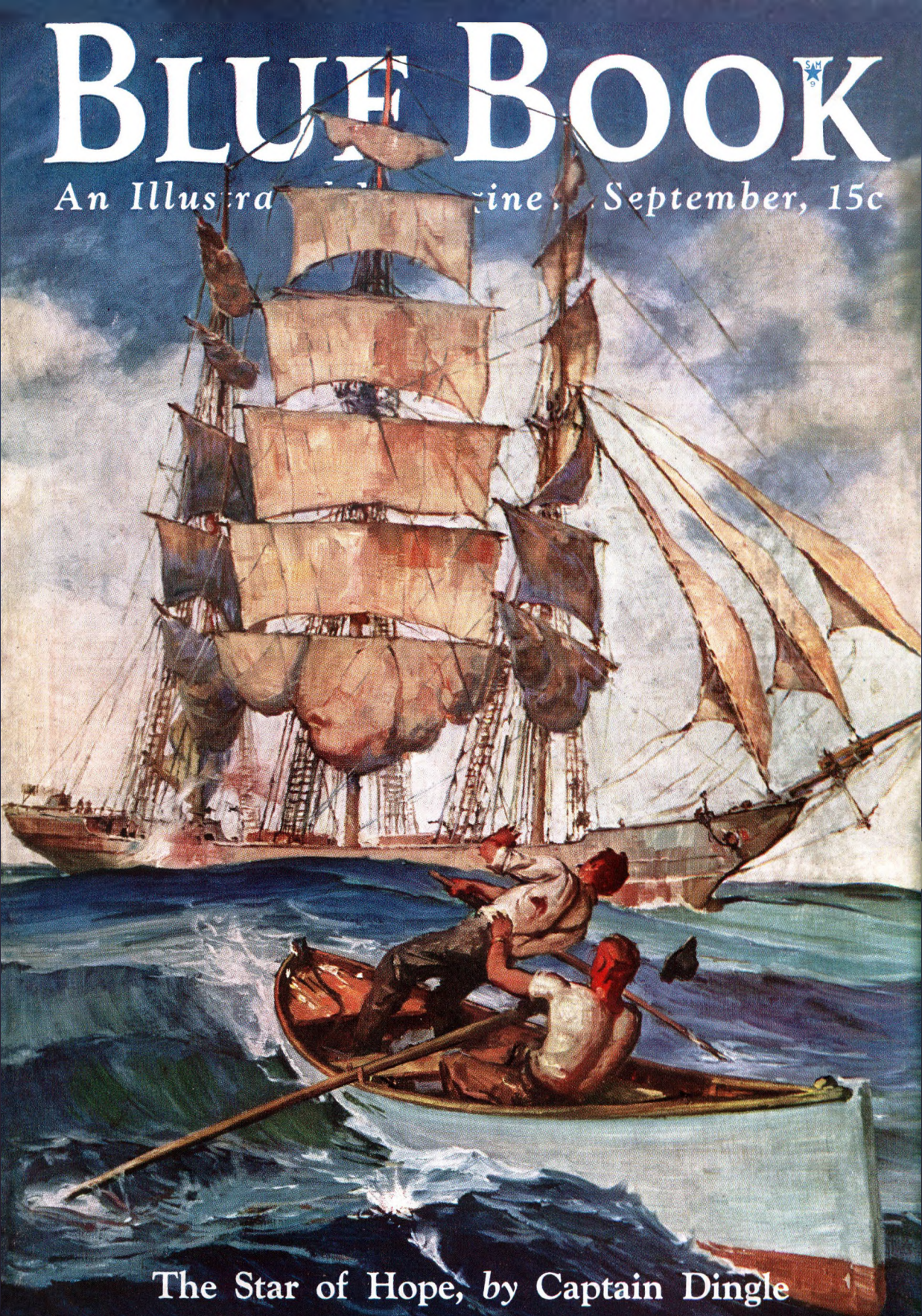
BLUE BOOK

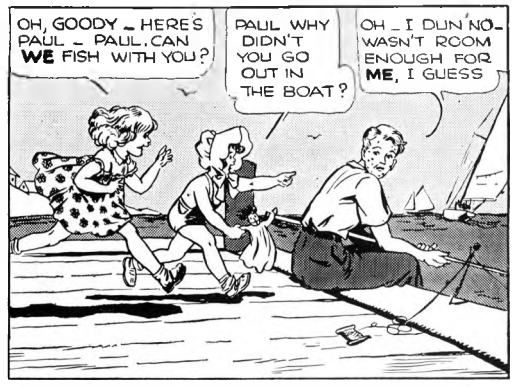
An Illustrated Magazine. September, 15c

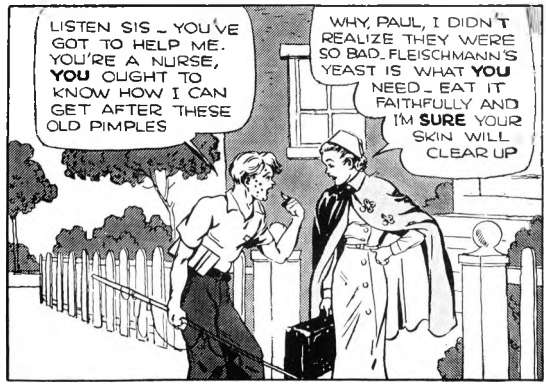


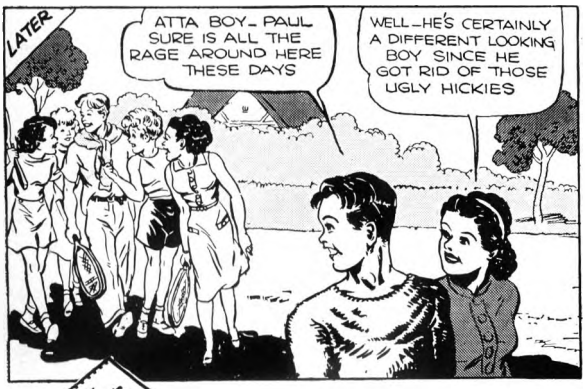
The Star of Hope, *by* Captain Dingle

H. Bedford-Jones, Eustace Cockrell, William Chester,
Fulton Grant, Carl Sandburg, Robert Mill

THE GIRLS WERE GIVING PAUL THE "GO-BY" UNTIL—







—clears the skin

by clearing skin irritants out of the blood

Don't let Adolescent Pimples put a stop to YOUR good times

YOUNG PEOPLE are often plagued by unsightly pimples after the start of adolescence—from about 13 to 25, or longer.

Important glands develop at this time, and final growth takes place causing disturbances in the body. The skin gets oversensitive. Waste poisons in the blood irritate this sensitive skin —and pimples break out!

Fleischmann's fresh Yeast clears these skin irritants out of the blood. Then, the pimples go. Eat 3 cakes *daily* —one about ½ hour before meals —plain, or dissolved in a little water—until your skin clears. Start today!

BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER, 1936 VOL. 63, NO. 5

A Complete Novel

Spirited Short Stories

A Much-Talked-About Serial

Prize Stories of Real Experience

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

THE McCALL COMPANY,
William B. Warner, *President and Treasurer*
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Francis Hutter, *Secretary*

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Prize Offer for Real Experiences

THERE is material for a novel in every person's life, it has been said. Whether this is true or not, we do believe that in the lives of most of us some experience has occurred sufficiently exciting to merit description in print. With this idea in mind we shall be pleased to receive and to print true stories of real experience, running from one thousand to four thousand words each. For each of the five best of these received each month we will pay, according to our appraisal of its length and strength, an average price of $50.

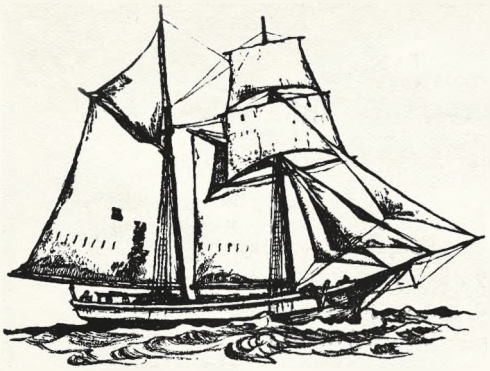
In theme the stories may deal with adventure, mystery, sport, humor,—especially humor!—war or business. Sex is barred. Manuscripts should be addressed to the Real Experience Editor, the Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. Preferably but not necessarily they should be typewritten, and should be accompanied by a stamped and self-addressed envelope for use in case the story is unavailable.

A pen name may be used if desired, but in all cases the writer's real name and permanent address should accompany the manuscript. Be sure to write your name and correct address in the upper lefthand 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.

Ad Man and Author at 22

Took the N.I.A. course at eighteen. Today at twenty-two am Assistant Eastern Advertising Manager of The Billboard, and editor of Ad-vents, monthly newspaper of the Association of Advertising Men of New York. Have just sold a story to Famous Detective Cases for $185. So as an ad man and author permit me to say, 'If you want to write ad copy or fiction, try N.I.A.'"

Joseph G. Csida, Jr.
3063 Williamsbridge Road
Bronx, New York, N. Y.



From a Sailor's Scrapbook

By COULTON WAUGH

THE tops'l schooner is a schooner with the addition of one or more square sails on the foremast. The two-masted tops'l schooner looks very much like a hermaphrodite brig and the three-masted variety resembles a barkentine. What differentiates them is that in schooners the foremast is in only two sections—whereas the other rigs have three.

This is a widely used European rig. When English schooners are mentioned, this rig is generally meant. Who can forget the romantic *Hispaniola* of "Treasure Island?" Or young Jim Hawkins, furiously working with his knife to cut her cable, while below in the schooner's cabin two pirates are "locked together in deadly wrestle, each with a hand upon the other's throat?" From the shore where the rest of the pirates are carousing around the fire comes the chorus:

Fifteen men on a dead man's chest
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum,
Drink and the devil have done for the rest,
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!

Our flesh creeps as we see Jim on the pirate-schooner with one man dead and the other with a knife in his teeth, creeping up the shrouds after the youngster.

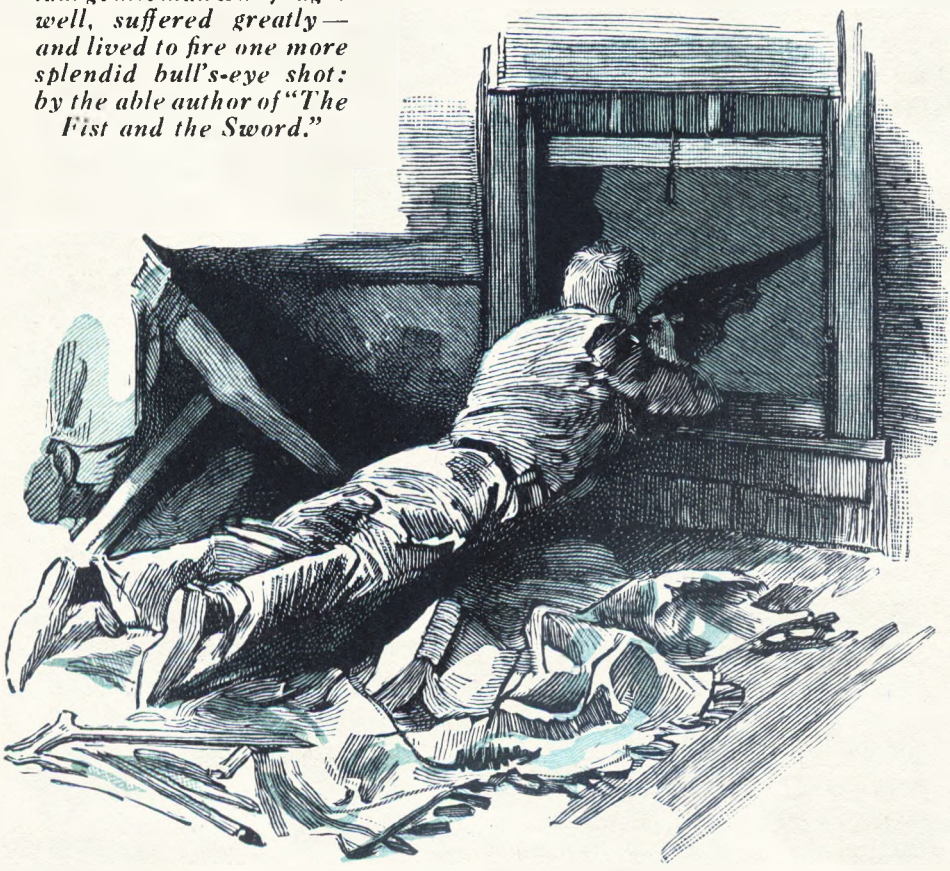
"Something sang like an arrow through the air; I felt a blow and then a sharp pang, and there I was pinned by the shoulder to the mast. In the horrid pain and surprise of the moment both my pistols went off and both escaped out of my hands. They did not fall alone; with a choked cry the coxswain loosed his grasp upon the shrouds and fell."

Springfield 00078596

By FULTON GRANT

Wood Engravings by Louis F. Grant
(Who, as it happens, is the father of Fulton Grant.)

The story of a very gallant gentleman who fought well, suffered greatly—and lived to fire one more splendid bull's-eye shot: by the able author of "The Fist and the Sword."



THE old Greek poet Hesiod gives us the picture of the three Fate Sisters, weaving a tapestry out of human lives and winding the threads of mortal men around each other to form their fearful patterns. Sister Clotho spun; Sister Lachesis measured; and grim Sister Atropos cut those threads. Perhaps we moderns ought to dismiss any such unscientific business with a superior wave of the fingers and a flip of the wrist; but just the same we will have to admit that modern science has done very little to explain phenomena like the tangling of the threads of Dr. Samuel Brede and Christian Mowbray. "Friendship" we call it; but the touch of Fate in it transcended friendship; and then, this business of the Springfield rifle and what came of it is a design so clear and defined that you can't explain it away by coincidence. It's a story.

The place was France, in 1918. The date was September 30. Those spinning sisters gathered in the olive-drab life-thread of Captain Samuel Brede, field surgeon attached to the 27th New York Division, A.E.F., and knotted it loosely around a bright little strand which had somehow got caught in Sister Atropos' shears and was almost severed. Almost immediately those threads parted and wandered about the tapestry of life in far-distant patterns, for fourteen years. Then they made the curious design which is this story. . . .

That gallant New York division was hurled against Crown Prince Wilhelm's shock-troops, who had dug in and built tunnels and gun-nests along the Saint-Quentin Canal. Untrained, inexperienced, they preceded the Aussies, raced down the Canal banks like demons, swam or waded the Canal and completed the rout of the Germans while the Australians mopped up. The slaughter was horrible. We need not go into that.

Captain Brede had charge of a make-shift field hospital in the cellar of a shell-shattered farmhouse near Bellingris. Outside was a dense fog, a dense hail of bullets, a dense spray of blood. You've read about that battle; maybe you were there. But inside that cellar, dying souls going up to heaven made a still denser vapor. Brede did his best, but it could not be much. They dragged them in—mere kids, who should still have been home in school. He doused them with iodine, gave them a case number, piled them on cots, and sent them inside to a hospital when the raid was over. Most of them died; he knew that they would. Brede was a methodical man, however; and he made a diary of his cases. He didn't stop to speculate what might become of them—those torn, gutted, maimed boys—if miraculously they should live. Men go mad from that kind of speculation. But he noted their tags and their numbers, made a brief record of their wounds, and shoved them through. . . . He never noticed the boy Christian Mowbray, or if he did, he forgot it. Those things are better to forget.

BREDE left the army after the war—Dr. Samuel Brede now, and a clever practical surgeon. At heart, however, he was still a soldier, still filled with an unsatisfied need of motion. He built himself no lucrative practice. He cared nothing for the social manipulation that brings celebrity to some medical men. He cared only about two things—moving about the world, and making cures; that the two were incompatible he knew well, but he could do nothing about it.

In the month of June, 1932, Dr. Samuel Brede, attached to the American Hospital in Neuilly, near Paris, came suddenly to the decision that he was fed up with Europe. He served notice on the hospital, insisted gently but firmly on going, when the Board urged him to remain, and bought a passage on the little French liner *Degrasse* to sail on the twenty-fifth of June.

But on the eighteenth the Fate Sisters did their stuff again; this time the pat-

tern they wove out of those two threads stayed put. Late in the afternoon of that day, a tall, fine-looking young man with powerful shoulders dragged himself into Dr. Brede's office at the hospital on crutches. It was apparent at first glance that he was paralyzed from hips down.

"Dr. Brede?"

The ex-army surgeon nodded, and motioned him to a seat, but the man ignored the invitation. He stood there on his wooden props, his overdeveloped biceps bulging, a half-grin on his face, his blond hair dangling into his eyes, his clean, square features all lighted up with the flame of hope, yet lined with the grim crow's-feet of habitual pain.

"Listen, Doc," he said. "I'm only half a man—as you can see for yourself. I get around pretty well on these slats, but I want to dance. I want to play tennis and go fishing. I'm fed up with other people's sympathy, and I'm damned tired of their pity. I've been to all the specialists—Payo and Kreibnitz and Breightingham—all of 'em. They've cut me up into small uncomfortable pieces of meat and tied me together again; but none of them can make my spine and legs tick. Now, I hear you've cured some paralytic cases. That's why I'm here."

He paused. Brede waited for him, interested.

"But listen, Doc. I want a yes-or-no answer. Can you, or can't you fix me up? Money's no object. I've got more than I'll ever need. But don't you kid me; because by God if you do, I'll come back here when I get out of bed, and I'll pull you to pieces with my own hands. I mean that—so talk straight."

HE wasn't being tough. He was just a young man who had followed the will-o'-the-wisp of health over the world, from New York to Pasadena to Vienna to Paris. Dr. Brede guessed the story—knew the shame of it, and guessed it only too well. Surgeons with great names and greater bank-accounts had told this boy that they might be able to bring life back into those dead limbs of his, but they had lied. They had taken their fees, and they had failed him. Of course, they had failed. They had left him nothing at all but sage words and polysyllabic buncombe, learned evasions and doctrinal nothingness. And seeing this strong face before him, knowing the shocking story, Samuel Brede seethed with shame for the purse-snatchers of his highest of professions. Damn such men, he thought: they should be crucified on their own tables!

So he did talk straight. He asked three questions, and got three answers:

"Where'd you get it? The war?"

"Sure it was the war. Some fun, hey?"

"What battle?"

"Oh, a mess along the Saint-Quentin Canal. I was in the 27th New York. It was the end of September, just before the Armistice. You look military; am I right?"

Brede didn't answer that directly; he said: "What's your name?"

"Christian Mowbray."

THEN Dr. Brede dug into that little personal file of his—dusty, tattered in its broken pasteboard box—and pulled out a notebook with a stained, torn leather cover. He fumbled. He sat down. He spread the book before him. He spotted a passage. He read aloud.

"'September 30: Tagged Mowbray; base of spine shattered; acromion and iliofemoral ligaments torn; basin and sacrum practically destroyed; to Amiens base; No. 473.'"

The blond youth stood still. His face paled slightly.

"Mind if I sit down?" he said.

They looked at each other. Slowly Brede said:

"I'll give you an examination if you want, but I know right now I can't do anything. I'd give my right arm if I could, but I can't. Science hasn't progressed to the point where we can plug in electric wires where nerve-tissue used to be. I can't do a thing, and any other doctor who says he can help you is a liar and a crook. That may be rotten professional ethics, but it's the way I feel. I'm sorry to be so definite, but you asked for it."

The silence was heavy. It was as though some force were holding speech back. Mowbray's hands, gripping his withered thighs, were white at the knuckles. Suddenly he grinned oddly.

"Okay, Doc. I guess I can take up knitting now."

Samuel Brede wanted to lay his hand on the man's shoulder and say some comforting thing. But he knew better. Instead, he stood up and said:

"I'm sorry as hell, Mowbray; but it's better to know the facts. The miracle is that you are here at all. I was in back of that drive, and it must have been I who passed you through. I only made

notes of the worst cases. Damned queer, isn't it? There must be some kind of fate that sent you back to me again."

Mowbray said:

"I want a drink. Let me drive you back to Paris and have one on me, Doc. Come along. . . . Don't be afraid. I can still drive."

And so they did.

Perhaps it was no more than a natural thing that friendship should be born between those men. Perhaps the Sinister Sisters had no hand in that. Or possibly that too was a part of their life-pattern. Explain that as you will, it was at the Café de la Paix where Dr. Samuel Brede said:

"Mowbray, I'm quitting Europe. I'm sailing for home in a week. Taking the *Degrasse*. Why don't you come along back too? Maybe we can figure out something you can do. What d'ye say?"

And so that too was agreed; it was an excellent decision, which gave more beauty to the life-pattern. Friendship is a medicine to the soul.

IT was only a matter of hours now. Christian Mowbray spent the entire afternoon of June 24 in shopping and in attending to those multiple details which crowd in before going anywhere from anywhere. It was toward five o'clock when, tired and immeasurably worn from the effort of it, he directed his taxicab to a little *bistrot* in the Rue Cadet where he had always particularly enjoyed sitting and watching the stream of people who pour down the Rue Lafayette as though the heart of the city were pumping them down a broad artery from the Opera into the capillaries of Montmartre.

He sat on the *terrasse* at a little rickety round-topped table, and he consumed four Pernods, a secret libation to this historical ghosts who populate Paris for those who have eyes to see them. Fat, sentimental Frenchwomen passed, saw his crutches and his shriveled legs, and wiped a mechanical tear from their noses. *"Ah, le pauvre gosse!"* The war and its wounded is still a very real thing in France.

Christian paid his bill, struggled up, and dragged himself across the street to the taxi-stand.

A policeman whose stately person stood at the intersection of streets to make gestures intended to govern traffic, triumphantly held up honking automobiles and trucks to let this smiling, sweating cripple pass over in safety.

"Sure it was the war. Some fun, eh?"

There was a taxi at the stand, and he dragged himself toward it, all unaware of the game which the Fate Sisters were playing. But it was a game, and the deft fingers of Sister Lachesis drew tightly on Christian Mowbray's thread and led her puppet along.

He had already signaled the cab; the driver had already opened the door. And then, suddenly, he saw the sign above the store window—and might have heard the distant chuckle of Lachesis.

The sign read: *"Curiosités."* It was one of those queer, jumbled, dirty, but tremendously fascinating store windows. It was filled and cluttered with every kind of a weapon imaginable—rusty horse-pistols, rapiers, flintlocks captured from the Druses of Syria, hauberks of steel, two-handed swords purporting to be relics of the Crusades but doubtless manufactured in the Faubourg St. Antoine, coats of mail, poniards, stilettos, *matraques* for the local *apâches,* and even small Browning automatics to encourage everyday modern crime.

Fascinated, Christian Mowbray could not resist one last look at the mute show of this window which was so symbolic of the Paris he was leaving, such a mixture of quaintness and counterfeit, of the sentimental and of absurdity, of bluff and beauty. He left the taxi-driver to growl, and dragged his feet behind his crutches to the little grille in front of the window, and peered in at the display.

Chuckle of Fate! It was hanging there from a rack, rusty and dusty, among the flintlocks and Mausers and

"Eeet ees the gun of one hero—John Smeeth, the mos' famous of the *soldats Americains*, yes!"

daggers and the counterfeit curios—an American Springfield rifle. It stirred some consciousness within Christian Mowbray, and drew him closer. He came over and leaned on the grille and tried to read the die-print on the barrel where the serial number should have been. That was the action of a soldier. No one who had not cherished a Springfield, drilled with it, polished it, burnished it and loved it, would have thought to look for the number. But Christian Mowbray did that; and presently, because the light was poor, he shifted his weight on his crutches and dragged himself into the shop.

A musty little Frenchman pattered to greet him, smirking. Said Christian:

"Show me that." And he pointed to the Springfield.

"Ah, but Monsieur is Americain?" warbled the little *patron,* already counting the extra francs he would wring from this cripple; Americans are easy prey. The rifle was all but worthless.

Mowbray took the rifle in his hand, and his hand trembled. He lifted the breech, fumbled with the lock, found and studied the serial number. And then the flood of emotion caught him up and tightened his throat, whirled him in a kaleidoscope of memories, staggered him and sent a fever through his blood.

"Springfield 00078596—" three zeroes, seventy-eight, five, nine, six!"

CHRISTIAN MOWBRAY, a boy just turned nineteen, had engraved that number in his memory. That rifle was *his* Springfield. It had been a part of him, like his right hand; he had lived with it, drilled with it, slept with it, killed with it—all but died with it. It was with this Springfield in his hand that he had charged down the canal bank, trailing his corporal, mad with fear and fury, insane with the insanity of war, flinging himself into the mud, into the green water of the Saint-Quentin, watching the gleam of his bayonet—and then plunging into a sudden darkness when something ripped across his spine. *Springfield 00078596!* You don't forget those numbers. Not if you've owned a Springfield in the war. It's a part of your anatomy—hand, foot, nose, thigh, rib, Springfield 00078596. It was curled into the fibers of him, the digits branded into the convolutions of his brain.

"Combien?" he demanded. "How much?"

"Ah, but monsieur do not understand what eet ees, thees gun. Eet ees the gun of one hero, of one American who have geeve hees life for la France. At the terrible Château-Thierry, yes. . . . Weeth thees gun he have keel one thousan' boches. Weeth thees gun he have take' ten thousan' preesonaire. The name of heem eet ees famous—John Smeeth, the mos' famous of the *soldats Americains,* yes. So, monsieur, for only two hundred francs I weel sacrifice thees gun to you—"

Christian Mowbray leaned heavily on his crutches. His big hand reached out and gathered the lapels of the little proprietor in a firm grip.

"Listen, little man," he said, and his grin was hard. "Before I toss you through your window, listen to me: You get a hundred francs for this rifle, see? And that's too much. And you'll get me a clip of shells to go with it, see? *Cartouches,* savvy? And don't you try to cheat me, because I get mad quick, and I'd just as soon wrap this rifle around your neck as not. *Comprenez?* One hundred francs. Allez-oop! Scram!"

Indeed, all Americans are mad. And this one, with his crutches and his terrible fingers and his grin—he was, of all Americans, the most surely mad. He was *un fou furieux.* He was violent. But the *fusil,* it had cost nothing at all. Little Jacques, he had found it. . . . Where was it now? *Ah, oui.* It was at the Canal where he made the fishing with a line. One hundred francs? No, it was not too bad. And shells—ah, yes, there were shells. There are always old cartridges to be found in France—English, German, American shells.

"Eet weel be the ruin of my business, monsieur, but for one such as you—for one hundred francs I sacrifice the gun."

Four dollars! The chuckle of Sister Lachesis. . . .

In the taxicab on the way to his hotel, Christian Mowbray caressed a piece of steel and wood, stamped *"Springfield 00078596."* Like the rubbing of Aladdin's lamp, his caressing conjured up a genie of the past. This genie was a young man, a mere boy, with a square jaw and the fine features of the man Mowbray—no cripple then, but able and eager, dressed in ill-fitting olive-drab, smarting happily with sunburn from the drill-field at Camp Perry, standing in a queue of men in front of the quartermaster's hut. A Q.M. sergeant was issuing the new rifles. The walnut of the stock was a new, rich brown. The barrel and the breech were packed in thick grease, and heavy green oil dripped from the elevating rear-sight. Christian, the boy-soldier, held out his hand to receive this, his first insignia of soldiery, his rifle.

"Learn that number, rookie. Got it? Three zeroes, seventy-eight, five nine six. . . . Take it away. Next!" It was the ancient Q.M. sergeant speaking.

BACK in his hotel room, Christian had a night's job before him. Packing was done. Baggage was already on the way; valises were labeled *"S.S. Degrasse."* But there was Springfield 00078596 to clean.

Laughter was fresh in his face as he handled that old iron. No mistake about the rifle . . . there was the triangular tear on the stock's wooden sleeve where

a grenade-fragment had struck. Vivid memory of that! His fingers had tingled for half the day. Might have taken his arm.

He tried to recite the names of the parts. How he had labored over them once: cocking-piece, firing-pin, safety lock, thumb-piece, safety-lock spindle, mainspring, firing-pin sleeve, follower-bolt, bolt-stop spring, striker, receiver—

Piece by piece he removed them. They were rusty and thick with dirt and corrosion. The hotel *garçon* had found him some *petrol*, some machine oil, some vaseline. *Petrol* for the rear sight, caked almost solid. He scraped at it and worked it free. He remembered that sight. "Zero" was two and a half points off to the left. Cockeyed, of course; but if you knew it, you could figure your windage and drop 'em in with anybody.

He used to be a dude about that rifle. You had to be. They never let you forget it. From the time you get it, all packed with grease, you start working on it, cleaning it, polishing it, treating it like a live baby. They caught you up in inspection if you didn't.

PICTURE that first inspection: Bowen was the sergeant's name, a surly mutt too; he took that bunch of rookies out with their new pieces, lined them up, marched down between the ranks, snatched rifles out of their hands, one after the other, spun them like flywheels, threw back the bolts and looked down the barrels. He had snatched Christian's rifle—this same Springfield 00078596. Hard, solemn, sardonic, he had held the barrel against the light and looked through. Then he had run his little finger into the chamber and pulled it out again with a little film of black grease over it. His surly face sneered. He stepped over to the boy, and slowly, insultingly, wiped his finger across Christian's face while he stood there at attention.

"Ya dirty tramp, ya couldn't clean a spit-kit! What wuz ya on the outside, a coal-heaver?" Then he spat, and passed on down the line to the next trembling man.

Picture the rifle-range, just before they sailed for France. Green recruits, all of them, and only six days' rifle-practice before they went over to fight. How the devil did they expect them to fight? But they did fight, didn't they? *"Hold 'em and squeeze 'em."* They made a slogan out of that. They had it painted down at the butts. They had it framed in the barracks. They steeped it in your coffee, and they dunked it in your salmon and stewed prunes. You lived it and ate it and drank it and dreamed it. "Hold 'em and squeeze 'em."

CHRISTIAN MOWBRAY had held 'em and squeezed 'em with this Springfield 00078596. And he loved it. You put your face along the stock with the cocking-piece practically on your cheek-bone. If you hold it tight on your shoulder, it won't hurt; but it will cut your face if you don't. You put your finger along the guard and stick it far under the trigger so that the muscle-pad of your first joint presses into the curve of it. Then you release the safety and get the point of your front sight square in the center of the bull's eye at the butts, and you frame all that in the aperture of your rear sight. Then you check your elevation to range, and your windage. Generally they tell you about the windage. You don't have your sling too tight, because it will paralyze your arm. You let your breath out easy and you forget to be nervous. You just keep squeezing your right hand, slowly, slowly, slowly, and pretty soon the thing goes off in your ear. You aren't supposed to know just when it will fire. That's a trick you play on yourself. You have to catch yourself by surprise. If you don't, you'll flinch. But if you hold that sight on and squeeze that trigger slowly, you'll get a white marker down there at the butts to show you're in.

Now, that was real sport, that shooting range. There wasn't any more fun than that. Christian had planned to do a lot of shooting when he got back from the war. That was going to be *his* sport. What he wanted to do was to shoot over the thousand-yard range. That was *really* something. He had qualified as "expert" with a good score of two hundred eighty-three out of a possible three hundred, but he never had a chance to try that thousand-yard range. Well—that was out now. You can't shoot with no legs. That was out now, like tennis and dancing. But it was good to think about. Good to find this old rifle, *his* rifle. Good to clean it again. Good to make it bright, to love it, to cherish it, to polish it, to be a dude about it again. Maybe he didn't have any legs that would be good for anything, but he did have that other part of him—Springfield 00078596. . . .

Ten days of monotony, that trip back to America. It was good, though, to have Dr. Brede with him. It was good to talk and to listen to that keen, straight-talking man. Good to admire him. But young Mowbray's monotony was that of nothingness, of void. Looking for new legs, looking for a miracle doctor—that had been an end, a destination, a purpose. Now there was no purpose. He was going back. That was all, just going. He liked this blunt doctor who spared him the feeling of pity with which other people patronized him. Now in ten days that would be over. And then—just blank.

But the Fate Sisters changed all that. The pattern of those two threads, *Mowbray* and *Brede,* was too definite, too articulate, to let fall apart into such emptiness. Lounging in deck-chairs, talking war, talking politics, talking travel, talking life, just talking, the Sisters made Brede open up his shell of reserve to this young cripple whom he liked so well.

"It doesn't make any sense, Mowbray," he said. "No professional man in his right mind would do anything but build himself a comfortable practice somewhere, or get himself attached to some hospital. But I just can't do it. I'm going to start out as soon as I get my bearings in America, and I'm going to hike across the whole United States. I've got ants in my feet. I've got to move. I want to see people—the *little* people, not bankers and brokers in cities. I want to see what they do. I want to see what medical help they get and what they need. . . . I wish to God I had some real plan, but I haven't. I just want to go. Maybe I'll find some place I never heard of, where I can cure people who really need it. Probably not. But I'm going to hike."

THAT was the way those Sisters worked it. They made Mowbray answer:

"Gosh, Doc, hiking is too slow. Now you let me drive you around in my car. I've got a trick extension gadget on the brake and clutch pedals so I can work them with my hands. Driving's the only fun I have. You let me drive you around and play chauffeur. I'll pay gas and all extra costs. I've got more money than I know what to do with. I haven't a damned thing to do that's worth anything. I'm bored stiff. I want to go places too. I'm fed up with this limping inactivity. In a car I'm a man, but on those props of mine I'm just another cripple.

"Listen, Doc, I mean it. Tell you what we'll do: We'll start off by spending a couple of weeks up at my dad's old shooting-box in the Adirondacks. You want to see odd little people? Well, take a look at those hicks. They're grand. Say, this is a swell idea. It's just a little cabin on a lake, miles from anywhere. We'll do some fishing and loafing while we make all the plans for the big trip, and then we'll take my car and just go off. That's ten times better than going on foot, Doc. Don't refuse me, now. You'll be doing me a real favor. Please, Doc, what d'ye say?"

AND so it was agreed.

They made their plans. They loaded Mowbray's big car with essentials. They burned the road, both of them hating cities, wanting an out. They followed a river and turned off into a back road leading east to a big mountain. Green, singing forests and rolling blankets of grass, the mountains. Brede called it a "man's country." And it was, too—wild, savage, almost primeval. Mowbray's cabin nestled in a cove of a tiny lake that sparkled in the sun and danced with leaping fish. Houses were few, widely scattered, hugging the soil with grim tenacity. Dried, sunbaked men and women struggled for life up there, fighting rocks, warring against an angry wilderness which snarled at intrusion. Grim people, too, the sons and daughters of flint-hard Puritans. For Dr. Samuel Brede, anthropology, like charity, begins at home.

They had been there for five days of clear freedom. Fished, they had, and planned. Mowbray could strap his legs to a thwart and row a boat. Samuel Brede could handle maps, draw itineraries, choose roads, plan detours. Five days they had had now, and tonight it was good to sit on the rustic porch and to watch the silver top of a full moon move slowly up over the little hill across the cove. It was good to sit there, sprawling lazily, hardly talking, filled with anticipation of their journey, listening to the moving silence of the twilight and the whispered singing of the water.

The sound of a motorcar in that wilderness is not a usual thing. This one was coming slowly down a back road which leads over to a little town. The road makes a right angle with Mowbray's driveway, an even thousand

yards across the arm of the lake. Twilight was thick, but there were no headlights visible, and that was an odd thing for such a twisting road. . . . They heard the car slow down and stop. The scrape of wood on iron came across the still water, and they knew some one had taken down one of the heavy timbers that formed a gate to the driveway.

Then there was another sound. It came faintly across the water, faintly and plaintively. It was the sound as of a child whimpering, a strangled sobbing.

"Now what the devil! Bet you've got a patient, Doc," Mowbray said; but speculation was shunted by a calling voice:

"Hello, the house there!"

It was Dr. Brede who called back, "Hello. Come on over," then added to Christian: "I'm afraid you're right. I'm getting comfortably lazy here, but somebody's bound to have a bad appendix, I suppose."

It was no appendix, however.

Footsteps materialized into a shadowy mass. From the mass stepped a man, and stood in the thin light of the kerosene lamp whose rays came through the open door to mingle with the early moonlight. He was rather small, lean, bareheaded. He had a peculiar, pattering, short-stepped gait. He was not lovely. His face was pointed, rodent-like. He came close to the porch and stood there below, peering up at them, his hands deep in the pockets of a double-breasted suit.

"Harya, folks," he said, and his hoarse voice was hardly more than a whisper. "I sees yer light, an' I wonders if yuh could maybe gimme a little water fer my bus. She's hot."

DR. BREDE stood up, stiff but gracious. "There's a lakeful of water here," he said rather obviously, for he did not like this man. "You're welcome to it. Come in, and I'll get you a can."

"Oke," said the rat-faced man, and stepped up onto the porch. The stronger light showed that his head was bandaged, crudely, with a handkerchief. A dark stain was on it, wet and oozing. It was natural for the doctor to notice it and to say:

"My God, man, you're hurt! Let me see that. . . . I'm a doctor."

The man stopped short and peered at him sharply. He tried to smile, but only succeeded in lifting his pointed upper lip and baring two gold crowns.

"A doc, hey?" he said. "Well, maybe yuh better look at it. I hadda accident. I gotta piece o' glass in my pan." And then his pointed eyes caught sight of Christian's crutches, standing against the wall, and his limp legs making grotesque angles as they lay out from his body. "What's the matter with yer pal, Doc? Bust a leg?"

"Something like that," the doctor said. "Come inside to the light, where I can examine your head."

THE man hesitated, then went in. He did not remove his hands from his jacket pockets. There was an odd expression of puzzlement on the face of Christian Mowbray as he pulled himself up painfully and slowly with his crutches, and dragged himself into the house. The rodent man watched him, and even his hard face showed surprise and something not unlike sympathy as he caught, for the first time, the full significance of those wooden props. He said, decently enough:

"Gee, that's tough, buddy."

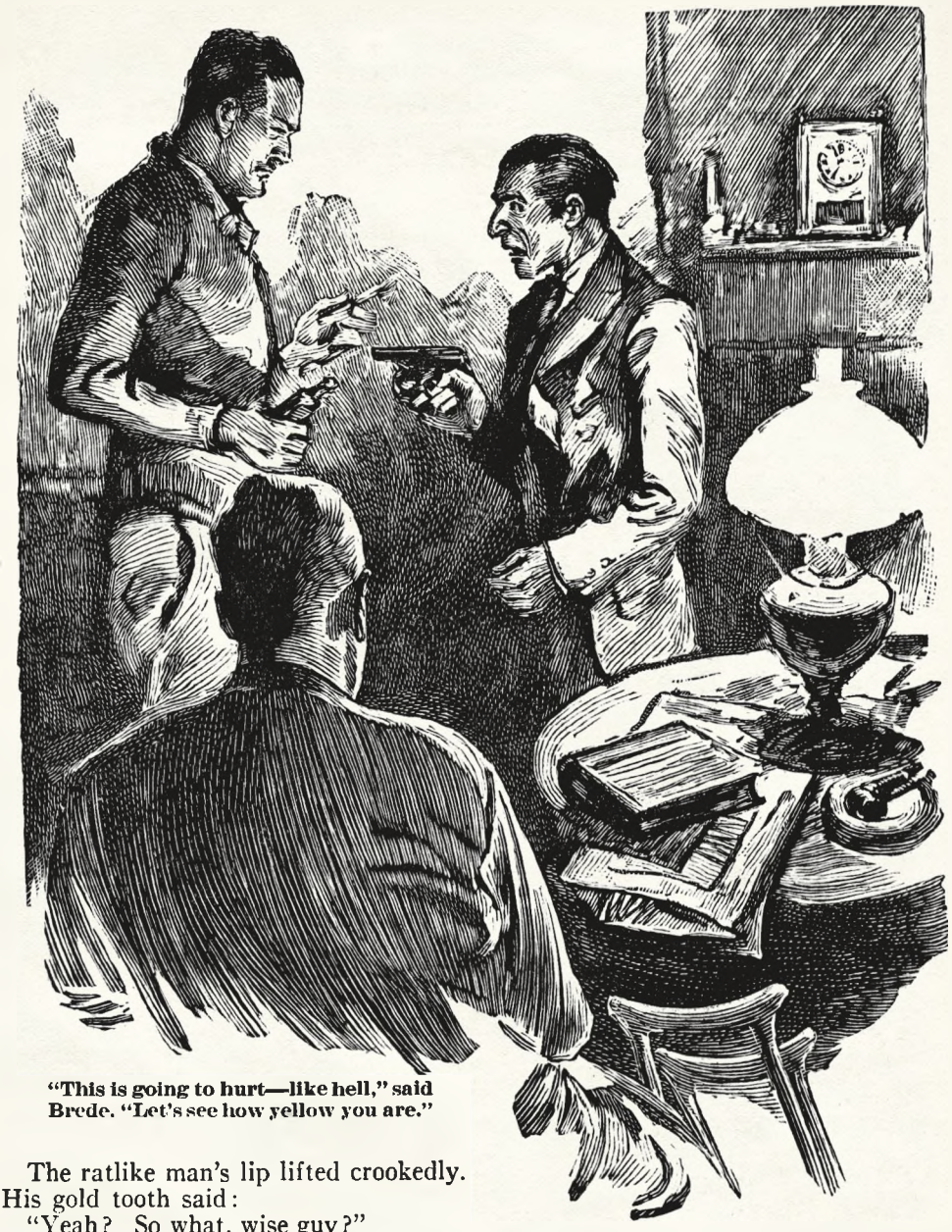
Christian grinned. "You get used to it," he said.

There was a moment of silence as the man stood by the table watching the Doctor, who brought gauze and scissors from his satchel; and in that moment the wind blew a sound across the cove of the lake to them all, a faint, plaintive cry which might almost have been imagined. It was that same half-strangled sound of a child sobbing. At the cry, three pairs of eyes turned to each other. Christian, lowering himself into the soft lap of a cot, caught a sudden nervousness in the man's eyes.

"Let's get goin', Doc," he said. "My kid is back there in my car, waitin' fer me."

He removed his left hand from his pocket and leaned with it on the table while the physician snipped through the bandage on his head. There was blood. There was a long, ripping furrow, a tear that carved the man's head from the back and had torn through his right ear, taking part of it away. It was still bleeding. It was evidently a fresh wound. And its appearance had an immediate effect upon Dr. Brede. He stepped back from the man and scrutinized him, lowering his hands and letting the bandage dangle.

"What are you trying to do, kid me?" he demanded in an altered voice. "That's a bullet-wound. No glass ever did that."



"This is going to hurt—like hell," said Brede. "Let's see how yellow you are."

The ratlike man's lip lifted crookedly. His gold tooth said:

"Yeah? So what, wise guy?"

There was no fear in Dr. Samuel Brede. He said sternly:

"So this: Medical men are required to report all gunshot wounds to the authorities. You know that. You'd better tell me who you are and how you got it, if you want help from me."

The man's smile was cruel. A rat could have smiled like that. And with the smile, his right hand came out of his pocket, bringing with it an automatic pistol which he pointed bluntly at Brede's chest. He said:

"That's what *you* think. Now listen here, Doc: I don't want no trouble, see? We're all goin' tuh be pals together, see? As long as yuh don't get smart, see? But you're goin' tuh put a rag on my head, an' yuh aint goin' tuh ast no questions, neither. Because I'm keepin' this gat handy, an' if yuh get funny, you're goin' tuh get into the papers, see? Both of youse, with a X-mark on yer pan. Get me? So make it snappy."

Abruptly, a laugh came from Christian Mowbray, sitting on the cot. It was irrepressible.

"Why, the man's a classic, Doc," he chuckled. "He must have been to the movies."

The rat-faced one did not turn his head. The side of his face said:

"Just keep that up, pal, and yuh won't need them crutches again. —Start workin', Doc. I'm goin' places."

SAMUEL BREDE was neither coward nor fool. He did go to work, silently, efficiently; but there was the light of thought in his eyes. It was not easy to wash the wound with that steel barrel pressing into his stomach. It was easy to "feel" the aim of it as he walked to the sink for water and brought iodine from his kit. But when the wound lay open and clean and unclotted, and his swab saturated with brown iodine was in his hand, he said:

"This is going to hurt you—like hell. Maybe you haven't guts enough to take it. I don't know what kind of a crook you are, but no crook has much guts. Let's see how yellow you are."

"Yeah?" The man grinned savagely. "I guess I can take all you got, Doc. Go to it."

Raw iodine is bad; but when iodine is old and concentrated, it is like a flame of fire. Dr. Brede flooded his swab from the bottle he had carefully chosen, and thrust it deep into the open gash. The man's eyes dilated with the pain of it. His face twisted in the sharp agony of torture. He jerked back from the light, screaming hoarsely:

"You lousy—" The roar of his automatic crashed through the epithet. The Doctor stood staring an instant, then clutched his stomach, and slowly sank to the floor.

The silence of an instant that followed the gun's explosion was like a blanket of paralysis over the room. Then it was broken by a little sound from Christian Mowbray, a stifled little cry of helplessness. Then rage caught him up, and the power of his huge upper body surged in him. He hurled himself toward the gangster, forgetting his useless legs, and sprawled forward on the floor, his hands clutching and falling just short of the man's feet.

The light of pain and frenzy died quickly in the rat-man's eyes then. It was easy to avoid the futile hands of this cripple. It was easy to step away from him, to kick him on the shoulder and watch him sprawl. It was easy to reach for the crutches, which the youth had forgotten in his sudden anger, to break them across the heavy table and to toss the useless pieces through the doorway.

"All right, punk. Yuh can't do nothin' now. An' if yuh make one peep, I'll plug yuh like I did yer pal," the man snarled.

Christian, lying there, helpless, useless, frustrate, could only watch him. He watched the man pry into drawers, then open the desk and peer in, watched him seize the little bunch of keys that lay there and examine them. He saw a sudden light come into the man's face as his fingers picked out a small flat key from the bunch. He watched the man turn toward him, step nearer him; then heard him say:

"Yuh got a car, hey? Where d'yuh keep it?"

There was no use in denying the car. The man could find it. It didn't matter. Nothing mattered except his friend, lying there on the floor, dying—or dead.

"Out back," said Christian. "Take it and get to hell out of here. That's the key."

The man leered at him, pocketed the key, started to walk out the door, came back and lifted the shade from the kerosene lamp, which he immediately blew out. Christian saw his body silhouetted against the moon's glow in the doorway, heard him climb down off the porch, heard his feet crunching through the loose earth and gravel. . . . Then he heard the roar of his own car's motor.

IT was the anguish, the frenzy of anguish and fear for his friend that was father of a new thought. It crept into his mind like the rays of the sun creeping into a dim forest. And lying there, a faint smile also crept over Christian's face. He rolled his body over, felt with his hands, gripped the table, gripped a chair, drew himself up to the support of his powerful arms, and dragged himself painfully and slowly across the room.

The motor sounded louder now. It was passing the door of the cabin. Seconds seemed years to him. His body seemed leaden. He dragged himself toward a corner just lighted by a film of moonlight. There his sensitive fingers felt the long cloth-wrapped object he knew was standing there. It seemed a full minute before he was able to pull the cloth from it. It may have been five seconds. It felt warm and full of life in his hands, but it was a thing of steel and wood.

Springfield 00078596!

That single clip of shells was wrapped in the end of the cloth. How old were they? Thirteen years, maybe fourteen.

Maybe they wouldn't fire. Maybe there was some speck of rust left in the barrel he had labored so long to clean. Maybe it would explode, weakened by rust and age. But it was his one chance. Lock and breech were oiled and clean. The magazine spring was bright and movable from hours with emery cloth. And the single clip of shells slid in gently, easily, clicked with a gentle snap.

He reached the window. It seemed like hours, that dragging. But he could hear the motor rounding the bend of the lake. A broad silver moon was full in the heavens, low in this early moment of its ascent. It was the great disk of a target.

Like dark threads against the moon, Christian could see the four wooden bars of the gate which separated his driveway from the road. One was down. The man had removed it to get through. He must take all four down to pass through with the car. His figure would be in clear silhouette against that moon.

Christian smiled.

He leaned out over the window-sill, savage joy in his heart. One thousand yards! Hold 'em and squeeze 'em! Queer trick of Fate, he thought. He had always wanted to fire on the thousand-yard range. Well, he had his chance. Just one chance, too. He *had* to put this one shot in. A man's body would be as big as the bull's-eye at that range—sharp against the moonlight.

Zero was off two and a half points. He remembered again. He checked that, put the gauge over, wet his fingers to feel the wind, but the wind had died.

His cheek was along the stock, touching the cocking-piece. His finger was tight in the trigger, wedged in, on the muscle. Hold 'em and squeeze 'em.

A FAINT groan came from the floor, just to his right.

"Take it easy, Doc," he said, half aloud. "I'll get him."

The purring of the motor had stopped. Two pencils of light were focused on the night-draped rhododendrons by the gate. And then, in that awful silence of suspense, a little cry floated over to him, blown across the lake—a child's cry.

The black head and shoulders of a body grew in that circle of the moon. The bead of his sight was on, framed in the rear aperture. Hold 'em and squeeze 'em! The pin was gigantic against that body. Gigantic and wavering. Must hold 'em. Must squeeze 'em.

"Hold 'em and squeeze 'em, feller. . . . Take your time. . . . Get yourself by surprise. . . . Squeeze slow—you don't know when it goes off." He could hear the sergeant's voice through the years.

THEN it happened. The Springfield's crash reverberated across the lake. A bullet wailed, and the wail was echoed in the cry of a stricken human. The head and shoulders fell away from the bead of his sight, and there was nothing there now but the round bull's-eye of the moon, grinning a silvery grin. There was no marker lifted to spot that shot, but Christian Mowbray—*Private* Christian Mowbray again—knew that shot was "in."

"A five, by God!" he said with a grin. It was his first and last shot at the thousand.

There was another moan from the darkness of the floor.

"Doc! Doc, are you bad?"

There was only a faint groaning.

And then a new strength came to Christian Mowbray. It was not enough to have fired that shot. He knew that death hovered near his cabin. He knew that he had a life to save. He knew that he must have medical aid, that he could only get through the help of his car. He knew this and he acted.

Christian Mowbray will never remember those next minutes—fifteen minutes, half an hour, an hour. He was crawling on his hands, dragging his body, pulling himself through the room, out the door, over to the porch's edge, falling like a thing inert down over the porch to the ground, dragging his useless limbs through the grass, gripping the sod in frenzied fingers, tearing at it, tearing at stone and dirt and pebbles in the road, driving himself on.

Even his overdeveloped arms grew weak and frail in that terrible drive, that surge down his roadway. The flesh of his hands was torn and bleeding. His clothes were rent from the sharp stones. At moments he lay still, face in the road, in the dust, an exhausted thing. Then with a sudden surge of will, he drove himself on, wriggling, clawing, hand after hand, his eyes fixed on that circle of moonlight, his back arching and relaxing, arching and giving again.

And then, almost as if it rose suddenly out of the night before him, was the car, the gate, the moon behind, still grinning silver. And there was a dark mass, a blotch, stretched out before the gate, a

twisted blob of a thing that had a human likeness. There was no motion in it. Christian, crawling, and in the agony of exhaustion, cared nothing about that thing.

Then he heard it again—the sound of a moaning child. It was near him now. It was in the road, outside the gate.

Christian drove himself on, reached the gate, pulled himself to his flabby knees, wrenched every ounce of strength from his fibers to lean on those cross-timbers, tugged at them, felt them drop, one by one. One of them, falling, struck his leg. It was a dull blow, but he felt no pain in that numbed and useless leg.

Then he was through the fence, crawling again. A small roadster was parked at the roadside, half-hidden in the shrubbery. . . . Hand after hand, hand after hand. He reached it, pulled himself up, level with the running-board, pulled up to the door. Held himself there.

In the seat was a little bright patch, almost shapeless in the blue gloom of the moon. It was squirming. It was crying. Christian's last ounce of strength wrenched that door open. The little child's eyes were staring at him, staring into the moonlight. A white patch was across the child's mouth. His hands and feet were wrapped in white. And Christian, lifting that moaning little boy into his arms, cursed the fiend who had bound him with adhesive tape and ropes, cursed the man who lay behind him in the shadows, possibly dead, possibly dying. If there is a hell where men's souls burn and writhe in hot agony, then such a hell was for such a man.

By what superhuman effort he released that small child from the ropes, dragged him out, got him into his own car, Christian Mowbray never knew. The town was some five miles away, and there was a doctor there. He remembered nothing of the drive, nothing of the torture in his bleeding hands and torn body. He remembered nothing, but it must have happened.

IN the tiny square of the town commotion came. The continued noise of an auto horn brought men running from the little town's combination post-office-grocery-and-drugstore. In the car, stalled there, was a man, his head hanging, his arm resting on the button of his horn, blowing it madly. He was unconscious. And in the seat beside him was a little frightened and wailing boy, bound firmly with adhesive tape. They were able to rouse the driver, and from him they heard a queer tale, a strange story that would bear investigation.

The local constable, the local doctor and a few men drove that car back to the lake. At the gate by the road they found a battered roadster, scarred with bullets. Inside the gate they found a dying man, shot through the lungs, but partly conscious. His story, too, was strange and unbelievable. In the cabin, in a pool of blood on the floor, they found Dr. Brede, a hole torn through his body by a slug, unconscious, possibly dying. It was a great mystery to those men, but the mystery was cleared in the morning by telephone.

AND late in the morning, Christian Mowbray awoke in a white room, in a white bed, with a white-clad woman looking down at him. With her were dim figures of men, smiling at him, talking to him. They were saying something about heroism—*his* heroism. They were asking him questions. They were writing down the things he said. They were talking about some reward. It was all very confusing. It was all very tiring. Why didn't they leave him alone? And the worst of all was a haggard, drawn-looking man who kept shaking his hand and thanking him about something. About a child, was it? Oh, yes. He remembered, there was a little boy who was crying somewhere. Why didn't they leave him alone? And there was a man in uniform talking about somebody named Spinel—Bubo Spinel, whoever *he* was. Said Spinel was a gangster; said he was a kidnaper. Well, what of it?

Then Christian Mowbray with an effort brushed the confusion from his mind for a moment.

"What about—Dr. Brede?" he asked; and it was an effort to speak. "What—about—Dr. Brede? Is he all right?"

It was the nurse who said:

"He's doing nicely. He'll pull through. You can't hurt a soldier."

And as the voices began again, with their questions, with their eternal babble, with all this foolishness about heroes or something, Christian Mowbray smiled and went off to sleep. . . .

Far up in Olympus, the three Sisters peered at that pattern, smiled at each other, nodded. And Sister Atropos laid down her shears. That was a good pattern. They would keep that.

Another memorable story by Fulton Grant is scheduled for our next issue.

Seller, Beware!

"I want myself a racing stable," said the lady from Oklahoma. "I want a good one, and I want it quick." How she got what she wanted—and then some.

By
EUSTACE COCKRELL

HAVING had a stable myself in the old days, I was a little curious about this advertisement, when I spied it in the newspaper:

> WANTED: Man to buy and train thoroughbreds; accustomed to having full charge of winning stable. M. Clark, Sutcliffe Hotel.

But I started going through the "help wanted" ads again, as I had been doing for—let's see—four weeks and three days now. I hadn't found anything that had been much help. These weren't, either. They all mentioned "experience," and my experience of the last five years didn't seem to fit in anywhere very well.

I found myself going back to M. Clark's ad, and I suddenly decided to go to the Sutcliffe and see what might happen; not that I had a chance, but just for curiosity. It might be funny, I thought. And five years and a month is a long time to have gone without a good laugh.

They sent me to the freight elevator, but it got me there just the same, and the suite itself was pretty grand. There was a bunch of other applicants sitting around, some as shabby as I was myself; no one whom I had ever known around the tracks. They would go in the next room, one by one, and one by one, they would come out.

The one just ahead of me was a slim blond kid, nice-looking, though hollow-cheeked. Too young for the job, I thought, and too—well, just not the type. He came out after a minute, looking sort of funny. Then it was my turn.

There was a woman sitting there, a woman you would look at twice in any crowd. She was tall, maybe as tall as I, and very blonde. And she was handsome—handsomer than anyone you are likely to see; but her face, in repose, was hard.

And I decided I'd tell her the truth. I'd tried for thirty or forty jobs, and I hadn't told anybody the truth—and I hadn't got any of the jobs. I didn't have a chance for this one, but I'd tell her the truth, and see how she liked it.

SHE told me to sit down, and I did, and she asked me my name.

"Luther Windron," I said.

"You're a trainer?"

"I'm not a licensed trainer," I said. "I used to own a stable."

"Livery?"

"Racing," I said.

She looked at me a second before she asked her next question. "What was the last job you had?"

"Making shoes," I said, and I never batted an eye.

"I've been in the hoosegow," she cut me off amiably. "But I just did sixty days."

She snorted then, and stood up with an air that was dismissal; and I had that old, futile feeling of being alone and hungry. I had almost forgotten that I didn't have a chance to get this job, that I had to go from a place like this to a park bench.

"Who were you making shoes for?" she asked suddenly.

"For the State," I said, and I held my voice even. It didn't seem so funny now. "I was on brooms first, but I got changed to shoes. I was in the penitentiary." I took a breath and went on. "I've been in the penitentiary the last five years. I've been out thirty-one days."

And still watching me, she started grinning. It made me suddenly mad. "You just try it sometime," I suggested, bitterly. "Maybe you won't find it so darned—"

"I've been in the hoosegow," she cut me off amiably. "But I just did sixty days."

I didn't say anything. I couldn't think of anything to say.

"In Oklahoma—it was the Territory then," she went on musingly. "I hit a deputy marshal over the head with a beer-bottle. He was no gentleman."

"Oh," I said. And then, for no special reason, I found myself telling her all about it.

When I had finished, she sat back and looked at me appraisingly. "Well," she said judicially, "I don't know but what you were in the wrong. There are times when you have to hit a man, and I don't doubt this fellow needed hitting, as you say; but you needn't have used a club, or hit so hard. . . . At that, I guess it was your bad luck that he didn't have the gun he made a bluff at pulling on you."

She seemed to ponder this awhile; then she said suddenly: "You know, I think you're hired." She opened a purse on a table and took out three hundred-dollar bills. "Go out and get fixed up," she said. "And meet me here tomorrow at noon. I'll see what I can do in the meantime."

I couldn't say anything for a minute; then I started to stammer something, trying to thank her.

"May Clark's my name," she said. "From Oklahoma. Don't thank me. Go put on the nosebag and get yourself some clothes."

I went.

I MUST have looked pretty different when I showed up next day, though not half as different as I felt. May Clark didn't make any comment, but she looked me over, and seemed pleased. Then she came down to business.

"I want a stable," she said. "I want myself a racing-stable, and a good one, and I want it quick."

That was a pretty large order. I hesitated. She went on, and her voice was different, softer: "You see," she said, "I've got a daughter. She's been going to school abroad; she's coming home pretty soon. And she's got some friends here in the East, and all their fathers, pretty near, seem to have themselves a

few bangtails, and I kind of thought—I kind of thought she might like it."

"It'll take some time," I said guardedly, "to get much of a stable—"

She laughed. "It won't take me some time," she said. "I'll fire you if it does. You can take your examination for a trainer's license any time—I've fixed that. And your signature'll be good at my bank. And," she added casually, "there's a car you can use. So get going."

She phoned for a bellhop, and when he came, she ordered:

"Have my roadster brought around, for Mr. Windron." She turned to me. "Get going," she repeated.

I stood up then, slowly. "Okay," I said. "I'm not sure where, but I'll give you an honest try."

AS I was just starting to open the door of the roadster, I felt some one tap me on the shoulder. It was the slim blond kid I had seen yesterday in May Clark's suite.

He gulped a couple of times.

"You're—you're Mrs. Clark's trainer?" he asked.

"Yes," I said. "Since yesterday, that is. What can I do for you?"

"Well," he said nervously, "it's this way: I heard Mrs. Clark was going to buy some horses. I'm terribly anxious to get in her employ—and so I went up and asked her for a position. She dismissed me—said I didn't have any experience. But you see, I have had some experience, only—only I couldn't tell her about it. . . . Oh, it's all most involved."

"So it would seem," I admitted.

He took a deep breath. "What it all comes down to," he said hurriedly, "is, will you give me a job as stable-boy? She said it would be up to you."

That stopped me. This nice aristocratic-looking boy, asking me for a job as a common swipe!

"Well," I said, pretty much at a loss, "I'm going out to the track right now. Ride along with me, if you want to, and we'll talk this thing over."

"That would be splendid," he said.

He didn't say anything while we were getting through the traffic out of the city—which was all right with me, for it had been five years since I'd driven a car, in traffic or out of it. Then we got into fairly open country and he loosened up.

"David Manners is my name," he began. Then he stopped.

I tried to encourage him.

"I'm happy to know you, David. I'm Luther Windron."

We drove on a little way. "I've got to tell you," he said. "It's my only chance."

I didn't say anything, but I had my ears pinned back.

"You see," he went on, "Mrs. Clark has a daughter, Martha. I'm in love with her. I want to marry her. She's wonderful. I really shouldn't be over here. I've been quite ill—and my brother's never well. I met her last year in Paris," he concluded disjointedly.

"Um," I said profoundly. "I see." Which was a lie.

"I'm terribly fond of her," he said. "I'd even be willing to live in Oklahoma." He paused a moment. "I'm fair on grouse," he finally blurted out, "but dash it all, I know I'd be frightful on Indians."

"They're bigger," I pointed out, grinning at the thought of what May Clark's daughter must have told him about Oklahoma.

He looked sort of blank for a moment, and then went on, deadly serious: "I've got to make a good impression on Mrs. Clark. It's my only chance. Martha said she'd never give her permission for us to be married—never. So I thought if I could work for her, and sort of live down the name my family has in England, she might relent."

"The name your family has in England," I repeated slowly. "What name is that?"

He told me.

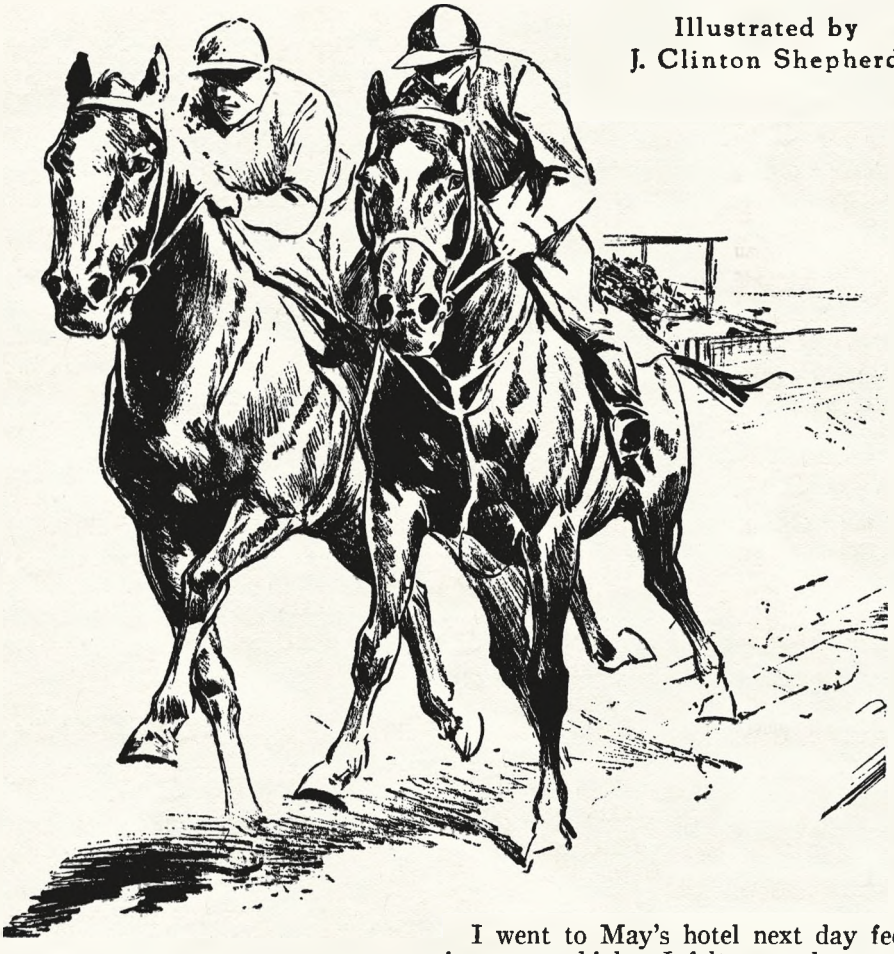
I didn't say anything for a minute. We were at the track by then, and I pulled into a parking space and stopped. I turned and looked at him.

"Okay," I said. "You've got a job."

THE boys at the Jockey Club remembered me; they gave me a fishy eye. But when they found out about my new status, they limbered up a bit. It seems that they'd all heard about May Clark, and when word got around that I was in the market for horses, they showed me horses. Plenty of them!

But of all of them I saw that first day only one really took my eye. He was a beauty—a big bay stallion three years old; sixteen hands and a frame on him like Man of War himself. His hoofs were sound, and the exercise-boy breezed him a mile under double wraps in one-forty-one, right there before my eyes.

Illustrated by
J. Clinton Shepherd



Max Benjamin owned him. I had known Max for years. And I had passed him on the street two weeks ago, and he hadn't been able to see me, though I had hailed him. But that didn't matter. He was pleasant enough now.

"What's the horse's name?" I asked. "I didn't quite get it."

"*Caveat Vendor*," he said. "It's a new phrase that's got quite a play lately. It means let the *seller* beware." And he smirked a small smirk.

I LOOKED up Caveat Vendor—everything about him. His breeding could not have been better. His record wasn't very conclusive, but as Benjamin pointed out, he hadn't had any good boys up on him the few times he had raced as a two-year-old, races in which he had appeared fractious and awkward. This season he had been out with a split hoof, but there was no doubt about that being all sound by now. The price on him was high, but he looked mighty good.

I went to May's hotel next day feeling pretty high. I felt sure she would okay the purchase, and I figured she would get a kick out of my description of such a prospect.

Instead she acted as if she'd almost forgotten she had ever wanted a racehorse.

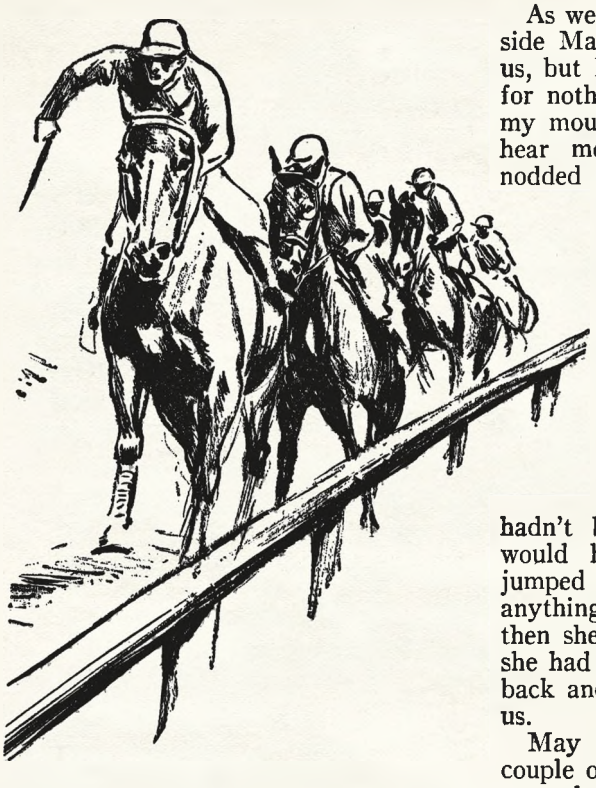
"Buy him, sure," she said absently, before I was half through telling about him. "Any price you think is right."

"What's the matter?" I asked, anxious. "Have you lost interest in your stable before you've got it?"

"Matter?" she laughed. I'd noticed her eyes were bright, and she looked different, tickled over something. Just then the door to the next room opened, and I saw why.

"My daughter Martha," May said, beaming with pride. "She took an earlier boat to surprise me."

I stood up and bowed, and I saw why May was so proud. She had everything, this girl, looks and polish and charm. She wasn't as tall as her mother, and she didn't have that hard look that May



They were ten lengths ahead of the field, those horses—and as they came under the wire, you could have hidden them both under a blanket.

had sometimes. But she had her mother's features, the same fine carriage, the same thing, whatever it was, that made May look like a queen ought to look.

NEXT day I bought Caveat Vendor. It seemed odd to be signing a check in five figures again, but for some reason I had no qualms at all about the horse. And I was sure that May would like him.

But I did start getting nervous about something else. And it was something that wasn't any of my business at all. I had already made arrangements to stable the horse, and David was on the job, and May and Martha were coming out to the track to see the new purchase in the afternoon. And I began to worry for fear Martha would see David—who hadn't had a chance to get in touch with her—and give the whole thing away to May.

David and I maneuvered the best we could, though, and we got away with it all right. He was out of sight when they first appeared, and I mentioned casually that I had a swipe who was on an errand at the moment. They were both enthusiastic over Caveat Vendor, who looked so beautiful I was pretty proud of myself for getting hold of him.

As we started to leave, I sidled up beside Martha. May was right ahead of us, but I hadn't spent five years in stir for nothing. I said, out of the side of my mouth, just loud enough for her to hear me, "David's back there," and nodded back toward the stall. If she hadn't been a pretty bright kid, she would have probably thought I had jumped my trolley. But she didn't say anything till we had gone a little way; then she said casually that she thought she had dropped a glove; she would go back and look for it and catch up with us.

May and I strolled on; but after a couple of minutes, when Martha hadn't come back, I got worried for fear she would stay too long and jam the works. So I excused myself, and leaving May watching a man tack a set of racing plates on a two-year-old, hurried back to see where Martha was.

I found her, all right. But she didn't see me. And David didn't either. They were together—not in a clinch, but just sort of looking at each other, looking and looking, not saying anything. It made me feel sort of funny. I backed out of sight and coughed before I came around the corner of the stall again.

Martha jumped, and I dragged her back before May suspected anything. I was sort of half cussing myself, but it didn't do any good. I knew, now, that I had one more thing to worry about: Not only did I have to look good as a trainer, not only did I have to make the horses I bought look good, but now I had David on my mind. I had to make him look good to May, too, if it could possibly be done.

CERTAINLY no one could have said that May didn't seem interested in her stable after that.

She was like a kid with a new gadget, trying to find out everything about racing in a few days, studying form-sheets, asking me a million questions about

training and feed and care. Smart questions, too .

I was a little nervous when she first saw David, looking out of place in his old dungarees. But she didn't say anything, just looked at him pretty hard. I don't know what she was thinking.

WE stuck Caveat Vendor in there at the first chance; that, with May, was soon. We had got Goose Markey, a good boy, under contract, and we had got a hurry order through on our silks. The big moment came for the début of the Clark stable, and May and Martha were as excited as a couple of kids on a roller coaster. May celebrated the occasion by putting a thousand on Caveat's nose.

He acted up at the barrier a little bit, but Goose brought him out all right, and he raced, rated off the pace, under restraint through the first four furlongs. But I didn't like the way he was going. And I didn't like the way he finished: seventh in a nine-horse race.

I turned to May, feeling hollow in my stomach. "That seems to be that," I said.

"Hm," she said thoughtfully. "You know, it didn't look to me as if he wanted to win."

That was what I thought; but I wouldn't admit it. I started talking fast. "He was nervous at the start. Didn't have his weight under him, didn't gather right. You know he hasn't been in many races. We'll give him schooling at the barrier. He never really got going that time."

May couldn't have been nicer about it. "Okay," she said. "Anything you say. You know best."

David felt worse about it than anyone else. He'd been exercising Caveat Vendor—he was a first-rate exercise-boy—and he'd got attached to him.

"I can't understand it," he kept saying. "He works like a champion in the morning. I can't understand it. I'll work him some more at the barrier."

We did work on him, for a week, like a couple of dogs. May continued to encourage me, and I bought her a couple of nice two-year-olds. I got them from Harry Rich, who trained for one of the biggest stables in the country. And because I was worried, I asked him about Caveat Vendor.

"I know the colt, Mr. Windron," he said. "I know the colt. A grand colt to look at. But he has no heart."

My own heart sank. That was the verdict—and it came from a man who knew. The verdict I'd been fearing.

"He has no heart," Harry said. "He can go the route, and he can lug the weight. But he won't. He has no heart." Harry sighed. "He's a quitter, Mr. Windron."

I didn't say anything. Harry looked at me.

"Don't take it too hard," he said. "I've done the same thing myself. And then," he added, "miracles do happen in this business. Changing owners, a new boy up. A horse is like a person, only more so—notional. And people change, you know, too."

"Yes," I admitted. "Oh, yes." A miracle might happen, of course. But right now, the horse I had bought for May Clark was a quitter.

I didn't tell May what Harry Rich had said. I was hoping against hope that the next race would be different. And May was so nice about the whole thing, and so happy, what with having Martha back, I didn't have the heart to throw a damper on things. She loved the two-year-olds and she still loved Caveat Vendor, not holding that first race against him. She came out to see him every afternoon, and fussed over him as if he'd been a baby.

I bought a couple of other horses that looked pretty good, but for some reason or other both the Clark girls—that's the way I always thought of them—seemed more interested in Caveat Vendor. As a matter of fact, these last two were not really first-raters. But people seemed to be feeling prosperous right then, at least the biggest owners were; and there weren't many top-notch horses going on the block.

CAVEAT'S second race came up, and May was down on him again with a big bet. I was the one that was jittery, though, when they paraded to the post.

He came out of the starting-stall like an automobile salesman for a straight cash prospect. He raced well for two furlongs, up with the leaders, and then they piled on a little pace, and he started fading. Goose Markey gave him the bat, but it didn't do any good. I'm not exactly sure where he finished. I didn't look.

So Harry'd been right. My first purchase, that I'd plugged as if he amounted to something! Harry'd been right, and

Martha didn't see me —and David didn't either. They were just looking at each other, not saying anything.

there was no miracle in sight, either. I told May what he had told me, and I mumbled through it in pretty feeble fashion.

"Ah, what the hell!" she said. "I've done it myself. Why, I even did it with husbands." And she laughed. "Imagine! I married an honest rancher, and he turned out to be a claim-jumpin' bum; and then I got rid of him and married a faro-dealer, and he was swell." She blinked her eyes a couple of times and looked away. "Prince Clark—he was Martha's father. A swell guy, and a square-shooter. The fastest faro-dealer in the West."

"Was he?" I asked stupidly—but feeling better.

"Yes," she said. "He left me a grand. A splinter. But they struck oil down in my country, and I ran it into a lumber-yard. Life's a funny business."

I agreed with her.

Next day, darned if she wasn't out at the stables alibi-ing for Caveat Vendor. Not a word about the money she had lost on the race.

"Maybe," she suggested, "if you stuck him in there with some horses he couldn't help beating, it'd make him feel better. Change his attitude, sort of. Give him confidence."

David, who always seemed to feel personally to blame for Caveat's defections, said eagerly: "That's a good idea, Mrs. Clark. You know," he went on earnestly, "I can't understand that horse. He works all right in the morning, for me—like a champion. Maybe winning a race is all he needs. There must be something wrong."

"Well, son," May said, "they say the only sure thing about luck is that it'll change. Let's keep on trying."

But our luck didn't change. I saddled one of our two-year-olds, fit and ready; and three lengths in front and a furlong from home, Goose pulled him up lame. I stuck our filly in a five-furlong dash, and she was badly jostled coming through on the rail, and finished sixth. That's the way it went—one thing after another. And May riding heavy cash on our entries always.

I felt terrible. Here I was given leave to spend all the money in the world, do anything at all. We hadn't had a horse in the money, and every time an entry went under our colors, the bookies grinned. And May continued to fatten them up. But she kept right on grinning, too.

Then one day I found the spot May had wanted for Caveat. A cheap claiming race, though I felt perfectly safe about anyone claiming him if he won. The handicapper had assigned him only one hundred twelve pounds; and when I saddled him, his veins were swelling and he looked ready to go.

THE less said about that race the better. This time he didn't leave himself the ghost of an alibi. He quit to a bunch of cheap platers—quit with Goose Markey asking him to coast in, and finally asking him with the bat. He just quit.

I felt like getting a gun and shooting him. Martha looked ready to cry. Even May looked pensive—which with her was a bad sign.

"The only thing to do now," I said, "is try to find some sucker to take him off our hands. Maybe the glue-factory—"

May didn't say anything. Her eyes still had that sort of absent look.

I wanted to keep the paper out of her hands next day, but of course it was the first one she read. It was open on the table when I came up to her suite at the hotel.

"The Oklahoma Optimist is still with us," said the sport columnist, cute as usual, "and still going down in a big way on anything on four legs saddled by her trainer, one of the better known Sing Sing alumni. Some day she'll have a horse in the money and probably die of heart failure. Meanwhile, oil's well with the bookies."

"So that's what I'm letting you in for," I said. "As a trainer, I ought to be back in jail—"

May laughed a funny sort of laugh, and her eyes had a metallic look about them. "I'll show you what I think of my trainer's judgment," she said softly. "You nominated a horse for the Stakes tomorrow, didn't you?"

"Yes," I said blankly. "But that was Caveat Vendor—when we first got him, and didn't know—"

"Never mind," she said. "I've a notion to gamble the entry fee on him. Maybe he'll take it into his head to try."

"Don't do that," I began, a little frantic. "There's no reason why he should. Don't do that! They'll laugh us off the track."

"Never mind," she said again. "We'll give 'em a good laugh. I'd like to see him in there."

I argued awhile, but there was nothing I could do. "I'll go out and see about it," I said at last.

"I'll come with you," Martha put in unexpectedly. "I feel like a drive, and Mother's going to the hairdresser's." She hurried me out the door.

Between them, they had me dizzy. What was on Martha's mind? What was on May's, for that matter? Well, I'd find out, I thought, in good time.

NEXT day we were out at the track early. It was a pretty day, and a fast track. And there were lots of people out, and lots of money was being bet, and lots of fun had by all. Almost all.

It was May I felt worst about. I was sorry for the showing I was going to make as a trainer, I was sorry for David and Martha. But when I thought of May,—the way she'd treated me, the way she'd been about everything,—I knew I'd give anything I had or hoped for, just to let her have one good race, one good thrill, out of this lousy collection of hides I'd got her for a racing-stable.

I took the Clark girls to their box, and turned to go down to the paddock; but I waited a minute and looked at Martha.

I WOULDN'T have thought it was possible—but Martha was nervous. "I've something to tell you, Mother," she said, and her voice sounded strained.

"We—I thought it would be a good idea," Martha hurried on, "that is, Luther didn't want to without asking you, but I thought—I mean I didn't think you'd mind—"

"What did you do?" May was looking at her levelly.

"I got Luther to name David—the stable-boy—to ride Caveat today."

"He can make the weight—one twenty-six," I put in, "and he's got an apprentice's license."

"He was ill a long time in England," Martha said, sort of desperately. "It left him wretchedly thin; that's—that's why—that's why he can make the weight," she finished lamely.

May didn't say anything for a minute. Martha was swallowing nervously, and I was feeling sort of funny myself. Then May opened her bag and began fumbling in it.

"I wasn't sure I'd bet," she said, "but I always play hunches. In fact, I brought along a little cash, in case I had a hunch. And I've been laughed at by those lousy bookies long enough. I'm going down. If Caveat disgraces us, I'll sell the stable and go back to Oklahoma." She handed me a bundle of bills that made my eyes pop out, though I thought I was pretty blasé about such things. "Put these," she said softly, "on Caveat. To place."

Well, there it was. There went my job; there went the works. There went David's chances for Martha, probably, though it wouldn't be his fault. A green boy—and riding Caveat Vendor in *the* Stakes! I stood up and stared at those crisp packages of hundred-dollar bills, then reached into my pocket and pulled out all the money I had, and laid it on top of hers. "Okay," I said. "We'll all go away in the same padded truck."

There wasn't a book' at the track that could handle that bet alone, but they scattered it out, and I got it all down at seven and eight to one. Then I went down and saddled Caveat, after David had come down from the scale room.

And as usual, he looked like a million dollars.

Then David did a funny thing. He borrowed my knife and cut away the cloth tape that Caveat's tail was tied up in. He winked at me. "That's it," he said. "I've figured it out. That's why he goes in the morning. When the blood gets to pumping, that tape gets a little too tight for him, and he gets mad, sulks. You watch—he won't quit today."

"I'll watch," I said. "I'll have to. But if you think I believe that old wives' tale!" And I sighed as I walked away. Because David had looked fit, too—fit, and keyed up, and happy. I got back to the box, and a few years passed, and they were going to the post.

THEY had a little trouble at the barrier, but they couldn't take forever. They were off to a good fair start.

Caveat came out of his stall like a bum going for a free-lunch, and David wangled racing room for him close in around the first turn, sitting tight and saving ground. He was fifth in the backstretch, and running free and easy, and David was just sitting there and giving him a competent ride. And I was trying to keep from watching, afraid I'd see him start to fold.

David took him wide—he had to, coming into the stretch; and as they strung out, the favorite, that Derby-Preakness winner, found a hole near the rail and made his move. In a furlong he was running by himself—almost alone.

But Caveat Vendor, on the outside, was still trying. He was six lengths ahead of the third horse in the middle of the stretch, and a neck behind the favorite; but he was still trying. And I could see through my glasses that David's bat was still in his boot.

David was asking him with his hands, and Caveat Vendor was putting it all out. They were ten lengths ahead of the field, those two horses, and as they came under the wire, you could have hidden them both under a blanket.

It was a long time before the official numbers went up—Caveat was second.

But it had been a horse-race! For the first time in his life he had turned in an honest effort; he had outrun nine of the best three-year-olds in the country, and he had won so much money for his owner it was staggering to think of.

I went down with May when she collected her money—in bales; and the bookies weren't grinning when they paid off. And we weren't either; we just looked bored.

We picked up Martha and walked over to the stables. We found David sitting under the window of Caveat's stall, and his face was set and white.

He looked at us and tried to smile, but it was a poor job.

"The bad things come in threes," he said.

For some reason, nobody said anything. He had a telegram in his hand, and it had two stars on it.

"The bad things come in threes," he repeated. "I lost the race by my stupid riding at the last turn. And my brother died this morning."

May Clark went over and patted him on the back. "If you need money, kid," she said, "don't worry. You won me a barrel today."

"I'm not sorry my brother died," he said, steadying his voice. "I'm glad, in a way. He was terribly hurt in the war. He lived in pain; he couldn't move his legs—and he used to love to ride." He stopped, and I could hear Martha crying.

"And now," he said, and looked at May, "I'm in love with your daughter. A cheap fortune-hunter with a title. Now I'm the Duke of Dunsford."

May sniffed a time or two—the only time I ever saw her show any emotion like that, except that time she talked about Martha's father.

She walked over and sat down beside David and put her arm around him. "I didn't think you were a stable-boy, son," she said. "And I'm glad you are a duke—I'm sort of nobility myself, sort of a princess, just like Martha is. My husband was a prince. Prince Clark, the squarest, fastest faro-dealer in the West." She sniffed again. "Us aristocrats have got to stick together." And damned if she didn't sound like she was crying, though maybe it was me.

WELL, that's all—all there is. A tabloid ran four pictures on the back page of their morning edition. Me, in my convict garb, with my number across my chest; May, collecting dough in bales as big as your head; Martha in an evening gown; and David in our silks. The caption was:

"Ex-Con Saddles Caveat Vendor and Duke of Dunsford Kicks Him into Place —Wins Oil Heiress, while Mater Mangles Bookies."

I liked that. I got one framed.

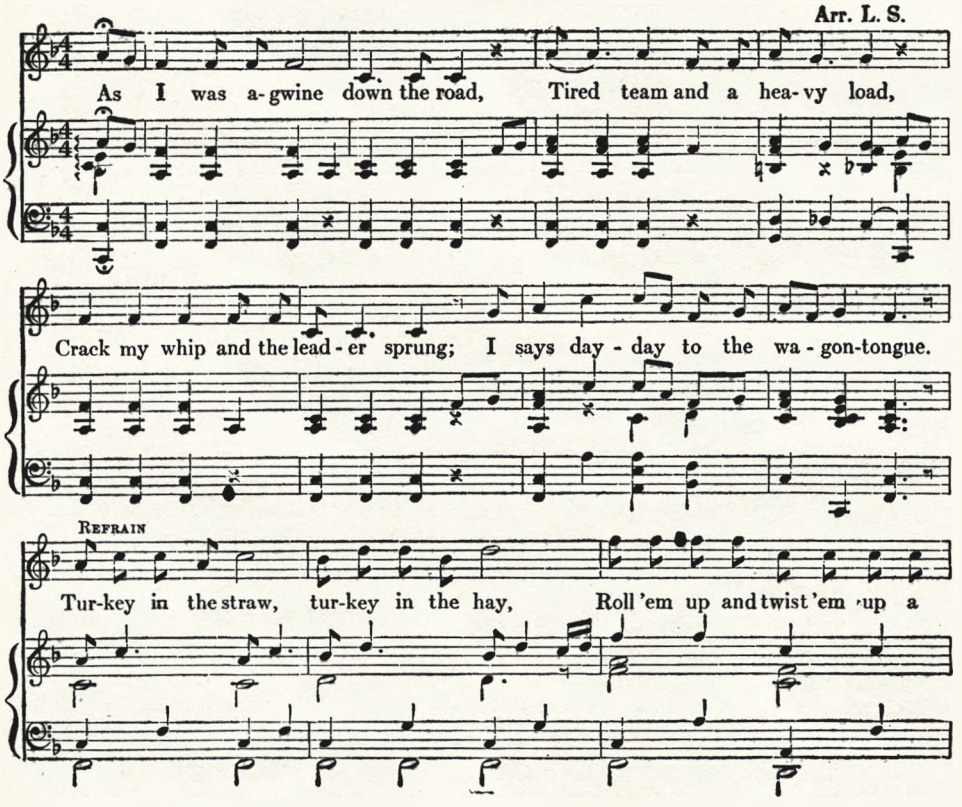
Made in America

III—Turkey in the Straw

THIS is the classical American rural tune. It goes back to "Zip Coon" and early minstrel songs. It has been sung at horses and mules from a million wagons. It has a thousand verses, if all were gathered. In the solitudes of tall timbers it has been the companion of berry pickers in summer and squirrel hunters in fall time. On mornings when the frost was on the pumpkin and the fodder in the shock, when nuts were ripe and winter apples ready for picking, it echoed amid the horizons of the Muskingum River of Ohio and the Ozark foothills of Missouri.

Arguments have been presented that the turkey, the Thanksgiving bird, is more the Yankee national emblem than the eagle. Maybe so. Anyhow the turkey has a song of the people and the eagle hasn't. And as a song it smells of hay mows up over barn dance floors, it steps around like an apple-faced farmhand, has the whiff of a river breeze when the catfish are biting, and rolls along like a good wagon slicked up with new axlegrease on all four wheels. It is as American as Andrew Jackson, Johnny Appleseed, and corn-on-the-cob.

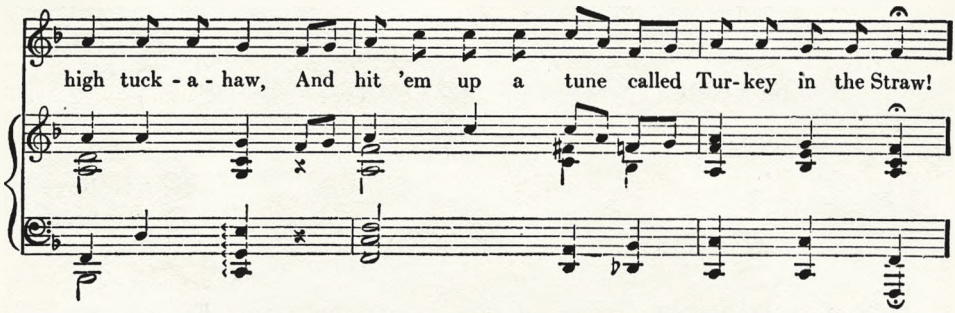
Text B. was printed by Delaney, who tells me this is the earliest stage version he knows of and it is at least fifty years old. With a little "puckering in" and doubling up, the lines can be adjusted to the harmonized melody. Text C. is a 1925 ditty from the oil fields of Ohio; Paul Schact, of Columbus, passed it along; like oil strikes, gushers, wildcats, and doodlebugs, it is a little mysterious.



Several hundred of these pioneer songs have been gathered by

Guaranteed Antiques of Song and Story
Edited by CARL SANDBURG

Author of "Abraham Lincoln," "Smoke and Steel," etc.



A

2 Went out to milk and I didn't know how,
I milked the goat instead of the cow.
A monkey sittin' on a pile of straw
A-winkin' at his mother-in-law.
Turkey in the straw, turkey in the hay, etc.

3 Met Mr. Catfish comin' down stream.
Says Mr. Catfish, "What does you mean?"
Caught Mr. Catfish by the snout
And turned Mr. Catfish wrong side out.
Turkey in the straw, turkey in the hay, etc.

4 Came to the river and I couldn't get across
Paid five dollars for an old blind hoss.
Wouldn't go ahead, nor he wouldn't stand still
So he went up and down like an old saw mill.
Turkey in the straw, turkey in the hay, etc.

5 As I came down the new cut road
Met Mr. Bullfrog, met Miss Toad
And every time Miss Toad would sing
Ole Bullfrog cut a pigeon wing.
Turkey in the straw, turkey in the hay, etc.

6 Oh, I jumped in the seat, and I gave a little yell,
The horses run away, broke the wagon all to hell;
Sugar in the gourd and honey in the horn,
I never was so happy since the hour I was born.
Turkey in the straw, turkey in the hay, etc.

B

Went down to New Orleans, got on a fence,
Tom Turkey in de buckwheat straw.
Dutchman asked me I talk French:
Dat's nine points ob de law.

Hit 'em in de head wid a great big brick,
Tom Turkey in de buckwheat straw.
Didn't I make dat nigger look sick:
Dat's nine points ob de law.

Refrain:
Den a turkey in a straw, den a turkey in a straw;
Roll a web of straw round to hide de turkey's paw,
And we'll shake 'em up a tune called Turkey in a Straw.

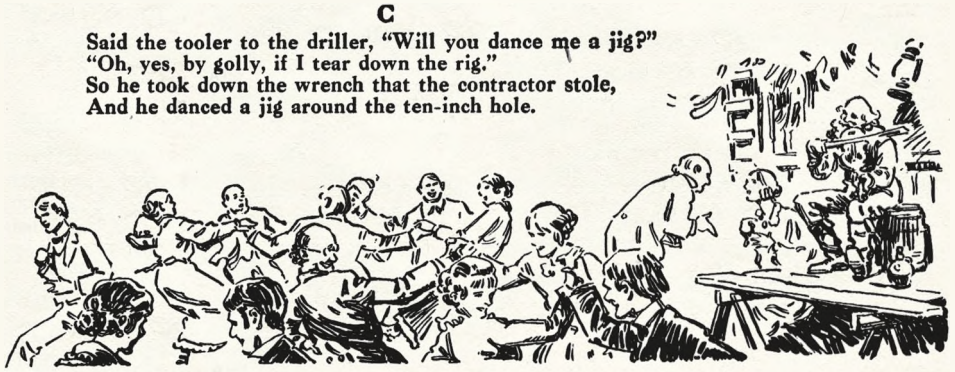
Tobacco am an Ingin weed,
Tom Turkey in de buckwheat straw.
From de debil it did seed:
Dat's nine points ob de law.

Rots your pocket, scents your clothes,
Tom Turkey in a buckwheat straw.
Makes a chimbley of your nose:
Dat's nine points ob de law.

Refrain:

C

Said the tooler to the driller, "Will you dance me a jig?"
"Oh, yes, by golly, if I tear down the rig."
So he took down the wrench that the contractor stole,
And he danced a jig around the ten-inch hole.



Carl Sandburg, and published in book form by Harcourt, Brace & Co.

KIOGA of the

The epic of a newfound frontier.

The Story Thus Far:

A STRANGE heroic figure—Kioga of the Wilderness! A strange heroic land—Nato'wa, wild newfound region beyond the Arctic north of Siberia, warmed by uncharted ocean currents and by great volcanic fissures and hot springs; a land thickly wooded with evergreens, and supporting many and varied wild animals. Stranger still its human population: a people so like the American Indians that Dr. Rand (a medical missionary to the Northwest whose ship had been blown out of her course and wrecked upon the coast of Nato'wa) soon decided that here was the original birthplace of the Indian race.

Not long afterward, the son of Lincoln Rand and his wife Helena was born; but only a few weeks later the child's parents were both killed in a raid by hostile natives upon the Shoni tribe who had given them shelter. Thereupon the baby was adopted by Rand's English-speaking Canadian Indian friend Mokuyi. And in this primitive life Kioga, or the Snow Hawk, as he was named, grew to a splendid manhood. Eventually, indeed, he became war-chieftain of the tribe. But when another party of white people, wrecked upon the reefs of Nato'wa, fired upon the natives and were about to be put to death, Kioga rescued them. For that he was exiled from his adopted people.

Longing to see the country of his fathers, Kioga aided this castaway yachting party—Beth La Salle, her brother Dan and her suitor Allan Kendle—to build a boat and escape. On the southward journey, Kendle grew suspicious of Beth's growing interest in Kioga, and contrived to have him left marooned on the ice when a whaler picked up the rest of the party.

The Snow Hawk survived, however, and made his way to San Francisco. But civilization proved too much for him. Disgusted by its many hypocrisies and believing his love rejected by Beth, he set out to make his way back to Nato'wa; and on the way he gathered a group of American Indians—people homesick for the free and simple life before the white man came—to take back with him to the land of their forefathers.

And at last they reached Nato'wa. But while Kioga was absent on a hunt for fresh meat, they were attacked by a Shoni war-party and either killed or made captive. . . . Kioga followed their trail to the village of the Shoni; then in disguise he boldly entered the town and rescued his friends; but later he was himself captured and put to the torture. At the last moment he escaped, indeed—but only to wander alone and blinded in the forest.

Illustrated by Jeremy Cannon

WILDERNESS

By WILLIAM L. CHESTER

Meanwhile, Beth La Salle, her brother Dan and their friend the scientist Dr. Munro chartered the schooner *Narwhal* and sailed from San Francisco to overtake him. And after a winter spent with the *Narwhal* frozen in the ice, and accompanied by guests they did not like (a group of castaway seal-poachers whom they had rescued) they reached Nato'wa, these renegade whites deserted, after stealing weapons.

Following Kioga's map of the region, Dr. Munro found a safe berth for the ship in a hidden landlocked cove, and then with Beth, Dan and the cook Flashpan made his way to the village of the Shoni.

Aided by his knowledge of Indian dialects, his skill as a magician, and by his store of trade gifts, Munro made friends with the Shoni; but only after some days did he venture to inquire of Kioga's friend Kias for news of him. Learning of the dreadful fate that had befallen the Snow Hawk, Munro and his party, accompanied by Kias and Kioga's boyhood sweetheart Heladi, set forth an expedition to attempt his rescue.

They found the cave where he had made his home—found the pitiful contrivances by which the blinded man had succeeded in maintaining life alone in the mountains. But they found also his tracks leading to a tremendous landslide which had apparently engulfed him.

Mourning Kioga as dead, the expedition returned to Hopeka, the Shoni capital. Soon after, Flashpan discovered large deposits of gold in the river-bed; but before he could garner all the available supply, Munro and his friends incurred the enmity of that same powerful Long Knife secret society which had fought Kioga. Just in time, the white voyagers, with a number of Shoni Indians who feared a general massacre, escaped to a rude fort they had prepared on an island in the river.

Meanwhile Kioga, who had escaped the landslide, had escaped also another dreadful fate: a blow on the back of his neck had displaced certain nerves and blinded him; now another blow on the same spot, received in a struggle with his pet puma Mika, restored his sight. . . . Wandering northward to a plains region, he encountered the Wa-Kanek, a tribe of horse-riding natives; and because he possessed a knife formerly owned by a son of their old matron-chief Magpie, he was received as the long-missing Wa-Kanek youth. *(The story continues in detail:)*

NOW it came about that, returning through the gathering storm from the vain pursuit of Munro and his party,

Suddenly the canoe rose in air, lifted by the mighty splash of the round-shot. The first cannon had been fired in Nato'wa.

Half Mouth and his warriors fell in with another band of canoe-men occupying a cove in which they were seeking shelter. As the parties approached one another hostilely, Shingas observed that there were white men in the other canoes. Thus he first encountered Mad Crow, the renegade white, in company with the mutineers from the *Narwhal*.

The sign of peace was made between the nearing canoes, and in a little while the parties were holding a council under the concealing overhang at the cove's edge. Half Mouth discovered new and strange allies in the persons of these white rascals. An astute savage, nothing could have pleased him more than to set one group of the hated white-skins against another. And presently he saw a way to accomplish this.

Betraying the facts of Munro's departure from the village of Hopeka, he watched the faces of Slemp and his cohorts, seeing only mild interest. But at talk of rich skins to be obtained, the white men pricked up their ears. And when Shingas produced a skin pouch containing a little gold Flashpan had forgotten to carry to the fort, the gleam of cupidity came into his hearers' eyes.

Quick to play upon this cupidity, Shingas reasoned that so long as he could

hold forth hope of more gold, these men would be his eager slaves. And so, to their queries as to quantity, he said:

"The white-skin had twenty times as much as this, hidden away. Destroy him and his friends, and I will lead you to its hiding-place."

"Done, ye red rascal!" ejaculated Slemp exultantly. "We'll be rich, my lads—rich as kings!"

"An' what good'll it do us here?" answered Branner pessimistically.

"We'll not tarry long," swore the other. "Just let us get our paws on Flashpan's dust, an' the rest is easy."

"What about the ship? Who's to tell us where she lies?" demanded the doubter.

"There's ways o' makin' deaf-mutes talk," cut in Mad Crow, the renegade, with a meaning grin. "Leave them details to men as aint afraid to use 'em." And turning again to Shingas, he engaged the shaman in a long harangue in Shoni dialect. The result of the talk was that Shingas agreed to lead the white men to Munro's hiding-place—which still remained to be found—and aid in their destruction.

LITTLE could they foresee, however, the preparations at the island fort, where Munro and his men were hewing timbers and squaring them with the adz. These they laid horizontally, overlapping at the ends, strengthened by cross-pieces and stayed with iron spikes.

On the inner side of the double wall more mud mortar was poured, while on the outer side great squared stones were cemented into place. Towers, five in all, were next erected, access up into which was by wooden ladders. Appropriate loopholes were provided, so arranged as to expose every approach to the fort's front to both cross- and lunging fire. And two embrasures were left, as for cannon.

Within, close against the walls, were sleeping and living quarters of wood and stone, upon the connecting roofs of which sentries might patrol while their relief slept below, available at call. These rooms took up three inner sides of the fort, and joined one another by heavy doors, boltable from either side. At the rear of the enclosure was a large roofed-over space. This roof could be lifted or lowered by means of ropes.

Within these strong walls a small army might be housed free from possible attack from any quarter save the cliffs across the river one hundred yards away. Loopholes were constructed on that side, and log head-covers as well. Munro was convinced that in the event of hostilities, the marksmanship of the Indians would be sufficiently balked by these precautions.

THE fort within was now a veritable beehive of activity. Tokala the Fox watched with excited eyes these preparations for hostilities. At one point Hanson had set up a crude lathe, operated by foot-power transmitted to a cord which rotated a heavy stone. After each pressure the cord was drawn up by a supple branch cemented into the vertical wall.

Carrying out Munro's instructions, the women worked on deerskins, sewing them into the shape of large fool's-caps, to which were attached pipelike appendages of hollowed reeds.

The scientist himself, aided by young La Salle, worked well apart from the others in a room off the main enclosure. Beth cast many an anxious glance their way. Even Tokala was forbidden entrance to that room, which presented a strange appearance—like some alchemist's den of ancient times. And indeed a strange chemistry was proceeding within it.

Great clay vessels of simmering liquid stood above a charcoal fire. Into these the men threw measured quantities of the pale salt-like stuff Munro had collected from the cave walls. As this dissolved, cool water was added to promote the rise of a scum, which was skimmed off. The operation was repeated until the solution was clear and bright. They then filtered it, setting aside the deposited crystals to dry, ere beating them gently into a powder. These, among other operations, refined their crude saltpeter.

Crude sulphur had been heated in condensing apparatus brought from the *Narwhal's* engine-room. The vapors, led through pipes, chilled and condensed, finally, into a clear yellow liquid which was drawn off and cooled.

Instructing Dan in further methods of filtering, cooling and stirring, Munro left the cubicle to tend his stone furnace. The pipes of the deer-skin bellows he directed into its lower part, which was filled with charcoal. Into the upper part, in a crucible designed to tilt, he placed quantities of the washed iron-sand. Closing the furnace, he then ignited the charcoal and called for Tokala.

The boy came running, eager to serve in these exciting preparations.

Munro showed him how the hands must be held upon the deer-skin cones, kneading the air within them forward, to direct a steady blow upon the charcoal. Alternating with others, Tokala never ceased his operations for a moment. The smelter was faithfully tended.

Now Munro made molds in a bed of sand. Some were flat and open for casting ingots. Beside these, with a tireless patience that surmounted all discouragements, Munro next built hollow molds of several sizes, with cores of baked clay.

WHEN at last the iron was molten and skimmed free of slag, the crucible was brought out, and the hot metal run into the molds. The flat pigs resulting were used as anvils whereon to beat out other necessary tools. Of the successful hollow castings, Munro handed six, long and pipelike, over to Flashpan. After scraping out the central cores of hard clay, the miner squinted through them critically and carried them away.

Another of the successful castings was in the form of a small gun of the falconet type, some four feet long, with a two-inch bore. With infinite labor this was pierced for a touch-hole at the breech, and mounted behind the wall-embrasure, with its muzzle pointing downstream.

So under the amazed eyes of the Indians the strange work went forward, amid showers of hot sparks, the crackle and hiss of pouring metal and the acrid chemical smells issuing from the little blast-furnace. But they were beginning to understand something of its meaning at last. For never had they owned such tomahawks as those made of this new iron, nor knives so hard and keen as those forged out of the fresh ingots.

But of the operations in the cubicle they were to remain ignorant a little longer. Within it Munro and Dan worked continually now, pulverizing the saltpeter and sulphur and fresh charcoal. This done, the ingredients were mixed —according to the classical formula— seventy-nine parts saltpeter, three parts sulphur, eighteen parts charcoal. The mixture was spread out, moistened and allowed to cake dry. Some was powdered fine, for use in small arms. The remainder was carefully broken down with wooden mallets and sifted into sizes through barken mesh of various widths.

A little of the fine gunpowder was then sent to Flashpan, who sat polishing his first experimental muzzle-loader.

This was a strange but ingenious weapon: The barrel, a cast-iron tube, was mounted on the carved wooden stock with copper bands. The trigger, of bone, actuated a spring made of thin layers of turkey leg-bone. This, in turn, snapped down the hammer, whose jaw bore a piece of flint.

Because the working parts were naturally fragile, Flashpan had contrived a movable plate of bone which gave easy access to spring and trigger mechanism. Now for the first time, with gleaming eyes, he took of the powder sent by Munro, poured a charge down the barrel, tamped in a cloth patch and dropped upon the patch a close-fitting leaden pellet. Ramming charge and missile carefully home, he rose and carried his weapon out among the Indians in the fort.

Taking a small stone, he poised it upon the new-built wall and moved back fifty paces to the inner wall, the savages watching absorbedly the while. Raising his smooth-bore, Flashpan sighted along the slender barrel, held upon the stone, and pressed the trigger. There was a flash of sparks and a quick report. The small round stone took flight, whizzed across the cañon and shattered against the cliff beyond. And Flashpan smiled a superior smile.

Compared to the rifles they had lost to the mutineers, his creation was a fragile and uncertain thing. It needed a loading-rod, a ramrod, powder-horn and cloth patches below the bullets. It demanded time for reloading after each shot, wasted much powder, and would be hard to clean. And yet it shot straight, and hit far on a light charge of powder. Its recoil was light, its report flat; there were no cartridges to stick in the breech. Indeed, it had no breech, and therefore no likelihood of a treacherous burst. Its trigger-pull was clean and crisp; its peep-sights of bone reasonably accurate. Above all, it was light in the hand; and to Flashpan, at least, a thing of pride, with its polished stock and gleaming bone and copper fittings; while to the savages it was a thing of great magic, provocative of awe as well as curiosity.

BUT the high treble of Tokala now directed attention to a canoe-load of Indian warriors on the Hiwasi, far downstream. Foremost in the craft sat

Half Mouth, seeking trace of Munro's party which had eluded him in the storm in retreating to the fort.

With a shout of triumph Flashpan handed his smoothbore to Dan, and leaped to the falconet pointing through the embrasure.

"They's pizen *an'* pizen," he muttered, measuring out five double handfuls of coarse powder and ramming it lightly back into the breech. "See how friend Shingas likes *our* brand!"

AGAINST the powder he pressed a circle of tree-bark cut to size; finally a solid round-shot of three pounds weight was pushed in against the crude patch. While the Indians crowded about, watching in complete fascination, Flashpan aimed this larger gun, primed the touch-hole with loose powder and applied a light to it.

There was a fizz, a spurt of flame, and with a jarring blast the falconet belched out its missile. The frightened Indians fell back in dismay; but rallied by Dan's encouraging words, turned their eyes downstream.

A long moment elapsed. The Indians in the distant canoe were seen to cease paddling at the strange sound of the approaching shot. Suddenly the canoe rose in air, lifted by the mighty splash of the round-shot. Then it overturned, hurling its occupants sprawling into the stream, to swim ashore and vanish yelling into the forest, while the echoes rolled back from the cliffs near and far. The first cannon had been fired in Nato'wa. Flashpan's face dropped in dejection.

"A *leetle* short," he muttered disappointedly, "but I 'low 'twas a fair beginnin', an' better luck the next time."

Munro and Dan laughed. But in the village of Hopeka, to which the frightened warriors repaired, it was believed that lightning had struck the canoe out of a clear sky; and the medicine-men were hard-pressed for some interpretation of this strange happening. . . .

Ponderous and crude though their early guns were, those that followed improved over the first few. Flashpan even sought to rifle his barrels, and in some measure succeeded, gaining greater accuracy and striking power. But time was of the essence. They required many guns for defense, which at this stage meant firing down into the faces of possible foes at point-blank range. Therefore accuracy was in some measure sacrificed to speed of manufacture, that all might be better armed. And in the inner enclosure Flashpan drilled Kias and several of the Indians in the handling of their new firearms.

Thereafter the little miner cut down the long castings into pistol-size, and with Dan's aid fashioned several handguns on the same principle as his first rifle. Two of his flintlock guns were dispatched to the *Narwhal* by Indian runner, along with a quantity of powder, iron ball, and a letter explaining their present situation. These all reached the *Narwhal* safely; and Munro received a reply from Barry Edwards, stating that all was well on board, repairs proceeding briskly, and no sign as yet that the ship's whereabouts was known to their enemies. In return for the guns, he sent back a package of fine Ceylon tea and some tobacco. Welcome as both were to the white men in the fort, the reassuring news was best of all.

Leaning back for a moment's rest Munro looked about his fort and faced the future with greater confidence.

CHAPTER XXV

The Question of the Eyes

THE Snow Hawk was given to eat of dried buffalo tongue and a meat-dish called by Me-Kon-Agi, *pumakin*. While eating, Kioga glanced about, observing where the prisoners were kept under guard.

"What will become of them?" he signed.

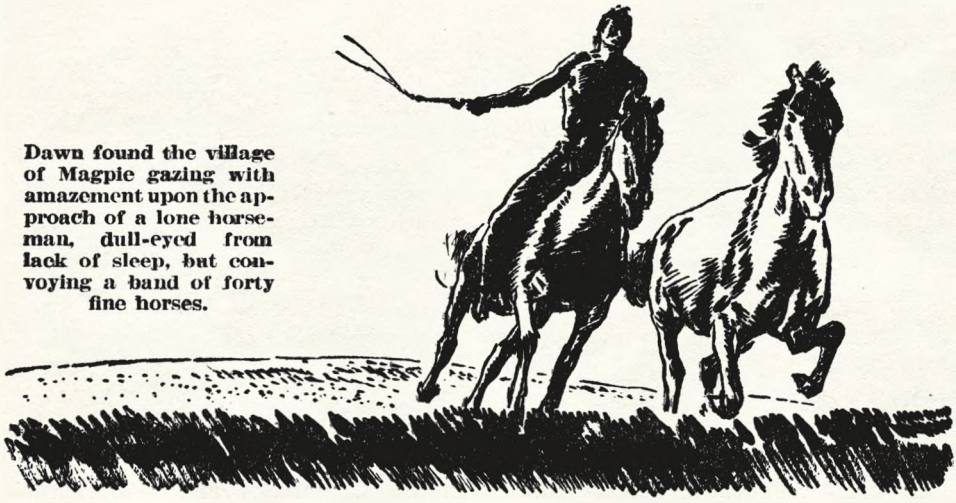
"They fought a valiant fight. Torture, perhaps. A pity, though. Our tribes have need of warriors. But Magpie is sometimes cruel."

"Magpie?" queried Kioga. Me-Kon-Agi glanced up quickly, to rectify a statement which he thought the stranger might resent.

"Magpie, your mother, greatest of our chiefs," he signed. Thus, for the first time, Kioga learned the power of the old matron-chief.

Later he contrived to pass the prisoners again, and counted heads. Old Crow Man was there, Grass Girl with her two babes, Kills Bull, Scalps Three and Pretty Eagle, now the pregnant wife of Kills Bull—all, excepting Tokala, who now remained of the band which had left civilization behind to realize the promise of the old Indian life.

In passing, he dropped near one of them a bit of leather with the encourag-



Dawn found the village of Magpie gazing with amazement upon the approach of a lone horseman, dull-eyed from lack of sleep, but convoying a band of forty fine horses.

ing "brave-heart" sign drawn in charcoal. He observed with approval that they concealed all interest in him.

Turning then to Me-Kon-Agi, "Teach me to speak the Wa-Kanek tongue," he bade; and thus by first translating simple hand-signs, he began to learn the language of the plainsmen. . . .

Among the Magpie's braves, Kioga already stood in high repute. And now to those he had wounded, Kioga made prompt amends before the entire camp. Pausing before High Bear, he splintered the club on a great stone, making these signs:

"Unworthy weapon to have struck down one so brave as High Bear."

Then to the other, proffering a tomahawk: "Yellow Hand's arm is broken. Wash out the offense. Strike off this offending hand."

The savage looked up suspiciously, for any sign of mockery. The face above showed only grave regret. Accepting the tomahawk, he raised it high. Expressions of protest showed on the faces of others near by, but none spoke; for by Wa-Kanek custom, the injured party may claim redress. Impassively Kioga placed his hand upon the ground. Down came the tomahawk—but not upon the Snow Hawk's hand. In twenty bits the weapon flew, shivered on the heavy stone. Yellow Hand spoke a few words to Me-Kon-Agi, who grunted in approval and translated in sign for Kioga and all the observers thus:

"My hands speak for Yellow Hand. When this tomahawk joins together of itself, he will ask redress."

A great shout arose, for next to a deed of heroic daring the Wa-Kanek horsemen love nothing so much as the generous gesture by an injured party.

That night the camp again was on the move. Two scouts rode on ahead. In the forefront of the main band old Magpie bestrode a befeathered mare. Thus mounted, she was a different person. Gone was the halting hesitating walk and bent carriage; in its place the graceful poise of one born beside a horse-travois, and schooled from childhood in equestrian skill.

Beside her, and a little back, rode the honor men. On her right side rode Gro-Gan', a famous shaman; of whom it was said that he snored louder than any ten other men in all the nation. On her left, in place of equal honor, rode Kioga on the tall gray stallion, now his to do with as he would. Then came the mounted prisoners under watchful guard, and finally the riders on the flanks and rear —High Bear, Yellow Hand with his broken arm in a sling, Six Coup and Chases Them. And in all that band, who a few days earlier would have cut his throat, not one man could Kioga now call enemy.

NEAR evening the forerunners drew in to report contact with Magpie's own home scouts. Just before sunset, topping another rise, the tents of a great village came suddenly into view—a sight to stir the blood of any man.

Six and fifty cowskin lodges crouching in a mighty circle on the plain, with sunset's gold encarnadined; from each great cone a bluish plume of smoke uprising to spread a haze above the scene; before each tent a tripod, hung with medicine-bundle and shield, catching the

last lights of the setting sun; in the open spaces flat bison-hides pegged out to stretch and dry; meat-racks groaning under strips of curing buffalo; before the lodges splendid horses, caparisoned and gayly decked with colored feathers. To one side along a winding stream, the main herd cropping grass and drinking from the river.

Feeding their eyes upon a scene each loved, the homing band stood etched against the sunset. And now from below, horsemen galloped to meet them.

Between the tents naked children ran about among the squaws. Warriors and old people swarmed forth to greet the well-loved Magpie and to learn of Black Shield's return—Black Shield, her youngest son, long captive to the Shoni. Of this great thing the village talk buzzed mightily. Men and women crowded near Kioga, to look upon his face, marveling that his eyes were not dark like theirs, but glowing blue-green in the firelight.

For this publicity Kioga paid the price of constant supervision. He could not again communicate with the prisoners, who were led to an inner lodge, still guarded against the hazard of seizure by the eager villagers.

Soon to Kioga came a message from the Magpie's painted tent. As all had been told to do in Kioga's presence, the messenger addressed Me-Kon-Agi in sign-talk. "The Magpie speaks. The camp moves tomorrow. Come now to her tepee to hear her words."

The tent-flap was open. Entering, the two men waited upon her.

"Sit," said Magpie, without looking up.

Observing her, Kioga glimpsed signs of an inner uneasiness. At her left squatted the imposing figure of Gro-Gan', who watched the Snow Hawk fixedly. For several minutes the old woman did not speak. Then holding in her lap the knife Kioga had carried into camp:

"By this knife, I knew you for my son," she signed slowly. "But one wise in many things"—indicating the medicine-man at her side—"would question you, that there may be no error. Answer with straight tongue, for he reads minds and hearts."

THE shaman then addressed Kioga, not unkindly:

"At morning the sun rises red. By day it grows yellow and sets red. Spring grass is pale, then green, then brown. A fox or an owl changes color with the season. These things are as the Great One made them. But,"—and here the shaman's watchful eyes stabbed Kioga's, —"when first Black Shield was carried away by the forest people, his eyes were brown. Now they are pale as new leaves. We have talked of this among us. How may it be explained?"

Magpie glanced up and as quickly down again, but Kioga saw fear in those deep-sunk eyes. Unless some acceptable explanation were forthcoming, quick violence might end his life. Slowly he answered:

"I would wait until all the great men are assembled and speak of this strange thing before them."

The shaman grunted, but found no fault with this, for he loved a good assembly. That night, before a great council, he put his question once again. Considering the character and office of

Gro-Gan' more than the plausibility of his explanation, Kioga now answered, in hand-talk:

"O respected wise ones, to whom all things mysterious are clear: Once, when still a boy, I fasted from food and drink for three days. I climbed upon a mountain to seek my *Manito,* who would remedy my poor vision. I had a dream. A white hawk came and spoke to me in the language of men.

"'Give me your eyes,' he said, 'and I will fly with them to where Those Above dwell, beyond the sky, that they may make them whole.'

"So saying, he plucked out both my eyes and carried them away. In the morning he returned while I slept. When I woke, behold, as I leaned above a pool to drink, I saw my eyes were blue. 'How, then, Spirit Hawk?' I said. 'You have brought back the wrong eyes, for mine were brown.'

"'True,' he answered; 'but henceforward these are yours. The Great Ones were angry that the eyes of mortal man had looked upon their mysteries. So they gave me a different pair and kept the others. Are not they keener than your own?'

"And when I looked, indeed this was true. My sight was cured.

"'But how will my people know me?' I asked. And Spirit Hawk spoke thus: 'Fear not. Some day you will meet one who will recognize you and explain this mystery. He who does so will be the wisest of all living men.' Then thunder roared and lightning flashed. Spirit Hawk flew into the sky, and I saw him no more."

DURING this recital there was silence in the crowded medicine-tent. "Since then," concluded Kioga, "I have sought in vain for one who could explain this mystery. And now again, O shamans, do I hope. What is the answer to this miracle?"

Amazed, but no whit doubting this curious tale,—for anything may happen in a fevered dream induced by hunger and thirst,—all those in the lodge turned to the rows of silent medicine-men. One after another shook his head. When none remained but Gro-Gan', all eyes fell upon that far-famed mystic. Like silent children, they waited for his interpretation of the medicine-dream.

Uneasily Gro-Gan' looked around him in this illustrious company. Swiftly he cast about for some good answer. He sensed the growing popularity of the Magpie's protégé, and felt the people's hope for a reply favorable to Kioga.

Tensely watching the workings of that crafty mind to see if his subtly sown seed would flower into rose or poison-weed, Kioga caught a sidelong glance from Magpie. It startled him by its mixture of admiration and understanding. Here was one, he feared, who was not hoodwinked by his strange tale.

A restless stir among the assemblage. Utter silence followed as Gro-Gan' stood up to make his revelations.

"This is the answer to the mystery," he said solemnly. "Spirit Hawk was a messenger from the Great Ones. The taking away of the eyes was a sign of

their anger with all our wars. The return of the sight was a sign of favor, a good omen for our people." A deep-toned murmur ran through the council-circle. "The Wa-Kanek will thrive from this day forward." Throwing wide his arms, powering his speech with fervent oratory, Gro-Gan' concluded: "Our bands will be reunited, the feuds of clan and family wiped out. Good hunting will be the rule. Many buffalo will fall. Our men will steal many horses. Our women will bear many children. The Wa-Kanek nation will increase, and our foes will stand in awe of us. I am Gro-Gan'. I have spoken!"

That night Magpie again summoned Kioga to sit in upon a meeting which was to decide the fate of the prisoners. One chief favored outright slaughter. Another argued that to separate them among the various bands were preferable. A third wished them put to torture as a test of mettle, and if they survived with honor, adoption into the tribe. Kioga offered no speech until Magpie turned to him with a question.

"What thinks Black Shield in this matter?"

The chiefs heard in wonder this unprecedented asking of a young man's counsel. Noting their feeling, "Wiser heads than mine should decide this, Mother," said Kioga. "But have I leave to speak my mind, O councilors?"

MOLLIFIED by this deferential speech, and eager as always to please the old woman, two of the chiefs gestured assent. But not until each had nodded agreement did Kioga respond.

"Are not these able-bodied men?" he asked. "Did they not fight well before capture? Do they not conduct themselves as brave prisoners, ignoring the gibes of our people? Are not their women well-formed and fertile—one with two future warriors at the breast, another quick with child?" He glanced about the council and won a general chorus of guttural approval. "What shall we gain, then, by slaughter? Feed them, rest them, take them on the hunt or to war. Thus you make them useful to you. Dead, they are no good to you. That is my mind. But it is for older heads to decide their fate."

After further talk, all but one agreed. In concession to the single dissenter, it was required of the captives that they submit to ordeal, the women alone excepted. Before the entire village a shaman pierced each captive through the flesh of the breast with bone skewers, drawing through the wounds a length of lariat rope, thus joining them all together. Then to the beat of the medicine-drums they were required to dance themselves free. Having done, so they were stripped and whipped with leather quirts to the river. The rite ended in purification ceremonies. That night, with song and ceremony the members of the migrant band came to the end of their long trek from one continent to another. Their goal was attained; their heritage of a wild free life renewed.

CHAPTER XXVI

The Humbling of Wolf Jaw

ACCEPTED thus among the Wa-Kanek, Kioga spent a day or two in company with Me-Kon-Agi. In language he progressed rapidly. But more than that, he learned that by the custom of the Wa-Kanek a man was a nobody until he had performed the several grand exploits which are required of all who would speak in council.

Of these the first was setting forth unarmed to capture horses from the enemy. By the reasoning of the tribesmen, to run off an enemy's horses is not on a level with common theft, but rather is in the nature of knightly enterprise.

That night, saying nothing to any man, but slipping out alone and unnoticed after the Indian manner, Kioga found the gray stallion among the other mounts, roped him and mounted.

Riding the tireless animal at a swift pace westward, an hour before dawn of the second day Kioga first glimpsed the glowing tents of a village, perhaps a mile away. The silence of midnight lay upon the plain. Somewhere a wolf's howl rose quavering. But the village was asleep.

Down-wind came the scent of grazing horses moving about in the inky blackness. Hobbling his own horse, Kioga stole toward the village on foot. Within calling distance he flattened against the grassy plain, with head alone upraised, seeking amid the prevailing scent of horses, the scent of him who doubtless guarded them.

Presently he could discern the form of an Indian sentry lying upon his back amid the herd, counting the stars of heaven and chanting a hunting-song. Ever closer crept Kioga, silent as the very genius of the night. The hunting-

song ended abruptly in a gurgle—the sentry threshed the grass with kicking feet, but silently, for about his head a light robe had been thrown, stifling all outcry. When his struggles ended, strong fingers bound a strip of the robe across his mouth, which was stuffed with grasses to prevent his giving warning.

Recovering his senses, the astonished Indian saw a dark form moving among the herd, speaking in soothing tones and gathering up all the lead ropes as he went. In bunches of five Kioga tied these to his own long rope. Rounding up the last of the animals, he urged them gently away at a walk to where the gray was concealed. Running them a mile farther, he secured them and returned to within a hundred yards of the village.

Selecting from among his arrows one with a round and hollow head, perforated with two small holes, he placed it against his bowstring and winged it away between the foremost great skin lodge and the others round about.

The arrow flew true, wailing its piercing song among the tepees of the village. It ended its career striking with a hollow sound against a war-shield hanging on a tripod.

Roused by the startling noise, braves were already darting forth from the lodges, weapons in hand. When the village was thoroughly roused, Kioga made known his presence. From the ridge whereon he stood blacked against the graying sky of dawn, the Snow Hawk sent pealing forth the sharp high war-yell of the Wa-Kanek.

Pausing only to note that he was seen, and to savor the clamor with which the Indians realized the loss of their horses, Kioga wheeled away, touched heel to mount and fled back to where he had left his booty.

THE day was fading before he paused to rest the animals; another dawn found the village of Magpie gazing with amazement upon the approach of a lone horseman, dull-eyed from lack of sleep, but convoying a band of forty fine horses. Straight before the lodge of the old matron, Kioga brought them.

Handing the rope to Me-Kon-Agi, he left the Indian staring, slipped from the gray and retired to his lodge. Dropping upon a buffalo robe, he slept the moment his head touched the bison-wool cushion.

Emerging from her tent, Magpie looked from Me-Kon-Agi to the herd and back again. "The mounts of Wolf Jaw!" she muttered with startled eyes. Then: "*Ahi,* but he lost no time! How Wolf Jaw did rave on learning of this! A lesson in horse-taking to the chief of the Fox Warriors. No good will come of this. But let us laugh while we may, warriors, for Wolf Jaw will soon be visiting us!"

And suiting the action to the word, Magpie laughed loud and long.

AND the visit Magpie anticipated was not long in materializing. Several days after Kioga's return with the horses, a scout brought in word that twenty men were approaching on foot across the plains. Later in the day, weary and footsore, an angry band of Wa-Kanek tribesmen entered the village, pausing sullenly before the Magpie's tent.

At their head stood Wolf Jaw himself, a savage more than six feet tall and burlier than most of his race, hiding his fury beneath a mask of frigid calm.

Presently Magpie emerged, looked upon her silent eldest son and said by way of greeting: "*Hau,* warrior, you have come far. Your moccasins are worn through until we can see your toes. Since when do horsemen of my tribes go afoot?"

Black as midnight grew the face of Wolf Jaw. From his great height he looked down upon the aged woman, conscious of the mockery running through her words. Little of respect appeared in his answering voice: "Since the men of Magpie's village steal horses from their own kin, old woman!" Then, unable longer to contain his fury: "Where are the sneaking women? Be they five or ten, I'll cut off their ears."

"They are not ten, nor yet five, O Talker-with-the-Big-Mouth," answered Magpie calmly. "And mayhap 'twill be thine own ears that come off, *ehu!*"

"Show me who did this thing!" demanded Wolf Jaw, carried away by his rage, and seizing Magpie roughly by the arm, he threatened her with upraised hand.

But an instant later, by what strange violent twist of magic he never knew, Wolf Jaw crashed flat upon his back to count the strange constellations appearing before his eyes.

The infuriated chief awoke to the realization that he had erred on the side of foolhardiness in daring to raise a hand against Magpie. Still writhing in that unbreakable grip, he was drawn to his

feet. His band stood surly and disarmed by the warriors in old Magpie's village.

Pinioned then by Me-Kon-Agi and several other village braves, Wolf Jaw was held in check, while Magpie, furious at this outrage, opened the bursting vials of her wrath upon his head. Finally, "Bind him to a stake," she ordered grimly. "Fetch my quirt."

Both orders were swiftly carried out. With her own hand Magpie then dealt twenty lashes, sparing neither vituperation nor energy in the process.

When she had done, Wolf Jaw lay striped and humiliated as never before in his life of uselessness to the tribe. Finally, breathing hard, Magpie gave her last orders:

"Give back their horses. But mount them, one and all, backwards, and drive them thus from my village." And with that, she stormed into her tent, to sit rocking back and forth before the fire for many an hour.

WOLF JAW'S answer to the reverses suffered in Magpie's village was aimed directly at the Snow Hawk.

Delivered through the mouth of Red Horse, a mounted messenger, and enunciated loudly before all the village, it was a long and acrimonious harangue. The substance of it was that Wolf Jaw defied the Black Shield to come forth mounted and armed for close combat, and that he, Wolf Jaw, would gladly repay him for the affronts of the previous day.

Since Wolf Jaw was renowned as the foremost exponent of mounted fighting among the Wa-Kanek, this was a challenge which even Me-Kon-Agi would have thought twice before accepting. Indeed, in taunting Kioga, comparatively untrained in the management of a horse, the bitter Indian anticipated a refusal, which would repair his prestige so that he might hold his head high again. Little did he expect this insolent reply, carried home to him by his messenger:

"Meet me on the Flat-Where-the-Rivers-Fork. Bring along as many of your men as wish to witness your downfall; arm yourself with whatever weapon you choose. But be sure to bring your strongest medicine-charms—and an extra horse to bear home your shield when you lie dead."

At the appointed place and time, two Indian horse bands converged upon the junction of the two rivers. Flanked by twenty of his men, Wolf Jaw stalked up and down on a big-boned roan with ornaments tied in mane and tail. He rode in a deep, high-pommeled saddle from which little less than a lightning-bolt might be expected to hurl him. At its horn hung rope and club. In his hand the great chief bore his feathered lance, bladed with copper; and above his crown was a splendid war-cap whose many feathers fluttered in the breeze. As he strutted back and forth, the vainglorious savage boasted of his previous victories.

"He is afraid to come forth from his burrow, lest the wolf snap him up. Coward once, coward always! Like boy, like man. And who denies that Black Shield was a cowardly child?"

"It may be so," said one of his warriors. "But here he comes."

Wheeling in surprise, Wolf Jaw saw his enemy approaching.

The Snow Hawk rode a smaller but active horse in lieu of the gray stallion, which he did not wish to risk in this encounter. In contrast with Wolf Jaw, he was naked to the light cincture about his waist. That single plume, painted now in recognition of his earlier exploit, still hung from his hair. His limbs were bare to the high moccasins. He rode lightly upon a plain bull-hide saddle, which was equipped with the usual coil of rope and a war-hammer.

Scarce had he appeared, when Wolf Jaw drew apart from his followers and stood waiting on the field, toward which Kioga presently rode, followed by the good wishes and advice of his friends. Where Kioga's men stood, many more of the villagers had appeared; and people from Wolf Jaw's distant village likewise increased the crowd.

Voicing a derisive yell, Wolf Jaw heeled his big-boned mount, and with headdress flying and lance couched in the crook of his arm, bore down upon Kioga, quirting his horse incessantly.

IN turn the Snow Hawk came streaking up the grassy stretch, riding as if welded to his seat. Like his foeman, he carried his lance as if to ride it to the mark. But before they came together, the Black Shield was seen to poise the slender weapon and launch it forth. A yell of excitement greeted the cast.

Luck was with the enemy, whose mount, stumbling, threw him momentarily sidewise in his seat; and the long lance, grazing his head, merely carried away the ornate headdress, which it pinned to

earth behind him. And then a sigh went up from Kioga's friends; for as he neared the other, Wolf Jaw's couched spear leveled at his breast must in another instant have transpierced him. The sigh was followed by a shout of admiration and wonder. For almost at the instant of being hit, him they knew as Black Shield dropped behind his mount's body on the off side; the spear passed harmlessly through empty air, as he clung with left hand and heel only, and the echo of his laugh reached those who watched.

PIVOTING, Wolf Jaw returned to the attack, intent upon skewering this unexpectedly wily prey upon the lance. But it was not to be, for with his war-hammer, Kioga dashed the splintered spear to earth. Seizing his own club, the Indian then met Kioga head-on. The crack of stone on stone sounded sharply as the Indian sought to beat down the Snow Hawk's guard. But none knew better than Kioga this art of cut and parry, and the other's club was first to fly from his numbed hand. For the fraction of an instant Wolf-Jaw rode at his opponent's mercy. But Kioga appeared to ignore this opportunity, and permitted him to pass on unbludgeoned.

At once Wolf Jaw reached for his rope. But even with the thought he heard the hiss of thrown lariat, and the Black Shield's hard noose snapped down about his waist, pinning one arm to his side. Desperately he slashed himself free, and riding swiftly near his fallen war-bonnet, snatched up Kioga's abandoned spear, and poising this, returned to strike anew.

A jeer from either side greeted Wolf Jaw's act. For in retrieving the spear he broke a rule of combat forbidding the use of any arm abandoned. And almost at once the desperate Wolf Jaw again violated a canon of horseback combat—the rule which calls it unethical to kill a mount in order to destroy its rider. With one mighty cast the Indian drove the spear through the lungs of Kioga's animal, and the luckless beast sank to earth, blood pouring from its nostrils.

A lightning twist, and Kioga avoided being pinned as the thunder of Wolf Jaw's coming drummed loudly in his ears. But the Indian leaned far over, dropped his coil neatly about the Snow Hawk and snapped it tight. Yelling in triumph, Wolf Jaw spurred cruelly, and in another instant would have jerked Kioga into the deadly drag which seldom ends in anything but death.

Silenced in anticipation of the approaching end, the onlookers waited tensely, scarce breathing. Only one among them, sent up a shout of understanding. Me-Kon-Agi alone had seen the meaning of the leap which carried Kioga across the fallen horse, taking secure purchase about its round barrel with the Indian's rope.

Wolf Jaw had overreached and was spurring his own downfall. As the rope's slack leaped taut, those watching saw the Indian fly bodily from his horse and come crashing to earth, still in the saddle, which had been jerked completely from his mount. Unluckily for Wolf Jaw, the saddle was uppermost, and in falling struck him senseless, while his horse pounded away across the plain.

His friends carried him away unconscious, later to think over the bitterness of defeat at the hands of this despised upstart, and to awake among braves who had lost every stitch of clothing they owned, in bad bets upon their fallen champion.

But in Magpie's village there was great rejoicing, for the old beldame's men, inherent gamblers like most of their race, had also wagered their all upon the outcome—and won.

DURING this time among the Wa-Kanek, the Snow Hawk had sought to forget what was past. The white woman he had known and loved, the period of his life spent in civilization, his friend James Munro the scientist—all these he put from mind.

But one day a Wa-Kanek warrior returned from a lone raid into forest territory dominated by the Shoni. Among the man's trophies stripped from a fallen foe, were objects at which the wild horsemen stared in wonderment: a necklace of empty cartridge-shells first caught Kioga's eye. Then from a captured pouch the warrior produced several circles of copper and silver. They were coins—American coins of small denomination. The pouch contained a tiny red-painted magnet, to whose horns clung the familiar bit of iron, and also a small strip of translucent stuff, evenly perforated at either side—a discarded bit of exposed motion-picture film.

All of these trifling items had been scrupulously wrapped in deerskin, after the manner of medicine-charms. Clearly their dead owner had considered them possessed of magical properties.

So too did the Wa-Kanek. Me-Kon-

Agi bid fifty horses for the magnet only. Gro-Gan' raised it to a hundred. But the owner would not part with his jealously guarded trophies. Of all who examined them, Kioga alone knew them for what they were.

Another surprise awaited him:

In a captured scalp which the returned warrior next showed, woven into three strands of hair, was a length of cheap gold-plated chain—one of the small trinkets from the *Narwhal's* trade-chests.

With narrowed, puzzled eyes and speculative gaze, Kioga scrutinized these things intently; then, leaning back, he laughed inwardly at a momentary uneasiness. Doubtless they were but a few survivals of the American yacht's enforced visit to Nato'wa many moons ago. In that belief he strove to dismiss the matter from his mind. And yet—he could not. . . . Perhaps it was for this very reason that he decided upon a raid into the domains of the P'Kuni, and persuaded a little group of the most adventurous to go with him.

With ceremony and dance the little band prepared themselves for their journey, and set forth well armed and mounted at dusk on the long trip into the hunting-grounds of the hostile tribe.

At dusk of the fourth day they came upon the bloody work of the fierce scalp-hunting foe. Three Wa-Kanek tents of an outpost clan stood silent and forlorn upon the grass. On one a raven perched.

Dismounting, Kioga and Me-Kon-Agi read a grim tale of surprise and merciless slaughter. In one tent the inhabitants lay in recumbent attitudes, slain in their sleep. The other tents told of an alarm too late to save the scalps of the inmates. Each person, including the three children, had been hacked and mutilated in frightful manner, and among them the Indians recognized relatives and friends.

With zeal to meet the foe and avenge their dead multiplied, they then rode on, sleeping by day, riding in darkness as much as possible; the night being short, however, much of their travel must be done in the light.

ON the afternoon of the fifth day, swollen black thunderheads loomed up on the horizon, and the fresh damp wind of impending storm fanned them briskly. Thunder grumbled into the distance, and soon the prairie grass that swept the horses' bellies bent in obeisance to the winds.

Casting frequent anxious glances into the sky, Me-Kon-Agi counseled seeking shelter and was seconded by Gro-Gan, who accompanied the party as invoker of good fortune. Kioga agreed, and they paused in a deep hollow beneath an overhanging bluff—and none too soon. Like charging battalions the swollen clouds rolled near in awesome shapes, swinging close above the hills and looming in mighty masses like strange monstrous creatures of the sky seeking prey upon the earth.

Then came a whisper, as if some mighty giant drew breath between his distant mumblings. Mud-brown clouds thronged the vault, shot with ominous green and copper hues. Chained golden lightnings throbbed intermittently amid the looming vapors. . . . The whisper rose to a deep disquieting drone. A gleaming curtain advanced out of the distance, preceded by a strange and terrifying quiver of the ground.

Suddenly a prairie fox went floating past, as if blown by the breeze. Close behind him came a pair of wolves, and twenty more in as many seconds. Then a little band of antelope bounded along, as if giving chase to their natural enemies who fled before them. Close above them, with driving pinions came ten white majestic birds, immense in size, voicing a strange, low-keyed trumpetlike cry, resounding deep and resonant. They were

another species of vanishing American to which Nato'wa is the final sanctuary. Common to these savage plainsmen, they would have proved a rare sight to a continental bird-lover—*Cygnus buccinator*, to an ornithologist; trumpeter swan is their better name—pursuing as it were a band of eagles winging in their van.

A band of young wild horses raced near the waiting Indians. After them came beasts less fleet of foot: a small herd of bison, with tongues hanging a foot from their mouths, a crippled elk, an aging grizzly bear—none too slow to flee what came behind. All the plain was filled with birds and beasts of each degree.

The antelope herd wheeled, milling, pawing the earth, darting out and back, bleating in piteous uncertainty, then whisked away, revealing a panting puma which had padded heavily along unnoticed in their very midst. Twenty yards away a tiger of the tawny plains variety clawed frantically at a bank and took snarling cover there. For in this moment the emperor of all living beasts was one with the timid hare, disdaining not to hide from the onrushing terror.

Even the Indians drew their horses closer back within their shelter, and they were pale beneath their bronze; and Me-Kon-Agi shouted above the nearing roar: "The storm-gods do their worst this day. Draw in and wait. You'll see—"

The tempest swept closer still. A mighty terrifying sound was heard, as of countless hoofs beating the earth. Before their shelter the grass was lashed flat by a sudden storm of milky pellets. And a female of the most timid of Nato'wan prairie game, the star-gazelle, crept shivering into the hollow under the bluff, leading a little fawn. Both crouched quivering among the Indians, driven in this extremity to seek haven among men, the worst foes of all.

The full violence of the hail storm now raged. The ground was as one great resounding drum bombarded by a myriad gelid spheres. A mighty bison bull fell suddenly not far away, struck down by hailstones large as apples.

The storm was over as quickly as it had begun. In its swath the plain was littered with dead and dying things, and covered with a sheet of glittering pearl as the hailstones jellied together, melting slowly into the warm earth. Everywhere the caribou-birds were busy. None others, save a band of Indians and a star-gazelle with young, moved upon this field of desolation.

NEARING at last the border of the P'Kuni domain next day, Kioga and his band proceeded with greater caution, keeping to the deep ravines. When they must expose themselves, they rode close against their horses' necks with blankets updrawn, in simulation of the shaggy buffalo who were their daily companions on the plains. And so riding ever in the gullies and scouting the country ahead before crossing any prominent ridge, they finally glimpsed the bluish smoke of a camp-fire rising from behind a hill.

Secreting themselves and their mounts in a gully, fringed with prairie grasses, they waited for dusk, and while waiting planned the raid to come. And that success be assured, Kioga argued against the folly of lingering to take scalps.

"We have come for horses," he said. "Let us leave revenge to the near-clansmen of the slain. We shall double our prestige by returning, every man alive, to give away his plunder."

The Indians agreed, though with reluctance. Remembrance of the newly killed dead of their own tribe was still fresh in mind.

Leaving their horses in the ravine and stripping to the barest essentials of weapons and apparel, the little war-party left its hiding-place at dusk. Nearing the village, the raiders divided, each going his separate way according to an agreed-upon plan. Kioga was to concen-

trate upon lifting as many horses and as much equipment as he could make away with. The others were to prowl among the shadows near the tents and take care of any likely to give the alarm, liberate Wa-Kanek captives, if any, and carry off all possible plunder. All were to meet at the ravine an hour before dawn, unless an alarm was given before that time, in which case it was to be every man for himself. . . .

The P'Kuni village slept deep and unsuspectingly, slumbering off the victory-feast which had celebrated the return of the scalp-laden warriors. And ten stealthy shadows stole ever nearer, blending at last with the shadows of the tall dark lodges. Nine separate shields vanished from beside nine separate lodges. One by one Kioga's band slipped forth to deposit the booty in the ravine. The take amounted in all to six fine bows, four otter-skin quivers stuffed with arrows, many spears, war-shields, articles of medicine-value and a long string of fresh scalps ripped from Wa-Kanek skulls only two days before.

Kioga, meanwhile, had done his swift work among the enemy horse herds, and came out of the darkness leading sixty of the finest, many equipped with their war-paraphernalia. Unhappily, several of his company had arrived before him, and not content with the fruits of their raid, they must return to raid anew. Kioga, hastening to dissuade them, heard and saw a sudden stir in one tepee.

Six Bear, busy killing and scalping in defiance of orders, had knocked something inflammable into the coals of the lodge fire. A squaw's scream of terror rose shrill and strident. Several dark figures sped forth, dropping further booty as they came. In a moment uproar rose among the clustered tents.

Two of Kioga's braves, caught in the middle of the village were seen making a wild dash for liberty, the P'Kuni in close pursuit with tomahawks brandishing. Equipped with wings of fear, the marauders outraced the villagers and reached the plain amid a shower of following arrows. There for the first time Six Bear faltered and stumbled down.

Aided by two companions, he rose again; but by now the P'Kuni, strung out loosely behind, were gaining on them. The Snow Hawk's voice checked their demoralization:

"Back to the horses! Carry him between you. I will follow in a little while. Haste, or we are all dead men!"

THE Indians melted into the night. Kioga waited, hidden in a small hollow. The P'Kuni, pursuing in long open formation came on, one by one. Several were grappled by an indistinct shadow with the agility and strength of a tiger, before the remainder took warning that danger lurked in the hollow. And before they could rally united, a fleet figure sped away at an angle from the direction taken by the pursued.

The hounds were turned. Arrows and tomahawks flew thick about the Snow Hawk's head, piercing the ground about him as the Indians followed yelling. But not their swiftest runner could hope to match strides with the Snow Hawk, and soon he left them behind, circled, and came back to where his anxious band awaited him.

"To horse!" he ordered. "Spare not the quirt! Pursuit will follow." And springing upon the gray stallion he set an example which the others imitated, leading the P'Kuni war-mounts behind them.

And with most of their horses gone, the P'Kuni could only count their dead and wounded, and their losses in plunder.

Thus, to the tune of victory Kioga led forth his first Wa-Kanek exploit band; and of those who returned, none save Six Bear and Kioga himself, who had suffered and ignored an arrow wound, bore more than the scratches of travel.

CHAPTER XXVII

The Battle of the Tents

SOON came an event which sent Magpie into a frenzy of fury. A band of P'Kuni hostiles attacked another of her villages. The toll of that midnight visit was forty dead. Of these more than half were children, the remainder old men and squaws.

Worst of all the P'Kuni, victorious and drunk with success, were reported on their way to attack Magpie's own village in the absence of the hunters. Striding up and down within her tepee, she vented her wrath upon Wolf Jaw and his subordinate warriors.

"How shall our handful of braves repulse two hundred P'Kuni scalp-hunters?" she demanded at length.

Wolf Jaw shifted uncomfortably; then indicating the Snow Hawk with a hand:

"Ask the mighty Black Shield," he answered sullenly. "He knows all things, or so you'd have us think."

"Our ways are still strange to him," defended Magpie swiftly.

"Strange or not," ventured Kioga, "it is plain to me that we need not fear the P'Kuni."

"How," questioned Wolf Jaw sarcastically, "would you meet them with our little force?"

"Small or great would be the same," returned Kioga quietly, "—since we shall not face them. We will abandon our village; we will give the P'Kuni our lodges as a gift, with all their contents."

Magpie wheeled upon him almost fiercely. "Flee? Like cowards, without a fight? What words are these? Your wounds have let your blood out. Your mind is still weak."

Such counsel from Black Shield the fearless sounded strange in Magpie's ears.

"My knees may be weak," answered Kioga, "but my head and heart are strong. And they tell me there is a way whereby if we give all, we give nothing. Listen."

The old woman gave careful ear. The fire crackled lower as Kioga talked. A silence ensued, broken by Magpie at last, who spoke with narrowed eyes glittering excitedly. *"Ehu-ah!* But you have a good head, my son! A moment, while I think. . . . It is good! We'll do it!"

FIVE minutes later the heralds were calling Magpie's message through the camp. "Move! *Move!* Collect your horses and weapons. Leave everything else behind. The P'Kuni are coming!"

Seeing that Magpie and Kioga were already leaving, surrounded by their warriors, the others followed suit. The village emptied. On its outskirts Kioga assembled his men and gave instructions.

All who could be spared returned and entering the tepees, spent some time therein, at an occupation invisible from without. Then all followed on the track of the main band, vanishing in a long black line among the eastern hills. As they disappeared, from out the west came two painted P'Kuni horsemen, to pause upon a hilltop and sweep the plain and its deserted village with their eyes.

On another watching-place, flattened against the crest of a ridge like serpents, three silent figures watched the foreign scouts, behind whom black storm-clouds were swelling up. Not the breath of a breeze stirred on the prairie. But the distant thunder whispered threatfully behind the scowling clouds as the silent watchers vanished in a ravine.

Thus the P'Kuni warriors, keyed to the highest pitch of ferocity in anticipation of strong resistance, came upon a deserted village which they took in its entirety without the loosing of a single arrow. The silent ring of tepees contained not a single occupant. The exodus had been not long before. That it had been hasty and inspired by fear the P'Kuni did not doubt, for upon the flat were many fresh-killed buffalo, abandoned. And in the tents the pipes were freshly filled, waiting only to be smoked.

Upon the waiting meat the P'Kuni warriors fell, to glut themselves with the eagerness of famished men. In the abandoned tepees they made their bivouac for the night, accounting themselves favored by their lucky spirits. Here they would sleep out the storm, already raging. Pipes were lit. The usurpers cast themselves upon the comfortable buffalo-robes.

"They must have been expecting us," remarked one warrior facetiously, puffing with satisfaction upon a well-filled pipe, and little knowing what truth his words had uttered. . . .

Those were no lucky spirits who crept upon the gorged enemy, but specters of vengeance. Down their naked backs the warm rains flowed. Their dripping horses trod fetlock deep in mud. When the riders slipped from their backs, it was to crawl forward upon the P'Kuni in a mixture of mud and muck whose sole virtue was that it helped camouflage them from their foes.

With all the tepees tightly closed against the storm, their task was made the simpler. Only a handful had been left on guard by the P'Kuni. Not by the wildest stretch of imagination could have any foe have been expected to assail them on such a night as this.

Creeping up under cover of robes and darkness, Kioga's men arranged for the quick disposal of the sentries. Whipping nooses deftly about the necks of the sleepy guards and stifling all outcry, one by one the sentries were hauled through the muck, to where other Wa-Kanek waited, knives in hand.

LARGE and well occupied were the tents. Men smoked and joked who did not sleep; meanwhile the rain pelted heavily against the thick sides of the comfortable leathern lodges, and the wind sang among the closed vent-holes above.

Now silent rain-wet shadows slipped from tent to tent, knotting the laces of

the door-skins. When all was in readiness, at a given signal a shadow host of Indians on foot poured rushing into the village. Suddenly the strongest men tore up the lodge-poles, precipitating the tepees down upon the earth.

The village fire suddenly rose higher with a gust of wind. In its light a fearful scene of carnage was enacted. The tents lay fallen, like immense bags covering struggling, squirming forms. Unable to see their assailants and terribly handicapped by the stifling covering of buffalo-hide, which closed them in amid the smoke and flames of the lodge-fires, the P'Kuni suffered awful execution.

Soon fell a silence more terrible than the clamor preceding it. Such had been the fury of the attack that only one man within survived.

And that one owed his life solely to Kioga's intervention.

Aghast at the extent of bloodshed, the Snow Hawk glimpsed a lean young warrior snaking forth stealthily from a hole slashed in an outer lodge. With yells his men would have fallen upon this last of the survivors, but Kioga intervened.

"Killing is at an end," declared the Black Shield. And to the P'Kuni: "Take this horse and return to your people. Tell them to think twice before again they attack the Wa-Kanek. Tell them day and night are all alike to us. We never rest; we never sleep. Tell them that, you who are the last of two hundred warriors."

With that he brought his quirt down upon the P'Kuni's mount. Horse and rider vanished into the darkness.

THE white man's war is dark and ugly, cold-blooded as the intertwinings of two serpents. The red man's war-path glitters with excitement. Deeds of daring rank above blood-letting. Following this second victory over the P'Kuni, the Snow Hawk faced an embarrassment of applicants eager to accompany him on raids or forays of any kind.

As Kioga rose in the estimation of the Wa-Kanek, Wolf Jaw lost proportionately, until one night there came to the Snow Hawk a deputation of warriors bearing a pipe which they offered to him on behalf of the Fox Warriors, the same warrior society that Wolf Jaw long had headed.

Having smoked, Kioga was escorted to the towering ceremonial lodge of the Foxes, and its ritualistic secrets revealed to him. And that night a question he had long pondered resolved itself into a solution. These competing societies, for all that they trained men in the arts of war, also sundered the nation as a whole, introducing rivalries often bitter and hostile. The cohesion of Magpie's scattered tribes would be impossible so long as such a condition existed.

Inquiry had informed him that the next largest society was that called the men of Flint, headed by White Bear, a famous chief long estranged from the Magpie, to the detriment of both. . . . Wolf Jaw was superseded. Kioga turned toward the enlistment of White Bear.

CHAPTER XXVIII

An Ally Won

MASTER now of as many men as he cared to command, Kioga and a small band set forth at sundown to visit the village of White Bear, chief of the so-called Flint Warriors. Arrived at Mitoka, or the Smoky Village, to the advancing heralds he spoke thus:

"Black Shield, son of Magpie, would smoke a pipe with White Bear and cement his friendship with these gifts." Whereupon he produced a pipe ornamented with intricate carvings and plumes, and in addition a pair of prize piebald mares.

The herald accepted the gifts and passed into the village, crying the news of Black Shield's coming. In a little while he returned to conduct the visitors into the presence of Magpie's long-estranged son. The meeting was in silence according to Indian practice. Kioga and his band were conducted to a half-open tent, beneath which each took his place in the proper order of precedence. The pipe was lighted and passed from hand to hand. No sound interrupted the age-old decorum of the council.

When all had smoked, White Bear stood up. Kioga beheld a man in the prime of life, six feet six inches tall, and the very antithesis of Wolf Jaw in the simplicity of his attire. He wore a plain blanket, unadorned. Three long feathers, tipped with fur, and notched, were all his headdress. He spoke disdainfully and straight before him, looking neither to right nor left.

"White Bear has counted many *coups*, and leads the Flint Warriors. You have humiliated one of his own blood. His heart is therefore bad toward you.

"White Bear is no enemy of Magpie. Though his brother chiefs would make a

league against her, he will not join it. The Magpie is proud and jealous. White Bear was ambitious for honors. She cast him forth, and would share no power with him. His heart is bad about this, and he came away to ride at the head of the Flint Warriors.

"I know not why I tell Black Shield this. Why should a seasoned warrior counsel with a nobody? When your deeds qualify you to speak, do so then, and I will hear you. When this council is over, leave my village before my men slit your throats. Take back your pipe and gifts. I am White Bear. My tongue is straight. I have spoken!"

A curt and arrogant reply to Kioga's conciliatory approach. But reasoning that there was probably some justice in White Bear's grievance, Kioga withheld any open resentment of the contemptuous terms. Not so his companions, whose eyes reflected the anger in their hearts. In the heat of passion hot words would have threatened battle, had not an interruption come.

From the edge of the village two herd-boys came running in with news that the P'Kuni were riding hard upon them from the west. White Bear jerked out orders to his own men:

"We talk, and the enemy comes to catch us asleep and half our warriors out hunting. Up, braves! To horse and follow me!"

The council came to a sudden end. Kioga's men rose uncertain as to what they should do. But not Kioga! Pointing after White Bear, "We will follow him," he said quickly.

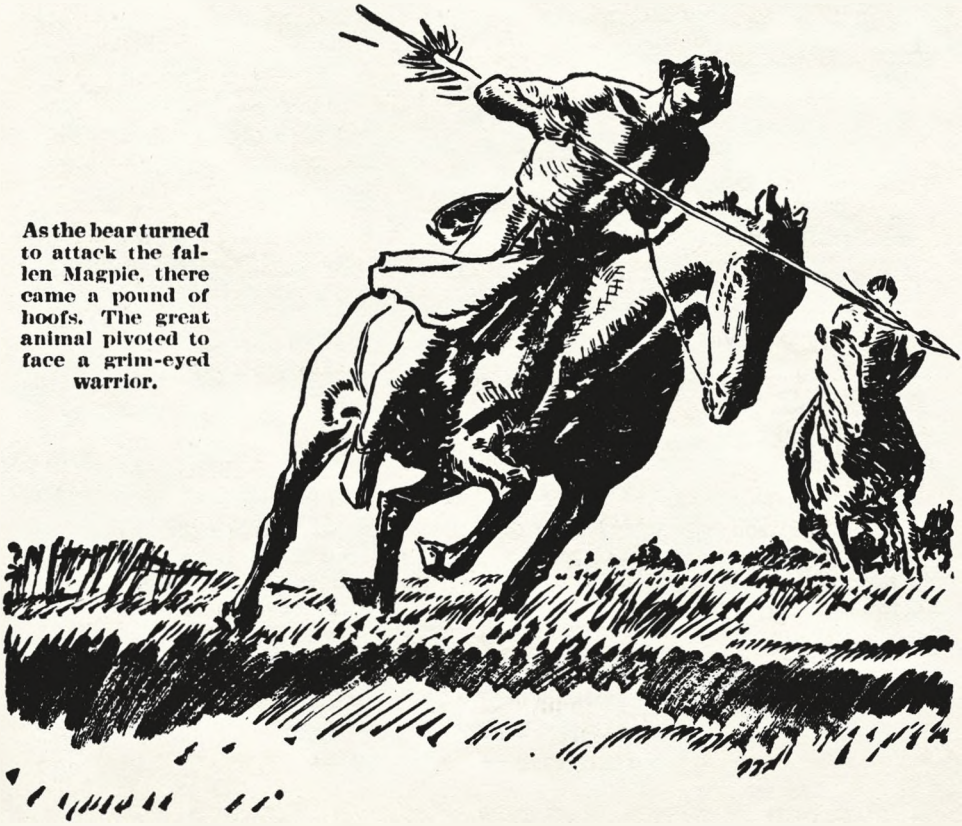
Me-Kon-Agi interrupted: "He has refused our offer of friendship; why should we aid him, after his insults?"

"Because we are all Wa-Kanek and there is enough enmity within the tribes," snapped Kioga in reply. "We'll show him deeds that will prove our right to say yes and no in council. What say you to that, Gro-Gan?"

Thus appealed to, the medicine-man threw up a hand, his tomahawk flashing in it. As one man the others followed him, rushing to their horses.

There was confusion in the village as the mounted warriors swept through. The P'Kuni scouts, finding their surprise nipped in the bud by the vigilance of the herd-boys, withdrew to lure the warriors farther onto the plains. Nothing could better have pleased White Bear in the absence of his hunters.

But dismay followed when from the



As the bear turned to attack the fallen Magpie, there came a pound of hoofs. The great animal pivoted to face a grim-eyed warrior.

ravines on either side of a cut there poured three times his own strength of riders. The warriors of White Bear were swiftly surrounded by a mobile ring of mounted P'Kuni, discharging their arrows in swift succession, from behind the necks of their mounts.

Thus far had the fighting progressed when Kioga and his thirty warriors joined the fray, appearing as from nowhere to fall savagely upon the P'Kuni rear, hacking them down with their war-hammers and tomahawks. White Bear, to his amazement, found himself reinforced by those whose friendship he had refused with such contempt. The one he had so recently labeled an unseasoned stripling was hewing a valiant way through the P'Kuni.

Suddenly Black Shield's horse sank, struck through by a spear. A P'Kuni chieftain, yelling in wild triumph, leaned far out in his saddle above Kioga with war-ax upraised. But as it came whistling down, Black Shield side-stepped. White Bear saw something snakelike coil from his hand, writhe forth and lap about the passing warrior's throat, as Kioga wielded the lash. An instant later the P'Kuni came out of the saddle heels over head; and one of Kioga's followers ended his fighting with a slash of the tomahawk.

Not ten feet apart, Kioga and White Bear crouched behind their dead mounts. A sleet of arrows fell hissing thick about them. But seeing the accuracy with which Black Shield was bringing the enemy from their saddles, White Bear was moved to laugh outright, in sheer joy of battle. Glancing at him in astonishment, Kioga met the older man's eye and heard him yell: "Two horses that you cannot bring down their chief on the painted mare!"

Kioga glanced across the waving grass-tops, tore an arrow from the body of his horse, and laid it on the string.

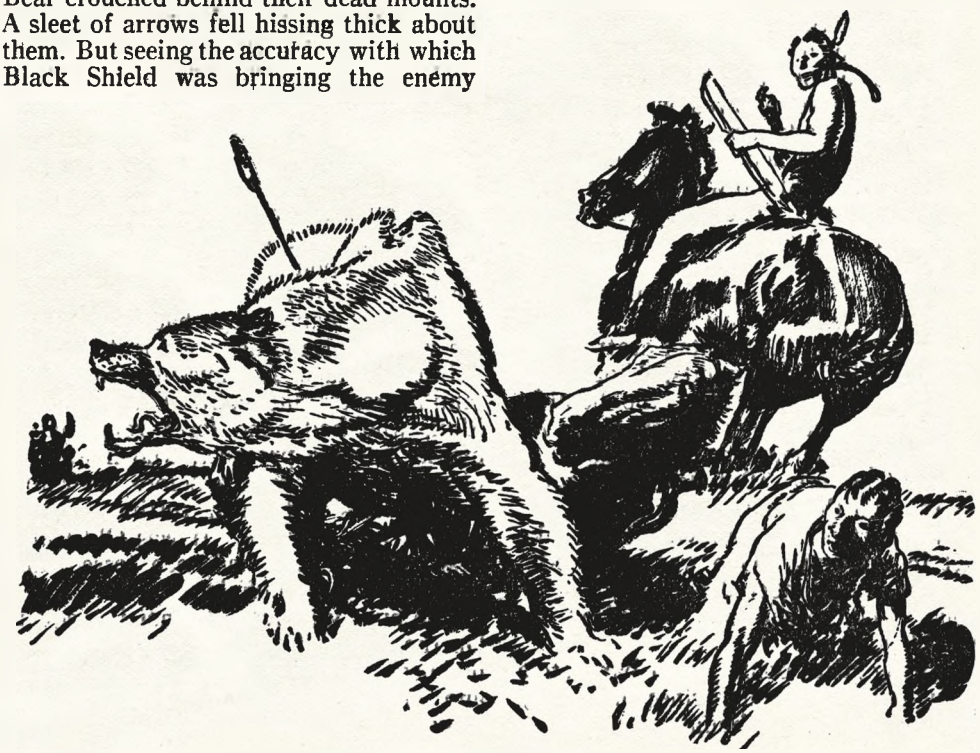
"It is worth a higher bet," he called. "For five horses I'll put my arrow in his medicine-shield."

"Ten you cannot even hit him!" retorted White Bear. The distant chief paused, dismounted to cut and rip the scalp from one of White Bear's dead.

"I'll gamble!" returned Kioga, taking careful aim. The limbs of his bow bent slowly back. The flint point pricked his bow-hand knuckle. Carefully he allowed for distance and the little breeze—and let the arrow fly. Close along the waves of grass it sped, a neutral streak.

"You lose!" cried White Bear, confident the arrow would not carry home.

"I win!" cried Kioga in answer. To the amazement of White Bear, the shield leaped from the saddle and rolled, transfixed by the arrow. "And now the rider," called the marksman, aiming above the distant empty saddle. Swift as thought, another arrow spun away. Before it was half sped, the P'Kuni warrior swung up



to his seat, then threw up both hands—in one the scalp—and fell to earth as if lightning had struck him.

A loud cry of admiration came from White Bear.

"I'd rather call you friend than foe, if the Great Ones spare us," he shouted.

Kioga laughed.

"Was that not what we came for?" he called, between arrows.

The P'Kuni had little war left in them now. The deadly shooting from behind the fallen horses had taken the heart out of them. They were in retreat, pausing not even to drag off their dead. . . .

White Bear selected ten good mounts to make good his wager with Kioga, laughing the while. The Snow-Hawk presented him with the arrowed shield. They drank from a common horn cup. Again Kioga broached the subject of his visit.

The brows of White Bear knit; then he smilingly said: "It is long since I looked upon Magpie's face. I'll go with you, warrior, and tell her of that shot."

And so, with twenty warriors accompanying them from his village, he returned with Kioga to Magpie's tents. The meeting took place before the painted lodge. The tall warrior looked down upon the aged woman with apparent coldness. She returned his gaze fiercely, unrelentingly. The man was first to yield, and held forth a pleading hand.

"Mother, forgive. I was in the wrong. I hungered for honors. I could not wait. Admit me to your tent again."

The Magpie swallowed with working throat. She made a wry face and spat, angry that tears should be in her eyes. "Pah! I love you too well. Come home and be welcome. There is work to do, and I am getting old."

ONE morning, sleeping soundly in his tepee, with his feet to the fire and his head against the painted draft-screen pictured with his exploits, Kioga was awakened by the cries of the heralds. From a far bluff a smoke-signal rose into the sky, announcing the finding of game. The cry "Buffalo! *Buffalo!*" ran through the camp like wildfire.

Two parties left the village to take part in the hunt. One was under Me-Kon-Agi and numbered Kioga among its group. The other was organized by Wolf Jaw.

Leading spare ponies, each band stole through the cuts and ravines until they came upon signs of buffalo.

Shortly thereafter, topping a ridge, the herds were viewed. As far as the eye could see the shaggy bison thronged the plain, their enormous humps looming everywhere. Wolves hung on the outer fringes of the herd, eager to drag down the sick or weak. Vultures and buzzards circled overhead, and far aloft eagles gyrated with motionless wings.

At a signal from Me-Kon-Agi his Indians began the circling movement of the "surround," streaming off to either side. When they had ringed a part of the herd, they hurled their mounts in among the shaggy legion.

THE buffalo horse Kioga rode was well trained in its work, quick-footed as a cat. Ranging up beside a plunging hump, he drove his arrows deep, and in the first few minutes he brought down many buffalo, until his arrow supply was exhausted. Returning for another quiver, he paused a moment to watch the scene. The men were doing well, milling the herd with practiced skill. A cloud of choking dust overhung the plain.

An Indian's horse stepped into a badger-hole and went down. Before the man could rise, a lean old bull swerved and gored him fiercely. A rush of black forms passed over the spot, and Kioga could not see who it was had fallen. . . .

When the kills were finally counted, again Wolf Jaw's party stood at a loss. The rival party had slaughtered eighty-seven bison, identified by their red-marked arrows. Wolf Jaw's band had killed but fifty-three.

The humps, tongues and boss-ribs were highest prized, and the best of each of these was set aside to regale the hunters. And of all who later feasted on the juicy roast hump and the succulent marrow of the leg-bones, the eyes of none gleamed brighter than the members of the migrant band Kioga had brought all the way from another continent.

But one face was missing from that familiar roster this night. For Old Crow Man, who had gone forth rejuvenated by the hunting prospect, who knew the bison-herds of America before the white robe-hunters left them rotting on the prairie, was no more. It was Old Crow Man whom Kioga had seen tossed and trampled by the buffalo.

The hunt was over, but not its sequel. On the skirts of the herd a grizzly bear had been roped down by a dozen warriors and goaded almost to madness with lance-points. In an enclosure of ropes

and tepee poles a huge bison bull was being tormented, preparatory to pitting one against the other.

When both animals were deemed fierce enough, the bear's bonds were cut, liberating him into the bull's enclosure, round which the Indians had gathered to witness the baiting. Almost instantly the animals came together. Bellowing with head down, the bull pounded in full charge upon the grizzly. Evading lightly for all its mighty bulk, the bear reared and scored bloody furrows along the bison's flanks. Hooking the horny foe with one paw, the grizzly swung suddenly upon the bull's back and reached forward to seize the muzzle and crack the spine.

Unable to shake him loose, the bull charged the pole fence, with all the power which comes of insane rage and pain. At once the flimsy structure collapsed.

Crowding near the enclosure, the Indians had sat their horses, Magpie and Kioga among them. Now bison and grizzly rolled struggling on the ground under the very forefeet of Magpie's horse, dust rising above them in a cloud.

Amid the bellowing of the locked beasts, rose the startled shouts of the Indians. The nearest warrior, in an excess of bravado, dropped from his horse and sank an arrow in the bear. He had not time to rue his foolhardy act.

With a swiftness past all comprehension, the grizzly whirled, and its jaws chopped shut upon the savage's face. A muffled cry was all he uttered as the bear flung him aside. And the bison, charging through the scattering Indians, trampled him in gaining the freedom of the open plain.

IN all the wild excitement, the Indians fell over one another in avoiding the fierce rushes of the angry bear. Old Magpie, not so quick as her younger companions, allowed her mount to step in reach of the bear's claws. One mighty slash of the hooked paw, and her horse was crushed to its knees. Lacking other intervention, that had surely been the end of the old matron-chief.

But as the bear turned to attack the fallen Magpie, there came a sharp pound of hoofs. Sensing a new menace, the animal pivoted to face a grim-eyed warrior, looming suddenly behind a feathered lance, its bronze point gleaming.

The bear struck at the oncoming weapon. The copper point, slightly deflected, but with Kioga's weight and all the force of his racing mount behind it, drove through flesh and bone, and buried itself in the sod.

For a short space the impaled grizzly lay quivering, then heaved upon its feet. But almost too quickly for eye to register, the rider had dismounted and leaped forward to attack.

The bear lunged, its curving claws slashing empty air, for Kioga was under the blow. Seizing the deep-sunk blade, he writhed round behind the animal. With knees clamped upon the bear's barrel he twisted his fingers in the shaggy mane, sank his horn spurs deep, clung, beyond range of jaws or claws.

Now the mighty beast reared. Kioga, however, only made good his hold, seeking firmer grip upon the knife, to plunge it yet again, with greater effect.

Down came the bear, rolling over and over to dislodge its unseen assailant, but vainly. Still Kioga hung on, waiting. Then suddenly the knife came forth halfway, then stabbed plunging in again. Gouts of blood sprang from the bear's nostrils as in its death throe it twisted facing the human enemy.

A long-drawn gasp sounded from the onlookers. It was seen that the brute had seized Black Shield against its hairy breast. Together they went down for the last time, the long black claws cutting deep, the snapping jaws seeking a death-hold.

Then the monster form went lax, and the claws fell limp and loose. An instant later a dozen spears were plunged into the dead beast as the Indians cast off their lethargy.

With a low cry Magpie bent at the Snow Hawk's side, raising his head upon her arm. The dying animal had done dread work. Kioga's throat was torn and streaming blood. The pulsing jugular lay exposed, and claw-wounds in chest and shoulder yawned red and terrible.

Of all who stood silently about the fallen warrior, only Wolf Jaw gloated. For it seemed to him that Black Shield's medicine had failed him now and forever.

CHAPTER XXIX

The Siege

SOME miles north of Hopeka village, and on the River Hiwasi, there is a cave called by the Indians Place-Where-We-Hide.

Slemp, chief of the *Narwhal's* mutineers, and the white renegade Mad Crow,

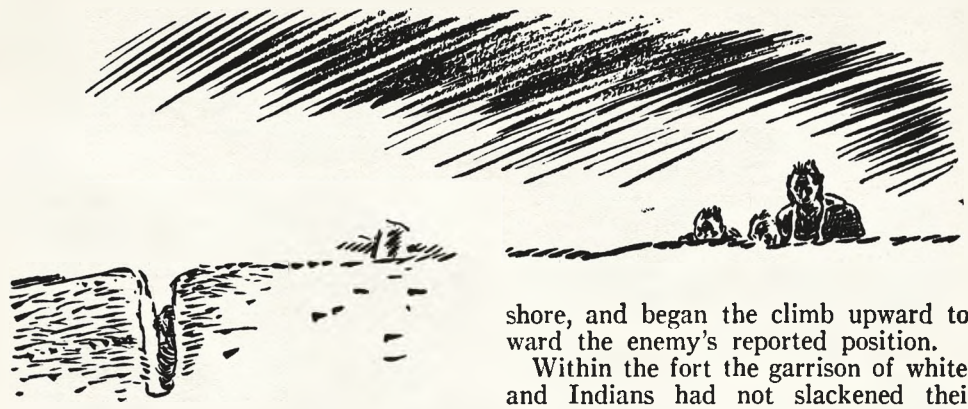
had here assembled their followers, red-skinned and white. With Shingas, their newest ally, they were busy mapping out a plan of action to attack the island which James Munro, unknown to them, had fortified.

To this river-bank lair came one of Half Mouth's scouts with the tidings that the hiding-place of the enemy was atop the cliffs on Isle Where Ravens Talk. More than that they could not tell, for they had retreated under a hail of arrows which cost them two braves.

Well the white conspirators knew that the *Narwhal* had carried no arms heavier than these rifles they had stolen from aboard her. Possibly they had overlooked some small-arms, but that the enemy could be equipped with cannon was inconceivable, if they thought of it at all. News of the wrecking of the Indian canoe had reached them: but the whites dismissed that incident as the work of a boulder dislodged from the cliffs above.

Confident, then, in the superiority of their arms over those of Munro and his companions, the mutineers prepared an immediate offensive on the enemy's po-

The moon threw the attackers into bold relief, as once again the Indians broke cover and came rushing up.



sition, in hope of forcing them to give over Flashpan's golden hoard and the secret of the mother lode.

Failure had thus far followed all their attempts to locate the well-hidden *Narwhal*. They had therefore a double reason for wishing to capture some one who might be forced to tell them where the vessel was berthed. Without means of escape to a land where it might be spent, gold would be useless to them.

Setting forth in canoes and disembarking on the island, they hid their craft under the dense overhang near

shore, and began the climb upward toward the enemy's reported position.

Within the fort the garrison of whites and Indians had not slackened their efforts to make the place defensible. The walls had been strengthened. The habitable interior was also enlarged to accommodate the Indians who from day to day joined Swift Hand in his stronghold.

In the arms-room the *clang-clang-clang* of the forging-hammers told of knives and swords being turned out as fast as primitive methods would permit. One falconet was kept trained upon the approach to the spring from which their water-supply was diverted. Meanwhile they sank a shaft in hopes of tapping a more certain supply within the walls themselves. Communication with the *Narwhal* was being maintained steadily once a week. As fast as new guns could be turned out, a number were taken to the ship, which was by now well stocked with smooth-bore small-arms, powder and bullets.

LONG since, the white occupants of Fort Talking Raven had lost any outward resemblance to modern civilized folk. The men were garbed in fresh buckskin and soft-soled moccasins, with coats of elk-hide, fringed and embroidered. Gone too were the mannish things that Beth had outworn. The dress of an Indian maiden had replaced them, save that Beth wore rather more above the waist than did Heladi. Even Placer had his head-feather, of which he appeared inordinately proud as he danced about on his devious errands.

So the white men changed their dress and certain of their ways. Not so their wild companions. Savage before their union with the whites, Munro saw them savage still—and never more cruel than tonight when two of Kias' scouts brought in a prisoner.

No common foeman he who entered fettered through the gates between his gloating captors, but one at sight of whom the Shoni bristled like wolves that bay a

panther. Here was no fellow-Shoni, an adversary only since yesterday, but a bitter racial enemy—a Wa-Kanek warrior.

Three tarnished metal buttons from a seaman's coat—reckoned a high price by his purchasers—had bought the captive from his previous captors—river-men of the upper tribes. Fresh marks of torture were livid on him. Yet in the fierce eyes beneath the scowling brows there was no fear. Only defiance lighted them—and amazement as he looked upon the white-skinned men.

With the interest of a scientist Munro gazed upon this fierce and haughty captive. And putting to good use his exhaustive knowledge of Indian dialects, he questioned the hapless man.

"You have never seen white men before?" Munro asked, not without a note of sympathy.

"I knew one other white man," the captive replied after a moment. "White of skin and blue of eye. A great chief newly come among my people—and braver far than any ten of these ignoble Shoni."

Munro's eyes widened, for these few words painted an unmistakable picture in his mind. Could it be possible?

"Your life as gift if you tell us more of him," Munro replied eagerly. He turned to the assembled warriors for confirmation of his offer; and they, after some hesitation, made the signal of agreement. For the same thought was now in every mind. Could it be—Kioga?

Munro glimpsed Beth and Heladi, newly arrived: close behind them came Dan, and Tokala. All waited for him to confirm by a further description that the Snow Hawk still lived. But—they waited vainly.

Conscious of the intense interest his words had aroused, the Wa-Kanek, perhaps believing that he could exchange his knowledge for freedom, folded his arms and with a jeering smile refused to utter another word. Threats, cajolery, entreaties—to each in turn he showed stony indifference. And in a blaze of anger at the man's stubbornness, a Shoni brave named Tecoma suddenly plunged a knife into the defiant captive's heart. . . .

That night Dan heard Beth sobbing in the darkness of her tent.

YET even this time of desperate anxiety within the beleaguered fort had its lighter moments.

Upon the wall near the open cooking-room ravens were wont to sit, observing Flashpan's cooking, and occasionally daring to swoop and thieve in his absence. Here also Tokala often lingered to watch and wonder at Flashpan's dexterity in pancake-juggling, and listen to the miner's wild tales.

"You're a funny man," said Tokala one evening, slipping an affectionate little arm about Flashpan's shoulders.

Flashpan grinned and rolled his cud.

"That's account the good Lord made me out of his left-overs—after he finished with the rest o' mankind. Satan was a-pullin' His laig, which 'ccounts for a few mistakes hyar an' thar."

At this moment a raven, bolder than most, dropped down and speared a deer-kidney from under Flashpan's nose.

Quick as a wink the irate cook hurled his knife at the robber. As luck would have it, he struck the raven to earth with a crippled wing. Instantly remorseful, he would have picked it up; but a wounded raven's friendship is not thus easily won. A few quick jabs of those iron mandibles, and Flashpan withdrew.

TOKALA was more successful. In a few days the injured bird was eating from his hand and performing the function of kitchen scavenger.

"What'll we name him?" wondered Tokala, stroking his newest pet.

"Name him Bonus," suggested Flashpan, "on account of he aint no extra dividend." And as Bonus the raven was thereafter known. Not the least of his accomplishments was a remarkable gift for mimicry. Unfortunately that power was accurate but not discriminating. Rumor soon had it that Flashpan was cultivating its vocabulary, for presently the bird learned to repeat words better left unsaid. Thus another and highly vocal member was added to the fort's varied roster. . . .

Never a moment passed but what keen eyes were watching all the approaches to the fort. To this duty, Munro had assigned Kias and his savage warriors. Tokala attached himself to whichever group offered the greatest promise of excitement. At this moment he was a dark blot upon the south wall. With bow and short arrows in hand, the Fox lay bemused by the darkness, the huge stars aloft and the forest-sounds rising up from the wilderness below the fort. The moon, veiled by gathering clouds, illumined a patch of the river, which gleamed through a space between two trees. Upon this space Tokala's eager eyes were focused.

Quick to adapt himself to the life his ancestors had lived, Tokala listened to the stirrings of forest-life. The sounds of daytime beasts were still, but near by he heard the brittle rustling of a porcupine's quills as it foraged in the gloom.

Two wolves slunk past, hunting. Presently, where the wolves had passed, another shape took form against the patch of moonlight. It was entirely black, save for the phosphorescent eyes, burning like candles in a dungeon. A panther prowled on past, the long tail twitching.

Ever deeper grew the stillness. Then slowly and with infinite stealth another something rose into view—a trimmed exploit-feather; in a moment more, a knot of hair, and then a human head. Stiff and rigid now, Tokala waited. A second head rose up beside the first. Tokala tossed a pebble toward the nearest sentry in the fort—who happened to be Kias. The boy directed his attention to the moonlit spot.

A moment Kias watched those silent heads. Then: "Go down," he whispered to Tokala. "Tell Swift Hand. I will keep watch."

Climbing down the nearest ladder leading from the wall, Tokala burst round-eyed into the room which Munro made his headquarters. Dan was there, and several red men too. Flashpan dozed on a robe in one corner. "Kias sent me!" said Tokala excitedly. "Indians—"

Munro waited for no more. To Tokala, "Wake the warriors!" he ordered quickly. "Warn them not to make a sound."

Flashpan came awake, still sleepy-eyed, to grasp the situation in a moment.

Munro uttered a few words of instructions to the Indians filing in at the door: "We will be attacked. Keep them off with arrows, if possible, and save your powder. If they get too close, open fire. Don't rouse the fort unnecessarily."

A moment later ten men mounted to the wall, scanning the ravines below and waiting for the moon to break through the clouds. Then at last the silver circle gave intermittent light.

Here and there a human form moved from place to place down on the slope, vague shadows skulking among other shadows, and visible only to the practiced eye. Just below him, Kias heard the rattle of a stone disturbed by human foot. Instant silence followed. Then came the hiss of a breath indrawn. A lean and sinewy figure paused below, almost within spear's length, to peer intently at the wall.

Slowly the savage raised himself. Lean, wiry fingers appeared atop the wall, testing each hand-hold as he came. His plume preceded his dark head above the topmost stone.

Then came a crushing impact. The wiry fingers loosened and slipped away. Without an uttered sound, the warrior fell, a tomahawk wedged deep in skull.

WITH a leap Kias was back at Tokala's side. There was a vibration of a bow-cord in the boy's ear. A shaft from Kias' string leaped out across the darkness. Of those two motionless heads first seen, one suddenly jerked up and back. A shadow-hand clutched wildly at the air. The head was gone, and the second vanished suddenly to one side. And then the hush was split by that fiercest of all fierce utterances from human throat—the Shoni war-cry.

No answer from the fort. With arrows waiting at the cords, the defenders bided their time. As that hideous sound died away, swift shadows appeared from where none had been seen. From every glade the warriors sprang upward.

As if to favor the defenders, the moon's floodlight came out, throwing the attackers into bolder relief. Down whizzed the waiting shafts. At the first barrage six warriors fell. Two others dragged themselves to cover in the shadows. Like wolves, the remainder came on, taking shelter wherever they found it.

SILENCE still from above, but the eyes of the fort watched them, and it was Flashpan who first descried a familiar form lurking in the background.

"Bucky Slemp, or I'm a Chinyman!"

"You're right," returned the scientist. "A devilish alliance *that* is!"

"Aye, sir—askin' Satan's pardon. Now how d'ye s'pose them sons o' sin all got together? There's Branner too, by gum—an' who's that other one?"

"A one-armed man," answered Dan, intently peering.

"Let me wing him in the other," begged Flashpan, advancing the barrel of his gun. "He's like a snake a-lurkin' thar and urgin' on the redskins!"

"Not yet, Flashpan!" admonished Munro sharply. "There's more here than I understand. How did they get together with the Indians, and what are they after? If they learn we're armed, they'll stand off beyond our range, and pick us off from across the river. If they intend to attack again, let them come in

close before firing. I don't relish bloodshed. But we're here, and here we stay. If they want to put us out, let them come and try!"

"Aye, by thunder!" answered Flashpan gleefully, "an' every mother's son as comes, we'll make him welcome!"

As he spoke, the bowstrings twanged again, two by two. But now the enemy, from shelter on the slope, were returning the shafts with interest. A number fell among the Indian women and children in the enclosure. Some one cried out in pain—a random shaft had hit home.

Other arrows played a *rat-a-tat* upon the wooden walls, quivering where they struck. Once again the Indians broke cover and came rushing up. But their rush was stopped in full swing by the keen swift flights of arrows from Kias and his warriors. A moment more saw the Indians retreating before the unexpected resistance from above. Arrows from within the fort whined after them.

One among the fort's warriors could not forbear an Indian's taunt, exposing himself the while in mockery upon the towering wall, a fair target for any waiting arrow from below. A sharp warning came from Munro—but too late.

There was a crisp and ringing report—a rifle-shot. The taunting warrior jerked suddenly erect, his words snapped off half uttered. Then sprawling flat upon his face he fell, half on, half off the wall.

Kias and Dan were first to seize him, preventing his falling down among the Indian dead who strewed the slope. The warrior, limp and still, was carried from the wall. By the light of torches within the arms-room Munro examined him while the roused fort-dwellers looked silently on. There was no pulse—the man was dead, shot through the body.

The first casualty in the fort, Sacowa was buried deep beneath the eastern wall. Less fortunate those Indian dead, lying along the slope! At dawn, with a rush of beating wings a great king-vulture came planing down. After it, one by one, the flock came following, darkening over the bodies, uttering hideous noises. Flock after flock of ravens fluttered heavily near by, muttering raucously. . . .

Isle Where Ravens Talk, was well named for its carrion-birds.

DAY was well advanced before a sentry on the east wall came to report scouts active in the forested cliffs across the river gorge a hundred yards away. Then a form appeared—a white man

It was Slemp, gun in hand, who stood forth upon the cliff, eying with astonishment the outer walls of the fort, whose every feature he could see from that position. A hail came across the distance:

"Ahoy! You in the fort."

"What d'ye want, ye son of snake and swine?" came Flashpan's unmistakable cracked voice, defiantly.

"Every ounce of gold you've got, or we'll starve you all out!"

"I been thinkin' as much," muttered Flashpan to Munro who stood close by. "Shall we give it up, sir? Mebbe it'd do some good."

"I don't see how," returned the scientist. "I can't imagine Slemp honoring any kind of treaty. Tell him to go to the devil."

Flashpan smiled happily and conveyed the message, interlarded with a few sparkling additions of his own, concluding: "If ye want it, ye cross-bred pennywit, come an' take it from us!"

"That we'll do!" roared the other, sending a bullet whining against the log head-cover from behind which Flashpan had answered. "You haven't heard the last of Bucky Slemp!"

"Nor you the last o' us," grumbled Flashpan, looking carefully to his guns.

OF smoothbores they now had a round dozen, and some skill in the use thereof. In each embrasure a crude but serviceable cast-iron demi-cannon squatted in wooden trunnions, replacing the earlier falconets. Between each gun were piled a score of balls. Behind the walls, the falconets had been equipped with wheels made of round sections of logs, pierced for a wooden axle, and each of these could be trundled wherever most needed. And each was loaded with iron scraps and bits of slag, ready to greet the new attack—which swiftly came.

This time the advance of the enemy was better managed. The whites had so contrived that their red allies should bear the brunt of the fighting. Once more the Indians advanced in irregular order under cover of the ravines and undergrowth.

Crisply Munro passed the word among his waiting archers and riflemen: "When they break cover, give them the arrows. Wait for my order to fire your guns. Don't waste a single shot."

With a rallying yell, the Indians swarmed from the thicketed glades and rushed the fort, pausing only to dis-

charge their arrows upward. For a moment it must have seemed that the fort was abandoned, for no sound or answering yell issued from it. The attackers were almost at the walls before the fort's reply came—a singing feathered storm of well-aimed shafts.

Thinned but unchecked, Half Mouth's warriors came howling on, under the very walls of the fort, and into range of plunging fire from above. From the overhanging base of the parapet, through loopholes cut for that purpose, a dozen round-mouthed muzzles were suddenly protruded. Loudly from above came the echo of Munro's order:

"Fire!"

A withering blast of gun-fire took the savages full in their faces, working deadly havoc. In the bedlam which ensued, the figure of Mad Crow, the renegade, was glimpsed darting to one side. The occupants could hear him cursing.

The savages were in retreat, striving to drag off their dead and wounded.

It was a fatal delay.

Upon the wall Flashpan was manning his gun, training it down upon them. He applied a light to the touch-hole. Came the flare of priming powder and then a blast that shook the fort. Six pounds of iron scrap slashed among the enemy, of whom scarce one escaped the hail of heated iron. None, indeed, were left to drag away the fallen.

There would be no further assaults upon the south wall. Instead there came a different kind of warfare. Hidden among the trees on the lip of the gorge opposite the fort, Slemp and his confederates began a sniping fire. All day long this continued at irregular intervals. But the log head-covers performed their function well. And no damage resulted to the defenders until a sentry standing somewhat back from the wall went limp and sank with a bullet through the head. A cry of triumph came from across the river.

No chance shot, that; for an hour later an ounce slug ripped into the breast of an Indian mother playing with her children in the central enclosure; she died within the hour. Yet again, near sundown, the unseen enemy scored. This time a ricocheting bullet lodged in the leg of an aged Indian. Attending the wounded man, Munro sent Tokala to fetch Flashpan. Probing for the bullet in the old man's limb, he spoke:

"Flashpan, that sniper must come down. It's up to you. Can you reach him with your smoothbore?"

"If he's in sight, mebbe," answered the miner. "Leave it to me."

From a position at the east wall, Flashpan looked long and vainly for the hidden sniper. Finally he placed a small folded robe upon his head, and atop this his seaman's cap, fairly simulating a human head. Thus laden he strode quickly along the parapet.

His hope was realized. A sharp report rang out. The log head-cover rained splinters, and the cliff behind the fort threw back a flattened bullet. Lining up chip in cliff and notch in log, Flashpan peered long and intently across the chasm in the direction thus indicated. At last, on a line with notch and chip, he saw slight movement on a tree-limb, and caught a glint of metal.

FROM his powder horn Flashpan poured an extra large charge, and pushed down a patch with particular care, before ramming down the copper bullet.

Resting the long barrel lightly upon the parapet he drew a careful bead upon the patch of deeper darkness in the tree across the gorge. Slowly he elevated the muzzle for the distance, aiming a little to the left, allowing for a light breeze that blew. Gently his crooked forefinger pressed against the bone trigger. Then:

Boom!

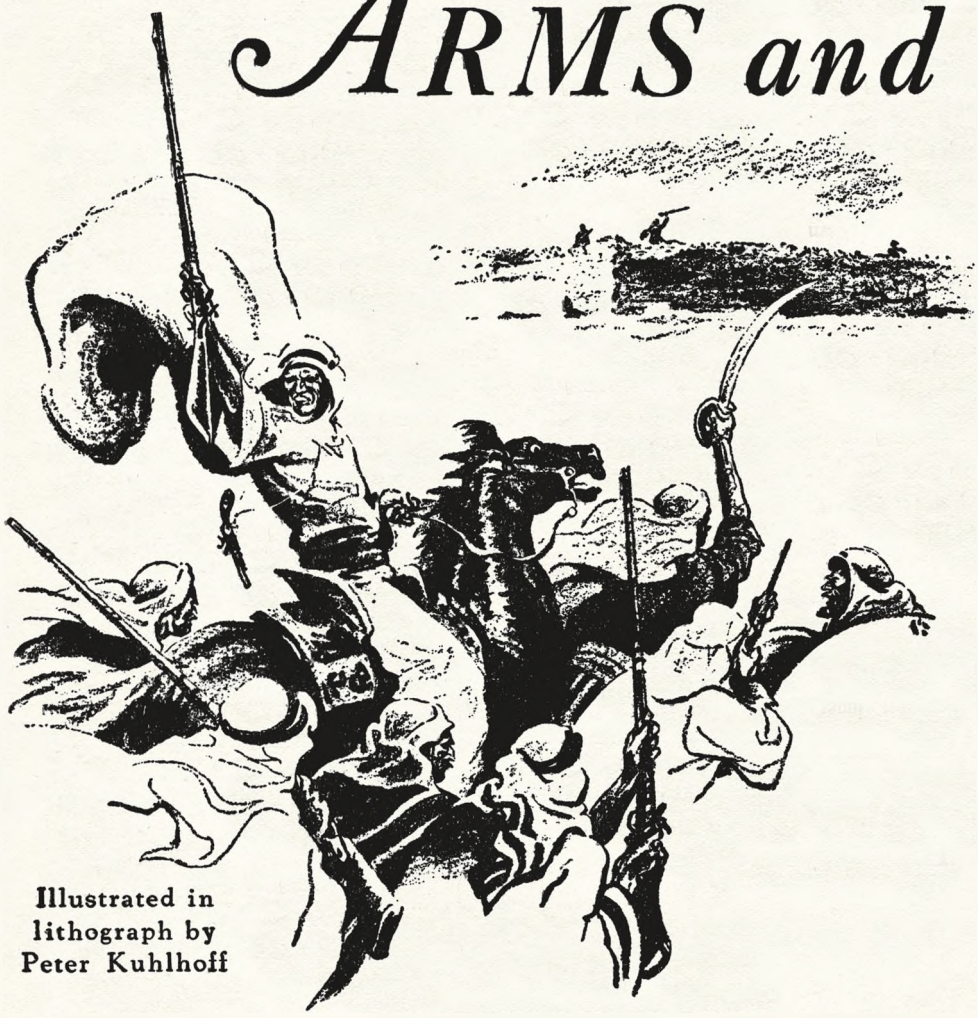
The smoothbore's heavy report had not died when from the tree came a scream of pain and a clatter as the sniper's rifle fell. Followed a heavy noise of breaking branches as the sharpshooter too went crashing down. Sounds of excitement and human voices could be heard. Laying aside his gun, Flashpan jumped to the demi-cannon commanding the river. The larger piece roared.

The heavy ball hurtled nearly true, smashing through brush and undergrowth into the midst of the invisible enemy. As they scattered, the banging of the smoothbores began, though to little effect at that range.

Thus, though they had lost three killed, the fort was still in strength, and all but impregnable to the assaults of the enemy. But counting on discouragement to dampen their ardor for further battle, Munro reckoned without Slemp's foxlike cunning.

The thrill-crammed climax of this fascinating novel will appear in the next, the October, issue.

ARMS and



Illustrated in lithograph by Peter Kuhlhoff

WHEN I settled down in the lounge of the Kansas City Club for a talk with Theodore Dexter, who had run over from Topeka for the occasion, I knew him to be one of the foremost American authorities on arms and armor. Yet I little dreamed that from this chat was to develop an unguessed incident in the life of Samuel Pepys—an incident so gruesome, yet so grotesquely human, that the bare chronicling of it leaves me with the creeps.

Dexter had brought with him several pistols, which he displayed with pride. One of these had a very handsome and intricate wheel-lock—that slow and cumbersome lock which had to be wound up before sparks would fly. When he told me it was the improved wheel-lock of about 1700, I was astonished.

"But flint-locks were in use by that time!" I objected.

He smiled a little, as he replied:

"Certainly. But, my dear fellow, don't you realize how in firearms all periods overlap? You can't pick out the first specimen of this or that. Constant development, the change from theory to practical work, is a slow thing. Your Blue Book stories aim at the first weapon of a kind, but you can't pick the very first in firearms. If you want an early flint-lock pistol that may have a history, look at this."

He picked out an old, heavy pistol and handed it to me. It was nothing extraordinary; a bit crude, in fact. Yet I was struck by the inexpressible something that one senses in any work of real artistry—balance, perhaps. A blackened silver plate on the butt bore the simple words, almost effaced by time:

Sam'l Daggett,
Tanjeh. 1684.

MEN

XX—THE COUP DE GRACE introduces Samuel Pepys and a new design of pistol, in a grimly dramatic story of an Eighteenth Century British fortress on the coast of Morocco.

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

"Know where that came from?" Dexter asked.

"Yes, Tangier," I replied. "Tanjeh is the original name. At that time, it was held by the English. Wonder who this Sam'l Daggett could have been?"

"That's the story," he said, and produced an old printed pamphlet. "It hurts me to give you this and the pistol, but take it along. Daggett lived in Tangier. This is a pamphlet he printed up on some of his experiences there. I took it in with a lot of old junk years ago. And it'll pay you to examine the pages very closely; don't neglect it," he added with a curious smile. "Daggett represented some English merchants there, and he was a gunsmith to boot."

THE curious old pamphlet interested me. It had been printed for the author in Bristol, was tattered and dirty; the end pages were full of manuscript notes. Over one end page was a huge ink-stain—the most important thing in the whole works.

Daggett had lived in Tangier since the English took it over about 1660; he was there when they quit in 1684. He became agent for Thomas Warren of London, who carried on a huge trade in saltpeter and munitions with the Moors, regardless that much of the powder was fired back at the English.

They were under constant siege. They poured money and troops into the place for twenty years. They had constructed enormous fortifications, a castle, and a gigantic mole to protect the harbor. When they finally decided to give back the place to the Moors,—who in point of fact drove them out,—they had to destroy these tremendous structures rather than leave in Moorish hands an impregnable harbor of piracy.

Now, Daggett's pamphlet had a lot of curious information, but it mentioned no names. It was *"Lord D."* this, and *"Mr. P."* that, and so forth; a cautious man, Sam'l. If the manuscript notes were his, there was nothing to show it, but they threw vast light upon his half-told tale.

And under that big ink-stain on the one end page there was writing.

I examined it with care, a glass, and proper light. Thus I found that this ink had been spilled, perhaps deliberately, over a key to the pamphlet's names: Lord Dartmouth, in charge of the destruction during the last days; Mr. Pepys, treasurer of the Admiralty for Tangier; and so forth. Pepys was here off and on, between expeditions into Spain, for a number of months. It was when he came back in February for the final ceremonies of destruction that this episode happened.

Daggett was an unpleasant, cynical, sun-dried man, on excellent terms with the Moors, as might be expected from his business. He occupied an old palace on the hillside, had both English and native servants, and lived like a lord. He spoke Spanish, Mr. Pepys spoke Spanish, and all the Moors in these parts spoke Spanish; so when he invited Mr. Pepys to take up quarters with him, it was a happy arrangement. The castle was being mined; Lord Dartmouth was living in another Moorish palace; and there was just enough occasional fighting going on to keep the garrison on their toes.

The fleet was in harbor for the evacuation, near the ruins of the destroyed mole. The ships were moored to buoys, which in turn made fast to enormous anchors and other weights sunk far and fast; but Mr. Pepys did not fancy shipboard life.

Lord Dartmouth, a very fine gentleman of thirty-odd, found Mr. Pepys highly amusing, and entertained a real liking for him. My lord had both guest and host to dinner, and as the wine was excellent and the company included no ladies, it may be imagined that some tall

tales were told of Morocco and its people —and to be quite honest in the matter, its ladies.

In which point Mr. Pepys betrayed, to the sardonic eye of Sam'l Daggett, a most live curiosity.

"But this hot sunlight does affect my poor eyes," said he, shaking his rubicund visage. "My sight is not what it was; true, it has bettered marvelously of late—"

"Thanks to the good wines of Spain!" And my lord shook with laughter.

"Amen and amen, my lord," said Mr. Pepys, who was a most hearty fellow, far more shrewd than he appeared, and extremely popular despite a popinjay vanity. "I cannot but bless God for my journey, observing a whole course of health from the beginning to the end of it; though I do think the marvelous sickness of the ship hath lost me ten pound weight."

The whimsical expression that accompanied these words caused a roar of laughter. Then my lord, somewhat remembering dignity, turned to Daggett.

"But I understand, Master Daggett, that ever since the Earl of Teviot's government here, the place has been greatly beholden to you, and that of late it is thanks to your science that the Moors have been beat off. Wine with you, sir, and my congratulations!"

HE clinked glasses with the dour-faced Daggett, and questions poured in, but from none more insistently than from Mr. Pepys, who had a huge bump of curiosity beneath his curled wig. Lord Dartmouth deigned graciously to explain his words.

"Why, gentlemen, it appears that Master Daggett hath invented a pistol, or more properly, developed a pistol, and armed most of the garrison gentlemen with the weapon. It shoots so wonderful true and straight and far, never missing fire, that the heathen are no longer inclined to risk their skins at close quarters."

"Why, my lord, this is right quickening news!" Mr. Pepys exclaimed. "And meet for His Majesty's ear, I dare say. What sort of a pistol may it be?"

"The wheel-lock hath been discarded for a flint, as with muskets," said my lord.

"But there's nothing new in using flints for pistols," spoke up an officer. "My lord, d'ye not remember those ambassadors from Muscovy, who bore German pistols with flint-locks? And that was a good two years ago."

"There's naught new, gentlemen, in it," spoke up Daggett. "But 'tis a combination of old things made new. And it works."

"It does, pox take me if it don't!" said somebody down the table, in a tone so vinously earnest that the laughter was renewed. When the talk rose again, Mr. Pepys leaned over to the ear of Daggett.

"Master, I must command a sight of this weapon tomorrow, by your leave. If I do mistake not, 'twill prove vastly entertaining to the Royal Society. These noble gentlemen, who do me the honor of friendship and company in the things of science no less than in society, are ever interested in such matters."

Sam'l Daggett nodded assent, and his rather jaundiced eye dwelt upon the complacent Mr. Pepys for a moment, but he said nothing.

THE table talk now returning, as needs must, to the females of Tangier and their curious ways, Mr. Pepys presently took the word.

"I never thought to see the day or place where women would not show their faces, but cover them all save an eye. Lord!" And he threw up his hands. "How is a man to know if a wench be proper or not? I myself stayed two or three hours in the streets this afternoon, and did truly expect to have speech of a woman who looked twice at me in passing, but somehow did miss of it, at which I am right sorry."

"By my hilt, Pepys, you'll be the death of me yet!" And my lord gasped with laughter. There was something so innocent about the rubicund gentleman, despite his shrewdness, that it was disarming.

Now came a deal of explaining before Mr. Pepys could comprehend the status of native women, and how the mere gazing upon one unveiled was a most deadly insult to her husband. In which good Mr. Pepys was by no means alone. Many of the gentlemen who had come with the fleet entertained extravagant ideas regarding the beauties of Islam.

This matter led to talk of the bloody customs of the country here, whereat Mr. Pepys stood aghast and flatly declined to believe all he heard. That the Sultan, Mulai Ismail, had the neat habit of mounting his horse and in the same motion beheading the slave who held his

"Two years since," said Daggett, "this Sidi Hamid played me a scurvy trick. I have not forgot; and he, by Allah, shall not forget, when I have departed."

stirrup, was far-fetched; yet it was literally true, and was but a minor incident in the day of that red-handed monarch, the most feared and dreaded man who had ever ruled this land of blood. . . .

The wine was passed, went round and round; and when Mr. Pepys departed with Sam'l Daggett, he held very open-hearted converse with that gentleman on the way home; but in the morning he remembered none of it. What with going over accounts with his clerk Will Hewer, and a confounded headache, and a morning draft of buttered ale which had soured in the cask, Mr. Pepys was in a most vile humor by noon.

The heat of the day passed, he sallied forth in a brand new periwig, his bravest attire, and a handsome stick Lord Dartmouth had presented him, to view the city. Not for the first time, indeed; but he was in mood to view it sadly and mournfully. As he himself said:

"To see so brave a place, so nobly built and long defended, being given over to destruction, doth greatly sadden one's heart, and I wish to God it were done and ended!"

So, taking keen enjoyment in the sad prospect, he puffed up the hill, a servant holding an umbrella above him to ward off the sun, and viewed the walls of Whitehall, an outer redoubt, being pulled down. Thence along the walls to Peterborough Tower, in which a mine was being set, and on to the citadel or governor's house, a noble building overlooking the upper works and the English cantonments.

Here more mines were being laid, and also at the corners of the walls. In the midst all this activity, the drums were beat up, and the Irish regiment that was working changed pick for gun, and hastened to the walls. Under the very eyes of Mr. Pepys, the Moors were making an attack. Mulai Ismail, having expelled the Portuguese from his land, was making every effort to expel the English even before they could depart.

The guns barked; the powder-smoke rolled; the Moorish town below the citadel was in disorder, and the fleet in the harbor beat to quarters. All of which ended in nothing, except the huge delight and satisfaction of Mr. Pepys that he had beheld such a sight. And encountering Daggett, who was going to his warehouse in the lower town, Mr. Pepys said as much.

"Very good, sir," Daggett rejoined. "It gratifies me that your worship should be pleased. And while on the subject, I might say that I have set afoot the business which you mentioned to me last evening, and it promises well."

Mr. Pepys blinked. "Last evening? The business? I recall none, sir."

"You no doubt recall singing some very pretty songs, sir? And a story about the old woman of Woolwich?"

Mr. Pepys, who had begun to look pleased, frowned hastily.

"No, no, sir! Upon my word, my memory is very blank."

"Oh! That's a pity," said Daggett thoughtfully. "It was in my mind that you had made a request of me, and I spoke of it this morning to a very noble Moor of my acquaintance, whose uncle is the vizier to Sultan Mulai Ismail at Meknez. He has a great enemy here, a most wealthy and arrogant man, who owns a most beauteous wife of Spanish extraction, and therefore kindly disposed toward Christian gentlemen. Tomorrow is Friday; and after the custom of these women, she goes to the cemetery with one of her slaves, there to dress the graves of the dead and gossip with her friends. So you see, sir, it might well be arranged, this noble Moor not hesitating to bring disgrace upon the head of his enemy."

Mr. Pepys blinked again, and shoved back his wig to cool his pate.

"What might be arranged, Mr. Daggett?"

"Your desire, sir, or so I thought. It seems that, in my memory, you requested of me a chance to speak in private with a Moorish lady, and by holding converse with her, thus assuage your curiosity regarding the customs of these unhappy females."

"Did I so?" murmured Mr. Pepys. "Did I so, indeed, Mr. Daggett? Now, I remember very well a curiosity concerning a pistol of your making—"

"If it please you to accompany me to my warehouse, Mr. Pepys, I shall be happy to show you the pistol, and the workmen whom I have making others, and we may talk of sundry matters as we go."

"You said, I think," observed Mr. Pepys after a time, as they walked together, "that this lady was a comely person?"

"A raving beauty, sir; and so sad in her life with the old Moor as to be easily comforted by an honest gentleman, if he be like yourself a man of parts and presence. And in a little summer-house in the garden of my office, yonder, she might spend an hour or two with the greatest safety."

SO they talked and walked, visited the warehouse and the *suk*, or marketplace under the walls of the guardhouse, and saw many things. And sitting in the pleasant little summer-house, Mr. Pepys viewed with great interest the pistol which Sam'l Daggett displayed.

"The flint-lock adapted to a pistol, sir," said Daggett. "And you perceive the barrel is rifled, as with French muskets and German arms. It is pity that now I must give up my business and all else here, and go back to England; but thanks be to God, I do not go back a poor man."

Nor did he, indeed, as one might guess by the sardonic glint of his eye and the thin twist to his lip. Indeed, Sam'l Daggett had lived so long in this land that he had taken to himself many of its ways of thought. His thanks to God might better have been elsewhere directed, truth to tell.

WHEN Mr. Pepys had departed to wait upon Lord Dartmouth in the cool of the day, Daggett called in his confidential secretary and interpreter. This was a Moroccan Jew in the black headgear of his race, who hated all Moors and served Daggett well, and had a hard shrewd face, unlined and youthful like all the people of this land, no matter what their age.

With him Daggett talked awhile, laughing now and then, and the other man smiling in a thin unpleasant way.

"Two years since," concluded Daggett, "this Sidi Hamid played me a scurvy trick, and I have not forgot. And he, by Allah, shall not forget when I have departed! Can you arrange the matter?"

"If God so wills," was the response. "I shall try it tonight."

Wherewith was Mr. Daggett much pleased, though his pleasure came in queer ways. One who carried on commerce of munitions which were promptly used against his own race, must needs find pleasure strangely. And these pistols of his were sold to wealthy Moors at a high price, although of this matter the government of Tangier knew nothing at all.

The unpleasant eyes of Sam'l Daggett glinted upon his accounts with keen satisfaction. His accounts did not lie all in moneys and goods, either. Certain of them were intangible. And Daggett was the type of man who disliked going home to England with any unsettled accounts behind him; though the settling of accounts, in the manner of Morocco, was apt to be strangely sinister in English eyes, were the facts to become known.

When it came to making love, the lady made it plain that she had come for something else: would Mr. Pepys so arrange that the palace of Sidi Hamid be not destroyed? Gallantly Mr. Pepys promised her this.

Daggett lifted one pistol and fired it, then the other, as the ship wore about. The chained figure on the mole fell forward.

Mr. Pepys enjoyed a total ignorance anent Moroccan customs, but he was pleased as any child with the pistol that Daggett presented to him that evening, and he was thrilled as any elderly rake with the rendezvous promised him on the morrow.

Next morning Mr. Pepys was up betimes and at his accounts with Will Hewer, till late in the morning. Then, dismissing his clerk, he dressed himself with care and took his way with pompous ease toward the Moorish town. Many women were in the streets, all bundled to the eye, enjoying their one day of liberty and wending their way to the cemetery on the hillside around the bay, where lay the ruins of Old Tangier, and to that outside town.

When he reached the counting-house of his host, Mr. Pepys was saluted low by the Moorish door-keeper at the entrance, and went inside. Without bothering Daggett, he looked this way and that, and slipped into the garden by the passage that had been shown him, and so came to the summer-house.

Here, beside a pleasant fountain, he found cushions and leather seats, and wide round trays bearing all manner of confections to eat, and wine to drink. When he had sat and cooled himself for some little while, a white-cloaked figure came quietly in by the entrance, regarding him from the one unveiled eye. Mr. Pepys rose, and bowed with astonishing gallantry, considering one thing and another.

"Madame," he said, "on the thirty-sixth anniversary of my birth, I had the joy and honor of kissing the lips of a queen. Today, at a slightly more advanced age, God wot, I perceive that a like honor is about to befall me."

In this aspiration Mr. Pepys was, it appeared, a trifle premature. True, the lady extended him her hand, which he kissed, and it was a lovely hand; and she knew a little Spanish, to which Mr. Pepys replied. But when, in his bluff English fashion, he attempted to seat her upon his knee, she demurred with a burst of silvery laughter that rang like the witchery of little bells in the air.

Not that she refused to unveil. What a charming, utterly lovely jade she was! Her eyes were brilliant and dark; her skin was pale bronze; she was filled with a charming joy of life and an eagerness in all things. Nor did she disdain to join Mr. Pepys in his repast.

When it came to making love, however, she made it very plain indeed that she had come for something else, and Mr. Pepys was a long time in discovering just what it was. Presently he learned that the lady's husband was one Sidi Hamid el Shadar, who had a magnificent palace not far away, and that to pleasure her husband, the lady desired a boon. The English meant to destroy the town before they left; but would Mr. Pepys so arrange that the palace of Sidi Hamid would not be destroyed?

A sad heaviness fell upon Mr. Pepys, but he gallantly promised and promised;

and for his reward the lady laughed and laughed, until the air seemed all filled with little bells of silver in the breeze. Mr. Pepys did not mind what he promised—the more so, as he knew Lord Dartmouth had no intention of harming the Moorish town.

So the time passed, somewhat sadly and somewhat gladly, in the pleasant little summer-house.

NOW Daggett sat in talk with his confidential secretary, a glitter in his unpleasant eyes. While Daggett could speak Arabic quite fluently, he stuck to Spanish on this occasion, lest some of his workmen be too open-eared.

"So she believed your story, then!" he said, chuckling softly.

The other nodded.

"She did, señor, she did; and in proof, she is here, with her woman slave on watch outside the summer-house. To her, this Englishman is a great joke, for she is like a child, avid of strange things. And she hopes to save the palace of Sidi Hamid from destruction. She has even brought money and jewels, wherewith to purchase the good will of this influential Englishman."

Daggett grinned at this, for he hated Sidi Hamid el Shadar with all his heart.

"Go, then, and pick your men with care," said he. "Be sure and lead them carefully by the little passage to the room above that overlooks the garden. Are you quite certain that they can see into the summer-house from there?"

"I tried myself, señor," the other replied, with an evil snicker. "Just now. And I could see them quite well. The fat Englishman was kissing her fingers."

A wolfish, mirthless grin twisted the thin lips of Daggett.

"That man is a fool, but I am not," he said. "Go about your business."

So the man in the black headgear might be seen going through the narrow streets and bringing men with him to the warehouse of Sam'l Daggett. One by one they came and went again—bearded men with fierce hawk-faces under the rim of their *jellab* hoods, hitching the ungainly garment over their shoulders as they slapped along, bare feet in slippers red and black and green. It was not until Mulai Ismail had flung all Christians into the sea that he ordered yellow slippers worn exclusively by his people, in token of the triumph.

These men came, one by one, frowning and uncertain. They went away with grins, cruel laughter in their eyes, eager jesting words on their lips; for Moors love a jest, especially if it be of a sort to bring blood. Some of them shouted aloud to their friends as they departed.

Thus, through all the native town with its twisting little narrow streets and its high walls, its mosques and its hidden gardens, ran the derisive word. The greater the man, naturally, the greater his shame. Through the close-crowded bazars flew the news and the laughter, through the market-place, past the closed shops—this being Friday—and out into the open among the throngs visiting the cemeteries:

The first wife of Sidi Hamid el Shadar had been seen by many a man, sitting unveiled with an English infidel, and toying with him. And of course this report gained in weight and detail as it flew, until honest Mr. Pepys would have lifted his hands to heaven in holy horror had he been aware of half what was being said concerning him—although being the elderly man that he was, he might have felt somewhat flattered.

The interview, so far as Mr. Pepys was concerned, ended upon a note of it-might-have-been-worse and a sigh, and a necklace of jewels tucked into his ample pocket. Not jewels in the sense of London, naturally. In Moorish eyes coral constitutes the most desirable of all gems, and the necklace nestling in Mr. Pepys' pocket was of filigree gilt and very rich coral studs, a barbaric and a handsome thing. From a native standpoint, it was quite correct to offer a reward to a powerful friend, and if the palace of Sidi Hamid was saved from destruction, the affair was well worth a necklace.

"ONE of the modestest, prettiest women that ever I saw," said Mr. Pepys to Daggett earnestly, mindful of that sardonic questioning eye. "She did laugh so heartily and so constantly, that it did me good to hear her."

"Aye?" said Daggett with a droll look; and Mr. Pepys reddened a trifle.

"I did but squeeze her hand and tender her comely fingers a salute," said he, with perfect truth. "But I must away to wait upon Lord Dartmouth. . . . What, your packing-cases are going out, Master Daggett?"

"They are, and we with 'em," said Daggett. "These be the last, thank heaven! We must be aboard ship tomorrow, and the mines sprung."

So, with heartiest thanks to Sam'l Daggett for his friendly offices, Mr. Pepys adjusted his wig and went puffing away, all unwitting what remarks were being bandied around him by the Moors who passed him by. But Sam'l Daggett gazed after him with a thin and twisted smile.

"Thanks to you, fat fool!" he muttered. "Thanks to you, who have evened up my accounts with Sidi Hamid for once and all."

Evened up, and well evened, too! That night the shame of Sidi Hamid el Shadar was the talk of all the Moors in Tangier, though naturally no word of it came to English ears. It even reached to the camp of the army under Caïd Hassan, who sat on the hills waiting for the English to be gone, like jackals waiting for the lion to leave his kill.

NEXT morning, Mr. Pepys betook himself safely aboard Lord Dartmouth's frigate, settled himself comfortably in his quarters, and went on deck to strut up and down and with other officers and gentlemen watch the blowing-up of the first mines to be set off, toppling the principal forts and buildings.

It was a vastly pretty sight, as Mr. Pepys observed, but presently he came upon good Will Hewer in talk with a pair of the garrison officers. Hewer was shaking and pale as death, with a cold sweat bedewing his sallow visage, and the officers were in hearty laughter.

"Well, sirs, and what's to do?" demanded Mr. Pepys in astonishment. "Good Lord, Will! Art seasick before a sail is let fly?"

"Nay, Mr. Pepys," said Will Hewer. "But these gentlemen ha' been telling me the sights they've seen among the heathen—"

Not unwilling to take another victim, the officers explained, with a wealth of detail, certain pleasing ceremonies among the Moors, which they had actually witnessed. In particular, a torture called the punishment by salt, in which the victim was chained naked in the sun and then subjected to dreadful torments.

Mr. Pepys halted the details, which were gruesomely realistic, in peremptory fashion.

"Enough of such talk, you idle rogues!" he exclaimed heatedly. "And 'tis no jest to seek to vomit a man with such tales. If I hear more of the same, I'll take up the matter with my lord. To me, Will!"

Down in the cabin, Mr. Pepys raged up and down.

"The veriest rogues, truly, that ever I've known!" he declaimed.

"But indeed, Mr. Pepys, it be cold hard fact, I do think," said Will Hewer.

Mr. Pepys sniffed. Then, to distract the other, he produced the very handsome necklace of gilt filigree and coral, and displayed it with no little pride.

"A trifle to adorn a lady in England," said he, gazing upon it complacently. "See, Will, if it be not well and shapely made! And the coral red as blood, which these people do esteem most highly."

Will Hewer vowed and declared that it was indeed monstrous pretty. Then, for he knew his master over many a year, he asked how Mr. Pepys had come by it, whereat Mr. Pepys cleared his throat once or twice.

"But yesterday in the Moorish town, Will," said he. "And now, lad, a draft of good buttered ale for us both, and mind it be not spoiled in the wood! And then on deck to behold the rest of this spectacle, which I would not miss for a good deal. And, Will, I'd have you take note of the esteem in which I am held by my lord and others of like quality; it is comforting to see, and will rejoice the hearts of my dear friends in England to hear told, so neglect it not."

Thus to the deck again, to welcome Lord Dartmouth aboard. Among others came Sam'l Daggett, who had been offered passage aboard the flagship. When he stepped on her deck, Daggett seemed to breathe freer; he turned and gazed at the shore with his slow, twisted smile as though in bitter mockery of farewell.

THE wind being fresh and fair, it was decided to complete the evacuation this day and be off, lest contrary winds spring up with evening. So my lord ordered signals hoisted to this effect.

Whitehall and other outer works being destroyed, the embarkation was hastened and the mines were set off, hour by hour, until afternoon drew on. The corners of the massive fortifications crumbled in showers of dust. The castle above the Moorish town roared skyward and settled again, in heaps of ruins. Last of all, and a sad sight although vastly edifying, as Mr. Pepys observed, the lofty Peterborough tower by the landward wall was sent toppling.

The last of the troops came aboard, and these reported that the Moors of the town had broken out in fanatic riots and

were massacring those of their own people who had been friends with the English. This disturbed Lord Dartmouth, but could not be helped.

"There must have been some reason for the outbreak," he said. "A general amnesty had been promised. However, we can do nothing now."

So signals were broken out, and the fleet weighed anchor for the straits, the wide Atlantic beyond, and home.

A shoreward section of the great mole, which had been so many years in the making, still remained in place; so solid was this work that complete destruction was by no means possible. And as Mr. Pepys and others stood on the quarterdeck, it was clearly seen how throngs of Moors came rushing out upon this stub of the mole, with firing of guns, leaving some men dead there, no doubt partisans of the English. A crowd was gathered about one strange figure which aroused the curiosity of Mr. Pepys.

"Why, I believe 'tis a man, stripped and chained there!" said one of the ship's officers, who had a glass. He lifted and adjusted it. "No, upon my soul! A woman, her extremities bound. She is fastened by a chain and they seem making ready to—"

All interest in this odd group was suddenly lost. A tremendous scattering fire of musketry was heard, as the army of the Moors came into the evacuated city, firing off their guns in the air. But through the flagship, already in motion, ran a chill cry of fear, a shrilling of bos'ns' whistles, a shouting of orders. Men sprang to lines and rigging.

For the flagship was driving straight down upon the broken works of the mole, and a wave of panic swept over her quarterdeck. The flag captain endeavored to allay it.

"No danger, my lord," he cried to Dartmouth. "There's five fathoms close under the mole, and we'll scarce come within pistol-shot of it. We'll wear about to catch the wind fairly and clear the passage."

Mr. Pepys and others, however, were not so certain, and gazed in fascinated horror as the ship seemed rushing to her destruction. Thus it happened that Mr. Pepys quite failed to observe the singular attitude of Sam'l Daggett.

Daggett, at the quarter rail, completely ignored the confusion and panic. He stood staring at the group about the queer chained figure on the mole, and upon his unpleasant features rested a singular pallor, an expression of the utmost horror. Numbers of Moors appeared along the shore, emptying their guns at the ship as she neared, and Daggett produced two pistols from beneath his cloak.

Whistles shrilled again. The ship, now so close to the mole that the woman's chained figure could be clearly distinguished, wore about very neatly. As she did so, Mr. Daggett lifted one pistol and fired it, then the other. A wave of relief at the ship's escape from disaster swept the quarterdeck, and some one even raised a laugh over Daggett's farewell to the Moors; no one observed that the white chained figure on the mole had fallen forward and was quiet. Daggett wiped sweat from his pallid, unlovely features and went below from sight.

SO ended the story that my friend Dexter had turned over to me.

It left me with a queer strained feeling, as I say. That some truth lay in it was past any doubt, for Mr. Pepys left some account of his trip to Tangier and the enterprise there; but he said nothing of any such adventure. Had he been entirely ignorant of the horrible facts lying behind his acquisition of that necklace, with its studs of coral as red as blood?

Whether he had known or not, there was ample reason for his not making any mention of the affair in his notes. The mere touch of that pistol, engraved with the name of Sam'l Daggett, made my fingers shrink back in involuntary repulsion.

However, Mr. Pepys had certainly learned the truth sooner or later. I made an examination of the ink-blot under violet rays, the better to decipher that key to the names in the story, and here I made a discovery that Dexter had completely missed.

The rays brought out one name, completely invisible in ordinary light, written off by itself. It was a signature, obviously of the first owner of the pamphlet, and it read:

S. Pepys

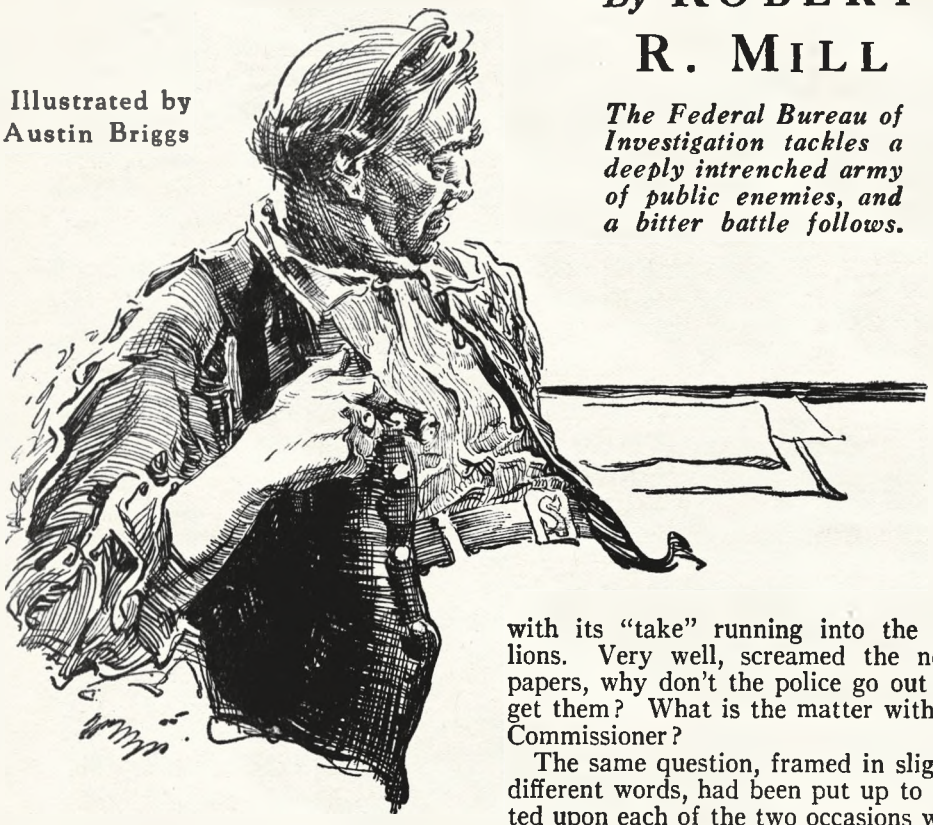
Another colorful story in this brilliant series, which follows the progress of mankind as manifested in the development of his weapons, will appear in our forthcoming October issue.

JAIL-BAIT

By ROBERT R. MILL

Illustrated by Austin Briggs

The Federal Bureau of Investigation tackles a deeply intrenched army of public enemies, and a bitter battle follows.



POLICE Commissioner Golted tossed the card aside with a snort of contempt. One of those schoolboys, playing at being a cop! His massive jaw was firm, and there was fire in his honest gray eyes as he growled at the clerk: "Tell him to wait."

A sardonic sort of satisfaction crept over Golted as he sat before his desk, thinking of the man cooling his heels in the outer office. Six days ago Polock Dan, head of the policy racket in Bender City, and two of his henchmen had met a violent end. Since that time life had been a nightmare for Golted.

Every edition of every newspaper was filled with sarcastic references to the failure of the police to make any progress in the solution of the case. Almost every inhabitant of Bender City knew the reason for the passing of Polock Dan and his lieutenants: rival gangsters had cast covetous eyes upon the policy racket, with its "take" running into the millions. Very well, screamed the newspapers, why don't the police go out and get them? What is the matter with the Commissioner?

The same question, framed in slightly different words, had been put up to Golted upon each of the two occasions when he had been summoned to City Hall, where the mayor, who was honest enough, but who was the dupe of the real powers ruling the city, was beginning to squirm under the newspaper fire.

Golted squared his broad shoulders as he jabbed a push-button. He was an old hand at this game, veteran of years when he had pounded a beat, and he knew what he was up against. If these schoolboy cops thought they could beat the system, they were welcome to try.

He looked up with an amused smile as a tall, thin and rather elegant young man walked into the room. He was smiling, but beneath that smile the Commissioner sensed strength and purpose. Golted glanced at the card:

"Special Agent James Ashby, Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Justice."

"Commissioner Golted?" The hand of the young man was outstretched.

"Maybe we can stall them off. Keep sitting on your brains, and let me do the talking."

The man behind the desk merely grunted. This was more than personal animosity between two men. Here was a clash between the old order and the new in police work, and the old was determined not to yield: Behind the desk the pavement pounding-cop, honest at heart, courageous, rough and ready, but a firm believer in the magic of the nightstick, rather than the miracles of science. Before him, stood an exponent of the new school: A trained hunter of men, taught to make use of every aid science could extend; a man who was proud of his calling, regarded it as a profession, and brought to it the zeal of a crusader.

Ashby merely smiled when he saw the attitude of the other man, and calmly slipped into a chair. Despite the rudeness, the special agent liked the policeman, and admired him for the rugged qualities he knew he possessed. In his heart he wished it was possible for them to meet on a basis of friendship, but his better judgment told him this could not be. So he offered a bait:

"They are giving you quite a pushing around, aren't they?"

He watched the flush steal across the face of the policeman, saw his fists clench.

"Yeh," growled Golted. "Maybe they are. You asking for some of it?"

The special agent smiled, a frank, almost boyish smile.

"I have been ordered to ask for some of it," he corrected.

Savage joy swept over Golted. "Good! You are welcome to it. You'll get just what they are handing to me."

He was pacing the room now with the slow, powerful pace that had carried him through the toughest beats in the city.

"I went into this job with my eyes wide open. I pounded a beat for twenty years. No man can say I framed him, and no man can say he bought me. But you can't use that for food in your old age. Now they have me down, and soon they will have me out. I will go out as poor as I was when I was a rookie. I kissed my pension good-by when I traded my uniform for this title."

He came to a halt before Ashby.

"They'll do the same thing to you." Gruff kindness overcame him. "But you won't be able to say I held out on you. Listen to this, young fellow:

"The people of this city think they elected a mayor. They think I am the police commissioner. I don't. And if you do, you shouldn't be allowed out without a nurse."

Bug-eye Sondus

Golted returned to his chair.

"Big Steve Howak runs this city. He runs it just as he ran the Scarlip gang during Prohibition, keeping out of sight, as far as the public is concerned."

He paused as Ashby lighted a cigarette. The poise of the special agent angered him still more. He drove home his charges with relentless fury:

"Big Steve runs City Hall because the mayor is just an honest, stupid figurehead, ruled by his secretary, who belongs to Big Steve. He owns the police because all the inspectors and most of the precinct captains take their orders from him instead of from me. He owns the district attorney, and he owns the judges. Think you can come in here and buck him?"

He watched Ashby lean back and blow a smoke-ring toward the ceiling.

"Just to save you a lot of running around, I'll tell you that Big Steve had Polock Dan and his pals put away. The Polock had the policy racket, and Big Steve wanted it. He waited until he had everything else in the city, and then he took that. Now all you have to do is to pin it on him. Good luck."

Ashby carefully extinguished the cigarette.

"Just where do you fit into the picture, Commissioner?"

There was all the bitterness in the world in Golted's laugh.

"The fall-guy. They knew I would be hard to handle. As an inspector in uniform, I was protected by Civil Service. Here, I hold office at the pleasure of the mayor. In a day or two Big Steve will pick out his pleasures for him. Then they win both ways. Clever, aint it?"

Ashby nodded. "It is," he admitted.

Golted stood up, a signal the interview was at an end. He had the natural reticence of a policeman, and now he was filled with embarrassment that his bitterness had made him so garrulous.

"That's the whole story, young fellow." His bitter laugh sounded again. "But wait a minute. I won't hold out anything on you. Here."

He picked up a misshapen leaden pellet.

"The bullet that killed Polock Dan. I keep it as a souvenir."

He saw the look of surprise that crossed the face of the special agent.

"Yeah, I know about ballistics, too. But you have to have the gun it was fired from to make a comparison, and I stopped believing in Santa Claus years ago. And even if some honest copper was fool enough to bring it in, it is a cinch Big Steve has a friend in our ballistics department. Swell way to work, aint it?"

Ashby shrugged. His manner was disarming, his voice casual, as he declared:

"Not so hot." He picked up the bullet. "Then this isn't doing you much good." He placed the bullet in his pocket. "I'll take it along to show my boss I am on the job, and that we are working together. We will return it to you."

Golted gave gruff assent. "That's about all you will get out of it," he growled. "Well, don't say I didn't warn you."

Ashby was smiling as he stood at the door.

"You have been very frank, Commissioner. I appreciate it deeply. Please don't get the idea that we think we are going to do wonders on this after you have failed. We will be back to see you quite often, and when we come back, we will be seeking help."

A noncommittal grunt was his only answer.

A FEW hours later, in the laboratory on the seventh floor of the Department of Justice Building in Washington, three men in white smocks bent over the leaden pellet, which now reposed in a bed of cotton. Bright lights beat down upon the three men. Two powerful microscopes were close at hand. One man held

a steel rule that was graduated to the thousandth of an inch. Carl Sherman, head of the great laboratory of crime, joined them. He too wore a white smock. His keen eyes, shielded by thick glasses, twinkled with interest. They presented a strange picture, these four men. To the casual observer, they resembled research workers groping for some new commercial formula, or scientists waging war on germs—almost anything rather than manhunters.

THE man with the rule looked up as Sherman entered.

"Fired from a .38 caliber Jones and Easton. Mushroomed a bit, but good enough for identification."

He meant that the bullet had flattened when it struck some solid object, probably bone, but that it was in good enough condition to obtain the minute measurements which would give the exact dimensions of the interior of the muzzle of the revolver barrel from which it had been fired.

The ballistics expert placed the bullet under the microscope and measured with the rule. He called off the results in thousandths of an inch. The other men made notes of the figures. The bullet's sides and base, of course, retained the form of the gun-barrel at the muzzle. The marks made by the rifling the experts called "grooves." The flat spaces between them were designated as "lands." When the measurements were completed, the expert bent over for an even more searching inspection. Soon a quiet smile played over his face.

"The gun that fired this bullet has a marked defect. It shows up like a trademark. Here, Mr. Sherman, have a look."

Carl Sherman peered through the glass.

"Plain as an electric sign," was his verdict. "Now the question is: can we match it?"

They turned to their large and constantly growing collection of bullets recovered at the scenes of various crimes. All these bullets had been photographed, and the prints enlarged as much as possible, with the measurements printed on each card. They divided these cards, and went to work. Carl Sherman stood to one side, anxiety on his fine face.

It was sometime later that one of the experts gave a sudden cry:

"Here we are, I think. Measurements check. Yes, and here is the defect. But you better check on me, Bill."

A second expert bent over the card.

"It couldn't be anything else," he decided.

"What is the number of the card?" There was triumph in Carl Sherman's voice. They called it off to him. He walked rapidly to a file, and produced a card bearing the same number.

He read aloud:

"'Bullet recovered from body of cashier killed during robbery of First National Bank of Syrport, January 27, 1936. Fired by man identified from Rogues Gallery pictures as Sock Dracon, member of Scarlip Gang."

There were figures denoting a cross-file. Carl Sherman jotted them down.

"Thank you, gentlemen," Carl Sherman told the ballistics men. Then he hastened to the master-file.

Sock Dracon's card told a number of things: First, that he was a fugitive from justice at the present time. Then came descriptions, previous convictions and other data, all of which Sherman passed over hurriedly.

It was only a step to the *modus operandi* file. Mr. Dracon was well represented there, his card being filed with various other members of the Scarlip Gang. His particular pals in the gang, according to these cards, were Whitey Beeso and Bug-eye Sondus, both of whom, the master-file stated, also were enjoying temporary liberty. Mr. Sondus, judging from his listed qualifications and achievements, was the lightweight of the unholy trinity.

CARL SHERMAN smiled broadly as he placed the cards of the three rogues and the bullet on his desk. Then his smile gave way to a thoughtful frown. Soon the frown vanished, and he made his way to the *modus operandi* file, turning to the cards devoted to the members of the gang once ruled by Polock Dan. There he selected two belonging to men neither dead nor in durance vile.

Then he penned a note to Ashby:

Polock Dan was killed by a bullet fired from a revolver formerly owned by Sock Dracon. It is reasonably safe to assume he is the present owner of the gun. Three men took part in the Polock Dan massacre. So, as you will see from the cards in the first group, Sock Dracon, Whitey Beeso and Bug-eye Sondus are very eligible. You will note that Sondus is the weak sister of the trio.

In accordance with our plan, as outlined with the Director, I am sending along

two "spares." Our files show them to be eligible for our purposes, but I advise checking with our Bender City field office before going ahead.

I am not inclined to think you will have much trouble locating these men, because they have every reason to feel secure. But remember that Mr. Dracon is not a pleasant man to do business with, and don't do anything foolish. Best of luck!

Ashby smiled when he opened the package, which had been delivered by airplane, and found the note. There was a warm glow about his heart. Good old Carl Sherman! He and the Director were aces. So were all the gang, for that matter.

FOUR days later, Ashby visited Commissioner Golted again. He found a changed man, for the blow that Golted had expected had fallen, and he had met it with the rough-and-ready philosophy acquired from crowded city streets.

"Hello, young fellow," he growled, with no resentment in his gruff manner. "You just got in under the wire. Wait until Monday, and you can deal with a direct representative of Big Steve. I get through then."

A smile lighted up his broad face.

"'Allowed to resign.' We part company on the best of terms. I tell the world what a swell bunch they are to work for, and they tell the world how they hate to lose me. We both are liars—but it saves my pension. I need it. I have a wife to think of."

Ashby's face was free from guile.

"Sorry you are leaving us, Commissioner. We are here to ask for that help I spoke about." He shuffled three cards in his hands. "We had a lucky break. Some information fell in our laps. We know who killed Polock Dan and his two pals."

He placed the three cards on the desk.

"Bug-eye Sondus, Shorty Peleg and Pretty Grecal." A smile played over his handsome face. "Three nice boys."

Golted studied the cards through narrowed eyes. He glanced at the special agent, then back at the cards.

"How long you been in Bender City, young fellow?"

"Less than a week," Ashby admitted.

The policeman snorted.

"Somebody has sold you something. Bug-eye belongs to the Scarlip mob, all right; but even if he was among those present, he was a long way from being the moving spirit. He aint got guts enough. Peleg and Grecal both are on the other side of the fence, and neither one of them would have had nerve enough to get within a block of the Polock with a gat in their hands. You got a bum steer, young fellow."

For just a moment consternation was visible upon Ashby's face, but he shook his head with dogged determination.

"We stand on the information, Commissioner. My orders are to get these three men. We are looking for them now. We would appreciate it if you would get out a general alarm for them; and if you get them, we will take them off your hands."

Golted shrugged his shoulders.

"That's easy," he declared. "It's your funeral."

"Yes," Ashby admitted, "it is my funeral."

When the special agent was gone, Golted pressed a button.

"Tell Chief Inspector Probar I want him," he directed the clerk.

Chief Inspector Martin Probar swaggered into the room. He gave an impression of capability and integrity, until the inspection was centered upon his shifty eyes, which were perhaps his outstanding feature.

Golted handed him the three cards.

"Department of Justice wants those three babies on the Polock Dan job."

The Commissioner saw Probar start, then quickly recover his self-possession.

"Want a general alarm out on them?" asked Probar.

"Yes," said Golted.

Probar walked away. Near the door he turned.

"Give me that in writing," he directed.

Golted scribbled the order. He watched Probar leave the room. Alone in the office, Golted sat slumped in his chair, staring off into space. There was something here that was over his head. That young fellow didn't look like a fool.

Meanwhile, Chief Inspector Probar dictated a general order to a teletype operator. Then he put on his hat and headed uptown. His destination was a hotel in the theatrical district.

IN the living-room of a suite in that hotel sat Big Steve Howak, head of the super-government that ruled Bender City, and District Attorney Samuel Leden, both of whom listened to Probar's story with interest.

Ashby's voice sounded from inside the room: "Make a grab for your gun, Sock. That will be my excuse!"

"What the hell do them Feds want with Shorty Peleg and Pretty Grecal?" demanded Big Steve.

Mr. Leden snorted.

"Phony information. Some stool sold them something. Turned in Bug-eye for a good rap, and gave them Shorty and Pretty on general principles—probably because they have no use for the two punks. Nobody who knows them does."

He shot the question at Big Steve: "Bug-eye in the city?"

There was sincerity in the voice of the gangster as he promised:

"He won't be, an hour from now."

"Says you!" Leden retorted. "Get this through your head, Steve: You aren't playing with dumb coppers now. You are jazzing with your Uncle Sam. Sooner or later, unless we play this damn' close to the chest, they are going to catch up with Bug-eye. The best way to hurry that up is to have him start moving now."

An ominous note crept into his voice:

"It won't look so good if those babies ever know Bug-eye started moving fast just as soon as we knew they wanted him. You can count Mrs. Leden's boy Sam out on any deal like that. It's too hot in Atlanta, too dry in Leavenworth, and too damp in Alcatraz."

"Maybe we—" began Big Steve.

Leden snorted his derision.

"Maybe we can stall this off by telling the newspapers we are out of town. Keep sitting on your brains, and let me do the thinking."

A long two minutes passed.

"I have it," declared the District Attorney. "Get Bug-eye somewhere, and wise him up. Probar can see Captain Moster, and he can get one of his dicks who is right, to pick Bug-eye up on some minor rap like picking pockets. Book him under a phony name, and arraign him before Magistrate Bloval. We put that monkey on the bench, and he has to come through. Bug-eye will cop a plea, and Bloval will hand him sixty days on the Island. Safest place in the world for a guy in his boots."

Leden's enthusiasm for the plan, and his pride in his ability shone from his eyes as he outlined the various details:

"Make out a card on Bug-eye, but put a phony picture and phony prints on it.

Police Commissioner Golted

I want the card to go through with the regular batch for the day, but those birds in Washington would spot his real prints in a minute. Get a picture and prints from some guy who is clean.

"When Bug-eye is put away,—and make it snappy,—the coppers can pick up Shorty and Pretty at any time. That will give them two out of three, and make a good showing. It is no skin off our elbow what happens to those punks, and it is a bum rap, anyway."

Mr. Leden relaxed, his sharp features in repose.

"Bug-eye aint going to like this," came the deep voice of Big Steve.

"Aint he?" demanded Leden, with heavy sarcasm. "Maybe he would like the hot-squat better. We'll ask him."

A good two miles away three men occupied a second-floor room which was dark, cold and meagerly furnished. The clothes the men wore were old, dirty and ill fitting. The men were unshaven, and their eyes hollow from loss of sleep. They shivered in the cold.

Two of the men sat in straight chairs, while the third was crouched on the floor, peering through a slit torn in the curtain, which covered a window commanding a view of the street and a tenement building, miscalled an apartment house, on the opposite side.

Outwardly these men resembled typical residents of the community, perhaps one shade removed from the classification of "bum." Among their comrades in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Justice, they were known as Special Agents Block, Holmes and Thomas.

Two days before, a rat-eyed individual had whispered some words in the ears of Morton Edwards, the agent in charge of the Bender City field office of the Bureau. One hour later these men rented the room and began their vigil.

Block, the man peering through the shade, turned to his companions.

"Sondus just came out. He is standing in the doorway, lighting a cigarette."

Thomas stood up and pulled on a cap. Then he walked from the room.

Block continued his vigil. Holmes moved nearer the window. His turn was next.

"There he goes," Block reported. "Heading east. Tommy had plenty of time to pick him up. Here is hoping."

Several hours later, when Special Agent Thomas appeared at the Bender City field offices, he was ushered into an office where Agent-in-Charge Edwards and Ashby were waiting.

"Sondus walked to Second Avenue and Spruce Street, where he met a man I later identified as Detective C. A. Woltey, of the Ninth Precinct," the special agent reported. "They talked together for some time, and appeared to be arguing.

"Then they walked off together, keeping up a constant conversation. They walked toward the station house in the Ninth; and about one block from the building Woltey took Sondus by the arm. I was unable to see what happened in the building.

"Less than an hour later Woltey arraigned Sondus under the name of John Garbon. Woltey accused Sondus of attempting to steal his watch, and Sondus entered a plea of guilty to the charge. Then Magistrate Henry Bloval sentenced Sondus to sixty days on the Island. The transfer was made at once."

ASHBY nodded. The buzz of a telephone-bell cut off his comment. He turned to the instrument.

"Yes. . . . Speaking. . . . Hello, Inspector Probar. . . . You have? Great work . . . . Yes indeed. We will take them right off your hands."

He turned away from the telephone.

"Chief Inspector Probar reports the arrest of Shorty Peleg and Pretty Grecal." There was a twinkle in his eye. "That is what I call efficiency. Now, if we only hear from Block and Holmes."

They sat waiting for the summons. But it was almost dark when the telephone rang again.

"One of the women went to a store and ordered supplies, which are to be

delivered," Holmes reported. "It looks like a good chance. The clerk is alone in the store, waiting for the delivery boy. It will be a cinch to take over."

Ashby's eyes were sparkling as he jotted down the address.

"Good," he told Special Agent Holmes. "Be right with you."

THE two men and two women in the living-room of the tenement, which its fond owners called an apartment, looked up as a peculiar knock sounded.

"That's Vi," said Sock Dracon.

"I'll let her in," offered Whitey Beeso, who threw open the door.

A large, overdressed and overpainted blonde entered. One of the women in the room looked up at her eagerly.

"Seen anything of Bug-eye?" she asked.

"Nope," said the blonde.

"Where are the eats?" demanded Mr. Dracon.

The woman called Vi tossed her handbag on a couch.

"Do I look like a truck?" she asked.

There was a ugly gleam in Mr. Dracon's eyes.

"You aint no 1936 model," he answered. "You got ten pounds too much on them hips of yours to get in the streamline class."

Vi calmly removed her hat.

"You should ought to write down some of them wise-cracks," she said. "We could slip 'em along to one of them now 'bright sayings of the kiddies' contests, and perhaps collect some jack on 'em. God knows they aint worth nothing here." She stood before the mirror, refreshing her make-up. "Try 'em out on the guy what delivers the groceries. He'll laugh. It's part of his job."

She walked across the room, kicking the stock of a machine-gun which was propped in one corner.

"And get that cannon out of the way before the guy staggers in with the beer," she ordered. "You wouldn't know, but the best people aint using them for parlor ornaments this year."

It was Sock Dracon who walked to the door when the knock sounded, about an hour later.

"Who's there?"

"Groceries from Goldberg's."

Sock unbolted the door, opened it, and was confronted by Special Agent Ashby, who had an apron tied about his waist, and whose hands were filled with packages of groceries.

"Where you want 'em?" asked Ashby.

Vi stepped forward. "Gimme."

Ashby handed her the packages.

"Case of beer comin'," said the special agent.

Out in the shadowy hall other special agents, armed with sub-machine-guns, were pressed against the wall on both sides of the door leading to the apartment.

Ashby was whistling as he walked from the room.

"Where you got it?" asked Dracon.

"Right outside," said Ashby.

The gangster remained standing just inside the open door. Ashby returned, the case of beer held before him. Dracon reached for it, took it in his hands, and had turned toward the kitchen when he heard the command:

"Stick them up, Sock!"

SOCK DRACON wheeled about. Before him stood the delivery-man. His body was rigid. His eyes were narrow slits. In his right hand was an ugly, capable-looking automatic. Through the open door walked three special agents, who trained their guns on the occupants of the room.

Whitey Beeso elevated his hands. One of the women screamed. The case of beer slipped from Dracon's grasp, and fell to the floor amid a crash of broken glass.

Ashby's voice sounded above the din inside the room:

"Make a grab for your gun, Sock. That will be my excuse."

Sock's hands went up promptly.

Ashby searched him, found a revolver, peered in the muzzle, and smiled his pleasure. Other agents moved about the rooms, collecting hidden weapons.

"What is the rap?" demanded Dracon.

"Nothing very serious," Ashby assured him. "Murder and bank robbery in Syrport. Murder here. A charge of consorting with criminals, is against the women. And don't feel lonely. Bug-eye Sondus will be with you, just as soon as we find time to bring him back from the Island."

He glanced about him with satisfaction.

"Meanwhile, we must get started. There's a lot more work to do."

That work began as soon as they returned to the field office.

"Go out and pick up these men," Ashby ordered a group of agents. "Detective C. A. Woltey and Captain Michael Moster, both of the Ninth Precinct, and

Magistrate Henry Bloval. Bring them in here, but keep them apart."

He turned to a clerk.

"Phone Police Commissioner Golted, and ask him if he will come here. Notify me when he arrives."

MORE than an hour had elapsed when Ashby entered an inner office and greeted Commissioner Golted. A grim smile was on the heavy face of the policeman.

"You are playing hell, young fellow. Think you can make it stick?"

"Too early for predictions," grinned Ashby. He dropped into a chair beside Golted. "Here is what we have:

"Clear case against Sock Dracon, Whitey Beeso and Bug-eye Sondus on the Polock Dan murders. Sock was carrying the gun that killed the Polock. The barman at the tavern where the murder took place has identified all three men."

Commissioner Golted nodded.

"Sock and Whitey won't talk," Ashby continued. "We expected that. We are working on Bug-eye now. He is the weak sister of the trio, and he is beginning to break. But I doubt if we need him."

He looked the policeman full in the eyes as he went on:

"When we asked you to pick up Sondus, Peleg and Grecal, we were setting a trap. Forgive me for not taking you into my confidence, but we wanted you to go ahead in routine fashion."

Ashby rapidly outlined what had happened. He saw a gleam of triumph shine from the honest eyes of the policeman, but it soon was followed by a gesture of resignation.

"Won't stick," growled Golted.

They looked up as Agent-in-Charge Edwards entered with a typewritten statement, which he placed before Ashby.

"Affidavit from Detective Woltey," Edwards explained. "He doesn't like the idea of taking the rap alone. He admits he received his orders from Captain Moster."

Soon another special agent entered the room.

"Captain Moster broke," he announced. "Admits he gave the orders to Woltey, and says he was acting upon orders received from Chief Inspector Probar."

"We are going up the ladder," was Ashby's terse comment. "Bring in Chief Inspector Probar."

Golted leaned forward, tense with excitement.

"Probar," he warned, "is a tough customer."

Special Agent Ashby crossed his knees. He lighted a cigarette. His voice was low, unemotional:

"I can be a tough customer myself."

Golted stared at him, seeing him with new eyes.

"By the Lord," he growled, "I believe it!"

Ashby inspected the glowing end of the cigarette.

"And when Probar comes in," he continued, "I am going to work on him."

Another special agent entered.

"Magistrate Bloval's statement. Says a man named Garbon was arraigned before him on a charge of picking pockets, pleaded guilty and that he sentenced Garbon to sixty days in the Island. But he admits Chief Inspector Probar called him on the telephone about the case, and intimated what the sentence should be."

Ashby nodded. "Good enough. Give me copies of all statements obtained thus far."

He turned to Golted. "Probar will like to read them. He may even want to tear them up. We will humor him."

ANOTHER hour passed. Then Special Agent Holmes entered. He was grinning gleefully.

"We have Chief Inspector Probar." His grin became more pronounced. "We better work fast, because he says we all will be fired by tomorrow morning."

Ashby brushed past him. Left alone in the office, Golted chewed upon an unlighted cigar, and stared at the bare wall. His whole career passed in review before him.

Here, tonight, a miracle was happening before his eyes. These youngsters, whose eyes gleamed with their sincerity and enthusiasm, and who functioned so smoothly and rapidly, appealed to the workmanlike mind of the policeman. They were bucking something he had believed unbeatable. He still doubted their ultimate success. But the light in their eyes was matched by the light that now sparkled in his. Win, lose or draw, he was for them.

Agent-in-Charge Edwards entered the office, clutching a sheet of paper.

"Where is Ashby?" he asked.

Before Golted could answer, Ashby appeared.

"Sondus admitted that Big Steve planned the Polock Dan killings; that proved too much for Probar."

"Giving him a chance to think." His voice was harsh. "Anticipation often is worse than actuality."

Edwards thrust the paper into his hands.

"Bug-eye Sondus broke," he said.

Ashby's glance ran over the typewritten lines.

"Come on!" he cried. "Bring Sondus in before Probar."

LEFT alone again, Commissioner Golted chewed on the unlighted cigar. But soon they were back. Ashby stood before the policeman, his face flushed with triumph.

"Sondus admitted that Big Steve Howak planned the Polock Dan killings, and brought Dracon, Beeso and Sondus on from Syrport to do the job," Ashby explained. "That was too much for Probar." The hand of the special agent rested upon the broad shoulder of the policeman. "I want you to hear this. You deserve it."

He turned to the special agents gathered about.

"Pick up Big Steve Howak and District Attorney Samuel Leden," he ordered. "Bring them in. We have them cold."

The policeman stepped forward, his hand outstretched.

"You've done it, young fellow!" His growl was a song of triumph.

They stood facing each other, both men silent.

"We will have a hard fight in the courts," Ashby said at length. "But I think our case will stand up."

"It probably will," Golted admitted. "And now I suppose you'll move on." His heavy fist struck the desk a resounding blow. "I aint belittling what

you have done, but it aint enough. You have put a big crimp in this outfit, but the rackets are still there. By tomoring it out for Big Steve Howak's place. You guys strike once, and then you move row morning, other guys will be shooton. The rackets don't play that way. They hang right on. They—"

"Easy, Commissioner," came the quiet voice of Ashby. "This time, and from now on, we stay. The Director has been planning this for years. We had to feel our way. More men—better equipment —increased appropriations. Thanks to our success on specialized cases such as kidnapings, we got them. Now, thank God, we are ready."

A shadow crossed his face.

"We are ready just in time. When Prohibition ended, gangland turned to kidnaping. We drove them out of it. We had the public with us. The gangs didn't like that. They used their heads, and they turned to things such as policy games and slot machines. They did this because they longed for the good old days of Prohibition when the public was on their side, and they had brains enough to know that the average citizen regards these things with amused tolerance."

He tossed his head with defiance.

"You and I don't. We know what lurks behind them. Very well. We have orders to fight them to the finish. It is the toughest job we ever had handed to us. It may take the halo from us, and give us the same stigma that Prohibition agents enjoyed. If it does, we don't deserve anything better, and we will take it. But we are going in expecting to win."

He studied the policeman with speculative eyes.

"Too bad you won't be able to go along with us on this, Commissioner." There was provocation in his voice. "Your resignation takes effect Monday, doesn't it?"

Golted took one step forward, seized Duke Ashby by the shoulders, and shook him.

"Resign, hell!" his deep voice boomed. "I never ran away from a fight in my life, young fellow. This is the sort of fight that makes a fellow's fingers itch to get in it." He sought to mask his emotion beneath gruffness as he brusquely added: "You fellows fight my style, and you talk my language. I am right in there with you."

Another of Robert Mill's fine stories will appear in the next, the October, issue.

Tigers Are

An American engineer in Siam encounters plenty trouble when the wild animals get too friendly.

By WARREN HASTINGS MILLER

Illustrated by J. Clinton Shepherd

I'VE always been morose about women; and when Chit Sya ate up my powerhouse roof, I felt that I had a right to complain. She's an expensive elephant.

Abdulhadi and I considered the wreck of our new thatch.

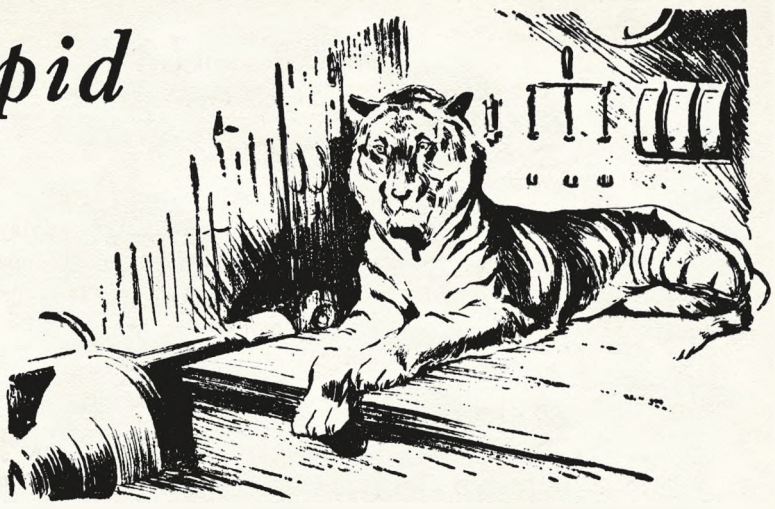
"Why doesn't the Sahib get a gas teruck?" Abdulhadi asked with a gaze of venom upon our beauty, who stood swaying and switching her trunk, her little red eyes guilty but content.

"Go to, father of all horse-thieves!" I said. "Can a truck drive piles for the dam? Or place a turbine-casting for you? We are not in the country of machinery."

We were not. We were on the southerly border of the great Thar Desert, in a little native principality called Jhaladpur. And we were building its Maharajah an electric-light plant. Also up our nullah prowled another female, a tigress whom the natives called "Mrs. Jhang." She had eaten an incautious bachelor named Jhang, and on the theory that it was time he got married anyhow, the village had given his name to the lady. They drove out a bullock for her once a week lest she sample more of their citizenry. At present she seemed interested in me; I would glimpse her occasionally at dusk when sitting out under my tent fly. Precisely the neighborhood kitty (if you scaled down our ravine to garden-nook size), and looking at me with that speculative interest that a cat has for anything not too large to be edible. A puff of my pipe in her direction, and she would vanish with a huge windy snort.

I have always held that tigers are stupid. This one wandered, in broad

Stupid



Nothing could be done about current until Mrs. Jhang chose to move.

daylight, into the native school one sunny morning. What she thought she was doing there she evidently didn't know. She backed out with the same windy snort, leaving forty scared little Ramasawmys staring back at the place where she had been. The priest continued his instructions on the sacred word, *Om*.

Yes, there were at least two too many pernicious females on this confounded job. We should have bought Htoo Mai for our work-elephant; but he cost Rs. 10,000. Chit Sya was intelligent enough; she packed in all our heavy turbine-casings and dynamo frames from Bikaner on the rails out in the Thar; she planted piles for our trestles and dam, and drove them home with a mighty mallet made of a teak-trunk section; sh. placed machinery on its foundations with the nicety of a derrick; but she was temperamental when Ras Daoud, her mahout, got drunk and neglected her meals. Give me a man, preferably one decorated with a *tulwar!* Azraf Abdulhadi, my general foreman, was a man after my own inches. Huge, rough and profane, he spoke an atrocious Berber-Arabic, and had quite evidently taken his insolent green-blue eyes and red beard aboard some ship (after attending to piety in Mecca) and had drifted ashore in India, where I had encountered him, in Madras. We had hired this whole village of Maikwar on commencing operations. I had only to let Abdulhadi replace the *tulwar* with a wire-rope switch, and what the Sahib said went—emphasized by a brawny forearm and a simply terrific vocabulary.

"That rat of a Bengali is drunk again, sahib," Abdulhadi was saying. "Lo, look to the leg-pin that this daughter of a noseless mother has pulled up! Shall I hit her on the toes?"

"I'd advise not," I said. "Always call the manager of the hotel when there is one piecee mosquito inside your bed netting. Go kick in Ras Daoud's ribs."

I strolled over to the dam while Abdulhadi was getting Ras Daoud and his elephant together for their mutual benefit. The lake behind the dam was filling up fast. My army of shouting black men had all gone back to their paddy-fields enriched by silver rupees for two months of digging and filling and puddling clay.

Down below, the few masons who were left—and one white electrician—were perched in a respectful group up on the ravine-flank, and were watching Chit Sya reach for another snatch of palm-leaf from our powerhouse roof. The thatcher stood weeping and cursing at her, but he did not dare throw any rocks.

"Hey, boss!" Blake yelled up at me. "When do I get going with those 'bus-bars?"

"Don't mind her," I called down. "It's all in the day's work in this country. She won't eat you."

"Not on your life!" Mr. Blake shot back resentfully. "She made a pass at me the last time! *I* aint gittin' paid no overtime for tapin' up no leads with no blarsted elephant on me back."

THERE spake the proper union man. But I really did not want to begin operations with a futile cascade of waste-water over my spillway. The Maharajah and all his suite would be up here this evening, on a train of caparisoned

state elephants, and with a brass band issuing forth from the city of Jhaladpur. You could see its turnip domes and pink palaces from here, with our power-line poles marching toward it over the low hills. This electrician had merely to finish taping a few dynamo leads and not mind the elephant. I could then open the turbine gates, and the thing would go off with a bang. The lake was filling right on time.

"Get in there and get to work, Blake," I said sternly. "I'll come down and keep her amused, if you like."

That was mere bravado. Chit Sya always chases me if her mahout is not by with his ankus, and I leg it up a hill, where the brute can't follow. It was all most exasperating! Chit Sya had complete possession so far as we were concerned. The ceremonies of starting up and taking over, with the Maharajah closing the main switch to town with a flourish, were gone *phut*.

Abdulhadi appeared at this juncture, with Ras Daoud, naked and limp, draped over one arm and rating about a hundred per cent useless, to a casual view.

"Ho, sahib!" my mountainous foreman roared up. "This grandson of a flea is snoring drunk. May dogs defile his grave! What do we, then?"

My word is law in this community. The Sahib has but to nod, and it is done. "Hand him over to Chit Sya," I said. "Perhaps she will take him to her motherly bosom."

She did not. She hit his carcass a playful belt with her trunk when Abdulhadi dumped him before her and skipped, lest she swipe him also. She reached up for another rip of thatch. We weren't getting anywhere. I looked at the lake-bank. It had two feet to go to reach the penstock gates. It was time I did something. I hate to call off a party, especially over anything so ridiculous as an elephant on the loose. The Maharajah's people would never come to the end of their laugh when they heard!

I WENT down there and put on a face of wrath. "Give me that ankus!" I said. I reversed its knob end and advanced on Chit Sya.

"You! Get the hell out of here! *Peha klung!*" I said, meaning, "Right about turn!" I smote her on the toes with the ankus knob.

"Have a care, sahib," said Abdulhadi. He was a very brave man; but when an elephant curls tight her trunk—

I went out of there, uphill, in five bounds. Blake laughed unfeelingly. "She don't like ye none, boss, looks like," he said. "I *told* ye I knew better'n—"

"We'll see about that!" I said. Chit Sya had gone back to our thatch after that warlike excursion in my direction. "You, Mandrapillay," I said to one of the masons, "run up to my tent and fetch the Sahib's revolver."

"Y'aint goin' to shoot six thousand rupees' worth of work-elephant over no thatch, are you?" Mr. Blake asked.

"No, but I'm going to shoot off all I can of her tail," I said wrathfully. "Maybe she'll chase the stump to hell-and-gone out of our way. I've stood enough."

WHAT would have happened, I can't say; but just then Chit Sya began to freeze. Her trunk dropped. Her belly rumbled like some one troubling a deep bass drum. She squawked under her breath. And then she began slowly backing away from the powerhouse.

"Now what?" said Mr. Blake.

"Mrs. Jhang calling, I believe," I said. "None of us has had an eye out for her lately."

"That tiger here? Me for Jhaladpur, then!" said Mr. Blake, and got ready to run.

"No. You stick around. I may need you, Blake," I said. "All tigers are fools; but she's not fool enough to want *you* when there's plenty of undressed meat around. If she's in the powerhouse,—and Chit Sya seems to think so,—I can tell you right now that she has no idea why she is there."

She ought to be asleep up in the nullah somewhere at this time of day. It occurred to me that the water, rising, had flushed her out of her lair, and that had started her prowling along the banks of this new lake that had happened in her hunting-grounds. There was a bushy gully to one side of the spillway, by which she could easily have poured her striped and lean self down into the powerhouse without any of us noticing it.

Mandrapillay had come back with my revolver. Chit Sya had backed off as far as her picket-ground, carrying Ras Daoud in the curl of her trunk. She was now belting him gently about the ears, and alternating it with disconsolate sweeps of the wisps of hay still left about. But she maintained a vigilant watchfulness on the powerhouse door.

Evidently there was more wild life inside it, and I had better go down. I

don't mind the occasional snakes and scorpions that seem to think our turbine piping a nice cool place; but Mrs. Jhang in there was really a bit too thick. We had to coax her off, if the Maharajah's party was to be a success.

"Abdulhadi," I said, "you catchum dynamite. Two piecee stick. Up in toolshed."

One might as well go down and have a look, while he was at it. Mr. Blake stared at me pop-eyed. "You look out, mister!" he said. "That ol' cat might rush you!"

"No fear. Like to see what she's doing, that's all," I said. "Just like her to park down on something valuable; and she weighs about three hundred and forty pounds. I was thinking of your switchboard, particularly. Look here, Blake, how far did you get it along?"

"All done but taping the 'bus-bars, boss; and then this other brute starts pulling the roof down all over me—"

"That's all right; we can start the turbines, then?"

"Sure thing. Might ease her out of there, at that, with all the noise and everything."

"Well—current, dynamite, gun: between them all we ought to stir her up a bit! Just the same, I'd better have a look, first."

I could not persuade him to come down with me. "You go up to the penstock gate-valve, then," I said. "The lake ought to be high enough by now. Turn 'em on when I signal. Abdulhadi will be plenty, down here, if she gets peckish."

My stout rapscallion had returned with two dynamite sticks in his hairy fist, and a fringe of matches handy in his teeth. He had found time to thrust his *tulwar* into his girdle also, in case of eventualities. I did not want to muss up the powerhouse with Mrs. Jhang's remains in any case, so bade him go light on that dynamite. The thing to do was to get her out as peaceably as possible, and then speed her on back up the nullah.

OUR view through the powerhouse door was at least arresting. Mrs. Jhang lay at ease up on the switchboard platform, in a warm spot of sun let in by Chit Sya's meal off our power-plant roof. She had chosen a still more strategic position than that pestilent elephant's. Nothing could be done about current to town till she chose to move. She was a superb creature, of dark tan and black stripes, and was snow-white on the belly.

Chit Sya reached for another snatch of palm leaf from our powerhouse roof. I felt I had a right to complain.

Her huge forepaws were stretched out like those on the Sphinx. Green fumes smoldered in those eyes that were fixedly watching Chit Sya—who eyed her back morosely, and continued to rumble her belly. Both were quite ready for a fight, but neither preferred to start. Then she turned that glare on me. . . . I looked over her head at the instruments and circuit-breakers on the polished slate wall of the switchboard. Over it rose the copper horns of our lightning-arresters on the high-tension transformers. All this was hooked up to the dynamos and ready for the Maharajah's switch to go home and send the juice over to town.

Mrs. Jhang stared at me for a moment, then opened her mouth and gave a typical cat hiss, as one saying: "Keep out! This means you!" Her tail twitched in annoyance.

Abdulhadi growled. "May all her days come to harm!" he said fervently. "Shall I throw a fire-stick, sahib?"

"We can't afford it," I said. Confound these temperamental females who are always entrenching themselves in men's jobs! There is always one. . . . I had two, here! At any moment Chit Sya might decide that attack was the best defense; and between them they would wreck my powerhouse. It was high time we got on with it.

"Oh, Blake!" I called. "Got water? Open those penstock gates. Slowly."

Water came rumbling down inside my steel flume. Water entered the turbines; there was the crunch of gears, and the two dynamos started rising to a high whine. Water spewed out the discharge culvert and went rushing on down the dry valley. I could see the ammeter needles swinging up their arcs on the switchboard. We had current.

MRS. JHANG leaped to her feet in one lithe movement. She had forgotten Chit Sya—and the unimportant humans—in her uneasiness over all this new noise and movement. She looked at the two spinning dynamos, round-eyed; then she crouched back against the switchboard with her tail up just like any cat. The thundering rumble of the turbine with its suggestion of limitless power was filling her feline brain with the conviction that this place was not a comfortable lair, after all. She looked very nervous and unhappy. I could see that the psychological moment had come. I was about to yelp, "*Scat*, you brute!" and have Abdulhadi emphasize it with a dynamite stick tossed where it would do least harm—but just then her tail slapped against our Number One circuit-breaker; there was a blue flash, and an explosion of jumping copper switch-blades. It was as if some starter had shouted the word, "*Go!*" She sailed off that platform in one tremendous leap for the powerhouse door. Her vindictive roars, as that flying cloud of cat went over us, said plain as words to Chit Sya: "*You* did that, pig! Virago!"

We didn't matter; that is, I was knocked down by her ropy tail in passing and Abdulhadi was too busy lighting a dynamite stick to interfere. Chit Sya bundled up her trunk, and her sharp tusks jutted forward at a suggestive angle. One thinks quickly in a crisis like this. Mrs. Jhang might be impaled neatly on two feet of ivory bayonet, but that wouldn't prevent her damaging—permanently—six thousand rupees' worth of work-elephant. I gestured Abdulhadi urgently and pointed. Anyone could see by the parabola where Mrs. Jhang would land—but she would not stay there but a split-second before taking off for the pounce on Chit Sya. She should be met there by some force considerably more dynamic than her own. . . .

Abdulhadi cleverly caught my idea and tossed his dynamite stick for the exact spot.

Bang!

That vicious crack of dynamite exploding in open air split our ears. Where gravity had intended to land Mrs. Jhang, she was not. She had vanished; gone up. . . . Chit Sya blinked and backed frenziedly, with snorts and sneezes presaging a stampede, but we were some time finding Mrs. Jhang. There seemed to be something up there in the smoke; but three hundred and fifty pounds is a mere feather, to dynamite. . . .

I may say that it does rain cats, occasionally, in the tropics.

"May Allah not remember her grave!" Abdulhadi cursed her with that vindictive piety reserved to ne'er-do-wells and unbelievers.

"It's regrettable," I said; "though one does have to be thinking of one's expense-account. She was a harmless kitty, really."

"*Aiwa?*" said Abdulhadi, which might be translated, *Oh, yeah?* "She did snatch my goat from beside my bed one night, sahib, though I told you not of that. Yea, with a paw thrust under the tent hem. It was a good goat. . . . And now there is no cheese. Also in this village there are no hens. Write that down in thy book, so that others may know what a lean place it is. Ya Allah, it is well that this 'lectricitee, which thou and I have built with our two hands and with much beating of this people of most weak hams, is finished—"

"Peace, thou!"

I CALLED to Mr. Blake and we went inside to view the damage. Nothing much but a circuit-breaker badly askew, where that ropy tail had swatted it, and some claw-gouges in the concrete as a memento to show the curious. It's all in the day's work in India.

But Abdulhadi put in his time collecting the remains of Mrs. Jhang while we were fixing the 'lectricitee. He had assembled quite a tiger for the world to see and admire when the Maharajah and suite arrived that afternoon to take over.

All Solid in the Head

A quaint and very American story by the able author of "The Ordeal of Tall Elk" and other good ones.

By BIGELOW NEAL

Illustrated by Monte Crews

ANDREW DRAYTON, thrusting his hands into his pockets halfway to the elbows, hunched his shoulders and bowed his head to face the coming storm. For many weeks he had been summoning his courage for just such an emergency. Now as he drove his toe into a gopher-hole and bowed his head to avoid the gaze of his angry employer, he realized that his stock of courage had been sufficient to precipitate trouble but with no surplus to carry him beyond.

"So you should want to marry my daughter?"

Buttonhook Johnson, so named from his tendency to droop like an overripe sunflower from a height of six feet and several inches, turned to face the young man behind the grain-drill, by the simple process of lifting his feet from the eveners, pivoting on the seat and lowering his feet again to the running-board of the machine.

"Else can't you say something, you agricultural college student? Been studying 'farmacy' four years and can't finish what you start?"

Half Norwegian and half German, Buttonhook Johnson thought in three different languages, while the one he spoke was so entirely different from its parents as to be entitled to a classification by itself. Frequently he prefixed his sentences with "else." Speaking with a gradually rising inflection, each statement became faintly interrogative whether he wished it so or not.

"You shall hear me talkin' now. Why don't you answer out?"

"Yes, Mr. Johnson, I should like to marry your daughter. I know I haven't a great deal to—"

"Ha—now he comes to talk again!" And then as an idea struck him: "Which one of the girls is it?"

Armed with a pipe-wrench, Andrew began an assult on the exhaust of the engine.

But Buttonhook made a practice of asking questions he could answer himself, and giving the abashed youth no time for reply, he went on:

"Else I know. Didn't I see you runnin' the washin'-machine this mornin' when you should have been squishing potato-bugs, and that lazy Julia standin' there grinnin' like a Chessy-cat?"

"I just did that so Katherine could have time to bake a cake."

"Hell and damn, else, he goes again! Don't you suppose those women cost enough, with sugar at six dollars a sack without you buttin' in on the cake-business? And so you not only monkey around the kitchen but you should pick yourself a cook at the same time! You make time to use up more sugar, and you think you get away with my fat Julia while the bugs eat up the potatoes—"

"I didn't say it was Julia."

"Else, it's Mary?"

"I didn't say Mary."

"Anna?"

"No—it's Katherine."

For the moment Buttonhook was too stunned to comment. Turning on the

four horses hitched to the drill, he exploded: "Doggone you, Mollie, never mind the nose-flies, an' if you don't quit leanin' on Jiggs I'll should put a staple on his hip-pad an' you'll should not be so anxious to sit on it! —So then, you young A. C. farmer, you think you come in here for forty dollars a month an' get away with my Katherine, the best girl I got! An' while we're talkin', what should you do with a wife if you had one? Else, how should you feed her? How about clothes?"

"Ha, that's what it means, Krosser-komper, eh?" demanded Mamma. "Stop still and not go, with fifty-one horses, for four thousand dollars—an' me still washin' on a wash-board and with a push-and-puller!"

Andrew withdrew his toe from the gopher-hole and again faced the choleric Buttonhook. "I know you don't think I amount to much, but Katherine loves me and—"

"Who says she loves you?"

"She says so."

"*Mein Gott!* An' seven little fishes! So it has gone so far! Why, you doggone' half-baked book-farmer—"

Buttonhook knew he was literally "up against it," for he could remember a time when he too had listened respectfully—and had eloped in less than twenty-four hours.

"Else, listen here, Andrew,"—and now there was a note of *camaraderie* and pleading in his voice,—"don't you see this matrimonial stuff is all foolishness? Listen, you think you're gettin' somethin', an' when you get it, it aint. It's just like, with Katherine, maybe, as it was with her mamma. She'll—"

Casting about for the most forcible illustration to support his new line of reasoning, Buttonhook's eyes lighted on Mamma Johnson's clothes-line, from which waved garments—one small and one very large indeed.

"Look, Andrew, an' remember, Katherine should most likely be just like her mamma. Look at the littlest, it's mail-order and made of rayon: that's what you think you'd get, just like I thought I got it. Else now, look at that tent beside it: that's what you should probably get, an' it's what I did got."

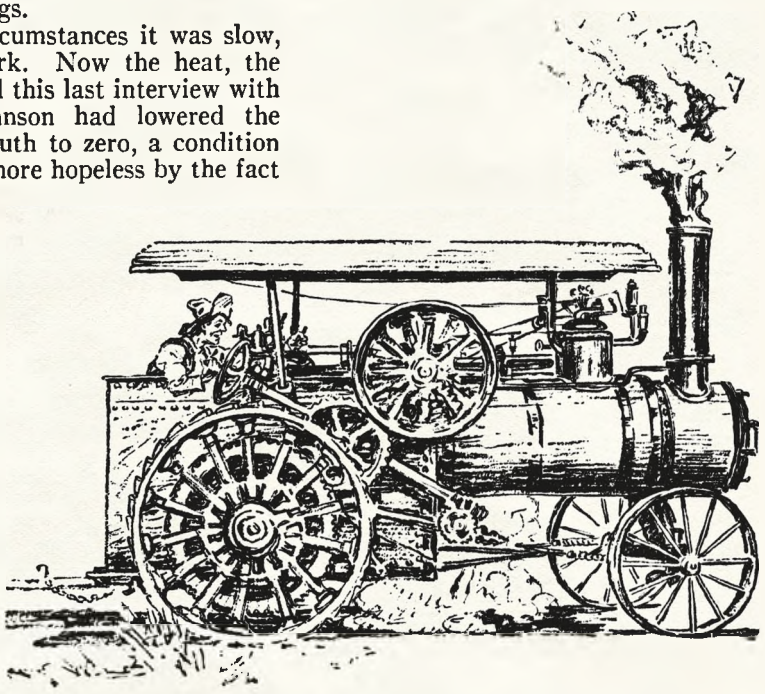
As the gaze of the youth followed the bony finger of Buttonhook Johnson, a breeze filled the garment and it swelled until it looked as if it might have been designed for a barrel.

"An' that," concluded Buttonhook Johnson, "is that, an' what's last an' more of it, if reason don't tell you where to get off at, the first time I see any of this monkeyshine, goo-gooin' business, you'll get your time an' a chance to foot it to town. An' you take me as I say it. It should be a cold day if ever I change my mind, once it is made up! You ask anybody; they'd most likely tell you, when my mind is once made up I'm all solid in the head. Else, meanwhile, we aint makin' no hays while the sunshinin' is good."

Side by side the man and the youth went down the field, Buttonhook stand-

ing on the grain-box of the drill, his head protruding through the dust, like a flag on a fort. Andrew plodded slowly in the wake of the thirty-foot drag. Ahead, six horses hitched abreast labored with sluggish, heavy tread. From the team came the creaking of hot and steaming leather, the jingle of trace-chains, the squeak of eveners and choking explosions from dust-charged lungs.

Under any circumstances it was slow, discouraging work. Now the heat, the choking dust and this last interview with Buttonhook Johnson had lowered the spirits of the youth to zero, a condition of affairs made more hopeless by the fact that the farmer actually prided himself, as he had said, upon being "all solid in the head." Indeed, Andrew Drayton had heard John Grahame say—and Grahame was Buttonhook's nearest neighbor and closest friend—that Buttonhook was the most obstinate man who ever walked on two legs. "His heart's in the right place, but once he gets a notion in his head it's there to stay, and what's a danged sight worse, he's actually proud of his stubbornness. He thinks it's a virtue, and a sign of a strong mind."



ANDREW'S courtship had begun in the rear seat of the family car one day when Buttonhook Johnson and Mamma, with Katherine and Andrew, were going to town. Knowing the driver was too busy to look around and that Mamma was too fat to do so even if she tried, the youth had allowed his hand to fall on Katherine's hand which lay on the seat between them. He had intended nothing permanent, but with Katherine's hand once in his, the nearer they had drawn to town, the tighter had grown his grasp. Going home this happened again, and the end of the trip had found Andrew and Katherine firmly knit in a wordless but none the less enduring compact.

That night they went for a walk and it was agreed that Andrew should muster up courage for an assault on Buttonhook, while Katherine opened negotiations in an effort to enlist the aid of her mother.

Mamma Johnson could be formidable, either as ally or as foe. She weighed nearly three hundred pounds, and if occasion seemed to require it, she could swear louder and faster than Buttonhook himself. She too had a tendency to be "solid in the head," but she liked young Andrew because he never allowed a full slop-pail to stand disregarded; because he proved both his modesty and appreciation by taking only one piece of pie, unless asked, yet always accepting a second piece when offered; he washed his face and neck before he wiped them, while her "human beanpole of a husband" —to use her own apt expression—merely used soap and water to make a paste of dirt, grease and chaff, before wiping it off on a towel. When Mamma liked, she liked, and when she hated she was equally wholehearted. She liked Andrew, and when Katherine suggested enlisting her aid, she calmly said that her daughter could do worse and probably would—

and, "That old stinge of a Buttonhook owns fourteen hundred acres and don't owe a cent; he ought to get along without Katherine, now that the other girls are growing up—and why worry, anyway, when there's another coming along every year?"

And so the first round ended with Buttonhook against them and with Mamma in their favor. The issue was clear and the real battle about to begin.

ONE night Buttonhook came in from the field with what Mamma called "a grouch like a cluck-hen." He wiped his face and hands on the towel as usual, and sat down violently in his place at the table. Wadding his mouth full of bread and sausage, he opened the conversation in an aggrieved manner:

"Else, doggone this horse-business anyhow! Always they kick at botflies, deerflies an' just damn' flies; they jump and dance and throw skyward their heads at nose-flies—an' every time a bumblebee goes by, it's one horse over the tug. When they don't stamp on my feet, they bust me on the head with a nose, or saw my eyes out with a tail, an' enough of that is plenty, an' thirty years is more than enougher! Right now I shall get me an engine-tractor!"

The glances of Andrew and Katherine met. Here was luck beyond their wildest hopes. Buttonhook never did anything by halves. If he got an engine, it would run night and day—and engineers didn't work for forty dollars a month! A thrill of hope rose in Andrew's breast at Buttonhook's pronouncement. Andrew had watched and studied engines since he was a boy; and he had made a special study of them, while at the agricultural college. Here might be the chance to show himself really valuable to his employer.

Buttonhook was going on, half to himself:

"Else, I shall not get me none of them popgun gas outfits neither! One year, good work; two years, poor work; three years, just junk. Nawthin' like that goes with me, for I shall get an outfit that'll make the Irish set up an' take notice."

One afternoon a stranger held a long conference in the field with Buttonhook. That night even the fact that he stepped on a barrel-hoop in crossing the yard, and that the hoop had flown up and put a dent in his shin, could not dampen Buttonhook's bubbling spirits.

"I have done somethin' now that shall make people set up an' take a look at, not? An' come next week sometime, we shall have a engine what shall go when we tell it to, an' not cough an' spit like a cat with a dog. I don't fool with no gas-wagon, when I got coal an' water all over the place! Else I shall—"

Here Mamma Johnson put down the spoon with which she was feeding the latest baby, and interposed a question:

"You say a wagon-load of words that wouldn't pull a toy wheelbarrow. Now for me, I'd like to know what kind of a engine you get, when you're so busted you can't get me a power-washin' machine and me all the time bustin' my back on this push-an'-puller—"

"Who for *Gott's* sake asked you to butt in when I—"

"Now, smart Papa, how many times have I told you to swear in the barn an' not before the children, you old know-it-all engine-buyer—an' me workin' off my hands on a washboard!"

"Now, Mamma," soothed Buttonhook, "it's because it's so hot an' you're so fat. Maybe when you see the old man plow twenty, thirty more acres a day, you'll feel better. We got a fifty-one-horse-power Kross-kompount engine, an' we—"

"What means this Kross-kompount?"

"Else, don't everybody know a Kross-pount is a—is a—is a— Why the hell should I explain somethin' that you don't know what it is, even after I shall tell you what it is?"

SO one morning the new engine stood at the end of the field. Buttonhook and Andrew had brought it from town the evening before, pulling behind it the triple gang-plows, the water-tank and the great lumbering bulk of the separator. Now, hitched to the plows, the ponderous giant of steel and hissing steam stood ready.

Since long before daylight, black smoke had been pouring from the stack and the dull roar of the forced draft had been causing protesting squawks and gobbles from the farmyard.

"You shall stand and watch me, Andy, as I shall make ready to start—because you shall be the fireman an' get five dollars a day, while I shall be the engineer an' get hell from Mamma for the grease," said Buttonhook with ill-concealed pride in his new outfit.

And when Andrew offered to fill the lubricator: "Else not-neither! What you learned in books is in your head an' won't come out, while I shall have run engines before you was ever born."

With the separator full from end to end, the big machine was laboring to its utmost.

A mist hung above the Missouri and isolated streamers of fog wandered across the field, slowly fading under the rays of the rising sun. The safety-valve was beginning to drone.

"Now we shall worry about botflies no longer," announced the engineer. "From now on, they do us nawthin' ever."

To see the new outfit go into action, Mamma had left her sewing-machine, Katherine had brought the baby, and the other girls had left the milk standing in the pails rather than risk losing the dramatic moment.

Buttonhook, after a look to be sure that everyone was watching, opened the cylinder cocks. At the sudden hiss of released steam, Buttonhook, Jr., squawked and Mamma gave ground abruptly with a muttered: "Gosh sakes, what a racket!"

Buttonhook pulled gently on the throttle and a sigh ran through the mighty frame of the engine; another touch, and the flywheel stirred restlessly; a third, and the engine glided into almost silent motion. Satisfied with the impression he had created on his audience, he stopped the engine, pulled in the clutch and again opened the throttle. With a groan of gears and a sudden snort from the exhaust, the mechanical pride of Buttonhook Johnson moved slowly forward, and

the gang-plows lumbered into place behind.

Then, with a final, "Here goes nawthin'!" he pulled the throttle wide open.

Amid a roar and a shower of sparks, the ponderous machine lunged forward. Andrew jerked the trip-rope of the leading gang, and the shining lays dropped from sight. The stubble trembled and rose, turned and fell. Another trip, and the second gang was in. Still another; then just as the third gang settled into the earth, the engine gave a mighty snort and stopped, dead still.

"Else, what the hell should be the matter now?" yelled the engineer, tugging hard at the throttle. "Shall we be stuck right here?"

"Ha, that's what it means, Krosserkomper, eh? Stop still and not go, with fifty-one horses, for four thousand dollars—and no washin'-machine yet?"

"Pull your mouth down, Mamma," muttered the worried engineer. "The governor's to blame, I see that right now. Else you shall watch me an' learn somethin'; sooner or later I make 'em talk."

"Smart Papa, what's the governor got to do with this? He don't should even know you buy a engine! An' me washin' on a washboard and with a push-and-puller for always an' ever!"

"Will you keep your face still a minute?" roared the now thoroughly exasperated Buttonhook. "Else you should poke it in my business once too often an' get it stepped on."

Much to everyone's surprise, after the engineer had looked at everything, fiddled with the weights of the governor, and then looked at everything again, and opened the throttle, the engine jumped into the harness with a rush.

"Now see how much you don't know. Else, you should learn to— *K-r-i-s-e!* There it don't go again!"

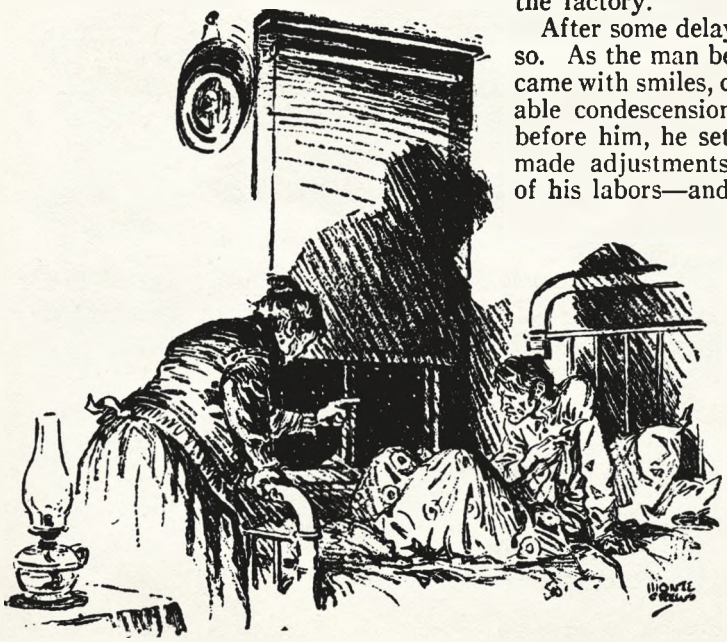
"Stop so quick? Smart Papa, sittin' on the boiler like Griddles on a turkey! An' now I suppose the game warden's to blame, because you don't know smokestack from waffle-iron—an' too tight to buy me no washin'-machine whatever."

"Else, now, woman, either you should get to the house by your own hook—or I shall help you!"

But Mamma stood pat and so did the engine, while Buttonhook fumed and perspired and cursed fluently in three different languages. At the end of an hour he had jerked the last gang into the ground and that was all. At noon, things stood about the same, except that Mamma had retreated to the shade of the house whence she fired her discouraging comments at long—but still effective—range.

The expert came from town. He professed to know all about the trouble before he got there. Resetting the valves would fix it in a jiffy! And so he set the valves. "Now she'll hop right along." As far as the "*hop*" was concerned he was right, but it wouldn't hop twice in succession. When he finally gave up in disgust and returned to town, it had become a problem for a super-expert from the factory.

After some delay that worthy came also. As the man before him had done, he came with smiles, confidence and insufferable condescension. Again, as the man before him, he set and reset the valves, made adjustments, tried out the result of his labors—and departed in defeat.



"You listen so's you hear!" said Mamma. "Either you get this solid-in-the-head business softened up, or somebody will sooner or later bust it with a fence-post."

For the time being, Buttonhook and Andrew went back to fighting botflies. The summer fallowing had to be done and after all, horses would go even if the engine would not. But often at night when the chores were done, Andrew found a seat on the water-tank by the engine and became absorbed in the mechanical monster before him. With the aid of a textbook left over from his school-days and diagrams which came with the engine, he traced out the various working parts of the machine. Sometimes, especially when the choleric Buttonhook was away, Katherine would join him, her interest and sympathy stimulating him to still greater effort; and while time passed with the problem yet unsolved, Andrew's knowledge of the highly complicated machine increased rapidly. He frequently lay awake at night turning the problem over in his mind, and the longer he pondered the more certain he became that the solution must lie in some simple thing, so simple as to be overlooked entirely by the experts.

Buttonhook said that Andrew had gone plumb loony, that he was moon-sick; but Mamma answered: "The boy knows more than you think he knows, right now, and pretty quick he'll learn *you* somethin' yet!"

"Else he shall not know enough to know, he don't know nawthin' an' what I forgot about engines is more than he is knowin' ever, not? But else it matters me nawthin' as long as he keeps away from my Katherine an' the gooey-gooey business. That's the one thing I should not stand for, for one minute."

THE summer passed with little outward change in the situation. Buttonhook remained "solid in the head" and the big engine seemed to share that distinguishing characteristic with its owner. Mamma still fumed about the "push-an'-puller" washing-machine, but the head of the house of Johnson stood pat.

"Else you have plenty of helpers to push on the handle as long as I have to fight botflies." And when she suggested that he might relent a bit in the severity of his rules regarding the conduct of Katherine and Andrew, he rejoined stubbornly:

"Else not! When I have said a thing I don't mean somethin' else. When Katherine finds the right man I shall set him up in farmin', but not no half-baked college-student book-farmer ever!"

Then came early fall and the end of an ideal growing season, when acres of ripening grain stretched away in all directions from the farmhouse. Manned alternately by Buttonhook and Andrew the big "twelve-foot" pushbinder ground back and forth across the fields from the time the dew was off in the morning until the last of daylight had faded in the west. The oats ripened first, then the barley and wheat. With these crops out of the way, Buttonhook removed the binder attachment from the big machine and they ground on again, cutting the most valuable crop of all, an even hundred acres of flax that Buttonhook said would "bushel twenty-five to the acre an' maybe more."

One night Andrew came down the field on the last round and drove the binder into the yard. The crop was cut. Seemingly their worries were at an end.

BUT now began a series of exasperating delays. Grahame threshed all but the flax as he took his threshing-outfit out for the season's work; then Buttonhook was served with a subpœna which demanded his presence on the jury of a United States District Court in a town clear across the State. Arriving home with an attack of influenza, he took to his bed—and still more time was lost. With a bumper crop, every threshing-machine in the neighborhood was busy and the best Buttonhook could do was to await the return of Grahame, which meant risking the loss of the flax, in case of an early snow. Then when Grahame finally came, he broke the crankshaft on his engine when he was less than half a mile from the end of Buttonhook's field. That of course could be repaired, but it would require ten days' to two weeks' time. Meanwhile the wind was holding steadily in the northwest, it grew colder each day, and sometimes snow-flurries scurried across the fields.

Then storm warnings began to come in by radio. One day snow fell north of them and on another several inches of snow were reported only a few miles to the south. Buttonhook was too sick to leave his bed, but he worried and fumed himself into a condition worse than ever. That day the forecast was for snow again.

After supper Andrew Drayton went to his room and sat with a diagram of the engine before him, as he had done so many times in the past. Dozens of ideas had come to him, each to be tried, found of no value, and thrown aside.

Now with a pencil he was tracing out the path of the steam from the high-pressure cylinder to the low, from there to the exhaust-pipe and along the side of the boiler to the stack. That also he had done many times before without result; but now, as his pencil moved slowly across the page and his imagination followed the course of the steam, his hand wavered an instant and stopped. For a moment he sat motionless, his eyes half closed. Then he was on his feet, hurrying down the stairs and out of the house. Out there in the cold windy night, armed with a flickering lantern and a heavy pipe-wrench, he began an assault on the exhaust of the engine. . . .

Sometime after midnight, John Grahame was routed from his warm bed by the persistent ringing of his telephone. The excited voice of Andrew Drayton came from the other end of the wire:

"Mr. Grahame, I hate to trouble you when I may be wrong, but I believe I've found the trouble."

"What trouble?" Grahame's feet were cold and his voice a trifle impatient.

"The trouble with the engine."

"What makes you think so?"

"Well, you know there couldn't have been anything really wrong in the first place, or the experts would have found it. I've been going on that idea all summer —and just a few moments ago I had the exhaust-pipe off and I found a little piece of iron in it. A dripping, I think it is, from a casting. There's a chance that it might fly up and plug the exhaust when the engine starts to work hard."

"Sounds kind of fishy to me," commented Grahame; "but with the weather this way there's a lot at stake. Have you coal enough to fire up?"

"There's enough on the engine, and Mr. Johnson left the tank full of water so it wouldn't dry out."

"Well, go ahead and fire up. We may have a lot of people laughing at us tomorrow, and a few sore to boot—but I'll take a chance and round up a crew. As soon as I get things started I'll get Conway to help me, and tackle the separator. Tell Mrs. Johnson that she'll have about twenty-five extra for breakfast."

SOMETIME in the darkest hour before daylight, Buttonhook Johnson awoke. Although yet too weak to get out of bed he was feeling decidedly better.

But it seemed to him that everything else was wrong. Listening, he heard a door slam and the sound of hurrying footsteps on the floor below. From the kitchen came the rattle and clatter of kitchenware and lifting his head, he saw some one hurrying across the yard with a lantern.

"Else what shall be the matter now? Has this outfit gone crazy?" he demanded loudly.

HE expected no answer and he was not disappointed. But now, above the whine of the wind, he caught a metallic clang from the side of the house where the engine stood.

"Mamma! Katherine!" he called.

Buttonhook saw another lantern borne swiftly across the yard.

"Andy! Julia! Mary! Anna! For *Gott's* sake, somebody answer!"

Footsteps sounded on the stairs, and the huge form of Mamma Johnson stood at the foot of his bed.

"*Mein Gott im Himmel,* what should all the excitement be?" he growled.

"Excitement is right," agreed Mamma. "Excitement aint half of it! I've been tryin' to get breakfast for twenty men in less'n no time; John Grahame tries to build a separator in the same time, an' Andy's burnin' up everythin' but the house and barn an' a couple fence-posts to get up steam in that gallopin' teakettle so's he can thresh by daylight."

"Else you shall all be crazy, not?"

"Now you've said it. *Not* is right! The only crazy feller in this outfit is you, old know-it-all-yourself, when you didn't let Andy run that old sizzle-pot in the first place."

"You mean to stand there, woman, and tell me that book-farmer has fixed my en-gine?"

"Well,"—Mamma shifted her weight uneasily from one foot to the other and a worried note crept into her voice,— "he thinks so—maybe. He—"

"Ha! You stand there an' tell me I'm the only crazy nut in the outfit! An' when I ask you to say facts, you sputter like a cluck-hen at a chicken-hawk! You talk like a—"

"Listen, smart Papa, should he fix the engine and save your flax from *that,*"— she pointed to a cluster of snowflakes on the windowpane,—"do I get me a engine washin'-machine or don't me, an' does Katherine get Andrew or don't her?"

"Oh, *mein Gott,* aint she bright? Aint she the smart little elephant, doggone—"

"Call me a effalant, will you?" Mamma's anger was genuine now and Buttonhook knew he had gone too far.

"Well, it's safe enough, anyway. Should he fix the outfit an' thresh the flax, you shall have your engine-washer."

"How about Katherine?"

"I aint said about Katherine."

"But I do—an' you listen so's you hear! Either you get this solid-in-the-head business softened up, or somebody will sooner or later bust it with a diamond-willow fence-post."

"Listen!"

A sound came up from the yard, a hollow roar broken by the panting breath of steam. They heard the grinding of gears, the clanging of a shovel and a jarring rumble under the window. Behind the engine came the giant separator, a monster in its own right, lumbering across the yard.

DAWN was breaking; Mamma turned down the lamp. "See, Papa, it goes!"

"Else that should prove nothin' whatever. It goed before—but it when it came to go *work*, it wouldn't!"

The rear of the separator was even with the stackyard. There it paused while shadowy forms dug with picks and spades under the rear wheels. The engine stirred again, and the separator settled into the bed prepared for it. Cutting loose from the separator, Andrew maneuvered the engine into position facing it. Already the drive-belt was out, and now it was lifted over the flywheel. A few deep breaths of exhaust steam and the engine backed until the belt was lifted and stretched taut above the ground.

While the belt still vibrated, a load of bundles moved in on either side. Two men on each load shed their coats, tightened their belts and looked up to the gnomelike figure of John Grahame towering above the separator. The supreme moment had come.

Grahame raised his hand. Andrew Drayton tapped gently on the throttle. The long belt stirred, trembled and glided into motion. The separator creaked and groaned and rumbled as it gathered speed. Another urge on the throttle and the rumble leaped an octave to a sullen roar. Now the throttle was wide open, and the roar rose to a high-pitched wavering whine.

Buttonhook Johnson had lifted himself to one elbow, his eyes straining as he watched each belt and wheel and chain. Andrew leaned from the engine-cab, his face white with strain. Seeing Katherine watching anxiously from a window, he tried to smile.

Suddenly John Grahame waved his arm, and a rain of flax beat down on the feeder. It was moving up in ragged brown lines on either side of the divider-board. It was in the throat of the separator and hungry, flashing knives reached out to cut and tear and drag it into the hungry maw. Andrew leaned from the cab and held his breath. For a second even the pitchers stopped, as if the cold wind had frozen them where they stood.

The high-pitched whine rose and burst into a wild shriek. The big engine snorted and its voice grew deeper. A convulsive shudder ran through the separator. It was spouting chaff at every joint. A burst of straw came from the spout of the stacker and the scale-beam began to rise. The men were pitching again, pitching as if they had no wish but to slug the machine. Then the weigher tripped, and a cascade of amber grain flowed down into the spout. With the separator full from end to end and an endless band of grain crowding against the cylinder, the big machine was laboring to its utmost.

When Buttonhook, attracted by the clang of the fire-door, shifted his gaze to the engine, he heard a vibrant hiss as a plume of steam waved above the safety-valve.

"*Mein Gott*, an' seven little fishes," he breathed. "She's got power to burn!"

THAT night, wearied by the longest "run" the neighborhood could recall, Andrew Drayton climbed the stairs to Buttonhook's room. Mamma and Katherine were already there.

"Else, Andrew," said Buttonhook,—a ferocious scowl on his face,—"there shall be one thing better'n bein' solid-in-the-head! An' that's to say so, when you should have made a mistake. From now on you an' me is partners. Katherine shall do as she doggone' wants to—"

In the hour of triumph Mamma still ran true to form. "An' you're the all-solid-in-the-head feller what said that it would be a cold day when you changed your mind?"

"That's what I said an' that's what I meant!" And struck by a truly bright idea, he raised a long finger and pointed:

"Should you look at that snow in the window an' tell me it *aint* a cold day? And say, Andy, for *Gott's* sake, go to town in the morning an' get her a gas-power washing-machine! Else it should shut off one more racket, an' give me a little rest!"

The Star of Hope

A stirring novel (complete in this issue) of present-day adventure at sea.

By CAPTAIN DINGLE

"BUT I don't want to stick in an office for the rest of my life, Dad! Not even your grand office," declared Perry Barton mutinously. "Why can't I go out as manager of the sugar estate in Hawaii? Linda is willing to marry me, and—"

Old Peter Barton grunted, and stopped midway of lighting a fresh cigar.

"Darned fools, the pair of you! Do you know the salary of my managers? How far would that go toward keeping a pretty little scatterbrain like Linda Blythe—"

"She isn't a scatterbrain! Don't you go calling her names like that! I know all about the salary. Everybody knows the salaries you pay. You spend all your money in mahogany and chromium offices, and keep your employees slim without the need of dieting. Dad, you know I'm not cut out for a desk and swivel-chair. You've brought me up—"

"I know how I've brought you up!" the old man snorted. "And I'm not too happy at the result. I've let you have your head. You've been through the best university, you've had cars, a plane —and you've loafed about until now you're a man with the empty notions of a brainless nincompoop. If you believe that Neal Blythe will let that girl of his have money to squander on a pauper, go ahead and think so. Blythe and I have been in business together for more years than you're old, my boy, and we have one mind where our interests are concerned. You are the only hope of the firm in the family. If you won't come into the business, then we'll bring in an outsider. Linda is only a kid yet, in the eyes of the law. She will do what her father wants, or say good-by to her share of the sugar."

The old man impulsively laid his hand on Perry's shoulder, and his steely eyes softened.

"I haven't been a hard father, Perry. I have given you the time of your life. And I'm not forcing you, now. Please yourself. I'm hoping, that's all; but if you decide against me, don't ever come to me for sympathy or help. I wouldn't raise a finger to keep you out of jail or the poorhouse."

"I wouldn't ask you to save me from the hot chair! But you'll be sorry you said that just the same," Perry retorted when he got his breath after the shock of the old man's swift change of tone. He slammed the door, marched down the steps and pitched himself into his sports roadster in the driveway.

Half a mile distant from his father's enormous house stood the smaller but more dignified home of Neal Blythe; Perry swept up the Blythe drive, tooted his horn in a private signal, and waited. Linda, in a scanty evening frock, came running out, her face alight.

As she passed through the brilliant illumination of the portico Perry's heart thumped madly at sight of her. Linda was eighteen, slim as a lily stem, copper-haired, and moved like a thoroughbred. And this was the girl he must give up unless he chose to anchor himself to a roll-top desk for the rest of his life!

"Tell me how you came out, Perry!" she panted.

"Hop in!" he answered grimly, and she jumped in, to be caught in his arms and kissed savagely.

The car hummed through the fragrant night, under a sky smothered with stars, until the gleaming waters of the Bay lay in sight. Then, winding along a byway, they reached the "Creek" where a score of old ships lay discarded and waiting for their doom at the breaker's hands.

In the black shadow of a line of tumbledown sheds Perry came to a halt and switched off his lights. This was a favorite spot for both of them, for nobody ever came near after dark, and they

Etching by Yngve Edward Soderberg

The *Star of Hope* trimmed her yards and sailed upon a different course; nothing slovenly about her now, though another violent death had left her short-handed.

had enjoyed many an innocent petting party in the car there. Linda shifted over to his lap, and waited for him to tell her the result of his interview with old Peter, remaining silent until he finished. In the distance the sounds of shipping on the wide Bay; nearer at hand the chuckling of water in the Creek, the wheezy creaking of gear on the ancient windjammers. Over all the velvety sky and the breeze, and the blazing stars.

"I think he's a terrible old bully, darling," she whispered at length. "But let's not fret over it. You'd perish and blow away in dust in that miserable office! My father will see our side of it, and even if he won't, I'll marry you tomorrow, father or no father. You can get a good job anywhere. I don't care how poor we are at first—"

He sighed.

"We won't wait, darling; but I'm not going to dump you into an attic with a gas-plate and a frying-pan. I'll tell the old man this very night that I'll go into his old office—that it's what I've been longing to do all my life. Now let's—"

"Hush!"

She placed a finger on his lips. Somewhere quite close by, were voices—several voices talking in low tones, and one in irritation or anger.

"I tell you I'm not satisfied! It aint as cut and dried as you all make out. Too many in it for safety, and I'll be damned if I risk a stretch in—"

"Stop bawling, you fool! Want to be heard clear across the Bay?"

"I don't care who hears me.... Hullo! There you are! See?"

Around the corner of the sheds a man's head had peered, and now, in a few seconds, four men were around the Blue Streak, men with crouching bodies and leering faces.

"Who the hell are you?" rasped one, and the car door was flung open.

LINDA slipped from Perry's lap into her own seat, and Perry swung a hefty punch at the nearest man who was dragging at him. The punch landed, but was countered instantly by a heavier one which knocked Perry sidewise upon Linda. He fumbled to find the starter, but his hands were wrenched away, and in a moment he was hauled from the car, and Linda was fighting courageously in the grip of a bearded giant of a man who spoke words to her in a voice which sounded like a benediction, though his clutch was like that of a bear.

"Don't let 'em howl! Bring 'em both aboard till I get a good look at 'em," the big old fellow said in the mildest of tones.

Perry struggled manfully, and Linda never quit fighting, but all to no purpose. They were carried up the crazy gangway of a dark and indistinct mass out of which soared masts, and then across a chaotic deck and down into a dimly lit saloon which reeked of mildew.

"WHAT'S the big idea?" demanded Perry, glaring around the somber compartment, which seemed to be suddenly packed with men.

"Is the top door shut? And the skylight covered?" the old graybeard asked softly; one of the men rushed up the companionway stairs to make sure. The men who held Perry tightened their grip on his arms.

"All secure, Cap," the man reported, returning. The old man smiled at Perry.

"Now, young sir. Pardon our seeming discourtesy, but really we didn't expect visitors. May I ask your names? I see you are dressed for a visit—perhaps not to my ship?"

"You're dead right it wasn't for your ship! You'll be having visitors you won't care to see if you don't release us," retorted Perry furiously.

"Possibly," said the gentle-seeming giant. "And it's not my wish to detain you. But how much of our talk did you hear? And who are you? Believe me, it is only in a social way I ask."

Probably this queer old skipper was indulging in a bit of smuggling, decided Perry. And of course he wouldn't feel pleased to discover a darkened car right near the spot where he was having a business chat.

"I beg your pardon," the old fellow added. "I ought to introduce myself first before asking your names, hadn't I? I am Captain Absalom Moody. And your name, please sir?"

"Perry Barton!" snapped Perry.

"By chance related to Peter Barton?"

"He's my father. He'll—"

"And your name, my dear?" Absalom murmured, to Linda.

"She's my sister Linda," snapped Perry, acting upon a swift impulse. Some of the men about him were muttering, and one of them picked up Linda's handbag from the table and turned it over. There were her initials, *L.B.*, in silver, shining in the lamplight. The bag was opened, the contents flung on the table,

and the old man poked among them with a forefinger like a banana, picking up compact, lipstick, handkerchief, keys, cigarette-case, lighter, and many more bits of feminine encumbrance in the search for cards or other revealing paper, finding none.

"I am doubly honored," murmured Absalom. "It makes me very happy to extend to you the poor hospitality of my Ark—"

"Turn 'em loose!" growled one of Perry's guards, though he did not loosen his grip. Others took up the chorus:

"You'll have your hands full without playing the fool with old Barton's pups, Absalom. Let 'em go."

"That would not be very wise," replied Absalom, never raising his gentle voice in the face of opposition. "I will discuss it with all of you presently. For the present, put them both in my room and lock the door! Brother and sister may with propriety share a room, I think, and we shall only have one room to watch. Please pardon the necessity," he added, patting Linda's soft hair caressingly.

NOW, Perry Barton was tall, athletic, and in good condition; he saved his breath and put it into action. He fought like an all-in wrestler gone crazy, but he could not shake off these men. Linda made a good fight too, for she was of a generation in which girls emulated their sweethearts in sport and often beat them; but she found herself like a rag in the amazing grip of Absalom Moody. One huge hand went over her mouth and half her face; the other arm swept her up against his vast body, and she was simply carried and laid down like a doll. He held her on the settee until Perry was bundled in, still struggling but utterly helpless in the grip of a man who had twisted both of his arms behind him up to his shoulders; then, screwing down the steel deadlight over the porthole and dropping the key in his pocket, Absalom bade Perry's captor release him.

"You will find wine and biscuits in—" he started to say in his smoothly gentle voice, when Perry rose and lunged at him. Without apparent effort, Absalom poked out a long arm with a knotty fist at the end of it, and it took Perry squarely in the center of the forehead.

"I apologize for that, sir," Absalom said unctuously to Perry, huddled up on the floor in a corner. "You will find wine and biscuits in that cupboard, and the retiring-room is through that inner door. I beg you will make no uproar. I am an old man; my nerves are not what they were, and I must silence unruliness for the sake of peace."

THE door was shut, the key turned. When the door into the saloon was shut, the stateroom was dark, and Linda groped fearfully for Perry, suddenly afraid. He gathered her close, and tried to tell her not to be scared, that this bizarre adventure could not last long.

"We've been aching for adventure, Linda. Guess we've got it. I wonder what's their idea? A cigarette is indicated, darling."

While he lighted the cigarettes, the tiny flame from his lighter showed some of the place they were in, and he risked his fuel supply for a moment to examine their prison. Richly embellished with brass and carved mahogany, having a great brass bedstead which swung to the touch, the stateroom looked as if it had been unoccupied for many years. The brass was green; the wood had lost its polish. The water-bottle and glass in a rack above a desk were smudgy and empty. Scrolled in faded gilt on oak at the head of the bed was a name, with crossed flags, doubtless the ship's name and flags: *Star of Hope.*

Linda giggled, blowing fragrant smoke at the scroll.

"What a hope!" she jeered.

Perry spotted a candlestick swinging on a bulkhead, and darted his lighter at it. Then Linda could see how she had come out of the fracas. She laughed now with some show of amusement. Her flimsy evening gown was almost in rags.

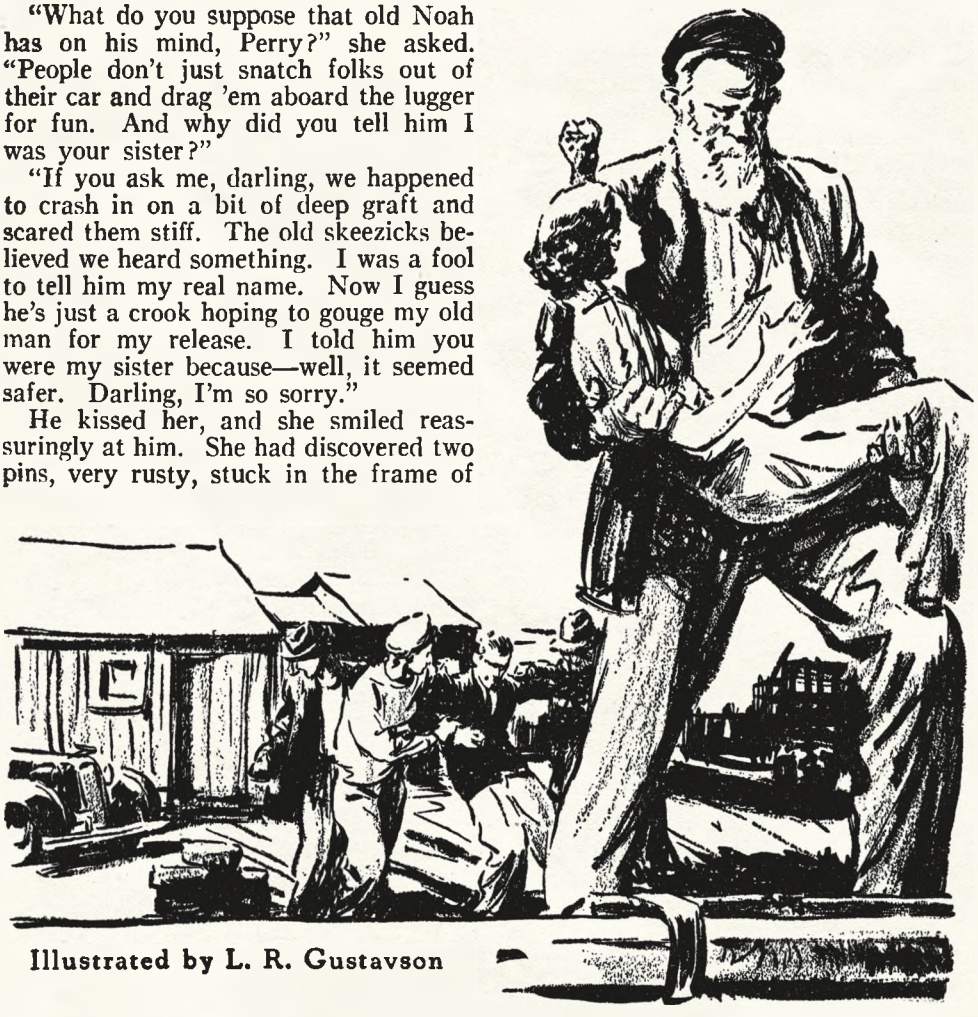
"If it had lasted two minutes longer I'd have been peeled!" she said. "Show a light in that—retiring-room, he called it, didn't he?"

The candle, lifted from its socket, lighted them into the inner room. Here was the same sort of evidence of neglect as ruled in the stateroom, but some hurried attempt had been made to make it usable. There was a bath, but no water came from the tap; a washbasin did produce cold water, however; there was a large mirror, clean towels, and the usual furnishings of a bathroom. The necessary things were at least clean, though the floor and walls were grimy with the dirt of ages. Linda, with the frankness of her age, pulled off the upper part of her frock to examine the damage, and rather hopelessly looked for pins.

"What do you suppose that old Noah has on his mind, Perry?" she asked. "People don't just snatch folks out of their car and drag 'em aboard the lugger for fun. And why did you tell him I was your sister?"

"If you ask me, darling, we happened to crash in on a bit of deep graft and scared them stiff. The old skeezicks believed we heard something. I was a fool to tell him my real name. Now I guess he's just a crook hoping to gouge my old man for my release. I told him you were my sister because—well, it seemed safer. Darling, I'm so sorry."

He kissed her, and she smiled reassuringly at him. She had discovered two pins, very rusty, stuck in the frame of the mirror, and wondered who had left them there so long ago. Her frock was a wreck, and the most she could hope to do with it was to make it cover her decently.



Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson

They found several bottles of excellent wine and a big tin box of biscuits, and made a meal of them. Nobody came to bother them; outside the stateroom they heard no sound, for what seemed hours. Soon they grew sleepy, and Linda lay down on the big bed; Perry blew out the candle, and stretched himself on the settee; and sheer weariness put them to sleep.

LINDA woke first. She was conscious of a light upon her face, and sat up in alarm. But nobody had intruded. Perry lay sleeping. Then she saw that the light was sunlight, and it poured down through the glass of a skylight over her bed. Then she was aware of something else, which brought her out of the big bed to the floor, to Perry's side, shaking him fiercely.

"Perry! Wake up! The boat's moving!"

He struggled to sit up, bemused with sleep. Linda was shaking the door-handle furiously when he found his feet.

"What! Oh, they can't do this to us!" declared Perry. "Let me take a wallop at that door!"

He crashed his shoulder at the barrier, and the shock wrung a yell from him. Old the *Star of Hope* was, paneled in rare and aged woods her staterooms, but her structure was steel, and the door was steel sheathed in satinwood. Linda pushed him aside and rattled the handle again, screaming.

Nobody paid the slightest attention. There was a gurgling of water to be heard, a creaking of frames, and from a distance came the muffled throb of machinery. Perry added a shout to Linda's angry scream; and now the skylight was

raised, a hose was thrust through it, and a thick spout of water roared into the room, drenching them both and nearly strangling them.

"Shut up!" warned a voice. "Every time you make a peep, you get a bath, see?"

Perry did see; but he did not heed. He started to shout again, and the jet of water hit him full in the face, knocking him endways.

"Bring 'em aboard!" the big fellow said. Perry struggled manfully, and Linda fought; but to no purpose; they were carried up a gangway.

"Keep quiet, Perry!" she begged. "It's no use getting drowned. We'd better do some serious thinking."

The skylight had been closed again, but through the frosted glass they could see the deadly nozzle of the hose lying ready. The sun rays moved about the flooded floor, changing place as the ship altered her direction, and hours seemed to pass before anything else happened. Then all motion ceased. The gurgle of water, the throb of machinery, the creaking—all gave place to a stillness.

Soon there came another sound, of a motorboat coming alongside; and a voice which sounded as if coming from it.

"Here you are, Cap'n Absalom! Send down a bucket for your papers. You're cleared in ballast, to carry the ship to Noumea for breaking up. All correct?"

"Thank you, sir. I shall do my best, and you will hear from me in due course," answered the kindly voice of Absalom. The motorboat started up, and the sound of her going died away. Perry sprang upon the bed, reached perilously to get his head near to the skylight. He pushed it open a little way, and raised his voice in a piercing yell, while Linda ran into the bathroom to escape the gush of water she dreaded must follow.

But no water answered Perry's yell. Nothing happened. Somebody on deck laughed, but that was all—until an hour later, when the door of the stateroom was flung open and Absalom stood there.

"I am sorry you have been neglected," he said genially. "I must plead business necessities. You may come on deck now." He saw Linda's disheveled plight, and shook his head until his beard waggled.

"You have been making a mess of your pretty clothes, my dear. I must find you something more suitable. My steward shall see what can be got."

Absalom vanished; and Perry and Linda gazed at each other, speechless.

CHAPTER II

PERRY ran on deck with some half-formed idea of starting a real riot; but he thought better of that as soon as he reached the sunshine. The visible crew did not seem too numerous, but they were one and all a tough lot, and several had guns stuck in hip pockets.

A cleaner, younger man lounged at the rail near to the helmsman, and Perry edged toward him hopefully. He smiled as Perry approached.

"Hullo, youngster! Gosh, you look swell! It's a goodish while since I wore duds like those. Need pressing, I'd remark." In leisurely fashion he slipped a hand into a coat pocket and brought it out armed with heavy brass knuckles.

Perry shrugged and stopped where he was.

"I'll lend you some more suitable togs, if you like," the young second mate went on coolly. "We're about the same size. I'm called Killer Hogg—it's not my name, of course; I couldn't kill a bedbug."

Perry was not listening. He had turned his gaze forward, and now ran to the forward rail of the poop with his mouth opened to shout—but the shout did not emerge. Between a hatch and the bulwarks in the waist was a heap of canvas, sails apparently, and some men were dragging at it. A gleam of sunshine had touched something which caught Perry's eye, and caused him to run for a closer view. There was his car! He swiftly glanced all around him then. There lay the land, dim and diminishing. He hurried below, and burst in upon Linda.

"Linda! This is nothing but a holdup! They've got the car—"

Linda sat cross-legged in the middle of the big bed in her slip, trying patiently to thread a needle. Beside her lay her crumpled frock, and across her knees was what looked very like a couple of shirts of cotton stripe.

"You ought to knock, darling," she said calmly. "It might have been somebody else. It's all right for brother and sister—"

"Oh, do be serious!" snapped Perry.

SHE threaded her needle, bit off the thread, and picked up a vast shirt. "Listen, darling," she said. "We're here. Father Noah just told me outright he's going to try to gouge Peter Barton for a wad of money before he lets us go. So why worry? We can do nothing. We're going to Noumea. Sha'n't call anywhere until we reach that romantic island. We may as well make the best of it, and it'll be no end of fun. How shall I cut these duds? Smock, frock, or shirt and shorts? He's finding something for you too—"

"That old crook has been talking to you, and you've fallen for his line!"

"Darling, if you can think of something better, spill it," she suggested. "At least the man's on the level. He came right out with the truth. Ransom! I'm curious to see how much my dear daddy will cough up for his darling daughter. Or how much your daddy will cough up for his son and the daughter he didn't suspect he had."

Perry leaned over and grabbed her, for he detected beneath her nonchalance a mood very close to tears, and Linda was not given to weeping. He murmured comfort to her, his face buried in her hair, and she dropped her work and flung her arms around him.

"AH! It is good to see brother and sister in sympathy," purred the gentle voice Perry already detested; and Captain Absalom stood in the open doorway. They drew apart, and Perry faced their abductor with fresh rage.

"I've brought you some clothes," the old man said.

"Never mind clothes! We'll have a showdown right here! I hear you hope to get a ransom for us. You may as well know now as later my father won't dig up one dollar for me! Those were his very last words—"

"Hush! It is terrible for a son to speak so of his parent. Why not yield to the inevitable, Mr. Barton? You happened upon a rather important business discussion, and I could not afford to have eavesdroppers. Perhaps you heard nothing. Perhaps you did catch something which might annoy me if carried elsewhere. In any event, here you are, a potential asset to me. I don't believe your father will refuse to pay me for my trouble in taking you home safely. There are ways—oh, yes, my dears, your father certainly will come down handsomely when he hears the alternative!"

"Yes, I suppose you want us to believe we're in some danger," snarled Perry. "You and your hard bunch! Guns, knuckle-dusters, and killers—"

"I'm glad Mr. Hogg introduced himself to you," remarked the old man kindly. "He's a nice young man, much nicer than my chief mate, Cutlip Harrity. There's a villain for you! But I feel sure you'll like Mr. Hogg. I have asked him to lend you some clothes. They will fit you better than these I have borrowed from Pantry, my steward, which may be rather small. Put them on, for the present. —Linda, my dear, if you can clothe yourself temporarily, breakfast is ready."

They were hungry, the food was plentiful if rough, and they ate industriously while the ancient mariner talked. He

regretted that he was an old man, and therefore could not altogether give up his comfortable stateroom to them, but he would turn the second mate and steward out of their room and they could no doubt make themselves at home there.

"I can sleep on that sofa," snapped Perry, nodding toward the broad transom across the stern. "My sister must have her room to herself. It's not too late to put us ashore, though. I saw the land. You'll save yourself a lot of trouble—and food. I've told you nobody will pay a ransom for us, and if you carry us on with you—"

"Oh, dear, I wish you were not so unkind," moaned Absalom. "You could be so happy in my ship. Of course, if you prove stubborn, and make me consider you unfriendly—"

"Go on. Say it! Tell me you'll murder us. I'd like to see you try that on!" Perry laughed in the old man's face and got up from the table. Absalom shook his head sorrowfully.

"I don't believe you would, Perry. I don't, really. But we won't think about such unpleasant things, will we, my dear?" he smiled, patting Linda's arm. "Now run away and finish your sewing. Take it on deck, where it's nice and sunny."

As Linda sewed, she could hear Perry's voice somewhere forward; it was very angry, and men were laughing. Then Perry yelled, somebody cursed, and there was a howl of mirth.

There was Perry, picking himself out of the scuppers, his face bloody. As he regained his feet, a man tripped him from behind, and he crashed again. But Linda could not spare all her attention for Perry, for she was hot with fury at another thing she saw:

From a double tackle rigged from a yardarm and a stay, dangled Perry's car. It hung out over the rail. A man in the rigging drew a long knife from his belt and slashed a rope, and down plunged Perry's beautiful car, to bubble and sink, and leave no evidence.

"THAT'S sure a shame, miss, but we couldn't leave it on the wharf very well, could we?" A pleasant voice spoke at her side. "I'm the second mate; Hogg's my name, but not my nature. We ought to be friends."

Linda flashed around upon him, her face ablaze.

"Friends! With your kind? Go down and stop them beating Perry, if you have a spark of decency in you!"

"That, my dear, would be straining friendship too highly," shrugged Mr. Hogg with a grimace. "I love my life, I do."

Nobody could have been more solicitous and tender-handed than Captain Absalom while patching up Perry's rather ugly hurts. He said kindly:

"I shall speak seriously to those men, Perry. I will not countenance such hard-boiled methods aboard my ship. Really, though, if I had been in your place I don't think I should have challenged the whole crew."

Not one word did Perry utter. He had made a decision regarding his future behavior, and refused to let the old ruffian cajole him into retort or comment.

At dinner they met Cutlip Harrity, and Linda and Perry were very glad he either ignored them or favored them with unmistakable hostility. He was a ferociously forbidding brute of a fellow, bald, scrub-bearded, with one eyelid drooping low over a permanently bloodshot eye, and a lower lip which had been at some time split to the chin and had healed with a V-shaped jag through which his broken teeth grinned.

WHEN several days had passed without further alarms, they slipped almost unconsciously into acceptance of their predicament, and even found something to enjoy in the sheer freedom of the open sea. They were lulled into a sort of routine way of living which under different circumstances might have been pleasant enough.

Perry had flown his own swift little plane, had made some considerable flights in it, and had learned sufficient navigation to be able to figure out a general direction; and nobody seemed to care enough about his movements to stop him inspecting the compass. But he never saw a log used, either a patent clock-face one on the taffrail, or the old fashioned chip log. When he found himself at the chart-room door, nobody near on deck, and nobody inside, he darted in to look at the chart—and there was no chart! There was nothing on the chart table except a thick log-book, and that had a lock, like an old album, and was locked.

He noticed that the yards had been trimmed a bit more nicely than at first, but they still lacked much of perfection. Indeed this old *Star of Hope* made her lumbering way out into the blue ocean with yards braced in half a dozen differ-

"Mr. Harrity and I are going to have a little game of cards. You are the stakes."

ent degrees, and a wake astern of her that would break a clipper captain's heart. Yet slovenly as she was trimmed, she was able to move along with a steady breeze over the quarter. It was her direction which puzzled Perry. He tried to remember what the map of the Pacific looked like. All he could definitely be sure about was that Noumea at least lay in the South Pacific, and this ship was heading, in spite of her vagaries of steering, much nearer west than south.

Nobody did any work. Now and then old Absalom appeared on deck, took an observation, and vanished. Hogg or Harrity kept watch by turns; the helm was always tended, and very infrequently men came out of their retreat at a shout, and dragged indifferently on sheets or braces. Once, when a sharp squall caused Absalom to order the royals taken in, the crew let go the halyards, but left the sails to flog themselves to bits. Nobody cared. The ribbons of canvas flogged aloft until sun and rain and wind disintegrated them entirely. The men slept or gambled the days away between meals. The *Star of Hope* grew more filthy and unkempt.

There was not much for Perry or Linda to do. Mr. Hogg made somewhat perfunctory advances toward Linda, but it did not develop into more than backchat and furtive squeezing of her arm.

"What are you letting him get chummy for?" demanded Perry.

"Don't get all hot and bothered, please, Perry," she soothed him with swift gravity. "I'm playing the game in my own way. Hogg seems to be about the only man aboard this ark who may be able to help us later on. Why don't you mix with the crew a bit? You might find one or two possible—"

"Forget it!" Perry cut in irritably. "I shoved my snoot in on a poker game only yesterday, and I was told to scram." Glancing around, seeing Cutlip Harrity occupied with a fouled rope aft, Perry whispered close to Linda's ear: "This ship isn't going to Noumea, or anywhere like it!"

"I know. She's going to Honolulu—"

Captain Absalom emerged from the chartroom, blew a whistle; and for once, and the first time, men came running from every corner of the ship. Linda and Perry were shoved aside, but ignored as soon as they were definitely out of the way. Killer Hogg followed Absalom; two of the youngest of the crew joined him, and they proceeded to take out of a deck locker a number of small cases and packages which, opened, revealed a radio receiving-set and batteries.

Men climbed to the main and mizzen mastheads with small blocks; others fitted insulators to an aërial.

SINCE land had faded from sight days before, no ship had come within the horizon, nothing more tangible than smoke; and even that had not been seen since the first day or two. The *Star of Hope* was wandering into a region remote from shipping tracks, and now Perry believed he saw the whole scheme.

"I know!" he said to Linda. "It's some smuggling game! That radio is to pick up instructions. You watch!"

"Just like the talkies, Perry! And we'll be in all the papers, and—"

A shrill yell came from aloft. A man dropped from the mizzentruck, and crashed with a sickening thud almost at their feet. Perry dragged Linda out of the way. The men working at the radio set glanced up indifferently; Absalom stepped forward and turned the body over with his foot.

"Poor fellow! Perhaps God has been kind to him," murmured Absalom gently. He straightened up, saw his unwilling guests looking horrified, and smiled.

"Come, my dears. I think you had better go below for a while. Such things are not nice to look upon, but the ways of Providence are beyond argument. Come."

The final word was sharp and brooked no protest. Perry and Linda were hurried into the companionway, and the door was shut upon them. The opposite door was also shut as they descended to the saloon, and the great skylight over the cabin table, which had been open to the sunshine for days, was lowered and covered up. But above the running sound of the sea, and the creaking of the vessel's fabric, they heard the heavy splash near by of a body thrown overboard.

"They didn't even bury him decently!" Linda flung herself into Perry's arms.

"Hush!" Perry straightened up. The porthole over Linda's bunk was open, and voices were clearly audible on the poop.

"You'd better send them two young squirts the same way!" Cutlip Harrity's voice! "If we sh'd slip up on this job it'll be because you aint satisfied with a rich haul and spoil a nice little game for the sake of a few grand you'll never be able to collect. How're you going to get ransom for these kids when you don't dare get in touch with anybody about it? Chuck 'em overboard, before they put a rope round your fool neck."

Absalom's voice was heard.

"Peace, Mr. Harrity, peace! Put up your gun! Must I be answerable to you? I can answer you, Mr. Harrity, in a manner you are very familiar with. Attend to your duty, at once! Mr. Hogg, how long will it be before that instrument is in working order? Tonight? Excellent. Mr. Harrity, please urge those men to be careful up aloft. We cannot well dispense with their services—yet."

Pantry, passing the door, glanced in—and quickly entered to close the porthole.

"Don't take no notice of what you hear," advised Pantry. "Some of the things these toughs say might frighten nice young folks as aint used to a hard life. Have some cawfee. I just made a pot. I feel sorry for you, I do straight. It aint your fault you're here, but you *are* here, and I don't believe old Absalom knows what to do with you now he's got you. If I was you, young fellow, I'd be looking out for a chance to swipe a boat."

"But where is the ship going, Pantry?" Linda asked. "If you want to help us—"

"Me? Lady, don't you ever say nothing like that! You'll get me scragged. Look out! They're opening the doors. Get back to your own quarters."

LINDA sat in a deck-chair under a canopy of stars that seemed to brush the swaying mastheads. Below in the saloon Perry and Captain Absalom sat at the table, the wireless-set between them; Linda could hear their voices.

"You won't get much on this set," grumbled Perry, who was twiddling the knobs. "Homemade, isn't it?"

"Ah, my dear Perry, we must be content with what we can get," sighed the ancient Absalom. "I am an old man, and long past the vanities of life. Perhaps if you turn that small knob—"

"There's no broadcasting station sending out on a wave-length as short as that. All you get is a lot of code, and—"

"Let me have the ear-phones, Perry."

Again that note, a sort of sting, came into the old man's voice; then silence endured for several minutes.

Out of the velvety dark came Hogg, silent on rubber soles, and leaned over Linda's chair. He laid a hand on her shoulder, urging her to rise. She did so, for she wanted no fuss.

"I only want to show you something amusing," he whispered, leading her aft to abreast of the wheel. "Don't make a sound!"

He pressed her to the rail.

"See him?"

Right alongside the gently moving hull she saw a long body outlined in phosphorescence, a very long body, sinuous, slim, holding position as steadily as if fastened to the ship.

"Shark?" she whispered, with a thrill.

"The biggest I ever saw. He's been hanging about ever since poor Tip went overboard. How would you like to take a chance with that fellow?"

His arm strongly hugged her body against his, and his free hand covered hers on the rail. Swiftly he kissed her, and the helmsman laughed. Mr. Hogg turned his head, and she saw a terrible glint in his eyes; then Perry appeared with an angry rush and thrust himself between them.

"What's the big idea?" snarled Perry.

NOW Hogg laughed, the helmsman forgotten.

"Hullo, young Perry! Mustn't snoop on your sister, my lad. It isn't nice. Here, I was showing her our shark. Take a look at him, Perry. I guess poor Tip's inside that joker. Look out you don't tumble overboard. Now run away, little man. Linda is no kid!"

Linda released herself without comment, and turned to Perry.

"Don't be silly, Perry. Mr. Hogg has been kind to me, and that's worth something in this horrid old ship. What about the radio? Get anything?"

"A lot of code, that's all. The darned thing won't pick up anything else."

Absalom now emerged from the companionway with his sextant, and sharply ordered Hogg to go to take the time at the chronometers. He spent some time in taking a series of star observations, seven in all, and then he and Hogg worked them out independently. It occupied half an hour; then there was swift activity. Absalom blew his whistle, and the decks swarmed with men.

"Get up the spare royals!" ordered Absalom. "Set them. Trim everything, and get a move on!"

The old *Star of Hope* began to slip through the smooth sea with speed; and Perry, watching the stars, saw Polaris swing until it hung squarely abeam to starboard, and there it stuck.

"West!" he told Linda. "See? We're sailing west. Nowhere near Noumea or Honolulu. Might be Japan or Kamchatka, but nowhere near where they said!"

Absalom had walked to the forward rail and was bawling to the mates aloft. Perry sneaked into the chartroom like a cat, keeping in the darkest shadows and out of sight of the helmsman. Linda stayed where he left her, and kept her eyes upon Absalom's gigantic back, fearful for Perry if he were detected. But two seconds before Absalom turned, Perry slipped back to her, safe.

"Let's go below, Linda. It's getting chilly," he said aloud, and led her to the saloon. He took her to the transom, which was anybody's seat by day but his bed at night. Then he gripped Linda's arm hard.

"Gee! I got a peep at the chart! There's a new circle dot on it, and today's date. Linda, where do you guess we are?"

"Oh, where?" She turned to him eagerly. "Don't play about!"

"Right on the edge of the Honolulu-San Francisco route. We are heading west. In two or three days the nearest land will be Hawaii—"

"Then we can—"

"And that will be a thousand miles away! Linda, darling, this ship isn't going anywhere! She's going to meet some other craft. My gosh! I wish I had a gun!"

He gathered her in his arms.

"Perry," she said gravely, "we simply must know. There is a cold wickedness loose in this ship, much more evil than we have yet suspected. You must let me do my best with Hogg. Just for a few days; and if he won't do anything to help us I'll drop him cold."

Perry avoided the deck for a few days. If he must trust Linda in this, he might as well trust her absolutely.

ONE thing struck Perry as odd: the crew had divided into two separate and distinct gangs in open hostility to each other. Once, when a fight began, and a couple of men were stretched out on deck with bloody heads, Perry glanced

at Cutlip to see what he would do about it. But Harrity stepped to the rail, peered along the deck until he saw who were the smitten men, then coolly resumed his position at the mizzen rigging and did nothing about it.

Perry knew those two men—Colwyn and Jorker, two of the least villainous of the crowd. And the next time all hands responded to Absalom's whistle Colwyn and Jorker were absent; and nothing was said about it. Icy fear now gripped Perry by the throat.

THE ship sped on her course, and the wind held true. Absalom sat hours by the radio, patient as a spider. One afternoon when he had been particularly attentive to his observation of the westering sun, another row broke out between him and Harrity over the unwanted passengers, and Perry and Linda, earnestly discussing matters on the transom, saw them come stamping into the saloon. Absalom stepped into his stateroom for a moment, and brought out a pack of cards. He glanced at the transom, and chuckled.

"My dears, you will be interested in this. Mr. Harrity and I are going to have a little game at cards. You are the stakes. Mr. Harrity has never seen eye to eye with me about you. I am sorry. I believe you are valuable to us; he thinks I ought to throw you overboard. That is a shocking suggestion! But we are getting close to a critical point in our voyage, and I cannot have dissension, so we are to see who is to decide your future. Cut, Mr. Harrity."

"I'll see you both—" yelled Perry, furiously leaping up and confronting Absalom, white with rage.

Unruffled, Absalom curled one great arm about Perry, heaved, and flung him back upon the transom, his head striking a piece of teak with a sickening sound.

"You great savage!" cried Linda, raising Perry's head. She managed to drag Perry to her room, and bathed his head. Then she urged him on deck, begging him to risk no more violence until they could see farther ahead than at present.

Presently Cutlip and old Absalom appeared, Cutlip looking savagely ugly.

"Well, Linda, my dear, you are mine, you and your headstrong brother," remarked Absalom softly. "I shall ask you both to compose a message to your dear father very soon now." He stooped to examine Perry's bruise. "Too bad, Perry. A little concussion, I fear, eh? I regret deeply if I have been the innocent cause of pain to you. Linda will find some arnica in my bathroom. You must not make a habit of breaking in on a gentlemen's card-game, Perry. Reprehensible habit."

Linda ran below, and Perry looked up with cloudy eyes into the old scoundrel's kindly face.

"I know all you can say about my habits, sir. I asked for that bump, and got it. You're regretful; and I'm sorry. We're quits. Now if you'll tell me how I can get myself and Linda out of your hands, I'll do it. I don't believe you can collect, but I'll do whatever you say. What do you want me to ask my father for? Where is he to send it?"

Absalom beamed.

"Now, that's what I call a man's talk, Perry. Happy as I have been to have you and your charming little sister in my ship, I do confess you may be rather embarrassing shortly. We'll make it as easy as possible for your dear father, my boy. Say fifty thousand each for you two promising young people. I think he can stand that without having to deprive himself of cigars, eh?"

"Oh, easily, sir," agreed Perry docilely. "I'll write the letter now. Where shall it be paid? How will you get the letter to my father? I notice several of your crew have gone, but I don't see that any boats are missing?"

Absalom's eyes glittered for an instant as he stared down at Perry's bowed head.

"I think, my dear Perry, you haven't been about the ship very much. You very cleverly noticed the missing men, but missed noticing that the boat was gone from on top of the galley." Perry knew there had never been a boat on top of the galley, but he nodded acceptance of the statement, and Absalom went on:

"I shall get word to your dear father in the same way as I communicated with my employers. You must know, Perry, there is little profit in delivering an old ship to a French colony for breaking up, and an old man like me must feather his nest as he can. I am sending another boat away very soon. Come to my stateroom now, and we'll draft that letter. . . . Oh, here is Linda with the arnica. Give it to me, my dear. I'll doctor Perry myself. I did the hurt."

KILLER HOGG was a young fellow who had earned his sobriquet with no more effort than the bumping off of a man or two in a friendly gang war. He

was whistling a dance tune while keeping his watch on a night as black as two black cats, when the *Star of Hope* was reeling through growling seas close-hauled to a hard nor'-wester. Sailors are not supposed to whistle, except when they want wind; and here was wind enough to blow the Earl of Hell clear out of his riding-boots; but Mr. Hogg was the sort of man to whistle if he wanted to. He wanted to now, and the reason was not far away.

Presently Linda stumbled out of the companionway, wrapped warmly in borrowed oilskins and boots, peered into the darkness, and ran with a catchy little laugh to the rail, where Mr. Hogg caught her dexterously.

"It's a bad storm, isn't it?" gasped Linda, her face beaten by a slashing volley of spray.

"No storm, precious, just a nice strong breeze," Mr. Hogg reassured her. "Perfect for a pair of sweethearts as tough as us." He pressed her to him.

OVERHEAD the sooty sky fled in broken masses; the stripped spars swung in dizzy arcs. The ship was snugged down to topsails and main-topgallant-sail; she rode high in ballast, and took aboard no heavy water; but now and then her soaring bows burst a sea, and the wind hurled the pieces across her decks with a vicious crash. There was a circle of lamplight in the galley, and now and again the red or green side-lights shone vaguely on the sea crests; beyond those smudges of illumination, the ship roared on in darkness on a gloomy sea.

"How soon shall we get to where we're going?" Linda asked, pulling his arm down to a less uncomfortable position. "Perry wrote his letter, but he can't see how it's to be delivered to his—to our father. I can't either."

Mr. Hogg chuckled.

"You didn't come up here to talk about Perry. Let's forget that letter for a while. What's it matter, anyhow? Perry's father isn't your father, my lovely, so—"

"Oh!" Linda's heart began to thump, then to sink.

"You don't think a couple of lovebirds can pet in corners and nobody spot 'em, do you? Come out of the dope. I'm in the market to bid against Perry Barton; and unless I win, you lose."

"We're engaged," she said hotly, trying in vain to unclamp his arm. "Since you know all about us, you may as well know that."

Forward, men were laughing. Then

"So you've been giving me the run-around!" He turned her face up to his. "What did you expect to get out of it?"

"I hoped to get some real information out of you," she said flatly. "I still do. You're different from the rest. Perry and I are in a jam. How do we know we'll be set ashore, when Mr. Barton pays that absurd sum of money? You can tell me. That's why I've been nice to you, though Perry is furious with me over it."

"You're right! Bet your life I can give you the lowdown—at my own price, sweetheart. I've decided that you're the sort of wife I want. Your father can find me a nice job, I guess, if I deliver his daughter to him safe, intact, and not too talkative about certain things that may have happened."

A sheet of cold spray flew across the ship and pattered against their oilskins like small shot. Linda shivered.

"But suppose I—if I liked you as well as you seem to think, what about Perry?"

"I'll tell you that in short order. I don't believe there's a chance in this world that his father will get that demand. But suppose he does, and he planks down the dough where Absalom can get his hooks into it, do you imagine Perry is going to be turned loose? Or you either? Whether Absalom gets it or not, you'll never see your daddy again, or Perry his, unless—"

"What?" Linda uttered the single word through parched lips.

"Unless you come to terms with me! Think over what I've said, Linda. I'm crazy about you, and I'm about ready to chuck in my hand in the main job for you. If you knew what that was, you'd realize what I'm willing to lose to get you."

Perry yelled, somebody cursed, and there was a howl of mirth.

"I will think it over," Linda said earnestly. "But what is the big job?"

Hogg let go of her, and walked away. He had no need to tell her she was on forbidden ground. His manner told her. She went below. Before going to her room, she stole aft, leaned over Perry and kissed him.

"Oh, darling, we're in a terrible fix!" she murmured. "Look, there's a light being turned up in Absalom's room. I'll tell you all about it in the morning!"

Absalom came out of the stateroom dressed for wet weather. He went on deck, and stayed there until morning; and all that next day he never undressed. The weather got worse; another night came, and for the first time Captain Absalom Moody showed evidence of a perturbed spirit.

Linda and Perry spent most of the time at the saloon table, making a poor show of playing cards, talking over their dilemma. Linda's story of her talk with Killer Hogg had made Perry laugh contemptuously at first, but now he felt less sure of himself.

"You can't be serious, darling," he said for the tenth time. "It's damned nonsense, and you know it is."

"I wish I could see what we're to do otherwise, Perry—"

"Ah! A pretty sight, brother and sister dwelling together in harmony," came the gentle voice of Absalom from the doorway of his stateroom. "Did you hear the news? The schooner we expected to meet is now in sight."

Perry jumped up, eager.

"Then you'll be sending my letter?"

"I think we may now let your dear father know that you are safe. I hope he loves you as much as I think he ought. It would be a pity if he did not —a great pity."

Outside, the wind still piped, the sea ran high, the *Star of Hope* staggered along, dripping salt water from every spar and sail; and out in the tumbling gray ocean, still several miles away, a three-masted schooner lay hove to, keeping her appointment.

"We shall not be able to communicate until the weather moderates, Mr. Harrity," remarked Absalom, when he had scanned the situation. "Please bring the ship to under a main topsail as soon as we come within two miles to windward of her."

CHAPTER III

SOMETIME near dawn Perry awoke on his transom couch. He heard strange voices, and the rattle of a boathook feeling for a hold in the mizzen rail; he was sure that the sound of a motor had aroused him.

He got up and knocked on Linda's door. She opened at once, for she had heard the new sounds.

"Maybe we can talk reason into these people from the schooner, darling," said Perry. "After all, *everybody* afloat can't be darned crooks!"

"Let's go up," whispered Linda, feeling around for the shoes which Killer Hogg had made for her out of canvas and rope.

Perry led the way, and they were midway of the stairs when Absalom entered the companionway, followed by a withered little man who looked like a dwarf beside him, and a powerful electric torch shot a dazzling beam upon the startled pair.

"Hullo! What's this? Absalom, you blazing old fool, you're up to your tricks again!" snarled the little man. He played

the light squarely upon the faces of Linda and Perry, thrusting his own mean gnome's face close.

"Hush!" murmured Absalom, reprovingly. "These are young friends of mine, Isaac. A little insurance, you understand, against possible failure. Yes, my dear Isaac, a little insurance, that's all. Go on down. You frighten my little friends."

"Frighten? Have you gone crazy? Get below, you kids, till I get a proper look at you! Absalom, if you— *Argh!*"

Abruptly the little man ceased his tirade, gasped, and twisted in Absalom's grasp. Only one hand did the genial Absalom use, and it was only placed upon Isaac's shoulder, but Isaac's face turned scarlet, and into his fierce little eyes crept terror.

"Now be quiet, Isaac," said Absalom gently. "Leave my private affairs alone. Let me see your log-book and I'll get my chart. Perry and Linda are my guests, at least until I get what I expect from them. After that—don't worry, Isaac."

ABSALOM'S chart was laid out on the table, and Isaac's log-book lay on it. And the two men discussed strange things without paying the slightest attention to Perry and Linda, crouched in desperation on the transom. They argued about positions and courses, length of passages between points, and clearance from ports.

"You see, my chart shows a fair average for an old ship, not too well manned, bound from San Francisco to Noumea," Absalom pointed out. "I keep my real reckoning separate. This ship has a nice turn of speed when needed, and if there's no slip-up with the people you know of, I ought to fall in with you about here." He jabbed down a tremendous forefinger. Isaac flipped the pages of his log-book, his fishlike lips moving rapidly as he calculated figures.

"I've made my trip, strictly according to my last clearance papers," he announced. "Now in Honolulu I shall pick up a bit of cargo and clear for—" He glanced up at Absalom, nodding over his shoulder toward the transom.

Absalom chuckled.

"For Noumea, of course. How else should we fall in with each other? Buy some trading goods. Don't take cargo. Clear for New Caledonia and the Islands, on trading account. And you had better make your schooner move, Isaac. We are now three days behind schedule, and I allowed only a week for possible delays. I have a letter for you to mail in Honolulu. The sooner that is on its way, the sooner I know my insurance premium is paid up." The old graybeard laughed softly, winking at his prisoners.

Isaac got up, putting his log-book into a vast inner pocket which took up half the lining of his jacket, and Absalom rolled up his chart. They went on deck.

"Perry! They took no more notice of us than if we were furniture, while they talked openly about their phony voyage! Mr. Hogg was right! We're never going to be turned loose, whatever your father does about it!"

Linda gripped his hand frantically, and Perry muttered:

"I believe you're right. And—"

He broke off, for down on the main-deck a struggle had suddenly started, grim because no words were uttered; but there was an upheaval, and just as Perry and Linda got to the rail in panic to watch, one man broke loose from the huddle of indistinct rioters and yelled:

"There's three of us goin' in that schooner! Hey, captain of the schooner! They're murdering—"

A stab of red flame and a shot, from somebody near the galley, and the voice petered out in a bubbling grunt.

"That was Slushy, the cook!" breathed Linda, clinging to Perry.

To their side stepped Killer Hogg.

"Why don't you turn in?" he suggested coolly. "Those men are always making trouble. Want to quit the ship, when the trip's only just begun."

"You've killed another man!"

"Not I, my dear. One of their own gang fired that shot. Go to bed. These things will happen at sea. Take her below, Perry." Hogg turned at an order from Absalom, and cast off the schooner's boat.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Absalom, gazing along the deck. "We're getting so short-handed, and before we can afford to. Perry, my dear fellow, I'm afraid you'll have to try your hand at cooking tomorrow. Fortunately, it won't be for long."

THE schooner sailed away, the dawn light shining on her sails; the *Star of Hope* trimmed her yards and sailed upon a different course; nothing slovenly about her now—though another violent death had left her even more short-handed. Perry sweated before the galley stove, turning out atrocious food at which, strangely, nobody grumbled very hard.

For a week the ship glided on, meeting milder breezes and bluer skies all the time, until one day Absalom again paid the strictest attention to his observations, made up his reckoning with the most minute accuracy, and for the second time on the voyage the taffrail log was streamed astern. Both mates remained on deck, and in the evening the ship was once more hove to, this time under all her canvas except the royals, simply backing her main yards.

Absalom Moody sat with the radio ear-phones glued to his ears, his face lined and anxious.

"WHEN are you expecting to go all sensible and get rid of them two kids, Absalom?"

Cutlip Harrity stood beside Absalom until the ear-phones were removed for a moment, then put the question which he had asked a score of times before.

Absalom stood up and stretched.

"Cutlip, my old companion in many crimes, I don't like your bloodthirsty proclivities at all. I never did."

"Quit kidding, you old hellion!" growled Cutlip.

"Oh, dear, I'm not kidding, indeed I'm not," smiled Absalom. "There has been too much violence already for my liking. I have put in my reasonable request to Mr. Peter Barton for a slight acknowledgment of my care for his children, and a little bill for the cost of returning them unharmed. The letter will be delivered in a few days from now, if it hasn't been delivered already. Isaac has a fast vessel; he will catch the mail, and I have suggested to Mr. Barton a means of communicating his answer to me in a perfectly safe manner—safe to me, you know. Our little radio expert in San Francisco will get it through the understood channels, and we shall pick it up, as we are hoping to pick up a very different bit of news at this moment, Cutlip.

"If it is reasonable and satisfactory, a hundred thousand dollars is—well, isn't a bird in the hand worth many times more than two in the air? There's many a slip 'twixt the plane and the ship."

"I see you sharing a hundred grand!"

"Of course not! Why should I share a little private and personal matter with men who object to my trying for it? It will be my nest-egg. Of course, if Mr. Barton is unreasonable, and all goes well otherwise—"

"You leave the babes in the wood to me, then?" Harrity persisted.

"Without another word, Cutlip, I promise you," Absalom agreed. . . .

The ship lay almost motionless with backed main yards on a level sea under a soft and pleasant sky. Absalom suddenly appeared on the poop, hair and beard flying. For once his gentle voice had been mislaid; he yelped:

"Aloft! Do you see anything?"

Almost in echo came a shout from the fore rigging.

"Here's something up in the sky! It's one o' them airyplanes!"

"Come down! All hands! Swing the main yards. Mr. Hogg, are your men dumb?" yelled Absalom. The *Star of Hope* began to move, slowly. Cutlip Harrity and Killer Hogg came together at the davits of the gig, and began to unfasten the cover and clear the falls.

Linda heard the droning hum from her room, and ran on deck.

"Perry! Let's climb on top of the galley!" she panted. "I'm sure we can make that plane's pilot understand—"

"Good shot! Come on!" cried Perry. "Wonder if I can remember wigwag."

They scrambled to the untidy top of the galley; then saw the great cabin plane was undoubtedly in trouble. She had started to wabble; she made a sharp dive, recovered, and flew unsteadily in a circle, then slanted definitely toward the sea. As she struck the water, she turned toward the *Star of Hope* as if to taxi to her, but abruptly stopped, one wing-tip broken and dragging.

"OUT with that boat! Damn it, out with it!" roared Absalom in frenzy. "Oh, my God, she'll sink!"

The plane was not sinking; it was the broken wing which gave her the aspect of impending destruction. She sat the smooth sea like a crippled gull, and Perry stared at her in despair, his hand clutched in Linda's.

"What luck!" he groaned. "I could have taken a chance in that plane; now she's beyond repair out here at sea."

He knew planes. He had flown, and there was not a flying-machine known to aviators which was entirely strange to him.

The plane drifted toward the *Star of Hope,* and the boat soon reached her. Jubilant voices rose; Harrity and Hogg were greeted by name; they replied with the given names of the plane's passengers, and a great gust of laughter went up to the blue sky. In the boat was a length of towline, but it was refused. In the

cockpit two men slumped motionless; nobody paid any attention to them.

Some baggage was lifted into the boat —two common suitcases, which were passed indifferently to Cutlip and the Killer, and two much smaller cases which were handled as tenderly as dynamite. Then the two passengers jumped into the boat with eagerness as extreme as their previous caution. One of them produced a small pocket ax, smashed a hole in the body of the plane, then wrought a similar damage to the float on the same side; and while the boat still floated almost within its shadow, the great plane began to tilt and sink.

"Look, Perry! They're leaving the pilots!" whispered Linda, white-lipped.

CHAPTER IV

THE plane sank. Absalom scarcely gave it a glance, but hung over the rail to help up the rescued aviators and take their baggage. The two men handed him the suitcases, but declined to relinquish the smaller cases.

The boat was simply fastened to the rail, and Cutlip and the Killer followed Absalom and the plane's passengers below, indifferent to the safety of the lifeboat. Two of the crew also detached themselves from the rest and boldly entered the saloon. Cutlip snarled and would have stopped them, but Absalom beamed benevolently and said:

"Let them come, Mr. Harrity. Let them come. It will make no difference."

The ship still lay hove-to, the ocean an empty blue shield under a speckless blue sky. Perry grabbed Linda's hand, and they stole aft to the saloon skylight just as one of the rescued men reappeared—having discarded his heavy flying-kit—carrying one of the cases. He saw Linda, and halted, astonished.

"Hullo! What's a pretty kid like you doing here?" he exclaimed. "I'll have to talk things over with you, darling."

Linda edged away, and Perry was too amazed at the man's aplomb to make the angry retort that rose to his lips.

"Just wait till I do a little job, kid. I'm going to like you," the man went on, kneeling to open the suitcase.

From it he took a small compact radio sending-set, apparently of the airplane type; without bothering to ask for help, he set it up and connected it to the ship's aërial. Then he went below and brought up the other suitcase, which contained batteries, and presently tapped out a signal in code. For some time he repeated a call signal, then uttered a grunt of satisfaction and sent out a message.

"That's that!" He grinned at Linda.

From the saloon rose irritable voices, one of them angrily insistent, and the radio expert turned and ran below.

"Perry, I'm—I'm scared," whispered Linda.

"I don't feel so good myself," returned Perry. "There's some big piece of dirty business going on—bigger than we even dreamed about! Ssh! Listen!"

A great silence suddenly filled the saloon, and Perry and Linda crept to the skylight to peep through. Around the broad saloon table stood seven men: Absalom, Harrity, Hogg, the two rescued men, the two seamen; craning his long neck from behind was the steward.

A key was being fitted to one of the two small cases. The case opened. A sound like the first sighing of an advancing storm filled the saloon. Behind Perry and Linda had crept the rest of the crew, and together they must have darkened the skylight, but nobody beneath it seemed to notice.

"Perry!" breathed Linda in awe.

Out of the box and onto the table poured a heap of blazing jewels, necklaces, rings, stars, brooches—such jewels as might be seen in the Tower of London but nowhere else open to public view. No mere wealth of millionaires, this, but royal jewels, gauds of state, riches beyond imagination. The man with the key laughed sharply, and opened the second case.

IT was Absalom who first uttered a coherent remark—and its tone and sense sent terror up through the skylight:

"Very good! Good indeed! I think we need keep our young friends no longer. They're yours, Cutlip!" And with a sudden resurgence of activity, Absalom swept up the glittering treasure and dumped it back into the cases, ordering the key-man to lock them up.

"When that's done, I'll turn my back on you, not before," declared Cutlip with an ugly laugh. "Watch the old hellion, boys. Never quit watching him!"

"And don't you be too hasty about those kids," put in the radio expert. "I like the look of that flapper."

"The boat!" whispered Perry to Linda. "Better take a chance on starving in an open boat than what I can see here. Come on!"

Together they ran to the rail. But the boat was gone. For a moment they could not see it; then Linda spotted it on the other side, moving fast under the frantic oars of two thoroughly panic-stricken seamen.

"Hey!" yelled Perry in desperation. "Hey, you in the boat! Come back and let us in!"

The oars thudded faster. The two fleeing men stuck down their heads and bent their backs. More than ordinary fear had driven them out into the wastes of the sea to face almost certain death. "Wait for us, please!" screamed Linda. The boat merely sped on.

But their shouts brought results. Up from below came Absalom, apoplectic with fury, with everybody else after him, though the two jewel-cases were brought too, and never for an instant left unguarded. The seamen who had dared to intrude were the most solicitous; they kept close beside the bearers of the cases.

"Oh, the villains! They may be picked up!" groaned Absalom, and moved with amazing speed into the chartroom. He returned with a rifle, and at once opened fire. The men in the boat rowed harder. A second shot was aimed with minute precision, the marksman shifting his sights twice before firing. That bullet knocked a bit of wood from the boat's gunwale; and at the next one of the rowers dropped his oar, lurched spasmodically to his feet, then collapsed.

Absalom breathed heavily with relief, and pumped shot after shot at the same range until the boat lay still, half full of water, sinking rapidly.

Perry and Linda stood like rabbits confronted in a blind burrow by ferrets.

"Cut along to the galley!" Killer Hogg gave them a little shove, and pushed in between them and Cutlip.

They obeyed him dumbly, and Perry shut one door and the lower half of the other. The boat had sunk to its gunwales now. In one spot splashing could be seen, where the survivor of the doomed men tried heartbreakingly to swim back to the ship, the urge to live so strong that though he knew death awaited him at her rail, yet face it he must rather than die out there alone.

"I don't think he can make it," commented Absalom. "No, I am sure he cannot. His luck is out today. Swing the main yards, Mr. Harrity. We must be on our way."

Absalom sat on the jewel-cases on a skylight locker, while the ship was got

"If I had been in your place, Perry, I should not have challenged the whole crew," said Absalom kindly.

moving, and the two men saved from the plane stripped off their jackets and went to work like sailors. The young people shivered in the galley, listening to all that went on, but nobody came to interfere with them. The two new men were called by the names of the two who had taken the boat and had perished!

The day wore on and nobody came near the galley until just as the sun was setting, when the steward appeared.

"What about supper?" he demanded. "You've let the fire go out! Hello, my young sport, you aint thinkin' of crownin' me with that cleaver, I hope."

"I'll crown anybody who pulls anything on us!" snapped Perry.

The steward chuckled.

"Nobody won't pull anything on nobody, yet. They've got too much to think about, watchin' each other! You're safe enough, my laddy-buck, till we spot the schooner again. Start the fire, Perry. Rustle some grub. If they aint fed, they'll come to see why."

Ham and coffee were prepared, and Linda peeled potatoes; but the moment the steward carried it away, Perry fastened the galley doors securely. The night was horrible, through sheer absence of alarms, and sunrise found them unrested. Only when another day passed to sunset without interference, did Linda consent to lie down in the cook's bunk, and Perry lay down on the lockers, his cleaver beside him. . . .

The wireless expert, who had assumed the name of Boland on the ship's roster

in place of one of the murdered men gone with the boat, had been too busy trying to pick up radio messages to think much about pretty girls, but now he apparently believed he had earned a bit of relaxation, and Linda was its name. He tried the galley door, and Perry leaped from the lockers, cleaver in hand.

Boland laughed softly.

"Listen," he said cautiously, "I want to talk to you two nice young folks. You're in a jam. Maybe you don't know it. I can help you. Let me in before I'm spotted by the second mate."

"Don't let him in, Perry!" whispered Linda, from the door of the berth. "I'd rather trust Cutlip than that man!"

"I'll prove my sincerity, Perry," Boland promised. "Open the porthole, and I'll pass you my gun. No fooling. Stand close to the side and take it. You can swipe at my hand with the ax if I don't let go of the gun. There's nothing to be scared of. I'm on the level!"

"Go on, then, give me the gun," ordered Perry, and flung open the port, standing aside within reach but out of range. A short automatic pistol was thrust through, and with one hand Perry clutched it, his other hand gripping the cleaver. The gun came away into his grip without resistance, and his heart leaped with elation.

"Hurry and open the door! I'm being spotted!" urged Boland.

PERRY unfastened the door; it was snatched open, and he stood back, gun in hand. Boland stepped in, peering eagerly into the darkness of the galley. He saw Linda, and shoved Perry aside.

"Stop where you are!"

Perry shoved the gun against Boland's stomach, and the man laughed.

"Not loaded, my boy. This one is, though!" And Boland knocked the gun from Perry's hand just as a dull click answered the pull on the trigger. Another gun was poked into Perry's face, and he was forced into a corner.

"Now Linda, my cutie, let's talk it over!" chuckled Boland.

Swift as a darting swallow Linda ducked under the reaching hand and fled out on deck, Boland after her. Perry flung his empty gun at the man, missed, and saw it sail over the bulwarks into the sea. He raised his cleaver to throw, but Boland had turned the corner of the galley after Linda.

On the other side of the deck, in the black shadows of the galley and sails, a smothered scream burst from Linda's terrified throat. Perry darted around, unable for a moment to see clearly in the greater darkness of the shadowed side, but he was knocked aside and almost capsized as he ran from behind the galley, by a silent, swift figure which leaped down the poop ladder in one stride and advanced on rubber-soled shoes.

Perry reeled, dropped his ax, and before he could recover it and himself, a curiously soft shot popped out, a shot from a silenced fixed-barreled automatic pistol.

Beside that muffled report, which was little more than an amplified click, and a gasp from Linda, no human sound followed, but Linda fell sobbing into his arms, and together they watched a grim conflict of darker shadows among the shadows of night. They heard a grisly wrenching sound, and the clatter of a falling weapon; then the narrow space of deck between galley and bulwarks was full of the silent fury of two men locked in a death grapple.

Along the waterways lay the square, solid bulk of the spare topmast, chain-lashed into place; the combatants crashed against it, and fell in a heap. . . . A hand was freed. The awed spectators heard a gasp of triumph, then a deep grunting sob, and one man stumbled to his feet. He glanced swiftly around him, and moved with the speed of light across the deck, gathering Perry and Linda into a steely grapple. Linda tried to scream, but her throat refused to let the sound pass.

"Shut up! Get back into the galley!"

It was the voice of Killer Hogg, and with irresistible force he bundled them around to the open door.

"Has he harmed you?" he demanded, pushing them inside.

"N-no," whispered Linda. "Oh, I am so grateful—"

"Let that wait! Keep close in here, both of you. I'll see you're not bothered. It's a damned good thing all hands have declared themselves free and equal on this fine ship! Everybody is snoozing except the helmsman, and I believe he's more asleep than awake. Keep the door fastened, Perry, and open only to the steward or me. I'll be seeing you."

A SILENCE fell upon the ship again, only the gentle harmony of the rigging and running small seas intruding, and they but helped to make the silence more complete. Perry put his arms

around Linda and comforted her, for the accumulated stress had at last broken her down and she was crying soundlessly. She buried her face in his neck; and only he heard the heavy, sullen splash that came soon after Hogg left them.

THE Killer had told the simple truth when he assured them they would not be bothered further. Dawn came, without alarm; and Perry, looking out uneasily, hurriedly opened the door and ran to the scene of the midnight fight. A dark stain on the spare topmast made him shiver, but something else had brought him there, and he made sure that he was alone on the maindeck before he picked it up.

It was a knife, fashioned from a file, the handle no more than a wrapping of adhesive tape; it was stained its whole length and still sticky. He slipped it into his pocket and glanced about the deck.

Dawn was only beginning to break; nowhere about the broad maindeck was anyone to be seen; only the man at the wheel gave evidence of human guidance to the *Star of Hope*.

Not that she needed much attention. Perry's yachting experience had taught him the sweet simplicity of a soldier's wind, or a lady's breeze; and this ancient windjammer sailed serenely along with her yards checked in a trifle, practically steering herself in the smooth sea with the breeze almost abeam.

Perry was turning to reenter the galley, when the helmsman saw him and beckoned.

"Hey, buddy, come an' give me a spell while I get a drink," the man called. "I been here for hours."

Perry knew the man for one of the least ruffianly of the crew, and as he hesitated, a mad idea crashed into his mind, provoked by the weight of the bloody knife in his pocket.

That blood had come from the radio expert. Radio! He ran to the galley, after waving an arm to the helmsman.

"Linda! Fasten the doors until I come back! I'm going to have a look around aft. Don't get scared, darling. I'll be back in a minute. Don't open for anybody but me."

Then he ran up the ladder to the poop and glanced into the chart-room in passing. At the saloon skylight he knelt to peep through. Absalom sat in his own chair, asleep; Cutlip Harrity sat opposite him, his head lolling painfully on his shoulder, snoring in a strangled way. In the open doorway of the pantry the steward sat on a stool, his back supported by the hooked door, sleeping as awkwardly as Cutlip, but he faced old Absalom even in sleep. Beside Absalom sprawled the second man taken from the plane. Statter was the name he went by—the name of one of the unlucky sailors. He seemed to sleep too, but every few seconds his hands went instinctively to his armpit, as if he carried a holster there.

Perry turned away with a gulp. Where was Killer Hogg?

"Hey, buddy, wotcher rubberin' after? Take hold of her for a little spell," the helmsman growled. "I been here hours past my trick. Sha'n't be long, buddy. Just get a drink, that's all."

"Be quick, then," Perry urged.

The helmsman shuffled forward on bare feet, and Perry stood at the wheel long enough to discover that it made little difference whether anybody held the wheel or not—at least, enough to impress a yachtsman accustomed to the quick actions of a small fore-and-after. If he had idled with the helm of any yacht as he idled with the big wheel of the *Star of Hope*, she would have turned round and looked at him, in a manner of speaking; here he could not see that it mattered much whether he turned the wheel or not, so deliberate was the reaction of the ship.

HE watched the compass for a moment, decided it was rock-steady, then left the wheel, and darted swiftly to the chartroom. Daylight was at hand now, and there was light enough to see things clearly; and he saw a chart.

There was the ship's track, from the day of sailing, regularly drawn and dotted, without a break in general direction. But the latest date was a month old, although the presence of rulers and dividers and pencil lying handy gave him reason to suppose that the reckoning was recently set down. A moment's thought persuaded him that this irregularity in dates was just another part of old Absalom's cunning plan. A few inches farther on, in the direction which he estimated to be about the same as he had seen on the compass, a cross was marked in pencil, and against it some figures, a latitude and a longitude. He seized upon that.

"The schooner!" he decided, and memorized the position. Then with heart thumping madly in excitement, Perry

darted back to the chartroom and bent over the radio.

"S.O.S., S.O.S., S.O.S., Ship *Star of Hope.*" He repeated the vague message, adding that position which he had taken down; and he kept repeating, feeling buoyed up as keenly now as he had been panicky before, until a loud flapping and an abrupt change in the ship's position alarmed him.

HE heard voices. The ship, untended, had slowly come to the wind and in a moment would be taken all aback. He heard the swift padding of bare feet.

"Hey, what the hell!"

The delinquent helmsman came at a gallop, darting to catch the wheel. Steps sounded on the companionway stairs, and Cutlip Harrity burst forth on deck, followed by Absalom, swearing horribly. It was all too late. The great sails slammed against the masts; the ship came to a stop; then slowly began to gather sternway.

Perry did not linger to switch off the radio, but seized the moment when Absalom and Cutlip were storming at the helmsman, and crouching, darted to the galley, where Linda, uneasy at his long absence, let him in.

"Don't ask me anything, darling!" he said breathlessly. "Let's start the fire!"

Outside was uproar. Every man of the depleted crew was on deck now. Though the breeze was mild, it took all hands long enough to swing the heavy yards and get the ship on her course again, and so fully occupied mates and men, that breakfast was cooked before Killer Hogg hammered on the galley door.

"Open—hurry up. Steward's on his way for the grub!"

Perry flung open the door, for he had to trust Killer Hogg though he resented his interest in Linda.

"Give me a mug of coffee, quick!" ordered the Killer, and when the steward shortly appeared, he saw the quite legitimate spectacle of a hard-worked second mate snatching a hot drink in the galley. The dishes for the saloon were handed out, and the moment the steward departed, Killer pulled Perry aside.

"I'm keeping my eye on you kids," he said, "but hell's going to pop very soon in this ship, and you never know. Keep this handy, and don't be afraid to use it." He slipped a pistol into Perry's hand, and with it two spare clips of cartridges, with a backward glance to see if Linda were watching. "Cutlip manhandled the helmsman just now, and the men are ugly. They can't find our radio man, either." The Killer gave Perry a keen glance.

"He must have gone to find the owner of this," returned Perry grimly, handing Hogg the bloody knife.

"You're wise, Perry! Don't get too wise. It's dangerous," said the Killer in an undertone. "But keep your eyes open and remember what I said. I'm pulling for you as far as I dare." He turned to leave, and passing Linda squeezed her arm gently.

"Linda, I'm coming along after dark. I want to talk to you. If you don't want my company, you want exercise," he said, and was gone.

There was some semblance of routine that day, for the ship picked up speed and traveled fast; but except to fetch food at meal-times, neither the steward nor the sailors intruded in the galley.

At about nine o'clock—two-bells in the first watch—the Killer reappeared.

CHAPTER V

"NOW, Linda, we'll talk," said Killer. He had taken her aft, to a corner under one of the semi-spiral ladders leading up to the poop, where there was shelter from the wind and security from eavesdroppers.

"Time's getting short, Linda. Up to now you've only been in a bit of a jam, but—well, you'd better believe that I'm giving you the straight goods now. I've gone all goofy over you, sweetheart. First time in my life. I can get you out of this—at my price. You know what that is."

"Yes, I know," Linda stiffened, but his arm drew her close to him. "You are holding me up, blackmailing me—and pretending it's love. That's the oldest trick known to man!"

The Killer spoke quietly; and in spite of herself Linda knew he was in deadly earnest.

"Blackmail is a queer word, Linda. I've done a bit of it in my time, and I know all about it. I was all set to blackmail you at first—since you call it that—but not now. I love you, Linda. If you think that's bologny, listen to this. When you've heard it, you have my life in your hands. You can go to old Absalom and spill it all and I'll be cold meat, five minutes after your first word."

The Killer left her for a moment to step up the ladder high enough to scan the poop-deck, then rejoined her.

"You've seen what came out of the plane," he said. "That is a royal treasure—loot of a European royal house, stolen by revolutionaries. It was to be smuggled across to America. How this crowd came into it is a long story which doesn't matter now; but we were to help in its disposal and share in the rake-off. You know old Absalom—a real hellion, but smart, too. It took his brain to arrange a safe scheme, and it's a good one. Two of our lads have spent months on the other side preparing. When the loot was ready, and a big seaplane tuned up, they started with the principal guys in it, and by that time our side was all ready.

"This old ship was bought for a song to go to Noumea for a hulk or to be broken up. That wouldn't have helped much alone, but with Isaac and his schooner, the thing is easy. We dawdled about in a remote spot of ocean where the weather is almost always fine, and the plane would spot us fifty miles off. She couldn't mistake any other ship for this one. There isn't another windjammer of its kind afloat on the Pacific today. . . . That part went fine. You saw it."

"I saw two dead men in the plane!" interrupted Linda hotly. "Two men were murdered in the boat too. Others have mysteriously disappeared, and you've been as cold-blooded as the rest about it!"

"If I hadn't been, how long do you guess I'd have lasted? Now it's all narrowed down. Absalom believes he's to be the grand beneficiary. Cutlip believes *he's* the one. Both of them forget Isaac on the schooner, the meanest little hornet of them all. And all of 'em forget me! But I see a rocky road ahead, Linda. You and Perry are alive up to now, mainly because we're shorthanded. As soon as that schooner heaves in sight, there will be too many hands. Then—"

"When will that be?" interrupted Linda, white-lipped.

"That's to be seen. Some darned loon left the radio on, and the batteries are nearly dead. It won't be many days, though. Now, I've done what I could to keep you clear of trouble, but if I hadn't fallen hard for you in a regular way, I'd have had to let you and Perry take the jump. I sha'n't be able to protect you much longer. And I've told you

"Go back to your pack!" roared Absalom. Statter only stepped higher. The shotgun roared, and he went down in ruin.

that if you want to spill the beans to Absalom about me telling you this, I'll not live long enough to holler. Doesn't that convince you that I'm on the level?"

"But," persisted Linda keenly, "how are you to help us if things are as bad as you say? Suppose I—accept your conditions, how does that make things less bad?"

"Because I'm ready to fight against all of them for you. I want to marry you, properly. I can make a living for you—an honest one—even if your father won't give me a hand. You must believe me! I am in love with you, darling."

"I don't love you," said Linda gently, "and I don't believe I ever could. But I realize we're in terrible danger. Will you help Perry as well,—and leave me alone until we are safe,—if I consent?"

"Absolutely! Then you will?" Killer held her at arm's-length and gazed into her eyes, his own alight with eagerness.

"Yes," whispered Linda, and fell against him in a faint.

AFTER a fearful night in which Linda slept only in brief snatches and Perry could get no more information out of her than a repetition of the first words she uttered on coming out of her faint, a new day dawned in which no hope appeared left.

The steward arrived with stores for the day.

"You'll have to grind up some salt horse and give the crew dry hash," he announced dolefully. "Stores is low."

"They'll growl at that," said Perry. "I've been feeding them cabin grub."

Cutlip's voice was heard, bawling for the hands; and soon the decks were alive with men hauling on braces and sheets, trimming sail for a shift of wind.

Perry started the fire, while Linda pounded hard biscuit, and peeled feeble-looking potatoes for the hash.

Men stamped and hauled; the *Star of Hope* took on a sharper angle, and the freshening morning breeze whipped small whitecaps from the sparkling sea. By the time the gear was coiled and hung up on the pins, Perry had breakfast cooked after a fashion. While waiting for the steward on the lee side, he was accosted from the windward door by one of the men.

"Breakfast, doctor?"

"Hash, in the oven—take it away," said Perry over his shoulder. "Coffee in the big kettle."

"Hash! Who's the ham an' weenies for, then?" demanded the man.

"Aft."

The steward appeared; Perry turned to get the saloon dishes—and saw the sailor dart out of the galley, with ham and sausage. The steward stepped in.

"You're out of luck, steward. Absalom will eat hash," said Perry indifferently.

The steward stooped to the oven, straightened up with a jerk, and ran out on deck screaming like a crazy woman. He ran full tilt into Cutlip Harrity.

"Now, what the hell?" snarled Cutlip.

"Breakfast! They've swiped the cabin breakfast! Him—that man—"

Cutlip was a hungry man. "Go after him and bring it back!" he said harshly; then he stepped into the galley with cold ferocity in his ugly scarred face.

PERRY saw murder there. He felt for his gun, remembering too late that he had hidden it behind the flour bin. He backed away, out through the windward door—and Cutlip was upon him, a hairy claw gripping Perry by the breast of his shirt, the other balled into a fist quivering to strike.

"I've been waiting for this chance!" muttered Cutlip, and let go the punch at a ten-inch range.

It brushed Perry's cheek; but Perry was wound up. He jerked his head aside as the blow was started; and with every ounce of nerve and sinew in him, he countered. . . . His fist felt as if it had struck granite; for Cutlip had lunged into him as his own blow missed, and Perry's knuckles plopped right to the button.

Harrity went down, face first, like a sack of fertilizer falling from a sling; and Perry looked down at him in blank amazement. Cutlip was out for the count, a good long count, and jubilant laughter from forward drowned the angry tirade of the steward. But the most astounding sound of all came from aft.

Old Absalom Moody stood at the poop rail, his great hands gripping the teak, his vast body shaking, his hoary old whiskered face red with merriment.

"Ho, ho! Ho, ho! Do that again, Perry! What a pretty little piece of work! Ho, ho! My poor mate, my poor, peaceable Mr. Harrity!"

AND now there was a howl from forward, as the men whose mouths were still full of cabin ham and sausage came streaming along the deck to leap upon the fallen mate. Nobody took the slightest notice of Linda and Perry now. Absalom's voice rose again, in alarm; the man known as Statter, the survivor from the plane, started with the men, but as soon as they were occupied in kicking at Cutlip, went on at greater speed to join Absalom and Killer Hogg on the poop.

Cutlip was buried under a mob of men who had been turned into killers through example. Ever since the *Star of Hope* left port, their shipmates had been mysteriously disposed of or openly murdered, and now everybody realized that of all that great stolen treasure on board, none was intended to share it but the fittest who survived. Cutlip scarcely regained consciousness after Perry's astounding knock-out before his wits were scattered again by fist, boot and knife.

Aft, on the poop, Killer Hogg joined Absalom at first hint of trouble; and the first man Absalom turned upon was Statter, midway up the ladder.

"No farther!" roared Absalom, pointing an ugly sawed-off shotgun down the ladder.

"Be yourself!" Statter yelped angrily. "Let me up."

"Go back to your pack!"

Statter stepped higher. The shotgun roared, and he went down in red ruin. The other barrel Absalom coolly turned upon the rioting seamen. He uttered no orders, however, but looked on with the most complete cold-bloodedness until he saw how the mutiny went. Perry fired one shot, and Cutlip's attackers backed for a moment in alarm; but Harrity was blinded with blood and could do no more than stumble to his knees before he went down again.

"Finish the bucko! Get after the old hellion aft and cop the swag!" bawled the leader. He fired a revolver point-blank into Cutlip's breast and ran aft, the rest following in mad glee.

"Help him inside, Linda!" urged Perry, opening the galley door and getting hold of Cutlip's arms. They dragged the grievously stricken man over the sill, and as they shut the door, Absalom's voice was heard, as soft as ever:

"Stop this madness, boys. Mr. Harrity has driven you—I don't doubt that; but you have paid his account. Don't venture to invite my anger. Go to your breakfast quietly."

"Says you! Share out that stuff right now, and let every man take care of his own. That's our lay now, and no kiddin'," declared the leader of the mutiny.

"That is impossible," said Absalom gently. "The crew of the schooner must be present at the sharing. Without Isaac, we cannot carry out the plan we agreed upon. None of us could hope to get ashore with such treasure as each man will share, without falling foul of police or customs people." A harsh note crept into the old man's voice as he ended: "That is reason! I shall use a stiffer argument next!"

The other's voice rose truculently.

"Hah! Soft soap! How about our shipmates wot you've done in? How many of us is goin' to be bumped off before those chests is divvied up?

"Come on, fellows! Get the old stiff!"

The gang began to move forward.

"I warn you, I'll shoot!" bellowed Absalom, slipping a shell into the discharged barrel of his gun.

"Fire away!" challenged the leader, and raised a foot to mount the ladder.

"STOP! Cut it out, men!" Killer Hogg stood quietly at the head of the ladder on his side; his gun was held in a disarmingly casual fashion, and his smile never left his face; but his words stopped the attack and halted Absalom's blast.

"Cut out this crazy horseplay! We can't work the ship without men, and you can't find the schooner without us!"

They backed away, muttering. Soon all had submitted.

CHAPTER VI

HARRITY still breathed when Linda fell to work on him with a swab and hot water. His forbidding eyes opened, and closed again quickly. Conscious and in terrific agony, he refused to let a girl hear him utter one moan, but the effort to keep silent turned his ugly face into a mask of horror.

Perry found a bottle of rum and poured a stiff drink into Harrity's mouth.

"Sonny, you done me in—" Cutlip gasped.

Perry indignantly protested, but Cutlip made a gesture which warned him to silence.

"I know. . . . You never shot me—and I don't hold it against you. I was out to get you. You and the flapper were our only danger. Absalom was foolish. Hope you both live to beat him. But you won't."

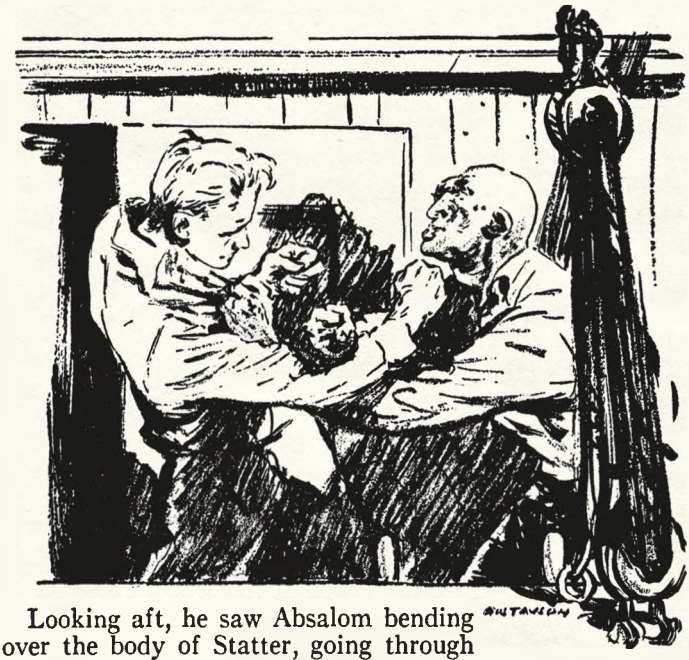
Again the rum bottle poured fleeting strength into the man, and he babbled on, his eyes closed tightly in pain.

"Perry, too much money in this. Plan was O.K. When Isaac joins up, they're going to plant the stuff on a little island. . . . Then—they'll sink both boats. . . . Get themselves picked up for castaways. . . . Come back for stuff. . . . Better throw in with Killer—tell him to stick a knife into Absalom and take you two and the stuff all together in a boat before—that schooner—heaves—in—si—"

Cutlip groped as if for the bottle which was no longer there. His eyes were fast shut now. Abruptly they opened.

"Sight!" he gasped, as he died. . . .

Something had happened to Perry Barton when he handed Cutlip the punch which brought on his gruesome finish. Up to that moment he had been pretty much of a helpless incident aboard the Star of Hope; but now he had struck a lusty blow, had seen his chief menace drop at his feet like any other man under such a blow; and as he looked down upon Cutlip Harrity now, he came to a decision.



Perry jerked his head aside, and countered. Cutlip lunged into him as his own blow missed, and Perry's knuckles went right to the button.

Looking aft, he saw Absalom bending over the body of Statter, going through the pockets; and calling to Linda to leave the gruesome deathhouse of the galley for the sunshine, he strode along to confront Captain Absalom Moody.

"The mate's dead in the galley," he announced. "If you want me to go on cooking, you'd better have it cleaned up. Linda and I are coming aft, anyhow."

Absalom did not look up, but went on turning pockets inside out. Then he grunted with glee, and snapped the bit of yarn which held the key he sought.

"All right, Perry," he said genially. —Oh, these villains who will kill for gold! Yes, bring her aft, my boy. She shall have her room again, and I will protect her. The dead men shall be disposed of." He blew his whistle.

Killer Hogg was steering; and when Perry had taken Linda aft and returned to the poop ladder again, Absalom and the steward were just rolling Cutlip overboard with no more ceremony than if he were a can of refuse. And a broad red stain at the ladder foot was the only remaining evidence that Statter once had lived. Out of the sky he had come, and into the sea returned.

"You were a good mate, Cutlip Harrity. Fair winds to you," rolled sonorously from Absalom's bearded red lips. Then the old ruffian went below without a word or glance to anybody.

"PERRY," said Killer a few minutes later, "take a peek through Absalom's skylight. Go soft. Keep away from the sun's shadow so he won't spot you."

Perry stole to the skylight. He looked down. The two cases taken from the plane lay on the bed, and Statter's key was in the lock of one. Both were open, and Absalom's great hands pawed among the dazzling treasure.

Now and then a gem fascinated the old thief, and he picked it out. Several times he absently thrust a piece into his pocket. Perry slipped back to the wheel and told of what he had seen.

Killer shrugged and smiled grimly.

"He's gone cuckoo earlier than I expected," he commented. "You socking old Cutlip did it, Perry. He was scared stiff of Cutlip. Now we must watch our step and—"

The Killer suddenly broke off. Absalom had stepped out of the companionway, and now called to Linda.

"Go on!" whispered Killer hoarsely. "Humor him!" Linda reluctantly went. Absalom put an enormous arm around her shaking shoulders, bent toward her, and slipped upon her finger a great emerald which outshone the sun.

"Just a small gift for a brave pretty girl," he said kindly. Linda started, her face ablaze, but before she could follow her impulse and reject his gift and repulse him, he left her and went up to the wheel. He was smiling like a benevolent old uncle as he said to Perry:

"Such a lovely day! And those foolish men must soil it with violence and bloodshed. You are a little to blame, Perry, for your attack on Mr. Harrity encouraged them. It can't be helped

now. They have forfeited their share in our voyage." He rubbed his huge hands together with a relish far from matching his sorrowful tone. "We shall not be burdened with them long—very soon we shall be among the islands."

"Islands?" exclaimed Killer, startled out of his indifference. "What about Isaac?"

"Ah, Isaac!" Absalom shook his head, and a slow chuckle broke from his thick lips. "I never expected to meet Isaac. You should know me better than that, Mr. Hogg. I am afraid Isaac's luck went out the day he tried to quarrel with me in my own saloon."

He wandered away, walking right forward past the forecastle with his sawed-off gun across his arm, unmolested.

CHAPTER VII

"LINDA, we're going to take a hand ourselves!"

They stood alone by the wheel, for the men still remained forward; and the Killer, leaving the wheel to Perry, had gone below.

"Absalom said we shall soon be near islands," said Linda. "If Mr. Hogg will help—"

"Forget it!" Perry frantically turned the big wheel to bring the ship back to her course. He was slow in getting the feel of so heavy a vessel; already he was sweating. "Forget the Killer. I'm going to do a bit of self-help for both of us. We'll get a boat ready. Store it quietly, bit by bit—"

Absalom stepped from the chartroom and went to the rail. He had in his hand a crumpled sheaf of pages from a notebook, and looked a bit more than merely worried. After closely scanning the horizon all around, he swarmed into the mizzen rigging, mounting with the ease of a gymnast for all his age and bulk, and never paused until he reached the royal yard. There he shaded his eyes with his free hand and scrutinized every quarter of the visible ocean.

When he came down he was smiling. He came to the wheel, put a becket of rope around two spokes, and patted Linda's shoulder reassuringly.

"We shall very soon know all about it now," he chuckled. "I want your help, Perry. My men seem to have deserted me. Come."

He led the way to the best of the remaining boats. While Perry grew more puzzled what to make of him, he led in preparing the boat for lowering.

"Now, Perry, you can fill the water-keg," he directed when all had been made ready, and the davits turned outboard. "After that, take the wheel again." Then he strode off below with an air of complete indifference to any other need of his ship.

Just when the setting sun lay like a red balloon on the lip of the skyline, Killer Hogg appeared. He needed no word to tell him that it was not these two kidnaped youngsters who had managed to swing out that boat. He glanced into it, and then joined Perry, at the wheel.

"The old man's been good to us, Perry. We'll show our appreciation when it gets dark," he said. "That's a bit of luck I never expected. I know near enough where we are now. Keep handy as soon as it gets dark."

Perry nodded understandingly. . . .

Often, that afternoon, Killer Hogg peeped through Absalom's skylight to see if the old man might be resting or busy about his devious affairs. Finally a faint haze on the horizon puzzled him, and he picked up the binoculars and clambered aloft to get a better view.

He saw smoke clearly, and could make sure it was moving, but the steamer which sent it up into the blue sky was still so far away that even from his perch a hundred and fifty feet above the sea not even her smokestack was visible. About to descend, he swept the whole horizon with close attention, and suddenly stiffened at gaze.

Between him and the smoke another object crept into the field of his glasses: a tiny feathery speck—palm trees

WHILE the Killer tried to form a picture out of smoke and palm, others were busy with far different matters below him. Pantry, the steward, stole like a ghost into the lazaret through the grating hatch in the saloon floor, letting it fall softly after him. He made his way into the hold, and forward over the ballast. The hold was as black as a cellar, but he knew his way to the forepeak very well.

He had scarcely vanished through the grating hatch in the saloon floor when Absalom emerged from his room and peered about him. He tried Linda's door, and nodded approvingly; then he produced long pliers and with them turned the key inside until he could push

it out; with his own key he then relocked the door.

Now he stepped on deck. For a moment he missed Mr. Hogg, until glancing aloft, he saw him.

"What do you see, Mr. Hogg?" he called up in a soft, far-carrying tone.

Killer started, looked down.

"Nothing! Just taking a good look."

"Ah, nothing is good. The very thing," murmured Absalom. "You might remain up there awhile and make sure. It is calm. The ship needs no attention."

Now he went over to the boat, carefully noted everything in it, and nodded. Before returning below, he glanced narrowly along the broad maindeck, saw no sign of human wakefulness, and chuckled pleasantly.

Once more in the saloon, he reached inside his room and got an auger with a large bit, tested the point on his thumb, and softly shutting his door, he crept away in the same direction as that taken by the steward.

HE had passed safely into the gloom of the hold, when the shadows of the after transom moved. The cushions which had been heaped at one end dissolved, and out into the saloon stepped Perry, trembling with excitement. A padlocked iron bar lay beside the grating hatch to the lazaret. He slipped it into its socket, over the staple, and snapped the padlock.

"Linda!"

He tapped on her door, turning Absalom's key. She drew the bolt, opened the door, and he gathered her into a fierce embrace.

"Darling! What has happened?" she gasped.

"Come on!" He dragged her across the saloon, swiftly telling her all that mattered; and expecting to find Absalom's door locked, he put his gun, Killer's present, against the keyhole; but Linda tried the handle, and the door swung open easily.

"Oh!" They both sighed with relief from the stress.

For there upon the great bed lay the two precious cases which were the cause of so much strife and villainy. They ran to the deck, each carrying a case, and straight to the boat to put them in. Killer saw them from his lofty perch and came flashing down to the deck by way of a backstay. For once they saw excitement and sheer astonishment evident in his face.

"You've done it! You've done the old hellion in the eye!" he grinned. "Where is he?"

Perry told him where Absalom and the steward had both gone, neither aware of the other.

"I locked up the lazaret too," he said proudly.

"Not enough!" decided Killer quickly. "The hands have all gone down the forepeak. The steward gave them some word, and they followed him. Perry, run for'ard and fasten the forepeak hatch. Linda, get into the boat, darling. You get in when you've done that hatch, Perry. I'll slip the battens across the after door. We've got him!"

In five minutes they were in the boat, and together they lowered away. As they took the water, gently, without a splash, a dull thud echoed through the ship.

"The shooting's started!" declared Killer comfortably, and shoved the boat clear. He thrust a long oar over the stern and sculled hard.

Slowly the ship receded: when they had been moving steadily for half an hour, she still seemed to loom over them; and presently Killer drew in his oar and flung it along the thwarts.

"Come on! Row!" he told Perry. "Don't look so scared, Linda. Even if they get out, they can't hurt us now. They can't sail, and I've fixed the other boat."

"I can't row the way you did," grumbled Perry dubiously.

"Take two short oars. You've got to do your bit. Linda must do her bit too. Try an oar each. What's a few blisters to us? A breeze may spring up soon."

He made himself a seat on the cases, shipped the tiller into the rudder, and placed the compass between his feet. And Linda and Perry rowed.

CHAPTER VIII

THERE is no expanse in all the earth as limitless as the calm ocean scanned from a small open boat adrift upon it. The sun went down, the hours of darkness passed, the moon flooded the sea with brilliant radiance again; still the boat floated alone on a rippleless mirror of translucent water. When the moon rode high, and they could see the horizon all around, Hogg looked for the ship, but could not see her. Neither could he see the island.

"Step the mast, Perry," he directed. "You're a lightweight. Climb up with the glasses and see if anything's in sight. Here's the glass."

Perry fumbled with the light spar, and grumbled at the foolishness of it, for the mast was only twelve feet long and no bigger than a good big oar. But he slung the glasses around his neck and climbed up the spar, making the boat rock crazily.

Up there the desolation of a speckless ocean was still more striking, and Perry's stomach speedily rebelled at the giddy swaying. But he persevered in his job, closely scanned the horizon full circle, and disconsolately reported emptiness. He started to slide down, eager for the comparative security of the boat, and as he looked down to make sure of his hold, he had a shock.

"Hey, Killer! You could touch bottom here with an oar!" he shouted.

Killer stared over the side. There was certainly a lighter luminosity. He spread out the chart in the moonlight, ran his finger over a space corresponding to his assumed position, and shouted with relief.

"I knew I saw that island!" he declared. "This shoal extends over twenty miles, and that island is on the edge of it. Refraction must have thrown it up for me to spot it so far off. Take the tiller, Perry. How I wish there was a breath of wind!"

FOR hours the oars thudded against the tholepins, and the boat made progress, but nothing broke the emptiness of the sea. The moon slanted to the west, went behind a bank of haze, and left the darkness intensified. Linda was now at the tiller, and the men rowed stoutly.

"I hear something!" cried Linda, at length. They all listened.

"Surf!" declared Perry hopefully.

Killer shook his head. "It's a plane," he said. "It's no accident, either. No regular flying-routes cross near here!"

The drone of the plane faded to silence. A breeze rose with the dawn, and the sail was set. By the time daylight really came spray was flying and the boat required bailing. All around them had risen a mist which was only flying spindrift but which narrowed visibility to half a mile.

And suddenly Killer detected a smooth patch not more than a short ship's-length in width, between two lines of roaring breakers which terrified his young shipmates but made him very happy.

"Oh! We're swamping!" cried Linda. A great sea rose beside her and curled over into the boat with a crash. The bailer was snatched from her hand; the oars floated out, the sail was full of water, and the boat. Killer laughed, let fly the sheet and spilled the water from the sail, hauled in again and hove up the tiller.

The boat floated tranquilly on smooth water now, though half full; a gleam of sunshine pierced the mist; the roaring of the reef was left astern, and right ahead lay a golden beach hacked by green bush and a few tall, graceful palms.

"We're here!" announced Killer, and steered the boat straight up to the beach and grounded her.

A DROP of rain hit Perry in the eye and he sat up. The sky was slaty gray; daylight had faded; the foliage all around him rustled, and the reef was bellowing. He sat up.

Linda was absent; her resting-place remained like the form of a hare, almost a cast of her body. Killer sat up as Perry got to his feet, yawned, saw the sky, and leaped into full wakefulness.

"Hullo! Looks dirty," he remarked. "It don't always run true to signs, though. Come and let's haul the boat into a safe spot, Perry."

Linda appeared while they dragged at the boat, and lent her weight. As soon as they had secured the boat, empty of all her gear and turned bottom up, the Killer ran to the edge of the surf and salvaged an oar. Linda and Perry also set out along the beach. In half an hour they had recovered all the gear washed out of the boat in passing through the reef channel. Darkness was very near now.

"I don't believe it'll be much," Hogg observed, still heedful of the portent in the windward sky. "One good thing, the island never gets washed out—these shrubs don't grow in flooded ground. The water gets salted up, though. We must see about that. And let's see if Absalom's map was right about there being a spring."

They found the spring without much trouble; and before night came and blotted out everything, Killer stuffed his shirt and Perry's with yellow pawpaws and purple breadfruit.

"It'll ease the stores, and a change won't hurt us," he said.

That was a strange night. Thunder rumbled all along the distant sea rim;

rain beat down fiercely in squalls; never a star peeped or moon shone through a blackness almost to be felt; yet between squalls there were periods of calm so utter that they could hear the whispering of the sands as the tide receded.

MORNING broke in a hot stillness, but no sun appeared. As far to seaward as the eye could reach, the expanse of the big shoal was marked from the deep water by a curious ripple; along the windward side of the island the swell rose and burst in thunder.

Killer eyed the sky apprehensively.

"Get us some breakfast, Linda," he said. "I'll chop open some green nuts, and we'll drink the liquor. You'll like that, and it'll save water. Call us when you're ready. Perry and I are going to get things ready to start work after we've eaten."

With the boat ax he took off the narrow ends of three green coconuts, leaving a smooth cuplike aperture to drink out of, and stood them up on the sand. Then he took Perry to the shelter in which the boat gear had been stored, and they went through it carefully. The two cases were not there, and Perry had not seen them since Killer took them from the boat; but it was other business that occupied them for the present. Such a boat as theirs contains simple gear in accordance with legal requirements; there were two axes, a strong knife becketed against the side, a box containing several flares and a precious bag of nails; a watertight case of matches, a coil of small line, a sailmaker's palm, and tin container full of grease stuck tight with needles. Besides the lugsail which they had used, there was a stout little jib, and a small coil of wire.

"Others besides us had thought of a boat trip," chuckled Killer. "All we have to do is to raise her sides a few inches, and make some sort of half-deck over her, for'ard of the mast thwart—for Linda to sleep in. There's only about fifty miles of hard going before we strike the steady breezes; after that it's easy to make the steamer lane."

LINDA called them; they ate a meal of fruit and biscuit, then they commenced work. It was terrific chopping out planks with a boat ax. By noon Perry's hands bled, and he had only skinned the bark from one side of a bush stem which was hard enough to turn the edge of his ax. Killer had done better, but not much. He cursed the man who had forgotten to put a saw in the boat.

Where they worked there was shelter, but they knew the wind had risen, for the bush and the trees murmured and chafed. Linda called them many times before they heard her, and at last came running to them. "The ship's coming!" she panted.

They crashed through to the shore, leaving her to follow as she might.

Beyond doubt it was the *Star of Hope.* Right in the path of an advancing squall she moved; and as the squall struck, her sails flew into wild pennants, but she sailed on, running swiftly past the island, uncontrolled.

"Look! There's another!" said Perry quietly.

Sure enough, there was a schooner sailing from far off toward the ship. Together they watched the two vessels swept into the maw of the coming big wind; then the first of the real gale pelted down upon the island and drove all three to shelter.

In an hour the tiny island quivered in the grip of a mighty storm; the beach quite disappeared; only the hummock of higher ground remained, and against that the sea beat brutally. Of the ship and the schooner no glimpse could be seen. Sea, sky and island were drowned under a torrential downpour of rain.

ONCE or twice Killer left the shelter to look seaward; but when he had been twice all but brained by falling coconuts, he gave it up.

"Just made out the ship—scudding, stripped to bare poles; the schooner's going with her. She's stripped too, but men have snugged her down—the wind did it for the old *Star,*" he reported. "Old Isaac won't let that ship out of his sight again. Let's hope the gale lasts long enough to blow 'em both a thousand miles from here."

He resumed his place in the huddle, but now assumed a sort of guardian attitude toward Linda, leaning over her as if to protect her from the drowning rain, his arm and one side of his jacket covering her shoulders. Perry pressed closer to her on the other side, looking murderous.

"I hope it blows them right back here quick!" he growled. Killer laughed.

"No, you don't," he returned. "I'll tell you babes something, which ought to convince you. Maybe Perry won't be convinced even now, though what's al-

ready happened must convince anybody but a lunkhead. You saw where the boat was stored. I don't mean our boat. There was a big ship's lifeboat hidden away on this little bit of coral. All got up proper, the schooner's name painted on her and everything. If everything had gone according to plan, the old *Star* was to founder just as Isaac's schooner providentially hove in sight; then the schooner was to accidentally run foul of these reefs, and later, after a long hard boat voyage all hands were to land on a remote coast with a terrible tale to tell. Nobody would connect Isaac's schooner with the *Star of Hope.* The survivors would all be Isaac's crew. The *Star of Hope,* Absalom and all, would be lost at sea. Really, of course, Isaac and Absalom would be the sole survivors—until landing was certain! One of those old hellions meant to land alone, with the loot of an empire."

"But," said Perry, "why is that hidden boat gone, if it was intended to pull off the last trick in this wild stunt?"

"I don't know. But I can make a guess. I should say Isaac came here, took the boat aboard his schooner, and so made sure that if Absalom pulled the big get-away, sunk the ship, and came here in an ordinary ship's boat expecting to find everything ready for his homeward trip, he'd be delayed at least long enough to put his own boat in shape—as we are—and give Isaac time to get here to beat him. Where the plane comes into it, I don't know—some later scheme, probably.

"You see, the loot was too big for them to stick together: I knew that from the start. I was to go with the rest—after they had used me: I was supposed to live up to my name."

"So you have, too!" snapped Perry.

"Linda won't hold that against me," returned the Killer quietly. "What matters now is that we're here, we've got a boat, we've got the treasure, and now Isaac's fallen in with Absalom. We've got to be well on our way before those two old hellions get together and compare notes! We will, too. I shall keep my bargain, and Linda will keep hers."

Slowly the ship receded: she still seemed to loom over them. "Come on! Row!" Killer said to Perry. "You've got to do your bit."

"Not if I know it!" declared Perry, and got up and plunged off into the storm in helpless rage.

CHAPTER IX

WHEN the wind had moderated, which was not until about noon, the rain squalls ceased on the island, though the horizon was still black with marching clouds. Killer Hogg swarmed up a tree to examine the ocean all around; when he came down, they ate a miserable meal of damp biscuit and canned beef

before starting work to make the boat seaworthy for a long voyage.

"Linda can scout through the island and pick up all the fallen nuts and paw-paws," suggested Killer. "Gather all the breadfruit too, Linda. There's only one tree so far as I know. We'll leave our guns in your charge," he added with a whimsical grin. "They're heavy, and I sha'n't need mine; Perry will be better off without his too, until he gets over his grouch against me. Come on, Perry. Let's get safely off this island as quick as we can, and leave other considerations until afterwards. We need each other now, all of us."

Perry threw his pistol into the wet sand at Linda's feet, and she sharply told him to act his age.

Killer handed her his gun gently, butt first and she thanked him with a wan smile.

"Yes, you can say thank you to him!" snarled Perry.

"Don't be a fool!" cried Linda passionately, and ran away to her own job.

The axes were poor tools; very soon Perry found it difficult to hold his ax, when his blisters started to break and bleed and his hands grew slippery with blood. Stealing a secret glance now and then, he saw Killer in no better case, slogging away at stubborn wood, his face set and grim, shifting his ax from hand to hand and wiping blood on his trousers.

Perry's ax slipped, and he winced with pain. Trying the Killer's trick, he shifted the ax into his left hand and swiped savagely at the balky piece of wood which he was trying to beat into a fair bend on the boat's gunwale.

The back of the ax-head hit a glancing blow on a nail, turned in his slippery grasp, and the heavy edge went through a sound plank two strakes below, as the ax flew from his aching hand.

"YOU clumsy dumb-bell!" gasped the Killer, glaring. "You did that on purpose! You need trimming, and—"

"You're a liar, but it doesn't matter! Try trimming me!" yelled Perry, and swung a punch at Killer's lowering face.

The blow reached its mark, but slipped from skin as greasy with sweat as his own, and Perry fell across the boat with the force of his effort. The Killer was upon him like a cat. Both axes fell into the sand; Perry was hauled over the boat, stood upon his legs, and shaken ferociously by the throat.

"You small-time sorehead!" gritted Killer. "Just for spite, you'd hurt Linda! *Arrgh!*"

Perry gathered together every ounce of punch left to him and smashed the Killer in the mouth. Blood spurted, but that grip never relaxed on Perry's throat.

He was gasping. His legs were knocked from under him, and he was on his back, Killer on top of him, that deadly grip tightening on his windpipe. Killer's skull beat at his face too; a knee was grinding into his groin.

He twisted sidewise, kicked upward with his own knee, and stopped trying to punch that malevolent face so near his own. Punches made no impression. He was much too close to get whip into them. He jabbed with forked fingers at Killer's eyes, and missed. The Killer caught those stabbing fingers in his teeth, and held on to them like a terrier.

NOW he knelt, shifted his grip to Perry's body, and staggered to his feet. He lifted Perry with terrible ease, raised him above his head, still hanging to his fingers with those strong teeth, and stiffened to smash his enemy down across the boat.

Perry closed his eyes, awaiting the end. He felt himself falling, but Killer's arms were still around him. He did fall, not upon the keel, but upon the relaxed body of the Killer. He opened his eyes, the Killer's face was staring in a curious fashion, mouth partly open, eyes wide; and slowly his grip loosened. Perry fell from him and scrambled to his feet, following the direction of that astonished stare.

There stood Linda, on the edge of the little clearing, her face deathly white and her big eyes blazing, a pistol in her hand—Killer's own gun.

Perry ran to Linda. She slipped into his arms, and dropped the gun, hiding her face against his breast.

"Oh, Perry, I couldn't let him kill you!" she sobbed.

"Linda! You too, Perry! Come here!" The Killer had raised himself upon an elbow, and his face was gray.

They went to him, and he fell back into the sand. Linda knelt beside him.

"I'm so sorry," she whispered. Gently she sought for the wound. He seized her hand, and kissed it.

"You're not sorry. Anyway, you mustn't be, Linda. You had to shoot somebody, to stop a silly fight. I ought to have had more control. I don't hold

anything against you—or Perry either. I played high stakes—you, Linda—and lost." A spasm of coughing racked him.

LINDA lifted his head, and sharply told Perry to bring water and the brandy. But Killer demurred.

"No good! Don't go, Perry. You've got to help yourselves now. You've got to finish the boat. I'll—" He chuckled; the sound was terrifying. "Keep my gun—if you don't trust me—but give it to me if—those two hellions—get here."

Perry brought brandy, and water, and together they labored to bring back to life the man they had tried to kill. And indeed though his wound was serious enough, it would not be fatal, they judged, if he could be kept quiet. . . .

The storm passed, and a gentle breeze blew, the sun dried a sodden world, and the Killer sat with his back against the bole of a screw palm, driving on with harsh words the puny efforts of two inexpert people to get ready a boat which was more than a little likely to prove their death-trap.

"Nail canvas. Don't waste time on wood. Isaac won't waste time getting back. Shove off—steer northwest—never forget that—northwest—" A fit of coughing brought to an end his harangue of advice. Never did he omit to tell them to steer northwest.

They forced brandy into him, tried to make him take food. He cursed them, kept them awake and working until they fell into the sand from utter fatigue.

DAWN found all three lying close together on the sand, and the first rays of the early sunlight brought Perry to his feet, angry at himself for having wasted precious time in sleep. His first thought was to look for the schooner, but he could see no sign of it—no gleam of sail. He looked down at Killer Hogg, lying crumpled up with one arm flung across his face as if to shield it from the strengthening rays of the sun.

"Help me pull him into the shade," said Linda.

They laid Killer down in a more comfortable position. His eyes opened, and a phantom of the old grin came into his face for a moment.

"I'm tough, children. But give me a shot of brandy, Linda. I don't feel any too good."

They gave him brandy, and he went to sleep again while Perry and Linda went to work again.

A light breeze sprang up as the sun mounted high, but the sun was near setting when they levered and dragged the boat clear of the last piece of rock. Only five yards of smooth beach now lay between them and the sea. Perry dragged along rollers they had cut, while Linda ran to the crest of the island to scan the windward ocean. The rollers lay ready for the final haul, when she ran back.

"Perry! It's coming! There's a fresh breeze springing up, and the schooner's in sight!"

Heroically they put their backs to the job. With a supreme gathering of their forces they shoved the boat afloat, twisting the painter around a rock.

"Oh, Perry!" Linda flew into his arms, shaking with the reaction. He hugged her hungrily, kissed her, and repressed his own trembling.

"Musn't lose time, sweetheart," he said hoarsely.

THEY flung the gear into the boat, stowing it roughly, the water-keg last, then went to get the Killer. He moved as they touched him, and when they tried to lift him he protested faintly.

"Shove off! No use dragging me into it. Only have to roll me overboard. . . . Northwest—seven hundred—"

"Lift!" panted Perry.

Together they contrived to raise him, and staggered through the deepening twilight. They rested at the edge of the beach, propping him against the last tree, and Perry ran once more to look for the schooner.

She seemed to have come very close; the breeze blew cool and brisk, and she was bowling along in plain sight now.

"We've got to get a hustle on!" he cried, running back.

Linda stood like a statue, staring at the boat. Killer Hogg still sat with his back to the tree, wheezing in anguish, shaking his head.

The boat was half full of water, for she had already grounded again, and things were floating about in her.

And while they gazed stricken dumb with despair, the upper air hummed with a sound which they knew only too well. It grew, rose to a deeper drone, and the plane came into view, a speck rapidly increasing in size, circling the island as if seeking a landing-place and anxious to find it before darkness became complete.

"And the schooner's almost up to the reef!" said Perry dully.

"You'd better give me that gun," wheezed the Killer.

Overhead the plane still circled. Darkness was imminent, and the fresh breeze ruffled the lagoon. Perry was furiously flinging things out of the boat, knowing where the leak was most likely to be found—in the patch clumsily fixed over the hole his own ax had made.

Linda produced Killer's gun, and gave it to him. His hand fastened upon hers with terrible strength.

"You'll never have to pay that debt to me, Linda. But you have been a good sport. I'd have held you to it if I had got you clear. Now stick to Perry. He's a fine boy. If the worst comes, he'll fight like hell for you. So shall I, as long as I last. There's just a chance that now they've lost the loot, they'll try to get that ransom, so you may come through. If you do, Linda, keep this. Promise me you won't look at it until you're safe, and if the worst comes you'll destroy it. Promise!"

The demand was fiercely uttered, the grip on her hand hurt her. Killer's other hand let go the gun and went to his pocket, produced a twist of paper, and pushed it into the hand he held, then his grip covered her closed fingers.

"Promise!"

"I promise!" she whispered.

"I know you'll never break a promise, Linda. I sha'n't ask anything more of you, ever. This is going to be my finish, when they land and find me. You've never kissed me, Linda. Will you?"

Her throat choky and dry, she took his head in her hands and kissed his dry lips. He shuddered.

"The dearest thing—I could have—" He shook his head and fell silent, his chest heaving. She left him, and went to help Perry; but he was standing by the boat, beaten.

"It's taking the water," he said gloomily, and pointed to the plane taxying across the lagoon to a sheltered spot. "At any rate they haven't got a boat. They can't land until somebody goes out for them. Did Killer tell you what he's done with the jewel-cases?"

"I didn't ask him," she replied, and sat down suddenly upon a tree bole.

THERE would be no moon until near midnight, and the schooner seemed farther away now that it was dark.

"Leave the brandy with me, and you youngsters try to snatch a little sleep," Killer urged them.

They gave him the bottle, and he drank. They had no thought of sleeping, but youth and weariness overcame them.

A STONE hit Perry's face, and he sat up dazedly.

"Perry! Get up! Quick!"

He saw in the moonlight Killer's arm waving to him impatiently.

"Perry, there's the schooner! They'll be here any time. I heard you say once you knew how to fly."

"That's a joke!" snapped Perry. "Know any more?"

"Yes. . . . Don't make me waste my breath. Go fill the boat with sand. Wake Linda to help. Shove it off to deep water and it's bound to sink out of sight. Both of you hide. Plenty of places in the bush. I'll keep 'em all busy when they come for the loot. They'll never bother about you until they get their hands on that. Then you and Linda go off to the plane. Swipe their boat, or swim. Rest is up to you. Northwest. Seven hundred. Get moving!"

Perry stood looking down on the man he was now sure had gone crazy when death had him by the throat.

"Go on! By God, if you don't, I'll shoot you!"

The Killer's gun gleamed. Perry turned away perforce, and woke Linda. The Killer wrapped gun and spare clips in a handkerchief and buried it in the sand beneath him.

In the reef channel appeared a boat, looking like a spider as its oars dipped and flashed, crawling into the lagoon. At a shout from the plane it turned, and went around the point of land.

"Come on, Linda!" Perry said.

Making a bag of the sail, they filled it with sand and dumped it into the swamped boat. Then, before putting in the next one which would completely sink it, they pushed it off as far as they dared wade, and returned for the sail. Now when the second lot of sand was flung in, the boat slowly sank.

"If we can do it, we're saved, darling!" Perry encouraged Linda, and led her swiftly into the bush as the boat reappeared in the reef channel.

They crept into the split roots of a broad bush, and above and all around them great thick leaves as wide as the boat's jib drooped. By lifting one they could see the lagoon and the returning boat; in another direction the Killer was just visible. He lay, his back to his tree, the bright light of the moon shining

on his face, to all appearance a dead man.

"I haven't been fair to the Killer," muttered Perry.

"Glad you realize that. I think he's magnificent," rejoined Linda gravely.

The boat crept in, and voices could be heard. Figures could be seen as well, and there was no mistaking two of them for anybody but Absalom and Isaac.

"The boat was here! I saw it!" declared Isaac.

"It was on the beach just before we made our landing," a man in a pilot's working dungarees corroborated. There was another dressed like him, sitting in the bow.

"They can't be far away, then—but we'll take no chances with Killer Hogg!" said Absalom. "I dislike violence, but that's one bad man—a very evil fellow."

The boat grounded, twenty yards away from the sunken craft, and Absalom, the two pilots and Isaac stepped ashore.

"Keep afloat!" ordered Isaac. "I'm going up a tree to have a look."

Perry hugged Linda close, and they cowered in their shelter. Isaac started crashing through the bushes toward the crest of the island, but at that moment Absalom raised a shout:

"Come back, Isaac! No need to bother. Here's one of them—it's Killer Hogg!"

The Killer never moved. They circled warily around him, guns glinting, and Absalom's face shone pallidly in the moonbeams as he strode toward the tree.

"Put 'em up, Killer!"

Killer never stirred.

"Stick your gun into his face while I frisk him!" snarled Isaac impatiently. He went through Killer's clothes, found no weapon, and shook him savagely. Wearily Killer's eyes opened.

"Hullo, Isaac. 'Lo, Absalom. Glad to see you," he said weakly. "Don't shake me up. I'm all in."

"You did me in the eye, Killer!" said Absalom reprovingly. "It wasn't kind of you. Where are Perry and Linda?"

"To hell with the kids! Where's the cases?" burst from Isaac.

Killer sighed.

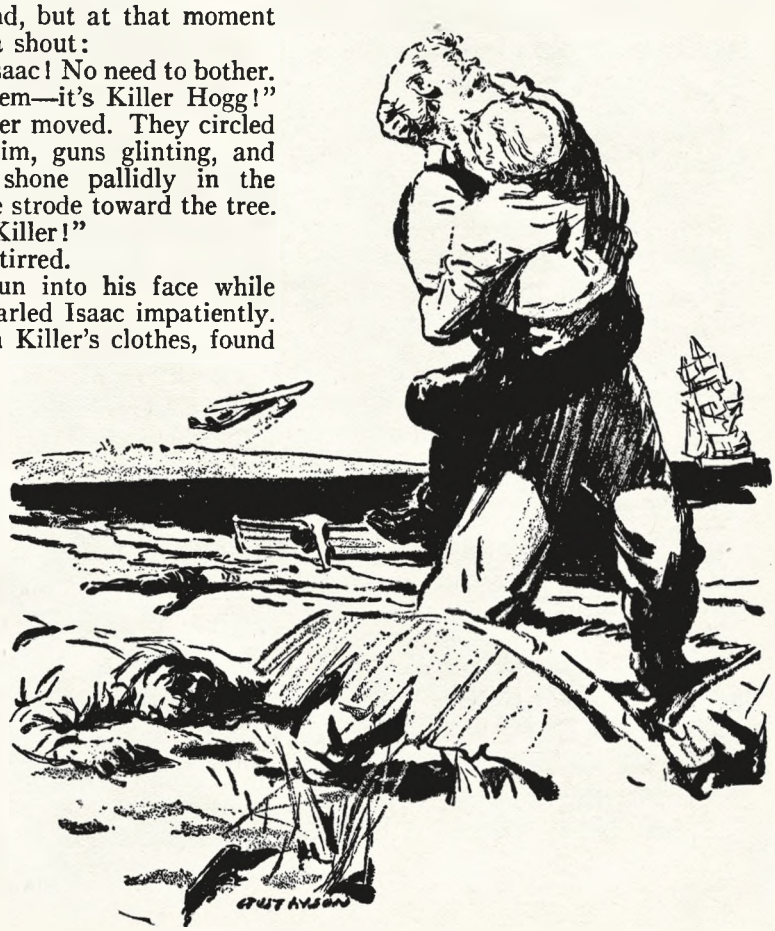
"Have you missed them?" he interrupted, coughing. "That's too bad. They did me in, and shoved off with the stuff. Can't be far away; go get 'em, Absalom."

"Watch him!" snarled Isaac. "I'm going up that tree! Send the boat along shore. They're skulking somewhere."

"You'll have to share it now—if you find it," chuckled Killer, and fell sidewise into the sand.

CHAPTER X

THE boat made a complete circuit of the little island, and found nothing. Isaac climbed the tallest coconut tree



Absalom moved toward the sea to get rid of this clinging terror at his throat. "Isaac!" he gasped. "I know nothing—so help me God!"

and remained up there until the boat came back, straining his keen eyes over the whole expanse of gleaming sea.

"Killer's lying!" he rasped. "I'll make him talk straight!" He pulled his gun.

Absalom grabbed it.

"He's too far gone to be afraid of that, Isaac. Somebody shot him; that's certain. Let me talk to him. We can search the whole island in two hours of daylight. Hadn't you better go and bring in the schooner? She looks mighty close to the reef from here."

"I stay here! I don't trust you no more than I do him!" was Isaac's vicious retort.

If Killer Hogg were not already dead, he might as well have been for all the response they got from him. Absalom played patience as only he knew how, but never a word did he persuade out of those pale dry lips.

The moon set, and the dawn came; the schooner filled her sails and headed in for the channel. And the moment it was light, Isaac sent everybody but Absalom over the island, and the search began. Repeatedly men crashed past the leafy shelter in which the two runaways cowered.

"Scatter! Cover the ground!" snarled Isaac again and again.

From end to end of the island they ranged, from side to side, but it was nearly noon, when Perry had almost given up hope, before the way was clear to the part of the shore nearest the anchored plane.

"IF we're going to do it at all, let's try it now!" whispered Linda. "I can't stick this any longer. See, there's nobody this side now."

"If we fail—it's all up with us, darling. You saw Isaac."

"I don't care! Let's go!" she insisted.

"There's five in this gun, anyhow," muttered Perry, and peered out. The way was clear.

"Come on, then! Keep low, and strike out for the plane. Whatever I do, you go on. We can't lose, but if we do—" He kissed her, and they stepped out.

The island seemed to be full of men, uproarious with voices as they stole forward; in reality nobody was near them, and the voices were far enough away. One man only got a glimpse of them, and that was Killer Hogg; his lips moved as if wishing them luck.

They reached the water, and Linda slipped into it like a seal. Perry only paused to look back for a second, then he was after her. Easily they swam, almost as much at home in the warm sea as on land; and ahead of them lay the gleaming plane, sitting the water like a great sea-bird impatient for flight.

They won out beyond the point of land, and as Linda turned to breathe, she saw the schooner's boat lying under two oars clear of the beach as ordered. At the same instant the men in the boat caught the flashing of their arms in the water, and sent up a yell.

Absalom, Isaac, the pilots and the other two men heard that yell, caught the note of alarm in it, and rushed to the beach. Outflung arms guided them; their eyes saw the rest.

"Take us aboard!" roared Isaac. "Get a move on, you slugs! That's Killer Hogg's trick!"

Savagely Isaac turned and fired at the Killer, sitting there like a corpse against the tree. The shot missed; the boat backed in. The Killer's bloodless fingers dug up the gun from under him.

AT his shot, a man holding the boat crumpled and fell into the water. Another man got hold of the boat as she was floating out. He too let go and tumbled into the sea. Isaac and Absalom were mid-thigh in the water. The airmen at the oars were shoving off. One of them dropped his oar and sat down, looking foolish.

Isaac was facing the beach when the pilot fell, and now saw the spurt of fire from the Killer's gun. Absalom shoved his way ashore, splashing like a stranded walrus, slipping a fresh clip into his own gun.

"Get after those damned kids, Isaac!" he bellowed, and kicked the boat's nose around.

Never pausing to see if he were obeyed, Absalom moved with tremendous agility out of the line of Killer's fire, then went swiftly behind his tree.

From its protection, he coldly emptied his magazine into the Killer's body at a ten-foot range, then stepped out and glowered over him. The Killer was dead enough now. But there was a sardonic smile on his features; for just as Absalom's first bullet found its mark, upon the warm air sounded the roar of a plane engine revving up to speed.

In fury Absalom lost all his camouflage of benevolence. He kicked savagely at Killer's shattered body—then suddenly stopped, motionless. Right where

Killer had been lying was freshly turned earth!

The old ruffian fell to his knees, scrabbling in the earth. He flung sand and soil like a terrier at a rabbit hole; six inches down he came upon something which he knew as well as he knew his own beard.

He stumbled to his feet, his face afire and in each hand was a black case—a jewel-case!

"WHERE'S the key?"

Isaac gripped Absalom by the shirt-front and shook him.

Absalom was gazing anywhere but at Isaac: at the sky, the schooner, into the far beyond.

"Come on! Wake up!" persisted Isaac. "Where's the key?"

"Hey, these don't need no key! They've been picked!" exclaimed the schooner's mate, who had snatched the second case.

In a moment the cases were on the ground.

Killer Hogg's dead face still wore that smile. Like a cat Isaac was at Absalom's throat.

"You old hellion! Come clean! What have you done with 'em?" Isaac screamed. "Don't look so dumb! Come on, where are they?"

On the sand lay the open cases. Strewn near by was a collection of rubbish—empty meat tins, pieces of green coconut, sand.

Absalom stared down at them in bewilderment, dragging Isaac's claws from his throat.

"They were in the cases when I last opened them, Isaac," he declared hoarsely. "The steward—"

"Ah! Talk sense! He's out there, along with all the rest, down with the fishes in the ship you scuttled! Where are they?"

The men glared at each other in black suspicion.

"Absalom's done us! It's the kids! He knew all about it!"

A blow was struck, and in a moment a fight was on. Isaac flew again at Absalom, and clinging with his skinny legs to that vast body, he sank his teeth in the hairy throat. Absalom's great arms enwrapped Isaac, and there they swayed, panting.

Blood ran from Absalom's jugular vein. His arms tautened. Isaac's bones began to crack. Guns were roaring, but neither of the chief combatants bothered with weapons. Slowly Absalom moved toward the sea to get rid of this clinging terror at his throat. His knees gave way. Never did he relax his terrible constriction. He could feel Isaac's bones breaking under his arms; but the sea was far away.

"Isaac! Isaac!" he gasped. "I know nothing—so help me God!"

Two men in terror shoved off the dinghy and began to row frantically toward the schooner, which lay apparently sound and secure beside the reef entrance; only a keen, seeing eye could detect the fact that she only seemed to float because she could sink no further. She was a dead ship—as dead as the old *Star of Hope* now sunk out there—a coffin ship.

And through it all the corpse of Killer Hogg lay among the milling feet of senseless fighting men. Feet trod upon him, spurned sand over him, booted him aside; the sun had begun to work upon him; but the last thing to change was that cold, sardonic smile. Even the wide open eyes seemed to hold their expression of cruel mirth. When Absalom toppled and crushed, with Isaac as tightly entangled about him as a vine about a tree, the swift shadow of their falling gave Killer's dead face a look of content.

CHAPTER XI

"WELL," said Peter Barton in a lull, "it's a darned amazing story. But for one thing I'd say you had both been taking hop!"

Four people—Peter Barton and Perry, Neil Blythe and Linda—sat at the wide window of a hotel in Honolulu, drinking cool decoctions and gazing leisurely out at the tranquil sea upon which so much could happen. Perry and Linda had very little remembrance of the swift and fortunate flight that only yesterday had carried them from that island of horror. Somehow Perry had got the plane into the air just ahead of the bullets flung after them; following Killer's direction, he had set his course northwest; and after some five hours of flying on the desperate chance of hitting Hawaii, they had passed a steamer, corrected their course by hers, and an hour afterward had slapped down in a clumsy but not too disastrous landing in Honolulu harbor. And there they had found the elder Barton and his partner awaiting news of them.

"And what's that one thing, Daddy Barton?" Linda drawled lazily. She was quickly recovering her normal spirits, and she had always been fond of kidding Perry's rather awe-inspiring father.

PETER BARTON smiled quizzically at her.

"Oh, just a trifle to you, I don't doubt, miss! It happens that your father and I between us have paid out a hundred thousand dollars' ransom for you. That was paid many weeks ago. It was because there was no sign of your coming home that we got uneasy and came down here to arrange a search-party. So we know that you were kidnaped, and didn't just rush off in a grouch because Perry and I had a bit of a spat. Ever since we arrived here, the Government has been sending out planes and ships to try to find the *Star of Hope*. And the whole world knows about the big plane that went missing with valuables aboard. Your S.O.S. was picked up, Perry, long ago; but nothing was ever reported in the spot you mentioned. Naval men now connect the *Star of Hope* with that missing plane. They are finding a flock of private planes scouting around near there; had to rescue one of them, for the aviators are more eager than expert—tough lot, too."

Old Peter Barton sipped his drink, gazing hard across the rim of his glass at Perry, who lounged in a deep chair.

"I know you have been through hell," old Peter went on with a queer emphasis in his tone; "but that's a pretty tall yarn you spin about those jewels. Where are they now? A bit of proof—"

Linda dived a hand into her breast, and pulled out on a string the great emerald given to her by Absalom.

"Do you believe that?" she demanded, flinging the magnificent gem into Peter Barton's lap.

Mr. Blythe grabbed it. The two elderly men handled it, snatched it from each other, held it to the light, weighed it, almost smelled it.

"There were two cases full of gems like that," said Perry.

"Then where are they?" both parents hoarsely demanded in one voice.

"That's more than I can tell you. Glad to be clear—"

"Oh!"

Linda was on her feet, her big eyes wide. Then she turned swiftly, and went out in a swirl of flimsy skirts.

She dashed past astonished hotel help and up the broad stairs, scorning elevators. Five minutes later she reappeared before her stupefied father and friends with a disreputable old scrap of a ragged frock, made out of sailor's garb, waving it at them like a banner.

"Gosh! I came near forgetting it!" she exclaimed breathlessly. She triumphantly pulled out a thorn which was pinning to the inside of the ragged frock Killer Hogg's last message.

"Remember, Perry? He slipped this into my hand, and told me not to read it until I was safe, and if the worst came I was to destroy it!"

Linda opened the crumpled scrap of paper. It was torn from a chart, covered with small, neat pencil writing. She read it eagerly, then went pale and sat down in a chair, holding the message out to Perry with trembling hand.

Perry read aloud:

"You will only read this when safe away from all this trouble. You promised me that, and you keep your promises. It would do you no good to load you with the treasure here. Nobody could keep it and get away with it. But there ought to be a fat reward for giving it up. Get your father to bring you and Perry back here when it's quiet again. You'll find the stuff in the bottom of the spring. I love you, Linda. That must be my one virtue. —Bernard Hogg."

Two parents stared at two offspring in dumb bewilderment, while Linda fell into Perry's arms and tried to hide the moisture that welled in her eyes.

"Well?" Perry glared over her shoulder and shot the word almost defiantly at his father.

"LISTEN, you young tramps, and you too, Blythe!" Peter Barton snorted. "We can't leave all that treasure lying at the bottom of a darned well! I'll cable home for the yacht—"

"Why waste the time?" Blythe put in. "We'll hire a schooner here, and—"

"Not on your life!" interrupted Perry. "This is our party. Linda and I want the yacht for our honeymoon, and if you old folks want to come along, welcome. But we can find that spring without help, and get the treasure. If there's any reward for returning it to the owners, we'll put it into the business; and I'm going to fill that chair in your office. That right, Linda, darling?"

"Suits me," smiled Linda.

THE END

Escape

A brief story that presents a big drama.

By REGINALD BARKER

NICK COURTNEY had served something more than seven years in the State penitentiary when his wife received the note. It was delivered to her one night by a man who wore his hat low down over his eyes. Before the woman could ask a question, the messenger had disappeared in the darkness that enveloped the little house on the high hill where Janet dwelt alone.

The message, crudely printed on a scrap of soiled paper, had etched itself into Janet's brain:

Have two hundred dollars ready two weeks after you receive this. Be alone. Will knock 3 times so you'll know its me.

Nearly two weeks had elapsed since then, and a hundred times a day Janet had imagined that she had heard three knocks. Once she had heard them, and her heart had leaped into her throat. But it had only been an agent. He had mumbled something apologetic, and hurried away, believing that he had looked into the eyes of a woman gone mad.

Janet had believed her husband innocent, despite the evidence. She had promised to wait for him, and to do everything within her power to help him secure a parole; for she had been brought up to believe that marriage meant "until death do ye part."

Then, a year before she received the note, she had met Jim Blake, who was everything that Nick Courtney was not. Or so it seemed to Janet, in her loneliness. And it was not long before she knew that she loved Jim Blake with a consuming passion such as she had not hitherto dreamed could exist between a woman and a man. Yet nothing he could say would induce her to divorce her husband.

"No, Jim," she had told him repeatedly. "We can never be more than friends. . . . Nick will need me when he—when he comes home."

Illustrated by Austin Briggs

For Janet believed that Nick would come home, in spite of the fact that all her efforts to interest the authorities in granting him a parole had been fruitless.

Sometimes, when Janet went to the prison she had been refused permission to talk with her husband. Gently the big warden had told her that owing to constant infractions of the prison rules, Nick's privileges had been canceled. He could have told her that her husband had become an intractable and dangerous man, whose only thought seemed to be of escape; but of this the warden said nothing. So gradually Janet became obsessed with the belief that Nick was a martyr, and the belief strengthened her in her purpose to be true to him. She never told him how hard it had been for her to scrimp along through the years. She met him with a smile and left him with a smile, and did her weeping alone.

Janet felt no surprise that Nick was coming home at last; for in her inno-

cence she believed that he had been given a parole. That he would need money to get a fresh start in life seemed so obvious, that she was concerned only with the fact that she had none to give him. For work was ill paid in that town, and her job as bookkeeper barely sufficed for her own simple needs.

So it was only natural that in her dilemma she made up her mind to appeal to Jim Blake.

HE came that evening to the little house on the hill: a tall, slim man in his middle forties, with shrewd brown eyes, and hair as gray as Janet's own had become. At thirty-one, Janet was a slender, graceful woman, nearly as tall as her visitor, with the quiet dignity that sorrow brings. And ever in her gray eyes was an indomitable resolve.

Quietly she led Jim Blake into her little sitting-room, where a single pink rosebud in a slender glass vase stood on a table set for two. Quietly she let him take both her hands in his own, as he always did when he came. Wordlessly they smiled into each other's eyes.

"I'm glad you could come, Jim," she said after a while. "I'll tell you why, after supper."

He started to follow her into the kitchen, then changed his mind, and turned on the little radio which had been his gift to her to help dispel her loneliness. Over the air a girl began to sing softly....

Janet was humming the tune as she poured the tea, though there was a look in her eyes that made Jim wonder.

But she talked lightly of this and that until the meal was over. Then she switched off the ceiling lights, so that only a tall standing lamp cast a dim radiance over the room. She sat down beside him on the davenport, and laid a hand on one of his.

"Jim," she said, "my husband is coming home."

Whatever he had expected, it had not been that.

"Coming home?" he said after a pause. "Perhaps you had better tell me all about it, Janet. I don't quite understand."

But when she had told him about the note, and the demand for money, Jim Blake thought he understood only too well, and his heart sank within him as he wondered at the woman's simplicity.

"So you see, there is nobody to whom I could appeal but you, Jim," said Janet. "I was wondering—hoping—if perhaps you could let me have the money."

"Now, listen," said Jim Blake. "I could spare the money all right; but you'd better think it over. Don't you see? It is evident that your husband is planning to escape, or has already done so, and intends to use the money to help him get clear away. He isn't thinking of you at all, dear. He's thinking only of himself. Besides, if I were to give you the money, and you were to give it to him, we could both be arrested for conniving at the escape of a—convict."

White of face, Janet rose to her feet, scorn in her gray eyes.

"I thought," she said, "that you loved me. I'd have done anything for you in return, Jim—anything in the world, if it would have helped my husband."

He scarcely heard her. He saw only the irony of it all. That she should come to him, who loved her enough to marry her if she were free, and ask him to connive at the escape of her husband from prison! He wanted time to think it over; he got to his feet, and reached for his hat and coat.

"Do you mean that you won't help me?" Janet whispered. "That all your talk about loving me was just talk?"

He passed the tip of his tongue over lips gone suddenly dry; then, as impulsively he took a step toward her, she grew rigid, and stared at the door with fear in her eyes.

"Three knocks," she gasped.... "Oh, Jim, he'll kill us both!"

JIM BLAKE crossed the room and flung open the door. A full moon, riding high, made everything almost as bright as day. But there was nobody to be seen.

He closed the door, and glanced at Janet. She was standing beside the radio. In her eyes was terrible fear, and her lips were a thin scarlet line across the dead white of her face.

"Nobody there," Jim Blake said. "Your nerves must be all unstrung. Maybe I'd better stay awhile."

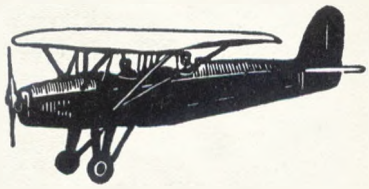
"No! No!" whispered Janet. "I tell you I heard three knocks. He must have seen you through the window. But he'll come again."

And then, as she spoke, over the air, a man's voice burst suddenly into the quiet room:

"We interrupt our broadcast to report a news flash from the State penitentiary: Nick Courtney, serving a life sentence for murder, was shot and killed tonight while trying to escape."

REAL EXPERIENCES

In this department we print each month the best five true stories contributed by our readers. (For details, see Page 3.) First a noted aviator tells of his disastrous flight with a lion as passenger.



Flying the Lion

By MARTIN JENSEN

FLYING from Oakland, California, to Honolulu, entitled me to a few weeks' rest, I thought. And then—the cablegram came! I opened it and read:

MARTIN JENSEN, HONOLULU, T. H: WILL YOU CONSIDER FLYING METRO GOLDWYN MAYER LION TO NEW YORK NONSTOP SEPTEMBER TENTH. CABLE DETAILS COLLECT.

"My goodness, Martin!" exclaimed my wife when I showed her the cable: "They mean Leo—that big lion that growls so when the title of Metro pictures is shown."

Well, I was willing to try anything once, and if they were willing to pay me enough, give me a big enough airplane, and tie Leo up tight enough, I would take a chance. I cabled them accordingly, and in a few hours received my instructions.

Two days later I sailed, and arriving in Los Angeles, went to the lot, where I made the acquaintance of Leo. I want to say right here that he didn't like me. He stood up and roared, cuffed the bars of his cage, and acted pretty boisterous in general, every time I so much as made a step toward his cage. From Los Angeles I went to San Diego, where the aircraft company was putting the finishing touches to the plane I was to use. A steel tubing cage was welded inside the fuselage of the plane.

On the morning of September tenth I went to old Camp Kearney just out of San Diego, which had been designated as the point of departure, as it had a long stretch that could be used as a runway. Leo weighed four hundred pounds without his breakfast, and I was carrying three hundred and ninety gallons of gasoline, so I naturally needed plenty of room in which to get off the ground.

The sun was just lighting up the countryside when Leo arrived in a truck. He was accompanied by a battery of news photographers, a veterinarian from a nationally known circus, and several trainers and keepers. The vet began giving me instructions on how to care for a lion. Some instructions! The trainers pulled the truck alongside the plane and after plenty of coaxing and prodding, they managed to get Leo through the narrow door of the cage inside the plane. As I pushed the throttle forward to warm up the motor of the plane, Leo gave a mighty roar, and my heart gave a mighty leap. The animal could not turn around in his cage, as it had been built narrow with that thought in mind. The only thing that saved me from heart-failure was the fact that Leo had been put into the cage with his head facing backward. The worst he could do was to brush the back of my neck with his tail. But what if he got real sore and broke the bars of his cage? Several of my friends tried to argue me out of the flight at the last minute, but I reminded them that I had once flown my wife from San Diego to New York, and therefore felt qualified to take Leo.

After telling my wife and friends goodby I pushed ahead on the throttle, and the ship with its strange cargo lifted into the air. The air was good over San Diego, and I soon had sufficient altitude to cross the San Diego Mountains, which rise to a height of forty-three hundred feet. On the eastern side of the mountains lies Imperial Valley, and anyone

who has been there, knows that in September the heat in the Valley is terrific. The air had no lift to speak of, and as I continued on, I began to lose altitude until I was flying a scant fifty feet from the ground. At times the plane would give a sickening lurch, and I knew it was my passenger resenting his ride through the air. But on I went. I had to make a nonstop flight to New York or I didn't get any pay, and I meant to get Leo there, or bust.

We passed over Imperial Valley, over the sand dunes, and barely missing jagged peaks, I passed a little to the north of Yuma, Arizona. The air grew hotter and hotter, and I was expecting to be forced down any minute. There was no dump-valve in the gas tank, so that I could not let any of the fuel out to lighten my load; and a forced landing in this region with all that load would mean but one thing: A crack-up resulting in a dead pilot and a dead passenger! However, I managed to stay in the air.

I reached Salt River Valley in Arizona and noticed that I was gaining a little altitude. I looked with longing eyes toward Phoenix, where I knew there was a good-sized airport; but again I thought: "If you don't reach New York, you don't get paid." Ahead of me I could see dark mountains rising higher and higher. A still small voice warned me to turn back; but no, I couldn't do that. Maybe the air was cooler ahead, and I could get through the mountain passes. I had not cleared much money on my ocean flight, and the few thousand dollars I was to get for flying Leo looked big to me.

Always managing to keep a little higher than the ground, I went on. I hit an occasional up-current and gained a little on the rise of the mountains. Below me I saw deep gorges heavily wooded with oak and pine, with here and there a ragged cañon bare of any vegetation whatever. The country grew wilder—very beautiful; but I was not interested in beauty just then. A short way ahead I saw an immense rock wall barring my way. With the weight I was carrying, it would be impossible to climb over it. I had to think quickly, for I was making over a hundred miles an hour. To the right of the granite barrier a narrow cañon wound its way; and to the left another but wider cañon loomed. Later I learned that the name of the right-hand cañon was Tonto Creek and the one on the left was Heglar Creek. The granite barrier was called Hell's Gate—and was aptly named. Making a sharp left bank, we entered Heglar Creek. Huge rock walls rose on either side of me, and the ground seemed to rise faster than the plane. I tried to climb the ship, but only succeeded in going into a stall, and lost more altitude than ever.

ABOUT a mile farther on, the cañon came to an abrupt end. It was impossible to turn in the narrow space, and pulling back on the control stick and muttering a prayer, I crashed head on into the oak and pine trees that covered the sloping end of the gorge. Trees were cut in half and uprooted. The wings of the plane were sheared off.

There was a gas tank in either wing, one in the center-section, and a belly tank just below me. As the trees ripped the tanks open, gasoline sprayed in every direction. I thought of fire! Raw gasoline pouring over a hot motor is as bad as touching off a charge of T.N.T. I was drenched with gas myself and as the plane came to a complete stop, I came out of it like a jack in the box. The lion was roaring; and with but one thought, that of self-preservation, I made for a big tree. Blood was blinding me, but I was too scared to know whether I was badly hurt or not. As for Leo, I sensed that he could not be very bad off, or he wouldn't be making such a noise.

However, if he was injured, I would have to put him out of his misery. Just before leaving the field at San Diego, the vet had pressed a .45 into my hands with the words: "Just in case. Use it if you have to: but remember, this is a valuable beast you are carrying."

With every sense alert, I crept back toward the wreckage. I wanted to get the gun and the canteen of water I had stowed away in the plane. Then—I stood petrified in horror. Where the plane had first struck the trees, a fire was burning. I ran toward the fire and discovered it was one of the parachute flares that had been strapped to the landing gear. These flares burn for five minutes, and are for use in case of a forced landing at night. Miraculously, the gasoline-sprayed trees did not ignite.

After all danger of the lion being consumed by fire had passed, I again crept toward the wreckage. The closer I came, the louder Leo roared. He lunged as far as he could in his cramped quarters; and not knowing how badly the cage was damaged, I was in a lather for fear that he would make his escape.

I finally got the gun and canteen, and making my way to the top of the highest peak, surveyed the surrounding country. All I could see was mountains, more mountains and still more mountains. I returned to the plane and ripping a piece of fabric from the wings, wrote a note saying I intended going downstream. I asked that if anyone found the lion, to please feed him and give him water, but for heaven's sake not to shoot him. The note I pinned to the tail surface of the ship which was sticking up at a crazy angle. Then I left. The clock in the ship had been smashed, but I judged the time to be about three-thirty in the afternoon. I expected to reach help that evening. I have always been an optimist.

I TRAVELED until well after dark; but when I saw there was acute danger of falling into a deep crevice, or stepping on a rattlesnake I decided to stop. I found a group of rocks and using one for a windbreak, stretched out to rest and sleep. But I was awakened by thunder rolling between the mountain peaks. Rain began to fall, and as each clap of thunder died away, the rain seemed to increase in volume. My teeth were chattering with cold, and the cuts and bruises I had sustained in the crash had begun to ache until I was dizzy with pain.

At dawn I set out on my way, a weary and bedraggled figure. All through the day I traveled, always downstream, and saw nothing that looked as if a human being had ever set foot there. I was hopelessly lost, and at dark I again lay down to rest, but was immediately alert again as I heard a most bloodcurdling howl. My first thought was that Leo had broken from his cage, and tracking me down was about to seek vengeance for my ill treatment of him. I finally decided it must be a wolf, and I wasn't interested in meeting one at that moment. I promptly climbed a tree, removed my belt, and tying it to the canteen strap, secured myself to the trunk.

At dawn the next morning I was on my way—among rocks and boulders, over sharp ridges, and through steep-walled cañons. Moments of nausea gripped me—either from hunger or from my injuries, which were troubling me more and more.

About three hours before darkness set in my spirits took an upward leap: I had sighted a good-sized herd of cattle grazing on a cañon rim, and started following them as they moved away, but after about two hours of cow trailing I discovered that I was right back where I had started from.

Darkness found me tied to a limb, far up in another tree. Sleep would claim me, now and then, but as my unconscious body strained against the strap holding me to the tree, I would awaken. Staying awake was much better, to my way of thinking, than being devoured by wolves. I have been laughed at many times since then for being afraid of wolves; but how was I to know?

As dawn broke I started to climb down from the tree, but fell to the ground and for a few minutes lost consciousness. When my senses returned, I staggered on, weak and sick, and with trees and rocks blurring before my eyes.

At about eleven on the morning of this third day I topped a sharp rise and looked upon the most beautiful sight I believe I have ever seen. A small log cabin was before me, and in the yard, putting a saddle on a burro, was a man. I was too weak to make much of a noise, but he sighted me and came on the run. I collapsed in his arms and he dragged me to the cabin.

I identified myself and he remembered my flying over, three days before. The burro was the only means of transportation he owned, and with his small son leading the animal, and the man holding me in the saddle we traveled six miles to his nearest neighbor. As yet no alarm had reached this remote section, although I was being hunted from coast to coast.

TWO days later, with officials from the picture company, a veterinarian and several news-reel cameramen, who had rushed over from Los Angeles, I led a search-party back to the lion. He was a pretty sick animal, having had no water or food for days, and the cramped position in which he had been lying had just about paralyzed him. He seemed to know, however, that I was responsible for his predicament, and managed a resentful roar when he caught my scent. Poles were run through the bars in his cage and swung to the backs of mules, and two days later, Leo arrived in Payson, Arizona, where he recuperated before going back to Los Angeles.

After the proper rest and medical attention, we were both as good as new; but —never again! I might fly across an ocean again; but to fly over the Tonto Basin country in Arizona with a lion as passenger—nothing doing!

Fish Bites Man

SHORTLY before the netting season closed last January, a general and torrential rain fell, followed by the hardest cold spell in years. Snow fell for two days, while the temperature hung around twelve above—extremely cold weather for southern Arkansas.

Lake Chicot was rising fast, with all inlets pouring a muddy flood into it; and on the second morning of the snow I knew I had to take up my three gill nets, which I had left set the afternoon preceding the rain, or the rising water would cover them.

When I left the house, the thermometer showed fourteen. My skiff was half full of snow. Having pitched out enough of this with an oar to make room for my feet, I took off my outboard and laid it in another boat near by. It would be much warmer rowing. My tackle was only a half mile up the lake.

Out of the first net, which froze as it came out of the water and lay in stiff curls on the bottom of the boat, I took two buffalo, a spoonbill, five small pikebill gars, and a medium 'gator gar of about fifty pounds. This one was dead and stiff. He had drowned and sunk to the bottom.

I pried his mouth open and picked the threads from about his teeth, working fast against the cold, which already had my own teeth popping. My "picker"—a little hook fastened in a wooden handle—was buried under the snow in the boat, so I used my fingers in removing the linen threads from the gar's mouth. A fifty-pound gar, dead or alive, is easy to handle in strong linen tackle—but a big 'gator with even a little life left in him is a very different matter. With my gar-killing iron and my other aids buried under the snow in the boat, I was glad that even this fifty-pounder was dead.

A big alligator gar is a powerful brute covered with an armor of flint-hard scales. His great jaws are equipped with upper and lower rows of almost needle-sharp teeth. In warm weather this fish is very lively, and usually tears his way through a gill net such as we use in catching buffalo; but in cold weather he is sluggish and often drowns overnight in a net.

The next net yielded only two small gars. By the time I had this one in the boat, I was chilled through; my hands were numb, my fingers so stiff I had trouble in gripping the net.

I was tempted to leave the third and last one and come back for it when the weather was decent, but I disliked the idea of leaving the job two-thirds finished. It would be only a few minutes' work anyway, this being the shortest net, and when I had got back home and thawed out in front of the fire, I'd be glad all my tackle was safe at the landing. So I rowed to the end-float near the shore and brought the anchor into the boat. I noticed that only one cork showed, even after I had given slack by raising the anchor, and I knew there was something heavy out there in it. Probably gars.

I was right, except that it was *one* gar. A monster gar! Long before I reached him, I could feel his weight. The net pulled down hard and slanted sharply toward bottom.

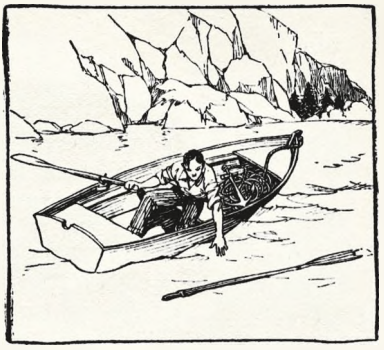
Before long, I was over him, hauling his dead weight up, heavier and heavier as he drew near the surface. I've handled some big gars, but this one felt bigger than any of the others. He was.

HIS nose appeared first, then his broad head set with eyes that looked big as those of a horse! The net was muddy and slimy, and the 'gator was covered with the blue-black muck of the lake bottom. Judging from the size of his head and the few inches of his thick body I could bring into view, I estimated his weight to be near three hundred pounds. I was glad he was dead, for my "gar-banisher," a long bolt with a heavy nut on the end, was buried under the snow in the boat, and I'd have no way to kill him without a cold job of scratching around to find it. The gar had not moved a muscle, nor had he given the long, slow exhalation a half-drowned gar usually gives when brought to the surface.

To haul him over into the boat was out of the question, for my gaff was also hidden under the snow. It would be quicker and easier to work the net from

When a man catches a fish, that's not news, but—

By W. T. PERSON



around his teeth and let him sink. He had not gilled, for his head was too large to go through the five-inch mesh, but was held by the threads he had caught in his mouth.

Clumsily, with fingers that were dead-cold, I worked the threads off his snout. With the handle of my pliers, which I carry in my hunting-coat pocket to use in working on my outboard, I pried open the vicious mouth and started picking the threads from behind the 'gator's teeth.

It was slow work, for my fingers were unsure and lacked strength to grip the small linen thread, which was tightly caught and required considerable loosening. I was working with my right hand, keeping the lower jaw pulled down with the pliers in my left.

I had removed all but two threads when it happened—nor do I know just how it happened, unless my left hand relaxed enough for the pliers to slip off the gar's jaw. That must have been it. At any rate, before I knew it, the gar had clamped his mouth shut *with my hand in it!*

INSTINCTIVELY, I jerked—but the fish just tightened his grip and drove his sharp teeth into my hand. They felt like red-hot needles when the sensation finally registered. It was his first sign of life. The next sign—and this may sound odd, but it is true—was in his eyes: they actually *walled* as if warning of the fish's grim purpose and intention to fight to the finish!

Thus, in a second, the tables had been turned, and *I* was caught. Contact with the cold air had revived the gar. He would gain strength fast now, and be ready to start trouble before long. One lunge would break the threads remaining in his mouth and lacerate my hand as he tore those sharp teeth along it.

Then, in reaction, came a sensation of cold, accompanied by nausea. I was on my knees, held in a cramped, twisted position as I tried frenziedly to pry the gar's mouth open with the plier handle. But those jaws seemed welded together; and there was little strength in my cold fingers, so that if I pushed hard on the pliers, my hold slipped. Once or twice I almost dropped them into the lake.

I shifted slightly, and realized that my knees were stuck to something. My hip boots had frozen to the net where I knelt. The movement sent sharp daggers of pain through my hand and arm.

Under the cold and the strain of the ordeal, I was shaking like a leaf, each fresh convulsion attended by nausea; but I noticed that the pain in my hand was growing less keen. I was weak. Each jab I made with the pliers seemed more ineffectual than the one before. But it was all I knew to do.

Finding that I couldn't force those jaws apart, I tried punching him on the hard, gristly snout—but all in vain. He seemed to have locked up for the day.

It was when black spots began to swim in front of me that I first realized fully the peril of the situation. There I was, in sight of home, within shouting distance of houses along the lake from whose chimneys smoke went up straight into the falling snow—and I was caught by a fish! There was a terrible irony about it. And if I allowed myself to become unconscious, the gar might yank me overboard and drown me. If he didn't pull me overboard, I might easily freeze. In either case it meant death.

The fish moved, as if he had lightly fanned his powerful tail. He was reviving!

FEELING was now gone entirely from my right hand; only the sense of weight on my arm and shoulder remained.

About that time the pliers slipped from my numb fingers and *plunked* into the lake. I grabbed at them as they went into the water, but missed.

The spots had spread to a solid wave of black that swept toward me slowly, faded away, then came again, nearer each time. There was no pain; I was not cold now—but I was conscious of

being sleepy. I realized that, and knew what the deceptive soothing sensation meant!

Desperate, I scooped up a handful of water, threw it into my face. I slapped myself about the head, threw more water into my face; I beat on my chest, gulping in lungfuls of the sharp air. It helped; the black thinned away.

Then came a ray of hope—an idea. The gar, regardless of his size, has one vulnerable spot. Maybe—

Awkwardly I got out my pocket-knife and opened it with the aid of my teeth. Carefully gripping it, I reached down under the gar's throat, felt for the *V* there, found it, drove the keen blade into it and slashed. The gar's heart is almost in his throat; and a main artery, which carries blood to the gills, passes through the part I had cut.

Blood was coming now, ruby red against the falling snow and in the roily water. The fish moved again, stronger than before, but he did not shake his head from side to side in the characteristic motion of his kind in panic. He was still too weak for that.

If I could only stay awake long enough, the fish would bleed to death and release his grip on my hand. It would be a matter of endurance. I threw more water into my face, slapped and beat as before, to keep awake. I had one advantage: I wasn't bleeding!

It seemed hours that I knelt there on the frozen net and fought dizziness and sleepiness. Finally I felt the jaws relax slightly. I pulled, but the teeth still held.

With one of my frozen gloves to protect my fingers from the sharp teeth, I pushed on his lower jaw and felt it give slightly. He was weakening!

I pushed harder. One of the threads in his mouth broke. The fish eased lower into the water, my hand still caught by those teeth that had gone into the flesh.

Then suddenly my hand was free; the last thread broke, and the gar sank slowly out of sight.

My hand was white as cotton, except for the punctures, which were black.

After a time I had painfully worked circulation back into that hand. I tore loose from the net, to which my knees had frozen, and determinedly finished the job I had started.

With my three frozen nets and a lesson in caution grimly learned, I rowed home to the most pleasant fire before which I had ever warmed!

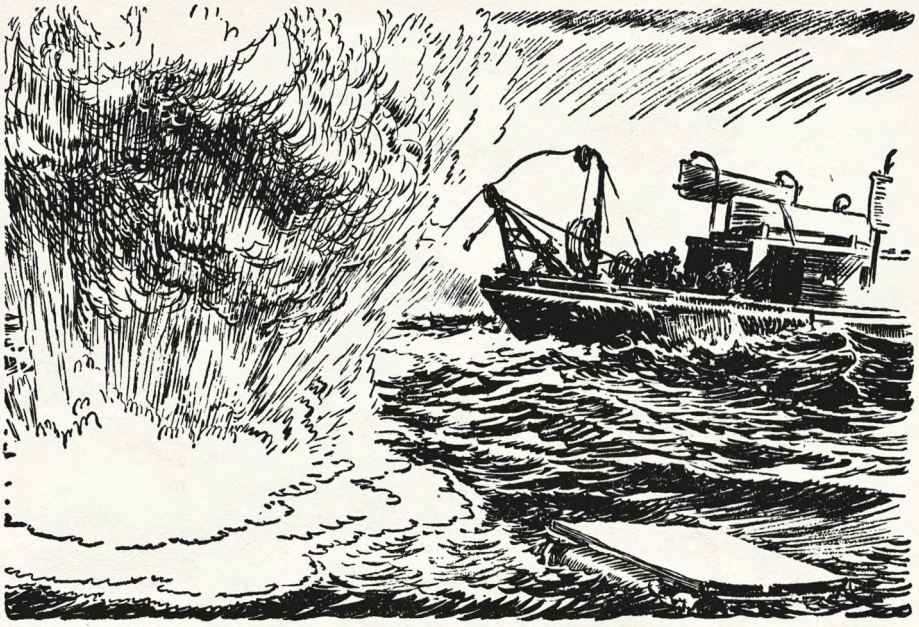
Fighting

ONE of the toughest assignments that this tough fighting salt John McCloy ever received was given to him right after the World War. It came at a time when enthusiasm for fighting, in most countries, had reached an all-time low. He was a full naval lieutenant now; and as the commander of a ship, he was sent with the "Suicide Fleet" to clear the North Sea of its most dangerous mine field. What an assignment! But let's have him tell about it:

THE *Curlew* was completed in about nine months, and placed in commission at the Navy Yard, Brooklyn, on January 7, 1919. She was 187 feet long, 35 foot beam, was rated at 950 tons and her engines developed 1,400 horsepower.

After getting the crew straightened out and organized, we practiced minesweeping off Block Island and made several shaking-down runs to sea.

We filled up the crew with men from the receiving-ship at Boston, and a larger number came from the naval prison at Portsmouth, N. H., men whose sentences were commuted for hazardous duty in the North Sea. On shore we were called the "Suicide Fleet," and numerous bets were placed on our chances of returning.



The heroic story of the Suicide Fleet, as told to—

John

LOWELL THOMAS
By JOHN McCLOY

We sailed from Boston on April 5, arriving fifteen days later at Inverness, Scotland. There we found the *Patapsco* in command of Lieutenant W. S. Benson, and the *Patuxent,* Lieutenant Jesse L. Harner. These two ships had been with the mine-laying force and had recently tested the mine-field with none too happy results. Also in port was the *Blackhawk,* Captain Rosco C. Bulmer, repair-ship and flagship of the mine-sweeping force.

German submarine warfare had been very successful, and was well on its way to win the war for Germany at the time the United States entered the conflict. The mines used by the British, French, Italians and Germans were types that were not effective against submarines in deep water. If they were planted deep, the submarines sailed over them; and if shallow, the submarines went under them.

The United States Navy constructed a mine that was a combination of inventions that had been sent to the Navy Department for other purposes, and from those various contrivances the magnetic mine was evolved. The British had objected to its use on the ground that it would have to be taken up after the war was over in order to make navigation safe; but as British shipping was being sunk so rapidly, there seemed to be a time near at hand when there would not be enough British shipping left to worry about. Under the circumstances, the United States Navy was allowed to plant 56,611 magnetic mines from the Orkney Islands to the coast of Norway. The Germans lost several submarines in trying to cross this barrier before they became convinced these waters were unsafe.

The laying of this mine-barrage was a war-time job, the mine-layers being well protected by escorts that kept enemy interference at a minimum. The layers dropped the mines astern as they steamed in free waters, and they actually laid the mines in thirteen working days at sea, although the job took months of preparation, skill and ingenuity. There was no precedent in history to follow in the work; nor was there any precedent to go by in sweeping the fields.

The British had 13,652 of their own mines near the larger American field, and were clearing the sea of them during our stay. The British crews were all volunteers, led to offer their services by promises of double pay and allowances, a bonus for each British mine and a five-fold bonus for every foreign mine destroyed.

The Americans were in no sense volunteers. They were detailed for the work the same as for any other duty; they received no additional pay, nothing except the honor of being picked for this unprecedented task. In fact, most of the officers were demoted to their peacetime ranks after the work was completed.

The first experiments in sweeping were made by two wooden sailing-ships. Explosions of two or three mines opened up their seams and butts, water pouring in so fast they were lucky to make port. Some one invented an electrical device to give steel ships a positive protection from mines. I heard several men claim the invention was theirs, so will not mention any names. This device was such that if a ship struck a magnetic mine, the switch on the mine would remain open. It was tried out on the *Patapsco* and *Patuxent*, and seemed to work. All mine-sweepers were fitted with the device before leaving the United States.

IN planting mines, their positions were accurately located, and in the operation of sweeping and clearing the mine-fields, we knew the direction and the depth of the mines in each line of a section of the field that was to be cleared. The sweepers were organized into divisions of six ships operating in pairs. The sweeping-device consisted of a kite made of a thousand pounds of sheet steel suspended from three points, the kite being towed by a kite-wire about one hundred feet long. A serrated sweep-wire of hard steel about eight hundred yards long was attached to the kite, and the other end was made fast to a kite dragging behind the second sweeper. The vessels steamed abreast four hundred yards apart. The heavy kites would keep the ends of the sweep wire almost directly astern the towing ships, and thereby give a wider sweep. Perfect navigation would keep the center of the sweep wire at the line of mines; and in the effort to do this, it was sometimes necessary to steam at an angle fifteen degrees away from the line of mines. One of the two sweepers on the tow was always the guide, and the skipper on the other sweeper had to be constantly on the alert to maintain the proper position. This was not easy to do in the high seas and strong winds of that storm-tossed area.

Despite our watchfulness, ships towing the sweep-wire would sometimes come near a line of mines where they would be in danger of explosions from counter-mining. As many mines exploded in sweep-wires as were cut adrift by sweep-wires. Sometimes the concussion from these explosions would explode other mines in the same line; perhaps four or five would go up at intervals of ten seconds. But our greatest danger came from mines fouled in the kites. We did not know we were hauling in a mine with a kite until the kite was within a few feet of the ship and we could actually see it. At first some mines were hauled aboard, but we learned from bitter experience to cut our gear adrift as soon as we knew we had "caught a crab."

The twelve mine-sweepers paired and passed their sweeps in a line at right angles to the line of mines, so that no pair would have the honor of being the first to cross the mine field.

The first mine cut or exploded was watched for by every one on board. After two days of experimenting, we cut or exploded about two hundred mines. This two days' work was only an experiment to try out our gear, find out the effectiveness of the mine fields and see if the mines were in position as shown on the charts. We then returned to Kirkwall, which Rear Admiral Joseph Straus on the *Blackhawk* had made the base of operations.

The mines were laid in thirteen systems; some had three lines, some had four, and others had five lines of mines. The total area covered was two hundred forty miles long, twenty-five miles wide, over six thousand square miles. Mines were at a depth of forty feet, eighty feet, one hundred sixty feet, and one hundred eighty feet. Antennæ reached up from each one to within about ten feet of the surface. The sweep-wire, or any steel or iron object touching any part of the antennæ or the mine itself, started the mechanism and exploded the mine. The sweep-wire would contact the anchor wire under a mine and often cut it. The mine then floated to the surface, and would be sunk by rifle-fire. A very large number of mines exploded on contact with the sweep-wire, and strange as it may seem, the wire was not always broken. Other mines fouled in sweep-wires and kites, and exploded when this gear was hauled in.

ON the first day the *Patuxent* was badly damaged by an exploding mine; its commander, Lieutenant Harner, lost a thumb; there was the heroic rescue by Chief Boatswain's Mate Eslinger of a

man who had been blown overboard. Two days later Lieutenant Bruce, commanding the *Bobolink,* was killed. He was aft looking after his sweep, and when the kite was hauled in, a mine came with it. The explosion tore up the rail, and the rail tore up his head. The ship had to be towed to Scapa Flow. The *Turkey* was the next ship to go in badly damaged under tow.

The wind began to blow a gale, and the *Curlew* and Subchasers 46, 272 and 329 were sent to Lerwick for shelter. About the time we anchored, a great blaze burst forth in a kipper factory on shore. The mine-sweepers were fitted with powerful fire pumps and other fire-fighting equipment; here was an opportunity to test our efficiency at a real fire. I put the *Curlew* alongside the pier, and with the assistance of the crews of the subchasers, ran out two lines of hose to the burning building. In the meantime sparks were falling on the boats of the herring fleet that were hauled out on the beach. Men were detailed to put out these fires before they gained headway. We got ashore too late to save the building, but we confined the fire, saved the herring fleet and a warehouse which was filled with naval stores. We received the thanks and praise of the British naval commander of the port, and from the citizens of the town.

SEVERAL weeks later when the *Curlew* returned to the base at Kirkwall, a signal from the *Blackhawk* was received: "Commanding officer of the *Curlew* report to the Admiral immediately." I could think of no reason for such a peremptory order to report to the admiral, except that possibly he had something to say about the fire at Lerwick. On the *Blackhawk* I was ushered into the chief of staff's cabin. Captain Bulmer said: "Sir, you brought your ship alongside of a pier in Lerwick and allowed her to touch bottom. The admiral told me to inform you he will not tolerate any ship of this fleet being risked. Do you know the importance of your command? Do you know that there have been admirals of this navy that have never held as important a command as you do?"

I was surprised at the onslaught; but when he finished, I said to him: "Please give my compliments to the admiral and say to him that I am aware of the fact that there are a number of men who have reached the rank of rear admiral and never held a command of any kind; that whenever the opportunity and necessity arises, in my opinion, the *Curlew* will be risked with everyone and everything on board, and if that is not satisfactory, it would be well to get another commanding officer for the ship."

THE first day of operations in our new scheme of attack was exciting and attended with disaster. Five mines blew up around the *Pelican* in rapid succession, almost ripping her bottom. Three sweepers responded to her S. O. S., two making fast on either side and putting aboard six-inch hoses from their powerful pumps. Crews from these sweepers also helped to stop up some of the holes in the *Pelican,* and without this assistance she no doubt would have sunk. Another sweeper towed the *Pelican* to port, with two lashed to her sides, their pumps working to keep the water down. The *Oriole* and *Rail* were also damaged so much by explosions that they were compelled to return to the base. The *Curlew* was lifted by a mine exploding not more than five feet from her stern, knocking the engine out of line and loosening so many rivets in the seams that the whole stern of the ship was flooded; we headed for port. While limping past the *Pelican,* under tow and her bow awash, her crew informed us they thought their ship would sink. Those who had no work to do for the moment lined the rail and sang: "Hail, hail, the gang's all here!" The *Flamingo* was the next victim of the day. A mine that had fouled the anchor wire exploded under her stern when the anchor was hauled in. The *Flamingo* and *Pelican* had to be dry-docked, but the rest of us were back at work in a day or two. . . .

With mines exploding so close to sweepers without one of them being sunk, you may question if the mines were effective. I can say that the *Pelican* would have gone down without the aid she immediately received; there is no doubt in my own mind that a submarine would have been sunk if she had been in the *Curlew's* position when a mine went off within a few feet of our stern. The explanation is in the difference in construction of submarines and sweepers. Submarines are more vulnerable to mines than are surface vessels. In addition, sweepers had double hulls, and when the outer one was penetrated, the inner skin became the hull; sweepers also contained an unusually large number of small compartments for their size; they were

built fine fore and aft—meaning that their ends were sharp and that the explosion of a mine near a sweeper's stern had the same effect upon it as the dispersion of force on a metal ball when hit with a hammer.

THE long days of constant work, the rough weather and the frequent jars from exploding mines made sweeping a tough grind even for seasoned sailors. We were at sea for one, two, and even four weeks at a stretch, and amusements and diversions were mighty scarce. The men on the *Curlew* were generally too tired after a day of twelve to eighteen hours even to play cards.

Our numbers had now increased to thirty-six mine-sweepers, and the *Curlew* was assigned to the Fourth Division, Commander E. A. Wolleson, an able and skillful officer. Among the late arrivals was Commander E. V. W. Kean, Naval Reserve, who commanded the Fifth Division.

On July 12 we suffered the greatest disaster of the expedition. A British trawler chartered to work on the mine-field had a mine explode alongside, and she sank in about seven minutes. Commander King, U. S. N., and six other Americans, went down with the ship. On the same day the *Tanager* was damaged so badly she had to return to port.

On this trip we flushed a sixty-foot whale. Bewildered by the thunder in his stamping grounds, he swam rapidly back and forth between the *Thrush* and the *Curlew,* trying to learn what all the shooting was about. This performance went on for an hour. Our sweep then parted, and we fell back to the rear of the column. The whale was perfectly safe so long as he kept his distance from the explosions, as contact by him with a mine's antennæ, or a mine itself, would not detonate it. He would not have been so fortunate, however, if he had strayed into a British mine field. And any unhappy electric eel could have committed suicide by rubbing against the antennæ of an American mine.

The *Curlew* was knocked out again on the twenty-eighth. A mine had fouled in the kite, which was being pulled in, and exploded within a few feet of the rudder. Boatswain Peter Storm and Seaman Robert T. Simpson were blown overboard. Fully a minute passed before the powdered charcoal, placed in the mines to absorb moisture, settled and the atmosphere was clear. I brought the ship back to a position alongside of Storm, and Chief Gunner's Mate George Gourley jumped overboard to help him. With a heaving-line we pulled Storm and Gourley on board, and then started for Simpson, but he disappeared under the water before we could reach him, and was never seen again.

Surgeon Blue was on the rail ready to jump over, but I forbade him to do so, because I knew a number of others would follow him. As soon as all hope of recovering Simpson was over, and although the ship had received her most serious damage to date, I went back to sweeping mines. An hour or so later two mines exploded simultaneously close to the ship, increasing the damage, but we continued sweeping until dark. I was in hopes we could keep the ship at work; but about midnight the engineers decided sufficient repairs could not be made at sea, and we were ordered to return to port. Forty-eight hours later we were back, pulling our end of a sweep.

I HAVE been asked many times about the force of 350 pounds of TNT exploding close to a sweeper. Perhaps I can describe it best by telling of the time I was sitting in the chart-house verifying the position of the ship, when a mine went off near by. Both elbows were on top of the table, and I was resting my chin in my hands. The shock was so terrific my jaws were sore for a week.

A word about the men who jumped overboard to rescue others, an occurrence on several sweepers. A number of small rafts made up of kegs and boards were placed unsecured around the decks, so that in the event a wave from an exploding mine washed men overboard, the rafts would go over with them. While the waves we had prepared for never materialized, men who jumped overboard to save life ran a great risk and were, in my opinion, inadequately rewarded. Perhaps it was an expedition that produced so many men whose heroism stood out, that it was the better part of discretion to overlook all of them in rewards and awards. Men who swept up twenty-seven mines in Cuba during the Spanish War were awarded the Medal of Honor and a gratuity of one hundred dollars each. With few exceptions, the men who swept 56,611 mines in the North Sea received no recognition whatever. But they have the priceless satisfaction of knowing they lived up to the best traditions of the United States Navy.

Mines exploding near a ship threw a spray of water filled with powdered charcoal that clouded the atmosphere like heavy black smoke. Deep-level mines would spout a mushroom-shaped column of water. Mines exploding several miles away would cause a heavy hammering on the hull of a ship.

The *Curlew* carried the division doctor; at first, Lieutenant John J. Blue, and later Lieutenant Newton W. Long. These men came from the reserves, and except for crossing the Atlantic, they had no sea experience. Their patients were on six ships, and five of these ships had no quarters for an extra officer. When the doctor answered a call, it was always problematical when he would return. At times the sea would be too rough to make a return transfer, although it was never too rough to make a call to visit the sick or injured. A number of times we wrapped the doctor up in lifebelts and transferred him to a subchaser on the end of a heaving line; and when he arrived at his destination, he would likewise be hauled aboard a ship. Then some one had to give him dry clothing before he could attend to his patient.

All sweepers had marksmen standing by with rifles to fire at drifting mines. Sometimes a bullet would ricochet and hit another sweeper. A signal was sent to the ship doing the shooting that that particular bird was protected by closed season. All mine-sweepers were named after birds.

AFTER the whole mine field had been swept, orders were given to resweep the area in which we had made preliminary and experimental sweeps. We all gathered at Kirkwall for fuel and supplies, and commanders of the various divisions called their captains into conference to find out how soon they would be ready to sail. At the conference I attended, captains appeared with long lists of repairs that would be necessary before they would be ready. As each in turn read off his list, the conference became bluer and bluer. The division commander finally turned to me and asked me what I had to say. I told him: "The *Curlew* has a twisted tail; the rudder quadrant has dropped to the deck, and it is not safe to steer the ship; the capstan is in a dozen or more parts; the engine is out of line; brickwork in the boiler is faulty; a number of boiler-tubes are plugged; about twenty per cent of the fuel capacity is filled with salt water. But—there is a full capacity of provisions aboard; she can drag a sweep; and the *Curlew* will be ready to sail in an hour." That broke up the conference. The entire fleet sailed the next day.

WE were a full week going over the area, picking up about eight hundred mines. We must have got them all, for there is no record of a mine damaging a ship in the North Sea after we left.

On September 30, 1919, Rear Admiral Strauss declared the work completed, the sea safe for sailors. A barrage that had taken thirteen days to lay down we swept up in 102 working days, destroying some fifty-six thousand mines, each weighing 750 pounds, each containing 350 pounds of TNT. We had lost two officers and nine men killed, and twenty-three ships were damaged. The task was finished at a cost of fifteen million dollars below the estimate. The graveyard for German seas was once more open to commerce of the world. . . .

Final touches were given the ships for the run to New York, where we arrived November 20th in the teeth of a northwest gale. The next day the sun smiled on us and we were reviewed in the Hudson by the Secretary of the Navy—from whom we had previously received a highly congratulatory cablegram—and given a dinner by the city of New York. That was the end of the mine-sweeping fleet.

The ships were sent to various navy yards for repairs and to discharge the crews. In a short time some of the officers shed the uniform of the officer and put on the uniform of the enlisted man, while many men who had been wearing the varnish off office desks were promoted to higher rank. For myself, I retained the rank of Lieutenant, U.S. N., and was confirmed in that rank by the President, with the advice and consent of the Senate.

Later, at Portsmouth, N. H., I was presented with the Navy Cross, with a citation by the President. . . .

While changes in the navy seem to come slowly, even reluctantly, and perhaps with opposition, as I look back over thirty years of active service, it is easy enough to visualize a vast improvement and steady progress. The enlisted man today is better educated, more self-reliant; the officer takes a more serious attitude toward his duties. And I think one of our modern cruisers properly handled could defeat the combined fleets of Dewey, Sampson and Schley.

A Wild Ride

A man and a boy, clinging for life to the rods under a speeding train.

By JOSEPH M. BATES

EMPLOYMENT in the building trades in my home city was at low ebb that spring, and finally I spent most of my cash for a ticket to Los Angeles, where, according to a friend, there was plenty of building.

No work was to be had there either, however; completely broke and discouraged, I decided to return East by the only way available, the side-door Pullman; and after three weeks of the worst kind of dirty, hungry work, and after suffering more hardships than a prisoner of war, I finally arrived in St. Louis. Late in the afternoon I crossed the bridge to East St. Louis, and the railroad yards there. After much maneuvering I found a strategic position near the eastern end of the yards, and took cover, for I could see several railroad detectives patrolling that section.

Four times during the early evening I tried to make the tops of outgoing freights; but each time I was caught and flung rudely off the right of way. As the afternoon waned, I saw there would be no chance to ride out on the tops; the only way to get out, was to ride the rods, for once I got settled on the rods, with the train moving, no cop would risk his life trying to drag me from there.

From my cover in some bushes I was waiting, when I heard the sound of sobs and sniffling somewhere close by. I investigated, and soon found a lad about ten years of age, crouched down in the bushes, and crying as only a small lost boy can cry.

After some talk I managed to get his story out of him. He lived in Decatur with his parents, and had left there the day before with some older boys on his first adventure out into the great world. They had brought him here, and then had run away from him. He didn't know where he was, and didn't care; all he wanted was to get back to Decatur—would I help him?

I felt sorry for the forlorn little tyke, and decided to help him. I took him over closer to the railroad, and gave him the only sandwich I had. While he ate it, I instructed him how to run alongside the train until I'd got on the rods, then to dart under, and I would drag him up beside me. Getting on the rods requires some agility, but it is not so dangerous as one would think, as the train moves very slowly at first.

Shortly after I finished instructing him, a long heavy freight came puffing along at a snail's pace. It was now twilight of a summer's eve; looking out from the brush, I could just distinguish the nearest officer about three hundred yards away. With a final hasty word to the boy, I ran out and ducked under the nearest car and crawled onto the rods. The boy was a plucky little fellow; he was whimpering, but he followed my instructions to the letter. He ran alongside the moving train until I had got on the rods; then he darted under, and I grabbed him and swung him up. One of the detectives farther up the track had seen us get on; and as the car we were riding passed him, he ran along with it, flashing his light on us and swearing at a great rate; but he couldn't get at us, and as the train was gathering headway, it soon outdistanced him. We were on our way to Decatur. The train we were on was of the type known as the "high ball;" they carry perishable goods, and make passenger time. I had ridden the rods before, and thought I knew what to expect; but I had never ridden a fast train before, and didn't know it all by a long shot. Ten minutes after the detective and his blasphemy had faded to the rear, I was fighting for my life.

THE car rocked, swayed, bounced and bumped. When we rounded a curve, the car writhed and twisted like a snake, and the rods tried to follow its gyrations. The wind sucked in under the car and slammed against me with cyclonic force, carrying with it dust, grit and small particles of ballast. The dust and grit got

in my eyes and mouth. Soon I could see nothing, and could scarcely breathe; I had to keep on the rods entirely by the sense of touch.

The boy was a stout-hearted lad; but what he was going through has destroyed the nerve of many a man. Often enough some knight of the road has been jolted or blown off the rods to certain death. In five minutes the boy was exhausted, and started to slip off; he was game, and tried desperately to keep his grip, but his strength was not equal to the task. I managed to get an arm around him, however, and clutched a rod on the other side of him; and from there to Decatur I had to hold him on the rods too.

It's about a four-hour run from St. Louis to Decatur, but that train made it in considerably less time; yet it seemed to me to be about a hundred years. However, the will to live is the strongest instinct implanted in man; and although my entire body was just one vast ache from the effort I was putting forth, I managed somehow to cling to the rods and keep the boy on until we got to Decatur. There, when the train stopped in the yards, I just had strength enough to crawl from under the car and stagger into the arms of a husky detective. He was inclined to get rough for a minute; but seeing my exhausted condition, he took us both over to the calaboose. I was too exhausted to talk, but the lad told the tale, and it lost nothing in telling.

They sent the boy home that night, and kept me till the next morning; then after a hearty breakfast they left me go. Strangely enough, I never learned that boy's name; but somewhere today he is living, and probably has boys of his own; and I often wonder if he ever tells them of his wild ride on the rods.

I Left My Arm Behind

Desperate days in Cuba.

By PIERRE DERBIGNY

EARLY in 1896 I was more-or-less a cub newspaper reporter; and at the age of twenty-two I was filled to bursting with inflammatory information as what Cubans were doing to obtain freedom by wrecking Spain's military control of Cuba—the head of which, at that time, was Military Governor General Weyler.

Young, enthusiastic, idealistic, ambitious, I went to New York and established acquaintance and friendship with Señor Don Tomas Estrada Palma. And Don Tomas, who in 1902, was inaugurated as the first President of Cuba, so filled me with enthusiasm that I hopped from New York to Havana.

Smart-Alecky young, I landed in Havana, and began diplomatically to gather "inside information" and write it out in such good shape that I could smuggle it out of there and, by steamer and rail, get it into print through *Harper's Weekly* and a news bureau.

General Weyler suspected me, and he had me picked up by his soldiers and slammed into prison in Cabañas fortress, across the bay from Havana.

Therein I established companionship with some three hundred or more Cubans and other "suspects," with whom I went through about three rather unpleasant weeks. Then, having obtained everything that I thought might be useful, I sent word to Mr. Fitzhugh Lee, then American consul in Havana.

Mr. Consul Lee hurried to El Palacio, made emphatic representations to General Weyler, and then waited there until I was yanked out of prison and brought to El Palacio—which did not take long!

By the three of us, my position was discussed. We finally agreed that, under military guard, accompanied by Consul Lee, I should go from the Palace to the hotel in which I had a room, gather all of my belongings, get aboard the military-guarded ship which would up-anchor that night and steam away toward New York All of which we did—

But!

My steamer was anchored in the deepest inner end of the harbor: at about nine in the evening, when the tide was highest, anchors were lifted and the ship started to push out of the harbor and on to New York. When she got under way, however, with my money wrapped in oilcloth and tied under my shirt, I dived

off the stern and quietly swam toward the swampy, jungly southeast shore. Safely landed, I started through the jungle, determined to get to headquarters of General Gomez—which I did, the afternoon of next day.

I was no longer a newspaper man, but a determined *insurrecto Cubano*. As such, General Gomez cordially dispatched me, with guiding escort, to General Maceo, in Pinar del Rio Province.

With open arms, General Maceo presently took me in—after I had told him how-come I got to him, and why. I was immediately made *attaché* and special messenger, with the lovely job of carrying messages to and from Generals Gomez and Garcia. That I did—until the latter part of the month of October. Then came the Big Event.

We were desperately in need of supplies. We knew when a train of loaded burros was due at Palacios, from Havana, and we decided to capture it by lying in wait in an ambuscade in the jungle on the west side of a creek, falling on the protecting soldiers as they crawled out of the muddy stream. Therefore, before daylight, under command of Lieutenant Alvarez, we saddled, left camp and rode down twenty miles to the point where the military trail disappeared in the thick jungle; dismounting, we tethered our horses, and three abreast, started the mile-and-a-half creep to the location of our planned ambuscade.

When we were within about one-half mile of the creek, however, the devil himself popped out of hell and landed on us —in the shape of a Spanish lieutenant and ten of his soldiers. Leaving his burros with the majority of his men on the east side he had laid a counter-ambuscade into which we fell!

FIGHTING did not last long. Outnumbering them, and being infinitely better "bush-masters," we wiped them out. Three of our men were killed and only four were wounded. *But*—

I had marched last in line as we had approached the creek, carrying a rifle in my right hand, a .44 in a belt-holster on my left side. Behind me, the Spanish lieutenant stepped from hiding and slashed my right arm with a terrific stroke of a machete. My rifle dropped to the ground, but with my revolver, I dropped the lieutenant.

That machete had cut almost clear through the bone of my right arm, about halfway between elbow and shoulder. The Cubans all came to my assistance at once; torn shirts and handkerchiefs and the inner bark of the majagua tree were used to bandage, wrap and bind my arm to my body; then the men helped me walk back over the mile-and-a-half to reach my horse, mount and swiftly as possible ride the twenty miles to our headquarters camp. There I was made as comfortable as possible, stretched on a cot, under a palmetto-leaf roof, protected from a fierce tropical sun, forced to wait until our one surgeon could arrive.

WITH only water and an occasional drink of cane rum, I was forced to bear it through the bitter hot day until nearly ten that evening, before the doctor could get to me. Then followed the examination, discussion and decision.

"Amputation, painful as it will be, is preferable. I could save the arm, but it would be a stiff, withered, useless arm and hand, terribly painful at all times, and an increasingly serious drag with each year of your life." Thus did Doctor Gonzales express himself.

"Go ahead, Doctor. Cut it off," was my reply. Then came the ordeal.

We had no chloroform or ether; nothing but a bottle of bromidia and a pint of excellent rum. I was given a big dose of the former and the full pint of the latter. Through the entire operation, I remained dully conscious. . . .

Well, the operation was so skillful, my health, system and constitution so fine, that in four or five days the doctor was able to draw out the iodoform gauze *and* the stitches. Three weeks later, aided by four fine Cuban soldiers, I was able to begin the careful, watchful ride, through forest and jungle, past Spanish sentries at outposts to where a good little sloop was concealed waiting to take me to New Orleans.

No more impressive salutation could be thought of or imagined than the one given me. Our entire little army was drawn up in mounted columns. General Antonio Maceo and Colonel Señor Doctor Ernesto Gonzales, standing side by side, facing me as I faced them. Then, the doctor first, followed by Maceo, embraced me—all three of us weeping!

Safely arriving that night at my bush-hidden war-ship, I bade my men *adios*, slipped aboard the sloop and we softly slid out into the beautiful moonlit Gulf of Matamano, on our way, around Cape San Antonio toward New Orleans.

But I left my arm behind me!

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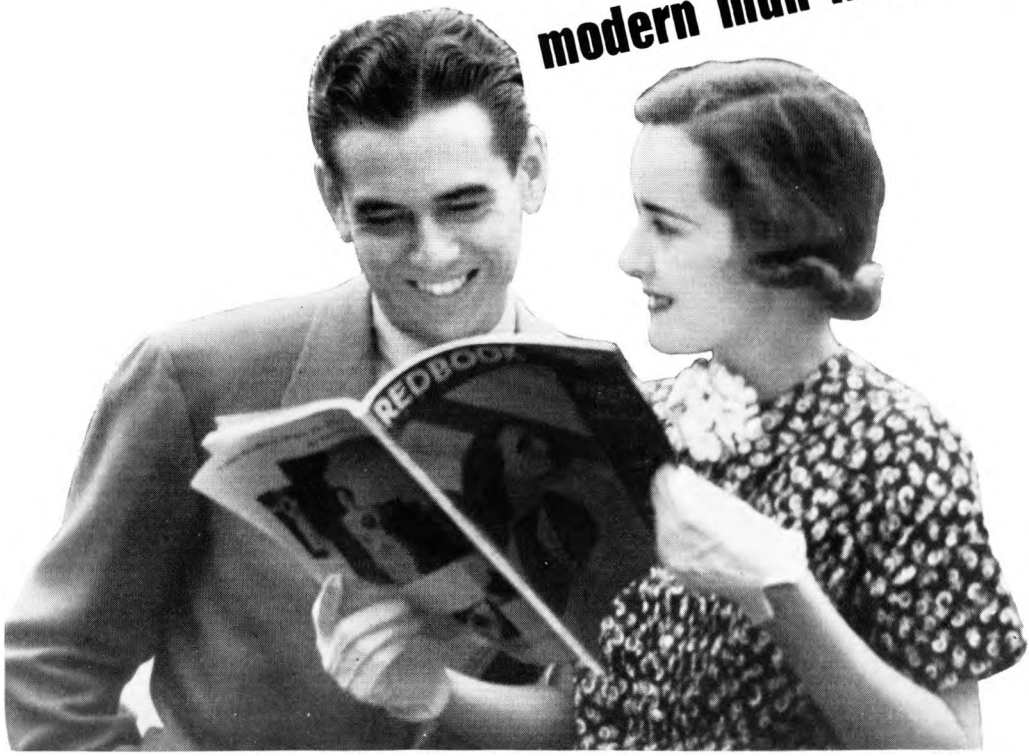

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