

Historical Adventure

GOLDEN FLEECE

JUNE



20¢

♦ ALL STORIES COMPLETE ♦

GUARDIAN DEVIL by Johnston McCulley



Brundage

Down the lane . . . came Fray Sebastiano with a frightened girl clinging to his arm.

Drawn by M. Brundage for "Guardian Devil"

GOLDEN FLEECE

HISTORICAL ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

JUNE 1939

Vol. 2 No. 6

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COVER DESIGN

Drawn by M. Brundage for "Guardian Devil."

These stories are fiction. If any character bears the name of a living person, it is purely a coincidence.

A. J. Gontier, Jr.

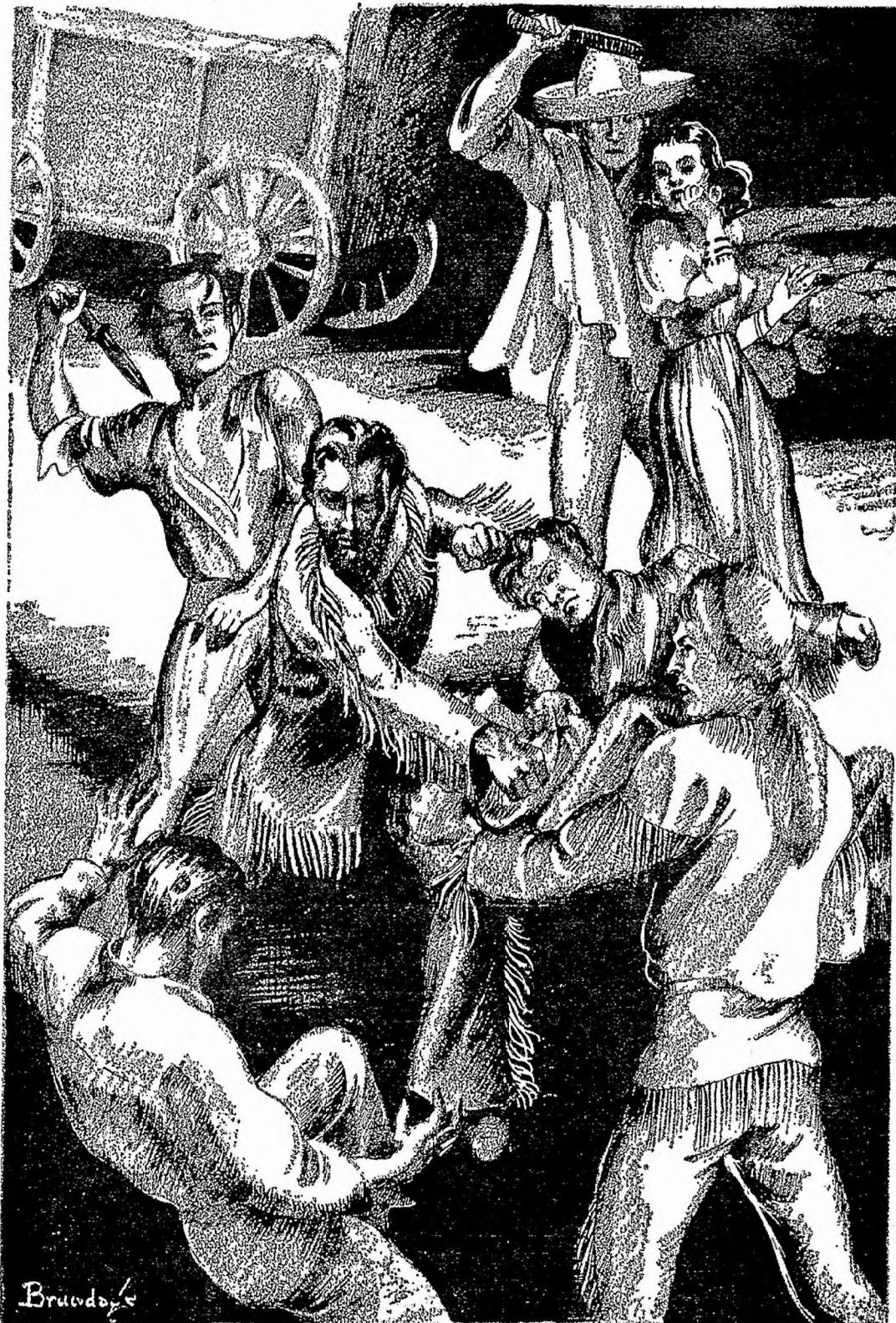
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There was serious trouble from the start . . . continual political intrigue . . . and trouble because of women.



by JOHNSTON McCULLY

Illustrated by M. BRUNDAGE

CHAPTER I

FROM the corner of his eye, Dan O'Dowd caught sight of the mysterious shadow, saw it flit through the bright moonlight and drift along the adobe wall. All other shadows in the vicinity were stationary. A moving shadow in their midst meant something alive, something furtive and skulking trying to pass unseen.

Dan came to an abrupt stop. He drew back into a streak of darkness against the wall. Except for that shadow, everything seemed normal.

Moonlight filtered through the tree-tops. The aroma of blossoms permeated the air. Somewhere a guitar strummed in serenade.

Dan's alert eyes saw the shadow drift slowly along the wall and straight toward him. Suddenly other shadows appeared at the mouth of the narrow street, half a dozen of them. They darted from side to side, plainly searching.

"Sombreros!" thought Dan. "Heathen sombreros, 'stead of honest coon-skin caps! Mexicans! And no help for me this side of the pack train yard."

He drew his knife half out of its leather sheath. Perhaps this was none of his affair, but he would be ready.

IT PAID to be ready for trouble always in this town of Santa Fé, with the Mexicans and Yanquis always at one another's throats, and renegades eager to get at the throats of either.

Since the country had been explored and named New Spain, and the town of Santa Fé founded in the shadows of the Sangre de Cristo mountains, long pack trains had traveled up to it from Mexico, from Chihuahua and Guadalajara, bringing their wares and taking generous profits.

Then the Americans had come to dispute the monopoly of trade, following the long trail from Independence, over plains and mountains, past Bent's Fort, to old Taos and Santa Fé.

Hard fighting men who would be denied nothing they desired, they came with their long trains of Conestoga wagons and pack animals loaded with trade goods, and brought with them a canny skill in bargaining. In buckskin clothes and coonskin caps, they traded and fought, drank white whisky and gambled, holding life cheaply. They howled their song about a certain Yankee Doodle, and so became known as "Yanquis."

There was serious trouble from the start. Competition in trade caused hard feeling and continual political intrigue, with a new man likely to sit in the Governor's chair any morning.

With Mexico in constant turmoil inwardly, and also having trouble with the rebellious Texans, nobody could say just what was the political complexion of Santa Fé, so the Yanquis often thrust the Mexicans aside, saying this was any man's land, though at the

moment Don Marcos Vega ruled it as *alcalde* and took what bribe money he could.

There was trouble because of women—women with soft brown skins, flat calves, broad hips, full bosoms, luring black eyes, and no morals at all. They paraded in bright skirts, their arms loaded with silver bracelets, rings in their ears and flashing ornaments in their black hair. A horde of them appeared at every *baile*, where the usual bars of convention were lowered, and they liked the boisterous, generous Yanquis.

But no wise Yanqui traveled around the narrow streets of Santa Fé alone after sundown in the early 1830s. Knives had been sharpened for him and intrigues woven for his downfall. . . .

DAN O'DOWD saw the first shadow he had noticed leave the patch of darkness and glide toward him. The other shadows came swiftly after. The leading one tripped, fell, sprawled. From the pursuit came exclamations of victory, but the quarry was up again and running. A scream of fear rang through the night.

"By the eternal! It's a woman!" Dan growled.

He sprang out into the moonlight with a bellow of rage. Six men trying to run down a woman like dogs a deer was something Dan O'Dowd could not stomach.

Past him darted a girl whose labored breathing he could hear, whose frightened wide eyes gleamed fearfully an instant in the moonlight. Just beyond him, she tripped and fell again, and crouched exhausted against the wall.

Dan with a roar of challenge rushed to meet the enemy with ready fists that thudded sickeningly into human faces.

and fled, howling for help against the murderous Yanqui. Dan had been fortunate that his antagonists were not good fighting men. Peon scum and tavern loungers, he thought.

HE PICKED up his coonskin cap and put it on. The cut on his forearm amounted to nothing, he found. A whimper sounded at his side. The girl had left the darkness by the wall to approach him timidly.

"You saved me, señor," she whimpered, and covered his hand with tears and kisses.

"None of that's necessary," Dan told her, drawing his hand away. "You're safe now. Better run along."

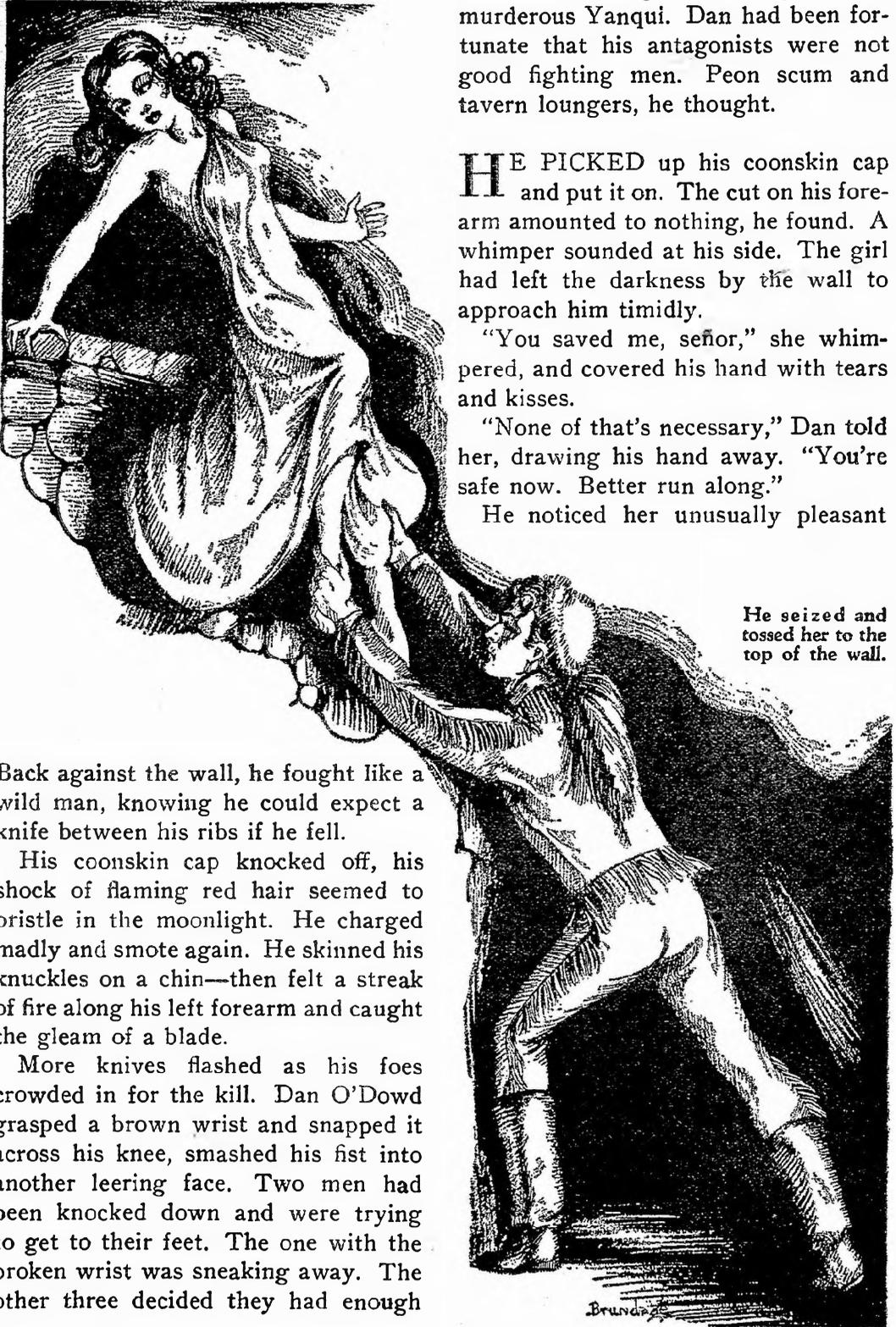
He noticed her unusually pleasant

He seized and tossed her to the top of the wall.

Back against the wall, he fought like a wild man, knowing he could expect a knife between his ribs if he fell.

His coonskin cap knocked off, his shock of flaming red hair seemed to bristle in the moonlight. He charged madly and smote again. He skinned his knuckles on a chin—then felt a streak of fire along his left forearm and caught the gleam of a blade.

More knives flashed as his foes crowded in for the kill. Dan O'Dowd grasped a brown wrist and snapped it across his knee, smashed his fist into another leering face. Two men had been knocked down and were trying to get to their feet. The one with the broken wrist was sneaking away. The other three decided they had enough



voice, low and rich and throaty. She lifted a pretty face in the moonlight. A gracefully slender form was draped with a single inadequate garment. Her wrists were without ornaments, and her feet and legs bare. A halfbreed, Dan judged.

"I am Anita, and my father's name is Juan," she said. "We will be your slaves for what you have done tonight."

"Who were those men, and why were they after you?" O'Dowd asked.

"I think they were sent by another to steal me, Yanqui. I escaped them once, but they ran after me again. I heard one mention Señor Carlos Martinez."

"You mean the rich trader?"

"*Sí, señor!* Several times I have noticed him watching me in the market place where I work, and have tried to avoid him. I've heard he is an evil man, though handsome and rich."

O'Dowd looked at her skeptically. Most girls of her sort were eager to attract the attention of a man rich and handsome. But this girl seemed sincere in what she said.

"Carlos Martinez is scum, and you'll do well to keep out of his sight," he told the girl.

Here was a mess. Martinez, noted for his hatred of all Yanquis because they had cut into his monopoly of trade, probably would desire a terrible revenge on the man who had prevented his hirelings from stealing the girl.

"Get along to your hut," O'Dowd told her. "Don't be runnin' around the streets nights and makin' honest men fight your battles. Get to your home before there's more trouble."

But at that instant more trouble came,—from both ends of the street, and Dan found himself in a trap.

On either side was a high wall with

a house behind it, neither to be scaled readily. Into the upper end of the street rushed men howling threats against all Yanquis. Into the lower end came one of his recent antagonists making loud complaint, and with him some of the *alcalde's* civil guards.

The girl began whimpering again. O'Dowd bade her be still. He seized and tossed her to the top of the wall, where she could stretch out in the darkness and not be seen.

Then he turned to the fray. He decided it would be wisest to attack the *alcalde's* guards and try to win through. Keeping to the darkness as much as possible, he charged at them. A blow from a hickory club missed his head by scant inches, but struck his left shoulder and numbed it. He whipped out his knife and slashed. He knew defeat meant either a violent death in the street, or incarceration in the *carcel*, and punishment after a mockery of a trial, but in no case justice.

The eyes of the guards glittered in the moonlight, their dark forms danced around in front of him as they prepared for another rush.

"Come on, scum!" O'Dowd howled.

They came, to crash against and overwhelm him. His knife was torn from his grasp. A club cracked against the back of his head. He reeled as a cascade of red flashes darted before his eyes. He sank into oblivion so swiftly that he scarcely felt the second blow, which stretched him senseless on the ground.

CHAPTER II

WHEN O'Dowd opened his eyes, it was to darkness relieved only by a faint streak of yellowish light which

came from a distance. Pains shot through his head and down into his neck. His shoulder ached and he was tortured by thirst.

He sat up with difficulty, his senses swimming. He realized he had been sprawled on cold, damp stone. Pressing against the wall, he got on his feet, reeled and almost fell, had a moment of nausea, then gathered strength and managed to stand erect.

Leaning against the slimy masonry, he focused his eyes on the distant gleam of yellowish light. Between he could see bars.

So he was in the *carcel*. The *alcalde's* guards had not knifed a Yanqui when they had a chance. O'Dowd did not like the situation, perhaps he had been spared for something worse. Perhaps against a wall at sunrise. . . .

The yellowish light outside the door grew stronger, and he heard voices and the thump of boots on the hard floor. A ragged peon appeared in the corridor, holding aloft a reeking torch.

"Fetch water, you!" O'Dowd barked at him. "Decent water to drink. Some white whisky, if you can get it. I'll pay well."

At the peon's sarcastic grin, he realized he could pay nothing. His clothing was torn and disarranged from more than fighting, the tail of his buckskin shirt flapped outside his pants. His money belt was gone.

"Come closer," he said to the peon.

But the peon remained where he stood, and spat at him. O'Dowd frowned alike at the indignity and the significance of the act. The peon evidently had no fear that this Yanqui prisoner ever could punish him for the insult.

"When I get my hands on you—!" O'Dowd threatened.

"But you'll never get hands on me, señor," the peon said.

"You expect to have the fun of watchin' the firin' squad do their work at sunrise?"

"Not so, Yanqui. I have heard Don Marcos Vega, the *alcalde*, whose servant I am, say it accomplishes nothing to shoot Yanquis. They grin when they face the squad, and take their silly pride with them to hell, and that makes them heroes to other men. But no man is a hero when he is whipped."

"Whipped?" Dan roared.

"The lash breaks the spirit of the strongest. The guards could have slain you, but had orders to take Yanquis alive. There will be a special *fiesta*, and you will be tied to a post in the market place, with your back bared for the lash. Peons are to whip you while the people watch, and no man can be a hero when that happens to him."

O'DOWD, close to the barred door, saw a robed Franciscan approaching down the corridor, the arrogant Don Marcos Vega beside him and two armed guards behind.

Don Marcos glared through the bars. "Accursed Yanqui—"

O'Dowd promptly interrupted. He had learned long before that a sloop can be slowed by taking the wind out of its sails.

"What's the meanin' of this outrage?" he demanded. "You rule here in Santa Fé, I understand, Don Marcos Vega, so I'm holdin' you responsible."

Don Marcos was taken aback. He never could understand these Yanquis, who seemed to have no awe of those in high places.

"Outrage? You hold me responsible—*you?*" Don Marcos blustered. "The effrontery!"

"I was attacked in the street and had to fight for my life," O'Dowd said. "Your guards smashed me and tossed me in here. Now, I suppose you've come to tell me that I've robbed and murdered somebody and am goin' to be shot for it. If that's it, Don Marcos Vega, make your speech short and rid me of your presence. There's stench enough here already."

"Silence!" Don Marcos thundered. His face was aflame, and his voice echoed down the corridor and frightened the rats. But he fought back his rage and stepped nearer the door, his manner judicial. "You were incarcerated for brawling in the street—"

"Self defense," O'Dowd interrupted.

"—and, in the fighting, some of my guards were knifed. Before that, I understand, you were in another brawl—"

"Six men were tryin' to run down a girl—"

"That the brawl was about a wench only makes your offense more reprehensible. Are wenches so scarce in Santa Fé that men must fight over one? I have decreed that all Yanqui brawlers be flogged publicly. Just now you may escape the flogging you deserve and have pardon and freedom—in return for a service."

"It's probably somethin' too dirty for your own guards to handle," O'Dowd said.

"Will you be silent?" Don Marcos bellowed. "It is a waste of time for me to talk to you. Possibly you'll be courteous enough to listen to the *fray* here."

He glared, then turned and stalked away haughtily. The guards remained, bodies stiff and faces inscrutable.

THE *fray* raised his head, took the torch from the peon's hand to hold

it himself, and motioned him to retire out of earshot.

"Now, my son, we can talk," he said. "I happen to know your name and reputation, and can guess at the sad state of your soul. I am Fray Sebastiano."

Leaning against the bars, O'Dowd looked with genuine interest at the tall and lanky form. The worn, clinging robe could not conceal that his body was terribly emaciated. His face was grayish and cadaverous, with hollow cheeks and deep-set burning eyes. In age he was more than sixty, but retained surprising strength and agility.

Fray Sebastiano stepped closer and spoke in low tones.

"Fear nothing, my son. Your defense of that poor girl was witnessed, also the fighting which followed. A certain man of influence has sent a request to the *alcalde* that you be spared punishment and given freedom for a certain purpose."

"What purpose?" O'Dowd asked.

"That is not for me to tell you. I am here to take you to another, who'll explain. The service is of the proper sort, else I'd not be concerned in it. You will do well to agree immediately without asking questions."

"I agree," Dan said.

Fray Sebastiano beckoned one of the guards, and the door of the cell was opened. O'Dowd stepped into the corridor. Beside the *fray*, he walked along the corridor and up a flight of steps, to the private quarters of the *alcalde*.

"Go into the room adjoining," Don Marcos said. "Clean the blood from your hands and face and doctor your bruises. Try to make yourself presentable for decent company."

Dan bathed his head in cool water and drank deeply, doctoring his bruises and removing the stains of battle as

well as he could. Back in the other room again, he was startled when Don Marcos returned his money belt with the contents intact, and also his knife.

"Now, señor, you are free to leave with Fray Sebastiano," Don Marcos said. "You may consider yourself fortunate. If you become my official guest again—!" He concluded the speech with an eloquent wave of his hand.

THEN Dan found himself out in the fresh air with Fray Sebastiano. They plodded along in the moonlight. Loud talk and roaring laughter came down wind from the pack train yard, where O'Dowd's comrades drank and sang wild songs. There was a din in the distant plaza, thronged now with a motley collection of Yanquis and Mexicans, Indians and breeds, where almost every glance was an invitation to trouble.

Men were bawling down by the big public corral, over which hung a pall of dust day and night, churned up by countless hoofs of horses and mules, and where horse traders were always busy.

Fray Sebastiano said nothing of their destination or purpose, and O'Dowd began to wonder. Some powerful influence must have worked on Don Marcos Vega, he knew, to compel him to release a Yanqui prisoner and return what had been taken from him.

"Where are we headin' for?" he asked, as they turned into a narrow street and carefully walked as far as possible from the shadows along the walls.

"We go to the *casa* of Don Pedro Estrada."

"What?" Dan was surprised. Don Pedro Estrada was a wealthy and aristocratic *hidalgo*, the cream of the cream.

"Your fight occurred outside the wall of his house, and with me Don Pedro witnessed it," Fray Sebastiano explained. "We expected to see you killed. The girl got away safely."

"What does Don Pedro want with me?" O'Dowd asked.

"He will explain that himself. You will do well to accept whatever commission he offers you, for it will occupy your time in good work—of which you probably do little—and also be profitable."

They walked on in silence for a time.

"We're bein' followed," Dan suddenly said, in a low voice. "There's been a shadow dodgin' around behind us for some time."

"That's to be expected, my son. Some persons have a huge amount of curiosity," Fray Sebastiano replied.

CHAPTER III

AT THE patio gate of Don Pedro Estrada's *casa*, Fray Sebastiano signaled with the heavy knocker. A small aperture opened, an eye gleamed at them, and they were admitted.

They entered a moon-drenched patio where flowers bloomed and water trickled from a fountain. Here was a different world, one of wealth and station. Dan had heard that the rich furnishings of the Estrada house had been brought from Old Spain and up through Mexico at enormous expense.

Santa Fé, the raw frontier community, seemed a strange place for a wealthy *hidalgo* like Don Pedro Estrada, among few of his own kind. He had come there years before with a young wife and infant daughter. A widower now, he still had his daughter, Glorietta, a gorgeous beauty seldom seen in public.

Fray Sebastiano led the way along a curving walk and across the patio, to a side door of the house. Don Pedro Estrada greeted them—a tall, dignified man with silvery hair reaching almost to his shoulders. His erect body and flashing eyes conveyed a consciousness of authority, and his voice was startling in its resonance.

Don Pedro motioned for them to be seated, summoned a servant to fetch wine, and waited until they were sipping it before he broached the business on his mind.

"I witnessed the street brawl," he said, finally. "Allow me to commend you, señor, on your gallant protection of womanhood. I wish to engage you to continue in that protection."

Dan glanced at him with interest but not understanding.

"The task I have in mind may prove simple, or may be fraught with danger," Don Pedro continued. "If there is danger, it may come from the direction of Señor Carlos Martinez, the trader. You know the man?"

"By sight," O'Dowd replied.

"He has amassed a fortune in trade, though I fear by means not always scrupulous. I have heard it said that Carlos Martinez is a combination of coyote and buzzard."

"What's the work you want of me, Don Pedro?" Dan asked.

"I want you to guard and protect the girl you saved from annoyance to-night; see that no harm comes to her. I want you to do it without the girl or anybody else knowing I'm concerned in the affair. Find her, watch over her."

"You want me to be a guardian angel," Dan said, grinning. "Maybe guardian devil would be a better name for me."

Don Pedro smiled. "As you like, as long as you're a true guardian."

Dan was puzzled and suspicious. "I'd think a word to the *alcalde* should be enough. He could have the girl protected."

"I do not wish the *alcalde* concerned in this. It is a personal matter, and one does not tell a man like Don Marcos Vega everything. I merely informed him that I want you to do some special work for me, and that his guards are not to molest you while you're doing it."

"That'll be a blessing."

"But neither will the guards assist you if you get into difficulties. You stand on your own feet, señor. I cannot explain further than this—certain things regarding the girl have not been decided, and until they are I feel it my responsibility to see she is protected."

"That's enough for me, Don Pedro."

"And do you engage to do this for me?"

Dan nodded assent.

"Thank you, señor. Your pay will be liberal, in addition to my thanks. If you ever wish to confer with me, come to the patio gate either by day or night, make the signal which Fray Sebastiano will explain to you, and you'll be admitted. Now, food is spread for you in the patio. Fray Sebastiano will conduct you there. Pardon me if I leave you now, for it is long past my time for retiring. *Buenas noches, señores!*"

DON PEDRO bowed and retired. Fray Sebastiano, his manner eager, beckoned Dan to follow him to the patio, where a table had been placed beneath one of the torches fastened to the wall, a table heaped with food.

They ate, Fray Sebastiano greedily, tearing a roast fowl apart with his fingers and gulping chunks of the choice

meat, washing them down with Don Pedro's excellent wine.

"I don't understand this business," O'Dowd said.

"You understand enough, my son. You have your instructions, and they are clear—guard the girl."

"I don't know anything about her except she said her name is Anita and her father's Juan, and that she works in the market place. There are thousands of Anitas—"

"Your interest must be in only one," Fray Sebastiano interrupted. "Search and find her. You were saved from *carcel* and punishment, and given this employment, because you are supposed to be a man of resource and daring."

"Women and trouble!" O'Dowd growled. "They always travel together. But that's no worry of mine. I'd never let any woman get my interest stirred up."

There was an immediate answer to that—a burst of silvery laughter came ringing across the patio. Startled, the two at the table turned their heads, eyes bulging and mouths agape.

She had come down the steps from the balcony and along the walk past the fountain—a vision of loveliness with her proud head uplifted, eyes sparkling, dark hair dressed becomingly with a high comb studded with gems, over which was draped a mantilla of priceless lace.

A few steps behind her an elderly *dueña*, clucking in futile protest like an angry old hen, waddled along looking like a tormented soul.

Fray Sebastiano, his eyes aglitter with interest, was upon his feet instantly, and Dan stood beside him. She stopped a short distance from them, so that the light of the torch fell directly on her.

Fray Sebastiano bowed, and his face softened as he spoke:

"So we have the unusual privilege of beholding the radiance of the sun at night," he said. He turned to Dan. "Señorita Glorietta Estrada."

"And the señor—?" she asked.

"Señor Dan O'Dowd," the *fray* replied.

"I greet you, señor, and make you welcome in my father's house. So you are a Yanqui? But surely there is some mistake. I've heard Yanquis have horns, but I see none on your head, and that they drink blood, but wine seems to suffice you."

"I've heard some yarns too, señorita, regardin' the beauty of some women of your race," Dan replied. "But they weren't exaggerated."

"That is a pretty speech, for a Yanqui."

FRAY SEBASTIANO cleared his throat, thinking it time to interrupt this sort of thing. The *dueña* was frowning.

"We were about to depart," the *fray* said. He crossed his fingers behind his back because he lied, for he had intended remaining as long as food and drink were on the table.

"Am I so hideous that I frighten you away?" she asked. "I wish to speak to the Yanqui with the flaming hair. I would ask him about his journey here and the lands he has crossed, for it is said we should acquire knowledge when we have the opportunity."

"Señorita!" the *dueña* exclaimed.

"And I would speak with him alone, though within your sight," the girl continued, tossing her head in a show of temper and scolding the *dueña* with a glance. "Walk with me to the fountain and back, Señor O'Dowd."

Dan had been looking straight at her, watching her in the flickering light from the torch and listening to her intently. He was startled, though he refrained from showing it. As the others stood back, he bowed and went forward to walk at her side. He got a still better look at her in the light from the torch, and felt his first suspicion confirmed.

"Let us walk in this direction, señor," she said, taking the path which ran beside the rose bed. "Isn't the fountain beautiful as the water dances in the moonlight?"

That rich, throaty voice! And this was Señorita Glorietta Estrada, the beauty of Santa Fé and proud daughter of a Don!

But she was also, Dan felt sure, the girl he had rescued that night from the ruffians out in the street.

CHAPTER IV

SO THAT was the mystery. That was why Don Pedro Estrada had engaged a Yanqui to act as protector. Perhaps this wild girl had the bad habit of outwitting her *dueña*, escaping the house and going out to seek adventure, and Don Pedro was afraid ill might befall her.

But this girl who walked beside him across the patio was like a queen conscious of her proper station, not the ragged girl who had crouched in the dust and covered his hand with kisses and tears.

"You're mighty pretty, señorita, the way you're dressed now," Dan complimented. He wanted to drop a hint that he understood the situation, give her a chance to say something about her masquerade earlier in the evening,

thinking that was why she had asked him to walk aside with her.

"As I am dressed now? Have you perhaps seen me in dress less becoming, señor?" she asked.

She put her hand down to pick a rose, and O'Dowd made a quick movement to pluck it for her. Their hands touched, and she drew in her breath sharply and pulled hers away.

"You weren't afraid to have your hand touch mine earlier in the night," he whispered.

"I do not understand, señor."

"Don't you remember clutchin' my hand and coverin' it with kisses, and sayin' you'd be my slave forever?"

She looked at him swiftly. "I've heard all Yanquis are insane, and now I can know it for truth."

"If there's anything you want forgotten, señorita, it's forgotten."

"That sounds like a pretty speech, señor, but I fail to understand you. Your manner and words are peculiar. I'm not quite sure that I like you, señor. I had hoped for an interesting talk about your adventures, but I am not interested in riddles."

Dan saw she was angry. He believed it was because she did not want him to recognize, except in his mind, that she had been the girl of the night's escapade.

"I'm beggin' your pardon, señorita," he said. "I'd like to ask, though, if you know a girl named Anita whose father is named Juan. And do you know of any interest Carlos Martinez might have in her?"

That ordinary question had an astounding effect. She tossed her head angrily, and her eyes flamed at him in the moonlight. Her hands clenched.

"Mention of that man's name is an affront to me, señor, though you may

not know it," she said. "I care not in what girl he is interested, so that I am not the girl. Why did you mention the beast? You have displeased me very much. Let us say '*buenas noches*' here and now."

Dan would have spoken again, asking in what manner he had offended, but she called her *dueña* and turned from him. He stood there dumfounded as she swept toward the stairs which led to the balcony. The *dueña* lumbered after her.

LEFT alone, O'Dowd rejoined Fray Sebastiano. They finished eating, then walked to the patio gate.

"The señorita always amuses me," Fray Sebastiano said. "She rules everybody, her proud father included."

"A madcap señorita?" Dan hinted.

"High spirits which bubble over at times. It gives her an added charm. She's a rare flower to grow in such a desert. She meets few in her own station in life, and no doubt is lonesome."

"I can understand that, a girl full of high spirits and lonesome—she might kick over the traces."

"We are discussing a lady, not a mule," Fray Sebastiano rebuked.

"Oh, she'll get married some day and settle down."

Fray Sebastiano chuckled. "Carlos Martinez, the poor fool, once asked Don Pedro for permission to pay his devotions, and his ears probably burn yet because of what Don Pedro replied to him. His interest was an affront. Carlos Martinez—part Indian and wholly a thief!"

So that was why the señorita had flared up at mere mention of Carlos Martinez!

They came to the gate, and the peon servant on watch let them into the

street after Fray Sebastiano had explained the knocker signal.

At some distance from the plaza, the *fray* left Dan to go in a different direction. Dan walked on, tired and sore from the fighting, eager to get to the pack train yard and crawl into his buffalo robes.

Probably, he thought, the señorita was a madcap who liked to kick over the traces at times like an ornery mule. She slipped out of the house and mixed with all sorts of people for a lark. But she was likely to run into danger, and her father worried.

He understood Don Pedro's reticence. Naturally, he would not want to mention his daughter, so he had directed him to find and watch the girl in whose defense he had fought that night.

O'DOWD'S head jerked up and his hand dropped to the hilt of his knife as he sensed danger. A short distance ahead, a man had appeared in the narrow street, out in the bright moonlight where he could be seen plainly.

"A sombrero!" Dan grunted. He walked on, alert and on guard. The man ahead took a step forward and bowed.

"Pardon me, but are you not Señor O'Dowd?" he asked.

"I am. Why?"

"I have been searching for you, señor, hence this is a fortunate meeting for me. I have a word for you."

"From whom and about what?"

"From Señor Carlos Martinez."

Dan was surprised. He had not expected to hear from Martinez so soon. The rogue must have learned how some of his men had been battered and the girl rescued.

"What's the word?" he asked.

"Carlos Martinez does you the honor to desire to see you immediately at his house. I'll conduct you to him."

"I'm on my way to bed, and don't intend to go anywhere else. Martinez hasn't any business with me tonight or at any other time."

"You do not seem to understand, señor. Carlos Martinez orders you to come to him at once."

"Orders me?" Dan barked. "I don't take orders from Martinez, and you can go back and tell him so."

"I have instructions not to return without you, señor."

"Here's once you don't obey orders, then."

The man sprang backward and lifted an arm in signal. From the deep shadows along the walls on either side men swarmed upon them.

Before Dan could whip out his knife, ropes were cast, loops fell true and were jerked taut, and he was yanked to the ground. His legs were bound and his arms lashed to his sides despite his struggle.

"Now, señor," said the man who had stopped him in the street, "we'll go to the *casa* of Carlos Martinez."

CHAPTER V

DAN was gagged with a strip of dirty cloth, then carried like a log along the deserted street. He seethed with rage at being taken so easily. There was peril ahead, no doubt. He supposed Martinez would seek revenge because of the affair earlier in the night.

His captors carried him swiftly to Martinez' *casa*, into a patio and across it, up the broad stairs to a spacious chamber where candles burned in heavy can-

delabra of silver gleaming with semi-precious stones.

He was dumped on the floor, and his captors stood round waiting. He could not see Martinez, but he heard the rogue.

"Unbind him!" Martinez thundered. "Is a Yanqui so terrible that you must tie him?"

The gag was removed, the ropes taken off, and O'Dowd put upon his feet. He marveled that his knife had not been taken away, and that he had not been robbed of his money a second time that night.

Martinez sat in a huge carved chair, wearing an embroidered robe of fine silk, sandals on his feet, and holding a lace handkerchief to his nostrils in pretense of gentility.

About forty, he was tall and broad-shouldered for a man of his race. He bent forward and his eyes glittered as he looked at O'Dowd.

"I regret it, señor, if you were roughly handled," he said. "But it is necessary for me to have a talk with you, and you would not come willingly."

"Now that I'm here, what do you want with me?" Dan growled.

Martinez gestured, and all but one man withdrew. The bodyguard leaned against the door with gun held ready. Martinez motioned again for Dan to seat himself.

"I know everything that has happened to you tonight, señor," Martinez said. "I know how you battered men in a brawl. Some were friends of mine."

"You mean the *alcalde's* guards?" Dan asked.

Martinez grinned. "Scarcely, señor. If you know the gossip of Santa Fé, you know the *alcalde* and I are not love birds together. I refer to your first brawl."



"I regret it, señor, if you were roughly handled, but it is necessary for me to have a talk with you, and you would not come willingly."

"Oh! I saw some men tryin' to run down a girl—"

"And why not, señor, if it amused them? Are you a robed Franciscan that you preach morals and protect the weak? To be frank with you, señor, I sent those men to find the girl and bring her to me, and you ruined some of my plans."

"I guessed that much."

"Possibly I'm not attracted to the girl in the way you imagine. The fact remains that you battered some friends of mine. But I am willing to overlook that—if the scum can't care for themselves, they deserve to be battered. I'm attracted to you, señor, because you are a fighting man. I'm not a bad man to have for a friend."

O'Dowd bowed mockingly.

"I know you were arrested and that Don Marcos Vega was compelled to release you at the order of Don Pedro Estrada. I know Fray Sebastiano took you to the Estrada house, and that you remained there for some time."

YOU seem to know everything." "I have excellent spies, but I don't know everything. I don't know, for instance, what business Don Pedro had with you. That is what you are going to tell me."

"What makes you think I'll tell you?"

"You look like a sensible man, señor. I pay well for information, and Yanquis love money."

"Maybe Don Pedro only wanted to meet a good fightin' man."

"Don't play at words with me, Yanqui! If I give a signal, you are a dead man. But it is your friendship I want. I can find a place in my organization for a man like you."

"I've already got a job," O'Dowd said.

"Whatever it is, I'll give you more pleasant work and double the pay."

"I've already hired out to Don Pedro."

"Don Pedro!" Martinez' eyes blazed. "Am I always to encounter the man? I hate his name! I have as much money as he, perhaps more. And what if my ancestors were not of blood and rank? Am I any less the man? Don Pedro Estrada! Before I'm done—"

Martinez seemed about to choke. He fought to regain control of himself, and became crafty again.

"Why not be sensible, señor," he asked. "Join with me, and work with much profit to yourself."

"I've already hired to work for Don Pedro and take his gold."

Martinez grinned. "Take Don Pedro's gold, señor, but take mine also." He tossed a small pouch of soft leather on the table. "Let Don Pedro believe you are working for him, but in reality work for me."

"Maybe you can't understand, Martinez, but some men are loyal to their employers and don't take pay from both sides."

Martinez' face grew dark. "You speak boldly when you are in my house and in my power."

"In your house, but maybe not in your power. I've got plenty of friends. If I'm not back at the pack train yard soon, they'll start lookin' for me."

"They'll not know where to look, señor. They don't know what became of you. If they learn you were arrested, released, and taken to see Don Pedro, they'll think you are safe in his house."

"Fray Francisco—"

"Separated from you in the street

and doesn't know what became of you afterward. I am well informed, señor. Why not take my gold and work for me?"

"If I broke faith with Don Pedro tonight, wouldn't you be afraid I'd break faith with you tomorrow?"

"I have ways of having men watched, and unpleasant ways of punishing those who betray me," Martinez said. "You've told me Don Pedro engaged you. To do what?"

"Afraid I can't tell you that."

Martinez straightened in his chair. "Perhaps, señor, we can pry the secret out of you," he said.

HERE was a hint of possible torture. O'Dowd knew he was at the mercy of this man, known for his brutality. He had his knife, and Martinez was within striking distance, but the man at the door held a gun and would shoot at the first hostile move. Even if he could reach Martinez with the knife, he would pay for the attack with his life.

And he had more than the man at the door to cope with. Plenty of Martinez' ruffians were within call. And Martinez himself had to be considered. He wore a silk robe and toyed with a handkerchief, but he had fought from boyhood, and wealth had not made a weakling of him.

"So you think you could pry the secret out of me? Maybe what I know isn't worth the trouble. Suppose it's somethin' that's nothin' of your concern?"

"Anything which concerns Don Pedro concerns me. He is my enemy, personally and politically."

"Politically?" Dan showed surprise.

"Who rules in Santa Fé at present? Don Marcos Vega. But he is only a

figurehead. Who is the real *jefe politico*? Who pulls the strings and makes Don Marcos jump? Don Pedro Estrada!"

"I don't know anything about politics here, and don't care a cuss about 'em."

"Do you know what is coming? Revolution! They have some sort of republic in Mexico now. But those in power down there have forgotten New Spain and Santa Fé. We are too far away, and they have troubles enough at home. They let us run ourselves up here. This is a land in itself. It could be made a great empire."

"With you for emperor?"

"Why not, señor? I am a fighter, have wealth, and know how to handle men. Why should I not seek power? I have been making plans, gathering good men. That is what I mean, señor, when I say you will do well to have me for a friend."

"I'm a Yanqui. No place for me in your empire."

"Why not? Yanquis are strong in many things. This country needs trade with them. I can start an empire. Mexico has all she can do with her internal troubles and Texas. Now is the time to strike. A swift move, a bold stroke, Don Marcos and his friends deposed—! And you dare stand in my way? I want a direct answer from you. Don Pedro engaged you to work as a spy, did he not?"

O'Dowd's eyes widened. "He did not. So that's what you've been thinkin' and got so worked up about."

"What did he engage you to do, then?"

"I promised not to tell. It has nothin' to do with politics."

Martinez took a gulp of wine from a mug on the table and got up.

"I must show you my house," he

said. "You are too sensible, I'm sure, to drive your knife into my back if I turn it on you."

Deliberately, he turned and stalked toward the door, and Dan followed, wondering what this sudden change in manner meant.

CHAPTER VI

THEY went along a corridor and down the stairs to the lower floor. Martinez stopped before a heavy door at which one of his men was standing. From beyond came the voices and laughter of women.

"I'll give you a glimpse of paradise, señor," Martinez said.

Within the air was drenched with perfume. Thick rugs covered the floor, and tapestries hung on the walls. O'Dowd saw a score of women— young, shapely, pretty, dressed in gauzy gowns through which their bodies could be seen, their arms loaded with bracelets, and jewels gleaming in their hair.

"My pets, señor," Martinez said.

He lifted his hand, and the women crowded forward, laughing and chattering, inspecting O'Dowd. Some were Indians, some breeds, and a few appeared to have even better blood in their veins.

"I like women around me," Martinez said. "They fill my lighter moments. I like to hear them laugh—"

A queer cackle interrupted him.

"Who is that?" he demanded.

"It is Señora Fate," one of the women answered.

She came from the shadows, a bent old hag with thin hair stringing down her face, walking with the aid of a crooked cane and looking like an old witch. As she hobbled toward Marti-

nez, she cackled her heathenish laughter again.

"Carlos Martinez, would you look into the future?" she asked.

"I make my own future."

"Perhaps you are afraid."

"I'm afraid of nothing, crone. What can you tell me that isn't a lie?"

"I speak truth, Carlos Martinez. The man who seeks to climb must beware a slippery path. If he does not climb alone, he must be careful who climbs with him. Beware your interest in a woman."

Martinez laughed. "You'll get yourself hated by talking like that here."

"I mean none of these women, Carlos Martinez. There are other things, also, of which you must beware. To hesitate means ruin, and to strike too quickly means ruin also. I see failure and disgrace ahead for you if you do not use care."

"Enough! I'll have you whipped—"

"You fear to touch me, Carlos Martinez. Your heart quakes when I am near. You want me for a friend."

O'Dowd saw Martinez shudder, and remembered hearing that he was rankly superstitious. Then he noticed that Señora Fate had turned to him.

"I see many things ahead for you, young señor," she said. "If you wish, you can be a king. A beautiful woman—"

"Same old story!" Dan interrupted, laughing.

Martinez had turned aside with the women. Señora Fate lurched close to O'Dowd and pretended to examine his palm.

"Use care señor, when you leave the house," she whispered. "Men are watching for you in every street. If you do not do as Martinez wishes, you are to die. You will not be slain in the

house—but in the street so no blame will be his.”

“Thanks for the fortune, señora,” Dan said aloud. In a whisper, he added: “Why do you warn me?”

She had no chance to reply. Martinez turned back and waved her away.

“You have seen my paradise, señor; come now, and I’ll show you my hell.”

THEY returned to the corridor and down a flight of steps into a narrow passage, cold and damp, and lit only by reeking torches.

Ahead of them, a man waited beside a door, from beyond which came the groans and curses of men in pain.

“How is it, Miguel?” Martinez asked.

“The same, *jefe*.”

“None have died?”

“They linger on, *jefe*.” The man grinned.

The door was opened, and the body-guard followed them inside. This was a room of torture, damp and filthy. Torches gave a fitful light.

The wreck of a once powerful man, his cheeks hollow, eyes deep-set and burning, cursed from his shackles against the wall.

“The man stole from me,” Martinez laughed. “He howls curses every time I visit, hoping I’ll become angry and put him out of his misery.”

Three other men were chained to the wall. One was unconscious and the others moaned continually.

“Two are thieves, and the third spat at me,” Martinez said. “Over here is something interesting.”

“A woman!” O’Dowd exclaimed.

“A woman—*sí*. She was in my paradise. A pretty little thing when I found her in rags and gave her fine dresses, good food, jewels. And she tried to poison me for it.”

Dan saw that she, too, was chained to the wall. Her face was thin and haggard now, but it had been lovely once. She was little more than a girl.

“Help me, Yanqui,” she begged, as she lifted her head.

Dan could only turn away as Martinez laughed again.

“What happens to these?” he asked him.

“They are fed and watered. At their appointed time, they die, naturally. I cannot help it. And they have their amusements—watching what happens to the others brought to this room.”

“If the *alcalde* knew this—”

“Ha! Don Marcos Vega would do nothing, unless I happened to have one of his friends here. You see, señor, he has such a room of his own. Let us go, señor.”

DAN drew a thankful breath when they were again in the wide corridor above. Martinez took him to a room off the patio and motioned him to a seat.

“You have seen part of my house, señor,” Martinez said. “Some of it is pleasant, and some is not. But a man of my position must take care of his enemies as well as his friends.”

“Why do you show me?” O’Dowd asked.

“So you will understand the two extremes—of which you must select one. If you please me—paradise. If you do not— But let us return, señor, to the original question. What is it Don Pedro engaged you to do?”

“I’m not sayin’.”

“Is it not possible for you to attend to the matter for Don Pedro and also work for me?”

“You want me to be a spy?”

“I want you to make the other Yan-



Dan saw that she, too,
was chained to the wall.

quis see it would benefit them to be friendly toward me and my plans. If there is trouble, they are to keep out of it, unless they fight for me. When it is over, I'll make them generous concessions in trade."

"I'm not a blind fool," O'Dowd said. "You've told me a lot, and I've seen a lot. If you don't turn me loose, I can't work for you, but I know too much to be turned loose, so what's your game?"

Martinez smiled. "You mistake me, señor. I expect you to go your way. It could not be otherwise, as you remark. But tell me a thing first—what did Don Pedro engage you to do?"

CHAPTER VII

HE reached for a wine mug. "Has it occurred to you, señor, that Don Pedro may be playing a double game on you? Perhaps having you pull his chestnuts out of the fire, as the old legend has it? The girl for whom you fought tonight—perhaps you do not know everything concerning her."

"I never saw her until the fightin'. We're just wastin' time talkin', Martinez, and I want to get back to the pack train yard and to bed. Are you goin' to let me go, or keep me here and slaughter me?"

"You are to leave my house freely, señor."

Martinez arose and gestured to his bodyguard, and O'Dowd got up and followed him out across the patio toward the gate in the outer wall.

"Whatever happens, it has been a pleasure to have you here, señor," Martinez said. "I regret we cannot be associates. You are a splendid fighting man, and loyal. I am a man who admires loyalty, though sometimes I buy it."

Old Señora Fate came from the shad-

ows and plucked at Dan's sleeve.

"Give me a coin for luck, Yanqui," she begged.

He laughed and fumbled beneath his buckskin shirt for a coin. The old woman bent toward him as Martinez walked on.

"The girl you saw in the torture room is my granddaughter. Save her if you can," she whispered.

"Here's your coin," O'Dowd said aloud, as he gave her a look of understanding, and she hobbled away muttering her thanks.

"For the last time, señor—what is it to be?" Martinez asked.

"It's the same answer, Martinez."

"I regret you'll not join with me, but it is for every man to make his own decisions. Allow me to escort you personally to the gate."

Dan understood how Martinez was protecting himself. He would stand at the gate and bid him a cordial good-night, and the men lounging about the gate would testify later that he had done so, that the Yanqui had left the house unharmed.

He would send him away with every street watched by his cutthroats and every avenue of escape blocked. And when he was some distance from the house, Death would strike.

He would be found by somebody when daylight came, with his knife still on him or on the ground beside him as if he had died fighting. And it would appear that another Yanqui had engaged in a brawl and had received the worst of it, and no blame would be attached to Carlos Martinez.

THE heavy gate swung open, and Martinez stood in it beneath a flaming torch, the wind whipping his silk robe about him. Two men were talk-



"Help me, Yanqui," she begged.

ing out in the street, the planted witnesses. The bodyguard leaned against the wall, his vigilance relaxed. He did not expect the Yanqui to attack Martinez now, when he was being allowed to depart.

"*Buenas noches, señor?*" Martinez said loudly. "I hope to have the pleasure of talking with you again."

Dan made a swift move. Before the bodyguard realized what was happening, Martinez had been thrust back against the wall, and a knife was at his breast, pressing into his silk robe so he could feel the point pricking his skin.

"If your man shoots, you die," Dan said. "You'll walk along with me, Martinez. If any of your men attack me, it means the end for you."

Martinez gasped, and his eyes blazed at the effrontery of it. He had a score of his ruffians within call, yet this was happening to him. He knew he was in deadly peril, that the knife could take his life instantly.

"Miguel!" he snapped at the bodyguard. "You understand? Make no move, or I die. Walk a short distance ahead and explain. An attempt at rescue would imperil me. I can have revenge for this later."

The bodyguard went ahead. Dan grasped Martinez' arm and made him go forward, keeping the point of the knife against the rogue's back, as they walked through the bright moonlight in full view.

"I compliment you on your cleverness, señor," Martinez said, "and at the same time promise to make you pay for this. Swift death would be too kind and merciful."

"I only want to get home safe," Dan replied. "I'm not runnin' the risk of havin' your men murder me along the way."

They strode on. Martinez' men, trailing and watching, dared make no move. The bodyguard glanced back frequently, then resumed his marching, unable to aid his master.

The pack train yard was off to one side of the congested section of the town. There the wagons had been set in a double row. A trading post, and a huge adobe warehouse—now empty—where *bailes* were held, flanked the adobe huts and larger buildings in which the Yanquis made their homes.

There were open fires for cooking, ovens, heaps of fuel, and a well. Though the stern discipline of the trail had been relaxed, there were always guards. Peons, often light-fingered, loitered around the yard, looking for scraps of food or fees for minor services. Native women swarmed, tending the cooking pots and mending torn clothes.

Martinez began asking for his release as they neared the yard. But there remained spots ahead where ambush was possible, so O'Dowd made him walk on.

One big fire in the yard still burned, and round it Yanquis sprawled, talking and drinking. A guard recognized Dan and gave a shout. Into the circle of fire-light, O'Dowd marched his prisoner.

"THIS here is Carlos Martinez," he said. "He had his cutthroats take me prisoner, and was goin' to have me ambushed and killed on the way home. I grabbed him and brought him along with my knife at his back, to make sure I'd be safe."

The men at the fire crowded forward.

"The señor has made a mistake," Martinez said. "I would have been friendly with him, but he thrust my offer of friendship aside. I would be friends with all Yanquis."

"That's a good one!" somebody

howled. "What are you goin' to do with him, O'Dowd?"

"Let him go, now that I'm safe home."

"Maybe we'd better line up and give him our boots first," somebody else shouted. "Might as well have some fun."

But Carlos Martinez had no desire to be booted out of the pack train yard. That ignominy would be something he never could live down. Towns and trails would ring with the story, and men would grin behind his back.

He whirled, bent low, started running, a grotesque figure fleeing through the moonlight with his silk robe flying out behind him. The bodyguard sent one wild shot toward the fire to cover his master's retreat, then darted into a patch of darkness before retaliation could come. Stones, clods and sticks were sent flying after Martinez, but missed the target. He disappeared in the shadows.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN he awoke next morning, Dan O'Dowd remembered the girl and the promise he had given Don Pedro Estrada concerning her. He doctored his bruises, dressed, went out to the well to perform his ablutions, then hurried to get food at the nearest fire.

Dodging questions, he got away and strolled to the market place, where the girl had said she worked. But he laughed at the idea now of finding Señorita Glorietta Estrada there.

He searched the market place well, but did not see her. He was continually alert, knowing he was in danger because of the way he had handled

Martinez, but did not expect an open attack in daylight.

He strolled back to the pack train yard, to be greeted with shouts and laughter.

"Your slave girl's been here, O'Dowd!" somebody called. "Anyhow that's what she said she was. A beauty, and mighty useful. She cleaned out your hut and cooked you a pot of grub, mended your torn shirts and cleaned your boots, then hurried away. But she said to tell you she'd be at the *baile* tonight."

Dan hurried to his hut. The place was scrupulously clean, which meant she had swept with a twig broom, then carried water from the well and scrubbed. And his extra boots had been cleaned and greased and his torn clothing mended.

For a high-born señorita who didn't have to touch her dainty hands to anything at home, the girl was a right good worker, O'Dowd thought. He ought to swell out his chest about it. Not every man had the daughter of a Don mending his shirts and cleaning his boots. She was playing a game, he decided—trying to make him believe she and Anita were not the same girl.

And she had said she would be at the *baile* that night! There was to be a big *baile*, and almost everybody would be there, including the *alcalde*, and no doubt a number of Martinez' men.

It was rumored around town that one of his pack trains from Guadalajara would be in before sundown. Perhaps this was the moment for which he had been waiting. They would be at the *baile* carrying on in a high manner, right off the long, adventurous trail and hungry to mix with humans. It would be a fine time for trouble to start.

Martinez undoubtedly would give or-



"Buenas dias, señor,"
a soft voice called.

ders concerning one Dan O'Dowd. And the girl would be in danger if she went to the *baile*. Dan decided it would be wise to go to Don Pedro's house and tell him to keep the girl at home tonight.

HE WAS admitted promptly when he gave the signal at the patio gate. But before he could start along the walk past the fountain, a quiet voice hailed him:

"Ah! My Yanqui friend?"

Fray Sebastiano, his hands clasped behind his back, walked slowly toward him.

"I came to see Don Pedro about somethin' important," Dan said.

"At an inopportune time, young señor. Don Pedro is taking his siesta. What is troubling you, my son?"

Fray Sebastiano indicated a bench beside the fountain, and they sat. Speaking in low tones, for servants were continually passing, Dan told swiftly what had happened the night before after he had separated from the *fray*.

The smile left Fray Sebastiano's

face. "Martinez goes too far," he said. "He grows outside his own skin. He is a bigger man in his own mind than he is in the minds of others. So he would add treason to his other crimes!"

"Maybe it was only big talk," Dan said. "I'm goin' to have all I can do to take care of myself tonight, with Martinez wantin' my scalp, and I don't want the señorita comin' to the *baile*."

"Have you told her so?"

"Haven't seen her. She went to my hut while I was away, and fussed around some, and told the women she'd be at the *baile*. But she's got to be kept here."

"Here?" Fray Sebastiano questioned.

"Oh, I know! I'm supposed to understand but pretend I don't. But, just this one time and between ourselves, let me say I know that the Anita girl and Señorita Glorietta are the same."

"Oh, I see!" Fray Sebastiano smiled.

"I'm not sayin' that anywhere else, so don't worry. But if she goes to the *baile* tonight—"

"I may attend the *baile* myself," Fray Sebastiano said. "I always like to see people enjoying themselves. And at such times they are off guard, and much may be learned. A mixed *baile* with both Yanquis and Mexicans as guests—there is always a possibility of trouble."

"It's the señorita I'm worryin' about," Dan pointed out.

"I'll inform Don Pedro of everything you have told me, my son. I assure you we'll do everything to see that Señorita Glorietta does not attend the *baile*."

"That takes a weight of worry off me."

"Guard yourself against Martinez and his thugs. Something must be done about the man. The torture chamber you described, with a girl chained

to the wall—! I'll have speech with Don Pedro as soon as he awakes."

Fray Sebastiano bowed his head, thrust his hands into the sleeves of his worn robe, rose and crossed the patio toward the house. Dan got up and stretched, yawned, adjusted his coon-skin cap on his head.

"**B**UENAS dias, señor," a soft voice called.

He turned quickly, and saw a small window in the wall of the house, and Señorita Glorietta smiling down at him. Dan removed his cap and bowed.

"You do not rejoice at seeing me again, señor?" she pouted. "Perhaps you are angry because I treated you so harshly last evening. I wish to make up for my bad behavior, but you mentioned a man I despise, and made me terribly angry."

"That man, señorita, is one you'd better keep away from. A sensible girl wouldn't put herself in a position where he could see her."

"I feel sure you are right," she said.

"For instance, there's a *baile* tonight. A sensible girl wouldn't go, if she wanted to avoid that certain man."

"I'd like to go. I might even like to dance with you, señor. But I promise I'll not attend this evening. It is so much quieter and nicer here in my father's house."

"Glad to hear you say that," Dan told her. "A funny thing happened today. While I was away from my hut, some girl cleaned it, mended my clothes and greased my boots."

"Indeed, señor? You must have an ardent admirer."

"Scrubbin' and greasin' boots and attendin' to a cookin' pot—that ought to be hard on dainty hands."

"I should imagine so, señor."

"Would it be too bold if I asked to look at your dainty hands again?"

"Oh, much too bold, señor! You are attempting to grow too intimate," she replied, laughing at him. "And I should not be talking to you like this, señor. My *dueña* is asleep here in this room. She would be furious if she awoke and found me talking to you, and might scold me dreadfully. Would you want me scolded, señor?"

She laughed again and disappeared from the window.

CHAPTER IX

THE sun was sinking as O'Dowd walked rapidly back toward the pack train yard. As he neared the plaza, he heard an unusual tumult. Men were shouting, and the shrill voices and laughter of women were in excited clamor.

Martinez' pack train was arriving from Guadalajara. There were more pack animals than usual, and they were heavily laden and showed signs of hard travel. The men with the train shouted



He turned quickly and saw Señorita Glorietta smiling down at him.

and laughed as they waved at the women along the street.

Dan saw that the animals were about worn out, and the men looked tired also. Some went toward Martinez' warehouse and trading post, but others veered off toward his house. The hardest looking men accompanied the mules toward the house. They were heavily armed, and the packs on the animals were of a shape to contain guns.

Dan went on to the yard. It was near sunset. The Yanquis were feeding and watering their stock, part of which was kept in a corral while some wandered around hobbled. He made certain his big black horse had been cared for properly, not entirely trusting the peon paid to tend him.

Men were eating around the fires, native women attending them, and O'Dowd went to a fire and ate also, then returned to his hut. Everybody began putting on finery for the *baile*—his best boots, colored shirt and neckcloth, his newest suit of buckskin.

When darkness came, torches and candles were lit in the empty warehouse where the *baile* was to be held, and where peons had been at work under the whip of an overseer greasing the floor with melted tallow.

On a raised platform at one end the fiddlers would play, and there were benches along the walls, where the women would sit and make eyes and wait for a man to claim them for a dance.

The ordinary rules of convention would be set aside during the *baile*, and no man needed a proper introduction. If a woman liked his looks, she would smile at him and dance, and if she did not she would frown, and perhaps claw his face if he persisted in forcing attentions on her.

At either end of the building was a

wide door, and beside each door would be a barrel of white whisky, with gourds for drinking, and the liquor would be free for all. There would be wine also, for those who liked something less potent.

Dan left his hut and strolled to the fire where men were gathering. A bright moon was up, and they could see people hurrying toward the warehouse. The women were always the earliest, young and old, seeking the best seats along the walls and nearest the doors, where men would stand and ogle.

They were dressed in bright skirts and blouses, some wearing shoes and some sandals, some barelegged and others with stockings of silk. All wore jewelry, whether expensive or gaudy. Rings were in their ears, gleaming ornaments in their hair, necklaces around their throats and bracelets rattling on their arms.

"Let's be goin'!" somebody howled. "The whisky barrels are open and the women are waitin'. The fiddlers are ready and my feet are itchin'."

They left the fire and strolled toward the warehouse in small groups, but not far apart. They wore their finery, but their sharpest knives also. As they neared the warehouse, they heard cheering.

"The *alcalde* has arrived!" somebody shouted.

B EING a politician, Don Marcos Vega did not fail to honor the affair with his presence. He entered the building with a few dignitaries and guards, and held court at one end of the raised platform, where a special bench had been put for him. The women approached, bowed and passed the bench and returned to their seats against the wall. Dancing began.

O'Dowd entered the building with other Yanquis. Some got partners and others hurried toward the liquor barrels. The Mexicans, in flaring trousers and braided jackets, glared at the Yanquis in buckskin and homespun.

Dan danced with a girl he knew, then with another, continually alert. He saw men he knew worked for Carlos Martinez. The *alcalde's* guards, seeing Don Marcos busy with the prettiest girls, wandered through the crowd and visited the liquor barrels.

As Dan whirled the girl with whom he danced he looked across the room toward the benches. A muttered imprecation escaped him. Sitting on the bench nearest the door, as if she had just slipped in out of the night, was the girl he most of all disliked to see in the place.

"After she promised me!" he growled.

He glanced that way again as he whirled in the dance, and saw Fray Sebastiano, who had come into the building and was standing against the wall, his hands in the sleeves of his robe.

The fiddles ceased squeaking. Men led the girls to the benches and sought new partners. O'Dowd, his face set and grim, got rid of his girl and strode along the wall toward the *fray*.

Fray Sebastiano smiled as Dan approached, but the latter had no answering smile. His manner was accusing.

"You told me you'd speak to Don Pedro and keep the girl from comin' here," he said. "Yet there she is, and the place swarmin' with Martinez' men."

Fray Sebastiano turned to look. The girl sat with her back against the wall, her eyes glistening. She met their gaze, flushed and smiled.

"Well, Fray Sebastiano?"

"That is the girl you are supposed to guard, my son. It would have been better had she not come here, but here she is. Perhaps you can persuade her to leave."

"You come with me and tell the *señorita* she must go home at once."

"It is your business to guard her, my son. No doubt you will do so admirably."

BEFORE Dan could reply, Fray Sebastiano moved away toward the corner where the *alcalde* was holding his reception. Angrily, O'Dowd crossed over to the girl.

"So you came!" he said.

"*Sí, señor!* It is a splendid *baile*, is it not?"

"Why did you come here?"

"Why not, *señor?*" She seemed puzzled. "It seems everybody else is here. I was hoping to see you. I never thanked you enough for what you did."

"There's danger."

"I am not afraid when you are near me. I did not go to work in the market place today, because I feared they would look for me there. But I went to the pack train yard."

"Thanks for what you did there," he said.

He glanced down at her hands, but they were covered with the thin gloves most of the women were wearing.

"I have not danced with anybody yet," she hinted. "The music stirs the blood, *señor.*"

"We'll dance," Dan said, and held out his arms. He swept her out on the floor, and she clung to him and laughed in his ear.

"Do you not want me to be your slave, *señor?*" she whispered. "I'll keep your hut clean, and I am a good

cook. I am anxious to serve you because you rescued me."

"I'll probably have to do it again," he growled. "You shouldn't have come here. Martinez' men are scattered through the crowd. If there's trouble—and there generally is before a *baile* ends—they may try again to steal you."

"But you are here to defend me, señor."

When the music ceased, he led her to the bench and remained until the next dance had started and all men had partners. Then he hurried along the wall and took his first drink of the night at the whisky barrel.

The *alcalde's* guards had been plied with drink and lured away by Martinez' men. The latter, heavily armed, had crept to the warehouse a few at a time, and now controlled both doors and windows, while others were scattered through the crowd.

As the fiddlers ceased again and escorts took the women back to the benches, armed men suddenly appeared in both doorways to prevent any leaving. A body of men marched into the room with guns held ready.

Their manner warned of something unusual. They moved swiftly to take up commanding positions, and Don Marcos Vega, *alcalde* of Santa Fé, found them surrounding him and got to his feet.

"What is this?" he demanded, alarmed.

Nobody answered. The group at the door parted, and more men strode in with Carlos Martinez at their head. Martinez was imperious in manner. He strode over to the *alcalde*.

"DON MARCOS VEGA," he cried in a voice which rang through

the big building, "I arrest you for treason!"

"You what?" Don Marcos cried. "What right have you—"

"My men are in charge here. Your guards have been cared for. I arrest you for treason, theft in office, for showing partiality, and order you confined in *carcel* until you can be punished properly."

Bewildered, Don Marcos looked around for help, and found none.

"I hereby declare New Spain free and independent of Mexico, a country in itself, which I take it upon myself to rule until things can be arranged. I declare a *fiesta* for two days, with free wine and food for all at my *casa*."

That last would get the mob with him, Martinez knew.

"Renegade and traitor!" Don Marcos howled.

"Use care in your words, señor," Martinez warned. "It is not necessary to wait for sunrise."

"You would murder me!" Don Marcos cried. "You would seize power. All loyal men will immediately take up arms against this traitor Martinez and those who stand beside him in this!"

"Enough!" Martinez said. He signaled his men, and they seized Don Marcos and swiftly lashed his wrists behind his back.

Martinez felt a touch on his shoulder and turned to find Fray Sebastiano beside him.

"So you would be a king?" Fray Sebastiano asked. "You would add treason to your other crimes?"

"How dare you speak so to me?"

"Because you dare not touch me or any *fray*, lest a curse fall on you. Things political must be settled, but not by

murder. You will not harm Don Marcos Vega. Is that understood?"

Their eyes clashed, and their wills. The superstitious Martinez was quaking, though he did not show it in his face.

"I wish to please all who are loyal to me," Martinez said. "I seek to rule this land well. I cannot allow Don Marcos to go free, arouse his men against me and cause bloody fighting."

"Let him be confined and treated as a prisoner of war."

The *fray* was working for time. His object was to save Don Marcos now and work out his ultimate salvation later.

But Martinez was not without cleverness. "So be it!" he said. "Don Marcos Vega shall be confined in the *carcel*. And so you may be sure, Fray Sebastiano, that this is not a trick, and that I will not have men enter his cell and slay him, you shall go with him and see he meets no harm."

Before Fray Sebastiano could speak again, Martinez gestured, and his men hustled Don Marcos Vega and the *fray* through the door and out into the night.

"Attention!" Martinez barked to his men. "In this place are a man and a girl I want seized and taken to my house. You will attend to it immediately."

He turned slowly as he spoke and pointed to the corner of the room.

CHAPTER X

AS MARTINEZ' men started toward them, O'Dowd whipped out his knife and stood in front of the bench, shielding the girl.

"Hi, Yanquis!" he howled.

It was a rallying cry which brought

immediate response. From every part of the big room, Yanquis started rushing toward the corner, hurling men out of their way. They charged with fists thudding and knives flashing, and the women screamed and pressed back against the walls.

Martinez' men at the doors were hurled aside as more Yanquis charged in from the night. The warehouse became a maelstrom of maddened fighting men. Torches were torn from the walls and flung to the floor, and boots crushed out their light. Candelabra were knocked over and candles extinguished.

There was no shooting now, for friend could not be told from foe a few feet away. Fists thudded and men screamed with rage and pain. Benches along the walls were demolished, and parts of them used as weapons to crack heads.

All were fighting now to get into the open, where the moonlight would make it possible to tell friends from enemies. O'Dowd got the girl between him and the wall and began fighting to get through the press. Men charged at them, the Yanquis to help and Martinez' men to make the capture he had ordered.

Guns were being fired outside, and sounds of fighting came from the plaza and other parts of the town. Martinez' men were having an easy time of it, for the opposition had not been ready for trouble. They seized the Governor's palace, the *carcel*, supplies of arms and ammunition.

Some of the Yanquis were howling for a retreat to the pack train yard, where they could make a better defense. They started that way with Martinez' men pressing after them. O'Dowd got out of the warehouse and stood against an adobe shed with the girl at his feet.

Yanquis crowded around them to meet the attack with knives, clubs and fists.

Martinez' men made a desperate charge. Dan dodged a knife thrust and cracked his fist into a face. He reeled from a blow, staggered to his knees as a club crashed on his head. Another blow came, and oblivion. Retreating to the pack train yard, the Yanquis carried him along. Martinez' men had seized the girl and rushed her from the scene with a serape wrapped around her head to stifle her cries.

At the yard, the walls were manned, gates closed and heavy bars put into place. But Martinez' men did not attack. They rushed away to other parts of town.

His head drenched with cold water, Dan regained consciousness to find the girl had been taken.

"Say the word, and we'll go to Martinez' *casa* and tear it to pieces!" some man near him howled.

"Wait!" O'Dowd said. "No sense in all of us gettin' mixed up in this. If you leave the yard and get out into the open, they'll have a better chance at you. And some of that mob may get in here while you're gone, and loot the place."

WHILE others watched the walls and gates and the frightened native women huddled around the fires, he went to his hut with a couple of men, stripped and put on ragged garments belonging to a peon. With charred sticks brought from the nearest fire, he smeared legs and feet and soiled his face. He rubbed the charred wood on his hands, ran his hands through his red hair until it was dark, and put on a tattered sombrero which came down almost to his ears.

"You look so much like a sneakin', thievin' varmint that the first fine señor

who meets you is likely to kick you out of his path," one of the men said.

Dan slipped a knife beneath his tattered shirt, went to a dark spot on the wall and got over. Moving carefully and keeping in the shadows, he got away from the yard. At a safe distance, he shuffled along, careful to avoid others, and got to the plaza where excited men jabbered.

Martinez' war had been rather bloodless, he learned. Only three were dead and a score hurt badly. Don Marcos was a prisoner in *carcel*, and Fray Sebastian was with him, determined to prevent the *alcalde's* execution. Martinez was in the Governor's house with his men guarding him.

O'Dowd went toward Martinez' *casa*, hoping he could hear something about the girl. As he neared the house, a whisper reached him from a clump of brush:

"Señor!"

He whirled quickly, hand going to knife.

"I know you, Señor Yanqui." Señora Fate hobbled up to him. "I was looking for you. The señorita is in Martinez' house. I saw his men take her there. I heard them say Martinez issued orders that the señorita be not harmed. His women are to care for her tenderly. Many guns came for Martinez on the pack train, and they are stored next to the torture room—"

"You know the house well," Dan interrupted. "How can I get in?"

"I know a way the peon workmen left, so they could get in and steal. If you will remember to help my granddaughter, I'll show you the way."

They went cautiously through the shadows to the rear of the house. Outside the wall, fires were burning and a score of armed men sprawled around

them, hobbled mules everywhere.

"It is useless tonight, señor," Señora Fate said. "See the bushes against the wall? Behind them are large adobe bricks which can be removed. That is the way in, señor."

GETTING into the house safely now was impossible, O'Dowd saw. He would need help to rescue the girl. And certainly he could get it! Don Pedro Estrada must be told what had happened to his daughter, if he did not know already. Don Pedro had men of his own, and powerful friends. Perhaps they would combine with the Yanquis in an attack on the Martinez *casa*.

He whispered to Señora Fate that he would see her later, dodged through the shadows, and hurried to Don Pedro's house. He signalled at the gate and the aperture was opened.

"Look closely! I'm O'Dowd, the Yanqui. I've smeared my face—" He spoke quickly, fearing the aperture would be closed after the servant got a look at him.

But the man recognized him, the gate was opened, and he slipped inside. Though it was late, a dozen armed men loitered in the patio. One ran ahead while the others watched O'Dowd. The first returned.

"You are to enter immediately, señor," he said.

Tattered sombrero in hand, Dan strode through the door. He expected to find Don Pedro surrounded by anxious friends, but Don Pedro was alone, standing in front of the fireplace with his hands clasped behind his back.

"So you failed, señor!" Don Pedro said. "I thought you were a man of daring and resource who could be trusted with a delicate matter."

"I did what I could," Dan replied.

"The girl shouldn't have been at the *baile*. I told Fray Francisco to tell you to keep her at home. And she promised me with her own lips that she wouldn't go."

"She promised you?"

"Spoke to me from her window as I was in the patio. Oh, we understand each other! Without me comin' right out and sayin' it, she knows I know she's playin' at bein' this girl Anita. I hinted there would be danger at the *baile*, and she promised she wouldn't go."

Don Pedro's eyes widened, then grew narrow with thought.

"She hasn't been harmed," O'Dowd continued. "An old woman told me orders had been given to take good care of her."

"Carlos Martinez plays a deep game," Don Pedro said.

"We'll save her. I know a secret way into Martinez' house. I'll get the Yanquis to help, and we'll rescue the señorita."

"You do not understand everything, and I cannot explain now," Don Pedro said. "I am expecting a messenger from Mexico City, and everything may be settled when he comes. But he is traveling with only one companion through dangerous country."

"About the señorita—?" Dan persisted.

THERE came an interruption. The door was opened and one of the servants rushed in, eyes wide and manner excited.

"Don Pedro!" he cried. "Carlos Martinez is at the outer gate and demands to see you. He says he comes in peace for a talk and will enter alone, but men came with him and are in the street."

"Martinez here?" Don Pedro Estrada seemed to grow an inch taller. "Admit

the fellow. Have a peon servant bring him to me. And watch those in the street."

The man rushed out.

"If Martinez comes here alone, you've got him," Dan said. "You can hold him for the safety of the señorita, make him send men to bring her here safely. He must be a fool to come here like this."

"Carlos Martinez is a scoundrel, but no fool," Don Pedro replied. "Step into that adjoining room, señor, and keep behind the door."

"You'll meet him here alone?"

"I do not fear scum like Martinez. He has a feeling of inferiority in my presence. Get behind the door and remain there. Whatever happens, hold your hand. You may yet be useful, though you have failed me once."

CHAPTER XI

DAN went into the other room and got behind the door, leaving it open a crack so he could hear and see.

The patio door was opened again, a servant stepped inside and bowed, and Martinez strode into the room.

"Well, señor, what do you wish of me?" Don Pedro asked.

"A little talk, Don Pedro. This is the time to have it. I am making plans for tomorrow."

"I cannot think on what topic I'd hold conversation with a traitor."

Martinez glared. Don Pedro sat in the nearest chair and looked up at the man. He did not ask Martinez to be seated.

"Some time ago," Martinez said, "I told you I admired Señorita Glorietta—"

"Señor!" Don Pedro thundered. "My daughter's name is not to be heard from your lips."

"You'll hear it, Don Pedro. I rule Santa Fé now. I intend to found an empire with Santa Fé as its center. I will be a man of power, and desire to link myself with all classes of people."

"You are linked to several already, I understand—part peon and part Indian."

"Don Pedro!" Martinez shouted. "I came here alone, leaving my guards in the street. You had better realize your position. I do not expect to receive insults."

"Is the truth ever an insult, señor? Have your say!"

"I know in what high estimation the people hold you and your kind, Don Pedro. A word, a nod from you, and they will follow where I lead. Let them know you are back of me in this, and my position is secure. You'll not regret it. Whatever you wish, you may have."

"You seek to bribe me, Señor?" Don Pedro asked, in a tone which seemed to pity the man's lack of understanding.

Martinez made another attempt to appear haughty. "I ask your daughter for my wife," he said. "Let word be spread in the morning that we are affianced. Then the people will know you sanction what I have done. If you do not agree, I have other plans—"

"Certainly I do not agree, señor. Did not your absurd pomposity amuse me so much, I'd have my peons kick you from the house. But one makes allowances for a clown."

"Señor!" Martinez cried, enraged. "I have given you a chance, Don Pedro. The people must be made to believe what I wish them to believe. If they see Señorita Glorietta riding beside me in the morning from my *casa* to the palace of the Governor, without her father or *dueña* along—"

"You would dare?" Don Pedro cried.

"How the people will cheer! They will think Martinez a great man indeed, when he can induce a lady of the blood of the Estradas to break the conventions because she thinks so dearly of him."

"I can not understand why I do not kill you, señor, except that I dislike soiling my hands."

"Is your answer the same, Don Pedro?"

"Now and forever!" He clapped his hands, and a servant darted in from the patio. "See that Señor Martinez departs at once by the rear patio gate," he directed. "That is for the use of peons and Indians. Then burn incense here, to kill the stench."

WATCHING behind the door, O'Dowd thought surely Martinez would make an attack. But the man seemed unable to take a step forward with Don Pedro's eyes burning into his. He took refuge in further talk.

"Very well, Don Pedro. My men will keep your place surrounded until too late for you to summon friends and ruin my plans."

Martinez turned and stalked into the patio with the servant at his heels. Dan rushed into the other room.

"Keep him!" he advised Don Pedro. "Hold him as hostage—"

Don Pedro shook his head. "You do not understand, señor. Let him go. The presence of such a man here would ruin my house for me forever. And now, Señor O'Dowd, you cannot leave. He has the house surrounded. I know his plans, insofar as they concern me and mine. But the best of plans may be wrecked."

"You could have exchanged him for the señorita."

"I fear not, señor. A wolf pack fol-

lows Martinez, and wolves turn on wounded of their own kind. Let them learn Martinez was held prisoner here, and his own men would ransack his *casa* and flee to the hills with their loot. And prisoners would not be safe from the looters."

"I understand," Dan said. "I've got to get out of here. Anyhow, I'm goin' to try."

"May good fortune attend you, señor. I'll pass word to those in the patio that you are to do as you please."

Dan went to the dark kitchen and looked through a small barred window. Along the rear wall of the house was a wide dark streak. There was a narrow passageway between building and wall, and at either end of it Martinez' men on guard.

He asked whispered questions of the servants, got on the sloping roof over the arches, and went along it noiselessly until he came to another sloping roof which ran down to the alley. He flattened himself on the tiles, fearing he would be seen in silhouette against the moon. For a time he listened and watched, then took the drop, doubling his body as he let go the edge and striking with a shock which drove his bare feet deep in the dust.

THERE was a slight movement beside him, and before he could turn he felt the muzzle of a gun pressed against his side.

"Do not move, señor," a whisper warned.

"Who are you?" Dan asked, whispering also, and his right hand inching upward so he would be in position to make a quick attempt to get his knife from beneath his shirt.

"I am a man who sees in the dark, señor. Do not move your hands, or I

fire. Your manner of exit from the *casa* indicates you are not one of the unmentionables who surround it. If you are a friend of Don Pedro's—"

"I am."

"Ha! It appears you are in disguise. I had a glimpse of your features as you dropped—"

"I'm a Yanqui workin' for Don Pedro."

"I also am working for Don Pedro. I am a messenger just arrived from Mexico City."

"He told me he was expectin' one."

"I have important information for Don Pedro and must get to him immediately. Both ends of this passage are blocked by enemies—"

"Do you know the signal for the patio gate?"

"I do, but how may I reach the gate?"

"We'll work together," O'Dowd said. "Let's take care of the man at the end of the passage. Then you keep in darkness and watch for a chance, and I'll do the rest. You do a little howlin' at the right time. Yell 'There goes the red-headed Yanqui! There's a reward for him!'"

"I understand, señor. They chase you and I get to the gate. But suppose they catch you?"

"That's a chance I'm runnin'."

THEY went cautiously to the end of the passage. The man on guard was pacing back and forth, watching down the street. As he made a turn, O'Dowd sprang and grasped him from behind.

One yell escaped him before he could be throttled. Dan darted into the street and ran, howling defiance in English. Don Pedro's messenger played his part well, fired his gun into the air and howled also, that the red-headed Yan-

qui for whose capture Martinez offered reward was running down the street.

Other guns barked, and men gave chase. Not being disciplined soldiers, they deserted their posts when there was a chance of profit. The street was clear of them for a moment, and the messenger ran to the patio gate, gave the signal and was admitted.

O'Dowd fled on down the street. Guns cracked behind him and slugs whistled past him, but none struck. At the end of the street he bowled over a man running toward him, and sped on. He dashed through a dark archway, ran across a deserted patio and scaled a wall. The pursuit went past.

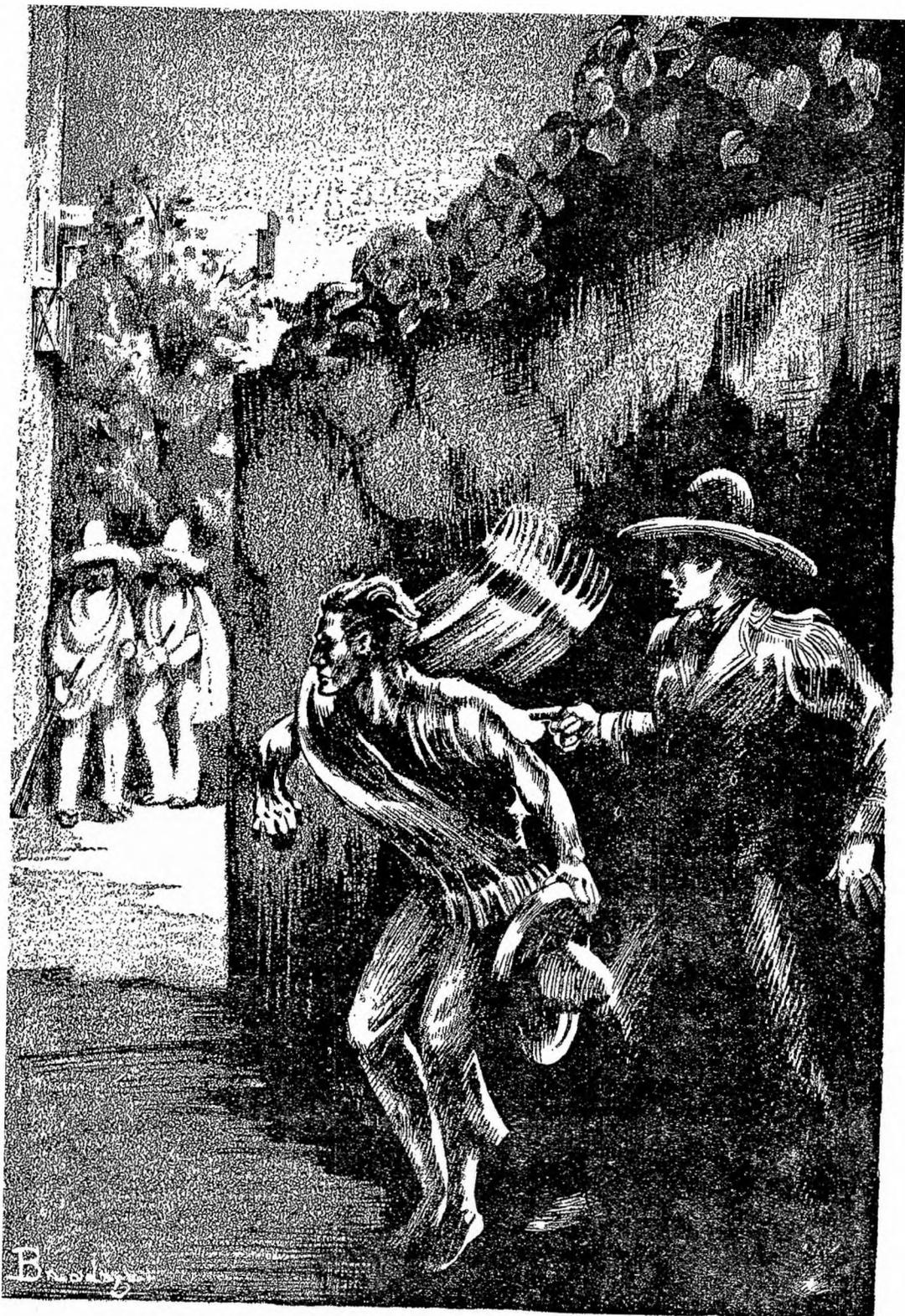
He went on toward the pack train yard, heard a tumult in that direction and quickened stride. As he approached the yard, he saw more of Martinez' men surrounding it. Feeling sure of his disguise, he joined a crowd of curious men and women in the shadows.

Martinez was there, sitting his horse like a general. The wall of the pack train yard was lined with men.

"I want my Yanqui friends to understand I have no quarrel with them," Martinez shouted. "I want your friendship. If you will not help me, do not help my enemies. If you take my side, I'll make good trade deals with you. In return for this, I ask only one thing—hand over to me the man O'Dowd. He has been acting as a spy for my enemies."

"That's a lie!" somebody shouted. "O'Dowd ain't takin' sides in this political row. You want to torture him 'cause he made a fool of you the other night. We wouldn't give anybody up to you."

"I intend to have him," Martinez declared. "Until I do, you Yanquis will be kept where you are, prisoners. But



"Do not move, señor," a whisper warned.

remember it is your friendship I want. We could deal profitably together. I will cancel the tax on beaver, so your mountain men will prosper. Think it over, señores, and I'll communicate with you later."

He shouted orders to his men, turned and spurred away with others close behind him, going in the direction of his house.

Dan got away from the group of peons in the darkness. He did not know which way to turn. He could not try to get back into the pack train yard without risk of almost certain capture. Martinez' men surrounded the Estrada *casa*, so he could not return there.

He drifted along a street, listening to men talk. He learned Don Marcos Vega was still in *carcel*, and that some of his guards had been found and confined there also, the remainder having tossed aside their uniforms to join Martinez.

He drifted on, always alert. It was only a couple of hours until dawn. He found a safe, sheltered spot beside a wall, and curled up to sleep.

CHAPTER XII

DON PEDRO ESTRADA welcomed the messenger from Mexico City cordially, but with something of dread also.

"I am glad you got in safely, and that Señor O'Dowd got out," Don Pedro said. "You have news for me?"

"I bring the proofs you wished, Don Pedro. It is as you suspected. I have the necessary documents."

The messenger reached beneath his jacket and brought out a small package. Don Pedro excused himself, sat at a table, undid the package and read the papers it contained.

"It is enough!" he said, when he had finished. "Now I know my duty and the manner of performing it."

"I have further intelligence, on another matter. This document will explain, Your Excellency."

"Excellency? You exalt me through courtesy, I fear."

"Not so, Don Pedro. The information was given me by word of mouth also, in case anything happened to the document. In Mexico, they know how things have been in turmoil here, how there have been a dozen spasmodic rulers, with almost every man trying to rule as a means of acquiring ill profits."

"That is true." Don Pedro said.

"Mexico has other troubles, but wishes New Spain to be ruled properly until she can give it more attention. That document is your appointment as Governor of New Spain."

"It is an honor I have not sought," Don Pedro said. He looked up and smiled. "You hand me the post of Governor when another has seized it. Carlos Martinez has announced himself the ruler here. I am the Governor, but only we two know it, and I am a prisoner in my own house."

"That must be remedied."

"*Si señor!* It must be remedied," Don Pedro said. . . .

O'DOWD awoke shivering in the cold dawn and inspected himself. He could not pass as easily in daylight as at night. His huge size betrayed him, his white skin showed through streaks of dirt. His tattered sombrero, pulled low down, would hide his red hair, but nothing could hide his blue eyes.

He went toward the pack train yard, and as he neared it saw Martinez' men had not been withdrawn. It was im-

possible for him to get inside. He went back toward the plaza and listened to the talk. What he heard startled him.

Don Pedro Estrada, people were saying, was standing beside Martinez. He had given his daughter into Martinez' keeping, and they would soon wed. As proof of this, Señorita Glorietta Estrada would that morning ride with Martinez from his *casa* to the palace, and all could see her.

So that was Martinez' game! He could carry it out, O'Dowd knew. Don Pedro, prisoner in his own house, could not prevent it or voice a denunciation. The people would believe Don Pedro was with Martinez, and before they discovered the deception Martinez would be in safe command.

Women and children were gathering around the plaza. The din increased as the crowd grew. From the direction of Martinez' *casa* came some of his men, shouting as they marched, warning people aside and clearing the way. Then came two of Martinez' best horses with rich trappings. He bestrode one, and on the other sat the señorita with a man leading the mount.

Behind them rode a dozen others, and behind those were more armed men afoot. Martinez was smiling and waving at the groups he passed, but his

men were not relaxing vigilance, and kept close watch on the people along the way.

Dan crowded forward with the others. The girl's head was high, her eyes half closed, her face a blank. The rags she had worn at the *baile* were gone. She wore silks and satins now.

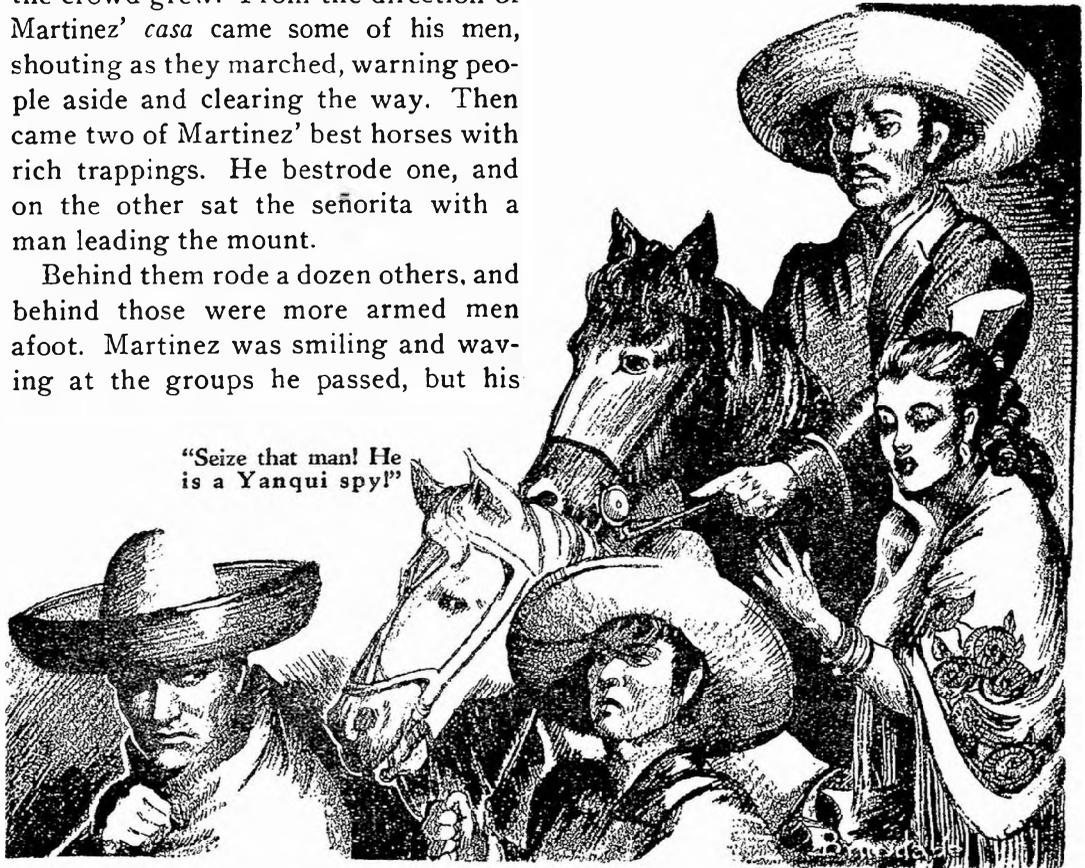
As they came abreast of O'Dowd, the señorita glanced down, and her eyes met his. Her lips parted as she recognized him despite his disguise.

"Señor—!" she cried.

Martinez turned as she spoke, and let out a bellow:

"Seize that man! He is a Yanqui spy!"

His men charged as Dan turned to run. But the words "Yanqui" and "spy" had been enough to turn people against



him. They grasped him and half tore the rags from his body. His knife came out, and he slashed at those nearest.

"Take him alive!" Martinez howled.

They got him down, pounded and kicked him. Martinez urged the señorita's horse on, and the other riders crowded around them. Dan had his arms lashed to his sides, his legs bound together. They picked him up, carried him to a horse, put him face downward across the saddle and held him there. So was he forced to join Martinez' march of triumph.

THEY crossed the plaza and went to the Governor's palace, where Martinez dismounted and compelled the señorita to ascend the steps. He lifted his hand, and the cheers ceased.

"Today and tomorrow shall be *fiesta*," he called. "The Yanqui spy will be whipped in the plaza in a few hours, and punishment will be given others also. I decree free wine for all. My men will roll out the barrels. Later, there will be food."

They cheered again. Martinez issued orders, and the señorita was taken inside. O'Dowd was lifted off the horse and carried to the *carcel*. They removed the ropes and tossed him into a cell, laughed and hurried away.

Dan got up, stretched his bruised limbs and went to the door.

"My son!" somebody called.

Standing behind a barred door across the corridor he saw Fray Sebastiano and Don Marcos Vega.

"So they have you, too," the *fray* said. "What happens in the town?"

O'Dowd told him all.

"If I can get out, I can do somethin'," he added. "The Yanquis will take sides quick enough."

He said no more, for boots pounded

down the corridor and two peons appeared carrying torches. Martinez came, three men with him. He strutted like a peacock, and his voice roared:

"So I have you, Yanqui with the red hair! You made a spectacle of me the other night, did you not? Now, señor, I'll make a spectacle of you."

"You're makin' one of yourself," Dan retorted.

"Miguel!" Martinez called the man forward. "I give you charge of this affair. At the appointed time, come for this man. He will be ready for the whipping, the leather bag over his head and tied around the throat after the usual manner."

"*Si, señor!*" Miguel grinned.

"Take him out, tie him to the post in the plaza, and have him whipped soundly. Let the old women throw filth on him. Then remove the bag, that all may see his face lined with pain. Revive him, if he is unconscious, and return him to this cell. Later, he will be shot."

"Martinez—" Fray Sebastiano began.

"Silence, *fray!* I command here, and desire none of your interference. Don Marcos Vega, you will be executed at sunset. Fray Sebastiano, you will be released immediately to go about your business."

"Leave me in the corridor, that I may give consolation to the condemned. That is my business," the *fray* said.

"That is permitted. Miguel, let the *fray* out when you come for this Yanqui. Hold the whipping as scheduled, and do not wait for me to appear. If I am not too busy, I may watch from a window. But I'll be present when this man is shot."

HE TURNED away, but Dan called to him:

"Martinez! I've got enough of this. You'll be a fool if you have me whipped. I may not talk if you do that. A messenger came from Mexico City last night to Don Pedro Estrada. He got into the Estrada house as I escaped from it—"

"You were in the Estrada house?"

"I was behind the door when you were there and Don Pedro almost had you kicked out."

"What did the messenger report?" Martinez asked.

Dan pressed his face close to the bars and whispered: "Do you want me to tell you where others can hear?"

"Ha!" Martinez' eyes glittered. "Tell me what I wish to know, Yanqui, and I allow you to escape the whipping. Miguel, take the others and retire. Come back at the time appointed. If this man is here and ready, take him to the whipping post. If he is not, say nothing."

The others retired, and Martinez stepped nearer the door.

"Now, Yanqui, talk," he said.

A roar of rage came from Fray Sebastiano across the corridor: "Señor O'Dowd! Have you no decency, no courage? Would you betray Don Pedro? Would you help this rogue Martinez?"

"It's time I was commencin' to think of myself," Dan replied. He put his face close to the bars again, and once more spoke in a whisper to Martinez: "Promise me freedom. It'll please the Yanquis if you let me go. You want them with you. After you let me go, I'll hurry to the pack train yard and talk to them."

"You'll turn them toward me?" Martinez asked. "Promise them good trade deals. Now, what did the messenger tell Don Pedro?"

"I can't talk here. Take me to that

fine room which used to be Don Marcos Vega's private quarters, and give me somethin' to eat and drink, and decent clothes."

"Talk here and now!"

"I told you where I'd talk. If you're wise, you won't lose any time."

"Very well, señor."

CHAPTER XIII

AS HE fumbled for the keys he had brought along and prepared to open the door, Martinez was thinking he would use this poor fool of a Yanqui as long as he was valuable, and the other Yanquis also, then do as he pleased with them.

Martinez unlocked the door and stepped back to let O'Dowd out. He was on guard. He had a pistol in his belt, and gripped it and held it ready.

Dan stepped from the cell and shuffled forward, so Martinez could walk in a safe position behind him.

"Coward! Renegade!" Fray Sebastiano denounced him.

"That's enough abuse from you!"

He stopped, half turned, faced the cell in which the *fray* and Don Marcos were imprisoned. His fists were clenched.

"Be quiet!" he roared. "I'll tear that door down and get at you!"

He sprang to the door, gripped the bars and tried to shake them. Fray Sebastiano and Don Marcos retreated a few feet in the face of his wrath. But they noticed a peculiar expression on his face.

Martinez laughed. "Come on, Yanqui. I promise you'll have revenge on the pair of them."

Dan whirled and sprang, his fists lashing out. He took a chance of finding Martinez ready for him, but Mar-

tinez was only half ready. His arm jerked up as he ripped out an oath, and the pistol came up with it. O'Dowd struck up the arm as the weapon exploded, and the slug thudded into the ceiling.

He rained blows upon Martinez, keeping him from getting out a knife. Martinez fought back as they tripped and rolled on the floor. Dan was fighting like a madman. He got his hands on Martinez' throat and used all his strength. Martinez' grip relaxed and his body went limp.

"You have killed the renegade," Fray Sebastiano said, as Dan lurched to his feet. "Forgive me, my son, for doubting you a moment."

"I did some good foolin', maybe."

Dan examined his victim and knew he would soon regain consciousness. He raced to the end of the corridor and returned with ropes. Kneeling beside Martinez, he stripped the clothes from his body. He tore off the rags he was wearing and dressed Martinez in them. He streaked his body with dirt from his own. He bound the renegade's arms behind his back and tied his ankles together.

Martinez moaned, opened his eyes, began cursing as he writhed on the floor. Dan gagged him with a strip of cloth, then carried him into the cell and propped him against the wall.

Leaving Martinez there, he went back into the corridor and dressed swiftly in his clothes. He wiped the dirt from his face as well as he could, pulled Martinez' gorgeous sombrero down low on his head, wrapped the man's serape around his shoulders so he could half hide his face by thrusting down his chin.

He seized the keys, opened the other cell and let Fray Sebastiano and Don Marcos out.

"MARTINEZ, I'm leavin' you here," he said, then, "but I'm puttin' the bag over your head. You're gagged and can't do more than gurgle. Our bodies are of a size, and your men are too full of wine to be careful. When they come to get the man for the whip-pin', Martinez, they'll get you."

He put the leather bag over his head and tied it around the throat, locked him in the cell, and hung the keys on the wall.

"Come!" he told the other two. "If we meet anybody, I'm Martinez. We'll go to the *alcalde's* office room. I'll pretend I'm lettin' you two go. Fray Sebastiano, you get to the Governor's house and find the *señorita* and take care of her."

"At once, my son."

"Let Fray Sebastiano go, but I prefer to remain in hiding until this affair is settled," Don Marcos said. "Martinez' men would kill me at sight. I know where to hide."

They went along the corridor and up the steps, and O'Dowd opened the door. It was only a few steps to the door of the *alcalde's* room, and nobody was near. Martinez' lieutenant, Miguel, was at the other end of the hall.

"Miguel!" Dan called, imitating Martinez' voice.

"*Jefe?*"

The light in the hall was poor, and Miguel saw Martinez' clothes with a man Martinez' size in them, and had no suspicions, for the serape almost covered O'Dowd's face.

"Send word for our men at the Yanqui pack train yard to withdraw at once and mingle with the crowd in the plaza. Send word to the *casa* for all except a few to do the same. In about half an hour, have the men leave Don Pedro Estrada's house and come to the plaza

also. Carry out the whipping as ordered, and do not wait for me to appear."

Then he opened the door and let Fray Sebastiano and Don Marcos into the office. He turned and barked at Miguel again:

"Fray Sebastiano is to be allowed to go to the palace and attend the señorita presently." Then he stepped inside and barred the door.

"A close thing," Don Marcos said. "I desire now to go in hiding until I can get the ear of trusted men and make plans to overcome this uprising. If you wish to leave, Señor O'Dowd—"

"I want to get out of here quick, but not in these clothes."

"I have others for you."

"I'll let Fray Sebastiano out now, so he can go to the señorita," Dan said.

He unbarred the door as the *fray* departed, then barred it again. Don Marcos pressed against a spot on the wall, and a panel swung open. They went out of the room and into darkness, and Don Marcos closed the panel again.

Fumbling along the wall, they came to another door. Opening that, they went into a small underground room. Don Marcos lit a candle. The room held arms and ammunition, clothing, wine, preserved meat. O'Dowd stripped off Martinez' clothes and got into some ragged garments and put on an old sombrero.

"THE way out—?" he asked.

Don Marcos opened another door and disclosed a tunnel.

"Through that, señor, and you emerge behind a hut in some brush. It is but a short distance. I remain here for the present. Let me thank you for rescuing me. I'll reward you later."

Bending almost double, Dan fumbled

along the tunnel. The door had been closed behind him, and he was in darkness. Dust filled his nostrils, rats scampered ahead of him. It was stifling, and the air was foul.

He saw a glimmer of light ahead. The air became better. He came to a pile of rocks through which light filtered, and saw brush in front of them. Pulling away some of the rocks, he crawled out, and put the rocks back in place. He was behind an adobe hut and screened by brush. A few feet away was the end of a narrow street.

Nobody was in the street. O'Dowd hurried along bent half double, head down. Everybody seemed to be going toward the plaza, where there was a constant din. He hurried toward the pack train yard.

As he approached, he heard the Yanquis howling taunts at Martinez' men, and saw the latter withdrawing. He waited until it was safe, and hurried to the gate. They let him in and gathered round, as he told what had happened, and of plans he had made. It was time for the Yanquis to play in the game.

They shouted agreement, accepted his leadership, ran to saddle horses and get weapons. Dan hurried to his own hut, stripped off his clothes and got into buckskin and boots, and put his coonskin cap on his head.

His horse was ready when he left the hut. Men were selected to remain at the yard on guard. Others slipped out a few at a time, and started circling through the town to a rendezvous.

Gradually, they gathered at the rear of Martinez' *casa*, to find his men had taken the mules away and left the secret entrance clear. Most of Martinez' men had withdrawn to the plaza in obedience to the order Miguel had sent. The Yanquis dismounted, some remaining

to guard the horses, and the others followed O'Dowd through the brush to the rear wall.

They pulled away the loose adobe bricks and got inside. A flight of steps led downward. An avalanche of men suddenly fell upon the guard who sat before the door of the torture room. His first scream rang through the house, but the second was choked in his throat.

Some of the men rushed up the steps to carry out O'Dowd's orders, and others went with him to the torture room. They worked swiftly unfastening irons. Señora Fate's granddaughter was released first, then the others, and all were sent out to freedom.

Then Dan charged up the stairs with his men. Women were screeching in the paradise room. The few Martinez men fled when the Yanquis appeared. The frightened peon servants were fleeing. The women were told they could go if they wished.

"No loot!" O'Dowd called to his men. "No time for it now."

They hurried below again, to the room where Martinez had stored the munitions his pack train had brought. They selected weapons they desired and rushed out through the secret entrance.

Getting into their saddles, they rode swiftly to the Estrada *casa*, where the Martinez men had withdrawn to go to the plaza. The Yanquis took command of the street. Dan went to the patio gate and gave the signal. The gate was opened, and he hurried inside.

CHAPTER XIV

DON PEDRO ESTRADA received him, but this time Don Pedro was not alone. Beside him, her head held

high, stood Señorita Glorietta Estrada. Dan's eyes bulged.

"I'm mighty glad she's home safe," he said to Don Pedro. "Fray Sebastian got her here from the palace, did he? If she hadn't broken her word to me and gone to the *baile*—"

The señorita giggled.

"It might not have been so funny," Dan told her, some anger in his manner.

"Let us speak of other things now, señor," Don Pedro said. "Tell me what has happened."

O'Dowd explained swiftly.

"You have indeed done well, señor," Don Pedro said. "You and your men can do still more. I have news for you, brought by the messenger. I hold here my appointment as Governor of New Spain."

O'Dowd grinned. "That makes everything about perfect," he said. "I was figurin' it would be a chore to kick Martinez out 'less there was a good man to take his place. Was commencin' to think I'd have to be king of New Spain and let the Yanquis run it."

"What have you to suggest?" Don Pedro asked.

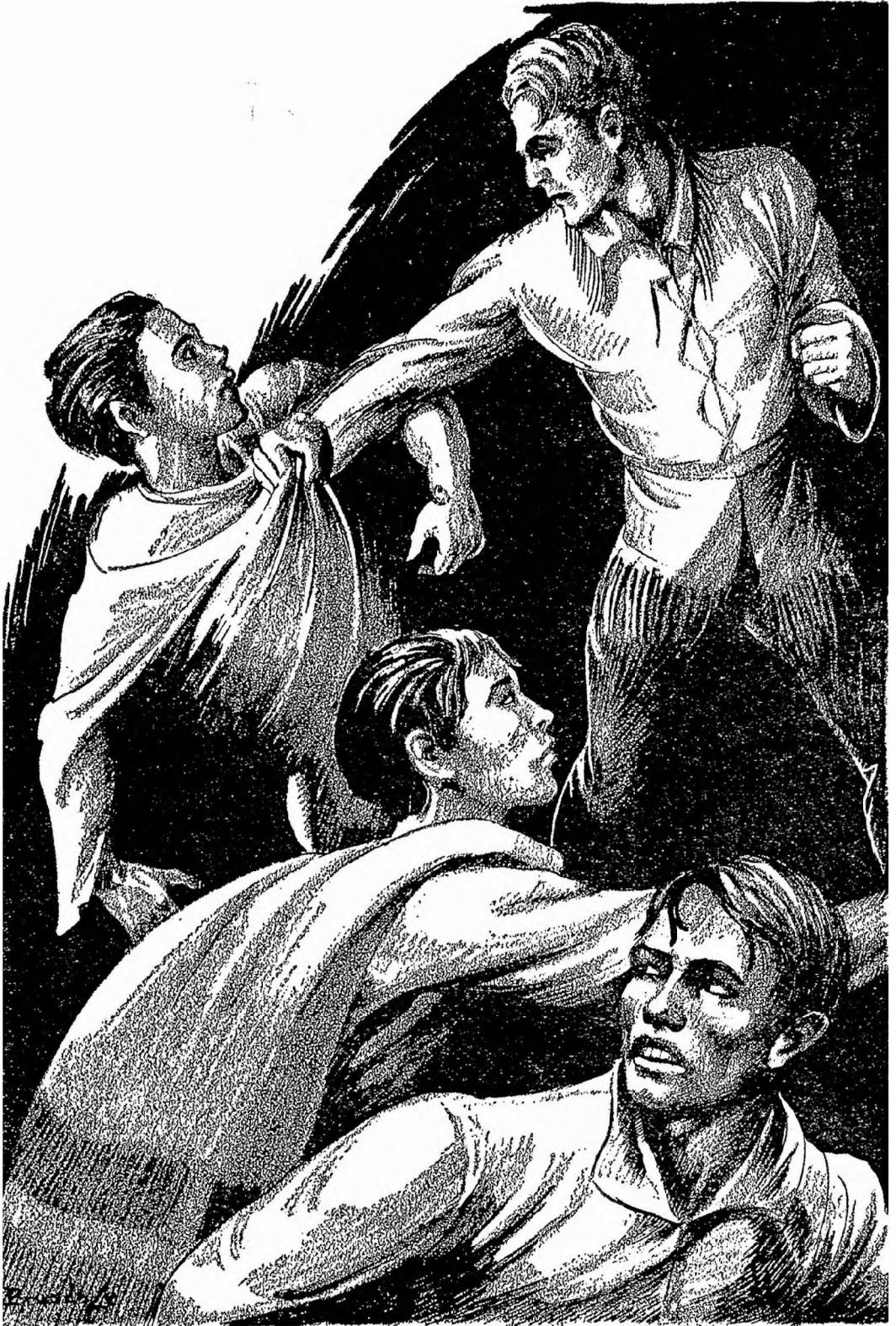
"The people are for you, Don Pedro. All you have to do is go to the plaza and announce your appointment. But the people may be puzzled. When the señorita took her ride this mornin' at the side of Martinez, naturally they got the idea you were backin' him."

"That was his object," Don Pedro said.

He went into the patio to issue orders. Dan turned to the señorita, and found her *dueña* had come into the room and was standing behind her. Señorita Glorietta smiled at him, however.

"I feel sure you do not approve of me, señor," she said.

"I approve of you, all right, but not



The frightened peon servants were fleeing.

of some of the things you've done," Dan replied. "You'll be gettin' into serious trouble some day, if you don't behave yourself."

"Perhaps, señor, I need a husband. No doubt one would beat me if I misbehaved. Are you to remain in Santa Fé, señor? It will become a great place as trade increases and more people come here to make their homes."

"I'd planned to go to Taos, and I'll maybe start when this fuss is over. Got some business there. But I'm goin' back with the wagon train when it leaves. But I reckon I'll be comin' back to Santa Fé with the next train."

DON PEDRO came hurrying back into the room.

"Señor O'Dowd, I have arranged to go to the plaza," he said. "I must make my appointment public. Trouble and bloodshed must be prevented if possible. My daughter, you will accompany me."

"You mean to take her along?" O'Dowd asked in surprise.

"I find it necessary, señor. You and your Yanqui friends can do much to help me now. Let us make plans."

They sat at the table and planned in whispers, while the señorita, with a slight show of displeasure, got up and walked the length of the room and stood looking out into the patio, the *dueña* at her side.

Then they all went out into the courtyard, where Don Pedro's carriage was waiting, and he got into it with the señorita on one side of him and the *dueña* on the other.

Dan hurried to the street to hold a quick conference with the Yanquis. They got into their saddles. The gate was opened, the carriage driven out into the narrow street.

Some of the Yanquis rode ahead and more behind. O'Dowd was in the van. They could hear men yelling and women screeching in the distant plaza.

CHAPTER XV

MARTINEZ' lieutenant, Miguel, had come with the pack train from Guadalajara, a long and tiresome journey, and had reached Santa Fé in time to play an important part in Martinez' plans. He had been so busy there had been no time for pleasure.

Waiting around the front of the *carcel*, he experimented in mixing wines and white whisky as a prelude to greater delights when Martinez was firmly established. His sturdy body had strength and he kept his feet, but his brain was befuddled and his eyes did not see so keenly as usual.

At the appointed hour, he carried out orders. Calling four men to help, he went below to the cells, took the key from the wall and tossed it to one of the others.

"Get the Yanqui out," he ordered, "and we'll have sport."

Martinez, the bag over his head, the gag keeping him from disclosing his identity, dressed in ragged peon's clothes, his feet bare and dirty, felt them seize him. He twisted and squirmed.

"Boot him!" Miguel ordered. "Take no nonsense from the Yanqui pig!"

The other men were befuddled by liquor also, and none was well acquainted with either Martinez or O'Dowd. So they gave the prisoner a few kicks and jerked him out of the cell, and forced him to hobble along the corridor and up the steps.

As they emerged from the building, the waiting mob gave howls of delight. Martinez was gurgling behind his gag,

but nobody heard him. If he pulled back, he got a kick or cuff. His own men cleared a path through the crowd so they could lead him to the whipping post. His arms were untied, then stretched over his head and tied to the post, his legs tied also.

"Lay on!" Miguel ordered his men.

They had brought two whips. One sang, struck Martinez' back and made a streak of red. A second blow fell, and blood spurted through the skin. The crowd howled. Miguel seized one of the whips and gave his chief a terrific blow which brought more blood.

"He's fainted already!" somebody shouted.

Martinez' body had sagged. A man stepped forward and rubbed salt into the wounds. The men whipped again. Martinez' body jerked, and he squirmed and twisted, showing he was not unconscious. His head, encased in the leather bag, wobbled from side to side.

"Enough for the present!" Miguel ordered.

He stepped back and raised a hand, and the deluge began. Gobs of mud and filth, clods and stones and sticks were hurled at the man tied to the post. Old women and squaws cackled in enjoyment as they tormented him. Children ran in and whipped his legs until blood streamed from them.

Martinez kept a hold on consciousness. The greater torture was in his mind. He knew he would not be respected after this. The people would not accept a ruler who had been whipped and scorned. His native pride was crushed, he never could hold up his head again. If he boasted or aped his betters, displayed his wealth and tried to act in a pompous manner, people would grin at him.

Now the lash was biting into his back

again at regular intervals. He felt strength leaving his body. The pain was not so sharp. Flashes came before his eyes, and he knew unconsciousness was approaching.

The whipping ceased, and again the deluge of mud and filth began. But a cry came from the fringe of the crowd, was echoed by others, gained in volume and ran around the plaza. The deluge stopped.

INTO the plaza from one of the streets mounted Yanquis were riding, surrounding a carriage, and others afoot were running beside the horses. They had come in force to rescue their comrade, the crowd thought, and would exact a terrible vengeance.

Women screamed and fled, pulling their children with them. Men scattered. Martinez' followers fumbled for weapons, not knowing whether to start trouble, since they had no commander to give them word.

The horsemen separated, and the carriage was driven straight toward the whipping post. The crowd recognized Don Pedro Estrada and his daughter.

The carriage stopped, and Don Pedro stood in it and gestured for silence.

"Take that man from the post!" Don Pedro ordered. "He has been whipped sufficiently."

Miguel lurched forward. "Don Pedro, Señor Martinez ordered this whipping. If I unbind him, it is your responsibility."

Don Pedro drew himself up. "Everything here is my responsibility. I am the Governor of New Spain." He picked up a document. "This came by special messenger—my appointment to serve as Governor. Listen as I read."

They gave him close attention as he read the wordy document in an impres-

sive manner. When he had finished, he looked them over again.

"If any here dares defy my authority, let him speak now!" Don Pedro cried.

"How about Martinez?" somebody called.

"He is not fit to be your ruler. He would serve his own interests. He would make himself a king, and only his favorites would be treated well."

"Where is Martinez? Let's hear from him!" somebody shouted.

Don Pedro pointed to the man at the whipping post.

"Take the bag off his head and revive him," he ordered.

CHAPTER XVI

MIGUEL sprang forward to obey. He was eager to cause as much delay as possible, hoping Martinez would hurry to the scene and take charge.

The other men waved the crowd back and made room. The ropes were taken off the victim, and Miguel fumbled with the cord which bound the leather bag around his neck. The cord loose, he lifted the bag and turned to toss it aside.

He had been working behind the victim, and did not see his face when one of the men lifted his head by thrusting it backward by the chin. But others saw.

This was not the red-headed Yanqui—and now they saw that Yanqui on a black horse beside Don Pedro's carriage. Here before them, victim of the whipping, the man at whom they had thrown filth, who had been scorned and derided, was Carlos Martinez.

There was a moment of stunned silence, then a roar of laughter. That laughter settled Martinez. His eyes

flamed, and he tried to lift his head.

"Miguel—!" he cried.

The horrified Miguel took a step forward and stopped. He remembered that he had commanded this affair, that he had put the lash across Martinez' back himself. It was better he did not show friendship for Martinez now.

"Well, señor?" Miguel asked.

"Call the men together!"

"Call them yourself, señor," Miguel suggested.

"To me!" Martinez howled. "Attack those Yanquis! Put Don Pedro under arrest!"

No man obeyed. They looked at the Yanquis on their horses, weapons held ready, at the others afoot and ready to charge. They glanced at the carriage, where Don Pedro Estrada stood with his arms folded across his breast.

"I am the Governor of New Spain and give orders here," Don Pedro said. "Be glad, Carlos Martinez, that you worked your treason before I was appointed. If you transgress again, you go before a firing squad."

"'Tis you who are the traitor, Don Pedro!" Martinez cried. "You urged me to rebellion. I and my men deposed Don Marcos Vega for you. You promised me your daughter for wife, and let her ride beside me this morning—"

"That is a lie, señor!" Don Pedro broke in. "All here know I despise you. Had I wished a partner in treason, you'd not have been the man. And my daughter did not ride beside you this morning!"

"Ha!" Martinez cried. "Do you hear that, people? How many of you saw her?"

"My daughter did not ride with you," Don Pedro repeated. "It was my niece."

A murmur of surprise ran through the crowd. Here was news! Nobody

there ever had heard Don Pedro had a niece.

“YEARS ago in Mexico City, I had a brother,” Don Pedro explained. “He became enamored of a native girl, and we of the family could do nothing. He married her, to the family’s disgrace, and later killed himself. That is why I left Mexico City years ago and came here. There was a daughter born, but no trace of mother and child could be found when we searched.

“Recently, a girl came to Santa Fé with an old man she believed to be her father, but who was in reality her mother’s brother. For her mother had died also. Martinez saw her, and had his thugs try to run her down. He asked for my daughter for his wife, and when I scorned him said he would seize my niece, make it appear she was my daughter and that I favored him in his treason.

“Finally he seized her, and it was my niece who rode beside him this morning, not knowing why. For she does not know, unless Fray Sebastiano has told her within the last hour, the truth of this affair.”

“Lies—” Martinez began, and stopped.

The crowd was parting. Down the lane it made came Fray Sebastiano with a frightened girl clinging to his arm. Señorita Glorietta stood beside her father and looked at the girl.

Murmurs came from the crowd when they saw how much the two girls resembled each other. They were enough alike to be sisters. The Estrada blood was strong in both.

Anita, badly frightened, was clinging to Fray Sebastiano, and he was patting her hand and telling her to have courage. At the side of the carriage, they stopped.

Don Pedro looked down at the girl. “I am your uncle, señorita,” he said. “Have you been told?”

“Sí, señor,” she murmured.

“And I am your cousin,” Glorietta Estrada said, bravely, bending down and offering her hand. “Come into the carriage and sit beside me. You have the right—my cousin.”

Don Pedro beckoned, and O’Dowd rode up beside the carriage.

“Do you understand now, Señor O’Dowd?” Don Pedro asked. “There were two girls, and perhaps that is why their comings and goings puzzled you.”

“And I, señor,” Glorietta said, “did not understand you that first night in the patio, and went to my father about it, and he explained. If I had a small amount of fun with you about it afterward, pray forgive me, señor.”

“I reckon you’re forgiven,” Dan replied.

“What about Martinez?” somebody was shouting again.

“I leave Fray Sebastiano to deal with him,” Don Pedro replied.

He motioned, and the carriage was driven on to the Governor’s house. The crowd was silent, watching the *fray*. Sebastiano walked near and spoke sternly.

“Carlos Martinez, guilty of almost every known crime, I could order you shot, but death would be too merciful,” the *fray* said. “It is my sentence that all your goods be taken from you and divided among the poor. Dressed in the rags of a peon, and without weapon or extra clothing, food or drink, you will be taken southward to the edge of the Indian country and released.”

“You would dare?” Martinez cried.

“Dare? Why not, señor? You are a nobody, a nothing from this moment.

You have no power, and soon you will have no pride. If you ever return to the vicinity of Santa Fé, you will go before a firing squad." Fray Sebastiano beckoned, and four men approached. "Take him and do as I have ordered."

The four seized Martinez and led him away. The crowd began to scatter. Dan O'Dowd rode over to the Governor's house. Don Pedro received him warmly. The two señoritas and the *dueña* were with him.

"You have come for your reward, señor?" Don Pedro asked.

"I'm not lookin' for any reward. I failed in spots, I reckon, and I don't want money for what I did. Doin' it was a pleasure. I've just come to wish

you luck and say 'goodby'."

"Goodby?" Señorita Glorietta asked.

"Goodby?" her cousin whimpered.

O'Dowd faced them as they stood side by side with the severe *dueña* behind them. He felt strangely disturbed when he looked at Señorita Glorietta and saw her soft smile, disturbed also at the expression in the face of her cousin.

"I ride to Taos," Dan said. "Got some business there. But maybe I'll be comin' back."

Glorietta Estrada smiled again, and extended her hand to him despite the *dueña's* warning cough.

"I feel sure you'll come back, señor," she said. "We'll always be waiting to welcome you. *Señor, á Dios!*"

"HOW!"

WHEN, on occasion, an army man raises a glass, the movement is invariably accompanied by the word "How!" rather than "Here's Luck" or "Mud in your eye" or other civilian equivalent. This curious custom had its origin in the Everglades of Florida almost a century ago.

In the winter of 1841 during the latter part of the Seminole War, several companies of the Eighth Infantry, and Company I of the Second Regiment of Dragoons, (now Troop I, 2d Cavalry), were encamped on the bank of the Kissimmee. Micco, an Indian guide, had been sent into the swamps to inform Coacooche, (Wild Cat), that Colonel Worth, commanding the Eighth Infantry, desired the chief's presence at a pow-wow. Coacooche was finally located and agreed to meet the Colonel on the 5th of March at an army post near Big Cypress Swamp.

On the appointed day, the chief appeared with his entourage. Sometime previously the Indians had attacked a theatrical troupe near St. Augustine, the plunder including a gorgeous stage wardrobe, so Coacooche, arrayed in all his glory, wore the nodding plumes of the Prince of Denmark, while close at his elbow ap-

peared Horatio, and another aide wrapped in the robes of King Richard. The colonel's officers managed to suppress any untoward mirth and the conference was conducted with fitting solemnity. Partly because of the importance of making a treaty and partly because of the genuine respect that one warrior feels toward another, Coacooche was treated as an honored guest.

During his stay, the chief observed that the officers, before drinking, always said "Here's looking at you" or something of the sort. Puzzled, he turned to Gopher John, a run-away slave who had lived for years among the Seminoles, and was now employed by the army as an interpreter. The negro did not know but ventured "It means 'How d'ye do!'" Thereupon the chief raised his cup with great dignity and said "How!" The officers instantly responded in the same manner.

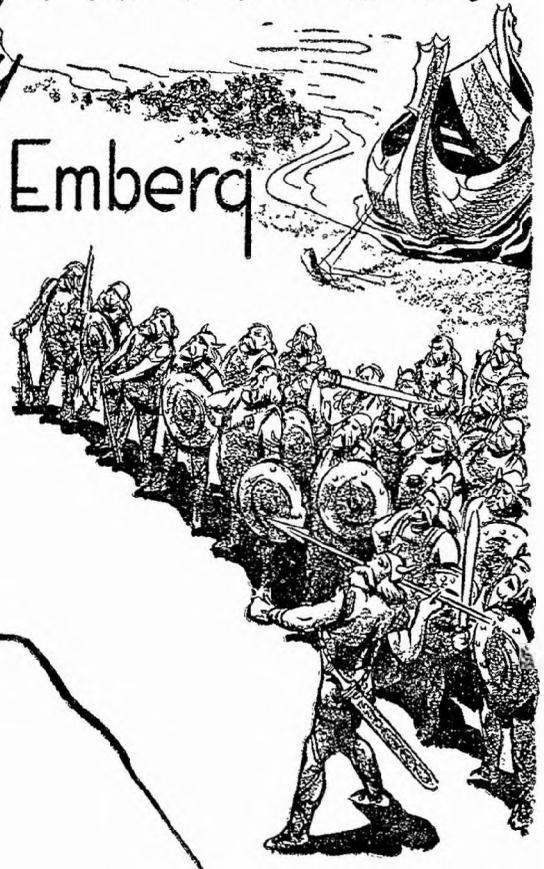
The custom soon spread from the Eighth Infantry and Second Dragoons to other regiments. For nearly a hundred years, our army, whether at Vera Cruz, Manila, Peking, Chaumont, Archangel or Coblenz, has repeated this toast first uttered in a Florida Swamp by Chief Wild Cat of the Seminoles.—*Allen P. Wescott.*



James Carr '39

Over the Danube

by
R.A. Emberg



Illustrated by JAMES CARR

IN THE king's skaale in the city of Ocum, a Gothic islet in the Roman province of Dacia, weighty matters were being discussed. A dozen Romans had requested an audience with Filimer, the young king of the Goths. They were now before the high seat.

Their spokesman, a gray bearded man, dressed in a white toga hemmed with patrician purple, was speaking.

"We have known for some time that you Goths contemplate moving on Nicopolis. It was to discuss this that we came hither."

"You seem to be alruna," the king re-

"You must be crazy, Goth. I have twenty men to your one. I can wipe your band off the earth!"

plied. "Tell us of the garrison. How many?"

"Two Spanish legions." The Roman returned readily.

Filimer stared thoughtfully at the old man. "Your reward?" he asked. "How much?"

"Only this. That we be allowed to worship the Trinity: the one God, the

Holy Ghost and the son, Christus, without hindrance; that we be free to preach the gospel to Roman, Goth and Greek, that all who believe shall have everlasting—"

"Hush—hush," Filimer clapped a hand to his forehead, "My head aches with these gods of yours. One in three—three in one—I make head nor tail of them. I asked: what do you want as a reward?"

"Nothing, King, except that we be allowed to worship as we please—and to preach the holy gospel."

"Nicomedus, you are a Roman?" The king's voice was hard.

"Aye, King. Ever my line has been Roman. My fathers stood with Caius Gracchus; ever have we stood with the common people against those who would oppress and enslave."

"Yet you would turn traitor to Caesar? You invite us to take over Nicopolis? Were you a Goth and acted thus, we would flay you alive."

The Christian's eyes blazed at the mention of the Emperor. "Listen, Goth," he cried, "what is this Caesar if not a blood-thirsty tyrant? Aye, Septimus Severus has drenched the empire with blood. What is the Roman Empire? Nothing but a vast slave market. What is the ruling class at Rome? Is it not the wealthy few, content to feast, watch the gladiatorial games and build monuments to itself? Rome stagnates. It has eaten the heart out of its people. For Rome, the handwriting is on the wall. It has been tried in the balance and found wanting. You Goths, even if you are pagan, are fresh and clean. You have the free clear air of the snowy lands from which you came. God willing, under you, the Empire shall become righteous, unless," he shook his head, "you too, succumb to the corrup-

tion of palaces and possessions. My diocese has discussed the matter thoroughly. We invite, and will aid you to take the city of Nicopolis, on the condition that you give us the right to worship our God and preach his gospel." Nicomedus folded his arms and stood waiting.

FILIMER spoke in his own tongue to the Gothic haulds clustering about the high seat. They understood little Latin.

"I make nothing of his religion," he said, "but it seems to be a kindly one. There are three gods: a Jahve, a white Christus, and a Holy Ghost. By some strange alruna device, they are combined into one, then back to three and so on. The Romans will not allow the worship of these gods and they put their followers to death in man hewings in the arena. Nicomedus invites us to take over the city of Nicopolis."

"Since when has a Goth waited an invitation from any man to take anything he may with the strength of his good right arm and hard Swedish steel?" roared a red-whiskered warrior, brandishing a huge axe. "It is for us to make the conditions, Filimer, not these Roman slaves."

"Like father, like son, Wulfson," the king smiled. "Wulf, the Balt, your sire, would rather fight than eat. Aye, we shall name the terms, but why turn away allies? Now we can overcome the walls of Nicopolis."

"I thought the Romans cared not what gods a man worshipped," another hald said.

"That was my understanding too," Filimer agreed. To Nicomedus, "'tis said by one of my men that the Romans permit the worship of all gods. Why, then, do they persecute the Christians?"

"Because we will not sacrifice to the Emperor," the old man replied. "Because, Goth, we are enemies of the Empire and its abominable system. In the old days, religion was free. Not so, now."

The king hesitated. "How do we know you are sincere?" he asked. "This may be a scheme to lure us beyond the Danube. What guarantee have you that you will keep your word?"

Nicomedus extended an arm above his head. "We Christians do not break faith, but I offer as hostage, my daughter Marcia. If we break faith, do your will with her. God knows, you could do no worse than Caesar's governor at Nicopolis!"

THERE was great activity in Ocum. Clang of hammer on anvil resounded in the street of iron workers as smiths fashioned ship gear, swords, axes, helms and arrowheads.

Down by the quays on the river, a tributary of the Danube, a forest of masts loomed against the sky as shipwrights prepared the fleet.

On the drill grounds, the shieldwall and *swinfylke* evolutions went on apace. Ten thousand Goths, many of them born in the land of Ovim, practiced under the eagle eyes and rough fists of the Baltic veterans.

With bovine placidity the Ovim looked on. Let the Goths prepare for war if they were foolish enough to prefer it to the comforts of peace. For their own sakes, the Ovim hoped all would end well; the Goths were kind masters.

Side by side, in the land wrenched from the Roman Eagles, the customs of both Goth and Ovim flourished. So did the people. The Goths were masters. However, they exercised their mastery

in a restrained and equitable manner, remarkable, considering the fact that blood and brawn, bone and sinew, they were little other than plain barbarians.

The Ovim could have their book learning. For the Goth, the school of sword and axe. Such was the will of Odin, and thus had the Goths ruled in the city of Ocum forty odd years.

Continuous intercourse with the Scandinavian Peninsula was maintained by way of the Dniester, the Dnieper and the Vistula. To Scandinavia went Roman gold, Roman goods, spices and other things. Pepper, very palatable to the Scandinavian palate, was a regular and expensive trade article. In return, came Swedish steel, and ever and ever new waves of barbarians. On their path southward they tore loose Slavic, Esthonian, Hunnish and other racial fragments which coalesced with them. Though at the end of forty years the Goths in Ocum were beginning to lose the pure Gothic blood by this infusion of alien strains, nevertheless the primitive culture and worship of the Aesir gods remained in the same state as it had been in Sweden at the beginning of the migration.

FILIMER supervised preparations for the descent upon Nicopolis. From daybreak until dusk he was in the armories, along the quays, aboard the ships and on the drill grounds.

Nicomedus and his men had returned to Nicopolis, leaving Marcia at Ocum. In the king's skaale with Alania, Filimer's mother, Marcia became as one of the family. The spinning wheel, the loom and the buttery were no strangers to this Roman girl. Latin, the tongue of Alania, hushed these many years, again sounded in the women's bower, and laughter, which Marcia had almost for-

gotten in Nicopolis, came to her lips—and into her heart.

Messages from Nicomedus told of political turmoil in Nicopolis, the state of the town's defenses and the plans of the Christians to aid the Goths.

The days wore along to mid-summer when preparations were almost complete.

A new galley, the Sea Otter, was being launched, and Filimer, Alania and Marcia stood watching the ceremony.

A Hunnish thrall, hands bound, was led to the prow to a V shaped block over which his back would be broken prior to tying him to the stem.

"A sacrifice," Filimer explained to Marcia. "He is a well-grown Hun and should be very acceptable to the All-Father."

Marcia's face went white. "Filimer," she begged, "don't let them do it. In Nicopolis, men are torn apart in the arena for sport, but I didn't think the free Goths were so cruel."

The king looked at her wonderingly. "It's not sport, Marcia," he explained. "It has been the Gothic custom since the first Ynglings came to Upsala. The ship would be unlucky if we withheld from the gods their just dues."

The girl's face was taut—determined. "Filimer," she said, "if you allow this, I will send word to my father that the Goths are as cruel as Caesar, that nothing can be gained by changing masters."

Filimer was troubled. The men waited his signal. To launch a ship, build a skaale, construct a bridge, without a sacrifice was unthinkable. Time had been when galleys were launched on living human rollers.

Quickly, he decided. For once there would be no blood-spilling. "Take him

away," he ordered. "Let the ship be launched."

The artisan in charge of the work sprang forward. "Such is not the custom," he began.

"Let the ship be launched." The king's eyes were hard.

Wonderingly, sullenly, the shipwrights resumed their work.

"To the bower, Mother," Filimer whispered, "and take this girl with you. She has done enough damage for one day."

"That was nobly done, Filimer," Marcia said softly. "And I thank you."

He waved shortly. "To the bower lest these men know it was you who forbade the sacrifice."

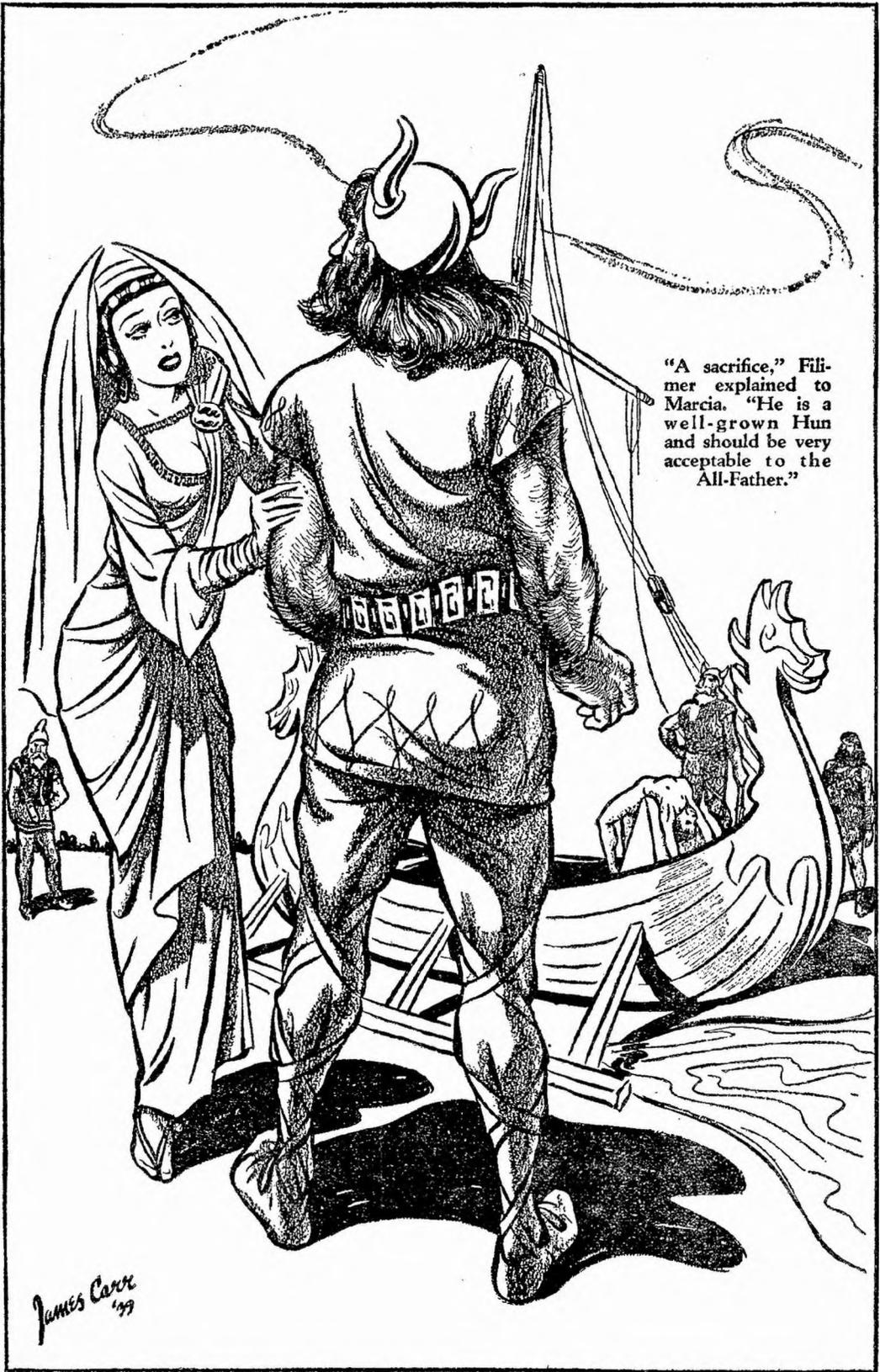
That evening came a dozen haulds to inquire why the sacrifice had been omitted.

Filimer calmly surveyed the dissenters. "Had we not omitted it," he explained, "we should never have put foot inside Nicopolis. It's blood Odin wants. Well, I promise him rivers of it, enough to satisfy him ten times over ere we take Nicopolis. Now leave me—I have tasks to perform."

After the haulds, partly mollified, had gone, Filimer breathed a sigh of relief. "Maiden," he murmured, "you know not how nearly you brewed me a pretty kettle of trouble."

THE fleet was dropping down river; one hundred ships and ten thousand men. In Nicopolis was at least an equal number of legionaries and thrice that number in light armed troops. And the walls of Nicopolis were thick and high.

On the wharves in Ocum, a great gathering of people waved farewell to the fleet. Alania and Marcia watched the last ship out of sight.



"A sacrifice," Filmer explained to Marcia. "He is a well-grown Hun and should be very acceptable to the All-Father."

James Carré
'39

"Thus have I watched his father," Alania sighed. "Men must always to war. May there come a day when women will no longer tremble to the sound of trumpets."

"Aye," said Marcia. "When the religion of the Christus is known throughout the world, will the day come."

"I know not of religions, Marcia," replied the older woman dubiously. "To me they are all cruel, be they the Aesir or that of the Romans. Of this Christus I have heard. He seems not to delight in blood as do the other gods. Blood and war! I have always known them. My father was of the legions. Gaul and Britain were my playgrounds, the camp of the legion my nursery. Oh, for an everlasting peace."

By the steerboard of the Otter stood Filimer. Beside him was the last messenger from Nicomedus, who had arrived half starved and gaunt, just before the fleet sailed.

"Lupinus smells a rat," the messenger told the Goth. "The walls are being strengthened and he has asked Phillipolis for reinforcements."

"The plan remains the same?" Filimer asked.

"Yes. Maximus, the governor of Phillipolis, is jealous of Lupinus. He will not send reinforcements unless ordered to by Caesar. Then it may be too late. And the legion at Phillipolis is German. Perhaps it can not be relied upon. Right now the whole empire is seething with revolts and ambitions. The African blames it on the Christians. We had it on good authority that a general persecution will be ordered shortly. In Nicopolis Lupinus may not proceed against us until he thinks the danger of the Goths' coming is over; on the other hand, he may order a general

persecution as soon as the Emperor's orders are received. If so, the plan will be worthless."

Filimer's face was grave. "Inside the city or on the plains," he said, "we can take care of all the legions between here and Rome. Ten to one or twenty to one, it matters not. But walls! That's a different matter. We Goths have never learned to fight stone walls."

TEN miles west of Nicopolis, on the southern shore of the Danube, the Goths disembarked. It was night and sullen black clouds hid the sky. Silently, they went into concealment in the willow thickets bordering the river.

Ten ships and a thousand men with Filimer in command continued down river. When the battlements of the town were sighted, they tied up at the river bank and, disdaining any attempt at concealment, went ashore and marched directly to the main road which, via a pass in the Balkan mountains, connected Nicopolis with Phillipolis.

Marching into the road, the Goths turned northward to the city gates, taking up a position directly under the walls. It was just daybreak when they arrived. As yet, the gates had not been opened. Terrified peasants on their way to market scurried toward the city. Trumpets on the walls and in the watch towers blared. The arrival of the Goths had been noted.

A sallyport in the main gate opened and a body of horsemen emerged. They reconnoitered the Gothic camp. The Goths, careless of the scrutiny, went ahead with breakfast preparations. When within hailing distance, the Romans halted. A man clad in the golden cuirass of a tribune advanced and called in Latin:

"Who are you that make free with the common?"

Filimer replied in the same tongue. "We are Goths from Ocum come to visit the great berg of Caesar."

"You sent no envoys," the tribune returned suspiciously. "In these days strangers are not welcome. Then too, Goth, you are forbidden the south shore of the Danube. What will Caesar say when he learns you have violated the agreement?"

"Not an agreement, Roman. An order from Caesar to keep to the north side of the river. One we have never recognized. We would see the city. We have goods to trade. Swedish steel from the land of the snows, walrus hides, walrus ivory, and we would buy garments, spices, pepper and other things."

The tribune was unimpressed.

"I will speak to the governor," he said. "Meanwhile, my Gothic friends, do not approach the gates or you will taste Spanish steel as hard and keen as your Swedish. My legionaries keep watch!" He wheeled and rode away.

"Friendly, eh?" Filimer said to the scald Roar, who stood near.

"Aye, Filimer," said the scald, "I'll put that in a song, something like this." He began chanting: "The Romans came and looked upon the wolves of the Goths, but they came not too close for they feared the sharp fangs, and they remembered too well how the iron legions fared, when folkhewing they tried, on the banks of the Danube."

THE palace of Lupinicus, the Roman governor of Nicopolis was a place of confusion. Attendants and soldiers ran hither and yon. The governor had attended a banquet the previous night and, getting home in the early hours of

morning, he had scarcely retired when he was confronted with the astounding news that a band of Goths from Ocum had camped without the city gates.

He was in vile temper. "Why tell me, Crassus?" he bellowed to the tribune who had brought the news. "Why didn't you drive them into the river?"

"Because, Excellency," the tribune was curt as he dared be, "there is peace between the Romans and the Goths. Furthermore, the business-like way in which they made their camp indicated that they were prepared for a trial at arms. True, there are but a thousand, but Excellency, if you had been with me at Ocum some forty odd years ago, you too would hesitate to turn out the legions. If your Excellency has not heard or if he has and forgotten, then may his humble servant inform him that three thousand Goths utterly destroyed two legions outside the walls of Ocum. I was a centurion then, but I shall never forget that red day. The Goth waded in his own blood to his knees, but the Roman crumpled beneath the shock."

"May the gods damn the coward Maximus," swore the governor. "A month gone and no word of the legion he promised me. What do you think, Crassus? Are the Goths up, or is this band what it pretends to be?"

"I don't know, Excellency." The tribune was frank. "You know what the rumors are. The spies we sent to Ocum have not yet returned. The merchants have reported activity of a sort that may mean war, but no matter what the Goths can do in the field, they can't scale walls. We have ample provisions. My advice is to keep the gates closed and sit tight."

"And let a handful of barbarians ruin our commerce?" stormed the governor.

"Let a thousand skin-clad men keep us cooped up as though we were rats? For a military man, Crassus, you show too much caution."

"As you will, Excellency." Crassus shrugged his shoulders. "Give the word and I'll take the legions out, but if we use force, the whole horde from Ocum will be upon us when word gets abroad."

The governor paced the floor. "By Jupiter," he raged, "I'd like to crucify a few hundred on the city walls. I'd make an example—"

"And your hide, ripped from you alive, would grace their temple in Ocum within a month," the tribune grimly replied.

THE governor shuddered. "I'll follow your advice, Crassus. What else should we do?"

"Get a messenger off to Maximus at once. Tell him the safety of Nicopolis is the safety of Phillipolis. If we fall, Phillipolis falls too. Tell him about the flaying alive. That should have some influence. The Goths could make a tent of his flabby pelt."

"And so far as my personal sentiments are concerned, they'd be welcome to it," added the governor.

"And for mine, they could have yours too," the tribune muttered to himself. Aloud, "I'll send scouts up the river to investigate the willows. I want to be sure that this batch outside the wall is not just a lure."

"A good idea, Crassus, and while you're here," picking up a scroll of parchment, "here are the latest orders with regard to the Christians. They're to be rooted out. An end is to be made of the sect."

The lines in the tribune's face deepened. "By Jupiter, that's bad!" he whis-

pered. "Are the orders precise?"

"Here they are," the governor gave him the scroll, "with the Emperor's own seal."

The tribune shrugged his shoulders. Plainly, the job was not to his liking. "Any suggestions?" he asked.

The governor eyed him. "So long as the Goths are here, we'd better wait," he said. "Afterward, we'll begin. That long bearded Nicomedus is the hub. It he can be made to talk the matter should be simple. And Crassus, that daughter of his, Marcia—I'm extremely anxious that nothing befall her. Bring her to the palace—to me. You understand?"

The old tribune, his face burned and lined with years of service, inured to bloodshed and violence, could hardly repress his disgust.

"Yes, Excellency," he replied shortly. "I'll bring her to you if I find her."

FOR five days the Goths under Filimer remained in camp. The gates of the city stayed closed. Peasants bringing their produce to market were dispossessed of their burdens and sent homeward.

Daily, bodies of Roman horse reconnoitered the Gothic camp, but no further conversations were held.

On the morning of the fifth day, Filimer stood looking at the city walls as the sun threw its first rays above the horizon. To Roar, the scald, he said: "If the sun shines bright this is the day."

Bright and warm the sun continued to rise. When halfway to the zenith, a Gothic trumpet sounded. The waiting men fell into formation, then, to the clash of axe and sword on shields, they marched toward the gates. A hundred paces from the portal they halted and

Filimer stepped forward to address the tribune who stood with the governor on the battlements.

"Five days have we waited, Roman," he cried. "Open the gate or we will force them."

The tribune laughed. "You must be crazy, Goth. Either that or the conquests of your race have filled you with contempt for all others. I have twenty men to your one. I can wipe your band off the earth!"

"It's war, then?" Filimer hurled the challenge.

"Yes. If you wish it."

Striding forward, the Gothic king cast the long javelin held in one hand. Soaring true, it struck the heavy wooden beam of the gate. It penetrated deep and hung quivering.

"The dogs!" On the wall, the governor lost his temper. "Let the legions at them, Crassus," he barked. "And take alive that tall fellow. I shall crucify him."

"Yes, Excellency," the tribune replied. "I go now to place myself at the head of my soldiers."

A MAN dressed in the breast-plate and greaves of a legionary, standing near the Governor and Crassus, followed in the steps of the tribune. Mounting a horse tethered near the watch-tower, he rode furiously toward the temple of Jupiter. At the temple, built upon an eminence, he dismounted and strode rapidly up the spiral staircase to the roof. A man in white toga lounged on the center of the flat marble top near a strange piece of apparatus composed of shining squares of burnished metal or silvered glass.

"The signals, Paul," cried the seeming legionary; "the legions prepare to battle."

The white toga'd man sprang to the contrivance. He turned it on a pivot and slanted the silvered squares to an angle which would catch the sun's rays. Again and again he went through the operation. Then far away, from a low horizon, came an answering flash.

"They have seen it," cried the legionary. "I go to muster the brothers. Farewell, Paul."

"Farewell, Ansgar, may the Lord protect you." The man bent to his task.

THE Goths in *swinfylke*, shields linked, faced the Romans before the gates. Like statues they waited for the onset. Here and there a warrior cried to the Aesir or chanted a song of Asgard, but for the most part, the northmen were silent.

The Romans were in three divisions of heavy foot, with cavalry on the flanks. Unlike the Goths, the Roman shieldwall was open, five feet being allowed each soldier for free play with sword and buckler.

A trumpet sounded in the Roman ranks, the divisions moved forward and out flew a cloud of skirmishers. Running toward the Goths, they hurled a cloud of light javelins. The missiles glanced harmlessly off the close linked shields. The skirmishers retired through the intervals in the heavy foot. Ten paces from the motionless Goths, the entire Roman line paused, then with a shout and a long, stern trumpet blast which bade the legionaries close, the Romans rushed forward, sending their heavy pila through the air, then on to the Gothic shieldwall with sword and buckler.

The shieldwall stood. Long swords licked out. Legionaries went down. With their short blades they were unable to reach the northerners. Here and

there a Roman crawling on hands and knees slashed at the legs of the Goths. Warriors assigned to the task watched for such attempts to break the shield-wall. Piercing cries sounded as assailants were dragged inside and butchered.

The Roman horse thundered against the shieldwall, but the long blue blades reached mount and rider. The horse retired, shattered, to reform.

Up and down the front of the war wedge, hacked the legionaries. Officers begged their men to break through and set the example by throwing themselves on the Gothic points. But regardless of the numbers hurled against the *swinfylke*, the Gothic formation remained intact.

HOURS passed. Like combers beating upon a reef, the Romans reformed, rolled forward, only to be dashed back again and again. Dead and wounded were heaped high before that invulnerable shieldwall.

Then a cry of alarm from the Roman ranks. A cry of fear. The city gates were closing. Foot by foot, ponderously and slowly, they swung into place. The Roman soldiery, still outnumbering the Goths ten to one, were anxious and amazed.

Crassus sent an aide to see what had happened. A white cloaked figure on the wall sent an arrow feathering toward him. He spurred back to Crassus.

"The Christians have risen!" he cried. "It is they who have closed the gates."

"Not so frightened, Orestes," reassured Crassus. "We can still crush the Goths—after that, deal with the Christians."

"The Goths don't crush so easily," returned the aide apprehensively.

"So I informed the governor," Crassus said dryly. "By Jupiter, I wish he were here. I'd like to see him spitted on one of those long blue blades."



"The Christians have risen!" he cried.

Orestes made no reply. On the roadway was a cloud of dust. Dry mouthed, he pointed to it.

"The legion from Phillipolis—or Goths? I wonder," breathed the tribune.

Through the dust clouds came a column of men. Those bearskin cuirasses, those round steel caps, those long heavy swords and brutal axes were not Roman. On they came at the double. A pause—the *swinfylke*, the boarhead, formed, a new fresh shieldwall came into being. Nine thousand Goths swept toward the remnants of the one thousand; another pause—and the combined forces hurled themselves at the panic stricken legions.

The Romans did not wait for the onset. Away went sword and shield. Away went breastplate and greaves. Away went anything likely to impede flight. The Roman horse melted away. Toward the Danube streamed the fugi-

tives, pursued by the Goths, whose swords and axes bit deeply from behind.

Crassus looked for his aides. They too had fled. "The glory that was Rome's," he whispered. Unsheathing his sword and spurring his mount, he plunged into the Gothic shieldwall. It opened to receive him.

ROAR, the scald, sat upon a pile of slain, singing the praises of Filimer and the glories of Asgard. Suddenly he became silent.

The city gates had opened. From the portal came a procession of men, women and children. They moved slowly toward the victorious Goths. Carried at the head of the procession was a replica of the instrument upon which the Roman put to death common criminals: a wooden crucifix.

Filimer and a few haulds went to meet the Christians. The Goth folk looked curiously on.

NEXT MONTH

McFARRITCH AND THE FRENCH WOMAN

by **JAMES VALE DOWNIE**

When Farlan, exiled Scottish Covenanter, met the Huguenot maid in the Low Countries, he knew the Devil was after his soul, but the McFarritches were never overly bright, so—

DANGER, LAUGHTER AND LOVE



MEDICINE HAT

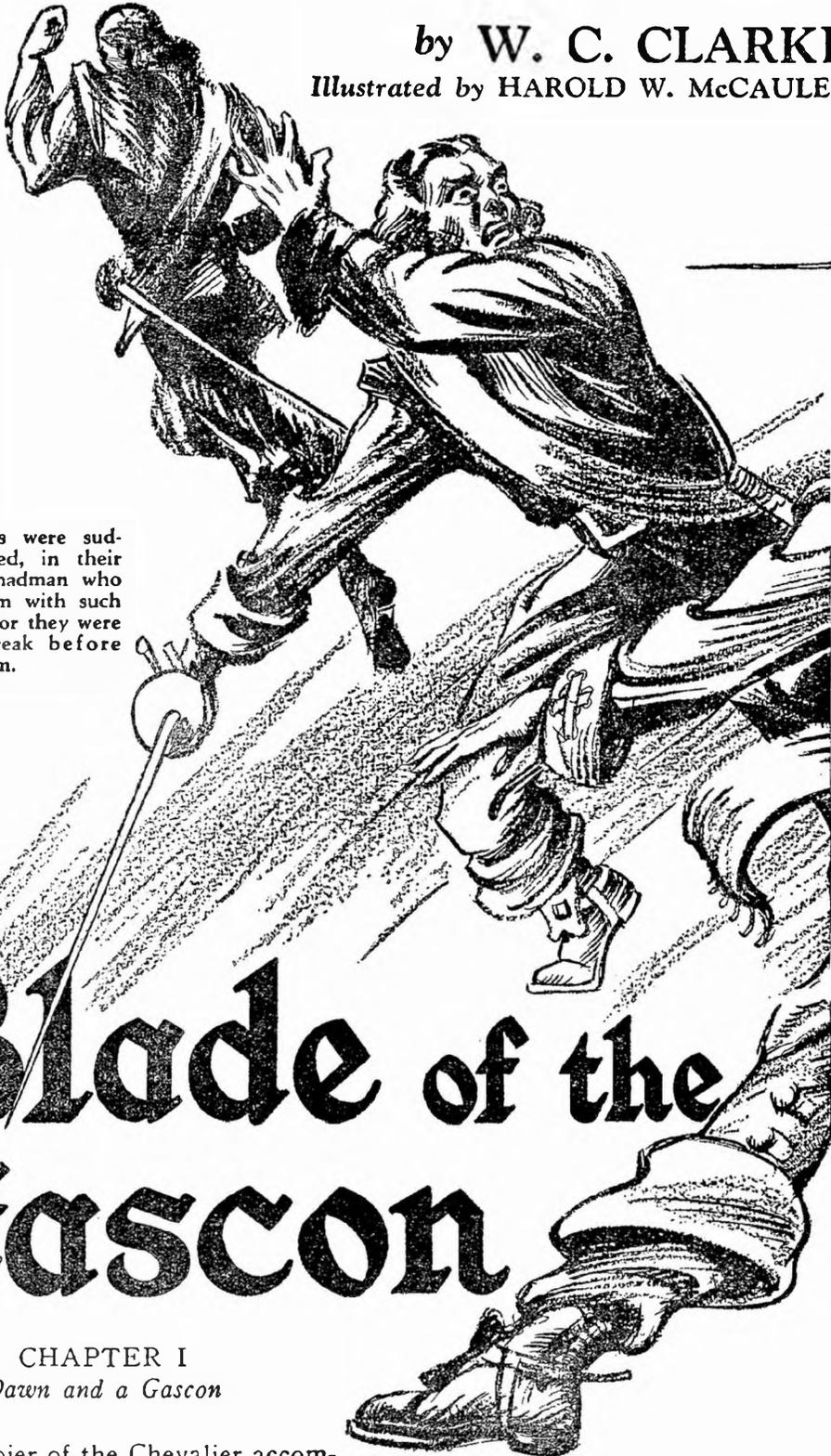
by **STANLEY VESTAL**

If Oliver Brook's hat was Good Medicine to him, why not to his enemies, if they could get it?

PLUS OTHER EXCITING STORIES

by W. C. CLARKE

Illustrated by HAROLD W. McCAULEY



The assassins were suddenly attacked, in their turn, by a madman who came at them with such skill and fervor they were forced to break before him.

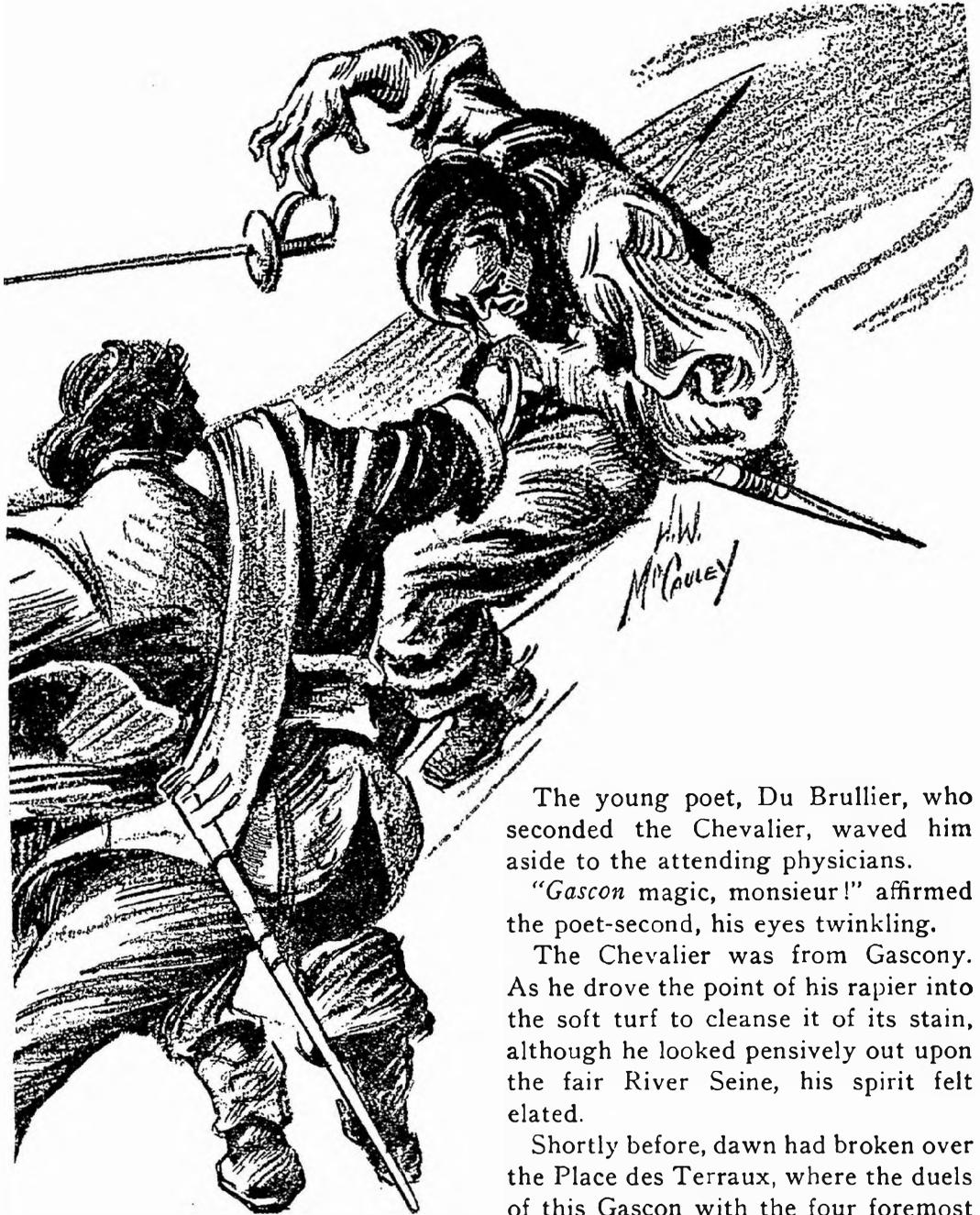
Blade of the Gascon

CHAPTER I
Dawn and a Gascon

THE rapier of the Chevalier accomplished a masterly parry.

The French maître d'armes, Le Flamand, had tried his special foyne

thrust at the head, puzzling in its jerky time-movement. It had proven fatal on other fields.



Yet the Chevalier solved the stroke in the quick heart-beat of its apt performance. Imperturbably he developed his parry's consummation into a reversal of the point and thrust in his turn.

The French master reeled back with a disabled sword-arm.

"Magician!" he gasped, eyes wide with amazement.

The young poet, Du Brullier, who seconded the Chevalier, waved him aside to the attending physicians.

"*Gascon* magic, monsieur!" affirmed the poet-second, his eyes twinkling.

The Chevalier was from Gascony. As he drove the point of his rapier into the soft turf to cleanse it of its stain, although he looked pensively out upon the fair River Seine, his spirit felt elated.

Shortly before, dawn had broken over the Place des Terraux, where the duels of this Gascon with the four foremost fencing masters of Paris were taking place.

As the Chevalier so ably had defeated his first antagonist, he heard, among the plaudits of the onlooking gallants, the acclaim of no less a personage than Prince Gaston, brother to the King of France.

Now there seemed to be some question of precedence among the remain-

ing opponents of the Gascon. The poet stifled a great yawn.

"If I were not so drowsy, Chevalier, I could write a sonnet praising this fair dawn . . . or love, and so win fame," he murmured.

"Would you rise so early to write of love—for mere fame, my poet?" the Chevalier gibed.

"Ha!" quoth the poet. "'Tis true fame has ever been a step beyond me or, overlooked, behind me. Yet I am no pawn of others' ideas. My originality is my own, not pilfered. So I will put aside that hackneyed thing termed 'love' and write of that unknown event at court—the dawn.

"But come, Chevalier, your next opponent waits. It is the Spaniard, de Limia. By Bacchus, I will drink a tun of wine after the meetings; it will make me dry to see you cut them down. There'll be Homeric laughter at the hotels tonight!"

His second and third antagonists were defeated by the Gascon in inimitable manner, both retiring with minor wounds.

NOW Prince Gaston countenanced the proceedings in pure spleen against the Cardinal Richelieu, for whom he had bitter hatred and a wholesome fear. As usual half-drunken, he slyly applauded the Chevalier for breaking the edicts of His Eminence against dueling, the while cautioning his attendant favorite gentleman, the Duke de Puylaurens, to keep a keen watch for the guards of that dignitary.

"'Sdeath!" exclaimed the prince. "Note the quick, sure turn of the Gascon's leg. A thing of beauty to behold."

"The man is using methods of all schools," agreed Puylaurens. "Watch the careless handling of his blade, his

seeming indifference. The apparent weak points in his defense are but to draw on his attacker."

Gaston was no mean swordsman himself. "He is a master of timing," he muttered. "His point is so late in parry as to barely put aside the opposing blade; he escapes by the barest fraction the thrust. Yet he toys with them. It is worth staying up till dawn to see. 'Sdeath! I am becoming sober. Who and what is the fellow?"

Puylaurens eyed the prince, calculatingly. His voice fawned.

"Recall, monseigneur, I brought you to this new sensation. He terms himself 'The Chevalier'. Some time since he opened a *salle d'armes* in the fashionable Rue de Bethisy, with no pupils. Without warning, he challenged the four most prominent fencing masters in Paris, undertaking to defeat them all with the rapier in a single evening, or forfeit a hundred louis to each master!"

The duke pressed shaking hand to aching forehead, and sighed, resignedly, under his breath. Being favorite gentleman to the brother to a king entailed being a fountain-head of information, and drinking a fountain-head of wine upon all occasions. Yet, withal, he thought complacently, there were compensations.

"The evening arrived," he continued, noting Gaston's interest. "Before half the nobles of Paris this unknown Gascon, by this or that trick of fence, conquered the four maestros. The thing was uncanny. In a night the Chevalier's *salle d'armes* became the vogue—his sword the most famous in Paris.

"Owing to our absence from Paris, monseigneur, we missed that night but we are here for this dawn. The four fencing masters attributed their defeat to the fact that buttoned foils were

used. They challenged the Gascon to naked points and he had the effrontery to accept. Hence the meeting in this secluded spot.

"But see now, he faces the Italian." A breath of premonition seemed to overtake the favorite. "Somehow I like not his assurance. He cannot always conquer. Fifty louis, monseigneur, the Gascon meets his fate," the duke ended, eagerly.

"Taken." Gaston's smile was cunning. "And if he wins, we have good use for a famous sword—if we can save him from the Cardinal and the Bastille."

THE fourth, and remaining, challenger of the Chevalier was no less a master than the Italian, Caizo, the "lamer of men," credited with the crippling of half the male population of Milan—a pleasing myth. But the man was truly expert in the "coup de Jarnac"—a left-handed drawing cut at the inside of the knee. To him the Chevalier paid the tribute of close attention as they fought. For the first time he lost some of his jaunty manner.

To meet the justly feared attack of the Italian master, he again changed his style of fence, holding his point far forward—so loosely, it seemed, a breath might dislodge it. But 'twas no insensate thing, that point, pregnantly become a wall of steel, against which the Italian used his bag of tricks in vain.

As for the Chevalier, it contented him, for the moment, to remain strictly upon the defensive. Despite his incredible exertions, he seemed iron-sinewed and scarcely breathed.

Finally, exasperated, Caizo snarled out:

"Watch your knee, monsieur!"

"It comes! It comes! The 'Jarnac'!"

whispered the onlookers with bated breath.

The flicker of a smile crossed the Gascon's face, as he replied.

"Try your *botte*, maestro. 'Tis all you have remaining. As I parry I will take you in the right leg, in my turn."

"Horns of Panurge!" lisped the poet. "Is the man omnipotent?"

An evil gleam appeared in the eyes of the Italian. He seemed veritably to tie himself into a knot of muscle and, from a bewildering stance, uncoiling, shot forth his famous "falso manco" stroke, with extremely sudden virulence, knowing if his disdainful antagonist improvised a parry, he was lost. It was a supreme effort, gallantly essayed.

But the Gascon met the thrust intelligently. The eye could not well follow the parry or the counter-stroke. Yet out of the *mêlée* there came the flickering of a blade, tossed high in the air, and the cursing Italian, disarmed, held his right leg by his hand where it had been stricken.

Across his face a deathly pallor spread. A paroxysm of fear shook him. That he should be lamed for life as he had often those others!

"Maestro," the Chevalier declared, "you are a gallant fighter, although somewhat merciless I hear. My steel cut no artery. 'Tis but a flesh wound. Yet spare your next opponent for the clemency."

The poet flung his beaver high in the air and his frank shout rang out, in defiance of the occasion's etiquette.

"The man's a paladin," he asserted, joyously. "I'll immortalize him in verse All Paris shall hear."

"If that drunken ass brays too loud, make him the fifth to feel your blade today, monsieur," admonished Prince Gaston who approached the Chevalier.

"We owe you thanks for rare entertainment, yet there are still the cardinal's edicts." Gaston laughed, dryly, and continued. "You may well need a friend at court, shortly. Count upon me."

The Chevalier bowed, in apparent gratitude.

"Monseigneur, you honor me," he declared.

"If you are in your *salle d'armes* to-night and not in the Bastille reserve the hour of ten for two new pupils at fence, myself and the Duke de Puylaurens," commanded the prince. He waved a benign hand and was gone, leaning upon the arm of his favorite.

"But," queried Puylaurens, "think you then this swordsman is the man for our purpose?"

"The very fellow," declared the prince. "He is unknown in Paris. Being a Gascon adventurer he will sell his sword for a song and count not the cost—nor fear Satan himself."

"Yet one thing I like not," returned the duke, thoughtfully. "Somehow he brings to mind the cardinal, himself."

The prince hiccoughed, mightily. "Bah!" he said. "You see the shadow of that pompous prelate everywhere. In a word you fear him. I—I fear him not." He made a magnificent gesture.

Puylaurens was careful to hide his doubting sneer. He would have scoffed openly, had he dared.

THE poet gazed after the departing, mincing figures of Gaston and his favorite, his brow cloudy with resentment, hand on hilt.

"Ha!" he muttered, "To what fair company am I elected, to what club of sties? Dubbed fellow-animal by the chief swine, termed 'drunken ass' by Panurge's self, no less."

He patted his blade, tenderly.

"Were he less than profligate brother to a king, he might well feel the drunken ass's sober kick."

He turned to find the Chevalier's appraising eyes upon him and immediately resumed his gayety.

"Come, my Gascon!" he exclaimed. "Come to Voisin's. I would drink to your prowess in the grape. Princes may flatter but Bacchus calls."

Still the Chevalier eyed him gravely.

"Monsieur Poet," he stated. "I would term you no craven if you go into retirement for a space. Here lie the cardinal's edicts shattered upon this field. There go my erstwhile opponents and their physicians to nurse their wounds, in secret places. You will note the nobles, for whom I made a summer morning's holiday, bowing to me coyly—from a distance."

The poet flushed warmly.

"Chevalier, I have known you but for the few days you have flashed, meteor-like, across the disturbed orbit of this Paris, yet my heart likes you well. I'll not desert you."

The two clasped hands warmly and, arm-in-arm, turned their way toward Paris, waxing confidential.

Said the Chevalier: "I have esteemed you more than most, my poet, since I read that triolet of yours in praise of a lady. You recall:

"When Madame trips through the
Louvre hall,
The Court drinks deep from her azure
eyes;
A drab-gowned Psyche, divinely tall—
When Madame trips through the Louvre
hall
The Muses sing; Hebe's love-birds call;
The Poets rant her to the skies—
When Madame trips through the Louvre
hall
And we drink the wine of her azure eyes."

The poet's reply was merry, but his eyes were wistful.

"Your few days in Paris then, Chevalier, have taught you the mode. 'Tis the reigning fashion to declare a burning love for Madame de Combalet, niece of the Cardinal, the lady of my triolet.

"A truly romantic figure. She disdains the court dresses the cardinal provides as too extravagant, yet how she out-dazzles the court ladies with her sweet simplicity. The Hundred and



"The very fellow," declared the Prince. "Being a Gascon adventurer he will sell his sword for a song and count not the cost — nor fear Satan himself."

One suitors of Madame are composed of all the famous statesmen, wits, geniuses of Paris . . . even poets, monsieur."

"The renown and famed virtue of Madame reached me in far off Gascony, my poet," assured the Chevalier. There was that in his tone, that in his eyes, which kindled ready sympathy in the heart of Du Brullier—the kindred emotion which two men have who both divinely love the unattainable.

SOMETIME later at Voisin's, that wine-cellar celebrated for its old Burgundy, where always could be found some of the musketeers and the prince's troop, there entered hurriedly the Chevalier's fencing assistant, Gregoire.

"Monsieur," he gasped. "The salle d'armes is closed by order of the Cardinal. The guards of His Eminence are searching all Paris for your person. They are but now on their way here!"

"Body of Bacchus!" exclaimed the poet. "Let us drink while we may! Alas!" he mourned, "how my Muse will stale, your sword-arm rust in the Bastille, my Chevalier."

The Gascon's eyes sparkled, perhaps with the lustre of the grape.

"Fear not the Bastille, my poet," he replied. "I have a word to say to the Cardinal. And if this magic word does not win us pardon, be assured we will hang at the very least for my effrontery."

"A word?"

"Yes—the word 'Pluvinel'."

"Pluvinel," repeated the poet. "'Tis not a wine—no! It may be a town . . . perhaps a province. Name of a name, what is it then?"

"'Tis a reminiscence," quoth the Chevalier.

CHAPTER II

For the Sake of the Days of Pluvinel

IN HIS private salon in the Luxembourg, that new and beautiful establishment, Cardinal Richelieu was closeted with his familiar, Father Joseph.

The great man inclined his head and wearily closed his eyes. Alas! France was voyaging through troublesome times, and although his guiding hand on the helm of state dared not tremble, it did, perforce, grow fatigued at times.

"Father, read my budget," His Eminence finally demanded, somewhat testily.

For a time the dull monotone of the priest went on, giving the routine busi-

ness of the day in the great capital of France. The secrets of Paris were here laid bare, garnered from the centers and purlieus of the city by the countless, able, spying agents of His Eminence.

Joseph's voice eventually took on a shade of emphasis:

"The Prince Gaston d'Orléans plots against Your Eminence secretly. He sneers openly. All Paris is laughing at his latest bon mot."

The Cardinal made a disdainful gesture.

"Madame de Combalet, your niece," went on the priest, "seems still determined to enter the Carmelite Convent. She refuses to wear the court dresses your munificence provides, claiming them too extravagant for her simple tastes."

The Cardinal muttered low to his beard. "I can control men—even kings among men. But women! Ah!" he sighed. "It is my destiny ever to be suspended over the abyss; tossed, puppet-like, now here now there, due to the whims and plots of women."

He seized a rapier from the massive table before him and, though seated, made a cunning thrust or two with skilled assurance. He bent the flexible steel of an expert craftsman point to hilt, and sent it back to length, singing its even tempered song to a swordsman's ear.

"A noble blade!" exclaimed the cardinal, his eyes taking on a glow, lighted by magnificent purpose. "Women! This steel is symbolic of them. I bend them—thus—to my need. But never break them—to my shame."

The look of Father Joseph was sympathetic, although wary.

"I have here the plea of the Duke de Puylaurens, Prince Gaston's favorite,

to wed Madame de Combalet," he declared. "Your opinion, father?"

The familiar eyed his master, but the look of Richelieu was inscrutable.

"Prince Gaston plots with Spain to lose you the King's favor and overthrow your Eminence," Joseph whispered low. "The marriage would unite discordant factions. But—"

The tone of the priest faltered with timidity at the daring which led him on.

"You do not break women to your shame, monseigneur," he ended.

THE cardinal coughed dryly and a wintry smile somewhat lightened his countenance.

"Proceed with the budget," he commanded.

"The budget is ended," declared Joseph. "Several persons await in the anteroom, chief among them the fencing master termed 'The Chevalier,' who has been duly apprehended. You have just handled his sword, taken from him by your order."

The eyes of His Eminence widened. He settled deeper in his seat and fingered a sheaf of papers. His face took on a look of sternness.

"Have him in at once."

In the anteroom Joseph conveyed his master's command to the Gascon. The two, swordsman and priest, whispered together for a moment, with an air of common understanding.

The Chevalier entered, his bow as free from restraint as though his neck were in less peril.

The cardinal frowned.

"Monsieur," he addressed the Gascon without preamble, "you and your establishment may well become a menace to the peace of Paris."

The Gascon made reply: "Your Eminence, on the other hand, my salle

d'armes may yet serve Paris well."

Richelieu eyed this bold man before him, appraisingly. This swordsman who was, at the moment, the talk of Paris—who held his head so high, subtly combining in his manner the dignity of a prince with the grace of a ripe courtier. Yet, withal, what was he but a swashbuckling master-at-arms, an unknown out-of-heels of yesterday?

"Your assurance proclaims you Gascon," finally stated the cardinal. "'Tis perhaps the saving grace. A Gascon—a tilter at moons—a time-server of fancies. Hardly, perhaps, an arch or dangerous conspirator, yet easily led to extravagances, rash expedients. Monsieur, why do you not respect my laws?" He broke off sternly.

The tall, lithe form of the Chevalier took on a seemly humility. His fine shoulders bent forward in a nice obeisance. His great dark eyes, which could express so much and so little, were wide with apparent wonder.

"The laws of your Eminence!" he gasped, in well-feigned amazement.

Richelieu made a testy gesture toward the documents before him.

"Come, you quibble, monsieur. Your recent misdoings are related here. They are already singing in the streets of a famous sword and its four duels at dawn—the blade of the Gascon' here before me."

Beneath his bold spirit the Chevalier quailed. "I am lost," he thought. For the voice of His Eminence was positively purring, his manner openly admiring.

"The unlearned say it is witchcraft; the sacrilegious declare you sold your soul to the devil as the price of your secret thrusts; the fact remains, monsieur, that you wield the most dangerous blade in Paris."

THE Chevalier spread his hands in extenuation.

"Your Eminence, my license to open the school is in order; my challenge to my fellow maestros was partly a means of gaining notoriety, to fill my empty school."

The tone of Richelieu still held a smooth invitation to confidence.

"You may say, monsieur, that the four duels were thrust upon you as further means of obtaining notoriety. But your swordsmanship—?"

"May be explained in four words, monseigneur. I am a Gascon."

The lofty air of the Chevalier was indescribable.

The countenance of His Eminence dropped its mask. His eyes glowed with the rage before which had trembled the mightiest spirits of France.

"You defy me!" he exclaimed. "With shifty blade and more shifty tongue—you defy me!"

The Chevalier confronted the wrath of the Iron Cardinal with courage even in despair. He answered, simply:

"The sword which appears my undoing has fought for France. 'Twas presented to my father upon a battlefield by a king. Perhaps France still has need of it."

"Monseigneur!" Father Joseph's voice was insistent.

The cardinal inclined his head, permitting the priest to speak, his eyes inscrutable.

"The Chevalier is Captain du Plessis, akin to your Eminence," the priest declared. "He attended the Academy of Pluvinel with you."

Richelieu pondered for a space, and when he again addressed the Gascon his voice was even kindly.

"'Tis true, your face, your voice, touch the chord of memory."

The Chevalier smiled proudly. "Ah, monseigneur," he prompted. "The good old days of Pluvinel, filled with dancing, fencing, riding—above all, the days when I dared to term a certain Marquis relative and friend."

THE cardinal settled himself further in his great chair and again fell to musing. Finally he stirred and sighed. For a time he had lived again the days of his youth at the Academy of Pluvinel, where, in velvet suit, with lace collar and soft shoes, a valet to wait on him, sword dangling at his heels, he had felt well on the road for camp and court—nor dreamed of the great destiny before him.

He said: "Although you were the youngest of us all, even then you made us veritable tyros with your blade. Ha! I recall a night . . . there was a moon I think . . . and a garden—"

"The moon had sunk behind a cloud. The shrubbery in the garden was rarely thick," aided the Chevalier.

"Thus we did not perceive the four lackeys until they attacked us," the cardinal continued. "I remember when my blade broke how you, transformed into a dozen fencing masters, shielded me, until wounded and bleeding the cravens fled."

The spirit of the Gascon soared.

"Ha!" he cried, "ha! And the gardener's daughters, the cause of it all. How well—"

He broke off suddenly, in amazement, at the sudden apparition of the horrified countenance of Joseph, rising, moon-like, behind the cardinal's chair, his arms frantically gesturing him to silence.

His Most Holy Eminence and gardener's daughters!

The cardinal, unperturbed, smiled

somewhat kindly, somewhat reminiscently.

"I doubt not, my son, there lived gardeners' daughters in those days who smiled upon the young Marquis of Chillon. Alas! The flesh is weak." Again he sighed. Long and hard years had passed since he had borne the simple title of marquis.

He rose and extended to the Chevalier the rapier before him, in his eyes a look of such lofty purpose that it moved the Gascon to instant allegiance.

"In your hands this blade may win you the heights or send you to the lower depths," he declaimed. "I learn that certain enemies plot against my niece, Madame de Combalet. They strike at me through her."

The Gascon grasped the tendered blade, his face transfigured with rage.

"They dare!" he exclaimed.

His Eminence observed him keenly.

"You may earn my full pardon by guarding Madame until she enters a convent, as she so strongly desires."

The Chevalier grew deadly pale. The look he turned upon the inscrutable cardinal was first imploring, then hopeless.

As the churchman raised his hand in final dismissal he added.

"If, in your service to Madame, you cope with such danger that even your expert blade falters, the password 'Pluvinel' will turn out my guards to your aid."

In the anteroom Father Joseph warned the Chevalier.

"Beware of your two newest pupils at fence, Prince Gaston and his favorite gentleman. You play with fire."

The Gascon's assurance was in grim earnest.

"Against the highest noble I will turn the shaft of ridicule, a poignant means

in merry Paris. Against the lesser gallant the long white blade at my side."

The priest nodded, half doubting, half assenting, and held aloft a hand in parting benediction.

As the Chevalier left the Luxembourg, he turned his face to the night sky, with its mocking happy moon, and breathed a sigh—or a vow—

"Madame—to a convent! Madame!" he murmured, despairingly.

A LITTLE later at court the Chevalier had a word aside with the poet, Du Brullier.

"For a time I wear the sword of Prince Gaston, whose sword-captain I have become. Gregoirc, my assistant, will deliver to you my own blade. Keep it well hidden in your scabbard."

The poet, flushed with wine, became sober, his eyes wide with alarm, as he remonstrated,

"Are you utterly mad to so defy the cardinal; to appear at court with the prince's gentlemen?"

"My poet, yes, I am utterly mad. But you have pledged aid. Learn for me the time Madame sets out for St. Cloud, the country estate of the cardinal, the morning after tomorrow."

Du Brullier bowed understanding and was quick to give his own message:

"Madame de Combalet requests that you meet her in the gardens of the Hotel Rambouillet after the fête tomorrow."

The Chevalier gasped, "You mean—"

"That Madame has a remonstrance for you—and a warning."

"How high have I risen in one day, monsieur! Sword-captain to the brother of a king and a tryst with the most beautiful lady in France!" The tone of the Gascon was defiant and mocking,

but he appeared at court no more that night.

CHAPTER III

The Bright Shield of Chivalry

A MORNING fête was in progress in honor of "the Princess-Niece," Madame de Combalet, in the gardens of the Hotel Rambouillet. The grassy sward was strewn with countless roses and orange flowers.

For the first time the cardinal had his will with her. She, ever before garbed in black at court functions, wore white.

'Twas a notable occasion. The geniuses of Paris—Colletet, Corneille, Voiture—were there, to say nothing of the poet Du Brullier, a candle-light among great luminaries. Madame was hailed as chief patroness of the Arts in France.

Pierre Corneille seized the occasion to dedicate his new play, "The Cid," to Madame.

How the changing jewels in her blue eyes sparkled!

How she outshone, in her simple gown, the great display of feathers and rare lace, the mingling of precious stones with silks, satins and elaborate coiffures!

As fascinating as Circe with her enchanting caprices; as learned as Aspasia with her little amazing extravagances of wit and fancy! All were enraptured by her adorableness.

At the last—the Poets of Paris formed an arch with their swords, and she passed beneath—the fairest, most gracious mistress in all France.

Despite the gayety of the fête, Madame, at times, had seemed constrained. As the last of the guests departed she dismissed her attendants,

and her feet tripped eager way, upon a flower-bordered path, to a far corner of the gardens.

A shyness was upon her as, before entering, she peered within the quaint latticed pleasure-lodge, her destination. Her eyes sparkled as, unperceived, she gazed upon the Chevalier awaiting the tryst.

But they were woman's eyes, when she faced his low respectful bow—and so unfathomable.

"Madame!" the Gascon murmured. "After all the years we meet again."

Madame's lips pouted adorably and Madame's voice held an edge of ice.

"You have been in Paris for a space. Last night at court you were arm-in-arm with my uncle's enemies. You came not near."

The Chevalier spread his arms in extenuation. "I to approach you, the Princess-Niece! I—the swashbuckling sword-captain?" He gave a bitter little laugh.

Madame bit her perfect lips in vexation.

"You appear at court with your beaver at such an angle it is an aggression in itself. Your hair is tinged with gray. Your laugh rings false. Have the years then brought you but bitterness?"

How sweetly malicious was her tone.

"Yet you now have fame. You are called 'First Sword of Paris,' monsieur."

The Chevalier sadly answered. "Alas! Youth, the noon of my age, is gone. When we parted, madame, upon a time, today was but a step until the morrow; around the corner of the hours perhaps lurked romance. But now—"

He essayed a gesture brave yet somehow pitiful.

"Now, the warrior of former days is

forgotten. France is at peace. My sword gains me but swashbuckling eminence. I frown and touch my blade—men shudder. The children hide their faces in the streets of Paris as I pass. Sorry fame have I.”

MADAME veiled her eyes and her voice was low.

“In my childhood you, chevalier, were my neighbor playmate in fair Gascony. Do you recall you wandered through the fields with the lonely orphaned child, naming the wood-flowers? Do you remember how you ever bowed to the little one, as to some great court lady, hand on sword, your head debonairly inclined?”

“‘Mademoiselle, I am your true knight,’ you would say.

“The day you rode away to war spelled shattered romance to the little maid. How she sobbed and sobbed!”

Her voice, sweetly tremulous, went on—

“Then convent days for your little friend. Marriage. Scarcely married, when a widow. Thus my life till now. The cardinal desires me as mistress of his household. But the envious, fawning, evil Court, monsieur! My sole refuge is in the minds of the geniuses of Paris. I again would enter the convent.

“But first, monsieur, hear my warning. Boon companion with his enemies as you have become, the cardinal is angered. Only Father Joseph’s intercession has held the cardinal’s hand. What are you doing? Have the years brought you but bitterness?” she repeated.

She paused, wondering at the exalted look in the Chevalier’s eyes, as he answered:

“But bitterness, madame? No. The

years have ever held a tender memory of a child’s dainty fingers, holding aloft the bright shield of Chivalry, mirroring therein an unstained sword.

“I have a mission to perform. When fulfilled, you will understand, the cardinal will forgive. Paris will hear and laugh.

“You—you go to a convent! When my task is done, somewhere I will find another war.”

He gazed at her wistfully, bowed gallantly, and was gone.

Nor heard her cry, impulsively, after him.

CHAPTER IV

A Lifted Mask

THE clock of St. Germain l’Auxerrois had just struck the hour of four in the morning.

There had been gaming in the main room of the Hotel of Prince Gaston d’Orléans. Around the long table the gallants of the prince’s troop were taking their ease, with flushed faces.

’Twas that hour when men, at gaming, are drunken, and the beast peers forth.

The Chevalier stood at the head of the table and gazed upon the assemblage with a look of cool contempt.

“Messieurs, attention,” he commanded. “The Duke du Puylaurens once made mention of a lady of the court. ‘A rare simplicity is but a cloak for broad corruption,’ he mouthed, in his cups. And you, you laughed. Jackals bay at the moon!

“Your laughter reached me in Gascony,” he continued, and there was something in the assured manner of the Gascon, in his supreme audacity, that quickly sobered the amazed gallants. “And brought me to Paris where

I have become sword-captain to a Prince of the Blood, to do his bidding—no less a task than to abduct a lady.”

With a great oath du Puylaurens lunged forward, pulling at his sword, to be restrained by Prince Gaston.

The Chevalier drew his own rapier and flicked the favorite in the face with his gauntlet. “A challenge to another fencing lesson!” he mocked.

“How may a gentleman fight you? We do not know you even as of noble birth. Strangely fortunate at gaming, you press your luck too far,” the prince asserted.

“To resemble a cardinal is not enough,” Puylaurens scoffed.

The Gascon scattered coins in the air from a well filled purse.

“The gold I won and that of my hire returned in your face, monseigneur,” he derided.

At such deadly affront to the prince his gentlemen rose, in a body, and menaced the Chevalier with their blades. A flicker of the Gascon’s wrist and the point of his rapier was presented at Prince Gaston’s throat.

“Messieurs, restrain yourselves,” he commanded.

Gaston, white with fear, gestured his gentlemen back.

“The man is mad. Grant him his way,” he stammered.

In truth the Chevalier seemed possessed of a mad humor.

“I have played a distasteful part indifferently well,” he said. “Proof has been sent the cardinal of your plots against him. How Paris will laugh when it hears that wily Prince Gaston sought to bribe the cousin of His Eminence to abduct Madame, his niece!”

The Chevalier’s challenging glance swept each gallant.

“Each of you save monseigneur, who

is too high”—his look at Gaston held supreme contempt—“is warned from Paris. Else you may find my bag of sword-tricks not yet exhausted.”

He dropped his point from Gaston’s throat, and the echo of his mocking tone still seemed to linger in the room as, with agile step, he brushed by an incoming guardsman and was gone.

Gaston, his face distorted with rage, uttered a great oath.

“He may go now, the nimble play-actor, who is or is not what he claims. But I vow he will not live to laugh with Paris. Your news, fellow?”—to the newcomer.

“All is arranged. Madame leaves for St. Cloud at seven, instead of nine, your Grace.”

The prince pointed one nervous, quivering finger at Puylaurens.

“Go you. Fail me not. We must have Madame for hostage. Then let Paris laugh!”

THE clock of St. Germain l’Auxerrois was striking the hour of seven in the morning.

The Chevalier was engaged in placing a placard on the closed doors of his salle d’armes. It read:

“Prince Gaston d’Orléans and his jackal, Puylaurens, hired me to teach them my secret tricks of fence that, in their amorous adventures, they might escape the vengeance of the jealous lovers and husbands of Paris. I have broken the blade used in the teaching. I have closed my salle d’armes. But I have taught the parries of the thrusts to the Four Fencing Masters of Paris. To them, then, oh jealous lovers and husbands, to learn the defense—and laugh as does all Paris with The Chevalier.”

Then the Gascon, spurred by his hot contempt of the prince and all his bravos, drew the borrowed sword from his scabbard and broke it over his knee. He laughed aloud.

But his mirth changed to concern as four gallants of the prince's troop, shouting with glee upon finding him defenseless by his own action, came at him with bare points. One rascal, somewhat in the lead, thrust at the Gascon with all his skill.

To escape the stroke the Chevalier desperately fell full length on the step before him, supporting his body upon one hand, and parried, with the splintered hilt-end of his blade, the quick thrust of another of the too eager knaves.

In a flash he resumed his feet and stood at bay. Fortunately the entrance of the *salle d'armes* was so narrow that the number of the assailants hindered the assassination upon which they were bent.

But the four rascals were the best swordsmen of the prince's troop and would not be long denied.

Once, twice, thrice the Gascon was slightly wounded and he gave himself up for lost. Desperately he resolved to throw himself upon the four as a last extremity, and do the harm he could before the end.

THERE came the sound of a madly galloping horse and the poet, Du Brullier, rode upon the scene. A great bruise marred his forehead and his face was wan with dread.

He reined in his steed at a loss, but was quick to heed the Chevalier's command:

"Cast me my blade, poet. It has work to do!"

Du Brullier drew forth the rapier

of the Gascon and tossed it lightly to the Chevalier's hand.

"Now, messieurs, now! The odds are somewhat equal," the Gascon mocked.

The poet, helpless to assist, uttered a cry of appeal:

"Chevalier, Gaston's knaves prevented me from warning Madame. She leaves, with a bribed maid, for St. Cloud at seven instead of nine—is on the road even now with Puylaurens as outrider. Alas! I fought and failed—" his voice broke off in a moan.

The Gascon became transfigured. "They dare!" he raged.

The assassins were suddenly attacked, in their turn, by a madman who came at them with such skill and fervor they were forced to break before him.

In a twinkling one of the attackers was thrust through the body and another disarmed. The remaining two cravens fled as though the fiend himself pursued.

His wounds forgotten, the Chevalier in a moment was in the stirrups in place of the poet.

"Go you and rout out the cardinal's guards," he commanded Du Brullier. "Use the word 'Pluvinel' and they will do your bidding. Hasten to Madame's aid."

He wheeled the panting steed and was gone on the road to St. Cloud as swiftly as though his urgent mission had given wings to his mount.

CHAPTER V

The Rescue

WHILE the clock of St. Germain was still striking the hour of seven, Madame de Combalet took the

road to St. Cloud, in her yellow calèche, to visit the country estate of the cardinal.

In her absorption she did not note she was unattended by her usual escort of the cardinal's guards. The two strange slinking outriders, the noise of a scuffle, escaped her.

Thoughts of a convent seemed far away from Madame on this fair morning. She felt her heart leap under the caress of the warm, playful breeze, coyly pressing against her cheek the soft tendrils of hair that matched in glint the gay, tender, young spring sun outside the coach window.

The month was April; the air, heady as old wine, went to the heads of the two horses drawing the calèche, so that they reared and plunged with the delight of life, nor minded greatly the muttered curses of the furtive-mannered and newly hired coachman, as he pulled strongly on the reins.

Even Madame's maid, for a short moment, forgot her intended treachery. Her eyes glistened in sympathy with the youth and winsomeness of her gracious mistress, seated across the coach from her. She had joined the establishment but two weeks before, was deft and meek, and seemed above her station.

Madame had brought with her the original manuscript of Corneille's "Cid" and, as the vehicle wheeled out of the environs of Paris, she scanned the lines. Then she sighed and, cheek on hand, gazed out into the distance where delicate purple mists hung in the air o'er glistening dew on grass and leaf. And thought how her own case resembled that of the Cid's "Infanta":

"But for a princess so to stoop
As to admit a simple cavalier
Within her heart—"

And sighed again and mused of her girlhood knight, that "simple cavalier."

"Madame will have her cordial now?" The maid broke in upon the reverie, with voice somewhat strained, eyeing her mistress with a calculating look.

"You are kindly thoughtful, Marie," Madame stated, brightly. "I give you thanks for persuading me to advance the hour of my excursion. The sole tonic I need is the air of this fair April and the marvelous verses of Pierre Corneille."

"But the cardinal's orders, Madame, that you heed the court physician? You have been pale of late, listless." The maid was insistent.

Madame secretly mused—"What do court physicians know of love?" and blushed.

"That uncle martinet of mine no doubt must have his will of me, as he does with all of France. Have you heard, Marie, he has induced the Pope to send me a command, forbidding my entrance to a convent? And yet my heart is glad."

She gave a little, lilting laugh. "But, come, I will drink."

The maid, biting her lips with resolution, extended the cordial, and Madame drank from the cut-glass vial its lustreless liquid contents, which were not at all what the court physician had prescribed.

MADAME drank and, very shortly, Madame slept as a child might, dreamlessly, her face pillowed upon one perfectly rounded arm. The transition was startlingly abrupt; Madame so still that the false maid stooped low to learn if fragrant breath really came forth from parted lips. Then, giving a

gasp of quick relief, she flung one hand out of the coach window.

The coachman pulled up the spirited animals instantly.

"Is it done?" he asked, hoarsely.

"Madame is well betrayed," the maid replied. "Let me forth to walk back to Paris through the fields. I wish to forget the perfidy of men — and women."

The coach had stopped hard by a thick forest, an aloof spot. The coachman whistled shrilly and, at the signal, the two outriders rode up at a smart pace. The foremost was no less than the Duke de Puylaurens, who flung himself from his mount and peered within the coach.

"She is there then. The potion works," he muttered.

"You have done well," he addressed the coachman. "We will await Monseigneur here. He follows almost instantly. Madame's maid?"

"Goes there through the fields weeping," the fellow guffawed.

Puylaurens uttered an oath. "Knave, hide your sneer," he scowled. "That maid is countess born and may weep, if she please, for diversion."

The coachman, abashed, cringed, and then started, amazed.

THERE came the sound of a cry on the breeze—"Madame! Madame! I come!"

There galloped around a turn in the road an exhausted horse, nostrils distended, bearing the Chevalier, eyes gleaming with menace.

Again Puylaurens swore a great oath, drew his rapier, and called his companion to his side. "Play for time," he muttered to the sleek looking rascal with a patch over one eye. "The prince will be here presently. If we

"Madame will have her cordial now?"



engage, take him in the back," he cravenly ended.

"What now, Gascon?" he called. "Bring you that fencing lesson. Come, aside in the forest there is a proper glade." He sought to draw the Chevalier away from the coach and Madame.

The Gascon swerved wide to avoid the two gallants and encircled the calèche. In a breath he flung himself from his beast and his quick eye caught sight of the recumbent figure of Madame within the coach.

He uttered a cry of such venomous

anger, he wore so terrible a look that, as he leaped in a mountebank flash to the box and snatched the reins from the coachman's hands, that craven leaped from his high seat and fled, incontinently.

Puylaurens' other cutthroat was a man of quick wit and some courage and, at the Chevalier's action, he was prompt to wheel his steed and grasp the mouth-rein of the nearest coach-horse, to which he desperately clung.

For a moment, chaos! the spirited horses plunging wildly, the Chevalier on his precarious perch guarding himself with rapier point against the blade of Puylaurens, who rode at him with eager zest.

The patch-eyed fellow had not drawn his blade; instead he suddenly released his hold of the rearing horse, and plucking from his doublet a dagger he flung the steel, with a malediction, at the Gascon. Chance served him well, for the point sped true and embedded itself in the side of the Chevalier.

The Gascon reeled with the shock and Puylaurens gave a cry of exultation.

"He is ours, this swaggerer," he gloated, and made a desperate lunge with his point.

But the Chevalier, wincing with pain, put forth the acme of his skill in his parry of the Duke's blade; his counter was a streak of white flame that pierced a full inch into Puylaurens' throat.

"Your fencing lesson, jackal," he retorted grimly.

"A moi! A moi! messieurs!" Puylaurens feebly gasped, his rapier falling to the roadside, his hand clutching at his throat.

TO THE Gascon's ears came the sound of approaching horsemen. The cry of the duke gave him warning. With the last remnants of his failing strength, he swerved the coach horses and sent them flying up the road towards Paris, with their passage thrusting aside into the ditch Monsieur Patch-eye.

The next instant there appeared to the astonished Prince Gaston and his gentlemen a wild vision:

A slumbering beauty in a yellow calèche, drawn by two vicious-eyed steeds, galloping like demons. On the box a bleeding madman, a dagger in his breast, rapier between his teeth, guiding the frenzied beasts willy nilly, yet masterfully directing them on the road to Paris.

The startled prince and his gallants were prompt to give the strange apparition the road, and although their wits led them to quick pursuit, it was abandoned almost immediately, for the coach drew ever nearer to a mounted body of the cardinal's guards, headed by the excited poet.

The coach horses were halted by the guards and the Chevalier sank from the box into the welcoming arms of the poet.

"See to Madame," the Gascon gasped, plucked the dagger from his breast and swooned away.

Du Brullier laid him tenderly by the roadside for the rough but ready ministrations of the guardsmen, and dashed to the coach window.

Madame stirred and Madame sighed, the potion having lost its power.

"My pulse . . . its conqueror's name . . . it knows its master," she murmured, drowsily quoting from "The Cid."

Madame opened her glorious blue eyes to behold the anxious poet, framed in the coach window.

"Ah, my poet," she inquired, wonderingly. "Why are you here? I have had a strange dream. Your doublet, there, stained with blood? Are you wounded?" Her expression bore alarm.

"No, Madame, no," the poet replied, with earnest pathos, "'tis the life-blood of the Gascon."

CHAPTER VI

The Laughter of Paris

TWAS a morning in the merry month of May ere the Chevalier awakened to the calm reasoning sanity he had foregone.

His eyes opened wide with wonder to find himself, the hardened campaigner, upon such a pampered sick-bed, within the magnificent appointments of a vast chamber. Before them was the joytul, loyal visage of the poet.

"Ha! Chevalier," cried Du Brullier, gleefully, "you are yourself again. But, hush. You may not yet speak. 'Tis so ordered by the king's own physician who allows me but five moments of the clock to relate to you the news of Paris, to relieve your spirit.

"Know then Madame came to no harm from her adventure, thanks to your quick rescue. Due to your mad exertions your wounds brought you low. Yet you have had careful nursing." A sly smile lurked upon the poet's lips.

"You awake, my Gascon, to find yourself in the Cardinal's own palace, brought here by his express command.

"You awake to find yourself the most famous man in Paris, amid its laugh-



There came the sound of a cry on the breeze—"Madame! Madame! I come!"

ter. But a week ago, outside the palace gates, half of Paris crowded mourning, you were so very low. For Paris worships the one who brought it inextinguishable mirth.

"Your enemies have disappeared. Gaston has fled to Lorraine to escape the wrath of king and cardinal. His gentlemen also were veritably laughed out of Paris.

"The Duke du Puylaurens is convalescing in Spain, where he is receiving careful nursing from Madame's former maid, a countess, they say. Your point sped so true the haughty duke will never speak again above a whisper.

"Ha! Much may be said in five minutes of the clock.

"The king inquires about you daily. The cardinal has been thrice by your bedside.

"See there by your bedside the wreath of red roses. A card is attached. It reads: 'From the jealous lovers and husbands of Paris.'

"Note that cluster of fragrant spring flowers, daffodils, snow-drops, tulips, primroses—see where the shy violet hangs its head. Here I place them by your side. They were plucked most carefully by Madame, herself.

"But not a word of the questions I see trembling upon your lips. Take this draught and sleep that you may wake again to quick convalescence."

The Chevalier sought to disregard the admonition, but found himself too weak and sank into a healing slumber.

Thus he failed to view the radiant vision of Madame, softly stealing forth from her concealment, to look down upon him as he slept, a light within her eyes that was torture to the poet as he gazed upon her, worshipping.

And the Chevalier dreamed he

strolled a sylvan fairyland, beside a youthful, starry-eyed Queen Titania. He knelt. She placed a dainty hand upon his forehead. He rose. She elfishly eluded him, a will-o'-the-wisp dancer through a twilight air, twinkling with the soft glow of fire-flies. He was quick to follow, crying—

"Mademoiselle, I am your true knight!" And she tarried—almost was in his grasp.

UPON a night thereafter the Chevalier, leaning somewhat heavily upon his cane, sought the palace garden underneath a waning moon, and paused by a quaint sun-dial that, sleeping, forebore to measure off its shadowly hour and minute duty.

A breath of the warm breeze sighed and whispered among the branches around him. A bird piped in its sleep, nearby. The soft strains of flute and violin, from the palace, made sweet melody that throbbed and lingered in the air.

The Chevalier sighed with the breeze. Somehow his heart was heavy within him, despite the fact that warm blood once more pulsed strongly within his veins.

"Madame comes not near me," he mused. "Her graciousness doubtless spent itself in her devoted nursing. She fears, perhaps, that I, misunderstanding, might presume.

"But well I know my part," he continued his bitter reflection. "I will play-act until the end and straightway find me another war."

He raised his cane to fencing posture and made a cunning feint. He mocked:

"Ha! I am again strong enough to try a tilt or two with destiny."

The air trembled to a rustle of robes no louder than the whisper of the



"Madame! Madame!" The rapturous words were a prayer, a promise, a vow.

breeze and the figure of Madame came between him and the stars.

"How it does pleasure me to see you standing thus," she faltered and her eyes would not meet his gaze. "What words can I find in gratitude to you?"

One hand pressed against her bosom, she extended him the other so graciously that the Gascon's heart gave a great throb, as he pressed it lingeringly to his lips.

He, the assured, could find no words in answer. Only stand gazing at her.

"Tomorrow evening, monsieur, you have an audience with the king," Madame went on, with a touch of lightness masking her emotion. "But first, the cardinal desires you before him to prepare you for fitting honors. Paris demands that you be well rewarded. My uncle, monsieur, assures me that you may ask what you will of him—" she ended, faintly.

The Chevalier finally found voice.

"Tell me not of kings or cardinals, but you—Madame?"

"I?" She turned away from him.

"You—you go to a convent?"

"Ah, no, monsieur," she answered. "The Pope forbids it. The cardinal decrees that I take a husband at once."

She blushed rosy red, underneath the moon.

ALL things swam in chaos before the Chevalier. He had not thought renunciation would be so hard. But he turned brave eyes upon her.

"Madame, I give you joy—joy to the man who claims you," he asserted. "No further task will you have then for your simple knight."

The slight coquetry in Madame's heart relented at the sight of the gallant, drooping figure before her.

"Chevalier," she cried. "I am not

over-bold. Many times in your illness your delirium revealed your love for your childhood friend. Read here within my eyes that King Love at last has come! You won me when you told me I was your inspiration through the years, when you said: 'A child's dainty fingers, holding aloft the bright shield of Chivalry, mirroring therein an unstained sword.' When you see the cardinal ask what you will of him, monsieur."

How tenderly revealing was her tone.

"Madame! Madame!" The rapturous words from the Gascon were a prayer, a promise, a vow, as he viewed that destiny, once mocked, now so alluring to be shared with her, who came so sweetly willing in complete surrender to his embrace.

IN THE palace, the poet made report to the cardinal.

"The play is over; the footlights snuffed; the curtain down to a merry ending," he stated dramatically, with forced gayety.

"You mean—?" the cardinal demanded.

"That outside in the garden, by the sun-dial, Madame and the Chevalier have discovered the obvious fact that they love each other, to the utter confoundment of the Poets of Paris and the Hundred and One Suitors of the Princess-Niece."

The cardinal took on a most benign expression.

"After all the Chevalier is a du Plessis," he murmured. "Madame now will be content to stay and keep my household. I will confer the Duchy of D'Aiguillon upon them. Paris, thus, will witness that anomaly—a Gascon Duke with a large estate."

He turned his keen glance on the poet.

"Your eyes are heavy; you have wept then for sheer happiness?"

"Poets or cardinals dare not weep, your Eminence," replied Du Brullier.

The cardinal nodded understandingly.

"The king has commanded that you set forth in verse the adventures of the Chevalier and Madame for your first duty as Court Poet," he stated, kindly.

"Ha!" cried the poet, "I will write a ballade and will compose the l'envoi first. As for the title—"

"Ah, the title?" queried the cardinal, interested.

"I have it apt. 'Twill be 'The Blade of the Gascon'."

His Eminence inclined his head in

approval. "And I will be your critic. 'Tis said I have some skill in such matters," he went on, complacently. "Your verse must have a martial strain, now light, now heavy; through it all must appear the plotting and confoundment of the conspirators, intermingled with the laughter of Paris; the sword-magic of the Chevalier inspired by his great love for Madame. Ha! Love!"

The great man, with hands clasped tightly before him, bowed his head in reminiscence, and paced slowly up and down, somewhat marveling over that destiny which led him on and on. . . . "Ha! Love!" he repeated. "Know you aught of it?"

"Poets and cardinals dare not love, your Eminence," replied the poet, sadly.

Chinese War in California

ONE of the oddest battles in the history of the West occurred in Tuolumne County, California. There, on Sept. 26, 1856, was fought what is known as the "Chinese War."

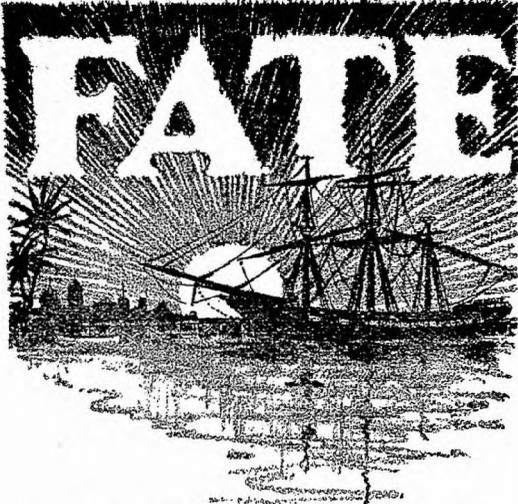
A mining camp on the Stanislaus River was the scene of the incident that led to the war. Six Chinese, members of the Wan-Wo Tong, were working their gold claim near twelve of their countrymen who belonged to the Sam-Yap Tong, when a large boulder rolled from one property to another. Words and blows ensued, but the difference was not settled. Next day the leaders of the two tongs met and decided to fight a regular battle.

Calls were sent out for the members of the respective tongs to assemble. American blacksmiths were engaged to make pikes, daggers, and tridents, to be used as implements of war. A few

firearms were imported from San Francisco, and white miners and cowpunchers were hired, at \$10 per day, plus rice and whiskey, to teach the Chinese the use of these weapons.

The battle was staged on a broad plain near the base of Table Mountain. The combatants, consisting of 900 members of the Wan-Wo Tong and 1,200 opponents belonging to the Sam-Yap Tong, began the conflict at sunrise. They fought hand to hand for several hours, accompanied with screeching and yelling and the beating of tin pans. When hostilities finally subsided, it was learned that there were but few casualties. Four had been killed and four wounded.

Later, American law officers arrested 250 of the combatants, but subsequently released them.—*Gene Kivett.*



WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED by
CEDRIC W. WINDAS

Buenaventura, Republic de Colombia,
 Feb. 25th. The STAR OF ITALY,
 last of the famous STAR line, lies
 stranded here in the mud. Her masts
 and some of her spars still stand—
 but she looks woefully abandoned.
 —News Item.

*I never see an old deserted ship,
 (Moored to the rotting fabric of a
 wharf
 That silent reaches into the backwash
 Of some forgotten estuary)
 But that I climb to her forsaken decks,
 And vision there, on poop and foc's'le-
 head
 The ghosts of yesterday.*

*I see the gallant figures of her crew,
 Proud in their strength and cunning
 To drive a staunch vessel on her course
 Against the angry gray-backs that roll
 forever
 South of Hershel—
 Adown the wind there comes the reck-
 less lilt
 Of a deep-water chantey.*

*Comely women, lynx-eyed, in far flung
 ports
 Laugh shrilly along the waterfronts,
 cajoling, luring.
 Taprooms wreathed in drifting smoke,
 reeking fumes,
 A drunken vicious brawl, a frightened
 wanton
 Whimpering at that thing upon the floor,
 The sheath-knife in its back;
 Sullen figures, sobered, slinking through
 the night
 Back to their ships.*



*Gone all the ghosts, strange ports, hard-
 ships,
 Illicit joys, and scarlet revelries;
 While they who laid aloft or steadied
 bucking wheel,
 Roll, challenging the FATES
 Across far distant seas;
 Or rest, full forty fathoms deep:—who
 knows?*

* * * * *

*And this old ship, the broken plaything
 Of a heedless Destiny.*



WINDAS 1939

A TORCH

"We will be through the forest soon, Kathleen . . . 'tis scarce a mile to the monastery and safety for yourself this night."

*T*IS a fine, brave country, Erin—and a grand history is on it. You'll be reading of it in books, and you'll be hearing of it from the lips of old men, and you'll be having the song of it in your heart, if there's a bit of Irish in you. And many a tale of heroes there is in it, you may be sure.

There's the wild, galloping days of Sarsfield and the splendid record of the men of O'Niell. There's the fabulous deeds of Finn McCool and the glamorous knighthood of his Fianna. And in the far, misty past, there's the mighty swordings of Cuchulain, and the wise, good kingship of Art mac Art.

But in the midst of Erin's grand history stands Brian—Brian, whom they named Boru, calling to his countrymen to unite and cast forth the reaving foreigner. Through the disappointments of a long life, he called to them. Through their heedlessness and disregard, he called to them. And then, in his graybeard days, at last, he saw his prayers answered at Clontarf, and the power of the Danes and their Viking pirates was ended in Erin, forever. Sure, Erin needed a thousand steadfast Brians, but she got only the one.

* * *

EVENING began to draw down on the sun, and spots of light and shadow fell, like moving leopard cloaks, upon the backs of the little cavalcade.



IS LIGHTED

by A. TANNER

Illustrated by JAY JACKSON



With untiring pace the horses swept along, nor did the riders stop to feast their eyes upon the beauty of the columned corridors of the Irish forest about them. For even here, far inland as they were, the invading Danes were still a menace to the peace of Erin, and who could say, if caught benighted in the wood, that his eyes, for sure, would see the dawn, or his lips breathe the cool air of a new day?

So they rode, all eyes alert and every sword loose in its scabbard, for they guarded that which, to them, was of more worth than gold or fine silver—the dark-haired lovely Kathleen, daughter of the king.

Six were the riders, beside the woman, but these were well equipped and fairly mounted. Their leader was a slim, brown-faced lad who, for all his youth, had yet about him the bearing of a man. Goll of Leinster, he was called, and he was of royal blood and cousin to Kathleen; and there was a fondness between the two of them such as you might see between an indulgent sister and her scamp of a younger brother.

“We will be through the forest soon, Kathleen,” the lad said, half-turning in his saddle to address the lady, a length behind him; “and after the forest, ’tis scarce a mile to the monastery and safety for yourself this night.”

“’Twas not fear that made me bid you haste, Goll, and well you know it,”

Kathleen replied, "but I wish to speak with Father Michael before he seeks his bed."

"Sure, I remember now—you had a vision," Goll said, and his eyes twinkled. "But women do be for always having visions and dreaming dreams, and the wonder is the poor priests do have the patience to be listening to them."

But Kathleen answered him not at all. Grave was the expression upon her lovely face, for in her mission, she felt, dwelt the fate of Erin. She must save her father, the King, from himself as well as from his enemies.

Afar, when they emerged from the woods, they could see the ancient monastery of Columbeith bathed in the dying light of the day. Pleasant and peaceful, it was, for all the stout wall that surrounded it. They could see, also, evidences of its one-time greatness. Upon its eastern side there still stood the bothies for students who dwelt there no more, at all, while upon the other were the ruined houses of the husbandmen who, in the old days, had tilled the fields round about. All these things were gone, with the coming of the foreigners, and only a few small patches of ground were cultivated by the monks, now.

When they rode into the courtyard, upturned faces all about bespoke the happy welcome that was in each monastic heart. Father Michael came before them, and his broad face matched the sun for glowing at the joy of their coming, whilst at his elbow leaned Dunnen, the old scribe.

"Get you down, Kathleen, and bless this old earth with your footsteps," said the stout priest. "'Tis long and long since such honor has come to these flagstones."

And they were dismounted and the horses were cared for. Then he led them to the hall where their suppers awaited them, and the long table gleaming in the light of candles.

ABOUT the table there was much good humor and laughter and high talk as the plates went round. Music and singing, with Kathleen at the harp, occupied them for a space. During a lull Kathleen leaned toward Michael upon her left.

"Father," she whispered, "who is that fair youth who hands the dish adown the table?"

Michael had no need to be scanning the board to know which of the men about had caught the eye of Kathleen and brought the blushes, fair as roses, to her cheeks. For there was one there you would be knowing was no ordinary man, for all his youth. Strong he was, and tall and nobly shaped such as the poets do be saying the ancient gods of Erin were.

"That is Brian," so he answered her, "brother to Mahoun, chief of the Dal gCais people. A few years back, his brother sent him here, though I ween he were a better man for the sword than for the monk's hood."

"He is to become a priest?"

"It is in my mind that Mahoun sent him here, in the first place, that he might make sure of his own place in the clan. The lad, Brian, was wondrous popular with the men, and they say he was a rare, good fighter. I'm thinking Mahoun saw in Brian a future rival for the chieftainship. But, child, what flame has lit your interest in this youth?"

"I had a vision, Father, of a torch, and this young Brian's face was in the vision, also . . ." She said, and said no more, but a slow smiling came upon her

face as though, deep in her heart, she planned a secret plan.

Now it seemed to Brian, in his seat amidst the monks, that there arose before his mind's eye, all the life of fighting that a man might be living for the sake of this woman; the going out with a great hosting against the foreign settlements, and the coming home again, with spoil of all sorts to heap in glittering piles at her feet. From out the corner of his eye he gazed at her, and the living beauty of her woke the wild mood in him till his blood beat at his temples like the wind-swept tide will be beating upon a rocky coast. And, without his will, his eyes followed the long, strong lines of her to the rise and fall of her high, firm breasts.

But he wrenched his mind away from her loveliness and the hot emotions that followed at the heels of them, and he got up and strode into the gloom beyond the fire's light. And being there, he strove to cloak his eyes with the darkness, but still they would be turning to her where she sat, the glory of her outshining the glow of the fire.

Black anger rose within him at his own weakness, that he should think to put aside his ambition because of a woman's beauty, and he thrust his way through the dark to the little alcove where was his bed.

WITH Brian's distracting presence removed, Kathleen hastened to tell Father Patrick of her mission.

"It is grave, good Patrick. My father, the king, as you know, was never one to put the foreigners away from him with soft words; but they are with us, and he has become friendly with the Danes and the invaders from the North, and has listened to them. And now the High King comes down from Leinster

for the tribute, and my father has promised to go out in the hosting with them against him. Can he not see how these despoilers of Erin lay their black plots against us? Can he not see that the Northmen aid one king against another, not to make Erin strong but to weaken her? Even now they hold our harbors and seaports. Would they not be weak fools to be stopping until the whole land lies beneath their rule?"

"Before that could happen," growled the old father, "some hero would rise and . . ."

"Brian!" she breathed, and there was about her an exaltation he had never seen in her being before.

Wise Patrick saw, and understood.

"I fear the Danes know my mission—that I go to my uncle in the south to stop my poor, blind father's unholy alliance with them. I had a sense, as we rode here through the woods, that our little band was being followed by unseen pursuers."

As if in reply to her fears, there arose outside a great clamoring.

Brian, too, heard the noise. From beyond the curtains of his cubicle, there came the sound of voices that rose and rose, as the winds would be rising on a winter's night. Brian, like a flash, was leaping through the curtained doorway and standing in the hall beyond.

Wild confusion was all about him. Figures, dim-seen, brushed past him in the dark. Through the room, like glow-worms on a bog, glinted and gleamed the polished blades of swords. Before the fire, his figure stark black against its glowing, stood Father Michael, and in his hand was a spear, while from his throat issued a voice that lost the cadence of the chanted prayer and found the stern, harsh vigor of the fighting Gael.

"Arrange yourselves by the gate," he shouted, "with a dozen men above it. Let spears and javelins be stacked in stacks, where they can be reached by the men in the high place. Let every man of you have a weapon, and every weapon be ready for use."

Now, Brian came swiftly before him and, catching the sleeve of his robe, besought of him his place in these warlike preparations. Within Brian there arose a great anger and a great fear, for he knew, even as if he'd been told, what treasure the raiders would be coming for.

"To the wall!" commanded Father Patrick.

Brian pulled off his brown robe and in its place put on a kilted woolen shirt and heavy cloak. A good, long sword was in its scabbard at his side; a stout steel cap upon his head. Taking up several javelins, he went out with the others to defend the wall above the gate.

From the high place Brian saw the Danes advancing up the slope, a great broad crescent of armed men, their steel shirts, here and there, catching little shafts of light from the moon and hurling them back again. Goll climbed to a place beside him.

JUST beyond the long cast of a javelin the crescent of men halted, and it might be seen how the leaders took council together. Then out of the thick of them advanced a tall warrior. Bearded and grim he was, and on his steel cap was a pair of spreading wings. From the hips to the throat of him he was covered with a steel shirt.

"We have no wish to be sacking these poor buildings," he shouted; "nor is it our wish to slay holy men of Erin."

"What would you, then?" questioned

Brian's ringing voice.

"Let you surrender up to us the woman of wealth who is within your walls—the daughter of the king—and you may all go free."

At these words, a great wave of red rage swept over Brian so that he pulled up a heavy spear and cast it in a wild fury of strength against the foreigner. The point took the man in his throat.

"Hell's fire consume all of you dogs of the sea!" came the hoarse shouting of Brian.

For a short space the stricken man kept his feet; then the heavy shaft of the weapon dragged him down as a hound at last drags down the stag that it has brought to bay.

Now at that man's falling, there rose a great bellowing from the raiders, and they came forward in a mighty wave, upon the crest of which gleamed swords and axes.

So they came under the wall, and there was a thunder of axes beating upon the gate; yet it held fast.

Then, from above the gate the long spears were plied and the slender javelins cast so that there was a great winnowing of souls among the raiding outlanders, until, at last, some of them drew off and began hurling their own lances against the men of Eire.

Now, when the lances began to come over the wall, Michael called out:

"Shane! Locheen! Do you two go up with your shields and kneel on the wall for the keeping of those javelins."

It was done, and there was no pausing in the fury of that fight, nor was there any rest for those who plied the long spears. Brian felt the sweat starting upon his brow, and his hands ached from the gripping of the heavy weapon; yet still he struck downward upon the axmen, the long point piercing where

their necks came out of their mail shirts.

But it was not in the foreign men to endure for long in the face of the long sharp Gaelic spears, and at last they drew off for the making of a new attack.

Thus, when Brian might spare his eyes from looking upon the foreigners, he gazed about him to see what harm had come to the men of the monastery. Beside him lay Murrough, one of Goll's men, and he dead of a deep wound in his chest. A little way off stood Goll himself, dabbling with his cloak-end at a cut across his cheek. And Brian saw others among the defenders that had wounds on them. His own cloak was in tatters from the flying lances, yet no scratch was there upon him.

But his wandering eye missed Michael from their numbers and he turned to Goll, questioning anxiously.

"No harm has been at him," Goll answered. "'Twas Dunnen came out of the hall, and a lance from over the wall cut him cruelly. Losh! You'd have thought the gate was taken, when Michael saw it."

"Let you not be mocking at the love of those two men for each other," Brian said, scowling. "Sure, it's little enough they've gotten out of their long lives of service."

"By the saints, Brian, I'm hushed."

"Where is Michael, now?"

"There, beside the round tower, binding Dunnen's arm," Goll answered, pointing.

Kathleen also was by them there, Brian saw; and for a moment his eye rested fondly upon her, admiring the slender strength of her. Strong, she was, like that round tower. Then he noted the heavy door of oak that was let into the side of the tower, all stoutly built of stone. The thought passed his mind that there they would rally should

the gate go down. He turned to find Goll peering out across the slope.

"LOOK, Brian. What do you make of this, now?" Goll said.

A great fire had been lighted at the edge of the wood, and from beyond it came the gleam of axes and the sound of them, chopping at a tall tree. And there was much going about between the tree and the fire, so that the long shadows of the Northmen wheeled out widely away from the flames.

"Saint Bridget protect us, Brian! That tree will be a ram for the battering down of our gate," said Goll, hoarsely.

"Right. 'Tis devil and all we're in for, now."

Brian leaped down and went to summon Michael.

Then stoutly did they arrange their defense against this new menace, yet was there grave misgiving at the hearts of all of them. Soberly and silently, the best marksmen took places closest over the gate. Among those who stood below, here and there a man snicked his knife in and out of his belt or tested his sword point with his thumb.

By this time, the invaders had finished the felling of their tree; branches were lopped off from it, and it was taken up between a long line of them. They came forward, resolutely, in spite of Gaelic javelins falling among them, and no sooner was one man down than another had taken the place of him.

When the tree's heavy end crashed against the gate, there was a quivering of wood and a creaking of bent hinges; and, strive as they might, Brian and Goll and those others who wielded the long spears could not reach the nearest of the men who swung it.

The monastery men then formed the half of a circle behind the gate, it al-



Kathleen also was by them there,
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ready sagging from the thunderous blows upon it until at last it splintered at its widest part.

Then there were axes that strove to widen the breach beating upon it again. One bold axeman, more impatient than his brother raiders, came twisting through the broken gate and leaped among the defenders; but it was short shrift he had, there among the anxious-flashing Gaelic blades.

But more came on, and more, until they were engaging the full strength of the stout defenders. In that fighting, Brian was as though a spell were on him. As the wild, frightening faces came before him, he would be striking out at them, and them going from before him, endlessly, endlessly.

The fighting consumed the whole of his heart and body, but there was no thought in him for the danger and the pain of wounds. The red spirit, which is in the born fighting man, bore him up, above the reach of feeling. He was aware that he was bleeding; yet, strangely, in the back of his mind a bit of a song was rising as you might hear

upon a summer's night, the roistering song of revelers come marching gayly up a quiet street.

Then through the fog of fighting that was on him, came the awareness of a weird, red glow. It grew about him, and gleamed in the faces and beards of the foreign men, adding glitter to the eyes of them.

Then came the voice of Michael, who fought at his side: "The black curse on these heathen wretches! They tied bits of fire . . . upon their lances . . . and cast them on the thatch. . . The chapel and the school are burning."

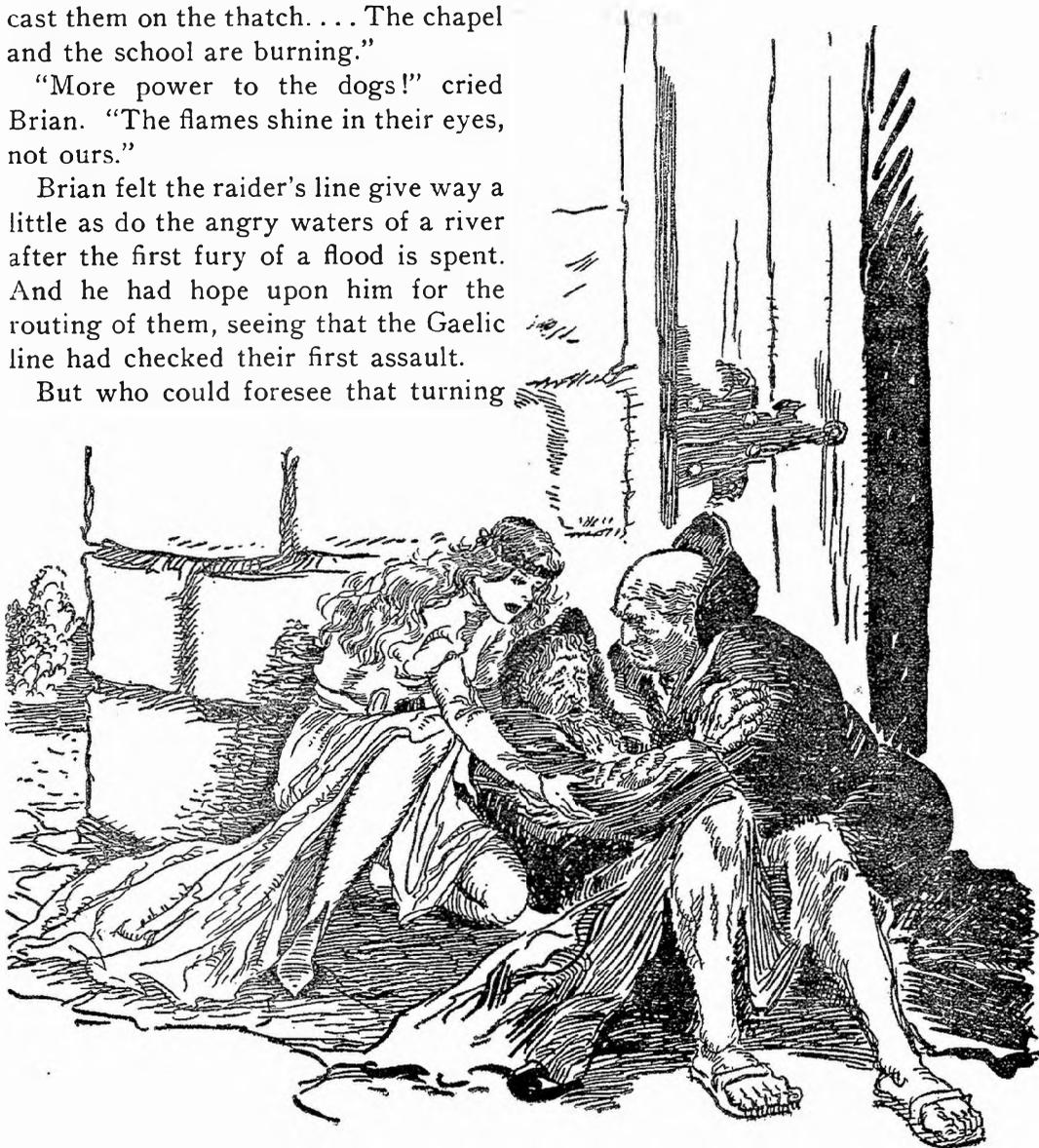
"More power to the dogs!" cried Brian. "The flames shine in their eyes, not ours."

Brian felt the raider's line give way a little as do the angry waters of a river after the first fury of a flood is spent. And he had hope upon him for the routing of them, seeing that the Gaelic line had checked their first assault.

But who could foresee that turning

of the tide that swept the battle to a brutal butchery? Yet, so it was, and the reason of it was yet more piteous still.

Across the courtyard there came a cry, thin and high and quavering, that yet rose above the din of battle as the little screaming of a gull will be rising above the boom of the surf. It was a cry of sorrow and Brian recognized the voice. 'Twas the voice of Father Dunnen.



"My books! My books!" it came. "The cruel fire will burn the books."

Brian well knew what the books meant to the old priest and him a childless man. All the high pride he had for them, and the great care he lavished upon them. And Brian remembered how the wrinkled kindly face would light with pleasure at the sight of the beautiful pages.

"My books! My books!"

And in answer to that wailing came a shout from Michael, beside Brian.

"Go not into the fire, Dunnen. Go not into the fire!"

Brian knew, in an instant, that Michael no longer was beside him. Instead, confusion was all about him. With Father Michael's going, the Gaelic line was broken. The foreign men were streaming past him. Though he strove with all the wild strength there was in him, it was beyond hope that he might stem the furious rush of them.

Brian, himself, went reeling backward, yet, uncertain as his footing was on the old flagstones, he somehow managed to keep his broad blade swinging. Through the flame-lit courtyard wild figures of fighting men were like leaves of autumn tossed in sport by winter's hurrying winds, which fling them out, to dance in flying twos and leaping threes before sweeping them whirling back again, into tortured, trampled masses.

NOW, Brian found the stout wall of the tower at his back, and there he struck. All about him were the foreigners. One of them rushed at him with upswinging sword. Brian darted beneath the blow. His own point plunged in. Like to a snake's striking for swiftness, it was. Down across the blade hot blood streamed.

Deep had gone that thrusting steel, and even Brian's strength could not release the blade. As he tugged against it, over his head he saw an axe's broad blade, and it gleaming in the lurid light of flames. Stooping sidewise, he heard the angry "whish" of the axe past his ear. Then he was grasping up the sword of the fallen Dane and felling the axeman with one slashing blow.

When he straightened, Brian glanced quickly over the flame-lit courtyard. Broken bodies dotted the old flagstones, and close beside the burning house of books he saw two huddled figures lying, lifeless; and knew them for Dunnen, the good old scribe, and Father Michael.

With a great surging of mighty muscles, the fighting monk broke the ring of the foreigners that closed in about him and began the cutting of his way along the tower wall toward the oaken door. There, he came on one more cruelly beset than he himself was.

Young Goll, it was, and the steel cap was gone from his dark head. Blood flowed freely down from a great gash in his scalp, darkening all the sight of him so that he struggled blindly amid thirsty foreign blades.

"This way, Goll! To the tower," Brian screamed; then, seeing Goll paid him no heed, he thrust the wounded youth along with his left shoulder to the tower door. He leaped before Goll, and his steel made a ring about the both of them.

"Reach behind you, Goll; and get you through the door!"

Yet young Goll stood there swaying on his feet, as sways a broken twig upon a limb. He spoke not, heard not, saw not; only breathed and swayed upon his feet.

Brian's great spirit groaned within him. He could see there was no need



When the raiders saw the vision of her beauty, they were like hounds that sight, at last, the long-sought quarry.

to be shouting the rallying cry, for there would be none to heed it. And he felt the powers of darkness crowding all about, more numerous, even, than his living enemies.

With his free arm he opened the door for the putting of poor Goll through it; but, then, amazement was upon him, for it was not the stout oak planks his fingers touched, but warm young flesh. Knowledge came to him that 'twas Kathleen was in it, and she reaching out for fainting Goll, and his heart was proud for the brave pity of her.

Yet when the raiders saw the vision of her beauty, they were like hounds that sight, at last, the long-sought quarry, and they came at failing Brian in one great mass. Their weapons were



bristling all about his head, some of them were thrusting past him at the door.

Brian heard a gasping cry from the doorway behind him, and he thought it was young Goll and his spirit leaving him. Calling up the last reserve of his great strength, Brian burst upon them as the final gust of a storm strikes upon a forest. Bare of breast, mad light in blood-encrusted eyes, reddened hands on dented sword, he burst upon them and sent them reeling back.

Then, in that moment's grace, he sprang aside and leaped back through the door and set his weight to it so that it came crashing shut. While his laboring breast leaned against it, he dropped the heavy bar.

Darkness and silence rang in his head more loudly than the shouting and bitter blows and flaming light that was beyond the door. After that last great prodigal spending of strength, the weakness took him and he came down upon the floor with a great crash, all the long length of him, and he lay there as one dead. . . .

THEN slowly, as his wandering wits returned to him, he heard a sound of murmuring like to the surf that beats upon a distant coast, and he knew it for the voices of Goll and Kathleen, and they talking together.

"Rest you now, Goll, your wounds will be bleeding and you should not speak."

"The time for resting is long past, dear cousin. 'Tis the green fields of Tir nan Og I'll rest in this night, Kathleen."

Then there burst a great groan from the poor lad, and thereafter a gentle sobbing shook the air.

But suddenly, out of the dark, the voice of Goll came rolling again, strong

and clear. It was as though he had cast his pain and his weakness from him and had on him once again all his fine young youth and fire and gaiety.

"Bring me the horses, Lugh, the fine, black, long-maned horses, them that do be running over the ground as do the winter clouds before the storm winds. Bring me the horses, I say, for I ride home to Leinster."

And Kathleen's voice came faltering through the dark, and all the pitying sorrow of her heart was in it.

"Oh, Goll, that you should die because of me."

The words ended on a sob that changed to gasping sighs of pain and the sure knowledge came upon Brian that she, herself, was wounded.

He tried to rise, but sank back again into that murmuring surf of sound. It seemed they were again in the dining hall where the bright fire burned. There in the great carven chair sat Father Michael, beside him Kathleen, just as they had been that sundown. Young Goll laughed and talked again with the soldiers and the monks.

Then into the mellow light was brought a great, tall harp.

"It would please us greatly, Kathleen," said Michael, "to hear you put your music on the harp. There's hardly a man in the land has not heard of the wonder of your playing."

So she sat to the harp, playing again the song; and she struck the strings and set them quivering with little flames of golden sound that mounted higher and ever higher into a great burning and then died away again to whispering embers. Then in a high, clear voice she sang the song.

Wild chanting music it was, like a war song, and it filled the long hall, and went marching, marching about the

seated listeners. Up to Brian it marched, and it possessed him. And the monks and the soldiers, and Goll and Brian took up the singing; and the rafters echoed back the rolling thunder of that chant.

Now Brian saw himself, in his seat amidst the monks, quivering as a harp string quivers when the note is struck, and he could not turn his eyes away from the fair face of Kathleen. And the wild, mad pleasure of the song filled him, for he drank deep of it, so that you might have thought him blind to all the world except one song and one face. She spoke to him no word, yet it was as if she had summoned him to her cause, and he knew he would serve her blindly, whatever that cause might be.

He saw it plainly, now, saw it as the strength that was upon him, instead of weakness, as he had first thought. Her cause was his cause!

Kathleen called his name and beckoned him to sit beside herself—but he was waking now—waking . . .

SOMEHOW, in the newer agony of conscious thought, Brian got to his staggering feet and went blundering across the empty dark to where she lay.

"Oh, Kathleen! Kathleen!" he cried. "Is there no end to the evil these foreigners work upon us? For Goll and the monastery men I can grieve without pain, for 'tis a man's place to be fighting, but I thought we might have saved yourself, at least."

"Och, Brian, let you not be grieving," 'Twas Kathleen's voice, yet the hand he held was cold. "Let you not be grieving, Brian. 'Tis you are chosen to save this land of ours. I know . . ."

"Only this morning I had a vision, and I walking upon the hills. 'Twas

in the sky I saw it—a great torch, Brian, a torch wondrous worked and carven, but unlighted and cold. And out of nowhere came a voice that said: 'It is for you to light the torch, Kathleen!' And at the words, it seemed, the torch drew nearer, and I saw that it was carved with the face of a young man.

"And by this token, I know it for a true vision;—the face was the face of you, Brian."

A great sob tore through Brian's body and the roots of his tongue were like red-hot coals in his throat.

"Ah, Kathleen, that a vision and myself in it should bring you to this pass."

A great numbness overcame him, and the darkness about him was no darker than the blackness of his soul. And then the darkness became luminous with a queer light and he wondered upon it and looked up.

There were two figures before him, and they strangely shining. They had the likeness of his father, Cinnetag and of his grandfather, Lorcan. And it seemed they spoke to each other and spoke of him.

"The descendants of Cormac Cas know how to die," said Lorcan.

"The men of the Dal gCais will never be stopping short of death, and it's fighting is in it," said Cinnetag.

"Sure, no son of Lorcan and Cinnetag is going to take an axe in the head and him not fighting back," they said together.

"We can't help your sword arm any, lad, but we'll be bearing you up on each side with a hand under the shoulder."

NOW the dawn came upon Erin, and the first long rays took the old monastery of Columbeith and came

peering over the walls of it. And oh! the sad sight was in it, what with the burned buildings and the scattered battle-torn bodies.

Near the round tower there was a great heap of the dead, they mostly foreign men and before them there was a giant body crowned with golden hair and it bore many wounds. At the side of this great form lay the still figure of a woman, dark of hair and gloriously beautiful.

Now the sun searched long upon the golden haired one, till at last, slowly as if breaking from the grave, Brian moved as to avoid the searching rays. So he awoke to life again. His eyes swung slowly round the scene, and understanding once again returned. Painfully, he sat upright and gripped his pulsing temples with his hands.

For long he was gazing at the still form of Kathleen beside him, and then he rose shakily to his feet. Then he took his bloody claymore, that had served himself so well, and he pressed the point of it into the earth between the flagstones until it stood upright like to a cross. Sinking down on his knees, to rest his aching head upon his bloody hands over the cross-barred hilt, he prayed a prayer.

"Oh, dear Lord and the good Saints,

Merciful Masters, never let me know the pleasant quietness, the sweet peace of mind, the happy restfulness of spirit, until, out of this island that is home to me, the foreign invaders are forever cast and all their power utterly destroyed. Here do I vow never to cease from struggling to this end until it is accomplished or I am no more. Let you now give me strength to keep this vow."

Then he took up the sword out of the ground and belted it beside him and he turned once more to the courtyard.

"Let you not be thinking hard of me, old friends, if I'm leaving you now with only the birds and the bees to be holding the wake over you. Sure, it's water I'll be needing soon, and a few herbs and simples, belike, for you see. I'll have to take care with this life that's been given back to me. So, let you not be thinking hard of me, now."

He faced the gate then, and took a step toward it, but turning back again raised his arms in a piteous, empty gesture.

"Kathleen! Kathleen!" he cried.

But there was no answer to that crying, and so, with grieving heart but steadfast soul, he passed out through the shattered gate and went his way into the south toward Cashel.

Mightier Than the Pen

MUCH has been said from time to time about "fighting newspapers," which as a rule do their fighting with news-print, working on the theory that "the pen is mightier than the sword." There is on record, however, one paper that apparently held the reverse of this theory to be true. That paper was the *Baltimore American and Daily Advertiser*.

On September 10, 1814, the British burned Washington and headed for Baltimore. On the same day, the *American* carried a notice that it was suspending publication for a few days, while the entire staff left the office to join the forces gathering for the defense of the city.

They participated, on September 12, in the

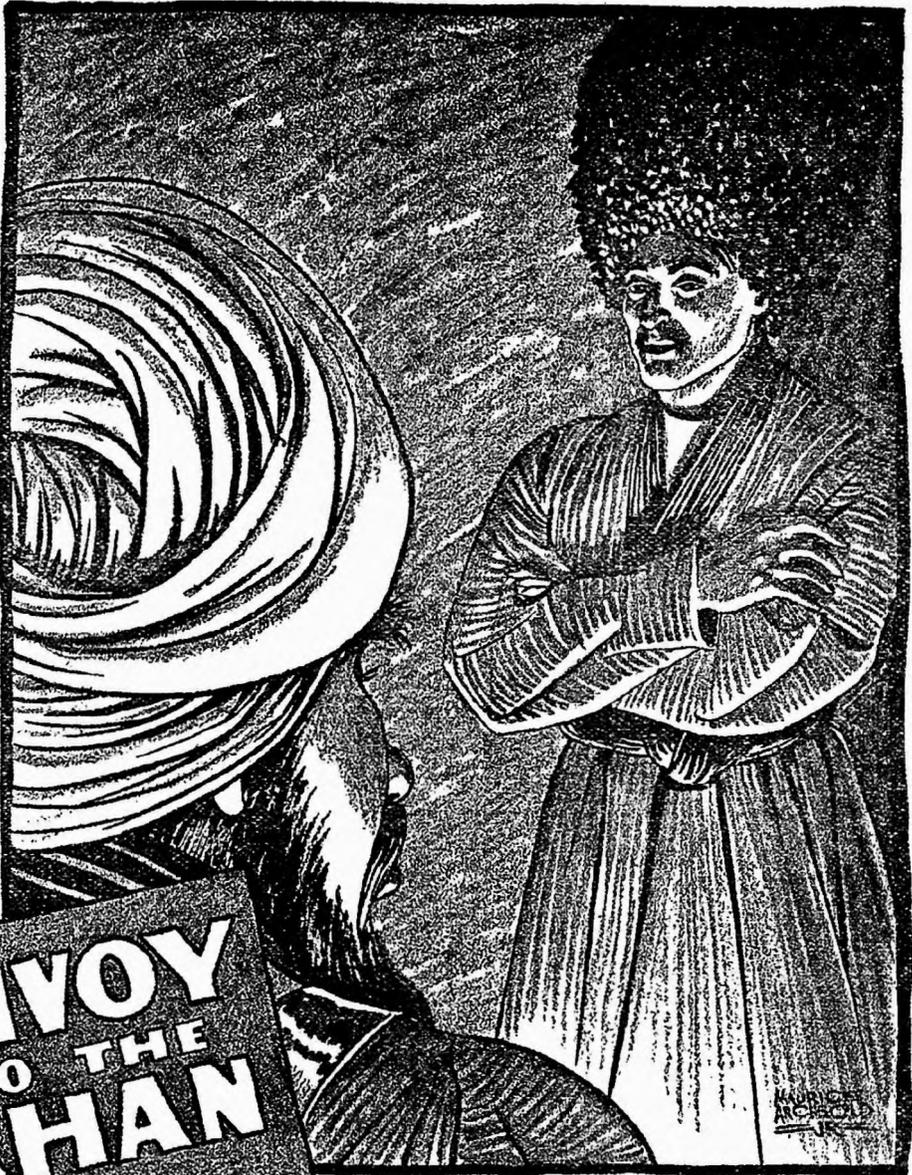
repulse of the British at the Battle of North Point. Next day, the British tried to take Baltimore with their fleet. Fort McHenry, at the entrance of the harbor withstood their bombardment, however, and a fleet of barges carrying landing parties that sneaked past the fort in the dark met with such a hot reception when it tried to land that one was sunk and the rest had to retire. After this second defeat, the British left and the Maryland city was threatened no more.

On September 21 the *American* resumed publication, carrying among other items a poem by Francis Scott Key, a Baltimore lawyer—"The Star-Spangled Banner."—*Edward F. Lych III.*

"I have a message for Abdurrahman Khan," the prisoner answered in Pushtu

**ENVOY
TO THE
KHAN**
BY
E. Hoffman Price

Illustrated by
MAURICE ARCHBOLD, Jr.



Khan's black beard. His eyes were reddened from the strain of writing by the flickering light of two tapers, and his stubby fingers were cramped by their unaccustomed task; but heedless of the outcome of the morrow's meeting with Mir Baba, Abdurrahman whipped himself to the night's work.

Each letter was addressed to one of the petty princes who squabbled with each other in Northern Afghanistan, instead of teaming up against General Roberts' invading army. Abdurrah-

A BASIN of glowing charcoal pulled the teeth of the wind that came down from Central Asia and slipped past the tent flap to stir Abdurrahman

man wrote, "*You served my grandfather and my father; therefore join me driving the infidels from the capital . . .*"

Two scribes squatted on ragged rugs spread on the ground. These were of the few who had followed Abdurrahman from exile in Russian Turkestan, where he had found refuge after the revolt that had dethroned his father. Outside, huddled among the grunting camels and restless horses, were his hard bitten captains, red eyed from the unremitting vigilance needed to keep several thousand newly recruited troops from deserting in the face of Mir Baba's somewhat larger and well equipped army.

A scribe nodded. His eyes glazed, and the reed, undipped in the ink soaked mass of silk threads in the saucer at his side, scratched meaninglessly. He was so far gone from fatigue that he moved in his sleep.

Abdurrahman looked up from his own writing, and wiped the sweat from his frowning brow. This was no time for rest. He rose, amazingly swift for one with his stocky trunk and short legs. He jerked the scribe to his feet and booted him.

The fellow yelled. Still clutching his reed pen, he landed in the bitter cold outside the tent. Abdurrahman had no words to waste; he saved them for people beyond the reach of boot or sword.

Presently, the scribe came back. Chill and the shock had aroused him, and he resumed his work—but only after an incredulous glance at that stocky man whose full lips moved silently with each word his squarish fingers shaped as though they handled a sword, instead of a reed.

At last Abdurrahman clapped his hands. A sentry, shivering despite his thick soled Turkoman boots and sheep-

skin coat, stamped in. His breath blew white, and his bushy moustaches were frosted. The exile commanded, "Send a dozen couriers out with these letters. At once!"

"*Aywah, huzoor!*"

"But first tell Zamin Khan I want to see him!"

"Very well, my lord!"

The exhausted scribes slumped in sodden heaps. Abdurrahman fumbled in the baggy pockets of his Russian military tunic. He pulled out half a cake of bread, then picked dried apricots from the cartridges, golden coins, and tobacco he had dredged out with the loaf. But even as he ate, his black eyes shifted as if to second his appeal to the stiff necked chieftains who sided with Mir Baba, ruler of the Badakshan province.

This territory was the key to Afghanistan. First win it; then think of General Roberts' army, which had defeated Ayyub Khan and avenged the murder of Sir Louis Cavagnari, the British envoy.

Abdurrahman's strong teeth ground into the dried apricots and tough bread. "First Mir Baba. As for the British, Allah will do that which is to be done." But he sighed and shook his head, thinking of leading a disorderly horde of tribesmen against fortified Kabul.

HOOFBEATS, the blowing of a horse, and the challenge of a sentry brought Abdurrahman to his feet, still swallowing as he wiped the crumbs from his lips. A *yuzbashi* strode in and salaamed. At his heels came gray bearded Zamin Khan, the chief of the exile's captains. Between the two was a prisoner. The *khan* reported, "A prisoner. Dost Tagai's patrol caught him at the river crossing. He says he has a

message from the British in Kabul.”

Dost Tagai nodded and thrust the captive to the front.

For a full minute, Abdurrahman looked at the tall newcomer, whose bitter blue eyes steadfastly met his own. The tent began to reek from soggy sheepskins drying in the charcoal's warmth. Blood, not quite washed off, stained the fellow's coat.

“You swam, and they fired at you?”

“I have a message for Abdurrahman Khan,” the prisoner answered in Pushtu, which plainly was not his native language.

“Who sends it?”

“Griffin Sahib, the new British envoy in Kabul.”

“Who are you?”

“Daoud Ali.”

“Hmmm. . . . Kabuli?” Abdurrahman noted the lank black hair that peeped from the tall sheepskin cap; the muscular hands, the bony face and long nose of the river drenched messenger.

“No. Shinwari. Where's Abdurrahman Khan?”

“Before you, Daoud Ali.”

The messenger scrutinized the stocky man with heightened interest. His glance shifted, for a moment considering the exhausted scribes. He read something from the eyes and postures of the two *yuzbashes*. Then he bowed, touching his hand to heart and lips and forehead. Finally, he drew a silk wrapped parcel from inside his jacket.

Abdurrahman broke the seals. The wrapper was dry. The writing was not blurred either from sweat or creasing. His black eyes took in the contents at a glance: Griffin Sahib wished to know his attitude toward the British, and his purpose in leaving Russian territory.

Abdurrahman smiled maliciously and crumpled the letter into his pocket. “After I've met Mir Baba, in the morning, you'll get message aplenty, Daoud Ali.”

He made a gesture of dismissal, but the tribesman stood fast. He said, “The Uzbek chief, Yolbars Khan, has just moved into the fortress of Nimlek. His outposts tried to keep me from passing through.”

Abdurrahman turned to Zamin Khan. “What do our spies say?”

“This fellow is right, Your Highness,” the sharp faced old soldier answered. “I was waiting for you to finish your writing before I told you this.”

Abdurrahman spoke to the other captain, “Give Daoud something to eat. Keep an eye on him. He's staying with us, whether he wants to or not.” Then, as the courier was taken away, the exiled prince turned to Zamin Khan. “Do you know what that means, having Yolbars and his Uzbeks behind us when we meet Mir Baba?”

Zamin Khan's wrinkles pulled into grim angles. “It means that we'd best retreat. Mir Saba has invited us into a trap. This last minute move of men to Nimlek proves it.”

“Retreat?”

“By Allah, we have to.”

“We can't! We'll lose followers instead of gaining them. Does withdrawal make us look like leaders of a holy war?”

Zamin Khan's leathery face reddened. He shifted from one foot to the other. “Better than risk our army.”

“We'll capture Nimlek on our way to meet Mir Baba.”

Zamin Khan's hands rose. “It can't be done! Your grandfather besieged it for eighteen months and couldn't take it! The moat is fifty yards wide.

We only have six field guns, and not enough men for a siege."

"We'll take Nimlek," Abdurrahman slowly said, "because if we do not clean out that nest of Uzbeks, we are finished."

"But how? They have almost as many men as we have. It takes three to one to take even an ordinary fortress by assault."

"Get out!" And as Zamin Khan bounded toward the door, Abdurrahman called after him, "Allah will open the road!"

If he secretly shared the veteran's qualms, he did not betray his fears, even in private. He pulled off his boots and stretched himself on a sheepskin rug spread on the floor. Presently, he slept as soundly as his exhausted secretaries.

TWO DAYS later, the brazen blare of trumpets aroused the Uzbeks who patrolled the impregnable walls of Nimlek. The darkness shook with hoofbeats and the shouts of Abdurrahman's *sowars*. From a mile away came the chatter and uproar of a town awakened from sleep. And as the sun rose, six brass field guns blazed away at the gates of the fortress.

"Lancers," said Abdurrahman, to Daoud Ali, whom he had invited to ride with him that day, "are worthless behind walls."

The courier had no answer. The sulphurous smoke of the field pieces choked him. Bullets and cannon balls from the embrasures of Nimlek raised clouds of dust. One ounce slugs from long barreled *jezails* plucked at Abdurrahman's turban as he spurred ahead of the front line, and through the fumes of the guns that the cannoneers were sponging.

Daoud Ali followed. He was thinking, "One thing I'll have to tell about this fellow, if I ever get to Kabul. He's a madman!"

Abdurrahman reined in at the edge of the moat whose fifty foot width made it impossible for his troops to close in on the flat faced Uzbeks, even though the first volley had blown the beams of the massive gate to splinters. The firing had ceased; the defenders wanted to know what this reckless fellow had to say.

He shouted, "Where's Yolbars Khan? Have him come out!"

Without waiting for an answer, he reached back to his embroidered Boukharan saddle bags and took out a compact parcel wrapped in scarlet silk. This he held in his upturned palms, waiting until a broad shouldered fellow in sheepskins came to the parapet.

Half a dozen slant eyed Uzbeks followed Yolbars Khan. Abdurrahman cried, "Surrender, and it will be well with you. It is not fitting for true believers to quarrel with each other while an infidel army is in Kabul. But if you don't lay down your arms, I'm coming in to take them."

"By Allah," boomed the deep chested *khan*, "what idiocy is this, thou son of a noseless mother? We have food for months, and who can take this place? Can you do what your grandfather failed to do?"

"Lay down your arms, and we will be friends." Abdurrahman raised the scarlet parcel. "I swear by this Holy Koran, and by the red standard I took from the tomb of a saint, after he came to me in a dream and bade me come home to be king. I will not harm you."

The Uzbeks flung back their heads and roared at the thought of being injured. Yolbars Khan silenced them,

then answered, "The Peace upon you, son of Dost Ali! But we serve Mir Baba, and we are here by his order, for what purpose may please him. Do you therefore ride south to meet him. Lay down your arms, and *he* will be merciful!"

ABDURRAHMAN wheeled his horse, and trotted back toward the cannons. The gunners fanned their smoking matches. The *khan* said to his tall companion, "Daoud Ali, do *you* think I'm crazy? What do you think I intend to do with the British when I reach Kabul?"

His black eyes twinkled, reflecting his smile. Daoud shrugged and stroked his lantern jaw. "*Ya Allah!* What matter what I think, *huzoor?* Be pleased to give me a letter, so I can ride."

Abdurrahman laughed gustily, and took his post some yards to the flank of the battery. Rifles and *jezails* again blazed from the walls of Nimlek. Led horses, not quite out of range, squealed and kicked as one went down. Dust rose, officers cursed, and the beasts were moved further back. The waiting soldiers prudently retreated as well.

A courier came galloping up. "The hay is on the way, Your Highness!"

Abdurrahman nodded, suddenly flung himself from the saddle, and ran toward the battery. "Hold it, captain! I'll lay these pieces."

Sword drawn, he prodded the gunners to greater haste. "Don't fire at the gate. Get that minaret!" He gestured, indicating the observers who were in the tall gray tower that rose above the walls.

The gunners blew their matches. Flame spurted from touch holes, gushed from muzzles. The brazen cannon kicked back, their trail-spades raking the rocky ground. Smoke enveloped them. Masonry crashed as the mina-

ret's top stage fell to pieces under the concentrated impact. The observers in the tower tumbled grotesquely in a rain of squared stone and dust.

Daoud Ali shook his head. Wasting fire on those massive walls would be silly enough; deliberately ignoring the wooden gate, which could be blown to slivers, was worse. It seemed to make no difference whether Yolbars Khan did or did not have an observation tower, since he had already spotted Abdurrahman's small army, and knew its full extent.

Finally, this very fortress had withstood a siege by Dost Ali, Afghanistan's stoutest soldier. His grandson, Daoud sadly concluded, was more impetuous than sensible.

FOR three hours the cannonading continued. The defenders, stung by the destruction of their lookouts, were trying to pick off the gunners, and arouse the dismounted soldiers into wasting ammunition. Abdurrahman, reckless as ever, rode up and down the line, striking hotheads with the flat of his sabre.

But he changed his tactics when another courier approached. The field pieces were fired as fast as the gunners could reload, and the *sowars*, ordered forward, kept the air shaking with small arms slugs that whistled before flattening against the parapets of the fort. The wind shifted, driving dense clouds of smoke to the right of the besieger's front.

This screened the movement of the greater portion of Abdurrahman's force. They circled, each man crawling with trusses of dry hay. And from behind a ridge came most of the population of the neighboring town—men, women, children, camels and asses, driven forward

at sword's point with their burdens of forage.

A bridge could not be thrown across the fifty foot moat; the engineers would have been picked off in the course of such heavy and conspicuous work. But flinging bundles of hay into the water was a different matter.

Drums rolled, gongs clanged, and pipes squealed as old Zamin Khan shifted the fire toward the gate. That was the signal for a charge. The Uzbek chief, suspecting that the besiegers might be insane enough to try to float across the moat on inflated goatskins, concentrated his men and his guns to meet the threat.

That was his first mistake; his second was in having failed to realize that the moat of the ancient fortress was no longer as deep as it once had been. Silt had filled its bottom, and the trusses of hay quickly bridged it. Scaling ladders, made the night before, were rushed across the treacherous footing. And Abdurrahman Khan, now on foot, led the way. Daoud Ali, accepting the challenge, was at his side.

And then the Uzbek *khan* awoke to what was happening. His men rushed to the threatened quarter and hurled bundles of blazing cane on the heads of the attackers. Muskets boomed, rifles crackled, and flintlock pistols coughed slugs and pebbles into the thin line of the storming party.

But Zamin Khan's detachment swept the parapet with concentrated fire. Sword in hand, Abdurrahman fought the defenders back, and every stroke covered the advance of men who swarmed up the ladders.

Old fashioned firearms could not be reloaded rapidly enough to block him. In his left hand, he had a seven chambered revolver whose repeating fire

swept the defenders back. Hacking and slashing, Daoud Ali covered his flank.

Then came the charge down the ramp, and into the court of the fortress. The Uzbeks, accustomed to cavalry maneuvers, and the thrust of their long lances, were handicapped from the start. They were caught flat footed, before they could mount up and form.

The show ended when Yolbars Khan was cornered at a drawbridge he had let down to make a sortie.

"Hold it!" shouted Abdurrahman, striking aside the blades that reached out for the Uzbek chief. "Lay down your arms, and live!"

IT WAS nearly noon when the Uzbek garrison marched out of the fortress they had vainly defended. Yolbars Khan, surprised that he had lived long enough to reach Abdurrahman's tent, stared stolidly at the victor. He was caked with blood and sweat, blackened with smoke. His broad face was blank, but his little eyes betrayed him.

"*Allah karim!*" he muttered. "You captured Nimlek in six hours!"

"Allah indeed is great," Abdurrahman agreed. "Now, this matter of serving Mir Baba. I promised you your life and the lives of all your men, if you join me in a holy war."

"I swore allegiance to Mir Baba," the defeated Uzbek persisted.

Abdurrahman shrugged. "Whoever opposes me favors the infidels I am going to drive out of Kabul." He gestured to Zamin Khan, who sourly regarded the prisoner. "Take the heads of a hundred Uzbeks," he commanded, "and then see if our friend is willing to save the rest."

Yolbars Khan made a hopeless gesture. "Allah upon you! Wait—for the

sake of my men, I'll join you, little as I want to fight Mir Baba."

"Don't worry," answered Abdurrahman. "Mir Baba won't fight. He doesn't want to. Otherwise he'd not have thought it necessary to send you to Nimlek to threaten my rear."

Then to Zamin Khan, "Give the Uzbeks their arms, and strike camp at once! We've got to meet Mir Baba before he expects us."

Daoud remained with Abdurrahman. He said, "Your Highness, may I have that letter to Griffin Sahib?"

Abdurrahman shook his head. "Not yet. As soon as I saw how carefully you preserved his message against wear and water, I knew you for a good servant. Stay awhile, and learn more to tell Griffin Sahib."

He fumbled in his baggy pockets. Though his coat was slashed and bullet riddled, he had not been wounded. He reloaded the seven chambered revolver, then dug bread and apricots out of his pocket.

"Eat," he said, offering Daoud a crust. "What sort of fellow is this Griffin Sahib? Does he want to gobble up our country? Is he afraid that Sardar Roberts' army can't hold Kabul against the tribesmen?"

"Griffin Sahib," Daoud slowly answered, "is an infidel, but honest. I would rather serve him than that fool of an Ayyub Khan."

"You have doubtless overheard him speaking with his officers. Would he order General Roberts to leave Kabul, if he believed that the Afghans had a king who could keep order?"

"Your Highness, I do not know enough of Griffin Sahib's mind to answer."

"What will you tell him about me?"

Daoud kept silence.

"Speak up!" Outside, a trumpet brayed. Abdurrahman leaped to his feet, listened to the ring of steel as horsemen mounted up. "I will not hold it against you."

"I would say that Abdurrahman Khan is a good soldier, but with more valor than discretion."

The *Khan* pondered on this for a moment. "No one could accuse you of prudence, Daoud Ali, carrying an infidel's letter all the way from Kabul. Any one of a dozen chieftains would have cut your throat for having it in your possession."

"In that territory I hid it in my boot. And Allah guarded me."

"Praised be His Name!" The Khan salaamed, and so did Daoud. Thus for an instant, neither could see the other's face.

SUNRISE of the second day that followed the capture of Nimlek saw Abdurrahman's army filing through the passes that cleft the hills. Hard riding, day and night, had more than wiped out the delay of a six hour siege. On the broad plain below, tents and fluttering standards marked the expanse of Mir Baba's encampment. The sun glinted on the chain mail and peaked helmets of mountaineers who had scarcely learned to use gunpowder; lance heads reflected points of light, and burnished field guns shimmered in the glare.

The forces were evenly matched, though Mir Baba's were better equipped. He could thus afford the courtesy of riding out to meet the exile, whose troops still filed from the passes of the hills that ran east and west until they swung in a vast curve that flanked the camp.

Abdurrahman and a few officers gal-

loped out. Old Zamin Khan was not with him, having been assigned to ride with Yolbars and the Uzbeks. Once, Abdurrahman glanced toward the flanking hills; then he went a horse's length ahead of his retinue, and met Mir Baba face to face.

The Mir's round face was oily as his smile. He was too heavy for his Turkoman horse, and the silver on his saddle increased the load. But when he dismounted, only an instant after Abdurrahman, he moved lithely enough, being tall and not too plump. His knee length silken *khalat* rippled like flame in the breeze, exposing a curved sword and a belt loaded with gold mounted pistols.

The two leaders exchanged ceremonious bows. Each attempted to kiss the other's hand, and each declined the other's compliment. But the two opposing bodyguards were ready to spur forward, weapons drawn.

Mir Baba stroked his curled beard and said, "Welcome, Abdurrahman Khan! It cools the eyes to see you, well and safe."

"The King of Boukhara bade me offer you his greeting," the exile said, smoothly as if he had not intercepted a messenger bearing a letter in which Mir Baba assured that very king that ten thousand gold pieces for Abdurrahman's head was a prize soon to be claimed. "The pleasure of seeing Your Highness makes a wanderer richer than a king!"

The Mir's smile widened. He did not know that Abdurrahman had read the letter and deliberately put his own pistol to the courier's head. So he went on, "With your army joined to mine, we can whip all of northern Afghanistan into shape: Badakhshan and Kataghan and Balkh."

"I have a better idea, Mir Baba. With your army added to mine, and with no civil war, I can drive the British out of Kabul."

The Mir's smile vanished. He looked past the bodyguard, and toward the troops who formed far back at the foot of the hills.

"You are more of a fool than your cousin Ayyub! Let the infidels keep Kabul and Kandahar. If we offend them, they will do with us as they did with Ayyub, and with Yakub, your uncle."

Abdurrahman growled, "O thou son of several dogs! Thou brother of many lewd sisters! With the British in Kabul, and with you and the other *mirs* fighting with each other, how long will the Russians let you play at being king? Look what they did to Boukhara! See their work in Tashkent!"

Mir Baba fumbled with his pistol, but he recoiled a pace as Abdurrahman advanced with hand raised, cursing him for an infidel lover, an eater of pork. The Mir shouted, "Sound the advance! Cut this fool to pieces!"

ABDURRAHMAN'S suite had come forward, pistols leveled; but neither side fired. Unless one of the leaders drew a weapon, this was merely the formal prelude to a battle. A trumpet blared, and one of Mir Baba's guard galloped back toward camp.

"There is yet time to run," Mir Baba mocked. "Until Yolbars Khan comes out of Nimlek to cut you off."

Abdurrahman gestured to the hills that blanked the opposing lines. Dust was rising; the drumming of far off hoofs was accented by the wail of pipes. Lanceheads glittered above the cloud that now reached the edge of the plain, and three standards were red splashes



On the broad plain below, tents and fluttering standards marked the expanse of Mir Baba's encampment.

against the gray crags.

"Yolbars Khan and his Uzbeks! They serve me," Abdurrahman said. He turned to an orderly: "Tell them to attack at once!"

His unfaltering assurance deflated Mir Baba. If Abdurrahman spoke the truth, the Mir's army was doomed, being deployed for a frontal attack, with a charge of lancers about to nail the flank. He raised his hand. "Wait, thou fool! Why should true believers quarrel with each other?"

As he rode toward Mir Baba's striped pavilion, Abdurrahman beckoned Daoud Ali. "Now you have news for Griffin Sahib."

"Not so, Your Highness!" the stubborn fellow declared. "Not until I have a letter saying you will drive the infidels out of Kabul. Would Griffin Sahib's officers believe me as a witness?"

"They might," said the Khan, rubbing his hands. "They might."

DESPITE that day's good beginning, Abdurrahman's work was far from finished. The independent princes of the north muttered. The British victories in the south made them think twice; their vision was not clear enough to realize that unless the country were united, the Russians would gobble them up, a *mir* at a time.

Abdurrahman, now leading the forces he had combined with his own, sent Zamin Khan out to comb the country, collecting money and munitions, grain and animals. These activities he seconded by countless letters which were posted in the bazaars, the caravanserais, mosques, bawdy houses — wherever Afghans met to gossip.

Mir Baba was in Faizabad, accumulating men and supplies. Abdurrah-

man, at his headquarters in Rustak, listened to Dost Tagai's complaint: "Allah upon you, *ya sardar*, but you are wrong in trusting Mir Baba. If he raises enough recruits, he'll—"

Abdurrahman laughed. "If he finds enough men to turn against me, then I'll win just that many more over to my side! Now bring in those spies. I want their reports."

He turned to the secretaries, who had stolen a breathing spell, and commanded, "You, Wali Dad, write thus to Sultan Murad, in Kataghan: *'O thou cut off one, thou eater of filth, send me at once the 3,000 horsemen I required, and with them, the cattle and the cash: or it will not be well with thee!'*"

"Allah!" muttered the scribe. "In those words, *huzoor?*"

"We'll have to fight after that," Dost Tagai cut in.

"Write!" commanded Abdurrahman. Then to the captain: "That's just the point. He's put us off with excuses, which gives Mir Baba all the more time to plot. The sooner we whip Sultan Murad in Kataghan, the better for keeping Mir Baba on our side!"

Daoud Ali, still waiting for his letter, had become a fixture in Abdurrahman's tent. He could not leave without permission.

Later came a message from Mir Baba. He wanted Abdurrahman to show himself in Faizabad. It would be easier to get the district in line if the people saw him, and heard his personal appeal.

"Don't go," said Dost Tagai. "It's a trap. The minute you pull the army out of this town, Sultan Murad moves in."

The whole enterprise still hung in the balance. Abdurrahman, however, could not deny that plausible request. Only

his own leadership had brought things thus far. He could not be sure of himself until he actually set out with an army large enough to get the support of the mountaineers just short of Kabul; they would as readily defeat and plunder a weak force as ally themselves with a strong one.

But his answer was simple: "That is right, Dost Tagai. Rustak must be defended. You keep the army here to guard the supplies. I'll take a troop and ride to Faizabad."

"A troop? *Ya Allah!*" He flung up his hands.

"More would make Mir Baba think we feared him." He gestured toward Daoud Ali. "Do you stay here, or ride with me?"

"Suppose I were away, and Your Highness saw fit to give me a letter?" He rose, and buckled his sword belt.

SO THEY rode down the narrow streets. Loaded camels made way for them, and the merchants in the bazaar ceased bartering for a better look at the stocky man who led a troop of *sowars*.

"By Allah," they muttered, "he doesn't look like a king."

"He acts like one," another said. "With his own hand, he cut off the heads of a hundred traitors and watched his men build them into a heap at the gates of Argu."

"Like his grandfather, Dost Mohammed!"

A pyramid of heads was logic that penetrated Afghan skulls. His occasional fits of temper had increased Abdurrahman's stature in their eyes. He knew this, and his tired eyes brightened as he rode through the cavernous archway, and down the caravan trail to Faizabad.

On the march, he weighed the merits of decorating the city gates with Mir Baba's head. Impressive, yes: but he had to balance awe against resentment. Then he dug into his pocket, dipped under the revolver and found a handful of apricots and some loose tobacco.

"Roll me a smoke, Daoud Ali," he said, "then eat."

The courier wrapped the black tobacco in the nitre treated paper from which cannon matches were made, then waited until His Highness wiped his lips with his sleeve.

MIR BABA met Abdurrahman at the gates of Faizabad. His eyes widened, seeing less than half a troop of horsemen slumping in their saddles when the halt was signaled. His spies had not reported the march of an army.

"How is it with Your Highness?" he solicitously inquired. "Well, I trust and pray!" He rubbed his hands, gestured toward the walled city whose minarets were still reddened by the last rays reaching through a cleft in the hills. "Tomorrow, your presence will cool the eyes of Faizabad. By Allah, we will hunt partridges in the hills, thou and I! *Aywah*, the hunting is excellent. A new smooth bore—"

"Russian, with gold inlay on the lock?" Abdurrahman's voice was smooth as his beard-stroking.

Mir Baba swallowed, but his stride did not break. "But tonight—welcome to my *serai*. Praise Allah, there are some fat-tailed sheep!"

He smacked his lips, and paused to think of other delicacies. Abdurrahman raised a protesting hand. "Nay, by the Four Companions! We are too weary, tonight. We have ridden hard."

Mir Baba could see that, and he itched to know why. He wondered if

Sultan Murad had swooped down and caught Rustak by surprise, but this was no time to inquire. Instead: "Then rest. In my own house."

Abdurrahman thanked him. "Our haste gave you no time to prepare. So I had the rest of my troop stop at the guard post."

He turned in the saddle, and gestured toward the rugged little fort that commanded the mouth of the pass, perhaps half a mile away. Between its gate and the city the ground was open; beyond it, one had a view of the backtrail.

Mir Baba was equal to the occasion. He licked the surprise from his thick lips and said, "Wait—I will order my guard post out of there."

"*Allah karim!*" Abdurrahman blandly smiled. "I've already done that."

When the visitors wheeled away from the gate, Daoud Ali reported, "Your Highness, I got a good look inside the town. There were a lot of troops under arms in the *maidan*. That's why we didn't see any encampment."

"Neither did I see any partridges," Abdurrahman observed, just as they met the troops which his detachment had sent from the fortress. "So . . . maybe I should go hunting with him."

Daoud Ali began to understand that in the event of a quest for non-existent partridges, his main task would be to keep a gun at Mir Baba's back—and to see that no one pointed a weapon between Abdurrahman's shoulders. A dead man could not write a letter to Kabul.

THE following day, something like 5,000 *sowars* marched out of Faizabad. Mir Baba, watching from the parapet of the fort which Abdurrahman had taken over, explained that their destination was Kataghan.

"To overawe Sultan Murad with a show of force." Then he hungrily eyed the oaken chest which Abdurrahman had brought with him. "Now, I could do well by you if you gave me 20,000 sovereigns. As presents for the people. Gifts for the chieftains, you understand."

Abdurrahman flung back his head and laughed. "Where would I have that much British gold?"

"Where but in that chest? I saw two men grunting and straining when they took it from a pack saddle. What are 20,000 pieces to you?"

"To me, nothing. But I don't have to bribe *sowars* to join me. With 15,000 Karaghannis so far, and almost as many Rustakis, I'm about ready to ride. All that's keeping me is that idiot, Sultan Murad. I don't want him raising the devil in our rear, that's all."

"*Wallah*, we'll take his head!"

"That'd save bribes," Abdurrahman agreed. "Anyway, I need my money. Every *rupee*, every *pie*, I need to buy bullets for the British to eat. And now—" He made an airy gesture, "let us not speak of money! Rather, do me the honor, tomorrow night, of dining with me. You, and your officers."

Mir Baba rose, bowed ceremoniously. But at the door, he glanced back, eyed that heavy chest, and sighed gustily.

When he left, Dost Tagai doubled up, chuckling. "Shaytan blacken me! That fool thinks we hauled gold from Rustak!"

"Gold," said Abdurrahman, "seems to be more valuable to some people than cartridges. Maybe he thought I'd bring 20,000 sovereigns and no ammunition."

Mir Baba was still a power in the north. Being outmaneuvered at Nimlek had been ascribed to the fickleness of the Uzbek *khan*; others held that Mir

Baba had generously welcomed a defender of the faith. Thus he had not yet lost enough prestige to unseat him.

THE following day, petty chieftains and their followers crowded the inclosure inside the first wall of the fort. The main gates were open, and so were inner ones. Through these last a steady stream of visitors came and went; for the news of Abdurrahman Khan's arrival had spread. Tadjiks and Kizil-bashis rode out of the hills to make their salaams. Faizabad was crowded; the *serais* were full, and the wide space outside the walls was dotted with newly pitched tents.

Later, Abdurrahman's men cleared the inner court. Sheep bleated their last, and cooking fires crackled. Great kettles bubbled, sheets of iron were greased for the baking of cakes of bread. Fat made the coals flare up, and the strong scent of spices drowned the reek of horses and camels, of sweat and leather and garlic.

Abdurrahman, seated in the second floor guardroom, nodded and smoked a cigarette. The last of the callers had left. The savory odors from below made him lick his lips. Then as the *muezzin's* call rolled sonorously from the minaret of Faizabad, he spread out a rug and prayed. It had been long since he had found time to face toward Holy Mekka and bow . . .

He listened for the roll of saddle drums that would announce Mir Baba's arrival. Impatient, he stepped to a window and looked down into the courts, then past the open gates and at the cooking fires that dotted the gloom. Tomorrow's reception, he judged, would be even heavier.

Then flaring torches outlined a mounted party. Drums rolled, and

Dost Tagai went to the outer gate. Daoud Ali remained with Abdurrahman.

A wrathful yell drew the Khan's attention back to the window. Dost Tagai snatched Mir Baba's horse by the bridle and cried, "All but thirty stay out! Do you think you're getting a couple hundred men in here?"

The Mir spurred his beast, knocking Dost Tagai asprawl. One of his men leaped from the nearest kettle, drawing his pistol and firing as he ran. Mir Baba's escort ploughed through, sweeping their leader ahead of them. Abdurrahman's men retreated toward the inner gate. By then, guards came running from their quarters, rifles leveled.

That threat stopped the Mir. Dost Tagai regained his feet and shouted, "Close the inner gate! That father of pigs is trying to murder us!"

The heavy beams that barred the gate thumped down into their sockets. Mir Baba, no longer menaced by a dozen rifles, booted his horse into the outer court, and his retinue came after him.

"God, by God, by the One True God!" he howled, brandishing his sword. "You'll insult my officers, will you? Allah curse you and your religion and your ancestors, Abdurrahman Khan!"

He turned to the trumpeter: "Sound off!" And to his officers, "Break the gate down! Get me that pig's head, here and now!"

Dost Tagai shouted, "Man the walls! Pick them off if they try to batter in the gate."

Then Abdurrahman appeared in the inner court and said to his men, "There is nothing that we can do. You saw his three hundred 'officers,' but you didn't notice the troops coming out of the pass."



"Get me that pig's head, here and now!"

"Those that left the day after we got here?"

"Allah is the Knower. But unless I am wrong, it is death to go out. Or to stay."

NO ONE outside wanted to be the first to rush the gate; no one inside saw any use in wasting cartridges on the ever increasing ranks that surrounded the little fort. Once more there was to be a clash of leaders. Abdurrahman knew that this one would be final. Something like five thousand *sowars* had doubled back from their supposed march, so that there would be no slips.

The visiting chieftains and their men had left their camp fires to see the finish.

"Let Abdurrahman Khan open the gates," Mir Baba shouted, "and it will be well with whoever lays down his arms."



Daoud Ali was about to follow.

Daoud Ali stroked his chin and smiled bleakly. "Your Highness, it seems that I will not get that letter to Griffin Sahib."

Said the Khan to Dost Tagai, "Tell him to have patience. I'll be out on the wall in a minute to parley with him. Tell him we meant no offense in asking him to bring only thirty men."

"Allah!" The hard bitten veteran spat. "Me, apologize in your name?"

"Do as I say, old wolf!" Then, to the men who gathered about him, "There is no might and no majesty save in Allah! I will go out, so that you will not be killed for my sake. When I have slipped through the crowd and have a chance to ride, then do you tell Mir Baba that I am gone."

"Ah . . ." Their eyes brightened as they realized that in the darkness and confusion he could escape, unrecognized.

"And then you can fight, or treat for peace. Allah will guard you."

He turned, ascended the stairway, and peeled out of his military tunic. He put on a long Turki robe and a jacket. Then, going toward the rear, he came to a second floor window. The crowd had shifted toward the front, and there was no one to see his exit.

No one outside, that is; but Daoud Ali had followed him.

"That letter, Your Highness."

Abdurrahman paused at the sill. "What I write depends on this night's work. Be patient."

He squeezed himself through the bars, and dropped outside the wall. Daoud Ali was about to follow, but the Khan sternly said, "Back, thou hot headed fool! Do I want thy blood on my head?"

"It will be on my own head, Your Highness!"

"More than that will be on you," Abdurrahman countered. "You cannot help, and you surely will harm. What I am doing must be done alone. Back, I say!"

Daoud Ali straightened. No Afghan soldier ever stood so erectly on parade. His hand rose as if to touch the visor of a military cap. His hand dropped, and running swiftly toward the front, he stepped to the old man's side. "Do we get our lives?"

"If we throw our treasure chest and our arms out over the gate, this father of dogs will let us march out!"

THEN Dost Tagai leaned over the parapet. Since there was no shooting, torch bearers had crowded around the Mir, who still looked up for the old man's decision. "Bring the Holy Koran," Dost Tagai shouted, "and every man in these walls will swear that Abdurrahman Khan is no longer here. As for treasure, there is none."

"Open up, thou white haired goat!" raged Mir Baba. "And get the chest of gold!"

He was now on foot, his horse having become unmanageable in the uproar. He gestured with his sword, and all those below looked up to watch the brave flashing. But Daoud Ali, looking down, saw something that made his heart rise; his fingers clawed into the masonry, and his breath stopped.

If one man on the wall saw who had slipped through the crowd and come toward Mir Baba; if one of Abdurrahman's men recognized his master and made a betraying move which the torch flare would expose . . .

"Throw out the gold, or I bring cannons to blow the gates down!" Mir Baba threatened, taking a pace forward.

That brought him well ahead of the crowd in the outer court. Abdurrahman Khan was behind him. He said, "Stand fast, Mir Baba, and let every man stand fast, or I fire."

At the same time, he caught the Mir's neck, and thrust a cocked revolver at his temple. "Throw down your sword, Mir Baba, or the man you cursed will shoot."

"*Allah karim!* Take that pistol away," the Mir quavered. "Then I'll drop my sword."

Abdurrahman twisted his neck. The frosty muzzle held firmly. The Mir's men knew better than raise a hand. The unexpectedness and audacity of the move had stunned them.

"This fellow is an *efrit!*" they muttered. "He fears nothing! Look at the Mir's sword shivering!"

Abdurrahman boomed. "Drop your sword and humble yourself, O Man! I know that you promised to sell my head to the King of Boukhara, but I

forgave you, and I invited you as a friend. Now see how Allah has cursed your trickery! Drop your sword, before He strikes you dead!"

The blade clanged against the stones. Still gripping Mir Baba by the neck, Abdurrahman spun him around to face the crowd. He demanded, "Will you fight for me, or for this coward who humbles himself before the man he cursed?"

The officers, seeing their leader at the point of death, did their best to



"Back, thou hot headed fool! Do I want thy blood on my head?"

save him: "We will follow you, Abdurrahman Khan, and drive the infidels from Kabul!"

The visiting chieftains, the townsmen, and the five thousand *sowars* who had slipped back to complete an ambush, echoed the cry. Abdurrahman backed toward the inner gate. As the shouting died, he said, "Mir Baba is forgiven, and to prove it, he eats with me tonight."

THE Mir's men quit the outer court, and Dost Tagai opened the gate. "Guard this fellow well," Abdurrahman said, "and see if there's any food that the mob didn't ruin. *Ya Allah*, I'm hungry!"

Then he found the envoy and said, "Now, Daoud Ali, I'll write that letter. Or you write it and I'll sign it. Your hand is better than mine."

"My hand, Your Highness?"

Abdurrahman chuckled. "You wrote

that letter from Griffin Sahib, after you crossed the river. If you'd brought it all the way from Kabul, it would have been stained and creased. No wonder you weren't killed for having it in your possession!"

Daoud Ali's eyes widened just a little. "What shall I say?"

"That I am the friend of the British, and no friend of the Russians, provided that General Roberts takes his army out of Kabul and leaves me to drive Ayyub Khan out of Kandahar."

The envoy smiled. "There is no need to write. I have seen enough. I came to see for myself if the Afghans have a king. When you reach Kabul, we will hold a *darbar* to proclaim you. And you will learn that I speak with authority."

"Griffin Sahib," said the exile who had won a throne, "you spoke with most authority when you tried to follow me through that window!"



Napoleon at Eylau

EAST PRUSSIA in its most forbidding aspect at the dreariest time of the year. A snow-covered plain stretches to the horizon. The sluggish streams and the famous long pond are thick with ice. A bitter east wind rages and howls. Very low leaden-grey, almost black clouds scurry before it. 150,000 men, French and Russian, prepare to spend a miserable night. It is February 7, 1807—the eve of Eylau.

The soldiers in their great-coats huddle in the snow, totally without shelter. The temperature is Arctic, and their clothing makes a poor shield against the icy wind and freezing cold. Moreover, they are cold with the worst cold—that of hunger. For days the French have eaten nothing but potatoes, their drink the melted snow.

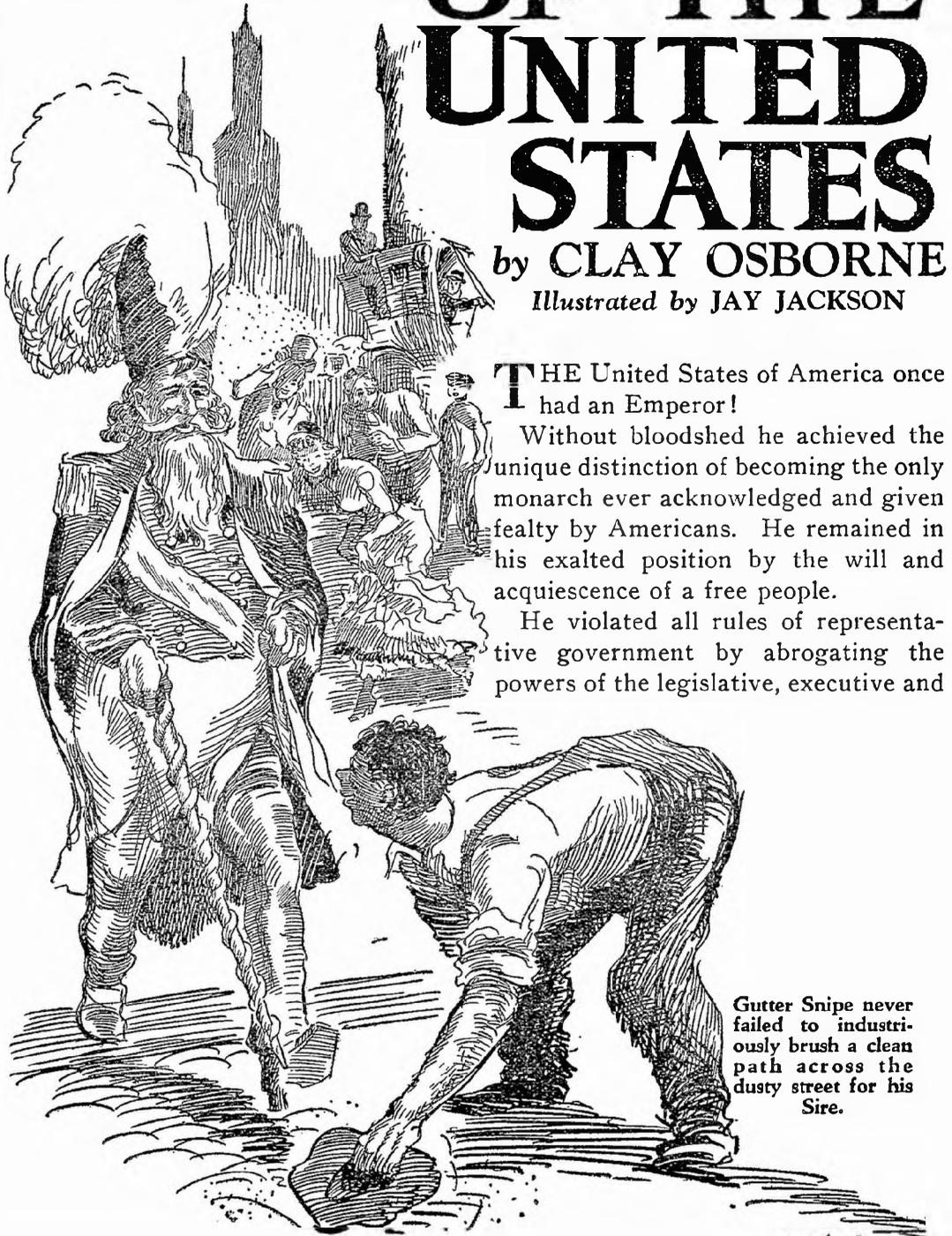
Here and there shine the flames of a fire. But kindling-wood in East Prussia at that season is hard to get, and the fires are few.

Napoleon is early astir. Nothing wins him the hearts of the rank and file more than his concern for their welfare. And he knows precisely when to show it. So this morning, walking among infantry units, he asks that one potato per squad be brought to him. He himself will test the quality of the men's rations. Sitting on a truss of hay, he proceeds to cook the potatoes in a fire, gravely turning them over with his stick. The soldiers watch in silence and admiration. "All this," says Colonel Vachée, "was the bluff of a great leader. But it was a bluff that never failed to impress."—*Hugh Thomson*.

EMPEROR OF THE UNITED STATES

by CLAY OSBORNE

Illustrated by JAY JACKSON



THE United States of America once had an Emperor!

Without bloodshed he achieved the unique distinction of becoming the only monarch ever acknowledged and given fealty by Americans. He remained in his exalted position by the will and acquiescence of a free people.

He violated all rules of representative government by abrogating the powers of the legislative, executive and

Gutter Snipe never failed to industriously brush a clean path across the dusty street for his Sire.

judicial branches, and vesting final authority on domestic and foreign affairs in his own royal person. He issued bonds and paper money. He levied taxes. He dictated to a legislature. A supreme court bowed to his will. He commandeered transportation facilities on land and water. He rewarded public officials by conferring upon them titles of nobility. He decreed punishment—even death!—upon offenders against himself and the State. He rendered judgment on matters brought to his Imperial Court. Yet his right to assume any and all of these powers went unchallenged for more than two decades—despite the election and inauguration of six Chief Executives during the period of his imperial regime!

Our monarch was Norton I, Emperor of the United States and Protector of Mexico. His capital was San Francisco, California. Leading hotels were his “palaces” during a reign of twenty-three years, from 1857 until his death in 1880. He violated more provisions of our national Constitution than any other man in history—and got away with it!

Within the last five years, citizens of this American democracy obeyed one of the Emperor’s most dictatorial commands published nearly seventy years ago, in the newspapers of the royal capital.

“PROCLAMATION!”

“From His Highness NORTON I”
“Whereas, reliable information has reached us to the effect that our neighboring sovereign, the Queen of the Friendly Islands, is desirous of annexing her domains to the United States, and Herself to our Royal Person; and whereas, it is our pleasure to acquiesce in all means of civilization and popu-

lation, now therefore we, NORTON I, Dei Gratia Emperor of the United States and Protector of Mexico, do order that a suspension bridge be constructed from Oakland Point to Yerba Buena Island, thence to the Mountain Range of Sausalito and on to the Farallones, to be of sufficient size and strength for a railroad. Whereof fail not under pain of death.
Given under our hand and seal this 18th day of August, A.D., 1869, in the 17th year of Our reign, in Our present Capital.

(Signed) NORTON I.”

Sixty-six years later the Golden Gate suspension bridge across San Francisco Bay was completed. Although it fails to extend thirty-five miles westward over the Pacific to the Farallones, it does very nearly link the far separated promontories specified for abutments in the *pronunciamiento*. And because in all essential respects this bridge fulfills his decree, we may call it the realization of the Emperor’s dream—a fitting monument to America’s only acknowledged sovereign!

EMPEROR NORTON’S personal story is an amazing saga of the halcyon days of California’s *el Dorado*. No man of that golden frontier tasted more deeply than he of the flavors of living. His was the complete success of great wealth, a host of friends, a future promising great happiness, and after a certain fateful day, a magnificent failure.

Norton I was not born to the purple. The son of Hebrew parents, born in 1819, he grew to manhood as commoner Joshua A. Norton among the moors and highlands of old Scotland.

Early in life, this Jewish boy felt the pull of his star of destiny. Some strange

force seemed to call him across a whole world, compelling him to forsake homeland and family to search beyond the horizon for the golden fleece he was to find at last.

While still a lad he sailed over the rim of the earth for the Cape of Good Hope. In South Africa he joined the Colonial riflemen and acquired that military manner, that love for bright uniforms, gold braid and brass buttons later to be considered the eccentricities of a monarch. But his strange restlessness soon guided him westward across the Atlantic.

During several years spent in Brazil as a trader, young Norton prospered very well and might have stayed to help develop that raw young nation had he not been a man marked for a stranger fate. When the startling news of the discovery of *El Dorado* electrified a world with golden thunder in Forty-eight, Joshua Norton converted all his holdings into cash and shipped as supercargo out of Rio de Janeiro for the Golden Gate.

He was thirty years old and had forty thousand dollars when he landed with other forty-niners at the docks of boisterous, swaggering, gold-fevered San Francisco.

The times conspired to make Norton a veritable Croesus at the end of four years. He perceived at once that, for him at least, there was more wealth to be gained in trade than by gouging the earth in search of gold. Opportunities to pyramid his capital by barter and investment were fairly flung at him.

Seven great fires ravaged San Francisco between the closing months of 1849 and the middle of 1851. Burned out property owners and discouraged merchants found a ready friend in Joshua Norton. Every dollar planted

in property and merchandise by the Hebrew immigrant brought him a golden harvest of double eagles.

Proof that he was an honored and respected business man is furnished by the fact that he was Vigilante No. 339 of the Committee of 1851. His personal integrity and fairness are reflected in this curious excerpt from the Minutes:

"On motion of Mr. (Joshua) Norton: Resolved that no criminal shall be sentenced until he or she shall have an opportunity of pleading guilty or not guilty and assigning his or her reason why judgment should not be passed."

This expression of benign tolerance is of more than passing significance in the light of the swift moving events which followed!

IN 1853, Joshua Norton resolved to double his fortune in one master stroke. His Midas touch had already brought him wealth variously estimated at four hundred thousand to a million dollars. He pooled his entire resources with those of a merchant named Thorne, and they set about cornering the rice market.

Rice was in demand not only within the city but at the mines as well, particularly among the forty or fifty thousand Chinese then working in virtual slavery for masters yellow and white.

Norton and Thorne bought every grain of rice in the city. They purchased every boatload of the commodity then in the harbor or known to be on the high seas. Of Macondray & Co. they contracted for a very large cargo due to arrive within a week, agreeing to pay fifteen cents a pound upon arrival and delivery.

Immediately the price of rice began

to soar. Soon it was selling from thirty-five to sixty cents a pound. The partners smiled; they could foresee prices of a dollar a pound—a dollar and a half—perhaps two dollars! They would be rich indeed. . . .

And then three ships sailed in through the Golden Gate, laden with Saigon and Pakling mats, a tremendous cargo of rice entirely unexpected. The news spread like wildfire. The market broke. Norton and Thorne were ruined.

The first manifestation of the strange mania which was to dominate the rest of his life appeared during the hectic days when Norton was making heroic efforts to clear his name of debt and judgment. He managed to pay every debt except the one owed Macondray & Co.

During the week following the crash Joshua Norton sought out Mr. Macondray:

"The Emperor desires to arrive at an amicable settlement of the debt owed your firm by the Crown!"

Picture Mr. Macondray's consternation and amazement!

"Crown! Emperor! Man—are you crazy?"

"I," was Norton's calm response, "am the Emperor of North America! It has occurred to me that I may most satisfactorily settle our differences and pay you personal honor by raising your daughter to the highest station in life at my command. I come, sir, offering my heart and my kingdom. Your daughter shall be my Empress!"

Mr. Macondray was of the breed of men who were taught tolerance and understanding of their fellow men by vigorous living in a raw, new frontier. Aware of the tragedy which had overtaken his visitor he courteously replied that he would like time to consider, and

gravely escorted the "Emperor" to the door.

He spoke of the queer mania to mutual friends. A few sadly shook their heads, recalling Norton's past brilliant successes, his unswerving honesty in business, his personal integrity. Many laughed and reckoned that the loss of millions would drive anyone out of his mind. All knew that a great mind had given way under pressure too great to bear. But no single soul even suspected, then, that within a few years all would be declaring allegiance to this man as a monarch indeed!

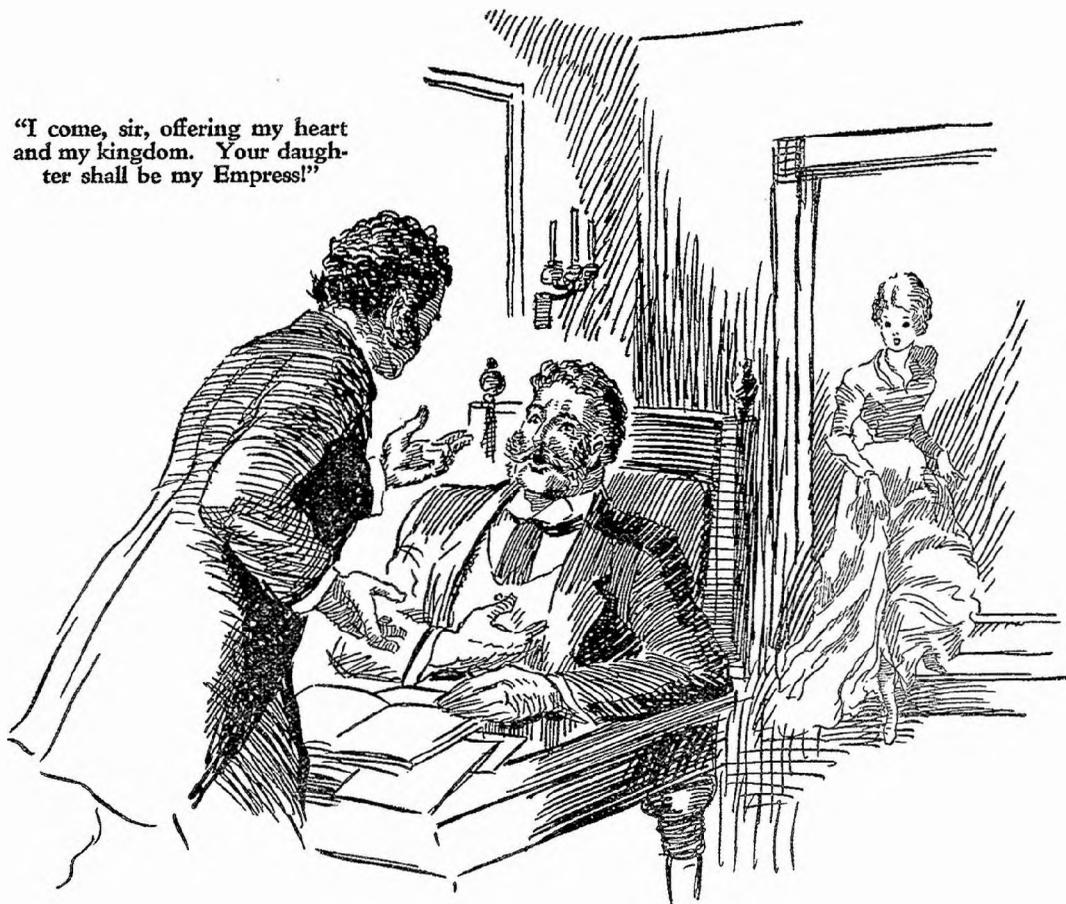
With the last remaining shreds of reason, Norton must have salvaged enough from the wreckage of his fortune to settle in a more practical way than marriage his debt to Macondray & Co. When he disappeared from the streets of San Francisco in 1853 he was penniless—but his debts were paid in full.

DURING the next four years he was missed from his old haunts. Some of his former associates came suddenly into great wealth. It was whispered that lands rightfully belonging to Norton had been swindled from a madman, that a little investigation might bring to light altered land records, forged deeds, securities baldly transferred into new accounts. Yet no one was sufficiently concerned to dig for facts.

In the winter of 1857, "Emperor" Norton invaded San Francisco. He found his future capital in just the right frame of mind to fall before his strange *coup d'etat*.

He appeared upon the streets one morning regally booted and spurred and garishly garbed in an ancient army uniform; rows of bright brass buttons across his chest, huge, gleaming gilt

"I come, sir, offering my heart and my kingdom. Your daughter shall be my Empress!"



epaulettes upon his shoulders, and over all a blue military cape, lined with scarlet. Upon his head was a queer hat in the Jehu style, with an enormous white ostrich plume.

His scepter was an enormous cane entwined with a great carved serpent.

Grave of mien, regal of bearing, clad and cloaked in his imperial garments and an amazing dignity, he marched purposefully to the office of the *Alta California*, on the morning of September 16, 1857, bowed gravely and handed a carefully prepared statement to the editor. Another bow, and he quietly departed without a word. With open-mouthed astonishment the editor read the communication. His bellow of surprise brought other workers running. The office buzzed with mirth and ex-

citement. Here was real news! Why not print it?

The next morning San Franciscans rubbed sleepy eyes to read that the State had become an Empire overnight. "Emperor" Norton's first proclamation declared earnestly that an Act of the California Legislature of 1853 had made him "Emperor of California."

On that day, as the news spread by word of mouth, the city by the Golden Gate enjoyed the best laugh of its experience.

Mud-splattered teamsters and booted miners; calm gamblers and gaudy women; quiet business men and noisy street urchins — all would turn and smile when the singular personality who had come among them passed by on the street.

Palaces of pleasure spoke of "Emperor's" wealth to be gained across the green cloth of the gaming tables. Saloons featured "drinks for a king," and hotels "royal" service. Muckers and teamsters cracked many a loud joke with the words "my lord" and "sire" as they hauled their mired wagons from hub-deep mud. Miners swore with good round oaths they'd be kings themselves, when they struck bonanza. And one and all, the men of El Dorado swarming in from the mines for a good time took the "Emperor" to their hearts.

Norton was toasted in saloons, fed in restaurants, taken everywhere to meet friends. For a week he was the sensation of the ribald, bawdy, showy, horny-handed and ostentatious elements of the town.

THEN, quite as suddenly as it had risen, his popularity waned. The city had had its fun. The very men who had crowded near him, now ignored him on the streets.

Emperor Norton, however, was a monarch not easily discouraged. His subjects might become a bit careless and forget his royal prerogatives. Not he!

When funds ran low and he was no longer welcomed at bars and lunch counters, Norton easily surmounted his financial problem. He made out and cashed a check for fifty cents.

Almost immediately it bounced. Norton's bank account was as phantom as his Empire. The disgruntled gentleman who had been bamboozled muttered angrily of prosecuting the "crazy old coot," but former friends of the demented man made good the worthless paper and let it be known they would be responsible for simple debts. These old associates were the first to

give homage to Norton I.

With the passing months, the city came to accept the Emperor as an institution, just another of the strange characters familiar to all during the 'fifties and 'sixties.

In those days, San Francisco echoed the cries of saints and sages, devils and doctors, clowns and quacks. Street preachers never lacked audience. Medicine men reaped golden harvests. There was "Simon Pure," who insisted upon sleeping in the streets beneath the open sky. There was the man who would touch your sleeve for a dime—"give you the Midas touch." There was the itinerant healer who called himself the "King of Pain," and made a fortune selling aconite liniment, attracting customers with his attire of scarlet underwear, heavy velour robe, high hat adorned with ostrich feathers and a heavy sword with which he enacted his battle with aches and pains of man and beast.

Norton had a place among the rest of the amusing characters. He was considered eccentric, harmlessly balmy, somewhat to be pitied. And thus he lived for the next two years, not quite a public figure and not quite obscure; kept from need by the charity of old associates.

IN September, 1859, a friend pointed out to Norton that his reign over California was unconstitutional. Perhaps the friend hoped to cure him of his strange delusion, but his suggestion had far-reaching effects.

The Emperor of California took the matter under advisement for several days. Strangely enough some of the logic which had made him a business success had survived the metamorphosis of his mind. He soon perceived



He was the sensation of the ribald, bawdy, showy, horny-handed and ostentatious elements of the town.

the error of his original proclamation, took immediate steps to correct it.

On September 17th he again made the headlines with his second manifesto. He pointed out that California lacked the right to consider herself an Empire when she was actually one of the United States. He solved the grave

problem in the only way possible. He proclaimed the extension of his dominion to include the entire nation!

In that raw, new land where "colossal" and "gigantic" honestly described the achievements of men like giants, this joke was hugely appreciated. *Viva* Emperor Norton! San Francisco con-

firmed his royal decree by good-humored acclamation!

From that time on, America's sole monarch was firmly seated on his throne. For twenty-one years he was a real force to be reckoned with in western life. The incidents of his reign, the comic-opera drama of his eight thousand days of glory would supply a fiction master with material for a lifetime of work!

One of the first official acts of his greatly enlarged administration was the issue of still another *pronunciamento*. This one was brief, but much to the point, couched in language somewhat like this:

*"Whereas our duties of State require
Our attention and Presence at all im-
portant public gatherings, and whereas
the condition of the imperial wardrobe
has become a matter of national dis-
grace, now therefore We, Norton I,
Emperor of the United States, do re-
quire and command that loyal citizens
of the Empire immediately provide
Our Majesty with raiment suitable for
every and all occasions and weather.
Whereof we have set our hand and
seal this 20th day of December A.D.,
1859."*

(Signed) NORTON I.

This state of emergency was gravely considered at the next meeting of the San Francisco City Board. The Emperor received "raiment" complete with brass buttons and magnificent new epaulettes of gold braid!

This evidence of loyalty was immediately rewarded by his imperial Majesty. He bestowed upon the officials the first titles of nobility granted by the Empire! Their descendents today are probably unaware that these deserving

ancestors were once Grand Dukes or Imperial Viceroys of the old Empire of the United States!

This precedent was adhered to more than once during the next two decades. Succeeding Boards replenished the royal wardrobe and in turn received titular awards for their generosity.

IN 1860, while the California State Legislature was in session at Sacramento, the Emperor announced his decision to favor that body with his presence. Accordingly, he made his way to one of the river steamers inland bound.

The Captain happened not to have given allegiance to Norton I. He made so bold as to forcibly eject the Emperor from his vessel when his Highness indignantly refused to pay fare.

In high dudgeon, he betook his royal person to the offices of the Navigation Company. Officials there courteously explained they must back up their Captain. No fare—no passage!

Thoroughly aroused, Emperor Norton descended upon the office of the Collector of the Port. In icy tones he imperiously ordered that the Sacramento River be blockaded by the revenue cutter in the harbor. When and if the offending Navigation Company should come to terms, and the Captain apologize for his insult and issue a Pass—then the armed blockade might be lifted!

Bystanders who had overheard the dispute spread the news. Loyal subjects of the Emperor took up the fight. Officials of the Navigation Company refused to listen to their pleas to treat the pseudo-monarch as a privileged character. That justice moved swiftly in those days is attested by the fact that the issue moved through the lower



In icy tones he imperiously ordered that the Sacramento River be blockaded by the revenue cutter in the harbor.

courts and was brought to the attention of the State Supreme Court within a few days!

That august body immediately issued a writ of mandamus peremptorily ordering the Navigation Company to immediately come to terms with his imperial Majesty under penalty of civic and royal displeasure.

Defeated by public opinion, the transportation company capitulated, its boat captain apologized, a lifetime pass was issued — and Norton I journeyed in august triumph to the State Capital!

At Sacramento he found the lawmakers wrangling over a choice of two men

to fill a vacancy. Candidate A had just about as many friends as Candidate B. From his gallery seat, Norton I attentively listened to the proponents of each. A vote still left the issue deadlocked. The legislature might have wrangled about it for weeks had not the Emperor been there to solve the problem in his own fashion.

Rising from his seat he began to speak. The political tumult subsided. Eyes and ears were focused upon his Highness. He warmly praised both candidates but stated that he was personally acquainted with the virtues and talents of Candidate B. He, Norton I, *appointed* Candidate B to the vacancy!

Stunned silence prevailed for a single, startled moment. Then shouts of approval filled the State House, hats were jubilantly thrown into the air, a boisterous standing vote was taken—and the Emperor's appointment was confirmed by unanimous vote!

THE gravest crisis of the Emperor's long career was brought about by the Civil War. That his children should fight among themselves greatly distressed his Highness. For several days he worried about the course the nation must pursue. His decision was a terrible one, but he made it with fortitude. On July 12, 1860, he issued a proclamation declaring the Union dissolved for the duration of the emergency!

Even after inflicting this punishment, he did not desert his errant children. He sought ordination from both Catholic and Protestant churches that he might attempt pacification of his warring peoples with better grace. He was not discouraged when his petition was denied, for the belligerents were approaching him!

Some wag with Northern sympathies

prepared a telegram purportedly from Abraham Lincoln and presented it to the Emperor. It was an alleged appeal imploring the Throne to smite with royal wrath the southern upstart who was giving the country such a headache.

Norton I spent hours preparing a thundering rebuke to Jeff Davis, and a command to cease his nonsense forthwith.

With remarkable speed came an ostensible reply from Richmond, couched in conciliatory language pointing out that the northerners had started the ruckus and it wasn't any fault of Jefferson Davis'. If the damn' Yankees didn't know their places it was up to somebody to give them an education!

Another message to Lincoln—with a copy dispatched to the leader of the Rebellion—demanded that an armistice be declared of sufficient duration to allow the Emperor time to talk things over with both parties!

While he waited for his answer, Norton I was occupied with other cares of State.

A delegation of sober-faced citizens laid before his Highness the information that a foreign usurper was about to seize the reins of government south of the Rio Grande. To forestall such an attempt, Norton I proclaimed himself Protector of Mexico, and warned whomever it might concern that he would tolerate no interference in the affairs of his Mexican children.

Not very long afterward, however, he corrected what he considered his single error of statesmanship. Dismayed by the disorganized and troubled affairs of Mexico, and angered by that country's apparent indifference to his repeatedly offered advice and help, he curtly announced that he was com-

pelled to withdraw his imperial protection.

All of his diplomatic correspondence was of course a reality to Emperor Norton, though no message ever got farther than the limits of his own capital city. Occasionally a more important proclamation appeared in the newspapers to advise the citizenry of the monarch's activity. He was repeatedly petitioned by partisans of both the North and South for royal redress of their wrongs, and he never became aware of the city-wide conspiracy to provoke amusing topics of conversation—any of which were less dreadful than war news.

When Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, the Emperor matched it with royal approval. He expressed the sorrow of his Empire when the war-President was assassinated, and instituted the relentless pursuit of John Wilkes Booth. He congratulated Grant and Lee for their obedience to his orders to stop fighting. The success attending the reconstruction of the Union was due to his wise counsel.

FROM day to day through all the years of his reign, Norton I busied himself with the affairs of his Empire, attending vigorously to both domestic and foreign affairs.

Abroad, he reconciled the French and the Prussians, and brought about the close of the Franco-Prussian war. He constantly received telegrams from Disraeli, Czar Alexander of all the Russias, Jefferson Davis and many other world figures—all urging him to marry Queen Victoria and unite his Empire with that of the British. But somehow he suspected skullduggery behind these messages, and persistently refused to dispatch replies . . . to the

chagrin of the town wits who had tried to "frame" him.

His three most faithful subjects deserve mention. Two of them were dogs, named Lazarus and Bummer, undoubtedly the most sincere of all in their whole-hearted devotion. True to his name, Bummer was the one who most ably assisted his master at the free lunch counters. Lazarus usually waited at the palace room of the Eureka Lodging House for the spoils of forage Bummer never failed to bring home.

Long before the Emperor's reign was over, Bummer was poisoned by food obtained from a regularly patronized eating place. Some vowed it was deliberately done, and mourned the passing of their monarch's most faithful attendant. Lazarus soon afterward joined his pal; it was generally believed of a broken heart.

The third subject who never failed to give prompt homage was a queer person known only as the "Gutter Snipe," a term descriptive of his curbstone salvage activities. He never failed to tear himself away from whatever occupied him at the moment to industriously brush a clean path across the dusty street for his Sire. His invariable reward for this service was a quarter.

EMPEROR NORTON was probably the most democratic monarch the world has ever known.

He spent his mornings on the street, seeing to it that policemen were on duty, sidewalks unobstructed, and the various city ordinances properly enforced. He frequently presented a bright flower to each little girl who passed, and escorted boys to nearby candy shops where assorted jawbreakers and licorice-sticks were provided by

command of his Majesty. Many and many a child went to school a commoner to return home afternoons a Grand Duke or a Grand Duchess, elevated to these happy stations by Norton I.

Afternoons, the Emperor attended to papers of State, and held Court from two to four at his Palace (The Eureka Lodging House) where he heard the complaints of the oppressed and extended his favors to the needy.

Evenings his activities were many and varied. Sometimes he orated at public meetings on the necessity of playgrounds for children. More often he was to be found at the Cobweb Palace, on the northern end of Meiggs Wharf; or the Cottage Bar in Stevenson Street; or the Martin and Horton saloon near Montgomery on Clay Street. These were the rendezvous for the famous, the sea-going, the odd and the political characters of the day.

Here Emperor Norton rubbed shoulders with William Walker, the American filibuster later to be shot by a firing squad in Honduras when his attempted *coup* failed.

Here, too, he conversed with mad Willie Coombs, who believed he was George Washington and always wore a Continental uniform of faded buckskin. Coombs almost starved himself to death before friends convinced him he was actually in the Martin and Horton saloon—instead of at Valley Forge.

He drank with Bret Harte at Barry and Patten's and rubbed shoulders with the lowly at less prosperous resorts. He knew personally most of the celebrities of his day; none of them ever attempted to disillusion him of his dreams of Empire.

Only once during his reign was Emperor Norton really insulted. A young policeman, new to the force and ignorant of his prisoner's real identity, haled Norton I before a judge for a sanity hearing. Shocked that profane hands had been laid upon his Highness, the good Judge roared out a declamation which crushed the erring cop, satisfied his Royal Highness and soothed the irate citizenry who threatened reprisal for the sacrilege.

"The Emperor Norton has never shed blood!" ruled the Judge. "He has robbed no one and despoiled no country. And that, gentlemen, is a helluva lot more than can be said for anyone else in the King line! Case dismissed!"

The Emperor died in 1880 while standing at the corner of California Street and Grant Avenue, dreamily watching the Bay. He was escorted to his last resting place by twenty thousand of his loyal subjects in a procession headed by the Mayor and two brass bands playing the "Requiem" from "Saul." A simple slab marked the grave of Norton I, "Emperor of the United States and Protector of Mexico" . . .

New readers frequently ask if back numbers of Golden Fleece can be had. Yes, send 20c for each copy you desire—October, November, December, January, February, March, April, and May—to Golden Fleece, 538 So. Clark St., Chicago, Ill.

The Knights of Malta

ONE of the strangest chapters in history is that occupied by the Knights of Malta. Their beginnings were inconspicuous. Some rich merchants of Amalfi, a city in the then kingdom of Naples, obtained permission from the Caliph of Cairo to erect a church at Jerusalem, to replace one destroyed by the Arabs. In rebuilding the church in the Christian quarter of Jerusalem, some time between A.D. 1014 and 1070, they also built hospitals dedicated, respectively, to St. Mary Magdalene and to St. John the Almoner. These hospitals treated the sick and wounded Christian pilgrims, but did not exclude Arabs or Egyptians.

However, the invading Turkomans, who united their armies with the Arabs, made Jerusalem so unsafe the Hospitalers quickly developed a military organization. At their head was an elective Grand Master, responsible to the Pope, and assisted by a council of senior Knights. Under them were the younger Knights or fighting men whose duties were to nurse the sick and exterminate the Turks. Of lower rank were the Chaplains, largely concerned with religious matters in the hospitals and on the battle-fields. The lowest rank were the Servants-in-Arms or Serjeants.

After the Christians, in 1291, were defeated at Acre by the Turkish Mamelukes, the Order removed to the island of Rhodes. During this period of wars against the Turks the Order became known as the Knights of Rhodes.

In 1480, the Turkish bashaw, Mischa Palæologus, attacked Rhodes with a fleet of one hundred sixty ships and one hundred thousand soldiers. After a siege of eighty-nine days involving the loss of about 25,000 men through battle, disease, and slavery, the bashaw admitted defeat. Forty-two years later, in 1522, the Turkish forces again attacked the Knights. On the 26th of

June, 150,000 Turks landed on the island of Rhodes. Shortly after came another 50,000 with the commander, Sultan Suliman. Following a siege of four months, in which the Turks lost 80,000 soldiers at the hands of the Knights and as many more by disease, Rhodes was surrendered.

Rather than continue on the island of Rhodes under Mohammedan rule, the Knights, with their Grand Master D'Isle Adam, left with the honors of war. They took with them their arms, flags, and artillery, and their most precious relic, the hand of St. John the Baptist.

AFTER several halts elsewhere, the Spanish Emperor Charles V gave them feudal rights to Malta and other islands. This grant was under the approval of Pope Clement VII. The Knights, still under Grand Master D'Isle Adam, settled on the island of Malta October 25th, 1530. From that time on, the Sovereign Military Order of the Hospitalers of Saint John of Jerusalem were known as the Knights of Malta.

At Malta, the Sovereign Military Order continued its historic mission. In the Eastern Mediterranean it fought against the Turks, and in the West, against the Barbary States — Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers. In the East, the Turks had gone on from Rhodes to the capture of Syria and Egypt. In 1526 the victory at Mohacs had made them masters of Hungary. Thus the continued mission of the Knights of Malta was to prevent complete Mohammedan command of the Mediterranean. Much of the history of this Order could well be symbolized by a blood dripping sword.

All during the Medieval ages, the Order so continually battled the Moslems that it was recognized through-

out Europe as offering the finest military and naval training. Centered on the island of Malta, the Order had Commanderies in Italy, France, Germany, England, and Ireland. These Malta monasteries had considerable wealth due to bequests of pious citizens of property of various kinds, including lands. The monasteries also acted as recruiting stations for the Sovereign Order of Malta.

The Knights were chosen entirely from the nobility. Requirements were strict. No natural children were accepted and often the suspicion of bastardy was sufficient for rejection. In Germany, sixteen quarterings of nobility were required. That is, the twenty-one year old candidate's great-grandparents had to be of the nobility. From France, only eight quarterings were required.

The Knight of Malta was hedged about with numerous obligations, such as the saying of one hundred fifty paternosters a day. The vows of chastity and celibacy were strictly enjoined. But when the Knights set out on a *Corso* or forty-day voyage in their galleys, it was nothing unusual for numerous ladies of Malta to bid them *bon voyage*.

IN 1565 the Knights of Malta successfully withstood a siege by the pashas of the aged Suliman the Magnificent. In 1566 the Sultan died. He was succeeded by Selim II, called by Ottoman historians, "The Drunkard," who spent his time largely in his seraglio by the Golden Horn. Suliman's generals and admirals took control.

At long last, under their guidance, the Moslem powers of the Mediterranean began combining their naval forces for a conquest of the Mediterranean. They began by the siege of Nicosia, and when it had fallen, followed with the siege of Famagusta—both on the island of Cyprus. The Venetian commander of Famagusta Antonio Bragadino, put up a stubborn resistance. The Turks lost nearly 30,000 men. Through lack of flour and gun-

powder Famagusta surrendered. Bragadino was flayed alive, his skin stuffed with straw, and sent to Selim the Drunkard.

An allied Christian fleet was formed in 1570, but failed to get into action through indecisive leadership. In 1571, Pope Pius V, as chief of the Holy League, chose Don Juan of Austria as captain-general of the Christian armada. Don Juan was the natural son of the Spanish Emperor Charles V and Barbara Blomberg of Ratisbon.

The Sovereign Order of Malta sent its best galleys and rallied its well trained Knights for a decisive campaign in the Greek archipelago. They were allied at Lepanto with the papal galleys under Prince Colonna, the Venetian galleys under Veniero, and Philip II's Spanish and Neapolitan galleys. Six galleasses and seventy frigates brought the allied total to 278 against the Turks' 274. On October 7, 1571, at noon, they met the Turks under Ali Pasha and 28,000 Christians fought 25,000 Moslems in one of the bloodiest naval battles in history. By nightfall, the Turkish fleet was largely destroyed, its remnants routed. The Order of Malta lost but sixty Knights.

In the fierce fighting, the flagship of their galleys was temporarily mastered by the Algerines under Ulugh Ali, a renegade Calabrese fisherman, who got possession of the Order's war flag, a white, eight pointed cross on a red field. So greatly did the Algerines value this trophy, they took it with them in their rout from Lepanto and carried it to Constantinople as a consolation for the destruction of the Turkish fleet.

Lepanto represents the high point of the Knights of Malta. They fought the Barbary corsairs till the end of the eighteenth century, but the usefulness of the Sovereign Order of Malta was ending. Through dissension in their ranks they surrendered Malta to Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798. He melted down their solid silver dishes and cups to pay the soldiers for his Egyptian campaign.—*Allen Fiske*.

The Round Table



AN OPEN FORUM FOR OUR READERS

I note with pleasure that on page 80 of the April GOLDEN FLEECE you show a woman holding a dagger with the correct fighting grip, with the blade on the thumb side of the hand. I note, however, another even more fantastic error on page 51, where your illustrator has a mounted Mongol lancer spearing a prone victim with the lancer's hand about 8 inches from the butt end, incredible as it appears, with the lance held like a ski pole with the blade on the little finger side below the hand.

Believe me, wherever that picture is seen by a man who has carried a lance in the service, who has ever ridden pig sticking, who has ever ridden in a carnival tournament and has tried to spear hanging rings for a prize, there will be a gale of Homeric laughter at this impossible pose.

A lance for mounted work ranges from 6 feet to 12 feet in length, with an average around 8½ feet. The butt end is heavily weighted and the lance shaft is grasped at the balance so that there is equal weight on each side of the hand. The butt weight varies and so does the balance point in different services, but as a rule there is roughly twice the length of shaft between the lance head and grip as between the grip and the butt. The leverage is such that an 8-inch butt length would have to outweigh the head and shaft 4 or 5 times and would make an utterly prohibitive weight to the weapon. The lance is a tricky weapon, requiring exquisite skill to aim the point at a small target, while mounted on a galloping horse. The tiniest motion of the fingers at the grip is magnified enormously into a wide swing

at the lance point 4 to 8 feet in front. Centuries of mounted warfare and tournaments have proven that there is only one possible grip for thrusting with the lance and that is with the hand at the balance of the shaft and with the lance head on the thumb side of the hand, so that the shaft is directed by the thumb and forefinger. In heavy jousting between armored knights the lance was often held with the butt between the arm and body, and no attempt was made to thrust with the arm, the lance head being aimed by the hand and wrist and the momentum of the horse and rider delivering the actual blow.

Your illustrator's Mongol using the stiletto grip on his lance with the lance head at his little finger, would have died in battle under such a handicap so quickly that it would take a reflex camera to have caught his picture alive. Such an unsound grip tremendously handicaps accurate thrusting and is abnormal and unnatural, while the regular lance grip is instinctive and accurate on a target like a tent peg or the victim in the illustration.

The javelin grip with the blade on the little finger side of the hand is instinctive in throwing the javelin, dart, or assegai. These weapons have slender shafts about 4 to 6 feet long with a blade about ½ pound in weight and are used as missiles and not for thrusting or parrying. The shaft is not grasped solidly to withstand a wrenching shock as is the lance shaft, and the light javelin is held almost like a pen, between the thumb and first two fingers, the tips of the 3rd and 4th fingers being along the shaft in the direction of the blade, and not with

fingers wrapped around the shaft as in your illustration. Some of the sporting javelins used in athletics for distance records rather than for accuracy or penetration, are much longer than hunting or military javelins but in no case is the shaft grasped in the impossible tight grip, like a ski-pole, shown by your illustrator.

I grant you that most of your readers will not have knowledge of the fine points I have mentioned and many more will not have the power of observation to note the error. But I submit that your staff has an educational obligation to your High School or city reader to give him historical fiction as nearly historically correct in text and illustration as is practicable for the time and research available. A magazine that cannot command the support of the active hunters, soldiers, and explorers of today because of errors of fact or illustration, loses a definite asset thereby, and on the other hand when its accuracy earns the approval of living experts and outdoorsmen, it gains a steadily increasing reputation which should bring a smile to the face of the circulation department.

I trust you will regard this letter as constructive criticism rather than mere fault finding.

The general tone of these stories is excellent and I have directed our library to subscribe to GOLDEN FLEECE.

*Col. George Chase Lewis,
Brooklyn, N. Y.*

Col. Lewis puts his finger on the weak spot—city, editors and artists alike. With the assistance of our expert friends we will learn, however. GOLDEN FLEECE is still a young infant. Perhaps in its old age it will be very wise.

I travel a lot and like nothing better than to find the newest GOLDEN FLEECE on the stands. Keep up the good work. *Bard of Babylon* in March was tops. *Lass o' Bitter Creek*, although short, seemed to me your best April lead. Delay's covers are distinctive and the inside illustrations more than make up the price of the magazine. Your magazine is plenty good the way it is. I laugh at those readers who advise you how to change it, all the while coming back for more of what you've given them. Don't change it a whit. *Dwight O'Connor,
Carbondale, Ill.*

I have just become acquainted with your excellent magazine. It is just about perfect—makeup, artists, and, most of all, stories.

I especially enjoyed *Bard of Babylon*.
*Gerard Lerner,
Youngstown, O.*

For the first time in my life I am writing a letter of commendation on the publication of a magazine, although I have been a reader for the past 30 years. I don't think I am alone in my desire for stories dealing with early history or written around events of the early days. There are perhaps 15 or 20 magazines with Western or cowboy stories; equally as many with detective stories and love, until they are an eyesore on the stands. You can imagine my joy when I saw your first issue. I have not missed one since. I believe your second issue contained a modern story, and I felt you were going the way of all magazines—falling back on the stock stories after getting a circulation. Please keep your magazine strictly to the line and you will build up a following that will be the envy of all other magazines. I wish you all the success in the world for filling a long-felt desire for this kind of reading material, and wish it were possible to publish such a magazine twice a month, as I am lost for reading matter a week after the issue is on the market. *H. J. Restell,
Pittsburgh, Pa.*

Victor Ferkiss of So. Ozone Park, N. Y., also objects to any modern stories, but listen to Richard Hardesty of Wilmington, Del.:

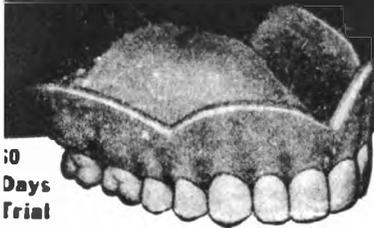
My vote still goes for a little more variety. I like HISTORICAL ADVENTURE, but think you could well afford to print some unusual adventure stories laid in the present time. However, I agree with most others who have written in, that you should steer clear of two-gun westerns and futuristic bunk.

I particularly enjoyed Vincent Cornier's stories — *The Mantle that Laughed* and *Octave Seventy-Five*—and the animal stories by Anthony Rud. More, please. I have read every issue so far and consider GOLDEN FLEECE and Blue Book the best of the pulps on the stands.

We promise to run no two-gun bang-bangs or futuristic bunk. As we have already said, we are pushovers for animal stories and think they have their legitimate place in GOLDEN FLEECE. As for modern stories, we feel justified in running an occasional one with a modern background, provided it has a *historical angle of interest*.

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