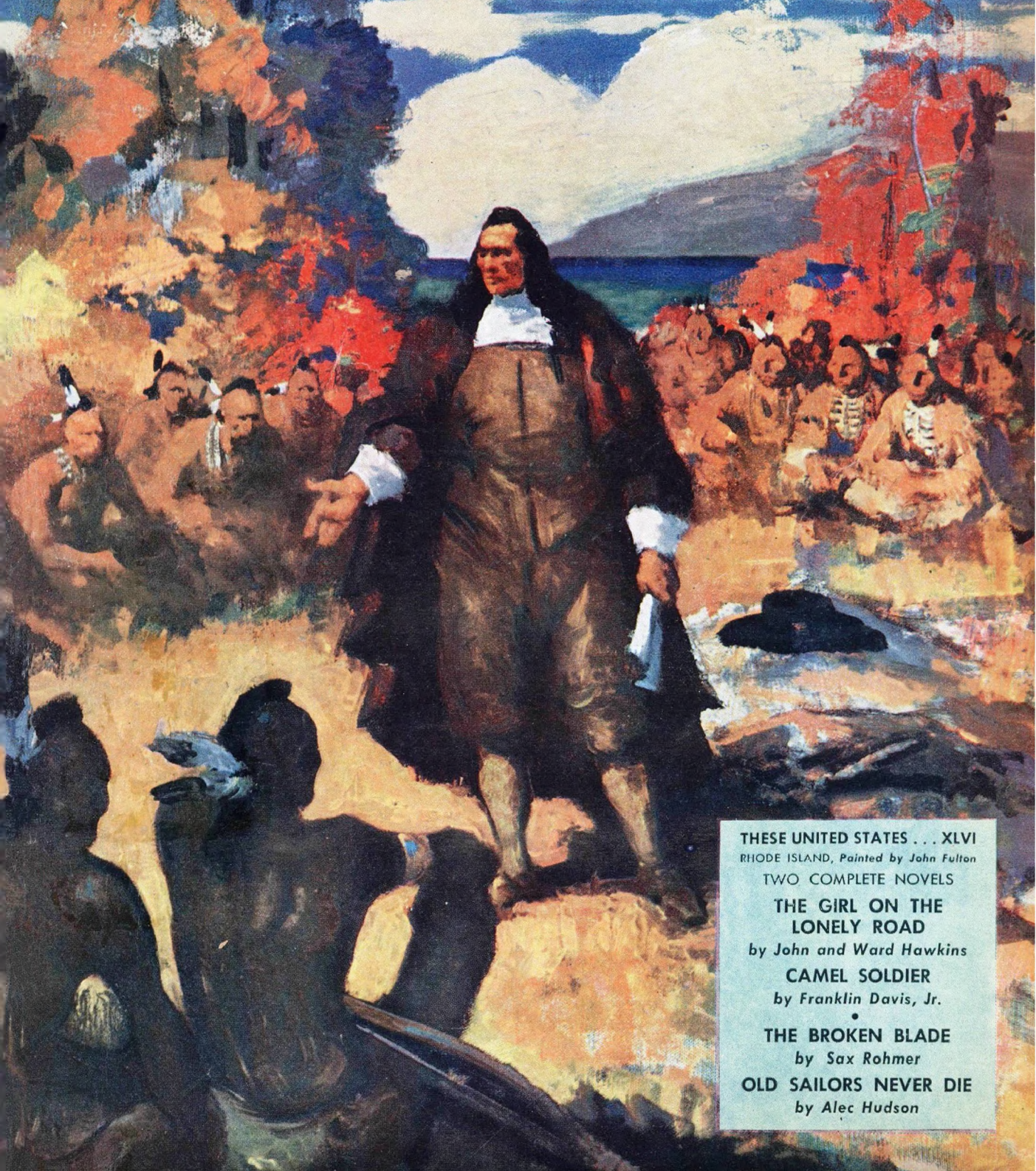


BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE FOR ADVENTUROUS READING ★ NOVEMBER ★ 25 Cents



THESE UNITED STATES . . . XLVI

RHODE ISLAND, *Painted by John Fulton*

TWO COMPLETE NOVELS

**THE GIRL ON THE
LONELY ROAD**

by John and Ward Hawkins

CAMEL SOLDIER

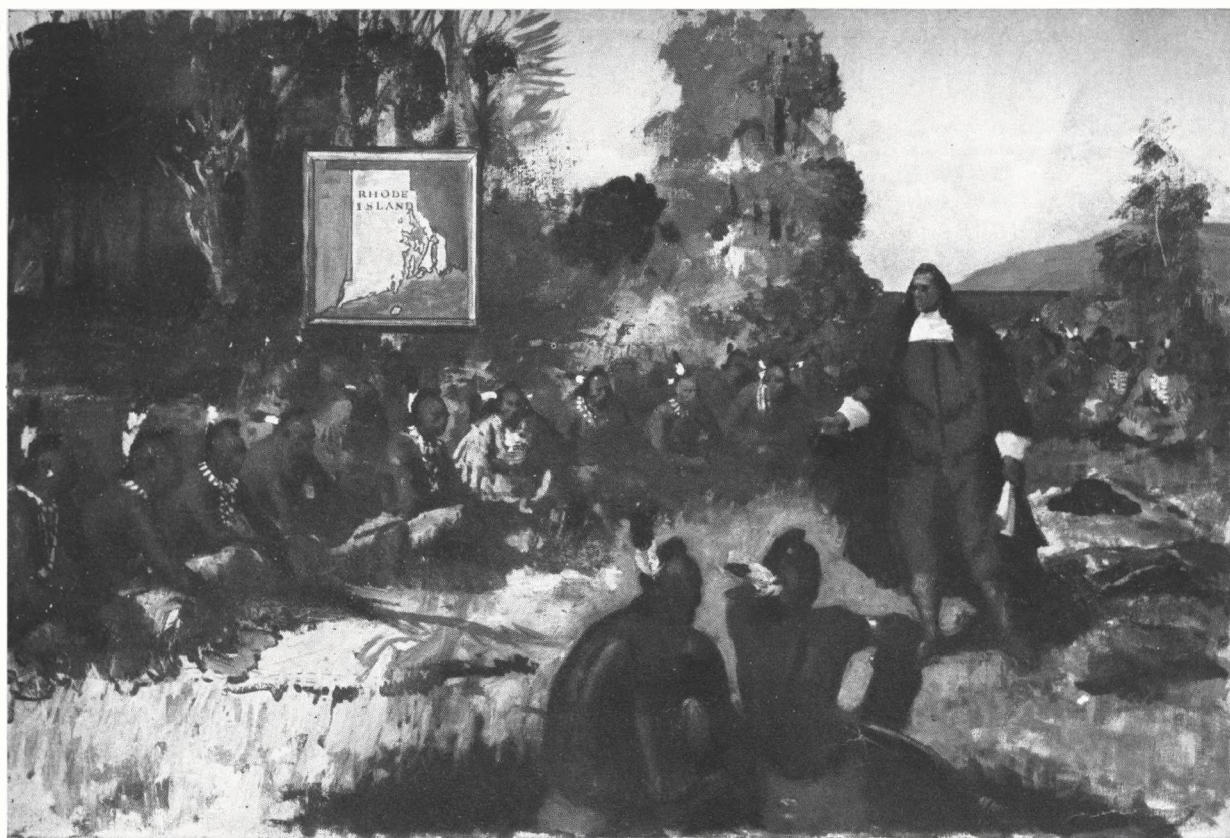
by Franklin Davis, Jr.

THE BROKEN BLADE

by Sax Rohmer

OLD SAILORS NEVER DIE

by Alec Hudson



THESE UNITED STATES . . . XLVI—RHODE ISLAND

The Little Giant

IN June, 1636, Roger Williams in the wilderness of Rhode Island called for "God's providence to him in his distress." From this invocation he took the name for the settlement that he and a band of followers established after they had been banished from Massachusetts. The Providence Plantations in the Narragansett Bay in New England, the first colonial settlement in Rhode Island, was founded on a large tract of land bought by Williams from the Indians. Its covenant provided for majority rule "only in civil things"—that is, its inhabitants would forever enjoy religious freedom.

Roger Williams had been welcomed in Puritan Massachusetts as a "godly minister," in 1631. But soon he realized that he was once more in a country where the "unconforming were un-free." His ideas of a democratic church were considered heresy by the Puritan Fathers, and several years after his arrival in the Massachusetts colony, he was banished.

Founded on the principle of religious freedom, the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations—

its official name since 1776—has served as a refuge for many sects that met with discrimination elsewhere. Its second town, Portsmouth, was established by more refugees from stern Puritanism. After 1657, both Quakers and Jews comprised small but influential groups.

In Rhode Island's second charter from Charles II the colony is given official sanction to "hold forth a livelie experiment" in the separation of church and state.

From the middle of the Seventeenth Century to the Revolution, the Rhode Island Colony was engaged in nine wars. Most damage to the colony was caused by King Philip's War, a general uprising among the Indians of New England, led by King Philip, sachem of the Wampanoags, in 1675-1676. The Narragansetts joined the insurrection, in spite of Williams' diplomatic efforts to keep them neutral. The winter encampment of that tribe was destroyed in 1675, but scattered bands continued warfare until King Philip was trapped and killed in Bristol, in August, 1676. At the time of Philip's death there were only

twenty-one men left in Providence, and every house had been burned except the fortified buildings.

The American Revolution may be said to have been touched off by an attack on the *Maidstone* in Newport harbor in 1769—a protest against British colonial regulations. One important Revolutionary battle was fought in Portsmouth in 1778, which prevented the British from advancing inland from Newport. A distinguished native son of Rhode Island was General Nathaniel Greene.

Rhode Island was not represented at the Constitutional Convention of 1787, and did not ratify the Constitution until 1790. The establishment at Pawtucket of the first successful cotton mill in the United States marked the beginning of Rhode Island's development as an industrial State. Today, this smallest State of the Union—it would fit into Texas 220 times—has the greatest per-capita industrial output in the country.

"Little Rhody" is proud of her past—and of her present. Rightly she considers herself the little giant of our United States.

Readers' Comment

More Than Any Other Magazine

HERE in the Willamette Valley we have a unique service which your readers might be interested in knowing about, and of which surely the editors of BLUE BOOK will be gratified to know.

A young man whose back was broken in a car wreck, and who is confined to his wheel-chair runs a magazine-reading service. Each month he reads as many of the national magazines as he can. Beside each story he makes a check-mark and each night he sends out cards to his "clients," telling them where they can find (1) their favorite type of story or article and (2) favorite author.

I asked him which magazine he recommended the most times each year. This will be no surprise to you, but frankly it was to me. Here is his answer: "Most people nowadays don't have time to search a whole newsstand in hope of finding the type of story or article they want to read, so consequently they don't do as much reading as they once did. But when they know where to find what they want to read, they'll read it. And today BLUE BOOK has more of the type of stories and articles my clients want than any other magazine on the market."
—ERNEST A. PORTER

Not a Trace of Advertising

THE other day I had an adventure. I was introduced to BLUE BOOK, the adventure magazine. With a more or less temporary address, I had depended on newsstands for reading matter, and passed BLUE BOOK by because I thought its appeal was to men, not to women.

My friend showed me how wrong I was. Its appeal is to every type. I almost said I like best the series on "These United States" and "Stories of Fact and Experience," but I remind myself of your stories of noted people, unusual animals, and strange backgrounds.

Imagine one hundred forty-four pages of reading matter between covers, with not a trace of advertising! In order to finish a story or article, the reader does not have to take a long and arduous journey from page to page, skirting his way among long or short columns, or waylaid by advertisements of television, automobiles, or cigarettes, finding at last that he must wait for the next issue.

ELIZABETH J. FISHER

BLUE BOOK

November, 1950

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Painted by John Fulton.

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

PHILLIPS WYMAN, Publisher

DONALD KENNICOTT, Editor

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TO PEOPLE A NEW

THE STORY OF A CIVILIZATION BLASTED; AND OF ONE FAMILY STARTING AGAIN AS IN ANOTHER EDEN.

THIS was our way of life: We had a house which my father and mother had built with their own hands. It was a fine house made of logs charred to an even length and chinked with river clay; so sturdy were its walls that not even the blustering winds of the cold season could penetrate them. The roof was woven of deep, sweet-smelling long grass thickly knit on a mat of

wattles; it was so cunningly thatched that only a prolonged rain could seep through to dampen the hard earth floors my mother had scraped and pounded to a flinty smoothness.

Gardens surrounded our house, and fields of grain, and pasture lands; all were enclosed within a staunch stockade. Our lands lay in the cleft of a river fork at the head of an intervalle flanked on north and south by rolling

hills which served as windbreaks. The forests which crowned these hills were rich with game, and at night the restless wild things gathered to drink at the upper ford of the river, so that at no time were we farther than strong bowshot from fresh meat.

My father was a middling huntsman, though. He never truly mastered the arts of the arrow and sling. At these, as at hurling the spear, my



Illustrated by
JOHN COSTIGAN, N. A.

cast beyond the stockade grew orchards of fine fruit trees: apple and cherry, peach and pear and plum. The dells of the neighboring hills were fragrant with countless shrubs, so that in their season we were bountifully supplied with berries and barks and herbs, all ours for the gathering.

In their separate pastures grazed our herds: cattle for butter and cream; goats for rich milk; mares for their thick, strong, nourishing cheese; sheep for their fleece; and all for their leather and flesh. Chickens we raised, and turkeys, and foolish, squabbling guineas; and in the little pond below the spring swam ducks and fat white geese. We had two dogs which my father had tamed; they guarded our flocks by day and our grounds by night; and so well had they taken to the domestic life that they seldom bit or even bared their fangs except when teased beyond the limit of their tempers, as by my brother when he was a child.

We were a healthy family and a strong one, kind to each other, and loving. The routine of our days was slow and simple; we did what work must be done and took a vast delight in playing between chores. We had the fields to roam, the woods to explore. We loved alike the cool of the river in summer and the warmth of the hearth in the cold months. We lived by the sun, rising and going to rest with its dawn and setting, like the children of nature my father said God meant man to be.

This was our way of life in the days that followed the Burning.

IN the summer of each year, my father made a journey. Not in the spring, when there were fields to be harrowed and plowed, seeds to be dropped in the warm ripe hungry earth; nor in the fall, when there were crops to be gathered, soft fields of grain to fall before the scythe, bright-colored fruits to be plucked from the trees; nor in the winter, when the long way was longer still with ice and drifting snow. But in the lazy summer of each year my father laced strong sandals on his feet, packed a provision bag with flour and salt, and set off across the northern hills for his annual trip to the City of Death.

He would be gone from one full moon to next. When he returned, we would hear his cheery *halloo* echoing down the hillside and spilling over the valley, and we would drop work or play and run to the edge of the stockade to watch him as he neared.

*The long journey home
from the City of Death.*

WORLD

by NELSON BOND

young brother and I excelled him always. Perhaps this was because we were bred to the use of such weapons, and he was not. When his stone missed its mark, or his arrow, badly aimed, sent a nicked buck crashing wildly into the brush with a precious goose-feathered dart dangling harmlessly from some fleshy, unvital part, my father would grumble and fret and swear.

"Oh, lor a rifle!" he would groan. "Or a shotgun, or even a small revolver. This business of hunting like a savage—"

But for food we were never in want, for the woodlands abounded with game, and cold, firm-bodied fish swarmed the waters of the river that freshened our valley. In the land which my parents had broken grew vegetables and grain, and a stone's

Through rifts in the green we would see him climbing down the forest trail; he would emerge at the river's edge, wade the north ford and hurry toward us, waving and shouting and smiling, and pointing with proud fingers at the bulging pack he carried on his shoulders.

Then my mother would laugh in tearful relief and my brother and I would answer his shouts with high, shrill screams of joy; we would leap and dance in a frenzy of anticipation, and could scarce restrain ourselves from rushing out to meet him and to pry with eager young hands into the depths of that mysterious, exciting bundle.

But my mother would not let us leave her side, nor would my father have let us approach him if we had escaped her. For it was not yet time; it was not safe. He would not come directly to our house, but would go, instead, to a tiny shack he had built on the riverbank. There he would live alone for seven days, eating the food that had been placed there against the day of his return, purifying himself.

Each morning of that week he would bathe in running water for an hour, scrubbing his sun-bronzed flesh with great handfuls of coarse sand. Afterward he would stand in the raw sunlight, stripped and lean, and in that fierce revealing glare examine himself painstakingly from tip to toe for any sign of the Sickness. And when at the end of the week he had satisfied himself that he was not infected, then at long last he would come home to us, proud and triumphant and joyful because again he had dared the Death and had returned to us unscathed with his bag of treasures from the old days.

There was a special way he kissed us at these times. It was a hard, rough, bristly way, with his great beard harsh upon our hairless cheeks, and his strong arms bruising our shoulders. But it was a good way, a way that was warm and loving.

THEN followed the giving-of-gifts, and it was the high spot of each year when my father opened his bag to show us the things he had brought from the City of Death. A bolt of sheer, fine cloth, brightly tinted and wondrously unlike the drab linsey-woolsey my mother wove from the combings of the sheep; bowstrings and fishing lines, waxy and strong; straight candles in all colors of the rainbow; sandals and gloves and harnesses of leather; a smooth round ball made of a strangely yielding substance known as rubber; long rolls of thumb-wide cloth, spotlessly white, which my mother used to bind our cuts and scratches so the blood would not leak

out; these were but some of the wonders.

There were others. Blankets and cups and dishes; white paper for the copying of our lessons—for it was best, my father said, that we should not forget the customs of the old days—and thin cylinders of wood with black inside, called pencils, with which we wrote upon this paper. Then there were ovals of soap that made frothy meringues of lather in cold water; small boxes filled with tartar and spice; corked bottles of sweet syrup; all such things as these, things we could not raise or make ourselves, he brought to us.

AND the most of his findings were useful, but for each of us each time my father would bring one special gift, impractical and gay: such trophies as the rubber ball I have already mentioned; a limp rag doll for my brother when he was very young; for my mother a sparkling trinket for her hair, or a tiny phial of liquid with the scent of a rain-drenched garden. Once he brought home a very special gift: it was a flat round circle of glass in which you could see yourself as in a quiet pool, only more clearly. My mother wept when she looked into this; wept and touched with slow, reluctant hands the straying wisps of hair, the wind-burned face, she saw reflected in the crystal pane.

"But I am old," she cried, "and worn and gray! Oh, husband—do I really look like this?"

Then my father laughed, but not unkindly, and took her in his arms and kissed away her tears and told her she was neither old nor worn, but beautiful as ever to his eyes, and sweet and brave and very, very dear. So her brief sadness ended, and again she smiled. But she did not hang the mirror in our house. She put it in some hidden, secret place. And if she ever looked into it again, I do not know. . . .

Once the gift my father brought to my brother and me was a chamois bag secured at the mouth with a drawstring and filled with smooth round brightly-colored stones. These were called marbles; they were toys to play with. And it was from this gift we learned about metals, for at the bottom of the bag we found a flat brown disk the size of a fingernail, with a man's head carved upon one surface, and letters and designs upon the other.

When my brother and I had marveled at this object, passing it back and forth and wondering at its meaning for a time, we took it to our parents and asked its purpose. Then there was great excitement and greater fear. My father struck the talisman from my hand; my mother broomed it swiftly from the house and into the

yard; later my father buried it in the far woods, and my mother scoured the floor where it had rolled in scalding water strong with caustic lime.

My father took us, then, to the hut at the river's edge, and there for a week he lived with us, directing us in the acts of purification, each day inspecting us with anxious eyes, and most especially searching our fingers that had touched the disk for any sign of the Sickness. But God was good, and no red sores appeared. So at the end we returned to our home none the worse for our experience, and greatly the wiser. For in the long hours of our exile my father told us many things we had not known.

The object we had found, he said, was called a coin; it was a small copper which in the old days had been used for money. Money was a symbol with which men traded their labor for food, and money was made of metal. And metal was forbidden since the Burning.

MY father told us, too, of the world as it had been before the Burning. In those days there were many men—as many as the stars in the midnight sky, or the leaves on the forest trees. These men and their families lived in great cities; the cities were conjoined into nations; and the nations covered the earth. The city to which my father made his annual pilgrimage was but one, the nearest, of thousands that once had been.

"They were great men and strong," he said, "who built those cities. They dwelt in homes that towered to the skies; their cities were linked by paved wide roads that arched the hills and spanned the widest streams. They laughed at miles, because they had wheeled cars to travel on the land, ships to cross the water, huge man-made birds to soar over the peaks. All these they had because metals were theirs for the using. In those days metals did not cause the Sickness.

"And they were wise," he said, "but not as wise as God. They did not use their wisdom to do good, but distorted their cunning to greed, their knowledge to the folly of destruction. In a world which had plenty for all, men strove to own more than they needed. So there was bitterness between the nations of men who lived far apart and did not speak the same language of the tongue or of the heart. And at the end, their hatred caused the war—the last great war that ended in the Burning."

"You mean," I asked, "men burned each other's cities as we burn the fields in the spring?"

"It was not that kind of burning. Such warfare men had waged in the past, and had survived. This was different. And it was fatal.

"They burned with something I cannot make clear to you because I was no scientist; I did not understand it myself. I know only that those who studied such mysteries had solved the secret of the atom, the building-block of nature, and had learned to loose its devastating powers—had learned to free, but not to control! And so it was that when, in that final war, great ships of the air swooped down like vultures to lay their deadly eggs on the cities of their foes, cities died in the Burning.

"Only the God who made us knows, in His infinite wisdom, what went wrong with their calculations. There was a term men used, only half-guessing its meaning; the term was 'chain reaction.' One atom explodes, disrupting all others about it. Something like that must have happened to the atoms comprising metals. For whatever men used of iron and copper and lead, of nickel and aluminum, all these were stricken in the days of the Burning. Strong buildings warped and toppled to the ground; the motors fused and burned to uselessness; the wires failed, and the guns, and the mighty girders; the framework of man's culture sickened and died."

My brother said: "But the coin we found— It had not died."

"Not wholly," acknowledged my father. "And that is the greater horror. The Burning was bad enough; it took the lives of many. But its aftermath was worse. The metals that did not burn took on a strange new life, a fearful vitality that was deadly to man. In the days that followed the Burning, raw sores appeared on the flesh of those exposed to the altered metals. These were the burns we call the Sickness. It was this which ended the war by destroying those who had warred.

"By the scores and the thousands they died: our kin, our friends and our neighbors. How it is that your mother and I survived, I do not know. By God's grace, surely. Also, perhaps, because we lived outside the city, and did not endure the Burning. Or perhaps because we were blessed with some strange immunity to the Sickness.

"I hope the latter." Here his eyes sought our hands. "And I hope we have transmitted that immunity to you, our children, remnants of mankind."

I ASKED with a sort of awe: "Then we four are alone in the world? No other survived the Burning?"

My father stroked his beard.

"I cannot say. It may be there are others living somewhere. It is more likely than not. The animals did not die; not all of them. But in the years that have passed since the Burning,



It was in my brother's gift I took the greatest joy.

we have seen no other men. So far as we know, we are the last on earth. The last—and the first."

"The first?"

"The first to people a new world," my father said. "If God so wills."

You have observed that my father was a devout man, humble and earnest in his worship of the Lord. This was his teaching to us: that we should strive to walk in the ways of our Maker, grateful for the mercy that had spared us, content with what we had,

not eager for the knowledge man once had used to his destruction.

"It is not meant that man should know too much," he told us. "Once men aspired to such learning. Your mother and I beheld what came of it. We saw the Burning and the Sickness turn our brave world into a charnel-house; we were compelled to flee the halcyon land and seek contentment in a simpler life.

"Simpler and better. If by God's will mankind should spring again



"There," he said. And in the valley below, I saw the sprawling memory of the past: The lonely

from your young loins to repeople wasted earth, never again must men strive toward that kind of knowledge which breeds dissatisfaction."

He turned to me and nodded. "One day you too will make the trip to the City of Death. With your own eyes you will see the fate that befalls men who attempt too much."

His words brought a great leaping to my heart.

"I, Father? I will go to the City of Death? When?"

He studied me thoughtfully. "You are sixteen, and tall and strong. Perhaps this coming summer, if you wish."

"Oh, I do wish, Father!"

"There is great danger. The Sickness lingers in the metals, which must not be touched."

"I will be careful. I will be cautious as the hare in the glen, as wary as the pheasant in the gorse."

"Well, then," my father said.

My brother asked, "And I, Father? I may go too?"

"Not yet, my son. You must wait your turn. Your brother is your senior by four years."

"But I am strong too, Father, and almost as tall as my brother."

"Still, you must wait. Your brother can be spared. His fields will need no tending in the hot, slow days of summer. You must remain to watch the fattening flocks."

"But Father—"

"Later, my son," my father told him firmly.

THAT winter I lived in a dream world of anticipation, my thoughts constantly upon the coming summer when I should make the journey. Sometimes I thought the snows would never end. And when at last they did, and the red earth was veiled with budding green, it seemed to me that never would we finish with the spring-time chores of plowing and planting, of pasturing the herds and repairing the damage wrought by winter ice.

But slowly, slowly, wheeled the midnight stars, until at last the Bear swung in the west. The forest bloomed: the gardens sprang up high; the days grew warm, and then at last the nights. And it was summer. Then with a knapsack high upon my back, I kissed my mother, bade my brother farewell, and in the footsteps of my father swung off along the swift-ascending trail that led up the northern hillside, into unguessed passages of mount and vale, and finally to the far, enticing City of Death.

I will not try to tell you of that trip. Enough to say the way was long and hard; there were high mountains to cross, and raging streams. There were days when drenching rains soaked our skins and turned the powdery dust beneath our feet into sucking quagmires of mud; there were nights when our campfire was a tiny sun encircled by a galaxy of red and baleful stars; bright stars in pairs that blinked and shone and stirred in fretful orbits



and deserted City of Death.

around the flame they feared, watching us hopefully, hungrily. Such nights we slept by turns, with spears in hand.

I will not try to tell you of that trip, but only of its ending. At the twelfth dawn my father led the way across a peak that long had been our goal. Upon the crest he paused, and when I reached his side, he pointed with his arm.

"There," he said.

And in the valley, deep and broad below, I saw the sprawling memory of the past: The lonely and deserted City of Death. . . .

My father had spoken of high towers, but there were no towers here. None such, at least, as I had visioned in my mind. There were great mounds of brick and masonry, but these were no taller than the groping trees that, with their roots deep-sunk in crumbling stone, thrust their strong branches upward to the sun. Save for such trees and an occasional stark

column projecting from the ruins like a stone finger raised in grim admonishment, the city was a broad gray rolling plain.

As we approached it, clambering down the hull, the flatness took on pattern; I could see by troughs and swells where streets had been, and parks and avenues. As we moved closer, the furrowed ridges turned to rows of houses, faded and worn, but many still erect. Also, as we approached, my father's care increased. He repeated the warnings he had drilled in me throughout the days of our journey.

"Where is red rust or green, walk not; these are the colors of sick metals. Venture not where the earth is glazed and shining, but only where a coarse dullness sifts beneath your feet. Seek out the houses which were of wood and stone; in these is the least danger. Move slowly and with care, and when in doubt, touch not."

So we went into the city.

Now my story grows confused, for I cannot repeat all the marvels I saw, neither can I hope to describe things I do not understand. For wondrous were the accomplishments of those who lived in the old days. Dust though they be, and drifted with the wind, still proof of their great might endures in the city they had built.

To the heart of the city, where the Burning raged most fiercely, we dared not go. But around the city's rim were countless rows of houses; into these, because they were not built on frameworks of metal, we ventured. So it was that I learned the way in which the old ones lived.

How can I tell it? It is much too great. Their comforts brought a hunger to my heart. They did not sit, like us, on benches made of planks, or sleep as we do on pallets of husks and hay. Their chairs were wide and deep and very soft; their beds were broad, raised platforms of down. They did not walk on earth floors, hard and cold, but laid firm floors of wood, and these they covered with soft mats of colored cloth.

In their homes they had separate rooms for eating and cooking and sleeping, and even small, shining rooms for cleansing and relieving themselves. My father would not let me enter one of these, for there was much metal in them. But he told me that fresh water from the streams was caused to flow from a far source upward—yes, even upward!—to bring each home its individual spring.

Another room wherein I might not go was that in which they cooked; this was made mostly of metals, thus unsafe. My father said that when he made his first trip to the city a dozen years before, as he lay on the hillside

in the black of night, looking down into the valley, he could tell which room of each house had been its kitchen, for so sick then were the metals that they glowed in the dark with a cold green light like foxfire. This was no longer so. With the passing years much of the fever had departed the metals. Still it was not wise to venture into rooms so greatly made of them.

So the houses. There were other marvels. For each score of dwelling-houses was one which had been known as a "shop;" these were places where things were traded for money. There were all sorts of shops; some were stocked with food and some with goods. There were shops for the selling of clothes, of jewelry and furniture and drugs. My father said that in the days of his youth there were stores that dealt in toys and pets and songs, and even in the cutting of hair.

It was in these shops we made our richest finds. It did not take us long to gather things to fill our packs. Our problem was rather that of winnowing the wealth of good things, selecting those most useful and at the same time light enough to carry. I looked with longing on a host of things I wanted to take home, but a pack will hold just so much, and a man is not a horse. So in the end, those things which we selected were much like my father's choice of other years, except that now there were two of us, and we could carry twice as much.

When our bags were near filled to the top, my father called a stop. Now was the time, he said, when we should separate and—that we too might share in the surprise of gift-giving—individually make selection of those special presents we were to take home to the others. So for a time we parted, each going a different direction.

I was happy with the gifts I found my family. For my mother I chose a set of combs; of tortoiseshell they were, and bright and beautiful. I found for my father a wonderful new thing: black foot-and-leg coverings made of thick rubber. In them he would be able to wade a thigh-deep stream, or pluck wild berries in the marsh, without ever wetting his feet.

But it was in my brother's gift I took the greatest joy. I found it in no shop, but in a house. It was a bundle of white sheets of paper, cut to an equal size, bound in a cover of blue cloth. Each sheet was covered with printed words—words like those my father and mother taught us in our lessons, only longer and more difficult of meaning—and there were numbers, too, and many pictures. Pictures of things made and used by men before the Burning: bridges, and boats, and



So it was that I left the home of my youth . . . feeling home-hunger fasten upon me even before I passed from sight of those whose lips I might not press in farewell.

cars that ran on wheels, and winged machines that flew, and garden tools. All of these things were drawn, and the way was told of making them. These things were made of metal. And the words on the front of this bundle said: *Applied Mechanics*.

I wrapped this present very carefully. It was the greatest wonder I had seen in the City of Death. I felt sure my brother would delight in it.

OF the long journey home there is no need to speak, nor of the week my father and I dwelt in the hut beside the river, I chafing with impatience to get home and show the gifts I had brought. Finally my father was satisfied that we had escaped the Sickness.

We entered the stockade, and our family was one again.

I have said how I looked forward to the giving-of-gifts, and especially to witnessing my brother's pleasure in that which I had brought him. Now I must tell how wrongly I guessed. My brother did not have the chance to like or disapprove of my gift. Scarcely had I drawn it from my pack, barely had I unwrapped and offered it to him, than my father, his face darkening with anger, stepped forward and snatched it from my hands.

"This!" he cried thickly. "Where did you find it?"

"Why, in a house when I was seeking family gifts. It is a wonderful thing, Father. It has pictures and

plans for making such things as were used in the old days."

My father frowned.

"It is a book, and books are evil things. It was by reading books that men brought on the Burning. Destroy it!"

"But it is my brother's gift, his special gift."

"It is no fitting gift. Here we live in God's way. In this house there shall be no books." He thrust it from his hands as if it scorched them. "Take it away—destroy it!"

"But, Father—"

"Go now, and swiftly. Burn it, and pray God's forgiveness, lest your hands have been stained with its venom!"

Sadly I left the house. I carried the book to the burning-place. This was a holy place my father had built; on it he placed as evidence of gratitude some portion of each thing God in his bounty provided for our fare: first fruits of the tree, first yield of the soil, first flesh of the increased flock. On it I started to place the book. But a breeze stirred the pages in my hands; the pictures from the past danced before my eyes, clouding my brain with dreams of what had been—and what might one day be again.

I could not burn the book. More easily could I have burned my own heart upon the fire. I stole into the woods and hid the book in a secret place known only to myself. Then I went home.

"It is done?" asked my father.

For the first time in my life I lied to him.

"It is done," I said.

This was the way in which the giving-of-gifts was marred.

Now is the bitter ending of my tale, the reason for its telling. Now it is summer no more, but drowsy autumn; the wheatfields are billows of gold, and the distant hills are blue with a smoky haze.

On this day the afternoon sun was low, and as had become my custom, I was hidden away in that secret place known only to myself, drinking the learning of the book.

It was on that day my brother chanced upon me. He did not know I was there; he stumbled on me as he searched for a lamb that had strayed. He burst through the thicket without warning, and before I could hide it from him, he saw the book in my hands. His eyes widened.

"That!" he exclaimed. "But it was to be burned!"

"I could not burn it," I told him. "I tried to, but could not. It is too great; it means too much to us."

"To us? What meaning has an evil thing to us? Our father said—"

"Our father is wrong. He remembers only the evil of the old knowledge; he has forgotten its good. You must believe me: I have read the book—read it not once, but many times. With it to help, we can rebuild the world, make it as it was in the days before the Burning."

"Are you mad? The book will destroy us as it did those who read it before."

"Not us. We have their fate as warning. This time we will build more wisely. We will not use the metals to make war, the elements to ravage."

"The metals? You think to use them? How can you use that which kills? The Sickness will eat your flesh and rot your bones."

"Not mine nor yours. Have we not learned that we are immune to the Sickness? Did we not touch the metal and survive? Has not our father returned a dozen times from the metal-laden City of Death?"

"And more," I reasoned desperately, "I do not believe the metals have power any longer to destroy. The fever has departed from them. They no longer glow in the dark. They are free of the Sickness. They can be used again to build great houses, cities—"

My brother backed away, his eyes clouded and fearful.

"You talk wildly," he said. "The Sickness is in your brain, and the grace of God has left you. I will not listen to your evil talk. I will tell our father. He will know what to do."

"No!" I cried.

"Yes. The book must be burned. And then you must be purified again. You—"

"No!" I cried. "No! You must not tell on me. The book is mine. Look!" I seized a great stone from the ground. "You are my brother, and I love you well. But before I let you tell our father of my secret, I will crush your head with this stone."

"You are sick in the mind," he said. "You have become a madman and a brute. Our father must be told." He turned and started to run.

And it was then that I killed my brother.

THEY did not find us that afternoon, nor in the cool of evening, nor yet in the long black night that I spent in the glade, weeping and sick with a soul-tearing anguish, crouching beside the body of my brother. They did not see how I kissed his still cheeks and his responseless mouth, begging his breath to stir, his heart to beat; they did not hear how I wept and pleaded and prayed, offering God my life in trade for his, that long black night in the glade when I covered his body with mine against the damp night mists and felt my heart die within me as his flesh cooled against my own.

They found us the next morning. And I thought I had known the ultimate in agony during the night just passed, but nothing I had felt compared to the sick despair that gripped my heart when I looked in my mother's eyes as she saw my brother.

Her lips moved, then were gray and could not move. A little sound escaped her, and she sank to her knees beside him. My father stood as stricken, staring at the ugly wound in my brother's head, and the blood-stained rock beside him. He looked at me as at one he had never seen. He said in a dull, dazed voice, "My son—you did this thing?"

I said: "Pick up the stone, my father; slay me too. I have taken my brother's life. I do not want to live."

For a long moment my father stood there, swaying like a tree beset by storm. His eyes were mirrors of his tortured thoughts: anger was in them, and a sort of fear; hurt and uncertainty and sorrow. Then slowly he shook his head.

"It is no use. Your death would not bring him back. Yet—" He lifted his arms skyward in his pain—"yet I had hoped that in this new life there would be no more of hatred and of killing. But here it is again. Why, God—oh, why?"

My mother said: "Husband, what are we to do?"

"It is not ours to judge, nor to condemn. Life and its giving, life and its taking away—these are the concerns of God alone. But our son can no longer say here with us—now. He must go away."

"But where is he to go?" my mother cried. "Here is food and shelter; outside is a silent world."

"It cannot be helped. He cannot stay with us, an unending reminder of what has happened, and a reproach. It may be that out there, somewhere, others live. I long have thought there must be life elsewhere. I do not know. But it is his to seek—and if God wills, to find. Go, son, who is no longer son of mine."

Then he turned away, and would not see my face.

And so it was I left the home of my birth, with my knapsack heavy on my shoulders, with food and clothes within the pack, with the book securely wrapped against the day when somewhere, somehow, finding other men, I might fulfill my dream of rebuilding a new world with the knowledge I had of the old.

So it was I left the home of my youth: the rolling pasture lands and flowering fields, the lowing herds and golden seas of grain, the gardens I had loved, the purling streams. I left in the gray of dawn, seeing these loved sights for the last time through a hot mist of tears, feeling the sorrow and home-hunger already fasten themselves upon me before I passed from the sight of those whose lips I might not press for a last time, not even in farewell.

So my last vision was the image of my mother far below, strained forward to watch me mounting the long hill, starting one time to raise her arm and wave, then faltering and letting it drop to her side. So I left, without kiss or blessing, with only my mother's last, dim, distant cry to ring forever in my aching heart:

"Good-by, my son. Oh, God go with you always, my son, Cain."

Were the Irish the first Europeans in America? Written records of St. Brendan's Sixth Century voyages are scanty; but Columbus and many other people have believed that St. Brendan had found this New World.

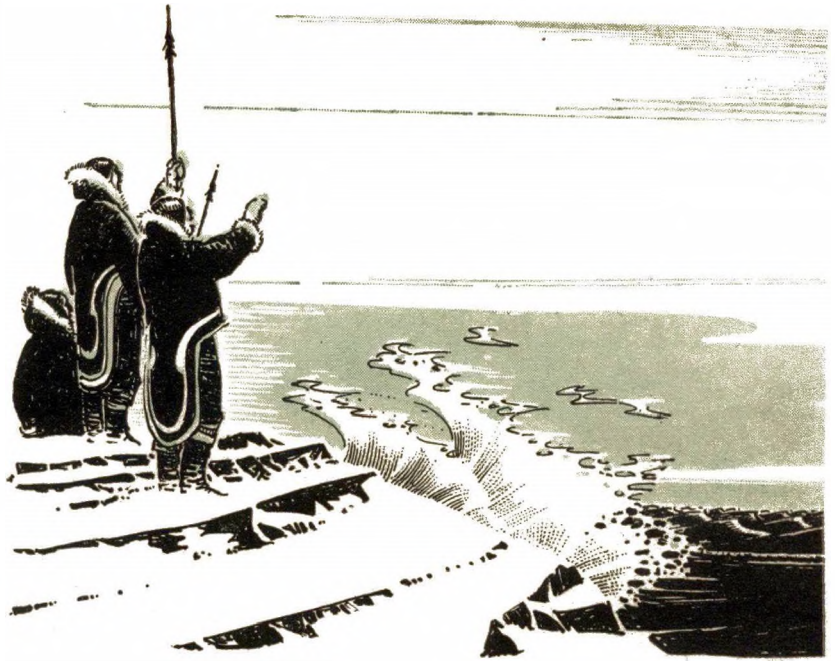
THIS is the story of a voyage which began just fourteen centuries ago—the earliest recorded attempt to cross the Atlantic Ocean in search of the New World. And to this day, we can only guess at the course of that voyage! But whatever his landfalls may have been, it is hard to deny the captain of that single wooden boat which put out from the West of Ireland on March 22, A.D. 551, his place among the boldest of all explorers. He and his crew of sixty were venturing into an ocean more unknown than interstellar space, without chart, without compass, and—worse luck!—without chronicler.

Even so, the tale of that wild heroic venture, blurred by centuries of oral transmission, spread far and lingered long, with mighty after-effects. Almost a thousand years later, Columbus and Cabot believed themselves to be following in the wake of Kerry-born Brendan Moccu Alti, known to medieval Christendom as Saint Brendan the Navigator.

Brendan, son of Finloga and descendant of Alta, was born in the township of Fenit, in what is now County Kerry, in A.D. 484, which means that in his youth he talked with men who had known St. Patrick face to face; he lived to become the friend of St. Bridget and St. Columba. It was Ireland's Age of Saints, and Brendan was not the least of them; and like most of these, Brendan rejoiced in a splendid pedigree, traced back to the resounding name of Fergus Mac Roy, the second-ranking hero of the Cattle Raid of Cooley.

In the intervening four centuries the fortunes of Fergus' cinel had dwindled: in fact, Brendan was the firstborn of a young couple living in more or less reduced circumstances, as dependents of Bishop Erc, founder of the little monastery of Termon Eirc on the Kerry coast. In the days of Irish paganism, then scarcely past, a first son by old custom went to the Druids, either for sacrifice to Bloody Crom, or for rearing as a member of the Druid caste. And to Bishop Erc, who had stepped into the place of the local Druid, Brendan's parents gave their little son, scarcely a year old; so was a career of saintliness thrust upon the infant Brendan, like many another in that day; the marvel is that so few proved unwilling or unworthy.

Bishop Erc sent the child to the convent of St. Itha, who "loved much fosterage" and presided over the chief



THE FAR

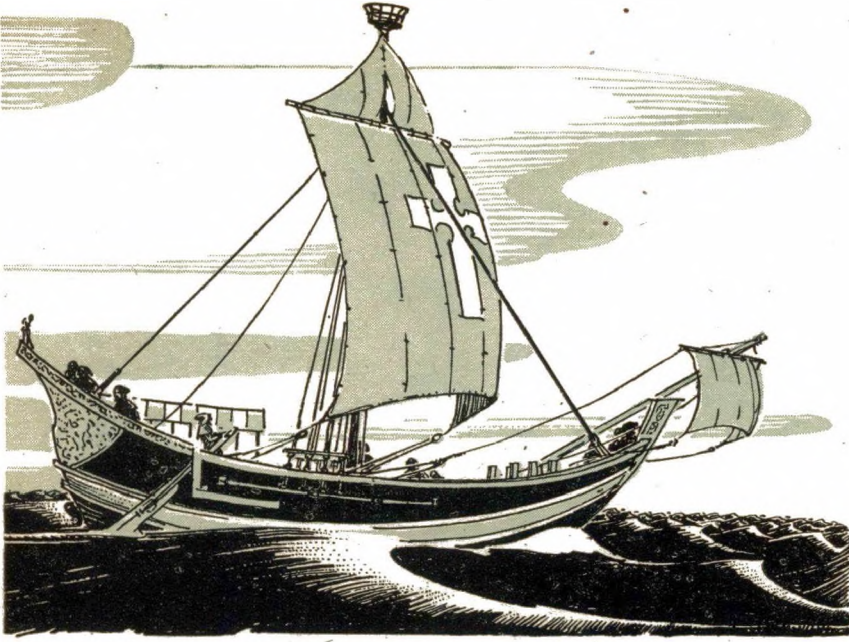
school for small boys in all Ireland. In Celtic lands foster-kinship was the closest of all ties. At six, Brendan went back to Erc's monastery, but he never forgot Itha; we shall see the decisive effect of her influence.

A student of rare promise, Brendan exhausted the educational resources of Termon Eirc, and with the Bishop's consent spent some years as a wandering scholar. He became one of the most learned clerics of a land then swiftly pushing into the forefront of European intellectual (as distinguished from material) culture. Returning, Erc ordained Brendan as a priest. The words which Bishop Erc spoke from the Gospel at his ordination lingered long in Brendan's mind. "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting (Luke, XVIII, 29, 30.)" Should he leave rocky Kerry, leave dear green Erin, for some wild foreign land, as Patrick had left Britain, for lifelong exile as hermit or missionary? But in A.D. 512 Bishop Erc died; and Brendan, aged twenty-eight, became Abbot of Termon Eirc.

It was a promising beginning. Yet for the next thirty years Brendan seems to have accomplished little. He travels the west of Ireland, by foot and by boat, founds several obscure little churches, gains a few disciples—that is all. Unlike Erc, he never became a bishop. He obtained no important donation of land on which to found a larger monastery—one of his dreams, for in his student days he had composed a book of rules for such an establishment.

WHAT, in a day when other men, his inferiors in lineage and in learning, were receiving huge donations and fairly transforming the land, did Brendan lag behind? It was not for lack of zeal or energy; bitter-tongued Gildas the Briton called Brendan "ever-toiling." Perhaps it was because in his day the *Ciar-raige*, the folk of Kerry, were a downtrodden clan, beneath the notice of the proud warrior-kings descended from Niall or from Eogan Mor, and Brendan was very much a Kerryman. More likely it was for another cause. Virtually all the Celtic saints were fiery, imperious creatures, able to make the fierce, bloody-handed potentates of their day shrink before their glance; but Brendan was notable for his absolutely

by PAUL
JOHNSTONE



LAND

ferocious austerity, his lack of that accompanying sympathy for all sorts and conditions of men and women, which made Patrick and Columba so lovable.

At the age of seven, standing in Erc's chariot while the good Bishop addressed a gathering, Brendan saw a little girl, a chief's daughter, with innocent friendliness, clambering up into the chariot to play with the fair-haired boy who held the reins of the Bishop's horses. Angered at such presumption, Brendan lashed the girl across the face with the reins he held, sending her away in tears. Bishop Erc gave him a scolding—and probably more—but it did little good. We find Brendan, now middle-aged, at sea off the Kerry coast with two of his disciples, young men and brothers. They land on a small island. Leaving the younger boy to watch their boat, Brendan and the other monk went inland, probably in quest of lodging for the night. As they went, the tide was turning, and the wind began to rise. As Brendan plodded onward, his frontally-tousured head bent in meditation, the monk spoke: "My little brother is not man enough to hold the boat in this wind."

"He will do well enough," said Brendan absently.

"I tell you, the little fellow can't hold the boat," persisted the monk. "Let me go and help him, Ab!" He spoke at length, as they went on. Suddenly Brendan whirled on him: "Go, then! *It will not be good luck for you, but go!*"

Hurrying back to the shore, the monk found his small brother just losing his grip on the boat's rope. Plunging into the pounding waves in a desperate attempt to save the boat, the elder brother was drowned. Brendan had *ill-wished* him; now he was dead. Smitten with remorse, Brendan told of his hasty words, and of course they reached the mourning family. Fierce saffron-kilted kerns put their shock heads together, and spoke of the righteousness of avenging one's kin. Brendan's shaven crown might—might, one says—put him outside their reach; but Brendan had a father, and younger brothers. Would their bleeding heads be flung at his feet by exultant avengers—and he a monk, with his vows to keep him from retaliation! For himself, Brendan was not afraid—his whole character speaks against that view. But he felt that he was in some degree to blame, that atonement was required. But what?

There was an old custom, known to Gael and Briton alike, by which an

offender whom no one wished to kill outright was set adrift in an open oarless boat, to live or die as the wind and waves might rule. It was Brendan's idea to subject himself to this ordeal—but was it a fitting thing, this half-pagan rite, for a priest and an abbot? He had his monks to consider; could he forsake them, even to clear his own soul of blood-guiltiness and shield his family from attack? In his perplexity Brendan took his little boat and voyaged north to the Aran Islands, to the hermit-saint Enda. Surely that hoary anchorite would give him no soft counsel!

Old Enda listened, thought long and deeply. "Go you back," was his answer at length. "Fast you and pray for the guidance of Heaven."

INTO the wild Dingle Peninsula went Brendan on bare feet, his little band of monks following. At the foot of the hill Slieve Daidche, with the Atlantic close about them on every side but the east, they halted to build *bothans*—rude huts of dry stone and sods, their lines still traceable after fourteen hundred years. Brendan ascended the hill for a fast such as St. Patrick had endured a century earlier, when "sore thrust-at" by the envy of other clerics. A forty-day fast after the manner of the Celtic Church was no easy ordeal. No food and no drink from sunrise to sunset, and then only a single egg, with a bit of leek and a single cup of water. On Sundays, a great feast—the cupful of broth or milk, and a crust of bread! And withal, day and night, endless psalm-recitation and prayers, with perhaps a snatched hour or two of sleep, atop a bare, grim hill three thousand feet above the sea, swept by every wind from the wide Atlantic, and drenched by frequent rains. As Brendan fasted on the crown of Slieve Daidche, his monks fasted below, beseeching counsel from on high. Austere and tactless Brendan might be, but he had won the complete devotion of those men who knew him best.

That was no common fast; nor is Slieve Daidche any common hill. When the sky cleared, Brendan could look down on a splendid panorama of rugged coastline, green meadows, purple-dark headlands of sheer rock, bays and islands—and the great Western Sea. "There is no such view elsewhere in the British Islands," said one who knew it well.

Then finally one sunset, came the vision—"A dark island, far out to sea,

Illustrated by
FREDERICK CHAPMAN



Hurrying back to the shore, the monk found his small brother losing his grip on the rope.

but not on the horizon . . . having two mountains, one wooded, in the low central tract; between rose buildings, towers and curls of smoke, rising against the golden sky westward." This description comes not from Brendan's monkish biographers, but from the first-hand testimony of a modern observer; for the island seen by Brendan is a recurrent mirage, seen in 1923 and even more recently. To Brendan it was the answer to his forty days of unceasing prayer.

But Brendan was far too knowledgeable a sailor from his many coasting voyages to imagine that the island lay just where his vision placed it, perhaps a half-day's voyage out; there were the five little Blasket Islands, close inshore, then only the open sea. No, he had seen with the eyes of spirit something far and far beyond the horizon of the mortal eye. Far it must be—but it was his. His to

seek and find, his retreat, his "desert" for meditative withdrawal, hidden in "the vast intolerable sea."

Down from the peak of Slieve Daidche came Brendan. Joyfully he told his monks that their fasting was at an end, their pilgrimage beginning. And as Cruachan Ligli became Croagh Patrick in memory of Patrick's vigil there, Slieve Daidche gained a new name. To this day it is Brandon Hill, and the inlet at its foot is Brandon Bay.

On the shores of Brandon Bay the men of Kerry will point to the stones of a ruined oratory, and tell you it was there that Brendan and his men built their boat. His men, for not all of them were tonsured monks. Skilled lay craftsmen were glad to volunteer, and there was a king's jester, remembered as Crossan the Satirist, which is a title rather than a name. "Using tools of iron, they fashioned a

very light vessel, its sides and ribs of wickerwork after the Irish manner, and they covered it with cowhide, and they tanned it in oak bark, tarring its joints. They put on board provisions for forty days, with butter enough to dress hides for repairing the boat, and all utensils needed." A mast was fitted amidships, with a sail and steering-ropes. Actually, as the Book of Lismore says, they seem to have built not one but three of these vessels, each to hold twenty men.

It may seem ridiculous to the modern reader, that men should ever have embarked on a long voyage of discovery in such primitive craft. Yet it is worth noting that, off the changeless coastland of Kerry, fishermen and seal-hunters still brave the Atlantic in these same curraghs, unchanged save for the replacement of cowhide by tarred canvas. Shaped like a half-cylinder,

pinched together and raised at both ends, having no keel, and balanced only by the play of slender spoon-shaped oars, they are held by those who know them to be "still the most seaworthy boats that exist." Skimming over the rough seas, they are little affected by even the fiercest wind, lying so-low in the water and being stabilized by the deep thrust of their long sweeps.

Stanch craft, then and now, but were they fit for the journey Brendan was planning? Maybe some of the men laboring with adze or tarring-brush muttered a wish that Brendan's little fleet should fare to a better journey's end than Breccan's. It had happened not so many years before—Breccan, grandson of the High-King Niall, was less a warrior than a great merchant seaman. Fifty curraghs he had, trading between Ireland and Scotland, until one day the whole fleet was caught in the huge tidal whirlpool off Rathlin Island. To the last boat and the last man, they were sucked down; and the whirlpool won its name of Breccan's Cauldron—or "Corrie-vrekan." Stout little ships, stout-hearted sea-wise men, the Old Hag of the Sea still had her way with them. . . . But Brendan did not care. This was his ordeal of expiation, his "green martyrdom." He would find the Far Land, whether it lay beyond or under the wide waters.

Each curragh had its sail of leather, its bronze brazier for the cooking-fire of peat or charcoal, with supports that rested on each gunwale, keeping the fire's heat from the hides, its bronze caldron of riveted plates, hung from a tripod. The food stored included dried fish, grain, roots, edible moss—probably also many kinds of nuts. Water would be carried in skins.

BRENDAN had chosen his crew with care. Whether they bore the adze-shaped tonsure or a layman's shag of hair, they were all seafarers of long experience. Lightly they swung their curraghs to their shoulders, marched, like three great centipedes, to the shores of Brandon Bay, and put the three boats in the water, as Brendan intoned the blessing of the Holy Trinity. Then, as the boats were launched and manned, came interruption. Three men, probably "wanted" men, ran forward to kneel at water's edge with lifted hands imploring permission to join the voyage. Brendan gave them a refusal: he had chosen his crew already, and these were no honest men. They raised a despairing cry. "Mercy, mercy, Mac Finloga! Fast against you we will to the death, and our deaths on your soul, if you will not let us come."

In Old Ireland, as in modern India, the "fast to the death" was a last dread

recourse. Angry, Brendan yielded; but as they boarded ship, he voiced the prediction that two of the three would meet disaster on the trip—clear proof that the holy man had yet to learn his own lesson of bridled speech.

With a favoring wind, they set their course for "the point where the summer sun sets." Out into the Atlantic they went for twelve days' sailing—and still the "Land of the Promise of the Saints" did not rise over the western horizon to greet them!

A calm fell. At first Brendan was unwilling to have the ships rowed onward. He would accept the arbitration of the winds and waves. Then the suffering of his crew overbore his self-sacrificial determination. His permission given, the men bent to their long sweeps, rowed until they sank in famished exhaustion atop their oars. Then came a mighty wind, a great roaring storm that drove the little boats before it. Brendan prayed for his men. "It is enough for you, O mighty Sea, me alone to drown! Suffer these my people to escape." Hammered by hailstones, driven by bitter winds, constantly menaced by huge waves, the seafarers lost all knowledge of directions, under the cloud-black sky. Somehow the three boats kept together—perhaps by means of a cable.

Forty days out of Brandon Bay, the skies cleared. They were at the end of their provisions. Worse, they had already exhausted their water—perhaps some had been spilled during the storm. Then, far to the north, a rocky land, looming high from the sea. Rowing nearer, they gazed joyfully on streams of fresh sparkling water pouring over towering cliffs into the sea. Then with despair they saw that those cliffs rose sheer, offering no least chance of landing, but only the menace of pounding waves if they drew too close to that rock wall. It took all Brendan's fierce resolution to keep his men, maddened by the sight of those clear streams, from drinking seawater. For three days they rowed onward along that forbidding coast. Once they caught a tantalizing glimpse of mountain-pastures, seen through a notch in the hills—but no harbor!

On the fourth day, rowing and drifting, they entered a wide, sand-framed inlet, on which Brendan pronounced his solemn blessing before they set foot on the strand. One of the three unwelcome guests rushed ashore without permission, and perished there. It is uncertain whether he stepped into quicksand, or whether he merely fell sick and died a little later, after which his transgression was recalled. The story does not say so definitely, but it is probable that the sixty Irishmen did not leave that harbor until the following spring.

And where was this land, forty days' sail from Erin? "The description accords remarkably with . . . the southwestern coast of Iceland," says Baring-Gould. James Hornall, perhaps the greatest of all authorities on early navigation, cautiously concedes that Brendan "probably visited . . . Iceland." His landing-place would be at Faxa Fjord. The identification is supported by a reference to what is most plausibly interpreted as a volcano: "They saw a hill all on fire, and the fire stood on each side of the hill like a wall, all burning." To the monks it seemed that they had voyaged to the very mouth of hell—a far cry from the saintly isle of Brendan's vision! Sadly they repaired the curraghs and began again their "green martyrdom"—a variant from the "red martyrdom" of violent death and the "white martyrdom" of asceticism.

THEN began a long sea-wandering. Either Brendan still clung to the idea of drifting to his goal, or else he had lost confidence in the direction indicated by his vision. Here and there in western and northern isles surrounding Britain a church dedication helps to confirm the miracle-overgrown story. We are told that the wind blew them to "a low flat island white with sheep," where the butchering of a wild sheep saved them from starvation. Since their provisions had been exhausted, they must have been experiencing a perpetual Lent, with only fish for their diet. The Norse *Faerveyjar* means "Sheep Islands," and on the Isle of Storms in the Faeroes there is a Brendansvik Bay, where a church dedicated to Brendan was remembered in 1420. The sheep must be a relic of still earlier colonists—probably in the Bronze Age, when the Faeroes lay on a well-known trade route from Spain to Norway via Ireland and Scotland.

St. Kilda, that most remote of the Hebrides, owns a Cell of Brendan, where he preached to the handful of pagan islanders, doubtless leaving one of his monks behind to see that they did not backslide. Had the curraghs been guided to that tiny isle by following the flocks of migrant birds who still make Kilda a paradise to the bird-watcher? Or was Brendan now making use of his own *prechan*—the pet raven he carried with him—to find land for them, like the three birds of Raven-Floki the Norseman who rediscovered Iceland, or the dove of Noah?

Brendan must have reached the Shetlands, but there Norse invasion swept away most of the older population, with their folk-memories. From island to island, they drifted south along the western side of Britain. A church of Brendan's founding survives on Eileach-an-Naomh, close to that

other island of Hii or Iona, where St. Columba was to found his abbey.

For a while we lose track of Brendan's currachs; then his trail reappears in North Devon, where Branscombe and Braunton are hamlets clustering about churches of St. "Brangvalator," as the Britons called Brendan. Eventually he rounded Land's End and crossed to Brittany. He had now been four years on his *imram*.

ONE nightfall three battered, patched currachs are laid upside-down, safe against the wind, on the sands of the Breton isle of Rhuis. It is cold, Brendan and his monks are weary and famished. Sometimes their fare has been one meal every four days. Inland is the new monastery of St. Gildas the Wise, its cooking-smoke beckoning to the seafarers. On cramped seallegs, the Kerymen plod inland, brightening at the prospect of a taste of "kitchen." But when they reach the fenced close, the tall wooden gate is shut. Brendan knocks, raises his voice, confident of welcome. He has a surprise.

Gildas answers through the barred door. He is the most rigid of disciplinarians. Are the rules of his foundation to be set at naught for the convenience of night-faring vagrants? They have come too late for supper, and the gate has been shut for the night. They have their choice—wait until tomorrow or begone! The Irishmen were very weary, and the sea had taught them patience. They waited.

But when morning came, and the bitter wind of dawn, the gate was still barred. Renewed knocking brought no answer. Not that the monks of Rhuis lay late abed—not while the saintly Gildas was their Abbot! But it must have been Gildas' idea to inspect these unheralded vagrants at his leisure, after matins and after breakfast. Inside the wall rose a solemn chanting. Outside, the ragged men, their hair and beards white with sea-brine, still knocked. . . .

Brendan had learned much, but he was still Brendan. "Your shoulder against that gate, Talmach! A lesson they are needing!"

The brawny disciple named Talmach threw his weight against the barred door mightily. Something gave, the door fell crashing, and Brendan led his followers through the gateway. From church or refectory rushed Gildas, flame in his eye, and anathema on his tongue. Brendan met him, word for word and glance for glance. The colloquy that followed is not likely to have lacked vigor and piquancy on either side. But it is clear that Brendan did not lose his head. He stated his case forcibly but fairly, perhaps with a salting of wry

humor. It was not long before the two Abbots were clasping hands. Britons and Gaels, side by side, they went in to breakfast.

Gildas was a dour saint, but once offered, his hospitality was not grudging. He made the Kerry men welcome to stay as long as they liked. More than that, he offered Brendan the position of Abbot at Rhuis while he, Gildas, visited some of his kinsfolk in Britain. Brendan accepted, and spent perhaps a year at Rhuis before Gildas returned. Then he sailed on.

At the western tip of Brittany, looking once again on the open Atlantic, Brendan faced a decision. Should he sail once more into the sunset, in the battered, leaky currachs? There may have been only two currachs now, as leaking hides were pieced together, correspondingly overcrowded. But his island was still to seek. . . .

Landing on another islet, they were greeted by a solitary hermit, bent with great age, almost clothed in his wealth of snowy hair and beard. He was St. Paul Aurelian, emigrant scion of the great Romano-British family of the Aurelii. Once he had been a Bishop in Cornwall, at the court of King Mark, where Tristan dallied with Iseult the Fair. In his castle of Caer Bahed (which must be Castle Dore beside modern Fowey, where in 1936 Mark's long, timbered hall was excavated) King Mark had a peal of eight small bronze bells, which called his court to their meals. Paul Aurelian asked but one of these for his new church. Mark refused; Paul took ship to Brittany, where old friends of his were settling. Repenting of his niggardliness, Mark sent a bell to Paul in Brittany—the fish-handled "bell which cures all ills," which still rings in Leon Cathedral on the feast-day of St. Pol de Leon. But Paul Aurelian never went back to Cornwall. Now, in his extreme age, he spent much time in retirement and meditation on the island of Batz, where Brendan found him. The old hermit-Bishop was a man of another stamp from Gildas of Rhuis. Brendan found in him a "soul-friend," one in whom he could confide. We do not know what Paul Aurelian counseled Brendan in detail, but when he left Batz, Brendan had at last reconciled himself to return to Ireland.

Using the old sailing route from the Loire, Brendan's currachs came back to Kerry, after five years of self-imposed exile. To the Kerry-folk Brendan, the outstanding cleric of their district, was a hero: to himself he was a failure. The kinsmen of his drowned monk may have forgotten their feud; Brendan himself could not forget the land of his vision. . . .

A thought came to Brendan. His foster-mother, St. Itha, still lived,

though greatly aged. When he had been a tiny lad, her wisdom had been his guide. Why not now? Brendan, now a man of sixty-five, slung his book-satchel about his neck, took a pilgrim's staff. His bare feet took the chariot-rutted roads eastward, into County Limerick where Itha, now surely in her nineties, presided over her convent of Killcady.

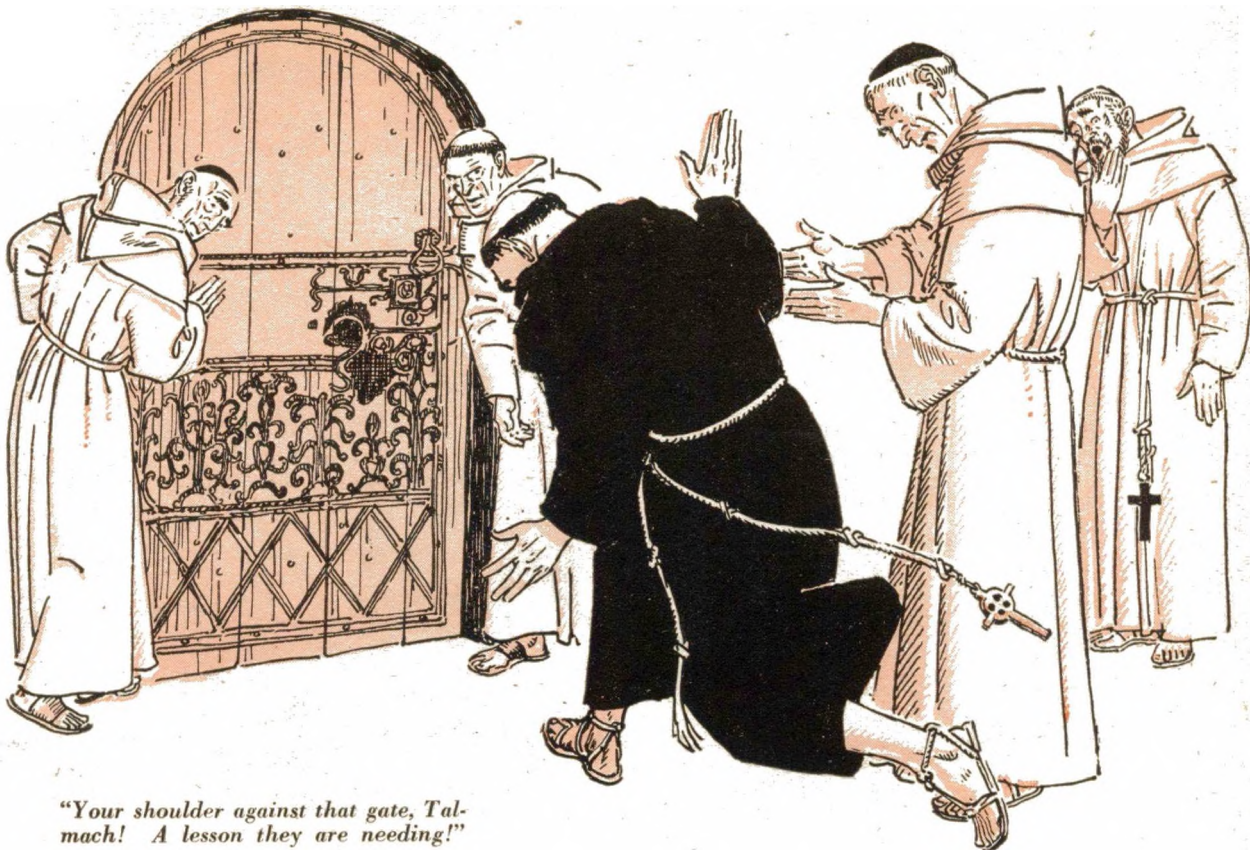
As he had six decades before, Brendan sat at the feet of his foster-mother. He told her the whole tale of his exile, his unslaked longing to see again his own promised land. "Mother of my heart, what should I do about my voyage?" he asked her.

The ancient Abbess was wise in the ways of the hearts of men, whether six or sixty-five. It is more surprising to find that she was also wise in the ways of the sea. Whence came that knowledge? Had she known voyages in her own far-off youth? Or did it come from a lifetime of observing the Gallic trading-ships that ascended the Shannon, bringing the wines of France to exchange for long-limbed Irish wolfhounds? We do not know, save that Itha was wise. She spoke:

"My dear son, why did you go on your expedition without consulting me?" First the reproof, then the counseling. "That land you are seeking from God you shall not find in those perishable leaky boats of hides." A pause here surely, as her eyes, blue and unfaded, gaze into Brendan's sorrowful face. Then like the ringing of a bronze bell, tiny and clear and penetrating: "But do you build a ship of wood, and you shall find the far land!"

HEAD uplifted, fresh hope speeding his feet, Brendan took the westward road. The Old Hag of the Sea had not beaten him yet! He spread the word that his *imram* was not ended. Monks and laymen, his old crew came flocking back to him. There could be no higher tribute to Brendan's leadership. He had no promise save exile and suffering and danger. They had not shared his vision; yet they would share his "green martyrdom." Surely, if the Western Sea were ever to be crossed under the conditions of the Sixth Century, it must be by seafarers like these! Columbus never had a crew like Brendan's.

A new obstacle arose: Kerry is not, nor ever was, a land rich in timber. Brendan could not find the wood needed for his new ship in his own country. In Connacht a new king, Aed Mac Eochu, ruled at Rathcroghan, where Queen Maeve had once lorded it over her husband and her lovers. Had Crossan the Jester, that small, witty man whose glib tongue had lightened so many long days at sea—had Crossan found the ear of the



"Your shoulder against that gate, Talmach! A lesson they are needing!"

young King of Connacht? At any rate, it was in the oak woods where the royal swine of Connacht pastured, that Brendan found and felled the necessary timber. The felled trees were carried to the shores of Clew Bay in Magh Eo, the Plain of Eo which men now clip down to Mayo, where the ship was built.

What was the plan of Brendan's "large and wonderful ship" of oak? We know that he "engaged artificers and smiths," not necessarily local men, so that the ship may well have embodied the most advanced shipbuilding ideas then known in Western Europe. Its most likely prototypes are the trading-ships plying between Western France and Southern Ireland, and those in which the Britons of Cornwall and Devon were swarming across the Channel to Brittany and across the Bay of Biscay, where a British settlement in Galicia maintained its identity for four centuries.

A BRETON sailor-cleric, the later St. Malo, seems to have voyaged with Brendan to Ireland, becoming his second in command, and may have shared in forming the plans of the ship. Actually, it seems to have greatly resembled those ships of the Veneti described (and destroyed) by Julius Caesar in 56 B.C.—"Great, shallow-draught ships with leather sails and

iron anchor-chains" (only Brendan's ship had a woven sail).

Like the Venetic ships, it had no oars save the one great iron-bound blade that served as rudder. She curved high at stem and stern, with decks resting on wooden stanchions, and "smith-work" clenched her hull-timbers together. Like the currachs, she was calked with tar. Apparently her tonnage exceeded all three of the currachs combined, for there was room for a crew of sixty, with ample storage for supplies. Besides the regular foodstuffs, Brendan took on board grain and plants to stock the fields and garden of a monastery, live swine, and roots of blue sea-holly as a specific against scurvy—an item of knowledge picked up somewhere during their previous voyage.

In the Sixth Century the period of sea-navigation ran from mid-March to mid-October. On the 22nd of March an Irish Church Calendar notes *Egressio familie Brendani*—"the outfaring of the Company of Brendan." The year was probably A.D. 551, when the Emperor Justinian from Constantinople ruled a Roman Empire once again extending from Gibraltar to the Jordan, and King Arthur was ten years gone from Britain.

The men of Mayo say that Brendan's ship was launched at Westport, and we have no reason to doubt their

tradition. Thus Brendan made a more northerly start than before. But he had learned much. Instead of immediately plunging into the unknown, he went coasting south to Aran. There they lingered for a month. Did Brendan await a second vision, or merely a favorable wind before they dared "the vast intolerable sea" beyond Inishmore.

Late in April the wind blew strongly from the land. Brendan's triangular sail was spread, and the ship of oak sailed into the west. Beyond sight of the Twelve Bens of Connemara, beyond the vision of Enda's monks clustered on the shores of Aran's Inishmore, beyond the farthest orbit of currachs of the fisher-clans, they sailed into the utterly unknown.

Sailing directly westward from the Aran Islands, Brendan's ship (some think she was named *An Trindoit*, the *Trinity*) was on a course which, if perfectly held, should have carried her to Labrador, or the northern tip of Newfoundland. But of course the idea of a straight course maintained for almost twenty-five hundred sea miles without instruments is preposterous. On the first voyage they had, if the Iceland landing be granted, been deflected enormously northward. But this time they had better weather, giving them guidance from the setting sun and the North Star.



Going ashore in this balmy land, they were greeted by an ancient man, Festivus, "clothed in the feathers of birds."

Forty days out from Aran they entered a region of thick fog. The sea "slept" (was utterly calm?) and "icy cold ran through their veins." They were menaced by sea-monsters (a herd of whales?) but praying the succors of St. Patrick and St. Bridget, escaped as the monsters fought one another. Sailing to meet them came "a great and bright-jeweled crystal temple," which seems recognizable as an iceberg. For three days they kept in sight of it, marveling at its beauty, and when it vanished, the crew felt they had lost a friendly companion.

The fog lifting, they saw a rocky inhospitable shore thronged with strange demon-beasts, bellowing defiance. They had "catlike heads, tusked like a boar, with bristly fur and bulging, spotted bellies"—which sounds very much like a herd of walrus. Here was land indeed, but still utterly unlike the Far Land of Brendan's vision and hope. They sailed onward. Then Crossan the Jester died, and was buried on the shore with full rites. Not long afterward the smith of the expedition also died, and they were forced to give his body to the sea—a hint that they were again out of sight of land.

Escaping what seems to have been a waterspout, they dropped anchor off

an island. Dark-skinned "pygmies" assembled on the shore, defying the shipmen to land. Brendan had to forbid his men to go ashore—if fighting was all they wanted, they need never have left Ireland! Seeking to lift anchor, they found it fouled deep under water, and were forced to break the anchor-chain. Brendan himself forged a makeshift anchor from iron scraps, at the anvil of the dead smith. They sailed on and on.

The weather grew summery, the off-shore breezes scented as with spice. Then at last they sighted the shores of "a land odorous, smooth and blessed, a land not mournful." This, after all his travels and disappointments, was Brendan's Land.

Going ashore in this balmy land, they were greeted by an ancient man, Festivus, "clothed in the feathers of birds," who told them that he had been in that land as a hermit for thirty years.

Before establishing his monastery, Brendan carried his explorations one step farther. Their landing-place appears to have been an island not far from a much larger land mass. Crossing to this, Brendan went inland for another "forty days" before he reached the banks of a large and wonderful river, on the banks of which he found

fruit and jewels. And here Brendan had an experience that was the turning-point of his career. It is very obscurely narrated that a young man came and spoke with Brendan. Whether this was a messenger from the party left on the island, or the creature of a dream or vision is not clear; but his message was unmistakable: *Brendan was to go home to Ireland.* This new land was not for Brendan to dwell in, nor for the men of his day. His work was to preach to and teach the men of Erin.

Brendan's men did not complain at the prospect of the long voyage home, forsaking this beautiful summery land forever. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" The great river of the far land could not compare with their wistful memories of Shannon and Boyne. We have no tale of that homeward faring. They simply sailed back as they had come—apparently after spending one winter in the Far Land.

To Brendan himself, his return was the return of a failure. He had no heart to write the story of his voyage. His monks might have it for a fireside tale. It was all behind him now.

In Erin, men thought otherwise. In 553, the year of his return, the King

of Connacht gave to God and to Brendan a wide tract of land. There Brendan built the university-monastery of Clonfert, which soon had an enrollment of three thousand students. Here at long last was Brendan's gift from God, his land of promise, not far across the wide sea, but in the green heart of Ireland.

Had, then, his long questing been utterly in vain? Not quite. Out in the sea-solitudes of his "green martyrdom" Brendan had left his hot and hasty temper. And, said Brendan, he had heard—was it in the long watches of the night?—the harping of the Host of Heaven, compared to which all earthly harping was but discord.

WE have one more glimpse of Brendan in his old age, at the coronation of Aed Caem, on the Rock of Cashel in A.D. 570. The official bard, Mac Lenini, whose duty it was to preside over the ceremony, was an obstinate pagan. The new king of Munster, himself a Christian, would not "take the kingship" from the hands and the mouth of a pagan—a Druid in all but the name. Into this impasse stepped Brendan. Once he might have scorned such worldly employment, but he was wiser now; he knew that the things of this world are not to be scorned, but instead lifted and redeemed. He made a song for Aed Caem's new kingship, led him to the coronation stone, and in winged words bade the men of Munster serve their new king. And Mac Lenini watched and listened from the sidelines. When Brendan had done, Mac Lenini rushed to kneel before him, asking baptism. And Brendan gave him a new name, Colman, the Little Dove. He also became a saint—St. Colman of Cloyne.

In his ninety-fourth year, May 16 A.D. 577, Brendan died, and "in Clonfert he lies resting."

Such is the tale of Brendan, and of his seven years' seafaring. What is the truth behind it all? Was there such a voyage, or voyages at all? Skeptics have not been wanting to doubt that Brendan ever left the West of Ireland.

As not infrequently happens, these skeptics are demonstrably wrong. The early and highly reliable "Life of St. Columba" by Adamnan refers to a voyage taken by Brendan to visit Columba in the Western Isles, accompanied by Comgall, Abbot of Bangor, St. Caimneach of Achad-Bo and Cormac Ua Liaithain. This would be after Columba's removal to Iona in 563, and after Brendan's great voyages were done. But it establishes him as a seafarer, and a companion of seafarers, as well as the equal of the greatest names of Irish monasticism.

The reference to Cormac Ua Liaithain ("O' Lyons" in modern guise) is of particular interest. This ship-comrade of Brendan and disciple of Columba appears to have sought to find Brendan's Land for his own retreat.

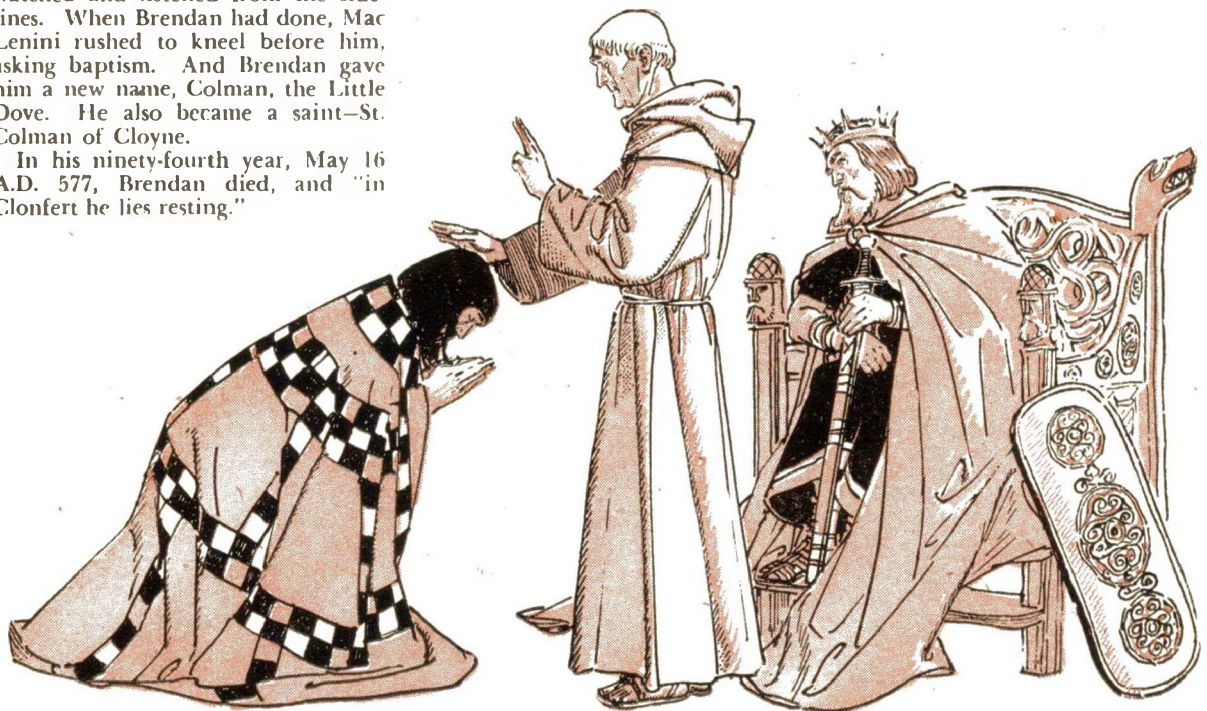
Adamnan tells of Cormac's three voyages in his curragh in search of a sea-girt "desert" for undisturbed holy meditation. The last of Cormac's voyages saw him blown northward before a gale which lasted two weeks. Going onward and onward into the north, he was beset by "myriads of loathsome stinging creatures about the size of frogs, which struck the sides of

the curragh with such violence that it seemed as if they would wholly penetrate the leather covering." At last, when hope seemed gone, the prayers of Cormac and his crew were answered by a sudden change of wind, making possible their escape. As St. Itha had seen, the curragh was unequal to such a voyage as Brendan and Cormac hoped to make.

The testimony of Adamnan and of Brendanic church-dedications are enough to authenticate Brendan's voyages to the Faeroes, Hebrides, Devon and Brittany. But what of the alleged Iceland voyage? Was he the true discoverer of Iceland? The answer seems to be that Brendan *reached* but did not *discover* Iceland.

The realistic description of Icelandic scenery, with the admitted fact that Irish hermits no better equipped than Brendan on his first voyage did use Iceland as a place of retreat A.D. 700-800, while they do not actually prove the fact of Brendan's voyage to Iceland, leaves no ground for denying its probability. But other seafarers had reached that island some 250 years earlier—the crew of a Roman war-galley, blown far to the N.W. during a punitive circumnavigation of Scotland. The evidence is three Roman copper *antoniniani* (pennies) found in the district of Sudhur Mulasysse, indicating a thrifty thank-offering made about A.D. 300.

Though no trace of this discovery appears in late-Roman sources, it ap-



Mac Lenini rushed to kneel before Brendan, asking baptism. He was given a new name, Colman, the Little Dove.

pears that the crew of this storm-driven galley made good their return, for a dim knowledge of Iceland appears in Celtic sources of later date, with a characteristically Roman mistaken identification with Thule.

"Ultima Thule" is a legacy from the Greek explorer Pytheas of Marsilles (about 325 B.C.) who "discovered" the British Isles, and heard of a country called Thule six days' sail from Scotland. It must have been Western Norway, where seaborne trade with Scotland is archaeologically verified, and where a district of Thele-mark offers a plausible explanation of Pytheas' name for the country. In Roman Imperial times, Thule was apparently identified with Shetland, but not without uncertainty.

In any case, the coins are fatal to Brendan's claim as the discoverer of Iceland. He was at most its re-discoverer. But what of his second voyage?

The level-headed W. H. Babcock, in his "Legendary Islands" (1922) held that Brendan's second voyage was actually to the south—to the Canaries, or Madeira, and the N.W. coast of Africa. This is supported by a number of late-medieval maps. But of course the map-makers were only speculating, on a more slender basis of information than we enjoy. It is hard to reconcile a voyage to the Canaries with references to freezing cold, icebergs and herds of walrus.

Two French Americanists, Beauvois (in 1875) and Gaffarel (1892) endorsed Brendan's claim to be the discoverer of the New World. The saint's most recent biographer, Dr. Little of Dublin (1946), would bring him to the vicinity of Miami. But the hermit Festivus would seem to be a stumbling-block.

SHELVING FESTIVUS for the moment, let us have a look at what might be made of the incidents reported during the second voyage. It is probably not worth basing any calculation on the forty days of sailing, since this is probably an indefinite expression. But the encounter with the iceberg strongly suggests that they had reached the Greenland Current, west of Iceland. The whales and the fog, though less decisive, point more or less in the same direction. The rocky land reminds one of the Helluland (rock-slab land) of the Norse Vinland Sagas. But Leif Ericsson and Thorfinn Karlsefni found Helluland aswarm with Arctic foxes, not with walrus. The usual identification of Helluland is with Labrador, but in Brendan's case the walrus-herds suggest the S.E. coast of Greenland. If so, the "dark pygmies" might be Eskimo.

Lacking more specific indications, it is probably hopeless to search among

the more pleasing islands and larger rivers of North America for the site of Brendan's never-to-be-founded monastery. But a few clues, quite possibly illusory, may be worth noting. In medieval maps from about 1325 onward, the island of Brendan's discovery bears the name Brazil, Brasil. Now, *Brasil* is a common medieval term for red dye, or dyewood, but it is also an Irish personal name—properly Bresal, Breasail. A Catalan map of 1375 shows "Brazil" as an almost complete ring of land, rather like a coral islet, with a single entrance and nine islands in the inner "lagoon." Babcock would see in this a sailor's-eye version of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, very sketchily explored. Another Catalan map, about 1480, shows a large island of Brazil S.W. of Iceland, in a position suggestive of Labrador or Newfoundland.

On his homeward voyage from "Vinland the Good," about A.D. 1023, Thorfinn Karlsefni captured two "Skraeling" (Indian) boys on the coast of Markland, which is Nova Scotia. These were taught Norse and baptized. They told the Norsemen that "another country lay on the other side . . . where people lived who wore white clothes and uttered loud cries, and carried poles, and went with flags." Is this the description of an Indian ritual dance, or a Celtic Christian religious procession? This comes from four centuries after Brendan, but later anchorites may have followed in his route, until Viking ravages cut their line of communication with Erin. That the Icelandic writer was reminded of Irish clergy is suggested by his comment. "It is thought that this was 'White-Man's-Land' (*Hvitramannaland*), or Ireland the Great."

Our only other reference to this mysterious country is in *Landnámabók*, the Icelandic Domesday Survey. This says that a heathen Norseman named Ari Marsson was storm-driven to "White-Man's-Land, which some call Ireland the Great," said to be six days' sail west of Ireland. Ari was never able to return, but was baptized there, and rose to great honor in that land. An Icelander named Rafn, long resident at Limerick in Ireland, first told the story, and seemingly claimed that he, or some of his Norse friends, had actually seen Ari in *Hvitramannaland*. The time of this story might be about A.D. 1000. It is not easy to say what its basis may have been, but it does embody a conviction on the part of the Norse that Irishmen had preceded them in the lands that they were just then discovering across the Atlantic.

From its very early date, the term "White-Man's-Land" is not likely to

imply a contrast with the Red Man. If it is a Norse translation of Irish *Tír Fín Fínn*, it might only mean "Land of the Men (who wear) white (garments)." The Danish Vikings whom the Irish styled "Black Strangers" were not Negroes! Other Vikings, who fought at Clontarf in full armor are called "Blue Men." We may now recall the "people . . . who wore white clothes" of Karlsefni's informants. Even if these were Indians clothed in near-white buckskin, they may have served to give their land a name.

Let us now return to that ambiguous hermit Festivus. I have little faith in Festivus. The *Navigatio Brendani* has entirely too many insular hermits for plausibility, even granting that it relates to what was the Age of Hermits, *par excellence*. It is easy enough to suggest that he really belongs to the first voyage, or to the Aran Islands at the start of the second. But let us look at Festivus a little more closely. He wears a garment of bird's leathers: Are we dealing with a Latino-Celtic recluse, or an Indian medicine man? And the name Festivus? I would take that as a mere Latin adjective, describing the antics of that aboriginal greeter, later mistakenly converted into a personal name.

THERE IS A CHANCE, small indeed but definite, that some day much more may be known of the voyagings of Brendan, or of those others who, like Cormac O'Lyons, may have tried to follow him. Brendan and many of his men came from Kerry, and in their day Kerry was still the home of the cryptic Ogham script, those odd scorings along the edges of standing stones. Crossan the Royal Jester died on shipboard, and was buried in the land that Brendan found across the sea. It is not said that he was given an inscription, but such a detail is not likely to have been taken into the tradition. If the voyagers had been dependent solely upon Latin script, then the time needed to peck out a name might well have seemed too much. Ogham, using only straight lines of no great length, could be filed along a stone's edge within a single afternoon. . . . To the uninitiated, such an inscription would appear to be only the result of haphazard knife-sharpenings. Once recognized, however, it would be decisive. Oghams, with their archaic spelling and grammar, are almost impossible to "fake." What vacationist or fisherman will note that a certain seaside rock, probably one that presents a sharp edge, bears notches of varying length and inclination, always in groups of one to five, and so bring to light the resting-place of Crossan the Jester?

HIS FATHER'S SON

by JOSEPH W. HOTCHKISS

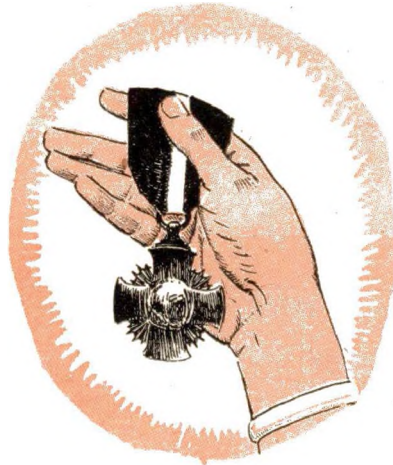
HIS father had died in the war. Paul halfway remembered him. When you are thirteen, you can't be sure how much of what you recall from seven years back is real remembering, and how much is looking at pictures and hearing folks talk. Though there was not much continuity to Paul's memories of his father, there were certain scenes that were vivid—that could only be his personal remembering, because no one was in them besides little Paul and big Paul. Nobody could claim to remember these times better than Paul.

All Paul's memories of his father had to do with the sea. There was the catboat. Big Paul used it for fishing, mostly. But some days he would take little Paul, and they would run down the coast a ways, then laze back, exploring the bays and inlets. One day big Paul had said: "Paulie, your ma doesn't love the sea the way we do. And I got the feeling she's jealous, or scared—or maybe some of both."

Paul remembered he'd said, "Yes sir," the way he did sometimes when he didn't quite understand big Paul.

Paul lived with his mother now in a small house built on the dunes, on the hard sand track they called the River Road. The River was really a tidal estuary, rising and falling with the ocean that fed it. When a strong northeaster blew, the wind piled the sea back up the River, so that salt water crept up on the dune, leaving, when it went down, a high-water mark below which the marsh grass never grew.

Paul often looked down the River to the sea; but his mother seldom looked out of the windows on that side of the house. After big Paul died in the war, she had rearranged the front room so that her chair looked out the windows toward the uplands. And she never talked to Paul about his father—or the sea. Paul understood that the sea had taken his father, and for that reason his mother hated the sea. Thus, in summer when he would have liked to live on the water from sunup to sundown, Paul was sent to the mountains, to stay with his grandparents. And in the shorter vacations, he was tied to the house, or the shed,



or the woodlot, by a routine of chores of his mother's devising. Now that Paul was a big boy, there was always wood to cut and gather and split.

So it happened that Paul, wiry-built, was as strong as many men. Except for a tendency to gangling, there was little of the child about Paul. He was courteous, but taciturn, and spent much time alone in his room with his books. . . .

The night of the storm, Paul was in his room, upstairs. His mother was sewing, down in the front room, with the shades drawn—as though paper window shades and thin panes of glass could close the elements out of any coastal dwelling!

The wind was from the northeast. Already, Paul could see from his window, the sea had passed the season's high-water mark, passed any mark that he could remember. And still the water was rising. Wind and rain rushed in at the open window as Paul waited for a patch of moonlight to try to gauge the sea's advance. Not until he forced down the sash on the elemental fury of the night did he hear the sharp repetitive knock at the front door, and a man's voice calling insistently: "For the love of God, open up."

Paul brushed by his mother, who stood mute and white in the front hall, with her sewing gathered up in her apron. She made a gesture, as though she would stop him, but she said nothing.

Paul threw open the door. In the lee of the house the wind was less, but the rain fell in torrents. A stranger in rough clothes, soaked through, stood outside. Paul motioned him in.

The man looked from Paul to the woman. "You must get out, at once," he said. "They've sent me to get you dunes people. This is a hurricane. Your houses, your lives are in danger."

Paul's mother put a hand to her mouth. She started to speak, but Paul motioned to her to be silent.

"We're not going," he said. "We belong here."

The man said: "You're crazy. I'll use force to get you out. I have Coast Guard orders."

Paul said nothing, but his fists were clenched, the muscles in his bare arms knotted. The man shrugged. "I have others to warn. What you do is your own affair." He turned to the door. Paul opened it, and closed it firmly behind him.

His mother said, "Son—" But Paul interrupted: "Get candles and flashlights, all we have in the house. The power line won't stand up much longer."

He went to the shoulder-high window in the front room that looked out on the River, and pulled up the shade. The sea had advanced to the foundation stones of the terrace. Fleeingly he remembered his father's broad back straining with the effort of placing those stones. Little Paul had watched from this same window.

THE lights in the house flickered twice and failed. From the darkened room he could see out better. The rising sea carried wreckage and driftwood. He saw a corner of the terrace crumble under the battering of an uprooted swamp cedar.

Paul's mother came into the room carrying flashlights and candles. Paul selected the strongest light. He played the beam around the room, from the heavy black walnut divan to his mother's chair, till the bull's-eye fell on the upright piano.

"Mother," he said, "hold the light."

She took the torch from him. The beam leaped to the ceiling, then danced crazily on the front of the piano. Paul said, "Steady." His



"Tonight, as God is my witness, I intended to give you this."

mother grasped the light in both hands and brought the beam under control.

From the sea side of the room a new noise emerged above the sound of the storm. The heavy terrace door creaked and groaned. Paul took the light from his mother. Water was seeping around the door, forming a widening pool on the floor. Paul examined the hinges on which the door was swung. The screws that held the hinges to the frame shivered perceptibly in the screw holes. Recrossing the room to where the piano stood, Paul kicked out of his path the scatter rugs that covered the floor.

He said to his mother: "Take the light again."

PAUL put his shoulder to the end of the piano and exerted all his strength in an heroic effort. The piano stood fast. His mother took a step toward him, to add her weight to his, but before she could reach him, the piano budged, then started to move forward slowly, propelled in part by its own momentum, across the slightly inclined floor. His mother timed her steps to the forward motion of the heavy piano. She held a steady beam of light on the terrace door.

The flow of water around and under the door was increasing. A delta of silt had built up and advanced six feet into the room. When the rolling casters that supported the piano hit the muck, Paul had to throw his whole

body against the vertical end board to keep the piano from bogging down.

Under the pressure of the storm outside, the terrace door had bowed in. The hinges and the heavy antique iron lock that held the door to the frame gave way a little each time a piece of driftwood struck. Lighter flotsam washing by made hollow, irregular drum-beats on the outer surface of the door.

Paul had the piano within two feet of the door when a heavy knock sounded at the other side of the house. His mother started, but Paul said sharply: "Stand by. Steady with the light." He was maneuvering the piano broadside to the door.

They heard the front hall door open and close. The woman threw the beam of her light across the room. There stood the man who had ordered them earlier to leave the house. He was soaked far above the waterproof hip boots he wore, and rainwater ran off the upper part of his foul-weather clothing in torrential rivulets.

Paul's mother waited apprehensively for him to speak, but he did not speak. He joined Paul in the task of placing the piano. Together they moved it easily up against the door.

Paul said to the man: "Hold it there. I'll get uprights and a hammer and nails to shore it up."

The man nodded, and leaned his weight against the piano. Paul returned with several heavy boards and two-by-fours. He divided the lumber,

and gave the man a hammer and some long nails. They worked together, nailing the boards to the floor against the feet of the piano, then running two-by-fours from the ends of the piano to the door frame.

"She won't give now," the man said. He looked to Paul.

Paul nodded. "We've done what we can."

The woman said: "I'll make coffee."

THE man and Paul stood at the window, not speaking. They looked out on the storm. From time to time Paul inspected the shoring that held the piano against the door. Sounds of battering at the terrace door became less frequent, then ceased. Outside, the wind subsided suddenly; and the water, without pressure of the wind to drive it, receded from the terrace.

Paul's mother came back with three full cups, and a pitcher of cream, and a bowl of sugar lumps on a painted tray.

The man said: "The storm's going down, ma'am."

She said: "You were good to come back and help."

"When your neighbors told me you were Paul Watson's widow and son, I had to come back. Paul and me grew up in these parts. I went in the Navy before he did, before the war. I'm a regular. But I kept up with Paul, and how he was killed, and how they gave him the Navy Cross. You've a right to be proud of the boy, ma'am. He's Paul's son, right enough."

Paul had listened intently. Now he spoke to the man, ignoring his mother. "You say my father won the Navy Cross? That's for bravery. My mother has told me that he died in the war. But she never said he won a medal."

The man and the boy looked at the woman. She stood with her hands clasped at her chest. Fear had etched her face that night, but now live apprehension animated her features. Her eyes passed mutely from Paul to the stranger. Her mouth worked, but no words came to her lips.

Paul said: "Mother—" His voice sounded shrill in the room, now strangely still after the storm.

"I did right, as I saw it, Paul," his mother said at length. "I did what I thought your father would have wanted."

Paul said nothing, but the man expressed his forthright puzzlement. "But didn't you take pride in your man, ma'am, and wouldn't Paul have wanted for the boy to share a part of that pride?" Having spoken, he looked away.

The woman seized his intrusion as an opportunity to escape her son's burning, accusative stare. She turned to the stranger.

"Don't doubt that I take pride in my husband. Pride has made it that much harder for me, doing what I thought was right. I knew the sea was in the boy's blood, as it was in his father's. But how can a woman who fears open water teach a lad the danger of the sea, and him keep his nerve, and not be scared off it for good?"

The man shook his head. He said nothing.

The woman went on: "The only way I knew was to keep the boy's thoughts away from the sea till he was old enough to learn the way of it for himself."

Paul remembered another day that he had not thought of since big Paul died in the war. In the catboat, running down the River with a following wind and tide, big Paul had said: "The day you lose your nerve is the day you go on the beach for good, son."

Paul looked on his mother with a new understanding. She continued to address the man:

"The hardest thing I ever did was to deny the boy his own father's memory. But talk of his father would have set Paul's heart on venturing out on the water, and me threatening, scolding, warning him of the danger. Paul never lost his nerve—there's the medal to prove that. He'd want the boy to have that same nerve."

She turned to her son. "Tonight, as God's my witness, I intended to give you this." She reached under her apron, into her skirt pocket, and brought out the medal, the Navy Cross.

"When you told our friend here that we wouldn't leave this house, you might have been your father standing there. I knew you were a man, Paul, and ready to take your place in a man's world."

She pinned the medal on young Paul's shirt.

Outside, an ominous thrust of wind roared in the chimney, and forced a cold draught of air into the room. Paul's face was drawn taut with fa-

tigue. He looked to the man for counsel.

The man said: "This will be the tail end of the storm. But the tide's been falling all the while. You won't have the water with this blow."

Paul nodded. The man said: "You won't need me here. I'll be leaving. But next summer when I'm back in these parts on leave, you and me'll round us up a boat and do some poking around."

Paul said: "I'd be proud to be shipmates with you, sir." He shook the man's hand. When Paul returned from the door, his mother had spread out before her in the candlelight an official-looking paper.

"It's your father's citation, Paul," she said. "And there's lots in his letters, and what I remember that he told me, that may be some help to you when you go out on the water."

The wind ranted outside, while Paul drew a chair up close beside his mother. The candle on the desk shed a light on both of them.

*Illustrated by
Frederick
Chapman*



*"Paulie, your ma
doesn't love the
sea the way we do.
I got the feeling
she's jealous or
scared."*

Old Sailors Never Die

THE STUBBORN GALLANT NEVADA SURVIVED PEARL HARBOR TO BOMBARD NORMANDY AND TAKE A KAMIKAZE OFF OKINAWA; EVEN THE ATOM BOMB AT BIKINI MISSED HER.

by ALEC HUDSON

NEVADA was obstinate the last day she was afloat. She was always an obstinate old witch, but those who served in her loved her for her stubbornness as for her other virtues. Stubbornness in a battleship can be a mighty virtue. She had a mind of her own, did our *Nevada*. For those who learned to respect her whims, she accomplished prodigious labors. Those who tried to force their will upon her, she broke in fiendish glee. . . .

Turbine-driven battleships were experimental when she was built, in

1914. Early turbine ships had little backing power, and *Nevada* had less than most. When Charles Evans Hughes went to Brazil's centennial, he went rolling down to Rio in the *Maryland*, then the newest thing afloat. They made a speed run going down and broke all records for the distance. *Nevada* had been weeks at sea, at a fuel-conserving ten-knots speed, to join *Maryland* a few miles off port and enter with éclat together.

Even the freshest boot aboard *Nevada* knew we were in for trouble when we entered that beautiful harbor in close column behind the *Maryland*, at battle speed. *Maryland* had electric drive. She had full backing power, as effective as four-wheel brakes. The Admiral was strong on dash and speed. On *Maryland*, the flagship, the signal to anchor in berth assigned was two-blocked. Nineteen knots right up to the anchor. The "old man" may have hedged a little and stopped her engines before the signal came down with a run, but he couldn't do very much. White water boiled up under *Maryland's* stern, five hundred yards ahead. Down went her anchors as the signal was executed. *Nevada* clawed ineffectively at the water, trying to check her way.

THE captain was a seaman born. He had earned a Navy Cross in the first World War, for bringing into port a torpedoed transport. But he had his hands full that morning. Dead ahead was *Maryland*. On the port bow were three Japanese cruisers. We could see them swarming on the forecastle veering cable, as we bore down upon them. They feared *Nevada's* steel twenty years too soon. When the speed had checked a little, we let go the port anchor. The cable paid out with a roaring run. We dropped the starboard anchor too, and backed and backed and backed with the steam drawing fast out of the boilers through wide-open throttles to her puny backing turbines.

The Japs we avoided by a hair's-breadth, rendering passing honors as we ranged alongside them. *Nevada's*

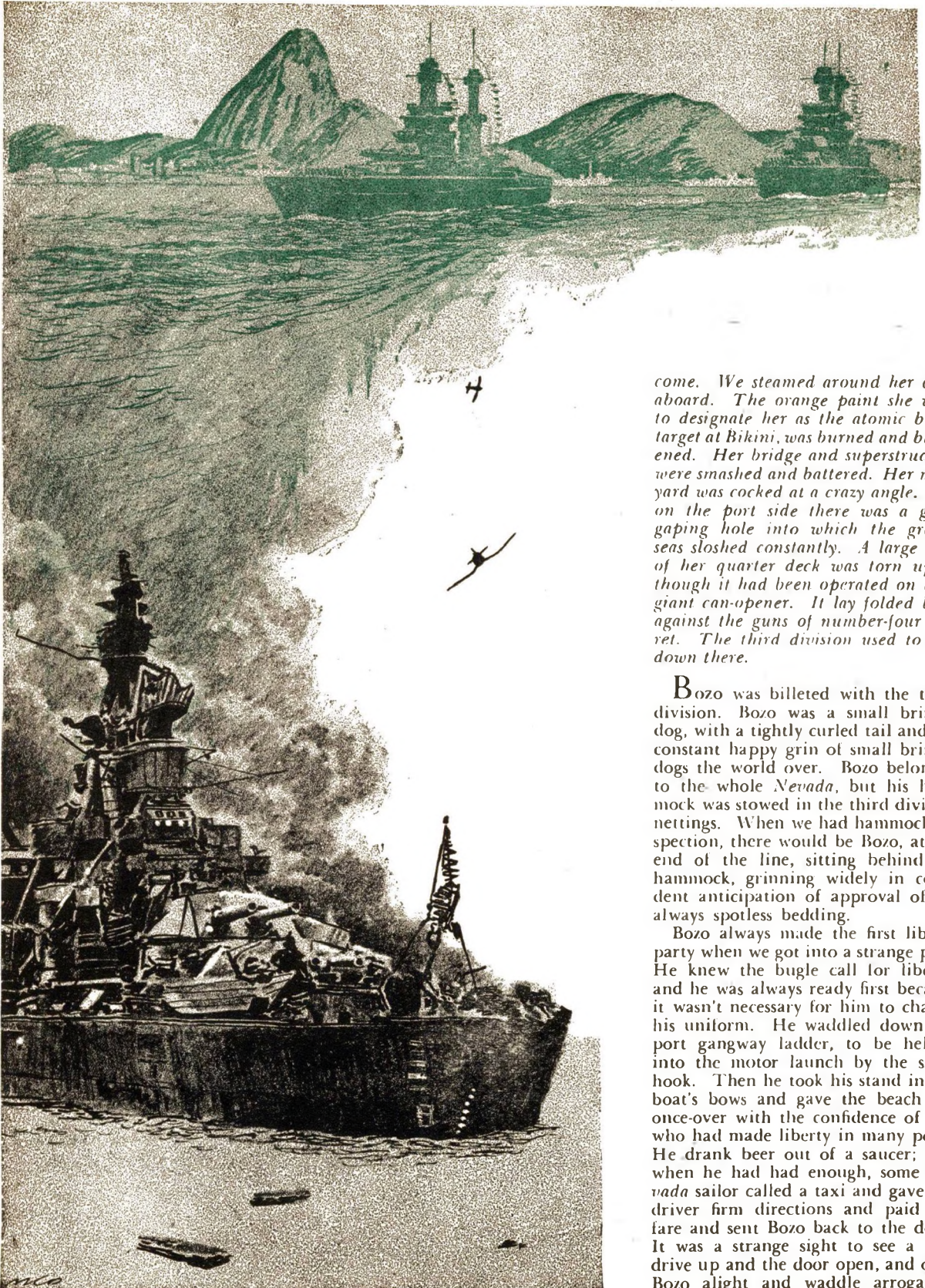
crew were at quarters in dress whites, with officers all in full-dress blues. We stood, stiff with gold braid for show, cocked hat, fringed epaulettes, frock coat, and the wide gold braid running down the outsides of the blue broadcloth trouser legs, while the cold sweat ran down the inside, as we watched *Nevada* avoid one disaster by plunging toward another.

The Mexican gunboat up ahead just lay there quietly and prayed to the Blessed Virgin. As we checked *Nevada's* way, the stern swung to port, almost into a British battle cruiser riding off our quarter in quiet scorn, watching the display. The Argentine sounded general quarters, and all the time we were rendering international honors. Should we render passing honors twice, once when bearing down on a foreign vessel in almost inevitable collision, and again when backing miraculously away from it?

IT was as though you drove full speed into a crowded parking lot, with no brakes, while being socially punctilious to all your gawking friends and enemies. The Brazilian colors broke at the fore; twenty-one guns, the guard and band, and the strains of the Brazilian national anthem in salute. Then in careful order of the seniority of their representatives, similar honors to each nation whose ships were in that crowded harbor, and nearly all of them had ships there. The band went on playing one national anthem after another, and the saluting batteries banged away for hours, it seemed, *Nevada's* crew at stiff attention. Her captain, cocked hat awry, dashed from side to side of the bridge in frantic efforts to get a clear view along the side, through clouds of black-powder smoke from the saluting batteries. He backed her into her berth assigned, and moored her with both anchors.

When we steamed out of Pearl Harbor, to watch her die, *Nevada* had already undergone three days of scientific vivisection designed to test new and secret weapons and explosives, and strain the old ship to the limit, while preserving her for this ordeal to



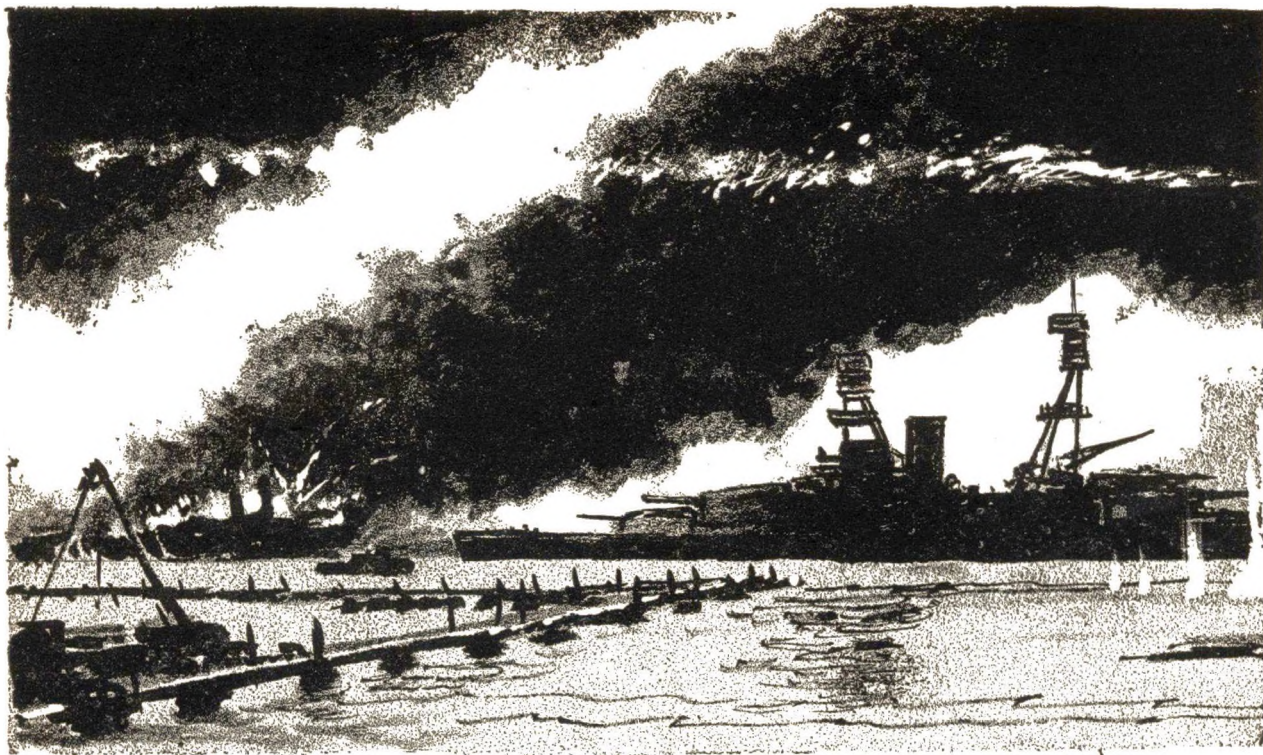


Illustrated by JOHN McDERMOTT

come. We steamed around her close aboard. The orange paint she wore to designate her as the atomic bomb target at Bikini, was burned and blackened. Her bridge and superstructure were smashed and battered. Her main yard was cocked at a crazy angle. Aft on the port side there was a great gaping hole into which the greedy seas sloshed constantly. A large slice of her quarter deck was torn up as though it had been operated on by a giant can-opener. It lay folded back against the guns of number-four turret. The third division used to live down there.

Bozo was billeted with the third division. Bozo was a small brindle dog, with a tightly curled tail and the constant happy grin of small brindle dogs the world over. Bozo belonged to the whole *Nevada*, but his hammock was stowed in the third division nettings. When we had hammock inspection, there would be Bozo, at the end of the line, sitting behind his hammock, grinning widely in confident anticipation of approval of his always spotless bedding.

Bozo always made the first liberty party when we got into a strange port. He knew the bugle call for liberty, and he was always ready first because it wasn't necessary for him to change his uniform. He waddled down the port gangway ladder, to be helped into the motor launch by the stern hook. Then he took his stand in the boat's bows and gave the beach the once-over with the confidence of one who had made liberty in many ports. He drank beer out of a saucer; and when he had had enough, some *Nevada* sailor called a taxi and gave the driver firm directions and paid the fare and sent Bozo back to the dock. It was a strange sight to see a taxi drive up and the door open, and only Bozo alight and waddle arrogantly down to the dock, tail wagging, and swaggering a little as becomes a sailor.



At the boat landing Bozo sat and waited. The steam launch from the British battle cruiser came in, bright-work gleaming in the failing light. An eight-oared cutter from the Spanish cruiser, Bozo watched with professional interest. When the *Maryland's* boat came in, he stood up and wagged his tail in salute. Like everyone else so far from home, he felt a lift of exhilaration at the sight of the familiar uniforms and the boat's colors streaming aft. But Bozo waited for the *Nevada's* boat. He refused to be distracted. Lots there was to distract a lively dog, as there was to distract a fresh young ensign on his first foreign shore patrol. Strange sights, strange sounds, strange airs. And pretty faces with come-hither looks. Bozo could tell the *Nevada* boat from afar off. He was down the stone steps to meet it, to scramble up into the bow again, as eager to get home to *Nevada* as he had been to make a liberty.

Bozo came to grief that cruise to Rio. *Nevada* lingered on for months. There was ample time for casual contacts ashore to ripen into stronger ties. There was even a rumor that *Nevada* herself had been sold to Brazil and would stay on there forever. Certainly she won for herself a place in the hearts of many Brazilians. And when we sailed from Rio, Bozo wasn't aboard. Ugly rumor had it that he had gone over the hill with a French poodle, and it was true there were

those who sailed home with *Nevada* who must have wondered if he hadn't made the happier decision. Even the ship was reluctant to leave. When the anchor came up, it was fouled in remains of an old First World War antisubmarine net. The heavy wire was criss-crossed and tangled across the crown, across the flukes, and knotted to the shank. It took all day to burn it clear, and it was well after dark before she left the harbor.

MANY weeks later Bozo walked aboard at Norfolk. The mystery of how he got there was never cleared up. He must have thumbed a ride with a tanker. But he was never the same dog again. Whatever had been his experience, the tight twist had come out of his tail. Forever afterward it stretched out aft in odd zigzags of dejection.

The Service Force ships, the tugs and tankers and supply ships, opened up on Nevada with four-inch and light automatic weapons. This stuff was insulting, and some of the Service Force ships were shooting wild. We steamed around her after each phase of the exercises. She had a port list, but not bad. Sometimes she had listed more than that after a fueling.

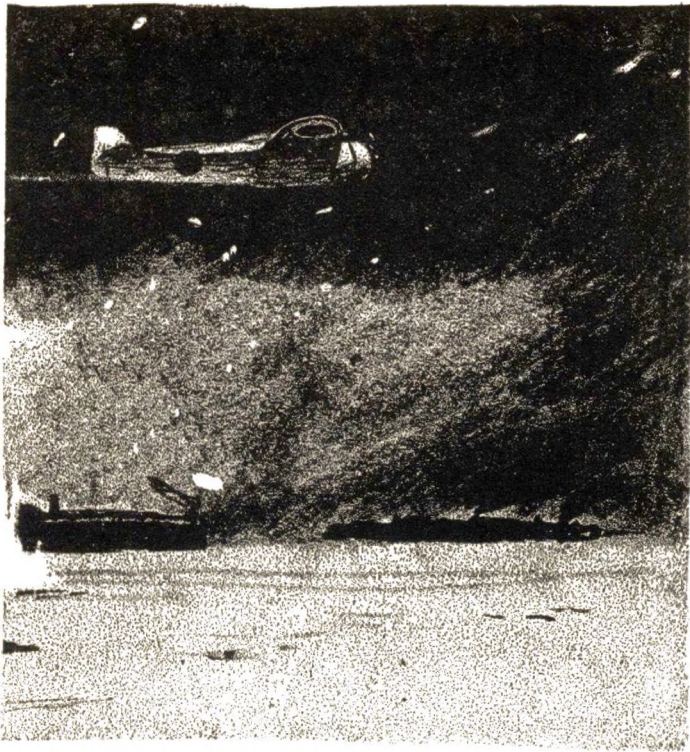
One day in Guantánamo, *Nevada* was anchored in company with the old and decrepit coal-burning battleships of the Atlantic Fleet. *Nevada* was a Pacific ship, oil-burning, and she was there only temporarily. It was

Saturday morning. We were getting ready for inspection, and *Nevada* had just fueled. She had a little port list.

There were members of the Atlantic Fleet admiral's staff who spent all their time on the flagship's quarter deck, examining all ships present through high-powered binoculars for any irregularity they could discover. We got a signal "Trim your lower boom." Now the lower boom was trimmed, properly to the ship, but *Nevada* had a list, and to the hawk-eyed observer on the flagship, the boom appeared slightly askew. No need to argue. Trim the boom, and then trim it back again as soon as we could correct the list by pumping the oil we had just taken aboard.

It was just about time for inspection. The uniform was dress whites, that white uniform with the wide blue collar and the white piping, a uniform for dress and not for work. To trim the boom, it was necessary for some one to shinny up the king-post, an operation that would ruin a white dress jumper.

Hurriedly the second division located a compartment cleaner, who had not yet changed uniform for inspection, and sent him up the king-post. As he approached the top, there came a signal from the flagship. "Man on your king-post is out of uniform." Spit, polish and punctilio, and little minds unable to grasp the essentials of a complex profession, finding refuge in emphasizing the petty unessen-



tials they could understand! May we see the day again when reputation can be founded on bright-work. For bright-work polish is cheaper than bombs and powder, and the world must have been long at peace for admirals to fret about Irish pennants and one man out of uniform on a king-post.

The swift pursuits came in like bullets and roared down at the helpless old ship in steep glides. Her anti-aircraft battery was silent forever. In a burst of flame the rockets left the planes, and continued on their fiery arc while the planes zoomed up and clear. When Nevada was young, such weapons were undreamed of. She took them now, but she burned in sullen smoldering hate, when the rocket attack was over, and sent a cloud of smoke drifting down to leeward. Where could there be anything left to burn down in her fore-castle?

THE J. O. mess was down there, where those fires were burning. When the new captain came aboard in Norfolk, he was horrified to discover that the J. O. mess was infested with bedbugs. He declared war without quarter, and war was waged with kerosene, and blow-torch, and evil-smelling liquids. The bedbugs beat a strategic retreat to prepared positions—to positions deep in foxholes gnawed out of the armor belt. There were no bedbugs for a while but they came back, ravenously hungry.

Then came that glorious day when *Nevada* came home to San Pedro after a year's absence in the Atlantic. The shore patrol preceded the liberty party ashore. The junior shore patrol officer was besieged for news by wives and sweethearts, and some who were neither wives nor sweethearts but who met the ship on speculation. The junior shore-patrol officer was the center of flattering attention, in starched white uniform, and leggings and a forty-five automatic jaunty at his hip. He glanced down nonchalantly at his side-arm just in time to see one of *Nevada's* bedbugs climb out of the holster to stretch in the California sunshine. Whatever became of *Nevada's* bedbugs? Surely they survived Pearl Harbor, although the J. O. country was burned out then, clear to the armor. *Nevada's* bedbugs were of sturdy stock. And the atomic bombing at Bikini? Perhaps radio-induced mutations stalked the second deck, as big as wolves, with teeth like sharks, and ravenous as only *Nevada* bedbugs could be.

The destroyer escorts moved in to eight thousand yards and opened up with their main batteries. They straddled on the third salvo, and after that red splashes of exploding shells bloomed against her armor each salvo. We steamed in close to look her over. No additional damage was visible, but she was pretty much cut up topside by now. Something or other under her bridge was combustible enough to

They came in like bullets and then roared down at the helpless old ship.

burn with a small bright flame. She had a stubborn defiant look, as though she intended to stay afloat forever. . . .

She was always perverse. She had a bad reputation among the pilots of the Panama Canal. Once she ran her bows aground in Culebra Cut, and once she ramm'd a lock. On one memorable trip she was a lady all day long. When she left the last lock at Pedro Miguel, the pilot heaved a sigh of relief and ordered "All ahead standard."

Her bow fell off a little bit to port. "Right rudder." Now it was one of her peculiarities, something about how the dead wood was cut away aft, and the balance of her rudder, that when she was accelerating like that, her first impulse was to swing left with right rudder. She didn't mean anything by it. She would come around properly as soon as the conning officer had been impressed that she could take her own sweet time answering commands. But the pilot couldn't know her idiosyncrasies, and the dock was close aboard. She could plow ruination through it and wreck a good pilot's whole career within a few seconds. "Let go the starboard anchor!"

NOW on *Nevada* the starboard anchor was on the port side. There wasn't time to explain to the pilot that both the biggest hawsepipes had been built in *Nevada's* port bow and consequently both bower anchors were on that side. Only to prevent confusion one of the bowers was called the starboard anchor and one the port anchor. The starboard anchor went down to port. That pulled her head farther around toward the danger. In a flash of rare intuition the pilot reasoned that if the starboard anchor was on the port side, the port anchor was to starboard, so he dropped the port anchor too. Unfortunately it wasn't true, not in *Nevada*. But she was only being kittenish. She didn't intend to damage anything. In docile humility she lay, straight across the channel with both anchor cables in a hard knot under her bow, and waited while patient men extricated her from her predicament.

The cruisers moved out to respectable gun-range and lambasted her with six- and eight-inch shells. This stuff was heavy enough to hurt, but it couldn't penetrate her armor. She took worse than that, the day the Japs attacked Pearl Harbor.

She was twenty-seven years old then, and very properly she might have been

looking forward to that final frustration that is a battleship's ultimate success. In a few more years she might have ended her existence without ever having fired a shot in anger. The gallant old *Nevada* was the only battleship to get under way that day. Her anti-aircraft fire talked back viciously and effectively when the Japs came in. She accounted for several of the attacking planes, but she took a bad torpedo hit up forward. With a forty-foot hole in her bow, she got under way, groping through the battle fog and smoke instinctively for the open sea. The dive bombers concentrated on her when they found her under way. She took five hits, and then she grounded on the point that now bears her name, grounded deliberately to avoid danger of blocking the channel.

She wasn't badly damaged, not as damages went that morning. She was back in service in time to support the reconquest of the Aleutians. But when her ex-J.O. came on board her the next morning, she seemed a tragic wreck. The bridge was a shambles. From the height of number-two turret you could look down through a gaping hole into what had been the wardroom, down through the J. O. country that had been home, down to where a bomb had penetrated to the protective deck. The galley, where there was always steaming coffee to be had at four A.M. on a cold morning watch, the galley was a burned out shell. And suddenly the war was different. It was no longer dispatches to be filed, the awful list of names of friends on casualty lists, the sudden

bloom of anti-aircraft shells against the bright blue sky, impersonal excursions and alarms. There was a personal score to settle with the Japs.

From over the rim of the world, Iowa opened up with her sixteen-inch guns. The big shells rumbled through the air like flying freight trains, traveling up into the stratosphere at supersonic speed, and plunging down into the sea to raise a crop of lazy, lacy splashes around Nevada. The fourth salvo found its mark. The splashes were discolored by black smoke and debris from the explosions. These shells were not armor-piercing. Theoretically they would not be lethal. But after the fifth salvo came "Cease fire."

When it came time for the invasion of Europe, *Nevada* was there. She was pounding the Normandy beaches on the third of June in 1944. She bombarded Cherbourg on the twenty-fifth. She was in the Mediterranean to support the invasion of southern France in August, and for the end of the war she was back in the Pacific. A lifetime of peace and bright-work, and maneuvers, and target practice, but enough war at the end of it to satisfy anybody.

She was bombarding Iwo Jima in February and March of 1945, after doing escort duty in the Atlantic. But it was at Okinawa that she took her first damage since Pearl Harbor. At dawn one morning a group of Kamikaze planes came in, to attack the fire-support ships. Several were shot down, but one suicide pilot found his target and crashed his plane on her

main deck aft. The flames leaped up mast-high. There were sixty casualties, ten dead. The fires were extinguished quickly, and in a few hours she was back on the firing line. She took time out after sunset to withdraw a short distance and bury her dead. Then back she came, back in slugging. Stubbornness in a battleship can be a mighty virtue.

A concealed shore battery ranged on her all one day, and then at sunset suddenly opened fire. The other ships in the support group were some distance away, and *Nevada* had it out all alone with the Japs. The shore battery was eradicated in eighteen minutes of firing, but *Nevada* took five hits, and lost two more men killed and several wounded. Over night the damage was repaired and at dawn she was on the firing line again.

Planes came in with bat bombs. They landed wide of the mark. Nevada was an old hand at dodging Buck Rogers weapons.

IN the Bikini tests some one, other than an ex-*Nevada* sailor, had designated her for the bull's-eye ship of the target group for the atomic bomb. Any *Nevada* sailor could have predicted that she would make an unconventional target. When the famous mushroom cloud subsided, there rode *Nevada*, obstinate in her bright orange sacrificial paint. The bomb had fallen wide of the bull's eye, to sink other ships, but not the *Nevada*, who was supposed to be at the center of the impact. On the second test she was intentionally farther away from



Bozo waited for the Nevada's boat. He refused to be distracted, though there was lots to

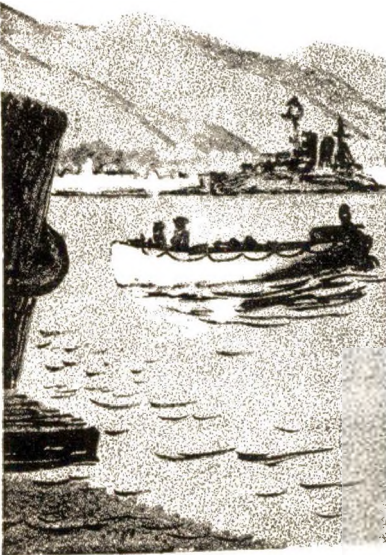
the explosion point, but near enough to be drenched with the radio-active spray. After that she was a pariah among ships. No one dared to remain on her deck for more than a few minutes at a time. It was inevitable that she must be sunk. . . .

The torpedo planes came in, gliding low. The torpedoes made faint splashes as they took the water. The sullen submarines watched with professional interest as the airmen manipulated the familiar weapon. They saw the tall plume of an explosion against her side. The sharp impact of the wave of detonation traveling more swiftly through the water, impinged upon their hulls before the dull boom of the explosion reached them in the air. Another and another torpedo hit her, deep down below her armor belt.

"There she goes! There she goes! She's rolling over."

Oh, give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses. . . . Over and over, and down by the stern and sinking—her chaste brown bottom to the glaring sky in final agony transcending decency and decorum. Then slowly her bow tilted up and withdrew beneath the surface of the sea.

Iowa, in arrogant hypocrisy, dashed up and strewed some puny flowers over the discolored water. Her crew at quarters were resplendent. From Iowa's quarterdeck her Marine guard fired three volleys. In that vast expanse of sea and sky they sounded like some small boy's firecrackers. But taps was adequate. The bugle sobbed its sad salute to as gallant and stubborn a ship as ever sailed the seas.



distract a lively dog.

Men of America—V

PRIVATE BIG

THE STORY OF A GIANT FIGHTING MAN OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION WHO SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN.

by SIMPSON RITTER

HE could lift a small man sitting on the palm of his hand to shoulder level; he could drag a thousand-pound cannon two hundred yards; he could heave a grown horse over a four-foot fence; he could kill eleven men with eleven strokes with his five-foot sword. His comrades called him Private Big.

The origin of Peter Francisco is obscured by both legend and a dearth of dependable information. The least romantic and most creditable version sets his birth year as 1761, somewhere in Portugal. At a very early age, four or five, he was "kidnaped" from a big house with a fine garden and taken to Ireland.

At an only slightly less tender age, possibly when eight, and big for his years, the kidnaped lad, now a free agent, resolved to go to America. To achieve this, he indentured himself to a sea captain.

WHEN the vessel, at an uncertain date, reached City Point, Virginia, where the broad mouth of the James river narrows to a slim ribbon, the captain put off the lad, and he was taken to the poorhouse. He was now about nine, a swarthy youngster, unusually well dressed. On his shoes were a pair of fine silver buckles bearing the initials "P.F." He wore these buckles the rest of his life.

Questioned at the poorhouse, he gave his name as Peter Francisco and spoke vaguely of his stay in Ireland and before that of a big house with a grand garden in a sunny land. The family name *Francisco* is equally common in both Spain and Portugal, among the lowly and among the aristocratic. One such Spanish family at that time enjoyed very high offices and unusually wide estates.

The poorhouse people had no trouble disposing of the healthy lad. He was bound for the conventional seven years to a Judge Anthony Winston of Buckingham County, some fifty miles west of City Point. This indenture meant that in return for seven years' labor, the nature of this to be determined by the master, Peter would at its conclusion receive a new suit of clothes, a hat, a pair of shoes, a gun and powder-horn, and either a small sum of money or fifty acres of undeveloped land.

The following years Peter worked on the Winston estate, doing as he was told.

Apparently his work agreed with him, for he grew to early and huge manhood. In 1777 he asked permission to join the Continental Army. Permission was granted. Generally such permission was granted only to those who had less than a year to finish their indenture, and agreed to finish it under the colors.

Francisco was then, most of his biographers agree, almost his full height and weight, six feet six inches and 260 pounds. Though the judge had for the most part neglected to educate his servant, the young man could write his name and figure simple sums; in ensuing years he slowly and laboriously labored to augment this, and in time could conduct his own correspondence and read a newspaper.

PETER'S first engagement was at the terrible battle of the Brandywine, where General Washington, due to the incompetence of a subordinate, lost one thousand men and was branded a fool, a coward and even a traitor by some. So savage and successful was Peter's fighting that his superiors and comrades marked him as a leader.

He took a wound during the fighting, as did another youth, and the two rested side by side in a crude tent that served as a hospital until the surgeons reached them. The other youth wore a resplendent blue-and-white uniform with much braid. The two became fast friends and later exchanged letters and visited together in Virginia. Francisco's hospital mate was the young Marquis de LaFayette, nineteen years old, and in name, if not in command, a major-general.

The young giant, entitled Private Big by his admirers, was prominent at Germantown. Regardless of his original position in the ranks, when battle was joined Francisco was soon up front.

At Monmouth he was wounded a second time—a musket ball went through his thigh. He was out of action for a while, but present under Colonel Daniel Morgan at Stony Point on the Hudson, where he swung a heavy musket like a riding crop. He split six heads, and was at Mad Anthony Wayne's side leading the brilliant charge. Francisco was the second man to enter the fortress, and received his third wound, a bayonet cut across his right side. This took him out of the lines for six weeks, and legend has it that his cussing proved equal to his fighting.

He was now known throughout the Continental Army for his extraordinary courage and strength and for his spontaneous leadership in action. General Washington, possibly somewhat influenced by LaFayette, offered the young giant a commission. Though socially ambitious Private Big declined. He couldn't afford the expenses attached to an Eighteenth Century officership.

As a substitute offering, General Washington ordered forged a special sword, five feet long, for Peter Francisco to carry on parade as a symbol of the Continental Army's respect.

Francisco carried this great sword into the subsequent fighting, and it became known as "The Sword of Death." Thirty men are supposed to have been variously wounded and killed by it. The sword was on exhibition in Richmond until quite recently.

At Powell's Hook he killed two grenadiers with his sword, and got his fourth wound, a deep cut in the thigh. While recovering, his enlistment ran out. Had he wished, he could have gone home to his fifty acres adjoining the estate of Judge Winston. Instead, Peter elected to enlist in a militia regiment under Colonel Mayo, of Powhatan, a friend and distant neighbor of Judge Winston.

Under Mayo, whose life he saved, he was present at the sorry defeat of

General Gates at Camden, where the poorly trained militia broke and ran. Francisco and a small scattered band of Continentals didn't run. From one such group came cries for a piece of artillery to help them hold. There seemed no way to get the gun to them, for the British snipers early in the fighting had cut down every horse. Peter Francisco gathered his mighty muscles and pulled the one-thousand-pound cannon two hundred yards to the required position.

It wasn't enough. The Americans were forced to retreat, constantly harassed by the oncoming British and their well-hidden snipers. A detachment of dragoons sighting the unhorsed Colonel Mayo, raced forward to capture him. Peter Francisco with giant strides crossed the field and got between them. He shot one of the charging dragoons, and felled a second with his great blade. The other two, recognizing the legendary giant, turned and fled. Francisco placed Mayo on a felled dragoon's horse, and Mayo got away. Later the grateful officer presented Francisco with one thousand acres of land on Richmond Creek, Kentucky.

He was with Mayo, under Morgan, at Cowpens when the Americans soundly beat the famed and feared dragoons of Colonel Tarleton. The Sword of Death cut down two dragoons and wounded three others.

HEARING of Lord Cornwallis' successful march, Francisco bought a horse and volunteered for Colonel Watkin's cavalry. This outfit was so threadbare, undisciplined and ferocious that by comparison, the corps of Light-Horse Harry Lee was a paragon of military correctness. In its hour of need, though, the Continental Army at last recognized Watkin's Cavalry and joined it to the force under General Nathaniel Greene, which included the other "irregulars," Lee and Marion.

Cornwallis' veterans chased Greene and his motley array across North Carolina. Desperate, the Americans halted at Guilford Courthouse to make a sacrifice stand. Here Francisco killed eleven men with his famous sword, reputedly with eleven swipes. A British Guardsman pinned Peter's leg to his horse with a practiced bayonet thrust. But as the soldier turned, deserting bayonet and musket and reaching for his sword, Francisco made a furious cut at him with the five-foot sword and "cleft the poor fellow's head down to his shoulders." Technically an American defeat, the long march had so exhausted the British it paved the way for the victory at Yorktown six months later.

After recovering from his fifth wound, Francisco was mustered out of

the service with honors, and he returned to Virginia. Impatient for a decisive victory, he became a one-man task force. Banastre Tarleton's Dragoons were raiding Virginia, and Cornwallis was entrenching at Yorktown.

Though he probably knew Tarleton's men were in the neighborhood, a tired Francisco, armed only with a pistol, halted for refreshments at Ben Ward's tavern in Amelia. Ward, a British sympathizer, sent word to the redcoats. Francisco was seated at a table when a detachment rode up and surrounded the place. There were nine dragoons, and three armed Negro orderlies.

Francisco made no effort to defend himself or escape, but accepted capture and was disarmed. The gleeful dragoons, leaving their paymaster and the three orderlies to guard the prisoner, rode off to scout for the rest of Francisco's "company."

The fine silver buckles on Peter's shoes—legend has it these were the ones he wore as a lad when he landed at City Point—caught the paymaster's eyes and he stooped to confiscate them. Francisco leaned over the stooping man, wrenched the dragoon's sword away and struck the redcoat over the head with it.

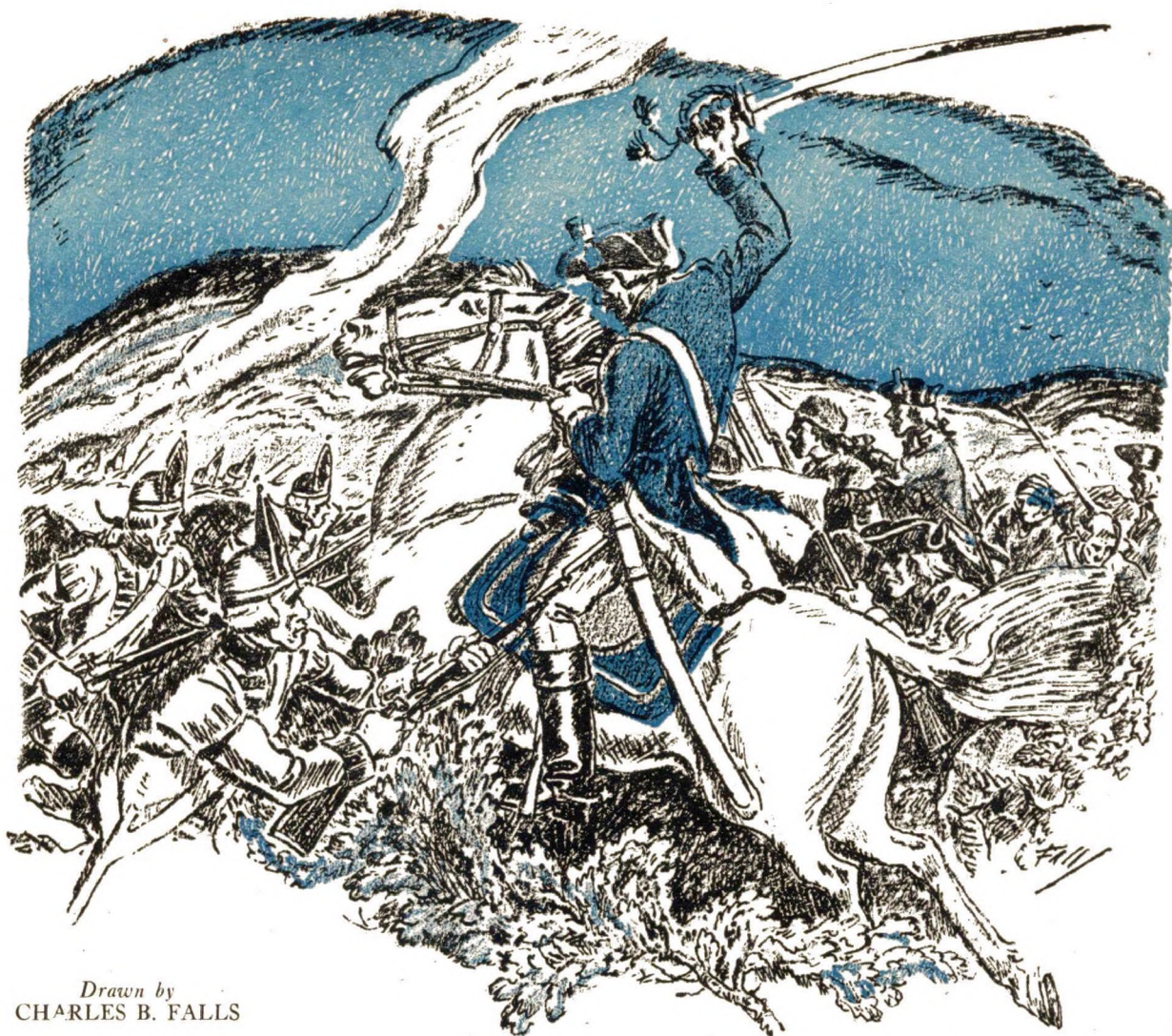
"My enemy was brave," Francisco is supposed to have later reviewed, according to Howe, "and though severely wounded, drew a pistol, but in the same moment he pulled the trigger. I cut his hand nearly off. The bullet grazed my side. Ben Ward very ungraciously brought out a musket and gave it to one of the British soldiers and told him to use it. It missed fire. I rushed the muzzle, disarmed the man and wounded him."

The wounded Negro fled in the direction of Tarleton's force, and his two fellows followed suit.

Lest the main body of dragoons move forward in attack, Francisco raced from the tavern, shouting orders and encouragement to imaginary companions, and while the dragoons gathered their wits, he escaped under the noses of four hundred of them.

THIS exploit captured the popular imagination, and a contemporary artist prepared an engraving, copies of which found their way into hundreds of homes. One copy today hangs in Philadelphia's Independence Hall. The engraving was republished while Francisco was still alive. In 1814, by James Webster of Philadelphia in a book describing heroes of the American revolution.

Three months later, though a private individual, Peter Francisco participated in the siege of Yorktown, and his Sword of Death drank the blood of two more British soldiers.



Drawn by
CHARLES B. FALLS

The war over, admirers invited Francisco to Richmond, where he was entertained by officials and leaders of society. Anxious to wed a girl of good family, Peter returned to his fifty acres and attended school.

In addition to working his fifty acres, he opened a store at a place he called New Store in Buckingham County, Virginia. Apparently he prospered, for he soon added a tavern which did very well and began building a home, Locust Grove, still standing. All this while he continued his studies.

At last he found a girl of good family willing to marry a giant, and his happiness was complete. When he visited Richmond, he was invited into the homes of the great and treated as an equal.

Francisco found it hard to play the gentleman, though. Demonstrations of his unusual strength were constantly requested by friends and strangers.

A Mr. Pamphlet of Kentucky, as big as Peter, is said to have come down to Virginia solely to wrestle him. After the manner of the time, each man was permitted to heft his opponent several times to ascertain the odds. Pamphlet raised the 260-pound Virginian a couple of times and nodded his satisfaction. Now Francisco raised the Kentucky giant. He did so once, and smiled as he put the challenger down, raised him a second time, and tossed him over a four-foot fence nearby.

But the Kentucky opponent still demanded a wrestling match—unless Peter could toss the Kentuckian's horse over the same fence. Angered that his strength was thus doubted Francisco is said to have reached his massive arms about the horse's middle and lifted it off the ground and tossed it across the fence.

Through the influence of an admirer, Charles Yancey, Francisco was appointed sergeant-at-arms in the Vir-

ginia House of Delegates and held the office from 1790 to his death. John Randolph, another admirer, brought his brilliant war record to Congress' attention with a request for a life-long pension. Records are mute on the outcome but one may assume that—as in hundreds of other cases then—Congress pigeonholed the request and went on appropriating money for more personally associated projects.

Francisco's first wife died about 1795, and he married a second time. His second wife died, and he married a third. He seems to have had children by each of them; most of these were long lived and so were their children. A granddaughter of Peter Francisco was living in Louisa, Virginia in 1944.

Virginia State records show Francisco's death as 1836, but the seven-foot shaft erected over his grave at Shockoe Cemetery, Richmond, in 1915, reads December 16, 1831.

The LEGEND of MATA HARI

THE AUTHOR OF "THE COMING WAR" EXPLODES A MYTH.

by KURT SINGER



I'M sorry to disillusion you. But she wasn't beautiful. She was no great shakes as a dancer. She wasn't much of a spy. Yet Mata Hari will be remembered when Made-moiselle le Docteur, Alice Dubois, Irma Staub, Louise de Bettignies, Maria Sorrell, Judy Coplon and a score of others far her superiors, are forgotten.

During her lifetime, legend was busy to create a fabulous creature who combined the beauty of an Aphrodite with the cunning of a Machiavelli; and since her death, that fable has gained credence until it is accepted as the truth.

More than anything else, her profession established this woman as a spy of the first magnitude. She danced wholly naked, delighting Europe's war centers the while she shocked them with the display of unlimited corporeal charm. Such a sensational abandonment to unrestricted nudity furnished her exploiters with blurbs and photographs that few newspapers would refuse to print. News agencies scattered them throughout the world; and when the time came for her intrigants to disclaim this plaything of politicians and spy-masters, the ma-

terial for her perpetuation was in the files of every newspaper worth the name.

She had been promoted as a sensational dancer. She was proclaimed a modern Delilah who had shorn a hundred Samsons. She died before a firing squad while her bureaucratic lovers and espionage overlords ducked for cover and renounced her.

Mata Hari died as she lived—an inconsequential demimondaine transformed into an insidious spy; and, fact to the contrary, this she is bound to remain. . . .

When Adam Zelle's good Vrouw Antje presented him with a daughter on August 7, 1876, he was the happiest man in Holland. The worthy pair christened her Margaride Gertrud, never thinking but what she would grow up like any of the stocky, square-headed youngsters with whom she played. So she might, too, for she was put to school in a religious institution with every intention of mating with some substantial Leeuwarden burgher, when a vacation at the Hague crossed her path with that of Campbell MacLeod. She was eighteen, and this captain in Holland's colonial forces was a broken-down roué of forty-odd. He drank deeply, loved savagely and sought bitterly to regain the vanished pleasures of desire that woman and liquor had long since sapped from him.

But with all that, this hard-bitten scoundrel, fit to qualify for the Foreign Legion, awoke an amorous response in the little Dutch maiden schooled in a cloister. They were married and 1895 found them in Java, where MacLeod was in command of a colonial army reserve. Two children—boy and girl—were born to them. Liquor and island skies got in their work, and MacLeod reverted to type.

He beat his young wife unmercifully; he threatened her with a loaded revolver. As much as he was able, he betrayed her, not once but many times. So in the end she left him and returned to Holland.

Six hectic years in the islands had unfitted her for the quiet of a Friesland provincial village. She left her daughter with relatives—her son had died in Bali—and headed for Paris and adventure. A brief experience in vaudeville ended when the MacLeods clamped down, proclaiming her a disgrace to the clan. But a short respite found her back again, taking the second step toward her tragic death.

Paris this time received a personality far removed from the amorous Dutch girl who had sailed away to the Orient in 1895. Years in Bali made her acquainted with the dances of the tiny Javanese *bayas* from whose posturings came her inspiration. She boned up on the literature of Buddhist temple rituals, and from this half-digested material framed a new life and a new personality.

No longer was she Margaride Gertrud Zelle, daughter of a substantial business man of Leeuwarden. She was Mata Hari, "The Eye of Dawn," born in southern Iridia to a family of sacred Brahmin caste. Her bayadere mother had died in giving her birth, and the temple priests of Kanda Swandy dedicated her to Siva, and schooled her in temple dances to replace her mother. How she came to Paris was glossed over, but there she was, exponent of rituals never before disclosed to unbelieving eyes.

The caterpillar was twenty-nine when it metamorphosed into the butterfly that was Mata Hari. Even then she was far from beautiful. Her jaw bordered on the prognathous, and the animalism that was hers was evidenced in her face. Her dark brown skin encouraged the fable of her Oriental ancestry, and there was a dampness about it that might have been oil or perspiration. Her beauty lay in her eyes and arms—arms that some avowed were the most beautiful in the world. But her flat breasts were pendulous and flabby. It was this that discouraged her attempts at modeling, and it was the only part of her person she did not expose during her public exhibitions.

As "The Eye of Dawn" she became the darling of Parisian night life, and the mistress of more than one prominent politician and plotting spy.

Unlike Aphrodite rising from the foam, Mata Hari did not emerge to public gaze in all her uninhibited nudity. Guimet Museum was devoted to Oriental collections; and there, appropriately enough, she made her

début in a mist of diaphanous veiling. From this it was but a step to drop veil after veil until only her breast-plates remained.

She was a sensation. Lovers found her waiting with open arms—for a price. She was put up in the Champs Elysées. She acquired jewels and costly clothes and rode the fashionable boulevards and entertained as befitted a dancer-courtesan surrounded by a mob of eager millionaires.

Two years later she was ready for a change. Off she went to Berlin. The Crown Prince was her first conquest. He took her with him to the military maneuvers in Silesia. The Duke of Brunswick shared her favors. Von Jagow, the Kaiser's foreign minister, was her avowed lover. Vienna saw her exhibitions. So did Rome and Madrid. . . . London came later.

It is believed that in 1910 she attended the espionage school at Lorchach for a term. This may have been so. Again, it may not. There is nothing in her life to warrant the assumption, since every move she made was publicized, and her private life consisted only of such conquests as she could keep under cover. There was nothing secret about her travels. Her departures and arrivals were functions attended by a train of admirers. As to nationalities, she played no favorites. French, Spanish, Germans, each shared equally in the privileges of admiration. Later, on trial for her life, she explained:

"I am not French. . . I have my right to friends in other countries, even those at war with France. I have remained neutral."

If so, it was a neutrality tinged with a flavor distinctly *Berlinoise*. The most reasonable explanation of the woman is found in petty grafting for private indulgences. In her adventurings in Germany she accepted the attentions of bureaucrats and army officers. For her favors she demanded the highest market price; and the man, not the woman, had to pay. Money was to be had from funds earmarked for undercover work, and from its very nature some of it could be juggled to cover petty deficits. So these men shared Mata Hari and paid her from this secret fund.

Once ensnared in the toils of her own avarice, she became a not unwilling agent of spy-masters. For the greater part, her duties consisted of picking up information confided to her by her dupes. A barmaid in a seamen's grogshop often did exactly the same thing with drunken navvies celebrating shoreleave. But this difference marked the two women: Mata Hari's information could be depended upon. It came from high places, and bore the stamp of authenticity.

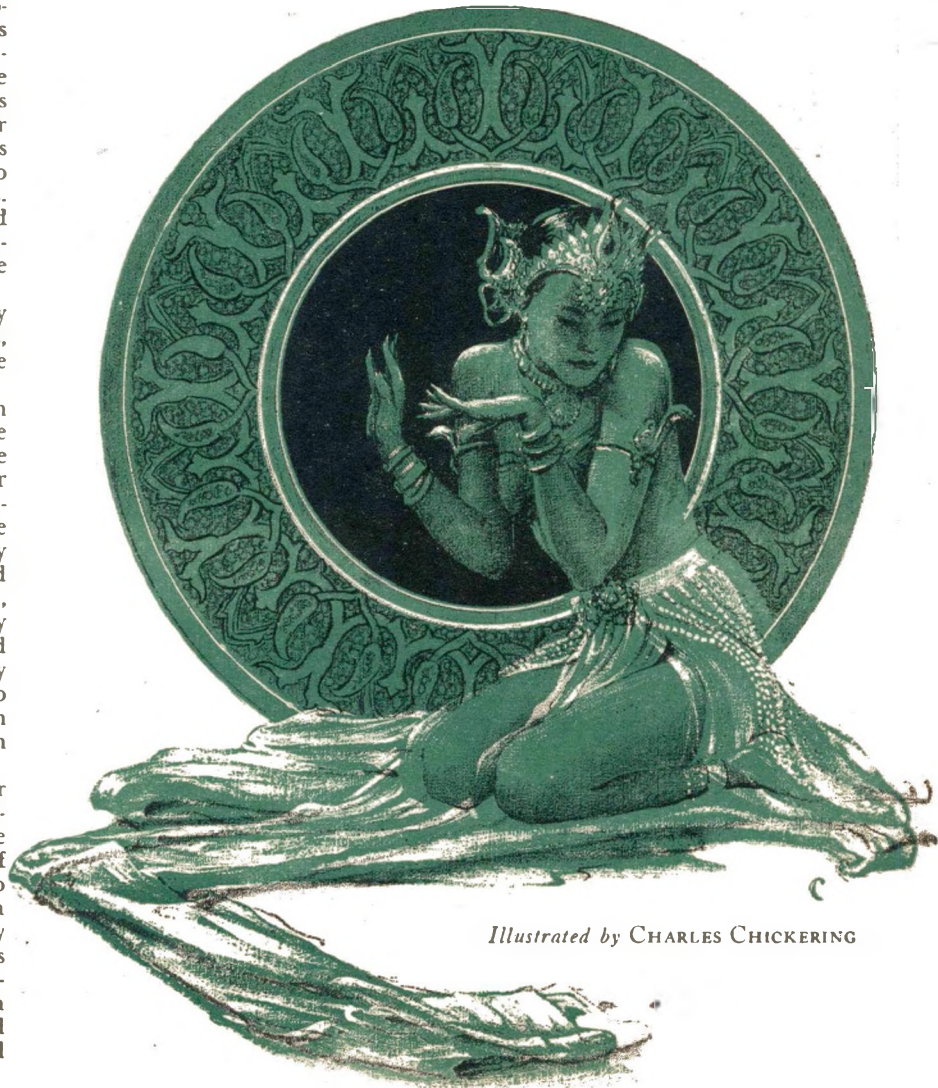
Even at that, however, nothing in the record goes to show that Mata Hari possessed an aptitude for espionage. There is little or no evidence that any of this information possessed an important significance. Yet rattling back and forth between Berlin and Paris, she attracted sufficient attention to warrant her being watched. It may be that some of her lovers realized that they had spoken too loudly and too often, and were only too glad to cover up for themselves. During the first year of World War I, there is no record of her activities. But when she came to France in 1915, a telegram from the Italian Secret Service had preceded her.

WHILE EXAMINING PASSENGER LIST OF A JAPANESE VESSEL AT NAPLES, WE HAVE RECOGNIZED THE NAME OF A THEATRICAL CELEBRITY FROM MARSEILLES NAMED MATA HARI, THE FAMOUS HINDU DANCER, WHO PURPORTS TO REVEAL SECRET HINDU DANCES

WHICH DEMAND NUDITY. SHE HAS, IT SEEMS, RENOUNCED HER CLAIM TO INDIAN BIRTH AND BECOME BERLINOISE. SHE SPEAKS GERMAN WITH SLIGHT EASTERN ACCENT.

Duplicates of this message were filed in espionage headquarters of each of the allied powers; and by this act, Mata Hari was branded as a German spy. French operators were put on her trail. They followed her day and night; yet nothing definite could be pinned on her. But at last they found that she was sending messages with the help of diplomatic intimates. Attachés of the Dutch, Swedish and Spanish legations were giving her the privilege of enclosing letters in their diplomatic pouches, which of course were dispatched sans censoring.

Now Dutch and Swedish pouches were opened and Mata Hari's letters appropriated. They were harmless enough, and the Black Chamber could



Illustrated by CHARLES CHICKERING



This hard-bitten scoundrel awoke an amorous response in the little Dutch Maiden.

not discover any secret code. But the letters played an important part in her trial.

A visa was granted her for Vittel, where, she said, she wished to visit a former Russian lover, Captain Maroff, blinded in the war. An important airdrome was being established there, and France had been warned of German spying. But her trailers were disappointed. She devoted every hour to the wounded Russian, and returned without any untoward action.

Her deportation was decided upon. Had she accepted it, Mata Hari might have survived the war. She was vehement in her denials of ever having worked for Germany. She declared herself unqualifiedly for France. She boasted of her intimacies with many German leaders, and volunteered for the French secret service.

The offer was accepted, and she was sent to Brussels to victimize General Moritz von Bissing, one of her conquests. Six Belgian agents were made

known to her. Not long after, one of them was executed by the Germans. British counter-spies reported that he had been betrayed by a woman. Mata Hari's next venture found her headed for Spain *via* Holland and England. In London, she was escorted to the New Scotland Yard and questioned by Sir Basil Thompson. She readily admitted she was a spy—but for France, ally of Great Britain. Sir Basil advised her to quit her espionage duties—excellent advice, too—and sent her on to Spain. In Madrid she teamed up with the German Naval attachés Captain Walter Wilhelm Canaris, Captain von Kalle, and the military attaché Major von Kron. All three tapped the espionage fund to meet her demands.

THIS final escapade marked the beginning of the end. German headquarters were clamping down. Too much money was being spent on wine, women and song, with insufficient re-

turns in the way of information. Liquidation is the fate of spies who lose their worth, and Mata Hari was one of little value at the best. Captain Canaris received his orders. (Canaris became chief of all German espionage during World War II.)

"H. 21" was to proceed to Paris. She was given a check for fifteen thousand pesetas for services performed in Spain, payable through a neutral legation. Mata Hari swallowed the bait. She went to Paris, and registered at the Hotel Plaza-Athénée in the Avenue Montaigne. She was arrested the next day before she had time to cash the check.

The message to Captain Canaris had been an overt statement (they used an outdated code, known to the French) that the betrayal and liquidation might be more certain. (Or wanted Captain Canaris to get rid of her for personal reasons?)

Ceremony ended with the arrest of Mata Hari. They took her to the

prison of Saint-Lazare and assigned her to cell No. 12, which she was to vacate only at her death. A spacious room with two windows and three beds it had housed Mme. Caillaux, who shot down Gaston Calmette, editor of *Figaro*; and Mme. Steinheil, who had accorded President François Faure similar ministrations; and Marguerite Francillard, who was executed as a spy.

On July 24, 1917, Mata Hari was brought to trial by court-martial. Her fate was a foregone conclusion. Semprou, president of the court, believed her guilty. Massard and Mornet, his associates, were of the same opinion. Maître Clunet, the counsel, was convinced of her innocence, and so were many who thronged the streets to hear the verdict. Proceedings were secret. Sentries guarded all doors, and none might approach within ten paces. There was much wisdom in this secrecy, for Mata Hari, told all.

She told of viewing army maneuvers in Silesia, France and Italy; of receiving thirty thousand marks from von Jagow after being with him when war was declared; of other payments of similar amounts.

"They were the price of my favors," she announced. "Thirty thousand marks? My lovers never offered me less."

SHE admitted corresponding with Germans. But they were her lovers, and she communicated nothing but private endearments. The diplomatic pouches were used to send letters to her daughter. She emphasized she had been a spy for France, but could present no information that she had gathered for them. Her fate was decided when she was unable to produce the list of six Belgian spies which had been furnished her. Nor could she explain what had become of it. Both she and the court knew that it had been dispatched to the German officials in Amsterdam before she left France.

But Mata Hari summoned witnesses: Jules Cambon, chief of the permanent staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, one of her lovers; former Minister of War Messimy and others who had paid for her favors.

"I am not French," she declared. "I have the right to have friends in other countries, even among those at war with France. I have remained neutral. I count upon the goodness of heart of you French officers."

The members of the court filed to a retiring-room to consider their verdict. They were back in ten minutes with the decision: Mata Hari was to be shot as a spy.

There are any number of soft spots in this prosecution. It had been contended that she was responsible for the

torpedoing of fourteen French transports in the Mediterranean with great loss of life. But nobody named the ships; nor is there any record of their loss.

And if she did furnish information that led to this destruction, what of the members of the ministries of marine and commerce and war who gave her this information? It seems quite evident that Mata Hari was a German spy; that her activities were of limited account; that she was paid more for her favors than for her information; that she lacked ordinary horse sense in acting as she did; and that her betrayal was certain whenever German spy-masters decided it was time to abandon her.

Whatever her life may have been, Mata Hari died bravely. When the findings of the court-martial were read to her, she heard her sentence with a smile. The stubborn courage of her

Dutch ancestry proved itself in her bearing. An enigmatic smile lightened her face, and the only tension evidenced was a nervous biting of her lips as she turned away.

BACK in cell No. 12 in the prison of St. Lazare, the two nuns sought to comfort her. She thanked them for their kindness and assured them that all would be well. For by this time, those she had favored were coming to her rescue, seeking a commutation of sentence, at the worst. This did much to bolster her courage—for, supreme egotist that she was, Mata Hari could not see why their influence would not work to her good. Her first days were filled with temperamental outbursts. After a bit she became philosophical and wholly tractable.

In that welter of mingled fact and fiction surrounding her last days,



She made her debut in a mist of diaphanous veiling. From this it was but a step to drop veil after veil.

Pierre de Morrisac plays no minor rôle. Younger son of a prominent French family, this Parisian roué had turned to the dancer after an abandoned life of degenerate dissipation and reckless love affairs. He loved her truly, and taking a page from the opera "*Tosca*," he planned a mock execution with blank cartridges for the firing squad. This plot was worked out in detail, and no doubt may have accounted for the woman's composure.

She had much time to prepare for the end, since the findings of June 25 were not executed until October 15. The hour was fixed at 5:47; the place, the rifle-range at Vincennes. She accepted the glass of rum prescribed for the condemned by law; wrote three letters, one to her daughter; made a final inspection of her toilette; and announced her readiness.

Guards and official witnesses waited without. A procession of cars made its way to the execution spot, where the troops waited, drawn up in three sides of a hollow square. On the fourth side stood a bare tree, stripped of leaves and branches.

The death warrant was read. They tied her to the tree—she refused to have her eyes bandaged; and nuns and priest withdrew. The firing squad snapped into readiness. Major Massard barked a terse command.

There was a volley of shots, and Mata Hari sank slowly to earth, her body pierced by twelve bullets. . . .

In the once quiet cloister of the Carthusian monastery Aula Dei, a solitary monk huddled above a machine-gun one late September afternoon in 1936. He was awaiting the next advance of Spanish Loyalist troops.

For eighteen years he had sought the refuge of the monastery, hiding his identity from the world, trying to forget. His companions fled the place at the first approach of danger, but he chose to remain.

For hours he held the Loyalists at bay, decimating their ranks until his last cartridge was spent. When the troops entered the building, sixty of their number lay dead.

Infuriated that one man should have caused such havoc, the Loyalists placed him against a stone wall, and eight bullets ended his life.

Eight bullets—four less than tore through the breast of Mata Hari eighteen years before—ended the life of him who had been known to the world as Pierre de Morrisac, lover of the Eye of Dawn, who as a youth of twenty-two fought desperately to save her from the firing squad, believing to his last hour that she was innocent of the crimes for which she died.

THE END

Arms and the Woman

VII

Hannah Snell — Seagoing Soldier

by FAIRFAX
DOWNEY

A GIRL marched proudly at the head of a company of her playmates through the streets of Worcester, England, in the year 1733. Citizens turned out to cheer, for this was not simply a bunch of youngsters playing soldier but a smartly drilled outfit. Even the boys in the ranks of Young Amazon Snell's Company didn't mind being captured by a girl. Ten-year-old Hannah, granddaughter of a gallant officer killed at the Battle of Malplaquet, commanded like a veteran.

When she became a woman, Hannah put aside military things and married a sailor, but the rascal deserted her, leaving her seven months gone with child. No husband should venture to skip out on a wife with Amazonian leanings. Like Christian Davies, who signed up as a dragoon and chased an errant spouse through Europe, Hannah, whose baby did not long survive birth, took the trail. She borrowed a suit of her brother-in-law's clothes and enlisted in a regiment of foot. On some joint operation by the army and navy, she might find that fugitive sailor, and then and there she would stage an early example of unification, whether the navy liked it or not.

ONE trouble with the army, then as now, was sergeants. Hannah's was a fellow who had fell designs on a local maiden and asked the new recruit to help him accomplish them. Instead, Hannah, trim in her uniform, stole his love away from him to save her virtue, and in revenge the jealous non-com charged her with neglect of duty and saw her sentenced to six hundred lashes. Hannah, bound to a castle gate, had valiantly endured five hundred blows when officers interceded.

Disillusioned with the army, naturally enough, the Amazon deserted and enlisted under the name of James

FLAK

THE Revolutionary War was the longest conflict in which the United States ever participated—it lasted eighty months.

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During their first months of operations from two airfields on Okinawa, Marine fighter pilots knocked down 209 Jap planes while losing only four in aerial combat.

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In World War I the U. S. Armed Forces used fifteen thousand pigeons—in World War II, fifty-four thousand.

• • •

The actual explosion of an atomic bomb lasts less than a millionth of a second.

• • •

Hand-grenades were used by U. S. Marines who served under John Paul Jones during the Revolution.

Thirteen thousand persons were convicted in this country of evading the draft during World War II.

• • •

The largest single item shipped overseas by the United States during World War II was a seventeen thousand-ton hydraulic dredge that was shipped by the Navy to the Philippine Islands.

• • •

The highest American decoration awarded to women in the armed services in World War II was the Distinguished Service Medal—to Col. Florence F. Blanchfield, superintendent of the Army Nurse Corps, and Col. Oveta Culp Hobby, director of the WAC.

• • •

Philip Spencer, a midshipman in the U. S. Navy, was hanged for mutiny in 1842 while his father was Secretary of War.

—by Harold Helfer



Gray in the marine complement of the sloop *Swallow* which sailed with a fleet for the East Indies. Appointed assistant steward and cook to the officers' mess, off watch she endeared herself to shipmates by mending their shirts. But there was nothing feminine about her when she landed with the marines at Arapong, assaulted the walls and stormed them along with her comrades as an enemy magazine blew up.

At Pondicherry she forded the river under the fire of French batteries and in the attack fired thirty-seven rounds before she fell with twelve wounds. The gallant girl let a surgeon treat those in her legs but concealed a serious one in her groin lest her sex be betrayed, and with the help of a native woman, she extracted the musket ball herself. As a bard put it in later years after she had discarded her masquerade:

Hannah in briggs [breeches] behaved
so well
That none her softer sex could tell;
Nor was her policy confounded
When near the mark of nature
wounded:

Which proves what men will scarce
admit,
That women are for secrets fit.

Returned to duty, Hannah sailed her share of the *Seven Seas*. Though her quest ended at Lisbon, where she learned that her recreant husband had been executed, she served on. In spite of her record, her shipmates teased her because of her beardlessness and boyish figure, calling her "Miss Molly Gray," but Hannah retorted "with a smile and an oath" and during shore liberty downed her grog and flirted with the girls like any sailorman. Once the skipper ordered her to sing him a merry song and when she refused, had her tied to a grating and whipped. Hannah, binding a broad silk handkerchief around her neck to hide her breasts, took her naval lashes as bravely as she had the army ones. The indignant crew "accidentally" allowed a heavy block to drop from the rigging on the skipper's head.

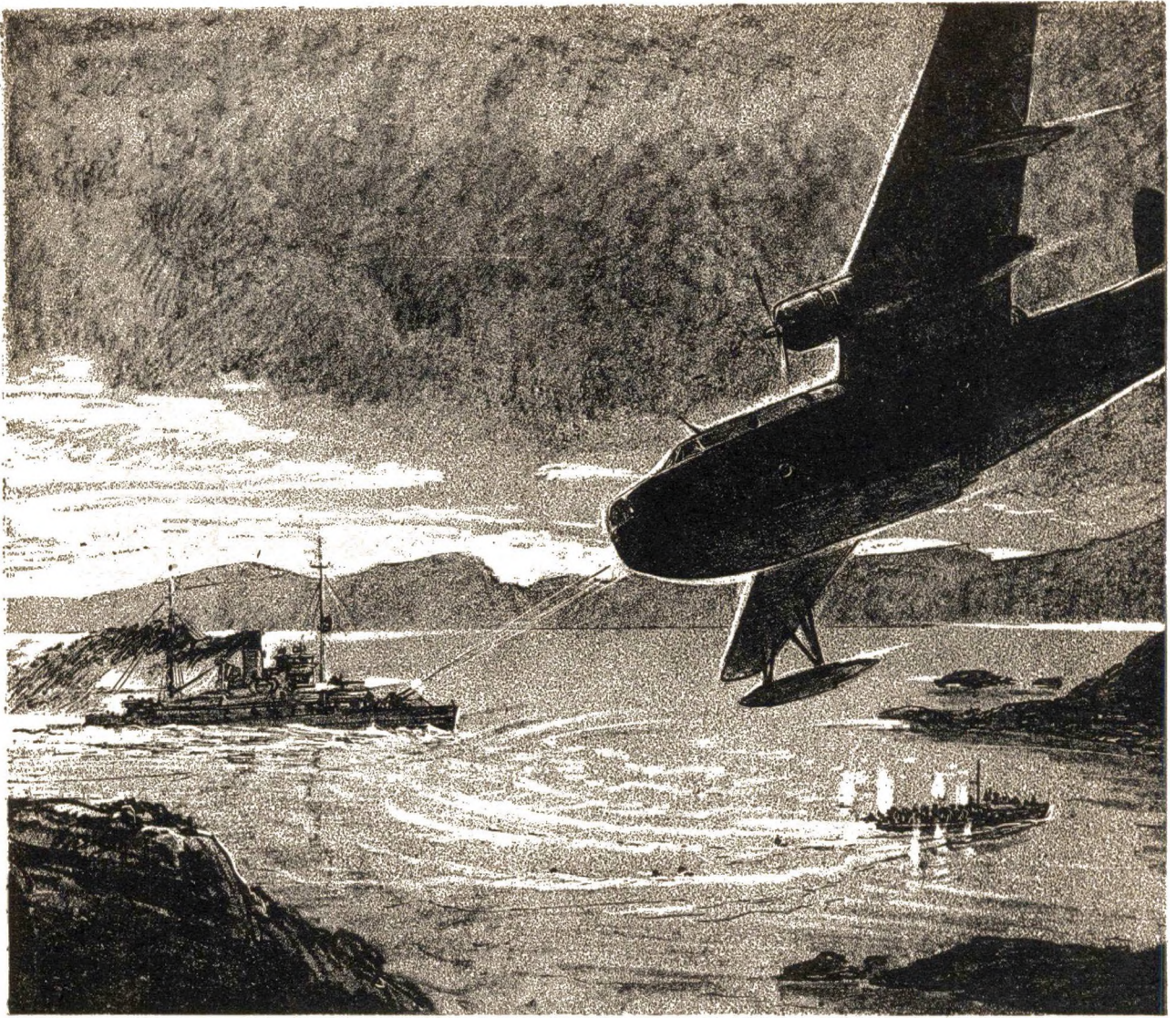
When the ship paid off in England, Hannah decided to resume petticoats.

Still in uniform, she gave a party for the crew at her sister's house, and addressing in particular one shipmate with whom she often had bunked at sea and ashore, she announced:

"Had you have known, Master Moody, who you had between a pair of sheets with you, you would have come to closer quarters. In a word, gentlemen, I am as much a woman as my mother ever was, and my real name is Hannah Snell."

WHEREUPON, it is related, Master Moody was suddenly enamoured of her and proposed marriage, but Hannah refused on the ground that one unfortunate experience in the yoke was enough.

She went on the stage, drilling as a marine and singing songs. For a time she ran a publication entitled *The Female Warrior* and she drew a pension of thirty pounds a year. Changing her mind, as is a woman's privilege, she married for a second and a third time. The veteran lived to the then ripe old age of sixty-nine, when she died insane.



Illustrated by
CLAYTON
KNIGHT

YELLOW SEA

THE undercast socked in before they reached Seoul. But Tom Brandt wasn't bothered. He had seen enough of South Korea, where the battered face of nature, he decided, had about as much charm as the profile of a punch-drunk preliminary boy.

Sitting in the tail of the DC-3, he sensed the subtle change in the engines' drone as the pilot started his letdown into the soup. "FASTEN SEAT BELTS"—the sign gleamed dully in the

narrow twilight of the passenger compartment. The wing flaps whined. The plane dropped in a tight, descending circle, righted itself and broke clear, gliding. For a long moment the close earth sped by; then the tires touched, squealing, on the hard-surfaced runway of Kimpo Airport.

After a short but engaging sign-language powwow, Tom herded his gear through customs and stood in the terminal doorway, a slim, durable young man with deceptive shoulders

and short cropped hair the color of pitch. In addition to a mahogany tan, faded khaki pants and a leather flight jacket, he wore the pleased, somewhat startled expression of a man with six kids and a mortgage whose rich uncle in Cincinnati has just died.

He watched an old AT-6 make a wobbly landing in the rain. The chunky Australian who had come in on his flight said, laughing, "That's the Korean Air Force, dig," and someone plucked at his sleeve.

AN AMERICAN NAVIGATOR NOW FLYING IN THE KOREA AIRLIFT
GIVES US THIS STORY OF A PILOT AND A MISSIONARY AT THE
WAR'S OUTBREAK.

by *PETER DOLLAR*

"Jeepo, Yi! In the back, you devil. Welcome home, Tommy, lad."

With a grin Yi flung his bag, clattering, over the tailboard, and followed it nimbly. The clutch banged out, and Tom hit the seat with a thump as they careened around a pothole in the road.

"Fine lad, Yi," the driver rasped, conversationally. "Ichiban—number one. He won't wipe his nose unless you instruct him."

HE was a wiry, red-faced little man with a lopsided grin and a large off-center nose that appeared to have stopped one left hook too many. He twisted the wheel expertly as the weapons carrier jumped past an oxcart and took off like a frightened rabbit around a curve. In the back Yi bounced happily, dodging the spare engine parts on the deck.

Tom grasped the frame. "Flanagan," he said, "I hate to distract you, but I can think of pleasanter ways to die."

"Sure, Tommy," the Irishman reproached, tramping the floorboards on a straightaway, "and you've nothing to fear in the capable hands of Septus Flanagan himself, the seventh son of a seventh son, born with a double caul in the dark of the moon." He waved carelessly at a series of small mounds that topped a low hill. "Burial cairns. A most reverent people, the Koreans."

"Reassuring," Tom grunted. "Now give with the scoop, Septus. What goes on?"

"South Korea Air Charter," announced Flanagan proudly, "of which, due to my own cleverness, you are now chief pilot and airplane driver, is quartered under a fish-shed in a filthy little village known as Kwangpo, a two-hour drive. We'll stop first in Seoul to see Mr. Pyun Kang, our honorable president, whose bank draft you must have been delighted to find in my letter, judging from the lean and hungry look of you."

Mr. Pyun Kang wore an American business suit, and rose from behind a dusty desk. "We are glad to have you on our side, Captain," he said in careful, clipped accents. "You are aware, of course, of the probabilities involved."

Tom answered easily: "Sure. Like one thousand dollars a month, American. Paid to my account in San Francisco."

"That is correct, Captain. I refer to certain risks, however. The situation here is most delicate at present."

"Sorry to hear it," Tom said. "But I'm a commercial pilot. I have a horsepower rating that says I can fly your PBM. That's all. When the shooting starts, I go home."

Mr. Pyun Kang bowed. "As you wish, Captain. Your first charter has been arranged. You will be quartered at Kwangpo Mission, and I will communicate with you there through Dr. Sinclair."

Back in the weapons carrier, Flanagan complained: "Ah, now, what were you after saying that for? There's no harm in a little friendly fight between neighbors. Why, I've lived through more wars than you have fingers and toes, and not a scratch have I on me."

"You're still my favorite liar, Septus," Tom informed him. "But I'm forced to remind you of the last little squabble you dealt us in. All it cost was an airplane, a nice soft job, and a month in a stinking Indonesian jail. No, I had plenty of time to think it over on the beach in Manila. From now on, I'm a reformed character, Flanagan. I prefer to eat regular."

"An understandable sentiment," Flanagan's Irish pan brightened as he bore down on the accelerator. "But look at us today. You omitted the happy end to that tale."

The roads were worse south of Seoul, forcing him to slow to a mad forty miles an hour. In the light June rain they wound across sparse, rocky hills, past flooded rice paddies, and crawled through the crowded streets of little walled towns, dodging white-robed citizens in high horsehair hats. The late sun broke through the clouds as they topped a rise and started down a precipitous valley, broadening at its base into the desolate mud-flats that border the Yellow Sea.

Flanagan chanted tunelessly:

There's a singular country far over
the sea

Which is known to the world as
Korea.

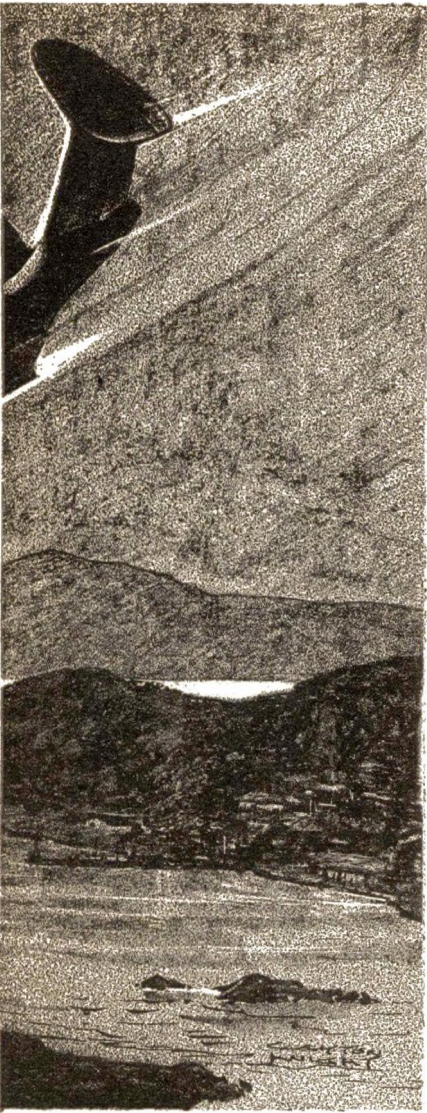
Where there's nothing to charm and
nothing to please.

And of cleanliness not an idea;

Where the houses they live in are
mostly of dirt.

With a tumbledown roof made of
thatch—

He broke off, slowing for a curve, and pointed down. "That's Kwangpo



PATROL

"Captain Blant, please." An underpowered little Oriental in grease-stained coveralls grinned up at him.

"Brandt." What if the man couldn't pronounce his name? He'd called him "Captain." It had taken five years of co-piloting, flying the idiot's seat, on a dozen rickety charter lines to get to that.

OUTSIDE, a familiar Irish voice yelled from behind the wheel of a canvas-canopied weapons carrier:



Tom grinned. "As they say in Brooklyn, ya talked me into it, pal."

on the river there, and the mission above it."

Along the water, houses balanced precariously on stilts. They skidded to a stop at the west end of the village and below them in the twilight Tom made out the twin tails of a PBM, protruding, for all the world in that place like some mythical dragon, from the after end of a covered wharf.

Yi jumped down, still alive and grinning, and broke immediately into an excited singsong, addressing the curious who crowded around.

"He's giving them the word," Flanagan explained, "on the driver of the Great Sea Bird. The little yellow men aren't quite sure it's real yet." He favored Tom with a humorous, sidelong glance. "I'll stop here for a bit; you can follow this road to the mission. And tell the good doctor to keep my soup warm."

The Great Sea Bird! Tom repeated the words wryly as he chugged in low gear up the muddy ruts they called a road. He'd seen some misery in the

last five years, but nothing to equal this junk-pile of nature.

It had stopped raining. To the west the red sun sank between broken clouds on the sea horizon, softening with its last light the bleak terrain. Above the road a footpath cut into the slope, and distorted into great height against the sky at the top of the ridge, a figure was walking.

It was a woman, bareheaded, wearing a slicker and boots and swinging a folded umbrella in her hand. As the weapons carrier came abreast, she turned, and Tom drew a sharp breath, startled by the incongruity of the fresh English face against that landscape.

He stopped. "I'm going to the mission. Want a ride?"

"No." She peered at him uncertainly. "Thank you. I'll walk."

She was looking into the sun, unable to see him, but her own features were clear. A striking aquiline face with deep-set eyes, a wide, sensitive mouth and courageous jaw. A faint wind blew, stirring the coarse grass

about her knees and disturbing the copper glints in her hair.

He said: "I'm Tom Brandt, the new PBM pilot. I was looking for Dr. Sinclair."

"Oh." She laughed. "Of course. I should have known." Her voice, with its touch of British inflection, had a pleasant musical quality. "May I still have that lift?" she asked.

He grinned. "As they say in Brooklyn, ya talked me into it, pal."

He watched appreciatively as she clambered down the slope and climbed into the seat. She parked her umbrella and glanced at him curiously. "Ready, Captain Brandt?"

"Uh—sure." He tore his eyes away and let the clutch out happily.

"I'm Leslie Sinclair," the girl said.

"Ugh," rejoined Tom quite distinctly, aware of a dull, inward thud. He took another quick reading. This Dr. Sinclair must be quite a guy. No missionary's wife ought to look like that.

On the flat crown of the hill the mission was a straggling pile of low, weathered stone. He helped her out of the weapons carrier, and she was just the right height. The top of her head, he observed, reached to his ear.

She smiled. "I'll see if there's anything left of supper. Is Mr. Flanagan coming?"

"That's what he said," mumbled Tom cheerlessly.

A grinning Korean boy showed him his room. It was a tiny chamber reminiscent of a monastery, and Tom wondered how it would feel to be a monk. *She must be his wife*, he reflected moodily. *He wouldn't keep his daughter in a place like this.* He changed shirts, and leafed through a stack of air charts on the table.

THE Korean came back with a lantern, and Tom found the girl alone in the dining-room. The severe lines of her slit-skirted Chinese gown revealed a figure that should never have been hidden in a baggy slicker. The dress was blue, and so were her eyes—a darker blue into which it was unsafe to gaze for too long.

She tapped a bell on the table, and he glanced at her hand. There was no ring on it.

She said: "Sune, this is Captain Brandt."

The little Korean girl bobbed her head. "So happy, Doctor," she lisped unexpectedly.

Tom was reminded suddenly of what happened when you unwound from a power dive with the airspeed indicator on the red line. This one felt like about six G's.

"You mean you're—"

"Of course," she told him with candid amusement. "You'd make a poor gambler, Captain Brandt. I could

tell from your face there was something bothering you."

"You could?" he asked, tremendously pleased. "Go ahead; elucidate, Doc."

"My father founded this mission, and I was brought up here. He died during the war while I was in medical school in Australia. I'm a doctor. That's all there is to it."

She smiled at him. It was a wonderful smile. If they had been in San Francisco, Tom reflected dizzily, he would have asked her what she was doing for dinner.

"Congratulations," he said. He took a deep breath and gazed at her with warmth.

"Won't you have some more tea?" asked Dr. Sinclair. "How do you like Korea?"

"As Flanagan predicted," he assured her sincerely. "I'm learning to love it."

"That's wonderful. You don't know what it will mean to these people to see a plane—their own plane—in the sky, and not to fear it. They need men like you."

"Meaning," Tom quoted Pyun Kang, "the situation is delicate."

"Yes," Leslie answered seriously. "I'm afraid it is."

"You know," Tom said, "it's none of my business, but there's one item that puzzles me. Something starts popping in a place like this, and first thing you know they want to drag in the rest of the world to save their skins. From what I saw today, it doesn't seem worth it."

SHE flushed. "That's hardly the point," she corrected, sounding just like a missionary's daughter. "They're human beings, no different from you and me, if only we realized it. If they have to fight, they'll be fighting our fight. All they want is some help."

"Most people do," Tom observed. "But it seems to me I was in a war once, and I found it extremely dangerous. A lot of people got killed. It didn't do a thing for me personally."

"Was that the idea?" Leslie's eyes had changed color. The blue was on the frosty side now.

"I wouldn't know," Tom argued, a trifle hotly. "I'm not a missionary or a national hero. I'm just a dumb air-plane-driver, and this is the best job I've ever had. I'd like to leave it at that."

"Oh?" She gave him a cool, somewhat clinical glance. "Do you always talk like this, Captain Brandt?"

The Doctor was taking things much too seriously. "Not always, but often," he admitted contritely. "As a kid, they say I used to burn worms."

Sune had entered the room. "A patient, Doctor," she announced in her careful, tinkling voice.

"Look," Tom said, "before you go—"

Leslie rose. "If you'll excuse me, Captain Brandt—" she said stiffly.

For some reason Tom seemed to have lost his appetite. He groped his way to his room and lay in the dark for an hour, listening to the gusty wind beat against the walls. Obviously, the Doctor lacked a sense of humor. But she looked even lovelier when she was mad.

WHEN he awoke, it was light, and Flanagan was shaking him. "Great flying weather," he advised. "It's raining."

The ceiling was a couple of thousand feet. Good enough to shoot some landings and take-offs.

On the way down the hill, Flanagan inquired slyly: "What did you say to the Doctor, Tom? She looked a bit pale this morning. At that, you're not a picture of joy yourself, lad."

Tom ignored him. "What's with the delegation?" he demanded, indicating the shoreline below.

They were packed thickly along the road above the river: a throng of small, white-clad figures waiting patiently in the rain.

"That, Tommy, my cobber," Flanagan said, "is the local populace assembled to watch the Great Sea Bird take to the air, an event of national importance in these parts."

The PBM had been moved to a buoy in the stream. Despite its need of a paint job, it looked big and able, and bumping alongside under the wing, Tom felt a pleasant tingle of anticipation at the thought of getting his hands on the controls.

With Yi's eager assistance he vaulted aboard, and glanced aft, catching sight of the empty gun-mount in the tail.

"Surplus," Flanagan offered hastily. "The mounts came with the ship."

"All right," Tom said. "But pull 'em out when you get a chance. No point in carrying the extra weight."

His co-pilot, a local product named George Sun Sin, was waiting on the flight deck. He was a thin, nervous young man who carried a technical manual under his arm. He started to bow, and then held out his hand.

"What do you know about this clunk?" Tom asked.

"The Patrol Bomber, Martin," recited George Sun Sin, "is a twin-engine seaplane powered by two Wright seventeen-hundred-and-fifty-horsepower engines. It is rated at a gross—"

"Okay," Tom grinned. "But what I mean—can you fly it?"

"No sir," his co-pilot said.

They taxied upstream, a mile above the village, and ran the mag check. The engines were smooth. They would be. Flanagan had had a week to work on them. Tom gave him thumbs up, and reached for the throttles.

The engines came alive, leaping to his touch with a deep-throated song. The ship shuddered and woke, answering their call. Rudder tab back a quarter turn. They were on the step now. She wanted to fly. The gull-shaped wings lifted, yearning to be airborne, defying the pull of earth and water. Ninety knots. They roared past the village and the blurred throng on shore. Tom eased back gently, and she flew herself off in a smooth, graceful line.

"Rated power! Forty-two inches. Twenty-four hundred rpm."

"Yes sir."

"Flaps."

"Flaps coming up, Captain."

At a thousand feet they turned and came back low over the mission and the sprawling houses below it. Tom lined it up and started the letdown, throttling back. Muddy water rose to meet them. He glided out, the keel touched, settled, and he shoved the power up, climbing again.

Flanagan yelled from the engineer's station: "How d'ya like it, Tommy?"

"Smooth," Tom grinned. "Very smooth, Septus." He turned to the co-pilot. "Your landing, George."

The Korean nodded, grasping the yoke with the expression of a man about to receive extreme unction. "Yes sir," he said.

They headed out to sea and came around again, flaps down, on the base leg in a wobbly turn.

"Nose down," Tom warned. "Watch your air-speed. All right, I'm with you. . . . Straighten it out. . . . That's good. Now fly it on."

A trickle of sweat ran down George's cheek. The water was coming up fast. He eased the nose up, reached for the throttles, and before Tom could stop him, yanked them back suddenly. They landed—twenty feet off the water.

With a gut-scrambling jar, the big ship dropped, hit and bounced again. Tom pulled his chin up and gave it the gun, keeping it up on the step.

He managed to grin at George, who looked back at him sickly. "Let's go again. Try flying it on this time."

GEORGE tried, with varying success. It was a long and at times painful afternoon. On the way in from the plane, Flanagan said hopefully: "Nice boy, George."

"Yeah," Tom responded. "A lovable character."

"He'll learn, Tommy."

Tom grunted, "He's got savvy like the rest of these jokers. I wouldn't depend on it."

The two men were waiting when they pulled into the fish-wharf; Mr. Saung and Mr. Kim. Mr. Saung spoke English. He showed Tom a map with a route neatly blocked out.

"Major Sun Sin will represent us on the aircraft," he lisped politely.

"Major who?"

"Ah—Tommy," Flanagan put in hurriedly, "did I forget to mention it, now? Our first charter is to the South Korean Government."

Tom examined the map critically. The blocked-off area followed the coast up the 38th parallel. It looked suspiciously like a military patrol.

"We'll just be keepin' an eye on things," Flanagan added. "You know, lookin' for pirates and such."

Tom shrugged. "Okay, Septus. But remember what I said. When the shooting starts—"

"Sure," Flanagan agreed. "When the shooting starts, lad."

LESLIE didn't appear in the dining-room. After supper, Flanagan yawned and went to bed, and Tom strolled to the outer doorway. He lit a cigarette and stood under the arch, staring into the darkening rain.

Behind him a musical voice said softly: "Hello, there."

He turned. She was wearing the slicker and boots again. "Going somewhere?"

"I have a call to make."

"Like some company?"

"All right. It's a terrible road, though. You may regret it."

It might have passed for a cowpath in the back hills of Kentucky. Crawling up it in Leslie's ancient high-bodied touring car, Tom posted over a bump and said, "I guess we got a little grim about things last night."

"It was my fault."

"No," Tom said. "I always talk too much."

They pulled up in front of a miserable one-room shack by the side of the road. "You're welcome to come in," Leslie said. "But I think you'd do better to wait out here. It's rather crowded inside."

He sat for an hour watching the orange light glowing through the heavy oiled paper that covered the windows of the house. At last Leslie came out, followed by an incredible number of small, chattering people.

He helped her into the car. "From the look on those people's faces, you must have quite a bedside manner, Doc. You'd be a sensation in San Francisco. You'd make a million."

"You're a materialist," Leslie answered lightly. "I have more than I need here."

He looked at her thoughtfully. "I won't argue with you about that tonight."

He parked the car and they walked to the doorway and stopped, looking into the rain. Standing there, conscious of her beside him, Tom thought of a lot of things to say, and found words for none of them.

"Well, good night." She faced him. "It was nice of you to come."

In the dim light her face was lifted. "Leslie—" He reached forward, and his arms went around her. For a moment his lips brushed hers, and then she twisted and broke free.

"You're very certain of yourself, Captain Brandt! You must have had a lot of practice."

"Sure," he agreed shakily. "A girl in every port."

She steadied her voice. "That's the difference between you and me, then. I'm sorry if I gave you the wrong impression." She turned angrily and strode through the door. . . .

The sun failed to come up, as usual, in the morning. The gloom suited Tom's mood. At ten they took off before a large and appreciative audience and headed north, flying at four thousand feet. Beneath them the coastal islands were low gray lumps in the mud-colored sea.

At the end of an hour they reached the Ong-jun Peninsula, on the fringe of the 38th parallel, circled offshore and turned, coming back. To the south a few fishing junks bobbed peacefully in the windless haze. Tom handed the controls to George, climbed out of the cockpit and opened a box lunch. He was munching a stale sandwich when the co-pilot's cry brought him to his feet.

"Captain!"

Below them an open launch, crowded with the tiny shapes of its overloaded passengers, had taken off from the northern shore and was making for a group of small islands to the east.

"What about it?" Tom demanded.

George pointed, and following his finger Tom saw the gunboat, leaving a dirty wake as it churned full speed from the open sea, headed on a collision course for the launch.

"North Korean," George said.

Tom slipped into the cockpit as the launch changed course, steering for the nearest point of land. If they got in among the islands they might get away. But it didn't look as if they would make it.

George was leaning forward excitedly. "We could dive on them—they don't know we're unarmed."

"Now, wait a minute," Tom objected. "This isn't our picnic."

He was eying the gunboat. It had the smaller craft cut off now, but was making no attempt to board. While he watched, a spurt of flame shot from its forward mount. In the launch a body twisted in the air and disappeared with a splash into the water.

"Captain—" George looked across at him with a dumb plea in his eyes.

"Okay," Tom snapped, disengaging the auto pilot. "Have it your way, George. Watch these comic-opera characters take off."

Beside him, Flanagan said soberly, "I don't think they'll run, Tommy." He pulled off the spare phones and pressed one of them against Tom's ear. "Tokyo."

A calm American voice said: "*North Korean Communist troops crossed the border in force this morning. A formal declaration of war—*"

Tom gave him a quick, startled look, too busy to listen further. They were in a power dive and the gunboat became a zigzagging, evasive target on the water below. Its machine guns elevated; pinpoint flames leaped up at them. Tom kept his eyes on it grimly, catching a fleeting glimpse of the launch, running again for the islands. The deck was centered now. If the PBM had had any fire-power this would soon be over.

He pulled it out at two hundred feet in a climbing, roaring turn. They came around, and he glanced at George's strained face, grinning. His arms tensed, pressing forward; and at that moment, without warning, a shot shattered the glass beside him. A sudden, numbing blow tore his fingers from the yoke and slammed him, twisting, against the seat.

Stupidly, he looked down, watching the red, pulsing stain spread across his sleeve. Another moment, and there was a lessening of the engines' roar. George had the controls. He was turning away from the target, pulling the power, letting down.

"No!" Tom grasped the throttles weakly, trying to push them up. "No! Climb. Get out of here."

"Let go, Captain." The co-pilot's voice came to him faintly.

"No!" They were only three or four hundred feet off the water. He held to the throttles with an aching grip, and saw the yellow face set. George's fist moved in slow motion, floating through the air between them. It exploded and Tom was flung, spinning, into a bright and blinding space.

HE opened his eyes, feeling the deck beneath his head. George knelt beside him, holding a piece of ripped cloth in his hands. They were on the water, taxing. Tom heard the sound of waves slapping, and the sputter of the engines.

"Get out!" he whispered. "The gunboat—we're sitting ducks here."

"In a moment, Captain."

Something tightened painfully on his left arm; he was too tired to talk.

After that, time had no meaning. He slept and woke fitfully, hearing the roar of engines, airborne again; feeling a jolt as the plane hit the water in a rough landing. He remembered, as if in a dream, seeing Leslie's face above him. It must have been a dream, because it had a misty, tender look.

There was a low, foreign whisper of voices behind her, and from among them Flanagan's said, "Ah, it was a lovely fight, lad."

Tom struggled to rise. "The plane—he landed out there."

"And took off again before the comrades got close enough to pot us. He'll make a grand pilot, that boy of yours."

Leslie's hand pressed him gently back. "That's enough, Septus. Lie still now. You're going to be all right, Tom."

He looked up at her. "Hi, Doc," he said and went to sleep again, quite peacefully.

WHEN he woke in his room it was light. He glanced at his watch. Ten o'clock. There was a neat bandage on his left forearm. He felt fine. He was hungry.

He dressed and wandered out to the kitchen, and was polishing off the breakfast Sune had whipped up, when Leslie came in.

He grinned at her. "How's my health, Doctor?"

"You tell me." She looked tired and not particularly happy. "It was a simple ligation: a secondary artery. The bleeding was stopped before it became critical. With the transfusion and the sleep you've had you should be as good as new."

"Transfusion?" His face sobered. "I guess George saved my life by landing when he did, then?"

"Quite possibly." She hesitated. "You remember what happened—about the war?"

"I remember." He got to his feet. "Which reminds me—time to go, Doc. Thanks for your help. Have your secretary send me a bill, will you?"

She didn't smile.

"Like to walk down the hill with me?"

"All right," Leslie said in a low voice.

The PBM rode to its mooring below them. A half dozen small figures moved on its wings and the gun mounts, Tom noted with satisfaction, were no longer empty.

Leslie stopped. "Good-by, Tom," she said.

"So long," he replied absently. He gazed out over the river. "How do you think she'll fly with a one-armed pilot?"

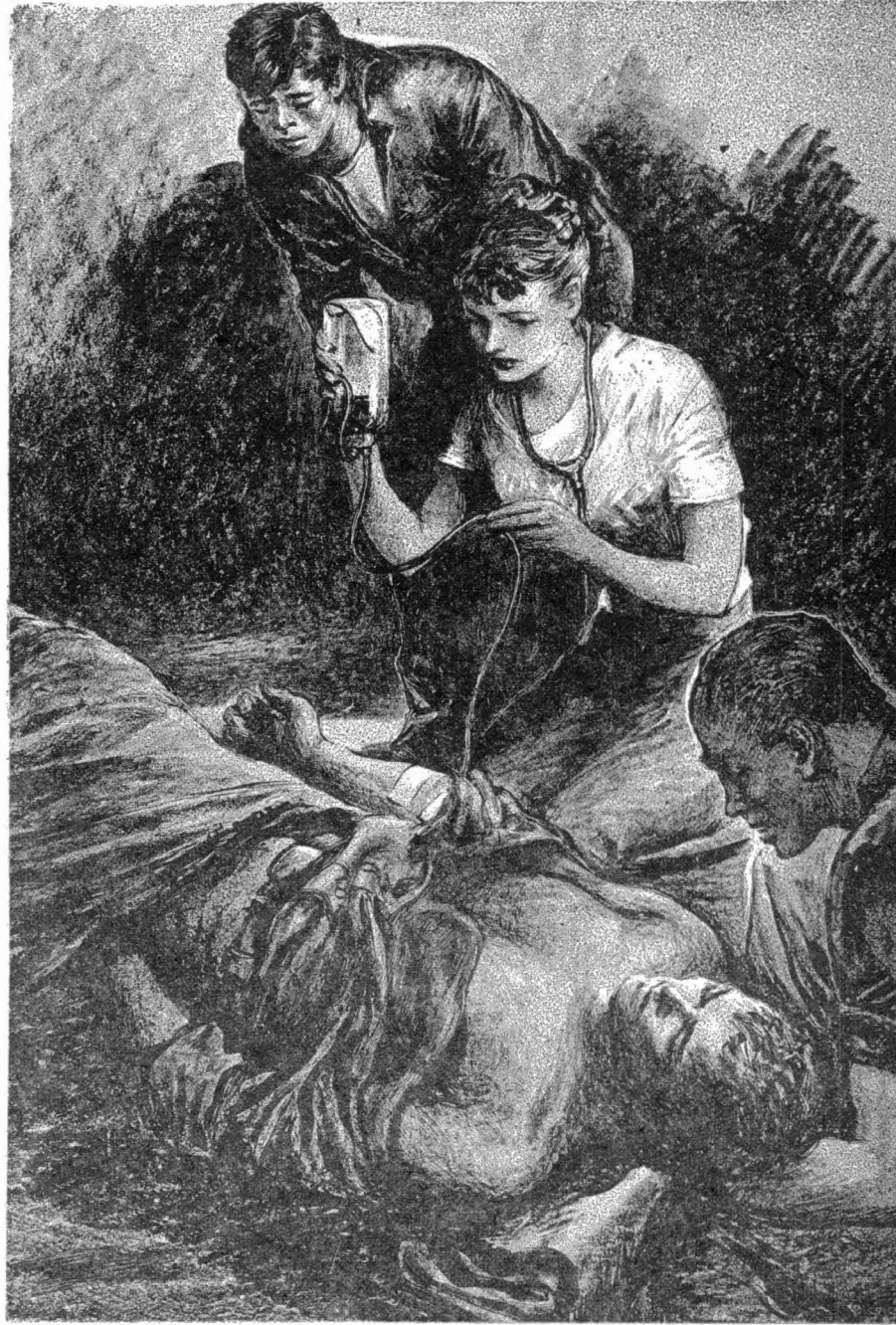
"Fly?" She looked up at him, startled.

"With your medical permission, of course."

"But I thought—you said you'd be leaving."

"You know," Tom said blandly, "I've been meaning to ask you—that was Korean blood you pumped into me, wasn't it?"

"Yes." Her face had come alive.



Tom looked up at her. "Hi, Doc," he said and went to sleep again.

"Well, it seems to work. So I guess they're human after all. We might as well face it—you've converted me, Doc."

"But perhaps you're right," Leslie objected. "Perhaps this isn't your fight."

He grinned at her suddenly. "You're slipping, Doctor. What kind of a missionary are you, anyway? Besides, someone has to help George fly that crate."

Standing on the slope above him, Leslie's eyes were level with his. You

could get lost in them, Tom discovered, when their warmth was for you. She touched his hand impulsively. "Take care, Tom."

"SURE. And don't forget—we have unfinished business to discuss. So think up some good answers by tonight, will you?"

"Oh, I will." She had started up the slope. Now she turned, smiling down at him. "As they say in Brooklyn—that's in America, isn't it?—you talked me into it, pal."

The Quest of the

A Tale of Knights Errant Indeed, by

... meanwhile came the knight following the Beast that had in shape a head like a serpent's, and a body like a leopard, and was footed like a hart; and in its body was such a noise as it had been thirty couples of hounds questing; and such a noise that beast made wheresoever it went. — Sir Thomas Malory in LE MORTE D'ARTHUR.

ATTRACTED by groans and fretful cries, Sir Dinadan turned aside into the green-wood shade and discovered an elderly knight recumbent among ferns and pillowed on moss, whereat he dismounted and made courteous inquiry concerning the cause of the stranger's position and lamentations.

"Cause enough, the Lord knows!" the stranger exclaimed, sitting up and clapping a mailed hand to his helmeted head. "Here was I within but spear's-length of the beast—with-in prodding distance for the first time in twenty years—when down on his knees went my horse with such violence that I departed the saddle by the way of his ears. Then he galloped away and left me grassed."

"What beast was that, sir?" asked Dinadan.

"The Saracen Beast, young sir," the other replied, speaking less excitedly now and fingering his gray mustache through his open visor. "That monster famous in song and story, that has been the quest of good knights these hundred years and more. There was King Gort—then Sir Cockrum, a mighty champion—then Duke Ironsides, who perished in it and was found a skeleton at the foot of a cliff. Then Duke Peveral followed it till he contracted rheumatics and bequeathed it to me, Sir Nigel of the Tower and his favorite nephew, God help me, twenty weary years ago. And now, alas, a mare's son fails me and I sit here unhorsed!"

"Sir, I would horse you and speed you on your quest right cheerily but for my lack of a second mount," Dinadan assured him. "As it is, Sir Nigel—with my second horse back at Camelot, and a somewhat pressing errand of my own—I fear me I can offer Your Honor no more than a lift to the nearest farmhouse or inn."



The elderly knight looked surprised and asked: "Why did you leave it behind you?"

Dinadan looked embarrassed, and replied, somewhat stumbingly: "He is not quite a warhorse, really—more of a sturdy hackney, sir. And, to speak frankly, I left him at Camelot in hock for my armorer's and my tailor's bills. And my man Kedge along with him! Both of them in hock—to be quite frank with you, sir."

"D'ye tell me so!" chuckled Sir Nigel. "As short of cash as long of spur, what! How come, young sir?"

Dinadan admitted it with a smile at once whimsical and rueful, and then explained his position briefly, thus: "I am the third son of a northern baron whose mountainy domain produces larch and heather and whortleberries in abundance, but little else, and whose tenants pay their rents with smoked venison and usquebaugh. Upon leaving home I paged, and later squired, a stout and generous knight, hight Sir Gyles; and a year since, King Arthur dubbed me knight for a small deed connected with the whiskers of treasonous King Rience of North Wales."

Saracen Beast

Illustrated by
JOHN FULTON

THEODORE GOODRIDGE ROBERTS



At that, Sir Nigel rose and embraced the younger knight with a clanging of breastplates.

"I've heard of that doughty deed!" he cried. "It was well done, by my halidom! It is an honor to meet the hero that razored the villainous visage of that braggart."

"Nay, no hero!" protested Dinadan, in modest confusion. "Only a fumbling beginner, sir—but at your service."

"At my service, d'ye say? Then do I bequeath to you, here and now, the high quest of the Saracen Beast, even as my lamented uncle bequeathed it

to me twenty weary years ago. It is all yours, my worthy and trusty Sir Dinadan. So mount now, and follow the Saracen Beast through thick and thin, even as it has been followed by the mighty King Gort, Sir Cockrum, Duke Ironsides and Duke Peveral, to mention myself. Up and after it, noble youth!"

His embarrassment and confusion vastly increased by the bequest and the old knight's rising vehemence, Sir Dinadan was fairly flabbergasted.

"Gramercy, gramercy!" he stammered. "But who am I—full young and untried—to follow those illu-

trious princes and noble questers? And were I worthy even, I'd think shame to leave Your Honor alone and unhorsed in this forest."

"You are too modest, my boy," said Sir Nigel. "As for my position at the moment, think nothing of it. It will mend. I have a squire and grooms and spare horses somewhere back along the way, who frequently lose touch but always catch up to me sooner or later. So mount and spur now, I pray you!"

"But, sir, I am in no manner prepared or provisioned for this high adventure," poor Dinadan protested. "I was but riding at random in the hope of meeting some knight-errant less secure in the saddle than myself, and thereby obtaining the means—his arms and harness and horse—of recovering my chestnut hackney and my man Kedge. In fact, sir, I am operating on a shoestring, and at the moment, in greater need of quick money than of glory."

"You shall have both, my boy," said Sir Nigel. "I'll be in Camelot tomorrow, and shall release your man and hackney, and make generous provision for them, without delay, as I am a true knight. As for quick money, here are five silver crowns to enrich your pouch. And here is one of the two flasks I always carry on my sword-belt. As for victuals for today and tomorrow, my runaway charger carries two saddlebags stuffed with the very best, to which you are welcome. You have but to follow in his tracks to overtake him, or more likely, to meet him on his way back; for it is his habit, upon such occasions, to turn about and retrace his steps when he realizes I am not still on his back. In either case, snatch the saddlebags."

He pushed Dinadan gently yet strongly toward the latter's charger, and even boosted him into the saddle.

"Now I shall rest easy, my noble young friend, in the knowledge that I have relayed this high quest into such worthy and capable hands as your own," he added.

So, feeling that further protest would sound discourteous and ungrateful, Dinadan rode off on the quest of the Beast. He followed the trail of the runaway horse without difficulty, and had gone only a mile

In a dangerous voice Green Tunic demanded: "Who are you, knave?"

before sounds of movement in the leafy obscurity before him caused him to draw rein. The disturbance increased swiftly; and a large black horse, saddled and accoutered, burst suddenly into view and came galloping straight at him. A collision was narrowly avoided by quick footwork on the part of his dapple-gray; and in the moment of the black's passing, Dinadan made a long arm and snatched the coupled saddlebags. He went forward again, keeping to the double track of the runaway's going and coming with hardly a check, until he reached a patch of moist ground whereon Sir Nigel's horse had snubbed to a stop and reversed himself. It was all as easy to read as inked words on parchment.

"Now I shall have only the tracks of the Beast itself to guide me," Dinadan muttered.

Looking down from his high saddle, he saw nothing traceable leading onward from the gouges of iron-shod hooves. So he dismounted and peered closer, and still failed to find anything to his purpose.

"But what am I looking for?" he asked himself. "What do I know of this Saracen Beast and the kind of tracks it makes?"

He sat down on a convenient tussock of fern, and racked his brains. He had heard of the Saracen Beast before his meeting with Sir Nigel, but always incidentally and never with his full attention. Now he ransacked his memory for particulars concerning that high and exclusive quest and its exclusive object, neither of which had ever made a very strong appeal to the popular taste, evidently. He removed his helmet and gauntlets and clasped his bare head in bare hands. When and what had he first heard of it?

HAH, he had it! He was a mere toddler when a wandering bard had sung of it, and many more marvels, in his ancestral hall. The bard had called it the Saracen Beast. By his telling, it had been brought to Britain by a great traveler in a remote age, and had escaped from its cage and into impenetrable mountain forests. He had clutched his nurse's skirts at the bard's description of that monster, and he shivered slightly even now at the memory. How had it gone?

"The head and neck of a great serpent, the body of an Afric leopard but twice as great and long, and the legs and hooves of a hart, and a noise in its belly as of thirty couples of hounds questing." That was it. But between the episode of the bard and the meeting with good Sir Nigel, he



had heard, or harkened to, only such talk of the Saracen Beast as had given him the impression that its pursuit offered little of knightly fame and even less of monetary reward. But now he, Dinadan, was pledged to it and embarked upon it, so there was nothing for him to do about it but his honest best.

Dinadan sighed, arose from the ferny tussock, hung his casque on the saddle and renewed his search afoot for the trail of the Saracen Beast. His tall dapple-gray Garry followed him with a polite show of interest.

He was rewarded sooner than he had expected.

"What's this!" he cried, staring at a cloven hoof-print in a patch of mud. "This is it—the track of a royal hart of ten points, anyway."

He advanced again, scrutinizing the ground and finding further prints of cleft hooves in moist spots every here and there; and Garry followed close, snuffling inquiringly at his shoulder. So they soon came to a spring of clear water under a bank of flowering May-thorn and bramble; and by the depth of the hoof-prints in the soft margin thereof, Dinadan knew that his quarry had drunk its fill here. Now the sun was behind the westward forest and the leafy twilight was dimming; so Dinadan decided to pass the night beside the spring. He unbitted and unsaddled Garry, who straightway sank his muzzle to the water. He followed the horse's example, though the weight of his armor all but bogged him down. After extricating himself from the mud, he unarmed from neck



to heels—a difficult task lacking squirrelish help. Then, after a swig at the flask which Sir Nigel had given him, he opened one of the saddlebags that he had snatched from the runaway's saddle-bow. Here was superior fare, in truth! Here was a tart of jam and rich pastry which he shared, bite and bite about, with nuzzling Garry. Here was a pigeon pie, of which the horse got only the pastry. They went fifty-fifty on the currant buns, but the knight had all of the roast chicken, and the charger all of a large barley loaf.

DINADAN slept soundly on fern and moss, but was early awake and astir. For breakfast, he and Garry shared what remained in the first saddlebag. Then (after a pull on the

flask) he saddled and bitted Garry; but instead of rearming himself, he resumed the belt only, with his sword and a dagger convenient on his left hip and his wallet and Sir Nigel's flask to balance them. He placed all the rest—helmet, the back- and breast-plates, shoulder pieces, thigh pieces, greaves and the rest—upon and about the great saddle. But he slung his shield at his own back and shouldered his war-spear. So he resumed the quest of the strange Saracen Beast on his own feet, with the tall horse and all his protective harness clanking after. Though he went lightly now, he still went slowly, searching for big cloven hoof-prints. The ground became higher and dryer and the prints so few and so far between that he just about lost interest in them before the

morning was half gone. He sat down on a mossy boulder to reflect and to moisten his throat.

"This is too bad," he told his horse. "In twenty-four hours I have lost that which Sir Nigel kept tag of for twenty years—unless the venerable knight was exaggerating. Or so it seems. But we'll take another scout around, of course: but I must confess that I don't see much of a future for you and me in this high quest of the Saracen Beast. It sounded impractical to me—a trifle too high and wide—when I first heard of it. But we'll do our best, of course—for another day, at least. We owe that much to generous Sir Nigel."

So the search for cloven hoof-prints was resumed.

"WHAT'S that?" exclaimed Dinadan. But he was not looking at the ground. His head was up: and so was Garry's.

"Hark! Hounds in full cry! The Beast with the noise as of questing hounds in its belly! Nay—it's real hounds—and they have brought the Beast to bay!"

He leaped forward and ran hard and straight toward the clamor, with the gear-encumbered charger clanking after him. Now he heard the halloos of men mingled with the fierce outcry of hounds. He went through thick and thin, and soon burst from cover into a small glade and the scene of action. Here was the Beast. . . . Nay, this was no monster, but a noble stag of ten points doing battle for its dear life against hopeless odds; the center of a milling ring of fangs and steel. It still struck with horns and hooves, but with failing force. There was troth on its muzzle now, and blood on neck and breast and flanks, and the great eyes were dimming. Dinadan saw plainly enough that this was not the Saracen Beast, but only a great hart of ten points overmatched and about to die and therefore no concern of his; but a sudden furious madness of indignation and pity seized him, and he dashed into the mêlée with a defiant yell and buffeting hands and feet. Hounds and two fellows in wool and leather slunk or jumped out of reach of his arms and legs, but a third huntsman turned upon him and threatened him with a boar-spear.

But only for a moment. Before the fellow could deliver even a jab, Dinadan enveloped him like a whirlwind, snatched the short spear and clipped him over the nob with its butt-end. Now a menacing but inarticulate roar caused our hero to look to his left; and he beheld a large person in a tunic of green silk coming at him on a tall horse. A personage, evidently, by the quality of his tunic, the curly

feather and gold brooch in his green cap and the arrogance of his voice.

Still roaring, this personage dismounted within a pace of Dinadan and threatened him with the butcher's knife with which he obviously intended to deliver the *coup de grâce* to the enfeebled stag. Dinadan, wagging the boar-spear in a calculating manner, warned him to make less noise and more sense, or he too would be laid flat with a broken head. At that, the other ceased his inarticulate bellowing suddenly and was silent for long enough to flap his mouth open and shut half a dozen times. Then in a controlled but dangerous voice Green Tunic demanded:

"Who are you, knave?"

To this Dinadan returned, in a voice that matched the questioner's: "Who wants to know, churl?"

At that, the two huntsmen who had jumped aside from Dinadan's first onset struck at him from the rear, only to have their blows nullified by the long shield on his back. He turned upon them and struck with the clubbed spear, thus presenting the shield to a vicious slash of their master's knife. He turned again, quick as a trout, dropped the borrowed boar-spear, drew his sword and sent Green Tunic stumbling back beyond the sweep of it.

"Fool, I am Sir Gregstone, lord of all this barony!" cried Green Tunic. "Put up that sword!"

Dinadan cried: "I am Sir Dinadan of the Quest of the Saracen Beast!" And he sent the two varlets leaping backward with a circular sweep of his long sword.

"The Saracen Beast, say you?" exclaimed Sir Gregstone, with a change for the better of both voice and countenance. "Just so. An exalted quest, truly, sir—ah—I didn't catch the name, sir."

"Dinadan."

"Dinadan. Quite. And what, then, of old Sir Nigel of the Tower?"

"He handed over to me, after twenty years of it, and went to Camelot."

"Just so. A fine old gentleman. But may I make so bold as to ask why you charged into this entirely private hunt of my own hart in my own forest, kicking my hounds and breaking the heads of my huntsmen?"

"I mistook your quarry for my own—your stag for the Beast—by the tracks of its cloven hooves," lied Dinadan.

"He's stole away an' got clean off, Lord," grumbled one of the spearmen.

Of the other spearmen, one still lay supine with a cracked nob, and one nursed a broken shoulder.

"My mistake, Sir Gregstone," lied Dinadan, feigning regret.

"Let it pass," said Gregstone, but with a wry grimace. "A head of ten



points, by my halidom! I've never seen a greater. But let it pass. And put up your sword, I pray you, Sir Dinadan, and come home to dinner."

"Gramercy," accepted our hero, who even at this stage of his career seldom refused an invitation to dine or sup.

The grumbling spearman knelt beside the fellow on the ground and tried to rouse him, but without success. Dinadan joined them, unhooked Sir Nigel's flask from his belt and unstopped it, raised the unconscious

churl's head and shoulders and tilted the flask to the parted lips. After three swallows, the sturdy fellow was up on his feet and staggering happily. Then Dinadan examined the other casualty's shoulder, advised him to see a doctor and administered two swigs from the flask. . . .

They came to Sir Gregstone's residence shortly after high noon. It stood, or rather squatted, in a fair meadow, and was girt by a wide moat like a paunchy champion by his sword-belt. It consisted of structures



"Permit me to reply for him, young sir. I know the answer as well as he does."

of two or more periods, some of hewn timber and some of masonry, with a square tower in their midst. Its appearance was substantial and commodious rather than elegant.

"Like its lord's," thought Dinadan, with a glance at Sir Gregstone.

They were no more than across the drawbridge when loud halloos in their rear caused Dinadan to halt and turn. He saw a knight armed cap-à-pie riding hard toward them on a red horse.

"Who is that?" he asked. "And what does he want?"

"Pay him no heed!" cried Gregstone. "He is but a crackpot. An' dinner is waiting," he added urgently.

"Nay, he bawls your name and dubs you coward," protested Dinadan. "He dares you to arm and come out to him. Are you deaf?"

"I hear him, as I've heard him, almost daily, this past month and more, the devil take him! Come in to dinner, or 'twill be burnt to cinders."

"But he calls you coward an' knave and a disgrace to your golden spurs. He calls you glutton and tyrant."

"He's mad. Heed him not. He'll come no nearer than the bridge.

Ignore him and come in to dinner, and he'll return to his pitch in the forest."

"But all he asks is to run a tilt with you—but in villainous language, I admit. Why not arm yourself and oblige him—and have done with his clamor? I'll be glad to squire you."

"No, no! Not now, anyway! After dinner, maybe. I'll explain it all after dinner."

Sir Gregstone pushed and pulled Sir Dinadan into the great hall, and grooms followed with the horses; and while Dinadan was being nudged and plucked toward a table set beneath a

canopy on a dais, the horses were led the whole length of the hall and out by a back door.

The two knights dined by themselves, but with service enough for a company of ten; and there was just as much too much of victuals and drink as of service. In truth, there was too much of everything except conversation, of which there was nothing for a long time. Dinadan was a good trencherman, but he could not hold a candle to his host in this respect, nor could he match him in the cup-and-can branch of gourmandry. At last, however, Sir Gregstone wiped his lips and fingers on a corner of the tablecloth of damask, sat back in his chair, hiccuped and closed his eyes.

"Now what about the knight on the red horse?" asked our hero, prodding him with an elbow.

Gregstone moved his fat lips, but nothing came of it. Dinadan prodded again and harder, and repeated the question louder. The fat lips this time emitted a thick whisper:

"It'll keep. Forty winks. No hurry."

Dinadan swore impatiently. Though he had plied knife and fingers and cup and horn with his customary heartiness, he was not sleepy, and his curiosity was as lively as ever. So he drew back his elbow for a third and yet sharper prod.

"Hold it!" someone exclaimed at his shoulder.

He held it, and turned his head and saw an elderly gentleman in a robe of black velvet standing behind him.

"I beg your pardon, young sir, but you'll gain nothing by nudging him," continued Black Robe, in a hurried and conciliatory voice. "His ribs are too well larded. He'll sleep for hours yet. But permit me to reply for him, sir. I know the answers as well as he does."

He introduced himself as Clark Andrew, one-time tutor to Sir Gregstone and for many years now seneschal of the great house and steward of the wide domain. At Dinadan's suggestion, he took a seat and helped himself to wine. He had already dined—"before the sirloin was done too hard for my waggly tender teeth," he explained. He dismissed the servants with a gesture.

"And now, young sir, what would you know?"

"Why your Sir Gregstone ignores the challenge and insults of the knight on the red horse, venerable sir."

"Quite. I myself would ask that question if I did not know my bully lord and friend as I do. Should you repeat it to Sir Gregstone three hours from now, when he wakes from his postprandial nap, he will tell you that he ignores challenges and insults

because he lacks suitable harness in which to accept the former and resent the latter. Mere sophistry, young sir—though 'tis true that of his two suits of armor, which were made for his father, one is now too small for him and the other still too large."

"D'ye tell me he lacks the price of a new suit of mail?"

"Not at all, young sir. God forbid! He could have a suit of the best Spanish made to his measure every sunnigh of his life, had he a mind to; but like his father before him, he is a better patron to cooks and tailors than to armorers. He is no joustier; nor was Sir Guff. He has neither the seat nor the spirit for exchanges of thrusts and cuts with equally armed cavaliers; nor had his sire. Harts and hinds are more to his taste as antagonists—but only after they have been properly winded and worried by hounds and huntsmen. And so it was with Sir Guff, who took his first and only tumble in a passage of arms as a young man and harnessed to match his slimness, and who had no further ado with body armor until, when as big around as a hogshead, he ordered a new suit of mail for a purely ceremonious occasion. And so it is that Sir Gregstone, a true son of his father, can excuse himself from combat on the plea that he has nothing to wear."



"What happens when an irresistible force meets with an immovable object? We'll soon know!"

"Hah! So he is truly the lily-livered, chicken-hearted knave that the knight on the red horse names him."

"Near enough, young sir. And yet not altogether a knave. Not an out-an'-out villain for a ballad, so to speak. There's good as well as bad in him—as in most of us. He's not vengeful, for one thing. Take your own case, for instance, young sir. I have heard from the huntsmen how you came crashing in when he was about to dispatch that great hart of many tines—one of the greatest ever seen in these parts, so they say—and cuffed and kicked hounds and huntsmen and threatened Sir Gregstone with your sword, to the end that the stag escaped with his life. And yet you sit here as safe as if you were in your own house; and you might lie here just as safely, asleep as awake. If you come to any harm here, young sir, it will be from emulating your host's prowess at this table. In other words, all will be aboveboard. Hah-hah! Not had, wot?"

"Very good, sir. You have a pretty wit. But I must tell you that I'd be in a poor state of health right now if his hunting-knife had not been turned by the shield on my back."

"D'ye tell me that he struck at you?"

"Yes—and it was when my back was turned."

"Even so, young sir, it was a surprising show of spirit on his part. But don't let it worry you. He must have quite forgotten his true nature in the chagrin and excitement of the moment. He lacks both spirit and energy, as well as inclination, to strike at you again from behind or before. Consider his behavior in the case of the froward knight on the red horse. All Sir Gregstone does in retaliation to that gentleman's challenges and insults, which have been of almost daily recurrence for the past month, is ignore them and him."

At that, Dinadan sneered: "Because he's afraid to fight!"

"There's no denying it, young sir," agreed the seneschal. "Sir Gregstone, like Sir Guff before him, is averse to combat—to the exchanging of blows, that's to say. In the matter of thrusts and cuts, he holds that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Yes indeed. But his case is not as simple as you make it sound, my dear sir. If he were of a vengeful nature, or treacherously inclined, he would have rid himself of the pestiferous attentions of that knight weeks ago, by sending archers and pikemen out at him in broad day or a cutthroat after dark; for the vociferous challenger invites disaster every hour, open to arrows and mass attack daily, and lying asleep and unarmed every night in the same dell. And Sir Gregstone has

only to say the word, and the murderous deed is done, for he is a generous master. But he has not said it; nor will he say it, for 'tis not in his nature, but turns deaf ears to the clamor and does not let it spoil his dinner."

"It sounds like madness to me," said Dinadan scornfully. "Madness and foolery! They both sound crazy, and worse, to me. Gregstone is an arrant coward, by your own telling, and a loathly glutton to boot, despite the one redeeming feature you claim for him. And his challenger must be utterly mad. Who is he? And what is he challenging about? What does he want of your guzzling coward?"

The seneschal scratched his bearded chin and a hairy ear, and drained and refilled his cup, before answering.

"He calls himself Sir Kelter," he said, and paused for a sip. "But what he wants," he continued slowly, as if weighing every word, "I am not prepared to say, as I have not the honor—questionable, maybe—of his confidence. I fully agree with you, however, that he must be mad: but there are so many varieties of madness in the knightage—in its junior circles especially—that I'll not venture an opinion on the exact nature and degree of his affliction."

"Maybe he is just spoiling for a fight?" suggested our hero hopefully.

"He is in a pugnacious mood, unquestionably," the other agreed.

"Maybe he would like a go at me?" Dinadan resumed. "Just a friendly bicker—or whatever he wants. Blunt spears or sharp ones, I'd leave him the choice."

The seneschal wagged his venerable pow and said: "I don't think he would like it, young sir."

"Not like it! Why not? I am a knight of King Arthur's own dubbing—high Sir Dinadan—and good enough for my years. Not as good as many and yet better than some—both ahorse and afoot!"

"I don't question your quality, Sir Dinadan. Nor your prowess, sir. On the contrary. To be frank with you, bully knight, I have observed you closely; and not only that, I have visited your great charger and examined your fine harness; and I doubt if Sir Kelter would welcome your worship as a substitute for Sir Gregstone. And after all, his ire appears to be very particularly aroused by the person of Sir Gregstone."

"That may be: but if he is half as fierce as he sounds, he'll not refuse a fight simply for lack of a quarrel."

After a long minute of deep thought and another cup of mead, the old man said: "In my opinion, it is a bang at Sir Gregstone that he wants, rather than a fight. But if you, sir, are serious in your suggestion of meeting him in combat, you have only to

go forth on Gregstone's charger and with Gregstone's green shield dressed before you."

Dinadan didn't half like the idea of doing battle on a strange horse and sporting his craven host's shield, but he felt such an urge for action that he accepted it. So he and the seneschal retired to the stables, leaving Sir Gregstone snoring in his chair.

With his companion's help, Dinadan was soon in his suit of superior and tested mail, the price of which had been several times more than he could afford. Then, after a brief visit to Garry's stall, for the purpose of embracing and apologizing to his puzzled dapple-gray, he went forth on a strange horse and behind a strange shield with the intention of amending the manners of a strange knight.

WHEN Dinadan issued upon the meadow beyond the drawbridge, Sir Kelter was hovering at the forest's edge some two hundred yards away. At a blast on a horn blown by the venerable seneschal, Kelter wheeled, gave vent to a long-drawn whoop beginning on a note of incredulity and rising swiftly to a hoot of derision and an exultant shout, then laid his spear and launched to the attack. Whereupon our hero laid his spear and dressed the green shield and knocked spurred heels on the bulging flanks of his mount.

"Get going!" he urged. "Action front!"

But the horse only tossed his great head in protest and sank his great hooves deeper in the sod.

"What sort of warhorse are you?" Dinadan enquired, with appropriate epithets.

But breath and heels alike were wasted, for the animal was no sort of warhorse at all, but the biggest and laziest plowhorse within five leagues in every direction. In the meantime, Sir Kelter and the red charger came on, hard and straight.

"So be it, fool!" muttered Sir Dinadan. "Let them do the running—the devil take you! What happens when an irresistible force meets with an immovable object? We'll soon know!"

A number of things happened practically all at once. Sir Kelter's wavering point—he was only a third-rater after all, despite his noise—went wide in the last critical split second; but Sir Dinadan's held true. So Kelter sailed backward from his saddle on the point of our hero's bending lance—but with his breastplate no more than dented behind the pierced shield—and came to earth violently on the back of his neck. Then the collision! The forces of motion and immobility involved were so great that both horses fell down; and though the plowhorse dropped where he stood, without giv-

ing back an inch, the vibrations of the shock flung Dinadan from the saddle to the ground, where a hoof of one or the other of the stunned steeds clipped him on his helmeted head.

UPON regaining consciousness, Dinadan did not open his eyes at once, but tried to collect his wits; and while so stilly yet laboriously and painfully employed (for his head felt terrible), he heard a voice close at hand. It was the voice of Sir Gregstone; and though it was reduced to a wheezy whisper, he recognized it.

"But use your brains, I beg you!" wheezed Sir Gregstone with urgency. "This is the better match on every count, as I've explained a dozen times already. Must I go all over it again? So he it! He is by far the better joust—since you set such store by the silly arts and mad antics of chivalry. Though handicapped by a mount that refused to budge, he hit your vociferous Kelter straight and hard and grassed him like a carp. That he was unhorsed by the collision, and so got his head trod on, was no fault of his. It might have happened to King Arthur, or to that master of romantic tomfoolery Sir Launcelot du Lake, under like circumstances.

"Kelter can take no credit for it, that's certain, for the spill was due entirely to his mount's stupidity, and the knockout was purely accidental, no matter which horse stepped on him. Instead of pouting, you should be thanking your stars for the quality of his helmet. Use your wits, child! With such a helmet as that, and every other item of his harness of matching quality—and consider that dapple-gray charger too—this Dinadan is as well turned out as any earl. So quit your sulking, and make the most of this opportunity."

A peevish feminine voice protested: "But you yourself named him for a fool, Papa, when you said that only the feeble-minded or utterly mad ever undertook that quest."

"True for you," wheezed Sir Gregstone. "I said that, and I repeat it. King Gort, Sir Cockrum, Duke Ironsides, Duke Peveral and Sir Nigel—each and every one of those questers of the Saracen Beast was either as mad as a March hare dancing in the moonshine, or as simple as the village idiot: for if such a beast ever existed—which I doubt—it was dispatched even before old King Gort's time, or it would have fallen since to one of those eager questers, who were all good men of their hands, whatever can't be said for their heads. Nay, the Questing or Saracen Beast is not, and never was, anything more than an obsession bred of an old-wife's tale or a poet's fable. It exists and survives only in the imaginations of its succeeding pursuers,

each of whom must needs be mad, or at least chuckleheaded, or he would have nothing to pursue. And so the fabulous quest has been passed on from madman to madman—but whether by accident or design I don't know.

"But this I do know, child. It has always moved on an exalted plane. From King Gort to Sir Nigel, every quarter of the Beast has been of high blood and exalted possessions. And do you think for a moment that old Sir Nigel of the Tower would pass it on just to any come-by-chance hedge-running knight-errant? Don't be silly. I promise you that this young knight is a rich earl's son and heir at the very least, and more likely a duke's. So bestir yourself now that you have him at your mercy, while he is doubly a crackpot, so to speak: for you'll never have another chance—not with that nasty temper you got from your poor lamented mother—to make so fine a marriage. And if this young knight lacks something of intelligence, he will make the happier husband: the happier for himself as for you. I am sure that my own marriage would have been happier for all concerned had I been less generously endowed with intelligence and sensibility."

"Not to mention gluttony and cowardice, dear Papa," jeered the lady.

Breathing in angry snorts, Sir Gregstone exclaimed: "Your mother's own daughter! But harky to me, hussy! If you let this Godsend slip through your fingers, and continue to encourage that insolent pesky knave who calls himself Sir Kelter but is more likely a runaway scullion than a born cavalier, I shall lose my well-known sense of Christian forbearance entirely, and Black Tim or Sticker Mike will slit his villainous gullet."

Then there was silence; and after minutes of it, Sir Dinadan ventured to lift one eyelid just far enough for a peek. He was in a small chamber dimly lit by a smoky candle. *So I have been out for hours*, he thought. He saw that which twitched his venturesome eye wide open. It was a lady. She stood just beyond the candle, looking down at the smoking wick. He regained control of his eyelid. She snuffed the candle, waited till it burned clearly, then took it up and moved toward him. She stood close beside the narrow bed he was on, and gazed down at him with eyes as green and hard as emeralds. *God help me!* he thought, watching through screening lashes and trying to breathe like an innocent sleeper. She continued to gaze down at him, stooping a little. Her hair was like spun gold; her cheeks and brow were like eglantines and Easter lilies, and her small mouth was like a ruby. And now her green gaze took on a considering, musing softness.

"Maybe he really means it," she murmured. "And he may be right, for once. And to spare dear Kelt a slit gullet—why not? With a noble simpleton for a husband and my darling still alive and kissing—why not? A respectable son-in-law for Papa, and freedom for me. I'll do it!"

She stooped lower and touched her lips to his. He twitched sharply. She straightened up slowly, with a gratified smile on her ruby mouth (having mistaken his twitch for reaction to her kiss instead of to a drip of hot tallow on his ear), murmured, "Till tomorrow, my poor fool," replaced the candle on the table and left the room. Dinadan opened both eyes, then sat up cautiously and held his sore head in both hands, trying to steady it. After a little while, he recovered a piece of his armor from the floor and tried to put it on, but with such excess of anxious haste and lack of strength and direction that he accomplished nothing in ten minutes of frantic effort; and he was still fumbling futilely when discovered by the seneschal.

"What now, young sir?" asked the seneschal.

"Not so loud!" begged Dinadan. "Shut that door—for God's sake! An' lend a hand, I pray you, good Master Andrew. This caused breastplate!"

"Nay, that's the backplate! What gives?"

"I'm leaving. No place for me. Must be gone before morning."

"What's your hurry?"

"That lady. I—she—God save me from such a fate!"

"Hah! I get it. Permit me to squire you, young sir."

THE old seneschal had Dinadan ready for the road before the candle needed a second snuffing, then led him down and out to the stables by back stairs and passages, saddled Garry for him and gave him a leg-up, then led horse and rider away by a muddy lane and over the moat by the rear drawbridge. After thanking the seneschal warmly and promising to send a handsome acknowledgment as soon as he was in the money again, Dinadan expressed sportsmanly regret at thus condemning young Sir Kelter to a slit gullet.

"Though I'd personally prefer a slit gullet to marriage with that lady," he added.

"Tastes differ," chuckled the other. "But don't worry. Sir Gregstone's bark is worse than his bite."

So Dinadan rode back to Camelot: and that was the end of the illusionary quest of the fabulous Saracen Beast. Years later, he heard that Sir Kelter, who had lived to marry that lady and to cut his own throat, had been the secret and ambitious son of that crafty and ambitious seneschal.

A Page from the Editor's Scrapbook:

TRIPLE PLAY: PRESIDENT TO MILLIONAIRE TO JUNKMAN

by Harold Helfer

PERHAPS the only time a President of the United States ever intervened in an execution scheduled within a sovereign State occurred in 1922, when Warren G. Harding sent a telegram to William C. Sproul, Governor of Pennsylvania, and asked that the condemned individual be spared.

It wasn't, of course, a wholly proper thing for the Chief Executive to do, since Presidents are not supposed to interfere with interstate goings-on. Nevertheless Governor Sproul took heed of the President's telegram and requested the judge who handled the case—Magistrate P. Howard Boorse, of Buck County—to hold up the execution.

This the magistrate did; but he could only hold the matter in abeyance. The individual had been properly condemned in accordance with the law, and an execution-date set. And the law was the law.

The case created quite a stir throughout the country, and many people from all walks of life spoke out warmly in sympathy with the condemned prisoner. A millionaire manufacturer of Philadelphia, J. Edward Dunham, ordered the attorney of his corporation to cease what they were doing and devote their time to see if there wasn't a loophole in the law somewhere whereby the doomed individual might be saved.

Someone had sent Mrs. Harding a newspaper of the case and solicited her aid in the cause of the prisoner, and while the First Lady was not the sort who liked to stick her nose into things her sympathy was aroused and she promptly brought the matter to her husband's attention. She felt it urgent enough to warrant the President in putting aside any national or international matters in which he might be engaged. The President agreed and sent his wire to Governor Sproul.

The condemned individual was

Dickie, a big shaggy dog, one-quarter-or-so Saint Bernard. He belonged to a poor junk-peddler named Jacob Silverman. Dickie was a good-natured, amiable dog who got along well with everyone. Everybody in the neighborhood liked him. He never had done a mean thing in his life.

The reason he was condemned to be shot was this: There was a law on the Pennsylvania statute-books at the time which said that aliens could not own dogs; if they were found with a dog, the owner was fined \$25 and the dog promptly executed. Some law-enforcement officers were always on the lookout for aliens with dogs—since half of the \$25 went into the officer's pocket.

This ordinance in regard to aliens and dogs might seem like a harsh and unfair law, but there was a reason for it; it was this:

It had been discovered that some aliens, not understanding the way of American life, were in the habit of picking up dogs which belonged to others, particularly around the hunting season, and using the animals for hunting purposes.

Then, when the hunting season was over, they'd have no further use for the dog—and the animal, running loose, would take to killing sheep and fowl.

Junk-peddler Silverman was not a hunter; he was too busy trying to scrape out a living with junk. He had spent \$5 of his hard-earned money for the dog when it was just a pup, because his daughter Rebecca had taken a fancy to it. Nevertheless, Jacob Silverman was not a citizen and the law was plain about it; so, although Dickie was a gentle dog and loved by one and all, there was nothing to do but execute him.

But of course corporation lawyers are very smart; so, given time to work out something by the Presidentially-induced temporary reprieve, they thought up a permanent solution. It was this: A "holding company" could be formed and the "concern" could take possession of the dog and "lease" it to Silverman.

So Mr. Dunham the millionaire drew up a charter and made himself head of a "holding company" whose property was one Dickie Silverman, a dog—and then Dunham turned the shaggy canine over to the junkman.

And everybody was happy.

THE LITTLE WHEELS OF HISTORY

by William Brandon

SOMEONE has said that history moves on many little wheels. One of those little wheels was James Pursley, of Kentucky. In 1802 he headed west from St. Louis, the first American to travel extensively through what has since been designated the "Wild West." After three years of hunting, trading and trapping in Indian country, he arrived in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1805.

New Mexico was then a colonial province under the rule of Spain. James Pursley was made a virtual prisoner by the Spanish governor, and not permitted to write letters.

The reason for his captivity? The explorer Zebulon Pike revealed it in his journal, after meeting Pursley in Santa Fe in 1807.

Pursley had discovered gold on the south fork of the Platte, and the Spaniards knew it. "The Spaniards," writes Pike, "had frequently solicited him to show a detachment of cavalry the place; but, conceiving it to be in our territory, he had refused. . ."

This refusal created a "great obstacle to his leaving the country."

The Spanish empire, at that time, was coming unstuck at all its seams. Within a dozen years Spanish rule was driven from New Mexico, and after forty years there came the American annexation of the territory during the Mexican war. Following the close of the Mexican War, Pursley's gold strike on the South Platte was found again, and the Pike's Peak gold-rush of 1858 was on, out of which grew the city of Denver and the present State of Colorado.

The course of history in the Southwest might well have been considerably different if that immense gold-strike had been placed at the disposal of the dying Spanish empire in 1805. Assuredly Spain would have then made a more determined effort to hold on to its northernmost colony, New Mexico, and with Pursley's gold it might have done so.

His name has by now been so well forgotten that there is controversy as to whether it was Pursley or Purcell. Such is the usual fate of the little wheels of history.

Four-footed Troopers

EVEN THE LLAMAS FROM THE LONDON ZOO WERE PUT TO WORK DURING THE WAR.

by IB MELCHIOR

HIDDEN in foxholes and trenches burrowed into the rocky ground, crouching behind boulders and trees, and hugging every cut and draw of the terrain, the men of U.S. 27th Division were slugging it out with the crack Nazi *Afrikakorps* on the endless plains of North Africa.

Across the gun-scarred battlefield, carefully picking their way through the rubble and ruin of war, avoiding treacherous shell-holes, and scuttling for cover wherever possible, trudged Mehitabel and her soldier companion on their way to the front lines. At every gun-burst or shell impact, Mehitabel's long ears would flop in experienced analysis, and her handler would duck at her side. Mehitabel was a U.S. Army mule carrying supplies to the front over terrain only a mule could negotiate.

Suddenly the soldier stumbled and fell to the ground at Mehitabel's feet, a German sniper's bullet through his head. Mehitabel stopped; her soft gray muzzle prodded the man inquiringly. Then as if understanding and realizing what was expected of her, Mehitabel set off alone to reach her front-line destination—and to make mule history.

Trotting across an open part of the battlefield, she suddenly came upon two American soldiers slowly snaking their way along the ground. It was Lt. Hodes and another man, out to silence a Nazi machine-gun nest taking a heavy toll in American lives. Intrigued by the behavior of the men, Mehitabel ambled over and playfully began nuzzling the Lieutenant. But the officer, afraid that her antics

would draw the enemy's attention, shooed her away.

It was then that Mehitabel became aware of their target.

Leaving the men, she trotted over to the German installation and peered over the parapet. Her reward was a sharp bayonet-thrust in her flank by the German non-com manning the position. Mehitabel's fighting spirit was aroused. Quickly she whirled around, and a mighty kick cracked open the Nazi's head and killed him on the spot!

For this feat Mehitabel was made an Army pensioner, a hero living in a mule's paradise, proudly showing off her well-earned wound stripe. . . .

Although we live in a machine age and mechanized warfare is the watchword, the Army would find itself in dire trouble without the faithful and often courageous service of our animal fighters. There are crises when field commanders find it impossible to move their equipment and supplies by machine through jungle swamps, over rocky mountain trails, or through heavy snow. At such times, when all inventions of science are worthless, the Army calls upon its four-footed allies for help. Mules, horses, donkeys, elephants, oxen, llamas, dogs, reindeer, camels buckle to and carry their comrades-in-arms over the hump. And—like Mehitabel—many a valiant four-footed fighter emerged from the war a hero.

Mehitabel was one of 7,800 mules shipped overseas by the Army for use as pack and draft animals in World War II. Except for about eight hundred which went to Europe to serve with the 10th Armored Division, near-



ly all of them were sent to North Africa and the China-Burma-India theater of war.

IN 1944 hundreds of these tough sure-footed animals were flown into Burma in American gliders to operate difficult supply lines. One string of them kept such a supply line open to several battalions, cut off when the torrential rains came, and all mechanized equipment bogged down in the steaming, waist-deep mud. Their durability was amazing; during the monsoon season in 1942 over sixteen hundred mules served on the Burma front—and there was a scant dozen of casualties.

At the other end of the world, in Italy, under exactly opposite conditions, the hardy mules fought their way over snow-clogged mountain paths and icy glacial trails with the U.S. ski troops. No snowmobiles, mountain-climbing jeeps, weasels, or



Illustrated by
CARL BURGER

caterpillars could possibly plow through the deep snow, or cling to the narrow trails where the mules found a sure footing.

The U.S. Army has used mules as draft and pack animals from the earliest days. George Washington was one of the first generals to employ them, but the history of the mule goes back to Biblical times when the Kings of Israel rode to battle on the sturdy back of a mule. They served with Greek armies and Roman legions, and in World War I some thirty thousand mules were used by the American Expeditionary Forces.

The result of deliberate cross-breeding between horses and donkeys, the mule inherit traits and characteristics from both: size, intelligence and strength from the mare, and from the jackass stamina, imperturbability, frugality—and stubbornness. This famous stubborn streak in the mule, coupled with an inbred shrewdness,

has made many an Army stable sergeant gnash his teeth in impotent rage. At Camp Carson in Colorado, the post of a regimental combat team using mules, they still chuckle over this story:

A detail of soldiers was repairing a road just outside the camp. They had dug a lot of drainage ditches, leaving only enough road space for one car to pass. Suddenly a wagon pulled by an Army mule and driven by a corporal came rumbling down the road toward camp. When the mule spied the ditches, he promptly sat down, resolved not to move an inch until the holes were filled in. No amount of cussing or pleading, pulling or kicking on the part of the frustrated corporal could make him change his mind.

The work detail was enjoying the spectacle immensely.

"Build a fire under him!" someone shouted jestingly.

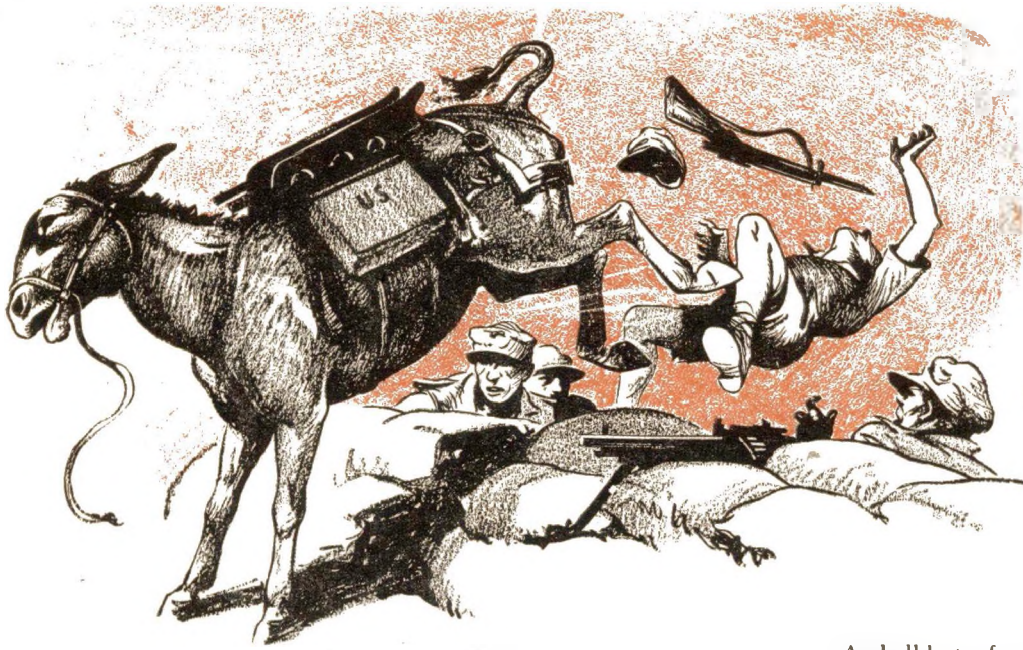
"All right, I'll do just that," answered the harassed corporal.

In a moment a small blaze of sticks and paper began to crackle under the belly of the unperturbed mule. It took a few seconds for the fire to get hot. The mule slowly moved his head, looked at the fire, looked at the corporal, and looked at the wagon. Then slowly he stood up, took a few calculated steps forward, and calmly sat down again.

Only a quick job of unhitching kept the wagon from burning up!

ALL in all, about fifteen thousand mules served the American forces during the Second World War. More numerous were their maternal ancestors—the horses.

Although today a mere 327 horses remain in the service of the Army, it was a different story in the beginning of the war. The War Department stepped up the buying of horses from



Mehitabel's fighting spirit was aroused. Quickly she whirled; a mighty kick cracked open the Nazi's head and killed him on the spot!

two thousand a year to twenty-three thousand in 1941, and in two years had forty-five thousand mounts in Army stables, two-thirds of them earmarked for cavalry use, the rest for draft animals. By 1942 the Army announced the replacement of fifteen hundred trucks and other vehicles with horsepower on the hoof. Yet comparatively few horses were shipped overseas in World War II—the rest used by our armed forces in foreign lands were procured on the spot. Their record is an illustrious one.

Although often nervous and shy, a horse can exhibit amazing courage and faithfulness under stress. Take Gilbert, for instance:

Gilbert was stabled with seven other mounts at ill-fated Coventry in England. When the Nazi *Luftwaffe* mercilessly bombed the town, Gilbert's stable became a target. But Gilbert rose to the occasion. Quickly he kicked an incendiary bomb out the door and trampled the fire in a pile of burning hay. Then his own tail caught fire. . . . But nothing daunted, Gilbert put it out by rubbing his rump against the wall. His courage and presence of mind saved himself and his seven comrades from a fiery death, and earned him a commendation.

THE most extensive and dramatic use of warhorses in the last war was undoubtedly made by the Cossacks.

Late in August, 1941, the German High Command was startled by a series of lightning raids on supply depots and columns behind their lines. For some time it had been rumored that a task force of Cossack

horse cavalry had broken through the lines and were on the rampage in German-held territory. But the officers had merely smiled. Did the Cossacks expect to win the war by pitting horses against the mechanized juggernaut of the Nazi war machine? Ridiculous!

But the smile froze to a painful grimace as report after report reached the General Staff, all adding up to unbelievable havoc and destruction. Several strongly armed expeditions were sent out to annihilate the annoying intruders, but the heavy mechanized equipment had no chance in keeping up with the light horse cavalry on the shell-torn, water-logged roads, and the Germans were cut down to a man.

Rumors began flying thickly among the frightened Nazi troops: One hundred thousand horsemen were behind the lines, it was said, wreaking havoc. Their officers tried in vain to reassure them: "There are only twenty thousand, and they'll soon be exterminated," they insisted.

Actually, the Cossack force under the leadership of Gen. Dovator numbered only three thousand horsemen of the Second Guard. For twelve days they rode riot behind the German lines, running up an incredible score: More than 2500 Nazi soldiers killed—and anybody's guess how many wounded; numerous guns, mortars, and 250 vehicles, tanks and armored cars utterly destroyed; thousands of rifles, documents, and horses captured; several supply depots and part of the German Sixth Army Hq. demolished and the 430th German Infantry Regiment routed in panic.

And all but a few of the original three thousand horsemen reached their own territory safely again.

Such cavalry raids continued to harass the Nazis on the Eastern front. One winter night later in the war Gen. Belov and a Cossack cavalry unit crashed through the German lines in the sector held by Gen. Guderian's *Panzer* forces, and succeeded in surrounding the unsuspecting tank troopers in the darkness. Then suddenly, with flashing sabers, roaring rifles and wild yells the Cossacks swooped down on the Germans, leaving a bloody carnage of wounded and dead sprawled among the burning and demolished equipment.

But as they withdrew, the *Luftwaffe* was sent out to destroy them.

Daylight now, the Cossacks quickly scattered over the rolling, woody terrain. Ordering their horses to lie down, they hastily piled snow over them, blending them into the mottled landscape. Lying beside their mounts, rifles ready, they calmly waited while the *Luftwaffe* spent their bombs and ammunition in indiscriminate bombing and strafing of an all-but-invisible foe.

Through it all the magnificently trained animals barely moved a muscle. But had they panicked and broken loose, it would have meant a bloody end for the Cossack cavalry. As it was they were quickly under way again as soon as the thwarted *Luftwaffe* had departed. . . .

The fighting spirit of our own horse cavalry is perhaps best told in the stirring saga of the 26th U.S. Cavalry and their heroic last-ditch fight on Luzon in the Philippines.

Japanese forces were invading the island. Gen. MacArthur had ordered

the withdrawal to Bataan, and critical confusion reigned along the western coastal area. One American unit was left behind—the 26th U.S. Cavalry—to fight a delaying action permitting the main forces to retreat in orderly fashion.

Jap landing barges were unloading troops at a small village named Damortis.

Storming through narrow ravines, galloping across open fields, darting behind trees, and dodging the murderous fire volleyed against them, the horsemen attacked the village. By sheer valor they hurled the invaders back into the sea. Covering astounding distances, the men and horses struck again and again.

Finally the Japanese landed forces far to the north: and planes, tanks and long-range artillery were brought into action against the cavalry. A withdrawal had to be effected at once, but the valiant horsemen found themselves surrounded. Their escape route lay directly through Damortis, now occupied by the Japs. Barbed wire had been thrown along the roadsides, making deployment impossible: the trap was closed.

But the fighting regiment was far from defeated yet. At a dead gallop, dodging, veering, and shifting, they charged through the village, through direct shell-fire, through a mortar barrage, and through the surprised Jap troops. The horses behaved magnificently; the ear-splitting racket seemed not to affect them at all, and the greater part of the regiment rode to safety.

This heroic fighting by the 26th enabled General Wainwright's main forces to reach Bataan unhindered. But the cavalry was called upon again and again to jump into the breach when the going was rough, and the regiment's record is long and glorious.

When at last MacArthur's forces had to be evacuated to Corregidor, it again was the 26th U.S. Cavalry that was called upon to fight the delaying battle—a battle which was to be their last.

Training the cavalry horse to go through an ordeal like that, to ride fearlessly into battle, braving gunfire and chaos, and taking every obstacle in his stride, is a feat well worth mentioning. Horses normally shy easily, and the slightest strange noise can send them into panic. The first unusual, ear-splitting noise to which the equestrian trainee is subjected is that of a military band playing full blast. To the horse, this must indeed be a terrifying experience, and it takes many weeks of training and conditioning before he will stand still for a blast on a trumpet or a clash of cymbals.

Comes the day the rookie horses have learned to tolerate—if not appreciate—the efforts of the band, it is time for them to be introduced to the sound of gun-fire. As the trainees peacefully loiter in their corral keeping company with a few veterans who will act as "good examples," a soldier nearby begins to shoot off blanks. Closer and closer he comes, and the horses get more and more nervous. All except the veterans. They are used to it, and they know that the man walking side by side with the gun-happy soldier has oats in his pocket—and all they've got to do to get these oats is to go up to him. They do—and little by little the other horses follow suit until they learn completely to disregard the horrible racket, which would give an untrained horse heart-failure.

AFTER this lesson is absorbed come others in rapid succession: Charging into gun-fire with pistol shots fired by their rider ringing in their ears—jumping, swimming, taking steep embankments, and many other hazards make up the basic training of the cavalry mount. But when he finally graduates, the result is the kind of horse which fought to the last with the 26th U.S. Cavalry on Luzon.

Even during the war, however, the replacement of horses with motorized equipment made great strides. Jeeps, armored cars, motorcycles and light tanks made up the better part of a U.S. cavalry regiment. A war-time innovation known as Portee Cavalry was the direct result of this combination of new and old. When the roads were firm, and mechanized equipment could make good time, the horses were carried along in huge vans—to take over again, once the going got rough.

Although there will always be a limited use for horses in modern warfare for moving supplies when there are no roads, and through rain, mud and darkness, and for scouting or patrolling in difficult country, we will probably never again see horse cavalry used extensively.

Down through the ages the war horse has been a constant, valiant partner of the warrior. History records innumerable battles where the mounted soldier was the deciding factor between victory and defeat. The first successful organization of the United States Cavalry was made during the Civil War by General Sheridan, and importance of the Army horse grew steadily until it reached a peak in the first World War, when



The shaggy but proud llamas labored for democracy as beasts of burden.

more than two hundred thousand horses served the AEF. But years before the second World War the replacement of horses with motorized equipment was begun.

June, 1944, saw the last of horses in artillery units, and the last cavalry unit turned in its mounts in December that same year. Then the Army officially abolished its historic cavalry as a separate arm in April 1946; in August, 1947, West Point's sixty-six horses were auctioned off: and in July, 1948, the Army's horse-breeding program was shifted to the Department of Agriculture.

The remaining Army horses today are being used as draft and pack animals, and as mounts for guards patrolling widely isolated or inaccessible areas at certain Army posts. Twenty-one mounts, attached to the Ceremonial Company, remain at Fort Meyer, which once stabled over twelve hundred steeds. These veterans have pulled the historic caisson which carried the coffins of General Pershing and of President Roosevelt.

Outside the United States the Army today maintains about four hundred horses that serve with the mounted constabulary in Germany. . . .

In Africa and India huge elephants did the back-breaking work.



On the paternal side of the trusty Army mule's ancestry we mustn't overlook the donkey. He too served the Allied cause faithfully in the last war. From India to Italy these sturdy little animals trudged along rough and hazardous supply trails, carrying burdens enormous for their size. They were of considerable value, for example, to the Fifth Army in Italy, when heavy rains turned the valleys into vast mud-holes. While trucks and cars got stuck and were left helpless, the little burros kept right on plodding along to the front with sorely needed supplies.

In Africa and India huge elephants did the back-breaking work of bulldozers, cranes, and tractors in jungle country where no machines could operate. Not an animal to be used in combat because of his extreme aversion to sudden noise, the giant pachyderm labored with the engineers, hauling timber, building bridges, clearing air-strips.

In 1941 the Indian army elephant was recalled after forty years of retirement—to duty to replace the railroad from Rangoon to the Burma Road keeping the vital supply lines to China open. He alone could do the job, and the value of the Indian and Burmese elephants plowing through nearly impassable jungle and toiling with the road-builders cannot be overestimated.

But when there was danger of the easily frightened elephants coming under fire, their loads would be taken over by lumbering oxen. Four of these strong, placid bovines can do the work or carry the burden of one elephant. And neither shell-fire, battle-hell or high water will faze them in the least.

At Leyte the G.I.s pressed the plodding *carabaos* into Signal Corps duty. Slung at their massive sides were heavy spools of wire for front-line communication. Sometimes hostile to strangers, the water buffaloes would go along in their usual docile manner, with a native Philippine guide, steadily laying the all-important communication lines.

And in Italy and France spans of handlebar-horned oxen, used to cultivate hill farms and vineyards, saw war service hauling heavy supply carts or drawing snowplows over difficult snow-blocked mountain roads.

In South America the shaggy but proud llamas labored for democracy as beasts of burden. They showed their worth under fire in London, of all places, where the zoo-llamas were pressed into service carrying sandbags and lumber, completely undisturbed by blitzkrieg and buzz-bombs.

In the Arctic regions—Alaska, Greenland, Norway, Siberia—another

The Eskimo dog, pound for pound twice as strong as a horse, can keep going for four or five days without food.



quaint draft animal served the Allies loyally—the reindeer. Fast, tough, these beautifully antlered animals can travel more than one hundred miles over crusted snow in one day, hauling sledges bulging with supplies, equipment, or arms—an invaluable asset to ski troops which must move swiftly and lightly. Because of the reindeer's strength, speed, endurance, and good health many consider it the most efficient transport animal anywhere in the world.

Of equal importance in lands of snow and ice is the dog. In harsh climates and terrain where mechanized equipment is useless and all other draft animals must perish, the magnificent dogs carry on undauntedly. Usually it is the tough Alaskan husky—the Eskimo dog—who makes the best Arctic sledge- or pack-dog. Pound for pound twice as strong as a horse, he can keep going for four or five days without food, with sixty-five pounds on his back, over treacherous, icebound wastes, weathering the fiercest snow blizzards, and showing no sign of weakening. During the Battle of the Bulge several sledge-dog teams were flown to Europe from Alaska to serve on the snowbound Ardennes front.

Official recognition by the Army that dogs could be used for military purposes came in March, 1942, when the Quartermaster General was authorized to formulate a program. In July after three months of studies, surveys, and planning the Quartermaster Corps formally inaugurated the K-9 Corps, and established the

first War Dog Reception and Training Center at the Quartermaster Remount Depot, Front Royal, Va.

At first training was limited to dogs for sentry work; later it was expanded to include scout and messenger dogs, and it is in this capacity that the K-9's have reaped most fame. But equally valuable was their contribution as sledge- and pack-dogs.

Over ten thousand dogs were procured and trained during World War II; of these 7,251 went to the Army, the rest to the Coast Guard. Only 268 of all these dogs were sledge-dogs.

It was, however, not only as sledge-dogs or as pack-animals with the ski troops that the draft-dog had his use. He was often equally important for hauling small supply carts, ammunition, or machine guns over rough ground or through heavy underbrush impassable for mule, horse, or vehicle. Because of his loyalty and courage he will stick to his mission under any circumstance, and because of his intelligence he will often know what to do if left to his own devices, in case his handler should be killed. Thus MG dogs many times would bring back their weapons of their own accord, saving the guns from capture.

Battle-conditioning, of course, was a necessary part of dog training. The canine was taught to be oblivious of all things which did not interfere with a given mission. This orientation course began with the firing of a rifle at a distance while the dog was en-

gaged in regular activities, and as the dog became more accustomed to this sound, he eventually came to pay little or no attention to fire of small arms or larger weapons. Most dogs were trained in a matter of twelve weeks; the sentry dog, however, usually completed his course in only eight.

Last but certainly not least there is left one draft animal able to work under conditions and in country where all other working beasts would soon drop dead—and this is the camel, famous ship of the desert.

Like the horse, the camel has been toiling and fighting in man's wars since history began. The largest camel corps in this long record of warfare was without a doubt Gen. Allenby's British camel army which numbered fifty thousand mounts and sprawled over eighty miles when marching in single file! And this enormous caravan was only a part of the 125,000-strong British Camel Corps of World War I.

THE camel used in the deserts of Africa, Asia, and Arabia is the one-hump dromedary. His chief assets are his strength, endurance, and ability to go without food and water for long periods. He can easily make 25 miles a day, week in and week out, carrying a burden of five hundred pounds, or pulling more than three times this weight on a wagon, across burning, deep sand, which would stall any tank or vehicle. And this with

only a modest drink of water every third day. With abilities like that it's easy to overlook a few drawbacks such as bad breath, an ornery disposition, and a certain unpredictability which only the native drivers know how to cope with.

Another valuable characteristic of the camel is that he doesn't get the least bit excited even under heavy fire—and he is practically impossible to kill with mere bullets. Take famous old Lead-belly, for instance.

One camel supply train in North Africa was marched too close to the front lines and the beasts suddenly found themselves under heavy fire from rifles and machine guns. Slug after slug slammed into their broad, shaggy sides, and shells sent sand geysers shooting high into the air. But the animals—regally unconcerned with the whole business—plodded on to their destination where they could take cover. The only concession a beast would make to a direct hit was a snarl and a bit of scratching with long yellow teeth at the hole left by the bullet. Few of them actually were killed, and the undisputed hero of that particular engagement was a big camel bull with twenty-three bullets in him! Oblivious to everything except chewing his ever-present cud, his many holes were plugged up with cotton, and old Lead-belly was as good as new.

ONE of the most colorful camel cavalry units of World War II was the Meharistes Corps, part of the French Sahara Camel Corps. Recruited largely from among fierce Tuareg tribesmen and with unbelievably tough, hardy mounts, the Meharistes harassed Rommel's armies throughout the entire North Africa campaign. And early in 1943 they attacked and took the Axis-held town of Ghat—declining an offer of American artillery support.

Not only the one-hump camel, but also the two-humper, or Bactrian camel, served the Allies in mountainous, rocky, and cooler areas of Northern Asia.

The picture of a camel shuffling across the burning sands of Sahara is familiar to everyone. But how about imagining a camel loaded with war equipment trudging along in knee-deep snow and sub-zero weather? Nonsense? Not at all.

A Russian camel corps worked and fought alongside the defenders of the city during the epic battle of Stalingrad in the freezing winter of 1942-43!

There seems to be no end to what our four-footed fighters will do for man, their friend and master—even fight his wars for him, slave, struggle—give their lives if need be.

A SMALL-COLLEGE COACH OFTEN HAS CAUSE FOR LAMENTATION; BUT WEEPY DOYLE WAS A SPECIALIST WHO COULD SPRING SURPRISES.

by RAY MILLHOLLAND



Weepy Smiles

THE name is James (Weepy) Doyle, and the owner thereof is football coach at little Sycamore College. This sad-visaged gentleman started his first day in this cruel world by wailing over his tough luck in having to live in it and never quite shook off the habit.

His brother coaches in the Valley Conference unanimously deplore his mournful attitude because of the unpredictable effect it has on his logical processes. When you are all set to stop Weepy's running plays to the outside, in comes a substitute and the Sycamore backs suddenly begin going inside with their outside plays and

outside with what no coach in his right mind would use as an outside play.

In his fifteen years as coach at Sycamore, Weepy had won the conference championship just three times—lucky years when he was blessed with a smart, iron-man quarterback who could play sixty minutes of every game. The rest of the time he had to be content with the less satisfying distinction of being the coach to beat before you could win the Valley Conference championship.

And now that thing dreaded by most coaches of small colleges had happened at last, to Weepy. Certain

The Blacksmiths ground their way down to the Sycamore twenty-yard line and on, missing a first down by inches.



for Once

influential alumni were becoming unpleasantly insistent that little Sycamore embark on a spectacular career as giant-killer of big university teams.

But Weepy was not one to surrender even to overwhelming forces without salvaging something from defeat. At that same alumni association meeting, where he agreed to schedule an early season game with an arrogant and mighty university with a football team known to every sports fan in the country as the "Blacksmiths," Weepy extracted forty thousand dollars—hard cash, not rubber promises—for a badly needed addition of locker-rooms and shower baths for his gymnasium.

All of which is by way of bringing us to that moment on a salubrious September day when Coach Weepy Doyle closed the door behind him to the new addition to the gymnasium and made his usual afternoon pilgrimage to the football practice field.

Just as Weeping arrived, a backfield man with the largest hands on the squad whipped a long flat pass diagonally across the entire width of the field to a gangling youngster racing awkwardly to receive it. But for all his clumsiness the scrub end caught the ball. He simply had to or the thing would have knocked his front teeth down his throat.

Weepy gave the passer a disapproving look and started across the field to speak to him, but he was intercepted by Preston, a sharp-nosed sports writer for the Central City *Times-News*, down from the big city for his customary pre-season visit to gather dope on the various teams in the Valley Conference.

Preston was smiling when he said: "This is one year when you'll have to hang up your crying towel, Coach. You've got an all-senior first string that is sharp, willing and rugged. Phelps, your fullback, looks as if he put on about ten pounds of pig iron on his shoulders this summer and could ram a hole through a brick wall. And Rabbit Scott, your break-away back, is due to set a new conference ground-gaining record this season."

Weepy gazed off across the field at Connor, his senior quarterback, one of the lightest men on the varsity squad,

and wasn't wringing out a crying towel when he said: "It all depends on how big is the injury list after the game next Saturday with that big Blacksmith team. They are three deep in reserves at every position. If Connor gets hurt, then I lose my offensive fullback along with him—for nobody but Connor can feed the ball to Phelps without his fumbling it."

Preston was paying little attention. His interest was centered on the second-string backfield man with the enormous hands who had just completed another long pass to a reserve end. "Where did you pick up that slingshot artist, Coach?"

"A kicking specialist who worked his way up from last year's B squad," said Weepy, but did not bother to mention the boy's name.

"Yeah, I know. Just another specialist like this man Hartley that you booby-trapped the Valley Conference with a few seasons back—one thirty-yard field goal, one long pass, and a ninety-yard run, and he wins three close games for you, single-handed,"

retorted Preston. "Now give with this new boy's name and some vital statistics on him. I'll have one of our photographers drive over tomorrow and get some action shots and a good still of him. I'm not going to be caught this time with no art on the sensation of the season, like I was with Hartley."

"His name is Wilbur Reeves," said Weepy. "He is a senior. He has played exactly one minute and forty-five seconds in a regular college game. And he is so near-sighted that he can't tell a football from a helmet, ten feet from him." Weepy neglected to add that Wilbur Reeves was now wearing contact lenses and could count the teeth of a pass receiver, at fifty paces.

"I'm not doubting your word," said Preston, "but I've been watching this kid hit his receivers with a fly-paper-covered football they can't seem to find out how to drop, afterward. If that guy has eye trouble, he must use radar. But, for Pete's sake, Weepy, give the boy a decent suit to have his picture taken in tomorrow. He looks

like the janitor of a rummage sale. The *Times-News* sports fans want some class to their art."

"You know my rule," said Weepy. "We play team football at this school. When you newspaper men make a hero out of some boy whose job just happens to be pitching the ball across the goal line, it isn't fair treatment to the other members of the squad."

Preston slowly tapped the end of a cigarette against a thumbnail before saying, "That noble idea went out the window about the time you were playing your last year of college football, Weepy. It's big business now, and the coach who doesn't give the fans flashy stars to read about, between games, doesn't click at the box office where those big salary checks originate."

And the ace sports reporter for the *Times-News* turned toward his car.

Weepy walked out onto the practice field where Reeves was still throwing passes to the reserve end. "Why aren't you down there at the end of the field, practicing field goals?"

Reeves flashed him a quick grin: "I've just discovered a way to make points faster than with my toe. Now watch me bury this thing so deep in that sophomore end, over there, it will take a crowbar to pry him loose from it."

He faded back a half-dozen yards and rifled the ball at the big lumbering end. Thirty yards away, the ball hit its target—almost knocking the receiver off his feet with its impact. "Happens every time," said Reeves, walking back to Weepy. "I'm amazed at myself. And just think how it will work in a game: In comes a new quarterback with a green end that the opposition has never scouted—a lum-



"Why aren't you down there at the end of the field, practicing field goals?"

bering oaf, like Pilgrim out there, say. Socko, six points are racked up for dear old Sycamore before the crowd stops yawning."

With a pained expression Weepy waved to the sixty-odd players on the field. "There is hardly one of them who can't do the same in practice. But only once in about five years does a man come along who can do it with a couple of big two-hundred-pound tackles charging down on him with mayhem in their hearts. Get back to your placement kicking, Genius!"

Reeves became serious. "I've got bad news for you, Coach: Ever since you sunk that two hundred fifty bucks in contact lenses for me, I haven't been able to kick a field goal. I used to be able to do it, practically, with my eyes shut. But now the ball just won't behave when I drive my toe into it. I see it too plainly, I guess."

"Then go back to the way you used to do it," said Weepy.

The youngster with the big hands gave him a long, steady look. "I've tried that, Coach. But without these contact lenses I feel like—well, too rotten, inside, to talk about it. So, if you can't use me as a passer, there's just one thing for me to do. I'll have to drop out of school to earn the money to pay back the two hundred fifty you put up for these lenses. Because, now that I've found out how useful they are, nothing is more important to me than keeping them—not even my last chance to win a football letter, after three years on the B squad."

"Those things are no good to me; keep 'em," was all that Weepy could think of at the moment to say.

He started to turn away, but Reeves caught his arm and gave it an almost bruising squeeze. "You're one in a million, Coach. I'll learn how to kick field goals again if it's the last thing I do."

LIGHT was still burning at eleven o'clock that night, in Weepy's office in the gymnasium where he was planning his strategy for the game with the Blacksmiths, Saturday. It was strictly negative strategy, designed to hold down the score against his boys to a minimum, without at the same time, subjecting his first-string players to possible injury by that three-deep, hard-charging Blacksmith line.

Weepy was finding it one of the toughest games to plan that he had faced in his entire career. If, in his effort to save his best players from injury, he substituted less experienced boys too freely the game would turn into a rout. And he knew what every coach learns, sooner or later, that an ignominious defeat at the start of a season can take the winning spirit out of a potential championship team.



"One of the Blacksmith backs side-stepped. This time Reeves had the ball and went for yards."

During the remaining two days of contact practice, Weepy drilled his squad in the execution of simple plays. It was too early in the season for fancy stuff. He gave his all-senior varsity the ball and began picking his most promising sophomores as the defensive team.

When he came to designating a defensive quarterback, he ran out of good material: he just did not have a sophomore to fill the slot. Then he saw Reeves standing to one side with those enormous hands resting lightly on his hip pads and looking as though he had a boxcar brake beam under his shoulder harness.

Weepy started to pick Niles, a junior, then remembered that Niles had a trick shoulder. He turned back to Reeves: "You—in as defensive quarter."

Reeves dropped his hands from his hip pads and drew to his sophomore team mates: "Okay, let's make the big boys earn every yard they make against us little boys," and the scrimmage was on.

Connor looked in mid-season form with his ball handling, and the experienced varsity line was opening good holes for the ball carrier. But, somehow, Reeves came swooping in to drop the runner before he really got going.

Then Connor called a mousetrap play and sent Phelps through a two-man-wide hole in the line and into the clear. The big varsity fullback straightened up, partially, from his plunging crouch and turned on the steam.

That is when Reeves drove his brake-beam shoulder into Phelps' middle, while the ball squirted on over Reeves' shoulder. A gleeful sophomore end pounced on the fumble.

Phelps made no effort to get back on his feet. Weepy ran in and started lifting him by the waistband of his pants, to pump wind back into his lungs.

Phelps began breathing normally again and got up, grinning. "Somebody with no manners just ran me down with a loaded lumber truck, Coach. Get his number as a hit-and-run driver."

The sophomores had already lined up with their center over the ball. But Weepy waved his hands, horizontally: "That's all for today. Five times around the running track and then sprint for the showers."

Weepy permitted no body contact during Friday afternoon practice. He called the squad in early, for a short skull session in the locker-room.

"All I ask," he said, just before dismissing the squad, "is that when you tackle a Blacksmith with the ball, that he stays tackled. And when we've got the ball, that you block for the runner like I've tried to teach you. Remember every play scores when every opponent is flat on his back when a fast man with the ball, like Scott, here, is sprung across that scrimmage line. Now go to bed and forget the whole business until tomorrow afternoon..."

For the first few opening minutes of the Blacksmith-Sycamore game the

scant twenty thousand spectators, scattered over the sixty thousand seats of the big stadium, began to suspect that they were witnessing a major upset. Outweighed almost twenty pounds to the man, the Sycamore line stopped the initial running attack of the Blacksmiths, cold, on the thirty-yard line.

Coach Weepy Doyle leaned forward on the bench with his bony hands dangling limply from his wrists, the brim of his rusty black hat pulled down over his eyes. He watched his team break out of the huddle and race to their positions—high-strung and tense.

Rabbit Scott, his last-breaking back, took the ball and darted off tackle. He was through and away for a touchdown before a single bewildered Blacksmith in the secondary could lay a hand on him.

But Weepy only sighed, disconsolately. He had seen the entire left side of his line charge off-side before the ball was snapped. Too tense—too overanxious! The referee called the ball back and stepped off a five-yard penalty. . . . Same thing again on the next play—another five-yard penalty for off-side.

PHELPS, the rangy fullback for Sycamore, dropped back to punt on the third down, as Weepy had instructed just before the game started. He got off a tremendous kick that rolled to the Blacksmith nine. But another five-yard penalty for off-side against Sycamore brought the ball back to the Sycamore ten-yard line. The Blacksmith linesmen grinned confidently at each other and dug in to break through and block Phelps' second punt.

They almost did. But in the wild scramble for a partially deflected ball, it was Rabbit Scott of Sycamore who recovered—on the Blacksmith thirty-yard line.

Jack Connor, Weepy's quarterback, called time out, in an attempt to get his team mates quieted down and relaxed. And, as an object lesson, he rolled over on his back, slipped his hands back of his head and gazed upward at a tiny fleecy cloud drifting over the sun-bathed stadium.

But the rest of his team mates stayed on their feet, kicking at the turf or standing and looking at the tiers of benches of the big stadium—by far the largest stadium they had ever played in.

Time in, again— On the very first play Weepy's entire backfield muffed their assignments and the centered ball went back to the fifty-yard line, where the Blacksmith right end recovered.

Weepy watched his demoralized team yield a touchdown in just three

plays. The game was only ten minutes old before the Blacksmiths scored again. They were on their way to a third, with the going getting easier every moment, when Rabbit Scott snatched one of their lateral passes in mid-air. He would have gone for a touchdown if he had gotten just one key block. But he didn't, and only reached midfield before he was tackled. Scott limped back to join the huddle, as the quarter ended.

Weepy got up and walked down the substitute bench, stabbing his finger at eleven men— "You, you—and you. Get out there and play something better than high-school football."

The last man that Weepy stabbed his finger at was Reeves.

"Gosh—me? Me, Coach, do you mean, replace Connor?"

"For just a couple of plays," said Weepy, "while I talk to Connor."

Reeves broke out in one of his slow grins, and drawled, "Don't keep Connor too long, Coach. I may not like it out there," then strolled out to join the other ten Sycamore substitutes.

After one close look at Rabbit Scott's drawn face, Weepy waved him to the dressing-room: "Have Doc work on that left ankle," he said and then motioned his regular quarterback, Connor, to a seat beside him on the bench. "What happened to all the football I thought I had taught you, Connor?"

Connor held out his hands. They were trembling, violently. "Weirdest thing that ever happened to me, Coach. First the linesmen got it and began jumping the snap signal. Then the other backs got it. Then I got it—the buck, the shakes, the big-stadium heebie jeebies—but bad. We were tearing 'em apart when this hit us. We didn't turn chicken, we just couldn't make our hands and feet do what they should do."

Weepy glanced down the row of disconsolate regulars who had just left the game. Some faces were wet with tears of shame. Phelps, the fullback, a man with the courage of a wild bull, was bent over, slowly punching the cinder running-track, unmindful of the fact that his knuckles were already raw and bleeding.

Suddenly, Weepy felt Connor's fingers bite into his forearm.

"Look, Coach! Reeves has 'em too. He's going to *pass!*"

But Reeves did no such thing. He reversed his field twice, faking a pass to first his right—then his left—substitute end. Then, when he had the entire Blacksmith line charging in for the kill, he reversed his field, part way, again, and started running straight down the middle.

There was more than a hint of mocking arrogance in the way he kept

just a step or two ahead of the pursuing Blacksmith linesmen. He seemed to ignore a backfield man until the tackler was almost on him—then up came his stiffened arm and the smack of his enormous palm against a leather helmet could be heard on the sidelines.

The two Blacksmith ends finally downed him with crashing tackles on their thirty-yard line. Reeves was the first of the three to regain his feet. On his way back to the huddle, he stooped over, pulled a handful of grass and tossed it up, in a sort of absent-minded gesture of testing the wind direction.

"A dead giveaway for the pass he's going to throw this time, sure," muttered Connor, at Weepy's side.

Except that Reeves did not pass. He flipped the ball to his sophomore fullback, then spun and went rocketing into the line ahead of the ball carrier. A line backer performed an involuntary cartwheel in the air and Reeves went on to hair-pin another Blacksmith with his second block of the play. The play gained five yards.

"That's the first real football I've seen today," said Weepy, and folded his arms across his knees to watch for what was coming next. The Blacksmith secondary, realizing that a breakaway runner behind this sort of tornado down-field blocking could go for plenty of yards, had closed in. It was a perfect set-up for even an inexperienced long passer like Reeves to hit a wide-open receiver in the end zone.

BUT on the next play Reeves dropped back into place-kicking formation. Weepy got a little wry comfort out of the idea: His first string had blown up; so three sure points was about all he could expect to salvage from the game. It was better than going home with a coat of white-wash, anyhow.

The moment Reeves' toe hit the ball, Weepy pulled off his rusty black hat and wiped his shoes, with it, in an agony of suspense.

The ball kept rising—rising—rising and finally hit high up in the empty seats at the end of the big stadium. The field judge gave the negative signal—no score. The ball had missed the goal post by inches.

Reeves turned slowly and faced the Sycamore substitute bench. He gestured outward with those hands and shrugged his shoulders, as though saying to Weepy: "What did I tell you, Coach? The ball just won't go between the sticks for me, any more."

"For Pete's sake, Coach," pleaded Connor, "jerk that bonehead and send me in there."

"When your hands quit shaking, I will," said Weepy, and waited to see

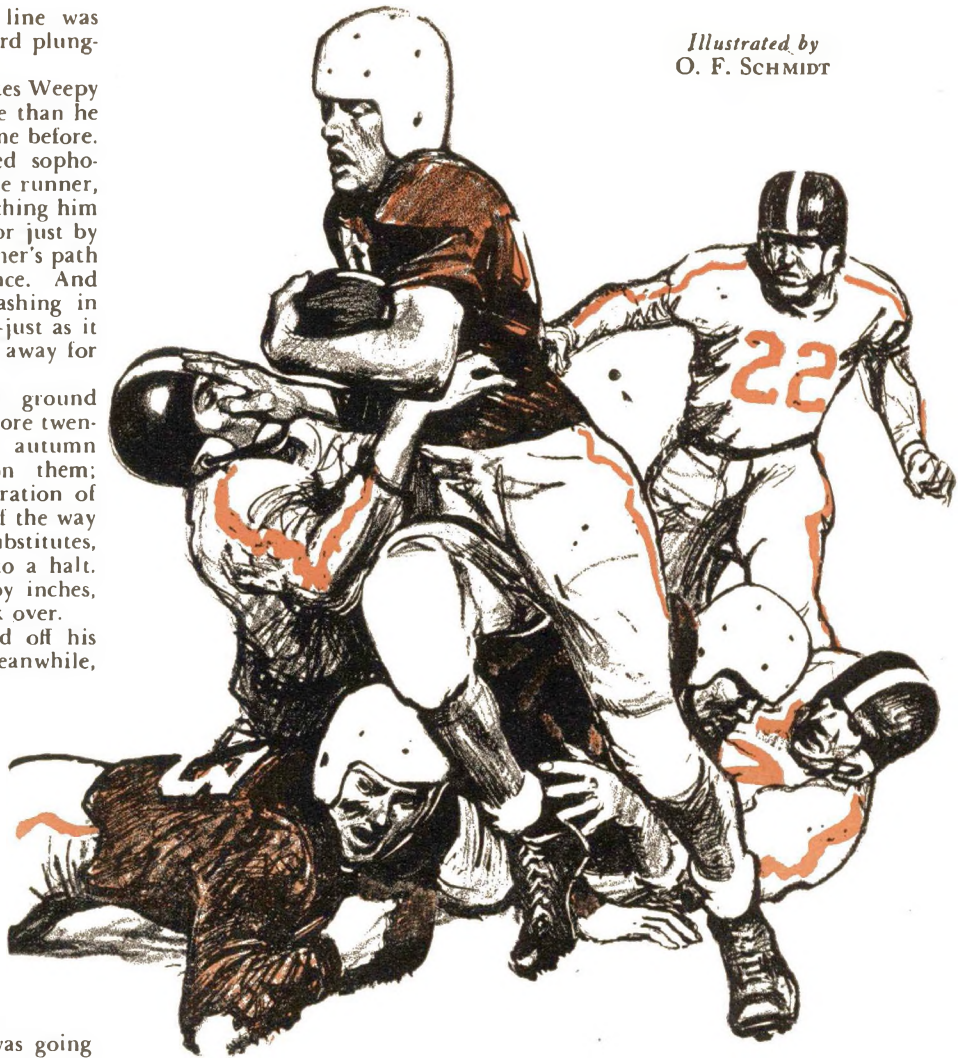
how his green sophomore line was going to do against those hard plunging Blacksmith backs.

During the next five minutes Weepy saw more lucky tackles made than he had ever seen in any full game before. His eager but inexperienced sophomores were slowing down the runner, momentarily at least, by catching him by the arm or his sweater—or just by getting blocked into the runner's path by the Blacksmith interference. And there was always Reeves flashing in for the final, jarring tackle—just as it looked as if the runner was away for a touchdown.

The Blacksmiths finally ground their way down to the Sycamore twenty-yard line. But the early autumn sun was beating down on them; which, added to the exasperation of not being able to keep out of the way of those clumsy Sycamore substitutes, slowly brought their drive to a halt. They missed a first down by inches, and Weepy's substitutes took over.

Solicitously, Weepy dusted off his hat and put it back on. Meanwhile,

Illustrated by
O. F. SCHMIDT



During the next five minutes Weepy saw more lucky tackles made than he had ever seen in any full game before.

he had lost track of what was going on out on the playing field. He took one astonished look at his substitutes huddling on the fifty-yard line and turned to Connor: "What happened—did a pass click?"

"No sir. One of those Blacksmith backs that Reeves has been jarring loose from his teeth with dynamite blocks didn't want some, so soon again, and side-stepped. Only this time Reeves had the ball and went for yards."

THAT ended the half. The big Blacksmith team trotted disgustedly toward their dressing-room. The cause of this disgust—Weepy's sophomore substitutes, aided and abetted by one senior, Reeves—strolled casually off the field, wearing smirking grins.

Weepy fell in step with Reeves, the last man off the field: "Don't worry about missing that placement kick, son. It was a beauty, even if it did miss."

Reeves smiled wryly and said, "Do you remember how I once bragged that I could do that with my eyes shut—that is, before I got these contact

lenses? Well, I knew I couldn't do it with my eyes open, so I tried that one with them shut."

"It wouldn't have been a bad spot for an end-zone pass," was Weepy's oblique comment.

"But you told me *not* to pass, Coach!"

"Don't tell me that you've started hearing voices too," said Weepy. "I sent you in without any instructions whatsoever. Where did you pick up this idea that you weren't to pass?"

"Last Tuesday—in practice, remember? You said for me to forget about passing."

"At least you held them scoreless while you were in," said Weepy, sadly.

He did not enter the dressing-room where the squad was resting between halves until less than two minutes before it was time to take the field again.

A red-headed sophomore tackle looked up from tying his shoe lace to drawl, "Cheer up, Coach, we couldn't be as lousy as this again if we tried." The regular varsity men merely looked up, silently—shamed.

"The original lineup will start the third quarter," Weepy announced in his dry monotone. "That is, if Scott's ankle will let him."

"I'm ready to go," said Scott.

Twenty minutes later, as the teams were changing goals for the final period of the game, Preston, the sports writer for the *Times-News*, tapped out this on his portable typewriter:

Between halves the sad-eyed mentor of Sycamore, Coach James (Weepy) Doyle, took as badly demoralized a football squad as ever shuffled to a dressing-room between halves and had them in tears for almost fifteen minutes while he delivered one of the masterpiece psychological harangues of his career.

When the first-string Sycamore team walked soberly back on the field, there was no huddle or back-slapping to match the show of pep and determination being displayed by the Blacksmiths. With cold pre-

cision, Sycamore marched, with short lethal line punches, eighty yards to a touchdown without giving up the ball.

The heavier Blacksmiths then started a determined drive to restore the two-touchdown advantage that they had enjoyed during the first half. But Coach Weepy Doyle's linesmen declined to be mousetrapped, and Jergens the Blacksmith fullback punted out of bounds on the Sycamore ten-yard line.

On the very next play Connor of Sycamore caught his opponents' secondary in too close and quick-kicked to mid-field, where his teammate Scott fell on the ball, after the Blacksmith safety man fumbled it in an attempt to scoop it up on the dead run. The third quarter ended, Blacksmiths 14, Sycamore 7, and very much in the ball game again.

While this was being written, high up in the press box across the field, Coach James (Weepy) Doyle was not enjoying the sense of elation which the coach of the underdog team is entitled to experience when the moral victory of a tie score is almost within his grasp. That last head-on tackle of the two-hundred-pound Blacksmith fullback which Connor had made had shaken the lighter man badly. Connor was trying to hide the fact, but Weepy could see that he was slowing down—slow in feeding the ball to the runner, and missing his blocking assignment on the last two plays.

Weepy suddenly got up and walked to the further end of the substitute bench, where Reeves sat with his elbows resting on his knees and his chin cupped in those two enormous hands.

"Reeves in for Connor!"

REEVES dropped his hands. "You mean *now*, Coach—when he's got those big lugs stamped?"

Connor furnished the answer by slumping to his knees, and rolling over on his back.

"Yes, now," said Weepy, grimly.

Reeves scooped a handful of cinders from the running-track and rubbed his palms together. "Any special plays you want pulled, Coach?"

Weepy gripped his arm and walked to the sidelines with him. "Scott can still go for yards if you can take out that left end. But, whatever you do *don't kick that ball as long as you see me with my hat on*. Now get in there!"

Weepy walked back to the other end of the bench and sat down, deriving what comfort he could from the thought that if he did not know what screwball tricks Reeves was liable to try, at least everyone else in the world was in the same boat with him—including the Blacksmith coach and his team.

The first play Reeves called was the one Connor had been using so effectively to gain two or three yards for a first down, a fullback line plunge. His feeding of the ball to Phelps lacked Connor's finesse, but the block with which he bounced a mouse-trapped guard out of tackling position gained four yards. Then, before calling the next play, he stood upright with his big hands on his hips and smiled a fatherly smile at the Blacksmith linesmen.

What came next was an orthodox off-tackle slant by Scott that gained exactly nothing, because Phelps missed his block. But the Blacksmith line, apparently considerably irked by that fatherly smile from Reeves, had been pulled off-side. The referee paced off a five-yard penalty.

COACH WEEPY relaxed—tentatively. He was not sure whether Reeves was calling these elementary plays because he was getting a bad case of buck fever or whether he was intentionally crossing up the opposition's defense strategy by completely reversing the style of field generalship that he had displayed in the first half.

Reeve's interest in orthodox plays waned after the Blacksmith line settled down and stopped three line plunges inside their own thirty-yard line. With a fourth down coming up, he glanced to the side line—saw that Weepy still had his rusty black hat on his head and sent Scott around left end!

Weepy groaned and pulled his hat over his eyes—only to jerk it off at a sudden roar from the crowd, just in time to see Scott—not Reeves—throw a key block on the Blacksmith safety man. Just a stride behind was Reeves with the ball palmed in his huge right hand as though it were a nice red apple. He galloped over the goal line, unmolested.

Weepy turned, and in a dazed croak, said to Connor on the bench beside him, "What happened—did Scott lateral to Reeves?"

"Search me, Coach. I can swear I saw Reeves sink the ball into Scott's belly; but Reeves must have palmed it against his right hip pad."

Weepy looked Connor over carefully. "How do you feel—think you can go in there and stop them from scoring on us again, in the five minutes left?"

Connor bounded to his feet. "You can give those big lugs sawed-off shot-guns, Coach, and they won't be able to score again."

Weepy waved him in to replace Reeves.

Up in the press box, Preston of the *Times-News* started tapping out the story of the last five minutes of the game:

With the score deadlocked at fourteen-fourteen. Coach James (Weepy) Doyle again threw the Blacksmith camp into a psychological tailspin by sending in Connor, primed with a new bag of defensive tactics, to replace his surprise ace, Reeves. . . . On the first play after receiving the kick-off, an overzealous Blacksmith linesman drew a penalty for his team of fifteen yards, for what is known in polite football circles as "illegal use of the hands." Back on their own fifteen, the Blacksmith substitute quarterback, Davies, obviously sent in by Coach Tyler of the Blacksmiths, with specific instructions, faded back to his own goal line, in a desperate attempt to regain the lost yardage with his specialty—a long pass.

But the football-wise Connor had spread his tackles wide, in anticipation of just such a play. In his attempt to elude the two Sycamore tackles, Davies dodged back into the end zone, in hopes of spotting an open receiver instead of playing it safe and allowing himself to be tackled on the one-yard line. Connor personally contributed the final touch of irony by tackling Davies in the end zone, and the underdog Sycamores collected two points for the safety.

Having had an unexpected two-point margin of victory handed to them on a silver platter, the Sycamore team screwed down the safety valve and went roaring goalward with torpedo blasts at the center of the now disorganized Blacksmith line.

As no one but the wily coach of Sycamore remotely suspected before the game started, the final score—which may well turn out to be one of the major football upsets of the season—was Sycamore 16, Blacksmiths 14.

WEEPY finally disengaged himself from a band of Sycamore alumni that had swooped down on him the moment the final gun sounded and walked alone through the paper-strewn tunnel under the stadium to the dressing-room.

He tapped on the bolted door with a bony knuckle. One of the team managers opened it an inch, then shut it quickly.

Weepy tapped again. This time the door flew open and brawny young hands jerked him inside, and the door slammed shut again.

There was a moment of dead silence. Then the entire Sycamore squad roared in unison: "Smile just for once, Weepy, *smile!*"



Weepy took one look at the two sharpest quarterbacks he had ever coached, and obliged.

But he kept his trembling hands rammed deep in his hip pockets; he was having a delayed attack of big-stadium heebie jeebies, himself.



Cocoa-nuts on the Bounty

From "The private journal of the late Mr. James Morrison, Gunner of H.M.S. *Blenheim*, who had the misfortune to witness all he has related." All illustrated by a Lieut. Peter Wells, a terror to his crew indeed.



In the afternoon of the 27th, Lieutenant Bligh came upon deck, and missing some of the cocoa-nuts, which had been piled up between the guns, said they had been stolen and could not have been taken away without the knowledge of the officers, all of whom were sent for and questioned on the subject. On their declaring that they had not seen any of the people touch them, he exclaimed, "Then you must have taken them yourselves;" and proceeded to inquire of them, separately how many they had purchased. In the mean time, Mr. Elphinstone Master's Mate was ordered to see every nut on the ship brought aft. On coming to Mr. Christian, that gentleman answered, "I do not know, Sir, but I hope you don't think me so mean as to be guilty of stealing yours." Mr. Bligh replied, "Yes, you d---d hound, I do—you must have stolen them from me or you would be able to give a better account of them:" Then, turning to the other officers, he said, "God d---n you,

you scoundrels, you are all thieves alike and combine with the men to rob me: I suppose you'll steal my yams next; but I'll sweat you for it you rascals—I'll make half of you jump overboard before you get through Endeavour's Straits." This threat was followed by an order to the clerk to "Stop the villains' grog, and give them but half a pound of yams tomorrow; if they steal them, I'll reduce them to a quarter." He then went below, and the officers were heard to murmur very much at such foul aspersions being cast upon their characters; whilst the men, fearing that their yams would soon meet the same fate as their cocoa-nuts, immediately set about concealing as many of them as possible, the circumstance of their having purchased a large quantity being well known to Lieutenant Bligh.

In the morning of the 28th the boatswain came to my hammock, and after awakening, told me, to my great surprise, that Mr. Christian had taken possession of the ship.



Railroad on Stilts

EARLY-DAY RAILROADING IN THE MINING COUNTRY OF THE HIGH ROCKIES WAS A HAZARDOUS BUSINESS.

by RAY NAFZIGER

EXCELSIOR, newest mountain locomotive of the narrow-gauge Arastra, Central Colorado & Starbranch Railway, poked its stubby little nose around a bend in the cañon and sent its whistle bouncing against the cliffs. Then with tiny drivers revolving fast, it drew a mail-express car and four coaches into Conifer station and halted at the water-tank for a drink.

Camelot, nineteen-year-old daughter of the telegraph-operator-agent, hurried out with the train orders. The engineer, fireman, brakeman and conductor all waved at her, but she barely saw them, her eyes were that filled with admiration and affection for the little train.

"Heard the news, Camelot?" asked Conductor Gape Hogg, waddling down the steps of a coach. "The Arastry's finally got a new president."

"We don't learn much news up here," said Camelot, as she handed him his train-order copy.

"A young Yankee construction engineer," went on Gape Hogg, and a better name to fit the conductor's looks and predilections could not have been imagined. "Put in by his rich relatives among the Boston bondholders. Nawthin' but a schoolboy, they say. The Arastry's good as dead. In two months the Diamond Mountain will have it gobbled up and junked."

Camelot could have kicked the fat conductor's shins for his callous burial of the Arastra, C. C. & S. A venture-some little railway, snaking along deep cañons rich with gold and silver mines, clambering snow-capped peaks to drop soot into eagle nests. A stout worker of a railway, hauling cargoes of bacon and boilers, St. Louis lager and French champagne, and at six cents a mile men passengers who might ride up in patched shirts and breeches to find gold—and ride back in high hats and tailored broadcloth.

"A dead duck, the old Arastry," continued Conductor Gape Hogg,

crossing to steal an early rose from Camelot's flower beds.

"And you helped kill it," snapped Camelot. Her eyes, as deep blue as little bits of fallen sky, sternly accused the conductor. "Yesterday evening eleven miners boarded this train, and Dad had sold tickets to only three. You let the rest ride for the dollar or two they slipped into your dishonest fat palm."

"The other eight had passes," said Gape quickly. And then with a sly look: "I look after myself, my girl. When the Arastry is torn up, who will look after Gape Hogg? Gape Hogg, that's who. I'll quit railroadin', to buy me a farm down near Golden City."

"What with?" asked Camelot.

Gape Hogg chuckled. "You'd be amazed how much with. With close onto ten thousand dollars! And I been meanin' to tell you, Camelot, me bein' a widower, I don't plan livin' by myself."

At the leer on his moon face, Camelot snatched up a good-sized clinker and threw it at the broad target he presented as he fled up the steps.

LITTLE EXCELSIOR, after drinking at the tank, chuffed on briskly toward the sun-washed peaks.

Camelot went into the agent's residence to stir a vension stew on the range, and returned with a pail of soapy water to scrub the waiting-room floor.

The Arastra had been going broke for two years. All the short narrow-gauge railways which bored into Colorado's mining regions were destined to go broke eventually. They were like mines: they needed new ore discoveries to live. New strikes to which they could extend their rails were their life-blood. For the Arastra, such a strike lay above Conifer station, up the great rugged cañon called Left Hand. Already several thousand men were there gophering into lodes and

praying for a pair of rails to carry silver and lead concentrates to Denver smelters.

Another engine whistled down-cañon. That would be the veteran locomotive Kit Carson, taking the regular freight westward. Poor Kit, thought Camelot, now running free through the mountains, unsuspecting the threat of an imminent end in the boneyard of railway iron horses. Camelot scrubbed fiercely while Kit stopped below the station to set cars off on a siding.

SHE looked through the doorway once to see a stocky youth dressed in breeches tucked into stout boots, a flannel shirt and a small flat-crowned sombrero, walking up the track. Reaching Camelot's flower beds, he halted. They were the boast of the Arastra, the flowers Camelot grew at Conifer station. In season there bloomed roses of all colors, tiger lilies, irises, cannas, dahlias and tulips, as well as "paintbrushes" and blue-and-white columbines transplanted from mountain slopes.

After circling the beds, giving them a long admiring scrutiny, the young man came to the waiting-room and started to step inside.

Camelot lifted the mop. "Not until the floor's dry," she told him. "If you have business, go to the office."

The stranger looked down. "You're scrubbing it?" he asked, astonished. "The floor of a waiting-room?"

"And why not?" asked Camelot.

"Because nobody will know it is a waiting-room," he told her, and then he gave Camelot, with her blue eyes and hair the color of a storm-shadow on a rocky peak, the same close admiring scrutiny he had given the flower beds.

Hearing the talk above the clicking of his sounder, Zephyr Grady came to the ticket window. Camelot's father was a dark, handsome man with a certain poetic streak that had led him to



"Father was a great engineer. He said men could even build a bridge to the moon."

give the name of Camelot to his motherless girl baby.

"And who are you, my lad, and what are you doing here?" Zephyr demanded sharply. "Walking when you should be riding a train, and inspecting the premises as if you were the new general himself."

"The general?" repeated the stranger, puzzled.

"General" is what Colorado usually calls railroad presidents," explained Zephyr, "most of 'em out here having been military men. Same as conductors are called 'Captain'."

The stranger's smile made him look suddenly boyish. "In that case," he said, "I am the Arastra's new general. Eli Adams. You must be Mr. Grady, and this your daughter."

Camelot was shocked. It was incredible. This youth the new president of the Arastra?

"We'll be camped here awhile," said General Adams. "We're going to locate a grade up Left Hand Cañon."

"Can't be done," Zephyr said promptly. "A score of engineers have hunted the Left Hand for a grade, only to come out licked. On the wagon road some of the hills are so steep they require six mules to pull an empty quartz wagon up them."

"I know," said young Adams, and Camelot noticed that he had a stub-

born jaw and a thick stand of shaved beard over it. "It will take time, but we'll find a grade," he went on cheerfully, and Camelot suddenly liked his youthful brashness. The engineers who had come back beaten out of Left Hand Cañon had all been gray-headed.

"You'll have to build a branch up Left Hand," Camelot spoke up. "It's the only way to save the Arastra."

The stranger looked down. "You're scrubbing it?" he asked, astonished. "The floor of a waiting-room?"

Eli Adams looked at her, smiling a little at her intensity. Camelot was as pretty as any of the flowers she grew, but more than her eyes and features was the spirit that shone out of her, as sparkling bright as that of a sunlit mountain morning.

The freight rumbled on, leaving four homely boxcars, one with cooking and dining compartments, another fitted with bunks, and others made up into offices. Eli Adams could have lived in the president's special car, but he had no time to be fancy.

Ten minutes later a survey crew, carrying their transits, chains and red-and-white steel poles, followed Eli Adams into the wilderness of Left Hand Cañon in search of the impossible—a grade up which an engine could pull a train into the country of the new silver bonanzas. Always at their head marched "General" Adams, wiry and somewhat short of stature, moving with the mountaineer's steady, shuffling pace.

Evenings, Eli was a frequent caller at the agent's house. He was no tenderfoot, the Gradys learned. His boyhood, his vacations and his years since technical school had been spent with his father, who had both constructed and managed Western railroads.

For a rare holiday he went mountain-climbing. A hobby to clear a man's mind, he told Camelot, but it was one at which Conductor Gape Hogg sneered.

"The president of a railroad, even a busted one-hoss railroad, climbing mountains and living in a boxcar!" he said. "He has no dignity."

Day after day Eli and his engineers surveyed; night after night they worked in their boxcar offices. Sometimes Camelot, cooking early breakfast, saw their lamps burning against the sun and heard voices hoarse from all-night discussions.

IT was one such morning that Eli Adams emerged, his eyes as bright as those of a boy playing marbles. "We can do it," he told Camelot—"build a road up Left Hand Cañon, and no more than a 2.75 per-cent grade. Taking off from Conifer here, we build an easy three miles to Rockaby Gulch, a bridge across the mouth of the gulch to hit the north wall of Left Hand; up-cañon a thousand yards approximately to swing across to the south wall over another bridge. Down-cañon almost to Rockaby again, and then a long, high viaduct to swing back high on the north wall, and on up the cañon. A great loop, d'ye un-



derstand and an easy grade for locomotives. I have a drawing. It can be built, but will they give me the money for it?"

Camelot said, "They'll have to give it to you," but she could hear Conductor Gape Hogg ask jeeringly: "And where is the money to come from for all those bridges and high trestles? With Arastra's stocks and bonds bein' sold by the bushel basket, and the Diamond Mountain wolves fightin' tooth and nail to have the line torn up."

"There'll be four directors coming from the East to decide," Eli went on. "One will be my uncle, but that will be no help. He's a banker."

In a week the four, riding in the special car of the Arastra's president, were deposited at Conifer station. They were a sober and conservative quartet, thin-lipped men—with hearts, Camelot judged, of Vermont granite.

Eli's uncle seemed a trifle less conservative than the others. "What—roses in the Colorado mountains!" he was quick to exclaim. All four took



a surprising interest in the flower beds. They showed in fact more interest than in the models and drawings of Eli's projected loop. Mounting them on Western ponies, Eli took the four up Left Hand Cañon, to look first at Rockaby Gulch where slabby cliffs enclosed one of the most magnificent conifer forests in Colorado.

They returned the second day with their mouths, Camelot noted, tightly clamped on whatever decision they had made. Climbing stiffly from his saddle, Eli's uncle again admired

Camelot's flowers and smiled when she cut a rosebud for his lapel.

"Were I a young man," he told her, "I think I should stay in Colorado. And not because of the gold or the mountain scenery. I shall send you a few dozen bulbs for you to try in your mountain air."

Number Two, on which they were to leave, was delayed in Conifer. During the wait, Camelot overheard Gape Hogg talking with the uncle.

"What I'd like is the kind of investments you smart Yankees make,"

Gape told the Easterner. "Safe and yet payin' big interest. Could you name one, Mister?"

"Easily," drawled the New Englander. "Thirty years ago nearly every smart New England investor wanting safety and high income bought Connecticut Empire first mortgage bonds. Since then those bonds proved so safe and brought in so high an income that they have been held tighter than a turtle holds his shell. I'd venture to say that few of the original buyers or their heirs have ever

old a single one of those safe Connecticut Empire eight-per-cent bonds. You never see them quoted, even. They simply aren't being sold."

"If you ever hear of any of those Connecticut Empires for sale, Mister," said Gape eagerly, "I'd admire to get a chance at 'em."

Camelot saw a smile pass over the New Englander's face. Eli's uncle had a dry humor, and she suspected he was pulling Gape Hogg's leg.

At the Arastra's central office in the town of Arastra, the directors made Eli a promise: if he could raise a loan in Colorado for half the funds needed for the Left Hand branch line and its loop, they would match it with Boston dollars.

Along the Arastra, bets were laid giving odds that Eli Adams would never raise his half. Zephyr's sounder tapped out discouraging reports of Eli's attempts in Denver to sell a special issue of stock to build the Left Hand extension. The banks were skeptical of Eli's loop; it was a pure gamble. The rival Diamond Mountain spread lying rumors. Camelot took the nest-egg she and Zephyr had saved over the years and recklessly bought stock. Eli sold the president's private car at a fancy price to a Mexican silver millionaire. The odds against him shortened.

Leaving Denver, Eli returned to continue his money-raising campaign along the Arastra itself, appearing in mining towns and camps, in concentration mills and smelters and supply stores, in the deep workings of mines, pleading for the money that would save the little road.

Then appearing at Conifer station, he hired a saddle-horse and plunged into the Left Hand mining districts, riding from one raw camp to another. Enthusiasm greeted him: owners of the new bonanzas were desperate for a railway and shelled out their last dollars.

"The president of a railroad goin' around beggin' for money," sneered Gape Hogg. "He won't raise enough to even build the bridge 'cross Rockaby Gulch."

"Have you no loyalty?" asked Camelot. "With all the money you've stolen from the Arastra, you could at least buy a few shares of stock."

"Not me," said Gape. "I'm goin' to be smart like the Boston financiers and wait for something good like the Connecticut Empire eight-per-cents." He licked his lips. "If I c'd only lay my hands on some of them at near par!"

Eli rode back to Conifer station looking weary and discouraged. He sat down to look soberly at Camelot's flower beds. "I have still to raise eight thousand dollars," he told

Camelot. "I've combed half of Colorado, and I think the only way to get it is to dig it out of a mine with my bare hands."

"Only eight thousand?" said Camelot. "That's two thousand less than Conductor Hogg has to invest—money he stole by letting passengers ride all these years for half price. He won't put a cent in your stock, but he'd buy Connecticut Empire bonds if there happened to be any in your family."

Eli looked startled. "What—those bonds! Of course we have 'em. They say every family in New England able to raise the money bought at least one of those bonds. And they're what Gape Hogg wants?" He looked straight at Camelot. "You worry a lot about this railroad, don't you? I wish that you cared half as much for me as you do for the little Arastra."

"How could I?" Camelot returned. "You aren't a railroad, Eli; you're just a man that builds 'em." Her eyes became tender. "You see, I've grown up beside the Arastra. Its locomotives whistled lullabies when I was a baby. I think my first memory is of old Kit Carson thundering by. How can I help but love the Arastra?"

Excelsior with Number Two—the Number One that went up cañon in the morning—shrieked for Conifer station. Despite Camelot's boast of having been raised on engine whistles, the sound must have startled her, for she jumped violently—to find herself held in Eli Adams' arms and her lips against his.

"A railroad couldn't kiss you," he told her as she broke away, angry. She refused to say good-by to him, but when the train pulled out, she watched Eli seat himself beside Conductor Hogg. She felt a little sorry for Gape. Yankees were shrewd traders.

Gape was exultant on his next trip. "I got 'em," he told Camelot. "Connecticut Empire bonds! The little General's grandpa left him some that I talked him into selling me at eighty. Think of it—twenty below par. The fool hadn't no idee of their value."

"Took advantage of him, didn't you, Gape?" asked Camelot.

"You got to be hard, to get rich. He sold 'em cheap account he's crazy for cash to build his loop. The Little General Loop, it ought to be called, after little Eli, the Napoleon of the Narrier-gauge." Gape laughed until his whole front shook.

The Little General Loop became its name. Construction engineers appeared immediately, and a month later trains dropped grading contractors and a maelstrom of braying mules and cursing teamsters at Conifer. These gave way to track-laying gangs which built to the rim of Rockaby

Gulch. Conifer quieted except for trains chuffing through, carrying supplies and scores of lumbermen, carpenters, bridge men, powder men, along with complete sawmills to cut timbers for the bridges of the Little General Loop.

Across Rockaby Gulch a long, high bridge appeared in a wide path cleared in the forest of great conifers whose crowns towered both above the bridge and the rims of the gorge. This brought the rails to the steep step of Left Hand which had previously defeated engineers. Steadily holding their 2.75 percent grade, the rails went nearly a thousand yards along the cañon wall and, swinging sharply across a trestle, headed back down-cañon. Close to the upper end of Rockaby Gulch bridge, the rails leaped back to the north wall over a tremendously tall viaduct called High Trestle, containing enough lumber to build a town. Then again on the north wall, many feet above the first track, the three-foot rails headed for Livingston Pass and timberline.

The aspens had turned gold and had lost their leaves when Camelot went up to Rockaby to watch the trial trip of a fully loaded train over the Loop. She saw first a plume of smoke high up on the side of Left Hand Cañon, and then veteran Kit Carson with nine cars of ore swung to roll across the dizzy span of High Trestle.

Snorting up-cañon again and back, Kit descended to slide across Rockaby Gulch, in an aisle made between the trunks of the conifer giants.

Kit Carson's triumphant blast split the thin air. The Arastra would live and prosper over the years with a million tons of ore making a waltz-like circle of the Little General Loop. Tent and cabin mining-camps in Left Hand would metamorphose into dignified little cities.

"It is something to make you cry," Camelot told Eli Adams. "To see little Kit crawling over High Trestle and sailing down through the trees of Rockaby! It is beautiful. Your father would have been proud of it."

"He'd have appeared proud, but he'd have seen an easier way of doing it. He was a great engineer, and nothing was impossible to him. He said men could even build a bridge to the moon."

Gape Hogg that evening threw his usual bucket of ice-water. "Quite the hero he is for the moment," he admitted grudgingly. "But does he think the Diamond Mountain has given up? If the Loop works, they'll want to get hold of the Arastra more'n ever—not to scrap it, but to operate it. Maybe they'll have High Trestle partly blown up, knowin' Eli can never raise enough money to repair it."

*Illustrated by
John Fulton*



"A dead duck, the old Arastra, C.C.&S.," said Conductor Hogg.

"He's not asleep," said Camelot. "He has armed guards patrolling the Loop."

There was reason for the guards, that being in a day when railroads gleefully strangled rival lines with every known trick, from buying legislators to hiring armies of thugs to tear up enemy rails.

That night Camelot awoke suddenly and looked out of her window.

Above Left Hand Cañon the glow of flames lighted up the sky. She dashed to Zephyr's room, shouting, "Fire!" and Zephyr ran in his nightshirt to his key. The alarm, however, had already been sent from the construction office above the Loop.

Camelot flung herself into a dress and with two section men pumped a handcar up Left Hand. In sight of the Rockaby, her horrified eyes saw

flames eating on the long bridge over the gulch. That was bad enough, but what really terrified Camelot was the realization that if the fire burned to the upper end of Rockaby bridge, High Trestle would catch. If High Trestle burned, it meant the total destruction of the Little General Loop and the end of the Arastra, C. C. & S.



Men ran and shouted, and Camelot was trampled by heavy boots.

Next instant Camelot and the section men were leaping from the hand-car to drag it from the track. Rocketing up behind them, screeching like a locoed banshee, came Excelsior, pulling a stub train of flatcars loaded with men and fire-fighting apparatus from the town of Arastra. As the engine thundered past, Camelot had a glimpse of Eli Adams leaning from the cab.

By the time the three had the hand-car replaced and had pumped it to the halted train, the fight was on.

Axemen were in the bottom of the Rockaby just ahead of the marching flames, chopping at bridge supports to make a saving gap between the fire and High Trestle. Through the smoke men ran and shouted above the crackling roar of the fire. Camelot, joining the fighters, was trampled by heavy boots, and in her excitement tried to grab an axe from a big tow-head who to her mind was chopping too slowly.

Another engine with three cars jammed with miners from Left Hand

came rolling down-cañon to stop on the upper rim of Rockaby. They brought axes also, and in mere minutes men had hacked through the great piles supporting the last section of Rockaby bridge; but the stringers that carried the rails still held stubbornly.

Eli Adams ordered these upper timbers blasted apart. Men began fashioning ladders; but young Eli, utilizing his mountain-climbing technique, scrambled up the bridge like a toy monkey on a string. With smoke swirling about him and the fire roaring closer, he placed the sticks of giant powder.

Before a fresh surge of blistering heat the axemen fell back, yelling for Eli to come down before the flames trapped him. Camelot, heart in her mouth, saw the flicker of a match touched to a fuse—and then Eli slid down to race for cover.

Just ahead of the flames the upper portion of the bridge exploded, showering the region with shattered timbers ranging from beams to tooth-picks. A wide gap was left, and men with hand pumps from the Arastra fire department threw streams of water sucked from the river.

DAYLIGHT seeping into the deep trench of Left Hand found Camelot in charge of kettles of boiling coffee, pits lined with iron in which bread was being baked, and skillets of sizzling meat. Weary fire-fighters came up to bolt food and sluice down coffee. Automatically she ladled out the cups until Eli Adams, his clothing half burned from him, appeared.

"It's a nice morning," he said in a dead voice, and tried to smile through the soot coating his face. He looked beaten. With Rockaby bridge destroyed, no ore could come sliding down the new Left Hand Cañon line. The Diamond City crowd would take over, rebuild the bridge, and grow rich on Eli's engineering. If they were responsible for the fire, it could never be proved in court.

The cup in Eli Adams' hand shook, and the coffee slopped out. "I failed all of you that bought the new stock," he said. "I cheated Gape Hogg. Those Connecticut Empire bonds I sold him are worthless: the company lasted only a year. I ordered Arastra stock made out to Gape for his eight thousand dollars, but I cheated him, and I cheated all of you. I failed with the Loop."

Camelot looked at High Trestle looming untouched above them in the smoky light of the morning. "You're not beaten," she told Eli sharply. "All you've lost is Rockaby bridge. There's always a way, your father said, even to build a bridge to the moon."

"They won't give me time to raise money to rebuild Rockaby bridge. The Arastra will be in bankruptcy court in a week—the Diamond Mountain will see to that. We're through."

"They said you couldn't build up Left Hand Cañon, but you did. I'd think of a quick way to bridge Rockaby—if I were an engineer."

Eli looked at her quickly. "What would you be thinking now—if you were an engineer?"

She studied the thick-trunked trees that stood tall and thick in the gulch bottom, on both sides of the burned bridge. "I'd be thinking a foolish notion maybe; but to me the road you built up Left Hand Cañon was a magic one. When I saw the first train coming across Rockaby bridge, it looked as if it were running through the treetops. Why couldn't a railroad actually run in the treetops? The trees left in Rockaby are higher than the bridge you built, and they stand close."

"A railroad in the treetops!" said Eli Adams slowly, and studied the smoke that swirled above the Rockaby. "A temporary road. Why not? The trees are piles already set. Top them, and string your road between them. You should have been an engineer, Camelot."

Suddenly he flung down the cup and put his arms around her and held her tight. "I'll take a survey crew through the Rockaby within an hour."

Camelot returned to Conifer, where the crew of Number One found her spading up the flower beds.

"Didn't I tell you the Diamond Mountain would get us?" Gape reminded Camelot. "But me, I'm well fixed with a steady income from my Connecticut Empires. I've looked after myself, and I'll look after the lucky woman I marry. With your father thrown out of a job, you'll not be wanting to be a burden to him."

"You're a scoundrel," Camelot flung at Gape. "And I take pleasure in telling you that your Connecticut Empires are worthless. Eli's uncle was hoorawing you—telling you a joke that you didn't see through—after you'd asked him the name of a safe high-interest investment bought by smart Yankees. The Connecticut Empire company lasted only a year."

Gape, stunned, stared wide-eyed. "And me," he snarled, "I'm a crook for knocking down fares! What is Eli Adams, when he takes my money for no-good bonds? I'll sue him."

"He gave you the same Left Hand line stock that everyone got who loaned money to the road."

"Left Hand stock," repeated Gape Hogg dazedly, and acting like a man mortally stricken, he climbed into a coach to collapse into a seat.

Late that evening Eli Adams marched wearily into Zephyr's office to begin sending telegrams to the Arastra terminus. All night while Zephyr sent and received messages, Eli sat alternately dictating and covering sheets of paper with drawings and figures.

At daylight three engines rumbled into Conifer with a work-train loaded with donkey engines, logging equipment, teams of work mules. Perched wherever they could find a place were a hundred lumberjacks and bridge men. Eli Adams swung onto one of the engines and vanished up Left Hand Cañon. A second work-train chuffed past, bringing more supplies and workers.

A telegram from Eli's uncle came through Zephyr's office. Boston was washing its hands, the wire said, of the ill-fated Arastra. Eli sent a curt answer. In forty-eight hours the Left Hand line would be carrying ore. Also he advised his uncle to keep his shirt tucked within the purlieu of his trousers belt.

On the second night after the fire came a snow, a fluffy affair three inches deep, piling on roofs and trees.

On the following afternoon Kit Carson backed down to Conifer, and taking aboard Zephyr and Camelot, clanked up the Left Hand branch to halt at a temporary siding below the burned bridge over the Rockaby. The work-trains were on the same siding, and the workmen were gathered at the rim of the gulch looking up cañon expectantly.

Camelot, stepping from the engine cab, saw only the great trees and the sections of burned bridge and was dismayed, although the Left Hand and Rockaby were a white fairyland. In the cañon little snow had melted, and it was still piled an inch deep on the needles of a million green branches. It covered the ugly black ruin of the burned bridge and made a glittering tower of High Trestle.

Then from the Loop came a triumphant tooting. A plume of smoke drifted above the snow-streaked cliffs of the Rockaby, and a stout little iron horse of the Arastra stable appeared, running along a track a hundred yards from the old bridge, a track apparently suspended on air.

Camelot stiffened, and her heart beat fast. The locomotive with its blunderbuss spark-catching stack was coming literally through the snow-covered trees—no, over them, running along on rails on a narrow platform hung between two parallel lines of stout trunks.

Behind the locomotive, bobbing up and down over its arboreal road, rolled eight loaded ore-cars. From its path among the trees the train slid to the track leading to the main line.

Camelot stood drinking it in; she began to cry and then changed into laughing. It was a miracle that Eli had worked here. A miracle that would save the Arastra, Central Colorado & Starbranch!

"The ingenious little cuss!" marveled Zephyr, at Camelot's side. "Who could 'a' thought of that scheme but someone with the imagination of the Irish? On one of the graves of the General's ancestors there must be growing a patch of shamrock. And where is the General, anyway? He should be delivering a speech."

Eli Adams was past speech-making. He was asleep, lying in one of the ore-cars, making up for the days and nights he had gone without even lying down to rest. They carried him to a bed at Conifer station, where he slept until late the next morning.

CAMELOT had prepared a huge breakfast for him, but instead of sitting down to eat it, he stood looking at her. "I wish my father could have seen your bridge," he told her.

"My bridge?" she asked.

"Your bridge. A bridge of living trees. Engineers are not often skillful with words, Camelot. I need you always, as I needed you after the fire. I've been waiting until the Loop was finished to ask you. Camelot, will you marry an engineer who was so cowardly as to quit a fight?"

"No, I will not marry you," said Camelot firmly. "Not unless you promise never to say again that you quit. You were too tired to think. Now sit down and eat your breakfast."

Instead, Eli stepped toward Camelot, halting as a rap sounded on the open window.

"Can I have a word with you, General Adams?" asked Gape Hogg, whose Number One was waiting meekly for an ore-train from Left Hand to pass. "You are a Yankee, one of the smartest. I'm betting you will gobble up the Diamond Mountain some day."

"It was a shabby trick I played on you—selling you those worthless Connecticut Empires," said Eli.

"Am I kicking?" returned Gape. "You gave me Left Hand stock, and that makes me part owner of the Arastry, don't it? But as a stockholder, I got a request: I want myself transferred to freight runs."

Camelot and Eli stared at Hogg. "Why do you want to demote yourself?" asked Eli.

"It can't be you've turned honest," observed Camelot.

"No," said Gape to that. "It's because I can't trust myself to turn honest. Arastry stock will be worth more if I'm on a freight run. You see the point: I got to safeguard my investment."

BLACKY

HE WAS WELL LOVED BY ALL THE SMALL BOYS, BUT HE WAS ACCUSED OF MURDER, WITH A LOT OF EVIDENCE AGAINST HIM.

by

IRVING CRUMP

His name was Joseph Abraham, but to the boys of our gang he was just plain Blacky, and probably the most potent influence for good or evil in our young lives—depending upon how one regarded Blacky's sphere of activity. He taught us all how to swim. Through his efforts we learned how to catch catfish, how to bob for eels, and how to dress and cook fish and rabbits and even an occasional chicken which came into the possession of some member of our gang. If we had had a Boy Scout troop in those days, Blacky would have been our Scoutmaster.

But one thing he didn't do that is traditional with a Scoutmaster today: He never took us on hikes. Blacky was too big and fat and flat-footed, and withal too indolent, to do that. The longest walks he ever took were his hobbling journeys once a week from his shack down on the river shore to the stone-dock road where he usually caught a ride to town. There he sold a few catfish or eels and with the proceeds bought tobacco, flour, bacon and cornmeal, which were about the only staples he ever needed, and returned home as soon as he could.

Those painful journeys were about all he could endure because of his broken arches and other foot troubles. They were the only occasions, except in the winter of course, when he put on his tremendous shoes which were adequately ventilated to ease his bunions. At all other times those shoes rested under his swaybacked iron bed in his shack, their huge toes protruding like the bows of two somnolent canal boats; for Blacky was never completely happy unless he was bare-footed.

The shack in which Blacky lived started out in life as the cabin of a stone barge that got crushed in the ice one winter, and sank. Blacky salvaged the superstructure in sections, and set it up beyond the end of the stone dock, just where the Esopus creek flows into the Hudson River, and added onto it and repaired it from time to time until it was a most amazing hodgepodge. Attached to one end of it was a leanto shed in which Blacky had set up a rusty old kitchen stove with a staggered stovepipe that reached through the roof. This was the summer kitchen. A rickety old table, knocked together by Blacky out of driftwood lumber, and several benches, were also kept in the shed to be moved out on pleasant days and serve as our picnic place. Altogether, to us town boys who were numbered among Blacky's friends—for he was very selective—this place was the kind of a hangout near the water most boys dream about but seldom realize.

The spreading branches of a perfectly tremendous weeping willow tree, the trunk of which must have been fifteen to twenty feet in circumference, sheltered the shack and mitigated the curse of its stark ugliness. In front of the shack was a little sandy beach that led down to the mouth of the creek just before it entered the river. This beach was Blacky's kingdom, and he ruled it with all the despotism of a black potentate.

And indeed he truly resembled one as with his glistening black face and halo of white kinky hair he sat in a chair under an umbrella lashed to a stake in the sand and supervised our swimming.

"Doan want none of you kids drowndin' down round de crick here, 'cause if that happens, they gonna blame it on Blacky. So all o' you learns to swim or stays 'way from here. That's final."

And final it was. No new kid could join the gang until Blacky was certain that he knew how to take care of himself in the water. He had repaired several fire-charred cork life-jackets he had salvaged from the wreck of the steamboat *Ida Belle* which had run aground on the flats below Glasgo and burned, and he made the beginners, whom he called "pollywogs," wear them until they demonstrated they could really swim. Then he let them join the more experienced "seals" who cavorted out in deeper water.

That strip of beach, as it happily developed in a memorable disagreement between Blacky and Sam Thompson, the owner of the stone dock, was town property. But its proximity to the stone dock was one of its added charms, for besides the constant musically ringing clink of the stone-workers' chisels, which was incessant from seven o'clock in the morning until six o'clock at night, the stone dock provided reasons for chuffing tugs to come into the creek. There they made up tows of heavily laden stone barges which were to be pulled down the river to the fast-growing city on Manhattan Island.

It was the heyday of the bluestone era, when tremendous flags were being laid for the sidewalks of New York. Scores of quarries in the Catskill Mountains back of our town were sending huge drays loaded with giant slabs of bluestone and pulled by four, six and sometimes eight horses down the stone-dock road to old Sam Thompson's stone-yard. There a rubbing mill and a dozen or more stonecutters shaped them into flagging and curbing before they were loaded on the stone barges and sent down-river.

It was always a great temptation to make a shortcut behind old Sam Thompson's house and across the stone-yard to Blacky's. But we couldn't do that if Mr. Thompson was around, as was all too often the case. He didn't want any kids trooping through the stone-yard, and he told us so in about the most scorching language any of us ever heard in an era when profanity was akin to an art.

It was Sam Thompson's propensity for swearing that made Blacky dislike him from the beginning. Blacky could not abide profanity, and woe betide the boy who used any in his presence. He wouldn't stand for anyone else using it around us boys, either, and if he happened to be present on any of the numerous occasions

when old man Thompson began reviling us, he would waddle up to the wrathful old man to remonstrate.

"Shame on you, Mistah Thompson, de way yo' talks before these here boys!" I remember him saying one day when he was more annoyed than usual. "Sometime yo' gonna go too far, an' de Good Lawd gonna strike you daid with a bolt of lightnin'! Yo' mark my word! An' I hopes I'm round heah when it happens, 'cause I wants to hear how yo' sizzles."

THOMPSON'S face got livid and his red sideburns fairly bristled. He shook his cane at Blacky, and told him to mind his own business. But being reprimanded by the colored man embarrassed him nevertheless, and he went limping off across the stone-yard thumping his cane on the ground, while Blacky stared after him and shook his head sadly. He told us kids who were with him that the Lord had crushed old Sam Thompson's foot in

an accident on one of his stone barges just by way of a warning.

"But that man ain't got de sense of a catfish," added Blacky. "Was it me, I'd of knowed de Good Lawd was just a-showin' me what *could* happen did I continue with my blasphemious ways, an' I'd reform, sho' enough. But not him! He gonna keep it up till somethin' surely turrrible gonna happen to him. I jus' know it for certain."

It was all too evident that Thompson did not like Blacky. Nor did he like most of us town kids who were Blacky's constant companions. And after Blacky reprimanded him at greater length than usual that day, the lame stonecutter, who because he was a man of property was a figure of importance in town, decided to drive Blacky out of his shack and keep us kids off the little beach and away from the stone dock. So Mr. Thompson appealed to the law in the person of Constable Fitzgerald to oust Blacky

from his tumbledown shack, on the grounds that it was built on stone-dock property. And at the same time unpleasant stories about Blacky and his association with us boys began to circulate in town.

QUITE a few parents believed these tales and forbade their kids going swimming under Blacky's watchful eye.

But some of us—and I was one—sneaked off anyway. However, gossip about Blacky spread around town, and people really believed the stories about how he was teaching boys to steal food from the grocery stores or their own homes and bring their loot down to the old fellow's shack. There were rumors, too, that Blacky made nocturnal raids on town clotheslines and henhouses and also stole anything else he could lay his hands on, until there were complaints by the score to Constable Fitzgerald from disturbed parents who didn't know Blacky very



"Sometime de Good Lawd gonna strike you daid with a bolt of lightnin'! An' I hopes I'm round heah, 'cause I wants to hear how yo' sizzles."

"Clare to Gawd, Mistah Fitzgerald, I never murder nobody."

well. But our constable was an exceptional officer of the law for his day and age. He must have been, because a few years later he was one of the heroes of San Juan Hill, and still later he became a member of the bar and one of New York's leading criminal lawyers. . . .

Roxy Peters, Art Banker and I had been out fishing with Blacky in his green skiff the day the Constable drove down the stone-dock road in his shining black buggy with red wheels and his high-stepping sorrel Khalif. We had got back with a mess of white perch, which as every Hudson River boy knows are the sweetest fish the river produces, and found about four other kids at the shack. That meant a feed. So we pitched in and cleaned the fish, while Blacky got out the bacon and frying-pan and mixed up a batch of johnnycake, and someone started a fire in the stove in the leanto. We were all feeling very hungry and ready to have our tin plates heaped with sizzling brown perch and johnnycake squares when the Constable's rig whirled into sight and came to a stop.

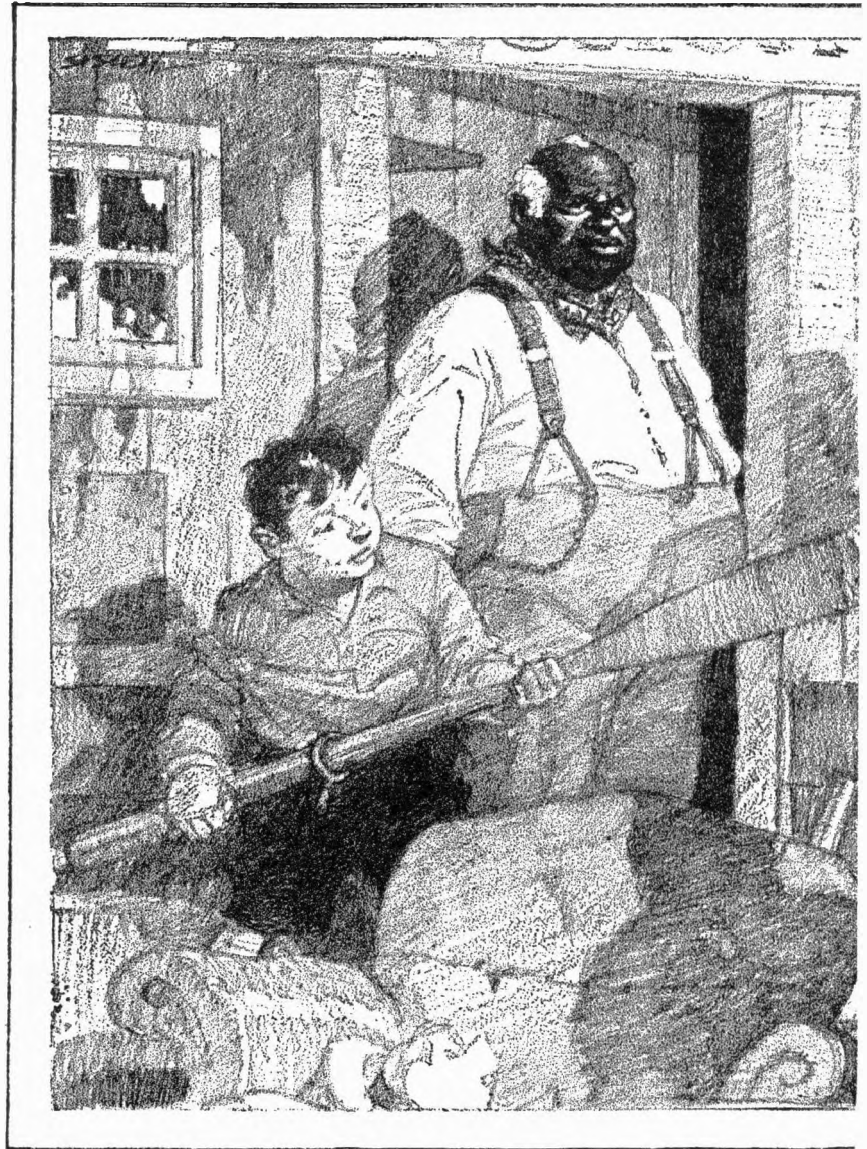
DON'T think we weren't all frightened when Mr. Fitzgerald got out. We were—even Blacky. He paused with frying-pan and fork in hand and stared bug-eyed at the Constable. So did the rest of us. We all realized that a visit from the Constable was not to be regarded lightly. But as Mr. Fitzgerald strode toward the cookshed he sniffed almost eagerly, and when he caught sight of the heaping pan of beautifully browned fish, he grinned in a way that put us all a little more at ease.

"Looks to me as if I had arrived just in time. Got enough, Blacky?" he queried.

"Yas sah. Yas sah," Blacky nodded his head and grinned. Then becoming the potentate, he commanded: "You, Jim Morse, go git de Constable a tin plate an' cup. Knife an' fork too, an' step lively." Then he added politely to the Constable: "Set right down heah, please sah, Mistah Fitzgerald, at the end o' de table."

We were still tongue-tied in the presence of the law, and we remained so, save for Blacky, who talked incessantly while he heaped Mr. Fitzgerald's tin plate with fat white perch and crinkly brown strips of bacon and hot johnnycake.

"I didn't know how hungry I was until I smelled the johnnycake and fish and saw how good they looked," the officer explained as he began to eat with enthusiasm. "Have many fish-fries like this?"



"Yas sah, plenty of 'em. The boys kind o' likes to feed down here with Blacky. Sometimes they near eats me out o' house an' home, but so long's we got fish in the river an' a dab o' grease for the fryin'-pan, we gonna be all right."

But in spite of Blacky's loquacity all the fun was taken out of the meal for us. We were restrained and quiet, expecting something to happen. The Constable realized this, and he did his best to make us feel at ease with him. He asked about the fishing and the river boats, and he began to tell stories of his police work and the new bloodhounds they had bought in the Sheriff's office in Kingston, and fighting Indians and punching cattle in Montana, where he had been a cowboy for a while; and it wasn't long before we were all relaxed and the whole mess of white perch and johnnycake had been

cleaned up. Finally the Constable got around to the reason for his visit.

"There are a lot of stories about you and these kids, Blacky. They say you're teaching them to steal and corrupting their morals," he said.

Blacky scowled and grew angry.

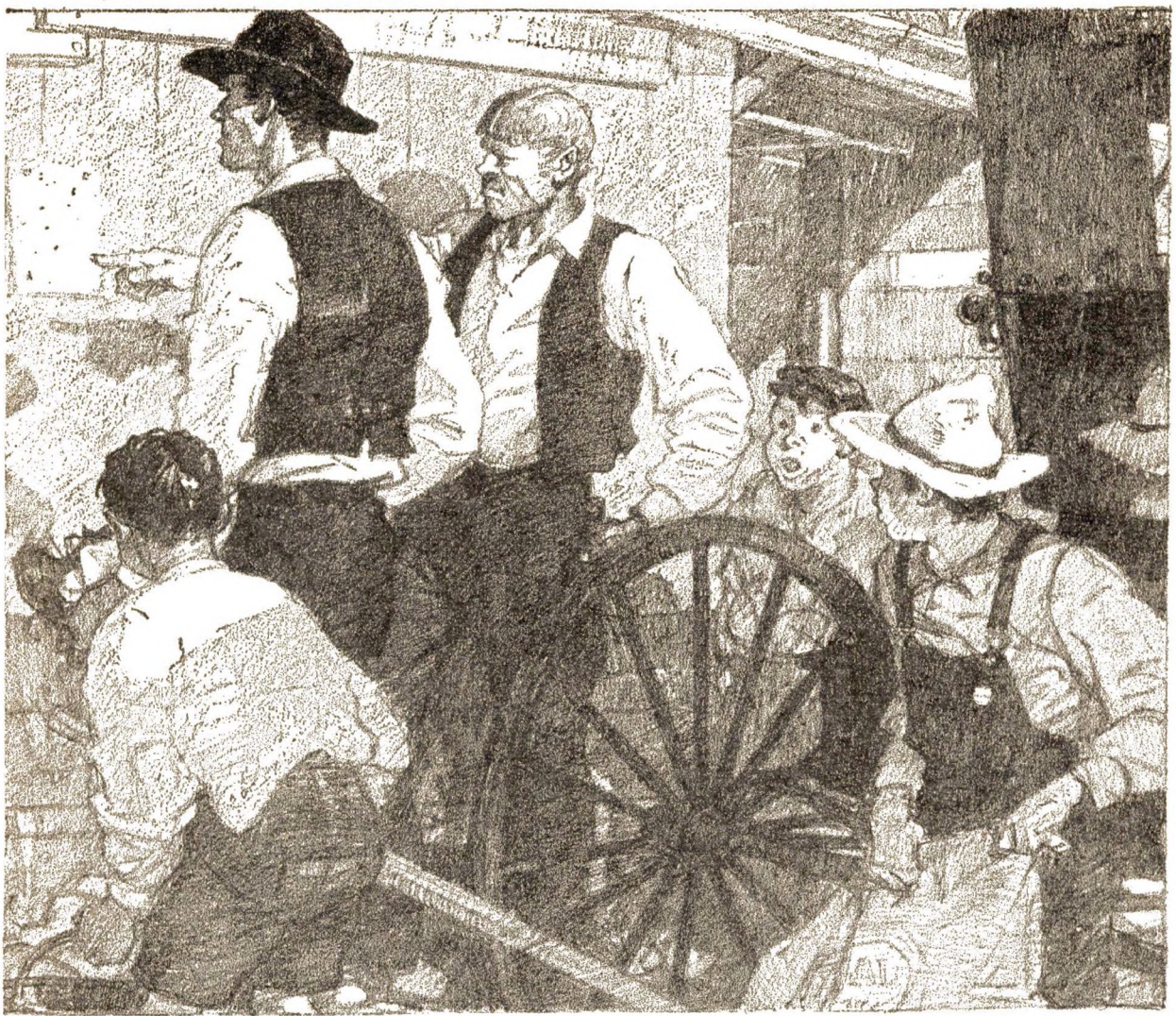
"O! man Thompson say that, that's who say it. And dumb folks listen. Ain't no stealin' goin' on round heah. No lyin' nor blasphemious language, neither. If I ketches a boy doin' any them things, I throws him out. He doan come back no more, neither. You calls havin' a fish-fry like we jus' had c'ruptin' somebody's morals, Constable? Flummydiddles, I say."

The Constable smiled.

"Sam Thompson says your shack is on his land and you've got to get off."

Blacky bristled.

"No 'tain't, neither. This here land belonged to Mistah George Seaman.



He lemme build a shack on it. When he die, he give this land to de town. Tha's who it belongs to now. Ol' Sam Thompson's property stops over yonder there, t'other side that buttonball tree. I found that out long ago."

The Constable nodded and getting up walked over to Blacky's shack. He went inside and poked around for a few minutes. Then he came out and went over to the buttonball tree. He took a general look around, too, before he walked over to his rig.

"I think you're right about the property, Blacky," he called. "You just sit tight until you hear from me. So long, boys. See you again sometime." Then he drove away.

We were all relieved after the Constable had gone and nothing serious had happened. But we were quiet for a little while, at least while we cleaned up the dishes. However, a few more

kids came down, and by midafternoon we were all in swimming, and the Constable's visit was forgotten.

There was much less gossip about Blacky and his influence over the kids of the town after that, and far less in the way of parental restraint; and the little beach over which Blacky ruled was more popular than ever. In fact, some of the fathers of the kids came down to see Blacky, and a few offered to pay him to teach their boys how to swim. Blacky steadfastly refused to take any money for that, but he did accept presents of cast-off clothing and food.

But though the size of the gang of town kids who congregated at Blacky's increased, the old fellow still had a select few whom he permitted certain privileges, not the least of which was that of going fishing with him. I was one of the favored group.

In early spring when shad were running, Blacky had a long gill net which he staked out in the river and visited daily. But when he had removed his catch from that, he would proceed to fish in the way he liked best, which was hand-line fishing for white or yellow perch, or catfish and eels or anything else that might take his bait. And that is the way we kids fished when we went out with him.

From the beginning of open water in April until the first hard freeze in November, Blacky was out every day at dawn unless storms whipped the broad surface of the river with such fury that fishing was impossible. In midsummer when school was closed, or on Saturdays, some of us boys were generally with him. In winter Blacky fished through the ice some, and harvested ice for the big icehouses at Malden and Glasgo if he needed

money for food. If he didn't, he stayed in his shack and slept and like a hibernating animal waited for spring.

Bob Finger, Roxy Peters, Art Banker and I were his most faithful assistants. We didn't mind getting up before dawn in the morning, and we lived a little nearer the stone-dock road than the others, and could generally get to Blacky's skiff before he pulled out onto the river, for Blacky never waited for any of us. We didn't miss many mornings the summer that old Sam Thompson tried to have Blacky dispossessed and his shack pulled down. And the four of us were with him the day that George Roach discovered that Mr. Thompson had been murdered.

The murder had taken place sometime Friday night. Thompson, as was his usual procedure, had walked uptown Friday and had withdrawn twelve hundred dollars in cash from the bank for his Saturday's payroll. He had done this for years. He had also transacted some other business, stopped in various saloons for a visit with some of his friends and was last seen about midnight, pleasantly drunk but well able to take care of himself, and to walk home by way of the stone-dock road, which he apparently did. But someone was waiting for him on his front porch and beat him to death with an instrument that later turned out to be a claw-hammer which belonged to Blacky. We all recognized it as one we had seen him use, and he identified it himself. Of course the twelve hundred dollars in payroll money was missing.

Old Sam Thompson's body was found by his nephew, George Roach, sometime after dawn. Roach was a skipper of one of Thompson's stone barges, and he said he had gone over to the old man's house because his uncle had invited him to have breakfast with him, as he frequently did on Saturday mornings, so that he could help with the payroll. Roach found the corpse on the porch soon after dawn, and of course he hurried uptown and notified Constable Fitzgerald.

TOTALLY UNWARE that we had walked within fifty feet of the old man's brutally beaten body as we crossed the stone-yard during the eerie hour before dawn, Roxy, Bob, Art and I had gone over to Blacky's. We found him loading his gear into the skiff, and we realized that we had nearly missed him.

"Figgered to git me a early start today. Water's a mite muddy. Gonna be a good day fo' cats, I think," the old fellow explained as we took over the job of stowing the buckets of lines and bait and shipped the oars while

Blacky took his place in the stern with the slow dignity of an emperor boarding his official barge.

It was a good day for catfish. We caught half a gunnysack full and headed back home about eleven o'clock, because it takes a lot of time to skin a mess of "cats." While we were on the other side of Fike's Island and still out of sight of Blacky's shack, we heard the bell-like baying of a couple of hounds. The sound came from the direction of the stone dock, and we all listened intently. It kept up for a few minutes as if the hounds were trailing something. Then it stopped abruptly. Blacky's brow wrinkled in a puzzled frown.

"Nobody got any houn' dogs round heah. Anyhow, 'tain't huntin' season. What-all yo' reckon that was?" he queried.

WE couldn't guess. But we were soon to know. As we came in sight of Blacky's landing, we discovered a lot of activity about the shack. Most conspicuous, of course, were two big brown-and-black bloodhounds, held in leash by a man from the Sheriff's office. Constable Fitzgerald was there. So was George Roach, with his blotched and freckled face and almost colorless eyes and eyebrows that somehow had always given me the creeps. There were a couple of town kids too; and out in back of the shack we could see the Constable's rig with the horse tied to the willow tree. We all knew that some very serious trouble was afoot, but we couldn't guess what it was until we drew up to Blacky's little dock, where everyone was waiting for us. Then George Roach called Blacky a dirty name and said:

"Thought you could get away with murder, didn't you? Well, we got you dead to rights."

"Who you talk to 'bout murder?" cried Blacky, horror freezing his dark countenance as he climbed heavily out of the skiff while we scrambled after him. The bloodhounds nosed him and growled softly as Constable Fitzgerald spoke:

"Blacky, Sam Thompson was murdered sometime last night. And I'm arresting you for the crime. We put bloodhounds on the trail, and they led us right into your shack. These are your shoes, aren't they? And this is your hammer." He laid a newspaper-covered bundle on the dock and unwrapped it, to reveal Blacky's big shoes bespattered with blood, and his claw hammer gruesomely smeared and with bits of hair and flesh still clinging to the claws.

"We found the hammer in the bushes behind your shack, Blacky," said the Constable.

Blacky's face turned a sickly gray-brown and his jaw dropped. For sec-

onds he was unable to speak. Then presently he blurted:

"They's my shoes, an' my hammer, sah, but 'clare to Gawd, Mistah Fitzgerald, I never murder nobody."

We kids knew Blacky had not committed the crime, which was the most horrible thing that had ever happened in our town. And there were a lot of adults who, no matter what they thought of the shiftless colored man, couldn't believe that he was that brutal, either. They knew that old Sam Thompson had hated Blacky, and that Blacky in turn disliked Thompson, but pure inertia alone made it seem improbable that the fat man could become aroused to such violence.

We youngsters knew, too, that there was nothing vicious in Blacky's nature anyway, and when Constable Fitzgerald returned from Kingston after putting the frightened and miserable Blacky in the county jail, a delegation of us went to him and told him that we were sure he had the wrong man, for the conviction grew among us that Blacky had been framed by Sam Thompson's nephew, George Roach.

"I don't trust that guy," protested Bob Finger. "It would have been pretty darned easy for Roach to swipe Blacky's shoes from under his bed. Blacky'd never miss 'em. Roach could have worn them just so's he'd leave a trail for the bloodhounds to follow back to Blacky's shack. He could have brought the shoes back after the murder and put them under Blacky's bed while we were out on the river. We went fishing at daybreak."

"Sure. And don't think Blacky would be so dumb as to throw that bloody hammer in the bushes back of his shack if he had killed old man Thompson with it. He'd have thrown it in the river," said Roxy Peters.

"That's right. You didn't find Thompson's bag of money on Blacky, did you? It wasn't in his shack, either. I'll bet my hat you'd have found it on that slimy guy Roach if you had searched him."

MR. FITZGERALD looked at us in silence for a moment. Then he said slowly: "No, the murderer would have hidden that moneybag and waited until things cooled off before he started spending any of it."

"By jiminy, that's just what a bird like Roach would do," I exclaimed, and Bob Finger added: "Sa-ay, listen, Mr. Fitzgerald, suppose us kids shadowed him. I'll bet we'd find out where he hid the moneybag. Then you could nab him with the goods."

"Now, wait a moment," said the Constable. "I don't want you kids mixing into anything where you'll get hurt. That fellow Roach could be a



"Well, you kids have got a lot of nerve. Just what are you looking for, anyway?"

tough customer, and some, of you might find yourself in trouble. You'd better be mighty careful what you do around him."

But the idea of shadowing him appealed to us so much that the Constable's warning fell on deaf ears. All of Blacky's boys became enthusiastic amateur detectives; and George Roach, much to his manifest annoyance, suddenly found himself the ob-

ject of a lot of unpleasant attention. We followed him wherever he went in town. As stealthily as any Indians we kept track of him from behind trees, from store doorways and from bushes and woody areas along the stone-dock road. We dogged his footsteps all over town. We watched him from under swinging doors of the saloons he entered, and we peered at him through the windows of Breede's

restaurant and the "dog wagon," both of which he frequented. We trailed him about the stone dock and even tried to sneak on board his barge, the *Thompson No. 10*.

First along, Roach became very angry, and on several occasions when he had been drinking, he reviled us with language that was almost the equal of that used by his uncle. And he even chased some of us, which of

Illustrated by
Raymond Sisley



"You thought you'd give us the slip?" said the Constable. "I don't know what you mean," said Roach a little huskily.

course added zest to our shadowing efforts. But gradually it seemed to dawn on him that the more attention he paid to us, the more pleasure we got out of bedeviling him. So he adopted a policy of ignoring us completely.

That took a lot of the fun out of the game for most of the gang, and slowly the interest of most of the kids just petered out. Roach's shadowers grew fewer in number until it was not long before just Roxy, Bob and I, and sometimes Art Banker, were the only ones who were still hopeful of discovering where he had hidden the moneybag, and perhaps turning up some evidence that would draw suspicion away from Blacky.

THOUGH we still continued to follow Roach, we realized that one place where he might have hidden the loot and where we probably never would discover it without taking desperate chances was in the cabin of the stone barge on which he lived. Roach always took particular pains not to let any of the kids on board. We could follow him as far as the stringer of the dock, but there we had to stop, because he warned us in plain language that if he ever caught any of us on his barge, he would break our necks.

That of course made us doubly suspicious that the hiding-place of the moneybag was in the stone-boat cabin, and we decided that the only chance

we had of turning up evidence that would save Blacky was to search that place. So in spite of the danger involved, we waited for a night when Roach went uptown, so we might break into the cabin and rummage through the place.

The opportunity came on a Tuesday evening, which was the night the village band gave its regular concert in the bandstand on the square. As soon as we saw Roach uptown making his way toward his favorite saloon, three of us—Roxy, Bob and I—hurried down the stone-dock road to the deserted yard where a string of stone barges were rubbing against the stringers with soft, chafing sounds like so many comfortable, purring cats.

With no one in sight, it did not take us long to scramble on board the *Thompson No. 10*. But once on the narrow deck, the problem of how to get into the cabin became troublesome. The companionway was locked with a padlock that defied anything short of a crowbar. To be sure, one of these was to be had easily enough, for there were any number in the stone-yard.

However, using such an instrument to force the lock made us hesitate. We started around the deck trying all of the low windows; and happily on the far side of the barge away from the dock, we found one that had not been locked. We slid it back with some effort, and feet-first I lowered myself

inside, to be followed by Roxy and Bob—though the latter being fatter than either of us, had a more difficult time than we did in working his way through.

ONCE inside the stale, tobacco-reeking room, we all found our hearts pounding hard, and momentarily we were at loss just how to proceed. In fact, the thought uppermost in all our minds was to crawl out through that window again as soon as we could, and it would not have taken much to have persuaded us to abandon our search. There was a disorderly bunk at one end of the room with a dirty mattress and foul blankets heaped on it, and a small trunk and an old carpetbag beneath it. On the other side of the room was a cookstove, and behind it blackened pots and pans decorated the wall. There was a table and two or three chairs, and in the bulkhead had been built two closets with several drawers underneath.

I realized that our search for the bag of money needed organizing, and suggested that Roxy proceed to search the bunk while Bob hauled out the old canvas-covered half-trunk and the ancient and dilapidated carpetbag and went through them. Meanwhile I tackled the closets and the drawers beneath.

With our hearts thumping with fear and excitement, we bent to our search, because we wanted to finish with this

erie business as soon as possible and clear out. But we did get preoccupied in our task—so much so, in fact, that the sudden sound of footsteps of someone coming on board the barge and walking across the deck took us completely by surprise.

"Chickie! Somebody's coming!" exclaimed Bob Finger in a hoarse whisper as he rushed toward the small window, and climbing on a chair, tried to get out. But he couldn't make it. In fact, he was nicely wedged when the companionway slid back and George Roach came down the three steps, ducking his head as he entered. For a moment he stared at us in surprise. Then a mean, crafty smile spread across his freckled face as he went over, and grabbing Bob by one ankle, dragged him back into the cabin.

"Well, I got to admit you kids have got a lot of nerve," he said, surveying us with his washed-out pale blue eyes. "Just what are you looking for, anyway?"

"You know darned well what," said Bob Finger.

"Old man Thompson's moneybag," I added, almost choking on the words.

ROACH studied us in silence for a matter of seconds, his brow wrinkled, before he said:

"You'd better ask Blacky what he done with it." Then he added: "Say, look here, you kids, why don't you give me a break? Maybe my uncle did hate all of you and tried to put the run on you. But that's all past now. He's dead, and me being his only relative, I'm going to own this stone-dock business some day, as soon as the courts get through with hanging Blacky and settlin' the old man's estate. So I can be good to you kids, I can. I'll leave you swim over there at the end of the dock. I might do a lot of other things for you too, if you'll give me a break and quit follerin' me. After all, I never done nothing to any of you kids, did I?"

"You only just got Blacky put in jail for a crime he didn't commit," said Roxy bitterly.

"Listen! You leave the law take care of Blacky and leave me slide out of town for a while, will you? I just want to get some clothes, and I'll be going, an' don't you say nothin' to nobody about it, because—"

Roach stopped talking and listened. We listened too, for once again we heard footsteps on the deck outside the cabin, and presently we saw feet, then legs coming down the open companionway. The Constable ducked his head and entered, to be followed by a man with mustache, derby hat and gloves, polished Congress boots and a checkered vest decorated by a big gold watch-chain.

Roach looked surprised. So did the rest of us.

"Hello, George. We figured on catching you here. In fact, we almost overtook you coming down the stone-dock road. You saw us in town, didn't you, and thought you'd give us the slip? But it didn't work," said the Constable with a cold smile.

"I don't know what you mean," Roach said a little huskily.

"No? Don't tell me you didn't recognize Inspector Byrnes of the New York Police Department. My friend Commissioner Teddy Roosevelt sent him up here from the city to help me clean up this case. The inspector, here, took some Bertillon measurements of you a few years ago. Remember? He'd like to take some more now. Fingerprints too, il—"

Roach's pale eyes had been slyly shifting toward the companionway. Suddenly he made a wild dash and tried to leap up the short flight of steps. But he failed to duck quite low enough, and the sound his skull made as it crashed against the companionway cover made me feel sick to my stomach. I thought he must have broken his neck as he collapsed and sprawled at the foot of the steps.

But he hadn't.

The Constable and the Inspector examined him.

"Probably the worst he got out of that was a concussion," said Mr. Fitzgerald. "But while he's out, you'd better begin your measurements."

The Inspector took a tape measure, calipers and pad and pencil out of his pocket. Then while the Constable jotted down the numbers he called off, the big city police official began to make a series of measurements which included Roach's full height, the length of his arms, the length of his ears, his fingers and a number of other details. Then he took an ink pad from his pocket and made the prints of Roach's fingers and thumbs.

WHEN he finished, he and the Constable went to the table, and there Inspector Byrnes spread out several sheets of paper that contained other measurements and a card with some fingerprints on it. These they studied for a few moments in silence before the man from the New York Police Department nodded with assurance.

"Fitzgerald, I think we have identified your murderer. These fingerprints are the same as the ones that were on the bloody hammer, so he is the one who killed Thompson. And his Bertillon measurements are the same as those of George Roach, alias Chad Turk, who did a stretch in Sing Sing for a holdup in New York, so he's a two-time felon. The whole thing checks perfectly. If we convict him, he'll be one of the first victims

of the new fingerprint system that we have just adopted by order of the mayor."

"Yes. And if we convict him soon enough, he'll be one of the first to burn in the new electric chair they've just installed in Sing Sing," said the Constable pleasantly.

To us kids who had never heard of the Bertillon system of identification, or fingerprints, or even Inspector Thomas Byrnes, the whole thing was a complete puzzle. Roxy Peters interrupted the brief silence that followed the Constable's statement by exclaiming:

"Say, we've got a swell chance to search for that moneybag while he's still knocked out. That will sure convict him."

CONSTABLE FITZGERALD smiled.

"I'll find it for you right away," he said, striding over to the inert body and running expert hands over it to extract a canvas bag from inside Roach's shirt. He brought it to the table and opened it. It contained nothing but a roll of torn newspaper. We stared at its contents in amazement, but the Constable and Inspector Byrnes chuckled happily.

"I'll let you in on a secret, boys," said the Constable. "We knew where the moneybag was all the time. When Roach killed the old man, he wedged the moneybag up in the rafters of the porch to hide it. I found it the next day and took the money, but put the bag back filled with this wad of old newspaper. I did that because I didn't want Roach to use the money to make a getaway if things got too hot for him. But I didn't want him to discover the bag had been disturbed, either—not too soon, anyway. I wanted to get in touch with my friend Teddy Roosevelt, first. So that's why I didn't stop you kids from shadowing Roach. He never knew when some of you might be watching him, so he never went near that moneybag until tonight. When he saw Inspector Byrnes and me up-town, he got worried and came back to the stone dock. He got the moneybag out of the rafters then, and probably came back to the barge for some clothes, figuring on taking the eight o'clock West Shore train for Albany."

"He said he was going to slip out of town for a little while. He didn't want us to say anything to anybody," said Bob Finger.

"He is going out of town, all right," agreed Inspector Byrnes, "only he isn't going very far. Just down the river to Sing Sing."

"Which reminds me that I'd better drive down to Kingston tonight and let Blacky out of jail, so you boys can go fishing with him in the morning," said the Constable.

A Broken Blade

A BRIEF DRAMA BY THE FAMOUS AUTHOR OF "DR. FU MANCHU" AND "MOON OF MADNESS"

by SAX ROHMER

AND it isn't a damned fairy tale, either! (roared Dr. "Red" Rafferty, sharing a truculent glare amongst the group of fellow clubmen surrounding him). I know Policeman O'Donovan a good deal better than I know most of you half-wits—respect him more, too. I have always taken care of his old mother, who comes from Tipperary, my own home town.

A grand lad, Mike O'Donovan. He'll go far. Wait and see.

The story, as you've heard it, was twisted all out of shape. Police Headquarters had their own reason for keeping some of the details to themselves, and the reporters never got all the facts. If they had, they wouldn't have believed them.

Mike was always a studious fellow. He'll make a star detective one of these days. He is, as you may know—if you know anything—police champion middleweight. And the whole thing was played up on that note. In exact fact, it wasn't humanly possible for any man to do what Mike did, just with his bare hands. I ought to know: I can use 'em a bit myself.

—I saw that wink, Elston! Just do it again and I'll ask you to step upstairs and form your own conclusions!

In his time off duty, Mike didn't sit watching some maundering movie and holding a girl's hand. He was never that sort. No sir. He might take a brisk walk in the park for an hour or he might go to see something worth seeing. But Mike has an eye to the future.

It's queer, too, that I should say that—for I never knew a man with a keener eye to the past, either. As I don't want to test your limited brain powers unduly, perhaps I'd better explain what I mean.

Mike is a great student of history. He told me once that there's more to learn about the future from the past than from the present. But that remark will be over your heads. In his bit of an apartment he has quite

the beginnings of a library. Confucius is there, and Plato. Although a good Roman Catholic, as an O'Donovan should be, Mike always had his own ideas about the mystery of the soul.

I won't bother you with that part. None of you thinks he has a soul, anyway. And I'm inclined to agree, as far as my present company is concerned.

As a medical man, I'm expected to be an atheist; but I'm not. Neither is Mike O'Donovan.

There was one point we often discussed far into the night. It was whether, as the Buddhists hold, we live not one but many lives on earth. His dear old mother, who believed nothing but what Father Riley told her, used to leave the pair of us to it. I expect she prayed for us.

You see, although Mike was never in France, he had a kind of deep-rooted love of it. He had some etchings and such like, of old French chateaux. I don't subscribe to Freudian balderdash, and so my interest in this part of his character wasn't psycho-analytical. But I did find out, with patience—another wink from you, Elston, and there'll be bad trouble—I say, with patience, that his real interest lay in a certain period of history.

SINCE no period but the present has meaning for most of you, I won't say what period that was. None of you would be any the wiser. But he had an instinctive knowledge of things belonging to it; he'd collected some genuine pieces, a comfit box—you wouldn't be knowing what that is—a dagger, a bit of inlaid body armor and so on, picked up cheap.

Particularly weapons and the like seemed to attract him. And I remember once we sat until four o'clock in the morning discussing the family history of the O'Donovans and the Muldoons, his mother's side, trying to figure out if he could be a throwback to some distant French ancestor.

There's not a man of you knows the history of the United States of America, so I'm not expecting you'd know anything of Irish history. Myself, I have a fair intelligence, or I wouldn't hold the degree of Dublin. And as a good citizen, but an Irishman-born, I could assure Mike, after careful thought, that I could find no spot of French in his pedigree.

WHICH brings me to the evening he picked up the old sword.

It was in a ramshackle antique shop on Columbus Avenue; and Mike, prowling around, had dug it out more than a week before. The thing was in pretty poor shape, and it's likely nobody had bid for it before Mike blew in. All the same, the dealer asked too much—or Mike thought so, and he was playing for a cut. The evening I'm talking about—he was off duty—he got the man to take ten dollars, and walked off with his prize as happy as a Kilkenny cat with two tails.

Well—and this you know—twenty minutes later Patrolman O'Donovan walked right into a holdup in a small but expensive restaurant where a wedding reception was being held.

It was a well-planned job. There was a lot of money there, as well as personal jewelry. The doorman was held up, inside, the proprietor and his staff all locked in the kitchen; and the guests were being taken care of by three blackguards wearing masks. Smart work. And all going well.

Mike knew the proprietor, a Frenchman, and had planned to drop in for a chat and a glass, and to exhibit his new purchase. He got as far as the lobby, and found himself looking down the muzzle of a gun.

What happened after that rests entirely on accounts of witnesses. The evidence is more than a bit conflicting. The facts about the gunman at the door are clear enough, anyway. Mike flicked up the blade of the sword he was carrying in a sort of dazzling jerk and knocked the gun out of the man's hand. Then he ran him through!

And Michael O'Donovan never had a fencing lesson in his life!

Then he spilled himself, like a tornado, into the middle of the fun.

By using guests as cover, he contrived to get alongside one after another of the masks. They tell me he moved like a phantom. He disarmed Number One—and ran him through. Somebody picked up the gun and had a shot at Number Two, but got shot himself.

Mike picked a small man up as a shield, and from over his shoulder, ran Number Two through the throat. Number Three blazed away, and it was Number Three that got Mike—and got him a bad one. He snapped that lightning blade three inches from the hilt, and the ricochet landed in Mike's stomach.

Even then he didn't go scot-free. O'Donovan, his old sword snapped off short, planted Number Three a beauty with the bit that remained.

Number Three is the only one of the crooks that lived to tell the tale. If my opinion is worth anything, he won't live long. . . .

They rushed Mike to a hospital. When his old mother called me, I went over as fast as I could move. They didn't know me where he was, and tried to keep me out—but it's not easy to keep me out of any place I want to get into.

One glance and I said to myself, "He's had it, poor lad." You see, Elston, I admit I'm not infallible.

A very good-looking young nurse was holding his hand. O'Donovan's a fine figure of an Irish lad, and any girl with eyes in her head would feel that way about him. He was raving. And now—listen.

He was raving in French!

I'm here to swear he didn't know a word of French, unless it might be, "Oui, oui."

I checked the record a young fool in spectacles was making of his remarks. Psycho-analysis, or some such blasted tommyrot.

I WON'T go into details, for there's not a man among you would know what I'm talking about. But Mike was reciting the story of a fight he'd had—or thought he'd had—in some house in Paris! He shouted names. I knew two of them. They belong to French history. He used fencing terms that had become obsolete before *le roi*—I won't go over your heads—before Louis the Fourteenth sat on the throne of France.

And he hung on to the hand of the pretty nurse as if his life depended on it.

Then, suddenly, he opened his eyes. And before anybody could stop him (I don't think *she* tried) he had her in his arms!

Still in French, and a kind of French I never heard in my life before, he gasped out: "My heart! My soul! So this is death? And *you* are here to greet me!"

Those are the facts. He made a splendid recovery. But there's a sequel. Maybe two.

I am quite certain that none of you ever heard of Bussy d'Amboise: the Great Bussy. But they have his statue in Paris. They are realists, all right, over there, but incurably romantic. Bussy was said, in the distant days when he lived and loved, and played general hell, to be the first swordsman in France. And if the bloody shambles he left after his last fight against inhuman odds goes for anything, I'm ready to agree.

His sword was broken off three inches from the hilt that night—his last on earth. But he fought on with what was left.

The relic—almost sacred—its blade re-welded, had been preserved for generations in a French chateau. The Germans looted it.

How it came to be on sale for ten dollars in a shop on Columbus Avenue is none of my business. But Mike O'Donovan's sword is the authentic sword of Bussy. I've been to a lot of trouble to prove it.

Professor Beard, of Columbia, cleaned the silver hilt and examined very carefully a small mark engraved on it. That mark is the crest of Bussy d'Amboise!

Think that over for yourselves—if you have anything to think with.

Mike's engaged to the pretty nurse. She's Scotch.

Think that over, too.



They tell me he moved like a phantom.

JUDGE ON TRIAL

THE GIFTED AUTHOR OF "IMPERIAL RENEGADE," "THE QUIET LIGHT" AND OTHER WELL-KNOWN BOOKS HERE GIVES US A VIVID STORY OF THE ROMAN AMPHITHEATER AND OF A PERSONAGE INFAMOUS IN HISTORY.

by LOUIS DE WOHL

WHEN the driver saw the lamb in the middle of the road, he tried to swing to the right, but it was too late. There was a thud; the carriage swerved and a pine came up with terrifying suddenness.

He threw himself back, tugging at the reins as hard as he could.

The crash was not very violent, but something splintered. . . .

"You wretched fool!" said the old man in the carriage coldly. "I'll have you whipped for this as soon as we reach Naples. Help me out."

The driver obeyed. He felt the lean, fragile body under the billowing folds of the traveling cloak close to his own chest—like lifting a skeleton, it was. The threat did not move him much—the old curmudgeon was always threatening and then forgot all about it. He wasn't the man he used to be; but who was, at seventy-eight?

The old man looked about. "Hey, you!" he shrilled. "Come here!"

The peasant, bending over the formless mangled mass in the middle of the road, straightened himself and came up to the carriage. He was limping badly.

"Can't you watch over your confounded animals so that they don't get into my way?"

"I am sorry, sir," said the man. "It strayed and I'm not very quick. It's my leg." He spoke with a pronounced Iberian accent.

"Ex-soldier, eh?"

The peasant did not look up. "Yes sir."

The old man's eyes narrowed. His trained brain flashed the signal for suspicion. When talking to a personage of rank, an ex-soldier would not have missed the opportunity to add the campaigns in which he had fought—it was always worth a few silver pieces. There was probably something wrong with the man.

"Get that carcass off the road. One accident is enough."

"Yes sir."

"Thrax!"

"Yes, master."

"How long will it take you to mend the carriage?"

The slave scratched his head. Most of the silly brutes did, when they had to do a bit of thinking of their own.

"An hour and a half, master—perhaps two hours."

The old man stamped his foot. "Am I to stand here on the dusty road, waiting? Is there no place where I can sit down?"

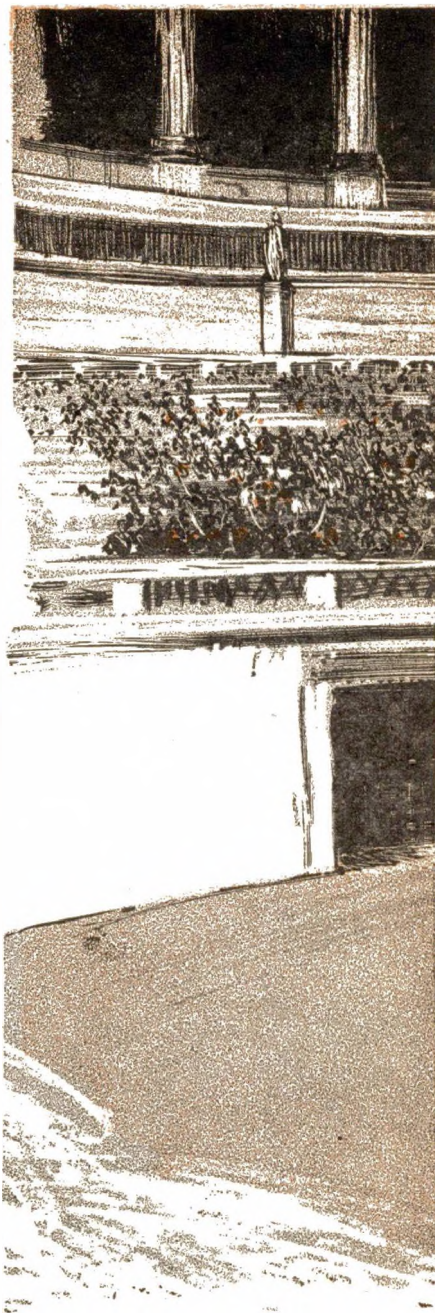
The peasant had dragged the lamb off the road and onto the grass. Now he said slowly: "There is an inn, sir—quite near."

Their eyes interlocked.

He did not like saying that, thought the trained brain. But why did he say it, then? By the gods, he is as suspicious of me as I am of him.

"It is not a place for the likes of you, sir," said the peasant deferentially. "But at least you could have a rest and a goblet of wine."

The old man snapped his fingers. "Lead me there. Come with me, Thrax. You'd better know where the



place is, so that you can fetch me there when you've finished work."

Thrax was a sturdy fellow—and he had a sword.

This was not a main road, of course—he had given orders to avoid the main roads. And one had to be careful about rural inns off the main road. Italy had become as bad as any far-away province, and no wonder.

The limping ex-soldier led the way. After a few minutes the old man began to lean heavily on Thrax' shoulder. A wave of impotent rage flushed his brain. A man of his age and



"My centurion got up—a little dizzy. He raised his sword to the Imperial box. And all was silent."

standing, to use third-class roads like a fugitive criminal—and now this undignified stumbling over tussocks and roots!

When they reached the inn, a tall, broad-shouldered man awaited them at the door. His right arm was paralyzed. A disabled veteran, no doubt, who had invested his war-bonus in a country inn, or better still, had married the innkeeper's daughter and the inn with her. If so, it must have been a long time ago—under Tiberius, probably. Neither Caligula nor Claudius nor Nero had paid war-

bonuses to veterans. Not that it had made any difference. They had all been murdered—Tiberius too, bonus or no bonus.

An unusual face, for an innkeeper. Good face. Clear eyes, strong nose, energetic chin; the hair thinning at the temples from the pressure of the helmet—always the sure indication of the veteran. Simple dress, but clean. Innkeeper? Laughable—that man had been an officer.

He was polite in a quiet, self-assured way. "You will probably prefer to sit outside, sir—the fresh air will do

you good. Marcia! Bring the big chair and some cushions."

THE chair appeared first, held by sinewy young brown arms. A touse of dark curls followed, and strong white teeth flashed a good-natured smile.

"There, old gentleman," said Marcia. "Just sit down. I'll prop you up."

It was good to sit and to relax. "Carriage broke down," muttered the ex-soldier. "Run over one of our lambs."

"Bad luck, Cuso," said the innkeeper placidly. "You better go and see if you can help with the repairs."

The ex-soldier nodded and limped away.

"Go back with him, Thrax," ordered the old man.

"Cuso is quite clever with such things," said the innkeeper. "And there is no reason to worry about his limp. He's accustomed to it—now."

The old man looked at him in blank surprise. There was scarcely anything in the world he worried less about than whether the man's limp hurt him or not. But the remark gave him an opening.

"A war wound?"

"N-no, not exactly. —Marcia, bring some wine."

The old man raised his bushy white brows and murmured something unintelligible. The kind of wine that people drank in rural inns was usually the sort inferior actors in Rome used to wash make-up off their faces.

"I am sorry about your accident," said the innkeeper. "Cuso is too slow to run after his sheep, and we are not accustomed to much traffic here—so far off the main road. That is, we haven't been, until yesterday."

"What do you mean?"

"No less than thirty-four carriages have passed here within the last twenty-four hours."

THERE was a pause.

"Can it be," said the innkeeper, "that there is something in the rumors we heard?"

"What rumor?"

"About the—the Emperor—being in trouble."

"There is a good deal of trouble in Rome," said the old man fiercely. "But there is no emperor. Nero is dead."

The innkeeper heaved a large sigh. His face was void of expression.

"Epaphroditus did it," the old man continued. "His freedman! Nero was too much of a coward to finish his own life."

"I am glad of that," said the innkeeper enigmatically. "But what is the reason, sir? Is it true that the Spanish legions have mutinied?"

"They are marching on Rome. Under Galba."

The innkeeper nodded. "That means turmoil in Rome, of course. And danger for the Augustians."

"I'm not an Augustian," snapped the old man. "Haven't had anything to do with the Palatine for years. I'm in retirement. Just as well. Hate to see the Empire going to the dogs."

"You are quite safe here, whatever you are or have been, sir," said the innkeeper quietly.

Marcia came with the wine. The pitcher was simple enough, and so



was the goblet. But the wine was good.

The old man drank, coughed, drank again. He put the goblet down very firmly. "Nothing to do with the Palatine," he repeated. "Nothing to do with Nero. But in times of political unrest, it is always advisable to avoid being in the middle of things. Seems I'm not the only one who thinks so."

"Certainly not. All these carriages—"

"I don't mean them. I mean you."

"Me, sir?"

"Yes, you. You're not an innkeeper. What's your name?"

"Terentius."

"Well, Terentius—what were you before you became an innkeeper?" The cracked old voice still had a commanding rasp to it. "And don't lie to me."

"Sir," said the innkeeper calmly, "I never lie."

"Then you are probably mad. Or you—never mind. You've been an officer, of course. In command of how many men?"

"Six thousand, sir," said the innkeeper.

The old man nodded slowly. "In command of a legion, eh? Which one?"



The cracked old voice still had a commanding rasp to it. "And don't lie to me."

Imperial beast was dead. And Rome had other things to worry about. The story could be told.

Terentius shook his head. *I want to tell it, he thought. Strange—I never wanted that before. . . . Bah—the old man is harmless. At his age, one is no longer ambitious—one has even passed the meddling stage. And the beast is dead. . . .*

"It's a good many years ago, sir—we were stationed at the old barracks in the Trans-Tiber—the entire legion. A sort of counterweight, it was, against the Prætorian Guards, just in case—you know how it was under Nero. He never really felt safe, and how could he? Perhaps that was the reason why he renewed the old army order about religious parade—you know, about the Emperor being a god, and officers and men having to sacrifice incense before his statue. Under Claudius the procedure had never been taken very seriously, though *he* wasn't half as mad as Caligula, who always insisted on it. On second thought, I suppose that that's just why—"

The ghost of a smile flickered on the face of the old man, and vanished as if a smile could find no rest on that bleak and furrowed field.

"Anyway, Nero renewed the order," went on Terentius. "And I had to read it out in the officers' mess, feeling no end of a fool. I know that some quite intelligent people were all for it—took it as a symbol for the link-up of humanity with the gods in the sacred person of the Emperor, and so on and so forth, and I said something of the kind myself that day, a little shamefacedly, so as to cover up what I really felt. Well, you know how soldiers are: some are devout, of course, and believe in all the deities of Rome's ten thousand temples—from the ancient Etruscan gods to all the newfangled cults, including that of Isis and Serapis and Mithra. Some just stick to Jupiter and Mars. And a great many don't believe in anything—except, perhaps when things are going really badly."

AGAIN that flicker of a smile peering in and vanishing again. But the old man remained silent.

"The majority," said Terentius grimly, "did not believe in anything much—except in the necessity of remaining on the right side of the fence, so as not to endanger their promotion or—their lives. It did not matter to them whether they burned incense to the statue of the Emperor or the statue of a winged donkey. Well—I read out the order and fixed the hour of the ceremony for the next day after the midday meal. A quarter of an hour later one of my centurions was announced to me by the orderly.

"The Twelfth, sir."

"That's better. What makes you play the innkeeper?"

"I like it here. It is peaceful. I could return to Rome now. I won't."

The innkeeper looked at the sky. It was clear and of a dazzling blue, but for a small white cloud in the north, where Rome was, and the corpse of an emperor. And Galba was marching on Rome. Perhaps things would be better under Galba.

"The Twelfth," mused the old man. "That means you must have fought in Numidia—and in Germany. I've done service in Germany myself

—long before your time, of course. Tiresome people. Always talking of fidelity and always breaking their treaties, every one of them. Good fighters—if the fight doesn't last too long. First attack quite irresistible—but then they slow up, and you can get 'em. That's how they were a hundred and fifty years ago, when Marius beat them, and that's how they are now." He took a sip of wine. "Sit down, Terentius—and tell me why a general becomes an innkeeper."

Why not—now? The very presence of the old man was proof that the

"It was one of my best men—had been with me in Numidia and in Germany: a wall-crown and three silver disks for bravery, he had. He said:

"I am very sorry, sir, but I cannot comply with the ceremony you ordered for tomorrow afternoon."

"Why not?"

"Religious impediment, sir."

"I laughed. But the fellow was deadly serious. He told me that he believed in one God and one God only, and that this God regarded it as the supreme crime to sacrifice to any other god.

"Listen," I said, "believe in your God, by all means—I don't grudge anybody his personal and private superstition or religion or whatever it may be. You're a good soldier—that's all I'm interested in. But a good soldier does not give a bad example. An order is an order."

"Sir," said my centurion, "I have always obeyed orders, and I always shall. But worship has nothing to do with orders. I serve the Emperor. I worship God."

"Am I a Greek sophist?" I flared up. "What's the good of splitting hairs? You know as well as I do that the Emperor is to be considered as a god."

"Said the centurion: 'Do you really believe that the Emperor is a god, sir?'"

"I was extremely annoyed now. I thumped the table and barked at him:

"It is not the question here of what I believe, but of what you have got to do. All I must ask you to do is to step forward, tomorrow afternoon, when your name is called out, and throw a few grains of incense into the tripod on the altar. Surely that isn't asking for very much, is it?"

"You want me to bear witness to something that isn't true, sir."

"I shrugged my shoulders. 'How do we know what is true and what isn't?' And I dismissed him."

"Exactly," said the old man eagerly. "How do we know! We don't know. We can't know. Only fools believe that they know the truth—only fools. Pour me some more wine."

TERENTIUS filled his goblet. "I dismissed the centurion," he repeated stonily. "But I couldn't dismiss the matter from my mind. It was really too stupid. If the fellow insisted on his insubordination, I would have to put him in jail and send his dossier to the city-prefect. He could be sentenced to exile, years in prison or even death."

"It was always death—with Nero," said the old man.

"Ah, yes, later on it was—but not just then. It depended upon Cæsar's mood—or so I thought on that day. I came home in a bad temper. Well,

soldiers' wives are accustomed to that—I suppose every good wife is. Metella knew at once that something was wrong. Usually, in such a case, she kept very quiet. This time she asked me point-blank what it was. And I told her. She listened very intently and then asked me what the centurion's name was. I told her that too, and she said hastily: 'You know, I never try to interfere with anything that does not concern our own house. But this time I beg of you—don't have anything to do with this. He is a just man—let him go free somehow.' . . . What is the matter, sir—are you ill?"

"Nonsense," wheezed the old man. He drank a few sips of wine. His hand was unsteady, and he spilled some of it over his cloak without seeming to notice it. "Women," he said, "—they are the same everywhere. Impressionable. Anything impresses them—any kind of fancy. Or a dream. My own wife— But never mind. Go on with your story."

"Well, I don't know—I found it strange that she should be so impressed by the matter. I was naturally annoyed, because I was going to lose a good officer—but why should she be so interested in that? And she was more than interested: she was greatly upset. When I said I could do nothing, she burst into tears. And she is not given to tears easily. Now of course I had to know what was behind this. I pleaded with her—I became severe; I even threatened. A minute later I wished I hadn't. She made a step back and said: 'Very well. If you punish this man, you will have to punish me too. For I believe in what he believes, and I too would not sacrifice to the Emperor even if it cost my life. I am a Christian—just as he is.'

"Be quiet," I said, looking about. Fortunately there was no slave within earshot. Then I sat down. Only now I had suddenly realized what it was all about. I had heard of the Christians, of course, as who hadn't? But I hadn't been very interested. And at that time not many people were. The big hunt for them started later, as you will remember—when Nero needed a scapegoat for the little matter of having half of Rome burnt—just because he needed the sight of a burning city to compose his latest poem about the destruction of Troy. They were a secret society; I knew that. And they were supposed to perform all sorts of ghastly rites—like eating the flesh and drinking the blood of a human victim—and to plot against the state. There was a strict edict against them. Public confession of belonging to the sect was punishable with death. So of course I was very frightened. It was most unlikely that Metella would ever participate in an official ceremony de-

manding sacrifice to the Emperor; but even so—one never knew. I remonstrated with her. How could a clean, decent woman like her believe in all that superstitious stuff and make common cause with slaves and criminals? She kissed me and said: 'Why not ask the question the other way round? How can Christians be what you think them to be, if Metella is a Christian?'"

"And of course she got me there. How indeed! And then she asked, just like my centurion: 'Do you really believe that Nero is a god?' 'I don't think anybody really believes that—except Nero,' I said. 'Then why must a man be disloyal because he refuses to worship a false god?'"

I SHOOK my head. 'Where did you learn to argue like that? And how did you become a Christian?'"

"The answer to both questions is the same.' And she told me that she had met a very marvelous old man who was one of the great teachers of her religion in Rome—a man called Paulus of Tarsus.

"Well, that Paulus converted her, and incidentally also my centurion—she had met him at their assemblies. The cheek of these people, I thought. There's an edict out against them; they're arrested when they are known. Some of 'em have been executed—if they were citizens—or made to die at the games in the Circus Maximus if they were of foreign extraction. And there this man Paulus goes on converting them right in the midst of it all. I cross-examined Metella, but from all I could find out about her belief, there seemed to be no substance in the charge made against it. Much ado about nothing, I thought."

"Quite," nodded the old man. "Quite. Much ado about nothing."

"So in the end I promised her I would do all in my power to save the centurion. I didn't relish the idea of losing a good man, and I couldn't help liking him for standing up for his convictions. Next morning I sent for the man.

"The legion needs mules,' I said: 'You will proceed to Terracina and see what you can find there on the market. If they have not what we need, go elsewhere—use your own initiative. I want twelve good mules, as stiff-necked and obstinate as you are yourself. Now go instantly, and don't come back before next week. You know the prices we pay, and the usual conditions of payment at delivery. Off with you.'

"He saluted and went. I felt relieved. By the time he came back, the whole legion would have passed through the confounded ceremony and have forgotten all about it. I could always add his name to the list of the others. No one would know.

"I went back to work—desk-work, as usual. But I had only just signed a dozen papers or so when the door opened and Tigellinus came in. There had never been much love lost between him and me—he was a climber all his life, and he didn't mind how he got where he wanted to get, as long as he got there. As Prefect of the Prætorian Guards, he looked down on a simple field commander like me, although he was not directly my superior. I couldn't have thought of anybody whose entrance would have given me less pleasure—and yet, he brought with him the one man I wanted to see even less than him—my centurion.

"I just dropped in to pay you my respects," said Tigellinus with the kind of cheerfulness that a cat dis-

*Illustrated by
C. L. Woodward*



"Very well. If you punish this man, you will have to punish me too. For I believe in what he believes. I am a Christian just as he is."

plays when playing with a mouse. 'And I found this officer leaving. It's a strange thing—you wouldn't believe how many officers are being sent on errands today—wouldn't be surprised if the garrison at Terracina is sending some to Rome to buy mules here. And yet today is the day for the solemn ceremony of sacrifice to the genius of our sacred Emperor. I asked him whether he had already sacrificed, and he said he hadn't. What sincerity! Very good sign for the spirit of your legion. But the orders are that *all* the troops are to sacrifice today—it must have escaped the attention of your quartermaster. I am quite sure it couldn't have escaped yours, and I am even more certain that you could not wish to act against the explicit orders of our august sovereign. So I brought the man back. You would have done the same for me, I'm sure.'

"I could have strangled him. Instead I bowed to him and said: 'You may go to your quarters, centurion.'

"Just a moment," said Tigellinus. 'Centurion—you are going to sacrifice this afternoon, aren't you?'

"No sir," said the unfortunate man quite impassively.

"No?" Tigellinus seemed utterly surprised. 'Why not?' And the inevitable answers followed. A minute later came the question of life and death:

"Are you a Christian?'

"Yes sir.'

"Tigellinus whistled softly and turned to me. 'My good Terentius—you have even more reason to be grateful to me than I thought.'

"I murmured that it was all very regrettable, and that the man hadn't told me that he was a Christian—which was true, as you will remember. It was Metella who had told me.

"Tigellinus gave me a quizzical look. 'You look upset—but not horrified, my Terentius,' he said. 'You are not a Christian yourself by any chance, are you?'

"Certainly not," I snapped.

"You never know, these days," said Tigellinus. 'There are some of them in the most surprising quarters. Is this man a Roman citizen?'

"I did not dare to lie. Tigellinus could look up the register—in fact, he was sure to do so. 'No. He's an Iberian.'

"He'll give a good fight in the arena," said Tigellinus.

"I decided to make another effort. 'Look here, Prefect—the man's been an exceptionally good soldier. Wall-crown and three silver disks. Surely that accounts for something. He's got a superstition of his own—all right. I'll have him scourged for it, and that's the end of the story.'



"The leopard attacked at once. My centurion covered himself with his shield as closely as he could, and struck at the leopard's head."

"Impossible," said Tigellinus coldly. "Don't you know your duty? This man belongs into the arena."

"I command the Twelfth Legion, Tigellinus."

"He shrugged his shoulders. 'As you wish. I shall have to tell the Emperor that he is wrong in regarding you as his friend, that is all. He will be very disappointed—we are badly in need of a few good men for the games. However, as you say—you command the Twelfth Legion—at present. Well, I must be going. Vale, Terentius.' He left with a smile."

The old man had closed his eyes. Almost inaudibly he asked:

"What did you do?"

Terentius sighed.

"I knew only too well how Tigellinus was going to present the case to the Cæsar. The commander of the Twelfth Legion trying to shield a man convicted of being a Christian—and therefore of subversive activities and of blasphemy against the sacred person of the Emperor."

The old man nodded. His eyes were still closed, the skin over the sunken-in cheeks was twitching.

"Yes. Yes. And there's nothing so dangerous than to be accused of not being a friend of the Emperor. I know. So?"

"So I gave in," said Terentius tonelessly. "I put the man under arrest and sent his dossier to the city prefect. The orthodox thing. The magistrate promptly asked for his extradition and sent four soldiers to fetch him. Within twenty-four hours they had obtained his conviction, and he was put into the Mamertine prison—and you know there was no escape from there. It led straight to the arena and death."

ONCE more the old man nodded. But now he opened his eyes, sighing contentedly as if he had heard some particularly good news. He smiled, a toothless, strangely confidential smile.

"What else could you do?" he said. "You were a sensible man, Terentius

—a very sensible man. No one can possibly blame you."

"No one did," said Terentius, staring straight before him. "But I felt—I felt—like a condemned man myself."

The old man gave him an angry look. "Tender-hearted, for a soldier, aren't you, Terentius? Why, if the man belonged to a seditious movement—"

"There was nothing seditious about it. I knew there wasn't. I knew the man was innocent. I played with the idea of going to see the Emperor. But I knew I was no match for Tigellinus, even if I should find the Emperor in a gracious mood. I told Metella, when I came home, and she cried. And then she said: 'God will forgive your weakness.'"

THE old man had sunk deeper into his chair. He murmured something unintelligible. Perhaps the accident had affected him more than he had shown so far. But as Terentius was bending over him, he looked up and said impatiently: "Go on—there is more to come."

"I tried to reason with Metella. Tried to make her see that I could not have acted differently, without endangering my entire career—perhaps my life—perhaps her life. She did not contradict me. But I knew that nothing I said had convinced her. And however reasonable my attitude seemed to be, however often and cleverly I told myself that I had done the only thing I could do in the circumstances—I knew that she was right, and that in some way I did not clearly understand, my centurion also was right, and that I was weak and a coward. Three days later I received the order from the palace to attend the games. I was in no mood for it, as you may imagine, but I had to obey."

"It was a beautiful day, and they had started early in the morning, though the Emperor never came before the afternoon."

"My seat was no more than about fifteen yards away from the Imperial box. Tigellinus was with Nero, and so were six or seven Augustians—Vatinus, Petronius, that horrible little Sporus, and of course Poppæa Sabina—I don't remember the others. But I knew that one could easily buy every one of them if one had enough money—that none of them would stand up for a principle, for anything he believed in, if enough pressure was applied. I had known that before, of course, but never had it seemed such a sordid fact."

"A good many of my officers were present: they had all duly worshiped before the statue of the fleshy man with the reddish hair—there in the box. And so had I—so had I."

"I took a good look at my god. I saw him shake with laughter at some obscenity whispered into his ear by Petronius—he always had a stock of them. I saw him caress the boy Sporus, and Poppæa looked on, smiling.

"And I found out that my god made me feel sick.

"Meanwhile the gladiators fought—one or two of the fights were quite good, too, and then they pumped water into the arena and had a *naumachia*, a sea-battle between a Roman bireme and a pirate-ship: both manned with condemned criminals. I looked very intently, but could not see my centurion among them. It took them over two hours to get the water out again.

"Then they let a lion fight a tiger, and another lion against a pack of wolves.

"And then came my old centurion—alone. They had given him sword and shield—no helmet, no armor. Not a very good equipment—against a leopard. And it was a fine animal, too. I don't know what my officers felt behind me. I was in a towering rage. Here was a man who had served Rome faithfully all his life—and they would let him die in a mock-fight, for the amusement of all the riffraff of the city, high and low.

"They never give food to the animals before a fight, as you know—makes them fight better. The leopard attacked at once. My centurion did not thrust his shield forward—it would have been a fatal thing to do, as he'd have lost it at once; he covered himself with it as closely as he could, and struck at the leopard's head. The animal clawed his shoulder just above the rim of the shield, fell back, jumped up again and renewed the attack.

"This time it threw the man and fell right on top of him. I thought it was all over then. But my centurion was still covered by his shield, and suddenly the leopard's head thrust upward and back—with the sword right through its throat and out again by the neck. The beast rolled over and was dead.

"And thirty thousand people howled with delight, and I was one of them. Somehow I had never thought of that possibility—that he might fight himself free; yet, you know it has happened many a time.

"HE got up—a little dizzy. His shoulder was bleeding, and so was his leg—very much so. And he raised his sword to the Imperial box. And all was silent.

"I saw Tigellinus and the Emperor whisper with each other.

"Then Tigellinus shouted: 'Another leopard!'"

"I could not believe my ears. I felt like choking. What little of my brain was still functioning thought: *They won't stand for this—they can't stand for this. It's too mean—too beastly.* There were some protests, too—but not too many. And already they opened the gate to the *vivarium*, and another leopard came out.

"My poor centurion, pale, bleeding and still winded from the attack of the first animal, grasped his shield and sword and faced the enemy. He even made a few steps toward him. He could scarcely walk. He did not have a chance. It was clear for all to see that he did not have a chance.

"I got up. I shouted to the Imperial box:

"Stop that fight, Domine!"

"Nero smiled. And Tigellinus, grinning, shouted back:

"Stop it yourself—if you can."

"That was too much. I made three steps to the balustrade, swung over it and jumped."

"Mad," said the old man, breathing heavily. "Mad. Mad!"

"CERTAINLY. But shall I tell you? For the first time in three days I felt fine. I felt so good I could have killed a tiger with my bare hands. Well—that's what it amounted to, practically. I didn't even have a shield—only my service sword, and it wasn't the field-sword, you understand, not specially sharpened. I wanted to get the centurion's shield, but the leopard decided to attack me first. I was a very strong man then—the beast got me down, but I managed to finish it, ripping it open from underneath it. It clawed me badly, and the strange thing was that in the end my centurion came to my aid—he had to drag me out. It's astonishing, you know, what a dead leopard weighs—you wouldn't believe it when you see them jumping about so quickly and gracefully.

"Well, there we were, we two, lifting our hands to the Imperial box, and this time not even Tigellinus would ask for another leopard. The people shouted too much. So they had to let us go.

"We were both in a pretty bad shape—my Greek physician thought neither of us would pull through. I don't think Metella slept even a single hour in the first few days."

He was silent a moment, then went on:

"But as soon as the Greek had to admit that we had cheated death after all, we left Rome. We did not wait for the inevitable message to kindly open our veins after making our will in favor of the Emperor.

"We disappeared—Metella, my centurion and I. This place belonged to a freedman of my father. He took us in, and we helped him. When he

died, two years ago, we went on living here.

"It's a very simple life, but it's healthy and clean. We like it."

"The ex-soldier with the limp," said the old man. "Cuso, I think you called him—"

"That's my centurion, yes. And here is Metella."

A tall, slim woman in a simple blue dress stood in the door.

The old man rose and bowed his head a little. Then he began to laugh. It was a dry, hollow, mirthless laughter, and it shook his lean, cadaverous body like a racking cough.

Metella gave her husband a bewildered look.

AT long last the old man could stop himself. "No," he said, "I am not mad, Domina—that's just it, don't you see? You and your husband are mad. And I am sane. Perhaps one must be mad to be happy. You see—I did not jump, Domina Metella—I did not jump into the arena. I thought the box was safer. That's sane, isn't it?"

That was when they heard the carriage approaching.

Thrax was driving it up to the inn, with Cuso sitting beside him.

The old man saw it. Suddenly he turned to Terentius:

"And you—have you learned to share your wife's beliefs?"

"Yes," said Terentius quietly. He was frowning, though.

The old man nodded.

"Yes, yes—it's infectious. Well—thank you, Terentius, for your hospitality. I will not insult you by offering you payment. Thus I serve both your pride and my pocket. You are mad people—but you are lucky, it seems to me. You can sleep. And yet—"

He smiled. Terentius and Metella would never forget that smile—there was mockery in it, and suffering, disgust and loneliness and fear—and many other things, perhaps, that they could not decipher.

"And yet," said the old man, "you would not be what you are—and where you are—without me. Farewell."

The carriage had stopped; Thrax and Cuso jumped out.

"Help him, Cuso," said Terentius.

The former centurion obeyed, and Terentius took Thrax by the arm. "Tell me," he whispered, "who is your master?"

Thrax turned his head back to the carriage. Cuso was just helping the old man into his seat.

"He's nothing now," he said with an impertinent grin. "But there was a time when he was one of the high and mighty—governor of Judæa he was, believe it or not. His name is Pontius Pilatus."

*Tales of
Whippoorwill
Valley—III*

by EWART
A. AUTRY



Old Traveler

WILD geese are strangers to Whippoorwill Valley. They drift high above it when they go southward in autumn, and then again when they go northward in spring. They never stop unless for a quick snack on the creeks, or for a little rest from their long journey. Mostly, though, they just pass high above it, as they do a thousand other valleys along their route. In autumn there is distress in their cries, as if they are disturbed by the cold winds which drive them down to a land of eternal spring. In spring they chuckle happily on the northward flight, as if dreaming of love in secluded spots beyond the distant horizon.

I have always thrilled to the passing of wild geese. When I was a child, I used to watch each flock from the time it came in sight until it disappeared beyond the rim of the distant hills. I would lie in bed at night and hear them crying overhead as the first winds of autumn sent leaves rustling against the window panes. One night I got out of bed and watched a flock pass between me and the full moon. The moonlight tipped their feathers with silver, and they were like fairies floating against the sky. Another time I heard a flock crying at night during a storm. They were scattered and distressed. I went to a window and could see them silhouetted by flashes of lightning. All during the storm they circled and cried above the house. By and by the storm passed, and they got together again. In a few moments their cries were far away as they pointed their flight toward the journey's end.

They were fascinating to me, because they represented strange lands and strange adventures. I wondered what tales they would tell me if they could only come down and talk. I wanted to ask them about the place whence they had come, and whither they were going. I wanted to know about the mountains they had flown above, and the rivers they had crossed. I was just a little boy who knew only the trails of Whippoorwill Valley. They were bold adventurers who knew the broad trails of the sky far beyond my limited horizons. I even dreamed of being one of the flock, and of viewing the distant scenes from high wings; but in those dreams I always came winging back to the familiar scenes of Whippoorwill Valley.

I still lift my face toward the sky when I hear the cry of wild geese. I have climbed some of their mountains and crossed some of their rivers; but I still feel a tingle of excitement when I see their wedges coming over the horizon. I think it is because I remember so well the day that Old Traveler came down to us from a sunset sky. I was only about nine when he came, but I remember that day as well as if it were yesterday. . . .

It was one of those days when the Valley seems in a flurry of preparation as it gets ready for the coming of the frosts. Scarlet leaves hurried to the ground all day long as if in a rush to get huddled by logs and stumps before cold fingers crept into the valley. Blue jays chattered excitedly in treetops, and woodpeckers crammed acorns into sheltered knotholes for winter fare. Mockingbirds sang hurriedly, as if anxious to finish before

the cold winds came down and took away their songs. Late persimmons were dropping with a dull thud, and there was still the sweet scent of fallen muscadines in the dry sand ditches which run down from the hills. The hills themselves were cloaked in a blue haze, but even that could not hide their gay parade of autumn colors.

It was a day for wild geese. All day long we had listened for their cries, but not a single wedge had crossed the valley when the sun touched the treetops on the western hills. It was about then that I went to the pasture after the cows. I was bringing them home, and had just started down Huckleberry Hill toward the valley when I heard the familiar cry of wild geese. It was faint at first, but gradually becoming louder. I strained my eyes toward the north, and saw them as they came in sight over Indian Hill. There must have been fifty of them, and they were flying high and fast, as if the cold winds were pushing at their tails.

They were much nearer to me before I noticed the lone gander flying slightly behind and fifty yards lower than the main flock. His head was pointed upward, and he was beating his wings furiously in an effort to gain altitude. I could see that he was fighting a losing battle, because he was sinking lower all the time. He too realized it, and was crying piteously with every beat of his wings. The main flock was about even with me when the old gander gave up the struggle. He kept his head up, but came down to earth, just beating his wings enough to keep from falling too fast. He was silent as he came down,



but started crying again as soon as he touched the ground.

The main flock swung around in a wide circle and came back over the place where he had landed. They too were crying, as if distressed over the fall of their late companion. They circled several times, each time getting a little lower, until they were finally just above the treetops. I thought they were going to come down and land beside the fallen gander, but they didn't. They made a final swing to the north. By that time they were below the level of the trees. As they turned back toward the old gander, their cries ceased entirely, and so did his. They flew slowly as they approached him. Just before they were above him, they started talking in low voices, and I could hear the low answers from the ground.

I wish I knew what they were saying in those moments. Perhaps they were asking him if he wanted them to come down, and he was telling them it would be of no use, since he could not rise and fly with them. Perhaps he was trying to be brave by telling them to go ahead to the distant sandbars and sunny lakes—telling them he would be all right alone in Whippoorwill Valley, until one day he would fly again and seek them in familiar haunts. I don't know what they were saying. Perhaps it was just good-by as they swept over his head, because from there they sped upward and pointed their flight southward. I saw them until they were mere specks against a cloud painted golden by the sunset.

When they were out of hearing, the fallen gander started crying again. Perhaps he had been too proud to cry while they could still hear him, or it may have been that he suddenly realized they were gone forever, and he was alone in a strange valley. He was not more than two hundred yards from me, so I started toward him. Be-

fore I got there, I saw Dad coming, and waited for him. He too had seen the gander drop from the sky.

We found him standing in the center of a little open plot near the creek. He did not run as we approached, but just stood there, looking sad and dejected, as if nothing mattered any more. We could tell there was something wrong with one wing, because it drooped until it touched the ground. Dad walked up and caught him. He struggled a bit, but Dad stroked his neck, and said: "Be quiet, Old Traveler. We don't aim to hurt you."

From that day on we called him Old Traveler.

We examined the injured wing, and found that it had been penetrated by two Number 4 shot. No bones were broken, but it was swollen and inflamed. That was what had forced him down. We wondered how far he

had come since hearing the boom of that gun, and feeling the stinging impact of those shot. They seemed to have been in there for several days, and he had probably flown hundreds of miles. He must have suffered great pain as he tried to keep up with the flock, with that wing becoming worse with each weary mile. It was little wonder that he had been forced to give it up at last, and drop into the solitude of our valley.

It was getting late, so we hurried to the house with him. Mother suggested that we put him in a wire chicken coop out by the henhouse. We fixed his wing first, then put him in the coop. He moved over into a corner and sat down in absolute silence. He had not uttered a sound since we had picked him up in the field. There was about him an air of complete hopelessness, as if men, chicken coops and even death didn't matter at all. Falling from the sky had not injured his body, but it seemed to have broken his spirit. His flight had been set for some enchanted spot beside a far-away lake. He had failed to reach his goal, and it seemed that he was ready to die, without even unfolding his wings to try again.

All the next day he sat in his corner, and seemed to pay no attention at all to anything around him. He was staring off into space as if his mind were far away. We tried to feed him, but he wouldn't eat. We tempted him with everything from corn to plum



"Lem Hawkins, you're just a quitter. If you want to mope and die, go right ahead, but don't expect me to be a lonesome old widow!"

pudding. He wouldn't even look at any of it. We left it in the coop, thinking perhaps he would eat when we were out of sight, but when we returned, it was still untouched.

Our ducks came by and tried to make friends with him. They walked around the coop, bobbing their heads and talking. When there was no response from the gander, they walked away in disgust. The dog went by and sniffed at him through the wire. The gander showed neither alarm nor anger. A little bantam rooster looked at him, then hopped on top of the coop and crowed. He still sat like a wooden decoy, and kept his head toward the south, and his wounded wing drooped toward the ground.

He still wasn't eating the second day when Grandpa Hawkins came along. I took Grandpa out in the back yard and showed him the gander. He was sitting in the same corner and looking in the same direction. The pan of food was in front of him just as we had left it the day before. I asked Grandpa if he thought he would just sit there until he starved to death.

"Maybe so, and maybe not," replied Grandpa, walking slowly around the coop. "If he starts eating, he'll live and make you a good pet. If he doesn't start eating, he'll die and make good buzzard bait. I'll tell you what's the matter with him, though, son: he's

just disappointed. He was all set on going South, and it broke his heart when he couldn't keep up with the flock, and had to come down. He feels as if he's all finished. I can sympathize with him. Know just how he feels—I felt that way one time myself."

For a moment, Grandpa reminded me of the old gander. He stood looking off into space as if thinking of things far away; then slowly he pulled out his old pipe and loaded it with home-grown tobacco. Carefully he tamped it down, then struck a match on the henhouse, but let it almost burn down to his fingers before touching it to the pipe. After a few slow puffs he sat down in the henhouse door, and fixed his eyes on the old gander.

"Yes sir, son, I felt just the way he does one time. I was in a worse shape than he is. He just has a broken wing, and that'll get well. I had a bad case of old age, and a fellow just doesn't get well of that. It was when I first realized my age that I felt the way the old gander does today. I had been used to foxhunting with younger fellows, and had always made the rounds about as well as they did. One night, though, we had a hard race, and did a lot of fast traveling to get sight of the fox. Suddenly, I was plumb tuckered out. I had to sit



down on a stump while the others kept going. It was while I was sitting there that I realized I was getting old, and would never be able to keep up with the others again. Well sir, I got right up off of that stump and went home. Didn't even wait for my hounds. I went right in and hung up my hunting horn, and told your grandma I was through.

"Well, son, I moped around the house for a month. The fellows came by several times for me to go hunting, but I wouldn't go, and I wouldn't tell them the reason. My hounds would come whining around the windows. They couldn't understand why my old horn was silent. I moped so long that I got to feeling as if I was just about ready for the undertaker. I reckon I would have just moped right on into the grave if it hadn't been for your grandma."

Grandpa paused, and smoked a few moments in silence. I didn't say anything, because I knew I couldn't hurry him along with his story. As I watched him, I saw little crinkles creeping up around his eyes, and knew he was thinking about something funny. Finally he took his pipe out and blew a puff of smoke in the direction of the gander.

"Yes sir," he continued, "your grandma broke up my moping. She was sweeping the floor one morning, and I was sitting right in the way. She stopped, lowered her glasses to the end of her nose, and looked right straight at me. 'Lem Hawkins,' she said, 'you're an old idiot.' That made me pay attention, because she hadn't said that to me since thirty years before, when I had pinned a diaper on one of the babies with a six-penny nail. 'That's what you are,' she went on, 'sitting around here moping because you're getting old. You think you are through; and when a fellow thinks he's through, he usually is. I don't feel sorry for you, because there's



Old Traveler even attacked a small hawk which invaded the chicken-yard.

nothing wrong with you except that you're just a weak-kneed old quitter. If you had any gumption, you'd be out tooting your horn just as loud as you ever did. When a man gives up, he's of no more use than a polecat in a sun parlor. I have no patience with it. If you want to mope and die, just go right ahead, but don't expect me to be a lonesome old widow! I'll find somebody with enough grit and gumption to keep going until Gabriel toots his horn."

Grandpa slapped his legs hard and laughed long and loud at the memory of Grandma's tirade.

"What did you do then, Grandpa?" I asked.

"Well sir, your grandma made me so mad that I got up from there, took my horn off of the hook, and went hunting. That was close to sundown, and I didn't come in until daylight. That was twenty years ago, and I've been going hunting ever since. If I can't keep up with the other fellows, I just go my own gait."

Grandpa arose and knocked out his pipe. "Now, this old gander doesn't have a woman like Grandma to insult him, but he may come out of it anyhow. Be good to him, son. He needs good treatment. He's feeling down and out."

IN a few days the inflammation was gone from Old Traveler's wing, and it was about as good as ever, but he still seemed dejected and downcast. The only difference in him was that he ate the food we carried to him, and no longer sat in one corner all day. We finally let him out of the coop, thinking perhaps that would improve his spirits. He did nothing but walk around in the yard, talking to himself, and ignoring the other fowls as if they did not exist. Flocks of wild geese were still passing over, but they seemed to hold little attraction for him. He would sometimes cock his head to one side and watch them, and even call to them, but not once did he stretch his wings as if to rise and join them.

Grandpa Hawkins took a great interest in the old gander. He would come over every two or three days and spend a lot of time just watching Old Traveler. One day I overheard him talking to him.

"You'll never get anywhere just standing around in this yard," he was saying. "You were born to fly, old boy, and you'll never get anywhere just standing around in this yard. You'll never be happy until you fly again. No use in being a quitter. Your wing is just as good as it ever was, and the sky is just as free. You'd love it up there. Those flocks going over probably think you're afraid to fly. They're probably laughing at

you, or feeling sorry for you. Don't let them do it. Show them you're not finished."

Grandpa saw me just then and quit talking to the gander. "He's a stubborn old fool," he said to me. "Probably never have the grit to fly again. He'll just sit around here in the yard, and let his wings get weak and his feathers dirty. Just as well go ahead and have roast goose out of him."

But before winter was over, I was sure I didn't want Old Traveler ever to fly again. He learned to follow me to the barn, and to eat corn from my hand. On long winter days I played with him in the hallway of the barn, teaching him to strut around after me like a soldier on parade, and to stand at attention with a little hat tied on the side of his head. When I told Grandpa Hawkins of the things I had taught him, he just snorted and blew a puff of smoke in the gander's face.

"You're just making a sissified dude out of him," he said, "and it looks like he's beginning to like it. He's just as much out of place down here in the barn as I'd be riding a broomstick through the sky. He ought to be up flying—but like a lot of folks, he's going to settle down and be satisfied without even trying to do what he ought to do."

It was almost time for the wild geese to start flying North when I saw Grandpa coming across the field one day with something under his arm. It proved to be a wild goose.

"Got her from Jim Strickland," he explained triumphantly. "He winged her on a hunting trip down South. Wing's well now, and she's as good as ever. Bought her from Jim and brought her over to put with your gander. Thought she might talk a little sense into his dumb head, and put a little grit into his gizzard."

Illustrated by CHARLES CHICKERING



"Yes sir, son, I felt just the way he does. I had a bad case of old age."

Well, the presence of the lady in the yard did bring about a change in Old Traveler. He started walking with a swagger, and no longer bothered to follow me to the barn. He changed from a humble inhabitant of the yard into a bold adventurer who sought trouble with the old red rooster and a whole battalion of drakes. He even attacked a small hawk which invaded the chicken yard, and sent it away in a flurry of feathers. When the hawk had gone, the old gander hopped to the top of the chicken coop, and sent his strident call echoing up and down the valley. It was the triumphant cry of a conqueror, and at the same time a bold challenge to all would-be enemies. His new mate stood demurely by and chuckled, as if greatly pleased with the antics of her hero.

I told Grandpa Hawkins about the way the gander was acting. He threw back his head and laughed. "I thought perhaps a lady could put a little strut into him," he said. "Made me feel plumb sad to see him sitting around like he didn't have a friend in the world. He may act a little silly, but son, a lot of men do that when they think a woman's watching them."

THERE WAS a morning when spring came rushing over the hills as if in a hurry to brush the dead leaves off of the violets and sweet williams. Brilliant cardinals were broadcasting love-songs from high limbs, and flocks of bluebirds were wrestling over worms around the garden gate. I was coming from the barn that morning when I heard the old goose in the yard start calling excitedly. Just then I also heard the chuckling of a flock. I ran to the yard where I could see Old Traveler and his mate. When I got there, I could see the flock coming from the South. They were flying so high that they seemed no more than tiny specks against the blue of the spring sky. Old Traveler was showing no more interest than to cock his head to one side and look upward. His mate was dancing on tiptoe with her wings outspread, and wild cries of joy streaming from her throat. The flock passed on over without noticing the two geese in the yard.

The flock had been gone only a short while when Grandpa Hawkins came. I told him about the passing flock, and how the old goose had acted.

"I saw them pass over," he said. "That's why I came. There'll be some more along, and I wanted to see how those two acted."

It wasn't thirty minutes until another flock came into hearing. The old goose heard them before we did, and started calling as she stood on tiptoe and beat her wings. The gander also started calling, but did not

spread his wings. When the flock was directly overhead, his mate half ran and half flew across the yard. When she stopped, she turned and looked back at Old Traveler. He was watching her with an expression of mixed surprise and puzzlement. She walked back to him and started talking rapidly. For five minutes she poured forth a rattle of goose language right in his face.

"Reminds me of your grandma," grinned Grandpa Hawkins. "She's giving him a lecture, and he can't even get in a word edgewise. I'll bet she's calling him dumb and lazy and no account. If she had a finger, she'd be shaking it in his face. Yes, sir, she's a dead ringer for your grandma."

IN a few minutes we heard another flock coming. Before we saw them, we could tell by their chuckling that they were much lower than the others had been. There was no warning from the geese in the yard, although we were sure they had heard them. They were standing close together with their heads lifted. Before the other flock was even in sight, Old Traveler gave a sudden cry and started running across the yard with his mate close behind him. Before they got to the fence, they took to the air and started circling above the house, getting a little higher at each circle, and crying rapidly. The flock came in sight, flying just above the treetops. When they saw our geese, they started circling and giving answering cries. I kept my eyes on Old Traveler and his mate as they went upward to join the others.

"Tell them good-by, son," Grandpa said. "They're going home where they belong."

We watched them as they took their places in the flock, and sped away toward the north. Perhaps it was my imagination, but it seemed that Old Traveler dipped his wings in a parting salute as he passed over the place where he had fallen from the sky. There was a lump in my throat as they passed over the trees on Indian Hill.

Grandpa Hawkins placed a hand on my shoulder.

"Yes sir. They're going home, son," he said softly, "—home where they can float on blue lakes, and preen their feathers on sunny shores. They were not born to die in anybody's chicken yard. They were born to battle with the winds, to look down on mountains, and to cleave the sky until they fold their wings forever."

I looked at the chicken coop where Old Traveler had grieved in a corner with a broken wing, and in my heart I was glad that he could rise and soar again above the hills that rim our valley.

THE END

Under

AN AMERICAN PHYSICIAN IN CHINA STICKS BY HIS PATIENT WHILE THE RED TIDE SWEEPS ON OVER HIM.

THEY were in the tiny room that had been the mission dispensary. They were three: Dr. John Keyes, Mayor Lien Chao, and the peasant named Wang, who lay on the string bed, trying to breathe. A fighter plane, at the moment, was strafing the whole town.

"Here comes again," said Lien Chao, staring at the cracked white ceiling, as though he could see through it.

"Doesn't that guy know where his enemy is?" Keyes asked. "After all, this is still supposed to be Nationalist territory."

Lien Chao sighed heavily. "Old American proverb," he said. "War is hell. Also one big snafu. Problem is to keep head. Fellow who keeps head and outsmarts both sides wins war, hey?"

The fighter's husky whine, still distant, sounded again. It rose in pitch and volume, and it seemed this time the plane was headed directly for the mission.

Keyes turned to the patient again. Respiration shallow and rapid, each breath a saber-cut. Air-hunger, cold sweat. Yet no worse, really—he'd been hanging on like this for some hours. Hemothorax, Keyes would have explained to another doctor, resulting from trauma and characterized by intrapleural bleeding. What it meant was: Wang, working in a rice paddy, had been strafed—accidentally, of course. Bullet through his lung. Any minute now, either or both pneumonia or progressive secondary anemia might develop. That was why Keyes hadn't left in a jeep with the others, the two missionaries and the nurse.

Keyes adjusted his bottle and needle for another 1500 c.c. of five-per-cent glucose. That, and keep the patient warm—not much more he could do.

VRRR - OMMMMMM! Pok - pok-pok-pok-pok!

The plane passed overhead, out of somewhere, stitching with its guns. Keyes winced. He saw that Lien Chao, with not the slightest change of expression in his yellow plum of a face, was still following the sound with

the Dragon

by WALT
SHELDON

his eyes. Lien seldom changed expression, unless it was to smile his fine, underhanded political smile. Lien was mayor here at Huan-So-Kai, but only because a shift of political wind had taken him out of provincial circles: he was merely biding his time here in the town of his birth. Perhaps he'd even been quietly waiting for an upheaval like this, so he could grab an opportunity or two. As things had developed, Huan-So-Kai was now directly in the path of Nationalist General Ming's bungling retreat; a few miles to the north, Red Colonel Tun was pressing hard. That was why everybody in the mission had been ordered out. They'd all left early in the morning for Anling, eight miles down the river, where there was an air strip, and where CNAC planes were evacuating more or less important people.

"Johnny, you simply can't stay just because you've got a patient, one patient," Andrews, the head of the mission, had said to Keyes. "You'll do more good somewhere else, don't you see? And if you stay, you might not make it."

JOHNNY KEYES had grinned and stammered and tried to explain, but there hadn't been time. What made it even tougher to explain was the fact that Keyes had never been very strong on the religious and moral angle, and Andrews had even chided him gently about that a few times. Anyway, Keyes had a patient, and he was sticking.

The sound of the plane faded off, and Lien Chao spat and said: "*Ch'o wang p'tong p'!*"

"What's that mean?" asked Keyes. The phrase wasn't in his smattering.

"Stinking son of a lowly turtle's egg," Lien explained. Lien wore a brocaded Chinese garment on his tremendous belly and under his English tweed jacket—it rather symbolized his St. John's, Shanghai, education, and his purely Oriental outlook. "Turtle is lowest animal in Chinese mythology. Turtle's eggs even lower than turtle. Anyone related to turtle's egg is pretty low fellow, hey?"



"Guess so," said Keyes. He took the peasant's arm—a thick, smooth, hairless, muscular arm—from under the blanket, and daubed with alcohol cotton where the needle would go. He supposed this would be his last patient in China; they were shutting up everything these days. He had only vague plans—probably he'd go to his brother-in-law's clinic in San Francisco for a while. Maybe it was for the best, at that. They'd all told him he was slightly crazy to go to China, and he

hadn't really known his own motives very clearly. After-war restlessness as much as anything, he suspected. He'd been in India and China for most of the war; he'd gone in the Army right after medical school. He was a young doctor, sandy, fair-skinned, hair just thinning slightly at the forehead, and before long he'd have to be careful of that fleshy tendency at the waistline.

He let the five-per-cent solution flow. Behind him the door from the courtyard opened, and he glanced

around and saw that a thin Chinese in a long blue gown and Western-style felt had entered. He recognized him as one of Lien's hatchetmen. Lien had these hard-eyed, slit-eyed assistants: sometimes when folks disagreed with him too strongly, they were found a day or two later face-down in a rice paddy.

The newcomer chattered in local dialect, handed Lien a folded paper and went out again. A moment later, when Lien had read the message, he said: "Johnny—is for you."

"For me?" Keyes took it—the usual flimsy tissue the Chinese used for writing paper. Lien was smiling his usual unfathomable smile. Funny, Keyes as a natural-born debunker had always liked to say that the Chinese were no more inscrutable than anybody else, but this Lien gave him pause, all right. He couldn't imagine why he seemed to prefer hanging around the dispensary at a time like this, while the town was just waiting for the Nationalists to move out and the Reds to move in. Maybe he was just a little snobbish; maybe he

couldn't find anybody else to match his St. John's education, though Keyes was hardly what you'd call a man of culture.

Keyes looked at the message. There was Chinese writing on the top, and a quick scrawl in English on the bottom:

*Doc:
Better get here to Anling p.d.q.
We'll only be taking three more trips
out; last one tomorrow morning.
We're supposed to be hauling Ming's
retreating troops, but I'll be damn'
sure to find a jump seat or something
for you.*

Larry Retnik.

Lien was quite shamelessly reading the note again, over Keyes' shoulder. "Who Larry Retnik?" he asked.

"Pilot I knew in Kunming. Works for CNAC, now—knows I'm here."

"Better hurry, hey? Maybe last chance."

"Oh, I think I'll make it. Got to get Wang, here, over his crisis. Get that fever down. And Lien, I'm leaving it to you to see he has a long period of rest afterward. That's important."

Lien's smile seemed to flicker. "No worry. I know Wang's family pretty damn' good. They take care. Only

you, Johnny, you crazy to stick around. Colonel Tun probably shoot everybody when he moves in."

Keyes, laughing a little, went back to the patient. "How about you, Lien? Aren't you likely to get shot too?"

Lien thought that was very funny. He held the brocaded swell of his middle with both plump hands and bounced it up and down as he laughed. "Not me, kid. Not me. Nobody can run town right without me. You know what? Ning Ku—very rich man—wanted to have funeral today. I say no permit. Soldiers retreat, need town quiet, streets clear. Who else big enough to say no to fellow like Ning Ku?"

Keyes, withdrawing the needle, said: "Who do you think you're kidding, Lien? You're just hoping Ning'll pay you a big fat bribe for that permit, that's all."

Lien only laughed again and said: "Maybe so. Could be."

Later in the day—when it was about noon—Lien had food brought in. He and Keyes sat at the table in the middle of the room. The patient was sleeping now, less pain, but with the dyspnea still evident. The town was relatively quiet. The overenthusiastic fighter plane had flown off somewhere. There was only the rumble of gunfire to the north, which seemed to Keyes to be getting slowly nearer. . . .

Lien, his lips long immune to scalding, sipped steaming tea. "Is 'before rain' leaves," he said pleasantly. "Very superior. I hide it in my house—hope Colonel Tun doesn't find. Probably is barbarian and wouldn't know difference, anyway." He sighed. "One regret: When Colonel Tun is here, I have nobody will listen to poetry."



"Aren't you likely to get shot too, Lien?"



"Okay," Colonel Tun said, interrupting again. "You come with me."

Keyes chuckled. "Well, Lien, let's be frank. I always keep quiet when you rattle off the stuff, but I don't exactly listen. I'm not much of a poetry man."

"Johnny, trouble is, you don't learn enough Chinese," said Lien seriously. "Then you appreciate, hey? You see, thing is double meanings. What's that word? Puns. Word mean one, two, three things—you say which. Understand? You take poem by Han—very humble man. 'The warrior is brother to the turtle—endless chariots go through the mountain pass.' My own translation. Pretty good, hey?"

Keyes said: "Is that all?"

Lien said: "Wait. I explain."

At that moment there was shouting and the slap of running feet from the courtyard. Keyes rose, staring. Lien bounded to his feet with the startling, tapered grace some fat men have. They both moved to the window.

The mission and hospital formed a square U, with the courtyard enclosed.

The yard was flagstoned, and planted with pear and cassia trees. Out there, houseboys were scattering in all directions. Just beyond the wattled fence, Keyes saw the canvas top of a lorry that had pulled up. The gate broke open suddenly, and a small bird-like Chinese in a resplendent uniform barged in. Three other officers followed him. There were some men that seemed to be asleep sprawled in the lorry.

"Is General Ming," said Lien. "That son of a turtle's egg."

Keyes saw the major general's pips on the collar now. Ming had a cruel little face and huge horn-rimmed glasses and a Charley Chaplin mustache. Lien jumped to the door and opened it as General Ming came. Lien was all smiles. "*Ni'in hao, hsian-hsien!*" He addressed Ming by the complimentary title of "man on horseback."

MING was all smiles and compliments too. They stood there beaming and bowing and complimenting each other, and the three officers crowded into the room behind Ming, and there was a field day of introductions, cross-introductions and compliments.

The patient woke up and started to cough at that moment. Keyes went back to him quickly. Pallor increasing—an icteric tinge to the skin. Bad, that. Maybe more glucose. Keyes wished he had the surgical equipment for thoracentesis, so he could get some of that corruption out of the man's chest. He started to set up the apparatus for the glucose drip again.

Behind him, Lien and the officers chattered away in high mandarin; he couldn't catch a word of it.

He could sense, though, that Lien was buttering-up the General. After all, the outcome of the battle wasn't certain yet. No use taking chances.

Then abruptly Lien said to him: "Johnny—"

"Yes?" He didn't look around.

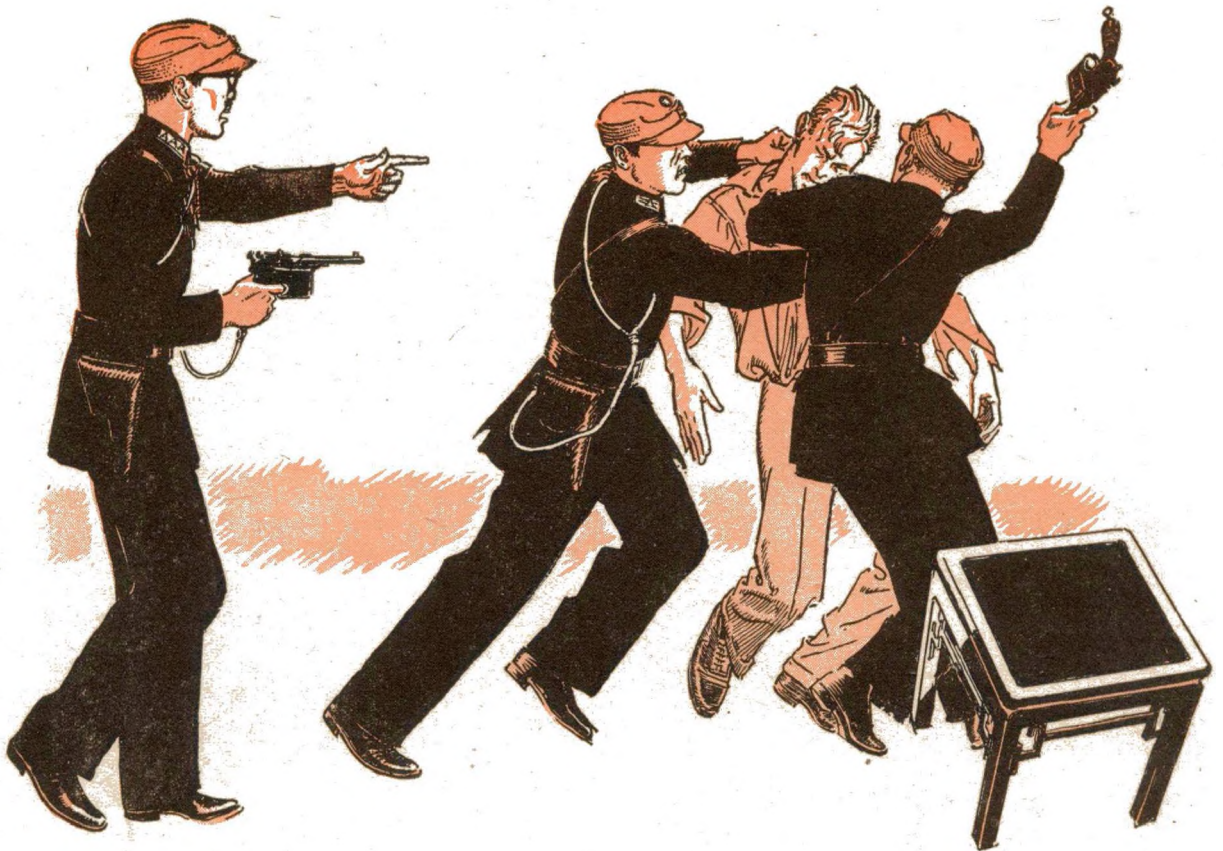
"General Ming is in great hurry. He wish personally to stay with troops, but orders say he is to get next plane at Anling. He want you to help officers in lorry outside so they can walk."

John Keyes did look around then. "Wounded?"

"No." Lien's expression didn't change by a flicker. "Drunk."

Keyes said: "What?"

"Can't make them wake up. Is important. They need to walk. I tell



Somebody tripped him, and he started to fall, as a pistol stock crashed on his head.

General Ming you can fix them—maybe something in needle, maybe some medicine, hey?"

"Tell General Ming," said Keyes quietly, "to go to hell, and try to translate it literally if you can." He turned back to his patient.

Footsteps pattered behind him. Hand on his shoulder. He looked once more, and saw Ming's grotesque goggled-eyed face thrust up at him. Angry. Ming must have understood. He was chattering at Keyes in what sounded like a falsetto voice. He shook Keyes' shoulder, and Keyes' hand slipped, withdrawing the needle in the patient's arm. Blood welled, and Keyes slapped cotton on it quickly, and bent the arm over the cotton. Ming shook him again, and this time he whirled and brought his arm around and backhanded Ming viciously across the face, knocking him away.

He was sorry the instant he'd done it, of course. He felt the surge of anger drain from him, and he called himself six kinds of a fool—

And then they were suddenly upon him, Ming and the other three officers.

Keyes had barely time to get up and start throwing punches. The targets were many, they all kept moving. They didn't punch back; they pushed and yanked and grabbed and kicked.

He saw two of them yank their heavy Mausers from wooden holsters. Somebody tripped him, and he started to fall. A pistol stock crashed into the back of his head, sending shimmering pain all the way down his back. He hit the floor. They started to kick, and reach down to strike at him with the pistols. The pain came in hot waves now, gradually melting him into numbness. Keyes did the only thing he could think to do. He doubled-up, protecting his groin with his knees, his temples with his forearm, and his face with his elbows.

They seemed to get tired of beating him after a while. He was dazed: he really couldn't tell how long that was. Somebody threw water over him, and he was hauled to his feet and slammed against a wall. Two officers held him there, on either side, and Ming stood in front of him and gestured and screamed at him. Dimly he saw Lien's bulk, set placidly to one side.

"What's he saying, what the hell's he saying?" Keyes asked thickly.

He distinctly heard Lien's sigh. "Johnny, was very foolish you do that. Ming execute you, now."

They pushed him out into the courtyard, and he had all he could do to keep from stumbling. In the middle of the courtyard Ming drew his pistol

and said, in *kuan hua*, or national speech: "Get on your knees."

Keyes shook his head—stubbornly, stupidly. Execution, was it? All very military and proper—later, no doubt, he'd draw up charges and orders, just to make it all look right if anybody ever questioned the death of the American doctor.

They knocked him to his knees.

KEYES didn't remember whether he felt the pistol at his neck or not; he was still dazed. But he did remember the sudden avalanche or what seemed a hundred explosions, and he remembered hearing shouting and screaming and tracer-lines of excited chatter. He remembered somebody running past him, brushing him, knocking him all the way down.

There were several moments of this confusion, and the explosions—shooting, it was—continued. Then, somehow, he seemed to be standing; and Lien Chao, gross and solid, seemed to be holding him up.

"What the devil, what the devil!" muttered Keyes.

Lien was steering him back to the dispensary room; he could see that now. His eyes started to focus again. He could feel his legs moving. Lien said: "You crazy guy, you crazy guy!"

It was about then that he realized the courtyard was full of people—men—soldiers. They were in khaki; some had quilted jackets—they looked somehow fatter, and moved and spoke more briskly than the Nationalist soldiers he'd seen.

"Colonel Tun is arrive," Lien said calmly.

The last thing Keyes glimpsed before he got inside again was General Ming's ridiculous bird-like body pitifully sprawled on the flagstones, dead like a rag doll.

After that Keyes took time only to prescribe and administer for himself one quick gulp of Chinese vodka from the bottle in the cabinet, then he went back to the patient. Wang's muscular arm had unbent, and hung loose over the side of the bed; the puncture in his armpit had clotted, and the cotton was stuck there in a tuft. The tube and needle hung, and the glucose was all over the floor. The patient was asleep again. Breathing seemed—was it possible?—steadier: the harsh rattle and artificial resonance were gone. Keyes tried his pulse. Not quite as rapid. Better. The next hour or two might do it.

Keyes started to clean up.

ONCE more the dispensary door banged open behind him; and when he turned this time, he saw a tremendous Chinese with a doughy, blank face, and shoulders with all the bulk of beef quarters.

"*Ni'in hao, hsian-hsien!*" Lien babbled obsequiously, waddling forward.

The big Chinese ignored him. He stared flatly at Keyes. His uniform, which bore no insignia, and his face were both covered with yellow dust. He carried no weapon, but held a thin stick, obviously broken from a bush, in his hand. In quite good English he said to Keyes: "Who you are?"

"Dr. Keyes," Keyes said, staring back. "This is my hospital. I suppose you're Colonel Tun?"

"I am Tun." The man nodded. He turned to Lien suddenly, with a quick, bumbling shift of his shoulders. He kept speaking English, possibly to show that he could. "Who you are—Mayor Lien?"

Lien bowed and said: "Not deserve to hold high honor, mayor of Huan-So-Kai—"

Tun cut him short by waving and grunting impatiently. Then, abruptly, disconcertingly, he grinned. He had a gold tooth. His eyes went back and forth between both of them. "We get here very quick, all right. We push right through. Ming's fellows still fighting air—nothing—up there. Now we got to close up city, what you think?"

Lien chattered in Mandarin, evidently agreeing.

"Okay," Tun said, interrupting him a second time. "You come with me." He turned back to the door, opened it, and then paused a moment to look at Keyes and say: "I see you later."

When they had gone, Keyes stood there for a moment, looking out across the courtyard and frowning. About twelve of Tun's soldiers were in the enclosure, apparently posted there. They made no move to drag away the bodies of General Ming and his three officers. The lorry that had been parked in front was gone. The soldiers, toting rifles and carbines haphazardly, either walked aimlessly about or gathered in groups and chatted. Every once in a while one of them would look at or point to Keyes' window, and sometimes several would look and say something and then laugh, but they made no other move to molest him.

The afternoon sun forced its way through the yellow sky-haze to beat down upon the flagstones.

Keyes turned from the window. He resumed his job, and wiped up the rest of the spilled glucose with a rag. He checked the patient once again, feeling forehead and pulse. He'd wait for him to wake up before taking his temperature. He listened carefully to the breathing—much steadier.

He went to the mirror then and examined his own bruises. They weren't pretty. It stung when he washed the dirt and caked blood away from his face: he daubed the actual lacerations with Mercresson's, and then he took another slug of clear, bitter vodka, and lit a cigarette.

He stayed at the mirror. He stared at himself. There was his plain face, his thirtyish face, his rounded and sandy face with the slightly thinning hairline. Dr. John Keyes—a good-enough doctor, he supposed, though he'd need a good solid tour in a civilian hospital before he was ready for something like stateside practice. Only he didn't think, now, he'd ever get to that. "I see you later," Colonel Tun had said. He hadn't liked the tone of the Colonel's voice or the flat, doughy look of his face. . . .

He turned quickly from the mirror and thought: *You got yourself into this, chum, so stop complaining.*

He stood over Wang the peasant, and looked down at him. Hard, lumpy face, the puffy epicanthic folds nearly hiding the slit of his eyes, cheekbones like spikes against the skin, and deep hollows beneath them. An animal face. Keyes shook his head abruptly. You weren't supposed to look at them as faces—only patients.

He went to the table and felt the teapot, and found that it was moderately warm—just right for him, now. He sat down and poured himself a cup of tea.

He was on his second cup, and his third cigarette when he saw Lien come into the courtyard again. Lien was wearing his fine political smile. The soldiers stopped him and he talked to them and gestured broadly, and then they laughed and let him pass.

He came in; he paused, holding the door open, glanced at the patient, then at Keyes.

Keyes said: "Well?"

Lien said: "You crazy guy." He went to the table and sat down across from Keyes. He helped himself to Keyes' pack of cigarettes on the table, lighting it in that curious flourishing, woman's way the Chinese have with cigarettes. After the first cloud of exhaled smoke he said: "Colonel Tun move pretty fast. Now he got soldiers all over Huan-So-Kai. At city gates. Nobody leave. You understand. Johnny? Nobody."

"That means I'm stuck here definitely now, I suppose."

"For little while."

"For how long, do you think?"

"For till Colonel Tun finish job General Ming start."

Keyes gripped the table. "Are you kidding, Lien? This isn't one of your little gags, is it—one of your funny roundabout ways of saying something?"

Lien shook his head. His jowls vibrated like jelly as he did. "He think you are a spy. Up in Kweihung, they have trouble with Americans. Or maybe English. No difference. They shoot them. They shoot you too."

"Why, the crazy fools," said Keyes, getting up suddenly, "They're all mad, absolutely mad, with this whole damned thing. All they know how to do is shoot and kill. They—"

"Hey, Johnny."

"What?"

Lien nodded at the sleeping man. "How come you really stay with him? Why you really do it?"

KEYES scowled and said: "Hell, I don't know—"

"What you hoping you get from it?"

"Get from it?" Keyes shrugged and turned away, irritated. He went over to the bottle of vodka again. He poured himself a small bit in a glass this time rather than slugging from the bottle. "Look, Lien," he said, "I can't explain it to Dr. Andrews or you, or even to myself. I just do it. It's just something I have to do. There's a patient coming up on crisis—I have to stick." He laughed a little and said: "I guess maybe I'm not very bright." He gulped the vodka.

Lien said: "Well, everything gonna be okay."

"What do you mean?"

Lien rose quickly then. "Ning Ku—the rich fellow. He is my cousin.

Everybody in town my relative, almost. Ning has back gate—through wall—from his house. You get out through there. You get to river: I write paper for you, then anybody on sampan take you to Anling."

On the bed, Wang stirred and coughed gently.

"Wait a minute," said Keyes, and went to him.

"Johnny, you listen. You got to hurry. You understand? Tun is searching town now—look all over. Pretty soon he find back gate in Ning's house, then you don't get out."

Keyes stared at the peasant. Even in his sleep he didn't have the expression of anxiety that was ordinarily a symptom of hemothoractical conditions. But his pallor had increased. He was gasping for air now. That was the way these things went, sometimes: the patient started to recover, and then slipped again. Only it was possible that the relapse was just the final effort of the disease to take hold, as you might say, before the real recovery began. Any minute now Keyes would know—would sense—whether the patient would pull through or not—

"Hey, Johnny," Lien said, "you a doctor, but I not such a dumb fellow, too. I tell you something. You take one like this Wang, here, he very tough. You know that? I think you

leave Wang alone, he get better, all right."

Keyes turned, looked up, frowned very deeply, moistened his lips which were suddenly dry and said: "I—uh—better stick around just a little longer, Lien. Then I think he'll be sure to pull through."

Lien stared at him expressionlessly for a long moment. Then he shook his head. "You sure crazy guy," he said. "You sure crazy."

He whirled abruptly and went out again.

Keyes pulled the chair a little closer to the bed and sat there and waited for Wang to wake up, or at least come out of this deep sleep into a less restful state. He checked the pulse again from time to time. He set up another glucose bottle, to have it ready, and he sterilized and laid aside a hypo with one c.c. of adrenalin chloride in it—just in case.

He watched the patient, and the time passed. He wasn't conscious of the time. Later, Wang stirred and

groaned softly and Keyes took his temperature: Down to ninety-nine even. Keyes smiled to himself. He felt that old excitement—that never-absent excitement—that comes when the patient passes the turning point. It was a tingling euphoria, it was just the least bit like being tight: it was a momentary experience that made all other experiences in-between worthwhile.

He noticed that it was dim in the room presently, and he got up and looked into the courtyard and saw that it was nearly evening. That reminded him that he was hungry. He turned on the light, made some coffee and opened a can of peaches. He sat quietly, eating, watching the patient, later smoking.

Wang, the peasant, was stirring in his sleep now and the dyspnea was gone: his breathing was slow, even, steady.

Keyes could leave him now. A little rest, a little care would be almost sure to pull him through. Keyes shook his head and blinked, like a

Lien trotted alongside and Keyes heard his voice every once in a while: "We near the silver shops, now! . . . Now we crossing bridge!"



man coming out of a dream. Now to this business of getting past Colonel Tun—somehow.

He found his canvas musette bag and started to dump things into it. Shaving kit, socks, his notebook, a few extra packs of cigarettes. As an afterthought he added a couple of cans of peaches—and sticks of gum. He slipped into his corduroy Norfolk jacket then, jammed an ancient gray felt hat on his head, and strapped the musette bag over his shoulder.

While he was doing this, the door opened and Lien Chao came in again. Lien slammed the door quickly. "Hey—where you think you're going?"

Keyes shrugged. "Out. Away from here, if I can make it." He nodded at Wang. "He's okay, now. Keep him quiet, and he'll be all right."

"Well, you crazy guy!" said Lien. "You think you really get out? You think they let you past gate?"

"I guess that's what I'm going to try to find out."

LIEN grunted, and then nodded. "Now you listen, Johnny. I got things fixed. Lien Chao—he fix things in Huan-So-Kai. You do like I say, now: you promise me do like I say."

"All right, Lien. You take it from here."

Lien pointed to the street. "Couple, two, three minutes Ning's funeral coming. You understand? Be music and Ning's uncle in coffin and big paper dragon—twenty men in dragon."

"A dragon? In a street funeral?"

"Tun, he don't know difference. Think is maybe local custom." Lien waved his fat, tapered fingers impatiently. "We take coffin to graveyard, where all Ning family buried. You understand, now? Outside city gate. Maybe Tun, maybe soldiers be there—but anyway you got chance. When I give signal, you run like hell! You go for river. I got ten cousins, anyway, with sampans you maybe find. You got it, hey?"

"All but one small point," said Keyes, frowning. "How do I get past with the rest of the funeral?"

"You crazy guy," said Lien, "you walk under dragon."

Keyes—in a kind of dreamlike astonishment—stood in the courtyard and watched Lien handle the soldiers who had been posted there. Lien was magnificent. He spoke *huan hua*, and Keyes caught enough of it to understand. Lien was supposed to bring Keyes to Colonel Tun for questioning. No, of course, he didn't give him a note or anything—Colonel Tun was busy near the gate, right now; he had no time for such nonsense. Now, if the soldiers wanted to stop Lien and prevent him from going there, well, they would have to take the consequences from Colonel Tun himself.

After a lot of scowling and muttered discussion, the soldiers let them go.

"Sons of turtle's eggs," Lien snorted, when they were out of earshot.

There was suddenly the sound of drums, tinkling glass, and discordant singing. There was the saucy spatter of firecrackers. Around the bend of the winding, cobblestoned thoroughfare came the vanguard of a funeral parade, four abreast; two carried drums, two carried poles with cross-pieces from which the tinkling glass hung. The coffin, lacquered black and gold, followed, and behind that the weaving head of a paper dragon, trailing a long body, under which men moved and stepped in an undulating line. Men and boys darted about on the fringes of the parade, lighting firecrackers from punk and tossing them here and there.

"Now!" said Lien. "Quick—*kwa-ti, kwa-ti!*"

The dragon rustled by, the drums chattered, and the singing rose; Lien looked up and down the street quickly, especially at the courtyard entrance where the soldiers had gathered and were staring, and then he steered Keyes hastily into the concealment of the crowd.

A few seconds later Keyes was under the tail end of the dragon, dancing and shuffling with the rest. . . .

It seemed that twisting journey through the streets would never end. Lien trotted alongside and Keyes heard his voice every once in a while: "We near the silver shops, now! . . . Now we crossing bridge!"

Actually, it wasn't much over a quarter of a mile to the south gate. Keyes could have sworn it took them an hour to get there.

"Going through gate!" Lien whispered, when they did.

The music was even louder and wilder, now. It was hot and stifling under the paper hood. He could see the darkness of evening when he looked down, and he could see the flickering of torchlight on the ground. He sensed the ground rising as they climbed the little knoll to the graveyard.

Then they had stopped and the singing was spirit wailing, no less, and the drums had reached madness.

Lien's whisper said: "Is dark. Are soldiers, but you run quick, they don't see. Okay, crazy guy—you run now!"

Keyes ducked from under the dragon. He blinked for a moment in the torchlight. The participants in the funeral had gathered in a rough circle, and the coffin was placed beside the open grave. Just beyond the circle townspeople and a scattering of Tun's soldiers stood, watching.

Lien said: "*Yi-lu, ping ahn!*—Good luck!" He slapped Keyes lightly on the back. "Hey, and you remember—

"The warrior is brother to the turtle. That my own translation."

Keyes slipped through the crowd, and into the darkness beyond. He hoped he was moving casually. He didn't start to run until he was out of the light of the torches. Then he ran, and stumbled, and picked himself up and kept running. He trotted along the little dikes between paddies where he could find them, and he sloshed through the paddies themselves when he couldn't. There was a quarter moon, and in its faint light he could see the line of poplars and cassia fringes that marked the river.

The sound of drums and singing began to fade. Exhaustion gripped his lungs. He stopped running finally: he looked back and saw no sign of pursuit. He stood there on a little mound, and stared at the torchlight and the tiny silhouettes on the graveyard hill. Beyond it he could see the bulking of Huan-So-Kai's walls, and the ski-jump gables of its rooftops. He could already hear the gurgling of the river and the calls of the boatmen. He'd make Anling, and that last flight of Larry Retnik's by dawn, easily.

THERE were suddenly bright, sharp flashes—like matches struck across the night—on the graveyard hill. In the first moment he didn't guess what they were, and then the sound of shooting reached his ears. There was the flat bark of carbines, and the stutter of a machine pistol. He squinted: he saw the tiny silhouettes back there swirling in terror, and he saw the silhouettes that made the gun flashes moving among them.

He turned quickly and ran the rest of the way to the river then. As he ran, it all began to come together in his mind. Lien had taken a long chance—he must have known that Tun would discover Keyes' escape and track it down at any moment. He must have known it would mean his own life when Tun found out the real purpose of the funeral. Yet Lien Chao—the cynic, the opportunist, the eternal compromiser and politician—had taken that desperate chance to let Keyes escape.

Why? Keyes smiled a little as he came to the river's edge. A tree frog that had been chirping was suddenly silent. The water swashed by. It was all in that line of Chinese poetry—Lien's own translation. Lien was indeed brother to the turtle, and everything else lowly: he couldn't have acknowledged it more deeply than by arranging for Keyes' escape at the risk of his own life. For Keyes had risked his life to save Lien's brother—not his actual brother, perhaps, but anyway a peasant named Wang, which means in Chinese—turtle.

"I KILLED A MAN," THE GIRL TOLD HIM. BUT IN HIS TRAVELS AS AN ITINERANT PHOTOGRAPHER HACK HAD RUN INTO CON GAMES BEFORE. . . THIS ADVENTURE HOWEVER PROVED PRETTY TERRIFIC. . .

The Girl on

AT first Hack thought it was a porcupine. This was porcupine country, a mile or two below the summit, where the forest road wandered down through scrub pine and light undergrowth. The moon was fat and full. Hack Pipes was driving without lights or motor, letting the car and trailer roll unhurriedly down the long slopes against compression. He could see bits of the road below him—slashes of silvered black on the face of the far hill; and on one of them he caught a flicker of movement.

"Meat-head," he said, "wake up!"

The dog curled on the seat beside him stirred. He was a huge and awkward animal, still only a pup. An unhandsome beast, principally boxer, he was a tramp at heart, friendly and forever aggrieved when his size scared strangers silly. He wriggled and tried to put his head in Hack's lap.

"None of that," Hack said. "Sit up."

The car rolled quietly on, tires whispering on the oiled surface, the trailer hitch thumping now and again. Hack liked to drive at night. He was in no hurry. The last town had been good to him—a hundred and four dollars for a two-day stand. He had money in his pocket, gas in the tank, and the land beyond each hill was new. They slid through a patch of shadow and down a strip where the scrub growth was silvered by the moonlight.

"Watch the road," Hack told the dog.

The pavement bent in a wide, flat curve at the head of a draw. Far down, Hack saw the flicker of movement again. "Correction!" he said. "That's not a porcupine—too tall." The fall of the road steepened; the rush of air past the open window was loud. Hack Pipes reached for the light-switch. "A deer, maybe. We'll see in a minute."

Shadow again, and then a long stretch of lighted road—movement at the far end of it. Something white or almost white. Hack touched the brake, and the trailer hitch thumped a protest. Meat-head was whining now. Hack switched the headlight on and rammed the brake pedal to the floor. Ahead, on the shoulder of the road, a woman turned to face the glare, hands lifted. Hack had a glimpse of a white face, an open mouth, and then Meat-head was bark-



ing savagely. Hack grabbed at the dog's collar. When he looked back, the woman was gone.

"Hey!" Hack said. "Did you see that?"

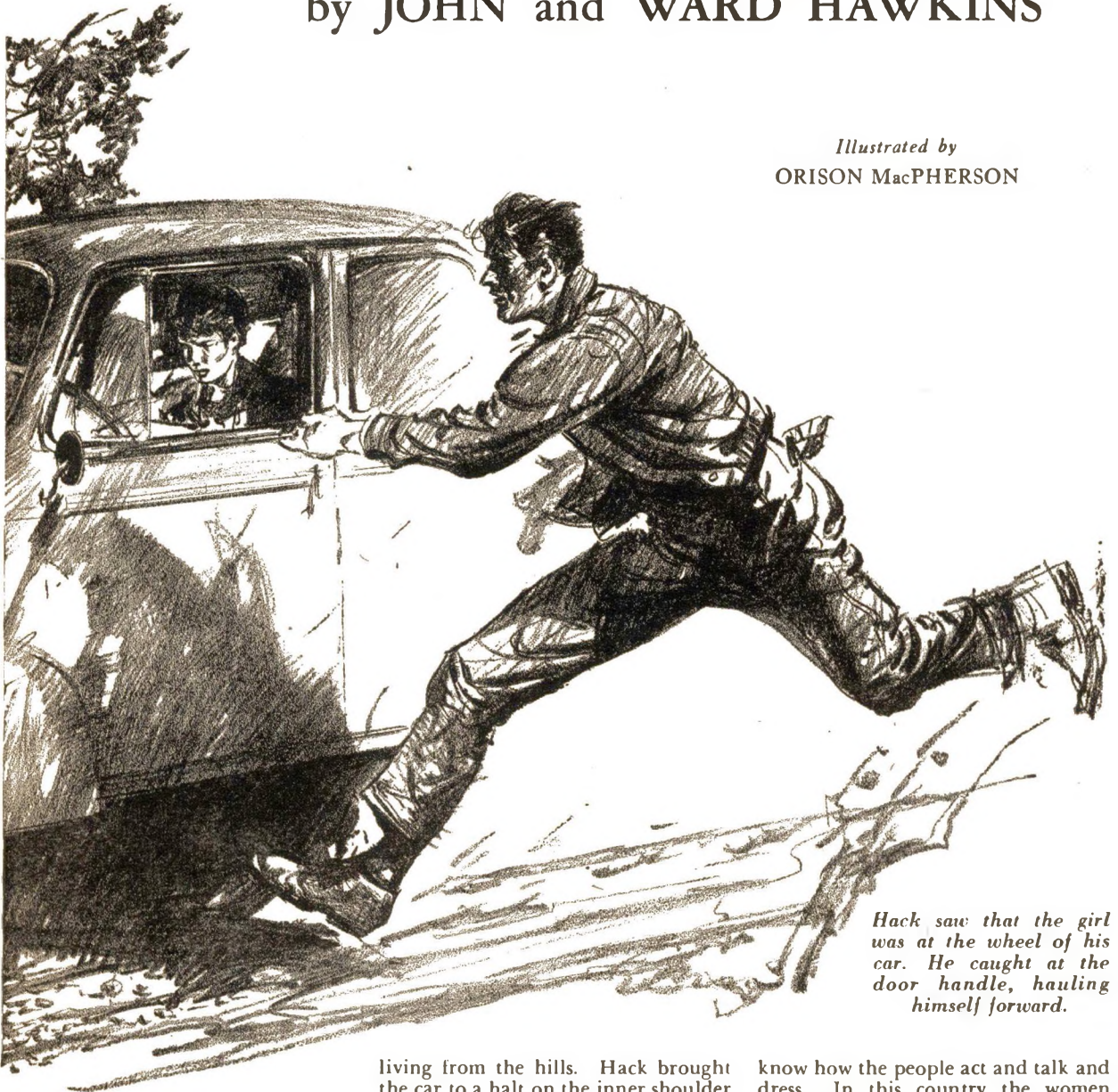
There had been a woman standing on the outer shoulder of the road. A

woman or a girl, something in a skirt and short jacket, anyway. As soon as the light touched her, she'd bolted like a rabbit. The car and trailer were crawling now, the wheels protesting loudly against the restraint of the brakes.

the Lonely Road

by JOHN and WARD HAWKINS

Illustrated by
ORISON MacPHERSON



Hack saw that the girl was at the wheel of his car. He caught at the door handle, hauling himself forward.

"You scared her," Hack told the dog. "Or the lights did."

He rolled that around in his mind. In more than an hour of toiling through these hills he had not met a car or seen a house or glimpsed a light. Pineville, county seat and the nearest town, was at least twenty miles away. This was forest road, the back country. Here, near the summit, not even a stump rancher could scratch a

living from the hills. Hack brought the car to a halt on the inner shoulder of the road and set the brake. He reached for the five-cell flashlight clipped to the steering-column, then changed his mind.

"None of our business," he said.

BUT a thing like that: one look into the lights and then a swift dive into the brush below the road. Funny! And something else—that skirt and jacket. When you knock on every door along the way, you pretty well

know how the people act and talk and dress. In this country the women wore cotton prints or overall jeans on weekdays; high heels and silk dresses and cloth coats with fur collars on dance nights and Sundays. One or the other—but nothing in between, not camel's-hair jackets and tweed skirts.

"Meat-head, let's get out of here," Hack said.

The dog objected. He was shouldering against Hack, nose thrust to the open window. Hack pushed the



"Mr. Jackson became furiously angry. He tried to catch me, and there was a gun on the table."

dog aside and released the brake. "I've been wondering what you were good for," he said. "You're a deer hound—two-legged dears." He let the car roll, driving with one hand, mauling the dog with a gentle fist. "That's a joke," he said. "But you don't get it. You don't know how to spell."

Meat-head nosed Hack's clenched hand and whined.

Hack was thinking again. A woman hiding in the scrub pine beside a seldom-traveled road, twenty-odd miles from the nearest town. Boy-friend trouble, probably. Or maybe she was somebody's dear old mother, and there was a trail back there and a shack somewhere far down in the cañon. Either way, it wasn't his affair. He had business in Pineville, though Pineville didn't know it yet. The thing for him to do was keep right on going. He did, until Meat-head whined again—until the road curved and widened and there was a parking place on the inside shoulder. Hack set the emergency and killed the headlights.

"All right," he said. "We'll have a look."

The dog bounded away as soon as the door was opened, charging hard across Hack's lap. Hack took the keys and the flashlight, and walked back past the trailer, an aluminum job, compact and soundly designed, and splashed with black lettering that told all who could read that PIPES' PHOTOGRAPHS were the best. He went up the road, a lanky, hatless man in hard-used khaki and a leather jacket. He didn't use the light. He didn't need it here in the full wash of the moonlight. Besides, he was going to feel like a Grade-A idiot when he found a footpath as wide as the highway up there where the dog was snuffing around. . . .

There was no path, no trail of any kind. Hack found the place where the woman had been—at least he found a place where the roadside gravel held what might have been footprints, and a torn patch in the soft loam of the slope below the shoulder of the road. He used the flash

then, swinging the beam back and forth across the scrub growth. No woman. No glimpse of movement anywhere in the trees at the foot of the first steep pitch.

The dog was busy with a search of his own, quartering back and forth along the gravel shoulder some distance up the highway. Hack whistled. Meat-head ignored the summons as he always did. Meat-head was fine company, all paws and adoration and great red tongue, but he had yet to obey a command. Hack whistled again, and then sent a loud, "Hal-loo!" down the slope. The hills and the night threw it back at him. There was no other sound.

HE had a close look at the torn patch on the slope. The print of a heel was caught there, small, sharply defined and definitely made by a woman's shoe. Farther on, he found another and a third, and then the trail ran out on the thickly matted floor of the scrub forest. Hack swung the light beam, crouching to peer

beneath the low-hanging branches. There were trees without number, the humped, black shapes of boulders, and nothing else. No footprints and no gleam of light on a blonde coat.

Meat-head charged past Hack, blundering noisily down the hill. Hack whistled without result, then got to his feet. The hell with it! Being a good Samaritan was one thing; fumbling around in the dark wasting time hunting a crazy female who didn't want to be found was something else. Hack climbed back to the road. The trailer gleamed in the bend of the curve a hundred yards away. Hack moved toward it, head cocked to Meat-head's clamorous voice. The moonlight was very bright. He could read the lettering on the trailer's flank. He did. And then he heard the thump of the trailer hitch.

THE trailer was moving, creeping behind the dark shape of his car toward the center of the road and the steep-down pitch of the next long stretch. Hack yelled, and Meat-head scrambled into sight, abreast of the car, making enough noise for half a dozen dogs. He leaped and barked, snapping at the front tire, and Hack Pipes ran. He was beside the trailer, passing it, the flashlight clubbed in his hand, when he saw the blonde coat, that damned blonde coat, at the wheel of his car. He caught at the door handle, hauling himself forward, snapping the door open.

He went in, headfirst, grabbing for the handle of the emergency brake. He yanked it hard, and locked wheels slid on the oiled road. For an instant Hack was jammed tight into the space beneath the steering-column. He was kicked once before he got free, and Meat-head climbed his back, barking furiously, eager to join in the play. Hack batted the dog aside, fumbling for the light he'd dropped. Meat-head charged the car again, and a woman's voice lifted in a sharp thin cry.

"Come out of there," Hack said.

"Please!" The voice was small and breathless. "That dog—"

Hack tried the light; it wouldn't work. "Get out," he said, "or I'll let him tear you to bits."

He caught Meat-head's collar and stepped back, his jaws clamped angrily. He watched the woman slide out of the car—brown walking shoes, nylons with one knee gone. The legs were slim. This crazy woman had nice legs. She had brown hair and huge brown eyes, and a smudge on her chin. She could not control the trembling of her mouth. She was twenty—give or take a year—a well-made, well-dressed, very frightened twenty. Her lipstick was badly chewed; her hands were shaking.

"You're pretty well dressed for a thief," Hack said. "But maybe that's why—maybe there's money in stealing cars."

"I have to get to Pineville right away."

"You could put out your thumb and hitch a ride," he said. "You didn't have to coax me into a snipe-hunt so you could grab my car. Fool stunt, anyway; the key's in my pocket. First time you hit an up-grade you'd've been stuck."

The girl wet her lips. "I have to see the Sheriff."

"You'll see him—that's for sure," Hack said.

He stood there, his hand on Meat-head's collar, a dent of frown between his brows. He was a loose-knit and lanky twenty-four, not deeply marked by time or travel. He was dark, black hair and brown hide, flat at the waist and broad at the shoulder. His ears were big and his nose was big, and his homely face was without guile.

"Why'd you have to hide?" he asked.

"I didn't hear you coming. I—you frightened me."

"When I switched on the lights?" He watched her nod and swallow hard. "Sis," he said, "is somebody chasing you?"

"I thought you were."

"Me?" He made a sound of disgust. "Maybe when you saw the lights, but not when you tried to grab my car. You can read, can't you? You can see what it says on the trailer: '*Pipes the Photographer.*' That's me." He jabbed his chest with a thumb. "Hack Pipes—kidnaper. I work the weeds, the back roads, the small towns. Baby pictures a specialty."

"I didn't see that," she said. "Honestly."

"I think you're shy a few marbles." His voice was sour. "Get in the car. We'll get the show on the road."

WHEN he let go of Meat-head's collar the dog bounded to the girl, all eagerness and yelping joy. She went back against the side of the car, the wordless sound of fright on her lips. Meat-head licked her hand. He tried his valiant best to give her a kiss of greeting before Hack pulled him down.

"You got sawdust for brains," he told the dog. "You're a dope."

The girl giggled—hysteria or relief, or both. "Tear me to bits?" she said. "He—wouldn't tear anything to bits."

"You should see what he does to my shoes," Hack said. "Get in."

Meat-head rode in the back seat, sprawled over a camera case and the clutter of odds and ends of gear Hack meant to stow in the trailer some day when there was time. The girl sat beside Hack, quiet there, hands locked

in her lap. Her head was bent; the fall of her hair obscured her cheek, but not the hard-pressed line of her lips or the faint trembling of her chin. Hack released the brake. The trailer hitch thumped, and they rolled, without lights or motor, around the curve and down the next steep stretch.

"Sis," Hack said, "you're in a mess of some kind. Not the car—that's trouble too—but something else. That disappearing act—that dive into the brush. What's the pitch? What's wrong?"

"I"—she swallowed hard—"killed a man."

Hack said: "I beg your pardon?" "I killed a man," she said. "I shot him."

ALL breath went out of Hack Pipes in a long sigh. The tires sang on the dark road; moonlight silvered all the trees. People went a little crazy when the moon was full—some people. The girl might be one of those. But she didn't look like a mental case. She looked scared, taut as a drumhead, quivering, about to fly apart or burst into tears.

"What was this?" he said. "An accident of some kind?"

She nodded. "The gun—just went off in my hand."

"You didn't know it was loaded—one of those deals?"

"It was an accident," she said. "I swear it was."

"And you want to see the Sheriff and report it. Right?"

"Yes." Her voice was out of control again.

A curve rushed to meet them; bridge planks thudded hollowly beneath the wheels. There was black shadow here. Hack switched on the lights. He could hear the ragged breathing of the girl.

"A couple of things," he said: "How come the gun, and where'd this happen? And how? Maybe we'd better start with that. How did you happen to shoot this whatever-his-name-was?"

"Jackson," the girl said.

"All right," he said. "Take it from there. Where did you shoot this Jackson?"

"At the mine, the Pole Star mine. In the cabin up there. Jackson was—I think he was going to kill me."

"When?"

"Two hours ago—maybe a little more."

He looked down at her hands, clenched and quivering in her lap. "Two hours ago," he said, "you accidentally shot a man named Jackson. This took place in a mine cabin. Where is this mine?"

"Back of us. There's a side road near the summit. The mine is three or four miles up that road."

"Six miles from here, possibly seven. That checks. You could walk that far down-grade if you were in a hurry."

"Part of the way I ran."

He thought about that: six or seven miles of mountain road. Death behind her. The sound of the gun thundering in her memory. Terror crouching in every splash of shadow along the way. No wonder she was coming apart.

"Rough," he said. "But if this Jackson was going to kill you, you certainly had a right to shoot. Self-defense. But why did he want to kill you?" Hack rubbed a sweating palm on his shirt. "We keep backing up," he said. "Why were you up there? You don't belong in this country—wrong clothes, wrong perfume. So where do you live, sis? What's your name?"

"Ellen," she said. "Ellen Hale. I live in Portland."

"How do you do," he said. "Now—why the trip to the mine?"

She clenched her hands. "Do you have to pry? Can't you just take me to a phone?"

"Sure, if that's what you want," he said. "But look—the Sheriff's going to ask you plenty of questions. You've got to get it all straight anyway. Why not try it on me for practice?" He touched the brake. He let the car drift to the shoulder of the road, halted there. "Besides, I've got an interest in this. You tried to grab my car, remember?"

"I'm sorry about that. I—"

"You were scared stiff. You still are." He got cigarettes from his jacket pocket. "You thought I'd been up at that mine, that I'd found this Jackson and that I was hunting you. Right?"

"Something like that. I didn't really think. I just ran."

"Have a cigarette," he said. "The dash lighter works."

He watched her hands. The wire-tight trembling was still there.

"Who is this Jackson?" he asked. "He owns the mine."

"And you came out from Portland to see him. Why?"

"To talk to him. I rode out on the bus, and then hiked in to talk to him. He was going to sell part of the mine to my Uncle Charley—Charles Hale." She brushed the hair from her eyes. "I asked him not to. I didn't want Uncle Charley mixed up with him."

"This Jackson was alone up there?"

"Yes," she said.

"Was Uncle Charley spending your money?" Hack asked.

"No," she said. "But I've lived at Uncle Charley's house since my mother died, and I didn't want to see him get—" She stopped there, her hands

pressed to her face. "I asked Mr. Jackson to let Uncle Charley alone. He told me to go away and mind my own business, and then—he became furiously angry. He tried to catch me, and there was a gun on the table."

"And it went off in your hand?" Hack said.

"Yes. Then he fell down, and it was—awful."

"It would be," Hack said. . . . "This uncle of yours: He's an adult, isn't he? Why can't he buy a piece of a gold mine if he wants one?"

"It was a—bad investment."

HACK PIPES sighed. "Sis," he said, "you're leaving something out. It wasn't your money Uncle Charley was going to spend. You didn't hop into the act just because you thought the deal was sour. And this Jackson wouldn't go overboard because you make a speech. There's more, sis. There has to be."

"He—Jackson was a crook!"

"Why didn't you tell Uncle Charley that?"

She stubbed her cigarette out in the dash tray, grinding it there until she had only shreds of paper and tobacco in her fingers. Then her hands were locked together again, tightly locked and quivering in her lap.

"You see how it goes." Hack's voice was quiet. "I'm not a policeman or a lawyer, but I can see the hole in that story. If you can't sell it to me, what's going to happen when the experts go to work on you?"

"All right." The words came at the end of her breath. "It wasn't legal. What they were going to do was against the law."

"And Uncle Charley knew that?" Hack asked.

"Uncle Charley's honest." Her voice begged for belief. "A successful business man, solid and substantial. But the way this happened—"

"He knew it," Hack said. "Honest Uncle Charley knew there was a gimmick in this deal. But how did it work? Why was it wrong?" His eyes were shiny with thought. "There's nothing illegal about buying a hunk of a gold mine, unless it's a dud and you're going to peddle a lot of sour stock."

"It isn't a dud. The gold's there. The assay proved it."

Hack said: "Get to the crooked part, sis. How did it work?"

"They were going to operate the mine secretly," she said. "They were going to smuggle the gold out of the country and sell it for two or three times what the Government would pay." Her voice was hardly more than a whisper. "Now you know," she said. "Now will you take me to a telephone?"

"Did you tell Jackson you were going to report him?"

"Yes. That's why he tried to kill me."

"Gold, and smugglers, and guns that just go off in people's hands," Hack said. "Shades of the Yellow Kid! Do you know what the con is? The big con?"

Ellen Hale said: "The con? Do you mean a convict?"

Hack said: "Nope. It's not a person. It's a racket."

And he was quiet, fitting together the items the girl had given him: One gold mine: one upright and respected citizen with a heavy bank account; one crooked scheme to realize vast profits; one gun with a touchy trigger convenient to the hand; one burst of violent rage; one mine-owner dead on the floor. Check and check again! The picture was not complete, but the framework was unmistakable. Ellen Hale had walked smack into the big con and the big con cool-out, complete with gun and cackle-bladder. Hack reached for the emergency brake, and then he grinned. Here, by the grace of God and the full moon, was a chance to be a hero. Fool-proof and without risk! And how often did a man have a chance to help a beautiful and frightened girl without cost to himself?

"That was Jackson's gun," he said. "Right? When he started the hassle, it was right there where you could reach it. When it went off, Jackson hit the floor, and blood came out of his mouth. Was that the way it was?"

Ellen Hale said: "How did you know?"

"Never mind," he said. "I've got news for you. Your Uncle Charley is not above grabbing a quick dollar. That's Item Number One. Number two: you didn't kill anybody, sis. You just think you did."

"I shot him. I saw him fall—"

"Sure." He started the motor and pointed the car downgrade. "You grabbed the gun, and it went off. You saw the blood. And then you got out of there—but quick!—just as you were supposed to do." He grinned, and shook his head. "Somebody's dusted off some old, old ghosts," he said. "And damned if they didn't pick a fine night for it."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Stick around," he said. "You'll find out."

Chapter Two

THEY rode in silence for a time, rounding a series of gentle curves, crossing a bridge. They came upon a clearing beside the road where gravel had been heaped in long

stock piles. There was room on the approach ramp to swing the car and trailer in a wide turn and head back toward the summit.

Ellen Hale caught at Hack's arm. "No!"

"Relax," he said. "I'm going to set your mind at rest. Jackson's alive. Hale and hearty, with no extra holes in his hide. I'm going to prove it."

"How do you know? You weren't there. You—"

"I'm a magician," he said. "I do tricks."

"You can't bring the dead to life," she said.

ELLEN'S eyes were enormous and her voice was trembling again. She seemed to shrink within herself, hugging her elbows. She hunted words, watching him from the corners of her eyes.

"I don't want to go back there. Please—"

"You can stay in the car with Meat-head while I take a look around," he said. "If I'm right, I'll haul Jackson out where you can see him. If I'm wrong, you haven't lost anything but a little time." He smiled at her. "Yell when you see the turn-off. And brief me: What's it like up there?"

"Old," she said. "A cabin, some rusty cable, some little cars."

"This is a new strike in an old mine?"

"Yes." Her head was bent; her face was in shadow again. "The people who owned it a long time ago thought it was exhausted. Mr. Jackson found a new vein just past the place where they'd stopped digging."

"Check." Hack slowed for a curve, and then tramped on the throttle again. "Five gets you ten I can tell you the rest of it. Jackson spent all he had buying the mine—something like that. Anyway, he needs a fresh set of money in order to get into production. He can't get a bankroll through the usual channels—not and operate on the hush-hush. And along about there is where Uncle Charley came into the picture."

"I don't know all the details," the girl said.

"We ought to be close to that turn-off," he said. "Sing out."

"Around the next curve, I think. There's a little sign."

There was a weather-beaten sign spiked to the trunk of a tree. The road was nothing more than a faint set of ruts curving away into the scrub growth. Hack thought of leaving the trailer somewhere close by, and then decided against it. The girl was as jumpy as a rabbit; she'd probably try to bolt again if he stopped to unhook the trailer.

"Jackson," he announced, "here we come."

The road followed the backbone of the ridge. It was a crooked snake of a road, detouring for every stump and rock. It was full of short, sharp turns, and it was rough. Second-gear work all the way, and no time for talk until they were crawling up a long, steep pitch.

Hack said: "I forgot to ask how you got up here?"

"Walked. The bus dropped me at the turn-off." She drew a long breath. "The road forks before you get to the mine. I think both roads go to the same place, but I'm not sure."

"Which one did you take?"

"The left," she said.

"That's for us." He ducked as a branch scraped the top of the car. "I'm not going all the way in—not at first. I'm going to walk up and have a talk with Mr. Jackson. Then I'll come back for you."

"You're really sure he—he isn't dead?"

Hank was tempted to explain, to tell her how and why he knew Jackson was alive. But explanation now would make him something less than a worker of miracles when he produced the man, unhurt. A little mystery—a little cloak-and-dagger—lent stature to the hero act. And for a change it was nice to be something more than a man who spent his days taking pictures of other people's kids.

"Sis," he said, "I'll give you my word."

She flattened her hand on the dash, bracing herself against the bounce of the car. "I'd like to believe you." Her voice was taut again. "I don't want to go near that cabin, and yet I'm afraid to stay in the car. Silly, isn't it?"

"You can come along and wait outside," he said.

"I don't want to," she said. "But I will."

They had reached the fork of the road. Hack swung to the left. The road climbed steadily, slashing across a barren slope brilliantly lighted by the moon. Hack killed the headlights again. Far ahead, against the solid black of a shoulder of the hill, he found a gleam of light. He lost it briefly as the road dipped, and then it reappeared—the yellow shining of a lighted window.

"Far enough for now," Hack said.

He parked in the shadow of a small pine grove. Without the motor's sound, they could hear the small voices of the night, the murmuring of the wind, the creak and sigh of branches. The flashlight was on the seat beside Hack. He changed bulbs, whistling softly as he worked.

"Come on, sis," he said. "We'll leave Meat-head here."

The dog objected noisily. He lunged against the car doors, barking,

until Hack went back and slapped his nose; then he whined and pawed, his head thrust against the glass. The girl stayed close beside Hack as they walked across a long clearing. The cabin was above them, set hard against the face of the hill that reared steeply behind it, its outline lost in the black shadow there. Short of it, they came upon a crisscrossing of ruts. Beyond these was a rough, steep slope. They climbed it to reach a flat area, and found a set of rails—rusty steel and rotting ties. A tiny dump-car crouched on broken wheels against the tangled coils of cable, long useless, long unused.

"One door in that place," Hack asked, "or two?"

"Two," she said. "One opens almost into the mine. The track goes right past the cabin and into the hole. The cabin was a sort of office once, I think. There's a counter and an old safe—a stove, some hunks and a table. He fell down back of the counter."

"He won't be there now," Hack said.

There was gravel on the path beside the track; the sound of their feet seemed very loud. They went on until they could see the door, outlined by a filtering of light. Hack put his hand on the girl's arm.

"Wait here," he said. "I'll be right back."

He used the flashlight, swinging the beam back and forth across the weather-worn plank of the cabin's front. The single window was set high in the wall, crusted with dust and grime of the years. The doorstep had been adzed from a log; there was a latch thong of braided rawhide. Hack thumped the door with a doubled fist. He yanked the thong and walked into a long and cluttered room.

AND then he paused. No one was in the room, at least no one moved and no one spoke. A kerosene lamp burned on a plank table; half its chimney was black with the smoking of uneven flame. There were bunks against the wall on his right, both empty. Dishes and pans were stacked in a tin sink. A rude counter jutted from the end wall to the middle of the room. Beyond it stood an ancient safe, bulky and square. Beyond it, too, was a door open to the night. Hack pointed his light that way; the beam found rock, and the dark yawning of a shaft cut into the hill.

The lamp flame wavered and the shadows danced. Hack let his breath go in a long sigh. The mine shaft was a handy thing, a storm-cellar ready made. Jackson must have heard the toiling of the car or the barking of the dog—and run. But there was the gun, a .38 automatic, black and

ugly on the floor. Hack walked wide around it, a taut fluttering in his middle. He saw the hand on the floor at the counter end, palm up, the fingers curled. He wondered briefly if Jackson had heard the car and set the stage—same act, second show. And then he pressed the flashlight switch. "Good Lord!" he said.

The man on the floor was dead. He lay on his side, his legs doubled beneath the counter. There was a blood-stain on the thirsty wood of the floor; one side of his shirt was bright with it. He had been shot high in the chest—this Jackson—and he had fallen and rolled and kicked and died on the mud-tracked plank. He lay there, gnarled and thin, a bearded man, soiled with the violence of his dying. His clothes were back-country clothes—overalls, a hickory shirt and hob-nailed boots, one with a broken sole.

HACK PIPES clung to the counter end, sweat cold upon his hands. He found he was listening, listening hard, and then he swore. He forced himself to crouch beside the whiskered corpse. He turned the light upon the man's hands, his face. There was mud and pipe-ash in the man's beard, and that was sickeningly wrong—death with open eyes and an open mouth and mud ground into the flesh of the face. Hack touched the patch of stain. He swept the light wide over all the floor behind the counter. He peered into the corners, moving fast. He was standing beside the table staring at the lamp when the wooden latch of the door creaked against its catch.

"Wait," Hack said. "I'll be right out."

He bent over the gun, not touching it. His eyes found the glitter of brass beside a table leg—the cartridge case. He swore again, pulled now by a desperate urge for haste. He had another look around the room—wadded blankets, tattered magazines, dirty dishes, a lamp chimney black with soot. He went backward to the door. The girl was standing just outside, her shoulders pressed against the cabin wall.

Hack said: "We've got to get out of here!"

"I told you." Her voice was thin and brittle with strain. "I told you what happened. He is dead, isn't he?"

"We'll talk about it later," he said.

He put his left hand beneath her elbow and swung her into the path beside the track. The need for haste was a roaring in his mind. The stain on the floor alongside the man in that cabin was fresh. Not two hours old—fresh! Hack had touched it and found it wet, and that hero dream had crumbled and vanished. This was no place for Ellen Hale. This was no place for Hack Pipes, the wise-apple

photographer who thought he knew all the answers. They'd talk about it later—miles away, surrounded by men in nice blue uniforms.

Ellen stumbled heavily as though the last of her strength was gone. Her teeth were set hard in her lip, and there was the shine of tears on her cheeks.

"I told you," she whispered. "But you wouldn't listen."

Hack said: "Save it, sis."

Below them, the land fell sharply to the foot of the dump, then sloped more gradually to the far trees. The track curved to the left—over there were the broken cars, the coils of rusted cable. The path bent away from the track, clinging to higher and darker ground. Here oil-drums stood in a row: here cordwood was stacked between two pine trees. A splitting ax stood upright, blade sunk in a chopping-block, and a bucksaw hung on a stub of branch. There were wood chips underfoot. Hack pulled the girl to a stop, listening hard. The wind—he told himself the sound he'd heard was just the wind.

"Don't move another inch," a big voice said.

There was movement in the dark beneath the tree at the end of the woodpile. A boot gritted upon rock, and a tall shape appeared beside the trail, coming up behind them. The girl was a dead weight against Hack's side. He tried to hold her erect, but the flashlight got in the way.

The big man said: "Let go of her, Jack."

The man was no more than a yard away. Tall—cowboy hat and leather jacket, and dark, tough face. Light glimmered on metal in his hand. A gun! Cowboy Hat had a gun. Panic exploded inside Hack Pipes. He did not think or reason: he couldn't. His mind was full of the bearded face, the ground-in dirt and ash, the sightless eyes. That one was dead, shot to death, and this one had a gun. Hack exploded wildly and blindly. He shoved the girl away from him and struck with the flashlight. The light hit the gun, or the man's gun hand. The lens of the flashlight broke. He heard it break. He heard Ellen's frightened cry, below and to the left of him; and he heard Cowboy Hat's grunt of pain and a violent slamming as the gun went off.

Hack struck with the light again—first up, swinging at a face he could barely see—then down, with the full strength of his arms. It was a panic-stricken lashing out, a quick, continuous piece of blind violence; but he found a hard target with both blows. The side of Cowboy Hat's face, then the top of his head. The man went down, falling limply, and rolled, face to the moonlit sky. His hands were

empty—the gun torn out of his hand by the blow, or dropped and lost in the moment of his fall. He lay there, mouth open, his breathing harsh and heavy.

"Good God—" Hack said.

A violent reaction had taken hold of him. His hands were shaking, and his legs were shaking. No one but a madman would have taken the chance he'd taken; none but the luckiest could have got away with it. He'd been mad, then, and drenched with luck. But he'd had enough of both. He was leaving now, and fast.

"Ellen!" he yelled.

She was not in sight. He heard her voice, faintly, from beyond the edge of the slope. He'd put her over it with the shove he'd given her. The slope was long and steep, loose rock and gravel, and she'd gone clear to the foot of it. He called again, and she answered again, and then he found the dim white oval of her face in the shadows at the edge of the brush-covered bottom land. He went down the slope with a giant's leaping strides, and the slope moved beneath him, sliding and rattling. Halfway down, he thought of the flashlight. He had dropped his light. And that gun. He should have brought both the light and gun. He cursed himself for his stupid haste. But there was no going back. Not up that loose slope, not with Cowboy Hat coming to at any minute. He went on, slipping and scrambling, to the girl's side.

"You all right?" he asked.

"Y—yes—"

"Let's get out of here!"

SHE wanted to argue, but Hack Pipes didn't wait. He caught her wrist and lunged with her into the covering brush. Get his car, get out of here, get to town and get some law—that's what he wanted. Speed and distance. Stiff branches whipped and tore at them. Hack swore, and the girl moaned. He ran something like a dozen paces, hauling at the girl's dead weight. Then he stopped and turned on her.

"Will you hurry it up?" he said furiously.

"No—" she gasped.

"Why not? Are you hurt?"

"No—"

"Then let's go—let's go. He'll be on his feet any minute. He's got a gun, and he'll use it. We've got to get my car and get to town and get the law—"

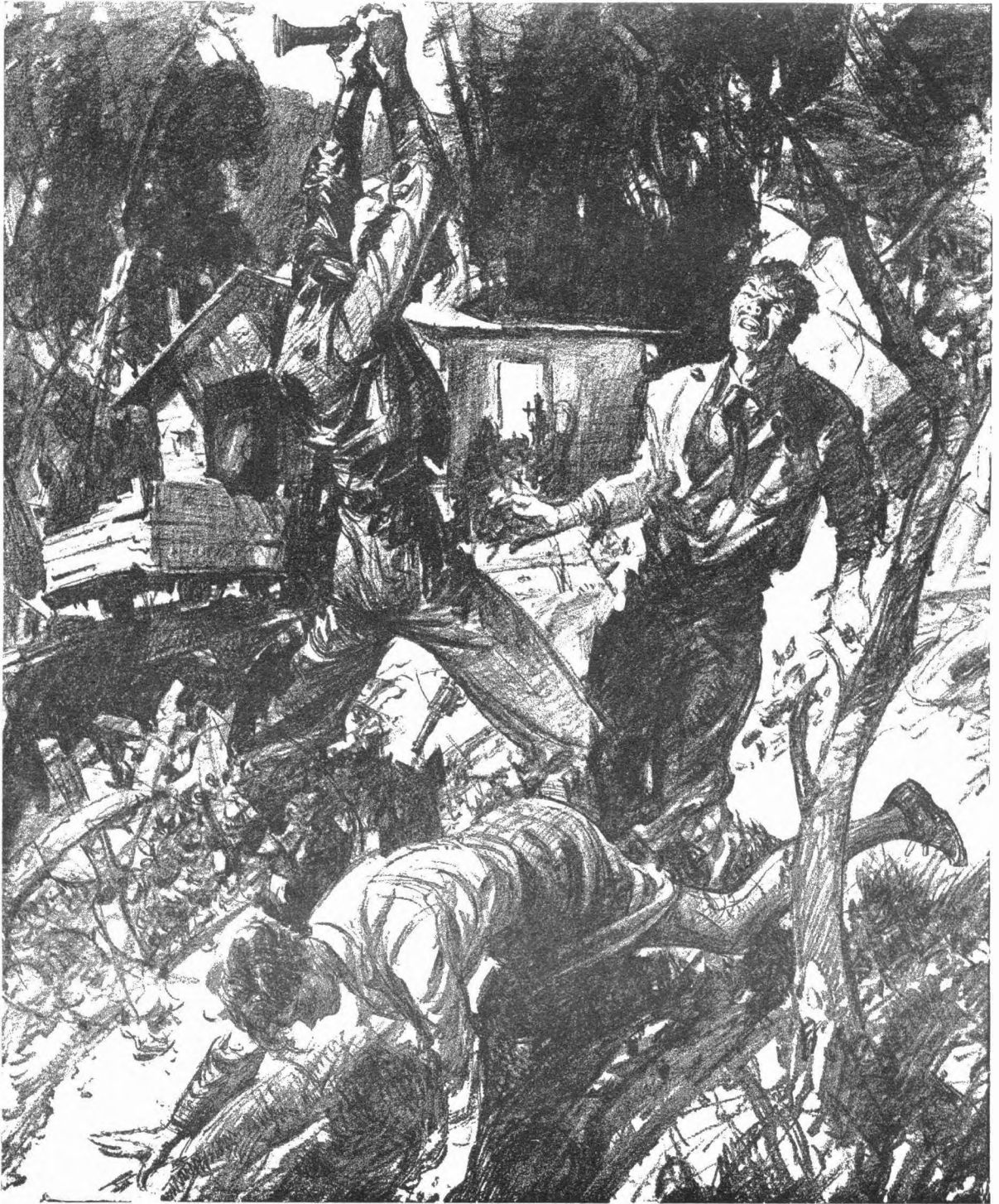
"That man—" Her face was tormented.

"The hell with that man!"

She almost screamed. "He is the law—he's the Sheriff!"

"What?" Hack's voice thinned. He said it again: "What?"

"You hit the Sheriff."



"My God!" Hack said. "How do you know?"

"I saw him in Pineville."

"What's he doing here?"

"He—he must have followed me."

"Holy Mother!" Hack said. He took a step away and then came back, his hands clenched. "This's fine. This's great. Now you tell me. You were going after him, but he was here all the time. We'll take an hour some-

Hack struck with the light—with the full strength of his arms.

time and get that explained." He looked back. He could see the top of the slope in the moonlight. Nothing moved up there. "Now what do we do?"

"I've got to go back and tell him what I did."

"You didn't do anything! You did not kill Jackson! I keep telling you." He lifted his clenched hands. "Somebody else did!" They were standing here, foolishly, making noise and wasting time. "Love of God!" He caught her arms and shook her. "You stay here," he said. "I'll go back. Maybe he's still out. I can sit on him till he comes to and explain it. Will you do that? Will you stay here?"

Her face was white. "I don't know."
"I know," Hack said. "You do what I tell you."

He left her and started back through the brush. He didn't like it; he didn't like it a bit. He had questions. Did the Sheriff know there was a man dead in the cabin? Did he know Hack hadn't killed him? That the girl hadn't? Hack reached the foot of the long dump slope. To climb the loose rock would take a couple of minutes—minutes spent in the full light of the moon. But to find the path would take longer and time was the essence. If he could get to the Sheriff while the man was still out and sit on his chest until he came to, he would have a chance to talk. Otherwise—

He looked up the slope again.

A shadow loomed at the top of it. A man tall on spread legs, hatless. A tongue of light flickered there. The sound of the gun and the thwack of the bullet came together. The bullet missed Hack no more than an inch. He tumbled back into the brush in wild haste. Another shot hammered the night, and another bullet slashed the brush close by. Hack was up and running and dodging them. There was going to be no talk with the Sheriff. No explaining. The man was on his feet, roaring mad and shooting at shadows. Hack found the girl and caught her wrist at a dead run. She did not hold back now. No one—not even a woman—was going to argue with bullets.

They ran as long as they could and as hard as they could. They changed directions several times. Too many times. Hack had no idea which way to turn to find his car. But the wild twisting and turning had lost the pursuer. At least, listening, Hack could hear no one trailing them. They stood in a patch of deep shadow, fighting for breath.

"**W**HY did he shoot?" the girl panted.

"Jumpy," Hack said. "Or maybe scared. I don't blame him. I slugged him, didn't I? I knocked him kicking. So now he's not taking any chances. There's a man dead in that cabin. Maybe I'm the guy who killed him—after getting slugged, he's probably sure I did. He'll shoot first and talk later."

"What are we going to do . . . ?"

Her voice was a wail.

Hack knew how she felt; he felt the same way. From here, it was going to be rough and no doubt about it. Besides the Sheriff, somewhere around and about, there was the man who had killed the man in the cabin. That one would be shooting at shadows too. And where was he? Hack's head turned like an owl's, back and forth,

searching the dark. His legs were shaking and it wasn't all fatigue. There were fragments of bitterness in his mind. Pipes, wise guy and know-it-all. Pipes, the poor man's photographer, had Galahaded himself and the girl into a fine mess of trouble. He should have stayed with his shutter-clicking; he hadn't been cut out for this kind of work. Also, and more to the point, he had to do something and do it quickly, even if it was wrong.

He caught Ellen's wrist again. "Let's go!"

"Where?"

"My car," he said. "We'll get out of here. We'll go to town. We'll find some nice friendly law. We'll give up quietly and hope for a nice, safe jail."

"No—" She set her heels in the earth.

"Listen," Hack said. "We've got a murderer loose in these woods. We've got a Sheriff hunting him. We're in the middle. Do we stay in the middle and get shot at by both of them? Or do we do our best to get the hell out of here? Come on, sis, tell me!"

She didn't know. She was willing to go with him until she had thought it through. They trotted through the brush for perhaps a hundred feet and came upon a road. Not the road Hack had used. Not a road anyone had used, for there were down trees here. This, then, was the right hand fork. Down the hill, down this lighted track, they would find the point of branching; from there it would be easy to find his car. But the road was a lighted trench in the woods; walking that they'd be fine, sharp targets. Hack swore and moved out into the open. No shot. No sound and no one in sight. He pulled Ellen out of the shadows and they ran again, for a hundred yards.

They rounded a curve and found themselves almost upon the bumper of a sedan—a dark and expensive sedan. Behind the sedan was a second car—a jeep. And it was a hellish moment, a moment in which Hack's mind was numb and blank. They were in the open, too close to do anything but stand and take it. But there was nothing to take. Both cars were empty.

Ellen said: "Uncle Charley!"

She jerked away from Hack's grasp and ran for the sedan. She looked in the windows, looked at Hack. "It's his car," she said. "He's here!"

"So he's here," Hack said.

He got her by the wrist again. He wasn't interested in Uncle Charley or Uncle Charley's car. He was interested in the jeep. It carried a buggy-whip aerial and had a Sheriff's star painted on its flank. The jeep blocked the way out for the sedan. Keep the jeep here and he would keep the pursuit here. The Sheriff and

Uncle Charley could stay and talk about smuggled gold and dead prosecutors. Hack ripped wires loose beneath the dashboard of the jeep and he ripped and yanked at the wiring of the radio on the floor back of the driver's seat. Then he got a firm grip on the girl and pulled her away from the cars and down the road. She resisted, holding back, saying: "No—no—" but Hack was not going to be held back. He had the pursuit anchored. Now for the left hand fork—his car, Pineville, a friendly cop and a safe cell in a stout jail. He wasn't going to settle for anything less.

Chapter Three

HE found the place where the road split, found the rutted track up which he'd taken his car and trailer. They climbed a short hill; the road leveled and the way opened. Hack could see his car and trailer. He cut across the clearing toward it. Running, he measured the clearing. There was room to turn. Get the girl in the car, get in himself: swing the car fast and hard . . . and with luck they could make it. Meat-head saw them coming and set up a happy bellowing, leaping from seat to seat. A fine welcome! A loud signal to the Sheriff, to the killer, to Uncle Charley, to anyone within a half mile that Hack Pipes and Ellen Hale were close by the car and dog! "Shut up—for the love of God!" Hack said.

A dozen strides farther on and he said, "For the love of God!" again, this time in despair. His car sat low on the rutted road—too low. A car that low had flat tires—four flat tires. Somebody—the Sheriff or Uncle Charley or somebody—had let the air out of the tires. Never mind who or when. The tires were flat. They weren't going anywhere in that car tonight. Hack passed the car, without pause, and went into the brush again, climbing. Meat-head's yelling became agonizing. They were leaving him again and he didn't like it. He said so, loudly and long.

"Wait—please—" the girl begged.

The way was steep, a rocky, brush-studded slope. Half the time her whole weight seemed to hang on the wrist Hack held. The going was hard, the pace cruel, but there could be no quitting. They needed every foot they could get. Every additional foot made them harder to find—more brush, more hill, more shadows—and Hack was going to be very hard to find before he stopped. They were going until they couldn't go a step farther—and then go on beyond that. Damn the brush and the rocks and the stumbling and falling—the hell with the



"The Sheriff was sitting in his jeep. I asked him the way."

bursting lungs and rubber legs! Distance they had to have and distance they got—to the top of the slope and a hundred yards along it. He found a huge cluster of boulders at the edge of a stand of timber. He got the girl into the middle of the cluster, dropped her on a patch of sand and fell beside her.

He was a beaten man. Flat on his back, mouth gaping, chest heaving, heart pounding. Never would he get enough air to breathe again; never would he be able to lift his head again. He was dead and he knew it. He was dead for ten minutes. Then gradually, he stopped gasping and heaving. After a while he could sit up. He sat up and looked at the girl. She was sprawled just as he'd dropped her: face to the sky, eyes closed, mouth open. She was scratched and bruised; her clothes were torn and dirty; her hair was a tangled mess. He brushed her hair from her face.

"Sis," he said. "How is it?"

SHE rolled her head from side to side but did not speak.

Hack got up, rocking on shaky legs. He picked his way to the edge of the boulder pile and knelt there. The moon still rode high and bright. The long slope they'd climbed was washed with silver and shadow. He could see

the car and trailer, five hundred feet below and a quarter of a mile away, well to the right. The mine dump, the cabin and the portal lay to the left, about the same distance away. All of the slope below was spotted with brush thickets, trees, heaps of rock, splashes of light and deep shadow. There were a thousand hiding-places down there, any one of them as good as their fort of boulders. A man would be a long time searching all of them. He'd need the balance of the night and then some. Hack decided they were safe, for the moment at least. He could take five, get his breath, and do a little thinking.

He had to think. This was a piece of serious trouble. Trouble of his own making. Pipes, the camera boy, hadn't been able to resist a chance to do a little showing off for a pretty girl. He'd been as silly as a schoolboy walking a fence, no hands. He'd told her he could work miracles. He'd told her he could bring the dead to life. What a fat-headed fool he'd been! The old character in the shack—Jackson, if that was Jackson—was going to stay dead. The trick, from here out, was going to be keeping himself and the girl alive.

He turned and looked back. Ellen Hale was sitting up. He called to her softly, and she came to drop on the

sandy earth beside him—a tattered and bruised girl, white of face, exhausted. "Sis," he said, "we're in a fix."

"I—I am," she said.

"Both of us. I'm in it too." He put his hand under her chin. "Up to here. The Sheriff's got me tagged for the murder of the old guy—if the guy I slugged down there is the Sheriff. You're sure about that?"

ELLEN HALE nodded. "I'm sure."

"Tell me why you're sure?"

"I saw him in Pineville. I told you that."

"Tell me again," he said. "When? Where? Why?"

"When I got off the bus this afternoon—or yesterday afternoon. I didn't know the way out here. He was sitting in his jeep at the curb. I asked him how to get here."

"You want directions," Hack said. "You ask a cop. Fine. But why did he come out? Did you tell him you had trouble?"

"No!" she said. "I didn't want—I mean, I didn't tell him anything. He said it was a long walk from the bus stop to the mine, and it was getting late. I said I'd wait until morning. Then he asked what I wanted up here. I told him I was—well, I told him I was an artist, and I was going to do some sketching."

"Was that the best you could do?"
"Why? Don't you think he believed me?"

"No," Hack said. "No sketchbook. Besides, lying takes a lot of practice. On you, a lie would stand out like a bandaged nose." He thought for a moment. "Suppose I'm a cop," he said then. "Suppose a good-looking girl tells me a big fat lie. I know she's going out in the wilds for something, and that by the time she gets there, it's going to be dark. Maybe I even see her on the bus. I'd be curious, wouldn't I? Even if I wasn't curious, I'd still have to check up. A lovely girl, alone at night in the wilds, is asking for trouble. It's part of my job—it's my duty—to look after her." He chewed his lip. "That's it—that's why he's here."

"What difference does it make?"

"This difference," Hack said. "You don't usually fall over a Sheriff in the middle of the night at the stub end of a back road miles from town. He had a reason for being here. You're the reason. He wanted to know what you were doing out here. And he found out—"

"Oh!" the girl said.

Hack turned. "Now what?"

He didn't need an answer. He knew what the trouble was. Ellen's head was bent; her hands were pressed to her temples; and there was fear and despair in every crumpled line of her. She was in the grip of terror again. She was seeing herself, the gun in her hand, the old prospector falling, the blood pouring from his mouth. She was seeing the police, the judge and the jury; seeing herself trying to explain that she had not meant to kill the man. She was seeing herself in prison gray, with bars all around her. Hack got hold of both her wrists and pulled her hands from her face.

"ONCE and for all," he said: "You did *not* kill that man."

Her eyes were tormented.

Hack shook her wrists. "How long before we got back here?" he asked. "From the time you left, I mean. A couple of hours, at least a couple of hours. All right. I'm no doctor; but I know when blood is wet and red, it's new. I'm telling you, sis. That man was killed just before we got here."

There was still torment in her eyes. "Are you sure?"

"Damned sure."

She looked at him a moment longer, searching his face. Then her hands found his jacket lapels and her face was pressed against his shoulder. She whispered: "Thank—thank you." And the gratitude in her voice was deep and real—as if he'd handed her an acquittal. Hack smoothed her hair with his palm. And it was nice—it was very nice.

He stiffened suddenly. "Listen!"
Something had moved, crashing through the brush on the slope below them. It wasn't a rabbit, and it wasn't the wind. Hack was frozen, listening hard until he heard the sound again. Then he moved fast. He pushed to his feet, and hauled the girl erect.

"Get out of here," he said. "Back in the woods."

Ellen did not want to go. Hack made her go. A hard shove sent her stumbling through the shadow of the boulders and into the deeper black of the trees. She went on until she was hidden in the dark. Hack wheeled back. He dropped and flattened under a low-hanging bush. Brush crackled again on the slope. Hack stiffened, and then sighed in relief. Meat-head! The dog lunged into view at a dead run, head down, following their trail. He came up the slope, found Hack, and trampled him with all four feet, wet tongue busy.

"You mutt!" Hack said.

He swung a balled fist at the dog. Meat-head evaded it easily, leaped past Hack and bounded into the dark of the pine grove. Immediately there was a squeal of fright. Hack winced. Meat-head had found the girl, pawed her and kissed her and scared her half to death. Hack thought about that, cursing the dog, and then gave his attention to the slope again. Meat-head had got out of the car—but how? He might have hit a door-latch with all his earnest pawing. They opened on a downward thrust. But maybe not. Maybe the Sheriff was smart enough to know the dog would find his master quickly in the dark. Just open the door and let the dog out of the car. Follow him—follow the sound of his crashing through the brush!

There was no movement anywhere on the slope. The odd, humped shapes were rocks and bushes. Hack waited tensely, trying to watch every patch of deep shadow as one moment ticked away and then another. If the Sheriff was on the slope, Hack couldn't find him. That did not mean he could not be there. He might very well be in any one of a half-dozen thickets, behind this rock or that. Hack swore beneath his breath. Now he would have to lie here for hours, wondering.

The girl said: "It was only your dog."

Hack started and whirled. She was standing beside him, erect in the moonlight where she could be easily seen by anyone on the slope. Hack grabbed her at the knees and dragged her down. The dog climbed atop both of them. Hack said: "For God's sake—" and managed somehow to catch Meat-head's collar and hold him still. An anxious moment passed. There was no shot from below, no yell. Hack waited. He counted to a

hundred slowly, before he allowed himself to relax. Standing up was one way to find out how safe they were—the hard way. There was no one—Sheriff, killer, or Uncle Charley—anywhere within sight of them. Hack was willing to gamble on that.

DOWN to the right a motor came to life—a jeep motor. There was no mistaking that sound. Hack knew it well; he'd heard it often enough in the Army. The Sheriff had managed to repair the torn wiring. Hack watched and waited and saw the gleam and swing of headlights as the jeep backed and turned. Then the sound and the lights were gone.

"How do you like that guy?" Hack said.

Ellen said: "Where is he going?"

"After reinforcements," Hack said. "What else? No man with any sense would beat this brush alone. He'll be back in daylight with fifteen or twenty men." Hack gave that some thought. "I'm all for it," he said. "Come daylight, we can give up without being shot at. If we're still alive, that is."

"What do you mean?"

"We've got a killer around somewhere, remember. Somebody shot that old character. Not you; not me. Whoever did it is still here. And your uncle is still here."

"Do you think he did it?" she asked.

"Do you?"

"No!" the girl said. "He's not a murderer!"

"Now that I'm glad to hear," Hack said.

He left the girl and found a seat close by, where he could put his back against a rock. He could watch the slope and the road as long as there was moonlight. The girl sat up. Meat-head crawled close to her and shoved his head in her lap. He had switched alliances. Hack scowled. "He's your mutt," he said. "I give him to you."

The girl dug her fingers behind Meat-head's ears. They were still then, the two of them, the woman and the dog. A nice picture, Hack decided. Who could look at them and believe the trouble they had? Hack let himself slide down on the sand. He didn't believe it himself.

Quietly, the girl said: "But you think he did."

She couldn't let it alone. Hack sighed. "No, I don't think so."

"Who did?"

"Should I know?"

"You seem to know a lot. I mean—you knew I didn't before we got here. Or that's what you said."

"That's the way it was."

"But you don't know who did it?"

Hack gave that some thought. "I can come close," he said finally. "I

don't know his name but I can tell you a lot about him. He's the roper."

She stared at him. "The what?"

Hack looked at the moon, and wondered how long it would be until daylight. He didn't wear a watch, and he knew very little about the behavior of the moon. At a guess, daylight was several hours away—a long time. He wanted a cigarette, and he needed water. But he wasn't going to get them until daylight. Down there somewhere was a man with a gun, and murder on his mind. Hack was not going to ask for a bullet by lighting a match or walking down to the trailer. He was going to stay here—right here—until dawn came and the law came. And then he and the girl were going to walk down into the clearing with their hands up and empty. The professionals, the lads in uniform, could take it from there. They could sort and probe and hunt until this thing came clear. Hack Pipes had had all he wanted. Meanwhile, there were the hours of waiting. And while he was waiting, he could talk.

"All right," he said. "I'll tell you about it: This gold-mine business. That thing down there isn't a gold mine at all. It's a prop in a confidence game, a swindle. They call it 'the big con.' The roper is one of the men in the racket. Your Uncle Charley was the mark, the sucker. The inside man was Jackson, the old guy who isn't with us any more."

Her face came up, shadowed.

"How do I know?" he said. "How did I know you didn't kill Jackson? I know the racket. You told me about your uncle. He was putting a lot of money into a gold mine, on the quiet, because there was a smuggling angle. I thought that sounded like the con. Then you told me how Jackson scared you so badly you shot him with his own gun, and how he fell on the floor with blood pouring out of his mouth. Ellen, that is the con. He cooled you out. He had a sack of fake blood in his mouth. He bit it when he fell. Very realistic, and very frightening. They call it a cackle-bladder, in the trade. Any time a cackle-bladder shows up in a hush-hush deal, it's a swindle—make no mistake about that!"

SHE was still looking at him. Maybe she believed him, maybe not.

"How do I know there's a roper?" he said. "The same way I know there are nine men on a baseball team. It takes nine to play the game. It takes a roper, an inside man and a mark to play the con. You can use more. Before Uncle Sam kicked the racket in the head, it was a pretty big operation. Now it's dead, except for a quick take like this one. This gold mine. There's a roper in this deal somewhere. That I know."

Quietly, she said: "You seem to know a great deal about it."

Hack grinned. "Sure," he said. "It runs in my family. A long time back one of our menfolks worked a shuffle like this. Got himself dressed up as an Indian, and peddled an island to a Dutchman. The Dutchman built a town there, place called New Amsterdam. Our boy made a fast twenty-four bucks on the deal."

She said, "This is hardly a time for joking."

Hack's grin went away. He looked at her, seeing the way her shoulders drooped, the way her head was bent. As if she had the weight of the world on her neck. She didn't think his jokes were funny. And why should she? Look what she'd had. A trip out here to keep her uncle out of trouble. Then a gun in her hand, and a whiskered character falling down with blood flowing out of his mouth. A two-hour hike, and then a ride with a wild photographer who said she hadn't killed anyone. Then the old guy dead, but good. The Sheriff shooting at her. A mad scramble through the brush to a hide-out on a hill. Her uncle was down there somewhere, and a killer was down there. Come dawn, the Sheriff would be back with an army. And more trouble. She wasn't half done with trouble. She didn't think his jokes were funny. Who would? In her place, Hack decided, he'd be flat out, beaten.

THINKING of that, he looked at her again.

The marks of the night were plain, even in this dim light: The snarls in her brown hair needed a comb: her skirt was soiled and torn. She was scratched and bruised and aching, and so sick at heart she could hardly speak. But she wasn't beaten. She hadn't given up. She wasn't going to give up and cry and come apart. No matter how bad it was she would always dig inside and find enough strength to go another round. One of the best, this Ellen Hale.

"Newspaper work," he said quietly. "That's how I know. I put in a lot of time lugging a press camera, shooting pictures for newspapers. It's an education. The people you meet! There's a bishop who calls me by my first name. A wonderful man. There're a thousand grifters, big and little, who know me, too. I know them. I know how they work. The con's an old racket. I've seen it often. Okay?"

Softly, she said, "I didn't mean—" "Forget it," he said.

They were quiet for a moment. Hack said, "Would you like a drink? Water, I mean?"

"I am thirsty," she said. "I—"

"There's some in the trailer," he said. "I'll get it."

He went and got it, and he got back. Nobody shot at him. He was glad, then, that he'd had courage enough to go. Her hands shook when he filled the thermos cup for her. He dropped on the sand beside her, close beside her. The long slope below them was almost dark now. The moon was low. And still the dawn seemed long away.

HACK said: "I'm going to describe a man for you. Tell me if you know him. He's a good-looking guy, probably young, smart and intelligent. Good company. He wears clothes well. He knows everyone who is anyone—at least he seems to. He has money and he spends it—the best hotels, the finest restaurants. He travels a lot. The odds are, he met your Uncle Charley recently, on a train, a boat, or in a plane." He turned his head to look at her. "How about it? Does it ring any bells?"

"Y—yes," she said.

"Fine," Hack said. "You've met him and you know his name?"

"Bert Wallace." Her voice was a whisper.

"That's our boy," Hack said. "That's our roper."

"No!" she said. "That's—that's impossible. He's a fine man. Good, kind, and—well, a gentleman."

"He's got to be all of those," Hack said. "Or seem to be, anyway. If he weren't, he wouldn't be a roper. All those qualities are the tools of his trade."

"I still don't believe it."

"Okay," Hack said. "I'll go a little further. This Wallace was a great admirer of your uncle. Thought he was a terrific business man and said so. Often! Then he asked Uncle Charley's advice about a deal. He didn't want money. Just the benefit of Uncle Charley's wide knowledge and experience. Then conferences. A lot of conferences. Reports, tests and ore sample. And then—boom!—the deal's cold. Dead! No dice, no anything. Wallace is now a sick boy. He's been flying too high. The deal's too big for his bankroll. He can't handle it."

"You're wrong." Her voice was stiff.

"But there was a deal?" He waited for her nod. "Just for the record, how big was the score? How much money was involved in this transaction?"

"Fifty—I think fifty thousand."

"And that was too much for Uncle Charley's fine young friend?"

"Well—yes, it was."

Hack turned to look at her again. "This Wallace—" he said slowly. "Is he by any chance a heart interest with you?"

"He's a close friend."



He was paying his way by taking pictures of children in this town and the next.

She said it crisply and fast—too crisply, too fast. Wallace was more than a friend. Hack felt a very real desire to cut a throat. Always, if it could be done, a con man made a pitch for the woman in the picture. With the woman on his side, he stood with his hand on the mark's bankroll. It would be so, at least, with Uncle Charley and Ellen Hale. And it was a lousy trick—it was a stinking, lousy trick. The guy had made a pitch for the girl and he'd somehow made it stick.

"It's tough," Hack said. "Your boy's a thief."

Ellen Hale said: "Bert Wallace is an honest man."

Hack sighed. "He's a con-man, and a con-man is a thief. I'll tell you something else, as long we're facing facts. Your Uncle Charley's got a fair share of larceny in his heart. There's an old saying that you can't beat an honest man. Any time a mark gets

clipped, it's because he thought he was going to make a fast and slightly dishonest buck. Uncle Charley was going to hold still for the smuggling. Not that any smuggling would ever be done. All the gold in that hole down there you could put in your eye."

"Uncle Charley had an assay made."

"With ore they gave him," Hack said. "Listen to me, Ellen: That mine is a front, a stage set. The boys in the trade call it 'a store'. The roper goes out and finds the sucker, the mark. He sells himself, first. That's where the confidence racket gets its name. Then he brings the mark and the inside man together and they're ready to roll. There are a hundred switches, but the pattern is the same. The mark sees a chance to make a lot of money. Not honest money, exactly, but spendable. Here, they had the smuggling angle. If this was the horse racket, say, they'd be getting advance information on race winners and using it to clip bookies.

It's always the same idea. The mark thinks he's going to clip someone."

"Uncle Charley isn't a crook. He's not!"

"What happened to Uncle Charley has happened to a long list of distinguished suckers," Hack said. "The smell of all that money deadens the conscience. He wants in. They let him in, finally. He's got to put up cash and he's got to keep his mouth shut. He goes away and back he comes with the money. Then something goes haywire—the wrong horse comes in, if it's the wire-con; they buy stock when they should have sold, if it's the rag-con. One way or another, the money's gone. So they've caught their sucker and they've peeled him. Now the trick is to get rid of him, to cool him out. There are various ways. A fight is one. Between the roper and the inside man, each blaming the other for losing the money. It is a fine hassle, big and wild, and the inside man finally pulls a gun and shoots the roper dead on the spot. The roper hits the floor, blood pouring from his mouth. The cackle-bladder, remember?"

SHE did not look at him. She was patting Meat-head's shoulder.

"All right," she said after a moment. "Then what?"

"The inside man hustles the mark out of the place, out of the store. He's going to square it with the police. That's what he tells the mark. The mark's got to get out of sight and stay out of sight until he hears from the inside man. He does—murder's big trouble and he wants no part of it. He waits to hear from the inside man, hoping he'll get a chance to get his money back. He never does." Hack rubbed his jaw. "That's the framework, rough and fast. There are endless variations. But one thing is always the same. The killing is a fake. The inside man and the roper split the score."

"The man down there is dead," Ellen said quietly.

"He is," Hack agreed. "And I'll guess with you as to why. Could be the roper decided they'd made a good score and he wanted it all. The big con isn't a going racket any more. One good score is all they can ask. Say that here the roper and the inside man traded rôles, that the inside man was the man to be shot. He'd be expecting it and he'd give the roper plenty of room. A live round instead of a blank and the roper's doubled his score. He can cool the mark out in the same old way. Why not?"

The girl was still. The darkness now was almost complete, only the far sky was lighted by the moon. Hack could not see Ellen's face; he could not guess how she had taken all

of this. But when she finally spoke her voice left little doubt.

"You're wrong," she said.

"In what way?"

"Bert Wallace is not a thief, and he is not a murderer."

"He's in it," Hack said. "What's he doing in it?"

"I don't know that," she answered. "Perhaps he didn't understand that it was—well, dishonest. If he got himself involved, it was mistakenly and with good intentions."

"Don't believe it," Hack said.

"I do believe it," she said. "And I'll continue to believe it. I trust Bert Wallace implicitly, and nothing you can say or anyone else can say will change that."

She meant what she said—not half-way, but all the way. And it wasn't, Hack decided, much of a surprise. She would be fiercely loyal to her last dying breathe. Blind, sure—the deepest loyalty was always blind. And stubborn. She was sold on Wallace with her heart and her mind, and she was going to stay sold. A couple of hours talk here at the thin end of the night could not alter that. It would take cold proof and a lot of it to change her mind. He looked down at her. When morning came she'd get the proof and a belt in the teeth she'd never forget. But right now she could do with a little rest.

"Let it alone," he said. "We won't argue."

She sighed tiredly, moving in the dark. Meat-head groaned.

"How long until daylight?" she asked.

"An hour," Hack said. "Two hours. Are you cold?"

"I'm all right."

She wasn't all right. Hack reached for her, fumbling; he found her arm. "You're beat," he said. "Come here." She let herself be drawn against his side, tense, but too tired to worry. He put an arm about her shoulders. It was a harmless arm and she could not help knowing that. Harmless and yet it offered warmth and comfort. The tenseness left her and she sighed again.

"Get yourself some sleep," he said.

She was quiet.

Chapter Four

AND it was an all right thing, holding her. A fine, sweet armful, a fine girl. A man could travel far and wide and never find another like her. Lovely brown eyes, brown hair and that golden dusting of freckles across her nose—hidden now in the dark, but Hack remembered them well. Plenty of courage, plenty of fight. And loyal. Ellen Hale was loyal like crazy. All that a

man could ask in a woman—in a wife. She moved now, restlessly.

"I can't sleep," she said. "Talk to me. But not about that—down there. Anything else. You. Are you still a newspaper photographer?"

"Not any more," he said.

"Well—" she said.

He told her about Hack Pipes; it was a way to pass the time. The woman-sweet fragrance of her hair got in the way, now and then, mixing him up, causing facts and dreams to run slightly together. Most of what he said was true, and what was not was only lightly seasoned with small, wry distortions.

He hadn't cared for newspaper work. One day was too much like another—a dull and weary grind. Anyway a man got tired of working for other men. Hack had. He'd wanted to do something on his own. Something—well, something besides leg art and mug shots. A piece of work with integrity. A fine job, perhaps an important job. A book, for example; every newspaper hack wanted to do a book. He was doing one, now, of the Northwest. Pictures, all kinds of pictures—cities, rivers, mills, parks, slums, mansions, people—everything that had something to say to a camera lens. It would be a record, when he had it done, a clear and honest look at a place and a time and a people. He was paying his way by "kidnaping," taking pictures of children in this town and the next. The way it had worked out it was chicken one day and feathers the next. But if the book was half what he hoped it would be, Hack Pipes had a future. . . .

"The only way to know," he said, "is to see the pictures. I'd like to show them to you sometime."

"I'd like to see them."

Her voice was blurred against his shoulder. She sighed and presently she slept. He wanted to ask her about Ellen Hale, who she was and where she'd come from and where she was going. But that could wait. He sat there, back to the rock, his arm about her shoulders. He watched the stars pale and tried not to think of what the new day was going to do to her. Uncle Charley was somewhere below them and the killer was down there. In spite of what he'd said, there was a good chance the two were the same man. If not, where was her uncle? Where was the roper? If they were here—and only the jeep had gone down the rutted track to the highway—why had they stayed?

He watched the far hills appear, black against the lightening sky. He fished for a cigarette, slowly and carefully, so as not to disturb the girl. She slept as quietly as a child. He looked down at her face in the grow-

ing light—lashes thick and long, tangled lashes. The faint dusting of freckles across her nose. Her cheek was scratched and there was a smudge of dirt on her chin, but she was all he had hoped she would be and more.

"Ellen," he said softly, "you're a lovely thing."

The sunrise set the distant peaks afire and all the shadows on the land thinned and melted. Hack found the mouth of the lower road. The girl had been right. One fork of the road clung to the bottom of the draw; the other cut high across the side of the hill. Both ended in the clearing. His car and trailer were just as he'd left them. He discerned the shining black top of Uncle Charley's sedan. The shack, the high rock dump, the black mouth of the mine portal—nothing moved down there. His eyes went back to the road again. The Sheriff, the lad with the cowboy hat, was due back any minute now, with half of Pineville at his heels—men and rifles and dogs.

"Rise and shine," Hack said.

ELLEN HALE woke. She opened her eyes and stared at Hack, her mind fumbling for just a moment. Then she sat erect. Her hands went to her hair, trying to bring some order to it. A difficult job. She gave it up, finally, with a wry shrug.

"I must be a sight," she said.

"Not bad at all," Hack said.

Meat-head got up and yawned. He came to nuzzle Hack's hand. Then he stretched and shook himself, and sampled the morning wind. Hack stood and arched his back against the ache of cramped muscles.

"I'll take a walk," he said. "Give you five minutes. The Sheriff's due any time. We'll meet him down on the road and surrender. Is that okay with you?"

She said it was.

Hack and Meat-head walked along the crest of the ridge together. Hack had a cigarette. Meat-head tore up the countryside in pursuit of something that had left a hot and interesting trail. Hack went back to the cluster of boulders. Ellen Hale was not there. Hack decided she was somewhere close by and leaned against a rock to wait. A moment dragged by and then another. Hack began to worry. A call brought no answer. He searched the immediate area and came back to the edge of the slope again. Still no Ellen Hale.

Hack swore.

His glance went to the portal of the mine, drawn there by movement. A man was standing on the track, just short of the tunnel mouth. It was a long way down there—too far to see a face clearly—but not too far to know the man was tall and well-dressed.

And young—he wore a young man's clothes: hat, sport jacket and slacks. Bert Wallace. The name leaped into Hack's mind. The tall man down there had to be Bert Wallace. Who else could he be? While Hack watched, the man went back into the mine.

Then Hack found Ellen Hale.

She came out of the thick scrub growth beside the road. She was on the road a few yards from the foot of the sloping rock dump before the mine and the path that climbed it. Hack yelled. Ellen turned and he waved at her desperately. He wanted her to come back, but she did not. She hurried up the twisting path, climbing toward the cabin and the entrance of the mine.

Hack went down the slope at a dead run, swearing at every jump. He knew what had happened. She'd seen Bert Wallace, too. Wallace was her boy. She hadn't believed Wallace was a thief and possibly a killer. She hadn't believed one word. A guy named Pipes had done a lot of explaining, but who was Pipes? A stray photographer, a stranger who'd happened down the road. Ellen had known Wallace longer. She knew him better, liked him better. She trusted him. She was going wherever Wallace went. That Ellen—that blindly loyal, stubborn woman. She'd find out about her boy—the hard way.

Hack yelled at her again.

She was on top of the rock dump near the shack. She did not look back. She bent and straightened. Bright metal glinted in her hand. The flashlight Hack had dropped there. Hack lost the girl when he hit the path that climbed the rock slope. He climbed hard and fast, slipping and stumbling. The girl was not in sight when he reached the top of the dump. She was beyond the cabin. Hack passed the cabin. The portal of the mine was beyond the cabin. No Ellen. But light glimmered inside the shaft, far inside. The girl had gone into the mine.

"Mother of God!" Hack whispered. He went in after her.

THE shaft ran straight into the hill, slanting down a little. There were rough and rotten ties underfoot, fallen rocks, rusty rails. The walls and roof were rough-timbered, the wood was wet and rotten. The going was bad even when the faint light from the portal fell on the track. When the dark thickened it was impossible to move faster than a hurried walk. Ellen was perhaps two hundred feet ahead of him. He could see her legs outlined against the dim and watery glow of the lensless light. She was hurrying. A yell of command built in Hack's throat. He held it. Yell-

ing was no good. He had to get his hands on her.

She stopped and he gained a little. She'd turned her light down a side alley. The light swung back; she went on and then stopped again. Another side stope. This hill was a honeycomb. Hack held his breath, cursing. If she left the main shaft he would lose her. But she went on again, following the ancient track. Hack thought he'd cut the distance between them in half. No more than fifty feet to go now.

"Ellen!" he said. "Wait!"

She didn't stop. He tried to run. A long stride, another, and he tripped and fell. He was on his hands and knees in a litter of broken rock when he heard the shot. The sound came from everywhere, echoing hollowly, booming, as sourceless as a drum-beat must be inside a drum. Hack's head came up. He watched the light. It had stopped moving but it did not fall. Ellen had not been hit. She went on again, running now. Hack called to her. No answer. He pushed himself up and went after her. She had the light; she could see the tunnel floor. He was blind and stumbling and she drew away from him.

He lost the light. The shaft had turned. He was a long time reaching the curve and finding the light again. The watery beam was moveless now. Ellen was standing still. Just before her the tunnel split, going to the right and left. A column of rock seemed to stand in the center of the shaft. The light was pointed at the foot of the column. A man was sitting on the floor of the shaft there, his back against the column of rock.

Hack reached Ellen's side.

The man on the floor was a short, stout man with a Santa Claus belly and a face as round as last night's full moon. He wore gray tweed, the good gray tweed, a bow tie and glasses with wide black rims. He was sitting with his fat little legs spread comfortably, his hands loose upon his thighs, his head canted and bent. One side of the gray tweed was dark with stain. Hack knew without being told that this was Uncle Charley. And it did not matter now that he'd had a touch of larceny in his heart.

The light beam wavered and jerked away from the still figure; it brushed the walls and ceiling, falling. Ellen Hale had dropped the flashlight. It hit the track and went out. Cold darkness smothered them.

"He's—he's dead!" Ellen whispered.

Hack groped for her in the darkness. Finding her, he turned her and held her close. She did not weep. She clung to him, shivering, her face against his chest, her hands clutching and working on his lapels. The little man there against the column had

been a sucker, a mark, and a bit of a thief. But he'd been her uncle and finding him dead here had torn her to bits. She needed comfort, but there was no time for it. She needed holding but that would have to wait. The shot they'd heard had killed this man. And they'd heard the shot no more than two or three minutes ago.

PULLING away from the girl, he went down on his knees. He wanted the flashlight. He fumbled blindly for it. Broken rock, ties, rails, the ends of ties and more rock. His hands moved in widening circles. He lost skin and gathered slivers. He had to have the flash—not for the light it gave, for the bulb was gone—for its heavy length and the weapon it made. He searched until he found it. On his feet again, he blundered into one of Ellen's hands, pawing at the dark. Her fingers were claws, hard with fright. She caught his arm, caught his head and tipped it down. Her whisper was wire-tight:

"I—I think I heard something!"

"Where?"

"Back there I think—back, the way we came!"

Hack set his jaws. He'd found, just now, that fear was contagious and that complete, black darkness was a perfect conductor. It flowed from her to him like a high-voltage current. He couldn't have it. If fear got loose in him in this dark he'd be a gibbering idiot. He found her shoulders and bit into them with his fingers. The harshness of his grasp was as much for himself as it was for her.

"Come on," he whispered.

They had to get away from the body of her uncle. The sound behind them had blocked that route. He drew her after him and felt his way into the tunnel that branched to the left. Slowly and carefully and as quietly as he could, he went a dozen, two dozen steps. Then, moving to the side, he felt in the blackness for the wall. Heavy timbers and plank. He pushed Ellen into a space beside a square upright and flattened himself beside her.

"What are we going to do?" she whispered.

"I wish to God I knew," Hack said.

They were motionless, listening. They could hear their own breathing, their thudding hearts. Water dripped upon stone. And that was all; there was no other sound. Hack tried desperately to think. He had to think fast and he had to be right. Make a wrong guess now, make a wrong move, and they'd have a flashlight beam on them—they'd get what Uncle Charley'd got. Hack cursed himself and the mush he had for brains. He couldn't think. He had no place to start.

"You're this Wallace," he told himself. "Take it from there—"

So he was Wallace. He'd shot Charles Hale. He'd just got it done when a couple of people had come along. The light and the noise they'd made had given him plenty of warning. He had a minute, maybe two. What would he do? He wouldn't know who the people were or what they were. He'd have to hide and stay hidden until he did know. Where? In one of the side stopes back toward the entrance. So they would pass him. So he would be able to get out of the mine ahead of them, if that seemed best. Or block the entrance-way and trap the two.

That's where Wallace was now. In the mouth of one of the side stopes, a little way back, waiting and listening.

Hack put his mouth close to Ellen's ear.

"How do you like that guy now?" he said. "That Wallace?"

"Do you think he did it?"

"You followed him in here, didn't you?"

"Yes—"

"All right," Hack said. "He came in here. He scratched your uncle and he'll scratch us. You should've listened to me."

A soft moan escaped the girl.

Hack set his jaws. This was no time to gripe, and scaring Ellen would do no good at all. The problem now was to get out of here—alive. He had to think hard. Put himself in Wallace's spot. How did it look from there? Wallace had probably had a glimpse of Ellen's face and recognized her. He'd be wondering who the man with Ellen was. There was no label on Hack Pipes that said he was a shoestring photographer. So he might be anything. Maybe the law. Probably the law, if Ellen had found out about the swindle . . . and her presence here must mean she had. If the man with Ellen was the law, he'd have a gun. He'd have help outside, or there'd be someone somewhere who knew the whole story and would implement a search if the need arose. Hack decided, in Wallace's place, he'd stand fast and do nothing until the picture came clear.

How long would that take?

Not long. If the man with Ellen Hale was a cop, he'd start prowling. If he had help outside, they'd be coming in to see what had gone wrong. Five or ten minutes. Make it ten. After a ten-minute wait Wallace would be sure the man with Ellen Hale was not the law and was not armed. He'd know they were a couple of rabbits. He'd search and find and shoot. He'd take the money and hit for the high hills, sure he'd

have time to be long gone before anyone came to search this old mine.

It wasn't a pleasant picture.

Chapter Five

HACK thought of the Sheriff then. Bert Wallace didn't know about the Sheriff. He didn't know Cowboy Hat had gone to Pineville and was due back presently with reinforcements. It seemed to Hack he ought to be able to use that information somehow. What would the Sheriff do? Back with the boys, he'd comb the hills outside. Finding no one he'd come inside, into the mine. Wonderful . . . but when? Hack swore bitterly to himself. He knew when—after a lot of searching and talking and getting worked up to it . . . sometime along in the afternoon, and a fat lot of help Cowboy Hat and his boys would be then. No. Hack had to do something and do it fast. They had ten minutes or less. He drew the girl close.

"We've got to split up," he whispered.

"Oh, no!" Her fingers clutched at him. "No!"

It was a rough prospect for Ellen to face. Hack knew that. But he knew, too, he had to sell the girl the idea. Fear would do it. If he gave her a choice she would take the least frightening. He drew her back along the shaft a little way, carefully, and then placed her against the wall. He held her face in his two hands, his lips close to her ear, whispering.

"Ten minutes," he said, "and we're dead."

"No—he couldn't—" She was pleading.

Hack said, "He killed your uncle."

"We don't know that he did. It might not have been Bert. It could have been someone else—"

"No one else had a reason." Hack put his chin against her hair. "Ellen, he planned to cool your uncle out by killing Jackson. A real killing and not a fake. His store was good for only one play and he wanted all the money. Then you showed up. And Uncle Charley wouldn't cool out. Maybe murder was too tough for him and he wanted to report it . . . to protect you, to make a clean breast of it—something. Anyway, Wallace killed him to shut his mouth. You hang no higher for two than you do for one."

"But you and I," the girl said. "Surely—"

"Yes," Hack said fiercely. "With us alive he hasn't a ghost of a chance of beating the rap. We know him. We know what he did and why he did it. With us out of the way, he's got a chance. Slim, sure. But the

slimmest chance is better than no chance at all. You know that."

"But four—"

"What's the difference—two or four. After the first one it doesn't matter. He'll do it. He has to. I'm telling you he'll be after us in a few minutes. If we stay here and stay together, he will. Believe me."

"But alone—I couldn't stand being alone."

"Yes, you can," Hack said. "You're scared, sure. I'm scared. But we've got to do something. Together, we're sitting ducks. Splitting up, we've got a chance. Like this. You stay here, right where you are, back against the timber. I'll go out and take the alley on the other side of your uncle. Up there, I'll make a lot of noise. He'll think it's both of us. He'll come after us. You wait till he goes by the mouth of this tunnel and up the other one. Then you get the hell out and fast."

"But you," she said. "What about you?"

"I'll keep going," Hack said. "I can go farther and faster alone. Maybe I can get him to pass me and get a crack at him from behind . . . something. Anyway, you'll get out. The Sheriff should be out there now. It's daylight and you won't have any trouble talking to him. Tell him the fix I'm in. Tell him to bring the boys and get me out. Okay?"

"I can't!" she whispered.

"You've got to!"

ELLEN'S arms went around Hack's neck. She clung to him, afraid to let him go. And he didn't want to leave her. Alone and frightened half to death in the darkness—it wasn't good. But to stay with her was worse. He had to leave her, somehow. He tipped her head and found her lips with his lips. Her cheeks were wet and her lips were cold. They pressed against his, hard. Out of fear, he thought, begging him to stay, and that was a hell of a thing. He took her wrists and broke her grip. Holding her wrists, he shook them gently.

"You've got to," he whispered into the dark. "And you can do it. Let him go by. Be sure of that. Be sure he's gone into the other tunnel after me. Then get out fast."

"Hack, please—"

"Don't miss," Hack said. "Don't move or make a sound until he's past you. Stay ten minutes, stay an hour if you have to. But do it right." He had to get that firmly in her mind. "Will you?"

"Yes—but—"

He let go of her wrists and stepped quickly back. He was only a few feet from her, but the dark was absolute; and once his hands were gone she was as alone as if she were on the moon.



He heard her frightened gasp. He knew she was terrified, pressed against the wall, moving her hands in a frantic search for him. It was difficult to leave her, almost impossible, but he did leave her, moving quickly and quietly. He got the flashlight out of his pocket and held it clubbed in one hand. The extended fingers of the other hand found the wall. He followed it back to the turning. There he paused. Slowly, with infinite care, he moved out and bent over, swinging his hands in front of him. A step and then another. His hand brushed the shoulder and then the face of the small man who sat with his back against the rock. He had expected it, and still it was racking. He jerked his hand away, flinching. He almost dropped the light. And then he stood quite still, cursing himself and his ragged nerves. Wallace must now know the two who had passed him were unarmed. So a clattering here would bring a light and a shot and the end of a promising photographer.

He was out in the open, facing the corpse. A little way beyond and to the right was the tunnel he wanted.

He moved carefully around the space where the dead man sat. He found and crossed the right-hand track and moved on, gently, until his extended hand touched a wall again. He guided himself along it and into the right-hand tunnel. Now he was on his way. He counted his steps. At thirty, he stopped. Thirty yards, perhaps a little less. He needed that much start and thirty yards gave him a fair chance unless Wallace was an expert shot.

Now for the noise. It had to be loud and it had to sound like a stumbling accident. He stowed the flashlight under his belt against his stomach. Using both hands he felt along the wall. Shoring. Heavy timbers, old and rotting planks, and behind the planks loose rock. He found a broken edge of plank he could get a grip upon; he jerked it suddenly with all his strength. The plank cracked loudly coming away. Loose rock rattled down in a cascade. Hack swore aloud. He yelled, "This way—" as if to the girl. Then he turned deeper into the shaft, earnestly hoping the sounds he made would indicate two people

in stumbling flight. Another thirty yards or so, and he stopped again.

There was no sound behind him. Nothing. Hack swore desperately. If Wallace didn't follow—he had to follow. Hack swore again. Wallace might be waiting just a little longer, waiting to be sure. Hack found a packet of paper matches in his pocket. He struck one, lit the remainder, and threw the pack quickly away from him. The light flared up and then

*"Sit easy," Hack said.
"Unless you want your
teeth knocked out."*

faded. It seemed intensely bright after the utter dark; it would be visible in a mile of tunnel, barring turns. If it didn't bring Wallace, nothing would. And it didn't. There was no light, no shot and no sound of an approach.

"No good," Hack said. "No dice!"

He backed against the tunnel wall. His trick had gone flat on its face. Bert Wallace had not been fooled and now time was running out. Hack thought of Ellen, alone in the dark, waiting as she had been told to wait for the sounds that would tell her the way to the tunnel mouth was clear.

"Fresh out of future," Hack told himself. "Both of us."

AND that was a coldly bitter thought. He wished now that he'd stayed with Ellen instead of making this wild, wrong guess. Not that he could have done anything at her side—a broken flashlight is no good against a gun—but at least an arm to cling to, a chest to press her face against. Hack rubbed his jaw and found sweat. He tried to visualize this shaft as he'd seen it in the brief flaring of the packet of matches. Wide here. A little wider than the long entrance tunnel. The floor sloped up. The walls fell indefinitely away to make a low gallery. Water dripped back in there. And another sound: the scrape of a shoe upon rock.

Wallace had not been in one of the side stopes. He had heard them coming. He had seen their light and he had gone down this shaft, deeper into the mine. Instead of baiting Wallace

down this shaft, Hack had blundered toward him. Ellen was in the clear, though there was no way to tell her that. The match-light had positioned Hack, and Wallace was coming out. When he was close enough to make a miss impossible he'd use his light and gun.

Hack leaned away from the wall to bend his knees and crouch. He put the flashlight down, carefully, and then he searched the floor with his fingertips for bits of rock. He gathered four or five. Still crouching, he scaled one toward the entrance of the mine. It hit and bounced and beneath its brittle clattering there was the choked, short gasp of an indrawn breath. Hack tossed another rock. This time the sound of its fall was the only sound. Hack waited. Presently he heard a soft footstep and then another.

There was sweat on Hack's hands. He could feel the cold trickling of it across his ribs. His stomach was jumping like a yo-yo. This ruse was working. Wallace was stalking the sound, trying to close with the clattering before he used his light. Hack flipped another rock and then he sought and gripped the flashlight. He knelt beside the track. Company coming—and company was going to be slugged hard across the knees. Wallace would be carrying his gun high, hip high at least, a finger curled on the trigger. Smashed across the knees he'd fire. And if the gods were good the bullet would go high into the dark.

Hack struck too soon. Betrayed by eagerness, he lunged before Wallace was fully abreast of him. The flashlight brushed a leg—not solidly and not hard enough to drop the man. And Wallace yelled. He kicked at Hack, trying to escape the arms that sought his legs. Hack pulled him down. He caught Wallace's belt and climbed the man, seeking his hands, seeking the gun. He was kneed savagely. A fist hammered at his head. They hit the wall and fell and rolled. Hack butted the face he could not see. He was hit again. One hand was clubbing at him; another was clawing at his eyes. Hack lay across Wallace. He got his fingers into Wallace's hair and bounced the man's head against the rock. The breath went out of Wallace suddenly. Hack straddled him then. He lifted the man and slammed him down on the tunnel floor.

Now it was done. Wallace no longer moved. Hack opened his hands, wary and waiting. He rolled Wallace's head from side to side and when nothing happened, he found and lighted a match. There was blood on Wallace's lips. His mouth was open.

A pulse-beat pumped strongly in his throat. Hack patted Wallace's pockets, hunting for the gun. He used another match to search the floor, and found a rubber-covered flashlight, a heavy-duty job, lens and bulb intact. He used it to complete his hunt. No gun. He heaved the unconscious Wallace up and propped him against the tunnel wall. He went through his pockets carefully—wallet, handkerchief, matches, but no gun and no holster of any kind.

Hack sat on a tie-end. In spite of his hurts and bruises, he felt wonderful. He pointed the light at Wallace. The man didn't look murderous, but what killer did? Just average, this man. Twenty-eight or thirty, a clean-shaven, well-dressed, well-shod man of about Hack's height. Hack rubbed the stubble on his jaw and then he scowled. He leaned forward; with his finger-tips he rubbed the flesh of Wallace's face. The man was freshly shaven. He had used a razor and hot towels and lotion no more than an hour or two ago. And that did not fit—it simply would not fit.

Hack stared at the man, his mind numb. Then he tucked the light beneath his arm and slapped Wallace's cheeks with his open hands. Wallace groaned. He drew a shuddering breath and then his hand came up to shield his eyes from the light.

"Sit easy," Hack said. "Unless you want your teeth knocked out."

Wallace said, "Who are you? What do you want?"

"You," Hack said. "You're what I want—a part of it, anyway. Tell me, how many of you are there in this con? And where's the lad with the gun?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," Wallace said. "I came up here looking for Charley Hale. His car was out there but he wasn't, so I thought he was in the mine. I heard a shot. I found Charley sitting on the floor. He was dead when I found him." He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "I still don't know who you are."

"A friend of Ellen Hale's," Hack said.

"I called Ellen yesterday, but she wasn't home—"

"Quit it," Hack said. "You know she's here."

"Oh—good Lord!" Wallace set his jaws. "We bought into this mine yesterday. Charley Hale brought the money up here—cash, forty thousand of his, ten of mine. He was supposed to come back to Pineville last night, but he didn't. That's why I came up this morning—to find him and to see what we'd bought. There was no one around outside. That's why I came in."

"You found Hale dead?"

"Yes. Then I saw a light coming—"
"And hid." Hack rubbed his jaw. "Man'll you'll have to do better than that. This's the big con, and you're in it up to your ears."

"The what?" Wallace said. "The big what?"

"The con—the swindle. You know what it is."

"I bought part of the mine, part of Charley Hale's share. I waited for him in Pineville." Wallace wet his lips. "I can prove I waited in Pineville. The desk clerk saw me in the lobby until after two. I left a call for four o'clock. I had coffee in an all-night place across the street from the hotel—"

Hack said: "Who rigged this swindle? Who set it up?"

"I bought part of Charley's share. That's all I know."

"You were a sucker and so was he." Hack's voice was harsh. "There's no gold in this mine. The whole set-up was rigged to clip the two of you. But who did it? How did Hale find out about this mine?"

WALLACE stared into the light. "Hunting—he hunted down here."

"Not alone," Hack said. "He didn't find this place by accident. He was led here. Who brought him here? How'd he find the place?"

Wallace said, "He camped here with Lundberg, the man he hunted with every year. Sheriff Ben Lundberg."

The breath stopped in Hack Pipe's throat. Cowboy Hat. The man had not trailed Ellen Hale up here; he'd come with Uncle Charley—with the mark. He'd pulled the trigger on the cool-out gun. Hack's mind jumped past that. It didn't matter how or why the live round had come to be in that automatic. It had been there; that was the only important thing. Jackson was dead. The old pattern—roper, inside man and mark—had been smashed wide open. And then Hack Pipes and Ellen Hale had arrived to wreck completely whatever Lundberg had planned.

"Good Lord!" Hack said.

The Sheriff had not gone for help. He'd gone to ground somewhere nearby where he could watch the outlet road and wait for dawn. He'd hidden Uncle Charley in the mine—probably when he'd heard the approaching car. Then, just before or just after daylight, he'd re-entered the mine to talk to the little man in the good gray tweed, the little round man who'd reached for a quick dollar and found a gun against his side instead.

"Come on," Hack said. "We've got to move!"

"Suppose I don't want to go with you?" Wallace said.

"Then sit here until you get what Hale and Jackson got," Hack said.

"Not that it matters much—the way it looks, you'll get it anyway."

"Jackson?"

"In the cabin, behind the counter," Hack said. "You'd have seen him if you'd taken a look inside."

Wallace said:

"What about Ellen?"

"Waiting in the first side stope."

There was time in the scrambling moment it took them to reach the spot where the light fell upon gray tweed to give Wallace a brief picture of the night. "I had you figured for the ropers' part in this steal," Hack said. "But no beard and no gun—that makes it Lundberg's show." Hack turned the light into the shaft where he had left Ellen. "She isn't here," he said. "She did exactly what I told her to do. She heard the fight and ran for help."

"Maybe we can catch her," Bert Wallace said.

They wheeled and ran. Wallace was limping heavily, but he did not complain. They rounded one bend and then another, the long reach of the light showing them only bare walls and ties and rusty steel. The side stopes were empty. The track curved again and the tunnel mouth was in sight. Ellen was in sight. She was outside the tunnel, beyond the shack, standing in a patch of sunlight. She was outside the mine, alive and alone. Hack swore in relief. No Sheriff . . .

"She's all right," he said. "I can see her."

"Thank God," Bert Wallace gasped.

ONWARD they ran, slipping and stumbling. Hack felt like a man reprieved. He hadn't killed her with his foolish thinking after all. Two dead had been enough for Cowboy Hat. He'd taken the fifty thousand and the long chance of a running start.

"Ellen!" Hack yelled.

She saw them in the tunnel mouth. Her hand flew to her lips. She did not answer his call or come toward them. She stood there, staring and frightened. Hack got it then. She saw Wallace behind him and she thought Hack had lost the fight.

"It's okay," he said.

Still she didn't answer. As Hack and Wallace passed the shack, she closed her eyes. Her hand had slipped down to her throat, trembling. Hack caught both her arms.

"It wasn't Wallace," he said. "It was the Sheriff."

"I know," she whispered.

Wallace turned at once. His breath made a sucking sound. Hack's turn was much slower. He was in no hurry. He was dead inside. He knew what he'd find. Hack Pipes, the wise apple, had missed again. Two dead

had not been enough for the Sheriff. He hadn't taken the long chance of a running start. He was here.

He was sitting on his heels, cowboy fashion, in a slanting piece of shade beside the shack door. His cowboy hat was on the back of his head, a stalk of grass was between tight lips and a gun hung from a relaxed wrist laid across his right knee. He had waited with Ellen as bait until they had come. Now he had them. And he didn't need to lift the gun to prove he had them. His stare was enough. He was watching them steadily, his eyes very pale against the deep tan of his face and very cold.

Hack said, "Damn it to hell—" at the end of a breath.

The Sheriff said nothing.

His eyes had picked Hack to bear upon. The man's clothes were wet and muddy—tunnel mud and tunnel seepage. Hack saw an angry swelling on the left side of the Sheriff's brown jaw. Knowing he had put it there with a clubbed flashlight was a small satisfaction—small and soon lost. Nothing could hold against the level deadliness of the Sheriff's eyes. They said Hack Pipes was to blame for all of this.

"Yes, you—damn you!" they said.

Hack had blundered into the Sheriff's store, and had turned an easy touch into a murderous shambles. One killing the Sheriff could have managed easily. He'd had only one before Hack had stumbled into the picture. Then he'd had another. And now he had three more. Five were too many to allow him any but the thinnest hope of going free. He knew it well. He knew, too, if he let them go he had no hope at all. The Sheriff was sitting there now with this horrible task before him, with his own capture and death somewhere beyond it—because of Hack. His eyes were hating Hack as much as a man could hate.

"Two ways into the mine," Hack said. "Two entrances. You wanted somebody in there when the shot was fired so you could double back and nail that one coming out—and use him for a goat. But it went haywire. There were three of us . . ."

There was no reply.

"You can't do it," Hack said. "Not five—"

The Sheriff's pale eyes moved to Ellen and paused, to Wallace and paused, and then came back to Hack Pipes. And the flesh at the corners of his eyes was a little tighter now. That was answer enough. The girl was going to be very difficult, Wallace less so, and Hack almost a pleasure.

THE way of it was all that held him now.

If there could be a way of hiding this, a way of shifting the blame,

Lundberg wanted to find it. Even a time of doubt and confusion before the pursuit centered upon him would be worth while. And there were possibilities: He could take them far back in the mine, or deep into the hills, or stage this so as to throw the guilt upon Hack or Wallace. Each way had to be thought through, and while Lundberg was thinking there was time.

Hack cursed. Time for what?

Wallace, beside him, was open-mouthed and staring. Ellen Hale was as still as death. Neither of them would be of any help. Hack Pipes was the one who was going to do whatever was going to be done. And what could he do? He could stand there shivering and swearing in a cold sweat. There was nothing else he could do.

HE was eight feet from the Sheriff, across open, sandy ground, in full sunlight. He had Wallace's rubber-encased flashlight in his hand—a poor weapon against a gun. He looked at the gun again, still hanging from a relaxed, brown wrist. That it hung thus was proof that the Sheriff was not worried about Hack and his flashlight.

Hack pulled his eyes away. The road, dusty and shade-splashed, was empty. The sky was blue and cloudless and empty. The brown hills were empty. No. There was Meat-head. Hack's eyes stayed with the dog. He was coursing across the slope above the mine, hell-bent on a stupid chase of some kind. Remembering the way the dog had leaped upon the girl, Hack felt a moment of hope.

His eyes went back to the gun.

"We'll go into the mine," the Sheriff said.

He started up from his heels.

"No!" It was Bert Wallace.

The Sheriff waited. "No?" he asked.

"No—" Wallace drew a ragged breath. "There—there's no reason to—to take me."

The Sheriff was on his heels again, listening.

"I—I won't talk." Wallace's mouth was still slack. His lips were trembling and there was sweat on his face. He shuffled his feet and took himself away from Hack and Ellen, separating himself from them. The Sheriff's eyes followed, narrow, intent. "I give you my word," Wallace said. "I won't talk."

The Sheriff's mouth thinned with derision.

It was a futile waste—the Sheriff could trust no one—but Wallace made a try. The strain of watching and waiting, knowing what the end would be, had broken his nerve. He came apart. His pitch was a disgraceful

thing—an all-out groveling, a selling of the soul. He was on his knees to the left of Hack and Ellen. He gave Hack a brief glimpse of his eyes, strained and wild, and then he gave himself to the Sheriff. His pleading became sodden. He moved toward the Sheriff, crawling.

A good boy, that Wallace, Hack thought. A stout heart!

Watching him tied Hack's stomach into a sick, hard knot. He shifted his weight slowly to his toes. He wanted a break. It didn't have to be good. Any sort of a small break was better than going into the mine with the Sheriff. The Sheriff stood up. His eyes flicked to Hack and back to Wallace. Wallace was quite near. The gun was alert now. Lundberg could swing it easily and fire before Hack could cross the eight feet of space between them, break or no break. They both knew it. Wallace had reached the Sheriff's feet, hands outstretched. Lundberg kicked the hands.

"Get away," he said. "Get up—"

Wallace moaned and rolled and groped. The Sheriff kicked at Wallace's hands again. Wallace's pleading became louder, more abject. The Sheriff suddenly had had enough of it. He could stand no more. He bent and hit Wallace with the gun.

Hack threw the flashlight and dived.

The Sheriff saw him. There was plenty of time. He saw the flashlight, ducked smoothly and let it go by his head. The gun swung up. There was nothing Hack could do but hope and pray and keep diving. The gun hand leaped; the gun roared. Hack felt no pain at all. He hit the Sheriff waist-high, showing at the gun arm, and they both went down in a wild and desperate scramble.

The gun was the answer. Hack forgot everything but that. He went for the gun arm with his hands, got the wrist and clung to it. Lundberg was a wild, wire-hard, fighting fury, more than a match for a soft photographer. The legs alone could destroy Hack, lashing at his middle and groin and knees. But Lundberg's legs were caught and held, tied by Wallace's arms and Wallace's weight. Without the legs to worry about, Hack could manage the rest. He got a knee in Lundberg's throat. He tore the gun from Lundberg's hand, reversed it, and hit Lundberg on the side of the head with the barrel of it. The strength and fight went out of the hard body. Hack got to his feet, gun ready, and backed away.

"Okay, Wallace," he said. "I've got the gun."

WALLACE let go of the Sheriff's legs, rolled, and got to his feet. The Sheriff's pale eyes found Hack and the

gun. He didn't want any more of the gun or the man behind it. He stayed on the ground. Wallace wiped his hands on his shirt front and blew a hard breath. He was no longer a groveling coward. He was a coldly serious young man, tough, capable and thoroughly angry. He flopped Lundberg over. He ripped Lundberg's shirt into cords and bound his wrists behind his back. Then, erect again, he booted Lundberg with the flat of his foot.

"That's for believing it," he said.

"You can't blame him," Hack said.

"It was a terrific act."

Wallace said: "You didn't believe it."

"No," Hack said. "I'd tangled with you in the mine. After the scrap you put up in there, I knew what you were doing." He grinned then. "For God's sake, man! You got us out of it. What're you beefing about?"

"I got us out?" Wallace said. "You're the one who jumped the front end of that gun. You didn't know I could make him miss. I didn't know."

"He missed—" Hank shrugged. "We win."

Wallace said, "What next?"

"The State Police and the D.A."

"You heard the man," Wallace told Lundberg. "Get up."

The Sheriff was no longer bleakly assured. He had lost and the losing had made him haggard and old. He did as he was told, without protest. Wallace pointed him down the path. Lundberg had gone only a few steps when the brush on the slope crashed loudly. Meat-head burst into view, running hard, mouth wide, red tongue lolling. He hit the trail ahead of the Sheriff, spun and leaped and punched the Sheriff in the chest with stiff forelegs. The Sheriff went over backward. Hack watched the performance sourly. It was all he'd hoped it would be—though more than a little tardy.

"That's my boy," he said. "That's my Meat-head."

THE long day was finally done. John Schwartz, District Attorney, Pine County, a grizzled man of fifty-odd, folded his hands atop the stack of reports upon his desk. "The money," he said, "has been recovered. It will be returned in due time and used, I trust, to a better end the next time it is taken from a bank."

"Yes," Bert Wallace said.

"It wasn't hard to establish alibis for you people." He pushed his glasses up and rubbed his eyes. "Mr. Pipes knocked on many and many a door yesterday. Mr. Wallace was in Pineville at the time of Jackson's death. Miss Hale was with Mr. Pipes. Presented with these facts, Lundberg decided to co-operate. Jackson was

the root of the whole sorry mess. An ex-confidence man, he was a prisoner in the county jail. Lundberg met him there and they planned the swindle together. It didn't work because Lundberg wanted all the money and used a real bullet instead of a blank. Also, Charles Hale was an honest man, only temporarily bemused. As soon as the gun went off he wanted no part in any attempt at a cover-up. After hiding for some hours in the mine he insisted the whole thing be reported to the authorities. It cost him his life."

Hack said, "What about us?"

"You'll have to come back," Schwartz directed. "But only briefly. We'll let you know in plenty of time."

He was still at his desk when they left the room, a gray man, gray and tired. They went down a long hall and out into the twilight. They paused, the three of them, on the walk just outside the courthouse door. Hack's car and trailer were in a parking lot close by. Meat-head was over there, sprawled beside the trailer door.

"I CAN offer you a drink," Hack said.

Wallace said, "It's a long way to Portland."

"I'm not thirsty," Ellen said. "But I would like to see your pictures." She smiled. "And say good-by to Meat-head."

Wallace said, "Do that. I'll get my car."

He grinned and thumped Hack's arm and left them. Hack and Ellen moved on toward the trailer and the dog.

"I'm in Portland often," Hack said. "Going through, I mean."

"I'm in the book," Ellen said quietly.

"Last night," Hack said. He fumbled for his keys. "Look," he said. "You know what I mean. You were right about Wallace and I was wrong." He unlocked the trailer door. "He's a nice guy—"

"A friend." Color flamed in Ellen's cheeks.

"If that means what I hope it means," Hack said, "come here."

He put his hands upon her shoulders and that alone was wonderful. She came into his arms and Hack closed his eyes as a man should for a kiss that meant as much as this. And he was kissed. He was pushed off-balance by Meat-head's weight; kissed by Meat-head's wet red tongue.

Ellen laughed delightedly.

"Lie down," she told the dog. "Lie down, sir."

Meat-head obeyed; for the first time in all his life Meat-head obeyed a command.

"Well," Hack said. "What am I waiting for?"

A short novel of adventure with our experimental camel corps in the Southwest. . . Franklin Pierce was President, and his friend Jefferson Davis, the Secretary of War, authorized the experiment. Admiral Porter brought the beasts from Egypt.

CAMEL

STACY TRENT stamped along the rude board sidewalk of Grommet Village, slashing his heels on the rotting slats in vicious blows that sent startled lizards scuttling roadward in snap-tailed fright. Tall and deep-chested, with the smooth-muscled frame and sturdy legs he liked to see in his own troopers and horses, the stamp of command on his firm-jawed face was concealed now by a blur of anger. The dusty campaign hat was pulled low over his forehead, and parentheses bracketed his tight lips. Cavalry yellow was in the kerchief at his neck, and the broad yellow stripe of his blue breeches disappeared into spurred knee boots creased with stirrup grooves, marking him a mounted officer as surely as the fringed gauntlets on his hands and the low-holstered Whitneyville revolver at his waist. Behind him perspired a slack-jawed baggage-smasher from the depot, a heavy trunk balanced on his bowed back. If any idlers had foregone the traditional siesta to stand in front of the Grommet House, or to lean apathetically against the weathered false-fronts that lined the street, they'd probably have been wondering why a cavalry officer was walking. Stacy Trent knew they'd be wondering. And he was prepared to tell them it was none of their pop-eyed business. Disloyalty! Camel duty! What the hell was that?

WITH sorrowful reluctance he had looked at the entry in the Horse Book. *Bay Trooper, officer's charger, from Sick to Died.* The Army buried its soldiers with military honors—why not its horses? He could imagine old Cromby ordering a funeral for a horse. For Bay Trooper at that, the horse that beat him out of first ribbon in the Battalion Show year in and year out. Be just like the old blowzer to rejoice instead, knowing that now Trent would have to rank a trooper out of his horse—something no good troop commander would do—or else use a scraggly cast-off until the spring draft of remounts came in from San Francisco.

Bay Trooper. Trent had spotted the regal head and the Arab cast to that tail at Fort Leavenworth when



Watching Garrity and the soldiers close warily on the oncoming rider,

SOLDIER

by FRANKLIN
M. DAVIS, JR.



Trent felt foreboding as he saw his patrol circle and come back.

he'd been dub lieutenant in the Second Dragoons. He'd worn patched boots, kept his dress blouse practically past decency, even foregone leave until he'd saved enough of his meager pay to buy the animal from the Government. Brought him along through ten years of service which included Cerro Gordo, the storming of Chapultepec (where Winfield Scott himself had cast an approving eye over the magnificent barrel and gleaming croup of the big bay) to say nothing of the long bruising marches to this corner of the desert. Well, the Army was clinching the bonds of empire in a Vulcan's forge fed from blinding heat, vicious terrain and gold fever. He'd seen friends go down before from desert ague, the Walapai, or the bone-sucking service. Bay Trooper was another on the growing list.

HE'D initialed the entry, handed the book to the clerk, and strode out of the orderly-room. Outside, the sun hit him like a blow. The glare stabbed under the brim of his hat, skewering his eyeballs as the heat swelled across the Main Parade in shimmering waves. Fine sweat on the back of his legs dried out with prickly speed, and his breeches felt hot around his thighs. This was desert heat, roiling out of the California caldron, cooking moisture out of the air, burning the membranes of the nose, even turning shaving lather to powder before it was barely spread on the face. It was, as Major Elkanah M. Cromby, Commanding Officer of the First Battalion of the Mounted Rifles was fond of saying, "A Yankee sharper's version—mind you, Trent, no offense when I say Yankee sharper—yes, a Yankee sharper's idea of what hell ought to be. Yes. Heh!" The puffy Major never explained why a Yankee sharper's idea of hell was any worse than hell itself, but he patently thought it was, and Trent had long learned never to question his commander's devious levity. It was that rare. . . .

Trent had walked on, the hot air going sharp with dust into his lungs, morning sounds struggling painfully to him through the pall of heat. The deep clang of the farriers at their

forges behind the line of stable-shacks and corrals, the ragged crackle of gunfire from the pistol range backed against Crying Child Grotto, the measured voice of a corporal drilling recruits in sonorous tones now peaked in exasperation, then dropped in heavy sarcasm. "Will you get it, or do I hafta do it meself? Hup, hup, hup, hup. Nah then, Squads right, Harch! You on the end! Didn't they learn you your lel' from your right when you was gallows-jumpin' in the Flagstaff jail? Hup, hup, hup, hup—" Renegades, runaways, strays—they preferred the eleven dollars a month and steady beans and coffee to the uncertainty of life for the weak and inept on this fringe of the West. The gold-fields attracted a man, sure. But when the dream was past, and you found you couldn't eat the salt-sweat, that brook-gravel wouldn't cook in those shiny pans, that a sluice-box was a poor place to sleep, and the gold was going to somebody luckier anyway—well, the Army dollars were few, but they were steady. If a man could make it anywhere at all out here, he did. Otherwise, he enlisted.

Over where Non-Coms' Row shrank in futile retreat from the sun, a long straggling line of mud shacks reeling uncertainly away from the more symmetrical line of Battalion Headquarters and Officers' Row, washing hung in listless loops on sagging lines; children and dogs panted in the glare. Off to the north, backed against the rusty spines of the Old Woman Mountains, a rising dust-cloud plumed gently into the hard brilliance of the sky. That would be Leydecker's troop, in from the last wagon escort. Trent shook his head. It was a mistake, pulling that escort off. They'd see it yet.

The sharp notes of Officers' Call leaped from under the flat képi of the bugler posted in front of Battalion Headquarters. Trent quickened his long stride. The Major didn't like his officers to be late, even for routine daily formations. Exchanging salutes with the sentry mounted at the mud-brick building, Trent clumped over the porch, went up the three steps and ducked under the door frame. Inside, he glanced at the notice-board. He stopped. A note in the Adjutant's mincing copperplate said: *Mr. Trent. Report to Commanding Officer.*

What was this? He'd seen the Major at stables that morning, and he'd indicated nothing except his usual testiness.

TRENT walked by the clerks who sat driving pens over reams of foolscap after the chimeras of Army administration. The stack of telegraph flimsy on the sergeant-major's desk rattled at his passing. At the Adjutant's door

Trent spoke to flabby Lieutenant De Groot, a weak-willed young braggart stuffed into a soft body that radiated distaste for men, horses, the desert—everything about the Army except the paper work.

"The Major wants to see me before Officers' Call, De Groot?"

"Right."

"What for?"

De Groot deigned no answer. He jerked his shaggy head toward the doorway across the hall. Trent stooped under the sign painted, *Major E. M. Cromby, Commanding*, took four steps across the frayed cords of the patched carpet, clicked to a salute and said, "Sir, Lieutenant Trent reports to the Commanding Officer as directed."

Major Cromby, the puffs of too little exercise gullied by the lines of too much whisky on his discontented face, returned the salute with a flop of his arm. Still a major after twenty-seven years of service, he wore his battered oak-leaves with an air of defiance, as though denying they were anything but temporary. The bulging forehead gave an impression of academic brilliance his educational background could confirm, but it was in the command of the battalion that you saw his long years in commissioned ranks had taught him no more about handling men than he knew the day he entered West Point, a thin-haired Virginia plebe in the class of 1831. His lack of progress he attributed to jealousy, selfishness and lack of appreciation on the part of his seniors. It was never any of his own doing. Eventually strangled ambition was replaced with picayune observance of routine detail, without the cool insight that marks the successful officer with his career still ahead. Worse, the Major saw all men in his own mold.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Trent. The unhorsed Mr. Trent. Pity you didn't know that feed was bad. That should be a lesson to you, Mr. Trent." The grubby hand rustled some papers on the desk. "But you're here on another matter, Mr. Trent—another matter entirely. It's my understanding you had several comments to make in the mess last night concerning the discontinuance of the escort. Is that correct?"

Trent flushed. *De Groot!* "Sir, I didn't intend—"

"You're grown up, are you not, Mr. Trent?" The voice was cold, its edge keen. *This is dissection of character*, its tone said, *a favorite game*. "You are a grown man, thirty-one years of age, Mr. Trent. You are responsible for your acts, are you not?"

"Yes sir, but—"

"Then do you believe yourself more capable than General Clark?"

"Naturally not, sir." Trent looked at the Major as he leaned back in his

cane chair, the battalion colors glinting behind him, his thick-buttoned blouse a band restraining the wads of flesh under his arms, the swollen chest heaving in and out as though the heat squeezing the walls of the room was making him breathe by compression. "That was a private conversation, purely."

"Private conversation? You call it a private conversation when five of the officers in this battalion heard you remark"—the Major referred to a paper in front of him, his breath whistling in flared nostrils—"What people like Clark and the rest of these old foofs can't get into their oblong heads is that these damn' Walapai are products of the hot country? Do you consider it loyal, do you consider it supporting the decisions of your seniors, when you say: 'All right, pull off the escort, but watch 'em all scurry around when a wagon train gets butchered out in the middle of the desert somewhere?'"

"Sir, it was simply table-talk in the mess. I meant no disloyalty. I was expressing an opinion."

"Is that your opinion, Mr. Trent?" The voice was low now, the pea-bean eyes were twisting deeper into the bushy-browed sockets.

Trent tightened his mouth. "Major Cromby, I simply expressed an opinion on a tactical decision because it affects me and my troop as much as anyone else. But I indicated in no way that I would fail to support the decision."

"It is your opinion, then?" Triumph, now.

Trent took a deep breath. "Yes sir, it is. I feel it's my privilege as a member of this command to state that thinking the Walapai are beaten down just because wagon trains have been crossing the desert unmolested for seven months is a mistake. These aren't north country cold-weather Indians; these are hot-weather Indians, they're Aztecs! And they don't act, think, fight, or do anything else like those cold-country Indians. When we pull the Army escort off those wagon trains, we're making a serious error!"

"Mr. Trent!" The Major leaned forward in his chair. "It may be news to you to discover that neither General Clark nor myself are at all interested in the poorly-thought-out and worse-expressed opinions of immature little boys, be they thirty-one-year-old lieutenants or not. You'll confine yourself to your military duties. Leave the staff estimates to those who are qualified. When your opinion on the policies of your seniors is desired, you'll be so notified. And to make certain you apply yourself to your work—here." He tossed a yellow mes-

sage form across the desk. "Read it, Mr. Trent. Read it."

Trent picked up the message.

HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA, TO OFFICER COMMANDING FIRST BATTALION MOUNTED RIFLES, FORT BEALE, CALIFORNIA. 18 APRIL 1858. YOU WILL DETAIL ONE OFFICER OF YOUR SELECTION TO DUTY WITH PROVISIONAL CAMEL DETACHMENT AT GROMMET VILLAGE. OFFICER TO PROCEED WITHOUT DELAY TO REPORT ON ARRIVAL TO MR. THEOPHILUS PAGE, GOVERNMENT AGENT, GROMMET VILLAGE.

LIEUT COL CLARK,
BREVET BRIG GEN, COMMANDING

In Trent's ears his own voice sounded flat and ragged. "I'm to be detailed to this—this—" It was hard to say *duty*. Provisional Camel Detachment! The camels were the joke of the Southwest. What was the old man trying to do?

"Precisely, Mr. Trent, precisely. Ever serve with camels, Mr. Trent?" The Major lowered his head, his chin bulging over a brass button at his collar. The eyes were peeping out from under the overhanging brows in snide anticipation of a joke soon to pop from between the fat lips.

If he thinks I'll rise to his bait, he can go trot.

"No sir," he said. "I've never had the opportunity." He said it as if being detailed to the camels was as usual as being designated Officer of the Day.

The Major tugged at his pulpy nose, his eyes flicking over Trent's face. "The Secretary of War is very much interested in this, ah, project. Great military value, he says. Of course, the horse has only served this Army for fifty years. Now we'll have camels. Well—" The lips stretched. "There are thirty camels at Grommet Village, and about fifteen Arab handlers. Get your instructions when you report. Do a good job there, Mr. Trent, and—" The Major paused and looked up sharply, as though trying to read the reaction on Trent's face. "Do a good job there, and you'll be eminently qualified. Heh." The black eyes were ready for the joke now. They crouched. "You'll be eminently qualified to handle camels as a guide at the Great Pyramids of Egypt. You'll go down in history as the first mounted officer to ride to duty on a camel." The Major cocked his head then fired a snorting laugh, his eyes recoiling in delight. "Heh!"

Trent stiffened, his hands clenched alongside the yellow stripes of his breeches. "I have no doubts about my ability, sir; but there is some doubt in the wisdom of sending a qualified troop commander to serve on a detail of dubious military value."



"I am Berber—from valley of the Zig. My men, all Berbers."

The Major shrank into his seat, a terrapin shocked because somebody hit him on the nose with a stick. "Mr. Trent!"—his voice a hoarse whisper. "Mr. Trent!" Color flooded his face and the wattled neck arched out of the stiff collar of his blouse. The words came in a rush. "Let me remind you, Mr. Trent, you'll either accept the detail without question, or you'll stand arrest in quarters pending court-martial for disloyalty." He slapped his hand on the desk with a noise that made the colors rustle behind him. "And if your career is as precious to you as you'd give the impression it is, then"—he swelled—"go to Grommet Village, and count yourself lucky!"

Trent's breath came fast through his nose. Sure! Toss in a comment about his career. Of course it was precious to him. Would he be sweating out here on the edge of nowhere if it wasn't?

And a charge of court-martial! It'd never stick. But there was no choice. Any court-martial, acquittal or not, was finish to a career. Promotion and pay dodged the officer whose Washington jacket showed even a suspicion of disciplinary trouble. The Major had him spread-eagled. And he knew it. Camels!

"Very well, sir."

"You may move out as soon as you turn over your troop. Dismiss'."

Chapter Two

TRENT stood under the sloping porch roof of his quarters, his belongings tucked in the neatly-strapped trunk locker beside him, every trace of his life at Fort Beale wiped as clean as the floor his orderly was swabbing down in the room inside. Almost every trace, that is. He smiled to himself. He'd been thinking he had time before the stage came to walk over to the sutler's beyond the headquarters for some tobacco. Then he admitted he didn't need any more tobacco than the pound he had in the trunk locker already. Why not be honest? The grin broke out on his face as he chided his self-deception. He turned toward the orderly, the smile chasing the bitterness from his face. "Durkee, I'm going over to the sutler's a minute. If the stage comes get the locker on board and come after me, will you?"

"Yes sir." Durkee went on with his sweeping. Trent stepped into the heat. It was hardly mid-morning, and the place shouldn't be too busy. Maybe Content Henneker would have a moment or two to spare.

Inside the sutler's, the sharp smell of whisky lingered over the big casks



Trent wished that he'd said more in the past to this girl Content Henneker . . . but he'd never felt he had enough—and now he had even less.

in the corner bar, and the sawdust was spread evenly across the floor, ready for the onslaught of the day's traffic. Bolts of turkey-red cloth were a housewives' bright challenge on the pine shelving over the long counter that held pins, needles, shoe-laces, pens, paper, playing cards, gloves, belts, spurs, pipes, insignia and the countless other items of necessity and petty luxury that made the sutler the Army's personal peddler.

In his corner, Conrad Henneker bent a graying head over the ledger, scrawled a note, then looked up as Trent's steps clicked across the sawdust. "'Morning, Mr. Trent. About ready, huh?" He closed the ledger with a slap of finality. Trent thought with a little twinge of pain that there was fitting accolade for his departure. The ledger closed with a slap. What would it take to open the book of Fort Beale and the Mounted Rifles again?

He refused to let the thought linger, but smiled at this big nut-faced man and said: "Well, I guess, Mr. Henneker. But I'll be back—"

"You hope." Henneker grinned. Thirty years of following the Army had given him steely sun-wrinkled eyes that were as adept at seeing through a man as they were at detecting counterfeit coin. Obviously he knew the

doubts that had been drilling at Trent as he came through the door. Brushing some ashes from his wrinkled waistcoat, he hooked big arms through an alpaca coat and said: "Don't know why I insist on wearing this damn' thing in this heat. But if I didn't wear my sutler's coat, somebody'd think I'd quit, I'll be bound, and that'd be bad for business." He shrugged into the jacket, settled a broad-brimmed hat on his head, and moved toward Trent. He was smiling with his mobile mouth, but in his eyes there was an entreaty for Trent to read. *Take it from an old gaffer, it said, don't ride this thing too hard. You're young. Time heals everything. You can do a good job down there.* And the years had left enough on his face to make the message worth reading. He shook hands with Trent. "Watch yourself, Stacy. You know how to handle things if you'll think them over a bit. Let the old man have his blow. He can't cut you

down." The hand gripped Trent's. "Good luck to you, boy." Then he turned and called: "Content, keep an eye on things, will you? I got to go over to headquarters and confer with Brother De Groot." He went out after slapping Trent on the shoulder—hard.

CONTENT HENNEKER came from behind the curtain that hung over the door to the back room. Looking at her dark-eyed loveliness that lent dignity without formality and charm without brassiness to the simple dress that flowed over her high-breasted figure, Trent wished that he'd said more to this girl in the past; and that now, when it was too late, there was some way of getting everything into a few simple words. He didn't know why he'd hung back, when you got right down to it, except he'd never felt he had enough. And now he had even less. She had ordinary hair, he thought, except there was something about the way she piled its dark lights above her smooth wide forehead. She had the usual number of eyes, but you remembered their swimming depths when you forgot everything else. Her nose looked like anyone else's, except that the little tilt that destroyed the classic line without spoiling its appeal was all her own. Her lips were only average, unless you took notice

of the sweet curve of the lower lip against her even teeth, and then you knew there was no sense in calling it average, because it wasn't. His chest tightened a little as he said: "I've come to say good-by, Content."

"I know." Her voice was low as she moved slowly to the window and stood looking out. "I saw you come across the Parade."

"Were you watching for me?"

She turned; there was something in her face he couldn't read, as though she might have shut a ledger of her own. "Oh, Stacy, what's the point? You've noticed me when it suited you; you've danced with me when you felt like dancing; you've ridden with me when you were going that way. Now that you're leaving, don't try to give the idea it means anything to you."

"Suppose I said it did?"

She looked at him coolly. "That's an easy question to answer. Because if it did mean anything, you wouldn't be going in the first place."

Surprised, Trent said: "Why, that's silly. You know, the whole post knows, that I'm not going of my own accord."

"That's just it. You never see anything as your own doing. For goodness' sake, are you a recruit, that you don't know better than to talk like that in the mess? Must you always act first and think afterward? Don't you suppose you hurt people who're interested in you, just because you can't see your job in proper relation to yourself?"

"Are you interested in me?"

Color flamed in her cheeks. "No, I'm not. But I'm like some of your friends. I hate to see a young officer make a complete fool of himself."

"You can stamp your foot if you want to."

Her voice was quieter now, and she looked back at the window. "I should think you'd have had enough of foot-stamping to last you quite a while."

Trent was silent a moment. That was what she thought of him, then—a foot-stamping little boy! He tried a new tack. "Won't you feel sorry for me, down there with all those camels, the whole Southwest giggling at me, with never a friendly word from anyone?"

Content moved toward him. "That's what you want, isn't it? Somebody to feel sorry for you, isn't that it?"

"Maybe."

"Let me tell you something, Stacy Trent. The day you turn out to be something besides a selfish little boy, that's the day I'll feel sorry for you. Why don't you look on it as a new job? A challenge? Why don't you go on down there and do the very best you can, instead of worrying about people laughing at you? May-

be the camels are an answer—who can say until they've been tried? But no, you have to mope around as though you'd been ordered to the ends of the earth, as though you'd lost your last link with the Army. Put yourself in the Major's place for a minute—what would you expect him to do, now honestly?"

Trent twirled his hat in his hands. When he looked up at Content, he was struck with the way she was looking at him, much as though he was a fractious child and she the stiff-backed young school-ma'am. "You're just like all the rest of the ladies, aren't you, Content? You get around the Army for any time at all and you think you know all about it. Did it ever occur to you that maybe I was right about what I said? They never handed out brains according to rank, you know."

"But it's the system, isn't it, Stacy? Doesn't the Army oath you take say you'll carry out orders you receive from your lawfully appointed seniors?"

"For goodness sake, who's talking about orders? Did I ever say anything about not following orders? All I did was make a couple of comments about a poor tactical decision, that's all. That greasy parasite De Groot had to go tell the old man!"

"WHAT makes you think it was me?" said a deep voice behind him.

Trent turned to see the Adjutant, a twisted cast to his face, standing in the doorway.

"Well, as long as you ask," Trent said in a flat voice, "because I think you told him, that's why."

"Why should I tell him?" De Groot's little eyes flickered toward Content.

"That gives you away right there."

"I don't consider that a proper remark at all, Stacy Trent," Content said with a furious glare. "You'll solve nothing by innuendo."

"Whose side are you taking, ma'am?"

"Stacy, I think you'd better go while we're all still friends."

"I'm not cross at anybody," Trent said. "But as long as Mr. De Groot insists on listening to private conversations—a habit of his, it seems to me—I'll feel it my duty to tell him what I think."

De Groot's tone was lazy. "Oh, come now, Trent. There's no need to pour your ill-will all over the sutler's shop. I'm sure Content is quite bored with your outburst. And if it keeps on, I'll feel the need to call you to account for it." He strolled across the floor, smiling at Content.

At the moment, Trent would have given a year's pay for the privilege of burying his fist in that soft belly. But why make matters worse with a brawl?

He was searching for a fitting rejoinder when Durkee bounded up the steps. "Stage's in, sir. Your dunnage is aboard."

Trent put his hat on and stepped out of the sutler's. His last glimpse of the place was a confused picture of a smirking De Groot and an angry Content. It wasn't the memory he wanted to carry away at all. But it had to serve.

Chapter Three

TRENT knew Grommet Village. A shriveled morsel of a place spitted over the desert blaze on the steel tines of the railroad, it cooked and sputtered in the heat. The village struggled to cling to this long fork that held it aloft and kept it alive by basting it now and then with loads of eager-eyed men and women on their way to the gold-fields, dumped into the teeming pot with a sort of one-handed dexterity.

Never mind, he thought, that only one in a hundred makes a strike. Never mind that heat and work and disappointment turns well-fed flesh to cracked rind. What do you care if the desert grates tender spirit against its flinty bosom until the gloss of civilization is shredded away, and only the basic animal remains? No, gold is to be had, the failures are always somebody else's. Go on, pile into Grommet Village. A conscientious government will send its unwilling servants to do your bidding, to guide, to counsel, to lead by the hand with all the impedimenta of hope, avarice, and adventure piled up on Government horse or mule—and now, by damn, on Government camel. . . .

Trent twisted his face in step with his wry thoughts as he pounded down the sidewalk. And Theophilus Sage, he thought, is the only man to take gold from Grommet Village. Come to think of it, Sage looked a little like a poke-sack at that. Long, with a narrow body tightly enclosed in mole-skin clothes, his face was puckered as though somebody had pulled the sack-string too tightly around his neck. He had been in Grommet Village when it was simply a collection of shacks around a palm-shaded waterhole, weary troopers and horses the only visitors. He was Grommet Village then, and he was Grommet Village now, and if he looked like a poke-sack, it wasn't so strange. He had the Midas touch. Getting gold from people who had to be housed and fed and entertained until they could move across the desert was a lot easier than going after it with a pick and a pan yourself. But even if he could—and frequently did, Trent had heard—

count his gold by the pound, Theophilus Sage knew that any enterprise is only as good as the people in it. Thus, the hook-nosed midget who clog-danced on the shiny bar of the Welcome Home Saloon could talk to the agent as readily as the wealthiest traveler with money to spend for pot, lantern and mule. Each received equal attention, courtesy and treatment. And so the money—in dollars, dust, nuggets, heirlooms, gold, silver, diamonds, and notes—piled up in the yawning safe behind the fancy lobby of the Grommet House a lot faster than it might have if Theophilus Sage had seen fit to demand gold-field prices without the wit and presence to make the traveler like it.

TURNING a skeptical eye at the sweating opulence of the crowded lobby, Trent made his way to the office. "Mr. Sage, you remember me from the patrols, don't you? I'm Trent, Mounted Rifles."

Mr. Sage teetered back in his plush-backed chair and unpuckered his face enough to permit the extraction of a slender cigar, shaped and colored a great deal like himself. He held out a lean brown hand, the fingers slightly crooked from rheumatism. "Of course. You had A Company."

Trent noticed the word *had*.

"Well," the agent went on, "I'm glad to see you, Lieutenant. Don't suppose you're too happy about all this, are you?" When Mr. Sage smiled, you could see why he was suspected of eating gold with his meals.

Trent grinned. "Well, I'd be lying if I said I was happy to be here. I'm not. I've made changes of station in the past and never thought much about it, because I was always going to a regiment, and I knew what I was getting into. All I know about this is it has something to do with those camels they damn' near laughed out of San Antonio when Dave Porter brought them in. And Dave Porter's gone East, so I suppose it means I'm supposed to command the things."

"Sit down, Lieutenant." Mr. Sage waved Trent into an overstuffed chair jammed into a corner under an eight-point set of antlers. Sage leaned back, blowing a pillar of smoke toward the oil lamp hanging from the ceiling. "Look at that map up there on the wall. See where Grommet Village is? Well, we're only a hundred miles from the gold-field over there on the coast. But it's a hard hundred miles. You know that. Desert, damned gravelly stuff that wears your horses' hoofs down to stumps even if they can stand the heat. We both know about the heat. Man fried an egg on the sidewalk out here today. Silly trick, but somebody has to do it every year. I

can remember when you couldn't get an egg around here to do it with. But it's different now. Anyway, the Government is interested in developing this area, now that we got it away from Mexico, on account of the gold-fields. We need the gold; we want to make something of California. Simple matter of economics. The more people we can get in here, the more good we get out of the place. But there's a transportation and a supply problem. God knows how long it'll be before they get the railroad on through. Still, this is the shortest route from the Southwest to the gold-fields. People want to go that way. Up to now we've been using regular wagon trains, an Army escort going along, but the mortality's been high on account of the heat; the rate's been slow; we have problems like water-holes, feed, handling of people and so on. Same as the Army does, except you're organized for it—you've got discipline and training and equipment." The agent waved his cigar and leaned forward. "All we've got is the equipment. You ever take a bunch of kids on a Sunday School picnic? No, I don't suppose you have—"

"I've made the baggage escort, you know, Mr. Sage."

"That's right, you have. You know what it's like, then. Nothing but a lark for these people. You tell them the Indians are out there—the men want to go find some squaws, the women want to buy blankets, the kids want bows and arrows. You tell them to save their water—hell, they'll drink their wagon barrels dry the first day and wonder why they can't strike a rock out there somewhere and get more. You appreciate all that—you've seen it."

Mr. Sage rekindled his cigar.

"Now, there's been an idea going around here for some time," he went on, "that camels could solve a lot of the problems. They're desert beasts to begin with: water means little, heat is what they live on. Best of all, they can carry big loads. Do it all the time in the African desert. So our Congressmen have finally got the Army to try some camels out here. We've got thirty now, and there'll be more later on sometime, I guess. Now I've got your instructions here somewhere." He fumbled behind him in the rusty safe that looked weak until you saw the shiny reinforcing inside.

WHEN he turned, he had a long brown envelope, agleam with sealing wax, in his hand. Sucking at his cigar, Mr. Sage tapped the envelope on a palm. "Here are your instructions. You can read them now, but I'll save you the trouble." He smiled. "I talked with the courier that brought it down. You're to run such

tests and do such training with these camels as is necessary to determine their practicability as military transportation in the desert."

"Don't I have to run patrols on the wagon trains?"

"Oh, no. You're simply to try out the camels in this region. The Army's discontinuing the wagon escorts as such. The Mounted Rifles still have the responsibility for the overall safety of the passage, but Captain Leydecker's troop made the last escort last week."

Trent reflected that the last time he'd made comment on this it had cost him a command. But he wanted to see what Sage's views were. "That's what I don't like. It's just what Bent Ear and the rest of the Walapai are waiting for. The Rifles can't cover the whole desert, can they?"

SAGE made mild comment as he examined the glowing end of his cigar with a critical eye. "I don't know as I can see much danger from the Walapai, Trent. There hasn't been a raid since they attacked the train at Beale's Crossing last year. And Hoffman straightened them out. After all, that escort kept one company tied right down. And it meant the Rifles had to be spread pretty thin on the rest of their jobs. The other patrols, map-party escort, road-survey, and the like. That's a lot for only seventy men."

Trent crossed one boot over the other and slapped a hand on the arm of the chair. "Well, I got filleted for saying it before, but by thunder I'll say it again! I've been out here awhile, and I know what I'm talking about. Because General Clark and everybody else thinks the Walapai are like those Six-Nation Indians up north, they let themselves get out-smarted. Maybe they do use stone arrows, and maybe they don't have all the fancy trappings the northern tribes do, but they don't need all that. Hoffman's parley isn't going to hold them in—that was just so many wasted words."

The factor rolled his cigar non-committally in his narrow mouth. "Well, maybe you're right. But I've been out here a long time too, you know, and all they ever looked like to me was a bunch of slab-sided galloos without an ounce of gumption. Even the men work in their cornfields. I never heard of a Six-Nations brave doing that."

Trent leaned forward and tapped a stiff finger on his knee. "That's the whole point. We underestimate them, and it's the worst mistake we can make. These are thinking Indians, I'm telling you. Why do the braves work? Because they can get more in less time than if they leave it to the squaws. These tribes don't have to

hunt to live; that's why they don't wear furs and claws and stamp around while the women work in the fields. They're civilized—not as we know civilization, but 'way beyond any other Indian nation. They raise grain; they plan their whole life around that stuff. You've seen the clay pots they use. Ever see any other Indian tribe that had utensils that well-made?"

Sage boomed a deep note out of the big brass cuspidor when he tossed his cigar away. "I've never seen any other Indians, let alone the utensils they use. But what are you going to do? You can't fly in the face of orders, can you?"

Trent leaned back, a brief grin flashing across his face. "No, I can't fly in the face of orders; there's no question about that. But this just looks like a damned poor risk, that's all; and I hate to see the Army get taken in. Bent Ear knows all he's got are stone arrows, so what does he do? He fights in defiles where he can range with the guns. Look, I was on that patrol that got to that Beale's Crossing thing. Those people never knew what hit them. The wagons were still in column; and in that second wagon, the one the parson and his wife burned in, we poked through the ashes, and what do you think we found?"

Mr. Sage inspected the envelope as he twirled it in his hands. "All right. I'll be your end man, Mr. Bones. What did you find?"

"A rifle still in the boot. It was so badly burned the Indians overlooked it, but it was still in the boot."

Mr. Sage shrugged. "Ambush."

"Ambush? It's all ambush out here. What do you figure is the longest open stretch in this desert? Not more than twenty miles, is it? Oh, all right, maybe that long wash west of the Chocolates is thirty-five miles; but where can you go and not be ringed by mountains? You have to go through mountain pass after mountain pass, all the way to Stockton or anywhere else."

"Right. You do. But I think you're an alarmist. You know what Bent Ear told Hoffman. 'The country is yours; all we ask is that we be permitted to live in it.'"

"Maybe so. But what else could he say? He was outgunned and outnumbered—then. I still say it's a mistake to run these wagon trains without escort."

"They're not so helpless. They're all armed."

Trent snorted. "If you think a tenderfoot with a rifle's an armed man, they are. But"—he waved a hand—"I suppose it's neither here nor there, anyway. I'd thought I was going to furnish the escort with the



"Camel have big stomach. Go three-four days without water."

camels. It'll be easier if I don't have to, I expect."

Mr. Sage handed him the long envelope. "Your orders are pretty clear. You're to run the camel detachment, current strength one sergeant, six privates, fifteen Arab handlers and thirty camels. Your orders say you will cooperate with civilian authorities to the fullest extent possible to jointly determine the feasibility of the camel as a military beast in this area."

"What? What's that about 'jointly determining'? You mean I'm responsible directly to you?" Trent didn't like the idea of civilians running Army business directly. It played hell with working troops.

"Politics, Trent. The Army—that is to say, Mr. Davis, the Secretary of War—is very much behind this project. So are our Congressmen. But the military heads themselves are doubtful. Thus, if this fails, the Army proper can slide from under. Meanwhile, so far as I'm concerned, you're in complete charge. You'll have nothing but help from me."

Mollified, Trent felt bound to ask for advice now. "Do you have any suggestions?"

"Yes. Get those soldiers straightened out. They've been carousing, chasing women, and raising hell in general. After that, take the camels out and see if they'll work in the

desert. My own guess is the soil is too hard, too flinty. This is gravel. They're used to sand."

"Maybe they're like horses. They can get used to anything if you give them enough time." He'd seen drafts of remounts, wild-eyed and unbroken, come into this country off the grassy plains with feet like butter. In a year they could travel the rockiest country. It sliced hoofs right from under shoes, sure, but the horses got gaited to the rough going.

"Well, maybe so. I don't pretend to know much about animals—except mules. Know a lot about mules." Mr. Sage clipped the end from a fresh cigar with a gilt cutter suspended from a thick chain across his vest. "Windjammer through here the other day, who claimed he could find gold by just looking at the ground and rock formations, told me camels used to run in North America. Says somebody found some old bones up here in Nevada territory not so long ago."

Trent shrugged. Horses he knew. But camels—Lord, he'd never seen a camel but once, and that was some moth-eaten spindly-legged one with a drooping hump, in the Great Moral Show back home in Boston when he was a youngster. Still, what did you do? You were sworn to follow orders; it was all very plainly worded, for all the fancy lettering, in the commission hanging on the veloured wall in the sprawling brick house on Boston's Boylston Street. There was no equivocating. If orders led to brave deeds in far places, your heart sang. If they led to humdrum tasks in broiling backwaters where vast distance, perverse circumstance, and a sickening sense of by-passing destiny chopped you down to insignificance, what did you do? You stayed in there and soldiered just the same.

Chapter Four

TRENT took a room in the Grommet House, saw to the delivery of his trunk, then set off down the street to locate the detachment area. The colorful pulsing throngs jamming the wooden sidewalk thinned out as he drew away from the upper part of the street. A flag hanging limp in the breathless afternoon heat from a flat-topped two-story adobe house at the end of a rutted side road looked as if it marked the place. Trent tugged at the parade gauntlets sheathing his wrists, settled the pistol belt around his slim flanks, and strode purposefully up the duckboards to the entrance.

As he stepped into the shadowed hall, he winced at the smell of musty food and stale bedding. He caught a

glimpse of an Indian woman, fat and round in a greasy blanket, padding around a makeshift messhall, tin buckets clutched in her wrinkled hands, a clay pot tucked against her sagging breasts. A rickety ladder led off to the loft above him. In a room to his right a soldier snored comfortably on a cot.

Trent's first impulse was to bellow at the man, but he knew that if he

could make sergeant in his first enlistment. A rime of whiskers chilled the boyish cast of his features, and the too-red lips against pale skin indicated a recently concluded session with cactus whisky or whatever it was they sold in the jugs Trent had seen in half the stores on the main street, and could smell now in the closeness of the room. "I—I beg pardon, sir. I didn't know the Lootenant was due in—"

Trent pulled off a gauntlet and held out his hand. "That's all right, Sergeant. I know you weren't expecting me. I didn't expect to be here myself until a few days ago."



Bent Ear was a canny warrior. He was using his few rifles to keep the battalion driven into his arrows in the defile.

The Sergeant looked at Trent's hand, then slowly extended his own. "Sergeant Garrity, sir. Sixth Infantry."

Trent shook hands. The man had a firm grip. "Oh. Fort Mojave. What company you in up there?"

"K Company, sir."

"Oh, yes. Captain O'Lanter's company. How long have you been down here?"

The Sergeant attempted to button his blouse, and Trent obligingly looked out the narrow window and studied the way the desert stretched in serrated planes, hinged one to the other, to the gray forbidding ridges of the Chocolate Mountains in the west. It was a malevolent country, a country that took with delight and gave with pain. It was a country where you had to wrest the water from the soil. It was a place where the heat beat down with brutal joy even the hardiest shoot that poked pale green and curious from below the desert floor, so that the vegetation was seldom more than waist-high. Every bush, every twig was gnarled and twisted as though writhing with the physical effort that was the cost of life in this sere land. Somewhere out there lay his military future. It had looked bright and shining when he was commanding a company in the Mounted Rifles, a good war record behind him, the excitement and ex-

perience of active service in front of him. Now, detailed to animals he didn't know, with a handful of soldiers to square away, with foreign handlers working the camels, he wasn't sure. The bright and shining light was dimmed. He wondered if it was going out,

When he turned back to the Sergeant, Garrity had finished buttoning his blouse and had smoothed his black hair flat away from his forehead. "I've been here a month, sir. We've been waitin' on an officer."

Trent nodded. There were a lot of excuses hanging in that "waitin' on an officer" sentence. He decided to say nothing, to reserve judgment until he'd finished looking around. "Let's see what we've got here, Sergeant Garrity. Lead the way."

After they'd scrambled through the sloppy reaches of the barracks building, they stepped into the harsh sunlight in back. Immediately a stench—eye-watering, strong, with a reek reminiscent of rotting fruit mixed with rancid meat—clouted Trent as if across the nose. "Sergeant, for God's sake, what's that vile stink?"

Garrity might have smiled. "That's the camels, sir. They ain't no lilacs, believe me, sir."

Trent walked on, blinking. He was used to the sharp, not unpleasant smell of the stables, and he'd always thought he slept better when he was rolled up in a blanket close to the picket line, the occasional shuffling of the horses a soft overtone in the night, the animal smell a pleasant counterpoint. But this—good heaven, were all thirty camels dead?

IT was a strange picture that greeted Trent as he stepped through the small wall of the barracks yard into the desert spreading into the distance. The camels were picketed on two long lines strung between makeshift A-frames seated in the dirty gray soil. The first thing he noticed about the camels as he looked at the Oriental scene were the long crooked necks supporting flat narrow heads. Single humps added a bizarre touch to the already incongruous bodies supported on stalklike legs. They were generally a dirty brown in color; and as they weaved and shifted uneasily on the lines, guttural noises burred deep in their throats. The camels looked big, about eighteen to twenty hands high, he figured. They lurched back and forth in a peculiar manner as they nosed ceaselessly about the ground or shuffled up to the line. Close to, the smell was worse. Trent wondered if he'd ever get used to it. As he walked warily behind them toward a few striped tents pitched low on the ground some fifty yards behind the picket line, Trent found it hard to

believe he was looking at a part of the Army, let alone his own command.

"The head handler's an Ayrab named Highjolly, sir. He's probably in that first tent. Speaks pretty good English."

"Highjolly? What kind of name is that?"

Garrity grinned this time and adjusted his cap. "We call him that, sir. He's got an Ayrab name, but it's kinda hard to say. Highjolly's as close as we can come."

There was a sudden shout from within the nearest tent, and fifteen figures materialized in a neat row, a tall hawk-faced man in front. This man was wearing what Trent took to be an arrangement of bed sheets, with a colored cord at the waist matched by a similar colored cord around a piece of sheeting over his head. The men ranged behind were similarly dressed, except for the colored cords.

Trent found himself facing a man of his own height, with skin the color of rich tobacco framing deep-lighted eyes above a sharply aquiline nose. There was a firmness about this face, emphasized by the cut of the shoulders under the sheeting and the strong-looking hands clapped to the sides. The square chin, fringed with a short beard, was dominated by a wide mouth nicked at each corner with fine grooves that etched loyalty, determination, and high spirit into this straightforward gaze. Looking at this Arab, Trent could understand how it was he could leave his homeland to journey across an ocean to a strange country. And, in the instant it took to register the impression, he thought that the handsome pay the Government was giving these handlers had little to do with the presence of this striking figure in Grommet Village. Without being able to say how he felt it, Trent knew that in this man there beat the same pulsing drive that kept Stacy Trent out here on the edge of the country.

The Arab snapped a hand to his head in open-handed salute. "Sar, Jemel Fissyen Haj Ali. Fifteen men. Thirty jemel."

Trent gravely returned the salute, hoping Garrity had the grace to feel embarrassed at this display of military snap as opposed to his own sleepy reaction to Trent's arrival. At the same time, he wondered at that open-handed salute and the terse report. Here was a man, obviously, who'd seen service in some kind of army, who understood discipline and military courtesy.

"Put your troops at ease, please." Trent extended his hand and found it clasped in strong fingers for a moment. "I'm Lieutenant Trent. It's nice to meet you here." Trent won-

dered as to the best way to continue, and then figured that courteous interest knew no boundaries of nationality or language, so he decided to talk to the man just as he'd talk with a newly arrived junior officer in his company in the Rifles. He folded his arms across his chest and said: "Where do you come from?"

The man smiled quickly. "Sar, I am from Sahara. I am Berber—from valley of the Zig. My men, all Berbers."

There flashed into Trent's mind a fleeting picture of a sweating American purchasing agent haggling under some palms in the white sweep of the African desert. Gold clinked. The camels were bought. Now the handlers. Who would come to the land across the sea with the camels? Murmured debate among the fierce-faced white-clothed tribesmen clustered around the palm tree. The most adventurous step forward: Haj Ali and fourteen others. Now they were at Grommet Village. They were his troops. "You've seen military service. Where?"

A SMILE again, a bright light in the dark face, extinguished sharply in the depths of the eyes. "With Berbers. Against French Marshal Bugeaud. We fight at Isly." Haj Ali waved eloquent fingers. "Twelve, fourteen years ago. Then I serve in Tambors on desert. Is guarding for French after treaty. Man ask to come to America. I come. Bring the jemel."

Trent nodded. *Jemel*, he decided, meant *camel*. "What is your tongue, your language? Do you speak French or what?"

"No French. Moroccan. Berber Moroccan tribes."

Moroccan. That was beyond him. But the man seemed to be able to express himself well in English. Well enough, anyway. They'd get on.

Trent looked at the camels again. If he was taking over a new company now, they'd inspect the men, then the horses. This was in effect a new company, even if the men were outlanders and the mounts the damndest beasts he'd ever seen. "All right," Trent said, "Let's look at the men, then the jemel."

Trent walked briskly down the line of handlers, Haj Ali beside him. They were hard-eyed, proud-looking men, bearded with the same fringed type of short beard Haj Ali wore. Looking closely at their clothing, Trent realized that the sheets were actually robes, worn over baggy pantaloons, and he noticed that the robes were fastened at the waist with narrow leather belts.

He started to move in toward the picket line to get a close look at the nearest camel, but Haj Ali put out a

hand and restrained him. "Careful, sar. Jemel kick, break leg. Take man's knee, arm, with one bite. *Awscrey* hold jemel." He flung a few words over his shoulder, and two of the handlers ran forward. One seized the woven bridle of the camel and thrust the beast's head high in the air. The other deftly tucked a foreleg up so the camel rested on three legs. Trent nodded. It was the same technique he'd used himself on fractious horses.

MOVING in close, the smell was worse. He noticed the moth-eaten look of the beast came from a variance in the color of the hide. Where the hump rose in a bald-fringed lump, the hair, short and bristly, was one shade of brown. On the narrow chest it was another. The whole effect was a patchiness that lent nothing to the attractiveness of the animal, but Trent reminded himself that he couldn't expect a camel to have the eye-appeal of a blooded cavalry mount. Remembering that any animal respected confidence of movement, he looked at the head as the *Awscrey* held it extended. He was struck with the heavy fringe inside the wide oblique nostrils.

"What's that for, anything special?"

"Special, sar?" Haj Ali looked perplexed.

"Look at that fringe of hair in his nose. Can he breathe?"

"Oh, breathe fine, sar. In sand-storm, jemel close nose. Keep dirt out."

Trent nodded. Nature provided for everything. Those thick calloused pads, cracked and wrinkled, that sat like great warts on the chest and knobby knees had some kind of purpose now, but what? He pointed them out to Haj Ali, Garrity circling in the background.

"I show, sar," the Arab said. He said something to the handlers, and the foreleg dropped to the ground with a plop. Haj Ali made a whirring sound in his throat. "*Rehcabee! Rehcabee!*" The camel pulled its long flat head against the bridle in the hands of the other handler, dropped to its knees, then settled in the dirt. "Jemel kneel for load, sar. Pad save skin." He waved a hand close to the long eyes. "*Fook, fook!*" The camel struggled slowly to its feet, then stood, looking off into space, its jaws moving in gentle rumination.

Damn, Trent thought, *these things are tall*. Signaling the handler to pick up the foreleg again, Trent inspected the huge splay feet. The jemel was three-toed, he noticed, and on the hock there were vestigial remnants of two other toes. He reflected that the horse was once a five-toed animal which eventually, over eons,



"*Bent Ear* raided a train," Sage reported. "Nothing

used its middle toe to travel on, this toe developing into the horned hoof. The camel, he could see, was better suited to shifting sandy terrain; the broad toes were constantly seeking footing, and the great weight seemed well supported. Maybe the camel was some relation to the horse at that. Lord, Trent thought, *I'm looking this thing over as if it was something somebody just built*. He turned to Garrity: "Sergeant, do you know your Bible?"

"Bible, sir?" You could tell Garrity thought this was a new one.

"Yeah. Doesn't the Bible say Job had camels?"

Whether Garrity was merely being helpful, or whether some long-forgotten Sabbath lesson came to his aid, Trent couldn't tell, but Garrity said: "Why, yes sir, I believe it does say that."

Trent groped for the reference, then gave up. He had asked Garrity because he wanted to include Garrity in the group. He could appreciate the strangeness the Sergeant felt around these animals, abashed by the expert handling of Haj Ali and his *awscreys*, probably wondering what

this new officer was going to have to say about the sloppy barracks and the fact that so far, only Garrity was present of the seven soldiers assigned.

Trent went on with the inspection, getting the handler to open the thick-lipped mouth so he could see the teeth. They were wedge-shaped, coming out of the jaw at an angle that would have indicated great age in a horse, but when he asked the Arab about it, Haj Ali said: "Jemel eat leaves, sar. Eat shrubs. Dry vegetables. Easy to feed. No oats."

Trent rubbed his jaw. That made a difference, certainly. One of the biggest problems with horses in this country was feeding. When the Rifles marched, oats and hay had to be carried on wagons or on pack animals. It made the columns heavier, put excess weight on the animals, and made re-supply a matter of great concern. Since the desert abounded in mesquite, and a variety of small shrubs, it might be possible to live off the country entirely with camels. Water, too, was a big point. With the horses, now, they had to plan marches to permit daily watering, often a difficult thing to do on campaign. But he



left. Wagons burned, horses gone, scalps taken."

knew the camel could go for some time without water. "How long can these jemels go without water, anyway?"

Haj Ali patted the side of the camel. "Camel have big stomach, sar. Store water in little pockets inside. Go three-four days without water. Jemel smell own water, sar. Very good smell. Smell water for many kilometers."

Good smeller is right, Trent thought. Then he said, "Miles, Haj Ali. We use miles over here."

The Arab smiled affably and patted the huge meaty lump on the camel's spine. "This jemel good condition, sar. Hump big, solid. Hump get small, soft, when jemel get sick."

It was a point. Trent had been wondering about his animal management. In his company—when he had one—he could run his eye over poll, withers, croup, cannon and hocks and tell in an instant which horse was knocked, which horse was favoring a leg, whether that bay was developing thrush or this chestnut was stone-bruised. With the camels it was different. He didn't know anything at all; he had worlds to learn before he

could hope to understand these ships of the desert. He knew he was going to have to lean heavily on the tall Haj Ali and his handlers. What had Content said? He glanced across the shimmering desert, and he could see that lovely face and that ripe mouth. *Why don't you look on it as a new job, a challenge? Why don't you do your best?*

Well, what was it going to take? Primarily, he thought, some kind of change in his own attitude. But how could he tuck in to this detail, knowing nothing about the camels, working with strange men and lackadaisical soldiers? Still, there was no point in wasting time worrying. Whatever came out of this would be his own making. It was a challenge, all right. He'd better get about meeting it.

After he finished inspecting the animals, he chatted for a few moments with Haj Ali, then moved off with Garrity to the barracks. On the way he made several pointed suggestions for policing up the adobe building, then waited while Garrity took the time to round up the rest of the men. The afternoon was spent in getting the police-up under way, shaping up

the morning report and Camel Book, announcing the list of calls, setting up a stable police and charge-of-quarters arrangement, specifying a supervisory routine for the mess, and juggling the bedding arrangements in the loft. Trent wound up by saying, "That's all for now, Sergeant Garrity. Do you have any questions?"

The Sergeant fingered a lip and said, "No sir, I don't think so."

Trent went into the messhall where the soldiers were occupied with mops and buckets. Trent settled his hat on his head and faced the men as they stood up. "All right," Trent said, "you can get this stuff underway. But let me point out one thing, just in case I haven't made it clear. We're going to run this place like the Army. Keep in mind that so far as you're concerned, this is just an extension of Fort Mojave. This is an Army post. We'll run it that way. If there's any more trouble in town, we'll straighten it out so that it doesn't happen again. You may not realize it," he went on with more conviction than he felt, "but this is a special detail that may very well revolutionize Army transportation in the desert. Don't feel it's a backwater, and don't feel it isn't important. You may never do anything more important while you're in the service. Is that clear?" He looked around at them.

The soldiers gazed back, with faces blank. Nobody said anything. Trent wondered what Content would have thought of his words.

Chapter Five

MR. SAGE looked out of breath when he came up to the wall behind the barracks where Haj Ali and Trent were trying to rig a carbine on one of the high-pommeled camel saddles. Pulling a dun-colored silk handkerchief from his breast pocket, the agent removed his hat and mopped his forehead. "Well, it's happened, Trent."

Trent dropped the leather thong he'd been snubbing against a cantle ring and looked up. "What's happened?"

"The Walapai. Bent Ear raided a train."

Trent compressed his lips. "How do you know?"

"Prospecting party came back in with the news. Nothing left. Wagons burned, horses gone, scalps taken." He mopped again. "It's an awful mess."

"Do you want me to say I told you so?"

Mr. Sage sighed. "It must be nice to be so right, Trent, but that doesn't solve the problem. Do you think

you're ready to do any good with these stinking things?" He gestured vaguely at the camels shuffling against the picket line.

Trent hooked his thumbs into his pistol belt. "Depends what you mean by good, Mr. Sage. I told you the other night I haven't been sitting still for the past month. But I've only got thirty camels and seven soldiers. Do you want me to go alter Bent Ear with them?"

"Oh, it's not a question of that, so much. But Department's ordering the Rifles on a punitive march. And they're asking about using the camels as a supply train from here. It'll save a good two days' turn-around for the battalion wagon train supplying the Rifles."

Trent was silent a moment. It wasn't a pleasant mission to think about, this idea of playing servant to Major Cromby. He could imagine the hoots and hollers that would go up when he brought his ungainly troop into camp, the sly remarks of his one-time brother officers, the twisting grin on De Groot's face, the scorn of the Major. "Well," he said, "it's not up to me, is it? I told you I wasn't sure whether these things were satisfactory military beasts or not. We can drill with them—you've seen our mounted routines. We can load 'em up and they'll carry a lot of weight. They'll do for draft animals as long as they're closely watched. But the camel isn't an ideal domestic beast, Mr. Sage. He's vicious, mean, ill-tempered; he hasn't a speck of heart or loyalty, and he's the stupidest thing outside a block of wood I ever saw in my life."

Mr. Sage restored the handkerchief to his pocket. "Well, Department says you'll have to be ready. More information'll be in later."

"When do the Rifles move out?"

"They're supposed to be on the way now. They'll rendezvous at Thousand Wells, and we'll have a scout report by tomorrow or so. The prospectors think Bent Ear headed into the Iron Mountain country."

IRON MOUNTAIN country! It was a dry serried wasteland that stretched for mile on grinding mile into the horizon well to the north, a vast area of deep gullies, countless defiles, and great spikes of rock that towered on every side. From the little he'd seen of it, Trent thought a thousand Indians were safe in there.

"They take any women?"

Mr. Sage scowled. "Two, for sure."

Trent's heart hammered. Two women! He blazed in sudden anger. "That's something, now, isn't it? The Army's so damned smart, they yank the escort off, and now they've got only one battalion to send where they'll need a dozen. They've con-

signed two women to God knows what kind of hell, all in the interest of economy! I hope somebody roasts for this, by God!"

Mr. Sage was mopping again. "Somebody will, Trent, you can be sure of that. But that's not the problem, is it? The problem is to put the Rifles in position to do some good. And that's where you fit in. If you can supply them, it'll save a good two days' marching right at the beginning."

Trent smacked a hand on the saddle. "I'll be in position, never fear for that, Mr. Sage. Just get me the orders. We'll be ready to move."

THOUSAND WELLS was never designed, Trent thought, as a bivouac for more than two men and a dog, but he had to admit that the plan was sound enough. The battalion supply wagons were going to work out of Grommet Village for Thousand Wells. There, in that pockmarked ground that once must have gushed with water but was now only a few acres of yawn-sized potholes gaping at scrub greenery around a single murky water puddle, Trent would picket his camels. As the wagons came up with four days' re-supply for the Rifles, now inching into Iron Mountain some fifty miles to the north, Trent would make the turn-around in two days, rest a day, and then push on again. And as the Rifles went deeper into the frowning country guarded by the rusty heaps of the ore-laden mountains, they'd move the supply point up, perhaps to Many Smokes or Lachryma Christi, the shining mirage that turned the vile-smelling puddle at the foot of the Moonstone into a false oasis that nevertheless could still serve the needs of thirty camels.

Rocking easily in the saddle, accustomed now to the pacing motion of his tawny camel Gummlah, Trent squinted into the distance, then turned and surveyed the line stringing out behind him. The camels plodded forward, their splay feet eating up the distance, the soldiers not so strange now in the peculiar forked saddles, the unit's baggage looking like extra humps on the pack camels. Haj Ali, burnouse flowing behind him, rode on a flank like a sheeted first sergeant. His sharp eyes noted every detail of gait, load and saddle, so that come stables at Thousand Wells, there would be no sick list of animals with sore feet, baggage rub or saddle bumps. In spite of himself, Trent grinned. It was quite a thing to see these bulky desert creatures move with their spindly legs in what was a reasonably respectable column of troopers. It gave an Oriental aspect to the flat country around them; and as Trent saw the flowing

robes of an Arab handler silhouetted momentarily against the deep blue of the distant horizon, harmonizing with the vague gray of the mountains that surrounded them at what was surely the outer limits of the world, Trent imagined himself a sheik in the desert. Faithful followers were ready to do his bidding, perhaps even to capture a lovely princess from some caravan. The Princess, he discovered, looked exactly like Content Henneker. . . .

His reverie was broken by a bubbling protest from Gummlah. Trent reined the camel away from a startled jackrabbit that drummed feet into the sand, then shot in front of them to disappear with a flick of a tail behind a spiky cactus. Gummlah, as Trent knew by now, meant *louse* in Moroccan; and while it was hardly a complimentary name, the word Gummlah had a mouth-filling sound that seemed appropriately foreign. Since the camel had a vile disposition, continually gurgled and bubbled, and had made three distinct attempts to tear Trent's arm off with those teeth, Trent let the name stick. The rest of the camels were called by such Moroccan names, and that's the way they were carried in the Camel Book.

Feeling the heat eating at the back of his neck, Trent eased his hat farther back on his head in a futile attempt to shade the sun. He noted that Gummlah was hardly damp in spite of their five hours' marching, and he marveled that these animals sweated so little. He reminded himself that the camels were bred for this type of country, but it was certainly a point when it came to comparing them with horses. Horses, now, would have been in a lather at the pace they'd been keeping, and there would have been at least one water halt. The rate of march was better than the horses', too. The camels could make fifty miles to the horses' thirty. The loading was another thing. Major Cromby insisted that his pack-animals carry no more than one hundred and fifty pounds dead weight, which complicated ammunition supply, the packing of the howitzer, and so on. The camels, on those humped backs, could carry five hundred pounds apiece, and that dun that Sergeant Garrity was riding had already test-carried one thousand pounds for a day's march. With thirty camels Trent figured he had a re-supply capability of close to eight tons. That was considerable, and it was a good argument in favor of the camel as a desert military animal.

As the column rounded a sloping dune and headed through scrub brush in the flats between two red-streaked rock heaps that turned the

broad sweep of the desert into a gorge, Trent saw the faint green of Thousand Wells a mile or so ahead. Waving Haj Ali forward, he watched the Arab move out in an accelerated shuffle, and shortly Trent raised his palm over his hat and called: "Dis-m-o-o-o-nt and Lead Out. Ho-o-o-o!" He'd found that the camels responded well enough to the guttural whirrings the Arabs used, but he couldn't bring himself to forsake the singsong mounted commands of the Rifles. He was, he realized, a man who could consider the future, but who hated to give up the past. So he kept up as many semblances of the Rifles as he could.

Now they led forward and tied on to the hasty picket line Haj Ali had strung between two sharp Spanish bayonets. With a chorus of angry bubbling and groaning, the camels sank to the ground to let saddles and packs be pulled off. These were spotted a few yards behind the line; and as Garrity told off a wood and mess detail from the Arabs and soldiers, Trent and Haj Ali started stables. This formation went off best, Trent had found, if the men worked in pairs. So, under the watchful eye of Sergeant Garrity, the rest of the handlers and soldiers paired up and started to groom, wiping down the slender legs, swabbing saliva from the snaky jaws, massaging bridle welts, and performing the necessary attentions that kept the camels fit for service.

STROLLING up and down the line, Trent marveled at the quick eye of Haj Ali. Of course, he'd been the same way with his horses, but he doubted if he'd ever come close to matching the Arab at this camel business. Accordingly, he had enough sense to let the expert do the talking.

"Look here to Azbah, sar." Azbah was a female camel, one of three they had, and Trent knew Haj Ali had great hopes of breeding her, once the rutting season set in. Accordingly, he cared for her as if she were the prima donna of the troop. "Azbah has saddle puff, sar. See?" He prodded the hump of the resting camel with a thick finger. Trent spotted a tiny bump under the thick hair.

"All right. She can rest tomorrow. Or do you want to put sacking on it?"

"Put sacking, sar. Must keep care."

Trent smiled. That meant the Arab would tenderly swathe the animal's hump in burlap and keep it sluiced down with water during the night. The bump was small; they could shift the padding in the saddle to take care of it, but Trent humored the Arab. In fact, he thought, he was beginning to take quite an interest in



"It's all ambush out here. The longest open stretch—twenty miles."

these ungodly critters himself. "All right, Haj Ali. There's plenty of sacking in the veterinary kit. But you've got to do something about this smell. I still haven't got used to it."

Haj Ali flashed a smile. "No mind smell, sar. In desert jemel provide food, give milk, smell out water. Provide clothes from hair. Provide fuel from chips. Provide shelter with body. Jemel all man need. No mind if smell bad."

Trent blinked as they stepped down the line. "Well, maybe you don't mind it, but I do. They'll never let me on to an Army post again until I get this unearthly stench out of my clothes."

Once the grooming was completed, they watered and then turned the camels out to graze under the careful supervision of a sizable guard. You never could tell when one of the undependable freaks would take it into a perverse mind to go streaking across the desert.

After the evening meal, Trent made his journal entry. *Arrived Thousand Wells 2 p.m. after five and a half hours' march. Condition of men and animals excellent. Supply train due in tomorrow.*

As he was tucking the flat journal into a saddle-bag, Sergeant Garrity came up, saluted, and said: "Sir, I've put out the picket-line guard, but

does the Lootenant want any outpost security? I don't know about them Indians, now. Would they be comin' in this close?"

He stood waiting in the glow of the fire, his eyes gleaming like raisins in a cake.

Trent thought a moment. The Walapai would hardly be this far south, especially when Bent Ear would know by now that the Rifles were after him. Still, complacency made a poor field soldier. "Put out two Cossack posts, Sergeant Garrity. One back in the west spine of the gorge, and the other three hundred yards to the north. No fires."

The Sergeant saluted and moved off into the darkness. Trent rolled in his blanket, put his arms behind his head, and lay looking up, watching the stars as they winked playfully at some cosmic drollery, taking distant part in the gentle laughter of the wind chuckling softly in the desert beyond.

In a way, Trent was thinking, it would be nice, to see the battalion again. He'd have to go down to the company and see how they were getting on. And if De Groot or somebody made comment—well, he'd take care of himself with a few comments of his own. What difference did it make, really, if he was putting service in with the camels or with the horses? When you get down to it, there was a lot to be said for the grumbling burbling beasts out here in the desert. There shouldn't be any trouble with the re-supply, either. Actually, their march forward was screened, so to speak, by the position of the Rifles, who would have swept the Walapai before them. And if some stray band slipped through and tried to slash into the camel column—well, they had sabers, pistols, and seven .58 carbines. What with the new eight-count loading Maynard's new primer made possible, there'd be no difficulty, not when they could fire two shots a minute.

ARCHING his neck, Trent rubbed the back of his head against the rough blanket.

The picket-line noises were quieting now, except for an occasional agonized scream as some camel lacerated its neighbor at a real or fancied insult. There was only a faint murmuring from the fire, the scrape of a foot on a stone, the random noises of camp at the end of day to bulge the blanket of quiet. Looking into the infinite reaches of the deep night sky, Trent noticed that the sliver of moon, a narrow golden gash in the veil of darkness, seemed to turn a floating cloud-bank into a woman's profile, a profile of Content Henneker, to be exact.

Chapter Six

THERE was only one hitch in the rendezvous with the supply train. Jernigan, the battalion quartermaster, had thrust his hat back on his beaded forehead, narrowed his slotlike eyes and said: "Well, I can't help it if you don't want to take the gun, Trent. Cromby said he wanted it." "Why didn't he wait for the damn' thing, then?" Trent asked, spitting disdainfully toward the squat tube of the howitzer on the nearest mule. The mule waggled its ears and snorted.

"If I knew what was in people's minds, do you think I'd be making my living as Cromby's damn' quartermaster?" Jernigan was brusque. "No—I'd be making a fortune reading the faro cards." He squinted at Trent. "I suppose he didn't take it, because he had orders to move out, and the gun was still in the shop getting re-bored. Now will you take the mules, or do I have to drive them up there myself?"

"Oh, I'll take the damn' thing. But leave the driver with them." The three mules of the pack-howitzer team would be an added burden, of course; but still, the mules could pretty well keep the pace; and it might be a good test, at that, to see if the camels could work well in combined train. Still, it all went back to the water and feeding. The camel was a good desert beast because he was no supply problem. Anything else was. "And be sure you stick an extra sack of feed on somewhere."

Jernigan looked relieved. "They've got three days' feed in their packs now. They won't give you any trouble, Trent. Schneewirke's a good driver. He'll handle them all right."

Schneewirke grinned a tobacco-stained acknowledgment and turned to cinch the pack-saddle on the mule carrying the small wheels of the howitzer carriage.

Trent got the column under way, the camels bulging with loaded packs, the three-mule howitzer team shuffling along in aimless disinterest in the rear. It was something to have a command behind you, even if it was a bunch of camels. He felt the sun bite into his shoulders through the cloth of his shirt, and wriggled a little in the saddle. "Column of Troopers!" he signaled, waving an arm in a circle from his shoulder and holding up one finger. "Ho-o-o-o!"

As they cleared the bivouac, he waved Sergeant Garrity to one flank, watching the man lope off on his camel, then gestured Haj Ali to the other flank. Posting another trooper to the rear, he was satisfied that his march security was disposed of, and

he settled in the saddle and gave himself over to the gentle motion of the camel as it lurched along under him. The easy pace was a gentle gait, once you got used to it. He found his thoughts drifting. What made Content Henneker keep coming to his mind? Was it because she was—to be honest—already so much a part of him that he couldn't get her out of his mind? But that was a silly thought. All you had to do was apply yourself, and you could forget anything. But it was one thing to say, and another to do: and though he amused himself by reciting paragraphs from "Hardec's Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics," he found himself getting his phrases mixed so the results were hardly what crusty old General Hardec had in mind. Thus, *In the position of the soldier the heels are on the same line and as near each other as the lady will permit and There are four kinds of kisses, common, quick, double-quick, and the run.*

HE was saved from further lapses of memory by the sudden swerving of Gummlah. The camel jerked its head forward, bared its lips, gargled, and jiggled incessantly.

"What's the matter, you mangy cow?" Trent growled as he hauled back on the bridle.

Haj Ali appeared close by. "Jemel see something, sar."

"Sec? What does he see?"

"Jemel see great distance, sar. Something out in front."

See a great distance? Could the damn' things see better than men? He could see nothing in that great run of barren country except the scowling rocks and the gray dust and flaky gravel. A horse, he knew, could see no distance at all. A horse saw only width and height, not depth. Now it appeared the camel could see for miles.

"Sure he isn't smelling something?"

"No sar. Jemel smell water for many kilometers when thirsty. These jemel not thirsty yet. Something come."

And there *was* something out there. Even as Trent sent two men forward with Garrity, a pillar of dust twisted faintly in the distance; and as he strained his eyes to make out what it was, Trent signaled the column into a closed formation. He wasn't going to get caught strung out. He urged Gummlah forward for a good forty minutes before he spotted the dust-cloud as a rider coming at churning speed. Watching the distant specks of Garrity and the soldiers close warily on the oncoming rider, Trent knew a sense of foreboding as he saw his patrol circle, fall in behind the rider, and come swinging back to him.

The rider came up in a clatter, reined up, and then Trent saw it was De Groot. The man's face was seamed with dirt; his horse was soapy with sweat; and where the reins had continually slapped the withers, there was a ridge of dirty foam. De Groot's shirt was soaked, and his fat belly wheezed and heaved at his belt. His words came in croaks. "Hell of a thing, Trent. Cromby cut off. Needs help. Sent me back." The eyes rolled in his head, and he sagged.

Flinging his bridle to a handler, Trent slid off Gummlah, grasped the reins from De Groot's limp hands, and led the horse to the scant shade of a bush, where he helped the man dismount. Easing De Groot's weight onto the ground, Trent called for a water-bottle, then held the canteen as the Adjutant drank in gusty gulps, water sluicing over his face and running down into the damp muddy rings on his neck.

"All right, De Groot," Trent said easily as he took the canteen away. "Don't try to drink it all at once. What the hell's wrong, anyway? Here, move over a little. There's more shade."

De Groot sat down, took off his hat, and wiped an arm over his greasy hair. He shook his head and blew a long breath, his eyes holding a glassy look.

"God, I thought I'd never find you!" he said.

"Get to the point, will you? What's wrong?"

"It happened last night. The scouts spotted what they said was Bent Ear's main body. Cromby ordered a night march from the bivouac; he took both troops in about twelve miles, up a long draw that ends in some kind of water-hole. While they stopped for water, Bent Ear surrounded them."

"Surrounded them? What did Cromby do, go into a box cañon?"

"I guess so. Or if it wasn't a box, Bent Ear blocked it at one end. The Walapai are all up on the rim-rock around the top of this draw."

"How'd you get out?"

"Cromby sent me through with a flying squad."

"Where's the squad?"

DE GROOT gestured widely.

"Somewhere between here and there. Bent Ear got two. Nielson—you know, the B Company corporal?—his horse stepped in a hole or some damned thing, and broke a leg. The horses bashed out on the others."

"How far away?"

"I don't know, for sure. I've been riding like hell since last night."

Trent rubbed his chin. Hardee preached reconnaissance in force, all right; but it didn't make sense to



These bulky desert creatures gave an Oriental aspect to the country.

weren't any shots until we started to break out."

Bent Ear was a canny warrior. He was using his few stolen rifles to keep the battalion driven into his arrows in the defile. It was smart tactics. But if there weren't too many rifles, there was a chance. . . .

"What'd Cromby want me to do?"

"He wants you to send word back to Grommet Village and have them telegraph Department and Fort Mojave. Have them send a relief."

"Relief? Hell, it'll take the infantry a week to get out here."

"Not on the camels."

"What does he think these things are? Caravans? How many infantrymen does he think I can ride on a camel, anyway?"

De Groot slashed his legs back and forth in the dirt. "Think you can fish the old man out by yourself?"

Let the old galoot fry in his own fat! Trent thought for a minute he'd actually said it, it was that close to his tongue. Well, why not? What was there to force him to try to help when Cromby had got himself in there? If he'd had any sense in the first place, he'd have saved himself a lot of trouble, the old rum-blossom. . . . Trent scowled. What kind of talk was this? Cromby wasn't the only one up there. There were soldiers in that battalion that had fought with him at Cerro Gordo and Molino del Rey, there was a lieutenant in B Company named Jeb Stuart who would do as much for him if the tables were turned. And there were two women in Bent Ear's hands.

march into a defile at night. "What'd Cromby do, anyway? Just up and leave the bivouac with the whole battalion? Didn't he hold out any reserve or anything?"

De Groot shook his head. "Trent, he didn't expect any real trouble. He thought he'd make some kind of peaceful deal with Bent Ear."

Trent laughed, a wry laugh that rattled in his mouth. "Oh, another Hoffman, huh? He thought because Bent Ear listened to Hoffman, he'd listen to him, is that it? Didn't the old goat know Hoffman had the damn' Walapai outnumbered six to one that time?"

"The scouts said the main body was less than a hundred."

"Sure, the moving body probably was. Bent Ear just pulled in to where he could add a couple of hundred more, that's all. What's Bent Ear armed with? Many rifles, do you think?"

De Groot shook his head. His eyes were losing their glazed look. "They used arrows at first. McCloud was bending over throwing water in his face, and he got the first one. Split his head. He fell into the water, and some of the horses stampeded. Then about three flights of arrows came in, and a lot more went down. There

No, you didn't quit, not when there was a single narrow chance. And he had better than a narrow chance if you looked at it one way. Trent took a deep breath.

"Yes, damn it. I can bail him out. If I have a little luck."

The twisting smile that flitted across De Groot's face was clear indication he was feeling better. "That's good. Because Content's up there. She's probably expecting you."

Trent swore. "She's up there? What the hell's she doing on the damn' expedition?"

De Groot shrugged. "Cromby wanted the sutler's wagon to go along. Old Henneker was taken with the ague; it was either have her go or let a soldier run the wagon. And even if Cromby had spared a trooper, you can imagine how much profit there'd have been to Henneker."

Damn it to hell! Content was up there! He thought of Bent Ear and the Walapai, the pierced noses and ears, the long braided hair smeared with clay, the fetid smell as they closed in. Content, white-faced, backed against a wagon-wheel as she defied the grinning circle that stepped nearer and nearer, until some smirking brave made a lunge at that up-swept hair, twisting her head back while the others swarmed at her. He could hear her screams, up, up, up the register. . . .

He whirled. Shouting at Garrity and Haj Ali, he waved up the pack howitzer. Making quick comment on the situation the Rifles were in, he outlined his plan. "Schneewirke, how many rounds you got for that howitzer?"

"Reg'lar field load, sir. Thirty rounds."

"Good. Garrity, put the gun on your camel. The whole thing."

"Pile the whole thing on Oobah, sir?"

"Hell, yes, the whole thing. The gun doesn't weigh but six hundred and eighty pounds, does it? Then Oobah can carry it, can't he? All right, get it on there. Don't stand there with your teeth in your mouth."

IT took Garrity and a crew the greater part of an hour to assemble the howitzer, then lever it up onto the protesting Oobah. Trent fretted at the flying minutes.

Garrity licked the sweat away from his lips and said, "I don't know as it'll ride, sir. Can't we leave it on the mules?"

"Look at their feet, man. They won't last a forced march, you can see that. Throw a diamond hitch over the tube and snub the carriage lines under Oobah's tail. The big sculpin's got three inches of padding on that saddle. He can carry it all right."

Watching them seat the gun and raise the camel to its feet, Trent ran over his plan. It was simple, certainly, but that was in its favor. He'd run the detachment at a forced rate of march until he could reconnoiter Bent Ear's position. Then he'd use the howitzer to crack down on the hostiles while he wheeled to the left or right down the rim-rock above the battalion. As long as there was plenty of water, Cromby could hold out for days unless Bent Ear rushed. And there was no danger of that working if the ammunition held out.

And certainly, even if he couldn't rout Bent Ear, he'd scare hell out of him. It ought to make the difference. But, to be sure, he wrote a detailed message to the Officer Commanding at Fort Mojave, mounted a trooper on one of the fastest camels they had, and sent him back to Grommet Village. . . .

Finally they got under way, De Groot perched uncomfortably on a camel along with Trent. Privately, Trent would have preferred the load they'd dismounted to make room for De Groot, but De Groot was the only one who knew the battalion's exact position. The bivouac was presumably at the Iron Mountain end of the trail he had marked on his map; but from there on, having a guide along would make things move without loss of time.

Looking at De Groot, Trent thought: *If it wasn't for that flabby gull, I'd be up there myself, with my own company, and not plugging along somewhere in the rear.* He thought again of Content, and gritted his teeth. He wished he could make the camels go faster, but he had them jogging along at an extended shuffle now, and he knew he couldn't waste their strength by making them keep step with his own wild wishes.

The camels bobbed forward, Trent comfortable, but De Groot obviously pained at the unaccustomed motions. "These are the damndest things to ride, Trent," he complained. "How do you ever do it?"

"Sit as if you were in a rocking-chair and let the camel do the work—that's the easiest way."

De Groot relaxed with an effort, and from then on he appeared to have easier going, though once he turned his head and said: "God, Trent, how do you stand the smell of these things?"

Trent shrugged, and they plodded on. Trent kept checking his map, stuffing it into his shirt when he wasn't using it, but finally he took it out, spread it across his thigh, and held it there. He had been through this country only once before. That was when he'd been with the patrol riding up to look over the Beale as-

sault. The country here was no different from anywhere else in the desert—that was the hard part about it. You could be tossed down anywhere on that great expanse, and one landmark looked very like another.

They were winding now through a series of shorter passes, the gray dust harsh in dry throats, the alkali an abrasive on wind-roughened skin, the heat brazing grit and sweat until you felt as if you were covered with hot wax. Off to the left front were the long harsh outcroppings of Sleeping Giant, the desert a narrow thread winding beside it close to Little Giant, a similar glacial formation on the right front. This was the limit of Trent's knowledge. When they had passed out of the long wash that cut diagonally between the two formations, they would be about three hours from Iron Mountain. And Iron Mountain would be a round dome on the horizon, innocuous signpost of the vicious terrain beyond, a beacon that marked the general location of the battalion.

WOULD the kitchen wagons, the combat wagons, the battalion rear elements still be in the bivouac? And was Content there too? Was she safe? And what could he accomplish by going beyond? These were the questions that plagued him. Knowing that he had to depend on De Groot, he felt an uneasiness, as though he were a lame man walking with a cane already cracked.

Darkness sifted down on them as they moved out of the wash, and as the stars popped out to add a look of deceptive friendliness to the night poking at them with chill probes, Trent halted the column. "Check your equipment," he directed. "Haj Ali, look at the jewels, will you? Sergeant Garrity, put three men out to the north, about four hundred yards out. Thirty-minute halt for evening meal. We'll move out in thirty-five minutes. De Groot, come here."

De Groot climbed stiffly from the saddle and dropped to the ground, where he stood raising and lowering his legs, running his hands along his thighs. "Never get used to those damned things," he said.

"You'll have to," Trent said, turning Gummlah over to a handler. "Look now: you'll have to take us in. Those Giants back there are the limits of what I know about this end of the desert."

De Groot's face was a blur in the dark. "Can't we wait until morning? I'm not sure whether I can actually lead us in there or not, the way the place is so damned dark all at once."

"You got out of there, didn't you?" Trent's voice snapped. "For God's

sake, if we wait until tomorrow, there's no telling what'll happen by then. Hell, we're three hours from Iron Mountain. It'll take us all night to get in position, anyway. Isn't the battalion a good three hours beyond that?"

"Don't get nervous. I'm just telling you what I think, that's all."

"Nobody asked you what you thought. Just be damned sure you get us up there as fast as you can, you understand?"

"I ought to. You make enough noise telling me."

"I just want to be sure you've got your wits about you, that's all. This whole thing is going to depend on surprise. I don't want to get it mixed up by getting lost or walk in on them too far." Trent turned his back and started to dig in his saddlebag for some jerky.

He decided, while he was drinking water from his canteen, not to try to water the camels. There was no need to; it would mean losing time locating water, and he was anxious to get under way. Though the chill drape of darkness hid his movement, it also rendered him vulnerable, and he wanted no Indian scouts to pick up his presence. Besides, this being strange country, he wasn't sure he could maintain his forced rate of march. He wanted to be ready to drive in and help the battalion by daylight. He was prepared to spend the greater part of the night getting ready, but he wanted to be sure it was no longer than that.

THEY had been five hours marching, when Iron Mountain towered over them, a great misshapen shadow in the night. "Column halt, dismount!" Trent called softly, then moved over to De Groot. "Come on, let's go forward. Show me the bivouac. Maybe we can pick up some more help or something there." The two men shuffled forward on their camels, the big three-toed feet making plopping noises on the ground. They rode in a spiral, swinging farther and farther away from Iron Mountain. There was no sign of the bivouac.

The sharp teeth of fear nibbled at Trent's stomach.

"De Groot, damn it to hell, can't you find the place?"

De Groot was a shadow in the dark. "Trent, they must be gone. Look there, now—there's some tracks, see? I know damn' well they were here by this two-way drywash. Look, there's where somebody had a fire, see?"

Trent slid off Gummlah and walked forward, bending over to read the signs that were almost invisible in the darkness. The fire was a black irregular smudge against the light gray of the ground. He rubbed some ashes

through his fingers. Cold. Gummlah clanked against something. Trent whirled. It was a cookpot, half-full of slum, likewise cold. Fear took bigger bites.

He sent De Groot back for the detachment, then fanned them dismounted through the area. The pitiful clues piled at his feet. Another cookpot, a glove, a strip of cloth, a cap, a splintered rifle, a tobacco pouch. Garrity came running up. His voice throbbed. "*Lootenant! Over here!*"

Trent's feet scraped on the gravel as he hauled at Gummlah, trying to run. Garrity was bending over. "Look."

Trent bent down. Under a mesquite bush a figure sprawled face down. An arrow was centered between the shoulders. Gently, Trent tried to pull out the arrow. It resisted. He pulled harder. Then he set his foot on the man's shoulder and yanked. The arrow came out with a dull *plunk!* and they rolled the man over. He was a corporal, from the stripes on his sleeve, but Trent didn't recognize him. It was hard to see in the dark, and he didn't dare risk a light. He wiped the arrowhead on his breeches, then fingered it. He couldn't see the feathers, but the stone head told him all he needed to know.

His fears were realized. Bent Ear, bold from his success in the cañons past Iron Mountain, had sent back to rout the bivouac. Whether the rear elements were surprised and killed or captured, or whether they got away, he couldn't tell. In any case, Content and the rest were gone. He had got there too late.

Trent fingered his jaw. What should he do now? Ride back in all haste and bring up some good solid support, or should he go ahead and try to do something himself? Impatience boiled in him. He cursed the darkness, the blackness that shielded movement, that hid sign, that slowed him down and added fearful impotence to his already too-small force.

Well, there was no point in standing around. Better to get on with what little he could do. He thought of Bent Ear, a long-nosed flat-eyed savage, who cultivated the meaching attitude of the sycophant when it suited him, but who hid behind his bony face, between the cropped ears that gave him his name, the cunning mind of a greedy despot. When he was ready, he struck. Right now he could be entertaining himself and his braves with a war dance around the campfires, the captives huddled in dry-eyed terror, praying for the quick and merciful death they knew they would never receive. Among them was Content. . . .

"De Groot! Let's go!" Mounting Gummlah, Trent rode over to Haj Ali and Sergeant Garrity. "Put the column under cover here. Spread out so we're not too bunched. Mutually supporting fire. I'll ride forward and find the route with Mr. De Groot. Put out Cossack guards, of course, and be ready to move on ten minutes' notice. We'll move up forward tonight, anyway. We won't attack until daylight."

A THOUGHT struck him then: What about the Arabs? Could he legitimately order them into a fire fight? They weren't even armed with firearms. All they had were the long sabers he'd dug up back in Grommet Village. Maybe it would be better to leave them here. Actually, they were civilian employees of the Army. Foreigners, at that. What stomach would they have for another man's war? Still, he'd need every man he could get. He motioned Haj Ali to one side. "Look," Trent said, "this isn't your fight especially. You can stay here with your men if you want to. Nobody expects you to get in the battle."

Haj Ali's teeth gleamed in a brief smile. "American pay gold for *awscrey* work with Army. Army march; we march. Army fight; we fight. Is good, sar?"

Trent leaned over and gripped the Arab's muscular arm. "You bet it's good, it's damn' fine." Feeling suddenly better about the situation, he urged Gummlah into the night.

He kept a little ahead of and to the right of De Groot. No sense in taking a chance on the camels kicking or biting at each other when any delay now would be fatal. Occupied with trying to decide whether he should run straight into the cañon, counting on surprise or shock action to carry the day, or locate the howitzer to shell the defile while he circled the rim-rock, he didn't realize until almost thirty minutes had passed that they were moving in an aimless circle.

"De Groot! We're circling! You stupid quill-driver, are you lost?"

De Groot reined his camel. "Look, Trent, there's three trails take off from here. I'm blessed if I know which one is which."

"Well, let's dismount and look!"

For an hour Trent crept back and forth across the desert, stinging hands on cactus, cursing as his camel balked at being led, fuming as he discovered there was no way of telling, in that darkness, which trail was the one. The ground was hard, rocky. Even if it held sign, you couldn't spot anything in the blackness. A hundred thoughts piled up in Trent's mind. He wanted to score De Groot for a simpleton, for a fat sloppy desk-sol-

dier who had no business in a man's world; he wanted to point out that the action might be long since closed, that maybe even now the scalps of the beleaguered battalion were drying over the Walapai smudges. But there was no sense in wasting words. They had to find the right way or they had to wait until morning.

"What about fires?" De Groot asked hopefully. "We could go up on the mountain and look for fires."

"That'd take half the night. Besides, it's about two now—the fires'll have mostly died down. And if that country's the way you say it is, there're too many folds and gullies to hide the fires. Maybe even the rim-rock over that water-hole is masked—" He stopped. *Water-hole*. Of course! An idea. That was the answer.

Trent led Gummlah back to the trail junction, mounted, then tossed the bridle-reins away, letting them loop down on Gummlah's arched neck. Gummlah burred in surprise, thrust his head down to snatch at a shrub, raised up, then with soft slipping steps, ambled down the trail. The night closed in around them, occasional shoulders of rock thrusting up beside them, now and then a stone scuttling away from a spurning foot, the only noise except the harsh breathing of the camels punctuating a drumming that Trent realized was his own heart. Gummlah picked up his rate of movement a little, and Trent held his breath. Was he right? Was the beast going to deliver? The camel went on, then stopped for painful minutes to chew on a stick. Trent booted him, and Gummlah groaned, then ambled forward again. Eventually the trail eased out of a high steep cañon to pass into the encircling arms of two great sinewy rocks jutting into the night a mile or so ahead. De Groot hissed: "That's it, by God. I remember that place. You found it!"

"Damn' right I found it. If I'd left it up to you we'd be back there yet. Now, how far in are they?"

"It's another hour."

"Right, then," Trent said. "Come on! We haven't got much time left."

Chapter Seven

It took another hour and a half to bring the detachment up to the cover of the cañon below the rim-rock, and then Trent still had to scout forward. He planned to get as far up on the rim-rock as he could at night, and then to reconnoiter until he spotted the Walapai horses. Out-numbered the way he was, surprise and the howitzer were his two biggest weapons. He felt sure Bent Ear would have his horses close to him—the Indian was too canny a campaigner to

let his mobility get very far away from him and very likely the horses would be picketed right in his camp. If he could spot the horses, they'd be the first target of the howitzer. With the horses panicked, Bent Ear would be helpless. Then Trent could hem him in with the detachment and cut him down more or less at leisure.

The patrol was agony. He'd had to picket his camels on the low slope of the rim-rock and go forward on foot. Carefully he made his way up the rock, looking carefully at the ground before he made each step. A noise now, and an Indian outguard would be alerted. The success of the plan depended on surprise. He caught a noise from behind. It was a camel shuffling back on the line. He held his breath. He was helpless. Was that noise enough to alert Bent Ear's outpost?

For a long moment he listened, expecting to hear a deep-throated hoot or a drumming, the call of the owl and the signal of the rabbit being two Walapai warnings. He heard nothing. The darkness mocked him. It was hard to see. Suddenly he was struck with his inadequacy. Dismounted, inching forward, he wondered what he could expect to accomplish. A handful of men. . . . It was a farce! But he had to go on. He was committed now.

Ahead of him, at some indefinable distance, a spark flickered. Trent stopped. That was a fire of some kind. Trying to see through the night, he knew he'd spotted a fire but how far away it was he couldn't tell. He crept on. Then he stretched out on the ground and pressed his ear to the soil. Once he was used to the sound of the blood roaring in his head and could so identify it, he was certain he heard a slight shuffling, a rustle, coming to him along the ground. For a long time he listened and calculated, pausing now and again to raise his head and look at the spark. Finally he was satisfied, and he eased back to the detachment. He knew he was within a mile of the Indian camp and that was close enough.

It took another hour to move the detachment to the forward position he'd picked close to his listening post. When he saw the trouble they had getting the howitzer into position behind a small cropping on the rim-rock, he was glad he hadn't decided to use it down in the draw below. Up here they could get it in position and know they had it. He could supervise it himself. Eventually the gun was dismounted and set up, Schneewirke a squat shadow piling his charges close to the mount, assembling the rammer staff, pegging the trails in, and lining up the harness traces so the gun could be pulled forward when necessary.

Trent then disposed the detachment under cover of rocks, bushes, small runs; then he eased forward to where he could see when daylight came.

Around him, the soldiers and the handlers drowsed off. Occasionally a camel belched or bubbled, Trent tightening his stomach muscles at the thought of the noise giving them away. It seemed like a long time until daylight. And it was odd there was so much silence. He couldn't imagine the battalion just sitting there doing nothing unless they had run out of ammunition or had been captured. He'd been so busy with his own plans he wondered if he'd overlooked any signs. Still, it didn't seem possible Bent Ear could have closed in on the Rifles and taken them, in the short space of a day.

More likely, he didn't understand the whole situation from De Groot's description. If there was much space in the draw below at all—and certainly it couldn't have been too narrow a defile or Cromby would never have gone in the way he did—the two companies were spread out, in a state of siege. Bent Ear, because he controlled the area from higher up, was taking his time as well. It made sense: Cromby, knowing he was trapped, would take a cautious course of action, realizing he had infantry help on the way. He'd elected to sit it out. That tallied with the man's usual approach. Decisive, aggressive action wasn't listed in the Cromby book.

EVENTUALLY the sun began chasing the shapes of night with long arrows winging from below the horizon. As the day began, Trent looked around anxiously. Farther up on the slope, a good mile away, he could see a gentle stirring in the brush. It was Bent Ear's camp.

Dawn was high in the sky now, and only close to the ground were the vestiges of darkness still mottling the faint mist. Trent's stomach growled and he swallowed. He wasn't sure whether he was hungry or just plain scared. He couldn't figure the quiet. It was ominous, unhealthy. It lay across the land like a thick and musty gag.

Watching the camp, he saw the Walapai slowly come to life. From the way braves were straggling down into a draw he deduced that the horses were, as he had surmised, picketed in the middle of the force. From the width of the movement, from where he could see the nearest brave to where he could see the most distant. Trent estimated the force at a good two hundred, maybe more. That made his position the more perilous. If he failed, well, there was

no use in thinking about that. He couldn't fail.

But why wasn't Cromby taking some action? He knew that daylight was the best time to attack. Why didn't he open up from down in the draw? Why wasn't he doing something?

SUDDEN movement to the far right side of the camp caught his eye, so faint he wasn't sure of it. He scrambled back to Gummlah and burrowed for his glass. Then he ducked forward. Holding the glass across a convenient rock, he focused it where he had seen the movement. He felt his heart constrict. He understood the quiet now.

In the circle of the glass he could see two Indians, a woman sagging between them, approaching the edge of the rim-rock, a red-blanketed figure behind them. They edged out to the rim, the woman struggling, fighting to hold back. The braves dragged her forward. Trent could see the dust rising from her set heels. At the edge they gave her a sudden shove, then grabbed her as she toppled into the brink below. Then they held her up on the rock again.

God! No wonder Cromby was silent. It changed the whole picture. Bent Ear was holding Cromby in check by threatening to toss one of the women captives into the camp below.

Trent took down the glass and wiped a blur of moisture from his eye. Then he raised his head. What was he going to do now? He looked around the ground again. If he opened fire, surely they'd throw one woman—*what if it was Content?*—maybe more, into the draw. How could he win?

He crawled back to De Groot. "De Groot, for God's sake! They're threatening to throw one of the women into the draw!"

De Groot bit his lip.

Trent went on:

"Look, there's only one chance. And for once, don't make any mistake! I'm going to edge forward along the lip and try to get at least one of those braves. That red blanket is Bent Ear, I'm pretty sure. If I can drop at least one with a carbine from back here somewhere, that'll shock them for just a second. Then you dash in there, see? Now you move everybody up as close as you can—no, wait a minute, you better go from here. Somebody'll see us sure as hell." Trent dropped down a little more and crouched behind a bush. "Schneewirke! Over here!"

Schneewirke came up. Trent gave him his plan. "Listen, you've got to drop that first burst in that draw. That must be where their horses are. Then screen the far slope. If we miss the horses, that'll hold the most of

them up there. Get all set. When you hear the carbine go off, touch her off. You got it?"

Schneewirke wiped some tobacco juice from his mouth with the back of his hand. "I got it."

Then Trent had another idea. He waved Garrity up. "Garrity, who's the best shot here?"

Garrity looked dubious. "Why, I am, sir. I'm expert."

"Get your carbine. Then come with me."

Trent turned back to De Groot. "Look, when you hear us shoot, take off, you understand? Sail in there, pistols, carbines, sabers, the works. Now I've got to get up there. They may start really throwing one of those women down there."

He never knew how long it took to wait for Garrity, then inch crab-wise to the edge of the rock to slip forward, knees scraping, buttons rasping, his breath coming in sharp blasts. Eventually he lay panting behind a low swale, the Indians swinging the woman a good five hundred yards away. He twisted to look at Garrity. "Look at those savages, Garrity. That's a hell of a shot. Take two clicks left windage, and sight in. Then, when they swing her back, take up your slack as they start back. When they're all back, I'll say, 'Fire,' and we'll shoot. If you're an expert with that thing, boy, prove it now."

Poking his carbine muzzle over the back of the swale, Trent set his windage and laid his cheek along the stock. Over the front sight he could see the Indians, the woman's toes dragging as they shook her like a dog with a rat. It was a long chance. If they missed, it was surely the woman's life. "Garrity,"—Trent's voice was hoarse,—"take the left Indian. I'll lay on the right. Lay your second shot on that red-blanket one. That's Bent Ear, cold as hell."

Trent let his breath out slowly. He cradled the carbine in his hands, the stock cool against his face. He watched Bent Ear bend over the rim to shout something below. The Indians started to swing the woman back. Trent took up the slack and held the trigger. He gritted his teeth to keep his body vibrations down, but there still was a little movement of his front sight. He steadied the piece. The right Indian was square in the sights. "Five!"

The carbines cracked. One Indian spun and fell, the left one. Trent cursed. The woman sprawled, then scrambled away and ran shrieking toward the camp, the other Indian grabbing at her as Bent Ear wheeled and bellowed. Their voices were faint. *Boom!* A round burst somewhere to the left. Then with a ragged cry, the camel detachment surged

from cover. Trent and Garrity reloaded and pumped shots after the brave pursuing the woman as Bent Ear disappeared in a fold of the ground.

The woman kept running; so did the brave. They followed Bent Ear. Watching the camels race forward, hearing the ragged fire, listening to the deep *boom!* of the howitzer as Schneewirke walked the shots up the back of Bent Ear's draw, Trent's pulse raced. *Ai-eeeeee! Ai-eeee!* There was frenzied whooping from the camp. Braves hurried to snatch up weapons. In a sort of whirling kaleidoscope, Trent saw Indians snatching for rifles, arrows. A few mounted Indians burst from their draw and dashed into the camel column.

Trent and Garrity kept up their fire. Trent grinned as he dropped a brave with a rifle. A piece of shrapnel keened overhead. The shock of the camel charge took the line deep into the Indian camp. There was a maelstrom of whirling sabers, bucking camels, shrieking Indians, and the continued cracking of guns. *Boom! Boom! Boom!* Three quick rounds from the howitzer scythed through the storm of battling men. Trent saw a camel lurch and fall. He heard its dying noise as a rising howl. He saw four Arabs, burnouses streaming behind them, hack their way out of the center of the mass with whirling sabers, then wheel and carry toward a flank.

Trent loaded his carbine and started forward, then dropped as a round gnawed at him. He snapped a carbine shot at an Indian riding hard toward the far side of the rock, then bellowed at Garrity as he saw two braves herding three women toward the gulf. Trent sighted carefully, dropped one Indian. The other raised a club at the nearest woman as the other two ran. Garrity shot him. A sudden roll of measured fire snatched Trent's attention to his right. A double column of rifles, spread wide, burst over the rim and leveled searing fire into the swirling mass in the center of the camp. Grabbing his carbine, Trent ran toward them.

CONTENT sat eating beans from a pot, with a big spoon. She looked across the fire at Stacy Trent, and there was a warm look in her eyes, a dancing light, a word unspoken but all the more precious because they both understood it and delighted in it. Trent winked at her, then turned to Major Cromby as the Major prodded a check and wriggled on the ammunition box he was using for a seat. "Mr. Trent, you still haven't explained one thing to me. Heh." The wattles were faded and the face was drawn. The Major's voice sound-

ed cracked. "How was it you didn't come straight down the draw to where we were? You took a long chance up there on the rim."

Trent slipped his hat back on his head. Wasn't the old boy going to give him any credit at all? "I didn't think I could get in to you, sir. I knew Bent Ear had that end bottled up."

"Hm. Yes. The worst of it, of course, was he had me helpless. And he knew it, yes, he knew it, the beggar. But you finished him. I'll give you that, Mr. Trent."

Trent looked down the picket line to where a detail was lining up the captured Indians. Now that it was over, he felt deflated, let down, as though he had seen all this happen to somebody else. But the old man was right.

Bent Ear was done for. Somebody had finished him off up there on the rim. This was the end of the Walapai. A beaten lot, they shrank before the savagery of the troopers, who kicked and struck at them as they herded them into a crowd to be driven back to their clay huts in the south.

And you couldn't blame the troopers for that, Trent thought. They were thinking of scalped comrades in the Beale detachment, they were thinking of that corporal back there with the arrow in his back, they were thinking of the battalion bottled up and helpless while Bent Ear palavered, the threat of throwing the women off the rock his bargaining-point.

"Ah, Mr. Trent," the Major said, "Perhaps you'd be good enough to escort Miss Henneker to the ladies' tent."

MILDLY surprised that the old man had enough perspicacity to know that he was eager to leave, Trent rose and helped Content to her feet. Her arm felt firm and soft and round to his touch, and as they moved away he made no effort to let go nor did she move away. Trent tried to think of something to say. "Miss me?" was the best he could do.

Content smoothed her hair and looked up at him.

"In a way, yes. But I thought you'd make out."

Before he could reply he heard the Major call:

"Oh, Mr. Trent. A moment, if you please."

Trent went back to the older man. "Sir?"

The Major looked at the ground, then raised his head. "Mr. Trent, the last time we talked at any length it was under circumstances that were unpleasant—for you. This time, it's under circumstances that are unpleasant for me. I didn't want to say too much in front of Miss Henneker, you understand. Women don't know about these things. But you helped the Rifles out of a difficult situation. You may even have saved me my command."

And the Major shook his head. "Yes, Department will take a bad view of this as it is, though General Clark may appreciate my difficulty when he understands that it was either sit still or have the women prisoners killed one by one.

"And one thing, Mr. Trent. I intend to ask for Mr. De Groot's resignation. His conduct, in hanging back and letting that Arab—what's his name? Haj Ali?—lead that charge is reprehensible. Unfitting of a commissioned officer. But kindly do not say too much about that if you will, Mr. Trent. That's a piece of dirty linen I prefer to wash myself." The Major set his jaw. "Yes, I'll take care of that. Now, the other thing, Mr. Trent. I should be happy to have you back with me. You may take over your troop again." The little eyes flickered under the heavy brows.

Trent looked on past the Major, out the end of the draw to where the camels were picketed. All at once he didn't want to go back to the Rifles. Whether it was because he felt that certainly the camel had proven itself or whether it was because working with men like Haj Ali and Sergeant Garrity and the others had shown him that the challenge of the job included the welding of loyalties and the development of soldiers, he couldn't say. But he knew he didn't want to leave the detachment. "Well, sir, if

it's all right with you, I'd just as soon stay where I am."

The Major waved a hand. "Suit yourself, Mr. Trent."

"There's still a lot to be done. We may be able to develop a decent pack-saddle and carry artillery all the time. I'm not sure what the future of the camel is out here, but so far, I haven't seen anything to convince me that the camel isn't a first-class military beast."

"Certainly, Mr. Trent. But I'll be happy to have you any time you care to come."

"Thank you, sir."

Trent saluted and walked back to Content.

TAKING her toward the ladies' tent, looking at her serenity beside him, Trent knew he wanted her. But he didn't know quite how to say it. "What were you doing in the bivouac? Trying to drum up some more business for your father?"

"Oh, Stacy, it was terrible. When the hostiles rode in right out of nowhere, I was terrified. And when they dragged us up there on the rim—" She sighed. "I don't know how you got there, but I do know I'm eternally grateful."

"Eternally?"

"Eternally."

"Even if it means spending some time with the camels?"

"Why, Stacy—are you proposing?"

"Well, it's this way. When we got lost last night, I turned Gummiah loose because I knew he could smell water. He took the right road, though he didn't know it. I knew it, because I figured there'd hardly be more than one water-hole out here. Now that was fate, wasn't it? A camel leading me to you? And I can't leave them. Or you either. So wouldn't you like to live in Grommet Village? Married to me, that is?"

Content squeezed his arm and turned her face to his.

"I'd love it!"

There was only one answer to that. Trent bent his head and kissed her squarely. And even as he did so, a camel trumpeted a long burbling call down on the line.

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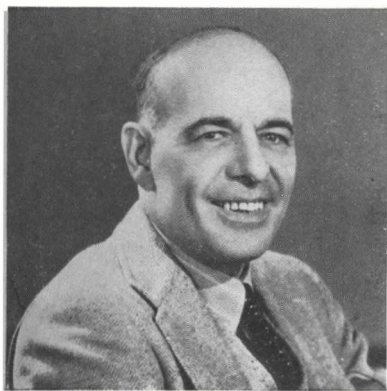
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Who's Who in this Issue



J. Irving Crump

IRVING CRUMP has contributed to most of the major magazines since he sold his first story to *Collier's* in 1912—which is so far in the past that to recall that fact makes him uncomfortably aware that he has been at this business a long time. Originally a newspaper man, his short stories attracted the interest of Franklin K. Mathiews, who induced him to write for *Boys' Life* along with Zane Grey, Sabatini, Albert Payson Terhune, Stewart Edward White and other well-known authors of that era. Mr. Crump's contributions became so popular that he was offered the editorship of the magazine.

Except for an interval of twelve years free-lancing and two years as managing editor of *Pictorial Review*, under Arthur Vance, Mr. Crump has been the Editor of *Boys' Life* since 1918. As the editor he was associated with Dan Beard, Ernest Thompson Seton, Theodore Roosevelt, Dr. James E. West, Charles Livingston Bull and others who were interested in the development of the Boy Scouts of America. Besides his contributions to magazines, he has written a long list of books for boys, three novels, and more than one thousand radio scripts. Oh, yes, he wrote a play. Unsuccessful.

The story of "Blacky" is based on factual situations and a real character long since dead. Blacky in his sphere of influence contributed immeasurably to the character and background of scores of boys in the upper Hudson Valley, and all of them in a small way are better citizens because of their contact with this humble contented colored man.

Louis de Wohl

THE author of "Judge on Trial" was born in Germany, the son of a Hungarian father and an Austrian mother. On the maternal side of his family he is descended from Sir Harry Worms, who was a Lord Mayor of London. At the age of six he turned out his first play, composing music to it as well. He was twenty-one when his first novel, "The Great Fight," was published; and from then on the writing has never ceased. "I Follow My Stars," his autobiography, was published in 1937. Sixteen of his books have been filmed.

In 1935 he left Hitler Germany voluntarily and unmolested, heartily sick of the moral disintegration of the people; he was accepted and commissioned in the British Army with the rank of Captain, working with a new type of psychological warfare. In this rôle he rendered extremely valuable and unusual service during the late war.

Mr. de Wohl has traveled a great deal, having covered most European countries, nearly the whole of North Africa, including Tripolitania and Egypt; also Nubia, the Sudan, India and Ceylon.

A series of historical novels which Mr. de Wohl began in 1948 is published by the J. B. Lippincott Company. "The Quiet Light" is the most recent of these.

Clayton Knight

THIS well-known aviation artist and writer was born in Rochester, New York, and studied at the Art Institute of Chicago.

He learned to fly in England during World War I, and although a member of the United States Air Service, he was attached to the Royal Flying Corps in France until two months before the Armistice, when he was shot down, wounded and taken prisoner by the Germans.

A group of Folkers pounced on a formation from 206 squadron and set his plane on fire; and as no parachutes were carried in those days, he was forced to fight his way to the ground, where the ship crashed in a field. Following this, he spent eleven months in hospitals recovering from wounds caused by an explosive bullet in his thigh.



CLAYTON KNIGHT

Between the wars he illustrated many books and short stories dealing with flying, and was often a guest of the Army and Navy during their annual maneuvers. Before the United States entered World War II he headed a committee that aided thousands of American flyers who were impatient to get into action to join the Canadian and Royal Air Force during the Battle of Britain, and who later transferred to the U. S. forces. The British Government awarded him the *Order of the British Empire*; and Robert Sherwood, the historian and playwright, wrote: "He made great contributions to the winning of two World Wars."

In 1942 he visited England and Ireland as a special correspondent. Later he went to Alaska, the Aleutians and the Pacific as a Combat Historian for the 11th, 8th and 20th Air Forces, and was present at the Japanese surrender ceremonies on the battleship *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay, where he sketched this historic event. He flew around the world in thirteen days on the Clipper *America's* first regularly scheduled flight by the Pan American World Airways in 1947.

He is the author of three books for older boys: "The Quest of the Golden Condor," "The Secret of the Buried Tomb" and "Skyroad to Mystery," published by Knopf; and co-author of "Hitch Your Wagon," the story of Bernt Balchen, published by the Bell Publishing Co.

Knight has made the drawings for several of the excellent stories by Arch Whitehouse—a comrade-in-arms during World War I—which have appeared in BLUE BOOK. He now lives in West Redding, Connecticut.

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