BLUE BOOK

Magazine

September

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by an Indian war chief who fought there against Custer

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and many others . . . Cash Prizes for Real Experiences

The Black Archangel *by* MICHAEL ARLEN

Who's Who in Blue Book

"CHOOSE an author as you would choose a friend," some wise man has remarked. And in our capacity as sponsor for the authors we introduce to you, it seems fitting that we should tell you, now and then, a bit about them.

Michael Arlen *(né* Dikran Kouyoumdjian), whose amazing story "The Black Archangel" leads this issue, was born in 1895, of Armenian parentage, in Bulgaria. How he came to England and became a naturalized British subject, we do not know; why he changed his name to Arlen is obvious enough, for his natal one was a bit of a tongue-twister.

Like the Polish Joseph Conrad, he has won an extraordinary success in the literature of his adopted land: "Piracy," "The Green Hat," "Young Men in Love," "These Charming People," and other brilliant stories and plays have achieved world-wide fame. "The Black Archangel" is very different from any of the foregoing, for he is a conscientious craftsman and refuses to repeat himself. And the rugged power and daring imagination of "The Black Archangel" reveal a new side to his undoubted genius.

WE have had many inquiries concerning Beatrice Grimshaw, whose stories of the South Seas have long been familiar and welcome to our readers: She was born in County Antrim, Ireland, was educated at Belfast and at Bedford College. She began her career as a newspaper woman—and acquired some celebrity as an athlete by winning a bicycle race across Ireland. Presently she undertook to "write her way around the world"—to finance a world tour by sending home articles about her travels. But the enchantment of the South Seas captured her; and save for an occasional brief visit home, she has remained there ever since. Her very address suggests the glamour about her: one writes to "Miss Beatrice Grimshaw, Rona Falls Cottage, via Sapphire Creek, Port Moresby, Papua."

Venturesome lone journeys through the New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands, Borneo, Celebes and Java, and through the cannibal country of the Papuan hinterland, have given her a wealth of material for those fascinating stories like "Vaiti of the Islands," "When the Red Gods Call," "Guinea Gold," "The Eerie Island" and "The Flaming Sword." We are very glad to present "One Woman in Ten Thousand" in this issue, and to announce "Sun on the Pacific" for early publication.

We could go on and write a volume instead of a page about these writers of ours, for the same qualities of mind and spirit that produce interesting stories make for interesting lives also. . . . And we try earnestly to introduce to you authors who are therefore worthy of your friendship.

—*The Editor.*

The Soldier's Scrapbook

In club and mess-hall, tales are told of many curious events which for good reason are not of historical record. While we cannot always vouch for the complete accuracy of these, some of them, like the following, seem too good for you to miss.

II—Wanted, a President

DID you ever hear of the time when you couldn't hire a man to be president of Honduragua? Few did, but there were two weeks when not even a peon would accept the honor.

It was when Gustavo Benia was the incumbent of the presidential throne. He had unwisely bought a big Krupp gun and had had it mounted in the fort at Puerto Torres. There was a celebration, naturally enough, and the whole population was out to hear the initial salute of the great cannon; and when the gun was revolved and raised its long nose to belch flame and noise over the Caribbean—the damage was done.

For the gun was so mounted that it could be swung to command a complete circle. The *Comandante* saw that the town of Puerto Torres was included in that circle, and the *Comandante* was politically ambitious. This was all he needed. At sundown he trained the big Krupp on the town and proclaimed himself president.

Unfortunately the *Comandante* was too late. Exactly ten hours before, General Rodolfo Gómez had succumbed to presidential aspirations, and had booted Señor Benia out of the chair. General Gómez telegraphed the *Comandante* congratulating him upon his loyal support, offered him the job of vice-president, and commanded him, upon pain of demotion and imprisonment, to apprehend the fugitive Benia as soon as that ex-chief executive arrived at Puerto Torres.

In spite of the great shock this intelligence gave the *Comandante*, he was a reasonable man and a philosopher.

(Continued on page 4)

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BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER, 1933 VOL. 57, NO. 5

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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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COMING!

The first of a series of splendid Foreign Legion stories by *Christopher Wren,* author of the famous *"Beau Geste."*

In Our Next Issue

(Continued from page 1)

Promotion from vice-president was usually pretty rapid in those days, so he took the job and started looking for his victim. It was easy.

Resting directly under the guns of the fort was the steamer *Wawa* of the Fruit Company. Ex-Presidente Benia was seen by half the town as he clambered up the gangplank of the two thousand-ton ship, and all of them gave the information to the *Comandante.* That gentleman patted himself upon the back, called his cutter and went to the *Wawa.* Just for effect he took along a squad of his men with fixed bayonets.

As he came alongside, he was met by the skipper of his quarry's refuge, who looked down at him menacingly. This skipper was a long, lean New England Yankee with a hard look and a nasty disposition. So the *Comandante* wanted Señor Benia? That was too bad. Señor Benia was on an American ship and he would not surrender him. No, nothing doing; and if the *Comandante* felt as bad as that, he could go jump in the bay. *And* if the motions made by the *Comandante* meant that he was going to board the *Wawa,* why, the skipper not only encouraged that idea but accompanied the invitation by carelessly draping his hands over the rail.

The *Comandante* looked at those hands and thought for a minute. Each of them held a frontier model .45, and the holes looked as big to him as his own Krupp gun in the fort. He gulped suddenly and sat down. The cutter pulled back to the fort landing. In the reassuring shadow of the big gun the *Comandante's* courage returned. He strode to the parapet of the fort and paged the *Wawa* through a megaphone.

He would give the *Wawa* twenty-four hours to surrender the fugitive, or he would blow the ship out of water. Moreover if the *Wawa* tried to escape in the meantime, his orders were that she should be sunk immediately. Accordingly, and in full view of the ship, he had every gun on the fort trained on her, from the ancient smooth-bores and small-rifled cannon to the gaping mouth of the big Krupp; and with the accompaniment of loud cheers each gun was loaded. The *Comandante* then went to town and got plastered. . . .

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Time duly passed. At about three A.M. something disturbed the sleep of the sentry. He awoke suddenly and identified the sound. It was the rattling of the winches and the banging of anchor-chains as they were pulled through the hawseholes. Under his very eyes were the lights of the *Wawa,* and she was moving! The sentry shrieked the alarm and snapped his unloaded rifle. Then he remembered the orders, and like a frightened jackrabbit, he bolted around the parapet, jerking all the lanyards in sight. Gun after gun went off, and in the holocaust of roaring cannon, bursting shells and spouting geysers, the lights of the *Wawa* flickered, dimmed and went out, and in the first light of morning nothing was left but miscellaneous wreckage drifting up on the beach.

IT was a very gray dawn. The *Comandante* awoke feeling that something awful had happened. Then it came to him, and he nearly collapsed. Sinking an American ship! It was easy to talk about it, but—*Diós,* he had done it! It was no good thinking about what would happen. He knew. He telegraphed his resignation and the news to Gómez, bought a mule and fled.

This delightful bombshell dropped into the capitol in the midst of a cabinet meeting. Panic ensued instantly, and the room was full of abdications. The ex-vice president was hauled out of the calaboose where he was awaiting a firing-squad, and the office of president thrust upon him before he had recovered from his hysteria; whereupon the entire late government got aboard mules and went south, using their spurs vigorously. It only took the new incumbent long enough to get rid of his daze to realize he had been gold-bricked, and he too went in the direction of the equator, having resigned in favor of the *alcalde.*

That official declined the honor. He had already resigned as *alcalde,* but he didn't like the chief of police, so the city council installed the *jefe,* who protested every inch of the way but eventually received the office anyhow—together with some bruises. He resigned in favor of his lieutenant, who had vanished, took the oath by proxy for him, then went to his little *finca* in the country.

The office of *Presidente* gaped wide. Nobody wanted it. Street-cleaners were coaxed, peons exposed to bribery—nobody wanted to be president. For two weeks no man ventured far, lest he be seized for the Presidency. There was no government, but there was order. And then in the harbor appeared the *Wawa!* She sailed serenely to her moorage, dropped a boat from which clambered Presidente Benia, who went immediately to the palace and caught hold of the reins of government. The clangor of cathedral bells was loud but nervous. . . .

This is what had happened: When the *Comandante* trained the guns upon the *Wawa,* the tide was coming in. The ship had about three hundred feet of anchor-cable out. When the guns were actually fired, the tide was going out, and the ship was almost four hundred feet away from her former position, so that no shell came anywhere near her. But when the cannonade started, the engineer pulled the light-switches and the *Wawa* stole quietly out into the night, leaving a few fishing smacks in wreckage behind her.

The Black

Gigantic wings against the night sky of Africa—and blazing ruin among lonely white outposts in their wake: A fascinating story.

Decoration by Margery Stocking

MR. DISHER, inured to optical illusions though he was, and particularly by night, found that on this occasion *It* had gone too far. By *It*, Mr. Disher meant his Presbyterian conscience, which was wont to punish his weaknesses by inflicting on him shapes, goblins and delusions of a horrible but conventional nature. But this time *It* had gone decidedly too far.

Mr. Disher was inclined to be tearful about this, and to brood self-pityingly on the succession of dirty digs he had had lately. Sniffing indignantly, he had another look.

"Not sporting," he said.

The word gave him courage. *Sporting.* It uplifted Mr. Disher.

He said: "Decidedly not sporting."

Mr. Disher was ready to put up with a good deal. Indeed, what with one thing and another, he had had to put up with a great deal, though perhaps with less than his friends and relatives. But he was not yet so resigned to dirty digs that he was prepared to acknowledge untraditional shapes.

"Not as batty as that," he said. "Birds! Is it likely?"

Thus Mr. Disher did his utmost to persuade himself that what he was staring at was not the enormous, improbable and abominable outline against the moonlight of a bird with a wing-span from tip to tip of not less than twenty feet. Flopping about. Larking. Making hay in the moonlight. *Brr!*

Several birds—impossibly enormous.

Mr. Disher heard them as well as saw them. Great black monsters. *Flop, flop!* Not really good at flying they were, either. You'd think they were practising. *Flop, flop.* You'd think the noise they were making would wake the natives for miles around. There was a fair-sized native village not a mile away.

"This is a bit thick," said Mr. Disher. "Birds!"

Feeling that the time had come to put a stop to this, he took a long pull at his bottle and blinked his eyes very carefully three times. Then, taking a deep breath, he had another look between the trunks of the flat-topped thorns, fully expecting to see the familiar pink snakes and green elephants which had followed him from London to Mombasa, from Mombasa to Nairobi, and from Nairobi, undeterred by the conventional wild beasts of Africa, to the bush fifty miles south of Lake Naivasha.

But the great flopping birds were not to be exorcised so easily by the alcoholic snakes and elephants to which Mr. Disher had grown quite attached.

He felt lonely and frightened. *Flop, flop.* Drat those birds!

"Shoo!" said Mr. Disher dismally. "Shoo!"

They looked, against the moonlight, like flopping airplanes. Mr. Disher would have been very content if he could have convinced himself that they were airplanes, but unfortunately they gave out harsh guttural cries which, though quite unbirdlike as he knew birds, were distressingly realistic as coming from these titanic vultures.

"Oh, go away!" said Mr. Disher. "Go away!"

Flop, flop.

Mr. Disher gave a low groan, buried his head in the bush, and fell asleep.

Archangel

By MICHAEL ARLEN

Author of "The Green Hat" and "These Charming People."

Illustrated by Joseph Franké

NOW Mr. Disher was the sort of man who knew a good fellow when he saw one, though when he did not see a good fellow, it is probable that he knew nothing whatsoever. Certainly he knew nothing about Reparations, Mr Aldous Huxley, or the Polish Corridor, and could not have been expected to know what was happening in Hollywood at that time.

Who did know? It is on record that in the year 1932, when poverty and bankruptcy were hurling Nordic film-stars and Jewish film-magnates from apartment-house windows like confetti, the vast majority of Hollywood's population had resigned themselves to famine conditions. The motion-picture industry was in the red for millions of dollars. What was to be done?

It was in such times of economic distress that Mr. Albert Bayfish found his true stature. Mr. Albert Bayfish was production manager of United Cosmic Films (U.C.F.).

U. C. F. believed in Mr. Bayfish, and Mr. Bayfish believed in new ideas; but with this important reservation: that the older the idea, the more "sensationally" new it would appear to the public. When Mr. Bayfish was confronted with suggestions for making motion-pictures based on ideas that had never been used before, he was wont to snap: "The answer is in two words—*im* possible."

The latest epic with which U. C. F. was seeking to fend off the probable dissolution of the American motion-picture industry ("the most superb civilizing force ever known to mankind") was based on an idea so original that Mr. Bayfish could not conceive why no one had thought of it since the days of Homer. The film was called "The Black Archangel" and was inspired by the attempted flight of Dædalus, son of Icarus—with the difference, of course, that under the auspices of U. C. F. the flight came off.

All we need say here about "The Black Archangel" is that the climax of the film was reached when a tall negro, fitted with gigantic wings that shone like black ebony (but were made of fabric), was seen poised, with wings gloriously outstretched, on the roof of the Empire State Building in New York, the highest building in the world.

From this perilous height the winged negro, who was seen in a close-up to be poised on his toes, dived to what would have been certain death if Mr. Bayfish had been as big a fool as Dædalus. The flying man, his gigantic wings outstretched and tremulous, glided down with the grace and the authority of a gull, and behold, landed on the boat-deck of an incoming liner.

WHAT could not be seen in the picture, of course, was an autogiro airplane a hundred feet or so above the winged negro, which gently let him down by means of an arrangement of wires.

Mr. Bayfish's surprise, when later the negro proved to him that he had landed safely despite the fact that the wires had snapped, was instantly extinguished by an almost ecstatic admiration for American workmanship, which had constructed the flimsy painted wings so soundly that they had acted like parachutes and had prevented him, Mr. Bayfish, from looking as big a fool as Dædalus.

"Holy Moses!" said Mr. Disher. "And I've scarcely had a drink all day!"

The negro, a young man with the slender figure and the slender hands of his Masai forefathers, and whose exact counterpart could be found in any of the innumerable Masai *manyattas* in Kenya Colony, smiled in a way which helped Mr. Bayfish, once they were back in Hollywood, to dispense with his further services. United Cosmic Films, now that they had proved the sales-value of really original ideas, had set a score of indigent English authors (who had come to the United States to lecture and had stayed to suffer) to get a line on the story of Hercules, starring Jim Pardos, the Greek wrestler.

Before the negro left Hollywood, he went to a doctor and asked him to examine the muscles in his back between shoulder-blades and spine.

"Got a sprain?" said the doctor, examining him. And he was interested enough to ask the negro to return for an X-ray photograph; but the negro never showed up, for he had learned what he wanted to know. . . .

When Mr. Disher awoke in the morning, he felt far from well. Pressing his

hands to his burning eyes, he wondered why he had ever left England. But that thought led him nowhere. He knew very well that he had left England because he had been kicked out. His aunt had seen to that.

A hearty breakfast of whisky pulled him together just a little. He would have stayed where he was for lunch, only there was no whisky left. Stumbling along between the slender trunks of the flat-topped thorns, he came to the open space where he had seen the birds. He looked about him dismally. *Birds!* Things had come to a pretty pass if he was going to see whacking big birds every night of his life.

"Must see a doctor," thought Mr. Disher. "Birds! A joke's a joke, but—"

He lurched on through the bush to the edge of the native village, which he had skirted the evening before. Mr. Disher had been in Kenya for no more than a few days, and knew nothing of the various tribes of natives, the Masai, the Kikuyu, the Wakamba, nor of the districts they inhabited. He had stumbled on a Masai *manyatta* (village).

Pot-bellied children stared at him with fascinated awe, and this momentarily encouraged Mr. Disher. It was a long time since anyone had stared at Mr. Disher with anything but distaste. These children, he decided, had been unspoiled by civilization.

The village, like all *manyattas,* was a circular collection of easily demountable huts made of cowhide and covered with mud and cow-dung. Mr Disher's depression returned weightily. This village did not appear to be fully equipped with the amenities of life. He looked hopelessly at the pot-bellied children. Well, this was a nice look-out.

"Could any of you boys tell me," he asked ingratiatingly, "where I could find the mayor? I want a bath."

The tallest of the pot-bellied children opened his mouth very wide and made a noise which sounded like the beginning of a pretty outspoken song, and then stopped abruptly.

MR. DISHER, looking toward the village, saw extremely undesirable women passing in and out of the huts. They appeared to take Mr. Disher for granted, all except one, a wall-eyed old lady, who reminded him of his aunt and gave him a dirty look.

Then a man came out of the largest hut, shaded his eyes in Mr. Disher's direction, and began to walk toward him, scattering the children as he came.

The native was naked except for a fairly clean white cloth stretching from his shoulder round his middle; but Mr. Disher noted with approval that he was smoking a cigarette. Nice-looking chap he was, too—hair parted at the side and all. Mr. Disher did know enough of the natives to know that this was unusual, for usually their hair was a greasy mess.

"Good morning," said the native. "Glad to know you. How you keeping?"

THIS unexpectedly conventional form of address somehow touched Mr. Disher profoundly, and he had the utmost difficulty in restraining his tears.

"I'm not so well this morning," he said unsteadily.

"Got a hang-over?" said the native.

Mr. Disher pulled himself together, reminding himself that he was English and that this chap was a native, even if he did speak English with an American accent.

"A touch of liver," said Mr. Disher coldly. "Been sleeping very badly. And last night I was disturbed by a lot of birds."

The tall, slender Masai looked at him curiously. Then he said: "Come on to my hut."

They walked on toward the large hut at the further end of the *manyatta.*

"D'you think I could have a nice bath?" said Mr. Disher.

"I can give you a sort of shower. I got used to a shower in Hollywood, and had one rigged up here."

Mr. Disher was interested. He had always wanted to go to Hollywood.

"Ever meet Greta Garbo?" he asked eagerly.

"That ritzy dame? She's so high-hat she gives me a pain in the neck. No, guess I'm a Marlene Dietrich fan."

"Nice legs," Mr. Disher commented.

"Sure she's got swell legs. Yessir, Marlene's my baby."

"*Is* she?" said Mr. Disher enviously, and then remembered he was addressing a native.

"Thank you for your hospitality," he added coldly, preceding his host into the hut.

"So you saw some birds last night," said the Masai, quite pleasantly. "Big ones?"

"Whoppers," said Mr. Disher; and then several absolutely incomprehensible things happened at once.

Impossibly enormous they were—great black monsters! *Flop, flop!* Not really good at flying, either; you'd think they were practising.

The tall slender native clapped his hands, uttering what sounded to his guest like a series of rude noises. Two natives, not half so clean as their chief, appeared from nowhere, collared Mr. Disher, hurled him to the ground, wrenched his arms behind him and sat on him.

"Here!" said Mr. Disher. "I say, look out!"

One of his captors shoved his greasy hair into poor Mr. Disher's face, and it seemed to him he had had a dose of castor-oil.

"Going to be sick," he feebly announced, and was. Then his first "friend" gave an abrupt order, and Mr. Disher, his arms tied behind him, was raised to his feet.

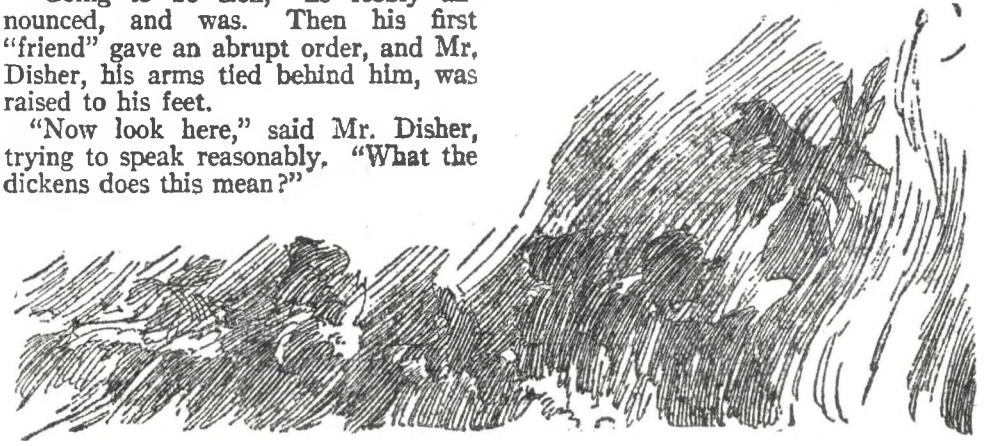
"Now look here," said Mr. Disher, trying to speak reasonably. "What the dickens does this mean?"

"Scram!" said the native, and Mr. Disher was hurled into a windowless and noisome little room, onto the mud floor.

Fountains of self-pity welled up within Mr. Disher. He tried to crawl to the rickety door, but his strength failed him. And his mouth was full of dust and grief and fear.

"Look here," he tried to shout, "there seems to be a terrible misunderstanding somewhere."

But there was silence in the hut, silence in the village, silence all around



Mr. Disher. . . . He must have fallen asleep. When he awoke, the door of the noisome little room was open, his bonds had been removed, and from the main room of the hut an enormous bird was looking at him.

"Holy Moses!" said Mr. Disher, quickly closing his eyes again. "Has it started again? And I've scarcely had a drink all day."

"Open your eyes, nasty one," said the bird.

Mr. Disher opened his eyes, and before him stood the tall Masai with two great black wings so attached to him from the heels of his feet to the tips of his uplifted hands that between them his straight body looked but a slender trifle. Mr Disher was so relieved at this more or less natural explanation of the winged monsters he had seen, that he regained his courage.

"So it was you," he said, "flopping about last night. Well, I'm jiggered!"

"Do you know who I am, nasty one?"

"A naughty fairy," suggested Mr. Disher, and laughed heartily at what he thought was a pretty snappy joke.

But the winged negro did not laugh.

"Silence!" he said. "I am the angel of the Lord, and the sword of the Lord."

"Now you're going too far," said Mr. Disher, who—now that he was pulling the native's leg—wondered how he could ever have been afraid of him. "Come down to facts."

"You poor white trash!" said the Masai. "Sure I'll come down to facts. You will die tonight, because you have seen my *elmorani* learning to fly."

"Your elwho?" said Mr. Disher.

"My warriors—the warriors of the Masai, the Kikuyu, the Wakamba and the Kavarondo. My genius has at last united them. And when they have learned to fly, when all the races of Africa have learned to fly, then we, the oppressed black races, shall scourge the white man and drive him out of our lands, and we shall follow him to his lands, even across the seas, and we shall punish him with fire and sword for the crimes he has committed against the sons of Ham."

"Look here," said Mr. Disher, "you pulling my leg?"

"Why should I mock a man already dead?"

Now the curious fact to be noted here is that Mr. Disher, to his own infinite surprise, was not in the least frightened. Perhaps this was because he had not had a drink since dawn, or perhaps this was due to a defiant feeling that here at last he was face to face with the dirtiest of a long series of dirty digs, and something had to be done about it.

"Well," he said, "if I'm about to die, I might as well give you some advice. Take off those flea-bitten wings of yours and sit down."

And Mr. Disher, speaking with the fluency of one who has nothing to lose and everything to gain, won dominion over the Masai's attention, so that he gravely hitched up his shoulders and his great wings with them, and sat down and listened very patiently.

THE Pools had a farm on the south side of Lake Naivasha, a couple of hours' motor run from Nairobi. After deliberation as to what would be a nice name for their settlement, they had finally decided on a familiar household object, and had christened it "Pommery."

Charley Pool also held the honorable rank of Captain in the recently organized Kenya Defense Force. The K. D. F., as apart from the King's African Rifles, —which are black troops officered by Englishmen holding his Majesty's commission,—is a volunteer force entirely composed of white settlers and residents.

The Pools come into this story only because Mr. Disher was their guest, though he had apparently forgotten that fact by going out for a walk one evening after dinner and not returning. The principal connection between Mr. Disher and the Pools was a sentimental one. Lily Pool's only brother had been killed in the war, and Mr. Disher had been his best friend.

They had been persuaded to invite Mr. Disher to come out and stay with them at Pommery by the urgent persistence of his friends and relatives in London, who had decided that it was preferable for Mr. Disher to go to the dogs in Kenya Colony than in the neighborhood of Piccadilly. On arriving, Mr. Disher had explained to his easy-going host and hostess that he had had a "spot of trouble" in London, and he had vaguely put this down not so much to the immediate consequences of gambling and alcoholic poisoning, as to the profound and lasting consequences of having been left an orphan at an early age.

MRS. POOL said to her husband: "Being left an orphan at the age of seven seems a poor excuse for stealing and pawning his aunt's pearls at the age of thirty-five to pay card debts with, poor little beast. But after all he *was* Reggie's best friend, and we may as well do what we can for him. But mind and tell the servants to keep the whisky out of the way. Chablis and beer he may have, but not hard liquor. And no champagne, Charley. Poor little beast!"

But Mr. Disher, who always prided himself on knowing a thing or two (but would have been mortified if one had said he knew two at most), had somehow or other collared two bottles of whisky and one of gin and disappeared. Search was made for him, of course, but not with excessive tenacity. The Pools agreed that Mr. Disher, if he hadn't broken his neck before, would turn up in Nairobi sooner or later in search of manly refreshment.

The principal medical officer of Kenya, who liked an occasional change from the evening gossip at the Nairobi Club and

would once in a while come up to Pommery for a week-end, on his next visit agreed with his host and hostess that Mr. Disher, whom he didn't know and didn't want to, might just as well be left to work out his own destiny. This was ten days after Mr. Disher's disappearance.

The P.M.O. had other things to think about, as had all the other officials at Nairobi. Over the dinner-table Lily and Charley Pool listened with incredulous interest to what he had to say.

IT appeared that in the last week not a night had passed that some settler's house or farm hadn't been burned to the ground. And in widely different parts of the country.

"Set on fire," the P.M.O. explained in his quiet voice. "Curious, isn't it? This last week, of course, there has been no moon. But who's doing it? We're having no trouble with the natives. We're having no trouble with anyone. Who's doing it, and what for? Not that it's any of my business—I'm no policeman. But it's the kind of thing that distracts a man's mind from working out crossword puzzles—or isn't it?"

Charley Pool said: "But how's it done, Ian? D'you mean to say that some one, black or white, just walks up to some poor chump's house in the watches of the night, and sets it on fire and walks away again?"

"Might be your turn next, Charley. Pommery would burn nicely. They dropped a bomb on Muthaiga last night. Still, that might have been done by some one who didn't like the new secretary of that exclusive country club. Anyhow, the bomb didn't go off—the only one that hasn't so far."

"Bomb?" said Pool. "Did you say bomb, Ian?"

"Fire-bomb," said the P.M.O. "Curious, isn't it? All quite modern and up-to-date. Made in Chicago."

"And dropped from the air," said Pool, "by airplane?"

"Well," said the P.M.O., "we've thought of that. They're dropped from the sky, all right. But airplanes make a noise—or don't they?"

"Yes, they do," said Charley Pool. "And shut up being funny, when I'm asking you questions."

"Who's being funny?" said the P.M.O. "I'm in a reflective mood, that's all. All I want to know, and all anyone wants to know, from the Commissioner down to the youngest E.P.C., is how the hell these fire-bombs are dropped, unless it's by the latest thing in balloons; but they can't be balloons, because balloons are sizable objects and can't be disguised as tie-pins during the day—or can they?"

"They can't and they're not," said Mr. Disher, walking in from the veranda. "I mean to say, they're not balloons."

"Hello, Dishy," said Charley Pool. "What would you like first, a shave or a drink?"

"I'm not drinking," said Mr. Disher. "The Disher brain has come into its own at last. If you won't think I'm rude, Lily, I'd like to say a word to these two chaps."

And Mr. Disher's sudden reappearance had been so surprising, and his lean frame and clear eyes and straggling beard and serious manner were so surprising, that there was no smile whatsoever in the silence that followed. And Mrs. Pool, who was not the less attractive for knowing when she was not wanted, left the men to their important trifles.

WHEN at last Mr. Disher, curiously free from those guttural hesitations which come from too many cigarettes and drinks between meals, had finished speaking, Charley Pool said thoughtfully:

"Look here, Dishy, is this—on the square?"

Mr. Disher's answer was to fill a tumbler with soda-water.

The P.M.O., smiling, turned to Charley Pool. "Does he have to drink that beastly stuff to prove he has not been having alcoholic nightmares?" He turned to Mr. Disher. "One thing you haven't yet told us, Mr. Disher, is how this Masai from Hollywood manages to fly under his own power. We can conceive a man gliding down from a height with the help of wings, but it's another matter to believe that he can *rise* from the ground. What's the secret?"

"It's a fluke," said Mr. Disher. "And that's about all any white man will ever know about it. When I say it's a fluke, I mean that this fellow by accident found that he had certain muscles or tendons between his shoulder-blades and his spine which, when developed, could agitate wings with almost as much power and speed as a gull's. The arms and hands are used scarcely at all, though you'd think they were, to see them in

flight. It's these peculiar muscles between the shoulders that work the trick."

The P.M.O. turned to Charley Pool.

"Better make up your mind to believe our friend, Charley. I've been puzzled before now by a certain muscle formation, quite unknown in whites, among some of the natives—but not all."

"THAT'S our chap's difficulty," said Mr. Disher. "Actually about only one in twenty have them. It's sort of like being born with six toes, apparently. So he has had to give up his dream of sweeping the skies with hordes upon hordes of winged blacks. And he's faced with another difficulty—fear. This flying business frightens the life out of the natives; and so far, he hasn't been able to train more than twenty-two. But even one flying man on a moonless night, with a gun or a bomb in his hands, is pretty dangerous—as has been proved already."

"Dishy," said Pool very quietly, "when, as you've told us, this fellow was going to have you killed—what did you tell him, and what did you promise to do for him, that not only made him alter his decision, but take you into his confidence?"

"I thought," said Mr. Disher slowly, "that you would ask that question."

"We are waiting for an answer, Dishy."

"Ask yourselves," said Mr. Disher, his eyes fixed intently on nothing whatsoever, "what a man like me, who—let's face it—is a pretty septic cad, would do when threatened with death in such circumstances. I think you can supply the answer."

After a long silence Charley Pool said slowly: "So in exchange for your life you promised to give him the benefit of your advice as to the best and quickest means of driving us—your people—out of Kenya."

"That's right," said Mr. Disher. "His idea was to raid Nairobi bang off—annihilation of Government House, Secretariat, Nairobi. I persuaded him that his best move was first to cause a state of unrest and alarm by setting fire to farms in widely different districts; and then, when he had trained enough flyers in these small expeditions, to try something worth while. The raid on Nairobi is fixed for the night after tomorrow night."

"So now you're betraying them, are you, Dishy?"

"That's right," said Mr Disher. "But *double-cross* is the word—it sounds better. You'd better collect a few men and raid them tomorrow just after sunset. Only you'll first have to promise me one thing—"

The P.M.O. said: "One moment, Mr. Disher: This is none of my business, of course, but as the only official present, I must take it on myself to represent the Commissioner of Police. You have told us quite enough to make you liable for immediate arrest on the charge of treason, and I am afraid we can promise you nothing. What we want from you now is the locality of the *manyatta* which these chaps are using as their base, so that I can telephone Nairobi right away, and if necessary a detachment of the K.A.R. can be sent there before dawn to clean up the mess."

Mr. Disher said: "You will get nothing more out of me until I have a definite promise that these chaps are not shot down. Take their wings from them, and give them a lesson, by all means. But they're frightened to death of the whole business as it is, and only held together by their leader. They are no more than a bunch of children. Once you get the leader, they'll be only too glad to give up the whole show."

The P.M.O. glanced at the clock. It was half-past two. He said: "It's later than I thought—too late, I'm afraid, to get anything going tonight. Charley, if Mr. Disher will give us his word not to escape, you might let him have a bed for a few hours."

Mr. Disher smiled queerly. "Escape? Where the hell am I going to escape to? Having given my black friends the slip, I gather my white friends are just pining for a touch of the old Disher charm."

"That will do, Mr. Disher. I shall drive you into Nairobi at seven in the morning."

BUT at a little after seven in the morning it was with his host that the P.M.O. started to drive into Nairobi, for Mr. Disher, living up to his reputation, had decamped, taking with him the service revolver which Charley Pool had recently bought to mark his rank in the Kenya Defense Force.

The P.M.O. said grimly: "A flying detachment guided by an airplane can't help but find that *manyatta* within twenty-four hours. But that would be too late."

Pool said: "Too late? Why? He

said the raid was set for tomorrow night —that gives us plenty of time."

"I've got an idea," said the P.M.O., "that Mr. Disher's boy friend isn't the fool we take him for. Disher escaped from him to warn us—but suppose, just because he escaped, the Masai changed his plans and fixed the raid for tonight?"

NO one knows to this day how the news got about so quickly. Throughout that afternoon there was a state of pleasurable excitement in and about Nairobi. Good humor all round was engendered by the idea of a flying man, and the irreverent among the young went about asking each other how some of their elders and betters would look attached to a nice pair of wings before their time.

The attitude of His Excellency the Governor was also irreverent, but of course on the grand scale. What His Excellency said, in conference with the Colonial Secretary, Colonel Hand of the K.A.R., the Commissioner of Police, and the P.M.O., who was permitted to attend the Executive Council because he had brought the news, boiled down to this: it was "probably all my eye."

"That's all very well, sir," said Colonel Hand; "but what about the fires we've been having?"

His Excellency the Governor gave it as his opinion, for what it was worth, that the recent firing of settlers' houses was probably the work of Kikuyu houseboys who had been dismissed. However, just in case the whole thing wasn't all my eye, precautionary measures had better be taken.

"But," said the Governor, "don't kill anybody if you can help it—or even if you can't help it. For all we know, there may be an international law against killing fellows with wing attachments. You never know."

"Then what, sir, do you suggest?" asked Colonel Hand bitterly. "That we make a gallant stand on the housetops and shout 'Boo!' at them?"

"Now don't get petulant," pleaded the Governor. "Probably one airplane will be enough to scatter the silly fellows—if there *are* any such silly fellows."

The Commissioner of Police rose to his feet.

"Well, sir, I'll have to be going. What have we decided?"

His Excellency looked surprised.

"Decided? We have decided, my dear fellow, to—to—"

The native, in falling, must have been flicked by the propeller.

"To watch developments," said the Colonial Secretary bitterly.

"Exactly," said His Excellency, turning to Colonel Hand. "My wife asked me to remind you, my dear fellow, that she is expecting you for bridge this afternoon."

By ten o'clock that night only the

most tentative plans for defense had been made against the possibility of attack by the flying men. What made the organization of any real defense impossible in so short a time was the fact that, from the Governor downward, no one could be persuaded to believe in the existence of any flying men.

But offers of advice and assistance were not wanting, particularly from the young who owned airplanes.

At that time there were six airplanes in hangars on the Municipal Field, all privately owned—two by ladies, for ladies are very progressive in Kenya and remain young forever. Their young owners, particularly the two lady owners, were ready for anything at any time, from Flying Dutchmen to flying negroes. They had been saying that all day, and were repeating it at eleven o'clock that night to Colonel Hand—who, with some others of the elder statesmen, was sitting rather vacantly in the main hangar, when the telephone rang.

It was Charley Pool from Pommery, whither he had returned that afternoon on finding that Nairobi was laughing at him and the P.M.O. for having let Mr. Disher work a snappy leg-pull on them.

"Hello?" said the Colonel. "Pool? What's that?"

"With reference," began Charley Pool, who appeared to be enjoying himself, "to those winged natives who gave you all such a hearty laugh today—"

"Come to the point, man. What about them?"

"Well, I thought it would interest you to know that they have just passed over here."

"See them?" snapped the Colonel.

"Too dark to see more than black shapes. But I heard them. Their wings seem to make quite a flopping noise. You'd better buck up, Colonel, if you want to collar them."

"Do they fly fast?"

"I wouldn't know. But I don't think so, as I heard their wings for quite a time. You may have half an hour."

WITHIN fifteen minutes twenty cars filled with officers and men of the K.A.R. were leaving Nairobi toward Naivasha. Their instructions were to stop ten miles out of Nairobi, scatter, wait and capture anything with wings except birds.

Two young settlers, Ackroyd and Mackie, were chosen from the airplane owners to go up and scare the winged men down to earth. The lady owners kicked up an awful row at not being chosen, and had to be soothed with stimulants up at Muthaiga until a late hour.

Ackroyd's was a Puss Moth and Mackie's an Avro, and they were both first-class night pilots. Colonel Hand's idea was that the noise of the machines would scare the natives, and they would either fall or run.

BUT it was poor young Mac who fell first. It is probable he never knew why. When, later that night, they found the burned wreck of his Avro, what was left of Mackie was pinned beneath, and what was left of a winged native was twined horribly round the blades of the propeller.

Ackroyd saw young Mac crash, though he did not see why. Then he saw the flames below. Ackroyd said later that he couldn't tell whether he was more scared than angry, but he did know that he wanted to kill something immediately.

First thing he did was to put his Moth's nose up. Mac must have collided with one of the flying blokes, and Ackroyd felt he'd be taking fewer chances if he flew high and came down on them.

He couldn't foresee what happened next. No one alive could have foreseen that.

It has to be remembered that so far Ackroyd hadn't seen one of the winged men. He was going too fast to be able to pick them out on a dark night. His only hope was that they could see and hear him easily enough, and that they'd be scared to the ground.

He was circling at a thousand feet, and wondering about young Mackie, when he felt hands at his throat.

Ackroyd said later that he would never again disbelieve the old story about able-bodied men dying from shock. When a fellow is flying solo and damn' well knows he's flying solo, it's not pleasant for him to feel a pair of hands digging at his tonsils. First he doesn't believe they *can* be hands, and when he knows they *are* hands, he wants urgently to slide into another and better-run world.

Ackroyd said he let out a yell like a film-star asked to play in a silent picture. He didn't care what happened to him, whether he crashed or not, so long as he could see what those hands belonged to, if anything. There was no doubt but that they meant business. Ackroyd let the stick go hang and tried to tear the

throttling hands away. But the position he was in gave him no play. Then he managed to twist his head round just enough to catch a glimpse of what was biting him.

Ackroyd said he felt better on seeing the thing was human, but not much. Tearing along in the darkness with a great sweating, grinning negro, with wings stretching high over his shoulders, sitting astride his fuselage and trying to throttle him, was enough to give anyone the jitters.

The whole thing must have been over in two minutes. Ackroyd, feeling certain he must pass out in another second, grabbed the stick again—and couldn't help feeling sorry for the poor winged devil behind him.

Then he looped.

The native, in falling, must have been just flicked by the propeller. Ackroyd said the scream he heard was somehow like a baby's. All the maimed native's wings did for him in falling was to let him down gently enough to give him a nice long run for his agony.

Colonel Hand's men on the ground found it horrible. They never referred to it again, that period of waiting and looking up into the darkness from which the endless screaming came nearer and nearer down to them. And while they ran to and fro to catch the legless thing, at last silent, as it parachuted down, drops like rain fouled their faces and tunics.

That was the end of the raid of winged men. One white man and two natives killed, and twenty natives driven down in helpless terror by the noise of the airplanes, and captured. It was only some hours later, after long and patient questioning, that Colonel Hand gathered from the prisoners that their leader had escaped.

THE reconstruction of Mr. Disher's discovery of the flying men has been made possible from what he himself told Charley Pool and the P.M.O. But we have no adequate means of knowing what happened to him from the time he escaped from Pommery to the late afternoon of the day following the raid when the vultures had to be scared away from his body.

Mr. Disher and the Masai leader were found in the bush two miles from the *manyatta*. They lay so close together that the vultures had had to pierce through the Masai's broken right wing to get at Mr. Disher, for really satisfactory results. But all day boys had sat as near as they dared to the bodies to keep the vultures away, and so little harm had come to them, and Colonel Hand was very perplexed at the expression which death had surprised on their faces.

When a flying detachment of the K.A.R., guided by one of the prisoners, rushed the *manyatta*, such of the warriors as had not taken part in the raid had taken refuge in the bush. But from the narratives of the old men and women Colonel Hand was able to establish two facts: that nothing more was to be feared from the Masai leader who had come from America to disturb and destroy his countrymen; and that Mr. Disher, but for whose warning Nairobi might have been burned to the ground, would never be arrested for treason.

IT appeared that Mr. Disher, on returning to the *manyatta* and finding the Masai had anticipated the raid by one night, had shown every sign of being very angry. And when certain of the *elmorani* had sought to capture and ill-treat him for a traitor, he had shot at and wounded two (but only slightly), had terrorized the whole village with his revolver, and had generally behaved like a man in love with trouble of every description. And he had refused all food and drink, never moving from his squatting position, which commanded the whole *manyatta*, the revolver on his lap.

Many hid themselves in the bush, fearful of the uproar following the return of the winged warriors. Would the white madman try to fight the twenty-two winged warriors under their leader, the bravest of the brave?

But when, in the dawn, the bravest of the brave returned, he came alone and he came on foot, his wings drooping wearily from his shoulders and dragging along the ground. And all those remaining in the *manyatta* hid their faces in grief and fear, so that it was as though the warrior and the white madman were alone.

The tale went that for some time they looked at one another without speaking, and then the warrior spoke angry words, pointing to the white man's weapon and baring his breast. And the people held their breaths, but the white man answered calmly and remained motionless where he sat on the ground.

Then the Masai leader very wearily threw himself down near by, as though

he cared for nothing more in this world; but he roused himself on hearing a sudden small noise. Mr. Disher had thrown his revolver over the huts into the flat-topped thorns, and so great was the fear of the people at these happenings, that no one dared to steal it, and presently it was found by the soldiers and returned to Charley Pool.

Then the watching natives saw the two men, whom they had been accustomed to see as friends before the white man's escape, put their heads together in earnest discussion. And then they heard them laugh, and this laughter at that time was not a good thing to hear. Whereupon the Masai leader arose, he who but a short while before had returned with the feet of a weary fugitive, and strode with firm steps to one of the old men and said:

"Your sons and your nephews and your kin will be returned to you unharmed by the white men, for they are wise and know the blame is with the leader. They will be here today searching for me, but I shall be gone, and the white stranger shall go with me. We gave him his life, and in return he has betrayed us, for his duty lay with his people. He has returned here because his treachery is heavy on him, and because he has no honor among his own people, and because he says that of all men he loves only me, although he tried to destroy me. And because we are both outcasts, we shall go away together, the betrayed and the betrayer, and we shall find peace together."

"But how will you go? They will find you before sunset."

"We shall fly, he on my back. They will not find us."

"How can you fly with such a burden? You are already exhausted. You will fall."

The tall Masai laughed the same laugh with which he and the white madman had already frightened them.

"Of course we shall fall. That is the history and the destiny of men."

SO in this way it came about that when Colonel Hand found them in the bush, the faces of the broken bodies were smiling, as though life really was the funny thing people are always saying it is. And it must have seemed a very funny thing indeed to Mr. Disher, for the only decent action he had ever done was to betray the only man who had ever trusted him.

Through

A vivid story of the hazards that still come to men who go down to the sea in ships.

By

J. M. REYNOLDS

and

H. P. McCORMACK

Illustrated by George Avison

THE *Carib Maid,* a clattering four-thousand-ton freighter, was plunging along with a riotous southerly gale lambasting her enthusiastically from off her port quarter. Out of Manzanillo for Cienfuegos, she slogged along through the pounding seas. To starboard lay the coast of Camaguey Province, and to port the perilous Twelve League Labyrinth, a hundred-mile-long reef of wicked, jutting coral.

The *Carib Maid* had been thoroughly washed down from her Plimsoll-line to her flying-bridge. The *Carib Maid's* wheel-house was as unused as any New England parlor. On rare occasions,—possibly off Hatteras in January,—Captain Welch took to it; otherwise, he held to the flying-bridge in all weathers.

On deck, water sloshed in the scuppers, and in the officers' mess the second mate's coffee spilled into the Captain's lap.

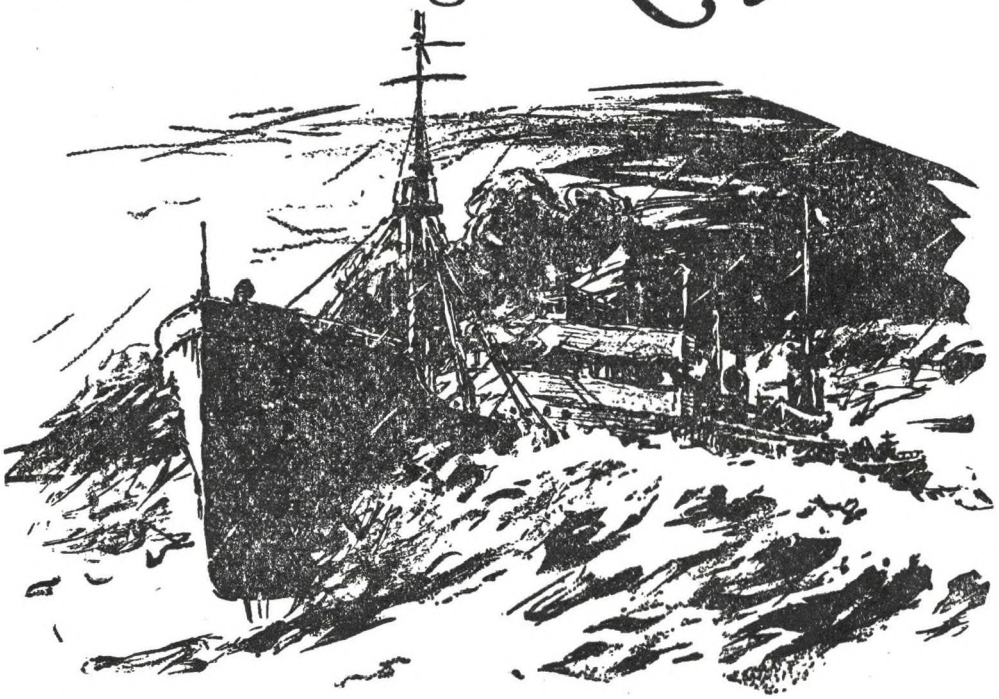
"When we get to Cienfuegos, Mr. Hobbs," Captain Welch remarked with what was undoubtedly pardonable wrath, "I'll go shopping for a nursing-bottle for you!"

"I'm sorry, sir," the fresh-complexioned Mr. Hobbs replied, "though I don't suppose it makes very much difference."

"Not a single damned bit," Captain Welch returned.

Ormsby smiled. All this was new to him. A middle-aged man, plainly land-

Twelve-league Labyrinth



bred, and inclined to both paunchiness and baldness, he seemed as out of place in the officers' mess as he actually was. However, as the newest vice-president of the Caribbean Line, he was treated with all deference and his most lubberly questions were answered with encyclopedic exactness.

"A bit of a squall," he remarked in a bored voice intended to indicate his salty contempt for the near-hurricane through which the *Carib Maid* was laboring.

"Squall, my eye, Mr. Ormsby!" the Captain ejaculated. "It's a hell-roaring gale. If it blows any harder, it'll be picking up chunks of reef and throwing them at us."

"Hitting up to sixty outside the Labyrinth." This from the third mate, Mr. Brown, a short, lean, gray-haired man with the eyes of a hawk. "I've seen it worse on a few occasions but not many," he added. Then he returned to his rice pudding. The third mate was a man of few words, and somewhat of a mystery aboard the *Carib Maid*.

"Mr. Brown, are you relieving the First for dinner?" the Captain asked.

The third mate did not answer.

"I say, *Brown!*"

The man looked up quickly. "I beg your pardon, Captain. I didn't hear you."

"I was merely trying to determine, Mr. Brown," the Captain purred, "if you are planning to relieve Mr. Sobel for dinner tonight."

"Going now, sir," was the answer, and Brown snatched his oilskins from a chair and left the mess.

"Is he hard of hearing, Captain?" Ormsby inquired.

"He can hear the watch in the forepeak spit," the Captain replied disgustedly. "In my opinion, he isn't used to the name he's using, Mr. Ormsby."

The vice-president looked startled. "Sailing under false colors?"

Captain Welch shrugged and glanced uneasily at Hobbs, the second mate.

"Signed him on in Norfolk ten minutes before sailing, when Cline went down with appendicitis. Don't know beans about him."

"Pretty old for a third mate," Hobbs suggested; "older than he looks, I'll bet."

Captain Welch glanced sharply at the cherubic Mr. Hobbs. It seemed almost indecent to the Captain that a man like Hobbs, with ten years of sea-going behind him, should look so much like a chorus-boy.

Out there somewhere a helpless ship was being driven toward the vengeful coral—a mighty, gallant ship, gleaming ghostlike in the moonlight. Brown gripped the rail savagely. "If I could only be *sure!*" he muttered.

"I sometimes think, Mr. Hobbs," he said icily, "that you're *younger* than you look. In matters of judgment, certainly. I'll bet Mr. Brown is a better master right now than you'll ever be."

Happily, the entrance of Sobel created a diversion.

"You'd think he was a navy man, the way he takes over the bridge!" he proclaimed in an aggrieved tone. "Soon as he hits the bridge ladder he perks up; you'd think to hear him chuck orders around he'd never been on anything but Class A in his life. Well, this junk-heap ought to tone him down a bit."

"That'll do, Mr. Sobel," snapped Captain Welch. Like every shipmaster, whether his ship is a garbage-tug or a speedy liner, he was touchy about his command.

Just then the *Carib Maid* nosed sharply into the trough and at the same moment was hit by a cross-sea—a combination which deposited the critical Mr. Sobel in an undignified position at the other end of the mess.

"Evidently," the Captain commented dryly, "Mr. Brown isn't the only one who'll be taken down by the 'old junk-heap.' How's the glass?"

"Bottom dropping out," replied the chastened Mr. Sobel. "Thank God, we're inside the Labyrinth tonight."

"About this time three years ago the *Carib Lady* went on the Labyrinth," Welch said, and paused to re-light his pipe.

"Terrible thing, that," Ormsby said. "Her maiden voyage, wasn't it?"

Captain Welch nodded.

"New Orleans to Santiago. Forty people lost, and the line's best master had her, too—man named Wilson."

"Just what happened, Captain? As I remember, the newspapers weren't very clear."

"Nobody was, Mr. Ormsby—and nobody knows now. Off her course and drove hard on. Wilson was all set to stay on the bridge till she broke up; but his third mate cracked him on the head and they took him off."

Captain Welch rose and reached for his oilskins.

"Said it wasn't his fault, I suppose?" Ormsby inquired.

Captain Welch nodded. "Question whether it was," he said; "but at any rate he hasn't had a ship since. Getting old and lost his nerve, was the claim. Coming up with me, Mr. Ormsby, or staying down here where it's warm and dry?"

"Coming along with you, Captain, if

you'll have me," was the reply, and together they started down the passageway. . . .

At six bells in his cabin abaft the funnel,—where he got the full benefit of its heat as well as that of the sun,—the wireless-man cast a contemplative eye upward at the antennæ that twisted and swayed crazily in the wind. He cursed disgustedly, wondering if it would remain aloft through the blow, or if he would be forced to risk his neck on a repair job. Then, with a shrug, he returned to an old copy of the *Police Gazette* that lay in his lap.

SUDDENLY he stiffened to attention. He slid his feet off his desk and sat upright, twitching the ear-phones into a better position on his head, and twirling knobs with his other hand.

Then he flicked up a switch and grasped the knob of his transmitting-key, to tap out his response in a staccato flow of dots and dashes. When contact was established with the calling ship, he grasped a fountain pen and pulled a pad nearer. Swiftly he scribbled down the message. In the middle of it he looked up at the chart on the wall at his side.

"Not so good," he muttered.

The message completed, he slipped on his oilskins and hurried from the cabin. It was not regulation to leave it, but this was an emergency. As he fought his way forward to the flying-bridge, he discerned in the glow against the rail three figures: Captain Welch, Hobbs,—whose watch it was,—and Ormsby.

"S.O.S. from the *Carib Empress*, sir."

"Tell it to me," snapped Welch. "I can't read the thing here."

"Propeller gone, ten miles sou'-sou'-east of Twelve League Labyrinth," the radio operator shouted. "Being driven on before blow, and unless help rendered immediately will strike within two hours. Absolutely helpless; reckoned position 79° west, 20° 44′ north. For God's sake, do something."

"The *Carib Empress*," Ormsby exclaimed. "A hundred and fifty on her passenger-list! We've got to do something, Captain."

"Harris," Captain Welch snapped, "get aft and find out if there's a ship anywhere within an hour's steaming of her. Quick!"

"Right, sir!"

The Marconi man started across the slippery and steeply sloping bridge. With her holds only a third full, the terrific southerly blow had given the *Carib Maid* a ten-degree starboard list.

"This coast is a hoodoo for Rice," Welch shouted. "He was Wilson's first mate when the *Carib Lady* struck three years ago, and he's master of the *Empress* now."

"Off the Labyrinth," Ormsby said. "But surely, Captain, there will be no ship nearer her than we are. And I hardly need to tell you that the idea of paying salvage to some rival line doesn't particularly appeal to us."

Captain Welch snorted impatiently.

"We might as well be in the Suez Canal as far as being of any help to the *Empress* is concerned," Captain Welch snapped. "Unless there's a ship outside the reef within an hour's steaming of her, the line will be notifying the underwriters in the morning."

The second mate, who until now had said nothing, cursed with a whole-hearted intensity as comprehension of the situation came to him.

"And we're not more than an hour from her, in a direct line!" he exclaimed.

"Then why the devil aren't we on our way?" Ormsby demanded angrily. "Give the necessary orders, Captain, immediately."

Captain Welch turned on him.

"You may be an officer of the line, sir," he snapped, "but please remember that I'm master of this ship. We can't go to the *Empress*, because the reefs are impassable! There's not a navigable channel through them for miles, east or west. The *Empress* is just outside the reefs from us, not more than an hour's straight steaming. But actually, she's five hours' forced steaming away! Best we could do would be to head northwest by west, cut around Zarza de Fuera, and then steam southeast by east—eighty miles, Mr. Ormsby. Back of us, the first navigable channel is even farther."

"Do you mean," Ormsby asked incredulously, "that there's *nothing* we can do?"

"Maybe some tramp out of Cienfuegos for Antilla," Hobbs hazarded hopefully.

WELCH only spat downwind and shook his head pessimistically.

"But damn it, man," the vice-president persisted, "do you mean that we have to stand by while the *Empress* goes on the reef, with a hundred and fifty passengers aboard?"

Suddenly Captain Welch reached for the engine-room speaking-tube.

"Yes," he replied grimly. "But we can get to her as soon as possible, and hope she holds together until we do get there. Then if we're lucky, we'll be able to take off some of her people." He blew mightily down the tube.

"No telling about that," Hobbs said gloomily. "She may drive over a razorback reef that'll rip off her bottom-plates, and sink in the deep water on the other side. It's happened before."

"McMonnies," the Captain shouted through the tube, "drive her for all she's worth. The *Empress* is going on the Labyrinth and we've got to get around to her as fast as we can."

"What a hell of a situation," Ormsby muttered, "—to be within a few miles and unable to help her! It's cruel."

THE gale snatched the words from his lips and carried them to the Captain, who stood at his elbow.

"The sea is cruel, Mr. Ormsby," he shouted. "Damned cruel! Smashes you when you're helpless or least expecting it. God help the *Empress!*"

"What are her chances if she goes aground, Captain?"

"Damn' bad," was the shouted reply. "All depends on the storm and how long it lasts. I'll have a look at the glass."

Captain Welch leaned against the wind and started for the chart-house. The vice-president gripped the rail and stared into the storm, which seemed to be growing in fury. The *Carib Maid* mounted high on the mountainous quartering seas, rolling at an alarming angle; she hesitated for a long moment, then nosed down steeply and suddenly into the trough. Tons of dark roiling water swept over her weather rail, until between the superstructure and the forepeak which sometimes shook itself free of the sea, only the mast told the location of the forward well deck. Occasionally a sea larger than ordinary, rocking the ship as she began to lift from the trough on the following swell, smashed sledgelike against the superstructure, to pile up against it until water poured a foot deep over the bridge itself. Spray so thick that it seemed nearly a sheet of solid water, flung over the bridge almost constantly, to break with a smack against the squat blue funnel behind and go quartering aft along the ship to the sea again.

Being driven now, strained to greater speed, the ship seemed to battle the sea more desperately. She buried her nose more deeply, diving faster into the trough. In a strange medley of clatterings, bangings, creakings and groanings, she seemed to voice her protest.

A two-foot sheet of water that rushed across the bridge caught the Captain as he crossed from the chart-room, swept his feet from under him and deposited him, drenched under his oilskins, against the starboard rail. Cursing, he crept up the listing deck to Ormsby.

"Glass still falling," he shouted. "Can't look for the peak of the storm for two hours yet. An unusually bad blow for this time of year, Mr. Ormsby. Much worse outside the Labyrinth, too. We're close to the reefs and they make a bit of a lee for us."

Harris the wireless-man clutched his elbow.

"She reports the *Paloma* nearest ship to her, sir. Nine hours away, but heading for her as fast as the weather permits; may make it in eight, but doubt it."

The silence that followed was more eloquent than words. The four men realized that the radio report was the death-sentence of the *Carib Empress*. Inevitably, with her propeller gone, the storm would drive her on the reefs. Then it would be only a question of time, of the outcome of the test of strength between man's handiwork and the terrific impact of hurtling tons of water. To the land-bred Ormsby, it seemed inconceivable; he thought of a trip he had made aboard the other ship—of her great dining-room, her lounges, the play-room for children. The ship had seemed to him a bit of *terra firma*, as secure from the wrath of the sea as his boyhood home in Kansas—but now the sea was driving her, helpless, to certain destruction!

"Tell the *Empress* we're logging it for her as fast as McMonnies can drive us." Captain Welch said perfunctorily, and Harris turned away.

"Near eight bells, sir," said Hobbs. "I'd better bring the log up to date and sign it over to Brown. Here he is now."

AS Hobbs braced himself toward the chart-room, a figure appeared from the ladder and came easily across the bridge, apparently untroubled by either the angle of the deck or the force of the wind.

"A sailor, this fellow Brown!" Captain Welch commented.

"Evening, gentlemen," Brown greeted them. "Tough spot the *Empress* is in! The Chief just told me. What ships are heading for her?"

"The *Paloma*, Mr. Brown," the Captain replied. "Only ship besides ourselves, within twelve hours of her."

"And what's our course?"

"We're going around to her," Welch answered shortly, and turned to the rail.

"Five hours, maybe more," Brown muttered. "But we'll be too late. See here, sir, why don't we ship through Caballones?"

CAPTAIN WELCH turned back to the third mate as abruptly as he had turned away.

"We can almost surely reach her before she drives on," Brown said. "Then we could shoot a line to her, get a hawser aboard and hold her off the Labyrinth till the storm blows out."

"What the devil are you talking about, Mr. Brown?" the Captain demanded.

"I say to go through Caballones, Captain; it will be tight work, but we can feel our way through. It's the only hope, sir. We've got to try it."

"A channel through the reef?" Ormsby demanded. "Is that true, Captain?"

"Mr. Brown," the Captain said coldly, "is talking wildly! Caballones Channel is unmarked, and impassable even if it were marked. It shows two fathoms on the chart, and there's no telling that we'd find even two. But we're not going to see if the chart's right."

"But if there's even half a chance, Captain," Ormsby objected, "we should try. Just think—one hundred and fifty in the passenger-list, one hundred more in her crew; and you say the ship may break up within a few hours after she hits."

"It would be a suicidal chance, Mr. Ormsby," the Captain replied.

"I beg to differ with you, sir," Brown said quietly.

"Differ all you damn' please, Mr. Brown," Captain Welch snapped, "but kindly keep your differences to yourself."

"This is a matter of the lives of hundreds of people, sir," the third mate persisted, "—not to mention the ship and cargo."

"What are you trying to do, Mister? Instruct me in my duty?"

"That's not my place," was the answer. "I'm only trying to tell you, sir, that we're the *Empress'* only hope, and that Caballones Channel is the only way. I can take us through."

"Ah, Mr. Brown, a miracle-worker, eh? Caballones is charted as two fathoms—and we *draw* two fathoms!"

"There's a fifty-five-mile gale piling water up in that channel, sir." The third mate leaned forward eagerly. "There may be three fathom there now. And we can gain two feet by pumping out our water ballast."

"Where did you buy your ticket, Mister?" roared the Captain, now thoroughly aroused. "We have a ten-degree list, and you want to dump our water ballast. That's not my idea of common sense, let alone seamanship."

"Damn it, sir," was the angry answer, "I got my ticket because I know my job—and I'll have you know that I've sailed as master on better ships than this rusty egg-crate! What I'm getting at is that going through Caballones we'll be headed into the blow and we'll be able to sacrifice stability to gain draft. Once we're through the Labyrinth we can keep headed into the blow until we've pumped our tanks full again."

"Captain Welch," Ormsby shouted, "if there's a fighting chance, then for God's sake let's take it! This ship is worth little—she carries little cargo, and her crew is small. The *Carib Empress* is worth millions, and she carries over two hundred people. I'll authorize the attempt, Captain—I'll take the responsibility."

"That you can't do, Mr. Ormsby," was the reply. "All the responsibility for a ship rests on her master's shoulders, and my judgment says Brown is crazy. To try an unmarked channel at night in the teeth of a storm like this would be criminal."

"Insanity," agreed the second mate, who had returned from the chart-room.

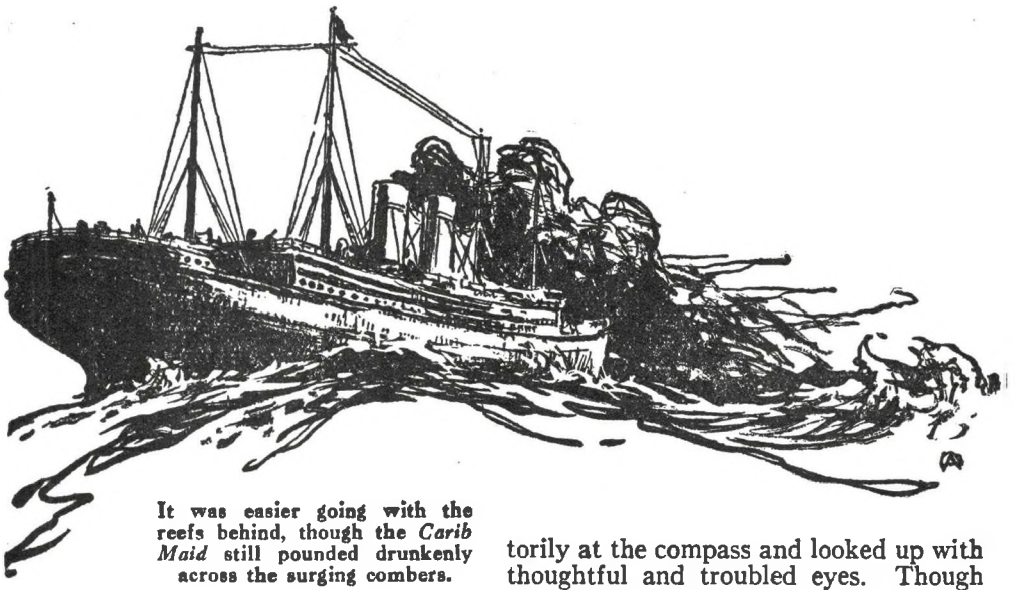
"Mr. Hobbs," Brown shouted, "when you're able to shoot the sun without making the five per cent errors that you do, then it'll be time enough for *you* to talk. As for Caballones Channel, Captain Welch, I once took a ship through—and I can take this one through!"

FROM the wheel-house the ship's bell chimed eight.

"That'll be enough about Caballones Channel, Mister," the Captain said. "Take over your watch."

The new watch came up the ladder and plunged toward the wheel. Behind him was another man who fought his way forward to the Captain's side. It was the bosun, a Canary Islander named Matao.

"Cook just broke his arm, sir," he announced in a matter-of-fact voice.



It was easier going with the reefs behind, though the *Carib Maid* still pounded drunkenly across the surging combers.

Captain Welch swore fervently.

"How did he do that?"

"Slipped on the greasy deck when the ship pitched, sir. Landed on his elbow. We carried him to his bunk."

"All right," Welch snapped, "I'll come. Get the first-aid kit. Hobbs, you come below and lend me a hand, just as soon as Brown takes over. Tell him to hold this course and send for me if there's any further word from the *Empress*."

Then the Captain, followed by Ormsby, grabbed for the ladder rail. . . .

In the chart-room the third mate bent over the chart, oblivious to the remarks of Hobbs. "If I could only be sure," he muttered to himself.

"And you'd better look to the lashings of the port boat," he heard the second mate saying.

"All right, Hobbs," he snapped. "The port boat will be looked to; you needn't worry. You've relieved me, Mister. Good night."

The chart-room door slammed and Hobbs glowered angrily. He ranked the third mate—and yet the fellow made him feel like an unshaven apprentice, time and again. And this was due to something more than the fact that thirty years or more separated them in age. There was something about Brown—a crisp assurance born of absolute knowledge and authority,—that had made even Captain Welch himself speak differently to him than to his other officers. Cursing under his breath, Hobbs left the chart-room and went below.

On the bridge Brown glanced perfunctorily at the compass and looked up with thoughtful and troubled eyes. Though the gale was as strong as ever, the sky was clearing and the light of the nearly full moon was becoming every minute more steady. The ripping wind shredded the low-hung clouds into phantom wisps, and hurled them across the sky at express-train speed.

Again he glanced at the compass, but it was with eyes that did not see, and in the light of the binnacle his face wore a strangely haunted expression. Returning to the rail, he gripped it savagely until his knuckles showed white and stared out at the white-topped, wind-torn peaks of the seas that gleamed in the moonlight. Then he went to the port rail and looked off toward the south where lay the dreaded Twelve League Labyrinth.

Out there somewhere a helpless ship was being driven toward the vengeful coral. Not a rusty tramp like the one on whose bridge he stood, but a mighty, gallant white ship that would now be gleaming ghostlike in the moonlight. Would she strike broadside on, with a shuddering crash, and then roll over as the breakers swept the decks clear and began pounding the hulk to shapeless wreckage? Once they had driven her on, there would be no relenting. Uncoiling from the reefs, they would rear themselves in seething, towering masses and hurl themselves in berserk fury on the helpless *Empress*. Or would she drive clear over, the steely coral raking her bottom, and go swiftly down in the deep water beyond, with boiler explosions adding to the horrors enacted on the storm-swept decks as the doomed passengers fought for the lifeboats? But no boat

would be able to live for even an instant in the hissing maelstrom into which the reefs tortured the sea.

IT was peculiarly ironical that the ship in peril should be the *Carib Empress,* Brown's old command. Of all ships afloat he felt he could least bear to see *her* founder, for she had been his from the day she had slipped down the ways until he had been transferred to a better ship—or a larger and a newer one, rather, for he had said that no better ship floated than the *Empress.* He half turned toward the helmsman, hesitated, and then, his decision made, hurried to the chart-room for another glance at the chart.

"If I could only be sure!" he muttered again. Then, emerging from the chart-room to the bridge, he saw off to port a yellow pinpoint of light. Seeing it at just that moment, when he was racked by doubt and indecision, it seemed more than merely Punta Practicos Light. It seemed a heaven-sent omen—and he turned swiftly to the helmsman.

"Put her over to sou'west by west," he snapped.

"What, sir?" the man gasped.

"Port your helm. Put her over to sou'west by west."

"Nor'west by west, sir?"

With a muttered expletive Brown seized the wheel himself, and gradually, with unerring judgment of distance and strength of seas, he nursed it over. Sluggishly the *Carib Maid* swung her blunt bows into the very teeth of the blow.

"Take her," he snapped to the helmsman, "and hold her steady on!" Then he hurried to the rail and seized the engine-room speaking-tube. "McMonnies!" he shouted. "Pump out our water ballast. Yes, pump it *out;* pump the tanks dry. Damn it, man, can't you understand English? I say, pump out the tanks and be quick about it!"

Driving straight into the teeth of the gale, the *Carib Maid* headed directly toward the reefs. Giant combers shattered on her forepeak into gale-driven sheets of moon-silvered spray, and a cataract of black water rushed across the well deck. Brown set his teeth grimly and gripped the rail with both muscular hands. Already, through the strengthening moonlight, he could see spouting surf a few miles dead ahead. . . .

Below deck Captain Welch, with the assistance of Ormsby and Hobbs, had finished setting the cook's broken left arm. He gave the man a stiff shot of brandy, stood up with a sigh and began to gather together the equipment taken from the medicine-chest. Then, and not till then, did he perceive what his absorption in ministering to the injured man had prevented him from noticing earlier. The vessel's motion had changed; no longer was she rolling to the swell—but driving ahead with a long pitching motion. He could feel the shock as the freighter's blunt bows plunged deep into the combers, and now and then the sudden vibration as the screw came out of water.

As he ran for the companionway Welch was muttering viciously from between clenched teeth unintelligible but curiously expressive expletives acquired in odd corners of the world during thirty years of sea-going. Chuckling at his wrath, Ormsby followed close on his heels, sensing that something was wrong but not understanding exactly what. They hurried up the bridge ladder, and Ormsby gasped at the stinging blanket of spray flung from the bow high over the cross-trees.

At last they stood beside the helmsman and the silent third mate. The clearing moonlit sky presented a strange contrast to the seething hell of water below. A succession of great foam-flecked combers—seeming even larger in the bright moonlight—rushed toward the *Carib Maid,* to crash thunderously on her blunt, stubborn bow. Sometimes the whole fo'c'sle-head went under, while the vessel reeled from the shock and the masts reached up through the water like the groping fingers of a drowning man.

But it was what lay ahead of them that held Welch momentarily silent.

A LONG line of spouting breakers stretched athwart their course, with only a few narrow gaps in their charging ranks. In some places the moonlight revealed low islets crowned with a few scattered palms; in others only the churning white water betrayed the position of the deadly coral.

The whole sea was a turmoil, where the dreaded Twelve League Labyrinth tortured the heaving waters, and the *Carib Maid* was almost up to the reefs. At the rail of the flying-bridge stood James Brown, the third mate, his lean face set and grim in the moonlight.

Overpowering amazement was all that held Captain Welch's temper in check, but his great fists were clenched and his rugged face was set in granite lines.

"Are you stark mad, Mr. Brown?" he roared in a voice that carried easily above the rush of the gale.

The third mate shook his head with a twisted smile.

"No, Captain Welch, I am quite sane. But I couldn't let the *Empress* go down without help, when I felt almost sure I could get through Caballones safely. Half an hour will tell us now."

"I don't need half an hour to tell me this is mutiny, Mister," Welch retorted with grimness. "You go below. We're going back on our course."

He took a step toward the helmsman, but Brown stopped him.

"It's too late now, sir. Look aft."

Something Welch had not noticed before met his startled eyes as he hastily turned. Off both quarters, aft of the *Carib Maid*, fountains of spray spouted high from the sea. To east and west the breakers stretched in serried ranks that were broken only by the narrow gap through which the freighter had passed. She was already past the first barrier.

"You see—it's too late now. There's not clearance enough to turn her."

There was a long pause and then Welch shrugged his massive shoulders in fatalistic acceptance of the inevitable.

"On your head be it," he said. "God help us now!" And a silence fell.

Because of the reefs all about and close beneath their keel, it seemed to the anxious watchers on the bridge that the seas were increasing in intensity, rising in insanely malevolent fury to destroy the gallant freighter thus invading their lair in an attempt to snatch from them the prey that had seemed to be theirs. Massed legions of snarling combers flung themselves from all sides on the *Carib Maid*. The starboard boat was smashed to a mass of kindling by one wave, and the wreckage swept clear of the decks by the next. The useless falls snapped to and fro in the wind like heavy whips.

TO Ormsby it seemed impossible the ship could live. Even to the others, who had ridden through hurricanes and typhoons, it seemed impossible that she could. Time and again she was buried under tons of hissing, savage water till it seemed there could be no recovery from that oppressing weight. Each time the stout hull surged slowly forward and upward till the dripping bows stood clear for an instant; then the conflict was renewed. The skipper stood motionless, steady glance on that forward well deck in which no man could live, watching for any signs of stove-in hatches or ripped tarpaulins which would mean their end.

They lost all sense of the passing of time. The waters boiled around them and columns of reef-born spray spouted high in the air like geysers. Under the quiet sky it was a macabre medley of black and silver, with the tearing fingers of the sea clutching remorselessly at the reeling, staggering ship. James Brown stood beside the helmsman, occasionally altering the course a trifle as they threaded their way through the peril-laden seas.

ONE by one the islets and reefs fell away astern; still the *Carib Maid* pounded on. Below decks, in the flame-tipped hell that was the engine-room, a wild-eyed Scotchman cursed himself hoarse at blackened stokers who fed the raging fires with their bare hands because no man could stand and swing a shovel. Far above them on the flying-bridge a few men in glistening oilskins clung to the rail and strained their eyes for the sight of clear water beyond the reefs.

Staggering, straining, clanging like a smithy, the *Carib Maid* reeled up to the last barrier of breakers, with the long rollers of the open sea beyond. As she lifted high on the crest of a wave the men on the bridge glimpsed the lights of another vessel dead ahead and not two miles away—the long string of lights that indicated a passenger-steamer. A sudden shout burst from their lips. But their jubilation was short-lived—the last barrier of breakers before them seemed to have no gap in its length!

For a moment Brown reached toward the engine-room telegraph, but his hand fell away again. It was too late to turn back now. Motioning the helmsman aside, he took the wheel himself and steered a little to starboard where the breakers seemed perhaps a trifle lower. Slowly the *Carib Maid* crept up to the reef. There was surf beneath her forefoot, and geysers of spray abeam on both sides. They lifted high on a comber, dropped into the trough—and felt a sudden jarring shock.

In one stride Captain Welch was at the switch for the general alarm. He stood tense and waiting, ready to summon the crew from below if they struck again. With apparent and maddening deliberation the freighter climbed up the crest of the next wave, hesitated a long moment and began to drop into the hollow. They waited for the shock, while

the next great wave towered over their bows. Then miraculously, they had reached the bottom of the trough and the bow was lifting again. . . . The *Carib Maid* had slipped over the reef!

"I'm afraid we loosened a few rivets and may have set up one of the plates," said Brown with a deep sigh of relief, as he relinquished the wheel. "But here we are. Shall I get ready to shoot a line to the *Empress?*"

Captain Welch nodded acquiescence, his weather-beaten face a mixture of varied emotions.

It was easier going with the reefs behind, though the *Carib Maid* still pounded drunkenly across the great surging combers; her blunt bows still buried themselves in the wind-torn crests, while showers of spray spattered over the flying-bridge. The breakers were behind and the fury of the sea alone was less than its rage where it had been tortured by the coral.

As they came abreast of the *Carib Empress,* Welch gave a single triumphant blast of the freighter's siren. It was both a pæan of triumph over the elements and the derisive snort of a shabby worker called on to help a fine lady in distress. As the *Carib Maid* passed to windward of the liner wallowing helplessly in the trough, there came a sharp flash from just abaft the freighter's squat funnel. The Lyle gun spoke,—its report lost in the roar of the gale,—and a line whistled down the wind and across to the liner.

With the hawser in place, the *Carib Maid* again turned her blunt nose into the swells. Her tanks were filling again, and the drag of the tow set her down by the stern, so she rode more easily—but her task was by no means done. For a decrepit old tramp such as she to tow a powerless ship five times her tonnage is not a light job, but she plunged bravely at it, while McMonnies in the engine-room alternated prayers with curses as he nursed his sobbing engines.

ALL through the night aboard the *Empress* sleepless, purple-fringed eyes strained forward toward the *Carib Maid,* whom they could sometimes see as only a squat, defiant blue funnel thrust up through seas that inundated her. Then the eyes looked aft toward the menacing reefs a scant mile astern, from which the squat freighter was fighting so gallantly to save the great liner.

Just before dawn the gale began to abate appreciably, and at eleven o'clock Captain Welch sent away a boat to beg a loan of the *Empress'* surgeon to patch the broken bones suffered by the *Carib Maid's* crew during the passage through the Labyrinth. He sent James Brown in command; it seemed somehow fitting that he should. And Ormsby, the vice-president, insisted on going.

WHEN they clambered aboard the *Empress,* her first officer awaited them. He seized James Brown's hand and shook it vigorously.

"Wilson!" he exclaimed. "Here's luck! Glad to see you. Didn't know you were aboard the *Maid*—and say, who brought her through the Labyrinth? You, I'll bet, and it was the swellest piece of work I've ever seen."

Brown was distinctly embarrassed.

"Glad to see you, Mac," he said. "Meet Mr. Ormsby, one of the line's officers. Mr. Ormsby, meet Mr. McQuade."

Ormsby barely acknowledged the introduction. "Wilson?" he said in a puzzled tone. "But your name is Brown."

"*Brown,* on my third mate's ticket," was the response. "Had to do it or starve, because I couldn't get a berth after the *Carib Lady* drove onto the Labyrinth. I was master aboard her then, you know, Mr. Ormsby. Mr. McQuade, here, was my third mate."

"Cracked Captain Wilson on the head and brought him off in the last boat," McQuade said. Then he lowered his voice. "Say, Wilson, Rice was in a blue funk last night—went all to pieces and I had to take over the bridge! He saw us going on the Labyrinth, and began to rave that it was his fault the *Lady* went on, and not yours. The ghosts did for him—all those forty that were lost from the *Lady.*"

"Shut up, Mac!" Brown—or Wilson—said under his breath. "Here he is."

A haggard man with bowed shoulders came up and took Wilson's hand.

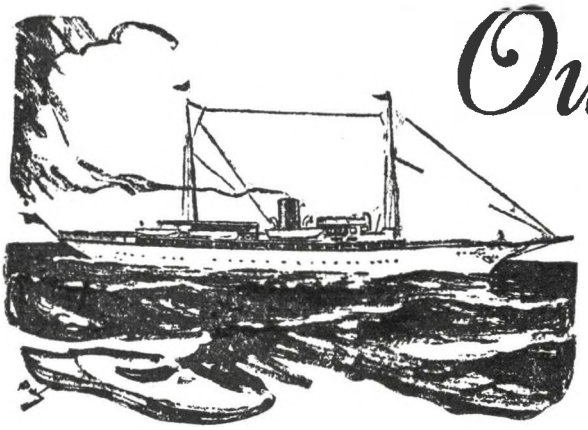
"Magnificent piece of work, Wilson," he said; then he seemed to choke, and turned and walked away. For a moment Ormsby and the two mates stared after him in silence.

Then Ormsby heaved a sigh.

"I guess the line owes you a little gift of some sort, Mr. Wilson," he began awkwardly.

"Damn the gift, Mr. Ormsby," Wilson snapped. "Give me a ship!"

"You shall have it," came the prompt response.



Outrageous

He had a way of starting private wars for the sake of preserving international peace — and he once socked a king on the nose: A lively novelette by an able writer.

PARIS was a murk of gray mist over a sea of gray slush that winter afternoon. Having cleaned up a dull story about the latest French tariff reprisal, I escaped from the drab offices of the American Press League to Fouché's, where a man could rest his feet, one foot at a time, on a brass rail.

No thought of the outrageous vagaries of O'Sullivan Smith troubled my mind.

But I had not rested long nor cleared my throat of the poisonous Seine fog, which is worse than London's worst, when Rufus Congleton, European manager of the League and the biggest newspaper man in Europe, came in. He pinned me to the bar with a keen black eye and had one himself before he spoke. He was worried about something—a most unusual state for Congleton.

"Chris, you're taking the seven-forty train this evening for Cannes," he stated succinctly.

If the assignment had been in heaven I could not have been better pleased. Out of Paris—out of that murk, southward, to the bright shores of the Mediterranean!

"You've saved my life and my reason, boss," I told him.

"I'm not so sure," Rufus Congleton answered dourly. "O'Sullivan Smith resigned by wire ten minutes ago."

I muttered something noncommittal. The bright prospect of the Riviera became almost as unpromising as the dismal grayness without.

"I don't know what hell's brew he's hatching down there in Cannes, but I want you to drag him out of it," Congleton said.

"He's more apt to drag me in," I answered, and spoke cold raw truth. "What are the symptoms this time?"

"For the last week his dispatches have been flailing away at the Riviera as the refuge of all the political scum of Europe. Kings without crowns, dukes without coronets and Russians without shirts are all sitting around down there in the sun working up bright plans for the suffering and oppressed peoples of their native lands to rise and put them back on the top of the heap again."

"Does O'Sullivan Smith call that news?" I asked.

Congleton nodded. "Our agitated correspondent took a particularly hard swing at the Mangarian refugees. He asserted that all of them, from the exiled King John of Mangaria down, are doing their damnedest at long distance to undermine and at the same time squeeze cash out of the present régime in Mangaria."

"It sounds reasonable to me," I said. "But it hasn't been news for at least four years."

Congleton scowled, and tapped the brass rail with his foot. "Of course I haven't let a word of this slip out onto the wires, Stokes; but our well-informed friend Smith says that the Mangarian situation has reached a point where a political murder has been committed and the peace of Europe is vitally threatened."

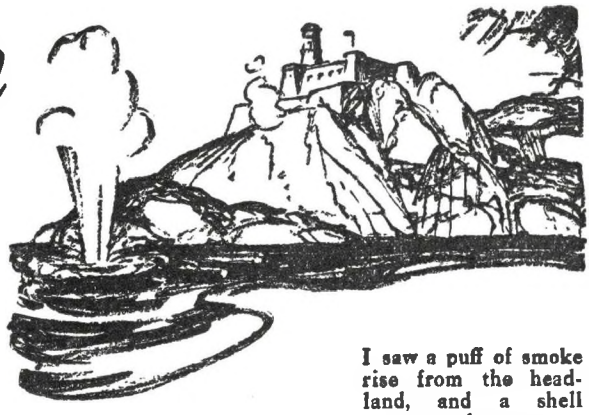
"You know how hipped O'Smith is on menaces to the peace of Europe," I pointed out, not too distressed.

Rufus Congleton looked at me with hard unfathomable eyes. His glance made me a trifle uneasy. I knew that the European manager of the A. P. L. carried many secrets under his gray felt hat, and that some of these secrets were not exactly conducive to his undisturbed repose.

O'Smith

By RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

Illustrated by Alfred Simpkin



I saw a puff of smoke rise from the headland, and a shell screamed over us.

His next remark was noncommittal enough. "Nobody is fool enough these days to think there can be war in Europe without war in America and the Orient," he said. "Anyhow, when I failed to send out more than a mild description of the revelry and antics of King John on the Riviera, I received O'Smith's resignation. As I recall it, he called me a white-livered, yellow-bellied, black-hearted, purple-faced fool, soulless and brainless, without the courage of an elderly gnat. O'Smith added that since the A. P. L. was obviously of no value to the world, he would use his own methods in eradicating the menace he had discovered."

"I hope he's mistaken in you," I said, but I was disturbed. O'Smith was always most dangerous when he was most flippant.

Congleton grinned briefly. "O'Smith's a gentleman," he declared. "He always bounces out from under the ægis of the A. P. L. before he raises any international hell. In that way he lets me out. I'm not sure that overarmed Europe doesn't owe to that profane wild-eyed little desperado the prevention of one minor war which might have spread over the world."

It wasn't an idle statement, and yet I did not know to which of O'Sullivan Smith's exploits he was referring.

"When the next war starts, I, for one, am going to dig in on a secluded ranch somewhere in northwestern Canada," the head of the A. P. L. said soberly.

He tapped his right arm, a triumph of mechanical ingenuity, but not as good as the arm a grenade had lopped off. "The fight will never end in my lifetime, and it won't be such a soft snap as the '14 to '18 fracas. Some men and some nations got through that. Cast loose from the rail, Chris, and head southward. Keep me informed by wire, but for Pete's sake don't compromise us."

"What is this political murder he mentions?" I asked.

Rufus Congleton shrugged his shoulders. "He's keeping that inside his skull just now," he answered.

BEFORE I caught the *de luxe* that evening at the Gare de Lyon, I found time to check further the state of mind of the dynamitic ex-correspondent of the A. P. L. O'Sullivan Smith, or Sully O'Smith, as his intimates twisted his name for brevity's sake, was a man of more than independent means; indeed, I suspected him of being a millionaire. He maintained a small flat in Paris as a convenient *pied à terre*. A fellow named Lockwood, who was midway between valet and secretary, stood by here and forwarded mail and drafts whenever he discovered where in Europe his master was wandering. I had a good understanding with Lockwood, for I was considered O'Sullivan Smith's closest friend. That was never very close.

Lockwood answered my telephone call promptly.

"Has Mr. Smith been drawing on you lately, Lockwood?" I asked.

"Indeed he has, Mr. Stokes," the man answered with sorrow in his tone. "He's kept me running to the bank and cabling America for funds, and you know what that means. He never spends money on himself—"

"I know," I answered, a bit grimly. "Not so good, Lockwood. Anything else?"

The wire buzzed, voicelessly, for a few seconds. Then Lockwood spoke again, and his voice was lower and even more distressed. "I have reason to believe,

Mr. Stokes, that Mr. Smith has chartered a yacht at Cannes."

"The deuce you say!" I muttered, thoroughly flabbergasted. "Whatever he's in, it's big."

"Very big, sir," Lockwood agreed mournfully. "Judging by the charter price, I mean."

That was all Lockwood could tell me. Even had I been in my own bed instead of galloping southward on the bone-racking train *de luxe* I would not have slept that night. No windmill in Europe was too large for my engaging little friend to take on single-handed.

ACHING in mind and body, but still alive after a thousand kilometers of travail, I crawled out of the train at Cannes shortly before noon next day.

O'Sullivan Smith was staying at the Azur, one of the most enormous of the many huge hotels fronting the Mediterranean along the Croisette. I went there and two hours later O'Smith himself was glaring suspiciously at my smiling face and shaking me warmly by the hand.

This swashbuckling guerrilla of peace was a small man, as keen as a knife and as quick as a whip. An American by birth, he was Irish and Welsh in ancestry, a weird Celtic mixture. A warning tinge of red glowed in his light brown hair and a hint of blue glinted in his slate-gray eyes. His nose, broken during an ill-advised attempt to win a motor road-race, had been skillfully mended but was still slightly askew. The lobe of his left ear had been shot off; how I never knew.

"You're here to pry, but you're too witless to be dangerous, so I'm glad to see you, Chris," he greeted me. "But take warning; I'm loaded for bear, and I'll stand no sauce from guinea pigs."

"Congleton told me to tell you his face is red, not purple," I said, and he grinned again, and led me from the gorgeous deserted lounge of the Azur out onto the terrace in front of it. Though a chilly easterly breeze blew, the sun was pouring down in a good imitation of April on the Jersey coast.

"Busybody though you are, I'll deny no traveler just off a French train a drink," he said, pushing me into a seat and beckoning to a waiter.

"Tell me about it," I suggested after the *garçon* had scurried away. O'Smith, I knew, would reveal much without coaxing; only about the important part would he be silent.

The ex-correspondent scowled, and nodded toward a noisy party of four men and half a dozen women at a near-by table.

"It's these Mangarians," he said. "The place is crawling with them—loud, fat-jawed noble slugs bleeding a decent little country and posing as heroic exiles who have followed their deposed king to banishment—on the festive Riviera."

"All that's four years old," I pointed out. "Are Americans supposed to regard it as news?"

O'Smith brought his fist down on the table with a crash that made our neighbors look around at us. "I'm a newspaper man myself," he stated with a glare. "I know news. It isn't news that John, the royal chiseler, is collecting cash from Mangaria, where the present king, William, hikes the taxes and pays up every time John touches him.

"But Chris, damn you, it is news that John is about to collect big wads from two other countries. Let's call them France and Italy, and say that John will promise each most secretly that when he returns to power in Mangaria he will extend the nation's sphere of influence in his country until it amounts to control. Chris, if he makes those lying promises to each country it means war—red, raving war in Europe!"

CHAPTER II

The Silver-plated Gun

I GRIPPED my chin and said nothing, but I understood what was back of his latest outburst. He had certainly uncovered a plague-spot.

O'Smith caught sight of our waiter returning just then, and fell silent.

The waiter got as far as the riotous table O'Smith had indicated to me. But as he tried to pass, a tall, handsome black-mustached young man leaned back in his chair and seized the tray. In another instant the two cordials we had ordered were on the Mangarian table, and our waiter was staring at his empty tray. Then with a single apprehensive glance in our direction, the servant turned and fled toward the bar again.

I groaned audibly, but O'Sullivan Smith paid no heed to my distress or the pilfering of our drinks. He was too deep in his own thoughts for that.

"What's this political murder you were yipping about?" I demanded derisively.

He reacted to my implied incredulity

at once, leaning forward to fix me with those rapier-pointed blue eyes, and speaking with crisp bitterness.

"I have, or *had*, a friend named Alexis Arrock—a tall dissipated, scrappy ship's officer that I met in a Danzig joint and later at Montevideo, where we had some trouble with a fellow who turned out to be the Minister of War. I ran into him at Marseilles a few days ago in a talking mood. He told me he came from a Mangarian noble family—I had guessed his people were that sort—and that he'd had a straight tip from a compatriot that his exiled sovereign's outgo on the Riviera had exceeded his income for so long that he was going to sell out his country to the highest bidder. That's what it amounted to. Aleck was red-hot. A good many Mangarians feel strongly about their unprogressive mountainous little country.

"Well, Aleck was all set to trail the noble John to an appointment he had with a mysterious gentleman in a hotel off the Cannebiere. I took the job of picking up this agent, whose description Aleck had obtained, at the Gare St. Charles and escorting him to the rendezvous—at a distance.

"Aleck was watching at the hotel for King John himself—or his representative. I had no trouble in finding my man at the station, but when we reached the hotel in single file the place was in a furor. There had been a suicide in a room on the fifth floor."

"Well?" I demanded as he paused.

"The suicide was of course my friend Aleck," O'Smith said dryly. "He had killed himself with a nice new silver-plated automatic pistol, although in life he had always used a marlin-spike wrapped in tape to solve his difficulties. There was no sign of King John or any other Mangarian about the place. But John and at least one sycophant was in Marseilles that day. I found that out—and some other things, too. John's playing it double—to get double pay."

HE looked at me. "But what's one man?" he asked. "Even one good man. Chris, there'll be hell aplenty raised when John, if he sells out to both, gets back his throne and France or Italy—let's call 'em—discovers that it is not the nation selected to run Mangaria and establish a strangle-hold on the Danubian countries."

He drummed on the table with lean, nervous little fingers.

"Or even less than that might start the ball of ultimatums rolling. When the will is there, an incident will set off the fireworks. And the frustration of the most cherished aims of either of those two old-style imperialistic powers by the other is more than an incident."

I nodded. The thing was really serious. "You seem to be quite sure that John will regain his kingdom," I said. "That may not happen."

OUR waiter was emerging from the bar. Hopefully I watched him coming toward us.

"John will regain his kingdom," O'Sullivan Smith stated positively. "John himself is a flighty, absolutely selfish and unscrupulous young hound, but he has behind him a patriotic and powerful friend, Colonel Spardon; the Colonel is ex-Minister of State of Mangaria and a thoroughly able citizen. He has been planning the overthrow of King William and the restoration of John's line for several years."

He tapped the table with one finger and grinned. "When Spardon is ready, John will return to Mangaria whether he likes it or not. William—if he's lucky—will take John's place on the Riviera."

"How do you know that John is playing a double game with two countries?" I demanded.

My friend caressed his bent nose. "A waiter told me," he said.

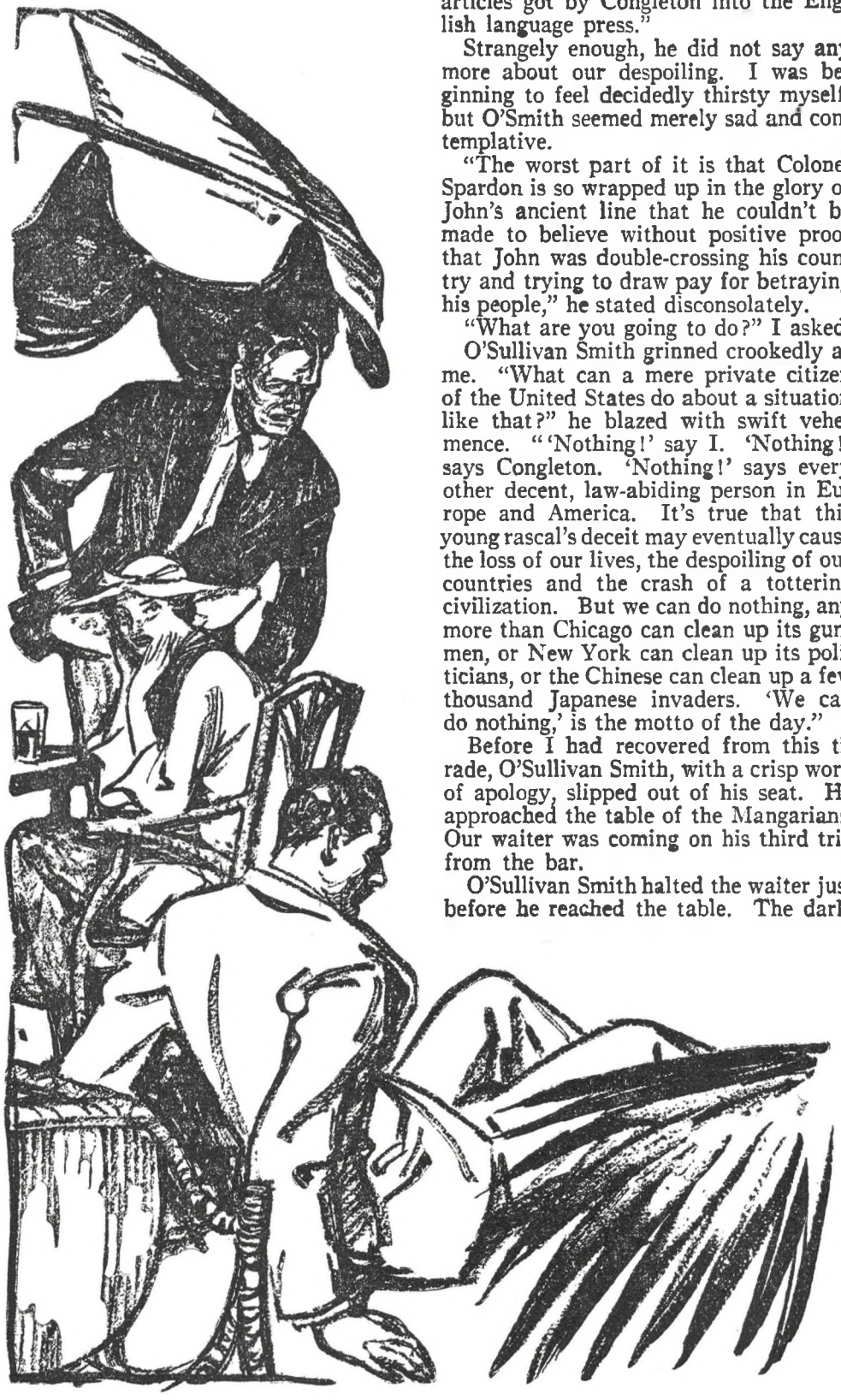
I think I was right in taking that seemingly flippant remark seriously. O'Sullivan Smith had many strange sources of information. A waiter on the Riviera may be merely a waiter or he may not. The political refugees of Europe do not gambol amid the flowers and wines of the *Côte d'Azur* without quiet but most efficient surveillance by various interests.

"Speaking of waiters," I said rather ruefully, "our own doesn't seem to have much luck in getting by that festive table."

O'Sullivan Smith shifted his gray-blue eyes in time to see the handsome young man who could have played perfectly at Hollywood the part of a dissolute and degenerate young noble stop our waiter and again seize our drinks. This time the black-mustached Mangarian shot a derisive glance at us.

"That's the second time," I said. "He seems to know us. Who is the thirsty refugee?"

"What better description could I give him?" asked O'Sullivan Smith. "These



noble squirts—there are scores of them—know me because a few of my milder articles got by Congleton into the English language press."

Strangely enough, he did not say any more about our despoiling. I was beginning to feel decidedly thirsty myself, but O'Smith seemed merely sad and contemplative.

"The worst part of it is that Colonel Spardon is so wrapped up in the glory of John's ancient line that he couldn't be made to believe without positive proof that John was double-crossing his country and trying to draw pay for betraying his people," he stated disconsolately.

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

O'Sullivan Smith grinned crookedly at me. "What can a mere private citizen of the United States do about a situation like that?" he blazed with swift vehemence. "'Nothing!' say I. 'Nothing!' says Congleton. 'Nothing!' says every other decent, law-abiding person in Europe and America. It's true that this young rascal's deceit may eventually cause the loss of our lives, the despoiling of our countries and the crash of a tottering civilization. But we can do nothing, any more than Chicago can clean up its gunmen, or New York can clean up its politicians, or the Chinese can clean up a few thousand Japanese invaders. 'We can do nothing,' is the motto of the day."

Before I had recovered from this tirade, O'Sullivan Smith, with a crisp word of apology, slipped out of his seat. He approached the table of the Mangarians. Our waiter was coming on his third trip from the bar.

O'Sullivan Smith halted the waiter just before he reached the table. The dark,

handsome young man was already reaching out a hand toward the tray.

"Since they are my drinks, you will perhaps permit me to serve them, m'sieur," O'Smith said in rapid French, and lifted the two cordial glasses.

In one swift movement he emptied a sticky *crême de menthe* down the back of the handsome gentleman's collar. The other he poured deftly on his head.

With a roar that echoed across the broad Croisette, the dripping Mangarian thrust back his chair.

Shouting a command to his fellows, he thrust a hand toward his hip pocket and jerked out a small, silver-gleaming automatic.

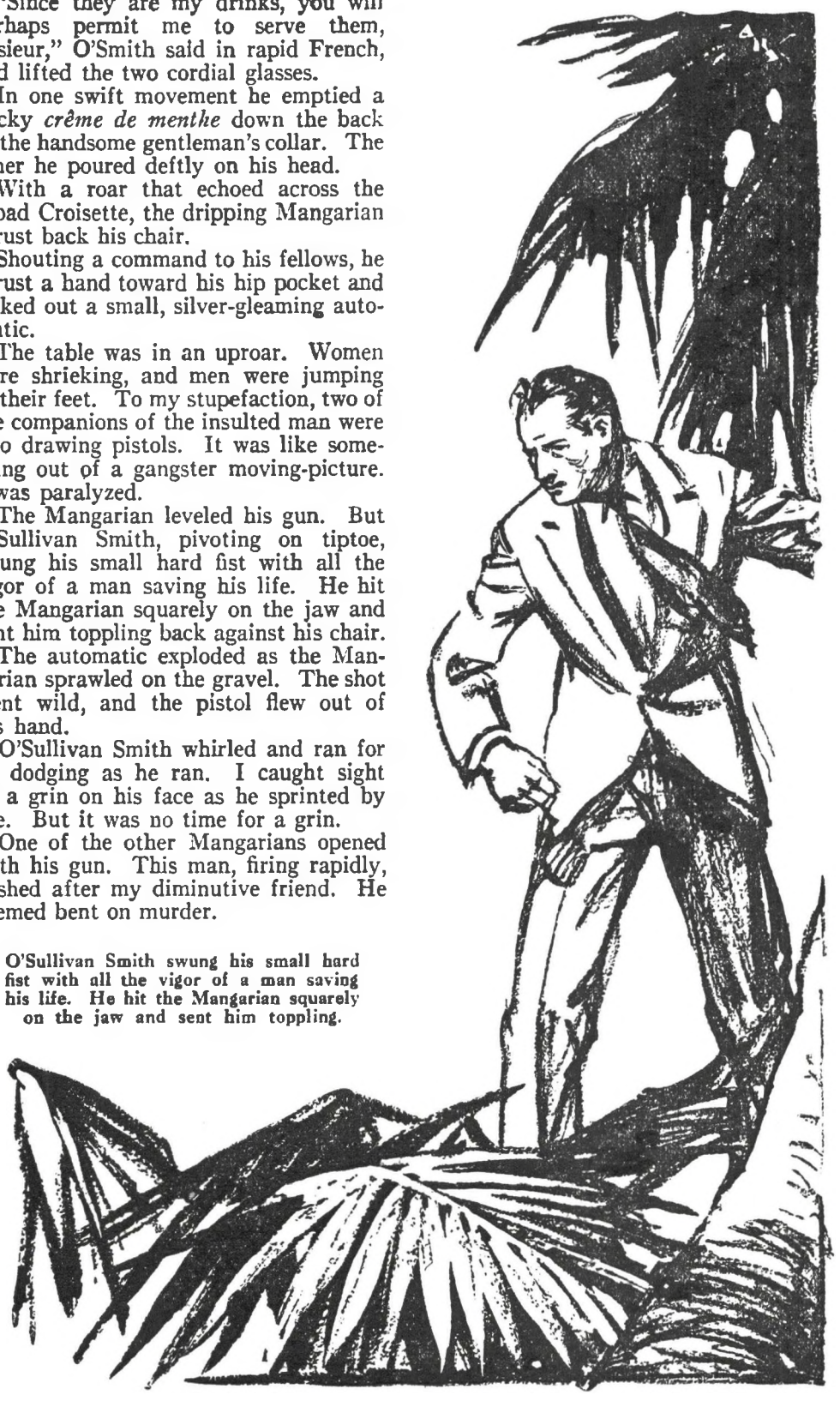
The table was in an uproar. Women were shrieking, and men were jumping to their feet. To my stupefaction, two of the companions of the insulted man were also drawing pistols. It was like something out of a gangster moving-picture. I was paralyzed.

The Mangarian leveled his gun. But O'Sullivan Smith, pivoting on tiptoe, swung his small hard fist with all the vigor of a man saving his life. He hit the Mangarian squarely on the jaw and sent him toppling back against his chair.

The automatic exploded as the Mangarian sprawled on the gravel. The shot went wild, and the pistol flew out of his hand.

O'Sullivan Smith whirled and ran for it, dodging as he ran. I caught sight of a grin on his face as he sprinted by me. But it was no time for a grin.

One of the other Mangarians opened with his gun. This man, firing rapidly, rushed after my diminutive friend. He seemed bent on murder.



O'Sullivan Smith swung his small hard fist with all the vigor of a man saving his life. He hit the Mangarian squarely on the jaw and sent him toppling.

Unfortunately for him, he dashed past me. His flying legs brought up against a chair I was lucky enough to shove in front of him. He went down with a terrific thud. I was on my way after my friend before he recovered.

O'SULLIVAN SMITH had pelted toward the nearest door, which led into a lounge of the hotel. When I reached it, he had halted just inside.

He was chuckling heartily, while a dark plump man in waiter's costume was tugging him urgently toward a staircase.

"To your room, m'sieur!" the waiter implored. "There—there—though it is King John himself whom you have chastise'—there you will be safe! Quick! They will blame it on the reds, m'sieur!"

"The King!" I gasped. "He was the King?" At a glance I read the gleeful expression of my small desperado. "Blast you, Sully, you knew that was the King when you poured those drinks on him!"

"Why not?" O'Smith answered coolly. "Where's your sturdy democracy, Chris? He wanted 'em, didn't he?" He swung around, half yielding to the waiter's pulling. "Why will they blame it on the reds, François?"

"A king does not brawl, m'sieur. You will be safe from arrest—but beware!"

With a fleeting grin at me, O'Sullivan moved toward the stairs. I followed with a grim face. There was no pursuit from outside.

"And Congleton sent me here to get you out of it!" I growled.

But there was no repentance in O'Smith. "Fancy me scragging a king!" he murmured as he ushered me into his room. "Sometimes I think I'm overcoming my natural shyness."

We had not yet received the drinks O'Smith immediately ordered when the door of his room was flung open with a crash. I started to my feet.

A man came storming into the room. The intruder was a strapping big creature. With his broad face contorted in wrath, his dark eyes shooting fire and his long arms swinging like maces, he probably looked larger than he actually was. He strode across the room to where O'Sullivan Smith was lounging in a chair. With a sweep of his arms he gripped the small American's shoulders and lifted him bodily out of the chair. Then he shook him—shook him till O'Smith's teeth clicked like poker-chips in a bag, and I thought his head would snap off. Then he slammed him down into his chair with a crash and stood over him, glaring and breathing heavily. He was a picture of righteous wrath.

"You gutter gamin—to insult a king!" he raged. "If you were a foot taller, I would tear you into pieces—pieces!"

O'Sullivan Smith was badly jarred, though cool enough. His head wabbled on his neck. He felt his neck solicitously.

"A damn' good thing I'm not a foot taller, Colonel Spardon," he muttered. "But if your king—"

"Enough!" roared our intruder. "This insult to our monarch will be suppressed—unless you publish it in your own scandalous papers. I will permit none of our patriotic gentlemen to lay a finger on your contemptible body in just punishment. But you must go at once. Leave the Riviera!"

O'Sullivan Smith slipped out of his chair, and as if testing his legs, walked gingerly across the room.

Our huge visitor stood stock still, glaring, mighty hands on his hips.

SUDDENLY, as his tottering walk brought him near the open door, O'Smith's hand darted toward the knob. He leaped into swift movement. In another instant he was out in the hall. The door slammed. I heard the rattle of his key in the lock.

For a big man, Colonel Spardon traveled fast. Nevertheless by the time he laid hold on the doorknob, the door was locked on the outside. For just an instant Spardon wrenched at the handle; then he swung around and leaped toward the nearest chair.

I backed away into a corner, not too grateful to O'Sullivan Smith for imprisoning me with this wild man.

Spardon's chair went crashing against the door with all the man's force. It literally flew to pieces, but the door remained intact.

With an oath the Mangarian drew back from the door and gathered himself together. But before he could hurl his big body at the solid door, an agitated voice came to us from the outside.

"M'sieur! M'sieur! *Un moment!* Within an instant I shall have a passkey and release you! *Un moment!* It would be better if no more disturbance occurred."

Colonel Spardon stopped dead. He turned his fiery eyes to me, and then answered the servant on the other side of the door.

"Get the key."

I ventured to come out of my corner. Spardon looked at me again.

"Your friend has maligned in the public newspapers a patriotic and noble gentleman—my sovereign," he said sternly. "Now he has attacked him in person. If you have any influence upon this trouble-making lunatic, you will see that he leave the Riviera at once. It will be hard to restrain the devoted gentleman of Mangaria from violence."

"I will speak to him about it," I said meekly.

"You will be doing him a kindness," Colonel Spardon assured me. Now that his anger had partly subsided, he was a dignified and imposing gentleman. But I was not at ease in his company. . . .

It was a long ten minutes before O'Smith's involuntary guest was released.

In the interval he paced the floor, square chin sunk on his chest and hands clasped behind his back. He paid no more attention to me than he did to the bed.

When the door was flung open by an apologetic menial, Colonel Spardon paused on the threshold to look at me from under his overhanging brows.

"Remember!" he said and vanished.

It was not five minutes later that O'Sullivan Smith came slipping into the room again. There was an air of smug satisfaction about him, and his slightly bent nose seemed to have acquired an upward Celtic tilt.

"Well?" I said angrily. "If that's your idea of sticking to a friend, I'm going back to Paris."

"Friend be damned!" said O'Smith. "I've been trying for three days to get a private glimpse of what's going on in Spardon's room. Chris, that old boy has brains. He has worked out in detail the military campaign to replace John on the throne. His room's a storehouse of plans for the economic, social and political future of Mangaria."

CHAPTER III

O'Smith's Mad Act

THOUGH O'Sullivan Smith declined to leave the Riviera, neither of us was menaced by outraged Mangarian nobles or by hired assassins. The French, for all their faults, look down upon that sort of thing. Moreover, I had an idea that Colonel Spardon would not countenance violence.

Although O'Smith deigned to dine with me that evening, he was completely wrapped up in his own thoughts. This did not seem to me to be a good sign. His only remark was not one calculated to relieve my anxiety concerning his plans.

"We must move fast, Chris, my boy," he assured me. "Spardon will be pressing John to try his luck within a few weeks."

Then he relapsed into silence.

After dinner, on the flimsy plea that he had to see a friend, he left me. I did not attempt to follow him. The only time I had tried that, during one of his adventures in Lausanne, he had complained to a Swiss policeman and I had spent three hours explaining at a police station.

IT was dull in Cannes that night. All the notables and most of the other visitors had motored to Nice, where the carnival was on. A number of private, exceedingly private, dinner dances and other celebrations were being held by luxurious *hivernants* who never attended the street fêtes. I spent some time in composing a veiled and far from reassuring wire to Congleton.

I must have fallen asleep at last in the easy-chair in O'Smith's room. My previous night had not been restful. I was roused by a sudden feeling of movement in the room. Leaping up, I found myself staring at the window. A man had just slipped in off the balcony.

It was O'Sullivan Smith, and he was hard pressed.

Dressed in a Pierrot's costume, of which there must have been hundreds of duplicates in Nice that night, he was panting like a man at the last gasp. His costume was filthy, and he raised a hand with a grimace to his shoulder.

Without a word to me, he strode to the closet, pulled out a bottle of whisky and thrust it at me.

"Empty two-thirds of that and put a couple of glasses on the table," he said swiftly. "We've been here all night."

I obeyed. Meanwhile he stripped off his costume. There was a clot of blood on his left shoulder, and a long smear of blood had dried on his chest. He rapidly arrayed himself in black trousers, slippers and a dress shirt, with his dressing-gown flung over the rest.

"Muss yourself up," he instructed me sharply. "We're two boozy Americans who've been going it strong."

"I'd like to know how you got that knife-wound on your shoulder," I said sternly.

"It isn't a knife-wound," he corrected. "It's just a graze from an automatic—a silver-plated one. Practically a miss."

HE sat down at the table, and I sat opposite him. He began to talk in a rambling drowsy way about how he would cure the depression at home if given only half a chance. I listened in intolerable impatience. He was still maudling along thirty-five minutes later when I caught a movement of the door-knob. O'Smith's eyes, sharp as poniard points, warned me to disregard it, and he continued his monotonous soliloquy. The door opened a bare two inches. I was uncomfortably conscious that some one was peering in. At last the door was closed again without a sound.

Within five minutes O'Sullivan Smith got up and assured himself that there were no eavesdroppers outside. Then he spoke jubilantly to me.

"Spardon wouldn't seriously suspect a mere newspaper man—especially when he doesn't even know whether any violence has been attempted."

"Suspect a newspaper man of what?" I demanded, but he made no answer.

As he refused to permit me to hunt up even an American doctor, I bound up his shoulder myself. His wound was more than a graze; a bullet had cut through the flesh. The powder-marks on his face and costume told me the bullet had been fired at exceedingly close range.

His refusal to talk irked me more than a little, but he was adamant.

"You need some sleep, and if I tell you now, you won't get it," he said.

In defiance of French custom I descended next morning to the dining-room for a real breakfast. The Riviera newspaper screamed a wild story of an attack upon the exiled king of Mangaria. A party of half a dozen reds, it was stated, had been beaten off only by the courageous and instantaneous action of the monarch and several members of his suite. Unfortunately the reds had escaped. It sounded convincing. Yet the management of the hotel, at least, knew the identity of these "reds."

My waiter, observing my interest in the report, bent over me. He was a thin, wizened old man not in the least resembling the plump François who had given us such good advice and then dropped out of sight.

"More things have happen' to that King John," the old servitor said softly. "Early this morning we have been drawn from our beds here in this hotel and questioned. The Colonel Spardon have done that. He desire to know where his master has departed to—why he does not return from Nice."

I stiffened in my chair. "Didn't John return from Nice last night?"

The waiter shook his head. "He is not yet back. But then—there have been other nights when he does not return."

I made a poor breakfast of it and hastily left the hotel. At the *bureau de poste* I wired to Rufus Congleton my resignation as an A. P. L. man. I gave no details. Then I returned and hurried to O'Smith's room. He was sitting up in bed with a tray on his lap. Through the smoke of a malodorous cigarette, he was gazing at the account of John's adventure with the reds. He eyed me with bland innocence.

"Look here!" I said sharply. "What have you been doing to John?"

"I understand that he slipped away from the dinner dance he was gracing in Nice, presumably to indulge in a little frivolity *à la* Haroun al Raschid during the excitement of the carnival."

"And then what?"

O'SMITH'S voice sank. "Curiously enough, I had a good idea that he was actually going to meet the same quiet gentleman he had failed to confer with in the hotel at Marseilles where poor Aleck killed himself. A waiter told me. In the Place Massena I put one arm around his shoulder and shoved my insignificant little automatic against his ribs. Our voluminous costumes concealed the gun from the other revelers. I led him to a little old coupé that was waiting for us.

"We drove back toward the Alpes Maritimes. Unluckily, near the outskirts of Nice I had to reach for the emergency brake in a hurry as a car turned into the road ahead of us. He pulled his gun and put one shot through my shoulder before I could crack him on that glass jaw of his. Thereafter he rode more quietly."

I strode up and down the room. "You infernal fool!" I muttered. "You kidnaped a king! Don't you know you can't get away with that sort of thing?"

"Not yet," he said placidly.

"What did you do with him?"

"I parked him with friends of mine."

"Waiters?" I asked ironically.

He nodded.

I stamped on up and down the room in something like a panic. I saw French Guiana ahead of us; and, without getting dramatic about it, I may say I preferred death.

"What are we going to do now?" I muttered.

"Go back to Paris and tell Congleton I'm too busy to reconsider my resignation."

"Perhaps we can make some sort of deal with Colonel Spardon to overlook this," I suggested not too hopefully. "If a king can't brawl, perhaps he can't be kidnaped, either."

"King John of Mangaria hasn't been kidnaped," O'Smith asserted. "I've just borrowed him to nip in the bud the hell that his witless selfishness may stir up in Europe."

"I don't see it," I said. "You can't keep him hidden indefinitely. Do you plan to murder him?"

"I would murder him cheerfully to save a few million lives," the little fanatic stated coldly. His keen gray eyes bored into me. "I'm a great believer in the sanctity of human life, Chris. As a matter of fact it isn't necessary to murder him. You can go back to Congleton and assure him that my hand will remain—may remain—bloodless. That will cheer him up amazingly."

"You might at least be serious about this," I growled. "How long do you think we will continue to live if any of this Mangarian gang find out we've got their king? Their whole—"

"Racket," suggested O'Sullivan Smith.

"—livelihood depends upon John."

My dangerous friend hopped out of bed nimbly enough, despite his stiff shoulder. He cracked me on the back.

"Don't take it so hard, Chris," he said. "Yesterday you and I were low, poorly paid correspondents of a faint-hearted news agency. Today we are the leaders of the Mangarian revolutionary movement."

"And tomorrow?" I asked.

But he would not anticipate. Neither would he amplify his statement.

CHAPTER IV

The Captive King

I DRESSED his wound again, noting with gloom that it was not sufficiently serious to keep him inactive. We dawdled away the morning on the terrace in front

of the hotel. It was as bad a time for me as I have been through. I saw nothing of François. The enigmatic waiter seemed to have a talent for keeping out of sight when the Mangarians were about.

The Mangarian camp was humming with suppressed excitement and unsuppressed activity. Colonel Spardon had abandoned his customary retirement in his room and roamed restlessly about inside and outside the hotel. His big black eyes dwelt with keen speculation upon us for a time; then he apparently dropped us as suspects. He received numerous reports from Mangarian refugees of high and low degree. The number of times he was called to the telephone indicated that a vigorous search for the missing monarch was being prosecuted in Nice as well as here.

O'Sullivan Smith, consuming an occasional drink without interference, commented favorably upon the Colonel.

"A good man, Spardon," he said. "He's making these Mangarians hop, and that takes a bit of doing. They don't often show before noon, especially the nobler ones. We must watch Spardon."

Soon after luncheon O'Sullivan Smith led me down the Croisette into the middle of town. We stood on a street corner with two obvious Mangarian trailers watching us earnestly. They seemed much taken aback when we halted an ancient bus bound for Nice. Nothing we could have done would have been more convincing to them that we had nothing to do with John's abduction. The kidnapers of kings do not take cut-rate buses

on the Riviera. Neither of the shadowing Mangarian nobles condescended to follow us farther.

We jounced along the vile road as far as Juan-les-Pins; then took a taxi to Antibes and there entered a garage. O'Sullivan Smith paid the storage on a car he seemed to own, a two-year-old Citröen sedan, painted blue. It was a most inconspicuous machine, and he assured me that not in the least did it resemble the coupé in which John of Mangaria had ridden into obscurity.

WE drove up into the Alpes Maritimes along the side of the Var River, through the gorges and narrow passes of that most imposing mountain country. On the south the mountain sides were green and warm; on the northern slopes the snow lay thick and cold.

In the neighborhood of Beuil, O'Smith turned off the narrow little main road onto a mere track which skirted the edge of a precipitous shoulder. Ten minutes later, after gingerly traversing deep drifts and climbing upward along the edges of precipices, we reached a roughly constructed building like a chalet that perched precariously on a cliffside.

A man in the dark garb of a house servant greeted us most politely. He bore a strong family resemblance to the plump François and O'Smith addressed him as Miron. He did not seem to me to be French; there was a ruggedness about him that was far from French; there was also something in his manner that did not suggest the servant.

O'Sullivan Smith led me upstairs and along a short hall to the back of the house. He knocked at a door and after a jingling of keys within the door opened. Another brown-faced servant peered at us and then vanished at a word from O'Smith. We entered the room.

King John of Mangaria was sprawled in an easy-chair before a fire of olive logs. There was a decanter and siphon at his elbow. He got to his feet, scowling with intensity, yet with more than a suggestion of fear on his dark countenance.

"We have come to satisfy your curiosity," O'Sullivan Smith stated coolly.

"You dogs!" the captive blustered. He spoke in French, with perfect intonation. "You shall bitterly regret this!"

"Yes, yes," O'Sullivan Smith said with a strange mildness. "We know all about that, but it really isn't wise of you to irritate me, is it?"

"One fool has attempted to interfere with me recently!" John stormed, shaking a clenched fist in O'Smith's face. "He died—died, I tell you!"

O'Smith inclined his head with sudden gravity.

"I know that Alexis Arrock died," he said. "That is one reason why you are here."

The exiled monarch of Mangaria dropped into his chair again; the mask of kingly anger fell rather quickly from his face, leaving it the face of a most apprehensive man.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"For five years you have been stirring up unrest in Mangaria," O'Sullivan Smith stated, suddenly stern. His eyes burned. "Many a loyal peasant has lost his life and beggared his family in sporadic and premature outbreaks in your behalf. But those small, seemingly unsuccessful revolts have kept King William sufficiently frightened to induce him to pay you a liberal allowance. And they have also about convinced two countries, the names of which we both know, that you are well worth bribing, since one day you will be able to betray Mangaria, land and people, to one or the other."

John said not a word, but his sallow hand twitched as he fingered his mustache. His eyes were rigidly set upon the man who had kidnaped him at the point of a gun.

"The time has come for you to lead the revolt in person," O'Smith declared. "You will inform Colonel Spardon of that fact this afternoon."

KING JOHN stood up again. His expression eased. "I agree," he said. "I will do so."

"By telephone," O'Sullivan Smith said dryly.

John's face fell.

O'Smith pulled out of his pocket a sheet of paper and handed it to the royal exile. "This is what you are to say to Colonel Spardon and you will answer no questions. Be imperious about it; that will prevent him from suspecting anything."

The captive king read his instructions with eyes that became horror-stricken.

"Alone!" he cried. "Alone! You mean to say that you wish me to return to Mangaria alone?"

My resolute little companion nodded.

John crumpled up the paper and flung it to the floor. "It is a death-warrant!" he declared. "Do you know nothing of

King John picked up the paper. "If I refuse, you will murder me," he protested.
"You grasp the idea," stated O'Sullivan Smith. . . . The King lifted the receiver and called Colonel Spardon. Revolver in hand, Smith bent forward to listen—and toyed with the yellow vial.

William, my cousin? He would murder me! I will not go."

"Better men than you have died for you," O'Sullivan Smith stated with cool contempt. "It is time to put an end to your gay life on the Riviera. You are gay at what may be the cost of death and agony to millions."

He paused. "As you know, you do not have to go. But eventually you will feel the need to eat or drink in this house."

He took from his pocket as he spoke a small vial of a yellowish liquid and fingered it meaningly. He was not a prepossessing person at the moment. His ruthless determination was dreadfully apparent.

The ex-king stared at the little glass bottle with horrified eyes. "You—you would poison me!"

O'Sullivan Smith nodded slowly. "I am a humanitarian," he explained ironically. "Poison—unless you would prefer to have it go down in history that you shot yourself after an all-night debauch?"

Still presenting an inflexible face to his terrified captive, O'Smith slipped the bottle back into his pocket.

"I'm giving you what we call in my country a break," he explained. "William is weak and unpopular in Mangaria. Go back alone—not at the head of an army. You will regain your throne, probably with no bloodshed or with not a tenth of the bloodshed that you have instigated since you fled. Quit your treacherous negotiations with these two countries we both know of. You can maintain the independence of Mangaria. With Spardon as your minister you can rule a peaceful and happy country. Man, it's worth the risk; it's worth giving up a lap-dog's life on the Riviera."

O'Sullivan's voice had lifted; his eyes blazed with enthusiasm.

SULLENLY King John bent and took up the paper. "If I refuse, you will murder me," he said sullenly.

O'Sullivan Smith turned cold again. The enthusiasm dropped from him. "You grasp the idea," he stated. "Decide!"

At that moment I was quite convinced that the little man beside me was capable of cold-blooded assassination.

Equally convinced, apparently, was John of Mangaria. "Where is the telephone?" he demanded.

"That's fine!" his captor applauded. His manner became genial at once: a most singular but far from reassuring change. "I'd much rather restore you to your throne than murder you. Of course I did want to see how this stuff in my pocket works, but that can wait. Come down into the living-room."

He led the way to a comfortable room, lighted only by a skylight, where the telephone was located.

John followed sullenly.

HALF an hour later the ex-king, duly coached in his end of the conversation, lifted the receiver and called Colonel Spardon at the Azur Hotel in Cannes. Once the hotel was reached, there was little delay in getting the anxious statesman.

Across the table from the exiled monarch O'Sullivan Smith, with an extra receiver clamped to his ears, listened to both ends of the wire and toyed with his yellow vial.

"Colonel Spardon," John said after he had identified himself, "you will attend to what I say:

"I have been conferring secretly with a certain distinguished subject newly come from Mangaria. He says that I can win back my throne by showing my confidence in my people—by returning alone."

Here Colonel Spardon must have interposed a torrent of questions and objections. O'Sullivan Smith's face told me that. But John, staring at the tawny little bottle with wide eyes, broke in as he had been instructed to do.

"You will listen to me, Colonel Spardon," he said sternly. "These are your orders. The yacht *Trinité-Victor* has been placed at your service. She is moored at the Albert-Edouard jetty in Cannes. Embark today with such subjects of mine as you may select, and steam toward Mangaria. On the way, by a proclamation issued through the yacht's radio, you will make public my decision to return alone. When you anchor off the grounds of my winter palace in my capital city of Avana I will not be far away. On that day I will appear at the palace to see if my people want me."

Again John was silent, and I read in O'Sullivan Smith's mobile face something of the objections, warnings and pleas of the faithful Mangarian statesman on the other end of the wire. As Spardon spoke the face of John reflected more plainly his great fear. But the nearness of his grim little captor stiffened him.

"There are many objections to this plan, Colonel Spardon," the exile read obediently from the crumpled sheet of paper. "But my mind is made up. I cannot see you; I admit that you might shake my purpose—convince me of the need for delay—for an army. I shall be in Avana at the appointed time. I command you to be there too. If you do not obey you may have wrecked your career. Or you may have saved your life."

O'Sullivan Smith jerked his head in emphatic affirmation. Reaching across the table he cut off the telephone.

"That last sentence will get the Colonel," he assured me.

John sat there, still fingering the disconnected telephone. "He—he said it would be suicide," he muttered tremulously.

"I hope not," O'Sullivan Smith replied with detached politeness. "I think, given a bit more courage and a little less liking for dissipation, you'd make a good king, as kings go."

He put pen and paper before John.

"Within fifteen minutes Colonel Spardon will have this telephone call traced," he said. "Within two hours he or his agents will be here. Therefore we will be moving on—but I think you had better leave him a note. Write!"

Slowly he began to dictate. Sullenly, like a sulky schoolboy, the ex-monarch took down his words:

"Colonel Spardon: My purpose is inexorable. I demand your unquestioning—"

CHAPTER V

The Enigmatic Intruder

O'SMITH stopped abruptly as the man called Miron entered the room. He carried a tray with some glasses on it but O'Smith's inquiring glance told me that these had not been ordered. Miron set the tray on the table. His head was close to O'Smith's shoulder and he spoke rapidly.

"François, who watches outside, tells me there is a man on the roof. He is peering through the skylight now. I fear he has seen our visitor."

John caught none of the words, but he chanced to look upward; then he sprang to his feet.

"Help! Help!" he roared, lifting his arms in quick entreaty. I caught a glimpse of a round head outlined against the blue sky in the frame of the big skylight. The man disappeared after a single glance at the royal exile. But O'Sullivan Smith was racing toward the door while the spy's bulging eyes were still taking in our captive.

I RUSHED after O'Smith, dreadfully aware of what would happen to us if this eavesdropper got away. Despite my fright I far underestimated the momentous consequences in history that were to come out of that intruder's dramatic entrance into the situation.

O'Smith went pelting up a narrow stairway. I clambered after him. In an instant we were up on a look-out platform on the roof. Doubtless the mountain-view was superb, but I did not see it. The eavesdropper had left the skylight and was crawling backward as fast as he dared down the slope of the roof toward the mountainside against which this chalet was built. A pine sapling which had grown near the rear of the house had been uprooted to bridge the gap between mountain shoulder and roof.

The roof was slippery with half-melted ice and the inclination was abrupt. I had no time to admire the spy's courage and agility. He was startlingly close to that slender bridge of escape.

O'Sullivan Smith leaped the rail of the balcony and landed with a clatter on the icy tiles. Half sliding, half running, he shot down the roof and literally dived at the crawling man. Locked together, they slid to the edge and hit the sapling. For an instant they hung there, held by the bending, slender branches. Then they fell into the gap between house and mountainside.

I clambered over the rail and on hands and knees descended the slope. Within ten feet of the roof's edge I planted my knee on a piece of ice that cracked loose from the tiles and set me sliding. Clawing fruitlessly, I slid dizzily down the incline. My legs forked the sapling and I clutched desperately at it. Then tree and self went hurtling into the gap.

I landed with a brain-jarring thud.

"That's the stuff!" O'Smith's high voice yelled in my ear.

I was on a pile of snow and ice. My pine tree, falling with me, had pinned down the spy. O'Smith, with a bleeding cheek, was clambering to his feet. I saw then that the unknown intruder had a heavy wrench gripped in his right hand. My fall had saved my friend's skull from another jolt or two.

Between us we disarmed the gasping and battered spy and pulled him out

from under the tree. He was a small man, not much taller than O'Smith but far more stockily built. He was clad in the yellow leather of a chauffeur, but his uniform was suspiciously new. The wrench, too, had the appearance of a tool just out of a shop. Though he scowled at us with formidable menace, he said not a word.

After searching unavailingly for other weapons we rushed him into the house.

"Up to the living-room," O'Smith murmured softly to me. "I want to see if King John knows this fellow."

The ex-monarch of Mangaria was sitting sullenly at the table. Miron was hovering near him, but not as a servant hovers. I noticed that the ex-king's lips were a trifle puffy and abrased and that Miron's knuckles were red.

John glowered at our leather-clad prisoner, but said not a word. The spy, if he were a spy, returned the Mangarian's glance without the least subserviency. If the pseudo-chauffeur knew he was confronting royalty it did not worry him.

O'SMITH looked inquiringly at Miron but he shook his head.

"Are you alone?" O'Smith demanded of our latest captive. He spoke in French and the man answered promptly in that tongue.

"You will discover, m'sieur, that I am not alone."

His French was perfect but his dark complexion and other characteristics might easily have been those of an Italian, Spaniard or Greek. He would say nothing more.

"He is bluffing about not being alone or he wouldn't have said a word," O'Smith asserted when we drew aside. "François has been watching vigilantly outside."

"Who do you think he is?" I asked.

O'Sullivan Smith shrugged his shoulders. "A plain, unsophisticated American can't answer that," he said. "He might be a regular member of the intelligence service of any one of a dozen countries or he might be some lone prospector in international messes ready to sell out to the highest bidder. We'll search him. I'm sure he won't turn out to be a regular French police detective."

While Miron watched over John, we stripped the leather uniform and everything else off our taciturn intruder. There was not a trace of a clue to his connections. He had not even on him a *carte d'identité* such as aliens must carry in France. Our search was rapid but it was thorough.

We tied him up in a chair in the comfortable little den where John had been imprisoned. There was now a twofold reason for haste. Down in Cannes Colonel Spardon would doubtless have organized pursuit. And there was more than an off chance that as a result of our reception of the unknown roof-climber a file of soldiers would surround the house. O'Smith, I felt sure, was inclined to believe that the spy had French connection. Miron assured us most emphatically that there was nothing of the Mangarian about him.

Within eighteen minutes of our triple fall from the roof we were on our way from the chalet. François was returning alone. O'Smith was as flippant as ever as he drove into the deepening twilight. He displayed a fine disregard for S curves and switch-backs on the edges of giddy descents.

But behind the flippancy was bleak anxiety. Truly we were in no secure position, driving about such a well-policed and super-soldiered country as France with an ex-monarch, in whom the republic was so plainly interested, trussed and doubled up under a rug in the back of our car. Miron rode on the rear seat with the motor crank-handle beside him to quiet our royal encumbrance.

The eavesdropper had been left before the fire of olive logs with bonds sufficiently tight to make sure he could not release himself within an hour.

Heartily I wished myself out of the mess, and the small fanatic at the wheel in Tophet. But I maintained a casual air when O'Smith praised me for my prompt action in downing the spy. O'Smith is cocky enough at all times and it does not do to let him think that he is the only man capable of decisive action. The fact that my intervention was accidental was something I intended to keep to myself.

IT was night when we reached the coast. O'Sullivan Smith turned east on the *Route Nationale* and drove through Nice, pausing in the Place Massena to point out to me the exact position where he had started all this by thrusting his pistol into the ribs of the monarch of Mangaria.

"I wish John had slammed you in the eye and called a *gendarme*," I growled. "Now, we're in deep—we don't know how deep."

"There are a dozen ways whereby our anonymous porch-climber could have traced John to that chalet, but I'd certainly like to know how he did it," O'Smith muttered in my ear. "I think you'd better drop off here and go back to Paris, Chris. Congleton needs you more than I do."

"I am no longer connected with the A. P. L.," I told him curtly and he blinked at the news and patted my shoulder. "I look to you for my cakes and *vin rouge*."

"You'll earn them, then," he assured me with grim earnestness. "As soon as I show you our next hide-out I have a job for you."

CHAPTER VI

"You Shall Die!"

THE hide-out was not in Nice. We threaded a winding way through the crowded, carnival-mad streets of the capital of the Riviera and continued on around the curving edge of the great roadstead of Villefranche. The next town beyond was Beaulieu, sacred to highly respectable middle-class sun-seekers from England.

Our destination was a villa high on the road that winds up through "petite Afrique" toward the Moyenne Corniche. Nothing could have been more open and aboveboard than that little house. But the garage connected directly with the villa and we had no trouble at all about smuggling our captive in unseen.

Inside that unassuming place of refuge we released John from some of his bonds. He stood up and cursed us in a passion-shaken voice.

"Remember, you shall die for this—all of you!" he assured us with frenzied intensity. "I swear it on the soul of my mother! You shall die! Do you hear? You dare not kill me, but there is no escape for *you* from death!"

"If we had been any more afraid of death than Alexis Arrock we would not have taken on this job," O'Smith answered him quietly.

John flung himself back into a chair and stared at us with burning, savage eyes.

I did not feel any too comfortable.

What disposition O'Smith made of the royal exile after that I had no time to discover. Leaving Miron to guard the king, he gave me instructions in brief and I left at once.

It was with considerable trepidation that I walked a little later that evening into the Hotel Azur at Cannes.

I knew that by that time the spy we had left tied up in the chalet near Beuil must have released himself, even if Spardon's searchers had not found him sooner. My return to the Azur might therefore be exceedingly dangerous—although not as dangerous as remaining in the same house with the abducted king.

O'Sullivan Smith had told me that the chalet we had used was actually owned by a wealthy Mangarian noble, a lover of winter sports. This gentleman might conceivably have entered into some arrangement with John that would result in John's voluntary return to Mangaria. At least there was enough plausibility about it to keep Spardon guessing, provided that the spy did not talk to him. O'Smith assured me the Mangarian owner of the house was not available for Spardon's questioning.

Where O'Smith and I entered into the international situation, should the spy describe us to Spardon, was something for the Mangarian diplomat to work out for himself. I didn't envy him the job. O'Sullivan Smith's motive was so wildly altruistic, so utterly incredible to the European mind, that Spardon doubtless would disbelieve it even if O'Smith in person delivered to him an address on dangers to the peace of Europe.

Terrified people who have lived on a rumbling volcano all their lives would never attempt to subdue it. Only an American—an American of the O'Smith type—would tackle a job like that.

MY return to the hotel was most ordinary. Nobody paid any attention to me, as far as I could see.

Nevertheless, I had not been in my room fifteen minutes before some one knocked thunderously at the door.

It was Colonel Spardon himself. I asked him in, apologized for my pajamas and listened to his counter-apology for this late visit. It was all very polite but I could see that the Mangarian statesman was exceedingly worried. His broad brow was only slightly furrowed but his dark eyes plainly revealed anxious cogitation in their luminous depths.

Colonel Spardon opened proceedings by inquiring for Mr. Smith.

"My friend has taken your advice about leaving the Riviera," I said mendaciously. "As a matter of fact we were both considerably upset this afternoon

by discovering that two gentlemen whom we took to be citizens of Mangaria were following us."

Colonel Spardon, restlessly roaming about the room, nodded curtly at my frankness.

"Their mission was observation, not violence," he assured me.

We fenced for a while and he tried hard to pump me. But a newspaper man knows how to withhold information as well as to broadcast it.

AFTER he had gone, I had another visitor: François. He too had come back to the Hotel Azur.

The plump waiter reported confidentially that a car had been seen to shoot down the hotel driveway within eight minutes of the time that Spardon had received John's telephone call from the chalet at Beuil.

That was quick work, I reflected, and again I wondered whether Spardon's men had reached the place before our mysterious spy had freed himself. But François could not tell me that, though he agreed that it was most important to know. . . .

Doubtless it is indecent for a man with a possible commitment to Devil's Island hanging over his head to sleep well, but that night I did.

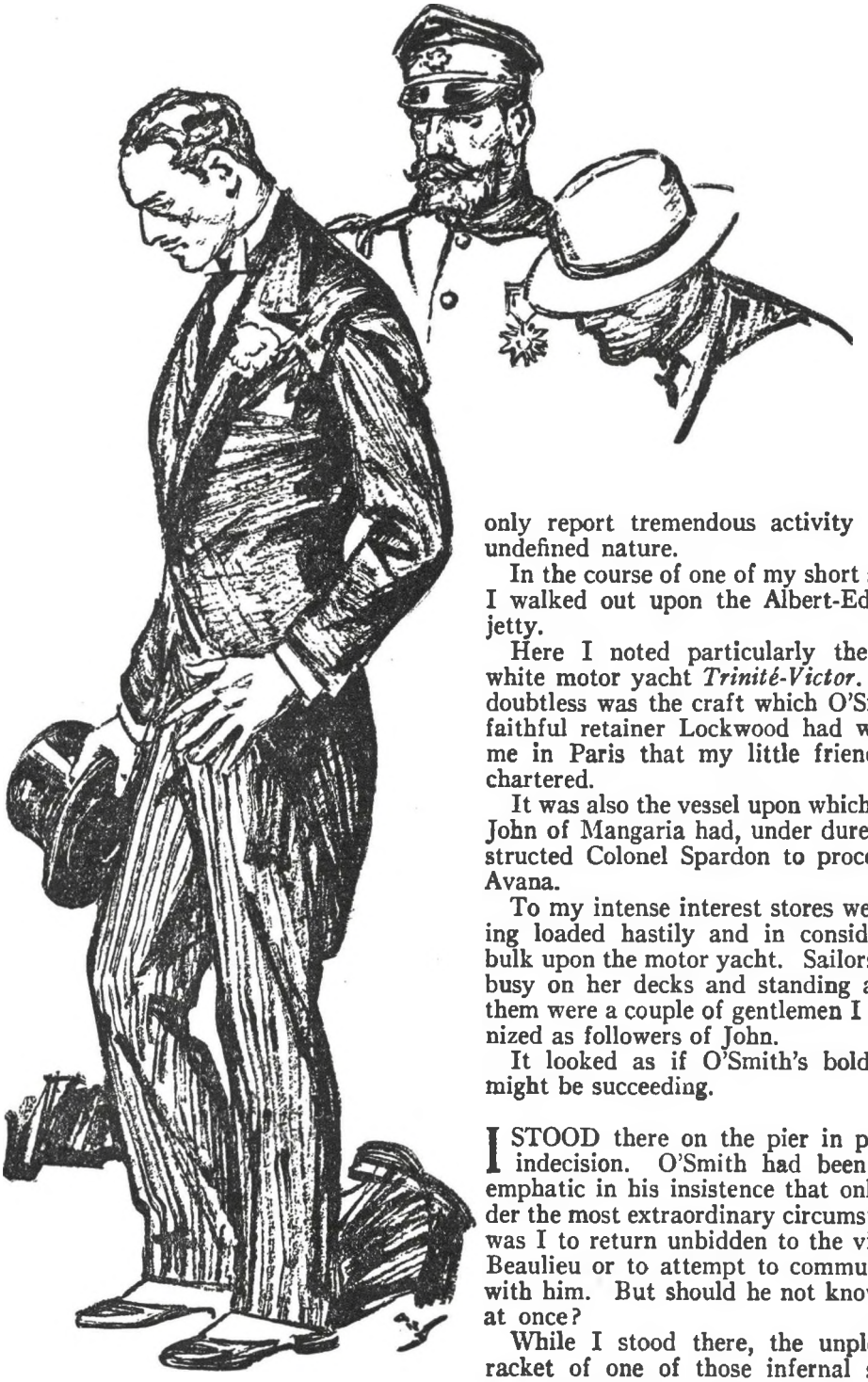
There was a telegram from Rufus Congleton waiting for me when I woke in the morning:

FRIENDS INQUIRING ABOUT YOU AND SULLY.

Apparently Colonel Spardon had loyal servants in Paris as well as on the Riviera.

There was nothing in any newspaper I could lay my hands on that day about the disappearance of King John of Mangaria.

The disheveled newcomer was flung at the feet of John. "William!" muttered the Mangarian officers about me—and I realized that I was looking upon a newly deposed monarch.



I spent my time wandering in and out of the hotel and up and down the Croisette. It did not seem to me good policy to maintain too close a watch upon Colonel Spardon. Besides François did that for me and did it well and most unobtrusively. Even he, however, could only report tremendous activity of an undefined nature.

In the course of one of my short strolls I walked out upon the Albert-Edouard jetty.

Here I noted particularly the trim white motor yacht *Trinité-Victor*. This doubtless was the craft which O'Smith's faithful retainer Lockwood had warned me in Paris that my little friend had chartered.

It was also the vessel upon which King John of Mangaria had, under duress, instructed Colonel Spardon to proceed to Avana.

To my intense interest stores were being loaded hastily and in considerable bulk upon the motor yacht. Sailors were busy on her decks and standing among them were a couple of gentlemen I recognized as followers of John.

It looked as if O'Smith's bold plan might be succeeding.

I STOOD there on the pier in painful indecision. O'Smith had been most emphatic in his insistence that only under the most extraordinary circumstances was I to return unbidden to the villa at Beaulieu or to attempt to communicate with him. But should he not know this at once?

While I stood there, the unpleasing racket of one of those infernal speedboats which are always for hire along the *Côte d'Azur* battered at my ears. I scowled at it automatically and then clutched my stick hard in a frenzied effort to keep my face placid. Unless I was seeing things, the small man in the speeding craft with his helmeted head drawn down into his big overcoat like a

turtle's head in his shell was O'Sullivan Smith.

O'Smith had no need to be told of the activity on the *Trinité-Victor*. I turned my head rigidly away from the roaring boat as it circled within the port, but nevertheless managed to keep an eye on it. It was with great relief that I saw it shoot between the two jetties and speed, unpursued, down the quiet blue sea in the direction of Nice.

CHAPTER VII

Warning

DOUBTLESS I should have taken more care about what I ate or drank that evening. All I know is that I dined quietly but well at the hotel, had a drink or two to brace me for my vigil of observation of Mangarian developments and then, about midnight, went to bed.

I awoke in the morning without a headache and without any other feeling of discomfort. The only thing troubling me was that I was no longer in the Hotel Azur. I was on board a moving vessel. The stateroom in which I found myself was small but most luxuriously appointed. It is impossible to describe the utter bewilderment I felt. There was a bell beside my bed and after a glance through the porthole that showed me distant land, I rang it vigorously. It was answered at once, but the man who responded had to unlock the door before he opened it.

"Colonel Spardon's compliments, sir, and he will be pleased to explain to you when you desire," the steward said, as one repeating a sentence by rote.

I dressed in a hurry. I did not need to ask whether I was aboard the *Trinité-Victor*. Within an hour of my awakening, Colonel Spardon received me alone in the spacious owner's cabin of the yacht. He sat behind a table laden with maps and papers upon which he was hard at work.

His manner was polite but a trifle ironic.

"We go to make history," he said with a sardonic gleam in his eye. "What sort of history, Mr. Stokes, I am unable to say. But I thought it advisable to bring along with me a correspondent, an historian of the present, to record that we did what we could for our country."

I am afraid that my silence was principally due to confusion. Figuratively as well as literally, I was at sea. You cannot threaten a patriot, apparently about to sacrifice his life for his country, with arrest for kidnaping. Besides it was our side who had started that game and it looked as if Colonel Spardon shrewdly suspected the truth. Perhaps he had been able to learn in whose name the *Trinité-Victor* had been chartered.

Although I refused with dignity to give my parole, Colonel Spardon assured me that I would have the liberty of the ship. Indeed he also offered me the use of a typewriter and promised to give me any information he decided to make public. It was all inconceivably weird. But behind it all I sensed the grim, inflexible resolve of Colonel Spardon to make the best play possible for his king and the future of his nation.

I left the Mangarian statesman busy upon his plans and went out on deck for a reconnaissance. I was far from alone on the *Trinité-Victor*. The vessel was crowded with Mangarian refugees. They were all, as far as I could make out, nobles or gentlemen who had followed King John into exile. Many were busy overhauling various arms and accouterments. Seeing them away from the tawdry setting of the Riviera, they were a far more competent-looking lot than I had thought. But perhaps Colonel Spardon had taken with him only the cream of his banished compatriots.

Apparently many of my fellow-voyagers spoke and thought in French more naturally than in their own difficult tongue. I had no difficulty, while sauntering here and there, in overhearing the discussions that were going on. These men expected a bloody and probably disastrous struggle when they reached Mangaria.

The campaign had not been planned. Colonel Spardon, in blindly following John's orders, was throwing their lives away. Not one could I find who did not seem to consider himself a unit of a forlorn hope. They also appeared to be completely in the dark as to what had happened to King John and what Colonel Spardon intended to do.

MY position among them was peculiar. I felt like a disembodied spirit. Although polite enough, they treated me as if I did not exist. If I spoke I was answered, but evasively. I discerned in their attitude puzzled uncertainty as to the meaning of my presence on the yacht. Plainly, Colonel Spardon was keeping his own counsel.

Meanwhile the yacht pursued her steady course down the Italian coast. The sun was shining brilliantly and had we been headed anywhere but toward the explosive country of Mangaria I might have enjoyed myself. As it was, I could only compare the yacht's progress toward her destination to that of a sputtering fuse blazing its way toward a bombshell.

ALL that day and the next Colonel Spardon kept our spark radio set crackling out messages. On the morning of the second day he sent me a copy of a proclamation he had issued to the world in general and to the loyal people of Mangaria in particular. It was the usual thing in revolutionary propaganda, calling upon the citizens to rise under the leadership of their wronged and exiled sovereign and restore to themselves banished rights and privileges. I thought I detected more sincerity than is usually manifested in such documents.

Despite the fact that I had resigned from the A. P. L., I dispatched by radio with Colonel Spardon's consent a brief story, suitably vague, concerning the counter-revolutionary movement in Mangaria. It was a good way of letting Congleton know where I was.

That same morning I discovered something that made my thoughts more chaotic than ever. As I was going below to prepare for my solitary luncheon I came abruptly upon the spy who had discovered King John in our hands in the chalet near Beuil. He was being marched out of Colonel Spardon's cabin between two Mangarian officers.

Although he was not manacled, he was obviously a prisoner. As he passed me the little man, still in the leather uniform of a chauffeur, favored me with a most formidable scowl. I went to my stateroom to sit on the bed and try to work out just what this meant.

Obviously Colonel Spardon's men had reached the chalet before the spy had released himself. Failing to find John, they must of course have brought the little man back to their chief. And Spardon had carried him off on this expedition under closer guard than myself. Remembering the sullen, obstinate face of the spy as he was marched out of Spardon's cabin, I decided that the Colonel had been attempting to get information from the man and had had no more luck than O'Smith and I had had.

"This means that the fellow is an espionage agent, probably of France or Italy," I reasoned. "Miron assured me he wasn't a Mangarian. But how much of O'Smith's moves does Spardon know?"

I had a rapid but disquieting response from my news bulletin to the A. P. L. The steward brought me a radio from Congleton eight hours later.

DON'T GO TO MANGARIA STOP WE DON'T WANT YOU ON THE SPOT STOP

The radio had undoubtedly been passed on to me after Colonel Spardon had examined it, but I suspected that the Mangarian statesman did not know enough of American gunmen's slang to interpret correctly that "on the spot." This was a plain warning, undoubtedly from O'Smith, relayed through Congleton, that killing awaited me at Avana. And O'Smith was not the sort to send a needless or useless notice of danger. It hadn't been smart of me to join this yachting party, even in my sleep!

It was only on the evening of the day before we were due at Avana that Colonel Spardon received a shock. I was hastily summoned to come to his cabin. As I followed the officer to Spardon's door, we were compelled to step aside as three men came out together. They were the spy and his two guardians. Never before had I seen such an expression of malicious glee as appeared on the spy's face. He was positively gloating over something, as he was led away.

CHAPTER VIII

The Two Fortresses

ENTERING, I found Colonel Spardon slumped behind his littered desk. His usually brisk and ruddy face was gray. There were numerous new lines in it. He motioned me to a seat and the Mangarian who had brought me there vanished at once. We were alone.

Colonel Spardon leaned forward, resting his great head on the palm of his hand as he studied me. In his other hand he clutched a crumpled radio form.

"I must appeal to you, Mr. Stokes, to tell me as much of O'Sullivan Smith's plans as you feel you may," he said somewhat wearily. "I know that His Majesty is in the hands of your friend."

I needed time to answer that and my answer was a question:

"May I ask where you received this startling information?"

He acknowledged my caution with a twisted smile and gestured toward the door.

"The gentleman you passed on the way out has at last spoken. He has proved himself an Italian intelligence officer. He remained silent until now for purposes of his own, but he has told me of how he discovered John of Mangaria in the hands of O'Sullivan Smith and yourself at a house near Beuil. I have had loyal subjects of my sovereign busy on the Riviera since my own departure and what this intelligence man has said merely confirms their report."

"Then, of course, you need no confirmation from me," I fenced.

He stood up abruptly and tramped across the narrow room. Then he whirled to confront me.

"What does this man Smith want?" he demanded harshly. "Whom does he represent? What is his object?"

"O'Sullivan Smith wants nothing," I told him. "He represents himself. His object is to secure the peace of Europe."

Colonel Spardon shot a keen glance at me from under his dark and bushy eyebrows. There was almost physical force in the thrust of his eyes.

"The peace of Europe," he muttered, still striding about. "It is incredible—but he is an American."

He walked back to his desk and planted both hands upon it. Leaning forward he uttered a question in a low unsteady voice:

"Has it come to O'Sullivan Smith's attention, then, that His Majesty has been approached by certain emissaries of a foreign power which desires to exert influence over Mangaria?"

I took a long breath before I decided to answer that.

"It has," I said. "Two foreign powers, in fact."

He sat down abruptly in his chair. His expression was stern, even anguished. Purpose seemed to flow out of him.

"The peace of Europe," he repeated. "Two powers!"

HE sat among his scattered plans, staring through a port at the blue sea outside. Plainly my words had added the last confirmation to truths that he had hoped desperately would not be proven. The sovereign whom he had loved and fought for was an ignominious traitor!

Watching Spardon, I could hear the subdued thump of the screw as it urged us on toward the country that, whether under William or John, seemed doomed to become the tool of greater nations and probably enough the cause of a world conflagration.

As he seemed to have forgotten me entirely, I rose and left him at last. All that night I listened to that turning propeller pushing us on. The *Trinité-Victor* did not turn back.

I was on deck at dawn. The sun came up over a gray and mountainous land on the starboard bow. This was Mangaria. There was no need to ask questions about that. The followers of Colonel Spardon were all at the rail gazing that way and the very look of them was enough like hearing a sounding trumpet. From idlers on the Riviera they had become stern and eager followers of a losing cause. They had been summoned away too hastily to acquire new uniforms; some of them wore old ones and some merely a jacket or helmet. But all were armed with either pistols or revolvers. Spardon had picked well.

WE drew closer to the coast. First I made out a sort of hollow in the coast line, then saw ahead a narrow opening between two high and rock-ribbed headlands.

The *Trinité-Victor* with the royal standard of John flying from the peak of her gaff and the flag of Mangaria at her foretop moved steadily toward the harbor of Avana.

Colonel Spardon, in a slightly worn uniform of his rank, was on the bridge. As we drew in and details of the land became more distinct I saw a puff of smoke rise from the green side of the headland on the right. Instantly a shell screamed over the ship. Another followed. This skipped the seas fifty yards astern of us.

I caught sight of the agitated face of the bearded Frenchman who commanded the *Trinité-Victor*. He was jerking frantically at the sleeve of Colonel Spardon but the Mangarian's face was inflexible and he paid no heed. I noted then that there were several Mangarian officers on the bridge, including one at the engine-room telegraph and another beside the helmsman.

A third shell burst with a crash high above our funnel and I heard a thud and rattle of fragments on deck. One Mangarian officer in a faded gray tunic suddenly staggered, then proudly raised a bleeding arm high and shouted something in jubilant accents to his fellows.

At that moment the fort on the other side of the narrows opened fire. But it was not at us. The shell screamed

through the air hundreds of feet above us and burst on the other headland. The cheering on board swelled to a mad climax. Apparently we had friends on one side of the narrows at least.

As if the shell had been a signal scores of men, tiny in the distance, suddenly swarmed into view from the gun emplacements of the fortress on the right. No more shots were fired at us. We could make out that they were waving frantically at us and one fellow was brandishing a flag.

THE *Trinité-Victor* thrust steadily on between the two old fortresses.

The city of Avana, clinging precariously to a hillside, was opening before us. At that distance it was a picturesque grouping of low white houses with red tiled roofs. We did not approach the city itself, but swung hard to port around a precipitous island and headed toward a long low marble building that occupied an abrupt rise of ground on the outskirts of Avana. This, I decided, must be the winter palace of the king.

As we drew closer I made out that a long low sea wall in front of the palace was black with people. We came to anchor close to shore. There were no demonstrations save a few scattered yells and cheers from the people ashore. Had there been a revolution? Why were we not opposed? Was this a trap? These people seemed to be waiting in a sort of ominous or bewildered expectation.

There was no hesitation in Colonel Spardon's movements. He ordered the largest motorboat carried by the yacht to be lowered and was the first man to step into her. In accordance with his orders only about five officers followed him. I slipped in without orders but also without objection. The radio warning of death could not keep a newspaper man away from a story like that!

That was a strange trip—that brief journey from the yacht to a shore covered by a huge and silent crowd. I was completely in ignorance of what had happened in Mangaria since I had been spirited aboard the yacht. But I was keenly aware that something was going to happen almost immediately.

Colonel Spardon had regained his expression of calm determination and unswerving purpose. Although I acutely anticipated a volley from the shore, I found some relief in looking at him.

We came alongside an ornate landing-stage which had been kept clear of people. The people watching us were of several distinct types. I saw men in picturesque costumes vaguely familiar to me and I recognized them as mountaineers of Mangaria, come down from the uplands above the city. Others were the dark-clothed, ordinary-looking citizens of Avana, the type that is now found in every part of the world. And the third type were soldiers, most of them, strangely enough, not there in organized ranks but as individuals scattered among the crowd.

As Colonel Spardon stepped upon the landing-stage, there was a murmur and then a sudden incoherent roar and movement from the crowd. His arrival had suddenly precipitated action that had been hanging fire. I heard numerous scattered shots; heard the thud of blows and saw the glint of knives. The crowds on the wall above swirled like diverse currents. It was a short fight in which a small force was almost instantly overwhelmed. In another instant I realized that we had witnessed the final act in a revolution against King William. The roar of the throngs suddenly became a roar of cheers rather than the utterance of a battle-cry.

And then in my ears another roar supplanted that of the crowd.

CHAPTER IX

For His Country

A SEAPLANE was racing toward us, flying low between the headlands. In scant seconds it covered the stretch and dropping lower, suddenly took to water close to the sea wall. It taxied rapidly toward the landing-stage.

In another instant three men were stepping out of it. First came John of Mangaria, in a frock coat and striped trousers. Close behind him—suspiciously close, I thought, followed O'Sullivan Smith. His mobile face was tense in an expression of dignified solemnity, but his gray eyes were roving in a swift visual summing up of the situation. His right hand was in his coat pocket, despite the formality of the occasion.

After them followed a man, resplendent in some ancient costume of rank or nobility. I had difficulty in recognizing this third man as François, the ex-waiter of the Hotel Azur. He appeared to be acting as equerry to the restored monarch.

That was a sight that only a cynic

could fully appreciate. A king who would sell his country marched back to his throne at the point of a pistol, while his people cheered him! A king who could be trusted only in his native land, when surrounded by patriotic counselors! A king to whom the welfare of all Europe meant nothing when it conflicted with his desire to idle away his life in a glorified amusement park!

The crowd burst out into thunders of acclamation and joy. John responded with raised hat, but I could see that the demonstration moved him not at all. He was as wary as a cat and his attention was centered upon the slim little man who stood so close to him. I was reminded irresistibly of a sullen tiger obeying the orders of a small but resolute trainer.

THEN there was a flurry in the crowd and a man was suddenly hustled by several soldiers amid jeers and insults onto the landing-stage. He was clad in a gorgeous uniform but it had been ripped and sullied. The disheveled newcomer was literally flung at the feet of John.

I caught an exclamation that rose from the throats of several of the Mangarian officers beside me.

"William! William!" they muttered. And I realized then that I was looking upon a newly deposed monarch.

For several minutes the crowd took command of the situation. They roared in renewed and exultant applause at the sight of one king prostrate at the feet of another. A group of soldiers fought hard with clubbed rifles at the top of the gangway to prevent the people from surging down and overwhelming us on the landing-stage.

O'Sullivan Smith edged over toward me. Behind the grin I could see his face was pallid and drained of blood and he moved a bit uncertainly on his feet.

"What's wrong with you?" I demanded, gripping his cold thin hand.

His grin broadened momentarily.

"That damned ungrateful monarch we've restored to his throne got me in the chest with a knife while we were lying up at one of the Greek islands to await the appointed moment," he said. "John would rather be a waiter on the Riviera than king in Mangaria. His blue blood is pure yellow."

The crowd was still shouting lustily, John was still bowing with dignity and William still cowered in shaking terror at his feet. A few feet away Colonel Spardon stood, stiffly upright with his hand on the hilt of his sword. He was easily the most commanding figure on the landing-stage despite the presence of the two royalties. And if he had saluted John I had missed the gesture. The din of the crowd continued.

O'Sullivan Smith touched François on the arm and drew him toward us.

"Permit me to introduce a Mangarian patriot who would rather be a waiter on the Riviera than a minister under a weak and unscrupulous king," O'Smith said. "This is Francis, Duke of Avana."

"I am delighted to see you restored once more to your own country and rank," I said to the smiling François as we shook hands.

"Restored, hell!" O'Smith put in. His grin had vanished; his white face became suddenly purposeful and strained. He spoke softly, although that continuing uproar from the crowd made it safe enough to speak.

"Francis is in the same boat with us. John's first unofficial act will be to have us three quietly strangled. He has sworn it, and he's a king. Blast you, Chris, didn't you get my radio? Why didn't you stay on the yacht?"

I stared at King John. His dark, handsome face was turned toward us for a moment and though it was blank enough I read the lust for murder in his glowing eyes. And I remembered with a chill O'Smith's murdered friend, Alexis Arrock. Though circumstances had made John a king, at heart he was a killer.

"We're safe while John's on parade; after that—" O'Smith paused; his eyes switched to the plane in which they had arrived. "We've got to breeze somehow in the seaplane within ten minutes. But look, Spardon's taking charge."

As the cheers gave indication of subsiding, Colonel Spardon strode forward toward King John and raised his hand for silence. His gesture was so imperative that the roar died to a murmur; then utter silence descended on the crowd.

COLONEL SPARDON stood a moment, his eyes running along the massed faces on the sea wall and the rising ground behind it. He looked up at the mountains for an instant and his face was gray and strained. Then at last he spoke and Duke Francis beside us softly translated his slow-spoken words into English.

"Under whatever king, Mangaria must be free," Colonel Spardon said. His deep,

powerful voice mounted to the ears of the throng like the notes of an organ. "Whoever would sell his country to the greater, covetous powers that surround her is no king but a traitor. He is far less worthy to reign than a weak fool.

"I came to restore John to his throne. I remain to restore William. For a traitor there can be only—death!"

Like a flash of lightning, Colonel Spardon's sword leaped from its scabbard. Its point thrust deep into the throat of John of Mangaria. The king swayed; then dropped forward upon the prostrate form of his royal cousin.

AFTER that ruthless execution the big Colonel threw his sword to the boards before him. He stood motionless, bare-handed, confronting the paralyzed mob with a calm face. He awaited his own death.

I was vaguely aware in the midst of the great hush that followed that O'Sullivan Smith recovered first. He whispered urgently to the man I knew as François.

Suddenly François leaped forward to Spardon's side. He brandished a big, glinting automatic pistol. In his barbaric, brilliant costume of ancient ceremony he was an arresting figure. Though I did not know until later what he said he dominated the throng completely.

"I, Duke of Avana, will serve no craven!" he shouted with a contemptuous gesture at the cowering disheveled figure of William. "But I will serve a man! Here stands Spardon—waiting to die—for killing a traitor! Brothers, is there not royal blood in Spardon's veins? Will he not keep you clear of foreign plotters? There can be no middle course with Spardon! Kill him—or crown him!"

There was a murmur from the crowd; then a roar like the breaking of a tidal wave upon an iron coast. Suddenly I saw swift, thrusting movements in the throng. The mountaineers, fierce-looking, powerful men, were surging forward in a body. They gained the sea-wall beside the landing-float. Knives and clubs flashed in their hands and their cry was "Spardon!"

Again and again they shouted that word, as if it were a talisman against evil, and swiftly the crowd took it up.

"Spardon!"

The huge-bodied minister who had gone into exile with his king and returned only to kill him, stood there like a graven image. I saw quick tears trickle down his stern, lined cheeks. His head sank on his chest.

The Mangarian officers who had come ashore with him pushed forward to surround him, shouting, and pushed us with them. O'Smith moved with them willingly enough, and did not stop until his short, lean little figure was in the very shadow of the Colonel's bulk.

"It's you or chaos in Mangaria!" O'Smith said to him rapidly in French. "Damn it, man, this is no time for modesty! What will happen if Mangaria goes down in leaderless anarchy? What country will annex her?"

Colonel Spardon swung around to look down at the small American beside him.

"You think—" he said in a shaking voice.

"I know!" flared O'Smith. "Grab now—or Mangaria is down! Be king, dictator or president—but take command!"

"I will!" said Spardon. The world knows how overwhelming was the plebiscite that confirmed his decision. . . .

O'Sullivan Smith and I left Mangaria several days later by the same seaplane in which O'Smith, in violation of international law, had conveyed his captive royal exile over Italy. We left as the great leave, not as fugitives, and François remained behind. Miron, his cousin, was already back in his country.

O'SMITH, still weak from the knife-thrust with which John had so nearly avenged his abduction, announced his intention of remaining on the Riviera to recuperate. Though very low in mind from his physical incapacity, he invited me with great good will to remain as his guest. My skin prickled at the thought.

"I will live longer in Paris," I told him, in rejecting his offer with insulting emphasis. "How do I know that a waiter will not whisper in your ear some other menace to the peace of Europe?"

He cheered up amazingly at my suggestion. "Yes; there's always that," he agreed. "And I shan't be entirely idle. Rufus Congleton has wired me an offer of a job as correspondent of the A. P. L. He phrased it 'Keeper of the peace of Europe'—but correspondent is what he meant."

I nodded dispiritedly. "He offered me a job, too, and I've had to take it," I said. "I'm afraid it's a roving job."

"Special correspondent, Chris?"

I looked at him. "No. Keeper of the Keeper," I said.

The Battle of the

As told to
STANLEY VESTAL

By CHIEF JOSEPH WHITE BULL

THE morning of June 25, 1876, that fatal day on which General George Armstrong Custer and five troops of the Seventh United States Cavalry rode to their doom, dawned brightly, giving no hint of the bloody scenes that were to make it memorable. During the ten years since the Fetterman fight at Fort Phil Kearny, White Bull had been constantly on the warpath, fighting the whites and neighboring tribes, killing enemies, counting *coups*, stealing horses by the score. That morning he was twenty-six years old, and already a famous warrior.

It was not yet sunup when White Bull stepped out of his wife's tepee in the Sans Arc Sioux camp circle, loosened the picket-ropes of the family horses, and drove his ponies to the river for water.

The Sioux and Cheyennes had pitched their camps, three miles of tepees, circle on circle, in the wide flats along the west bank of the Little Bighorn River. There they rested after the fight with General George Crook on the Rosebud only a week before. Their scouts reported that Crook was retreating, and though they knew that other troops were in their country, they did not expect them that day. Besides, they were not afraid; there were too many Indians in the camp.

The Little Bighorn flowed to the north, its shallow winding course marked by clumps of tall cottonwood timber, above which White Bull could see the abrupt bluffs, scarred by ravines, rising steeply from the eastern bank. When the horses would drink no more, he drove them north of the camp to grass, and when they had settled down to graze, left them and went home for breakfast. Later he returned, trying to keep them in a bunch about a hundred yards west of the river. As usual, he carried his seventeen-shot rifle, and wore two loaded cartridge-belts.

It was a hot, lazy day, almost windless, and the trails were dusty. White Bull remained herding his horses without a thought of any danger, though all that while General Custer's command was rapidly approaching. Custer's scouts had warned him that he would find more Sioux on the Little Bighorn than he could handle, but he refused to be frightened, divided his command into three bodies, and pushed on. Captain Frederick W. Benteen had orders to strike the village from the west; Major M. A. Reno was to attack on the south, while Custer rode over the bluffs to jump the Sioux from the east bank of the stream.

The General expected the Indians to run, and he was anxious to prevent their escape.

It was not yet time for the midday watering when White Bull, watching his horses north of the camp, heard a man yelling the alarm. Immediately he jumped on his best running horse, a fast bay, and ran his ponies back to camp. Before he reached it, everyone in camp had seen the tower of dust coming from the south, and below it the blue shirts of soldiers, the flash of rifle-barrels in the bright sunshine. The column of soldiers spread into a line; smoke burst from it;

Little Bighorn

The horrors and the hatreds of the Indian wars belong to another generation; and we today can read with understanding this story of a valiant warrior who fought well in this bitter battle for his home-land against the white invader.

Illustrated by Charles Fox and Chief White Bull

and White Bull heard the noise of the carbines.

All through that great camp was the confusion of complete surprise. Old men were shouting commands and advice, young men running to catch up their horses, women streaming away to the north afoot and on horseback, trying to escape the soldiers. They abandoned their tents, snatched up their babies and called their children. White Bull saw young girls clutching shawls over their frightened heads, fat matrons puffing and perspiring, and old women, shriveled as mummies, hobbling along with their sticks, trying to save themselves.

White Bull saw his own family started to safety, then sped up-river hard as he could ride, to the camp of his uncle, Sitting Bull, which the soldiers were already nearing. There, he knew, his father's tepee stood on the north side of the circle. By the time he arrived, the women and children had fled, and about a thousand warriors were gathering to resist the troops, whose bullets were already crashing through the tepees, too high to hurt anyone. When White Bull reached the south end of the great camp, he saw a lively fight going on in the open, where the Ree and Crow Government Indian scouts were trying to run off the Sioux ponies. Everything was smothered in a great cloud of dust and smoke, as the Indians on both sides dashed back and forth, fighting for their horses. Already some of the Cheyennes and Sioux had been shot down by the Rees; and the white soldiers, firing from the saddle, kept advancing, pushing the Sioux back. But before long the Sioux had gathered in such numbers that the Rees retreated, leaving most of the ponies to their enemies. Immediately after, the soldiers dismounted and formed a line in the open, facing the north. White Bull saw them set up a flag (guidon).

White Bull yelled aloud: "Whoever is a brave man will go get that flag." But everyone was busy. Nobody volunteered, and before he himself could do anything, the soldiers moved the flag, falling back into the timber which bordered the river.

BY this time great numbers of Indians had gathered, and some of them made charges toward the troops, while others stood and fired. After some hot fighting on foot in the timber, Major Reno's troopers climbed into their saddles and rode south up the river, look-

ing for a place to cross. The moment they turned about, the swarming Sioux were on their heels, striking with war-clubs and the butts of their guns, shooting arrows into them, riding them down. The soldiers went plunging through the river and up the steep sprawling ridges of the high bluff to the top. Most of them got over, ran up the bluff and dug in. But three soldiers kept up the west bank on the level. White Bull took after these. There was one soldier on a gray horse. White Bull singled him out for his victim and fired, but failed to hit him. Reno had left behind him three officers and twenty-nine men killed.

JUST then the foremost Indians halted; White Bull heard some one behind him yelling that troops were coming from the east toward the north end of the camp, three miles down-river. White Bull was near the water and turned downstream with the rest to meet this new danger. Some of the Indians rode through all the camps and crossed the stream above them to block Custer's advance. White Bull and many others crossed almost at once, streaming up the ravine to strike Custer on the flank. As he advanced, he saw Custer's five troops trotting along the bluffs parallel to the river.

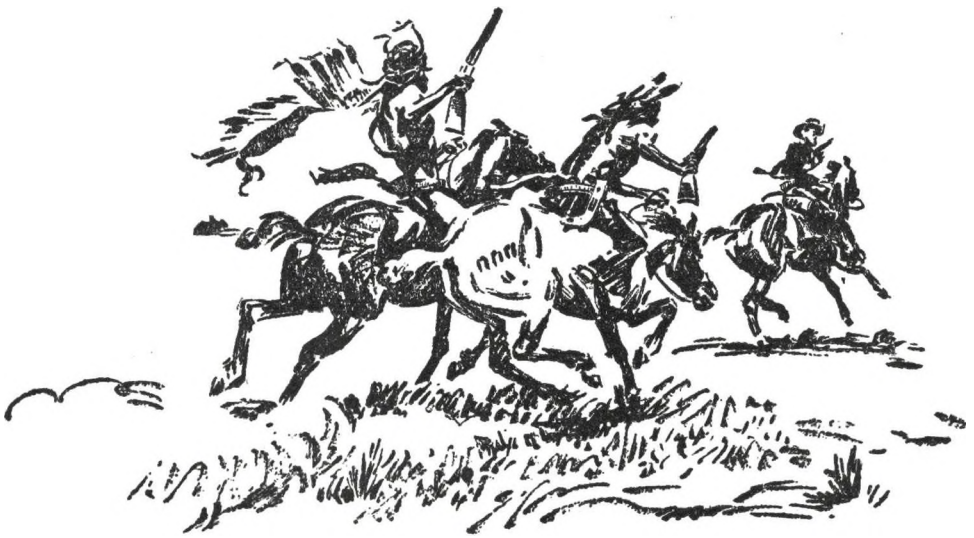
White Bull saw that there would be a big fight. He stopped, unsaddled his horse and stripped off his leggings. He thought he could fight better so.

The Indians rode in many small parties, streaming northeast up the ravine toward the troops passing along the ridge.

With White Bull there rode Iron Lightning, Owns-Horn, Shoots-Bear-as-He-Runs, and two Cheyennes. They rode up the ravine with a great horde of warriors. Most of Custer's five troops of cavalry had passed the head of the ravine by the time White Bull was near enough to shoot at the soldiers. From where he was, the soldiers seemed to form four groups of mounted men, heading northwest along the ridge. He was shooting at the group in the rear (Lieutenant James Calhoun's command).

All the Indians were shooting, and White Bull saw two soldiers fall from their horses. The soldiers fired back from the saddle. Their fire was so effective that some of the Indians, including White Bull, fell back to the south. Soon after, the white men halted. Some of them got off their horses to fight. By this time the Indians were all around the soldiers. Many were between the camp and the troopers, ready to defend the ford. Others took their stand wherever they could obtain cover, each small party acting independently.

When White Bull was driven out of the ravine by the fire of Lieutenant Calhoun's men, he rode south and worked his way over to the east of that officer's command, and there joined a party of warriors with Crazy Horse. By this time a large number of Indians were gathering around Calhoun's troops. They were particularly numerous south of him. The troopers at the tail of the column were falling back along the ridge, leaving their dead and wounded behind them, trying to join forces with Keogh's troop. Keogh's men were fighting on foot.



A drawing by Chief White Bull himself, explaining the custom of "striking coup"—*i. e.*, claiming credit for the killing of an enemy. The little marks at the left symbolize soldiers, those at the right, Sioux.

Seeing these soldiers on the run, White Bull, in bravado, dashed across their line between the two troops, hugging the neck of his fleet pony. They fired at him, but missed him. He circled back to his comrades. Encouraged by his success in this desperate stunt, he called out, "This time I will not turn back!" and charged at a run on the troopers of the last company. When the Sioux heard him yelling and saw him dashing forward, many of them followed. This charge seemed to break the morale of the survivors of Calhoun's troop. They all ran to join Keogh, every man for himself, afoot and on horseback. All around, the Sioux were firing, dropping the soldiers.

One of the Sioux shot a mounted trooper. White Bull saw the man waver in his saddle, and quirting his pony, raced forward to strike the man and count the first *coup*. Before he could reach the trooper, the dying man fell from his saddle. White Bull reined in his pony, jumped down and struck the body with his quirt, yelling, "*Onhey!* I have overcome this one." He took the man's revolver and cartridge-belt. Did-Not-Go-Home struck this enemy immediately after; he counted the second *coup*. Then White Bull leaped on his barebacked bay and dashed on with the charging, yelling warriors through the dust and smoke drifting down the bluffs.

By that time the last of Calhoun's men had joined Keogh's troopers, and all together they were falling back northwestward along the ridge to their comrades of the third group. A bugle blared. Those soldiers who still had horses mounted.

White Bull found himself side by side with Chief Crazy Horse. Knowing him for one of the bravest of the Sioux, White Bull dared Crazy Horse to lead a charge. Crazy Horse refused. White Bull led the charge himself.

He saw a mounted trooper left behind; his horse had played out. White Bull charged this man; Crazy Horse followed him. As White Bull dashed up from the rear, the trooper tried to turn in his saddle and bring his carbine to bear on White Bull. But before he could shoot, White Bull was alongside, seized him by the shoulders of his blue coat, and jerked furiously, trying to unhorse the man. The soldier fired in the air, and fell from his horse. Crazy Horse struck this man second. White Bull had outdone the famous chief.

SOME troopers were left afoot. One of these, with Indians all around him, stood turning from side to side, threatening them with his carbine. In that way he kept his enemies at a distance. However, White Bull was not daunted. He rode straight for the soldier. At close quarters the trooper fired. White Bull dodged, and the ball missed him. A moment later he flung the shoulders of his horse against the trooper and rode him down. Bear Lice counted the second *coup*.

The remnants of Calhoun's and Keogh's troops had now joined the troopers around Custer to the north and west, near where the monument is now. The fourth mass of soldiers (the commands of Captain G. W. Yates, Captain Tom Custer and Lieutenant A. E. Smith) was then below these, down the hill toward the river. The air was full of dust and smoke. Here and there a wounded man had been unhorsed and left behind.

One of these men, bleeding from a wound in the left thigh, with a revolver in one hand and a carbine in the other, stood all alone, shooting at the Indians. They could not get at him. White Bull dashed up behind the man, who did not see him come. White Bull rode him down. Brave Crow counted the second *coup* on this enemy.

BY this time all the troopers on the hill had let their horses go. They lay down and kept shooting. White Bull was to the east of them, Crazy Horse at his side.

Then White Bull charged alone through the body of soldiers at a gallop. It was all open ground. He lay close to his horse's neck, and passed the troopers within a dozen feet, but was not hit.

The horses turned loose by the soldiers —bays, sorrels and grays—were running in all directions. Many of the Indians stopped shooting and chased these loose horses. White Bull tried to head some off, but the Indians swarmed in ahead of him. He caught only one sorrel. The firing was very hot, so hot that immediately after, White Bull's horse was shot down. The animal was shot through the shoulder and chest, through the ribs, and through the head just behind the ears. White Bull was left afoot. Other Indians had dismounted. It was hand-to-hand fighting by that time. White Bull rushed in.

A tall, well-built soldier on foot tried to bluff White Bull, aiming his carbine at him. But when White Bull rushed the man, he threw his gun at him without shooting. They caught hold of each other and wrestled together there in the twilight of the dust and smoke. The soldier was brave and strong. He tried to wrest White Bull's gun from him, and almost succeeded. But White Bull lashed the enemy across the face with his quirt. The soldier let go, then grabbed White Bull's gun with both hands, until White Bull struck him again. But the soldier was desperate: he struck White Bull with his fists on the jaw and shoulders; seized him by his long hair with both hands, drew his face close, and tried to bite his nose off. White Bull thought his time had come. He yelled for help: "Hey, hey, come over and help me!" He thought the soldier would kill him.

Bear Lice and Crow Boy heard his call and came running to his aid. They tried to hit the soldier, but in the rough-and-tumble most of their blows fell on White Bull. He was dizzy from the blows, but yelled as loud as he could to

scare his enemy. At last he freed himself, struck the soldier several times on the head with his pistol, knocked him over, took his gun and cartridge-belt. Hawk-Stays-Up struck second. That was a close shave, a hard fight, but White Bull says: "It was a glorious battle; I enjoyed it. I was picking up head-feathers right and left that day."

FOR a time all the soldiers stood together on the hill near where the monument is now, ringed in by the Sioux, dying bravely one by one, as the Indians poured a hail of lead and arrows into their dwindling strength. They lay or knelt on the bare ridge, firing across the bodies of dead horses or taking cover behind the shallow shelter of a fallen comrade, selling their lives dearly until only a few remained alive.

A Cheyenne named Bearded Man charged these soldiers. He rushed right in among them and was killed there. His body lay in the midst of the soldiers. When the fight was over, the Sioux found him there. They did not recognize his body. They thought he was an Indian Government scout. Little Crow, brother of Chief Hump, scalped Bearded Man. Afterward, when Little Crow realized his mistake, he gave the scalp to the dead man's parents.

By this time many of the Indians had armed themselves with carbines and revolvers taken from the dead troopers, and had filled their belts with cartridges found in the saddle-bags of captured horses. The volume of their fire constantly increased as that of the soldiers diminished. White Bull lay in a ravine pumping bullets into the crowd around Custer, aiming always at the heart. He was one of those who shot down the group in which Custer made his last stand.

All this time White Bull was between the river and the soldiers on the hill. The few remaining troopers seemed to despair of holding their position on the hilltop. Ten of them jumped up and came down the ravine toward White Bull, shooting all the time. Two soldiers were in the lead, one of them wounded and bleeding from the mouth. White Bull and a Cheyenne waited for them. When they came near, he shot one; the Cheyenne shot the other. Both ran forward. White Bull struck first on one soldier, but the Cheyenne beat him to the other one. He got only the second *coup*. The eight remaining soldiers kept on coming, forcing White Bull out of the ravine onto the ridge.

White Bull snatched up the soldier's gun and started up the hill. Suddenly he stumbled and fell. His leg was numb, it had no feeling in it. He searched himself for wounds, but could find none. Then he saw that his ankle was swelling. The skin was not broken, only bruised. He had been hit by a spent ball.

He found a shallow ditch, crawled into it, and lay there until all the soldiers were killed. At the time he stopped fighting, only ten soldiers were on their feet. They were the last ones alive. The fight began before noon and lasted only about an hour, he says.

White Bull found very few cartridges in the belts he captured. Though he was in the thick of the fighting from start to finish, he did not see a single soldier commit suicide.

"The soldiers seemed tired," he says, "but they fought to the end."

SOON after, With-Horns found White Bull, put him on his horse, and led him back across the river. The tepees had not been moved up there. The people had rigged up tent-flies, and were camping as best they could on the open flat.

Makes-Room made his son White Bull lie down under a shade tree, and sent for Sitting Bull. Sitting Bull put "wounded medicine" on White Bull's ankle and wrapped the swelling in buffalo wool. Sitting Bull said: "Nephew, you had better be careful. One of these times you might be killed." Meanwhile the herald was calling out that the camp must be moved to where the people were. The women went after their tepees and moved them.

After a while the Indians had lunch. Then White Bull asked for his horse. They brought it, and helped him upon its back. He crossed the river to get his leggings and the saddle he had left there, and afterward went over the battlefield to see the dead. He says he did not see anyone mutilating the dead. He thinks that the parents of Indians killed in the fight must have gone up there later and mutilated some of the soldiers. On the hilltop he met his relative Bad Soup. Bad Soup had been around Fort Abraham Lincoln and knew Long Hair (General Custer) by sight. The two of them found Custer lying on his back, naked. Bad Soup pointed him out and said:

"Long Hair thought he was the greatest man in the world. Now he lies there." They did not scalp Custer, for his hair was cut short.

White Bull took two pairs of trousers from the soldiers. On his way home he washed them in the river. He gave them to his father.

After White Bull reached camp with his saddle and leggings, he rode up to the bluff and took part in the fight with Reno's men, remaining there all night.

About the middle of the morning White Bull went home and took a nap. In the afternoon he rode north down-river to meet the troops coming under General Alfred H. Terry and General John Gibbon. He was successful in stealing eleven horses from these troops.

The Custer fight was over. In that fight, White Bull had counted seven *coups*, six of them "firsts," had killed two men in hand-to-hand combat, captured two guns and twelve horses, had had his horse shot under him, and had been wounded in the ankle. Few if any of the Sioux or Cheyennes in that fight could show such a record of reckless bravery and good fortune.

Because of his bravery and his success on that bloody field, White Bull was chosen from all the Indians on the plains as the representative of the red race in the peace ceremonies held on the Custer Battlefield on the fiftieth anniversary of that fatal day, June 25, 1926. On that day he rode to the monument on the battlefield at the head of hundreds of Indians to exchange gifts and shake hands with Brigadier General E. S. Godfrey, U.S.A. Retired, who, as a first lieutenant, had commanded Company K of the Seventh Cavalry under Major Frederick W. Benteen.

On this anniversary White Bull gave General Godfrey a fine blanket; the General presented White Bull with a large United States flag. That day both the white men and the Indians recognized Chief Joseph White Bull, nephew of Sitting Bull, as the leading chief and bravest man of all the Sioux and Cheyennes.

There are those who believe that White Bull is the man who shot General Custer. Certainly he was among those Indians who fired into the group around Custer, and when asked to point out the place where he saw the body of the General lying, he indicated the exact spot where the body of General Custer was found by his comrades after the battle.

One Woman

From far Papua, the distinguished author of "The Flaming Sword" and "The Eerie Island" sends us this colorful romance of the South Seas.

By BEATRICE

CREWE awoke in the enormous darkness, quite alone. Outside, a woodcutter bird was busy at its nightlong task, chopping imaginary logs; a boobook owl complained; some distance off, the snarling roar of a crocodile cut the air.

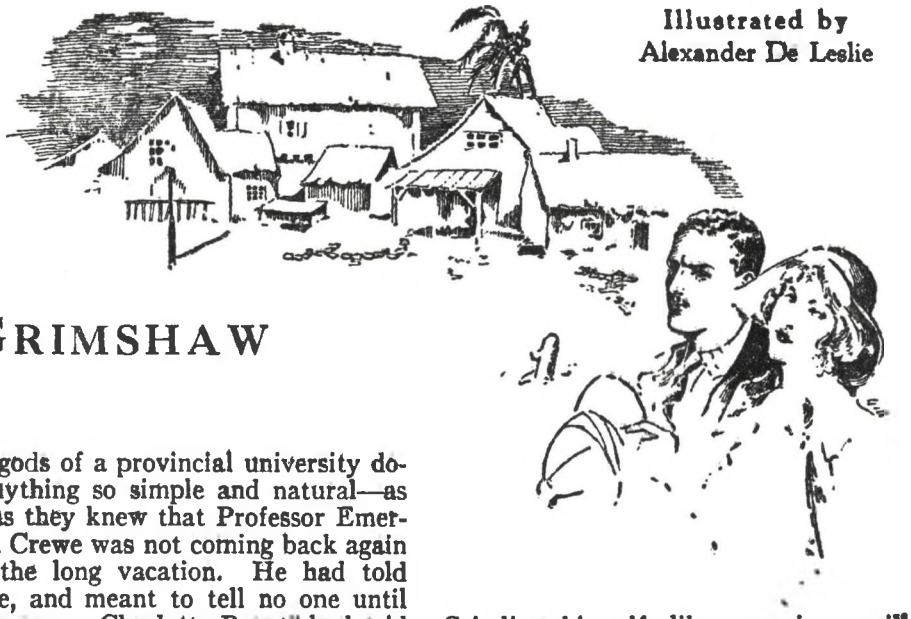
Crewe, lying uncovered in his hot bed, reflected, with a thrill, that these creatures were his nearest neighbors, by at least forty miles, (unless you counted the native laborers in their huts, which of course no one did); that he owned a hundred acres of magnificent savanna and forest, for which he had paid thirty shillings; that he was king of his castle, lord of his domain, had no neighbors, no duties, and could do any damned thing he liked. . . .

Four months ago this day he had paused on the threshold of his lecture-room, as the students were scrambling out, and said to himself: "Done." Nobody knew. That was the salt of it!

For the last time he had called on Mr. Smith or Mr. Jones to state the main differences between the Shakespearean and the Restoration drama. The bell would never swear at him again: "*Jang, jang,* curse you; *jang, jang,* come in!" The class-room odor that had been his native air—books, dust and damp tweed clothes, and the faint reek of tea-leaves used in sweeping—was in his nostrils for the last, last time.

He wasn't treating "them" badly. "They" could find another English literature professor by putting their heads out of the window and shouting into the street—if one could imagine the little

in Ten Thousand



Illustrated by
Alexander De Leslie

GRIMSHAW

brass gods of a provincial university doing anything so simple and natural—as soon as they knew that Professor Emerson E. Crewe was not coming back again after the long vacation. He had told no one, and meant to tell no one until he was gone. Charlotte Brontë had said —very wisely—that to tell an intention was to have it discussed, and to have it discussed was to have it opposed. . . . Must look up the exact words when he got home; it wouldn't do for an English literature professor—

Emerson E. Crewe, on the steps of the "Lit." building, realized with an agreeable shock that he didn't need to know ever again just what any one of those accursed Brontës had or hadn't said or done. That he could say to himself—and did: "Drown Emily, burn Charlotte, spiflicate Branwell and Anne!" That, from this moment, he was not any more "Professor Emmy,"—hated nickname!—but simply Mr. Edward Crewe.

He wore black clothing, to express the grief he had not felt for his mother's death. His garb looked professorial. He would order a gray suit in London—no, a navy blue. He was only thirty-seven, after all.

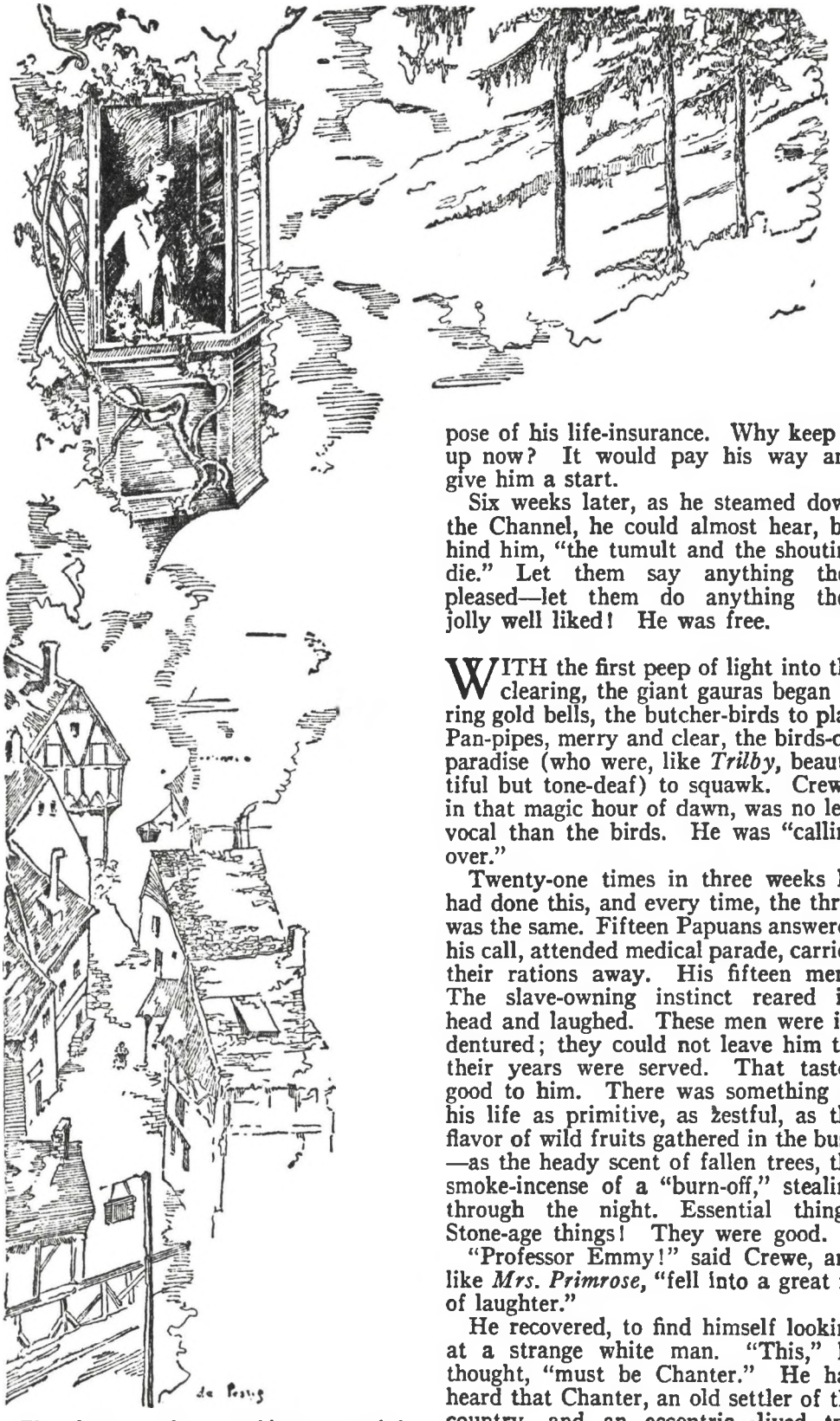
In the tram he thought about these things. Impossible to grieve—much—for the loss of a parent who had been childish and paralyzed, in charge of an attendant, for years, whose necessities had kept him chained—oh, willingly, of course—ever since he was twenty-five, grinding out English literature, as instilled into him by Oxford, for the stupid youth of a provincial university. Grinding himself, like corn in a mill. His brains, his energy, pouring continually out of the hoppers, in one monotonous stream of standard stuff—bolted, purified, guaranteed, and not a vitamine in a truck-load of it. "They" would have objected to vitamines.

Edward Crewe ran up the steps of his house, let himself in, and locked his study door behind him. The maids would think he was at work. Well, he was. He had to go through a pile of literature provided by the benevolent Cook, to ascertain, as nearly as possible, where, on this overcrowded earth, in these hard times, a man might hope to get a landed estate for nothing.

Canada? No. It had been called "Our Lady of Snows"—and you had to do your own plowing. . . . West Australia? N-no. Too like the cowboy novels; and he hated cattle. Elsewhere, you had to pay. . . . Was there no place where one could get land free, find labor to do the heavy work?

New Guinea beckoned. In Papua, you could take up land with rich soil and rivers, for nothing, practically; and you could keep it, not forever, but for ninety-nine years.

"When I'm a hundred and thirty-six, the Government may have it back and welcome," thought Crewe. He slapped a hand on Papua, and went out to dis-



Was there no place on this overcrowded earth where a man could get land free?

pose of his life-insurance. Why keep it up now? It would pay his way and give him a start.

Six weeks later, as he steamed down the Channel, he could almost hear, behind him, "the tumult and the shouting die." Let them say anything they pleased—let them do anything they jolly well liked! He was free.

WITH the first peep of light into the clearing, the giant gauras began to ring gold bells, the butcher-birds to play Pan-pipes, merry and clear, the birds-of-paradise (who were, like *Trilby*, beautiful but tone-deaf) to squawk. Crewe, in that magic hour of dawn, was no less vocal than the birds. He was "calling over."

Twenty-one times in three weeks he had done this, and every time, the thrill was the same. Fifteen Papuans answered his call, attended medical parade, carried their rations away. His fifteen men! The slave-owning instinct reared its head and laughed. These men were indentured; they could not leave him till their years were served. That tasted good to him. There was something in his life as primitive, as zestful, as the flavor of wild fruits gathered in the bush —as the heady scent of fallen trees, the smoke-incense of a "burn-off," stealing through the night. Essential things, Stone-age things! They were good.

"Professor Emmy!" said Crewe, and like *Mrs. Primrose*, "fell into a great fit of laughter."

He recovered, to find himself looking at a strange white man. "This," he thought, "must be Chanter." He had heard that Chanter, an old settler of the country, and an eccentric, lived two days' walk distant.

Chanter was of some indefinite age above fifty. He was short-legged, heavy-bodied, hairy-handed. He had a beard, and the open breast of his shirt showed amazing mats of hair. The yellow of malaria, mingling with the red of whisky, had turned his face dull orange. He had brown eyes as sharp as pins, but his mouth was slack and huge. Crewe couldn't quite place him; they didn't have such types in university towns. "Stevenson would have made a character out of him," he thought; and then, indignantly: "There I go—literature again!"

Chanter, who had no more shyness than an alligator, introduced himself.

"I'm y'r nearest neighbor. Ha-ha! Come for a yarn. You got not a bad little house. My oath! Boys build it? Cost you nothing—ha-ha!" He was walking through the two rooms, round the four verandas, staring at the golden-brown thatched roof, at the walls of gleaming sago-stem. "I'll camp here tonight," he proclaimed. "Got any *kai-kai?*"

"Glad to see you. Yes, parrot soup, wallaby steak, sweet potatoes, sago jelly," recited Crewe, wondering whether he wanted the visitor or not.

Chanter was in no doubt about that matter. He found the best of Crewe's canvas chairs, dropped into it, helped himself from the tobacco-box on the table, and began to talk. . . .

Hours later, he was still talking. Talking as he smoked, as he drank, as he ate, almost as he slept—monologuing without a pause for a reply. Crewe, half drowned in the Mississippi flood of Chanter's "yarn," listened, dozed, listened again. He realized that on the bosom of the flood were floating valuable things. Chanter told him all about growing and marketing copra, all about rubber; gave him the biographies of most of Papua's planters, with an occasional lurid P. S.; criticized the Government; asked him what the hell he meant by growing vanilla—nobody had made a success of that; therefore nobody would. . . . Only two years to wait? There must be a catch in it, then; whenever a thing looked too darn' simple, there was bound to be a catch. Nothing for nothing—nowhere!

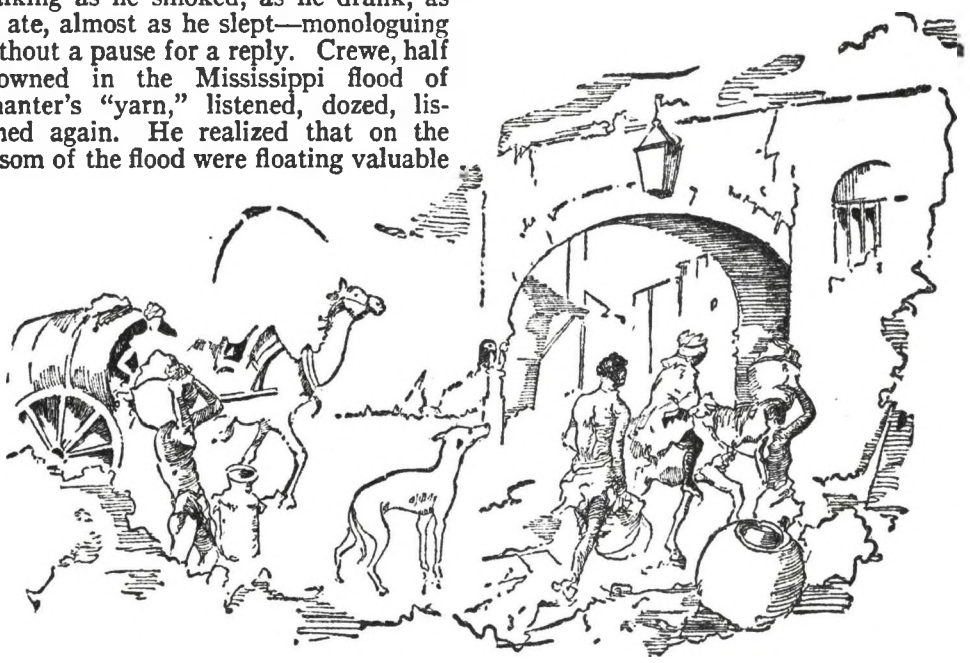
"The catch," explained Crewe precisely (after all, the University library had helped out), "lies in the fact that the product has to be prepared by the planter in person. Delicate work. Not hard, but difficult. Very paying."

"I told you," boomed Chanter. "Catch in it. Always is." He horrified Crewe—who had heard a thing or two about island drugs—by rolling himself a chew of betel-nut, and sticking it in one cheek.

"I suppose I must stand him," thought Crewe. "He may be useful." The long habit of judging, estimating other people's mental abilities, warned him that Chanter was not the sodden fool he looked.

"What do you grow?" he asked, trying not to mind the dirtiness of Chanter's shirt.

"I don't grow anything. Trade. Buy copra from the natives, sell it to B. P.'s. Lot of betel-nut palm on my place; I sell that—a shilling for thirty nuts in



Port Moresby. Bit of a trading store. Up the river. Transport not so bad."

"Are you a married man?"

Chanter winked. "What d'ya think?" he said. "That's one of her, outside."

Crewe had hardly noticed the native girl sitting half under the veranda. He leaned forward and looked at her now. Pure savage, dressed in a kilt of grass, tattooed and painted, chewing betel-nut, like Chanter, and like him, spitting red upon the ground. . . . Crewe was revolted.

"But they aren't all like him," he thought. And he recalled the names of planters, living with white wives, down the coast.

AS if he had read the thought, Chanter said: "Y'see, I'm me own master; I don't work for wages, for no man. I do as I like. And mind ya, the white girls want a man with a job. All them plantations. Salary blokes! Chucked out at a month's notice any day. Do as they're told. You don't like my missus; she's one of the best, but you wouldn't understand. Two more at home, as good as her. They don't want no trips to Sydney. They don't want a car and a road for it, to be goin' tea-drinkin' with the other plantations. They don't get sick and want op'rations that costs as much as a whaleboat; all white women is always wanting op'rations—I don't know why the Lord didn't make them right to start with, but that's the crimson truth. Their kids don't have to be sent to school in Melbun, and the mother go too, and set up an 'ouse for herself, and asking men to dinner, and you working the insides out of yourself to pay for it."

He paused for a moment, shot a crimson stream over the veranda rail, turned his betel-nut quid, and went on:

"You better let me find you a nice girl out of Baia's village; it won't cost you too much, maybe thirty or forty in trade, and I'll let you have discount for cash."

Crewe found that he needed all his practiced art of speech, to refuse without hurting the feelings of Chanter.

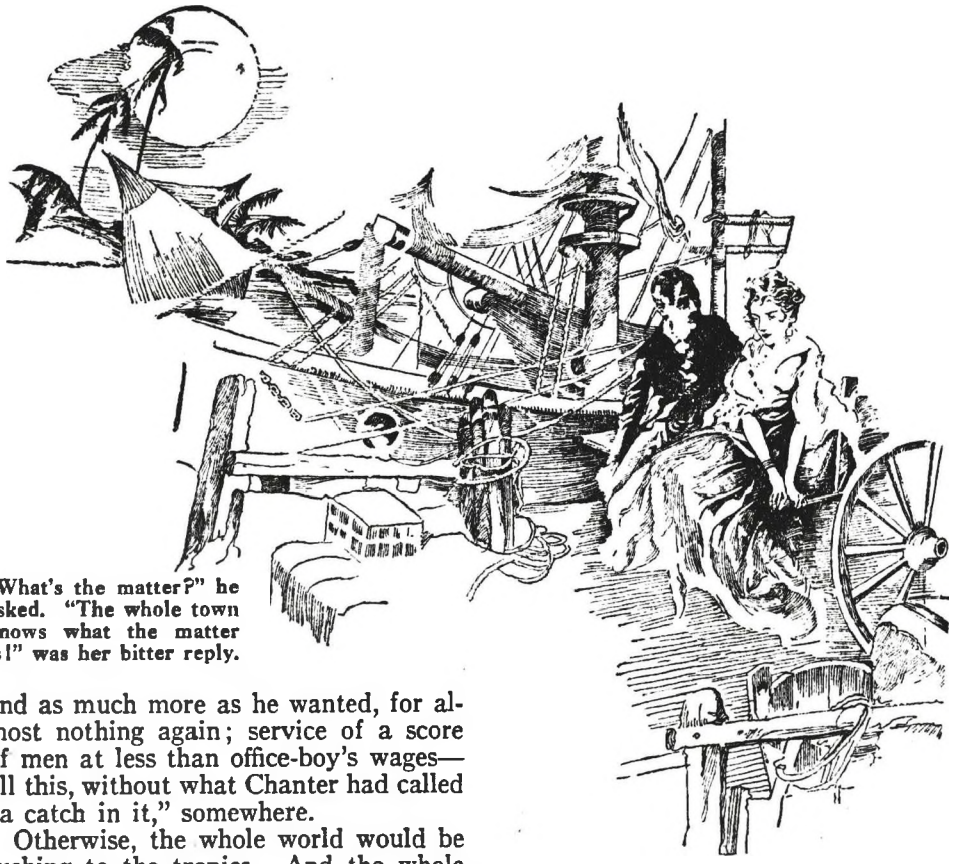
Chanter went home next day, and it was as if a clattering train had suddenly pulled out of sight and sound, leaving behind it unimaginable peace. . . .

Followed again the red-gold mornings, the smell of night rains on the rich soil, the marvelous upspringing of scarcely tended plants and seeds, that shot themselves inches toward the burning sky in a single morning, yards in a single week. The dynamic power of the vegetation held Crewe in delighted awe. Everything, when you looked at it, seemed to be moved by furious desire for the still more furious sun; the palms were fountains, shot toward heaven; the flowers, red, white and golden, cast themselves upward on the ends of their long stems like jets of water from a hose. If you listened long enough, you could actually hear things grow. As for the vanilla cuttings, trained from rail to rail among the timber, they ran like snakes, like snakes were their thick shiny stems, like fleshy hands the leaves with which they clung. Life, in the forest, was fierce. When the native laborers danced at night, singing and drumming, it seemed as if every last ounce of energy in their wild bodies was being called upon, as if the fury of their delight must cast them lifeless on the ground. Strange birds that shouted at night made your blood run cold; nothing, you thought, that screamed like that could live to scream again. All existence ran like a rapid above a fall.

"And that fall," thought Crewe, "is death." In this country, people were near to death; you heard it in their talk: "Smith—good fellow—he died on the Mambaré. Jones—yes, that was the chap who shot himself in 'twenty-eight. No, Waters wasn't taken by the natives; he winked out with blackwater, on the woodlarks. It was Floyd they got; they hung his bones in a tree beside the track—all that was left of them, that is—" And so forth, and so forth.

Was that the "catch?"

CREWE was becoming curious. Something about his plantation—the golden soil of it; the rivers that furrowed it, running fathom-deep in the longest of dry seasons; the costly timbers scattered here and there—red cedar, *kassi-kassi* hard as steel, a stand or two of sandalwood; even the house, weatherproof, beautiful, cool in any weather, and made by his own boys out of the stuff on his own place, without a nail or a tool, save clearing-knives—all this, for nothing; or for thirty shillings down and the chance of a few pence an acre, to pay, in ten years' time—was too much! Things didn't go like that, in a post-war world. You didn't get, as he got, good food without paying for it,—game, fruit, vegetables, everything almost, save flour and tea; lordship of a hundred acres,



"What's the matter?" he asked. "The whole town knows what the matter is!" was her bitter reply.

and as much more as he wanted, for almost nothing again; service of a score of men at less than office-boy's wages—all this, without what Chanter had called "a catch in it," somewhere.

Otherwise, the whole world would be rushing to the tropics. And the whole world didn't. Even Australia, next door, was not enthusiastic. The gold-and-silver of this Tom Tiddler's ground was not picked up. The stretch of country in which he lived, hundreds of thousands of acres near the sea, had actually been overlooked for a generation or so; natives didn't trouble about it, white men had not taken it up—until Chanter came along, and after him, Crewe.

"What," said Crewe to himself, still keeping his literary phrasing, "what does that connote?"

"Taubada," interpolated the boss-boy, appearing suddenly from under the piles of the house, "me wantum medsin."

"What for?"

The native showed a swollen leg. "Me think," he confidentially remarked, "God bitem last night."

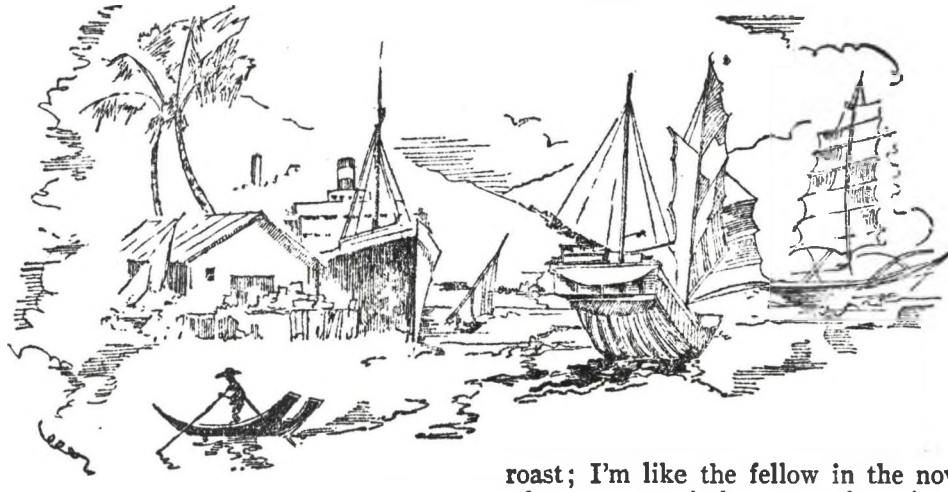
You were always being interrupted in your train of thought. It was like having a family of fifteen children.

Crewe went for iodine, and did not ask himself the eternal question again, for at least three weeks. . . .

There came a morning of the kind that only the tropics know. A day when "gold, raw gold," had been spilled so freely from the cloudless zenith, that the whole landscape seemed to be over-filled, dripping with glory. You could almost see it fall from the laden leaves, where it clung like drops of yellow wine. You could watch it gather in thick pools on the forest pathway, under the breaks of the trees. When you stood beneath it, you could feel the driving force of the world run through your body, as the power of the wind that moves great ships goes through a steersman's hands. You might have been whirled away from the planet by the "send" of that strength, and felt no amazement. This day, earth was ten times, a thousand times, more alive than yesterday—for an hour.

In the night, all green things had pushed and budded; the growing palm-trees were higher, the almost human hands of the vanilla had stretched themselves over more and more of their supporting rails. Crewe, standing on his wide veranda, looked about, saw that everything was good, and very beautiful; and like the first man in the Garden, knew himself alone. Alone, and naked to the searing thought of it, as he had not been till now.

"Hau!" he shouted to the head boy.



"Get the swags, get the tent. Come to the storehouse. I am going to town."

In the hotel, with the gingerbread front and broken balconies, it was dinner-time. The heat was frightful, far worse than on Crewe's plantation; the mosquitoes were almost as many, and the bedrooms—roofless cubicles of sheet-iron, dark, hot, hardly furnished—made him think with regret of his large cool room at home, in the house that had cost nothing, where banana leaves waved green hands before the window, and outside, among ripening guavas, sunbirds sang. There was singing in the hotel, but of another kind. Chanter had "come in" also, and was at the moment making a charade of his own name down in the bar. Into the dining-room flowed the roar of his huge bass voice, protesting furiously his willingness, "for Annie Laurie, to lay me down and die."

"God, why don't he?" wearily asked Crewe's table-companion. "You just in? I've not had a wink of sleep for two nights with him."

"Why don't they turn him out?" asked Crewe, unashamedly smelling his plate of hash. You had to.

"Turn you or me out, more likely! He and his sort keep the hotel going; he comes in every three or four months, just for a spree. Sober as a judge on his own place, as I suppose you know. Brainy chap, making money hand over fist. Trouble is, he can't spend it."

"Why not?"

THE other man—a young Government official—became cautious. "Oh, you know, I reckon. Can't leave the country. All tied up. . . . Better try the roast; I'm like the fellow in the novel, who never ate 'ashes away from 'ome."

Crewe went past the open door of the bar on his way upstairs. He saw Chanter inside. He was struck, almost violently, by the expression of utter happiness on the planter's face. Chanter, a little more sober now, was laughing, telling stories, spreading himself over the cushioned bench, like a starfish. It came to Crewe that the fellow looked as if he had sold himself to the devil, and was riotously enjoying the proceeds. He recalled the uniform joyousness of Chanter, his utter unconsciousness of anything unworthy, anything degraded in his life. And for one moment Crewe was overwhelmed by envy. Nothing, he knew, could ever give him, Crewe, that amazing complacency.

He remembered others. The ex-Government official Griswold, whom he had seen at home, miles down the coast, sitting by lamplight at a table covered with papers and books; reading, writing, meticulously clad and toileted; a gentleman every inch. About him on the floor, passing round among them the rank New Guinea pipe, sat Griswold's wife, sons and daughters, black to brown, almost naked. They looked up to Griswold as to a god. He was gracious with them, spoke to them now and then, gave them little scraps of the world's news. They listened uncomprehendingly, and passed the *"baubau"* on.

Griswold had taken up free land long ago, when white women didn't come to the country. He had a fine holding; but there was a catch in it.

Crewe went into his room, lit the lamp, and hung it above the meager mirror. Gravely he scanned himself. He was changed in these few months. He'd always been tall, very thin; he was filling

out now, had a finer carriage, a healthy tan too, that made his eyes look blue instead of gray. Those University Extension girls, who used to "schwarm" over him, so tediously—well, they'd have rather more to "schwarm" over now, if they were here. He could pretend to something good in the way of a wife.

For that was his object in coming up to town. He knew that Port Moresby, nowadays, owned quite a number of decent little girls; not suitable matches, perhaps, from a social point of view, for an ex-university professor, but well worth thinking about all the same. He had even picked upon one: Miss Daisy Barraclough, stenographer. He remembered her, from the time of his first arrival; he had seen her in Clarke's Non-comformist Church, of a Sunday evening, and had been favorably impressed. Nice eyes, long eyelashes, pretty mouth, not without character. An attractive simple frock, made, he supposed, by herself. Nice way of speaking, when a mutual acquaintance had introduced them, just outside the church. And it was to her credit that she was a churchgoer. Crewe, who in his Professor Emmy incarnation, had had a few abortive love-affairs, and rather despised love in general, considered he might do worse than look up Miss Daisy again, and see if she wouldn't do.

He loved his estate, his independence, as much as ever, but the first rapture of delight had died down into comfortable affection. One could now, like a bridegroom past the honeymoon, condescend to think of other things. Of Daisies, for example. And it was not at all because of Chanter, with his joyous degradation, of Griswold, icily determined to remain what he was not and could not be. He wasn't a bit frightened by them. He just was being sensible.

CERTAINLY it was luck that Miss Barraclough at present was taking her meals at the hotel. He could see her twice a day if he wanted, make up his mind without hurry. Crewe, accustomed to the easy and undesired conquest of University Extension girls—girls for the most part ill-dressed, lacking in what the gods of Hollywood define as "it"—had little doubt of being accepted. What did these stenographers come up to Port Moresby for? The day of the "gold-digger" female, following up the male gold-diggers, had passed with Port Moresby's primitive times. Decent little girls came now, shop assistants and secretaries, with visions of wedding-rings in their eyes. And they all wanted planters, of whom Crewe was one.

IT was a pity that he could not have heard Miss Barraclough, a few days later, talking to her "girl friend" at the pictures.

"Believe me, dear, he's mine for the taking. Just wild about me, if you know what I mean. What would you do if you were me?"

To her the girl friend, chewing chocolates: "I'd go easy, dear, till you see if you can't do better. Bury yourself in the bush, I don't think! And no salary to fall back upon. You go slow, Day. The *Kaivili's* in from the east. Jimson's aboard. His wife died six months ago; he must be ready for another. And he's got a real iron house, and a small lorry, and you can go to tea at six different plantations."

"Jimson's fifty!"

"What if he is? The Company will keep him on for years yet. And you needn't stop on the plantation longer than a few months. Then you can get a doctor's order to go and live in Sydney, and Jimson can pay. Don't you go tying yourself up to a chap that's not got a job. The job's the thing."

"I tell you what I think's the thing," Daisy said. "I think a bird in the hand's the thing—when you're not far off thirty."

The friend knew her to be thirty-one. "As you like, dear," she answered disappointedly. She may have had her own small hopes; she was Daisy's senior, and she had looked at Crewe's blue eyes with wistful desire. But clearly, there was nothing more to be said. She changed the subject.

"Didja see the Princess?" she said.

"What Princess?"

"The one who came on the boat two days ago. She's a real princess. Austrian. Ruined by the war. Awfully tragic story. The Prince was coming up here incognito-like,—got a job from a friend to run a rubber plantation,—and he went and died at the last port, and she landed here without a thing but her frocks and panties."

"Go on!"

"True as I'm sitting here. Princess Pamela is her name."

"Why—"

"Yes. English; she was born in England, and married him when she was six-

teen.... They say the Gover'ment will have to pay her way back."

"Where to?"

"I don't know. *Ssh*, there she is!"

"What, that tall thing with the permanent-waved red hair? She looks as proud as Lucifer. I bet she knows black becomes her."

"Well, it does. They say she didn't care a rag about the Prince. They say she didn't even cry when they buried him at Cairns."

"She might've cried, if she'd thought what she was coming to. Government rations and Government ticket away!"

"I wonder does she know that? Two shillings for the pictures is two shillings."

"Oh, look, she's going to play! She must have got in free!"

Into the darkened hall crept the first few notes of a dreamy melody, sweet as falling waters. "She can play," breathed Daisy with good-natured envy. "I bet we'll enjoy the pictures tonight, even if my bloke didn't bring me."

"Why didn't he?"

"I reckon he hasn't made up his mind to pop yet. Yes, I'll take him when he does. You can try for Jimson yourself."

Not many rows behind, a minute later, Daisy's "bloke" slipped quietly into the hall. He had no taste for cinemas, but that exquisite melody, heard from his iron cubicle, had irresistibly drawn him down to the picture show. Who, in this frontier town, was playing like an angel, or like Chopin come to life? There was no hint of jazz in that delicate music, no rhythm of the wearisome, inescapable foxtrot that had followed him through twelve thousand miles of travel. It was true melody, magically played.

HE turned in his seat to look at the player. Light from the piano candles fell on her hazy red-gold hair, her ivory face. One could not see her eyes. One could see that she was very tall, and almost excessively slender; but that might be due to the dead blackness of her dress. Out of it, her arms and her neck showed regally shaped and white as white roses.

Crewe also had heard of the Princess, thus unchancily cast on an alien shore. He caught his breath, and took one more look, before he settled down to ignore the idiocies on the screen, while enjoying fully this gift of noble music.

"She wears an invisible crown," he thought. Inevitably the appropriate reference came tagging after:

"And the shadow of a monarch's crown is darkened in her hair."

But for once, he welcomed it. It expressed something essential. This woman did wear a crown. Here, in rawly civilized, remote Port Moresby, among the kindly ordinary folk in Ryan's picture show—here, playing for her bread!

YEARS afterward, he remembered the names and notes of almost everything she played through that long evening; but he was not able to recall, next day, the title or the plot of the picture. He managed to follow close behind her as she left. She stumbled a little on the rough slope going out, and in an instant his hand was at her elbow, ready to help. She looked at him in almost a friendly way, as she thanked him. Her eyes were not blue, as he had expected; they were deep brown, with lights of gold, and the eyebrows, untouched by pencil, delicately thin, were ink-black. They gave a curious flavor to her face—pride, he thought, steadfastness; he could not say.

She wore a long-trained dress, the first that had been seen in that town. The tail of it was flung over her arm. It made him think of courts—presentations. He had never seen a court, but of course one knew all about those things. What glamour they held!

Half the night, lying awake in his hot iron cell, he thought of her, wondered about her. Like everyone else, he knew that she was destitute, almost dramatically so. What was to become of her? She could not go on playing at the picture show for her board; that wasn't a living. How else could those exquisite long hands employ themselves? It was most unlikely that she could type, sell tapes and tinned goods over a counter, manage a boarding-house.

The answer was clear enough. Government rations, Government fare away from the country. Other derelicts had met with the same fate, kindly but firmly dealt to them. The frontier town could not afford to feed idle mouths.

This English-Austrian princess, Pamela—he thought he knew from what family she had come; it was equal in birth to almost any European royalty, but it had been as utterly ruined by the war as Austria herself. Even if she had the money to get back to Europe, her people would be in no position to help. What about the friends who had given

her husband a job, for which he could not have been fitted, a job that evidently deserved its name, in two senses? They were men, no doubt. Easy to guess how they, or he, would help.

Music? But with phonographs, radios and talking-pictures everywhere (save in Port Moresby) even the most accomplished concert artists were finding it hard to make a living. Did any of them play more exquisitely, he wondered, turning about on his knobby mattress, as the night wore on. How those melodies ran in his head! How he had missed music, without knowing it!

Maybe that was the "catch"—loss of the arts, and all they meant. But—one could have a phonograph; one could put up radio, even in the wilds. One had already arranged to have all the new books sent from Sydney. One had bought illustrated picture-show catalogues; tried to follow names and subjects, at least.

No. That wasn't it.

Crewe turned again and beat his pillow. It felt like new-baked bread. How was she sleeping, a few yards away, this new-made widow who had nothing, not even the remembrance of past love, and who was forced now, empty-handed, to face a cruel world?

Crewe was not devoid of common sense. He put the Princess determinedly out of his mind. "She's not my business," he thought, picturing her the while as one on a snowy height above him. "And Daisy has to be remembered; I've gone too far there not to go the whole way. She's sure to look for me after church tomorrow."

DAISY *was* looking for him after church. She was prettily dressed; she was engaging; she smiled at him, and held out a little hand that had not yet been splayed out of shape by typing. Crewe suddenly saw her on his estate, in his beautiful house that had cost nothing; jingling the keys of the store, laying out and mending his clothes, waiting for him with a ready kiss, when evening came, and he was late back from the newest clearing. . . . It is to be feared that the outmoded pattern of *Esther* in "Bleak House" possessed Crewe's mind.

If this was so, a rough awakening awaited him. Not three sentences had been exchanged, before Daisy and he were interrupted by Chanter, who had also been to church—it seemed that this was one of his Port Moresby habits, like getting drunk and singing "Annie Laurie" to unappreciative ears. Dickens' *Esther* would certainly have bridled—whatever that may have meant—and clung to her lover's arm. Daisy, only too well pleased at the chance of a double flirtation, smiled agreeably on Chanter, and asked him if he ever took a walk down Ela Beach.

Everyone knew that the Princess was destitute. What was to become of her?

The copra-buyer responded as an electric bell responds to pressure. His oath, he did take walks down Ela Beach. His word, he would take one now, if he hadn't to go alone; he was scared of going alone—with a huge laugh.

Crewe, not so much piqued as Daisy, for his good, intended him to be, raised his hat in polite farewell, and said he hoped to see Miss Barraclough on the tennis-ground tomorrow. "I'll propose to her there," he thought, remembering a sheltered corner near the beach. "It's time the thing was settled; and when it is, I hope I can teach her better taste."

NIGHTFALL was coming quickly, as he left the grounds of the church, and directed his walk toward the quietest place in town at that hour—the end of the B. P. wharf. There one could find coolness unattainable elsewhere. One could sit on an empty truck, and look out across the darkening harbor undisturbed. One could think, and plan, and dream, quite alone.

Could one? Rounding the corner of the baggage shed, he came upon the Princess.

Clearly, she too had thought the jetty secluded ground. She was sitting, with her profile toward him, on an unused truck, as graceful as something out of a Botticelli picture, as black and slim as a bird. Only her pearl-pale face showed light, in the growing dusk of sundown. And although he could not see her expression, he knew she had been crying.

At this, something unknown and unsuspected in his breast gave way. It was as if a lump of ice (Hans Andersen, he thought; story of Gerda and Kay—oh, damn; let him forget the books for once!) had melted. It was like—he didn't know what, and didn't care. But it made him walk up to the Princess as if he had been her brother, sit down on the edge of the truck, and breathlessly say—but not as a brother would have said it: "I had the honor of helping you last night. I—is there anything I can do now? My name's Edward Crewe."

Astonishingly she said: "I think I know. You were at Hampden University. My sister gave the prizes at the sports, once, and I was in the stand. You got a prize for something. I knew I had seen you somewhere."

"I was lecturer there," he answered. "Yes, I went in for and won the long jump.... But you must have been only a child, then."

"I married Prince Emil the same year," she told him.

There was silence for a moment; in the distance the bell of the Anglican Church began to ring; a native, fishing underneath the pier, burst into nasal Papuan song. Out over Fisherman Island a great star was beginning to rise.

"What is the matter?" he asked her, with a note in his voice that Daisy had never heard.

"The whole town knows what the matter is!" was her bitter reply.

Crewe lit a cigarette, handed his case on to Pamela. This was a question which must be handled with deliberation.

"Your own people—" he began.

"They," she said, with an uncertain little laugh, "they are keeping boarding-houses, mostly, or chauffing other people's cars—since the war."

"Your husband's people?"

"Emil," she told him, choosing her words carefully, "was not popular with them—even when they had anything. He was not—popular—with many people."

Crewe remembered the ship gossip that had filtered into town, about the Austrian prince and his drunkenness, his arrogant treatment of every soul on board. How he had died of pneumonia brought on by a chill, the chill being due to a night spent in the gutters of Cairns.... What was one to say?

Princess Pamela did not seem to expect him to say anything. She went on: "I'd thought the plantation life might be good for him—if not for me."

"Clearly," Crewe said, "you would have been the loser. In such a country—"

"But to live as paid servants," she hurried on, "to be dismissed at a month's notice, if anything went wrong! To spend oneself on somebody else's land—when the land-owning instinct's in one's very bones— Well, I'm not sorry that is out of the question. But it leaves nothing in its place."

AN enormous idea was beginning to dawn on Crewe.

"May I ask you," he said gravely, "to honor me with a visit, bringing any lady you can find to accompany you?"

The star was up now, and the moon was climbing after it. One could see clearly. One could see that Princess Pamela's face was paler than ever, that her deep eyes seemed to burn. But she answered with polite formality:

"It would be very agreeable."

ON the day after they were married—the day Mrs. Marks, the chaperon, was just reaching Port, and home,—Princess Pamela came out onto the veranda of the beautiful costless house, and looked down over the clearing: gold and green, with the sun upon it.

"How can one believe in all this?" she said, drawing a long breath. "Rivers and mountains and forests, all one's own, and for nothing. I feel as if I had wings. I could fly for joy!"

"You don't get anything for nothing, on this earth," modified Crewe, not at all deterred in his phrase-making by the fact that he had both arms around her.

"What do you pay here?"

"All the world," he said gravely. "It's very dear land, in reality—unless you can get the price back again. And I think," he said, holding her a little more closely, "that I've managed to do that."

There was one thing only that he dreaded—a visit from Chanter, who would have too much to say, as usual. He would say things best left unsaid. He would even sneer, perhaps, at Crewe and Crewe's romance. Bring his black girl with him, and tell Crewe how much better it was for a man—

Thought broke off. Chanter himself was coming through the edge of the clearing. And there was no black girl with him. There was a white girl. Crewe was almost certain that he knew her, but he could not at first believe his eyes.

Not till the pair were introduced, refreshed and comfortably placed on the cool side of the house, did Crewe ask:

"What made you change your mind, Chanter? Last time I saw you, you were all against marrying."

"She changed it," was Chanter's cheerful reply. "We hit it off first go. Just after you left for your place, with your visitors. Three months ago. We been down to Sydney for a holiday, and now we're going to settle on my land for good."

"Glad to hear it," answered Crewe cheerfully. But he had seen what Chanter did not see—Daisy's sudden, scornful grimace.

"What I say is," she declared, fanning herself with an air of exhaustion, "that the bush is no place for a lady."

And suddenly, Edward Crewe knew that she spoke the truth.

As stupid women so often do, Daisy had blundered on a significant fact, and held to it, as a limpet sticks to its rock.

The bush—for white men, for brown women; and for the rare, splendid white woman who could give up everything that women loved and valued, casting it without regret at the feet of her man, a noble wedding-gift. There were such women; Edward Crewe bowed his head before the thought.

That did not alter the main fact. Civilization had climbed to its present peak over the bodies of sacrificed women: Savage women worked to death child-bearing, burden-bearing, doing all labor, while the men alternately fought and idled; peasant women hardly more happy, toiling in the fields, yoked with oxen and asses—women old before thirty. The long trek upward to the thrones on which modern man had set his women, throne of the Twentieth Century; of labor-saving houses, of cheap, accessible amusements; of easy transport, of frequent happy commune with one's fellows; of sure help in sickness, for a woman and her child; of little pleasures, so little, so great; shopping, party-giving, gossiping—all that made up a woman's delight in life. Civilized? They were ten times as civilized as men; men were always looking backward, down the long climb; men didn't really care for half the things they had accomplished and acquired, spurred on by their women. They were ready to jump back at any time—as he had done. To be gloriously happy, tasting primitive things—as he was, he, late Professor of English Literature in Hampden.

But this step back was taken as the steps forward had been taken—over the bodies of women. It might be good for a man, even a nation, to go back occasionally to primitive things. Yet it could only be done by sacrificing, in one way or another, a nation's wives and children.

THAT was the "catch in it." Chanter had escaped for a while; so had he himself. But both of them were in it now.

Daisy was no meek victim; very soon, to use her own vernacular, she would show Chanter "where he got off." Pamela never would "show" Crewe; but—

His princess was watching him. She had seen the shadow on his face. Into his arm slipped her arm, warm, eloquent, pressing. Pamela had heard Daisy. Whether or no she agreed with Daisy in her heart, was never to be known. Only she said,—"I love you!" and turned her face, that was level with his own tall head, for a kiss.

A Scream

A murder-mystery next door is ably handled by Dr. Adams, physician friend of the Free Lances in Diplomacy.

THE small house which Dr. Samuel Adams occupied in Chelsea had in its rear a garden-plot ending in a brick wall which ran along an alley connecting with a mews in the center of the block. The adjoining house on the right was supposed to be occupied by a well-known actress, who naturally slept late of a morning and was rarely seen by daylight. On the other side lived an attractive girl with red-bronze hair, a somewhat older companion who helped with cooking and housework, and a lodger who apparently was in and out at irregular hours, seldom exchanging any talk with his landlady or her companion. The fourth member of the family was a big black cat who evidently was a personage—sunning himself on top of the brick wall dividing the two rear gardens, proving quite affable when the Doctor first made tentative advances, and serving to introduce his mistress when she came out to see who was hobnobbing with him.

Adams liked the girl and drifted easily into a pleasant back-yard acquaintance with her; secretly he was pleased when he found that she'd heard of him as a prominent anthropologist and psychologist who had given up a fine practice in New York that he might devote all his time to these hobbies, and who lectured occasionally before distinguished audiences at the Royal Institute.

There was something about the young woman which interested him scientifically, though he couldn't quite define it. Apparently she was a simple, unaffected type with a character which anyone might see at a glance—but in their second chat he sensed a strain which went a good deal deeper than that and was thoroughly under control. Adams accepted her as a young woman with reserves, and became interested in studying the possible direction in which any strong emotion might sway her. She did excellent work as an illustrator, and lived very comfortably on its proceeds.

Except for the local constables, the postman, the charwoman, and keepers of two or three small shops in King's Road, this about summed up the Doctor's circle of acquaintance in the neighborhood. He occasionally strolled along Cheyne Walk on a bright morning, and dined at his club, or with friends, in the evening—but in Chelsea, he worked or read indoors or experimented with plants and flowers in his garden. His man Jenkins, however, who had been with Dr. Adams upwards of twelve years, probably knew over a hundred persons within a few blocks' radius of the Redburn Street house—for it was a fixed belief with him that the more people one knew, the more valuable information was likely to be available in any unexpected emergency.

Redburn Street is a narrow side-eddy from the larger streams of London life—starting off Flood Street and running without a break to Troworth Square, a distance of three average city blocks. Consequently, it is to all intents a little world in itself—visited occasionally by taxies and private cars, but with no buses or trams nearer than King's Road or Pimlico Road. The alley from the mews in the rear of the dwellings comes out between two houses on Christchurch Street—so that the Doctor's garden, his study-windows and those of his sleeping-room overhead, face the southeast, two blocks from the river. This means that they get whatever sun there may be, also the maximum density of river-fog even when it is comparatively thin around Kensington and Hyde Park.

One night a pea-soup fog had settled down upon Chelsea so thickly that if

in the Fog

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

one opened a door or window, enough of it came in to stain curtains and make the room a bit misty until it settled. Taxi-drivers stuck to thoroughfares like King's Road where the powerful arc-lights made luminous spots which one might see when directly under them, while householders living in the narrower streets felt their way home by railings with which repeated fogs had forced them to familiarize themselves.

It was the sort of a night which gets on a person's nerves. Some fogs are concentrations of chilly murk, with a vague suggestion of frightful things about to happen—fogs in which a breath of damp wind will moan in the chimneys like a human being gasping its life out, or a sudden gust will shriek like a lost soul, all the more startling from the fact that it dies away to a deathly stillness.

Doctor Adams had about as few "nerves" as any man in his profession. He knew perfectly well the scientific reasons for the effect such nights have upon the human system, and discounted it. But an hour after his dinner on this night, the sense of oppression was so strong that he stepped through his front door to see if he could make out any of the street lamps or hear anyone speaking along the sidewalk.

He had pulled the door shut behind him. Then he heard a window shoved up violently on the second floor of the actress' house next door—as if somebody, feeling faint, was trying to get outside air, even though it was heavy with fog. For a moment or two there was silence—the dead, heavy silence of fog. Then a frightful scream rang out, ending in a horrible gurgling moan. Then again silence—absolute silence.

IN any great city—particularly in London—one hesitates about interfering, unasked, in his neighbor's affairs. A person may be screaming from a toothache, or some other pain—or may have wakened from a heavy sleep with a nightmare. In such cases, one feels like a fool if he barges into the house. Again, he may be convinced that the screams come from a person being murdered—in which case, that particular house and room are good places to keep away from until after the police arrive—for reasons of personal safety or to avoid the risk of suspicion. Doctor Adams, however, is the sort of man to whom this line of argument doesn't apply. From his professional experience, he knew that a woman in terror for her life had let out that cry—and that probably it was the last cry she ever would make.

Running down his own steps, he kept his left hand upon the railing until he reached that of the next house, where he tried the door. It was locked and bolted, as it usually was at night. He rang the bell and pounded—but with an ear against the door-panel, he could hear only a faint swishing sound, as of clothing brushing against the wall. He managed to straddle across to the sill of the parlor-window and tried to open it. The sash was securely fastened; and breaking the glass and forcing an entrance could be considered burglary, if the police wanted to look at it that way. With a dead body presumably in the house, it would look even worse. He tried the basement door—which also was locked.

He stood a moment or two, considering. Apparently nobody else had heard that scream. Feeling his way back to his own door, he ran through the house to his rear garden, picking up a flashlight on the way, hauled himself up to the coping on top of the brick wall at that side and dropped over into the actress' garden. Now he had but to

follow the wall until he came to the little wooden penthouse at the rear door, which was unlocked. Inside, he found himself in a kitchen. Next to this was a room in the center of the house, used by the cook and the maid as a bedroom. There was a passage from the kitchen to the front basement-door,—a coal-cellar at the left,—and stairs to the parlor floor. Hurrying up two flights, Adams entered the still-lighted front room—finding it misty with fog that had drifted in at the open window, which he hastily closed.

Here chairs were overturned—cushions from a divan lay upon the floor. A rug in front of the divan had been shoved into wrinkles, and bunched by struggling feet. A woman's high-heeled pump lay on the floor beyond it. A triangular Venetian stiletto with an ivory handle and a point like a needle lay in a crease of the upholstery at the back of the divan, but there was no trace of blood upon it. In the partly opened drawer of a small Chinese table at one end of the divan there was a small automatic, with the magazine fully loaded—the sort of weapon a woman might keep about her for defense. From the partly opened drawer, it looked as if some one had tried to get at it during that struggle in the room. On the floor partly behind the hall door, was an embroidered Spanish shawl with the usual wide fringe of knotted silk threads. This shawl seemed oddly familiar to Dr. Adams.

PRESENTLY he recalled that Miss Arleson, in the house on the other side of his, had worn such a shawl in her garden upon mornings when it had been unusually chilly. He couldn't swear to the flowers or the exact coloring of the stripes along the fringe—but he seemed to remember that one of the roses had a splotch of ink on it which wasn't noticeable enough to mar the beauty of the garment, yet which unquestionably had fallen on it by accident. He bent down to look; the splotch of ink was there.

Miss Arleson, for all he knew to the contrary, might be an acquaintance of the actress—or Miss Arleson's lodger might have borrowed it for the actress, if he knew her. But there was certainly no doubt as to whose shawl it was. There was no body in evidence—no trace of blood—no suggestion of murder, other than the scream he had heard. But if some woman *had* been murdered in the house, this shawl was fairly strong circumstantial evidence against his attractive neighbor with the red-bronze hair —and he was tempted to roll it up and take it home with him, to keep until more was known of the case. On the other hand—suppose she really was a murderess? Would he go so far as to shield her? But she might be implicated yet entirely innocent of murder. And if he were going to call in the police, there was no question as to the advisability of leaving everything exactly as he found it.

BUT should he call in the police? What had he of real evidence to show them? He had not heard a sound in the garden, as he came in. Both street doors had been locked when he came up the stairs—one doesn't bolt a door on the inside after he is once outside. As far as Adams could surmise, there might be at least two persons in the house at that moment—possibly three—unless they had gone out over the roofs to some other house in the block, or through the rear door in the brick wall to the alley. He went silently into the other rooms on that floor—then up to the ones on the floor above. In a storeroom, there was a ladder going up to the roof-scuttle —but the scuttle was hooked fast on the under side.

As he came out into the hall and leaned over the stair-rail, he thought he heard the kitchen door pulled shut softly. In three seconds he was shoving up a window-sash in the rear hall-room, and leaning out directing the beam of his four-cell flashlight down into the garden. Probably it didn't even make a luminous spot in that fog to anyone looking up from below—and it was of no use at all to the Doctor. But this time, he distinctly heard the click of the latch as the alley-door in the wall was pulled shut. So somebody *had* been in the house—hidden in one of the dark rooms on the parlor floor, or possibly in the coal-cellar—while he was examining that room! Had it been Selma Arleson?

He made another thorough search from roof to basement, without finding a trace of anybody; evidently the cook and housemaid had been given an evening off —and considering the thickness of the fog, it was doubtful if they would even attempt to return before daylight.

Adams sat down in a chair by the table and surveyed that front room for the third time. Then he pulled the tele-

phone across the table and asked the operator to put him through to Victoria 7000. When the switchboard operator in the Commissioner's Office answered, he called for the Deputy Commissioner, Sir Edward Pelham. As that gentleman had just left Scotland Yard for home, Adams asked for Chief Inspector Beresford. When he came to the phone, the Doctor asked if he would call for Sir Edward, then come at once to the house next his own, on the right, in Redburn Street. When the two officials drove up in Beresford's speed-devil of a car three-quarters of an hour later—his chauffeur knew the streets and curbs of London as well as his own face, fog or no fog—Adams let them in at the front door of the actress' house and took them up to the second floor.

"Now, gentlemen, tell me what you think of this! Nothing has been touched since I got in here—not even that stiletto on the divan or the pistol in that table-drawer. If there are any fingerprints on the corpse, they're not mine!"

"Oh, aye—quite so! Are you pullin' our legs by any chance, Doctor? Where's the *corpus?*"

IN a few words Adams delineated the puzzling situation.

"Now you tell one!" he ended his tale.

"Who lives here?" asked Beresford.

"Some actress or dancer—sleeps most of the morning, as they generally do—drives away in her car either in time for dinner somewhere, or just before the curtain goes up at the theaters. I've never laid eyes on her, and don't even know her name. My man Jenkins probably would; he's of an inquiring turn of mind—gets to know most everybody."

"Hmph! . . . . If that's her picture on the cabinet over there, we'll not need to bother him! That'll be Feodora Lanova—quite popular as a dancer at the music halls. She's booked for a leading part in the new show Grossman is putting on Monday night; she's been rehearsing for a couple of weeks, which would indicate this woman must be Lanova—otherwise she'd be workin' now."

"How do we know she's not? We haven't the faintest idea who the woman was who screamed!"

"We'll settle that question in a few minutes—I'll get through to Grossman."

In five minutes, Grossman answered from the stage of the Globe Theater.

"Aye, Chief Inspector—what shouldt I do for you?"

"Tell me where Feodora Lanova lives—an' where she is now."

"You shouldt tell *me* where she is by now, Chief Inspector! Me—I don't carry t'em aroundt in my pocket, you know. At eight o'clock tonight Madam Lanova shouldt pe here—readty for goin' on in that new part. I sendt to her house—but nopody couldn't find t'e place, in t'e fog."

"Very good, Grossman—call up the Yard at this time tomorrow night—or as soon as she turns up, anyhow. It's possible the woman may be missing."

Replacing the receiver on its frame, Beresford swung around.

"It was Lanova, doubtless, who screamed," he said briefly. "She lives here—no question as to that!"

"But—wait a bit, Beresford. That scream was a good two hours after she should have left for the theater! Why did she stay here without phoning Grossman, as she would have done if she were ill and couldn't go out? She certainly was alive when she screamed—what kept her here for two hours, without letting Grossman know?"

"She might have been killed shortly after seven. Then one of the servants comes in—sees the body—and does the screaming."

"If that were the case, the servant would have been killed also. That was a death-screech—I'll gamble on that! And if she let the servants go out for the evening before she left, there would have been nobody here to get her dinner. But she dined at home—the dishes stacked on the kitchen table prove that. If she deliberately stayed here, as all the evidence indicates, why didn't she phone Grossman?"

SUDDENLY Dr. Adams' face lighted. "Hold on now, Beresford! . . . . I think I've struck it! Something which fits the whole proposition: Some man who has been pretty thick with her in the past writes or phones that he'll be here for a talk this evening. She doesn't dare defy him, but supposes they'll be through in time for her to reach the theater not more than a few minutes late. Has her dinner early—sends the servants out—lets the man in when he comes. They probably start the discussion quietly enough. Then he begins accusing her. She blazes out—not considering the possible consequences. They're at it, hammer and tongs. She's stifling with rage—flings up the window to get some fresh air. He pulls or picks

up the stiletto—it may have been on the larger table as a paper-cutter—and jumps for her before she can get the pistol out of the drawer. It flashes through his mind that blood is messy, and reaches for her throat instead. That's when she lets out that screech. After she's done for, the man beats it for the kitchen and alley-door. I'm inclined to think he must have known the locality pretty well. He's almost up to King's Road when it occurs to him that it's a risk leaving the body there, and he hurries back as fast as he can make it in the fog—goes up through the house, picks up the body, and carries it down into the alley. I don't believe he'd got much farther than that when I came over the wall—it must have been a pretty near thing. Well, there's my hypothesis. Fits every question or objection we've raised—eh?"

"M-m-m—oh, aye—it might." Beresford lighted a cigar. "In a shillin' thriller, it would make a rather clever plot. But, d'ye see, Doctor—it's all pure theory, without one scrap of evidence to back it."

"Except logical probability," Adams countered. "What is there about this case, anyhow, but 'pure theory'? We have here a room in a state of disorder which might have been produced by any sort of physical struggle—not necessarily fatal or even very injurious—especially considering these two lethal weapons, neither of which were used. You'd say, I suppose, that you've no evidence whatever as to a murder having been committed, wouldn't you?"

"Er—quite so. Can't take any other ground, you know! Not on the evidence, so far."

"On the other hand, I heard that scream—and I'm an experienced physician; I say that woman died right then and here!"

"BUT again, Doctor—that's theory, you know. You didn't *see* murder committed, or even hear anything but one scream. You're constructin' an hypothesis, an' then workin' backward. I'll not say that doesn't work sometimes; but it'll not do for a British police organization."

"Then I suppose you'll make a casual examination of the premises by daylight, and if you find no further definite clues, set it down eventually as another case of mysterious disappearance—let it go at that?"

"Don't see what else we can do, Doctor! Put yourself in our places—what do you fancy you'd be doing?"

"Working the probabilities out on a psychological basis—showing you this woman's body not much later than noon, I'd say!"

"Oh, come, old chap! You don't usually make as wild a statem'nt as that! How can you possibly do anything of the sort—with nothing but what we see here, to go upon?"

"I'd use the old bean a bit, to start with. For instance—"

THERE came a quiet interruption which was nevertheless startling. A low, well-modulated voice came from the doorway—in which a handsome girl with red-bronze hair appeared as the three men jumped up and whirled about.

"I hope I don't interrupt a really important conference, gentlemen! You see, I dropped my Spanish shawl here, by this door—and I fancied I'd best come and get it. The shawl was a present from a man I cared for a lot, some years ago; I should very much regret losing it."

"Well, I'll be— You dropped that shawl *here*, Miss Arleson? When?"

"About an hour ago—just before you came in, Doctor."

"Are you a friend of Miss Lanova's?"

"Until I came in here this evening, I'd no idea that I'd ever seen the woman. You may have noticed that she didn't show herself in the daytime, beyond coming down the few steps and getting into her car."

"But you thought you recognized her this evening?"

"I can't be at all certain—she was a —a horrid sight!"

"Then she really was murdered?"

"Yes; no question as to that! There was something vaguely familiar about her as she lay across that divan—like a woman I used to see several years ago; a woman who was then making a hit as a dancer. But I'm not in the least positive this Lanova woman was the same."

"Then—you also heard that scream and got in the back way before I did?"

"I heard something half an hour before that. —These gentlemen are from Scotland Yard? Yes—I inferred that, from what I overheard on the stairs before coming in here. I fancy I'd best tell you what I know of the matter. I had come out for a moment on my doorstep to see how bad the fog really was.

"On the chance I might get in the back way, I ran through my garden into the alley. . . . Then came that frightful scream!"

Suddenly I heard this window shoved up—then the voices of a man and woman, quarreling. Something about the man's voice seemed familiar—sounded like that of a man I'd been told had died from starvation and dissipation. It didn't seem possible it could be the same man—yet I'd almost have sworn to the voice. You see, I cared a lot for him—once. I went along, touching the railing until I was just under the window—which of course I couldn't see in this fog. One minute I was sure of the voice—the next, I was doubtful.

"Then the window was slammed down. On the chance that I might get in the back way, I ran through my garden into the alley, found her door unlocked, came in through the kitchen and was just starting up the stairs when I heard this window go up again. Then came that frightful scream. I'd hoped to reach the room before anything could happen. But when I knew by the sounds that he was choking her, it was fairly certain that he would kill me also if I caught him at it. There was nobody I could shout to for help. I had barely strength

enough to slip into the rear drawing-room, which of course was quite dark, when he ran down the stairs and out through the kitchen. I didn't get even a glimpse of him. My one idea at the moment was to hide—instinctively, I'd pushed the hall door nearly shut. When he'd gone, it struck me that the woman mightn't be dead—that possibly I could do something for her. So I went up these stairs and came in here. The room was bad enough, after what I'd just heard—but the body on that divan—" She halted, then went on determinedly.

"I just clung to the edge of the door and leaned my head against it—my shawl must have slipped off, then. Plainly, I could do nothing for the woman—and this house was no place for me to be found in! I managed to get out through the alley into my own house. Suddenly I realized that my shawl was gone—that I'd probably dropped it here. I hurried back, and up to this room. Then I was so thoroughly amazed that I forgot the shawl entirely—for there was no body on the divan, and no trace of it anywhere on this floor or on the one below! I had just looked around the drawing-room in the rear and turned off the light, when I heard Doctor Adams coming up the basement stairs. I supposed of course it was the murderer coming back; but the man came up to this floor and in the light which shone out into the hall, I recognized the Doctor. I didn't want him to find me in the house because it certainly would have looked suspicious—so I waited until he was searching the top floor. Then I slipped down to the basement, and went home through the alley. There I sat down and thought it over. My shawl was still in this room and I really didn't wish to lose it. If the police were called in, they might keep it, if they considered it evidence. So I came back for the third time—heard who you men talking with the Doctor really were—and decided it was my duty to tell everything I knew about the matter. This covers it, I fancy."

SIR EDWARD, and Beresford, had been watching the girl as she was telling this amazing tale. There was a ring of truth and innocence in her voice—but police officials everywhere soon become highly skeptical. The Chief Inspector's first move was a check-up.

"Er—Doctor—how close an estimate can you form as to how long it was from the moment you heard that scream to the time you started up those basement stairs inside the house?"

"Well—that may not be as easy to fix within two or three minutes as it seems, Beresford. I didn't go down my steps, of course, until after I'd heard the scream. It's quite possible that I hesitated two or three minutes before deciding to investigate. Add another two minutes for feeling my way along and up these steps to the front door. One rings a bell—waits what seems a reasonable time for somebody to open the door. Rings again, much harder—waits again. Puts an ear against the panels and listens for perhaps two or three minutes—say eight or ten minutes, as far as I'd gone up to then. Straddling across to the window-sill and trying to shove up the sash—another two minutes. Feeling my way down to the basement-door and then back to my own—two minutes more. Looking about for the flashlight in my study, certainly a full minute. Getting over the brick wall, into the kitchen, and as far as the basement stairs—a good three or four minutes, because I was feeling my way at every step and trying to move without noise. Altogether, it would figure up eighteen or twenty minutes at the very least. Yes, twenty would be conservative—perhaps five more than that."

"VERY good! Then in twenty minutes, let us say, the man commits this murder, and looks about to see if he's dropped anything. Miss Arleson gets in an' hides on the floor below while he runs down the stairs an' out into the alley. She comes up and sees the murdered woman—takes a minute or two to steady herself—gets out an' goes back into her own house. Murderer returns and is carrying the corpse downstairs, presumably while you are listening outside the front door. Miss Arleson comes back an' finds the body gone—searches this floor an' is on the one below when you come up the basement stairs. All in the space of twenty minutes! Well—of course it *could* be done, because we do many things in less than half the time we suppose and others in three times as long—but I'd say on general principles that this schedule would have to be run on a prearranged synchronization to make it mesh so perfectly, just as we used to compare watches before going over the top at the zero hour. It's not impossible, of

course—but it's the most amazin' string of circumstantial actions which ever has come within my experience."

"I agree with you on that! But I may have been six or eight minutes longer than I figured."

"No. You're a man of science, Doctor – accustomed to exact calculations. I'd say your figuring would be very close to the mark."

"Then the murderer, on his second trip, must have come in the alley-door of this garden at about the same moment Miss Arleson passed through her own and was bolting it. He may have been in the back part of this garden with the dead woman in his arms when Miss Arleson went around through the alley and came in the second time—passing him in the fog—three or four minutes before I came over the wall. In fact, the actions of the three different individuals could only have taken place in a fog as dense as this without discovery!"

"IF you've figured the time correctly and Miss Arleson is quite sure she hasn't forgotten anything, that would come very close to what must have actually happened, Doctor. Er—now, Miss Arleson, I think we need a bit of supplementary information from you, if you don't mind. About how large a woman would you say Feodora Lanova was? How tall? How much would she weigh?"

"Well—she was lying diagonally on that divan with her feet over the edge of the seat a bit at the left end, and her head on the cushion in the right corner. If she'd been stretched perfectly straight on the divan, I fancy her head and feet would have come about an inch inside the arms at each end."

Doctor Adams took a steel tape from his pocket and measured the divan.

"Five feet eight inches, in the clear—which would make her about five feet six. How much would she weigh?"

"She was neither fat nor thin. Good muscular condition, I'd say, for a dancer. Around eleven stone, possibly."

"Hundred and fifty-four pounds. How old was she?"

"Diffic'lt to say, from her appearance. If she really was the dancer I used to see, she'd be upward of thirty."

"H-m-m—average weight of a woman five feet six, at thirty, is ten stone. If she weighed over that, she was either taller than we're estimating, by at least an inch, or her bones and muscles were large."

"I fancy she'd weigh a bit more than ten—it's quite possible she may have been slightly taller—diffic'lt to judge from the way she was lying when I saw her."

THE Deputy Commissioner now began asking questions.

"How much of a family have you in your house, Miss Arleson?"

"My companion, who also does the cooking and half the housework—an old friend from Devon. A lodger—a man of forty—apparently decent and respectable. I fancy he does some sort of commission business in paintings and period furniture, for wealthy collectors—makes a good income—in and out at irregular hours; but he has his own key, so we rarely see or speak to him. He has been away since Monday—in Paris, very likely—goes over there several times a year, I believe. With myself and our cat Pluto, this covers the family."

"How large a man would your lodger be?"

"About twelve stone."

"Keeps pretty fit, I suppose?"

"We don't see enough of him to answer that question accurately, but I fancy he doesn't go in for sports at all."

"Is your companion a large woman?"

"Just medium—about my size."

"Go out much, of an evening?"

"Only to the cinema—occasionally goes to see a cousin, up Hampstead way. She's there tonight—but if she can get a taxi she'll be home by midnight."

"So that you and the cat have been alone all evening, eh? Nobody at home who would know anything of your movements?"

"Not a soul. Martha left about five, and I got my own dinner."

"Can you prove this, Miss Arleson?"

"Quite easily. Martha's cousin would give you the time she reached their house this evening, and the time she left—if she leaves in this fog. And Martha can tell you that Mr. Smithers hasn't been in his room since Monday. She looks after it. Of course I see what you're driving at, sir—but the only one of us who has been in this house tonight is myself—and nobody outside of this room knows that, as yet. If you fancy I come under suspicion I'm perfectly willing to have you investigate in any way you wish. But I want to take my Spanish shawl home with me. Examine it carefully—there isn't a trace of blood on it; if there are fingerprints on the

silk anywhere, they naturally would be mine. It is lying exactly where I dropped it when I leaned against that door, and I can see that nobody has touched it since."

"How do we know it's your property?" asked Sir Edward.

DR. ADAMS picked up the shawl—found the ink-spot and identified it. "Well—it's evidence, you know, Miss Arleson. Technically, we shouldn't let it go out of our hands."

"It is merely evidence that I was in this room tonight, if I choose to admit it—which I voluntarily came in here to do. Otherwise you couldn't prove that I hadn't loaned it to Miss Lanova, or had even had it stolen from me. Without my explanation of what occurred, you've no evidence whatever that a murder has been committed. And I fancy you'll have diffic'lty in getting any further evidence. The body may have been taken a hundred miles from here in a car of some sort. Outside of the city there'll be not much fog."

"Oh, well—I can't see that the shawl is really important, in the circumst'nces. You may take it home after we've gone over it a bit. But we'd like to have you remain for a few days where we can see you again in case anything new comes up—and your companion also."

After Doctor Adams had said that he would stop in for a chat before morning, she left them, carrying the shawl. They smoked in silence for a few minutes. Presently Adams remarked that he was rather surprised at their letting her go until they had investigated further—everything considered.

"We'll prob'ly turn up more evidence by letting her imagine we don't really suspect her—an' she can't get very far," Beresford explained. "There's a constable in front of this house with orders to shadow anyone coming out of it or within three numbers of it—another constable at the alley entrance on Christchurch Street. Even the little you said over the wire seemed to render that precaution advisable—and of course we have been in your house enough to know all about the mews an' the alley."

"Then—you do suspect her?"

"Now I ask you, old chap!" Sir Edward expostulated. "She told one of the most amazin'ly improbable stories I ever heard! Criminal actions simply don't synchronize like that in any such limited time!"

"It takes rather powerful hands to strangle a grown woman. Miss Arleson's are slender and delicate—the hands of an artist."

"Er—quite so; but we've not seen the body, as yet—have only her amazin' story to go upon. She had help in whatever happened—possibly her lodger—possibly the companion. What I really can't figure out as yet, is why they took away the body, if there really was a murder?"

"If there wasn't, why under the canopy would she come in here and tell us all about it? That's a pretty strong point for her, you know—in the total absence of any other evidence. As for removing the body—well, without a body, you've no case; what little investigating you do is merely perfunctory—gives the murderer ample time to get away. The longer you don't find it, the more secure he is. So we'd better be finding that body, right away!"

"Oh, I quite agree! But just where were you goin' to look for it, Doctor?"

"Well—let's project ourselves inside the murderer's brain and figure out what would occur to him after he gets the body down into this alley without being seen by anybody. The fog is greatly in his favor. There are four horses stabled in the mews, and six private cars garaged in some of the old stables—in care of a watchman who sleeps there at night. No private-car owner would risk getting his auto banged up by taking it out on a night like this—so there would be no chauffeurs around the mews this late, and the watchman is probably asleep. There's no question but that the murderer could knock that watchman unconscious and take out one of those cars with very little trouble. If he knows the alley and mews as well as the little evidence we have indicates, he's quite aware of how easily he can get one of those cars. Then his choice is disposing of the body within a radius of a few hundred feet or popping it into a car and taking it some distance away. Taking it on a supposition that he is a man of intelligence, Sir Edward—which would he do?"

"IF there chanced to be any place in this immediate vicinity that wasn't likely to be discovered—for some time at least—he'd decide on that," replied Sir Edward. "Because, d'ye see, the chap doesn't live around here himself. Once he's concealed the body an' gone out

upon a main thoroughfare in this fog, there'd be absolutely nothin' to connect him with the crime. On the other hand, every move in gettin' the body away with a car is a risk—quite likely to leave clues which may be followed up. Knockin'-out the watchman is a risk—it furnishes the police an' news-sheets with a full description of the car, its license-number and owner—gets everyone lookin' for such a car an' tracin' its movem'nts soon after the watchman recovers consciousness. If he kills the watchman, it merely gives him the start he can get before the first chauffeur turns up at the mews.

"Then runnin' a car in this murk is risky business; a collision is likely at any moment, either with another car or some building on the side—which means investigation, detention by the nearest P. C., an' discovery of the body. To be sure, if he's not himself hurt, he can jump off an' disappear in the fog before anybody sees him. On the other hand, suppose he gets out in the country where there's little or no fog, an' is stopped for one reason or another by a P. C. In that case, he can't disappear.

"Then, if he abandons the car in a lane, somebody is almost certain to have seen him walking away in that vicinity. If he abandons the car within the city limits before the fog lifts, the body'll be found an' quite likely identified—which at once destroys much of the advantage he got by taking it out of this house. Even the brainiest criminals almost invariably make one serious mistake, after having provided for any other contingency. But if this murderer really *is* intelligent, he'd not take the body away in a car, d'ye see."

"GOOD! Logical reasoning, Sir Edward; precisely what I expected you to say," Adams applauded. "Very well—that leaves us with the body concealed within a few hundred feet radius of this house. To the best of my knowledge, there is just one place in this neighborhood where a body might be concealed before the fog lifts, and possibly not discovered for several months, at least—and that's a sewer-connection under the two-foot grating in the center of the concrete draining-pavement in the mews. The wash from the cars and drainage from the stables all run down into it. To the best of my recollection, there's a circular brick pit under it which goes down into the top of a four-foot sewer, into which all these houses on both streets drain. I'm betting that we'll find the body there if you care to go and look right now. Eh?"

Beresford nodded.

"H-m-m—he *could* manage to lift that two-foot grating an' pop the body down, in this fog, without bein' seen. We'll go down an' have a look-see, Doctor—at all events!"

It was a case of feeling their way along the alley in the murk, cautiously advancing down the graded concrete until their shoes touched the bars of the grating—lifting it off to one side, then lying on their stomachs and reaching down, at arm's-length, to throw the flash-light beam as far as the sewer. They saw a partly bare human leg and one hand—dimly white—in the sewer. The rest of the mass was dark and shapeless.

The Chief Inspector hurried back to the mouth of the alley on Christchurch Street, and told the P. C. who had been posted there to fetch a short ladder, a rope and another man. It proved a difficult job getting the body out, but fortunately no onlookers were about.

AFTER they had taken their ghastly burden back to the Lanova house, Beresford was reaching for the telephone to call the police surgeon, when Doctor Adams stopped him.

"Wait a bit! The woman is unquestionably dead—plenty of time for medical examination in the morning," he said calmly. "What we want to do now is catch the murderer—which I imagine we may have the luck to do. Send the constables back to watch the entrance to the alley and Miss Arleson's house—keeping out of sight, and letting anybody go in, but arresting anyone coming out. Then we three go into Miss Arleson's house for a few moments."

"Er—what have you in mind, old chap? This is your show—we seem to be merely lookin' on from the stalls!" Sir Edward observed.

"Well—those marks on the woman's throat may have been made by a man with strong but tapering fingers, or by a woman with stronger ones than they appear to be. With a man's or another woman's assistance, Miss Arleson *could* have carried the body down these stairs and put it into that sewer. Just as a matter of psychological interest, I want to know whether she did or not. If she did—no use looking any further. If she didn't—well, I've a hunch that we'll get

the murderer in this house sometime before daylight. So we've no time to lose in settling the girl's innocence or guilt."

THEY found Selma Arleson reading. Her big cat Pluto was dozing comfortably on a table, near her shoulder. The Doctor stroked him gently until he rolled over on his back, opened one golden-amber eye, and began to purr loudly. When the intelligent beast was thoroughly awake, Adams quietly said:

"Speak to him, Miss Arleson. They say cats are selfish creatures incapable of affection—but I've never believed it from what I've seen of them."

"You're quite right not to, Doctor. Just watch!" And she spoke caressingly to the big cat.

Pluto gaped luxuriously—took a long stretch, front and back, stepped daintily over and sat down with one paw on her shoulder, the other softly patting her nose. Then he commenced industriously licking her cheek with his rough tongue.

The psychologist laughed.

"Pluto gives you a pretty good character, Miss Selma. Well, I don't think we need trouble you any more tonight—we just wanted to be sure you were all right. Go to bed and get some sleep. Come, gentlemen!"

In the Lanova house again, Adams took them into the rear room on the second floor, where they sat down in the darkness—listening for any noise from below, while they discussed the crime in lowered voices.

"What was all that flummery about the cat, old chap? I can't see what you found out in there!"

"Know much about cats, Beresford? Like 'em—or are you a bigoted bird-lover who distorts statistics to fit your prejudice? Ever live with cats for any length of time? You see, I move in the very best feline society—and that doesn't mean the long-haired, pampered Angoras, either. It means the everyday backyard cat who respects himself and earns himself a good home with appreciative humans because he loves 'em. If you only notice cats occasionally, you wouldn't know much about feline thoughts or intelligence. But over a period of many years I have never seen an intelligent cat show the slightest affection toward a man or woman who is instinctively cruel and brutal—a potential or premeditating murderer. That doesn't mean a person who kills another in self-defense—a cat himself will do that, if he's up against it. But he positively will not be even friendly with anyone who kills unconcernedly, as a matter of convenience to himself, or because he enjoys killing! If Miss Arleson had committed murder tonight, that black cat's instinct would have warned him of something deadly in her aura—in the scent of her. He'd have shied off and kept out of her reach. And he'd have known without any guesswork, either—he'd just have *known!* You'll say of course that that's no sort of argument for a British jury—but it's good enough for me—assures me the murderer is somebody else, who may come into this house at any minute."

"Just how do you figure that out, Doctor?" asked Sir Edward, who knew a good deal about instinct among his dogs, but hadn't supposed cats were of equal intelligence.

"Psychologically. As a part of my investigations, I've kept records for some years of various reactions among murderers—finally separating them into not more than two main classes: those hardened, habitual criminals who kill casually, either as a matter of momentary expediency or from a paranoiac's curiosity to see life snuffed out of a human being—and those who kill in the heat of momentary passion or insanity and get the horrors when realization comes of what they have done. The one sort are abnormal perverts who scarcely think of a murder after it has been committed, and never dream of going back to the scene of one. The other kind are potential murderers only because they have the kind of temper which lets go when the strain reaches a breaking-point. These are drawn back to the corpses or scene of the crime by a species of horrible fascination which they can't resist. They must know if suspicion has been directed their way. They're obsessed with a fear that they may have left some betraying clue about. I size this murderer up as one of the second type—I don't believe he has self-control enough to keep away from this house as long as this thick fog will hide his movements."

FOR another hour they sat exchanging an occasional quiet word, and listening intently—but not smoking. Then a stair-tread creaked. Cautious footsteps, making the slightest possible rustle, crept up the treads to the second floor, went along the hall into that lighted

front room where the corpse lay across the divan. In another second, there came a stifled cry:

"My—God!"

AFTER standing as if paralyzed for a second, the man whirled to go out —but the two officials were behind him with automatics—the Doctor stood between him and the windows. His arms were grasped and forced behind his back —handcuffs clicked around the wrists. They sat him down in a chair, in the best light—and looked him over. His face was adorned with a Vandyke beard, black like his hair, but showing a light brown at the roots—evidently dyed. A man about five feet nine, weighing a bit heavily. Reddish cheeks indicated a heart or lungs not quite up to the mark.

The Doctor seemed trying to recall a name. Presently he nodded.

"Well, Mr. Browning, I believe? Eh?"

The man's mouth opened in sheer amazement. Then he nodded.

"Oh, yes—though I'm damned if I can understand how you possibly knew—or how the police found that body so quickly in a—in a—place like that—in this fog! News-sheets rag the Yard a lot—but—my word! . . . . I'd not have believed they were as good as this! I always kept out of sight in this neighborhood, Doctor—never around here in the daytime—though your man Jenkins would know me, I fancy—"

"Yes, I saw you talking with him in a little restaurant near here, one evening. He gave me your name. You don't live in the neighborhood?"

"No—I came down from my diggings at Golders Hill just to have that talk with Lanova and make her drop one of my young friends whom she was ruining, body and soul, as she did me. I'll sketch the story for you—as an explanation of what happened here. But I'd like to smoke a cigar while I'm telling it. You're three to one, and I've no weapon on me—can't possibly escape. Can't you risk taking off these handcuffs and letting me feel comfortable?"

The police officials glanced at each other. After all, he hadn't much chance to escape, so they unlocked the handcuffs. He selected a cigar from a silver case and fished in his waistcoat pocket for a patent lighter—a gadget with which he seemed childishly pleased.

"I met Lanova in Plymouth shortly after I married one of the sweetest girls that ever lived. Lanova was then plain Mary Scroggs—making a big hit as a dancer in one of the local music-halls. There was a fascination about her—I can't describe it, but it bowled me over until I had no self-respect or decency left. I'd inherited money, so I took her to Paris—left my wife a check for two thousand quid. Mary began dancing in the cabarets—men went crazy over her. She was intimate with several, but stuck to me until she got my last penny, then went to Warsaw with a Russian—returned as Feodora Lanova, an' made a big hit in London. I tried to get a little money from her when I was pretty well down the grade, and sleeping in Hyde Park. She had me thrown out into the gutter. A rich American stopped his car and picked me up—took me home to his ranch in California, where I pulled up again and made a little money—let a story go round that I'd died in poverty. Got pally with Dick Stanford, my benefactor's only son. Before Stanford died he asked me to look after the boy, if he needed it.

"We came over here. Dick met Lanova in a night-club and she got him, as she'd got me—she bled him by the thousands, and he wouldn't listen to a word against her. I came here tonight to warn her that if she didn't drop Dick absolutely I'd publish enough to get her kicked out of decent society anywhere in the world. She defied me—said she wouldn't let up on Dick as long as he had a cent left. Then I saw red—and seized her by the throat. I was justified, gentlemen—my God, I was justified! Yet British law doesn't take much of that into account. So I suppose I'll be taking that nine o'clock walk to the little woodshed, some morning. Very good! I've at least saved my friend from her.

"But there's one thing I'd like to have you do for me if you will: get me away —before Miss Arleson gets any glimpse of me! Will you do that for me?"

HE was fumbling again in his waistcoat-pocket for the patent lighter; but when his fingers came out with it, they held something else which the other men did not see. He casually rubbed his nose, slipping something between his lips as he did so—and crushed the little cyanide capsule between his teeth.

"Thank you, gentlemen! You see—Selma Arleson was the—wife—I left!"

Another of Mr. New's unequaled stories is scheduled for an early issue.

Smuggler's Cove

Decorations by
Margery Stocking

The Story Thus Far:

SHOT at! Shot at three times! It was certainly the end of a perfect day for Frederick Alonzo Binns—who had been an amiable young man weighing some two hundred pounds, not all of which was bone and muscle.

The day had begun with a curious episode; for F. Alonzo had halted his car across the field from a vast crowd gathered at the airport of his native California city to welcome the latest hero aviator. To avoid slaughtering his admirers, the aviator had landed on the nearly vacant space near Mr. Binns. That blithe young man had taken upon himself the duty of welcoming the hero and had driven him to town in the Binns car. As a result the welcoming committee was left with no one to welcome—and the chairman of that committee was none other than Clarendon Webster, father of F. Alonzo's lovely fiancée Mary Webster, and a power in local business and politics. A painful scene followed later, in which Mr. Webster expressed to Mr. Binns his outraged feelings—and in which the lovely Mary all but returned Frederick's ring.

Worse came at supper-time, when Alonzo's servant He Gow delivered to him a letter from one Wally Pidge, to whom Alonzo had loaned some money secured by an old house.

"Dear Old Horse," it began. *"Well, here we are at the end of the stipulated year, and you'd certainly have your check if I hadn't run into a little more hard luck. But the business flyer that I went into petered out, so the old Du Port place is being turned over to you.*

"Yep, the house is now yours; while I haven't lived in it for five years, it's in good condition, and what if it is old-style mansard-roof French?

"As you know, it's in a secluded location, with ocean frontage and a deep cove that they say smugglers once used. The caretaker, Harley Gann, is the right sort. You might want to keep him on.

"One other thing. Remembering how keen you always were on blood-hounding clues to their lairs, I've drawn a rough sketch of the basement floor-plan of the house. The old hide-out Frenchman Du Port who built the place sure must have had a guilty conscience, what with his get-away tunnel from basement to stable, and also from basement to cove, to say nothing of the dizzy secret stairway in the big chimney.

"Well, I'll ring off. Deed follows just as soon as I can get it around. Reservoir, Wally Pidge."

Impulsively F. Alonzo had piled He Gow and his diabolic pet cat into the car and had driven to Seashore to claim his house. He had arrived about midnight—and had been met by a burst of pistol fire!

Something queer about all this, decided F. Alonzo. He decided to lie low, at least until the deed to the house arrived, and find out what sort of people were shooting at visitors from his house.

He put up in town therefore; and to account for his presence took a job as delivery boy for the local grocer, Delfus Jones. In this guise he met the caretaker Harley Gann, but failed to get beyond the kitchen of his strange house. So

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A sprightly novel of light-hearted adventure.

By TALBERT JOSSELYN

Illustrations by
Harry Lees

that night he broke into the barn, found the entrance to the secret passage, and prowled along it till he came to a locked door. *(The story continues in detail:)*

HE put a hand on the heavy catch, lifted it up, up. He opened the door a hair's width, then a little wider.

To his surprise and indignation, his eye did not come upon people within arm's-length from the door, near enough for him to jab with a knife, if he had been so inclined. He saw a vertical slit of sunset sky; also, something near at hand, and a deep green. A tree—a short, squat, screening pine tree. He inched the door wider, craned a neck to find himself walled in by a number of thick, dwarf pines, with cloudy sunset sky showing above their tops. Then, through the low branches, he caught a glimpse of something gray-blue: the ocean.

He stepped out from the tunnel and peered through the leafy screen.

He was standing in a cup-shaped bit of ground, a truncated trough set against the face of the cliff, some ten feet above the cliff's base. In this patch of ground pine seeds had some time found lodgment, or been set out, and made screen for the seaward entrance to the tunnel of the long-ago Frenchman Du Port.

Long and narrow the cove ran seaward, high-cliffed on both sides, small of mouth where it greeted open water. For a moment, its new owner felt a twinge of compassion for the fumble-footed Wally Pidge who had been forced to give up a spot of such wild beauty. The day was almost gone; a bank of heavy clouds was driving in; sea fowl were circling and calling above the darkening waters. The mystery of the sea and coming night was upon the place.

A gleam through the foliage caught his eye. He shifted position, and now saw a small beach at the cove's apex; on its upflaring sand, seated about a fire, were the picnickers. A series of natural, rough steps, going up a crevice in the cliff's face, had enabled them to descend thither.

All thoughts of beauty vanished. At one side of the driftwood fire—his driftwood—sat Morley Buck and Mary, their heads together; the warmth that went through the watching Frederick Binns was as though he were not only by the fire, but in it. Stretched out on the sand at the other side, smoking leisurely and talking to the others, was the lean Harley Gann. Probably telling his audience what a hell of a fellow he was.

A bull-like quality descended upon Frederick Binns. All that he could now see was the redness of a fire, a fire that had been lighted by trespassers, trespassers on his property.

Well, they wouldn't be trespassing long! He wheeled back into the tunnel, and the weathered door clicked behind him. Swiftly he went up the pent-in passage, and his jaw was set. To get through the search as quickly as he could, and whether he found anything or not—and all the more reason if he did—to come striding down to cliff-edge above the cove and bellow down upon the bonfire gang, "Get off this property!" Then to take things up personally, physically, with Harley Gann and Morley Buck, and he hoped that they'd be so inclined.

ONCE more he was in the basement. A flicking torch-beam found stairs. He mounted them, ghostly of foot, and worked open a door, to slip into a huge, high-ceilinged room—the kitchen.

F. Alonzo Binns, caught like a fool in his own house, showed the stuff of which he was really made: He moaned—then again, louder! There was a scream. . . . then the clatter of feet.

He gave a start as something touched his trouser leg stealthily; then a relieved gasp escaped him at the discovery that it was only a cat—evidently the Gann person's useful mouser.

There was still enough glow in the sky to see by. He got his bearings. Three doors led from the kitchen, and he chose the one through which Harley Gann had popped that afternoon, gun in hand.

He found himself in a butler's pantry —nothing but shelves and drawers. He slipped through it into the dining-room, a splendid room, paneled in oak, with heavy glass chandelier hanging above a massive table. Electricity had been added to the original lighting scheme of hanging lamps at some era after the building's construction, but the original chandelier still hung. Above sideboards, mirrors gleamed dully in the twilight admitted through deep bay windows looking seaward, framed with partly drawn double curtains of heavy material.

Pride momentarily bubbled from the new owner. What a wonderful room!

Followed closely by the friendly cat, Binns pussy-footed into the next room through opened sliding doors. A corner room, facing both the sea and to the south. It made the dining-room look by comparison only big enough to hold a fold-up table and a stool. It stretched away to bowling-alley length, connecting beyond with another room of equal size. Together the two rooms occupied the whole southern expanse of the house.

Again pride of ownership suffused Frederick Binns. Poor Wally Pidge, living away off somewhere else, instead of here! And when Mary saw this—he broke off with a growl. He had forgotten. He'd hot-foot them right out of there!

He padded past seven tons of gilt and mirrors, past a huge formal fireplace set against an inner wall. Now, through an archway on his left, loomed the entrance hall, its heavy door flanked by tall, churchlike stained-glass windows; at its far side a wide, sweeping staircase went darkly up.

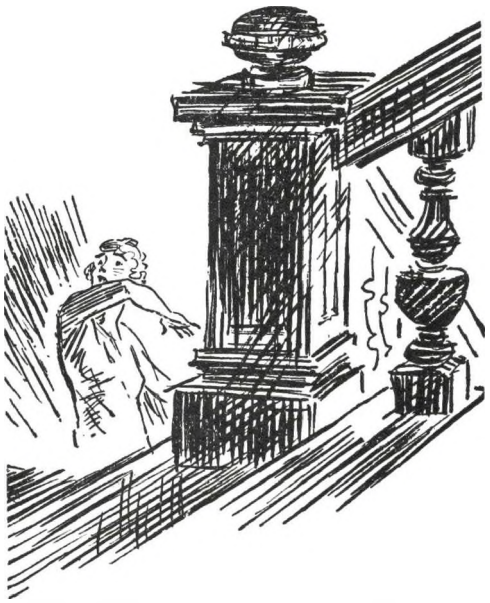
He moved into the hall, saw dimly a small paneled door set under the great stairs. He turned its knob but the door did not give.

Locked! He reached for the prying iron.

"Now," said Frederick Binns, "we'll see what we see!"

But before he had time to see, he heard something coming hollowly through the great dark silent house—footsteps, voices, the boom of a shutting door.

People—people in the house. Now in the dining-room, now in the big corner room. He heard the tramp of their feet on the bare hardwood floor. The house was being overrun.



He had been right! A gang—the house a hiding-place for thieves—with night, they were slipping back in, and here they came!

With a bound, the owner of Du Port house reached a newel post, grabbed it and swung around it, to go leaping up the great front stairs.

At the second landing he almost tripped as the cat shot past him; then he caught himself, hung on to the railing. A voice—Frederick Alonzo recognized a voice, that of Morley Buck. It was the picnic party!

"Rain," said the Buck voice. "Whoever supposed that it'd rain at this time of year? Never saw a shower come up so fast." The voice trailed away. Evidently Mr. Buck was walking about as he talked.

But other voices didn't trail away. Two, feminine, came nearer.

"Did you ever hear of anything so gorgeous? Get rained out on the beach and find ourselves in a grand old spooky house. My, isn't it sweet?"

"Don't you love it? Oh, look at those stairs. I wonder what the rooms upstairs look like."

"Oh, I wouldn't go up," said the first voice. "He said we could look around while he lighted a fireplace fire, but—"

"What's the difference?" came retort. "It won't do any harm, and I've always wanted to see what real French bedrooms looked like. I've always heard so much about them." There was a giggle.

Footsteps sounded in the hall, sounded on the stairs.

Frederick Alonzo Binns, owner of the Du Port place and the man who was going to run the picnicking trespassers right off it, flattened himself against the heavy balustrade. Too late now to run. Caught like a fool in his own house!

Caught. Then F. Alonzo Binns left off mowing and gibbering and showed the stuff of which he was really made. Few could have met the situation better.

He moaned. Moaned not loudly, but long, with falling inflection at the end.

The steps continued. He moaned again, louder, longer.

The footsteps stopped—stopped as though their owner suddenly thought that she heard something, heard something in a dark, empty old house, and wanted to make sure.

She did. F. Alonzo Binns let himself out, spread himself.

There was a scream. There was the clatter of feet, a thump and a howl. Somebody was falling down the wide front stairs.

F. Alonzo Binns went up as the somebody went down. He found sanctuary around a corner, and there he paused. He felt that nobody else would be coming up the staircase for some time.

He was right. Nobody came up, but many came with thumping feet as far as the hall.

"What's the matter?" rose a clatter of question. "What happened?"

"Why—why, Marge started to go up the stairs," began an explaining voice. "I told her not to, but she went, and then all of a sudden she screeched and fell all the way down."

The young lady in question seemed now able to fend for herself. "I didn't fall all way. It was only half." Her voice hardened. "Say, were any of you gang trying to be funny?"

"Funny?" said the gang.

"Yes, funny! Did any of you go on ahead up there and try to scare me?"

"Scare you? How?"

"Made moaning noises," snapped the young lady. "If they did and think it's funny—"

The gang denied all intent at humor.

"Well, I heard something," defended

Miss Marge. "And I'm not running around asking to hear it again."

A new person added himself to the group. "What's the matter?" came the demand. It was the fire-making caretaker Harley Gann.

Explanations again became the order. They were followed by a pause.

"Hum," said Mr. Gann at length. Then his voice took on a note of importance. "What kind of sounds did you say they were? Moans? What kind of moans?"

"Why, moan moans," retorted the chief witness, with acidity. "If you want to go up and listen to 'em, don't let me stop you."

"Moans," repeated Harley Gann, and it was evident that he was again thinking. "Well," he confided, "that's where you'd be likely to hear 'em. Yes sir, right at the head of the stairs. That's where they say he died."

"Died?" said some one sharply. "Who?"

"Why, the old Frenchman that built this place. Of course," went on Mr. Gann with fine relish, "it may be only a story, but that's the way I heard it. I don't know what he died of, whether it was poison or bullets, but—"

"Oh!" said one of the rained-out picnic party.

"Yes'm. And they say that about this time of evening, just as it's almost plumb dark—"

"Let's get out of here," said a number of voices.

THE narrator gave a condescending chuckle. "Not scared, are you? Why, I thought flamin' youth wasn't scared of anything. I didn't think a creepy sound or two—"

Mr. Gann paused, then shifted his tone: "Of course, now, ma'am, if you think it really was somebody up there, some thief who had broken in, I'll just go right on up and give him a round of lead for his pains." The importance of a bullfrog in a puddle welled from Mr. Gann. "You bet. That's what the owner wrote me. Shoot first and inquire afterwards."

Caretaker Gann ostentatiously put a foot on the stairs.

"No!" rose sharp chorus.

If the chorus had not been quite so sharp, the picnic group at the foot of the stairs might have heard the sound from somewhere above, of a person swiftly rising from a crouching, listening attitude, and padding down a hall, saying things as he padded in a manner unbecoming a Christian and a gentleman.

Caretaker Gann quickly withdrew his foot from the stair.

A voice laden with authority now cut through—the voice of Mr. Morley Buck. "Let's get back by the fire. We've stood around like fools long enough. Throw on some more wood, Gann."

IN the upper hall a retreating figure did a whirling right-about and came scuttling back to the head of the stairs. His face was working hideously. "Throw on some more wood, Gann," he repeated, soundlessly. "Gah! By—" He almost started down the stairs, then gave up the idea to wave his arms and hurl blisters at the incredible Wally creature who had so offhandedly issued orders for carefree shooting. . . .

Frederick Alonzo Binns, master of Du Port Hall, sat on a top stair like one too young to mingle with the revels of grown-ups and listened to the picnic party drying itself out down below. The drying out process seemed to consist mainly of foot-racing up and down the big rooms, with sliding effects thrown in.

"Why don't they get bicycles?" demanded the owner.

Then once more he sprang up and scuttled away. Footsteps down in the hall below, people talking. A searing sensation went over him: It was Morley Buck and Mary.

"Let's sit here on this settle," suggested Mr. Buck.

"Ooh, don't you like this old house?" glowed Mary.

Down the Binns spine went the first pleasant tingle in many an hour. She liked the old place!

"Oh, it's all right if you like this sort of junk. But what I was going to tell you, Mary, was this." Here Mr. Buck apparently put his head closer to Mary's. "Listen, Mary."

Evidently, however, Mary didn't care to listen. "Oh, don't let's talk mush. I'd like to see this house, now we're in it. Don't you suppose the caretaker would show us around if we asked him?"

"Who wants to go sightseeing?" growled the miffed Mr. Buck. "Say, wait a minute! I got a better idea. Let's go tell the others."

Footsteps again sounded, then exclamations of pleasure.

"Wonderful idea! Morley, old top, you've sure got a head on your shoul-

ders. Isn't he too precious? Say, we'll sure make whoopee."

"Now, listen." The precious Mr. Buck was talking. "Get whoever you can, Edgar. Those Filipino boys at the hotel don't play such rotten music. But get somebody. Let's make this a party."

"I'll let you out the front way." It was caretaker Gann speaking.

The Gann boots clumped across the parqueted floor. A blaze of light hit the great front hall. The instant before it hit, a face was withdrawn from between banisters in the upper hall. The owner of the face rolled over, lifted, and dived around a corner, the face working as though the owner were possessed of demons.

Caretaker Gann was saying:

"Say, while we're waiting, if any of you folks really want to look around upstairs just say the word. There aint nothing to be scared of. I was just kidding when I spoke about the old Frenchman dyin' up there. I dunno where he died, or if he ever did die. What you girls heard was probably the wind outside, moaning in the trees."

The Gann boots sounded on the stairs.

It is said that an elephant can go through the densest jungle at full speed without making sign or sound. Frederick Alonzo Binns bettered all elephant records. He had rounded three corners and was going down Stygian back stairs before the Gann sightseers were even under way.

What he was thinking and saying had best be left unsaid. It can be hinted at, when, several minutes later, after a voyage through lower back hall, kitchen, kitchen stairs, tunnel, stable, and a dropping out of stable window, he paused at a corner of the now lighted tall house and lifted up both fists. The man who was going to run out the picnic party and who had been run out instead, moved swift lips.

"Owner of the place, and run out by that, that, that—"

His fists went higher, and this brought up his head, so that his face was to the sky—and he observed that the stars were shining. Stars. The rain had lasted only long enough to drive Morley Buck and party indoors.

It was a shambling maniac who went skulking away among the trees. . . .

Some time later, a heavy-set young man in a large roadster entered the decorated town of Seashore, and was just turning into a garage when another car,

as decorated as the town, and laden with costumed figures, pulled up alongside the vehicle of the lone rider.

"Hi!" cried a costumed one. "Where's your costume, and why aren't you down at the lagoon?"

Frederick Alonzo Binns looked soggily at the speaker. Slowly he recognized the Venetian as a disguised member of the Committee—Seashore's Celebration Committee, beginning with a Feast of Floating Lights.

"Costume — lagoon," said Frederick Binns, dully.

"Yes! And we're going to need everybody, too. That damned shower scared a lot of dim-wits out. They got into costumes and then disappeared. We're rounding up whoever we can find. Some costumes still left at headquarters—the vacant room in the Fink Building. Get yours and come a-running!"

The Venetian Paul Revere whirled away.

Frederick Alonzo Binns sat stolidly at his wheel. And then, a line here, a seam there, his face worked, broke, fell all apart, and he threw back his head and gave way to an outburst of gigantic, Homeric laughter.

"Celebration! Me and a celebration! Well, why not?"

A PORTLY young Venetian gentleman surveyed himself in a mirror that had been hung on a wall in the Fink Building. He considered his plum-colored, puff-sleeved silk jacket, his canary-yellow doublet and hose, his blue velvet hat smothered in green ostrich plumes, and feelingly shook hands with the costumer, Mr. Gilberstein. Then

he sauntered outside, stepped across the sidewalk to a large roadster and was about to climb painstakingly in, when his eye caught a passing figure beneath an arc-light across the street.

"Hey!" called the Venetian.

Master Chesterfield Wurzel, erstwhile truck-driver for the grocery concern of Delfus Jones, approached suspiciously. Not until he was almost within reach of the cloaked figure did Master Wurzel learn the truth. Then he stopped precipitately and gave a snorting cry.

"For gosh sakes! You?"

"Yes," confessed the Venetian Frederick Alonzo Binns, "me. And you've just got time to get in there, Chesterfield, before the accommodating gentleman closes, and pick out your own costume."

A BELLOW split the night, and Chesterfield Wurzel backed away.

"No sir!" he shouted. "No sir! I'll never put any of 'em on."

"Oh, yes, you will," said the Venetian gentleman, equably. "You're not going to throw down an old pal. We go through everything side by side, Chesterfield. Come on."

And Chesterfield Wurzel went. There was horror in his glassy eyes, yet he went.

"No plush hats!" he managed to breathe out. "No plush hats!"

Yet it was even a plush hat, in shape something like an old-time milk-can cover that had been run over by a trolley car.

"Gosh!" cried Chesterfield. And well he might, for he looked like a volcano rising from the sea. His shoes and stockings were green; the rest of him was clothed in a fireman's red.

"Come on," said the big Venetian. "We don't want to be late. We'll go over to the rooms first and leave our everyday clothes."

The big roadster was piled into. It came to a roaring stop in front of the D. Jones restaurant.

"Come on," repeated Binns. "Need you for advertising purposes. And we need everybody we can get."

The eating section of the D. Jones restaurant held no prospects, but from beyond the swing door came the sound of animated Cantonese conversation. The modern version of the Carnival of Venice thrust open the swing door, and the Cantonese conversation died.

"Us," announced Frederick Alonzo Binns. "Also you. Come on." And he launched into his sales talk.

When he finished, there was stricken, hideous silence. Then it was relieved by words, done into English in the best Cantonese manner. Any other man than the one in the magenta cape and canary tights would have bowed to the blast, but Frederick Alonzo Binns merely compressed his lips and stiffened his neck. Then he threw back his head and started. The insurance industry has grown to mighty wealth and power on less, much less, than that which flowed from the lips of F. Alonzo Binns in the Jones kitchen.

"We go," he concluded. And to their own unbelieving horror, the Celestial trio went.

The five emerged into the dining-room, and came upon restaurant-owner Delfus Jones himself. Jones put up a good fight, a noble fight, but he went down under a welter of words. Went down, and did not come up except in the Fink Building; and Solomon in all his glory *and* the lilies of the field, were not arrayed as he. A gold and purple robe enveloped him from throat to heels; a crimson sash was about his waist; on his head was a high-peaked, brimless hat made iridescently regal by a lone peacock feather.

The metamorphosed restaurant and grocery crew was put into the front and rumble seats of the roadster almost on the run.

Just as the door was being closed, the final member of the crew arrived at full gallop. Around the corner came bounding a yellow animal of some ten

pounds weight, and hurled itself aboard with a loud *"Prraow!"* Kitty Cat Ash-can had no intention of being left alone.

A dry chuckle came from one sympathetic Celestial Venetian.

"Where pants for Kitty-Cat?" demanded He Gow.

THE town of Seashore, as has been said, lies on an oak- and pine-wooded slope between rolling hills and the sea. Its southern boundary is marked by a small river that comes trailing down a long, winding valley piled high with trees. When it reaches the town of Seashore, the river broadens out to become a lagoon fringed with willows and rushes backed by low bluffs, then narrows suddenly and through granite ledges goes to meet the sea. A drive has been built around the town-side rim of the lagoon, and in the most naturally favored spot between the drive and water, where the low bluffs drop down, tiers of seats have been placed to accommodate spectators to the Seashore Feast of Floating Lights—which was to celebrate the reopening of the fish-cannery, the establishment of the Reforestation camp—the New Deal, in fact.

The roadster bearing the latest thing in Venetian Gilberstein turnouts bowled along the lagoon rim drive, whirled into a parking place. "All out. Everybody, all out. End of the line. Venice," announced Mr. Binns.

With guarding eye, the largest of the Venetians convoyed his companions down toward where a string of lights set among willows showed a landing-float and a number of boats. But in the path appeared an exquisite figure in lavender silk, slashed jacket, doublet and hose, with plumed hat that fitted and red calfskin shoes that did the same, and put out a barring hand.

"Just one moment, please." His tone was richly embroidered with authority. "What group, may I ask?"

"Group?" said he of the magenta cape and canary tights. "Why, work-group. Men to row boats."

A frown went across the pathway gaurdian. "Boatmen? Then why aren't you dressed as boatmen? I'm very sorry, but I have strict orders to permit no one to pass unless correctly garbed."

An unpleasant look went across the ample Binns features. Then it was supplanted by a wide smile.

He clapped a jovial hand upon the other's shoulder.

"Right you are. I can see they can't slip anything over on you. But didn't they tell you about us? You know, the truth. The secret."

"Secret?" frowned the pathway guardian.

"Yes, the secret part that was written into the drama at the last moment. The big surprise for the audience. You know—ah, I can see that you're wise. The return of Marco Polo!"

"Marco Polo?"

"Yes, old Polo himself, back in Venice the day the Carnival opens. Get it? All the way from China. And to put over the real dramatic punch, he has real Chinese dignitaries with him. Say, you'll never know how much trouble it took to get the genuine article, either. I'd liked to have seen you trying."

The lavender gentleman relaxed, but this was only partial. "Marco Polo. I see. But I don't understand why they didn't tell me." Justifiable grievance was in his tone.

"Didn't have time. Mrs. Magoozlum—"

"Magoozlum?"

"Well, the lady that wrote the play—"

"Chichester is the lady's name."

"Ah, I knew it was something like that," said F. A. Binns. "Well, she—" And then, as though he had now done enough dallying, the last of the Binnses broke sharply off and looked down upon a section of the lavender one's costume with such unbelieving horror in his eyes as to cause a sharp cry to come from the impeccable young Venetian.

"What's the matter?"

"YOU don't mean to say," demanded Frederick Binns, the horror growing, "that you went and let them slip anything like that over on you, do you?"

"Slip what?" The impeccable one was now also looking where Frederick Binns' gaze was concentrated. It was upon the lavender doublet.

"Why, your pants," explained Frederick Binns.

"Pants?" The word crackled. "These aren't pants. This is a doublet."

"Well, whatever it is," granted the other, "I wouldn't have let 'em slip over on me a thing with a rip in the seat."

"Rip!" The lavender gentleman's voice went up until it broke like an egg against a brick wall.

"Yeah, rip. Aw, you can't see it. It's right where you can't. But I guess other people can."

The stricken impeccable tried still further to turn himself inside out to get a glimpse of so unnamable a horror. He failed.

"Told you it was where you couldn't see," said Frederick Binns gruffly. "Say, my advice to you, young fellow, is to walk sideways, or go sit down. That's a mighty quick-fitting suit you got on, and you haven't any cloak. And we don't want this show spoiled by anything that's off-color in any way. Get me?"

Frederick Alonzo Binns loftily drew his magenta cape about him and stalked past. The rest of the Marco Polo cast followed, leaving the pathway guardian in what looked like twisting death-throes caused by a half-pound of the best strychnine.

THREE men stood on the float that was moored on the far side of the willows. They were dressed as medieval sailormen. For a moment they stared at the newcomers, then their faces split with welcoming grins.

"Hello, Jones! And hanged if that aint young Wurzel. Why, the whole restaurant!" Admiration was in their tone.

"And now," inquired Mr. Binns, "where's our boat?"

"Well," said one of the garage sailormen, slowly, "there's two or three boats waiting here, but only one of 'em's any good, and the bird out in the path with the waxed mustache said we weren't to go until he got the right crowd."

"Well, we've got it," said Frederick Binns.

And forthwith Skipper Binns took command. His eyes danced as they gazed upon the craft moored at the float. It was an everyday large-sized rowboat made over with high sides and a projecting prow to look like an ancient small-sized galley. It was painted bright red, and from between its two short pole masts glowed a row of colored paper lanterns. The crew embarked, and Kitty Cat Ash-can curled up morosely in the bow.

"Hey," protested one of the authentically garbed oarsmen, "you don't mean that cat's really going, do you?"

"Sure."

"Well," said the sailor, "it aint my funeral, but there are some big dogs in one of the floats, and if they see this pile of fur, there's going to be one less cat around here."

"Or dog," amended Frederick Binns. "Now—all right? Everybody set? Shove off!"

We pass over the earlier scenes of that wild, wild night which the Venetian carnival was to become. For a time the Binns genius for trouble was in abeyance, and the carnival proceeded in the idiotic if colorful fashion peculiar to such affairs. Then in an evil moment that female grenadier Mrs. Chichester hailed Admiral Marco Polo Binns, and failing to recognize him, commissioned his craft to act as dispatch-boat. A half-hour of erratic and desperate rowing on inconsequent errands followed. Then in desperation and exhaustion Admiral Binns took pity on his crew and sought sanctuary in the lee of the barge laden with the fireworks which were to go dazzlingly heavenward as the happy young Venetian lovers plighted their troth.

Here they rested, listening to the exploits by land and sea of the fireworks man, a much-tattooed individual who had been through everything worth while on this planet, and who didn't hesitate saying so, from the blowing up of the battleship *Maine* down to the present time, and whose knowledge of powder and the handling of the same was so infinite, that all he had to do was to put out his hand, and dynamite would roll over and be dead dog.

"You stick around and you'll see something that's worth seeing tonight," promised the Vesuvius man.

Twice from this sanctuary the dispatch-boat was routed out, and during the second routing, while alongside a galley getting orders, the equivalent of flaming Greek fire fell into the Binns craft. With a squall of joy, a Venetian maid, hair streaming, launched herself from galley among dispatch-boat oarsmen.

It was Miss Lotus Givens.

"My hero! My heroes!" she cried.

The hero and heroes did everything but bang Miss Givens over the head with an oar—with the net result that when they had given up in despair, the Venetian maid settled herself primly next F. A. Binns and said: "Now that you boys are through giving me a real Venetian welcome, let's row around the lagoon a few times. I like to row fast."

IT was here that Dragon-fly Wurzel, almost sniveling in rage, shook fist at the Venetian maiden's back and began

darkly to hint at drownings. Then again he broke out:

"I'll bet we've rowed across this old pond a million times! Why don't we just quit?"

"Can't quit under fire," retorted a hoarsely breathing Skipper Binns. "Besides, the play is almost over, or ought to be."

Indeed, and it should have been. Seemingly enough water had gone under the dispatch-boat's keel for a dozen classical dramas.

"Where were you when you had to leave?" asked the skipper of the boat's latest passenger. They were now conveying to the landing-float a Venetian nobleman who had become afflicted with a violent nose-bleed just before he was due to appear on the floating stage in his three-line part.

"You asked where they were?" The nobleman took handkerchief from nose. "Why, right where the Doge and the false priest—"

"Oh, I remember," said Binns. "Then handsome-boy and his crowd will be coming along, and there'll be the fight and the grand finale. We just got time to put you ashore and get back for that and watch old Know-it-all set off all those skyrockets. Heave-ho, hearties!"

The hearties heaved. The nobleman was put ashore. Then Frederick Binns caught sight of two men in a small boat at the far end of the float, and the men were working at something and swearing.

"What's the matter, buddy?" called Binns.

"What aint?" came shrilling back. "Everything! Work like a nigger all day on this damned old celebration, and now I have my own boat taken away from me and given a leaky tub." A bucket rasped and banged louder; evidently furious bailing of the leaky tub was going on. "I tell you I've stood enough!"

"Why it's Dolf Cuddy," exclaimed Doge-brother Jones, peering out. "Dolf Cuddy and some friend of his. You know him, Lonnie. Drives general truck for—"

"Sure I know him," said Lonnie Binns. "Get right in here with us, you and your helper. Had your own boat taken away, you say?"

The lean Mr. Cuddy stopped bailing, "Not five minutes ago a young feller and a crowd up and took my boat away. Said it was needed important. Wouldn't even let me and Jake ride with 'em,

because we didn't have the right costumes."

"What sort of a young fellow was it that took the boat?" demanded Binns eagerly.

"Aw, some swell in a pretty suit with a sword and a waxed mustache. Him and a crowd in long cloaks—"

"It's him," said Frederick Binns. "Rag-picker Ike. Get aboard, quick. You and Jake are going with us to find that bird and we—"

"Oh, boy," chortled Chesterfield Wurzel from the bow. "Le'me have a chance at him."

"You leave things to me," ordered Skipper Binns. "Lean on those oars."

The oars were leaned upon until they bent. The dispatch-boat cleaved the dark waters of the lagoon.

"There's a whole row of boats over there, coming up toward the big barge," said Lookout Wurzel.

"The hero and his crowd," interpreted Binns, "out to make mincemeat of the Doge. Dolf's boat, here, is probably among 'em."

It was. At the rear of the rescuing hero's column bobbed a garlanded shallop, loaded to the guards with cloaked Venetian lords and ladies.

"Head for 'em," commanded Binns.

"Oh, such fun!" commended Miss Givens. "Now we're going fast!"

BY now the leading galley of the column had reached the barge, and the hero lover and his old friend the drunken shoe-cobbler—now drunk no longer and swinging a lusty blade—leaped from their craft with their followers and set upon the unspeakable Doge and his myrmidons in true classical style. "Have at you!" sounded the cry. "What, caitiff? Down, dog!" A multitude of rapiers

crossed and sawed, up, down, up, down. "Huzza!" chorused Venice. And the audience on shore, which had been waiting two hours for something like this, roused itself from blank-verse coma and gave applause.

The Binns craft was now within hailing distance of the crowded shallop, and the shallop was by now close to the embattled barge.

"Hey, there!" called Frederick Binns. "Hold on, you!"

The shallop showed no disposition to hold on. The Binns galley ranged alongside.

"I'm talking to you," said Binns, and thrust out an oar. It caught one of the Venetian lords in the back. The Venetian lord turned haughtily, also swiftly, around. Frederick Binns almost dropped the oar.

The Venetian lord was Morley Buck.

Morley Buck, whom Frederick Alonzo Binns had last seen partying in his—Frederick Binns'—house. Partying with Mary Webster and— The Binns eyes swept the shallop. Mary Webster sat there, sat looking at F. Alonzo Binns.

Miss Webster's gaze held so many things that one can write his own ticket as to what they may have been. Surprise was among them, yet not great surprise.

"Oh!" cried Mary, as she recognized Miss Givens. Her kettle of wrath toppled wholly into the flames.

HERE the back-poked Morley Buck found words, and knowledge that it was F. Alonzo Binns who had done the poking did not sweeten them.

"Say, you lout! A little of that goes a long way. Clear out of here before we do something to you!"

"Yes," agreed a voice from the shallop's stern, "you and your Marco Polo episode, and other things. You oaf!" The young Venetian gentleman of the exquisitely fitting lavender costume glowered pudgily from between two damsels in the stern seat. "Get back to your kind!"

"Beat it, big boy!" added the damsels.

Frederick Alonzo Binns drew a happy, snorting breath. "Listen!" he boomed. "You gang get out of that boat into some other one and get out fast! I'm warning you."

"Go to hell!" cried Morley Buck.

Frederick Binns drew a snortier, happier breath. "All right. Then take what's coming to you!"

Mary Webster knew her Frederick Binns. "Frederick!" she cried, and alarm was in her tone.

"Oh, don't mind that four-flusher," said Morley Buck, reassuringly. "I'll 'tend to him." He picked up an oar.

"GET your women clear!" rang the Binns voice. Then to his crew he cried: "Stern all. Put your backs into it. Give her everything you've got. Sock your backs into it!"

The young lady at Mr. Binns' side clutched at his arm. "Coward!" cried Miss Givens. "You're running away!"

"Running away, hell!" retorted the skipper.

The dispatch-galley boiled away from the shallop. Stretched a wide gap of water between the two. Then, "Hold her!" barked Frederick Binns. Then his voice went flaming up. "Give 'em the works! Steer for 'em, Delfus. Ram 'em. Oars, you crew. Pull!"

To the spectators of Seashore's Feast of Floating Lights, engrossed in the classical battle between the forces of the wicked old Doge and the noble young hero on the barge, there suddenly obtruded in the near foreground a minor fray so well acted as swiftly to attract attention. A garlanded shallop, laden with lords and ladies presumably hastening to the support of the young hero, had swung in between shore and barge. A small galley, filled with multi-colored figures was bearing menacingly down. Without doubt, here was an added classical touch to the grand scene on the barge—a boat-load of ruffian adherents of the old Doge fighting it out to the last, or maybe the ruffianly crew was intent on capturing both lords and ladies and holding them for ransom. Not until the last moment did the lords seem to realize their peril. Then the lavender gentleman's rapier got halfway out of its sheath, the oar started aloft, the mandolins and guitars were thrust outward.

None of them got any farther.

There was a crash—an honest, sizable crash. The galley had rammed the shallop squarely amidships.

The shallop careened drunkenly. So did some of the lords. The one with the rapier measured five feet seven along the bottom of the boat; the one with the oar caught a fellow-noble alongside the ear with the oar-blade; the two with guitars, on the low side of the shallop, went overboard. Sounded shouts and

squeals, and free-spoken words of strong nature.

Sounded further shouts and squeals and words. Then a bellow—this from the nobleman who had tried to defend himself with the oar.

"Hey! You've rammed us. We're sinking!"

There was a wild getting to feet.

"Hey!" commanded the leading partisan of the Doge. "Women only! You birds can shift for yourselves."

He caught at one of the ladies. She resisted him, but was unceremoniously hauled aboard the galley. Another was dragged over the rail. Clearly the Doge's ruffians were out to steal the Venetian beauties and leave the noble gentlemen to perish. And the shallop was sinking, sinking.

More drama was added. The flame-suited youth at the galley's bow oar broke out with a startled shout:

"Doggone it, looky! Our bow's all come loose. Looky, the water in here! Hey, we're sinking, too!"

The kidnaper of Venetian ladies gave one look: Chesterfield Wurzel had spoken the truth. Then the Binns brain went into high gear.

"Row to the barge!" he cried. "Row to the barge."

The barge was not more than a boat-length away. Never had the Binns mind functioned so clearly. Interlocked, galley and shallop crunched against it. Up over its side swarmed the abandoners of sinking craft.

THE fierce battle that had been in progress on the barge, which during the last few minutes had shown signs of slackening down with attention wandering elsewhere, now stopped abruptly—then started again, fiercer, but in not quite so classical a manner.

F. Alonzo Binns, first of the galleymen up over the barge's side, wheeled and bent over to haul up the ladies. The cloaked Morley Buck, vaulting from the shallop, took a free and running swing at the Binns head the instant his feet touched barge deck. His aim was not quite true. It was merely the Binns blue plush hat that went spinning off. Whereupon F. Alonzo Binns rose and knocked Mr. Buck flat. At the same moment the exquisite young Venetian of the lavender suit, having saved himself from dark waters, struck at F. Alonzo with his rapier, using it like a limber whip. At which Master Chesterfield Wurzel, now present, gave the lavender gentleman three of his best in the region of the solar plexus, and the young gentleman folded up like a faulty card table. Into this tableau came the rest of the shallop's young nobles; came also Delfus Jones and He Gow and See Fong and nephew Willie Kee; came the two garage sailormen and the wood-chopper; came the dispossessed Dolf Cuddy and friend Jake. The ladies were left to rescue themselves.

FOR a moment the dead and dying of the late Doge battle continued to take any and all boot-soles from their prone positions on the barge deck. But the dead and dying of a battle, no matter how classical, will endure only so much. Up they pulled themselves and struck at all under suspicion. From around the Doge's raised throne, where Venetian affairs were just culminating with the wicked Doge begging for life as the hero held a poniard at his scraggy old throat, Doge and hero and a remnant of living classicists stared glassy-eyed at the scene below—then flung themselves down to try and stop it, but in doing so made themselves look like fresh battlers, and were treated accordingly.

Alone remained immovable the Doge's two great wolfhounds, large enough to bend the springs of the automobiles in which they were carried about, and trained to stand statue-like beside his throne, no matter what might eventuate. Well-trained were they. Nothing had eventuated as yet. But it did. Into sight on the shore side of the barge scrambled a yellow creature weighing some ten pounds. The galley-riding Kitty-cat Ash-can at length had decided that it had no intention of being left to drown alone. *"Prraow,"* said Kitty-cat, coming into view. With a fine baying note the Doge's two immovables leaped forward. Then leaped backward. And then for the next several minutes contented themselves with blindly running into whoever got into their way, and as their weight was equal to that of a well-fed man, the hit-and-run victims left in their wake were like grain under the reaper.

At this happy moment of climax, the red-, black- and gold-suited fireworks man on barge Number Two—he who could walk right among dynamite with a handful of lighted matches and not think anything about it—apparently did

just that. From the know-it-all man's barge appeared a flickering, baleful light, followed by a ruddy glow, and then a great skyward geyser of light. In one kaleidoscopic set-piece the combined "Oh's" and "Ah's" of half an hour went up in the time it takes one to say "Oh, my gosh, look!"

In that same time, the trial-by-error fireworks man's figure was observed on the barge, outlined in sharp relief against the glare of artificial day and futilely beating at a fiery shoal of skyrockets and Roman candles about his ankles, then giving up the unequal combat to race to the edge of the barge, where he poised like one getting ready to dive—and then dived.

The Vesuvius man had promised the dispatch-boat's crew that they would see something worth while; they had.

They continued to see it. A battery of skyrockets, left to their own aim, spittingly hopped the short distance that separated the two barges and fell upon the embattled actors. A squadron of parti-colored bombs followed. Roman candles, flower-pots, and a dozen other species of the Vesuvius Company's best leap-frogged into the Venetian mêlée, and proceeded to skitter about the Doge's throne with all the furious aimlessness of decapitated chickens. . . .

The wicked old Doge was the first to go. He had a long, false beard. When only part of it was left, he stepped full stride into the lagoon, landed armpit-deep in water, and proceeded to claw his way toward shore, waving his arms about his head as he went, as might a man pursued by hornets.

When in Venice, do as the Doge does. The shallow lagoon between stage and spectators became the scene of the most spirited broad-jumping and wading contest known to history, each wader non-equipped in a costume furnished by the Gilberstein Outfitting Company.

Even to Mrs. J. Mosby Chichester! Being a person of regal proportions, the author of Seashore's Venetian Spectacle contrived to keep a portion of an imperial purple robe above lagoon level. Below that, Seashore's leader of the classic was as mortal as the humblest of her followers.

Like the headless chicken that gives one last, extra convulsive flop before consigning itself to the cook-stove, so did the Vesuvius Company's Special Fiery and Extra Brights spout up in a final froth of flame, and then leave the two barges and the lagoon to the darkness that came swooping down.

And on this note, the Seashore Feast of Floating Lights, done in the classical Venetian manner, passed along into the corridors of history.

CHAPTER IX

WHEN Frederick Alonzo Binns awoke next morning he gave a convulsive start: Remembrance of the Feast of Floating Lights and its classical climax struck him like a tidal wave. He had fled. No, he hadn't fled; merely, like everybody else, he had departed.

But they'd be looking for somebody to lay the blame on—why not for him?

Further remembrance smote him. Morley Buck and Mary. The house. The status of that gun-carrying Harley Gann. He waggled limp hands.

"Music. Loud music. Got to be faced."

Just how loud the sonata was going to be, became apparent as he, in so-called white apron and Eat More Ham cap, was sweeping the Jones sidewalk. A shadow of portentous size fell across his path—the shadow of a large woman in jacket and knickers, stout boots and Tyrolean hat.

Mrs. J. Mosby Chichester looked him up and down, especially the Eat More Ham cap and the tied-about apron. She spoke.

"I expected to find a low, gross person, and I have. I shall inform the author-

ities. Not that you ruined the Feast of Floating Lights—don't give yourself that false impression! Nevertheless the authorities shall be informed."

And down the street went Mrs. J. Mosby Chichester.

"Looks like a storm. Bad storm," mused Frederick Binns, as a stout, rubicund man came striding up.

F. Alonzo Binns put himself at semi-defense position, and increased it to full defense as the invader thrust out a hand. But no blow fell; rather, there was a fierce gripping of the Binns fist by the newcomer, accompanied by a smile warm as an August sun.

"THEY said you worked here," said the newcomer, "and I've come to tell you that the town ought to put up a statue to you. Joyce is my name. Lived here for years. Last night was the first real good time that I've had in a generation down at that lagoon. Years ago we used to have pretty good times without thinking about them. Then this higher-thought gang came into town, and pumped us full of the beautiful and the true. With us footing the bills. Well, I went home last night—"

But now a restraining hand fell upon Frederick Binns' shoulder, and he wheeled to find himself faced by Seashore's marshal, with Mrs. J. Mosby Chichester and the man Ducey forming a background.

"Come out of here," commanded the Marshal, "and I don't want no back talk, eeder." He yanked at a Binns arm, and the last of the Binnses was hauled out upon the sidewalk.

"You get your t'ings," crisped the marshal, boring eyes through F. Binns, "and then you leave town."

"Just one moment of your valuable time, Marshal," interrupted a voice. It was the rubicund Mr. Joyce. He had followed the procession. "I gather," he went on, "that these friends of ours here, think that some one, preferably a stranger, ought to be given the bum's rush in consequence of certain pleasantries that happened on the lagoon last night."

"Pleasantries?" cried Mrs. J. Mosby Chichester.

"Pleasantries?" echoed Mr. Ducey. "I suppose you call it pleasantries, Mr. Joyce, when a gang of hoodlums swarm aboard a barge and start fighting and cause two large dogs to get out of control with the result that—"

The red-faced Mr. Joyce held up an appealing hand.

"Don't, Ducey, don't." He choked. "If anybody mentions those two dogs again I think I'll die. Dogs the size of horses being chased by an every-day cat and knocking people down, and—"

He paused, then turned to the marshal. "Marshal, don't let these people put a whizzer over on you. All this affair happened beyond the edge of the lagoon, and therefore outside of town. One of your big talking-points, you know."

The Marshal snorted. Once he knew where he stood, he was charmingly impartial in carrying out justice.

"Say," he rapped out at the Chichester-Ducey forces, "you tryin' to make a monkey out of me? I got enough trouble trying to keep things right-side up in this town without hunting trouble, and odder people could do the same."

Having reduced the plaintiffs to the desired size, he once more concentrated on F. Alonzo Binns.

"You get off free this time," he conceded. "But I got my eye on you, and you better not forget that. And I'm gettin' tired having my eye on you!"

With much knee and shoulder movement, he set off down the street.

Mrs. J. Mosby Chichester had not won through to knickers and high boots and a feathered Tyrolean hat by any supineness of character.

"The Sheriff's office, then!" said Mrs. Chichester.

At these words an approaching pedestrian left off being immersed in his own thoughts, and Frederick Alonzo Binns, catching sight of him, gave a howl like a forlorn dog that has been trod on in a crowd.

The man was Clarendon Webster, father of Mary, to whom Frederick Binns had once been engaged!

The Webster voice rumbled like a ship paying out anchor-chain.

"I suppose you feel mighty proud of your record. Assisting an aviator one day—helping a pageant the next. Anything else you've got planned?"

IT was the first opportunity to speak that Frederick Binns had been offered within a quarter of an hour, and he took hold of words as a terrier takes hold of a trouser leg.

"Now, listen, Mr. Webster! I—"

"Oh, I know what you're going to say. You'll claim it wasn't your fault. Other people have told me the same! But I

know better. I ought to see you put out of town, but if you went somewhere else you'd wreck that place, too. Aren't you ever going to amount to anything? And good God, why are you going around in that damnable cap and apron, pretending to work for a numskull grocer? Haven't you *any* consideration for the memory of your parents?"

"Listen, Mr. Webster," repeated the wearer of cap and apron. "I came down here on a business trip; and when I got here, I ran into something that may lead to—"

"That's enough! You're always running into something that may lead to—to trouble!"

"Lonnie!" called a voice from the grocery doorway. "As soon as you get through talking, the morning delivery has got to go out."

Clarendon Webster snorted.

"I wash my hands of you," he said to F. Alonzo Binns. "Because some other people said you weren't altogether to blame, I'm allowing you to go this time, although it's just like letting a wild tiger stay loose. But the next time—the rock-pile!" And Mr. Webster departed. . . .

To Master Chesterfield Wurzel, drawing busily on an Old Scratch cigarette from his seat in the racketing delivery truck, recent events were something to be happily reminisced over.

"Say, I sure had a swell time last night. I dunno when I ever had a sweller. I'll bet them two dogs knocked down forty people. Gee, I thought I'd die laughing."

Driver Frederick Alonzo Binns bent a little lower over the steering-wheel. That his mood was the opposite of Master Wurzel's was painfully evident.

"Say," said Frederick Binns, "I got a headache. Awful one. Don't let's talk."

And Driver F. Alonzo Binns continued to look straight ahead. Then suddenly his heart went happily hit and hammer.

An automobile was drawn up at one side of the road. It was the car of Miss Mary Webster. That young lady herself was standing looking at one of the tires. Flounders could have taken that tire as a model for flatness.

The Jones delivery truck stopped with grind of brakes.

"Repair car," greeted Frederick Binns. "Trouble-shooters."

For the length of time that it takes an active young woman to turn around there was silence. Then—

"Repair car not needed. Nor trouble-shooters." She turned back to studying the flat tire.

"Hop in," said Mr. Buck, and Mary hopped. With a clash of gears, Morley Buck and Mary Webster were gone.

In the next quarter minute a number of things happened. The Jones delivery truck jumped ahead like a horse whose tail has been twisted. It was yanked to one side of the road, and its driver dropped to the ground as though he had caught sight of a pocket-book lying in the dust. His face, however, had none of the pleasure of a pocket-book finder, being closed shut like a new monkey-wrench. He strode back to where the young woman of the tire was standing, grasped her by an elbow and brought her around to face him.

"For two cents," said Frederick Alonzo Binns, "I'd take you over my knee."

"For half of that," retorted Mary Webster, "I'd box your old ears."

Honors being even, the two stood and looked at each other, as they had done times without number from their first meeting back in the dimness of history, when Master Freddie Binns in garments of plush and lace had shoved at Miss Mary Webster in garments of silk and ruffles, and had been bitten on the hand and kicked in the shins in return. Life since then had been one long series of shovings and bitings and kickings, metaphorical and otherwise, interlarded with equally emphatic making of love and giving of engagement-rings and the returning of the same.

So now, in the bright noon sunshine of Seashore, they stood and glared at each other—just stood and glared, until Frederick Binns suddenly caught her by the shoulders and gave a snapping shake, at the same time breaking into shouting laughter.

"Laugh, you little fool, laugh!" he commanded.

As suddenly as had come the shake, came laughter clear and ringing from Miss Mary Webster, followed by a vigorous kick upon the Binns shins. At which Frederick Binns laughed all the more.

"Now," he said, "I guess we can talk."

They talked.

"The last time that I was talking to you," said Frederick Binns equably, "I told you that I was going away on a business trip."

"And you seem to have succeeded," said Mary admiringly, her eyes bright.

"You will cut out looking at my apron and cap and listen to what I'm telling you," said Frederick Binns. "Sit down on that running-board. And while I'm trying to mend this worthless tire, I may get a few facts into your head."

Followed a rummaging under the front seat and bringing to light of a jack, tire irons and a tire-repair kit, none of them in the best of condition.

"Same old gang," said an examining Frederick Binns. "We may have," he added, running fingers through the repair kit, "to resort to chewing-gum. Some autoists—"

"You came down here on business," prompted the occupant of the running-board.

"Yes!" shouted the tire-repairer, failing at getting a kink out of the jack-handle. "And it was business that concerned you, too. Or once might have," he amended darkly.

"But I never wanted to go into the grocery trade." Mary Webster's eyes were round and full of protesting pansy innocence.

"Any more of that," cried the jack-manipulator, "and I'll straighten this thing out over your head. Now where the devil was I when you interrupted me?"

"You had gone into some kind of business. Secret-service business, I guess."

"What?" The Binns voice broke on high C.

"Well, you've been five minutes trying to tell me something that's still a secret to me." Blue eyes suddenly narrowed in speculation, then widened, and she was up and had a hand on the Binns arm. "Freddy! Is it—is it something to do with detective work? Did I hit the nail on the head the first time out? Tell me!"

Alonzo Binns took a slow breath. For a moment it was on the tip of his tongue to tell her everything—she was the sort that would find out everything sooner or later—but he succeeded in fighting the impulse down. There'd be a whole lot more to tell her by another day, if he ever told her. Who was she to be asking him questions after sending back his ring—and riding with Morley Buck!

WHEN Frederick Binns did look up, words died in his throat. He blinked. Then he was on his feet and taking a mental cross-lots cut to his goal, his face glowing like a new-risen sun.

"Say, it was you that told your father just how things happened, wasn't it?"

Miss Webster answered the question by not answering it. "Oh, Freddy, you poor eclipse, why didn't you tell me you were coming down here, and then we could have had all these wonderful times together?"

Frederick Binns began to millrace his words.

"You see, I didn't know I was coming. . . . I mean, I had a surprise for you and I wanted to get it all ready, and I hoped you'd like it. But now that's all over—and the first thing that we got to do is to get back where we left off." A Binns hand dived into trouser pocket, brought forth a ring. But—

"Frederick! You'll keep that ring where it is until you've answered a lot of questions, and even then you may continue keeping it there. When I first saw you, as Father and I were coming into town, there was riding on the seat with you—"

"And there he is now." Frederick gave wide gesture to indicate Chesterfield Wurzel on the truck seat, deeply immersed in a magazine and Old Scratch smoke. "That's Chesterfield Wurzel, and as upstanding a boy as you'd ever want to meet. Being under legal driving age, he points out the houses where the customers live, while I—"

"Frederick!" Mary Webster threw in a buzz-saw along with more ice. "About one more evasion from you—"

"Oh!" said Frederick. "Of course! I'd forgotten. Lotus Givens. Now, let me tell you about her. A very interesting girl. A little off in the upper story, I'm afraid, but for all that, having certain qualities that make her very charming. A sort of woods creature who could have lived back in the time when people —why, when people lived in the woods. Yes, that's it. Dryads and all that crowd, you know. When she got aboard our delivery truck yesterday—"

"Oh," said the listening Mary. "So she got aboard the truck. Asked to get aboard, I suppose."

Frederick Binns nodded.

"Stepped right aboard. It seems that Chesterfield knows her, and that in a general way she likes delivery boys—"

"How singular," breathed Mary Webster.

At this, a premonitory chill went through the frame of Frederick Binns. He whirled about and looked in the direction favored by Miss Webster, and his knees buckled under him as though he had been blasted by lightning.

Threading her way through an oak copse, looking remarkably like the woods creature he had so deftly described, came Miss Lotus Givens.

"Arrouw!" cried Frederick Binns. The rim of the world tipped up and fell upon him.

Admirably did Miss Lotus Givens help the situation.

"My delivery boy!" she intoned with flute-like voice, and bounded forward.

"Arrouw!" cried F. A. Binns, louder.

"You!" The flute-like quality had left Miss Givens. She was looking at Mary Webster, her head high, her mouth a straight line. "Daughter of the rich, oppressor of the poor. Trying to lure my poor boy away from me!"

Although his knees should never have been subjected to the strain, F. Alonzo Binns got to his feet.

"Hey, hey, hey, *hey!*" he cried.

BUT the situation had got past all heying. Mary Webster was already half a dozen strides away.

And here it in no wise improved itself as a gaudily colored new car drew up in the road and a young man with varnished hair called out possessively: "Say, Mary, I've been looking everywhere for you! They told me you came out this road—"

Morley Buck had added himself to the scene. He grinned in loathsome glee.

"Hop in," said Mr. Buck.

Mary Webster hopped.

"We can get a repair man to come out and fix your tire," came the Buck voice above the clash of Buck gears. Then the colorful car, Morley Buck and Mary Webster were gone.

This joyous tale continues blithely in the next, the October, issue.

WILLIAM J. MAKIN

The author of the Wolf of Arabia series presents a detective who believes that a person sometimes shows the qualities of a certain beast. He has told us of the man who killed like a lion, and of the man who charged like a rhinoceros. Here he tells of a woman who struck like a tiger.

Illustrated by Margery Stocking

The Tiger Woman

"LET us spend ten minutes among the tigers," said Jonathan Lowe, as I was accompanying that extraordinary character—known to natives in India and Africa as the "Father of the Jungle"—on a little tour of the Zoo. As a crime-reporter on a daily newspaper I felt a little humiliated. Jonathan Lowe was treating me almost as a schoolboy. If only we had been perambulating the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's, I might have felt superior.

"Ten minutes among the tigers," repeated Jonathan Lowe, opening the door of the animal-house and plunging into that hot, indefinable atmosphere of sawdust and beast-smells. I observed that the uniformed attendant saluted this long lanky figure in the ill-fitting snuff-colored clothes, and whose disreputable hat was pulled over his white hair. Jonathan Lowe was well-known at the Zoo.

"Splendid beasts," went on Lowe, nosing his way to a cage where the yellow-and-black-striped tiger yawned obligingly at him. The cruel sharp teeth, curling tongue and fierce whiskers engendered a feeling of hatred in me.

"Cruel beasts," I countered. "They're the best example of that overworked proverb—'Nature red in tooth and claw'."

Jonathan Lowe gave me a quick glance and laughed.

"Hate 'em, don't you, eh?"

I nodded.

"Well, it's a natural human instinct," he observed. "The tiger and man have been enemies from the very beginning of Creation. The Hindus believe that men and tigers have struggled for supremacy for centuries, and that even today neither admit defeat. They're implacable enemies; they snarl at each other when face to face. The hatred is almost as intense as that which exists at moments between man and woman."

There was a cynical gleam in his blue eyes as he spoke.

"Tigers are merely beautiful murderers," I said shortly, gazing into the yellow eyes of the beast divided from me only by bars. "There seems no reason for their existence."

"No more reason than there is for a murderer in our midst," agreed Lowe.

"Well, let the big-game hunters go on killing them," I said, turning my back on the beast. "I suppose you've slaughtered some yourself?"

I looked into his mahogany features, burned by tropic suns. A thoughtful look was in his eyes.

He nodded. "I believe my bag is nearly thirty," he said. "It would have been more, perhaps, but I was always regarded as an unorthodox tiger-hunter."

"Why?"

Jonathan Lowe swiveled on his heel and faced the beast again.

"Because I always refused to sit in a tree or on the back of an elephant to shoot a tiger," he said. "To kill a tiger in that fashion is almost as easy as killing a man if you are a professional executioner. The odds are overwhelmingly in your favor. The beast,—tiger or condemned man,—hasn't a chance."

"But they're murderers," I argued.

"Nevertheless, I prefer to meet them face to face, on their own ground. It's the most deadly test of a man's nerve, facing a tiger on foot as the beast comes swishing and coughing out of the jungle grass! Once my nerve nearly went, and the beast clawed my arm." His hand instinctively crept up the sleeve of the snuff-colored coat. "But in the end I killed him."

And with a grim smile he turned away from the striped beast behind the bars.

We moved on. Jonathan Lowe lounged near another cage. But I had suddenly forgotten the jungle beasts, for I was gazing with admiration on something supremely civilized—a beautiful, expensively gowned woman. Even in that heavy odor of sawdust and animals, I caught the scent of perfume that clung to her lissom figure.

"Talking of tigers—" went on the prosy voice of my companion.

"Why talk of beasts," I murmured, "when beauty comes to visit them?"

JONATHAN LOWE looked up in astonishment. His blue eyes followed my admiring gaze.

I was hoping that the woman would look in our direction, but her eyes seemed fixed on that yawning tiger behind the bars. She stood in an attitude of rapt fascination.

"Isn't she beautiful?" I asked, in a whisper.

"As beautiful as—a tiger," said Lowe quietly. "Who is she?"

"I can tell you her name, and all about her,"—I smiled,—"even though I've never met her. You see, she's one of those women whom art-editors of newspapers go down on their knees and thank heaven for, when news-pictures are scarce. She married a millionaire six weeks ago; her name is Mrs. Anthony Strahane. She and her husband must have just returned from their honeymoon. It was spent at Lugano, in Switzerland."

"I understood you were a crime-reporter, not a social gossip-writer, young man," was the only comment of Jonathan Lowe.

His gaze had never left the woman. It piqued me that she ignored us. But she similarly ignored everyone in the tiger-house—the keeper in his uniform, a few pasty-faced children regarding the beasts in awe, a blowsy woman who clung to an enormous bag of monkey-nuts as well as to a baby, and a youth with a cigarette drooping from his lips. She ignored all, except the tiger.

SHE glided rather than walked, near the cage. Her yellow eyes, draped with one of those tantalizing half-veils, stared into the yellow eyes of the beast. And there was something so rapt and ecstatic in her posture that I could almost swear she purred.

"Look at the tiger!" Lowe commanded me quietly.

The beast had risen. It stretched its tawny black-striped body to full length. Its head raised slowly and the fierce whiskers brushed the steel bars. A nose pushed forward and a long red tongue licked forth. At the same time the brute raised a paw, the claws hidden in the pads; it was trying to caress the woman.

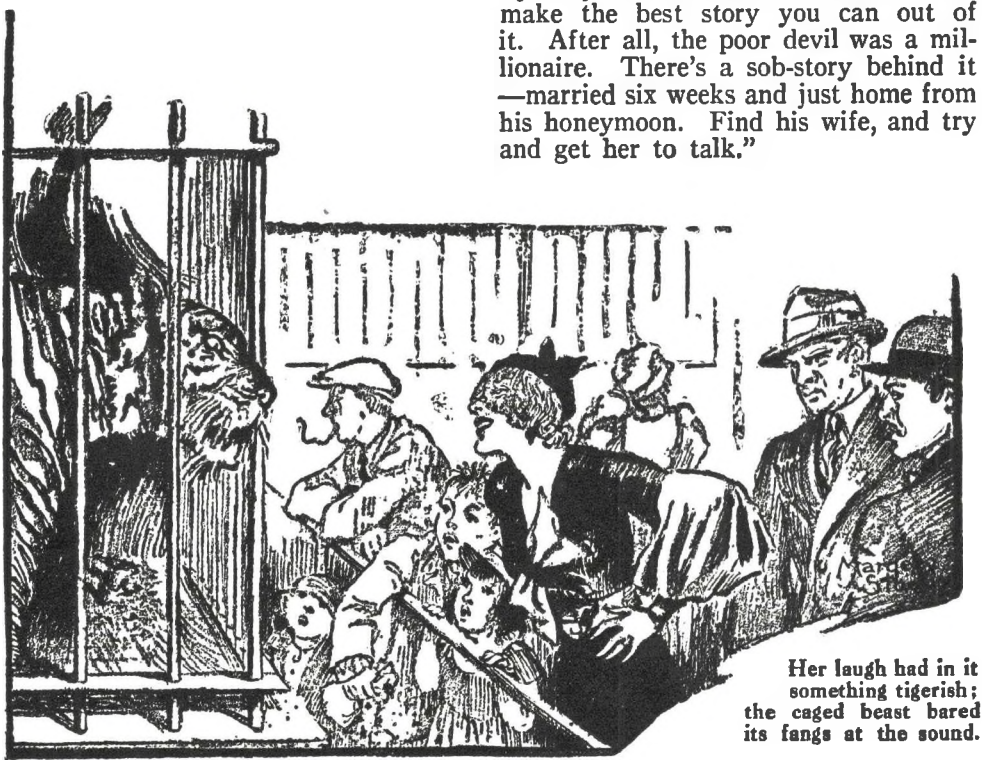
The expensively scented creature flung back her head and laughed. I saw the tawny yellow of her hair beneath the little hat. But the laugh had something tigerish in it. It made me shiver; it was not the laugh of a sane woman.

The caged beast bared its fangs at that laugh. A gurgling sound came from its throat, as though it laughed also; then the tiger rolled over on its back, its paws in the air, while the yellow eyes gazed fondly into those of the woman.

"Horrible—horrible!" whispered Jonathan Lowe. "Let us go."

I was not sorry to emerge from that hothouse atmosphere. Those ten minutes among the tigers had torn more than the half-veil from the face of Mrs. Anthony Strahane. I stood in the grounds

of the Zoo musing upon the revelation, while Jonathan Lowe talked with one of the officials regarding a strange sickness that had spread among the baboons. The white-haired naturalist was an expert whose opinion was highly valued in many directions.



Her laugh had in it something tigerish; the caged beast bared its fangs at the sound.

It must have been half an hour later when we clicked our way through the turnstiles into Regent's Park. At that same moment a lissom figure also hurried through, and walked to where a beautiful limousine waited. A handsome chauffeur opened the door. I caught a glimpse of yellow eyes as she said: "Home, Albert!" Then the door closed and the chauffeur took his place at the wheel.

"Decidedly an interesting woman—that Mrs. Anthony Strahane," murmured Jonathan Lowe as the limousine glided away. . . .

"You wanted on the telephone, *baas*," growled the negro servant Milestone, having wakened me at nine o'clock in the morning. After a late night at the office I had only been in bed five hours.

I groaned, slipped on a dressing-room, and hurried to the telephone. As I guessed, it was the news editor of the Daily *Courier*.

"Take the first train you can find to Foldcross, in Sussex," cackled the voice. "There's a story to be dug up in the country-house of Sir John Wrox."

"What is it—murder?" I asked wearily.

"Nothing so good," cackled the voice. "It might be suicide, but in all probability it's just an overdose of veronal. Still, make the best story you can out of it. After all, the poor devil was a millionaire. There's a sob-story behind it—married six weeks and just home from his honeymoon. Find his wife, and try and get her to talk."

"Who's the victim—Sir John Wrox?"

"No, you fool," was the reply. "It's Anthony Strahane, the millionaire. He was staying with Sir John Wrox. We've just had a message, saying that Strahane was found dead in bed with an empty hypodermic syringe by his side."

"Good heavens!" I cried. "Did you say Anthony Strahane?"

"I did," cackled the sarcastic voice.

"Why, I saw his wife only yesterday at the Zoo."

"A damned queer place for a modern woman to frequent. But then, probably the bright young people have started going to the Zoo. Anyhow, get hold of her, Hayton; she may tell a story. She stayed the night in town, and has gone off by car already. And now, go to it."

As I hung up the receiver I caught a glimpse of a grinning white face peering at me round the corner. A startling sight—but then, the house in St. John's Wood was full of surprises. The grinning white

face proved to be that of Blanco, Lowe's pet white monkey. A moment later, Jonathan Lowe himself stood there. He was fully dressed, and his strong sunburned hands held a basket of fruit.

"I've been feeding my beasts at the end of the garden," he apologized. "Hope I haven't disturbed you."

I shook my head; the shock of hearing of Anthony Strahane's death was still upon me.

"Tell me, sir," I asked, "what did you really think of that woman, Mrs. Anthony Strahane, whom we saw among the tigers yesterday afternoon?"

His blue eyes twinkled at me.

"The tigers were much less dangerous," he said. "But why do you ask?"

"Because I've just heard," I said slowly, "that her husband was found dead in his bed this morning. Apparently he had pumped himself full of a drug, for a hypodermic was found at his side."

There was silence for a moment. The white monkey jumped to Lowe's shoulder and he gently stroked it.

"And Mrs. Strahane?" he asked then.

"She stayed the night in town. Now she's gone off to Foldcross, in Sussex, where her husband was staying at a country-house. That's where I must go, too."

Jonathan Lowe nodded.

"I'm interested," he admitted. "Would you like me to come along?"

"It looks a very ordinary case," I pointed out. "Probably just a case of suicide."

"True," agreed Lowe. "But at least the woman wasn't ordinary. And I would rather like to meet that woman in the heart of Sussex, after seeing her in the tiger-house of the Zoo."

"Well, I'll be glad of your company," I said, and hurried away to dress.

AN hour later as we sat in the train, I tried to get Lowe to discuss that elusive lissom woman who had laughed at the tigers. But he was irritatingly evasive. He asked only two questions:

"How old was Anthony Strahane?"

"Fifty-nine," I replied.

"And his wife?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "Who can tell? For newspaper purposes she is twenty-five. I should say that she is really about thirty. Young and beautiful. I won't question her about her age. The news editor will see that she is only twenty-five, and that her photograph makes her look about seventeen."

Jonathan Lowe nodded, and lighting a vile cheroot, became engrossed in a gray-covered pamphlet. I caught a glimpse of the title: *Observations on Lycanthropy as Practised in Malaya.*

I groaned, and at the next stop bought a copy of the Daily *Courier,* and pretended to read it.

IT took us three hours and two changes to reach the village of Foldcross, situated on the last ridge of the Sussex downs, before they fell away to the sea. As we stepped out on the platform a tall grizzled man in plus-fours gazed anxiously at the four people descending from the train. Apparently the person he had come to meet was not there, for he turned away disappointed.

But for the second time his gaze rested upon the figure in snuff-colored clothes, whose cheroot smoldered in the keen Sussex air. Then he strode forward.

"Surely it can't be Jonathan Lowe?" he began hesitatingly.

Lowe chuckled.

"I'm afraid it is, Sir John," he replied. "Wasn't our last meeting on a house-boat on Lake Srinagar, in Kashmir?"

"By Jove, your memory is as keen as your shooting!" cried Sir John. "I'm mighty glad to see you again. But what brings you to the Sussex downs?"

Jonathan Lowe shook his head sadly.

"I'm afraid I've become something of a vulture in my old age," he said quietly. "A carrion-bird. Beastly, isn't it?"

"Good heavens, you don't mean to say that this horrible tragedy that happened in my house last night has brought you here?"

Jonathan Lowe nodded.

The tall man in plus-fours looked uneasy.

"Well, my dear fellow," he said, "you had better come along to the house with me, though I'm afraid it's poor hospitality I can offer under the circumstances."

Jonathan Lowe pushed me forward.

"This is a young friend of mine, Sir John," he explained. "I'll warn you at once that he's a newspaper reporter. But I will answer for him. I think you'll agree there'll be less scandal and silly rumor if we take the young man into the house. What d'you say?"

"You always were a queer devil, Lowe," admitted Sir John Wrox. "By all means bring your young friend along. What did you say his name was—Peter Hayton?" He shook me warmly by the hand, and nodded his head in the direc-

tion of the man with the cheroot between his teeth. "Anyone who is a friend of the old 'Father of the Jungle' ought to be proud of it. I hope you are!"

A servant took our baggage and led us toward a car that waited outside the station.

"I was hoping that Malcolm Letts, the Harley Street fellow, would be on the train," explained Sir John. "Probably he'll come by the later train. He's needed for the inquest. You see, he was Strahane's medical man."

"What were the circumstances?" asked Jonathan Lowe, as the car glided along the lane.

Sir John's face was grim.

"I sat up until two o'clock this morning with Strahane," he said. "The poor devil asked me to. For over two years he's been suffering from insomnia. Can't sleep. His doctor, the Harley Street fellow for whom I was waiting, supplied him with some sleeping-tablets. Strahane used to dissolve the tablets and inject the stuff into his arm by means of a hypodermic."

"Rather an unusual course," Lowe suggested.

Sir John nodded.

"Strahane had once been a morphia addict," he explained. "But he'd cured himself. He couldn't do without the prick of the needle, however. It was the physician's idea to give him a sleeping-draught by means of the hypodermic."

"I see," murmured Jonathan Lowe. "Then you were the last to see Strahane alive?"

"Yes." Sir John sighed wearily. "He left me just before two o'clock. The fellow seemed quite normal. 'I'll take my sleeping-draught,' he said, 'and get to bed.' We'd even arranged to go and see the beagling today. I'm sure there wasn't the slightest intention of suicide."

HIS voice broke for a moment. Then he continued:

"At seven o'clock this morning, Parkes went with a cup of tea to the bedroom. Strahane used to take tea at that time, then sleep for perhaps an hour afterward. But this time he had entered upon his last sleep. Poor Strahane was dead, and the hypodermic lay on the table by the bedside. Our local Doctor said he had been dead at least four hours."

"Then he must have died within an hour of your parting," said Jonathan Lowe.

"Yes," Sir John nodded.

"And—Mrs. Strahane?" asked Jonathan Lowe quietly.

"She was in London all yesterday," said Sir John. "She left in her car after breakfast, and it was understood that she would stay the night in town. I telephoned her myself this morning with the dreadful news. She answered the phone, and motored back at once; she's in the house now."

"I see." Lowe stared indifferently at the countryside that flashed past. "And how's she taking it?"

I was watching Sir John. He winced.

"She's taking it with extraordinary calm," he replied. At that same moment the car entered a wrought-iron gateway. "Here we are," said Sir John.

FOR the next few hours I confess my patience was sorely tried.

As a newspaper-man I ought to have congratulated myself on this easy entrance to the house where the tragedy had occurred; Jonathan Lowe's statement that I was his friend had sufficed. There were no restrictions placed upon me; I wandered freely about the fine Georgian house wherein Sir John Wrox had ensconced himself after long official service in India.

I had even been permitted to enter the bedroom where the body of Anthony Strahane was still lying. I had gazed upon his well-known features, now rigid in death. I had listened to Jonathan Lowe's futile questions to the Doctor, and also heard the curt replies of the local police inspector.

"No sir. He must have used a big dose on himself—an overdose, I expect. The box that contains the sleeping-tablets was empty."

But for a startling newspaper story I had nothing. A few bare details—obvious suicide. And not even an interview with Mrs. Strahane. I hadn't glimpsed her during my tour of the house; I was told that she preferred to remain in her room until dinner-time.

"But please don't talk to her when you meet her at dinner," said Jonathan Lowe sternly.

"Why?" I protested.

"Because *I* want to talk to the pretty lady," he replied provokingly.

And so, from the country-house of Sir John Wrox I telephoned my story to the Daily *Courier*.

"That doesn't sound particularly exciting," growled the news editor at the other end of the line.

"Nothing exciting *is* happening," I growled back.

"Well, you'd better stay on for the inquest, and then get back at once," snapped the news editor; his tone implied that a junior reporter could have collected a better news-story.

DINNER that evening promised to be a mournful affair. Sir John Wrox was feeling the tragedy keenly; Jonathan Lowe seemed to have stupefied himself with a succession of cheroots during the afternoon, and Malcolm Letts, who had at last arrived, was merely testy at being brought away from urgent affairs in London to this tragedy that had occurred in Sussex.

The only live person at the table was Mrs. Anthony Strahane. She faced me at dinner, and I was almost tongue-tied at her beauty. The full glory of her tawny hair was revealed by the electric light, and her yellow eyes glowed. A black evening frock draped her perfect body. Although the man she had married but six weeks previously now lay dead in a room upstairs, she seemed as much at her ease as if the door would shortly open and he would appear before us.

What is more she talked about him—about their honeymoon! I could see the stern features of Sir John wincing as she prattled on. He hated her. Only Jonathan Lowe seemed mildly interested.

"Yes, I once spent a holiday in Lugano myself," he drawled. "Picturesque little town. Ideal for a honeymoon."

Sir John frowned openly at him. This conversation was in the worst of taste.

"There was the sunshine on the lake," Mrs. Strahane prattled, "and the mountains changing color in the sunset. And the lake water lapping at the beach—"

"And the narrow streets of the village," went on Jonathan Lowe. "They climb the hillside. There was one, I remember, that went from the main square, twisted and turned, and finally led to a little Italian church at the top of the slope. Now what's the name of that?"

"I know," said Mrs. Strahane. "They call it the Rue Corniche."

"That's right," said Lowe. "You've a marvelous memory, Mrs. Strahane. But I think I can beat you."

"Try," she smiled.

"Well, halfway up that crooked street is a shop that sells cheap necklaces, picture postcards, and Italian trinkets. Am I right?"

"Yes," she nodded.

"And next door to that is a wine-shop, and *ristorante*. They call it Bellanza's."

"Right again," she smiled.

"And the shop after that is—a chemist's," he said quietly. "There is no name over the window, but when you open the door a bell tinkles in a silly sort of fashion and—"

He stopped. Her face had blanched; her hand which had been toying with a wine-glass trembled, and she quickly withdrew it from the table.

"I'm sorry if I've said something I ought not to have said," murmured Jonathan Lowe.

Her carmined lips were pressed tightly together, though the next moment they twisted into a smile.

"It's nothing," she said easily. "You were talking about what?"

"I mentioned a chemist's shop," went on Jonathan Lowe relentlessly.

She shook her head. "No, I'm afraid I don't remember a chemist's shop."

"Oh, but I'm sure there is one there," said Jonathan Lowe. "I was suffering dreadfully from toothache, and I remember opening that door where the bell tinkles, and—"

"Damn the chemist's shop!" exploded Sir John, who could no longer contain himself. "You amaze me, Lowe. There was a time when your stories were worth listening to, but you're becoming prosy in your old age! I would rather hear you talking of tigers, than of chemist's shops."

"Tigers!" The yellow eyes of Mrs. Strahane blazed. "What do you know of tigers?"

Her lips were parted almost in a snarl.

I had a sudden vision again of that beast behind the bars at the Zoo.

"Well, he's shot more than most men," said Sir John, happy that the conversation had now changed. "He's stalked many a murderous beast in the jungle—and on foot, too!"

The woman's gaze was fixed on Jonathan Lowe.

"It must be a big moment," she said, "when you gaze into the eyes of a tiger."

"Yes," replied Lowe. "It is."

"And are you afraid?"

"Very often."

"Has a tiger ever mauled you?"

"Once."

"You will have to be careful."

She put a cigarette between her lips. Lowe gallantly offered her a lighted match.

"I'm afraid my tiger-hunting days are over," he laughed, and blew out the flame. "But I can, at least, give advice to others," he added. "Perhaps I ought to explain that it happens to be the reason I am here."

Her yellow eyes opened wide.

"There is some one here who wants advice on tiger-hunting?" she asked.

"There *was*," he corrected.

"Who?"

"Your husband."

There was a tense silence. But it was broken by Jonathan Lowe himself.

"Yes," he went on easily, "Anthony Strahane wrote a most astonishing letter to me a few days ago—a most astonishing letter. He seemed to have developed a terrible fear of tigers, or rather, one tiger; and he asked me if it were possible for a human being to take on the spirit of a tiger, if not the body. Of course, that is a subject well known to people of the jungle. Psychologists call it lycanthropy. But this letter written by Strahane suggests that he expected to be killed by a tiger at any moment. It was for this reason I decided to come here and hand in the letter at the inquest."

"Have you done so?" asked Sir John, astonished.

Jonathan Lowe shook his head

"Not yet. I'm going to sleep upon it. I shall have to think about it."

At that moment Mrs. Strahane rose from the table.

"Gentlemen, I hope you'll excuse me," she said. "I'm very tired and I know that tomorrow will be a most difficult day."

There was a murmur of sympathy.

We rose, and watched that slim, black-frocked figure glide out of the room. Malcolm Letts was the first to speak.

"Jove! It's amazing to think what that woman has gone through—and yet she can control herself sufficiently to sit at this table and talk to us of her honeymoon! She's magnificent."

"Magnificent," agreed Jonathan Lowe.

"Well, I think I'll get along to my room," growled Malcolm Letts. "I suppose this inquest will be over within a couple of hours?"

"I hope so," said Sir John.

WHEN Letts had left the room, Sir John turned to Jonathan Lowe.

"And now, you queer devil, what are *you* going to do?" he ask.

Jonathan Lowe selected one of his vile cheroots.

"D'you remember, Sir John, the excitement of waiting all night for your first tiger?" he said. "The moon coming up out of the jungle—the silence suddenly torn by the shriek of a beast in pain, and then the cough in the grass that tells you the tiger is on the prowl? And you sit in the *machan*, gripping the cold steel of your rifle, in a desire to make the nightmare less real. Yet it is real, gloriously real."

"Yes, that waiting in the jungle darkness makes you live ten times the intensity of the ordinary man," said Sir John.

Jonathan Lowe lit his cheroot and puffed at it noisily.

"Tonight," he said quietly, "I'm going to wait for a tiger once again."

"You're mad," cried Sir John. "You're in Sussex, in my house, and sleeping in one of my bedrooms!"

Jonathan Lowe nodded.

"In Sussex, in your house, and in one of your bedrooms I hope to bag my tiger."

Sir John stared at him. "And the bait?" he asked.

"Myself," replied Lowe simply. And with a cunning crook of his finger he gathered us together, and began to talk in whispers.

AT two o'clock in the morning, sitting in a chair in the quiet darkness of a bedroom overlooking a Sussex garden, the whole affair seemed to me absurdly fantastic.

Jonathan Lowe lay stretched on the bed. I could glimpse his vague outline against the white sheets. He was asleep, I was certain of that; but he slept as does a hunter in the jungle—the slightest sound would wake him.

In another corner of the room, wrapped in a dressing-gown, was the tall figure of Sir John Wrox. It was with many misgivings that he had entered upon this tiger-hunt in a country-house. He disbelieved in the whole mad theory expounded by Jonathan Lowe.

"As a hunter of beasts," he had said, to the gray-haired naturalist, "you are unequaled, my dear fellow. But when it comes to the psychology of human beings, and particularly women, you are sadly mistaken."

"Let the night prove me wrong," Jonathan Lowe had urged.

Sir John nodded. "Very well—and to satisfy my own conscience. I'll sit in the *machan* with you."

I yawned in the darkness. My eyes were heavy for want of sleep. I wished dearily that I had never agreed to Jonathan Lowe's accompanying me on this job. As a newspaper reporter I would have done better from the outside. And I was so tired, so very tired!

I lurched into sleep. Except for the soughing of the wind in the trees, there was nothing but a lullaby of silence. I dropped heavily into a darkness of oblivion, but was jerked back again like a puppet at the end of a string. The creak of a floorboard had sounded in the night.

I stirred in my chair. A slight hiss from the bed told me that Lowe was awake, and warning me to silence. I sat with my heart thumping heavily, my ears strained for another sound. At last it came—a soft, slithering noise. I tried desperately to analyze it.

It was the padding of a beast along the corridor beyond the door.... Pad—pad—pad!

A tiger roaming in the night! Was Jonathan Lowe right? I gripped the arms of the chair tensely. In that moment I realized what Lowe meant when he said a man waiting for a tiger gripped the steel of his rifle to make the nightmare seem less real. For this was a nightmare of darkness and soft sounds. But there was no rifle in my hands.

Another creak—then a silence of seconds. The pads had stopped by the door. Then came a tinkle; I realized that the brass knob of the door was being turned, ever so slowly. The door began to swing open; but only the darkness beyond was revealed.

For a few seconds the door remained open. The beast waited, and listened. Jonathan Lowe was breathing with quiet regularity. I had clenched my nails into my palms in a desperate endeavor to control myself. The next moment the beast was in the room. *Pad—pad—pad!* It approached the bed, and bent over the prone form of Jonathan Lowe.

I could stand it no longer. I rose in my chair. At that same moment the hands of Lowe shot out in the darkness and grabbed the beast.

"No, you don't!" he said quietly.

I blundered to the electric switch. Even as my fingers were on it, a horrible scream rent the darkness, the scream of a tiger! I plunged the room into light and swung round to face the beast.

Dazed by the light, I saw only a tawny black-striped body twisting and snarling in the grip of Jonathan Lowe. A white paw was in the air, and seemingly a claw gleamed—but it was a hand holding a hypodermic syringe, and struggling to plunge it into the arm of Jonathan Lowe!

THE tiger was Mrs. Anthony Strahane, in a striking yellow dressing-gown with black stripes. Her tawny hair straggled over her maniacal face. With a swiftness that was surprising, she suddenly buried her teeth in Lowe's hand gripping her arm. With a grunt of pain he released her.

"Stop her, for heaven's sake!" he cried, and Sir John Wrox leaped forward.

But he was too late. The woman had plunged the needle of the syringe into her own bare arm, and stood swaying in the light before us.

The yellow eyes gleamed fiendishly. I knew then how a trapped beast looks.

"So you got me! . . . Tiger-hunter,

eh?" she gabbled. "Well, you won't put me behind bars. I won't go to that human Zoo that you call a prison. . . . I've beaten you!"

She noticed the trickle of blood that came from the hand of Jonathan Lowe where she had bitten him. At that she flung back her head and laughed, that same dreadful laugh that we had heard as she stood before the tiger in its cage. But the laugh choked in a sob and she dropped to the floor.

"I'LL get the Doctor," said Sir John. his grizzled face alarmed.

"No use," murmured Jonathan Lowe, shaking his head. "She's dying of the same poison that she gave her husband—hyoscine. It'll be all over in five minutes."

"But how could she poison him?" cried Sir John. "She was in London when it happened!"

"Exactly," nodded Lowe, on his knees at the side of the woman. "But she knew that every night he dissolved a tablet of veronal in water, and injected the stuff by means of a hypodermic."

"Well?"

"There was only one tablet left last night. And before the woman went to London, she saw that the tablet of hyoscine was substituted for a tablet of veronal. You see, she had planned this murder from the very beginning, and she was clever enough to buy the poison abroad. On her honeymoon, in fact. That little chemist in Lugano, whose door tinkles when it is opened, supplies hyoscine in this tablet form. Anthony Strahane knew that his wife hated him and sought to kill him. But he did not realize that she very cleverly arranged that he should kill himself—which, unsuspectingly, he did. He thought he was taking his usual sleeping-draught. Instead, he was injecting into himself a deadly poison."

The dying woman on the floor raised her head. Her yellow eyes were glazing.

"You cunning devil," she whispered, and a tigerish look crossed her face. Then she raised herself with an effort. "Forgive me, Albert, I loved you."

Then she dropped back, dead. . . .

I had finished writing my story for the Daily *Courier*. A good story, I flattered myself. I was about to take up the telephone and ask for the news editor. But I hesitated a moment.

"Tell me," I said to Lowe, sprawled in a comfortable chair in the library, "what made you suspect that Anthony Strahane had been poisoned? Was it the Harley Street man who told you?"

Jonathan Lowe shook his head.

"The Harley Street man gave one perfunctory look at the body and decided that Strahane had died from an overdose of veronal. No, it was the little village doctor whom Sir John first brought in, who made me suspect it. He was worried. He had never had a case like this in the course of his village practice, and naturally he concentrated on it. He remarked that it was almost as though a swift poison had killed Strahane."

"And that, combined with the letter you had received from Strahane about tigers, made you suspect the woman, eh?"

"There was no letter," said Jonathan Lowe. "I never had a letter from Strahane in my life. I'm afraid, my dear young man, that I was lying horribly when I talked to Mrs. Strahane at the dinner-table. But I wanted a bait. That letter was the bait. Mrs. Strahane realized that the sort of letter I had concocted would be dangerous if read at the inquest. She felt she must get it, and destroy it. Well, as a crime-reporter, you ought to know that a murderer always repeats the same form of murder. Joseph Smith and the bath is a striking example. Mrs. Strahane used her claw—the hypodermic."

"So most of your deductions were pure instinct?" I asked.

"Jungle instinct," replied Lowe, with a smile. "Study the beasts, young man!"

I turned to the telephone.

Another of these stories, which have aroused much comment, will appear in an early issue.

An Error

By JAY LUCAS

Illustrated by
E. H. Kuhlhoff

PERHAPS if Jack Henderson hadn't been shoeing a bronc' at the time, he wouldn't have lost his temper. Of course his temper had been getting shorter and shorter during the three days he had been working for the Cross J: he didn't like the other cowboys; he didn't like the foreman, nor the cooking, nor the vicious, spoiled horses he had been given for his string; in fact, there was nothing on the whole Cross J outfit that he did like. Trouble was, he reminded himself, he had been more than four months getting even a job of this kind, —jobs were scarcer than hen's teeth,— so he had to stay with it until he got a road stake.

It was strictly a "home-guard" outfit: every man on the outfit had been there for years, and would feel like a lost dogie if he didn't have a Cross J horse under him. That was all right, of course— but why the devil does a "home guard" outfit have to go out of its way to make life miserable for a new hand?

Jack picked up three or four horseshoe nails and thrust them into his mouth with the heads out. Then he picked up the light farrier's hammer, and the shoe which he had already pounded—cold—into shape. He sidled back cautiously toward the off hind leg.

"Whoa, pony! Good little pony—I won't hurt you!" He spoke soothingly from one corner of his mouth, the nails filling the other.

The bronc' of course couldn't talk— but he didn't need to. A hard hoof whizzing within an inch of Jack's ear conveyed his meaning better than words. If Jack hadn't been looking for it, and dodged just in time, he would have been brained. How he had got the other three shoes on, he himself hardly knew. The foreman had forbidden him to tie a hind leg up close to the belly; he'd remarked sarcastically that that wasn't how they shod bronc's on the Cross J. And the man or two Jack had asked to hold the horse's head had been "too busy," although they were doing nothing but pottering around the corrals.

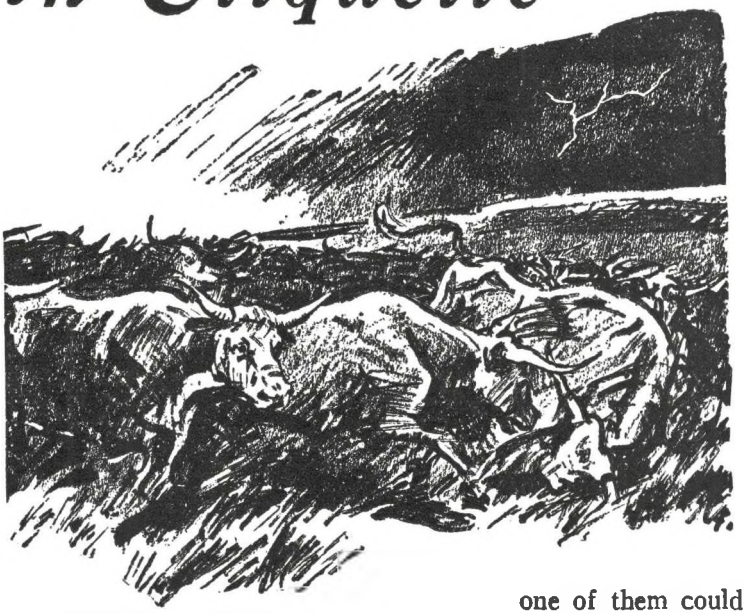
"Whoa, boy! That's a good little pony!"

Jack patted the bronc's neck and spoke softly. His eyes were glinting angrily, and he felt like taking the "single-jack" hammer and scattering the little sorrel's brains—if he had any—all over the place. But one angry, excited word would make the little snake all the worse, and spoil him for future shoeing. Spoil him! Why, any cowboy with half an eye could see that some Cross J hand had already lost his temper and beaten the bronc' while shoeing him—what else would make him so mean?

"Whoa, you ornery little devil!" said Jack in loving tones.

Somehow or other he managed to get the hind leg onto his lap. The bronc' lunged wildly, trying to pull the leg

in Etiquette



Only a real cowboy like Jay Lucas could tell this vivid story of a mistake in range-land manners and the exciting episode which followed it.

loose to kick, but Jack held on. Around and around they wrestled. Finally the bronc' subsided—and proceeded to throw all his weight on the leg in Jack's lap. Jack's face was red and streaming sweat. He couldn't trust himself to speak now, lest the bronc' should notice his voice quivering with fury. Very rapidly he placed the shoe, and the little hammer went *tack-tack-tack*. One nail in and clinched over—a second. The third in but not bent.

"Hell an' damnation!"

The unexpected lunge and kick had sent Jack flying backward, almost falling. He looked down at where the nail had torn his chaps—not new chaps by any means, but the only ones he had. His lips quivered with rage, and his fingers clenched on the little hammer, ready to throw it in the bronc's face. But he did not throw—just stood there quivering. He knew that in another moment he could get sufficient control of himself to go back, and speaking softly, finish the miserable job. That is what would have happened—if Jack hadn't happened to raise his head and glance toward the corrals a short distance off.

An oath sprang to his lips, and his eyes flamed angrily. Five of the "home guard" were squatted on their heels, smoking cigarettes—and grinning toward him, nudging each other. Not a one of them could have even begun to shoe the sorrel bronc' alone; and here they were, laughing at him openly!

And then Jack Henderson saw something that made him drop the hammer, hitch his chaps straight quickly, and start grimly, tight-lipped, toward the corral. Slim Summerford, the foreman, had unfortunately picked just that moment to unhitch Jack's private horse from a bar of the corral and swing into the saddle. One of the worst possible breaches of range etiquette is to ride another man's "company" horse without asking permission—indeed, it is better taste not to ask permission, even from your best pal, for no two cowboys train a horse alike, and one spoils it for the other. But to mount without leave another's "private" horse, his own personal property—why, slapping a man's face could scarcely have been more insulting! And Jack, after his wrestle with the sorrel bronc' was in no mood to stomach further insults from this outfit.

Slim Summerford stopped to speak a word or two to the boys. Then he jerked the horse around brutally, dug a spur into the flank with totally unnecessary violence. If a horse could gasp in amazement, the little bay would have gasped—he had never been handled that way before. But he was too gentle to buck, to show resentment otherwise. He sank quickly, preparing to launch himself into a dead run from a flat-footed start—that

must be what the rider wanted. And then a hand with a familiar smell slapped roughly against his muzzle; he saw Jack seize the cheek of the bridle; he heard Jack's voice, low, suppressed, quivering with fury:

"What's the idea, Slim?"

Slim looked down coldly.

"Uh, Jack—why, I'm borrowin' yore horse to ride up the horse-trap a ways."

Still Jack spoke quietly, but his face was now white.

"Come out of that saddle—before I pull you out!"

SLIM swung to the ground, open amazement on his face. Didn't this outsider know that he, Slim, was a little king on the outfit? Didn't he know that if he accepted him as such, he might get a steady job here—might even be accepted by the other boys as an equal later on?

"Jack, what the hell's got into you?" began Slim angrily.

He didn't finish the sentence. A fist caught him in the jaw, and he measured his length in the thick dust.

"That's to teach you not to take a man's horse without askin' him. Also to teach you not to jerk a horse's mouth, an' not to try to tear the guts out of him with a spur."

"What—what—" Slim was getting to his feet. Now his face, too, was white with anger. He could not understand it—it all seemed so uncalled-for.

"I'm through! I quit! Of all the lousy home-guard outfits I ever saw—"

He didn't finish. Whatever might have been said of Slim Summerford, he had a hot head—and nerve enough to back it up. He came charging in, and managed to land a wild blow on Jack's ear before he went sprawling again. And again he came to his feet, came charging in wildly. Out of the corner of his eye, Jack saw some more of the boys closing in on him—saw that one of them had something long in his hand. He leaped quickly to meet Slim, and every ounce of strength in his square shoulders went into one tremendous punch to the solar plexus. With a sickening little grunt, Slim collapsed on his face, turned over on his side, and lay there staring up—such a blow paralyzes the body, but leaves the mind fairly clear.

Now Jack had leaped to one side. His hand flashed down to the right pocket of his chaps, which was made holster-shaped, and dragged out his stubby forty-five—he always carried it there, never in a belt. There was a crash, and another gun went spinning toward the corral. Sam Jenkins was wringing his numbed hand, swearing feverishly.

"Drop that gun, Shorty!"

Shorty did; he had seen the revolver shot from Sam's hand, and he knew that he himself wasn't the best or quickest shot in the world. And Curly Jones unobtrusively dropped the branding-iron with which he had been sneaking up behind Jack during the fight.

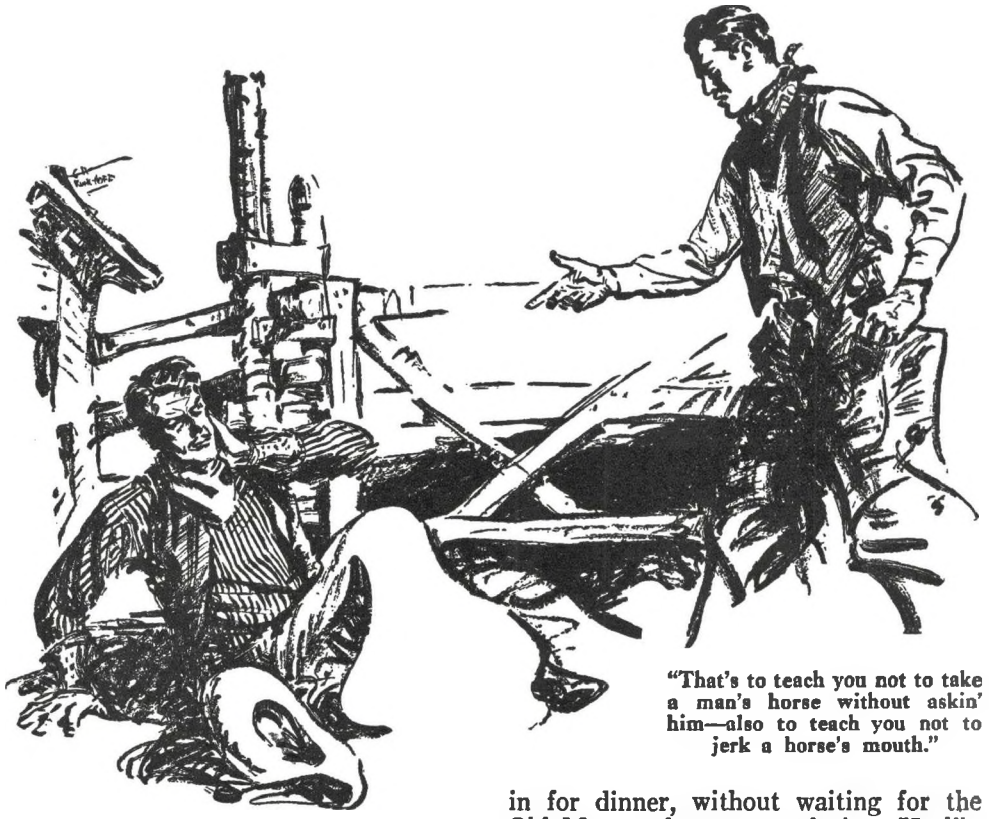
"Now, line up there, an' I'll give you my plain opinion o' this outfit, and of home-guard outfits in general."

They lined up. Jack began talking. He talked for five minutes—ten, fifteen. It wouldn't have taken any very great deal of imagination to imagine a sulphurous smell in the air, nor a bluish vapor quivering around Jack's head.

The verbal outburst brought Jack such relief that when he rode away later, leading his bed-horse, he was positively cheerful; there was a broad grin of satisfaction on his face, and once he broke out in a whistle. He was so pleased that he had forgotten to ask for his three days' pay; he probably wouldn't have got it if he had. Nor did it worry him to know that any of the Cross J men would gladly shoot him on sight: he felt competent to take care of himself.

THIS had happened in the late forenoon. Toward sunset he found himself riding down a ridge toward the headquarters of the Triangle Box. He had two reasons for going there: the Cross J boys had always been cussing that outfit—which made it more than likely to be a good outfit to work for, if he could get a job. Then again, back on the Cross J during his three days there, he had become aware that there was some sort of plotting or scheming going on against the Triangle Box. Of course, not being one of the "home guard," he didn't know just what it was, but he did know that the Cross J wanted, somehow, to grab the Triangle Box range for itself. Of course he couldn't say a word about all that—he wasn't a tattle-tale; but he had vague hopes of being able to frustrate the plans somehow. Not that he cared a hang about the Triangle Box, which he'd never seen, but he'd get an unholy pleasure in frustrating the Cross J all he could.

There was a din ahead of him that had been growing louder and louder as



"That's to teach you not to take a man's horse without askin' him—also to teach you not to jerk a horse's mouth."

he approached—bawling of cattle, trumpeting of bulls, shrill, yipping yells. They were holding a herd, and a big one. Good—there was pretty nearly always room for another man when a big herd was being worked.

Presently he swung around a shoulder of the ridge and came in sight of the ranch-houses—and of the great herd the big salt-lot. He nodded approvingly. White-faces, and good ones; the longhorn was bred out of them about as much as they'd stand, and still be tough enough for open range conditions. Two men were butchering a fat yearling near the round corral. He rode in a wide circle around them, very careful not to come too close. That was another point of etiquette always observed in Arizona. Of course nowadays most outfits killed their own beef; but still, it was good manners for a stranger not to go near enough to be able to see the brand.

A slim young fellow in shotgun chaps, lounging near the main ranch-house, glanced up and saw Jack. He waved a hand immediately, and sang out:

"Hey, partner! Turn yore horses in the corral an' come up—dinner's ready!"

Now, that was more like it! An outfit where anyone could invite all he saw in for dinner, without waiting for the Old Man or foreman to do it! He liberated his horses, and presently he was walking toward the big, low ranch-house, wide bat-wing chaps flapping behind him, spurs tinkling. He had taken off his gun and left it with his saddle—another little point of good manners.

PRESENTLY he was standing in the doorway, shooting a glance over the men at the long table. That one look told him they were cowboys after his own heart. Mostly "rimmies" like himself—the boots outside their trousers showed that, and the big, straight-shank spurs. Not that he had a thing against "centers"—he'd knocked around enough to get over that; but rimmies worked cattle the way he was used to. At the head of the long table was a dried-up, kindly faced little man with drooping gray mustache. This little man spoke with the soft drawl of West Texas:

"Shove up to the table, stranger, and make yoreself at home."

Jack climbed over the bench and squeezed himself between two cowboys. Immediately the cook dropped a tin plate on the green oilcloth before him, to be followed by a platter of hot biscuits. Then the cook, a Mexican, spoke sadly:

"No got no more *pastel, compadre.*"

A red-faced, sandy-haired fellow across the table grunted with relief.

"Say—that's a break for me! Now I can get rid o' my piece without havin' to eat the damned thing!"

He slid his triangle of juicy golden-brown apple pie across to Jack, and followed it with a cheerful grin—just as though he really hadn't wanted it. Then, without waiting for thanks, he scrambled back from the table. Jack beamed contentedly down at the piece of pie. This was a *real* cow outfit! He heard the soft drawl of the little cattleman down at the end of the table:

"Yes sir, fellers—only a ten-mile drive to town tomorrow, an' the herd'll be delivered. Shore kept us humpin' to git it gathered on time!"

Some one chuckled: "Tough on that buyer; I'll bet he's wore his knee-caps out prayin' we'd be a day late so's he could welsh on the contract—cattle goin' down like they did."

The Old Man was rolling a brown cigarette—just like those his men smoked. He too chuckled softly: "Well, he'll get the herd all right—an' pay for it. That'll let me take up that dog-gone note o' mine at the bank in time; an' believe me, it's the last money I'll ever borrow from Leavitt. The outfit would have been blowed up if we hadn't got gathered on time."

"Wonder," some one muttered, "if there aint somethin' back of it all—the buyer wantin' to welsh, an' the bank refusin' to renew yore note?"

But no one ventured a guess. The talk drifted to other things, and one by one they left the table. All but Jack; he sat jabbing at his pie with a fork, sometimes conveying a piece to his mouth without knowing it. That snatch of conversation had just fitted in with a few odd words he had chanced to hear back at the Cross J. Yep, it fitted like the hole fitted a doughnut! Jack winked at the last forkful of pie before he raised it to his mouth. Slim Summerford was smart, all right—but he'd have to be a darned sight smarter to slip anything over on an old-timer like little Dan Hankins here. Now, if he, Jack, could only get a job of riding from little Dan!

HE didn't. Down by the corral, old Dan explained, with honest regret on his face, that he was going to have to let two or three of the men go after he got the herd loaded; work was slack, and with beef so low, he had to get along with as few cowboys as he could. But wouldn't Jack stick around a few days and rest his horses before going on? He'd sure like to have him do it! He meant it, too, and Jack accepted the offer. A rest would do his two horses good, but he himself didn't mean to rest; he'd work so hard that the Old Man would give him a job next time there was an opening. Gosh, but he'd like to work for old Hankins! Maybe if he snapped out a real snaky bronc', the Old Man would figure he needed him for the rough string. What was Hankins grumbling about?

"Them dog-gone boys o' mine jest have to ride to town tonight, bein' so near it—an' I reckon I got to go with them to see that they're back at daylight to start the herd in. Comin' in with us, partner?"

"I—I reckon not; I'll jest stick around here an' rest."

"If—if yo're short o' money, mebbe I could lend—"

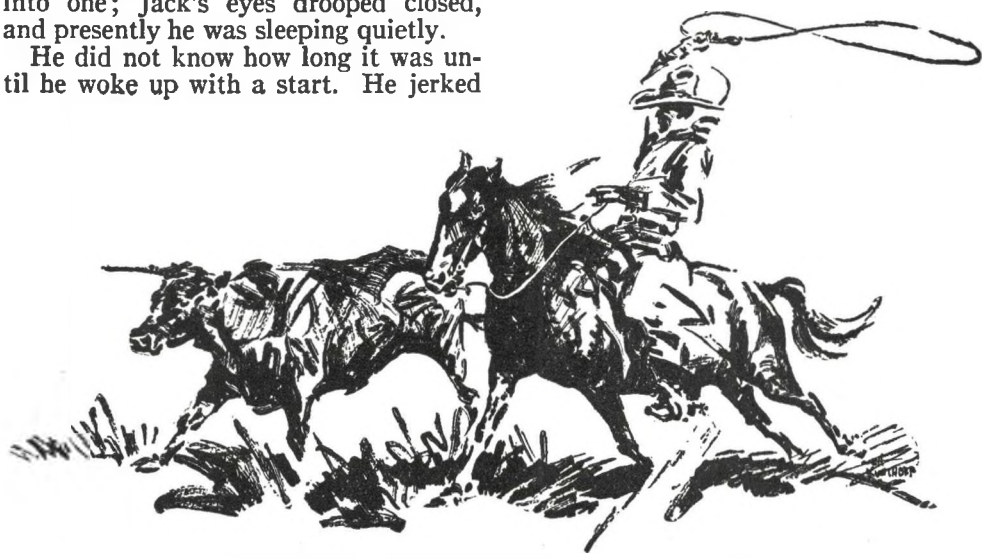
"'Taint that," lied Jack. "I jest been seein' too much o' town lately."

PRESENTLY he watched the crowd ride merrily off—even Juan, the cook. He glanced speculatively at his horses in the corral. From random remarks among the boys, he had gathered that the ranch was only a mile or two from the Rim; he had a good notion to saddle up and ride over to see it. He'd heard a lot about this Mogollon Rim. Here he was up among the pines and quaking-asps, at an altitude of nearly eight thousand feet; just a mile or two south, and he'd come out on the edge of the great cliffs, to look down on hot, dry country nearly a mile lower, stretching far out of sight. That huge cliff stretched clean across into New Mexico—must be nearly two hundred miles. Sometimes, he'd heard, you'd have to go twenty miles to find a break where a billy-goat could go up. Just straight bluffs, red and white and every color. Something like a Grand Cañon—without any other side to it.

But he found himself yawning; he was tired; they'd been working the devil out of him back at the Cross J. Oh, well, he could see the Rim tomorrow or sometime. He began pottering around absently. He mended his torn chaps with a bit of buckskin string; he combed out a witch-lock that was beginning to form in the tail of his little bay. And presently he spread his tarp on the clean dry needles under a pine, undressed to his underwear, and crawled under the covers.

By that time it was fully dark. Above the soothing bawl of the herd in the salt-lot came the shrill yapping of a coyote or two; sounded like a trail-herd of the things! Presently a timber wolf howled, a mile or so away. Up in one of the bigger pines, an owl was *hoo-hoo*'ing softly, and its mate answered from over on the ridge. The sounds all blended into one; Jack's eyes drooped closed, and presently he was sleeping quietly.

He did not know how long it was until he woke up with a start. He jerked up on one elbow, listening intently. Something had wakened him, but he could not tell what. It was pitch dark, and suddenly he remembered that there had seemed to be a million stars twinkling when he fell asleep. Must have clouded up during the night. But what had awakened him so suddenly, he wondered; there wasn't a sound.



With a faint snort, the leader swung to one side.

And then he knew: it was the sudden, ominous stopping of sound. The herd —had it got out? He sat up quickly. The herd was still in the salt-lot; he could barely see the shadowy forms in the darkness. But why were they so unnaturally quiet? A wave of uneasiness swept over him.

And then, so suddenly as to bring him leaping to his feet with his heart in his mouth, a mighty crash rent the forest, a ghastly, greenish flame lit up the still, wild-eyed herd in the big corral. He could see the high, poised heads, the flaring nostrils, the flash of white horns held high in the air. Everything set for a stampede!

Again the thunder roared, the lightning blazed greenly. The storm was bearing down directly on him—one of the terrible, sudden thunderstorms of the High Country. He lunged wildly for his trousers, but even as his hand closed on them, he paused, cursing himself for his needless panic. Why, that salt-lot fence was six feet high, of good, solid pine logs—it would hold till hell froze over.

Still, he dressed quickly, and carried his bed into the house; no use in getting it wet. It was deadly calm, but he could hear the roar of wind and rain a mile or two off, growing louder and louder. Faster and faster came the crashes, the sheets of green lightning. Now he began to notice a smell like sulphur in the air. Danged good thing to be in a nice, dry house this kind of night. He crossed to the window to close it, and stopped to glance toward the salt-lot.

And suddenly, as the lightning flared, he stopped dead still. His eyes bulged; his jaw dropped unbelievingly. In that brief flash he had seen three men topping a log from one side of the salt-lot—and it looked as though there were a wide gap in the fence beside them.

There was no time for thought. Jack found himself plunging through the door, forgetting to close it after him. In a moment he was at the horse corral, jamming his six-shooter into his chaps pocket, and then he was running toward the salt-lot, around the side of it, bent low. With the cattle stampeded, no one could ever prove that they themselves had not knocked the fence down; no one would have even thought of anything else, but for what he had happened to see. Some

one must have seen the whole Triangle Box crew riding toward town, seen how easy and safe it would be thus to prevent delivery of the herd.

Crashing through a little patch of dense pine saplings, Jack almost bumped into a saddled horse. Immediately the lightning flashed again, and he saw a man come running toward him—toward the horse. It was pitch dark for the instant. The man was beside Jack, not knowing he was there; he was passing a rein around the horse's neck.

And then Jack's gun-barrel whammed down on the man's head. Hardly knowing what he was doing in the excitement, Jack jerked the pegging-string from the belt of his chaps, knelt down, and tied the man's hands; he didn't want him to get away. He wanted to tie his feet too, but the pegging-string wasn't long enough. Then he solved it—jerked the man's heels back up against his hands and tied them there.

Over on the other side of the salt-lot, a yell rent the air, a shot. Now two men were yelling and shooting. Jack fired wildly toward them, and yelled an oath at the top of his voice; there was a moment's lull in the storm just then, so they could hear him.

And then the frozen herd surged to sudden life. Without a sound except from their hoofs, the cattle came flying through the break in the fence, past Jack. The lightning flared, glinting on high-held horns and wild eyes. Stampeded!

With a sobbing oath, Jack seized the reins of the horse and leaped into the saddle. He had a terrible impulse to dash around the salt-lot and shoot it out with two who had caused this—but that would not hold the herd. The roar of the wind was upon him, the sheet of rain; the edge of the storm seemed sharply defined as a stone wall. The lightning flared; a second flash showed him the white of a newly riven pine. He was tearing through the pines, whipping and spurring.

"Run, boy—run!"

A tall pine fell with a crash, directly in his path. It was in a moment of pitch darkness; he could not see, but he felt the horse heave high in the air under him as it leaped the trunk. A good horse, anyway, thank God! The horse crashed through another little patch of thick saplings. The branches whipped his face, almost tore him from the saddle. Sure running, that pony was! He could feel stout muscles working under him.

"Run, boy! Head 'em! That's a pony!"

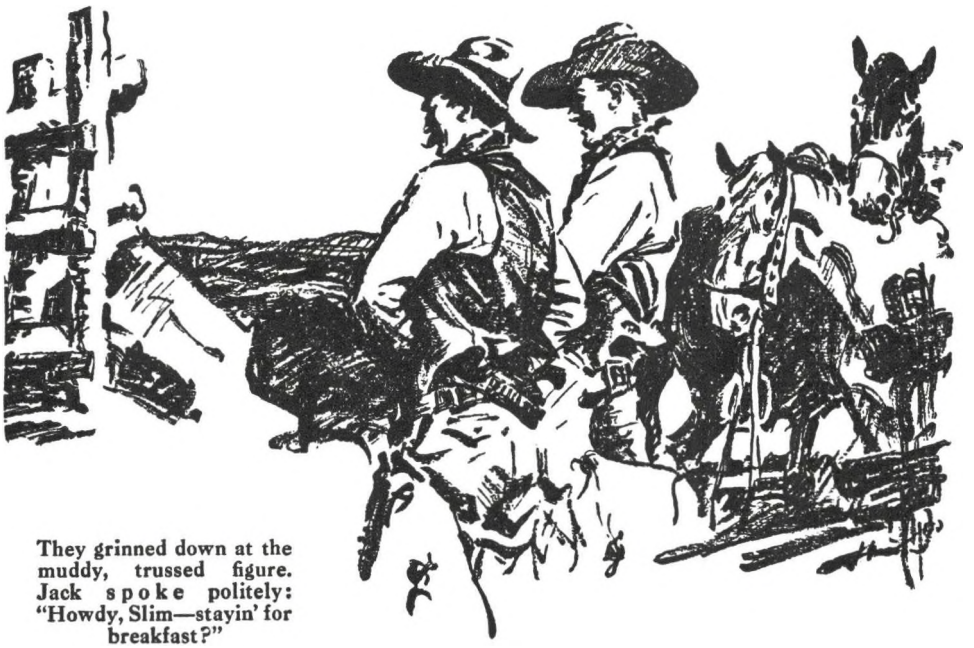
He was already soaking wet, water streaming down his face, running coldly down his back. Great limbs crashed around him from high above. Already the ground was soaking, and the hoofs of the herd made a queer, sucking, roaring sound. That, and the din of the storm, was almost deafening. Now and again, in the flare of the lightning, he had a glimpse of waving horns and rolling eyes. The herd was sweeping up the ridge in a close-packed mass, crazed with mute fear; if a cow in front went down, nothing but a mangled, crushed thing would be left after the rest of the herd had passed.

Crash! Flare! Now he was alongside the middle of the close-packed herd, and the horse was still gaining. Jack Henderson raised his voice.

"So-o-o, sisters!" he called soothingly.

He might as well have called upon the storm itself to stop. Over the ridge swept the wild-eyed leaders, down the other side. Now the green glare was almost continuous. Sheets of water seemed almost to drown him, to take his breath away. Across a flat, over another ridge, —a low one,—another flat. Still he held the horse back, and well out from the herd. To ride closer would be madness; if his horse stumbled, you could gather all that would be left of him in a tobacco-sack.

Another ridge—a little low, bare one this time. Racing over the summit, Jack's eyes suddenly seemed to bulge in his head. A choking sob sprang to his throat. *The Rim!* For a short distance



They grinned down at the muddy, trussed figure. Jack spoke politely: "Howdy, Slim—stayin' for breakfast?"

ahead of him lay the level ground, and then—nothing! And straight toward the edge of those immense cliffs raced the silent herd. The wild leaders would be pressed on by those behind. Half the herd of fine white-faces—perhaps almost all of them—would be dashed to pieces on the boulders thousands of feet below! For an instant Jack pulled on the rein, and suddenly he leaned forward.

"Up, boy! Head 'em, pony!"

It was a chance in a thousand, this thing of flinging himself in front of this mad stampede. The glare of the lightning showed Jack's face paper-white—yes, he was afraid; his body seemed withering with fear inside his cold, drenched clothes. He dug the spurs in.

"Right in front of 'em, boy! Head 'em!"

He had a vision of the Triangle Box men riding across the flat in the morning, trailing the herd—and suddenly stopping to gather silently around something lying in the mud.

"Right in front of 'em, boy!"

He reached back to the back of the cantle; yes, there was a slicker there. He tore it from the saddle-strings that held it. Straight across the front of the herd he raced, swearing hysterically, flapping the yellow slicker into the faces of the leaders. Useless! He cast the slicker from him, across a pair of white horns. For an instant it waved there, and then dropped beneath the hoofs of the herd.

He glanced quickly away from the herd. The Rim! He was almost to it—between it and the herd! Too late to turn off now! He swore feverishly.

And then he gasped, as though he had suddenly thought of something that should have come to him sooner. His hand flashed down to the revolver in his chaps pocket. He turned in the saddle, and the gun spurted a little reddish-yellow flame. A big steer dropped and was trampled under. He reined back until horns were raking the horse's flanks; he could not afford to miss a shot.

Three down—four. Were they turning a trifle? Another. The sixth falling. Under his horse was solid ground; on his right was—nothing. He was racing along the very edge of the Rim. And on his left, touching his stirrup, raced the leaders of the herd.

He screamed at them—whipped off his hat and waved it in their faces. When he glanced around again, the Rim was three feet off. The herd was turned!

He was beyond swearing, beyond groaning. He reined back to a safer distance and just let the herd go, not trying to stop it, riding beside it . . . . Presently the storm was sweeping away as quickly as it had come. Now the cattle seemed to be slowing up. He waited until they came to a little sheltered hollow, and then dashed in, yelling like a drunken Indian, waving an arm. With a faint snort, the leader swung to one side. Beside him raced Jack, swinging him more and more. Presently the leader was fol-

lowing the cow that had been last, and the herd was racing in a circle.

It was then that Jack groaned with relief. He had them milling. Beside the whirlpool of flesh he raced, sometimes shooting ahead, sometimes dropping back. Presently he began to sing at the top of his voice. Slower and slower the whirlpool turned, until at last it stopped uneasily. From somewhere in the center came the soft moo of a cow calling for her calf. Jack sagged in his saddle, staring dully ahead: that little sound told that the danger was over.

IN the gray light of dawn, Jack saw a crowd of riders dashing along the Rim; they were bent over in their saddles as though trailing. Jack raised his voice in a shrill yell, and the man in the lead straightened up, came dashing toward him with the others following.

"Jack—yo're alive!" Old Dan Hankins' face was white and haggard. "We—we picked up the pieces o' yore slicker, an' we figgered you was done for. The herd—reckon it's scattered plumb to Utah. There won't be no delivery today."

Jack led him to the edge of the little depression and pointed. The cattle were bedded down comfortably, sleepily, still resting after their mad race. Jack grinned a slow, quiet grin—to see him, you would never suspect that he had been terror-stricken not many hours before, never suspect that he had gambled his life on a chance in a thousand. But old Dan had seen the tracks on the rim, the scraps of yellow slicker—he knew. He wasn't the kind to say much.

"Come on back to the ranch, Jack, an' I'll cut you out a string o' horses. Reckon yo're too good a hand to let git away. Wonder how them ornery divils tore the fence down?"

It was only after he spoke that he chanced to glance down and see the strange brand on the horse Jack rode—that told him a lot before Jack could speak.

Before long they were standing side by side in a little patch of saplings near the salt-lot, both looking very cheerful as they grinned down at the muddy, trussed figure. Jack spoke politely:

"Howdy, Slim—stayin' for breakfast?"

Slim didn't seem talkative; in fact, he was probably too cold and stiff to talk much even if he wanted to.

"We-ell, Jack," drawled old Dan Hankins, "let's go up to the house, an' one of us can go get the sheriff to take him in."

But they hadn't gone fifty yards when old Dan stopped suddenly, making a little sudden explosive sound that seemed to be: "By gosh!" He stood for a moment, scratching his head behind his ear, and then he turned to Jack.

"Say, Jack, I been figgerin' a long time that I'm gettin' pretty old an' stiff to be my own range-boss, but I couldn't find the right kind o' man to ramrod the outfit. I wonder—"

"Huh—uh—" Jack shifted his feet. "I was foreman for the Lazy M Bar down near Yuma—Pete Sholter's outfit—for near two years."

"Old Pete—I know him well. Well, if yo're foreman enough for Rimmy Pete, yo're foreman enough for me. I'll ride in ahead an' see the buyer, an' you can bring the herd in after me. I'll send the sheriff out after Slim."

Jack thought a long time; at last he spoke:

"About Slim. Uh—do we—uh—have to have him arrested?"

"Up to you. You caught him—I don't want him." Old Dan Hankins waved his hand magnanimously.

They turned back into the saplings. Jack untied the Cross J foreman. He had to help him to his feet, Slim was so stiff.

"Slim, I changed my mind; I aint goin' to have you arrested. You see, it's this way: I'm foreman o' this outfit now, an' I'm thinkin' o' what fun me an' the boys will have dealin' misery to you an' yore home guard—havin' you locked up would spoil all the fun. So climb on yore horse—he's pretty tired, but he'll carry you home. Drift!"

BUT he had to help Slim into the saddle too. With his hand on the reins, Jack held him for a last word.

"Jest think, Slim: this wouldn't all have happened but for yore turrible manners—takin' a man's horse without askin'. If I was you, I'd buy me a book on that there etiquette an' study it—might save you a lot of trouble. Well, sorry you can't stay for breakfast!"

Jack heard a soft chuckle beside him, and he turned to glance with a little grin at old Dan. Then, contentedly puffing a cigarette, he turned back to watch the bedraggled figure trailing off through the pines on a tired, muddy horse.

"Uh-huh—if Slim jest didn't have sech awful manners!"

A steam-calliope is always a prize noise-maker. Stolen, however, and silent, it can yet make infernal uproar through Darktown streets.

By
ARTHUR K. AKERS

Illustrated by Everett Lowry

The door opened with a bang. Instantly "Bugwine" Breck shot under the agency sink.

The Stolen Calliope

THE door opened with a bang, and instantly "Bugwine" Breck shot under the agency's sink. When Columbus Collins came in like that, trouble was bound to be right back of him! Worse, Detective Collins—who had seemingly been stumped by a case for a week—was now showing unmistakable symptoms of a solution, an idea. Hence the sink; as assistant sleuth the five-foot Bugwine had had bitter previous experience with Columbus' ideas!

"Boy, come on out! You is in luck!" clarioned the entering Mr. Collins.

"Got all de bad luck I can tote now," demurred Mr. Breck, from sanctuary.

"But you is fixin' git a new deal. Us about to clear up who stole de lodge's steam-calliope last week—"

"*Still* sounds like some more of yo' dirty work for me to do."

"Shet up! Also, *work* is somep'n you aint know nothin' about, shawt boy! All time hangin' round dat Aroma Adams gal's alley, moanin' through dat saxophone of yourn like a duck wid de croup."

"Aroma lovin' wid me," Bugwine eyed enviously Columbus' "bull"-fiddle leaning in the corner. "And craves herself serenadin'; also craves it loud."

"Done brung up somep'n else: Aroma aint yo' gal no more."

"Who say she aint?" bristled the emerging Mr. Breck.

"I is; she done seen me now. So lemme cotch dem two left-shoes tracks of yourn up her alley again, and I tells her whar you was all last week. *Dat* put a tuck in yo' business!"

Mr. Breck winced and blanched, for Aroma not only held firm views about *fortissimo* in serenades, but was also fussy about jails. "Aint me, it's de white-folks," he defended his recent incarceration. "—All time leadin' me down a hall when I gits in de courthouse. Den somep'n go *clang!* and dar I is—in de jail-house again. By mistake."

"Yeah, *yo'* mistake—for lookin' like you belonged dar! And Aroma aint got no time for jail-birds. She say so."

"What dat got to do wid de calliope case?" Bugwine hastily detoured, in lieu of denial.

"Plenty. I done solve de crime, and fixin' give you part de credit."

"Says *huh?*" If Columbus ever gave Bugwine any credit, there was a trick in it!

"Un-gape dat mouth, boy—you's caus-

in' a draft! Says all you got to do now is git busy; also stay out of Aroma's alley. And I got me a idea dat'll 'tend to both dem things, too."

"Sounds like two ideas—both of 'em bum. Whar-at de assignment now?" Mr. Breck surrendered sullenly.

"Now you showin' sense! I done arranged it for you. Eve'ything: room, board, washin' free. All you got do is *be* dar—"

Bugwine shot back beneath the sink: Columbus was describing heaven to him, and that meant a boy had to be knocked in the head first. "Means I gits a job widout no *work* in it?" from his refuge he suspiciously acid-tested this Utopia.

"Country plumb full of boys tryin' to git one as good," rebuked his chief. "And here you is, buckin' and brayin' about till I cain't hardly git de bridle over yo' ears!"

MR. BRECK'S imagination came reluctantly up from the rear: possibly Columbus had changed. "Whar-at de job, den?" he risked finding out.

"Dat's de spirit! Lights on de assignment like a banker on a dime! Why, you even gits yo' clothes furnished."

"Craves me a bright blue coat," decided the re-emergent Bugwine. "And pa'r dem peg-top pants, and—"

"You aint tell *dem:* dey tells *you,*" Columbus halted him. "All you has to do is git in—"

"Git in whar?"

"Dawggone! Aint I tell you? Well, you know de lodge done retain me to locate dey calliope what got stole—"

"Lodge so busted dey couldn't pay you nothin', was you to find it," objected Mr. Breck.

"But dey's more ways dan *money* of gittin' yo' rewawd; ways jest as good—"

"Jest as good to who? Craves my money spendable."

"Gits dumber as you ages! I'll git paid all right—"

"Paid how?" persisted Bugwine.

"Back off, boy; yo' brains is burnin'! All you got und'stand now is dat I jest jailed Mammaduck Brown—for stealin' dat calliope!"

"Sho used to toot noble through de streets, wid de mule pullin' it!" reminisced Mr. Breck, to whom Marmaduke Brown meant nothing—yet.

"So eve'ybody satisfied now," recapitulated Mr. Collins, "exceptin' Mammaduck—and old Frawgface Reeves, de head-man of de lodge."

"Understands Mammaduck kickin'," conceded Bugwine; "but what Frawgface hollerin' about?"

"He sore beca'ze I gits de crook, but he aint git de calliope back. Fussy. And aint show no confi-dence in me—"

"Tells you he cain't pay off, nohow, after us gits de crook—"

"After *I* gits de crook," corrected Mr. Collins coldly. "And aint nobody know whar dat calliope is, so forgit it. But here whar my idea come in—and you. You see, Mammaduck and you both is so runtified de white-folks cain't tell you apart: looks like you is both growed up under de same stool."

"What dat got to do wid it?" Vague apprehension enlarged and whitened Mr. Breck's eyes.

"Dis: Mammaduck was aimin' to git hisse'f married tonight. But him bein' in de jail-house liable gum up de weddin'."

"Sho is!"

"So he re-tains de Columbus Collins detectin' agency, what got him *in* de jail-house, to also git him out again—before de weddin'-time at seven tonight, and for long enough for de honeymoon. Dat whar you comes in."

"On de honeymoon?"

"Naw, in de jail-house. In Mammaduck's place—"

AGAIN Mr. Breck shot frantically under the sink. So *this* was Columbus' big idea—to accommodate Marmaduke and hog-tie his own rival in love, Bugwine, with one jailing!

"But dat ruin *me* wid Aroma!" Bugwine further recalled how his love felt about jails.

"If she know it, yes," his chief revealed still more of his strategy. "But I aint tell her about yo' bein' in jail *last* week if you goes back to jail *dis* week. Keeps both times dark. And besides, by den—"

"But I done promise to serenade dat gal again tonight—loud!" interrupted the stunned troubadour beneath the sink.

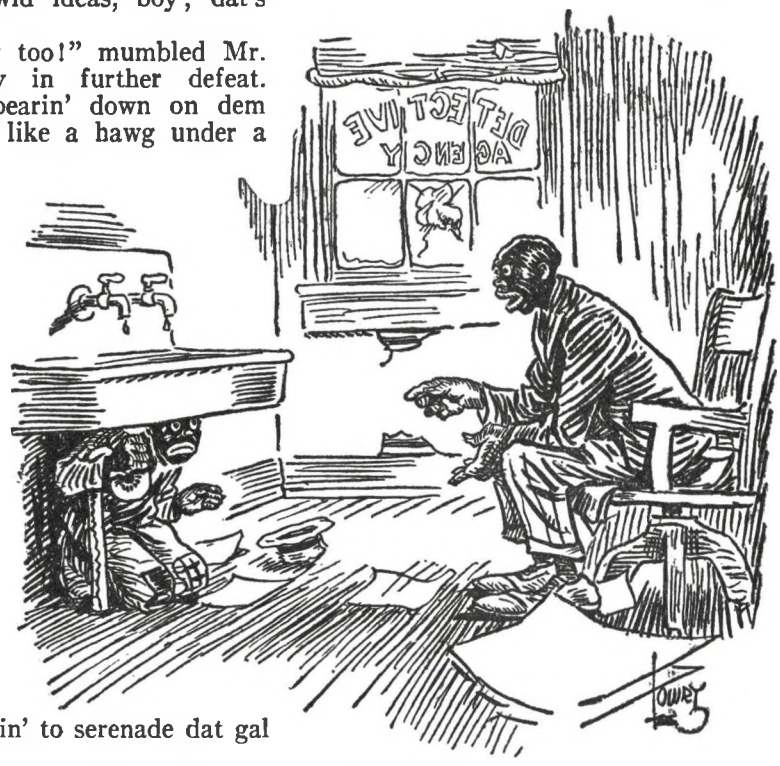
"*I* 'tends to de serenadin', *you* 'tends to Mammaduck." Columbus was adamant, also cunning. "All you got to do is shet up now—and bust into jail."

"Bust in how?" Again Bugwine was falling back before superior forces.

"Like you always does—by mistake. Hangin' around de courthouse and gits locked up, to mix and mingle sociable wid de boys inside, till you meets Mammaduck. Den you slips him yo' star.

He looks so much like you dat when he show it to de jail-house gent'men and say, 'Wrong number again,' dey say ''Scuse it, please!' and turns *him* loose. You stays in while he honeymoons, den, and I keeps *all* yo' jailin's dark from Aroma. Lousy wid ideas, boy; dat's me!"

"Ideas is lousy too!" mumbled Mr. Breck resentfully in further defeat. "And me been bearin' down on dem 'St. Louis Blues' like a hawg under a gate, too—practisin' to serenade dat gal noble tonight!"



"Means I gits a job widout no *work* in it?" From Bugwine's refuge he suspiciously acid-tested this Utopia.

Once in the alley outside, Bugwine felt the need of farewells. He who was about to go to jail, saluted—if he could manage it before Columbus caught him at it, Columbus who took cases from indigent lodges and seemed to have private ideas as to the kind of coin in which he would be paid.

Bugwine found Aroma busy with a hot iron and a damp shirt, in the rear of her residence. Threading his way among the assortment of dogs that cluttered her smoke-shrouded back yard, he presented himself dubiously before her, his saxophone under his arm.

A shadow forthwith crossed the brow of his love. "You can come round, honey," she accounted for it, "but hitch dat tin-whistle outside. I done run out of soda!"

"How-come 'soda'?" Bugwine blinked perplexedly.

"For dem two sour notes in de basement of dat thing! Also, it aint got no more standin' wid me now dan a bait-worm wid fleas. Craves myself volume! And Mist' Collins, what been round here lately, he's got it! Boy, *is* he saw hisself a note on de bull-fiddle! Hear him plumb to Gawgia, when de wind right!"

Mr. Breck collapsed internally. So *that* was it! Columbus had been fiddling while Bugwine burned!

"Mist' Collins say," Aroma added fuel to the flames, "he gwine serenade me *right* tonight. Hear him fur and loud!"

Mr. Breck sickened some more. Aroma still craved volume, did she? While, in the jail-house—or in the hospital, as his compliance with Columbus' demands should soon determine now—he could only listen helplessly while his chief and rival zoomed and boomed and bowed himself the rest of the way into the heart of Bugwine's girl Aroma. It was intolerable—also inescapable!

"Mist' Collins sho is a swell detective, too!" she further enthused.

"Uh-huh," Mr. Breck gave his superior the same endorsement he reserved for the ailment popularly known as "athlete's foot."

"Death on jail-birds! De bird-dawg of de law, dat's him!" Aroma rattled on. "Me, I aint no use for jail-birds, no-how. And Mist' Collins sho hatchin' 'em fast! He jest jailed dat Mamma-duck Brown boy now."

Bugwine's frayed overalls had mounted about his ears as he sank in his gar-

ments. He began floundering upward through them for air and extrication. "Leaves de saxophone wid you, sugar," he proposed weakly, "while I 'tends to my business. Next time you hears *me*, you hears somep'n in playin'."

"Leave it all you pleases, jest so you aint play on it again!" giggled Aroma accommodatingly. "Bull-fiddle's done ruint me for sound of wind blowin' through a crack. Craves myself volume!"

With which second ultimatum ringing in his ears, a Mr. Breck at the end of his rope, musically and otherwise, headed reluctantly for the courthouse and the sure incarceration that ever awaited a boy in its corridors.

SOMETIME later Columbus Collins, gayly checking over his business at his agency's battered table, could not suppress explosive cacklings of anticipatory triumph. Brains were the stuff! Brains and volume. Shortly now he would have both: no matter how busted everybody knew the lodge was. There was other currency than money. Meantime, everything was going fine. He had squared the lodge rank-and-file by jailing Marmaduke. Squared all but the skeptical Frogface, that was. And Frogface was the sort of boy who believed nobody but eyewitnesses—and only then when supported by circumstantial evidence. As proved by his even doubting openly the authenticity of Columbus' current crook! Mr. Collins dismissed Frogface and dwelt again on pleasanter things—like Marmaduke: Marmaduke whom he had squared also by providing Bugwine as his honeymoon-long substitute in jail—Marmaduke, who was as good as married already, with Bugwine so strongly bound by threats of blackmail that his presence in the jail was assured long before *Lohengrin* should sound for Marmaduke at seven. Like love, Columbus recited, a smart man like himself ever found a way! Moreover, this *was* love, where everything was fair. While as for the calliope, naturally nobody knew where that was except its thief, and he—

A sound at the door startled, shattered this pleasing reverie with: "Whitefolks aint lemme *git* in de jail-house."

"Aint let you in!" Columbus whirled, leaped to his feet amid crash of dreams and schemes. Savagely he glared down at a one-man depression in overalls and flap-crowned straw hat, eying the sink yearningly from the threshold.

When business was to be gummed-up, it flashed across Mr. Collins' mind, trust Bugwine Breck to gum it! While, to make matters worse, as long as Bugwine was at large—Bugwine who played all instruments alike, by ear—Aroma couldn't finish getting that far-away look out of her eyes.

"Naw," resumed Mr. Breck unhappily. "Jest say 'No loafin' in de halls,' and runs me off wid a broom. Say gwine scald whole mess of fur off me too, is I come back in dar no more."

Columbus choked, scowled, debated. Bugwine shifted in his overalls and watched his chief uneasily. If Columbus thought up any *more* ideas—

Then the sink called and Bugwine answered! For Mr. Collins had suddenly straightened, in the familiar manner preceding the birth of inspiration with him. And, "Come out from dar!" again roared the agency's head. "Eve'y time you shets one door, I opens two. Wid my brains. And alibis aint go: is you cain't git in de jail-house *your* way, dey is still a way left."

"Wh-what way?"

"De *regular* way: commit yo'self a crime."

Stirring sounds from beneath the sink betrayed the penetration of this idea to an assistant's very vitals.

"Even is you got to call in some of yo' dumb friends to help you, you is gwine be in de jail-house—or de hawspital—and Mammaduck in front de preacher, by seven tonight!" ultimatumed Mr. Collins but the more firmly.

Mr. Breck continued to squawk, gurgle, and send up rockets. But to no avail. Until his third and final sinking was signalized by vocal grasping at a slender straw indeed. "Might git Gladstone Smith to help me think up somep'n," he hazarded as he clung precariously to it.

"*Gladstone?* Dat's a hot sketch!" gibed Columbus. "You and him! One long, one shawt; both dumb! But two half-wits adds up de same as one whole set of brains—in de arithmetic. So go to it!"

BACK of a fried-fish emporium in Strawberry Street, the sunken-spirited Mr. Breck had luck at last. The only question continued, which kind? For unexpectedly there he stumbled upon his sought-for aide.

"Looks like you is jest gittin' back from buryin' yo' liver," commented the

seven-foot and still-A.E.F.-uniformed Mr. Smith sympathetically. "What ailed it?"

"Cain't git myself in de jail-house!" mourned Mr. Breck comprehensively.

"Cain't git *in* de jail-house?" Mr. Smith, who had just had a birthday but was still the same age mentally, labored over this, behind fresh corrugations of a Cro-Magnon brow.

"Naw, been tryin' to git in dar on a assignment all evenin'—take another boy's place so he can git married. White-folks jest runs me off."

GLADSTONE took the weight off his feet, that more strength might go to his mind. Then, squatted loosely on the curb, he brought his increased powers to bear upon the problem from this fresh attitude and angle. "What is you done, to git arrested for?" at length issued from his fog.

"Aint commit nothin'—"

Instantly and interruptingly, the light appeared to Gladstone. "Dat's it!" he laid joyous finger on his friend's difficulty. "You got to *do* somep'n to git in jail—like stealin' from de white-folks while dey's lookin'."

"You sounds mo' like Columbus eve'y minute!" wailed Mr. Breck. "But wid de jam I's in, I got to try it. Let's go."

But Gladstone's suggestion was to prove easier made than executed. Everything of value seemed either locked up or nailed down. Larceny looked impossible. The combined intellects of Bugwine and Gladstone did not seem to bear out at all Columbus' contention about the arithmetic. Daylight and the outlook for a jailable crime were both fading fast. Clearer and clearer it became that Mr. Breck could not achieve jail by seven, unless crime got started with a rush, while in any event now, he could not keep his promise to serenade Aroma. Nothing loomed in the early-descending December dusk but failure.

Then suddenly, and as so often was reputed the case, the fast-falling darkness revealed itself as merely that blackness which is ever deepest before the dawn—a dawn which to the uninitiated, including Bugwine, merely seemed a bag of coal, standing conveniently outside a forlorn-looking little store. But to Gladstone, who saw it first—

"Grab it and run, Bugwine!" he hissed under its inspiration. "While I stays and tells de man on you. It'll be good for thirty days and cawsts, easy. Us'll have you in de jail-house by seven, after all!"

"Grab it and *walks*, you means," acceded and amended Mr. Breck morosely. "Seven 'clock comin' on too fast for me to slow down de white-folks none at cotchin' me, by runnin' *now!*"—an idea which he instantly put into execution.

But the outcome was unexpected. Fate, it seemed, was against a boy, no matter how hard he tried to do wrong. For, "Sure! What's a sack of coal, when already I go broke at four o'clock this afternoon!" shrugged the ravished merchant philosophically when Gladstone had breathlessly apprised him of his loss. "Tell him to take two—and fool my creditors worse!"

"And *now* I got to tote de damn' coal all over Demop'lis, on top all my other trouble!" criticised Mr. Breck harshly when the failure of his *coup* and the inner workings of a bankruptcy had been crestfallenly relayed to him by the goggle-eyed Gladstone. "*Next* time you gits one dem swell ideas, make it a *hawss*—so me and de coal both can ride!"

Which was precisely what Mr. Smith approximated when, from a pessimistic foray up a cross-alley, he returned with his personal contribution to crime.

"What dat?" In the deepening darkness Mr. Breck eyed perplexedly the vague form that shuffled and stumbled in Gladstone's rear.

"You's in de jail-house *now!* For hawss-stealin'!" divulged Mr. Smith, glancing proudly backward at his tow.

"Hell of a hawss!"

"He aint a hawss, he's a mule, nohow," Gladstone defended and amended his loot in a better light. "Git you as fur as de jail-house, though; den you aint need no hawss no mo'."

INSTANTLY, however, Gladstone seemed wrong again: from the surrounding night emerged something short, upright, and even darker than itself—one Napoleon Nash—proving that luck was still in reverse for Bugwine.

"Whar y'all boys gwine wid my mule?" he demanded ominously.

"Looks of de mule, us aint gwine nowhar," estimated Mr. Breck bitterly. He was all but over Columbus' dead-line now, and nothing else mattered; sunk as he was with Aroma, with Marmaduke, and with Columbus. Seven o'clock kept nearing, and here he had to hold an argument with the owner of this mule. By now not only the wedding-guest but

Savagely Columbus glared down at a one-man depression in overalls and a flap-crowned straw hat.

the bridegroom too, must be beating his breast—within a jail that resisted Bugwine's every assault upon it from without! While, if they did not hear the loud bassoon, its sickening counterpart was again suddenly abroad in the land! Bugwine heard it now, in the far-off *Zzzooom! Zzzooom! Zzooomity-zoom!* of Columbus' bull-fiddle in evident rehearsal for Aroma's serenade and Bugwine's final downfall. Aroma craved volume—and Columbus was fixing to give it to her, with Mr. Breck's own recent fervent parting promise that he would return forthwith and *fortissimo*, about to prove but an empty boast and gesture. While now—

"W-e-l-l," the bereft Mr. Nash here broke startlingly in upon a bad situation, and made it much worse, "git as fur as you can wid him, den. Wid de depression and all, aint do *me* no good havin' him starve on de premises. Aint but one trouble wid dat mule—"

"Looks like fawty or fifty of 'em to me!" interjected Mr. Breck gloomily.

"All right, pick 'em out for yo'self, den!" snapped the ex-owner irritatedly. "But git wid him, while he's still under his own power!"

"Now you is done play hell again: us got to tote de coal *and* lead de mule!" Bugwine berated his co-criminal as Mr. Nash faded back into his setting. "Done *been* ruint, nohow, when seven 'clock comes: and now I's *re*-ruint!"

It was a predicament that betrayed no change as Bugwine checked over his affairs, stumbling up an unfamiliar alley ahead of Gladstone and his four-footed mental equal. While loud and ever louder, *Zzzzooom! Zzzooom! Zzzooomity-zoom!* rang the far-off and fatal fiddle of Columbus, sawing away as though he had already been paid for ferreting out the crook who had stolen the lodge's calliope.

A block farther up the unlighted and unfrequented alley, they came to a place where it widened into a bush-bordered and unfenced lane at the edge of town. Here the boat-footed Gladstone blundered heavily into something, on the opposite side from Bugwine.

Puzzled investigation revealed something huge and formless, partially buried in the bushes and partly covered over with hastily flung-up planks. Then, as they fumbled further at its outlines, twin jolts to the brains simultaneously floored and felled the pair.

"It's de lodge's calliope!" burst first from Gladstone. "—What's been stole!"

"And dat Columbus aint found!" echoed Bugwine. Then a further thought: "Dumb, is I?" he chortled beneath it. "Wait till Frawgface hears how good I is—and Columbus aint! He gits de crook, but *I* finds de calliope! Sho is a hawss on Columbus!"

Then darkness again: No matter now how strong Bugwine became with Frogface he was still a jail-bird to Aroma, once the word reached her from Columbus about him. He was still in Columbus' power, in that respect.

And yet, as the little sleuth stumbled and floundered in the twin nights that covered him, vague stirrings presented themselves in the arid area between his ears, presaging things that frightened him. The last time he had felt like this, just before the big war, he recalled in alarm, he had thought up something. . . . With a rush it was on him! Rocking him, engulfing him dizzily in a vast surging wave. He had thought again! And what a thought!

"Hot ziggity dawg!" his mouth beat his brains to the outer air with it. *"Us is got eve'ything!"*

THE startled Gladstone leaped aside in amazement at what followed next. For when a sawed-off boy carrying a sack of coal began dancing the Black Bottom with a mule in the darkness of mental and physical night in an alley, the situation was serious!

"Us got use for eve'ything now!" enlarged the blur-footed Bugwine, casting

his coal ecstatically from him, but hanging on to the halter.

"Use for eve'ything what?" Gladstone's jaw and intellect still flapped loosely on their bearings from shock.

"I kills three birds wid one rock, dat's what!" bugled this new Mr. Breck. "*My* turn to steal de calliope now—from whoever stole it from de lodge! Keep my mouth shet about it, and I's still got time — before seven 'clock! Coal couldn't fix it and de mule couldn't fix it—but stealin' dis calliope 'bleeged to git me in de jail-house now! Dat shet Columbus up and git Mammaduck out. But I aint *stay* in now! I gits out and Aroma gits volume what *is* volume, too!"

"Volume?" Intellectually, Gladstone was farther behind than a stock-ticker in 1929.

"Sho! I sets Columbus' old bull-fiddle in de shade now, when us fires up de calliope wid our coal and hauls it wid our mule! You drivin' and me playin' —serenadin' Aroma, tootin' noble on de 'Jail-house Blues', through de streets on my way to de jail-house now!"

"How-come dat git you out so quick after you's in?" Gladstone still suffered from his intellectual overload.

"By provin' to Frawgface, by you—after I gits Mammaduck out—dat *I* aint steal de calliope; I's jest *bringin' it back*, when dey arrested me. And Columbus cain't say nothin', beca'ze I is done got myse'f in and Mammaduck out, jest like he say. Brains, come to papa!"

"All downhill from here to jail," Gladstone let it go at that. "Make it easy on de mule; he aint look so stout, nohow."

"Only thing you can be sho about a mule is he fool you," rebuked Mr. Breck.

"Wonder is he calliope-broke?" Gladstone couldn't get off his mental dead-center, and a vague memory of some unfinished comment.

"Aint keer if he's house-broke!" Mr. Breck was busy harvesting dead branches among the adjacent bushes. "You git in here and rustle kindlin'! Whoever stole dis calliope de first time done a good job—stole de harness wid it. Hook up dat mule, boy! Music fixin' to swell de breeze! I plays 'em by ear, and I plays 'em all! I gits in, *and* I gits out!"

"Plenty of water in de b'iler," shortly reported a Gladstone joyous among the gauges, as first flames crackled in the fire-box.

"Step on yo'se'f wid de coal-sack

"He aint a hawss, he's a mule, nohow," Gladstone defended and amended his loot in a better light.

now!" urged Mr. Breck feverishly. "You acts like seven o'clock aint comin' on."

"Thunk up swipin' dat coal my own-se'f," pointed out the panting Mr. Smith, as sparks began to spangle the smoke from the stack.

"Little more, and you'll think you thunk up de mule, too!" Bugwine beat his side to any further glory. "Neither one no good till I hooks up my brains to yo' mule and de lodge's calliope. Boy, rally wid de mule—feels *'Sweet Adeline'* comin' on!"

"Mule r'arin' to go," retorted Mr. Smith, catching the contagion, "soon as fans de fire some mo' wid my hat."

"Brains, quit friskin' about!" Mr. Breck was settling himself into his virtuoso's seat at the rear. "—Acts like you aint never thunk up nothin' befo'. Gladstone, b'ar down on de mule!"

"Mule, romp on yo'self!" bellowed the swollen Gladstone in turn, as he slapped the rope reins over their motive-power.

"When you gwine start playin'?" questioned Mr. Smith anxiously, as they entered the upper reaches of familiar Baptist Hill. "Cain't tell how long a mule like dis gwine last. Napoleon say dey one trouble wid dis mule—"

"Commences soon as gits 'bout a block above Aroma's house—she aint crave none dem soft and fur-off tunes: craves volume," rejoined Mr. Breck loftily. "I gits up all de steam us can dat way, too, waitin'."

Already, however, Baptist Hill was taking notice and positions of vantage. Gratifying assemblages of knob-eyed

auditors began to knot the corners, only to scatter wildly once as the safety-valve deafeningly let go under Bugwine's strenuous stokings. Volume took steam!

"Old pop-valve aint budge him!" From in front Gladstone admired their steed aloud.

"Couple of cawpses in de cem'tery aint turn over, neither," Mr. Breck wet-blanketed this admiration.

Bugwine was busy watching the sidewalks for signs. He hoped the news would not reach Frogface too soon or too late. Sonorous serenade—followed by prompt and private arrest—was the ticket now. Proving that he was merely returning stolen property would then effect his release. And with his calliope restored, even the skeptical Frogface could be counted upon not to push any case against the newly-wed Marmaduke. Leaving Columbus with his pains for his pay, yet pledged not to betray to Aroma that Bugwine had ever been in durance vile.

From the back seat of the calliope, it all looked good to Bugwine. So did the long downward slope of the Hill, the entrance to Aroma's crowded alley.

"B'ar to de left, Gladstone, and p'int de mule's nose to'ds de jail-house. Fixin' to romp all over dese keys now!" he commanded stentoriously.

Gladstone bore left. And, with a hiss and roar, the lodge's long-lost calliope, Bugwine Breck at the console, burst bellowing into the moving music of "Little David."

Very shortly after which nothing was according to Hoyle or Bugwine's dreams. True, he had volume; but he also had trouble—from an unexpected quarter.

AMID the uproar of his own melodies, Bugwine first noticed that the fronts of the close-set frame shacks on either side of the alley were going by too fast. A breeze began to fan his fevered brow, to tear the plume of steam rudely from the now-speeding stack, while his seat was beginning to buck under him like a tugboat at sea in a storm.

"Slow down dat mule, Gladstone! Y'all makin' me miss de goodest notes!" bellowed the music-master in angered remonstrance.

"Lay off dat back-seat drivin', boy: you aint missed nothin' *yit!*" squalled back a distraught driver enigmatically. Mr. Breck perceived then that Gladstone was standing erect like some dusky and rag-wrapped *Ben Hur* of old, sawing fiercely but futilely at his mule's mouth with the reins of rope.

"Slow down de mule!" screeched Bugwine afresh. Memory of Napoleon Nash's unfinished caution recurred disturbingly as they grazed a tree and six slower members of the populace.

A command which he no sooner reiterated than worse calamity came: "Old note's done stuck now!" reported Mr. Breck in frantic reference to the ensuing vaporous howl that cut across his public's ear-drums like the scream of a sawmill whistle at dawn, a shriek that the mule's panic and velocity seemed but to feed upon.

"Old mule pop-valve-broke, but he aint *music-broke!*" diagnosed the frenzied Gladstone as he sawed at a hard and tireless mouth.

NAPOLEON'S meaning about the mule flashed too late across the Bugwinian mind.

"Rake out de fire! He's runnin' away!" shouted Gladstone from the forefront of the swaying instrument.

Clang! went the firebox door, as Mr. Breck abandoned art for ashes. Along the alley in the darkness behind them, like the road to Avernus, began to blaze and smoke the far-flung fires of Bugwine Breck as frantically he strove and sweated to stop note and mule!

Yet, "Sho is a noble note!" pride mounted involuntarily through his despair and uproar, as they screamed and thundered in wild and ever wilder clatter of hoof, wheel, and harness down Aroma's alley. "Got itse'f volume!"

"Old mule cain't stand de note: swap it for somep'n else!" implored the horror-stricken charioteer in front.

"He *'bleeged* to stand it! Hammerin' at it now and still cain't budge it. Steam still goin' strong!" panted the perspiring and grayish-gilled old master. "Business is in a jam!"

And a jam indeed it was. This runaway would upset everything—including the calliope. Wreck it, and he wrecked all! Instead of replacing Marmaduke in jail he would merely join him there, with all that that implied. While, as for Aroma and Columbus, even above the banshee note of the calliope he thought he could hear the ominous *zoom-zoom* of the bull-fiddle, their wedding-bells—and the long laughter of the Hill at a sawed-off serenader who sought volume and got a runaway—and a cell—instead!

Meantime, his gallery grew. Pursuit had already begun as well, headed by Frogface Reeves in an early-American roadster, intent on recovering his lost and imperiled property if he could but overtake it. While, in the glare of its headlights on a curve, Bugwine thought he distinguished the shine of Aroma's eyes, the ivory of her smile as he went past in fire and thunder, *en route* to disaster.

Then the further familiar proof that Fate ever kept a more fatal shot in her locker for Bugwine Breck. At a corner their panicked motive-power swerved; the speeding calliope careened wildly on two wheels; and again they were at a gallop, thundering down Hogan's Alley toward the headquarters and home office of the Columbus Collins detective agency!

The mule, gasped Bugwine in fresh horror, was trying to wreck them where it would look worst for him, as though adding destruction to larceny!

A thought, however, scarcely thought before the climax came, a climax marked by the conjunction of a telephone-pole, a tree, and several hundred stars; all pointing without benefit of astrology to bad luck for Bugwine during December, as the calliope came to a sudden halt, but the broken-harnessed mule went on. So did Bugwine—until he came to a tree. After which he saw the stars, too.

SOMEWHERE in a darkness where birds sang and a boy's head felt like the site of the Black Tom explosion, Mr. Breck heard words, and hearing them, was convinced he was coo-coo for life. For they could not be—after the calamities that had just crowned and culminated his career.

Feebly at last he opened dulled eyes, fingered the knot on his brow, and prepared to face fresh, and far different, music.

Then he blinked. For the calliope was not only there, but all but undamaged. Aroma was there—holding his thundering head in her lap and ministering to it with a cold towel, while members of the lodge first-aid team burned chicken-feathers revivingly beneath his nose. At a little distance, others were laboring to coax Gladstone Smith down out of a tree with a fried fish. Of all Demopolis, only Columbus Collins, hound of the law, seemed missing.

"Lawd, honey, dat was *volume!*" breathed Aroma just here. "Dat—and Frawgface—done cured me of bull-fiddles *now!*"

Mr. Breck let the rest of the world go by. If this was being coo-coo, he was for it! He listened fearfully for the *Zzooom - zzzooom! Zzooomity - zoom!* that again would tell him all was lost.

"Whar at Columbus, Aroma?" he inquired feebly, when certain of that silence.

"*Columbus?* Boy, you *is* been knocked out! Aint you know?"

"Aint know nothin'—since de mule hit de post."

"Why, Columbus in de jail-house!"

"In de *jail-house?*" Mr. Breck's heart leaped on two counts. Aroma was off them when they got in jails! "In de jail for what?" he pressed her further.

"For stealin' de calliope—"

Bugwine's brain broke down again. "But Columbus arrest' Mammaduck for *dat,*" he pointed out bewilderedly when it was revived. "Columbus say aint nobody know whar de calliope was—"

"Nobody but Columbus aint, you means. Frawgface git it all out of him when de mule ditch de calliope right in front of Columbus' place here. Columbus had framed Mammaduck to cover up he own tracks: Mammaduck jest *is* git out in time to git married too!"

"Yeah, but what," Bugwine struggled with impaired and inadequate mental facilities, "is *Columbus* want wid no calliope?"

"Well, *dat,*"—Aroma beamed coyly,—"was whar he thought he was gwine put one over on *you.* He steal dat calliope to fall back on, to serenade me wid, is I weaken wid de bull-fiddle! But you is too smart for him, boy—finds whar dat jail-bird hid it, and you serenades me wid it first like I likes it—long and loud. Speakin' about weddin's, Bugwine, honey, what time you aimin' to ask for ourn?"

MR. BRECK'S eyes blinked, batted, and revolved wildly in surprise. So that was why Columbus had felt profited by the calliope's loss, even if the lodge never paid him for jailing the "crook!" "Brains, lay low and say nothin'!" he murmured *pianissimo.* "Couldn't done no better if you'd been bright!"

Then, in answer, as his gaze rested again upon the fair and fond Aroma: "In jest about a month, sugar; jest as soon as I gits dis knot off my knob, and dat high-note out my ears!"

There's Murder

A fascinating story, based on a really new idea, by the author of "The Game of Death" and "The Eternal Light."

The Story So Far:

IN a house in New York on the evening of February 15th, 1933, a girl was playing her violin—a girl who was young and beautiful and blind—and who was gifted with a strange power. With her were her father—Daniel Tyler, a former district attorney; and Nathaniel Benson, a young scientist.

Suddenly, there was a crashing discord and the music ceased.

"Murder!" Ruth Tyler cried. *"Murder!* Black hate. . . . A mind churning with hate! Death. . . . Kill all rulers!" She gave a little gasp of horror.

"He is going to shoot Mr. Roosevelt!"

"Roosevelt is speaking at Miami Beach tonight!" Benson exclaimed.

He ran to the radio, turned the dials. A confused roar—then the announcer's voice:

"An assassin has just attempted to kill the President-elect! Mr. Roosevelt is unharmed, but Mayor Cermak of Chicago and others were struck by bullets."

"Mr. Tyler," said Benson later, "this is nothing supernatural. But we may be on the threshold of something so big—so important that it may affect the whole future of mankind. We know that some persons, a very rare few, have the power of receiving *thoughts* or *images* from the minds of others. Almost as if the mind were a sort of super-acute radio antenna. Your daughter seems to have this power to a remarkable degree. Think what it may mean if, instead of knowing when disaster strikes, *she can foretell it!*"

A few weeks later another strange mind-message came to the blind girl: some one, somewhere, hated with a fury that meant murder. Finally the name came to her—Paul Gordon.

Tyler looked up that name, found it that of a wealthy financier. They called upon him at his country place—a great estate, close-fenced and guarded, where he lived with his son David, his second wife Carlotta, his daughter Hélène and his adopted daughter Doris.

He proved skeptical of Ruth's power; but a few nights later, the message came to Ruth again; Nat Benson called Gordon on the telephone to warn him; and even as Gordon answered, the crash of a pistol shot drowned his voice over the wire. But the financier escaped—that time. And the would-be killer vanished. Probably he would try again, however; and it was arranged that Ruth, with her father and Nat, should occupy a cottage on the Gordon estate, so any future warning might be given instantly. An elaborate burglar-alarm system, which would floodlight the whole place in case of intrusion, was also installed.

Sure enough, Ruth received another warning. And almost immediately the burglar-alarm sounded, and the great floodlights illuminated the whole estate. A man leaped from the ledge where he had stood outside Gordon's window and ran; but Nat intercepted him with a football tackle, and he was captured. He refused to speak. But Gordon now confided to Tyler and Benson the probable reason for these attacks: his son David had been kidnaped as a child; he had been recovered, and the kidnapers convicted; one of them, Gaudio, had escaped and had sworn vengeance. . . . And not long afterward, in 1915, a bomb had killed Gordon's wife. In despair he had gone to New York, placed his two children in the care of a friend, made his way to England and enlisted. He had been badly wounded; and while the surgeons had restored his shell-torn face, his features were much changed. Recuperating in Spain, he had fallen in love with Carlotta and married her. And believing his changed appearance made him safe from discovery, he had changed his name from Moridon to Gordon, returned to America, taken up life over again and gained a great fortune. When the friends who had sheltered his children were drowned, he had adopted their orphaned daughter Doris. And now—had Gaudio found him out?

Again Ruth received that dreadful message of imminent murder—this time, strangely, the threat menaced Hélène. Nat ran for the house, plunged through open French windows, saw a pistol thrust from between heavy curtains. Then he heard a shot, and fell, badly wounded.

No trace of the assailant was discovered, but the gun was found under Doris' bed. The switches controlling the burglar-alarm had in two places been opened, making it ineffective. All signs pointed to the crime being the work of some one inside the house. . . .

Hélène, in a serious state from shock, was sent to a sanitarium for safety. Useless precaution! For next day—following Carlotta's disappearance—came a phone message:

"A terrible thing has happened. Two sedan-loads of armed thugs held up the sanitarium awhile ago and took Miss Gordon away! Kidnaped her!" *(The story continues in detail:)*

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in the Air

Illustrated by Joseph Franké

By ROY CHANSLOR

He began to mount the stairs—to keep his rendezvous with death.

IN a huge and comfortable chair, feet on an antique footstool, a long thin cigar between his lips, lolled a heavy-set dark man with close-cropped black mustache, a man in his middle thirties, placidly reading a tabloid newspaper.

Striding back and forth restlessly, his little dark eyes almost constantly on the heavy clock which adorned the mantel, was a quick, slim fellow, four or five years younger, dark too, a man with a strong resemblance to the man in the chair.

The heavy Aubusson rug deadened the sound of his pacing feet.

The man in the chair gave a low chuckle, and the younger stopped, stared at him irritably and demanded: "What's so funny?"

The man with the mustache glanced up from the paper with a grin.

"Get a load of this," he said complacently. "It's in Winchell's column. 'Recommended to diversion-seekers: The grand floor show at the Palm Gardens in the Bronx. Plenty hot!'"

The slim man gave an exclamation of impatience. The man in the chair tossed the paper onto a carved table and looked at him steadily.

"Take it easy, Nicky," he said. "You're as jumpy as a cat."

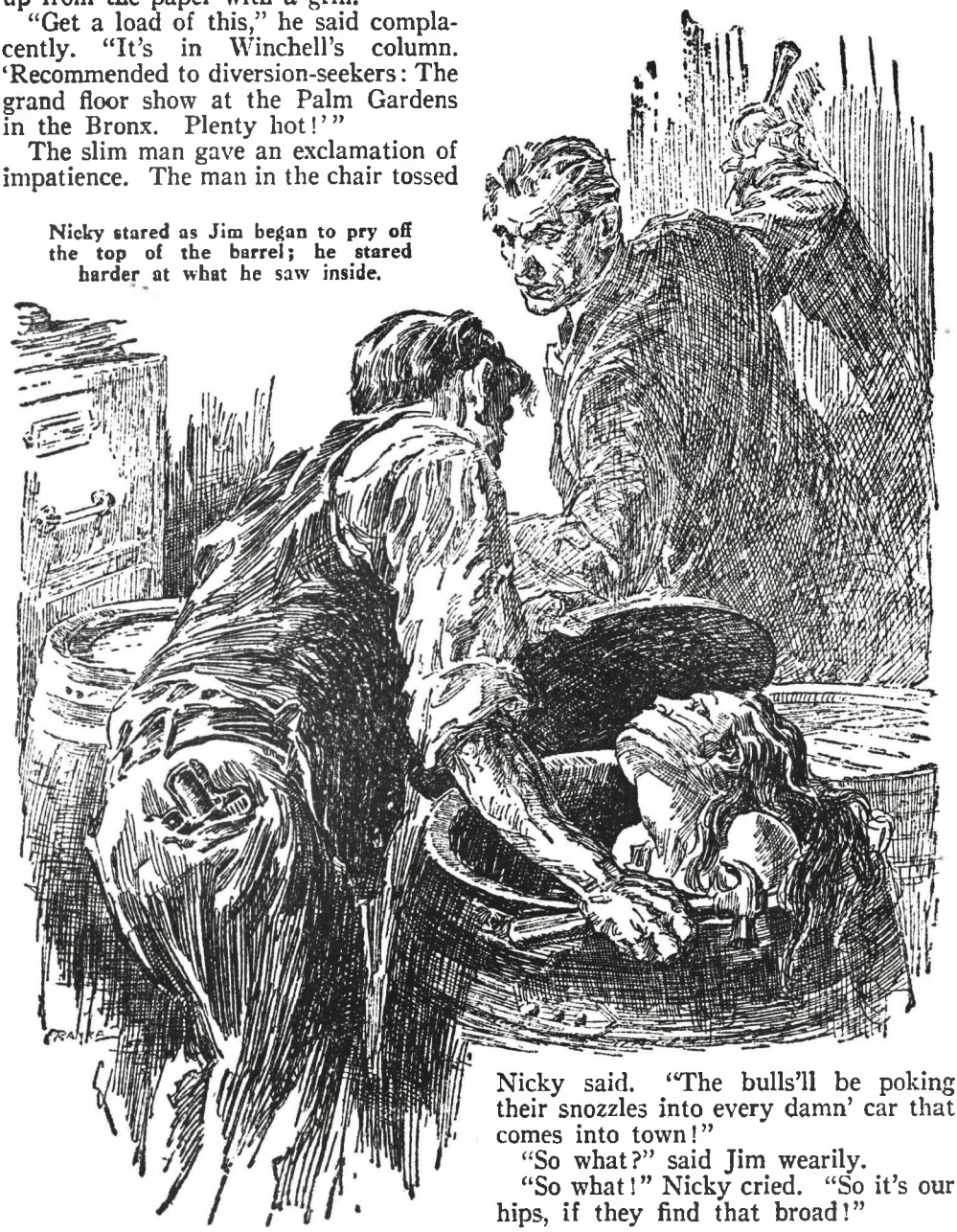
"'Take it easy!'" echoed Nicky explosively.

"That's what I said," said the other man quietly.

"My God, Jim," said Nicky, "you aint human!"

The man he had called Jim smiled, and made a little gesture with his hands.

"You're nuts to take this chance,"



Nicky stared as Jim began to pry off the top of the barrel; he stared harder at what he saw inside.

Nicky said. "The bulls'll be poking their snozzles into every damn' car that comes into town!"

"So what?" said Jim wearily.

"So what!" Nicky cried. "So it's our hips, if they find that broad!"

"They won't find her," said Jim composedly.

"But suppose they do?" persisted Nicky.

"They've got nothin' on *you*," said Jim quietly. "And they won't take me alive. If they come for me, you can stroll."

Nicky glared at him angrily.

"You know me better than that, Jim," he said.

Jim smiled.

"Okay," he said. "But quit worryin'. They won't find her."

"If you'd only taken my advice!" said Nicky. "It would 'a' been a cinch to slit her throat, toss her in a ditch—"

"I've waited too long, Nicky," Jim said, interrupting. "To me, it's worth the risk to keep her alive."

"We've got to bump her anyhow," Nicky cut in. "What the hell's the sense—"

"I've got reasons," said Jim softly. "Reasons for *waiting*."

He silenced Nicky with a sudden commanding gesture.

"Sit down," he said sharply.

Nicky sat down. The other man smiled, picked up the tabloid again and went on reading. He finished the gossip column and turned to the sports page, glanced at the headline, then looked across at Nicky, who was grinding his fingernails into his palms.

"The Yanks lost," he said. "Too bad. I lose eighty fish."

Nicky achieved a look of mock sympathy.

"Aint that a shame?" he said.

Jim went back to his paper.

"They oughta bench the Babe," he said. "He aint hittin' his weight."

THE phone rang. Nicky's little eyes went to it swiftly; he started to rise. Jim waved him back. Unhurriedly he lifted the receiver, said "Yeah? This is him. . . . Okay, Sam. Be right down." He replaced the receiver. "The beer's here," he said. "Come on."

Nicky looked at him blankly.

"The beer?" he said.

"Uh-huh," said Jim.

He rose and motioned Nicky to follow. The younger man shrugged and stepped through the doorway behind him. They were in a long hall. Silently they walked toward the rear, passing three doors on their right.

At the extreme rear was a steep flight of stairs. They descended to the door which closed off the foot of them. Jim pressed an automatic catch, and the door swung open. They stepped into a small square room, dimly lighted. Jim closed the door to the stairs, and the automatic latch clicked.

There were three other doors in the small room. Jim opened the one directly to his right, and shot a quick glance down a narrow hallway which opened into a flower-filled lobby. No one was there. He closed this door, locked it.

Then he opened the door opposite the one which led to the stairs. They stepped into a spacious kitchen, and the door clicked shut behind them. A food checker sat at a small table across the room. He glanced up and jerked a thumb toward the rear.

"Thanks, Sam," said Jim.

HE led the way to the rear of the kitchen, and out onto a wide porch. Nicky followed closely. A big truck was backed up against the porch. It was loaded with legal beer, three point two, in full-sized thirty-one-gallon barrels.

Three barrels were rolled onto the porch, and were stood upright. Nicky watched this operation wonderingly. The driver waved good-by and drove away. Jim surveyed the three barrels with a grin.

"Good beer," he said complacently, "and strictly legit."

He stood by, instructing the men handling the barrels. Still upright, they were carefully moved through the door of the huge refrigerating-room which opened off the porch. Jim dismissed the men, and they stepped into the kitchen, leaving Jim and Nicky alone. Jim quickly fastened the doors which led to the porch and the kitchen.

Then he twisted a lever, and a concealed door at the rear of the refrigerating-room opened, to reveal the small dimly lighted room through which they had passed on their way. Jim peered at the barrels.

Nicky saw that one of them had apparently already been tapped. He stared as Jim seized a hammer and a chisel and began to pry off the top of this barrel. He stared harder at what he saw inside: the figure of a girl, bound and gagged.

Jim chuckled, lifted her into his arms. Her eyes were wide with fright, and she struggled feebly. Jim held her tightly, and motioned Nicky into the small room.

Jim followed with the girl in his arms, twisted another lever, and the door to the refrigerating-room closed silently.

"Open up, Nicky," he said, grinning. "We got a guest."

Nicky opened the door to the stairs. Jim carried the girl up them. Nicky pressed the automatic catch inside the door and followed. Jim passed two of the doors in the long hallway, paused before the third, the one nearest the front.

At a nod, Nicky unlocked it with a key from his pocket.

DAWN had come, gray and cheerless, as Tyler and Nat trod wearily back toward the cottage, with the memory of Gordon's face, gray as the dawn itself, still haunting them. At the fountain Tyler stopped, leaned his back against the edge and fumbled for a cigarette.

"Well?" said Nat.

Tyler shook his head in exasperation.

"Nat," he said, "it's plain to me that besides ourselves, there are only two people on this estate that we can trust completely."

Nat raised his eyebrows inquiringly.

"And they are—Ruth, and Gordon himself," said Tyler. "The devil of it is that Gordon is now no use to us. He's just—licked. I don't wonder, but the fact remains. We can't count on anybody but ourselves now. And that means we've got to depend almost entirely on—Ruth."

Nat nodded despairingly.

"It certainly seems obvious that Gaudio has an accomplice inside the house," he said. "That accomplice either made the attacks on Gordon and Hélène himself—or aided some one from outside in getting in. And that accomplice tipped off Gaudio where Hélène was."

"Exactly," said Tyler. "I notice that you say, 'That accomplice—*him*self.' You won't accept the possibility—"

"That it was a woman?" interrupted Nat quickly. "Of course I won't! Doris is innocent! Call that just blind faith if you will, but remember this, *no woman* knew where Hélène was!"

"And who did know?" demanded Tyler. "Gordon himself, Dr. Grace, yourself, myself, Dr. Karasc—"

He stopped himself and darted a swift look at Nat.

"Dr. Karasc!" he repeated softly.

"Don't be silly!" said Nat.

Tyler shrugged.

"You've forgotten something," said Nat. "Another person knew: Collins, the chauffeur who drove you to the sanitarium!"

Tyler gave an exclamation. Then he was off, his long legs striding, toward the garage. Nat followed. Collins was asleep in the apartment over the garage which he shared with the other chauffeurs. They roused him. Tyler asked him to dress.

Collins did so without protest, and followed them into the garden. Very quietly Tyler told the man what had happened in the night.

Collins gasped, stared at Tyler unbelievingly.

"Collins," said Tyler quietly, "some one—either you or myself, or Mr. Benson or Dr. Grace, or Mr. Gordon, told somebody, either inadvertently or deliberately, where Miss Hélène was. Neither Mr. Benson or myself did so. I don't think Dr. Grace or Mr. Gordon did. Did *you?*"

The man wet his lips, ran his hand across his face. Then he nodded, slowly.

"Yes," he said hoarsely. Then, quickly: "I didn't see that it was any harm. She said she wanted to surprise Miss Hélène—"

"She?" said Nat dully.

"Miss Doris," said Collins. "It was this afternoon when we were in the town—just before Mrs. Gordon—disappeared. Miss Doris ran back from the others. I was alone in the car. She said she was getting a surprise present for Miss Hélène—asked me where she was, so she could have it sent. I—didn't think—"

He stopped, turned a troubled face toward Tyler.

"I didn't realize," he said; "I told her."

HELENE lay on a couch in a room with blank, windowless walls, a room illuminated by a single drop-light which hung from the ceiling. She didn't know whether it was day or night. How many hours had it been since the man with the black mustache had lifted her from that stifling barrel and carried her upstairs to this room?

Ages, it had seemed, she had lain there fighting to control her nerves, in that utterly silent room. She had heard music as she was carried up the stairs, dance-music. But it had been shut out completely as soon as that door had been closed behind the man with the black mustache, and the slim man with the hard little eyes.

Finally a man she had not seen before had brought her eggs, toast, marmalade, orange-juice and coffee. She had refused them. He had shrugged and departed, leaving the tray. And then she had forced herself to eat. She had to keep up her strength; she needed it if she were to conquer the terror in her heart.

She must keep her mind clear, her wits sharp, must not dwell on the horror which still lingered in her mind, the horror of that night in her bedroom, that shot from the curtained door, that seemingly interminable daze which had followed. Those things were intangible, vague, not understood. She must not dwell upon them—now.

SHE heard a key turn in the lock, and stared at the door. The black-mustached man slipped quietly into the room, and locked the door behind him. Hélène shrank back on the couch until her back touched the wall. As he came slowly toward her, the drop-light in the center of the room illuminated his features. He was smiling. Her eyes went wildly about the room, fell despairingly on the blank and windowless walls. The man spoke, softly.

"Don't be afraid," he said. "I'm not goin' to hurt you."

The girl quieted her nerves as best she could, managed a feeble smile.

"That's better," he said.

He unbuttoned his coat, revealing half a dozen long thin cigars in his vest pocket. He took one of these, fastidiously cut off the end with a gold knife attached to his watch-chain, lighted it with a gold lighter. He took one or two approving puffs, then turned his eyes to hers.

"Nobody's goin' to hurt you," he said. "Not if you act nice and sensible. It's money we want, of course. Your old man's got plenty of that. I'm sendin' him a little love letter, sayin' everything will be hunky-dory if he hands over two hundred and fifty G's."

The girl stared at him uncomprehendingly.

"Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars," he elaborated, smiling.

"Oh," she said. "That's a lot of money. . . . But I'm sure Dad—"

"Of course he will," said the man softly. "If his wife and his daughter aint worth a quarter of a million—"

"His wife!" exclaimed Hélène.

"Sure," said the man. "We got her too. Just to make it official. We won't hurt either one of you, if you'll—"

"Where is Carlotta?" demanded the girl.

"Meaning Mrs. Gordon?" the man asked. "She's in another nice little boudoir with no windows. Now here's the point: I want a note from each of you, see? Telling the old man he'd better do what we say—or else. I think that'll make him realize just what he's up against. Without those notes, he might get the crazy idea we'd already bumped you two ladies off, see? That would make him feel kind of lousy. I don't want to worry him none."

"Why—why, of course I'll write the note," said Hélène.

"Good," said the man.

From his vest pocket he took a fountain pen, handed it to her. Then he opened his coat, reached into an inside pocket, took out several envelopes. The girl saw that some of them had writing on them. She stood up and held out her hand.

"Give me something to write on," she said.

He grinned, selected a blank envelope, handed it to her, and started to put the others back in his pocket. The girl swayed suddenly, gasped, closed her eyes. The man hastily threw an arm about her. He felt her go limp; her hand clutched his convulsively.

With an impatient exclamation he picked her up, laid her on the couch. Her hand still held tightly to one of his, the hand in which he held the letters. With his other hand he opened her fingers. Her eyes flickered, then opened. Her fingers relaxed.

Her eyes flashed to the man's hand, took in the name on the top envelope, closed again. He gave her a sharp look. She opened her eyes, seemed to rouse herself by an effort, sat up on the couch, shaking her head apologetically.

"Oh—I'm so sorry," she breathed. "I—it was stupid of me. But I—I'm all right now."

THE man regarded her for a moment through half-lowered lids. Then he shrugged, and replaced the envelopes in his pocket.

"Water?" he asked.

"Please," she said. "Would you mind?"

He grunted and crossed the room, went through a door. It was the bathroom, and like the other, was without windows. He turned on the water.

While he waited a moment for it to cool, he stole quietly back to the door and peered cautiously at the girl. She was rubbing her temples ruefully.

The man grinned, filled the glass and took it to the girl. She drank it gratefully.

"Thank you," she said. "Now—about that note—"

NAT was filled with a feeling of helpless rage as he paced restlessly back and forth across the living-room of the cottage. It was bad enough, this waiting, under any circumstances. But now, alone, out of communication with everybody, it was almost intolerable.

Why were they all avoiding him?

For everyone certainly seemed to be doing just that. He hadn't talked to a soul since luncheon. And that had been a meal filled with constraint. Immediately afterward Doris, complaining of a headache, had retired to her room. It was obviously an excuse.

Of course, he could understand why Gordon wanted to be alone; it was perfectly natural. But Doris—and even Ruth and Tyler! That was too much!

Had Doris, he wondered gloomily, seen the questions in his eyes? Was that why she was so suddenly afflicted with a headache?

Could she have seen him and Tyler talking with Collins? And guessed that Collins had revealed the fact that she had asked where Hélène was? He brushed the thought aside impatiently. Doris could have nothing to conceal!

He felt irritated and impatient with Tyler. Why was he acting so mysteriously? Could it possibly be that Tyler didn't trust him? Well, if Tyler continued to harbor those ridiculous suspicions of Doris—

He shrugged, paused, made up his mind. There was no sense in making a prisoner of himself. He went to the door, stepped out into the sunshine, wandered disconsolately about the garden, now and then staring up at Ruth's windows. No sound came from there.

As he came to the edge of the garden, one of the garages came within the range of his vision. He stopped and stared. Tyler, Nelson and Collins were grouped about one of the big cars in earnest conversation.

Nat saw Collins extend his hand suddenly to Tyler, who grasped it and clapped the man on the shoulder with his other hand in friendly fashion. Then Collins got into the car, took the wheel. Nelson got in beside him, and the car rolled away. Tyler gave a wave of his hand and started toward the cottage. The car went down the driveway. Tyler then saw Nat. But instead of coming toward him, he hurried to the cottage.

Anger welled up again in Nat. He turned and strode toward the cottage. By George, he'd put it squarely up to Tyler, demand to know what was in the wind!

But Tyler was not in sight when he stepped into the living-room. Setting his lips grimly, Nat went to the door of Tyler's room and knocked. There was no answer. Irritably Nat flung himself into his own room, closed the door with a bang. At least Tyler would know where he was. . . .

The hours that followed were a torture. He heard Tyler come downstairs and go into his own room. After that there was silence—until, happening to glance out the window, he saw Gordon, apparently much agitated, hurrying across the garden toward the cottage.

At his door Nat paused, hesitated. He heard Gordon knock, and then heard Tyler go quickly into the living-room. Nat opened his door. Tyler was just admitting Gordon.

"Nelson just phoned," Gordon said heavily. "Collins has disappeared!"

"Collins!" Tyler exclaimed. "Impossible!"

Nat stared at Tyler unbelievingly. Gordon was nodding, his lips working.

"I—I sent Nelson to the city to confer with the heads of his agency," he said hoarsely. "Nelson doesn't drive, so I told him to take one of the chauffeurs. He chose Collins—and now the man has given him the slip!"

He buried his face in his trembling hands.

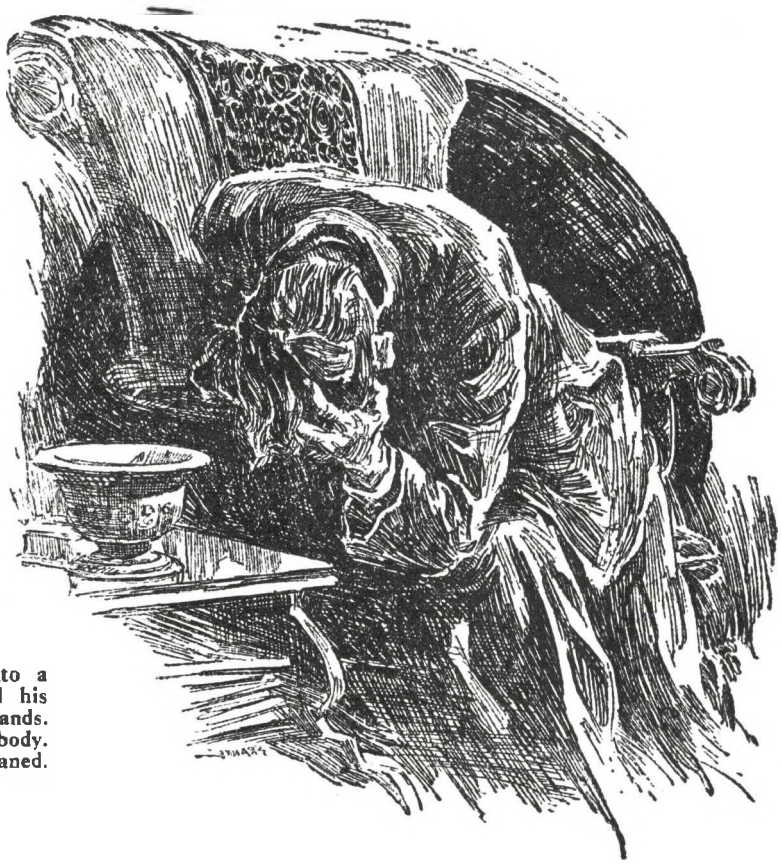
"It looks bad for Collins," said Tyler gravely.

"But I don't understand!" protested Nat in bewilderment. Then he caught a warning glance from Tyler, and despite his annoyance, caught himself and ended lamely: "Why—why should Collins—"

"But—God, isn't it plain?" demanded Gordon, raising his face. *"Collins* was Gaudio's inside man!"

TYLER nodded thoughtfully. "We should have guessed," he said.

"Certainly we should!" And Gordon groaned. "Good God, we've let him get away!"



Johnson sank into a chair and buried his face in his hands. Sobs shook his body. "Judas!" he moaned. *"Judas!"*

"It looks that way," said Tyler, sighing. "Gaudio must have bribed him—or placed him here in the first place, to wait his chance."

"And when he got it, he planted that bomb in my car!" said Gordon. He clenched his fist, and there was a terrible look in his eyes.

"*Collins* planted the bomb!" Nat gasped.

Gordon nodded.

"But wasn't he your personal chauffeur?" Nat demanded.

"Of course," said Gordon. "That's how he—"

"Wait a minute," Nat interrupted. "Didn't he discover that bomb?"

"No," said Gordon.

He was pacing the floor, running his hands through his hair.

"God, I see it all now!" he said. "Collins was *sick* that day. You see how he worked it? Planted that bomb, and then played sick—because he knew that car and its occupants would be blown to pieces."

"Then another chauffeur found the bomb?" asked Nat.

Gordon nodded.

"Duffy," he said. "He's the man I picked to drive in Collins' place. It was just luck that he found that bomb!"

Nat whistled.

"Well, I'll be—damned," he said.

Tyler hurried to the phone.

"Maybe we can pick him up!" he said. "At least we *know* him. I'll have Kilrane broadcast an alarm."

GORDON sank onto the couch, staring straight ahead of him. He seemed drained of all emotion. He clasped and unclasped his hands, pitifully, while Tyler talked with Kilrane. When he hung up, Gordon rose unsteadily.

"I suppose you see now how absurd all your other suspicions have been?" he demanded bitterly of Tyler, who nodded humbly.

"Yes," he said. "I—I'm sorry. This all adds up. Of course. Collins is smart. He knew the whole layout here. Somehow or other—it shouldn't have been difficult for a trusted man—he found a way to get into the house. It was he, of course, who tried to shoot you the night of Ruth's warning. And he must have tried to kill Hélène too."

"But why Hélène?" Gordon demanded, raising eyes wide with agony.

Tyler shook his head, a puzzled frown on his face.

"I don't know," he said. "But I can make a guess. Somehow or other she got suspicious of him. Perhaps she saw him entering or leaving the house. Spoke to him about it. Probably he made some excuse which seemed to satisfy her. But naturally he would be frightened. Suppose she were not satisfied? Suppose she told you, Mr. Gordon? You see? He would be desperate, would go to any lengths to be sure she never had the chance to tell you."

Gordon sprang to his feet.

"God in heaven!" he cried. "It's monstrous!"

TYLER put out a steadying hand, grasped Gordon's shoulder sympathetically. The man turned a tragic face toward him.

"It—it's this awful waiting," he half-whispered.

"I know," said Tyler gently.

"They must know I'd give *anything* to get Hélène and Carlotta back safely," said Gordon. His voice was almost pleading, as if he had to be convinced, for his own sanity. "Knowing that, they wouldn't harm them?"

Hope and despair fought in his face.

"Of course they won't," said Tyler. "We've just got to be as patient as we can. I know what you're going through. But we'll get them back, Mr. Gordon. We'll get them back!"

Gordon made a heroic effort to pull himself together. He managed a grateful smile.

"Good fellow, Tyler, good fellow!" he murmured. "I—I'll carry on."

He stood alone, firmly, held his head up.

"That's the spirit," said Tyler. "Now, there's one thing I think I ought to do: In justice to everyone in your household, I think I should apologize for my suspicions—my whole attitude. I'll be glad to do it now."

"Would you?" said Gordon gratefully.

"Of course," said Tyler. "And I think we should tell them about Collins. Relieve their minds, you know, if they realize just who was the inside man."

"Good," said Gordon. "I suggest we go and get that off our chests right now."

They entered the house through Gordon's private entrance and proceeded toward the living-room. Doris and David were in earnest conversation by an open window. Nat felt a pang of resentment. A headache, indeed!

Gordon called to them and they turned quickly.

But just as he was about to speak, Johnson entered from the porch, hurriedly, an envelope in his hand.

"Mr. Gordon!" he said.

Gordon turned, and Johnson held up the envelope. Gordon fairly sprang for it. It was an ordinary-looking letter, addressed to Gordon on a typewriter, and had no return address. Gordon ripped it open swiftly, drew out three sheets of paper.

The first read:

Paul darling: I'm all right. I don't think they will harm me. It's Gaudio, and he has us in a large house somewhere, just where, I don't know. He says he will not hurt either of us if you will do as he says. Hélène is writing too. I'm not afraid for myself—but I think you ought to meet his demands—for Hélène's sake.

Whatever happens, I love you,

Carlotta.

The second sheet of paper proved to be from Hélène. It read:

Dear Dad:

They have both Carlotta and me, and I'm so frightened! They will surely kill us if you don't do exactly as they say. For God's sake, don't tell the police—

There were two long dashes and then the note continued, in a much more agitated handwriting:

Please try to understand this, Dad. It means death or worse for both of us— Just imagine. . . . My God. . . . and bring ransom immediately. . . . & enough! . . . . love,

Hélène.

The third sheet was typewritten. It read:

Moridon: I don't want your dirty money. I want you. You know why. Make up your mind and do it fast. It's your life, or your wife's and kid's, and I don't mean perhaps. I'm giving you forty-eight hours. If you're ready to take the fall for them, put an ad in the Star, as follows: "G. Okay." And sign it "J.M." Will let you know how and when to give yourself up. Guarantee to turn the women loose, unharmed. If you try to cross me, it'll be just too bad!

The signature was also typewritten. It was: "GAUDIO."

CHAPTER XV

The Name

DAVID threw an arm about his father, as if to support him. The older man waved him aside, stood erect and firm. Tyler, after a cursory glance at Carlotta's and Gaudio's notes, was scrutinizing the one from Hélène closely. He handed it to Nat, who puzzled over it briefly and then handed it back. Tyler placed it in his pocket, walked up to Gordon.

"Well?" Tyler said.

The man returned his glance steadily for a moment. Then he apparently made a decision. Quickly he went to the telephone-book, flipped the pages. Everyone in the room watched silently. He picked up the phone, called a number. It was the number of the *Star*, as Tyler instantly recognized.

"Wait," Tyler said, and went to him.

Gordon shook his head. He asked for the advertising department, dictated the advertisement: *"G. Okay. J. M."* There was a chorus of protest from those in the room. Gordon paid no attention. He repeated the ad., asked that the bill be sent to Paul Gordon, and hung up.

"Dad!" David cried. "You can't do this!"

Gordon shrugged and smiled.

"Oh, yes, I can," he said quietly. "I'll give him his revenge. What is my life, anyhow? Nothing."

Doris ran to him, threw her arms about him.

"Dad!" she cried. "What does it mean?"

Gordon stroked her hair affectionately. He said nothing.

"It means," Tyler said, "that Mr. Gordon is quixotically throwing away his life—for nothing."

The girl turned toward Tyler, her lips moving soundlessly, her eyes full of questions. Gordon raised a hand wearily.

"Let's not discuss it, please," he said. "The time for argument is past."

Unexpectedly Tyler nodded. He bowed and walked out of the room, Nat's eyes following him. Then he turned toward Doris, saw her staring at Gordon with fixed intensity. Abruptly he excused himself, followed Tyler, who was swiftly crossing the lawn. Nat called, and Tyler stopped, waited for him.

"You think he'll go through with this?" Nat demanded.

Tyler nodded.

"Unless something breaks," he said. "We can't stop him. It's so futile! But I can see nothing will budge him. I can understand, too. Suppose I'd do the same, if Ruth were in Hélène's place. The pity of it is, even the sacrifice of his own life won't save her. She's doomed, son, unless we can break this case within forty-eight hours!"

"But maybe not," Nat said. "This fellow Gaudio is a fanatic. Maybe if he does get his personal vengeance on Gordon—Moridon—he'll be satisfied."

"And risk the chair by sparing those two women, who must have seen him, must know enough about him to help bring him to justice?" Tyler demanded. "Don't be silly, son."

Nat shook his head desperately.

"God," he said, "if the police could only locate Collins!"

Tyler paused, and grinned wearily.

"What then?" he asked.

"They could sweat the truth out of him!" said Nat savagely. "Or break him apart!"

Tyler paused and looked at Nat.

"Collins doesn't know anything, son," he said. "He's as innocent as you are."

Nat stared at him incredulously.

"Keep your shirt on," said Tyler composedly. "I know where he is."

"You—" Nat began, then stopped, recalling the scene he had witnessed between Tyler, Collins and Nelson.

"I sent him away," Tyler said.

"But why—" Nat began.

"To throw suspicion on him," said Tyler calmly. "It seemed to work, too."

He grinned.

"Even *you* were taken in," he said.

"Well, I'll be—" said Nat.

"That's why I didn't let you in on it," said Tyler. "I wanted to see whether I could build up a case against Collins that everybody would swallow."

He laughed. "Pretty sore at me for a while, weren't you, son?"

Nat grinned sheepishly. "I still don't understand what good—" he began.

"IT'S like this," Tyler said patiently: "When I heard Nelson was going to town, I had a hunch. I talked with Collins and Nelson. Collins was willing to help out. Nelson took him to my own house. Nobody would think of looking for him there. But just to play safe, in case Collins wasn't as innocent as I thought, I phoned Kilrane. Before Collins got to my house, the phones there

had been tapped. If he tries to communicate with anybody, that will be that!"

"But suppose he sneaks off?"

"I took care of that too," said Tyler composedly. "If he moves an inch out of that house, there'll be a Central Office man tailing him. If he's guilty, he'll lead us right to Gaudio. I don't think he is guilty, though."

"But why all this camouflage?"

"I just want to lull Gaudio's real accomplice into a false sense of security," said Tyler calmly. "He—or *she*—may overplay his or her hand now."

"But if Collins is innocent, won't the real accomplice know—" Nat began.

"I don't think so," said Tyler. "I think the real accomplice will believe Collins is in on the general plot—and has skipped to draw the dogs off the scent."

IT was seven o'clock by Hélène's tiny platinum wrist-watch when the door to her windowless room was opened by a slim dark man bearing a tray, covered with a napkin. Through the door she heard the sound of music, gay dance-music, apparently coming from somewhere downstairs.

The man closed the door and grinned at her.

"Hello, sister," he said. "Like to tie on the nose-bag?"

She recognized the man called "Nicky." He eyed her speculatively. She shrank under his bold stare. He grinned and advanced with the tray, threw back the napkin. An appetizing aroma came to her nostrils. Nicky laughed, and set the tray on a chair.

"It's good chow, babe," he said. "We got the best chef in Bronx County. Hop to it."

He waved toward the tray, then took another chair, tilted back comfortably and lighted a cigarette. The girl felt hungry, but she didn't move. Somehow she couldn't, with those hard eyes fixed upon her.

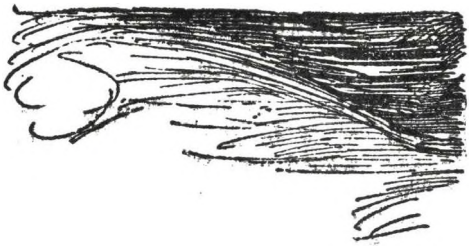
"Not hungry, eh?" said Nicky.

"Please," she said pleadingly. "I—I'd like to be alone."

Nicky's eyes narrowed.

"Don't be like that, baby," he said. "I'm your friend. I might be able to do you a lot of good."

The girl glanced at him sharply. He was grinning. She shuddered. Nicky stood up suddenly. He strode to the couch and looked down at her. Then



he sat down again, and surveyed her appraisingly. The door opened. Hélène and Nicky turned quickly. The man with the dark mustache, Jim, stood there.

"You, Nick," he said curtly. "Scaram!"

Nicky shrugged philosophically and stood up. Jim jerked his thumb over his shoulder imperiously. Nicky went to the door. Jim opened it, waved him out. Then he turned, without a word, and followed. Hélène seized the tray and began to eat. The food was surprisingly good. With it she found a small bottle of Chablis. She looked at the label curiously. It looked like imported wine. . . .

Jim and Nicky proceeded silently to the front of the long hallway, entered a well-furnished apartment, with large windows. An electric sign blinked just below. The strains of dance-music were loud and clear.

Jim glared at Nicky.

"Stay away from her!" he snapped.

"Just takin' her some grub," Nicky grumbled.

"Tony'll take care of that," said Jim.

"Kayo," said Nicky resignedly.

He stretched out his legs.

"Got a job for you," said Jim. "Take one of the heaps and drive downtown. First edition of the *Star's* off the presses at ten forty-five. Get one and look for that ad. I don't want to wait till it gets up here. Phone me. Understand?"

Nicky nodded, took a hat from the table and went out. Jim grunted. Then he went down the hallway, stopped in front of Hélène's door, listened a moment. He heard nothing. He hesitated, then opened the door. The girl glanced up, worriedly, from her dinner. Jim grinned.

"Just to make sure you didn't have company," he said, and closed the door. He continued down the hallway, passed the second door without pausing and stopped in front of the third, the last of the doors in the hall. He unlocked this door and peered in.

It was exactly like the room where

Hélène was. Carlotta Gordon sprang to her feet and ran toward the door. He blocked it.

"My God!" she said. "How long am I to be cooped up in here?"

"Till Papa comes," he said grimly.

He pushed her back from the door, closed and locked it, grunted and went on down the hallway to the stairs. He descended, let himself into the small room, heard the door to the stairs click. Then he opened the door which led to the front of the building.

The music swelled up. Jim stood in the doorway a moment. A waiter came forward. Jim nodded curtly, and the waiter showed him to a table at the rear of the room. He sat down and watched the couples elbowing each other on the crowded floor.

In a few moments the same waiter approached, bowed over him and said: "Flatfoot." Jim raised his eyebrows inquiringly. "Flaherty," said the waiter. Jim grinned. "Okay, Tony," he said. "Send him over."

A broad-shouldered man in plain-clothes came toward the table. Jim indicated an empty chair, grinned. The man sat down.

"What's on your mind, Flaherty?" asked Jim good-naturedly.

"Nothin'," Flaherty grunted. "Just a routine check-up, Jim."

"The Commissioner just won't give up, will he?" said Jim.

Flaherty shrugged.

"Can't rule him off for tryin'," he said.

"He ought to know I'm not in the racket," said Jim.

"Oh, yeah?" said Flaherty. "Look, I'm kinda thirsty—"

"How about a nice cold bottle of beer?" said Jim hospitably. He paused and grinned. "The real stuff. Three and two. Just got in three new barrels last night."

Flaherty grunted and shook his head.

"I don't want any of that mange-cure," he said. "Save it for the saps."

"Sorry," said Jim. "It's all I got. This is a high-class place. We're gettin' a great play these days. I'd be an awful sucker to dish out booze."

"Sure you would," said Flaherty. "Guess I'll be movin' along."

"Tell you what I'll do," said Jim indulgently. "I'll buy a right guy a drink any time."

Flaherty smiled. "Suits," he said. He beckoned to the waiter.

Jim shook his head. "I don't sell it," he said. "But I may have a bottle upstairs—just for my friends."

He stood up, and Flaherty followed suit. Jim led the way out of the dining-room, down the main hallway, unlocked the door. He waved Flaherty ahead of him, followed with a grin. His lips tightened ever so little as they walked past Carlotta's door, then Hélène's. Flaherty looked back inquiringly. Jim nodded ahead of him.

Flaherty looked about the front apartment appraisingly.

"Nice little diggin's, Jim," he said. "Now what's the angle?"

"Angle?" said Jim, pained. "No angle, Flaherty."

He opened an ornate sideboard, took out a bottle, two glasses. He handed the bottle to Flaherty. The detective looked at the label, sniffed the uncorked bottle, poured himself a full glass. Jim took the bottle, barely wet the bottom of his glass, replaced the bottle.

"To the finest," he said, with a wide grin.

The men drank. Jim jerked his thumb at the bottle. Flaherty shook his head.

"Thanks just the same," he said. "But I'll be toddlin'. Don't trouble to let me out. I can find the way."

"Kayo," said Jim indifferently.

He extended his hand. Flaherty took it, turned and started down the hallway. Jim stood in the doorway, watched the man until he had reached the steps, had disappeared from sight. He picked up the house phone.

"Mr. Flaherty is leaving," he said quietly. He waited for a moment. The voice on the wire said: "Sure enough." Jim hung up with a smile. Then he went back downstairs.

AT ten minutes to eleven, the waiter called "Tony" came to his table, bearing a portable phone. He plugged it in and handed the instrument to Jim. It was Nicky on the wire.

"*Two* ads," said Nicky briefly. "The one you expected and another."

"Read the other one," said Jim.

"Here it is:" said Nicky. "'*G. Phone WE-10001 at eleven. D.M.*'"

Jim gave a sharp exclamation.

"That'll be Dave," he said.

"Phone him from a booth. And call me back from another!"

"Aw, listen, Jim," Nicky protested. "It may be a plant."

"Do as you're told!" snapped Jim.

"Kayo," said Nicky resignedly.

TYLER sat on the couch, thoughtfully staring at Hélène's note. It must mean *something*. He went over it again, for the hundredth time, at least, shook his head, puzzled, and irritably stuck the note in his pocket. He rose, stretched and walked to the door.

Across the garden Gordon was hurrying, almost stumbling, a newspaper in his hand. Tyler stepped out quickly to meet him. Gordon's face was a death-mask. He was breathing heavily. With trembling hand he held out the paper, pointing with his finger.

Tyler read: "*G. Okay. J. M.*" Then his eyes followed Gordon's and he saw the other ad. "*G. Phone WE-10001 at eleven. D.M.*" He looked up, bewildered.

"*D.M.* is Dave!" Gordon cried, his voice full of bitter anguish. "I just checked up on him. He left the place at ten o'clock last night. Hasn't returned! My God, man, don't you see what this means?"

He seized Tyler's lapel frantically.

"They've got him too!" he cried.

Tears stood out on his eyes.

"He—he's given himself in my place," he said.

"You phoned that number?" Tyler asked.

"Of course," Gordon said. "It's—a cigar-store on Fordham Road. Gaudio undoubtedly communicated with him there. And Dave offered *himself!* He may be dead by now!"

"The young fool!" said Tyler explosively. Then, at the look in Gordon's eyes, he checked himself, took the man's arm, gently. "But he's a gallant fool," he said.

"Why doesn't Gaudio communicate with me?" demanded Gordon. "I've offered myself. I'm the one he hates. I'm ready to go!"

"And so deliver the last of the hated Moridons up to a fanatic avenger!" said Tyler. "You're as big a fool as David! This man will destroy you all."

"But he promised to let the others go if I—" Gordon began.

"Promised!" said Tyler angrily. "My God, man, are you completely insane?"

Gordon stared at him.

"Wouldn't you be?" he half-whispered.

Tyler bowed his head.

"Yes," he said. . . .

Nat jumped to his feet, flung his half-smoked cigarette into the fireplace.

"To think that that young fellow—" he said. "What he did took courage, Mr. Tyler. The highest sort of courage. I'll grant it was foolish, but—"

"Possibly not so foolish," said Tyler.

Nat stared at him.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"Just this," said Tyler. "Suppose that *David* was conspiring with Gaudio? Suppose he is afraid of us? Suspicious? Suppose he placed that ad. in the paper—as a neat little alibi? In other words, suppose he just disappeared,—conveniently—perhaps to go to Gaudio, pretend he was a prisoner—after making a hero of himself by that advertisement."

Nat's jaw dropped.

"He *knows* his father will deliver himself to Gaudio," Tyler went on grimly. "And that Gaudio—will kill him. If Hélène or Carlotta know too much—they'll be killed too. But David can make a miraculous escape. Nobody could pin anything on him then. And he's on top of the world, with every cent of Gordon's fortune!"

"Well—I'll—be—damned!" said Nat weakly.

Tyler looked at him grimly.

"His own father—his own sister," said Nat slowly.

"WOULDN'T you rather it were he than some one else?" asked Tyler.

"Of course," said Nat. "If by some one you mean— You see I *know* it wasn't she!"

Tyler shrugged.

"I hope you're right," he said.

"But you just said it was David!" Nat protested.

"I didn't say it was David at all," said Tyler patiently. "I just said it *might* be David."

He took Nat's arm. "Come," he said. "It's squarely up to Ruth now."

"What are you going to do?" demanded Nat.

"I'm going to ask her to make every possible effort—to get through!" said Tyler.

"You mustn't force her!" Nat said.

"I'm merely going to ask her to try," said Tyler. "After all, there are lives at stake, perhaps *four* lives!"

He urged Nat with his lean hand, and the younger man fell into step beside him. Tyler proceeded up the stairs, Nat following. Ruth was lying down and Olga was tidying up the room. Tyler dismissed her. The maid left, stealing back a curious glance at him.

"What is it, Father?" the blind girl asked.

Tyler took both her hands.

"Ruth," he said, "I'm going to ask you to put yourself to—to a great test."

She nodded.

BRIEFLY he told her about the advertisement in the *Star* signed "D.M.," about Gordon's conviction that it was inserted by his son, and young Gordon's disappearance. But he did not mention the hypothetical case against David which he had outlined to Nat. The girl shuddered.

"That means that all of these people, David, Hélène and Carlotta, may be murdered," he said. "Even if Gordon sacrifices his own life! In the minds of one or all of them there must be the knowledge of this, there must be a terrible fear. Perhaps one of them may know this man's identity, his *name!*"

"Yes," the girl whispered.

"Hélène's note to her father was—well, peculiar," Tyler went on. "I think she was trying to communicate something. Perhaps *she* knows the name. I—I hate to ask you to do this—but it may be our only hope. Will you—make every possible effort—to get through?"

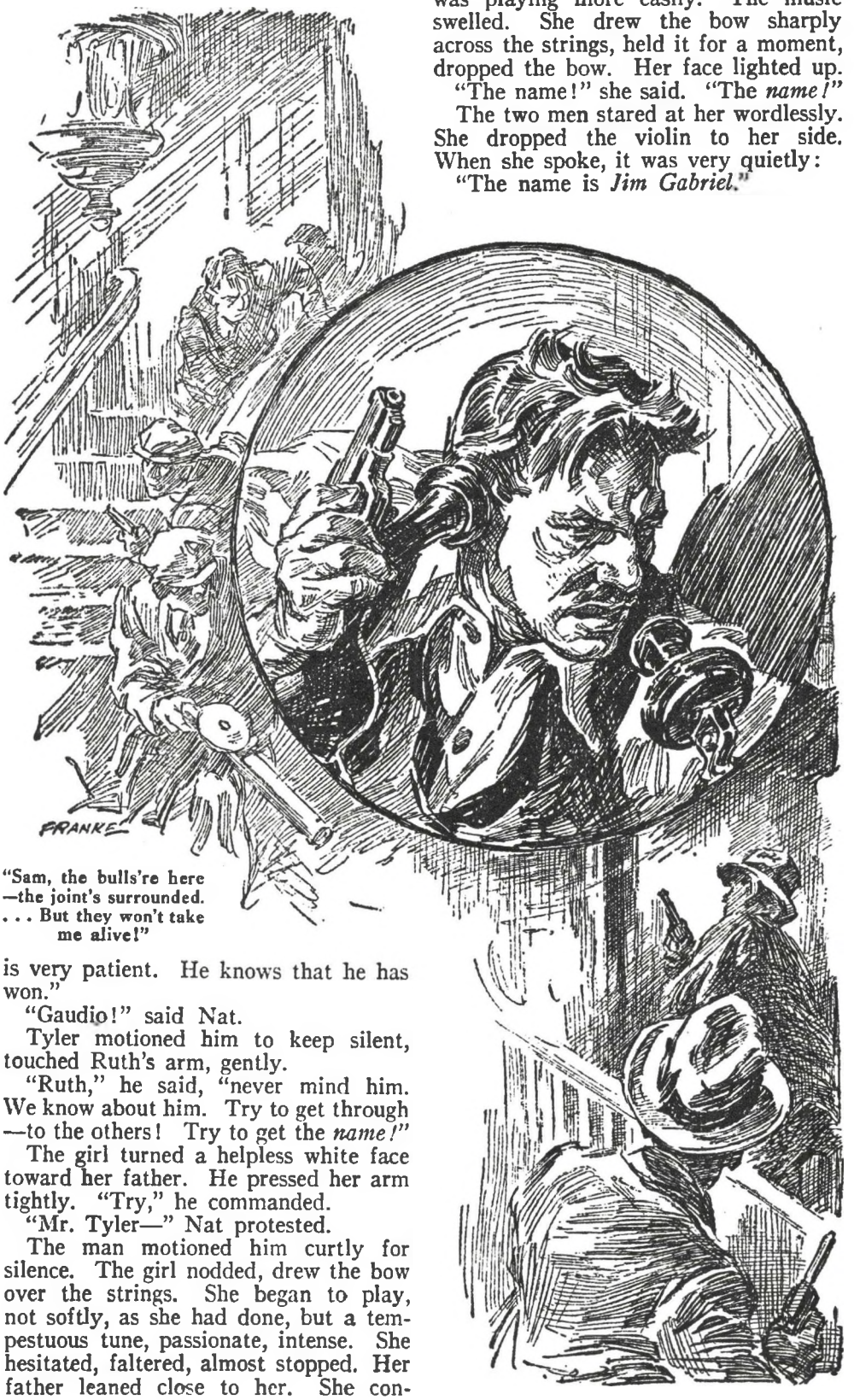
The girl nodded slowly.

"I'll—try," she said.

Tyler took the violin from its case. He bent over and kissed the girl's forehead. She smiled. Then she stood up, placed the instrument to her shoulder, drew the bow across the strings. She began to play, softly. Tyler leaned forward, the cords in his neck standing out whitely.

Abruptly Ruth stopped.

"Some one is waiting—waiting," she whispered. "Some one who has waited a long, long time. His mind is filled with bitter triumph. He is biding his time—which he knows will soon come. He



"Sam, the bulls're here —the joint's surrounded. . . . But they won't take me alive!"

is very patient. He knows that he has won."

"Gaudio!" said Nat.

Tyler motioned him to keep silent, touched Ruth's arm, gently.

"Ruth," he said, "never mind him. We know about him. Try to get through —to the others! Try to get the *name!*"

The girl turned a helpless white face toward her father. He pressed her arm tightly. "Try," he commanded.

"Mr. Tyler—" Nat protested.

The man motioned him curtly for silence. The girl nodded, drew the bow over the strings. She began to play, not softly, as she had done, but a tempestuous tune, passionate, intense. She hesitated, faltered, almost stopped. Her father leaned close to her. She continued with obvious effort. Then she was playing more easily. The music swelled. She drew the bow sharply across the strings, held it for a moment, dropped the bow. Her face lighted up.

"The name!" she said. "The *name!*"

The two men stared at her wordlessly. She dropped the violin to her side. When she spoke, it was very quietly:

"The name is *Jim Gabriel.*"

CHAPTER XVI

A Rendezvous with Death

TYLER gave an exclamation, plunged his hand into his pocket, drew out a folded sheet of paper, stared at it.

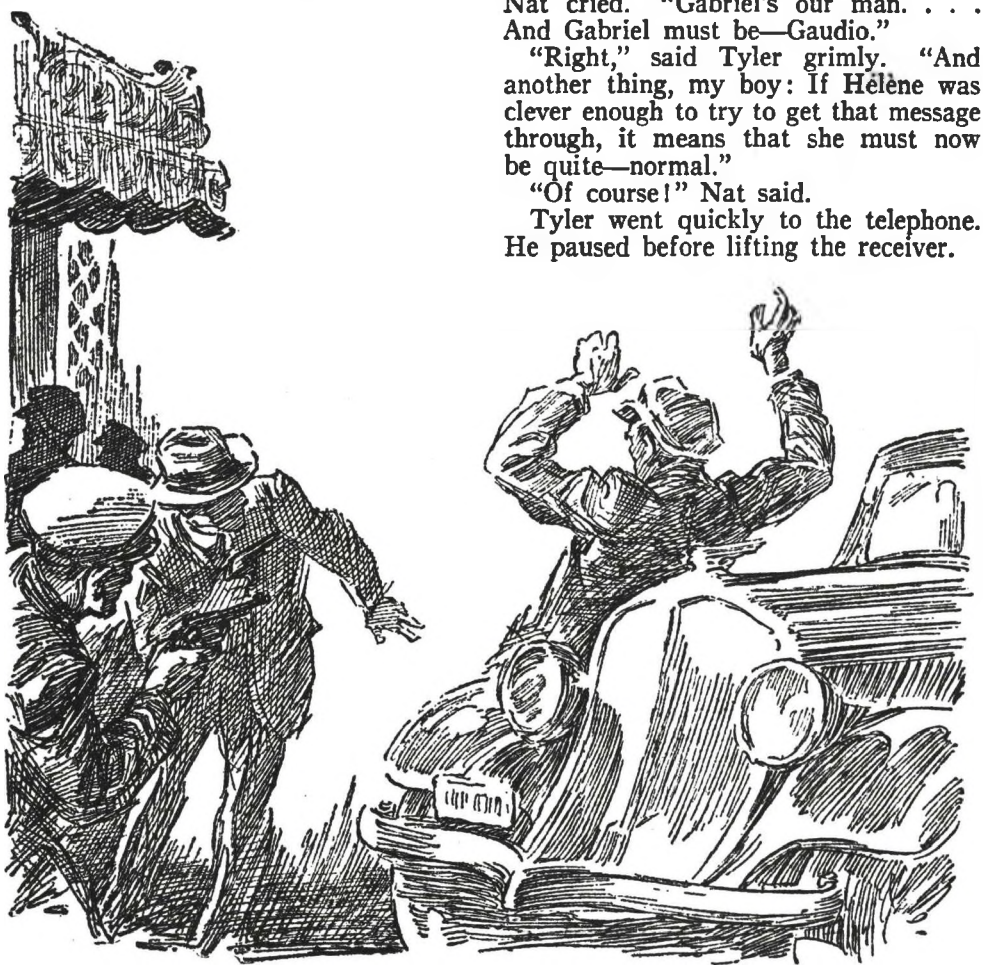
"Jim Gabriel!" said Nat. "Ever hear of him?"

Tyler glanced up from the paper.

"I have," he said. "He was one of half a dozen men Commissioner Kilrane named to Gordon and me at headquarters the other day, a known racketeer the police have never been able to pin anything on. Got a pencil, Nat?"

Nat produced a stub of a pencil, and Tyler sat down before a table, began to make marks with the pencil on the unfolded sheet of paper in his hand. Nat took Ruth's violin and pushed forward a chair for her. Her face was turned toward her father.

Tyler scribbled busily for a moment or two, once or twice using the eraser. Nat watched him curiously. Then Tyler chuckled, rose, holding out the paper.



Nat took it. It was Hélène's note. His eyes went to its second paragraph: *"Just imagine. . . . My God. . . . and bring ransom immediately. . . . & enough! . . . . love."*

Through the first letter of each word, omitting only the symbol &, Tyler had drawn a line. Nat looked up, puzzled. Tyler grinned.

"I was sure there was something in that note!" he said. "Thought the girl was trying to communicate. That's why I insisted on Ruth making the try today. Don't you see it now?"

Nat shook his head.

"Lord, but we were stupid," said Tyler. "It's as simple as A-B-C."

Nat stared at the note again, at the letters crossed with pencil lines. "J," he said, "I, M—" He stopped. *"Jim!"* he cried.

"Jim Gabriel," said Tyler. "Take the first letter of each word in that peculiar paragraph, leaving out only the symbol &, and you spell *Jim Gabriel."*

"Then that confirms it absolutely!" Nat cried. "Gabriel's our man. . . . And Gabriel must be—Gaudio."

"Right," said Tyler grimly. "And another thing, my boy: If Hélène was clever enough to try to get that message through, it means that she must now be quite—normal."

"Of course!" Nat said.

Tyler went quickly to the telephone. He paused before lifting the receiver.

"Nat," he said, "we've got to take this in our own hands. Gordon's in a frightful state. He'll be scared to death for his family. We've got to strike—through Kilrane—before Gordon knows what it's all about."

Nat nodded, and Tyler lifted the receiver. "Spring 7-3100," he said.

"I'm going to be in on this!" said Nat determinedly.

Tyler smiled.

"Hello," he said. "Commissioner Kilrane, please. Personal call. Dan Tyler on the wire."

He turned his eyes on Nat.

"All right, son," he said. "We'll both be in at the death."

"No, no!" Ruth gasped.

TYLER began to speak into the phone, ignoring her protest. Briefly he told Kilrane the facts. Kilrane was grimly congratulatory.

"I've wanted to get that rat for years," he said. "I'll send out a confidential message. We'll pick up his trail. I'll phone you the minute we strike the scent."

As Tyler turned away from the phone, Ruth rose, her look pleading.

"Father," she begged, "you and Nat—you're all I have! You mustn't—"

Tyler took her in his arms.

"There, there, honey!" he said. "We'll be in no real danger."

Between them, Tyler and Nat finally calmed her, reassured her, got her to lie down and rest. They went downstairs then, tried to compose themselves to wait. It was hard to do. Twice Gordon came to the cottage. He was like a man in a nightmare. . . .

The hours dragged slowly. Finally, in the late afternoon, Kilrane phoned. He was grimly jubilant.

"We've found him," he said. "He's at the Palm Gardens, a café he owns in the Bronx. Traced him through one of our men, a dick named Flaherty. Gabriel invited him up to his private apartment last night to have a drink! How's that for nerve?"

"If I'm any judge, this fellow has plenty of that," said Tyler.

"Yeh," said Kilrane. "Now, here's the situation: Flaherty got a good look at the layout there. Gabriel lives in a swell apartment in the front of the building, above the restaurant. He's got all kinds of trick locks on his doors. Probably could withstand quite a siege. So we've got to be careful. There are three other rooms on that second floor. My hunch is the two women and the young fellow are in them. Gabriel hasn't been out of the building since last night. We're going to close in on him tonight. Meet me at the Westchester police station at nine. I'll send a departmental car for you. Pick it up out in the main road at about eight-fifteen. Kayo?"

"Okay," said Tyler, and hung up.

He picked up the phone again and called Nelson. When the man arrived, he swore him to silence, and then explained what had happened. Nelson's eyes gleamed.

"Am I in on the show?" he asked eagerly.

Tyler shook his head.

"There's work for you here," he said. "First, about my daughter: I want you to put a trusted man right here in the cottage. I'll have her maid Olga stay with her in her room. But I want her absolutely protected. There may be a dangerous killer right here yet."

"How about Harrigan?" asked Nelson.

"Good," said Tyler. "Now, here's the idea, Nelson: Not a word about Collins or Gabriel, or any of this, to a soul. Detail another trusted man to help you and watch everybody else on the place like a hawk. If anybody tries to leave, let him go, but have him—or *her*, followed. That means everybody!"

"The boss too?" asked Nelson.

"The boss too," said Tyler. "And Miss Doris and Johnson and the servants—*everybody!* When we grab Gabriel, I'll phone you. I want you to spread the word then that *Gaudio* has been captured. If the guilty person is here, he may be surprised into showing his hand."

"I get it," said Nelson. "You can count on me."

JIM GABRIEL was in his characteristic attitude in his huge chair, lolling back comfortably, feet on the stool, when Nicky entered the apartment. The younger man looked at him inquiringly. "You sent for me?"

"Uh-huh," said Gabriel, smiling coldly. "Nicky, tonight's the night."

He stood up suddenly, the smile fading, eyes narrowing, jaw stiffening, lips thinning to a hard line. He held out a clenched fist, opened it slowly and then contorting his face grimly, closed it again. Nicky, watching, nodded.

"Kayo," he said huskily. "What you want me to do?"

"Go down to Timmy's and get an ordinary-looking car," said Gabriel, suddenly businesslike. "Then drive out toward Gordon's place. You'll find him, alone, walking toward the city, about a mile this side of his house, at nine o'clock. Pick him up and bring him here."

Nicky's jaw dropped; he stared at Gabriel incredulously.

"My God, Jim, are you crazy?" he demanded.

"Not yet," said Gabriel calmly. "Just in case any dicks happen to be around, you'll take him to the rear, of course. There's nothing to it."

"NOTHING to it!" Nicky cried. "There'll probably be a million bulls right on our tails. This is suicide, Jim!"

"Uh-uh," said Gabriel, shaking his head composedly. "I know Moridon—and he knows me. He'll come alone, because he knows that that's his one chance of saving the lives of the others. I've impressed that fact on him plenty. In fact, I told him frankly that it would be a cinch for him to cross me, lead the bulls right to me. But I also explained what would happen to the people he wants to protect. Oh, he'll come through, all right. I know the breed."

"Boy, if anything goes wrong, they've got us sewed up like a sack!" said Nicky.

Gabriel looked at him steadily, his jaw hardening.

"Are you a Gaudio or not?" he demanded.

"Don't be like that, Jim," said Nicky. "You know I—"

"Then you're in?" said Gabriel.

Nicky nodded, gulping.

"I'm in," he said. "But how—how you gonna—get rid of 'em?"

Gabriel smiled grimly.

"We got plenty of empty barrels," he said.

Nicky managed a sickly grin.

"We'll have the little party in the room the girl's in," said Gabriel softly. "You can take care of her, Nicky. Moridon ought to enjoy watching that."

Nicky's eyes lighted up.

"I'll attend to Moridon myself—last," said Gabriel.

He looked at Nicky.

"Kayo?" he asked.

Nicky nodded.

"Kayo, Jim," he said. "Ought to be a nice little party."

He turned and walked out of the room. . . .

Tyler and Nat stood in Ruth's room, their hats in their hands. The blind girl faced them, her lips trembling pitifully. Tyler cupped her chin in his palm, squeezed it gently. She tried to smile. Tyler put an arm about her, held her close, kissed her cheek.

"Olga is downstairs," he said. "I'll send her right up. We'll phone you from the Palm Gardens as soon as it's over. And it'll be good news."

He stepped back. The girl turned toward Nat, who took her hand, kissed it gently. She lifted both her hands to his coat-lapels, raised her face. He brushed her lips with his, then turned and followed Tyler from the room.

The two men crossed the lawn quietly, glancing up at the house. It was completely lighted. They continued on to the driveway, then walked down to the gate. Nelson and Cooke were there. In the main roadway a car stood waiting. Tyler gave Nelson last-minute instructions.

Then he and Nat got into the car. They drove straight to the Westchester police station, in the Bronx, the police chauffeur driving like the wind. Commissioner Kilrane was waiting for them.

"My men are quietly surrounding the Palm Gardens," he said. "I thought it best to have no concentration here. Always the danger of a tip-off. We've got machine-guns, rifles, tear-gas, searchlights. We won't use any of them unless we have to, of course. The main thing is to get those two women and that foolish boy out of there unharmed."

Tyler nodded.

"We've got to be terribly careful," he said. "This Gaudio is a desperate man. It's the chair for him if he's taken alive. If he knows he's trapped—I shudder to think what he'll do to his prisoners!"

"I know," said Kilrane. "Our only hope is to take him completely by surprise. Unless we strike without warning, he can lock himself in and battle it out to the death. And if he's got young Gordon and the two women up there—"

HE shook his head forebodingly; then he went on:

"I've sent Flaherty to the Palm Gardens. Unless there's a tip-off, Gabriel will suspect nothing in that. I told Flaherty to try to get him to invite him upstairs for another drink. And once he gets him alone, to make the collar

As Flaherty turned, an automatic was jammed forcibly into his stomach.

and signal from the window. If we get Gabriel, the others will be safe, since he's the only one desperate enough to fight it out."

Tyler nodded.

"That's the best way," he said. Then, quietly: "Are we ready?"

"Ready," said Tyler.

A thrill ran up Nat's spine. He placed a hand in his pocket, felt the reassuring cold steel of the automatic.

"Let's go," he said. . . .

Paul Gordon was almost happy as he made his careful toilet. Now that the die was cast, the irrevocable decision made, his mind was clear. Everything had come to a head. The intolerable worry and suspense were done. Now he could act. The moment of his supreme gesture was almost at hand. It was fitting and proper to die for those one loved.

He brushed his hair carefully, examined his reflection in the mirror. He even managed a smile. Then he stepped into the bedroom. Johnson stood there woodenly. In a calm, even voice Gordon told him the suit, the hat, the stick he wanted.

He donned the conservative dark clothes, took the gray Homburg hat, the Malacca stick, from Johnson. Then he smiled at the man, whose composure almost vanished. His face worked, but at Gordon's sharp, "Steady!" Johnson stiffened.

Gordon shifted his hat and stick, held out his hand. Johnson stared at it, pitifully, hesitated. Gordon held his hand steady. Johnson seized it, wrung it. Still clasping his hand, Gordon said quietly:

"Good-by, Johnson."

"Good-by, sir," said Johnson hoarsely.

"You are not to follow me," said Gordon. "Your promise."

Agony was etched on Johnson's face. At Gordon's firm look, he nodded slowly.

"I promise, sir," he said.

Gordon dropped his hand, turned and strode from the room. Johnson stood quite still for a moment, staring at the door which had closed behind him. His face went gray and old; he sank into a chair, buried his head in his shaking hands. Sobs shook his body.

"Judas!" he moaned. *"Judas!"*

GORDON descended his private stairs and let himself out. A man came forward inquiringly. With some surprise Gordon saw that it was not Harrigan. He spoke to the man in a low voice and then hurried across the lawn, toward the spot where the driveway swerved away from the house.

When he reached it he glanced back toward the house. A light burned in David's room. Doris would be there, dressing for dinner. Gordon put a hand to his lips, made a little gesture toward the light. Then he turned and strode down the driveway.

Cooke came out of the lodge at the gate.

"I'm going for a little stroll," Gordon said quietly. "I want to be alone, Cooke; do you understand?"

The man nodded.

"Yes sir," he said.

He went back to the lodge, and the gate swung open. Gordon stepped through, began to walk, unhurriedly, toward the city. . . .

Looking indescribably lovely, Doris, in a trailing pale yellow frock, her beauty enhanced by the pallor of her cheeks, walked down the stairs. She heard no sound, and paused, puzzled at the absence of voices. Then she hurried into the living-room. There was no one there. She looked about her, bewildered, called: "Dad!" There was no answer.

Then she saw, through the French windows, Nelson crossing the lawn. She ran to the door, called to him. He stopped, turned and came toward her. She advanced to meet him, her thin slippers crunching the gravel of the driveway.

"Dad?" she said. "Where is he?"

"He just left, Miss Doris," said Nelson.

"Left!" she echoed, her hands going to her breast. "Wh-where?"

Nelson shook his head.

"Don't know, miss," he said.

The girl gasped.

"Mr. Benson—Mr. Tyler—where are they?"

"Gone too, miss."

"With Dad?"

"No, miss. They left a few minutes earlier—alone."

She stared at him, the last vestige of color gone from her face.

"Where—where have they gone?" she breathed.

"Don't know, miss," said Nelson.

The girl caught her breath. Then she whirled about, stared at the cottage across the garden. The blind girl had begun to play her violin. The sound rose, clearer, hauntingly beautiful.

"That music!" Doris cried. "Always it's come—"

She gave a little moan, and then she was running toward the cottage. Nelson stared after her a moment; then he followed. He heard the music cease, increased his pace. He was just behind Doris when she burst through the door. Ruth, on the arm of her maid Olga, was descending the stairs. She stopped at the sound of Doris' entrance.

"Mr. Gordon!" she called.

"It's I—Doris," said Doris.

"Where is he—oh, where is he?" Ruth said. "Take me to him—quickly!"

DORIS ran to her, took her other arm. Nelson stood watching, bewildered. Across the room Harrigan stood, staring at the scene on the stairs.

"He's gone—he's gone!" Doris cried. "What is it, Ruth?"

"Oh, God—*oh, God!*" Ruth moaned. "It's a trap! They'll *all* be killed!"

Doris clutched at her arm, shook her.

"Where have they gone?" she demanded.

"The Palm Gardens," Ruth said huskily.

Doris dropped her arm, turned, started running down the stairs. Nelson reached out for her, but she eluded his grasp, sprang through the door. Nelson caught up with her as she reached the garage, seized her arm.

"Let me go!" she cried passionately. "Let me *go!*"

GABRIEL sat at his table at the rear of the café, his eyes on the performers in the floor show. "Plenty hot!" Winchell had said. Gabriel glanced at his watch, then back at the show.

Then he saw the broad-shouldered figure of Flaherty making its way across the room. Deliberately, Gabriel did not look at him until he loomed over the table. Flaherty grinned.

"How's it, Jim?" Flaherty boomed.

"Fine as silk," said Gabriel. "Sit down."

Flaherty sat beside him. Gabriel nodded toward the floor.

"Get a load of this finale," he said.

Flaherty grinned. "Read about it in Walter's column," he said.

The frenzied finale began. Gabriel kept his eyes glued on the madly whirling girls. Flaherty chuckled, applauded. The show ended, the girls trooped off. Gabriel grinned at Flaherty.

"Aint thirsty, are you?" he asked.

"Don't wanna be a hog," said Flaherty.

"A right guy's always welcome here," said Gabriel.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw Tony signaling.

"Be right with you," he said, rising. He walked toward the waiter. Flaherty eased over in his seat, followed the man with his eyes.

"Phone," said Tony.

"What's the matter with the portable?" said Gabriel.

Tony's eyes flicked toward Flaherty. Gabriel nodded grimly. He glanced back at Flaherty. Then he walked quickly toward the door, watching the detective out of the corner of his eye. Flaherty rose slowly. Gabriel swerved just before reaching the door, and stepped into a phone-booth beside the cigar counter. He saw Flaherty sit down again, his eyes on the booth.

Gabriel spoke into the transmitter. His face tightened; the cords on his neck stood out. But he kept his voice low, gave staccato orders. He emerged from the booth with a smile, and returned to the table but did not sit down.

"How about that little snifter?" he said. "Could use one myself."

"Kayo," said Flaherty, rising. "I'm right behind you."

Gabriel led the way upstairs, walked beside Flaherty, chatting pleasantly as they went down the long hallway. At the door to the apartment he paused, opened the door and waved Flaherty inside. Flaherty entered; Gabriel followed. As Flaherty turned, an automatic was jammed forcibly into his stomach.

Flaherty grunted and tried to look surprised. Gabriel swiftly relieved him of his gun and his handcuffs. He snapped one of them on the detective's left wrist, prodded him with the automatic, nodding toward the radiator in the far corner of the room. Flaherty backed up to the radiator.

"Lie down," said Gabriel.

Flaherty lay down. Gabriel slipped the other cuff about the steam-pipe, snapped it onto Flaherty's right wrist. Then he took out a handkerchief and gagged him securely. . . .

Up the back street, proceeding at a conventional speed, came a nondescript car. Two men sat in the front seat. At the rear driveway of the Palm Gardens the car turned, proceeded to the service entrance.

Three men who lurked in the darkness behind the building turned inquiringly toward a detective sergeant. He shook his head.

"They didn't say nothin' about incomin' cars," he whispered.

The two men got out of the car, entered the kitchen door. . . .

Gabriel, finished with gagging the detective, glanced up as the house phone rang. Carefully avoiding the windows, he went to it.

"Hello," said Nicky's voice. "I got this guy here. Open up, will you?"

A SMILE spread across Gabriel's taut face.

"Sure," he said. "Just push him in, tell him to walk straight up the steps and then you close the door behind him."

"Say, aint I in on this?" demanded Nicky.

"Sure, you are," said Gabriel. "But we got plenty of time. Want you to do a little chore first. This party's got to be staged right. All the fixin's. You know, the last-supper stuff. Well, I'm fresh outa champagne! That'll never do. Take the car and run over to Louie's, and get me five bottles. Yeh, five. I'll be seein' you."

Nicky looked puzzled as he hung up. Then he shrugged and grinned. What a gag! Champagne—and then the old business! He motioned to Gordon, led him through the refrigerating-room. The door on the other side clicked. Jim had released the automatic lock.

"Go ahead, pal," said Nicky. "Right up them stairs. Be with you in a couple minutes."

He locked the door on the outside, turned, went back through the icebox, strode through the kitchen. He climbed into the car, started it and drove slowly to the street. He turned right and started to shift gears.

Two men stepped out of the shadows. Nicky reached for the gun in his shoulder holster, then thought better of it as he saw the grim service revolvers snap out. A big man motioned him out of the car, clapped a huge palm over his mouth.

GABRIEL was at the house phone. "Sam," he said, "has Nicky gone?"

"Yeh," said Sam.

"Good," said Gabriel. "Wanted him outa this. Sam, the bulls're here!"

At the sharp exclamation from the man on the wire, Gabriel cut in sharply:

"Wait a minute—listen! This is my show—a one-man show. They won't take me alive. It's a murder charge, anyhow. That old Chicago rap. They'll give you guys a chance to walk out. Take it. No, there aint a chance in hell. I was tipped off. The joint's surrounded. They're waitin' for Flaherty to give 'em the office. He won't be givin' it. That gives me time for a little job. Tell the boys good-by."

"Nuts!" said Sam. "We're all in, Jim."

"Don't be a Joe Grimm!" said Gabriel. "It'd be the chair for all of you, Sam. . . . Because I'm takin' plenty of them with me!"

"So what?" said Sam. "When I ring, open the door!"

He hung up. Gabriel replaced the receiver, smiled grimly, shrugged. Then he went swiftly down the hall.

Paul Gordon stood on the first step, just inside the door staring up into the semi-darkness, listening. He heard the soft pad of approaching footsteps. Then he squared his shoulders and firmly began to mount the stairs, to meet Gaudio face to face at long last—to keep his rendezvous with death.

This absorbing story reaches a thrilling climax in the next, the October, issue.

Have you yourself been through an experience as exciting as any of those here described by your fellow-readers? (If so, you will be interested in the details of this prize contest, given on page 3.) First a civil engineer tells of his hazardous adventure high in the Andes.

Beating A Glacier

By RALPH ANDRÉ

BLEAK was that cañon in the Andes (Bolivia) where, for six months I had been constructing a masonry dam for the Chojñacota tin mine.

Between the pea-green of Chojñacota's icy depths and the eternal ice of Huanchaca's glittering glacier, the eye roves in vain for relief from the nakedness of gray granite and dead-dull slate on those precipitous slopes.

Beyond and high above the vast whiteness of the glacier, where only the condor soars, Mt. Timbali reaches up to touch the leaden sky, like some black god of desolation who hovers threateningly over his perilous domain.

Needless to say, in such a setting I was happy when that job was finished; and it was with buoyant spirits that I headed for the mine's camp on that last evening.

After dinner we sat silent for a space. I was wondering if it was to be a son and heir who would soon arrive in a certain hospital in far-off Chile. Then Bill Ingram, the manager, swung his lame leg to a more comfortable position.

"They say," he observed out of a clear sky, "that some Aymara Indians once crossed Huanchaca glacier."

"Started," I corrected. "They were never heard from again. One of my boys, Juan, said that they slipped into one of those bottomless crevasses."

"I bet you could cross it and be in Puchini camp in six hours," said Bill artfully.

"I could—in a hydroplane," I scoffed. Bill only grinned as he studied me for a moment, for I was lean and hard as nails in those days. He and I had talked over a ride up to the edge of the glacier some day but it was too late now. "Get it off your chest, fella," I went on. "But if you think you can kid me into crossing Huanchaca glacier, you're plumb 'loco'!"

"That," murmured Bill, "is just what Ted McNamee said." McNamee was the manager of a big tin property on the other side of Mt. Timbali. "I bet him a case of 'sec' that you could do it. I had in mind that you might find us a trail that would give us a shortcut—"

"Uh-uh! You bridge fiends can just go on around by Caxata or Pacacha the

same as usual and count me out. I've seen that bit of scenery from that saddle above Puchini. I'd only break my neck or maybe a few legs hunting a northeast passage for you birds so that you can win a fool bet. Anyway, I'm getting too dag-blabbed old to see any fun in skating around on the top of a glacier, eighteen thousand feet above nowhere!"

"You're thirty," said Bill, staring, glassy-eyed, into space. "And I was thinking that I *might* start that second dam right now instead of waiting until next year."

I sat making smoke-rings and thinking. Bill had some good reason for wanting a report on that unknown country, was willing to pay for it. It was risky, and to do it in six hours meant some pretty steady plugging. And what a tragedy for Junior to arrive and find no dad! On the other hand, his arrival would take money. I put down my cigar, paced the floor a moment. "Sixty-five bills a meter—and I'm on," I said.

We shook on it. Bill was sure that there was more tin on Mt. Timbali, but getting to it from the eastern slopes was very difficult, and a trail would cost a tremendous sum.

TIME was the essence of *that* contract! A precious hour of my six had already gone when at ten next morning I slid off my mule. Under the inspiration of a healthy bonus, two brothers, Juan and Manuel, had plodded up the twenty-five hundred feet and were waiting for me at snow line.

Through the scudding mists I glanced down at Lake Chojñacota, looking like an emerald, or something of great price, at that height. And more so when I turned and sized up that vast ice-field which we must traverse.

I became aware of a shrill dissonance in the air, faintly, as if from distant sled-runners, but blood-chilling as is the sound of sand on glass. I laid it to the effect of the warmth on the ice and, gradually becoming accustomed to the sound, forgot it. Glimpsing the distant saddle to the north of Mt. Timbali, I set a compass course, northeast, and we set out. Its apparent nearness was deceptive.

Tied to a hundred feet of half-inch manila line, the three of us trudged diagonally across the wide field. It was rough going over a jagged rotten crust; ragged hillocks and ridges, unseen until we were almost upon them, quickened our labored breath. At eighteen thousand feet the heart races and one breathes from his boots in that rarefied atmosphere to obtain the life-giving oxygen.

Strangely enough, there was little wind on this roof of the world. We were soon sweating from every pore, for the clouds offered scant protection from old Sol. But knowing it becomes bitter cold after sunset, I hung to my mackinaw.

The heat and glare struck us from all directions; it was reflected terribly from our feet. I began to appreciate Nature's wise precaution in providing green grass for us. We had blackened our cheeks and wore dark spectacles but the steady glare became more uncomfortable as the hours passed. We felt enervated; we began fighting an overpowering desire to lie down and sleep. But, with a wary eye for crevasses, we pressed on.

We had crossed but one crevasse in that first hour. Then we struck an insurmountable obstacle—where the glacier had dropped, leaving a sheer wall of ice fifty feet high. We headed due east. Our new direction took us across more of those deadly fissures, all the more dangerous because of the deceptive overlying snow crust. At times we had to search a place narrow enough to jump across, but by using caution we negotiated eleven without accident.

We were making for a tall granite peak which loomed up out of the surrounding whiteness like the spire of a submerged cathedral. Our pace increased as we began treading a smooth gentle decline. Then, as we emerged from a shroud-like mist about fifty yards from the side of this granite island, we halted in our tracks. A hundred yards away was the brink of the glacier!

I CAUGHT my breath at the awful majesty of it. Like some glittering giant scimitar, it curved away from the rock peak for a mile or more to the south. And from its top to the millions of tons of broken ice at its bottom, it appeared to be a thousand feet—straight down. The face of this tremendous wall scintillated the colors of the rainbow—white, green, blue, pink. Its middle half was black by reason of its overhang, a circumstance whose significance I did not immediately grasp.

I imagined that we were on a great river moving slowly toward a nightmarish cataract. A sharp exclamation from Juan woke me from my stupefaction. We *were* moving; slowly, but moving!

In a flash I saw the reason for that great undercut: the top was sliding over the bottom. Needless to say, we set off at a brisk pace for the comforting solidity of that island of granite.

Faint crackling sounds, as from a lake on a cold day, became more noticeable; little fissures appeared in the crust at our feet. Our rapid walk became a mad run. Then—*cra-a-a-ack-ck!* An instant's pause, then came a screeching and groaning as from a million tortured devils in hell. And hell broke loose!

FROM somewhere back of us a gigantic chunk split off. It shrieked protest as it slid down—a breath-taking pause—then it struck with a splintering crash. Others followed in quick succession. And—soul-freezing sight!—a glance over my shoulder showed the break-up eating swiftly in our direction.

Clouds of snow and vapor rose up like Niagara's spume as enormous segments, weighing millions of tons, sheared off to land with that terrifying sound as if all the windows in the world were falling. The fearsome shrieking of grinding ice was incessant. The snow-covered ice began tilting beneath our feet. And though we were running with all we had, it seemed as if we were running straight up and down.

That breaking edge seemed to leap toward us. It became more and more difficult to keep our feet. I wondered, crazily, why the whole mass did not go. We were still tied together and I, somewhat swifter, was in the lead—like the head goose in a flock.

R-r-rip-p-p!—Cra-sh-sh! Right behind us!

The very section we were on was going! It hung—poised. In a final burst of speed I sprang to a narrow ledge on the rock peak, legged it around the corner. Juan was not far behind. But Manuel, heavier on his feet, was too slow. He began slipping down that slowly tilting mass. Desperately, he clung to the rope, working his legs like pistons. I can still see his black eyes rolling in terror. His mouth opened but his cry was lost in the greater ear-piercing scream of that slipping ice.

Juan and I braced ourselves, snubbed the rope as Manuel's weight came upon us. It was a hair-raising moment; no time to see that that rock dropped, sheer and naked, for a thousand feet. Manuel swung like a pendulum, clear of the falling ice. The rope skittered along the sharp edge as we hauled upward in frenzied haste.

We dragged him up to us; then I sat down, knowing that my trembling legs would not hold me. I leaned against the rock wall, away from that fearsome drop, breathing in long gasps.

I observed that the three-foot ledge on which we rested narrowed to a hand's-breadth before it reached the corner ahead. We were marooned! All thought of our race against time faded. I smoked a cigarette, trying to get up enough nerve to crawl along that fearful cliff face and explore to the corner.

We might have to wait until the ice again moved out—weeks, perhaps. And a rescue party could do nothing, I concluded, with a glance at the awful void.

Then something jarred me from the chill gloom in which I was sinking. The entire rock was quivering! The break-up back to the undercut of the glacier was nearly complete but there was still movement—slow, but none the less terrifying. The incalculable weight of ice might shear off this pinnacle of rock! The thought galvanized me into action. I dragged myself to my feet.

I was plain scared, but I did not want my boys to know it. Flipping my cigarette off into space, I gave Manuel what must have been a ghastly grin. "A smoke for the devil," I said.

I told them to lie flat and give me rope as I needed it. Then, leaning against the rock, I inched out of their sight.

ACCUSTOMED as I was to mountain climbing, I took no chances of becoming giddy by looking down. Glued to my precarious toe-hold, I looked cautiously ahead when I was safely around that corner, gave a gasp of relief. Some ten feet from the corner was a small table of rock. It was risky going, but I made it. Presently we were all huddled on that flat bit of rock.

The peak was V-shaped, as if a wedge had been removed from an enormously thick pie. The "V" was partly filled with talus, or loose slide-rock, which lay on a forty-five-degree slope for about a hundred yards. There it ended in what I assumed was a sheer drop. About fifty feet lower than our position and some twenty yards distant was a broad slab of rock about on a level with the ice-field.

Cold shivers ran up my back as I saw that we must cross that loose rock. But the continuous trembling of our rock

island halted much thought. The boys watched, bug-eyed, as I slipped out of the noose about my waist. I gave them a few instructions, then, with one end of the rope gripped tightly in my fist, I leaped out. It was fifteen feet to the loose rock and I landed, running. A small landslide started, but I was moving across and down in great strides. At that, I barely made it.

I wiped off the cold sweat while the boys pulled back the rope. Juan was soon beside me, but the rope was partly covered with rock in his passage. And, in jerking it clear, Manuel let it slip from his hand. With a shout to him to wait until I could heave it back, I bent down to tie a rope to one end. I looked up as Juan began chattering. Manuel was already poised on the edge, pointing down as if telling himself where he must land.

Too late, we screamed together. Manuel jumped. He lit solidly, instead of running, and sank in halfway to his knees. He fell forward, scrambled to hands and knees, clawing desperately as he slid down, down to that terrible precipice. It was as if he were on a treadmill—losing his race. Juan flung the rope but Manuel missed it and it was quickly covered. He was sobbing as I yanked off my mackinaw. Seizing the rope, I sprang onto that treacherous footing, took three strides and flung out my coat. Manuel caught it as he was sliding past. Then I cussed him in three languages.

We set out with barely two hours to go. And it was yet a long way to that saddle. It was up a gentle slope, but every step became harder than the last as we forged upward. Weariness, "serrocha" (mountain sickness), reaction from our narrow escapes took its toll. Our feet dragged as we resisted an overwhelming desire to lie down and sleep. But victory meant a lot. We kept on.

We reached the saddle utterly spent; quit the snow and began that long steep descent down the boulder-strewn mountainside above Puchini. I had forty-five minutes left. Grateful for the hobnails in my boots, I leaped from rock to rock like some reckless mountain goat. I arrived with five minutes to spare, took a little soup and went to bed—snowblind!

Did I make money on my contracts? Not any! About then the price of tin hit the skids. But it was a stem-winder who arrived later in Chile!

The Man with the Hammer

By WALTER GREENOUGH

IT may be really hot down there in those Arabian deserts in the wake of the red-haired Wolf of Arabia; but for downright infernal warmishness let me lead you to a spot I know just south of the railroad switch in the ware-yard of the old Lawrence Conduit Company. The sun of August is blazing down, it is true, but there are other factors in the heat: Kiln No. 4 is to the right of us and Kiln No. 7 to the left, while down the cinder roadway a bit is Kiln No. 2. The latter is being drawn today.

When a kiln is drawn, some hardy boys break down a sealed doorway after fires have been sucked up through the green ware inside the rounded brick oven for many days. I never was able to discover just what the Fahrenheit reading is, inside those kilns, at about the seventh day after the fires go on—but a fellow could tie on a forked tail, grab himself a three-pronged sinner-sticker, and cavort around old Kiln 2 of an August morning—and arouse envy in the breasts of Dante's devils.

I knew the man who was boss of the Lawrence Conduit Company that summer. And when I came up from the university to the old home town to seek a job, I sought out Charley Sutherlin in the cool offices there in the tiny grove to the west of the kiln-yard. He listened to my story of need—I had to make and save a hundred dollars or so that summer if I was to complete the work for my degree—and gave me the job of kiln-inspector.

That sounded good to me—dignified—a job for a man! (I was just eighteen.)

Some of the puff went out of me when I followed Charley out to the yard and found that I wasn't the only kiln inspector. There were several others, it seemed.

This young man's first job was in a tile conduit factory, and it put him to a severe test.

The yard boss shouted at "Mad" Butler. With something of fierce alacrity the man strode up to us. I know now that he welcomed even a moment's respite.

"Here's another inspector to work with you," the yard-boss told Butler sharply.

I followed the gigantic fellow back through the tall piles of baked clay-ware to a broad cinder floor midway between Kiln 2 and the open door of a railway box-car—shunted, with others, onto a siding platform. In and out of this doorway traveled a long stream of sweating men, pushing flat-bedded wheelbarrows. Going into the car, these barrows were piled high with fiery-hot conduits, those four-sided, baked clay protectors for telephone cables that are laid underground. They were being stacked for transportation to Chicago.

On the cinders Mad Butler took his stand, and the full barrows rolled by him unceasingly. I remember Mad's forearms —shaggy, with vast knots of muscle from wrists to elbows, and copper-hued from the vicious sun. When he seized his inspector's hammer and held it aloft a second before slamming it down along the tops of the conduits, I instinctively thought of Vulcan. Somebody gave me a great hammer, like that Butler held. And Butler superciliously pointed to the barrow there between us and told me to get to work. I summoned up enough courage to ask him to do his stuff on that first one. Tossing his head like a horse, he spat tobacco-juice and then ran the head of his hammer along the top of the barrow-load of conduits. At first I didn't hear any difference in the sound the hammer made against the heated clay pieces. But Butler thrust his forearm into the lower tier of the conduits and pulled one out, tossing the ten-pound thing aside as if it were a crumbled cigarette-pack.

"That one bad?" I asked him.

"Of course, you fool!" he said.

You see, Butler couldn't bear the thought of a kid being sent out to take the same sort of job he had. Butler was nearly fifty years old, and had spent fifteen of those years in the yards of the Lawrence Conduit Company. He was a bully through and through—but a bully who was so powerful physically that his fellows gave in to him. I've seen him, for example, seize the dinner-pail from a fellow-workman, and grinningly rifle it of whatever chanced to appeal to him.

JOHNNY the water-boy came around the west ware-pile a little after noon that first day and our wheeling-crew sank right down in the shade beside a stack of building-tile and waited to get at Johnny's dipper. A capacious dipper it was, too—flaring out around the top, and with a long tin handle. No individual paper drinking-cups—no, sir, Johnny's dipper held about two quarts of *aqua pura*, the life-savingest fluid that ever slipped down past a boy's tonsils. Johnny ruefully watched his water-bucket's contents shrink up until there was only about a spoonful in the bottom. Mad Butler, who'd stepped into the box-car to see how things were coming on there, returned and gave the bucket a vicious kick, then began to yell at Johnny to show some speed with a fresh bucketful.

Johnny, who must have known Butler for what he was, calmly picked up the bucket by its bottom and flung the rest of the water straight into Butler's face. Well, if you ever saw a wild man—

But Johnny had left hastily, and he didn't get back for half an hour. All that time the sun was beating down on us, and the bitter heat blast from Kiln 2 enveloping us every time there was a breath of wind.

I'd learned a little something of my inspection duties by that time and had fitted onto my right arm and hand a sticky, thick piece of cowhide, designed to protect me from cuts or burns when I reached into a barrow-load of conduits to extract a damaged one. The wheelbarrow boys, sensing that they could press things a little, had begun to shove two barrows up to us at once, one on Mad's side, one on mine. My arm was as tired as my brain was hot.

And so I didn't really see Johnny come back with the fresh bucket of water until he was there beside me, offering me the dipper for my drink. Did I want a drink? No desert rat was ever dryer! I took the dipper from Johnny's hand and sank my mouth in its cool depths.

SUDDENLY I felt the tin dipper jammed cruelly into my face.

I didn't realize at first what had happened; it took me a moment to get my face free of the water and see out over the dipper. But gradually I saw the leering eyes of Mad Butler challenging me across the barrows.

I knew that when Butler drank I should have to smash the dipper against his lips in retaliation. If I didn't, there would be no more job for the schoolboy there in the yards of the Lawrence Conduit Company. I knew that crowd; the showing of the white feather sealed the job of the man who showed it. They were a gang of rowdy, hard-drinking, hard-working, fighting clay workers. Instinctively I knew that, regardless of how they hated him privately, they all stood in with Butler in that moment, against the college kid who had come to take one of the prize jobs of the yard out from under the noses of men who had spent their lifetime wheeling the conduits.

Johnny moved around the line and sank the dipper in the cool water for Butler's drink, and the bruiser reached for it without taking his eyes off me. As he drank I could see those eyes, watching me sneeringly over the rim.

I believe Butler was more astonished than I when I struck the dipper savagely against his teeth. He actually dropped it in his startled step backward, and the spilled water struck along his pants-leg. But I couldn't believe it had been my hand that had struck the blow against the dipper. I stood rooted there while the yellow-eyed monster, with cinders and sweat streaking his enormous chin, slowly raised that terrible hammer above his head. The tool had a steel blade at the back of it that must have been eight inches long and fashioned in the form of a shoemaker's hammer, only it was much heavier and longer, a murderous tomahawk. That steel shaft he held poised above me. It would have split my skull in two!

I am not writing this to prove my bravery, for I am the veriest physical coward; even dark nights terrify me. No burglar need fear an ambush at our house. He'll find me in bed—and he'll have to pull the blankets back if he wishes to confer with me! Always I have been physically afraid of things, as I was at that moment when the yellow-eyed Butler withheld for an instant the downward death-sweep of that mighty arm of his. I knew I was about to die—no one could reach him and pinion that awful ape-fist, clenched about the deadly hammer.

But I had never taken my eyes from his! Through sheer physical fear I had held them rigidly on those catlike yellow orbs—but he didn't know it was fear. All at once *I* knew that something within him had crumpled; the impulse to drive that great arm downward had somehow faded.

Why? I cannot tell you. I know that he would have struck if I had for one instant wrenched my eyes away from his, if he had but once sensed the weird throttling fear that held me immovable.

At length the big fellow wiped his lips with his free hand and swept the mighty hammer down along the ringing conduits on the wheelbarrow there in front of him. It rang hollowly against a cracked one, and he jerked it free and tossed it backward. Old Tom Aren spat on his hands, lifted the handles of the wheelbarrow that I had finished, and moved off toward the red box-car.

MAD BUTLER was the best fellow to me you can imagine, from then on. Oh, he'd cuss me now and again—but he cussed everybody all the time.

Five or six years afterward, I heard that he had killed a fellow-workman one hot August day—with his inspector's hammer! Perhaps that day was even hotter than the one I've told about.

Shot Down

A thrilling adventure in the observation-balloon service on the Western Front.

By SAMUEL TAYLOR MOORE

AT the tip of the cable, one thousand meters, I had succeeded in gaining sufficient altitude to rise above a bank of autumnal morning mist which was hanging like a stage curtain between the valley north of Montfauçon and the rising wooded scarpes of the Meuse beyond. My field-glasses were focused on a defiladed valley between two undulating ridges as I sought to locate the new lines of the Thirty-second Division which through the night had been advanced.

A black Maltese cross on the fuselage stood out clearly as a plane flashed across my lenses. I dropped my glasses on their neck-sling to follow the raider with my naked eyes. So low was he flying that his wings seemed to be clipping the treetops as he crossed the lines. And there was no mistaking his objective; he was coming straight for me. My bulging gas-bag was his prey!

I seemed powerless to act, or to take my eyes from those wings racing toward me.

He was more than a mile distant when without preliminary warning a blast of crimson tongue wrapped about the speeding plane! Like a flaming cross, nose-first, it dived to earth. Smoke and dirt rose as the flaming plane hit; then the funeral pyre burned brightly on a hillside. What caused it? To this day I don't know. Possibly a mechanical failure was the cause, but more likely some shot—luckily for me—from a doughboy's rifle had penetrated the fuel-tank. No Allied plane was in sight, and there had been no white bursts of "archie" about his tail.

I cheered. It was a foolish and futile outburst, for I had had nothing to do with the fate of that plane, and being alone in the basket no one could hear me. I contacted the telephone mouthpiece and reported the incident to the logging clerk at the switchboard below, then resumed my attempt to locate the new infantry lines.

On days when the weather was fair the battle horizon on the Western Front could be marked for almost its entire length by what appeared to be twin rows of festooned Japanese lanterns. Those were the observation balloons—"sausages," most Allied soldiers called them. And these sausages were the strange war weapons which put a country-fair thrill into the World War.

Amidst the furious fighting of an advance no less than in the tedious monotony of trench-life in a quiet sector, certain familiar sounds in the sky constituted a summons for the doughboy to prepare himself for a spectacle reminiscent of boyhood holidays at home fairs. Those sounds were the sudden *rat-tat-tat* of Spandaus firing warming bursts, and the whine and crack of antiaircraft guns laying a protective barrage about the object of attack. From the ground one could see the winged silhouettes of the diving attackers against the gray-green blob on the high horizon. Through the tiny white clouds which marked detonating high explosives, the enemy would dive. Then, too often, a telltale wisp of white smoke would puff from the side of the bag. The next instant a titanic red tongue would swallow the balloon whole. Then down like a flaming meteor, with lingering trail of black smoke to mark its path, the thing would plunge.

BUT invariably, before the balloon started falling, one or two streaks of white would drop from below it. The streaks would blossom quickly into parachutes; at the termination of the shroud-lines twisting pygmy figures could be discerned. After the parachutes opened, they generally drifted leisurely to earth without molestation. But not always. Once I saw a plunging sausage fire-ball

breathe upon the delicate silken expanse of a descending parachute. Like a cobweb before the blast of a plumber's blowtorch the white spread vanished! I could only curse helplessly as I saw the body of my good friend Cleo Ross fall like a plummet from a full half mile in the air.

BY mid-October the Seventh Company were veterans. We were the fourth American balloon company to go into action. Since July we had been observing the war from a grandstand seat in a swaying wicker basket. That is, the observers had, save for interruptions by weather and loss of balloons by enemy incendiary bullets and by shell-fire. But the men of the company,—now a hundred days in action without relief,—had had only the more common mole's-eye view of the war. To see a sausage hanging in the heavens one would never suspect the large number of men required to make it an efficient instrument of war. It took one hundred and seventy mahouts to handle the cumbersome fabric elephant on the ground, or advance it while inflated along roads blockaded by telephone wires, camouflage screens and protruding branches—as well as engineers to build windbreaks and balloon-beds, signal-corps men to build and maintain against constant breakage by enemy artillery some twenty kilometers of telephone-lines connecting the observer in the basket through a central switchboard with various artillery units and the staff headquarters of corps and vision; anti-aircraft machine-gunners, lookouts, chauffeurs operating a fleet of trucks carrying over congested shell-racked roads heavy hydrogen compression cylinders and new balloons to replace those lost in action, motorcycle messengers, winch operators, parachute packers, and sundry other specialists.

They were good men, conscientious, tireless, proud of what we were doing. And among them was a youngster of Armenian antecedents who today under an Anglicized name is a prominent architect on the West Coast. When he joined the outfit he was somewhat of a problem, by reason of a natural informality of manner which outraged all rules of military conduct. I'm no martinet, but for the sake of general discipline it was necessary to teach him fundamentals of military courtesy. Eventually not a member of the company surpassed him in military speech and behavior. And that fact was almost to cost me my life!

A balloon observer could not leave the basket under attack on his own initiative. From the maneuvering officer on the ground, he received the order to jump. That was because the wide expanse of the fabric balloon belly screened all vision above. The observer in his suspended basket could not see whether the balloon was on fire or not. Accordingly he was forced to await a formal order to jump. Usually mere seconds transpired between the first telltale puff of smoke and the spread of flames to engulf the whole gas-bag. It was therefore necessary to expedite conveyance of the jump-command. To facilitate action in that critical moment a soldier was stationed by the balloon winch with a field telephone set constantly cut in between the observer and the company switchboard. The maneuvering officer relayed to that particular soldier the jump-command by a sudden downward sweep of his arm. Whereupon the soldier would shout the single word *"Jump!"* into his mouthpiece. At once the observers would be seen bailing out from opposite sides of the basket. Balloon parachutes differed from present-day aërial life-preservers in that we had no ring to pull. We wore permanent light harnesses over flying togs. A single rope led to a parachute packed in a container attached to the side of the basket. The weight of the falling observer would pull the parachute free. Usually the 'chute was fully spread after falling two hundred feet.

THE flu had hit us hard; a third of our men had been evacuated to hospitals, or lay in fox-holes in feverish delirium. I was alone in the basket that dawn, because only a sergeant and myself remained to carry on observation work. And among the flu victims was the soldier who ordinarily relayed the jump-command. The maneuvering officer had selected the model soldier I have spoken of, to substitute at that important post.

It was not five minutes after I had seen the first plane crash in flames that my observations once more were interrupted.

From a lazy batch of cumulus clouds drifting five hundred feet above the gas-bag, eight Fokkers swooped upon me. The basket swayed violently as the winch operator slipped his clutch in high to rewind the cable. Instantly shells began cracking in a fifty-meter circle about the descending bag. To the deafening scream and ear-splitting detonation of those bursting high explosives was added the

whine of a bullet-barrage from my own aërial machine-gunners. About my head hissed a dizzying, smoking pattern of enemy tracers—yet I could not see the attacking planes. They were hidden by the fabric belly. I reached for the Chauchat rifle with which our baskets were equipped for defense. But I did not pick it up. Darting wing-tips were all that one ever could see. In that mad pandemonium a voice reached my ears. But it did not give the word I awaited until the end of a model military speech.

"Lieutenant Moore, sir," said the voice. "Lieutenant Axtater presents his compliments, and says for you to jump."

IN the æons that dragged while those silly prefixes were being uttered, there passed before my eyes and about my body a literal hail of smoking tracers. Fragmentation from bursting archie shells whirred among the suspension ropes like a covey of grouse taking wing. The whistle of those steel splinters all but drowned the formal polite voice.

I have been asked if it requires nerve to jump in a parachute. I had jumped before under less urgent circumstances. On the present occasion I only can say that if a sea of flames lay below, I'd not have hesitated for a split second to bail out. Any place and any future was preferable to that concentrated inferno of hissing, screaming, ear-splitting noises and hail of deadly hardware.

At the final word of the interminable speech I jerked off my telephone headset and dived head-foremost over the basket edge. Tracers seemed passing fairly between my legs as I departed.

The sensation of falling before one's parachute cracks open is pleasant, lacking in the sense of breathlessness sometimes experienced in an express elevator. It is rather a sense of floating; the body travels through space with a distinct sense of exhilaration.

Then suddenly I was jerked up short. I had bailed out at about twenty-five hundred feet. There is no sense of descent while drifting to earth in a parachute. Until one is within a few hundred feet of the ground, the feeling is that of being anchored aloft.

The sharp screams and deafening bark of archie grew fainter, save for the occasional whir of a falling fragment. But the din of the barrage from my own gunners grew louder. And curiously enough, the throb of airplane motors also seemed to grow louder. Almost singeing my ear-tips were frequent angry hisses like the sudden attack of an aroused hive of hornets. I thought those bullets came from my own gunners who, in the excitement of training their weapons on the darting, diving enemy ships, were disregarding my own presence in their line of fire, and I cursed them heartily.

But I was wrong—the spread of my white parachute screened from my eyes my very real peril. Five of the eight enemy machines were following me down! In echelon they were diving, training their guns on my unhappy form for short sharp bursts. It was leaden pellets from Spandaus that were hissing in my ears! My parachute was being transformed into mosquito netting, smoldering tracers among the rain.

Yet what I awaited in trepidation was the plunge of the flaming gas-bag. I'd seen Ross killed but a few days before. Finally the bag passed me—whole! It sometimes happened that the pressure created as a balloon was hauled down in high speed extinguished the first touch of flame. That had happened now. But it was as well that I had not remained upstairs. Such luck as protected me in that experience should never be forced.

AT length the ground came rushing at me. I pulled from a pocket of the harness the banana-knife we carried to cut free from our 'chutes so that upon landing we would not be dragged. But I was slow; I hit hard, was bowled over, and dragged through some old barbed wire before a sergeant flattened the billowing silken sail. Except for some torn flesh on my legs I was unharmed. And that seemed impossible to some French artillerymen who had been watching. With jaws agape they stared as at a ghost as I got to my feet and walked away.

Not one of my men had been wounded. A doughboy, an innocent bystander who had stopped to watch the spectacle, had been killed, however, and several artillery horses were killed or so severely wounded they had to be shot.

The balloon and basket were punctured with over forty holes. We had to patch them before I could go back up. It was two hours later before I ascended again to finish my observations—and before starting up I made it a personal matter to see that the substitute telephone attendant at the winch was a soldier who never gave a whoop about military courtesy.

Such formality can be carried too far!

The desperate struggle against death herein described led Mr. Brower to forsake the sea and thus brought about the Alaskan venture described in "My Arctic Outpost."

Fire at Sea

By CHARLES M. BROWER

WITH my ship the *C. C. Chapman*, I arrived at Antwerp early in April, 1883. When we were nearly unloaded, we were chartered to San Francisco, this time with a mixed cargo, and as soon as we could get the ship cleaned, we started to load.

The first cargo we took in was scrap iron, as ballast. This was floored over with boards, and on top of the boards we had a lot of blacksmith coal. This again was covered with more boards; then we started loading sulphur, furniture and gin, as well as a large assortment of general merchandise, and last of all we had several large panes of plate glass, crated.

Our passage was about as usual. Our crew were all sailor men, mostly Scandinavians, and the work went along fine, with never a hitch, until we were almost down to the Horn.

The morning we entered the Straits of Le Maire, the sun was shining, and with a fair wind, though light, we expected to be through, and off Cape Horn that night. But at two that afternoon the wind whipped to the southwest so quick we were taken aback. That is, the wind came out ahead of the ship, and instead of the wind forcing the ship ahead, we were going stern first. In light weather this does not amount to anything more than getting the yards braced around, and the sails filled on the other tack; but with us, the wind came a full gale. Finally, however, we got our head yards around and the jibs and head staysails filled, and came aft to get the main and mizzen around also.

The ship's carpenter, when all hands are called to handle the yards in tacking or wearing ship, is supposed to take care of the braces on the mizzen. Chips was at his place, but evidently was rattled; he put his foot in the center of the crossjack brace, coiled on the deck for running. Slacking away on the mizzen, the braces got away from him, and the first thing we knew he was going aloft, feet first, with a half-hitch around one leg.

When this happened, the Captain was on the forward end of the cabin, where he could see everything that was going on; here we had coiled all the main braces, out of the way and so they would run clear, in just such an emergency as we had got into. But when the carpenter got jammed, the Captain, while giving some orders about what to do, inadvertently put his foot in a coil of the braces on the poop, just as we had let go the main and were squaring yards. The running rope caught the old man by his foot and threw him from the house to the main deck, where he lay, unable to move.

Things were certainly mixed for a while. We got the old man into his cabin where we had to leave him with the steward for a time.

I got into the rigging with another man, and stoppered the crossjack brace, so we could unscramble the carpenter, who was almost unconscious from hanging head downward. Otherwise he was uninjured, and was soon back at his work.

We finally got the ship before the wind, standing north out of the strait. Then we had time to attend to the Captain, who was suffering considerably, for he had broken his leg.

That afternoon Chips made some splints; then George—the third mate—and the carpenter set the leg, but it took three of us to pull it in place.

We got away from the land that night, and by morning had better weather, so it was not long before we were off the Horn. We beat around the Cape in a few days and then started to haul to the northward. Eventually we reached the latitude of Valparaiso, but well offshore. Everything had been going smoothly, and the old man's leg was starting to knit finely. And then one morning just at breakfast time, we noticed a smell of gas coming up the fore hatch, which was off for ventilation. Shortly afterward, we saw smoke coming through a ventilator we had in the end of the forecastle. Of course we had to tell the Captain. He ordered us to get the main hatches off at once and locate the fire.

We got down all right, but could not locate the fire, which seemed to be just forward of the hatch. However, we passed a lot of water down there and thought we might get the best of it, but all we did was to give the fire a fresh start, by letting the air get at it.

Of course the Captain was anxious, and wanted to come on deck to take charge and insisted that as his leg was doing so well, that we put a suspension bandage under his instep and help him on deck.

After getting him fixed up, we took him on deck; and the carpenter was delegated to look out for him (Chips was a Hollander over six feet tall and strong as a bull) while the rest went about the job of pumping water into the hold. All hands were on deck. Some were passing water in buckets down the hatch, and as the empty buckets took too long to pass out, they were pitched up and caught by the man on deck. The old man, wanting to see what was going on below, came to the coaming of the open hatch to have a look. As he stood there with the carpenter, he spoke to the man catching the buckets, and distracted his attention just as one was thrown out. Instead of his catching the bucket, he just hit it with his hand with force enough to shoot it against the Captain's legs, knocking them from under him. As he fell, he hit his leg against the hatch coaming, and broke it again in the same place.

GEORGE and Chips took the old man to his cabin, and did the best they could with his leg. I stayed with the fire as long as I thought it any use, but we could all see we were making no headway. So finally I had to call the men out of the hold, and put all the hatches on, to try and smother it.

We calked every seam in the hatches, and all ventilators, and wherever a bit of smoke could be seen. Then we went sniffing around trying to find if there was any place the gas was escaping, and when we found such places they were immediately plugged.

The Captain was suffering greatly. We wanted to have him put in to Valparaiso, but he would not think of it at the time. All the money he had was invested in the ship, and there was no insurance on his share. If the vessel had been taken to this port, no doubt she would have been condemned, and all his earnings would have been lost.

The fire did not seem to be gaining any, and as we had a good fair wind blowing us along eight knots an hour, we hung on, until there was no port we could have made if we wanted to.

Everything seemed to be going along fine. We smelled no more gas, and we thought we had got the best of it. All the crew did was to pump water into the hold until we were as deep in the water as we dared be; then we pumped it all out again. This we did three times.

ON the morning of the twelfth day of the fire, without any warning, the main hatches blew up in the air fully six feet, with a loud report.

Again we tried to locate the trouble, but could not. I even went crawling over the cargo as far aft as possible. The gas here was so strong that I thought I'd never get out. I just made it. When I got where the crew could see me, I just keeled over, and they hauled me out and up on deck, where I lay for several hours before regaining all my faculties—and then oh, what a headache!

While I was laid out, the hatches had been all put on again and battened down, but the fresh air was enough to give the fire another start. From this time, we had enough excitement for one voyage. We kept the pumps going day and night. Water in, and water out. All the work the crew did was to trim sails, and occasionally take in the light sails.

During the next month the hatches were blown off every few days; and each time the fire took a new lease, and spread farther aft. Several times George and myself went below to see if there was anything we could discover, but never again without a rope fast to whoever went, as almost invariably whoever went

below was overcome by gas. It was a horrible feeling; and whoever's turn it was to take the gas, as we called it, was left lying on deck until he could get around again.

Soon after we crossed the line, things got worse. Our deck got so hot that it was hardly possible to touch it with the bare hands. Shortly after this the carpenter reported that the main water tank was getting warm; sure enough it was, and soon the water was almost boiling. A good job for us that the tank was iron, or we might have been without water for the rest of the voyage.

During this time we had made ready all the boats. Sometimes it seemed as if we could stand the strain no longer. It was like living over a volcano, which was known to be active. But no one spoke of leaving at the time, for all realized that to take the old man in a smallboat in his condition would be almost sure death for him.

THIS tension had lasted forty-eight days, getting gradually worse. We had to stand well to the north until we got the westerly winds to carry us in. When we did get them, they were good and strong, but we were past caring for weather, and all we wanted was for that breeze to keep up till we were in San Francisco harbor once more. With the wind over the quarter blowing a gale, we squared away for port and for three days and nights the *Chapman* traveled as she had not traveled for a long time.

As we neared the coast the wind got stronger, but still we kept all sail on the ship. As fast as one of the light sails was blown away, we sent some one aloft and sent down the remains; then furling the new sail on deck, we sent it aloft, bent it and set it. We did this as long as we had any spare canvas left, carrying on and carrying on. We knew that it was not a matter of days, but just of hours, before we would have to take to the boats, so we took all the chances there were—and won.

As we neared the coast the wind let go some. Sighting the Farallones early in the afternoon, we passed them a little after five; crossing the bar, we sailed up the bay with a fair wind, and rounding to, we anchored at ten that night. Sails were soon furled, everything made snug for the night. The crew all went below, except two men and myself. We stood the first anchor watch till two in the morning, when George relieved me.

All hands were called at four, as we expected there would be something doing as soon as it was daylight. That was right. At five the fore and main hatches blew off with a bang. The fire blazed up through the main, and soon there was another flame coming through our port side just abaft the fore-rigging. For a while it looked as if the crew would jump overboard, but they soon came to their senses. The two fire-boats laying at Vallejo Street wharf saw us the minute we blazed up, and it did not seem five minutes before they were alongside and had eight streams of water playing in the two hatches and through the hole in the ship's side.

With the *Governor Erwin* on the starboard side and the *Water Witch* on the port, they held us while we drove the pin out of the anchor chain; then they towed us up the bay, in behind Mission Rock and ran us well into Mission Bay, where they pumped us full of water and we rested on the mud, with just our decks out of water. All the crew except one man left as we were towing up.

When we got the ship to Mission Bay, two of the firemen belonging to one of the boats, leaning over the fore hatch-coamings and playing two streams of water in the hold, suddenly keeled over and fell down the hatchway. The gas had got them just as it used to get us.

As I was acquainted with the lay of the hold, I volunteered to try and get a rope on them. Ed Black, the only man of our crew who had stayed with us, offered to go along with me. We got down all right, but were some time finding the two firemen. Black got his first, and he was soon hauled up and laid out on deck. I found the other one, and had just sense enough left to get the rope on him. The crowd above, not hearing anything, pulled up on the lines, which fortunately I had made fast to myself as well as the other man, hauling both on deck. That was a narrow shave for me. I lay on deck for over an hour before coming out of that trance. But the man I had tried to save never did revive. The one Black got came around after a long time, but never fully recovered.

WE were fifty-two days afire before arriving in San Francisco, and I stayed the best part of a week aboard afterward. I had made up my mind that going to sea was not the life I wanted to lead.

The Ghost Moose

He proved a very real and formidable beast, and took this professional hunter for a terrific ride.

By DONALD SMITH

THE Ghost Moose was locally famous. Indeed his reputation as a man-killer and as a beast bearing a charmed life was international. For I first heard of him during a bear-hunt in Alaska. Tradition had it that he stood higher, ran faster, and was hunt-wiser than any of his breed before him. He was credited with having killed three men in five seasons.

Tradition and glamour enough, you'll agree, to attract a man whose business is big game. I collected a party of five seasoned sportsmen from almost as many States. We left the train in Mafeking, a little backwoods town near Hudson's Bay Junction and packed back to an old logging camp through a thin, hard blizzard. There we learned that we could recognize our bull not only by his great bulk but also by the antlers he was wearing that winter. These antlers, it seemed, had been deformed in their velvet state and now swept back peculiarly over the ghost's fabulous shoulders. And that is a fact worth noting now; for on it balanced both the bull's life and mine.

The fourth morning out Mr. Warman Frey of Minneapolis and I were teamed. We had come through a heavily timbered tamarack swamp, skirted an open meadow white and dazzling, and were deep in a forest of heavy willows. It was painful going through those frost-stiff lashes of willow, for they were stinging and sharp as whips on the face. But it was good feed country for moose. Close to midday we halted to rest on a fallen log, and it was from there that I saw him—the great moose himself.

He looked tremendous. The uncanny, silent swiftness of his approach drove un unaccustomed thrill down my spine. Hardly a sound he made as, with outflung head and antlers backflung to part the brush for his mighty front quarters, he slipped along. A great black ghost indeed. And to me he looked every pound the killer of his reputation.

He was coming down *with* the wind; in consequence he got no scent from our direction.

I touched Frey's arm and pointed, still unable to look away from that majesty of moose flesh. The rhythmic swing of the long bristling bell at his throat fascinated me. Frey's breath came once, audibly; then I heard the tendons of his knees crackle. A cartridge clicked into the chamber of his rifle. It roared over my head.

There never was a cleaner, quicker fall. Frey was a dead shot, and I never questioned for a moment that his bullet had found the Ghost's brain. No heart shot would have stopped him that way. I was up and running on the instant. For frost works unbelievably fast up there, and if you want the hide off your kill without fighting it with frozen fingers, you'd better hurry. My knife was out, ready.

The bull had fallen with his front quarters half propped up against a young birch and with his nose down between his knees. It gave him the strange appearance of being just in the act of rising. I threw a leg over his neck and lifted his bell for the jugular cut that would bleed him at once.

BUT you may have no idea of how thick and heavy are the bristles on a moose's throat. They are there to protect him against the fangs of timber wolves and will turn a blade like wire if not parted down to the skin. I had just slit the outer hide preparatory to making the deep plunge for his jugular. Frey was coming along with both rifles, and I was just starting to yell some excited remark back to him, when the unbelievable happened.

The great moose moved!

Suddenly, unaccountably, terribly for me, his great antlers snapped backward. They struck me numbingly on the chest and arms. But what drove a chill of desperation through me was that they clamped down upon my thighs, locking me to the vast, upheaving neck and withers I straddled. I could have bellowed with the pressure and pain of it, but a quick fear gripped at my throat. Then he was up, a snort of rage in his red nostrils and plunging away.

I heard Frey's yell and prayed that he wouldn't shoot. Then the pain of a thousand whiplashes on my unprotected face and hands. Those frosty, frost-sharp willows! I could taste blood on my lips and feel it between my fingers. We were traveling like the wind.

HAVE you ever seen or heard a bull moose in full flight through the woods? It's like nothing so much as a freight train gone wild. He doesn't push his way through, he smashes it through. His backflung antlers are his flying wedge. And on this dash I was no better than part of that slashed and punished wedge myself. My face streamed blood. Whistling kinnikinnick flayed my eyes.

My eyes! Suddenly I cared nothing for that bounding demon beneath me. Already my best effort had failed to budge the clamping horn that held me captive. It was my eyes— Those lashing things, they'd leave me blinded, groping, a lost and helpless thing for the rest of my life—if I lived at all after that mad brute beneath me got through. For I realized that, sooner or later, reason would return to the bull's raging brain and he would toss me like a rag to the frozen ground. Then those razor-sharp, experienced hoofs—

I pressed my lacerated hands over my eyes. As yet I hadn't tried to reason why the moose had not stayed down after Frey's shot. And even if I had known then that the bullet had only creased him, run through his upper neck above the spinal column to shock him into temporary unconsciousness, I wouldn't have cared.

Then abruptly the merciless lashing ceased. I wiped the blood from my eyes. We were tearing down a long meadow with the willow brush to one side and a thick tamarack stand on the other. The bull's speed had increased. Now even the drive of the frosted wind blinded me. But my hands were free at last, and I knew that if ever I was to have a chance for life it was in that meadow. I threw every pound of desperate energy in me against the bull's antlers. But for all the action I got, I might as well have flicked them with my thumb. And the motion of his great shoulders was jarring the breath out of my lungs.

The realization of my fate came to me as suddenly as came the animal's swerve toward the tamaracks. That bull was a killer by more than mere instinct! Beneath his ponderous skull there undoubtedly worked a brain; else why did he turn like a plunging demon for those tamaracks that would tear my anchored body to ribbons?

I saw the twisted arms of the forest outstretched for me. They swept up like horrible magic. A desperation such as I had never before known, gripped at my blood. And then, not till then, did I realize that I still had my knife. All through that mad ride I had unconsciously clung to it. And I saw my only hope clearly—the bull's jugular vein!

His rage-red eyes were glittering within an inch of mine as I forced myself forward and down for his throat. Then I plunged my blade. He tossed his head with the pain of it, and the antlers drove sickeningly into my sides. But I plunged the steel again. A rumbling cough shook the bull. I glanced up; the trees were almost before us. Then a gush of blood spattered over me, and the world turned red before my eyes.

A stinging branch tore across my face. Frosted tips slashed me. Would a bigger one come before— Suddenly we were on the ground. A flying tangle of antlers and legs tossed me like a chip to one side. I felt my lungs collapsing, the breath gushing out my throat. Yet I somehow found my feet, and my sight. And there, for the second time that day I witnessed the unaccountable:

The moose was rising again!

Ghost and killer to the last, indomitable, he was coming up for one more try! Quick as a flash his front hoof stabbed and I was down again—with a shattered arm.

WHEN I got up, he was lying still—but his eyes, piercing and dilated with a deathless fury, were still upon me.

Mr. Warman Frey has the head. Captain Dare, my partner, has the knife. But I have the imperishable memory of once having been astride a killer bull moose who carried in his bloodless body a vitality that awes me to this hour.

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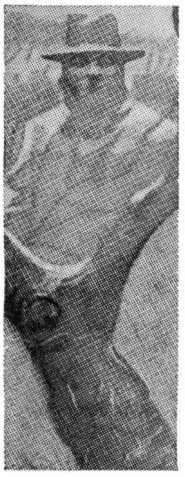

. . . . *suddenly it appeared—that mysterious, menacing figure!*

AS THEY groped their way back toward the grim silent house Katie kept close to Paul. The fog in that gloomy park was blinding, strangely confusing. All was still and yet not still. They sensed a feeling of some furtive presence near them. Not knowing why, they suddenly stopped, frozen with fear . . . . then all at once there loomed before them a dimly black shape, motionless but menacing . . . .

Who—or what—was this threatening figure peering through the eerie fog? Why was it there? What lay ahead for these two, caught in the meshes of this grim old estate where murder had been done the night before? *What happened next?*

The September issue of Redbook Magazine, on sale August 5, will tell you—and in the telling of this gripping murder mystery, will hold you spellbound. For in the September Redbook will be published, *complete in one installment,*

THE FIGURE IN THE FOG

This hair-raising story, written by Mignon G. Eberhart, winner of the Scotland Yard Prize for mystery fiction, is not a "novelette." It is not a "short novel." It is a complete book-length novel of over 50,000 words, and Redbook will publish it without break from first page to last.

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