BLUE BOOK

MAY MAGAZINE 25 Cents 30¢ IN CANADA

FLAME *in the* FOREST *by* HAROLD TITUS

S. Andrew Wood, Arthur K. Akers, Bigelow Neal,
Seven Anderton, Beatrice Grimshaw *and many others*

Cash Prizes for Real Experiences

The West Is Within You

LIKE the kingdom of heaven, the West is within you. . . .

Because it has always been from east to west that civilized man has pioneered this so-fascinating globe, the West has from time immemorial been the undiscovered country. (So perhaps it came about that to the soldiers of the Great War, as well as to the ancient Egyptians, the West was sign and symbol of a country undiscovered indeed, a Happy Hunting-ground beyond the grave.)

Horace Greeley of course meant his famous advice to youth in a sense entirely literal: America's unsettled West of his time offered young men a fine opportunity for a material success based on the vast untouched resources and freedom from competition which that then new land offered. But to us Americans of 1932, the West means not only that old untamed land of infinite opportunity, of pioneer perils and frontier hardship; not only the beloved and beautiful if only too well settled region that is the modern West; more than these, the West today is an idea, an ideal—a state of mind that reflects and carries on the spirit which won the old West and inspires the new.

For these reasons stories of the West —sincere stories, that is, by men who know whereof they write—have for us a particular and peculiar appeal far beyond the glamour of a picturesque place or period. For they wake again a courage and preserve an attitude of mind that is close to the very soul of this America of ours. . . .

BRET HARTE, Frederick Remington, Owen Wister—they have had a host of imitators and a dozen lineal descendants. The work of a few of these latter we have been privileged to publish in these pages—notably that of Frederick Bechdolt and Will James. So we know you will share our pleasure in the new drawing by Will James. which appears on another page of this issue. And we predict your special enthusiasm for Mr. Bechdolt's novelette of the old West, "The Silver Trail," which will be a feature of the forthcoming June number.

"Youth Rides Victorious," "The Hazardous Highway," "Sindbad of Oakland Creek"—you who recall these will remember also the fine quality of Mr. Bechdolt's writing and anticipate the new story with pleasure. You will be glad also to know that with it will appear some of the best work of such writers as S. Andrew Wood, Harold Titus, Arthur K. Akers, Clarence Herbert New, H. Bedford-Jones, Leland Jamieson and the like.

—*The Editor.*

"I Saved Six Orders and Made $90 in One Day . . . Thanks to This Pocket Volume!"

I'VE only been selling about a year. When I broke in, though I realized that trained salesmen are the highest paid men in the world, I expected the going to be hard at first. It was—a lot harder than I'd expected, even. At the end of six months I was commencing to get discouraged. I certainly hadn't made a flop of it—but I wasn't getting the results I should have had.

Naturally, seeing other fellows who started right with me go right ahead, I realized something was wrong. A particularly disheartening thing was the fact that at times I'd be right on the point of closing a good-sized order—and all of a sudden, it would go "flop." In fact, it kept happening all the time. I was doing something, I knew, that was killing those sales.

Finally I decided that I had to do something. I had been hearing a lot about National Salesmen's Training Association. But I'd never investigated them. Then, one day, I read one of their announcements. I was amazed to find how comprehensively they covered the training of salesmen. Furthermore, they announced that they were sending a most unusual volume, "The Key to Master Salesmanship" to ambitious men who asked for it—not only experienced salesmen, but men who had never sold, but wanted a chance in this highly paid field.

Naturally, I wrote for it—it seemed to me that here was the certain solution to the errors I had been making. Imagine my surprise—and interest—when there arrived, not only one book, but two. To this day I can't decide which of those books helped me most. The little book which I had not been expecting was just what I needed at the time. It was written for men just like me—men who had been plugging along in salesmanship—never successful, never so hopeless that they quit selling. And while "The Key to Master Salesmanship" gave me an insight into the real secrets of salesmanship, the other book, "Mistakes Commonly Made in Selling" was the one I could first get practical use from.

Right in the first few pages, I saw some examples quoted. They were things I had been doing every day. I'd never dreamed they were dangerous errors. The more I thought about them, the more clear it became, though, why I was having such difficulty with my closes. I thought to myself: "By golly, that's why Barnes decided to put off buying, this very afternoon!" I kept on thinking of men whose orders I had lost, through just that very mistake. There were six of them.

The next morning, I sallied out, bright and early to see if I couldn't save those sales, using the tips given me. Before noon, I had put the practical suggestions of that little book to work—and sure enough, in every case, I made the sale which I had thought was gone glimmering. Six sales saved—at $15 commission apiece, that was $90 made, by one morning's work, plus the advice of a little book that cost me nothing!

Of course, that set me to thinking. If that one piece of knowledge could make me $90, how much would I make out of having all the knowledge which the National Salesmen's Training Association could give me? It didn't take long to figure that one out, either! I was enrolled for the full training that same night; and the next two weeks saw my sales record soar. Not a minute of time lost—I studied just in spare hours, but I learned things in those spare hours that I'd never have picked up, just by my own experience.

Today, I find amazing increase in the volume of my sales now over what they were a year ago. Then I was selling only about 40% of my quota—this month, with a quota twice as high as it used to be, I'm 50% over! And you know what quantity production means when the bonus checks roll around!

Today any man who wants to see how to end some of his biggest sales weaknesses can learn from this book some of the most frequent mistakes which spoil sales, and get practical suggestions how to end them. Not a penny of obligation—"Mistakes Commonly Made in Selling" is now FREE to any ambitious man. At the same time we will send you, also free, the new and finer edition of "The Key to Master Salesmanship," which since its publication has been read by many men who have got into the biggest pay class of salesmanship. Write for both these valuable volumes now—the coupon will bring them by return mail.

NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSOCIATION

Dept. E-34, 21 W. Elm St., Chicago, Illinois

National Salesmen's Training Association,
Dept. E-34, 21 W. Elm St., Chicago, Ill.

Without obligation to me, please send me "Mistakes Commonly Made in Selling," as well as "The Key to Master Salesmanship," and full details of your various service features, including your Free Employment Service.

Name .....

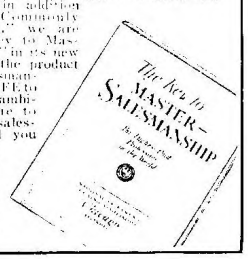
Address .....

City ..... State .....

Age ..... Occupation .....

A NEW AND FINER EDITION

Thousands who read the original edition of "The Key to Master Salesmanship" are men who today are among the leaders of successful selling. Today, in addition to "Mistakes Commonly Made in Selling," we are sending "The Key to Master Salesmanship" in its new and finer edition, the product of years of salesmanship research, FREE to salesmen. Real ambition, and a desire to make the most of salesmanship, are all you need to get this volume. Simply mail the coupon and it will be sent to you, with your own copy of "Mistakes Commonly Made in Selling."



The BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

MAY, 1932 — Vol. 55, No. 1

ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH

HE'S a newspaper man and a good one. Of late years his novels "Porto Bello Gold" and "A Manifest Destiny" have won him real fame as a fiction-writer. To our next issue he will contribute a unique and deeply impressive story of a sea-captain's adventure with a picturesque black emperor—under the title:

"Treasure"

THE McCALL COMPANY, Publisher, The Blue Book Magazine

William B. Warner, *President and Treasurer* — John C. Sterling, *Vice-President* — Francis Hutter, *Secretary*

DONALD KENNICOTT, Editor

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COMING!

A group of specially attractive stories of the sea, by

Captain Dingle
Albert Richard Wetjen
Stephen Hopkins Orcutt
Richard Howells Watkins
Henry Rowland
and others.

A NEW PLAN FOR

Real Experience Stories

FOR over five years we have been printing stories of real experience—stories based on the belief that nearly everyone's experience includes at least one episode so unusual and dramatic as to deserve description in print. With this idea in mind, we each month have offered five prizes of one hundred dollars each for the five best stories of real experience submitted to us. It is our impression that our readers have much enjoyed this feature of the magazine.

We have come to feel, however, that there is a certain injustice in the conditions of our offer. For stories are not like sugar or flour, to be appraised and purchased by the pound, at a definite rate. Some are inherently of a higher quality than others; some can be told adequately in a thousand words; some can with difficulty be compressed into four thousand words.

For these reasons we have decided to alter the plan a little: We shall be pleased to receive and to print stories of real experience, running from one thousand to four thousand words each. For each of the five best of these received each month we will pay, according to our appraisal of its length and strength, from $50 to $150. We hope in this way to present to our readers an even more attractive department, and to reward a little more fairly those readers who contribute their real experiences to us. The other conditions of our offer remain as before. To recapitulate:

In theme the stories may deal with adventure, mystery, sport, humor,—especially humor!—war or business. Sex is barred. Manuscripts should be addressed to the Real Experience Editor, the Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. Preferably but not necessarily they should be typewritten, and should be accompanied by a stamped and self-addressed envelope for use in case the story is unavailable. A pen name may be used if desired, but in all cases the writer's real name and permanent address should accompany the manuscript. Be sure to write your name and correct address in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of your story, and keep a copy as insurance against loss of the original; for while we handle manuscripts with great care, we cannot accept responsibility for their return. As this is a monthly contest, from one to two months may elapse before you receive a report on your story.

By LELAND JAMIESON

Illustrated by George Avison

"*GREENSBORO to One Hundred, Greensboro to One Hundred, Greensboro calling Mailwing Number One Hundred. Go ahead.*"

The radio operator chanted the call, turned off his transmitter and listened acutely in his earphones for the distant answer. But none came, and after two minutes the operator tried again. Still nothing but faint static reached his ears.

He began calling Spartanburg:

"*Greensboro to Spartanburg, Greensboro to Spartanburg. Go ahead.*"

"*Spartanburg to Greensboro,*" came the reply. "*O. K. Go ahead.*"

"I've been trying to get a message through to One Hundred," the Greensboro operator said. "I can't work him—think something could be wrong?"

"He's got no receiver for any messages except the radio beam and weather broadcasts. Didn't you know that? Mail ships don't carry 'em."

The Greensboro man was new. He had been at work on this line only a week. "No," he came back. "Well, I'll have it broadcast as a special weather report, then. But it'll be the best weather report that pilot ever got!" He switched off the air, called the Department of Commerce station two miles away, and talked for a few moments.

The Department of Commerce operator, following this conversation, switched off the guiding finger of the beam, and went on the air with the strangest message any air mail pilot, flying on his run, could get.

Johnny Lee, the pilot of One Hundred, was out of Greensboro with Schedule Four, night mail for Atlanta. The weather was bad, but flyable. Spartanburg, the next stop, reported three hundred feet. Greensboro, behind, had had two hundred when Johnny went in and came out of there. Atlanta, at the end of the run, had seven hundred—for this night relatively good.

So Johnny was sitting in his cockpit smoking a cigarette, his eyes glued to his turn indicator, his ears tuned to the long, unbroken squeal of the radio beam which was guiding him upon his course. He was flying blind, but he had been flying blind all the way from Richmond, and he had done it so much that it was as easy for him as flying visually.

Suddenly the beam went off. Johnny Lee came up in his cockpit as rigidly as if the engine had stopped. His radio was his salvation—the thing, and the only thing, which would bring him into Spartanburg. The way to get killed was to try to get down and fly under a ceiling like this. Once a man "pulled up" it was impossible to get down without great risk.

But the beam was followed, a moment later, by a voice that Johnny recognized as coming from Greensboro. Since the broadcast wasn't on regular schedule, he listened carefully. It might be a warning of a dangerous weather condition developing ahead.

"*Double-U—R—Double-U, Greensboro, North Carolina,*" the voice began in an unmodulated monotone that pierced the earphones. "*Special broadcast to pilot Lee, southbound on Trip Four. Special broadcast to pilot Lee, southbound on Trip Four—*"

Johnny was tensely alert. Specials like this almost always meant some potential danger—another ship about to pass him in the "soup," or a recall because of weather, perhaps an order to get down at the first emergency field he could find. But what came to his ears brought a broad grin to his face.

"*Pilot Lee, you are the father of a baby girl, born tonight at nine fifteen. Pilot Lee, you are the father of a baby girl, born tonight at nine fifteen. Congratulations. Everybody sends you congratulations. Double-U—R—Double-U, Greensboro, North Carolina.*" The voice stopped and, following a short pause, the whistle of the beam once more stabbed as an unbroken sound into the earphones.

JOHNNY sat there, almost unable to believe his ears. His spirits soared, and he grinned for no reason at all except that he felt better than he had in a long time. "But, damn it," he muttered, "why didn't they tell me something about Mary? Still, no news is good news—she's bound to be all right."

When his ship slid off on a wing and the wires tuned up to a crescendo in the rising blast of air, he came back to some semblance of unified endeavor and started flying again. He had, for the time being, forgotten that he was even in the air. He was thinking about his wife, and wondering what a baby of his would look like. It was his first.

His thoughts were a medley of hopes and conjectures when the beam began to narrow, pulling him in toward Spartanburg. It was difficult, now, to keep the plane in the thin line; wind drift and the inaccuracies of instrument navigation caused it to slide from side to side occasionally, and during those times either the A or the N merged with the steady on-course whine. And, too, Johnny was thinking very little about the way he flew.

Years ago, before there were airplanes, Rudyard Kipling wrote a famous story of the air-mail as he imagined it would be. Here Mr. Jamieson gives us a memorable story of the night air-mail as it actually is.

But when the volume of the beam began to increase rapidly, he throttled back a little and eased down through the "soup" until he reached five hundred feet; and at that altitude flew level, his head out at the side from time to time while he searched for a light. He found none. When his radio assured him that he was near the field, he dropped still lower, until he was at three hundred feet. And here, presently, he saw the first lights of Spartanburg, and came on down a hundred feet and saw, ahead in the misty darkness, the dim wink of the field beacon. From then until he reached the field he flew under the ceiling, and at last landed easily on the muddy field.

"Proud Papa!" Tom Walker cried, when Johnny had taxied to the gas pit. "Just heard about it on the tape. Congratulations. Sorry you can't get on through to see them."

Johnny, grinning—the grin had, it seemed, become a fixture of his face by this time—climbed stiffly from the cockpit and lighted a cigarette. When Walker got the gas hose out, Johnny stepped to a respectful distance to avoid the danger of fire.

"What'd'ya mean, I can't get on through to see them?" he asked jovially. "I got this far. Atlanta's got five hundred feet on the last report—dropped two hundred in the last hour—I can beat it in."

"That's up to you," Walker, from his position on the plane's wing, responded. "But if it was up to me, you couldn't get me off this field in a wheelbarrow for a dollar a mile!"

Johnny chuckled and walked into the office and sat down at the teletype machine. He called the dispatcher in Atlanta, and while waiting for a reply examined his weather card. Anderson, he saw, had dense fog. Jefferson, the other intermediate weather station, was likewise. But Atlanta still had five hundred feet, with the dew point and temperature three degrees apart. As long as they stayed apart, there would be no fog. Even if they "got together" there would be some ceiling as long as it was raining. And Atlanta reported light rain now.

The Atlanta dispatcher replied, and Johnny asked about the weather. He had the dispatcher call the weather bureau there, and obtain a special forecast for the next four hours. The forecast was, "No change."

So that settled it. Johnny climbed into the plane and gunned it from the gassing ramp onto the field, ran it up carefully on the ground to test both the engine and the instruments, and took off with a rush. He went blind at a hundred feet, and pulled up rapidly. That, he thought, was nothing to be alarmed about. What did he care about the weather? He was going home! And never in years had he wanted as much as now to get home. He was warm with magnanimity toward the world, and he even included the weather in this feeling. It had left him some ceiling to get in under at Atlanta.

He was running late, because he had gotten out of Richmond late. At 12:45 A.M., forty minutes out of Spartanburg, he received the first broadcast of the line. Anderson and Jefferson were still zero-zero with dense fog. Spartanburg had closed in behind him. But the radio operator chanted:

"Atlanta, Atlanta, overcast, ceiling five hundred feet, visibility one mile, wind northeast three, temperature forty-nine, dew point forty-seven, barometer thirty-seventeen. Double-U—Aitch—Zee, Atlanta, Georgia."

Johnny grinned again, and lighted a cigarette and flew on comfortably.

THAT cigarette almost cost Johnny Lee his life. He had put the packet in his inside trousers pocket while on the ground in Spartanburg, and to get to it in the air he had to unbuckle one leg strap of his parachute and scrouge around upon the seat. He did this, and got fire to the tobacco. It was minutes later that he saw a white streak lying in the seat of the airplane by his leg. He reached down—and found that somehow in his effort to get his cigarettes he had tripped his parachute! Part of the canopy of silk already had escaped from the pack; any additional movement in the seat might release more of it.

The danger of this was that it removed the customary safety of a 'chute as a last resort, should the motor, while he was flying blind, stop running. And still another hazard, a thing more likely to happen than engine failure: If the parachute slipped out of the pack enough, part of it would billow up into the wind, catch in the propeller blast, and drag out the rest of it, taking Johnny bodily along. The shroud lines would entangle in the tail. . . . The remainder of the story would be written in stark tragedy.

So Johnny Lee sat very still, and flew on into the black fog of night, listening to his beam signals, wishing that the time would hurry, that he were there already and could land. He heard the marker beacon at Jefferson. Sixty miles to go! Some of the frigid tension left his mind and body. Engines were pretty reliable these days. He wouldn't need a parachute to jump. The only thing, now,

was to keep that silken mass folded under him so that it could not escape into the wind.

Ten minutes later the special broadcast came in. Johnny, forty-five miles out, picked it up distinctly:

"Double-U—Aitch—Zee, Atlanta, Georgia. Special broadcast. Weather at Atlanta. Atlanta, light fog, ceiling zero, visibility one-fifth of a mile, wind calm, temperature forty-eight, dew point forty-eight, barometer thirty-seventeen. Fog forming rapidly. Double-U—Aitch—Zee, Atlanta, Georgia."

There was something foreboding in the very tone the operator used. Something which sent a tingle of apprehension coursing through Johnny's mind and body. He cracked the throttle a little more, increasing his revvs. He would have to hurry. He could still land in light fog, even if the ceiling report was zero. As long as he could see anything he could get down with his radio. But if the fog grew dense, he wouldn't be able to see at all.

If his 'chute had been all right he would not, even in this precarious position, have worried greatly. He could, and would when he ran out of gasoline, jump out and let the plane go where it might. But if he got caught tonight he couldn't jump. It might be—well, too bad for him if he got caught. He visualized his wife lying in the hospital. He tried to visualize that youngster of his, and was unable to. His life, suddenly, seemed of more importance now than it had been. He had, he decided, been taking too many chances on night mail recently. He'd slow down now, and take it easy.

"If I live to take it easy," he muttered against the howling of the wind and wires.

He was twenty miles from Candler Field when the beam went off again.

"Double-U—Aitch—Zee, Atlanta, Georgia. Special broadcast. Weather at Atlanta. Atlanta, dense fog, ceiling zero, visibility zero, wind calm, temperature forty-eight, dew point forty-eight, barometer thirty-seventeen. Double-U—Aitch—Zee, Atlanta, Georgia."

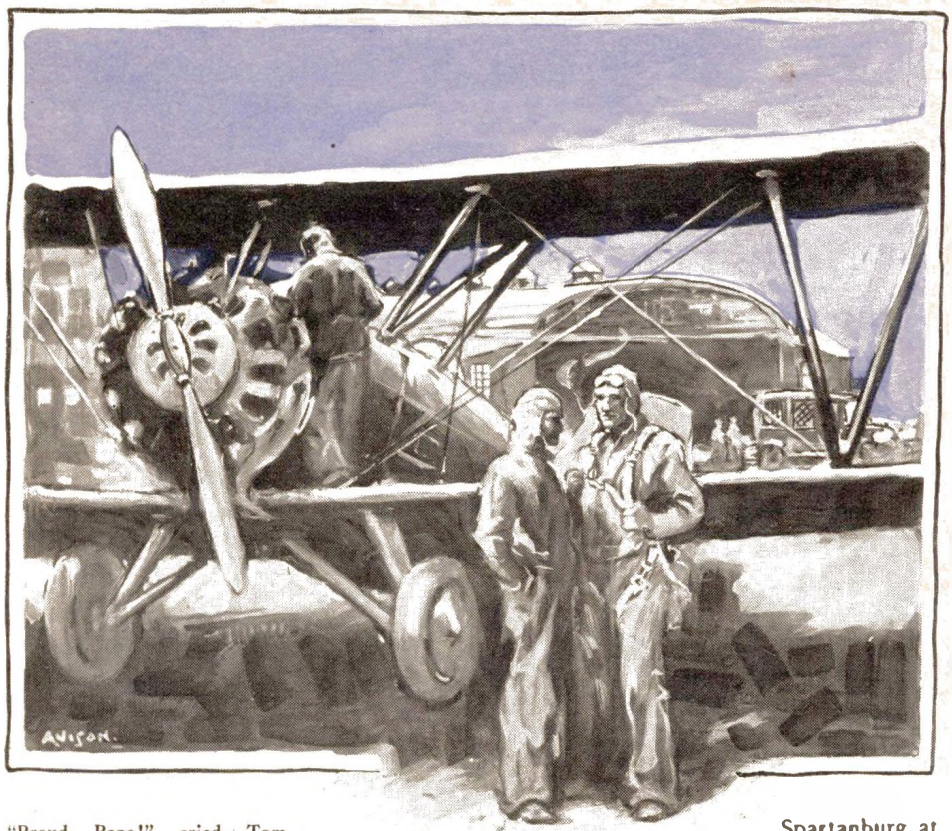
But Johnny Lee went on, for there was nothing else to do. His gas wouldn't take him back to Greensboro. Spartanburg already had dropped to nothing, pinching him off from that retreat. He had to get into Atlanta, regardless of the fog. If he didn't— He closed his mind to thoughts of what would happen if he didn't.

The beam grew louder, and Johnny throttled back and came down. He had leaned his mixture out as much as it seemed possible soon after taking off from Spartanburg, but now he shoved the lever forward still another quarter of an inch, until the engine spit and sputtered and barely ran at all. Gasoline was precious now.

He crossed the field at five hundred feet, looking down, straining his eyes for the smallest break in the clouds and a light on the ground. But without success, and he gunned his engine a little once more and flew on to the southwest, turned back and came once more toward the field, but this time lower. When he was sure he was somewhere close he throttled down and mushed until his altimeter showed that he was only a hundred feet above the ground. He held his breath, trying to look both at his instruments and at where the ground should be. This was the bad part of tough weather flying—getting down. And all Johnny's past experiences in weather seemed to him insignificant and meager now. This was the real thing; this was life or death, balanced on a razor edge.

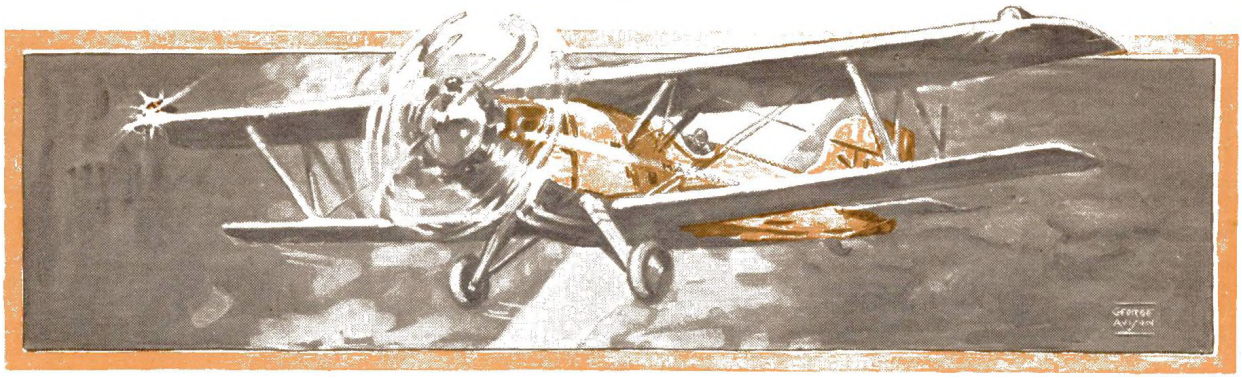
He crossed the field again, and saw nothing of it, and climbed slowly back to five hundred feet to swing around and make another shot at it. The gruesome thought of motor failure now crossed his mind. Well, he'd hit the ground in that case. He found himself hoping that the airplane wouldn't burn—as if that would make any difference to him then.

While he turned he estimated gasoline consumption. Spartanburg was a hundred and sixty-seven miles from Atlanta; it had required two hours to come down this far. At seventeen hundred revvs—his average engine speed—the motor would burn about twelve gallons per hour. The tank held seventy-four gallons all told, counting the reserve. Six hours. He had left Spartanburg at 12:05 A.M. Daylight would come slowly at seven in the morning. If he couldn't land at Atlanta, he must stretch his gas to seven hours in the air.



"Proud Papa!" cried Tom Walker. "Just heard about it on the tape. Congratulations! Sorry you can't get on through to see them."

By Leland Jamieson



He doubted that he could do this, felt sure he couldn't. But he must get down at Atlanta. If he didn't get down soon, field employees might call the hospital and send word to Mary of his plight. They shouldn't do that, but they might. And his wife, Johnny knew, worried about such nights as these too much already. He had to land.

So he cut back and came in again on the beam, turning his radio carefully so that he could tell as closely as possible when he crossed the radio station. Always, in tight flying conditions before, he had set two hundred feet as the closest margin of trust to impose upon an altimeter; tonight, however, he must go far beyond that. Fifty feet, he decided, would be his minimum.

He tried to crowd all other thoughts from his harassed mind. It did no good to think of crashing into a water-tank, a building; it was a painful thing to think of dying now, when, suddenly, he wanted most to live. He cut the gun and started down once more, and his eyes were straining in the darkness of the night to pierce the fog and see a light.

Suddenly he saw one! Fifteen feet beyond his left wing tip he saw a glow, and the glow grew with a rush into a solitary light upon the sloping crown of a water tower. The light, when he passed it, was above him! Fifteen feet to the left would have put him headlong into a wall of steel. Cold sweat made his grip upon the stick unsteady. Then the light was past, swallowed in the fog and darkness.

He went on, holding that altitude until he thought he had safely passed the radio beam station, then he throttled still more, and mushed down, hoping against hope to see the boundary lights of the field sweep underneath his wing. When that happened he meant to cut his switches and flop the plane upon the ground. He might crack up, but it would be minor; it wouldn't hurt him to do that if he could strike the field.

But instead of the boundary lights he saw a growing red spot just ahead, and the spot swelled until it lighted up the fog and the plane flying through the fog. The flying wires and wing struts were for a moment silhouetted starkly. Then the light passed. In a flash just after Johnny passed that light he saw the tree-tops in a rift in the solid cloud that hugged the ground! He missed them by inches with his landing-gear.

Up again. Up, to temporary safety. He had to go up, to get his breath, to collect his senses, to still the cringing of his nerves against another scrape like that one had been. He was lucky to have gotten out without a crash.

As he sat there he tried to place facts in an orderly fashion in his mind. It was surprisingly difficult to do that.

"Two things," he thought. "First, my altimeter isn't as accurate as I thought it was. Second, I just passed over the field with my wheels ten feet above the ground. If I couldn't see the field from ten feet, I'll not see it. I was lucky to get away with that—I won't, probably, be lucky a second time. So shooting at the field is out."

He climbed to a thousand feet, and circled, flying by his instruments without consciously being aware that he did so. A broadcast came up to him suddenly from below:

"Pilot Lee, you are now one mile west of the field. You are now one mile west of the field." The voice went off and the beam came on again.

"That's a lot of help," Johnny muttered. "I know where I am. What I've got to know is where to go."

And presently the beam went off again, while the operator, trained to his routine, broadcast the route west from Atlanta. Birmingham had zero-zero. Jackson had a like condition. The beam again, and Johnny Lee was swearing now. They should broadcast him the weather at an open spot, so that he could go there before his gas ran out.

But no more special broadcasts were put on the air. In its regular sequence the Midstate route north to Chicago was announced. No promise lay in that direction. Adairsville had five hundred feet, but there were hills that high bordering the field. With no radio there to lead him in, he would be almost sure to smash head-on into a ridge. Chattanooga, Mount Eagle, Phillisboro—all these were zero-zero, fog-bound. Evansville had twelve hundred, with light fog and the dew point and temperature together. No chance there. He didn't have gasoline enough to go that far anyhow.

The beam snapped off again and a deep, harassed voice replaced it on the air. Johnny, grim and tense, listened passively.

"Pilot Lee," the voice said, *"Mr. Norris, the operations manager, says for you to climb way up high and jump. Pilot Lee, Mr. Norris says for you to climb up high and jump. The entire southeast is zero-zero. The entire southeast is zero-zero. You can't land anywhere. You can't land anywhere."* The man coughed. *"Good luck, Pilot Lee!"*

The beam again, and Johnny sat there somewhat dazed with the awfulness of what his fate must be.

"Climb up 'way high' and jump!" he muttered. "Boy, how sweet that sounds!" He wanted to laugh at the operator's phraseology, but humor had deserted him.

There came a time, sitting there while waiting for the next broadcast, that he thought his nerve would shatter from the strain. He fought his imagination, he fought the terror of panic which seemed to border reason and logical thinking. He couldn't go to pieces and do some-

thing rash—and fatal. His engine was still running, turning slowly, slowly, spitting as it starved for gasoline. At this rate it might last seven hours. It must last seven hours in order for him to have even the barest chance to land.

But where, he asked himself, could he land even in daylight with fog smothering the ground from the Mississippi to the Atlantic? Obviously not near Atlanta, where hills, highlines and other obstructions towered from the ground—and where Stone Mountain reached a thousand feet into the air, a wall of stone to strike and die upon. He needed smoother country.

He could go south, toward the coastal plain; but experience made him reject this possibility, for fog would, of course, lie thickest there. Jacksonville had zero-zero, was blotted out in a blanket of mist. Augusta, Charleston, Savannah—these had been obscured even before Johnny had left Spartanburg.

The best possibility lay back along the path he had followed coming down from Richmond. He had radio to guide him, also, on that route.

While he was debating these things, while he was fighting a mortal fight with himself for mental calmness and stability; the beam snapped off and the operator began his weather broadcast as by rote. It angered Johnny Lee to sit there helpless and have to listen to that voice, which chanted the long statement of the worst weather the southeast had, within the time of record, seen.

"Jefferson—zero-zero, dense fog. . . . Anderson—zero-zero, dense fog. . . . Spartanburg, ceiling twenty-five hundred feet, visibility one-half mile—"

Johnny whipped his plane around and started northeast as fast as possible, yet saving gasoline. Why, he asked over and over, hadn't they given him a special broadcast of Spartanburg? Why? Well, no matter. He would get down now.

He climbed, and at sixty-five hundred feet broke out on top of the clouds, and found still a higher overcast, through which the full moon broke now and then. And he found a roaring tailwind at that altitude. Turning his engine fifteen hundred revvs, an hour put him into the surging crescendo of the Spartanburg beam station. He started down, light-hearted at the assurance of a quick and easy landing.

Down, and on down. Once again his eyes strained to pierce the fog. The beam went off. He turned abruptly around, to be sure he wouldn't, while the radio was off, over-run the station and go past unwittingly.

"Double-U — Ess-Tee, Spartanburg, South Carolina. Weather at Spartanburg. Spartanburg, overcast, ceiling two hundred and fifty feet, visibility one half a mile, wind calm, temperature forty-six, dew point forty-six, barometer thirty fifteen. Double-U—Ess—Tee, Spartanburg, South Carolina."

Johnny Lee, still feeling jubilant at the certainty of getting down, turned back upon the beam and headed for the field. There must, he thought, have been a mistake in the ceiling of the first report. The operator had unwittingly added a cipher. Well, no matter. He was down.

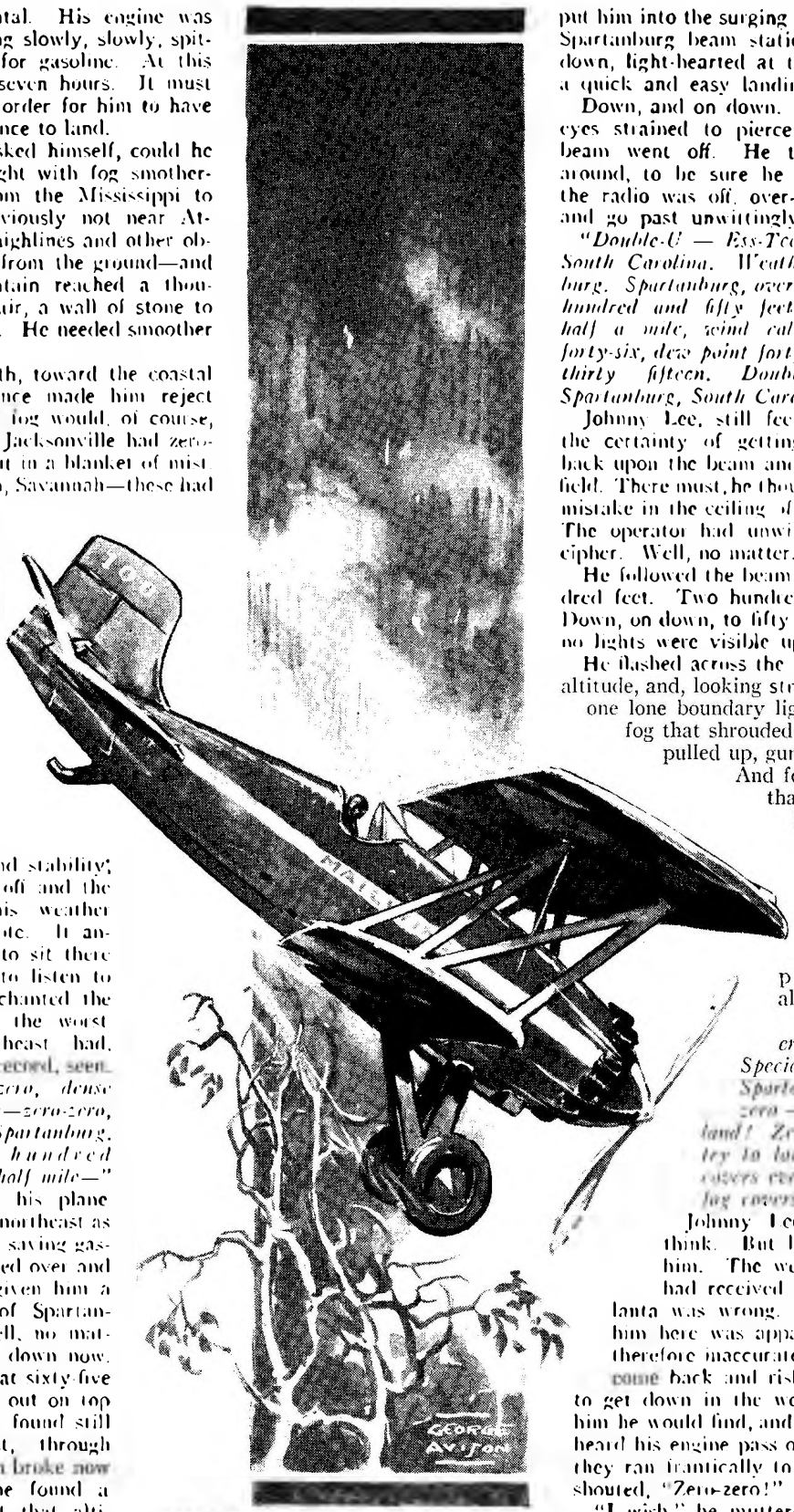
He followed the beam in. Three hundred feet. Two hundred, one hundred. Down, on down, to fifty feet! And still no lights were visible upon the ground.

He flashed across the field at that low altitude, and, looking straight down, saw one lone boundary light dimly in the fog that shrouded everything. He pulled up, gunning his engine. And for the final time that morning the beam went off, and the operator at Spartanburg shouted to him, his voice high-pitched with alarm:

"Special weather at Spartanburg. Special weather at Spartanburg. Zero-zero — don't try to land! Zero-zero — don't try to land! Dense fog covers everything. Dense fog covers everything."

Johnny Lee tried not to think. But black rage filled him. The weather report he had received by radio at Atlanta was wrong. The one given him here was apparently old, and therefore inaccurate. They let him come back and risk his life trying to get down in the weather they told him he would find, and then when they heard his engine pass over in the night they ran frantically to their radio and shouted, "Zero-zero!"

"I wish," he muttered, "that I had that guy up here with me right now! That's ground coöperation for you!



He looked outside—the plane was in a spiral, almost steeply vertical. And he could almost have touched the trees!

But what does he care? It's no skin off him if I pile up!" He wondered if the man had been asleep, thinking no airplanes were in the air.

HE gave consideration, as he climbed through the fog, to trying to get out with the parachute that he had accidentally opened. He might, he thought, do half a slow roll, and push the stick forward in that position and thereby be thrown out. But there was too much danger in such an attempt. The 'chute would undoubtedly become tangled.

But if he must die, Johnny preferred to do it in the plane, in the cockpit, by ramming his head through the instrument board in one quick blow and having it over. Nothing could be more agonizing than to hang, helpless, by one's shroud lines to the tail of a pilotless derelict as it plunged to earth. That kind of death would take too long.

It was amazing to him that he could think, now, so dispassionately upon the matter. Weariness had somehow overcome the stabbing fears which had plagued him earlier in the night. He had sat in this cockpit nearly ten hours now, blind all the time except for the brief respite when he had rested his eyes when up above the clouds in the moonlight.

His eyelids felt now like hot coals. He was cold, but more from fatigue than from the chill of the air.

And it would be hours before he could get down, unless by some miracle the fog should lift. His clock showed five-thirty; the gasoline gauge on the instrument board indicated that he had fifteen gallons of fuel left in his tank. At least an hour and a half—he would stretch it until daylight!

But what, then, after daylight?

Once more he went down, feeling his way by instrument and by the beam, trying to find and land upon the field. The fog was not as thick here as it had been in Atlanta. As he crossed the boundary lights he could see them faintly. But he could never get lined up right to land: the radio beam crossed the field at such an angle that by following it he would run into a water-tank. He would locate himself by the radio station, turn slightly from the beam course, and mush on down. But always he could see the field too late to land. Terraced cotton fields lay on every side of that landing area; to cut his switches and go on in would be suicidal.

He discovered, while feeling for this field, a new hazard. He was coming in slowly, his motor barely turning up, his air speed set as nearly as possible to a steady sixty miles an hour. It was the slowest glide he had thus far used. The compass revolved slowly when he thought he was flying straight! The turn indicator had not moved. The turn indicator, he thought, must be going out!

THE turn indicator is the one instrument most important in blind flying. Without it a pilot cannot hold a perfect course. And especially in such a predicament as Johnny Lee was in, the turn indicator must not fail. If it does, the pilot will go, sooner or later, into a spiral; from the spiral into a spin, and from the spin into the ground. Many pilots have followed that procedure, either from failure of the instrument or, more often, from inability to read the instrument.

But where ordinarily he could have jumped, Johnny Lee could not, with any assurance, jump now. When he saw the turn indicator giving trouble, he gunned his engine wide out and started climbing. If the plane "got away" from him at a low altitude it was certain to mean his sudden end.

He thought he was climbing, and watched the climb indicator for its reaction. But instead of going up, the climb indicator pointed down. The air speed jumped from sixty to a hundred and thirty miles an hour. Still Johnny pulled back more on his stick, and glued his eyes for a moment to the instruments.

The white mist of the fog suddenly was no more around him. The night was dark. He looked outside the cockpit—in time to see that the plane was in a spiral, almost steeply vertical. And he could almost have reached out and touched the trees!

Desperation for a moment took possession of him. Without the turn indicator he could no longer fly blind. But he must fly blind. The hand of luck had, in this lone case, brought him down in a pocket of the fog. Not one time in a million would he have been able to see those trees in time to keep from going into them.

He looked back at the instruments, a quick glance. And he saw that the turn indicator once more registered! He pulled up, straightened out, and climbed, while a realization of what had happened slowly penetrated his mind: in flying so slowly, the turn indicator had been deprived of the suction of its venturi tube, and therefore it had stopped.

"We'll fly fast, and we'll fly high—for a few minutes!" Johnny said.

ANOTHER hour dragged, interminably. The gasoline gauge was down, now, until the needle pointed to the red line indicating the reserve tank. It was six-thirty, and while a thin gray light was beginning to show itself in the inconquerable mass of fog, this light was not sufficient to be of any aid in getting down. And conservation of gasoline was difficult. The plane, light as it was, would fly at thirteen hundred revvs, but at this speed the turn indicator would not function. Earlier in the night, with its heavier load of gas, fourteen hundred had been the minimum, which was sufficient for the instrument.

Seven o'clock, and an eerie daylight came at last. The main tank had not yet run out. With a safe thirty minutes' gasoline, Johnny turned on his reserve—so the main would not run out while he was too low safely to change tanks—and went down once more. It was now or never. If he failed during the next few minutes to get on the ground, the probability was that he would not live to hold this experience as a dreadful memory.

He lined up on the beam and came in. At a hundred feet the ground was still invisible; he might as well have been at five thousand. But he went on, until he knew that he was crossing the field at fifty feet. And he didn't see it even then!

A dull gray shape loomed ahead, and seemed to be flung through the fog toward him at express train speed. He recognized the water tower, and hauled back upon his stick and kicked violently at his rudder to avoid the deadly tank.

The left wing suddenly seemed to be torn away from the ship; the impact was followed by a small report, something like the sound of an air rifle. Then the tank was lost in the swirling mist and Johnny Lee was still, somehow, in the air.

But now his left wing tip was a gaping mass of flapping fabric. He had clipped six inches from that wing. It was, again, pure luck that the crash hadn't hurled him to the ground.

It seemed to him that all night he had fought a losing, useless battle against elements of Nature over which no man could gain control. In the end he would die, he felt hopelessly, just as countless other airmen had died before him—and in the official records the cause would be set down by the simple word:

"Weather."

But he was not through fighting. The Mailwing would still fly, and he still had some gasoline. It was left-wing heavy now, and tried to pull in that direction because of the increased drag of the debris' resistance to the air. So Johnny Lee, knowing that his time had been reduced to minutes, fought down his fear of ramming into something and tried again. It was the crisis now. The engine, out of gasoline, might quit at any minute.

He started in on the beam from the north, and flew southwest, crossed the station, and immediately came down to the fifty feet that he had set as the minimum. But here, going cross-country, it was infinitely more dangerous than back hunting for the field. He knew the elevation of everything there; here, plunging on and on, he might unwittingly fly into a terraced hillside and never see it until he struck. He might not even see it then! But he could not jump, because he must soon land somewhere, he went ahead. It was, to him, a final test of nerve.

Again, flying there, craning his neck from side to see, watching acutely for the looming dark shadow in the fog which would indicate a hill ahead, he thought of his wife and the baby which had been born to her the night before. It would be the irony of a relentless Fate if death should claim him now. And he felt, as pilots sometimes do, that this flight was his last.

Time and again he overcame the suspicion of panic that tried to seize him, that tried to force him to reach up and cut his switches and mush at the slowest possible speed into whatever lay ahead. There was, he believed, a better way. If it failed—well, he would be unlucky if it failed. If it worked he would get down without a scratch. But it took all the nerve he could summon, to stay there at this low altitude,—with his motor threatening to quit at any second,—and fly entirely by instrument.

FIVE minutes lengthened into ten, and the ten into fifteen. Several times he saw the tops of trees brush by close under him. Twice he had to pull up frantically to miss them, then ease down again and keep on trying. And constantly there was that mental hazard crying to him to cut the switches, reduce his speed, and flop the ship wherever it might go.

Then he saw the break he had been looking for! A pocket in the fog, such as he had by accident run into when the turn indicator went out. And in the bottom of a ravine he saw a terraced cotton field!

He cut around, blind in the process, to get down before the motor quit. In his haste he turned too far, and missed the clear spot in his glide when he cut the throttle to come in. So he tried again, every sense alert and working. He came back and tried to turn. But the Mailwing would not change its direction in so short a radius. And Johnny, because he would lose the field in doing so, could not fly away, turn back, and come in on a normal glide.

In the end he resorted to a drastic maneuver. He crossed the field almost at stalling speed, and when almost to the wall of fog that bordered the pocket on each side, he hauled back on the stick and kicked full rudder. The plane fell off, turned, spun! The ground, a hundred feet below, rushed up to meet it.

He got around—and with full motor tried to come out of that vicious deadly spin before the nose smashed into earth. It was close. The landing-gear brushed through a tree-top. The tail tore off a branch. But the nose came up. The tail-skid touched the ground before the wheels.

But in the dim light and the misty fog, Johnny Lee failed to see a ditch ahead of him until the plane was thirty feet from it. Then he snapped forward frantically on the throttle, the engine responded, he hauled back upon the stick to tear the airplane once more from the ground. It had slowed, its tailskid digging in the ground. The wheels came off just before they reached the ditch. They almost cleared that yawning chasm ten feet wide and fifteen deep. They would have cleared, but at that moment the plane began to spin again, unable to fly for lack of speed.

So as it ended, the right wheel struck the bank and the left one cleared. The right wheel was sheared clean, and took with it that side of the landing-gear. But the plane went on into the field, and slid on the remaining wheel and the right wing tip, pivoted, stopped.

SILENCE settled upon the wreck, broken only by the off-course signals of the radio beam coming into Johnny's earphones. He removed them from his head, and climbed stiffly from the cockpit. The parachute unfolded and trailed out behind him.

A little negro boy came running through the field, sighted the plane when two hundred feet away, and stopped, fearful to proceed until invited by a living voice. And when near by, he asked:

"Aint nobody daid in theah, is theah?" and pointed to the wreckage.

Johnny laughed, and that laugh broke the tension which had claimed him for six hours past.

"No," he said. "You're all right. Where's a telephone?"

"My house," the boy declared. "You-all aint skin't up none," he added, marveling. "I done heahed you when you fell."

He led the way to the telephone, and there Johnny Lee reported. When that was finished he called his wife. She knew nothing, until that moment, of his plight.

"But the baby," she declared, "looks just like you! . . . You'll be home this afternoon—by train?"

"If the trains can run through a fog like this!" he answered her.

"Well, hurry!" she commanded.

But Johnny did not hurry. Weary as he was, he meant to load his mail into a car and take it to a post office. And for that purpose he and the negro boy started back to the wreckage. The fog had closed in again, thick as a woolen blanket.

Johnny missed the train. The boy got lost in the fog, and they reached the wreck again at noon. They had searched for it all morning in the wrong field, a hundred yards away.

That morning, Johnny says, was pretty foggy!

Another of Mr. Jamieson's inimitable stories of incidents in the life of a mail pilot, based upon his own experiences and those of his fellow flyers, will appear in an early issue.

"Stirrups"

The Cowboy Today

By WILL JAMES

IT takes a lot of holding to hold a stirrup sometimes, specially on some horses I know.

There was a good joke I heard of one time where a cowboy, pointing at a dude who was trying to ride a bucking horse, says to another dude who was standing near him: "I see your friend lost a stirrup."

"No," says the dude. "There it is hanging on the saddle."

You take it when there's slush on the ground and all around, and your boots get covered with gumbo, why, then your stirrups are apt to get slippery. . . . I seen one time where a slippery stirrup was the cause of a cowboy getting kicked in the head—his foot had slipped out while he was getting on, and scared the unbroke horse. I seen stirrups that stretched and hung on a feller's foot, causing him to drag to death. With the big rodeos I seen where the loss of a stirrup meant a thousand dollars or more to a cowboy, disqualified. I seen stirrups that cost two dollars a pair and brought their riders millions of dollars' worth in experience.

I always had a failing for good stirrups. I always try my best to hold 'em, whether I'm riding or writing, because no matter what you do, if you hold your stirrups, you'll never be afoot.

Flame in the Forest

By HAROLD TITUS

SMOKE filled his eyes and his throat. Heat, so intense that it seemed to be fluid, poured over them. The sound of the speeder's motor and the clatter of its wheels on the uneven rails was almost drowned in the raging voice of the fire; and Tod, an arm around him, holding him close as they rocked and swayed down the grade, was trembling.

But he wasn't going to cry, even if he was more scared than he ever had been in his seven years of experience. Not much, he wasn't! He hugged the precious letter-file with old Jack's pay-roll in it closer, and tried to look ahead; and when he saw living flames from the burning cars of chemical wood sweep across the track like a curtain, he threw himself flat and squeezed his eyes shut and held his breath, and did not complain with so much as a grunt when Tod's big body, sprawling suddenly over his small one, made his ribs bend like barrel-hoops. No sir! This was no time to act like a baby!

Headquarters was going, sure enough; but they were getting good old Jack's money out to safety! That was his job: to help save good old Jack from going bust. When you've got a job like that, for a man like that, you can't let on you're scared, can you? No; not even at seven, you can't!

Oh, he had been scared, of course, for three days now. But he hadn't let on. He had a right to be scared; everyone else was. Even the voice of a grown man like Tod West shook when, an hour ago, he called Kerry into the office and told him what they might have to do; but the boy knew how it was with Tod. He was all a-quiver inside himself, and if he tried to talk much, he knew that his voice would have been no more than a stutter. So he didn't talk any more than he had to.

He had been outside the office, standing in the deserted camp clearing, staring off up the road which Jack and the crew had taken before daylight, and where the cook had just gone with dinner for the fire-fighters, when the bookkeeper called to him.

"Listen, Kerry," Tod had said. "I want you to sit right here until I call you or come back. Wind's getting worse. They had her stopped last night, but you never can tell when fire'll stay stopped, in weather like this."

His big, ordinarily good-natured face was white, and fine beads of moisture pricked out above his eyebrows.

"Sure," said Kerry Drake, and swallowed, his heart going faster with Tod looking so scared.

"Now, listen careful: I took the pay-roll out of the cash-drawer, see? It's in this letter-file—this one, right here." He laid his hand on the brown box on top of the safe. Another file was on the desk, and more were on a shelf above it; but Tod put his hand right on that special one. "I'm goin' out to scout around. If anything happens, it may happen fast. The speeder's right on the track, now—right by the water-tank, there. If I yell, you bring the file and come a-runnin'. Understand that?"

"Sure, Tod," said Kerry, and swallowed again, even if his mouth was drier than ever.

"Good boy! Everybody's got to do his part, time like this. I'm uneasy, about the wind. Remember, now; if I yell—"

He went out, then, and Kerry sat down on a chair with his breath fluttery in his throat. Responsibility sat heavily on his small shoulders, but he'd do just what Tod had told him to do! That pay-roll was old Jack's money, and he'd break his neck to help old Jack, he would! Good old Jack, who had found him in the house the day before his mother died, and got the doctor and did all that he could do, and who, after it was all over and he was all alone, brought him to camp. That had been winter before last, and it looked as if he was going to stay with Jack forever. He certainly hoped so! Nobody in the world could be so kind to a little boy who had nobody else to look out for him as could old Jack; and breaking your neck for a man like that would be little enough to do!

Jack had been so worried since the fire started, day before yesterday! He had been in town when it came up, and had come back, driving the engine himself, snaking the empties over the steel fit to shake the stakes out. He had given her the air so hard that the whole train slid,

A deeply interesting novel of the North Woods timber country today, by the able author of "The Forest War," "The Beloved Pawn," "Spindrift," "Timber," and other noted books.

Illustrated by W. O. Kling

streaming fire from its every wheel; and then, jumping down from the cab, he came running fast as he could for the office.

The crew was on the fire then, of course; and old Jack's voice, generally so good-natured, was sharp as a knife when he questioned Tod, who was telephoning for more wardens. Jack stuffed the pay-roll money into the safe as he talked, and then, telling Tod certain things to do all in one breath, he jumped into the waiting buckboard, and galloped to the southward, where a mile-wide front of slash fire advanced toward camp. . . .

KERRY waked up when Jack came in that night. Their room was off the office, with a big bed and a little one; and he lay in his little one and looked through the open doorway and saw Jack standing by the desk, shirt all scorched, hair singed, talking in a low, husky voice to Tod.

It was bad, Jack had said. He'd brought half the crew in to get some rest; he'd turn in himself and try to catch a wink, because with all that chopping afire, tomorrow was going to be hell itself. . . .

And tomorrow was, with the telephone ringing and help from town coming through all day, and the smoke thick and thicker, and logging wholly forgotten in this emergency. The boy's belly ached with excitement, and he swallowed a great deal for no reason at all, and had little to say, because he couldn't trust his voice.

But at breakfast this morning, eaten before the first crack of dawn, Jack had said:

"We got an even break, now. We'd *ought* to hold her, but you never can tell. Why, yesterday, some of them dawn' birch stubs got burnin' clean to the top, and I'll bet they was throwin' live brands half a mile ahead of 'em, at least."

"And they might go farther than that," Tod West commented.

They might, another said; not likely, but still they might; and then Jack had pulled Tod to one side where nobody else but Kerry could hear, and said:

"Since this thing broke, I've thought no more about pay-roll than the boys have about pay-day. Shows I'm gettin' old. You'll be here, Tod. Somebody with a head on 'em has got to stay by the telephone again. It aim likely she'll get away from us. If she does, it aim likely she'll get clean to camp in a hurry. But if anything *should* happen, you get that pay-roll into town. Silver's all right, but it's mostly bills; and bills would burn sure as hell in that old safe of mine."

"They sure would," agreed Tod.

Then Jack had looked at Kerry.

"Be good boy, son!" he said cheerily, as if he were only going out on the job and not to a fire-line. "Be good boy." And he tweaked Kerry's ear playfully.

"And him," he said to Tod, suddenly sober and jerking his head at the lad. "Twenty-two hundred, small as it is, would bust me right now, so get that out if anything pops. But him—if you get a chance, send him into town anyways." So Kerry knew that Jack thought more of him than he did of going bust.

Then the crew went out, and dawn came, and before noon the cook and the bull cook drove off in a wagon with dinner for the men, and now Kerry sat alone in the office, listening to the wind and looking from time to time at that brown letter-file on top of the safe. . . .

He sat there a long time, feeling important. It wasn't much that he could do for Jack, ever; but now, watching that file, he knew that if fire should come into camp, he'd grab that box and get to the speeder faster than he had ever got anywhere before in his life. He rose finally and looked through the window toward the water-tank where

the speeder waited. Tod West was just then coming up from the alders along the creek, looking around in a funny way, as if he expected to see somebody or something alarming; and Kerry, for the moment, almost hoped that the bookkeeper would see fire, so he would have the chance to do something for good old Jack.

But when, only minutes later, he heard Tod bawling his name, his heart went flippety-flop and almost choked him.

"Kerry! Kerry! . . . . A-runnin', Kerry!"

And he was running, desperately, hugging the file against his belly, legging it with all his might for the speeder waiting by the water-tank.

He threw a look to his left where a streamer of thick white smoke was coming up to mingle with the blue haze which had been drifting through camp for three days. Brush was on fire south of the barn. In a moment he could see orange tongues of flame licking at more brush-piles.

Tod West was filling buckets at the horse-trough, and then ran with them toward the blacksmith-shop. He set one down and soused the other against the building—emptied the second, looked at the fire again and then ran back for more water.

The little boy stood by the speeder, breathing quickly through his mouth. He wanted to go and help Tod carry water and save the buildings, maybe; but he had the pay-roll hugged tight, and to keep it safe was his job.

The blacksmith-shop did not catch at first. The barn did, though. The barn was even closer to the burning brush than the shop which Tod was trying to save. It caught with a snap, and the snapping ran into snarls, and great pennants of flame licked at the eaves and broke through the roof.

Tod began trying to save the cook shanty, and Kerry wondered why he didn't throw water on the office, which was in greater danger; but Tod was terribly excited too. The boy could tell that by the way he acted when he ran up to the speeder.

"She's goin'!" he yelled. "Old office is goin', Kerry!" His voice was funny, for all the world as though he were glad because the office was being licked by hungry, fast-devouring flames.

He did not start away at once. He stood there priming the motor slowly, spilling gasoline because his hands shook so much. He did not look at what he was doing, either. He kept his eyes on the office, where flames were licking at the roof, eating into the hewn log sides, seeming to melt holes in those stout timbers.

"She's goin', Kerry!" he said, and gave a queer laugh which made the boy wonder if grown men also sometimes laughed when they felt like crying.

He glanced at Kerry then, and at the letter-file, and licked his lips.

"Sure you got the right one?" he asked.

"The one you told me!"—stoutly. "We'd better haul, hadn't we?"

"Just a minute, now!"

He waited, standing there and watching while a part of the office roof tumbled in. Only then did he shove the speeder ahead until the motor caught and coughed.

If he had started just a minute earlier, they would not have had to face that barrier of living fire across the track. In the seconds which elapsed between the time Kerry saw it sweep down from the loads of wood until they were in it, he had a tough time keeping his voice from crying out. . . .

And then they were in it, zooming past the siding, and he screamed from the heat that beat upon him—opened his throat and yelled and writhed against the weight of Tod's body, all of which did no good. The smell of burning paint poured into his nostrils; and then suddenly the torture was past, and he was half sitting up, and they were hitting it down the grade, and Tod was slapping at his own smoking shirt, and Kerry felt the sticky paint of the speeder as he gripped for a fresh hold with one hand, while the other hugged the precious letter-file, loss of which would make old Jack go bust, tight against his belly.

THEY made it into town in nothing, it seemed. Kerry was a little sick from the smoke he'd swallowed, or the smell of the scorched paint, or the swift flight—or perhaps all three. So he shut his eyes and did not give much attention to what Tod said in his ear. He only nodded when Tod asked again if he was sure he'd brought the right file.

Then he felt better, and they were clicking over switch-points, and here was town; and the motor stopped, and Tod West was calling out to somebody, with a lot more excitement than he had shown back at camp, that Jack's headquarters was burning.

A group quickly gathered, mostly old men and boys, because the best man-power of town was out on the fire-line, and they followed Tod and Kerry across the street to the bank, listened to Tod tell in quick high-pitched words what a good hand Kerry was to help save Jack's cash.

They crowded into the bank, and a man rose from his desk behind the counter.

"Jack's headquarters are gone," said Tod, handing the file to the man. "But we brought in the pay-roll. Did my dammedest to save something of camp, but I was alone. Kerry, here, lugged the money out of the office just in time."

"That's fine," said the banker, pressing the catch of the file. "That's sure lucky! I happen to know that if Jack should lose—"

He stopped short then, and Tod leaned forward, and the others pressed up close, attracted by the look on West's face, likely. It was a look that even a seven-year-old boy would notice.

"Why!" the banker said. "Why, Tod, it's *empty!*"

A moment of terrific silence followed, and then Tod looked down at Kerry and said in a queer, unfriendly way:

"Kid, which file did you bring?"

The boy swallowed, with a new sort of thrill running his small frame.

"Why," he said, "why, I fetched—You told me the one on the safe, Tod!"

The bookkeeper swore slowly under his breath and looked at the banker.

"Good God, I trusted him!" he said in a whisper.

The other clicked his tongue. "Oh-h," he said, long-drawn. "But he's only a little boy," he added, and slapped the file shut. "That surely is going to be tough for Jack!"

Kerry's knees were trembling, and there seemed to be a vacant place in his middle.

"Tod, what's the matter?" he asked shrilly. "Tod, is the money back yonder? Did it burn up, Tod?" And then, summoning all his vigor: *"Tod, I done just what you told me!"*

West shook his head. "No, you didn't understand," he said in a moan. "You didn't understand, and the money's burned sure as hell, and my God, boys, it's my fault!"—turning to the crowd.

He said other things, but Kerry did not hear. He moved away a little.

By Harold Titus

Kerry saw living flames sweep across the track like a curtain; he screamed from the heat . . . . then the torture was past, and they were hitting it down the grade.

Some one said: "The kid got rattled."

Another said: "It aint your fault, Tod. The kid, he got rattled."

A third said: "It'll be all day with old Jack now!"

They all looked at the boy, and he knew they were blaming him. All but Tod. Tod did not look his way; there was something funny about the look in Tod's eyes. But the others—

His nostrils smarted, and a lump swelled in his throat suddenly. A helpless feeling ran through his bones, and a sense of having been put-upon, abused, outraged. Jack had gone bust because his payroll was burned up, but he, Kerry, *had* done just as he had been told to do.

And before he knew what he was doing, he was sobbing just that:

"I fetched the one you told me! I did! *I did!*" He screamed the words, and tugged at Tod's sleeve to make the bookkeeper look at him. "I fetched the one you told me, and Jack's goin' bust, and I'd ruther—"

He got that far before his sobs choked him and he staggered to a corner, burying his face in his arms. Old Jack was bust, and they said it was because he, Kerry, got rattled when he had done as he'd been told and tried his best to help! The world, indeed, was a wretched place. It was Tod who had been wrong. . . . Wrong, and funny-acting too. When, back in camp, he came up through the alders from the creek just before fire came from nowhere and hit the buildings, his face had been funny, and he had looked all around as if, perhaps, almost afraid some one else would be there.

CHAPTER II

IT rained toward evening, and Jack Snow got to town at dusk. He had heard about his camp, of course, but he had not heard about the loss of his pay-roll. And when they told him, he said nothing for perhaps a quarter of a minute, but in those seconds he aged. Before, men had called him old Jack because they loved him. . . . Afterward he was an old man, in fact.

The first thing he said after he knew the worst that had happened was about Kerry. He looked at the boy and winked, and managed a sort of grin and said:

"But *you're* all right, son!"—as if that were all he would admit as counting. And after that he said but little for days. He appeared to listen when people talked, but if he heard, he seldom answered properly.

Once he said to Kerry, when they were alone in their room at the mill boarding-house:

"Tough, to let a coupla thousand bust you. . . . But it was that close."

And again: "Goin' belly up's not so bad when you're under sixty. . . . Me, I'm too old, now."

He managed to rustle enough to pay off the crew—that is, those who would take what they had coming. Most of the old-timers left town without coming around for their pay or waiting for Jack to look them up. He was their friend; he was in trouble; they would share that burden as best they could. Such was the liking of men for old Jack.

He began to be feverish, and talked at night in his sleep, holding the little boy close in his arms while the tremors ran through him.

Tod West came to say good-by and declared again that it was his fault, that he should have fetched the letter-file himself.

Jack roused from his lethargy. "Fault, hell!" he snorted, and spat, the way he used to. "You done your damnedest, both of you!" But Kerry detected again that funny look in Tod's eyes. The man would not meet the boy's gaze.

"I'm hittin' for the West," said Tod. "Goin' clean to the Pacific Coast."

But from their window that evening he saw West board an eastbound train. He did not think so much of that just then. . . . He was to remember it later, though.

That night old Jack grew worse. The doctor came and gave him some medicine, but he was restless, and frightened Kerry, the way he would sit up in bed and talk wildly; and finally the boy, trying to soothe him, crept close into the arms, and that seemed to bring peace to the old man.

After Jack was quiet, the boy whispered:

"It aint so, what they're tellin', Jack. I didn't take the wrong one, unless he told me wrong."

"Eh? What's that?" Jack asked.

He said it again, and added: "When he told me, he put his hand right on it—right on the one on top the safe, and said your money was in it, and to come a-runnin' when he yeowled fer me. But I did, and now the kids and some men say 'twas me who sent you belly up!"

Old Jack was very silent.

"What else did he do? After that, what'd he do?"

And the boy related, in detail, what Tod West had done—how he had gone down by the creek and come back through the alders as if wondering if anyone had seen him. And of how he hadn't tried to save the buildings that were first in line of danger.

Fast and faster he moved, charging for that narrow channel. . . . He gained safety by a hair, as he shot through.

Jack Snow swore a slow and terrible oath, then.

"He *could* of," he muttered. "He *could* of set that fire himself. And buried it and dug it up since the fire, and put the bee on a little feller." He got out of bed and stood by the window and swore mightily again.

"I'll send after him and find out! He aint so fur on his way west, yet!" he declared; but when Kerry tried to tell him that Tod had gone east instead of west, the old man did not listen.

Before morning he was much worse, and that day they took Kerry away; and before the week was out, he had no old Jack looking after him, nor would he ever have again. The Poor Commissioner was his boss now, and was boarding him out. . . .

He could not hide the terrible hurt of old Jack's passing, of course. All he could do was to hide himself, in the woods at the edge of town, in the long grass of meadows where he could lie on his face and cry softly.

But that other thing: the hurt which came when boys, with the cruelty of their years, taunted him with making the mistake which busted old Jack. . . . Well, he could cover up a thing like that, even though it lasted longer than grief over Jack's death. They would not listen when he tried to tell what he had told Jack. The Poor Commissioner wouldn't listen, either. No one would, so it did no good to let on that the gibes and looks cut him to the heart. When they pointed him out or nagged him with having sent Jack bust—why, then, he found, he could cover the pain with laughter. He found both sanctuary and defense in laughter.

He tried repeatedly to run away, when he was older. Always they brought him back and made him stay, and kept him in school when he hated the place and all the people in it because they never forgot what Tod West had told about him, and would not listen when, as a little boy, he had tried to tell what he and old Jack had suspected. He did not persist in trying to broadcast this suspicion. Some day he'd get foot-loose; then they could all go to the devil. Until then, he'd hide the things he really felt, behind laughter.

CHAPTER III

THEY sat in a St. Paul office, Kerry Drake tall and brown and trim in his woodsman's clothing. At his feet was curled a Chesapeake retriever, brighter than the prescribed dead-grass in color—almost honey-hued, he was. One amber eye opened from time to time and cocked upward as his master talked.

The better part of two decades had passed since that day when he had tried to do something for Jack Snow and had brought upon himself the ignominy of blame for the old man's fatal failure. The better part of a decade had passed since he had finally got free of the town which had warped and molded his spirit.

"This," said the man across the desk, "is the finest report on a timber property I have ever read. It's great! I'm asking you again: Won't you stick with us, Drake? There's a big opportunity with this corporation for a man of your years and ability."

Kerry smiled slowly. "Time to move," he said in his deep voice. "I've been on this one job since October. It's July, now. Tip and I"—with a nod toward the dog—"are a little afraid of taking root!"

"You're always moving, aren't you?"

"Most of the time."

The other paused, started to speak, hesitated and then asked bluntly: "Why, Drake?"

He laughed then, a deep, chesty man's laugh.

"I like to see country. I like to put in, this time of the year, at the headwaters of a river I've never been on, and follow her through to the mouth. Rivers are wonderful experiences, Mr. Burkhead. You never know, on the new ones, what's around the next bend or at the foot of the next rapid!"

"I understand all that. But isn't there something else?" the other persisted. "Something else that keeps you forever on the move?"

Drake's smile faded.

"There is," he said simply. "Once, when I was a kid, I was in one place too long. It's while he's a kid that a man's habits are formed. I got the habit of wanting to move, wanting to go; wanting to clear out and get yonder until it hurt—hurt like the devil, sir!" His eyes reflected a modicum of that pain which came with memory of earlier days. "It got so bad that I thought I'd go nutty if I couldn't be loose and moving; and so now, when there are no strings—"

He broke off short, and the smile swept back into his face.

"No use trying to explain! I just want to be gone yonder; that's all!"

Burkhead leaned forward, as a man will when hoping for confidences.

"You know, Drake, you've always seemed to me like a man who was searching for something, some definite end or person or thing. Am I wrong?"

Pause.

"Oh, there are one or two things I'd like to find out, a question or so I'd like to have answered."

The reply was light, and ready laughter followed it. But that lightness of tone and that laughter masked something: an earnestness, perhaps, which warned trespassers away.

Burkhead sat back in his chair and shook his head, smiling.

"Some day you'll light, and do a lot for yourself, I'm thinking. But I won't try to anchor you; it's no use. I'm interested, though. What river's it going to be this year?"

"Oh, any one of several. I know lots of 'em." Kerry Drake looked at a large map of the Great Lakes section which hung on the wall. "There's the Zhingwauk, and the Madwoman and the Blueberry. Any one of 'em would be a good bet."

"They're all fine streams." Burkhead rose and walked to the map, putting on his glasses. "We had an operation on the Blueberry years ago. We could have one on the Madwoman now, if we wanted it. A chap up there in trouble—bit off more than he can chew, I guess. West—Tod West. Know the property?"

For an instant Kerry Drake did not reply. He could not, for the queer emotions which coursed him.

"No," he said, "I've never been on the Madwoman. Tod West? You're sure?"

"Sure. Had considerable correspondence with him—sent a cruiser in there last winter. Ever run across him?"

He looked up a bit sharply when, instead of answering, his caller laughed, a hard and brief and mirthless laugh.

"Once," he said after that. "Yes—once."

CHAPTER IV

YOU never know what's around the next bend or at the foot of the rapid below you, when traveling a strange river, he had said.

For a week, now, he had been on the Madwoman; and although he met few in that unspoiled country, although he would stop at length to watch birds and beasts through his binoculars which were always slung about his neck, though he went ashore now and then to walk in the timber, to observe sign, to scrutinize rock-formations, he would have given to a watcher the impression of a man on the leash of his own restraint.

One night he had camped by a fire-tower and talked for long with the lonely look-out. Yes, Tod West was a big man in this country. Having a hard time just now, but leave it to Tod. Smart, he was.

Another time he stopped for an hour with an isolated trapper. West's Landing was thirty miles below. Pretty soon, now, he'd be going through West's upper holdings. A great fellow, Tod, but he'd been hit lately, gossip had it. His only operation was in pulp, and the pulp-wood market was shot. . . .

And so on.

Occasionally as he paddled easily with the current, he would look at Tip, seated by the packs, and laughter would rumble up from his chest.

"Chance!" he said once. "The part chance plays in a man's life!"

And at night, in his camp beneath the stars, he would lie awake for hour after hour, wondering, remembering, teasing himself with the thought that finally, perhaps, he was going to *know*. . . .

Since rounding the bend far above, the murmur of racing waters had been in his ears, and approaching the head of the rapid, he went cautiously. Tip, sitting erect by the duffle-bags, pricked his shapely ears and stared hard ahead.

AT the right was a landing, with signs of many portages. Fires had been built there, camps made—many boats dragged out and packs lifted to shoulders for the carry. It was the way that travelers familiar with the Madwoman took, surely, rather than risk descent of the tossing torrent below.

Drake was about to step into the shallows and lead his canoe to shore, when a flash from downstream caught his eye. It came again: the glint of afternoon sunlight on something bright, something other than the tumble of torn water.

He lifted the glasses, leveled them and went suddenly rigid.

Two people at the foot of that rapid were in flailing combat!

He could see a red shirt, its wearer evidently having leaped into a boat beached there. Trying to escape, he was, but another gave pursuit. A larger figure, this; and as he leaped into the boat, he stumbled and went down, and the skiff commenced drifting slowly out into the current.

Again Kerry had that bright glint of reflected light, and saw that it was from an outboard motor, clamped to the stern. . . . And now the larger figure was rising, and the red-shirted one seized an oar, raised it high and swung it smartly at the other.

On that gesture, a word broke from Drake's lips—one word: *"Girl!"* No man ever swung a cudgel in that manner.

The man in the bow ducked, threw out a hand, caught the oar as it bashed the gunwale, and with a wrench tore it free from the girl's grasp. He tossed it overboard, stood straight and brushed his hands together in an anticipatory gesture. Then slowly, menacingly, he went forward, raising a foot to step over the thwart before him.

He stopped then, and threw out his arms for balance against the sharp list of the boat. The girl had dived!

"Oh-ho!" said Drake sharply to himself. "Tight fix, eh? *Drop, Tip!*"

The dog, at his word, flattened himself in the bottom.

No time for the carry, now. The girl in such evident distress was a quarter of a mile below him by water; how far by trail, he did not know. But he read an ominous quality in the brushing together of her assailant's palms, and she herself believed the pinch tight enough to attempt defense by primitive means; failing in that, she had sought the water for sanctuary.

The canoe nosed silently into the first suck of swift current, Drake's eyes sternly busy with the frothing tumult below. He saw where a barrier ledge ran out from the right, narrowing the stream down against the opposite bank, making safe passage meager. He saw where upstanding boulders seemed to rip the current to spume in that narrow cut, making further increase in the hazard.

He needed a pole for such work, but in his leisurely travel he had not burdened himself with a pole. It was the paddle alone, now, which could get him safely through.

Fast and faster he moved, charging for that narrow channel, straightening his canoe out as he gathered speed, setting it parallel with the rip. He swung sharply to the right to miss one snag, and worked back into the sleek black slide which indicated the safety of depths.

Into a brawling riffle he went next, with foam all about, and angling across it, found deep water again. It scooted with him, sweeping him straight down a stretch rods long, eddies and patches of froth accompanying him like outriders. . . .

Protruding rocks reared themselves again. He decided in a split second that the way to the left was the better. A contrary current disputed with the impulse of his paddle. He raised himself higher on the one knee and drove the blade deep and rapidly. Breath hissed through his teeth with the final strokes, but he gained momentary safety by a hair, even feeling the slight rub of smooth stone against the frail skin of his craft as he shot through. . . . Then he was backing desperately, swinging the bow to the right, fighting to keep away from the area of white water where the current hurled itself against abrupt shoals. . . . A crazy rapid, this—a reckless chance on which he was engaged!

He lifted his gaze for a flash of a look at the boat below. It was, so far as he could tell, empty. Whoever the girl was, she had been followed overboard by the man—whoever the man was.

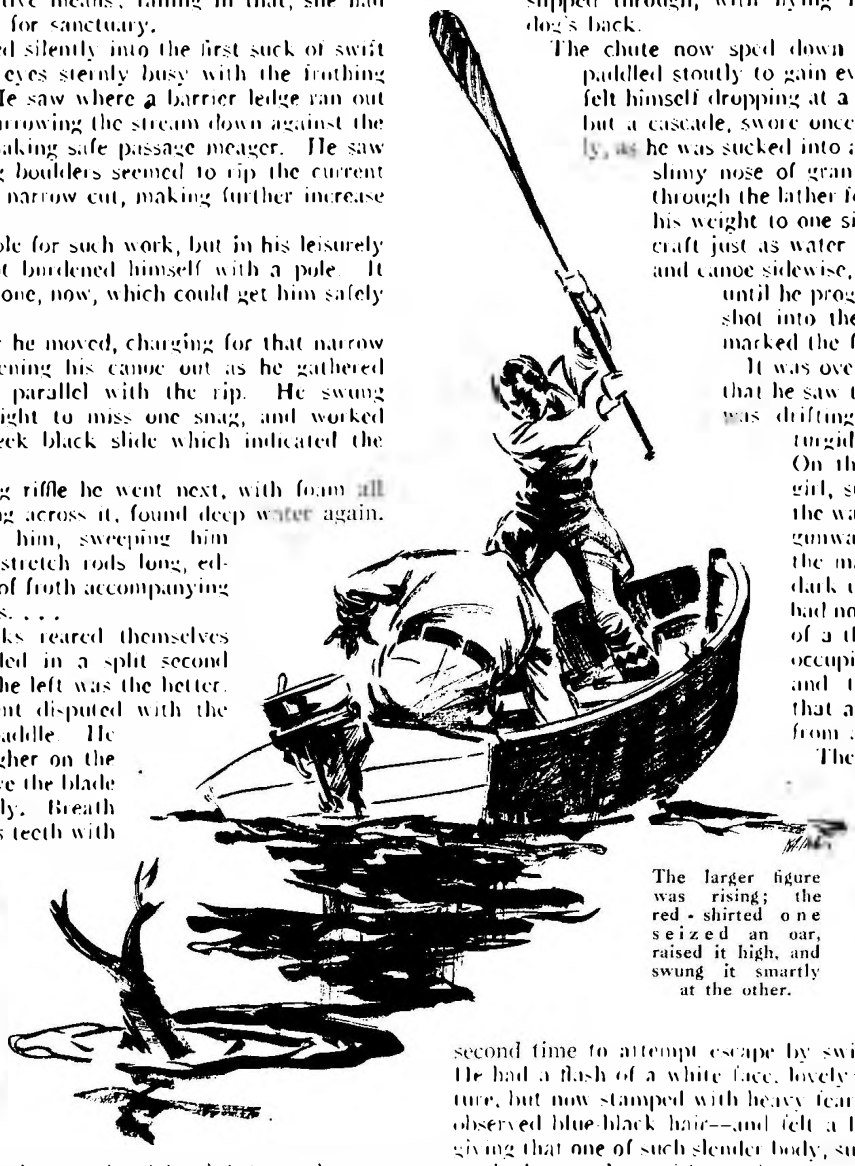
The dog's ears were up though he lay flat, nose on his paws. From his throat now and again came a sharp whine, and he quivered as the tensity of his master communicated itself to him.

And now again Drake was paddling desperately, great arms sweeping with the precision and regularity of some device of stout metal. Cords stood out on his brown neck, and back-muscles rippled beneath the smoothly fitting shirt of deep green. Beyond, the current was actually uptilted, banked, so abrupt was the deflection of those tons of rushing water. He must clear the rock to his left, must turn in time to avoid that which would then lie close to his right. . . .

He gave a short, barking laugh of achievement as he slipped through, with flying foam spattering the dog's back.

The chute now sped down midstream, and he paddled stoutly to gain even more speed. He felt himself dropping at a break which was all but a cascade, swore once, sharply and stoutly, as he was sucked into a welter of foam. A slimy nose of granite seemed to reach through the lather for him, and he threw his weight to one side, righted the frail craft just as water boiled over the rail, and canoe sidewise, turning still further until he progressed backward, he shot into the placid pool which marked the foot of the rapid.

It was over his shoulder, then, that he saw the two. Their boat was drifting with the current, turgid there for a space. On the one side was the girl, supporting herself in the water by hands on the gunwale; on the other was the man, hatless, his face dark under the sun. They had not seen this approach of a third. They were so occupied with each other and their own impulses that all else was excluded from attention.



The larger figure was rising; the red-shirted one seized an oar, raised it high, and swung it smartly at the other.

The man braced himself, pulled his weight sharply upward, hooked elbows over the rail and threw up a foot to flounder inboard.

It was here that the girl, letting go her hold with one hand as if for the second time to attempt escape by swimming, saw Kerry. He had a flash of a white face, lovely in contour and feature, but now stamped with heavy fear, sensed rather than observed blue-black hair—and felt a little tug of thanksgiving that one of such slender body, such fine bone, should not be longer alone with so robust an opponent as the man.

For an instant the gaze from his blue eyes locked with the girl's dark ones. Then he smiled. He smiled, and threw back his head and let the smile run into a laugh.

"Good afternoon," he said. "Is the water fine?"

A bantering greeting, this, and the words came through the last of his laughter. But banter went out of his heart, and mirth from his countenance, as he looked at the figure of the man, rising to stand spread-legged in the flat-bottomed boat, arms hooked, clothing plastered close to his great chest and strong legs . . .

The man—hair touched with gray now, heavier by a hundred pounds, his face lined and a bit full at the chin—the man was Tod West!

For a long moment they stared at one another. West breathed rapidly; and Drake, a stone's-toss away, could have heard the rasp of it had it not been for the blood

crowding into his own ears. And after that first shock of recognition, with its surge of bitterness, of a certain triumph, he marked something else: Tod West's face was stamped with the die of passion, that particular kind of passion which had been repressed too long, which had perhaps been soured and twisted and fermented to fury by repression.

But that passion was fading now; astonishment and bewilderment and chagrin were sweeping up to replace it. And then, in a darkening flood, came deep anger against this intruder.

West moved a bit and made as if to speak, but no words came. He shut his full-lipped mouth tightly and raised a hand halfway to his breast. It was the right hand. Kerry Drake should have noted the gesture, but he did not. He was too close to the answer of an old rankling question, now. . . .

No light of recognition was in Tod's face. Too many years had passed. A lad of seven, Kerry had been on that day in old Jack's camp; and West a young man in his early twenties. It was no wonder that the advantage of knowing identity rested only with the younger.

Drake rallied himself. More important things, in his own way of reckoning values, might be close at hand: but he had run that rapid to render aid to this girl. That came first, and so he spoke, but with difficulty kept bitterness from his tone.

"You might," he said pointedly, "help the young lady back into the boat!"

Still West did not move; nor did he respond. The canoe was within a length of a paddle from the skiff now, and Kerry could hear the light, quick breathing of the girl.

"I said that you might"—voice rising and thickening—"help the young lady back into the boat. . . . Or perhaps she would rather come with me?"

He turned his eyes on her then, and put out a hand to stay his drift against the larger craft.

"No," she said steadily enough. "I would like to get into my own boat, though."

West turned and looked silently toward shore. Drake, staring up at him, felt an immeasurable loathing for the man arise. . . . Put the blame for old Jack's ruin on him, had he? And perhaps profited by the tragedy himself?

HE lifted one foot, flicked it across the gunwales, and with a heave of his agile arms was standing, face to face with the older man.

"I take it the young lady doesn't relish having you here at all. Why don't you get out?"

The heavy jaw trembled ever so lightly, and a red flood swept into the cool gray eyes.

"I happened to see from back yonder. I happened to see your little game of—of tag. I'd say your welcome aboard, here, was at any time highly questionable. I'd say that the least you could do would be to get out now. You forced her to dive, once, and another little swim shouldn't do you any—"

"Let go, you!"

Drake's grip on West's arm brought words, heavy with rage. "I won't let go until you—"

The man was no weakling. Kerry felt the tremendous strength in those arm muscles, felt the vast power in the stalwart legs and broad back as West swept an arm out to clip him into close embrace. But he had the advantage of better composure, of better stance, and perhaps of an older, riper hatred. He drove a knee against West's shin; he half turned, grinding a hip smartly into West's groin. He shoved with both hands; and giving a strangled roar of anger, the man went backward into the river.

As he fell, left side twisting upward, shirt stretched tight over it by his contortion, a vague something about that side nipped for Drake's attention. He should have given it heed then, as he should have heeded the gesture of a moment before; the day would not be wholly done before he would know that he should have given closer heed. But just now a lovely girl was waiting in the chill waters of the Madwoman, and quickly he stooped, taking her hands in his.

She came up, with a light kick of her small feet, the bunt of a trim breech-clad knee against the boat, and stood close to him, draining water. For the space of a slow breath he clung to her hands; and his eyes, smiling now because of the things which churned in him, things that, should he let them, might stir too much rage and a modicum of pain, plunged their look deep into hers.

"There!" he said, and laughed, because there was nothing else to do, with confusion and embarrassment flooding such a lovely face as that!

SHE drew her hands down the sleeves of the red shirt, stripping water from the fine flannel. Her eyes went past him to the swimming West, making suddenly and stoutly for shore, and in them showed an anger surprising in intensity for a face so gently molded.

The man gained the shallows, waded dripping to his own canoe, and dragged it afloat with a savage jerk. He stepped in, drove the paddle against bottom stoutly enough to spin the craft about, and turned on the girl such a look as Drake had never seen on a man's face.

"All right!" he said chokingly, and nodded just once, sharply. "All right, Nan! For this—you'll be a pauper!"

With no more, with only a quick, venomous glance at Kerry, he turned downstream, paddling briskly.

Drake looked at the girl. She was standing in the stern of her boat, which now drifted gently toward the bank, and her face was set in a mask of suffering.

Her look forbade speech just then. He was at a loss until his gaze, going past her, saw his own canoe, grounded downstream and on the other side. Tip, amidships, was sitting up, ears at alert, watching his master; and when the girl sat down on the thwart with a suddenness which was almost collapse, Drake raised his hand.

"Hi, Tip!" The dog sprang to his feet, rocking the canoe. His tail threshed rapidly. "Fetch! Fetch the canoe!"

Frantically, then, the retriever nosed the packs, shoving his muzzle deep into them, and came up with the track-line in his teeth. Over he went into the shallow water, and backing, "scooching" down, waggling his tail, growling, he dragged the canoe afloat. Then, in deeper water, he swam rapidly up and across the current, head held sidewise by the tug of the line in his jaws.

"That's a smart dog," the girl said. Her voice was even, as though nothing unusual had happened.

"Smart," echoed Drake, and looked down at her. Her face was averted, and a flush stained her cheeks.

"Whatever a girl says to a stranger who has helped her out of a situation that's at once uncomfortable, and perhaps dangerous—whatever is to be said, I should say to you." The evenness of her voice did not deceive him. She was fighting desperately for self-control. "I—I'm very grateful. Is there more to be said?"

"That wasn't necessary," he replied. "Not even that. . . . It was quite a privilege to throw Tod West into the river!"

He reached out to take the line from Tip. "Good dog," he muttered. "Go ashore and shake."

The girl had turned toward him.

"You know Tod West?"

"A long time ago I thought I did. And for a good many years I've wondered how well anyone in that country knew him. But just on suspicion, it was good to upset him. I believe," he added, "that he broke the best friend I shall ever have!"

"So I'm not the first! After all that he's seemed to be in this country, he *has* a past, has he? And a future too, perhaps!"—bitterly.

"I took it, from his parting shot, that he had some deviltry afoot."

"Deviltry!"—in an angered whisper. A look of loathing whipped across her face.

"Was it just because I happened along and took a hand that he's going to make you a pauper?"

She shook her head. "No. That was settled before you came. It was after I wouldn't—wouldn't barter myself to save my property, that he seemed to lose his head."

THE boat grated on sand, and Kerry sat down, looking hard at her.

"I've never seen you before. I—I have a particular and peculiar interest in this bird. A man doesn't change, you know; if he's a rascal today, he was yesterday; if he is today, he will be tomorrow. For a good many years I've wanted to cross his trail, but have never known where to look.

"Do you mind telling a stranger what this West's game is? I don't want to pry, but—"

"You're not prying. It is little enough for me to tell you. I'm in your debt, you know—yours and Tod West's!"

She stretched one pac-clad foot so the warm sun could dry it better, and appeared to ponder on where to begin.

"It's better to give you the whole picture, I suppose. I'm Nan Downer. I came into this country four years ago with my father. Maybe you've heard of him—Cash Downer? No?" She sighed.

"Well, we bought on contract West's mill below here, and the big tract of mixed timber to the north of the river. My father had a new idea in the utilization of forest resources. He had felt for a long time that the things we'd considered by-products of such properties were perhaps almost as big money-makers as the timber itself, handled rightly. I mean, recreational facilities.

"This is probably the best big tract of the Northern hardwoods that is left. There's fish and game in abundance. My father laid a very careful plan to interest a group of wealthy men in buying locations up here for their hunting and fishing clubs. They were to own their various parcels, but were to give us the privilege of selectively logging on their descriptions over a long period. You know—or maybe you don't—that in these types, a logger can take a third of the volume and get two thirds of the total value, and not detract in the least from the scenic beauty or the quality of the game-cover."

Drake nodded. "I get you. It's the new idea in forestry."

"Exactly. But to show these prospects what would be left after we'd done this selective cutting necessitated considerable of an operation, with higher costs, in the beginning, and a reduced income. In other words, our project was a slow starter, and we didn't have sufficient capital to be very safe.

"We kept the mill running, though, did our cutting in several types of stands, and last year were just getting ready to show some prospects what we had to offer.

"My father had sunk all the cash he had in the down payment. It was hard work getting the other payments together, but he did it. Last November another payment was due, and we were going to be able to meet it. Then, one November night, my father was killed, and the money he was bringing out to pay to Tod West was stolen."

"Murdered, you mean?"

"Murdered," she said quietly, and paused. "That, of course, put the undertaking in a bad way. Just now it's very difficult to refinance a timber operation of any sort; also it's hard to find men with money to spend on their expensive toys, which is what these camps will amount to. Tod West seemed very sympathetic, though, and told me to take my time, and that he wouldn't see me lose. He kept stressing that: that of all people, he wouldn't see *me* lose." She looked away. "I didn't get the inference then. I'm pretty dumb, I guess.

"But this summer he commenced to hint and then to ask and then to crowd. He has other timber. He has had to stop a big pulp operation below, because of the market. He needs money. I am doing my best to interest prospects and get the cash together to pay him, but so far I haven't had much luck. . . .

"And then today he followed me up here and said—said that if I would marry him he would forget that—"

She bit her lip and stopped.

Drake drew a hand slowly along one thigh. It was a gesture almost of satisfaction and he nodded slowly.

"That checks with the guess I've had—as to the sort of bird he really is. . . . When you wouldn't agree to that, what happened?"

The girl gave a shuddering shrug.

"You saw a part of it. He seemed to go insane, and then I realized that all along, for months, perhaps for years, he's been—well, thinking things about me. . . . Where were you, anyhow, that you saw?"

"Up above. At the head of the rapid. I was just going to—"

"But you didn't carry! Why,"—startled,—"you mean you *run* Dead Bear?"

"If that's what you call the rapid, I did." He laughed at the astonishment in her eyes.

"You ran *that* water to help me, a stranger?"

His laughter rose higher.

"I'd have swum it to help anybody, if I'd known Tod West was the party making trouble!"

"Then you must have known him far better than most people here do."

"Quite a figure, is he?"

She considered. "A—a king, in this country! He owns most of it. Most of the people in it are dependent on him, in one way or another. He isn't a man to take lightly!"

"Then I sure am glad it was the Madwoman I picked out this summer!"

The girl eyed him curiously.

"You're just going through, then? Your objective wasn't near here?"

"I had no objective when I put in. Now, I have. . . . I've a question I want answered. When I've done that, then perhaps I can go on."

HE rose. "You're shy an oar, aren't you?"—glancing at the one in the boat's bottom. He turned to Tip, who was ashore, licking himself.

"Here, boy!" he cried. The dog leaped up attentively. Drake picked up the one oar. "Oar gone, boy! Fetch the oar!" He waved a hand downstream; and the dog, rigid, eyed him a moment. On the second command, however, he plunged into the stream, throwing great fronds of crystal water about him, and began swimming down the current, head high, searching the surface.

He was conscious as he stood there watching Tip go about his errand that the girl's eyes were on him. He

turned, and perceived a look of admiration on her face. She looked away then, and a slow flush came into her cheeks. They were oddly silent for an interval.

"There! He's found it!" Nan cried.

Tip was working back through the screen of low-hanging alder branches, reaching for something with his mouth, and worked his way out from the bushes shortly, the blade of the oar in his jaws.

"If you're going to stay on here," she said, "we'd be glad to put you up. We have accommodations for fishermen, you know. It's part of our job. That's why I'm here now. Two of our prospects are fishing the beaver pond up the creek." She nodded toward a small tributary which debouched a short distance above them. "That is why I happened to be here."

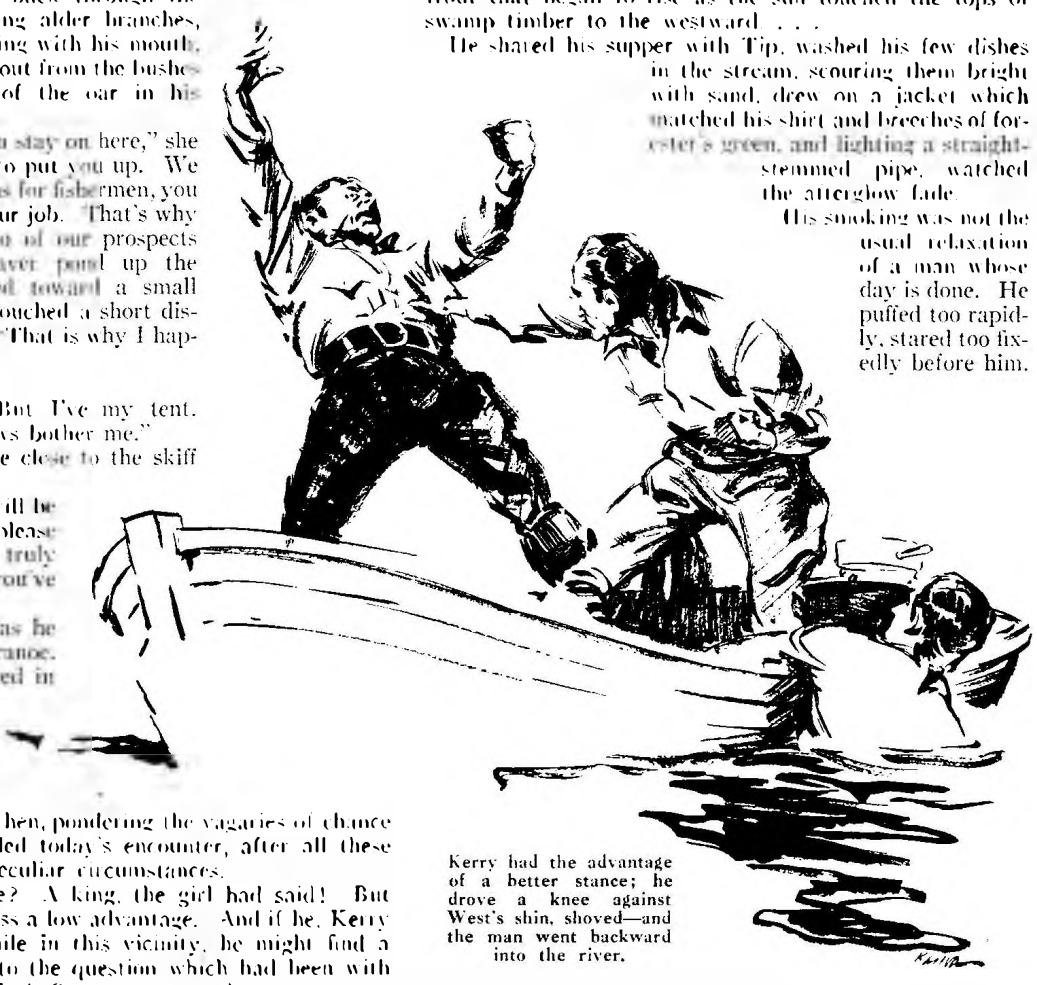
Kerry smiled.

"Nice of you. But I've my tent. Shingles and windows bother me."

He drew his canoe close to the skiff as Tip approached.

"The latchstring will be out, though. I—I—please believe that I'm truly thankful for all you've done."

Kerry remarked, as he stepped into his canoe, that the flush lingered in her face; also that the high color became her superbly.



Kerry had the advantage of a better stance; he drove a knee against West's shin, shoved—and the man went backward into the river.

KERRY went on then, pondering the vagaries of chance which had guided today's encounter, after all these years, under such peculiar circumstances.

Respected, was he? A king, the girl had said! But the sort who will press a low advantage. And if he, Kerry Drake, lingered awhile in this vicinity, he might find a satisfactory answer to the question which had been with him since that day Jack Snow went to ruin.

Shortly, from upstream, came the purring of an outboard motor, and around the bend came the skiff, bearing three figures now. Nan Downer was steering, and two men in fishing-clothes sat indolently on the thwarts. As they swept past him, the girl nodded, and the men waved friendly hands.

He watched her out of sight. A pretty girl, a competent girl, and in trouble.

Kerry Drake had never gone in much for girls, and so the fact that the picture of her persisted as she told him her sorry story, was a rather new experience. A *darned* pretty girl! He wished, of a sudden, he could help her with her problem. . . .

An hour later he made out buildings below. First, was a log structure, low-eaved and wide-roofed, with a screened porch, and automobiles parked in its clearing. Not a club, not a logging-camp. It must be Nan's establishment, he decided.

On below he discerned the screened stack of a mill, and the song of the saw came harshly to his ears. A railroad trestle spanned the river, joining the small group of buildings around the mill to another, larger settlement, with many humble habitations, a pretentious one of peeled logs, a box-car depot and several stores.

He went still farther down, landed in a clump of poplars, and set about making camp. He worked adeptly, and within an amazingly short time had his tent up, bed made, firewood chopped and was casting a fly delicately for trout that began to rise as the sun touched the tops of swamp timber to the westward. . . .

He shared his supper with Tip, washed his few dishes in the stream, scouring them bright with sand, drew on a jacket which matched his shirt and breeches of forester's green, and lighting a straight-stemmed pipe, watched the afterglow fade.

His smoking was not the usual relaxation of a man whose day is done. He puffed too rapidly, stared too fixedly before him.

A great horned owl flew across the river, but he gave it only a passing glance. In the swamp across, a whip-poor-will started to sing, but he did not hear. Fireflies appeared and he scarcely remarked their presence. A slice of silver moon, stiff in the western heavens, took on more luster, and his heart beat at increased tempo. . . . He should have been remembering two items, along with his anticipation of what lay before. He should have considered that first gesture with his right hand, made by Tod West this afternoon. As well, he should have recalled that something specific about the man's side as he fell backward into the Madwoman had bid for his consideration. But he did neither. . . .

"You watch camp, Tip," he said as he rose abruptly. "We'll go see—what we can see!"

He launched his canoe, paddled across and up the murmuring river, and landed under the bank where yellow lights showed through the gathering darkness.

ABOVE loomed the white front of the town's largest store; he stood outside for a brief interval, looking about. This was the heart of Tod West's dominion, West's Landing, by name. It was here that the man had established himself as a king; here he had perhaps laid the foundations

for a kingdom on the money that he had taken from Jack Snow by ruthlessly clever theft. Kerry drew a deep breath and entered the place.

The store was well filled. An Indian was buying grub and stuffing his purchases into a pack-sack; a bearded man was trying on shoes; before the small post-office wicket, two men and a little girl awaited the deliberate service of the beefy-faced man within. In the rear, a stud-poker game was in progress.

KERRY'S eyes picked out these details quickly and then fastened on the back of the one card-player whose face, at least in part, was not revealed to him. The man was Tod West.

Several loungers watched the game, and as Drake leaned idly against the counter, two left and came toward him.

"Jim shouldn't be in there," one muttered.

"Hell, no!" his companion agreed. "You can bet your life if *I* had a kid in the shape his is, I wouldn't be stackin' up what little I had against a lucky dog like Tod."

"Lucky's no name for it! Aint he a cuss, though?"—grinning.

"Table stakes; and with them dudes from Downer's. . . . Why, Jim's little roll won't last through one good pot, if they get raisin'."

Their talk was broken then, as both greeted another entrant.

The taller man resumed: "Doc's out now, aint he?"

The other nodded. "Over at Jim's. They sent for him, but he put 'em off. Hell-bent on stayin' in the game. He's been losin', lately, and seems to be havin' a run of luck again. Wants to get even, I expect."

"It's a wonder Tod don't chase him out. It aint like Tod, to let a hand who can't afford to lose play where he plays."

"Likely wants to let him catch up."

Drake lounged toward the rear and took up a position against the wall, behind and to one side of West's chair.

Five were in the game. Two were the men he had seen in Nan Downer's skiff that afternoon. One was a good-natured native, evidently. West was Number Four, and a thin-faced, dark-haired man with bright black eyes and a weak mouth obviously was the Jim to whom the gossipers had referred. Surely he was playing as a man will who sees himself coming from behind. His movements were quick and nervous, and he continually plucked at a corner of his hole card, snapping it down against the table.

West was dealing, and talked as he distributed the cards.

"An ace to you, a nine to you, a deuce to Jimmy, a jack for Sawyer and a nine for the dealer—which lets him out!"

His voice was good-humored, tolerant, the sort of voice which wins the confidence of men. Always that had been characteristic, Drake thought. Back yonder through the years, men had liked the then young Tod West. Jack Snow had trusted him implicitly. . . . He folded his hand, now, and awaited the betting. One of the fishermen chanced a dollar; his companion called; Jim raised five; and the man Sawyer dropped out. The five was called by both the others, but Jim won and gathered in the pot with significant eagerness.

"Good lad, Jimmy!" West rumbled. "You've been losin' lately; always like to see losers catch up!"

The deal went clear around. Drake noticed that West played shrewdly, with a hard calculation beneath his easy talk. The stakes were not large, but he had the manner of a man who is playing for the winnings rather than for the enjoyment of the game. Jim and Sawyer were not good players, while the two strangers surely were; they bet cagily as wise gamblers will in a strange game. Not suspicious, they, but—well, cautious.

The deal had come back to West. The hole cards were going out.

"All heavy!" he chuckled. "All heavy cards in the hole, boys! Everybody's going to have luck this hand. . . . Luck of one kind or another!"

And he dealt himself from the bottom!

A sharp, chilling thrill ran Drake's body. He looked at the other watchers, at the players, studying the face of each. No one else had detected that move!

"And here we come," West went on. "Here we come, lads! Coming out with a seven and next a ten-spot and a queen for Sawyer." The cards flipped from his hand toward their appointed places, turning in the air to fall face upward; and Kerry, watching closely, saw that he was "second-dealing." The top card of the deck never left its place. Back and forth it slid against the next, giving the illusion of being dealt; but it remained there, right on top! Always it was the second card which went flipping toward one of the other players.

Again Drake studied those faces about the table. Sycophants, most of them; they wore fixed grins as Tod West kept up his patter. Their interest was on what he said, not on what he did. He was covering a crooked deal by his easy patter, playing on the respect in which he was held by the country, to cheat without detection.

"What, Sawyer? A whole buck on the queen? Let's see, now. . . . Hum!"—peeking at his hole card. "Well, I've got just enough here to string along."

He came in for his dollar, and again called the cards he turned, and once more that top card kept sliding back and forth on its changing companions.

Only a close watch would reveal that gambler's trick, and men who respect another do not watch him closely.

Three cards in each hand were face up, then. Again Sawyer bet his queen, tossing in a five-dollar bill from the little pile of money before him.

"Now I'll help build a pot for you, Sawyer," said West. "Leave it to old Tod! There's a five-spot. But don't put too much faith in women. I'm tellin' you, don't trust 'em or bet too high on 'em!"

He chuckled, but there was no mirth in the sound, Kerry thought. He would have liked to look at the man's face then; surely it would have borne some trace of the chagrin which had been on it only a few hours before—because of a woman. But he had other and more important matters to watch. He judged that Sawyer had another queen in the hole; he was the aggressor, and a bit too aggressive for a man with only the high card showing. No pair was in sight; the queen dominated the board. Before Tod West were exposed an innocuous four and five and nine-spot of three suits.

One of the fishermen and Jim Hinkle had dropped out.

"So we spin 'em for the final heat," drawled West. "We drop a jack to you, neighbor, and Sawyer catches himself a six; and I— Take a look! I draw myself a large ball of fire!"

THE top card had finally dropped. It was the ace of diamonds—and Kerry straightened slowly. His hole card had been dealt from the bottom; surely it was another ace!

"Now, with this large ace showin', it puts the bet to me, I take it. . . . Hum. . . . . Sawyer, you got a queen showin', and you been proud of her. I wonder what else, if any, you've got. . . . But this old ace of mine. . . . Now, it'd be a downright insult to bet less than ten dollars."

The tourist folded, and Sawyer eyed Tod's hand. He was breathing a bit rapidly, Kerry noted, and fingered his remaining bills in a manner which proved him ill at ease.

Kerry rose, with a swift, flowing movement. His hand dropped to his coat pocket. "Stop it!" he snapped. "Put 'em up!" West, clutching at the pistol grip in that shoulder-holster, hesitated.

"But me, I got only eight bucks left, Tod," he said.

"Then I'd be pretty sure I had somethin' before I used 'em. Honest, Sawyer,"—with a grin,—"I'd stay out until I was sure I had 'em."

But that was no sincere advice. It was a goading, an invitation, a challenge. He knew his man!

"All right! For the eight, then. Call!"

Sawyer shoved in his money and turned his hole card. "Pair!" he said, showing the second queen, and leaned forward.

"I warned you," chuckled West. "I told you to stay out. All along, I had him." He turned the ace of clubs. "All along I had him buried, and the last card happened to be his playmate! Sawyer, you want to follow Tod's advice after this!"

The man rubbed his chin.

"Well," he said, "guess I better. That cleans me out, as the feller said. It just aint my night, I guess." Slowly he began shoving back his chair and turned to Jim, at his right. "I'll leave it to you to get revenge, Jimmy. Seems like it's your night, after a run of bad luck."

"Oh, we average up," put in West, raking in the pot, and in the movements lay the only suggestion of greed he had betrayed. "Fair pot," he remarked. "Just fair. So you're leavin' us flat, Sawyer! Four-handed isn't so good. Anybody else want to try his luck just to keep the game goin'?"

"It's too rich for my blood!" a youth giggled.

"Anybody else? Last call!"

He looked up and around, grinning, and the grin changed, ran into a stiff sort of grimace as Kerry Drake moved out from his position against the wall.

"If it's open," he said. "I—I don't mind trying my luck now and again."

Eyes were on him, not on Tod: so the group missed one half the exchange of glances which followed. Emotion chased emotion across the older man's eyes: surprise, hatred, chagrin and a malevolent sort of inspiration; one after the other they flickered against those gray depths.

"Or—or wouldn't a stranger be welcome?" Drake asked mildly.

In the question was challenge, and West's eyes dropped, and others followed Kerry's hard gaze to Tod's face.

He stirred slowly in his chair and gathered the cards.

"Why, sure," he said, but could not keep the grudging quality from his tone.

Drake moved, then, to the place just vacated by Sawyer, seated himself and, thrusting a hand inside his shirt, drew a packet of bills from his money-belt.

A CHANGE had come over the place. The onlookers had ceased their idle talk; the two fishermen from Nan Downer's eyed Drake appraisingly; and Tod West, shoving the deck to the dealer, lighted a cigar with a hand which was not just steady.

A change came over the play too. Of a sudden it was more intent, a seasoning or savagery in the betting put there by West's sudden silence and the sharpness of his gestures.

Kerry played cautiously. His luck was not good. For the first half-dozen deals, he stayed only once after the second card. Jim Hinkle, at his left, lost repeatedly, and losing, his tension increased. Kerry saw in his eyes the look of a man who can ill afford to lose that which is slipping through his fingers.

In a new game, a strange game, a man with wit watches everything. So Drake watched this game. His eyes never left Tod West's hands as the man dealt, but despite the fact that he detected nothing to arouse suspicion there, he passed tens, back to back, and let Jim Hinkle fight it out with West. Jim lost again and, thumbing his bills muttered:

"Back where I started tonight."

Drake thought, as West looked toward the man at this, that the gray eyes flickered significantly. . . .

Kerry stayed for the first time, in a pot contested for only by the two fishermen and himself. He won, and

laughed. He had won with nines. The nine of spades, his hole card, had a bent corner. He remarked that. . . .

West began to talk again, making an obvious attempt to resume his banter which had been soured on Drake's appearance. He succeeded badly; the grudge would not leave his voice entirely; and something else was in the tone, too, a quality which Drake, listening closely, could not analyze.

Tod and Hinkle clashed again; Hinkle won. A few moments later he lost most of what he had gained. West was watching Jim closely, Drake observed. A vague feeling of apprehension, as of something definite afoot, manifested itself.

"Damn Mel's cigars!" said West beneath his breath, tossing his smoke away and making a wry face. "Rope!" He looked over his shoulder toward the storekeeper, occupied behind his counter, as if he would speak. Then he looked back. "Count me out a hand," he said. "I'll run over to the house and get a real smoke."

He rose and went intently out, and Drake wondered. Did West so much dislike confronting him even across a poker-table, after what had happened that afternoon, that he had fled? Or was it something else?

THE game went on, four-handed, and suddenly under relieved tension. West's place was vacant through a round and part of another. . . . In his house he ran rapidly up the stairway, entering a bedroom, and without turning on a light, stopped before a chest of drawers. He rummaged a moment, found what he sought, and going to the window, knelt in the faint shaft of moonlight.

Cards were in his hands, a red-backed deck; and he scrutinized the design carefully.. A grunt followed this, and he began sorting the cards swiftly, laying them out face upward on the floor. He worked hastily, almost feverishly, and with the job completed, slipped the deck into the belt which held dark blue corduroy breeches against his ample girth. Buttoning the coat, the bulge was ever so slight.

Outdoors again he turned back impatiently, returned within and took cigars from a box on the mantel. . . .

On West's return to the table, the good-natured atmosphere which had prevailed for those last few hands disappeared. Again it was a gambling contest, although Tod's talk was outwardly all that it had been before he knew that Kerry Drake was in the room. . . . Still, that feeling of apprehension, of something afoot, grew stronger in Drake's heart.

And then something happened which brought it to full life, which hatched suspicion and readiness for trouble.

It was West's deal. He riffled the cards twice adeptly and cut them for a third time. His fingers bent them, sent them fluttering against one another; and then two or three of the pack leaped from his clasp, slid across the table and spilled into his lap.

"Need a basket!" he growled, and shoving back his chair, stooping over, groped for cards on the floor.

He found them, all right! He found and gathered them in the hand which held the deck. But his other hand slid the second deck from beneath his belt; and when he came up, the one pack was thrust into the little stein shelf beneath the table-top, while it was the new one he shoved toward Jim Hinkle for the cut. . . .

Kerry Drake did not know this, of course. But his heart rapped smartly with suspicion now, and he watched West as he would have watched a cornered and dangerous animal.

"Cut 'em, James!" the man said. "And cut 'em deep, because I've got another feeling about this hand!"

He looked about and grinned, more affable than he had been since Kerry entered the game. Hinkle cut; West beamed on the two fishermen and—"slipped" the cut.

Drake saw that clearly. Back to the top of the deck went the section that Hinkle had cut away and West was dealing, talking, chuckling over some joke he had made but to which Drake was deafened by the blood crowding into his ears. To find Tod West playing the rôle of ruthless aggressor this afternoon; to find him repeatedly cheating at cards tonight—and after all these years of suspicion and resentment!

The hole cards went out. To the tourist at Tod's left fell a king, next a four, to Drake a seven, to Jim Hinkle a queen, and to himself a six-spot.

"The king," said its possessor, "will risk a dollar."

Kerry looked at his down card. It was the nine of spades—and a nine of spades without a bent corner! The deck had been switched, he knew!

The man at his left came in; Kerry, thinking quickly, paused and caught a little flicker of misgiving on Tod West's face. The man wanted him in! He tossed a dollar bill to the pot.

"And a dollar!" said Jim Hinkle promptly, and Tod nodded wisely.

"That queen must be proud of herself again. Queens ruined Sawyer, James. Well, I'll trail along."

The rest also saw the raise.

Tod set the deck on the table before him, ostentatiously, Kerry believed. He hitched his chair closer and dealt, taking cards one at a time from the pack.

The showing king drew a ten spot; the four caught a nine, Drake was given a deuce and beside Hinkle's queen dropped another. . . .

"Oh-oh!" muttered Tod. "You must've felt her coming," —turning himself a king.

Excitement showed in Jim Hinkle's sallow face. Why shouldn't it? With queens back-to-back, and now a third? And two kings showing in two hands?

"Ten dollars," he said and his voice was too eager.

"Well, now, James—I'm just a little bit proud of what I've got. I've beaten those damn' queens once or twice tonight. I'll just tilt it a mite this time to try my luck. Let's bet twenty-five and keep the retailers out!"

The man at his left folded; the second hesitated and again Kerry caught that little flash of misgiving in West's eye. He wanted them all out now; all except Jim Hinkle who was already fingering his money, ready to call or raise.

The second tourist folded and Kerry silently shoved the cards away from him.

"Raisin' fifteen, Tod?" Jim asked and this time his voice was husked. "That's the way I feel. I'll back at you!" And he dropped three ten-dollar bills, one at a time into the center of the table.

WEST rubbed his chin and grinned and looked about and shifted in his chair.

"By gosh," he said, as if in chagrin. "By gosh, Jimmy, you tryin' to *beat* me?" An onlooker laughed. "I think you're downright tryin' to take my money and that aint quite right. . . . Back at you with twenty!"

His voice snapped on this last and the watchers crowded closer to the chair backs.

"Well, seein' as you've got so much confidence and seein' as how we've got more cards comin'. . . . Call!"

Three cards were dealt, now, with two showing; a pair of queens, with a lone king against them. From the top of the deck, lying so openly before him, West picked an ace and flipped it toward his adversary. For himself he turned a nine-spot.

"The queens bet twenty-five bucks!" Jim's voice was tight and strained.

"And the king will see the twenty-five and raise ten!" said West mellowly.

Hinkle shifted his weight. He wet his lips and looked nervously at Tod's hand. Then, as if deciding on caution after a struggle, he called. His stack of bills was thin, now; the heap of currency in the center had attained considerable size.

"Now for the last heat, Jimmy. To you, my lad, a trey, and to me,"—hesitating as he looked at the card he turned from the deck and let a smile cross his face,—"to me, the king of diamonds!"

SO that was it, Kerry thought to himself. Obviously, Hinkle had threes. Tod, from a cold deck, had dealt himself the case king. . . .

West was sitting back in his chair, smiling coolly. The place had grown very still. Well over two hundred dollars had been bet so far and West was smiling at the distraught Jim Hinkle as a man will who is most sure of himself. He was smiling and a sort of fright was forming on the other's face.

"Beat the kings," West said. "If you can and care to!" A fine little beading of moisture had pricked out on his forehead as he watched Hinkle.

Jim cleared his throat.

He counted his money slowly and said, "I'm betting fifty dollars," and as he shoved in the last of his money Drake heard the breath catch in his throat.

Tod West began to laugh.

"Them queens!" he said. "You boys have to learn about women from me! I beat 'em with aces once tonight. Now, it's kings. . . . Kings beat queens, Jimmy. Three? You got three of the gals?"

Hinkle strained forward as West began turning his hole card.

"Three queens," the man said huskily.

"That's what I figured, along at the last. So I just called, you bein' out of cash. My kings, James, catched 'emselves a triplet, too!"

Hinkle slumped back in his chair weakly. In the depths of his eyes was acute distress, deep pain. He tried to smile as he looked about and the pathos of it wrenched Drake's heart.

"Caught the caser!" Tod West was saying as he reached forward with both hands for the pot. "Caught the caser and—"

"Just a minute!" It was Kerry Drake's voice, with snap and iron in it; and Kerry Drake's hand lay in an arresting grasp on West's wrist.

Tod broke short his speech. He snapped a look hard into this stranger's face. His lips sagged.

"How much are you in, Jim?" Drake asked, never taking his eyes from West's.

Silence, except for a slow movement behind West as a short, pudgy man wearing steel-rimmed spectacles edged closer to the table.

"How much did you lose in this pot?" he said again, almost impatiently. "You were even, you said a while ago."

"Hundred an' eighteen," said Hinkle unsteadily.

Drake nodded.

"A hundred and eighteen dollars: That's too much to lose—"

"What comes off here?" West, recovering himself, shook off Kerry's hand and drew back. Color gushed darkly into his face. "What goes on here? You weren't even in this pot!"

"No. You didn't want me in."

"Makes no damn' difference to me, what you do. But you were out. It's my pot. If you want to post-mortem here, whatever your name is, just string along and buy the right."

"I've the right, now!" Drake's mouth twitched and he was a bit pale. "My financial interest in this pot is nothing. But I've an interest in it beside that. I've been sitting in the game and when I see a man stripped of his last dollar on a crooked deal—"

And in that instant he knew that twice within recent hours he had been lax. He had failed to interpret another gesture such as West made now; he had later failed to observe what his eyes saw—that slight bulge against West's left side, revealed this afternoon by his backward fall into the river.

Tod was on his feet, a rush of crimson rage flooding his face and his right hand was whipping at his breast, jerking open the shirt. Buttons gave, exposing the sweat-stained strap across his chest and the segment of shoulder-holster. . . . .

It happened quickly; with such desperate quickness that Drake could not hope for escape by flight. Before him was the table. To right and left were seated card-players, too amazed and shocked and fuddled to be aware of what impended, let alone moving quickly. Behind, were onlookers who, even had they guessed, would have had no margin of time in which to seek safety for themselves, let alone permitting him to get clear.

And so he did all that there remained to do. . . .

He rose, with a swift, flowing movement. As he rose, his hand dropped into his coat pocket.

"Stop it!" he snapped; his voice was a rasp, and as West's baleful eyes caught the lift of that coat, saw the rigid projection within the pocket, he added in a half whisper: "Put 'em up. . . . Quick, or I'll—"

The great hand, clutching at the pistol grip in that shoulder-holster, hesitated. Drake's voice was imperious, his manner commanding.

"Up, now! Smartly, Tod West! . . . . High. . . . Higher than that!"

Slowly, West obeyed, panting as he stood there, swaying just a little; and then the rest stampeded for safety. They ran for the door, for the sanctuary of the great stove in mid-room, for the scant shelter of the store counter. In those places they halted, staring hard at the tableau before them. The two stood there, facing one another across the table, West's eyes glassy, a stringer of spittle at the corner of his mouth; and Kerry Drake, the stranger, hand steady in his jacket pocket, was smiling oddly.

"Next," he said, "you will turn around . . . . so I can take your toy away. You won't be harmed, but neither will I. . . . *Now*,"—as West hesitated—"face to the wall, or I may have to—"

Once more, he left a threat unfinished. For an instant longer West held his ground and then the hand in that pocket twitched. He turned at the ominous gesture and slowly faced the wall.

QUICKLY, with a light tread, Drake stepped close behind. A prodding projection pressed the small of the larger man's back. Drake's free hand went over the other's shoulder, inside his shirt and dragged out the flat, ugly automatic.

From the doorway a man swore in surprise. Tod West carrying a gun? It was incredible!

"Now," the stranger was saying as he backed away, "you may do as you damned please!"

Tod chose to turn and face Drake who was halted in mid-room, cynosure for all eyes. The hand which had covered West was still in his side pocket; that sharp, menacing projection still held firmly against the cloth. And then the hand came out, slowly, ostentatiously, drag-

ging with it the pocket lining. . . . The lining of the pocket and a straight-stemmed pipe! A pipe, only, had been concealed there; a masked pipe had cowed the great Tod West after he had been goaded to a killing mood!

One explosive guffaw preceded a wave of incredulous murmurs. Then these subsided as Kerry withdrew the pistol's clip, ejected the cartridge from the chamber and spilled the ammunition into his palm.

He dropped the pipe into his pocket and held the unloaded gun toward its owner. With a contemptuous gesture he sent the cartridges scattering across the floor, plopping and rattling in the stillness, and then he laughed, a rising, chesty laugh as West, face ashen and glistening with sweat, dumbly accepted his weapon.

"There's your toy, Tod West," he said as the man, a-churn with chagrin, amazement and, perhaps, a species of relief, took it from his hand. "There's your toy, West. You may gather your ammunition later!"

Voices were murmuring, like the distant sound of a storm. Some one laughed, another swore, and a third said:

"Damned bluff! And as for Tod's cheatin' at cards—"

Reputations die hard.

Drake swept the room with his eyes.

"As for his cheating," he said evenly. "The money on the table belongs to those who had invested. You will find that the nine of spades, lying there with the money, is a perfect card. The nine of spades in the deck which was dealt the last time, has a bent corner. Somewhere, about the person of Mr. Tod West, or about the table, is a red deck, of identical design, and the nine-spot of spades will have a bent corner. No one called for a new deck; no change in decks was mentioned. It is my guess that on the stein-shelf before the chair occupied recently by Mr. Tod West, good citizen, may be found—"

"You *rat!*"

At last, West had found voice.

"You rat!" he cried again. "Other decks? Course there are! You c'n find a half-dozen on the stein-shelf!"

But his bluster was not convincing. He had not regained his self-possession.

"Perhaps," said Kerry with a shrug. "Perhaps, West! You may be able to alibi yourself for the rest of these lads, but you know and I know,"—nodding slowly—"and that is all that matters!"

He went slowly forward.

"Know me, West?" he asked. "Know me? Never saw me, eh? . . . . Maybe, then, it'll refresh your memory to recall things.

"After I saw you steal from Jim, here; after I saw you cheat a poor man for a few dollars, Tod West. . . . . After I saw your smallness now, I say. . . . . Then I knew that I didn't take the wrong letter-file the day old Jack Snow went broke!"

A SORT of half moan came from the big man and he wet his lips. Color drained from his face, but into his eyes came a crafty glitter, covering and subduing the gush of insane temper such as had swept them when he reached for his gun, yonder at the card table. He did not speak at once. He may have been conscious of a shifting of bodies in the room, of the movement along the wall as several came closer, grouping behind him in mute gestures of support. He may have known that this brazen youth had not convinced all who had watched of his duplicity; that a withering gesture had not wholly wrecked the place he had builded for himself in this country. He had been patient many a time before, had this West; he could be patient again, even with his heart leaping in his breast, poisoned to feverish heat by hatred and fear.

"Don't you know me?" Kerry taunted when the other did not speak. "Don't you remember me at all? . . . I'm Drake; Kerry Drake. . . . And I took out the file you *told* me to take, that day old Jack had his death-blow!"

West spoke, then, thickly.

"Drake?" He shook his head. "I know no Drake. . . . Wrong file? Jack Snow?" A contortion crossed his countenance. "It all means nothing to me. Who you are, what you are—I don't know. Except this: you're a *rat!*"

A man growled:

"We're with you, Tod! You're no crook!"

Kerry shrugged.

"Fair enough," he said and smiled in triumph. "It answers the one question that's—bothered me. You've come a long ways, Tod West, from a thieving, burning bookkeeper. It's hard for men to think their king can do wrong, I see. But—step carefully, Tod West! I've sowed seed tonight; some seed of a sowing always sprouts!"

He hitched at his belt with a frankly swaggering gesture.

"After all these years, the job was done quickly; in mere hours. And now I—I can be on my way."

He turned on his heel and made slowly for the door.

BUZZING murmurs filled the room. Eyes were on Kerry, on Tod West, standing with rage seething in him. He had a rôle to play, this West. He had a reputation at stake, loyalties to consider—perhaps things to fear. His place in the country was in the balance, he knew. Years of building, years of accumulating influence bit by bit, might truly go to smash and ruin under the influence of the suspicion sowed tonight. But the charge of cheating at cards was too fantastic, too incredible to be of more than passing consequence if he played his rôle properly, as a respected leader should.

He found voice at last.

"Hold up there, you!" Kerry was at the threshold.

He turned, smiling that bitter smile.

"You're a rat!" West said again heavily. "You're a—damned rat! What's the idea, tryin' to make me out a crook? Blackmail? I'll leave it to these men here if I've ever been suspected of cheatin' at cards before!"

He waved an arm and assenting mumbles followed. Men nodded and stirred. Loyalty to a king dies hard!

Encouraged, he advanced slowly, halting again with feet outspread and hand raised in strong gesture.

"I've never set eyes on you before! Drake, whoever you are, I've never seen—"

"Not even this afternoon? Careful, West; some doubter might check up!"

"Never!" The word was a snarl. "Never seen or heard of you! And I've only this to say, after callin' you a rat. Just this: you'd best be on your way, come sunup! Your kind's not wanted here!"

Kerry lifted a hand to scratch a temple slowly.

"That's tough on me, Tod West," he said. "I'm through, here. I stumbled on the thing I've wanted to know for years. And I'd like to be gone, being the roaming kind. But if there's one thing I'm more afraid of than taking root it's—it's being driven, Tod West!" He began to laugh. "So I've got to stay! I've got to light a while!"

He went out into the darkness and his deep laughter floated back to them. A fierce exultation racked him and he did not look about; did not see Nan Downer standing there in the edge of the light-shaft from a window, one hand at her breast.

This fine novel of the North Woods gains in dramatic power with each chapter. Be sure to read the next installment, in our forthcoming June issue.

The joyous tale of the second mate Mr. O'Grady, who went ashore at Alexandria full of wrath and brandy, and made things hum.

My Pal

By HENRY LA COSSITT

Illustrated by Margery Stocking

SEVEN o'clock: The winches, after clattering stridently all day, were mute. The decks, save for the two stupid watchmen provided by the agent to keep a weather eye cocked for marauders, and a lone, somewhat lorn figure that sat swearing quietly on Number Three hatch amidships, were deserted. The companionways, cabins and crew-quarters aft housed no one. The ship was quiet. No sound broke the peace which enveloped it except the distant hum of Alexandria, which drifted across the water from the twinkling town. Now and then little craft, darting through the half light over the harbor, passed silently and disappeared in the darkness. Above, the brilliant constellations glittered in a deep and moonless sky, their mirrored patterns floating on the water below like delicate lace. The water lapped stealthily against the hull of the ship; and the two watchmen, with nothing to do except look down their noses, became drowsy, lulled by the lapping sound.

Therefore the mood of Mr. O'Grady, second mate of the *S. S. Westchester*, which lay in the cotton berth at Alexandria gorging itself with the richest cargo in the Mediterranean countries, was strange. The romantic peace of the Egyptian night was not for Mr. O'Grady; he was disgusted and angry and not a little hurt. It was he who sat on the cover of Number Three hatch; and it was he who was swearing quietly. Mr. O'Grady had had a trying day.

First, the line of the boom which hoisted the compact bales into the waiting maws of hatches Four and Five aft had for no reason that Mr. O'Grady could see, parted neatly as a large load in the net was swinging in midair, allowing the load to drop into the waters of the harbor. For that Mr. O'Grady had been spoken to in an uncomplimentary tone by Mr. Redfield, first mate of the *Westchester*, for whom Mr. O'Grady entertained a profound if unannounced dislike. Moreover Mr. Redfield had spoken concerning the parted line to Captain Briggs, a disturbingly hard-boiled and tremendous man, who had seconded the first mate's uncomplimentary remarks. That had been trial the first.

The second was equally unforeseen by Mr. O'Grady. It was not his fault, surely, if one of the loutish Arab stevedores had got in the way of one of the loads which was swinging across to be lowered and had been knocked off the deck and down into the hold, to fall on two of his fellow-laborers. Not his fault, but his hatch. The stevedore had been smashed up a bit by the accident, and the two who received his falling weight on their heads were in no condition to continue work that day. They had been bundled off to the hospital, to be taken care of at the expense of the Levantine Mail, of which fleet the *Westchester* was a unit. It would, in all probability, lead to litigation, which the gentlemen who owned the Levantine Mail would have to fight. Therefore, Mr. O'Grady once more had been spoken to sharply by Mr. Redfield, who again had taken his remarks and laid them before Captain Briggs. Captain Briggs had returned to Mr. O'Grady with the remarks embellished. That was trial the second.

But the third was the last straw: Again it was not Mr. O'Grady's fault that the stevedores working in Number Four had not followed his instructions to brace and

secure the stacks of bales; it was not his fault that the stacks, uneven and topheavy, had suddenly collapsed, injuring two more oafish stevedores and making several hours' extra work necessary. But again it was his hatch, and as he very well knew, his business.

On this occasion Mr. Redfield and Captain Briggs had descended on Mr. O'Grady together. Mr. Redfield, who was a man of medium height, with a beet-red face that never seemed to harden itself to the weather, a pair of narrow gray eyes that had a malicious gleam in them, and a pursed mouth that gave him unwonted gravity, had said nothing at all. He simply had stood by, his pursed mouth twisted into a grin of sorts, while Captain Briggs had dealt with Mr. O'Grady.

Captain Briggs, his broad and weather-beaten face colorful with wrath, his wide, steely eyes flashing, had invoked the Deity and a number of other heavenly inhabitants to condemn Mr. O'Grady. The tirade was artistic in its combinations. But that was nothing; it simply was Captain Briggs' —Mr. O'Grady liked Captain Briggs very much—quaint manner of expressing himself. Captain Briggs had, however, ended his observations painfully for Mr. O'Grady.

"You," Captain Briggs had said, following the artistic tirade, "ought not to be a seaman; you ought to be a milliner. I think you would be very successful at that."

A terrible and humiliating day, and Mr. O'Grady brooded on it. Not that he blamed Captain Briggs; he knew Captain Briggs was, these days, much overwrought. And he knew the reason. Old Man Everhard, who was president of the Levantine Mail, had, through his agents at Alexandria, purchased a priceless antique for his wife. The antique was a chain of solid gold, on which were hung medallions the size of American half-dollars, and in each medallion there was set an emerald. Moreover each medallion had been decorated by the artisans of the Pharaohs, and according to the style and inscriptions, had come down from the time of the Israelite persecution. The price— Mr. O'Grady had heard the price, and it reminded him vaguely of international debts. And the point of Captain Briggs' anger was that old man Everhard had saddled him with the responsibility of bringing the thing back to the States. True, it now reposed in the sturdy safe in the ship's office against the day of sailing, which was very near, but the purchase had been famous; it had got into the press dispatches, and the *Westchester* still had several ports of call. Captain Briggs was, naturally, apprehensive and worried. And being so, he was not inclined to be lenient with anybody, much less Mr. O'Grady. Captain Briggs had been overheard saying that he hoped the condemned thing broke old lady Everhard's neck. Which, judging from its weight, probably would come to pass.

Mr. O'Grady sympathized with Captain Briggs, but that did not ease his present state of mind. Captain Briggs had touched a sore spot; Mr. O'Grady had been a seaman ever since, almost, he had been able to crawl. He had held his license ever since his twenty-first year. Therefore he was particular about his seamanship. And now he had been called, of all things, a milliner!

O'Grady's swinging frame came into contact with a large and corpulent body.

He was not a very large man, this Mr. O'Grady. Out of County Cork by Manhattan's Weehawken Street, he had been a little undersized since birth, when, to his burly father's disgust, he had weighed a mere five and one half pounds. His mother, too, had been a little disappointed. And now, somewhere in his early thirties, he was not much more than five and one half feet tall. But what there was of Mr. O'Grady was not at all consistent with his size. As a number of people round the world would attest, his skinny body was like a bundle of steel wire; his arms were like piston-rods; his fists, when propelled by his arms, could flail like maces. Other than that, he had a small face with sparkling hazel eyes, a turned-up nose that made him look like a French caricature, and a wry, thin-lipped mouth, with a hint of satire about its puckered expression.

But there was no satire in Mr. O'Grady's soul tonight; there was but bitterness and gall. And as the mood progressed, there came before his hazel eyes an inviting picture of a beet-red face into which he would like very much to ram one of his macelike fists. But that, obviously, was out; Mr. Redfield was, after all, first mate.

Finally Mr. O'Grady became desperate. Suddenly, and without stopping to go to his cabin in the 'midships housing for his shore clothes,—he was still clad in dungarees, blue shirt and officer's cap,—he jumped to his feet and made his way to the companion ladder. There he encountered one of the watchmen, who looked at him dully. Mr. O'Grady snorted disgust in the man's face and muttered something about a "lousy gyppo."

Descending the ladder, then, he got into a smallboat in

which sat a very dirty Arab who was sound asleep. Mr. O'Grady awakened him with an irritated clap on the head that almost knocked off the man's *tarboosh*. That, as Mr. O'Grady very well knew, was an unpardonable insult, but it made no difference; Mr. O'Grady had been insulted himself. The Arab, rudely awakened, jumped angrily to his feet. But Mr. O'Grady stood in undersized menace. The Arab, seeing the menace, grew tractable.

"Take me ashore!" snapped Mr. O'Grady. "Take me ashore damned quick!"

The Arab scrambled to comply. He sculled the boat hurriedly across to the base of a jetty and set Mr. O'Grady carefully ashore. Then, as hurriedly, he sculled away, muttering something about the evil eye.

Mr. O'Grady proceeded to the Customs gate, where he was frisked indifferently because of his expression, and headed across the street to a pub with which he was very familiar. In this pub Mr. O'Grady poured, in rapid succession, three double brandies Domecq down his parched throat, then waited a moment to see the effect. The effect was not satisfactory. Mr. O'Grady called for, received and gulped two glasses of rum and anise, after which he felt much better. Then he rose and paid his bill, hitched his belt and started out of the place, his hazel eyes now a little set.

"Make way!" shouted Mr. O'Grady in a voice grown suddenly stentorian. A way was made. Mr. O'Grady's eyes were too set for anything else.

Outside he turned and made further way, swinging easily, as if a rolling deck were under him, in the direction of the Rue d'Annastassi. He did not mean to stop in Annastassi, which disgusted him; he was on his way to Mohammed Ali Square and the St. James. But the street was the shortest route. At the corner of the street on which he was traveling, and the Rue d'Annastassi, Mr. O'Grady's swinging frame came into abrupt contact with a large and corpulent body which emitted a grunt at the impact.

He drew back and doubled his fists.

"Make way!" he boomed.

But his fists relaxed; his arms dropped at his sides in astonishment. He was looking at the annoyed countenance of a very fat person in monk's garb. This person let loose a group of phrases in some tongue with which Mr. O'Grady was not familiar. With dignity he drew his habit around him and passed Mr. O'Grady; and the mate, like an axis, revolved with him, set eyes staring widely.

THE monk passed on disdainfully. Mr. O'Grady, anger at something he did not bother to understand welling within him, hitched his dungarees jerkily and swung on blasphemously to the nearest pub, where, in less time than at the first, he swallowed three more double brandies Domecq, and two rums with anise. Thus fortified once more, he rose and started out.

"Make way!" he roared; and again he was not opposed. That is, he was not opposed until he emerged and began an unsteady swinging up the Rue d'Annastassi. There he was not only opposed; he was grabbed.

Mr. O'Grady turned angrily and shook off a gaudy young woman who had taken his arm.

"Lemme go!" snapped Mr. O'Grady.

The gaudy young woman did not understand Mr. O'Grady's language, but she understood his expression. She loosened her grip on his arm with alacrity, waved him away in disgust, and muttering something in a contemptuous tone, went her way. Mr. O'Grady lurched on.

But he was not suffered to go his way unmolested; a dragoman, scenting easy business, tugged at his sleeve. The dragoman was shaken off. A seller of souvenirs, impressed by Mr. O'Grady's foreign and disorganized appearance, attempted to stay the mate's progress. But this one was ill-advised. Mr. O'Grady—the cataclysm taking place in his vitals adding to the natural rage that Mr. Redfield had started—turned, hurled the seller of souvenirs against the wall of a house, and addressed himself to the street.

"The next as stops me," he shouted, "gets a sock in the phizz!"

He glared belligerently back down the street; he glared belligerently across the street; he glared with all the Celtic menace which he possessed naturally, and that which the liquor he had consumed had added, up the street in the direction he meant to go.

"Unnerstand!" he shouted. "Make way!"

Mr. O'Grady, as if starting out to do some vast deed, stepped forward mightily—and fell flat on his face: something had grabbed his trouser leg.

AS he fell, and as he felt the tug at his leg, there came before his eyes all the indignities he had suffered that day, all the indignities he fancied he had suffered that night, and a face that never had become hardened to the weather. And as the face came before him, Mr. O'Grady's vision became as crimson as Mr. Redfield's imagined countenance.

He turned, starting to his knees, his hands hardened into fists. Swearing violently, he started to get to his feet. But he got no farther than his hands and knees. There he remained.

The lights whirling around him became slower, stopped. The sidewalk steadied, became as usual. The red haze began to fade. For in the center of the haze, growing clearer with each second, there appeared a face. It was a solemn face. Its sad, placid eyes looked implacably into Mr. O'Grady's bleared stare of wonder. Its grave chops did not move. But out of the haze it slowly took definite form, not three inches from Mr. O'Grady's flushed features.

Mr. O'Grady suddenly went over backward and to his haunches, and there he remained for a moment, his arms stretched out behind to prop him up. Out of the face had emerged a long red tongue that gently licked the tip of Mr. O'Grady's turned-up nose.

The mate, not quite aware of what he was doing, lifted a hand and ran it across his nose. The solemn face moved closer. As it did, Mr. O'Grady realized that there was a body behind the face. It was a huge body, and it padded forward on all fours. The face and body, he saw, belonged to a dog—not just a common, ordinary dog, either, but a St. Bernard dog.

"Go 'way!" said Mr. O'Grady. "Get out!"

He scrambled to his feet and took a pace backward. The dog followed him. "Miserable hound!" said Mr. O'Grady. "Go 'way!"

He took another step backward. But he had forgotten the curb. He stepped off the curb unexpectedly and sat down in the street. Immediately the dog bounded forward and stood over him, whining gently. The dog yawned tremendously. Once more Mr. O'Grady had the tip of his nose licked.

"My God!" he said bitterly. "It's a curse for my sins!" Once more he ran a hand across his nose and got to his feet. And then he was startled. Startled and enraged! For he heard laughter. Looking around, he saw that all of the Rue d'Annastassi, threatened by him a moment before, was laughing at him. Furious, he turned again to the dog. "Get out o' here!" he yelled. "Out o' my sight! Get!"

Mr. O'Grady, scooping his hands wildly in the direction

of the St. Bernard, realized an overwhelming sense of futility. Suddenly he turned and fled. With no particular idea of where he was headed, he ran blindly up Annastassi, turned the first corner, ran a block, turned another corner, continued his zigzag course until his breath gave out, and stopped. Glancing up, he noticed a pair of swinging doors that loomed invitingly. Above the doors he saw a sign which read: "*Sailor's Haven.*" He burst through the doors and sat down at a table, panting.

"A curse!" he muttered, soothing his sweating forehead with his shirt-sleeve. "A curse! A—" He stopped his reflections abruptly and stared across the room at a man who was just leaving the Sailor's Haven by another door. He swore and spat in disgust. The man was Mr. Redfield, and he was in company with two Arabs. The Arabs did not please Mr. O'Grady by their looks, but they were as nothing to the sight of Mr. Redfield. Mr. O'Grady glared after the trio a moment, then turned and looked blearily at the bar. "Brandy!" he shouted. "Double Domecq!"

THE bartenders jumped. One of them hurriedly procured a tray, poured a drink, put a glass of water beside it and scurried toward Mr. O'Grady. He set the tray on the table, looked apprehensively at his customer, and retreated.

Mr. O'Grady stared at the brandy a long moment. Then, his hand trembling a little from his recent exertion, he raised the glass and looked at it. Gradually, as the light stole through its thick amber, his face relaxed. The impression Mr. Redfield had left began to subside. He drew the glass slowly toward his already half-open mouth.

But the glass did not reach his mouth. Mr. O'Grady's hand wabbled strangely; the brandy poured down his open shirt-front on his bare chest. Something had jostled his elbow.

Once more enraged, he turned quickly. And then there issued from the mouth of the *Westchester's* second mate a stream of language which rivaled that of the ship's captain. Mr. O'Grady saw once more the sad eyes and solemn face of the St. Bernard. He took time, too, to notice that the dog's tongue was lolling out of the side of its mouth, and that it was panting heavily.

"You spawn of Satan!" shrilled Mr. O'Grady. "You curse of hell! You—"

He broke off abruptly at the sudden appearance of one of the bartenders. This man, seeing the rage of his customer at the appearance of the dog, had come from behind the bar to take a hand. Now, mouthing viciously in a strange tongue, he aimed a kick at the big body of the solemn dog. The kick landed. Looking at the dog, Mr. O'Grady saw its eyes turned sadly on him. It seemed to Mr. O'Grady as if there were appeal in those eyes. It seemed as if those eyes were reproaching him.

He felt suddenly righteous and sentimental. It seemed to him as if it were not right that the sad-eyed dog should be kicked. That dog, like Mr. O'Grady, was one of the downtrodden of the earth. That dog was suffering from a Mr. Redfield. It was being kicked and kicked violently. Its yelps filled the place.

Mr. O'Grady, remembering the sight of Mr. Redfield a moment before, with, for the first time that night, something to vent his anger on, jumped to his feet.

"Lay off!" he shouted. "That's my— That's my—pal!"

But Mr. O'Grady was not quick enough to forestall another vicious kick the bartender aimed at the St. Bernard. This kick also landed, and as it landed, the dog howled piteously.

Mr. O'Grady, with fierce enthusiasm, flung himself at the bartender. The man, seeing him coming, raised a hand in amazed protest. But to the embattled Mr. O'Grady it was not a gesture of protest; it was an indication of war. The mate's gnarled fist landed squarely in the center of the bartender's dark face. The bartender dropped. And then, for several minutes, Mr. O'Grady wrought havoc in the Sailor's Haven. He smashed the other bartender to the floor, hurled a chair at some customers advancing to intervene, and burst through the swinging doors in flight, the St. Bernard loping joyously at his side.

Together they ran, this time, and at the first corner they disappeared. They ran for many blocks, staggering their course, through strange little streets on the sidewalks of which sat meditating Arabs puffing at enormous *narghiles*, past pubs and cafes, past tall, dignified houses with colored fronts and enormous jalousies, until Mr. O'Grady, satisfied that no policeman was following, slowed to a walk. He finally stopped altogether beneath a sputtering arc-light. There he looked down and regarded the St. Bernard. Panting, the great beast looked back and up at him, shaggy tail swishing contentedly.

"My pal!" murmured Mr. O'Grady. He stroked the dog's massive head. This time his hand was licked. "'Scuse me for cussin' you out," he went on. "You're a good pooch, you are." He fondled the dog's muzzle with both his hands and knelt to hold converse more privately. "The only friend I got, you are. . . . You don't think I'm a milliner, do you? Nah. . . . You're my friend—the only friend I got in the world." Mr. O'Grady rose to his feet with an expression of resolve. "Come along," he said, nodding owlishly. "You an' I— You an' I are gonna have ourselves a great, big time."

He made his way down the street, past tightly shuttered houses, to the Rue des Soeurs, where he turned again and walked toward Mohammed Ali Square, the dog padding at his heels. They reached the great square, but they did not stop. Mr. O'Grady fought his way across the broad expanse, through crowds of Arabs and Copts who stared curiously at him and his strange companion, through traffic jams of carriages and automobiles, and through a bedlam of Moslem curses hurled in his and the St. Bernard's direction by the drivers, to the little street in which the famous St. James stands. That, as has been said, had been his original destination. It still was. But when he came to it, he did not enter. He saw, seated at a table by one of the open windows, the beet-red face of Mr. Redfield. And Mr. Redfield was not with the Arabs this time. He was talking earnestly with Captain Briggs. They were drinking whisky. Mr. O'Grady hurried on; he wanted no part of either this night.

PAST the St. James he went annoyedly, followed by his padding companion, and down the street to the next corner, where, he knew, was a little pub run by a Sudanese. There, at a table on the broad sidewalk, he stopped and sat down. The dog sat down beside him and yawned prodigiously. Then it laid its head in the mate's lap contentedly. Mr. O'Grady, fondling the shaggy head, began to drink again. After the first of this series, those that he previously had swallowed, their activity stilled temporarily by the excitement, began churning again. Mr. O'Grady grew mellow.

The world seemed, suddenly, good; the night became beautiful; a gentle peace suffused the narrow streets, the brilliantly lighted cafés and Mr. O'Grady's soul. Even Mr. Redfield and the odious day behind Mr. O'Grady became almost endurable. He sighed contentedly and took off his cap.

After the third—Mr. O'Grady was once more drinking double brandies Domecq—he looked down at the great

head dozing peacefully in his lap, and grew thoughtful. "You," he said, "are unnerprivileged. . . . You're missin' the better things o' life." He shook his head sadly. "You should know about better things because you're my frien', an' by the Lord,"—Mr. O'Grady brought his fist down on the table with great force,—"you *will* know!"

Hence Mr. O'Grady clapped his hands sharply, which brought a Sudanese waiter hurrying toward him.

"Bring me," said Mr. O'Grady to the Sudanese, "four o' these things an' a bowl,"—Mr. O'Grady joined his hands and formed a circle with his arms to indicate the size,—"great, big bowl." The waiter started off, but Mr. O'Grady had a second thought. "Hol' up there! Not four o' these things, after all. . . . Make it four Alegzhanders; they're sweeter. . . . An' you c'n pour 'em all in"—Mr. O'Grady once more formed a circle with his arms—"the great—big—bowl."

Off went the waiter, and onto Mr. O'Grady's sharp little face there came a beatific smile. He worried the dog's head affectionately.

"My pal," he said softly. "Jus' beginnin' t'live, and I'm gonna show you how." He wagged his head gravely.

But the dog only continued to doze contentedly. Now and then immense sighs inflated its big body as it shifted its head to a more comfortable position on Mr. O'Grady's lap. The mate laughed. In a moment the Sudanese, a glass bowl in his hands filled with liquid of a brownish hue, appeared at the table and stood waiting Mr. O'Grady's pleasure.

Mr. O'Grady saw once more the sad eyes of the St. Bernard. "You spawn of Satan!" shrilled Mr. O'Grady.

"You c'n put it down there," said Mr. O'Grady. He pointed to the exact spot on the pavement where he wished the bowl set. "Right—down—there."

The waiter set the bowl on the exact spot designated by Mr. O'Grady.

"An' now," said the mate, "you c'n go fly a kite!" He looked up, frowning, at the waiter—who, not quite understanding Mr. O'Grady's idiom, stood puzzled for a moment. "A kite!" snapped Mr. O'Grady. The Sudanese, though still puzzled, retreated.

Mr. O'Grady put his hand beneath the dog's muzzle and lifted the huge head.

The sad, placid eyes fluttered sleepily open and looked adoringly at the mate.

"Ol' frien'," said Mr. O'Grady. "I'm gonna show you life. . . . Jus' take a sniff o' that!"

Laboriously he urged the dog's head toward the bowl. At first the beast seemed bewildered, but catching sight of the bowl, became interested. The big ears raised a little, and it got to its feet. It edged around the bowl in a circling motion, its nose coming closer. For a moment it stopped suspiciously as a strange odor assailed its nostrils; but there was cream in the bowl, and that was familiar. The shaggy tail began swishing. Mr. O'Grady laughed benevolently.

"Here's how!" he said. "Here's life!"

He raised his glass to his mouth. Below, the dog's red tongue slipped out and into the dark liquid in the bowl; and above, Mr. O'Grady drank. But he set the glass down hurriedly, sputtering. The dog, with a startled leap, had backed from the bowl swiftly, and now, sitting on its haunches, emitted a long and mournful howl.

Mr. O'Grady stared. He looked reproachfully at his friend. For an instant a glimmer of anger crossed his hazel eyes, but it gave way the next to pity. The dog had hurried to him and was now nuzzling his lap frantically to erase the taste and odor of the liquid in the bowl. Mr. O'Grady shook his head.

"A prohibish'nist," he muttered. "Thass what you are, a prohibish'nist. But"—he lifted the beast's head—"you're all right, jus' the same."

He eyed the dog for a moment, and then his gaze wandered down to the bowl. For a minute or so he stared at the bowl, shaking his head. Then he reached down and picked it up.

"Waste," he said to the St. Bernard, "brings poverty. It's wicked. Besides, I gotta stand by you; I gotta drink for you. . . . Well—we'll make it a lovin'-cup. . . . Here's to—"

Whatever else Mr. O'Grady might have said was lost in a gurgle as the mixture flowed down his throat. The dog, ears lifted, watched him raptly. Mr. O'Grady drained the contents of the bowl, and set it down on the table with a bang. It was a rather hard bang. The bowl splintered.

"Always," he advised the dog, "break the glass. That"—he wagged his finger close to the St. Bernard's nose—"is the way to drink." Mr. O'Grady nodded with conviction and turned back to his double brandy Domecq.

But for some reason it did not interest him so much now. Strange sensations, beginning at Mr. O'Grady's solar plexus, conveyed themselves in waves to his limbs. A cold, clammy sweat broke out on his brow. In front

of him the street became very much like the bay of Biscay with a norther lashing it. The dog's head before Mr. O'Grady's tortured vision became large, distorted, like an image in a Coney Island comic mirror, multiplied, assuming ridiculous and fantastic shapes.

Mr. O'Grady passed a hard hand across an harassed brow. "Whoo," said Mr. O'Grady. "Whoo!"

The dog whined piteously. Mr. O'Grady, fondling its head erratically, made vast efforts to catch his rapidly shortening breath. The dog whined again. Mr. O'Grady leaned forward and held his head in his hands. Darkness, which was not darkness at all, but a hideous night of many colors, reeled before his bewildered eyes.

"Whoo," puffed Mr. O'Grady again.

But despite the weird sensations racking him, he became approximately alert. For near by some one was laughing. Moreover, Mr. O'Grady had reason to believe the laughter was directed at himself. He heard distinctly a voice, and a cockney voice at that, say something about a "drunk mick an' a bloody dahrg."

There was nothing particularly derogatory about that, but Mr. O'Grady had ideas. Besides, Mr. O'Grady never had taken kindly to the English. Looking in the direction of these remarks, he saw at least three—how many more it was impossible for him to tell, as they changed positions with precision each time he shifted his eyes—men clad almost as he was himself. And he saw the unmistakable ruddy complexion and narrow features of the cockney seaman. Mr. O'Grady's visage grew grim.

"Were you limejuishers," he said threateningly, "shpeakin' o' me an' my pal?"

The cockneys hesitated a moment. "Yuss," one of them finally said, "we was. . . . An' what's yer to do about it?"

Mr. O'Grady made no comment. With all of his diminishing faculties for concentration, he made what he believed was a withering attack in the direction of the cockneys, arms flailing. He saw fists, more numerous than he had ever witnessed before, fly at him in showers; he felt dull jolts that gave his anesthetized flesh no pain at all; he felt his own whirling fists connect—and then he felt no more. . . .

He became conscious of a sound much like that of the second string in the treble register of a violin. The sound became monotonous. It came closer. It came, in fact, to within a few inches of his right ear. And then Mr. O'Grady felt something warm and soft lick his face. That brought him to, with a start. He sat up abruptly, and really believed, for the moment, that his head was going to fly from his shoulders. He groaned. He rocked from side to side, and then he opened his eyes. And there, once more, he saw the dog. It was the dog's whining that had reminded Mr. O'Grady of the violin. The dog, evidently beside itself, was tugging at Mr. O'Grady's shirt.

"My frien'!" said Mr. O'Grady.

The dog barked joyously.

Mr. O'Grady, sick and sore, got to his feet unsteadily. There were bruises and lumps on his jaws, and his turned-up nose felt the size of a football. He looked around through slit-like eyes and found himself in a dark street just, he knew from the noise and lights around the corner, a short distance from the Sudanese café. He did not bother, then, to reason how he got where he was. He did not bother much about anything. He lurched miserably around the corner and found a carriage. For Mr. O'Grady felt that he ought, above anything else, to get back to his ship and bunk.

The bartender dropped; and for several minutes the embattled Mr O'Grady wrought havoc in the Sailor's Haven.

But with him, in the carriage, traveled the dog. Once more it dozed peacefully, its head in his lap.

Mr. O'Grady reached the jetty and was sculled to his ship, the dog his fellow-passenger. As he climbed, with effort, the ladder, hauling himself up along the rope-rail, he heard the chronometer strike eight bells. Midnight! No one would be aboard yet, he knew. At the top of the ladder there was not even the watchman employed by the agents. But that only pleased Mr. O'Grady—he did not want to see the watchman. He staggered across the deck and to his cabin amidships, where, with the dog beside him, he sank into his bunk with vast relief. A profound sleep crept over him. . . .

How long he slept he did not know. He only knew that he was vastly annoyed when, near by, he heard the sound that resembled the second string of a violin's treble register. And he knew that his annoyance was increased by a tugging at his shirt and a warm tongue licking his face. Too sleepy to come full awake, and drifting back, he turned over on his side. But then he started

up, his head reeling. His cheek had come in contact with something cold and clammy. It was the St. Bernard's cold nose.

"You—" began Mr. O'Grady in a fine rage, but he broke off abruptly and scrambled across his bunk to the edge. He had heard something. Looking down, his eyes widened in a stare of wonder.

Beneath the dog, which was standing guard, there lay a man, and the man was struggling. Mr. O'Grady saw the dog reach down, take the man's coat in its teeth and drag him closer to the bunk. He had a swift, comprehending remembrance of things he had learned in school, of the Hospice of St. Bernard in the Alps, and of the manner in which the dogs were trained. This man had been dragged by the dog into Mr. O'Grady's cabin!

Mr. O'Grady jumped from his bunk, now fully awake, hastily untied bonds, and loosened a gag. The man was the watchman who should have been by the ladder.

A moment later, and the man was on his feet, the dog shut in Mr. O'Grady's cabin, and the mate and the watchman were creeping across the deck. They entered the companionway leading aft, and in the crew's mess they found what they were looking for—the other watchman.

"Who did it?" whispered Mr. O'Grady.

That, the watchmen didn't know. They only knew, they said, that, drowsing, they had been attacked suddenly and thrown to the deck. Their guns had been taken from them; they had been bound and gagged.

Mr. O'Grady pondered that, and then, suddenly inspired, ran on tiptoe to the end of the companionway. He looked up at the bridge deck and saw, as he had expected, a dim and moving light through the port in the ship's office. Hurrying, then, he went to the galley. There he armed himself and the watchmen with what he could find, which included a cleaver and a butcher-knife. These he gave the watchmen; to himself he gave a meat mallet.

Then, still moving cautiously, they made their ways to the end of the companionway again. There they hesitated. The light above still moved. Across the main deck, then, they crept, eyes on the light above them, to the 'midships housing, the two watchmen moving for the ladder that led to the bridge deck, Mr. O'Grady entering the housing. "Bust in," Mr. O'Grady had said before they parted, "when I do."

The watchmen nodded. Mr. O'Grady vanished into the companionway that led past the officer's pantry. Next this room he stole softly up a stairway which led to the ship's office and the skipper's quarters. At the top of this stairway he paused.

For he saw through a screen door a sharply defined circle of light. In the center of this circle of light was a round metallic disk and some one was working the disk carefully. Some one was trying to open the ship's safe.

Mr. O'Grady hesitated. As his eyes became accustomed to the dim light, he made out three figures. They were grouped about the safe, one of them working on the combination. The other two watched him fascinatedly. So, for that matter, did Mr. O'Grady.

THEREFORE he started violently when, from below, although somewhat muffled, there came the loud and earnest and lonesome howl of a dog. Mr. O'Grady froze.

From within the room came startled exclamations. Some one cursed in English and started to his feet. This person came toward the door swiftly. As he did, Mr. O'Grady, his wits about him once more, yelled. And as he yelled he charged through the door.

He did not bother to use his mallet at first. His hard fist struck out twice and landed squarely in the middle of the face of the man by the door. After that the mallet descended; the man went over backward toward two other men who stood rooted in astonishment. One of these figures also caught the force of Mr. O'Grady's mallet. The other was swept down from behind when the watchmen went into action through the door that gave on to the bridge deck.

Mr. O'Grady switched on the light. For a moment he stared in bewildered amazement. So did the watchmen. And then he laughed. His laughter became violent. He was looking down at three men, two of whom were completely out; the third, hands to a bloody face, was swaying stupidly on his haunches, shaking his abused head to clear his wits. It was, to Mr. O'Grady's intense satisfaction, Mr. Redfield. The others were those Mr. O'Grady had seen with the first mate in the Sailor's Haven.

IN the morning Mr. O'Grady, his face a sorry sight from his encounter with the cockneys, sat in the ship's office with Captain Briggs, two Alexandrian policemen, the American consul, a fat monk, the agent of the Levantine Mail, and the St. Bernard dog. The dog sat by Mr. O'Grady, its head in his lap. It was dozing placidly. Forward, in irons, were Mr. Redfield and his helpers of the night before, two villainous renegades of doubtful blood. The monk—the one into whom Mr. O'Grady had bumped the night before—was talking rapidly in Swiss, the agent acting as interpreter.

"He says," the agent declared, "that he came from Switzerland on a pilgrimage to Cairo to the Coptic church which covers the traditional site of the hiding-place of the Holy Family when they fled into Egypt. And yesterday, when he arrived in Alexandria, he lost his dog, which he had brought with him.

"He thanks you," went on the agent, "for finding the dog, and is happy that the dog could be of service. He says he is leaving today for Switzerland, and that he was terribly worried when he couldn't find the dog."

Mr. O'Grady looked down sorrowfully at the head in his lap. He stroked it affectionately. "My pal," he said.

But the monk, his business finished, had to leave. Mr. O'Grady looked sadly after the great dog as it trotted out after the monk.

"I wondered," Captain Briggs was saying, "why I got so tight. . . . I passed out at the St. James. Redfield must have slipped me some knockout drops when I said I was coming back to the ship early."

But Mr. O'Grady only stared at the floor.

"I've cabled Everhard," the agent was saying. "There should be a handsome reward for you, Mr. O'Grady. Mrs. Everhard certainly had her heart set on that necklace and the price—my God!"

Mr. O'Grady kept his eyes fixed on the floor.

"And of course," said Captain Briggs, "it means that you get Redfield's berth."

Mr. O'Grady heard, but made no comment. He rose abruptly to his feet. He passed his hand across his brow, which suddenly had become cold and clammy. In the pit of his stomach things not yet properly dealt with were revolting. He started out the door. The agent and the Captain and the rest stared after him in astonishment.

"Where you going?" yelled the Captain.

But Mr. O'Grady did not answer. He couldn't. He lurched down the ladder and toward his cabin. But even in his extremity he paused. From the harbor there came an insistent barking. Mr. O'Grady, his vision swimming crazily, saw, in the boat that was being sculled to the jetty, the fat monk and the dog. The dog was standing, ears lifted, tail wagging, looking eagerly at the ship. . . . Mr. O'Grady raised a hand and waved, before he plunged to his cabin.

The Good Fight

The making of a cow-hand out of unpromising timber is ably described in this vivid story of East and West.

By EUGENE P. LYLE, JR.

Illustrated by Allen Moir Dean

THE thing was as casual as "Pass the cabbage, please." You couldn't top it; for cool swaggering insolence you'd have to picture a city gangster throwing his chest about in a night-club, to get anything like it. But this was the West—the cattle country. This was Budd's Grove in a grassy valley between hazy blue mountains where we were having a Fourth of July picnic. This was Wyoming, where you'd think there'd be plenty of room.

Every outfit from all around was at the picnic. Families and the hired help and everybody. Big sycamores. Platform built for dancing. Some of the girls wore pants, having come on horseback. Lazy wind-tanned hellions, under their ten-quart hats, were tuning up a fiddle and a saxophone and a funny banjo and two wooden blocks covered with sandpaper, when a girl pointed up the road and said:

"Would you look who's bringing that snippy blonde who works at the eating-house! It's the new cowhand from the Bar-B."

A puncher near me laughed. "Cowhand?" he laughed. And it's a fact the young fellow didn't look any too comfortable topside a horse; he leaned forward in a stiff, pained kind of way. But I noticed that Janet—she's my favorite niece—wasn't smiling with the others. Perhaps she didn't relish the young fellow's being laughed at because he worked for her father, who is Milt Barber—my brother-in-law and the owner of the Bar-B, where I'm visiting from the East. Or perhaps his bringing the eating-house girl had something to do with it. You never can tell, and Janet with her large sober gray eyes is a girl who does her own thinking. She's the prettiest girl anywhere, too, quaint and sweet and one little daredevil.

As to that green hand, I'd noticed him around the ranch. He would practice throwing a saddle on a horse for half an hour at a time—or handling a rope, or any of those things; he was extremely eager. He was compact and rather stocky, but quick, and his muscles were like live wires once he got the hang of a thing. He'd keep trying too, whether his problem was staying on one of Milt's demon broncos, or wrestling a steer. With dogged cheerfulness he'd pick himself up and tackle it again until maybe somebody happened along and saved his fool neck by ordering him out of the corral. Mostly, though, he washed the Barber cars and oiled the harness. Sometimes Janet would sit with him on the porch of an evening and they'd talk like old chums. He was twenty-three or four—just a city youngster, but with a homely, boyish face. He had a shy, wistful way about him, wanting to be friends with those gods of his universe, the careless, easy, hell-for-leather cow-punchers. And now he was bringing a girl to the picnic like any of them, all pepped up and expectant as if he really belonged. Then an excited cry went up from about six of the girls at once:

"Oh, here comes Rex Spangler!"

There would probably be reason for their excitement. This Spangler atrocity was what us Easterners expect of the West—a regular six-gun hurricane with all the trappings. He toted a gun and he liked to make gun-plays; and besides, there was a streak of cruel humor in him.

"You might take him for a drug-store cowboy," Milt Barber had warned me. "But don't be too sure. Good-looking, too, only he knows it. He makes me itch for a yellow-jacket to sting him!"

The *clankety-clank* of hoofs announced him. Rider and horse might have been poured into the same mold, after which the devil had breathed fire into them. Rider and horse thundered past the green cowhand and the yellow-haired girl on their ponies, enveloping them in a flurry of dust. The big flamboyant Spangler looked over his shoulder and some whim possessed him. He pulled his horse round, and trotted back, and rode on the other side of the girl. The young fellow with her mightn't have been there at all. The girl evidently was new to Spangler, and not without possibilities. He leaned nearer her and said something, whereat she tilted up her nose like a five-and-ten duchess, but he laughed and flung an arm around her waist and hoisted her out of her saddle over upon his lap; at the same time he jabbed his spurs into his horse, letting out *yip-yips* and *ki-yis*. She screamed and fought, but that big cowboy didn't mind in the least.

As for the young fellow who was left behind, he looked plumb dumfounded at first. There never was such a mixed-up jumble of expressions as showed on his stunned face. Then he yelled "Hey!" and whipped up his horse with his hat, and the little pony almost shot out from under him, so that he dropped his hat and clung to the pommel of the saddle. He hung on, somehow, and when his pony came up neck-and-neck with Spangler's horse, he leaned over and tried to get hold of Spangler's bridle. Spangler pretended to be right surprised. He reached out a long powerful arm, caught the boy by the collar, and yanked him clear of the saddle; then he just let him drop in the road. Still holding the girl, he dashed on, turning into the grove right into the midst of our picnic, where he skidded his horse to a halt and let the girl slide off his leg to the ground. The girl was flushed and laughing. Spangler landed on his heels in front of her.

He wore chaps wide as a skirt at the bottom. Leather thongs dangled from polished discs down the leg. He wore a big six-gun. His wide belt was brass-studded. All of his gear was equally spectacular. He let the girl have a bold flashing smile.

"Suited, baby?" he asked arrogantly.

She screwed her painted-on mouth into a pout, yet looked about her to see how the other girls were taking it. Vanity had one big refill, this day.

"Or maybe," said Spangler, "you want me to go fetch your little boy friend?"

"That pea-green ash-can!" sniffed the girl, whose name we later heard was Verna Krause. "That poor prune—look at him now!"

The young fellow had picked himself up out of the dust, and started to come on to the picnic on foot; but there were two riderless ponies, his and the girl's. He had borrowed them at the ranch, and now they were innocently cropping wildflowers by the roadside. The conscientious kid had to secure those borrowed horses first of all; he had all but put his hand on the bridle when the little beast flung up its head and scampered up the road and joined the other one, where the two of them went on nibbling wildflowers.

"Whoo-ee!" roared the cowboys at the picnic. Those ponies' bridles weren't hanging, being still over their necks, and everybody foresaw the entertainment to follow.

The boy heard the mocking cheers from the picnic. He hesitated, but he had to get those ponies. He tried again. They let him get almost to them, then trotted off another little ways toward home. They played with him. And I am positive that they laughed at him. Still the boy kept after them. It was a good eighteen miles back to the ranch.

"Rubbed out of the picture," the Krause girl sneered, "just like that."

But for me, and Janet perhaps, who didn't seem able to get her mind on the picnic after that, he was the only one in the picture for as long as I could see those three diminishing specks up the wide valley. Ragingly angry that youngster must be. Not that he cared two-bits for Verna Krause. He didn't. She was just some one he had asked to come to the picnic, as I found out later; but still she was his girl for the time being, and he had let another man take her away from him.

"Who is that boy?" I asked Milt Barber.

A worried look came into Milt's calm gray eyes. He shook his head dubiously. "You know what they say about a bull pup that gets bested in its first fight?"

"You mean that he's never any good afterward, being convinced that he always will get licked?"

"That's it," said Milt.

"But the thing dazed him, scattered his wits," I protested, "and he thought he had to catch those miserable ponies, even if it does look like an alibi for not coming on and getting himself beaten up by that big bruiser. He's new out here, isn't he?"

"As green hay," said Milt, "but he wanted to come. His dad is the old buccaneer in Omaha that I ship my stockers and feeders to. Old Glenn Ramsey—bulldog breed!" Milt shivered in recollection. "Some of the nips I got from that old coot hurt yet! But he's one of my best friends—for twenty-thirty years. I've nipped him too, but he never whimpered. And now he's shipped young Glenn out to me."

"But you said he wanted to come?"

"He did," said Milt. "He asked for it, but I reckon he didn't know he was asking for what he got today. What's worse, that boy has always been cuddled under his mamma's apron. Even when he's through college and old Glenn takes him into his office at the stockyards, figuring he'll boil the sap out of him, it's just as bad. Neither of 'em figured on young Glenn himself, though. He'd been meeting the round-up bands sent with the cattle, and so, as his dad tells me over long-distance, he gets himself the swell idea he'll come out here and toughen up into a real *hombre*. Mother weeps, says old Glenn is an unnatural parent—but he ships me his yearling just the same, and I'm to put the grand old brand of the West on him."

"But he's no sissy," I said.

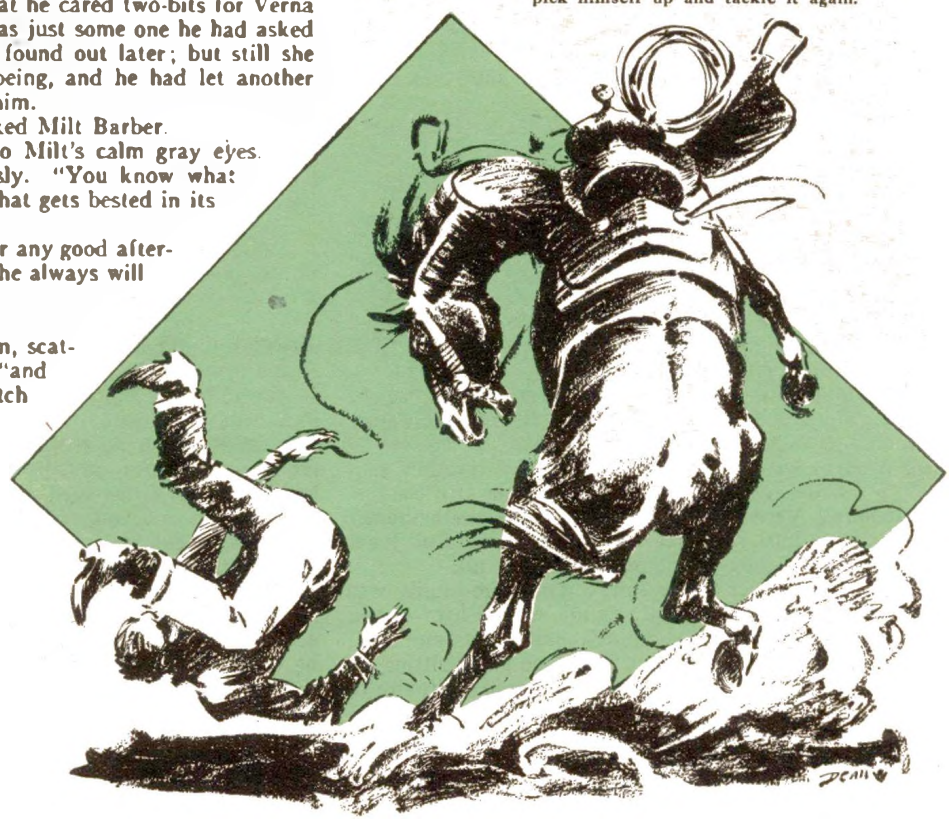
"No," said Milt, "and I was agreeably surprised. He's plain and serious-minded, and he wouldn't let me make a guest of him. If I'd let him eat and sleep with the men, he said, he'd take it as a real favor, and when I said, 'Sure, all right,' you'd have thought I was Queen Elizabeth making a knight out of him or something. —Damn Rex Spangler!" Milt added forcibly.

Late that afternoon as we were riding home from the picnic—all of us of the Bar-B outfit, I mean—we met young Ramsey astride his pony. He had trailed those ponies clear to the ranch before he could lay a hand on them, and now he was sticking to his original idea, which was to go back to the picnic.

"But that particular picnic is done broke up," one of the cow-punchers told him.

Then the boy asked: "Where'll I find Spangler?"

He'd keep trying . . . . with dogged cheerfulness pick himself up and tackle it again.



"Spangler?" They looked at one another and pulled long faces. "Now, now, bub," they said earnestly, "you don't want to find Spangler!" The boy saw they didn't believe him. "And besides," one of them added, "we told him about you, and he pulled his freight *pronto*."

Even Janet smiled, and it gradually dawned on young Ramsey that they thought he had run away. And worse, he began to doubt if it wasn't the truth, for the color died out of his face, and you could see that something was dying in him. And he could prove nothing, even to himself, because as a matter of fact Rex Spangler did leave the next day. Spangler was a follower of the rodeos, doing his spectacular hard riding and such, and he had a string of dates to fill. . . .

In the days that followed I'd sit on the porch of the old ranch house and see young Glenn Ramsey going about his chores in the barn-lot and around the stable and sheds. He wasn't the same youngster at all. In the long summer twilight he would sit on the corral gate—just sit there looking at the ground. Then one Sunday afternoon, when everybody else had pulled out and he was sitting there, I strolled down through the barn-lot and when I came to the corral gate I said "*Ouch!*"—making believe I'd turned my ankle. He jumped down as if out of his sleep and steadied me on my pins.

"It'll be all right in a minute," I said, holding to the gate, and after a little he climbed up on the top rail again and I did too, but he had gone back to his job of looking down at the hoof-packed ground under him. Even when I'd got to talking to him like his own father might, trying to argue some self-respect into him, he'd only shift on the rail uneasily. At last I burst out.

"Why in hell, son," I said, "why in hell, if it's as bad as all that, do you stay on here? There's other places!"

WITHOUT lifting his head he turned his face to me and I saw something in his eyes—no, not tears, but something stubborn—and a swelling of the muscle in his jaw. "I'm staying on here," he said.

He'd stay on; bred in the bone, that dumb brute stubbornness!

But a thought struck me. Maybe Janet was the reason he stayed.

"Is it Janet?" I asked him straight.

His head jerked up.

"Miss Barber isn't to be aspired to," he rapped out for my information. "Not by me, she isn't."

"Of course not," I hastily agreed. "And so you're staying on just because you're staying on?"

He uttered one word—"God!" I think it was—and jumped down and went away, stumbling as he went. The licked, beaten, mangled bulldog pup!

About Janet now— Did she spare him? Of course she didn't. Not a girl like Janet, Janet with her large gray eyes, all sweetness and courage. The real kindness would have been to let him alone. And she did try, but suddenly she had to hurt him worse. The other girl, the biscuit-shooting Verna Krause down at the eating-house, couldn't have hurt him, one way or another. But Janet could, and did—though not meaning to at all.

It began at supper one evening. Only the family was there; and Janet's mother—that's my sister Elise—stared into the twilight outside the dining-room window and said:

"Milt, I declare, there's that poor lone ghost sitting on the gate again. I—I declare, Milt, I'm going to write to his mother."

"No," said Milt, though he had been worrying too. "No, don't do that."

"But," stammered Elise, "can't we send him home—or anything?"

"No," said Milt again. "No, it's too big for us. Better not meddle."

But Janet meddled. The family went on eating in silence, but after a minute Janet carefully set her napkin down and without a word she rose and left the room. The others looked at one another. None of us had guessed that she had been hit that hard by young Ramsey. Milt started to get up and follow her, but Elise shook her head at him and Milt sat back, muttering that he'd only be an old blunderer anyhow.

"She has only gone to her room," said Elise. "I'll go up to her in a little while."

BUT Janet hadn't gone to her room. Out the window I saw her trim figure racing toward the corral and Elise certainly saw her too.

Perhaps you can picture that scene in the twilight by the corral gate. Two young hearts groping for each other and getting nowhere. Janet told her mother later what happened, and it wasn't a bit encouraging. She came on him suddenly and startled him so that he almost fell off the gate—after which he stood on one foot and then on the other, with his hat in his hand, while she talked to him. Janet's hands make fluttering little gestures for emphasis when she talks in downright earnest, so it's not difficult to see her outlining certain facts to that young man.

"See here, Mr. Ramsey," she said to him, "even a worm can give itself too much importance—always thinking that everybody else has nothing else to do except to keep on thinking that it *is* a worm! You're not so important that folks can keep on laughing about that affair forever, are you? Suppose you give the boys here at the ranch a chance to forget about it entirely. But if you insist on moping around, why, they'll respect your privacy. It's a way we have in the West. Come out of it, won't you? Then—I give you my word—you'll see those boys lift their eyebrows and look at one another and say, 'Well, what do you know? If here isn't a human being!' And from then on they'll treat you like one. Won't you come out of it—please?"

It sounds rough, I know, for Janet is as forthright as a hammer cracking a nail on the head, but I'll bet there was a pleading tenderness in her tone and that it plunged young Mr. Ramsey into such a state of emotional turbulence that he really did not know what he did next.

"Won't you, please?" Janet said again.

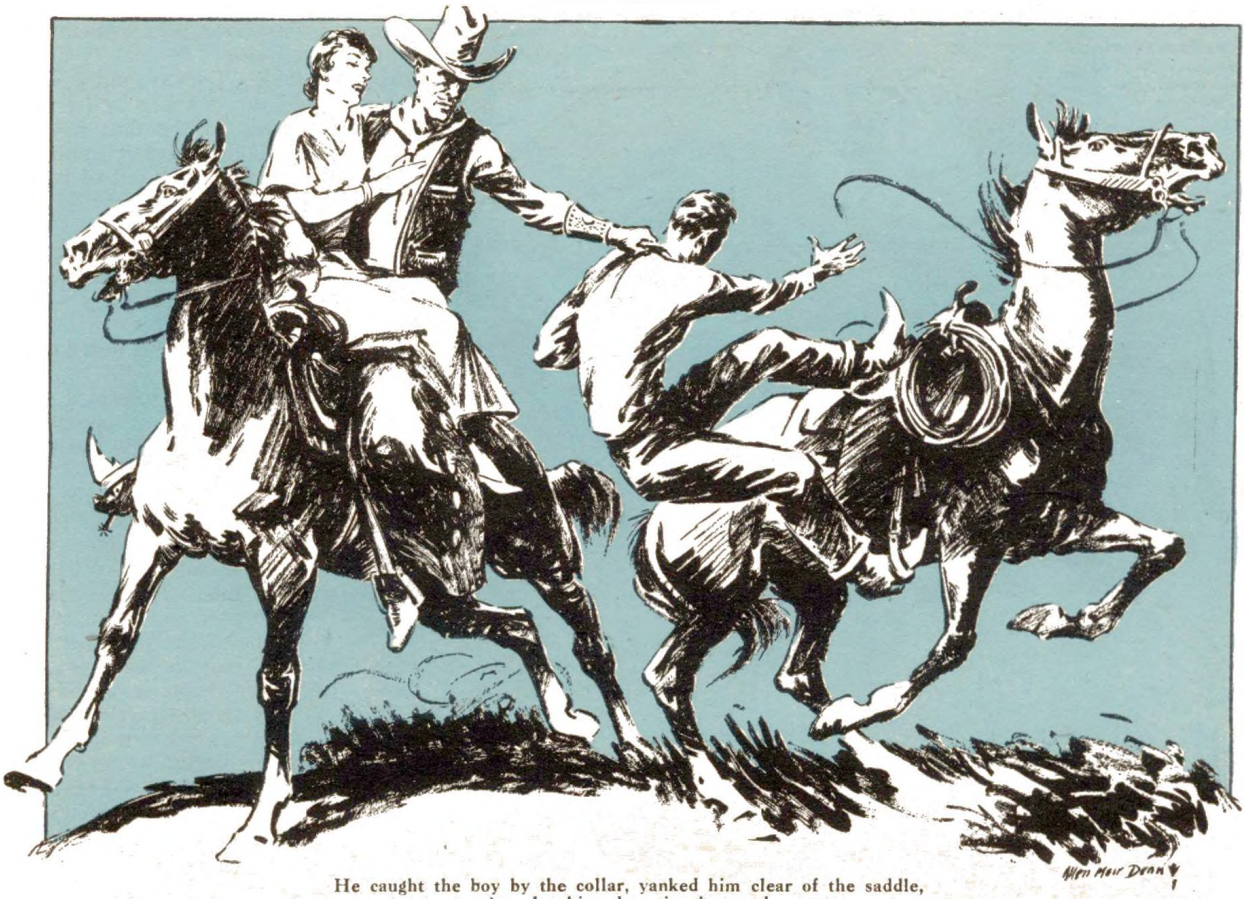
And then what does that storm-swept boy do but turn on her and grab her close to him.

"Janet!" he said, "Janet!"

JANET didn't do anything. She stood unmoving while his arms were about her and he was saying, "Janet! Janet!" as if it were a prayer uttered by a miserable lone man on a mountain-top. Then he probably realized that he wasn't a miserable lone man, at least not on a mountain-top. Anyway, he dropped his arms and stood looking at her, wide-eyed and scared. And it looked as if he'd turn and run, for she said to him:

"One moment, if you please." It was a command, really, and must have stung like one. The daft young man had delivered himself into the lady's hands, and she was going to exact an accounting. Yet I am sure that her voice, as she went on, was as gentle as only Janet's voice can be. "You had no right to do that," she said.

Now Janet isn't the kind of girl who would use that old line, or, that is, what it sounded like. Of course, when they had just been "Mister"-ing and "Miss"-ing each other, it was considerable of an advance for him to enfold her in his arms; but no matter what their tongues uttered, weren't their hearts already speaking to each



He caught the boy by the collar, yanked him clear of the saddle, then let him drop in the road.

other? Weren't they already down to the primitive elementals, and wasn't taking a girl in your arms just another elemental anyway? Of course, and Janet Barber had the good sense to know it, yet here she was sorrowfully telling him he didn't have the right.

"I—I know I didn't, Miss Barber," he stammered, but she cut him short.

"Oh, hush that," she said impatiently. "I don't believe you even know what I mean."

"I don't need anyone to tell me," he retorted. "Even to look at you, a wet smack like me—"

"That's what I mean," she interrupted. "What right have you to put your hands on a girl, when you wouldn't fight for her?"

That roused him. "But I never put my hands on that other girl!" he declared.

"Indeed?" said my niece—and she used, I'll bet, that rising inflection that's one of the handiest snickersnees of her incomprehensible sex. She wasn't the slightest bit interested in his reassurance about the other girl. Oh, no, of course not! "Indeed!" she said. "But you put your hands on *me*, you know. Am I to understand, then, that if I had been that girl at the picnic, you would have done a little of this and that or whatever, to hold me?"

So there it was. In half a dozen words and a question-mark she had faced him with his manhood.

He did not answer at once. His homely honest face was distorted with pain when at last he looked at her.

"I don't know," he said. "I—I don't know." Even though it meant the right to take her in his arms still he did not know; that was the state he had got himself into by his wretched doubts and morbid self-questioning.

"Very well," said Janet. "Very well. I think, Mr. Ramsey—I think you had better go home to your mother."

Then, looking straight before her, she hurried back to the house and ran up the stairs and shut herself in her room, leaving him out there in the thickening dusk—outside all human fellowship. A complete job my tender-hearted little niece had made of it, so complete that no fellow human being might reach him. Yet there was a fellow-creature—not a human one, though—who did it.

No wandering half-grown mongrel should have strayed into the barn-lot when it was feeding-time for the milling riot of chickens, ducks, turkeys, guinea-fowl and geese. It was the next morning, and Glenn Ramsey stood knee-deep in the swirling conglomerate, tossing out gobs of mash from an old dishpan. He finished, and waded out; then I saw a dog squirming between the bars of the pasture gate into the barn-lot. He was hardly more than an overgrown puppy, all feet and head and floppy liver-colored ears, and he had an inquisitive black snout that went sniffing along the ground until it brought him into the midst of the ravenous poultry. He disappeared; but almost at once I saw him again—or, rather, I saw a yellow streak and a big indignant gander right behind. The streak curved here and there, uttering needlelike yelps, while the gander used the dog's fast-humping rump for a chopping-block.

Now where in all this strange hostile country was a dog's merciful Providence? Oh, yes, over there, walking away, oblivious, to hang the old dishpan on its nail. The yellow streak described two circles around him. Omnipotence was absent-minded this morning, and must be reminded ere one of the chosen horribly perished! In a frenzy the

Two fists, as the mathematician counts, seemed multiplied into a vortex.

puppy-dog leaped against Glenn Ramsey's stomach. It jolted the lad out of his dark reverie and he caught the pup to him and held it out of the gander's reach. He drove the gander away, set the dog down and went on. But the little dog ran in front of him and stopped to look up at him. Glenn stumbled over him, and saw two beseeching eyes lifted to his.

Glenn stooped and folded a soft floppy ear over his fingers, which set the dog's tail to pounding. Then he straightened—seemed to hold himself straighter than he had before. The dog kept close behind him. From that day on that black muzzle was plastered, you might say, to Glenn Ramsey's heel. "Say, you ought to see this big strong guy handle a gander!" the dog would proudly tell everybody in practically so many words.

What none of us had been able to do, not even Janet Barber, a half-grown yellow pup, scared to death of a gander, was doing for the boy. . . .

Labor Day came and there was another picnic at Budd's Grove. About everybody was there, and Glenn Ramsey came too. There was something rock-hard and enduring in that stocky compact mother-sheltered boy. He came alone, riding his pony,—not so awkwardly as before,—the little dog trotting along beside him.

Unexpectedly Rex Spangler burst upon us soon afterward. For a brief space the hero of the rodeos would flash his splendor before the home-folks! The blonde Verna Krause let out a squeal and raced down the steps of the dancing-platform to meet him—but even as Spangler flung himself from his saddle she tripped over Glenn Ramsey's dog, who had run between her feet.

The pup was looking for Glenn, who had ridden on to the creek to water his horse; now the little dog stopped and cocked his head to see what it was all about. The Krause girl's dress was dusty all down the front when she got up, as were also her powdered bare arms and the end of her nose—and Rex Spangler stood there spraddled like a colossus and grinned amusedly at her.

Fury and mean spite leaped into the girl's eyes. She pointed a theatrical finger at Glenn Ramsey's dog.

"If you don't kill that pooch for me, Rex Spangler—"

Spangler looked at the small dog.

"Oh, sure, baby," he said. "I always did want to see how far I could throw a dog by its hind legs." And he went to the dog, holding out his hand with deceptive friendliness. But the dog squared back out of reach. A cowboy whooped: "Hoo-ray for the rodeo champeen!"

All the good nature left Spangler's face as he pounced at the dog, only to get his hand slashed by sharp puppy teeth.

"Hoo-ray!" whooped a dozen cowboys.

"Even at that," screamed the Krause girl, "the pooch shows more fight than his master!"

Spangler ran for the dog, who was too muddled in his head to know that Glenn had been whistling for him. The distracted pup tried to run under the steps of the platform, but the passage beneath was boarded up, so there he was cornered. Two booted legs penned him in.

"Now then!" said Rex Spangler, beginning to grin as he turned round and lifted one sharply spurred heel for a backward kick into the side of the cringing animal.

A wave of sickness swept over most of us, I guess. Janet shuddered and put her hands over her eyes. There wasn't any possibility of reaching Spangler in time, for we were on the platform. Nobody thought of Glenn Ramsey. But suddenly there he was, breathless. He fastened a hand in Spangler's shirt-collar and jerked him from the dog, which thereupon darted away.

"Oh," said Spangler, "it's the little dough-face!"

Glenn's lips were quivering. "You let that dog alone!"

"Why?" said Spangler. "This is a free picnic, aint it?"

"I—I'm telling you to let that dog alone."

"I heard you," said Spangler. "One mutt is the same as another to me—only you're easier to catch."

"Shucks, Rex," said Milt, "let him be."

"Rex Spangler," cried the Krause girl, "you goin' to let that sap yank you around?"

"Shut up, painted doll!" And Spangler looked up at his audience with a smirking gleam in his eyes. Then he turned his twisted grin on Glenn Ramsey. "Now then, little Alfred, get set for your first spanking."

But at this moment Glenn's dog returned. In one glad burst of smell and sight he discovered his master—but at the same instant found himself gripped by his hind legs and circling in the air over his enemy's head.

"Always did want to see how far I could throw a dog," said Spangler. "You be umpire, little Alfred."

"Little Alfred" swung his right fist straight to Rex Spangler's mouth. Boy, oh, boy—that swing! Blind rage may have given it force, but clear-visioned expertness drove it true. Old Glenn Ramsey's coddled youngster had never had a fight, but evidently that hadn't kept him from an earnest academic study of the motions. I sensed what had been a male child's pathetic instinct to break through the cocoon of jeweler's cotton and honey in which a too-fond mother had cradled him.

Rex Spangler did not throw the dog. He dropped the pup as a white tooth slipped from between his purple lips.

His hand flashed to his hip, but Glenn Ramsey caught the barrel of the gun as it left the holster, and it seemed to us that the shots—three of them—went wild. By that time the Bar-B foreman and a half dozen others were on Spangler, taking the gun away from him. They pointed out to him that the kid was unarmed. "And you got as many fists as he has," added the Bar-B foreman.

It was all right with Spangler. He shouted down protests. Yeah, ladies might be present—but he demanded his rights. He'd been smashed in the mouth before them all, and now he'd square it before them all! He was a slugger, and his reputation included general rough-housing. He licked his lips and swung wide from the shoulder. Glenn only partly blocked the blow, and he was knocked sideways, half tripping over his own feet. Somehow he contrived not to fall, and came back. Spangler's second blow crashed through his guard to his jaw and spun him obliquely backward as if he had been snapped off a whip. He came back again.

"You still got that chance to run," said Spangler, but the boy shook his head. I question if anything short of being beaten unconscious would have erased that set, sullen look in his eyes.

"The poor simp aint got the sense to run," the Krause girl piped up.

"Not when it's a yellow dog he's fighting for, Miss Krause!" said Janet Barber significantly.

Janet's face was white. She was fighting that fight herself. With each blow Spangler struck, the hurt of it showed on her agonized face. Now, when Spangler murderously intended to make a finish with his third swing, she shut her eyes. She could not bear to look. But she should have looked!

Spangler's next swing was not blocked at all. The target sank suddenly between two sturdy shoulders, and Spangler's mallet-like fist missed entirely, jerking the slugger's big-boned body round with it. For an instant Spangler's huge bulk was off-center, unwieldy, helpless. In that instant a fist steaming-hot propelled it farther off-center, and another farther yet. Two fists, as the mathematician counts, seemed multiplied into a smothering vortex.

We saw Rex Spangler toppling farther; we saw the acceleration of that colossal disintegration. He toppled like a column of granite blocks. He tried to get up, but he had to make several tries at it, and when he lurched drunkenly into the storm area again, Glenn Ramsey spoke for the first time since the fracas had started.

"Care to run, Mr. Spangler?"

"You—" was Rex's only answer.

Deftly Glenn sidestepped the lurching rush. It was beautiful footwork. The boy was controlling things now, and attending to them with easy precision. He might have been at the "Y" gym working out a problem with careful academic intentness.

"Better run, Rex! Better run!" everybody shouted.

Spangler turned uncomprehendingly. A left, a right, and a left again blotted out his already battered face.

"Get going!" roared Milt Barber. "Get going, you big dub!"

The idea seemed to penetrate. He would never have done it if his mind had been clear. But his mind was dazed; it needed outside suggestion. He staggered lumberingly back, and started to turn.

"Wait!" said Glenn Ramsey, his face ashen. "Wait!" he repeated. "It makes me sick to see a man run."

Spangler hesitated, then stopped.

Glenn turned to Milt. His voice was quavery, and he seemed to be swaying. "That revolver, please, Mr. Barber," he said. "Give it back to him."

Milt shucked out the cartridges and handed Spangler the gun. I doubt if Spangler knew whether it was a pistol in his hand, or a plug of tobacco.

"Now, Mr. Spangler," said Glenn,—and I could see it was an effort for him to get the words out,—"you're leaving these parts, understand? You're leaving!"

"Eh?" said Spangler. And he looked strange. If you could have seen the expression on his face! But—explain it if you can—he suddenly put out his great paw to the little fellow to shake hands.

Glenn didn't see it. His knees gave under him, and he wilted into a heap upon the ground.

Janet Barber reached him first. She went down on her knees and pressed her hand over his heart. Then she snatched it away, looked at it, and began tearing open Glenn's shirt. There was blood! A bullet had plowed a furrow between two of the boy's ribs.

"Say—the game little bantam!" a leathery cowboy muttered; then he ran to bring a dipper of water. We heard the ripping of fabrics, and girls handed Janet strips of chiffon and georgette. On her knees Janet tended the wound.

The foreman of the Bar-B turned to Milt. "Boss," he said, "I wouldn't be anyways surprised if you got the makings of a cowhand here."

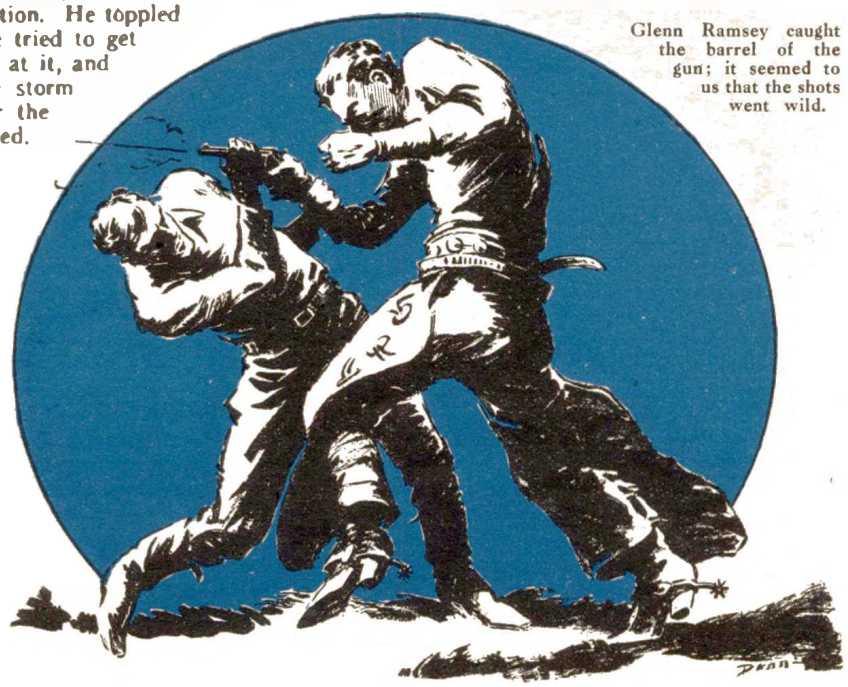
Glenn opened his eyes and saw Janet's face close over his. After a while, he managed to say diffidently:

"Is—is your question answered now, Miss Barber?"

"What question?" But suddenly her cheeks went red—and before them all Janet put her cheek against his.

Then the dog—that overgrown pup—jumped on Glenn's chest and nearly licked his face off. Glenn crooked an arm over the frantically wriggling little body and smiled up at us apologetically.

"I couldn't let the poor mutt down," he explained. "I—I just couldn't lose *his* good opinion, seemed-like!"



Glenn Ramsey caught the barrel of the gun; it seemed to us that the shots went wild.

In Soviet Russia—the Russia of the anti-God posters and the Five-Year Plan, of free marriage and divorce, and of the dreaded secret police—the two Americans of this flame-vivid story go through a series of amazing adventures. The author knows well whereof he writes—and has given us a story of exceptional power, novelty and fascination.

By

S. ANDREW WOOD

Comrades Of Chaos

He struck with the heavy butt as the Mongol lurched at him. . . . The huge figure thundered from the platform.

The Story So Far:

AT the cracked window of the little room in Apartment House 187, Karl Marx Street, Elsa Peterson stood looking down at the pavement below. This had been the house of her father, the English scientist, and the beautiful Countess Nikolai, his wife. And now—it was like a cheese that teems with maggots, inhabited by a score of families billeted there, with only two tiny rooms left for Elsa and her brother Martin.

It was rather terrible to be only half-Russian in the Red Republic. Worse still, when the Russian half came from the hated aristocrat blood, even though Elsa and Martin were citizens of the Soviet—even though Comrade Elsa slaved in the dispensary of the Lenin Hospital.

Nitchevo! What did it matter? It had been a lovely house, and she had had a lovely mother and a fine father; but they were dead, and the Government had taken the house, turned it into a barracks, and filled it with five hundred people. It was now Apartment House 187.

Martin came in from his work, and they ate their scanty supper. "I wonder if John Worden ever thinks of us, now," observed Martin presently.

A little tinge of color surged over Elsa's thin cheeks. "Why should he? He's safe in America, and he's rich and—happy, I expect; a bloated capitalist, Martin."

"Old John Worden a bloated capitalist!" Martin laughed softly and shook his head. "No fear. He's the old hell-for-leather John, for a certainty."

Somehow the name of John Worden lightened the dingy apartment. Yet tragedy lay in memory of him. John Worden had been their demi-god six years before. They were children in their 'teens, and he was a great, clean-limbed giant of twenty, with blue eyes that laughed at the lean years and the lean people about him. And then one snowy night, in the days of the Tcheka, the blow fell. The secret police came very swiftly and silently, as they always did. John Worden's father and mother were pistoled as they walked through the dark garden to the waiting prison-van.

While the suave explanations of an "accident" were being made, David Peterson and his Russian wife were sent to the Siberian timber-camps. They had both died on the way, peacefully, it was said, and in each other's arms.

Somehow, John Worden had got out of the very teeth of the Tcheka, escaped from Russia, reached England and then America—to become rich, in that dear, sane country which seemed to belong to another planet. And Elsa and Martin Peterson were left behind in the chaos. . . .

Another blow fell now. For now again the dreaded secret police appeared, asking questions about one John Worden. Martin was hauled off to the sinister Butyrka prison—where he was "questioned rather severely."

The police had indeed reason to ask questions about John Worden. For it was he himself, disguised as a workman, who spoke to Elsa next day. He had come back to

Russia to rescue them—and to exact vengeance from Boris Vladimir, who was responsible for his father's death.

Worden was to have still greater cause for vengeance, it appeared; for Boris Vladimir told Elsa that he would secure Martin's release if she would come to him at his "house of the red door." And when Elsa saw how Martin had been tortured, she consented. Just in time John Worden appeared, knocked out the Cossack, and drugged him. Then with Elsa, and the order for Martin's release, Worden went to the prison, brought away the badly injured Martin—and laid a plan for their escape out of Russia.

This plan was made to fit the new Russia. The three went to the Marriage and Divorce Bureau and pretended that Martin was Elsa's husband, of whom she was tired, and that Worden was her lover, whom she wished to marry. In a few moments Elsa obtained a "divorce" from Martin and a certificate of "marriage" to Worden. Their false identities thus established by documents they took a train for the Polish frontier. . . .

The Ogpu—animated by Feodora Federoff, a beautiful but terrible young woman mockingly called the "Bright Angel of the Butyrka" and who had known and perhaps loved Worden in earlier days—caught up with them when they left the train near the frontier. They escaped by a desperate ruse, but Martin, succumbing at last to the wounds inflicted upon him, died in a monastery where they took refuge. Worden and Elsa fled to the village of Borodotchi, close to the Polish frontier; but here, as they were about to make a final dash for liberty, the Ogpu pounced upon them.

On condition that Elsa be allowed to go free, Worden acquiesced in his capture; and Elsa was started for the frontier in a Soviet car. . . . But very soon a series of pistol-shots exploded the tires and brought the car to a halt. *(The story continues in detail:)*

THE headlights of the car behind crawled dazzlingly forward, and Elsa continued to sit with a sense of fatalism which perhaps came from her Russian blood. She knew that whoever was in the approaching car, whatever cool treachery was revealing itself, there was no escape from it. The head of the Ogpu chauffeur, with its shaven neck and high glazed collar, turned and looked in at the window. It was too dark to see; but Elsa fancied

there was a grin on his face as he announced: "They have blown our tire to ribbons. We shall have to ascertain their business, citizen."

"Have you no revolver?"

"I have," the man answered negligently; "so sit still and obey instructions."

Elsa smiled stiffly. Had she really believed that the Bright Angel was sending her to the frontier? She knew the answer to that. She had not believed it. Some instinct of woman against woman had prevented her. But John Worden, who was Mitka Ivanovitch, the husband whom a marriage-contract of Soviet Russia had given her, had believed it. He must have forgotten what Russia was, during his years away from it.

"Step out, little one," said the chauffeur. He opened the door, and the stars, which made the sky line like milk above the snowy steppes of the Ukraine, revealed the careless amusement on his face. There was no passion in it, and no pity.

"The instructions were to take me across the frontier into Poland, comrade," said Elsa, speaking as calmly as possible. "I heard them distinctly."

"They are small and pretty ears," returned the Ogpu chauffeur, "and they heard quite correctly. But you know how frontiers alter nowadays, comrade, if you study the books in your Politbureau library, as you should. This one has vanished completely—for you."

Once, marked as she was, something deadly got into her throat—and she hoped, for an instant, that it would kill her.

The other car was throbbing softly alongside now, its door swinging open. The Ogpu chauffeur blew his nose in his handkerchief like one whose job was completed, and called:

"Carry on with the kidnaping, citizens, and let me get back to report this foul attack."

A gloved hand reached out and caught Elsa by the shoulder, clamping her with irresistible strength, and simultaneously, she felt a cloth pressed against her face and the icy sting of some volatile liquid—ether, by its sweet smell. She was far too tired and abandoned by hope to struggle, even if she had not known it to be entirely useless, and she sank into unconsciousness as upon a dark couch. . . .

So it came about that some two days later, Elsa Peterson sat upon a broken chair in a small stone-walled chamber which was roughly furnished as a living-room. Moisture oozed through the ceiling and cockled the anti-God posters which, in incongruous proximity to two ikons, were hung over two plank beds. No sound penetrated the chamber. It was either underground or walled with such thickness as to exclude every noise. An old woman, carrying some greasy mess in a frying-pan, shuffled to the stove, and turned to survey Elsa with a gnomelike drollery of expression as she did so.

"You grow quite strong again, little comrade, eh? They will put you to work, tomorrow, no doubt. Are you ready for it?"

"I think I am ready for anything, Anna Georgievna," answered Elsa. "Tell me, may I ask questions now?"

"You may ask," conceded the old woman, screwing her face distastefully; "but as for the answer—there is no answer to anything in this world. In the next, there may be. When I die, I don't want to go before God—if there is one—with a lot of questions, and find Him dumb, which is why I hang up the ikons. On the contrary, if only Lenin is there, I can point to the posters."

"This is Mos-cow?"

The old woman plumped the frying-pan onto the stove and nodded.

"Tenement No. 3627 — the bowels of it, little one."

"I'm a prisoner?"

Anna Georgievna scratched her chin, which was like the hairy toe of a boot. Her face had the sickly, parchment-like look of one who had lived long underground. It was half-idiotic, cunning, but good-humored.

"Pretty one, you're the guest of Comrade Joseph Stalin; you are a worker for the State, and your number is F.293. It is sacred work, I assure you, though not pleasant. Not very healthy, no. When they set you to work tomorrow in the laboratory,—see how I get that long name!—you will know all about it."

Elsa drew a sharp breath: "This is the W.E.F.?"

Before she answered, Anna Georgievna wiped her hands on her filthy apron and put her arms akimbo, scoldingly.

"And is that not better than a pistol-shot in the neck, better than the Butyrka? Good food, as long as you keep the appetite to eat it, and a bed to sleep on? No, this is not the Death Factory—there, I called it its name! That is nearly half a verst from here—underground," added Anna Georgievna quickly.

"Who sent me here?" Elsa managed to ask.

"What questions!" The old woman was growing exasperated. "Who but Comrade Stalin and Comrade God-knows-who in the Kremlin? It is the rule. You are of the intelligentsia—a chemist. Well, then! You are also a canceled execution-warrant. So you come here, to work in the laboratory. But for some reason you are given comfortable quarters with Anna Georgievna, instead of living in the cellars with the others."

ELSA began to remember. In Moscow they whispered about the W.E.F.—the War Emergency Factory. Old M. Litvin, the head-dispenser at the Lenin Hospital where she had worked, knew of it. It made poison for the war which the Soviet, beleaguered by enemies, believed to be inevitable sooner or later. Gas, disease-cultures, chemical fire! It lay underground, and so deadly was the work that for the most part only political prisoners who had had their death-sentences commuted were employed in the Death Factory, living and working like moles, till they died. . . . Anna Georgievna had called her a canceled execution-warrant, which must mean that, into whatever hands the Bright Angel had delivered her on the road to Poland, they were connected in some manner with the Government. She remembered hardly anything about that, or even how she had been brought to Moscow. But somewhere she had seemed to see Boris Vladimir's face, and heard his voice, for a moment. . . .

All that night—though night and day were the same in those subterranean depths—she slept deeply, fatalistically. The old woman wakened her early. There was a lantern-jawed man, with the sunken eyes and transparent skin of a consumptive, waiting. He was dressed in a Communist's leather jacket and carried a heavy knout at his belt.

"He is dumb," said Anna, pushing Elsa out. "His throat has gone. But that thing at his belt can speak. Be obedient, child."

It was like some pullulating cavern where Elsa found herself, so suddenly among a crowd of half-human beings that in spite of her resolution she shrank. Their faces were barely visible in the dim light, as they shambled like sheep into the opening of some dark, stone-lined passage, but she knew that when they had belonged to the world, they had almost all been bourgeoisie or aristocrats: professors, scientists, teachers. And all at once she felt her hands caught, and saw a face, shrunk to the bone, but still familiar, peering at her.

"God—*you* here, my child!"

It was old Professor Litvin, the chemist who had worked with her in the dispensary of the Lenin hospital. Before he could say any more, a knout cracked and the drove moved along the passage. There was something terrible in their silence, something more terrible than the great stone chamber with flaring lights and glowing furnaces, retorts and benches, into which the passage presently opened out. The place smoked with biting fumes and quivered with heat. Men and women in white masks already worked there. It was like some anteroom of hell, where faceless creatures wrought. . . .

"Put on your mask, child. It seems you are to work with me. Small mercies happen even here," Litvin said.

"How did you come here?" Elsa's limbs were trembling with some toxin that seemed already to have entered her blood—unless it was that it took time to become acclimatized.

"For sabotage, they said. But I think they needed me here, and I was a bourgeois. Perhaps it is better than starving above there. Quicker! The mask, child, before it strikes you down! We work for the Brotherhood of Man, and are not allowed to talk."

Scalding vapors and the roar of electric furnaces that set the ears thrumming and stupefied the brain, chemicals that would have corroded the hands away but for chain-mail gloves, test-tubes with death and agony in them. Once, in some inner cavern, an acid-vat exploded dully, and there was a stifled scream, and then something that writhed beneath a rough blanket was carried out. Elsa heard and saw, telling herself it was only a nightmare with the bestiality of man as its subject, and she would awake, perhaps in the hut at Borodotchi, with John Worden sleeping in the other corner.

Once, too, masked as she was, something deadly got into her throat from the retort which she and Litvin worked on—and she hoped, for an instant, that it would kill her. But before she had recovered fully, one of the masked Communist guards touched her shoulder, and with half-a-dozen of the younger prisoners, she was pushing a railed trolley to the reverberating maw of the great furnace that glowed in a corner of the cavern. . . .

Nature is merciful to both body and soul, and has her own anæsthetic when they are driven beyond endurance. In the W.E.F. beneath the great snow-clad city, where men slaved for the Worker's Paradise, the Regeneration of the World, and the Five-Year Plan, which would make Russia the America of the East, Elsa Peterson found it so. The days passed in a kind of trance. At long last, Russia, which had mauled her so long, had her fast between tooth and claw; and as the work in the laboratory began to sap her blood, so she grew torpid and suffered less.

When, one morning, old Litvin did not appear and the guard told her that he had died during the night, she felt only a dull loneliness. Sometimes, lying on the bed in old Anna's room, with body racked by manual labor, and brain stupefied with fatigue and poisonous gases, she thought of John Worden. But John Worden was in another world, in Russia, in Moscow, probably. He thought she was safely over the frontier—and all the time she was in the catacombs of the Death Factory, hidden from the living world with other canceled executions. It brought a hacking laugh to Elsa's lungs, and she wondered how much longer she would stand it.

SHE crawled back one night,—if it was night,—to find Anna Georgievna with a clean apron and signs that she had undergone ablutions. There were three candles and the lamp lighted, and by their illumination Elsa perceived that a man stood in the room, regarding her as she entered. With difficulty, because the glare of the electric furnace she had worked on all day still blackened her sight, she recognized him.

It was Boris Vladimir; and she saw something pass across his face that might have been a twinge of pity, if it had not vanished immediately. She waited for him to speak, keeping her own lips tight. Deep within her, Elsa was conscious of the treachery of the flesh, which cried out for freedom at any price if it should be offered.

"Have you finished for the day, Citizen Elsa?"

She nodded. Vladimir came a step closer, so that she perceived a little white shadow at his nostrils.

"It hurts—this. You look like a flower in the gutter."

"Thanks. It was you who brought me here, wasn't it?"

"Menjinsky made out an execution-warrant, and I got it canceled. Yes, it was I, Elsa. Feodora handed you to me, that night on the Warsaw road. I thought that if you worked in the W.E.F. a little while, you would become reasonable. And there was a little revenge in it, for that night at my house in the Petrovka."

"But for me, John Worden would have killed you out of hand."

"Yes, I remembered that. I remember it now." He was trembling a little. Boris Vladimir could be inhuman and

pitiless with men, or with women who were nothing to him. But with this woman he could never get the measure of his passion when he looked into her calm eyes. "You'll die here, Elsa. I never meant that to happen."

"No. That was kind of you, Boris. And somehow, I believe it. Everyone makes mistakes—" Elsa answered spiritlessly, blind with weariness as she was.

"Do you know what's happened to Worden? I don't. He's vanished. Feodora has hidden him somewhere, I think."

"No news comes down here. Why have you come? I'm very tired."

"I could get you out. That was what I came to tell you. You know it."

"No," said Elsa, and again: "No."

She sat huddled in the only chair and shook her head, while her heart cried out for the touch of the wintry sun and the sight of people who were not living-dead. Presently she looked up and said:

"Thank you for giving me these quarters with Anna Georgievna. It was you, wasn't it?"

"I couldn't think of you with the herd in the cellars, cruel as I wanted to be. There's a door, and it leads upstairs and out to the street, Elsa. Menjinsky would give me an order of release, and you would walk through it."

"I know the door. I've tried it when Anna was asleep. It's made of steel. Don't come again, Boris, because I should never come out with you. If you want to know why, it's just obstinate respectability. I married John Worden at the No. 3 Marriage and Divorce Office, before we went to Minsk with Martin—who is dead. . . . Have you heard that Martin is dead?"

There was a touch of wildness in her speech. She heard it like one detached from herself, and knew that perhaps it was the phosgene she had worked on that day. Litvin had said that it could produce light-headedness and madness, according to the quantity inhaled. But she saw a dark flush of jealousy spread over Vladimir as she mentioned Worden, and knew she had said it on purpose, so that he would never come again to tempt her. . . .

Elsa closed her eyes on the plank-bed. If weariness was next door to death, she told herself, she would not be alive in the morning. She did not see Vladimir go. She was in the deep sleep of exhaustion.

"WE have various data about Comrade Vladimir, friend Mitka Ivanovitch," said Koregorvsky, secretary to the State Prosecutor, cautiously, with a trace of pomposness in his manner. "Some of it is possibly true, and some—ah—fiction. Where agents are zealous, one has to sift the truth from the fiction. Sometimes, of course, one sifts the fiction from the truth. According to instructions."

"Exactly," returned Worden gravely, looking into the baboonlike face of Koregorvsky and watching it crinkle into a sour smile. "Personally, I am for both, in the present case, Comrade Koregorvsky."

The scene was Koregorvsky's chambers in the Kremlin. The doors were closed and guarded. Koregorvsky had awaited with some curiosity the coming of this new recruit, under the ægis of Menjinsky and the Bright Angel, upon the affairs of Boris Vladimir. Koregorvsky, who hoped to succeed Menjinsky of the Ogpu when he was assassinated, had a ledger full of men and women who, from being hunted, had turned into hunters. But there were few English or American, however disguised, among them. Koregorvsky in the later days of the Tcheka had been a member of the traveling execution-squad. He glanced with a professional curiosity at Worden's neck: Thick and strong—the muzzle would have to be close up when he was finished with. . . .

"So there is personal feeling between you and the handsome People's Commissar, eh?" Koregorvsky rubbed his hands. Neither did he love Boris Vladimir, who was too handsome a cockerel to be a good Communist. Not that Koregorvsky troubled about Karl Marx. But his tenets had given some good hunting, in Russia.

"Menjinsky sent me here on business, comrade," returned Worden coolly, but with a disarming smile. "Not to discuss my personal feelings. Give me the *dossier*, and Madame Feodora and I will go through it at leisure."

HE felt calm and cool-witted. In various corners of the world, peril and death had brushed close by him more than once. But he had never been so far into its charnel house as he was now. Very clearly, John Worden knew there was a period to his life, as surely as if he had lain in the cellars of the Butyrka. Yet he had been before Menjinsky and received his pardon for past offenses from that expressionless mask. He had been made free of a great wardrobe of disguises which were docketed and ticketed like some fantastic theater-cloakroom; and here he was, closeted with this wizened and ugly Spearhead of the Faith.

"There is no real evidence." Koregorvsky sucked in his cheeks. "He is an Oriental. That is no crime. He leads a loose life. That is. He also loves luxury. But he is a People's Commissar. We must make sure of other things."

"I will make sure," said Worden; and something that slipped into his voice for a moment made the little secretary cock an eye at him. Koregorvsky leaned over the desk to reach for a large parchment envelope, and in doing so, disarranged a pile of papers which lay before him. They were small, typewritten documents, and the large black Russian characters upon them stood out clearly: Death-warrants, at a glance! It chanced that Worden stood a little behind Koregorvsky's chair, which was as well. All his body stiffened, and he went pale as death as he stared at the name on one of the warrants. For a moment, a red mist spun before his eyes.

Presently Koregorvsky turned and handed him the parchment envelope.

"You and Madame Feodora put your heads together over that. A pleasant task for you, comrade—it is a lovely head. Personally, I have forsworn women completely. I read a story about some Egyptian queen who poisoned her lovers next morning, and it frightened me."

With a great effort Worden smiled.

"Your loves lie on the table here—these," he said.

"Ah, yes. Some of them are false—the canceled ones. But many of them will follow me to the grave, or even go before me." Koregorvsky, with a loud chuckle, slapped Worden on the back. "You and I like each other, Mitka, eh? We shall get on well together, I see."

Worden passed out of the gates of the Kremlin, with his brain reeling. The sight of Elsa Peterson's name on Koregorvsky's desk set a red mist before his eyes which still lasted. It seemed to him that it must have been a figment of imagination. Elsa was safe—she had sent him a letter from Warsaw. Feodora had put her safely over the frontier. But Feodora was a flame-scorched liar, a red Jezebel whom he would kill, to get the truth. . . .

The paroxysm of fury and despair did not last long. Worden's iron control returned slowly. He could not run berserk among the pistols of the Ogpu and the bayonets of the Red Guards. Desperate as it all seemed, he must pit cunning against cunning to find out what had happened to Elsa.

And so it came about that that night John Worden dined with Feodora Federoff, who had once been the Countess Feodora, a Russian refugee. . . .

After dinner Worden eagerly read a letter which Feodora handed him. It bore the Paris postmark, and he smiled gratefully across the small heavily-curtained room.

"She crosses to London today," he said. "It seems she has met some young man whom she used to know in England. He's taking her across. I shall never forget what you did for her, Feodora."

Feodora's white fingers handed him a tiny liqueur-cup which had been made by a craftsman of Peter the Great. To certain chosen guests she was apt to tell the story of how the blood of the Grand Duke who had owned the liqueur-cup exactly filled a dozen of them when

"Who is there?" she called swiftly. As she spoke, a flash of metal came skimming across the room.

his throat was cut as he sat at dinner, one day in the Revolution. But she did not mention it to Worden now.

"Grand Chartreuse, John. I hoard it for certain commissars who come to see me, though it is against the law. I only hope the young man does not take too much care of your Elsa. Am I a cat?"

"Women be forgetful," said Worden lightly, with a rueful smile.

A cloudy gleam lit Feodora's eyes as they rested upon the big well-knit figure of the man in the evening clothes which now garbed him. "Men have a little weakness that way, I've heard, too," she said.

Worden leaned over and clumsily knocked his cup from the table. The difficulty was not to leap across and seize the transparent throat with his hands until he wrung the truth out of it. To get that, he would love or kill—or both.

"Damn! Pour me out another. I never forgot you, Feodora. But when the Countess Feodora went away suddenly from Antibes, I couldn't follow her because she left no address."

"I should have come back if I had been able to."

Suddenly she moved across and placed her topaz eyes close to his.

"And now we're here together in Russia! Does it frighten you?"

"Tremendously." Worden looked down at the glowing skin that warmed his own. He wondered if it was possible for a decent man to love a woman deliberately, in order to wring a secret from her. Yet he was not impassive. Far from that. She touched him with a soft and deadly fire, and he realized that perhaps she would be able to drug his soul to sleep, in spite of himself.

"I don't care about your Elsa, whether you loved her or not, Mitka Ivanovitch. Nowadays one doesn't trouble about that. And I came first—nearly."

"Nearly." Worden's fingers fell upon the slender wrists.

A low laugh left Feodora. She leaned upon him and pressed her open mouth against his, so closely that it hindered his breathing.

Worden drew away involuntarily.

"You're frightened!" she taunted softly. "Frightened by the Bright Angel!"

The room, with its heavy Russian scents and steam-heat, was very quiet. Yet suddenly Feodora turned. Her body stiffened. There was something in her change from softness to alertness and vigilance that was completely wild-animal-like.

"Who is there?" she called swiftly.

As she spoke, a flash of metal came skimming across the room, apparently from nowhere. Worden saw the glint of it as it came, and moved aside by sheer instinct of self-preservation. In the silk of the divan behind him there was a little tearing sound. He looked round, and saw that the blade of a knife was buried hilt-deep in it. . . .

"Wait!"

The single low word fell from Worden. He continued to sit on the couch in which the flung knife had buried itself, and watched the silent room steadily. As in most of the more luxurious houses in Moscow, its walls were stifled deep in hangings. He saw a slight ripple pass through a yellow curtain by the door.

The second knife came soaring across as he leaped stooping and keeping low down near the carpet. Later, he knew that he forgot Feodora and the crushing touch of her mouth, as though she did not exist. His hands gripped the bulging curtain, and tore it aside, revealing the figure of a man—and yellow fingers that hovered a moment, then came down to his throat.

"Friend Yogatai!"

He drove at the parchment-colored chin, rocking the big head against the wooden wainscot. Behind, he heard the rustle of Feodora's skirt as she slipped like a cat to the sideboard. Worden, even as his hand fell like steel on the leather jacket of Boris Vladimir's Mongol servant, divined her purpose, and called out:

"Don't shoot. We'll question him first. I imagine he's exhausted all his ammunition."

Perhaps Worden turned slightly, as he called; perhaps his grip on the Mongol relaxed momentarily. His captive jerked free. Into Worden's side, just above the hip-bone, came the crash of a heavy boot that sent him sprawling in momentary agony. It was a Kalmuck wrestler's trick which was effective enough, even with bare feet; and if Yogatai had had another knife, John Worden's adventures in Russia might have ended there and then. The crack of Feodora's small revolver came sharply as she fired and missed. The bullet scored a mark on the door-jamb but the huge shadow of the Mongol, black in the doorway for an instant, had vanished.

"Give me that."

Beyond, in the acrid smoke that filled the chamber, he saw a girl's face. "Don't throw a faint!" he said curtly. "We've got to get out."

Worden was on his feet, pallid, limping, but smiling tightly, as he plucked the weapon from Feodora's hand and followed out into the little hall. The door of the house was wide open, and the wind whirled the snowflakes in, for it had begun to snow steadily. As Worden ran, he snatched his furs from the settee where he had flung them. But in the quiet street there was no sign of Yogatai. Nor in the blinding snow-mist lay any chance of tracking him.

"So Boris takes the offensive," said a thoughtful voice by his side. "It seems that he must know you are in Moscow. That was a poor shot of mine, John. Perhaps it was because I was out of uniform."

Feodora was smiling gravely. She glanced down the street as, perhaps, an Englishwoman would look after a beggar-man who had been a little insolent.

"His second knife cut the fringe of my frock." She laughed lightly. "I believe you forgot all about me when you sprang after him. It's cold. Let us go inside again."

"I'd like to pay him back for that kick he gave me," said Worden slowly.

"And forget all about the knives? You baby creature! How? Ten rounds under the Marquis of Queensberry's rules, shaking hands between rounds?"

"Not a bad idea." Worden forced a grin. They were back in the warm and scented room again; and Feodora, lighting a cigarette, watched him from beneath lowered lids. She shrugged slim, pale shoulders.

"I shall find him in order to hand him over to Drishkin, tomorrow. If you like, we'll go and watch them use the branding-iron on his yellow skin, Mitka Ivanovitch."

"I'd rather tackle friend Yogatai myself. I expect Koregorvsky has his *dossier*. Through Yogatai may lie the road to Vladimir."

"As you wish." Feodora stifled a little yawn. "How I hate to discuss business in what should be hours of pleasure! You will call me Madame Bright Angel next."

Her allure shone gently again. There was something almost inhuman about the steely nerve that was in the soft, warm flesh of her. This time she did not sit on the couch and press her dewy mouth against Worden's again, but talked with a smoldering and passionate curiosity behind her eyes —as though for once she had met a man who baffled her, and was fascinated by the discovery. . . .

It was late when Worden rose. Feodora Federoff, her small feet tucked up beneath her on the couch, watched him from beneath bright lashes.

"I think you're a devil in disguise. Devils can be cold as well as hot, I imagine. Won't you sit down and let me read passages from Polak's 'Citizenship and Mankind' to you? If you like, I'll put a pair of spectacles on my nose; as a good Communist schoolmistress should. Or is it your Elsa? Personally, I think she'll forget you."

Worden leaned over the golden short-clipped head, and forced up the shapely chin with his palm. He saw with a cold and sober triumph the slight shiver that ran through Feodora at his touch. So far, he knew, he was winning the duel.

Smiling, he remarked:

"That dear fellow Koregorvsky told me about some Egyptian queen who always killed her lovers."

"Like a lady-spider? Thanks for the compliment. Unless Koregorvsky or some other man falls a victim, I shall probably end by giving you the alternative of coming to the Marriage and Divorce office with me, or being shot."

Leaping lightly to her feet, she opened the door.

"Take care of Yogatai," she said.

She watched Worden's big figure in its hooded furs, vanish, then sat over the stove, smiling faintly into its glow. Presently she took up the two knives which the Mongol had thrown, looked at them and flung them aside. . . .

In the snowy street John Worden walked beneath the fire-signs that flared like misty banners in the snowstorm. In Russia, he was pondering, one attained iron control, or perished. In another country his racking anxiety for Elsa would have driven him nearly insane. In this country of born serfs who worked for the mastery of the world and mingled the barbarism of three centuries ago with the faith of the monk and the pagan soul of some robot state, it was different.

Yet he felt a torment growing with every step. Feodora had revealed nothing. Was Elsa alive or dead? Perhaps if he had given way to that cloudy passion when the Bright Angel's lips had touched him, he would have learned. . . .

"Gigolo to the Bright Angel. Splendid, Worden!"

A Red Guard, sheltering by the Iberian virgin, heard him laugh. The man looked half-enviously after Worden. Vodka, the gift of God—if there was a God. Nobody laughed by himself in Russia nowadays, without it.

IN one of the rooms of Tenement No. 3627, that night, Dmitri Polenka, a street-scavenger, knocked over an oil-lamp in his sleep. At least, that was the finding of the Fire Commission afterward, though they had no evidence from Dmitri Polenka, who, with his room, was cremated to nothing almost before the alarm was given.

Tenement No. 3627 was an old merchant's palace which had stood by the edge of the frozen river for half a century, and it went alight like a rocket. Some three hundred people, according to the Commissariat of People's Housing, escaped alive.

Among those who perished, upon the sworn statement of Sasha Kolinsky, his bedmate, was one Gunter, an *Amerikanka* ne'er-do-well and gutter-scum, who had drunk himself to sleep that night, as was his usual practice, on the odd occasions he slept there. When the screams had rung through Tenement 3627, Gunter had sat up and laughed at the aforesaid Sasha Kolinsky, who had accidentally dropped upon his knees and prayed, though he was a good citizen, anti-God and not at all given to superstition.

The truth was that Nick Gunter, engineer, adventurer, and general rough-neck who had come from Texas to Russia under the Five-Year Plan, waited for panic to empty the room, in order more comfortably to take a shot of vodka from the bottle he kept wrapped up in the mangy fur-coat he used as a pillow. A sudden awakening, experience had taught him, was apt to make vodka necessary to shake his brain into gear. He was a lean little man of forty or so, with red Indian features, and a faint scar that reached from temple to chin, a lurid Russian vocabulary that ranged about the word "Bolshie," and a complete indifference to Ogpu agents which took away the breath of the people in Tenement 3627.

Gunter looked out of the doorway and saw that the whole corridor was sheeted in flame. When the wind blew it aside, the staircase was revealed melting like tin and hanging in shreds. There were sounds in Tenement 3627 that blew the sleep from his brain at one puff. He remembered suddenly some circular iron stairs which ran to the depths of the house. Usually an Ogpu agent was lounging about them, for some reason; but when he reached them now, there was nobody there. Even the Ogpu gave way before fire. The stairs were hot, and they scorched him, but Nick Gunter descended them, sure that they led to some back door opening onto the river-bank.

"Guess the Bolshies are not going to get fried Nick Gunter for dinner, yet," he muttered.

It was some cellar he found himself in, and there was a square window through which he could see the snow-blink. Nobody save himself had thought of the iron stairs. Even in a fire-panic, the Ivans queued up and followed the drive.

There was an iron bar on the stone floor, and Gunter lifted it to smash the window. It was just at that moment that a wailing cry reached his ears, muffled yet near.

It was like an old woman keening hopelessly. And then the American caught sight of a small steel door in some newly-mortared brickwork. Beneath it trickled a little stream of molten lead which dripped from the ceiling. Gunter swung the heavy bar to the lock, without much hope. But presently he perceived that the molten lead was aiding him, raising the solid door from its hinges as it congealed on the cold stone.

"Keep back!" he roared. He began to sweat and weaken. Nick Gunter forgot at times to take food nowadays, when he could exchange it for vodka and Odessa brandy, the only good things in Russia. The lock splintered; then through the opening of the door an old woman crawled. He lifted her over the rivulet of lead; and beyond, in the acrid smoke that filled the chamber, he saw a girl's face. Gunter caught her as she crept to the door.

"Don't throw a faint!" he said curtly. "We've got to get out."

"I'll try not to," said Elsa.

"Gee, you're not Russian! How in hades—"

Elsa pointed dumbly to the ceiling, which was beginning to sag ominously, and Gunter smashed the window at which Anna Georgievna was clawing like a scared cat. The drop to the river-bank outside was no more than a few feet, and there was light enough in all conscience, from the red torch that Tenement 3627 made on the snow and the ice-bound shipping.

"Safe enough now," said the man, looking curiously at Elsa. "Where's the old woman?"

Elsa shook her head. The fresh air poured into her lungs like cold steel, turning her dizzy for a moment. Her companion caught her, steadying her. She was not sure yet that it was not some dream that she stood beneath the open sky with this Scaramouche of a man by her side. He was ragged and dirty as any Russian as he turned to glance at the spark-strewn sky, but there was a look of genial rascality about him that was different altogether from the torpid misery of the Moscow proletariat.

"You'd better find shelter," he said roughly. "It's darned cold out here. Good-night."

He walked away, but turned again and said:

"Anywhere to go? You're too pretty to stay out all night in this city, especially if you're a foreigner. What were you doing behind that steel door? Say!" Nick Gunter scowled. "You're not one of those Communist janes who're learning the alphabet here to go back and make a hell-upon-earth in London and New York?"

SLOWLY, Elsa told him. She felt too indifferent to life to care whether or not he was to be trusted. Nick Gunter listened impassively, then said with a soft laugh:

"So you're supposed to be as good as dead? That's darned funny. I'm likewise, except that I'm supposed to have been accidentally killed. Been running round Moscow in a pale pink haze ever since. Story's too long, and you're too nice to listen to it. Let's get away from here. Maybe the police will be nosing round for you."

In silence he moved down to the frozen river, and the

red flare and the clangor of belated fire-engines died away behind. It was cold, and in spite of Elsa's protests, the American put his sheepskin coat upon her, first taking a bottle from its pocket. Once he said, with a sardonic smile:

"Pity I didn't push that old woman back. Guess they might have thought you had both been burned up, then. Why didn't you both get away from the fire into those underground passages, and that laboratory?"

"I tried to," answered Elsa with a shudder. "But Anna Georgievna was more terrified of the W.E.F. than of the fire. She was a kind of cook and housekeeper for the Communist guards. When I saw her hammering at the door, I thought perhaps I could get out if she could. . . . Where are we going to? I ought to leave you. If you're caught helping an escaped prisoner, they'd have no mercy on you."

"Can that, girlie," said Nick Gunter brusquely. "It makes me feel sentimental, like a story hero. I want lodgings as well as you. Both fired, aren't we? We're going where there's food and shelter and company. Not drawing-room company, maybe, but—you'll see."

The little lean man moved along the frozen surface of the river with quick footsteps, and in silence. He did not ask Elsa her name, nor did he give her his. Obviously he was an enemy of sentiment of any description. Yet Elsa felt that he was the only thing real in the unreal hour that had given her escape from the Death Factory. Brief as her stay there had been, it had stamped itself upon her indelibly, and for long afterward it was to haunt her sleep. But already the open air was giving her back her strength as she walked through the barges and shipping, all riveted in ice until next April. Moscow lay in a glittering panorama of lights on every side, as they passed under three of the dark bridges. But presently the lamps grew sparser. Nick Gunter began to skirt the shore on which low warehouses stood, and small creeks opened. It was a down-river neighborhood, where only the Red troops made a drive, now and again—Moscow's cesspool.

"You're not tough," said Nick Gunter suddenly. "But I reckon you've got pluck. The Ogpu never come this far down. Let's stand a minute. We gotta understand each other. A dame's safe with me. I don't go in for the wholesale business, because I got a good one"—he jerked his thumb over his shoulder—"here. Name's Nick Gunter. *Amerikanka*, as the Bolshies say. I was a diplomatic case not long ago."

NICK GUNTER grinned like a graceless boy and lit a cigarette. He was probably a very tough case indeed, in his native country or whatever other part of the globe his wandering footsteps led to. But his look at Elsa was friendly.

"Sabotage, the Bolshies called it. I was engineer in a new power-station, and one night I burned out twenty dynamos and put half the Kremlin in darkness. Mucked up my bit of the Five-Year Plan, and then some. They arrested me, but they couldn't shoot me, me being an American citizen. They're nuts on America. This is going to be the United States of the East." Gunter showed his teeth in a derisive grin. "So they let me go, and that night I was shoved off the quay into the river by an Ogpu agent. It was just before the freeze came, and there was water to swim in, lucky for me.

"Well, to make the story short, they fished out my body, and everyone was glad as cuckoos. I guess they thought I wasn't worth another war, and I'd burned the dynamos out of sheer cussedness because I couldn't get my rations. Of course it wasn't *my* body. It was some other guy's, I expect."

Nick Gunter paused, then took out a flashlamp, and held it above his head for an instant.

"Marked 'dead' in the books of the Ogpu. That's me," he ended calmly. "And they know as well as you that I'm alive. I have friends at the British consulate watching to see they don't bump me off, while the Ogpu's watching to see I don't split about the agent who hunched me from the quay. . . . Aw, girlie, you're tired and dazed. But listen—have you heard about the Bez Prizorny?"

Elsa remembered the Ishmael children of the Serguei monastery and said so, but Gunter shook his head.

"Not children, but full-sized ones. Bandits! Kind of hijackers on the Soviet booze factory. Born bad guys, some of them, and others like you and me, with a price on their heads. We're going to one of their dives. You'll be safe there for a while."

He began to move cautiously across the ice—where, a score of yards from shore, a large barge, roofed over like a Noah's Ark, showed dimly. The American moved his flashlamp again; and on the hulk, embedded in its six feet of ice, a light answered.

IN the doorway of the Big Cell of the Asiatic Comrades of Moscow, a small flap door flew open. A head and face that was an almost perfect triangle of yellow skin and lank black hair popped out, to smile brilliantly.

"Honor me with the name and number of your *Jabkom*, Comrade, before passing inside. I am a blind owl, worthy only of being stuffed. But I don't know you by sight."

"I belong to a large and well-known factory, Comrade. But keep it secret, by the ashes of your forefathers. It is only a little recreation I come for, and I wish to cause no alarm."

The newcomer, with a flick of his sleeve that revealed the G.P.U. badge in it, stalked inside. It was a large, dimly-lighted room he entered, moist and stifling with steam heat, and laden with vague, rancid scents. On little rattan mats, and at small low tables, a motley crowd sat; breeched Chinese girls, wrinkled Tartars wrapped in sheepskin, Kalmucks and Tungus, the high cheek-bones and impassive faces of Russia in the East. At the end of the room was a raised platform upon which stood a black, gaunt creature with both his arms lopped short at the elbows, gesticulating with the stumps to some appalling pictures of French "atrocities" in Morocco. The great propaganda machine, which never stopped, was grinding in the Big Cell of the Asiatic Comrades.

A black-eyed Karachaite, looking oddly incongrous in a leather blouse, spat on his rug.

"Why did they not cut out his tongue too?" he growled. "He talks too long. We come here for entertainment, as well as instruction."

"Who is he, comrade?" Worden tested his disguise on the man. He himself was dressed as a full Communist, with revolver complete, but with a judicious combination of dirt and black hair-dye he was of some indeterminate Caucasian race such as one met in the streets of Moscow every day.

"Some dog from Africa," was the indifferent answer. "Telling us how the French capitalist mauled him. I'll eat a whole sheep if it wasn't frostbite. Ah, he finishes. There is some dancing and wrestling tonight, I believe."

"Yogatai the Mongol?"

"And the little Japanese Shogu, who breaks limbs by just standing still," said his companion with relish.

"Shogu was arrested by the Gay-pay-oo today. He is wrestling with Menjinsky, who can break his limbs by just sitting down." Worden grinned. "So I come instead. In my village they call me Chacha, which is the highest peak in our native Caucasus, eh, comrade? But not a

word, yet." Through Worden there went an adventurous thrill.

An awed oath left the Karachaite; he stared at the stranger; but a mechanical piano had started, and on the platform three Chinese girls were dancing a strangely still but sensual dance. A little whispered sound went through the room, a breaking and melting of impassivity. Over the Asiatic Comrades, pledged to turn the teeming East into a Soviet with textbook and loud-speaker, passed something as old and barbaric as Genghis Khan. The dim and smoky place, plastered with propaganda pictures, glistened with eyes that changed from boredom to brightness. A drum and pipe began to play monotonously, a low chant arose; a knife, flung playfully, flickered to the ceiling and stuck, thrumming there. . . .

Yogatai the Mongol, with his shoulders bulging beneath a dirty blue tunic, picked his teeth for a moment, and sauntered to the edge of the stage with the arrogance of one who wielded power among the Asiatic Comrades.

"Shogu the Japanese has not come, citizens," he announced. "He smelled my breath from a distance. What shall we do? Have you a bear or a wolf, or will one of you little ones step up to be cracked between my thumbnails?"

He jumped in with two lightning blows, evaded a savage knee-kick, . . . He felt very cool and purposeful.

Worden rose, and with a jerk of his wrists sent his hard, glazed cap spinning, so that it struck full between the eyes the broad yellow face that lolled forward. It was as neatly done as he meant it to be.

"Shogu sends me in his place, comrade. Pick up my cap, Mongol dog."

A sibilant indrawing of breath went round. Oriental faces looked up sharply, from little glasses of koumiss, the fermented camel's milk of the Caucasus, which they were drinking, now that the lectures and propaganda were over.

Worden sprang on to the platform.

"I throw a cap with more accuracy than you throw a knife, citizen Yogatai," he said in a low voice.

The slit eyes in Yogatai's tallow-colored face turned to small beads. He retreated a moment like some big cat, taken aback. Worden swung a half-arm jolt that was like the chop of a mallet, as he did so—an awakener. . . .

In silence the Mongol dropped his huge arms like the pincers of a crab, and Worden felt the deadly strength of them. He was in iron condition, though Yogatai could probably give him twenty-five pounds. Again the half-arm jolt freed him, and he jumped in with two lightning blows, evaded a savage knee-kick, and stood back grinning. He felt very cool and purposeful. He meant to show the Asiatic Comrades that Yogatai was vulnerable; and right back in his mind were other purposes, not formed yet. . . .

The Mongol lunged across. He got his giant hands to Worden's face, fingers buried in cheek, thumbs gouging at the eyes. There was a moment of racking red blindness, and then they were locked, muscles cracking. The stage shook as they went down, the Mongol uppermost, but Worden hammering at the point of his chin. Yogatai knew how to crush fingers to pulp, how to crack a man's collar-bone with the ball of his thumb, a dozen Eastern wrestling tricks; but a fist that was like a piston for speed and strength, he did not know.

His opponent was on his feet as he sprawled on all fours and came up slowly, a knife in one hand. There was nothing but blind bestial murder in Yogatai's face, as his weapon flashed downward to pin Worden's foot to the floor.

"So we end it that way, Comrade Yogatai?" said Worden softly. "Very good."

The revolver holster was still at his belt, and it was a moment's work to withdraw the weapon. He struck twice with the heavy butt—once when the Mongol lurched at him with his blade, and again as he reeled back. The huge figure thundered from the platform and lay stretched over a broken chair.

It had all happened so quickly that the Asiatic Comrades had scarcely realized it. Through the smoky light, triangular faces stared stupidly between fear and bewilderment at the revolver in Worden's hand. In such a polyglot crowd panic spread swiftly. One of the Chinese girl-dancers scuttled affrightedly down the room. Dancing in public was forbidden in Moscow, though so far, the police had been tolerant with the Asiatic Comrades.

"He is of the Ogpu!"

Worden heard the cry, and a reckless idea, perhaps half-formed before, came to him. It might mean that Mitka Ivanovitch, of the G.P.U., would be hauled before Menjinsky to account for his actions if his identity was discovered. But just then neither Mitka Ivanovitch nor John Worden cared much for either Menjinsky or the Kremlin itself. In the middle of a giant gamble with the dice already heavily loaded, one did not count pennies.

The *Timofeev 2*, in its waste of foggy grey ice, might have been in the Sea of Murmansk. Little Oliuka went to sleep over his rifle.

He fired at the two clusters of lights which hung at the ceiling, and they went away in a puff of shattered glass. Save for a single bulb, which continued to burn near the platform, darkness fell upon a stampeding throng that had forgotten its dignity as leaders of mankind and was merely an Oriental melee, with devil-take-the-hindmost as its temporary slogan. In the Big Cell of the Asiatic Comrades, under cover of the dark, the members were pouring from the bogey man of Russia, the Three-letter Man, who, to their half-awakened minds, groping in the fog of Soviet ideology, was like the werewolf of their native mountains. They gladly took the risk of Black Crow prison-vans waiting outside.

Worden's hands traveled quickly through Yogatai's outer clothes, cast upon a chair near the one where the Mongol hung, a limp weight. There was a little leather bag hanging beneath the waistcoat, and in it was a key he recognized at a glance. It was the pattern of the key which Elsa had shown to him that night in Madam Lydia's room—the key of the scarlet door in the Petrovka.

Crouching a little, he groped his way between the overturned chairs and tables. Somewhere, he guessed, there would be a second exit, for proprietors of cinemas and clubs were blithely shot if they did not provide one. He found it, stepped out into some icicle-hung alleyway, and a minute later was moving quickly among the night traffic of the streets. . . .

John Worden's destination for the second time in his life was the scarlet door of Boris Vladimir, People's Commissar. As he trod through the new snow, to outward eyes Chacha, a comrade from the Caucasus, he felt icily exhilarated at the glissade of adventure he traveled upon. Beneath the street-lamps, he glanced at his hands, which still bled. The marble throat of Feodora had not come into them yet! But there was no such escape for Boris Vladimir's now. Whether the death-warrant Worden had seen upon Koregorvsky's desk was canceled or not, Vladimir knew—knew whether Elsa was alive or dead.

Worden felt his eyes a little bloodshot. The exhilaration passed and left him strained and tired. In some house he heard a gramophone scraping, and looked up at the tranquil stars that hung over Moscow as they hung over the rest of the world.

"Jazz dance!" he muttered. "And with a damned grisly partner. How long can it last, even in this madhouse?"

As he approached, he perceived that the curtains of the little window of No. 17 the Petrovka Place were dark. Either there was nobody there, or Vladimir had gone to bed. Yogatai's key sunk silently into the lock; the door opened with barely a sound. Cat-footed and cat-witted, Worden passed inside. If Vladimir was in the house and called to his servant for something, so much the better. He would take Worden for the Mongol for an instant, and that instant's advantage was all he, Worden, required.

But there was no sign of Vladimir or any other person. The little house was empty, though warm and still smelling of the Russian's scented tobacco. Worden sat down, smiling stiffly in the darkness, for he did not switch on the light. For convenience, he placed his pistol upon his lap. Whoever returned home first, Vladimir or a Yogatai with a very sore head, he meant to be prepared for them. . . . A little Astrakhan terrier dog came from the stove, sniffed at him doubtfully, and returned to the heat again. He must have made a strange figure, John Worden pondered, sitting there in his Caucasian disguise, nursing his weapon—like a Soviet poster of the East, lying in wait for the capitalist!

Presently the little dog whined, and pattered to the door. Worden's pulse quickened to the sound of a faint tap. It could be neither Vladimir nor his Mongol. The dog gave a sharp hostile bark. A moment of suspense, and the tap came again—louder. Between the curtains it was possible to see out into the street. A little old woman, cringing beneath a tattered shawl, stood there.

Softly, Worden brought the door half-ajar. "Well?"

"You're his servant, are you not?" The old woman's teeth were chattering, her nose blue with cold. "Mother of God, I waited and waited and perished, till somebody should come home. Will he be back soon?"

"No," answered Worden.

"Then give him a message, hospitable one! It is important, and I should have brought it before, but I could not find the house, Moscow crazes me so. I am like a mole dug up from the underground, and the daylight blinds me; and as for the Kremlin, where the Commissar works—"

"Old fool!" Worden under his assumed character, experienced a queer thrill. "What is it all about?"

"Tell him it was Anna Georgievna, and the house went afire, and the *Amerikanka* took the girl away."

"What girl?" Worden shot out his hand and held the old woman, making her hunch her head back and gaze with terror at the forbidding giant.

"Who but his little Elsa? The *Amerikanka* took her down the river, and that was the last I saw of them. I know nothing more. I was crazed. Like a mole," whined the old woman, "like a mole! I must get back underground again, if they will have me. Leave go of an old woman, *dushenka*."

Anna Georgievna wriggled herself free, and shot down the street, her tatters flying, without looking back once, leaving the man staring after her with his eyes ablaze like those of the lunatic he undoubtedly was.

NICK GUNTER stuck his red Indian's face round the door of the cabin and said "Cuckoo!" with the friendliest of grins.

"May I enter the saloon, girls?" he inquired, ceremoniously removing his mangy fur cap. "What's that you're cooking, Maryanka mine—steak à la droshky-horse? Guess I can smell the old whiskers who drove it."

"They are sausages à la Bolshie, as you say, then, my little Czar Nicholas!"

"Purloined. Stolen by the banditti. In Paris and London, Miss Peterson, the smash-and-grabs steal diamond necklaces. Here we snatch sausages. Guess it's purely a matter of longitude and latitude—latitude especially. Feeling better?"

"Much," answered Elsa.

"She is fattening," said Maryanka critically, nodding her head.

Maryanka herself was broad in the beam, with buxom arms, a skin like satin, and a plump baby face. She was a contented little twenty-year-old animal that a new Terror could not have perturbed. Nick Gunter and she had dispensed with the formalities of the Marriage and Divorce office—Nick affirming, with great logic, that a man who was officially dead could not be officially married; and anyway, he hadn't the necessary two rubles. They were completely devoted to each other, and talked incessantly together in a mixture of vile Russian and slangy American.

Elsa had been aboard the old timber-hulk for three days, but still could not shake off the feeling that she had landed herself upon some mad and completely Russian Noah's Ark.

The *"Timofeev 2,"* stuck fast in the ice of the frozen river, was in fact a large thieves' kitchen. From Pappa Obo, a frail old man who was really a Count of the old Czarist court, pretending pathetically to be a born vagabond, to little Glinka, who had lived like an Eskimo in snow igloos and picked pockets for a living half his ten years of life, the dwellers on it preyed upon Moscow with nimble wits and fingers. There were probably a score of them, living most amicably in the cabins and deck-huts of the old hulk, and stealing ashore on their various missions after dark.

"It matters nothing if they are caught," explained Maryanka complacently. "The State would call them psychological cases. Not like political prisoners—ah, no! They would be well-housed and well-fed in prison, and studied by the students of the Lenin Institute. And even, now and then, their wives or husbands, as the case might be, would be allowed in prison to stay with them a night or so. Yes!" Maryanka nodded. "But my little Nicholas, who is captain, gives them strict orders that they must not be caught."

"Kind of little fleas on the big Bolshie flea," said Nick Gunter. "But the poor saps had no organization whatever, till lately. They needed a commander. So I came aboard."

Elsa liked the little Texan, and Nick Gunter's red-brown eyes were kindly when they rested upon her. He was as lean as a little wolf, and as strong. He lived as nonchalantly aboard that den of Russian outcasts as he would have done in his own Texas township. He was a modest man, save for two things of which he was inordinately proud: he had mucked up his part of the Five-Year Plan by burning out twenty dynamos and putting the Kremlin in darkness, and he had nearly been the cause of friction between America and the Bolshies. . . .

"No friends in Moscow?" Gunter asked abruptly.

Elsa flushed. "Only John Worden. I've told you about him. I think he's joined the Ogpu—for reasons of his own."

Softly and thoughtfully, Nick Gunter whistled. "Coo! And you only just shook clear of the W.E.F.! As well-cooked in that fire as I'm supposed to be, too."

"I'm afraid it would be too dangerous to try to get his help," said Elsa with a chill of despair. "And I can't stay here for long, because I'm a political prisoner. I might easily bring the police here."

"Two machine-guns on the quay yonder and a squad of Stalin's Red Guard palookas would make a mash of the old craft," agreed Nick Gunter. "Aw, you're welcome as the flowers in spring, girlie, don't think you're not. But this aint your crush. We gotta face that. Hell's bones, I wish I could get you out of Russia right under the Bolshie's dirty nose!"

"I'm afraid it's impossible," Elsa smiled, in spite of herself, at the little man's earnestness.

"Diplomatic channels," said Nick Gunter. "That's what I mean. I gotta pull at the British Embassy. There aint no United States Embassy, you know—no diplomatic relations a-tall. But there's a British Embassy now—though it's been withdrawn once or twice. They don't like me there, me being supposed to be dead. But I gotta pull."

BREAKFAST finished, Gunter kissed Maryanka a resounding smack and went ashore after setting Glinka to watch with a rusty rifle. There seemed no necessity, for the *Timofeev 2*, in its waste of foggy gray ice, might have been in the Sea of Murmansk, for all the sign of human beings there was. Maryanka hung her washing on deck, where it froze stiff; little Glinka went to sleep over his rifle; the other inhabitants of the barge cooked and slept or slipped furtively ashore. Elsa dreamed a little of John Worden. But he seemed to have gone far away and to belong to another planet. Perhaps Maryanka read her thoughts, for she felt the girl's hand fall upon hers, fat and comforting.

"Little Nicholas will see you safe. He is *Amerikanka* and powerful, and puts his fingers to his nose at the Bolshie. Some day he will walk out and spit on Russia as he goes. He tells me he will take me with him, but I know otherwise. Little Nicholas adventures too much to have any woman hanging round his neck. What does it matter? *Nitchevo!*" Maryanka ended sadly, with two tears running out of her baby-blue eyes.

But when, toward nightfall, Nick Gunter came back, she was laughing merrily, and hauled him aboard to hug him in her buxom arms.

"Supposed to be twice dead," reported the American, with great satisfaction. "Them sulphur-babies have put me on the list of fire-victims. It's in that official newspaper the *Pravda*. But they framed it up that I set the darned place on fire. Can you beat it?"

NICK GUNTER was quiet for a moment. He sent a curiously sympathetic glance at Elsa.

"Listen, girlie: I saw that guy to-day—Worden or Ivanovitch or whatever his moniker is."

"Did you?" Elsa felt her pulse jump.

"Sure I did. Look here. We'd—we'd better forget him. The flywheel's bust right there. Scrap—no use. You forget him."

Elsa sat still at the Texan's words.

"You'd better tell me why, please. There's a reason, I expect."

"Well,"—Gunter was acutely uncomfortable,—"he's an Ogpu baby, right enough. Well up with that woman they call the Bright Angel. Driving about with her in Ogpu cars. Aw, I did hear he was sort of pet monkey to her, but they open their faces about that sort of thing in Russia like they do anywhere else. Though they sure did seem friendly together."

"I expected that, because it's part of his plan." Elsa spoke quickly. She discovered that she was telling herself, as well as Nick Gunter—trying to keep her voice steady and assured, without success.

"Maybe." Gunter coughed dryly. "But steam's down, there. Firebox clogged up with Bright Angel. So it's diplomatic channels."

Elsa shook her head. She had grave doubts about the influence of the little vagabond engineer at any embassy, and he seemed to divine it, for he flushed a brick red and grew very stiff and distant. Not until she put her hand on his arm and said quickly, "I'm afraid of getting you into trouble, Mr. Gunter," did he thaw and make a large gesture with the arms of his rabbitskin coat which included all Moscow.

"With that bag o' stiffs? I'm an American citizen, girlie. Likewise I'm dead, drowned and burnt alive. Insulted! It's all fixed. Leave it to me."

They climbed down the side of the *Timofeev 2* an hour after dark, Elsa in a hooded cloak that all but hid her face, Nick Gunter wearing a fur coat that reached to his heels and made him look like a very seedy financier. Maryanka cried a little till Gunter slapped her round, and all the inhabitants of the hulk who had not gone ashore on their divers occasions leaned over in farewell; the motliest and frowsiest crew Elsa had ever set eyes on in her strange life in Russia.

The old sense of fatalism came back to her as she and Nick Gunter stepped into a droshky that mysteriously appeared on the quay. Martin dead, John Worden gone. . . . Nothing mattered much.

Almost indifferently she glanced at the building which housed the British consulate, as the droshky stopped before it. The diplomatic buildings, she knew, were always watched by the Three Letter Men, and possibly she would be arrested as she stepped to the pavement. But Nick Gunter disembarked with a visible swagger, thrust his arm in hers, and they went up the steps together.

"Name, sir?" The commissionaire looked at them both doubtfully.

Elsa's companion answered pleasantly.

"Nicholas Gunter—Esquire, if you like, brother. Mr. Boylan's the guy I want to see. He knows me, well."

The commissionaire returned hastily. Like a man who smuggled contraband, he shepherded Gunter and Elsa up the staircase and into a room where a lanky, middle-aged man came to his feet quickly, but without any sign of welcome.

"Good God, Gunter!"

"What the college professors call alliteration, that is, Mr. Boylan." Nick Gunter nodded coolly. "Here I am again."

The secretary's eyes hardened

"About the burning of that tenement?"

"Aw, can that, Mr. Boylan. I never set that houseful of Ivans on fire. Too tender-hearted, even for that. You might know it was a frame-up of the Bolsheviki to blacken the name of an honest man. Never mind me. See this lady? She's half-Russian and nine-tenths English. I gotta right to a passport, aint I? Well, give it Miss Peterson, here. She's been through the steam-pipes of hell in this country and wants to get out."

Boylan's face grew kinder. He looked long at Elsa, then shook his head slowly.

"Half Russian? It makes it impossible in any case, I'm afraid. You were born here? I'm sorry."

He tapped his desk with a pencil, looking with distaste yet with what seemed an involuntary twinkle in his eye, at Nick Gunter. But his glance came back again to Elsa,

"I'd like to help, my dear. But—we're really helpless. We're in trouble with the Kremlin over this precious friend of yours already. Don't tell me your story." Mr. Secretary Boylan flushed and made a mute apology at something in Elsa's eyes. "And don't be too proud, for heaven's sake. . . . Listen. I believe—there's a little chance. A tiny chance. I know a man with influence who might help you, and he happens to be in this very building at the moment. Wait."

Mr. Boylan took up a telephone. He paused a moment, then spoke.

"That you, Lennox? Will you ask M. Vladimir if he will be good enough to step into my room when he has finished with you?"

"THIS Vladimir is one of the People's Commissars you hear such a lot about, Miss Peterson, but don't alarm yourself on that account. On the other hand, don't expect miracles. He's just a decent Russian who may help us."

Putting down the desk-telephone, Boylan raised his dry, pleasant face and smiled encouragingly. To look at Elsa, seemed to afford the consulate official some relief from the pain of looking at Nick Gunter, though that individual's lean and mobile features were suffused with honest pride at his latest diplomatic achievement, as he said:

"Okay, that, Mr. Boylan. You got your hand on the pulse of Russia, all right."

Elsa moistened lips which had slowly turned very parched. Then she decided not to speak. What use? *Nitchevo*, and *nitchevo*, again! She was aware of a fatalism deeper than she had ever experienced before as she waited for Boris Vladimir to come into that room in the consulate, where she stood as on a kind of headland, looking at freedom she would never gain.

In the interval Mr. Secretary Boylan coughed.

"I should go while the going is good, if I were you, Gunter. Down the staircase, and right there, is little Moscow."

"Not me. Safe in the consulate, aint I? Habeas corpus, Mr. Boylan. I want to see my pal booked out. I'm not nuts on little Moscow at the moment."

"Would you prefer a passport to Paris, fare paid? It's here."

The little engineer blinked obstinately. "Passport for

a dead man? Can't be done, Mr. Boylan, even in Bolshieland."

"But, you mud-crusher, they've discussed you in the council. Ten to one they have some trick up their sleeves to make you an—"

"International case." Nick Gunter nodded with relish. "The Gunter Case, eh? Aw, I don't mind. My mother always said I was a man of destiny, like Napoleon, though she put it another way. Here comes the Commissar."

In the doorway, as he entered, Boris Vladimir stopped dead, his hand on the door-handle. Great as the shock of amazement must have been, he controlled it, and closed the door gently, with nothing more than a glance at Elsa that was as quick as light. Then he was shaking hands with Boylan and speaking in his liquidly-modulated voice.

"Anything within my power for you, my dear Boylan. . . . This lady?" Vladimir swung round with a bow and then let a low exclamation break from him. He gazed for a moment in silence.

"I heard you were dead, Miss Peterson. This is a shock—a pleasant one. . . We know each other, this lady and I, Boylan."

"Hell's bones!" It was murmured delight from Nick Gunter. In his egregious fur coat, he strutted forward, bringing an expression of mingled despair and resignation to Mr. Secretary Boylan's features. "She wants to get out. I guess you'll pull it, Commissar, sure's I'm Nick Gunter. A decent Russian. Mr. Boylan, you said it."

Vladimir's look traveled swiftly over Elsa's quaint companion.

"If she will trust me," he answered gravely, "I think I can help her. Miss Peterson has little cause to trust anybody, Boylan, I'm afraid. She's been crushed in the giant machine that we in Russia are building. We poor cogs in the machine are not always able to prevent that." Vladimir shrugged. "Perhaps she told you her story?"

"She did not," said Boylan curtly. "She was far too brave. Do you offer to help her?"

"Gladly. Communist wolves, Boylan"—Vladimir smiled faintly—"are sometimes human beings, after all."

"Delighted to hear it, Mr. Commissar."

The consul's secretary sent a long glance at Elsa as he opened the door. The girl seemed deadly pale, but she went quietly with Vladimir. Dazed a little, perhaps. Boylan sighed. He had been in Moscow two years, and knew how well the savage idealism of the new Russia could crush to powder. Mr. Secretary Boylan had learned to keep his imagination within the bounds of his consulate walls, like a good diplomat. Vladimir, he told himself, was a charming fellow. In any case, the girl was out of his hands now. But Elsa's face haunted him a little, after she had gone.

Presently he awoke from his reverie and looked up, with an undiplomatic epithet.

"That little hellion's gone with them!"

IT was quite true. Nick Gunter was not the one to leave a benevolent task half-done. It had always been his dream to buzz round Moscow in a Kremlin Rolls-Royce. True, in his dream, which relied wholly upon vodka and Odessa brandy for its details, he stunned Stalin by stealth, changed into his clothes, drove to the Kremlin, and destroyed the Five-Year Plan by wiping out the entire Politbureau with a concealed Lewis gun. At the moment it was not quite as good as that, but good enough. He sat with Comrade Boris Vladimir and Elsa Peterson, in the big car driven by Yogatai—a big ugly Chink with a bump like a pumpkin on his cheek—and smoked one of Comrade Vladimir's Turkish cigarettes.

"Not that I hold with communism in any way, Commissar," Nick Gunter was saying reasonably. "Bats in the belfry, or the Bolshie Bloodthirst. That's my name for it. But I'm saying nothing against you. Seems to me you're a gentleman, though you may be a Bolshie."

"Thank you," murmured Vladimir. His sidewise glance went to Elsa, where she sat, barely moving. He leaned over and said in a low voice:

"You're not afraid? I'm the only man who can save you. No man in the world wishes to like I do. No other man could do it."

Said Nick Gunter:

"I hear there's a little radio-set aboard each of these Kremlin Rolls-Royces, too. By the driver's seat, eh? Dandy!"

Mr. Gunter, lolling in the cushioned interior, changed the subject and gestured a grubby hand out of the window.

"This the Kremlin? Them towers and things are fine. Like a kid's big toy. Blood and candy, I always call it. I take it kind of you to bring a comparative stranger like me here, Commissar. I can see you understand the sort of brotherly anxiety I got to see Miss Peterson clear away, and see how you'll do it."

AS Nick Gunter, delighted with his experiences, spoke thus, the car was moving across Senate Square. It stopped before the black doorway of a large Gothic building with a soft skid of chained tires on the snow.

"You alight here, Mr. Gunter," said Vladimir carelessly.

"Eh? Alight, do we?"

Nick Gunter stepped out and held his hand gallantly to assist Elsa. He might have even assisted the People's Commissar, too, in the exuberance of the moment, but Vladimir closed the door. Mr. Gunter was left on the old cobbled pavement with a puzzled expression on his tough features, looking more like a stranded and bankrupt financier than ever. Two men in the Ogpu uniform emerged without haste from the black doorway.

"In the name of the Government, friend!"

Nick Gunter grew cold and white.

"What Government, you lousy rats?" he asked slowly. "Come!"

A heavy hand fell to his shoulder. A spring seemed to be released in Nick Gunter that made him jump back like a small weasel, leaving his fur coat in the custody of the G.P.U. Against the cheek-bone of the nearest officer his fist cracked, small but as hard as a hammer-head, and sent the man reeling. Half-bent, the little American streaked across the Senate Square with the distant gateway as his destination, and some hundreds of lurking Three Letter Men and Red Guards as the gantlet.

Once stripped of his fur coat, the commander of the *Timofeev 2* was as much like a running scarecrow to look at as a human being could be. A Red Guard stepped into his path, with rifle-butt uplifted, but his lithe figure cleared man, butt and all. A hundred bullets could have riddled him, but the police of the Kremlin, no doubt warned by the radio he had so much admired, did no shooting.

Half a dozen guards sprang at him. There was an ancient elm-tree growing by the walls of the senate. Whooping, Nick Gunter leaped its trunk and began to shin it with a stream of vituperation and appeal which pointed out that not even a gang of Bolshies could arrest a man who was officially both drowned and burned.

A well-stabbed rifle-butt cut it short. The handle of a revolver dropped lightly but sufficiently as he thudded to the ground.

The claws of the Ogpu have closed indeed! Don't miss the thrilling climax of this story—in the next, the June, issue.

Bridegrooms Is My Meat

Wherein a stove-colored detective busts up a wedding by arresting the bridegroom—and a despairing clerk makes out a marriage-license which reads "To Bearer."

By ARTHUR K. AKERS

Illustrated by Everett Lowry

WITH cotton at five cents, a once-adequate law practice reduced to two clients—both inactive—and the rain pouring dismally during breakfast, young and red-headed Mr. George Goodwin reached a decision: Anybody who was fool enough to get married under present economic conditions would have to put up with the same old suit on his carrot-topped best man! And Mr. Goodwin strode through his bachelor-establishment kitchen, and started a damp dash for the garage in its rear.

But what he came upon midway there brought him up short and swearing. Out on the driveway stood his car, and busily engaged with hose and rag, washing it in the pelting rain, was "Bugwine" Breck.

"Mawnin', Mist' Gawge! Jest kind of washin' up yo' car!" the short-legged, underbrained Mr. Breck—who between odd jobs was a private detective in the precarious service of the dusky Columbus Collins Detective Agency—opened his campaign on the wrong note.

"Not a damned dime!" rasped Mr. Goodwin heatedly at sight and sound of the symptoms of a coming touch.

A pained expression crossed the wet face of Bugwine. He was being misunderstood.

"Naw, suh, Mist' Gawge!" he hastened to get his business on the right basis. "I aint axin' for no money. Jest fixin' to see is you got no old dress suit whut I can get to—"

The slam of the car door and angry whir of its starter answered him.

"Mist' Gawge must aint gwine gimme no dress suit!" was the best Bugwine could make of it after fifteen minutes of head-scratching cogitation in the rain. "And I sho Gawd got to git me one, too, for whut's comin' off. I wonder is Columbus—"

But Columbus Collins, entering his agency's headquarters some hours later to find his assistant steaming mournfully by the stove, was in no mood for helpfulness either, it appeared. On the contrary—

"Whut all dis I hears up de alley about you fixin' to step out in sassiety?" he demanded, looking coldly down upon Mr. Breck and the safety-pin that had once graced a horse-blanket before its promotion to pinch-hitting for buttons on Bugwine's coat.

"Mixes business and hard luck!" muttered Mr. Breck resentfully. "Mist' Big Ugly Snews' gal, Geranium, whut I wuz married to las' year, gwine git married ag'in. Sure wishes I hadn't lost that 'scursion money shootin' craps dat time. Dat hurcome Geranium lef' me an' went back to her daddy."

Columbus nodded unsympathetically. "She *tell* me she gwine gimme her answer next week," he pursued his own train of thought. "She must made up her mind to grab me sooner!"

"Grab *you?* She aint gwine make no marriage wid you—" began Geranium's former spouse.

Columbus wilted momentarily, then rallied suspiciously. If Bugwine had been unduly busy at the cross-roads—

"Look here, runt!" he addressed his helper threateningly. "Is you try to cut me out another time wid Geranium—"

"Aint able cut nobody out," Mr. Breck descended deeper into his coat collar and gloom. "She *still* look lovin' at me, but her papa aint. All he do is whut I's tryin' tell you: he jest rub it in—hirin' me as de detective at my own gal's weddin'! To guard de presents, same as dat big white-folks' weddin' whut Mist' Gawge Goodwin gwine be in."

"Den who *is* Geranium marryin'?" Columbus persisted.

"Boy from Selma. Name' Spasmodic Simmons—"

"*Spas Simmons!*" Mr. Collins' emphasis spoke libraries. "Boy, I wuz in de army wid him and knows him—dat's whut! All time pickin' up somep'n whut aint belong to him. Let dat boy be at a weddin' and dey *needs* detectives dar: old Spas'll steal de shirt off de preacher, is dey aint watch him!"

Bugwine rubbed an outstanding ear perplexedly. It was beginning to sound like a busy wedding for the house-detective. And he still hadn't settled a vital matter—one that his former mother-in-law had insisted upon from the start. So:

"How about lendin' me dat waiter-suit wid de low-neck vest and long-tail coat, Columbus?" he essayed. "De one you has befo' you pour all dat soup on de white folks dat time—to w'ar at de weddin'—"

"Lends you nothin'!" Columbus cut him off. "W'ars it my ownse'f—let dat gal see all de class she done miss, marryin' a pickpocket!"

Bitterness darkened the brow of Bugwine, but caution kept his mouth shut. Columbus was all the time stepping on a smaller assistant's face if an argument grew too heated. "Got to git me a dress suit to w'ar," he mumbled.

"Sounds like a fiddle wid one string," Columbus thus dismissed Bugwine and his sorrows. "Could marry dat gal my ownse'f yit, wuzn't for Spas Simmons."

"Rambles amongst de barbecue while I's tryin' to figure out way git myse'f one dem open-face black suits," mourned Mr. Breck despairingly, with no intimation of how, down on Capitol Street and up in Hogan's Alley, Fate had just stepped on a banana-peeling while busy with his affairs.

"Yo' lodge *buries* 'em in dat kind," reminded Mr. Collins darkly. . . .

In the barbecue-stand of "Bees'-Knees" Thompson, Mr. Breck had scarcely ensconced himself on a chair before an oilcloth-covered table when a fellow-citizen from Baptist Hill struggled through the door, to dump his burden into one chair at Bugwine's table and himself wearily into another.

"White folks done mess me all up!" complained the burden-bearer, otherwise Willie Freeman the pants-presser.

"Aint it so!" agreed Mr. Breck sympathetically, if

vaguely. "Boy readin' me de paper yest'day, say dey tryin' git law pass' make eve'body work five days a week dis winter."

"Got to overtake *me*, first!" muttered Willie rebelliously. "Done bust myse'f down now, shovin' hot iron over cold pa'r of pants all time. Cain't suit 'em, looks like."

Bugwine's eye strayed over Mr. Freeman's prospective handiwork—and kindled rapturously.

"What dat dress suit belong to?" he demanded.

"Red-headed white gent'man, Mist' Gawge Goodwin. Stays mad all de time, since times gits so hard. Lemme jest forgit to crease one laig of dem breeches, and he t'ar couple my livers loose."

The eye of Bugwine merely grew brighter. "When you got to git dat suit back to him?" he followed the new gleam.

"Time for de big white-folks' weddin'. Thursday's way I ricollects it, got so much on me—I done mark de date on my calendar, whut dey say."

"And dis is Monday—"

Mr. Freeman's personal fog failed to lift. His eyes said so.

"—So dat leave you plenty of time!" concluded Bugwine.

"Plenty of time for whut?"

"To press dat suit and let *me* w'ar it Wednesday night to Geranium's weddin', den git it back to Mist' Gawge in time for de white-folkses' Thursday. He aint out nothin' and you's in two-bits rent for it—from me."

Caution and cupidity battled within Mr. Freeman, until Bugwine displayed his quarter.

"Takes it, but sho is layin' a strain on my luck," accepted Willie dubiously. "Old rabbit's foot got mo' business dan it can b'ar up under, now!"

Bugwine, resplendent in George Goodwin's evening clothes, was willing, but Columbus' grip held him.

But in the meantime, things were occurring in the dingy headquarters of the Columbus Collins Detective Agency, whose stirring slogan was "A criminal with every case." That eminent sleuth, collapsed in his chair from the crushing news that the refulgent Geranium, whom he had courted before she married Bugwine, was again to be the bride of another, had suddenly and dazzlingly seen that it could yet be quite otherwise—if a smart sleuth worked it right. Wait until Bugwine—and Spasmodic—saw his dust *this* time!

He leaped to his feet, strode excitedly back and forth.

"Hot ziggity dawg!" he crowed, regarding himself admiringly in the mirror of his mind. "'A crim'nal wid eve'y case,' eh? *And* how! Must have been around twice when de brains gits passed out—gits Bugwine's and my own, too! Runs dat runt ragged, and den set his rags afire and watch him gallop some mo'! Him and Spas Simmons. . . . Boy, bridegrooms is my meat! Two birds wid one rock—dat's my gait! Ruin both dem boys wid Geranium *and* her papa—aint leave nobody round but me when de best man gits to fumblin' for de ring!"

Whereupon motorists upon the road that led to Linden, the county-seat, shortly beheld a new hitch-hiker with importunate thumb—a long-legged, short-waisted colored boy in a plaid vest and battered greenish derby hat; a boy who in time stood at the counter in the court clerk's office there and introduced novelty into a dull day.

"Craves git myse'f pa'r of licenses, Cap'n," the interview began in the usual manner of the caller's race.

"Got the two dollars?" The clerk also was experienced in such matters.

Two dirty dollar bills were the answer.

"Your name?"—as the form was fished forth, the pen poised.

"Columbus Collins, suh." Old "pair of licenses" sure looked noble!

"Marrying whom?"

"Demopolis gal—Geranium Snews—"

The pen halted in mid-dip.

"*Geranium Snews?* Why, I issued *one* license to marry her—to another boy, yesterday. He came over here from Selma. Haven't been able to find my spare glasses and two goldfish since. . . . Name was—" he consulted his records—"Simmons; Spasmodic P. Simmons."

"Yas suh; dat him—all time pickin' up somep'n. She *aimed* to marry dat Simmons; jest aint know all she gwine to, yit," Columbus explained without enlightening.

"Well, when I get that other license back, unused, I'll talk to you," asserted the court official firmly. "Bigamy enough on Baptist Hill now, without you makin' Marengo County a party to some more of it."

"Yas suh, Cap'n," acquiesced Columbus pleasantly. A boy with the grip on circumstances—other people's circumstances—which his scheme gave him, could afford to acquiesce temporarily.

At the house of Snews on Wednesday, all was bustle and loud confusion. Thrice an hour "Big Ugly" Snews, father of Geranium, consulted his watch, checking the progress of events.

This watch was Big Ugly's pride, inscribed as it was with the encomium of his lodge:

To G. Washington Snews
10 Years Treasurer without a Shortage
1919—1929.

From the garage in the rear rang the strains of Professor Alexander Dinghouse, Baptist Hill's one-man band, in rehearsal in dogged effort to get the jazz out of his rendition of the wedding march.

Even the new bridegroom had reached town, and was parked in the Waldorf-Astoria for Colored, near by.

Gifts continued to arrive. Mrs. Petunia Snews, three-hundred-pound mother of the bride, continued to place them on display. Her nervousness increased as the loot accumulated. She knew her neighbors.

"Whar at dat shawt-laigged, big-footed Bugwine boy whut gwine guard de presents?" she demanded of her lord. "He mighty late, for him, at place whar de eatin's is free."

"Open de kitchen door about once and let a whiff of dem chitlin's git loose in de air," suggested Big Ugly grimly. "Dat'll fotch him through a barb-wire fence!"

But Mr. Snews was only partly right. Bugwine, resplendent in Mr. George Goodwin's evening clothes, with the trouser legs falling in black and graceful folds about his skinny ankles and tan shoes, was willing; but Columbus' grip of hand and eye held him.

"Stand still while I polishes you social, runt!" Mr. Collins was shaking his free fist in front of the wall-eyed Mr. Breck's nose. "Dis aint no hawss-sale you gwine to! It's a weddin'."

"Ought to know; gal dat was my wife doin' de marryin' —to another boy," mourned Mr. Breck sadly. "And you done told me so much now, I aint nothin' but a mess between de ears."

"Cain't tell a boy like you too much. You got do somep'n 'sides stand by a skillet and grab up a po'k-chop eve'y time aint nobody lookin', too. You's s'posed to stand by de weddin'-presents, and make de arrest is no crooks git crooked."

Bugwine dug in a pocket and produced his tin star as private detective, in proof that the flag was still there.

"You so dumb, you all time messin' up somep'n," persisted his chief.

"Aint gum up nothin'," defended Mr. Breck obstinately. "Holds de chop in my right hand, 'stead of de left, while I nourishes at de weddin'; throws de bones back in de dish, 'stead of on de floor, jest like Mist Gawge and all dem other sassiety folks—"

"Shet up! Aint talkin' about yo' manners now; you aint got none! Talkin' about yo' detectin'. You's dumb dar too. Leave nothin' to whut you call yo' *judgment*, and you's sunk! Means—now git dis—is dey no hollerin' start durin' de weddin' about somep'n stole, you grabs de crook quick, and starts friskin' him, right befo' eve'ybody. You und'stand dat, or is I got to stomp you in de stomach to impress it on you?"

"Quit hollerin' in my ear! Grabs whut crook?" Bugwine was flying blind in the fog again.

COLUMBUS' gesture of despair was realistic. "*Dar you go!* Dar you go!" he raved in the opening bars of his deep-laid scheme for ruining two rivals with a single stroke. "Now, listen all over ag'in. Spas Simmons is a crook. I wuz in de army wid him, and I knows. Whut does crooks do? Dey steals eve'ything whut aint nail' down. So, is you on de job, when de hollerin' starts for de crook, de *hero-in*' starts for you! You gits yo'se'f in good. You steps up and grabs de bridegroom and starts searchin' him, see? Den, is you find de missin' stuff on him, you's in strong. Eve'ybody sayin': 'Look at Bugwine, de big detectin'-boy! "A crim'nal wid eve'y case!" and all broke out wid brains'!"

"Smarter'n I looks," confessed Bugwine at the pleasing picture. "Grabs Spasmodic, and eve'ybody starts lookin' at me—dat right?"

"You cain't miss it," emphasized the Machiavellian Mr. Collins earnestly.

"Hot dawg! Makes myse'f a hit wid Mist' Snews and Geranium! Maybe she marry me ag'in!"

"Never can tell," agreed Columbus cheerfully. "Find de goods on Spasmodic and you's made. *Hero* dey calls you, when dey gits talkin' about you."

Mr. Breck's doglike eyes shone anew in their surrounding blackness. All a good man needed was a chance. R'aring to detect, that was him all over! Spasmodic Simmons was a crook, was he! Seize him and search him, soon as old hollering started, was the ticket!

Under the hypnotic effect of this entrancing outlook, Bugwine overlooked a small but vital detail—as Mr. Collins had intended that he should.

BEHIND two rubber plants and a fire-screen, Professor Alexander Dinghouse, the one-man band, flung himself magnificently into Baptist Hill's substitute for a seven-piece orchestra playing soft music in the conservatory. The rubber plants hid not only Dinghouse but the door to the combination coat-closet and entry-way that led into the kitchen—which arrangement gave the Professor time and opportunity at intervals to refresh himself from the square-faced bottle in his overcoat hanging in the entry.

Beneath Mr. George Goodwin's brocaded vest the heart of Bugwine Breck alternately limped and leaped as he thought of his own status. As one who had loved but lost the fair Geranium, it limped. But as Bugwine Breck, assistant hound of the law, Nemesis of any light-fingered guests or groom, it leaped. Let Crime but rear its ugly head by so much as one little spoon, and Bugwine would be astride its neck. After which the applause would start. Better to have loved and lost than never to have been at this wedding at all!

Thicker pressed the throng. At the foot of the stairway, awaiting the signal to ascend in order that he might descend with the bride, Big Ugly Snews ever and anon looked at his timepiece with dual object—that he might see the time, and that all might see his watch.

Through the crowd circulated Bugwine Breck, a faultless figure in spotted necktie, tan shoes, and full evening attire otherwise. Glimpsing him from above-stairs, indeed, even Geranium's hitherto unforgiving heart was quickened longingly. Spasmodic Simmons had nine dollars and a half—but Bugwine had *it!*

Evening clothes, noted Geranium, looked all alike; but the boys in them didn't. You might not be able to tell coat from coat in their deadly uniformity, but nobody would ever mistake the swollen Bugwine Breck for the scheming Columbus Collins who kept slithering through the throng like he had something up his sleeve.

"What time is it now, Mist' Snews?" questioned Columbus in the hall below just here.

"Six fawty-five—ten minutes mo', and Dinghouse steps on hisse'f in de weddin' march and I gits me a son-in-law whut aint look out de winder eve'y time Bees'-Knees lays down de check in de ba'becue-stand!"

Columbus recognized the insult, but it no longer mattered, at least not until after his scheme had eliminated both other contenders for the hand of Geranium. And now his hour had struck—even now his fingers were lightly in the vest pocket of Mr. Snews, the prized watch already in their grip.

Mr. Breck launched himself at the flop-eared boy beside the silverware in a flying tackle that would have won acclaim at any big conference game.

Lacking only two canary feathers in the corner of his mouth to complete his resemblance to a cat that has dined unorthodoxly but well, Mr. Collins moved through the guests in Mr. Breck's direction. Reaching Bugwine's side he trod sharply, as though in reminder, upon his anguished aide's tan-shod bunions, and then brushed heavily past him to where the oversized Petuma anxiously watched her guests.

"Heps you wid openin' up de 'freshments in de kitchen, soon as de time comes," he volunteered disarmingly in her ear.

Then, with crash of cymbal and squall of harmonica above the rumble of the drum, Professor Dinghouse swept into his own rough idea of "Lohengrin," at which a flop-eared, lanky darky in what had only yesterday been a waiter's suit, emerged from his personal parking-lot under the steps in the clutch of an ancient best man, and moved to meet a descending stir and flutter upon the stairway, upon the arm of that human truck Mr. Washington Snews: and the new wedding was on!

At the foot of the steps waited Columbus. Even Napoleon, he reflected, must have felt this way at a critical moment in a campaign. Yet in his own case nothing could fail; and, with Mr. Snews' watch already well planted, it was time for the real show to begin—a show that would ultimately end with *Columbus* taking Geranium from her father's arm—as soon as some other details, and aspirants, had been finally attended to!

"Aint you startin' jest a little ahead of de schedule-time, Mist' Snews?" he therefore sprung his trap as Big Ugly approached.

Mechanically Mr. Snews' huge hand went to his watch-pocket. Then his jaw dropped. Sudden beads joined his eyes in protruding from the surface of his startled face. He shed the puzzled clasp of his daughter's hand like an eel, while with frantic fingers he frisked himself, pocket by pocket, to a terrible conclusion. Then, over the musical misconceptions of Dinghouse rang the bull-bellow of: "*My watch! Somebody done git my watch what de lodge gimme!*"

A startled Bugwine was jerked back from rueful dreams to duty. He glanced wildly about him while recollections of instructions—conflicting and confusing—flooded the limited area behind his knotted forehead. Over excited heads he caught sight of Columbus unmistakably signaling him. Now or never! The call to heroism had come! Geranium might again be his!

From amid the slack of Mr. George Goodwin's trousers, Mr. Breck gathered himself, launched himself at the flop-eared boy beside the silverware in a flying-tackle that would have won acclaim at any big Conference game.

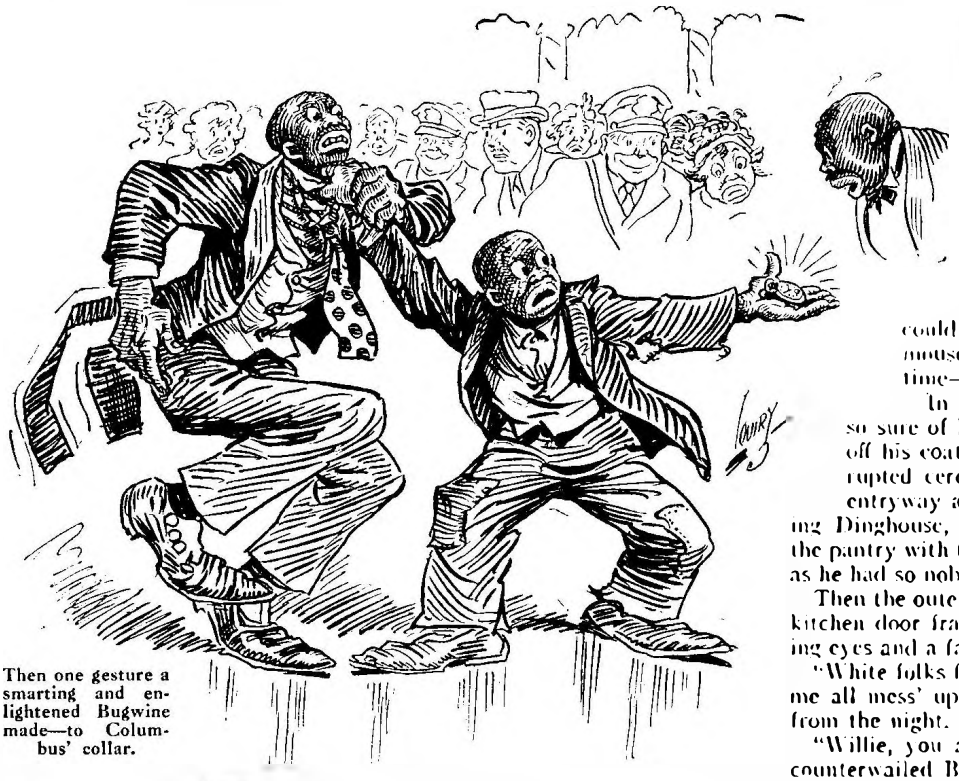
Down went groom and guard in a yowling, biting, gouging whirlwind. Shrieking guests sought safety up stove-pipes and atop of furniture, while Mr. Snews sought opportunity for mayhem amid the whirling figures upon the floor.

"Arrests you—in de name of—de Law! For bu'glary!" panted a sawed-off little detective at length, from a strategic position astride the bridegroom. "—Marryin' a man's daughter—and den tryin' to git his watch too!"

"Watch? Search me! Dat all I say, search me—befo' I gits up and slaps you loose from yo' neck!" invited the flop-eared Spasmodic heatedly from the floor.

Bugwine shifted his shirt-bosom away from one ear, so he could hear the hero-worship better when it started. Then he went methodically through the wedding-suit of the bridegroom—to an awful realization: Spasmodic didn't have the watch!

This discovery but brought out the fact that nobody had said he had, except Bugwine. And now Bugwine



Then one gesture a smarting and enlightened Bugwine made—to Columbus' collar.

couldn't prove it; it was merely an idea he had got hold of some place, without being able to remember where—putting him in the ruinous position of having tried to make a burglar out of a bridegroom, right spang in the middle of a wedding. Nothing was more likely to get a former husband in bad with the bride, or the bride's parents, as he saw now—regardless of the merits of the case. And this case didn't have any merits. Everywhere a boy looked he saw disapproval, diluted only with yearnings to step in his face.

None of which left the ostracized Mr. Breck in shape for new shocks. But they kept coming. His hand straying wretchedly into the unfamiliar pockets of Mr. George Goodwin's only dress coat, proved startlingly just here that the wind could not always be depended upon by a shorn lamb. He couldn't believe his fingers, but they kept on telling him—that he had Big Ugly's watch in *his* pocket!

Frantically he gazed around him. Already of the same social standing as a snake with fleas, he mourned, where would he be if this searching-idea took a sudden flare-up again? Then memory, starting at his feet and working upward, revealed all—except what to do about it! It was Columbus who had stepped on his feet, brushed heavily past him, cunningly planted the stolen watch not on Spasmodic but on Bugwine, that both might be discredited at one stroke!

At which he saw the rest—and Columbus pushing forward to put it into execution: Now Columbus would loudly search him—and a certain short-legged boy's meals would be pushed through the bars in a pan for about six months after that. While Columbus and Geranium went on a honeymoon, too! Spasmodic Simmons might be sinking under the weight of suspicion, but Bugwine was already sunk under weight of the watch! With Columbus crowding nearer, nearer—

Then disasters for Bugwine grew so thick as to get in the way of each other. Columbus was blocked by a fresh herald, pushing and paging through the milling guests with importunate word from the back door.

"Whar at Bugwine Breck? Boy out here c'arin' to see Bugwine quick!" rang the call.

"Dar he is. I can wait. Weddin' done all gum' up noway," came cryptically from Columbus. Even in his anguish, Bugwine could remember a cat with a mouse, once, having plenty of time—like Columbus.

In fact, Mr. Collins seemed so sure of himself that he was taking off his coat in the midst of the interrupted ceremonies, hanging it in the entryway alongside that of the laboring Dinghouse, preparatory to helping in the pantry with the refreshments, it seemed, as he had so nobly promised.

Then the outer darkness beyond the open kitchen door framed for Bugwine two rolling eyes and a face of woe.

"White folks fixin' to kill me! Done got me all mess' up!" wailed a familiar voice from the night.

"Willie, you aint never *seen* no mess!" counterwailed Bugwine.

"I aint, aint I?" Willie Freeman grew hoarsely belligerent beneath his wrongs. "Whose open-faced suit you got on den? Dat all I ax you, whose is it?"

"Mist' Gawge Goodwin's, you says—"

"Dawggone right I says it!" Willie's aggrieved voice rose until he keened like a homesick hound. "And Mist' Gawge say he want it—*right now!*"

"W-wants it *now?*" the owl-eyed Bugwine stuttered. "Wh-why, you say de white-folks' weddin' wuz *Thursday* Dis here's jest Wednesday, and—"

"Forgits and leaves up last year's calendar," yelped Willie explanatorily. "Marks de date right, but gits de day wrong. Now Mist' Gawge sont me word he craves dis suit or my right laig—and I done run out of lies a hour ago!"

Bugwine watched his business going around in circles without his being able to do anything about it.

"Here yo' suit—wid de safety-pin in de coat. Now git out of Mist' Gawge's clothes befo' I sets 'em on fire wid you in 'em!" Mr. Freeman indicated that a desperate man knows no ground-rules.

Mr. Breck bowed to the inevitable, in a flutter of coats, pants, and B. V. D.'s, with his mind verging on utter blank from fright and misery as he changed in the entryway where Dinghouse's overcoat and Columbus' coat also hung.

Eyes rolling, he hung the borrowed suit of Mr. Goodwin upon the nearest hook, slid into his own patched and pinned garments, then thrust dress coat and trousers into the waiting arms of Willie Freeman without.

Then sight of the perfidious Columbus laboring with an ice-cream freezer in the pantry shocked Bugwine into the consciousness of a still newer calamity—Big Ugly's watch was gone! Gone in the coat pocket of Mr. George Goodwin's suit, whence he had been too addled to remove it. And when Mr. George found a watch with the name of Big Ugly Snews on it in the pocket of his coat he would smell a whole litter of rats—followed by a big joint lodge funeral for Willie Freeman and Bugwine Breck.

About him all was demoralization. The minister was fanning Petunia, while Geranium attended to some overlooked hysterics in the hall. Four men held Big Ugly, Columbus labored in seeming innocence in the pantry, and Spasmodic Simmons wandered vaguely among the bewildered guests.

In a pleasant haze through it all, Dinghouse alternated between his musical harness behind the rubber plants and the entryway, where the presence of Columbus' tailed coat hanging there confused an artist who desired only the bottle in his own.

Then something psychic within him told Bugwine that an undertaker somewhere near by had shifted his card over into the Active Prospects file. Starting with the screech of brakes outside that preceded a thunderous knock at the door.

Opening it proved that a boy's business could always grow worse. Weakly Mr. Breck turned to flee, but too late. Retreat was already blocked by crowding guests and relatives behind him, through whose midst an inquiring and innocent-appearing Columbus was already shouldering his way, slipping on a coat as he came.

In the open doorway cowered Willie Freeman, a blue-coated officer gripping him firmly in the waistband of his trousers, while behind him towered—

"Lawd Gawd, hit's Mist' Gawge!" squalled the despairing Bugwine.

"Damn' right it is. And where's my coat? A whole wedding waiting over on Capitol Street while *you* wear *my* coat!"

The red-headed young man made a lunge and the gray-gilled Bugwine made a leap. His mouth made motions but it didn't say anything. He had returned that suit! His staring eyes asked questions of a Willie too addled to answer them. Blank called unto blank, as it were—a blankness in which the approaching Columbus suddenly joined. His jaw dropped, his eyes glazed, as he caught sight of Bugwine in his anguish and his every-day garments, as though he beheld dire personal possibilities. Then he rallied; whoever had Big Ugly's watch now, it could not be traced to Columbus!

And as for all his trouble to discredit Bugwine, that had been unnecessary: Bugwine could ever be depended upon to discredit himself. As witness him now, flap-jawed and foolish before the blistering gaze and tongue of the red-headed Mr. George, the cold eyes of the Law.

Yet even as Mr. Collins moved nearer, to break the tension by accusing Bugwine on general principles and past performance and planting, it was broken for him—by a sudden startled blankness on the face of the outraged Mr. Goodwin as he took in the faultlessly clad Columbus. Then recovery—and the depth-bomb:

"There it is! Grab him quick, Officer! That's my coat! —No, no! Not on Bugwine—on that *Columbus* coon!"

Then, through ensuing swift confusion, light into lower darkness, near the floor: darkness in the mind of the sawed-off Bugwine being dispersed as he suddenly saw all—two dress coats hanging side by side in a darkened entryway while Columbus helped, coatless, in the pantry and Bugwine donned numbly his own sad garments; the wrong dress coat hurriedly handed Willie by mistake; and now —

The eyes of all were upon the discarded husband again, especially Geranium's. For Bugwine's sudden strut now was an arresting thing.

Then one gesture a smarting and enlightened Bugwine made—to Columbus' collar. His other hand plunged into the pocket of the coat Columbus still wore—and the watch of Big Ugly Snews was found at last! On Columbus Collins—by that unerring sleuth, Bugwine Breck!

An admiring gasp ran about the dusky portion of the assemblage, one in which Geranium's led all the rest.

"Take him away!" Mr. George Goodwin and Mr. Snews addressed the Law as one. And, crushed and coatless, Columbus went; in his eyes the look of that wound which only boomerangs self-flung can inflict.

Following which there fell in the house of Snews one of those dramatic silences, a hush in which a pin could have been heard to drop—not to mention the six spoons, three knives, and a candlestick that slid suddenly with damning clatter from beneath the vest of Spasmodic Simmons, victim of habit to the point of stealing his own wedding presents. Then he too faded forever through a window, before exposure, leaving in the eyes of Geranium a look—

In the office of a hastily aroused court clerk at Linden an hour later, again sounded familiar words:

"Craves myse'f a pa'r of licenses, Cap'n. Heah de two bucks—and de old paper de preachuh gimme."

"What's the names?"

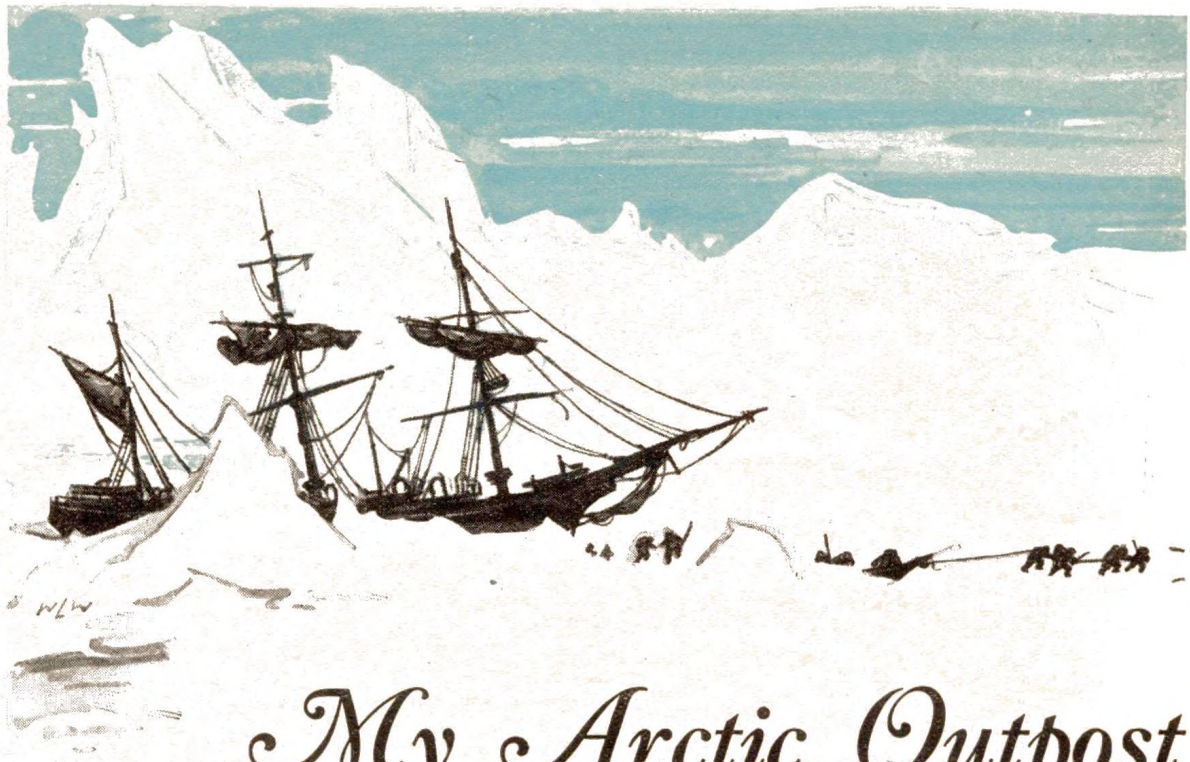
"Craves make marriage, suh, wid Geranium Snews—"

"Geranium Snews! What is this starting over there—a reverse harem? You're the *third* boy that's been in here this week to marry that same girl!"

"Yas, suh; other two gits deyse'fs in a jam. My name Bugwine Bre—"

"Bugwine, hell!" growled the clerk. "Any license I issue for marrying *that* sheba from now on, I'll just make out—*'To Bearer!'*"

Bugwine's eye strayed over Mr. Freeman's prospective handiwork—and kindled rapturously.



My Arctic Outpost

This true story of terrific adventure records the valiant career of a man who for nearly a half-century has been America's most northerly pioneer. In the foregoing chapters he has told you of his hunts with the Eskimos for whale

THIS spring at Utkiavie was a bad one; not many of the hunters had gone inland, and those that had were not very successful. The ice had been closed for two months, and no seal were to be had for love or money. It looked as if it would be a hungry year, if things did not change. As soon as I was home we started covering our oomiaks. Woolfe was fitting two boats; Charley Ice was to have one and the carpenter the other.

We waited as long as we dared; then taking our boats on sleds, we started out, building a road as we went. The ice was terrible. A person would have had a hard job crawling over it, let alone hauling a boat without some kind of road; the second day we were seven miles away from the beach and no water in sight, not even a water-cloud. The wind had been northeast ever since we started, not blowing very hard, but still we expected the ice would open somewhere. That afternoon we made a camp, thinking to send some one out to try and find if there was a lead.

We sent Attooktua, rested that night, and started early in the morning, building as we went. In the middle of the day Attooktua came back reporting water nearly as far as we had already come; the lead was not very wide, and the edge was straight up and down. This was disheartening news, as all of us thought that with the edge so far out, it would be smooth. There was nothing except to continue on with our road-building, or turn back, which none of us wanted to do. The third day we got along fine, except we had to zigzag all that day between rows of rough ice; still, we were satisfied to have the road crooked, if it was less work. The last mile and a half was fierce. We did not tackle that until the fourth day; then we were all day and night getting through.

At the edge, there was no place level enough to place a boat, and we had to make a slide to get to the water; then we had to fasten a rope on the stern to keep it from sliding in. To make camp, we had to level a place twenty feet square back a little from the edge. Here we piled all our gear, leaving only the boat with the whaling-gear in it lying in the slide; we kept one boat on the rough ice, intending as soon as we rested to take it and look along the edge to try and find another place where we could haul out and take a chance whaling. After we had a sleep, we went south along the flaw eight miles or so before finding any kind of place fit for laying a boat. This was so far from our road that we did not like to stay there, especially as the ice was not fit for our work, for the edge was like a wall where the pack had been grinding along—no place was less than fifteen feet high, and often it was sixty; if we had been caught with the pack coming in, there was no place we could have climbed out, let alone haul out the oomiak. Turning back, we went north several miles; here the ice was better in places, so we placed both the boats, watching the ice all the time.

As long as the wind stayed northeast, we felt safe, and it stayed there for many days. The lead was finally several miles wide. We saw a number of whales offshore, but the young ice would not allow us to get out that far, so all we could do was look at them. Three or four days after we got out, Woolfe's boats came along, using our road; then

Decoration by Lloyd Wright

By CHARLES D. BROWER

and bear and caribou, of his salvaging a wrecked vessel and his start in the whaling business for himself. Here he tells you of many other unique adventures, including the attempt to escape from a ship being carried north frozen fast in the ice.

the village boats came, and they did not like the edge. Some only stayed a few days, then were hauled back to where the level fields were, staying there most of the spring. In the middle of May, Pat and Fred caught the first—and only—whale taken that spring. Their boat was lying south of the slip on top of the ridge; the pack was in and most of the village boats were hauled back from the edge. The ice started to move, leaving holes along the edge, and one happened to make right in front of their boat. Pat was sleeping in the bow when the whale broke water, it did not travel any, but just lay there and spouted. Fred woke Pat, who took his second gun without harpoon or line and darted it as far as he could. The gun-pole hit the water, slid along far enough for the rod to touch the whale's side, and the bomb went straight to a vital spot.

The whale rolled belly up, and there was a scramble trying to get a boat from the ridge to where it lay. Our boat was there first, and Tom soon had an iron in the critter; then we hauled it alongside the pack-ice, which was slowly traveling north, and two Eskimo boats joined us. We soon were cutting the bone out; the pack-ice was just the right height for working, and again the Lord was good to us, for the hole stayed open all that day, until we had finished cutting the whale in. Woolfe's two boats came down to us. Between us, we cut nearly the whole whale, pulling the meat and blubber to the top of the ridge, as well as the bone, which was nine feet long; I think that head made thirteen hundred pounds.

For some time the woman that Joe had been living with kept telling him that she would have to go back to the native she had left; Joe wanted her to leave then, as he did not want her around, but she wished to stay in the boat until whaling was over, after which she intended to go back to MacKenzie River, where she belonged.

Two years before, one of the Nuhook headmen had been to Barter Island trading, where they met some Indians from inland. They were deadly enemies, and the only time they did not kill each other on sight was when they were trading at Barter. This summer something had gone wrong in the trade, and the old fellow had killed an Indian and all his family, except this young woman; and the reason he spared her was that she belonged to a tribe at the mouth of the MacKenzie River. He took her for one of his wives, but after they arrived at the Point, old Dot, as we called him, went crazy and died. After old Dot's death, the woman lived with another native until Portuguese Joe came along.

The last of May, Joe and this woman started walking from the boat to the house; Joe wanted to get Woolfe to have the oomiaks hauled in, as the season was finished; halfway in, they sat down on a canoe sled that was on the road, and while they were there, the husband came along. He did not seem put out very much, so Joe asked him to sit with them and talk things over, telling him that the boats would soon go ashore, and then he could take the woman—she would have a nice payday and they could start all over again. He seemed willing enough, and Joe got up, leaving the two Eskimos sitting on the sled. He started for home, but he had not gone more than fifty feet when the Eskimo hauled his rifle out of his sack and shot

Joe through the small of the back; he must have been killed instantly, but to make sure, the Eskimo walked close and shot him again through the head, the bullet entering under the chin and coming out the top of his head. Leaving the body to lie on the track, the man and woman both started for the village, where the woman told some of the other Eskimos what had happened. Then Mungie sent a young man out on the ice to tell us, and we immediately started for the beach. In the meantime Charley Ice had been out and taken the body ashore to the station, where all the white men soon gathered.

Capture, trial and execution of a treacherous Eskimo killer.

It was finally agreed that we could not let this pass without making an example of the murderer. All the Eskimos were in the village waiting to find out what we were going to do about it, so we first sent for Mungie and the other headman, Angaroo, telling them we were going to arrest the man, and if he was guilty, as the woman said, we were going to execute him.

In the meantime the man had taken his sled and two dogs, starting inland, and by the time we were ready to arrest him, he had gone several hours. One old woman in the village said he would not go far, as the snow was too soft to travel fast, with only two dogs; he was, no doubt, just outside the village somewhere, waiting to see what would come of the murder. The Eskimos would not help us any, saying Joe was one of our kind, and if we wanted the man, we could get him ourselves.

Con, Pat and myself were the ones that went out for him, and following his trail out of the village three miles, we found him in a gully waiting for us, standing behind his sled with his rifle over his arm. As soon as we came close to him, he threw a cartridge in the chamber, and first he covered one and then the other as we approached, seeming unable to make up his mind which one to shoot first. All three of us walked close to the sled, expecting each moment to have him start shooting; but he waited a little too long. Pat was the closest to the sled, and before he could point his rifle from me to Pat, Pat vaulted over the sled, knocking the rifle into the air. As he grabbed him, Con and I soon had him down; then we lashed his hands behind him and started back to the station, where all the others were waiting.

We did not want to kill him without a fair trial, and thinking that the village men ought to be there, we sent for them. Not many came over—just some of the older ones and the *omaliks*, or headmen. We had the woman as witness, and she told just what had happened on the road coming in. She was afraid, after the shooting, and had gone with the man, expecting he would kill her too, if she did not. The captive did not deny anything she said, and the only remark he made was to say that if we let him go, he would never kill another white man. Finding him guilty, he was sentenced to be shot.

Most of the Eskimos were not pleased at the sentence, saying he would not have done the killing if it had not been for the woman, but we would not stand for letting him go. Finally old Angaroo said that it was right for him to die; he had killed a man, and if the victim had been an Eskimo, some one would have killed the captive and maybe his whole family. The only thing wrong was that the woman should be shot also, as she was the cause of the row. We could not do that.

We wanted them to execute the murderer, but they absolutely refused, so we had to do that part ourselves. Old man Bordon loaded four rifles with ball cartridges, and the rest were loaded with blanks, and no one knew which guns were loaded. The native was taken half a mile away, shot and left where he fell; Mungie and the other men made the woman wrap the body in deerskin, leaving it there. That summer the woman left in one of the ships, and we never heard of her again. We buried Joe over the hill half a mile from the station—the first white I ever helped bury at Point Barrow.

This killing made everything unpleasant for a while, and there were only a few at our dance that spring; we had it nevertheless, then washed and bundled our bone. When our work was all done, we hunted seal for a while; for as the ice thawed along the beach, they came in close. Many of the Eskimos were sealing with nets south of us; when the seal were running good, two men could get eighty to over a hundred before quitting.

Although the ice was heavy all spring, the ships arrived as usual. Two were going to winter at Herschel Island, if they could get there, the *Grampus* and the *Mary D. Hume*. They made it all right, and stayed several years before coming out.

Joe Tuckfield, who got all the news about the whales summering at the mouth of the MacKenzie, was not wanted any more, so the Company let him out. We had been expecting Leavitt to return to the station, but he was second mate of the *Hume*, and John W. Kelley came to relieve Woolfe. He brought several Portuguese along with him, just for boat-headers, and his crew were all from Point Hope; they had been working for him there the season before, and had almost the entire village come up that summer.

When the *Bear* arrived, Woolfe sent a written report of the murder and trial to Captain Healy; the Captain's comment was that we had the right to shoot the fellow on sight and he did not want the report, so destroyed it. That was the last of that episode.

We were around trying to buy an outfit from the ships most all summer, but none of them seemed to have much to sell, especially the things we needed to carry on our whaling. We did finally secure all we could pay for, and when we left, we were able to run three boats the next spring. I was camped at Berinak part of the time, shooting ducks for our winter supply. It was great fun to see the ships' boats come there for a little shooting; they did not get many ducks unless they bought them, for as soon as the officers started shooting, several of the Eskimos were alongside them. They had old muzzle-loading guns, using caps, and loaded only with a little powder and no shot; when the ducks came along, the men would snap their caps, making some report, and then dropping their guns, all ran for any ducks that may have dropped. The only ones that were shooting were the men from the ships, but the runners got the ducks, saying they had shot at the same time. Often there were arguments, but the holder of the ducks always came off best. If any eider were taken aboard, they were usually purchased. They never did that with us, for when there was good shooting, we left the sandspit to the Eskimos, going over to a long point two miles away up the lagoon, where we had the hunting all to ourselves.

That summer, as the Point Hope people arrived, they told us of the big feud at Tigera; thirteen had been killed before it was finished. It started with Attungowrah's son's beating his wife to death because she broke a whaling taboo, and wound up with the murder of the old chief himself.

The son's wife belonged at Ke-wel-ling-noo, below Cape Thompson and her brothers at once came to Tigera looking for him. They waited until they found him off his guard and shot him. First one side and then the other killed some one all summer. After the ships arrived, the old chief got drunk, and while sleeping in his igloo with the gut window off, he was shot and so badly hurt he was unable to move. While in this condition one of his wives, who was from Ke-wel-ling-noo, finished him off with her *oo-lu-ra*, a woman's knife made from a saw-blade, shaped something like an old-fashioned chopping-knife. She jabbed the corner into his brain, and that ended that feud; for no one was left alive on Attungowrah's side except a small son, and he was not harmed.

In August a small schooner, the *Silver Wave*, came from San Francisco. She belonged to Captain Jim McKenna, an old-time whaler, and was bound from Herschel Island to winter. Mac was to meet them somewhere near Point Barrow, but they failed to connect. An old acquaintance, Baine, was captain. After going as far as the Island, and not getting his supplies, he returned to the Point. Joe Tuckfield was second mate on her, and not being able to get much of an outfit here, they started to go south, reaching the Sea Horse Islands, where Baine ran her ashore; he lived in the boat, but sent most of the crew to the Refuge Station. His mate, George Smith, and four other men, were the first ones to find shelter in the new place of refuge.

A new cook proves a wild man. . . . A fist-fight indoors.

Our cook, John, left us this summer. He was going to try and get into some soldiers' home, as he had been a soldier during the Civil War, and he was getting old and quite useless, so we sent him home with Captain Smith in the *Balcana*. What we should do without a cook we did not know. None of us were any good at cooking, but I tried it for a while and then the crowd fired me; each had a turn, and Fred was the best of the bunch, but he wanted to be on the outside, instead of fussing over grub.

The last ship to leave that fall was the schooner *Alton*, Captain Newth. The day before leaving for the west Newth anchored close in by our house, and all of us went aboard to see him and trade a little. Newth told us he had a man that was a good cook and he would let him go if we could get him. He told us he had some trouble with the man, that he was a Dane, the strongest man he ever met, and no one could do anything with him aboard the schooner. If George Matson knew the Captain wanted to get rid of him, he was just contrary enough not to want to go, but Newth thought if we could see him and coax him to run away, he would fall for it. George had been shanghaied while drunk, and since had raised the devil with all the officers.

We wanted a cook badly, so we looked him over; he certainly was a husky, but seemed all right to talk to, and when we broached the subject of leaving, he thought he would like it, but added that maybe the Captain would not let him off. So the scheme of deserting the ship was carried out, and everybody was satisfied. We liked him fine and he was a good cook; but as Newth said, he was a moose for strength. He hardly ever wore shoes in the house; and all winter, even in the coldest weather, he ran out to empty slops in his bare feet. When he had anything to do with his stovepipe, he would stand on the hot stove until his feet were scorching, for he had such calloused places on the soles that he never felt the burns. In after years, George became a noted character in the North.

I did not go hunting that fall; we needed more skins for covering our boats, and I wanted to go to Icy Cape to see if I could get the Baby and his family to come up and whale for us in the spring. In November, Tocton and I started down the coast; we reached Wainwright village in two days, and stayed until I had bought all the skins I could; then we went to Icy Cape. The Baby was there, but he did not want to come to Utkiavie in the spring; he would come now, but wanted to stay where he was for another season. They had bad luck the last year, losing nearly everything they had. He wanted to come back with me, thinking we could fit him out with some more, and if he caught a whale, all the bone would belong to us. I did not give him much encouragement, not knowing what the other boys might think of it. Baby thought he would come along and find out, so we started home, and one of his brothers went along. Traveling slowly, it was the middle of December when we got home, and we fitted the Baby out with some old rifles for his brothers and a new one for himself, as well as some whaling-guns, with a few old iron bombs. He went away well satisfied, but we never got anything back, for he had another bad season and never saw a whale all the spring.

None of our crowd went hunting that spring, and I did not care to go with anyone else. Some of our men went inland for us instead, and in March I took six sleds to their camp, coming home with all loaded. Soon after I returned, our cook George tired of his job and left us, shipping with Kelley, in order to get a chance at whaling.

As the whaling time came near, it looked as if the ice was going to be fine, for it was level all the way out; near the edge were a number of old fresh-water pieces, some a couple of miles in length, and these were all cemented together with new ice about four feet thick, which left lanes of smooth ice with projecting peninsulas all up and down the coast. This makes an ideal whaling flaw, for the whales coming along the edge run under the smooth places, coming out to blow in the small bights between the points.

We were having three boats that spring, Con and Ned taking the third one. Kelley had twelve, mostly manned with Eskimos from Tigera, while a few more were from Wainwright and the village. Right after George left us, we shipped another Dane that had been cook with Baine. He only stayed a month, and I think he must have been crazy, for the first thing he said after coming to us from the Refuge Station was that he was just the man for us; if we struck a whale and lost it under the ice, he would put himself in a trance and tell us where it was. He was a good cook, but if he saw people conversing, he thought they were talking about him. After a while this got us all going; one day he started on Fred, calling him a lot of vile names. Fred had been joking with some women, and the cook accused them of talking about him, saying he could tell without hearing just what was said. Tom Gordon took up the argument and told him where to get off, and the next thing there was a scrap.

We were cleaning a lot of hides to cover a boat in our main room; they were just thawed and were some mess, and in the scrap they were knocked over, the stovepipe came down, which had not been cleaned for a long time, and then some one upset a bucket of water. Then there *was* a mess. We all stood around the walls to see the fight, and it was worth watching. The cook was a powerful fellow, a larger man than Tom, and for a long time it was an even fight, though Tom got the best of him eventually. When the cook said he had enough, he certainly heard enough said about him to cover what he had imagined was said earlier in the evening. After the fight we made him clean up the mess and then fired him. He started down the coast the next morning; I never saw him again.

Kelley started a new fashion in the whaling at Point Barrow, for when his boats left for the flaw, they were each supplied with a tent, a stove and all kinds of food, and the women belonging to the outfit ran the sleds every day, bringing out anything required. We went out with our usual supply, to be as light as possible. Whales were late. They were not reported up to the twentieth of April, on which date we hauled out. Our road led south from where our house was, while Kelley had built a road abreast his station; the village boats used either, never yet having built a road of their own. Our boats were the first to go, so Pat and Con stayed near the road; it all looked good. When Tom and I reached the point, we liked its looks so well we stayed there, but the next day the young ice came in, staying closed for a week, then started crushing. We were forced to haul our boat back half a mile from the edge, thinking the point might crush off. This did not happen, for after crushing for a while, the ice remained stationary for a long time. When it did go off with a northeast wind, the whales came through in a large body.

The spring hunt. ....Five whales are taken. . . . The gang splits.

I never saw more whales than the first day the ice opened; they came from under the ice in schools, and time after time we tried to reach one, only to have him go down just before we reached him. There was not a breath of air, and while the run was on, the water was like glass. No doubt the whales could hear our paddles, or possibly see us, as the sea was just like a mirror. At any rate, we did not get a chance to strike that day. The ice had not opened north of us; the other boats saw whales in the young ice, but could not get at them.

That evening, when the big run was over, I got a chance to strike a large one from the ice; he ran offshore into the new ice, where we could not get at him, and that was all we saw until morning. The next day we hauled to a small hole a hundred yards away, and had been there an hour or so when a big fellow came up and lay on top of the water as though he was tired. We took the guns and harpoon to where he was; Tom and Pisa, our native, each had a gun, I the iron, and we let go together, turning the whale belly up.

We were a pleased crowd, but as they were only seven in our boat, it was a problem how to handle the critter. We knew how, but we did not have men enough. We made a start by getting the score cut in the ice, but when we were ready to haul up the head, we could only raise it up part way; at that, we managed to cut off one lip and get one side of the bone on the ice. While we were doing this, the ice moved off a little, and one of Kelley's boats came down where we were and helped us roll the whale and take the other side of bone out.

As soon as we could load up, we started for our road, and on the way we came across Fred and Pat with a whale they had just killed. It was another large one, and of course we had to stop and help them cut in, before going any farther. Their whale was larger than the one we had killed, and it took two boats to take their bone to the road, where we all proceeded as soon as the cutting was over.

One of Kelley's boats was cutting a whale just below our road; this was the second for him, and Kelley was feeling good, asking me to come to his tent for coffee and eat with him, while waiting for the sleds to come for bone. It was the first I had seen him since early spring, when some of his boys and I had disagreed hotly about several deer they had shot. Kelley had a fine streak of luck, for his boats took twelve whales that spring, most of them large. We did not do so badly either, as each of our boats caught another one, making five for the season. The Eskimos only caught one that spring, and that made them change their ideas of whaling more than anything we could have said to them; they could see that we stayed by our boats all the time, taking advantage of every opportunity as it came. If any of our men left the boat without some good reason, he lost part of his pay—especially if during his absence a whale was taken. I could see that Kelley had the right idea, having tents for his crews, and also having them cook near their camp. It made them more comfortable, for they could dry their clothing without having to send them ashore.

This summer we had a great time, as all the Eskimos came first to one place and then the other for the dance. We did the best we could to make them have a good time, Kelley giving away lots of canned fruit, while our side furnished doughnuts. Big George Matson, our old cook, did well for Kelley, getting him seven whales out of the twelve his boats caught. This seemed to go to his head, for shortly after coming ashore he had rows every day with some one over at the station. Finally Kelley fired him, and then he came over to us, working for his keep, and acted decent, wanting to do something all the time.

After we had cleaned all our bone, some of the boys thought they would like to go to San Francisco and have a good time on what they had saved. Tom and I wanted to stay for at least another year. It was finally agreed that Tom and myself should buy their interest in the station. First we divided all the bone and what furs we had, then put a valuation on the house and boats, and that was all we had to value. Tom and I paid the others their share in bone, and we still had a nice little nest-egg.

The ice held on all the month of July without a move, and on the tenth of August, I started south with a boat as I did not want to take any chance of not being able to get an outfit for the next spring. Big George was to come along with me, and Mr. Stevenson, who had come from the States to teach school, wanted to also, as all his outfit was to come in on the *Bear*, and if it was late, the *Bear* probably would not come this far.

(Mr. Brower's journey in search of some one who would sell him the supplies needed for the next season was unsuccessful, and he returned to Point Barrow with the prospect of a hard winter ahead.)

On September twenty-fifth the steamer *Grampus* came from Herschel Island to go outside; they had not been as successful as they had imagined they would be, although Captain Norwood had a few whales. Norwood had a big part of his two-years' outfit still aboard; I made a dicker with him, and he and MacGregor sold me everything we wanted, and then I had some bone left over. All our merchandise was landed at the point, and I had to hire several oomiaks to freight it to our house ten miles south. If the ice had been away from the beach, we could have had him land all at our place, but Norwood took no chances, and sailed south almost immediately after.

The ice never did go away that summer and fall, and

the whaling was good at the Point; the four ships stayed later than I had ever seen them. They took whales every day, although many were lost under the ice. On the night of October second, as the ships were coming in to anchor under Point Barrow, it was snowing, and every little ways, there would be a streak of slush ice they had to come through. As the steamers came to these patches, they rang for more speed; all four were together, with the *William Lewis* in the lead, the *Navarch* only a few hundred yards astern and the others just as close to him. After coming through a number of these strips, Sherman rang for speed to get through another patch, piling the *Bill Lewis* high up on the sandspit. As soon as he struck, he blew his whistle, and the others stopped and then backed their engines just in time to keep the whole lot from getting on shore. In the dark, the snow-covered sandspit looked just the same as a strip of slush ice. The ship stayed where she struck until she was burned that winter by some fool Eskimo.

Immediately they were ashore, all boats were lowered, the crew going aboard the *Navarch*, taking only their whalebone, and the ships left for the south at daylight. I was at our house the next morning, when an Eskimo came and told me what had happened. Taking Billy Grant with me, I started for the Point, hoping to be able to save something that would be of use to us. As I passed the Refuge Station, I stopped and told Captain Bordon of the wreck, and he had some Eskimos take him up in a sled, getting there as soon as I did. On the way up, I found two whaleboats on the beach, with nothing in them except oars, mast and sail; all the whaling-guns had been taken by the officer who had charge of the boat, as had always been customary in case of wreck.

I anchored the boats to the beach as best I could, making the painter fast to pieces of heavy driftwood; I knew they would be safe if the wind did not change. When we reached the ship, the Point Barrow natives had cleaned out everything they could get at, but there were a lot of casks in the hold which had not been bothered. I had some of the men working for me start salvaging them, and we did not do so badly; ten casks of hard bread, one of fresh cabbage, several sacks of potatoes and some onions, which the Eskimos did not use, and we were mighty glad to have them. We also found part of the ship's slop-chest, which we piled on the beach; there was a lot of salt meat, of which we took a number of barrels, although not so much as we could have, as no one ate that ashore, when there was plenty of fresh.

Along the beams were a lot of whaling spades, boat-boards and spars for making masts, which we put on the beach. At night I just camped aboard, eating whatever I could find; the galley stove was still in place, so we had all the coffee we wanted; that had been taken by the Eskimos, but they did not like coffee, and returned it to us. The second day Antone Bett came to skirmish; and before he was through, there was nothing left that could be taken away. Antone saved all the meat, of which he sold a lot the next summer to the sailing-ships.

Welcome salvage from the wreck of the steamer *Bill Lewis*.

The second day I took the ship's dinghy, still hanging on her stern davits, lowered it into the water and hauled it up on the beach. Then I went aloft and unbent most of her sails that were of any use as canvas. Then we cut all the weather rigging (that is, the rigging on the high side). Then I had men at each mast and cut all the sticks out of her, so they all fell at once. What a mess! All the yards on the fore- and mainmast were still up, and it took me several days to clear away what I wanted; then most of the spars were broken.

I wanted to save some of the larger yards for building canoes, and I managed to get four, which I had hauled to our place that winter. While I had been doing this work, Billy had taken some men, brought the whaleboats up and taken most of our plunder home. The last thing we took home was a lot of coal, of which there was a large quantity in the ship's bunkers. Charley liked that, because we had only wood to burn before, and that kept one man busy all the time. I had intended to take the stove from the galley, but Anton got ahead of me.

From an ambush of ice an Eskimo kills twenty-two polar bears.

Early in December, Tookoloona, an Eskimo from the village, was on his way south to trade, and as he was crossing the lagoon at Peard Bay, he found the carcass of a whale that had washed in there sometime in fall. For some reason no one had crossed the lagoon right there. It was daylight when he found it, and the carcass was covered with polar bears. Having his wife hold the team, Tookoloona shot twenty-two of them from behind a cake of rough ice, and a number escaped. Skinning the bears, he left the hides cached in the snow. When he told Kelley what he had found, Kelley sent a party of his boys there with a lot of traps, and during the winter they caught several hundred foxes and a number of wolves. After the first lot of bears were killed, not so many seemed to come around; no doubt the dogs scared them off, as where they smell bears, they make a great noise. An Eskimo dog never barks unless he winds a bear or one comes close to him; all he does is yelp and howl the same as a wolf.

Soon after the sun came back on January twenty-first, I started to work on the boats and as I had plenty of help, I took it easy, hunting between-times. The deer were plentiful, coming close in to the coast, and I could leave the house in the morning most any time and shoot deer, one or two, and be back before dark. This kept us in meat all spring. The ice looked good for whaling, so we expected to have a good flaw if there was no heavy pressure from the southwest to rough up the ice offshore.

One day in the village, looking for some one to make whalebone lashings for me, I found an old man making a fish net from small whalebone. He had a large bundle that he had scraped fine like grass; the strips were little over two feet long, and he told me he had been two winters scraping enough for his net. He had just started knitting it, and he had a little over two fathoms made; I had heard of bone nets, but this was the first I ever saw; when he had scraped the bone as fine as he wanted it, he knotted a lot together, enough to fill his knitting needle. It was some task making that kind of net, for every knot had to be just so; to make it lay flat every mesh was measured over a gauge he had made from ivory. The net was thirty meshes deep, and when finished, it would be twenty fathoms long. I wanted to buy it from him for a curio to take out with me some day. At first he did not want to sell it, saying it would be fine for his fishing, especially in summer, for it looked so much like grass in the water that he would catch a lot of fish. A few days after, however, he sold it to me. He would not promise when it would be finished—in fact, I did not get it for two years more; during that time I had been outside and forgotten all about it, but he had remembered and finished the net, working when he had time.

The old men tell how they used to make a small bow from whalebone, which were only used to kill some one they had a grudge against. A bow of this kind was always made small enough to carry under the shirt or attiga, hardly ever over two feet long. This was backed with sinew in their usual style, and with a bow of this kind, they used a short arrow tipped with a small flint point; they were so sharp and the bow so strong that one of their arrows would

penetrate skin clothing and go almost through a man's body. In opening an old ice-house a few years ago, I found the body of a man dressed in loon-skin clothing who had been killed that way. Evidently his body had been left there for a devil charm; it had been placed in a sitting posture, with the arrow still in place, right over the heart.

That spring, I learned how to chip flint. In tanning deerskins, the women use a flint scraper set in an ivory or bone handle, curved at one end and flattened out for a place against the chest to get more purchase. When flint was wanted for scrapers, or in the long ago for spear-heads and arrow-points, it was brought from the mountains by some hunter. The flint found is in small rounded pieces, in size from two to six inches in diameter; these pieces are split into slabs by striking two of them together, and they will generally split with an even surface, with three and four flakes from a piece. They are worked smaller and shaped to the implement required with a small hammer, made from deer horn; the handle and all is sometimes of one piece; at other times a horn head is used, with a wooden handle, but the handle is always made pliable so there is a lot of give to it.

The flint flakes, held in the hand, are struck on the edge with the hammer, chipping the flint to almost the size wanted; the horn hammer is just the hardness required, for the head does not slip when the blow is struck. Most of this preliminary work is done where the flints are found; then they are brought to the villages and finished with the *kigilik*, or chipper. The handle of ivory has a score cut in the top in which is inserted a piece of copper or deer-horn; the flint is held in the hand; the point of the copper, or horn, is placed where a chip is to be taken off; then, with the flat end of the kigilik against the chest, a quick pressure will break the chip off nice and clean, sometimes all the way across the piece. In this work, the hand holding the flint is protected with a heavy piece of deerskin; otherwise the chips will be forced into the hand, making a nasty cut.

In the middle of April it turned cold, sometimes getting thirty-five below zero at nights, so it would be no pleasure whaling in that weather. Whales were not reported until the eighteenth, and the next day we started out to the flaw.

For a while we were not successful, for the Eskimos had three before we had any, and all of their whales were large. In May, Tom got a big whale, and the next day I caught one. Charley, who had returned when the whaling started, had several chances, but got nothing. His Eskimo boat-header came to me, saying Charley was not strong enough to throw his harpoon and could get nothing. I had to send him to the house. He did not like that, so went to work in an Eskimo boat. The boat I fitted for him had no more chances. Tom and I each got another big one, and at the last we each caught a small one, mine with bone only two feet long. But we were pleased with ourselves that spring. Bone was five dollars a pound, and we had caught over eight thousand pounds between us. The Eskimos had a good season, taking nine whales, most of them large, a lot of which we bought later.

Learning to chip flint. . . . The whaling season starts again.

Tom and I were feeling good to think we had done so well, and began making plans for the coming season. We did not want to run more than three boats, hoping we might have another good season before going outside and possibly organize a company, having some one to send us what we needed each year. The ships arrived early in August, and as they came in, we went aboard each one. None would sell us anything; the steamers belonging to the Pacific Steam Whaling Company were the only ones that had any trade to amount to anything, and they had orders not to sell to us; they wanted no opposition to their station, either in whaling or trading.

When the last of the steamers had gone east, Kelley came to us, saying that his company wanted to buy us out, and offering us five hundred dollars for our place. We would not consider it for a moment. Kelley said he wanted to do us a favor if he could, and every morning after that, he came in, raising his offer five hundred dollars each time until he reached three thousand five hundred dollars. Then Tom and I took it before he wanted to go back on the offer. We did not have seven hundred dollars' worth of stuff in the place, outside of our bone.

(Early in September, Mr. Brower started south with Captain Healy on the cutter Bear. After some difficulty he obtained passage for the States at Unalaska.)

We arrived in San Francisco in the early morning. As soon as we were located, Tom and I made our first visit to the office of the Pacific Steam Whaling Company. We had our check for three thousand five hundred dollars Kelley had paid us, and we wanted to dispose of our whalebone as soon as possible. They were the largest handlers of bone on the coast, therefore the logical parties to sell to. Captain J. N. Knowles, the head of the firm, was in New York. Ned Griffith was in charge. He would not make us an offer on the bone, as he wanted Captain Knowles there before committing himself.

San Francisco.... Mr. Brower revisits his parents in the East.

Captain Knowles got home from New York and he agreed to buy all our bone at near the market price. This was satisfactory to us. On the way down, our bone had lost no weight, which was unusual, as if it is not dried properly there is a shrinkage of at least ten per cent on the passage out.

Tom and I had made up our minds we were going home; neither had been there for a number of years. I wrote home that I was coming, but Tom, whose home is Scotland, would not write as he wanted to surprise his folks. It was only a few days after getting our money that we started for the East.

I had a glorious time and visited every one of my relatives and friends. My father was not in very good circumstances, and not very strong. He had been employed as station agent on the D. L. & W. road for a long time, and they were putting in younger men, so he was to lose his job. He had a new house he had just finished building, which he wanted to sell so he could live in a small place near the railroad. As I was flush, and he needed help, I paid all he owed on the new house and then moved him and Mother where they wanted to go, and furnished it to suit them. Then I paid a mortgage on some property he owned, and this put him on Easy Street; with his pension from the Civil War and what he could make as Justice of the Peace he was able to live comfortably. . . .

When we arrived in Oakland on my return trip, we went to the Pacific Steam Whaling Company—they had promised to have something for us when we came back. Now they offered to take up an outfit for us, but nothing was guaranteed. Tom and I talked things over, concluding we would try and get some one else to go in with us, having them handle the bone and furs in San Francisco while we did the best we could in the North.

H. Liebes and Company were the largest furriers on the Pacific coast. Thinking they would be interested in the furs especially, I went to see them first. I had met Mr. Liebes before, so needed no introduction. When I had a talk with him, he thought favorably of the venture, and as soon as he found out that we wanted to put up our own money, he said he would go in with us, and for me to get out a requisition for what we wanted. If the money

we had to put in the venture was not sufficient, they would advance all that was necessary. I was told to find a schooner, and charter her for the trip North. That was the way I liked to do business.

Looking around, I found a schooner just the right size, that would be available in a few days, the *Jennie Wand*. As soon as the *Jennie Wand* was ready, she hauled alongside the wharf near Vallejo Street for our cargo. We were to have another man along with us, and I could not think of a better one than Conrad; he was doing nothing and when I spoke to him, he was more than willing.

Back at Point Barrow. . . . A village row and murder of Baby.

We sailed on the tenth of June, 1893. Our passage north was excellent; we had fine weather the whole trip. . . .

Immediately upon our arrival, work started in earnest; everything landed had to be put under cover before rain came. Many hands made quick work, and all the Eskimos of the villages were there, glad to see me back again. They all fell to work, and soon everything was covered. I looked for a suitable place to build our station. I had wanted to be farther north, where a lake of fresh water was handy, but it was too much bother moving all the freight two miles, so I had to build where we landed, just a half mile north of Kelley's. In a day and a half all the lumber was sorted and we were ready to put up the main house and storehouse. The storehouse was of the most importance, so that was finished first. Then I put up the main building. This was our living quarters, workshop and kitchen. It took about a week before they were both far enough advanced to live in.

In November I had to go to Wainwright for hides to cover our boats; we expected to run six in the spring, and these I had to build, all except one that I bought. I took the Baby with me on the trip. Halfway to the inlet, we met a team coming north; they were new people to me, but Baby knew them and made a great fuss over them, saying they were friends of his father, from Port Clarence, and that he was glad they were coming to Utkiavie. On my return to the station, lots of booze was being made by most everyone. The year before, there had been three murders, all on account of liquor.

Two nights after our return Baby got drunk in the village; and as usual the drunk wound up in a row. Baby beat up two of the village men badly. Sometime later he did the same thing, and this time he got drunk with his father's friend, and almost killed him. When Baby left the house to come home, his friend came out at the same time, taking along his rifle. Just as they reached the last house in the village, he shot Baby through both legs, leaving him where he fell; and one of the men the Baby had beat up sometime before, seeing what happened, ran up to the wounded man and stabbed him through the heart; then, tying a rope around his neck, he dragged him some little distance from the track, and left his body. At daylight some one saw him there and reported it to me. I told his family, who went for the body, bringing it to our station.

One of the Baby's younger brothers was going to kill the old fellow who had done the shooting. I tried hard to make him let things rest, saying Baby had brought it on himself, and no man would stand for what his brother did to the other men. I thought for a time there would be a general killing; the old fellow heard what the boy had said, and sent word that he would kill the boy on sight if he even made a move against him. He was willing to pay the Baby's mother for the son's death; finally it was compromised, the man paying to the Baby's mother a new sled and four dogs. He agreed to leave the village at once, so there would be no chance for the boy to change his mind.

The Port Clarence man left that same day. I never saw him again, for next summer some of the Baby's relatives killed him and his two sons at Kivilina. We did not know for two years that it was one of the Utkiavie Eskimos who finished him off; then the man, who had become blind, told it himself.

Baby was killed just before Christmas. He was buried back of the station half a mile; all the natives working for me and all the people from south of here, working for Kelley, helped at the funeral. An immense pile of driftwood was gathered, and it was built in a great stack over the body, which we had placed in a coffin. That was the last of Baby—a mighty fine fellow when sober, and a good friend to me. . . .

All winter I had men working, making lashings of whalebone for the boats I was to build in the spring. The rest of the whites were doing the carpenter work on the frames. Some of the Eskimo were making paddles, of which we needed ten for each boat; all the whaling-gear had to be set up, and the handles made for all the cutting-gear. This kept everyone busy all the time. I wanted to take a trip inland for fish and on February 1st, 1894, I started; the camp was only forty miles away, and I thought I could make it in four days, with a good team. I made the trip out in a day and a half, as I had good moonlight and traveled several hours after daylight had gone. Loading my fish, I was all ready to start home next day.

The weather was fine when I left camp, with just enough breeze to make one hustle to keep warm; in the afternoon the wind freshened to almost a gale; I knew I could not make home that night but wanted to travel as far as I could, so I would get home early the next day. Thinking to help the team, I harnessed myself alongside the sled. It helped, but I slipped and split the seam on the inside of the leg of my pants from the knee to the crotch. Then I knew I had to build camp. I managed to make a small snow-house all by myself, but nearly froze in doing it. I always shed all white man's clothing when traveling, and wore deerskin clothing with the hair in next the skin. When I split my pants, I had wound my snow-shirt around my leg; that is all that saved me that night, for it was about forty below zero.

When the house was built, I fed the dogs and then going inside, I lit my native stone lamp, feeding it with seal oil and using chopped moss mixed with oil for a wick. This did not give much heat and only a little light. I looked for my sewing-kit and I looked in vain! I had left it home, for the first and last time that I have ever done that. No needle or thread! I was up against it for fair. It set me thinking pretty hard. There was nothing to do but make a needle. This I did out of an empty 45-70 cartridge shell, and then whittled it out with my knife. First I made a small hole for the eye. It was not much of a needle, but it served its purpose, and with it I was able to sew the seam after a fashion. When I finished the needle, I wanted thread. This I made from the ravelings out of my sled cover. It was a cold job sitting on a deer-skin in a snow-house with no pants on, sewing by the light of an oil lamp. I finished the job and was glad enough to get into those pants once more; then I had a supper of frozen fish and a little tea in a small bucket for dessert.

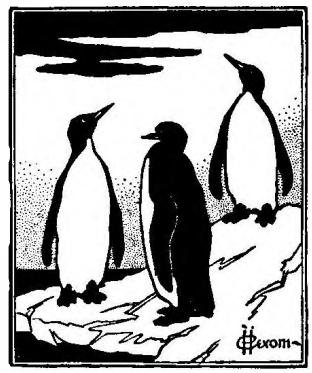
Torn pants at forty below is a serious matter. A crude needle.

In the morning the weather was fine again, and I reached home by night in good shape. Toctoo looked at my pants, and did not know whether to laugh or cry. She did give me some good advice about leaving my sewing outfit home!

In April the ice looked good; as far as we could see, it was level, with a lot of "old ice" all through the flaw. As near as we could judge, the edge would be out five miles.

The ice had opened and shut a number of times at this place, but was solid all through April except for two days.

All hands turned to and built a road some time after the fifth; Kelley would not build with us, preferring to have his own road straight from his station. Kelley had twenty-two boats this spring. We had six. Almost every Eskimo from Point Hope was here, working either for Kelley or us; we had only a few, for most of our men were from Point Barrow or from the villages near Wainwright and Icy Cape. My boat-header was from Pt. Belcher—an old man who had been head man at Sedaroo as long as I had been in the country. He was a dandy in a boat—that is, a skin boat, which he could handle to perfection. Keawak said he had a death-song handed down for many generations. He knew it would be all right for both of us. I was agreeable; as long as he felt that we were going to be lucky, I wanted him to keep on feeling that way.



April 15th, both stations hauled their oomiaks out to where we had an idea the water would be, and we stayed a week, with no sign of the lead opening. The boats were strung along the ice for miles. As we reached the end of the road, a boat would haul either north or south, giving room for the rest if the ice opened. I was first, going north four miles to a place that looked good. Here we built camp, but not as we did when we were working for ourselves. Now we had tents, sleeping-bags, stoves and food of all kinds. The Eskimos were educated now; if they did not have every comfort they would not work; they insisted that we have things the same as Kelley. It made all the more weight, but they did not seem to mind as long as everything went well. If there was any break-up during whaling, most everything was sacrificed for quick traveling. Fred was next boat to me, not more than five hundred yards south, and close enough so we could visit while the ice stayed closed. When we left the beach the wind was N. E. Not long after we reached our place, it hauled to the west; the ice had not moved during the breeze from the eastward, so my men at once started offshore looking for seals. They came in sometime later, bringing six polar-bear skins, saying there was plenty of bear sign a few miles out.

There being no change in the wind, Fred and I started offshore, hoping we might be lucky and shoot bear. Wandering around several hours, we finally gave it up and started back for our tents. Just outside of where the tents were, there was a pressure ridge some twenty feet high. Here the ice had slacked, but we noticed no change in the wind. Probably the current had changed, causing the ice-pressure to become less; the ice was all falling in as the pressure gave way—even as we watched it, we could see small patches of water here and there.

Caught in the ice. A bear and ten whales. One salvaged whale.

Neither of us wanted to be on the wrong side, if the ice opened, so concluded to try to cross. Picking the best-looking place, we started over the ridge. Hardly had we begun the crossing, when the ridge fell away, leaving the loose ice close together in the lead. As we had started, there was as much danger going back as keeping on; for a while we managed easily enough—as the ice was close together, we could jump from cake to cake without much difficulty. The ice was all jammed by the slush. But when we were about halfway over, the lead opened rapidly, and it was tough work, jumping from cake to cake. Some we could hardly touch without their sinking. By good luck we reached the other side without losing our rifles, and we were mighty glad to be on solid ice.

I have seen pressure-ridges slack so fast, without any apparent reason, that a person standing on one of them would almost drop into the water. And again, they will close just as quickly. That is what happened in this case; and when it did, there was an immense pressure behind the pack forcing it on the flaw so hard, we had to move our boats back half a mile for safety. Before the crush was over, the ridge was sixty feet high all along where the break had been. There was no movement of the ice until May 16; then the wind whipped to the N. E. and blew hard. Our men had been all over the ice killing many bear and getting an occasional seal through a blow-hole. They were positive that the ice would break farther out, and they were right. That evening, five miles outside of us, there was a water-cloud showing that the lead had opened.

I was in a hurry to get to the water, and so was my boat-header. Leaving everything behind, except a little food and our whaling-gear, we started to the lead. By good luck the ice was mostly level, and there was no need to cut a road except in a few places. When the other boats saw me start, they all came along, and made light work when we did come to rough going.

Two o'clock that morning we had almost reached the water, and then we had the misfortune to have a bear come close to our boat. It was no use telling the boys not to bother with him; they would not listen, insisting they could get it before it reached the edge of the lead. All they did was to wound it; then the bear started across the lead for the pack, dying as he reached the ice on the other side. Two of my boys found a place they could cross the lead. Away they went, reaching the bear as we arrived at the edge with our oomiak; then we had to get it off the sled and unload some of the gear.

By this time the pack was opening fast, and whales were coming through everywhere. I had to get my men before anything else could be done. I got them after three hours' work; they had to keep alongside the edge so I could pick them up; the lead was opening fast, and all the loose ice drifted down with the wind, making it almost impossible to reach them. We left the bear on the pack.

When we finally reached a favorable place, that run of whales was over. I am almost sure I could have struck one that night. Next morning Fred struck a large whale that ran south to me, and I killed it with my darting-guns. It was a nice whale, having eleven-foot bone. I liked the looks of my place; two days later I struck and killed a big fellow, and two days after that I got still another big one.

Kelley's boats were all south of us. I did not hear what they were doing for some time after the whaling season began; then we heard he had eleven whales, including several good-sized ones.

I had a great streak of luck this spring; our six boats took ten whales, of which I caught five, three large and two small ones. My boat-header surely had a good song. I let him use it whenever we struck a whale! Just at the close of whaling I saw offshore a large body of seagulls. I knew they must be feeding on something, but it was so far away we could not make it out with a spyglass. As

there were no whales running, we took a trip offshore, ten miles or more, to see what the gulls had. It was a dead whale, almost fresh. Some one had cut pieces of blubber from its body, and left it. I was going to turn around to come back to the flaw, but Keawak said as long as we had come this far, we might just as well look it over. To my surprise, the bone was all still in the head.

We towed the whale to a small piece of ice to get the bone, drifting north with the current. Before we had finished, we were north of Point Barrow, grinding along the flaw. With a great deal of work, we finally got all the bone, having to shoot two tonite bombs into the whale's scalp to break off his head. Leaving the camp, we had neglected to take our axes along. The whale had an iron in its body. One of the Eskimos wanted to look at it, but I would not allow it; I cut it out and dropped it overboard. I was not going to let them say it was so and so's whale. When we returned to the road, everyone seemed to know we had a dead whale, and that it was Kelley's. There was no proof except what the Eskimo told, but I was certain it belonged to one of his boats. From what they told me sometime later, one of Kelley's men from Tigera struck the whale, killing it offshore, then as he was alone, left it. I found it drifting a few hours later, and won a head of bone.

End of another whaling season. . . . . A leisurely inland hunt.

A few days before, the ice had broken where we thought the edge would be when we first came out; all the boats were near the roads, and no whales had been seen for a day or two. This was late in May. The season was a short one, but we all expected there would be a break, and took no chances. All our bone was ashore, and most of the outfit. So, when the ice did go, all we had to do was get our boats on the sleds and haul in to the leads.

Hardly had we hauled back when there was a run of whales in the new lead, but no one was ready for them. One of Kelley's boats did manage to strike, and the village boats saved it for him. This was the only whale the natives killed that spring; their ways were of the past, all their gear was of the poorest; and if they would not work for the stations, they were in bad luck.

Then the ice came in with a bang and smashed the flaw for miles up and down the coast. The flaw was full of large cakes of old fresh-water ice, some several miles across. Four miles below the village, there was a very large piece of this kind which jutted out from the flaw and made a long point. When the pack came in, it struck this first, grinding, tearing and throwing pieces larger than a big house in the air, rolling them over and over.

I was quite near while this was going on. My boat-header wanted to haul the oomiak where it would be safe; then he came with me to see that I got in no difficulty. He did not think a white man had any sense where ice was concerned; only Eskimos knew about ice—they had always been where there was plenty. He and I watched the pack grinding along the point; it wore that hard point away just like a rasp cutting in soft wood. In a scant hour and a half the point was gone, and a straight wall was formed along the edge. As the ice moved steadily northward, every block that came between the edge of the pack and flaw was pulverized as fine as snow. Occasionally there would be a place that would break; at times an acre or more would go, and this would be pushed up on the flaw and crushed like grist in a mill. It was fascinating to watch, and I hardly could be persuaded to leave. As the flaw was ground to pieces, we kept moving our oomiak back until we reached a heavy ridge that had been made all winter. Then we cut a road through and hauled ashore, so ending the season.

We had not done badly with our six boats; when all our bone was bundled, we had eleven thousand pounds, while Kelley with over twenty chances got only sixteen thousand pounds. This, our first season for the new company, we celebrated with a big dance for all the Eskimos who worked for us. It lasted four days. Then every one went to Kelley's; the dances were just as usual, tossing each other in a walrus hide, and dancing until all were so tired they had to go to sleep.

After all the work was finished, I planned to go inland hunting, and then come to the coast in Harrison Bay, about one hundred and fifty miles to the east of us, to get out stem- and stern-pieces for new oomiaks to be used the following spring. I took Attooktua, a native from the Point along, as I knew he was a good carpenter, and he knew all the country to the eastward. We started late in June, Attooktua and his wife Kittik, Toctoo, the baby and I; we took our whaling oomiak on its sled with another frame sled to help carry our outfit over the ice. We did not take many dogs, as they are a nuisance in a boat. All we needed were four, and they were harnessed to the frame sled. Toctoo looked out for them while the rest of us hauled the boat. We did not travel fast nor far in any one day. The first day we rounded Point Barrow and camped near the entrance to the lagoon three miles east; the second day we camped on a sandspit which the Eskimos called Tap-carboo, ten miles farther. The going was not so good the third day; the ice was melting fast and formed runways, so we had bad sledding. First we had to take the sled over these places and then come back for the canoe, which made very slow going. We finally reached Cooper's Island, called by the natives Iglura. We could get the boat along the beach for a mile, and then we camped, expecting to stay two days and let our dogs rest and heal their feet. The ice was as sharp as glass and cut the dogs' feet so badly they could hardly walk. I had made boots for the dogs, but they did not like them and, would tear them off. The third day, however, they found what they were for, and from then were content to wear them. I had my dog Jack along, and he was as badly crippled as the rest, even though he was not in harness.

There is a good pond of fresh water at Iglura, and we camped close to it. The next morning Attooktua went ahead to see what the road looked like, while I stayed and hunted over the island, which is several miles long. There were many old squaw ducks in the pond; I had great sport shooting, and Jack enjoyed retrieving them.

We stayed for five days on the island; then we crossed to the mainland on the inside of Point Tangent, where we stayed two days. The fish were running in from the ocean, following the shore to the mouth of the rivers. The little river on which we were camped led inland to a small lake which was connected to another at the end of the second lake, and we made a portage of a hundred yards to another river. Here we camped again as there were plenty of signs of deer all around. We saw nothing however, and next morning we paddled down this river, which was named Sak-a-vi-lak, meaning "without current." It was more like a canal than a river and the bottom was covered with water plants, some with leaves as large as the head of a barrel. I don't think I ever saw anything like this before in Alaska. . . . Our next camp was the head of this river, where it flows from the Tashie-

puk. There are several islands, on one of which we pitched our tents; they were higher ground than the banks of the lake, and made a fine dry camp. We only stayed a night. There were no fish, all being in the deeper water where our nets were of no use.

A mysterious and fearsome animal called the "oogroognoon."

Attooktua told me there were fish larger than our kyaks in the Tashicpuk and that they had been known to attack men in kyaks when they were out spearing ducks. He had never seen them himself. I afterwards saw an old man who told me he had seen two, both at the same time. He and others were paddling across the lake in an oomiak; their paddles were all stained red, and these fish came alongside their boat, snapping at their paddles. He explained that the fish evidently thought that the paddles were meat of some kind. Since then, no Eskimo will have red paddles going on the Tashicpuk.

We sailed and paddled the full length of the lake but the fish did not bother us. I was on the lookout, hoping to see one, if there is anything of that sort there. It took us the best part of two days to reach the eastern end; halfway down we camped at the mouth of a small stream. While we were camped here, another boat from the village came along; they stopped for a while and a boy in their party took one of our kyaks to cross the river. He capsized in the middle of the stream, and if he had been by himself he would surely have drowned. Their own boat was handy and Attooktua and one other soon had hold of the kyak, and righted it in the water. The boy had been unable to get loose from the small boat and was almost gone when rescued. I worked on him an hour before all the water was rolled out of him.

The next day we reached the end of the lake where we made a portage of over half a mile, to a small lake which is the head of another river emptying in Harrison Bay. At the end Attooktua showed me the bones of some kind of large animal, saying they were part of the backbone of the large fish living in the Tashicpuk. We took all night portaging our outfit across, using the canoe sled and dogs to haul the equipment. The ground was high where the river left the lake, so we camped; it was a fine fishing-place, and there were plenty of deer signs all around. We stayed a long time, getting twenty deer, and more fish than we could use.

While camped here, Attooktua told me another story, about some animal he called an *Oogroognoon.* It was supposed to be as large as a small bear and made a noise like a child crying. It lived under the banks of the lakes and came out in the water only when hungry. The opening to its den was under water; its fur was fine, just like a beaver, and in the water it glistened when the sun shown on it. None had been seen for a very long time; he thought maybe they had all died, but was not sure about it. A few years ago, as some of the Nubook people were coming home from Negilik, they camped right where we were. Two of their children had gone over the hill playing and they never were seen after. Their parents looked for them a number of days, but no sign was ever found of them, so they imagined the Oogroognoon had carried them to its den and devoured them. I tried to convince him that wolves may have taken the children, but I do not think he believed me. Some years later he brought me a skull that he said belonged to one of these animals. It was the skull of a prehistoric horse.

The deer we first shot had poor skins. At this time of the year the winter hair is still shedding. Only the old bucks are good for clothing or the young fawns. When we had enough meat to keep us going, we agreed to shoot nothing but males. As the skins became better, we moved farther east, following the river and chain of lakes into another small river coming from the south. Just east of our camp was a long lake or widening of the river; in some places it was as much as a mile in width. This was a favorite crossing-place for caribou on their north or south migrations. Large bands were crossing every day, going out on a long point, and then swimming to the other side. There was a place where the Eskimo drove deer in the water, and then speared them from their kyaks.

Attooktua took me with him and showed me how they drove the caribou. Extending for more than three miles from the point on the north bank were two rows of sod piled two feet high; on top of these was placed a lot of black moss. They were a mile apart at the widest end and narrowed as they ran toward the point which led into the lake. When a herd of deer were close to the opening of this runway, all the women and children circled around and drove them toward the entrance; the deer became frightened, and would sheer from side to side as they approached the moss-crowned pillars, thinking no doubt they were more people. Finally, going out on the point, they would take to the water. All the men that had kyaks lay under the bank until all the deer were in the river, and then they went after them with their lances, forcing their kyaks right in among the caribou, spearing from both sides. Sometimes as many as a hundred were taken at one time. It was not what I would call sport, but it was an effective way of getting game. I tried it once, and killed two. I did not care for that kind of hunting, however, I left the most of the work to the natives. Nineteen caribou were taken in all. Such methods of hunting caribou are no longer used; in fact, I believe that was the last time this was done near our village.

The other natives left us the next day and we hunted by ourselves the rest of the summer. Deer were so plentiful we had only to go a mile from our camp for them. We wanted skins for clothing, and when we had the chance, we dried the meat, making a rack of driftwood which Attooktua and I brought from Harrison Bay, twenty miles away. At times the mosquitoes got so bad it was impossible to hunt or do anything else. Then we had to shut ourselves in the tents and wait for a breeze. When they were at their worst, the caribou would run in the water and stand all day with just their noses out; at other times they seemed to try to escape from their tormentors by running.

Castaway sailors .... Eskimos are astonished to see a man swim.

All around where we hunted were many seagulls nesting; they were a nuisance, for we never shot a deer but they came in dozens, sitting in a row to leeward of the carcass. The first might settle a hundred yards away and others kept coming nearer. No matter how much moss and sod was piled over the carcass they pulled it off long before it was possible for some one to come with the sled for the meat. If there was any fat meat, they ate it first. When we hunted together, one of us watched the deer while the other went for the team.

On my way up the small river one day I saw something on the bank looking like a cow head; on investigation it proved to be a musk-ox skull with both horns almost perfect. They were decayed slightly where they rested on the ground. I took it to the station later, and since then I have had a number brought to me. I sent a couple to a museum, and I am told that these musk-oxen were different from those which are found in Canada.

By the middle of August, we had killed over a hundred deer, so we packed up to go to the coast for our canoe wood, and home. We had dried most of the meat we did not use, bundling it in bales weighing nearly fifty pounds.

The skins were dried so we could pack them in our boat. Then we started for the coast in Harrison Bay, coming out behind Eskimo Islands, a few miles from the mouth of the Coleville.

A band of deer came almost into camp the second day. Attooktua and I could not resist the temptation and we killed seven out of the band. That evening, while we were working on our boat frame, the women said there was a whaleboat coming from the east, and in a short while they could see another. The men in the boat spotted our camp and headed for it; as they landed, I spoke to the man in charge asking him where they came from and where they were going. They were from the bark *Reindeer* which had been wrecked at Cross Island, the ice forcing her ashore. Captain Cogan was aboard another ship, and these boats were on their way to the Refuge Station. Another boat was following and would be along later. The officers in charge of the boats were Sam Varnum and Charley Howland. They camped with us that night and we boiled a big kettle of fresh meat for them, filling the kettles as often as they emptied them. When they left the next morning, I had them take all the fresh meat we had on hand with them to our station. With the fair wind they had, they could easily be there in two days.

I stayed two more days in this camp cutting out lumber. Attooktua hunted one day, bringing in three more deer; then we left for home, camping halfway to Cape Halkett, where we met a canoe from Point Barrow. We had to stay here for several days, for the weather turned nasty and blowing hard from the N. E. The coast in the bottom of the bay is very shallow, so when the wind is on shore, it is impossible to launch even a skin boat.

Our camping-place was a poor one, but as we had to stay day after day, we hunted across a small lagoon where there were many deer. One day, Seravunna, an Eskimo camped near us, capsized while crossing the lagoon. He was an expert in the kyak, but he became careless, and it was fortunate that the lagoon was shallow all the way across, or he would have drowned, for none of the Eskimo can swim—at least none at Barrow.

One warm day I thought I'd like a swim. We were all lying on the river-bank in the sun, as it was too hot to hunt, so everyone was taking it easy. We had visitors, a canoe-load coming from the east on their way to Utkiavie. While all the rest were telling news, I took a kyak and sounded the river from one bank to the other, a distance of seventy feet or more, finding good deep water everywhere. I then came to the bank, undressed myself in the tent, then with a yell started for the bank and took a header into the river. When I came up on the other side, it seemed that all hands had gone crazy; they were running an oomiak into the water, all excited, thinking I was drowning; and when I leisurely swam to them, they did not know what to say. None had ever seen a person dive before. Attooktua said that he would not worry any more about me when I went off in a kyak.

When we finally got away, we made a long day, rounding Cape Halkett and continuing to Pitt Point, where we camped in the dark. We stayed two days and were joined by another outfit that had been hunting near the western end of the Tashicpuk. In company with these other natives, we started early in the morning and sailed well down in Smith's Bay; then with a nice fair wind we started to cross to Cape Simpson. The bay is shallow and in bad weather it is impossible to cross in an oomiak. When we were halfway across it breezed up pretty strong, and as we were loaded deep, we took in a lot of water. . . . We landed behind a small sandy point, wet through.

It was a miserable night, and everything was wet, even the driftwood, and it was hard to start a fire. The boats were unloaded and turned on their edges for shelter and we then put the tents to the lee side of them. We made a big fire in front of the tents and tried to dry some of our bedding. To make matters worse I opened some canned salmon, and it must have been spoiled, for hardly had I eaten some than I became sick. Finally I became so weak I could not stand, so lay alongside the fire in the rain.

One of the women was a devil-doctor. She thought she might be able to help some, so she tied a skin rope around my leg and talked to her familiar devil for an hour. I did not die, but imagined I would.

We stayed at the camp four days. The second day Attooktua wanted me to go with him to look at some lakes of oil he knew of a short distance away. They were not over a mile from us, back from Cape Simpson. Just before reaching them, we came to a rise in the land not over forty feet above the sea-level. Along this ridge were a number of boulders, some of which were full of crystals. I had never seen anything like them before in Alaska. They were floats, no doubt, brought here by the ice at some former time. A little away from the ridge was the lake of oil; to me it looked like asphaltum, at least all around the edges where it had been hardened. The stuff must overflow, for I found where it had trickled down a bank into a small gully. There was a hard crust everywhere except in the center of the lake; there it seemed a liquid, glistening in the sunlight. It must have been very sticky, as the bodies of three caribou were still lying on their sides in the center, where they had mired.

Arctic lakes of asphaltum trap caribou and a number of ducks.

I wanted to go out on the crust as far as it would bear me, but Attooktua objected, saying I would break through a little way out, and sink out of sight. About a mile from this lake was a larger one; the center was soft and glistened like water on a calm day. In this lake were a number of spectacled eider ducks which were caught. They were still alive but almost exhausted, their feathers all oil, or pitch, and they looked like a lot of large flies on a piece of fly paper.

The Eskimo get this pitch, boil it until it is soft, and then use it to plaster up the seams in their old canoes, as it never seems to get real hard. It makes a hot fire, but is filthy, for the smoke will trail along the ground for a mile, and everything it touches is spoiled. Later I had a sample assayed in San Francisco, and found that it was oil with an asphaltum base; but it is so far away that it is of no use. It may be of value in generations to come.

We left Simpson one morning just at daybreak, with a fair wind and did not stop until we reached the station with all our woodwork for three canoes, and one hundred thirty-seven deer skins.

The three boat crews from the *Reindeer* were at the Refuge Station. The third boat was wrecked near Point Tangent in the same bad weather they were having when they passed me in Harrison Bay. The other two boats came in without difficulty. The *Bear* was here when I arrived, and took all the men aboard with the exception of Howland, who stayed a year with Kelley. A few days later the *Jennie*, tender to the fleet from Herschel Island, came from the east, on her way home. There were no ships after the *Jennie* left as the rest had gone to the west before I came back. Many of the steamers were wintering at the island, and those that did not were on their way to take in the whaling at Herald Island. The fleet was getting smaller even then; many of the sailing-ships were lost each summer, somewhere along the line, and they were never replaced. A few new steamers were added to the fleet, but they were only to replace those lost.

I stayed home all winter, working, as I was going to

build some new boats for the spring whaling. The Eskimo oomiak had always been built with straight sides, something like a dory. I wanted to build some with round sides, the same as a whaleboat. I knew it could be done; they would carry a much larger load, and not be so cranky as the old-fashioned ones. In the summer we had chopped out a lot of pieces from roots we found on the beaches, and I sawed these to the size wanted for ribs, all with right curves. Then I built my boats. Whaling time came before we had a chance to get more than two boats completed; I used one and Fred the other, and both worked fine.

We had eight canoes that spring and Kelley had twenty. On April 15th we both pulled our canoes to the edge, and a number of whales were reported, but none were taken. On the 22nd we had a heavy gale from the N. E. No one expected the ice would break. All of Kelley's boats and most of ours had gone miles south from the road. It blew so hard, and the snow drifted so badly that we could not see inshore for any distance; all at once we could see the pack ice close to us. I thought it funny the pack was coming in against this breeze, so I got our sounding line, and found we were drifting offshore. We were floating to the pack instead of the pack coming in!

No other boat was near us, so we had to get back the best way we could. We were two miles north of our road, and by the time we were ready to start, the pack was up against our ice, leaving no water to get to the road. Just a little north, the pack split the ice broken from the flaw, leaving a lead that seemed to run in toward the land. Attooktua was for getting the boat in the water and sailing as far as we could; then if we had to haul over the rough ice it would not be so far. The idea was good. The lead was about one hundred feet wide and did not seem to close, and we followed it until we hit the heavy ridge of old ice—where we hauled out just in time, for the lead closed with a bang.

A few days later, I got a small whale that came along the flaw; the bone was only two feet long. Later, Fred caught one the same size. Kelley's boats had nothing until just at the close of the season. Then one of his boatheaders started for Wainwright, to go home with his boat. When almost there, they ran onto a large whale and killed it, bringing the bone back to the station.

Finding there was no whaling south, I went north of Point Barrow, to see if the whales were coming in to the flaw up that way. Attooktua, who belonged to Nubook, said that the ice to the N. E of the point was almost always good. The reason no whaling was done, was that the current was so strong it swept the dead whales under the flaw when they were taken alongside the ice. I wanted to try my luck, so north we started. Hardly had we reached a likely-looking place for whaling than the pack closed in, while open water prevailed where we had come from. We could tell this by the dark water-clouds in the sky.

Ocean currents prevent whaling north of Point Barrow.

If we had no whaling, we did have some good bear-hunting. My crowd killed eight while we were shut in. One morning two came right to the tent while everyone was inside having breakfast. We heard them around the blubber we used to make fire with; then there was a scramble to see who could get first shot. All the rifles were in the boat some distance from the tent, and if the bears had had sense, they would have left before we had a chance to shoot. Instead they leisurely wandered inshore for a distance, one making for a high ridge a short distance from the boat, the other going along on level ice. All the boys were after the one they could see, while I started for the one near the ridge. As I came close, it climbed to the top, stood there a few seconds to have a look at me, and those few seconds were enough. I had a fine shot, and tumbled him down faster than he went up. The boys brought back the other one with them. A few days later I got two more.

Shooting bears; a polar bear makes a poor shipmate.

Shortly after we killed these bears the ice opened, with a strong east wind. An hour or so after the water made, I had a whale come to my boat. I was ready for him when he came up within a few feet of me, and I struck him with both of my darting-guns, while Attooktua shot him with the bomb-gun at the same time. The whale was killed instantly. All hands held on to the line, but it was no use. I found the current just as Attooktua had told me. It swept our whale under, taking the line from us before we had a chance to get it fast to the ice.

I gave up Point Barrow for that time, and started for home, as the season was nearly over. We skirted young ice all the way to our road, and as we came abreast our landing, some one in the boat saw two bears swimming toward the flaw. They were in the young ice near the edge, so of course we started after them. When they saw us, they started diving, coming up every little way to breathe, but they poked their noses through the young ice. For a time they stayed together, and then one started for the pack while the other kept coming nearer the flaw. We followed the latter and drove it into clear water. We had planned to come close up to the bear, and two of us would shoot, while a third was to have the seal spear ready, in case the bear sank, as they usually will at this time of the year. About ten feet away Coochic without warning shot at the bear, missing it clean. I was so startled when the gun went off close to my ear that I did not shoot. Then, before I could aim, the bear made a breach at the boat, catching both front paws over the gunwale. I had only a moment to put the muzzle of my rifle against his head and let go. Fortunately, I killed it instantly, or there would have been trouble. One of the boys had presence of mind enough to harpoon the bear before it could sink. Everyone else had gone aft, thinking it was the safest place, when the bear started climbing in. A polar bear makes a poor shipmate. . . .

The pressure of the pack, with a southwest wind behind it, crushed the ice up on the beach twice during the month of July. It seemed as if we never would have open water. We were anxious for the ships at our place, for the most of our supplies were gone.

On the first of August, Fred, Nelson and myself started south to meet the ships. If we found them near the Sea Horse Islands, we expected to come back with a few supplies. At the Sea Horses, the ice was worse than at Utkiavie. We had to keep going, so we paddled and sailed to Wainwright, where we certainly thought the ships would all be anchored. The ice was in there, as it had been up the coast, so we continued south all the way to Blossom Shoals. We found the whole fleet there waiting for the ice to open offshore. I went aboard the *Karluk*, belonging to our company. Captain Jim Wing took our oomiak aboard so when we could start there would be nothing to detain him. A steamer, the *Lakme*, was bound for Herschel Island with provisions for some of the fleet; she had the most of our supplies as well. Some things had been shipped in the brig *Myers*, but she had been lost during a gale. All my merchandise in her was lost to me; the other ships bought it all at auction, and then told me about it. Later from the ships leaving for home I was able to replace most of what was lost. . . .

This fall I had an operation to perform on one of my

Eskimo boys. The whole bunch were out playing football in the moonlight; one kicked at the ball, missed it and hit the neck of a broken bottle, ripping his foot from the end of his big toe almost to his instep. It was a nasty gash. In sewing it up, the skin on the sole of his foot was so tough I had to force the needle through with a pair of pliers. It took an hour to complete the job, and the boy scarcely batted an eye.

Football as played by the Eskimos is a game of endurance. Not any skill is needed. Every moonlight, in fall and in the spring, everyone in the villages turns out for the game. Their ball, made of deer-hair covered with soft tanned deer-skin, is eight inches in diameter; when kicked, it rolls along the hard snow, for it is seldom that anyone tries to kick it into the air. The men are divided into two groups. Generally one of the head men and his followers take a side, and others follow their other leader. There are no goals, and each side endeavors to keep the ball as long as possible. If the fastest runners on one side get the ball, they keep going with it sometimes for five or more miles, until the other side gives up, and then the game is over for that night. Every spring, while Kelley and our company were here, our men had a big game, whenever the weather was fine and moonlight enough to follow the ball. Their best game was after whaling. Then, when the dance was finished they had the big game of the year which often wound up in a row, which meant a wrestling match.

The football game in 1895 was the best and longest they ever had. At the finish the men were all out on the sea ice. Holes had already melted large enough for the sealers to set their nets. Our crowd were getting the best of the game. Kelley's team did not like that, so taking two of our best runners, they ducked them in the salt water; to get even, our men caught two of the other side, the best dressed ones, and ducked them. That finished the game, all hands coming ashore to wrestle. For this we had the best men, two brothers from Icy Cape, both six feet tall and strong.

Their wrestling was like their football, just a matter of endurance. A man would pick out the fellow he wanted to wrestle with. If he threw him, he had to stay until some one from the other side tired him out and he was thrown, if it took all the other side; if he was not thrown, he was considered the best man for that time. Our two men were always the longest stayers. In wrestling, the men always stripped to the waist. Their hold was to grasp each other around the body, under the arms. First one would have the first hold, and then, if there was a fall, the other one had first chance. Where one man was extra good, the other always had the first hold.

This winter was uneventful, as no one at the station wanted to go hunting. Most of our good hunters, who knew the country, were to the eastward. In January we had the heaviest crush I had ever seen to that time. The wind was S. W. and had been blowing for two days; the evening of the second the ice started moving in, crushing hard just off the beach. After dark the ice started moving up on the shore, sheeting over the sand and coming within ten feet of the houses; sixty feet back, it started to bend up; then it broke and started to pile. Before it stopped, the ice was forty feet high and the edge of the pile rested right up against our building. While the ice was coming over the sand, we were carrying everything out of the house, back of our warehouses, which were fifty feet inland from the main building. The first thing we did was to put all fires out, so if the house did get smashed we could save lumber enough to make a shelter of some kind. It was a narrow squeak; no one slept that night. After getting things back, we watched the ice pile in a number of places away from the shore. The only damage was done to the rack we kept our canoes on. This was closer to the edge of the house. The boats had all been carried back to safety. The ridge on the beach was solid, and we had to cut a road through it to get on the ice with a sled, and used the same road for hauling out the canoes at whaling time.

In February, one of our men, Arnivigger, from Nubook, was brought to the station shot in the hips. The bullet was still in him somewhere, but though I probed, I could not find it. Some boys playing with an old .44 rifle did not know there was a cartridge in it. There was no doctor here and I did not want to do any cutting, so as the wound seemed to be healing I asked him to wait a while.

This spring the ice did not look good to any one. We cut the road in April and were ready to haul out as soon as water made. That was near the last of the month. Then whales were reported offshore but none were taken until the last of May. Then five small ones were caught. This made two bad seasons together, which was discouraging; and if it had not been for the furs we bought during the winter, we would have been "busted." During the winter, we had one hundred and twenty-three polar-bear skins, most of which we dried ourselves, on a big rack.

After the whaling, Arnivigger, the native that was shot, got worse. The wound was healed, but something inside his hips bothered him. He told me there were three pieces of hard substance imbedded in the flesh that hurt him.

I had him strip and lie on the table in our big room; four men held him, one at each arm and one at each leg, keeping him face down. The only thing I had to cut him with was an old razor; that, and a pair of forceps I used in tooth-pulling was my surgical outfit. The first incision I made, I hit a piece of bone, over an inch and a half across; it was some time before I could get it out as I had to cut around one edge some more. Then I took hold with the forceps and it came away. I cleaned the wound, drawing the edges together with adhesive tape. The first attempt succeeding so well, I tried the other hip, where another hard substance could be felt. This time I must have cut a large vein, which bled considerable. I tried holding my finger on where the blood came from, for over a minute, and it stopped. Then I took out the .44 bullet, which was smashed on the end and then I fixed this wound as the other.

Mr. Brower attempts surgery to save a wounded Eskimo.

Arnivigger had not made a move nor flinched all the time I had been working on him. Once I thought he had fainted, but nothing of the kind; he just lay there, never murmuring. The third place was a little difficult, but I finally got what I was after. This proved to be an inch off the end of his backbone. After the cut was made, this bone came out quite easily; and after cleaning the wounds and dressing them, I sent him home, looking at him every morning for over two weeks. The wounds started to heal immediately, and inside of a month he was up and around. He is still living somewhere on the Coleville River, trapping for a living, as I write this during the winter of 1927.

After this I was in great demand. Every time any of these fellows had a headache they wanted me to cut their heads, or if there was a pain that could not be accounted for, it had to be cut. This was their own custom, their devil-doctors keeping a small flint knife for that purpose. Even today that is the first thing they do if they have a pain, if they are away from the hospital any distance.

When the ships arrived during the summer of 1896, there was plenty of news. First, the Government had abandoned the Refuge Station. Captain J. N. Knowles bought it for a whaling station, but shortly after buying the place Captain Knowles died. Then the Pacific Steam

Whaling Company decided to quit whaling at Utkiavic, and Kelley was ordered to close the station, turning everything left over to Captain Aiken, who would stay a year as caretaker for their houses.

This left only us to winter here for the coming year. When Kelley got through paying off his men, there were only a few whaling-guns left, and I bought them cheap. Most of the Point Hope men went back home; they were loaded to the gunwales with the stuff Kelley gave them.

Many changes take place in the Arctic; the station closes.

A few of the best I shipped, but not many, as I preferred the men I had here. We heard our company had bought the schooner *Bonanza*, and were sending her as tender to the station, but she would not be along until later. All the steamers stopped long enough to get anything they wanted from Kelley's place and then kept on for Herschel, which was their goal in these days. Not much whaling was done except in the east; the sailing fleet was passing away; two or three, mostly schooners, kept coming for a few years, then they quit.

The steamer *Jennie* was tender for the fleet at Herschel. When she arrived here, she tied up to the ridge just north of our house for a day. Having nothing better to do, Fred and I went aboard her. On the way out, we had to haul the boat over a quarter mile of ice inside the ridge, then pull up north a piece. Some days later the *Bonanza* arrived. Captain Sam Smith was master; I had known him for years. As captain of the tender he was fine, never taking any chances in the ice, and as he was not on a whaling voyage, we never missed getting our supplies while he sailed for us. When he was ready to return to San Francisco, Con, Kelley and our cook left. I wanted John to go out in her, but he wanted to wait for the cutter, saying he had been in her the year before and Captain Healy would take him out.

The *Bear* was late this year, as they were carting reindeer from Siberia all summer; when she did come, I had made up my mind to keep John, for I found him a handy man. He was not at all lazy, and he stayed with me for several years. . . . Mr. Stevenson had returned after a year on the outside, bringing with him the lumber for a school and mission, which he erected with the help of the Eskimos. To his work we are indebted to many changes in the Eskimo mode of living, as well as changes in their morals. The children especially were fond of him. He started the school work and taught them the first they knew of religion; for a time it was uphill work, having all the devil-drivers against him. It must have been disheartening to try as he did in those early days to teach the children something about morality, especially see the girls grow up, then have some village buck take them off.

The fall and early winter passed; the holidays were over; and 1897 was with us before we knew it.

As whaling approached, the ice did not look good. All winter the edge had been close, not more than a mile and a half from the beach. There was no road to build, as there was no ridge; everything was perfectly level. As usual we hauled the boats out on the fifteenth of April, seeing nothing for a long time. Then the wind shifted, and young ice came in, closing everything tight. This lasted a week; then a small crush made a chain of holes in the strip of new ice, which was not over a foot thick. As soon as the holes were made, the whales came through everywhere. Our boats struck several, of which we saved two large ones and two small ones. We did not get either of the large ones until they had been dead a long time; then we found them by the smell through the ice.

Later in the season, we caught another good one. This was my unfortunate year. I caught nothing except two white whales and two bears. In 1896 one of our men had shot the largest polar bear I ever saw; it was coming in toward the end of the house when he spotted it, and getting his rifle, he went straight to the bear, which was on some young ice eight inches thick. When he shot the bear, it fell and broke through the ice and had to be partly skinned in the water. The hide stretched twelve feet and four inches. How much it weighed, there was no way of telling. It was killed with one shot from a .44 rifle.

That same fall, several she bears came in along the coast. They dug tunnels where the banks were high and snow deep, and had their cubs. The young are born in January, staying in their dens with their mothers until early in April; then they dig themselves out, and go straight out on the ice. The she bear never comes out of her house from the time the cubs are born until she takes them away with her. I never saw any signs that they stored food in their houses; there are often many seal bones, however, on the outside of the long passage, which leads to the den proper. The entrance is always snowed up so when one is traveling along the coast, one would never knew there was a bear around; but the dogs often smell them, and then the Eskimos break open the houses. As soon as the den is broken, the old bear comes out looking for trouble. The young are almost naked when born, as well as blind. They grow very quickly, and when they are three months old they are as large as a dog.

When the whaling was over, the bone cleaned and bundled, I had to go down to Icy Cape. It had been planned to build a branch station there, and I wanted to reach there as early as possible, in order to meet the ships as they came north. Early in July I left, taking only one boat and crew from the house. All my men were young; hard work did not bother them a bit—and they had plenty before we reached our destination, having to sled all the way. After passing Point Belcher we shot a number of polar bears. This did not make our load any lighter, but I did not want to leave them behind.

We reached Icy Cape on the 20th of July, waiting until the 24th before any ship came in sight. The days we waited the men were hunting oogorroo south of Blossom Shoals. They must have killed twenty or more, for I know we had a lot, all tied up ready for sending to Utkiavie if we had a chance. The first ship this summer was the *Navarch*. They came in to the cape early on the 27th. I at once went aboard for news. The Captain informed me that the company had changed their minds about putting any new stations along the coast. That being the case, I had no further business there. The Captain asked me to come aboard and go north with him. I had too many men for him to take along, but I said I would go with him, sending the boat's crew home along the coast. They took the seal hides while I carried the bear skins, which by this time were nearly dry. The Captain had his wife with him. That same evening the *Karluk* came along, anchoring close to us. Her Captain had his wife also, and the women had some kind of grudge against each other, so in order that they would not get together and squabble, the captain of the *Navarch* took his anchor and rounded the Shoals, anchoring just on the north side. This was a very unwise thing to do with the wind to the east, and it cost the life of more than a dozen men. It seems ironical now, years later, that a row between two women should have been the indirect cause of the disaster which overtook us.

A row between two women caused disaster; an unwise move.

The morning of the 28th the ice came all around the ship; instead of coming back south, we took the anchor and tied to a large field of ice apparently grounded. While there, the smaller drifting ice came in and completely sur-

rounded the ship. The first thing we knew, the piece we were tied to started drifting; even then we might have pushed our way out from the ice, but instead we just drifted, the ice coming more inside of us all the while, until we were fairly adrift in the pack, with no chance to move. Then the Captain tried to work his way out, but there was not even room to turn around in, and each minute the ice seemed to pack harder around us.

We drifted northwest until the other ships were out of sight. As we drifted, the ice kept pushing the *Navarch* farther and farther into the pack, until we could not see the edge. How far from shore we drifted it would be hard to say, but I think about thirty miles. The wind hauled N. E. but this did not help us any, only helping to move the pack farther off the land. Then the current swept the ship north at the rate of three miles an hour. Several times, in the first days, the ice crushed around the ship, listing her first to one side, then to the other, as the pressure came first on one side, then on the opposite. While drifting, the piece of ice to which we were tied, milled all around, so that we headed to all points of the compass in succession.

On the 2nd of August we were north of the Sea Horse Islands, and there did not seem any chance of the ship's getting free. Then the Captain, after consulting with the officers, concluded to abandon the ship. As I had some experience in ice traveling, he asked me if there was anything I could think of that would be of benefit. He was to take three whaleboats, and try to haul them to the edge of the pack; then try to make the land. I told him that in hauling our wooden boats we always had a hardwood keel put on them to strengthen them and also to raise them from the ice; then the bottom boards were not so liable to get stove. I wanted him to have the carpenter make the keel at least four inches deep, giving as much lift as possible from the ice.

The Captain, however, thought one inch sufficient, and that was all he let the men put on them. I also suggested they carry a bolt or two of heavy canvas, so we could have something to patch the boats with if they did get stove. This he would not listen to; it would make too much weight. They were to take as little food as possible—enough to last a week.

All being ready, we abandoned the *Navarch* on the evening of August 2nd. Just before leaving, two hogs that were aboard were put over the side and shot. The crew was divided equally among the three boats; everyone was harnessed except two that were too old to be of any use and these just tagged along. Besides these two, I took care of the Captain's wife; the "old man" was first one place, then another.

All that night, we hauled the boats, not making much headway; we traveled S. E., hoping to head south and at the same time in toward the beach. On the morning of the third we rested for a while. If anyone slept, I did not know it. The Captain's wife was game, never making the least murmur at what was happening. When we had rested, we had to haul some more, and then we got to rougher ice. This was man-killing work; our crew were tired and could hardly handle the boats, two of which were soon worthless, with their bottoms ripped away by the ice. That night we had to abandon one, and we cut it to pieces, making a fire of it to boil coffee.

As soon as we finished eating, the old man was for starting immediately. Dividing the men from the boat we had burned, we hauled all night. Near morning we struck ice that was milling, and then it was hard going. Instead of waiting until the ice was quiet, the Captain wanted to get across, hoping we were nearing the edge and water. This milling ice was the end. In trying to get from piece to piece, we stove the boats so badly there was no use hauling them any longer. We had all our work cut out getting back to the pack that was solid or nearly so.

Then the Captain broke down, crying like a kid. The only thing we could do was return to the ship. Her masts were still in sight, and for a while everyone stayed together, the men that were all right helping those that were all in. The Captain had a bottle in his pocket and every little while he took a drink, then, when he had too much, he took a handful of gold money from his other pocket, making the remark that he would give it all to be ashore. We all thought the same, but there was no use in crying about it. Then he started for the ship, saying "everyone for himself." His wife was all in, and it was impossible to travel fast and help her along. When the boats were abandoned, the mate helped with her. We three kept together until ten miles from the ship.

Loss of the small-boats.... The despairing return to the ship.

On our way back, we could see the smoke of two steamers, miles inside of us, showing there was open water along the coast, and that the ships were on their way to Point Barrow. They could not see us away out where we were on the ice. Just before we could see the hull of the *Navarch*, we came to a place where the ice was crushing. The pressure made the two edges grind and pile twenty feet high, but across the ridge there seemed level ice. We could not take the woman over this without carrying her, and that was out of the question. It was all a man could do, to get over by himself; then he did not dare to stop, or he would be crushed under. I volunteered to cross and see if the ice on the other side was as good for traveling as it looked from where we were. The mate stayed with the Captain's wife.

When I reached the other side, I signaled them it was fine; but I waited too long before starting back, for the pressure let go, leaving a lead of water where the ridge had been. I waited several hours hoping it would close, and then the mate and his charge started along the edge, finally finding a way around the water. I then started for the ship, which I reached three hours before they did. The chief engineer had been the first to return. When I arrived, he had steam on the boiler, almost ready to blow the whistle, if it turned foggy.

The Captain was aboard and turned in long before I came aboard and so were a number of the crew. The mate and the Captain's wife came while I was asleep. As I came aboard, two polar bears were having a feast on the hogs we killed before leaving the ship. By the time I awoke, they had finished their meal and gone. All hands managed to reach the ship the next day; some could just crawl, and some had stopped on the way, trying to sleep.

While we had been away from the ship, she had been drifting north. There was not much time for us to do anything if we meant to leave near the latitude of Point Barrow. Beyond that, no ship had ever drifted and returned, except the *Young Phoenix*, and she was frozen fast in the ice. The little time we remained, we spent in building a small boat. The frame was hickory, riveted together with copper; the cover we made of canvas, oiling it well to make it water-tight. When we were abreast Cape Smythe, or a little north, we abandoned the *Navarch* the second time. Just before leaving at three A.M. August 10th, the Captain asked me to go ahead with the crew, thinking with my experience I could pick out a better road. He would come along behind bringing the light boat and some food. He also had the compass, so that in case we got lost in the fog he could tell which way to travel.

These fascinating glimpses of real life in the Arctic continue in the forthcoming June issue.

A Tartar on the Spot

Our pioneer forefathers would have known how to handle racketeers. Here a young man from the West, with the pioneer tradition strong within him, proves anything but an innocent bystander when the big-town machine-guns get going round him.

By SEVEN ANDERTON

Illustrated by Joseph Maturo

THE large tan leather suitcase he carried was heavy, a fact that was not betrayed by the careless ease with which the tall young man handled it. Emerging from the railway terminal, he crossed the sidewalk and stood for a moment at the curb. His gray eyes flicked over the traffic stream. His left hand went up to beckon a cruising taxi. Entering the cab, the tall youth placed the suitcase between his feet and gave the driver an address on Fourteenth Street.

As the taxi swung out into the stream of vehicles, a big closed car which had halted to pick up a small, swarthy, black-eyed man who had followed the tall youth from the station, pulled in behind it.

Besides the driver, there were two other men in the car which had picked up the black-eyed man. All were well dressed and well groomed, but they were nevertheless unsavory-looking citizens. Their faces bore a common stamp of brutality; their eyes were hard and wintry. One, the largest, spoke to the little dark-eyed man as the latter jerked shut the door of the big closed car.

"Sweet luck, Blacky," said the big one, "spotting him on the rattler. The chief was tickled pink when your wire came. This little trick will make Steve Capri dizzy—teach him to import his rod artists in armor-plate boxes if he wants to get a look at 'em alive." A cold gurgle that was meant to be a chuckle followed the big fellow's speech.

"Yeah," agreed the little black-eyed man. "Where's the hand-organ?"

"Under that blanket on the floor," answered the big man. "It's all ready to go."

The little one nodded. The driver was tooling the big car along behind the cab in which the tall young man was riding. Both machines were now rolling southward along Seventh Avenue.

"Look sharp, Bert," said the big man to the driver. "Pull past at the first chance you see for a run."

The driver nodded without taking his eyes off the cab ahead. The traffic was heavy along the Avenue, and the men in the big car wanted a reasonably open path for their get-away after they had murdered the unsuspecting youth in the taxicab. It was broad daylight—two o'clock in the afternoon; but the bleak-eyed killers in the closed car did not care about that. Once they had filled their victim with machine-gun slugs, they would speed away from the scene, dodge around a few corners and then abandon the car. It had been stolen half an hour before, a mile or two away. They would take the murder weapon with them in a violin-case, and report as finished the job on which they had been sent.

The taxi turned west on Fourteenth Street. There was little traffic here as compared with the busy Avenue. The little black-eyed man bent over, flung aside a blanket and took a Thompson submachine-gun from an open violin-case thus exposed. He laid the "tommy-gun" across his knees. The big man had lowered the window on the right-hand side of the car.

Seventh Avenue was several blocks behind. The driver of the trailing machine stepped on the gas, and at the same moment the taxi pulled up to the curb before a flight of steps leading up to the entrance of a three-story brick building. Beside that entrance was a placard announcing that rooms could be rented by the day and week.

"Hold it!" growled the big man.

The driver of the closed car halted it abruptly. Some twenty yards ahead, the tall youth had stepped from the cab and was paying the chauffeur.

"Let the cab pull out," ordered the big man. "Then slip past and we'll burn him down. All set, Blacky?"

The little swarthy man nodded. The cab pulled away, and the tall young man, carrying his suitcase easily, turned toward the flight of worn wooden steps. A dozen children were playing on the sidewalk. One was pulling another in a toy wagon. Another was preparing to slide down the banisters beside the steps.

"What about them kids?" asked the driver as he started the big car in second gear and hurled it ahead.

"To hell with 'em!" snarled the big man. "Miss 'em if you can, but burn him down!"

The tall young man had reached the foot of the steps when the sound of tortured gears came to his ears. He turned his head toward the sound, and saw the big car leaping ahead as its powerful engine answered the suddenly opened throttle. Then he saw something else. The ugly muzzle of the machine-gun was thrust through the window of the speeding car, now abreast of the stairway!

Like a flash the tall youth whirled to face the danger, and in the same movement swung the big suitcase up as a shield for his body. He was not a moment too soon. The street suddenly echoed to the spiteful clatter of the machine-gun. It seemed to the tall young man that somebody was striking rapid blows on his suitcase with a heavy hammer. Something stung his shoulder. The blows on the suitcase forced him off balance, and he sprawled backward onto the steps.

The deadly sputtering of the machine-gun had suddenly ceased but screams of pain and terror were coming from the children. Something fell across the tall young man's face. The five-year-old boy had tumbled from the banisters; blood was drenching the neck and shoulder of the man upon whose head he had fallen.

The big car with its four occupants was whisking around the corner as the tall youth squirmed from under the little

limp body and scrambled to his feet. The street was now a bedlam. Children were screaming. Women who had rushed from various doorways were adding their shrieks to the tumult, and men were cursing. A crowd was gathering rapidly. The shrill blast of a police whistle tore the air. The tall young man stood for a moment staring down at the form of a little girl writhing on the dirty sidewalk. The tall youth was kneeling beside the wounded child when two policemen came pounding up with drawn guns. . . .

Presently an ambulance had come and gone, bearing three wounded children to the emergency hospital. Two stalwart policemen stood guard over the still form of the murdered boy on the steps, and a patrol wagon clanged away with the tall youth and his suitcase inside.

"I'm getting tired of this," retorted the youth. "Suppose you take my fingerprints right now."

Less than a dozen blocks away four men stepped from a big closed car parked at the curb and walked casually away. One of them carried a violin-case. . . .

In the private office of Lieutenant Lucius Gardner, the tall young man sat in a chair before Gardner's desk. The bullet-riddled suitcase, now open, lay upon the desk, and a brace of revolvers lay beside it. Half an hour had passed since the tall youth had finished telling his story of what had happened before the house on Fourteenth Street.

The door of the office opened, and a man entered, laid some papers and photographs on the Lieutenant's desk and departed. The detective picked up the things the man had brought and scrutinized them closely. His eyes then lifted to the face of the tall youth.

"So," said Gardner grimly, "your name is Allan Vare, eh? And you haven't the slightest idea who tried to rub you out awhile ago, nor why?"

"That's right," nodded the tall youth.

"Cut it out, you rat!" snapped Gardner. He rose and thrust a rogue's-gallery photograph across the desk, holding it before the eyes of the chap who had declared his name to be Allan Vare. "What good do you think it's going to do you to keep up a bluff? I suppose this aint your mug, 'Gun' Shelton, alias Thomas Horner? I suppose you didn't finish a two-year stretch in Atlanta about six months ago?"

"You suppose correctly," retorted the youth. "That picture looks a lot like me, I'll admit, but my name is Allan Vare. I hail from Griswold, Iowa, originally, and I was never in jail anywhere in my life. I only arrived in New York from Oklahoma this afternoon. I'm a peaceable citizen and—"

"That looks like you are a peaceable citizen," interrupted the detective, pointing a big finger at the two walnut-handled forty-five revolvers lying on the desk. "I suppose you use them things for watch fobs or paperweights."

"I've been with a Wild West show all summer," stated the youth in an unruffled voice. "I'm handy with guns and horses—always have been. I went with the show to earn money to pay for the winter at the University here. I intend to finish my course in civil engineering this term."

"Yeah?" sneered Gardner. "Well, bozo, here is your picture and description. If you won't come clean before seeing them, maybe your fingerprints will do the trick."

"You have the fingerprints of this—this hard guy you claim I am?" asked the tall youngster with eagerness.

"Don't you remember when they were taken?" jeered the detective. "My, my, what a rotten memory you must have."

"I'm getting rather tired of this," retorted the youth, flushing a little. "Suppose you take my fingerprints right now and get this over with? I've got things to do."

"Oh, have you?" inquired Gardner. "All right, bozo. Come along."

FIFTEEN minutes later they were back in the private office. There was a worried, mystified expression on the detective's face. The fingerprints of Gun Shelton taken from the files were in no way like those of the tall youth.

"Looks like you win, guy," growled Gardner. "But by thunder, you were sure cast in the same mold as Gun Shelton—and that's tough luck for you."

"How so?"

"The birds who tried to burn you down this afternoon thought they were pouring lead into Gun Shelton," replied Gardner. "You can bet your life on that. As soon as they learn from the papers that they didn't get you, they'll be having another try at it. Nature sure did you a dirty trick when she gave you that face. If you'll take some good advice, you'll get out of this town and get quick. That is, if you want to stay healthy."

Allan Vare's cheeks flushed. Anger blazed suddenly in his gray eyes. His long-fingered, brown hands became fists unconsciously as he faced the detective lieutenant.

"*I* should get out of town!" he cried. "*I* should get out of town! This is a hell of a note! First I am arrested because somebody tries to bump me off. Then you tell me to get out of town before they try it again. A carload of murderers blaze away at me and kill a baby—and what happens? I'm pinched for getting shot at! And the gunmen get away without anybody chasing them. And now I'm told to jump town in a hurry. What the devil sort of a police force has this burg got anyhow?"

"Cool down, big fellow," said the detective wearily. "Cool down. My head has been aching for months from listening to the words and music of that song. Can I help it that you are a dead ringer for Gun Shelton who is a crook and a killer? Can I help it that somebody else mistakes you for Shelton and opens up on you with a tommy-gun? I can't make you leave town. I'm simply telling you that if I was the image of a guy whose number was up,—a guy who is undoubtedly scheduled to die on a spot in the near future,—I would make tracks for somewhere else and make them quick."

"Well," snapped Allan Vare, "I'm not making them. And you can believe that. Why wouldn't it be a good idea to arrest this bad actor Shelton, and put him in jail? Why not go out and round up that gang of baby-killers and electrocute them?"

"Wouldn't I like to!" shrugged Gardner. "Talking is easy, big boy. Trying to do the little trick you suggest is something else again. If a hundred people had seen and recognized the men in that car today, we couldn't get a name or a description out of a single witness. The gangsters in this town have got the Indian sign on us. The honest people are scared to death. They want to live—and they know they won't if they offer to testify against any member of the mobs and gangs that have this town by the throat."

"Do you mean to tell me," demanded Allan Vare, "that the father or mother of that little boy who was murdered this afternoon wouldn't identify the killer and testify against him if they were given the chance?"

"That's just what I mean," answered Gardner grimly. "You'd know it too, if you knew this town."

"Well," declared Vare, "I'll tell you something: I saw two faces in that car this afternoon and got a good look at them. I'll remember them if I see them next in hell. And I'm not afraid of them or any of their friends. You get them—and call on me."

"If by that time you are not where the man who serves it will need an asbestos subpœna," retorted the detective. "Could you pick their mugs out of the rogue's gallery?"

"Yes."

"Come on."

TWO hours later Allan Vare declared flatly that the pictures of the two faces he had seen leering from the murder-car were not among the thousands of pictures he had scrutinized.

"But I'll pick them out," he declared as they headed back for Gardner's office.

"Out of what?" asked the lieutenant.

"Out of this town," replied Vare. "And when I spot either or both of them, I'll bring them to you—or leave them lying where you can pick them up."

Lieutenant Gardner shot a quick, keen glance at the stern young face with its deep coat of tan. They entered Gardner's office.

"Now," said Allan Vare, "if it's all right with you, I'll pack up my junk and be on my way. I've got a friend living at the place I was going into when the shooting started. He's a civil engineer. He's going to get me a job with his outfit when I finish at the University. I'll get a room there, and you can get in touch with me there whenever you have caught anybody you want me to look at."

"Say, big boy," said Gardner as Allan began to repack his riddled suitcase, "did you ever hear of the law against carrying guns in this State? Better leave those gats here or get rid of them."

"Yes?" inquired Vare. "Well, I have a permit to carry them in this State. Got it this spring while the show was playing here. I—"

"Say," cried Gardner, "are you the fellow who did the fancy pistol-shooting at that show?"

"Yes."

"Jerusalem!" cried the detective. "I'll say you are handy with a gat! I went twice, just to watch you shoot. I got to examine one of those guns on the second night when they were passed around to show that you were using bullets and not shells loaded with shot. Funny I didn't remember you."

"COWBOY togs make a fellow look a lot different," smiled Vare. "But I'm keeping my guns—and I'm not carrying but one in the suitcase from now on. If I get my eye on one of the buzzards who was in that car this afternoon—well, I'll not hit any babies that happen to be playing near him."

"I don't think you will," nodded Gardner. "But listen, boy. I wish you'd get out of this town. You don't realize what you're up against."

"I'll find out."

"That's what I'm afraid of."

"I'll know I'm in danger from now on," declared Vare. "That's more than I knew this afternoon. I'll look out!"

He had picked up a heavy, sheepskin-lined coat that had been removed from the suitcase. He now grinned as he held it up.

"That's the thing that stopped the machine-gun slugs," he said. "You'll find them tangled up in the wool if you want them."

A little later Gardner stood looking at eight lumps of lead cut from where they had been imbedded in the thick wool of the coat lining.

"Well, I'll be darned!" he exclaimed. "That jacket sure stopped 'em."

"Yep," replied Allan. "Hang this coat on a clothesline, and you can't shoot through its double thickness with an army rifle. It's funny stuff, wool. There's a company that makes a threshing-machine with a cylinder that they demonstrate by threshing oak planks and six-inch monkey-wrenches without damage to the machinery. But you can throw a sheep-lined coat into it and tear cylinder and concaves all to smithereens."

"I'll just put these bits of lead away," observed the Lieutenant. "If we happen to get hold of the gun that spit them out—"

"I'm getting an idea," said Allan Vare suddenly. "Would you do me a little favor in return for having spoiled my afternoon?"

"What?"

"Only you and me and the fingerprint-chap know that I am not this Shelton gunman?" countered Vare.

"That's all," nodded Gardner.

"Then will you keep that fact a secret from the newspapers and everybody else for a while? If you will, I've got a hunch I can get your baby-killer for you—and evidence that will send him to the chair."

"H-m," said Gardner. "You'll get your fool self killed. The best thing that could happen for you would be to

have all the papers carry the story of the mistake. What sort of scheme are you thinking about?"

"I'll let you know that later on," answered Vare. "Don't you want to catch that murderer?"

"I certainly do; but—"

"Then do what I've asked you, and I may get him for you."

"Well," said Gardner, after a moment of silence, "I'm a darned nut for doing it, but I will if you'll let me know what you're up to before you get yourself into any more trouble."

"Good!" cried Allan. "I'm starting. Go and put the muzzle on that finger-print chap. You know where to find me. I'll be seeing you."

"I'll give it out that I had to turn you loose because I had no charge to hold you on," said Gardner as Allan Vare picked up his suitcase and moved toward the door. . . .

Shortly afterward Allan Vare was in a taxicab with his riddled suitcase again between his feet. One of his revolvers was in that suitcase, but the other was thrust under his belt, handy. It was ten minutes past six o'clock when he dismissed the cab and carried his suitcase up the flight of steps at the foot of which he had so nearly met death four hours before. The steps had been scrubbed and were not yet thoroughly dry. Allan Vare's lips tightened and his eyes narrowed as he remembered the little limp figure that had lain on those steps, wantonly murdered in the midst of play.

A large middle-aged woman whose eyes were red opened the door in answer to Allan's push on the bell. Evidently she did not recognize the caller as the man who had been taken away in the patrol wagon after the shooting.

"Does Mr. Lawrence Iverson room here?" Allan asked the woman.

"He does," was the reply, "but he is not in the city at present. What is your name?"

"Allan Vare."

"Mr. Iverson left a note for you," said the woman. "Come into the parlor. I'll get it for you."

Lawrence Iverson had been Allan Vare's chum in the little Western college where they had both begun their study of engineering. One year ahead of Allan, Iverson had finished with a year at the University and obtained a position with a large construction company whose head offices were in New York. The note from his chum which the landlady presently handed to Vare, read:

Dear Allan:

Sorry, but I was ordered up to do some work on a small job in Vermont. Got the order too late to wire you. Make yourself at home in my room. I'll be back in a week or ten days. Behave yourself until I get back.

Lawrence.

Allan handed the note to the landlady, who glanced over it and then led the way to a room on the second floor, to which she gave her new guest a key. She informed him that the bathroom was next door to the room he was to share with Iverson. Vare thanked her, entered the room and spent five minutes or so in looking over the lay of the land. Then he set about freshening himself up a bit. He was hungry.

"Move a muscle, and you're cold meat," said Vare softly. "Reach high, and stand still!"

Later he bought a newspaper and read the story of the shooting while he ate his dinner in a near-by restaurant. The affair was described in lurid words, and a front page editorial declared that it was high time such atrocities ceased to disgrace the city.

"Must honest citizens," asked the editorial, "take the law into their own hands to deal with murdering morons who kill babies and innocent bystanders ruthlessly in settling their private feuds? Could the constituted authorities do nothing—or didn't they want to? Were the police afraid, in the pay of the gang leaders, or simply incompetent?"

It pleased Allan Vare to note that he was mentioned as "the gangster who escaped the death intended for him, and who was later released by the police, who declared that they had no evidence upon which to hold him prisoner."

It was just dusk when Vare returned to his lodgings. From a pawnshop he had purchased a spring shoulder-holster to fit the forty-five revolver. In his room he tried the holster and found that with the heavy weapon it made far too noticeable a bulge.

"Guess I'll have to get an automatic," he muttered to himself. He didn't like automatics. He laid the gun on the bed and took off the holster, deciding to carry the forty-five in his hip pocket when he went out for the look around which he intended to take presently. Tomorrow he would purchase one of the flat and more easily concealed weapons.

There came a knock at the door of his room. Allan turned and started toward it. Then he halted, frowning. He had heard no sound of steps approaching along the uncarpeted, dark-painted boards of the hall. The door was locked, and he had left the key in the hole.

"Yes," he called. "Who is it?"

"Telegram," answered a thick voice from beyond the door.

Vare's lips tightened; he stooped and quickly pulled off his oxfords. It might be a wire from Lawrence Iverson, at that—but Vare was taking no chances.

"Be there in a minute," he called as he stepped quickly and noiselessly toward the open window, picking up his revolver as he went. Allan thanked Providence that the warm September weather had made open windows necessary, and that the windows were unscreened.

IT was about a fourteen-foot drop from that window-sill into the small yard behind the house, but Vare had no intention of taking that drop. In a moment he was poised on the sill. Then he was erect outside the window, clinging to the top ledge of the casing. There was four feet of brick wall between his window and the bathroom window, which was also open. Out went one hand and one stockinged foot. In another half-minute he had slipped quietly into the bathroom.

With his right hand Vare drew the gun from his belt. Two steps took him noiselessly to the door, and his left hand closed about the knob. His body tensed. Then his left hand twisted the knob, and he was standing in the bathroom doorway with his revolver covering the man who stood before the door of his room. The fellow was slender, and clad in dark garments. In his hand an automatic with a silencer on the barrel was covering the door which he had been expecting to open.

"Don't move, you," snapped Vare. There was something in his low tone that seemed to freeze the slender gunman where he stood. He turned his head just a trifle, and there was a startled look in the eyes that sought Allan.

"Move a muscle, and you're cold meat," said Vare softly. He stepped along the hall and in a moment had taken the weapon from the slender chap's hand. He dropped it into the side pocket of his coat. "Reach high and stand still!"

Up went the gunman's hands. He made no attempt to speak. A rapid search of the fellow's pockets brought to light a bunch of keys, one of which was a long and slender "skeleton." Vare nodded with satisfaction as he saw this key. He thrust it into the keyhole of his locked door. It took but a minute to push his own key out of the lock, and the door yielded quickly to the skeleton.

"Get inside, quick," he snapped.

The slender chap obeyed, and Vare followed him into the room, locking the door behind him with the skeleton key. The fellow's bleak eyes watched his captor unwaveringly as he obeyed Allan's order to sit down on the side of the bed.

"So you came to finish the jobs your boy friends muffed this afternoon?" inquired Vare. "What the dickens have I done that you fellows begrudge me a little air to breathe and a whole skin to wear?"

The slender gangster's face remained wooden and expressionless. His eyes continued to stare stonily into Allan's. He offered no reply to the question.

"So," said Vare, grimly, "—tongue-tied, eh? I'll have to fix that." He laid his gun on the dresser that stood just behind him.

A gleam flared for a moment in the gunman's eyes as he saw that weapon laid aside, but it faded as Allan took a step toward him. Like a flash Vare struck—struck with his open hand, and so quickly that the fellow's attempt to throw up a protecting arm was useless. Vare's palm struck the sallow cheek of the gangster with a crack like that of a pistol. The force of the blow knocked the fellow over onto the bed, and Allan stood over him in readiness to strike again. Fear suddenly shone from the too-small eyes of the victim.

"If you don't answer my questions," declared Vare, "I'll slap you a few more times. If that don't work, I'll double up my fists. If that don't make you talkative, I'll kick the seat of your pants up to where you can wear them for a hood. Now, what's the objection to my living?"

"Aw, what th' hell?" mumbled the gangster. He was still cringing on the bed where Allan's blow had sent him. His pasty face had paled a shade.

"Words," observed Vare, "have come out—but they don't mean anything." He bent forward slightly and lifted his hand. "Don't!" begged the gunman. "If you're gonna bump me, go ahead. But don't beat me up."

"If you don't answer my questions," promised Vare, "I'll beat you to a jelly. What have I done to you and your friends that you should want to plant lead in my system?"

"Nothin'," muttered the rat.

"Nothing, eh?" grunted Vare. "Now, isn't that nice! You boys just out for a little target-practice! You really shouldn't have picked me for your target. I'm funny. I get sore about things like that. Whose idea was this?"

"Aw, Gun, what's the use kiddin'?" whined the fellow. "You know who put your number up."

"Maybe I can't believe myself," said Vare. "I want to hear you tell me. Spit it out, or I'll smack you through the mattress."

"Mike Passow," came hoarsely from the gangster's stiff lips.

"And why," demanded Allan relentlessly, "has Mike Passow decided to end my career in the bud?"

The fellow gulped and licked his lips.

"Why?" barked Allan.

"Aw, Shelton," muttered the victim, "Mike knows Steve Capri sent for you. He said the best way was to burn you down before you got started."

Before Allan could ask another question, there came a sharp rap on the door. Vare stepped back quickly and grabbed his gun from the dresser. He flattened himself against the wall out of range from the doorway.

"Who is it?" he called.

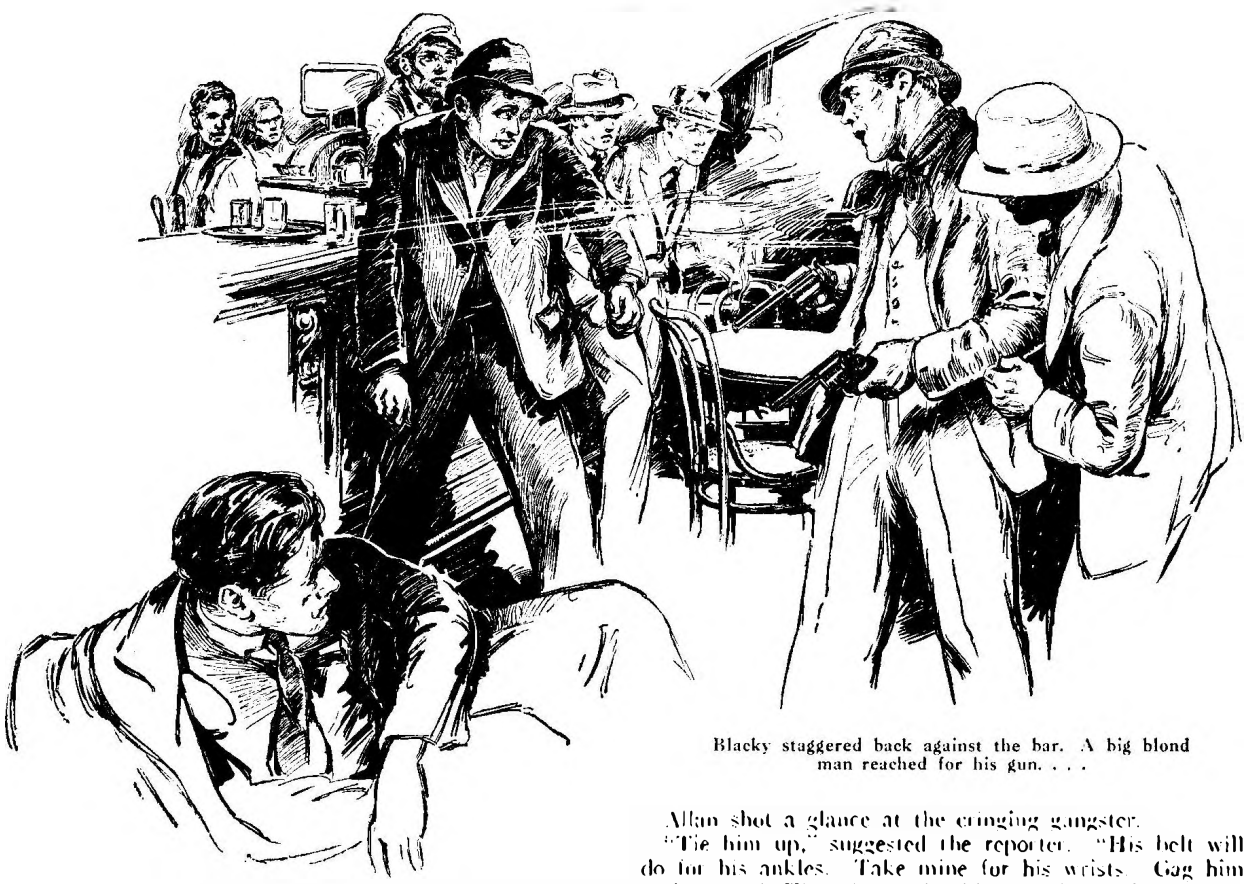
"Reporter from the *Banner*," answered a cheery voice. "You Mr. Shelton?"

"Yes," answered Allan. "Just a moment."

Vare made a motion with his gun-barrel and his lips formed a soundless command for the gangster to open the door. After a moment of hesitation, the fellow rose from the bed and went to the door. He grasped the knob with one hand, turned the key with the other and swung the door open.

THE small red-headed youth who stood before the door was a police reporter. His name was Martin Dignan, and the gangster knew him by sight. The next moment the gangster leaped forward, knocked the reporter sprawling and raced down the hall. Forty feet away near the head of the stairway, the door of the room he had rented less than two hours before stood slightly ajar. There was another gun in that room. The gangster raced desperately for that haven and the weapon that waited there.

The astonished reporter was halfway to his feet when another figure burst through the open door and again knocked him flat on the hall floor. The second man to run over Martin Dignan was Vare. The Westerner's long legs fairly hurled his lean body along the hall, and he overtook the fleeing gangster in the very doorway of the latter's room. A long, muscular arm went around the gunman's neck, and Martin Dignan, again on his feet, saw the lanky pursuer come back along the hall dragging the man he had overtaken. The reporter stood carefully aside and then followed Vare and his burden into the room.



Blacky staggered back against the bar. A big blond man reached for his gun. . . .

"Shut that door and lock it!" Vare snapped over his shoulder.

Martin Dignan obeyed. He turned back to see the gasping gangster lying on the bed where Vare had flung him without care.

"Hello, Shelton," greeted the reporter. "And why are you playing so rough with Skinny Lubitsch?"

"Is that the name of this insect?" demanded Vare with a jerk of his thumb toward the figure on the bed.

"That's Skinny Lubitsch, right enough," chuckled Dignan. "What have you got against insects?"

Vare shot a quick glance at the newcomer. He saw a typically Irish face, liberally spattered with freckles and wearing a contagious grin. Fiery red hair showed under a disreputable felt hat, and a yellow pencil was stuck over one ear. Five feet and one inch tall, Martin Dignan might have weighed a hundred and fifteen pounds if his pockets had been full of shot.

"Thanks," nodded Allan Vare. "I always like to know the names of fellows who have notions about stopping my clock. What can I do for you?"

"Say," cried the reporter, "is Skinny one of the birds that blazed away at you this afternoon?"

"No," answered Vare. "He is the little boy who was going to plug me this evening. I persuaded him not to do it. I'm sort of busy finding out some things from Mr. Lubitsch. What's on *your* mind?"

The reporter scribbled on a pad of copy-paper which he fished from a coat pocket, and held the result before Allan's eyes.

"*I know you are not Gun Shelton,*" Vare read.

"Could we have a little private talk out in the hall?" inquired the red-head as Vare looked up from the paper.

Allan shot a glance at the cringing gangster.

"Tie him up," suggested the reporter. "His belt will do for his ankles. Take mine for his wrists. Gag him with a towel. Tie wrists and ankles together with another."

Vare nodded, and the reporter began removing his belt. Presently Vare and the red-head were out in the hall.

"What's this all about?" demanded Vare in a low tone. "I thought—"

"I talked to the finger-print clerk before Lieutenant Gardner got to him to shut him up," interrupted the reporter. "My name is Martin Dignan. I work on the *Banner*. Gardner asked me not to use the dope about you being the wrong guy. I agreed on condition that he let me come and talk to you. He gave me your address, and here I am. Gardner said you were going to room here unless you took his advice and left town. I trotted up here to see whether you had pulled out and whether you'd give the *Banner* an interview before you depart. I wouldn't have butted in on your visit with Skinny, only I'd like mighty well to be sure of the interview before you leave town."

"Then you can get it any time this winter," snapped Allan Vare. "I'll be right here."

The reporter's blue eyes searched Vare's face and his lips pursed to whistle, but he changed his mind and grinned.

"Gonna stick?" he remarked. "You're a braver man than I am, Gungha Din. If I had that face of yours, I'd be pushing it ahead of me toward the tall timber so fast that the wind would whistle in my ears. Are you bullet-proof or something?"

"I'm not going to be run out of town by a bunch of hoodlums," retorted Vare. "You can bet your false teeth on that. I'm going to find out what it's all about and do something about it."

"As a reporter," observed Dignan, "my job is finding out things. I think I can give you a pretty clear idea

"The boss has got everybody who knows your mug out hunting for you. Jump in, and let's get going."

of why you are a likely candidate, right this minute, for the morgue."

"I'm listening," declared Vare.

"It's this way," explained the reporter: "Two of our big shots in the booze racket have decided to merge their territories."

"And their names are Steve Capri and Mike Passow?" cut in Allan.

"Yes," nodded Dignan. "If you've heard this one, stop me."

"I found out from that rat in there," smiled Vare, "that I am being hunted with machine-guns and things at the order of one Mike Passow, because the Passow party knows that I was sent for by Mr. Steve Capri. That's all I know. I won't butt in again."

"Well," went on the reporter, "it seems that the only difficulty about consummating this merger I spoke of is that when the territory is merged, either Passow or Capri will not be in any condition to enjoy the increased profits. They can't seem to agree on which one that will be. It has been noised abroad that Steve Capri has called to his aid one Gun Shelton, the gentleman of whom you are such an excellent physical reproduction. Mr. Shelton is reported to have made an art of the removal of competition. When Shelton joins the ranks of a warring gang leader, sudden deaths from lead-puncture become frequent and numerous among the cohorts of the opposition. Mr. Shelton has for some time been sojourning in St. Louis, but has recently been expected to arrive in our midst at any moment. Then you step from a train, and—" Dignan concluded with an expressive gesture of the hands.

"I see," nodded Vare grimly. "And in their zeal to nip my career, or this Shelton party's career, in the bud, Mr. Passow's gunmen murder one baby and cripple two more. And all anybody seems inclined to do about it is arrest me for being shot at and warn me to get out of town quickly before the bad boys finish the job."

"Oh, no," said Dignan, a note of mockery in his voice. "There will be a lot of other things done—and faithfully chronicled by the ever-alert press. Public opinion will be aroused. It always is. Decent citizens will demand justice, and the powers that be will promise that they shall have it. Scathing editorials will be written. A few bums will be arrested on suspicion. The police will be baffled. Lucius Gardner will look at a body in the morgue and say, 'Poor Vare, if he'd only have beat it out of town like I told him to!' Then some chorus lady will bump off her millionaire daddy in their penthouse love-nest, and the dead and crippled babies will be forgotten. And that's all."

"Like thunder, that's all!" growled Vare. "The fellow who killed that baby and crippled the others is going to die for the job. I'm going to make that my personal affair. And since it seems I can't stay in this town and be let alone by these gangsters and gunmen, I'm not going to sit around and wait for them to bring more trouble to me. I'm going to take a little to them."

The reporter looked thoughtfully at the stern face and blazing eyes of the tall youth who had just made this declaration. After a brief silence, the red-head nodded slowly.

"I rather believe you mean that, crazy as the idea is," he observed. "I'm interested as to ways and means. Would you mind enlightening me a bit, if I stick around until you have—er—dismissed our friend Skinny?"

"That snake," declared Vare, "is not going to be dismissed. I need him. He's got a lot of things to tell me. I'm just puzzling over where I'm going to keep him. You haven't got a nice cage for such birds, have you?"

Again the wiry little red-head studied Vare thoughtfully. His bright blue eyes bored into Allan's gray ones, and kindred spirits saluted each other in that mutual gaze. Slowly an understanding grin spread over the reporter's freckled face.

"Can you bring him along without any trouble?"

"Sure," answered Allan with a tight smile. "He's as gentle as a kitten. He'll trot along with me anywhere."

"Fetch him," said Dignan. "I've got a misused car out in front—if the street-cleaners haven't been along since I came in."

Twenty minutes later Vare and Dignan sat in the front basement apartment of an apartment-house just off Allingdon Square. The gunman Skinny Lubitsch lay in a dark cellar that opened off the back room of the apartment. The gangster was securely trussed up, and his mouth was stopped with a gag constructed of a kitchen towel.

"This is where I keep my other shirt and socks and come to sleep once in a while," said Dignan. "The back way out of that cellar has been bricked up. It's a nice safe place to keep your pet. Now let's hear this plan you have for committing suicide."

"But," asked Vare, "suppose the landlord—"

"I'm the landlord," admitted Dignan. "But for the love of Pete, don't let it get out. Hard enough to hold my job on the *Banner* now. Aunt who was fond of freaks died a couple of years ago. Left me this dump. Go ahead and spill your idea."

"Well," began Vare, after a moment of study, "you know what happened this afternoon. When I got located in the room after they decided I wasn't this Gun Shelton party—"

Vare talked steadily for twenty minutes while the reporter listened attentively and without interruption. "And that, roughly, is what I'd thought about doing," Allan concluded.

"Roughly, is right," chuckled Dignan. His eyes were bright with excitement. "I really believe I behold in you

that rare bird, a simon-pure direct-actionist. And you are now ready to—to interview Skinny Lubitsch again?"

"Yes."

"I guess I'd better stay out here," said the reporter. "I can't stand to see a human being handled roughly. Brutality shocks me to the core. . . . On second thought, I suppose I'll have to see it through. You may need help—and the *Banner* expects every reporter to do his duty." He rose and led the way back through the apartment to the door of the cellar prison. . . .

As his kind usually are, Skinny Lubitsch was a moral and physical coward except when he had a gun in his hand and the other fellow at a disadvantage. Vare had learned that fact and meant to make the most of it. Ten minutes after Allan and the reporter had entered the cellar, the gangster had told what Vare wanted to know. They quickly fixed the fellow so they were certain he would be there when they returned, and made their way back to the living-room.

"Woe," said Martin Dignan with a long face, "is me. Why did I have to be the unlucky devil chosen for this assignment? Now I'll have to stick along—or lose my job. It *would* be my luck to be trailing a long-legged bozo with a mistaken sense of duty and a homicidal and suicidal mania. Why couldn't you have packed up your duds and skedaddled out of this wicked city like a sane and cautious person?"

"You needn't come," retorted Allan Vare. "I'll tell you what happens."

"No," declared the red-head, sad resignation in his voice. "You have no journalistic training. You might overlook something. And the probability is that St. Peter will be the party to whom you will do your telling of what happened."

"Yes?" queried Vare. "And dead reporters write no tales. Don't forget that."

"There is only half as much of me as there is of you," observed the reporter. "A small target is hard to hit—especially when it is hidden behind a large one, as I shall be."

Vare laughed. He was liking this little freckled chap more all the time. He had decided that there couldn't be much wrong with the courage of a fellow who had hair the color of Dignan's and who could banter even about the fear he professed.

"Got a gun?" asked Allan.

"Mercy, no!" cried Dignan. "I couldn't hit an elephant at ten paces, if I had one. I mean a gun, not an elephant."

"Then," declared Vare, "you'd better not come along. There's no sense in it."

"Right you are," nodded Dignan. "I'm glad you've seen the light. Trot along and get your satchel. I'll go to the depot and see you off."

"You know darn' well what I meant," snorted Allan Vare. "If you see me off for anywhere, it will be for the Valhalla of my ancestors. Come on! I'll telephone to your paper if anything happens to you."

"The *Banner*," said Dignan, following Vare toward the door, "will be delighted to hear from you."

It was just eleven o'clock when Martin Dignan pulled his battered car up at the curb of a not-too-well lighted street on the lower east side. The two companions in adventure stepped out onto the sidewalk.

"That's the joint down there, where the light shines out," said the reporter.

"Sure you can get in?" asked Allan Vare.

"I wish I was as certain I could get out."

"What's the method of gaining entrance?" inquired Vare. "I want to get an idea of the layout before we crash the gate."

"The speak-easy," explained Dignan, "is in the basement. There is a pool-hall above it—that's where the lights are shining onto the sidewalk from. We go down into the basement areaway, and I expose my handsome face before a peep-hole in a door. I've been here several times before. I sometimes look upon the wine when it is red. When the door opens, we go down a hallway to another door beyond which is the speak-easy. There is no watchdog at this second door. The bar is along one side of the big room, and there are about a dozen tables with four chairs to each."

"Is there any other way out of the dump besides the front door?" asked Vare.

"I suppose there is a back way of some sort where they bring in their liquor," answered the reporter. "But I never noticed it."

"Did you know before tonight that this Mike Passow's gang used this dive for a hang-out?"

"Yes," nodded Dignan. "I've seen a number of the Passow outfit there. There are two telephones at the end of the bar. One of them is a private wire, direct to Passow's apartment, which is about a block from here."

"Hm-m," said Allan Vare. "Well, let's go. I hope the fellow at the peep-hole doesn't know this double of mine by sight."

"Amen," muttered the reporter as they started toward their goal.

They descended some stone steps into a dark areaway. Vare kept just behind Dignan and pulled the brim of his hat low. He shifted the two revolvers thrust under his waistband so that their walnut grips would be handy when the concealing coat was flipped back. The reporter rapped on the stout-looking door, and a moment later a flap was pushed from a six-inch hole and light from beyond the door shone yellow on the freckled face. The flap fell and the door opened. The companions stepped inside, and Dignan, with a greeting to the doorkeeper, led the way down the narrow lighted hall. There was no recognition or suspicion in the glance the burly guard gave to Vare.

Allan followed the red-head closely as they approached the second door. Anything might happen when they stepped through that door. The men Vare sought might be there, as they might not. Some other Passow gangsters might see a man they believed to be Gun Shelton, hired killer of the rival mob, and start fireworks. They might enter unmolested. In the latter case, the plan was to sit down in a corner with their backs to the wall and await developments.

Dignan pushed open the door and they stepped into a large, low-ceilinged and smoke-filled room. Ready for anything, Allan Vare swept the room with a swift, searching glance. There were more than a dozen men in the room. One group was playing cards at a table near the rear end of the bar. Half a dozen stood at the bar with drinks before them, and still others were sitting at tables with their liquor. Nearly all eyes turned casually toward the new arrivals.

And then Vare's body stiffened. He was looking directly into the black eyes that had surveyed him over the sights of a machine-gun that afternoon. The fellow was standing at the bar, and the big gangster who had sat beside him in the back seat of the murder-car was next to

"You can go to sleep now," said Vare. "We got some business to attend to."

him in the line of drinkers. Astonishment in those black eyes changed instantly to deadly purpose and the killer's hand darted to his left armpit. It flashed back to view gripping a blue steel automatic.

Bang!

Vare had taken a quick sidewise step and his twin revolvers were in his hands. One of them had spoken, and the bullet from it struck the gangster's weapon, tearing it from his grip. Blacky staggered back against the bar.

At one of the tables a big blond man with cold eyes and a hard mouth had reached for his gun almost at the same moment as had Blacky. Vare's gray eyes, flicking over the room saw that gun coming up to spit death in his direction.

Bang!

The deep voice of Vare's forty-five again filled the speakeasy, and a howl of pain came from the big gangster as a slug shattered his wrist and his weapon clattered to the floor beside his chair.

"Everybody reach up!" commanded Vare while the room was still reverberating with his second shot. "Quick—and don't anybody move!"

Hands that had started toward weapons, and others that had been for a moment frozen in surprise, went up obediently as all eyes stared at the tall youth with the grim face and blazing eyes who covered the room with two smoking guns.

The only man who did not obey Vare's sharp command was the bartender. Recovering from his stunned surprise, that individual dropped behind the shelter of the bar. He had made a mistake. Even as the top of his head disappeared below the top of the bar, both of Vare's guns spoke. Two bullets tore through the face of the bar, and a howl of anguish echoed with the twin reports in the room. There was the sound of a body thumping to the floor, and moans of pain came from where the victim had thought to take refuge. Vare stood grim and taut, his revolvers ready to pump lead into the next man who moved.

As the first shot from Allan's gun sounded, Dignan had darted to a near-by table upon which stood three empty beer-bottles and some glasses. Snatching a bottle by the neck, the reporter had leaped back to a place against the wall beside the door that led to the hallway. He was not a moment too soon. The door was kicked open, and the burly doorkeeper stood in the opening with a gun in his hand. Even as his eyes took in the scene and the muzzle of the weapon shifted toward Vare, a beer-bottle swung with all Martin Dignan's might crashed down on his wrist, and the gangster's gun spat its lead into the floor as it fell from his numb fingers.

"Stand still!" yelled the red-head, lifting the bottle again, "or I'll cave in your head!"

But the door guard was not a coward. Just as Vare shot through the bar at the ducking bartender, the guard's right hand shot up and grasped the threatening bottle. Whereupon Dignan drew up his right leg and kicked the burly thug with all his might squarely in the pit of the stomach.

The fellow's face went gray, and something between a moan and a gasp came from his lips. He doubled up and pitched to the floor. Dignan calmly kicked the dropped gun out of the fallen tough's reach.

"Thanks, Red," said Allan, without taking his eyes off the men who now stood or sat motionless under his menacing weapons. "Drag that bird out here where I can see him. Then get to that telephone and call Lieutenant Gardner. Tell him what's necessary, but get him here in person."

"Gardner is coming," announced Dignan a minute later as he turned from the phone. "Hadn't I better take the guns off those bums?"

"Nope," said Allan. "They won't get funny with their irons. Go around behind the bar and see what that guy is moaning about."

"He's got a bullet through his thigh and another through his shoulder," said the reporter from behind the bar presently. "Shall I drag him out of here?"

"Let him lie," replied Vare. "You'd better get out to the door and be ready to let Lieutenant Gardner in."

A few minutes later Dignan ushered in the detective and three of his assistants. Gardner stood looking questioningly about the room.

"The little black-eyed rat over there by the bar with the blood on his hand," said Allan Vare crisply, "is the man who blazed away at me with a machine-gun and

killed a baby this afternoon. The big hulk beside him is the bird who rode beside him in the car. As for the rest of these fellows, you'd better search them."

"I see," nodded Gardner. "But where do you get off, shooting up a gang of guys without any authority?"

"Best authority in the world, Lucius, old sleuth," spoke up Martin Dignan. "Self-defense. My friend Vare and I strolled into this quaint little place to have a cup of hot chocolate. And would you believe it, these gentlemen drew guns and began shooting—I mean trying to shoot—at us. Fortunately, Mr. Vare had brought along a couple of guns that he had meant to trade to the proprietor for hot chocolate. He not only saved his own life, but preserved a reporter for the *Banner*."

"All right," said Gardner, a smile twitching the corners of his mouth for a second. "Boys, frisk these birds."

Ten minutes later fourteen men were on their way to jail; and one, the bartender, bound for a hospital under guard. Police had driven back the crowd from where Gardner, Vare and Dignan stood on the sidewalk.

"I ought to take you in for safekeeping," declared Gardner to Vare. "It takes your testimony to hold these guys on a murder rap—and important witnesses have a way of disappearing or turning up in morgues in cases like this."

"Sorry," said Vare, grinning, "but I'll try to stay alive. And I'm not ready to knock off for the night yet."

Gardner drove away. Then Vare turned to Dignan.

"Let's eat," he said. "Then I want to get back to your place and have another chat with our friend Skinny."

"You go ahead and feed," answered the reporter. "I've got to get to the office quick with this scoop. I'll get the city editor to put somebody else onto it after I give him what I've got. I'll meet you at my place in an hour or less. Here's an extra key to my door, in case you get there first."

Dignan stepped into his car and drove away. Vare walked on to a restaurant. . . . As he emerged from the place half an hour after entering it, he heard the squeal of suddenly applied brakes, and a big car plunged to a halt at the curb. An evil face looked out at him from the driver's window. A hand beckoned.

"Hey, Gun," called a guttural voice, "come here. Where the hell you been? The boss has got everybody who knows your mug out hunting for you. He's waiting at the south warehouse for you to show up. Jump in and let's get going."

Vare managed to keep his lean face from betraying surprise. His quick mind was working furiously as he stepped up to the car. This man must be some one who knew Gun Shelton. He was evidently some one who expected to be trusted by that gunman double of Vare's. Therefore it followed that he was a member of the Steve Capri mob and the boss of whom he had spoken was Capri.

"I'm glad I ran into you," said Vare fervently, "but we can't talk here. Drive on and turn into the next side-street. I'll follow along. Got word for Capri."

VARE was watching the other's face closely as he spoke; the name of Capri registered as he had hoped it would. The evil-faced fellow jerked a nod, and the car rolled away. Vare stood still for a moment. Then he strolled slowly on in the direction the car had gone. A little later he walked up to the open driver's window where the big car had pulled up to the curb on a dark side-street.

"What's the word, Gun?" asked the driver. "The chief is all up in the air. He's been wondering for two days why you didn't show up. He's been combing the damned burg since the papers came out with that stuff this evening. Best thing is for you to get in here and go down there as quick as you can."

"I know my business," snapped Vare. "I happened to hear a couple of the Passow mob talking on the train that I came into town on. They didn't know me and I got next to something that has kept me busy. Things worked out so I couldn't take a chance on buzzing Capri. You just take this word to Capri for me. Get it straight, too."

"All right," growled the gangster, "but—"

"But nothing," interrupted Allan. "You tell Capri that I'll come to the south warehouse at four o'clock. It's half-past twelve now. Tell him I said to get busy and have every rod and tommy-gun he's got gathered there by four. I'll have things ready by then so we can rub out Passow's whole damned mob as slick as a whistle. I was just about to risk a messenger boy if you hadn't popped up. Get going! Capri will have to hustle to get all his guns together. I'll be there on the dot of four."

"I'll tell him," growled the man as he started the motor.

"Now," muttered Vare to himself as he watched the big car roll away, "what the devil am I going to do next?"

HE walked slowly back and turned toward Allingdon Square. Martin Dignan was home when Vare arrived at the apartment. It was ten minutes past one. Vare had been doing plenty of hard thinking while he walked, and a plan had almost completely formed in his nimble brain. Whether or not it was a good plan depended on a number of things. Vare was carrying a package of sandwiches which he had bought at a cafe along his route. He greeted Dignan and set the package on the table.

"Do you know a hangout of Steve Capri's that the mob calls the south warehouse?" inquired Vare.

"Yep," answered the reporter, "but I'm not going to go with you if you've got any fool notion of tearing up that little playhouse."

"What sort of dump is it?"

"Warehouse," replied the red-head. "Two stories high, with a big basement. An old Russian runs a fruit and produce business on the ground floor as a blind. He's paid by Capri, who uses the top floor and the basement as a storehouse for booze and beer. Why?"

"Things may happen there later on," answered Vare grimly. Then he told the reporter what had happened to him after they had parted.

"And so?" inquired Dignan when the tale was finished.

"And so," replied Allan, "we're going to pull a fast one on our friend Skinny Lubitsch. You'll have to help me with this part of it. The rest I can handle by myself."

"That's nice," observed Dignan. "What do we do to Skinny?"

Allan spent ten minutes in explaining the scheme he had evolved. The red-headed reporter was grinning widely when Vare finished. They rose and went back toward the cellar where their prisoner lay. Allan carried the bag of food and Dignan stopped in the kitchen for water.

"Well, boy friend," said Vare as they stood over the gangster, after taking the gag from his mouth, "there is another thing we want to know. We've brought some grub and water. If you answer this question like a nice lad, you get to eat and drink. If you are stubborn, I'll kick the answer out of you, and you don't get the food and water."

"What you want to know?" whined the cowed gunman.

"What is the name of the bird who drove that car this afternoon when the babies were killed?"

"Bert Camper," answered the fellow.

"That's straight?"

"So help me."

"Fair enough," nodded Vare as he bent down and began untying the gangster's hands.

The gunman sat up and wolfed the food and water which

his captors placed before him. When he had finished, Vare proceeded to replace the gag and rebind his wrists. This time, however, he did not tie them so tight, and he fashioned a knot that would slip without much trouble if the fellow strained very hard at his hands.

"You can go to sleep now," said Vare as he rose to his feet. "We've got some more business to attend to. We won't bother you any more until tomorrow."

THE comrades left the cellar and went back to the living-room. They took chairs, and Allan winked at the reporter. They sat for some time in silence, pretending to read. Then a faint squeak sounded in the silent apartment. Their eyes met, and both grinned. Their prisoner had freed himself from his bonds and was at the cellar door. The creak had been the result of his pushing the door ajar. Allan Vare rattled the newspaper he held. There was silence for a couple more minutes.

"Well," said Allan in a full voice, "it's two o'clock. We'd better get started. It'll take us an hour to do that Barker Street business, and Capri gave strict orders for every guy in the mob to be at the south warehouse on the dot of four."

"Yes," answered Dignan, "this will be some night. By morning the morgue will be full of Passow's mugs, and Passow will be among them. Capri will have a sweet new territory, and we'll all be grabbing off bigger dough."

"And how!" replied Vare. "Those birds that we landed in the stir tonight will be all that's left of Passow's mob by daylight. They don't know how lucky they are."

"Capri ought to slip you one nice bundle of jack," observed Dignan. "You doped this thing out for him—and I'll say it's a darb of a scheme. Rubbing out a whole mob at one swipe will give Capri some rep."

"I'm getting plenty," answered Allan, "and so will you. But let's get started. All hands and the cook have got to be in the south warehouse at four o'clock. We leave there to start mopping up at a quarter past four."

The comrades rose, turned off the lights and left the apartment, closing the door noisily behind them. Outside, they hurried across the street and secreted themselves in the darkness of a tailor-shop doorway.

"Big boy," whispered the red-head, "if this thing don't work out, I'm leaving at dawn for Timbuctoo or Vladivostok. Suppose this guy don't fall for our play?"

"Then we'll have to think of something else and think quick," answered Vare.

"I'm thinking already," declared Dignan. "Thinking of remote places, and how I'll look in a full beard and wearing smoked glasses."

"Better keep quiet," whispered Vare. "Our friend Skinny will be popping out of there as soon as he's sure we are out of the way."

Perhaps five minutes passed in silence. Then a low hiss came from Vare as he pressed Dignan's side.

The watching pair saw Skinny Lubitsch emerge from the door to hasten away down the street. Without leaving their hiding-place, they watched him until he disappeared into an all-night restaurant about a block distant.

"Took the bait," said Vare delightedly. "He's telephoning Passow right now. You can bet on that. Let's get going before he comes out. We'll find another phone and give Lieutenant Gardner something to do."

"I doubt if you can reach Gardner at this time of night," said Dignan.

"Yes, I can," Vare assured him. "I telephoned him after I sent my message to Capri. He promised to sleep in his office and wait for my call."

They stepped from the doorway and hurried around a corner to where Dignan had left his car. At three o'clock, Vare entered a booth in a drug-store and was soon in touch with Lieutenant Gardner.

"This is Allan Vare," he told the detective. "Hell is about ready to pop. If you take the directions I'm ready to give you and follow them, you'll probably get promoted to mayor or something tomorrow."

"Say, you crazy yap," growled Gardner, "who in blazes gave you charge of my department, anyhow? Where are you now?"

"Don't think I'd better tell you," chuckled Vare. "Ready to take down the dope?"

"What is it?"

"Load about sixteen men in four of your big cars that can't be spotted for police-cars," said Allan. "Give the men plenty of tear-gas, some machine-guns and some sawed-off shotguns besides their gats. Send one car to each of the four street-corners I'll name in a minute, and have them at their posts at a quarter of four. If you do as I tell you—you'll be surprised."

Vare was smiling grimly as he left the booth and joined Dignan.

Skinny Lubitsch arrived at the Passow headquarters at twenty-five minutes after two. He immediately blurted out his story to the eagerly listening gangsters.

"Well," growled Passow when Skinny had finished, "we don't know what Capri's scheme is, but we don't need to. If he's going to have his whole mob in the south warehouse at four o'clock, it'll be that outfit and not us that will decorate the morgues in the morning. And Gun Shelton! Shoot up my joint and rat to the cops, will he? Not any more after tonight! The south warehouse! What a fine spot Capri has put himself and his mob on!"

"What's the word?" asked a sleek-looking chap by the name of Larry Moore, Passow's right bower.

"Get busy and gather the boys—all of 'em," barked Passow. "Shoot a couple of cars over and get every pineapple that old Bang Clayson has ready. Get 'em quick. I want everybody here and ready to go at three-thirty. Plenty of tommy-guns and all the mob. We'll blow that dump into little pieces and burn down any of the rats that are able to get out of the mess."

AT ten minutes to four Dignan parked his car two blocks from the warehouse around which the plot was centered, and Vare climbed out. He had explicit directions from the reporter as to how to find the entrance of the place. Dignan had also given him a careful description of Steve Capri.

"You are a blasted idiot," declared the reporter. "In ten minutes you'll be as dead as a kippered herring. Have some sense. Get back in here and let the business take care of itself from now on. You've done plenty."

"Nope," retorted Vare. "To make it perfect, I've got to show up and put this Capri rat on his guard."

"Then I suppose I ought to go with you," said Dignan, "only I'm scared stiff to be this close."

"You are a darned red-headed humbug," declared Allan. "You're sore as hell now because I told you to stay out and mean to see that you do! You've got an idea—"

Allan's voice ceased as two men rapidly approached their car.

"It's Gardner," hissed the reporter, and a moment later Lieutenant Gardner and another detective faced the comrades in the murky light.

"So here you two hell-raisers are," growled Gardner. "By thunder, I'll see that you quiet down for the rest of the night. Now, what's all this hocus-pocus about?"

"Listen, Lieutenant," said Vare, "I can't tell you right now. Time is too short. Have you got those cars and men planted as I told you to plant them?"

"I have," declared Gardner, "and I want to know—"

Bo-oo-om!

The air trembled with the sound, and a terrific explosion shook the neighborhood. Another blast followed—then two more, almost together.

"You'll know plenty, if you keep your eyes open!" shouted Vare. "Come on!"

THE two detectives were pounding at the heels of the Iowan and the reporter as they raced in the direction from which the sound had come. The thud and clatter of debris hurled skyward by the explosion was now loud as the stuff rained to pavement and roofs. Then police sirens added their wails to the clamor, and a moment later machine-guns and small arms began their song of death.

The neighborhood was in an uproar. Motors with open throttles were hurtling heavy cars along the pavement. Shouts and screams began to mingle with the rest of the racket. Suddenly the beam of a pair of powerful headlamps swept the street along which Vare, Dignan and the detectives were racing. The machine, a touring car with the top down, leaped down the street toward the running quartet. It bounced and careened as it ran over bricks and other debris on the pavement. There were five men in the auto. Then a police car came around the corner on two wheels, swerved, settled down and came hard after the open machine. Commands to halt were being shouted from the official car. Then a man in the rear seat of the touring car stood up and hurled a dark object at the pursuing auto.

There was a deafening crash. The red flare of the explosion painted the walls of the near-by buildings for a moment, and the police car seemed to literally leap into the air. There was a rending smash as the auto came down on its side on the far curb. The bomb hurled from the open car had exploded fairly under the front wheels of the officers' machine.

Vare had halted, and a revolver was gripped in each of his hands. One of them spat flame, and the man who had stood up to hurl the bomb stiffened, lurched sidewise and fell out of the car.

The speeding machine was now almost abreast of where Vare and his companion stood. The man beside the driver had a gun in his hand. He pointed it at Allan and fired. The bullet whistled past Vare's ear and smashed a window in a delicatessen store. Vare's right-hand gun barked, and the driver of the gangster car let go the wheel, clapped both hands to his head and slumped in his seat. The speeding car swerved wildly as the man beside the driver grabbed for the wheel. Vare fired again. The man grabbing for the wheel went down out of sight. The car swung against the curb, leaped it and crashed into a shop front.

"Good work!" shouted Lieutenant Gardner, racing toward the wreck.

Leaving the detectives to collect prisoners, Vare and the reporter sped away toward the scene of the first explosion. As they rounded a corner and came in sight of the warehouse that had been the stronghold of Steve Capri, they saw that the building was now a complete wreck. The street was covered with bricks, mortar, broken timbers and heaps of fruit and vegetables.

"They must have caught Capri and his crew like rats in a trap," shouted Vare to the red-head who raced at his elbow. "I intended—"

SUDDENLY a body dived from a doorway and a pair of strong arms were flung around Vare, pinning his arms to his sides. The weight of the burly assailant sent both Vare and himself rolling on the littered sidewalk. Two more gangsters leaped from the doorway behind the first. One of them made a grab at Martin Dignan, but the red-head jerked from the fellow's clutch and staggered out into the street, almost falling.

"Take his guns and let him up," snarled a smooth, silky voice. "Let's see if the damned double-crossing rat has the guts to stand up and take it, looking at me."

The speaker was Steve Capri. The dapper gang chief and his two henchmen had by some stroke of luck escaped the fate that had overtaken the rest of the mob.

Fighting desperately, Vare rolled on the sidewalk in the bear-hug of a thug who outweighed him by at least forty pounds. He tried vainly to free one of his gun hands for a moment, but kept his grip on the guns.

As Dignan stumbled into the street, the gangster from whose grasp he had freed himself leaped after the reporter. Dignan's hand snatched up a brick and held it as he regained his balance. He swung the brick with all his might and it crashed against the hoodlum's skull just above the ear. The gangster dropped.

Still clutching the brick, Dignan whirled. He saw the struggle on the sidewalk, and he saw Steve Capri standing with an automatic in his hand and eyes fixed on that struggle.

"Tear the rat loose from those guns," Capri was ordering the thug who held Vare. "I'll fill the double-crossing crook full of lead."

Balancing himself on widespread feet, the red-headed reporter hurled the brick in his hand with all his might. It struck Capri squarely in the face, and he went over backward, howling. Dignan snatched up another brick and leaped to where Vare was struggling in the grasp of the burly muscle-man. The brick came down with a thud on the gangster's head. The fellow went limp, and the next moment Vare had twisted from beneath the inert bulk.

The gun in Vare's right hand spoke. Behind Martin Dignan, Steve Capri—who had struggled up and was leveling his automatic at the reporter's back—stiffened and fell backward to the sidewalk. Vare's bullet had pierced the gang chieftain's heart.

Vare stood sweeping the vicinity with keen eyes, but there appeared to be no more enemies about.

AT nine o'clock next morning Allan Vare and Martin Dignan sat over breakfast in a restaurant not far from the *Banner* office.

"Boy, what a clean-up!" exclaimed Dignan. "The two biggest shots in this burg's gangland are cold meat. Darned near every killer in both of their mobs dead or on his way to the hot squat. You're a hero of the first water."

"I'm just a sap," retorted Vare, "who doesn't like the idea of being run out of town by a posse of hoodlums."

"You can be that if you want to," grinned the red-head.

"What I'd like to know," said Vare, "is what happened to this real gunman, Shelton?"

"That's easy," replied Dignan. "I was curious about that, so I wired an old buddy of mine on the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*. I got his answer a bit ago. Gun Shelton is in the St. Louis hoosegow, charged with wife-desertion. Seems he recently took a flyer in matrimony and the little woman didn't like the idea of his coming to New York."

"I see," nodded Vare.

"How would you like a job on the *Banner*?" inquired Dignan.

"I'm going to the University and finish my course in engineering," answered Vare, smiling. "Anyhow, what could I do on a newspaper?"

"We could keep you in a cage in the press-room," grinned the red-head. "Whenever news got scarce, all the city editor would have to do would be turn you loose!"

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made,
Those are pearls that were his eyes;
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea change
Into something rich and strange.

Full Fathom Five

By BEATRICE GRIMSHAW

"UNLESS a man's made of brass and iron, he's got no besness here," said Saul M'Cullagh. His Belfast accent shrieked to heaven—the turquoise heaven, clear as a bell-glass, that arched from sea-rim to blue sea-rim, over cabbage-green-colored Leopold Lagoon.

Saul had abandoned an Antrim plow-tail twenty years earlier, to enter the medical schools; he had won through, and built up a decent practice, but the accent of the barnyard clung. His patients, in consequence, were of the kind that fatten no bank-account; clever as M'Cullagh was, he could never have afforded himself a trip round the world.

Nevertheless a dipsomaniac patient, sent away by his friends, and conveniently dying twelve thousand miles from home, had provided the funds for just such a trip. M'Cullagh found himself at a loose end, with his return tickets paid for, his pay in his pocket, and several spare weeks on hand. Therefore he made from Fiji to Leopold Lagoon.

Leopold is celebrated among biologists for the wealth of minute ocean-life to be found in its waters. There are little sea-beasts in Leopold which would leave you and me passionately uninterested, but which any member of a scientific society would almost worship on his knees. Dr. Saul knew about the little beasts, and had intended to spend his holiday Belfast-fashion, working hard, with a microscope and a miniature trawl. Hence his appearance on Leopold Island, not far from the small iron hut that alone broke the solitude of that enormous beach. The hut was his home at present, and until a young man by the name of Laverty disembarked from a passing schooner, nobody had visited the island for quite three weeks.

Laverty had walked up to Saul, and introduced himself. "I think I ought to know you," he said. "We come from the same town. I heard about you down at Brunswick Island, where I'm staying; so I just came along."

To himself he said: "He's the sort to help me." For despite Saul's grimness he somehow inspired confidence.

Saul, barely looking at him, had replied as above. And the young man, checked, stood staring disappointedly.

"I don't quite understand you, I'm afraid," he said in answer. He was a tallish young man, almost too slim, well-mannered, well-dressed; he had an English accent, and seemed careful of it.

"What I mean," Saul said, "is that the islands are no place for the like of you. I know yer da'—a wee crowl of a man; and ye're queer an' fushionless; I wouldn't buy the two of ye at a fair for pence apiece. But come in and spett it out; ye'll feel the better. Is that yer luggage? Ye were brave and sure ye were goin' to visit with me, weren't ye? Tell that naygur to bring it up, and then tell him to quit out of it. I've no naygurs here, men or women."

"Thank God," said Laverty explosively. He took the suitcase from the sailor, tipped him, and sent him off. Following after Saul, he entered the palm hut, passing sud-

denly from the tumultuous roar and the fierce sunlight of the beaches, into green dusk, pleasantly filled with a sound like the far-away shouting of crowds.

"Set down," ordered M'Cullagh, indicating one of the two empty meat-cases that passed for chairs. "Now who is she, and what's she done on ye? Is she black, or just a black man's dotter?"

"She's yellow," said Laverty, "—more or less. Half Chinese,—there's a lot of Chinese on Brunswick,—half white. A good family, and educated, and one of God's own angels."

"Oh, aye, she wud be."

"You can imagine, of course," went on Laverty, "what my father'd be likely to say to the prospect of a half-Chinese daughter-in-law. Not much hope there, nor with her own people—I'm simply mud to them. But that's not—I mean, there's something else. I mean, I'm in danger of being murdered."

He sat back a little, and waited for his effect. It did not come. Saul M'Cullagh, physician, had listened in his day to revelations beside which this was mere society news.

"Aye, so?" was all he said. "And for what?"

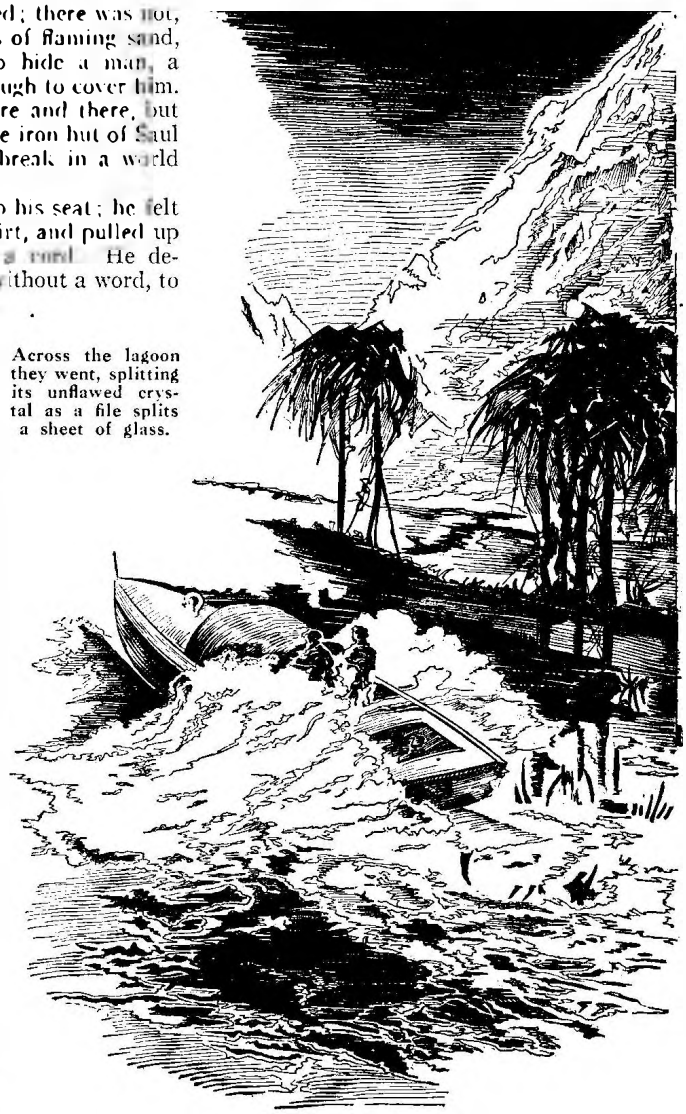
The young man got up suddenly, and put his head out of the door. Under the blaze of afternoon, Leopold lay bare, confessed; there was not, on all the miles and miles of flaming sand, a hollow deep enough to hide a man, a clump of bushes thick enough to cover him. Palms pricked the sky here and there, but palms give no shelter. The iron hut of Saul M'Cullagh was the only break in a world of blinding white.

Jim Laverty returned to his seat; he felt inside the breast of his shirt, and pulled up something that hung on a cord. He detached it, and handed it, without a word, to Saul.

"That's a geyan purty ring," commented Saul coolly.

"She gave it to me. Her father gave it to her, and told her not to show it to anyone, but keep it hidden away. And she—we were down on the beach of Brunswick, a full moon night, y' know, with the *tiare* flowers smelling like heaven, and the reef away out there calling and calling—you know the way it does—and the black shadows under the calophyllum trees. Her name's Almond Blossom, and she's like one; you never saw—"

"Mebbe I did, laddie. Mebbe me and that one walked on the sands in the munelight, burr-foot the both of us, in and out of the wotter, and in an' under the rocks, where there wes no mune. . . . We're all young once. —And so she gave you the ring?"



Across the lagoon they went, splitting its unflawed crystal as a file splits a sheet of glass.

"She did. She didn't know anything about it, except that her father thought it very precious, and she wanted to give me. . . . Well—I took it. And I wore it, just once, where it could be seen—there was a sort of race-meeting. And on the way back, in the dark, one Chink tried to stab me, and another drove his horse right up against me on the road home, and almost ran me down. And next morning my cook-boy left, and wouldn't give any reason but that 'he liked Master,' which when you think of it, smells sort of bad. . . . And I got another cook, and the coffee he made for me the first morning tasted so bitter I wouldn't drink it; I put it on the side-board to have it looked at, y'know. And the beggar took it away the minute my back was turned, and washed up the cups. There's only two motorcars in Brunswick, but they've both cut in on me turning corners, and one almost took the heel off my boot—since Almond Blossom gave me the ring. Now what do you think?"

Saul had taken the trinket, and was turning it over and over in his fine capable fingers. It was a heavy gold ring, carved in Chinese fashion, with a claw setting. In the claw was a jewel, round, like a pearl, but it was not a pearl; green like an emerald, but it was not an emerald. It shone with luster that was a strange and very beautiful combination of emerald and pearl, with perhaps a hint of opal.

"It's queer and denty," observed Saul. Jim Laverty understood that the gem had met with Saul's approval. "I seem to mind me of seeing the like before," added M'Cullagh, wrinkling up his brow in thought. "But it wasn't near so bonnie, and it wud be somewhere else than in a ring."

Jim Laverty looked at him. "Do you think she'll get into a row about it?" he asked. "If I thought that for a minute, I'd go back and— You never saw such hair; it's like the finest black sewing-silk, the sort they sell in skeins; and it lies like a cap of satin on her head. And she has a red mouth, like a camellia, and her skin is just ivory, nothing else; and her eyes are—"

"Like stars," finished Saul dryly. "They bid to be."

"No, they're not," snapped Laverty. "They're like the eyes of a—of a—of a—partridge. Lovely eyes. . . . It was she who made me go. She hung round my neck and cried. She told me to go to—"

"Jericho, wud it be?"

"Honolulu. There was a boat due. But I—when

this little hooker started out, I just slung my things aboard and came. I thought, if there's a Belfast man up on Leopold, he may be dotty,—pardon,—but he'll see me through, and this is getting too much for me—I thought. . . . And how could I clear off to Honolulu, and leave her altogether, when she's done a thing that's likely to put her out of favor with all the Chinks on Brunswick? There's a fair lot of them, and they seem to be a busy sort of people, if you understand me."

"I do. . . . So ye're sure an' certain Miss Ammond Blossom dawn't know what she's done—if annything?"

"She gave me the ring," said Jim Laverty with emotion, "because it was the most precious thing she had—that is—well, she gave it to me, to show her love for me. As to what's she's done in giving it, she doesn't know any more than I do."

"Does her father know she gave it?"

"She's been afraid to tell him, ever since. You see, he was very particular in telling her to keep it quiet, until her birthday that's in three months' time. He's dotty about her—he'd give her the teeth out of his head; but he's a tough customer all the same. Why, Almond Blossom's mother was a white woman, and she was carried off by him, from somewhere in the islands. She died years ago, and then he married one or two Chinese, and had some sons—I don't know how many; but Almond Blossom's his darling. She loves jewels—she's got a fine collection of them; but she picked out that ring to give me, because she said she knew it was more precious than any diamond she had. I don't see how that is, but anything she gave me would be.

"I say, I've talked a lot, and you haven't opened your mouth. May I stop with you for a bit, and go shares? Just till I see what's going to happen—there's no decent whites down at Brunswick, you know, just a beachcomber or so, and the Chinks and the half Chinks. Hock Sing, her father, has all the trade of the place in his hands."

"Ye can stop if ye like, and ye can go shurrs with me. . . . If he's got the trade, ye needn't be whingin' about Almond Blossom. She's safe enough; they wouldn't anger her father. As for shurrs, tinned goods don't grow up out of the san's of the sea; ye'd better run my cutter over to Albert tomorrow, to buy some more. It's right away the other direction from Brunswick, but nearer at hand."

"Do you think—"

"Laddie, in my profession, ye quit that bad habit of thinkin', very sune. Ye have to *knaw*. Until I do knaw, I'm sayin' nawthing."

Nevertheless, while Jim Laverty was busy gathering driftwood for the evening fire, M'Cullagh said several things—to himself only. One spoken aloud, summed up his visitor. "Brass and iron? No, but plain wud." Then, again, as he held the jewel up to the last rays of the swiftly vanishing sun and saw it take on a sparkle strangely compounded of the glow of the pearl, the glitter of opal and the green fire of emerald: "It's as plain a merracle as if ye'd taken the dewdrop offen a rose and set it in yer tie-pin—if I'm right. And merracles, from the beginning of the world, have been damn' uncomfortable company for plain men. Hasn't this, already, fair cowped every plan I hed?"

Next day brought comfort. When the cutter had slipped away round the corner of the island, peace came once more to Leopold Lagoon, falling soft as the sunlight fell, on beach and palm, upon green water and tossing wool-white reef. And with the silence and the peace—for it was silent, despite the race-course roar of the breakers, and the screaming of gulls and frigate-birds in the blue—there came back to Saul the deep delight that haunts these solitary places. He was a doctor and a man of science; he had kept abreast with modern thought, knew the danger of that delight, though he could not pin it down by any sharp-pointed name. Reluctantly he enjoyed it.

"Thur'll not be time to drink too deep," he said to himself. "Not with Mr. Jems Laverty about. And I'm *naw* made of wud, annyhow. Thur's good Belfast iron in me. And I've always my work."

On that word he paused. It had always had a pleasant sound to Saul M'Cullagh. Today, for some reason, it rang harshly. Work. . . . An ugly word, and an ugly thing. . . . He saw the mills of Belfast lit up and ablaze, in the dark of the winter morning. He saw the spiritless crowds of spinners and weavers, flowing like a dusky river to the doors—flowing from the doors, when dark came down and rain fell cold and greasy on the sodden road. He saw shop people, standing, serving all day long. Himself he saw, holding the plow with crackling muscles, laboring through stiff clay; again, years after, springing to the sound of the night-bell, battering with his hardy little car up and down a thousand streets, sitting for countless hours in his consulting room, giving out nerve and brain force—which is life—as a conduit gives out water. But behind conduits lie rivers and reservoirs; behind Saul M'Cullagh was his own limited cistern of life, that only, and already it was more than half run away. For thirty-eight is more than half of seventy.

Over M'Cullagh the worker there swept that morning the worker's bitter revolt against his lot. This holiday—it was good, but it was all. He'd never again have a chance to shepherd a "mental," who would obligingly die, and leave him free to enjoy himself at some one else's cost. When he got back, and that would have to be soon, it would be the round of town-practice with a week in the summer down at Bangor, if he was lucky, for all the rest of his life. Luxury of far travel, luxury of unproductive study, luxury of plain and simple rest; these things were not for him.

"I'm doatin'," said Saul M'Cullagh, meaning thereby that his mind was tottering on its throne. He arose from the meat-box and shook himself. "What a sort of gowk am I becomin'?" he asked himself. "Just to hear that wotter out there peghin' to itself," (it was thus that Saul expressed the sea's eternal sigh) "makes me feel that I cud sit down and never do a hand's turn all the rest of me life. What is it?" His analytical mind, ranging rapidly over possible causes, fixed on one that seemed probable. "It's the unearned increment that's dazzlin' me," he thought. "There's a quare ol' smell of riches about yon merracle."

Riches! What did they mean? If one was rich one had a splendid villa in the suburb named Balmoral. One sold the small car and bought a larger one. One married a girl with a neat figure and nice eyes, and had two sons and a daughter. One sailed a yacht in Belfast Lough; one joined the Ulster Club. One kept on with desultory practice, but one's soul was in a laboratory, beautifully fitted, at the back of the house. . . . One's portrait looked well in the Daily *Mail*, with a flattering notice under it. And "Sir Saul" was not bad. "She'd like to be 'Lady'—whoever she might be," thought M'Cullagh.

That brought him back to the thought of Miss Almond Blossom. He clicked his tongue impatiently. "If the young chap wasn't an Ulster man himself, I'd leave him to it," he thought. But he knew that he would not have done so. And he knew, too, that the "miracle" would hold him, even if nothing else did.

Night came, and the cutter had not returned. Saul did not worry over that circumstance. He had spent the day at work on what seemed to be a new line of inquiry. Abandoning his trawl, he had waded into deep water, diving every now and then for certain shells that lay among the many-colored coral flowers of the reef, invisible themselves save to the trained eye that could discount their clever disguise of weed and barnacle. Saul's eye was keen; he picked up a dozen or two in the course of the morning. They were big things, as large as the head of a year-old child, and shaped like snail-shells. They were grayish, with ridges of pale green, and each was closed by an operculum of creamy shell, as large as a captain's biscuit.

Saul killed one in a tin of boiling water, split it open with a heavy stone, and searched the remotest recesses of the shell. He did this without result, again and again.

Later, he found more shells, and went on with his search. It ended at four o'clock, when he discovered, in the top end of a shell, a small body, fairly bright. It was the green pearl of the "snail"; a mere curiosity, of less commercial value than the pearl-lined shell itself. Saul knew the snail; he had seen tons of it bagged and shipped in the rough for the mother-of-pearl trade. He had come across it in cottages at home, cleaned bare with acetic acid, shining all white and green, and cherished as a parlor ornament. He had seen a specimen or two of the bastard "pearl" that the green snail sometimes produces; but he knew it to be scientifically and commercially valueless.

Now he held one in his hand, and stared at it as he would not have stared at the most amazing section upon which the eye of microscope ever had been focused, since microscopes were made. For it held in its small, dullish round some part of a secret that, all told, would have turned other secrets, other wonders, pale.

Riches! What is there in the world as wonderful as that?

Saul, during the next few minutes, became several people. His lips grew moist, as if he had been thrown back to his own savage ancestor, and was watering at the mouth before sight of a fat bear just out of bowshot. He became a pirate, filled with desire to seize upon other men's goods; perhaps the sultry air and the solitary thundering seas had something to do with that. . . . He became a treasure-hunter; the eternal treasure-hunter who is born at eight years old, and never dies, in the hearts of most men, though most find themselves called upon to attend his funeral, somewhere about the age of twenty. . . . Above all, he became the common savage of the tropics, who holds fast to his unwritten, uncodified knowledge of what, in a life no longer than a breaking wave, is certainly good—leisure, and peace.

"If I can howk the secret out o' this," said Saul aloud—Saul, the toiler, the hard son of a hard city—"I'll never need to do a han's turn again till I die!" And he began to whistle "The Protestant Boys," which is a cheerful bit of ribaldry, associated in Belfast with roaring holiday-time.

Nobody works so hard as the man who works for leisure. That day Saul, with all the meager resources of his chemical stores, and all his by-no-means-meager brain and patience, toiled on till sundown—worked on, by the light of hurricane lamps, late into the night. The secret that he sought never once came within sight or call. The snail-pearls that he destroyed were destroyed, no more.

"It's just what I said," he declared at last, wiping a weary brow with a damp sleeve. "The thing's a plain merr'cle. Yon Chinaman would have to be a wizard, if there was such a thing. Annyhow the Chinese are two thousan' years ahead of us with all the inventions that matter; sure, an' didn't they make 'culture pearls' before Julius Cæsar divided all Gaul into three parts?"

Almost pettishly he threw down a couple of empty bottles and a mess of shell. He remembered now that he hadn't dined, and that it was almost midnight, and that the cutter—his hired cutter, not even insured—was missing.

Jim Laverty, of course, was missing too—but Jim hadn't to be paid for, if he were lost.

Dr. M'Cullagh swore a little at Jim, and at the Chinese wizard, and at things in general; got himself some food, and went to sleep. "The fellow'll be back in the morning," he told himself, as he tumbled into many-colored dreamland, through which pearl-emeralds, big as Rugby footballs, went rolling ceaselessly beyond his reach.

But the fellow was not back in the morning. Saul, at the end of his scientific resources, filled up time by collecting all the

"In the dark, one Chink tried to stab me."

"snails" he could find, and breaking them open, thereby accumulating a small and not valuable store of greenish snail-pearls. The lazy fit had possession of him today; he found himself, again and again, sitting down upon a coral boulder, hands hanging idle, eyes fixed upon the creaming line of froth that frontiered the lagoon, ears filled, contentedly, with the ceaseless calling of the reef. It was a southeast day; the island peoples, white and brown, could tell you what that means.

"A man wud need," said Saul, "to be med of brass and iron—good Belfast iron. Like me." But he spoke without conviction. "I'd not do a han's turn—" he said presently, and looked at his worn fingernails.

It was late in the day when the white triangle for which he had unconsciously been watching, lifted over the distant sea-rim. The cutter sailed fast before the breeze, now blowing up for sundown. Saul, in twenty minutes, could make out her passenger—her— Passengers?

"God bless us, he's brought Miss Almond Blossom with him!" shouted Saul to the planing frigate birds. They screamed in reply.

Jim Laverty brought the cutter, on a rising tide, through the reef passage at nine good knots. Saul could see Almond Blossom standing ready to let go anchor; dropping it with a sure hand, as Laverty's call rang out. He saw Laverty jumping into the shallow water, lifting Almond Blossom over the gunwale as lightly as if she had been a small white lamb—indeed she was not so very much bigger—and setting her down upon the beach. Saul was there to meet them by this time. He stared at the girl, without much thought of manners; then, seeing her shrink beneath his exploring eye, withdrew it. "God bless us, but she's a beauty," he commented.

He saw M'Cullagh waver down lower and lower until at last he was a mere pale shadow, a ghostly thing.

Almond Blossom turned as pink as her name.

"Stow that," said Laverty. "She speaks English as well as you—as I do," he corrected, the pride of Trinity College, Dublin, swelling within him. "Darling, this is Dr. M'Cullagh, my very kind friend. M'Cullagh, this is my *fiancée*."

"The blazes she is," said M'Cullagh to himself. Aloud, he answered civilly: "Glad to mek yer acquentance, Miss Almond Blossom. Has yer good father given his consent?"

The exquisite small oval of Almond Blossom's face paled slowly from ivory to pearl. Her long, dark-amber eyes grew shadowy.

"My father," she said, speaking slowly and carefully, "my father, most honored, has died."

"Murdered," said Jim to M'Cullagh, by the motion of his lips. Aloud he said: "I—I couldn't run back here after getting the stores; I just had to go down to Brunswick—took me all night and we've been near all day getting here, but thank God I did go. There was the devil to pay at the settlement—Hock Sing dead, of—of—heart-attack in the night, and Almond Blossom here left alone, and a half dozen bad eggs from the Chinese quarter snooping about the house ready to make trouble. Well, there was only one thing for a decent man to do, and I did it; told her to put her little duds together, and come with me. There's a couple of beachcomber whites who've had the sense to go off in a launch after the Resident Commissioner. He'll fix things up. Meanwhile, she'll be all right here."

M'Cullagh looked about him; it was as if never before he had observed the barren shape of Leopold Island, hooped round the long lagoon, the naked palms, the utter absence of anything like domicile or shelter, save his own ten-by-eight iron shed. He could see Almond Blossom, in one swift moment, taking in the whole situation, then dropping her long eyelids, fringed with blackest silk, and waiting. . . .

"Wal," he said, "you wee house of mine isn't much gude as a hotel. You and me'll have to be sleepin' on the san', and Miss Almond Blossom can have the shed by her lone."

"I've made those beachcomber fellows promise to tell the Commissioner about her; he'll be here in a day or so to marry us," babbled Laverty. He was exalted, feverish; his eyes could not leave the fairness of the girl. Almond Blossom, no more than sixteen years of age, was yet fully developed, by reason of her Oriental blood; she was a woman, dignified, self-possessed, and—sweet? Yes; Saul thought she looked as sweet as a golden lily, of the kind people used to plant and love in old-fashioned gardens. She was boneless slim, as only Orientals are; yet her arms, and her legs in their black satin trousers, were beautifully rounded, and her fingers seemed to curve and flow from her hands as foam curls from a wave. Her small undeformed feet were set in green satin shoes embroidered with gold; she wore a green satin jacket. In her pale cream-colored face, eyes of dark amber shone with steady, unmoving luster—save when she caught the vivid glance of Laverty, and then a sudden flash of fire leaped up to meet the fire in his. Saul, somehow, had not expected her to speak; all the more was he astonished when, at the end of Laverty's speech, she lifted her head, and addressed her lover with perfect self-possession and candor. "I've never been more candid, when the need was, m'self," thought Saul, amazed.

"Jim," she said, with a precise choosing of her words, that belied the warmth glowing through every syllable,

"Jim, I love you very much and for ever. But I have not a mother, nor a father, now. If I had had my mother, this would be her day, and I would go to her as a China girl does, and I would kneel before her, *so*—" She knelt upon the sand, utterly unself-conscious, and raised her hands as if in prayer. "And I would beg of her that she would pardon me all the wrongs and troubles I have done her in my life. And she would pardon me, as the China mother does. And she would give me counsel and good words, and I would listen; thus would be the night before my wedding. My mother was of your country, but she loved my father, and every China custom she followed."

She rose to her feet again.

"But, Jim, instead of that I am to spend this night in your house. And you, a little way off, will lie on the ground, and think of me and not sleep, and you will come to my door, and make prayers to me, but those prayers I must not answer."

SOME recollection, recent, smarting, brought the blood to Laverty's face. He stood before her, dumb.

Almond Blossom continued: "I have lost my honored father. Tonight I would think of him, and maybe weep for him, alone. There is a cabin, a little good cabin, in the cutter. I shall go there and close the door, and stay till the morning."

Jim opened his mouth, closed it again, opened it again, and said nervously: "Darling! You won't be afraid?"

She gave him a look that made M'Cullagh feel chilly and grown old.

"I am not afraid of anything," she said, and Saul thought—he could not be certain—that she added: "Anything—but myself."

There was silence. The reef sounded; the gulls screamed. In the lagoon, the cutter swayed to the tide with a noise like clapping of hands.

"Come to yer dinners," said M'Cullagh suddenly.

That night Jim Laverty and Saul stayed in the little iron hut, out of the way of the tearing winds that nightly scourged Leopold Island. Saul, well enough pleased to be under shelter, slept soundly, healthy animal that he was. Laverty, lying down with his mind made up not to close an eye, found that two almost sleepless nights were taking their toll. Twice, he got up to walk under the trembling starlight, and watch the cutter out in the lagoon, rocking quietly at anchor. After that sleep claimed him, and Hock Sing, in his unblessed grave at Brunswick, rested not more peacefully than the lover of Hock Sing's daughter.

It was Saul who woke up first; he had trained himself to early hours. In his pajamas he stood yawning and stretching, looking through the open doorway which faced away from the cutter an dthe reef. Red was in the sky; flights of birds, like little black pen-scratches on scarlet paper, were hurrying seaward. Day had begun.

"Hup! Quit out of that, and let's see how Miss Almond Blossom has passed the night," said Saul, punching the bridegroom shrewdly. Laverty woke with a jump. "Is it twelve?" he said. "Good heavens, it's morning—I've gone to sleep!"

"Ye did so. C'mon, we'll have a swim before she wakes."

Laverty reached for his towel. "I didn't mean to go to sleep," he said shamefacedly. "I meant to watch. I'd never forgive myself if anything has happened to her."

"Hut-tut, what sh'u'd happen? Thur's no hurr'canes at this time of year. C'mon!" Dawn was peering in at the door of the hut. Jim—so M'Cullagh thought—looked very young, in that clear light; young, strong, yet somehow easily to be hurt. . . . These youngsters, handsome and plucky, ignorant, vulnerable, so much more than they knew. . . . "Like young bears," said Saul to himself, "like young bears, with all their troubles to come." And he was glad to think that more than half of his own lay behind him.

Then occurred that which chased philosophy from his mind, for a long time to come.

Laverty had hurried round to the far side of the hut, from which he could see the reef passage and the anchorage. Saul, buttoning his pajama jacket, delayed a minute. In that moment, the air was torn by a scream that would have curdled the blood of any but a practising physician. Saul abandoned his toilet, and took three steps round the hut. "What is it?" he asked of empty air. Jim was fifty yards away, running hard along the beach toward the place where last night the cutter had been safely riding at anchor. On all the plain, jeweled water, pink with rising sun, there was no boat.

Trouble was M'Cullagh's element; frightened people, and things gone wrong, the ordinary conditions of his life. Coolly he buttoned his coat and tightened up his loose cord girdle; the wind was fresh, and there was nothing to be gained by catching a chill. Then he followed Laverty, and took him by the shoulder. "Here," he said, not unkindly, "quit gowlin', and tell me when ye last saw the boat."

Jim, who had been wildly shouting Almond Blossom's name, across the empty sea, calmed down a little. "About eleven o'clock," he said, shivering as if the cool southeaster had been a January storm blowing from bleak Cave Hill. "There was a moon then, and the cutter was riding easy to her anchors—I put down both—and the light was burning. Nothing could possibly have happened. Why—why—even if she'd changed her mind—but I know she didn't—and taken the boat out herself, the row of getting up anchor would have waked me like a shot. There's no accounting for it—it's like some horrible magic. M'Cullagh, I say, M'Cullagh—what do you think has happened?"

Saul refrained from telling him that he had just said nothing could have happened. He himself was almost as bewildered as Laverty, but professional habit kept him from showing it. "Thurr's no such thing as merr'cles—not nowadays," he said. "Thurr's no effeck without a cause. If the cutter's gone, something tuik her. Plenty of wotter outside, and no win' to do any damage. She'll pick up the Commissioner's launch, and the both of us'll know all about it by tomorrow—if ye can keep from goin' *gyte* before that comes."

Almond Blossom

Jim, tall and lean and bright-eyed, had him fast by the breast of his pajama coat. Even at that moment, Saul noted, professionally, the length of the young man's eyelashes, the transparent color of his face. "They're always emotional," he thought. "It wasn't me your da' consulted, before he sent ye stravagin' over the world

of men and weemen—and weemen's to cure yer lungs by overworkin' yer heart. Am I certain of it?" He was answering Laverty's frantic questions, coolly, soothingly, not too truthfully; that was the way. "Of coorse. What else could have happened? The Commissioner couldn't miss her, with the win' the way it is. We've got nawthin' to chase her with; we'll put up a signal, and go to breakfast, and hope for the best. That's all anyone can do."

Laverty, all eyes and teeth and stare, ten years older, by looks, than last night, followed Saul in silence. Saul had no qualms about lying to him "good and plenty," as he put it to himself. "If the lad isn't a case, he'll be one, before long," was the physician's comment. "That sort live on thurr emotions. If he'd been my lad—" And he pictured to himself how he'd have brought up Jim. "Still an' all," he told himself, "if I'd had the fatherin' of him, thurr'd have been more good Belfast iron in that body of his, and maybe less wud in his head!"

The days that followed taxed the patience of both men to the very roots. Jim had returned on a Wednesday night; all Thursday, and all Friday the signal—a Jack reversed and half-masted—fluttered aimlessly on its standard, calling for help to a world that seemed empty, deaf and blind. And all those two days Saul, who wanted to be busy collecting green-snail pearls, tended Laverty instead, kept him alive and sane, hid firearms and razors out of the way, and gave him sleep at night, almost by force, with the tiny needle that has saved so many lives. The question of the pearl-emerald haunted his mind ceaselessly. His dream of "never doing a hand's turn again," had left him, chased away, as such strange spirits of island life are chased, by the sudden necessity for action. But clearly, as if it had already been in being, he saw the villa, the laboratory behind it, the garden and the garage and the six-cylinder car, and—yes—the girl, perhaps, some time or other; a nice girl, of course, though certainly not as nice as she who long ago used to walk the sands of Bangor, barefoot, with him.

It was the memory of that girl, asleep these many years beneath the "mossy marbles" in Malone Road Cemetery, that caused him to be so gentle with Jim.

ON Saturday the Commissioner's launch appeared at last. Both men were on the beach to see him come ashore. He was a small, snowily tailored gentleman, full of Governmental dignity, and did not wait to hear what either of the men on the beach had to say. Addressing the younger of the two, he began at once:

"Sorry, very sorry to have disappointed you, Mr. Laverty; but business first and pleasure afterwards, eh? Pleasure to marry you, I'm sure. Would have been here two days ago, only the riot down at Brunswick kept me: turned out a good deal more serious than— But that can wait; suppose you present me to your—"

"Shut up," said Saul brusquely to the King's representative. He was too late. Laverty, after staring for a moment at the Commissioner, as a lost soul might stare at a tourist tripping through hell, turned away, and fled down the shore alone.

"Are you both mad?" demanded the indignant Commissioner.

Saul explained briefly. "Ye saw nawthing on yer road?" he demanded.

"Nothing," answered the Commissioner. "The best thing you can do is to come with me and search. Do you suppose—"

"I told the wee fellow over there," said Saul, pointing his thumb at Laverty, "that it was all right; I've been besy keepin' him from suicidin', this forty-eight hours, so I didn't tell all I knew. But luk here—" He kicked aside a mass of seaweed, and showed, lying beneath it, a solitary oar. "I putt that out o' the way," he added.

"Why?"

"Don't ye see? It's muffled."

The blade, and part of the loom, had been rudely bandaged with blue cotton coolie cloth.

"Yon was floatin' in the wotter this mornin'," explained Saul.

"What do you think?" asked the official, suddenly grave.

"I never think until I knaw," was Saul's reply. "I suppose ye can spare a half an hour till I get the lad and m'self packed up? There's two-three things I've collected on the islan' I'd like to take away with me."

JIM LAVERTY was never to forget the journey that followed. In years to come, crossing gray seas between Belfast and Heysham, tramping windy sands beyond Portrush, some little thing, a breath of salt air, the flash of a breaking wave, would bring back to him the days of doubt and agony, and paint before him once again, as in a picture-film, the burning seas about those distant islands; the nights spent at anchor, with large stars rolling drunkenly above; dawns when the deck grew chill beneath one's sleeping body, so that one waked, and sighed, and knew the gray was in the east, and another day begun, yet nothing found; fierce sun on the long beaches of Brunswick and Maria Islands, on the restless waters that ran blue as broken sapphires, outside; native huts visited, iron-roofed settlements called at, men, white and brown and yellow, questioned; nowhere anything learned. Launches and cutters and canoes held up and searched. Queer places visited, promontories that were vexed by whirlpools, and straits where tide-rips boiled, fatal to small or carelessly handled craft. No wrecks, no news. The Commissioner kindly, fussy, explaining over and over again that it was really not his duty to go hunting after Chinese subjects; that the girl, of course, took her father's nationality, that it was a pity, since Laverty was so set on marrying her, he hadn't managed to do so earlier—because in that case she would have been British, with the whole power of the Empire at her back; nevertheless, he, the Commissioner, would do his best, and if necessary, would lie to the High Commissioner like a Trojan.

Of it all, nothing came.

With regrets, the Commissioner explained to them that his time was up, and that he must return to Maria Island. A Sydney-bound steamer would call there before long. Would Dr. M'Cullagh and Mr. Laverty care to await it at the Residency?

Dr. M'Cullagh was willing, but Laverty refused almost curtly. He would return to Leopold, he said—and Saul humored him, because of the girl who had once walked on Bangor sands, and also because the secret of the pearl-emerald was still unsolved, and there might even yet be a chance of working it out.

Laverty offered to make good the loss of the cutter, and Saul accepted. Laverty also paid the expenses of a second trip to Leopold. It was a fast launch this time, and Laverty drove the engine hard. "I've got to go," he explained, as white water began roaring past the counter, and the deck shook with speed. "We came away too quickly. She might have come back—she might be there all this time." Saul did not believe it, but he said no word.

On a clear morning, they made Leopold again. The southeast weather that had kept the seas continually chipped with white, was failing now. It was the pause before the breaking of the northwest season, when one may see of a morning high mountains painted like tapestry across the unstirred surface of the deep; when palm trees on the low atolls look down, as in a glass, upon the perfect

semblance of their own beauty. Saul, who loved loveliness —as ugly fellows do—felt the new aspect of Leopold Lagoon in his heart. "I thought it c'u'dn't have been purtier, but it is," he said, half aloud, as they stormed in through the passage, Laverty handling the boat in masterly fashion, born of summers spent on Belfast and Carlingford Loughs. Across the lagoon they went, splitting its unflawed crystal as a file splits a sheet of glass. On either side, the coral-fish sped away like flickering blue flames; parrot-fish parti-colored green, purplish-pink and yellow, went sailing; coral blossoms seen, far down, were like faint jewels glimmering through blue mist; gigantic shapes of the pure ivory coral reared themselves in globes, in mushrooms, in spires and skulls and witch's caldrons, under the flying keel. . . .

Saul, leaning over the boat's side, suddenly drew back, stared, and let out a surprising oath.

"What's the matter?" asked Laverty, busy beneath the engine-hood. "I didn't know you ever used language."

"I dawn't," answered M'Cullagh. "Except whiles. . . . Stop the engine, will ye?" Then as Laverty emerged, wiping his hands: "Take a hold on yersell," Saul said curtly. "Ye were right; she was here, and we've f'un' her."

There was that in his face that told the lover of Almond Blossom no good news was intended. "What do you mean?" he asked, white-faced, choking.

"She never quit out of it. She's there." Saul's finger pointed inexorably, downward to the lagoon.

They backed the boat a little way, and stopped. "Look down," said Saul. "It was the blawin' of the win' all the time that kep' us from seeing it before. Ye can see it now." And far down in thirty feet of water, Jim clearly saw the cutter lying on its side.

"Oh, my God," he said, and laid his head upon his hands. Saul watched him for a minute. "He suspected it all the time," was his thought. "He's bruk in to the ideer." And in a minute, he roused the lad with a curt question. "Can ye dive?"

"I— A little—not like that," answered Laverty, looking up, white, but dry-eyed.

"I can. Chaps like me, we have to take to athletics; we dawn't have the time—or the money—for games, like your tennis and your golf." This, with a slight scorn. "Swummin' and divin's mine. I was Ulster champion for all manner of dives, up till four years ago. I can go down."

"If you will, I'll bless you to the—"

"Quit. It's one for you, and two for me. Have ye forgot yer ring?"

"Is it likely?" His hand was held up to the sun, the strange gem flashing from it.

"Well, I haven't forgot it either, and the signs on it. I think thurr's something—or was something—down thurr in the boat, that might be helpin' me."

LAVERTY passed that over. "Will you go down today —will you go down *now?*" he asked.

"I will go," said Saul agreeably, throwing off his shirt, and unbuckling his trousers.

Laverty dropped anchor, and hanging absorbedly over the gunwale, saw the pale green body of M'Cullagh waver down lower and lower through the gleaming water, until at last it was a mere pale shadow, a ghostly thing that glided, almost invisibly, down to the cutter, reached her, and vanished round the farther side.

A dozen times Laverty was sure that Saul had stayed down too long, that he was lost. It was indeed more than two minutes before the green shadow reappeared and came beating up again to daylight and to air. Saul hung a minute, getting breath, upon the gunwale of the boat, and then scrambled in.

"She's thurr," he panted. "I'm goin' down again. . . . The boat's been sunk by a blaw from an ax or the like, outside. The cabin door was split by the fall, but—it had been bolted, outside."

"My good God!"

"Aye. Them chaps must have come up quate-like; I didn't tell ye I f'un' a muffled oar, the day we left, but I thought, and so did the Commissioner, they'd mebbe carried the gurl off somewhere. But no—they crep' up, bolted the door, give the cutter one good welt with an ax, and sunk her."

Laverty was dumb. His eyes, dilated like the eyes of one who sees a ghost, were looking as in a vision on that midnight scene of murder; they saw the bolting, the blow, the boat wavering down through night-darkened water to the bottom—Almond Blossom helpless, dying within.

"Go on," he said chokingly, in a minute or two. "I want to hear everything."

"Yes, but you won't," thought Saul. He had no intention of describing all that he had seen down there. Some of it had shaken even his hardened nerve.

"She has a quiet grave, the puir wee gurl," he answered, presently. "And mind this, Jim, no one touched her. This w'u'd be to be the way of it, as I make it out! When them divils came sneakin' alongside the cutter, they'll have heard Almond Blossom, mebbe cryin', mebbe talkin' in there to herself. D'ye see? D'ye understand? It was dark, and they never thought she was there *alone;* so they shot the bolt, and give the cutter one welt with an ax—it would mebbe sound like the wotter hittin' on the side of her, with that breeze blawin', if anyone'd been awake to hear. And says they, 'They was thurr, both of them, and we've done for the both of them—and now thurr's nobody but ourselves that knaws about them wee jewels.' For ye see, both of ye had been seen with the ring. And that was the way of it, I'll take my oath."

THERE was silence. In the tops of the leaning palms, a slow rustle began to stir; the dead, still glitter of the leaves took on new life, flashing out heliographs from rim to rim of the lagoon.

"That w'u'd be the nor'west breeze gettin' up," commented Saul. "When I come here, it was the sou'east season, scurce begun. . . . This place and the like of it has you before you knaw. They get a hoult."

Jim did not answer.

"It's nawt the gurls only, brown or yellow. It's the—the - The hell I knaw, or anyone else, what it is! But thurr's a cure; in med'cine ye learn that it's not necessary to isolate the germ, before it can be kilt. An' the cure, for you and for me, Laverty, is—money! Go back and forget the gurl; she was a denty wee thing, but no wife for you. An' forget the islands. An' learn again what money is and what it means; ye've half forgot. I naver had it; so I haven't forgot."

With a sudden change of subject, he added:

"Jim, think hard! Did Miss Almond Blossom, when she run away with ye, go intil her da's room before she came, and did she stop a wee while, and come out?"

"Why—why—I believe so. But how do you know?"

"She did?" Saul had risen to his feet again, and was poised on the gunwale, a tall, well-muscled body, shining in the sun. "Well, ye can expeck me back when ye see me—this time!"

Once, twice, the sleek head of M'Cullagh emerged from green water, after a long period of eclipse; wet hands clung to the gunwale, waited a little and let go. Laverty showered questions, but they were answered only by a shake, and a curt "Lemme alone."

A third time the dripping head came up, and this time,

Saul, after a short rest, flung his leg into the launch and scrambled aboard. He was breathing in great gasps; his body had turned white and blue with the chill of the underwater. But he was broadly smiling.

"D'ye mind that?" he said, between gasps, pointing with one hand to a small, soaked bag that hung round his neck.

"What is it?" asked Jim incuriously.

"Man, feel it! 'It's jewels—and somethin' more! They're wrapped up in a wee bit paper."

"In a paper? What paper?"

Saul, pausing only for a moment to fling on his clothes, untied the little bag from the long silk string that secured it round his neck. "Dawn't ye ask me whurr I got it," he warned. "Ye're better not hearing too much." He opened the bag, and spilled out upon the cushioned locker top of the launch, a handful of glittering, semi-transparent, gorgeously green pearl-emeralds. Jim uttered an exclamation; but Saul was busy with the wad of parchment inside the bag. "Easy does it," he breathed, carefully extracting the sodden mass, and spreading it to the sun.

The parchment was like lace; eaten over and over, through and through, by some minute, unknown sea-creature. Here and there the tail or the crest of a Chinese letter showed. No more; whatever the secret that the bag had held, the sea had taken it, for ever.

Almond Blossom, hoping to make her lover rich—he who needed riches so little!—had guessed at her father's great discovery, which he had been keeping back until a store of the new jewels were ready for market. Knowing his house, she had found the secret hiding-place, and carried off the pearl-emeralds already made, and, far more valuable, the recipe for making them out of the common green snail-pearl, that recipe which even now the Chinese of Brunswick Island were seeking everywhere, in Hock Sing's looted house. With the keenness of their race, they had suspected, earlier than Hock Sing's half-English daughter, the nature of his discovery: they were ready to do anything, not excluding murder, in order to get the secret into their own hands. But, as Saul said presently, after a somewhat disappointed pause:

"Them divils done themselves in the eye!"

"After all," he continued, "thurr's somethin' in it for us; them jewels are unique, barrin' any two-three the Chinks may have found about Hock Sing's, and they'll likely stay unique; thurr's many a discovery of the Chinese that nobody f'un' out for a thousan' years after them. The things are worth a guid wee bit."

"Of course," said Laverty, "you'll keep them. I've no need of—"

"We' then, I will, with pleasure! A man," said Saul sententiously, "never gets all he looks to get; I was looking for a fortune an' a villa an' a big car—and I've got, mebbe, the paintin' and paperin' of me old house, an' the price of new furniture when the gurl's ready for it, and a wee bit in the bank, as well.

"And," he added, looking with a long look of farewell at the glittering island, the slim, sun-flashing palms, "mebbe something's been learned me, too."

Laverty, very silent, took the tiller as they went out again. Saul, counting over his store of pearl-emeralds, thought he heard himself addressed from the stern.

"Whet's that?" he asked. "I didn't catch ye."

"I wasn't speaking to you," answered Laverty.

"Ye said something."

"*I* didn't; Rupert Brooke said it."

But Saul was not interested in Rupert Brooke. He barely heard, as the launch ripped onward through the broken seas outside:

". . . . *Not the tears that fill the years,*
After—after."

Free Lances

By CLARENCE

ALONG Blake Pier there were the usual number of persons waiting for steamer-launches, selecting boats for trips around the harbor, or casually drifting there for a possible glimpse of some one they knew. Among others were half a dozen press syndicate correspondents, His Excellency's daughters, with officers of the staff, cockney stewards from liners anchored offshore, and sampan coolies.

The correspondents had just come down from Mukden where they had apparently found out all there was to know concerning the Japanese campaign—the Japs were courteous enough about it except for one or two sectors of active operations—and had picked up a hint that there might be a conference between officials of the two governments either in Hongkong or Canton.

Barremore, one of the correspondents, was asserting something which sounded absurd to the other men.

"We haven't got the key to this proposition, fellows—maybe we never *will* get it, the thing's so damn' subtle! Get into your heads the massed weight of Chinese numbers who haven't the slightest fear of death!"

"All the same, if the Japs keep on through the winter as they're going now, they'll control not only Manchuria but China itself by summer—no getting around that!" one of his hearers declared.

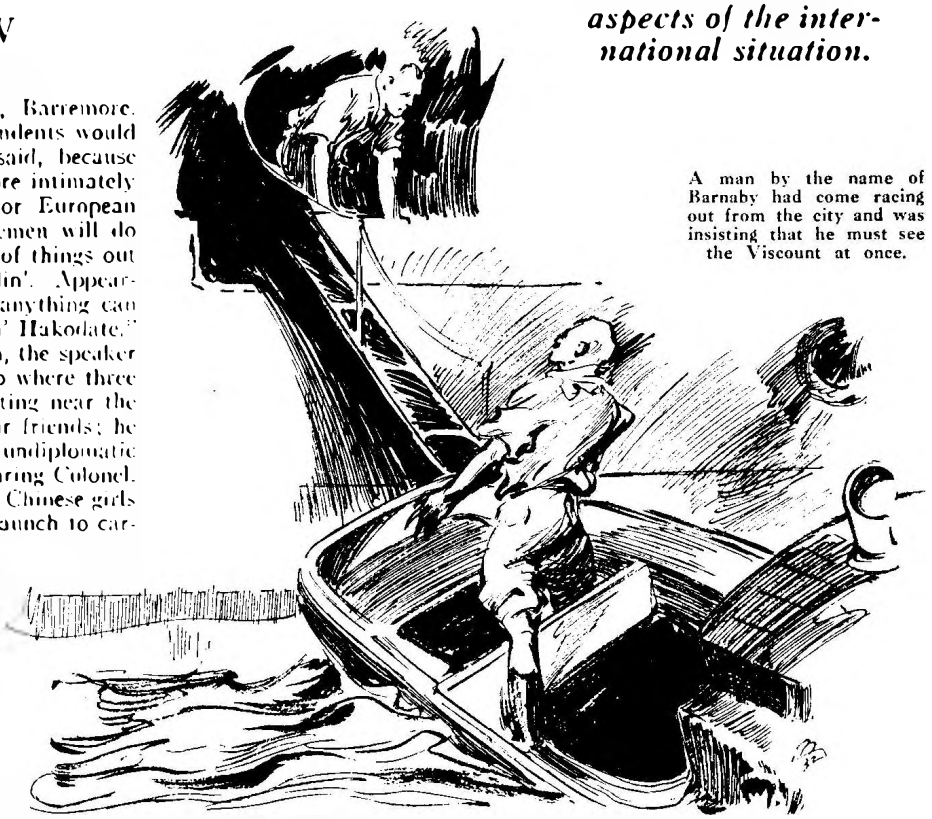
"My boy, you're completely saturated! The Japs couldn't do that in a thousand years! Up there beyond a line drawn from Mirs Bay—west, north, and southwest of here—lie nearly three million square miles of China, including Manchuria, Tibet and Chinese Turkestan (approximately the same area as the United States without Alaska) with a total population of four hundred and forty-five millions—all Chinese, and all believing from ancestors four thousand years back that their race is superior to any other on earth. The sampan coolie believes that just as thoroughly as does the Tuchan or princely Manchu. No government on earth can either conquer, or assimilate if conquered, that number of people with any such conviction. Get it into your heads, you chaps, that this isn't a German war or a European war. All over the Western world, today, the newspapers and people are talking apprehensively about the possibility of Japan's making a complete conquest of China and what concerted action, if any, the Powers can take about it. Out here, the Japs aren't paying the slightest attention to the League of Nations or any concerted action of the Powers. They've told the rest of the world to mind its own business, and are proceeding with their plans in regard to Manchuria. At first China was looking on with casual interest at the proceedings—only asking the other Powers not to let Tokyo get *too* annoying. But now—look out for fireworks and pray that the Yellow Peril and the Muscovite Menace fight it out among themselves without involving us."

A well-built young man, who had come ashore from a yacht at anchor in the harbor, and who had been standing near the group, listening to what the other correspondents considered mostly tommy-rot, now surprised them by saying:

in Diplomacy

"When China Fights" is of special timely interest and perhaps explains certain surprising aspects of the international situation.

HERBERT NEW



A man by the name of Barnaby had come racing out from the city and was insisting that he must see the Viscount at once.

"Faith—you're quite right, Barremore. Most of our London correspondents would endorse every word you've said, because they know the East much more intimately than the average American or European press man. You other gentlemen will do well to dig under the surface of things out here before you do much cablin'. Appearances are mighty deceptive—anything can happen between Port Said an' Hakodate."

Nodding pleasantly to them, the speaker sauntered along a bit closer to where three officers of the staff were chatting near the Governor's daughters and their friends; he had caught indistinctly some undiplomatic remarks from a beefy, overbearing Colonel. A little beyond this group, two Chinese girls were evidently waiting for a launch to carry them home. The Colonel, after condescendingly admitting that some of the Oriental types might be considered fairly good-looking, was now remarking that one occasionally noticed some of the "native women" in Hongkong who were—er—really not bad-looking at all. "For example—eh?" He winked—and nodded toward one beautifully dressed Chinese girl who was near enough to notice the motion, and to hear what he said. But just as he was about to add a still broader remark, a cool voice at his elbow remarked in a guarded tone:

"I say, Colonel Roston—mind the post!"

"Eh? . . . . What the deuce— An' who the devil are you, sir?"

"I was merely suggestin' that this is by way of bein' a rather public place—an' the lady really is a princess, you know. Pipe down a bit on the personalities. What?"

"Ah! . . . . An' what business is it of yours if I happen to like the looks of a pretty native girl?" The low tones had an edge to them, now.

"Merely that, while she might not object to admiration from a gentleman who knew enough to keep his mouth shut, she would quite properly consider it an insult from a bounder who's had one or two over the eight. I cautioned you, Colonel, in a friendly way, because I saw you were not entirely responsible. Why not change the subject?"

The amount of liquid cargo the officer had taken aboard made him a bit clumsy, but his vicious upper-cut was so quick that the eye couldn't follow it. Instead of landing on the younger man's face, however, the next few motions were made so quickly that nobody quite saw what happened.

But as the Colonel's fist, with all his beefy weight behind it, shot past the other man's neck, a hand flashed around under Roston's arm, digging a thumb and two fingers deeply into the flesh at the top of his spine—and the officer's arms dropped limply at his sides. He staggered and fell.

The young man, beckoning to another officer, said coolly:

"I think, Commander, if you'll take him where he can rest for a few minutes, he'll be quite all right—seems to be just a temp'rary paralysis."

The Navy man hadn't quite been able to see what was occurring but he knew what started it and had been on the point of cautioning the Colonel himself. He nodded, with a cheerful grin.

"We'll look after him, Viscount. Tried to strike you, didn't he an' didn't connect? Ran up against something—what? I say! . . . . Your Lordship knows the ladies, of course? They've no idea what it's all about. Could you—er—invent something—eh?"

"Oh, I fancy they got it, Commander. However—"

The Viscount walked over to the Governor's daughters and greeted them pleasantly while the Commander and his brother officer walked the Colonel up the pier to a bench.

"We were sure it was Your Lordship, but you wouldn't look this way—seemed more int'rested in those press correspondents!" remarked one of the girls gayly. "Haven't you just come from the yacht, by the way? Where is she? We fancied you'd left for one of the other ports—"

"No—our movem'nts always are a bit uncertain, but the

Duchess was such a corking good sport about cancelin' her engagem'nts when we had to make Shanghai in a hurry that we're hopin' we now can give her a few days here in peace. There's the *Rance Sylvia*, just back of the point on Stonecutter Island."

"Where? . . . . I can't see any boat there! Just the green of the shore beyond the island—"

"Humph! . . . . Our paint must be even better than we fancied! She *is* a bit dim, if one doesn't know her lines very well. We experimented with various colors to strike something that would blend with the sea a few miles inside the horizon, and finally decided upon this bluish-green. You really *can't* see the boat five miles away, at sea—an' we've heavy-oil motors, so there's no smudge of smoke from her funnel, which is merely for draft an' ventilation."

"What was the trouble with Colonel Roston, Your Lordship?"

"Oh, you heard what he was sayin'. I was merely tryin' to pipe him down a bit. I wish, Miss Flora, that you'd ask Sir Cedric to drop the Colonel a quiet hint; if the bounder can't stop discussin' women when he's had a few over the mark—well—the sooner he's transferred to some other field of activity the less trouble he'll make for His Excellency."

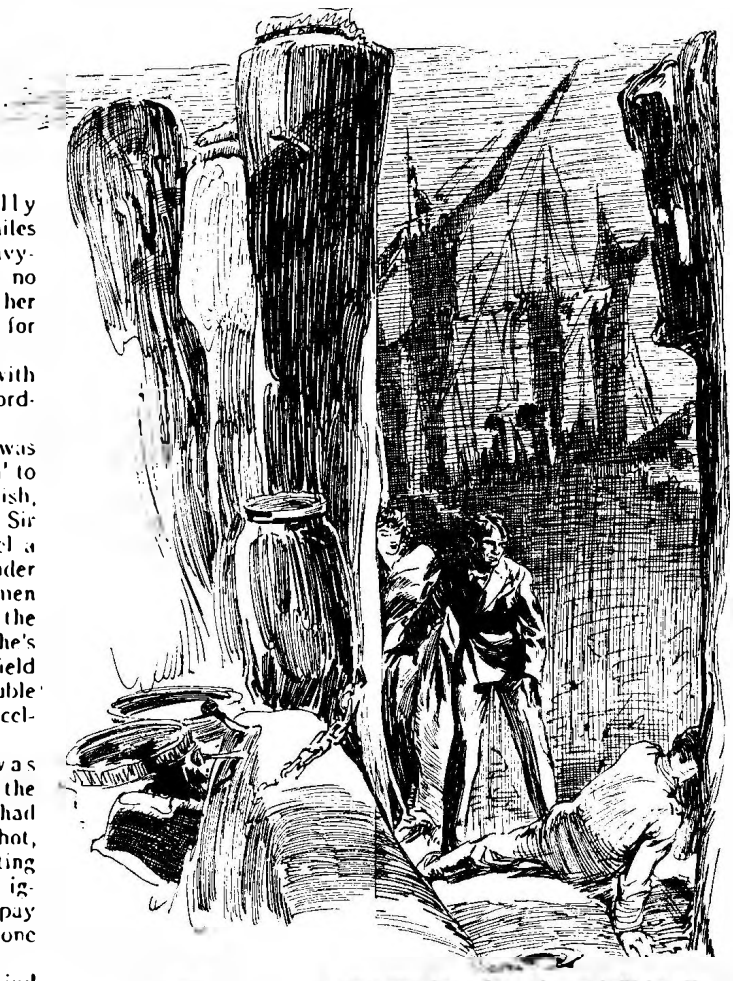
Viscount Salcombe was starting up the pier when the two Manchu girls, who had moved along out of earshot, smiled at him in an inviting way that couldn't well be ignored—so he turned to pay his respects. The prettier one said quietly:

"That was exceedingly kind of you, Lord Salcombe. One wishes the incident could have been avoided—but we thoroughly appreciate the courtesy in what you did. Can't you fetch the Duchess across to us for tiffin? My uncle and my cousin would like to have her see our home."

"Why, if she's not otherwise engaged, Princess, we'll be delighted!"

Then he left them and walked up toward Connaught Road. As he passed the sunshade where Colonel Roston was sitting, he saw another man in "whites" and sun-helmet stop to speak. And much to his surprise, he caught a few words of Russian. Salcombe had been intensively coached a few minutes each day by either Prince Abdool or the Marquess during the past four months, and could now carry on a simple conversation in Russian.

Ordinarily, Salcombe would have paid no attention to Roston and the other man, who hadn't stopped more than a minute—but the recent encounter unconsciously made him listen with a good deal of concentration as he passed



"If you'll take him where he can rest for a few minutes he'll be all right—seems to be a temp'rary paralysis."

And what he caught was an appointment for that night in a second-class hotel catering to the foreign element up toward the west end of Queens Road. He couldn't get it out of his head as he strolled over to that arcaded thoroughfare and along to the great marble building which served as the Hongkong godown of Garrod's, Ltd. He went through various passages until he came to a suite of private offices in a steel-lined concrete extension at the rear—about as near an impenetrable safety-vault as could be made, although there was nothing to indicate this except a single ponderous steel door which was closed at night with screw and ball-bearing mechanism. Garrod's, Ltd., has godowns in all of the Oriental ports, with branches in European cities—and is probably the greatest commercial house in the Orient devoted to banking, exporting and importing. In the farthest office, Salcombe found two middle-aged men who were on the books of Garrod's as experts in the credit department—but who also were registered as two of the F. O. men, in Downing Street.

"Barnaby," he asked, "what do you know about Colonel Roston of the Governor's staff?"

"H-m-m—let me think a moment. He was abroad the first year of the war—in the Argentine, supposedly. Joined up with the Yorkshire Yeomanry as soon as he returned. He knew horseflesh and something of commissary. Put in Remount Departm'nt—then Commissary in France. Ranked as Brigadier—War Office berth—was demob'ed with a Captain's rank an' privileges—made an honorary Lieutenant-Colonel in Yeomanry—sent out to serve on Sir Cedric's staff as an officer with creditable war record."

"Anything known of him before he went to Argentina?"

"Nothing more than the assumption of his bein' one of the Yorkshire Rostons—one of the oldest families in the county."

"How much of a linguist is he?"

"Some French—a bit more Spanish. Fancy that covers it."

"How about Russian?"

"Russian comes a bit diffic'lt for a chap who does well in the Latin languages—it's diffic'lt to get the proper emphasis on pronunciation. Nobody ever heard Roston attemptin' it. Overbearin' beggar—not liked here."

"An' speaks Russian like a Muscovite! He has an ap-

pointm'nt tonight with a Vladivostok bounder at the little Hotel Europa in Queen's Road. Would you have time to look into that a bit, Tom—an' let me know at once if you turn up anything? Come off to the yacht any time during the night, if it's important."

"Why, fancy I can handle that, Ivo. If you're right about the Russian, it looks damn' fishy. Can't see just what the bounder's play would be, as one of the Governor's staff; an' yet, His Excellency *might* be put in a position dev'lish compromisin' to the Governm'nt—with Tokyo! I'll see what I can dig up, old chap, an' report to you. Is the Marquess in on this?"

"I only struck it fifteen minutes ago—but if we turn up anything serious, he surely will."

MEANWHILE, a luxuriously appointed speed-launch had come across the harbor to the steps at Blake Pier and four tall Yunnan houseboys in handsome silk livery stood at attention by the gangway as the Princess and her friend stepped aboard. Around back of Stonecutter Island, the launch headed for a marble-walled basin some one hundred by two hundred feet in area, with a sixty-foot entrance, and marble landing-steps. It was the boat-mole in front of the four-hundred-acre estate belonging to Earl Hu Han Chang, probably the most influential personage in all China, a Manchu noble of the old Empire—his family having been related to the Dowager Empress—and Senior Member in the Council of Twenty elected from the two hundred delegates of the Central Organization of the Chinese Benevolent Societies which control the Chinese race all over the globe. His estate on the shore of Hongkong harbor was the only parcel of land not affected by the terms of the Mirs Bay Treaty which defines the area of the British Colony.

The buildings in their grove of cedars were covered with the graceful curved roofs of red tiles, and spread out in a geometrical plan which gave a maximum of sunlight and ventilation, yet included several arcaded courts with fountains and large goldfish basins in which water-plants were growing, so that even on the hottest days the surrounding marble seats, with their woven cushions, were entirely comfortable. One of the larger courts surrounded a pellucid swimming-pool. Broad halls and low-ceiled chambers were paneled in carved onyx, alabaster, jade, and fine woods, and hung with silks and velvets rarely seen outside of China.

While the girls were conferring as to their prospective guests' preferences in the eating line, Salcombe returned to the yacht and was calling the Foreign Office in London. Briefly sketching what he had heard on the pier, he asked if it were possible to get a line on Colonel Roston's antecedents during the day.

It was, of course, two A.M. in London, but the F. O. man on night duty thought something might be turned up, and promised to call the yacht if he got anything. Then one of the stewards came below to ask if the Viscount would receive Mr. Barremore.

"Any other press men with him, Jukes?"

"No, M'Lud. 'E was alone in the launch."

In a few minutes Barremore came below.

"Hello, old chap!" Salcombe hailed him. "—Jukes, fetch us a spot of something. . . . What have we been doing, Barremore, to arouse your suspicions?"

"Humph! . . . . You're not far off the mark, Viscount. We know there is to be a Sino-Japanese conference here in Hongkong before tomorrow night—presumably because it's neutral ground. And it's understood that you're entertaining very distinguished men on both sides, this evening. Now isn't it much better all round for you people to give us as much as you can, straight, than permit us to publish the wild and probably incorrect reports we're bound to print if we can't get the real dope? The rest of the world is anxiously watching this corner of it!"

"You're all off, Barry! We're giving the Duchess of Ascoynham a birthday dinner this evening at which only old friends of hers will be present—that naturally includes prominent Chinese and Nipponese, as she has a wide acquaintance out here. It's a strictly private affair. No press man could get within five hundred feet of this yacht after our guests arrive. We rate as Navy, you know—an' the Kowloon Station is policing us."

"Would you be willing to give me a hint if anything is said that might influence the military situation?"

"That's asking me to betray our guests, Barremore—prob'ly you didn't realize it when you asked the question. If you want information about the situation out here, ask any prominent Chinese or Japanese who may be in Hongkong just now. Anything they're willing to give you will be authentic—not hearsay."

After Barremore had gone Salcombe looked up the Duchess of Ascoynham and the Honorable Jean Wallington, guests on the yacht, and took them ashore with him to Earl Hu's estate.

THE Duchess, who is in her late fifties, is thoroughly Victorian. To her all races other than white are "heathen"—living in outer darkness and sinful practices—to be converted at as early an age as possible to Western clothes, manners and customs. She is naturally courteous and tactful, except when her zeal causes her to slip for a moment and speak before considering the other person's beliefs. The Trevors had invited her on this Oriental cruise in hope that it would prove beneficial to her health—and the Duchess not only had completely recovered, but was delightedly renewing her wide circle of acquaintance in the East. She was beginning to feel, however, a vaguely uncomfortable impression that she never had really known the East—that it was something sinister, indeed, when probed too far.

Of the Princess Lei Fu she thoroughly approved—until she saw the girl's own private suite in a tour of the congeries of buildings that made up "the house." They had met in London two years before, though the Duchess had known Earl Hu for twenty years. Lei Fu—who could name ancestors in every generation for four thousand years back—was the Duchess' idea of what conversion could do for the "heathen." Here was a girl dressing like other well-bred girls of the day, looking like a white person if one didn't glance too closely at her eyebrows—in the Duchess' opinion very much more of a lady in appearance than her cousin Mein Ling, the Earl's daughter, whose beautiful Manchu costume of silks in blending shades of rose and coral-pink would have sold in Hongkong for a surprising sum. But in Lei Fu's living-room the older woman got a jolt—for on a carved ebony table between two French windows looking out on a goldfish court, there was a gorgeous red-lacquer-and-gold shrine in which sat a calm and beautifully modeled Buddha.

"Oh, Lei Fu—my dear! Why do you have that idolatrous image in your rooms? I suppose, of course, you consider it merely a specimen of Chinese art—but really, my child, it shouldn't be in your private suite!"

"Why not, Your Grace? You would not expect me to insult the religion of my ancestors by discarding the good Lord Buddha altogether! That would bring me very bad luck—and there is no reason for doing such a thing."

The Duchess sank limply into a sandalwood chair. The child held degrees from three famous universities, too—this simply couldn't be lack of intelligence!

Altogether, Her Grace felt a vague dissatisfaction with

everything about the beautiful house and estate, with its shaded pools and flowers in unexpected places, its occasional marble pavilions with lovely distant views. Even at tiffin she was uncomfortable. Out of deference to her, most of the dishes were European ones, to which she was thoroughly accustomed—but Mein Ling quite disgustingly had second servings of what she blithely admitted to be fried shark's-fin and a bird's-nest pudding which she described as strips of a certain tree-gum, pulled out by the birds, allowed to harden, and then laid up closely in nests. But the Duchess really did not care about tasting it. Imagine! . . . . Shark's-fin—bird's-nests!

During the meal, she asked what never occurred to her as a tactless question: Would Earl Hu confirm or deny a rumor she had heard that he was the head of the great House of Garrod's, Ltd.?

Hu glanced at the Viscount—who nodded smilingly.

"I see no great objection, Lord Hu. Her Grace can keep a close mouth when it's impressed upon her that she must. —You get that, Duchess? It might cause a great deal of trouble in various ways if you ever mention what the Earl tells you."

"I have the honor to be Managing Director of Garrod's, Duchess—but by no means the owner," Earl Hu admitted. "Although I am what might be considered a wealthy man, that would take more of a fortune than I have. I think we might say that the *Rance Sylvia* is the owner of Garrod's, Ltd., inasmuch as the Trevor family and their two most intimate friends hold five-eighths of the share-capital—and they closed out a large number of their other investments before they were able to purchase it. I hold one-eighth of the shares—private investors, the remaining quarter. The chief reason why you must not mention this knowledge to anyone is because the House of Garrod's has a rather powerful influence politically. We bank for and loan to potentates all through the Orient—Government and private-construction enterprises. We can assist a Tuchan, a Nipponese statesman, a Malay Sultan, an Indo-Chinese or Siamese noble, or governments of various States to do —or prevent them from doing—things they have determined upon doing. And the main reason why it is possible for us to handle really formidable sums is because our credit is four or five times in excess of our capital."

After tiffin they went out to a large and handsomely furnished room used by the Earl as a library and study, also as a hall of audience, when various persons came to confer with him. As they were lingering there over their coffee, his Number One boy came in to whisper something —receiving a nod of instruction.

When he went out Earl Hu remarked:

"Three generals from the forces in one of the Manchurian neighborhoods have come down to explain why they failed to carry out certain orders. Suppose you keep your seats and hear what they make of it—eh?"

WHEN the generals came in, they stood stiffly at attention, and there was a dead silence until the Earl broke it in low and level tones:

"You were in command of the 15th, 21st and 29th Brigades, with instructions to keep the first two from any contact with the Nipponese forces, but to throw in the 29th as shock-troops to keep them from advancing farther. Instead of that, you withheld the 29th and sent the two made up of students—scarcely more than boys—to be wiped out by Nipponese machine-gun fire. We can't spare young lives of that sort in needless sacrifice. Why did you do it?"

"But—but—Excellency, the troops of the 29th are communists throughout—men who drifted down the line of the Chinese Eastern with arms and our uniforms, which they had picked up somewhere, and begged us to enlist them. Had we sent them in, they would have joined the Nipponese and turned upon us!"

"So you know more than the General Staff about such matters? Japan isn't helping Mongolian and Siberian communists to strangle her at some future time! Any three men who hadn't asses' heads would see that! Had you sent in the 29th, they would have been killed to a man—the Nipponese had a battery of machine-guns under cover—and we would have had no more trouble with those revolutionists. Instead of that, you sacrifice a lot of the best young blood we have—honorable Chinese, all of them. . . . Well?"

The three went down upon their knees with their foreheads knocking on the floor—and silently groveled there. A most shameful exhibition, the Duchess thought. It seemed to her the poor men had acted with the best of intentions—but everything was topsy-turvy in China!

"Rise!" ordered Earl Hu. "Ah Ko, take them out into the compound—cut off the insignia from their uniforms and burn their tunics, so that no honorable man ever will wear them. March them back among the cryptomerias and give them fifty lashes each. Cut the ideograph of the Central Organization into the flesh of their shoulders. Then give them coolies' clothes and let them go."

As the former generals had disappeared with Ah Ko and his men the Honorable Jean couldn't help saying in an undertone to Lord Ivo:

"My word! . . . . That's what I call discipline!"

IT was about six when they all returned to the yacht, and the Viscount received his expected London call almost immediately. The Foreign Office attaché said:

"Bit of a jolt you've given us, Salcombe! Durin' the last two years of the war there was one particular leak we never succeeded in pluggin'—a leak through Sweden an' Russia to Berlin, as if comin' from the East. We blocked most of the damage, but twice were badly let down. Traced it all to a Gregor Ladowski, sometimes known as Rostonyi, a Hungarian. Oddly enough, he never was connected with Brigadier-General Roston, then in the War Office with an excellent record. I'm sure now that your Colonel Roston is the same man—he certainly answers the description. He's utterly unscrupulous—while intelligent enough an' sufficiently well educated to be *beaucoup* dangerous wherever you find him. I'll get in communication with Sir Cedric at once—have the bounder dismissed from his staff an' closely watched—"

"I'd say that's quite the safe course, Forbes—but I've reason to believe the beggar is hatchin' something here with several confederates who are stoppin' in Macao, an' I'd like to catch him red-handed if possible. Suppose you suggest to His Excellency that he doesn't appear to know anything against the bounder during the next few days—leaves him on the staff while having him under surveillance? What?"

"Faith, if you an' Barnaby have the matter in hand at that end, your idea is a good one. Give me a short-wave phone-connection through the Kowloon naval station to Governm'nt House—an' I'll talk with His Excellency at once."

When Barremore went ashore that afternoon, he told the other correspondents about the birthday dinner on the yacht, assuring them they wouldn't be able to get anywhere near it. But since no correspondent lacks initiative, they hired a fast launch shortly before nine and went off to look the craft over—only to be met by a patrolling circle of Navy launches and ordered to keep outside of it, a good six hundred feet away. . . .

The guests sat down at a beautifully appointed table in

the *Ranee's* dining-saloon at nine—and when midnight came were still at the board, with coffee, tobacco, more champagne and a good deal of informal talk still to come. The Duchess, flushed with the excitement of the occasion, made a handsome figure at the head of the table. She was vaguely conscious, however, of something in the atmosphere which she didn't understand—and never would understand. The Princess Lei Fu, dear girl—how well her civilized costume became her! How much more appropriate than the heathen Manchu garb of Mein Ling, and of Earl Hu—gorgeous, of course, but so out of date in a civilized world. Their Japanese friends, now— Look at Marquis Yomori in his striking gold-laced diplomatic uniform, and Viscount Medijira, as Admiral of the Fleet—his chest fairly covered with decorations! How thoroughly of the present world they looked—gentlemen, all of them. At war—if one believed the lying news-sheets. There was no sign of it here—and yet the poor Duchess felt in her bones that the Orient was far less safe and comfortable than the Western world—one never knew, for example, what an Oriental might be thinking, even though he smiled—and smiled—

SHORTLY after eleven, one of the stewards whispered to Salcombe that he was wanted on deck. At the gangway a Navy coxswain said a man by name of Barnaby had come racing out from the city and was insisting that he must see the Viscount upon a most important matter at once—Cox fancied he was a Governm'nt chap, or he wouldn't have bothered His Lordship.

"Aye, let him through, coxswain—he has an appointm'nt!"

When Barnaby stepped on deck he looked about him.

"Nobody in the after saloon just now, is there, Ivo? We'll not be overheard in there? Let's get below."

It took but a couple of minutes to reach the living-saloon—where the F. O. man tossed off a spot of Scotch and soda, and lighted his pipe. "Your big amphibian is lying between here and the shore, isn't she?" he asked then. "I saw her drop down this afternoon—"

"Aye—Dad came from Shanghai on her, fetching a couple of the Tuchans. The pilot, Billy Crofton, an' two mechanics, are aboard now."

"By Jove! I was hopin' they might be. —Ah! . . . . Good evening, Miss Wallington—no use trying to keep you out of this, I fancy. Well—I managed to overhear that interview in the Hotel Europa an' there's goin' to be the very deuce to pay if we can't stop it! That Colonel is Muscovite all through—and he's an utter rotter! Now—have you plenty of gas an' oil in that amphibian, Ivo?"

"We always start refilling tanks the moment we come down for a few hours' stay—boats ready to come off with 'em. And the mechanics go over motors—struts—braces—everything—before they're permitted to leave the plane."

"If we go over to her in ten or fifteen minutes—half an hour is prob'ly safe enough—how long before she can be in the air?"

"Five minutes to reach her in a boat—ten more to get up."

"Any armament?"

"Two machine-guns—an' something better; a 'ray' of my own with which I can stop the motors of any craft aloft—kill the pilots if necess'ry—send 'em down in a crash—"

Jean Wallington quietly picked up a phone—got the amphibian on a short-wave—and told Billy Crofton they'd be going up as soon as they could get to her.

"My word! Then I fancy you'll be able to handle part of this by yourself—that's a big relief! I tried to get planes from the Navy and from Army Headquarters—but there isn't one available which can be ready before noon tomorrow. And I'm positive the bounder knew that when he picked this particular time for his devilm'nt—or, more likely, gave some staff order to have 'em overhauled.

"But I'd best give you the whole plot, because the other end of it will take some handling—may be a tragedy before we're done. Get a phone-connection through the Naval Station with Earl Hu's estate over yon; have him order his *comprador* to muster every man on the place—fully armed. Put an ample guard in the buildings themselves—an' a larger force patrollin' that stone wall that entirely surrounds the estate. As I recall, it's twenty feet high, with broken glass set along the top of it, an' goes several feet underground—but at some point along it there's a place where a gang of ladrones can get over or under or through it with little trouble or noise, if they don't figure out some easier way to get in. Roston, in uniform, and several of his bullies in the uniforms of Sikh police, figure on breaking in—abducting the Princess and her cousin—murdering Earl Hu—prob'ly firing the buildings—depending upon some sort of bluff to avoid all serious resistance until they have captured and bound the servants about the place. The Earl must instruct his servants to fire upon any officer or Sikhs they see about the compound—an' shoot first! The preliminary part of the plot is a bombing-plane coming over from Macao, where it has been in readiness for two weeks. They knew all about this dinner on the yacht, tonight, as soon as your invitations went out to the Japs an' Tuchans—know exactly where the dining-saloon is located on the *Ranee* (though how in hell they got that is a mystery). Well—if prominent guests of two other powerful nations, dining here in supposed safety on neutral ground, are killed by an aerial bomb as they sit at dinner—what's the answer, as far as Britain and the Governor of Hongkong are concerned? If the much-loved daughter and niece of the most influential Manchu in China are abducted—the Manchu butchered, apparently by a staff officer and the police of a British Colony—what sort of complication is that going to introduce into the present delicate situation? Now let's get busy—into the air—meet that bombing-plane before it gets over the yacht! The moon is just coming up—undoubtedly they figured on that, too. Keep the Earl an' his girls on the yacht all night—don't forget that detail!"

INSIDE of eight minutes, Barnaby was joined by two figures in flying-togs just as a steward fetched out the Marquess for a moment from the dining-saloon.

Jean had taken down all the main facts on a pad—and torn off the leaf. Shoving the scrap of pad-paper into the Marquess' hand, she told him briefly of their plans, after which the three stepped into a launch which ran them across to the big cabin-amphibian which was floating on her pontoons halfway to the shore. In two minutes, she was slipping along the smooth water back of Stonecutter Island, clearing the end of it two hundred feet up; then Salcombe switched in the Marquess' patent muffler so that there was very little noise either from the exhaust or propellers. Making a wide sweep over the Sulphur Channel, he began looking for the other plane in the direction of Pearl River and Macao Light—and by so doing, nearly permitted the very catastrophe he was trying to avoid.

Instead of being over near Macao, the bomber already had been in the air long enough to circle around over Mirs Bay and the mountains northeast of Kowloon; so she came swooping down behind the amphibian and would have succeeded in getting over the yacht if Salcombe hadn't heard her exhaust through his open window and, suddenly banking in what was almost an Immelman, headed straight for the bomber until her pilot lost his nerve and swerved—dropping two aerial torpedoes halfway between the

yacht and the shore. The concussions threw up great hills of water that broke in the air and swept the forward deck of the *Rance*—smashing some of the glasses on the dinner-table, but doing no worse damage than the shock of thundering reports to the nerves of the guests. But the scoundrels got no chance to drop another bomb; the plane, out of control, went into a nose-dive and plunged into the water near the shore. The three bodies subsequently recovered proved to have been Russians whose faces had been familiar in Hongkong for two or three months.

THE narrowness of the yacht's escape gave the Viscount a bad jolt. It had been pretty short notice, with the bomber in the air a good hour before the time set in that conference at the Hotel Europa—but he knew it was merely a fluke of luck that he had heard the bomber quickly enough to bank and force her toward the shore.

He turned to Jean.

"Get the *Rance*," he said. "Find out if Dad is keeping the Earl and the girls aboard all night! He's not the sort to forget or overlook anything, but it may be just possible that, scribbling so hurriedly, some of that memoranda wasn't emphasized—eh? You're *sure?* Those brutes may have another bomber in reserve! Ah Ko may not have fully understood about shooting— My word! . . . . There is something coming down the wind from Pearl River!"

While Jean was talking to Sam Howard, the yacht's chief operator, Salcombe circled up over the western Kowloon mountains—three thousand feet high—where he couldn't be seen against the moon. In a few moments he spotted the other plane,—a slower bus than the first one,—satisfied himself that she also had torpedoes under her in sling-cradles, and that she was heading directly for Stonecutter Island. Then he swooped down upon her like an Andean condor—and he didn't hesitate a second from any humanitarian considerations. Passing over the "stick" to Billy Crofton, he aimed the long electrode of his Omicron ray at the other ship, and switched in current from the generator. He saw her swerve in the air as the motors stalled and the pilot was paralyzed—then pitch down into the west end of Hongkong harbor. Again the Viscount's cool thinking and instantaneous reaction had saved the lives of the distinguished men conferring over that festive dinner on the yacht. As Barnaby hadn't known that the use of a second plane was even contemplated, nor where one was likely to be hidden outside of Macao, it seemed fairly safe to come down.

Fifteen minutes later the three were back on the yacht, where they were assured that all of the instructions had been carried out. The Earl had been positive about the voice of Ah Ko as he gave him orders over the phone—and Salcombe was about to go ashore with a dozen of the *Rance's* crew when Jean delayed him with a timely suggestion:

"You don't know just what action Sir Cedric may have taken after that talk with the Foreign Office. It's possible that he may have sent a Navy or police detail to the Earl's estate for a night or two as a measure of protection. We don't want to risk shooting the wrong men!"

Calling up Government House at once, Salcombe got the Governor's assurance that he wouldn't consider anything of the sort without first consulting the Earl. Being on his own ground under the Chinese flag, Lord Hu, of course, was entirely at liberty to deal with trespassers in any way he considered necessary. In five minutes more, the Viscount was racing ashore with a detail of men selected for their physical fitness and absolute loyalty—accompanied by the Earl's personal Yunnan boy who went everywhere with him as a sort of secretary-chauffeur-valet.

Slipping without a sound into the basin of the mole, the men opened out and crept up to the front entrance of the buildings, where the Yunnan secretary gave a shrill, peculiar call in one of the dialects familiar to Ah Ko. A low reply came from a clump of dwarf-cedars at the right. In a moment the Number One boy joined them, his left arm tied up with a bloody rag. He said that just before midnight a staff officer with eight of the Sikh police had come into the mole quite openly in one of the harbor police boats, asking to see the Earl or his niece. Being assured that they were out for the evening, he said they would come into the house and wait, as he had orders from Sir Cedric to fetch them across to Government House for a few nights as a matter of safety. Ah Ko had refused; they were on Chinese ground, not under Hongkong jurisdiction—and they would not be permitted to enter the house. Then Roston had shot him through the arm and started to run into the house with his men. Scattered shots from Ah Ko's houseboys had dropped three of the supposed Sikhs—whose bodies were later tossed into the harbor from the mole—and evidently hit Roston himself, as he left a thin trail of blood.

While Ah Ko flashed up the house-lights ahead of them, the Viscount spread his men slowly through the buildings, keeping under cover as they went. Roston was sitting on a bench in one of the goldfish courts and raised an automatic in his left hand to shoot the Viscount—who beat him to it by firing from his hip and shattering the pistol-hand. The remaining masqueraders—who proved to be black-bearded Siberians with their beards trimmed square and turbans on their heads—couldn't get out of the house because it was surrounded; they had no choice but to surrender.

An hour after sunrise, Roston and the remaining five of his gang were taken along the outer wall of the mole, decapitated, and tossed into the waters of the harbor as the others had been a few hours before. . . . The correspondents did a lot of sensational cabling before noon.

HER GRACE the Duchess found it impossible to sleep after Lord Hu and the girls retired and the last guest had gone ashore. The day had been a bit too much for her, what with one thing and another: The excitement of meeting her old friends—the perfect dinner in celebration of her birthday—then those terrific explosions so close at hand. Then there had been the calm discussion between the Tuchans and the Nipponese statesmen as to sacrificing brigades made up of bandits and communists wherever practicable—and the affair of the disobedient Generals at Lord Hu's. . . . Slipping on a negligee, the Duchess went on deck—aft, under the awning—to lean upon the rail and look out over the twinkling lights of the harbor, the setting moon, the wisps of mist here and there.

In the air there was the tang of the Orient—a composite smell, vague and elusive, made up of joss-sticks—sandalwood—cane matting—burning temple-incense—and a flavor added of recent years, the faint suggestion of kerosene from Standard Oil tins. Somewhere near, a couple of the *Rance's* men were admiringly discussing in low tones the way the young "chip of the old block" had saved the yacht and everyone aboard from destruction—speaking of the subsequent fight ashore at Earl Hu's estate, and what would have happened to the Princess if Salcombe hadn't spotted the plot. As she listened in horrified silence, the body of a black-bearded man in turban and tunic floated slowly past the stern. . . . That was too much; Her Grace routed out the yacht's physician and asked for a bromide—feeling that while twenty-eight may see the East in a glamorous haze, fifty-eight is conscious of the reddish tinge in it!

A memorable drama of the Dakotas, by the gifted author of "Captain Jack" and "The Field of Amber Gold."

A Giant On the Prairie

By BIGELOW NEAL

Illustrated by Monte Crews

NIGHT was falling on the prairies of Dakota. In the west a dimming flare of crimson marked the setting of the sun. In the east a dark-blue mantle moved slowly across the plain. In every direction clear out to where sky and prairie met, stretched an unbroken blanket of snow. Nor was there a sound, for an intense cold had come with the afternoon and a deep dead silence followed in its wake. Below lay the frozen prairie; on every side the air was laden with drifting particles of frost, while the stars above glittered hard and cold. Presently out of the east a black speck appeared, a speck that became a slowly moving point, a blur, growing at last into the shadowy form of a team, a bobsled and a man.

Plumes of white vapor waved from the nostrils of the horses and a smoky haze hovered before the sheepskin collar of the man's coat, tracing a lacy pattern of frost across his shoulders. Here the silence was broken by the shrill whine of iron runners, the heavy breathing of the team and the clipping crunch of steel-shod hoofs.

John Dullam was a big man, broad of shoulder and deep of chest. Shod with rubber "arctics," mittened in calfskin with fur gauntlets reaching nearly to the elbows, within a heavy coat that fell below his knees, he bulked large indeed. His face, tanned and seamed by the suns and winds of many seasons, was hidden within the ample wings of the collar while within the heart and emotions of the man there was much to match the silent cold of the prairie.

That afternoon, in the back room of the bank in town, he had sat across the table from Henry Kane. Between them lay one of those documents which, like fire and water, has proved the greatest enemy as well as the greatest friend of the pioneer. Sometimes an actual necessity—oftener a curse—this one had proved a curse.

"Well," said the banker, facing the farmer across the table with an expression that showed neither hate nor love, neither gloating nor sympathy. "We can't go on this way forever. This bank is not in the real-estate business, nor do we want land, but it's my duty as an official to protect both my stockholders and my depositors. This obligation is long past due and you say you can pay neither the interest nor the taxes out of this year's crop. It is my duty to foreclose and I shall be forced to do so. I think that is all, Mr. Dullam, and as I have other—"

"I don't suppose there would be any use in telling you again that I was hailed out last year and that the drought and the grasshoppers got away with the crop this last summer, would it, Mr. Kane?"

"No, that would make no difference. I know you have had an exceptional run of hard luck ever since the fire burned you out three years ago. I am not saying you are not a good moral risk or that you are not a good farmer. I think, however, you might have avoided the hail loss last year, by carrying insurance; that was—"

John Dullam stirred impatiently and interrupted again: "I canceled the hail insurance on your advice! You said I should carry it every year or not at all—and you advised me to cancel it then. I did—and you know the result."

"That certainly was bad luck," conceded the banker, and as if afraid his listener might retaliate with some remark about poor advice, he got to his feet. "I feel that your greatest mistake has been in depending too much upon wheat. Had you diversified a bit more, perhaps more cattle, more hogs or something like that, you might have paid off the debt in spite of your luck. You understand it will take us thirty days after you are legally

notified, before we can foreclose. It will take six weeks to publish the foreclosure proceedings, and you still have your year of redemption. Lastly,"—and here he smiled as if impelled by a genuinely generous thought,—"we hardly are going to put you out in the middle of the winter. That gives you until a year from this coming spring, and even after we get a sheriff's deed, I know of no man to whom we would rather rent the place than to you."

Realizing that his case was hopeless and yet unwilling to give up, Dullam put forth a final proposition.

"Mr. Kane, would you accept a deed for the south half of my farm in satisfaction of the mortgage? You know I hate like the dickens to lose that place, both on account of Margaret and the children and because, if the railroad should happen to build through by me, the land would be worth several times what it is today."

At this mention of the railroad Dullam had noticed a distinct show of interest on the part of the banker. Obviously Kane had heard the rumors too, and that, Dullam reasoned, was exactly the cause of his sudden desire to foreclose. His answer bore out Dullam's theory.

"I'm afraid I couldn't," the banker replied. "In the first place, that would be buying the land and paying all it is worth and more. In the second, the question of water makes the place indivisible. It is too difficult to get water in that neighborhood and your well, of course, is on the other half."

The banker left the room and for a time John Dullam stood with his coat over his arm, staring silently out of the window. This was not the news he had hoped to take to Margaret. After the years she had worked and struggled to help him build that little home on the prairie she deserved something better. His mind went back to their crude beginning, to the hardships she had undergone, neither flinching nor complaining; to the times she had soothed and encouraged him when he had all but given up; to her cheerfulness under hardship and sometimes actual want. He thought of her as a lonely woman many miles from town and especially of the long agonizing hours of suspense at times when the babies were coming and when, on account of storms or snow, the doctor might or might not get through. . . . How could he tell her it had all been a failure? How could he tell her that the home for which they had labored so long and so hard was really their own no longer?

HE shook himself and withdrew his eyes from their empty gaze into space. It was now late afternoon; it was very cold and growing rapidly colder and the ground was covered with loose snow that might spring into the air with the slightest wind. Even now Margaret was worrying, he knew, and by sundown she would worry more. Long before he got home she would be pressing her face to the window again and again staring down that long trail across the prairie. He had much to do before he could leave town and there was little time to lose.

As he passed through the outer banking-room he met Henry Kane again, and Dullam was struck with an idea.

"Mr. Kane," he said, "I've got a chance to winter through about two thousand head of cows for that cattle outfit on this side of the Bad-lands. Perhaps you didn't understand that the reason I couldn't diversify as you suggested, was due to the fact that my well played out. In fact, during the dry seasons I have to haul part of the water for the stock I have. Now my place is worth little to you without water; you couldn't sell it in years. I've got a slim chance, with a bumper crop next year and the money from wintering those cattle, either to redeem my place or else cut the debt to suc ha point that you might consider renewing the note. Can't you give me enough additional backing to drive that well down about two hundred feet more and tap the water under that twelve-foot vein of lignite?"

"How much do you figure it will cost?" countered the banker.

"Well, I'll have to dig a new well, making a total of somewhere around two hundred and fifty feet, at a dollar and a half a foot—which would come to something like four hundred dollars. It shouldn't vary much from that figure because all the wells around me are of about that depth and the country is fairly level."

After a moment of tapping his desk with a pencil, Henry Kane nodded his head.

"I'll gamble with you just that much. As you said, either you need the water or the bank does. It's as much to our interest as to yours."

THAT ended the interview and an hour later John Dullam left town. . . .

The crimson of the sky was gone now, and its last faint light was fading from the western sky. Still the heavy team plodded steadily on and still John Dullam sat huddled on the forward edge of the sled-box. It was very cold and a colder night was in store, one of those nights which come to the prairies on an average of once in a winter—when the thermometer falls and keeps on falling until the mercury has huddled into the bulb or else goes right on through and out of the bottom. Thirty below, John Dullam judged it to be. It would probably drop to forty during the night. Fortunately the gods of the prairies seldom sent wind with a temperature so low.

Presently Dullam stirred. A stabbing pain through one foot warned him of numbness to come, and when he moved chills struck through him from under either armpit. He knew that the cold was biting in. Easing himself forward and down until his feet rested on the eveners and tongue, he stood for a moment with his hands resting on the rumps of the horses, then stepped stiffly to the ground. He might have walked either ahead or behind, but he knew that the greatest safety lay in the greatest exertion and he purposely took up a floundering battle with the unpacked snow.

Slowly the man and the team plodded on into the night. Now icicles hung from the lips and nostrils of the horses and the visor of the man's cap was frosted white; but the exertion and the surging of blood through his veins was doing more than warm his body. Gradually his courage was coming back; the fit of depression had reached its peak and was passing. With the sting gone from his hands and feet, he walked ahead of the team and at the top of a sharp incline where he let them pause for breath he ran his mittens up and down the faces of the horses, and spoke, as men often do speak to animals when they have long been alone on the prairie:

"Seventeen miles gone, girls, and only three to go! Another hour and we'll see what we can find in the oat-bin to pay for forty miles with a heavy load."

Moving on again, he stood on one runner steadying himself with one arm thrown across the box. As his gaze swept the load he noted with satisfaction the sacks of flour and sugar standing in close-packed ranks. There was a winter's supply of salt for both the family and the stock. One box sent out the pungent aroma of coffee and spices. Another bulged with dry-goods and clothing. There was another, too, and perhaps the largest of the lot. This was the one which would not be opened until Christmas, the one around which Margery and Dick would stand in open-mouthed and bulging-eyed speculation. After all, the world was not so bad; despite the mortgage and his worry as to the future, he was experiencing one of the greatest

pleasures that can come to a man of the prairie—that of following a long cold trail knowing he carried a winter's supply of food and clothing and of things to make small folks happy and at the same time thinking of a warm fire, a steaming supper and the love awaiting him at the end of the trail. One by one the waves of the prairie rose ahead, to slip beneath and to fall behind. On top of one, he paused again to let the horses breathe and looking far ahead he saw a star. It was not a cold light like those which glittered above his head, nor was it high. It was low down in the west and very bright and warm. To him it meant more than all the other stars put together; it marked for him the place he called home. The memory of his financial plight came to cause a temporary twinge of pain but it passed quickly and he stepped to the eveners, running his hands over the broad smooth rumps of the horses.

"We're almost in now, girls—one more short pull and there'll be a warm stall with hay and oats," he said cheerily. The mares seemed to understand; they lengthened and quickened their stride until the dull clank of the trace chains became a merry jingle and, on a downhill slope, they broke into a swinging trot.

The star ahead grew brighter and brighter until finally it ceased to twinkle and settled to a steady glow. And as at last the team swung into the gate before the house, Dullam saw the faces at the window with their promise of welcome.

When the team had clanked off toward the barn he filled his arms with bundles and opened the door. As the cold air swept in with him and mingled with the warm moist air of the house, a sudden burst of steam shrouded his entrance—but he could see the small boy and the smaller girl waiting with eager eyes. Thank God, they would not be disappointed! He shut the door and his wife appeared out of the cloud of steam to work rapidly with expert fingers at the corded loops which held his coat. For a moment he held her close within the great folds, afterward picking up the boy and the girl, one at a time, and tossing them until their golden heads brushed the ceiling.

Throwing aside the heavy coat and cap and mittens, holding his hands before his face to thaw the ice that held one eye tight shut, he passed from the kitchen to the living-room, on by the heating-stove with its cheerful tinge of cherry-red, to the bedroom. A bundle lay across the bed. It was pink and white and woolly, and it wriggled at the approach of his heavy tread. Near one end he found an opening and a pair of blue eyes met his gaze with unmistakable interest. Little fingers reached toward his face, but remembering the cold and ice, he drew back. Again he felt that twinge of pain at the thought of the mortgage, but when a tiny fist closed on his finger, he forgot it. Then he left the little one on the bed and took his place at the table.

When supper was over, when the chores were done and the sled relieved of the perishable portion of its burden, John Dullam and Margaret sat by the fire. He had promised himself that he would tell her nothing. Manlike, he fully intended to be a hero and carry his woes in his own breast, but somehow his plans went astray and he heard himself pouring out the whole wretched story. And like most products of the human mind, his trouble sounded not nearly as great on the air as it had in imagination. Another thing which surprised him was Margaret's attitude. Apparently she did not deem the situation nearly as desperate as he had thought.

"Bad luck can't go on always, dear," she said quietly. "If they can get us water within the next two or three weeks, so we can take the cattle, that will help us a great deal and we may have the best crop of our lives next summer. Then all this worry will have been for nothing."

An hour later, Dullam felt so much relieved that he was half-ashamed of himself for mentioning his trouble at all—and if Margaret Dullam lay awake far into the night, he didn't know it, for he was sleeping as quietly as the baby beside her. . . .

The Dullams' nearest neighbor was "Buttonhook" Johnson. Buttonhook came by his nickname—few knew his real name—from a certain peculiarity of structure. His Creator had evidently intended him to be four or five inches above the six-foot mark; but Buttonhook had not progressed in a true perpendicular line. The result had been a decided droop in his lank frame near the summit. At times he suggested an over-ripe sunflower; again he bore a weird similarity to a question mark. In the end, however, the idea of the buttonhook prevailed.

Nor were Buttonhook Johnson's oddities confined to matters of structure alone. His nationality was ever a matter of local doubt, confined only to a combination of German and Norwegian—either or both, as political exigency required. He spoke neither language with any fluency, while his English, tempered by both languages, was marked by a manner of expression and enunciation which was unique. Speaking as he did with a gradually rising inflection of voice throughout the course of every sentence, he gave to his conversation a decidedly interrogative atmosphere. One accomplishment really more than unique, lay in his ability to keep right on talking regardless of whether the air in his lungs was going out or coming in. When the inflowing air happened to change directions in the middle of a sentence the remainder of his statement rose not only to an interrogative pitch, but frequently assumed the proportion of a genuine squeak. Another of his distinguishing characteristics lay in the habit of opening his sentences with the word "else"—and, if he was really asking a question, ending them with the word "not." Buttonhook chewed tobacco incessantly, indeed, it was commonly supposed that he kept a medium-sized quid in his mouth all night. Lastly, he had a deep and thorough knowledge of farming, a frame that seemed impervious to heat, cold or misfortune, and a gentle and generous nature.

Buttonhook owned the only well-drill in the community and he had come into possession of that more by accident

"Else we shall hurry now before all hell busts loose," announced the newcomer. "We—
a roar of thunder drowned his voice.

than by intent. At one time there had been a well-driller in that locality with a decided propensity for dry holes. Until he went broke he made his headquarters with Buttonhook Johnson and when he left the country he also left the drilling outfit—as a voluntary payment of certain obligations to Buttonhook.

Buttonhook knew nothing about drills and less about drilling wells and no stretch of imagination could make the well-drill of great value to him or to anyone else. But be that as it may, Buttonhook owned the drill and there was no other in the country.

When the Dullams first filed on their claim they found in the friendship of Buttonhook Johnson not only a continual source of courage and inspiration but also a source of advice and much practical aid, for Buttonhook lent and gave without stint. He was not only a giver but also a ready seller and the terms of his sales were left largely to the honesty of his debtors.

As John Dullam had turned to Buttonhook Johnson so many times before when in doubt or perplexity, he now turned to him in the matter of the well. And thus it came about that on a night not long after DuBam's interview with the banker, the drilling outfit reared its gaunt and decrepit frame above the farmyard.

With the dawn came Johnson, owner, engineer, and operator—the last title being more a matter of courtesy than one of fact. Beside him loomed the large but exceedingly animated bulk which constituted Mamma Johnson. Whatever Buttonhook was, Mamma was not—as a matter of principle. She spoke Russian and English, the latter

merely after a fashion. In times of anger or extremity, she could produce and deliver a third vocabulary equally, or perhaps even more, effective. Always loyal to her husband in deed, she seldom agreed with him on anything. She firmly believed in "dressing him down," and the process had lasted, without abatement, through the course of a quarter of a century—so long, in fact, that he paid no attention to her at home and was stirred to action in his own behalf only in the presence of company. She called him "Papa," and he called her "Mamma," and there were a dozen good reasons why neither was in error. Mamma was everything in a horizontal line that her husband was in the perpendicular. She could pass through a standard door without much effort, but that was about the limit. She waddled a good deal and flopped still more, but like her husband she was extremely efficient and her heart was large in proportion to her other dimensions.

"Else the next thing should be a hole in the ground," crisply announced the chief engineer when, after putting their team in the barn, he draped himself over a chair by the kitchen range to warm his feet and hands. "An' then we'll pretty soon have water, if we have to drill a peek-hole to China—not?"

Mamma, who had been bustling about the kitchen already deep in helping Margaret Dullam with the housework, paused in her labors.

"'Hole in the ground?' 'Peek-hole in China?' Mr. Dullam, that long drink o' water couldn't drill a hole in a doughnut! If you get a well with anything in it, you'll have to be the boss an' him the flunky. What he don't know about well-drillin' is everything he ought to know an' then some."

Buttonhook chewed calmly on his tobacco until she had finished, then went on as if she had not spoken at all:

"Else you shall be engineer an' I should steer the rope an' dump the bucket an'—"

"Hear smart Papa do the talkin'! He is the fellar 'at steered our flivver into a rockpile an' busted the radee—radit—or whatever it is, an' both headlights—an' as for that bucket-dumpin', he aint emptied a slop-pail in ten years!"

Buttonhook rested his feet on the oven door and wriggled his toes before the line of glowing coals, until his wife had subsided.

"Else you should not pay much attention to Mamma, Mrs. Dullam; she is that way because she is so fat she is peevish an'—"

"*Mein Gott!* There he goes again," roared the now thoroughly offended lady. "He is such a big wind he blows all the time. Nobody can stop him an' he is always makin' fun about my—"

Buttonhook got to his feet, took a pail of water from the stove and moved toward the door. On the stoop he turned and thrust his head back into the kitchen. "Else I shall be the only wind in North Dakota she can't stop —not?"

THE cold had moderated after Dullam's trip to town, and when work began on the well the day was clear and bright with no more than a tinge of frost in the air which as the sun climbed higher rapidly gave way to warmth. After some coaxing with hot water and the usual amount of cold-weather tinkering, the gas engine on the drill came reluctantly to life.

The drill proper was a very simple affair. The bucket was a steel cylinder, six inches or so in diameter and three or four feet in length. At its lower end was the bit, a narrow, wedge-shaped piece of steel running across the diameter of the bucket. Just above it, was a valve so arranged that when the contrivance was driven downward into mud, the valve opened, allowing the loosened and puddled earth or rock to pass, or be forced upward into the bucket. When the bucket was lifted the valve closed automatically, thus retaining the contents. In lifting the bucket by the rope which was attached to its upper end, then allowing it to drop, the sharp chisel-like bit cut into dirt, clay or coal and even into some of the softer forms of rock. As it fell, the operator turned it a trifle, to the right or the left, so that the knife would tend to splinter out a layer from the bottom of the hole. A little water poured down the opening served to puddle the mud thus formed. When in the operator's opinion the bucket was full, a mechanical contrivance lifted it from the hole to be emptied.

WITH the engine running smoothly and the outfit oiled and greased, Buttonhook Johnson set out to give a demonstration of how a "peek-hole to China" should be made. He had seen it done and he had great confidence in himself but the operation proved not to be as simple as it had appeared—and too, his poise was somewhat affected by the fact that Margaret Dullam and Mamma Johnson had come to witness the beginning, which promised to be historical no matter what the result.

Buttonhook adjusted the rope so that the bucket when at the end of its fall would just touch the ground. Trying to appear nonchalant and entirely at ease he spread his feet and grasped the bucket firmly on either side. "Else now we shall see what we shall see," he remarked and pushed a lever beside him. The result was instantaneous. The bucket was jerked violently from the ground to be released quite as unexpectedly in the middle of its upward journey. Buttonhook was successful in getting his toes out of the way, but not without some cost in exertion and a decided strain on his dignity, and also the partial loss of control of the bucket. The second time it struck the earth, Buttonhook's feet were amply in the clear but a new difficulty had risen to become a serious complication. The drill didn't, and apparently wouldn't, strike twice in the same place nor could it be induced to do so even at the end of a dozen lunges. The territory under the bucket was becoming rapidly and impartially pock-marked, and the operator had been snapped and jerked from side to side in a manner which became more and more ludicrous as he progressed. The visor of his cap had settled to the bridge of his nose, and his coat tails sticking out at right angles to his body, whipped the air sharply. Not daring to let go, yet seemingly unable to do anything else, his position was difficult indeed—so much so, in fact, that a little genuine sympathy would not have been out of place. But Mamma Johnson was not sympathetic.

"Look at smart Papa now!" she said. "Is it a two-step or a waltz?" And when the pock-marked area continued to increase in size: "He couldn't even bang the same place twice!"

Buttonhook Johnson attempted no repartee; he had neither the breath, the time nor the inclination. He was able to convert an inglorious defeat into a partial victory only by the timely aid of Dullam. Between them they steadied the drill so that its activities were confined to a reasonable area, at least.

When the drill had pounded a hole into the earth of perhaps twice its own diameter and as much in depth, Buttonhook pulled back the lever. "Else now we shall do business right." And seizing a bucket of water, he filled the hole half full. The results were destined to be effective—but they would have been more gratifying had he waited until Mamma had gone into the house. For when the drill hit the hole, the water promptly flew out, a large share of its contents striking Buttonhook in the face.

"*Mein Gott*, what a splasher!" cried Mamma, edging round so that she might better observe the effect of the deluge. "Even his mouth is full!" And then, knowing that she had reached the limit, she turned and hastily walked away.

With no instructor other than experience, it took the amateur well-drillers some little time to develop any degree of competency, but the first day saw them through the frozen ground and into soft clay beneath. Now progress was rapid and with the hole as a guide for the drill the entire operation became simplified. When they quit work for the night prospects seemed bright indeed.

ALTHOUGH lack of experience on the part of the operators and constant need of attention and repairs on parts of the drill took a great deal of time, the progress on the whole was fairly rapid. Before the end of the first week they had passed through the vein of lignite which was the source of water for the old well. As if to prove the hazards of well-drilling, however, the vein at the point of their puncture was powder-dry. Twenty feet below they struck another and thicker vein with no result other than a little seepage. A third vein contributed an incident which was later to become a partial catastrophe, for the drill struck a rock imbedded in the coal. Unable to go through, the bucket finally found a way around the obstacle—thus causing a curve in the course of the well which gave considerable trouble in lowering the casing, and made its withdrawal an impossibility.

At the end of the third week they struck the twelve-foot vein. They were within but a few feet of the limit allowed by Henry Kane, and success, if there were to be any, must come within a very few feet. As the drill began battering into the flinty coal the nervous tension became greater with every moment. Mamma Johnson's interest became so intent that she returned to the field of operation during several days in succession and now the two women spent much of their time standing by the hole, waiting, watching and listening for the result which meant much to one—and far more to the other.

For two long nerve-wrecking days the drill battered its way slowly through the lignite. Then it broke through the vein into hard blue clay, with no sign of water. Apparently the end had come.

Dullam made a trip to town and interviewed the banker again but that official was adamant and the now thoroughly dejected and discouraged farmer returned home to find, much to his surprise, that Buttonhook had arrived ahead of him. He sat by the big heater in the living-room, chewing tobacco incessantly and saying nothing at all. In the kitchen the two women were busy with their work. Dullam dropped into a chair by the window and gazed out into the night that was fully as dark as the despair in his soul.

Suddenly Buttonhook Johnson stirred. "Else tomorrow we should go to town."

"It's no use," said Dullam. "I haven't done business with Henry Kane so long, without knowing him. He won't O.K. another foot."

But Buttonhook Johnson had not finished. "Else we should not give a damn what Kane says. All we want is casing."

"But I tell you it's no use," argued Dullam. "I haven't the money to buy another length. When I have paid you for the use of the outfit and your work, and when I've settled for the casing already here, there won't be another cent left."

But still Buttonhook was not through. "Else who said anything about paying me, or the drill? I got a hunch! You furnish the gas and casing and if we don't strike water, else you shall owe me nawthing. Else tomorrow we go to town for more pipe an' the next day we make more hole."

And so through the generosity of Buttonhook Johnson the drill went down. They passed through red clay, white clay and blue clay, through layers of sand, of gravel, and into clay again until finally more than three hundred feet below the surface they struck a vein of sandstone which became harder and harder as they progressed and upon which, owing to the inadequacy of their equipment, they could make but little impression. A stick of dynamite lowered and exploded had no effect; the result of two sticks was the same; while three sticks blew off a section from the lower end of the casing. In falling this piece of pipe jammed in some way so as effectually to block the hole. Apparently the ill luck of the Dullams was running true to form. When Buttonhook Johnson took the drill away nothing remained but a section of pipe projecting above the prairie, a monument over the grave of a forlorn hope. In a few days snowdrifts had covered and obliterated even that.

And, as if to add insult to injury and to deepen the gloom which already hung over the household, the weekly newspaper coming from the county seat on the day their hopes of striking water finally petered out, carried the first insertion of the mortgage foreclosure. For six consecutive weeks it appeared, an official notice to the neighbors and to the community at large that their attempt at farming had been a failure. There was nothing in the legal form of foreclosure setting forth the why of the loan. Nothing was said of the medical and hospital bills that had piled up during the course of Margaret's sickness three years earlier. There was no mention of the fire which necessitated the rebuilding and furnishing of their home nor of hail, grasshoppers or drought—only the cold, undiluted fact that they had borrowed and could not pay. To John and Margaret Dullam the publication of the foreclosure seemed to toll steadily through the weeks like a death-knell of hope.

IT takes courage to fight the battles of the prairie. It takes muscle, and the brain and enthusiasm of youth. There comes a loss even in success, for when youth is burned out, to fall by the wayside before success is won is a tragedy—how great a tragedy is known only to those who have failed. Dullam and his wife had begun with the virgin prairie; they had broken the sod itself. They had endured cold and heat and dust. They had known the dread of untimely frosts and the fear of hail-clouds coming out of the west. In spite of all they had carried on. By sacrifices they had built the house, the barn, the granary and all the rest. Each improvement on the place had become a part of them not unlike their children, because each represented labor and sacrifice and love.

Now the farm was theirs only because the law allowed the unfortunate his year of redemption. They were still in possession but they were in possession of something they did not actually own. In all but the law, the title for which they had given so much had passed to Henry Kane.

There remained now but a single chance and that was slim indeed. A crop such as they had never had before, and prices as high as those which ordinarily go with years of drought, might save them—but nothing else could do so. And so throughout the long winter the man and the woman planned the last act of the drama. Not only did they plan together but each made plans independently of the other—for these were plans which dealt with sacrifice. Night after night the man lay awake gazing into the dark. Over and over in his mind he turned the details of repairs to his tractor and machinery and laid his plans for the plowing and seeding of every field. On her part

Margaret Dullam weighed the chances of success with chickens and turkeys and the garden.

There was one consolation to both of them: whatever the measure of their success it would be theirs. If they could not meet the mortgage they at least would have whatever they made from the season's work. That much could not be taken from them. The first break in the so-far uninterrupted chain of Dullam's misfortune came when winter broke in the middle of February. By March the last of the snow had gone and with the first week of that month the frost was out of the ground. By April he had seeded two hundred acres of wheat, a part on summer fallowing and a part on fall plowing. Then abandoning the drills for the time being, he hitched the tractor to its plows and began the endless grind back and forth across the stubble. Each morning when the first light of dawn broke over the prairie he was in the field. That meant getting up long before daylight to milk and to feed the stock. At noon the children met him with his lunch and he ate without taking his hand from the steering-wheel of the tractor. Twice a day he stopped long enough to "oil up," to replenish the tank with gas, and the radiator with water. The end of the day came when no longer could he see the furrow. Then there were the chores again and a few hours of loglike sleep before the alarm-clock heralded the beginning of another day.

April added another hundred acres of wheat, totaling the largest area he had ever seeded, for this year the cash crop was all-important. May saw the oats and barley seeded, as well as the potatoes and corn. During the first ten days of June he broke up a small portion of the pasture and seeded it to flax. When the last of the flax was in, the tally on the two drills totaled four hundred and fifty acres. He had done his best—the result was up to the fates who control the rain, the rust, the grasshoppers and the hail.

Meanwhile Margaret Dullam had not been idle and good fortune had crowned her efforts. The incubator had hatched three times without failing once, and the yard was flecked with scurrying clouds of baby Wyandottes. Even the turkey-hens had paid attention to business and now they too moved back and forth across the yard followed by squeaking, long-necked poults, probably the most brainless of all living things produced on a farm. With the help of the children she planted the garden. By the time the wheat had turned the black of the plowing into a vast lawn of green, her radishes and lettuce were coming to the table. That was an ideal spring. Rain came, sometimes for three days at a stretch, soaking the fields until the occasional low places were turned into tiny lakes. Between times, sunshine warmed the fields and when Dullam began his haying at the end of June, prospects for a crop had never been brighter.

One morning when Dullam was busy with his hay, Buttonhook Johnson drove up. While his errand was primarily the return of some borrowed article, Dullam saw at a glance that he was not only bubbling over with news, but was also highly excited. He sat on the spring seat above the wagon-box, his knees drawn up over his chin. His overalls, never too long at best, were now shrunken until he exposed a foot or more of shinbone extending to the place where his socks should have been, but were not.

No one spoke. The roar of the wind forbade. A few moments would decide their fate.

"Else coming up the coulee I seen a feller pecking through a telescope. Else that shall mean hell is to pay right—not?" Not entirely comprehending, John Dullam knew his neighbor well enough to await more information before risking a comment. "Else there was another fellow there dragging a pup-chain doggone' near half a mile long and another fellow down on his knees driving sticks in the grass with a hatchet. Else it's come, all right—not?"

Now Dullam understood. This indeed was the irony of Fate! A railroad within a mile of his home, with the only level ground available for a town site on a quarter of his own land—and all of this coming within a few months after he would lose the title to his place! His first thought was that the presence of the railroad and town site should increase the valuation of his land enough so that the banker would renew the loan. But he remembered the gleam in the eyes of Henry Kane when the railroad was mentioned at a previous meeting. Once with the land in his clutches and the prospect of profit in sight, Kane was not the man to let go. If the money to redeem

were forthcoming at all, it must be from some other source; but though Dullam studied the situation from every angle, he could think of no other.

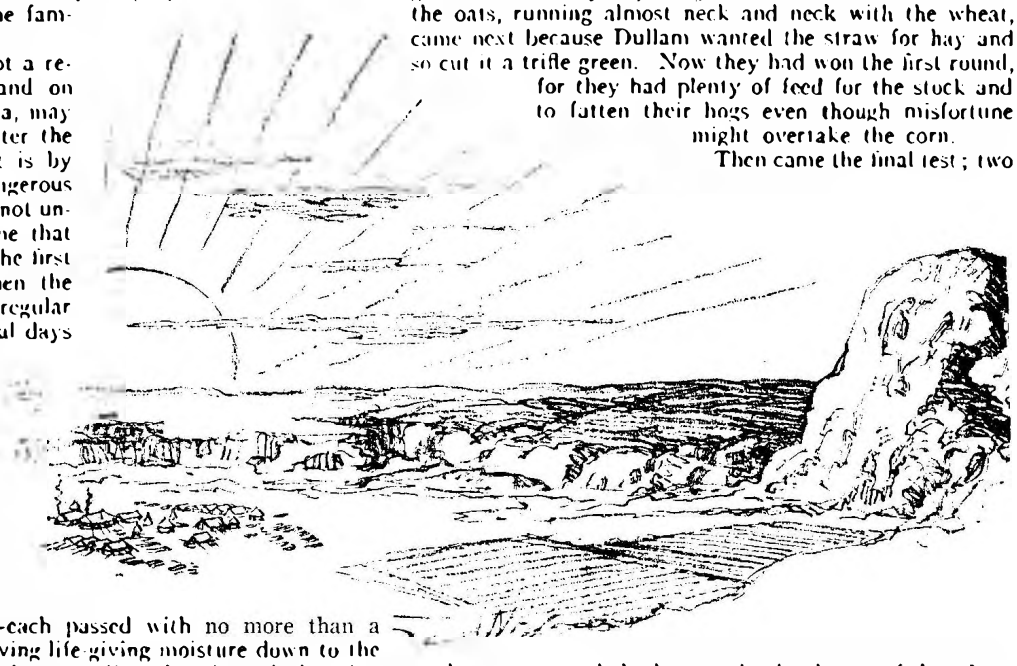
With the prospects for a good crop growing brighter every day and also influenced by the advent of the long-awaited railroad, Dullam took the bit in his teeth, so to speak, and did not release the State hail-insurance. In case of disaster the insurance would at least guarantee seed for another year and perhaps prove a vital factor in the expenses of the family.

Although hail is not a respecter of seasons, and on the prairies of Dakota, may come at any time after the first of June, August is by far the most dangerous month, and so it was not until the middle of June that the wheatfield faced the first real crisis. Until then the rains had followed a regular schedule. After several days of southeast winds a storm would come from the west in the evening, and although each was a possible source of danger,—scanned intently by Dullam and his wife for those telltale streaks of green which so often warn of hail,—each passed with no more than a heavy fall of rain, driving life-giving moisture down to the thirsty roots of the wheat, cooling the air and changing the wind to the northwest for the cooler beginning of another cycle. By that time the wheat was waist-high and the long heads, beginning to fill, drooped and swayed from side to side with every change in the breeze. Sometimes of a morning when the wind blew hard, Margaret Dullam could look from her kitchen window out to a three-hundred-acre field that stretched away beyond the immediate horizon and watch the waves follow each other across the nodding wheat, sometimes in long lines, again in a broken series but always sweeping on and on across the sea of grain. Out there where the green waves ran, lay the fountain source of hope and there were times when Dullam himself stood by her side and both would gaze across the field without daring to voice their thought.

One day a rift appeared in the cycle. After several days of blowing from the southwest, growing hotter and hotter each day instead of bringing a rain from the west, the wind shifted to the south and doubled its velocity. It blew all night and all the next day, then a second night and a second day. It was so hot that it actually felt like the blast from an open door of an oven. Under its blighting breath the wheat lost the richness of its green, the leaves on the buckbrush in the pasture were tipped with bronze, and even the green of the hills were tinged with brown. Another day or possibly two and the damage would be irreparable, resulting in partly shriveled wheat if nothing more. But just when the Dullams were preparing to give up their last hope, an evening came when thunderheads thrust their jagged summits into the western sky. Hail follows often in the wake of hot winds, but although lightning made the night brighter than day, and wind wrenched at the foundation of the buildings, the clouds brought only needed rain.

Another source of dread lay in mornings following nights of rain and heavy dew, when there was no wind at all and the wheat steamed under the rising sun. Rust spores thrive under just such conditions, but while Dullam found a little red rust forming in the oats, he saw no signs of the deadly secondary stage or black rust which is the silent and merciless equivalent of hail. At the end of the month the green of the fields was slowly giving way to gold. The barley, ripening first, was cut and shocked; the oats, running almost neck and neck with the wheat, came next because Dullam wanted the straw for hay and so cut it a trifle green. Now they had won the first round, for they had plenty of feed for the stock and to fatten their hogs even though misfortune might overtake the corn.

Then came the final test; two



weeks at most and the last act in the drama of the wheat would be written. And then one day the wind again switched to the south. Again it blew like the breath of a furnace. At first, Dullam only smiled, for the berries in the heads of the wheat were smooth and plump and hard The wind had come too late, unless— But he did not want to think of that.

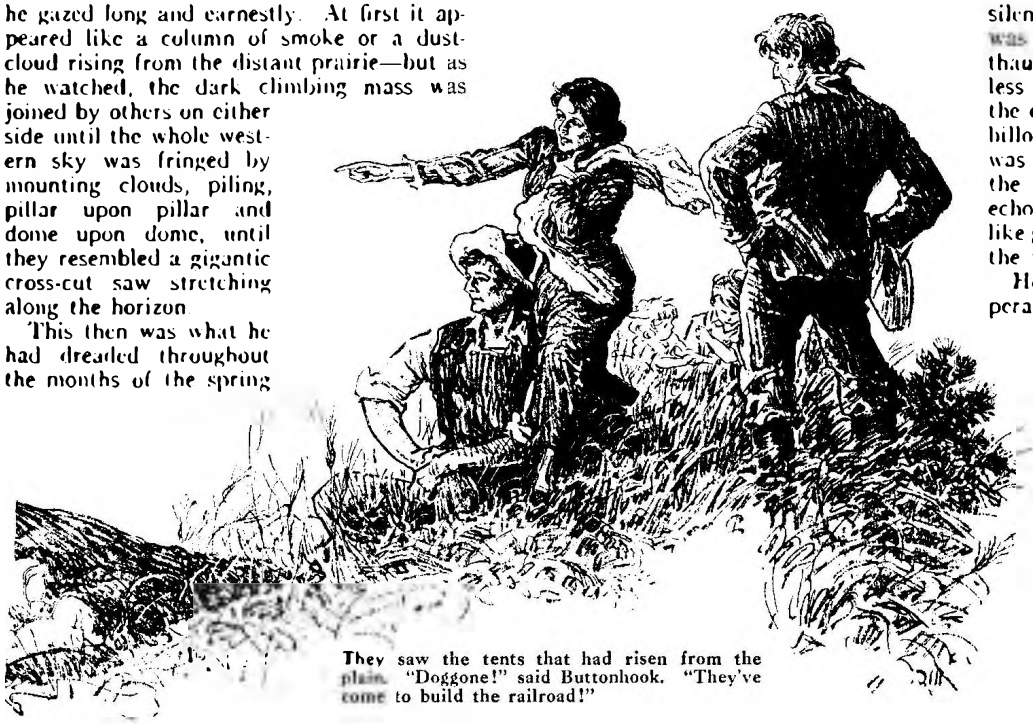
It was a terrific day. By mid-afternoon the wind was blowing a gale and yet its breath was so hot as to offset the cooling effects of vaporization. From fields of summer-fallowing, clouds of dust rolled up before the wind like the smoke of prairie fires. Grasshoppers, made restless by the extreme heat, sprang into the air to be hurled along and battered against the shingles and siding of Dullam's home. The sun, partly subdued by the dust, shone round and coppery and, as if to accent the general depression, the pull-out rod on the windmill kept up a continual *clang—clang—clang*, as forbidding as the wind itself.

It was impossible to cut grain in such a high wind but John Dullam hitched the big binder to the tractor and drove to the end of the field. Even in that short distance the water in the motor was boiling, due partly to the heat and partly to the myriads of grasshoppers held fast against the radiator. There he left the machine on the chance that the wind might go down with the sun, and returned to the house. . . .

The day wore on toward sunset. Dullam was leaning against the windmill tower dividing his time between watching a stream of cold water which was running out to form a cooling bath for his panting hogs and studying that ever-constant source of danger in the west. Presently his figure stiffened. Holding his hand before his face to shut off the force of the wind and the glare of the sun,

he gazed long and earnestly. At first it appeared like a column of smoke or a dust-cloud rising from the distant prairie—but as he watched, the dark climbing mass was joined by others on either side until the whole western sky was fringed by mounting clouds, piling, pillar upon pillar and dome upon dome, until they resembled a gigantic cross-cut saw stretching along the horizon.

This then was what he had dreaded throughout the months of the spring and summer. A few more days and the grain would have been safe from whatever might have come, but today three hundred acres of wheat stood waving in the fields. Of course there was a chance that the storm might pass harmlessly as the last one had done, but it was only a chance. There was nothing he could do but to prepare for the worst as best he might.



They saw the tents that had risen from the plain. "Doggone!" said Buttonhook. "They've come to build the railroad!"

First shouting a warning to his wife, he ran to the field and loosened the canvases on the binder. Dry as they were and stretched taut, the rain would cause them to shrink and either tear themselves to pieces or do considerable injury to the machine. Starting the tractor he backed it around to a position affording some protection to the reel and more vulnerable parts of the binder.

From there, he ran to the barn to shut and securely fasten the haymow doors. He caught occasional glimpses of Margaret as she was trying to drive in flocks of turkeys and chickens from the clumps of buckbrush around the farm. He knew her task was hopeless for the time being; there might be an opportunity during the lull which usually comes just ahead of a storm and between the change of winds, but now they could not be driven.

A premature dusk, deepening into the darkness of night as the storm approached, had settled over the earth. Overhead the sky had turned from copper to green and the wind had risen to a hurricane. As Dullam was struggling with the big sliding door of the barn, he heard a sound behind him and turning saw Buttonhook Johnson with a team and wagon. There was no time for greetings and leaving the door open that Buttonhook might drive his team under cover, he set out with his head down, fighting his way against the wind to the little pasture where the wiser among the milch cows were streaming in toward the shelter of the barn.

When he came out again after securing the horses and cattle, the whole western sky was aflame. Jagged streamers of fire darted from the tumbling mass and above, where static charges raced from cloud to cloud, a wavering glow spread across the heavens. Suddenly he realized there was no wind. It had stopped so abruptly that the silence which followed was even more awful than had been the ceaseless howl. The crest of the cloud, a low, tossing billow of white vapor, was almost overhead and the sharp crashing of echoless thunder beat like giant hammers along the western sky.

He was working desperately when he noted the presence of help at his side. It was Buttonhook Johnson.

"Else we shall hurry now before all hell busts loose," announced the newcomer, "We should let Mrs. Dullam chase the chickens while we herd these long-necked—" A roar of thunder drowned his voice.

Indeed the roar had become almost incessant, long ear-splitting crashes, some of them directly overhead—and through the bedlam of sound a new tone was making itself heard, a high-pitched, droning scream from somewhere above, growing louder and more menacing as the moments passed.

It was a wild race to the house but they made it just ahead of the black wall of dust and water sweeping in from the West. No sooner were they under shelter than the storm struck with a force which shook the building from cellar to attic. Above the shrill wail of the wind they heard sand and pebbles rattling on the siding, then a deluge of water that actually made the house tremble under its weight.

There was no darkness now, for a continuous lurid glare lighted the yard as far as vision could penetrate the rain. Terrific thunderbolts followed each other in rapid succession; water ran from the eaves in unbroken sheets and the yard was a lake.

Dullam and Margaret, with Buttonhook Johnson, stood at the west window of the living-room watching with bated breath. Margaret held the baby in her arms while the older children snuggled close against her skirt. No one spoke, and indeed there would have been but little use for the roar of the wind forbade anything like conversation. But to the face of each came that strained, drawn look which comes to those who stand in the presence of something over which they have no control, and can only dread the issue of the moment. To the Dullams, a few moments would decide the fate of their wheat and the loss of their home, and the strain was great indeed. Even Buttonhook gazed into the storm with eyes squinted nearly shut and lips compressed into a straight line—although in his case there was not so much at stake, for most of his grain was cut and all had been insured.

Presently the rain began to slacken and the first terrific blast of the storm died to lighter and intermittent gusts. Now the rain ceased entirely and, with a final anguished howl, the wind dropped to a sigh and to silence. Then the voice of Buttonhook Johnson:

"Else I bet'cha we got water in that doggone' well now—not?"

But Dullam nudged him. "Hush!" he said. "Listen!"

And in that silence of expectation and dread came that which they had feared. Something struck the house a sharp blow. Again a moment of silence, and then another blow followed by others in quick succession. Looking out into the blinding light of the yard the watchers could see columns of water spurting into the air like the bursting of shells at sea. Once on a mound of earth that rose above the water they saw a piece of jagged ice that appeared nearly the size of a man's head as it struck and bounded on.

"Else those big ones don't amount to nawthin'," observed Buttonhook reassuringly. "They should make a loud bang on the roof and maybe split some shingles but they aint thick enough to hurt the wheat."

Hardly had he spoken before the wind came again with all its former violence and as suddenly as it had ceased. It came with a roar deafening to the ears of the listeners, and with a force that lashed the waters in the yard to foam—and with it came those great chunks of hurtling ice crashing against the side of the house. One of them, ripping its way through screen and windowpane, splintered itself to bits on the floor of the living-room. The dread of months had become an actuality. This was the thing they had feared and it would seem that the long hours of labor, the sleepless nights, as well as the prayers of many months had been of no avail.

"Else now hell's to pay right," yelled Buttonhook, stuffing a pillow into the broken pane.

But he was mistaken. In that moment when they were certain that all was lost, it seemed that some giant, protecting hand had been stretched suddenly forth above them. Instantly the hail ceased, the wind dropped and utter silence reigned.

"Else you should not be all blued up, because Mamma and I have been doing some figurin' an' I come over to tell you about it."

Dullam and Margaret were staring out of the window to where a rosy glow from the west already was replacing the waning lightning from the departing cloud.

"Else with a good crop you should not need much money to square yourself. An' they won't renew the mortgage because they want your place for a town site?"

"That's it exactly," acknowledged Dullam.

"Else now listen to your uncle. This hail aint cost you more than two dollars an acre, maybe not that. Now just to be showin' that old skinflint in the bank somethin' he aint known nawthin' about: You put in what money you get from the crop and if it aint enough, doggone' if Mamma and me don't dig up the rest! Else we should redeem this place and tell 'em all they should go plumb to hell!"

A little later Dullam and his wife and Buttonhook Johnson stood on the swell in the prairie, which commanded a view of Dullam's entire farm. The western sky was clear by now and the sun just dropping behind the hills. Before them the wheat stretched away into the distance, lodged slightly in places and with occasional broken heads but otherwise undamaged.

"Else if you get a dollar an acre insurance it'll be fifty cents more'n you got comin'," announced Buttonhook. "I think your bum luck's goin' to turn round and run—" He broke off at an exclamation from Margaret Dullam.

Turning and looking where she pointed, toward the base of a butte near the corner of the farm, they saw the yellow and white of khaki and canvas tents that had risen as if by magic from the plain.

"Doggone!" said Buttonhook. "Else now they've come to build the railroad! I guess *luck* is right—not?"

REAL

What was your most exciting experience? If you think it worth describing in print, read the details of our prize contest on page 3 of this issue. Here five of your fellow readers give us their most thrilling adventures. The first of these tells of being arrested as a "Chink-runner"—and found with the evidence!

Contraband Cargo

By J. J. Farrell

SOME few years ago I spent my vacation touring and fishing with my friend Pete. He owned a dandy new roadster, and we had a wonderful time, with perfect weather and some great fishing in Canada.

We had our camp near a little waterfall and when we finally broke it up we faced a four-hundred-and-eighty-mile drive in one day in order to get back to the grind of our daily work. Ten o'clock found us through the customs and some twenty miles into the U. S. A. With breakfast at daylight we were good and hungry by that time, so we pulled up at a little inn on a lonely stretch of road.

Business being at a standstill at that hour of the morning, the proprietor sat with us and talked fish and fishing while we cleaned up his excellent fare. Temporarily exhausting the topic of fishing, he spoke of a wrecked car which we had noticed in a ditch a mile or so up the road.

It seemed this car had run into the ditch sometime during the night or early morning, and when troopers discovered it there was no sign of the occupants. Evidently some one had been injured, for blood was in the car.

Our talkative host had many theories and solutions, making the most of the little mystery. While he was expounding a particularly far-fetched one, shouts followed by four pistol-shots sounded outside the inn. We dashed to the front door just in time to see two ugly-looking fellows go galloping around the side of the inn.

Each had a gun in his hand, but they sure were making speed away from two troopers who pulled into the yard in a light car. The cops were out of the car and after the thugs like a flash. All four disappeared in the woods behind the house before we got our mouths closed.

"They must have been stealing your car—or trying to hold up my place here!" gasped the proprietor.

We couldn't figure what it was all about; we decided that the troopers were looking for two such birds and had found them heading around the other side of the inn toward Pete's roadster, which we had left unlocked. We sure thanked our stars for the timely arrival of the law!

After several shots from back in the woods we heard no more, and as we had a long trip before us we resumed

EXPERIENCES

our journey regretfully—for we were curious to learn what the little drama we had witnessed was all about.

About ten miles down the road we came to an unfamiliar cross-road and we pulled up to read the signs. We had just got straightened out, when a motorcycle pulled up from the direction we were to go. It proved to be another trooper, so we started to tell him what we had witnessed.

"You're riding a little low," he interrupted. "What have you got in the back?"

"Why, nothing," said Pete; "that is, nothing but a small camping outfit." Pete's car had a roomy back without a rumble seat. The back was down, but it wasn't locked, and the cop went over and started to pull up the cover. When he got it up a couple of inches he jumped to the side of the car and pulled out his gun.

"Put 'em up!" he ordered—and we reached for the roof, thinking we were dealing with a mad man. "A camping outfit, eh?" he sneered. "Well, this camping outfit will get you a few years in jail!"

We didn't know what it was all about, and the cop wasn't disposed to tell us, thinking our plea of ignorance was ridiculous. He searched us and then the side pockets of the car for guns. Then he told Pete to drive slowly into the next town, which was about eight miles away. He warned us that one false move would start him shooting, so you may bet we proceeded slowly and carefully with the motorcycle escort beside us all the way.

When we reached town we pulled up at a large brick building which was evidently the town hall. A local policeman came out of a side entrance as we drove up.

He hailed our captor with, "What y'got there, Tom?"

"Plenty," said Tom. "Wait till yer see!"

With that Tom snapped a pair of handcuffs on us—and there we were, right in the center of a busy town, with a pair of bracelets on! A crowd started gathering fast.

"Well, aren't you going to bring your prisoners in?" said the town cop.

"Wait till I get the rest of them," said the trooper, and he went over to the roadster and lifted up the back. Reaching in, he pulled out a Chinaman,—pigtail and all,—then another and still another!

Talk about a magician pulling rabbits out of a hat! We stood there gaping at the three Chinamen. The poor Chinks were all cramped up. One couldn't straighten up, and another had some of our largest fish-hooks sticking in the seat of his pants.

Well, the crowd thought it was great fun, but we couldn't see the joke just then. The Chinamen seemed mad at us for some reason—and we were mad at them for picking our car to steal a ride in, but couldn't understand how they got there. We hadn't brought them over from Canada, for the back had been examined at the customs house. When we told the trooper this he smiled wisely and herded us into the town hall, while the crowd cheered.

He brought us into a room in the basement and proceeded to take our histories, for he seemed to think us royal liars. The Chinamen answered everything with "no savvy" and we wished we had used the same tactics.

The trooper was trying pidgin English on the Chinks when a Lieutenant of the State police walked in. He asked Tom where he got our roadster and Tom explained.

"Corporal Flint just phoned to have an alarm sent out for it," said the Lieutenant.

"He must have gotten a tip up the line some place," said our captor.

"Well, he is coming down with two prisoners," said the Looey. "He should be here soon."

"Two prisoners!" exclaimed the trooper. "Looks like a busy day."

Shortly after, the Corporal came in with his prisoners—and lo and behold! There were the two birds we'd seen being chased by the troopers up at the inn!

When the Corporal saw the Chinamen, he seemed greatly relieved. "Good," he said. "You got the laundrymen, eh?" Then he turned to us. "You the birds in that roadster?" he asked. "Well, why in hell didn't you wait up at the inn? You must have known there was something wrong. Serves you right that you got locked up."

Then he explained to the Lieutenant that he and his partner saw the two prisoners putting the last of the Chinamen into our roadster. The smugglers saw the troopers just as they got the lid down. In reply to a shouted order to drop it, they took instead a couple of shots at the troopers, and then they both lit out for the woods.

The troopers caught them after a mile or so and they admitted that they were running the Chinks down from Canada in the car that landed in the ditch. One of them was pretty badly cut in the arm from flying glass. They hid the Chinks in the woods and waited around the inn for a car to make a break in. When they saw our roadster drive up they hit upon the idea of bringing the Chinamen in the back and collecting the five hundred dollars a head that they were to get for the job.

After a little investigation we were sent on our way with the prospect of having to drive well on into the night, owing to our little adventure. But as we rolled relievedly down the road we voted our vacation a great success!

The Golden Mercury

A Colorado miner finds some of his friends making a serious mistake—and takes a long chance to stop it.

By **A. R. Adams**

A NUMBER of years ago I was a shift-boss in the big stamp-mill on a rich gold-mine in southwestern Colorado. "Wild Del" Donahue was shift-boss this wintry day in January and I was to relieve him at three o'clock. The wiry, red-headed Irishman was not in our change-room at that hour, and as I saw a notation on the mill log, "Power off," I started my rounds to see what was holding him, for the mill was now running. The mill ran three hundred and sixty-three days a year, twenty-four hours a day, stopping only on the Fourth of July and Christmas, unless winter storms gave us trouble with the power-lines in the mountains.

I found Del down at a small bucket pulp-elevator which the day before had been cut out of the mill-flow and was to be dismantled. "What's up?" I asked, seeing him staring at the elevator.

"When the power was off after lunch the mill-super asked me to start taking off this elevator tail-pulley," Del replied. "He said he wanted it below. But I didn't get at it. You don't need to start on it, though—if the power goes off never mind the elevator. I'll fix it tomorrow when there's better light." With this he said "So-long!" and was on his way.

Things ran along all right till after I'd eaten my lunch. Darkness had come early with a wind carrying loads of heavy snow, and I wasn't surprised when the power went off. I only had five men; by candlelight we were all busy in different places getting machines in shape to start easily on the return of power, when the mill-super came through and said there'd be no power till next morning. He directed me to let the crew go home, with the exception of the fireman, saying that there would be no amalgamator's helper on, and for me to help the amalgamator clean and dress the plates and if we had time, to clean out the boot of the abandoned elevator. This was customary and caused no comment.

I let all the men except the fireman go by eight, which was about the time "Ruff" Rhodes, the night amalgamator, would be coming.

My men had gone and Ruff was late. I had a key to the amalgam-room so I got out the rubber gloves, the scrapers, brushes, pans and mercury, and started at Number One battery to clean the plates of their amalgam. The stamps had been hung up to be ready for power, so I lost no time.

The night watchman had just gone through, and by his rush I knew he was in a hurry to get back to the boiler-room. On a night like this he probably wouldn't be around again for a couple of hours or more. I had put my first scrapings in the pan, when along the battery floor came the raw-boned Ruff with a candle in his hand and Del Donahue was with him.

This was not surprising, for Del was engaged to Ruff's sister Barbara, who kept house for her brother, and Del and Ruff were together a lot; but for Del to come back to the mill with him on a night like this was a bit unusual. However, Del soon explained.

"Forgot to tell you I want to go to Burch's funeral tomorrow—so I thought if I'd come out and finish the shift for you, you could relieve me at noon tomorrow. Thinking you wouldn't mind, we brought out a couple of sleighs. You take the single horse and cutter—Ruff and me'll use the team when we go."

"Sure thing, Del," I replied. "I'm glad you brought a rig, for it's one tough night."

I had planned on going to the funeral myself, but since I hadn't said anything about it, and Del had mentioned it first, it was O.K. with me. We mixed our shifts any way to suit our convenience and it was all right with the management as long as things were running in good shape.

I could see Ruff and Del had been drinking and had brought the bottle with them. This was against the rules, but under the circumstances they could probably get away with it. They didn't offer me a drink for they knew I was on the water-wagon—but they also knew I would not say anything. I told Ruff what the mill-super had said about the elevator; then Del and I went to the shift-bosses' change-room, while Ruff went to the amalgam-room to change his clothes.

Making a quick change, I grabbed my lunch-bucket, said "So-long!" to Del, and with a "Cornish lantern" started for the shed where the horses were tied.

I was unhaltering the single horse, when zip and lickety-split, a horse and cutter from town came along and turned into the shed. The driver jumped out and I turned my lantern on the coated figure—it was Barbara Rhodes!

"Barbara!" I called in astonishment. "What brings you out here a night like this?"

"Thank God!" she cried, and caught my arm. "Put out that light, Bud, while I tell you!" I smothered the lantern and she hurried into her explanation: "Ruff and Del are going to rob the mill! That sounds wild and impossible, I know, but it's this way—and if I hadn't found you I was going to tell the watchman."

AT first I felt like laughing, but as she told her story I too became a bit excited. Barbara, a pretty girl of eighteen with plenty of nerve, had been around mining-camps all her life and could use the language of mine and mill; she often spoke about wanting to be a mining engineer. I liked her a lot. She was not easily disturbed and had a great deal of common sense, but as I listened I could see where the fascination of gold had warped even her level judgment; however, she'd regained her balance of values before it was too late, and now she was scared for Del and Ruff.

They had learned that the boot of the pulp-elevator was rich in amalgam. (Amalgam in a gold mill is mercury—quicksilver—impregnated with gold to a stiff, putty-like consistency.) There were quicksilver traps between the amalgam-plates and the elevator, and with these being cleaned frequently there was small likelihood of any "quick" or amalgam getting into the boot itself. But evidently gold had somehow reached the boot, and with the elevator never having been cleaned there was a big accumulation of values there. Del and Ruff had discovered this sometime before. No one else suspected it.

The fact that the mill-super had left word for Ruff to clean the elevator was just a precautionary measure. If Ruff reported no values, and left a few pails of sand with a pinch or so of amalgam in them it would appear all right; this was what Ruff and Del intended to do—leave a few pails of sand as having come from the elevator-boot, then take the amalgam home and dispose of it a little at a time. There were plenty of places in town to dispose of "high-grade."

Del and Ruff had convinced Barbara that as long as the company did not know the gold was there it would not be wrong to take it; nothing would ever be said, for no one would miss something they didn't know they had—consequently there'd be no risk and soon all three could have many of the things they'd always wanted.

Listening to the boys' insidious line of reasoning, and considering the job as belonging to the future, Barbara had let herself drift into the pleasure of day-dreaming about a new home for herself and Del, and how cozily she could furnish it; but with the night of action right at hand and the boys leaving the house actually to embark upon the scheme, it was a different picture. The enormity of what they were about to do had suddenly engulfed her, and she determined to stop it.

And what a lucky combination of circumstances had enabled Del and Ruff to pull off their job tonight barely ahead of the day the elevator was to be dismantled! They were probably working on the boot now, leaving the plates till the latter part of the shift.

"Can't you stop them, Bud, or head them off so no one will know what they were up to—and they won't lose their jobs?" Barbara questioned eagerly.

Barbara was a swell kid, and here she was with her brother and her sweetheart in a jam! I liked all three of them and for old times' sake I was going to do my best to keep them out of trouble. But with their minds all keyed up to going through with the raid I wouldn't dare to stop them abruptly; something worse might happen. To turn them from their plans in such a way as to head off the theft and not have the night watchman or the company officials learn anything of the planned steal was also a ticklish matter; but while listening to Barbara a scheme had come to me which might be worked.

"Sure thing, Barbara, I think I can fix it—I savvy the whole layout. You beat it back to town and leave it to me. Take this rig I was to use, so when the boys come out this way they'll think I'm gone."

She thanked me, and we turned her horse around. I tied the one I had been going to use to her cutter, and waved her on.

"I think it will be fixed by midnight—I'll try to let you know," I told her, for I knew she would wait up till she learned what had happened. . . .

Hurriedly dropping below the shed, I entered the mill tailings-tunnel, hid my lunch-bucket and lit my lantern. I could use the light up the tunnel and into the mill, saving time. After getting up toward the table-floor, I blew out the candle and stuck it in my pocket, leaving the lantern there. I knew the mill like the palm of my hand and could easily make my way in the dark, though I couldn't move as quickly. My street clothes would be in an awful mess, but that couldn't be helped.

Everything was quiet as a graveyard, with the exception of a little water and solution trickling down the launders.

All the buckets were the same in the mill, so I didn't have to worry about what kind Del and Ruff were using, as I grabbed four nested ones off the bench by the tube-mills and ducked down through a manhole in the floor.

Peering out from behind the tube-mill foundation with my heart pounding till I thought they must hear it, I could see Del and Ruff digging out the amalgam from the elevator-boot, by the light of several candles. The enormity of what they had in mind had evidently reached them at last, for they were laboring feverishly. And, boy, what a haul! Even by their flickering light I could see that most of each shovel was amalgam, and as they finished scraping it looked as if they had four buckets of the stuff!

THEY set the four buckets of amalgam away back behind the elevator, and their four buckets of sand they set out in plain sight on the settler-floor.

They stood over the buckets of sand for a moment, Del wiping the sweat from his face with a bunch of waste. A slab of snow and ice slid off the upper roof onto the lower one, and at the dull crash they both jumped.

"Gosh," exclaimed Ruff, "I need a bracer. Let's go get a drink. Before the watchman leaves the boiler-room we'll take the swag to the sleigh, and then clean the plates."

But Del demurred. "No, somebody might prowl onto it out there," he said. "Leave the bullion where it is, and these buckets of sand out here just like we didn't care who saw 'em. Leave 'em here till morning and let anybody look at 'em who wants to—it will show there was nothing in the boot. We'll clean the plates, and then when we take the swag to the sleigh you can keep on going to town and I'll come back and stay till Belden comes on." Belden was the eleven-o'clock shift-boss.

Ruff agreed to this as the best plan, so they took their candles and went on up to the batteries. I climbed part way up the manhole in the floor to be sure they were working on the plates, then dropped back and went over to the buckets of amalgam. By the light of a shaded candle I

had a look and was dumfounded at what they had cleaned up. There were over thirty pounds to a bucket, and it was easily worth two hundred dollars per pound. Close onto twenty-five thousand dollars in the four buckets! Tomorrow sure would be a day of surprises.

I carried the four buckets of amalgam away in behind the shift-bosses' change-room, then filled my four empty buckets with wet sand to about the same weight, and left them where the amalgam had been. The other four buckets on the settler-floor I did not touch. Now when Ruff and Del came to take their four buckets to the sleigh they would be handling nothing but sand—and no harm done.

After Ruff had taken the sleigh and was bound for town, I'd corner Del and tell him what had happened to their pot of gold; right now I was getting a kick out of visualizing the time when remorse would be riding them, and then their pleasure in learning they had committed no crime. If it had not been for getting the amalgam into the amalgam-room I could have gone home and let Del and Ruff learn of their mistake when they first started to sell their sand—but the amalgam had to go into its place tonight or the later explanations would cause an exposé of the whole thing anyway. . . .

I camped by some steam-pipes near the tube-mill foundation till Ruff and Del finished the plates and came down to get their loot. They picked up what they thought were the buckets with the gold, and I followed at a safe distance till they passed out the door on their way to the sleigh; then I returned to the shift-bosses' change-room.

I had hung my watch on a nail and was cleaning my clothes when Del came back. He saw the candlelight where no light should be, and burst in to see if it was the watchman. The questioning surprise and consternation on his face was pitiful when he saw me in my street clothing, and all muddy. He had a hunch I knew what they'd been doing.

There was no need for them to know Barbara had warned me, so I told him I'd forgotten my watch and in coming back for it I'd heard and seen what they were doing. Del was downright glad when I told him Ruff had nothing but sand with him in those four buckets, and in sheer relief he laughed out loud when he thought of the surprise in store for Ruff.

Del went to town after we had carried the gold-amalgam into the bullion-room, but I stayed with the stuff till morning came and the day-amalgamators arrived, for I wanted to be sure it arrived in the assay office. . . .

I did not know of the final twist to the affair till I had waded through the half-broken snow-drifts to town next morning. Del was waiting for me and we ate breakfast together as he told me.

Ruff Rhodes had never stopped at his house with his supposed booty. Whether he had planned that way all along or not, nobody knows, but after leaving Del at the shed the idea must have swamped him that he had all that gold in his possession, would have a good start, and there was no need of dividing it with anyone, so he kept right on going down the river road.

And so if any of the officials of that now historic mining company read this account they will know how near they came to losing that twenty-five thousand dollars that was in the amalgam-room, with the three-o'clock shift-boss on guard, one winter morning in January so long ago, and why the night amalgamator left his job so abruptly.

This episode will also explain the mystery of a fagged team which was tied to a telegraph-pole in Ridgeway that same winter morning, with the spilled buckets of sand and the canvas sacks in the sleigh. For Ruff's benefit I may say that it was the making of Del—and neither he nor Barbara was ever sorry.

Adrift

A sailor tells us what it is like to abandon a ship off storm-swept Cape Hatteras and—find himself imprisoned under a lifeboat.

By **Sven J. Sether**

THERE are old-time sailors who will tell you that a starboard list is considered, for some unknown reason, to be a sign of good luck for a vessel bound to sea—but in the case I have in mind it turned out to be our bad luck, and caused me to have as narrow an escape as I have ever had. And this is how it happened.

It was in the early spring of 1916 that I shipped as seaman aboard an old American steamer called the *Kanawha*.

We left New York around the first of March, and after loading a full cargo and deckload of coal at Newport News, sailed for Rio de Janeiro.

At the great coal-docks in Newport News that commodity is loaded into the ships by the use of chutes, and as we were lying port side to the dock, the *Kanawha* had a considerable starboard list both while we were loading and after we shoved off for sea. This of course caused comment and talk aboard the ship, and as the coal-trimmers who had failed to straighten up the ship hurried ashore before we cast off, one of them threw the remark over-shoulder that a starboard list augured a speedy and pleasant voyage.

However, we had not even got clear of Cape Hatteras before we found out that something was radically wrong with the weather predictions. Instead of flying-fish weather, we were running into a real Hatteras gale, with the nasty choppy sea which that locality can produce on short notice.

It seemed we had just got into the beginning of things, for the wind and sea grew steadily worse until the old *Kanawha* was commencing to make bad weather of it. Whenever she rolled to starboard she not only took a more violent, deeper roll then, to port, but she stayed over, floundering around precariously and losing her steerageway. Each time she rolled she seemed to remain on her side a little while longer, until it looked as if she would never get back on even keel again.

This went on for the better part of a day. Suddenly she took an extra heavy dip to port. Everyone aboard, whether on deck or below, looked for something solid to hang onto, all of us knowing well what to expect. Nor did she leave us long in expectation. She came back as if she had rolled off a cliff, bringing up so abruptly on her side that we were almost jarred loose from our various holds. Everything in the ship that was not actually bolted down, broke loose—everything except the deckload on the port side. By some fiendish quirk of fate it stayed in place in spite of a great deal more squirming and twisting on the part of the ship than before, for from then on the vessel never got back on an even keel. It was bad enough before, merely standing by, waiting for something to happen, but now we all had to turn to, on the coal.

First we let go all the lashings that held the remainder of the deckload in place. In doing this, everything that

looked like coal on deck should have slid off into the sea even easier than it did from the other side. But it did not budge an inch. It sounds more or less incredible that a ship can lie on her beam ends with seas washing over her, breaking the after-deckhouse and beating open the hatches, without sweeping a half-submerged deckload overboard. Yet that is exactly what happened.

For twenty-four hours we worked shoveling coal, all hands and the cook, as the saying goes—praying for a sea to come along and wash that coal over the side: but to no avail—we had to assist the last lump of it off.

By the time we had cleared it off, the ship was beginning to get full of water and by five o'clock in the afternoon the Captain gave orders to abandon ship, for the water was now above the floor plates in the stokehold and engine room, making it impossible to keep up steam any longer.

To give the order to abandon ship is easy enough, but unless you just want to jump overboard you are tackling as ticklish and tough a job as can be imagined. It is about as easy to launch a lifeboat in a heavy sea and get her away from the ship's side as it would be to try putting a thimble in a bathtub full of water and keep it afloat, while some one else is splashing and stirring it up vigorously.

However, we launched the two boats—*how*, I haven't the slightest idea, though the boat my mate and I were lifeboat-men in, was on the weather side at that. But we managed against pretty heavy odds to get her around the stern and on the lee side where the rest of the crew assigned to our boat jumped into the water; after that my partner and I, when we weren't busy keeping the boat from getting smashed against the ship, helped them clamber aboard.

While we were busy getting the men aboard, one man was detailed to hang on to the boat's painter, that is, the line in the bow of the lifeboat. Whoever the man was,—no one ever owned up to it,—made the line fast to the taffrail and left—a gross mistake at a time like that, and one that cost seven men their lives. A boat's painter should never be made fast, but should have a man stand by it to take in and pay out the slack as the ship and boat surge up and down in the sea. As I said before, whoever did this unseamanlike act never admitted it. It may have been that one of the men who drowned, did it.

There were twenty-eight men in the ship's crew, half of which were assigned to each boat. We had just assisted the fourteenth man aboard our craft and were on the point of pushing clear of the *Kanawha*, when she took a deep plunge with her bow. Now if the painter had not been made fast we would have got clear, and away from the ship—but as it was, the ship's stern rose out of the water and in doing this she pulled our boat in under the counter or overhang of the stern. For a few terrible seconds the ship's stern towered above us until we managed to cut the painter—too late to clear the boat, however; the next moment the stern of the *Kanawha* descended upon us with a terrific crashing splash. In a case like that a man instinctively ducks, and that is exactly what I did. I ducked down into the bottom of the lifeboat to avoid being smashed to death outright. The next instant I found myself being pushed down—down—with the boat, jammed in and powerless even to make a struggle to free myself. Then the lights went out, so to speak, just as I experienced dimly the indescribably joyful sensation of being carried up to the surface again.

When I regained consciousness I was floating, held up by my life-belt, but in total darkness—a strangely black and impenetrable darkness it seemed, filled with a continuous sucking, splashing sound, that I vainly endeavored to connect with anything I had ever experienced before. I was slowly collecting my dazed wits, and puzzling over my predicament, when a heavy weight descended upon my head, pressing me under the water.

Instinctively I raised my arms to free myself from this nightmarish thing. As I did so, the object raised of its own accord, releasing me, and by the aid of the life-belt I found myself above water once again, and able to breathe. In groping around above my head to determine what this dreadful thing could be, my hands touched it, and it slowly dawned upon me that I was imprisoned under the capsized lifeboat.

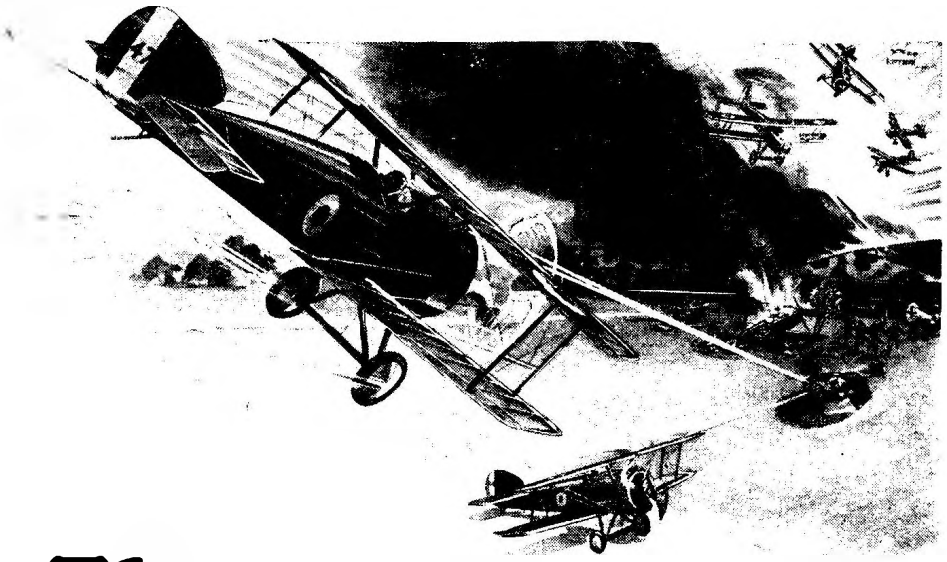
Once more the lifeboat descended upon me, pushing me under water in spite of all my struggles. This went on with maddening regularity for what seemed an eternity, leaving me weak and sick from swallowing salt water. In vain I tried to crawl under the gunwale of the boat to get on the outside. By its buoyancy, the very life-belt I was wearing to preserve my life frustrated every attempt at saving myself from this horribly slow but sure death.

The water was slowly taking on a ghastly greenish hue, with here and there a shimmering shaft of cold light that glittered with glee as if mocking me in my dark prison.

I began to realize that outside the sun must be shining—the nice warm sun! How wonderful it would be, to be able to drift around out there! Suddenly the thought struck me to take off the life-belt. Although I was weak, it was not long before I had it unfastened—and taking a deep breath, I let myself sink and with a few strokes gained the surface on the other side of the boat.

At first I was blinded by the dazzling light, but as I became accustomed to it, I saw to my great joy, six of my shipmates, hanging on to the sides of the upturned boat. They told me the rest had disappeared, drowned—and they had believed me to be among them. I had been imprisoned under the lifeboat for twelve hours.

All day we clung to the boat; then toward evening the S.S. *Santa Marta* sighted us, and after picking us up, brought us safely into port.



Mr. Betteridge lives in South Africa now—but never forgets this terrific war-time adventure over the German lines.

By
Arthur H. Betteridge

The Raid on Epinoy

IT is possible to cram many sensations into a very short space of time. My first air raid on a German airdrome at Epinoy in August of 1918 lasted five minutes; my squadron was across the front line less than an hour, but the experiences so swiftly following each other in that short time are indelibly impressed on my mind.

My best pal, Ronald Cooper, was anticipating the celebration of his twentieth birthday that week. He was the senior Lieutenant in the squadron and had "downed" three enemy planes in aerial combat. After dinner one night the Major handed each of us a photograph of Epinoy with detailed instructions regarding the attack. We were to destroy the enormous enemy outfit with small fourteen-pound bombs and incendiary bullets; a new departure from the customary high offensive patrols and "dog-fights" we had undertaken in our single-seater "Camel" scouts. Epinoy was situated seven kilometers north of Cambrai. At that time Cambrai lay more than forty kilometers behind the German front line. We were to pair off on arrival at our objective, and each pair was allotted a specific hangar or shed to attack. Ronnie Cooper was my partner for the ground work.

We were to drop our bombs from one hundred feet or less. The element of surprise was in our favor, but we realized at the outset our greatest difficulty would be to get safely aloft after the raid and run the gantlet of German airmen on the outward journey. Ron and I decided to chase home "on the floor" when the job was over.

We took off in pairs and arranged ourselves into squadron formation with only the intermittent light of bursting shells and Very lights from the distant front line, to guide our maneuvers. The other squadron circled above us. Our leader flew directly east, climbing quickly.

At two thousand feet the first rays of dawn were visible immediately ahead. We crossed the front line at nine thousand feet and twenty minutes later we reached Cambrai; our altitude was then about fourteen thousand feet.

A glance at the airdrome at Epinoy revealed amazing activity among our foes. Enemy mechanics were frantically withdrawing airplanes from their hangars, hoping, no doubt, to catch us on our return journey. I waved my hand to Ronnie and pulled up the gear-pump for my guns just as our leader gave us the signal meaning: "Get on with the job."

The air seemed full of machines. Ronnie's bus swung past my nose and I gave chase in a vertical dive. The whining wind through flying-wires reached an incredible pitch; eyes watered, nostrils became parched and it was necessary to swallow hard to breathe at all. My speed-indicator swung far past the maximum m.p.h. it was supposed to register. The wings did their best to tear away from the fuselage. How we avoided crashing into each other in that mad rush to earth is a mystery. I shut off the engine at five thousand feet; at about five hundred I pulled out of the vertical, then pushed the petrol lever forward. The engine sputtered—then refused to budge. A horrified thought of landing on the German 'drome flashed through my mind. I could expect no quarter there! Automatically I pumped up air-pressure in the petrol tank—the engine roared; it gave me the most vivid feeling of gratitude I've ever experienced. The swift dive down from the heights had reduced the pressure to practically nil, and in my excitement I had forgotten to pump.

The air was full of machines in all sorts of positions. I had kept an eye on my pal who outdistanced me in the race down. I nearly froze in my seat—there was Ronnie flattening out to land on the enemy 'drome! A gun from the cement gunpit on the landing-ground was pumping tracer bullets into my pal's machine.

I dived straight at the gunner, firing both guns till I zoomed from the ground. The gunner gave no more trouble. To my utter astonishment and joy Ronnie taxied his bus over the ground and lifted her into the air again.

We tootled round the 'drome a few feet above the sheds, releasing bombs on our particular hangar, which quickly burst into flames. Three machines in front of the hangar received several bursts from our guns and promptly caught fire too. Our greatest danger was that of collision with our pals.

Ronnie and I clung together and circled the village like two eagles after prey. Racing along roads, we fired at

gray-uniformed troops running for shelter. Ron dropped his last bomb on a building which resembled a church. I was following at that moment, and the resultant explosion nearly blew me out of the sky. Whatever the building was, it contained explosives—because I learned later it continued a series of explosions for two days.

Five minutes after our spectacular attack a Very light ordered us to make for home as best we could. We contour-chased alongside trees and skimmed telegraph-wires—then nearly collided with an L.V.G. enemy two-seater taking off from a field alongside the main road. The observer must have been as surprised as ourselves, but from close quarters he gave me a burst of tracer bullets. He actually hit the bullet feeder into my port gun as I zoomed to attack. Ron did the same and as we dived on the German, he put his nose down and hit a tree. We shall never know whether or not we hit him.

I had only one gun in action and one cylinder sounded none too healthy. Alongside the straight road we raced toward Arras; we were flying too low for antiaircraft, but several snap-shots from snipers on the ground whizzed through the fabric wings. The cross-roads at Cherisy gladdened our hearts—another ten kilometers to the line and safety! At last we sighted the trenches; we skimmed the barbed-wire entanglements at Mercatel. Shells bursting among the infantry, who waved to us, bumped the machines violently.

Our side and still alive! When we reached the Arras-Doullens road we turned toward the latter town, near which our 'drome was situated. Another cylinder cut out just as we had risen to a thousand feet. I glanced round for a reasonable forced-landing spot and suddenly the engine stopped dead, then continued in a series of dreadful jerks. My progress could be likened to that of a bronco-buster on a fresh colt. Fearing fire, I switched off the magneto, nosed down for a landing and sideslipped into a small field. The undercarriage hit a small furrow I'd not seen and buried the propeller in the damp earth.

Ron circled above me. I waved my arms showing all was well, but he hovered round and then landed in a plowed field alongside my forced-landing place. We examined my bus and besides the broken propeller found a cylinder had been hit and the wire of the plug—exposed on a rotary engine—had attached itself to another wire, effectually cutting out three of the nine cylinders. No wonder she had bucked!

Ronnie gripped my arm. "Look up an *estaminet*, old bean," he said. "I'll get back and send a car for you. Come and give my prop a swing, will you?"

As we pulled Ron's bus back to the edge of the plowed field we laughed at the picture of the cursing Germans minus their machines and mess, for all their buildings were completely demolished.

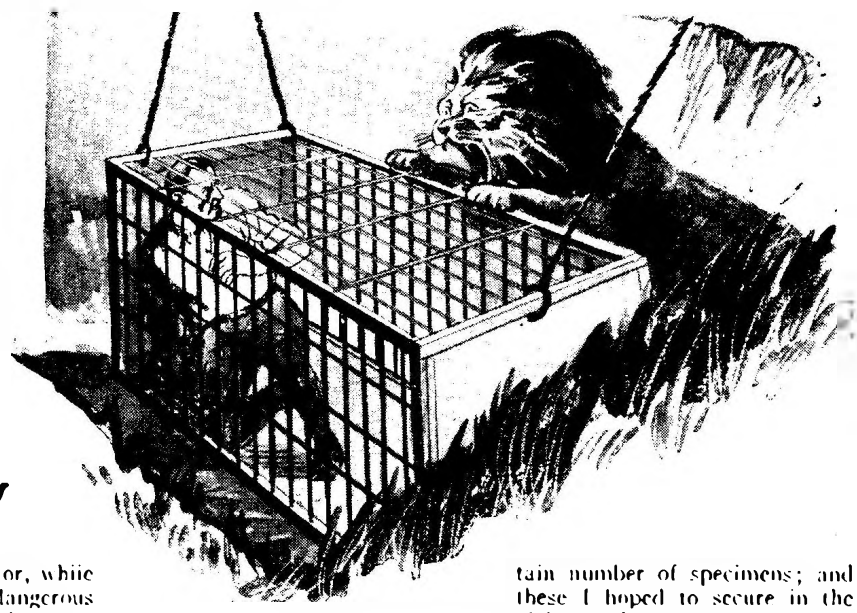
I twisted the propeller for my pal, pulled away clods of earth I'd used for wheel-chocks, and he gave her the gun. She ran about thirty yards, bounced, then stopped and gracefully turned right over on her back.

I ran as I've never run before or since. . . . The wheels had sunk in a soft hole in the plowed furrows. I lifted the tail of the airplane. My pal Ronnie was dead, his neck broken—the only casualty in our squadron that day. . . . His escape at Epinoy had been sheer mockery.

Lion Bait

This story also comes from Africa—the extraordinary experience of a wild-animal collector who fell into the pit that was digged.

By **F. Stanley Renshaw**



THE life of a live-animal collector, while exciting, is really little more dangerous than many other pursuits of life. But I never shall forget the time that I became the human bait, while a maddened lion fought savagely to get at me.

Usually, the natives do most of the labor and take most of the chances. A white man, to keep his prestige, must not soil his hands with any unnecessary work, or the natives will lose much of their respect for him. I learned that never-to-be-forgotten lesson on one of my first trips to Africa and nearly lost my life in the bargain.

We left the railroad at Buleti and safaried through Uganda to the Congo. I had a permit from both the British and Belgian governments for the taking alive of a certain number of specimens; and these I hoped to secure in the vicinity of Lake Victoria. But the promise of many easy specimens held in captivity in certain villages farther north lured me to the banks of the Nile.

I had a well-equipped safari, and in place of the usual native bamboo cages I had substituted light but strong metal ones that were carried knocked down, but could be bolted together at a moment's notice.

Contracts for most of the specimens I sought had already been made with various zoos and animal-dealers, and with any kind of luck, this would prove a very profitable venture. But as usual when things start out well, difficulties lurk just around the corner. Most of the

stories of captive animals proved to be fantastic fables, and as a last resort, I moved still farther north.

We were camped on the east bank of the White Nile in the Belgian Congo, when a runner arrived with the news that a village about ten miles downstream had a large lion in one of their animal pits.

Our luck had not been particularly good, and the prospect of getting a good specimen was quite pleasing, for a free-lance animal collector has a heavy expense to bear. So, having my natives place a portable cage in the flat-bottom boat powered with a small outboard motor, we set off for the village.

The whole tribe were drawn up on the bank to receive us, and as we started down a jungle path, we were escorted by a hundred nearly naked men and women, and nearly that number of totally naked children. They shouted and laughed like so many happy youngsters on the way to a circus, and many jests were made at the expense of the unfortunate lion.

We could hear the roars and snarls of the trapped beast for some time before we actually arrived at the pit, and the sounds told me that my hope of a really good specimen were about to be realized.

SUDDENLY the grass opened out into a small cleared space, and we were on the edge of the pit. I could see the huge beast leaping in a frenzy of terror and anger; and at the sight of us, a tremendous leap almost carried him to safety. One great paw gripped the edge of the pit, and the laughing natives were silenced as they raced for safety; but the bank caved, and the lion slid back.

The usual procedure is to lower the cage into the pit, and with long sharpened stakes drive the beast through the trapdoor and then drop it shut. We followed this plan, and with the aid of ropes managed to get the cage safely down, though not without several near-accidents.

The natives had, with their usual lack of energy, selected a very unsuitable location. The ground was sandy and the banks caved easily. Of course it had been easy digging, and to them nothing else mattered.

The lion proved most obstinate, although the bank of the pit was completely surrounded with natives armed with stakes. I feared they might put out an eye, or otherwise harm the animal, so I repeatedly cautioned them, but it was too good an opportunity to torture their enemy Simba. The lion had been lashed into a fury of desperation, and he clawed wildly at the sides, fought the cage and snapped at the wooden prods. Eventually, I knew, we would wear him out; but by that time he might be a poor prize.

I had grasped one of the ropes attached to the cage for the purpose of drawing it to a more strategic position. My hands were slippery with perspiration, and I gave the rope a turn around my arm for a better hold. Just then the lion made a long lunge and landed squarely on top of the taut rope. I was caught off-balance—and in a moment I found myself flying through the air with the certain prospect of landing in the pit. My fall could only have lasted a second, but I lived a year of torture, and a million things flashed through my mind. Then I struck against the soft bank and slid down in front of the open cage.

I am not sure which was the most surprised and frightened, but at least, I thought faster than did the lion. I think he was a little suspicious of having one of his enemies within such easy reach, and his momentary hesitation gave me the opportunity to crawl into the cage.

The next instant he was on top of the steel mesh and trying desperately to reach me. The bars were too narrow to permit his huge paws to reach through, but the long, sharp claws tore within inches of my body as I shrank against the bottom, in the exact center of the cage.

The door could only be tripped by a rope from above, and I knew that the lion would discover the opening at any moment and I would be dragged forth like a mouse from a trap. I shouted wildly to the natives, but they only milled round in excitement, a few making ineffective jabs with their pikes. Then, just as I thought my time had come, Mado, the headman of my porters, regained his senses and lowered the door.

No sweeter music will ever sound than the plop of that falling square of steel! But the lion seemed to sense that he had passed up a golden opportunity, and he redoubled his efforts to get at me. He tore at the bars with gleaming fangs, and he boxed the cage with his great paws in an effort to knock it to pieces. Then a better plan occurred to him, and he made a try at turning the cage over. A new terror gripped me, for I knew that once he got the cage to rolling, I would be thrown against the sides where those long knifelike claws would cut through my flesh like a spoon through butter.

Then for the first time, I remembered the automatic that rested in the holster at my belt. I dropped a hand, and the cold metal butt gave me renewed confidence. I forgot much of my fear, and a great anger at the lion gripped my mind. Here I had set about caging a trapped lion; and instead, the lion had me caged! I would be the laughingstock of all African collectors and lose the respect of the natives as well.

For a moment the lion had drawn back on his haunches and regarded me with the baffled look of a great, tired housecat; but he hadn't given up. He rested only a few seconds; then he was back again, and this time determination was written on his savage face. I could feel his hot breath, and scalding saliva spattered in my face.

THAT lion will never know just how close he came to stopping a heavy forty-five slug of steel-coated lead. I had no intention of hitting him, but my none too steady hand jeopardized his safety, as well as the natives on the brink of the pit.

I placed the gun almost in his face and pressed the trigger. The explosion was particularly deafening in the close air of the pit, and the lion recoiled in terror. Holding my gun ready to repel another attack, I yelled to Mado to draw the cage up.

It seems strange that this would not have occurred to the natives before, but I think in their childish minds they were enjoying the dramatic spectacle. And it occurred to me as they obeyed, that it was with a measure of reluctance!

The lion was not yet discouraged, and as he saw his prey slowly rising from his grasp, he made a last desperate lunge and gripped the cage. Perhaps he thought that he too would ride to freedom, but another close shot past his head caused him to drop back in the pit.

That particular lion is now in an American zoo, and whenever I pass through that city, I always make it a point to stop by and see him. Sometimes, as I stand before his cage, I seem to catch a sardonic gleam in those great green eyes, as he turns disdainfully away to drop the massive head on the mighty paws. Then I wonder if he remembers me and the time that I was almost his meat.

On Page 3 of this issue will be found full details of our prize offer for stories of Real Experience.

Missing Page

Inside back cover

"The extra protection to my throat"

MIND IF I COLLYER "JUNE"? June gave Park Avenue something to boast about . . . she's one of New York's "400." When June middle-aisled it, dozens of eligible bachelors went back into circulation. Did you see her in WARNER'S "ALEXANDER HAMILTON"? For 4 years she has smoked LUCKIES. That nice statement of hers was not given for money. "Thanks, June Collyer."

"It's the extra things I get from Luckies that make me so enthusiastic. The extra protection to my throat, the extra fine flavor of Lucky Strike's choice tobaccos. And the extra convenience of the little tab which opens the Lucky Cellophane wrapper so easily." June Collyer

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