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SEPTEMBER MAGAZINE

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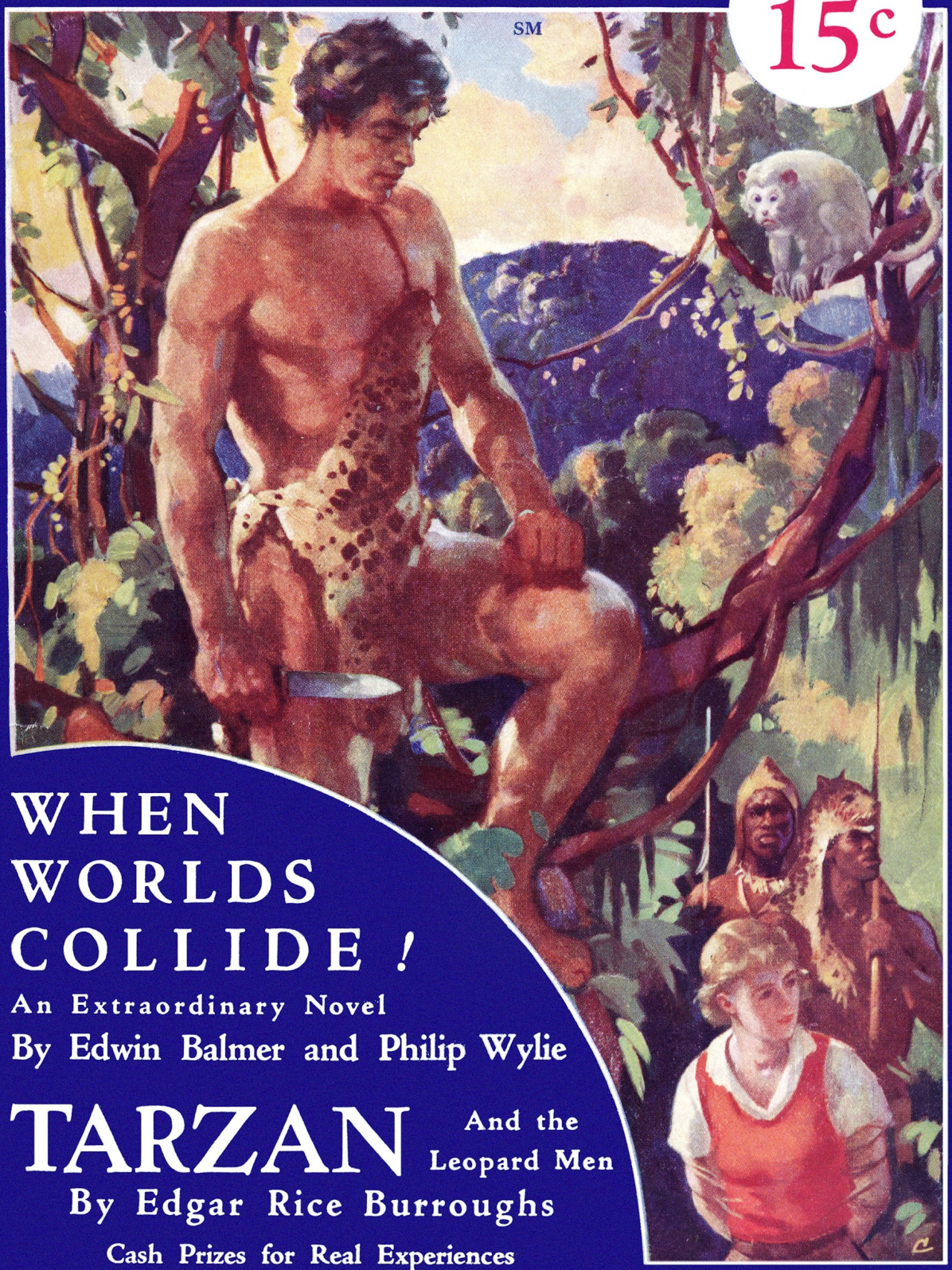

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE!

An Extraordinary Novel

By Edwin Balmer and Philip Wylie

TARZAN And the Leopard Men

By Edgar Rice Burroughs

Cash Prizes for Real Experiences

SEPTEMBER 1932

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

VOL. 55 No. 5

Happy Days

HAPPY days—days of a fifteen-cent magazine for our readers—are here again. . . . For the past nine years Blue Book has sold at twenty-five cents. During this period its standard of editorial excellence has, we believe, steadily improved; and the enthusiasm of our readers confirms our efforts.

Within the past year, however, many incomes have been seriously reduced; and in recognition of this fact we have for some time been working to design a magazine that would give you, at a price in keeping with these so-well-known hard times, all that Blue Book has always offered. The result we present herewith—the price fifteen cents instead of twenty-five.

By reducing the size of the pages,—and increasing their number,—several things are accomplished: First, the size of the illustrations is reduced, so that they occupy relatively less space; and as a result we are able to offer you more reading matter. Second, it gives you a magazine much easier to hold and to read, and more convenient to carry. Moreover the economies effected in printing enable us to maintain—even to raise—the high standard of story-quality for which we have always striven.

In this issue, for example, appears one of the most remarkable novels any magazine has printed in years—"When Worlds Collide," the collaboration of two of America's best writers: Edwin Balmer, who wrote "Dangerous Business" and "That Royle Girl;" and Philip Wylie, author of "The Wild Wallaces." You have a real novelty awaiting you on Page 6 of this issue.

Edgar Rice Burroughs, of course, is represented by his unique and famous Tarzan. And to minds wearied or perplexed with this difficult civilized life of ours, Tarzan confers a boon indeed, for he takes us back in racial memory to the dawn of time, when we too daily fought or fled for our lives, and won our food direct from Mother Earth.

With these two features will appear the best of the Old Guard,—stories by Clarence Herbert New, Arthur Akers, Beatrice Grimshaw, Warren H. Miller, H. Bedford-Jones and the like,—and the best of the newer writers also in each issue, along with the usual stories of Real Experience.

—The Editor.

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BLUE BOOK

SEPTEMBER, 1932 MAGAZINE VOL. 55, NO. 5

Two Fascinating Novels

Stirring Short Stories

A Lively Novelette

Prize Stories of Real Experience

THE McCALL COMPANY,

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Publisher, The Blue Book Magazine

DONALD KENNICOTT, Editor

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Special Notice to Writers and Artists: Manuscripts and art material submitted for publication in The Blue Book Magazine will be received only on the understanding that the publisher and editors shall not be responsible for loss or injury thereto while such manuscripts or art material are in the publisher's possession or in transit.

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IT has been said that there is material for a novel in every person's life. Whether this is true or not, we do believe that in the lives of most of us some experience has occurred sufficiently exciting to merit description in print. With this idea in mind we shall be pleased to receive and to print true stories of real experience, running from one thousand to four thousand words each. For each of the five best of these received each month we will pay, according to our appraisal of its length and strength, $50 or more. We hope in this way to present to our readers an even more attractive department, and to reward a little more fairly those readers who contribute their real experiences to us. The other conditions of our offer remain as before. To recapitulate:

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

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The Sportsman's Scrapbook

Specially interesting and little-known dramas of turf and field and ring, offered by a writer well known to you. . . First, the story of that great mare Black Maria.

By EWING WALKER

BLACK MARIA'S first race was arranged before she was foaled; her most famous race required her to run twenty miles in one day. (The well-known Man O'War in his entire racing career ran less than twenty miles.)

That first race was on the old Union course of Long Island October 3, 1829, two-mile heats for five thousand against a colt named Brilliant. The match was made as has been said, before either animal was foaled—a private futurity—and was blood against blood, North *versus* South. It was won by Black Maria in straight heats on a heavy track.

The most remarkable of her races was that which has come to be known as the "Twenty-mile race." This was on the same Union course, on October 13, 1832, when Black Maria was six years old.

Four horses started, in four-mile heats. There were Lady Relief and Slim, of which little was thought. Then came Trifle, the four-year-old chestnut mare from south of Mason and Dixon's line; and with them Black Maria, carrying the hopes of New York and the North.

The trumpet sounded, and the horses paraded before the throng. At the tap of the drum, they were off together. The first mile was a waiting one, all four jockeys holding back their mounts in the hope another would set the pace. Finally the impatient Trifle set sail. With her challenge, Black Maria made her bid, and before they came to the judges' stand was leading. At the beginning of the third mile Black Maria still led, with the chestnut Southerner close behind, and the other two far in the rear.

In the fourth mile, with a dash, Trifle took the lead. The heat seemed hers. But as they swept into the stretch, Black Maria shot by the mare from Dixie and won "going away." It was a disappointed crowd; and despite the result of this first four-mile heat, it still held Black Maria cheaply, and the horses went to the post again with Trifle still favorite. There was no waiting in this heat; all were fighting for the lead. Relief led; Slim and then Trifle followed; and Black Maria brought up the rear.

Before the first mile was covered, Trifle took the lead; but as they came to the rising ground before reaching the stands, Maria, with her sweeping stride, passed them all. Soon Slim decided the going was too tough and quit.

The black mare led Trifle through the third mile and on through the fourth to the stretch, when Trifle, game to her racing plates, challenged. Maria's rider, instead of holding his lead, took things easy, and it was a dead heat. Eight miles had been run.

When they went to the post for the third heat, Trifle still was favorite. Three horses only awaited the drum this time, Slim having retired. In the fourth mile Relief took the lead, running fresh and strong. In the stretch her jockey pulled her up, and the Dixie mare Trifle won the heat. Twelve miles had been run.

Sent away for the fourth heat, Relief took the lead and held it throughout four grueling miles, winning her first heat, with Black Maria second by a neck, and Trifle third. Sixteen miles had been run; each horse had now won a frame, with another a dead heat.

The crowd was about as fatigued as the horses—more so than Black Maria, who seemed strong and confident; more than Relief, who appeared fresh and eager. The brilliant Trifle showed strain.

Up they come for the fifth heat. They're off, Relief in the lead, Trifle second and Black Maria, as usual, last. They fight around the track through the seventeenth, eighteenth and into the nineteenth mile; then Trifle calls it a day and quits. Meanwhile, the Harlem mare is no more to be shaken off than a shadow; as they approach the rise toward the judges' stand, Black Maria with the dash of a quarter-horse sweeps by and wins.

Twenty miles have been run of an autumn afternoon, and racing history has been made!

When Worlds Collide

The tremendous story of the two strange stars sighted in the southern sky—one to destroy the earth, the other to save us.

By EDWIN BALMER *and* PHILIP WYLIE

THE secret itself was still safe. It was clear that the public not yet could have learned it. No; the nature of the tremendous and terrific Discovery remained locked in the breasts of the men who had made it. No one had broken so badly under the burden of it that he had let slip any actual details of what had been learned.

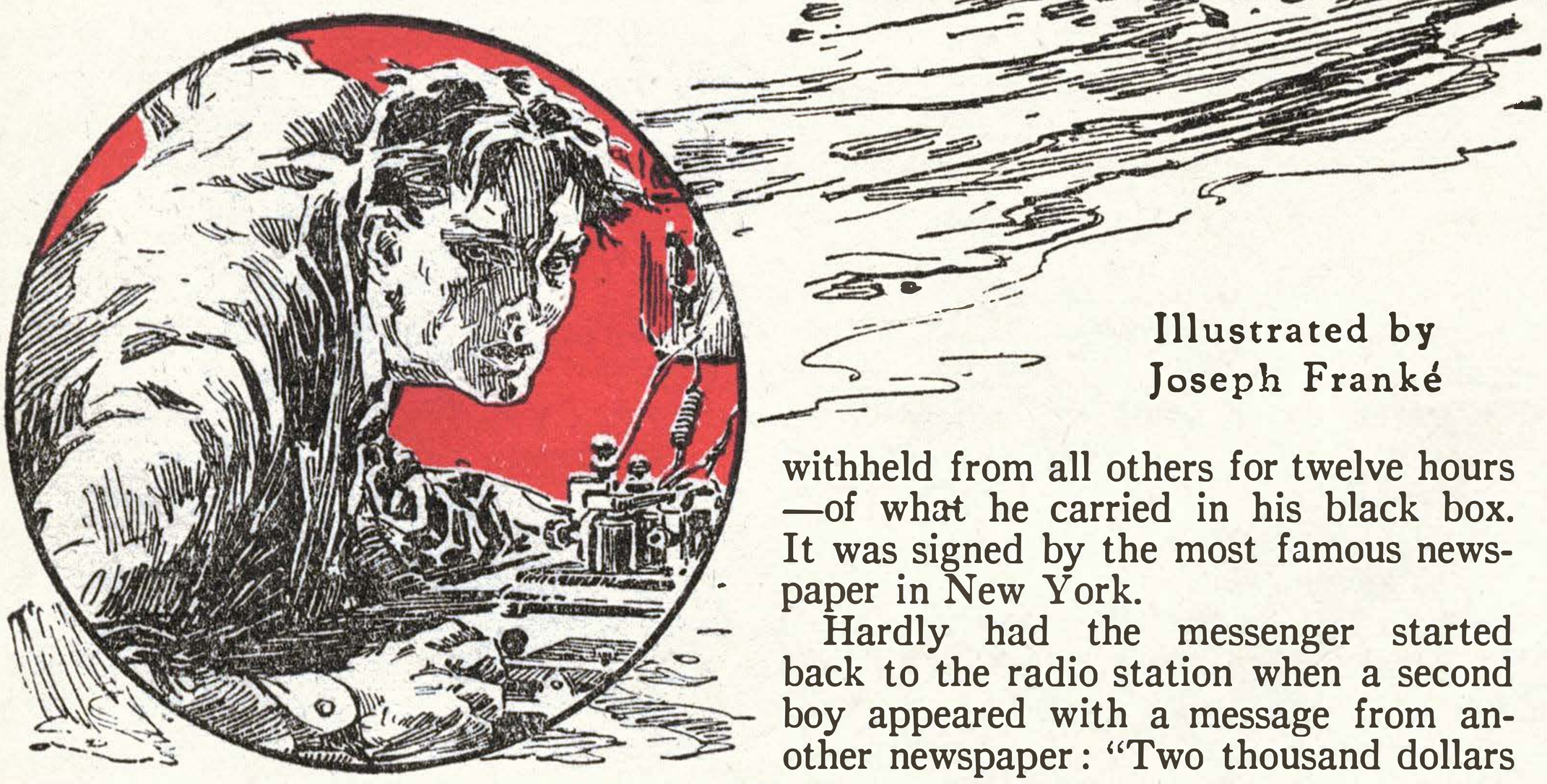
But the fact that there was a secret, of incomparable importance, was out.

David Ransdell received plenty of proof of it, as he stood at the *Europa's* rail, and the radiograms from shore were brought to him. He had had seven, all of the same sort, within the hour; and here was another.

He held it without opening it while he gazed across the sparkling water at the nearing shores of Long Island beyond which lay New York. Strange that, in a city which he could not yet see, men could be so excited about his errand, while the fellow-passengers, at his elbow, glanced at him with only mild curiosity at the sudden frequency of radiograms for him.

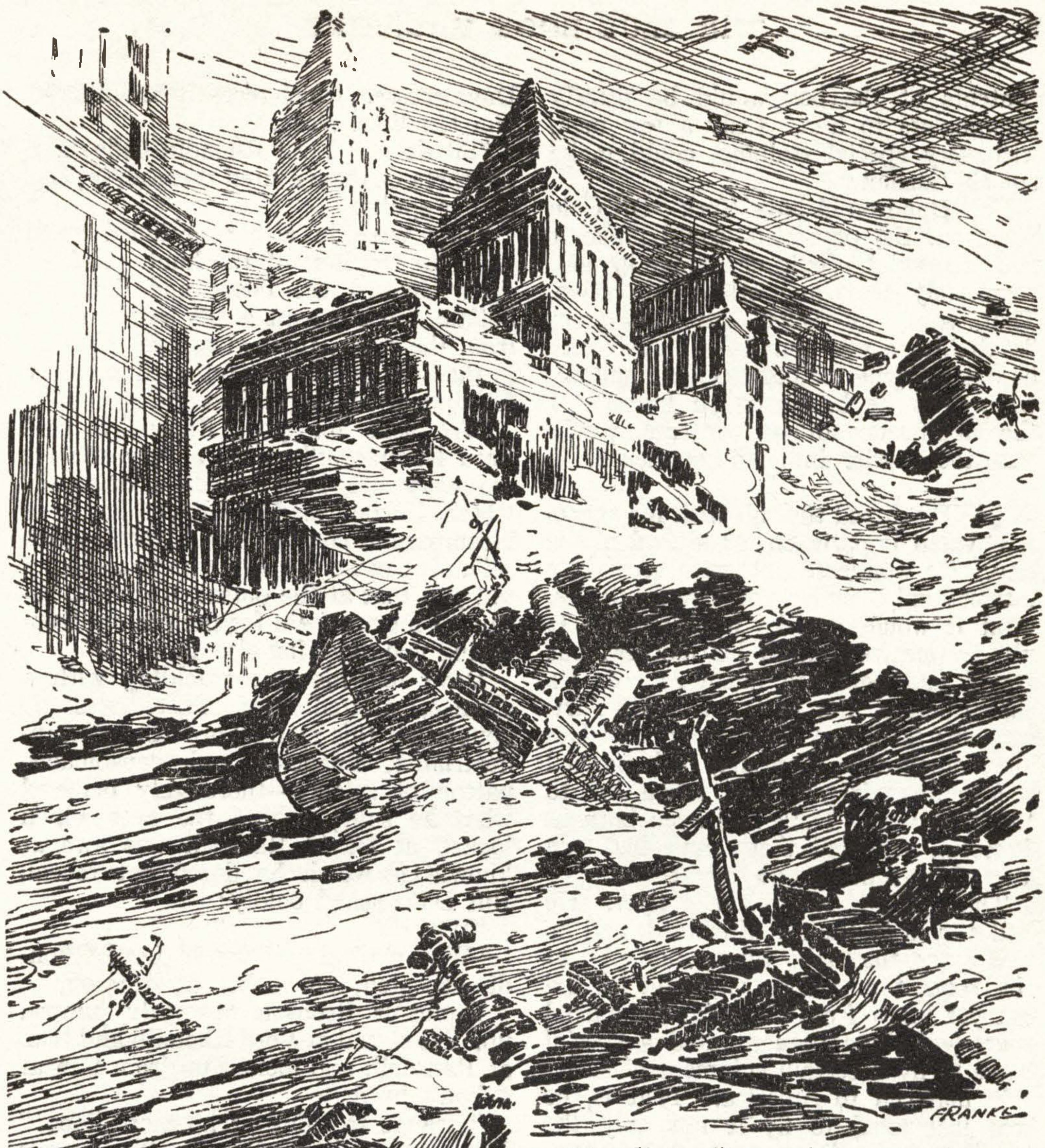
They would be far less indifferent, if they had read them.

The first, arriving less than an hour ago, offered him one thousand dollars for first and exclusive information—to be withheld from all others for twelve hours—of what he carried in his black box. It was signed by the most famous newspaper in New York.



Illustrated by Joseph Franké

Hardly had the messenger started back to the radio station when a second boy appeared with a message from another newspaper: "Two thousand dollars



"New York will be under water to the tops of its towers—a tidal wave beyond all imaginations! And it will be the same in Europe and Asia."

for first information of your business in New York."

Within ten minutes the offer had jumped to five thousand dollars, made by another paper. Plainly, the knowledge that there was a secret of utmost importance had spread swiftly!

The offer remained at five thousand for twenty minutes; indeed, it dipped once to twenty-five hundred dollars as some timid soul, on a more economical newspaper, ventured to put in his bid; but quickly it jumped again and doubled. It was ten thousand dollars, in the last radiogram which Dave had opened. Ten thousand dollars cash for first information, which now needed to be withheld from others only for six hours, regarding what he was bringing to New York.

The thrilling and all-absorbing fact of it was that David Ransdell himself did not know what he carried which could become of such amazing concern. He was merely the courier who transported and guarded the secret.

He could look in his box, of course; he possessed the key. But he had the key, as also he had custody of the heavy black box, because those who had entrusted it to him knew that he would never violate his word. Least of all, would he sell out to others. Moreover (if curiosity tried him beyond his strength) he had Professor Bronson's word for it that the

contents of the box would be utterly meaningless to him. Only a few men, with very special training, could make out the meaning.

Cole Hendron in New York—Dr. Cole Hendron, the physicist—could make it out. Indeed, he could determine it more completely than any other man alive. That was why Dave Ransdell, from South Africa, was bound for New York; he was bringing the box to Cole Hendron, who, after he had satisfied himself of the significance of its contents, would take the courier into his confidence.

DAVE gripped the rail with his aggravated impatience for arrival in the city. He wondered, but with secondary interest only, under the circumstances, what it would be like in America. It was the native land of his mother; but David had never so much as seen its shores before. For he was a South African—his father an Englishman who had once ranched in Montana, had married a Montana girl and had taken her to the Transvaal. Dave had been born at Pretoria, schooled there, and had run away from school to go to war.

The war had made him a flyer. He had stayed in the air afterward, and he was flying the mails when, suddenly, at the request of Capetown,—and he did not yet know from how high an official source,—he had been granted a special leave to fly a certain shipment of scientific material to America. That is, he was instructed to fly it not only the length of his ordinary route, but to continue with it the length of Africa and across to France, where he was to make connection with the fast express steamer *Europa* for New York.

Of course, the commission intrigued him. He had been summoned at night to the great mansion of Lord Rhondin, near Capetown.

Lord Rhondin himself, a big, calm, practical-minded man, received him; and with Lord Rhondin was a tall, wiry man of forty-odd, with a quick and nervous manner.

"Professor Bronson," Lord Rhondin said, introducing Ransdell.

"The astronomer?" Dave asked as they shook hands.

"Exactly," said Lord Rhondin. Bronson did not speak at all then, or for several minutes. He merely grasped Dave's hand with nervous tightness and stared at him while he was thinking, patently, of something else—something, Dave guessed, which recently had allowed him too little sleep.

"Sit down," Lord Rhondin bade; and the three of them seated themselves; but no one spoke.

They were in a big, secluded room given to trophies of the hunt. Animal skins covered the floor; and lion and buffalo and elephant heads looked down from the walls, their glass eyes glinting in the light which was reflected, also, by festoons of shining knives and spears.

"We sent for you, Ransdell," said Lord Rhondin, "because a very strange discovery has been made—a discovery which, if confirmed in all details, is of incomparable consequence. Nothing conceivable can be of greater importance. I tell you that at the outset, Ransdell, because I must refrain for the present from telling you anything else about it."

Dave felt his skin prickling with a strange, excited awe. There was no doubt that this man—Lord Rhondin, industrialist, financier and conspicuous patron of science—thoroughly believed what he said; behind the eyes which looked at David Ransdell was awe at knowledge which he dared not reveal. But Dave asked boldly:

"Why?"

"Why can't I tell you?" Lord Rhondin repeated, and looked at Bronson.

Professor Bronson nervously jumped up. He stared at Lord Rhondin and then at Ransdell, and looked up from him at a lion's head.

"Strange to think of no more lions!" Bronson finally muttered. The words seemed to escape him involuntarily.

LORD RHONDIN made no remark at this apparent irrelevance. Ransdell, inwardly more excited by this queerly oppressive silence, at last demanded:

"Why will there be no more lions?"

"Why not tell him?" Bronson asked.

But Rhondin went abruptly to business: "We asked leave for you, Ransdell, because I have heard that you are a particularly reliable man. It is essential that material connected with the discovery be delivered in New York City at the earliest practicable moment. You are both an expert pilot who can make the best speed, and you are dependable. If you will take it, I will put the material in your care; and—can you start tonight?"

"Yes sir. But—what sort of material, I must ask, if I am to fly with it?"

"Chiefly glass."

"Glass?" Dave repeated.

"Yes—photographic plates."

"Oh. How many of them?"

Lord Rhondin threw back a leopard-skin which had covered a large black traveling-case.

"They are packed, carefully, in this. I will tell you this much more, which you may guess, from Professor Bronson's presence. They are photographic plates taken by the greatest telescopes in South Africa, of regions of the southern sky which are never visible in the Northern Hemisphere. You are to take them to Dr. Cole Hendron in New York City, and deliver them personally to him and to no one else. I would tell you more about this unusual errand, Ransdell, if the—the implications of these plates were absolutely certain."

AT this, Professor Bronson started, but again checked himself before speaking; and Lord Rhondin went on:

"The implications, I may say, are probably true; but so very much is involved that it would be most disastrous if even a rumor of what we believe we have discovered, were given out. For that reason, among others, we cannot confide it even to you; but we must charge you personally to convey this box to Dr. Hendron, who is the scientific consultant of the American Electric and Power Corporation in New York City. He is now in Pasadena, but will be in New York upon your arrival. Time is vital—the greatest speed, that is, consistent with reasonable safety. We are asking you, therefore, to fly the length of Africa along the established routes, with which you are familiar, and to fly, then, across the Mediterranean to France, where you will board the fast *Europa*. You should reach Dr. Hendron not later than a week from Monday. You may return, then, if you wish. On the other hand—" He paused as crowded considerations heaped in his mind,—"you may be indifferent as to where you are."

"On the earth," added Professor Bronson.

"Of course—on the earth," Lord Rhondin accepted.

"I would go myself, Ransdell, you understand," Bronson then proceeded. "But my place, for the present, certainly is here. I mean, of course, at the observatory. . . . It is possible, Ransdell, in spite of precautions which have been taken, that some word of the Bronson discovery may get out. Your errand

The newspaper offered ten thousand dollars for information regarding the black box.

may be suspected. If it is, you know nothing—nothing, you understand? You must answer no inquiry from any source. None—none whatever!"

AT the landing during the fast flight north along the length of Africa, and in France, and during the first four days aboard the swift German vessel, nothing had happened to recall these emphatic cautions; but now, something was out. A boy was approaching with another radio; and so Ransdell swiftly tore open the one he had been holding:

"*Twenty thousand dollars in cash paid to you if you grant first and exclusive interview regarding the Bronson discovery to this paper.*"

It was signed by the man who, an hour ago, had opened the bidding with one thousand dollars.

Dave crumpled it and tossed it overboard. If the man who sent it had been in that trophy-room with Bronson and Lord Rhondin, he would have realized that the matter on their minds completely transcended any money consideration.

THE evening in New York was warm. It pressed back the confused uproar of the street; and the sound which ascended to the high terrace of the Hendron apartment seemed to contain heat as well as noise. Eve found that her search for a breath of fresh air was fruitless. For a moment she gazed into the mist and monotone that was Manhattan, and then stared over the city toward the channels to the sea.

"Suppose those lights are the *Europa?*" she asked Tony.

"It left quarantine before five; it's somewhere there," Tony said patiently. "Let's not go back in."

His cigarette-case clicked open. The light of his match made a brief Rubens; buff satin of her bare shoulders, green of her evening dress, stark white of his shirt-bosom, and heads bent together. Some one inside the apartment danced past the French windows, touched the door-handle, perceived that the terrace was occupied, and danced away to the accompaniment of music that came from the radio.

"Guests take possession these days," Eve continued. "If you suggest bridge, they tear up the rugs and dance. If I'd asked them to dance,—and had an orchestra,—they'd have played bridge—or made fudge—"

"Or played District Attorney. Why have guests at all, Eve? Especially tonight."

"Sorry, Tony."

"Are you, really? Then why did you have them, when for the first night in weeks the three thousand miles of this dreary continent aren't between us?"

"I didn't have them, Tony. They just heard we were home; and they came."

"You could have had a headache—for them."

"I almost did, with the reporters this afternoon. This is really a rest; let's enjoy it, Tony."

She leaned against the balustrade and looked down at the lights; and he, desirous of much more, bent jealously beside her. Inside the apartment, the dancing continued, making itself sensible as a procession of silhouettes that passed the window. Tony laid his hand possessively on Eve's. She turned her hand, lessening subtly the possessiveness of his, and said:

"You can kiss me. I like to be kissed. But don't propose."

"Why not? . . . See here, Eve, I'm through with Christmas kisses with you."

"Christmas kisses?"

"You know what I mean. I've been kissing you, Christmases, for three years; and what's it got me?"

"Cad!"

He put his hand on her shoulder, and turned her away from the panorama of the city.

"Is there some real trouble, Eve?" he inquired gently.

"Trouble?"

"I mean that's on your mind, and that stops making tonight what it might be for us."

"No; there's no trouble, Tony."

"Then there's somebody else ahead of me—is there? Somebody perhaps in Pasadena?"

"Nobody in Pasadena—or anywhere else, Tony."

"Then what is it, tonight? What's changed you?"

"How am I changed?"

"You drive me mad, Eve; you know it. You're lovely in face, and beautiful in body; and besides, with a brain that your father's trained so that you're beyond any other girl—and most men too. You're way beyond me, but I love you; and you don't listen to me."

"I do!"

"You're not listening to me even now. You're thinking instead."

"Time is vital. We are asking you to fly the length of Africa, then across the Mediterranean."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Feel!"

"Oh, I can do that too."

"I know; then why don't you—and stop thinking."

"Wait! Not now, Tony. . . . Do you suppose that's the *Europa?*"

"Why do you care? See here, Eve, *is* there anything in that newspaper story your father and you have been denying all afternoon?"

"What story?"

"That something unusual is up between all the big scientific leaders."

"There's always something up in science," Eve evaded. . . .

The doors were flung wide open. Music blared from the radio. In the drawing-room a half-dozen people continued to dance. Another group surrounded the punch-bowl. The butler was passing a tray of sandwiches. Some one stepped out and asked Eve to dance, and she went in with him.

Tony remained on the terrace.

The butler stopped before him. "Sandwich, Mr. Drake?"

"Keep three of the tongue for me, Leighton," Tony said solemnly. "I want to take them home to eat in bed."

The butler nodded indulgently. "Certainly, Mr. Drake. Anything else?"

"Possibly an anchovy."

"Very good, Mr. Drake."

An arm encircled Tony's broad shoulders. "Hello, Tony. Say—give me the low-down on what shot the market to hell's basement today."

Tony frowned; his eyes were following Eve. "Why do you compliment me with thinking I may know?"

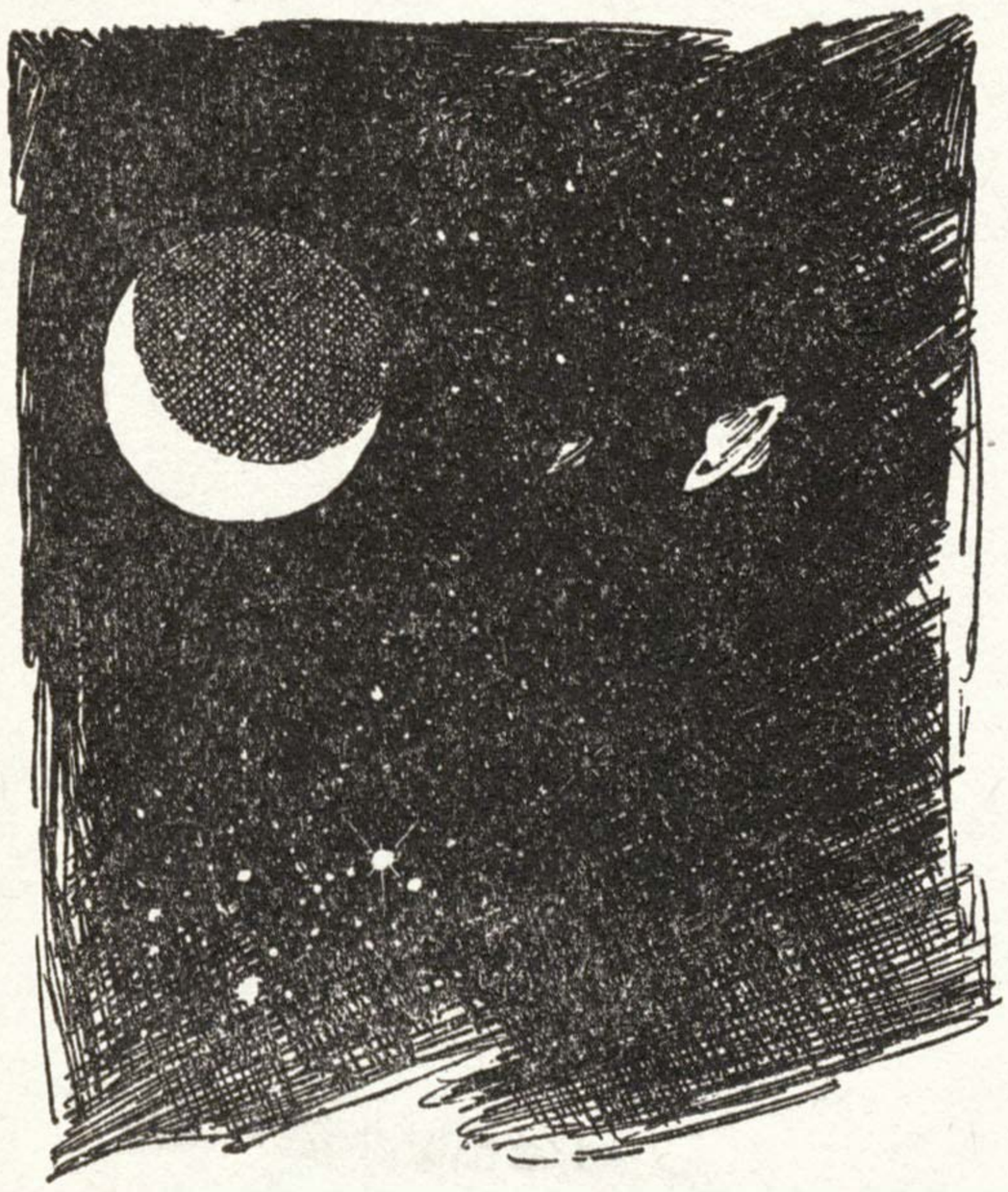
"It's something happened in Africa, I hear. Anyway, the African cables were carrying it. But what could happen down there to shoot hell out of us this way? Another discovery of gold? A mountain of gold that would make gold so cheap it would unsettle everything?"

"Cheap gold would make stocks dear—not send them down," Tony objected.

"Sure; it can't be that. But what could happen in South Africa that—"

Tony returned alone to the terrace. His senses were swept by intimate thoughts of Eve: A perfume called Nuit Douce. Gold lights in her red-brown hair. Dark eyes. The sweep of a forehead behind which, in rare company, a woman's instincts and tendernesses dwelt with a mind ordinarily as honest and unevasive as a man's. All the tremendous insignificances that have meaning to a man possessed by the woman he loves.

He stood spellbound, staring through the night. . . . Anthony Drake was an athlete—that would have been the second observation another man would have made of him. The first, that he owned



that uncounterfeitable trait which goes with what we call good birth and breeding, and generations of the like before him.

With this he had the physical sureness, and the gestures of suppressed power which are the result of training in sports. He had the slender waist of a boxer, with the shoulders of a discus-thrower. His clothes always seemed frail in comparison with his physique.

He also had intelligence. His university companions considered it a trivial side-issue when he was graduated from Harvard with a *magna cum laude;* but the conservative investment-house with which he afterward became affiliated appreciated the adjunct of brains to a personality so compelling. His head was large and square, and it required his big physique to give that head-proportion. He was blue-eyed, sandy-haired. He possessed a remarkably deep voice.

He was entirely normal. His attainments beyond the average were not unusual. He belonged more or less to that type of young American business man upon whom the older generation places its hope and trust. Eve was really a much more remarkable human being—not on account of her beauty, but because of her intellectual brilliance, and her unique training from her father.

YET Eve was not the sort who preferred "intellectual" men; intellectualism, as such, immensely bored her. She liked the outright and vigorous and "normal." She liked Tony Drake; and Tony, knowing this, was more than baffled by her attitude tonight. An emotional net seemed to have been stretched between them, through which he could not quite reach her; what the substance of the net was, he could not determine; but it balked him when, as never before, he wanted nearness to her. He believed her when she told him that her tantalizing abstraction was not because of another man. Then, what was its cause?

Tony was drawn from his reverie by the appearance of Douglas Balcom, senior partner of his firm. His presence here surprised Tony. No reason why old Balcom should not drop in, if he pleased; but the rest of the guests were much younger.

Balcom, halting beside Tony, reflected the general discontent of the day by waving at the city and murmuring: "In the soup. Everything's in the soup; and now nobody cares. Why does nobody care?"

Tony disagreed, but he deferred to Balcom by saying: "It seems to me, a lot of people care."

"I mean nobody who's in the know cares. I mean the four or five men who *know* what's going on—underneath. I mean," particularized old Balcom, "John Forgan doesn't care. Did you see him today?"

"Forgan? No."

"Did you hear of his buying anything?"

"No."

"Selling anything?"

"No."

"That's it." Balcom thought out loud for a while. Tony listened. "Forgan's the fourth richest man in America; and normally the most active, personally. He'll be the richest, if he keeps up. He wants to be the richest. Oil—mines—rails—steel—shipping—he's in everything. He's only fifty-one. To my way of thinking, he's smarter than anyone else; and this looks like a market—superficially—which was made for Forgan. But for two weeks he's gone dead. Won't do a thing, either way; takes no position. Paralyzed. Why?"

"He may be resting on his oars."

"You know damn' well he isn't. Not Forgan—now. There's only one way I can explain; he knows something damned important that the rest of us don't. There's an undertone—don't you feel it?—that's different. I met Forgan today, face to face; we shook hands. I don't like the look of him. I tell you he knows something he's afraid of. He did a funny

thing, by the way, Tony. He asked me: "How well do you know Cole Hendron?"

"I said, 'Pretty well.' I said: 'Tony Drake knows him damn' well.' He said: 'You tell Hendron, or have Drake tell Hendron, he can trust me.' That's exactly what he said, Tony—tell Hendron that he can trust John Forgan. Now, what the hell is that all about?"

"I don't know," said Tony, and almost added, in his feeling of the moment: "I don't care." For Eve was returning.

She slipped away from her partner and signaled to Tony to see her alone. Together they sought the solitude of the end of the terrace.

"Tony, can you start these people home?"

"Gladly," rejoiced Tony. "But I can stay?"

"I'm afraid not. I've got to work."

"Now? Tonight?"

"As soon as I possibly can. Tony, I'll tell you. The *Europa* isn't in, but Ransdell was taken off at quarantine and brought on ahead. He's in Father's study now."

"Who's Ransdell?"

"Nobody I know. I haven't set eyes on him yet, Tony. He's just the messenger from Africa. You see, Tony, some—some things were being sent rush, by airplane and by the *Europa*, to Father from Africa. Well, they've arrived; and I do his measuring for him, you know."

"What measuring?"

"The delicate measuring, like—like the position and amount of movement shown by stars and other bodies on astronomical plates. For weeks—for months, in fact, Tony—the astronomers in the Southern Hemisphere have been watching something."

"What sort of a something, Eve?"

"Something of a sort never seen before, Tony. A sort of body that they knew existed by the millions, probably, all through the universe—something they were sure must be, but the general existence of which has never been actually proved. It—it may be the most sensational fact for us, from the beginning to the end of time. I can't tell you more than that tonight, Tony; yet by tomorrow we may be telling it to all the world. Rumors are getting out; and so some scientist, who will be believed, must make an authoritative announcement. And the scientists of the world have selected Father to make it.

"Now, help me, Tony. You clear these people out; and then you run along. For I've measurements to make and report to Father; and he has to check over calculations made by the best men in the southern half of the world. Then, by tomorrow, we may know, for certain, what is going to happen to us all."

TONY had his arm about her; he felt her suddenly trembling. He swept her up and held her against him; and kissing her, he met on her lips a new, impetuous passion which exalted and amazed him. Then some one came out and he released her.

"I—I didn't mean that, Tony," she whispered.

"You must have."

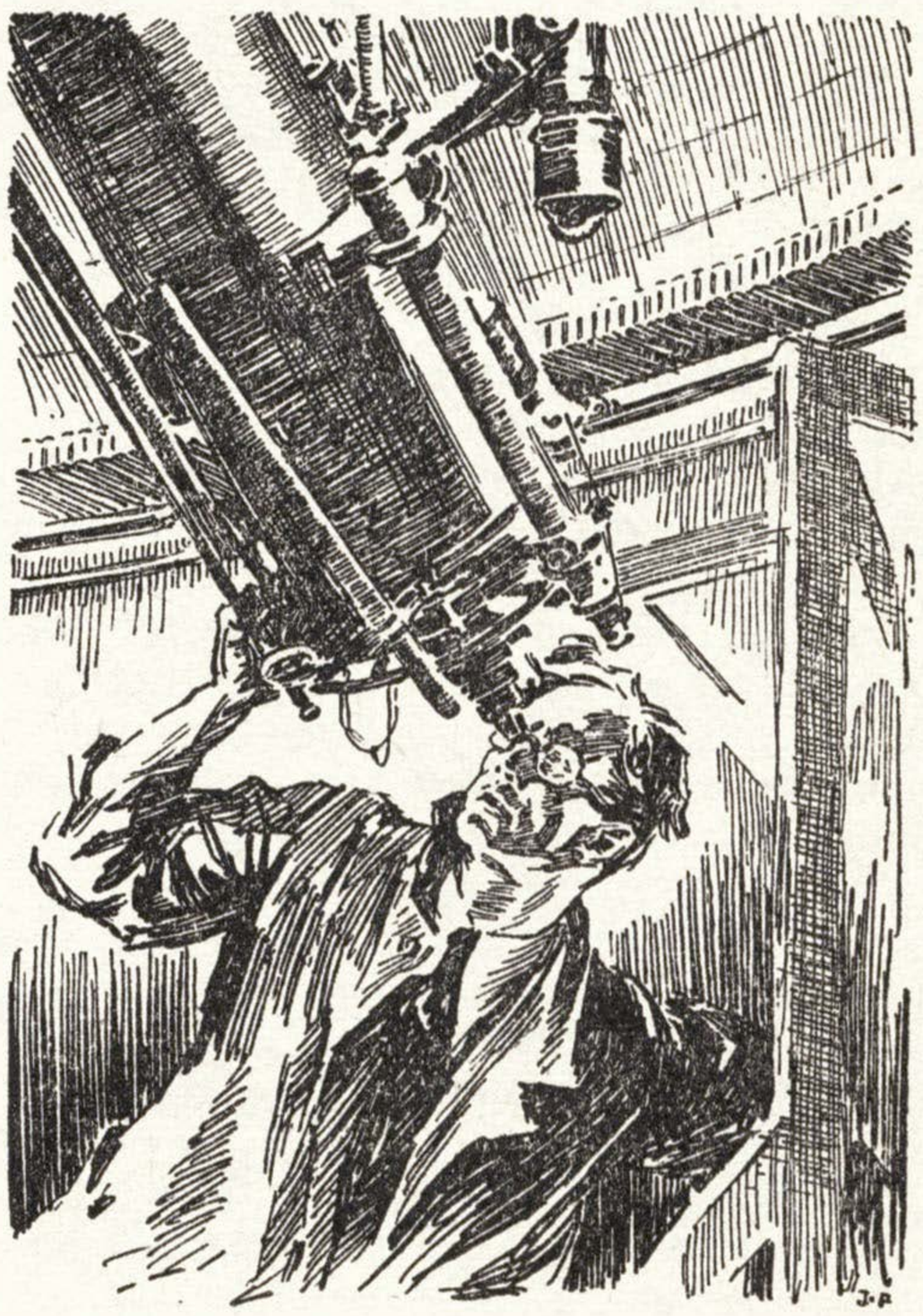
"I didn't! Not all of it, Tony. It was just for that moment."

"We'll have a thousand more like it—thousands—thousands!"

They both were whispering; and now, though he had let her go, his hand was over hers, and he could feel her quivering again. "You don't know, Tony. Nobody really knows yet. Come; help me send them all away."

He helped her; and when the guests had gone, he met, at last, the man who had come from South Africa. They shook hands, and for a few moments the three of them—Eve Hendron and Tony Drake and Ransdell, the mail-flyer from under the Southern Cross—stood and chatted together.

There must be presentiments; other-



"Tony, the *Europa* isn't in, but Ransdell, the messenger from Africa, was taken off at quarantine and brought on ahead. He's in Father's study now."

wise, how could the three of them always have carried, thereafter, a photographic memory of that moment of their meeting? Yet no one of the three—and least of all Eve, who on that night knew most of what was to come—could possibly have suspected the strange relation in which each was to stand to the others. None of them could have suspected, because such a relationship was, at that moment, inconceivable to them—a relationship between civilized men and women for which there then existed, indeed, no word in the language to describe.

CHAPTER II

The League of the Last Days

THE lobby of Tony's favorite club was carpeted in red. Beyond the red carpet was a vast room paneled in oak. It usually was filled with leisurely men playing backgammon or bridge or chess, smoking and reading newspapers. Behind it, thick with gloom, was a library; and in a wing on the left, the dining-room where uniformed waiters moved swiftly between rows of small tables.

As Tony entered the club, however, he felt that it had emerged from its slumbers, its routine, its dull masculine quietude. There were only two games in progress. Few men were idling over their cigars, studying their newspapers; many were gathered around the bar.

The lights seemed brighter. Voices were staccato. Men stood in groups and talked; a few even gesticulated. The surface of snobbish solitude had been dissipated.

Tony knew at once why the club was alive. The rumors, spreading on the streets, had eddied in through these doors too.

Some one hailed him. "Hi! Tony!"

"Hello, Jack! What's up?"

"You tell us!"

"How could I tell you?"

"Don't you know Hendron? Haven't you seen him?"

Jack Little—a young man whose name was misleading—stepped away from a cluster of friends, who, however, soon followed him; and Tony found himself surrounded. One of the men had been one of the guests whom Tony, half an hour before, had helped clear from the Hen-

drons'; and so he could not deny having seen Hendron, even if he had wanted to.

"What in hell have the scientists under their hats, Tony?"

"I don't know. Honest," Tony denied.

"Then what the devil is the League of the Last Days?"

"What?"

"The League of the Last Days—an organization of all the leading scientists in the world, as far as I can make out," Little informed him.

"Never heard of it," said Tony.

"I just did," Little confessed; "but it appears to have been in existence some time. Several months, that is. They began to organize it suddenly, all over the world, in the winter."

"All over the world?" asked Tony.

"In strictest and absolutely the highest scientific circles. They've been organized and communicating for half a year; and it's just leaking out."

"The League of the Last Days?" repeated Tony.

"That's it."

"What does it mean?"

"That's what I thought you might tell us. Hendron's a member, of course."

"The head of it, I hear," somebody else put in.

"I DON'T know a thing about it," Tony protested, and tried to move away. Actually, he did not know; but this talk fitted in too well with what Eve had told him. Her father had been chosen by the scientists of the world to make some extraordinary announcement. But—the League of the Last Days! She had not mentioned that to him.

League of the Last Days! It sent a strange tingle under his skin.

"How did you hear about it?" Tony now demanded of Jack Little.

"From him," said Jack, jerking toward the man who had heard that Cole Hendron headed the League.

"I got it this afternoon," this fellow said importantly. "I know the city editor of the *Standard*. He had a reporter—a smart kid named Davis—on it. I was there when the kid came back. It seems that some months ago, the scientists—the top men like Hendron—stumbled on something big. So big that it seems to have scared them. They've been having meetings about it for months.

"Nobody thought much about the meetings at first. Scientists are always barging around visiting each other and having conventions. But these were different. Very few men—and all big ones; and no real reports coming out. Only camouflage stuff—like about progress in smashing the atom. But the real business that was exciting them wasn't given out.

"Nobody knows yet what it is; but we do know there is something mighty big and mighty secret. It's so big and so secret that they only refer to it, when writing to each other, by a code.

"That's one thing definitely known. They write to each other and cable to each other about it in a code that's so damned good that the newspapers, which have got hold of some of the messages, can't break the cipher and figure it out."

"What's the League of the Last Days got to do with that?" Tony asked.

"It's the League of the Last Days that's doing it all. It's the League of the Last Days that communicates with its members by the code."

That was all anyone knew; and soon Tony left the circle. He did not want to talk to men who knew even less than himself. He wanted to return to Eve; and that being impossible, he wanted to be alone. "I need," he said to nobody in particular, "a shower and a drink." And he pushed out of the club and started home.

His cab lurched through traffic. When the vehicle stopped for a red light, he was roused from his abstractions by the hawking of an extra. He leaned out and bought one from the bawling newsboy. The headline disappointed him.

SCIENTISTS FORM SECRET
"LEAGUE OF THE LAST DAYS."

A second paper—a tabloid—told no more.

SENSATIONAL SECRET DISCOVERY
World Scientists Communicating in Code.

When he reached his apartment, he thrust the papers under his arm. The doorman and the elevator boy spoke to him, and he did not answer. His Jap servant smiled at him. He surrendered his derby, threw himself in a deep chair, had a telephone brought, and called Eve.

The telephone-company informed him that service on that number had been discontinued for the night.

"Bring me a highball, Kyto," Tony said. "And hand me that damn' newspaper." And Tony read:

"A secret discovery of startling importance is exciting the whole world of science.

"Though denied both by American and foreign scientists, the *Standard* has come into possession of copies of more than a score of cablegrams in code exchanged between various physicists and astronomers in America, and Professor Ernest Heim of Heidelberg, Germany.

"This newspaper has sought out the American senders or receivers of the mysterious code messages, who include Professor Yerksen Leeming at Yale, Doctor K. Belditz of Columbia, Cole Hendron of the American Electric and Power Corp., and Professor Eugene Taylor at Princeton. Some of these scientists at first denied that a secret code communication was being carried on; but others, confronted with copies of messages, admitted it, but claimed that they referred to a purely scientific investigation which was being conducted by several groups in coöperation. They denied that the subjects under investigation were of public importance.

"Challenged to describe, even in general terms, the nature of the secret, each man refused.

"But matters are coming to a head. Today it was discovered that a special courier from South Africa, sent by Lord Rhondin and Professor Bronson of Capetown, had flown the length of the Dark Continent with a mysterious black box; at Cherbourg he took the fast express steamer *Europa,* and upon his arrival, was taken off at quarantine and hurried to Cole Hendron's apartment.

"Dr. Cole Hendron, chief consultant of the American Electric and Power Corp., only today returned to New York from Pasadena, where he has been working with the scientists of the observatory on Mt. Wilson. . . .

"To add to the disturbing and spectacular features of this strange scientific mystery, it is learned that the scientists associated in this secret and yet world-spanning investigation are in a group which is called the League of the Last Days. What this may mean. . . ."

There was nothing more but speculation and wild guesses. Tony tossed aside the newspapers and lay back in his chair; he could speculate for himself. The League of the Last Days! It might, of course, have been manufactured by one of the tabloids itself, and thus spread about the city. But Tony too vividly recollected Eve Hendron.

Kyto appeared with his highball; and Tony sipped slowly and thoughtfully. If this which he had just read, and that which he previously had encountered today, had meaning, it must be that some amazing and unique menace threatened human society. And it was at a moment when, more than ever before in his life or in his dreams, Tony Drake wanted human society, with him in it—with him and Eve in it—to go on as it was. Or rather, as it would be, if things simply took their natural course.

Eve in his arms; her lips on his again, as he had had them today! To possess her, to own her completely! He could dream of no human delight beyond her! And he would have her! Damn this League of the Last Days! What were the scientists hiding among themselves?

Tony sat up vehemently. "A hell of a thing," he said aloud. "The whole world is haywire. Haywire! By the way, Kyto, you aren't a Japanese scientist, are you?"

"How?"

"Never mind. You don't happen to send code messages to Einstein, do you?"

"Code messages?"

"Let it pass. I'm going to bed. If my mother calls from the country, Kyto, tell her I'm being a good boy and still wearing woolen socks against a cold snap. I must have sleep, to be in shape for work tomorrow. Maybe I'll sell five shares of stock in the morning, or possibly ten. It's wearing me down. I can't stand the strain."

He drained his glass and arose. Four hours later, after twice again having attempted to phone Eve Hendron, and twice again having been informed that service for the night was discontinued, Tony got to sleep.

CHAPTER III

The Strangers from Space

IT was no tabloid but the *Times*—the staid, accurate, ultra-responsible New York *Times*—which spread the sensation before him in the morning.

The headlines lay black upon the page:

"Scientists Say Worlds from Another Star Approach the Earth

Dr. Cole Hendron Makes Astonishing Statement in which Sixty of the Greatest Physicists and Astronomers Concur."

"The passing of the Bronson bodies would cause earthquakes on a scale unimaginable; half the inland cities would be shaken down, and the effect below the crust would set volcanoes into activity everywhere."

Tony was scarcely awake when Kyto brought him the paper.

Kyto himself, it was plain, had been puzzling over the news, and did not understand it. Kyto, however, had comprehended enough to know that something was very different today; so he had carried in the coffee and the newspaper a bit earlier than customary; and he delayed, busying himself with the black, clear coffee, while Tony started up and stared.

"Dr. Cole Hendron, generally acknowledged to be the leading astro-physicist of America," Tony read, "early this morning gave to the press the following statement, on behalf of the sixty scientists named in an accompanying column."

Tony's eyes flashed to the column which carried the list of distinguished names, English, German, French, Italian, Swiss, American, South African, Australian and Japanese.

"Similar statements are being given to the press of all peoples at this same time.

"'In order to allay alarms likely to rise from the increase of rumors based upon incorrect or misunderstood reports of the discovery made by Professor Bronson, of Capetown, South Africa, and in order to acquaint all people with the actual situation, as it is now viewed, we offer these facts.

"'Eleven months ago, when examining a photographic plate of the region 15 (Eridanus) in the southern skies, Professor Bronson noticed the presence of two bodies then near the star Achernar, which had not been observed before.

"'Both were exceedingly faint, and lying in the constellation Eridanus, which is one of the largest constellations in the sky, they were at first put down as probably long-period variable stars which had recently increased in brightness after having been too faint to affect the photographic plate.

"'A month later, after photographing again the same locality, Professor Bronson looked for the two new stars and

found that they had moved. No object of stellar distance could show displacement in so short a space of time. It was certain, therefore, that the newly observed bodies were not stars. They must be previously unobserved and unsuspected members of our solar system, or else objects, from outside our system, now approaching us.

"'They must be new planets or comets —or strangers from space.

"'All planets known to be associated with our sun move approximately in the plane described by the earth's orbit. This is true, whatever the size or distance of the planets, from Mercury to Pluto. The two Bronson bodies were moving almost at right angles to the plane of the planetary orbits.

"'Comets appear from all directions; but these two bodies did not resemble comets when viewed through the greater telescope. One of them, at the time of the second observation, showed a small but perceptible disk. Its spectrum exhibited the characteristic lines of reflected sunlight. Meanwhile, several observations of position and movement were made which made it plain that the two Bronson bodies were objects of planetary dimensions and characteristics, approaching us from out of stellar distances —that is, from space.

"'The two bodies have remained associated, approaching us together and at the same speed. Both now show disks which can be measured. It can now be estimated that, when first observed, they had approached within the distance from the sun of the planet Neptune. It must be remembered, however, that they lie in an entirely different direction.

"'Since coming under observation, they have moved within the distance of the orbit of our planet Uranus, and are approaching the distance of Saturn.

"'Bronson Alpha—which is the name temporarily assigned to the larger of the two new bodies—appears in the telescope similar in size to Uranus. That is, its estimated diameter is something over forty thousand miles. Bronson Beta, which is the smaller of the two bodies, has an estimated diameter of eight thousand miles. It is similar in size, therefore, to the earth.

"'Bronson Beta is in advance of the other. The distance separating the two bodies, as they approach, is approximately three million miles. They have both come definitely within the sphere of gravitational influence of the sun; but having arrived from interstellar space, their speeds of approach greatly exceed the velocities of our familiar planets in their orbits around the sun.

"'Such are the observed phenomena. The following is necessarily highly speculative, but it is offered as a possible explanation of the origin of the two Bronson bodies.

"'It has long been supposed that about other stars than ours—for of course our sun is only a star—are other planets like the earth and Mars and Jupiter. It is not presumed that all stars are surrounded by planets; but it has been estimated that probably at least one star in one hundred thousand has developed a planetary system. Among the many billions of stars, there are probably millions of suns with planets. It is always possible that some catastrophe would tear the planets away. It would require nothing more than the approach of another star toward the sun to destroy the gravitational control of the sun over the earth and Venus and Mars and Jupiter and other planets, and to send them all spinning into space on cold and dark careers of their own.

"'This world of ours, and Venus and Mars and Jupiter and Saturn, would then wander throughout indefinite ages—some of them perhaps eternally doomed to cold and darkness; others might, after incalculable ages, find another sun.

"'It might be assumed, for purposes of explanation of the Bronson Bodies, that they once were planets like our earth and Uranus, circling about some life-giving sun. A catastrophe tore them away, together with whatever other of her planets there might have been, and sent them into the darkness of interstellar space. These two—Bronson Alpha and Bronson Beta—either were associated originally, or else established a gravitational influence upon each other in the journey through space, and probably have traveled together through an incalculable time until they arrived in a region of the heavens which brought them at last under the attraction of the sun. Their previous course, consequently, has been greatly modified by the sun, and as a result, they are now approaching us.'"

AT this point, the prepared statement of Cole Hendron terminated.

Tony Drake was sitting up straight in bed, holding the paper before him and trying, with his left hand and without

looking away, to strike a match for the cigarette between his lips. He did not succeed, but he kept on trying while his eyes searched down the column of questions put by the reporters to Dr. Hendron—and his answers.

"'What will be the effect of this approach upon the earth?'

"'It is impossible yet to tell.'

"'But there will be effects?'

"'Certainly there will be effects.'

"'How serious?'"

Again Cole Hendron refused to answer.

"'It is impossible yet to say.'

"'Will the earth be endangered?'

"Answer: 'There will undoubtedly be considerable alterations of conditions of life here.'

"'What sort of alterations?'

"'That will be the subject of a later statement,' Dr. Hendron replied. 'The character and degree of the disturbance which we are to undergo is now the subject of study by a responsible group. We will attempt to describe the conditions likely to confront all of us on the world as soon as they clearly define themselves.'

"'When will this supplementary statement be made?'

"'As soon as possible.'

"'Tomorrow?'

"'No; by no means as soon as tomorrow.'

"'Within a week? Within a month?'

"'I would say that it might be made within a month.'"

Tony was on his feet, and in spite of himself, trembling. There was no possible mistaking of the undertone of this astounding announcement. It spelled doom, or some enormous alteration of all conditions of life on the world equivalent to complete disaster.

The League of the Last Days! There was some reference to it in another column, but Tony scarcely caught its coherence.

Where was Eve; and what, upon this morning, was she doing? How was she feeling? What was she thinking? Might she, at last, be sleeping?

She had been up all night, and at work assisting her father. The statement had been released at one o'clock in the morning. There was no mention in the paper of her presence with her father; Cole Hendron apparently had received the reporters alone.

How much more than this which had been told, did Eve now know. Plainly, manifestly the scientists knew more—much, much more, which they dared not yet tell the public. Dared not! That was the fact. They dared, today, only to issue the preliminary announcement.

CHAPTER IV

Dawn After Doomsday?

KYTO, who usually effaced himself, did not do so this morning. Kyto, having the untasted coffee for an excuse, called attention to himself and ventured:

"Mister, of course, comprehends the news?"

"Yes, Kyto; I understand it—partly, at any rate."

"I may inquire, please, perhaps the significance?"

Tony stared at the little Jap. He had always liked him; but suddenly he was assailed with a surge of fellow-feeling for this small brown man trapped like himself on the rim of the world.

Trapped! That was it. *Trapped* was the word for this strange feeling.

"Kyto, we're in for something."

"What?"

"Something rather—extensive, Kyto. One thing is sure, we're all in for it together."

"General—destruction?" Kyto asked.

Tony shook his head, and his reply surprised himself. "No; if it were just that, they'd say it. It would be easy to say—general destruction, the end of everything. People after all in a way are prepared for that, Kyto." Tony was reasoning to himself as much as talking to Kyto. "No; this can't be just—destruction. It doesn't *feel* like it, Kyto."

"What else could it be?" questioned the Jap practically.

Tony, having no answer, gulped his coffee; and Kyto had to attend to the telephone, which was ringing.

It was Balcom.

"Hey! Tony! Tony, have you seen the paper? I told you Hendron had something; but I admit this runs considerably beyond expectations. . . . Staggers one, doesn't it, Tony? . . . Now, see here, it's perfectly plain that Hendron knows much more than he's giving out. . . . Tony, he probably knows it *all* now! . . . I want you to get to him as soon as you can."

As soon as possible, Tony got rid of Balcom—another rider on the rim of the world, trapped with Tony and Kyto and all the rest of these people who could be heard, if you went to the open

window, ringing one another to talk over this consternation.

Tony commanded, from before the bathroom mirror, where he was hastily shaving: "Kyto, make sure that anybody else that calls up isn't Miss Hendron, and then say I'm out."

Within five minutes Kyto was telling the truth. Tony, in less than five more, was at the Hendrons'. The place was policed. Men, women and children from Park Avenue, from Third and Second avenues crowded the sidewalks; sound-film trucks and photographers obstructed the street. Radio people and reporters, refused admittance, picked up what they could from the throng. Tony, at last, made contact with a police officer, and he did not make the mistake of asserting his right to pass the police-lines or of claiming, too publicly, that he was a personal friend of the family.

"There is a possibility that Dr. Hendron or perhaps Miss Hendron might have left word that I might see them," Tony said. "My name is Tony Drake."

THE officer escorted him in. The elevator lifted him high to the penthouse on the roof, where the street noises were vague and far away, where the sun was shining, and blossoms, in their boxes, were red and yellow and blue.

One man dropped dead at his first glance upon the racing ticker.

No one was about but the servants. Impassive people! Did they know and understand? Or were they dulled to it?

Miss Eve, they said, was in the breakfast-room; Dr. Hendron still was asleep.

"Hello, Tony! Come in!"

Eve rose from the pretty little green table in the gay chintz-curtained nook which they called the breakfast-room.

Her eyes were bright, her face flushed the slightest bit with her excitement. Her hands grasped his tightly.

Lovely hands, she had, slender and soft and strong. How gentle she was to hold, but also how strong! Longing for her leaped in Tony. Damn everything else!

He pulled her within his arms and kissed her; and her lips, as they had last night, clung to his. They both drew breath, deeply, as they parted—stared into each other's eyes. Their hands held to each other a moment more; then Tony stepped back.

She had dressed but for her frock itself; she was in negligée, with her slim lovely arms in loose lace-decked silk, her white neck and bosom half exposed.

He bent and kissed her neck.

"You've breakfasted, Tony?"

"Yes—no. Can I sit with you here? I scarcely dreamed you'd be up, Eve, after your night."

"You've seen the papers? We were through with them before three. That is, Father then absolutely refused to say any more or see anyone else. He went to sleep."

"You didn't."

"No; I kept thinking—thinking—"

"Of the end of everything, Eve?"

"Part of the time, I did; of course I did; but more of the time of you."

"Of me—last night?"

"I hoped you'd come first thing today. I thought you would. . . . It's funny what difference the formal announcement of it makes. I knew it all last night, Tony. I've known the general truth of it for weeks. But when it was a secret thing—something shared just with my father and with his friends—it wasn't the same as now. One knew it but still didn't admit it, even to one's self. It was theoretical—in one's head, like a dream, not reality. We didn't really *do* much, Father and I, last night. I mean do much in proving up the facts and figures. Father had them all before from other men. Professor Bronson's plates and calculations simply confirmed what really was certain; Father checked them over. Then we gave it out.

"The God of our fathers, the God of wrath and vengeance . . . . could also be merciful to men. He's sending two worlds to us, not one. Not just the one that will destroy us. He's sending the world that may save us, too."

"That's what's made everything so changed."

"Yet you didn't give out everything you know, Eve."

"No, not everything, Tony."

"You know exactly what's going to happen, don't you, Eve?"

"Yes. We know—we think we know, that is, exactly what's going to happen."

"It's going to be doomsday, isn't it?"

"No, Tony—more than doomsday."

"What can be more than that?"

"Dawn after doomsday, Tony. The world is going to be destroyed. Tony, oh, Tony, the world is going to be most thoroughly destroyed; yet some of us here on this world, which most surely will come to an end, some of us will not die! Or we need not die—if we accept the strange challenge that God is casting at us from the skies!"

"The challenge that God casts at us—what challenge? What do you mean? Exactly what is it that is going to happen, Eve—and how?"

"I'll try to tell you, Tony: There are two worlds coming toward us—two worlds torn, millions of years ago perhaps, from another star. For millions of years, probably, they've been wandering, utterly dark and utterly frozen, through space; and now they've found our sun; and they're going to attach themselves to it—at our expense. For they are coming into the solar system on a course which will carry them close—oh, very close indeed, Tony, to the orbit of the earth. They're not cutting in out on the edge where Neptune and Uranus are, or inside near Venus and Mercury. No; they're going to join up at the same distance from the sun as we are. Do you understand?"

IN spite of himself, Tony blanched. "They're going to hit the earth, you mean? I thought so."

"They're not going to hit the earth, Tony, the first time around. The first time they circle the sun, they're going to pass us close, to be sure; but they're going to pass us—both of them. But the second time they pass us—well, one of them is going to pass us a second time too, but the other one isn't, Tony. The smaller one—Bronson Beta, the one about the same size as the earth and, so far as we can tell, very much like the earth—is going to pass us safely; but the big one, Bronson Alpha, is going to take out the world!"

"You know that, Eve?"

"We know it! There must be a margin of error, we know. There may not be a direct head-on collision, Tony; but any sort of encounter—even a glancing blow—would be enough and much more than enough to finish this globe. And an encounter is certain. Every single calculation that has been made shows it.

"You know what an exact thing astronomy is today, Tony. If we have three different observations of a moving body, we can plot its path; and we've hundreds of determinations of these bodies. More than a thousand altogether! We know now what they are; we know their dimensions and the speed with which they are traveling. We know, of course, almost precisely the forces and attractions which will influence them

—the gravitational power of the sun. Tony, you remember how precise the forecast was in the last eclipse that darkened New York City. The astronomers not only foretold to a second when it would begin and end, but they described the blocks and even the sides of the streets that would be in shadow. And their error was less than twenty feet.

"It's the same with these Bronson bodies, Tony. They're falling toward the sun, and their path can be plotted like the path of Newton's apple dropping from the bough. Gravity is the surest and most constant force in all creation. One of those worlds, which is seeking our sun, is going to wipe us out, Tony—all of us, every soul of us that remains on the world when it collides. But the other world—the world so much like this—will pass us close and go on, safe and sound, around the sun again. . . .

"Tony, do you believe in God?"

"What's that to do with this?"

"So much that this has got me thinking about God again, Tony. God—the God of our fathers—the God of the Old Testament, Tony; the God who did things and meant something, the God of wrath and vengeance, but the God who also could be merciful to men. For he's sending two worlds to us, Tony, not one—not just the one that will destroy us. He's sending the world that may save us, too!"

"Save us? What do you mean?"

"That's what the League of the Last Days is working on, Tony—the chance of escape that's offered by the world like ours, which will pass so close and go on. We may transfer to it, Tony, if we have the will and the skill and the nerve! We could send a rocket to the moon today, if it would do us any good, if anyone could possibly live on the moon after he got there. Well, Bronson Beta will pass us closer than the moon. Bronson Beta is the size of the earth, and therefore can have an atmosphere. It is perfectly possible that people—who are able to reach it—can live there.

"It's a world, perhaps very like ours, which has been in immutable cold and dark for millions of years, probably, and which now will be coming to life again.

"Think of it, Tony! The tremendous, magnificent adventure of making a try for it! It was a world once like ours, circling around some sun. People lived on it; and animals and plants and trees. Evolution had occurred there too, and progress. Civilization had come. Thousands of years of it, maybe. Tens of thousands of years—perhaps much more than we have yet known. Perhaps, also, much less. It's the purest speculation to guess in what stage that world was in when it was torn from its sun and sent spinning into space.

"But in whatever stage it was in, you may be sure it is in exactly that stage now; for when it left its sun, life became extinct. The rivers, the lakes, the seas, the very air, froze and became solid, encasing and keeping everything just as it was, though it wandered through space for ten million years.

"But as it approaches the sun, the air and then the seas will thaw. The people cannot possibly come to life, nor the animals or birds or other things; but the cities will stand there unchanged, the implements, the monuments, their homes—all will remain and be uncovered again.

"If this world were not doomed, what an adventure to try for that one, Tony! And a possible adventure—a perfectly possible adventure, with the powers at our disposal today!"

Tony recollected, after a while, that Balcom had bid him to learn from Hendron, as definitely as possible, the date and nature of the next announcement. How would it affect stocks? Would the Stock Exchange open at all?

HE remembered, at last, it was a business day; downtown he had duties—contracts to buy and orders to sell stocks, which he must execute, if the Exchange opened today. He did not venture to ask to have Hendron awakened to speak to him but, before ten o'clock, he did leave Eve.

He walked to the subway. His eyes stared at the myriad faces passing him. His body was jolted by innumerable brief contacts.

"Gimme five cents for a cup o' coffee?"

Tony stopped, stared. This panhandler too was trapped, with him and Kyto and Eve and all the rest, on the rim of the world which was coming to its end. Did he have an inkling of it? Whether or not, obviously today he must eat. Tony's hand went into his pocket.

Speculation about the masses assailed him. What did they think this morning? What did they want? How differently would they do today?

Near the subway, the newsboys were having a sell-out; a truck was dumping on the walk fresh piles of papers. Everybody had a paper; everybody was read-

ing to himself, or talking to somebody else. The man with the half inch of cigar-stub, the boy without a hat, the fat woman with packages under her arm, the slim stenographer in green, the actor with the beaver collar; they all read, stared, feared, planned, hoped, denied.

Some of them smirked or giggled, almost childishly delighted at something different even if it suggested destruction. It was something novel, exciting. Some of them seemed to be scheming.

CHAPTER V

A World Can End

AT ten o'clock the gong rang and the market opened. There had been no addition to public knowledge in the newspapers. The news-ticker carried, as additional information, only the effect of the announcement on the markets in Europe, which already had been open for hours.

It was plain that the wild eyes of terror looked across the oceans and the land —across rice-fields and prairies, out of the smoke of cities everywhere.

The stock market opened promptly at ten with the familiar resonant clang of the big gong. One man dropped dead at his first glance upon the racing ticker.

On the floor of the Exchange itself, there was relative quiet. When the market is most busy, it is most silent. Phones were choked with regular, crowded speech. Boys ran. The men stood and spoke in careful tones at the posts. Millions of shares began to change hands at prices—down. The ticker lagged as never in the wildest days of the boom. And at noon, in patent admission of the obvious necessity, New York followed the example already set by London, Paris and Berlin. The great metal doors boomed shut. There would be no more trading for an indeterminate time. Until "the scientific situation became cleared up."

Cleared up! What a phrase for the situation! But the Street had to have one. It always had one.

TONY hung on the telephone for half an hour after the shutting of the mighty doors. His empire—the kingdom of his accustomed beliefs, his job—lay at his feet. When he hung up, he thought vaguely that only foresight during the depression had placed his and his mother's funds where they were still comparatively safe in spite of this threat of world-cataclysm.

Comparatively safe—what did that mean? What did anything mean, today?

Balcom came into his office; he put his head on Tony's desk and sobbed. Tony opened a drawer, took out a whisky-bottle which had reposed in it unopened for a year, and poured a stiff dose into a drinking-cup. Balcom swallowed it as if it were milk, took another, and walked out dazedly.

Tony went out in the customers' room. He was in time to see the removal of one of the firm's clients—a shaky old miser who had boasted that he had beaten the depression without a loss—on a stretcher. The telephone-girl sat at her desk in the empty anteroom. Clerks still stayed at their places, furiously struggling with the abnormal mass of figures.

Tony procured his hat and walked out. Everyone else was on the street—people in herds and throngs never seen on Wall or Broad streets or on this stretch of Broadway, but who now were sucked in by this unparalleled excitement from the East Side, the river front, the Bowery and likewise down from upper Fifth and from Park avenues. Women with babies, peddlers, elderly gentlemen, dowagers, proud mistresses, wives, schoolchildren and working-people, clerks, stenographers—everywhere.

All trapped — thought Tony — all trapped together on the rim of the world. Did they know it? Did they feel it?

NO parade ever produced such a crowd. The buildings had drained themselves into the streets; and avenues and alleys alike had added to the throng.

The deluge of humanity was possessed of a single insatiable passion for newspapers. A boy with an armful of papers would not move from where he appeared before he sold his load. News-trucks, which might have the very latest word, were almost mobbed.

But the newspapers told nothing more. Their contents, following the repetition of the announcement of the morning, were of a wholly secondary nature, reflecting only the effect of the statement itself. A hundred cranks found their opinions in big type as fast as they were uttered—absurd opinions, pitiful opinions; but they were seized upon. There were religious revivals starting in the land. But the scientists—those banded together who had worked faithfully first to learn the nature of the discovery and

"One of those worlds, seeking our sun, is going to wipe us out —every soul that remains on the world when it collides."

then to keep it secret until today—they had nothing more to say.

Tony dropped into a restaurant, where, though it was only afternoon, an evening hilarity already had arrived. The Exchange was closed! No one knew exactly why or what was to happen. Why care? That was the air here.

Two men of Tony's age, acquaintances in school and friends in Wall Street, stopped at his table. "We're going the rounds. Come along."

Tony returned with them to the warm, sunlit street where the exhilaration of night—the irresponsibility of after-hours with offices closed and work done—denied the day. . . . Their taxi squeezed through Broadway in which frantic policemen wrestled vainly with overwhelming crowds. It stopped at a brownstone house in the west Forties.

A night-club, and it was crowded, though the sun was still shining. The three floors of the house were filled with people in business clothes drinking and dancing. On the top floor two roulette-wheels were surrounded by players. Tony saw heaps of chips, the piles of bills. He looked at the faces of the players, and recognized two or three of them. They

were hectic faces. The market had closed. This was a real smash,—not merely a money smash,—a smash of the whole world ahead. Naturally money was losing its value, but men played for it—cheered when they won, groaned when they lost, and staked again. The limit had been taken off the game.

Downstairs, at the bar, were three girls to whom Tony's two friends immediately attached themselves. They were pretty girls of the kind that Broadway produces by an overnight incubation: Girls who had been born far from the Great White Way. Girls whose country and small-town attitudes had vanished. All of them had hair transformed from its original shade to ashen blonde. Around their eyes were beaded lashes; their voices were high; their silk clothes adhered to their bodies. They drank and laughed.

"Here's to old Bronson!" they toasted. "Here's to the ol' world coming to an end!"

Tony sat with them: Clarissa, Jacqueline, Bettina. He gazed at them, laughed with them, drank with them; but he thought of Eve, asleep at last, he hoped. Eve, slender as they, young as they, far, far lovelier than they; and bearing within her mind and soul the frightful burden of the full knowledge of this day.

The room was hazy with smoke. People moved through it incessantly. After a while Tony looked again at the motley crowd; and across the room he saw a friend sitting alone in a booth. Tony rose and went toward the man. He was a person—a personage—worthy of notice. He was lean, gray-haired, immaculate, smooth. His dark eyes were remote and unseeing. First nights knew him. Mothers of very rich daughters, mothers of daughters of impeccable lineage, sought him. Wherever the gayest of the gay world went, he could be found. Southampton, Newport, Biarritz, Cannes, Nice, Deauville, Palm Beach. He was like old silver—yet he was not old. Forty, perhaps. A bachelor. He would have liked it if some one of authority had called him a connoisseur of life and living—an *arbiter elegantiæ,* a Petronius transferred from Nero's Rome to our day. He would have been pleased, but he would not have revealed his pleasure. His name was Peter Vanderbilt. And he was trapped too,—Tony was thinking as he saw him,—trapped with him and Eve and Kyto and the panhandler and Bettina and Jacqueline and all the rest on the rim of the world which was going to collide with another world sent from space for that errand; but a world with still another spinning before it, which would pass close to our world—close and spin on, safe.

Tony cleared his brain. "Hello," he said to Peter Vanderbilt.

VANDERBILT looked up and his face showed welcome. "*Tony!* Jove! Of all people. Glad to see you. Sit. Sit and contemplate." He beckoned a waiter and ordered. "You're a bit on the inside, I take it."

"Inside?"

"Friend of the Hendrons, I remember. You know a bit more of what's going on."

"Yes," admitted Tony; it was senseless to deny it to this man.

"Don't tell me. Don't break confidences for my sake. I'm not one that has to have details ahead of others. The general trend of events is clear enough. Funny. Delicious, isn't it, to think of the end of all this? I feel stimulated, don't you? All of it—going to pieces! I feel like saying, 'Thank God!' I was sick of it. Everyone was. Civilization's a wretched parody. Evidently there was a just and judging God, after all.

"Democracy! Look at it, lad. Here are the best people, breaking the newest laws they made themselves. Imagine the fool who invented democracy! But what's better on this world anywhere? So there is a God after all, and He's taking us in hand again—the way He did in Noah's time. . . . Good thing, I say.

"But Hendron and his scientists aren't doing so well. They're making a big mistake. They've done splendidly—hardly could have done better up to today. I mean, keeping it under cover and not letting it out at all until they had some real information. They had luck in the fact that these Bronson bodies were sighted in the south, and have been only visible from the Southern Hemisphere. Not many observatories down there—just South Africa, South America and Australia. That was a break—gave them much more of a chance to keep it to themselves; and I say, they did well up to now. But they're not well advised if they hold anything back much longer; they'd better tell anything—no matter how bad it is. They'll have to, as they'll soon see. Nothing can be as bad as uncertainty.

"It proves that all those names signed to this morning's manifesto are top-notch scientists. The human element is the one

thing they can't analyze and reduce to figures. What they need is a counsel in public relations. Tell Cole Hendron I recommend Ivy Lee."

RISING he left Tony and vanished in the throng. Tony started to pay the check, and saw Vanderbilt's ten-dollar bill on the table. He rose, secured his hat and went out.

The latest newspaper contained a statement from the White House. The President requested that on the morrow everyone return to work. It promised that the Government would maintain stability in the country, and inveighed violently against the exaggerated reaction of the American people to the scientists' statement.

Tony smiled. "Business as usual! Business going on, as usual, during alterations," he thought. He realized more than ever how much his countrymen lived for and believed in business.

He wondered how much of the entire truth had been told to the President, and what the political angle on it would be. Amusing to think of the end of the world having a political angle; but of course, it had. Everything had.

He took a taxi to the Hendrons' apartment. More than a block away from the building, he had to abandon the cab. The crowd and the police cordon about the apartment both had increased; but certain persons could pass; and Tony learned that he still was one of them.

Several men, whose voices he could overhear in loud argument, were with Cole Hendron behind the closed doors of the big study on the roof. No one was with Eve. She awaited him, alone.

She was dressed carefully, charmingly, as she always was, her lovely hair brushed back, her lips cool to look at, but so warm upon his own!

He pressed her to him for a moment; and for that instant when he kissed her and held her close, all wonder and terror was sent away. What matter the end of everything, if first he had her! He had never dreamed of such delight in possession as he felt, holding her; he had never dared dream of such response from her —or from anyone. He had won her, and she him, utterly. As he thought of the cataclysm destroying them, he thought of it coming to them together, in each other's arms; and he could not care.

She felt it, fully as he. Her fingers touched his face with a passionate tenderness which tore him.

"What's done it for us so suddenly and so completely, Tony?"

"'The shadow of the sword,' I suppose, my dear—oh, my dear! I remember reading it in Kipling when I was a boy, but never understanding it. Remember the two in love when they knew that one would surely die? 'There is no happiness like that snatched under the shadow of the sword.'"

"But we both shall die, if either does, Tony. That's so much better."

The voices beyond the closed door shouted louder, and Tony released her. "Who's here?"

"Six men: the Secretary of State, the Governor, Mr. Forgan, the chief of the Associated Press, two more." She was not thinking about them. "Sit down, but don't sit near me, Tony; we've got to think things out."

"Your father's told them?" he asked.

"He's told them what will happen first. I mean, when the Bronson bodies—both of them—just pass close to the world and go on around the sun. That's more than enough for them now. It's not time yet to tell them of the encounter. You see, the mere passing close will be terrible enough."

"Why?"

"Because of the tides, for one thing. You know the tides, Tony; you know the moon makes them. The moon, which is hardly an eightieth of the world in mass; but it raises tides that run forty to sixty feet, in places like the Bay of Fundy."

"Of course—the tides," Tony realized aloud.

"Bronson Beta is the size of the earth, Tony; Bronson Alpha is estimated to have eleven or twelve times that mass. They will both pass us, the first time, within the orbit of the moon. Bronson Beta will raise tides eighty times as high; and Bronson Alpha—you can't express it by mere multiplication, Tony. New York will be under water to the tops of its towers—a tidal wave beyond all imaginations! The seacoasts of all the world will be swept by the seas sucked up toward the sky and washed back and forth. The waves will wash back to the Appalachians; and it will be the same in Europe and Asia. Holland, Belgium, half of France and Germany, half of India and China, will be under the wave of water. There'll be an earth tide, too."

"Earth tide?"

"Earthquakes from the pull on the crust of the earth. Some of the men writing to Father think that the earth

will be torn to pieces just by the first passing of Bronson Beta; but some of them think it will survive that strain."

"What does your father think?"

"He thinks the earth will survive the first stress—and that it is possible that a fifth of the population may live through it, too. Of course that's only a guess."

"A fifth," repeated Tony. "A fifth of all on the earth."

HE gazed at her, sober, painless, without a sense of time.

Here he was in a penthouse drawing-room on the top of a New York apartment, with a lovely girl whose father believed, and had told her, that four-fifths of all beings alive on the earth would be slain by the passing of the planets seen in the sky. A few months more, and all the rest—unless they could escape from the earth and live—would be obliterated.

Such words could stir no adequate feeling; they were beyond ordinary meanings, like statements of distance expressed in light years. They were beyond conscious conception; yet what they told could occur. His mind warned him of this. What was coming was a cosmic process, common enough, undoubtedly, if one considered the billions of stars with their worlds scattered through all space, and if one counted in eternities of endless time. Common enough, this encounter which was coming.

What egoism, what stupid vanity, to suppose that a thing could not happen because you could not conceive it!

Eve was watching him. Through the years of their friendship and fondness, she had seen Tony as a normal man, to whom everything that happened was happy, felicitous and unbizarre. The only crises in which she had observed him were emergencies on the football-field, and alarms in the stock-market, which in the first case represented mere sport, and in the second, money which he did not properly understand, because all his life he had possessed money enough, and more.

Now, as she watched him, she thought that she would meet with him—and she exulted that it would be with him—the most terrific reality that man had ever faced. So far as he had yet been called upon, he had met it without attempting to evade it; his effort had been solely for completer understanding.

A contrast to some of those men—among them men who were called the greatest in the nation—whose voices rose loud again behind the closed doors.

Some one—she could not identify him from his voice, which ranted in a strange, shrill rage—evidently was battling her father, shouting him down, denying what had been laid before them all. Eve did not hear her father's reply. Probably he made none; he had no knack for argument or dialectics.

But the ranting and shouting offended her; she knew how helpless her father was before it. She wanted to go to him; not being able to, she went to Tony.

"Somebody," said Tony, "seems not to like what he has to hear."

"Who is he, Tony?"

"Somebody who isn't very used to hearing what he doesn't like. . . . Oh, Eve, Eve! My dear, my dear! For the first time in my life, I'd like to be a poet; I'd wish for words to say what I feel. I can't make a poem, but at least I can change one:

"Yesterday this day's madness did prepare;
Tomorrow's silence, triumph, or despair;
Love! For you know not whence you
came, nor why;
Love! For you know not why you go,
nor where."

THE sudden unmuffling of the voices warned them that a door from the study had opened. Instantly the voices were dulled again; but they turned, aware that some one had come out.

It was her father.

For a few moments he stood regarding them, debating what he should say. Beyond the closed door behind him, the men whom he had left increased their quarrel among themselves. He succeeded in clearing his mind of it.

"Father," Eve said, "Tony and I—Tony and I—"

Her father nodded. "I saw you for a few seconds before you realized I was here, Eve—and Tony."

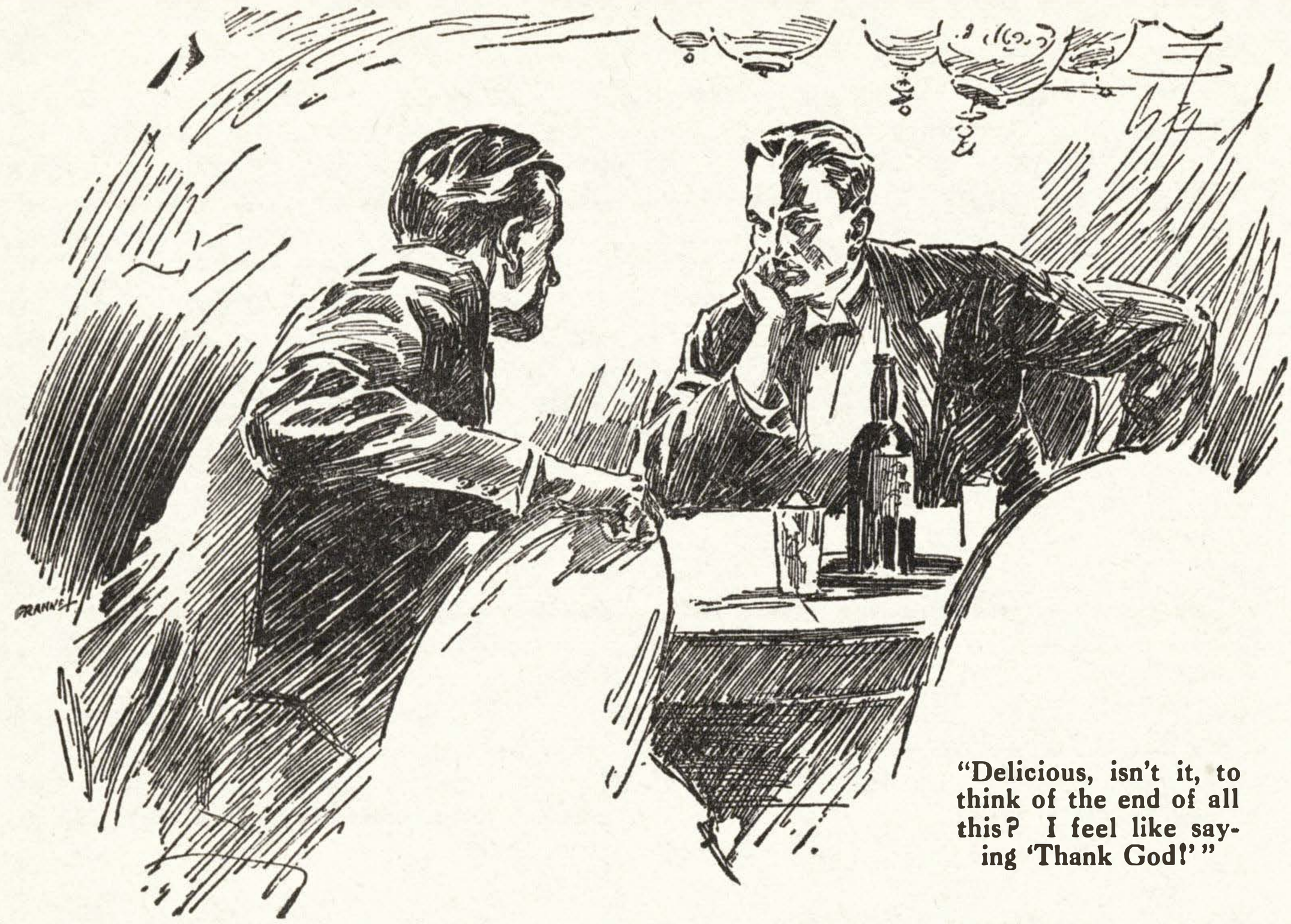
Tony flushed. "We mean what you saw, sir," he said. "We more than mean it. We're going to be married as soon as we can—aren't we, Eve?"

"Can we, Father?"

Cole Hendron shook his head. "There can't be marrying or love for either of you. No time to tell you why now; only—there can't."

"Why can't there be, sir?"

"There's going to be altogether too much else. In a few months, you'll know. Meanwhile, don't spoil my plans for you by eloping or marrying in the Church



"Delicious, isn't it, to think of the end of all this? I feel like saying 'Thank God!'"

Around the Corner. And don't go on doing—what I just saw. It'll only make it harder for both of you—as you'll see when you figure out what's before you. Tony, there's nothing personal in that. I like you, and you know it. If the world were going to remain, I'd not say a word; but the world cannot possibly remain. We can talk of this later."

The study door again opened; some one called him, and he returned to the argument in the next room.

"Now," demanded Tony of Eve, "what in the world, which cannot possibly remain, does he mean by that? That we shouldn't love and marry because we're going to die? All the more reason for it—and quicker, too."

"Neither of us can possibly guess what he means, Tony; we'd be months behind him in thinking; for he's done nothing else, really, for half a year but plan what we—what all the human race—will have to do. He means, I think, that he's put us in some scheme of things that won't let us marry."

THE argument in the room broke up and the arguers emerged. In a few minutes they all were gone; and Tony sought Cole Hendron in his big study, where the plates which had come from South Africa were spread upon the table.

There were squares of stars, usually the same square of stars repeated over and over again. There seemed to be a score of exposures of the identical plate of close-clustered stars.

"You were downtown today, Tony?"

"Yes."

"Today they took it, didn't they? They took it and closed the Exchange, I hear; and half the businesses in town had a holiday. For they've known for quite some time that something has been hanging over them, hanging over the market. This morning we half told them what it is; and they thought they believed it. Just now I told six men the other half—or most of it—and—and you heard them, Tony; didn't you?"

"Yes; I heard them."

"They won't have it. The world won't come to an end; it can't possibly collide with another world, because—well, for one thing, it never has done such a thing before, and for another, they won't have it. Not when you dwell upon the details. They won't have it. Tomorrow there'll be a great swing-back in feeling, Tony. The Exchange will open again; business is going on. That's a good thing; I'm glad of it. But there are certain drawbacks.

"The trouble is, men aren't really educated up to the telescope yet, as they are to the microscope. Every one of those men who were just here would believe what the microscope tells them, whether or not they could see it or understand it for themselves. I mean, if a doctor took a bit of cell-tissue from any one of them,

and put it under the microscope, and said, 'Sorry, but that means you will die,' there isn't a man of them who wouldn't promptly put his affairs in shape.

"None of them would ask to look through the microscope himself; he'd know it would mean nothing to him.

"But they asked for Bronson's plates. I showed them; here they are, Tony. Look here. See this field of stars. All those fixed points, those round specks, every single one of them are stars. But see here; there is a slight—a very slight —streak, but still a streak. There, right beside it, is another one. Something has moved, Tony! Two points of light have moved in a star-field where nothing ought to move! A mistake, perhaps? A flaw in the coating of the plate? Bronson considered this, and other possibilities. He photographed the star-field again and again, night after night; and each time, you see, Tony, the same two points of light make a bit of streak. No chance of mistake; down there, where nothing ought to be moving, two objects have moved. But all we have to show for it are two tiny streaks on a photographic plate.

"What do they mean? 'Gentlemen, the time has come to put your affairs in order!' The affairs of all the world, the affairs of everyone living in the world— Naturally, they can't really believe it.

"Bronson himself, though he watched those planets himself night after night for months, couldn't really believe it; nor could the other men who watched, in other observatories south of the equator.

"But they searched back over old plates of the same patch of the sky; and they found, in that same star-field, what they had missed before—those same two specks always making tiny streaks. Two objects that weren't stars where only stars ought to be; two strange objects that always were moving, where nothing 'ought' to move.

"We need only three good observations of an object to plot the course of a moving body; and already Bronson succeeded in obtaining a score of observations of these. He worked out the result, and it was so sensational, that from the very first, he swore to secrecy everyone who worked with him and with whom he corresponded. They obtained, altogether, hundreds of observations; and the result always worked out the same. They all checked. . . .

"Eve says she has told you what that result is to be."

"Yes," said Tony, "she told me."

"And I told these men who demanded —ordered me—to explain to them everything we had. I told them that those specks were moving so that they would enter our solar system, and one of them would then come into collision with our world. They said, all right.

"You see, it really meant nothing to them originally; it stirred only a sort of excitement to close the Exchange and give everybody a hilarious holiday.

"Then I told them that, before the encounter, both of these moving bodies —Bronson Alpha and Bronson Beta— would first pass us close by and cause tides that would rise six hundred feet over us, from New York to San Francisco —and, of course, London and Paris and all sea-coasts everywhere.

"They began to oppose that, because they could understand it. I told them that the passing of the Bronson bodies would cause earthquakes on a scale unimaginable; half the inland cities would be shaken down, and the effect below the crust would set volcanoes into activity everywhere, and as never since the world began. I said, perhaps a fifth of the people would survive the first passing of the Bronson bodies. I tried to point out some of the areas on the surface of the earth which would be comparatively safe.

"I could not designate New York or Philadelphia or Boston. . . . They told me that tomorrow I must make a more reassuring statement."

COLE HENDRON gazed down again at his plates.

"I suppose, after all, it doesn't make much difference whether or not we succeed in moving a few million more people into the safer areas. They will be safe for only eight months more, in any case. For eight months later, we meet Bronson Beta on the other side of the sun. And no one on earth will escape.

"But there is a chance that a few individuals may leave the earth and live. I am not a religious man, as you know, Tony; but as Eve said to you, it seems that it cannot be mere chance that there comes to us, out of space, not merely the sphere that will destroy us, but that ahead of it there spins a world like our own which some of us—some of us—may reach and be safe."

This gripping story of an entirely possible, though unimaginably disastrous occurrence, mounts rapidly in interest in the next, the October, issue.

A White Man's Burden

By FRANCIS M.
and EUSTACE COCKRELL

Illustrated by George Avison

IT was very hot out there in the sun, two afternoons before the fight. Just standing at the corner of the ring, doing nothing more strenuous than timing them, Jack Fitzimmons was hot. In the ring Kid Wallace's shoulders were a sweat-shiny bronze, and K. O. Jones was gleaming ebony. The heavy gloves landed with a soggy *slap-slap* on their wet skins.

"One minute left," Jack called. "Snap it up."

They put on a little spurt. K. O. was trying, Jack knew; but he couldn't get to the Kid with his right. The Kid let that long left go, and it connected. K. O. sat down. That was it, Jack thought—that long silly-looking left hook, which the Lord had endowed with dynamite. That was what would make the Kid champion.

K. O. was up again, grinning proudly over the fact that Mr. Roger had caught him. Jack smiled to himself. Funny darky, K. O. Jack looked at Roger Williams—Kid Wallace. A swell kid, this boy. And a fighter now. A year of training under himself, and with K. O. for a sparring partner, had made an entirely different and better man of Kid Wallace than he had been the night he had knocked K. O. out, over a year ago. He was probably better than K. O. now. Of course, Jack excused K. O. in his own mind, K. O. was getting old—old for a fighter.

Jack hastily clanged the bell. He had let them go forty seconds over. "That's all," he said. "Get on in for a rub."

Roger Williams climbed through the ropes and hurried on into the little gym and shower-house. K. O. lingered, walking in with Jack.

"Mistuh Jack,"—K. O. exuded confidence,—"he in right now! He got eve'ything. He don't telygraph that lef' no mo' with that li'l crouch, an' it'll teah yo' haid off. Anyhow, that champ, he's th'ough."

"That's bologny, George," Jack told K. O. "A champ is never through until another man's arm goes up."

"Yassuh," K. O. grinned easily, "but they's one champ sho' gonna be th'ough pretty quick, Satiday night." And chuckling happily, he went on in to give Mr. Roger his rub-down.

Well, Jack thought, turning up the path to the quarters, he would agree with that, all right. Because if K. O. couldn't get to the Kid, the champ never would. K. O., in Jack's estimation, was still the prettiest boxer he had ever seen. And if anyone knew about K. O., Jack reflected, he was the one. He ought to, in twelve years of managing him.

Jack went out and sat on the front porch. Later Roger Williams joined him.

"Well, son," Jack said, "it's all over but the fighting, huh? How do you feel?"

"Great. I'm not cocky, Jack; but honest, I don't see how I can lose. It all looks kind of predestined to me, anyhow. You know, K. O., and Hominy, and you, and everything."

WELL indeed Jack knew: after twelve years of managing this colored boy K. O., they had finally got the champion cornered for a title match—just one man to dispose of first. But this one man had happened to be this Kid Wallace—whom K. O. had recognized, in the ring, as none other than Roger Williams, the "young master" of the Williams plantation that K. O. had left when he was sixteen. That recognition spoiled a good fight, and K. O.'s chance for the championship; for he just

A sequel to that vivid and well-remembered story of the prize ring "Gentleman in Black."

couldn't hit "Mr. Roger," and was himself knocked out in the second round.

K. O. had gone to the bad for a while after that, until he learned that his "Mistuh Rogeh" was to be matched for a fight with that colored killer known as "Hominy." For Hominy was a butcher of men; and no fighter was ever quite the same again after taking the punishment Hominy inflicted. Wherefore K. O. had confrived to pose as a "set-up" and get into the ring with Hominy first; and somehow K. O. had turned in the fight of his life against Hominy—had taken a terrible beating himself, but had knocked out the killer, so that Mr. Roger shouldn't have to fight him in his progress toward the championship.

Well Jack knew these things: he was managing Roger Williams (known to the ring as Kid Wallace) now; and the faithful K. O. was his sparring partner. . . .

"Yeah," Jack said now, "I know. Well, I think you're in too. You've got two things: that left and your young legs. You can't touch him with a right, but that don't matter. You've got more steam in your left, anyhow."

Roger Williams sighed. "Well," he said, "I sure am glad we're set. This fight will make enough to clear the place, with about a thousand over. And then just a couple more fights, as champion, and I'll have enough to get it going right. I've already wired Dad. Told him the money would be in the bank Monday morning. He'll sure be tickled. I'll be glad when those other two fights are gone, too—so I can quit and go down there and run that place. I guess I'm not cut out for a fighter, Jack. Too lazy. I'd rather sit around on a plantation, bossing a bunch of good hands, and make a little bit, than hold the championship forever and make a fortune."

"It's O. K. with me, son," Jack said. "Just managing a champ, once, that's all I want."

THE morning of the fight K. O., in a chauffeur's cap, sat haughtily behind the wheel of the phaeton as they rolled down the Jersey shore. Murphy's training-camp was behind them; the long grind was behind them. Manhattan, the title fight, lay before them.

K. O. turned into Broadway, and honked loud blasts on the horn with great gusto. Jack grinned. He honestly believed that K. O. was prouder in his title of "personal bodyservant to Mr. Roger Williams, of Clarksville, Louisiana," than he ever could have been as middle-weight champion of the world. A funny darky. A swell fellow.

K. O. stopped before Jack's hotel, and Jack got out. K. O. drove the kid on over to his apartment. Jack went over when he had unpacked, and K. O. gave them lunch in the apartment. At three they went up to the office of Ted Downey, the promoter, to weigh in. The Kid tipped it at one fifty-eight.

K. O. stood in the background, grinning constantly, watching them take the pictures and everything. Jack studied the champ. The Kid would take him, all right. The champ was getting old. The left would take care of the champ.

They came out onto the street. "Well, son," Jack said, "you go on over and lie down. Sleep if you want to. Don't think about anything. I'll be over about eight. Just a few hours now—"

"And you'll be managing a champion," Roger finished for him, smiling confidently. "O. K. We'll see you. Come on, George." He hailed a cab.

Jack went to his hotel. He began glancing over the sporting pages. Then

he began to do a very unreasonable thing: he began worrying.

Jack knew there was no cause for it. He knew he was silly; logic assured him the Kid was as good as in. But he worried.

He stuck a cigar in his mouth, but didn't light it. He got up and began to pace the floor. It was goofy, feeling this way. Everything was set and couldn't be better. But he was uneasy, anyhow. For over an hour he paced the floor, devouring cigars without resorting to combustion, trying to calm himself, assuring himself that all was as it should be.

He tried reading the papers again, but he couldn't make it work.

"I'm an idiot," he finally mumbled to himself. "Just because I'm about to really manage a champ, I'm all on edge like a schoolgirl with her first date, or something." He grabbed his hat and went on out—he sat through two reels of a movie, and then realized abruptly that he hadn't seen a thing. He got up and left, walking quickly down-street.

It was silly, all right, and he was an idiot, all right; but just the same, he was going to go over to Roger Williams' apartment, and he was going to sit right there until time to start for the stadium. That way, sitting right there so he could see everything O. K., he *couldn't* worry.

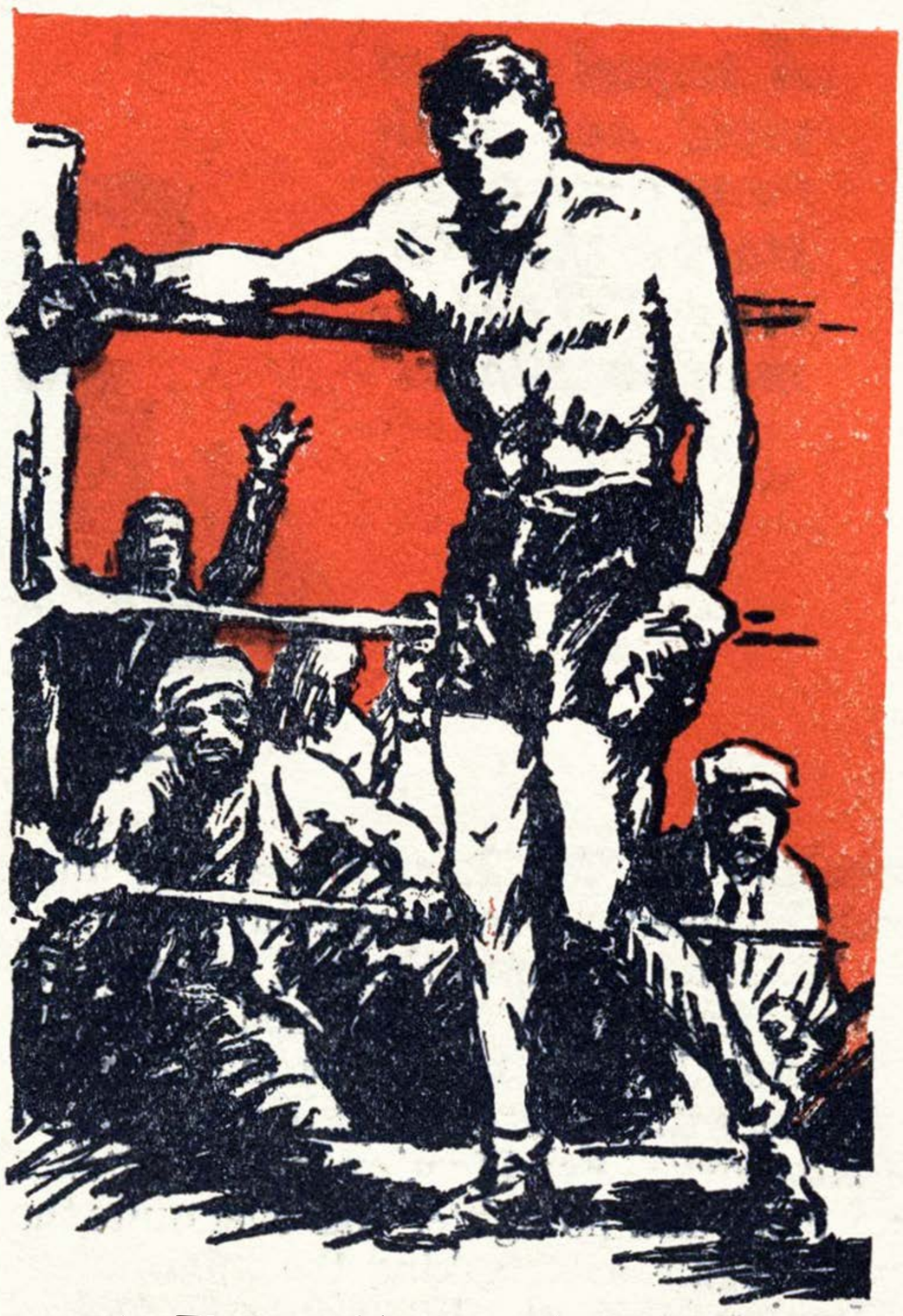
K. O. let him in. "Sho', he heah, Mistuh Jack! He in back, takin' hisse'f a li'l nap." For some reason known only to those of K. O.'s race, he went off into a series of delighted chuckles.

Jack said: "You know, George, I don't know what I'm doing over here, but I was worried as hell, some way. And me in this business thirty years too."

"But Mistuh Jack, you don't want to be worried, none. Mistuh Rogeh, he's right, sho' 'nough. Why, comin' home this aft—"

"What I was saying, George," Jack broke in with mock admonishment, which brought quick contrition to K. O.'s battered countenance, "was that this time tomorrow we'll be working for a champion—a real honest-to-God champion, with a diamond belt, and his picture in the papers, and everything—and after I had quit the old racket to run me a poolhall. After thirty dirty, lousy, *swell* damned years."

K. O. stood silent a moment, then went back to something he understood.



Kid Wallace, his face kind of green . . . . making the corner and hanging onto the ropes with his right.

"Yessuh, Mistuh Rogeh, he sho' right. Just lemme tell you what he done this mornin'! When we get outa ouah cab this afternoon, when we come home from weighin' in, a guy step up to Mistuh Rogeh an' say: 'Wait a minute, fellow, I want to talk to you.' Mistuh Rogeh, he stop and tu'n around.

"Me, I come up, and heah this li'l kinda rat-lookin' guy say real soft: 'You're gonna lose, tonight, see?'

"So I says to him: 'Why, Mistuh, you oughta know betteh'n 'at. Why, he'll knock 'at champ kickin' by the fift' frame, anyhow.' 'Shut up, niggeh,' he says, and goes right on lookin' at Mistuh Rogeh.

"Well, Mistuh Jack, I didn't mind him callin' me a niggeh so much, only I didn't like how he was lookin' at Mistuh Rogeh, so I neveh said nothin'. I just stood theah. Mistuh Rogeh, he say, 'You're talkin' to the wrong man,' an' he tu'n around and staht to walk in the hotel.

"But me, I was kinda ticklish 'bout this fella, so I waits a minute, an' what you reckon he do, Mistuh Jack?"

Jack Fitzimmons had not moved from the moment K. O. began this recital. Nor did he move now.

"Well," K. O. went on, without waiting for an answer, "he up an' haul this

li'l leatheh thing outa his pocket, an' he staht to swing it at Mistuh Rogeh. Only I was watchin', so I grabs him, and we sorta scuffle around, like; but this monkey gets loose some way, an' he reach down in his pocket, and his eyes look all kinda smoky, an' he shakin' some, too, an' he say: 'O. K., smoke, I'll let *you* have it.'

"I neveh knew what he was gonna let me have, only I was scared. But Mistuh Rogeh, he spin around, and just as this guy's hand come outa his pocket, Mistuh Rogeh, he crack him. Lawdy, Mistuh Jack, you could heah it pop clean acrost the street, an' he lay this guy out like a rug."

Jack Fitzimmons' cigar had gone out. There was no change in his expression, but his voice was strained, when he said: "Go on, George! Do you remember which hand he hit him with?"

"Well, lemme see," K. O. said, posing himself in the right position. He held up his left hand. "It was this one, Mistuh Jack."

"Tell me what happened then," Jack said tonelessly. His face was ashy, but K. O. didn't notice. He was enthralled with his own story.

"Well, Mistuh Rogeh, he kinda look at his hand, an' then look up the street an' see this cop, an' call him down. He say somethin' 'bout concealed weapons, and the cop puts the guy in the Black Maria, in a minute, when it come up. An' you know, Mistuh Jack, that guy, he hadn't neveh come to, yet. So I aint talkin' th'ough my hat, when I say Mistuh Rogeh is right. I was kinda 'fraid maybe he hu't his hand, hittin' that way without no gloves, or nothin', but I ask him comin' up in the elevatah, and he just sorta laugh, and says he neveh."

K. O. paused a moment, and then said: "What's the mattah, Mistuh Jack, don't you like 'at drink?"

Jack said dully: "Get me the phone-book." K. O. leaped to hand it to him.

Presently he got his number. . . .

"I didn't ask you if he was busy," Jack was saying into the transmitter. "I said get him up here."

He hung the receiver onto its hook and

walked back into Roger Williams' room. He found him sitting on the edge of the bed, gazing moodily out the window. His left hand was swathed in a bandage of hot towels.

"K. O. told me," Jack said; and presently, in the same dull voice: "Didn't you think about the fight?"

"Yes," Roger Williams said, without looking up.

AN hour or so later, still in that same back room, they consulted X-ray pictures.

Jack looked at the bandaged hand. "We'll have to postpone it," he said. "You can't go on like that."

Roger looked sick. "I've got to," he said. "I promised to have the money in the bank Monday. I've wired Dad."

For a long moment Jack Fitzimmons stared fixedly at nothing. Then he said: "O. K. I aint got that much dough myself, or I'd let you have it. But I got a trick or so left, so you can stall through. You'll take a beating, though. It won't be but a couple of rounds before Hammond knows something is wrong with that mitt. Then he'll slaughter you."

"I'm sorry, Jack. Sorry as hell. But there wasn't anything else to do. He'd have shot that coon surer than sure. *You* know how those fellows are, when they're half full of snow, and crazy anyway. I had to take him on the chin, and—well, I'm only thankful I caught him right."

Jack Fitzimmons regarded him a moment. "You know," he said then, "you cracked my life's ambition this afternoon. Thirty years of hoping to manage a champ! But son—I'm sure glad you caught him right!" And he whirled quickly to look away, as if ashamed.

He went on out then, into the front room. K. O. hovered about worriedly.

"Who was that come in with that funny-lookin' machine, Mistuh Jack? Was he a pitchuh man?"

"Yes," Jack said, "a photographer."

"Did he get some good pitchuhs?"

"No, George. They were lousy. But never mind. I've got something for you to do." He went to the telephone again.

Before long another caller arrived, with a parcel. Jack unwrapped it gingerly. K. O. let out a long, scared "Whoo-o-o!"

"You take this," Jack told him, almost menacingly. "And if anyone tries to get in here while I'm gone, you show it to 'em. And if they don't leave then—you pull the trigger. Don't worry about getting in jail. But if anyone gets in here, you better get you a one-way ticket to Africa."

Jack went out then, and K. O. sat down, holding the gun fondly, with a pleased, wary expression on his face. He didn't know what it was all about, but he knew he was playing an exciting part, and he liked it.

IN the dressing-room, that night, with K. O. sent out on an errand, Jack Fitzimmons talked to Roger Williams—Kid Wallace.

"Now, son, I got that hand so full of dope you can stab with it. And maybe I can fox 'em a little on the tape. But no matter *what*, don't do more than stab with it. That little fracture—it's just sort of a crack, not a real break—it'll fix itself up in a little while, if you treat it right.

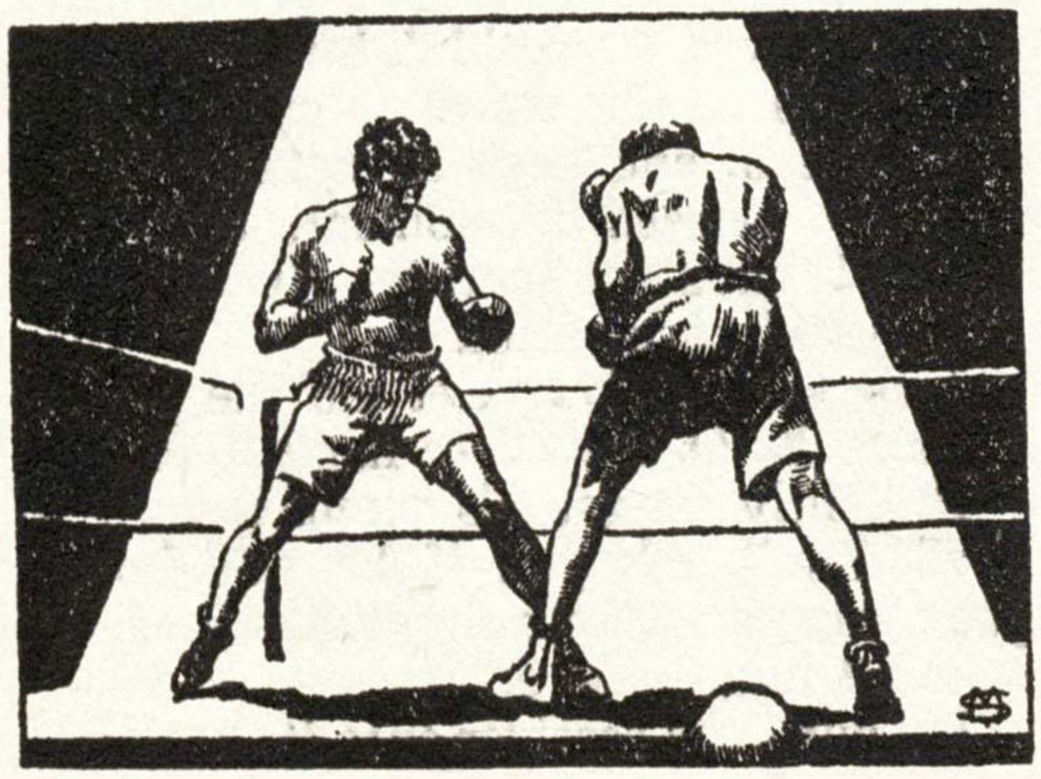
"So for Pete's sake, son, don't *hit* with it. You'll never fight again, if you do. It'll be gone for good."

K. O. came back then.

"My, my," he beamed, "it sho' smell like old times. I kinda wish I was you, Mistuh Rogeh, only I couldn't do up the job like how you gonna do it. No *suh!* They couldn't nobody do it like how you gonna do it. Man! I sho' is glad I aint that old champion. I sho' is!"

A call-boy stuck his head in through the door, and shouted.

Jack began gathering up bottles and towels and such. "O. K., boy," he said cheerfully, "let's go. No hurry, son. Got all night. Watch his right when he shows it with that left lead. Got all night." It was the old line, that K. O. knew and loved so well. "Don't let him tie you up too much. Take your time." And under his breath, for Roger's ears alone: "For God's sake watch about that hand!"



KID WALLACE was in the ring, and the referee was droning his instructions. Kid Wallace looked around toward his corner, and his eyes saw K. O., grinning confidently. Then his glance swung to the right, and he saw his manager, Jack Fitzimmons. Jack Fitzimmons was grinning too—but with a lot of difference!

The referee's monotone went on. . . . Well, Kid Wallace reflected, he had to lose; but he guessed one beating wouldn't hurt him. The people he cared about would know—Jack and his father.

Then he thought about K. O. He couldn't tell George. George didn't know, and he never would. Because, if he told him, George would be miserable all his life, feeling that it was his fault. Why, the fool darky would think he should have gone on and got shot, rather than let his master lose the fight because of saving his life—George, who was looking forward so proudly to the morrow, when he would be working for a champion. . . . K. O. . . . Oh, hell!

"Come out fighting," the referee ended his instructions; and Kid Wallace went back to his corner. He *couldn't* come out fighting. He didn't have anything to come out with.

Then there was the bell, and no time for excuses, and thinking about anything but this fight. No time for remembering that this fight would pay him barely enough to clear the plantation. No time for thinking about K. O., or weighing one thing against another. No time for anything—except the champion: Hammond, the champion, whom he couldn't hit with his left. His left hook with all that dope in it. . . .

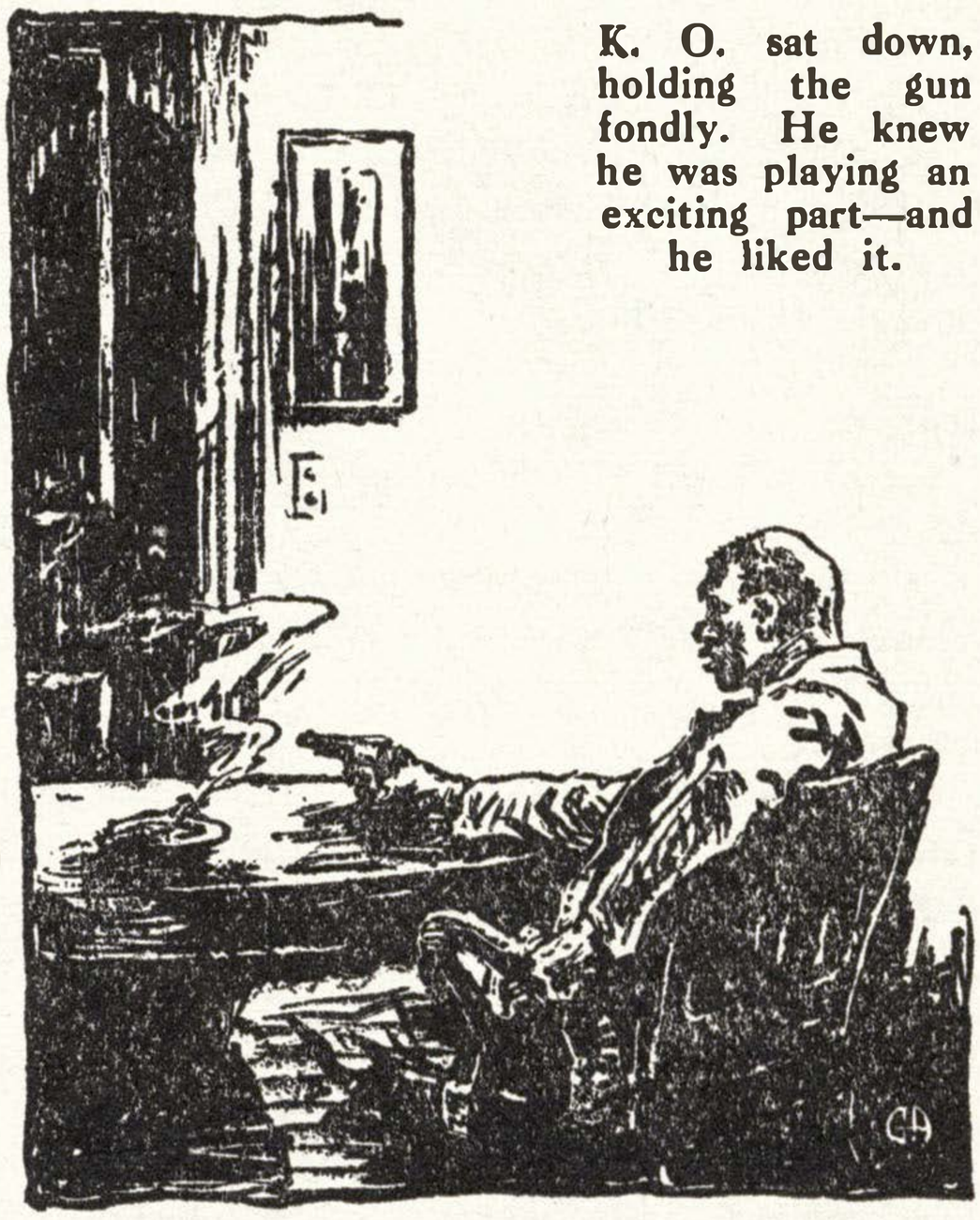
Two rounds went quietly, while Hammond felt him out. In the third Hammond opened up a little. In the fourth Kid Wallace took a pretty lacing.

Between the fourth and fifth he heard K. O. ask anxiously: "Why don't you open him for that left hook, Mistuh Rogeh, like I l'arnt you?" He heard Jack tell K. O. to shut up. . . .

The fight went on. The fourth round had been but a prophecy of the three which followed. The champ was cutting Kid Wallace to pieces, and the bleachers were beginning to chant for a knock-out.

Between rounds, in Wallace's corner, Jack Fitzimmons kept up the chatter which was instinctive to him, through long years of usage:

"O. K., boy. You're all right. Careful with that left, though. Keep it up. You're all right. We'll get another crack at him later. It's a sweet go. Pretty house. Sell-out. Watch his right when he telegraphs it with that other paw. He's got a fast one-two. Careful with that left."



K. O. sat down, holding the gun fondly. He knew he was playing an exciting part—and he liked it.

And K. O., chiming in with those things he used to like Mr. Jack to whisper to him: "You doin' great, Mistuh Rogeh. That Hammond, he done tired. Jus' a round or two, now. You take him then. Easy. Sewed up. A couple mo' frames now, and loweh the ol' boom on him."

Then Kid Wallace turned and grinned at K. O., kind of queer.

OVER in Hammond's corner, at the end of the seventh, a second was saying: "They's somethin' wrong with his left, all right. You got him goin' fine. You're makin' him fight your way, and you got it on points, easy, so don't get foolish. Ride it out."

Hammond grinned and said: "Yeah, and you birds thought I was through. Huh! Know where the smart dough is, don't you?"

And Hammond's manager, a small-eyed man without a scruple to his name, at those words, wondered again what had happened to his emissary of the afternoon. But it didn't matter, because this Kid Wallace couldn't use his left—couldn't use that long, wicked left hook that had the dynamite in it. A sweet fighter, but he didn't try for an open-

ing for that left, and he wasn't hitting hard enough with it to cause a breeze.

Kid Wallace knew it was the eighth round, and he knew Hammond was making him look silly. Well, he had expected that. He had known he would be out-generaled, outboxed, outsmarted. But he had never, he thought, as though watching from the ringside, seen it done so cleverly.

There was that peculiar crouch. . . . He saw now why it was always the left that K. O. and Jack had coached him on—why Jack had told him he couldn't reach the champ with a right. It was true—you couldn't. Even when a right was all you had, you couldn't get it in.

And things were getting hazy, and Hammond was taking him pretty, and it was the—the—eighth round, and there was the bell. Kid Wallace got to his corner, settled onto the stool Jack had swung under him.

The water felt good, but he couldn't feel the work on his muscles much. Jack kept whispering: "Careful with that left."

He turned his eyes a little and saw K. O., looking pathetically worried.

"What's the matter, George?"

K. O. burst forth: "Nothin', Mistuh Rogeh, only why don't you—"

Jack Fitzimmons snapped: "Shut up!"

And then he was back out there, and it was the ninth round. He was pretty sure it was the ninth round.

Now feeling began to seep back into his left hand. Before, it had felt like somebody else's hand, and didn't hurt except when he landed with it. Now it was a ball of pain, at the end of an arm that was completely numb, in comparison. It was a blob of throbbing misery, even when it was touched in blocking.

And it was the ninth round, and there was more to come; but he guessed he could make it, all right. Only things were hazy. . . . He heard the bell.

Back in his corner. He probably hadn't scored a point that round. . . .

And then, for some queer reason, despite the fact that it was only a whisper, he heard K. O. saying to Jack:

"—an' when he say three to one, I run got out that money you put in the bank fo' me, an' I bet my diamond ring 'gainst seven hunnud, too, and tha's why I'm kinda eageh fo' Mistuh Rogeh to go—"

That's all Kid Wallace heard. For Kid Wallace was forgetting. He was forgetting a lot of things. Not of his own volition! His mind was working of its own accord. If, indeed, it was his mind when you get right down to it. It may have been only his emotions, impressing things on his consciousness.

But there was no realization left that this fight would bring him but barely enough to clear the plantation, not enough to keep it going. He didn't recognize a hand that would, if used strongly now, be forever after utterly worthless, as far as fighting went.

Instead, he was musing on a crazy colored man—just on one colored boy, who worked for him—who had been born on his father's plantation, and was really responsible for his being in this ring, with the champion, now.

Just a dumb, no-headed black boy that couldn't have anything but unlimited confidence in his white-folks—that didn't have any better sense than to bet every nickel he had, on his master. To win.

A colored boy that nothing could hurt so much as knowing he had been in any way the cause of his boss losing a fight.

Kid Wallace knew perfectly well that the feelings of one colored boy, more or less, were of no world-wide importance. But as the timer raised his whistle, Kid Wallace was wondering in a sort of impersonal way just what a man *could* do with a cracked left hand, supposing he had a perfect shot for it.

THE tenth round was coming up. And now the feeling of some unusual drama began to sink into that crowd. Despite the fact that the champion had turned back a tough young challenger, they sensed that there was something left, before the curtain.

The hubbub slowly died away. There was a queer, tense silence. The ten-second whistle sounded like a policeman's call on a deserted road; the gong clanged loud and hollow.

Kid Wallace came from his corner just as he had for every round—except the first two. Bleeding from the mouth, and one eye almost closed.

But the squeamish ones who had been shouting, "Stop it!" were silent now; and even the bleacher boys, bloodthirsty devils, and shrewd and raucous fight-fans—they were silent too.

Kid Wallace stalled and covered; and he looked terrible and pathetic.

Hammond's legs were a little shaky, but Hammond was the only one that knew it. He was pacing this boy to perfection; he could win as he had

planned. But he too felt that the atmosphere was charged. He was vaguely uneasy.

But Hammond wasn't too uneasy to carry on his fight. He went on, disregarding that left, as he had for the last five rounds, and using its ineffectiveness to pile up more punishing points for himself.

Kid Wallace was groggy, and there was no faking about that grogginess.

Just the same, there was something different about the way he moved, and the crowd caught this difference. They sat tight—waiting.

Kid Wallace came in slowly, and stabbed a left. But Hammond knew that left would be a cream-puff stab, and he caught it, getting Kid Wallace twice in the eye which was nearly closed. Kid Wallace wriggled into a clinch, and he seemed to hang on desperately.

Out of the clinch, the Kid came off the ropes, and stabbed that sickly left again. Again Hammond caught it.

Working Wallace out of position, Hammond crossed a short, hard right. Maybe Hammond was careless, going away after that punch. Maybe he started too late. It was hard to tell. It looked, though, like the same thing he had done a hundred times before. And of course Kid Wallace's left was not in use tonight.

Kid Wallace hardly tried to roll with that right of Hammond's. It sounded dull and sickening, when it landed on his cheek. All he had done was pull his head in a little and hunch his left shoulder up high.

He must have taken that right to get his shot.

The boys out in the right-field bleachers could almost feel that shot land. Anyway, they heard it.

It was that left—that long, silly-looking left hook. The first one he had thrown in the whole fight. The last.

Hammond dropped like a log.

And there was Kid Wallace groping for a neutral corner, his left hanging limp at his side.

KID WALLACE, his face in that bright light, looking kind of green, finally making the corner, and hanging to the ropes with his right. And the referee out center, taking up the timer's count at five.

Still there wasn't any sound. There was a champion, on his back in the ring. But no one was noticing him. They were watching the challenger hanging there on the ropes.

And then the referee's count ended, and from that entire stadium there came a vast, screaming roar of sound. There was a new champion.

Jack Fitzimmons was in the ring, slashing at the Kid's left glove with a knife, and everyone was still looking at the Kid. The Kid was standing there, sort of weaving, and looking down at some darky in his corner.

And the Kid knew he was a fool; but just looking down at that proud grin made him feel swell. Because, you see, there was still running through the Kid's dazed mind, snatches of a sentence: *"I got that money . . . bet it . . . diamond ring, too."*

Then a grin began to spread over the Kid's face. It was a funny grin, and sort of ghastly, too; but it was a grin. And those people who were close to that side of the ring, heard the Kid ask, as he grinned down into the black face of K. O. Jones:

"Well, boy, how do you like working for a champion?"

About two hours later, in that back room of the apartment, Roger Williams was saying to Jack Fitzimmons:

"—anyhow, we've got the darn' place clear. It won't be easy, but I guess I can make it go, somehow. And K. O. won't ever know I didn't bust this mitt in the fight."

Jack was nodding, as he stared from the window. . . .

K. O. had let the man with the odd-looking machine in again. As they came from the bedroom, K. O. asked:

"Say boss, did you get some good pitchuhs, this time?"

The man nodded, and K. O. said: "It's a good thing, 'cause you was photoin' a champion of the world." And his grin showed fourteen white teeth.

Presently he took a couple of drinks back to Mr. Roger and Mr. Jack.

He asked: "Can I see that good pitchuh the man took?"

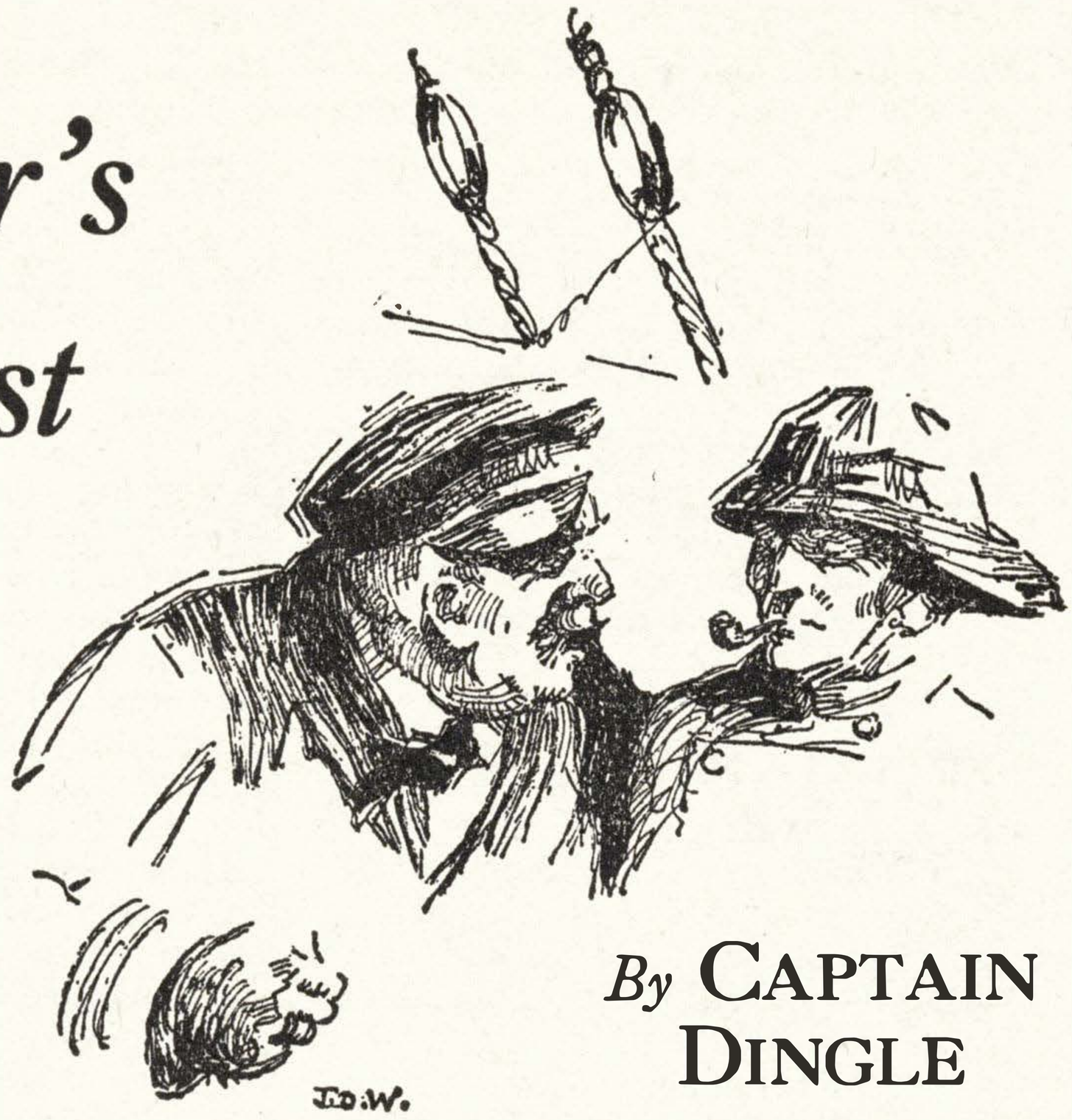
Mr. Jack handed him a funny-looking thing with a lot of white lines all sort of jumbled around in it. It was then that K. O. noticed Mr. Roger's hand in a sling, and started to exclaim.

But Mr. Jack cut him short: "That's a picture of a *retired* champion of the world, boy. But it's a grand picture!"

K. O. grinned extensively.

"Yassuh," he answered happily, "it sho' is!"

Owner's Interest



A stirring story of deep-sea adventure by the noted author of "Carry-on John" and "Shanghai Bill."

By CAPTAIN DINGLE

THE mate's burning eyes gazed unwinkingly from behind brine-cracked lids; he bit hard upon the stem of a cold pipe. The watch huddled on the poop; the maindeck was full to the pinrails with thunderous seas every time the *Orontes* rolled, which was often. The men sweated at the wheel, though snow flew and the wind had a force of 10 Beaufort, which epitomizes fifty miles an hour.

A shivery steward, standing with his nose flattened against a companionway port gloomily estimated his chances of drowning if the skipper sent him to the galley again for hot water. His spirit-stove in the pantry had run short of fuel. To get alcohol meant a longer venture than to the galley.

For all of this, the ship carried herself sturdily. Deep-laden, and forced to run before the gale under a reefed fore-sail and main lower topsail, she was yet secure. Mr. Rollin, the mate, had examined the hatches with Chips, only an hour ago. How they survived was one of the ocean's mysteries. But chiefly the ship was doing well, fast making her northing for home, making better weather of it than most vessels her age and lading would do.

If there was one growl due, it was that Captain Gerter was leaving over-much to his mate—and was using too much hot water, with trimmings!

All in all, however, the ship was none the worse handled for the master's aloofness. Gerter was no windjammer man. Only the fact that Mr. Rollin lacked a master's ticket had prevented him taking the ship home when her old skipper died in Banca.

Choice, indeed, had been narrow. The best the agent could do to replace the dead master was to dig up Gerter from Batavia. He held a master's ticket, and a second mate's capacity for gin. As soon as hard weather set in, he left the ship very much to old Rollin, who was a real shellback to his fingers and toes, and no Paddy Wester.

HIS teeth chattering, the steward crept out. He started for the galley, with an empty kettle. At the foot of the poop ladder he hesitated. "Run, man!" barked the mate. "Roon, y' floonkey!" gurgled a fat sailor. "Look out!" yelled Chips, and started to run down the ladder after the steward as a sea lifted above the port rail and hung for a breath.

"Come here, you damned lump!" bawled the mate, going after Chips. Both were too late. The steward was palsied with fright. The sea fell upon him. He went flat with a thump; his kettle flew clear over the other rail on the sea's broken crest. When the wash ports let the water off, Chips and the fat sailor salvaged a half-drowned steward who ran

below whimpering, without hot water. In fifty seconds the Captain came up storming.

"What are you doing with the ship?" he shouted. He was red-eyed and his face was puffed and purple-veined. As he lurched to windward his breath struck the mate like something palpable and nasty. "You're trying to wreck her!" he yelled. "What kind of a bloody mate are you, anyhow?"

"The ship is doing well, sir. She runs easily," the mate returned patiently.

"Easily be damned! You well-nigh drowned my steward with your driving her."

"He had no business trying to reach—" the mate began. Gerter stopped him with a savage oath.

"You dare talk to me of rights? My steward? Mister, if I send a man anywhere between hell and high water he has business there and will go! Understand? Heave the ship to! You may be a windjammer man, but, by Jonah, you don't know your place! I said heave her to, an hour ago."

"It's risky to bring her to now, sir," the mate replied with the patience of a lifetime of service.

"Mr. Rollin! Heave the ship to or go to your room! I'll show you who's master here!"

IT'S ill takin' the breeks off a Hielander. It's no joke bringing a big ship to the wind when she has run so long that the seas have grown beyond sportive weight. Gerter got a clutch upon the poop rail, and stood grinning at the men clawing their way to the gear. The forebraces were down in that weltering maindeck. All the gear of the foresail too. That foresail must come in before the ship would head up.

"Call all hands," Rollin told the second mate, and himself led the way into the waist. He gave the skipper neither look nor answer. Obey orders if you break owners, is sea religion. The Captain was on deck. Tackle the job and carry on.

Letting go the foretack was a he-man's job. Old Rollin took that. The second mate and some hands went to the braces; Chips, Sails, Bose, and the rest doublemanned the clewline and outer buntline to starboard.

"Run her up!" bawled the mate. "Bear a hand! Hell! Are you all frozen?"

In the first easing of the heavy tack, before the clewline got a hold, while the gale had its will of the slackened clew, the mate's was no place for a half-man. The rope surged, his hands were skinned; but he knew the men at the gear were backing him like heroes. The braces were cleverly handled to spill the sail.

Then came a grayback. Gerter gave no warning. The helmsmen started to shout, but the shout was scared back into their throats. High above the rails on both sides it grinned. The mate, bending low at his bitts, never saw it. The second mate's shout died in utterance. Then the sea fell. Throughout her length the ship quivered. She disappeared from sight. Only three masts and a bowsprit emerged from the sea, with the two boats on the skids afloat.

"GOD! She's gone!" screamed Gerter, and scrambled to the deckhouse top. Mates and men were hurled from the gear. The foresail took charge—thundered, exploded, and flogged until the staggering ship seemed to stop in her headlong flight and shiver in a death tremor.

Oilskins, yellow and black, washed aft to crash against the break of the poop. Four men rolled fairly into the ladder, and clung. The next minute they let go their safe hold to go again into the rope-mazed flood of the waist to drag back the mate, halfway through a wash port going out. With a sigh, and a torrent of off-pouring water, the ship flung her bows clear, rolled sickeningly twice, and freed her decks. The men regained the poop.

"Go ahead and heave to! Why did you stop?" screamed the skipper in frenzy. The foresail had flown downwind in shreds.

"She'll not stand it!" the mate shouted back. "The masts'll come out of her!"

"She'll go from under us like this! Heave her to!"

"Ought to have hove her to long ago!" blatted the second mate, sniffing the gin-laden air avidly.

"Come, lads!" snapped Mr. Rollin, and again led the way to the main-topsail braces, the only gear to be handled now the foresail had stowed itself. The foretopmast-staysail sagged to leeward on a slackened stay. So much had the flogging foresail done. Rollin peered at it, shaking his head.

"When you're ready, sir!" he bawled to the skipper.

"Down with your helm, there! Down with it!" yelled Gerter, too fuddled to

watch for a smooth, boozily indifferent if only the ship were hove-to, riding easily, so that his steward might get to the galley for hot water. Gin was no good, cold, in such weather!

The ship swung her head to windward, moving fast on a great following sea that hove her up.

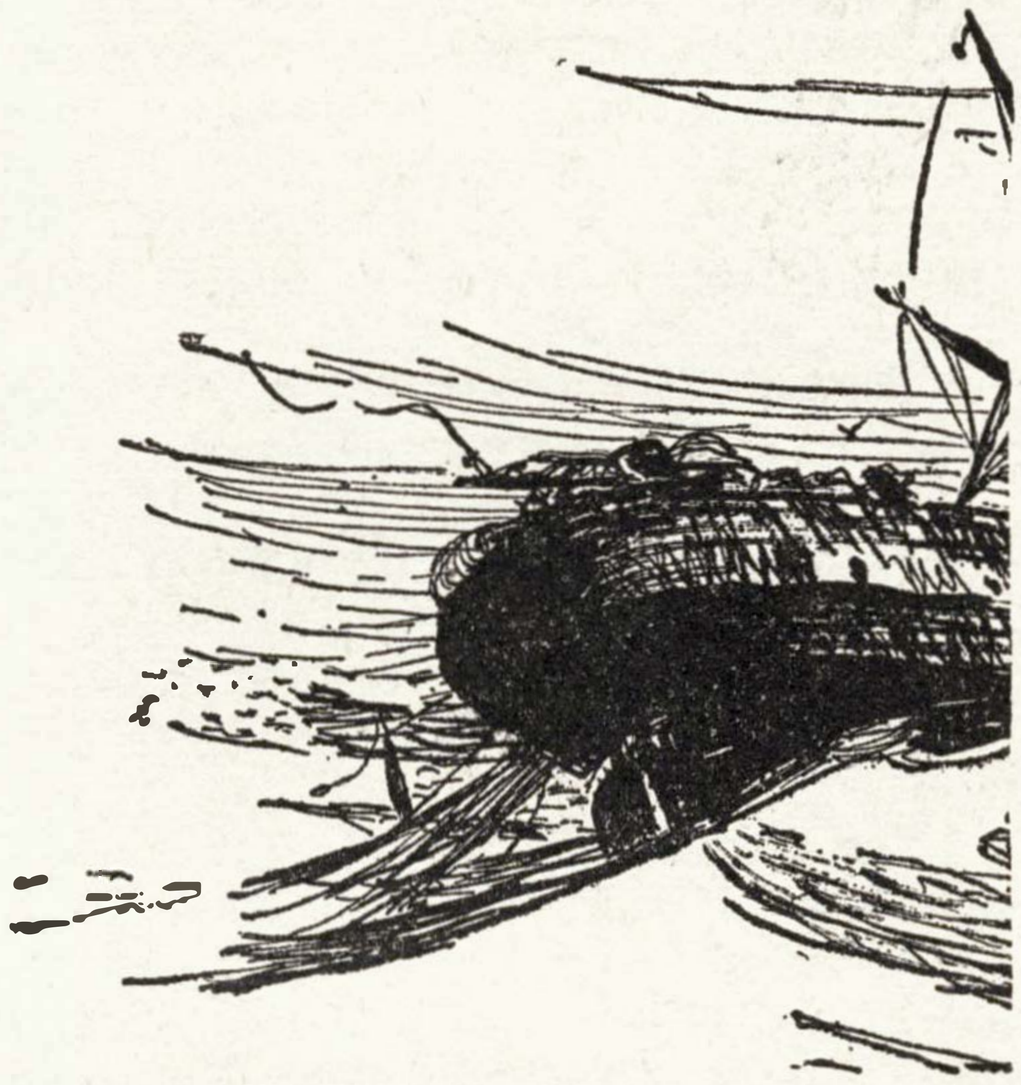
"Take it in, lads! Oh, round with it!" roared the mate at the topsail lee-brace. "Lord! Watch yourselves, men! Hang on!"

The onrushing sea crashed down as the ship showed her length. From stem to stern it smashed her. Rails were leveled. The men at the wheel let go and ran in sheer stark terror. Masts went in a tearing crash. Boats went. The donkey-engine house went. One of the helmsmen was hurled into the mizzen top, went overboard with the mizzenmast, and came aboard again on the roaring backwash of the sea. Gerter, flat on his stomach on the top of the companion house, stared goggle-eyed at the wreckage emerging. Men crawling like partly drowned kittens out of a tangle of gear, their faces streaked with red; a search was made for the bosun, who never was found. Everything was gone above decks but the galley and the fore-lowermast, foretopmast, and main lowermast. A rooster, sole survivor of the hencoop all the way from Java Head, perched for a mad moment on the stump of the mizzenmast, stern to wind, feathers uprooted, hoarsely crowing until his hold was torn loose and he went downwind in a cloud of flying plumage to wherever it is that drowned fowls go.

"Tell the Captain she's hove-to!" old Rollin growled to a youngster grinning with the pain of stove-in ribs.

GERTER had gone below. So had the second mate, making much of a skinned forehead, and hopeful of rum. The ship had hove herself to. And while the gale yelled around her and the seas leaped to drag her down, Mr. Rollin stolidly drove the men to a dreary round of securing broken spars lest they hammer death-blows to her side. He double-lashed the galley. There would be bleak days in bitter weather. Men must be fed. He bandaged broken ribs; found salves for ripped flesh. When darkness came, he glanced at the ship's last position on the chart, calculating chances of other ships happening along. He had Chips light a tar-barrel flare.

"We won't be easily seen," he said.



"Like a halftide rock, we are. Don't want to pile anybody up, Chips."

HE found and issued grog; he tried first to get orders from Gerter. Gerter's room was locked. The steward had his spirit stove going again; a bigger kettle stood on it, boiling, always boiling. The second mate, head bandaged, and smelling of rum, looked contented but pleaded grievous injuries which forbade him to turn-to.

The mate, thoroughly disgusted, went through an old notebook of his own, and decided upon the best method of jury-rigging the ship when daylight and easier weather came.

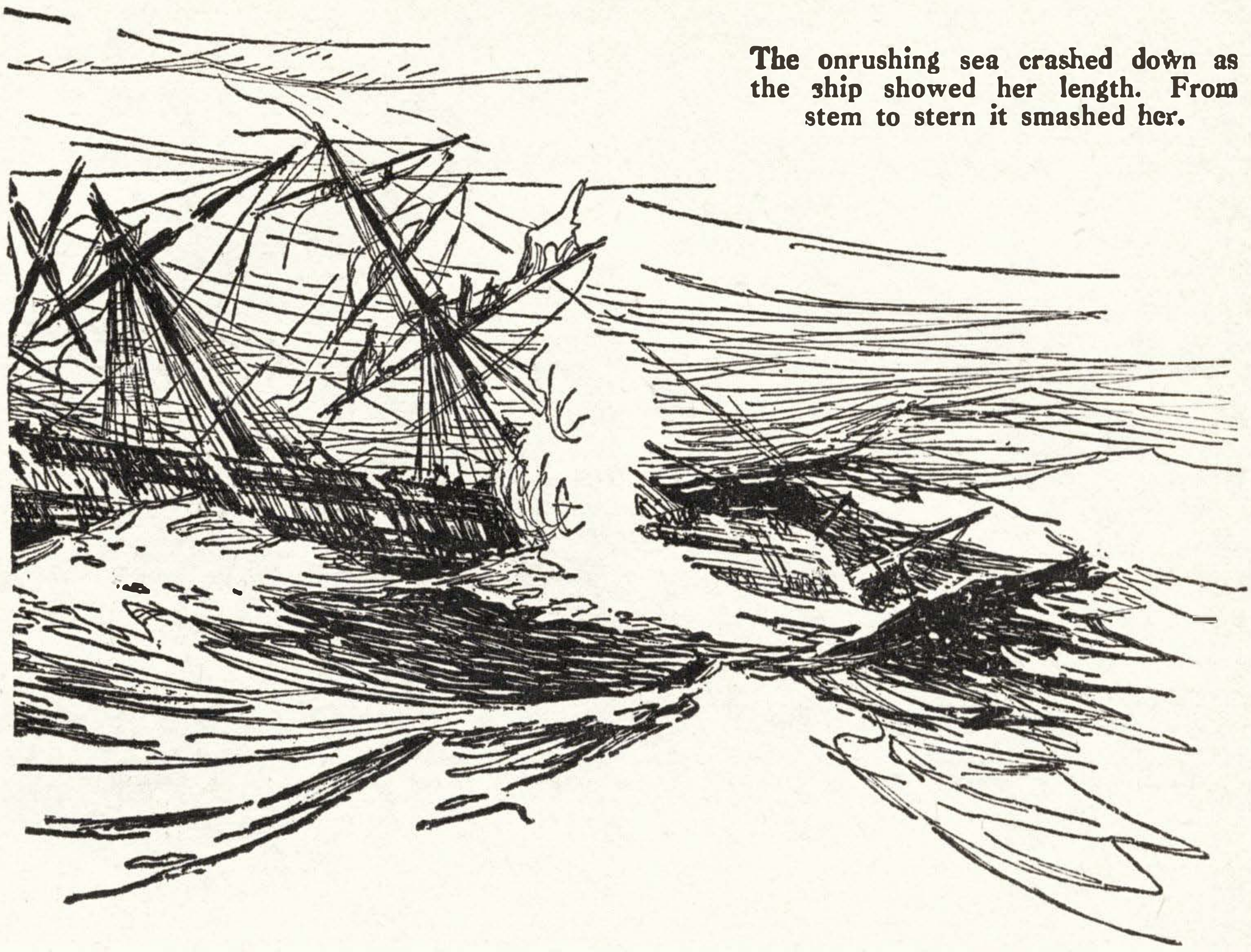
Easier weather was long coming. Rollin thanked the guardian cherub of sailors that Gerter remained below. The second mate flattered Gerter's skill in surgery, asking for fresh bandages twice a day; and rum was the fee of flattery. Asking for orders while the morning dressing was in hand, Rollin received a snarling admonition to cut away all wreckage and keep double lookouts for steamers.

"Carry on jury-rigging, sir?" queried Rollin.

"Jury-rig the devil! I'm making no moving picture! Keep a good lookout for a steamer and call me when one's sighted."

"Aint no use fooling with jury-rig, sir, that's a fact!" the second mate agreed.

"We're able to reach port under sail, sir. Towing's a sore expense." The old mate had his owner's interests at heart.



The onrushing sea crashed down as the ship showed her length. From stem to stern it smashed her.

He had been in the ship many a better year. He had never been in any other employ.

He had seen the fleet of sailing-ships vanish before the onrush of steam until only the *Orontes* remained, and her owner would never survive her long. Rollin knew that the ship was not insured. For many voyages now the owner had saved that expense and gambled on his luck. That luck had held well, until his dependable skipper went and died out East this voyage—now this serious mishap of dismasting when within fair reach of home with a good cargo. Of course the cargo was insured, by the shippers. The owner's personal risk was in his uninsured vessel. Had she been insured, the expense of towing her to safety could be recovered from the underwriters; but in the circumstances, all cost of towing and aid fell on the owner. It must break him utterly; Rollin knew that. He repeated:

"We can make port, sir."

"Damn it! You still there?" came the harsh retort. "Will you obey my orders, or must I break you? Can you afford to take a bad discharge, Mr. Rollin?"

Mr. Rollin could not. He was well on toward sixty, and all he knew was the sea, and sailing of ships. If Gerter would only stay below, fuddling! But that sort of skipper wouldn't. He'd fuddle, and meddle, and keep his promise in one thing if no other—doing mischief to a man who crossed him.

AT noon Gerter went on deck, bundled up like an Eskimo, his face more purple, his breath nastier, his eyes more bloodshot. Snow fell, driving obliquely on a moderated but still bitter gale. Visibility was poor. Men working forward were blurred. The mate had worked all hands like slaves—mostly willing slaves under a driver who knew his business and was a man. Dimly seen on the foreyard and foretopsail yard, four seamen worked at the torn rigging. At the main-lowermast head two more men worked. The decks were orderly after a fashion; spars and rigging had been untangled and stowed shipshape. Gerter hurried below, satisfied that a good lookout was kept; he cursed the steward because boiling water was no hotter.

Grimly the mate went on. His second mate was useless, but he had in the carpenter and Sails two of his own stamp of seadogs, of his own age and experience. Between them they cleared the gear so that every spar and wire lay where it could best be put to use if needed.

The men worked well enough, for Rollin saw to it that they were full fed

and grogged, and had time enough to smoke without either wasting time or lacking the solace of the weed. By night, the shaky foremast was stayed again. And when the flare-barrel was lighted, and the darkness fell complete, Rollin patched up broken skin and torn flesh and sore bones for the men, the inevitable price of clearing the wreckage of an iron ship's dismasting.

The next day too. Quietly, saying nothing, the mate guided the disposition of the salvaged gear according to a definite plan. He hoped the skipper would drink himself silly. Then if no steamer chanced along, there was the jury-gear almost ready to rig. Already the foremast was fit to carry sail to topgallants. A new foresail was ready to bend.

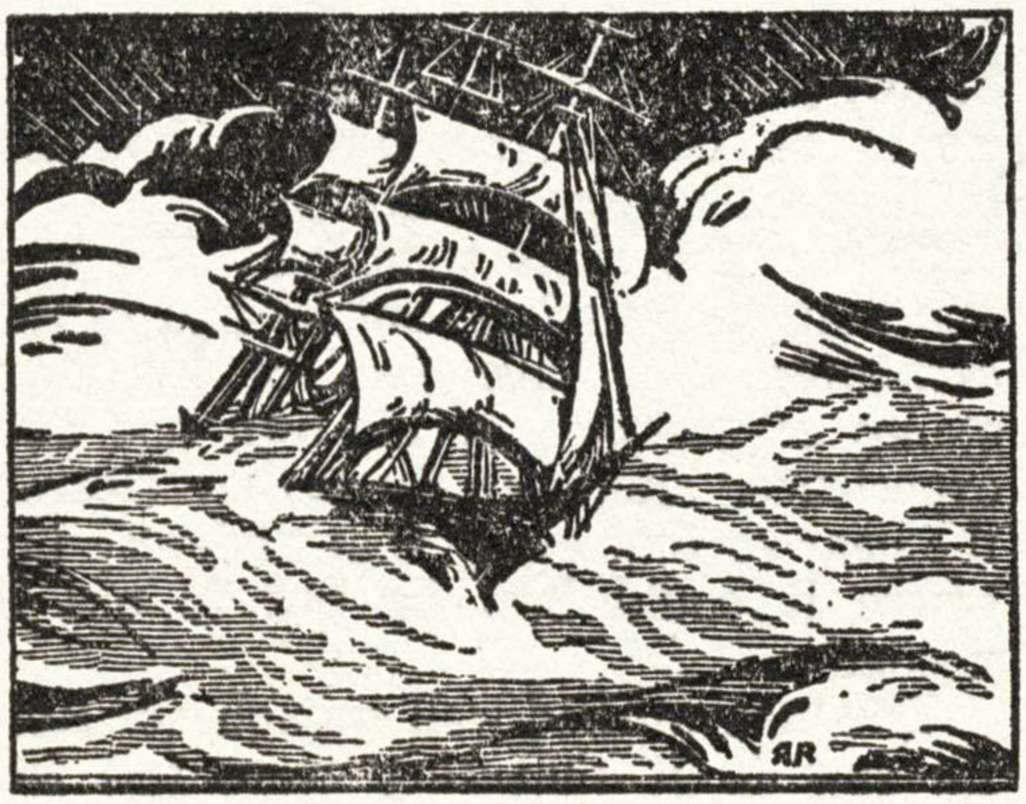
When at the end of the second day Gerter had not appeared for twenty-four hours, Rollin put the two foretopsails on her and let her drive. The wind was fair. She rolled less. There was a hint of clearing in the sky at dusk. The flare was lighted. The mate obeyed orders.

No accident happened. The weather cleared, the wind blew strong and fair; the bit of sail she carried blew the ship toward home waters. Gerter never bothered to come up.

At eight of the morning, and at noon, having secured flying shots at a wintry sun, the mate reported the ship's position and drift. He reported having set the topsails.

"Look out for a steamer," Gerter snarled, ignoring all else.

IT was approaching dusk again when smoke was seen astern. Gerter stumbled quickly on deck. He carried himself marvelously, loaded as he was. His red eyes glittered in mounds of puffy flesh, but he knew what he wanted.



"Run the ensign up, union down, Mister. That steamer will tow us in if I have to bond the ship for her hire."

GERTER stayed out of sight until the streamer drew alongside, signaling. The *Orontes* was deep with good Banca ore, heavy and solid. When the driving force was off her she fore-reached a mile before coming to a stop. The steamer was a tramp, no bigger than the sailing-ship, and she was flying light. Her propeller churned yeastily beneath her counter as she wallowed by, rolling desperately as she changed course and slowed down. Darkness was upon them when the signals had been read and answered. Then a cluster of cargo lights blazed out on the tramp's fore-deck, and a winking Morse light told the *Orontes* to have a flare lighted to guide the boat which soon came dizzily across the sea. It was the chief mate of the steamer who came, and Gerter almost dragged him below. When they came on deck again, Gerter was hoarsely jovial, the tramp's mate stolidly agreeable. The boat went back to the steamer. Gerter called Mr. Rollin below. The second mate was there, still wearing a head bandage, looking alcoholically happy.

Rollin glanced curiously at him.

"Mister Rollin, I have no fault to find with you," Gerter began. He fumbled with a bottle and glass, pushing them at the mate. "Have a little *schnapps*, Mister, and let's forget any unpleasantness."

Rollin ignored the invitation, standing solid as a samsonpost, waiting for orders. He knew he had been brought below on no such simple errand as drinking his skipper's health.

"There is no one in charge on deck, sir," he remarked pointedly.

"Let her drift!" growled Gerter, scowling at the unaccepted glass. "I want your advice. I have made an offer to that steamer to tow us to an anchorage. The Captain will be here soon to complete the agreement. I want your witness in the log that I have done the best possible thing for the owner." Swallowing a sizzling hooker of steaming *schnapps* toddy, Gerter said thickly: "The owner can't afford to refit this old wagon, Rollin. It'll be to your advantage to agree with me."

"That I cannot do, sir. The ship can be carried safely home under her own sail," Rollin insisted stoutly. "I can take her in myself."

"Ha! And that's what you're hoping, I know!" yelled Gerter, in drunken rage. "Don't fool yourself! You'll look many a day for another ship, Mister, I'll see to that."

"I am but watching the owner's interest, sir. We are old friends," returned Rollin dully. He saw ahead that dreary, killing round of the docks and offices, seeking in vain the ship that would have a berth for an old man of sixty who had never passed for master.

"Then if you ever fall lucky and get another ship, Mister, take your chance with the master's interest. That's what the underwriters favor these days. Get to your duty!"

"I know she can't make port, sir, and so does he," stated the second mate.

The tramp's master came aboard. He was a heavy little man, with a "crojick" eye which swiftly roved over the length and breadth of the *Orontes* and even in the lantern light seemed to have already appraised her value. The skippers were below for half an hour; when they reappeared, there was a rich flavor of grog on the bracing air. There was an aura of absolute understanding about the two men.

"It'll be a heavy tow, Captain Gerter," the tramp skipper shouted as he tumbled into his boat. "You'd better keep your topsails set, until we strike soundings anyhow."

WELL that the seas had leveled a lot, well that the gale had settled into a fresh, whole-sail breeze blowing fair! The *Orontes* had no boats left; the tramp's scanty crew got the first towline aboard only by calling up the black-gang to help. Fortunate it was that aboard the crippled old sailing-ship were some men so utterly of the sea that seamanship was part of their fiber, needing no pondering. Even so it was midnight when the tramp signaled "stand by" and steamed slowly ahead.

The *Orontes* with her topsails moved ahead too, easing the strain on the tautening hawsers. Rollin had rigged a wire bridle, leading from both hawsepipes and round-turned on the windlass, passing aft and made fast to the foremast. Springs were stoppered to the bridle from the bitts, and the steamer's towing hawser was shackled to the bridle. It looked a rig capable of towing an island. Gerter only came up when the tow started. He growled because his own ideas had not been asked;

but it was too late then. Even his befuddled eyes saw that the mate's rig was good. As soon as the strain snatched the hawser out of the water, the tramp lurching heavily to the weight of the drag, Gerter staggered off below again. The North Atlantic on the heels of a January gale is no cozy corner for a gin-slinging shipmaster.

ROLLIN snatched his rest as he could on the chartroom locker. He stayed forward for an hour, watching the tow. Then he went aft. He shook his head hopelessly. The tramp was making heavy weather of it. She could just barely keep the ship moving; and long before that hour was up her smoke-stack was belching greasy smoke in clouds so heavy they fell upon the sea like poison gas, blowing out ahead of her as if she were not moving at all. The second mate came out to take his watch, and seemed less reluctant than he had been. He grinned queerly when taking over, leering insolently in the mate's face. . . .

When Rollin had been lying down for an hour, he was awakened by groping hands to hear a sobbing whimper at his face. He leaped up, turned up the lamp, and found the steward, bleeding at the forehead from a jagged cut, crying like a baby.

"He hit me with a bottle, sir! He's crazy! I'm afraid of him!"

"Couldn't you go to the second mate without waking me up?" grumbled Rollin.

"He's as bad as the Old Man! Hell frizzle 'em both!"

"Give me your keys, steward. Get along to the cook's room. Stay there. I'll look after the Captain tonight," said the mate, dabbing meanwhile with a sea-

soaked handkerchief at the ugly cut. "Wait a minute, man! That cut needs more than swabbing!" he ordered sharply, for the steward was panicky—he would have run forward bleeding like a stuck pig in his anxiety to leave the vicinity of Gerter. The mate stolidly completed the job, bandaging and plastering from the emergency kit in the chartroom; then he went below, got brandy from the ship's medicine-chest and made the man swallow enough to turn his tears to plain eye-watering.

"Now run along," he said.

"I'll tell him something in the morning, sir, see if I don't!" vowed the revived flunky, and charged along the deck to tell the Doctor all about it.

AT four the towline parted. The whang of it reverberated all through the ship.

The tramp shot ahead; the hawser whirled like a tortured snake through the air. The lookout and his watchmate were hurled clear over the forecastle rail. The old *Orontes* surged along, scarcely slower than when towed. Rollin was on the spot before the men picked themselves up.

"Hurt?"

"No, sir. Bill landed on his head, though." The lookout rubbed his own head tenderly.

"He isn't hurt then! Get the fores'l on her. Get a move on!"

No need to call all hands—no need to call the Old Man. The men poured out of forecastle and forward house, alarmed at the clangor. Gerter came lurching forward, flashing an electric torch, snarling peevish queries. The steward ducked back into the cook's berth, all his new brandy-pluck evaporated.

"What's the matter here?" yelled Gerter. "Where's that fool of a mate?"

"Towline parted, sir. We're too heavy for that little steamer," Rollin told him frankly.

"Who told you to set that foresail? Make that fast again! You're up to your old tricks again, hey, Mister Rollin? Too heavy, are we? I'll tell you what's what: you're putting rotten gear to work to beat me! I'm wise to you. Look out for that boat, Chips!"

"It wasn't our gear that carried away, sir," protested Rollin, already getting the broken line hauled in and cleared for a new trial. The steamer's boat was in the water, cargo lights lighting the sea. The steamer was coming astern on a port helm.

"I'll stand by and see you secure the towing-gear this time, just the same," snarled Gerter.

THE steamer's mate hailed from the boat:

"We'll send you our best wire, Captain! You'll have to carry more sail—you're hard towing."

"Raise more steam! Sail wasn't in the contract!" yelled Gerter viciously. Mates were all alike. Here was a tramp mate telling him exactly what Rollin had already argued! "Tell your Captain to use his coal. He's getting paid well for it!"

"Set some more canvas. You can furl it on soundings," insisted the steamer mate, and started back with the heaving-line Rollin had thrown him. Nobody moved to set sail. The skipper stood over the windlass like a bloated porpoise, pig-eyed and nasty. Rollin and his old dependables brought inboard their bridle, cast off the broken hawser end, and, when the steamer's steel wire was secured, the *Orontes'* windlass dragged it aboard. Gerter leaned over the bows, breathing heavily in the bleak chill of dawn, finding fault with everything done. Chips sawed a handspike in two for toggles.

"Don't want them!" yelped Gerter.

"The bends'll jam, sir, without toggles," Rollin said, looking up irritably. Aft, the second mate leaned on the poop rail, head cocked eagerly to catch the drift of the squabble.

"I want 'em to jam! That wire stays fast until we anchor!" He impatiently signaled the steamer with his flashlight:

"All fast! Go ahead!"

"Set your foresail!" the answer flashed back.

"Go ahead! I'm setting it!" The tow went ahead again. "Hold on with that foresail!" snapped Gerter. The mate was already at the gear with his watch. He carried on as if he never heard. The heavy canvas fell and billowed in the lines. The men hung, looking from one to the other for direction.

"Keep that sail fast! Rollin, you're finished! Go to your room; I'll see you in jail for this! It's insubordination. It's mutiny!" Gerter trembled with splenetic fury. The second mate grinned with relish.

The wire twanged, the bridle surged, sparks flew, and the steel hawser parted

with an appalling sound. The men down on the main-deck at the foresail gear scattered instinctively, arms about their heads, hearts stopped. The flying end came aboard like a whip of scorpions, the strands unlaying, the separate wires bristling, almost redhot with the broken tension. Rollin staggered back against the foremast, knocked breathless by the impact of a heavy body. A cold dawn slowly lightened. . . . Gerter lay at the mate's feet, ugly and crumpled and silent, the wire coiled about him like a devilish python.

The steward ran forward, stooping gleefully over the mangled form.

"Good enough! You arsked for it! How 'd yer like yer eggs done now, hey? You—"

"Shut up!" Mr. Rollin shoved the steward aside. "Carry him to his room, men. You, steward, undress him. I'll handle you if you try any dog's tricks on him! Call me when he's ready and I'll fix him up if it's possible. You go too, Sails. Handle him gently."

LOUDLY the steamer's siren was blaring. It carried a frenzied message over the riotous sea as the ships drifted nearer.

"Wire's fouled her propeller, snapped the shaft and jammed the rudder!" Rollin interpreted. He keenly scanned all aspects; then— "Take in both topsails," he ordered tersely. "Call me if she comes too close, Chips." Then he went to see Gerter. This was a crisis in more ways than one. He met Sails in the companionway.

"He aint gorn, sir, but I'll get some canvas ready," offered Sails. Rollin gruffly bade him hold fast with his canvas. He met the steward in the salon carrying a kettle of hot water. The second mate was standing beside Gerter's bunk, staring doubtfully down at the silent figure.

"Go on deck, Laurel!" snapped Rollin. "Who told you to come below anyhow?"

"Perhaps I will, perhaps I won't," retorted Laurel impudently. "Wasn't you disrated? Seems to me the last thing I heard the Old Man say was: 'Go to yer room, Mister Rollin!'"

"Are you going?" Rollin asked fiercely. Laurel met his eyes—and went.

"It aint no use bothering with him," the steward muttered, nodding at Gerter. Rollin was trying to pull bits of stuff out of the worst cuts. The flesh didn't bleed; that looked bad. The steward puttered about, obeying orders but not in love with his job. "You'd let the swine die if you knowed the deal he made with that tramp skipper."

Rollin turned angrily on the man, who babbled on, slopping water and indifferent to it.

"The second mate's in it too. You was to be broke."

Vividly Rollin recalled the last words Gerter had uttered. They were meant to do precisely what the steward now declared was the intention.

"If you don't believe me, sir, look in his private log," the man added.

The bargain for towing had never been necessary, in the mate's judgment. That it was a bad bargain for his owner he believed utterly. He probed Gerter's swollen flesh hopelessly; and the steward opened the log-book in the desk and silently let it speak for itself, placing it on Gerter's chest.

Rollin glanced at it.

There was his name, entered as disrated. The entry made before the act. There was no signature, yet. The intent was plainly a dishonest one. The steward pulled out a sheet of notepaper from the back leaves of Gerter's pocket book. "I was to be in on the cut-up too." he said. "But he hadn't busted a bottle over my napper then!"

When Rollin's eye lighted on that precious sheet of paper, his fingers, still ministering to the unconscious Gerter, involuntarily tore at the flesh, so angry did he become. Here was a rogues' compact. The tramp skipper undoubtedly held an agreement to tow the *Orontes* to anchorage; but this paper in Gerter's keeping was simply an undertaking to split the proceeds on condition of Gerter making it a complete job, by dismantling all jury-rig as soon as the tow reached frequented waters, rendering the *Orontes* helpless and the steamer's services paramount. It was, in brief, a devil's document for the final and utter ruin of the owner—and the owner was Rollin's old friend, his employer of years.

WHILE the thought buzzed through his brain, he became aware of a change in Gerter. He looked closely again, tried to open the eyes. He pulled apart the deepest cut, and the flesh was cold. He silently slipped the pocketbook into his pocket, sudden decision vitalizing him.

"Cover him up, steward. He's dead," he said quietly, and entered the happen-

ing in the log right beneath the entry of his own disrating. To this entry, however, there was a signature, and the witness of the steward too. "Don't talk to the men, steward. You won't lose by this if you behave yourself. Let nobody come in here unless I say so."

ON deck the sleet blew bitterly. The vessels rolled and plunged, drifting nearer to each other. Only the bit of sail set on the sailing-ship kept her from coming afoul of the other. Signals flew from the tramp. Laurel had the codebook, trying to read them. He had assumed an air of importance.

"Never mind flags, Laurel. I'll talk to him," said Rollin, and began to semaphore with his arms. The tramp skipper waddled along to the forecastle head to answer.

"I'll take your lines and tow you until something comes along," Rollin signaled.

"I'm coming aboard. If Gerter's dead I want to—"

"Better send a line before you roll over," Rollin wagged, cutting the other's message short. "It's going to blow harder. Talk to me when it moderates."

"Is Gerter dead?" the second mate demanded truculently.

"Stand by to take his lines," snapped the mate. "I'm going to take him in tow."

"You're going to play hell! Last thing I heard was that you was to go to your room. I'm in charge here, and you—"

Rollin hauled off a step and swung fiercely, determined to make a clean job of this one for the encouragement of the others. Laurel pitched headlong against the wheel gratings, and sat there holding his jaw and glaring up at the suddenly electrified Rollin—Rollin, the old has-been, the patient donkey for Gerter's load of abuse!

"WHO'S next?" demanded Rollin. Chips shook his head. Sails shook his. Half a dozen men who had been ready to follow Laurel's lead stepped hastily over to the other side. Some of them walked over Laurel in making the decision.

"Good enough! Then stand by and take the lines. Get a move on. If we can't get fast to her in ten minutes she's lost. Look at that wind a-coming!" Laurel got up and shuffled along with the rest. The steamer's boat came careening over the lumpy seas, with the end of a coil of line. Rollin himself hove a monkey-face at the boat for the line to be bent on. It was no sort of job for sailors to bring a boat near to either of those dizzily rolling ships; for the tramp's indifferent hands it was murder and suicide in one. But the lines were married, the boat put back. By the miracle of sailors' luck the men reached the steamer's rail as she rolled down to them; and they clung there until hauled aboard, while their boat was smashed to staves by the staggering iron hull.

The eye in the steel wire was barely at the *Orontes'* stern when down whistled the gale. Sleet intensified until the tramp was blotted out at the length of her lines. But the gale that made her plight a ghastly hazard drove the derelict sailing-ship ahead like a scared gull, and the first tremendous strain hauled the towlines into an inextricable jam around the bitts.

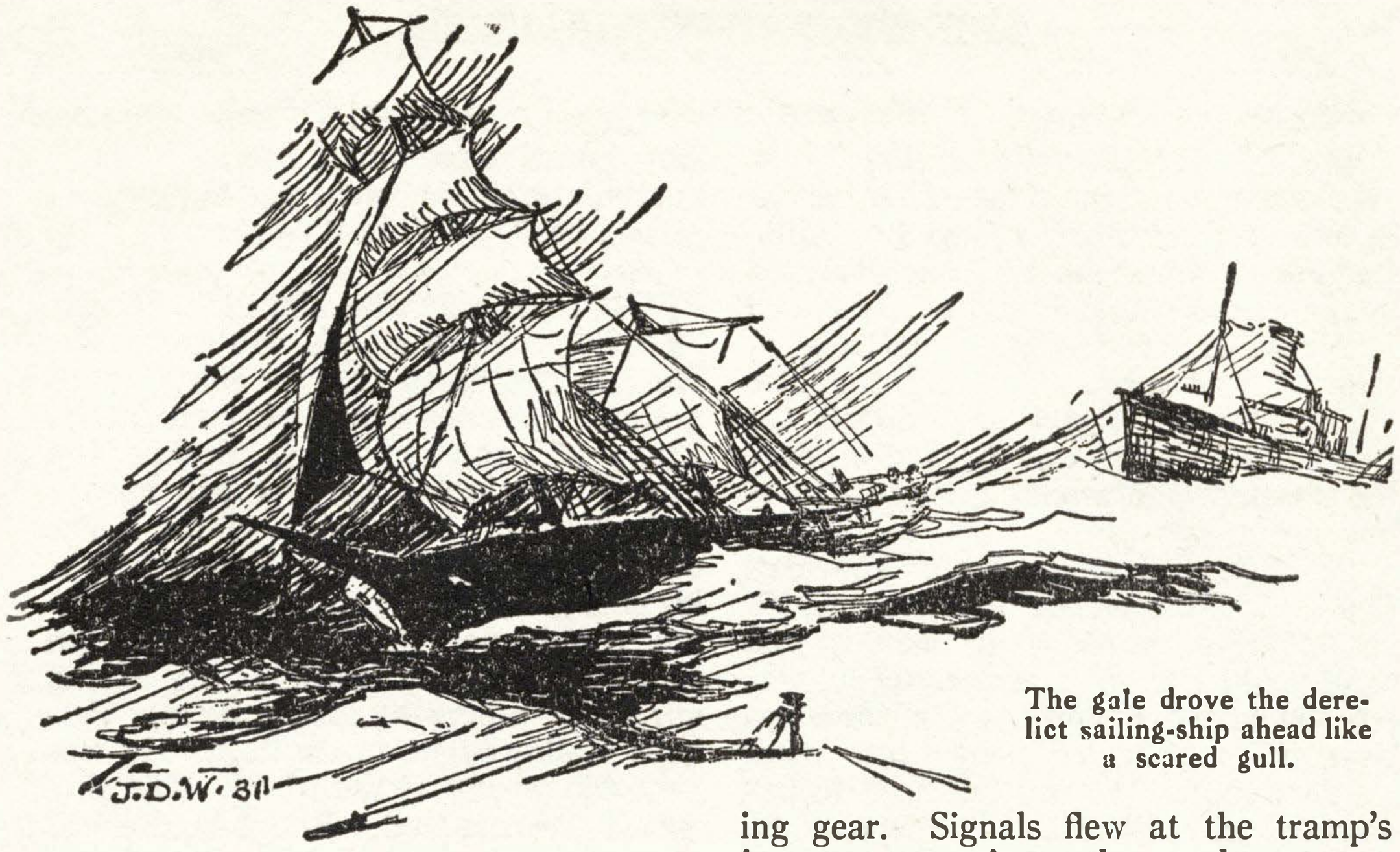
"Tuck in more rovings everywhere, and clap on preventer sheets and backstays," Rollin directed, and stood at the helm himself, knowing the danger to the helmsman if that towline parted. And when all else was done, he had strong fourfold tackles rigged to ease the strain on the bitts, passing most of it to the stump of the mizzenmast.

AT the end of three days Gerter had to be buried, cold though the weather was. Somebody passed the word to the tramp, and her skipper spent two hours on the forecastle-head trying to get semaphored messages to Rollin.

"Let him talk," said Rollin. "But don't touch those towlines!"

Laurel was uneasy. The steward was different lately. Just before the accident to Gerter the steward and the second mate, who had shared a cabin, were pretty thick together; ever since the accident, particularly since they gave Gerter's body a passage, there had been a look in the steward's eye which puzzled and alarmed Laurel. He talked much with the men of his watch, in the shelter of the galley. Sometimes he received wigwag messages from the tramp which he did not pass on to Rollin.

One watch, on coming on deck Rollin saw the smoke of a distant freighter. He saw signals flying on the tramp. He also noticed that they were not conversational signals for him, but signals of distress intended for the far-off steamer that couldn't see them. There were signs, too, of tampering with his towlines. He



The gale drove the derelict sailing-ship ahead like a scared gull.

seized Laurel by the arm, halting his going below.

"Did you try to slack off those lines, Laurel? Did you?"

Laurel twisted clear, spitting with rage.

"If I did, what of it? I should stand by and see you murder all hands to make a big name for yourself, hey? We can make port ourselves if you cast that tramp adrift, and plenty of steamers'll give her a pluck in."

"I'm not making a name for myself, Laurel. Don't meddle again," said Rollin patiently. "Nobody's getting murdered—yet. Leave the towlines alone."

LAUREL told his men, next watch, that Rollin was easy. He took the first chance of letting the skipper of the tramp know it, too. Rollin checked up his position, and snatched a rest. He felt somehow that rest would be rare for him now. Yet there was a sense of satisfaction which almost insured peaceful sleep, utterly against all the laws of seafaring. He was nearing land, in thick weather, charging along before a gale which showed no signs of abating. Where most shipmasters would forgo rest, Rollin lay down with easy mind.

He was an old sea fox; he slept just so long and no longer. Others had expected him to sleep until wakened. He emerged on deck, wrapped as if for a long watch, and came upon a pretty scene. Sails headed Rollin's own watch, and with the men, still snored bravely forward. Chips was not to be seen, and two men were missing too; but the rest, with Laurel, were tugging and heaving with tackles and handspikes at the towing gear. Signals flew at the tramp's jumper stay. A ten-thousand-ton cargo steamer lay rolling abeam, steaming slowly to keep her position. On the tramp's forecastle-head the skipper bellowed impatiently through a megaphone. Sleet had turned to snow, and the wind was taking off. Now and then the towline perceptibly slackened. Rollin took all in at a glance. There was the loom of land, faint but certain, dead to leeward. The one thing ugly about it was that the point he had hoped to make lay a long way from dead ahead. To make it, turn it, and bring his tow to harbor meant a fight; and here was his second in command, and half of the men, working against that end behind his back. And where was Chips? He could depend on Chips. He hurriedly ducked inside the wrecked chartroom and picked up a port spanner. Then he burst in among the crowd at the bitts.

The lines sagged, surged, and sparks flew. Laurel was too intent on his job to see Rollin until he felt the weight of his hand.

"Drop it! Stand clear, all!" gritted Rollin, and hurled the second mate against the rail. The tramp skipper's frantic roar came downwind like a steam blast. The men scattered, undecided, but Laurel came on, and he had Gerter's gun now. Rollin had been looking for that gun ever since Gerter's funeral. Now it spoke. There was no doubt about Laurel. The slug smashed a button of Rollin's pilot jacket against the book in his breast pocket, and all but knocked him down. Before another shot could be fired, the mate whirled his port key and whanged it down on Laurel's skull, dropping him like a poleaxed ox.

"Aloft, two hands, and loose the t'gants'l!" yelled Rollin and then the climax was upon him. The tramp master bellowed; the towline twanged. Rollin, grinding at the helm to bring the ship to her course, was suddenly overwhelmed in a rush of frenzied men who believed that he was mad. The big freighter abeam steamed faster and circled the tow. But Rollin was backed against the wheel, and somebody was at the towline again.

The ship was falling across the seas. There would soon be a smash which nothing could stave off or mend. The helm could not be used because he was crushed against it, and now men who had been willing to be led seemed bent upon his destruction. It was not hard to understand why, when Laurel staggered to his feet and groped for the pistol again. He had stirred them up, with some silly tale of rich reward or dire punishment. But where was Chips?

Laurel found the gun among the milling feet. And the steward found Chips, tied up and rolled under the chartroom table. He cut the lashings with Chips' own knife, and together they came into the mob that was attacking Rollin and leaped upon Laurel as he aimed the gun.

That part of the fight was over. The big freighter blew impatiently on her siren, and the tramp answered her; but for Rollin neither existed in that moment. He did not trouble to put Laurel under restraint, nor cared for possible reprisals. He stuck the gun in his own pocket, and took the helm. Men were already setting the single topgallantsail; the big freighter blew again, then went on her way. The tramp blared hoarsely; Rollin stood and steered his ship, and prayed the gale would last.

AHEAD the land stretched. The *Orontes* was in poor trim for even sailing with wind abeam. It was impossible for her to fetch to windward, released of her burden; but as she went now there was just a bare chance of her weathering that snow-capped headland, and that was the mate's goal. The tow straggled out astern, sagging to leeward. Rollin knew what the world would say if he failed. It would say he cast away that steamer and himself for greed. Men would never believe that any other motive could urge him to hang onto a helpless steamer when other vessels offered to take his burden. He would be ruined. No use seeking a ship after that.

"Chips! D'you think if you rigged a stay from the mainmast head aft to the mizzen stump we might get bit of after sail on her? —What d'ye think, Sails?"

THOUGH thinking him mad, the old fellows did as asked. He steered on. He was not doing this for glory, or as a stunt. He was considering all things. There was the old owner, broken and utterly smashed if he ever had to pay that tramp's outrageous claim. The owner would be a badly shaken man if his ship got home no worse than she was. She could win home in that condition safely enough by turning the tramp adrift for others to fasten on to. Perhaps Rollin ought to do that. He was none too steady at the wheel. The ship wasn't steering well. But if he dragged that tramp to harbor, with that bit of paper he had snug in his pocket to counterblast the tramp skipper's claim, why, the owner might yet recover enough to refit the *Orontes* and carry on running her.

Rollin rubbed his eyes. The land was dim. The big freighter seemed to be hanging about too. The tramp's siren blared without rest. Yet the ship appeared to be making around that headland nobly. Then Rollin was aware that Chips, and Sails, and the steward stood close beside him, staring ahead, and staring at him, and muttering among themselves. His eyes must be getting weak. He braced himself, and peered through the haze.

"That freighter's blowin' a warnin', sir!" muttered Chips. "Don't look like we'd win round that point."

"She's got to make it! She's got too much forward. Take in the topgallants'l," Rollin answered, and nursed the wheel tenderly.

The tramp put over a boat, and her men began to crowd into it. That madman on the *Orontes* was bound to drown all hands! Laurel wavered for one minute, then grabbed a lifejacket and plunged overboard, slogging his way to that boat. Rollin paid no heed. Some of his men were on the point of following the second mate; but the tramp's boat still dragged alongside her. The skipper was not going to leave his vessel to that crazy salvage-hound. Some men appeared on the tramp's forecastle-head, and attacked the towlines again; but long towing had jammed those wires beyond any influence less than machinery.

"Aint pinchin' that point a mite too

near, are you, sir?" Chips ventured. The tramp seemed bound to strike a patch of broken water. Already the *Orontes* was staggering in a powerful tide rip. The momentary clearing of a patch of sky over the land showed a tall flagstaff with signals flying. It needed no code book to interpret them. They flung out to the ships: "*You are standing into danger!*"

"Get your anchors ready, Chips. Hand me a couple of buckets before you go," wheezed Rollin, his face queerly white, his eyes fearful for the first time. Chips set the buckets down, and the mate turned one upside down on the other and sat heavily on the seat.

"Praise Pat he's got sense! He's goin' to anchor!" growled an old sea waif to whom an anchor had always spelled hope.

"You fetch the stooard, my lad, and make him stand by Mr. Rollin," snapped Chips, and went off to see to his anchors.

NOW the big freighter was sounding her siren continuously. The tow staggered and sagged, but drove on as if urged by a maniac. The tramp's boats were both in the water, and her people were tumbling down lines in panic. The Captain paused long enough to shake his fist at Rollin—who remained unconscious of the farewell—then followed his men, and the boats pulled raggedly toward the freighter; for the swiftly rising shore was a deadly welter of broken seas in which no boat could live.

The steward looked keenly at Rollin, then at the shore. His face went pale too, but he ran below and brought brandy. He forced some upon Rollin, whose lips were flecked with red, and whose breathing seemed strangely labored. But it was useless now to speak of anything. Only a miracle could bring the ship and her burden past that headland. Rollin was mad, undoubtedly. Men forward were putting on lifejackets. The steward silently got his, and laid one on the gratings for the mate.

"We got no boats, lads! He's goin' to drown'd us sure as shootin'!" declared Sails, at last frightened out of docility.

"Let-go the anchors, then!" yelped the Doctor. "Some of us'll get ashore, maybe." Chips looked dubiously at the shore, and was of similar mind. He moved toward the forecastle head, where his anchors were all clear for letting go. That way lay safety. He started forward.

"Stay where you are!" roared Rollin in a ghastly voice. He held Gerter's pistol, and to point his order, which took his last available breath, he fired a shot which flattened against the steel side of the galley with a whang which sounded to the scared hands like the crash of a mortar.

"As well be drowned as shot!" muttered Chips, and remained where he was, biting off a big chew of tobacco which he truly believed would be his last.

Out from beyond the headland steamed a big tug. It came foaming down upon the *Orontes,* her skipper bawling at Rollin. Rollin paid no attention. The tramp steamer was in a turmoil of broken water. She must have struck, had she been loaded. The ship had just scraped past with her greater draught. Now the wind piped again and the snow came thicker. For an instant the land was hidden; then a watery sun peeped out, the ship reeled over a fragment of outlying rock, and suddenly a great shout burst from Rollin. The *Orontes'* course was altered; she swung around the headland with the tramp scraping the sand; and then into deep water and a sheltered haven she swam.

"Let go!" yelled Rollin. The anchors crashed down—and he crashed down in the same moment. The *Orontes* had brought home her tow. His old owner would never be robbed now! The steward tried to arouse the mate, but that was a job beyond him. All to be got was a wheezing murmur before Rollin's eyes closed:

"In my pocket—Gerter's book!"

MEN were on board from shore; officials, shipping agents. The steward and Chips told their tale, and the pocketbook was to tell a tale of its own. It contained Rollin's report, right alongside Gerter's shameful bargain.

Laurel's bullet had driven a smashed brass button through a corner of the book into Rollin's lungs, and for a long while Rollin never knew what men called him. But he knew, as the anchor went down, that his owner's interest had been safeguarded. That was well.

Opinions might differ regarding the towage bill and the responsibility for the tramp's mishap; but there could be no misunderstanding that bit of paper between the tramp's master and Gerter. Nor were there any two ways about the fact that the deserted tramp had become clear salvage!

A masked figure strode toward Brenda!

A Warrior

A stirring drama of New Orleans today, by one of the South's ablest writers—author of "Lilies of the Lord" and "The Daughter of Nez Coupé."

BRENDA QUISTGAARD still sits behind the cashier's little desk in the New Orleans corner grocery, where the historians of that city of many historians overlook her completely. None of those historians could lead you to that corner grocery on a bet.

Some of them undoubtedly once read of Clarence Tolley. But they have forgotten him. The newspaper editions roll so often; daily there are new headlines. Anyway, historians fix their eyes on the past.

Romance is dead in New Orleans, they tell you. They point you out the spots where Romance died. Busily they write about those spots. The Vieux Carré, where French and Spanish trod narrow streets in steel and silk and lace, leaving behind moldering walls, iron grilles, courtyards, memories. The battlefield at Chalmette, where Andrew Jackson fought shoulder to shoulder with Lafitte's swarthy pirates, against the redcoats. The Mississippi River, where vanished the pageant of the packets. The dueling oaks, where slim rapiers clashed and smoothbore pistols cracked at dawn.

New Orleans takes Romance once a year synthetically, they tell you, in the tinsel of Mardi Gras.

Nature gave Clarence Tolley the protective coloration she gives so many of her powerless, inoffensive children. You could have passed Clarence on the street half a dozen times a day without remembering him five minutes later. If the police had ever been forced to telegraph his description, the result of their message to the detectives of any other city could have been the picking up of enough youths to fill that city's hotels instead of its jails.

Clarence's hair was just hair-colored hair. His eyes were neither pronouncedly blue nor gray, black nor brown. His height and weight were just average for his age of nineteen. He bore no distinguishing marks nor scars. He wore what a million other youngsters wear these days when America refuses to provide tourists with quaint peasant costumes.

He was born in what New Orleans knows as a shotgun cottage. When you open the front door you look straight down the barrel through living-room, bedrooms, bath, dining-room, and you see the kitchen sink at the far end. They come single-barrel and double-barrel. New Orleans has more miles of them than Baltimore has of white doorsteps leading from the street to white doors in red brick walls, or New York has brownstone fronts. They are cheap and unlovely. In the one where he was born, Clarence grew up with the same schooling, the same amusements, the same appearance, as thousands of other undistinguished New Orleans boys.

He scraped through high school on one of those seventy-to-seventy-one averages that barely give a kid a diploma to frame. He got a job in the corner grocery three blocks from his home.

There, in those unheroic surroundings, was born in Clarence's heart this thing that set him apart from the common run of man. For there Clarence began to get daily close-ups of Brenda Quistgaard, the cashier.

THOUGH Brenda's hair was blonde and her eyes were blue and her skin clear and her features not too haphazard, Brenda wasn't Miss New Orleans in any bathing-beauty contest, not by five hundred statute miles. But Brenda looked great to Clarence. And in her heart burned a clear flame that changed the world for him. Let the genealogical and biological experts explain whether it came from Viking ancestry through a Norwegian sailor who jumped ship at

Goes Home

By MEIGS FROST

Clarence stepped through the doorway.

Illustrated by George Avison

New Orleans, became a stevedore, settled down and married, and in due time became Brenda's father—or whether it just happened as so many entrancing human qualities do. But Brenda was a born daughter of battle.

Had she lived in the Rome of the Cæsars, you'd have found Brenda in the front row at the arena, leaning forward, lips slightly parted, eyes eager, breathing hard, when gladiators died. Had her home been Camelot and she of high degree, her sleeve or glove would have gone floating down the lists on the helmet of her champion, when knights in armor jousted for glory and the reward soft eyes and softer lips bring after the fight is over.

But Brenda lived in New Orleans and the twentieth century; so she took it out in athletics. Brenda simply adored football and baseball, basketball, boxing and track.

AS Clarence's diffident courtship progressed, most of his pay, outside the board he paid his mother weekly, went for tickets to spectacles where lithe-muscled athletes leaped and thudded against each other or raced against time; where the rough roaring shouts and the fighting songs of battle-adoring humanity rose to open skies or to raftered roofs where billowed dense clouds of tobacco-smoke.

Night football and baseball and track meets beneath floodlights on a college campus in New Orleans were gifts of the high gods to Brenda and Clarence.

That was when the bright-tinted bubble of desire for courage and victory in battle began to swell in Clarence's heart with the passing of days and nights of this new, wonderful life into which Brenda led him. To be the kind of guy Brenda ought to have—

Dumbly Clarence knew that Brenda was great. Brenda's kisses left you tingling. There was a girl! Brenda didn't just let herself be kissed—she met you more than halfway. Brenda deserved a guy who— Well, Brenda deserved a regular guy—that's what Brenda had coming to her.

IN Clarence's heart began to rise a great inarticulate tide of love which bore that bright-tinted bubble on its breast. With that tide ambition rose, also.

If he could only lay in Brenda's lap one good offering of the fighting courage she adored! Just one!

It couldn't be football or track or baseball. Clarence's school days were over, his college days never would be, and he had been a dub at all three sports in high school. Nor could it be the ring. There wasn't a boy in the block who couldn't hand him a sleeping-powder with either mitt in the first minute of the first round. Clarence's first, last and only fight back in high-school days had taught him he had a glass jaw.

It worried Clarence. Courage in combat became the obsession of his life, looming before his eyes amid the tiers of canned baked beans, the smell of cold boiled ham and Swiss cheese, the crates of tomatoes and lettuce.

Though he was in love with a daughter of Norway, Clarence never had heard, or if he had heard, had forgotten, the tale of the shock troops of Viking days. Yet no shield-biting, mouth-foaming, sword-swinging Berserker of King Harold's time ever thought of battle by day, dreamed of battle by night, more than Clarence the grocery clerk.

Then on a news-stand he saw one day a magazine cover that showed a Western gun-fighter at bay, his six-shooter spitting flame. Clarence bought it. He plunged into adventurous fiction. Now another new world opened to him.

Nightly, when he was not with Brenda, he sailed the Seven Seas. He battled killers in tropic jungles, and in the barren wastes of the frozen North where Men are Men. On Western plains he shot it out with bad men in little cow-towns. He rode with galloping posses. He dropped rustlers from the saddle with grim unsmiling face and effortless ease as he fanned his trusty six-gun or snapped his rifle to his shoulder. He plunged through blizzards with his dog-sled, toward the Great Slave Lake, a lone Mountie in scarlet tunic beneath his furs —and he always got his man. He quelled mutinies on the grimed, greasy decks of rusty, wallowing freighters, dropping the leader with a shot from the bridge, where he commanded in crisp white uniform.

Thus his dreams. But in real life it began to look hopeless.

Then he stumbled on a story of a man who had found in a pawnshop window an ancient, ivory-handled pistol on the steel of which was engraved:

> Be not afraid of any man
> However large his size.
> When trouble threatens, call on me,
> And I will equalize.

A thought was born to Clarence. And luckily, as he saw it, for a few weeks later at the store two of the clerks went down with the flu. Work was so hard for the rest of them that when evening came both Brenda and Clarence were too tired to go anywhere but home. So Clarence had a little more money in his pocket than usual. And with his head full of dreams of the Equalizer, Clarence went down to "Pawnshop Row" on South Rampart Street one evening, and nosed around.

He emerged presently with the biggest, blackest .45 six-shooter in the shop. He had bought a worn shoulder-holster too, and two boxes of cartridges. Tom Mix was never better equipped for foiling a cattle-rustling, heroine-kidnaping villain of the bad-lands west of the Pecos!

For some time thereafter, Brenda got excuses instead of entertainment. Clarence explained that he was studying a correspondence-school course in accounting. Brenda thought that was grand. But nightly in his bedroom,—behind a locked door and facing the mirror on his dresser,—Clarence was practising the lightning draw. Fifty times each evening, by laborious count, he dragged out that heavy revolver, cocked it, and snapped it on an empty cylinder, at the figure of his enemy there in the glass.

Over the battle-fields soared Valkyries, beautiful women in armor, who snatched the swords of gallant warriors as their sword-hands sank in death.

Sundays he took the street-car to the Napoleon Avenue ferry, crossed the Mississippi, and trudged down the west bank Barataria Road. There in solitude he fired shot after shot at the trees that lined the silent bayou.

Clarence never got to the point where he could out-shoot Billy the Kid. Few grocery-clerks in their spare time win to such deadly coördination of wrist and grip, squeeze and eye. But Clarence was somewhat pleased with himself, at that. He began to hit the trees. Then he began to hit newspaper pages he pinned on the trees.

Daily, now, to get what he called to himself "the feel of the gun," Clarence went to work with that shoulder-holster and heavy gun under his coat—which, in New Orleans' climate, can be a very damp and uncomfortable practice. But it was centuries ago that man discovered arms and armor are a proud burden!

Gun and holster hung under his coat in a dark little lavatory, while he was on the job. Fortunately, nobody in the grocery store happened to discover it.

Clarence went out with Brenda again now, from time to time. All he needed, all he wanted, was opportunity. Some thug, some bunch of hoodlums—if they'd only accost Brenda and him on a dark street some night! Some Chicago or New York gangster in New Orleans for the races—if he'd only start something with Brenda, and Clarence around! The pictures kept flashing through Clarence's mind. The courteous, grave, slow drawl of those gun-fighters of the Western plains:

"Take yore hand off that young lady, you coyote! I'm waitin' for you to draw. No varmint like you ought to get an even break, but I'm givin' you one."

And then: *"The two weapons spoke as with a single shot."*

It was a hectic life Clarence was living, deep down inside himself. He was nearly bursting with his secret. But he wouldn't tell Brenda; this offering would be laid in her lap as a complete surprise when it came.

Then, as Hollywood's subtitles used to tell us: "Came the day."

CLARENCE had been unromantically handling subdivisions of ripe Camembert for a fussy customer. Satisfied at last, the fussy one departed. Clarence stepped into the little lavatory to scrub his hands—Camembert was a cheese that lingered if you let it. Through the half-open door he heard the commotion and the sharp voice, just as he was drying his hands. He looked over his shoulder out into the store.

"Line up over there! Against that wall! Make it snappy, you!" the sharp voice was saying. A chunky black automatic was backing up the order. The man who held it wore a yellow oilskin slicker. He had a blue bandanna handkerchief tied around his face, only his eyes showing between bandanna and hat brim.

Just beyond the man, through the open door to the street, Clarence caught a glimpse of a car standing at the curb, the engine running, at the wheel, a youth in overalls and down-pulled cap, leaning to peer sharply through the door at what was going on inside. And toward the cashier's little desk another overalled and bandanna-masked figure was striding, gun in hand—toward Brenda!

Clarence knew them instantly. The papers had been full of the raids of a mysterious trio on outlying groceries, drug-stores, filling-stations. The darkness of the little lavatory had kept them from seeing Clarence.

Clarence rubbed his hands swiftly on his thighs, lest any slippery soap might remain. Clarence's face became as grim and unsmiling as any Western gun-fighter's. Suddenly there was a queer, shaky feeling inside him. But he reached over under his coat, hanging there, for the loaded gun. He felt the shaky feeling vanish as he gripped the rough butt. He felt a hot surge of something else take its place. The Equalizer!

Clarence cocked the weapon and stepped out through the lavatory door. That was the exact moment Brenda, through some hysterical twitch of nerves, made an involuntary movement that scared the young hold-up amateur advancing on her and the cash register.

"Yuh would, would yuh!" he snarled. He leaped and struck her on the side of the head with the barrel of his automatic.

CLARENCE fired. He aimed at the stomach, as he had read good gun-fighters do, and the bandit dropped with a shattered thigh as the big pistol roared like a cannon inside those walls. It roared again as Clarence wheeled and fired through the door at the figure seated behind the steering-wheel of the car. The youth screamed and fell backward. Clarence's bullet had missed him, but it splintered the windshield glass.

Clarence continued his swift pivot. He hoped to plant his third bullet in the body of the third stick-up man, who had lost his interest in holding the five customers in line against the wall, and had just fired once at Clarence, shattering a window.

This time it was just as Clarence had read about it, often, in those adventurous tales— "The two weapons spoke as with a single shot."

But the sharp crack of the .38 automatic came a split second ahead of the bellow of the old .45 six-shooter.

Clarence collapsed to the floor, his head resting prosaically among spilled potatoes. . . .

But his head was in Brenda's lap and she was kissing him and crying, her arms clutching at him convulsively, when Motorcycle Patrolman Michael Coyle, who had heard the shooting as he was headed uptown on traffic patrol, came speeding down the street and leaping toward the store entrance—to drop the third bandit on the sidewalk as the bandit emptied the rest of his clip, and missed.

Clarence wasn't tingling to Brenda's kisses, now. Clarence was dead. He would never even read the headlines about himself in the New Orleans newspapers.

A warrior had gone home.

THE old Norse warriors made a pleasant heaven for themselves, calling it Valhalla. There abode Odin, greatest of the gods. Valhalla, his hall, was vast. It had five hundred and forty entrances, each so wide that eight hundred heroes could march through abreast.

Outside were broad, level fields, splendid for combat. There warriors who died in battle could fight again, with worthy foes, from dawn to eve, through all eternity. Each sunset all wounds miraculously were healed. The warriors trooped joyously back into Valhalla. They spent the night in revelry. They drained huge horns of mead. They were served and loved by blonde beauties, milk-white of skin, rose-red of lips, sea-blue of eyes.

And over the battlefields of this earth soared on shining wings the Valkyries, beautiful, alluring women in armor rich with gold and gems. They snatched the souls of gallant warriors as sword-hands sank in death. They bore them aloft through cloudless blue to Valhalla and its eternal joys. . . . .

Romance is dead in New Orleans. There is no man who will tell you the Valkyries ever soared on shining wings above a corner grocery there. . . . . Page the Valkyries for Clarence!

"Means you sell me de marryin'-agency—wid all dem women comin' round?" Mr. Breck gulped.

Detective Bugwine buys a matrimonial agency—and learns how exciting life may become.

Cash at the Altar

By ARTHUR K. AKERS

Illustrated by Everett Lowry

"OUTSIDE of bein' half-witted,"—Columbus Collins, gangling head of the dusky detective agency of that name, was lecturing his five-foot junior partner and janitor, Bugwine Breck,—"de mainmost trouble wid you is you is all time gwine up a blind alley when you's on a case. Aint never stick to de job you is on."

Bugwine fiddled mournfully with the place where the mule had stepped through his all-weather straw hat, and awaited further disagreeable details.

"Got to rub dat in on you good," resumed Columbus, "befo' you gits your next assignment."

Mr. Breck slumped farther into his overalls, and glanced apprehensively at the circular in his superior's hands. All a junior partner ever got was the rough work around the agency, anyway! "Lemme see de paper," he suggested.

Mr. Collins looked at his assistant narrowly. If Bugwine got a glimpse of the picture of the big darky for whose capture this circular was offering a fifty-dollar reward, there wouldn't be any getting him out from under the house without recourse to air-guns and Airedales. Also, Bugwine could read figures, if not words—and would be likely to claim the whole reward if he knew its real amount: the spread of education was making it harder and harder to hold out on an assistant.

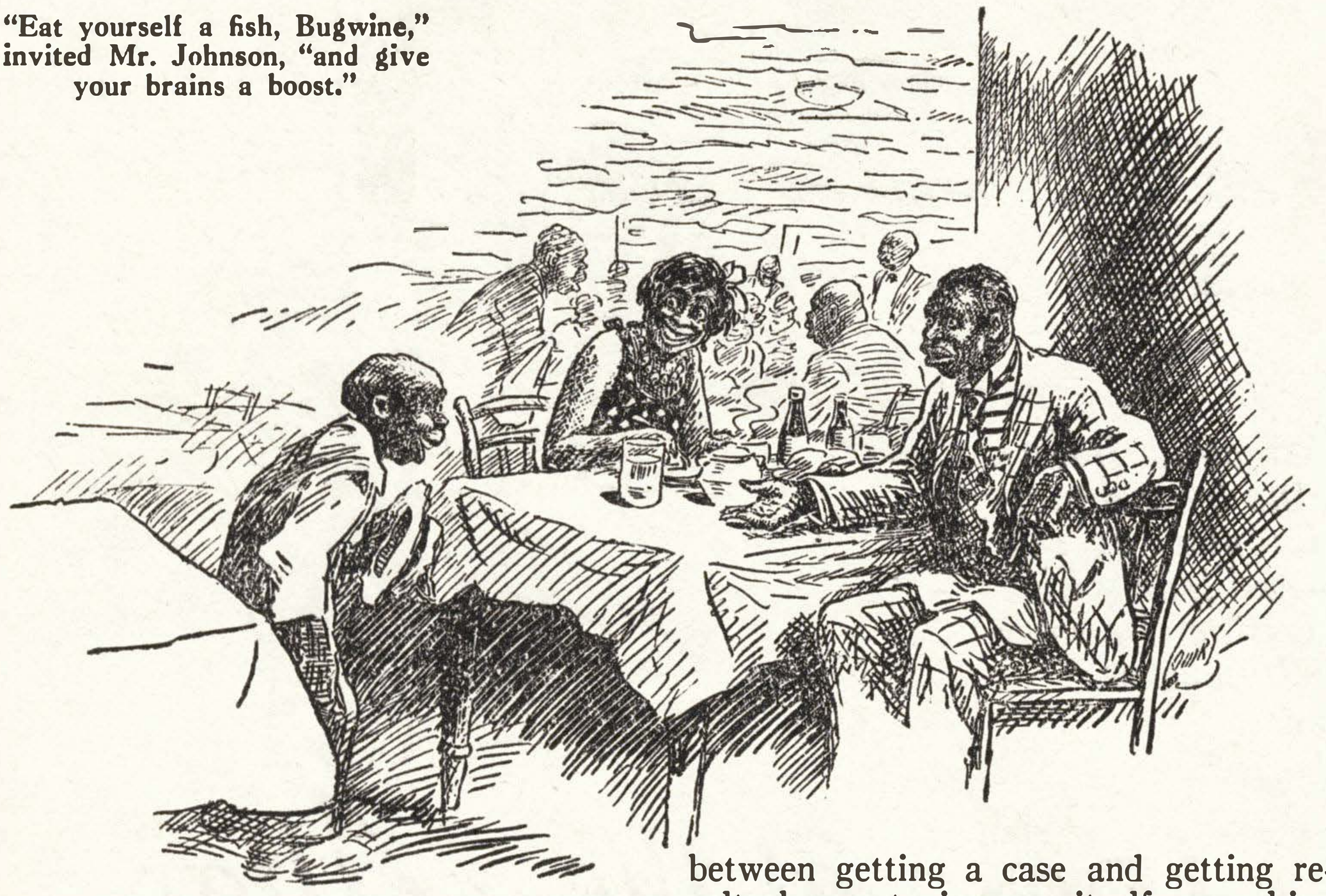
"Dat mess you all up in de mind," Columbus therefore demurred unselfishly; "and your mind's somep'n whut us cain't take no liberties wid. It's weak now: liable bust down on you and leave you doin' your thinkin' by ear!"

"Whut de paper *say*, den?" surrendered Mr. Breck gloomily, realizing he had a case to handle for Columbus.

"Dat more like it!" applauded his chief. "Paper say, *Twenty-five bucks rewawd for de capture of 'Catfish' Madison, de hi-jackin' boy.* I gives you *all* of de twenty-five dis time, when you fotch him in."

BUGWINE glanced uneasily at the agency's bear-trap which was pinch-hitting for handcuffs during the depression. "How big dis Catfish boy?" he demanded cautiously. When Columbus promised all of the reward, there was a trick in it.

"Six-foot, but weak," returned Mr. Collins firmly. "Aint weigh but about



"Eat yourself a fish, Bugwine," invited Mr. Johnson, "and give your brains a boost."

a hundred and ninety—jest a runt. Smooth-shaven, same color as a two-bit seegar, and de women all likes him."

Mr. Breck swallowed, and looked down pessimistically at his own five feet of overalls and malnutrition.

"Sic him!" snapped Columbus conclusively.

"Craves myself five dollars, first—for bait and 'spenses," balked Mr. Breck.

Mr. Collins did subtraction on an envelope: five from twenty-five, net, it indicated, still left twenty. And there were ways of securing refunds from a smaller partner, anyhow. "Advances you five frawgskins—and craves results or you starts a boom in de undertakin' business round here, pussonal," he specified.

"Gimme de b'ar-trap and de mazdafy-in'-glass too, den," Bugwine delayed his doom additionally.

"Here!" Columbus complied irritably. "And stay out dem blind-alleys, now!"

"Strut myself down one,"—the five dollars was having a reviving effect on Mr. Breck,—"and it aint no alley no more—it's Main Street!"

Following which ringing pronouncement, burnishing his saucer-sized tin star with his sleeve and shifting his flap-crowned straw hat to the rear of his skull, Mr. Breck burst nobly into song and public view upon the dusty boulevards of Baptist Hill, Demopolis, Alabama.

But shortly thereafter the difference between getting a case and getting results began to impress itself upon him. Revising the insurance salesman's slogan that everyone is a prospect, Mr. Breck viewed everyone as a suspect. But none fitted the description. All he encountered were too long or too short, too thin or too stout, or bore facial growths of a length indicating long standing, while his quarry had been smooth-shaven at the hour of issuing the circular, a day previous.

NOON and Fish Alley with its barbecue-stands, poolrooms, and fried-fish palaces neared and beckoned respectively.

"Fish Alley aint no alley," argued Bugwine with himself in respect to Columbus' phobia concerning blind alleys, "—it jest de impawtant part of Strawberry *Street.*"

But once within its confines, something new under the sun caught Bugwine's eye, stirring his curiosity with sight of a new and different tenant in a shop long empty—a shop with its window filled with photographs, behind the new lettering blazoned on the glass.

"Whut dat open up in de old barber-shop place?" Mr. Breck flagged down a passerby who looked literate.

"Dat? Sign say, 'HEART-AND-HAND MATRIMONIAL AGENCY FOR CULLUD,'" read the savant. "'HAPPINESS GUARANTEED."

Mr. Breck's jaw flapped in response. "Huccome?" escaped him.

"Ax de man. I's late for my hand-out now." And his informant brushed by.

Which was how Mr. "Cupid" Clark, plump proprietor of Baptist Hill's newest and only matrimonial agency, first saw relief ahead from his own current complexities; for, as the husband of an iron-armed woman who was taking an unparalleled interest in his business with too many good-looking women now, Mr. Clark had need of what Bugwine looked to be. He eyed Mr. Breck as the spider eyes the fly. Bugwine, reflected Mr. Clark, did not look bright in the head. And when they were not bright he did better than when they were. More than once, in fact, under the combined machinations of Cupid and Clark, a boy like this one had come downtown for two-bits' worth of pork-chops—and gone home, instead, with a photograph and Honorable Intentions toward a widow listed by Mr. Clark as "wealthy, attractive, and fond of taking in washing."

"MAWNIN', suh; you looks lonesome," Cupid Clark jiggled his web enticingly, preliminarily, beneath Bugwine's nose.

"Wife mess up my face wid a flat-iron, huccome I looks like I do's," corrected the fly disappointingly.

"You still got her?"

"Try and git shet of her—wid me a partner in a business!"

"Partner in a business!" Mr. Clark's eye rekindled; here was what he had scarcely dared hope for! If he couldn't sell him a wife, he could—

"Clark my name—Cupid Clark," purred that worthy ecstatically at the prospect opening before him. "Come right in!"

Recollection of Columbus' warnings against blind-alleys recurred, and then dimmed. Besides, this wasn't any alley. And, "Mine Bugwine Breck, de Human Bloodhound," acknowledged the sleuth modestly.

"All time fond of dawgs," Mr. Clark indicated that that was all right with him, too. "Now, heaps of de boys whut drifts here, Mist' Breck, is dumb—"

"Aint got deyselfs no sense," agreed Bugwine complacently. Old pictures kept on intriguing him, in the window, too!

"But *you* now," Cupid Clark purred flatteringly on, "could take a little money and run it up into a whole mess of mazuma in no time, a business-man like you looks to be."

Mr. Breck's doglike eyes bulged satisfactorily.

"Dat whut make it so lucky for you dat you comes along jest now," pursued Mr. Clark smoothly, "—and right when I's fixin' to sell out."

"Huccome *'sell out'?*" fumbled the half-hypnotized Bugwine. If a coal-colored guardian angel was waving any red lanterns in the foreground, Mr. Breck was already past seeing them.

"Means I is gwine out of business—for my health," Mr. Clark embellished a lie with the truth, as he slipped the landing-net under his newest fish. His wife had told him that the next time she caught him closeted with one of his feminine clients—

"Means you sells me de marryin'-agency—wid all dem women comin' round?" Mr. Breck's gulp, face, and memory betrayed him. "For how much?"

"How much you got?"

"Five bucks,"—the truth slipped out.

"Dat plenty for de down-payment," grasped Mr. Clark. "Owe me de rest twel next week. By dat time old business done paid for itself, nohow. Reg'lar gold-mine. Pays you percentage eve'y time you merges two lovin' hearts at de altar. Cash at de altar! How dat sound to you, Mist' Breck? Cash at de altar!"

"Aint never found none dar no other way," Mr. Breck quoted darkly from bitter personal experience. Besides, his knobbed eyes were busy watching five dollars belonging to Columbus being charmed right out of his pocket. Columbus, who deprecated side-lines and blind alleys—

"Way you works it," he at length heard Cupid's voice as though it were returning from a great distance,—while his own hand made an *X* at the bottom of a dangerous-looking piece of paper with "$25" written on it,—"is git yourself pictures of a whole gang of good-lookin' gals and sheiks—"

"*Git* myself pictures?" gulped Bugwine in dismay. "Aint dem pictures go wid de business—de ones in de window?"

"I keeps *dem* as security on de note dar for de balance due," elucidated Cupid with commendable practicality.

BUGWINE gulped some more. Then a new angle occurred to him, concerning this matrimonial-agency business which he had so irretrievably entered. Every profession had its trade-secrets and technicalities, it seemed.

"Aint dey never no *ugly* folks crave to git married?" he voiced it.

Cupid beamed approvingly. "Sharp

as de back end of a bee, aint you!" he applauded. "Dat huccome you drives sich a hard bargain wid me—wantin' my pictures too!"

"Gits me a medal in de first grade, for brains," admitted the reflattered Mr. Breck, hitching his overalls higher. "Jest aint been back since to git me no more."

"Pre-zact-ly! You sees right off dat de pictures aint nothin' but de bait. And aint good business to show de prospect's *right* pictures, nohow. Becaze, de good-lookers aint *need* no matrimonial agency; and de bad-lookers couldn't git married on a bet, is dey use dey own pictures. So de first princ'ple is to git your pictures somewhars else."

"Yeah, but whar?" hesitated Bugwine. But before Cupid could answer, light flashed over the dim brain of Mr. Breck, proving that a difficulty stated is a difficulty half-solved; that—Columbus to the contrary—he was getting smarter all the time! Frisco Johnson was the answer!

"Knows whar I can git me a whole gang of pictures!" he enthused suddenly.

"Sho you can. Well, you gits up your pictures, and writes on de back of each one how much money you thinks dey is got. Make it plenty—so after dem boys and gals look at de back once, dey look at de front no more. Dat way it aint matter is dey aint look like whut you say is their pictures."

"Sho aint!" A pleasant haze enveloped Mr. Breck as he realized how smart he was.

"When you aim to pay me dat twenty-five-dollar note, den?" Cupid introduced an earthly note.

"Quick as agency earns it, or I cotches a crook I's trailin' and gits de rewawd-money. Bugwine Breck always gits his man."

"Sees you next week, den," concluded Mr. Clark; "me, or de Sure-Shot Collectin' Agency, whut 'tends to my collectin' for me."

AND he left, with his photographs, leaving the little winged god of his name in new hands—hands that held a bright future but no photographs; a store but no stock. Creating a situation that only Frisco Johnson could cure.

"Frisco all time janitorin' round de jail-house," Mr. Breck, recovering from his haze, addressed his feet. "Hoofs, step on yourselfs. Us done open under new management."

The hunch proved correct. Frisco slept serenely in the sun in a splint-bottomed chair just outside the main—or colored—entrance to the white-folks' jail-house. Bugwine, who knew enough on Frisco to move him inside for ninety days any time he chose to divulge it, kicked the chair rudely from beneath the slumberer.

"Dawggone! All time messin' me up!" spluttered Mr. Johnson, reassembling himself mentally and physically.

"You aint seed no mess yit," retorted Mr. Breck. "Craves myself some dem pictures you is all time pickin' up. Wid big-money-writin' on de back of 'em dis time."

"Huccome 'big-money-writin'?'"

"Means you writes down, *'Got fawty dollars'* on de back of all of 'em. And, *'Got regular job on de railroad,'* on de back of de sheiks' pictures, too. Aims to move my merchandise!"

"Longer you lives, dumber you gits. And you done live too long now—kickin' folkses' chairs out from under 'em!" muttered Frisco vindictively. "But wait twel I gits you some dem new pictures jest come in yest'day."

TILTED back against the front of his new place of business an hour later, *Schatchen* Breck had scarcely finished congratulating himself upon his acumen when trouble rounded the corner, in the form of his senior partner and superior, Columbus Collins—the one who was always quarreling about Mr. Breck's alleged inability to stick to his last. This disagreeable tendency made Bugwine's sudden blossoming into ownership of a matrimonial agency just that much harder to explain.

"*Now* whut?" At sight of his aide Mr. Collins' disgust stood out like a red flannel shirt beneath a Tuxedo.

"Merges de lovin' hearts, for cash at de altar," mumbled Mr. Breck sheepishly. When Cupid said it, it sounded better; while what Columbus was always saying about blind-alleys kept rising right up between him and his bargain now.

"'Tends to business like a tawm-cat wid de hives, aint you!" Mr. Collins loosed a withering glance and tongue on his half-pint associate. "Got to set down and scratch nine times before you can go whar you's gwine! Whut de hell you means, 'HEART-AND-HAND MATRIMONIAL AGENCY—BUGWINE BRECK, *Prop.*—HAPPINESS GUARANTEED,' nohow, *huh?* Thought you wuz a detective!"

Bugwine told all, with no audible improvement ensuing in his position.

Through the wide-flung door behind Steamboat streamed light and language.

"And my five bucks 'spense-money I gives you gwine too!" raved Mr. Collins in his peroration. "Boy, you git busy and forgit dis foolishness! Fotch in dat Catfish crook like I tells you, and refund me back dem 'spenses, or I fills a couple of accident-wards plumb full of you! You *hear* me?"

Schatchen Breck heard. And he realized despairingly that he had again chosen the wrong alley, had detoured to his detriment, with no chance now to back out. Not while Cupid Clark held that twenty-five-dollar note over him.

"Bugwine Breck, de Human Bloodhound, always gits his man," he quoted feebly after his irate chief's departing footsteps. "—Me and de b'ar-trap!"

Then suddenly, proof that it is ever darkest just before dawn—large, dark, good-looking proof, of the genus *Sheik,* filling the matrimonial agency with the odor of prosperity in the shape of an overpowering blast of Tiger Lily's Breath perfume!

"Hot dawg! Dat boy sho squirts a mean atomizer!" caroled Mr. Breck to himself as he leaped to his feet, took in at a glance his visitor's long blue coat, gray-striped, peg-top pants, and Groucho Marx style mustache. Here was class!

"Is dis whar-at you makes marriages?" the big caller followed up a good impression by saying the right thing in the right place.

"Yes suh! Bugwine Breck, sole proprietor, waits on de trade pussonal!" welcomed that shrimp-sized personage. Already he was scrabbling among his photographs as furnished by Frisco, seeking the least hard-boiled-looking virgin in the lot. Columbus should have stuck around and seen *this!*

"Calls me 'Steamboat' all along de river from Bumin'port to Mobile," volunteered the hulking prospect, "account I's a big man and I gits about. Jest moves in up here on Decatur, and needs myself a cook. Women follers me four-deep when I steps out, and husbands hunts culverts when dey sees me comin'. But craves to git married now, and settle down raisin' myself fightin' roosters."

Bugwine fixed flutteringly on a photograph. "Got de very gal here for you!" he enthused professionally. "How you like *her* looks, Mist' Flatboat?"

"*Steamboat* to you. And likes her all right—is you tell time round de place by de sun."

"Huccome *'tell time by de sun'?*" puzzled the rebuked Mr. Breck.

"Couldn't keep a clock in de same house wid dat face—stop it eve'y time!"

"Look on de back side," Bugwine's business blood shot to the surface. "Read whut it say dar."

"*'Got fawty dollars,'*" Steamboat spelled out slowly. "You mean dat goat-faced gal got fawty bucks cash money?"

"Aint mean nothin' else, is de writin' say so."

"H-m-m-m. Fawty bucks help a gal's face a heap," ruminated the domestically inclined Steamboat romantically. "How about gittin' us acquainted?"

BUGWINE was already reaching for his hat. "Two bucks' commission, cash at de altar, does it!" he quoted. "Come back dis evenin' about four. 'Tween now and den, cain't see me for de dust, gallopin' after dat fawty-dollar gal for you!"

But passage of time and distance proved to Mr. Breck that he had merely swapped embarrassments. True, he had the forty-dollar lady's picture and a prospective mate for her in Steamboat, but who and where was she?

Then he remembered something else: old Steamboat wasn't standing hitched. The situation which had arisen made it necessary that he have a picture of Steamboat to help interest the mythical lady. A boy had to watch his step all the time, or he talked himself into a jam!

Back to his photographs shuffled Mr. Breck, to make the pleasant discovery that everything in his place was now redolent of the fine ripe odor of Tiger Lily's Breath, adding atmosphere and an aroma that clung to every picture. He finally dug out one of a large dark boy who bore a fairly satisfactory resemblance to Steamboat—with the important difference that Steamboat was better-looking. No girl in her senses, reflected Bugwine, could resist the mustache of the real Steamboat, which the picture did not show. Here was one time when the goods were going to be even better than represented!

After which times simply got better. When luck finally did get started rallying round a boy, realized Mr. Breck, it rallied noble! Events halfway up Fish Alley proved it. Beginning with his chance meeting with that eminent source of photographic supply, Mr. Frisco Johnson. Mr. Johnson was elegantly buying a fried fish for a lady—a lady whose looks were fully four notches above that of the likeness which *Schatchen* Breck had just been using so successfully on Steamboat. At sight of her, inspiration glowed in the Bugwinian soul with such heat that it raised blisters. Supply was fixing to meet demand—

"Eat yourself a fish, Bugwine," invited Mr. Johnson, "and give your brains a boost."

"Help my stomach right smart too," Mr. Breck ignored irony. "And how about givin' me de knock-down to de lady? Whar-at you find all de good-lookers?"

"Miss Feline Adams," Frisco made grudging amends to one who knew too much about his business to be denied, "meet yourself Mist' Bugwine Breck, de detective—"

"Runs me a good side-line too, now," corrected the little sleuth as he saw Feline's eyes widen dubiously. "De Heart-and-Hand Matrimonial Agency—Bugwine Breck, proprietor. Happiness Guaranteed—or aint no charge!"

"You means *you* gits a gal a husband?" giggled Feline derisively.

"Wid cash money and—and a job on de railroad."

"I bets! And one laig, and blind in both ears—"

"Yeah? How about *dis* one?" Bugwine flashed his sheik photograph. "Only he look better'n dat. Got a mustache. Den turn de picture over and look on de back, see whut de writin' dar say."

WHOEVER said there was no such thing as love at first sight hadn't seen Feline's face, as Bugwine did, when she reversed the picture and read what was scrawled across its back. Yearning was in her eyes, then in her voice as, "Is you see de man's money, Mist' Breck?" she questioned.

"*And* smelled it! Sniff dat picture your ownself, gal!"

Feline sniffed. "Sho is kind of tower over de fish," she admitted admiringly.

"Aims to git married and settle down," Bugwine rushed his sale, "—and raise himself some—"

"Aw, Mist' Breck!" Feline interrupted him in creditable confusion. "Whar-at de man? Whut he name?"

"Calls hisself Steamboat, account he's a big man and gits about. He's done seen *your* picture a'ready, and r'arin' to start courtin'."

"Aw, Mist' Breck! Aint you and him de fast workers!"

"Sidewalks warms under me twel dey smokes, I gits about so quick," asserted Bugwine. "You kind of happen along *past* my place about four o'clock, and I introduces you to him. He sho been pawin' de pavement to meet you."

Headed back toward the matrimonial agency, leaving behind him a good impression and the picked framework of a fish, Bugwine felt only the need of

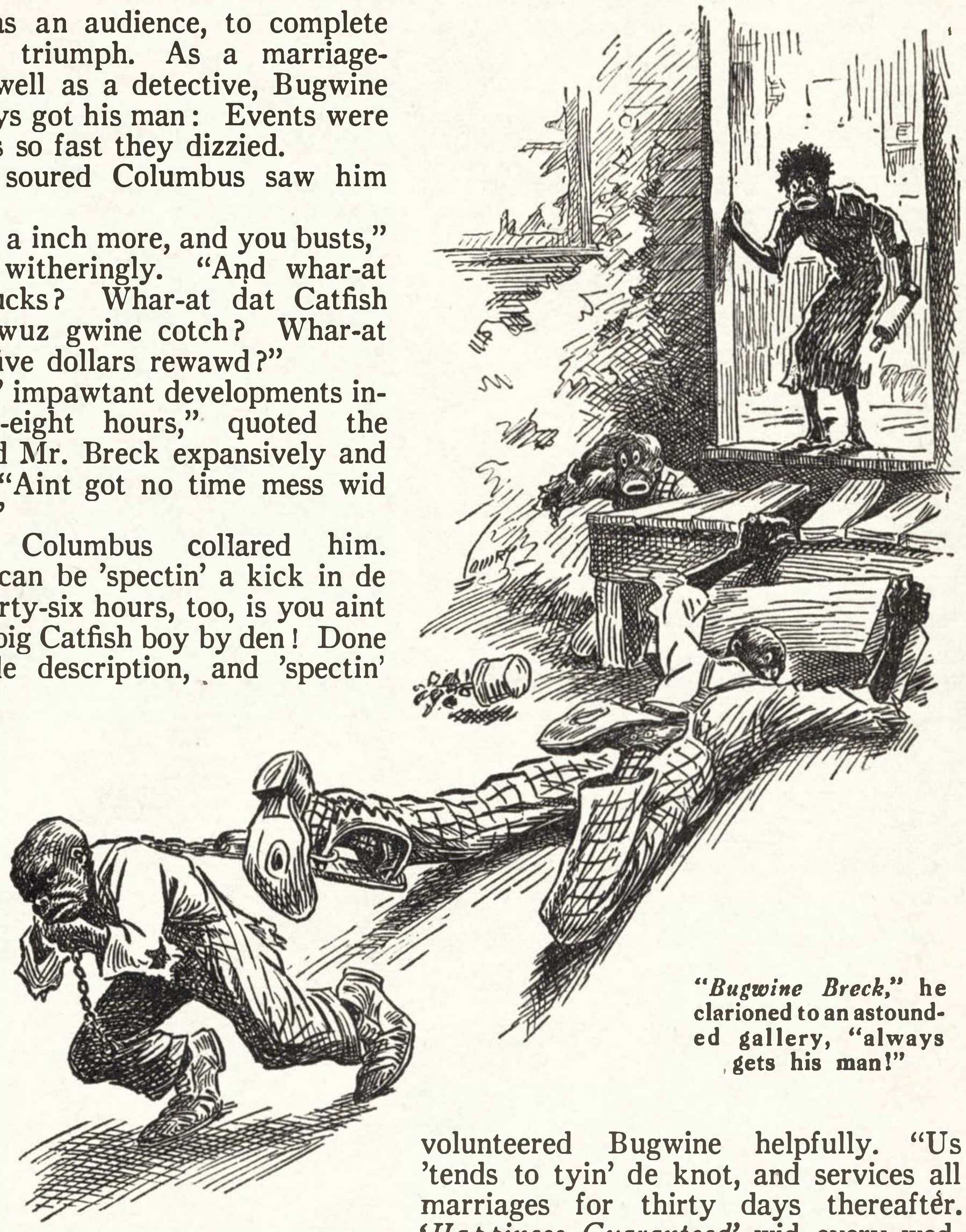
Columbus as an audience, to complete his coming triumph. As a marriage-broker, as well as a detective, Bugwine Breck always got his man: Events were proving this so fast they dizzied.

But the soured Columbus saw him first.

"Swell up a inch more, and you busts," he warned witheringly. "And whar-at my five bucks? Whar-at dat Catfish crook you wuz gwine cotch? Whar-at de twenty-five dollars rewawd?"

" 'Spectin' impawtant developments inside fawty-eight hours," quoted the straw-hatted Mr. Breck expansively and evasively. "Aint got no time mess wid you now—"

"Yeah?" Columbus collared him. "Well, you can be 'spectin' a kick in de pants in thirty-six hours, too, is you aint turn in dat big Catfish boy by den! Done give you de description, and 'spectin' results! Six-feet, weak, weighs one-ninety, smooth-shaven, seegar-colored—dat's de way de description on de paper say. And I aint crave no more alibis—you hear me?"



"Bugwine Breck," he clarioned to an astounded gallery, "always gets his man!"

AT four o'clock, the mustached and further-polished Steamboat, obviously just from under a fresh shower-bath of Tiger Lily's Breath, waited impatiently with Broker Breck in the matrimonial agency.

At four-one Feline Adams happened past—and in.

At five the figures on the respective backs of two photographs had so absorbed the attention of two hearts that their fronts were forgotten. And the redolent Steamboat was inquiring loudly and definitely for the nearest preacher.

"I gits de Rev'rend and de witnesses," volunteered Bugwine helpfully. "Us 'tends to tyin' de knot, and services all marriages for thirty days thereafter. '*Happiness Guarantced*' wid every weddin', jest like old sign say!" Success was stimulating the gratified Mr. Breck in the vocal cords.

"Means I sees you, is de matrimonial ship git a flat?" Steamboat mixed his metaphors but not his meaning. *That* was unmistakable.

"Stands behind our goods!" Bugwine rushed on recklessly.

Feline interrupted the guarantee. "*P-s-s-s-t-t-t!*" she beckoned Bugwine sibilantly aside.

Mr. Breck inclined an ear accommodatingly upward.

"Is you sho dat big sheik *got* fawty dollars?" she desired reiteration and reassurance.

"Smell him!" Mr. Breck fell back on the best way of dispelling unworthy doubts and cinching his commission. "Could he smell like dat on less?"

"Sho is sniff noble!" admitted the

bride-to-be. "Looks swell wid dat big bushy mustache, too."

"Cain't raise nothin' like dat in a week, neither!" Mr. Breck endorsed anything Feline did. "And remember, '*Happiness Guaranteed*'—dat's de agency's college yell."

FOR a season after this everything went happily—including the cherry in Bugwine's spiritual cocktail of having Columbus Collins drafted as a sour-visaged witness while the minister tied the nuptial knot.

"Got me so many irons in de fire now, cain't *never* miss!" expanded Mr. Breck as new-made man and wife departed, leaving a two-dollar commission in Bugwine's pants.

"Gwine miss a lung, is you aint cotch dat Catfish crook," recalled Mr. Collins grimly.

"Aims to ramble round to de jail-house and find Frisco," Bugwine sought to change a painful subject. "Git myself some more dem pictures. Done used up de two best ones, here in my pocket, mergin' dem last two lovin' hearts."

"Keep on messin' round dat jail-house, and you gwine be lookin' for de can-opener instead of pictures, to git yourself out de can!"

"—And after dat," pursued Mr. Breck optimistically, "I service-calls by Steamboat's house on Decatur Street tonight. Hot sport wid plenty of dough like him liable be pullin' hisself a weddin'-party whut *is* a party, wid de refreshments flowin' free."

Columbus hesitated. "Dat *last* is a good idea, even if it is yourn," he conceded reluctantly. "So I goes wid you. Aint like dat Feline gal's looks, but dat aint hurt de drinkin'-gin none."

"She suit old Steamboat all right," Mr. Breck defended his matchmaking, "soon as he read on whut de back of her picture. "And he aint no bad-looker his ownself. Big mustache like dat gits de women."

"Gittin' 'em and keepin' 'em two different things. And aint your fool sign say '*Happincss Guaranteed*'?"

Bugwine blinked at recurrence of a disturbing thought. Somebody was all the time turning a horse-fly loose in his ointment! The "Happiness Guaranteed" part of his sign *could* be taken too literally. In which deplorable event, hospitalization of a marriage-broker might follow at the hands of a boy as big as this Steamboat. Either true love was going to run smoothly, or Bugwine Breck was going to run swiftly, the way things seemed about to stack up!

After which one depressing thought brought on another—reminding him of Cupid Clark and the conveniently forgotten fact that Bugwine owed him twenty-five dollars on a note. Cupid was no flyweight, either. In fact, Mr. Breck recalled with sinking spirits, he was all the time owing somebody bigger than he was—like Columbus and his five-dollar expense advance. Now, to complete the chain, there was Steamboat with his two-dollar investment with Bugwine in happiness. While the yet-uncaught Catfish Madison still loomed in the background as a source of further fears.

Mr. Breck shrunk farther into his overalls, and, "Meets you in de alley at eight," he mumbled weakly. "Us stop by de house den, and see how Steamboat and Feline gittin' on."

"You better show me somep'n on dat Catfish clue by den, too," ultimatum'ed Columbus grimly. "Cain't pleasure myself at no party while I's thinkin' about how you is tryin' two-time me, side-linin' yourself wid *my* money!"

Later cautious contact with Frisco at the jail-house proved no boon to Bugwine either. The tide was showing signs of a definite turn there too.

"White folks done started missin' dem pictures," reported Mr. Johnson hoarsely. "Startin' more ruckus about 'em dan a fox in a hen-house."

"Means I cain't git me no more pictures?"

"Means is you make no more marriages, you makes 'em wid de pictures whut you is got already."

"Luck done slippin'!" mourned Mr. Breck apprehensively. Suddenly a cold wind seemed blowing on a boy. Everything, including his health, appeared about to hinge on how a couple of newly wed strangers got on with each other. But there was one precaution he *could* take.

THE bear-trap shortly was clanking hollowly at his belt as he did it: however much his action might partake of locking the stable door after the horse had been stolen, Bugwine was painting out that part of his sign which said "Happiness Guaranteed." At conclusion of which it was eight o'clock; and Columbus materialized out of the alley shadows. "Keep yourself in front of me," he forthwith directed. "Aint aim to have

no runts running out on me, is nothin' start happenin'."

But as they neared the habitation of Steamboat and his bride, Mr. Breck began to feel his fears unworthy. For there sounds of revelry by night floated clearly forth. A familiar aroma lay round about in the night.

"Old Tiger Lily Breath circulatin' strong!" commented Bugwine hopefully.

"Gives you somep'n to think about in de hospital, is you aint fotch in dat dere Catfish Madison crook by tomorrer," croaked Columbus pessimistically.

"Aint see nobody even looks like Catfish," demurred Bugwine, "but 'spects impawtant developments—"

AS a prophet, Mr. Breck gave service —it now caught him in mid-mumble with its delivery. They were just mounting the steps to Steamboat's abode, —wherein revelry had risen to a riot, if sounds were any criterion,—when Bugwine's prophecy was interrupted—by the redoubtable Steamboat himself, at full speed. But, at that, he was not fast enough; an eight-day clock was proving itself even faster—so fast, indeed, that it caught the speeding Steamboat in mid-leap and squarely at the base of his skull. He went down like a shot horse.

Through the wide-flung door behind him streamed light and language. Bugwine shot forty feet up a pine tree, under the illuminating influence of both. Had there been more tree, he would have gone higher. For—

"*Married rich, is I?*" Feline's squall was splitting the night, even as Columbus Collins himself made a hole in one —under the porch. "Had fawty dollars and a job on de railroad, is you? Big man and you gits about like a steamboat, is you? Well, you aint got nothin' and you aint gwine nowhars, becaze I is done found you out! All you got is *four-bits and a atomizer!* And *it* aint hittin' on all six!"

Aloft, Bugwine's anguished eyes bulged like a cat's at a dog-show. The worst had happened! And at the worst possible time. He had guaranteed happiness in a match that had already proved a knock-out—for the bridegroom. Each loving heart had thought the other rich! And now— Groans wracked the suffering marriage-broker in his tree, groans that mingled with those of the prostrate Steamboat below. Shortly he would come-to—after which he would become just one of the trio of big boys—Steamboat, Columbus, and Cupid—who would be looking for Broker Breck who had started all this mess! Not to speak of the shadowy Catfish Madison who was still on Mr. Breck's list of unfinished business.

Then, at what he suddenly saw below him, Bugwine fell out of his tree, as the fastest way of getting down—to land with a mighty clank and "*Oooof!*" upon the grassless soil of Steamboat's yard.

"When *I* gits *you*—" instantly issued menacingly from beneath the porch; but Bugwine wasn't listening to Columbus any more. In fact, he was too busy spitting teeth and gravel, and staggering to his feet. Then it was that he sprang —but not toward safety! Rather, he launched himself heroically upon the still-sprawling Steamboat, to click his bear-trap harshly shut upon that bridegroom's ankle.

"*Bugwine Breck,*" he clarioned to an astounded gallery, "always gits his man! And you can keep on stayin' under dat porch, Columbus, becaze dis here's *one* rewawd I collects my ownself, and you don't hold out none on me! Gangway now for me and *Catfish Madison*—whut match de picture Frisco gimme, jest as soon as Feline's clock knock dat big phoney mustache 'bout four feet off he face!"

In the Collins detective-agency headquarters, late next day, an humbled senior partner painfully pocketed five dollars, in refund—instead of twenty-five as he had schemed. A swollen-faced but strutting junior was tucking nine similar notes within his ample shoe.

One thing still perplexed and gnawed upon the crestfallen Mr. Collins. "Whut burns me up," he confessed it, "is huccome you had dat picture of Catfish Madison to rec'nize him by, when I aint never give you none."

NONCHALANTLY Mr. Breck lit a cigar only slightly shorter than himself. "Gits it," he deigned, "in a whole mess of pictures I gits from Frisco for de marryin'-agency—"

"From *Frisco?*" Realization rushed over Mr. Collins; he knew all now, even if Bugwine didn't! In Bugwine's blundering hands a blind alley had become Main Street! Then through his pain he heard the confirmation of tables unwittingly turned upon himself, in Mr. Breck's guileless: "—and *Frisco* git 'em *from de 'Rogues' Gallery'*, he call it, at de jail-house whar he janitored!"

Why Devils Came to

A lively story of

The Free Lances in Diplomacy

IN Shanghai, the Hondoan troops were going aboard the transports in the Whang-Po, on the way home—and the various news-correspondents were loading the cables with all they could make out of it, at the Astor and Cathay. In Hongkong harbor, a big amphibian plane had come down upon the water back of Stonecutters' Island, just off the beautiful private estate of His Excellency Hu Han Chang—the only four hundred acres not transferred to Britain under the long Mirs Bay lease. That evening the big plane, after being refueled from the Kowloon naval station, went up with six passengers on board, two of whom were dropped at Canton, one at Hankow, and another at a town in the foothills of Yunnan—after which the ship headed southwest with Earl Hu and his favorite niece, the Manchu Princess Lei Fu, and did not come down again until it reached Singapore. Here they took on fuel, the passengers remaining on the craft; it was not known even at Government House who were aboard. Another landing was made at Cairo under the same conditions—then the big amphibian remained in the air until it reached Trevor Hall in South Devon.

As Earl Hu was known to everybody in authority on the Trevor estate, they were permitted to debark at the hangars without any questioning and were sent up to the Hall in a car. There they were welcomed by Ivo Trevor, Viscount Salcombe and his recently acquired wife whom they had known as the Honorable Jean Wallington, daughter of Earl Falknyss. As soon as the guests had been installed in the east wing of the old Tudor castle built around the much earlier Norman keep, Salcombe called up the Marquess in Park Lane, London.

"I say, Dad! Are you particularly occupied for the next forty-eight hours?" he queried.

"Well, your mother an' I were flying over to the Avenue de Neuilly house in the morning. Doumer's assassination and the elections make it advisable to have a chat with Tardieu an' the others—see what they have in mind and how the next line-up may look. But the end of the week would be time enough, if there's anything out of the ord'n'ry on this side. —What's up?"

"Hu Han and Lei Fu have just dropped down out of the blue in his amphibian, stoppin' at Singapore an' Cairo only—which isn't so bad for that type of bus. And I'm of the impression that he wouldn't have come so quickly or secretly if it had anything to do with the managem'nt of Garrod's, Limited—I've a hunch that it may be something on the political side. They're one reason for your flyin' down. Aside from them, it looks as though Gordon-Smith has finally developed the 'N-gas' he's been workin' on. He's done some experimenting at his lab' in Kew—but found his equipm'nt out of date compared with what you've given him here. And he simply doesn't dare go further with what he's got in that Kew neighborhood—too much risk of some one gettin' in while he's out of the house. He's been concentratin' here in his own big lab', and fancies he really has it this time—he wants you to see a test as soon as possible. We're all a bit on edge to see it ourselves. It's pretty big—if he's really got it! Strikes me that Hu Han might have a use for it—if we gave him a bit of *sub-rosa* assistance. What?"

"We'll be down at once, Ivo."

SOMETIMES the Marquess and his family ate in the large Tudor dining-room where the scientists under contract with him and living on the estate—also his half-dozen executives, chief of whom was Sir Harry Archer—sat at a long table, and discussed their various activities. But when there were distin-

Manchuria

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

Illustrated by A. E. Briggs

guished guests at the Hall, or the family preferred privacy, they dined in a more intimate room overlooking the east terrace. This day the smaller room was chosen, and during the meal, Earl Hu discussed general topics and some proposed changes of policy in the business of Garrod's, Limited, of which he was the Eastern manager. Finally, he referred to recent events in Hondo.

"The assassinations of the ministers are directly chargeable to the military *junta* who practically control the nation today, and mean to establish a military dictatorship in place of constitutional government," he observed. "They do not really approve the withdrawal of troops from the Shanghai area—we shall have some offensive presently to offset that. Which means that we must recognize such conditions and make some preparation for dealing with them. Up to this time, we have been working to build up a solidified nation with central, constitutional government—but with our immense population that is too slow a job for concerted action as soon as we must have it. Hondoan influence is constantly at work to make the Nanking Government punish dissatisfied Tuchans who will not coöperate with us—but we are dealing with that in this way: The Tuchan in every province has been the one authority whom the people do not dare disobey. He imposes and collects the taxes, and holds the power of life or death. If Nanking tries compelling a Tuchan to coöperate when he has other views, it drifts into civil war—which we have decided to stop. And we have adopted—tentatively—this plan, to see if it may not prove more practical: We leave the Tuchan alone as the supreme authority in his province or State. We establish a Council of Tuchans, meeting when suggested, at Nanking, to discuss national policy and measures for carrying it out—no inference that they must

At eight-thirty there was not a conscious man within three miles of the line, on either side.

obey the orders of a President or Parliament, but with the understanding that they will back up any decision reached by a majority of the Council, unless they refuse at the meeting and give reasonable objections. In the case of the Manchurian Tuchans it is well understood that many of them are heavily in debt to the Hondoans—so no effort will be made to force them into an offensive against Hondo, at least until such debts shall have been paid. However, we shall require that they will not render Hondo armed assistance against the forces of the Council. It will also be understood that all of the Tuchans undertake to deal with bandits and Communists in their own provinces, and may have assistance from the Council if needed. At a meeting just before we left Hongkong, it was decided that several planes should be purchased for the forces of each Tuchan outside of Manchuria. I am authorized to place an initial order for fifty bombing-planes, fifty amphibians, and fifty small but fast scouting-planes. We'll be pleased to have all you can deliver of these three types, within the next six months—and particularly all you can send us during the coming month. It looks as though we may need them."

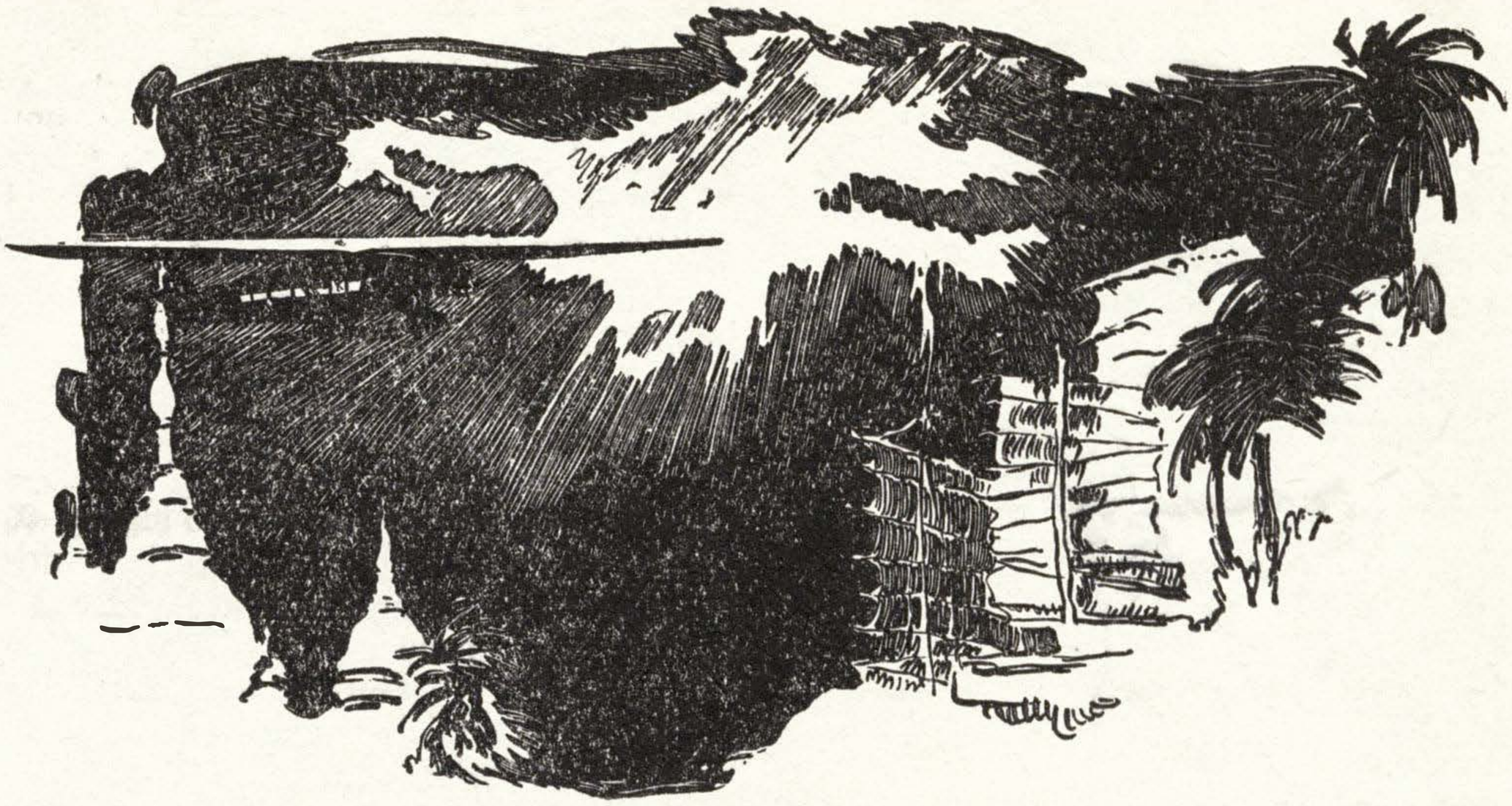
"We can give you possibly thirty in four or five weeks, Hu," replied the Marquess. "An' they'll be the best we can turn out. You've seen some of our shops down inside these rock-cliffs—but we've blasted out a lot more room since you were here last. We'll take Lei Fu all through them tomorrow—she has no idea what she's walking over! And there has been a new developm'nt within the last day or two—something I fancy you'll be very much int'rested to see. One of our leading scientists, whom I think you met—Doctor Gordon-Smith—has been workin' on something I suggested several months ago—and now seems to have overcome all possible objections. Suppose we have him in to tell about it."

DR. GORDON-SMITH—with some inkling that at last he might find out what the Marquess had in mind when this line of investigation was suggested—started by telling them of his difficulties in getting just the right subjects for a test of the "N-gas" upon which he had been working.

"Here was the proposition, d'ye see, as laid down by My Lord Marquess: A gas—odorless, tasteless, absolutely invisible yet takin' on the appearance of a very fine mist or rain at low levels. A gas sufficiently powerful in the open air to put a hundred men—or twenty thousand—completely unconscious for twelve to fifteen hours without any injurious effect, and yet disperse itself—lose its strength by absorption into the ground an' air—so that it will have no marked effect upon a person walking among those unconscious men three hours after they got their dose. Let me make that a bit clearer: If you got the first full strength of the gas as discharged from the tank or cylinders under pressure, you'd be definitely *out* for twelve to fifteen hours, because the full strength of it would be taken in entirely through the lungs and circulation—but if you came along three hours later when the strength had been attenuated by the open air an' whatever breeze might be stirring, you might feel a bit heavy or dopey, but you'd not lose consciousness. Rather tall order—what?

"Well, I'd got practically everything except the 'mist-effect' a month ago—an' I'm only beginnin' to see why the Marquess so strongly insisted upon havin' that. For I've got it now, d'ye see—covered every specification! Tried it on the Trevor Hall guinea-pigs—hardy little beggars—and they reacted perfectly. But then came the question as to humans. It takes a pretty good heart, lungs an' nerves to stand all that a thoroughbred guinea's will—yet the guinea comes nearest to a human being, in his reactions, of any obtainable animal. While I was chewing over that point I rode up on the southern slope of Dartmoor, fifteen miles from here, an' saw a flock of some three hundred sheep. Well, d'ye see, a sheep has rather a wonky heart—it lays down on him if he gets properly scared. Practically ideal proposition for the test I wanted to make! I asked the shepherd who they belonged to—what the beggars were worth. He gave me the owner's name and said he fancied about they'd be eighteen shillin's per sheep. Of course, I know no more about sheep than I do about worms under the terrace-garden, yonder—and I fancy I may have been done, y'know—but they're quite good enough for my purpose. I paid for the three hundred sheep, an' the shepherd'll keep 'em grazin' where they are, until some of you go out in cars to see my demonstration. I can have a plane ready tomorrow afternoon, if you like."

"Faith, I fancy we've nothin' on hand that'll int'rest us as much, Doctor; but we'll be keen upon seein' the whole of the



That evening the big plane headed southwest with Earl Hu and the Princess Lei Fu.

test—from the time you gas 'em to the time they wake up! I say! Why not tow a couple of the caravans we keep here on the estate? Then we can all be comfortable—eat an' sleep—while we're waitin' for 'em to revive. I don't think you got stung on the price, Gordon. Dare say the owner was glad to sell at any price—markets bein' what they are today. At all events, I'll give you two hundred an' fifty quid for the flock when you've finished with 'em—an' I'll wager I sell 'em for a bit over that."

TO the Princess Lei Fu, picnicking on Dartmoor in a modernly-equipped caravan, hauled to its camping-places by one of the high-powered cars, was a novel experience. She was delighted with it. To her uncle, Earl Hu, it was less comfortable than resting in more spacious quarters at Trevor Hall—but he had the impression that he was to see something which might prove immensely valuable to his country and to those guiding its destinies under difficult conditions.

The caravans reached their appointed spot while there were still two hours of daylight available for the start of the experiment. The cook who had followed them from the Hall in a motor-truck made a very satisfactory table with boards and trestles, and managed an unexpectedly appetizing meal. The shepherd had pushed Gordon-Smith's sheep along to fairly good grazing a quarter of a mile from them and one hundred and fifty feet lower. They could see the animals distinctly through binoculars. Caravan-parties, of course, were no novelty to the shepherd—it never occurred to him that this one might be connected with the purchaser of the sheep (who was a bit ignorant for a toff, if you asked *him*—even though he drove a main fair bargain when it came to putting up his oof). And he'd been unsuspicious of any unusual activities proposed in connection with his flock when the Doctor, that afternoon, had offered him ten pounds and his expenses if he would start at once for a cattle-fair to be held at Plymouth next day, there to purchase the four best thorough-bred rams he could find. The Doctor had had with him one of his own men, who jotted down directions for care of the sheep until the shepherd should return with the rams.

Late that afternoon a big plane dropped silently down over the moor. The substitute shepherd did not remark its soundlessness, then—it was only afterward he remembered how the ship came swooping down from the sky, so smoothly that he wouldn't have looked up if an old ram hadn't lifted his head in a startled way, and then gone back to grazing.

Up on the slope, the little party had risen from their improvised table and focused their glasses on the plane—following its every movement—watching for something to spurt from it into the air. But look as they might, they saw nothing of the sort. The Marquess called their attention to this particularly.

"Er—I fancy all of you will have seen a hydroplane laying down a smoke-screen at Spithead or some other naval rendezvous to hide a battle-fleet—or an Agricultural Departm'nt ship spraying in-

"Well, that's about all I want of that!"

sect-poison on crops. Aye? Well—that substitute shepherd, yon, stands for any concentration of men or troops who see such a plane approachin', but do *not* see it drop aërial torpedoes, or gas, or anything at all which might be dangerous to 'em. It passes as merely an observation plane or even a privately owned one, out for a look-see. Yet the Doctor is actually at his deadly efficient work right now. You'll notice that the breeze is from the northwest, blowing possibly ten miles the hour. An' he's not flyin' down over the sheep. On the level, he'd be a good quarter-mile upwind from 'em—at about two hundred meters, I'd say. Now imagine a line from the plane to the sheep—look halfway down it! See that little wisp of mist forming in the air? Watch it thicken a bit—and spread! The shepherd sees no mist at all, up where the plane is—just a light thickening of ground- or 'moor-mist,' such as is frequently observed when the wind is comin' in from the sea with a touch of salt dampness in it. As a matter of fact, there almost never is an atmosphere so dry that certain chemicals will not collect and precipitate particles of mist or rain in passing through. Now the mist is thickening slightly about the nearest sheep—it'll be along the ground among all of 'em in a couple of minutes, but not thick enough to prevent our seeing everything that happens, I fancy. The shepherd is lighting his pipe, you see—paying no attention. —Ah, he's getting some of it into his lungs, now! Tobacco tastes good, but it's 'sleepy-air!' Bit of a nap wouldn't feel bad—better than a smoke. Well—why not? See him wrap his cape about his knees an' put a fold of it across a gorse-bush for a pillow—too sleepy to notice that most of his flock on the windward side are lying out flat! Hmph! . . . . That'll be about all, for some hours, I fancy. Gordon will take his plane back, and then run out here in a car. Meanwhile, we'll finish our dinner—what?"

THE sun had set an hour before Gordon-Smith joined them on the moor. It was still light enough to make out the dots, scattered among the gorse-bushes, which were the sheep—but their outlines seemed more blurred than other objects at a little distance. Some one commented upon this, and the Doctor explained:

"If we were down there among 'em we'd find the wool covered with tiny globules of moisture—a precipitation of the mist. Those globules are full of the gas, inside, and there's a good bit more of it held outside, between 'em. After a while, of course, the globules evaporate and disappear—but if one recovers consciousness a bit sooner than the rest, the chances are his movem'nts may release enough of the gas still held in suspension to give him a much weaker second dose an' send him off again. If he'd not been gassed before, I fancy they'd not put him out—which is why, if these were men instead of sheep, another person coming to him with none of the influence hangin' about would be able to handle the unconscious chap without goin' off himself. And if I've grasped what the Marquess is after, the successful use of this gas is very largely a matter of timing an' coördination. Now we'll suppose those 'woolies' down yonder are a milit'ry force of ten thousand men, camped in close quarters. With four planes, I could have gassed twenty thousand as easily as I did those three hundred sheep—with but three cylinders of gas in a single plane. Started on 'em at 'twenty hours.' Three hours later, it should be perfectly practical to go down there an' walk among those woolies without getting knocked

out by the gas—and in another hour, to pick up the lot of 'em an' shift 'em to some other place—which I fancy is what the Marquess had in mind. But those are points we've to fix my actual experim'nt. So, at 'twenty-three hours,' I'll go down there with a flash-light to examine their condition, an' the shepherd's also—"

"Suppose the shepherd doesn't come out of it—has a weak heart that wouldn't stand the strain? And why, by the way, did you send the real shepherd off to Plymouth after rams that you don't need in the least?"

"That's just the point, d'ye see! This chap of mine has been gassed with the stuff in a sealed room, without injurious effect, and he was perfectly willing to have me experiment on him further—though he has no suspicion that it can be done in the open air, and from a plane. I didn't dare try it on the regular shepherd without his consent—an' that'd detract from the value of the test. I'd never know whether anything he'd say about his sensations was real, or imaginary."

AT eleven o'clock the party went down the sloping moor to within three hundred feet of the nearest sheep and stood there while Gordon-Smith walked slowly down among the motionless sheep, flashing his light upon their sides and nostrils to estimate the heart-action by the regularity of their breathing. He pulled up the eyelids of some, but the sudden glare of light didn't rouse any spasmodic motion in those he tested. Nor did the substitute shepherd rouse when the Doctor lifted him off the ground and carried him back to the others.

"He's dead to the world—and likely to remain so for several hours."

"How about you, Gordon? Feel like passing out?"

"No—an' I should have done so before now if the stuff remaining along the ground had retained enough of its strength. But I'll admit having a headache. If ten minutes' deep breathing doesn't get rid of it, it'll be a splitting one, too! That's another point we want to salt away for reference—whether that sort of reaction from the partly evaporated gas can be overcome by deep breathing. The use of the stuff might be absolutely successful up to that point, an' then lose out because the blinding headaches of the attacking force made them practically useless when the element of time meant the whole game!"

After fifteen minutes of deep breathing up on the higher slope of the moor, however, the Doctor said that his headache was gone—which was *that*.

"Now—what we've to find out next is some idea as to the requisite attacking force to handle ten or twenty thousand totally unconscious men," he observed. "That is easily ascertained by handling the shepherd and one of the woolies. This chap will weigh about twelve stone or less, I'd say. Very good! I'm fifty-two—weigh fourteen stone—an' consider myself exceptionally fit. I'll drape this chap over my shoulder in what's known as a 'fireman's hold'—legs an' torso hangin' over my chest—head an' arms hangin' down over my back. When I've loaded him aboard, I'll carry him as far as I can across the moor without feeling too much of a strain—I fancy we're assumin' that any attackin' force would have some means of transportation within a mile at the most. —Here goes!"

They were a bit surprised at the ease with which the Doctor picked the man up and walked off with him. When the figures blended with the moor, the Doctor reached around behind him with his left hand,—while his right arm held the shepherd's legs,—and flashed his torch so they could keep track of him. And after the flash-light had become a mere pin-point, they saw it slowly grow brighter as the Doctor came back with his load and presently laid it down where the man had been sleeping.

"Well—I'd say that's about all I want of that! How far d'you fancy I toted him? Seemed to me like a good half-mile—because I was nearly up to that smaller tor when I turned to come back. What?"

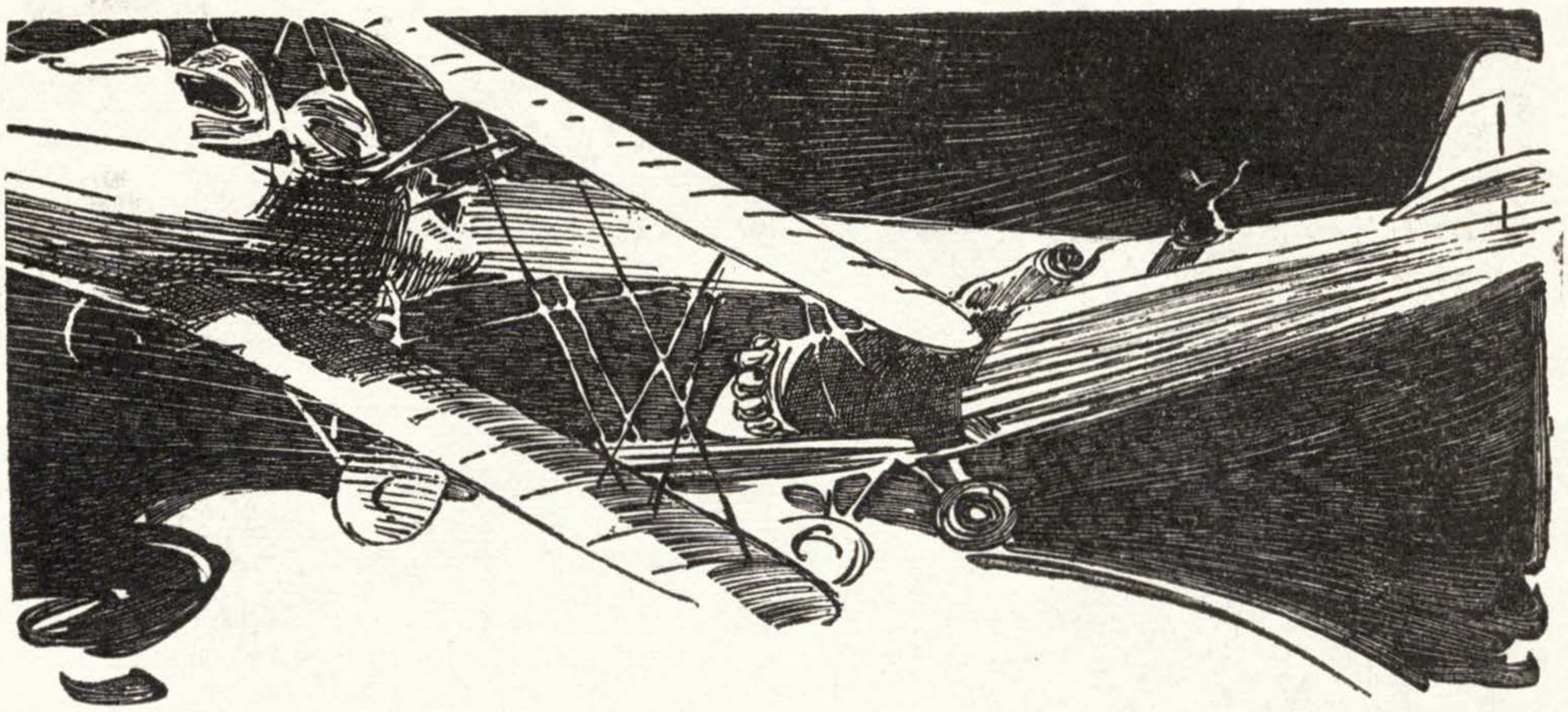
"Out and back would have been nearer three-quarters, Gordon."

"Couldn't have been, could it? I wouldn't have said I could get that far with him an' not feel worse done up than I do now! Anyhow—I fancy it's safe to say a bit over half a mile—which should be quite enough for our purpose. The average seasoned soldier would be as fit as I am, if not more so—accustomed to marchin' with a load of heavy equipm'nt. I had it in mind to have Ivo an' Sir Harry tote some of these woolies a quarter of a mile—see how many they could move in half an hour. A sheep's average weight is a hundred to a hundred an' twenty-five pounds, isn't it? But after my experim'nt with this chap I fancy it'll not be necess'ry. We'd best

"They held on until it was impossible for the other planes to dodge them — then jumped."

go back to the caravans an' sleep a couple of hours. That'll bring us to two Ack Emma—sun rises at three-forty-five, Greenwich Mean Time—so it'll be growin' light by a quarter after. From the experience I've had with this gas, the shepherd won't wake up much before ten o'clock—and he'll feel too lethargic to exert himself over anything for two or three hours more. But just to check up on general conditions, I'll come down here before sunrise an' look 'em over—then sleep possibly two or three hours more. Before we go up the moor, though, I wish to settle another point, even at the risk of killing some of my woolies. I'll tie the legs of half a dozen so that it partly stops the circulation in 'em—that'll reproduce the conditions if a lot of human beings had their wrists bound with marlin behind their backs for ten or twelve hours. If the retarded circulation reacts upon the heart sufficiently to make the gas-effect lethal, we want to know it before we kill a lot of men unnecessarily. What? Ivo, you and Sir Harry keep your fingers on the pulse in the necks of the woolies while I tie the legs."

When this had been done and the effect jotted down in the Doctor's notebook, they all went back up the slope to the caravans and "turned in" on the adjustable berths which were let down on light steel chains from the sides of the vehicles. The chauffeurs and cook stretched out on the deck of the motor-truck. At three o'clock, Gordon-Smith quietly slipped out with Lord Salcombe and went down to inspect their patients. In normal sleep, both animals and humans will change their positions at least twenty times during the night. If they don't, they wake with numbed limbs and feeling more tired than when they went to sleep, because when limbs or torso relax and become rested in one position, the circulation becomes more or less impeded on the under side—the veins and arteries, pinched together by the weight of the body on them, require more effort from the heart to force the blood through them. But instinctive, automatic change of position relieves such pressure and prevents the limbs from getting cramped or numb. When one has lain all night in the same position, it is difficult to move upon awakening and there is a feeling of exhaustion all day.



About five o'clock, study through binoculars of the motionless forms on the moor below showed no changes in position. Three or four villagers came tramping across the downs, apparently going to work, but saw nothing unusual in the sleeping flock. Sometimes sheep and cattle are astir at sunrise—or sometimes, with heavy morning mist along the ground, they will remain quiet for another hour or two. At seven, the party sat down to an appetizing breakfast, with excellent American coffee made by the Marquess, who'd been born in Boston. They remained around the improvised table for an hour or two, smoking and enjoying the magnificent view of the Channel to the south. Then some one noticed a slight movement of the shepherd's arm—a twitching of his shoulder—after which, he painfully turned over and went to sleep on the other side. Gordon-Smith said:

"My picking him up—moving him after three hours of the gassing—prob'ly affected his circulation so that he may come out of it before the sheep. On the other hand, I fancy he's feelin' so cramped an' dopey that he'll be in no condition to take any notice of 'em before they wake up. —Ah! Watch, will you—watch! Put your glasses on the sheep! This is exactly what I hoped to get! The nerves an' circulation of the woolies apparently react a bit more quickly than those of a man. You'll notice it's only the thinner, more nervous ones, who are moving. The big fat hundred-an'-twenty pounders are still dead to the world and possibly will be for an hour yet—circulation more sluggish, I fancy."

When the shepherd finally sat up, the party moved slowly down the slope toward him. He looked at them owlishly, not seeming to recognize the Doctor until he handed him a parcel containing half a dozen sandwiches and a quart flask of Scotch whisky—which brought a glow to the man's eyes. Apparently he was feeling rather low, and the whisky had more of an immediate appeal than the food. The Doctor was counting upon this to keep the man from paying any special attention to his flock.

"Sleep out of doors often, Grannis?" he asked.

"Oh, aye! Usually get in a bit of campin' an' hikin' in the summer. But I must have dropped off last night before rememberin' to scoop out hollows for my thigh an' shoulder. My word, but I'm stiff this morning—bit dopey, too. Must be the mist, I fancy!"

"We saw you from the caravans up yonder, where we camped last night—fancied you could do with a bite an' spot for breakfast."

"Thank you, sir! Very kind of you!"

After examining some of the sheep that were now on their legs—a bit wabbly, but otherwise quite all right—they cut the rope from those they had tied up and watched the animals slowly kick the circulation into their numbed limbs before trying to get up, a process which took them a good fifteen minutes. Grannis, however, was still sitting with his back to them, slightly fuddled with his quart of liquor on an empty stomach, and took no notice. Finally they went back to the caravans, broke camp, and returned to Trevor Hall in time for luncheon.

EARL HU never asks futile questions. If he hasn't one in mind which is straight to the point, he keeps his mouth shut and continues to smile blandly. This, of course, if he is with Europeans—with Orientals, he naturally matches guile with guile. The Marquess and Salcombe, who'd had business dealings and a strong

friendship with him for many years, saw that he was immensely intrigued with Gordon-Smith's "N-gas" but was unable, as yet, to visualize a practical use of it in the East.

AFTER dinner that evening, at which the Doctor had joined them in the smaller dining-room, the Marquess said:

"You've outlined for us your present scheme for a federation of Chinese provinces—with a Council of Tuchans as the supreme authority. From what I know of them you'll not have much diffic'lty in getting sixty per cent to act with you concertedly in any campaign for national defense. Aside from those, I'd say that twenty-five per cent more will join you after your campaigns prove unquestionably successful—an' that the remaining fifteen per cent will be so tied up with Hondo indebtedness an' lust for individual power that they'll prove too treacherous to trust for one vanishing minute—you'll have to discount 'em from the start! Very good! That brings us to a consideration of some campaign plan that'll hit any invading force a stunning blow—will score so heavily that every Tuchan in China will say to himself: *'Aie*—these Nanking men of the Kuomentung are giants among lesser men! They score a crushing blow upon the invaders with a negligible loss of Chinese—or with scarcely any loss of life. They have offered much to their ancestors! Let us join them at once, that we may not have to cover our faces before our own departed ones and the ancient gods of China!' Isn't that about the situation, Hu Han? Supposing that you successfully pulled off something of the sort, wouldn't it have just about that effect—at a rather critical time in the history of your country?"

Earl Hu nodded gravely.

"*Aie*, my Lord Marquess. If such a thing could be actually done—the result upon national feeling in China would be almost beyond calculation! That is why I watched with such very great interest the experimentation of Doctor Gordon-Smith. With the sheep and shepherd he is most successful—unbelievably so. But sheep—they do not think. They do not see ahead and protect themselves—or invent the counter-attack!"

"Well—let's go into that a bit. I started Gordon on this line of investigation with you an' China definitely in mind, Hu—in fact, it's been your particular show ever since he started experimentin'. And I believe he's actually won out—for I've been chewing over this a good bit longer than you have, and been working out the solutions of all the main obstacles. It's not a cinch, of course! No scheme of any such magnitude could be a cinch. It'll require not only careful planning—weeding out every man who can possibly betray you—but absolute coördination when the moment comes for the supreme test. Let's assemble the actual conditions in upper Manchuria today, an' see what is available for ground-work. First—am I approximately correct in saying there are about thirty millions of Chinese in Manchuria, and a hundred thousand Hondoans,—including sixty-five thousand troops, all branches of the service,—and, say, eighty thousand Russians? Right?"

"It is difficult to get an exact census with a population like ours, but from reports to the Central Council of our Benevolent Societies I would say those figures are fairly close," agreed the Earl.

"HOW many of the Manchurian Tuchans can you trust in any sort of a secret campaign? That is, how many will keep their mouths shut if they do not actively coöperate?"

"Well—they're under obligations to the Hondoans. Until those obligations are discharged, probably not one of them."

"How many of the thirty million Chinese could you trust?"

"There again, there are considerations which would make them a prohibitive risk. Our middle and lower classes hate the Hondoans as long as they stay in our territory and develop it to suit themselves—but they've always been accustomed to take their orders from their own Tuchans and most of them would continue to do so. Aside from that, we know that some of them are Hondoan spies, making frequent reports to their War Office."

"Then it gets down to your sending into Manchuria every man you need to use in any secret enterprise—eh? H-m-m—would it be possible to have twenty thousand unarmed Chinese from central and western provinces within ten miles of any specified spot in Manchuria on a certain date—ready to act at one minute's notice?"

"Possible—yes—like most enterprises which are carefully planned. It is a proposition which would require very careful detail, but one fact would be in its favor. This is the beginning of sum-

mer—there is a tide of immigration from here into Manchuria—men who get work in the soy-bean areas, the crop being heavier than usual this year. In the fall, some will remain, though most of them will return. As many go on foot, they like company—so there are night camps of some thousands all through the country. If they are not armed, neither the Tuchans nor the Hondoans pay any attention to them. I see no reason why there could not be twenty thousand of them within a ten- or fifteen-mile area on any one night, or even two nights in succession."

"GOOD!" the Marquess approved. "We'll keep that in reserve—it might remove the only serious diffic'lty. But I'm rather hoping we can do a little better in that particular detail. Now—how many of your air-pilots have made successful parachute-jumps?"

"At least twenty-five or thirty. Our air force is still small, but we have several ex-war-pilots from Europe who are splendid instructors and they go in strong for parachute-work—also machine-gun practice in the air—"

"Machine-guns are no good in this new game of ours! When the wires into Mukden an' Harbin go dead, the Hondoans are going to send out scout-planes to see what has happened. In a machine-gun fight, your pilots are just as likely to be killed as theirs, an' that simply won't do! You've got to have a remedy for those planes that's *certain!* If your pilots fly straight into their ships—lock their sticks an' jump—not one of those Hondoan planes will ever get back! And you've got to be mighty sure they won't—because half the force of this *coup* we're figuring on lies in its remaining an inexplicable mystery—the work of devils! Your railway-shops not far from Tientsin are prètty well guarded—and you can easily tighten that up until any possible spy dies before he gets a glimpse inside. An' you've got a problem of moving, in a very few hours, twenty thousand prisoners with all the guns an' equipm'nt you can get away with. Very good! That line up to Mukden belongs to you—the entire personnel is Chinese—and it's standard-gauge, with standard width of cars an' goods-wagons. Suppose you construct a shelf seven feet wide across one end of a box-car, a foot-and-a-half above the deck—another shelf a foot-and-a-half above that—until you get a tier of five shelves between deck an' ceiling of the car. Stowing prisoners crosswise on those shelves, you could get six on a shelf, or thirty to the tier—with room to breathe and even to move slightly. Figuring the length of your through-freight wagons, you could get five of such tiers in each box-car. That's a hundred and fifty men to each car—fifteen hundred to a ten-car train—easily hauled by one of your mogul engines. Fourteen trains to move those twenty thousand troops. Hmph! And we could stow all the Chinese we'll need in those same trains, going up—ready for business the minute they roll in—no risks of getting scattered men to the spot on time!

"What really started this whole idea in my mind was a report one of our F. O. men brought in a few months ago—he's one of the very few who can disguise himself as a Hondoan—speak the language, an' get away with it. He told us of that little pocket valley where there are some iron mines about halfway between Kowpangtze and Sinminfu, just north of the Chinese Tientsin Line—your people ran an in-and-out spur to it when that line was first built. All that immediate neighborhood is under Hondoan occupation at present—an' they consider it far enough south of the bandit-Communist fighting in northern Manchuria for a milit'ry base. So they've constructed barracks, machine-shops an' godowns in that little valley, and they're now beginning to fill up the place as a troop-reserve, with four or five different branches of the service. You must know all about it, Hu—with your facilities for obtaining information."

"Oh, yes—but we also know that they've strongly guarded the place with trench-fortifications and mines—have armored trains in readiness to run out on the single-track connecting spurs at a moment's notice in either direction. I can assure you that we've considered an attack upon that reserve base—but decided not to waste the lives of good fighting-men until we had at least a strong air force to coöperate!"

"But now that you can load 'em all on trains like so many sacks of soy-beans, without a single shot fired— Eh?"

PLAINLY astonished, Earl Hu stared at him.

"You mean it might be done—with this gas of the Doctor's? No—it's too absurd! A fortified base with twenty thousand men? That is ridiculous!"

"And yet, with perfect coördination—eh?" the Marquess urged.

ONE month later—at the Imperial Pangasaki Base in Manchuria—General Inoki Suomo, in command, lighted a fresh cigar and put his polished cordovans up on the edge of the desk before answering a remark by Colonel Matsuga.

There were four of the Staff in the General's office on the second floor of the concrete Administration Building.

"There doesn't seem to be any definite plan or system to these bandit outbreaks up in Pu Yi's neighborhood—yet if they keep it up all summer, and into the winter, it'll cost us more men than we can afford for that sort of thing."

"I wonder if they think in Nanking that the Shanghai incident is closed?" the Colonel speculated.

"We shouldn't insult their intelligence, Matsuga, by any such supposition as that. We've known for many centuries that our neighbors on the mainland are anything but fools! I doubt if they've guessed what we are planning for the end of the summer, but they'll be watching every move we make—Hondo is full of their spies. *P-h-e-w!* . . . . There isn't a breath of air tonight! Down along the China Sea, I'd be looking for a typhoon before morning—with this dead feeling in the atmosphere! Thick clouds overhead—dark as the pits under an abandoned temple. *W-a-a-g-h!* It's something new—up here! I'm so sleepy I can't keep my eyes open!"

"We all are, General! Dead air, I suppose. I could drop off right here in my chair!" Matsuga agreed.

EVEN the sentries neither saw nor heard anything. Yet one after another, at five-minute intervals, silent planes had flown over the Pangasaki Base, their Chinese pilots marveling in pleased amazement at the Marquess' exhaust-muffler, patented several years before but found on no other planes than his, and the adjustable pitch for the propeller-blades which, together, cut down the noise made by an airplane, until at two hundred meters it was practically soundless. When they had criss-crossed over the entire area fifteen or twenty minutes, they flew up the line,—dropping gas upon villages where it was known that several Hondoans had taken up their quarters,—and even to the junction of the Newchang Railway. In that latitude, the sun had set at seven forty-five P.M. and the planes had come along a half-hour later. At eight thirty, there wasn't a single conscious man stirring within three miles of the line on either side between Sinminfu and Kowpangtze, a distance of sixty miles, though of course no gas had been dropped along stretches where it was known that there were no human beings.

By ten P. M., it was noticed by Hondoan officers in Mukden that the telephone-line to the Pangasaki Base was dead. They called up the officials of the Tientsin Railway—who said there was a train off the track below Sinminfu, with a wrecking-train from down the line working to clear the track. Several telegraph and telephone-poles along the right of way had been smashed when the locomotive left the rails. The Hondoans then tried to get the army base by radio—but could hear nothing but heavy static caused by the electric storm reported from that locality. So they let the matter drop temporarily with what seemed a satisfactory explanation. At three A.M., however, the Tientsin line was still blocked. Repeated calling by radio failed to get any acknowledgment, so two scout-planes were ordered sent up from the flying-field with instructions to get definite information.

NOW—this railway line is single-track, with numerous sidings capable of taking three trains of average length at one time—but that didn't solve the problem of handling fourteen trains for prisoners and another five for guns and munitions. From Kowpangtze to where the spur ran off into the little valley surrounding the army base is twenty-two miles, and along the spur, through the valley, until it again joins the main line, seven miles. From that point to Sinminfu, about thirty miles. From either north or south ends of the spur to the nearest village or habitation, is ten miles or more. A number of ten-car trains can be "parked" on a single-track road, in ten miles. The nineteen trains used that night were run up beyond the north end of the spur, starting about nine P. M., and were all in place shortly after ten. The low hills between the main line and the camp-valley—nearly two miles wide—prevented any of the gas from coming over on the line. At midnight, the rearmost train ran down along the spur into the army base, each big locomotive having made a "flying switch" where the spur

branched off, and coupled on to the other end of its train. In fifteen minutes, the Chinese had swarmed out of the tiers and were stacking the unconscious Hondoans in on the shelves they had just vacated. This stunt had been practiced at guarded repair-shops until the men went through it with the proficiency of a fire-drill.

As three other trains had followed the first one into the camp, there were four of them unloading and loading at the same time. Incredible though it may seem, those ten-car trains were loaded with the Hondoans and out upon the main line again in not much over forty-five minutes for each four. Had the Hondoans been struggling, this would have been impossible—but they required no more handling than so many sacks of soy-beans.

AT three in the morning, a great silent bird—horizon-blue by day, and practically invisible at any time if five hundred meters up—cruised back and forth above the army base. In the cabin, Sir Harry Archer was at the controls, while Lord Salcombe was shifting a radio-compass as he listened to an exceedingly sensitive receiving-set—ready to switch in a two-kilowatt transmitting-set if there were occasion to exchange words with the yacht or any of the F. O. men down in Shanghai. The Marquess and Earl Hu Han Chang were occupying window-seats, watching the terrain below with their night-glasses. In a moment, Salcombe spoke:

"Two planes up by Mukden—heading straight this way!"

Prince Abdool—back near the two mechanics—promptly switched on a single powerful red light which could be seen by the six scouting-planes following close behind them—and the squadron headed for the approaching ships. In twenty minutes, the noise of their exhaust was apparently so close that Prince Abdool switched on a small but very strong spotlight on the front of the amphibian's upper wing—picking out the two Hondoan planes until they were clearly visible to the Chinese pilots, who headed straight for them. Two of the pilots held on until it was impossible for the other planes to dodge them—and then jumped. Had the Hondoan pilots suspected that any flyer would actually attempt such a dangerous stunt, they also might have had about two seconds to get out of their ships—but the probability did not occur to them.

There were a couple of terrific crashes in mid-air—four flaming torches that dived straight down to the stony field which made fireworks of them. . . . . One of the Chinese gas-planes came down and succeeded in landing with the help of the big amphibian's searchlight—remaining until the parachute-jumpers had tramped nearly a mile to be picked up by them. By four-thirty, it was beginning to get light in the eastern sky, and there wasn't a man left in the big army base—nor a field-gun, machine-gun, or munitions. As the last train disappeared down the main line—through Kowpang-tze without stopping—a delayed fuse set off the mines and large supply of high-explosive stored at the base camp. It shook the country for miles.

The Chinese were taking no chances of having those trains seen or investigated by daylight, as they would have been on their way through Tientsin. They were run to the steamer-pier and siding at Yungpingfu on the Gulf of Pechih-li, where the still unconscious Hondoans were taken aboard five large cargo-boats owned by the China Mutual, a force of coolies having been kept waiting there to make a quick job of it. Additional trains had been waiting up the line to pick up as many of the first lot as possible before they were compelled to scatter through the country and join the bean-coolie camps. The cargo-boats proceeded in a leisurely way to the mouth of the Yangtze—up the river past Nanking and Hankow—until they reached a detention-camp which had been prepared in one of the most unquestionably loyal provinces. The man who moved those nineteen trains that night, along that single-track line, in the time he had, was a star dispatcher of a big American railroad, mysteriously given a two months' vacation—his first one in twenty years. He sailed for Vancouver on a C. P. R. boat the following week with a couple of gorgeous decorations in his steamer-trunk, and in his pocket a draft for ten thousand taels, at current exchange.

THE Hondoans have inspected the Imperial Pangasaki Base—or rather, the crater where it once was—and are still trying to figure it out. The occurrence is simply incredible—that's all! There was not an arm, a head, a leg—nor any portion of a human body—to show whether twenty thousand seasoned troops with all their equipment went up—or down!

"Where have you been, Muzimo?" asked Orando. "Some said that Sobito had slain you!"

The world's champion fiction adventurer embarks upon his war against the sinister Leopard Men, who have made captive a daring American girl.

TARZAN
And the Leopard Men

The Story So Far:

THE forest bent beneath the heavy hand of Usha the wind. Dark clouds obscured the heavens. The voices of the jungle were silenced. . . . The girl turned uneasily upon her cot—awoke.

In the vivid and almost incessant flashes of lightning she saw a man entering the tent—Golato the headman. The girl raised herself upon an elbow. "Is there something wrong, Golato?" she asked. "What do you want?"

"You, Kali Bwana," answered the man huskily.

So it had come at last! For days she had been cognizant of the black's increasing insolence toward her. . . . From a holster at the side of her cot she drew a revolver. "Get out of here," she said, "or I'll kill you!"

For answer the black leaped toward her. She fired.

Next day the wounded headman and the rest of the safari had deserted; and the girl was left alone to fend for herself in the heart of Africa. And yet not quite alone, for—though she was not aware of it—not far from her two wandering ivory-poachers were camped. The campers were white men, Americans, who knew each other only as "the Kid" and "Old-timer," and who were united by a peculiar bond: each had forsaken civilization for the jungle because of a woman.

Meanwhile a strange thing had happened not far away. For that greatest of all adventurers Tarzan of the Apes (born the son of an English lord, but through remarkable circumstance brought up among the wild folk of Africa to become Lord of the Jungle) had suffered a wilderness accident: a great tree-branch torn loose by the tempest had struck him on the head, knocked him unconscious and pinned him down helpless. And although rescue came in the person of a native named Orando, who freed and revived him, Tarzan recovered his senses suffer-

By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

ing from amnesia—that strange malady of complete forgetfulness which sometimes follows a heavy blow on the head. He did not know even his own identity; and so bizarre was his appearance and manner that the native decided he was something more than mortal, and christened him "Muzimo," believing him the reincarnated spirit of one of his ancestors.

As Muzimo, then, Tarzan hunted with Orando and shared the native's battles. For Orando's friend Nyamwegi had been killed by the Leopard Men, that extraordinary cannibalistic African secret society whose members adorn themselves with leopard skins, wear masks fashioned of leopard heads—and strike down their human victims with iron claws made to resemble those of the leopard. Tarzan accompanied Orando back to his village, where Orando told of his friend's death, and proposed a war-party to pursue the Leopard Men and exact vengeance. His guiding spirit Muzimo, Orando explained to Sobito the witch-doctor and the other tribesmen, would aid them in this attack upon a dreadful enemy. *(The story continues in detail:)*

AT this shouts of approval arose from the younger men, but the majority of the older men sat in silence. It is always thus; the younger men for war, the older for peace. Lobongo was an old man. He was proud that his son should be warlike. That was the reaction of the father; but the reaction of age was all against war. So he too, remained silent. Not so, Sobito! To his personal grievance against Muzimo were added other considerations that inclined him against this contemplated foray; at least one of which (and the most potent) was a secret he might not divulge with impunity. Scowling forbiddingly, he leaped to his feet.

"Who makes this foolish talk of war?" he demanded. "Young men. What do young men know of war? They think only of victory. They forget defeat. They forget that if they make war upon a village, the warriors of that village will come some day and make war upon us. What is to be gained by making war upon the Leopard Men? Who knows where their village lies? It must be very far away. Why should our warriors go far from their own country to make war upon the Leopard Men? Because Nyamwegi has been killed? Nyamwegi has already been avenged.

"This is foolish talk, this war-talk. Who started it? Perhaps it is a stranger among us who wishes to make trouble for us." He looked at Tarzan of the Apes, known to them as Muzimo. "Who knows why? Perhaps the Leopard Men have sent one of their own people to lure us into making war upon them. Then all our warriors will be ambushed and killed. That is what will happen. Make no more foolish talk about war."

As Sobito concluded his harangue and again squatted upon his heels, Orando arose. He was disturbed by what the

"He opened his mouth and spoke to me. He said: 'I am the brother of the Leopard God.'"

old witch-doctor had said, and he was angry, too, angry because Sobito had impugned the integrity of his *muzimo*. But his anger was leashed by his fear of the powerful old man; for who dares openly oppose one in league with the forces of darkness, one whose enmity can spell disaster and death? Yet Orando was a brave warrior and a loyal friend, as befitted one in whose veins flowed the blood of hereditary chieftainship; and so he could not permit the innuendoes of Sobito to go entirely unchallenged.

"Sobito has spoken against war," he began. "Old men always speak against war, which is right if one is an old man. Orando is a young man; yet he too would speak against war if it were only the foolish talk of young men who wished to appear brave in the eyes of women; but now there is a reason for war. Nyamwegi has been killed. He was a brave warrior. He was a good friend. Because we have killed three of those who killed Nyamwegi, we cannot say that he is avenged. We must go and make war upon the chief who sent these murderers into the Watenga country, or he will think that the Utengas are all old women. He will think that whenever his people wish to eat the flesh of man, they have only to come to the Watenga country to get it."

Orando gazed defiantly at Sobito.

"Sobito has said that perhaps the Leopard Men sent a stranger among us to lure us into ambush. There is only one stranger among us—Muzimo. But Muzimo cannot be a friend of the Leopard Men. With his own eyes Orando saw him kill two of the Leopard Men; he saw the fourth run away very fast when his eyes discovered the might of Muzimo. Had Muzimo been his friend, he would not have run away.

"I am Orando, the son of Lobongo. Some day I shall be chief. I would not lead the warriors of Lobongo into a foolish war. I am going to the village of the Leopard Men and make war upon them, that they may know that not all the Utenga warriors are old women. Muzimo is going with me. Perhaps there are a few brave men who will accompany us. I have spoken."

Several of the younger warriors leaped from their haunches and stamped their feet in approval. They raised their voices in the war-cry of their clan, and brandished their spears. One of them danced in a circle, leaping high, and jabbing with his spear. "Thus will I kill the Leopard Men!" he cried.

Another leaped about, slashing with his knife. "I cut the heart from the chief of the Leopard Men!" He pretended to tear at something with his teeth, while he held it tightly in his hands. "I eat the heart of the chief of the Leopard Men!"

"War! War!" cried others, until there were a dozen howling savages dancing in the sunlight, their sleek hides glistening with sweat, their features contorted by hideous grimaces.

THEN Lobongo arose. His deep voice boomed above the cries of the dancers as he commanded them to silence. One by one they ceased their howling, but they gathered together in a little knot behind Orando.

"A few of the young men have spoken for war," he announced; "but we do not make war lightly because a few young men wish to fight. There are times for war and times for peace. We must find out if this is the time for war; otherwise we shall find only defeat and death at the end of the war-trail. Before undertaking war, we must consult the ghosts of our dead chiefs."

"They are waiting to speak to us," cried Sobito. "Let there be silence, while I speak with the spirits of the chiefs who are gone."

As he spoke, there was the gradual beginning of a movement among the tribesmen that presently formed a circle in the center of which squatted the witch-doctor. From a pouch he withdrew a number of articles which he spread upon the ground before him. Then he called for dry twigs and fresh leaves; and when these were brought, he built a tiny fire. With the fresh leaves he partially smothered it, so that it threw off a quantity of smoke. Stooping, half-doubled, the witch-doctor moved cautiously around the fire, describing a small circle, his eyes constantly fixed upon the thin column of smoke spiraling upward in the quiet air of the drowsy afternoon. In one hand Sobito held a small pouch made of the skin of a rodent, in the other the tail of a hyena, the root bound with copper wire to form a handle.

GRADUALLY the old man increased his pace, until he was circling the fire rapidly in prodigious leaps and bounds; but always his eyes remained fixed upon the spiraling smoke-column. As he danced, he intoned a weird jargon, a combination of meaningless syllables interspersed with an occasional shrill scream that brought terror to the eyes of his spellbound audience.

Suddenly he halted, and stooping low, tossed some powder from his pouch upon the fire; then with the root of the hyena tail he drew a rude geometric figure in the dust before the blaze. Stiffening, he closed his eyes and appeared to be listening intently, his face turned partially upward.

In awestruck silence the warriors leaned forward, waiting. It was a tense moment, and quite effective. Sobito prolonged it to the utmost. At last he opened his eyes and let them move solemnly about the circle of expectant faces, waiting again before he spoke.

"There are many ghosts about us," he announced. "They all speak against war. Those who go to battle with the Leopard Men will die. None will return. The ghosts are angry with Orando. The true *muzimo* of Orando spoke to me; it is very angry with Orando. Let Orando beware. That is all; the young men of the Utengas will not go to war against the Leopard Men."

The warriors gathered behind Orando looked questioningly at him, and at Muzimo. Doubt was written plainly upon every face. Gradually they began to move, drifting imperceptibly away from Orando. Then the son of the chief looked at Muzimo questioningly. "If Sobito has spoken true words," he said, "you are not my *muzimo*." The words seemed a challenge.

"What does Sobito know about it?" demanded Muzimo. "I could build a fire and wave the tail of Dango. I could make marks in the dirt and throw powders on the fire. Then I could tell you whatever I wanted to tell you, just as Sobito has told you what he wanted you to believe; but such things prove nothing. The only way you can know if a war against the Leopard Men will succeed is to send warriors to fight them. Sobito knows nothing about it."

The witch-doctor trembled from anger. Never before had a creature dared voice a doubt as to his powers. So abjectly had the members of his clan acknowledged his infallibility, that he had almost come to believe in it himself. He shook a withered finger at Muzimo.

"You speak with a lying tongue," he cried. "You have angered my fetish. Nothing can save you. You are lost. You will die." He paused as a new idea was born in his cunning brain. "Un-

less," he added, "you go away, and do not come back."

Having no idea as to his true identity, Muzimo had had to accept Orando's word that he was the ancestral spirit of the chief's son; and having heard himself described as such innumerable times, he had come to accept it as fact. He felt no fear of Sobito the man; and when Sobito the witch-doctor, threatened him, he recalled that he was a *muzimo*, and as such, immortal. How, therefore, he reasoned, could the fetish of Sobito kill him? Nothing could kill a spirit.

"I shall not go away," he announced. "I am not afraid of Sobito."

The villagers were aghast. Never had they heard a witch-doctor flouted and defied as Muzimo had flouted and defied Sobito. They expected to see the rash creature destroyed before their eyes; but nothing happened. They looked at Sobito questioningly, and that wily old fraud, sensing the critical turn of the event, and fearing for his prestige, overcame his physical fear of the strange white giant in the hope of regaining his dignity by a single bold stroke.

Brandishing his hyena tail, he leaped toward Muzimo. "Die!" he screamed. "Nothing can save you now. Before the moon has risen the third time, you will be dead. My fetish has spoken!" He waved the hyena tail in the face of Muzimo.

The white man stood with folded arms, a sneer upon his lips. "I am Muzimo," he said; "I am the spirit of the ancestor of Orando. Sobito is only a man; his fetish is only the tail of Dango." As he ceased speaking, his hand shot out and snatched the fetish from the grasp of the witch-doctor. "Thus does Muzimo with the fetish of Sobito!" he cried, tossing the tail into the fire.

SEIZED by the unreasoning rage of fanaticism, Sobito cast caution to the winds and leaped for Muzimo, a naked blade in his upraised hand. There was the froth of madness upon his bared lips. His yellow fangs gleamed in a hideous snarl. He was the personification of hatred and maniacal fury. But swift and vicious as was his attack, it did not find Muzimo unprepared. A bronzed hand seized the black wrist of the witch-doctor in a grip of steel; another tore the knife from his grasp. Then Muzimo picked him up and held him high above his head, as though Sobito were some incorporeal thing without substance or weight.

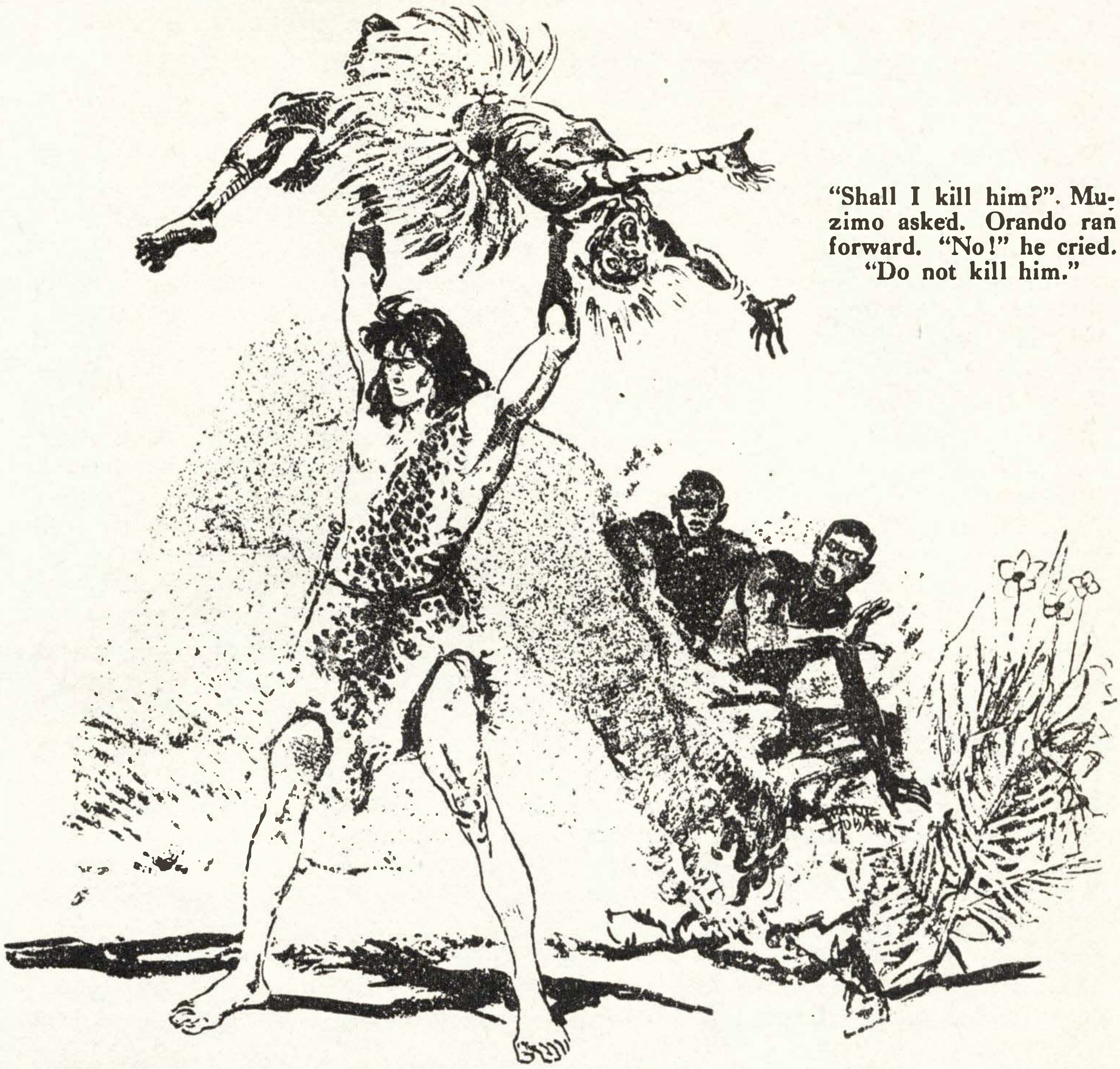
Terror was writ large upon the countenances of the astounded onlookers; an idol was in the clutches of an iconoclast. The situation had passed beyond the scope of their simple minds, leaving them dazed. Perhaps it was well for Muzimo that Sobito was far from being a beloved idol.

Muzimo looked at Orando. "Shall I kill him?" he asked, almost casually.

Orando was as shocked and terrified as his fellows. A lifetime of unquestioning belief in the supernatural powers of witch-doctors could not be overcome in an instant. Yet there was another force working upon the son of the chief. He was only human. Muzimo was his *muzimo*, and being very human, he could not but feel a certain justifiable pride in the fearlessness and prowess of this splendid enigma whom he had enthusiastically accepted as the spirit of his dead ancestor. However, witch-doctors were witch-doctors. Their powers were well known to all men. There was, therefore, no wisdom in tempting fate too far.

Orando ran forward. "No!" he cried. "Do not kill him."

Upon the branch of a tree a little mon-



"Shall I kill him?". Muzimo asked. Orando ran forward. "No!" he cried. "Do not kill him."

key danced, screaming and scolding. "Kill him!" he shrieked. "Kill him!" A very bloodthirsty little monkey was Nkima, who had been adjudged by the tribesmen as the spirit of Nyamwegi.

Muzimo tossed Sobito to the ground in an ignominious heap.

"He is no good," he announced. "No witch-doctor is any good. His fetish was no good. If it had been, why did it not protect Sobito? Sobito did not know what he was talking about. If there are any brave warriors among the Utengas, they will come with Orando and Muzimo, and make war on the Leopard Men."

A low cry, growing in volume, rose among the younger warriors; and in the momentary confusion Sobito crawled to his feet and sneaked away toward his hut. When he was safely out of reach of Muzimo, he halted and faced about. "I go," he called back, "to make powerful medicine. Tonight the white man who calls himself Muzimo dies."

The white giant took a few steps in the direction of Sobito, and the witch-doctor turned and fled. The young men, seeing the waning of Sobito's power, talked loudly now of war. The older men talked no more of peace. One and all, they feared and hated Sobito. They were relieved to see his power broken. On the morrow they might be afraid again, but today, for the first time in their lives, they were free from the domination of a witch-doctor.

Lobongo, the chief, would not sanction war; but influenced by the demands of Orando and other young men, he at last grudgingly gave his approval to the formation of a small raiding-party. Immediately runners were dispatched to other villages to seek recruits, and preparations were begun for a huge dance to be held that night.

BECAUSE of Lobongo's refusal to make general war against the Leopard Men, there was no booming of war-drums; but news travels fast in the jungle, and night had scarcely closed down upon the village of Tumbai before warriors from the nearer villages commenced coming in to Tumbai by ones and twos to join the twenty volunteers from Lobongo's village—who swaggered and strutted before the admiring eyes of the dusky belles preparing the food and native beer that

would form an important part of the night's festivities.

From Kibbu came ten young warriors, among them the brother of the girl Nyamwegi had been courting, and one Lupingu, from whom the murdered warrior had stolen her heart. That Lupingu should volunteer to risk his life for the purpose of avenging Nyamwegi passed unnoticed, since already thoughts of vengeance had been submerged by lust for glory, and poor Nyamwegi practically forgotten by all but Orando.

There was much talk of war and of brave deeds that would be accomplished; but the discomfiture of Sobito, being still fresh in every mind, also had an important part in the conversations. The village gossips found it a choice morsel with which to regale the warriors from other villages, with the result that Muzimo became an outstanding figure who reflected more glory upon the village of Tumbai than ever Sobito had. The visiting warriors regarded him with awe and some misgivings. They were accustomed to spirits that no one ever saw; the air was full of them. It was quite another matter to behold one standing silently in their midst.

Lupingu, especially, was perturbed. Recently he had purchased a love-charm from Sobito. He was wondering now if he had thrown away, uselessly, the little treasure he had paid for it. He decided to seek out the witch-doctor and make inquiries; perhaps there was not so much truth in what he had heard. There was also another reason why he wished to consult Sobito, a reason of far greater importance than a love-charm.

WHEN he could do so unnoticed, Lupingu withdrew from the crowd milling in the village street, and sneaked off to Sobito's hut. Here he found the old witch-doctor squatting upon the floor surrounded by charms and fetishes. A small fire burning beneath a pot fitfully lighted his sinister features, which were contorted by so hideous a scowl that Lupingu almost turned and fled before the old man at length looked up and recognized him.

For a long time Lupingu sat in the hut of the witch-doctor. They spoke in whispers, their heads close together. When Lupingu left, he carried with him an amulet of such prodigious potency that no enemy weapon could inflict injury upon him, and in his head he carried a plan that caused him both elation and terror.

CHAPTER V

"UNSPEAKABLE BOOR!"

LONG days of loneliness. Long nights of terror. Hopelessness and vain regrets so keen that they pained as might physical hurts. Only a brave heart had kept the girl from going mad since her men had deserted her. That seemed an eternity ago; days were ages.

Today she had hunted. A small boar had fallen to her rifle. At the sound of the shot, coming faintly to his ears, a white man had halted, scowling. His three companions jabbered excitedly.

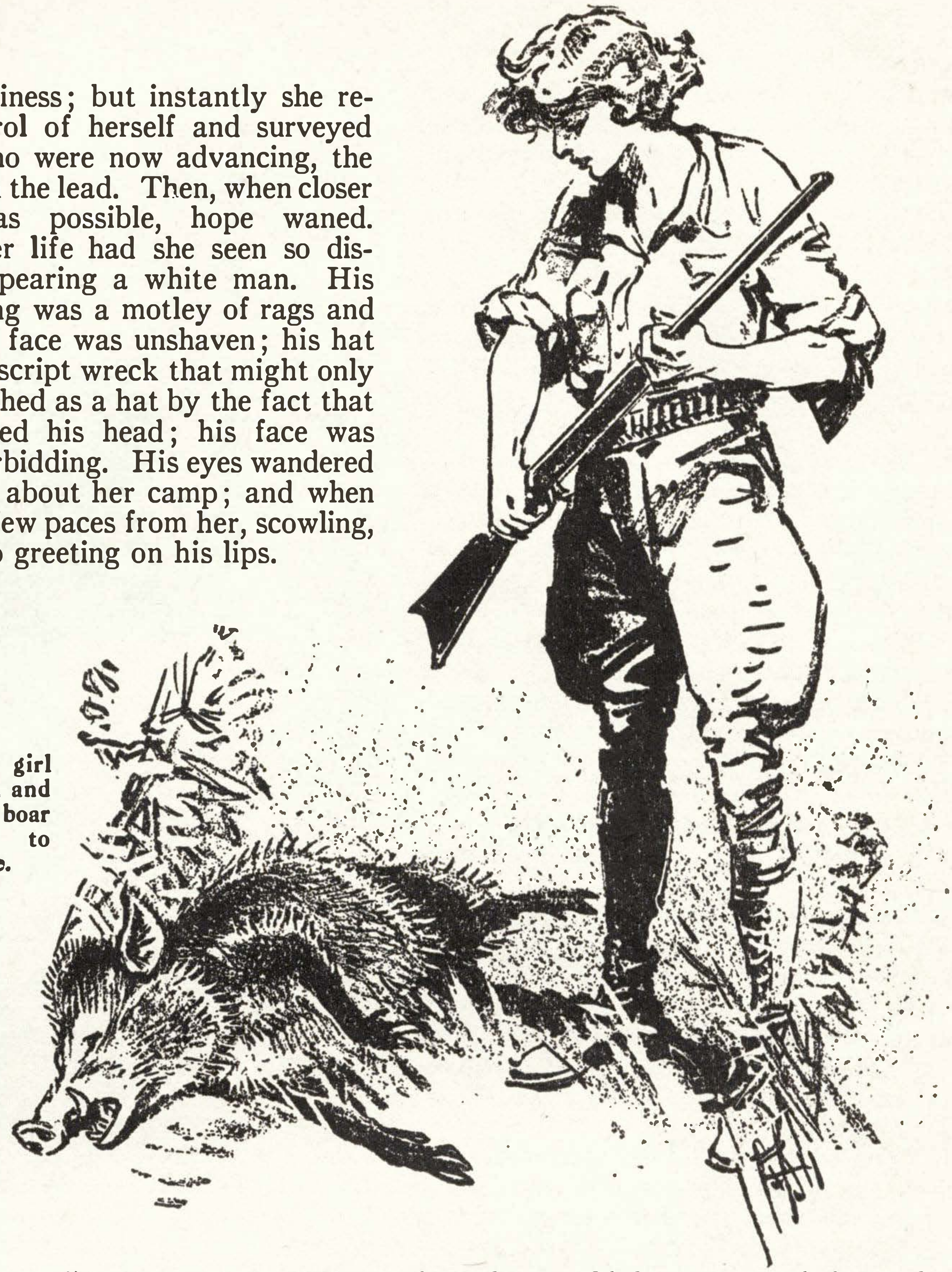
With difficulty the girl had removed the viscera of the boar, thus reducing its weight sufficiently so that she could drag it to her camp; but it had been an ordeal that had taxed her strength and endurance to their limits. The meat was too precious, however, to be wasted; and she had struggled for hours, stopping often to rest, until at last, exhausted, she had sunk beside her prize before the entrance to her tent.

It was not encouraging to consider the vast amount of labor that still confronted her before the meat would be safe for future use. There was the butchering. The mere thought of it appalled her. She had never seen an animal butchered until after she had set out upon this disastrous safari. In all her life she had never even so much as cut a piece of raw meat. Her preparation, therefore, was most inadequate; but necessity overcomes obstacles, as it mothers inventions. She knew that the boar must be butchered, and the flesh cut into strips, and that these strips must be smoked. Even then they would not keep long, but she knew no better way.

With her limited knowledge of practical matters, with the means at hand, she must put up the best fight for life of which she was capable. She was weak and inexperienced and afraid; but none the less it was a courageous heart that beat beneath her once chic but now soiled and disreputable flannel shirt. She was without hope, yet she would not give up.

Wearily she had commenced to skin the boar, when a movement at the edge of the clearing in which her camp had been pitched attracted her attention. As she looked up, she saw four men standing silently regarding her. One was a white man. The other three were blacks. As she sprang to her feet, hope welled so strongly within her that she reeled slight-

ly with dizziness; but instantly she regained control of herself and surveyed the four, who were now advancing, the white man in the lead. Then, when closer scrutiny was possible, hope waned. Never in her life had she seen so disreputable-appearing a white man. His filthy clothing was a motley of rags and patches; his face was unshaven; his hat was a nondescript wreck that might only be distinguished as a hat by the fact that it surmounted his head; his face was stern and forbidding. His eyes wandered suspiciously about her camp; and when he halted a few paces from her, scowling, there was no greeting on his lips.



Today the girl had hunted, and a small boar had fallen to her rifle.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "What are you doing here?"

His tone and words antagonized her. Never before had any white man addressed her in so cavalier a manner. In a proud and spirited girl, the reaction was inevitable. Her chin went up; she eyed him coldly; the suggestion of a supercilious sneer curved her short upper lip; her eyes evaluated him disdainfully, from his run-down boots to the battered thing that covered his disheveled hair. Had his manner and address been different, she might have been afraid of him, but now for the moment at least she was too angry to be afraid.

"I cannot conceive that either matter concerns you," she said, and turned her back on him.

The scowl deepened on the man's face, and angry words leaped to his tongue; but he controlled himself, regarding her silently. Had he not already seen her face, he would have guessed from the lines of her haughty little back that she was young. Having seen her face, he knew that she was beautiful. She was dirty, hot, perspiring and smeared with blood; but she was still beautiful. How beautiful she must be when properly garbed and groomed, he dared not even imagine. He had noticed her blue-gray eyes and long lashes; they alone would have made any face beautiful. Now he was appraising her hair, confined in a loose knot at the nape of her neck; it had that peculiar quality of blondeness that is described, today, as platinum.

It had been two years since Old-timer had seen a white woman. Perhaps if this one had been old and scrawny, or had buck teeth and a squint, he might have regarded her with less disapprobation and addressed her more courteously. But the moment that his eyes had beheld her, her beauty had recalled all the anguish

and misery that another beautiful girl had caused him, arousing within him the hatred of women that he had nursed and cherished for two long years.

He stood in silence for a moment; and he was glad that he had, for it permitted him to quell the angry and bitter words that he might otherwise have spoken. It was not that he liked women any better, but that he realized and admired the courageousness of her reply.

"It may not be any of my business," he said presently, "but perhaps I shall have to make it so. It is rather unusual to see a white woman alone in this country. You *are* alone?" There was a faint note of concern in the tone of his question.

"I *was* quite alone," she snapped, "and I should prefer being so again."

"You mean that you are without porters or white companions?"

"Quite."

AS her back was toward him, she did not see the expression of relief that crossed his face at her admission. Had she, she might have felt greater concern for her safety, though his relief had no bearing upon her welfare; his anxiety as to the presence of white men was simply that of the ivory-poacher.

"And you have no means of transportation?" he queried.

"None."

"You certainly did not come this far into the interior alone. What became of the other members of your party?"

"They deserted me."

"But your white companions—what of them?"

"I had none." She had faced him by now, but her attitude was still unfriendly.

"You came into the interior without any white men?" There was skepticism in his tone.

"I did."

"When did your men desert you?"

"Three days ago."

"What do you intend doing? You can't stay here alone, and I don't see how you can expect to go on without porters."

"I have stayed here three days alone; I can continue to do so until—"

"Until what?"

"I don't know."

"Look here," he demanded, "what in the world are you doing here, anyway?"

A sudden hope seemed to flash to her brain. "I am looking for a man," she said. "Perhaps you have heard of him;

perhaps you know where he is." Her voice was vibrant with eagerness.

"What's his name?" asked Old-timer.

"Jerry Jerome." She looked up into his face hopefully.

He shook his head. "Never heard of him."

The hope in her eyes died out, suffused by the faintest suggestion of tears. Old-timer saw the moisture in her eyes, and it annoyed him. Why did women always have to cry? He steeled his heart against the weakness that was sympathy, and spoke brusquely. "What do you think you're going to do with that meat?" he demanded.

Her eyes widened in surprise. There were no tears in them now, but a glint of anger. "You are impossible. I wish you would get out of my camp and leave me alone."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," he replied. Then he spoke rapidly to his three followers in their native dialect—

The girl was being half led, half dragged through the jungle. She had no idea as to the fate destined for her.

whereupon the three advanced and took possession of the carcass of the boar.

The girl looked on in angry surprise. She recalled the heartbreaking labor of dragging the carcass to camp. Now it was being taken from her. The thought enraged her. She drew her revolver from its holster. "Tell them to leave that alone," she cried, "or I'll shoot them. It's mine."

"They're only going to butcher it for you," explained Old-timer. "That's what you wanted, isn't it? Or were you going to frame it?"

HIS sarcasm nettled her, but she realized that she had misunderstood their purpose. "Why didn't you say so?" she demanded. "I was going to smoke it. I may not always be able to get food easily."

"You won't have to," he told her; "we'll look after that."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that as soon as I'm through here, you're going back to my camp with me. It aint my fault that you're here; and you're a damn' useless nuisance, like all other women; but I couldn't leave a white rat here alone in the jungle, much less a white woman."

"What if I don't care to go with you?" she inquired haughtily.

"I don't give a damn what you think about it," he snapped; "you're going with me. If you had any brains, you'd be grateful. It's too much to expect you to have a heart. You're like all the rest—selfish, inconsiderate, ungrateful."

"Anything else?" she inquired.

"Yes: cold, calculating, hard."

"You do not think much of women, do you?"

"You are discerning."

"And just what do you purpose doing with me when we get to your camp?" she asked.

"If we can scrape up a new safari for you, I'll get you out of Africa as quickly as I can," he replied.

"But I do not wish to get out of Africa. You have no right to dictate to me. I

came here for a purpose, and I shall not leave until that purpose is fulfilled."

"If you came here to find that Jerome fellow, it is my duty to a fellow-man to chase you out before you can find him."

HER level gaze rested upon him for a moment before she replied. She had never before seen a man like this. Such candor was unnatural. She decided that he was mentally unbalanced; and having heard that the insane should be humored, lest they become violent, she determined to alter her attitude toward him.

"Perhaps you are right," she admitted. "I will go with you."

"That's better," he commented. "Now that that's settled, let's have everything else clear. We're starting back to my camp as soon as I get through with my business here. That may be tomorrow or next day. You're coming along. One of my boys will look after you—cooking and all that sort of stuff. But I don't want to be bothered with any women. You leave me alone, and I'll leave you alone. I don't even want to talk to you."

"That will be mutually agreeable," she assured him, not without some asperity. Since she was a woman, and had been for as long as she could recall the object of masculine adulation, such a speech, even from the lips of a disreputable ragamuffin whose sanity she questioned, could not but induce a certain pique.

"One more thing," he added. "My camp is in Chief Bobolo's country. If anything happens to me, have my boys take you back there to my camp. My partner will look after you. Just tell him that I promised to get you back to the coast." He left her then, and busied himself with the simple preparation of his modest camp, calling one of the men from the butchering, to pitch his small tent and prepare his evening meal, for it was now late in the afternoon. Another of the boys was detailed to serve the girl. . . .

From her tent that evening she could see him sprawled before a fire, smoking his pipe. From a distance she gazed at him contemptuously, convinced that he was the most disagreeable person she had ever encountered, yet forced to admit that his presence gave her a feeling of security she had not enjoyed since she had entered Africa. She concluded that even a crazy white man was better than none. But was he crazy? He seemed quite normal and sane in all respects other than his churlish attitude toward her. Perhaps he was just an ill-bred boor, with some fancied grievance against women. Be that as it might, he was an enigma; and unsolved enigmas have a way of occupying one's thoughts. So, notwithstanding her contempt for him, he filled her reveries quite to the exclusion of all else until sleep claimed her.

Doubtless she would have been surprised to know that similarly the man's mind was occupied with thoughts of her, thoughts that hung on with bulldog tenacity despite his every effort to shake them loose. In the smoke of his pipe he saw her, unquestionably beautiful beyond comparison. He saw the long lashes shading the depths of her blue-gray eyes; her lips, curved deliciously; the alluring sheen of her wavy blonde hair; the perfection of her girlish figure.

"Damn!" muttered Old-timer. "Why in hell did I have to run into *her?*"

UPON the following morning he left camp, taking two blacks with him, and leaving the third, armed with an old rifle, to protect the girl and attend to her wants. She was already up when he departed, but he did not look in her direction as he strode out of camp, though she furtively watched him go, feeding her contempt on a final disparaging appraisement of his rags and tatters.

"Unspeakable boor!" she whispered venomously as a partial outlet for her pent-up hatred of the man. . . .

Old-timer had a long, hard day. No sign of elephant rewarded his search, nor did he contact a single native from whom he might obtain information as to the whereabouts of the great herd that rumor and hope had located in this vicinity.

Not only was the day one of physical hardship, but it had been mentally trying as well. He had been disappointed in not locating the ivory they needed so sorely, but this had been the least of his mental perturbation. He had been haunted by thoughts of the girl. All day he had tried to rid his mind of recollection of that lovely face, but it persisted in haunting him. At first she had aroused other memories, painful memories of another girl. But gradually the vision of that other girl had faded until only the blue-gray eyes and blonde hair of the girl in the lonely camp persisted in his thoughts.

When he turned back toward camp at the end of his fruitless search for elephant signs, a new determination filled

him with disquieting thoughts and spurred him rapidly upon the back-trail. It had been two years since he had seen a white woman, and then Fate had thrown this lovely creature across his path. What had women ever done for him? "Made a bum of me," he soliloquized, "—ruined my life! This girl would have been lost but for me. She owes me something. All women owe me something for what one woman did to me. This girl is going to pay the debt.

"God, but she's beautiful! And she belongs to me. I found her, and I am going to keep her until I am tired of her. Then I'll throw her over, the way I was thrown over. It's only fair. I've got something coming to me in this world. I'm entitled to a little happiness, and by God, I'm going to have it."

The great sun hung low in the west as the man came in sight of the clearing. The tent of the girl was the first thing that greeted his eyes. The soiled canvas had sheltered and protected her; like all inanimate objects that have been closely associated with an individual, the tent reflected something of the personality of the girl. The mere sight of it stirred the man deeply. He quickened his pace in his eagerness to take the girl in his arms.

Then he saw an object lying just beyond her tent that turned him cold with apprehension. Springing forward at a run, closely followed by his two retainers, he came to a halt beside the grisly thing that had attracted his horrified attention and turned the hot wave of his desire to cold dread. It was the dead and horribly mutilated body of the black he had left to guard the girl. Cruel talons had lacerated the flesh with deep wounds that might have been inflicted by one of the great carnivores, but the further mutilation of the corpse had been the work of man.

Stooping over the body of their fellow, the two blacks muttered angrily in their native tongue; then one of them turned to Old-timer.

"The Leopard Men, Bwana," he said.

FEARFULLY the white man approached the girl's tent, dreading what he might find there, dreading even more that he might find nothing. As he threw aside the flap and looked in, his worst fears were realized: the girl was not there. His first impulse was to call aloud to her as though she might be somewhere near in the forest; but as he turned to do so, he suddenly realized that he did not know her name, and in the brief pause that this realization gave him, the futility of the act was borne in upon him. If she still lived, she was far away by now in the clutches of the black fiends who had slain her protector.

A sudden wave of rage overwhelmed the white man; his hot desire for the girl was transmuted to almost maniacal anger toward her abductors. Perhaps he thought only of his own frustrated hopes; but he believed that he was thinking only of the girl's helplessness, of the hideousness of her situation. Ideas of rescue and vengeance filled his whole being, banishing the fatigue of the long arduous day.

It was already late in the afternoon, but he determined upon immediate pursuit. Following his curt orders, the two blacks hastily buried their dead comrade, made up a couple of packs with such provisions and camp necessities as the marauders had not filched, and with the sun but an hour high, followed their mad master upon the fresh trail of the Leopard Men.

CHAPTER VI

The Traitor

THE warriors of Watenga had not responded with great enthusiasm to the call to arms borne by the messengers of Orando. There were wars, and wars. One directed against the feared secret order of the Leopard Men did not appear to be highly popular. There were excellent reasons for this. In the first place the very name of Leopard Men was sufficient to arouse terror in the breast of the bravest, the gruesome methods of the Leopard Men being what they were. There was also the well-known fact that, being a secret order recruited among unrelated clans, some of one's own friends might be members—in which event an active enemy of the order could easily be marked for death. And such a death!

It is little wonder, then, that from thousands of potential crusaders, Orando discovered but a scant hundred awaiting the call to arms the morning following the celebration and war-dance at Tumbai. Even among the hundred, there were several whose martial spirit had suffered eclipse overnight. Perhaps this was largely due to the after effects of an overdose of native beer. It is not pleasant to set out for war with a headache.

Orando was moving about among the warriors squatting near the numerous cooking-fires. There was not much talk this morning and less laughter; the boasting of yester eve was stilled. Today war seemed a serious business; yet, their bellies once filled with warm food, they would go forth presently with loud yells, with laughter, and with song.

Orando made inquiries. "Where is Muzimo?" he asked, but no one had seen Muzimo. He and the Spirit of Nyamwegi had disappeared. This seemed an ill omen. Some one suggested that possibly Sobito had been right; Muzimo might be in league with the Leopard Men.

This at once aroused inquiry as to the whereabouts of Sobito. No one had seen him, either—which was strange, since Sobito was an early riser, and not one to be missing when the cook-pots were a-boil. An old man went to his hut and questioned one of the witch-doctor's wives. Sobito was gone!

WHEN this fact was reported, conversation waxed. The enmity between Muzimo and Sobito was recalled, as was the latter's threat that Muzimo would die before morning. There were those who suggested that perhaps it was Sobito who was dead, while others recalled the fact that there was nothing unusual in his disappearance. He had disappeared before. In fact, it was nothing unusual for him to absent himself mysteriously from the village for days at a time. Upon his return after such absences, he had darkly hinted that he had been sitting in council with the spirits and demons of another world, from whom he derived his supernatural powers.

Lupingu of Tibbu thought that they should not set out upon the war-trail in the face of such dire omens. He went quietly among the warriors, seeking adherents to his suggestion that they disband and return to their own villages, but Orando shamed them out of desertion. The old men and the women would laugh at them, he told them. They had made too much talk about war; they had boasted too much. They would lose face forever if they failed to go through with it now.

"But who will guide us to the village of the Leopard Men, now that your *muzimo* has deserted you?" demanded Lupingu.

"I do not believe that he has deserted me," maintained Orando stoutly. "He

too has doubtless gone to take council with the spirits. He will return and lead us."

As though in answer to his statement, which was also a prayer, a giant figure dropped lightly from the branches of a near-by tree and strode toward him. It was Muzimo. Across one of his broad shoulders rested the carcass of a buck. On top of the buck sat the Spirit of Nyamwegi, screaming shrilly to attract attention to his prowess. "We are mighty hunters," he cried. "See what we have killed." No one but Muzimo understood him, but that made no difference to the Spirit of Nyamwegi, because he did not know that they could not understand him. He thought that he was making a fine impression, and he was quite proud of himself.

"Where have you been, Muzimo?" asked Orando. "Some said that Sobito had slain you."

Muzimo shrugged.

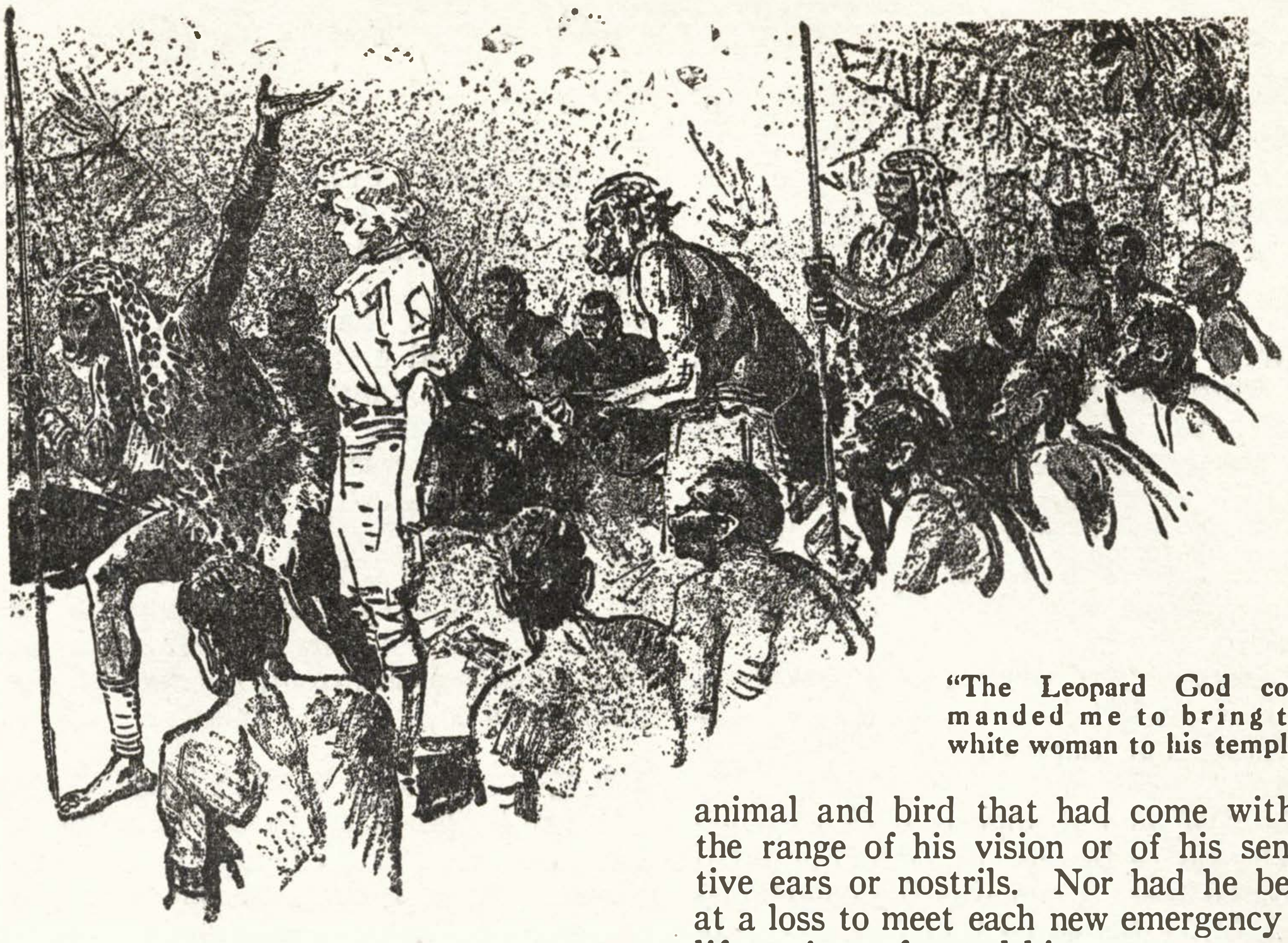
"Words do not kill," he said briefly. "Sobito is full of words."

"Have you killed Sobito?" demanded an old man.

"I have not seen Sobito since before Kudu, the sun, went to his lair last night," replied Muzimo.

"He is gone from the village," Orando explained. "It was thought that maybe—"

"I went to hunt. Your food is no good; you spoil it with fire." Muzimo squatted down at the bole of a tree and cut meat from his kill, which he ate, growling. The blacks looked on terrified, giving him a wide berth.



"The Leopard God commanded me to bring the white woman to his temple."

When he had finished his meal, he arose and stretched his great frame, and the action reminded them of Simba the lion.

"Muzimo is now ready," he announced. "If the Utengas are ready, let us go."

Orando gathered his warriors. He selected his captains and gave the necessary orders for the conduct of the march. This all required time, as no point could be decided without a general argument in which all participated whether the matter concerned them or not.

Tarzan—known to the blacks and to himself only as Muzimo—stood silently aside. He was wondering about these people. He was wondering about himself. Physically, he and they were much alike; yet in addition to the difference in coloration, there were other differences, those he could see and those he could not see but sensed. The Spirit of Nyamwegi was like them and like him, too; yet here again was a vast difference. Muzimo knit his brows in perplexity. Vaguely he almost recalled a fleeting memory that seemed the key to the riddle, but it eluded him. He felt dimly that he had had a past, but he could not recall it. He recalled only the things that he had seen and the experiences that had come to him, since Orando had freed him from the great tree that had fallen on him; yet he appreciated the fact that when he had seen each seemingly new thing he had instantly recognized it for what it was—man, the okapi, the buck, each and every animal and bird that had come within the range of his vision or of his sensitive ears or nostrils. Nor had he been at a loss to meet each new emergency of life as it confronted him.

He had thought much upon this subject (so much that at times the effort of sustained thought tired him), and he had come to the conclusion that somewhere, sometime he must have experienced many things. He had questioned Orando casually as to the young black's past, and learned that he could recall events in clear detail as far back as his early childhood. Muzimo could recall but a couple of yesterdays. Finally he came to the conclusion that his mental state must be the natural state of spirits, and because it was so different from that of man he found in it almost irrefutable proof of his spirit-hood. With a feeling of detachment he viewed the antics of man, viewed them contemptuously. With folded arms he stood apart in silence, apparently as oblivious to the noisy bickerings of the blacks as to the chattering and scolding of the Spirit of Nyamwegi perched upon his shoulder.

But at last the noisy horde was herded into something approximating order, and, followed by laughing, screaming women and children, started upon its march toward high adventure. Not, however, until the latter had turned back did the men settle down to serious marching, though Lupingu's croakings of eventual disaster had never permitted them to forget the seriousness of their undertaking.

FOR three days they marched, led by Orando and guided by Muzimo. The spirits of the warriors were high as they

approached their goal. Lupingu had been silenced by ridicule. All seemed well. Muzimo had told them that the village of the Leopard Men lay near at hand and that upon the following morning he would go ahead alone and reconnoiter.

With the dawning of the fourth day, all were eager, for Orando had never ceased to incite them to anger against the murderers of Nyamwegi. Constantly he had impressed them with the fact that the Spirit of Nyamwegi was with them to watch over and protect them, that his own *muzimo* was there to insure them victory.

It was while they were squatting about their breakfast fires that some one discovered that Lupingu was missing. A careful search of the camp failed to locate him, and it was at once assumed that, nearing the enemy, he had deserted through fear. Loud was the condemnation, bitter the scorn that this cowardly defection aroused. It was still the topic of angry discussion as Muzimo and the Spirit of Nyamwegi slipped silently away through the trees toward the village of the Leopard Men.

A FIBER rope about her neck, the girl was being half led, half dragged through the jungle. A powerful young black walking ahead of her held the free end of the rope; ahead of him an old man led the way; behind her was a second young man. All three were strangely garbed in leopard-skins. The heads of leopards, cunningly mounted, fitted snugly over their woolly pates. Curved steel talons were fitted to their fingers. Their teeth were filed, their faces hideously painted. Of the three, the old man was the most terrifying. He was the leader. The others cringed servilely when he gave commands.

The girl could understand little that they said. She had no idea as to the fate that was destined for her. As yet they had not injured her, but she could anticipate nothing other than a horrible termination of this hideous adventure. The young man who led her was occasionally rough when she stumbled or faltered, though he had not been actually brutal. Their appearance, however, was sufficient to arouse the direst forebodings in her mind, and she had always the recollection of the horrid butchery of the faithful black man who had been left to guard her.

Thoughts of him reminded her of the white man who had left him to protect her. She had feared and mistrusted him; she had wanted to be rid of him. Now she wished that she were back in his camp. She did not admire him any more than she had. It was merely that she considered him the lesser of two evils. As she recalled him she thought of him only as an ill-mannered boor, as quite the most disagreeable person she had ever seen. Yet there was that about him which aroused her curiosity. His English suggested anything other than illiteracy. His clothes and his attitude toward her placed him upon the lowest rung of the social scale. He occupied her thoughts to a considerable extent, but he still remained an inexplicable enigma.

FOR two days her captors followed obscure trails. They passed no villages, saw no other human beings than themselves. Then, toward the close of the second day they came suddenly upon a large, palisaded village beside a river. The heavy gates that barred the entrance were closed, although the sun had not yet set; but when they had approached closely enough to be recognized they were admitted following a short parley between the old leader and the keepers of the gate.

The stronghold of the Leopard Men was the village of Gato Mgungu, chief of a once powerful tribe that had dwindled in numbers until now it boasted but this single village. But Gato Mgungu was also chief of the Leopard Men, a position which carried with it a sinister power far above that of many a chief whose villages were more numerous and whose tribes were numerically far stronger. This was true largely because of the fact that the secret order whose affairs he administered was recruited from unrelated clans and villages, and, because of the allegiance enforced by its strict and merciless code, Gato Mgungu demanded the first loyalty of its members, even above their loyalty to their own tribes or families. Thus, in nearly every village within a radius of a hundred miles Gato Mgungu had followers who kept him informed as to the plans of other chiefs, followers who must even slay their own kin if the chief of the Leopard Men so decreed.

IN the village of Gato Mgungu alone were all inhabitants members of the secret order; in the other villages his adherents were unknown, or, at most, only

suspected of membership in the feared and hated order. To be positively identified as a Leopard Man, in most villages, would have been to meet sudden mysterious death; for so loathed were they a son would kill his own father if he knew that he was a member of the sect, yet so feared that no man dared destroy one except in secret lest the wrath and the terrible vengeance of the order fall upon him.

In secret places, deep hidden in impenetrable jungle,the Leopard Men of outlying districts performed the abhorrent rites of the order except upon those occasions when they gathered at the village of Gato Mgungu, near which was located their temple. Such was the reason for the gathering that now filled the village with warriors and for the relatively small number of women and children that the girl noticed as she was dragged through the gateway into the main street.

Here the women, degraded, hideous, filed-toothed harpies, would have set upon her and torn her to pieces but for the interference of her captors, who laid about them with the hafts of their spears, driving the creatures off until the old man could make himself heard. He spoke angrily with a voice of authority, and immediately the women withdrew, though they cast angry, venomous glances at the captive that boded no good for her should she fall into their hands.

GUARDING her closely, her captors led her through a horde of milling warriors to a large hut before which was seated an old, wrinkled black, with a huge belly. This was Gato Mgungu, chief of the Leopard Men. As the four approached he looked up, and at sight of the white girl a sudden interest momentarily lighted his blood-shot eyes that ordinarily gazed dully from between red and swollen lids. Then he recognized the old man.

"You have brought me a present, Lulimi?" he demanded.

"Lulimi has brought a present," replied the old man, "but not for Gato Mgungu alone."

"What do you mean?" The chief scowled now.

"I have brought a present for the whole clan and for the Leopard God."

"Gato Mgungu does not share his slaves with others," the chief growled.

"I have brought no slave," snapped Lulimi. It was evident that he did not greatly fear Gato Mgungu. And why should he, who was high in the priesthood of the Leopard Clan?

"Then why have you brought this white woman to my village?"

BY now there was a dense half-circle of interested auditors craning their necks to view the prisoner and straining their ears to catch all that was passing between these two great men of their little world.

For this audience Lulimi was most grateful, since he was never so happy as when he held the center of the stage, surrounded by credulous and ignorant listeners. Lulimi was a priest.

"Three nights ago we lay in the forest far from the village of Gato Mgungu, far from the temple of the Leopard God." Already he could see his auditors pricking up their ears. "It was a dark night. The lion was abroad, and the leopard. We kept a large fire burning to frighten them away. It was my turn to watch. The others slept. Suddenly I saw two green eyes shining just beyond the fire. They blazed like living coals. They came closer, and I was afraid; but I could not move. I could not call out. My tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth. My jaws would not open. Closer and closer they came, those terrible eyes, until, just beyond the fire, I saw a great leopard, the largest leopard that I have ever seen. I thought that the end of my days had come and that I was about to die.

"I waited for him to spring upon me, but he did not spring. Instead, he opened his mouth and spoke to me."

Gasps of astonishment greeted this remarkable statement, while Lulimi paused for effect.

"What did he say to you?" demanded Gato Mgungu.

"He said, 'I am the brother of the Leopard God. He sent me to find Lulimi, because he trusts Lulimi. Lulimi is a great man. He is very brave and wise. There is no one knows as much as Lulimi.'"

Gato Mgungu looked bored. "Did the Leopard God send his brother three marches to tell you that?"

"He told me other things, many things. Some of them I can repeat, but others I may never speak of. Only the Leopard God, and his brother, and Lulimi know these things."

"What has all this to do with the white woman?" demanded Gato Mgungu.

"I am getting to that," replied Lulimi

sourly. He did not relish these interruptions.

"Then, when the great brother of the Leopard God had asked after my health, he told me that I was to go to a certain place the next day and that there I should find a white woman. She would be alone in the jungle with one black man. He commanded me to kill the black man and bring the woman to his temple to be high priestess of the Leopard Clan. This Lulimi will do. Tonight Lulimi takes the white high priestess to the great temple. I have spoken."

FOR a moment there was awed silence. Gato Mgungu did not seem pleased; but Lulimi was a powerful priest whom the rank and file respected, and he had greatly increased his prestige by this weird tale. Gato Mgungu was sufficiently a judge of men to know that. Furthermore, he was an astute old politician with an eye to the future. He knew that Imigeg, the high priest, was a very old man who could not live much longer and that Lulimi, who had been laying his plans to that end for years, would doubtless succeed him. Now a high priest friendly to Gato Mgungu could do much to increase the power and prestige of the chief and, incidentally, his revenues; while one who was inimical might threaten his ascendancy. Therefore, reading thus plainly the handwriting on the wall, Gato Mgungu seized this opportunity to lay the foundations of future friendship and understanding between them, though he knew that Lulimi was an old fraud and his story doubtless a canard.

Many of the warriors, having sensed in the chief's former attitude a certain antagonism to Lulimi, were evidently waiting a cue from their leader. As Gato Mgungu jumped, so would the majority of the fighting men; but when the day came that a successor to Imigeg must be chosen it would be the priests who would make the selection, and Gato Mgungu knew that Lulimi had a long memory.

All eyes were upon the chief as he cleared his royal throat. "We have heard the story of Lulimi," he said. "We all know Lulimi. In his own village he is a great witch-doctor. In the temple of the Leopard God there is no greater priest after Imigeg. It is not strange that the brother of the Leopard God should speak to Lulimi. Gato Mgungu is only a fighting man. He does not talk with gods and demons. This is not a matter for warriors. It is a matter for priests. All that Lulimi has said we believe. But let us take the white woman to the temple. The Leopard God and Imigeg will know whether the jungle leopard spoke true words to Lulimi or not. Has not my tongue spoken wise words, Lulimi?"

"The tongue of Gato Mgungu, the chief, always speaks wise words," replied the priest, who was inwardly delighted that the chief's attitude had not been, as he had feared, antagonistic. And thus the girl's fate was decided by the greed of corrupt politicians, temporal and ecclesiastical, suggesting that the benighted blacks of central Africa are in some respects quite as civilized as we.

As preparations were being made to conduct the girl to the temple, a lone warrior, sweat-streaked and breathless, approached the gates of the village. Here he was halted, but when he had given the secret sign of the Leopard Clan he was admitted. There was much excited jabbering at the gateway; but to all questions the newcomer insisted that he must speak to Gato Mgungu immediately upon a matter of urgent importance, and presently he was brought before the chief.

Again he gave the secret sign of the Leopard Clan as he faced Gato Mgungu.

"What message do you bring?" demanded the chief.

"A few hours' march from here a hundred Utenga warriors led by Orando, the son of Lobongo the chief, are waiting to attack your village. They come to avenge Nyamwegi of Kibbu, who was killed by members of the clan. If you send warriors at once to hide beside the trail, they can ambush the Utengas, and kill them all."

"Where lies their camp?"

THE messenger described the location minutely; when he had finished, Gato Mgungu ordered a sub-chief to gather three hundred warriors and march against the invaders; then he turned to the messenger. "We shall feast tonight upon our enemies," he growled, "and you shall sit beside Gato Mgungu and have the choicest morsels."

"I may not remain," replied the messenger. "I must return from whence I came lest I be suspected of carrying word to you."

"Who are you?" demanded Gato Mgungu.

"I am Lupingu of Kibbu, in the Watenga country," replied the messenger.

Kali Bwana, who had worn creations of the most famous *couturiers* of Paris, stood clothed as she never had been clothed before.

CHAPTER VII

The Captive

KNOWING nothing of the meaning of what was transpiring around her, the girl yet sensed in the excitement and activity following the coming of the messenger something of the underlying cause. She saw the fighting men hurriedly arming themselves; she saw them depart from the village. In her heart was a hope that perhaps the enemy they went to meet might be a succoring party in search of her. Reason argued to the contrary; but hope catches at straws, unreasoning.

When the war-party had departed, attention was again focused upon the girl. Lulimi waxed important. He ordered people about right and left. Twenty men armed with spears and shields and carrying paddles formed about her as an escort.

Led proudly by Lulimi, they marched through the gateway of the village down to the river. Here they placed her in a large canoe which they launched in silence, knowing that enemies were not far distant. There was no singing or shouting as there would have been upon a similar occasion under ordinary circumstances. In silence they dipped their paddles into the swift stream; silently they sped with the current down the broad river, keeping close to the river bank upon the same side as that upon which they had launched the craft by the village of Gato Mgungu.

Poor little Kali Bwana! They had taken the rope from about her neck; they treated her now with a certain respect, tinged with awe, for was she not to be the high priestess of the Leopard God? But of that she knew nothing. She could only wonder, as numb with hopelessness she watched the green verdure of the river bank move swiftly past. Where were they taking her? To what horrid fate? She noted the silence and the haste of her escort; she recalled the excitement following the coming of the messenger to the village and the hasty exodus of the war party.

All these facts combined to suggest that her captors were hurrying her away from a rescuing party. But who could have organized such an expedition? Who knew of her plight? Only the bitter man of rags and patches. But what could he do to effect her rescue, even if he cared to do so? It had been evident to her that he was a poor and worthless vagabond. His force consisted now of but two natives. His camp, he had told her, was several marches from where he had found her. He could not possibly have

obtained reinforcements from that source in the time that had elapsed since her capture, even if they existed, which she doubted. She could not imagine that such a sorry specimen of poverty commanded any resources whatever. Thus she was compelled to abandon hope of succor from this source; yet hope did not die. In the last extremity one may always expect a miracle. . . .

For a mile or two the canoe sped down the river, the paddles rising and falling with clocklike regularity and almost in silence; then suddenly the speed of the craft was checked, and its nose turned toward the bank. Ahead of them the girl saw the mouth of a small affluent of the main river, and presently the canoe slid into its sluggish waters.

Great trees arched above the narrow, winding stream, dense underbrush choked the ground between their boles; matted vines and creepers clung to their mossy branches, or hung motionless in the breathless air, trailing almost to the surface of the water; gorgeous blooms shot the green with vivid color. It was a scene of beauty, yet there hung about it an air of mystery and death like a noxious miasma. It reminded the girl of the face of a lovely woman behind whose mask of beauty hid a vicious soul. The silence, the scent of rotting things in the heavy air oppressed her.

Just ahead, a great slimy body slid from a rotting log into the slow-moving waters. It was a crocodile. As the canoe glided silently through the semi-darkness, the girl saw that the river was fairly alive with these hideous reptiles, whose presence served but to add to the depression that already weighed so heavily upon her.

SHE sought to arouse her drooping spirits by recalling the faint hope of rescue that she had entertained and clung to ever since she had been so hurriedly removed from the village. Fortunately for her peace of mind she did not know her destination, nor that the only avenue to it lay along this crocodile-infested stream. No other path led through the matted jungle to the cleverly hidden temple of the Leopard God. No other avenue than this fetid river gave ingress to it, and this was known to no human being who was not a Leopard Man.

The canoe had proceeded up the stream for a couple of miles when the girl saw upon the right bank just ahead of them a large, grass-thatched building. Unaccustomed as she had been during the past few months to seeing any structure larger than the ordinary native huts, the size of this building filled her with astonishment. It was quite two hundred feet long and fifty feet wide, and fully fifty feet in height. It lay parallel to the river, its main entrance being in the end they were approaching. A wide veranda extended across the front of the building and along the side facing the river. The entire structure was elevated on piles to a height of about ten feet above the ground. She did not know it, but this was the temple of the Leopard God, whose high priestess she was destined to be.

As the canoe drew closer to the building, a number of men emerged from its interior. Lulimi rose from the bottom of the craft where he had been squatting and shouted a few words to the men on the temple porch. They were the secret passwords of the order, to which one of the guardians of the temple replied, whereupon the canoe drew in to the shore.

A FEW curious priests surrounded Lulimi and the girl as the old man escorted her up the steps to the great entrance flanked by grotesquely carved images and into the half-light of the interior. Here she found herself in an enormous room open to the rafters far above her head. Hideous masks hung upon the supporting columns with shields, and spears, and knives, and human skulls. Idols, crudely carved, stood about the floor. Many of these represented a human body with the head of an animal, though so rude was the craftsmanship that the girl could not be certain what animal they were intended to represent. It might be a leopard, she thought.

At the far end of the room, which they were approaching, she discerned a raised dais. It was, in reality, a large platform paved with clay. Upon it, elevated a couple of feet, was a smaller dais about five feet wide and twice as long, which was covered with the skins of animals. A heavy post supporting a human skull was set in the center of the long dimension of the smaller dais close to its rear edge. These details she noted only casually at the time. She was to have reason to remember them vividly later.

As Lulimi led her toward the dais a very old man emerged from an opening in the wall at its back and came toward them. He had a particularly repellant visage, the ugliness of which was accen-

tuated by the glowering scowl with which he regarded her.

As his old eyes fell upon Lulimi they were lighted dimly by a feeble ray of recognition. "It is you?" he mumbled. "But why do you bring this white woman? Who is she? A sacrifice?"

"Listen, Imigeg," whispered Lulimi, "and think well. Remember your prophecy."

"What prophecy?" demanded the high priest querulously. He was very old, and his memory sometimes played him tricks, though he refused to admit it.

"Long ago you said that some day a white priestess would sit with you and the Leopard God, here on the great throne of the temple. Now your prophecy shall be fulfilled. Here is the white priestess, brought by Lulimi, just as you prophesied."

Now Imigeg did not recall having made any such prophecy, for the very excellent reason that he never had done so; but Lulimi was a wily old person who know Imigeg better than Imigeg knew himself. He knew that the old high priest was rapidly losing his memory, and he knew, too, that he was very sensitive on the subject, so sensitive that he would not dare deny having made such a prophecy as Lulimi imputed to him.

FOR reasons of his own Lulimi desired a white priestess. Just how it might redound to his benefit is not entirely clear, but the mental processes of priests are often beyond the ken of lay minds. Perhaps his reason might have been obvious to a Hollywood publicity agent; but however that may be, the method he had adopted to insure the acceptance of his priestess was entirely successful.

Imigeg swallowed the bait, hook, line, and sinker. He swelled with importance. "Imigeg talks with the demons and the spirits," he said; "they tell him everything. When we have human flesh for the Leopard God and his priests, the white woman shall be made high priestess of the order."

"That should be soon then," announced Lulimi.

"How do you know that?" demanded Imigeg.

"My *muzimo* came to me and told me that the warriors now in the village of Gato Mgungu would march forth today, returning with food enough for all."

"Good," exclaimed Imigeg quickly; "it is just as I prophesied yesterday to the lesser priests."

"Tonight then," said Lulimi. "Now you will want to have the white woman prepared."

At the suggestion, Imigeg clapped his hands, whereupon several of the lesser priests advanced. "Take the woman," he instructed one of them, "to the quarters of the priestesses. She is to be high priestess of the order. Tell them this and that they shall prepare her. Tell them, also, that Imigeg holds them responsible for her safety."

THE lesser priest led the girl through the opening at the rear of the dais, and she discovered herself in a corridor flanked on either side by rooms. To the door of one of these the men conducted her and, pushing her ahead, entered. It was a large room in which were a dozen women, naked but for scanty skirts of grass. Nearly all of them were young; but there was one toothless old hag, and it was she whom the man addressed.

The angry and resentful movement of the women toward the white girl at the instant that she entered the room was halted at the first words of her escort. "This is the new high priestess of the Leopard God," he announced. "Imigeg sends orders that you are to prepare her for the rites to be held tonight. If any harm befalls her you will be held accountable, and you all know the anger of Imigeg."

"Leave her with me," mumbled the old woman. "I have served in the temple through many rains, and I have not filled the belly of the Leopard God yet."

"You are too old and tough," snarled one of the younger women.

"YOU are not," snapped the old hag. "All the more reason that you should be careful not to make Imigeg angry, or Mumga, either. Go," she directed the priest. "The white woman will be safe with old Mumga."

As the man left the room the women gathered about the girl. Hatred distorted their dark features. The younger women tore at her clothing. They pushed and pulled her about, all the while jabbering excitedly; but they did not injure her aside from a few scratches from claw-like nails.

THE reason for bringing her here at all was unknown to Kali Bwana; the intentions of the women were, similarly, a mystery. Their demeanor boded her no good, and she believed that eventually they would kill her. Their degraded faces, their sharp-filed, yellow fangs, their angry voices and glances left no doubt in her mind as to the seriousness of her situation or the desires of the harpies. That a power which they feared restrained them she did not know. She saw only the menace of their attitude toward her and their rough and brutal handling of her.

One by one they stripped her garments from her, and then she was accorded a respite as they fell to fighting among themselves for her clothing. For the first time she had an opportunity to note her surroundings. She saw that the room was the common sleeping and eating apartment of the women. Straw mats were stretched across one of its sides. There was a clay hearth at one end directly below a hole in the roof, through which some of the smoke from a still smoldering fire was finding its way into the open air, though most of it hung among the rafters of the high ceiling, from whence it settled down to fill the apartment with acrid fumes. A few cooking-pots stood on or beside the hearth. There were earthen jars and wooden boxes, fiber baskets and pouches of skin strewn upon the floor along the walls, many near the sleeping mats. From pegs stuck in the walls depended an array of ornaments and finery: strings of beads, necklaces of human teeth and of the teeth of leopards, bracelets of copper and iron and anklets of the same metals, feather head-dresses and breastplates of metal and of hide, and innumerable garments fashioned from the black-spotted yellow skins of leopards. Everything in the apartment bespoke primitive savagery in keeping with its wild and savage inmates.

When the final battle for the last vestige of her apparel had terminated, the women again turned their attention to the girl. Old Mumga addressed her at considerable length, but Kali Bwana only shook her head to indicate that she could understand nothing that was said to her. Then at a word from the old woman they laid hold of her again, none too gently. She was thrown upon one of the filthy sleeping mats, an earthen jar was dragged to the side of the mat, and two young women proceeded to anoint her with a vile-smelling oil, the base of which might have been rancid butter. This oil was rubbed in by rough hands until her flesh was almost raw; then a greenish liquid, which smelled of bay leaves and stung like fire, was poured over her; and again she was rubbed until the liquid had evaporated.

When this ordeal had been concluded, leaving her weak and sick from its effects, she was clothed. Much discussion accompanied this ceremony, and several times women were sent to consult Imigeg and to fetch apparel from other parts of the temple. Finally they seemed satisfied with their handiwork, and Kali Bwana, who had worn some of the most exclusive creations of the most famous *couturiers* of Paris, stood clothed as she had never been clothed before.

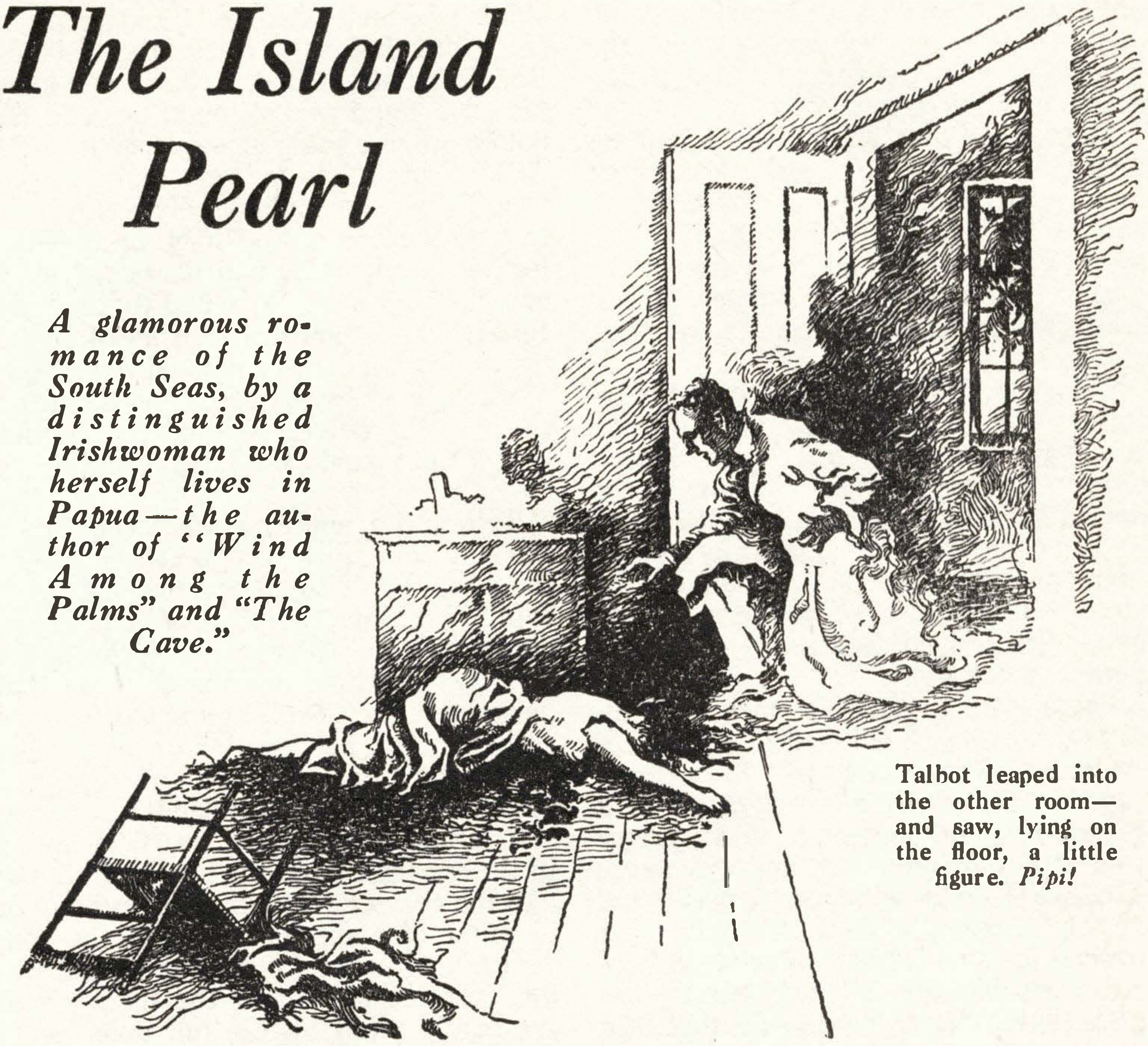
FIRST they had adjusted about her waist a loin-cloth made from the skins of unborn leopard cubs; and then, over one shoulder, had been draped a gorgeous hide of vivid yellow, spotted with glossy black. This garment hung in graceful folds quite to her knee on one side, being shorter on the other. A rope of leopard tails gathered it loosely about her hips. About her throat was a necklace of human teeth; upon her wrists and arms were heavy bracelets, at least two of which she recognized as gold. In similar fashion were her ankles adorned, and then more necklaces were hung about her neck. Her head-dress consisted of a diadem of leopard skin supporting a variety of plumes and feathers which entirely encircled her head. But the finishing touch brought a chill of horror to her; long, curved talons of gold were affixed to her fingers and thumbs, recalling the cruel death of the black who had striven so bravely and so futilely to protect her.

Thus was Kali Bwana prepared for the hideous rites of the Leopard Men that would make her high priestess of their savage god.

This, the most intriguing tale of the great Tarzan which Mr. Burroughs has ever written, develops unexpected situations in the forthcoming October issue.

The Island Pearl

A glamorous romance of the South Seas, by a distinguished Irishwoman who herself lives in Papua—the author of "Wind Among the Palms" and "The Cave."



Talbot leaped into the other room—and saw, lying on the floor, a little figure. *Pipi!*

By BEATRICE GRIMSHAW

Illustrated by Alexander De Leslie

ON the sands of the great South Seas, the waves cast up shells by thousands. Many are battered or commonplace, some brilliant and poisonous, some beautiful. Once in a long while you may find one of gemlike quality.

And the women of those far islands are like the shells.

On the shores of Niutaki, that great atoll toward the north, which is nothing but a ring of pounded coral sand held together by the roots of innumerable coconut trees, there are certain little curved shells, dainty of shape, and lined with creamy pearl. These are the pipis, and they have made fortunes for many men, because of the golden pearls that occasionally they contain.

Native names are mostly chosen by hazard. It was a lucky chance that gifted Jim Radcliffe's Island daughter with the name of Pipi. When she was sixteen, she made you think of the pipi pearls that the young men were just then busy gathering on the shallow reefs.

Like a few—very few—half-castes, Pipi united in herself the best of both races. She had straight little European features, and splendid South Sea eyes, deep as the open sea, where it plunges beyond the reef. She had the singing, sweet voice of the Islander, and the accent of cultivated England, learned from her well-mannered old waster of a father. Her hair was Island in its yard-long luxuriance, English in its color of pale honey; her skin was neither English nor Niutakian, but a transparent mingling of wax and pearl, that made her name a veritable inspiration.

Radcliffe had been lucky with his pipi fishing, and the girl wore night and day about her neck a coil of the finest golden pearls ever picked from the reefs. They seemed to be part of herself; you could

not imagine Pipi without her triple string of pipi pearls, or the pearls without the wearer—if you had the gift of picturing people and things symbolically.

It may be that Kirby Skeet had no such gift. Kirby Skeet had been known to say that that little girl was lucky to live in Niutaki instead of Sydney; if she'd been within a hundred yards of the 'Loo for five minutes, she'd have had her pretty neck twisted for the sake of what was on it.

This passed along among the simple Islanders for wit, and they howled with laughter. They did not know Skeet's history, nor why he was hiding among the Bonito Islands, far from all trade-routes. He had come there as a stowaway, rudely dumped ashore by the captain of the cargo-boat on which he had been discovered. He stayed because he had no money to get away.

There were three white men on Niutaki in those days: old Radcliffe the trader; Skeet, who was handy in a dozen ways,—a bit of an engineer, a bit of a carpenter, something of a clerk, pretty good at almost anything, and quite sure not to stick to it, whatever it was,—and the Englishman, Talbot. Talbot was a fine gentleman. He had come up to Niutaki from Papeete, the wickedest place in the South Seas; it was said that he'd had a roaring good time there; then, getting tired of it, had made his way to Niutaki to see if Bonito Island girls came up to what he had heard of them.

Talbot, with inimitable bearing, unbeatable clothes, and perfect good looks, had paralyzed most of Niutaki from the moment of his arrival. Radcliffe wasn't paralyzed, though, nor the Arikis—the chiefs who under George V, and an absentee Commissioner, ruled the Islands. Radcliffe knew Talbot's class as he knew his own house and veranda, and he did not approve of this example of it. The Arikis, specialists in long descent, said that Talbot was undoubtedly a chief, but they thought it would have been better for his family if he had happened to be one of twins. . . . You had to know the Bonitos, and their drastic way of reducing double births to single with a bucket of water, in order to understand the point. Clearly, the chiefs were of the opinion that Talbot would not have been the one "kept."

Talbot did not care what the Arikis thought of him, or what Radcliffe thought. From the moment he had seen Pipi flying along the sea-road on her bicycle (it was still the age of bicycles in the Bonitos) he had made up his mind that he wanted her. Pipi, in a small frock of amber cotton, her tawny hair held to her head by a tight crown of tuberose, and streaming back from under it; her arms and legs, like wax, like pearl, gleaming in the sea-light from the beach; Pipi, not like the coarser Niutaki girls, in body or in mind (for she had been to the convent school in the Cook Islands, and was but just returned with the influence of the gentle pious Sisters full upon her); Pipi, to Talbot, was something new in Island girls, and so entirely desirable that Talbot would almost have thought of marrying her—if that had been possible.

Pipi was a child of the ocean and the atolls, born of the sea-light, the sparkle of sun-polished palm-leaves, and the shining of the sands. In her face one read, as in a mirror, the clarity, the shadow-

Gossip is the chief diversion of the Islands; Niutaki became frantically interested in the course of Talbot's courtship.

less calm, of those barren far north islets under the Line.

And to Talbot, fresh from Tahiti's passionate luxuriance, its riot of fruit and flower, its madness of singing and girls and wine, this Pipi, sea-like, pearl-like, called irresistibly.

She took a wild delight in her bicycle; on the hard sands below the store you could see her any afternoon or morning, slowly pedaling up against the stream of the southeast trade, and gloriously flying back again before it, pale hair blown ahead of her, little yellow frock a-flutter like a flower. Upon one of many such mornings, Talbot caught her,—as he had often caught her before, on his way back from early fishing beyond the reef,—pulled her from her wheel, and set her laughing and breathless on her small bare feet. Pipi loved to be caught flying like that; it took strength and agility to do it, and further, no one else on the Island would have dared. . . . There is nothing that is not known, in the world of the reef and palm; everybody on Niutaki knew that Pipi was "good."

Radcliffe, looking out of his store window, saw Talbot catch the girl and swing her off her wheel; saw Pipi abandon herself recklessly to his arm, stagger laughing to her feet, and let the precious wheel go sliding over the sands.

"If I wasn't lame," he said (Radcliffe had lost a leg from a shark-bite, years before), "I'd go down on the beach and give that blighter what-for. Can't he let the girl alone?"

"No, he carn't," answered Kirby Skeet, who had come in for a tin of cigarettes. He smoked all day, and almost half the night. "I know his sort. A girl to him's the same as this to me." He touched his "capstan." "Got the habit, like."

"I never did get it," he volunteered, after a puff or two. "Gets in the way of a bloke's business." No one on Niutaki had ever asked Skeet what his business was; the Island world has its laws of etiquette. "I'm no ankleite," he went on. "I mean, they like me, and I like them, in reason, but as to taking them serious —*Caw!*"

Radcliffe threw a glance at Skeet. He'd always thought the fellow a "crook," but somehow Skeet didn't revolt him, as Talbot did. Skeet was small, very neat and tidy, even in these days of poverty—no socks, but canvas shoes always white; cheap trade shirt and trousers, clean, and ironed by Skeet himself with a lump of lead piping made hot in a drift-wood fire.

Almost all that night Pipi had been agonizing. Never to see Charley again!

He was skinny and dark; his black currant eyes were restless and too near his jutting nose; he was common, and a bit of a wrong 'un, in Radcliffe's opinion. Nevertheless, the trader would rather have trusted himself shoulder to shoulder with Kirby Skeet in a pinch, than with Talbot.

"I don't want to have him monkeying with my girl," Radcliffe confided. "I can get her suitably married any time she turns her mind that way; there's several decent half-castes here, and I believe in a girl going with her own kind. With Pipi's mother dead, and myself getting old, one begins to think what'll happen —afterward. But Pipi is an odd little bird; she's never given a look to anyone, until this good-looking waster came along. . . . I know what you're thinking—that I'm one myself, or I wouldn't be here at the back of God-speed, living on coconut and fish. Well, maybe I am and maybe you are,—I'm not asking,—but I married Pipi's mother, and that's what Talbot won't do, or I'm mistaken."

"You aren't mistaken," Skeet answered, round the stump of his cigarette. Then he slouched out of the house, and went leisurely down the beach, throwing a shrewd glance at Pipi and Talbot, as he passed them by.

"Is he gone on the girl himself?" wondered Radcliffe disapprovingly. He had noticed lately that Skeet had a habit of staring at Pipi in passing; he seldom spoke to her, never lingered in her presence, but—he stared. Heartily, now, he wished Talbot out of it, and Kirby

Skeet too. There would be a calling steamer in a week or so. . . .

Meantime Skeet walked past Pipi in the smiting sun, and taking a long look at her pearls, said to himself, "Seven hundred, at least!" Then he told himself, chewing his cigarette-butt, that there'd be a calling steamer in a week or so. . . .

Talbot had his arm round Pipi's waist. He was saying to her, "Dearest little girl in the world—you and I have known each other since the beginning of time, though we've only met now." He always began like that. By-and-by he would recite to her, with real feeling, the well-worn verses about the King in Babylon and the Christian slave. They came into his mind now, followed by a floating train of amorous reminiscence. . . . And he told himself, as he bent to kiss Pipi's sweet, half-yielded lips, that if the old boy made trouble—there'd be a calling steamer in a week or so.

Each of the three men looked to the coming of the steamer for the fulfillment of his private wish. Not one of them guessed in what case that coming was to find him.

GOSSIP is the chief diversion of the Islands; there it takes the place of picture-shows, newspapers, and wireless. Niutaki, in the blank interval between steamers, became frantically interested in the course of Talbot's courtship.

It was understood that Talbot was married. Everyone knew that Pipi, shining product of convent education, was "good," and that her father, at all events, meant she should remain so. It followed, of course, that the meetings of the pair were as secret as Niutaki allowed—which was not very secret after all. On a bare coral atoll, the movements of people are as conspicuous, as easily watched, as the affairs of ants on a kitchen table. Dark may be kindly—but Radcliffe's house was shut and locked at dark. You might see Pipi by lamplight, sitting in her rocking-chair, and idly, swinging to and fro; you might see her passing from kitchen to living-room, cooking and serving supper, and helping. You might—if you were a man who was curious, and interested in pearl necklaces—see, through the shut window of Pipi's bedroom, the girl retiring to rest, might watch her taking off and putting on again the glittering coil, when she washed her face and hands; see her, with convent-taught modesty, stretch forth an arm as fair as the pearls themselves, and put out the light, prior to undressing. You might say to yourself, thinking of all that fairness, that Talbot was a rotter, and you yourself a proper pig; might reckon, over again, "Seven hundred if a penny," wonder whether it was worth it, and know—bitterly knowing yourself—that anyhow you were going to do it, if you got the chance. . . .

ON the night of Radcliffe's death Talbot caught the other man. Talbot had come up to the house, openly troubled—though perhaps secretly a little pleased—over the accident that had occurred that afternoon. Radcliffe had been struck by a falling palm-tree, and was not expected to live. He fulfilled that expectation: even as Talbot reached the door, the native death-wail rose, high, trembling, dolorous, lifting to eternal stars and sea one more lament for one more finite life.

Talbot paused, in the shadow of the veranda. He didn't want to go in now; there was nothing to be said or done. He stood for a minute, staring idly at the unblinded windows. Pipi came and passed; her hands were held before her face and the long string of pearls, uncoiled, unnoticed, fell dangling to her knees.

Then Talbot, hidden in the veranda shade, saw Kirby Skeet, a small, active, ugly figure, creeping "like a cat burglar," as he told himself, to the window and peering covetously in.

"The little rat!" he thought. "After her pearls, I'll bet." He had plenty of money himself; pearls did not tempt him, only Pipi herself,—gem of all pearls,—and he did not suppose that Skeet would dare to raise his eyes to her. She was not imperiled, but her possessions were. That wouldn't do. Already Talbot was beginning to feel the owner's sense of responsibility toward Pipi.

He went away quietly, and said nothing to Skeet. In a day or two, when Pipi had recovered sufficiently from her loss to feel her new freedom, and meet him openly at any time on the beach, he told her that she was running a foolish risk in wearing her pearls; that she had best send them to his house, and let them remain there until the boat came in.

Pipi consented, and gave over the long glittering string. She was more like herself today.

She had cried over Radcliffe's death; always he had been stern with her, and never had she quite understood him, but he had spent money on her, loaded her

"Charley," she said, "I love you just like I love God—but I can't do wrong for you."

with pearls and pretty things, given her years at the convent school, and desired to see her well and safely married. Without him, she felt lost.

"I shall go back to the kind Sisters," she told Talbot. "This place isn't good now that my father is dead; not good for Pipi any more."

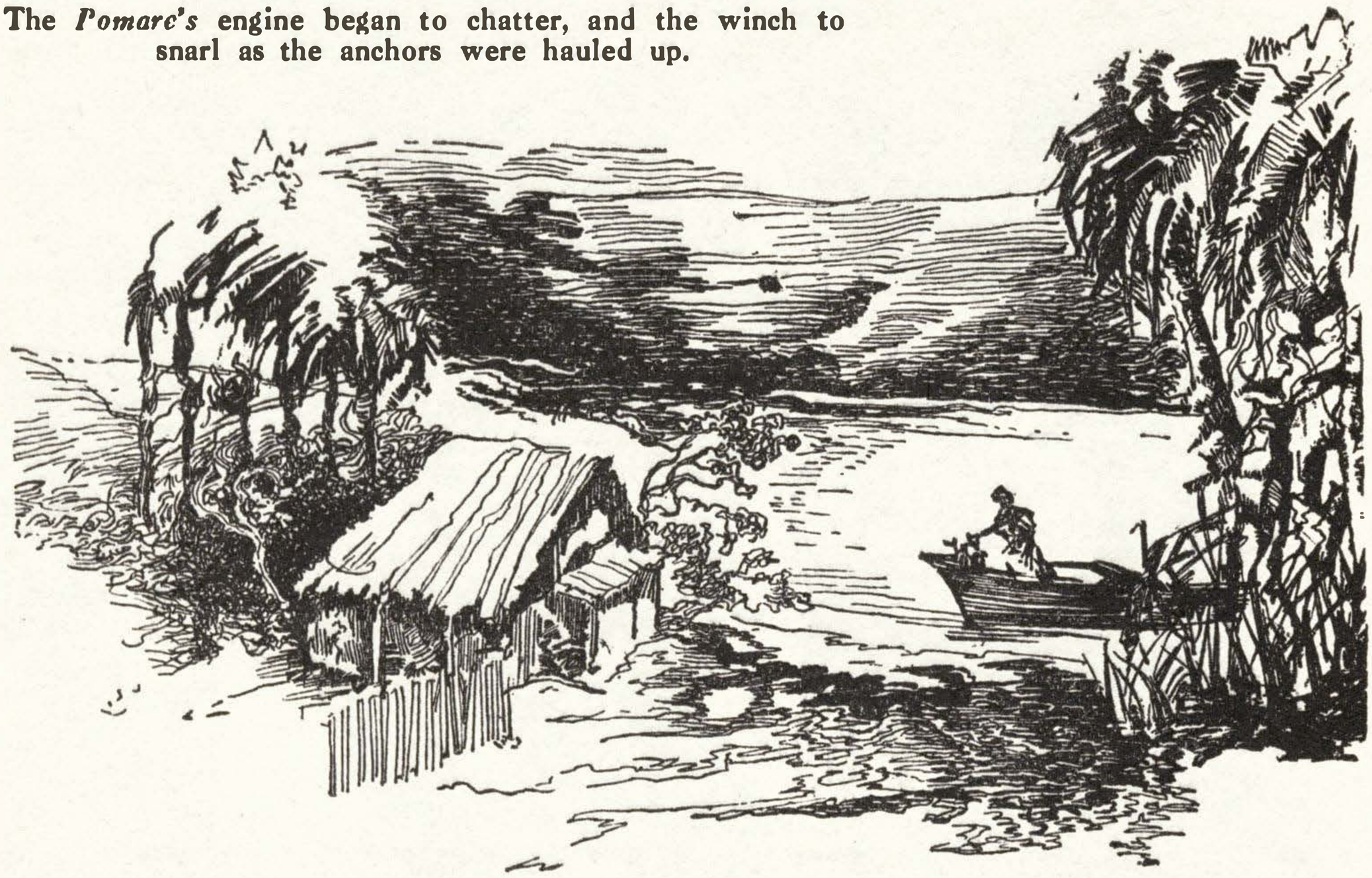
"Of course it's not," Talbot told her, flashing his blue eyes possessively upon her. "But you're not going back to those nuns; you're coming with me. You love me, my little Island pearl."

"I don't know, I don't know," she answered him. "My father told me you are a bad man; I don't want to love a bad man. The Sisters said—"

"Forget the Sisters!" Talbot said impatiently. "Do you love me or not?"

The child—for she was little more—cast him a look that he was never to forget, and said, her small bosom heaving like the sea that swayed and heaved beside them: "Charley, I love you just like I love God—but I can't do wrong for you."

The *Pomare's* engine began to chatter, and the winch to snarl as the anchors were hauled up.



He had his arm about her. He flung her off in a fury. "If you won't," he said, "if you send me away, you'll never see me again—never, never, never!" Every repetition of the word fell on her like a blow; he saw her cower, and was glad.

Turning away, he spoke once more:

"The steamer's due tomorrow. I'm going by her. If you aren't going, I'll send you back your pearls. If you are, come along with them—and me. That's that."

He knew the value of an ultimatum. Lest he should be tempted to spoil this one, he tramped away, never once looking back at the lonely little figure on the sands.

Skeet, from far off, had watched the scene. He would have liked to clap hands and applaud. "I didn't think she had it in her," he thought. "She's as straight as they're made. She's too good for that blarsted silvertail; the like of him wouldn't marry her if all the wives he ever had was dead." And then he began to think about the pearls again. Not for a moment had he faltered in his resolution to get them. The fact that Talbot had taken them into keeping was a nuisance, but—there were ways. . . .

Pipi went home alone, and what went on in her little solitary bedroom, all that afternoon and evening, only God and her guardian angel fully knew. "*Never—never—never,*" was the word that haunted her, beat her down, seized her, whenever she tried to rise from her bed, and flung her back again, face down on the tear-wet pillow. "Never, never, never!" Sometimes the terrible word changed its significance; it rang with another note: "If you go to him, you will never go to heaven. Never, never, never!" But this "never" was less terrible to Pipi than the first.

THE doors and windows of Talbot's house were wide open to the night, and every door and window was filled with stars. On Niutaki, there was seldom any noise but the sound of rollers creaming on the reef, or the dry rustle of palms; sometimes, you might hear in the distance the nightly *himene* of the natives, a windy booming of basses, with the high thin breeze of the soprano blowing through; like the reef and the trade-wind it was; you could listen to it without listening, hardly know it was there, so completely did it blend with the natural sounds of Niutaki. Very peaceful was the atoll on this night, the last before the six-weekly steamer should come in, to destroy the quiet of the beach with shrieking whistle and rattling derricks, and sting into excited futile activity every placid Niutakian—for a day.

Talbot had rented the best house on the Island, a missionary station seldom used. It had three or four bedrooms and a couple of sitting-rooms; it was well furnished after Island fashion with locally made tables and chairs, and a real wardrobe in the chief bedroom. For coolness, every room opened out of every door, and the three central rooms were all lighted,

more or less, by the big kerosene lamp dependent from the ceiling of the parlor.

Talbot called it a "rotten hole," but he had been very comfortable there during the weeks of his stay. He was comfortable now, stretched out on a long chair with a decanter and a glass beside him, leisurely drinking and smoking, and thinking indefinite thoughts. Talbot wasn't given to reflection; he thought in pictures, and the pictures were always of himself.

He saw himself, in Tahiti, hero of all the *tiere*-garlanded girls who danced and sang for wealthy strangers, made open love to by a Samoan princess, who was visiting Papeete; entertained by the white residents, introduced to their pretty daughters. There hadn't been a woman in those Islands, who didn't admire or wouldn't have admired him, given the chance. There wasn't one on Niutaki he could not beckon to him with a turn of his hand (he saw himself beckoning) except the Island pearl, little Pipi.

He saw himself going to Pipi's house, on steamer day. Saw himself, clearly, lifting her from the white bed, where she'd be lying crying her little heart out. Talking, persuading, bringing her round at last. She'd come—they always did. And he'd be good to her. She wanted taking care of, the little birdlike thing; she couldn't look after herself—why, but for him, she'd have been sleeping with those pearls in the house, ready for the little Sydney scum to steal! . . . He wouldn't have to send them back to her; she'd be there in the morning for him to slip them round her neck again. He saw himself doing it. Foolish Pipi—darling Pipi!

The night wore on. The singing had long ceased. There was no wind now; the palms were silent, and on the beach you could hear sounds that were never audible during the day—shells popping and opening in the pools, glassy tingling of coral twigs drawn back and forth by the tide.

Talbot was beginning to feel sleepy. He tapped out his cigar against the arm of the chair, and prepared to rise. How quiet it was! Not a sound in the house, not a—

Stay! Was that a noise? Instantly checked, but something that didn't belong to the sea or the beach, nor yet to anything in the house.

Talbot had plenty of physical courage, and he had been through the war, though he was beginning now to pass lightly over that fact—it dated one so. . . . An agreeable tingle ran through him as he listened. The Sydney scum—after those pearls. Well, he'd show him!

Very quietly, leaning from his chair, he opened a table-drawer, took out an American automatic pistol. Holding it in one hand he fumbled for his cigar-lighter, lit up with a sharp click, and started another cigar. Skeet would hear that, smell it, be put off his guard. Give him a minute. . . .

Talbot gave him a minute; then, lifting himself noiselessly out of the chair, took a step or two forward. Where would the fellow be? From the center of the house, with all doors open, he could see into the two main bedrooms. There didn't seem to be anyone in either; but of course the beggar would have hidden himself. Where?

A little breeze sprang up suddenly, outside, whirled through the open sitting-room, and set the hanging lamp swinging back and forward. All the shadows began to swing with it, darting back and forth across the floor like live, frightened things. Talbot, with his eyes fixed on the inner room, thought—he could not be quite sure—that some one in there had taken advantage of the sudden movement of the lamp, to make a move on his own account. Wait! One would see. . . .

The lamp had stopped swinging; the shadows were quiet—all but one shadow, that slowly moved against the wall, like a gray ghost creeping stealthily out of its

grave. Talbot watched that shadow, and as he watched, slipped his finger along the automatic, and released the safety-catch.

The chap would have a pistol of his own, ten to one. One must be quick. When the shadow touched the door-jamb, the owner of it would be halfway out from behind the wardrobe at the far side of the room, and it would be time. . . .

Now!

"Hands up!" shouted Talbot, with his pistol aimed toward the half-visible wardrobe. "Hands up—and come out of it, or I fire!"

The shadow stopped dead.

"Hands up!" ordered Talbot again, with a military bark. He saw the shadow waver. "What the hell is he doing?" thought Talbot—and fired. The shot tore through the flimsy, half-shut door, and crashingly splintered the wardrobe. With the noise of its destruction came the sound of a gasp—a fall.

Talbot, pistol in hand, leaped into the other room—and saw, lying on the floor, a little figure in a yellow frock, with amber hair outflung. *Pipi!*

She did not stir as he bent over her, cursing himself, and pulled away her frock to feel her heart. There was no pulse to be found. The blue hole in her side bled slowly, making a dark ring upon the floor.

"My God, my God!" choked Talbot, appealing to a Deity in whom he did not believe. "My God, what am I to do—I've killed her!"

Talbot saw Kirby Skeet creeping "like a cat-burglar" to the window.

No thought of his love for Pipi, of the horror of her fate, held him in that moment. His mind was bent only on himself, and on what might happen to him. To shoot a burglar wasn't dangerous. But to shoot an innocent girl—no witnesses—and everyone knowing that you had quarreled the day before—

Already Talbot felt the rope about his neck! Crazily asking himself over and over again what he was to do, he nevertheless did, quickly and effectively, the only thing that occurred to him. He packed. He put away his money. He found Pipi's pearls, and shudderingly slipped them around her neck. No use providing false evidence against himself. . . . Leaving her there, without a backward glance he hurried out of the house and down to the leeward beach. He had noticed for some days past, the *Pomare* lying there—a boat from Tahiti, with an auxiliary engine. Thank Heaven for the cash he had brought with him! There was plenty to bribe the skipper, to get away anywhere—South America for preference. Away. . . .

In her little house, for almost all that night, Pipi had lain agonizing and weeping, beset by the two terrible *nevers* that, like Promethean vultures, tore ceaselessly at her heart. Pipi was not as white as she looked; with her, as with many half-castes, the blood of the ruling race had exhausted itself in color and appearance, leaving her, at heart, as passionate and impulsive as any of her darker forbears. She was simple, as well: to Pipi, hell and heaven were tangible things, not less real than the ships and the sea before her house. It was quite plain to her that if she went with Talbot she was doomed to hell, eternally lost her chance of heaven. But—never to see Charley again!

In the dead still hours before dawn, she rose, her mind made up at last, and went silently, barefoot, toward Talbot's house. She knew the schooner *Pomare*; her cousin was the captain of it. She meant to see Charley once more, unseen by him—to break that terrible spell of "*Never!*"—and having broken it, flee to the ship, and to safety. Her cousin would sail whenever she wanted him to; she would go back to the convent with him.

So she concealed herself behind the wardrobe in the empty room, patiently awaiting the moment when Talbot should rise to go to bed. Unseen she would see him—see him again! She would feast her eyes, those eyes that must go hun-

Skeet lifted her carefully and carried her back to her own house. Very feebly her pulse was beating now.

gry for the rest of life. And then she would slip out and go—to the sea and the schooner *Pomare*—go far away. . . .

Pipi was never to know the folly of her plan—to find herself, as almost certainly she would have found herself, weak in the crucial moment. Before that moment came, she was lying pulseless on the floor, and Talbot, pursued by Furies, was flying to the schooner *Pomare*, out of the Island world, and out of Pipi's life.

Kirby Skeet, coming quietly down the beach, heard the *Pomare's* engine begin to chatter, and the winch to snarl as the anchors were hauled up. He wondered why the schooner was in such a hurry, but anyhow, it didn't concern him. He went on.

Ten minutes later, flashing his torch on the soft body over which he had stumbled in Talbot's house, he knew, in one lurid moment, why the *Pomare* had gone out, guessed what Talbot had done and how. And again he said to himself, "No business of mine!"

Skeet, in his brief and stormy career as a cat-burglar had never taken life, but he had seen plenty of the "rough stuff;" he knew when a man or a woman was dead, and when not. With his torch he examined Pipi's injury—skillfully bound it, using a torn sheet for that purpose, and then snapping off the torch, lifted her carefully and carried her back to her own house. Very feebly her pulse was beating now; but he knew that she would live.

She did live, tended by Kirby Skeet in a way that aroused the admiration of the whole Island. Hardly less admiration was evoked by the fact that Skeet gave over Pipi's chain of pearls to the B. P. trading-store, on the very day after the disaster, asking the manager to keep them in his office-safe till they could be sold for Pipi's benefit.

"They said he was a crook," the manager admitted, "but that isn't the way you expect a crook to behave. If you ask me, I think Skeets a jolly decent little chap; a lot better than that yaw-haw fellow who drove her to shoot herself—and then bolted!"

For that is how the atoll, and the other islands of the Niutaki group, came to interpret the strange happenings of a night. Pipi, and another, knew better—but both kept their counsel. . . .

Seven hundred pounds is enough to start a trading-store. Skeet has done well as a trader, helped by the innumerable cousins of Mrs. Skeet. Pipi has forgotten a good deal of what she was taught about hell and heaven; people who are fairly happy do not trouble much about either.

As to being "happy ever after"—were *you?*

A distinctly unusual story of the old West and the new, by a writer whose work has not before appeared on these pages.

THE littlest ghost sat upon the headstone of her own little grave and swung her thin legs as she talked. Behind her the hedge of slender cypress trees that divided the cemetery from the road stood like a row of tall dark soldiers, and beyond the hedge the yellow moon was going down in a bank of ragged clouds.

The littlest ghost talked by right of seniority. She looked younger than all the rest—was younger, in the years that are counted as life—but she had come to the cemetery long before any of the others.

"You know," she said, "they named this town after me."

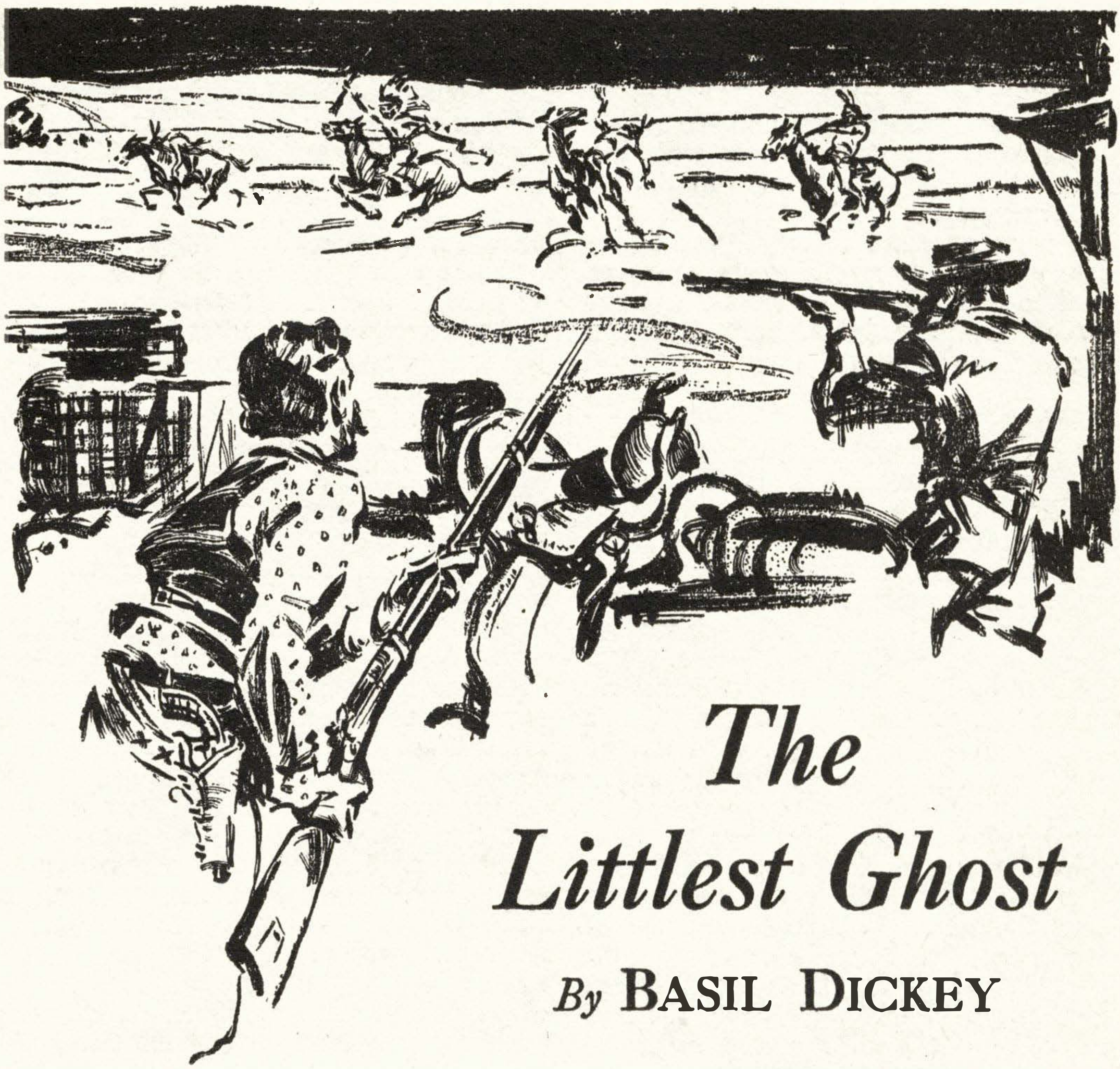
She addressed the remark to the newest ghost; the one who had come in only a few days before. He was a jolly, round-faced fellow, albeit transparent almost to the point of invisibility, as became a recent arrival. He leaned over to read the inscription that was carved upon the stone. Under the figure of an angel in flight, he could make out the names and dates, worn faint and shallow by the storms of more than half a century:

MARY ANNE THORPE
Aged 16 Years
CALLED TO REALMS ABOVE
May 3, 1871

The littlest ghost had slipped lightly down from the stone and looked over his shoulder as he read. She laughed, a musical little laugh but so faint that human ears would hardly have heard it.

"That's funny, isn't it," she said, "about the 'realms above'—because I haven't got there yet. I expect they are nice—but I had to wait here, you know."

The other ghosts were beginning to move away. Most of them had heard the story of Mary Anne Thorpe, so often that they could have told it almost as well as



The Littlest Ghost

By BASIL DICKEY

Illustrated by E. H. Kuhlhoff

she could. They drifted off among the monuments and over the graves, or stood among the cypress trees to watch the late automobiles, passing swiftly along the road. There was a sharp turn at the bottom of the hill and when two cars approached it, at the same time—one never could tell. It might mean a newcomer.

The newest ghost straightened up from reading the epitaph of Mary Anne Thorpe and looked at her, with interest. He said:

"Then you are *the* Mary—the one that Marysville is named for!"

She nodded eagerly. It had been a long time since she had had a really interested listener.

"I've heard about you," he continued, "though I only came to Marysville a short time before I—do I say *'died?'*"

"We say, 'passed over'," she explained.

"Thank you. As I was saying, I had only been here a short time, but I understand that you are—were—the actual founder of the city."

"Oh, yes!" she exclaimed. "For a time there was nothing here at all, except my grave, with a little wooden cross on it—and me."

"And you say that you have to wait here. Why? I'm waiting too, but I don't in the least know what for."

"I expect," she replied thoughtfully, "it is because of something that we did, when we were on the other side. What I did—it doesn't seem so terrible now—but at the time—"

"Yes?" he encouraged, as she hesitated.

"It did seem awful at the time and I expect that is why I have had to wait. But I haven't minded much. You see, I want to wait for Jim Mallory."

The newest ghost was surprised, and showed it. "Jim Mallory!" he repeated. "You don't—you can't mean James R. Mallory, president of the Drovers Bank!"

"Yes, that's he," she nodded. "I would have waited for Jim, anyway."

"But," he protested, "James Mallory must be well past seventy, and you are—"

"Sixteen," she interrupted, with her soft little laugh, and pointed at the inscription on the stone. "But you see," she went on more soberly, "the difference won't really matter, when he comes over to this side. We were both young when we—when it happened." And then she told him the story.

"JIM MALLORY was the guide of our party when we came West, by wagon-train, from Nebraska. I was an orphan, with my uncle and aunt, who had adopted me. There were eight families, with all their household goods and some stock, mostly horses and a few cattle. We were one of the last wagon-trains to leave Omaha, I guess. The railroad had been completed sometime before but most of our party were poor folks and it was cheaper, with all the stock and things, to go by the wagon trail.

"Our guide, Jim Mallory, was the splendidest thing I had ever seen. He was just a boy, only a few years older than I, but he looked like the pictures of scouts that I had seen in books and farm papers, back East. He wore buckskin clothing, with fringe all down the legs of the trousers and he had beaded moccasins on his feet, made by Indians. His hair was brown and hung down on his neck and over his collar and he rode his horse so beautifully—as though he was just part of the animal. Of course I fell in love with him at once. . . . And he—he liked me, too."

"I can quite understand that," said the newest ghost gallantly, and she made him a quaint little old-fashioned curtsey.

"You mean you think I am pretty, don't you? Thank you!" And she sat down upon the grave, with her back against the stone. After a moment of silence, she resumed her story:

"So it wasn't but a little while until we were engaged to be married and after that we were together most of the time. Jim usually rode out in front of the train a few hundred yards to be on the lookout for possible danger. The Indians had been making some trouble that spring, but Jim said they were usually in small bands and not very dangerous, if people knew that they were coming and had time to get ready for them. He said, that unless there were a lot of them, they wouldn't attack a train as strong as ours.

"Well, after we were engaged, I rode with Jim. The rest of the party didn't pay much attention to us. They were all rather troubled and worried because we moved so slowly. When it rained hard we had to stop, for the trail became so soft that the wagons would get bogged down in it. Then we had to stop when some of the horses went lame or when a child got sick. And of course there was always worry about the Indians, as we got farther west and into the country where they had been making trouble. We heard tales, from men we met on the trail, of isolated cabins being attacked and whole families killed. Some of the women would want to turn back and then we would go into camp beside the trail, while the others persuaded them to go on.

"But Jim and I were not worried. We had long days of riding together, sometimes ahead of the wagons and sometimes dropping back, far behind them, to make sure that no renegade Indians followed us. We planned to be married at the first settlement we came to, that had a church or a preacher, but we didn't come to any. But we made all sorts of plans for the future on these rides, and at night, when it was Jim's turn to stand guard and I would sit up with him and help keep the fires going.

"Well, what with our being so much together, with no one paying any attention to us—and our being young and foolish and—and not coming to any place where there was a minister—"

The ghost of Mary Anne Thorpe paused and looked down at the grass on the grave where she sat. When she raised her eyes, the newest ghost was gazing at

her with a kindly expression on his pleasant, round face. He made no comment but nodded his head understandingly.

"As I said, a little while ago," she resumed, "it doesn't seem so terrible now, looking back through all those years; but I was scared, then—and I think Jim was too. When we met anyone on the trail, he always took them aside and asked about preachers, but either there hadn't many come to that part of the country, or we were on the wrong trail for them, because no one could tell us of any, except in the settlements along the railroad, which was more than a day's ride to the south of us. Of course we couldn't go to any of those places, without telling the others—without explaining why we wanted to go. And anyway Jim couldn't leave the train, now that we were well into the Indian country. They depended upon him to be always on the lookout—to 'read the sign,' as he called it and give them warning, in time to get ready to defend the wagons. And he did it, too.

"Just after dawn one morning we were camped down there at the foot of the hill, where the road turns,"—and the littlest ghost pointed through the cypress trees, to the sharp bend in the road at the lower corner of the burying-ground.

"Jim had ridden out alone about an hour earlier. The men were hitching the teams and the women were washing the pans and packing things away in the wagons, when we saw Jim coming, riding hard. Away off behind him, at the top of a ridge of hills, five or six Indians had pulled up their ponies and sat watching us. They were half a mile away and looked like little toy horsemen, black against the sky.

"Jim said he had found the trail of a big band—forty or fifty of them. The ones who had chased him were all he had seen, but he said that now they had seen us, they would go and bring up the others. Even while he was telling us, they wheeled their horses and rode back out of sight, over the top of the hill.

"Well, everybody was excited and frightened. The men held a council and it was decided that Jim must ride to Fort Larned, which was about thirty miles to the north of us, and bring soldiers. He didn't want to leave me, but the men said he was the only one who knew the country and had a chance to get through, in case there were Indians on that side of us. So he said he would go.

"But first he showed them how to put the wagons in a ring to make a barricade,

and he said that when the attack came the women and the children must lie down flat in a wagon-box. I was awfully proud of him—just a boy, you know, and telling all those men what to do and how to do it.

"'They are Sioux,' he told them, 'and a bad lot. They'll try a trick or two, before they attack. Don't let one of them get within gun-shot.'

"Then he came and said good-by to me. He made me promise to lie down in the wagon-box, when the firing began. When he saw how frightened I was he said:

"'Maybe there's a chaplain at the fort. If there is I'll bring him back with me.'

"Then he kissed me, not minding who was looking, and rode off between the wagons and away to the north, turning to wave his hat as he disappeared over a rise in the ground."

The littlest ghost sighed and turned to pass her hand lightly over the lettering on the stone behind her.

"That,"—she paused,—"was the morning of May third, eighteen seventy-one."

"HE did not get back in time!" the newest ghost exclaimed.

"Oh, yes," she replied, "Jim never failed at anything he undertook. It was my fault that things happened as they did. If I had done just as he said I should— But let me tell you!

"The men built the barricade as Jim had told them to do, putting the wagons in a circle and dragging chairs and tables and things up, to stop the openings between and underneath. One wagon was placed in the middle of the circle, for the women and children, and they picketed the horses around it, to make a second barricade.

"When it got to be about ten o'clock and we hadn't seen anything more of the Indians, the folks began to hope Jim had been mistaken and that they wouldn't come. But I knew Jim didn't make mistakes and that things would happen just like he said they would.

"All at once one of the men shouted and pointed off to the ridge of hills, where we had seen them before. There was just one this time and he came riding over the ridge and down toward us, not going very fast but as though he was coming to make a friendly call. We were ordered into our wagon, but I stopped on the tail-step to watch.

"The Indian stopped when he was about a hundred yards from the wagons and began making signs with his hand. I could see him plainly from where I stood on the wagon-step. He didn't have any gun and there wasn't any paint on his face. He wore a pair of buckskin pants and nothing else except the feather that was tied in his hair, with a piece of red cloth.

"None of the men could understand his signs, but they remembered what Jim had said about tricks, so one of them—I think it was my uncle—fired a shot. It must have come pretty close to him, for his pony jumped. He raised up both hands and made more signs, but when nobody answered them he turned his horse around and rode slowly back the way he had come. Everyone was watching him and wondering what he would do next, so we did not see the others until they were within fifty yards of the wagons and we heard the drumming of the ponies' running feet.

"THEY came from the opposite direction, the way in which Jim had gone. They had horrible, painted faces and they began riding in a circle about our barricade, shooting and yelling as they went. But our men knew just what to do—Jim had seen to that—and that first fight only lasted a few minutes. Then the Indians went galloping back into the hills. Some of the ponies had no riders, because there were four bodies lying out beyond the wagons.

"We had been pretty lucky. One of our men was wounded and a couple of horses had been killed, but aside from that and a lot of bullet-holes through the wagon-tops, there wasn't any damage done. I jumped down to the ground and went to bandage the wound of the man that was shot. It wasn't bad—just a flesh-wound in the arm, and while I tied it up I listened to the men talking. They had used up a lot of their ammunition but thought they could stand off another attack, and they said that if Jim hadn't been taken, help ought to come within two or three hours. Winning that first fight had given the men lots of confidence. They loaded all the guns and brought more things from the wagons to make the barricade stronger—and then we waited.

"It was more than an hour before the Indians returned; this time they did not come so close; they rode in a wide circle, lying far over on the sides of their horses and shooting under their necks. When our men fired they would draw off a little farther and then come charging in again. It was wonderful and terrible the way they rode and managed the ponies. I stood on the wagon-step and watched, and most of the time I couldn't see the Indians—just the ponies, with the toe of a moccasin sticking over their backs, and an arm with a gun, under their necks.

"A bullet struck our wagon and my aunt made me come in and lie down with the rest. We lay there for what seemed ages and ages listening to the bang of the guns and the yelling of the Indians. Every time our men fired, we wondered how many cartridges they had left and every little while there would be a slapping sound above us, as a bullet tore through the canvas top of the wagon. We were all crowded together in that wagon-box with nobody daring to move; just when I thought I couldn't stand it a minute longer, I heard a bugle blow, away off toward the north. I jumped up and looked out of the back of the wagon.

"Our men were still crouched along the barricade, firing through the spokes of the wheels. One or two wore bloody bandages, but they were all on their feet and fighting. The Indians still rode in their wide circle, but away off beyond them there was a cloud of dust coming and I knew it was Jim and the soldiers.

"Just then there was a kind of funny

noise in my head and I felt sick and dizzy. I lost my hold on the wagon and fell over the tail-step to the ground. I heard my aunt scream, but I wasn't hurt and the dizziness was gone, the moment I struck the ground—and all that I could think of was that Jim was coming and I must go and meet him. So I ran as fast as I could and crawled under one of the wagons and got outside the barricade.

"By that time the Indians had seen the soldiers coming and were riding for the hills as fast as their ponies could carry them. The soldiers did look splendid in their blue uniforms all covered with dust and the horses all lathered with foam. And—Jim—my Jim—was riding out in front and coming faster than any of the rest.

"I ran forward to meet him, calling to him—but he didn't see me and his horse almost ran me down as it went by. He rode straight for the wagons and the soldiers went on past them, chasing the Indians. I called after Jim but he didn't hear me; he jumped from his horse and went in under the wagons. So I ran back too and scrambled under a wagon into the circle.

"There was a crowd about the wagon in the center and some of the women were crying. Jim was on his knees in the midst of the group, holding something in his arms, and I knew some one had been hurt. I hurried up to them—and then I saw that it was *me* that he held in his arms! There was a round red hole in my forehead, and blood all down my face and over the front of my dress."

The littlest ghost sighed again and looked away, across the graves and the monuments, to the bend at the foot of the hill, where the wagon-train had camped, so many years before. She seemed to have forgotten her companion, and he had to repeat his question.

"What happened then? After you knew that you were—that you had passed over?" he asked.

"They made a coffin out of a wagon-box, and brought me up here on the hill. Jim fixed a little wooden cross with my name on it and all the time he was making it I tried to talk to him. He felt so bad—and I wanted to tell him that I was all right, but he couldn't hear me, or see me. And early the next morning they went on and I sat here—right where I am now—and watched them go with Jim riding out in front of them alone.

"But after a few months he came back and brought this stone with him. I was awfully proud of it, all snow-white and smooth—and the angel was so pretty then. Jim built a cabin, down there below the hill, and he's never been very far away from me since then. And when the town began to grow up around his cabin, they called it Marysville."

LONG since, the moon had disappeared; it was very dark in the cemetery and out along the road. Somewhere down in the town, a deep-voiced clock struck the hour of one. The newest ghost arose, like a diffident caller who has overstayed his time.

"That was a very sad story," he began. But she was not listening. Her eyes were on the bend in the road, where a glow of light foretold the approach of a slowly moving car.

"Sometimes," she said, "he comes up here late at night, and brings some flowers for me. It's kind of sad—because I am right here beside him and he tries to talk to what he thinks is down there in the ground. Maybe sometime—"

She stopped suddenly as the silence of the night was split by the shriek of an auto siren and a speeding car shot by beyond the cypress trees, going downhill toward the bend. An instant later there was a deafening crash of grinding metal. . . .

Against the farther bank of the road a shattered car lay upon its side, the wheels still spinning. From a second wrecked machine, a few yards farther on, a frightened girl sobbed and screamed, while a white-faced man ran to bend over a motionless figure in the middle of the highway—the figure of an aged man with silvery hair. . . .

But the littlest ghost did not see all this. What she saw was a boy in buckskin clothes and beaded moccasins. He stood beside the road, pushing his long brown hair back from his forehead and looking about him with a puzzled frown.

"Jim!" she called.

He turned and saw her, standing among the cypress trees, and went quickly to her, holding out his arms.

The Last Throw

The famous Man with the Club-foot reaches the end of his tether —a stirring Secret Service drama.

IT was in Spa—where in the last autumn of the war the wires of the whole vast organization of the German armies in the West ran together, where all through those dripping November days that ushered in the collapse of Prussian dreams of world dominion the mud-bespattered cars and motorcycles came roaring in from the front with their fresh tidings of disaster.

Each evening after dark Grete would meet me in the woods, where in happier days the cure guests had laughed and flirted along the leafy promenades now bare and desolate. The prying eyes of a German *Feldgendarm* might well have taken us for lovers as we strolled along with our heads together—Grete in her shop-assistant's black, and I in my shabby waiter's attire. For little Grete, blonde and slim and graceful, was as charming a companion as a fellow could have wished to find—and as for me, well, I was thirteen years younger than I am today.

Yet an eavesdropper would have heard no talk of love between us. We spoke in breathless whispers of the rout of the German armies, the lengthening shadow of revolution behind the front, the Kaiser and his chances of retaining the throne. For Grete Danckelmann and I were the eyes and ears through which the American and British Governments respectively were following the inexorable march of events at German General Headquarters. The All Highest was lodging in the town behind the machine-guns and sandbags of the Villa Fraineuse and Spa swarmed with secret police. We went in constant peril of our lives, knowing that one false step would land us before the firing-squad.

A week before, an airplane had set me down at dawn in the Ardennes, whence —in the tattered jeans of a Belgian farm-hand looking for work—I had drifted down, through the retiring German troops, to Spa. A Belgian in the French Intelligence who kept a café had been warned of my coming, and took me on as a waiter. Having solidly established himself with the German authorities as a strongly pro-German Fleming, my employer—his name was Sylvestre—was able to secure me a permit of residence from the *Kommandantur*. It was he who put me in touch with Grete.

Being of German-American parentage, the German background was familiar to Grete Danckelmann and, unlike so many German-Americans, she spoke the language flawlessly. As soon as America entered the war, she had registered for employment with the United States Secret Service and, after six months' intensive training at Washington, was sent to Europe. There she disappeared into Holland, where as a German refugee from Brazil, she set to work to build up a German identity. A few months later she was in Germany, then Belgium, and when the call came and the State Department was clamoring for reliable reports from German G.H.Q., she was chosen to go to Spa. No ordinary woman could have carried it off as she did, for even German civilians had trouble about getting permits to visit Spa. But little Grete had a way with her, and the end of October found her as a properly accredited German citizen in the employment of a German florist in the Rue Royale.

ON the afternoon of the ninth of November, a date to become famous in history, she was late at our daily rendezvous.

I was feeling nervous and overwrought. All day long the little town had reverberated with rumors—of mutiny at Kiel, of revolution in Berlin, of the new Chancellor's insistence upon the Emperor's abdication. There was thunder in the air. I divined that tremendous decisions trembled in the balance; but they were being made behind closed doors. Of what use was the elaborate organization we had built up for sending reports away —when we had nothing to send? I was

By VALENTINE WILLIAMS

Illustrated by Edward Ryan

The Emperor had appeared. Cloaked and helmeted, he made a somber, imposing figure.

immensely relieved when presently I descried Grete's slender figure hurrying through the trees.

She was paler than her wont and unusually excited, for her. Her first words were, "The Emperor—"

"Well?"

"He's gone!"

"When?"

"Four days ago!"

"But all day yesterday he was here giving audiences. The *communiqué* says so."

"That's the bunk. Listen! Yesterday Marie, one of our girls, was out at Roselaer—that's an estate about eight miles from here: it's been shut up since the war. Marie's aunt, Madame Doppel, keeps the lodge—she gives Marie butter and eggs from time to time. But when Marie reached Roselaer early yesterday morning the aunt was out. So Marie went for a stroll in the grounds. In some shrubbery she saw the Emperor—"

"He often drives out to the country, doesn't he?"

"Let me finish! Marie dashed back to the lodge and found that Madame Doppel was back. When the old lady heard of Marie's adventure, she was terrified; and after a lot of persuasion she told Marie that the Emperor had been living there in the greatest seclusion for the past three days."

"THERE must be some mistake!" I exclaimed.

"Madame Doppel told Marie that last week a stranger called at the lodge and said the *Kommandantur* was taking over the château, and that if the old lady wanted to avoid trouble she'd better keep her eyes and mouth shut. That night she heard a car arrive and the very next morning, when she was gathering firewood in the park, she caught sight of the Kaiser in the shrubbery!"

I shrugged my shoulders. "You know what these Belgians are. For them any general with a twisted-up mustache is the Kaiser."

"Marie has seen the Emperor frequently, like everybody else at Spa. She's certain she saw him, and she says her aunt is just as positive. Besides, all kinds of generals have been out to Roselaer during the past three days. She says the Kaiser never goes out except for a short walk in the early morning, and he seems to have only three people with him—two of the secret police, and the third a man whom Madame Doppel saw once looking out of a ground-floor window." Grete paused and looked at me. "What do you make of it? Is he getting ready to bolt?"

"Possibly. But he's here at Spa, I tell you."

She wrinkled up a rebellious nose. "I wonder! I've looked up Roselaer on the map. It's out toward Pepinster. What do you say we investigate?"

Transportation for spies was not included in the scheme of things at Spa. "And foot it there and back?" I said crossly. "It's a damned long walk just to vet' a cock-and-bull story like this!"

Grete laughed. "I didn't say anything about walking. I can raise a bike. What about you?"

"Sylvestre would lend me his," I admitted with some reluctance. "But—"

There were no *buts*, however, when little Grete had made up her mind. The pass-control at the exits to the town after dark was stringent. But the food smugglers had their ways of getting out which the young woman, with characteristic German thoroughness, had taken the precaution to ascertain. Less than two hours later, we were creeping through the park of Roselaer, our bicycles hidden at the foot of the outer wall which we had scaled.

The night was as black as pitch and we floundered about considerably, until the lights of a car showed us the direction of the drive. We headed that way, and steering clear of the avenue presently struck a path through a shrubbery which brought us in sight of the château. It was a compact mansion with an open space in front where three or four cars were drawn up—the chauffeurs' voices reached us as we lurked behind a screen of young firs. The front of the house was dark and silent.

I put my lips to my companion's ear. "No sentries," I whispered. "He's not here. Let's get out while we can." But she shook her head and pointed. Then I saw there was a light in a window at the side of the house.

"Come on," the girl murmured resolutely. "I'm going to have a look."

MY heart misgave me as I followed her. Whatever that lonely house concealed, if privacy were of importance, the secret police were not likely to be far away.

And to reach that lighted window we had a stretch of turf and a gravel path to cross. However, we made it safely. Neither blinds nor curtains were drawn. Keeping in the shadow, we drew near the window. Then dropping to our knees on the flower-bed below it, we raised our eyes to the level of the sill.

The sight we saw fairly took my breath away. The Emperor was there alone. He was striding restlessly up and down the carpet, his useless left hand tucked away in the pocket of his field-gray tunic, his right hand toying with a button.

THIS was the first time I had seen him since the days before the war. He seemed thinner and older and beneath the flat cap he wore his hair was almost white at the temples. But the restless eyes, the sallow skin, and, above all, the studied regal pose—these were authentic. I could not take my eyes off him, even when he turned and faced the door expectantly. I was aware that the girl at my side was tugging at my sleeve and whispering. But all my attention was given to the room. No longer to the Kaiser, however, for the door had swung wide and a vast man stood on the threshold.

I suppose I should not have been surprised to see him there, for who was more qualified to watch over the monarch's safety than the head of his personal secret service? But in the thrills of the week I had spent at Spa I had almost forgotten my old adversary—the terrible Dr. Grundt, better known as the Man with the Clubfoot. The sight of him now, framed in the doorway, square-built, huge of bulk, and lowering, made me tingle with suspense.

The closed window shut out all sound. But it was obvious that Clubfoot was in a highly excited state. He seemed to radiate defiance and menace, and so strong was the man's personality that, like the radio beam, his mood penetrated through brick and glass to us outside. We could not hear what he was saying, but his gestures were brusque and imperative—I was astonished to see what little account he made of the imperial dignity.

At length the Emperor moved to the door and they went out together.

All this was the matter of seconds. As soon as I saw them depart, I turned to Grete, who was still trying to attract my attention.

"Some one in the shrubbery," her lips formed. "Let's go!"

We sprang to our feet. There were steps in the shrubbery and other steps approaching from the front of the château. I cast a hurried glance about us and spied a glass door in the side of the house a few yards distant. It was a thousand-to-one chance, but I grabbed

"Scum!" he raved. "You tried to interfere once too often. I'll teach you—and the lesson will last for life!" Holding me covered, he lifted the receiver.

Grete and pushed her toward it. The door yielded to the handle and we slipped inside.

We were in a dark lobby with a door at the farther end. Tensely we stood there listening. The footsteps drew nearer and then two figures were silhouetted on the glass panel of the door. Two men whispered there. Grete and I exchanged one look and by common consent backed toward the door at the end of the lobby. Fortune favored us again. The door yielded easily to my touch. . . .

The room in which we found ourselves —a small study—was dark save in the center, where a shaded lamp on the desk cast a circle of light. At first I thought the room was empty; then I saw that a man stood at the desk, a telephone-receiver to his ear. With a sinking feeling I recognized Grundt. He had his back to us and seemed completely engrossed, listening in silence to an excited voice that came squeaking out of the receiver.

I don't mind admitting that Grete's wits were sharper than mine. She had caught me by the wrist and dragged me across the heavy-pile carpet to a curtained window recess, before I caught the sound of feet in the lobby we had just left.

I heard Grundt's voice at the telephone. "Nonsense!" he vociferated wrathfully. "He's leaving for the Second Army now. He'll spend the night there and show himself to the troops tomorrow. *Adieu.*" The receiver was slammed down.

I RISKED a peep through the curtain. Two burly individuals—characteristic secret-service types—had entered from the lobby. Said one: "Herr Doktor, there's some one in the park. We found two bicycles hidden outside the château wall. Has the Herr Doktor heard or seen anything?"

Grundt stirred out of a profound reverie.

"*Herr Gott*, man, what has that to do with me? You have your orders—if you see anyone, shoot! Now get out—in five minutes we shall be gone, anyway!"

The spokesman touched his hat. "Very good, Herr Doktor!" The two men went out. A small hand seized mine and wrung it hard—that handclasp was like a sigh of relief uttered in unison.

Clubfoot's gruff voice brought me back to my spy-hole.

"Ready?" he demanded.

The Emperor had appeared in the door. Cloaked and helmeted, he made a somber, imposing figure. "Any news?" he asked in a toneless voice and came into the study. "Nothing fresh," the big man growled. "If they can hold him tonight, we can get away with it!"

Before I had time to ponder the strangeness of this rejoinder, a bewildering thing occurred. The Kaiser had an unlit cigar in his right hand. Now, as Grundt was talking, I saw His Majesty draw his left hand from the pocket of his military greatcoat and pick up a box of matches from the desk. And the hand he used was as normal and as serviceable as his right, as was demonstrated by the ease with which he manipulated the match-box. Even with my knowledge of disguise I found it hard to believe the evidence of my senses. This seemed to be the Emperor, yet it was not he! For the Emperor's left hand and arm had been withered and useless from birth.

In a flash I guessed the truth. This bogus War Lord was Grundt's counter-stroke against the growing movement at G.H.Q.—to which, it was whispered, even Field Marshal Hindenburg had been won round—in favor of the monarch's abdication. Clubfoot's puppet was to rally the troops and lead them back to combat the revolution at home while the wayward and vacillating Kaiser was kept out of sight or otherwise disposed of. All these past days the understudy—some actor, I surmised—had been getting into the skin of his part under Grundt's tuition in the seclusion of Roselaer.

IT was Grundt's last throw, a masterstroke worthy of the master mind that conceived it, and likely to commend itself to the large number of officers in high commands at the Front who, I knew, were incensed by the steadily increasing effacement of the Supreme War Lord. No doubt the military visitors to Roselaer were in the cabal.

But now Grundt, followed by his fellow-conspirator, hobbled out. It was our chance to escape. Silently I opened the casement behind us. We listened. The drone of cars came from the front of the château, but in the gardens all was still.

"Now!" I whispered, and I hoisted Grete up to the window-sill.

At that instant the telephone woke all the echoes of the room. Grete was clear of the sill; her face looked up pallidly at me from the darkness outside. Then I heard a shout, a rapid step, behind me and realized in the same moment that the draft from the window must have parted the curtains and disclosed me to some one who had entered. I had got a leg over the sill when I was seized from the rear. I fought desperately, but two of them were at me and a pistol thrust into my ribs decided the issue. My gun was plucked from my pocket and I was dragged back into the light.

GRUNDT, his features distorted with rage, was at the telephone. "I'll wait for your call," he rasped and hung up. "There were two of them, you said," he snarled at the men who held me. "Get out and find the other. And when you find him, shoot him! You can leave our friend"—his bulbous lips parted in a cruel smile as he drew a big automatic from his coat—"to me!"

My mind was racing madly. Clearly they had not seen Grete: she must have had time to get away. But she was loyal and brave—I was desperately afraid she might think it her duty to wait for me and so bring disaster upon both of us. My heart thumping, I trained my ears for any sound from the park.

Grundt's voice seemed to come from far away. He was chattering like an angry baboon. *"Schweinhund,* scum!" he raved. "You tried to interfere with my plans once too often. I'll teach you not to poke your nose in where you're not wanted—and the lesson will last you for life!"

And then the telephone whirred again.

Holding me covered with his gun he lifted the receiver. His eyes, scarcely human, were fixed on my face. But as he listened I saw the fury die out of them and a look which gradually turned from one of incredulous amazement to one of abject despair take its place.

"The Republic proclaimed? It's not possible!" he roared. "He's abdicated—you let him? *Himmelsakrament,* it's not true! Give me until morning—only six hours—and I'll undertake to line up the whole mass of combatants behind him. . . . . *What?* What's that you say? Damn this line—I can't hear. . . . . He's leaving for Holland? Tonight? You've got to stop him! . . . . What do you say? Gone? Gone already?" . . . . Then silence.

I jumped straight down on his back. He rolled free, jerking his pistol up to fire again.

Blindly, fumblingly, he restored the receiver to its hook; then, with a savage snarl, he flung his pistol at my feet and sank into a chair. He had suddenly grown old and broken—and if I could ever have found pity in my heart for Grundt, it was then.

"Clavering," he said, "my master, whom I was proud to serve, has run away! Take up that pistol and kill me, for my day is done. The army is in revolt, the monarchy has fallen, the Republic sues for peace—and Prussia's Soldier King is in flight. This is, indeed, the end!" The massive head drooped on that barrel-like chest and I saw a tear roll down his cheek.

And then I heard a shot in the grounds outside.

In two bounds I was at the window. One of Clubfoot's bulldogs stood below the window facing the shrubbery, taking aim with his revolver which yet smoked.

I jumped straight down on his back, bearing him to the ground. His shot went roaring into the night. He rolled free and was scrambling to his feet, jerking his pistol up to fire again, when I reached him. The swing I landed him on the point of the jaw gives me a thrill of satisfaction to this day when I think of it. He folded up with a grunt, and leaving him sprawled out on the gravel, I darted toward the shrubbery.

Grete was there behind a tree, her lips compressed with pain. Her arm hung helplessly by her side. "Through the shoulder," she murmured faintly. "I shall be all right—"

"Why didn't you get away when you had the chance?" I demanded reproachfully.

She smiled at me. "We were partners," she said—and fainted.

There were soldiers in the grounds now, waving bottles and shouting: "No more war! Long live the Republic!" Two of them helped me to bring my companion down to Madame Doppel's, where we remained quietly until, with the signing of the Armistice a few days later, the first Allied officers arrived at Spa. . . .

This story ends, as all real stories should, with wedding-bells—though they did not ring for me. I functioned merely as best man at Grete's wedding in London, a few months later, to a charming young lieutenant of United States Marines. The cross of the Order of the British Empire which I was able to procure for her looked very effective on the corsage of her wedding-gown.

AS for the Man with the Clubfoot, you shall take leave of him, as I did—crumpled in his chair among the ruins of Prussian autocracy to whose service his whole life had been given.

Wherein a young scientist invents strange new weapons to save his sweetheart from a sinister gang of racketeers —by the author of "The Phantom Foemen."

By SEVEN ANDERTON

Illustrated by Joseph Maturo

The Damned Thing

TED LOWELL, city editor of the Morning *Banner*, looked up at the tall lanky chap in evening dress who had halted beside the city desk. The lanky one was Lester Harrigan, star reporter of the *Banner* staff. Lowell's glance flicked to the office clock; he saw it was not quite ten-thirty.

"'Smatter?" queried the city editor. "The blow-out over already?"

"It never started," answered the reporter grimly. "Ted, I think you can get Alvin Portwood's obit ready to run."

"No!" cried Lowell, pushing his swivel-chair back and swinging it to face Harrigan. "What's happened?"

"It looks like that rat Pedro Flambon has had Portwood bumped off," replied the reporter. "You know I have been afraid of that very thing ever since Portwood and Eileen Warren announced their engagement. I warned them both, but they laughed at me and kidded me out of it. They insisted that Flambon was a good sport and a good friend to both of them. Bah! Flambon is a skunk and always will be a skunk! I should have made Alvin listen to me."

"But this farewell dinner," protested the city editor. "The story is in the bulldog—on the street right now: Three thousand dollars' worth of flowers plastered all over the Chez Flambon. A carpet of American Beauty roses twenty feet square laid for Eileen Warren to dance upon as her public watches her final performance. A list of guests that reads like 'Who's Who.' The mayor on the job as toastmaster. All—"

"Yeah," shrugged Harrigan wearily. "I know. All front! Trimmings for Pedro Flambon's alibi. The illustrious

guests were all there—and the flowers, as advertised. Flambon was there—the gracious host, spending bales of mazuma on a big farewell party for the girl he'd loved and lost, and the rival to whom he lost her. Rats! Flambon couldn't be like that. He's a reptile. Why didn't I brain him with a chair before I came away?"

Ted Lowell rose and looked sharply into the reporter's stern face. The editor knew a deep friendship had existed between Lester Harrigan and Alvin Portwood since their high-school days.

"Keep your head, old man," Lowell laid a friendly hand on the reporter's shoulder. "Just what happened?"

"Alvin never showed up," replied Harrigan. "As you know, the dinner was to begin at nine. At eight-thirty Eileen telephoned Alvin at his apartment. He told her he had just finished dressing and would be right along in a taxi. At ten minutes after nine he had not appeared. Eileen called his apartment again and got no answer. At a quarter of ten there was still no sign of Alvin. I knew then—and so did Eileen—that he would never come. We walked out of the dump with Flambon protesting—saying that Portwood would likely arrive any minute. Damn his soul—he knew while he was talking that Alvin had been taken for a ride by some of his hired killers! I got Eileen into a cab and brought her here. She went to pieces in the taxi and it took her a quarter of an hour to get hold of herself. Poor kid, she's out there in the little reception-room waiting for me. I told her that we'd learn of it here sooner than anywhere else, when his body is found."

"It's hard to believe," growled Ted Lowell, "and yet something tells me it is true. But his body may never be found, you know; be prepared for that. You know what happens since the gangsters have private crematories and acid vats. If Flambon *has* had Portwood killed, will he dare let the body be discovered? Alvin Portwood was big—rapidly becoming a second Edison and all that; he was rich and famous already at the age of twenty-nine. Even Pedro Flambon—"

"The body will be found," interrupted Harrigan with conviction. "You overlook the fact that Flambon wants Eileen Warren. He must let the body be discovered, otherwise Eileen will cling to the hope that Alvin is not dead—that he will return. That would hamper, if not completely block, Flambon's game."

"That's true," nodded the city editor thoughtfully. "It's a damned shame. Alvin Portwood's little finger was worth more to the world than a dozen of Pedro Flambon's carcasses. And they say that the fit survive. Bologny! And the hell of it is that the guilt will never be pinned on Flambon—the crooked, slimy devil!"

"If Alvin is dead," said Lester Harrigan in a cold voice, "—and I am certain that he is,—Flambon is going to answer to me for it. I promise you that. I'll get the stinking rat if it is the last thing I ever do."

LOWELL'S eyes met Harrigan's, and what the editor saw smoldering in those gray depths caused him to shake his head sadly.

"Don't be foolish, old man," cautioned the editor. "You can't buck Flambon. If you try it, you'll be where Portwood is. Pull yourself together and use your noodle. You'd better take Eileen home. I'll put a couple of the boys on the job and I'll telephone you at Eileen's apartment as soon as we hear anything."

"I guess that's a good idea," nodded Harrigan. "The poor kid! All her plans— Aw, hell! Well, I'll stay with her until you call up."

When Harrigan had gone, Ted Lowell called two reporters to his desk and gave them orders. Then he went upstairs to the composing-room to look over the made-up pages for the next edition. On one slab he saw a page all locked up and ready for the following day's issue of the paper. There were pictures of the bride- and groom-to-be, and two columns of story concerning their romance. The headlines read:

ALVIN PORTWOOD
IS MARRIED TO
EILEEN WARREN
Famous Young Inventor and Talented Dancer to Spend Honeymoon in Orient and Holy Land.

Ted Lowell shrugged and turned away in answer to a call from the make-up editor.

IN Eileen Warren's cozy and very feminine apartment, Lester Harrigan, a cigarette between his firmly set lips and a black scowl on his lean face, strode up and down the short length of the room. Eileen lay face downward on a divan which stood across one corner. For the moment troubled slumber had claimed her, after the exhaustion of her grief. The little clock on the mantel read ten minutes of three. The telephone rang. Harrigan snatched up the instrument. Eileen Warren's body twitched; she flung off her lethargy and sat up.

"Hello—this Harrigan?" inquired Ted Lowell's voice over the wire.

"Yes."

"They've found Portwood's body."

"Where?"

"Lying in a ditch beside a byroad east of Tarrytown," replied the city editor. "Shot through the heart. Dead for about five hours."

"Are they bringing him back to town?" asked Harrigan.

"Don't know yet. Just got the flash. I'll call you again as soon as some more dope comes in." The editor hung up.

Eileen Warren had crossed the room and was standing at Harrigan's elbow. As he put down the telephone, she lifted her dark eyes to his. Her small hand gripped his arm.

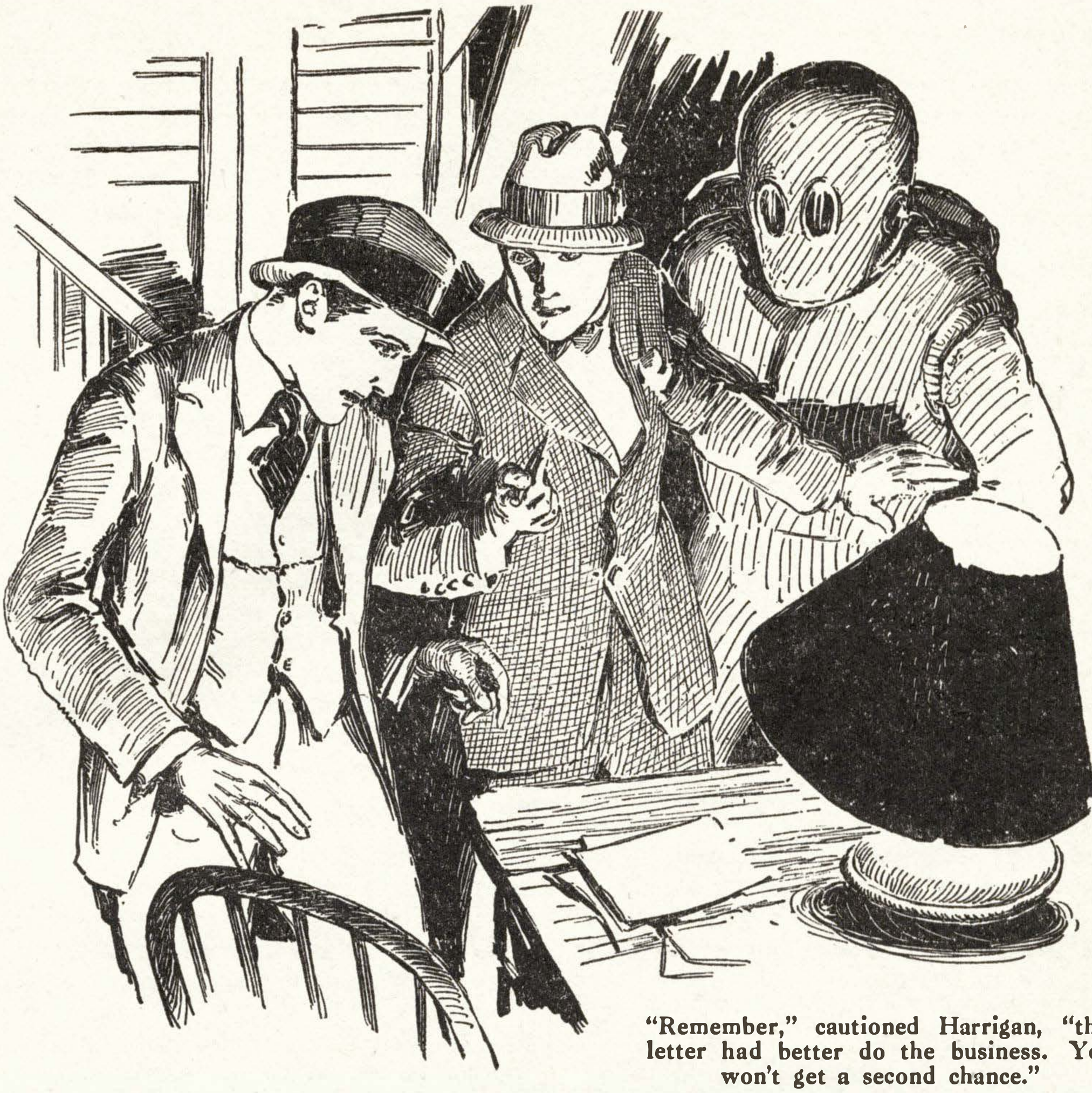
"Is—is he—" she begged.

"Yes," nodded Harrigan sorrowfully. "They killed him." He folded his long arms about the girl as she swayed and then wilted against his breast. For several moments her body was shaken by sobs. Then she grew quieter and disengaged herself from his arms.

"Where—is he?" she choked.

Harrigan told her what little he had learned from Ted Lowell, and of the editor's promise to ring up again when there was further news.

"Please, Lester," said the girl, as she stumbled over and again sank onto the divan, "go now and leave me alone. I'll sleep—there is nothing else I can do. I'll call you up from the paper."



"Remember," cautioned Harrigan, "this letter had better do the business. You won't get a second chance."

Eileen nodded. "Please go," she said. "I want to be by myself. —Oh, Lester, why didn't—*why* didn't we believe what you told us about Pedro Flambon?"

Harrigan made no reply. This was no time to gloat over having been right. He got his hat and topcoat, and departed.

For perhaps ten minutes Eileen Warren sat with her small hands gripping each other and her dark eyes staring into nothingness. A terrible change crept slowly over her face. Finally she rose, and moving in the manner of a sleepwalker, went into her bedroom.

AND Lester Harrigan, on his way to the *Banner* office in a taxi he had hailed at a near-by corner, was muttering to himself: "You're through, Pedro Flambon! If you were the devil himself, and I had to follow you to hell, I'd get you for this!"

The expression on Harrigan's lean grim face and the light that smoldered in his deep-set gray eyes kept the muttered words from sounding melodramatic—made the promise seem a thing already half-fulfilled.

At that moment Pedro Flambon was preparing to leave the Chez Flambon. The flower-bedecked night-club had closed its doors promptly at three o'clock. Only Flambon and half a dozen of his gunmen remained after the guests and employees departed. The servants who cleaned up the place would not arrive until five in the morning. And now the gunmen who surrounded him would escort their chief to his armored car and to the luxurious and well-guarded apartment that was his home.

Pedro Flambon was the biggest of the city's big shots—overlord of the interlaced rings of vice and crime. He possessed a slender, well-proportioned and lithe figure of which he was exceedingly proud. His attire was always faultless, having on several occasions won him mention in the newspapers as the "Beau Brummel of gangland." He aped the manners of aristocracy. His face was darkly handsome, but for a cold cruelty which could and did mar it now and then.

Nevertheless, the misleading outer shell of Pedro Flambon covered as ruthless and unscrupulous an inner man as

could have been found in a wide search. The lesser gang leaders who guided the destinies of the underworld's numerous mobs were, as a matter of fact, mere serfs of this sleek and deadly overlord. And Flambon ruled with an iron hand: Death, sudden and ugly, came to any underling who stepped out of line.

Like a feudal baron of past times, Pedro Flambon surrounded himself always with henchmen upon whom he could depend to keep physical harm away from himself. An interview with the president of the most powerful corporation in the United States could have been gained against the will of that executive more easily than one with Pedro Flambon, if the racket czar did not wish to see the interviewer.

The car in which Flambon traveled about the city had been manufactured to his order at a cost of seven thousand dollars and was proof against any weapon smaller than an artillery field-piece. His immediate and ever-present bodyguard consisted of a dozen of the most deadly gunmen in existence.

When it became necessary to "handle" a man, Flambon would buy him—if the price were not too high. Otherwise the victim would be intimidated or simply "rubbed out."

NOW, as he stood surrounded by his bodyguard and closest lieutenants, there was a worried frown on Pedro Flambon's face.

"Damned funny that those torpedoes haven't reported," growled the racketeer, addressing "Polish Joe" Burzinski. "If they muffed this job—" The unfinished sentence was ominous.

Polish Joe shrugged his massive broadcloth-clad shoulders. Before he could speak, a telephone in a curtained alcove jangled for attention. At a glance from Flambon one of the gunmen went to the booth. Soon he came striding back.

"That was Gimpy Lewis," announced the hoodlum. "He's been spottin' Headquarters. He says they've found this Portwood mug in a ditch out by Tarrytown. Cold meat—somebody plugged him with a gat. Too bad!" A sinister grin twitched at the gangster's thin lips.

A cold gleam of satisfaction came into Flambon's eyes as his head jerked in a nod. Then he frowned: "But why in hell didn't one of those torpedoes report—like I told them to?"

"Ask 'em when they come around for the pay-off," grunted Polish Joe. "Mebby something happened and they had to make a fast duck."

The door which led to the stairway and thence to the street opened and a burly thug—in a dinner coat which bulged where a gun was slung under his armpit—entered the room.

"All clear, Chief," said this thug, nodding to Flambon.

"Let's go," growled the gang lord, moving toward the exit.

Ten minutes later Pedro Flambon was admitted to his apartment by a stocky Japanese with a badly pockmarked face.

"Kenkichi," snapped Flambon, "there'll be an extra on the street pretty soon. I want one as soon as they are out."

The Jap grinned and nodded. He took his master's things and then brought a decanter of whisky and a glass on a tray to Flambon, who had dropped into an easy chair.

EILEEN WARREN came out of her bedroom shortly before four. She had changed into a street outfit of gray material. Most of the ravages of tears had been removed, but her face was haggard and her eyes glowed with feverish brightness. She crossed the living-room to a small desk and took a pearl-handled automatic from a drawer. She put the weapon in her handbag. Then she picked up the telephone and called for a taxi.

The eastern sky was just beginning to lighten with the promise of summer dawn when Eileen Warren stepped from the cab before the pretentious apartment building in which Pedro Flambon kept his quarters. She entered and asked the clerk behind the desk in the ornate lobby to inform Flambon that she was calling. The clerk nodded to a young negro at the telephone switchboard. The dusky youth thrust a plug into the board. Presently he nodded to the clerk.

"Go on up," said the clerk to Eileen, while he made a signal with his finger to the burly individual who was the elevator-operator—and one of the crew of gunmen on guard over the gang czar.

Eileen's face was pale as she rapped on the door of Flambon's apartment, but her nerves were as steady as a rock. She had come to kill the racketeer and her purpose was unshaken. She gripped the strap of her handbag tightly. Just as she was about to rap a second time, the door opened and Flambon's Japanese servant stood smiling at her.

"Come in, Missy Warren," invited the yellow man, backing away from the door.

Eileen had taken but two steps into the room when the door swung quickly shut behind her. At the same moment the Jap reached out and grasped her firmly by both wrists. She opened her mouth to scream, but a hand was clasped over her lips from behind. Pedro Flambon, clad in a dressing-gown, had been standing where the open door hid him from Eileen's view as she entered.

The girl struggled in vain. The Jap jerked her purse from her hand and tossed it behind him. The thud as the bag struck the floor brought a nasty smile to Flambon's tight lips. The racket lord took a wet and crumpled handkerchief from the pocket of his robe and clapped it over Eileen's nostrils and mouth. The handkerchief gave off the sweet odor of ether.

A few moments later, Eileen lay limp and quiet on a divan at once side of the room. Flambon stood looking down at her with a sneering smile on his dark face. He had picked up her handbag and extracted the weapon from it. He dropped the gun into a pocket of his robe.

"This is a break," said the racketeer to the waiting Jap. "We'll take good care of the little girl. I wonder if she would have plugged me? Get a blanket, Kenkichi, and fix her up. I'll have the boys here with the wagon in a shake."

The Jap moved toward the rear of the apartment and Flambon went to the telephone. There was a triumphant look on his face as he gave the operator a number.

AT half-past four o'clock, Lester Harrigan was at his desk in the newsroom of the *Banner*. The extra carrying the news of Alvin Portwood's murder had been on the street for a quarter of an hour. Except for the men who remained on the dog-watch, the staff had departed wearily for bed.

Several times Harrigan had been upon the point of calling Eileen Warren on the telephone, but had reconsidered. "If she is sleeping," he thought, "it'd be a pity to awaken her."

Now he sat deep in bitter thought, a still-damp copy of the extra on the desk before him. His telephone rang. With the thought that it was probably Eileen calling, he picked up the instrument. As the first words came over the wire, Harrigan's lanky body jerked taut. For several moments he listened. Then, in a voice that was low and tense, he snapped a question into the phone. Again he listened. Then he put the telephone down and snatched his top hat from his desk. He was still in evening clothes. He headed for the exit.

"Where are you going, Harrigan?" called Lowell from the city desk.

"Out," replied Harrigan without pausing. "I'll give you a ring after a bit."

"Say—" began the city editor. But the door had closed behind Harrigan and with a shrug Lowell turned to his work.

But when the final edition of the *Banner* had been put to bed and Lowell left the office, there had been no call from Harrigan. Nor had there been answer to the several calls the city editor had put through to Harrigan's apartment.

HOWEVER, when Lowell came to work the following evening, there was a note from Harrigan waiting on his desk. The message was brief, saying simply that the reporter was taking a week or two off and that he would report back for work as soon as possible.

"Damn!" muttered Lowell. "The nut has gone on the trail of Pedro Flambon—and I've lost the best reporter in captivity!"

He thrust the note into his pocket and dropped moodily into his chair. But he did not have long to brood. His telephone rang and an excited police reporter babbled into his ear:

"Say, Ted, that guy aint Alvin Portwood!"

"What guy aint Alvin Portwood?" demanded the editor.

"That stiff they found in the ditch last night," answered the reporter. "He aint Portwood! He had Portwood's watch on his wrist—that's how the Tarrytown cops identified him. But a dozen guys who know Portwood have looked at this body since it got here a little while ago—and they all say it aint Portwood. There isn't even a resemblance."

"Good gravy!" cried Lowell. "Get in here with your story! I'll shoot some more of the boys out on the job."

The city editor turned from the phone and began to bark orders at his staff. This meant another extra. When those assigned had hurried from the newsroom, Lowell again snatched up his telephone.

"Confound it," he muttered as he waited for the operator to answer. "Where in blue blazes is Harrigan? Maybe he'll show up when he sees this yarn in the papers."

But five days passed and Lowell heard nothing from Harrigan. Nor could police

and detectives, combing the city, find any trace of Eileen Warren nor of Alvin Portwood—dead or alive.

THE front pages of all the newspapers were smeared with the story, devoting unlimited space to all its angles and ramifications. Editorial-writers rode the authorities. The public talked of little else and followed the almost continuous editions of the papers avidly. There were hints that Pedro Flambon was behind whatever had happened in the case, but the gang czar had an iron-clad alibi —and even the newspapers were more than a little afraid of the sinister emperor of the underworld. On numerous past occasions, Flambon had proven that offending him was dangerous business.

Moreover it was proved that the dead man found with Alvin Portwood's watch on his wrist was not a member of the Flambon mob. The watch had been a gift to Portwood from Eileen Warren upon the occasion of his twenty-ninth birthday and was so engraved. On the other hand, the dead man proved to be a crook recently released from a Western penitentiary where he had served five years for bank-robbery. He was known to have been in Chicago until about a week before Portwood had disappeared.

During the hectic days which followed the Portwood affair other victims of gangland's guns were found where their killers had left them, but interest in them was quickly lost as soon as it was learned that they were not Alvin Portwood nor the missing reporter, Lester Harrigan.

"Confound it," Lowell declared to his managing editor, "what happened is as plain as daylight! Flambon threw that big farewell feed for a stall. He had himself and all his killers planted where their alibis would be perfect. Then he had some imported killers take Alvin Portwood for a ride, thus leaving himself a fresh chance with Eileen Warren. I know I'm right—but proving it is something else again."

"But," protested the managing editor, "where is the girl? Where is Portwood's body? Where is Harrigan?"

"Don't I wish I knew the answers?" growled Lowell. "But you can safely bet your life that Pedro Flambon knows them. It's high time that stinking rat and his pack of hoodlums were cleaned out of this town."

"It is," agreed the managing editor; "but who is going to do it? You haven't forgotten, have you, that the *Express* started a campaign against Flambon about a year ago?"

The city editor shook his head gloomily. Two bombs which had wrecked the plant of the *Express*, the murder of its editor and two of its reporters by machine-gun, and another bomb which tore the front from its publisher's home had effectually silenced the crusade of the militant paper against Pedro Flambon.

"I know," growled Lowell, "he's got this town buffaloed. Everybody he hasn't paid to play along with him, is scared to death of Pedro Flambon. But just the same that big crook knows what has happened to Portwood, Harrigan and Eileen Warren, and I'd give an eye to find some way to make him cough up!"

But Ted Lowell was only partially right in his conviction. Eileen Warren was a prisoner and safely hidden away. Flambon was not worried about her. Nevertheless, the racketeer lord wanted quite as badly as did Lowell to know what had become of Alvin Portwood and Lester Harrigan.

IT was the sixth afternoon following the farewell dinner at which Alvin Portwood had failed to appear. Flambon strode up and down the living-room of his apartment and harangued three of his lieutenants.

"I want those two birds found," snarled the gang boss. "And when they are found, I want them rubbed out quick. Damn that meddling reporter! He's had it coming for a long time. And I'd give something to know how Portwood got away after those three Chicago rods had him safe in that bus and started on a one-way ride. And I'd like to know how it happened that that torpedo with Portwood's ticker on his wrist was dumped east of Tarrytown when the boiler with the other two rods dead in the back seat was found in that Yonkers alley the next day!"

"Mebby, Chief," suggested Polish Joe Burzinski, "the Portwood bloke didn't get away from 'em. Mebby they rubbed him out—and something else happened afterward."

"In that case," barked Flambon, "what the devil did they do with him? Why aint he been found?"

Polish Joe shrugged.

"No," went on Flambon. "He got away somehow—and he and that blasted reporter are together, somewhere. But I've got the whip-hand. Portwood is nuts about the Warren twist. And you

can bet that they know, or guess, that I have got her. It won't be long before they make some kind of a play. And when they do we'll get them. I want all the boys on their toes every minute. I want a car ahead of mine and another behind it whenever I'm in it. I want a double guard on this place all the time and on the Chez Flambon whenever I'm down there. Let everything else slide until we locate those two dudes and wipe them out. Got that?"

The henchmen signified their understanding of the orders, and departed to spur the search for the two men upon whom their chief had put the finger.

BUT retribution was closing in upon Flambon. Despite the double guard and all the other precautions taken by the racket lord, a doom which he could not possibly have foreseen bore relentlessly down. That night, shortly before twelve o'clock, something happened at the Chez Flambon—something which those who witnessed will never forget.

Revelry ran full blast in the night-club. The tables were filled with after-theater merrymakers. A dozen dancing-girls in glittering spangles were performing in the open circle of dance-floor; waiters were bustling about busily. At his private table, Pedro Flambon was entertaining a party—the guest of honor was the *prima donna* of a musical show which was having a phenomenal run.

That party was the arrogant gang lord's gesture of defiance in the face of public opinion, stirred by the events of the week. Flambon was enjoying the limelight to the utmost.

The Chez Flambon was on the top floor of a two-story building. The ground floor occupied in the front by a curio-shop and in the rear by the kitchen from which a dumb-waiter carried the food up to the night-club. A wide, red-carpeted stairway led up from the sidewalk to the main salon. Beside the street entrance stood a burly individual in a gaudy doorman's rig. Outpost of the guard that stood at all times between Pedro Flambon and danger, that doorman was an ex-pugilist and a tough customer.

This uniformed hoodlum had just opened the door of a cab and escorted a gay party of "regulars" across the sidewalk to the stairway. As he turned back to wait for other arrivals, he beheld something that caused him to halt in open-mouthed surprise. His eyes fairly protruded as he stared at a figure which had stepped from the alley, separated from the stairway entrance by the width of the curio-shop.

The figure was approaching the astonished doorman. And never had that rascal seen anything like it—not even when he had been on the verge of delirium tremens! The thing was at least six inches more than six feet tall. It had the general contours of a man, but it was enormous. It was white and the street lamps struck glittering highlights from it as it moved. In its right hand the figure carried a cane—a cane that was as thick as a man's wrist. But the most startling thing about the apparition was the head. Hatless, that head was a huge grinning skull! That ghastly head was enormous, even in comparison to the body which carried it. Great black cavernous spots were the eyes. It was a vision to stampede a negro camp-meeting across a couple of counties.

Like a man turned to stone, the doorman watched the thing approach. His staring eyes noted the fact that the figure, despite its great height, was humpbacked. The hump was large and high. And to add to its deformity, the figure was pigeon-breasted as well. It moved with a peculiar, stiff-legged stride.

Now it was almost abreast of the doorman. Paying not the slightest attention to the thug in livery, the weird figure turned into the door and headed for the stairs. The guard recovered his wits. Of course, this was just a man in some sort of fool disguise—probably a part of the show, up in the club. But the doorman had had no instructions to permit it to enter by the front stairway.

With two quick strides he placed himself squarely in front of the thing. "What's the big idea?" demanded the uniformed ruffian.

NO word came from the figure. It simply lifted one hand, placed it against the hoodlum's chest and shoved. The fellow suddenly found himself hurled back against the wall of the vestibule with a force that brought a grunt from him. The uncanny thing had moved steadily on and was now starting to mount the stairs. The doorman recovered his balance and leaped after it. His outstretched hands grasped it by one shoulder and a huge forearm.

The next moment a howl of mingled pain and surprise came from the hoodlum. His body jerked and twisted in a sort of grotesque dance. Then, with an

apparent effort, he tore his hands loose from the thing and staggered back, quaking and bewildered. His dazed brain was unable to comprehend what had happened.

The huge white form continued to mount the stairs with that steady, stiffly mechanical gait. It was halfway up the flight when the doorman recovered his wits and turned quickly to press a button on the wall, just inside the entrance. That button sounded a warning to the guard at the upper door.

The guard at the door above was a heavily built rogue. He was in evening dress and was designated as a sort of superior headwaiter. In reality he was a ruthless killer and one of the topnotch gunmen of Pedro Flambon's bodyguard. He heard the sharp buzz from near where he stood which told him to watch whoever was coming up the stairs. He stiffened and moved to the double doors just as they swung open and the figure that had dumfounded the doorman entered the place.

LIKE the doorman, the second gangster was momentarily frozen with astonishment. All he could do was gape at the monstrous apparition. Then he recovered from his surprise and leaped forward to confront it.

"Say," snarled the guard, "what the hell—"

The figure made no answer, simply pushed the fellow out of its way with its left hand and moved on toward the center of the floor. With a growl of rage the guard gained his balance and leaped after the huge white form. He planted himself once more in its path. His hand now held a menacing automatic of heavy caliber. The steady muzzle of the weapon covered the middle of the weird visitor.

"Stop, and stick 'em up," barked the gunman, "or I'll let you have it!"

The figure paused. Its left hand went out and grasped the threatening gun. With a snarl the gangster pulled the trigger. The crashing report rang through the room, followed in a breath by a second. The big figure into which the bullets had been pumped did not waver. It lifted the huge cane in its right hand and brought it down on the gunman's head. The fellow went down under that blow like a felled ox. He lay sprawled motionless at the feet of the ghastly form. His still-smoking weapon was held in the weird figure's left hand.

Confusion had taken possession of the

All the diners, except several who had fainted, were staring at the apparition.

night-club. All the diners, with the exception of several women who had fainted, were staring at the apparition, which stood beside the man it had struck down with its huge cane. Some of the patrons had gained their feet. Others merely sat stiff with awe and fright. There were screams from women—questions and curses from men. The dancing-girls had drawn into a huddle at one side of the dance-floor where they clung to each other in terror, gaping at the unbelievable thing they saw. Waiters had forgotten their errands and stood bound in the same fascination as the patrons.

Pedro Flambon, at his private table on its raised platform in an alcove at the far side of the room, had half risen and was glaring at the strange invader of his premises. The unbidden guest stepped over the sprawled form of its victim and, with that queer, mechanical step, moved on across the dance-floor toward where Flambon stood.

"Butch!" came in a croak from Flambon's white lips. "Boys!"

The sound of their chief's voice seemed to arouse the half dozen gunmen placed at smaller tables covering the approach

to Flambon's. Their leader, Butch Hardy—ace of Flambon's torpedoes—was on his feet. The others followed his lead, whipping guns from shoulder-holsters as they rose.

"Rub him out!" barked Butch, the report of his own automatic drowning the last word of his command.

The next moment the place was a bedlam. Six weapons were spitting their lead at the huge misshapen form. Mingled with the sound of the fusillade were the piercing screams of women and the shouts of men. Somebody turned a table over. Two of the dancers fainted and sank to the floor, limp heaps of bare flesh and glittering spangles. Only the fact that the gangsters were crack marksmen saved many innocent diners from injury and death. All their bullets had struck the ghastly target.

Then, with magazines empty, the guns in the hands of the gangsters ceased to roar. An abrupt and almost complete silence fell in the place. The incredible figure had not even paused in its slow, steady advance toward Pedro Flambon's table. Butch Hardy was standing with his empty gun still unconsciously pointed at the apparently uninjured target. In the sudden silence his awed half-whisper carried through the room:

"Look at the damned thing!"

Then the figure halted. Its head turned slowly and the big, black caverns that were its eyes swept the gangsters who had fired the volley.

"Don't do that again," it said.

The voice was even more astonishing than the appearance of its owner. It was a bellow—it boomed. The room resounded and shivered with its incredible volume. It died away, leaving the terrified silence more complete than it had

been before. What manner of thing was this that stood calmly and ordered men who had pumped some two score bullets into it, not to repeat the performance?

THE thing was now facing Flambon. The weapon it had taken from the thug felled with its big cane was covering the racketeer chief. One of the gunmen shook off his stupor and slid a fresh clip into his automatic. As he whipped the weapon up to fire once more at the strange monster, the cane in his target's right hand was lifted and pointed at him. The next moment the gun dropped from his hand and he staggered back, sputtering, gasping and gouging at his eyes with his hands. A howl of anguish came from his lips.

"I said stop it!" The great voice again shook the place. Then silence fell except for the moans of the stricken gunman who had dropped to the floor where he lay writhing. The sharp odor of ammonia was now mixing with the pungent smell of burned cordite in the room.

Again the ghastly figure was facing Flambon. The racket czar seemed to shake off the chains of terror that had held him fast. He whirled toward a door just behind him. That door opened into a passage which led back to the dressing-rooms of the entertainers at the rear of the building.

"Stand still, Flambon!" boomed the staggering voice.

The racketeer halted and turned a gray face toward the thing which had commanded. The gun in its hand covered him steadily.

"We'll go together, Flambon," declared the bellow.

As the words were dying away the room was plunged into sudden darkness. A waiter had recovered from his surprise, and hastened to the main switch.

But the trick failed. Less than a second after the lights went out, a powerful white beam sprang into being and a circle of brilliance fell upon Pedro Flambon. The beam came from the end of the huge cane which just a few moments before had shot an ounce or so of ammonia under high pressure into the face of one of the gunmen.

"Stay put, Flambon," blared the enormous voice. "I'll put a bullet in you if those lights are not on in a minute."

Before the words ceased to echo the lights flared up. The waiter who had cut them off saw that this way to save his chief had failed. But during the few seconds of darkness, Butch Hardy and another gunman had leaped at the sinister foe with the idea of giving physical combat. They were upon the figure as the lights blazed on; they grasped the uncanny thing. Then howls of pain came from them and with writhing, twisting efforts they tore their hands away and fell back from the weird enemy. Upon grasping the figure they had received jolting shocks of electricity which left their bodies tingling and their brains numb as they stumbled back from the white horror.

Now the figure was moving forward. It seemed to have paid no attention to the attack. It reached Flambon's side and nudged the racket lord with the muzzle of the gun in its left hand. It did not speak, but the big cane pointed to the door leading into the corridor. Flambon stumbled through that door with the great bulk of the figure behind him.

"Don't follow," boomed the awful voice, as the figure disappeared into the corridor.

Now despite all that had happened, barely three minutes had passed from the time the ghastly shape had entered the night-club until it followed Flambon into the corridor. Police whistles were shrilling on the street, but the figure had been out of the big room several moments when the clatter of feet on the stairs told of the approach of the law. The sirens of patrol-cars were heard outside.

WHILE the officers who burst into the place with drawn guns were finding out what the trouble was about, Pedro Flambon was being ushered out a rear door by his ghastly captor. A car with a muffled driver behind the wheel stood in the alley before that door. The misshapen form pushed Flambon into the rear seat of that car and climbed in after him.

As the car shot away a command to halt was shouted down the alley. Then the night air was shattered by the reports of police guns as they sent lead after the speeding car. A police auto swung into the alley and took up the pursuit with the wail of its siren rising. The fleeing car reached the other end of the alley, swung on two wheels and sped away down the street. The driver reached out a hand and did something beneath the cowl. Suddenly from the rear of the auto there belched and billowed a cloud of thick yellow smoke that spread and rose,

filling the street behind with a dense, heavy blind through which no driver could pilot a car at more than a crawl.

FOR three blocks the escaping car continued to lay down this smoke-screen. Then it ceased as suddenly as it had started. The driver began to twist his course, slowing down more as he rounded each corner. The pursuit had been shaken off.

Within the hour newsboys were hawking extras even to the far outskirts of the city. Never had there been such a story. Besides the accounts written by reporters there were scores of stories—each different and vying with the others for wildness—by eye-witnesses. Staff artists questioned those witnesses and drew pictures of the Nemesis that had walked calmly through a hail of bullets to abduct the lord of the underworld from his stronghold. Those pictures were as weird and as different as the tales told by the eye-witnesses.

One reporter dubbed the ghastly abductor the "Damned Thing," and the phrase instantly caught.

The town was in a turmoil. Citizens who were still up called those who were in bed to tell them about the incredible happening. Police, detectives and reporters were being driven wild by the frantic demands of their superiors.

But the damned thing and its victim seemed to have vanished into thin air. Search proved fruitless. . . .

Two hours after the sack of the Chez Flambon, the car with the gangster chief and his strange captor in the rear seat turned into a drive which led to an abandoned farmhouse, standing in a dense grove about a quarter-mile back from the highway. The city was perhaps twenty miles behind. The driver tooled the auto into the shelter of a huge ramshackle barn, climbed out and opened the door for his passengers to alight. The driver was Lester Harrigan.

With an electric torch lighting the way, the grotesque white figure and its cowed captive followed Harrigan to the house. Presently they stood in a room which was bare but for a couple of kitchen chairs and a rough table upon which stood an oil lamp. Harrigan lighted the lamp. Flambon stood silent beside his captor. The yellow light showed his face drawn and gray and his eyes haunted with terror. Robbed of his bodyguard of killers, the sleek gang boss was a physical coward of the worst sort. Harrigan looked at the quaking rat, and a scornful smile twitched his lips.

"Well, Flambon," said the reporter. "Do you want to go on living for a while?"

Flambon licked his lips and opened his mouth, but no words came. Fear had actually paralyzed his vocal cords. His terror-filled eyes were fixed on Harrigan. He did not seem to dare glance at that ominous thing which towered close beside him. Finding speech impossible, he nodded his head while his eyes begged.

"Then," said Harrigan, in a voice that was brittle, "sit down there and write a letter that will cause Eileen Warren to be set free at once. It will be delivered early this morning. If she is not free and at her apartment before noon, you are going to die a painful death at the hands of my little playmate. Get busy."

Flambon shuddered and stumbled to a chair at the table. Harrigan shoved a dozen sheets of paper, which had been lying beside the lamp, before the racketeer and handed him a fountain-pen.

"Remember, rat," cautioned Harrigan, "this letter had better do the business. You won't get any second chance! I'm going to enclose a note with your letter for Eileen. It had better be given to her when she is turned loose, too—else she might not show up at her apartment. Then you'd be very sorry."

Flambon nodded, swallowed hard and set to work. With a trembling hand he wrote a message which covered two-thirds of a page. He signed his name—and below it drew a small design of intricate pattern.

"Hmph," grunted Harrigan, watching. "Little secret trick to make sure the letter is from you, eh?"

"Yes," croaked Flambon, making a sound for the first time since he had been pushed into the car by his captor. Harrigan took a stamped envelope from his pocket and laid it before Flambon. "Address it," ordered the reporter.

A MOMENT later Harrigan took the letter from Flambon and laid it aside. Then he went to a corner and picked up a coil of small, stout rope. He made the gang chief lie face-down on the floor and proceeded to gag him and to bind him in such a manner that movement was practically impossible. Then, with Harrigan carrying the letter, the reporter and his weird companion went through a door and into another part of the house.

It was about eleven o'clock in the morning when Flambon, still bound and lying on the floor, heard a car drive into the weed-grown yard beside the house. The motor stopped. There was no further sound until some twenty minutes had passed. Then the door opened and Lester Harrigan, and the huge misshapen Nemesis who had taken Flambon from the night-club, entered. Harrigan bent over, removed the gag and cut the racketeer's bonds. Then he yanked Flambon to his feet.

"Listen, you murdering louse," spat the reporter. "Your letter was delivered to Polish Joe Burzinski. Three hours afterward, Eileen had not turned up where our note told her to come. I got in touch with Burzinski by telephone. I reminded him that you would be a hunk of cold meat unless Eileen was turned loose in short order. And what do you think your boy friend answered? He said that would be nice—that he could get along very well without you, and would we please give you his best wishes before we bumped you off. I asked him what about Eileen and he said he had no use for her, but he'd keep her until we had put you out of the way. He said he'd turn her loose as soon as you were safe on a slab in the morgue. So—" Harrigan drew an automatic from his pocket.

Flambon was as white as if his blood had been milk. He reeled and sank into a chair. His terror-filled eyes clung to Harrigan's.

"Don't!" croaked the erstwhile despot of gangland. "My God, don't! I did what you told—"

"Here," cut in Harrigan, drawing a whisky-flask from his hip pocket. "Pour some of this into you." He extended the flask toward Flambon.

The racketeer seized the bottle in a trembling hand and gulped down a stiff drink. In a moment he became a trifle steadier and a bright spot of red came to each ashen cheek.

"We don't want to murder even a rat like you," said Harrigan. "But to save Eileen I would tear your rotten heart out with my fingers. We will attend to Polish Joe too—but first and at once you're going to tell us where to go to find Eileen Warren. Your only hope to live is for us to find her unharmed. Talk fast."

The news that Polish Joe Burzinski, his first lieutenant, had turned on him,—added to his fear of his captors,—had stunned Flambon. For a moment he was unable to speak. Another swallow of the whisky loosened his tongue.

"She's at the Red Palace—in the basement," said the gangster, "unless Burzinski has moved her. Damn his—"

"She's probably there," cut in Harrigan, speaking to the gigantic white figure. "That's the gambling joint out on Pennington Road. The dump is a regular fort. After reading about what happened last night and hearing what he did this morning, Burzinski has probably holed up there, waiting for us to bump off Flambon. Slick devil, framing us to do his dirty work and leave him in Flambon's spot!"

"Then we'll go get her," boomed the terrific voice. "Let's get started."

"We'd better get a little dope on the Red Palace dump from this snake before we start," suggested Harrigan.

DURING the next ten minutes Harrigan shot numerous questions at Flambon which the captive racketeer answered without hesitation and in a manner that left no doubt as to their truthfulness.

The quiz finished, Flambon was again bound and dumped on the floor. He begged and offered to help them—offered a fortune as a bribe—but his pleading fell on deaf ears. A gag was thrust into his mouth and fastened there. Then

Harrigan and the great hulking white thing went out. Presently Flambon heard their auto driven away.

IT was shortly after noon when the telephone rang in a darkened bedroom where a young man lay sleeping. The sleeper was Riley Stein, reporter for the Morning *Banner*, and a good friend of Lester Harrigan. He stirred and rolled over. Then he swore sleepily at the jangling telephone and dragged it to him. The next moment he was wide awake. The sound of Lester Harrigan's voice over the wire had banished all trace of slumber.

"Hello, Riley," said Harrigan. "Listen and don't talk back. Take down this address."

Harrigan gave an address and Stein jotted it down on the margin of a newspaper lying on the telephone-stand.

"Meet me there just as soon as you can," went on Harrigan. "Don't tell a soul you have heard from me."

"But—" began Stein.

"But nothing," cut in Harrigan. "Just come. Don't worry about reporting to the office. When Ted Lowell sees the story you'll take back with you, he'll forgive you if you tell him you murdered his grandmother."

"Say—"

"Come on. And make it snappy," barked Harrigan. The click of the severed connection sounded in the receiver.

Riley Stein banged down the telephone, growling a highly uncomplimentary opinion of Harrigan. Fifteen minutes later he was on his way to the address his fellow reporter had given him. . . .

Darkness had just fallen when a closed laundry-truck drove along Pennington Road not far inside the city limits. Lester Harrigan was at the wheel and in the enclosed body rode the Damned Thing and Riley Stein. Young Stein was a-quiver with excitement. The truck was approaching the notorious gambling-dive known as the Red Palace. The place was a huge two-story house of red brick. As Harrigan had remarked, it was a veritable fort. All the windows were covered with heavy steel shutters, bolted securely from the inside. The door, while it looked like wood, was in reality a thick slab of steel and built to withstand the assault of raiders for a long enough time for all evidence of gambling to be disposed of. For many years it had been one of Pedro Flambon's chief sources of income—and had been immune to the law. It was operated by Polish Joe, the lieutenant who had seen and taken a chance to usurp Flambon's throne. As the laundry-truck approached, the three who rode therein saw that two of the front windows were unshuttered and raised a few inches at the bottom. The heavy curtains of steel could no doubt be dropped quickly into place, but from what Flambon had told them the men in the truck knew that a man with a machine-gun watched inside each of those windows.

The house sat back from the sidewalk no more than five or six feet. Thus, when the laundry-truck pulled to the curb before it, the windows behind which danger lurked were not more than twenty feet from the vehicle. As the suddenly applied brakes stopped the truck, Lester Harrigan swung his right arm and hurled a rock weighing about a pound at one of those windows. A moment after making the heave, Harrigan tumbled from the driver's seat into the closed body of the truck. At the same moment Riley Stein leaned from the rear of the vehicle and threw a similar missile at the other open window. The two rocks crashed through the windows and a second later the vicious sputter of two machine-guns rent the night.

Tongues of fire licking from the red throats of those weapons stabbed the darkness, and a literal hail of lead raked the laundry-truck. But the three inside were not harmed by the hissing slugs. The side of that vehicle which was toward the gambling-den was so armored that it was even more bullet-proof than Pedro Flambon's notorious limousine. The flying lead from the gangster guns flattened itself harmlessly on that armor after ripping through the outer wall of the truck.

LESTER HARRIGAN had snatched up the nozzle end of a hose lying coiled on the floor of the truck. The other end of that hose was attached to a large steel pressure-tank. Harrigan thrust the nozzle through a small loophole in the armored side of the vehicle and pressed a long brass trigger. Driven by terrific pressure, a stream of liquid that seemed to steam as it sped through the darkness leaped from the nozzle and was played into one window and then into the other. A moment later the sinister voices of the machine-guns fell silent.

The steel shutters dropped over the windows with a clang. Even writhing as

they were in the torture of the tear gas that had been poured into the two small guard-rooms, the gunners had groped for and pressed the release buttons which closed those shutters.

But as the steel covers fell into place, the grotesque and gigantic white figure dropped from the rear of the truck and moved ponderously yet quickly toward the front door of the dive. It carried its huge cane in its right hand. As it drew near the entrance a small tongue of bluish fire that paled almost to white suddenly leaped out from the tip of its rather elongated left index finger. Before the heavy door the figure paused and pointed that blazing finger against the portal. Red sparks of molten metal instantly began to fly in a sort of fireworks display.

The weird white figure stood still, slowly drawing that fiery finger across the door. The blue-white tongue of fire was cutting through that thick slab of steel as a knife cuts through cheese. In less than three minutes a large rectangular slab fell inward, leaving a hole in the metal portal through which even the huge white figure could pass. The end of the long finger ceased to blaze and the two reporters, watching from the laundry-truck, saw the great white shape stoop and step through the opening whose edges still glowed red in the darkness.

Inside the dive, the ghastly form moved across a hall and began to mount a stairway which led to the main gambling-salon on the second floor. Screams of women and shouts and curses of men were now filling the old brick house. Steadily the misshapen monster climbed. It reached the doors at the top of the stairs. They were heavy, but made of wood and fastened on the gaming-room side with a single heavy bolt. Again the fire leaped from the long index finger. The wood blazed, and smoke and sparks flew; then the tongue of fire disappeared and the invincible figure pushed open the doors and stepped inside.

IT was early evening for the Red Palace. About forty patrons were in the big gaming-rooms. They were now ranged against the walls farthest from the entrance. Between them and the door through which the gruesome white form burst into the place stood a dozen or more hard-faced gunmen with drawn weapons.

Those weapons now leaped into action. The noise of the fusillade was deafening in the low-ceilinged salon. The flying lead centered on the terrifying thing just inside the door. But the weird figure stood steady, leaning forward slightly as though to brace itself against the bullets. Long black streaks appeared here and there on the enormous white head as bullets glanced off it and thudded into the wall behind. Sounding even above the crashing guns, that awful and unbelievable voice thundered:

"Stop it!"

THE resounding command seemed to freeze trigger-fingers. The volley died away with two or three scattering shots. The gunmen stood staring incredulously at the thing against which their combined weapons had proven futile. Their faces were suddenly pale and fear flamed in their eyes. Women screamed and fainted. The air was pungent with burned cordite.

The black, hollow spots which were the eyes in the huge and ghastly skull-like head now swept the room and came to rest on a tableau beside a chip-strewn roulette-table at one side of the salon. The white figure seemed to stiffen. Beside that roulette-table stood Eileen Warren. She was gazing with wide, horror-filled eyes at the thing which now faced her. Beside her, gripping her by the arm and pressing an ugly automatic against her small body, stood a burly figure—Polish Joe Burzinski.

Hate, fear and defiance were in that gangster's dark eyes as they rested on the big white form of the Nemesis.

"Get out of here and stay out," screamed Burzinski in a voice that quavered despite him, "or I'll blow a lot of holes in this broad."

For a long moment there was silence, complete and thick, in the smoke-filled room. The white figure stood still, gazing with those awful black caverns at the man who had defied it with the threat of death to Eileen Warren. The huge cane in its hand was half lifted. It seemed like stalemate for a moment. Then the girl herself took a hand.

Burzinski's eyes were riveted on the weird form of the Damned Thing, watching hawklike for any move in its part. Eileen seemed suddenly to lose her fear. With a lightning-quick move she grasped the gun and pushed it away from her body, at the same time flinging herself forward and down. Both of her hands remained frozen to the gun in a death-like grip as she fell. The gun roared, but the bullet slammed into the floor.

And then the big cane in the hand of the white figure whipped up and pointed at Burzinski. In a fine, hard-driven stream, a couple of ounces of ammonia struck the gangster in the face and he let go of the gun, clapping his hands to his eyes as he staggered back against the roulette-table. Flat on the floor, Eileen Warren rolled over and looked again at the unbelievable figure which seemed to be her friend.

Then the report of a gun crashed in the room. Twice more the gun spoke. Just inside the doorway behind the gruesome white form stood Pedro Flambon, disheveled and wild-eyed. The racketeer had evidently managed in some manner to free himself after the departure of his captors from the farmhouse and had made his way to the city, bent on vengeance. It was he who had fired the shots. All three slugs had torn into Polish Joe's middle. With a terrible scream Burzinski doubled over and pitched to the floor beside the prostrate Eileen Warren.

The great white form swung around and the big cane swept through the air to smack against the side of Flambon's head. The racketeer fell, unconscious.

NOW the wail of police sirens was heard. The riot squad, called by the policeman on the beat, was coming. Brakes squealed in front of the dive as the wail of the sirens died. A dozen men, armed with revolvers and sawed-off shotguns, piled from the two cars and charged into the Red Palace. They pounded up the stairs, leaving one man to guard the wrecked door. They knew there was no other entrance to the joint. With faces grim and guns ready, the raiders burst into the gaming-room. They halted in stark amazement as they beheld the grisly figure which faced them from its station between themselves and the other occupants of the room. On the heels of the officers came Lester Harrigan and Riley Stein.

"Greetings, officers!" The thunderous voice of the Damned Thing seemed to shake the room. "Yonder is Polish Joe Burzinski—ready for the morgue. Pedro Flambon murdered him in cold blood, while Burzinski was disarmed and helpless. Everybody in this room saw it. There is Flambon, taking a nap on the floor. I now turn affairs over to you. Good evening."

Gasps of rage and astonishment came from the members of the riot squad. The sergeant in charge shook himself and leveled his gun at the Thing which had made the speech.

"Who—what kind of a damned thing are you?" demanded the sergeant. "You stick out your mitts for the cuffs. We'll take you apart down at headquarters and see what makes you like you are. Cover him—it, boys!"

The order was not needed. The weapons of the other officers were already trained on the "damned thing."

"Sorry, Sergeant," boomed the stupendous voice. "But I've no intention of being taken apart. I don't want to hurt you or your boys unless I have to—so don't do any shooting. And get out of my way." The cane still in the figure's right hand was pointed at the sergeant. The great white thing took a stiff, mechanical step forward.

Bang!

The weapon in the sergeant's hand spat fire and lead. The bullet thwacked into the middle of the grim figure. At the same moment a slug of ammonia splattered in the sergeant's face and he dropped his gun with a gasping howl.

Wham!

An officer beside the sergeant had let go with a sawed-off shotgun. The charge of shot seemed to rock the huge form on its feet, but it did not fall. Then the man who had fired was suffering with his sergeant, blinded and gasping as he sank to the floor.

"Stop it!" The voice of the grisly thing bellowed.

There were no more shots. The remaining officers were standing rigid with awe and unbelief. The white figure again moved forward. It thrust the long index finger of its left hand against its side and then pointed that digit, spitting a tongue of blue-white flame, at the officers.

"Stand aside," thundered the paralyzing voice.

HALF-HYPNOTIZED, the officers fell back. The figure moved to the door, where it halted and faced the room.

"I'll stay here until you disarm the others in this room, just to see that they don't put up any fight," said the incredible voice. "Get busy."

The officers shook off their daze and went about their job. Shortly it was finished.

"Now I'm leaving," boomed the ponderous figure. "Don't follow me. You'll find a couple more thugs down in the

front rooms of this dump. They'll be pretty well knocked out with gas. Don't anybody come out of the door of this place until I am well on my way."

The Damned Thing turned and started down the stairs. The officer on guard at the front door stepped forward with a challenge. He met one of those potent shots of ammonia, and ceased to be interested in the form that lumbered down the stairs and stalked out into the night.

A crowd had begun to gather, but it kept at a respectable distance from the scene of so much gun-play. That crowd saw the unbelievable thing emerge from the gambling-dive—saw it walk calmly to where the two powerful police-cars stood at the curb. That tongue of weird fire was again hissing from the long index finger. It reached out and touched the front tire on one of the police autos. That tire immediately exploded with a loud bang, and went flat. The figure walked to the other car, climbed in and drove away. The patrolman on the beat emptied his gun at the strange driver as the car sped past where he stood on the sidewalk. The figure merely waved a huge white arm in a gesture of farewell.

Lester Harrigan's part in the drama was to bring Eileen Warren away from the wrecked gambling-dive. This he managed adroitly. While Riley Stein took care of the story for the *Banner*, Harrigan and Eileen slipped away in the gathered throng and disappeared.

MAKING certain that they were not followed, Harrigan hailed a cab and gave the driver an address. Presently they were set down before a big building, and Harrigan led the girl to a basement door. They entered a huge laboratory that was partly a machine-shop. This was the place where Alvin Portwood had for some time been conducting his experiments in the fields of chemistry and mechanics. He had kept the location of his workshop an absolute secret, to avoid premature publicity.

As Eileen and Harrigan entered the room, the grisly figure that had raided the Red Palace rose ponderously from a bench.

"Get busy," boomed its voice. "Boy, I'm tuckered!"

Harrigan laughed as he stepped forward and began to strip the figure. First he removed a suit of sheep's wool, half an inch thick, packed between two nets of fine, pliable steel wire. Underneath that was a queer suit of armor, constructed of thin plates of metal overlapping one another like the scales on fish, or like shingles. When the armor was removed, it was disclosed that two powerful storage batteries had made the hump on the figure's back. Harrigan detached these and placed them on the floor. Then he took off the object that had given the Damned Thing its pigeon breast. This was a copper storage-tank, divided into two compartments. One compartment held oxygen and the other acetylene gas. From this had come the white flame that had cut away steel barriers. Harrigan next opened and lifted off the huge, skull-like head.

ALVIN PORTWOOD, hair tousled and sweat streaking his face, stood grinning at Eileen Warren. The girl had stood watching the disrobing act with wide-eyed curiosity. Portwood was now clad only in a suit like tights, but made from inch-thick crêpe or sponge rubber. With a gurgle of delight, Eileen sprang forward and was in Portwood's arms.

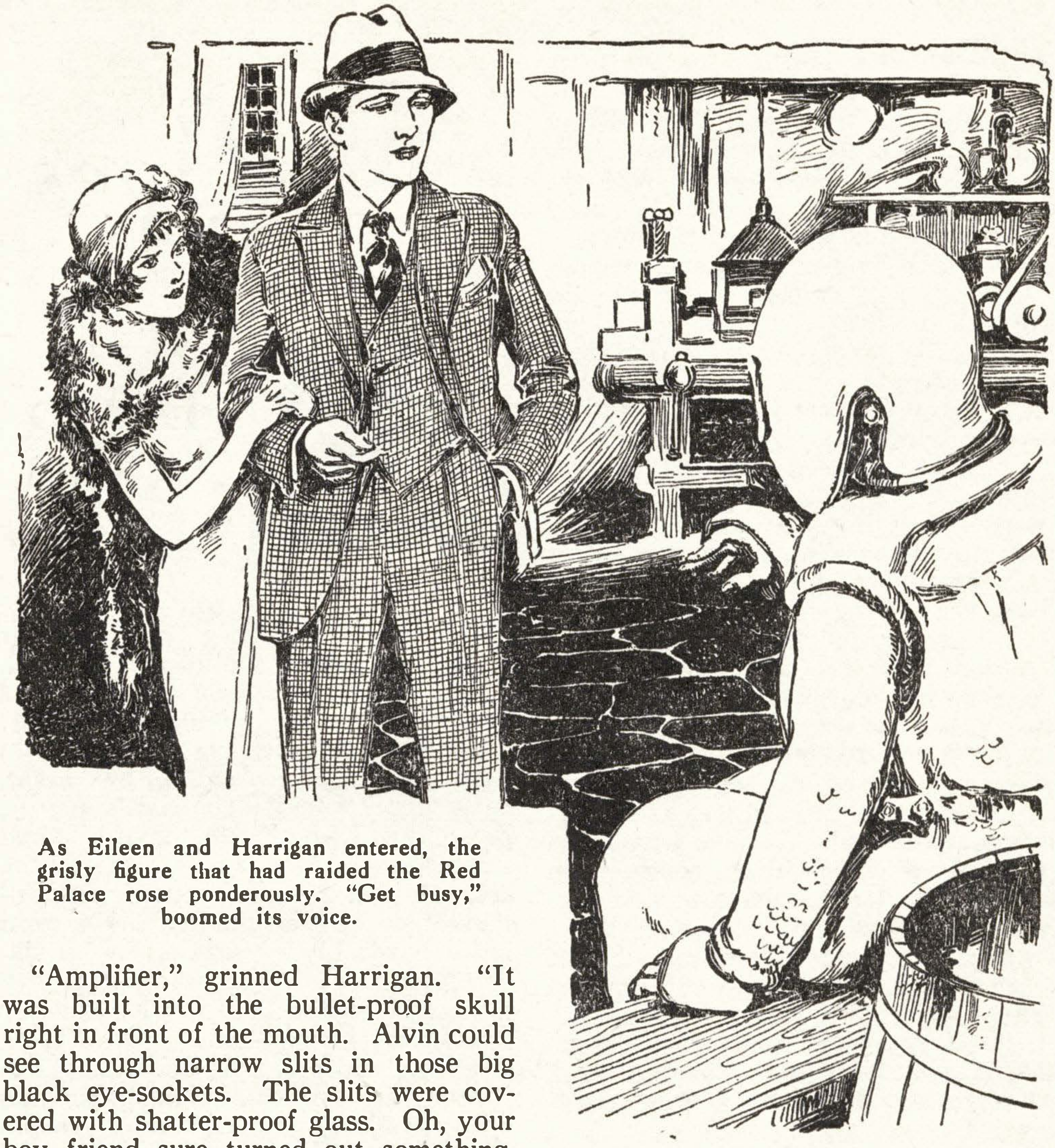
"Now darling," said her lover, pushing Eileen from him after a few moments, "you wait here with Lester while I get out of this last layer and into some civilized clothing. There is nothing but Alvin Portwood under this rubber."

He strode to the far end of the laboratory and disappeared through a door.

"I can't believe it yet!" declared Eileen to Harrigan. "Tell me about it."

"We had to get you away from Flambon," explained Harrigan. "So Alvin made himself bullet-proof. The sheep's-wool outfit tangled up bullets and slowed them down a bit before they hit the armor underneath. That armor was made of a new metal, very light in weight but still shell-resisting, which Portwood had just invented for use in Army airplanes. The sponge rubber under the metal helped to absorb the shock of the striking bullets. It also insulated his body from the electricity which he could turn into the wire netting of the outer suit, from the storage batteries on his shoulders. Anybody who grabbed him with bare hands got a devil of a jolt. A tube ran down his arm from the tank on his chest and fed the torch on his finger. That big cane contained a powerful flashlight and a storage tank of ammonia under air-pressure. The triggers for the light and the ammonia were on the handle of the cane."

"And that awful voice?" Eileen asked.



As Eileen and Harrigan entered, the grisly figure that had raided the Red Palace rose ponderously. "Get busy," boomed its voice.

"Amplifier," grinned Harrigan. "It was built into the bullet-proof skull right in front of the mouth. Alvin could see through narrow slits in those big black eye-sockets. The slits were covered with shatter-proof glass. Oh, your boy friend sure turned out something, when old Mother Necessity decided to give birth to another child!"

"But how did Alvin get away from those men who were supposed to kill him?" asked Eileen.

"All I know is what he told me," replied Harrigan. "And you know what a modest son-of-a-gun he is. Here's the tale. It seems that when Alvin left his apartment that night to come to the party at the Chez Flambon, two men with guns captured him at the front door of the apartment-building and forced him into a big closed car, driven by a third hoodlum. His captors sat with him in the rear seat and kept their weapons pushed against him.

"While driving north with him, they told Alvin that they were taking him for a ride because he had been a darned fool and monkeyed with a girl that Flambon wanted. When they got onto that byroad west of Tarrytown, the fellow sitting on Alvin's right noticed his jeweled platinum wrist-watch. The hoodlum told his buddy to watch, while he appropriated the gadget. The gunman then laid his weapon in his lap, took the watch off Alvin's wrist, and began buckling it on his own.

"In the meantime, Alvin had decided that the best way to die would be fighting. He made a quick grab at the gun the fellow on his left was holding against his side. He was quick enough to twist the muzzle aside just a second before the torpedo pulled the trigger. The bullet took the driver in the back of the head. Dying, the driver must have stopped the car, because it did not leave the road. The gunman who had taken the watch grabbed his gun and took a snap-shot at Alvin, who was struggling with his partner. He missed Alvin and drilled his fellow killer through the heart. Alvin got the gun from the fellow's hand as it relaxed, and shot the remaining hoodlum just as that bird fired at him again. The bullet just grazed Alvin's

skull and put him out. With Alvin's bullet in his heart, the gangster wearing the wrist-watch somehow opened the door and fell out of the car. His body rolled down the bank into the ditch.

"When Alvin regained consciousness, it was after one o'clock. He was in the car with two dead gangsters. He didn't look for the third, but rolled the dead driver over into the back and drove away from there in the car. Back in the edge of the city, he abandoned the car with the dead ones in it. He walked to where he could get a cab and called me on the telephone. We tried to call you, but you had already gone nuts and headed for Flambon's apartment. So we set about doing things."

"I'll say you did," smiled Eileen.

Alvin Portwood, naturally dressed, came out of the rear room. He dropped into a chair before a battered desk.

"Am I sore and weary?" grunted the young inventor. "Just try wearing that darned rig around! It weighs eighty-five pounds. And I feel like I had been pounded all over with hammers. I'm mighty glad I didn't have to take any machine-gun bullets!"

"Boy," declared Harrigan. "I was crazy with fear that they would get you in the hands. Luck was with you there."

"Got two pellets from that shotgun," said Portwood, holding up his left hand. "That's all. The darned thing scattered."

"You poor boy!" cried Eileen, sitting down gently on Portwood's lap and taking the injured hand in hers.

"Harrigan," grinned the inventor, "go out and see if the *Herald* extra is out yet. Let's read Riley Stein's story."

When Harrigan came back half an hour later, Eileen had dressed the injured hand. They read Stein's story.

"You should sell this invention to the police, Alvin," declared Harrigan. "With it they could sure put gangland on the everlasting fritz."

"No," smiled Portwood. "I'd rather keep my secret and be ready to make gangland behave whenever necessary, by simply threatening to step into the game. I think there will be a wholesome respect for the 'Damned Thing' in the underworld, for some time to come."

"I'll say there will," nodded Harrigan. "When shall the *Banner* say you and Eileen will be married?"

"By the time the *Banner* can get out an edition," grinned Alvin Portwood, "it can say that we *are* married!"

Lives

By DAVID NEWELL

"THE MISTER!" This is his title throughout southwestern Brazil. Perhaps a couple of shifty-eyed border-rustlers are talking about him; perhaps a high official is discussing him with a wealthy rancher. In any event, he is "the Mister." The words may be pronounced with affection or with hatred—but always there is a note of respect. John Gordon Ramsay's very nature admits of no halfway business. His word is his bond; his big fists and worn six-shooter are his laws; his warm generosity is the key to the hearts of his men.

This lovable old-time Texas sheriff is a man's man if ever there was one. Seventy-six years old, weighing one hundred and ninety pounds, keen of eye and powerful of body, he fairly breathes the colorful atmosphere of our old West. His fiery personality appeals to the South Americans, who admire fire; and his marksmanship, horsemanship and knowledge of the frontier are held in high esteem in a country where such things are essential.

Ramsay, as I have said, is not a young man. He grew up in the days when Texas and other Western States were wild and slightly woolly! He matched his wits and skill with a six-gun against the "bad men" of his times, and he has come to the conclusion that it does not pay to be a bad man. As he put it:

"There was a fellow came into town one Saturday night, and he was sure huntin' trouble. I was just a blubber-headed kid then, but what happened made a powerful impression on me. This fellow tied his horse and made a speech. Of course he was liquored up some, and what he said and the way he said it was simply askin' for what he got.

"'Poisonous Pete's my name,' says he,

of the Daring

I—"The Mister"

Here follows the first of a remarkable series—brief biographies of men who have led lives of extraordinary adventure. "The Mister," a Texas cattleman who rules a principality of his own in Brazil is described by David Newell, of the Matto Grosso Expedition.

'I can climb higher in a low pine, wade deeper in shallow water, shoot louder with less powder an' get drunker on less whisky than anybody in this country. What's more, I don't live where I did before—I've moved higher down.' Now, there was a bowlegged, leather-necked puncher from the Turkey Tracks standin' near by. This puncher gave the stranger a cold look.

"'Poisonous Pete, eh?' he says. 'Well, you don't look poison to me. Where do you keep it?' The stranger went for his gun, but he was miles late. He thought he was bad, but he'd found somebody worse. That's the way with bad men—they always find somebody worse. It don't pay."

EVENTUALLY Texas became too tame for Ramsay. He had been born with a love of adventure, and his early life had been full of it. He went to Brazil. There, on the frontier of Matto Grosso, he found action that brought a quickening of his pulse. As manager of an enormous cattle-ranch he carved out the reputation he holds today.

Ramsay's ranch, Descalvados, is about half the size of Belgium—approximately three million acres. It borders the upper Paraguay River on the east, and to the west it extends as far as the boundary of Bolivia. Even Ramsay himself has never been over all of it, for there are desolate marshes, dense jungles and rocky cactus-covered little mountains that are very difficult of access, and even more difficult of egress. When Ramsay took over the ranch, some years ago, cattle-rustling was a profitable business. Organized bands of rustlers worked the edges of Descalvados, stealing hundreds of beef steers and cows in the course of a year. To John Gordon Ramsay, such a situation demanded prompt and drastic action. His cowboys were Indians and half-breeds, but they loved and respected him. He called them together and outlined his plan of dealing with cattle thieves.

Now I know these *vacqueiros*. They wear funny little leather aprons instead of chaps, and they carry knives instead of six-shooters. Nevertheless they are experts with sixty-foot rawhide lassoes; hard, reckless riders; excitable, desperate fighters; and their knives are razor-sharp. It has long been customary, on the Brazilian frontier, to cut off a cattle thief's ears—thus branding him for future reference. Obviously a knife is far better than a six-shooter for such work!

Ramsay instructed his men thoroughly regarding the prospective raid. There was to be no "souvenir hunting" in the way of ear-cutting. The rustlers would be ordered to throw down their arms. If they refused—well, what happened would be their fault. The attack was made just before daylight, and Ramsay took with him about a dozen of his best men. The rustlers—about twenty in number—were camped in a long *cordilheira* or patch of jungle, about forty miles from Descalvados headquarters. Ramsay, in his broken Portuguese, called on them to surrender. Today, the Mister's voice would be enough; there would be immediate surrender. But at that time John Gordon Ramsay was a newcomer, so the rustlers cursed fluently and went for their guns. When the smoke and knife-play cleared, there were sixteen less rustlers, and the four who managed to escape were thoroughly convinced that an old-time Texas sheriff was very bad medicine. Of course there was a good deal of hard feeling among the friends

and relatives of the dead rustlers, although Ramsay had been entirely within his rights. The battle had taken place on his territory, and both he and his Indians held official "police" authority from the Brazilian Government. The rustlers had been caught with stolen cattle, and had been called on to surrender. However, the frontier of Matto Grosso was unused to "law." Therefore there were mutterings of revenge, and eventually the mutterings reached Ramsay. A peon from across the border brought word of the threats.

"The military commander at Santa Rosa has said that he will shortly come with a large force and wipe out Descalvados," reported the peon. Again Ramsay acted promptly. He took twenty of his men and rode to within twenty miles of Santa Rosa, where he left his men. Then, with the peon, he bearded the military commander.

"I have been told, senhor," said Ramsay, "that you have threatened to attack Descalvados."

"An error," replied the commander. "Such a thought is far from my mind."

"This peon says that he heard you make the threat," answered Ramsay in his direct Yankee way.

"A very, very grave error," retorted the commander, glowering at the peon.

"Well, I'm glad to hear it," grunted Ramsay. "I'd hate to have to kill any more of your people." He rose to go.

"Ah, senhor, we must discuss this matter more fully with some of the other officials. You will stay here tonight. Tomorrow we will have an understanding," announced the commander suavely.

"No," replied Ramsay abruptly, "I shall not stay here tonight."

"You really must do so, senhor," argued the commander.

RAMSAY kept his temper with difficulty. "Twenty of my men—my best men—are waiting, about three leagues from here," he snapped. "I told them that if I was not back at sundown, to come in here and not leave one stone on top of another in Santa Rosa." It was almost sundown!

The commander shrugged. "As you wish, senhor. I do not become responsible."

"The only thing you need to be responsible for is keeping yourself and your men out of Descalvados," growled Ramsay, and mounted his horse. There was no more trouble on the border.

GRADUALLY the Mister's reputation spread. Here was a man who always meant exactly what he said—no more, no less; an utterly fearless man, who stood ready to back his play with big fists and deadly accurate gun, and yet who was in no sense a bully. The Brazilians began to respect him, then to admire him. Today he holds the sincere affection of practically all who come in contact with him. His enemies are few and far between, and they take pains to keep well out of his way, for his age has dimmed neither his shooting-eye nor his fiery nature. In fact, just three years ago, at the age of seventy-three, he performed a most unusual feat with a six-shooter, one which is worth relating.

The jaguar of Matto Grosso takes heavy toll of cattle on the big ranches. A full-grown male attains a weight of three hundred and fifty pounds, and is a savage, treacherous beast. One Sunday morning the Mister rode out with some of his "boys" to look over the cattle. As the party entered a patch of heavy jungle, the Indians' mongrels put up a pair of jaguars. Ramsay spurred after them, drawing his gun. The two big cats were attempting to reach a heavier jungle, but by hard riding Ramsay cut them off, and they turned in the high grass. One he killed with the first shot of his old forty-five. The other bounded away, and Ramsay's third shot crippled it. With a great snarl, the spotted killer whirled and started a vicious charge. "Old Man" Ramsay stopped the charge with a bullet between the beast's eyes, at a distance of ten feet! On the way home he shot three peccaries and a big cervo buck—"just for meat." And all this was accomplished with a revolver.

Several months ago it was my good fortune to spend ten days in the field with this remarkable man. Two days we rode over twelve hours—chasing jaguars; and two nights we slept on our saddle-blankets where night found us, tired, and without food. I am a young man, but John Ramsay, a man of seventy-six, was up in the morning before daylight, rousting out the Indians and building the fire, singing cowboy songs, before I could unlimber sufficiently to lace my boots.

Many a night, as we lay in our hammocks at Carne de Vacca, while our "tiger" dogs snored by the fire, I have thrilled to his stories of the old West; of Bat Masterson, Mysterious Dave and other famous gunmen; of cattle-thieves, train-robbers and desperadoes; of knife-

and gun-fights on the Brazilian frontier. I shall never forget the first night at Carne de Vacca. We had ridden hard that day, and were turning in early. I had stretched my hammock, hung out my saddle blankets, fed the dogs, and was preparing to go to roost.

"Dave, where's your gun?" grunted Ramsay.

"Hanging over there on that tree—in my belt," I answered.

"Hang it on your hammock-rope," said Ramsay.

"I nearly always do," I replied. "But why especially tonight?"

"Well," laughed Ramsay, "I had to kill a man out here two or three years ago, and some of the people don't like me very much. It's best to be ready for anything that might happen. The fellow was drunk and went after me with his *faca*, so I had to do it; but of course everybody doesn't understand the circumstances."

I wouldn't let the old man go to sleep until he had told the story:

A FAMILY who held a tract of land on lease from Ramsay had taken to stealing cattle on a small scale. At first Ramsay let the matter go unnoticed, for the family was poor, and as I have said, Ramsay is too generous for his own good. But one steer every week or two is a good deal different from a dozen steers every week or two. Ramsay finally sent one of his men to see the head of the family and his two cattle-stealing sons. The messenger informed them that the *Patrao* had been aware of what was going on for some time. Now it would have to stop.

But about a month later, one of Ramsay's riders spotted the wrongdoers with four fine steers. The thieves had fastened one of Ramsay's steers on each side of two of their own saddle oxen, and were driving them south toward Carne de Vacca.

By hard riding, Ramsay and two of his men overtook them. There was a running fight, and the thieves finally abandoned the stolen cattle and fled for their lives. Ramsay really had no intention of doing more than throwing a scare into them, and in a minute more would have given up pursuit. The two brothers were well mounted, but the father's horse played out. The brothers calmly rode off and left their father, who leaped from his horse, and dashed into a patch of heavy jungle.

"It was almost dark, and a cold rain was falling," explained Ramsay. "We put in a miserable night, and took the captured oxen and the old man's horse back to Descalvados next day. The old man sneaked around in the jungle all night, and finally walked thirty miles home. About a week later he took pneumonia and died in a few days. The boys hated me—said I had murdered their father; and one of them got drunk and tried to knife me out here one night. The other one? I don't know. That's why I said to hang your gun on your hammock rope."

BUT the Mister's memories are not all of gun-fights and of violence. Descalvados has been the headquarters of several scientific expeditions, and Ramsay looks back on them as bright spots in his life. He is keenly interested in science—in the study of bird and animal life, in the life history of the Indians, the Bororos, the Guaranys, the Guatos, the Nhambicuaras and other tribes who lived on his beloved pampas and pantanals before the Brazil Land and Cattle Company was ever dreamed of. He has given freely of his hospitality, his influence, his men and his own astounding energy, in the furtherance of science and exploration. He speaks with pride of his guests—Cherrie, Schmidt, Mrs. Marshall Field and others. Particularly he likes to speak of his old Texas friend Colonel Roosevelt. And often he would preface a story by the remark: "When Teddy and Kermit were here—"

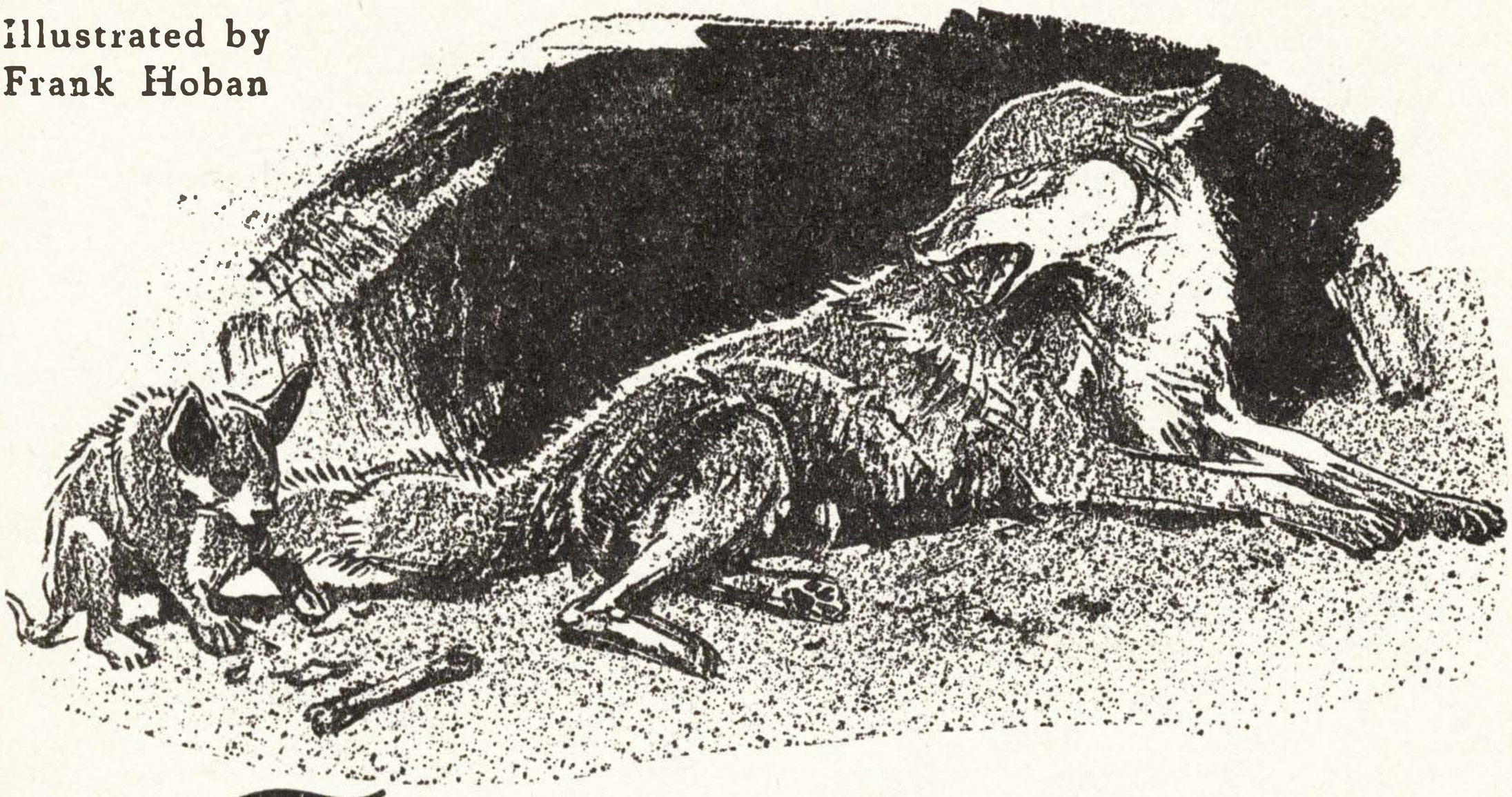
I hope that some day he will say, in that simple, friendly voice of his:

"Now when the Matto Grosso Expedition boys were here—" I know that I, for one, shall be very proud, for I learned to love the Mister. I can see him now, with a wee stub of a cigar peeking from under his gray mustache. He and his Indians—Luca, Cipriano, Pareira, Manuelito, and the rest—have come down to the landing to see me off in the Expedition plane.

"I'll be back some day," I say, with a choke in my voice.

"Well, don't be too long about it, Davey lad," he says, gripping my hand in that big fist, "or they're apt to show you the place where the old man was laid away." And as the plane roars from the water, the Mister whips out an old forty-five. Six little puffs of white smoke, glimpsed for a moment, as we point our nose toward the sea!

Illustrated by
Frank Hoban



Timber Wolf

A specially engaging tale of wilderness life by that alumnus of the old West who gave us "The Night Hawk."

By BIGELOW NEAL

IT was an evening in June and Mika was homeward bound. Velvet shadows reached out from the hills and the western slopes of the valley were in somber contrast with those of the eastern side. Wild cherries and thorn-apples choked the bottom of the valley, where mice and cottontails, retreating hastily before the intruder, filled the air with the patter of tiny feet on the dried and fallen leaves of a year gone by, while high above, against the blue of a Dakota sky, golden eagles rose and fell or hung stationary in space.

From the black plume at the end of his tail, to the quivering steel-gray nostrils that constantly sifted the evening air for signs of danger, Mika, as the Red Men called him, was a thing of beauty and of grace. He belonged to that family of coyotes whose members are so large that they are frequently miscalled timber wolves, when they dwell in the forested regions of Wisconsin and Minnesota, but on the prairie, where he had wandered long before, he was occasionally classed as a buffalo wolf, although that classification was equally an error. Long and rangy, his gray body surmounted by a cape-like mane of yellowish-brown, he flitted from bush to bush and from glade to glade with the speed of the ground-martins swooping above his head, and as silently as the progress of the shadows from the western hills.

All day long the coyote had been hunting, and although to the other creatures of the wild he appeared blood-thirsty in the extreme, to him his mission was a labor of sacrifice and of love, all because of those youngsters in the den ahead, those squirming little bundles of tawny-gray with eyes like pale blue buttons and tongues as pink as the rose petals that so often sifted down the tunnel's mouth. And then there was Mika's mate,—"Shadow" we may call her for want of a better name,—who had grown gaunt and thin transforming the food that Mika brought home to her—through the medium of warm milk—into the bones and muscles of her little ones.

TONIGHT Mika was bringing to the den a meal which would go far to fill out the gauntness of his mate. In his jaws he carried a jack-rabbit and in spite of the fact that it was his only kill of the

day, so loyal was he to those awaiting him that he had taken no part for himself —nor would he have done so, no matter how great his hunger, for among all the wild folk there are perhaps none that take the duties of parenthood so seriously as do the coyotes.

However, Mika was progressing under difficulties. The rabbit was heavy and not only did its fluffy fur clog his nostrils but the strong scent of the still-warm body clouded, even more effectively, the sense of smell which the coyote needed so much to warn him of ever-possible dangers ahead. Accordingly he was often obliged to pause, putting the rabbit down and moistening his nose with a long pink tongue, to analyze the air currents that drifted among the underbrush. Again and again he repeated this maneuver; evidently the results were disquieting, for the nearer he approached to his home the oftener he paused, and now a trace of apprehension became apparent in the increasing stealthiness of his movements.

AT the last turn in the valley he stopped to sniff again; now it was evident that his suspicions had crystallized into a certainty of danger, for as he sniffed repeatedly, the hairs along his back rose, the worried look in his eyes deepened to a glow of hate, and his lips drew back to expose the fangs of which so many wild folk lived in dread. He knew now that there was something wrong ahead.

Putting the rabbit into a hollow he covered it with sticks and leaves, then turning at right angles to his former course he entered the mouth of a steep lateral ravine. He was running now, not with the high playful bounds of the unhurried coyote but with his head held low and his tail outstretched. For a time he followed the very bottom of the gorgelike ravine—clearing rocks and boulders in great leaps and crouching low to dart like a gray streak beneath the trunks of fallen trees. Halfway up the ravine he turned again, assuming a direction parallel to his original course. Here he deliberately abandoned the brush-littered bottom of the ravine for the barren slope of the clay butte which bordered it. A short, hard scramble carried him up over the crumbling surface of clay and sandstone and lignite, until with a last great effort he surmounted the crest of scoria and petrified wood, and emerged on the level of the prairie.

Again he was running, this time in the open across the grassy plain, continuing with undiminished speed until he had come to a point above and opposite the den in the valley. Then changing his course for the third time, he crept slowly and cautiously toward a place where he could peer down through the branches of a sage-brush which grew on the crest of the hill. By this time the shadows had engulfed the valley. Far below a family of skunks was moving out from the trees, to pass like a waving black and white banner against the background of green. Prairie chickens were feeding out from the trees, while magpies flashed their green and white plumage busily among the branches. But the instinctive glance which swept the valley for signs of danger soon centered on the object of greatest interest. As Mika focused his gaze on the spot that had been his home the liquid blue of his eyes changed to a yellowish color, his lips drew back and now a snarl issued from between his fangs. Where once the entrance to his den had been hidden by rosebushes and an aromatic mantle of creeping cedar, now there was nothing but a yawning trench bordered by piles of yellow clay, while the breeze that swept up from the lowlands was charged with the hated scent of man.

For a long while the big coyote lay without moving. Twilight grew dense and shadows thickened into dusk, but still he did not move. Owls and bats issued from their holes in the cliff and darkness descended like a mantle over the land. At last Mika moved. Rising on his four feet, he pointed a trembling nose toward the stars and a low anguished wail floated out into the night.

HE knew the story, for it was old indeed. The law of man had placed a bounty upon the head of every one of his kind and while the coyote may not have been versed in the statutes he knew all too well the law as it manifested itself in rifles, poisons and traps.

Perhaps Mika was thinking too; it may be that he had the power to remember—and if so, perhaps his memory brought back the day when he and Shadow had met. It may be that he remembered where they had sported in the moonlight, on grassy plains or in valleys where the flowers of the thorn-apple drenched the balmy air with perfume. Or again on hard-packed drifts of snow where frost-crystals glittered under the moonlight and where they romped and

rolled and fought their mimic battles. For many years they had been together, ever loyal to each other, as coyotes are. Family after family they had raised and sent out into the world; never had they been parted except as today, when one had remained on guard while the other searched for food. Now she was gone and he remained alone. Because that same loyalty would forbid his mating again Mika would henceforth have few companionships other than memories of the past. And so the wail that rose and fell among the hills was a song of unutterable loneliness.

After a time the lamentations of the coyote grew less frequent and more subdued. The anguished howl gave way to an occasional whine and he crouched to the ground, once more peering down through the sage, at the dim scar on the hillside which marked the scene of the tragedy. But presently he stirred again, for a sound had reached those sensitive ears, even though it was no louder than the murmurings of a ground-mole to her young. Whatever it was, it came from below, and it aroused in the coyote that one besetting trait which amounted to a weakness—his all-powerful sense of inquisitiveness. Unable to stand the lure of the unknown, Mika got to his feet and descended cautiously into the valley.

Several times he circled about the trench, until satisfied that the scent of man was too old to mean an ambush. Finally he stood on the edge of the shelf peering down into the gloom. Here his mate was almost a living presence, the illusion created by her scent being so complete that he sprang down into the trench and began to dig frantically in the hard clay. But his digging only turned up fresh dirt where the scent was less strong, and he soon gave over the effort in discouragement.

LEAPING out of the trench, Mika began a thorough investigation of its immediate vicinity. Had his powers of reasoning been more acute the result of his search might have given him some grounds for hope, for the body of his mate was nowhere to be found nor were those of the cubs. This together with the fact that there were no blood-stains in the vicinity he might have taken as proof that the entire coyote family had been carried away alive, and as long as they were not killed outright there would always remain the possibility of escape. But these things were too complicated for the mind of the coyote; all he understood was that they were gone. Accordingly when the first streaks of daylight appeared in the east he turned away to find another hiding-place among the hills.

Hardly had he started, however, before he heard that sound again, this time so close and clear that it halted him rigid in his tracks. In a moment, within a tangle of buckbrush and wild hop vines, he found its source and in another moment the whining of the bereaved coyote had changed to half-smothered yelps of delight, for there huddled in a shivering ball was one of the baby coyotes.

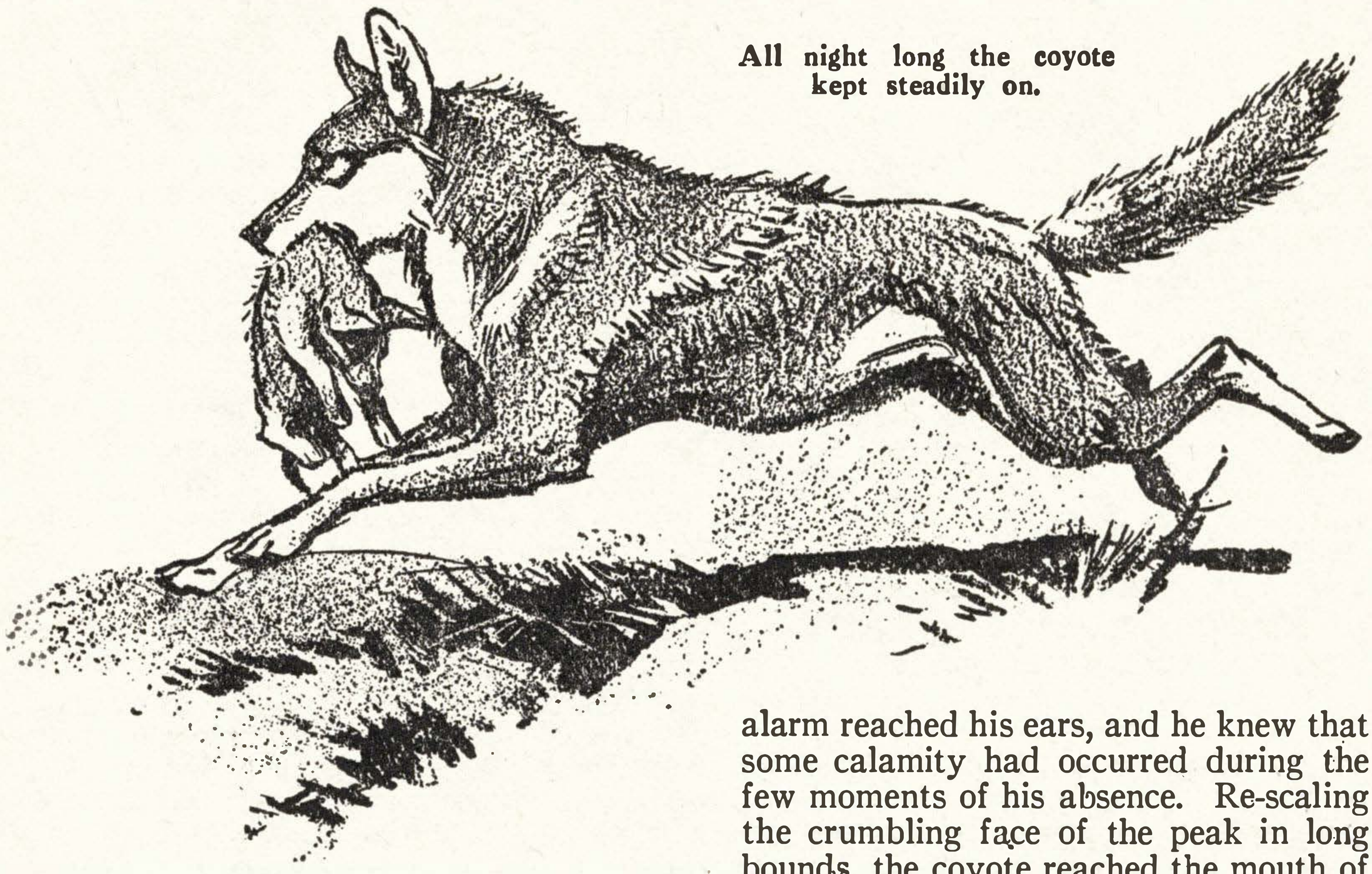
How the little one had escaped the fate of his mother and his mates was a problem in which Mika had but little interest. The mere fact that one of his little charges remained alive was the important consideration, and indeed soon threatened to become a problem sufficient unto itself. But for the time being the big coyote gave himself up to the pleasure of his discovery, with no thought whatever of the future.

Despite the lateness of the season it was apparent that the fuzzy little gray bundle was cold, for the tiny squealings which had served to attract Mika's attention continued. Failing to quiet the protests by licking the little one with his tongue, Mika curled himself around the puppy, enfolding and covering the helpless little fellow against his own warm body. Immediately the puppy began to prod his protector in the ribs with the point of a very sharp nose and kept it up without intermission until even a duller parent than Mika would have realized that the little fellow was as hungry as he was cold.

The coyote appeared to realize both the hunger of his tiny charge and the seriousness of the situation. Obviously the youngster's quest for milk could end in nothing but disappointment and just as obviously they could not remain where they were. Somehow Mika must satisfy his son's hunger and also find some sort of shelter; now the problem had become acute indeed.

Day was breaking rapidly. Already it was light enough to see for some distance, and delay might prove fatal. Accordingly the coyote got to his feet, picked the puppy up gently in his white fangs and set off through the brush along the bottom of the valley.

The first ray of light came to Mika when he remembered the rabbit buried



All night long the coyote kept steadily on.

under the leaves and sticks. The rabbit, although but a poor substitute for milk, would furnish a meal for the baby coyote. Mika directed his course thither.

The rabbit was where he had left it, but even then the solution of his difficulties was not as easy as it would seem. The day was too far come to allow of more delay and he realized that he could not carry the rabbit and his tiny son at the same time. Accordingly he picked up the puppy again and set out in search of temporary shelter.

HIGH up on the face of a butte he found what he sought: It was one of those places where rain and snow-water, running down from above, had cut a deep ditch in the side of the hill. In one spot the water, following a crack in the face of the butte, had run underground until it had cut a tunnel for itself, roofed by several inches of hard clay. During dry seasons Mika could not have asked for better shelter for the puppy, but it had two serious disadvantages—first, it would be absolutely untenable in rainy weather, and second, the tunnel was too small for Mika to enter, and difficult to enlarge because of the hard clay around it. For the present, however, it would well serve.

Putting the puppy down at the mouth of the tunnel Mika pushed the little fellow back underground as far as the size of the hole would permit and then set out down the hill to retrieve the rabbit. Hardly had he reached the foot of the hill, however, before muffled squeaks of alarm reached his ears, and he knew that some calamity had occurred during the few moments of his absence. Re-scaling the crumbling face of the peak in long bounds, the coyote reached the mouth of the tunnel—and stopped in utter amazement. The hole into which he had thrust the puppy a moment before had ceased to be a hole at all. It had become merely a boiling, writhing area of freshly dug clay; and Mika knew from the weasel-like scent that the animated boring machine was none other than a badger.

REALIZING that the big weasel's head could be no more than a few inches from the puppy, Mika leaped instantly to the assault. Burying his nose in the boiling dirt, he clamped his powerful jaws on the badger's tail and sat back with all his might. Taken entirely by surprise, Sunuh-katuh—or flat porcupine, as the Red Men called him—came from the hole with a tremendous scraping and a hissing like a safety-valve.

Mika had always been afraid of badgers; and badgers had always been afraid of him. In consequence the big coyote had never done battle with one of their kind; but now his anger overcame his reason, and he loosened his hold of the badger's tail for a savage assault at its throat. In theory his tactics were good; in practice they did not work out so well. Feeling the throat of the badger between his fangs, he exerted all the crushing power of his jaws—only to close them on a large section of the toughest skin that ever encased an animal. Realizing that he had made a mistake somewhere, he shifted his attack to the badger's shoulder; again he felt bone and muscle between his jaws, but here the result was

equally disappointing. Meanwhile the badger had ripped one of Mika's ears in a dozen places. Again and again the coyote strove to obtain a hold, only to discover that his opponent and his opponent's hide did not appear to belong to the same animal. After some minutes, finding his opponent invulnerable, the superior intelligence of the coyote evolved a clever if somewhat tardy idea. Grabbing the badger by the tail, he dug in with all four feet, and literally skidded the prairie battleship off the narrow shelf upon which they had fought. Then Mika sat down to pant and to watch his late antagonist roll down the face of the hill and disappear in a clump of brush.

It took Mika some time to coax his thoroughly frightened son from what remained of the tunnel; but this accomplished, he picked the little fellow up, carrying him down the hill again and into the heart of a thorn-apple thicket. Securing the rabbit, he tore it into small pieces and fed the puppy till his baby sides were stretched like a drum-head. Then Mika lay down, carefully tucking the youngster between his forelegs.

With the coming of darkness Mika once again grasped his little son between those powerful yet gentle jaws and set out on what he knew would prove a long night's march. For the present the old coyote was bidding farewell to the prairies; here the dangers were too many. And thus it happened that the little Mika-sika—again to borrow a name from the Sioux—made a long journey, dangling from the jaws of his father.

FOR many miles the country was rolling and broken, characteristic of the lands bordering the Missouri River. Sometimes their course lay across the tablelike tops of buttes; again it dipped into cool valleys. But at last they left the river and scrambled up the face of a high bluff. Then they were on level prairie. And then just as day broke they were dropping down a precipitous slope, over scoria and clay and lignite coal, into a chaotic land.

Now the pace of the travelers slowed, for Mika was weary, and here he had little fear of man. At a spring he stopped to drink and in the tall rank grass near by he caught several grasshoppers.

When daylight had come they went on again through the Badlands until at last Mika found a vacant den under the limestone crest of a butte. After scratching away cobwebs and hard pieces of fallen clay, the old coyote curled up with Mika-sika under his legs and slept there throughout the day. . . .

It was a strange land indeed in which Mika-sika found himself when he was old enough to take an account of his surroundings. By day it was a painted land of many colors. Slender pillars of clay supported slabs of stone roughly in the form of giant mushrooms and occasionally there were graveyards of age-old forests where slabs and trunks of petrified wood protruded from the ground.

By night—and of course it was mostly at night that Mika-sika was about—an additional mantle of weirdness settled over the land. Columns of steam and gas rose like ghostly pillars into the night, as they hissed from apertures in the clay. Then there were sink-holes—bubbling, bottomless pits from which sighs escaped from the tortured earth.

AT first the constant responsibility of caring for the puppy allowed Mika little time to grieve for the loss of his mate.

The den consisted of a sloping tunnel enlarged to a fair-sized room at the farther end. To begin with, it was choked with cobwebs, fallen clay and a miscellaneous assortment of bones. It was inhabited by a few mice, two solemn-eyed ground-owls, a mother bat that hung head down from the ceiling with a bevy of little ones cupped in her wings, and an exceedingly belligerent bull snake. The bull snake remained a respected host—or guest, according to the view-point—until one day when the puppy found his ever-restless tail. That aroused the temper of the bull snake and he struck, shutting down on one leg of the inquisitive baby coyote with a pair of painful but otherwise harmless jaws. Mika-sika let out a yell that would have done credit to a far lustier pair of lungs. At that the deadly fangs of Mika crushed the snake in a dozen places; afterward he was shaken so savagely that he not only let go of the puppy but flew into several totally distinct and irretrievable pieces. Mika and Mika-sika ate up the pieces.

For some reason the coyote did not molest the bat which continued to dangle from the ceiling.

Having cleared out the cobwebs and rubbish, the old coyote settled down to rest. Stretching out at full length the big fellow yawned, closed his eyes and went to sleep. But not so the puppy. Mika-sika had other plans for the day.

He chewed his sire's toes; he fastened himself to an ear and set back with all his tiny might. That was not much, but as far as breaking up Mika's sleep was concerned it was amply sufficient. Then when a half-playful, half-warning snap from the great jaws warned him away he shifted his assault to the end of the big coyote's tail. At that the harassed sire got to his feet and lay down again, this time in a circular ball with his tail tucked between his legs. In theory he was safe—but he went to sleep again with the sensitive tip of his nose exposed. Mika-sika found that, and was fascinated by the quivering nostrils. He thrust in a tentative paw and scratched just a bit on the tender tissues. At this Mika threw his son into a corner and wound himself up so tightly that there was nothing exposed to attack but shaggy hair. He opened his eyes sometime later to find the puppy gone. A search discovered his small charge far down the face of the butte and about to challenge a rattlesnake.

THEN Mika had a new idea. In the immediate vicinity of the den were some new bones and the tail of a long-dead weasel. These he carried into the den and placed in the middle of the floor. After that he lay down with his body completely blocking the tunnel.

Through association with the weasel's tail and the bones, Mika-sika gained strength and dexterity rapidly. Then Mika taught him to catch a share of his own grasshoppers and in a few nights his powers had progressed until he was able to cope with a frog. One night, urged on by his father, he went so far as to commit himself to assault upon a mouse, but the venture ended in defeat after all—for the mouse bit the puppy's tongue and then made his escape while Mika-sika was yelping loudly for help.

NEVERTHELESS each day saw him stronger, and each misadventure but served to develop his judgment. In time he learned to pounce on a mouse and snap his little jaws so quickly that the rodent had not time to fight back. To Mika, however, the puppy's antics continued to be a source of extreme annoyance. One night after he had made a long and cautious sneak on an unsuspecting cottontail, just as he was within striking distance, and was leaving the ground for the leap that would have netted an ample supper for them both, Mika-sika once again fastened his needlelike teeth in the end of his father's tail. After that the puppy went into battle on his own!

By the first days of fall Mika-sika had lost the wabble of his puppyhood. Now he was a match for any cottontail on open ground. The old coyote had taught the puppy many things too, about hunting.

Of late a change had come over Mika. With the lessening of his responsibilities his mind had turned more and more to the mate that had been with him so long.

One night he stopped on the summit of a peak. In the east the moon seemed to rest on the rim of the land, and the atmosphere was charged with memories of a time when he and Shadow too had lived within the Badlands. Under the spell of the night the big fellow lifted his head in the wail of a lonely coyote.

Mika-sika lay near by, chewing on the foot of a rabbit. At his father's outburst he sat up and stared in open-eyed wonder at the singer. As he gazed he became conscious of a feeling he could not fully understand, and pointing his sharp little

Grabbing the badger by the tail, Mika skidded the prairie battleship off the narrow shelf.

nose to the rising moon, he heaved a sigh. Moisture began to gather in his eyes; a high-pitched whine broke on the air and then a series of short, staccato yelps; at last one of his yelps prolonged itself into an anguished moaning wail. The education of Mika-sika was well-nigh complete. . . .

By mid-autumn Mika-sika stood well up near his father's shoulder. With the coming of winter he was to outward appearance nearly full-grown, and now the relationship of father and son had given way to that of comrades united in and by a common cause. But now a trace of discord appeared, for with the deepening of the snow and the approach of the mating season, Mika's loneliness increased and with it a longing to retrace his steps toward the place that he would always associate with his lost mate.

AS winter wore on, the longing in the shaggy breast grew greater. And so one night when the Badlands sparkled with cold, when once again the moon trembled on the horizon, Mika and Mika-sika sat on the crest of the bluff at the start of the prairie. The old coyote sat upright, calling for his mate.

Suddenly he broke off his song. Mika-sika was crouched on the snow beside him and the old coyote lowered his head and ran his tongue over the face and ears of his son. Then he got to his feet and moved a step or two toward the rising moon. Turning, he whined for the young one to follow—but there was no response. For the last time he called to his son; when this call went unanswered Mika became a long gray form bounding steadily into the east.

When he came to the gaping home in the hillside he found it filled with snow, and a rabbit trail led over the drift which covered it. In his disappointment he sat down on the edge of the drift and lifted his nose to the moon now hanging low in the west. Out over the prairie and its burden of sparkling snow, up and down the valley floor, and across to the glistening peaks, went the heart-rending cry of the coyote. Again and again that anguished sound rose and fell among the hills; and then—far across the valley, against the drifts on the farther slope he saw a dark spot moving swiftly toward him. He leaped high in the air while a series of short, sharp yelps burst from his throat. The dark spot disappeared among the trees at the bottom of the valley. A few minutes later it burst from the brush before him—and Shadow was running her warm tongue over his nose.

Once again they were frolicking on the drifts, wild with joy. So excited was Mika that he did not see the leather collar about the neck of his mate, or the short piece of chain dangling beneath. In just a little while he would lead her away from the breaking dawn, away to safety—to the Badlands and Mika-sika. Just now it was enough that they were together again, playing in the moonlight.

REAL EXPERIENCES

Most of us have been through at least one tremendously exciting experience. Here five of your fellow-readers tell of theirs. (For details of our prize offer for these stories see page 3.) First an American sailor tells what happened when he joined the—

Shanghai Police

By **E. Crabtree**

THE Sub-Inspector—we'll call him Smith—was newly promoted from sergeant in the mounted branch and transferred to general duty at Yangtsepoo station of the Shanghai Municipal Police. For some reason he took a dislike to me—perhaps because I was the only American on the force at that time.

Smith tried to make my tours of duty as miserable as possible. He had me on report and up before the Commissioner three times during his first month at Yangtsepoo, for some little breach of the regulations, such as, first, smoking while on patrol; second, failing to parade for duty in the proper uniform, as one of the buttons on my tunic was undone; third, for failing to show proper respect to my superior officer (Smith). For the third offense I was transferred to the Gordon Road Depot, for duty with the Reserve Unit or riot squad, as a punishment.

During my third week on duty with the Reserve Unit, orders came through from headquarters to raid a house in Wayside district, as they had received information that Chang Hu-Liao, a comprador of the Ningpo Native Bank, who had been kidnaped some time before, was being held prisoner there. The Reserve Unit was called on to make the raid instead of the Wayside personnel, as it was thought the Wayside station was being watched by the kidnapers.

When the "Red Maria,"—a large red covered motor-lorry capable of carrying four squads of ten men, and equipment for coping with riots, pulled out of the depot on the way to make the raid,—there were on board Chief Inspector Fairbairn, in charge, assisted by Sub-Inspector Eaton; also Sergeant Davies, Sergeant Hale, P. C. Menzies and I, with two squads of Chinese constables.

Upon arrival at the suspected house, which was one of a group of ordinary Chinese dwellings on Kung Ping Terrace, a small court opening off of Kung Ping Road, the Chinese constables surrounded the house; we kicked open the door and rushed into the house.

A Chinese man appeared at the head of the stairs and fired a shot in our direction. Menzies gave him a burst from our Thompson gun, and he came tumbling down the stairs, dead. We then went upstairs and kicked open the first door we came to. Inside was a Chinese woman keeping watch over a Chinese man who was bound to a heavy couch in

one corner of the room. This prisoner was Chang Hu-Liao, the missing comprador. A second kidnaper appeared in the hallway from another room. Eaton grappled with him, but he twisted free and dashed for the window at the end of the hallway, through which he leaped.

This window overlooked a narrow alleyway, about four feet in width. When we looked out, we found he had leaped across the alleyway and through a window into the attic of the house next door.

The other house was quickly surrounded. Inspector Fairbairn ordered me to throw a tear-gas bomb through one of the windows into the room where the kidnaper was, but it brought no results.

After waiting a bit, he told P. C. Menzies and I to take our sub-machine-gun and go into the rooms directly underneath the kidnaper and spray the overhead with bullets. We did this, but still no results. Then Sergeant Davies took a bullet-proof shield and climbed up a ladder and looked in. When he raised his head above the window-sill a pistol cracked inside, and his cap was knocked off by the bullet. He descended hastily. Another tear-gas bomb was thrown in.

While waiting to see if that one would bring him out, an English army officer in command of some troops billeted near by, and who had come over to see what all the shooting was about, suggested that one of his men be allowed to toss a hand-grenade into the room. Inspector Fairbairn gave his permission, and Sergeant Hale was sent to the billets. When he returned with a soldier and some Mills bombs, the soldier was ordered to throw two bombs into the room.

After they exploded, Sergeant Hale went up the ladder to see the result. He was greeted by another bullet from the kidnaper. He descended, and two more Mills bombs were thrown in. After they had exploded, the kidnaper could be heard moving around. Three more bombs were then heaved into the room, the last failing to explode. After about a minute, the kidnaper threw it back out the window; and although it still failed to explode when it hit the ground, there was a great scattering of police and soldiers. When they were convinced that it was a "dud," they returned and continued to heave bombs into the room until a total of eleven Mills bombs and two tear-gas bombs had been thrown in—with no results. (The above sounds incredible; but it is a part of the official records of the S. M. P.)

By now the Police Commissioner had come down to view the "siege," and as it was approaching dark, he gave orders that no one was to enter the building without his permission; that P. C. Menzies and I with a couple of other P. C.'s were to be stationed on the roofs of surrounding houses with Thompson guns, to shoot at any movement about the upper floor of the house, a strict watch to be kept all night; in the morning if the kidnaper was still alive, we were to enter and capture or kill him at any cost.

My post was on the roof of a house next door, so located that I could look through a window into the hallway leading to the room where the kidnaper was at bay. I had been sitting there about an hour, when a shadow seemed to move in the hallway. My orders were to fire without warning at anything that moved; so, aiming as well as possible in that uncertain light, I fired at the shadow.

Immediately there was a loud outcry: "Help! Help! I'm being killed. I'm bleeding to death! My leg is broken! Get me out before he kills me! Help!"

As the Commissioner had departed, leaving Inspector Fairbairn in charge, he and Sergeant Davies went into the building with flashlights to see who it was that had been shot. It was Sub-Inspector Smith. Upon investigation, it seemed that Smith had been passing by, and upon seeing the riot van, had stopped to see what was happening. When informed there was but one kidnaper inside, he had exclaimed: "What! Only one man in there? I'll soon have him out." Then contrary to orders, he had entered the building, gone up the stairs, and was creeping along the hall when I fired upon him. One of my bullets had gone through his knee.

On the following morning there was no sound to be heard in the room, and when Sergeant Hale went up the ladder and looked in, he found that the kidnaper had bled to death during the night. Upon examination, nineteen wounds were found on his body, but none in a vital spot.

SMITH was severely reprimanded by the Commissioner for disobeying orders. He was in the hospital for more than two months with his knee. There was some talk of amputating his leg though the doctor finally saved it. But he still walks with a limp, which reminds me every time I see him that, while I regret shooting a brother officer, revenge is sweet—even when unintentional!

Two hunters become interested in the operation of an outlaw still and get into much trouble.

By
William Linton

The Swamp Hunt

I SUPPOSE every family has one, but my Uncle Eb undoubtedly is the world's worst. By *one*, I mean one of those people recognized (by themselves) as knowing the best way to do everything that somebody else has been so unfortunate as to try without getting their expert advice. This technical service is gratis—nay, even more, it is usually forced upon unsuspecting and suspecting alike. Rebuffs by the experienced are treated as manifestations of ignorance, to be relieved by Uncle Eb as his duty to suffering mankind.

When Father bought the timber-rights of a large section of Hell-hole swamp in South Carolina, which of course carried hunting privileges for members of the family, I was delighted at the prospect of that Nimrod's paradise. But I did not foresee Uncle Eb's desire to go along. When he announced this desire, I thought of sneaking off without him, but as I intended using his car I gave up that idea. At last Uncle Eb and I squeezed ourselves amongst the assorted collection of hunting and camping paraphernalia that he or I thought essential to a two-weeks' expedition, and thus heavily loaded, we left for the swamp.

This swamp is in the lower part of South Carolina and covers several hundred square miles. For the most part it is cut up by small streams, ponds or lakes, or by standing water from a few inches to a foot or more deep. The natives know the paths through it, together with the various islands or "savannas," but are careful not to go farther than they are familiar, for to be lost is a dreaded experience. Insects, snakes and thick tangled briars infest this swamp —and quite as bad or worse than these are the "moonshiners." This particular breed of moonshiner is very suspicious and would not hesitate to put a stray witness out of the way. If there should be a search for the lost one, the chances are very remote that any particular person would be suspected and even if he were, he could hide indefinitely in the depths of the swamp. But the lure of plentiful game draws hunters, who hire negroes for guides. These guides know the haunts of the game and also the parts of the swamp that it is "better" to keep away from. Some of this we knew before we went—and we knew all of it later!

FATHER had not begun his operations yet, but we were to camp on Father's land and hunt where we would till some irate land-owner ran us off. After spending the day arguing about camp-sites, we pitched the tent near a small spring and turned in for a good night's sleep.

At dawn Uncle Eb was up. "Got to be

up early to hunt," he called to me. "Get up and let's get away!"

"What do we hunt today?" I yawned. "We haven't thought of that."

"*Hunt?*" Uncle Eb was furious. "Why, any durned fool knows enough to hunt everything he can find! I don't go out to hunt squirrels, and not have a load of buckshot for a deer if I see one! No sir, when I hunt, I take 'em as they come, and bring home the bacon. I just walk the woods, prepared for any and all kinds of game."

This was a new way of hunting to me, but knowing the folly of trying to dissuade him, I thought best to try it one day and maybe the next day I could show him how to get the bag-limit of whatever we hunted.

Uncle Eb had snorted at the idea of a guide. "Waste my money for a lazy negro to show *me* how not to get lost? Huh!" he grunted. "If you ever hear of me getting lost and staying lost over an hour, you'd better send for the asylum-keeper and reserve a padded cell!" No amount of persuasion could make him change his mind. So after breakfast we started, Uncle Eb having shells ranging from buckshot to the finest birdshot arranged in his various pockets so he could find one to fit any unwary game that hove into view. By noon we had managed to get five squirrels, three rabbits and four partridges. We broiled the birds and ate them with our lunch.

"I heard a gobbler calling this morning—before you woke up," Uncle Eb benignly informed me, "and I intend to get a turkey or two today. Sounded east of the camp, so let's hunt that way and maybe find the roost. If we do, I'll get plenty." And he smacked his lips at thought of a turkey dinner. Of course, I too wanted one of the noble birds, so eastward we went. We paid no attention to the direction we were taking, other than to keep the sun to our backs. Before we realized it, darkness was approaching, but we had not heard nor seen any signs of turkey, though Uncle insisted we had not come far enough. Just about dusk, sure enough, we heard a gobbler call.

UNCLE was excited. "I knew it!" he gloated; "they're just across this pond. And here's a boat for us! That's lucky too, for we can sneak up on them quieter in that boat than on those Number Elevens of yours! Let's go!"—never considering that a boat was property and that the owner probably would be near by. But that's like Uncle Eb,—nothing stands in his way,—so across the pond we went in the boat. But the turkeys evidently had warning of our approach, for we heard no more of them. Night settled, faintly lighted by a half moon, which in my opinion was worse than no light at all, for there was only enough light to make you think you could see where you were going and not enough to let you see vines, stumps and boggy places. We had left the boat and were now trying to find our way back to it. After an hour Uncle Eb admitted he was "a little mixed up" but was going to get back to camp soon and not bother with the boat. An hour later, he said we had been going in the wrong direction. So about-face we went; after another hour I was all in and called a halt. Uncle was ready to rest and said maybe we could cook a squirrel or two while we got our direction from the stars.

BARELY had we begun cleaning the squirrels and making the fire when a loud voice yelled: "What are you doing there?" Then the owner of the voice appeared, behind the most formidable shotgun I've ever seen. He was a typical "swamp rat." We explained we were lost and had decided to cook and eat.

"Well, that may be so," he drawled, "but then ag'in it mightn't. How do I know what you're doing here?"

We explained our predicament at some length. Uncle had lost some of his cocksure air and was almost humble.

"If you're lost," said the swamp rat at last, "you'd never get out tonight by yourselves and I haven't time to show you out, so I'll just have a snack with you. Have a drink?"—and he proffered a bottle of some clear liquid. Uncle and I were glad to try it, having heard much of this white lightning. We each took a good swig, which left us gasping. The native appeared pleased at our acceptance of his hospitality and took a huge drink without turning a hair.

During the preparation and eating of supper, Uncle questioned him and was delighted to find he was going to a still to make a "run" that night. The bottle had been passed freely, so when Uncle suggested that he'd like to see a still in operation the native, who said his name was Joe, agreed, and we set off. In considerably less than an hour we were at the still. It was a large affair, requiring a dozen or more men to operate it and

serve as outposts to warn of the approach of officers or strangers. Introductions were made by Joe; evidently Joe's guarantee of us was deemed sufficient.

The fire had just been made under the boiler when we arrived. While we were examining the still from all sides, the hissing of escaping steam drew our attention to the top of the boiler. There was a leak of some kind. This was right in Uncle Eb's line!

"I could have told you that wouldn't work that way," he began, much as a college professor beginning a lecture. "The screws are put in wrong. Whoever put them in that way?" He expounded at some length on the subject of various kinds of screws and wound up by offering to fix it. The distillers, probably thinking Joe had brought us along because of our knowledge of stills, readily consented to let such a learned man make the repairs. Uncle climbed up, soon calling for a wrench and hammer. These supplied, he began a lusty hammering; then called me to come up, so up I went.

Uncle then asked for another wrench, pliers and wire. Two of the "shiners" went for them; the others, foreseeing a rest, went into the woods, leaving us alone at the still. Uncle had tried to hammer off some part of the cap and wanted me to hold the opposite side while he hammered. With the sound of Uncle's hammering in my ears I heard nothing else until a voice shouted: "Come on down—you won't need to fix it now."

"Need or no need, I've started this and I never start anything I don't finish. Send up those tools and I'll have it done in a jiffy," Uncle shouted back, irritated at being told to quit a job he had started.

"If you won't come down, we can come for you," said the voice.

"What do you want me to come down for?" Uncle queried. "Here I've just about got it fixed and will have it all done in a few minutes. Aren't you going to make the run tonight?"

At that point, Uncle was unceremoniously dragged down by the foot. I sensed something wrong and slid down—into the waiting arms of a khaki-clad officer!

FOR once in his life Uncle Eb had nothing to say. We were surrounded by about a dozen officers, but none of the moonshiners were in evidence; they had either fled, callously leaving us, or had shouted to us and we hadn't heard, owing to Uncle's hammering. Anyway, we were caught red-handed.

"Come on," said the leader, "guess the rest have gone by now. But we've got the two we were looking for."

"J-j-j-just a minute, Officer," Uncle began, regaining his speech. "Just who do you think you've got? Do you know who I am?"

"Yep," replied the officer, "I do. You are the two that these fellows get to build these stills and keep them up. I've heard of you and the new method you're teaching these fellows! —Well, if you-all are through cutting up the boiler, bring the worm and let's go," he called to the men who had been wrecking the still.

WE were handcuffed and led along a path to a boat. About daylight we reached town and were conducted to the jail.

"Here," Uncle began desperately, "you have the wrong two! We were hunting and got lost. I only tried to fix the thing for them as any good mechanic would do."

"Yep," the officer answered, "that's what they all say. I remember the time I caught eighteen and they were all just looking on. You had to take the best look I ever saw—and I suppose you were going to wreck the still and then come for me? Oh, yeah," he added, grinning, "tell it to the Judge!" And he left us to the cold comfort of the jail.

Uncle was fuming at the outrage. He was going to sue somebody, break the officer and do untold damage! At last, during a lull, I managed to suggest wiring Father to identify us and get us out, whereupon Uncle called till the jailer came.

"I want to get out of here," Uncle screeched. "I want to send a wire!" The jailer said he'd see about it, and soon the Sheriff came. He listened to Uncle's full explanation, though I could tell he didn't believe a word of it.

"Well, I'll wire for you," he conceded at last. "But that aint going to get you out of it. I saw you fixing that still; I'm going to tell the jury that—and you can try to get away from *that!*"

After the longest four hours I've ever spent, the Sheriff came down the corridor with a yellow sheet in his hand. It certainly looked to me like a reprieve would to a man mounting the scaffold.

"Read that," he said, sticking the message through the bars and walking away before Uncle or I could say a word.

"Have no brother or son hunting in the swamp. Must be impostors."

The Swamp Hunt

This time both Uncle and I were dumfounded. Father knew we were hunting in the swamp. He could have at least sent a description of us, but this cold denial left us flat. There we were, caught in most incriminating circumstances, practically broke, and denied by our own kin!

Uncle fumed, stamped up and down the cell and swore. I could do nothing but sit on the cot. Sixty days on the gang, maybe more, was the least we could hope to get off with. Lawyers come high and being cut off from home we could not hire one, for if Father was going to deny we were hunting, he would surely deny us any aid. We knew his views on the whisky business and we did not expect any sympathy from him, though we certainly had expected him to help us.

"A month in this place?" Uncle shouted, when the jailer brought us supper. "I won't stay—I won't stay!"

"Let me know when you leave," the jailer said grimly. "I've just got some new bloodhounds I want to try on somebody!"

Finally the night passed. After breakfast, we heard steps in the corridor, and looking up, we saw—Father!

"So you decided to 'still awhile!" he said sternly. "Well, how do you like the business? The Sheriff tells me you both smelled as though you'd tried to drink the whole run. Hunting, eh?" he snorted. "Well, hunt some way to get out of the road-building business that you'll both be in for the next sixty days. No, I'll not spend a penny on either of you!" And he stamped out.

BUT it's always darkest just before dawn. After years, it seemed, though really only half an hour, the Sheriff came and unlocked the door.

"Your father explained in a separate wire to me," he said after drawing me aside, "but he wanted to give his brother enough of sticking his nose into other people's business. You'll have to appear before the magistrate, but I won't push the case, as I think you are innocent."

The magistrate did let us go, but not without a lecture. Father also added his opinion later, and bundled us off home.

On the way back, we stopped at a filling-station. The attendant was trying to change a tire and having a difficult job.

"Here," Uncle began, "let me show you how to get it off!" And he began to help. . . . While I suppose every family has one, I still maintain Uncle Eb is the world's worst.

Forty

A young miner undertakes to fire another man's shots as well as his own—and learns what peril means.

By **Earl N. Carver**

TO one who is helplessly facing a firing squad of rifles, one hundred and eighty long seconds undoubtedly seem like an eternity. But to one who is facing a firing squad of dynamite, with one chance in a million to get away, three minutes are infinitely short. I know!

I was helping Bill Scatterday and Joe Peoples, who were employed as drill-runners in the Number One stope of the Gold Star mine, at Silver City. Joe had been there about six months, and was getting rather "stakey."

He went to the office one evening, and told the superintendent that as far as he was concerned, the mine was deep enough.

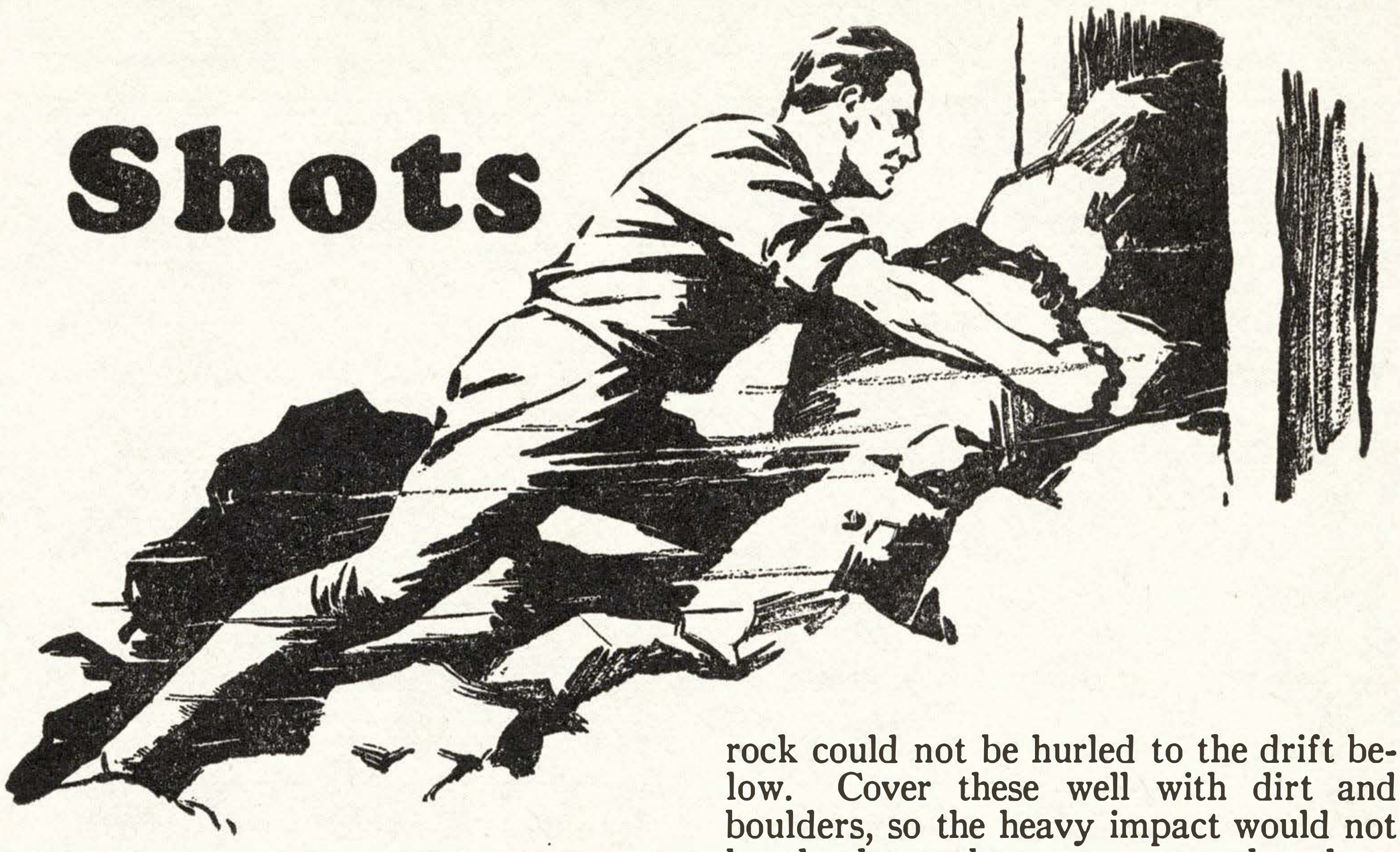
After supper that evening, the foreman came to me in the bunkhouse, and asked me if I thought I could fill Joe's place. Was I tickled? It meant one dollar a day more on my pay-check. Almost my board and room! I informed him very quickly that I was of the opinion I could. I had frequently run the machines for Bill and Joe.

The mining methods used at this particular mine were these:

A tunnel was driven into the mountain following a vein of quartz. At intervals ore-bodies were encountered containing gold and silver. The tunnel was driven through this body of ore on to the next body, and so forth. When the ore was ready to be extracted, a stope was started. Timbers were placed at right angles to the walls of the vein in the roof of the tunnel. Planks were placed over these timbers parallel with the tunnel, in order to keep the broken rocks from falling through to the tunnel. Drillers then started working over this roof, boring and gophering toward the surface of the earth.

Since this vein was only three feet wide,

Shots



it was necessary to break into the granite wall, in order to make room for the men to work. This waste was left in the stope as we went up, taking the place of timbers, and at the same time giving us something to stand on while we drilled vertical holes in the roof of the stope with machines built for that purpose. Access to these stopes was maintained through openings which were tightly timbered up through this fill. A partition was placed in the middle of this opening, leaving one side for men to climb through, and the other side to drop ore through.

The day started with a jinx. The lad who took my place had never been underground before. Nothing he did was right. To make matters worse, Bill ran a pick into his foot, that afternoon, and had to be taken to town to have it fixed up.

When I went after dynamite and fuse that evening, the foreman came rushing by me, and said: "Get your helper to fire Bill's round. I would, but the blower is broke down, and I've got to fix it so we can clear the mine for the night shift."

As I climbed up to my stope, my heart failed me. It did not occur to me until then that my helper had never done such work as that and I would have to do it myself. To fire forty shots alone was a big job for the most experienced miner.

I paused in my work long enough for instructions to my helper for putting the tools away, and closing the manway so I could get out after firing my charges of dynamite.

Those instructions, I thought, were simple: Place a bulkhead of heavy timbers over the manway so that the broken rock could not be hurled to the drift below. Cover these well with dirt and boulders, so the heavy impact would not break them; but not cover the chute side, because I would drop down this to the first timber, and squeeze through a hole in the partition that was left for that purpose.

I then began working as fast as I could, starting on my own end, working through Bill's end, intending to fire them in reverse order. While I was working in Bill's part of the stope, my helper came through to cover Bill's manway. Since no holes were drilled near it, I told him not to.

"Have you covered the other one good?" I asked.

"Maybe I'd better go back and look at it again to make sure," he answered.

At last the big fireworks were ready to be touched off. I looked down the line of fuses and almost backed out. But I thought of the kidding in store for me if I did show the white feather; so I set my jaws, and did the most foolhardy thing I ever did in my life.

I INTENDED, when I got out, to ask some of them if they had counted my shots.

"All set?" I called to my helper.

He nodded.

"Come over here, and I'll give you your instructions before we start, 'cause it'll be too late afterward. Hold this knife so I can grab it in case I have to cut a fuse deeper," I said as I handed him my open pocket-knife. "And," I said, continuing, "hold your light close to me, so in case mine goes out you can relight it; the lighter on mine is worn out.

"We must work fast; the blasts from other parts of the mine will put our lights

out. And oh, boy, it would be solemn songs for us if we didn't get out of here in time!" I said jokingly.

I noticed, as I gave these instructions, that his face was extremely pale; his hands were trembling like leaves.

MY plans were all worked out to fine points. Each fuse was seven feet long, and burned at a speed of one foot per minute; that gave me three minutes to light them, and four minutes to get away, if I had good luck.

One, two, three—I counted the fuses as I lighted them. Number Four was stubborn, so I grabbed my knife and cut it deeper. On I went, paying no attention to what my helper was saying. Number twelve was wet. I grabbed my knife the second time, and with haste I split it deeper. Finally, I counted twenty. Bill's round was on its way. However, I did not stop. Twenty-one wouldn't take. I grabbed for my knife again. This time my helper was hanging back, and I spoke sharply to him. When I turned to hand it back to him, he was gone. I could see a faint outline of his light through the ever-increasing smoke as he almost ran toward Bill's manway.

I was greatly vexed, yet slightly amused, for I remembered the insistent urge to get away I had felt when I first started working underground.

Twenty-two, twenty-three, I continued counting. I was slower now. The powder-smoke was so dense I sometimes had to grab three times for a fuse. . . . Nauseated, and almost blind, I counted my fortieth fuse—fully a minute later than I had calculated. What of it? I still had three minutes, and that was plenty.

With lamp held low, I cautiously groped my way through the foglike smoke, over rock and dirt, toward the chute that would afford me passage out of that hell-hole. Suddenly I came face to face with the end of the stope. I couldn't comprehend the meaning of it. Surely I hadn't stepped over the open chute, and it was impossible to walk around it. In a flash almost like a death blow, I realized my situation.

The chute was also covered!

I searched madly for a pick, a shovel, anything! No use.

"Shall I run for the other opening? No," I decided; "no person living can run the gantlet of that pungent, nauseating-smoke without being overcome by it."

With no more hesitation, I began clawing my way through that ton or more of dirt and boulders that lay between me and life, liberty and pursuit of happiness—with a speed that would turn the most skilled badger green with envy.

Bang!

Things suddenly turned to a blackness that only a thousand feet of earth can produce. The concussion of a blast from some other part of the mine had extinguished my light.

I worked there in the dark like a demon, with a strength I did not know I possessed—worked on, unmindful of the glassy quartz that cut mercilessly into my fingers as I clawed it back.

As in a nightmare I had visions of those little red demonlike sparks, ever crawling toward my destruction.

Only one boulder left! I slung it with superhuman effort, and was barely conscious of a pain in my left hand, as it came to a sudden stop against the solid wall of the stope. At last the manway was open, but none too soon.

As my head cleared the top of the manway, my first charges began exploding. I congratulated myself. I realized, however, that my safety was merely temporary. It is well that I did realize it, too, for had I not retained that something in my subconscious mind that had carried me this far, I should have surely fallen to the tunnel fifty feet below. A shower of rock and boulders came roaring down the manway as I collapsed, beyond danger, in the tunnel.

WHEN I regained consciousness, I was lying in the slimy drain-ditch, too exhausted to move.

In a short time I could hear footsteps, and see lights coming bobbing up and down, toward me. Some of my fellow-workmen had become uneasy when I failed to show up after my blasts went off, and had come back to search for me.

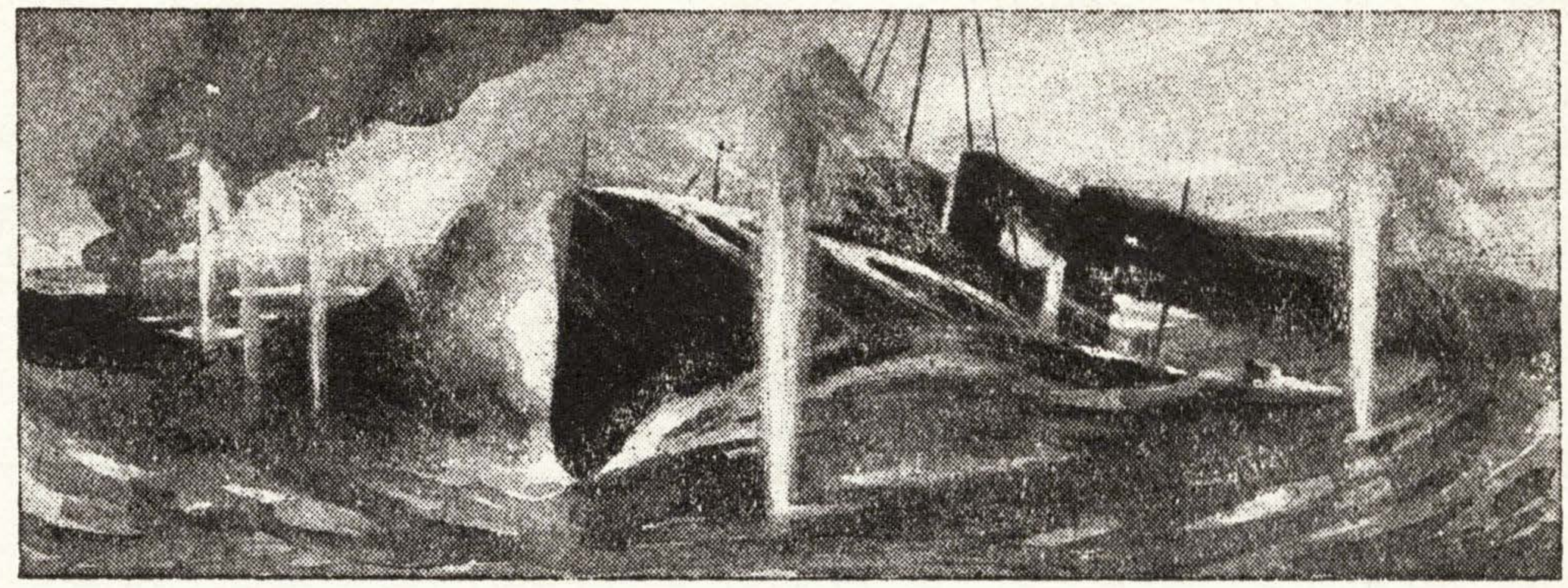
"You hurt?" they wanted to know, as two of them lifted me out of the ditch.

"My lungs are burning," I said, "and my fingers sting terribly; except for that, I'm all right."

They pulled the fragments of my gloves off, and blood was trickling from my finger-tips. My index finger had been crushed to shreds!

"Damn it all, kid," the foreman said as he lifted me to my feet, "it was all my fault. Why didn't you let Bill's round wait? I never thought about you having a green helper up there."

I did not ask them if they had counted my shots.



At the Battle of Jutland

A German sailor tells of the most terrific of modern naval battles as he shared it aboard a destroyer.

By **Frank Weishaupt**

FOR three years during the war I was a member of the signal staff on one of the largest German dreadnaughts, S.M.S. *Koenig Albert*, and had opportunity to realize how exasperating the situation was for German crews who, eager to meet the English, were almost continually plowing the northern sea, but never saw the elusive enemy. The latter, it was later proven, operated a highly efficient spy system, thereby keeping accurately posted on German movements.

At 2 A.M. on May 30, at Wilhelmshaven,—the main base of our operations,—a general alarm was secretly sent out by Admiral Scheer, chief of our fleet, on the receipt of news of British activities and we took our posts, as we had frequently done. My ship being laid up for repairs in the dry-dock, I was ordered for special service aboard the *B-98*, a torpedo-boat destroyer, and ninety minutes later was leaving the port, together with the entire fleet.

Our destroyer flotilla, consisting of six modern boats of the three-smokestack type was detailed to accompany the third battleship squadron, the pride of our fleet. The trip was similar to all the previous trips; the only difference for myself being my ship—a destroyer this time instead of a battleship. In the usual fashion—the five battle-cruisers seventy to eighty miles ahead of the nucleus of the fleet, with the light cruisers and torpedo-boats still farther ahead for reconnoitering purposes—we proceeded on a course due northwest.

It was a rather dreary day with a comparatively calm sea. We went through preparations for battle, as hundreds of times before. The next morning found us traveling one of our regular ways north some two hundred miles away from Wilhelmshaven; we were expecting at any time the signal to turn around for home. There were not even any Zeppelins along.

Then it happened.

Shortly after 4 P.M. on May 31, we received a radio message to the effect that our reconnoitering torpedo-boats had sighted minor British forces, torpedo-boats and light cruisers, some seventy miles away from us. A signal from the flagship dissolved our formation by ordering every ship to proceed to the assistance of our cruisers as fast as possible. Our boats tore ahead at forty miles an hour, a speed we never before had attained. The tremendous force of the propellers at times raised the boat's bow out of the water to an angle of forty-five degrees.

WORKING like ants, we got torpedoes and ammunition ready. Ahead we heard the guns roaring, though we could see no ships. At 5:30 P.M., still going at top speed, we saw the lightning-like flares of the firing ships flash up on

the horizon, but we were unable as yet to discern friend or foe. Half an hour later the first English shells arrived, throwing columns of water high in the air. I took my stand on the bridge.

As we changed our course, an English shell hit the water fifty feet distant. The resulting gusher nearly drowned us. I found myself in a corner of the bridge on the floor beside the commander of the boat; both of us were soaking wet. We looked at each other, thinking for a moment the boat had been hit, then scrambled to our feet, as our boat emerged from the water like a mad submarine.

On reaching our five big cruisers under Admiral Hipper, we found them engaged in a murderous battle with the English fleet. They were lined up alongside the enemy, pursuing a course due northwest with rapid changes of speed and direction. By this time conversation was impossible, so we stuffed our ears with cotton for protection against the indescribable roar of some eight hundred guns. Around us shells fell like hail.

Only the big cruiser *Derfflinger*, between my boat and the enemy, saved us time and time again from being hit. Every gun of this great ship fired at top speed and although fifty feet distant, my boat shook violently at the discharge of each broadside of the cruiser's ten-inch guns. Realizing by now the tremendous numerical superiority of the British, I was straining my eyes for some sign of ships on the horizon due south, the direction I knew our battleships to be. They alone could save us.

SUDDENLY the big cruiser *Luetzow*, just ahead of us, slowed down speed, thus forcing us and the following ships to stop. Moving backward for a few minutes, the great ship—then the pride of the German Navy—flew the mystifying signal, *"Am unable to move."*

Our situation had become extremely critical and only the big cloud of smoke now appearing in the south—our battleships—indicated relief for us, providing we could survive the terrific fire of the English until their arrival. Undoubtedly they also saw the approaching assistance, for they now made every effort to destroy our few remaining ships before the larger part of our fleet arrived. A literal hell of cannonading and destruction followed. In a roar and a rain of shells I saw two of our light cruisers sink like rocks. My boat proceeded to fish out of the water as many of the crew as we could without stopping. The English concentrated their fire on our big *Luetzow*, which was now an easy target. Half a flotilla of small torpedo-boats rushed past us. On orders from Admiral Hipper they circled around the helpless man-o'-war, which was still firing at top speed, to throw out a heavy smoke-screen that soon enveloped the big ship completely. One of the light cruisers and several torpedo-boats went alongside and under cover of the smoke-screen took the crew aboard as far as they were alive and able to walk. An explosion followed and the great cruiser leaned over on her side—dynamited by her own crew.

MY most trying moment came when a signal by our flagship ordered us out for a torpedo-boat attack. The commander of our boat, grimly gritting his teeth, threw the lever of the telegraph leading to the engine-room around to *"Utmost power ahead."* He repeated this order three times.

The little boat trembled under the tearing force of her turbines, as we shot past the big ships and moved straight toward the enemy.

To meet the attack, the English opened a terrific fire from their five-inch guns. Two of our boats simply somersaulted and went down head-first, having been hit by shells under the waterline on their bows.

Our commander, standing near to me, yelled: "Ready, torpedoes!"

The English fire now reached its height. We certainly did not expect to come out of this alive. The rear mast and part of the rear smokestack had been shot away. I did not notice it then. Holding tightly to the rail, I stared ahead into the uninterrupted line of frightful flashes.

"Turn!" the commander yelled. "Let loose torpedoes!"

Without reducing speed the boat turned on a right angle to the left. Two long and shiny torpedoes slid into the water. Another turn and we were on our way back to our cruisers. I consider it a miracle that we ever came back from that plunging charge.

As the engines slowed down, the commander looked at me and grinned, and looking back at him, I understood why he grinned: We were both black as negroes from the thick clouds of English powder-dust.

In the meantime our dreadnaughts under Admiral Behnke had arrived, and under the leadership of this best-liked and

most capable officer in the German Navy the battle took a decided turn in our favor, several of the British ships starting to retreat under the united fire of our now nearly complete fleet—though our gunners, having to aim due west into the setting sun, were under a decided handicap. H.M.S. *Queen Mary* was burning and soon commenced to sink. Front down, entirely ablaze, the great ship slowly disappeared into the waters, an awesome sight in the descending dusk.

Our destroyers became separated from the fleet in the oncoming night, and forced themselves in the opening of the Skager Rak, the waterway between Jutland and Norway. Subsequently we received radio orders from Admiral Scheer, the chief of our fleet, who had come to the scene when the battle was really over, to proceed home around the north end of Jutland. During our trip along the shores of the Danish Islands early the following morning, the island inhabitants, who had heard the terrific roar of the battle the evening before, came to the shore in swarms, and cheered us loudly.

On reaching the port of Kiel, we had just one ton of fuel-oil left; quickly replenishing our supply, we continued through the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal to Wilhelmshaven. At the opening of Jade Bay we met the main part of the fleet and seeing the battleships in daylight for the first time could see the fearfully marred cruisers and men-o'-war. Every available tank and salvage steamer was out helping the only one that was seriously damaged—S.M.S. *Seydlitz,* which was near sinking. This was the veteran cruiser's third encounter. In every fight she had got the worst of it. For reasons of pride, the German Navy made supreme efforts to get the ship into drydock. This was finally accomplished after nearly a week; meanwhile every device known to naval engineers had been employed to keep her from sinking.

The light cruisers came in each one with a heavy load of rescued crews, among them several hundred British sailors who were picked up during the night after the battle. The saddest aspect of the battle was the removal of the dead and critically wounded at Wilhelmshaven Navy yards, where for two days undertakers' cars came and went in numbers.

INQUIRING among survivors about the fate of the big cruiser *Luetzow,* it was found this is what had happened:

The German warships at that time carried a device known as a torpedo-net, for protection against torpedoes when anchored at sea. The net was of very heavy steel wire meshes and in its length covered nearly all of both sides of the ship, being swung out at the ends of heavy iron bars operating like a horizontal pendulum. At sea the nets were rolled up and fastened with chains alongside the outer edge of the ship's deck. During the battle several shells had struck and broken these chains, and the net unrolled, sliding down the outside of the ship and dragging around behind where the propellers caught it, tearing most of it down and completely ensnaring themselves. This, of course, quickly stopped the great ship and the enemy, noticing her standing still, concentrated their fire upon her for nearly half an hour.

S.M.S. *Derfflinger* had eight British shells of the 38-centimeter type, each weighing about eight hundred pounds, embedded in her coal tanks. Fortunately for the ship, they did not explode. This man-o'-war's own guns were all worn out. Some of the 15-centimeter guns were completely split open at the mouth, with strips rolled up on the outside. They had been firing most of the time at a speed of from twelve to sixteen shots per minute, whereas the 30-centimeter guns discharged as many as seven of the 800-pound shells per minute each.

OUR most distinguished wounded man was Admiral Behnke. Refusing the comparative safety of his flagship's heavy armored tower, he had been the only man to stay in the open, giving his orders through the observation slits from the outside of the tower on the bridge. A shell had fallen and exploded atop of the tower, Behnke being seriously cut and bruised on back and hip by a fragment. A hospital attendant came out and rendered first aid to the officer, who was seated leaning against the tower, continuing to make his observations and giving orders. Coming into port, he was taken to the hospital-ship *Sierra Ventana,* where for several weeks physicians were in doubt as to whether he would live. This officer was the outstanding hero of the battle. Today he has passed into complete obscurity. . . .

This ended the Battle of Jutland. Once more we returned to routine. Again I joined my comrades aboard S.M.S. *Koenig Albert.* Our first job was to remove that ship's torpedo-nets!

Misery Camp

Desperate hardship is encountered during a midwinter journey in Alaska.

By **George Valiquette**

IT was following a long and weary trek in 25-below-zero temperature that we decided to halt and build camp for the night. A long "mush" extending from the southwestern coast of Ungava Bay to Sugluk Inlet on the arctic fringe, with dog-team traction in midwinter was not the most comfortable journey to undertake. But we had to do it, and we were halfway through.

Blizzards had surged intermittently at Payne Bay. The party had waited long for clear weather. Finally it came, and we traveled for several days in a comparatively fine temperature.

Our party, composed of myself, four Eskimos and two Komatiks, had met with innumerable hardships during the trip. Dogs on both teams had died from sickness, the load seemed to increase in weight as the voyage progressed, and the wind bit more and more with the declining sun-rays. Pa-nik-too, my Eskimo guide, was showing signs of snow-blindness. Two of my toes were frost-bitten and my face was cut by wind and sun.

It was a wretched little group that halted that night off the shores of one of the myriad lakes dotting the inland. The huskies were fagged out and as soon as released from their traces, they curled up to rest. No time was lost; the building of our snowhouse was our first task. Snow-blocks were cut and the house built before dark. The dogs were fed, our bedding arranged, the grub brought in and the rations—hardtack, canned bully beef and tea—were served.

No one had any inclination to talk. The cold, the hissing north wind and the dreary howling of the dogs had a depressing effect. The Primus stove was put out, a hard block of snow was fitted in the tunnel entrance and we crawled into our sleeping-bags, all bunched together for maximum heat. Pa-nik-too was delirious but nothing could be done for him.

I shall always remember the feeling I experienced on awaking at dawn. It was the beginning of a disheartening week of misery, restlessness and privation. Outside a whipping blizzard was raging, buffeting the weak snow-walls that protected us from its onslaught. By cutting a peek-hole in the partition, I saw what I expected—snowbanks, mounds of snow, falling snow, snow everywhere, fanned by a gale of wind. Visibility was nil, and so were our chances of proceeding with the journey.

The wind blew and the snow kept falling and piling up for days. Communication with the outside was impossible. The best we could do was to throw half-rotted frozen walrus-meat to our hungry pack of dogs. Every time the block was removed from the entrance, a choking gust of snowflakes blew in.

At length the situation was untenable. The fuel canisters for the Primus stove were practically dry, our hardtack was in crumbs, and a few tins of sardines, two

bars of chocolate and a few pounds of tea were the contents of the grub-box. The pangs of hunger and cold were nerve-racking. Pa-nik-too's constant distress worried us; the dirge of the tempest accompanied his moans. I knew we could not hold out much longer as far as food was concerned. It was impossible to gulp down the fast-dwindling provisions of dog-feed, for it was in a bad state.

A-ko-ma-le, one of my guides, and I set forth in quest of some prey. For over three hours, bucking the wind as we went, we searched for signs of animals. We had hoped to secure a few red or white foxes for food, but luck was against us. I had roamed away from my companion, and for a while I lost all sense of direction. I was afraid to move far, lest I should be out of reach of A-ko-ma-le. I yelled at the top of my voice, fired my gun several times and still no answer. It took A-ko-ma-le nearly two hours to locate me and relieve me. Only his Eskimo instinct safely guided us back to our "Misery Camp," as we had nicknamed it.

PA-NIK-TOO, though feeble, sensed the situation more than did the rest of us. He half rose on his elbow and mumbled a few words, words that meant perhaps our lives, our subsistence. "*Ee-go-loo-too ma-ne,*" he said, which meant, "Go fishing here!" Right he was—we were camped on the shore of a lake, and perhaps we could get some fish there. There was a fumble, and the tool-kit was opened. Then we realized we had no hooks or line.

An Eskimo or an explorer is never taken aback for long. Their slogan is that necessity is always the mother of invention. In our particular case, we did find a way out of our predicament.

"We have no hooks?" A-ko-ma-le said inquiringly to me. "We shall *make* hooks and line!" With that, he took the plane, the hammer-ax, a sardine box with its opener and an *oog-jook* line, and pointed at the wooden box containing the fuel tanks. With an expression of delight he murmured that we should commence immediately. I could see what he meant and it did not take me long to prepare the necessary paraphernalia.

Had we been in early summer, only half the work would have been necessary to carry out our plans, but the ice on the lake was, we thought, several feet thick. To fish, we had to pierce this surface. Our kit did not contain an ice-pick, which was necessary equipment. A-ko-ma-le pried the planks from the woodbox, carefully avoiding any splitting. The nails he took out one by one and set them aside. When he finished his work of dismantling the box, the sturdy little chap had on one side some fifteen boards and on the other a neat little pile of nails. One by one, he split the boards into slabs a few inches wide, placed them in such a manner that one overlapped the other, and nailed them, the same as a roofer nails shingles. As a result of his work he had a pole some six and one-half feet in length. At one extremity he fastened the plane-blade, used for polishing the ice-runners of sledges, wedging it securely with strips of sealskin line. Here was our ice-pick!

Darkness had settled again as we finished the pick. It had been a delicate job, and we decided that it would be impossible to go out at night and dig. Instead, we resolved to work on the fishing apparatus. It was a queer contraption we made.

A-ko-ma-le first cut the line out of strips of hide traces. A few .303 cartridges he appended to the lashlike line. With the pliers he straightened out the copper can-opener from a sardine tin, looped it at one extremity, and at the other bent it in a U shape. A few strokes with the file made a fine point. This was the hook.

We retired early enough that night, fatigued but hopeful of what tomorrow would bring. The last bit of nourishment from the sardine-cans and the crumbs in the grub-box were divided as equally as possible. The wind abated during the night, as we could notice by the absence of buffeting on the snow-house—a good omen indeed.

THE dogs, scratching on the outer walls, awoke me the next morning. I stretched, in a half-stooped position, as the height of our igloo did not permit of our walking "head-up." A-ko-ma-le was soon at my side and we both crawled out of the snowhouse. The weather was not so cold as the previous day. The snow was still falling but the velocity of the wind had slackened considerably. It was decided that the preliminaries of our fishing should be undertaken immediately. The two other Eskimos were called out, and the snow was cleared to the ice.

The long and arduous work of chopping was commenced. Not to overdo our failing strength, we worked alternately. Now and again, one of us would go in head-first in the hole,—the others hold-

ing to him by his feet,—and scoop up the chopped ice with a tin dinner-plate.

By midafternoon, we had succeeded in passing through sixty inches of ice. It was only a matter of minutes then before the water-pressure burst the comparatively thin surface of ice separating us from the lake water. The sight of water, and thought of the food it contained left us mute.

Pa-nik-too greeted us with an upraised hand as we entered the igloo. That was all he could do. A-ko-ma-le went to a corner of the icehouse where we kept our grub-box. In a little bag, he showed me a thawed-out chunk of walrus meat which he had taken in from the main portion of dog-feed. He pointed to a candle, meaning he had used that light to soften the dog-feed. The meat was scorched on the surface but by some scraping with his snow-knife he finally restored it to a clean-looking piece of bait that would tempt any trout in the district.

Ceremoniously we crept out of the igloo with the *oog-jook* line fishing apparatus. The two other Eskimos had waited for our return at the hole, clearing the water of ice-chunks. A-ko-ma-le acted as master of ceremonies. His deft fingers plied the bait on the crude hook and fastened it securely. The final inspection of our fishing-line was made. It was pulled taut, and to our satisfaction resisted. Hook, line and sinkers were then lowered into the opening.

Eager eyes looked on the procedure, waiting for the pull, the bite, that would assure us a meal of fresh fish. A-ko-ma-le patiently "jigged" the heavy line up and down so as to attract the game.

FOR the rest of the day we kept at it, each one taking his turn. By nightfall we were discouraged. Our fishing had to be discontinued and we returned to our Misery Camp empty-handed. We could not eat that night, for there was nothing left. The only thing we could do was gulp down a few cups of tea. We retired hungry.

Early the next day we decided to have another try. This time we went through the operations of piercing another hole in another section of the lake. When the hole was finished A-ko-ma-le took the line again. It must have been a matter of minutes only until there was a jerk, a sudden stiffening of the line and the battle was on. Cautiously A-ko-ma-le brought in the line. It danced all over the hole, but under a sustained pull the prize, a big salmon-trout, landed on the ice at our feet. In my exhilaration I jumped on it in six inches of slush, killed it with a snow-knife, and placed it in a little niche dug in a snow mound. A-ko-ma-le smiled at me, baited the line again and continued fishing. In an instant, another whopper jumped in the air and splashed on the brim of the hole. I caught and jerked the line in my direction. The new arrival was placed alongside the other in the niche.

A-ko-ma-le seemed to forget that we were all hungry; he kept on jigging his line and hauling in more and more fish.

WHEN the sun was on the verge of declining, our fishing ceased. It took two of us to bring in the armfuls of good fresh fish meat. A-ko-ma-le was jubilant; his weather-beaten face glowed. He immediately set to lighting the Primus stove. We had enough fuel left to cook a good-sized meal and we decided to make a feast of this one.

Pa-nik-too had been informed of our good luck with the fishing line, and a smile was on his lips.

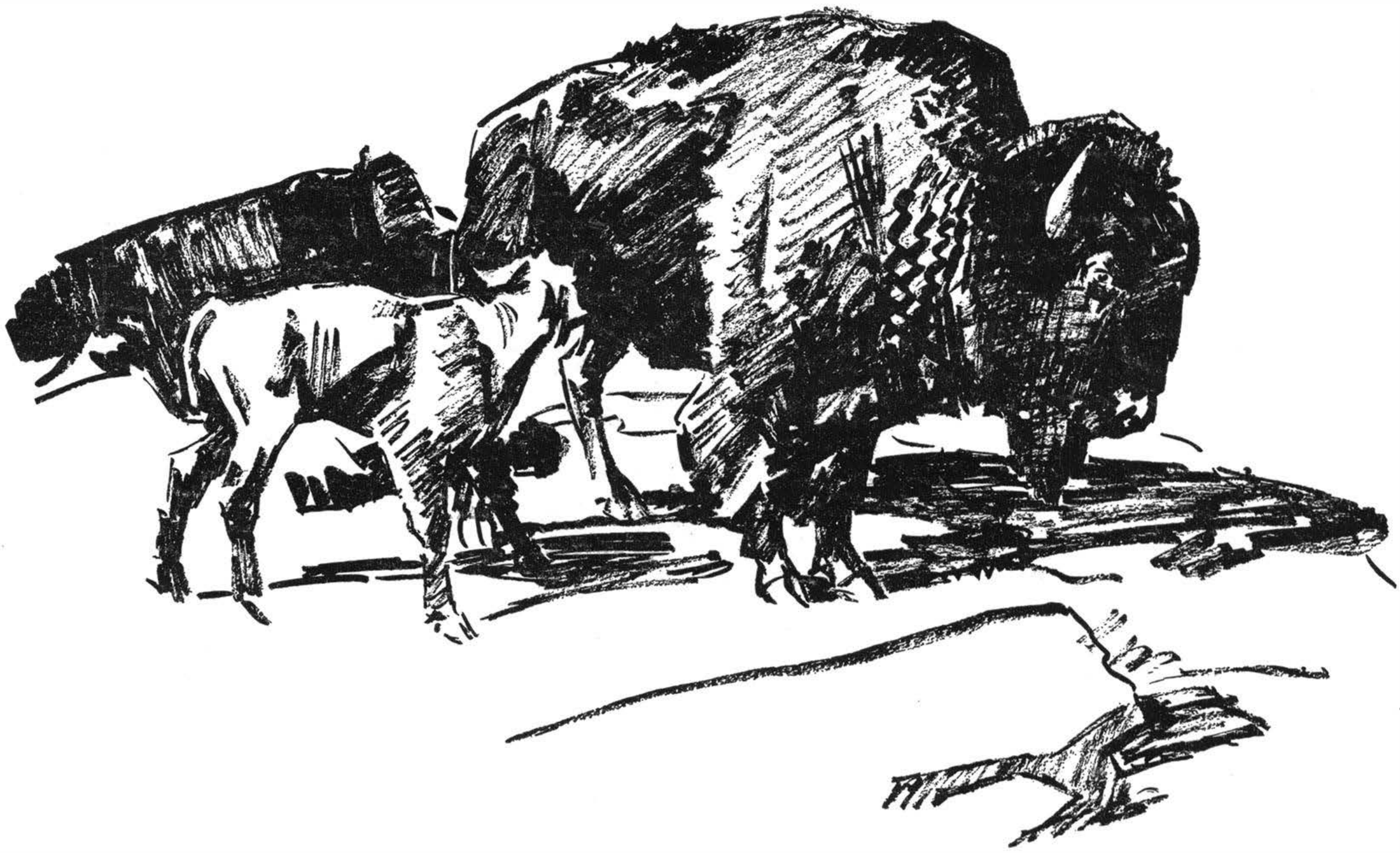
The two other aids looked after the cleaning of the fish under the supervision of A-ko-ma-le. Every drop of fuel in the tanks was poured into the Primus stove and tea was made. A bit of shortening was found in the grub-box and soon there rose the delicious odor of salmon-trout sizzling in the frying-pan.

Eagerly we devoured the fish. This was no case of rationing—we had plenty to eat and drink and knew we could get more. Pa-nik-too joined in the banquet. Those days spent in semi-darkness had to some extent relieved the pain from his snow-blindness.

The next morning we broke the ice that had formed over the hole during the night. I tried my luck with the *oog-jook* line, and we obtained more fish than we could eat or afford to carry. The dogs had their share and a good one at that. Three days elapsed, with fine weather. Pa-nik-too's condition now was such that we decided to resume our journey.

Halfway between our goal and our Misery Camp we stumbled on a Hudson's Bay Company cache. From it we borrowed enough provisions and fuel to last us for the rest of the journey. Several days later we reached our destination, fatigued, almost frozen, our faces cut by wind and sun—but darn' glad to be alive!

Full details of our prize offer for Real Experiences will be found on Page 3.



The Passing Of the Thunder Herd

A fascinating story of the old West by the author of "Captain Jack" and "The Night Hawk."

By BIGELOW NEAL

WITH this splendid story will appear specially interesting chapters of "When Worlds Collide" and "Tarzan and the Leopard Men;" together with a remarkable group of short stories by such writers as H. Bedford-Jones, Warren H. Miller, Arthur Akers, Richard Wetjen, J. Frank Davis, Beatrice Grimshaw, Clarence Herbert New, Lemuel De Bra and Roy Norton.

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