

TEN CENTS

# THRILLING ADVENTURES

10¢

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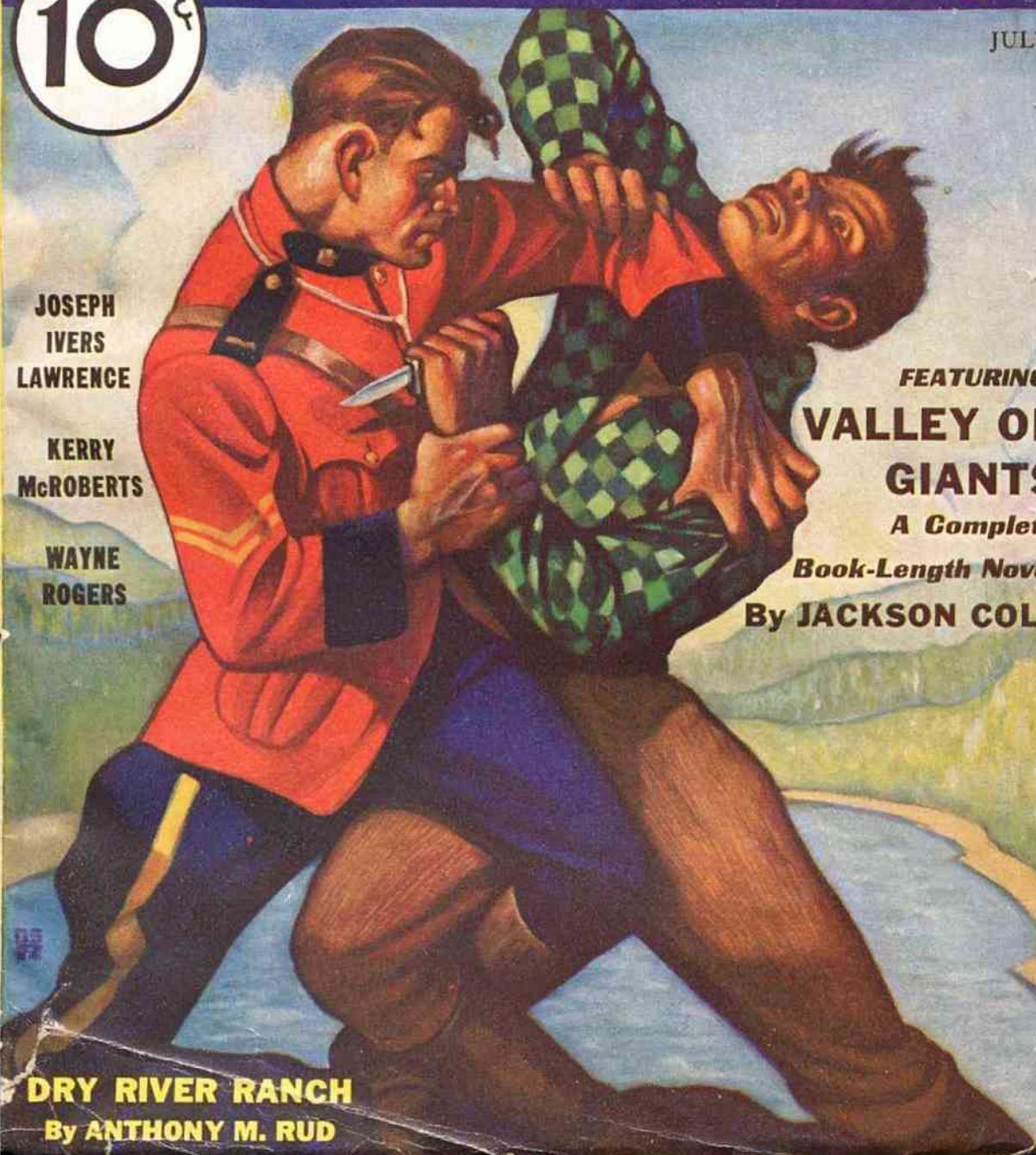
KERRY  
McROBERTS

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FEATURING  
VALLEY OF  
GIANTS

A Complete  
Book-Length Novel  
By JACKSON COLLIER

DRY RIVER RANCH  
By ANTHONY M. RUD



**\$14<sup>40</sup>**  
**A DAY**

*In your kitchen  
at home*

**TWO CERTAIN  
WAYS TO  
Make Money  
at Once**

**with very small  
investment**

**\$61<sup>60</sup>**  
**A DAY**

*letting others  
Sell for you*

Here is a business you can start for as little as \$50. And the first week of operation should bring you at least \$50 in profits. Run it from your kitchen. Let dealers do your selling, and it should be very easy to make \$50 a week regular and steady. This is a staple food business, but one with a brand new appeal. The food business is always good. People *must eat*. In bad times they buy the foods that have the greatest food value for the least cost. In spite of being greasy, and soggy and hard to digest, old-fashioned Doughnuts are sold daily by the millions. They are one of America's favorite foods. And they are high in food value for the cost. But now I have invented **BROWN BOBBY — A NEW AND DIFFERENT KIND OF GREASELESS DOUGHNUT** that you bake in an electric cooker. Anyone can eat and digest as many **BROWN BOBBYS** as they want. The taste is like nothing you have ever tasted before. And **BROWN BOBBYS** sell three times as fast as the old-fashioned doughnut.

For less than your potential profits for the first week we supply you with complete equipment. You can start in your kitchen or in any space two feet square. Simply plug into any light socket, mix up ingredient in secret formula and you can have a profit the first day.

I send you fully worked out plan so you do no selling. All your production is disposed of at wholesale and dealers appointed on my plan do all your selling for you. You merely bake and deliver. And \$7.20 worth of raw materials bring back \$21.60—a profit of \$14.40 a day.

If space permitted I could give you many testimonials from grateful widows, housewives whose husbands had lost their jobs, men who were out of work, or on part pay. It is an ideal home business that can be run by a man or a woman alone or a husband and wife working together.

Check coupon for my Free Book. There is no obligation to start. But read the unvarnished facts about this wonderful little "Depression-Proof" home money-maker and then decide for yourself. No salesman will call. All information free.

For eight years this responsible company has specialized in starting people in money-making businesses. No study, no delay—But profits at once. They now offer two separate businesses. Neither one is experimental. Both are **PROVED MONEY-MAKERS!** Each one is an equally big money maker in bad times or good. One or the other is sure to bring you the money you want.

I am also the pioneer in another basic food industry. I was instrumental many years ago in starting scores of people in the highly profitable Potato Chip Business. Many of them are still making money with the equipment I furnished them. But my old equipment had two faults. The chips it turned out were no different from any other chips—and the price was \$1,500 per machine. Now, after years of experimenting, I have perfected a machine that can be delivered to you for an investment less than your potential profits for the first week and one that turns out a chip different to any chip you ever tasted. Raw potatoes contain 9 Vital Health Giving Minerals. By the old way of making potato chips these 9 Minerals were removed. In addition 15.8% of the valuable mineral proteins were removed. My new process keeps these minerals in the chips — gives them an entirely new and different flavor — and makes them actually a vital mineral health food. My machine and my chips are called **VITA-SEALD**. Although this is among the first of my public announcements, already I have received thousands of inquiries. Many machines already are in operation and the reports coming in from the operators say that **VITA-SEALD** chips are actually sweeping competition off the boards, and that the public has taken to them in droves—will buy no other kind. One operator has sold over a ton of potatoes in four weeks—another reports lining up dealers to take 100 dozen bags a day. This business, like my other one, is one you can run from your home or from any small shop. \$2.30 worth of raw material brings you \$16.00 back—over 600% profit mark-up. Just supply dealers—at wholesale prices—and one day's output should net you \$61.60. Cut that figure in half if you like, and then show me any other home business that will bring you \$30 a day every day you operate.



Mr. Adams is a man of excellent character, high credit rating and good standing. He is a successful business man himself and has the success of many others to his credit—people he has started in business for themselves. He has spent the better part of his life showing others how to make money and you can make no mistake in investigating his proposition.

Get the facts. I have personally written a book telling all of my experience with potato chips—giving my experiments and showing the actual money-making facts in this business without exaggeration. It is free. Mail the coupon and be sure to check the square showing which book you want.

**Food Display Machine Corp., Dept. 8-G, 500 N. Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois**

H. ADAMS, President,  
FOOD DISPLAY MACHINE CORP., Dept. 8-G,  
500 N. Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

I am interested in making money at home and have a sufficient amount to invest if I decide to take up either one of your businesses. Please send the book I have checked below. This is free and I am not under any obligation to go ahead.

How to Make \$14.40 a Day on **BROWN BOBBY Greaseless Doughnuts.**  How to Make \$61.60 a Day on **VITA-SEALD Potato Chips.**

NAME.....  
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STATE.....

"I have added  
**7** inches to my chest,  
**4** inches to my biceps,  
**5** inches to my neck,  
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**JOWETT SYSTEM  
 OF PHYSICAL TRAINING.**  
 Signed: LARRY CAMPBELL



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COME on... let's go... give me a chance to prove that I can do for YOU what I have done for thousands of others! You risk nothing... I risk ALL... including my reputation... but I know what I can do... I "challenge" you to let me prove it!... Read my guarantee carefully.

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 ... or it won't cost you one cent! —GEORGE F. JOWETT

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Those skinny fellows that are discouraged are the men I want to work with. I'll build a strong man's body for them and do it quickly. And I don't mean cream-puff muscles either... you will get real, genuine, invincible muscles that will make your men friends respect you and women admire you!

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Mail your order now while you can still get this course at my introductory price of 25c... I will not limit you to the arm, try any one of my test courses at 25c. Or, try all six of them for only \$1.00. Money back, of course, if you are not satisfied.



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Name.....  
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# THRILLING ADVENTURES

Vol. VI, No. 2

J. S. WILLIAMS, Editor

July, 1933

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*Where Readers, Writers and the Editor Meet*

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Read our companion magazines: *Thrilling Detective* and *Thrilling Love*.

Every  
Good  
Boy  
Deserves  
Fun



**LOOK!**  
Easy as A·B·C  
to learn music this way

**JUST** see how easy it is! The lines are always E-G-B-D-F. Memorize the sentence, *Every Good Boy Deserves Fun*—and there you are! Whenever a note appears on the first line, you know it is *e*. Whenever a note appears on the second space, you know it is *g*.

And the spaces—just as easy to remember. The four spaces are always F-A-C-E. That spells "face"—simple enough to remember, isn't it? Thus whenever a note appears in the first space, it is *f*. Whenever a note appears in the second space, it is *a*.

You have learned something already! Isn't it fun? You'll just love learning music this fascinating way! No long hours of tedious practice. No dull and uninteresting scales. No "tricks" or "secrets"—no theories—you learn to play real music from real notes.

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Don't be just "another one of the guests" at the next party you go to. Be the center of attraction! The most popular one at a party is always the person who can entertain—and there is no finer and more enjoyable kind of entertainment than music.

Never before have you had such a chance to become a good player—quickly—without a teacher. And this method does not mean that you will be able merely to read notes and play a simple tune or two—but it means you will become a capable and efficient player. Many of our pupils now have positions with professional bands and orchestras.

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**NO HIGH PRESSURE SELLING  
NO HOUSE-TO-HOUSE CANVASSING**

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OF THE HIGH-GRADE BUSINESS MAN**

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SIMPLY INSTALL—  
SELLS ITSELF**

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POSITIVE PROOF

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AT HOME

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An enormous profit on small investment! Everyone likes this tasty tidbit any time of the day. 5 and 10 cent bags of Magic Cheese Chips sell like wildfire. Sales often run up to hundreds of dollars daily.

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Men and women succeed alike—no super-salesmanship—no skill—no canvassing. E. Weiler, California, starts with 10 pounds, uses profits to build up to 30 pounds, then 60 pounds, then places standing order for 150 pounds EVERY THREE DAYS! ALL PAID FOR OUT OF PROFITS! One of the largest bakery chain systems in the U. S. bids for exclusive rights in 200 cities, but we had already allowed exclusive rights to others, except in 9 cities which they grab eagerly. Buy 150 pounds a clip for each store! J. F. Knudson, living in a small New York city, wires, "RUSH ONE HUNDRED TWENTY POUNDS. OUR TRADE WILL REQUIRE UPWARD OF FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS MONTHLY." Large Pacific Coast concern wires, "INCREASE STANDING ORDER TO ONE HUNDRED FIFTY POUNDS WEEKLY. SHIP TODAY SURE THIRTY POUNDS ADDITIONAL EXPRESS." Long distance calls, telegrams flooding in from everywhere—we've had our plant working twenty-four hours a day to meet the demand! No hard times for MAGIC CHEESE CHIPS!

### YOU DON'T INVEST A RED CENT

until you have sold yourself on the possibilities. You must sell yourself first before we permit you to invest, and our novel plan enables you to decide without cost! Then you can start with \$8.50 investment, put back the enormous profits, building up without another penny investment if you wish!

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We furnish everything—advertising, display stands, etc. Don't wait until it's too late to get the FIRST BIG PROFITS in your locality. Mail the coupon at once for complete details and share the enormous profits immediately!

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*A Complete Book-Length Novel*

By JACKSON COLE

*Author of "Pearls of Peril," "Gun Justice," etc.*

CHAPTER I

*The Lake of Fire*

THERE'D come a crash, then such a shriek of metal and ice in conflict that you would have said the ship was being torn apart. The ship was a submarine. They called her the *Golden Harpoon*.

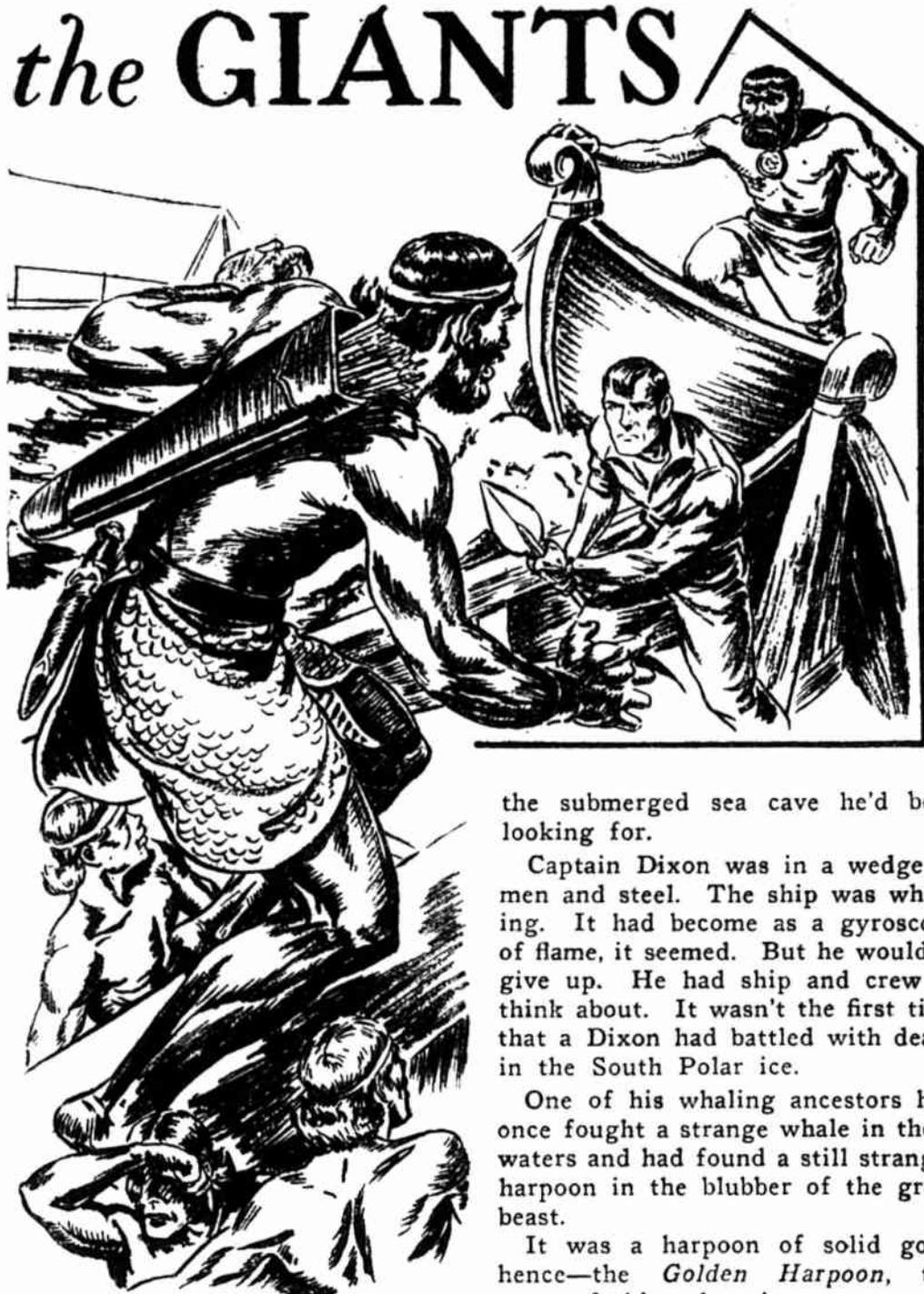
Then she'd fallen, twisting—end over end, it seemed—like a barrel going over Niagara. But a Niagara

at the bottom of the sea—three hundred feet below the surface she'd been when the trouble started; and the sunken ceiling above her a world of ice.

It had been that transition from ice to fire that had knocked the crew unconscious. There'd come the crash and the grinding shriek and the *Golden Harpoon* had been as if hurled into a roaring furnace.

The roaring was there as Captain

# the GIANTS



Shale Dixon struggled into consciousness.

He remembered.

For two days the *Golden Harpoon* had been groping her way under the South Polar ice. He'd found

the submerged sea cave he'd been looking for.

Captain Dixon was in a wedge of men and steel. The ship was whirling. It had become as a gyroscope of flame, it seemed. But he wouldn't give up. He had ship and crew to think about. It wasn't the first time that a Dixon had battled with death in the South Polar ice.

One of his whaling ancestors had once fought a strange whale in these waters and had found a still stranger harpoon in the blubber of the great beast.

It was a harpoon of solid gold, hence—the *Golden Harpoon*, the name of this submarine.

It was another Dixon who'd found the warm current flowing from under the thousand-foot ice cliffs of the South Polar continent. It was this submerged river of mystery that the *Golden Harpoon* and her crew of fourteen—adventurers all—

lunatics, the world had considered them—had come to explore.

Lunatics like as not, Captain Dixon's reeling thought admitted. And now in a crazy submarine!

He struggled up and hauled himself to the steering column.

It was as if the *Golden Harpoon* were now standing on her tail—flaming like a torch. There was dynamite aboard. When would she blow? All but Dixon, her captain, were still unconscious. Or dead already, maybe!

Not everything was lost. The ship was still alive. So was he. At any rate, the *Golden Harpoon* was no longer plunging deeper. He could tell that—even before he brushed the blood from his eyes and studied the depth gauge. She was rushing now for the surface.

His senses cleared still more.

He knew about where his position was—three hundred miles south and west of Little America—Byrd's old camp—somewhere near the heart of the South Polar continent.

But headed for what port?

**J**UST a matter of split seconds all this was. But seconds shattered like atoms and enough energy released to blow the whole world to pieces.

While Dixon still clung to his post—testing his ship for response to her wheel, trying to read the riddle of her whirling action—the *Golden Harpoon* slewed and lifted, then fell. She'd found the surface again.

Where?

The periscopes were out of commission. He'd have to risk the hatch of the conning tower.

Then, as he unlocked the hatch—hot to his touch—and pushed it back, he was met by such a gust of flaming gas that he jerked the hatch shut again and dropped below.

He had a flash of an idea, now, as to what had happened.

While feeling her blind way through that submerged sea cave, the *Golden Harpoon* had found herself in the drag of another current—a current feeding one of the geysers or volcanoes that made of this frozen continent a land of fire as well as of ice.

All this passing with the speed of a dream.

**T**HE electric motors were beginning to die. In a last desperate effort, Dixon sparked the surface engines. They responded. Rudder almost out of commission and propellers twisted; but the *Golden Harpoon* welcomed the chance to run for her life.

When Dixon next risked the conning tower, there was no more fire. He'd come into a world of roaring steam—then into a zone of mist.

The *Golden Harpoon*, riding high, was running across a strange sea—misty hot—yet almost under the shadow of the distant plateau, eternally frozen, that marked the South Pole.

Once through the drift of warm fog, Dixon glimpsed those frozen mountains—then again—far away, what he took to be the mirage of a tropic shore.

A faint shiver ran through the strained body of the submarine. It was as if she had scraped bottom, then was clear again.

And yet, in that contact, there was something that filled Dixon with a foreboding he couldn't explain.

Again the ship struck—lightly enough, it seemed; yet again a shiver passed through her. It was like the shiver of a living thing.

In a sudden panic, Dixon dropped below and reduced the speed of his engines almost to a stop. Even as

he did this he was listening. The noises of the outer world were reduced to the single organ-like drone of the distant fountain of steam still roaring up from the depths—and this growing fainter.

Then, through this thinning curtain of sound, Dixon heard another note. It was one that pierced him through with a shiver of cold—then of wonder. He would have sworn that he'd heard the siren of a steamer—the long, mournful hooting wail that vessels unloose when feeling their way through a fog.

His heart stood still as he listened. He heard it again—then again.

With his foot on the ladder there came down now from the open hatch an answering hoot that might have come from the *Golden Harpoon* herself.

This was sheer craziness! But had he run into a fog-bound fleet?

Again at the hatch of the conning-tower Captain Dixon surveyed the world around him. The *Golden Harpoon* was riding strangely high—when he remembered the amount of water ballast she carried. The surface of the sea was like melted glass—colored glass that had been melted. A mist was closing in—hiding sea and mountains. The mist gave the sky itself the look of a dome of colored glass.

**T**HERE was a sun somewhere—due north, behind that great veil of steam which was now off a mile or so over the port stern.

So much he saw—then a vision of terror.

Before his eyes a strange monster was rising from the sea. It had the head and forepart of a mammoth serpent.

For seconds, it seemed, Captain Dixon was riveted where he was—staring into eyes that were like cop-

per plates, and then into a fanged and gaping mouth.

## CHAPTER II

### *Strange Battle*

**A**LMOST at the same instant the reptile had flashed down its head. It missed Dixon by a matter of inches and caught the edge of the hatchway. The blow brought with it a gust of hot breath that was like a wave of poisonous gas.

Dixon dropped.

For a moment he was on the floor-deck of the submarine looking up—still half-stunned but his mind racing. He'd heard a thousand tales of sea-serpents and other monsters of the less traveled oceans. He'd been convinced of it before—not all of the men who'd told such tales had lied; not all of them had been victims of their own imaginations.

A head the size of a barrel, armored with a skin that looked like a mosaic of giant oyster shells. There was no intelligence in those saucer eyes. The barbed mouth—split to the capacity of seizing the girth of a man—was now grinding at the steel combing of the conning-tower.

Even while Dixon watched, in the swift interval that it was taking him to get his senses back, he saw a clawed foot—it was like a slimy, colossal hand—seize the rim of the hatchway.

The *Golden Harpoon* heeled and trembled.

A little more and the huge reptile would be hauling the vessel over on her side—perhaps rolling her over completely. That would be death for all on board.

Even with his other preoccupations, Dixon didn't forget his stricken crew. His hands and brain worked with the automatic precision

of some of his own instruments as he started the air-compressors and released oxygen to revivify the stifling atmosphere in the submarine's hull.

Some of the other men were already stirring—Hawley among them, the engineer.

The *Golden Harpoon* carried no heavy ordnance. But there were weapons enough aboard. Dixon seized a magazine rifle of heavy caliber that had been kept ready in case the submarine was attacked by killer whales.

From the open hatch of the conning-tower he fired up twice at that nightmarish head. The monster merely winced, repeated its attack—clawing, gnashing.

Dixon understood. For that huge beast of terror up there—whatever it was—the *Golden Harpoon* was itself some sort of a living thing, a rival in these waters that the creature of mystery now wanted to slay. Slain the submarine would be—with all hands—if the monster succeeded in canting the vessel over much further while that hatch was open. To get the hatch closed, that was the vital necessity; and no time to lose.

THE captain put aside his gun and took an ax—short-handled and heavy, such as the divers sometimes carried in their under-sea work.

The *Golden Harpoon* was heeling—she was about ready to turn turtle—as Dixon thrust head and shoulders through the hatch. One of those great feet—like clawed hands with a twenty-inch span—still clutched the combing of the hatch.

It was at this that Captain Dixon struck.

It was like striking into the gnarled roots of some abnormally tough creeper. He'd struck through skin of plated bone—then into bone

itself that turned the edge of the tempered steel.

There was a snorting roar as the clawed horror quivered and jerked up with a clutching movement.

Dixon—in what seemed like a moment of absolute nightmare—saw the arm, or front leg, of the creature. It was stringy and slack like the arm of an alligator, yet as big as the hind leg of a horse.

SOME fighting instinct must have told him what was coming. Back of him somewhere was the twin to this clawed foot he'd struck. He'd half-turned to defend himself. As he did so, he was clutched by the shoulder and snatched into the air.

He swung there, suspended—shot through with what seemed like currents of electric fire. And strangely, in that first second or two his only terror was to see that the *Golden Harpoon* was moving away without him—he could see the deck sliding away at what was like a great distance beneath him.

Then some shift of the clawed hand that had taken him by the shoulder twisted the *Golden Harpoon* out of sight altogether and he was gazing again at the head of the reptile. This swung over him and came close. At the same time up came the hand or foot he'd struck with the ax and held him by one of his legs.

Dixon had his ax. He still held it with both hands.

As the head of the monster leered close he struck at it. He may have struck a number of times. All he could remember was an impact as if he'd started to chop down a tree.

Then he was flung into the water.

Even as he fell he heard again that familiar sound—one that struck him as familiar. It was like the fog-siren of an ocean liner and it wasn't until seconds afterward that he knew



*Suddenly, Dixon hurled himself into action.*

that this was the voice of the thing he'd been fighting—the voice of a dinosaur, the great sea-lizard.

On dropping him, the reptile must have turned its attack once more against the *Golden Harpoon*. It slewed the submarine around, clawing at its steel hull.

All that saved Dixon at all just then was that the patent bowsprit of the *Golden Harpoon* came his way. He grappled with this and succeeded in pulling himself out of the steaming water.

He'd been badly mauled. In his throat there was a taste of strong mineral unlike the taste of any sea-water he'd ever known before. The water here about the *Golden Har-*

*poon* was warm but no longer hot. The submarine had continued to travel.

Her wake was crooked—crooked like that of a hooked and all but exhausted fish as the great sea-lizard fought her and brought her this way and that.

Captain Dixon lay there on the forward deck of his vessel doing his best to get back reason and sense into a world from which these things had fled. He was looking now at something that no human eyes had ever seen before—a prehistoric monster battling with a submarine.

This was a submarine that had originally been built for the United States Navy, then condemned under

some international treaty or other; then rebuilt for this cruise under the Antarctic ice.

Was she to end like this?

Dixon sought other normal details. This day was Christmas—mid-summer in these far southern latitudes. Somewhere the sun shone—far to the north behind that sky-high curtain of steam and fog. Daylight would last for another three months.

He heard the far hoot of another sea-lizard, then another and another. And as he looked away across the misty surface of this lake of fire he could see them. There were maybe a score of them, swimming with their heads and necks reared up like the periscopes of super-submarines.

Then he saw something else—something that struck him at first as an optical illusion. Behind the fog screen, dimly, yet unmistakably for a dozen seconds, he'd seen a flash of paddles or oars—a movement of boats.

He forgot all this in a pang of horror as he uttered a cry of warning.

### CHAPTER III

#### *Barbed With Gold*

**T**HE CRY was for Hawley, the engineer.

Coming to himself down there in the compression hull, it had been but a matter of seconds for Hawley to realize that something was wrong. This rocking and veering of the vessel, that open hatch—and his captain missing!

Still half-dazed, Hawley had climbed up and thrust himself part way from the conning-tower. It was at a moment when the dinosaur was lashing about the tail of the vessel, looking for some vulnerable part to attack. It was while Captain Dixon still lay sprawled on the prow of the submarine.

But suddenly, swiftly, the monster lizard had caught that movement as Hawley showed himself and it was writhing in his direction with the speed of a swimming seal.

**D**IXON himself was now trying to reach Hawley to warn him of his danger. But it was like running along the deck of a small boat tossed in a hurricane. As Dixon ran, he drew out his knife—the only weapon he had; but a knife with a spring-blade, all of four inches of razor-edged steel with a dagger point.

Before Dixon had covered a third of the distance, the great lizard had reared its huge neck and head above Hawley twisting and staring down at him. Then it had seized him and lifted him bodily from the hatch.

Meantime, Dixon had flung himself forward. In a breathless second, Dixon found himself in contact with a breast of white leather that rose and fell in time to the beat of a colossal heart.

Dixon struck—then struck again.

Then he himself was hurled away.

It had been a blind stroke by the brute that knocked him over. The great lizard was spouting blood and lashing about. In the midst of the turmoil, Dixon found Hawley, dazed and broken, and eased him toward the *Golden Harpoon*.

Others must have awakened down in the hull of the vessel. The boat had stopped. Her propellers were still.

Just as Dixon brought Hawley to the side of the ship, Ben Wiley, Hawley's second, bobbed up from the hatch. He gave a comprehensive look about him. In a flash he was gone. But in a flash, it seemed, he was back again, bringing along a line and a gun.

Hawley and Dixon came over the side.

"Get him below," Dixon com-

manded, and took the gun. "Stand by the engines—"

Ben broke in.

"Back of you—for God's sake!"

Dixon swung around.

Undulating across the surface of the sea—close up now—were half a dozen other giant reptiles. Then, true to some nearer surface sign Ben Wiley had seen, there was a heave alongside and another head shot up on a neck that might have belonged to a Chinese dragon.

**D**IXON held his fire—held it as the fierce head lifted and the slimy column of a neck slid higher. Just when that pulsing expanse of white leather appeared—there where the throat and body met—Dixon let out three shots in quick succession.

It was as if a derrick had fallen on the *Golden Harpoon*.

Dixon was felled as if he'd been caught beneath that derrick. He came out of it stunned to find Hawley struggling at his side. But Ben Wiley had disappeared.

Hawley pointed.

Dixon saw the monster he'd just shot tossing its head about and in its jaws the body of his second engineer.

He was over the side and swimming, calling encouragement.

There was a mass of horn and hide, shapeless like a slab of tidal rock, where the first giant reptile tossed and slowly coiled, dead or dying. On this as if for support—or because the two had been mates—the second dinosaur now rested one of its mighty feet as it held aloft the squirming human shape.

But the second monster also was pulsing its life away.

Just as Dixon came close it dropped Ben Wiley and went into a flurry like that of a stricken cachalot.

Through a whirlpool of bloody

froth, Dixon found his man and started to swim away.

The mist was thickening again. Even the mist had a crimson tinge. It was as if this whole Satanic world was tinged with blood. There was a taste of blood in the heavy brine.

Out of the thickening fog there came the bellowing of other monsters.

Over there on the flat sled deck of the *Golden Harpoon* man after man now appeared. They were excited—armed. Dixon, swimming with the wounded Wiley at his side, was stricken with horror as he saw two of the dinosaur herd bearing down on the submarine with swinging heads and necks.

Just then there was a heaving lift of the bloody froth about him and the head of another monster came up—lifting higher and higher.

While Dixon stared, momentarily helpless, there was a flash and a stabbing impact. A heavy arrow, big as a broom-handle, had struck into the throat of the brute.

The beast at once forgot its attack and began to fight this weapon that had struck it.

**A**NOTHER arrow came—then another and another.

One struck the armored head of the monster and flew off and back as if it had taken impact with elastic steel.

Dixon seized the arrow as it fell. It would serve him as some sort of a weapon.

And then—here and now, in the midst of the swirling excitement—he felt the thrust of an excitement keener still. The barbed head of the arrow was like no other arrow he had ever seen, but one, and that was the head of the historic golden harpoon that had given his submarine her name.

Gold also—gold hardened with an alloy of platinum.

The giant reptile was still tearing at the arrow in its throat with its weird ungainly forefeet—fingered like the hands of some primitive giant.

Other monsters were attacking the submarine over there. There was a riot of shots in the air—of screams—of hooting wails that were like a dirge of suffering giants. Yet Dixon felt a breath of triumph. In his hand he had a replica of the golden harpoon that an ancestor of his had found more than a century ago in the body of that strange whale.

Through the red fog that was drawing closer about the field of battle, Dixon again saw something that made him forget during the flash of a new wonder even these wonders that had already stunned him and brought him so close to death.

Emerging now from all directions,—there they were—a ring of queer yellow barges—flat and broad but riding light.

The boats were each driven, it seemed, by a hundred paddles.

And in the bow of each boat he saw a colossal human shape—bearded men incredibly big, armed with incredible bows.

And the barges in which these giant huntsmen stood and peered ahead shone with the same yellow metallic luster as that of the golden harpoon.

## CHAPTER IV

### *The Archers*

**D**IXON was in for a closer acquaintance with those giant huntsmen than he might have wished on such short notice.

He'd started to swim back to the submarine taking both the big arrow

and Ben Wiley with him—a floundering swim in that thick water—when some gust of a special shout came through the din and confusion. He turned his head and discovered that two of the barges were bearing down in his direction with a quick flash of paddles.

He was ready for a rescue, but he didn't like the looks of it. There was something in the expression of those giant and bearded archers that gave him a creep of suspicion. But there was no escape.

**H**E'D never seen man-propelled craft better handled. The boats were shallow, with a depth of not more than a couple of feet, he guessed; with a seven-foot beam and a length that couldn't have been much less than eighty feet.

All he could make out regarding the paddlers in that first wild moment was that they were naked savages—white, almost dazzling in their whiteness, yellow haired, heavy about the shoulders, but, if anything, smaller than the average man.

It was the contrast of these with the big men in the front ends of the barges that concentrated about the giants a sort of special atmosphere of terror. The archers must have been ten feet tall, or twelve; even more perhaps; black bearded and black haired, thick lipped and cruel-eyed. They brought to Dixon a memory of the bearded men represented in the carvings of ancient Babylon.

He had just time to see that the archers in the other barges—there must have been fifty of them—were still making sport of the dinosaur herd when the two that were headed for him were on him.

One of the barges had headed the other by a few feet and the big Goliath in the bow uttered a harsh cry. He was on his knees. He'd

tossed his bow aside. In an instant he'd seized Dixon and the still unconscious Wiley in his two hands and scooped them up.

It was a savage snatch—fascinated but a little fearful.

As Dixon looked into the huge face he wasn't sure but that he'd rather have taken his chances with the dinosaurs. This face was cruel—crueler than any face he'd ever seen; brazen and malicious—leering, sneering, the facial front for a cunning and ferocious mind.

Dixon controlled himself. He gave the giant a look that was cold and challenging, then spoke. There was no possibility that the Goliath would understand his words, but there was a power in the human voice that could reach the brain even of animals.

"That man's wounded," he said—and there was command in his voice. He put out a shielding hand over Wiley.

Dixon was one of those men who'd never cursed in his life. He'd never had to. He could see that the words had had some effect on the giant. The big archer had lost something of his leer; but there was a lurking menace in its place.

**D**IXON knelt over Ben Wiley who lay on his back where the giant had dropped him. He'd been terribly clawed. Some of his ribs may have been staved in. But he was breathing. His eyes fluttered open.

Suddenly Ben had jerked around and sat up.

"What the hell!" he exclaimed.

"Steady, old man!" Dixon told him.

Dixon gave another quick look at the yellow-haired paddlers. They had the squat faces of Esquimaux—but of a lower order of Esquimaux than any he had ever seen.

Each wore about his neck what

looked like a solid gold collar as of a half-inch wire and suspended from this was a tag of the same metal—big as a man's palm—on which some sort of a seal was stamped. They were naked except for shorts that seemed to be made of a cloth woven from gold.

The giant master himself was naked half way to the waist where there was a broad band of leather that might have been cut from the white throat of a dinosaur. From this there hung a sort of long kilt of similar material on which weird primitive pictures had been painted.

**T**HE paddlers had been staring absorbed at Dixon and Wiley. But as Dixon looked at them every face became like an ivory mask—fixed and changeless. He didn't have to be told that they were slaves—with a fear of sudden death stamped into their very souls—and that the giant was their commander.

The archers in the other boats had by this time about slaughtered the big sea-lizards or driven them off. There were carcasses and writhing blood-fountains in every direction. Most of the barges were closing in about the submarine and the two barges that had raced for Dixon and Wiley.

The barge alongside the one where Dixon was had nosed up so that the giant commander of this second boat could have a look at the strangers his rival had caught.

The two giants exchanged speech in a curious rolling bleat. Then he who was in charge of the boat that had taken in Dixon and Wiley picked up Wiley and passed him over to his mate of the second barge before Dixon could intervene.

There came a hail from the *Golden Harpoon*. It was Doc Harris calling. Doc was the *Golden Harpoon's* second in command.

"Captain, shall we open fire?"

"Only on command! How are your engines?"

"All right, sir; but the rudder and propellers are out of commission."

The crew of the *Golden Harpoon* were huddled on the sled-deck—some down, some crouched, some standing. But Dixon made a quick count—twelve. No one missing; and he was thanking God for that; even if some of them had been badly mauled. He'd been mauled himself.

Dixon called again to Doc Harris.

"Watch close! They may try to board you! Get your wounded men below and leave a deck-watch of not more than two men to be stationed at the hatch. In case of trouble duck under and defend the ship."

Even while he was speaking, one of the big arrows was shot from a barge—evidently just an experimental shot. For these men were marksmen with their big bows. There'd been plenty of evidence of that. And the arrow just fired had hit the *Golden Harpoon* well forward—evidently to test the quality of this strange craft. The arrow glanced and skipped into the sea.

From the barges there came a chorus of exclamations—of surprise, of admiration.

FROM just back of him, Dixon heard a groan and a grunting curse. It came from Ben Wiley as the men who handled him thrust him to the bottom of the boat and there held him down with a foot like a shovel.

The gesture was so swift—all of this was of such swift development, that words lag in the telling of it—that Dixon had sprung to Ben's defense with no thought at all of what the consequences might be. Landing in the other barge he'd stum-

bled for a moment among the stolid paddlers. From one he'd snatched a paddle—of metal, sure enough, balanced to his hand and with a blade as sharp as that of a whaler's blubber spade.

## CHAPTER V

### *Hostage*

FAST as Dixon's reaction had been his brain had been faster yet. A battle with the giants just now was the last thing on earth he wanted. Yet neither could he allow one of his men to be mistreated here before his eyes. Ben Wiley was on the floor of the boat. The giant's foot was on Ben's chest.

Dixon came around with the metal paddle ready to deliver a blow. He met the startled eyes of the giant—deep-set and black under brows that formed a single hairy ridge over the root of a hooked and dilated nose. It was the scowling, awakened glance of a mammoth black-eyed hawk rather than anything human.

"Get back!" Dixon gritted.

The giant's bearded lips parted over clamped teeth but he gave no sound. Then swift as the stroke of a cat that spears at a rat the giant made a grab at Dixon with one of his hairy hands.

At the same moment Dixon struck. Even then he didn't strike to kill. His idea had been to send the giant into the water. It would be a gain of seconds, anyway, and every second gained would be of value at least for the men on the deck of the *Golden Harpoon*.

The blade of the paddle should have caught the big brute flat side on. But as the giant now ducked his face came in contact with the sharp edge of the blade. It was as if he'd been slashed by a razor—from temple to chin, narrowly escaping an eye.

He let out a howl, but his foot was off Wiley.

In the confusion that followed, Dixon struck again; but took the blow of a fist that would have crushed his skull if he hadn't dropped.

For a moment he was on one knee and what looked like a mountain of hairy flesh coming down to crush him. Into this mass he now thrust his spade with all his strength. The man-mountain over him sagged lower—bringing his own death if he wasn't dead already—as his weight forced the golden blade deeper and deeper into his colossal body.

The handle of the paddle was propped against the floor. Its blade was buried in that floundering body just over the girth. Fate alone could have guided that broad blade between the stricken Goliath's ribs.

Dixon strained. The paddle aiding him, he tilted the burden sideways. The giant slanted over. It was a spasm of his own that brought him to his back with his head hanging down over the side of the boat.

Dixon staggered to his feet—panting, bathed in blood.

HE HAD a swift impression of the yellow-haired slaves back of him transfixed with some emotion that was more like awe than anger—anyway there was nothing to fear from them. Not just now. He retreated a little way, to seize another paddle.

"Wiley," he panted softly, yet without panic, "are you able to get over the side?"

Wiley caught a slow breath. "Don't mind me!"

"Okay, son; but I won't leave you!"

Other things happening all at once. Other impressions coming all at once.

"Steady, over there," Dixon sang out to the *Golden Harpoon*.

What he feared just now was that the battle should spread—become a free-for-all. In that event not one of the sub's crew would escape alive. Yes, for a while, perhaps. But later. What would be the line of escape?

In the same second of time he'd glanced at the other barges. Then he faced the giant who'd seized him first.

"Listen, you," said Dixon. "You're dead, too, if you try to get rough!" He raised his voice and sang out: "Give us a hull shot!"

IT was Morris who fired—the best shot in the crew. A soft-nosed bullet tore a hole through the gunwale a few inches from where the giant captain of the barge was standing.

It had been a shot at fifty yards—close enough for the detonation and the smash of the bullet to be practically instantaneous. Morris had been a big-game hunter in Africa. Just as instantly he could have sent the bullet crashing through the Goliath's skull.

It was a fact that Dixon conveyed to the giant with a swift gesture of pantomime.

The giant got the idea all right. He also was capable of swift reactions of a sort. The death of his comrade had caught him by surprise. He'd given a start of amazement, then rage, then a return to amazement.

The bullet that had smashed through the gunwale, had flattened against the other side and dropped to the floor of the barge at the giant's feet. He looked at the missile for a moment as if it had been some poisonous insect.

Without moving he raised a throaty cry—not very loud but rolling. It sounded like:

"*Hoa! Hoa! Hoa! Ola-lo! Hoa! Hoa!*"

Dixon stepped over the fallen

giant and knelt at the side of Ben Wiley. Ben had tried to rise and had dropped back.

"How's she makin'?" Dixon asked, easing Wiley to a much better position.

"Fine!" said Wiley, and he tried to grin but he closed his eyes.

Dixon looked up.

So had the giant brought his attention to a fallen comrade—the Goliath whom Dixon had speared. The victim may not have been dead. Or his movement now may have been due to a mere post-mortem reflex of twisted muscles. But his mighty body had lurched. Seeing which the Goliath of the first boat leaned over and grappled the head of the victim with both hands, then jerked him free of the barge and thrust him under the turgid red and purple water.

As he did this once more he raised his bearded face and let out that curious cry of his:

"*Hoa! Hoa! Ola-lo!*"

If it meant "Retreat!" it was an order or a suggestion that must have met with the approval of the other members of this strange hunting party.

But Dixon, held by a dread fascination, watched the giant making sure that his comrade was dead before releasing his body into the bloody waters of the place. Then, sharply, he was aware that the paddlers had reversed their position and were smoothly bringing the two barges into speed.

HE cast a look at the *Golden Harpoon*.

Doc Harris and others were still occupied there in getting the wounded down the hatch of the conning-tower.

A hail came across from Doc Harris:

"Shall we stop them?"

"No! Await orders—forty-eight hours—then—"

Across the widening space of stained water Dixon could feel a breath of comradeship to strengthen the heart of any man. He completed what he had to say with a voice that stirred those who heard him like a bugle call—

"Affirmation sealed instructions!"

Sealed instructions were for survivors, in case of catastrophe, to rendezvous at Little America where a relief ship might be expected before the South Polar winter set in.

All the barges were drawing away—melting with smooth speed into a red fog. The red fog dropped like a fateful curtain to a weird chant:

"*Hoa! Hoa! Ola-lo!*"

## CHAPTER VI

"*Hoa-hoa!*"

CAPTAIN SHALE DIXON, aged twenty-nine, white, unmarried—

There could have been other descriptive details on his papers if such details had been in fashion—five feet eleven, one hundred and fifty-odd pounds of animated whalebone; a jaw and a steel-gray eye that meant command; and yet that something about him that made him as careful of Ben Wiley's comfort as Ben's own mother would have been—if Ben had happened to have a mother.

"You're off watch, Ben," Captain Dixon said. "Better snatch a snooze."

Ben snoozed. The captain of the *Golden Harpoon* crouched beside him. The metal barge—shallow draught and broad, almost like one of those coaster-boats at a picnic resort, but ten times as long—slid across the oily surface of this sea like a phantom—a phantom unit in a phantom fleet.

It wasn't the first time that a

Dixon had sailed a sea uncharted and unnamed. The fact that it might be the last time such a thing should come to pass wasn't bothering this Captain Dixon at all.

His keen eyes searched the horizon, searched the surface of the sea, speculated on the presence here of dinosaurs—monsters that were being called prehistoric in the outside world.

The red fog lifted, drifted, opened up unending vistas. And gradually the nature of this sea revealed itself—the brimming crater of what was probably the world's greatest geyser. Up through the central bore of this geyser the *Golden Harpoon* had found her way.

An inland sea land-locked and mountain-locked—too wide to see across; but wide, he judged, not only because of the lay of the surrounding peaks but because—well, you wouldn't find a herd of dinosaurs in a bathtub.

He gathered at least a part of what must have happened this day besides the arrival of the *Golden Harpoon* in these uncharted waters.

The *Golden Harpoon* had come plunging up from the unknown into the midst of a hunting party. The sea monsters must have been more or less in flight from the hunters when the submarine broke from the depths.

THESE giant huntsmen had already been in pursuit. Dinosaurs were, after all, not so different in their general habits, most likely, from their cousins, the whales.

Where were the hunters headed for now? Some ship that lay veiled behind the haze? Or to some camp of theirs on the shore?

Of one thing Dixon became increasingly certain; and that was that there'd be no open-sea outlet from this fiery lake into which the *Golden*

*Harpoon* had found her way. In that case, never again would the *Golden Harpoon* retrace her course.

Tempered steel even couldn't again take the punishment of that passage under the ice and earth and through that hell of fire. It would be suicide for human beings to try it again.

CAPTAIN DIXON turned and took a last glance at the blurred low hull in the distance that was all he could now see of his vessel. Still on her deck he could see a couple of diminishing figures moving about. Was he ever to see them again?

He checked the thought.

At any rate, they had those sealed instructions — instructions they'd severally sworn to follow before the cruise began. In three months now, if all went well, the relief ship would be waiting at Little America. Would the survivors be there in time—after having scaled the ice mountains that shut in this lost valley? Would he—and Wiley—be among those survivors?

All hands still lived; and that was something.

There'd been no move to offer violence to either Dixon or Wiley since this run back from the field of slaughter had begun. Dixon had signaled for food and water and had received both—at once and both together in the shape of a sweetish melon.

Dixon himself had been without sleep for upward of forty-eight hours so far as he could remember. But perhaps he had slept in stretches of a minute—two minutes at a time.

He slept a little now—as whaling captains used to sleep in times of stress—with a brain that was at rest but with senses alert. He wasn't missing anything, overlooking anything.

He was as alert as ever when a

slight change of speed told him that something was about to happen.

The fleet of barges, sticking pretty close together and moving without a sound, had cut across a twenty or thirty mile arc of shore. The shore was close. It looked like solid yellow rock—glistening in places where the wash had polished it.

The captain felt an inner lurch.

This shore was gold! This whole sea was a solution of gold. The shore was a gold deposit. There was gold enough in sight to upset the monetary standards of the world.

A gold cup—a saucer, at any rate—perhaps a hundred miles round. He saw that the rim of the sea was considerably higher than the surrounding land. As he stood up in the barge and looked away, what he saw beyond the shore was like a tropic valley lush with a tangle of green jungle.

Then a shift of the barge opened up a long straight avenue through the jungle. At the end of the avenue he saw another shine of yellow—a high-stepped pyramid surmounted by a sort of portico.

There was some delay at the landing-place where Dixon commanded help—and got it—to carry Ben Wiley ashore without further injury.

**T**HE yellow-haired slaves did the work—in a way that put into Dixon's head the thought of using them later—and serving them too—as allies.

Then the slaves disappeared and the tall giants milled around. They showed a fierce curiosity, yet with a tinge of admiration in it. They held hands off. They talked to each other in hooting, warbling undertones like a talk of owls. Huge men. Not one but reared to twice the height of Dixon. And well-shaped, heavily muscled. With here

and there among them a face that was almost comprehending.

It was to the owner of such a face that Captain Dixon spoke. He spoke in English, as was his custom when among strange natives, at the same time backing up what he said with signs.

He pointed now to the pyramidal building at the end of the long avenue and asked what the place was called.

The giant replied:

"Hoa-hoa."

That was good enough. The place was Hoa-hoa. In future geographies there would be a region somewhere on the map of the South Polar continent marked Valley of Giants and the capitol of it would be put down as Hoa-hoa.

Hoa-hoa wasn't more than a mile away. But evidently these giants were lords who must go in state.

Dixon, with one of those barbed arrowheads hidden under his shirt, stood and watched a strange procession of elephants now coming out of the jungle. The elephants were as shaggy as buffalo and carried pads on their heads and shoulders held in place with heavy gold harness.

It was to these pads that the giant lords mounted as the march toward Hoa-hoa was about to begin.

For Dixon and Wiley a litter had been provided—big enough to have carried a dozen ordinary men and swung between two of the shaggy elephants.

"Cheer up!" Dixon encouraged Wiley. "We'll beat them yet."

## CHAPTER VII

### *Death in the Woods*

**A**T YOUR orders," said Wiley, as the yellow-headed slaves who were carrying him shifted him, gently enough, to the

couch of the litter. "But was I a sap to let them put me out!"

"You're not out yet," said Dixon.

"But I'm no good. Captain, sir, if you see the chance, beat it! Don't mind me."

Dixon laughed. "I may beat it, Wiley. But not for long. I've got to get word back to the ship."

"Swim?"

Dixon shook his head. And he explained what he had in his mind.

At least there was no call to whisper. Even if there had been anyone else there to understand, their voices would have been drowned out by a booming as of gongs that now arose about them.

**A** THOUSAND gongs, it seemed— with a tone as soft as that of great bells heard at a distance.

On either side of the procession of elephants the boatmen from the barges were now lining up. As they struck their paddles together there was the same smooth rhythm as when they were propelling the boats. But now the paddles were drumming out a sort of monotonous marching chime, and it was to a music like this that the soft-footed, curly-hided elephants swung into movement.

Dixon peered through the curtains of the litter.

A few of the giants, he speculated, were riding ahead. More of them were riding to the rear. All were in single column. But there was no real effort to guard the prisoners in the litter. Escape, it must have seemed to those assembled Goliaths, was out of the question for these pygmy strangers, whatever their power of magic might be.

The jungle that hedged in the avenue through which they were now passing was, Dixon noted, a close-grown and luxuriant garden, heavy with fruit and flowers, deserted in

stretches but generally alive with a swift and furtive movement of animals and people.

All of these people were of the yellow-haired, ivory-colored slave class, he judged. He saw them hunchbacked but nimble. Except for their color they were suggestive of the missing link.

How far could he trust them? How far could their understanding respond to his own?

Further than one might suspect, perhaps; as it often is with the minds of children and animals. And he had noticed that peculiar expression that had swept over the faces of some of these slaves when he'd killed the giant in the boat. The expression of one of these men he'd noticed especially—the look of the yellow-haired boatman from whom he'd seized the paddle.

He recognized this man now marching at the side of the litter.

Dixon reached out and touched him.

The man responded with a quick, animal-like look. The look was as glinting as that of a monkey, but, even so, there'd been a flash of understanding in it.

Dixon touched the man again. There was another glance, and this time Dixon made a swift gesture to indicate the jungle and that he intended to jump and run.

**W**HEN the man glanced at him again, Dixon completed his communication. He of the yellow hair was to come along.

There swept across the beast-like face at this suggestion a sudden spasm of swift yearning, then something that was unmistakably a look of assent.

"I won't be long," Dixon told Wiley.

"Boss, keep going!" Wiley's lips formed the words. But his voice

was inaudible in the boom of the metallic blades.

Dixon smiled and shook his head.

In another moment he was on his way. He had his arrowhead poniard in his hand. That was in case he should meet immediate interference. Even as he jumped, with his free hand he poked the Yellowhead at his side and motioned him to follow.

IT WAS as if he'd touched a tame tiger or gorilla, the reflex was so quick. In an instant, the two of them had disappeared like shadows into the dense green of the immediate jungle. It was doubtful even if their leap had been noticed except by the other Yellowheads there. And it wasn't for them to break ranks—or break the rhythm of that strange music they were making.

They came to a sort of glade before they'd covered a hundred yards—it was like a dense green arbor there in the midst of the crowded growth—and it was here Dixon halted.

The Yellowhead was looking at him now with the same expression of mingled dread and hope that Dixon had seen on the squat face after the killing of the archer in the barge.

Dixon smiled at him and lightly touched his head.

"You and I are friends," he said. "And you're going to take a message to the *Golden Harpoon*."

There is an eloquence in sign language that can't be put into words. The Yellowhead was helping matters considerably. Whatever he lacked in other respects, he had an animal's sense of direction.

"Over there," said Dixon—and so did he have a sense of direction. "Men like me!"

He was still explaining, when the Yellowhead himself broke in with a sudden gesture. It was a gesture of warning.

Suddenly, the Yellowhead had stooped and glided toward the edge of the little clearing. Dixon followed.

It was from an unexpected quarter that a giant shape rushed into the clearing—whether one of the archers from the dinosaur hunt or a Goliath whom he'd never seen before, Dixon would never know.

There had come one of those swift moments of tragedy such as might have passed in any primitive jungle—when the tiger springs, or the snake strikes. But this was like neither of these. And in a flash of revelation, Dixon had seen the real nature of it.

This Yellowhead had seen a paddle used this day to slay one of the giant masters of this lost world. The Yellowhead had a paddle in his hand. It had become an instrument of death.

In an instant—swift as any striking snake—the Yellowhead had made a beastlike spring and plunged the blade of the paddle up and under the ribs of the colossus.

THE giant lurched. His knees buckled.

He was dead before he hit the ground.

He lay there face down, and from his side there spread a broadening pool of blood.

Dixon for a moment stood as transfixed as was the Yellowhead himself. He knew that he'd started something here in this Valley of Giants that wasn't apt to end so soon. What one slave had learned others would learn.

"Well done!" Dixon said.

From the dead giant's kilt he cut a broad square. It was as white and soft as parchment. He picked up a stick. On the parchment he wrote a message in red and gave it to the messenger.

It was a desperate chance, but every chance was desperate now.

The Yellowhead disappeared into the green shadows. He'd taken the direction of the Lake of Fire.

Dixon himself was torn between two impulses just then. One was to join his comrades on the submarine. The other was to keep his promise to his wounded comrade who was still a prisoner—or dead.

It was with a feeling that he was condemning himself to death that he set off, running, in the direction of the avenue leading to Hoa-hoa, that strange capitol of the Goliaths and their king.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Before the Throne*

FROM the moment that Captain Dixon looked into the murderous dark eyes of Ola-lo, king of these giant people who, he learned, called themselves the Hokay, the Great Ones, he knew that only by more killing would this adventure end.

And—who would be the slayer, who the slain?

He'd caught up with the procession of elephants and their riders just as his absence had become known. There'd been a brief period of tumult which in itself had resulted in blood-letting enough.

A dozen of the Yellowheads lay in a tumbled heap at the side of the jungle highway with their heads battered in. But Wiley was safe.

There may have been a look about Dixon now that caused the bearded archers to keep their hands off both Dixon himself and this comrade of his. Anyway, messengers must have already gone ahead to notify the head of the clan in Hoa-hoa that a wonder was on its way—two wonders: two creatures no bigger than Yellowheads, but who'd come up out

of the Lake of Fire in the belly of a metal fish and who could kill nearby or at a distance.

"Gold!" said Dixon. "Gold and blood!"

There was no mistaking the one than there was the other.

This avenue was paved with gold. It was a golden city that loomed ahead—a city of many pyramids with a great royal pyramid in the center.

It was on a broad terrace, big as a city block, at the top of this pyramid that Wiley and Captain Dixon were brought into the presence of King Ola-lo.

A curious name; and no less sub-human than that great brute of a man who bore it. In fact, it was impossible almost to think of Ola-lo as a human being.

There was too much about him to suggest again those old wall carvings of Babylon or Egypt—one of those primitive half-gods, or a half-human; a man thewed like a bull with the head of a harpy eagle on his massive shoulders.

Swart and low-browed, with deep-set eyes glowering from under shaggy eyebrows that made a hedge across the bridge of the nose.

THERE was no sense of humor in that brutal face. Nothing but a sort of sullen mockery. But his interest manifestly grew as the other giants told him what was obviously the story of what had happened on their dinosaur hunt.

Dixon guessed that their idea of the submarine was that it was some sort of fish. It had swallowed these human maggots in some distant place and had been poisoned by them. Or—Dixon and his crew had managed to kill the monster, once they were in its maw.

The woolly elephants had carried all hands to this upper terrace of

the pyramid. Here the royal residence was a vast portico.

The portico was a place of columns—gold like the pyramid itself; but with figures painted on the polished surface and on the gold rafters overhead that supported a ceiling of golden tile. In the midst of this portico was an open space in which there was a black tent, and this tent was the canopy of a couch on which King Ola-lo had apparently been taking his nap.

**T**HERE wasn't much formality.

Everything was free and easy within certain limits—except for the yellow-haired slaves. Twenty of these had carried in the litter on which Dixon and Ben Wiley had been brought from the sea. The moment they'd set the litter down before the royal bed the slaves crawled out of sight.

But the crowd had grown. As Dixon looked about him he judged that there must have been five or six hundred of the giants—none of them less than ten feet tall, dark and hairy, muscled like wrestlers but swift and silent on their big bare feet.

The crowd formed a packed crescent—the royal couch between the horns of the crescent and Dixon and Wiley, still on their litter, in the middle, the curtains drawn back.

Wiley was all in—Dixon was afraid Wiley was going to die—but Wiley lay still and made no complaint.

Seeing which, Ola-lo, having heard the story, finally pulled himself up from his bed, where he'd been sitting, and got to his feet. Towering high. Scornful. Cruel as a hawk. He put out his right foot and tried to stir Wiley to a sign of life.

So far, Dixon had remained at a crouch on the litter. He'd been

fearing some such move as this. He'd seen what they did to one of their own who was wounded.

"Stop it!" he said to the king, and he'd come up to his feet with his hand in his shirt.

He stood there bloody and ragged with his feet apart looking up at this king of the Great Ones. The two of them looked at each other, Wiley on the litter between them.

Wiley made a sharp effort and came to his elbow.

"And not even a gun!" he gasped.

"Okay, Wiley," said Dixon gently.

But the king never winced. He'd lost interest in Wiley. He was keeping his black eyes on Dixon.

Neither did Dixon wince. Nor make a move. He was set for an attack, and his hand still on that weapon of his under his ragged and dirty shirt. But he spoke.

"Hold on! Hold on!"—slowly, not very loud, as if he'd been speaking to a tiger that had him cornered.

He was cornered, all right—with Wiley helpless at his feet, his ship and his crew back there somewhere on that unholy lake, and no telling how many murderous brutes—human and subhuman—ready to blot out his expedition.

**B**ACK home the newspapers had called him crazy. Was he? He must have been. But so far as that was concerned it had always been crazy, too, for men even to put out in flimsy boats to kill a whale.

The thought was still riding him when Ola-lo put out a big hand with his fingers crooked.

Dixon drew the weapon from his shirt. The arrow head made an ugly poniard—a foot-long blade, barbed on one side and on the other side a cutting edge. The ringed socket into which the shaft had been fitted was long enough for a hilt.

Now Dixon backed around a little.

He didn't want Wiley to be trampled. But Wiley was already dragging himself out of it. Wiley somehow shuffled to his feet and staggered toward the royal couch.

It was just as Dixon caught a finger of that outstretched hand and jerked it to his side with a pressure that almost threw the giant chief off his balance. At the same moment Dixon had brought the point of his poniard against the bare breast of the colossus.

All these events were slipping by in a haze of speed. But here was one of those poised seconds when the whole world hangs in the balance—so it seemed; the measureless interval between life and death.

## CHAPTER IX

### *Free for All*

**E**ASE up or I'll kill you," Dixon said. His words came swift and soft.

You would have said that Ola-lo got his meaning. In any case, he got the meaning of that grip on his finger and the touch of the point against his breast. He gave a sort of cough and jerked back—all of him—as if he'd been stung. Then he let out a grunting, rolling call, laughing a little as if what had just happened was a joke—but with a whine of poison in that laugh that told Dixon that his troubles were but fairly started.

At the call of the big chief there was a hustling and a shuffling somewhere back in the mob, and one of the giants who'd been standing in the background pushed through. Or was pushed.

He was as big as the others, but there was something more human in his face. He looked puzzled, baffled. He rolled his eyes and almost smiled. He seemed slow to understand what was wanted of him. He

brought his eyes at last to Dixon.

There'd been no delay in Dixon's understanding. The meaning of it all struck Dixon's brain as clear as a command in the navy—in code, perhaps, but unmistakable.

The king was ordering this newcomer to kill or get himself killed. Dixon had seen the same look in the eyes of a bull—the first and last time he'd ever watched a bull fight.

This fighting bull of a giant wasn't afraid. He simply didn't want to kill—or be killed. His preoccupation was somewhere else.

There came a guarded jeering then a more open jeering note, from the huddle of giants. The mocking commands of Ola-lo grew louder.

Suddenly, as if by a flash of blinding light, Dixon himself hurled himself into action. But it wasn't at the newcomer he directed his attack. He'd sprung at the king himself.

His move was so unexpected, so tigerish in its concentrated speed and purpose, that he'd caught the king of the giants a jagged gash in the side almost before anyone else but Ola-lo himself knew what was meant.

**B**UT Ola-lo himself had seen what was coming all right. He'd flailed a parrying blow at Dixon that was like the swing of an elephant's trunk. And the fight would have ended right there—with the king the winner—if Dixon hadn't dodged even as he lunged.

The impetus of his attack had brought him close in. The swing of that bludgeon of an arm caught him into a strangling embrace. While he was still hugged like that—panting out his own life with every glinting second lost—he kept on stabbing, cutting.

In the midst of it all he could feel a blind hand groping for his eyes—

the fingers of the hands like the claws of a cave bear.

Dixon went into a momentary eclipse of darkness. This was death. It was almost the peace of death. There was an escape from pain—from memory.

**T**HEN suddenly, he was fighting again. His throat and his face were free. He still had his dagger in his hand. It was such a thing as his own people had called "the golden harpoon." Back in America! It had become the symbol of his race.

A fresh tide of strength surged through him. He'd thrust his left hand under the shaggy chin and plunged the dagger into Ola-lo's throat.

Even as he did this he knew he was under the shadow of instant death.

Nothing had stopped. Everything was happening at once.

At the moment of Dixon's attack, Ola-lo had bawled a roaring scream. The echo of it still filled the air—stirring up other turmoil—setting loose an avalanche of clamor.

One giant quicker than another had plunged over to help his chief. As he did so, Ben Wiley was suddenly alive and on his knees. He'd found on the royal couch a sword like a scimitar—a yard of curving blade and razor-edged. With the last ounce of strength that remained to him he swung this with a two-handed blow.

It was as if the blade had gone through everything as it caught the charging giant under an arm. Together they rolled—Ben Wiley and the giant together.

Another giant was there—too late to save his king but as full of murder as a falling wall.

Dixon jerked back, bringing out his dagger from the king's throat. He was so drowned in blood that the

enemy must have taken him, Dixon, for the corpse—killed by the king. It was a mistake—swift as light—that caused his loss. Dixon stabbed again, then went to the floor and brought the edge of his weapon across the straining tendon of a giant heel. He stabbed this second Moloch as he fell.

Three Hokay killed—including the king of them all; but this wasn't going to save the two lone Americans. It might mean the death of all hands even now. Dixon knew the temper of Doc Harris and those others on the *Golden Harpoon*. They'd be out searching—or fighting—sticking it out in any case, until none of them lived.

Dixon was at the bottom of a slaughter-pen, it seemed. Ben Wiley was there with him. Under Ben lay that two-handed scimitar. As Dixon reached for it another hand reached down—a hand as wide as two of his together, yet nervous and shapely.

Dixon was about to stab at it when some strange intuition stayed him. Had he found a friend?

**T**HAT primitive white savage with the yellow hair and the ivory-colored skin who this day had learned from a stranger—a man no bigger than himself—how to kill a giant, had kept running for a time after he'd left Shale Dixon in the jungle. With him he'd brought that strange message that Dixon had written with the victim's own blood on the square of dinosaur parchment.

There in the depths of the greenery the Yellowhead paused. There was a terror upon him. But it was no ordinary fright. This was the terror of man or beast in the presence of a miracle.

He'd understood, all right, what he was intended to do. The stranger had meant that he was to

take this magic inscription of his to that strange huge fish in the Lake of Fire—the metallic fish that had brought the visitors up from the underworld.

Would he dare to do it? Not alone.

After a time, the Yellowhead uttered a curious call. The call was a flutelike note, not very loud, but long sustained. It was a note that would carry far—that would mean much to those who heard it.

The messenger waited. Not for long. There were answering notes. They came from all directions. Then swiftly enough the other Yellowheads who'd heard and answered his call began to appear. They came singly and in couples through the jungle, making no sound as they came.

They squatted on their haunches. The late-comers climbed into trees. They were patient. They stared with their curious, monkey-bright eyes at the thing their comrade held up in his hands. Then, finally, the messenger began to address them.

"Ho!" he began.

And he started to tell how even a Yellowhead could kill a giant.

## CHAPTER X

### *Sealed Instructions*

THE submarine *Golden Harpoon* crawled on across the Lake of Fire—as the name of this sea had been entered in her log. But she was no longer the brave craft that had left New York Harbor to a salute of flags and whistles the better part of a year ago. Her rudder was gone. Her twin propellers were twisted and bent. Her frame was sprung because of the terrific racking she'd undergone.

But she'd kept her fighting spirit.

As she reeled and tacked—trying to find her way in the right direc-

tion with nothing but her broken propellers to steer her—she spat fire at those who would complete her wreck and kill the faithful few who'd brought her to this unnamed port.

Scattered about her at various distances was a darting horde of yellow barges. From these barges came an intermittent rain of arrows.

Those surly giants had been quick to learn in some respects.

The forward ends of the barges were now protected with metallic hoods that could turn even a steel-jacketed bullet except at close range. And the archers thus protected had taken to a plunging flight for their heavy arrows.

The hull of the *Golden Harpoon* was beginning to take on the appearance of a porcupine. So far, none of her crew had been struck, but the submarine was doomed.

The sealed instructions had been opened by Doc Harris and read and discussed with the assembled crew. With the passage of the first forty-eight hours since the disappearance of Captain Shale Dixon, it was "Captain" Harris now—Doc was in command.

The sealed instructions had been direct and simple.

They had been prepared for some such emergency as this.

At no time should the general purpose of the expedition be put in danger out of consideration for the welfare of an individual member.

The rule should always be—first the success of the expedition itself, then the safety of the greatest number.

THERE was more in the same style—all of which, anyway, had been written into their papers as the members of the crew signed on. This wasn't to have been, in any case, a

pleasure cruise. It had been a fighting adventure from the start.

The crew of the *Golden Harpoon* fought on with heavy hearts. But dogged—dogged as the pioneering ancestors of America in covered-wagon days.

Those archers in the yellow barges were like raiding Apaches. The *Golden Harpoon* limped and staggered like a covered wagon.

Word had come up to economize ammunition. There was plenty for ordinary purposes; but the *Golden Harpoon* hadn't been outfitted as a war-boat.

Packed away in her compression hull—where every inch of space was priceless—there was an ample retreat-equipment. If—the retreat didn't last too long.

Four hundred miles by ruler to Little America, Byrd's old camp. But the distance might be doubled when it came to climbing mountains, hunting passes, dodging blizzards. And there'd be no supply bases on the way. All they'd have would be what they could carry—on their backs and on two skeleton sledges: tents, guns, primus lamps, food, extra clothing.

**CAPTAIN HARRIS**—"Doc" still to his comrades—worked through the forty-eight hours mending the hurts that various members of the crew had received in the battle with the dinosaurs.

Now on the upper deck Doc Harris spoke softly to Morris, his second in command. "Jay—for God's sake!—have you thought of a reason for disobeying those sealed instructions?"

Jay Morris shook his head and avoided the chief's eyes.

"Neither have I. There's not a chance in a thousand that Dixon is left alive. If he'd been able to make a truce with these killers they

wouldn't have come back at us so quick—"

"Unless he gave them the slip."

"He couldn't have given them the slip with Ben Wiley on his hands."

"Ben may have died."

"If Ben died, Dixon was there when he did pass out—unless he was already dead himself or disabled."

"Doc—Captain, sir—"

"I'm Doc—with half the crew in the sick bay—"

"Let me go out on the scout alone—try to find out what happened."

"I can't afford to lose you. You'd be going out to get yourself murdered. You can't fight a nation of giants—on foot and alone. They'd have you smoked before you were ashore an hour."

**MORRIS** was silent. He knew that Doc Harris was right. He also knew what Doc's feelings were about trying to get away—in accordance with those sealed instructions—without some special effort to find and rescue the missing captain and his man.

"I'm with you," Morris said at last, as he turned and faced his superior in command. Neither of them was much beyond college days in the matter of years, but experience had aged them. "What are the final plans?"

"We'll get the vessel to the north shore of the lake and there abandon ship. I'll need you for the landing party. On the shore we'll throw up cover for our wounded—then move on as we can."

It was going to be a fighting retreat at the best—all the way—and in this war there'd be no truce.

Even without the presence of those murderous Goliaths the chances would be that cold and starvation would finish the story once the Valley of Giants was left behind. There was no telling what the Valley of Giants itself would become, once the

sun went down and the six months of Polar night began.

The natives of this valley were no ordinary human beings. No ordinary human beings were apt to survive in conditions that permitted these bearded giants and their yellow-headed slaves to survive.

Hour after hour—one twenty-four hour span after another—and forever the sun was there somewhere behind the high curtain of steam that hung and shivered over the center of the Lake of Fire. It was a curtain that stretched away for miles. It was a curtain that merged with the clouds.

Under the fringe of that curtain was the *Golden Harpoon's* only hope for a hiding place—for a little respite from that circling, dashing menace of killer-fanatics.

Lying on the sled deck of the *Golden Harpoon*, under an improvised shelter of steel-plate, Jay Morris periodically fired and watched. Both his rifle and his binoculars were powerful.

Killer-fanatics, all right—those towering, bearded, kilted nightmares of men. They kept themselves under cover but they drove their yellow slaves on under fire.

From the first, Morris had spared the slaves. It was only at the giant archers he shot and made good practice. He'd started to keep score but had stopped at twenty.

Merely twenty made no difference.

Suddenly Morris saw one of the yellow-headed slaves rise and strike the giant archer of his boat a stabbing blow with his metal paddle.

Morris laid his rifle aside and snatched up his binoculars. He wasn't mistaken. There had been some sort of mutiny in one of the barges. One of the yellow-haired crew of slaves had stabbed his giant master.

But Morris wasn't prepared for the revelation that followed.

The leaderless barge was now racing in the direction of the submarine. In the prow stood one of the slaves waving what looked like a flag of truce.

## CHAPTER XI

### *Writ in Blood*

MORRIS had sent a hail down the hatch of the conning-tower and Doc Harris was up from below at the double-quick. Quick as he'd been, he was hardly on deck before the barge hauled near with a flash of paddles. Then, suddenly, the barge had stopped and he who held what had looked like a flag of truce was holding up the message that Captain Dixon had written.

"Written in blood!" Doc exclaimed.

"But written! A message from Dixon!"

The barge crept a little closer. Others of the *Golden Harpoon's* crew had come up on deck. There was something like a cheer.

Dixon safe. A word of hope. All of those on deck were now able to read that message scrawled large in red-black letters on the strange square of parchment.

*GH CR E 30 M WAIT SIG 48 H  
AD BEF RET D*

The abbreviated message flashed its meaning as clearly as the lights of a semaphore to those on the submarine.

This was the way it ran:

*Golden Harpoon: Cruise East thirty miles and there await signal forty-eight hours additional before retreat.*

*(Signed) Dixon.*

Now there was a cheer from the crew of the *Golden Harpoon*.

At the shout, the barge with the messenger in it wavered and was ready to bolt like a frightened walrus. Even that moment of doubt was costly.

Just as the messenger himself—with some quiver of understanding keener than that of his fellows, turned to reassure them—a plunging arrow from a war barge struck him through the shoulder and knocked him overboard.

Morris was into the water and after the wounded native at once. The man was dying when Morris brought him back to the submarine. His companions of the barge had made no effort to save him. But now they watched—with a sort of fascination and an indifference to the danger they themselves were in—as the crew of the submarine assisted rescued and rescuer from the water.

Dying, but the messenger raised a hand. He let out a strangled cry. It was to his fellows he was talking—some dying message of his own. And even to the watching Americans there came some hint of that speech the dying savage made:

"Strike! Strike! Even as I struck! Until no tyrant remains alive!"

They on the submarine who listened and watched could see some change going on behind the ivory masks of the yellow-headed men in the barge. They would be slaves no longer. Better even to die—die as a fighting man—one who had fought for freedom—than to live a slave.

IT had been a hint of something of this same thing that came to Shale Dixon there in the midst of battle on the terrace of the great pyramid in the golden city of Hoahoa.

First the revolt of that giant who'd

refused to become his executioner—or, at any rate, to obey the orders of the king. And the king now dead of that savage thrust that Dixon had delivered.

It was a further hint that had come to Dixon in the midst of the fighting. Here with red death settling about him and the devoted Wiley at his side, he had found an ally in this self-same giant rebel.

It was the hand of the rebel Goliath who'd reached for the scimitar with which Wiley had struck a death-blow. And, after that, Dixon had been fighting blindly—blindly as most battles are fought once the words for death and life, fear and courage, have lost their meaning.

It was as if there'd been a sunset after all—a blood-red sunset that would mean the going down of the sun of life.

THEN, a speedy night—a fall of darkness—darkness coming down with a roar of thunder as Dixon took a blow on the head that knocked the sight from his eyes and—for all he knew—the life from his brain and heart.

He awoke to a movement of fighting, and the first words he uttered were a call for Wiley.

Wiley's voice came from far away:

"Here!"

Dixon kept on fighting—or thought he did. He came up to a sitting position, blinking and still wild. And then for more seconds of concentrated struggle, knew that he was down and out. But Wiley was still alive—and so was he.

Dixon found himself in a jungle glade. He couldn't understand what had happened at all. But, gradually, swiftly enough, he was getting his reason back. Sheer will power was helping him to that.

Wiley's voice again. Wiley tell-

ing someone to give him water. And on top of that a splash of water across his head and naked shoulders.

Dixon was wide awake. He saw the jungle. In the jungle he saw a half-concealed haze of faces. The faces of Yellowheads, these were, and no unfriendliness in them. Nor friendliness, either, at first glance—the blank stare of animals.

Then, another face. Not Wiley's—the face of a giant.

After his first spasm of fighting reaction, Dixon recognized this face. It was the face of the giant who had taken sides with him after the killing of Ola-lo, the king.

The giant now sat there at a little distance from him. In the giant's hand there was a shell the size of an ordinary wash-basin, and the shell was still half-filled with crystal water.

In the giant's face, in any case, there was some recognizable look of friendship.

The giant offered his shell, and Dixon drank.

WILEY was there, propped up on a sort of makeshift bed a little to one side of the giant.

"The Big Boy's all right, chief," Wiley said. "He brought us here."

"What happened?"

"You were knocked out in the mix-up. Big Boy fought off the mob and got us both away—the three of us on an elephant."

Dixon studied the face of the giant. It was a wild and massive mask—something from the first pages of the Book of Creation about it. So ran Dixon's mind. But in it, just the same, some hint of the later chapters of that book—chapters that would tell of such strange developments in the human animal as friendship, understanding.

A murmur of warning came from the watchful Yellowheads.

## CHAPTER XII

### *Thunder of the Gods*

DIXON pulled himself together. He was still shaken. But he was on his feet again.

"Where's that elephant?" he asked.

It was as if the animal had answered itself—a squeal of pain or rage off in the jungle somewhere, less than a hundred yards away.

So was the friendly giant on his feet, crouched and listening. In his hand he still held that murderous long scimitar that had come from the pyramid home of the king.

Some of the Yellowheads now came to the giant and murmured excitedly as they looked away. The giant answered them. Most of the slave-people, though, were gone—melting away into the dense green like so many phantoms.

Other elephant notes now sounded through the hot-house thickness of the jungle. The trumpeting came from a dozen directions, as if on command. And then, over this coarser web of sound, an unmistakable blur of rolling, hooting calls in the thick, soft voices of the Goliaths.

"They're hunting us," said Dixon. "They've got us almost surrounded."

There was confirmation in the un-easing shifting glance of the bearded giant who had brought them here. The giant was shifting his scimitar, undecided to fight or run, but ready to fight if he had to. And crowded near to the giant now were a number of the Yellowheads, their bright blue eyes showing a gleam of excitement. It was an excitement in which there was both fear and frenzy.

So would these people fight—it flashed on Dixon—if they were properly led.

Dixon thought fast in that crowded

moment. The only hope, after all, for any of them, would be to establish contact once more with the submarine.

Meantime, the *Golden Harpoon* herself was in danger. So were all those on board of her.

Through the jungle green, Dixon caught a slant of misty sunlight. It was good as a compass, so far as he was concerned.

He clapped a hand lightly on the shoulder of the crouching giant and gestured for him to pick up Wiley. It was only in the half-second of hesitation that followed on the huge fellow's part that Dixon dared take the scimitar from him.

Maybe this thing called intelligence is a sort of liquid—like water, taking on unexpected power under pressure. And there's no pressure like a sudden danger of death—a pressure that will either paralyze or, just the contrary, step up the hydraulics of an ordinary mental outfit to a power like that of genius.

In any case, those beastlike Yellowheads were suddenly aware that they were men. So it seemed. The giant let Dixon take the scimitar, then, in arms that themselves were like the twin trunks of trained elephants, he lightly lifted Wiley up and swung him as if in a hammock.

"This way!" said Dixon.

That slant of light had given him the direction of the Lake of Fire. Over there, somewhere, they'd find the *Golden Harpoon*.

SO had the *Golden Harpoon* found allies—a growing swarm, as she slowly, crazily kicked her way across the Lake of Fire, fighting every mile and every hour of the way.

That original hunting fleet of the giant archers was back again, and multiplied, so far as anyone could tell in the drift of fog, a hundred times.

The dying harangue of the Yellowhead who'd brought that message from Dixon had had its effect. The crew of the barge had stuck close to the submarine—men like missing links, who still kept all the keenness of perception they'd inherited from their animal ancestors, yet now with a quickening of all that was purely human about them. It was as if these yellow-haired slaves of the giant people had suddenly cast off some hampering bondage on soul as well as body.

THEY were free. They'd become the associates of what they themselves recognized as free men—men without fear.

These were the first of the allies.

Now, with their peculiar whistling cries, the Yellowheads called in three other masterless barges from the rolling, blood-colored clouds of mist that drifted across the surface of the colored water.

Doc Harris spoke to Morris.

"They'll help us," he said. "They've learned how to strike back."

"We'll need them then," said Morris. "The big brutes know how to use these shifting fog-banks like the boys of the Navy use a smoke-screen. That's how they surprised that herd of big lizards—"

"And us!"

"God send dark! I never knew before how I'd miss the night. The sun's hung there in the same place ever since we got here. It'll be hanging there still for the next three months."

"We'll need those three months," said Doc. "We're going to have a long walk ahead of us."

"That's right. We can't take the sub back the way we came."

"And there's no other way to get her out. What's that?"

And Doc had snatched up the binoculars, staring away through the

veils of mist. Morris lay ready with his rifle.

"They're massing," said Doc. "They'll try to rush."

"If the fog lifts enough—"

Morris fired. But he was like a man half-blinded by the curling mist. Even as he fired, a flight of arrows came from the invisible archers. A dozen of the Yellowheads in the neighboring barges were struck. They were like animals also in this respect—they could take their pain in silence, meet death without a protest.

"I'll send you help," Doc told Morris. "Hurry them. I've got a plan—to break them up and let Dixon know we're on our way."

Among the retreat-equipment of the *Golden Harpoon* was the smashed wreckage of an eighteen-foot boat still lashed to the sled deck of the submarine. But the outboard motor designed for the boat was still intact, stowed below.

There was a shifting of crews in the near-by yellow barges until one of these was free, then to the stern of this Hawley, the engineer, shipped the motor. In the hull of the barge was a long steel box that was heavy and had to be handled with care. From this box there came a strand of insulated wire and this paid out as the barge—with no one in her but her motor churning—finally started off in the direction of the massed fleet of enemy craft.

**W**HAT had happened? What was going to happen?

The insulated wire spooled off from the *Golden Harpoon* for a hundred fathoms—then half a hundred fathoms more. And by this time the barge which traveled with no one in her was almost lost to view.

Just as the drifting fog was swallowing her from sight, Doc Harris, straining and concentrated at his

binoculars, caught a movement of enemy barges closing in about the barge that went alone.

Doc pressed a switch.

There was a gust of thunder.

## CHAPTER XIII

### *The Fighting Chance*

**D**IXON heard that explosion. He recognized something of the nature of it. And it answered a question that was in his mind.

He'd brought his little band—Wiley, giant and Yellowheads—to the gold shore of the Lake of Fire. Gold, all right. And gold the barge that some of his Yellowheads brought from a hollow that was up the shore a piece.

They were just getting ready to put out when a party of three other giants came running along the misty bank to head them off.

A fight seemed hopeless. Sudden flight was impossible with a delay like this.

But at the sound of that explosion, less than a mile away, Dixon was suddenly inflamed as if he himself had received some injection of dynamite.

"Get into the barge," he commanded. And his signs made his meaning clear. Neither was there any questioning of his authority just then.

What was this authority? Ask a den of half-tamed tigers how about it when the animal-trainer cracks his whip.

The giant and Wiley were in the barge. The Yellowheads were making ready as if this were one of their regular masters who was commanding them.

Back through the jungle could be heard the crash and squeal of a troop of elephants as the pursuers from the royal city came this way. The

chase had never been far off the trail. Not since the pursuit began.

And Dixon held the boat—and held himself—as the three giants stormed close, laughing in their beards, eager to take him alive.

There'd been a triple question in Dixon's mind—to run? to fight? to parley? It was always there, the knowledge that it wasn't of himself alone that he had to think.

But at that muffled shot of thunder from the sea he'd run forward to meet the enemy. He'd taken them by surprise. A thousand times more than Dixon was himself they'd been surprised by that awesome sound of explosion. The explosion itself had been expanded by a sort of hooting, shrieking chorus from the Lake of Fire that only they could understand.

Wholesale murder was what that hooting must have meant to them—more devil's work by this spawn of the fire-pit.

Dixon had swung his scimitar twice before the giants—slow-witted at the best—knew what was coming.

They also hooted. They ran.

Dixon was back and into the barge—more captain than ever now. The whole thing had been so quick that the barge was well away from the shore just as a strange rain began to fall—bits of *débris*—some of which had been boats and gear, some of which had been men.

**N**O white man ever had a stranger crew.

Nor, for that matter, a more willing one. Through a rift of mist and acrid smoke—there'd been five hundred pounds of dynamite on that barge Doc Harris had sent against the enemy—Dixon saw the familiar whaleback of the *Golden Harpoon*.

Almost thirty days had passed—with the *Golden Harpoon* nosed in against the northern shore of the

Lake of Fire, and on the shore itself a fortified camp where the sick and injured were getting into shape for more battle and the long trek out of the Valley of Giants.

Waiting too long meant death. To early a start meant death. The ordeal that lay ahead was going to be one to test the strength of every man.

But a fighting chance. Here there would be no chance at all.

From all parts of the valley—it was circular, with a diameter of two hundred miles—the giants had assembled. The Hokay, the Mighty Ones, as they called themselves. There must have been two or three thousand of them in all. And they were bent on the extermination of the strangers and all those who'd become their friends.

First, the giant who'd taken Dixon's part.

**B**OLO was his name. And a haphazard language—half signs, half words—had grown up between him and the crew of the *Golden Harpoon*—particularly with Wiley. Then such Yellowheads as had thrown in their lot with the Americans. These also were slated for destruction.

If—never was there a more gripping "if" in the history of the planet perhaps. If—the fighting Yellowheads didn't succeed in killing off the Hokay first.

But there was a turn to events that even Wiley—who'd become the interpreter of the expedition—hadn't foreseen.

It was a development that began with a gradual assemblage of strange yellow-headed tribesmen about the camp of the expedition. Thousands of them—all of them armed in their different ways.

Wiley had learned that most of the arms came from some huge grotto that ran off through the moun-

tains to the north. It had been the arsenal—that grotto, it seemed—of a race of higher culture than either the Yellowheads or the Hokay, an ancient race now long extinct. Knives and scimitars, maces and battleaxes, all the thousands and the tens of thousands of arrows or harpoons that had become the Hokay's chief munitions of war and sport.

THE newly assembled Yellowheads were peaceful at first. Everyone thought that they'd assembled there for the sole purpose of protecting the crew of the *Golden Harpoon* from the giants.

Then the Yellowheads got to fighting among themselves.

And the truth came out. More than half of that wild army had determined to keep the strangers here among them and to make Dixon their king.

Dixon promulgated an order—whether it was understood or not no one would ever know—that Bolo should be their king. In any case, this merely made matters worse. Bolo now had his followers. So did Dixon. And the curious thing about it was that neither of them wanted the job.

Bolo himself came to Dixon and made this clear. Bolo—all of twelve feet tall when he straightened up—and with an arm and a fist on him that could have knocked out a curly-haired elephant with a single punch, sat crosslegged in front of Dixon and almost wept.

He wanted Dixon to take him along to that country—"beyond the sun and the moon," he called it—from which Dixon and his companions came.

And, after all, why not?

All set for the retreat to begin, and there was a haze of murder in the air like a drift of red fog. The friendly Yellowheads had collected

a herd of fifty elephants for the first stages of the retreat.

The *Golden Harpoon* had found her last port. She would have to be abandoned. But the gallant vessel would still serve those she'd already served so well.

Just before the zero hour, the submarine, her engines running, her hatches closed and the Stars and Stripes afloat—but not a soul on board—left the shore and headed away across the Lake of Fire.

Just as she disappeared in the mist, a Hokay fleet of war barges closed in about her. Then, once more, the Valley of Giants was shaken by a terrific explosion.

"Now!" said Dixon, and the fighting retreat began.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *Death Grotto*

FIFTY elephants that looked like animals from before the flood. Fourteen Americans, some of them with the scratches of dinosaurs down their backs. A drifting horde of naked people with shaggy yellow hair who were probably as much like the early "cave men" of Europe as ever again would be seen alive. And then, in the offing somewhere, under cover of earth-steam and a jungle-garden in which weird birds screamed and croaked, a race of bearded giants—"tall as trees"—engaged in the ancient miracle play of murder.

The pity of it was, as Doc Harris said, that none of this could be carried out under cover of the night.

Barker Smith, the cameraman, gave Doc the laugh. Barker's only kick was that there was so much fog—that and the fact that he didn't have about forty miles of extra film.

Ever since he'd recovered from a head wound he'd got when the *Golden Harpoon* sprang her first

leak, Barker had been grinding—giants and golden pyramids, Yellowheads and curly elephants.

Twenty of those elephants in the strange caravan, each with a small pack on its back—a small pack but weighing five hundred pounds; five hundred pounds of gold. The United States of America needed gold. Here went five tons of gold—and, at that, like hauling away so many pebbles from any riverbed.

Gold, all right—gold and platinum. Doc Harris had made sure of that, testing the metal in various ways. And it was on his recommendation that the comrades made a compact to keep the secret of this valley from the world, except from the President himself at Washington.

Otherwise, what would happen to the money standards of the world?

But even gold evaporated as a subject of speculation in the mounting tide of death.

**T**HE tide was almost a physical thing—like a rising flood from which none could escape—this tide of a feeling that death was in the offing somewhere, gaining strength, ready to splash over and blot out this thing called life.

The fifty elephants smelt it or felt it—as cattle in some countries are said to know in advance when an earthquake's coming. The elephants—shaped like mammoth buffalo except for their trunks and their twisted tusks—would stop every now and then and show a desire to turn back. Or suddenly one of them would raise a trunk and scream like a banshee.

Then, just as they were breaking camp for the second march, and the snow-mountains still six marches away, the party who wanted to keep the strangers among them kidnaped Dixon and tried to carry him off.

Dixon had gone up to an outly-

ing rock pinnacle for an observation, and before he could guess what was doing—there were a thousand strange Yellowheads churning around him, men he'd never seen before. They were silent as ghosts. But as strong as gorillas. It must have been a selected regiment—willing to die, if they had to—willing and able to take it without a cheep.

In a minute, Dixon was fighting again for his life—mauling and kicking. He was as helpless as a fly in a spiderweb—the way they handled him was that soft and overpowering.

He let out a shout.

In a moment there was a squalling battle. He thought at first that it was the giant Bolo who'd come to his aid. Then—it was coming to him in snatches—he saw that the giant who'd loomed among the Yellowheads wasn't Bolo at all, but the big Hokay archer who'd captured him on the day of the fight with the dinosaurs.

The giant must have been out on scout duty and been taken by surprise.

In any case he was armed—with a two-handed sword that must have been fashioned in the days of Adam.

He cut a swath about him—taking cuts and knocks of his own. Then he saw Dixon and rushed him with a bellow. But this time Dixon had something better than an arrowhead. He jerked an automatic. He had time to fire just once—and he wasn't taking a chance on a head shot, either. This was a heart shot.

**T**HE racket was such that Dixon didn't even hear the bark of his own gun. Neither did anyone else. And the bullet made no more of a surface wound than a bramble might have made. Yet a thousand eyes had seen the play—Dixon standing braced but ready to jump and the

big Hokay tumbling there in front of him.

It was something else that Dixon saw—confirmation of something he'd glimpsed from the hummock of rock; and that was a cloud of Hokay mounted on elephants bearing down on the battleground from behind a ridge less than a quarter of a mile away.

**D**IXON shouted a warning to those about him and was on the run.

His own fifty elephants were packed and ready. The expedition was on its way again.

Hour after hour—while the sun stood still, or seemed to—the chase and the fighting kept up. This Polar day without a sunset except every six months could become a thing of horror. But once more a friendly fog was rolling over the valley from the Lake of Fire.

There was a halt and a council, when the fog got thick enough to serve as cover.

And still under cover of the fog, with Bolo as the guide, the elephant train of the *Golden Harpoon's* expedition ghosted off on another tack.

Bolo explained.

But most of his explaining was by means of maps and pictures that he traced on the ground with one of his big fingers.

There was a pass, he said, that led up through the mountains to the north. The Hokay called these mountains the Mountains of the Sun, for the sun was north. And everyone knew now that north was the way that the expedition was headed and there'd be an effort to cut them off at the pass.

It would be better, therefore, Bolo said, to make for—he used a curious phrase that Wiley worked out as meaning either Sleeping Cave or Dead Man's Cave—marked now on the charts (charts that have never been made public) as Death Grotto.

Death Grotto was as good a name as any. With an outer gate of basaltic rock as black as jet; twin columns that went up to about the height and the size of the Empire State Building, New York's (and the world's) champion skyscraper.

Scraped or scarred into these twin funeral peaks was a steep and winding trail. This looked from any distance like a goat track but when you got to it, it proved to be wide enough for the elephants to follow—if they didn't slip.

As Dixon looked at this trail he was glad to think that no enemy had got here first. He could guess what might happen if a stampede should happen on a road like this—broad enough, perhaps, except in places; but steep, slippery as glass, no guard rail or rampart of any kind and as full of twists as a ravelled yarn.

Not all imagination.

At the bottom of the chasm below this skyscraper trail was a bone-pile that formed a fair-sized hill in itself. Bleached white—dead white against the contrast of the jet black cliffs; the bones of men and beasts who'd fallen or been cast down from that dizzy path.

They were up perhaps to what would have been the fortieth or fiftieth story of any man-made skyscraper when the elephants went into a panic; and Bolo, who was leading, let out a warning scream.

## CHAPTER XV

### *Dark Slaughter*

**T**HERE was nothing to do but go ahead. If a retreat ever got started down that roller-coaster of a trail it would have gone out of control like an auto with broken brakes before it had traveled a dozen yards.

Under Dixon's orders they fought

the elephants to comparative quiet before any catastrophe happened and started to hobble them against stam-pede. They began with the equip-ment carriers. It was just as well they did.

**B**EFORE they'd got very far with the task there was a hail of rock and projectiles from above—more as a warning, Dixon guessed, than an actual bombardment, for no one was hit. The enemy up there, whoever he was, meant to turn them back.

That meant Yellowheads Dixon guessed—they that had wanted him to become their king.

He gave instructions to follow in half an hour—even if he didn't show up—and started on alone.

There was sufficient reason for the order. From the time they'd left the lower levels they'd been in sight of practically the entire valley. And these people—both the Yellowheads and the Hokay—had eyes like condors. There was no use overlooking that. They'd be already closing in for the kill.

There was confirmation of this as Dixon made the next steep turn on an overhanging shelf where the trail made a hairpin loop. It was here like walking the cornice of a skyscraper. And there, looking down to the valley floor he saw what looked like a war of ants and beetles.

The beetles were Hokay and the ants were Yellowheads. And even while he looked, the locked columns, whether battling or in flight, swarmed up the road below and were out of sight.

As Dixon lost sight of the enemy below he had merely to turn his head to see the enemy above. And right then was when his heart "froze"—like an overheated bearing—and lost a beat or two. It was seconds before he was all right again—playing his wits on the situation.

Those weren't Yellowheads at all who'd come up there first—who were up there now above him, in a position to send him and his elephants and friends to that bleached bone-pile down below.

Behind one point of rock he'd seen a bearded face—then another—almost merged with those black cliffs—human scabs deadly to the touch.

He had half an hour's delay to think—to act. But no time to lose. He walked on as if he'd seen nothing. His hand was on his automatic. He'd always been quick on the draw. Any man who isn't, as a matter of fact, had better leave such tools alone.

Eyes alert, he paced along until he knew that for the moment he was out of sight of the watchers above. Then he slipped back, flattened down. He sent over and up one shot, then another, and there were two Hokay tumbling down the cliff—like air-men bailing out without their parachutes.

**T**HEY looked like rags of tar-paper as they fell.

But he didn't watch them long. He'd run, hard as he could, until he knew that he was again leaving cover. And there once more he strolled and lingered, pretending to look down—but really looking up.

He sent another brace of the giants to the boneyard. And by that time he'd guessed at least a part of what had happened. These were sentinels that had been set to watch. Ten or a score would have been enough to hold this pass—all other things being equal.

But all other things hadn't been equal. The brains of these giants were perhaps as much as a thousand centuries behind the times. They'd never yet been able to figure out the significance of firearms.

Dixon returned swiftly to the place where he'd left his caravan.

There wasn't a second to spare. Whoever they were—Hokay or Yellowheads, or the two together—that rush of pursuers from below, their presence meant confusion and death.

He'd got a pretty good idea from Bolo as to what lay above. Here, at the head of the trail, the giant cliffs leaned together and formed a sort of inverted crotch—it was a place that would have housed a cathedral. Yet with a narrow entrance, there where the trail came in, and another narrow tent-like opening, there where the trail came out on the other side.

But dark.

With his train on the move, Dixon again went on ahead.

Where the cliffs came together it was like the entrance to some tremendous cavern, sure enough—dark and foreboding. Yet, far ahead in the darkness he could see a star of light—looking due north and shining with the sun.

It was like a lighthouse on an unfriendly shore—one that would give him his course.

**I**NTO the great crevice the trail wound away into the dark.

Just as Dixon entered this place of shadows, he heard a hooting voice. Then, before he could retreat or discover what lay ahead or about him, there was a riot of shouting. And the shouting magnified by a thousand echoes.

A giant form loomed above him in the dusk.

Dixon fired.

As the detonation of that shot joined the racket of shouting, the air itself became a riot as a cloud of huge bats came tumbling and circling about.

In a moment the place was a screaming madhouse.

Dixon himself sang out in a voice that was like a scream:

"All hands!"

And all hands responded.

"Doc Harris!"

"Here!"

"You and Hawley with your heavy rifles block the entrance—"

And he told them how.

Two others were told off to watch the exit. The balance of the crew were sent in support.

**D**IXON himself, keeping close to the side walls, as he'd ordered the others to do, ran back along the road down through the pass—on and on, until he'd found that place that had reminded him of the cornice of a skyscraper, and there he took up his stand. He hated to do it, but he was adding to the bone-pile—under the black cliffs, a thousand feet down; adding to the bone-pile—and praying for night, when there wouldn't be any night—not for two months yet.

The next three hours seemed like two months.

For the Yellowheads and the Hokay were jammed together—down shore—and shoving each other over into the abyss—singly, at times, again in squads of twenty and thirty.

All Dixon could do—and that was plenty—was to shoot close and, so far as possible, see that those yellow-haired slaves who'd wanted to make him their king didn't get the worst of it because of their size.

And the Yellowheads would never have guessed, at that, what he'd done for them, except for the fact that about five hundred of them, who'd made their way up and around the cliffs by a way of their own, took him from the rear.

They must have mistaken what he was doing for them. It must have been that way, for they tried to kill him.

## CHAPTER XVI

*Out of the Unknown*

**I**T WAS the rush of the last of the Hokay from the covered pass that brought the danger to a head.

While the Yellowheads and the giants were having it out, Dixon threaded his way through the battle. It was like getting caught in a log jam at the moment of a spring freshet.

Only by the grace of God he got through at all. There are moments like that in the life of any man.

Once more he was back in the covered pass—they call it Cathedral Pass now on the secret maps.

In there also there'd been slaughter. But thanks to the orders none of the Americans had been killed. Nor Bolo, the Hokay friend. Although all of them had been in the shadow of death—and taking chances—while the fight was on.

But some of the elephants had fallen.

Dixon had the other elephants haul those monstrous hulks to the opening where the high pass entered the covered way and used them to seal the entrance.

Then, with his diminished caravan he was on his way again—out into that high tangle of peaks and chasms that was the side of the Mountains of the Sun that lay away from the Valley of Giants.

One last look at the valley was granted them—the members of the expedition. It was through a gap in the hills—hills that glistened white in the sun, frozen since a million years. But down there lay that tropic valley—in which the life of a million years ago had been conserved—where a boiling sea was a vast retort for the fabrication of unheeded gold.

Would they ever see it again?

Would they ever see their own country again?

The sun was getting low. In a few weeks the long Antarctic night would be closing down upon them. Even now, as they turned their eyes to the north and west—over there where, beyond other unmapped mountains, lay Little America—they could see a sky-filling shiver of black and white where a blizzard raged.

Then, from back of them somewhere, echoed among the hills, there came again that howl they'd come to know and dread—wolflike, but as of wolves like men, men like giants.

The giants, the Hokay, had again taken up the chase. That was their following cry.

Down through the passes from the first great rise of the Mountains of the Sun, Bolo—he of the giants who had been their friend—guided them to that other great hole in the world that may some day become known to the outside world as Death Grotto.

**I**T was, as Bolo himself had already described it in his dumb and fumbling yet graphic way, the sleeping place of prehistoric generations, the storehouse from which both Hokay and Yellowheads drew their supplies of tools and weapons.

All of gold—gold tempered hard with some alloy of platinum.

It was here that the expedition pulled itself together and prepared for what was to be an even greater battle than any that it had thus far been up against.

That far glimpse they'd had of the world of blizzards would have been reminder enough, had they needed one.

In any case, it had started Bolo on another line of thought.

"Not for me!" he finally made his meaning clear. "Me, Bolo!"—and he waved one of his huge hands to the

south—back there where lay the Valley of Giants. That was where he belonged. There he would return. He'd had a vision. He'd had a glimpse of another civilization. He'd go back and try to hammer this into the lives of those about him—Hokay and Yellowhead alike.

Hard to explain how he did it; but he got it over.

So it was here that Bolo turned back, taking most of the curly elephants with him.

The other elephants would still be used a little longer. Then they'd also be sent back. And as no better place was likely to offer, it was here that Dixon decided to cache such gold as they'd brought thus far.

It had been a foolish dream from the start—trying to carry tons of gold along when you're starting on a race for life.

And this was what the next few weeks were going to be—down through those unknown mountains, then up again over other barrier ranges. Held up by blizzards—while strength and provisions declined—when every hour's delay meant less of a chance to reach Little America before the relief ship came and went.

The race was on.

**S**TRAIGHT on down into blizzard country—while each day the sun withdrew—sinking like a foundered boat—and taking the warmth of life along.

There was one camp where—just in case anything happened—they planted a flag on a spare staff and at the foot of this put down a brief record of some of the things that they'd seen and done.

But they struggled on—against wind and ice—down through a frozen hell.

**F**OR two weeks now, the relief ship *Spirit of Columbia* had been fighting gales and increasing ice-floes in the Bay of Whales.

There was still no trace of those she'd come to find. There was little hope of finding them anyway.

As the ship worked her way back and forth under the thousand-foot cliffs of ice that here come down to the sea—with other ice threatening from hour to hour to crush her—she'd picked up two melancholy relics of the expedition of the *Golden Harpoon*.

One was a bit of charred wreckage—part of a boat that the lost submarine had carried lashed to her sled deck. The other was a bottle with a message in it telling of a battle with dinosaurs in some boiling nameless sea.

Just as the *Spirit of Columbia* was about to shape her sad course for the long beat back to less savage seas, there was an almost frantic hail from her lookout.

The hail became a complicated cheering. It was a note of jubilation in which the stout ship herself seemed to join as she let out one long blast after another.

Over a high snowcrest fourteen crawling specks had come into view. Fourteen! Not a man lost!

Six hours later the gaunt and hairy specters who were Captain Dixon and his men—fed, warmed, tasting tobacco, feeling again the heartbeat of a world they'd almost lost—began to tell the story of the Valley of Giants.

*Next Month: "SKIES OF DOOM," by Frederick C. Painton. A Complete Book-Length Novel that Will Give You a Glimpse at the Future—and the Next War!*

# Mounty Justice



*A Tense Story of Desperate Struggle Between a Rookie Constable of the Canadian Wilds and a Ruthless, Murderous Prospector*

By **CAPT. KERRY McROBERTS**

*Author of "The Prowling Creature," "Legion of the Frontier," etc.*

**C**ONSTABLE JOE DUNCAN, who was still called "Rookie," led his bay horse to a point back of the deserted prospector's shack where the animal would be protected from the cold wind sweeping down off the mountain. He staked the animal among the giant boulders and saw that the bay would be comfortable before taking his own gear inside the shack where he was to wait for Sergeant Larue.

He had scarcely reached the cabin

when he heard the voice, Larue's cry. He looked about sharply. The trail was deserted—no it wasn't! Half way down the mountainside was a small speck of red, low on the ground and almost obscured by the great stones that some slide had long ago deposited in the pass.

Duncan gave an answering shout and ran down the almost indistinguishable trail, gripping the Webley that nestled in its scabbard at his side.

Trouble!

Half stumbling he reached the sergeant. Larue, prone on the ground, was dragging himself up toward the cabin, leaving behind him a bloody trail.

"Sergeant! What's it?" He was on his knees beside the body of the wiry little French-Canadian. He tore the scarlet tunic off.

"Somebody potted me, behind one of those boulders. Killed my horse."

Sergeant Larue closed his eyes and his tanned face twisted in agony. Duncan's prying fingers found the neat wound in his side, prowled farther and found the bullet had passed out between two ribs. Clean wound, but one that would cause internal bleeding, if not worse.

**T**HE rookie's strong arms lifted the sergeant as though he were a baby. He worked carefully, lifted the man and carried him up the boulder-strewn path and laid him out on the floor of the cabin. He brought water from the stream and bathed the wound; opened his kit and did everything his first-aid outfit allowed him to do.

Larue was in bad shape. But he was sleeping now.

The sun sets quickly in the mountains, and in the fall it sets early.

It was dusk when Duncan heard a shout at the door, and a man stepped in.

"I'm Pete Edge," he said.

Rookie Duncan looked at him. The man wore the regulation nondescript clothes of the mountain prospector, of which this region was full.

Sergeant Larue, lying on his back on the floor, opened his eyes slightly.

"Edge?" he asked. "I've heard of you. Maybe you can give us a hand. Tell him, Duncan."

On the sergeant's assurance that Edge was a known man in the region, Duncan explained.

"Headquarters have been getting

complaints that several of the prospectors who have started out of the hills haven't reached civilization. Turning up missing. Heard anything about it?"

The old miner ran his hand through his hair. He looked at the wounded sergeant speculatively.

"Nope. Hadn't heard it before, but it looks like you must 'a got close to the cause of the trouble," he said dryly.

"You panning around here?" Duncan asked.

"Yeah. Just up the creek a ways. Man said you was comin' up this way, so I looked you up. I ain't wantin' to add to your troubles, but I had a yarn to tell you, too."

Duncan looked at him questioningly.

"My partner's disappeared. Feller named Blackstrap. Been gone a couple o' days. I looked around careful but there ain't no sign of him."

Larue looked up from his position flat on the floor. "Tell him, Duncan."

The youthful trooper hitched up his blue trousers with his hands in his pockets and was thoughtful for a moment.

**T**HE truth is," he said to Edge, "we wanted to see this partner of yours. We'd got word somewhere that—that we ought to have a look at him. How long have you known him?"

"Just this summer. We bumped into each other in Skagway an' both figurin' on pannin' in this district, sort of took up. I wouldn't say we was partners to the extent that I'd be able to guarantee what he would an' wouldn't do, y' understand. Fact is—" He stopped short.

"—is what?"

"Well, I kinda got too much of him, myself. I can stand anything,

ordinarily—but he kept remindin' me o' skunk too much. I ain't sayin' I'm sorry he's gone, y' understand. I just wanted to report it to keep the records straight. I always got along good with the police."

"What do you think happened to him? Dead?"

"We-el—I wouldn't say that."

"Mean you think he's—scouting around, maybe?"

"I dunno. As I said, ol' Blackstrap kinda reminded you of a skunk somehow. An' with what you was just a tellin' me about men disappearin' an' so on—"

"I see," Duncan answered. "Maybe that's a good tip. Looks like Blackstrap might have been up to something. Maybe it was he who took that shot at the sergeant."

LARUE had again dropped off into a fretful sleep, and all through the night Duncan and the prospector watched over him. And Duncan asked questions.

"Many of the men coming down yet?" he asked.

"No, not many, least I haven't seen 'em," the old man said. "Looks like winter might be late and I guess the boys want to get in as much pannin' as possible before she chokes up. I ain't goin' out for another three weeks. Ain't had no luck at all this season."

"I thought this was pretty rich diggings," Duncan observed. "All reports say—"

"Maybe higher up in the hills—but we ain't found much. Thought maybe that was what got Blackstrap restless."

Finally daylight came.

Larue awoke long enough to take a few sips of coffee that Duncan made. The constable dressed his wound again and made him as comfortable as possible. The prospector sat around.

"Do you want to stick around and watch the sergeant?" Duncan asked him. "I want to see if I can pick up the trail of the man who shot him while it's fresh."

"Sure!" Edge agreed. "I'll do anything to help."

Corporal Duncan left the shack. The morning sun had just come up and had driven the night fog away. Below him on the left the valley extended as far as the eye could see in the clear fall air, and on his right the mountains towered over him, their highest peaks dazzling white with snow.

He was in a field of giant boulders which at times had tumbled down the mountainside, sweeping before them wide swaths in the pines and spruces which dotted the hills.

He made his way back to a creek that he had seen a few miles back. The crystal clear water tumbled down out of the mountain, icy cold from its source in the upper snows.

He worked his way upstream quietly, examining both banks as he went. Anybody hiding in the neighborhood would have to have water from the creek, would be bound to leave some sign of having been about.

It was the rookie's job to discover these signs if they were there—a job new to the constable who had just come out of the training school at Regina.

ALL during the next few hours he dragged his way upstream, stopping to examine every point where the steep banks would allow access to the water. Then he stopped suddenly and whistled.

He had reached a wide point in the creek where the water was shallow, running over a pebbly beach that extended a hundred yards upstream. All around him firs and spruces covered the mountainside,

leaving the spot as desolate as any Duncan had ever seen.

But there were footsteps on the beach, and there was mining gear! A small improvised sluice caught his attention.

Duncan studied the gravel, picking up a handful of it and examining it closely. He picked something out of the handful of stuff and studied it thoughtfully.

**GOLD!**

He examined more of the gravel. More gold! Rich panning; he judged it to be as rich as any that had ever been discovered.

He examined the gear, trying to find anything that would indicate who its owner might be. No names were cut into the woodwork, nothing at all about the ford that would indicate ownership of the place.

Yet it must have been the place where Blackstrap and Pete Edge had been working. All reports at headquarters indicated that they were the only two who had stopped this far down, all the rest having gone higher into the mountains.

Pete Edge had said that pickings were poor; that there had hardly been enough color to make it worth their while. Could this, then, be their claim?

Duncan gave a last look at the workings, then set out to follow the trail from them through the timber. It was bound to lead to the shack of the owners of the claim. He waded through the lush grass under the pines until he came to an obscure cabin, carved out of pine logs.

The place was well concealed, deep in the woods, and without a trail of its own leading down to the main mountain trail. That was curious, Duncan observed. Why the secrecy?

He walked into the house and found the camping gear of two men.

He examined it, but nothing shed any light on unanswered questions. It was gear that would have been found in any of the hundreds of camps in the north; bedding and cooking utensils and an almost depleted supply of food. Corned beef tins.

And tins that had once held blackstrap molasses!

Convinced now that this was Pete Edge's camp, he searched more carefully. Edge's reputation in that part of the country was good, but the man who had derived his name from his love of the black, sticky sorghum syrup was known or at least suspected of being a pretty bad character.

**HIS** search, however, did not throw any more light on the activities of the missing man. Duncan came out of the house disappointed. He sat on a stump outside the shack and tried to sum up the small amount of information he had gathered, but there was so little of it that it proved almost worthless.

Beyond the fact that this was the place belonging to Edge and Blackstrap, there was little he knew.

Except!—

Duncan's brow knit.

Why would Edge, presumably an honest man, swear that he and Blackstrap had found very little gold—when the fact was that the creek was rich in nuggets? Naturally, Duncan decided, Edge would not want a crowd of prospectors crowding in on such rich findings, but he should have at least told the police, who would have protected him.

As the recruit ran over these things in his mind while he sat on the stump, no solution came to him. But something aroused his curiosity.

An army of big black ants was beating a new trail off to his left, an excited and busy family. As

Duncan watched them idly he got the impression that they were up to something special. Somehow, something about their movements seemed a little unusual.

He got up and followed the new trail off into the woods. It ended at a point where the carpet of last year's pine needles and other leaves seemed undisturbed.

But the ants were working from a point under the dry carpet. Something was there for them to work on.

**D**UNCAN kicked back the needles and leaves where the ants disappeared into it.

Freshly dug dirt greeted him! Something was buried there. He hurried back to the shack and found a spade. As he again made his way to the place where the ants were feeding, he noted fresh dirt on the implement.

He dug feverishly for fifteen minutes, then his efforts were rewarded—his spade came into contact with something solid—a man's boot!

He threw off his scarlet tunic and hat and jumped into the job with renewed energy. His spade cleared the fresh dirt off the form of a man. A man who had been killed by a blow that had crushed in the back of his head.

Intensely excited at the experience of his first contact with a dead body, Duncan gritted his teeth and examined it. It was the body of such a man as any number of the prospectors up in the mountains.

On the left arm was tattooed the letters "P. E."

Pete Edge! Then the man Duncan had left to care for his sergeant must be Blackstrap, the killer. A murderer left alone with a man wounded perhaps by himself!

Duncan didn't wait to cover the body in the shallow grave. He

grabbed his tunic and hat and started back down the hill to the cabin he had left. Larue might be dead by now. Blackstrap would have had plenty of time to kill and make a clean getaway.

Duncan looked about him to get bearings, then decided that he would have to chance going to his camp in a direct route instead of following the meanderings of the creek. Time was precious, with the murderer having all the advantage.

Duncan stumbled down hill, through undergrowth and saplings, over stones and small precipices in the mountainside, keeping his bearings as best he could.

But the going became harder, the hillside steeper. Now his way was almost impassable in the woods and rocks.

Suddenly he stopped short. Before him was a narrow opening in the trees, a long sight down the hillside that allowed clear vision for several hundred yards straight ahead. It was as though a clear path, straight as an arrow, had been hewn out of the woods. And at the lower end of it, even from where he stood, Duncan could make out the main trail down out of the hills.

**T**HE trees had been cut down, he observed. Here and there a tree had been removed to give a straight and clear outlook to the path below.

"Straight as an arrow," were the words that formed on his lips.

He looked about—saw a small gleaming something and picked it up. It was an empty shell from a thirty-thirty rifle. He dropped the shell into his pocket and made his way down that narrow opened lane that was hardly fit for a path.

Down where that peculiar opening in the trees met the main trail, Duncan stopped to look back. Anybody on the path would be completely ex-

posed to rifle fire from above, while it would have been thoroughly improbable that a person on the path would even have noticed the clear lane like a fire guard that ran up the mountain side.

Duncan took a hurried look at the intersection of the path and the opening, examining everything carefully. Then his efforts were rewarded.

**I**N the trunk of a tree across the trail he found a bullet hole. Blackstrap must have missed one of his victims.

Duncan had enough evidence now and he broke into a trot down the path. Fifteen minutes later he emerged on the slight plateau clearing where he had left Larue and Blackstrap. He broke out of the clearing and headed toward the shack.

Then he heard a sound. From back of the shack his own horse emerged. And on its back was the man who had called himself Pete Edge.

The man saw Duncan before the rookie was in shooting distance and spurred the horse into a gallop. Duncan ran on after him—a losing race. He threw one shot after the man and the miner did not dignify it with a backward look. He was escaping to freedom!

Suddenly Duncan stopped short. He put his fingers of his two hands into his mouth and whistled a clear, piercing whistle, a distinctive whistle he had practiced on his horse until that animal had learned to come to him upon hearing it.

The animal slowed down as Duncan repeated the whistle. The man on his back tried to spur him on, but the horse reared up on his hind legs and tried to turn. Duncan broke into a trot toward him.

Finally the man got the animal

started again, but Duncan had gained a few feet in the interim. As the animal seemed about to get under way again, Duncan stopped and repeated his whistle. And again the animal halted and tried to answer the call, fighting the guiding hand of the killer. Duncan was shortening the distance between them.

Twice more Duncan whistled to the animal and twice again the animal got out from under control of the prospector. Duncan ran now with his gun in his hand.

And by this time he was within shooting distance. His Webley was out. But so, also, was the prospector's rifle!

**D**UNCAN continued to run. Withheld his fire for fear of hitting his horse. But not the prospector.

The man on the animal raised his rifle and swung it around just as Duncan tried out an idea. He whistled as the man's rifle came up and still again the horse tried to break and come toward him. The animal's efforts coincided with the moment that the prospector pulled the trigger of the rifle. His bullet went wild.

During all this time Duncan continued his race toward the man and horse. They had almost reached the edge of the clearing, but by now the animal was so confused and excited that it was impossible for the prospector to control him. Despite his spurings and shouts, the animal refused to break into the path into the trees. Duncan was almost upon them.

The prospector's rifle came up again, and again the horse disturbed his aim. His shot roared and went wild. Duncan was close now, close enough to use his own weapon without fear of hitting his animal which he would need badly if he lived to need him at all.

Now under fire, Rookie Duncan

felt a zest fill him that he had never known before. Hunting the killer. Face to face with burning lead, a murderer with a rifle! And his sergeant perhaps dead in the shack with his head bashed in just like that man back farther up the mountains.

Blackstrap saw the futility of trying to shoot at the approaching policeman from horseback. There was only one way to stop him—that was to let the horse go for the moment. He slid off the animal's back and the horse darted into the woods with the pack tied across the saddle.

Blackstrap dropped to one knee and raised his rifle, taking deliberate aim this time.

**B**UT Duncan was equally as fast. He had his pistol out and leveled at the man.

Both shots rang out almost simultaneously, but Duncan's beat the other by the smallest fraction of a second. The prospector's rifle was knocked from his hands and flung against a stone. He picked it up and jerked the ejection lever and tried to shoot again. The gun jammed.

But now Duncan was upon him, darting in from a distance of not more than ten feet. Blackstrap picked up a stone and heaved it. The missile knocked Duncan's pistol from his hand as he came.

Blackstrap met him with a knife which he jerked from his belt. Duncan dived at him.

The odds were all in favor of the massive prospector, a tower of muscle and brute strength, a maddened killer armed with a skinning knife, standing up to meet a youth just out of the police training school, a man new to this rough and tumble woods.

But Duncan had something else to make up for the disadvantage.

He had the law on his side, and more intimate and serious to him was the fact that his partner might be dead back there in the shack, that he was dealing with a killer who would show him no mercy. It was a matter of his own life if he failed.

They came together with a rush and instantly Duncan felt the sting of the man's knife as it dug into his sleeve at the shoulder and nipped his flesh.

But where the prospector was a bundle of ponderous muscle, Duncan had the advantage of agility, and it was this alone that saved him.

He dodged back out of reach of the prospector, alert, on the tips of his toes. Blackstrap was howling curses and working himself into a maddened rage. He lunged at Duncan.

**D**UNCAN sidestepped and planted his tightly-knotted fist into the man's midriff as he passed. The man hissed out a breath of pain and his feet dug into the ground like a maddened bull as he caught his rush and whirled to meet the youth again. He sprang back quickly to catch Duncan off his guard.

But Duncan dodged. Both men were breathing heavily, Blackstrap's face black with rage and pain from the blow. Duncan's fist darted out and caught him on the jaw as the man got within striking distance. And at the same moment the knife came down again, barely missing Duncan by the breadth of a hair.

This time the man whirled and came directly at the young officer, his head lowered and his lips mouth-ing curses. Duncan ducked under the knife and caught the man's wrist with both his hands, then started twisting.

The knife hand should have opened up like the jaws of a dog with his

head twisted—but it didn't. It was just like trying to twist a branch off an oak tree with your hands. The man's steel muscles would not relax before the pressure. And the arm was slowly bringing the knife closer to Duncan's body.

**I**NCH by inch! In spite of Duncan's supreme exertion of strength he could not dislodge the knife nor could he halt the slow but inevitable progress of the blade toward his own body.

Death wasn't so bad. It was the disgrace. Losing the first man he had been sent out to get. That was what hurt about dying—what they would think back at headquarters. Rookie Duncan lost his man!

Then from somewhere down deep in his consciousness came a thought, an idea that had hastened up out of his past to offer itself for what it was worth.

Jiu-jitsu! A stunt he had learned when he was a kid. Maybe it would work.

At least it was worth trying.

The knife was coming toward his ribs; he was trying to hold it back. Suddenly he reversed his own pressure. Instead of pushing away against the knife, he threw all his own strength into drawing it toward him, just as Blackstrap was doing. The combined force of the two men was behind the knife, instead of spent against each other. Then as the knife came on Duncan guided it sharply beside him, diverted its course just sufficiently to make it miss him. And in the surprise of the move Blackstrap had not been able to anticipate the gesture sufficiently to guide the knife properly.

As the knife passed harmlessly beside him, Duncan loosened his grip on the arm for a second and, stiffening the first and second fingers of his right hand, darted them

squarely into the eyes of Blackstrap.

Blackstrap let out a roar of agony, dropped his knife and clasped his injured eyeballs with both hands.

The whole fight had lasted a shorter time than it would have taken to tell about it, but it was slow motion beside Duncan's next move.

He dropped to the ground suddenly and came up with his hand filled with Blackstrap's own knife. He had the sharpened point of it drilled into the skin of the prospector's back before that worthy could have moved if he had wanted to.

Blackstrap was in agony.

Duncan gave a shove with the knife.

"Walk to that cabin," he ordered. He got one hand in the loose collar of the man's heavy shirt and moved the point of the knife to the small of the man's back. "And if you make a misstep you get this blade between your ribs."

**B**LACKSTRAP started walking, his arms and hands covering his eyes. The pain he was suffering had taken all the fight out of him.

Duncan stopped him within a few steps and recovered his pistol, substituting it for the knife in Blackstrap's back. They reached the door of the cabin.

Sergeant Larue was not inside!

"What happened to the sergeant?" Duncan demanded.

Blackstrap had groped his way inside the cabin and dropped to a seat on an upturned box. "I don't know," he answered between groans. "He was here when I pulled out."

"Did you kill him and bury him like you did Pete Edge?"

"I don't know what you mean—"

"It won't do you any good to lie," Duncan snapped. "I've been up to your place and have got the whole

dope. You cleared out an ambush for yourself and sat up on a hill and potted prospectors as they came out for winter. Robbed them, I suppose. I've an idea Pete Edge found out what you were up to and you killed him to keep him from giving the game away. Then took his name because he had a better reputation than you. But what happened to the sergeant? I left him with you."

Duncan heard a whistle outside and went to the door. From behind a boulder he saw a red sleeve and a hand.

He called Blackstrap out and kept him covered with his gun, then marched him to the boulder. Behind it lay Larue, awake but in a weakened condition. The sergeant motioned for Duncan to stoop over.

"Blackstrap trailed you," he said in a voice hardly above a whisper. "I knew who it was because Pete Edge never would have left me in this shape. I crawled out here and hid so he wouldn't decide to kill me when he came back. I had an idea he'd try to escape on your horse. But you'd better find your animal, because he's valuable for evidence. Blackstrap had the gold he'd robbed those other prospectors of hidden under the floor in this cabin. It's all tied on the horse."

Duncan whistled that peculiar whistle. The second time he repeated it the animal broke out of the clearing and trotted up to the party.

**D**UNCAN tied Blackstrap up with the halter rope.

"I'm going to make a travoise to get the sergeant back to the nearest post as soon as we can move him," he said to Blackstrap. "And you and this horse are going to take turns pulling it."

"I can't," Blackstrap growled. "I'm blinded. I can't see."

"Then I'll have to leave you tied here till somebody finds you. Maybe some of the friends of the men you've killed might run into you."

"Fix up my eyes," Blackstrap begged.

"I'll make a trade with you," Duncan said. "After you've answered the questions I need to get a jury to hang you, then I'll fix up your eyes. Not before."

"I ain't no fool."

"Neither am I," Duncan responded lightly. "I'll just wait until you've changed your mind."

**F**OUR days later a strange procession made its way into Police Headquarters. Constable "Rookie" Duncan rode in the rear of the parade with a bag of fruit jars of gold nuggets tied on his saddle horn. Before him, he watched a man dressed in prospector's clothes pulling an Indian contraption known as a travoise, two limbs of a tree made into improvised runners on which was built an improvised bed. On which rested Sergeant Larue, still in bad shape, but over the crisis of his wound.

Sergeant Larue lay on his improvised ambulance and fumbled with a bullet extracted from the bowl of a tree, dug out by Duncan with Blackstrap's knife, two or three cartridge shells, and Blackstrap's rifle, all of which would be sent to the ballistics expert to prove that the man who pulled the travoise was the man who had shot him and had been responsible for the death of the miners who had come down out of the mountains to spend their gold.

Duncan pulled up beside the travoise. "You know, Sergeant," he said, "I ought to have brought along a bottle of those black ants. They're really the first witnesses I had in this case."

# DRUMS *in the* NIGHT



*A Thrill-Packed Story of the Iron Courage of Two War-Time Buddies in the Face of Terrifying Haitian Perils*

## *A Complete Novelette*

By **WAYNE ROGERS**

*Author of "Bush Justice," "Conquest," etc.*

**I**'M JUST about at the end of my rope, Jim. It's not as if I could wade in and mop up with rifle and bayonet, not as if I could tear in and settle the thing with my bare fists. It's more fiendish than that—intangible and evil, elusive and deadly. I know what's behind it, but I'm helpless to fight it alone. That's why I've come to you."

Jim Cunnison eyed his dinner companion curiously. This hardly seemed like his old war buddy; not like the companion of years of adventuring

after the armistice had put an end to wholesale slaughter. Dave Ellis had always matched his own reckless courage and had seemed a man without nerves. Now his face was taut, his hand gripped his wine glass until the knuckles were white, and his voice was tense and tinged with desperation.

It was six years since they had dissolved their old partnership, Cunnison to continue his adventurous soldier-of-fortune career and Ellis to settle down to the prosaic life of a

sugar planter. Now they were reunited at dinner in one of New York's luxurious speakeasies. But those six years had taken a great deal out of Dave Ellis. He had lost weight; the gray was quite noticeable in his bushy hair, and a haunting fear lurked in his eyes. He was uneasy—as if he continually expected to find an enemy at his back.

**T**HESSE telltale signs Cunnison noticed with real concern and his own jaw squared belligerently, a sign which had been the forerunner of disastrous consequences for his enemies in many corners of the globe.

An outstanding looking pair these two made, alert and capable—men's men. Six-footers, in their middle thirties; Cunnison was a bit the brawnier of the two, though Ellis was a good one hundred and seventy-five pounds of solid muscle. An efficient partnership theirs had been—Ellis, the natural trailer, able to find his way anywhere day or night; Cunnison, the mighty battler, always ready to back his partner with his great strength.

Both were healthily tanned, Ellis a shade darker from the tropical climate in which he lived. Square-jawed and strong-featured, they looked like a pair of capable scrapers—as many a sorry adversary had found them to be.

Only when one looked into Ellis' eyes could the difference be noticed; only then did the haunting fear peer out where the reckless light of devil-may-care courage had always danced. A strong man ridden by fear is not a pleasant spectacle; to Jim Cunnison it was incredible in his old sidekick.

"Let that red ink alone and have a highball, old man," he ordered. "Your nerves are all on edge—probably that damned climate you live in." Then, when the waiter had substituted whiskey for their wine,

"Here's how. That'll straighten you up a bit. Now let's have the whole story right from the beginning. I haven't been able to make head or tail out of your incoherent raving."

"All right—but, I warn you, carefully as I tell it you'll still think I'm raving. Let's see, it's about six years since we split up, isn't it? You were all set for another whirl with the Chinks, and I had my belly full of the yellow brothers. We had heard about the excellent opportunities in Haiti under the Marines, but you couldn't see puttering around any damned farm. So I went down alone.

"For a couple of months I stayed in Port-au-Prince and made excursions out into the back country, looking for a good sugar site. Then I heard about the Valley of the Spoon, where another white man had started a plantation. It took more than two days of steady going to reach it, over the mountains and into the interior—but the journey was well spent. A lovely place I found it, shaped just like a spoon, with the hills surrounding it on all sides and the only practical road coming in over the spoon's handle.

**I** FOUND old Jules Deschamps there. He had come over from one of the French islands with his little daughter and established himself in this valley, which he pronounced ideal for sugar cane. But he had only about one third of the valley and was anxious to have a good neighbor come in and settle beside him.

"It was just the opportunity I was looking for—a pleasant place that was well suited to sugar, and an agreeable old fellow who knew all about its culture and could help me get the hang of things.

"So I sunk most of my capital into the place. Bought the valley from Deschamps' place to the road at the

spoon handle. Between us we owned most of the valley. There remained only a small section at the upper end, beyond Deschamps, and that was not as fine land as we had; so we did not bother about it.

"For four years everything went along great. I sunk the rest of my cash into equipment and little by little we cleared almost all of the valley and got it under cultivation. Labor was cheap. The only trouble was getting the cane out; we had to use donkey trains for that. But soon the American-built roads started to cut up the island, and our donkey haul was cut down to one-third. Business was flourishing and we were beginning to get back our capital. I was pretty well satisfied with life."

ELLIS paused and gulped another whiskey, then studied his buddy covertly.

"Then there was Angela," he admitted diffidently. "I know, we always kept clear of women, but Angela is different, Jim. At first she was only a kid of fourteen or fifteen. But soon I noticed she was growing up. And almost overnight she became a woman. Deschamps was some sort of professor in his day; he tutored her, and you'd never know she hasn't been to college.

"And she isn't spoiled. Jim. Cooped up there in our valley, she hasn't had a chance to acquire all this confounded modernism that ruins so many women. She is all natural woman—an angel if there ever was one."

"Humph," Cunnison commented. "Got you pretty bad, eh?"

"We are engaged to be married," Ellis admitted. "Probably would have been married before this if it were not for all this trouble. It's fear for Angela that is driving me crazy. I could fight it out alone, but what the devils may do to her is continually on my mind."

"Easy, now," Cunnison reminded. "What devils?"

"That's where Theot Toussel comes into the picture—and ruins it. This devil is a slick mulatto. He was born in Haiti, son of a Frenchman who had plenty of money. So he was educated in Europe. Another case where white man's education was wasted on a savage. The old man went broke and Theot found himself without the luxury he'd been accustomed to, so he set his evil brain to work to get it back.

"It was our misfortune that he heard about our valley. First thing we knew about it he had bought up the upper end of the valley and started building himself a house up near the crest of a steep hill—it's almost a mountain—overlooking it. Toussel started to clear his end of the valley, but he soon found that we had all the best land. Then he turned his attention to us.

I WAS at Deschamps' place the day he rode in. A suave, oily devil, whose eyes kept running covetously over everything. Deschamps' house is on a little knoll and from his veranda he looks out over his canefields. Toussel introduced himself, took a seat, and gazed out over the fields. I disliked him at sight; he fairly licked his lips as he looked over that cane just ripe for cutting.

"But when Angela appeared with cold drinks he beamed with delight. After that I would catch his calculating gaze studying Angela, then studying me. Then his evil eyes would sparkle and he would throw his head back in what seemed a silent chuckle. I had all I could do to keep myself from leaping across the table and grabbing him by his yellow neck.

"That was the beginning of Theot Toussel. He kept pretty much away from my place but made himself a

pest at Deschamps'. Old Jules had no use for him, but the devil was always so polite and smooth that the old man had no excuse to throw him out. Not until he wanted to marry Angela. That was too much. Old Jules lost his Latin temper and there was hell to pay. Toussel left in a rage. And then things started to happen.

"We always knew that the blacks fooled around with voodoo, but they kept it to themselves and we had no cause to butt in on it. Now the voodoo drums started booming night after night. We'd see lights up on Toussel's hill and often the wild yelling could be heard way into the morning. We could soon see the difference in our blacks. They became surly and lazy. Then they demanded more money. Trouble, trouble, one thing after another.

LAST year just as we were about to start cutting cane the blacks disappeared like magic. The plantation was practically deserted. Two days later Toussel rode down.

"What a pity," he murmured sympathetically as he looked at the cane all ready to be cut. 'Labor trouble, eh? You whites do not know how to manage the blacks. It takes a Haitian to do that. I fear your crop will be a total loss. Would it not be wiser to sell out to me? I could pay you, say, twenty thousand dollars for it.'

"My place is worth more than a hundred thousand; will soon be worth twice that much. Why, I've sunk almost twenty thousand into it! I could have yanked that smiling yellow devil off his horse and pounded him into a jelly, but he sat with his fingers stroking the handle of a razor-sharp machete, and in the bush a bit behind him I was sure I had seen other forms moving. The devil was sitting there hoping I would

make a break for him. Well, I ordered him off the place. He made another ridiculous offer to Deschamps.

"I'd rather see the place go to the devil first,' the old man told him.

"Perhaps *le diable* will soon get it,' he grinned evilly, and rode off toward his end of the valley.

THAT night fire broke out in half a dozen places in our fields. We had all we could do to save our buildings. The cane was wiped out."

"And you let him get away with that?" Cunnison demanded in amazement.

"What could we do? There wasn't a shred of evidence to connect him with the job. To appeal to the authorities, miles from our valley, was useless. And to try to handle him ourselves was equally out of the question.

"Oh, I tried, all right! I rode red-headed up to his place. That yellow devil simply sat on his veranda and told me how sorry he was; reminded me that he had advised me to sell. There was an automatic at his waist and a dozen blacks with machetes hemmed me in. It would have been suicide to make a try for him. Then he'd have grabbed my plantation and would have hemmed old Deschamps and Angela into the valley. I had to swallow my rage and go back to my burned fields.

"Since then it has been constant trouble. My blacks come and go; we never know what help we can count on. Our animals are killed and stolen—sometimes just parts of the carcass taken so that we will know they are being used for voodoo. Toussel rules the valley, and there seems no way we can strike at him.

"Louis, my foreman, tells me Theot is a mighty papaloi—the mightiest in all our part of Haiti. And he is perverting the voodoo cult to his own

ends. No doubt he has grafted onto it some of the tricks he picked up abroad and holds the simple blacks in terror of him."

ELLIS' eyes blazed with the rage his wrongs and his helplessness kindled within him.

"You have no idea of the power a fellow like this can wield, Jim," he pressed earnestly. "His is a power of life and death over his followers. If he passes the death sentence they die. And they know that. How can we fight that? Trying to run our plantations is bad enough, but there is always the fear that he may harm Angela.

"That's why I've come to you for help, Jim. I did not dare write or cable; Toussel would have known—his power is uncanny. Once you made me promise that if ever it was a matter of life and death I would come to you. That's what it is now, Jim—Angela's life, which means far more to me than my own."

Well, Jim Cunnison remembered the night he had exacted that promise. Pitch black in the middle of hell it was. Cunnison was a lieutenant then, Ellis his top-sergeant. Crouching and sliding through the mud, they were making their way across No Man's Land. Suddenly Cunnison realized that he was lost—completely out of touch with his party. Helplessly he groped around in the pitch dark, freezing at each strange sound.

It seemed an age that he wandered blindly. Then Dave Ellis—good old Dave, the best tracker in the regiment—found him.

"Quick, Jim, grab my hand—we've got to get out of this!" Ellis panted.

Racing and pulling Cunnison behind him, he sped for a battered wall, fell behind it just as the machine-guns started whistling through the air just where they had been. It

was behind that wall Cunnison exacted that promise from his rescuer.

In the fourteen years since that night Dave Ellis never had mentioned it. Now Cunnison knew how desperate his situation must be.

"Buck up, old man; we've foxed wiser birds than this one," he encouraged Ellis. "Remember old Ah Chen? He thought he had us in a box with the lid nailed down. Remember Black Dan—"

"Cigars, cigarettes—cigars, cigarettes—cigars, cigarettes."

The cigarette girl had made her way to their table and extended her tray toward Ellis. Absently he reached into his pocket for change, then turned to pick out his brand.

Suddenly the reminiscent smile which Cunnison's words had brought to his face vanished. Soundlessly he sucked in his breath while his face became deathly pale. His eyes budged as he gazed at the tray.

"Dave, what's the matter?" Cunnison demanded, grabbing him by the sleeve. "What's up, old man?"

"There—right on top of my brand!" Ellis gasped.

LOOKING into the tray of cigarettes Cunnison saw nothing unusual but a couple of toothpicks lying on the stack of Tarrytons.

"What—this thingamajig?" he asked in surprise, as he lifted and examined the toothpicks.

They were crossed in the middle and bound together at right angles by a piece of black horse hair—evidently pulled out of the lapel of a coat.

"Nothing but a couple of toothpicks and a bit of hair," he commented.

"To you, yes,—but to me, the voodoo death sign!" Ellis added tensely. "Even here, in New York. Even in this well-guarded place. God!"

"Where did you get this thing?"

Cunnison demanded as he turned angrily to the girl. "What do you know about this?"

Frightened at the strange scene she had precipitated, the girl backed away scaredly.

"Nothing, mister; I don't know anything about it," she protested. "A man at the cloakroom, he gave me a five-spot to walk over here to this gentleman with that thing on the tray. See, here's the bill."

"Come along!" Cunnison called, grabbing her by the arm, and starting for the cloakroom.

But when they reached the hallway it was empty. Toussel's messenger was gone.

**JIM CUNNISON** and Dave Ellis stood at the rail of the *Western World* as she steamed into Cap Haitien. The town stretched out in the sunset before them but already the evening shadows were shrouding the towering blue mountains inland behind it. Cunnison surveyed with interest the thick jungle that banked the lower half of these mountains and ran down to the edge of the town, but Ellis kept his gaze fastened on the distant peaks.

Somewhere in behind there lay his plantation, his Angela—and Toussel. A shiver ran through him, though the evening air was oppressively warm in the harbor.

After the episode of the twined toothpicks Cunnison had lost no time in winding up his own affairs and packing for the trip to Haiti.

"These depression days are tough on us rolling stones," he told his old pal. "Nobody has any money to send us anywhere, so this party of yours is just what I've been looking for. Let's go!"

"A message for you, Mr. Cunnison," the clerk had told him as he stopped at the desk to check out of his hotel.

Curiously, Cunnison studied the typewritten address on the unstamped envelope, asking, "When did this arrive?"

"I can't say, sir. It was in the box when I came on duty this morning."

"Humph," Cunnison commented. "It wasn't there last night—hello," in surprise as he tore open the envelope. "Now I have one, too," he grinned.

**I**N his hand he held another pair of twined toothpicks and a slip of paper on which was typed, "Only a fool puts his head into the noose."

But Dave Ellis saw no humor in the situation. His eyes searched the hotel lobby frantically, as if his enemy might be lurking behind each pillar and chair.

"You've let this foolishness get on your nerves," his partner scoffed, and they were off to the boat.

Now the trip was ended and they were about to land. All during the voyage both partners had been alert for any suspicious sign, but nothing had occurred to mar its peacefulness. Not until they were crossing the gangplank did anything unusual occur. Then Ellis almost dropped his suitcase as he looked overside.

"Over this way, quickly," he whispered, as they stepped onto the dock.

At the side of the dock they peered over into the water. There Cunnison saw what looked like a doll about six inches long, floating on the tide. A man doll, it appeared to be, its clothing carefully made to counterpart a man's apparel. And through it four or five knitting needles had been thrust, spearing it at crazy angles.

"Don't you recognize the clothing?" Ellis whispered. "It is mine!"

Cunnison glanced at him in surprise. Sure enough; the doll was wearing a tiny copy of Ellis' suit.

"And the white face! Don't you see—that is me, my *ouanga*, floating there. They have been conducting their devilish rites on the boat. They have killed me by proxy. That doll is my death sentence. Just as I stepped onto the gangplank it was thrown into the water so that I would see it."

"Nonsense!" Cunnison swore. "You're getting jumpy as an old woman. As long as they only spend their time making dolls the hell with them!"

FROM Cape Haitien their automobile sped over well-made roads carved through the jungle. Close to town were fields of corn, millet and cotton. Then these gave way to forests of plantains, banana trees and cocoanut palms. This in turn yielded to great sablier trees with their spiked trunks, mahogany and towering pines, as they climbed into the mountains. Over the crest and down the other side. For hours they rolled along over fine roads and through marvelous scenery. In such surroundings the very idea of mysterious danger seemed preposterous.

At last they reached the end of their auto trip and alighted at a small station where they packed their belongings on donkeys and mounted horses for the remainder of the journey.

Along narrow ledges, through steep canyons, they rode, a peaceful train of donkeys loaded with calabashes full of water the only thing they passed. Then they were threading narrow jungle trails.

After six hours of this they rode out onto the rim of what at first appeared to be a canyon. As he stood on the edge Cunnison saw that it was really a fine valley, at least ten miles long and three or four wide, and it was shaped exactly like the bowl of a spoon.

"Here we are!" cried Ellis, whose buoyant spirits were returning as he neared his home. "There—" pointing to a speck of a building among the fields of ten foot cane—"that's the house. It's funny though; we haven't seen any of our trains coming out. Louis should have been cutting three or four days."

Quickly they descended into the valley and rode through the lane in the cane which was the road. Still no sign of life greeted them. At last they rode out into the clearing in which Ellis had built his house, a rambling, homelike building overrun with *Bougainvillea* and other tropical flowers. Still no sign of life. The place seemed absolutely deserted.

ELLIS strode up onto his veranda and cupped his hands.

"Louis! Oh, Louis!" he shouted, but there was no answer.

"The same old story, I guess," he said bitterly to Cunnison. "The cane should be cut, and not a man on the place. That devil must have run them all off again. If you want action it looks as if you'll get plenty of it in a hurry. Come on in; I'll show you your room, and we'll get a bite to eat. Then I'd like to get over to Deschamps' and see what's doing there."

Quickly Cunnison unpacked and got ready for supper. Deschamps' place, he understood, was an hour or so away, and they wanted to reach there before the tropic night had entirely fallen.

As they were eating a hasty bite, hoofbeats sounded outside and Louis, Ellis' octoroon manager, strode in and sank wearily into a chair.

"They are all gone, M. Ellis," he lamented. "Gone who knows where? Two nights past the drums, they beat ver' fast. All night they pound, pound, pound. In the morning there is a black body lying in the road to

M. Deschamps. It wears your clothing. Then all the field men pack up their families and go away ver' quick. They would not listen. All day have I tried to get others. Wherever I go they have heard. None will come near us."

"Damn that yellow devil!" Ellis cursed. "More of his pleasant voodoo. They rig up a corpse in my clothing—that is the most fearful voodoo devilishness. It dooms me and all who have contact with me. It will be weeks before we can get a black to step into our fields. Now I suppose Theot will be down to offer me ten thousand for the place. But, damn him, this time he gets a bullet!"

"How are things with M. Deschamps?" Cunnison asked, seeing that Ellis was too wrought up to plan rationally.

"All gone," Louis answered hopelessly.

"Only monsieur and mademoiselle remain. The fields are idle."

That galvanized Ellis into action.

"Get to bed, Louis; you look half dead," he ordered. "All right, Jim; let's saddle up and get along. I don't like the idea of them being up there alone."

**F**ORTY-FIVE minutes of brisk riding brought them into the Deschamps' clearing. All that while they had not encountered a soul, and now the black tropic night had fallen. Carefully they had picked their way along the last half mile, not a light to relieve the darkness. Against the blue of the heavens Cunnison now saw the house looming up before him.

But not a light showed in it.

Frantically Ellis sprang from his horse, snapped on his flashlight and raced up the steps, calling, "Jules! Angela! Angela—where are you?"

Not a sound.

Into the house they ran, then came to a dead stop as Ellis stared down at the floor before him. In a moment he was down on his knees, old Jules Deschamps' head in his lap. Cunnison meanwhile found a lamp, lighted it, then discovered a bottle of rum and poured a stiff drink for the old man. The strong drink revived him somewhat, but it was apparent that the planter was pretty far gone. He had suffered a terrible beating, and blood welled up from a livid gash in his scalp.

"How did this happen, Papa Deschamps?" Ellis pleaded. "Where is Angela? When did they do this?"

"They have—just gone," Deschamps gasped. "They came in—just when we were—about to dine. Many of them. Black men. I could see—none of them. In a moment—they were—all over me. Angela—screamed. They dragged—her away. Then they—beat me—and I knew no more—my son."

Dave Ellis's face was frozen in a mask of terrible rage and tears coursed unashamed down his cheeks as he murmured comfort to the dying man.

"Find her—my David," the old Frenchman whispered. "Do not let that—"

Suddenly a piercing scream rang through the night. The old man struggled frantically to a sitting position.

"Angela!" he called. "Angela, *ma petite!*"

**A**LMOST roughly Ellis dropped the old man and raced out of the house. Quickly Cunnison ran out onto the veranda after him, but already the flying figure was lost in the blackness, only his flash stabbing the darkness as he switched it on and off as he ran along.

"Dave! Dave, don't lose your head! Come back here!" Cunnison shouted after him.

But only silence answered him. Then the light ceased to flash and the sound of Ellis' going died away in the jungle.

**B**ACK in the house Cunnison found the old man lying on the floor. He could feel no heartbeat in the old breast. Gently he gathered up the bruised body and laid it out on a bed. A hasty search showed that the house was stripped of firearms; even the hunting guns had been torn from the walls.

Bitterly Cunnison cursed himself for having been deceived by the apparent peacefulness of these plantations. Like a fool he had come away without his guns. There was nothing to do but return to Ellis' place. The horse would know the way home. With that doubtful reassurance he spurred off into the black night. And behind him the *boom, boom, boom* of the voodoo drums was beginning to rap out the story from point to point.

All was in darkness in Ellis' clearing, but Louis scrambled out of bed and promptly answered Cunnison's halloo. Briefly he explained the situation to the plantation manager.

"They probably have captured M. Ellis by this time," he concluded. "We must go after them at once. Can you guide me to this voodoo place?"

"Yes, monsieur," Louis admitted, though from his expression Cunnison could see that the octoroon had small appetite for the trip.

"All right, get ready. We'll get going right away," he snapped; then hurried to his room.

As soon as he lit the lamp he stared about him in amazement. His clothing and bags had been thoroughly ransacked. Of his guns there was not a sign. Even his hunting knife was gone. Someone had been very careful to see that he was left with no weapons. Anxiously he got on his knees and felt under the low-

standing bureau. With a sigh of relief he pulled out the canvas bag he had, by lucky hunch, thrust against the wall under this piece of furniture.

At first Cunnison was inclined to suspect Louis in connection with the disappearance of the guns, but a few pertinent questions soon convinced him that the manager was innocent. A search of the house proved that every other available weapon had mysteriously disappeared.

"They must have been here while I sleep, Monsieur," Louis apologized.

"All right, Louis, never mind that now. Are the horses ready? All right, let's get going."

Louis had armed himself with a machete used to cut the sugar cane, but Cunnison refused such a weapon. He had only the canvas bag and a canteen thrown over his shoulder.

Again they set out in the blackness for Deschamps' plantation, and as they rode along Cunnison explained carefully to Louis just what they were to do and what his part in the performance was to be.

Past Deschamps' they rode, and up into the jungle-covered hills. The persistent boom of the drums became louder and louder now. At last the horses could go no further and they were forced to pick their way on foot. After what seemed an eternity of crawling and dodging vines and branches they spied a light ahead. The throbbing boom of the drums was now all-penetrating and the voices of the worshipers could be heard.

**E**VEN more cautiously they proceeded now, carefully avoiding a black figure doing outpost duty. At last, inching forward on his belly, Cunnison was able to peer into the brightly lighted clearing. Louis, at his side, was shaking like a leaf.

"Here," Cunnison whispered tensely, "take a drink of this," passing back his canteen, which he had thoughtfully filled with rum.

The strong drink steadied Louis and Cunnison was able to give his full attention to the savage performance before him. And a mad scene out of hell it was!

In the center of the clearing a dozen poles supported an awning-like roof canopy, rectangular in shape and covered with thatched straw. There were no walls, just a roof.

"The *tunnelle*," Louis whispered.

At each end of this structure squatted the drummers industriously thumping away on huge drums three feet high. Their boom filled the whole place. Beneath it sat a yellow-faced man, who, Cunnison decided, must be Theot Toussel. He was regally clad in red velvet robes, a skull dangling on his breast and a savage headdress of gaudy feathers serving as a crown. Beside him sat a pretty blonde young woman, clad in a white robe, a sort of bridal crown in her hair. She stared straight in front of her and seemed unconscious of the savage scene being enacted before her eyes.

"A h—the Mademoiselle Des-champs!" Louis gasped. "It is the wedding gown!"

At the other end of the *tunnelle* a horrible hag of a woman had arisen from her seat and was now gyrating in an orgiastic dance. In her arms she held a snow-white rooster to which she crooned as she whirled and pirouetted madly. The drums beat faster and faster.

THEN suddenly the bird was whirled above her head—and in a twinkling its head was ripped from its body, the spurting blood pouring over her wild headdress and staining anew the scarlet robe that fell from her skinny shoulders. In a panting

heap the mamaloi sank to the floor, while the drums sobbed and the hundreds of blacks who cowered on their knees about the *tunnelle* groaned and moaned ecstatically.

A triumphant gleam lighted the eyes of the papaloi as he turned his lascivious look upon the girl beside him. But she sat as if of stone.

Only then did Cunnison become aware of another figure that had now arisen and was being led out from the shadows. With a barely strangled gasp of surprise he recognized the white form of Dave Ellis. Clad only in a white loincloth, the planter was led unresisting to a place beneath the *tunnelle*, and was there told to kneel. Meekly he complied, and in that second Cunnison caught a glimpse of his eyes—they were unseeing; like the eyes of a dead man!

Wildly the surrounding blacks were now beating the ground with their hands and heads, screaming prayers and invocations to Damballa, the Serpent god. The mamaloi, recovered from her ordeal, was now back in her seat, leering savagely while she crooned to a long, bone knife, its handle ornamented with a curled serpent.

THE carcasses of white goats and chickens, the expression on the faces of the voodoo high priest and priestess, the feverish howling of the black mob, the swelling crescendo of the drums, the kneeling white figure of Ellis, now being dabbed with blood—all told their portentous story only too well to Jim Cunnison. He must act at once—risk everything on one desperate toss—or the final sacrifice would be consummated and Theot Toussel would take his bride in the blood of her fiance.

It was horrible. Cunnison's blood ran cold in his veins; with difficulty he overcame the nausea that gripped him, then turned savagely to Louis.

"Now!" he whispered. "Louis! Don't forget your goggles!"

But Louis cowered in mortal fear, and Cunnison realized that little help could be expected from him. Noiselessly he groped his way through the undergrowth until he was directly opposite the *tunnelle*. A crown of white flowers had now been placed on Ellis' head, and the mamaloi arose to start her hellish dance. Theotoussel leaned forward eagerly, fairly slaving for what was coming.

A deadly silence fell on the kneeling blacks as the mamaloi started here sensuous posturing. All eyes were glued to hers—

Suddenly a round ball, no larger than a good-sized apple, bounded under the *tunnelle*, rolled a few feet, then burst into flame and poured forth billowing smoke and gas. Another burst squarely among the kneeling blacks. And before the entranced worshipers had time to shift their gaze from their high-priestess, a fearsome object strode out of the jungle toward them. Instead of a head it had a fiery knob, out of which two big round eyes gazed; its livid nose was long like the trunk of an elephant and seemed to terminate in a bag at its waist. Its long robe danced with flames, and it strode straight toward them. Another ball left its upraised hand and sailed straight at them!

ALL that they saw in one brief moment. The next they were madly rubbing their burning eyes, while the tears poured forth from them in streams. The drums stopped on a note. With one wild, terrified scream the blacks broke and scattered pell-mell into the jungle, the frantic crashing of the underbrush advertising the speed of their flight.

But Cunnison did not wait to listen to that. Quickly he ran across the *tunnelle* and seized Ellis, but the

kneeling man responded only dumbly. The hypnotism or drugs to which he had been subjected still held him.

"Sorry, old man, but this is the best thing for you," Cunnison muttered. Then deliberately he squared off and caught Ellis a resounding clout on the point of the jaw. "Louis! Louis!" he called. "Come and take him!"

IN the same second he whirled to confront Toussel, but the papaloi was not so easily deceived as his superstitious followers. He was not to be taken in by a gas mask and a lot of phosphorescent paint. He knew, too, the effect of tear gas; and as soon as he identified it he thrust one arm protectingly over his eyes. With the other he seized Angela Deschamps and hurried her, unresisting, into the jungle.

As Cunnison turned from Ellis he just glimpsed the girl's white dress disappearing in the darkness. He started to leap after them but the blundering figure of the mamaloi, clawing terrifiedly at her eyes, crashed full into him, and they both fell to the ground. In a second Cunnison was back on his feet, but in that second Toussel and Angela had disappeared.

Cunnison listened intently, but the noise of the fleeing blacks echoed in the jungle all around him. He had to trust to luck and follow in the direction he thought they were headed.

That pursuit was a nightmare Jim Cunnison never forgot. Blundering along dim jungle trails, often tearing through clinging vines where the trail left the beaten path. Time and again he was lost. His flashlight revealed only tangled greenery. For what seemed hours he would grope helplessly, circling and backtracking until he again picked up the thin trail.

Often the noise of Toussel's flight

would cease altogether; then Cunnison could only pray that he was on the right track. Again he would hear them ahead of him, and would try to increase his pace. Always the trail seemed to lead upward. Where was the fellow heading? Probably toward his house, Cunnison decided. Then the sound of their flight grew louder. Cunnison was gaining!

Louder—and louder! There he passed a bush which had hardly had time to straighten itself from the bending of the fleeing feet which had just pressed it down. They could not be more than a few yards ahead of him!

Then the trail led out of the jungle and Cunnison found himself on a thin canyon path rapidly arising before him. With his flashlight playing steadily before him he started to run up the narrow trail. Along the side of a cliff it clung; a glance over the side told him that there were unnumbered feet of yawning blackness there awaiting a single misstep to reach out and receive him.

UP—up! Now he could hear the footsteps clearly ahead of him. A pebble rolled back down the trail and bounced against his foot. Cunnison redoubled his efforts. Then—

"Now wait, my friend," a voice commanded silkily from up ahead of him, and he was suddenly bathed in the beam of a strong flashlight.

Toussel was no more than fifty feet in the lead, still higher on the narrow trail. The strong light lit the path like day and faded far in the distance over the black void that pitched beside them. Cunnison stood waiting, uncertain what to do.

"You will raise your hands above your head," the mocking command came from behind the light. "Then you will walk slowly toward me."

Still Cunnison stood undecided. The light switched a trifle, and

fell on the figure of the girl, cringing in panic against the side of the cliff, her hands tied behind her.

"Should you decide not to obey it would be very unfortunate for mademoiselle," the voice jeered. "I should have to prod her with my machete, like this—" The girl screamed in terror. "Only next time I shall be forced to prod her over the edge of the trail. You will come forward—no?"

Helplessly Cunnison faced the climax. He had no doubt that, should he refuse to come forward, the jeering devil above him would cold-bloodedly throw the girl headlong into that black void, to fall, a battered pulp, hundreds of feet below. Yet, if he walked forward, before he could possibly spring at the fiend that wicked blade would cut him to pieces.

"Angela's life—which means more to me than my own," he remembered Ellis' words in New York, when the planter sought his aid. And he remembered, too, that night in France. He had a debt to pay.

With his hand raised above his head Jim Cunnison stepped forward resolutely. Step by step the distance between them shortened.

Half of it was covered when a wild yell sounded ahead there on the trail. The light wavered, pitched wildly and fell, rolled to the edge, and plunged down, down into space—then winked out. The girl screamed piteously. Toussel cursed in terror, and there was the thrashing and tumbling of bodies. Inferno seemed to be raging up there in the blackness.

CAREFULLY Cunnison inched his way back along the dark trail, feeling the ground as he went. At last his fingers closed on the light where he had dropped it when he raised his hands. He switched it on

and played it on the scene ahead, then ran forward to take a hand.

But there was no longer any need for his assistance. Dave Ellis was astride the fallen Toussel, his fingers deep in the mulatto's throat, while he pounded the fellow's head savagely against the stony ground. Like an insane man he tugged and pounded.

"Let him go, Dave; he's dead," Cunnison told him quietly, but his words had no effect. "Let's go, Dave; Angela needs you," he tried again.

This time his appeal reached that furious brain, and Dave Ellis released his hold and arose. For a moment he looked down at his victim. Cunnison had been right; the devil was dead. With a shove of utter repulsion Ellis sent the body over the cliff to the oblivion it deserved.

Together Dave and Jim half carried Angela down that trail. The terrible ordeal of the night had almost deranged her, but thankfully Ellis realized that such times for them were over. Now they could make the Valley of the Spoon the paradise they had planned.

"How did I manage to turn up like a bad penny?" he answered Cunnison's kidding question. "Why, you old poke, when were you ever able to keep the trail with me? That sock on the jaw you gave me was a godsend. It closed my eyes so that I didn't get much of your gas, and it cleared my head.

WHEN Louis dragged me out into the jungle and poured half a canteen of rum down my throat, I came to like a house afire. I knew pretty well where Toussel would be heading for, so I scouted around you and got up there ahead of him. I knew he'd never get by me there. I was sitting on that rock ten minutes waiting for the show to begin!"

Jim Cunnison smiled with quiet satisfaction; this was the Dave Ellis he had known through many years of comradeship. Gone was the superstitious fear that had unnerved him. Cunnison's work was finished, his debt paid—now he could turn with a free heart to those far corners of the earth that always called to him so alluringly.

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HE TOOK THE CITY BUT OUT OF HIS 500 THERE REMAINED ONLY 128 ALIVE AND OF THESE ONLY 29 WITHOUT WOUNDS. THE EMPEROR MADE WARD A MANDARIN AND CHINA ERECTED A TEMPLE IN HIS HONOR.



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By ANTHONY M. RUD

*Author of "Frozen Face," etc.*

## *PART ONE*

### CHAPTER I

*"I'd Ruther Kill a Guy Than  
Cuss Him!"*

POP ARGYLE unbuckled the flap of his six-gun holster, and eased the butt of the .45 into his palm, as he slid down from his horse. Any time a stranger crouched in the chaparral, with a six-shooter upraised, ready to throw down on someone riding the trail to the home ranch, Pop was ready to give a verdict with hot lead.

Beside that, Bob Burdett, whom Pop loved almost as a son, was due back from town just about now.

Pop crept closer, studying the bushwacker. As he did so there was the sound of hoofs and around Searchlight Butte came young Bob, his horse at the mile-eating walk of a top-string horse.

As the assassin in the chaparral



started to bring his gun down to the horizontal Pop's weapon spat flame. Just at that second the waiting skulker sprang erect and a little sideways, throwing down his revolver in what was meant to be a dead-center shot. Pop's bullet creased the stranger's ribs, throwing him off balance. The treacherous shot, meant to kill Bob Burdett, went wild.

"Stick 'em up!" yelled Pop. "Look out, Bob! He—"

Five yards away, Bob Burdett flung himself from the saddle. He had no opportunity to join the battle, though he drew his gun. The stranger, snarling as his lips drew back from long, yellow teeth, whirled about, firing at Pop almost as fast as his thumb could fan the hammer.

But Pop was waiting—and at forty-three, Pop had seen too many range murderers come and go. He shot with deadly precision, and a split

## Adventures and Exciting Perils in the Great West



second before the stranger. Pop's second slug smashed into the assassin's stomach, three inches above his belt buckle. The man shrieked once, clutching both hands to his middle, and pitched to the ground.

"Friend of your'n?" asked Pop grimly.

"Good Lord, no!" cried Bob, a little pale beneath the layers of tan. "Never saw the hombre before!"

"Well, you got somethin' to say?" demanded Pop, huckering down revolver in hand beside the stranger. It was evident that the man was mortally wounded.

"Arrh!" snarled the stranger, his face working with pain. "I was bringin' a letter—Plug Hogarth—tell Plug I'd ruther kill a guy than cuss him! I—"

There was a sudden, ugly noise. Then the man lay still.

"There's yore letter," said Pop

soberly, handing out a dirty envelope to Bob Burdett. "Got yore name on it. What's it all about, boy?"

Bob shook his head. He opened the letter. The puzzled frown on his brow deepened. He handed the letter over to the elder man. Pop spelled out the following words:

*Don't come where you ain't wanted. Strangers is coyote bait here!*

"Huh! There ain't no name after it—an' where did it come from?"

"Jimtown," said Bob laconically. "Know where that is?"

"Yeah," nodded Pop. "Down south, mebber eighty mile. Why?"

Bob looked long and seriously at the man who had taught him all the lore of the range.

"I'm going there," he said finally. "And so are you, Pop. It's our big chance, I think, but I've got a hunch

it's going to be damn dangerous. Want in?"

Pop's homely features creased in a grin. He held out his hand for a firm clasp.

"I ain't askin' any questions," he said. "Tell me when yuh get around to it, boy. When do we start?"

"Tomorrow—if the sheriff'll let us. I reckon he will. This jigger was jest passin' through, the way I make it. He was s'posed to give me that letter, but naturally hankered for a killin'."

"Yeah, looks like he was one of this Hogarth's men, an' figured if he got yuh it would kinda save time," said Pop grimly. "Well, if he was lookin' for a killin' he got it!"

## CHAPTER II

*"Ef Yuh Deal With a Man, Yuh  
Talk Through Smoke!"*

**A**FTER BREAKFAST at dawn next morning, Pop and Bob rode away from the ranch which had been home for them so many years. Each lead a loaded pack-pony, and both were sobered as they halted at the gate and Lee Cantwell, the owner, came down personally for a final word.

The evening before they had traced out a probable route skirting the waterless Black Lavas, on Cantwell's survey map; but the distance to Jimtown, going by way of known water, stretched out from Pop's estimate of eighty miles to fully double that distance.

Since Cantwell's wall map had been drawn in '86, and was yellowed with years, they could not be at all certain of the streams and waterholes given. Therefore each pack-pony carried a five gallon water can to balance the other half of his load.

Neither of the venturers felt like talking after they had first left the ranch owner and started on their

way. They rode three miles toward Mogollon City on the deep-rutted familiar road, then turned straight southward. To the west bare rock buttes and weird-shaped lava up-thrusts acted as sentinels for the high purple peaks behind them. To the eastward, broken country in which the bunch grass rapidly gave way to scrub mesquite, cactus and acequia, faded into a whitening reach of alkaline playa simply called "Desert" and left blank upon Cantwell's map.

"You're just a peach, Pop, to take me up thisaway—an' still grin!" burst out Bob at last. He was well aware how great a wrench it had been for the elder to leave friends and surroundings familiar for all of twenty years.

"Oh shucks," disdained Pop. "I ain't so damn old, but it's a fact I was gettin' sorta rusty. Tell me somep'n about this job we got, though. I'm curious as ol' hell."

**B**OB nodded, a half-smile on his mouth. "It's a mighty long letter I got a couple days back," he responded, "writ on one of these clickety-clack machines. I'll tell yuh about the first part, an' then read the last page, where the real business is. Then sometime yuh can go over the whole thing, if yuh want to.

"First off, it's from an uncle of mine. Jim—James Loudon Burdett—was his name. I only saw him once, an' that was when I was a little shaver, afore Dad—died. Uncle Jim seems to have done hisself proud. He got all this range down near Jimtown, dammed up a stream called Magpie Creek, made a lake, an' then let it leak out in ditches where he wanted water on the range. Seems like the lake musta been an old crater; but we'll find out all about that.

"While the water was flowin' down

Magpie Creek, everything was slicker'n a sow's ear. But all of a sudden the water stopped, or was turned off—he kinda let's you imagine there's been dirty work at the cross-roads, but he don't specify. Anyway, most of the cows an' some men died of thirst—or mebber the men died natural of lead poisonin'. He didn't write that very clear.

"There ain't a cow left on the ranch, but plenty bones. In order to make a ranch of the place again, howsomever, we'll have to figure out a way to get at the water."

HUMPH," objected Pop. "Even if we tapped this-here agua, how'd we stock up with cows?"

"That's the stake we're playin' for. Uncle Jim knowed what we'd be up against, an' he wasn't any piker, I'll say! Listen! Uncle Jim was an ejjicated man. An' here's how he writes.

"My whole life has been bound up in the JB Ranch—the hellhole they now call The Ranch of Bones! It is magnificent bottomland, needing only water at handy places, in order to pasture almost any number of Herefords, or raise any sort of crops a man could desire.

"I thought we could strike the water, even after it had gone deeply underground; but I have spent half my reserves and all my health in the attempt. I know I cannot last much longer, so I am passing along this heritage of trouble—and possible fortune—to you, my brother's son. You are the last of the direct line of Burdetts.

"Eight wells have been bored, but none of them has tapped the old source of supply. I have not been physically able now to visit the spot for two years; and if it were not for curious tales which emanate steadily from that region, superstitious jargon of Indians and half-breeds who in-

habit the hills and semi-fertile ranges beyond, I should rest content to see the harsh dunes of the desert inch their way over the land I loved.

"But you, Bob, are said to be clean, strong, and just at the right age for venturing. The Star Agency looked you up for me; and their report makes me rather sorry that I carried in my blood that anger at your father. Perhaps you never heard, but he beat my time with the sweet girl who later became your mother—

"So, boy, I am making this a sporting proposition. I am placing one hundred thousand dollars in escrow at the First National Bank of San Francisco. I am deeding the JB to you in fee simple; you will find the deed duly recorded.

THE ranch itself, despite the fact that the buildings have been kept in excellent repair, will be valueless to you, however, unless you can solve the mystery of why Magpie Creek decided overnight to cease flowing. There is a real mystery, too, though because of growing physical infirmity I have not been able to trace it down, as I should have dearly liked to do.

"But there is your ranch. Here in the bank is the money to stock it again. The day that the bank's investigator reports that Magpie Creek flows again in its old bed, or that you have struck any other adequate source of water, you may draw to the last cent upon this trust fund of \$100,000.

"So, Robert, the heartfelt best wishes of a crippled and cranky old relative go with you!

"Yours sincerely,

"James Loudon Burdett."

"Hol-ee Smoke!" breathed Pop, awe in his voice. "But I don't see where I come in a-tall!"

Bob grinned. "Think I c'd run a ranch all by my ownself?" he demanded. "Hell no, Pop. You been my

pardner ever since I was green bone ready to make into a button. I jest couldn't get along without yuh!"

**B**ECAUSE of the alkali blown into their faces by a steady wind from the south, both riders rode on for some time with handkerchiefs raised to cover mouths and nostrils. The heat was intense, distorting objects only a few hundred yards distant. As they topped the rim of a dry wash Pop suddenly grunted. Bob saw him jerk off his gauntlets in a hurry and do something peculiar with his fingers.

"Desert magic!" said Pop hoarsely. "Cross 'em, son!" Bob noted with a wondering grin that the veteran had the first two fingers of each hand tightly crossed.

Pop had glimpsed a mirage, and it was awesome enough in all truth. Bob caught his breath and gazed, spellbound. Like every cowman who occasionally had to cross the edges of the desert, he had heard of these crazy phenomena, but had not really believed in them. Men had told him of phantom water rippling, of green valleys which receded as the traveler approached—but *this* spectacle could not be mistaken for anything except a mirage, for one instant. The picture was presented to them *upside down!*

There was a sort of slate-colored ceiling, apparently forty or fifty feet above the shimmering glare of the playa. Great lava cones hung down like grotesque stalactites. And as they stared the figure of a giant took shape—a man with a rifle, only this man was at least twenty feet in height, and walked along a path on the slate-colored ceiling, head down!

"Ghost of the Big Injun!" croaked Pop, whose lore of the West sometimes mingled strangely with legends of the Minnesota woods he had heard in his boyhood.

Bob broke the strain. He chuckled. "A ghost, on the way to our Ranch of Bones!" he said. "Hell, that's only—"

"Hey! Hey!" protested Pop in sudden alarm. As if his exclamation had been a magic word, the shutter of this natural camera obscura suddenly closed, and the mirage winked out.

Bob grinned at him. "No hey, hey, old-timer," he said. "That was my first mirage, but I know it wasn't any ghost. Some'eres way ahead there was a jigger walkin' with a rifle. We jest seen his picture throwed against a wall of these-here heat waves. Yuh don't believe in ghosts any more'n I do, Pop—an' I don't!"

"No-o, I—" Pop squirmed a trifle in his saddle, and unstopped his canteen. He took a long drink, and expelled his breath in a long *whe-e-w-w*. "I don't, not perzackly. But I've heered funny things a time or two."

"Oh, well," began Bob good-naturedly. But Pop was started on a subject which evidently had caused him much thought in times past.

**I**T AIN'T that I b'lieve in ghosts, I varmint, whem-gubblin' gruxes an' other queer jodey critters," he said earnestly, "only I ain't eddicated enough to know what is an' what ain't. Ef yo're dealin' with a man yuh talk through smoke—an' somebody's gotta savvy. When it's spooks, mebbe, I dunno whether I b'lieve or not—an' I don't see no reason to take a chance!"

"Best thing is to steer clear, eh, old-timer? Well, we'll do it. Le's ride."

"Yeah, when we get to them buttes up ahead, I reckon we can camp for a while. It's damn hot," said Pop.

## CHAPTER III

*"Fust Ghost I Ever Threw  
Down On!"*

ONE OF THE grandfathers of Emilio Rodriguez had been a dubious sort of Mexican white, but Emilio did not look it. To all appearances and habits he was a degraded Pima-Yaqui mongrel, with all the vices and none of the virtues possible to find among those two tribes.

Sullenly unconscious that a freak of desert heat and light had thrown his magnified picture before two travelers from the north country, Emilio mounted the lava path to a rough ledge half way up the nameless butte he used as a lookout.

To the south lay the winding stage road from railhead at Crandall, to Jimtown and Nueces. Lone travelers were apt to fare ill upon this road, for at two points Emilio had the range down to a fly's eyelash. And Emilio kept two loaded Sharps .50-90's oiled and protected from the dust.

Also he had a Winchester .30-30 for closer and quicker work. A Smith & Wesson .38 Special revolver, and a keen knife which he wore in a sheath at the left side of his spine, the fiber-wound handle hidden by the neck of his greasy chambray shirt, completed his armament.

Pushing aside a thin scale of rock, Emilio revealed a crevice three feet wide by fourteen inches high. This widened a little back of the opening, and served as an armory, larder, and cache for olla, canteen and miscellaneous valuables.

Removing a binocular case, Emilio took out an expensive Zeiss seven-power instrument which once had belonged to a Government surveyor. Scanning both reaches of the stage road first, and then slowly circling the arc of desert, the cholo replaced

the binoculars with a grunt. There had been no one in sight, no dust cloud to reveal the coming of a stranger. Even the white blossoms of the saguaros seemed to droop in the heat of mid-morning.

Emilio grunted again, rolled himself a cigarette. He used black, sweetened papers, and Mexican leaf which had been crushed and soaked in marijuana, then shredded. The lighted cigarette gave out a sickening aroma, but its drug was soothing to the nerves of an habitué like Emilio.

The cholo squatted. He drew from the cache a durham sack which bulged with something far heavier than its original contents. Also he brought out a queer tool, a plumber's blow torch, to which was attached a heavy wire frame holding a half-pint mold of cast-iron, shaped like a miniature washtub.

THE torch soon roared, directed so its blue flame licked at the iron mold. Into the latter receptacle Emilio emptied the durham sack. A number of dull or glittering chunks and slivers of metal cascaded. Some were fourteen-carat gold. Some were silver. One was amalgam. Still, they all would melt, and the resultant nugget would pass for pure gold among the Mexicans.

These were the by-product accumulations of two months, tooth fillings from the heads of white men for which Emilio had exchanged judicious amounts of lead in ounce or half-ounce doses. With the currency to be gleaned from purses, and more to be realized from the sale of horses, mules, stores and accoutrement, Emilio had a rather good thing.

Many a day passed when he glimpsed no one. Many a party went by unmolested, for Emilio made it a rule never to try his marksmanship

on more than two men at a time. Even with surprise in his favor it was likely to be dangerous.

And he already was rich, according to his standards. When there was nothing safe to do, he could smoke marijuana, and doze in the shade. Nights he could get sodden drunk on tequila—

**I**T SO happened that this comfortable philosophy worked just so long, with the cholo. It had now been four days since he had seen a person even on the horizon. His tequila had been finished the night before. He was almost out of tobacco, and therefore sullen and jumpy. He had no trophies to take to Crandall for stealthy sale, except the gold nugget,

So when close to four o'clock in the afternoon he spied the dust of two riders coming southward, he hurriedly smoked and inhaled three marijuana cigarettes to steady his nerves, and then made preparations to receive strangers.

Bob and Pop Argyle were tiring. They had pressed on, with only a short stop at noon to water the horses and dish up a cold meal for themselves.

"Sooner we get out of this desert the better I'm suited," said Bob, and Pop had agreed. Alkali rimmed them like hoar frost.

"Another whole day of it, anyhow," he had said, "less'n we want to hit east over to Crandall. That ain't more'n ten-twelve mile, but it ain't wuth seein'. Only Mexes an' Indios, an' the terminal of a spur line that was built when the mines was runnin'."

"We'll head straight for Jimtown," decided Bob. "One night out here ain't goin' to—"

He broke off abruptly. Something had struck the cantle of his saddle a sharp rap, then ricocheted away with the buzz of an angry hornet.

And slightly more than half a second later came the bellowing thunder of the big single-shot buffalo gun!

In that short space of time, however, Pop Argyle had reacted automatically. "Back of us, in them lava breaks!" he shouted, touching spurs to his mount and pulling along the packhorse he led, in a dust cloud of hurrying steel-shod hoofs. "C'mon! Get outa range fust!"

Bob already was in flight, though bothered by a pack animal that did not see any sudden necessity for hurry. It tossed its head and reared, nearly yanking Bob sidewise from the saddle. He gained control, however, and at that moment glanced back. He failed to catch a glimpse of the bushwhacker, but did see a white bloom of saguaro clipped away as by the slice of a razor blade. It had been no more than three feet from his head.

**T**HEN suddenly the timbre of the firing changed. Instead of the deep-throated bellow of the single-shot, came rapid, flat-sounding reports.

"Winchester too—three jiggers there!" yelled Pop, excusably in error. "Behind or on top that butte. Two hundred yards. Hop off, boy!"

"Close shootin'." commented Bob, obeying, "but not so damn good if it's only that far."

"Nope, but durned ef I understand it!" grumbled Pop, pulling his two horses behind a clump of evergreen oak. "Looks like they was aimin' to stick us up, an' 'en got panicky all of a sudden."

The range veteran had his Winchester carbine out of scabbard now, and was buckling a bandolier of cartridges taken from his saddle roll. Bob followed suit. They picketed the packhorses, then remounted. Even with the estimated odds against them, neither man thought of

straightaway flight wherein would lie probable safety. In a bargain of hot lead they could make bids of their own.

"You take that side, an' I'll take this," directed Bob, unconscious that for the first time in his life he was issuing orders to another man. "Less'n they make a sneak—" His rifle lever clicked.

ON both sides successions of breaks and arroyos, with occasional clumps of chaparral offered a modicum of cover; but each of the two made the best of it, and in addition he speeded, then slowed, twisting the mount's head this way and that to confuse the aim of the would-be assassins.

Bob was lying along the neck of his buckskin pony when the next shot sounded. He felt the breath of the bullet as it passed his cheek and shoulder.

With a screaming neigh the pony reared, the tip of one sensitive ear notched by the speeding bullet. Bloody spray flecked back upon Bob's shoulder.

"Damn yuh!" he gritted. "I'll get yuh for that!"

Without further attempt to charge the hideout of the bushwhackers, which he now knew to be the butte-like rock rising just ahead of him, he dodged down the steep bank of a dry wash, leaped from the saddle, and after a moment succeeded in making the quivering animal lie down.

No more shots were fired for some time. Pop Argyle had completely disappeared. Veteran of Shoshone and Apache raids as he was, he knew exactly how to deal with skulkers of this variety. Hat discarded, squirming along on his belly, he maintained a sharp watch upon those tumbled piles of fire rock.

On the other side where Bob ap-

proached, really keen observers from the butte might have remarked the curious wanderlust which seemingly had attacked a certain scraggly manzanita. This shrub, laden with red berries, evinced a desire for foreign travel, apparently, inching along the rim of one arroyo, dipping into another, ambitiously crossing the intervening stretches of rock and alkali.

But because of last night's debauch, in which he had drunk two full quarts of green tequila, the cholo up on the ledge did not see quite that distinctly. His hands were trembling, too, and he longed for the soothing weed, marijuana.

It had taken the two strangers nearly three-quarters of an hour to approach within easy rifle range, and during that time Emilio had not smoked.

Now a peculiar glaze was over his black, beady eyes, an unlighted cigarette dangled from lips slack and sneering, and a little saliva streamed from a corner of the loose mouth.

"*Valgame Dios!*" he muttered in hoarse anger.

Missing those shots had hurt his self-esteem—though Emilio himself would have been the last to admit it, the fact was that he never had been any too good at hitting moving targets. He needed a rest, and a potshot at a range he had practiced. Quickly loading the three rifles again, he stared out over the ground below, and saw nothing.

HE became uneasy. He had not counted on being stalked in turn; that never had happened before, and now he had two enemies down there somewhere. He shifted restlessly, cursed in a throaty rumble. His nerves became more and more insistent in their demand for the soothing inhalation of that marijuana-soaked cigarette tobacco.

He raised himself again, peering stealthily. After a minute of scrutiny he managed now to locate the elder of the two gringos. Pop Argyle was making what the Mexican-Indian regarded as an inartistic approach, to this lava upthrust, yet thus far he was keeping vital portions of his anatomy out of sight.

**N**OW and then Emilio could glimpse part of an arm or a leg, yet he did not fire. A few yards more and the cowpuncher would have to come into plain view, in order to reach the fissure where the mounting rock path started, and where Emilio kept his mule. When that happened, the watcher would pot him as cold-bloodedly as he would knock over a chuckwalla for meat.

He settled back for an instant, keeping his gaze upon the rock which sheltered Pop Argyle, and lit a sulphur match. He let it bubble and fume, then held it to his cigarette and inhaled deeply. *Madre de Dios*, how good that felt! Now for a while there would be no more twitching fingers, no more blurring of the sights on his deadly rifles.

But Pop, with uncanny perspicacity, took his chance at exactly the second that the cholo's eyes were lowered in the lighting of his smoke. The veteran cowboy leaped up, crouching, and dashed the intervening eight yards to the shelter of the rock fissure. There he saw the mule, and also the steep, worn path leading upward around the butte.

Pop grinned cheerfully. He put down his rifle and drew his six-shooter, raising the hammer to full cock. Then he started cautiously up the path.

*Crack! Crack! Crack!*

Awakening the echoes amid the walls of rock, three rapid shots came from the direction of the wandering

manzanita shrub. Bob, looking upward, had seen the rising smoke of the old-fashioned match, and quickly had made a decision. Right to one side of the spot where the killer or killers evidently lurked, an overhang of rock made possible a sort of billiard shot.

Speedily pumping three bullets against that overhang, hoping that one at least would ricochet toward the assassins, Bob scrambled to his feet and ran forward for dear life.

He reached the side of the butte without a shot being fired in retaliation, and held himself flat against the wall, his rifle at vertical. From above sounded scarifying curses in Mexican, proof that his "cushion shots" had made at least one carom.

Emilio, vicious as a cornered rat—but a rat at heart—screamed his vituperation. Fragments of lead and grainy pumice stone had raked across his neck and chest like the talons of an infuriated eagle. Stung and startled, no doubt made braver by the marijuana he had inhaled so swiftly, Emilio half staggered to his feet, beady eyes glinting fury over the rifle sights. Where was the damned gringo who had done this thing?

**N**OT Bob Burdett, but the other gringo, coming swiftly up the rock path, replied to his question with one swift shot. The bullet hit Emilio in the small of the back, smashing ribs on his right side.

With a scream of vituperation and terror, the cholo stumbled forward, lost his balance, and clutching frantically at the rock ledge, fell eighteen feet to a boulder just beside Bob Burdett.

"Reckon there was only the one of 'em, boy!" sang out Pop. "You all right?"

"Sure enough!" replied Bob, keeping Emilio covered. "D'yuh know,"

he continued in a queer tone, "this jigger, Pop, is the same one we seen walkin' upside down in the clouds!"

"Huh, not a ghost, hey?"

"No, he ain't dead—yet."

"Wait a second, I'll be down." His voice receded. "Fust ghost I ever—threw down—on—"

#### CHAPTER IV

*"Hombre, Why'd Yuh Kill Miss Ellen—Too?"*

**I**N SPITE of his wound and the fall, Emilio was far from dead. As Pop extracted the knife from the sheath at the back of the cholo's neck the latter groaned, opened his eyes, and squirmed in the attempt to sit up.

As he moved, Pop caught sight of a pearl-handled revolver still in holster. Quickly he grabbed it, side-swiping the bushwhacker across the temples with the long barrel.

The weapon was the Smith & Wesson .38 Special, a silver-mounted gun which long ago had been presented to a man of the cow country by an admiring easterner. The easterner never learned that his gift was little appreciated in that land of .45s, a country where a dew-daddded weapon that broke open at the breech was held in small esteem.

But here it was again. Pop looked for engraved initials on the silver butt-plate, and found them. His blue eyes grew steely, and deep lines etched themselves from his nostrils to the corners of his mouth. Yet for the moment he did not comment.

"Kill him?" inquired Bob with an attempt at nonchalance. He was a trifle pale. Shooting it out was one thing; casually knocking a wounded prisoner on the head was decidedly different.

"Uh-uh. He's jest got some smashed ribs an' a sore head," replied Pop. "Quick killin' ain't suited to this

sidewinder a-tall! There's some things I kinda wanta ask him about—*afore I hang him!*"

The last was a burst of such down-right ferocity that Bob involuntarily stepped back, staring. Pop had always been a good deal of a fatalist, where range affairs were concerned. It was unlike him to exhibit extreme rancor over a small matter like an attempted holdup which had failed. The more it seemed queer since prompt punishment had been meted out. No matter what happened, the Indian or Mexican—whichever he was—would bear a pain in his side for weeks to come as a reminder of his temerity.

"Why, good gosh, Pop!" began Bob.

"I don't want to talk about it now, boy," countered the elder savagely. "It's a ghost from the past—where all the wust ones come from!"

**T**HEY camped the night on the ledge where Emilio had kept his sinister vigils, picketing the horses below, with the mule. Bob, unable to listen to the groans and curses of the prisoner, bound his side tightly, after washing out the lacerated wound. It did not seem that the bullet had entered the cholo's body, but it had done a complete job of splintering a rib.

Next morning after breakfast, Bob was moved to protest when Pop commanded the prisoner to mount his own mule. The elder cowpuncher's eyes were slitted and steely, however, and he pushed Bob aside.

"I know jest what I'm doin', boy," he said through clenched teeth. "Yuh wait! Yuh'll hear somep'n that'll make yore hair stand up on end!"

Bob was silenced by his earnestness, though he could not repress shivers during those first morning hours, when Pop, apparently became a remorseless brute, time and again

urged the cholo's mule into a shambling trot which wracked the prisoner till once he toppled sidewise in a faint.

Pop reached over and held him in the saddle until he writhed back to consciousness.

There was no mercy in the slitted blue eyes. Bob, thoroughly uncomfortable, nevertheless sensed that something far more terrible than the holdup fiasco lay back of his comrade's changed manner.

When the prisoner, gaining breath in sobbing moans, caught the saddle horn and pulled himself to a sitting position, Pop let go of his shoulder, and drew the Smith & Wesson from the waistband of his trousers.

"Injun," he said with deceptive mildness, "yuh musta been jest a kid when yuh worked for the Circle Dot. What was yuh, hoss-wrangler?"

**A**N inarticulate grunt was his only answer, but the cholo seemed to stiffen, and his black eyes sought the visage of his tormentor.

"Musta been after I drifted on up-country," continued Pop reflectively. His voice still was soft, but ridges of muscle bulged on his jaws. "Yeah, round about the time Link Burdett an' his daughter was killed. *Was it?*"

The last two words crackled like pistol fire, revealing the intensity of self-control under which Pop had repressed his real emotions.

"*Vayasé al—*" began Emilio with a snarl, though his face had shaded to an ashy green with terror. Due to systematic drugging over a period of years, his brain recalled some happening at the Circle Dot only vaguely; but anything at all which was dragged out of the cholo's past was something that killer did not want spoken of in public.

"Hombre," gritted Pop, all pretense fled, "why'd yuh kill Miss Ellen—*too?*"

Bob Burdett was petrified with shock. The Circle Dot had been a ranch owned by an eastern syndicate, and which his own father had managed. His father, Lincoln Burdett! And Ellen Burdett had been his sweet-faced elder sister! Pop Argyle was intimating that this cholo, this snake in the grass, had murdered them both!

**T**WELVE year old Bob had been away at grammar school at Salinas, and never had been told the real story. He had attended the funeral, which wiped out all the little funds his father owned. For a couple of years the generosity of punchers had allowed him to board and remain at school; but then had come Pop Argyle, taking him up to Cantwell's spread to make a cowman of him.

There was no confession coming from the cholo, however. Not yet. As the mists cleared somewhat from his fogged brain he realized that any word of confirmation from him would bring death in some horrible form, so he decided to keep his mouth shut.

In that decision, however, he did not value the grim determination of Pop Argyle. The veteran whirled his romal. The leather came down with a vicious smack upon the rump of the mule, which lurched into an ungainly gallop.

And with every thump on the saddle a cry of torture burst from the prisoner's lips.

Even Pop never would tell the whole of his story as he knew it. He had been thirty-three then, already a hard-bitten cow hand, though jovial and likeable. Ellen Burdett had been eighteen, full and bubbling over with the romantic ideas put into her pretty head by an eastern finishing school.

But having known cowpunchers since she was old enough to toddle, she did not regard them as roman-

tic, especially. So it had been her sincerely regretful smile which had sent Pop riding that first long moody grubline to forgetfulness.

In a very few months, though, when no prince on Arab charger dashed up to woo and win her coy affections, Ellen's romantic notions faded somewhat, and she began to regret the leaving of the red-headed cowboy. She even wrote one shy, blushing letter to him, when chance let her hear of him indirectly.

**B**UT Pop had changed also in those months. He had not ceased to love Ellen Burdett, never would; but he had turned the spotlight of analysis upon himself, and decided that the girl had been right in the first place. He was not the material of which satisfactory husbands were made. He did not answer the letter.

Whenever the mule slowed to his stodgy walk, Pop fired questions. Little by little the horrified Bob came to understand that a good deal more than mere suspicion lay behind the elder's uncompromising attitude.

"This was yore daddy's!" snapped Pop, holding up the Smith & Wesson. "It was given him by Lester MacLain, one of the Circle Dot owners." He swung back toward the cholo. "Now yuh talk an' talk fast!" he gritted, raising the romal threateningly.

"No, no, Señor!" cried the captive. "I buy de gun! *Es verdad—*"

*Smack!* Pop had applied the romal again, and the mule jogged forward. It was tiring, but its trot was even worse than a gallop could have been.

"Ah-h-h! *Madre de—*" screamed the prisoner, and lurched over in a faint.

"God, Pop, are yuh sure?" gasped Bob, white-lipped. This torture was almost too much for his stomach.

"It was the Injun hoss-wrangler done it. He'd come to the house after Ellen, an' Link busted in on him," said Pop. "I'm shore! I wanted yuh to savvy!"

## CHAPTER V

"Don't Stay In Jimtown Tonight!"

**A**BOUT noon of the third day of their journey, Bob and Pop rode into the adobe-lined main street of Jimtown, with their pack animals and prisoner.

The town had a run-down, mangy look, owing perhaps to the pack of starveling, dust covered dogs that seemed more numerous than inhabitants. Once upon a time Jimtown, elevated to the dignity of a stage stop and supply center by Bob's own uncle, had supported four or five hundred souls, lost souls, Mexicans and Indians, with all their possible permutations and combinations.

There had been two or three white men, also, but that had been when the deep-worn canyon through the center of the town had been half filled with the swift, sweet waters of Magpie Creek. After wandering unhurriedly into a crater lake on the JB ranch, filtering down through channel and ditches on the fertile bottomland sections, it had struck a gradient, and hurried through town to mate and lose itself into the thirsty desert sands fifty miles beyond.

Nothing now could gild or hide the failure of Jimtown. A single well, furnishing the sweet water, doubtlessly accounted for the manner in which it clung to a sort of existence, for *grat'agua* is pitifully scarce all through this section of the Southwest. Grant it a sufficiency of rain, or good irrigation, and this land would carpet itself knee-high in blossoms, grass and crops of varied nature. But the blight of

thirst was upon it—had been upon it ever since the JB had become the shunned Ranch of Bones.

The prisoner was now roped securely and gagged. Bob and Pop dismounted and tethered Emilio's mule to the hitching-rack of the Rayo Rojo Cantina, after giving it and each of the horses a bucket of water from the well, and refilling their nearly empty cans.

A dazed-looking Mexican lounge slouched in the shade at one side of the cantina doorway.

"*Vamos!*" snapped Pop, slapping the black wood butt of his revolver.

THE lounge was not too stupefied to understand that word. After a single surprised glance he rose and shambled off. After going perhaps fifty yards he turned and looked back. The two white men had disappeared but the bound Indian still sat in his saddle on the mule. The lounge knew that Indian, but did not go near him. Instead he hesitated, then turned back down the street, and went to the side door of the adobe residence occupied by the local *jefe*.

"Don't like the looks of this dump a-tall!" growled Pop, entering the cantina and sniffing the stale dampness of the interior of the adobe building.

They sidled up to the main bar, a short affair of scarred pine, from which the stain long since had been eaten by the spilled liquids there dispensed. In back stood a man in a torn apron. He had white hair, and a peculiar, harsh face, terribly thin and lined—yet undeniably white. Two eyes of cloudy blue stared at and through the partners. The specter did not blink.

"Is there a marshal or a deputy sheriff in this town?" asked Bob. "We've got a prisoner, and—"

"Whiskey!" interrupted Pop, stepping on Bob's foot. "An' the best yuh got!"

Bob was silenced. He was watching that strange set face before him, he was conscious of a tingling chill which skittered from elbows to shoulders. He had the unaccountable sensation that on the other side of the bar a *dead* man was serving them!

IN spite of their demand they did not receive whiskey. The only sound was the bump of bottle and glasses on the bar as a pale yellowish-white liquid was offered. Then, still as silent as a mummy, the tall, emaciated bartender reached back, lifting an olla of water and two larger glasses, placing them before the customers.

"What the hell's this?" demanded Pop, staring at his poured drink, then lifting the glass and smelling the vile concoction. "Sa-ay, fella, don'tcha think I know whiskey from to-kill-yuh—an' green maguey juice at that? This stuff never'll go in my stomach! Don't touch it, Bob; it's wusser'n sheep dip mixed with rattler spit! They distills it in garbage cans!"

One hand reached across the bar, seizing the arm of the silent bartender and shaking it roughly. "Hey! You froze, or dumb, or what? Ain't yuh got—"

Bob Burdett had guessed something terrible. The idea had come when the bartender's face had twitched in a queer, spasmodic contortion. Affairs at this bar struck the younger man as strangely sinister. He put forth a restraining hand.

"Don't, Pop!" he cautioned. "I reckon there's somethin' wrong here!"

Pop must have sensed it, too, for he let go his hold and stepped back. Released, the white-haired bartender

turned away his face. His bony hands came up making some kind of a quick motion. Then he swung around again to face them, extending one hand, palm upward. There, rolling a trifle on their concave surfaces were two blue eyes—of glass! and then, closing his fist, he gestured toward his open mouth. At some time his tongue had been severed at the roots!

Pop gasped in horror. "Good God!" he exclaimed. "I—I—hell, pardner, I—" he could say no more.

"We're jes' as sorry as can be!" supplemented Bob, his own face chalkly beneath the tan.

The bartender nodded acknowledgement, a wan smile breaking across his gaunt features. He fumbled for a moment at the back of the bar, then brought out a piece of chalk and a two-foot length of dark-colored board. On this he scribbled for a moment, then turned it so the two could see. The chalk writing said:

*If you two are white men don't stay in Jimtown tonight!*

"Huh, we're gettin' lots of warnin's," grumbled Pop. "We're strangers from the north, fella. Why shouldn't we stay, if we've a mind to?"

THE bartender had wiped the board clean with a bar cloth. Now, tensing in a listening attitude for a moment, he wrote speedily again.

*Hograth doesn't like strangers.*

*I was one!*

As Bob and Pop read this message they did not see the shadowy figure that appeared suddenly in the doorway of the cantina behind them. A knife whizzed through the air, close to Bob's head. Pop cursed and reached for his gun as he swung around swiftly. He fired blindly at the fleeting shadow of a man, but he evidently missed his mark.

On a run the two men started for the door with their six-shooters ready for prompt action, but when they reached the street there was no one in sight, save the cholo, who was still bound and gagged as he sat on his mule.

"That bartender was right when he said Hograth didn't like strangers," said Pop grimly. "An' when I meets up with him he ain't gonna like me a-Tall!"

## CHAPTER VI

*"Stab Through the Eye—That Is Best!"*

WHO d'yuh s'pose Hograth is?" queried Pop when they had looked to Emilio's bonds and found them still secure.

Bob shook his head. "Prob'ly find out quick enough," he replied tersely. "Mebbe he's in charge here."

Securing information of any sort appeared to be extraordinarily difficult in Jimtown, and further experience only heightened their first unfavorable impression. Leaving Pop with the captive, Bob entered another cantina. There he met only suspicious stares, his questions both in English and border Mexican going unanswered.

Trying again at a dingy chile joint, where a Chinaman and a dirty peon woman dispensed malodorous food, "*No sabe,*" was the best he could get. At last they received information of a sort from Emilio himself, who was ungagged for the purpose.

"The *jefe*, Don Julio—lives up there," croaked the cholo sullenly. "*Demi usted un cigarro—*"

It seemed that Jimtown boasted no regular magistrate, and that since the town's decline the visits of even a deputy sheriff had become rarer and rarer. In all cases, from petty

thievery to killing, the Mexican *jefe* dispensed his own peculiar brand of justice. Whether his decisions were invoked by the town inhabitants themselves, and how they were enforced, all remained to be seen.

THEY found the *jefe*. He was a "grease-ball"—a Mexican dandy past his salad years who had gone to fat, and who exuded a continuous drenching of perspiration due to much *aguardiente*. Welcoming the strangers with short-fingered, moist hands outstretched, and with many short, jumpy bows, he seemed anxious to please.

"Too damned anxious!" said Pop grimly from the side of his mouth.

Bob saw that Don Julio exchanged one quick glance with the captive, before seeming to pay much attention to Pop's story. The two evidently had met before, though from Emilio's sullen glare it was impossible to guess in what connection. The *jefe* shrugged and shook his fat jowls as Pop's sordid story unfolded.

Of a certainty justice would be dispensed. This *bandido* bore one ver-ee bad reputation already, so one could easily believe the story of the Americanos. Again he had attempted murder? Bah, it would be the last attempt for this spawn of a Gila monster and a cockroach! He would pay the penalty!

Don Julio scowled fiercely, and waved a fat hand. "At sunrise his wickedness shall cease!" he proclaimed. "He shall be shot!"

"Hangin' suits this kinda varmint some better," objected Pop, "an' right now is a damn good time. Bring a rope, an' I'll do it for yuh, all proper an' legal. It's kinda my right, don'tcha think?"

For some reason this did not suit the *jefe*. Hanging it should be, but first there must be a scaffold erected,

and the execution then would have to be performed by the town police, who were under his control. Besides, the cool of the late afternoon, and the glorious evening were times when gentlemen should enjoy themselves; the *jefe* absolutely refused to do anything in such execrable haste as conduct an evening hanging.

UNTIL the morning hour of doom, Emilio could be shackled with iron fetters, and locked safely in the *juzgado*. The *jefe* would instruct a carpenter to nail a staunch beam to the joists of the *juzgado*, and meanwhile the estimable señores might inspect the place. No one ever had escaped from it.

After a careful inspection of the jail, even Pop had to admit that escape looked impossible. It was a three-celled adobe structure with a floor of heavy oaken planks. The walls were three feet thick. The windows were heavily barred, and the oak door was bound with brass and studded with bolts of the same material. Heavy old-fashioned shackles and leg-irons were attached to T-bars sunk through the wall and immovable.

"Looks all right," said Bob briefly.

"Yeah—but durin' the night we'll come 'round every now an' then jest to make sure," saturninely responded Pop. Until this belated vengeance was consummated, he would remain a far different man than the happy-go-lucky cowboy who had taken the southern trail with his partner.

With the *jefe* they returned to the residence. The Mexican was voluble, delighted at the chance to talk to strangers, he declared, and insistent that the two accept his hospitality for the night. He brought them to the patio, where comfortable chairs of woven maguey fiber stood about a table.

The *jefe* shouted for refreshments, and in a few minutes an Indian boy appeared with an enormous tray which he set on the table. Here was a pitcher of cooled aguardiente, an olla of water, glasses, and a bottle of the inevitable tequila.

Pop preserved silence, his features stony and relentless; but he unbent sufficiently to swallow a three-finger dose of the distilled liquor. Don Julia joined him.

Bob tasted his portion gingerly, making a wry face; but a little later, feeling the weariness and depression of the trip to Jimtown in his very bones, he held his breath and downed it all.

As tequila went, the liquor was fairly good. Yet for a few seconds Bob had difficulty in breathing, or even swallowing. The stuff was triple-distilled—sheer liquid torment.

Don Julio not only aged his own liquors; at times he adulterated them skillfully. This was one of the times. When he lifted the glasses to pour second drinks, his fat hand encircled the neck of the bottle—and also a long phial which also poured forth its contents into the first two glasses, mingling with the tequila. The phial held a colorless, almost tasteless fluid, chloral hydrate in saturated solution. Knockout drops.

NEITHER Pop nor Bob saw, for the trick was performed with audacious skill; and besides, they already had tasted some of the contents of the bottle. For all his oily complaisance, the *jefe* did not seem to them a person who needed to be watched when his own fat belly was within range of a revolver bullet. They underestimated Don Julio, who had been highly regarded as a cut-throat in his youth.

The *jefe* and Pop Argyle drank. Bob lifted the glass to his lips, but at the first tiny swallow a wave of

distaste for the stuff overcame him. Hiding the fact that he had consumed no more than one-tenth of the glass, he feigned a choking spell—and let the rest of the liquor spill out upon the baked clay of the patio floor. "T-too strong for me!" he gasped. "Gimme a glass of water!"

"Lay off'n the stuff," advised Pop. "It's mebbe some better'n the run of the stuff they serve in the cantinas, but to-kill-yuh ain't babies' pap by a long ways. The best of it pars up with varnish-remover, an' the wust—wa'al, fill up a water-pistol with the stuff, an' yuh can kill all the rattlers yuh want. Till the liquor eats up the rubber bladder in the gun, anyhow!"

DON JULIO poured himself a tall tumbler of aguardiente now, and offered some of this to his guests. Both Pop and Bob refused. They lay back, smoking cigarettes, while the *jefe* plied them with questions, and chattered on in fair English, speaking of nothing that mattered in particular.

"D'yuh know just where the JB ranch is—or was—from here?" asked the latter, addressing the *jefe*.

"Of a surety!" responded the latter, his beady eyes fixed upon the younger man with a curious expression. Bob yawned, and that seemed to relieve the Mexican. "It was a beeg place, up this Magpie Creek which now is dry. About four miles to the boundary, and then eight miles to the lake—now dry, too. There is nothing there any more—nothing but empty buildings, bones, and dead people who groan and shriek all night!"

Pop was nodding in his chair. Bob yawned again.

"D'you know a—a man hereabouts—named Hograth?" he inquired.

The *jefe* nodded. "Oh, *si*, *senor*," he said, and his voice seemed to

settle into a drone. He talked of the Senor Hograth being a big cattleman over beyond the divide of mountains to westward, perhaps forty-fifty miles away, who could tell. Years before he had come a few times to Magpie Valley and Jimtown with his vaqueros. A noisy, turbulent gang.

He was still worried about the man who had thrown the knife when they had been in the imaginatively named Crimson Thunderbolt Cantina. Neither Pop nor Bob had said anything to the *jefe* about the knife throwing episode.

Pop interrupted, to announce that he was going to inspect the prisoner. The *jefe* scowled, but it went unnoticed. Pop, lurching as he went to the gate, disappeared.

Pop was beginning to be a little dizzy as he made his way into the jail, but he was still quite conscious of all that was going on around him. After he had assured himself that Emilio still was shackled he again returned to the open air. As he stepped out through the door of the *juzgado* a rifle cracked, smashing into the adobe wall at Pop's left. He drew his six-gun and fired at the figure of the Mexican loungeur who had been sitting in front of the cantina when they had first ridden into town. The man howled, threw his rifle into the air, and then fell face forward into the dust to remain there motionless and very limp.

"Reckon, he ain't throwin' any more knives," mumbled Pop.

When he returned five minutes later, assured that Emilio still was shackled, he leaned heavily against the adobe wall.

His eyes were blurred and his mind refused to function properly. He staggered toward the table, where Don Julio still kept up a one-sided conversation with the sleeping Bob.

"Damn good teq-tequila," muttered Pop. He made a lunge for the bottle, missed it and the table completely, and fell heavily to the clay floor. In a moment he snored.

The *jefe* made speedy time back to the *juzgado*. There he quickly unshackled the cholo, who growled throatily at the aches and anger resulting from his long restraint.

"I keel 'em!" he gritted.

That was all right with the *jefe*, entirely in line with his usual reception of strangers who came to Jimtown not bearing credentials from the almighty Hograth. In fact, the *jefe* had brought with him a long, needle-pointed poniard.

"There must not be much blood," he advised the cholo in Spanish. "That would necessitate too much digging of the clay, which shows when it has been disturbed. Use this, and stab through the eye—that is best!"

Teeth showing from between retracted lips, hunching like a gorilla bent on vengeance, the cholo came from the jail, stretched his long arms, and hastened direct to the patio. There were his quarries—one on the ground, snoring and the other asleep in his chair. The poniard upraised, tip-toeing stealthily now, the murderer stepped noiselessly forward—closer, closer! This was the vengeance he craved—death, with the victims unable to strike back in any way.

*What Happens to Pop and Bob? Do They Outwit Their Ruthless Enemies? Escape the Point of the Poniard? Why Does Hograth Hate Strangers? For the Answers to These and Other Questions, Read the Second Thrilling Installment of DRY RIVER RANCH Next Month.*

# The Raid of Captain Lightfoot



*A Fast-Moving Glamorous Story of a Bold Nineteenth Century American Highwayman*

By **JOSEPH IVERS LAWRENCE**

*Author of "The Butterfly of Death," "High Carnival," etc.*

**J**EREMIAH HASKINS and Richard, his son, had rested themselves and the bay mare three days at Springfield, where the elder man had transacted some business to his advantage, and were already, toward sunset, half-way back to Boston.

Framingham would be the next town, and as the mare's jog-trot grew slower with every mile they resolved to put the chaise in the inn stables there and take lodgings for the night.

"Yonder comes no merciful man!" exclaimed Jeremiah, pointing ahead through the haze of gray dust, "if

I judge him by his treatment of a beast."

A horseman, vaguely outlined in a rolling swirl of dust, was pounding the highway on a lathered mount, and using whip and spur as he came. So fiercely did he ride, so unmindful of road or hazards did he seem, that young Richard reined the bay mare toward the ditch, as she roused herself and shied skittishly with a challengingly neigh.

The reckless horseman changed his mind, however, in the very moment of passing the chaise. With a powerful hand and arm he curbed the galloping charger; curbed it so

violently that it went back on its haunches, then stood almost erect, like a man, threshing the air with its forefeet and snorting its indignation.

**A**STONISHED at such uncommon tactics, Richard pulled the mare to a halt, and stared, while his father muttered harsh disapproval of the stranger's actions.

Now the rider controlled the spirited horse with a firm hand, and wheeled it about, and as he faced the two travelers in the chaise he peered at them through eye-holes in a black mask, and covered them with a long-barreled cavalry pistol.

"Put up your hands!" he commanded, in crisp, clean-cut speech, "and deliver your valuables, gentlemen."

"We're unarmed, blast ye!" cried the elder Haskins, raising his arms. "What devilish tom-foolery is it, anyhow—highway robbery in the nineteenth century, in these civilized United States?"

Richard was slower in obeying orders.

The mare was prancing nervously, and he held her on a tight rein with his left hand while he raised his right.

The masked man swung the muzzle of the pistol toward him.

"No tricks, my lad!" he warned. "I've no patience with clever fellows, and I'm no apprentice at this trade."

"If I were armed," said Richard, "you'd be a dead man now! Shall I let the mare go, then? You'll see no more of us but a cloud of dust."

"Hold your horse, and your tongue, sir!" snapped the robber, and dismounted with languid ease by swinging a leg over the charger's withers and sliding from the saddle.

He was a man a little above medium height, spare and small-waisted like a soldier, and he carried him-

self with the habitual swagger of a veteran of the wars. His clothes were well made of black broadcloth, his hat was of beaver, and fashionable Hessian boots covered his tight breeches to the knees.

The black mask concealed his face to the lower lip, so there was no feature to remember him by, except a clean-shaven chin which had the bold aggressiveness of the predatory type.

With impudent assurance he leaned over the wheel of the chaise and snatched a leather bag from between Jeremiah Haskins' feet, then grinned as he weighed it in his hand and listened to the chink of coins as he shook it.

"Now your wallet out of that pocket, Grand'pa!" he ordered, "and your watch and seals, and that ring."

**O**LD Jeremiah was helpless, but not cowed. His flushed face darkened to purplish hues, and he breathed hard.

"Make well of what you're getting, you scoundrel!" he growled. "You won't have it long—nor your life, either! Captain Lightfoot—or whatever they call 'im!—he may ride and plunder all Canada, and stick his nose over the border, but neither he nor the likes of him can ride in Massachusetts! Mark me! you'll dangle from the gallows at Worcester or Springfield, before there's enough beard on that chin to put a razor to! And I'll be there when the trap is sprung!"

"And you, young man!" snapped the brigand: "you have a watch and a ring. There'll be some small stuff in your purse, too. Hand it over!"

"Next time we meet," said Richard bitterly, "the odds will be even—and it will be soon, unless you can travel faster than I!"

The highwayman laughed harshly.

"I travel as I please," he muttered, "but I never flee from an enemy—least of all from a country yokel! Go mind your sheep, my lad!"

He gathered his loot together and dropped it all into a capacious saddle-bag, then vaulted to the saddle from the ground, and was off, riding like a demon horseman.

## II

AT THE inn in Framington the senior Haskins created a hubbub with his account of the highway robbery, but the village constable was a portly man, past the middle years, and calm and well controlled. He could see no advantage in pursuing a rascal who must be already near Worcester with his wild riding, and he would promise nothing more than the sending of a courier to Worcester with a report of the outrage. The sheriff at that county seat would know what to do.

Richard Haskins, aged one-and-twenty, demanded from the inn stables a good horse and a brace of pistols, and his father took fresh alarm.

The constable was right, the old man suddenly declared: it was quite enough to do, to leave the whole matter to the discretion of the sheriff of Worcester County; and he added that no young man in private life, of a respectable family, should be careering over the roads at nightfall, armed with horse-pistols, on the trail of a bloodthirsty bandit—not in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, in the year 1819.

Richard calmed himself and used diplomacy. He was, he asserted, merely riding as a messenger to spread a warning to other travelers, and to hasten the publishing of the startling news through the western part of the state. The pistols, if

they were obtainable, would be taken as a precaution. It was now evident enough that no man should venture upon the highways without being armed.

With sober reasoning he begged his father to let him ride at least to Worcester, where he could lodge for the night. He could give the sheriff a first-hand account of the experience, and that official would be able to set the machinery of the law in motion without delay.

"The robber was a brazen scoundrel," he said bitterly, "and plainly a public menace. My honored grandfather, Colonel Haskins, would never have shirked his duty in such a situation, nor delegated the obvious course of action to a hired courier. The Minute Men of Boston did not wait for day to dawn."

"I am not sorry to see in you the fine qualities that distinguished your grandsire, Richard!" the old man declared. "There is, I must admit, a public issue to be recognized, and we have a duty to perform. Very well, then, I'll see to the procuring of the pistols and the horse, while you take some refreshment in the tap room. But see to it, son, that you stop at Worcester and have your night's rest. And don't be tempted to sit up over cards or dice at the inn."

SO Richard posted out of the inn yard on a rangy charger of good wind and limb, with pistols in holsters on the saddle bow; and as soon as he rounded the first turn in the road he used the spur and put his mount to the run.

It was dark evening when he pounded into Worcester, and he needed a fresh horse, for he had no idea of stopping there except to see the sheriff and make inquiries.

It was news that he brought, yet the sheriff was already stirred to

excitement, for a well-to-do farmer had been made to stand and deliver by a bold highwayman at Cherry Valley, on the turnpike to Springfield.

"I have heard often of your father, sir—Jeremiah Haskins, Esquire," said the sheriff. "It's a bold villain we have to deal with, and no respecter of persons; and I'll go so far as to say that it looks like Michael Martin, who calls himself 'Captain Lightfoot.'"

I'VE heard of Captain Lightfoot," said Richard, "and hardly believed the tales.

"But would he venture so close to Boston?"

"Who knows? He landed within the year at Salem, presenting himself as an army officer and soldier of fortune; then he was reported next from Canada, taking purses on the highways. He has been met with in Vermont and New Hampshire, and all along the border, so it would be nothing strange if he grew more daring and tried his luck on roads where there's more travel and more money."

"If he robbed the man at Cherry Valley," said Richard thoughtfully, "then it would appear that he was riding toward Springfield—perhaps on to Albany. I'll change horses, I think, and go on to Springfield, to tell them there what happened to us."

"As you please, Mr. Haskins—so long as you don't set about any personal encounter with the desperado. I've sent a messenger to Springfield, and we shall post placards in all the towns presently, asking constables to keep their eyes open for the brazen rascal."

Richard cantered out of Worcester at eight o'clock, on a lighter, swifter horse, and he came to the town of Warren at ten, and needed a third

horse for the next stage of the journey.

The houses along the way were dark now, for the most part, respectable persons were in bed; but in the inn at Warren a tired young gentleman arrived a quarter-hour before Richard Haskins, was in the tap room taking a cutlet and a mug of ale.

"Lightfoot!" the young man cried, springing up, as he heard Richard telling his story. "Has he been this way, then? I can add something to your report, sir."

"The Cherry Valley robbery?" queried Richard.

"Cherry Valley? No, I rode through that village without a halt. I come from Boston, and there, in the afternoon of yesterday, I heard how Captain Lightfoot rode to Medford, to plunder the dinner guests of His Excellency, Governor Brooks. He stopped the chaise of Major John Bray, of Boston, at the pistol's point, and took the major's purse and other valuables. Now they're scouring the coast towns for the man, from New Bedford to Portsmouth; but they never look in the right place for a fox of such a color."

RICHARD ordered a supper served in a hurry, then went to the inn stables to see about another horse for his next lap and make sure that the one he took at Worcester was blanketed and bedded down for the night.

Glancing over the array in the stalls, he saw a tall dark chestnut gelding that stood with legs apart, and head drooping, still blowing from a dash on the roads. He went into the stall and examined the animal, looking at the head, and asking the ostler to hold the lantern closer.

"Whose horse is this?" he inquired.

"Just came in, Master," said the ostler. "A young gentleman—he's in the tap room right now, sir. Said he'd be needing a hoss for to go on to Springfield with. You'll hardly be askin' for that' un, half foundered as he is."

"No, I'll take the sorrel, there in the third stall," said Richard, patting the heaving flanks of the big chestnut as he left it.

HE went back to the tap room and sat down at table with the young man who was finishing the cutlet.

"Your pardon!" he said apologetically, "but how did you come by the chestnut horse the ostler says you turned in here?"

"At Brookfield, at the inn," the other answered easily. "It was all they had, but scarcely fit for the road. I took it for the seven miles here, hoping for better luck at this place. There's no pleasure in riding a jaded nag."

"It's a clue," Richard said frankly. "I know horses as I know people, and that's the one that our Captain Lightfoot was riding when he paid us his compliments at Framington. A hard man, with a hard hand, and the beast was near spent at that time."

"Interesting!" exclaimed the young man, taking a pull at his ale. "And how was your robber dressed, when he presented himself to you?"

"Black broadcloth, I'd call it—and black, at any rate," said Richard, glancing at the other's good suit of butternut worsted.

"Of course, you can't tell much by the horse," the young man said reflectively. "Your robber may have ridden it till it was spent—for I found it barely able to amble these seven miles; but then, again, he more likely left it much farther back. Some of these ostlers and their masters have no feelings for a

beast: they'll rub it down, give it a measure of oats, and send it off again."

"I'm stopping for just a bite; then I'm going on," said Richard.

"Did your highwayman say to you that he was Captain Lightfoot?"

"Why, no, he did not; but my father mentioned Lightfoot and his knavery, while the fellow had the pistol at his head, and he said nothing—neither yea nor nay."

"By your leave, I'll ride with you when you go on," proposed the young man. "These are quiet and peaceful roads, but when such gentry as the Captain are on the march, there's safety in numbers."

### III

WHEN the two young men left the inn together, the stranger took a pair of saddle-bags from under the table in the tap room and slung them over his shoulder, and they appeared bulky and of some weight.

"My name is Richard Haskins," the Bostonian said courteously, looking at the other inquiringly.

"Winters — Henry Winters is mine," was the ready response.

The sorrel was already saddled for Richard, and the ostler brought out a roan for Winters. Although the custom of bearing small arms had been waning since the turn of the century, and was fast disappearing, each man produced a brace of pistols in holsters, and fastened them to the saddle, and the ostler made nothing of it.

"One man like this Lightfoot," Richard remarked, as they rode off, "can restore the habit of wearing swords and pistols. I dare say you armed yourself, Mr. Winters, after hearing in Boston of the raid on the Governor's dinner guests?"

"I was already armed," Winters

replied. "My business keeps me in travel on the roads, and one meets all manner of strange folk in lonesome places. Highwaymen are out of fashion in New England—and the dashing cavalier type is fast passing away in old England; but a lone traveler runs afoul of vagabonds who are always tempted to plunder, if the odds are unequal."

An inn on the edge of the village of Palmer was still showing lights in the parlors, though it was after midnight, and they agreed to stop long enough to rest the horses, or perhaps to change again, if the stable afforded suitable remounts for the remaining fifteen miles to Springfield.

A sleepy ostler met them at the horse block and took the bridles; each man detached his pistols from the saddle, while Winters took off his heavy saddle-bags and slung them again on his shoulder.

Then, in the stillness of the night, as they stepped into the porch, they were thunderstruck by the sound of an explosion in the lighted parlor, and they heard a muffled cry and the fall of a body.

Winters' hand was on the latch of the heavy door, and he thrust it open and reached the doorway of the parlor in one stride, while he jerked a pistol from one of his holsters.

**R**ICHARD was at his heels, likewise armed and ready.

A heavy-faced man, rather broad and bulky, in a caped traveling coat, stood back of a table upon which a supper was spread, with a smoking pistol in his right hand.

Between the table and the door, on a tapestry rug, lay the body of a smaller, slighter man, dressed plainly in homespun like a countryman or a small tradesman, and there was a

bullet hole in the forehead, near the right temple.

An elderly man, evidently the landlord, stood in a doorway leading to the kitchens, white-faced, gaping, wringing his hands in consternation and anguish.

"Gentlemen!" boomed the man with the pistol in a husky but robust voice, "I am sorry to startle you so much, on your arrival, but the events of the last five minutes were not of my ordering, believe me! Self-preservation is a cardinal law, you'll agree, I believe, and self-preservation was the sole impulse that moved me to this act. The innkeeper, here, was not a witness, yet he cannot—and I'm sure he will not, refute my statement."

**R**ICHARD HASKINS and Winters, recovering from the initial shock, stepped forward and stared curiously at the body of the dead man, and Winters pointed to a small brass-bound pocket pistol that was partially concealed by the outspread fingers of the right hand.

"I will not touch the pistol," he said quietly; "that's for the coroner; but—was it discharged, sir?"

"If it had been," said the man behind the table, "I should not be here to discuss the situation, gentlemen. The assassin's finger was pressing the trigger when I fired, and I repeat that my action was purely defensive."

"Was this man a robber?" Richard inquired.

"A robber, by all the evidence, sir. You must ask others how he came here, and when. Five minutes, I should guess, before I heard your horses' hoofs in the yard, the door opened softly and this man stole into this room, with that small pistol in his hand. He signaled for silence, threatening me fiercely; and the door to the kitchens was closed.

It's clear enough that he had followed me, and watched me through the windows, for he ordered me to take my bags and luggage from beneath the table.

"The chaise that you must have seen in the stable yard is mine, gentlemen. I'am a merchant, but not a rich one. My home is in New London, and my business takes me on long journeys through the eastern states. Ours is now a land of law and order, yet I habitually arm myself against attempts upon my life and upon my property. No court can justly rule that I have acted in a manner unbecoming a free man and a loyal citizen."

**D**OES this landlord know you?" asked Winters.

"It is my first visit to this tavern," said the man. "I was going on to Springfield, but the hour was late."

"I do not know any one here!" wailed the distracted landlord. "I never saw you young gentlemen before; I never saw that—that man that's lying there. Always it has been a quiet place, here, and I have kept a good house and enjoyed the patronage of fine people. Now, tonight, there is a fine family in the rooms in the west wing, and—God grant they did not awake! Never did I think there would be murder done in my house!"

"Murder?" cried the man with the pistol hotly. "You keep a check on that tongue of yours, fellow! Shall I tell you what it may mean to call a good citizen a murderer?"

"You are, naturally enough, somewhat overwrought yourself, sir," remarked Winters. "That is not so surprising, but you would do well to calm yourself. There must be, in this commonwealth, a regular investigation of this case—in justice to you as well as to the community. Some one may know who this man

was, and what reputation he bore. You have not told us your own name, yet I am sure you would not withhold it."

"My name!" cried the man proudly, in a sonorous voice, "is Phineas Mitchell—at your service, gentlemen. Find me a man—or a woman, either, who can say it is not honorable, and I'll ask pardon for offering it to your attention."

Richard was regarding the man's flushed and twitching face intently, and he said deliberately:

"My father is Jeremiah Haskins, a merchant of Boston. He has associates in New London, and we go there occasionally. I am familiar with the names upon his books, but I do not recall the name of Mitchell, though that may not be significant."

The man flushed more darkly, and his lower jaw was thrust out to add an expression of grim defiance to his mobile face. "What's this, then?" he cried. "A drum-head court-martial? And by what authority?"

Richard stared at that prognathous chin. There was something distractingly familiar about it. He tried to picture it to himself, partially concealed and shadowed by a black mask. It was all rather puzzling, however, for the man in the black mask was slender and of a dashing, military habit, and this man was almost portly in his great coat.

"It is the very essence of the common law, my friend," spoke up Winters, "that every citizen is vested with authority to maintain peace and order. Here we have no officer of the law, at the moment, but as citizens we exert ourselves to safeguard justice and the peace until a qualified officer may arrive."

"Humph! You are young, you two!" exclaimed the man who called himself Mitchell. "Like the young, you arrogate too much importance to yourselves by far. I shall render

an account of my actions to the proper authorities, at the proper time. Meanwhile I am my own man, and my own master, and I shall leave this place when, and how, I please."

"For that matter," said Richard, "it is the innkeeper's duty to hold you for the constable, for his own protection."

ON sudden impulse, Winters stooped over the body on the floor.

"Witness that I do not change the position of the body," he said to the others, as he cautiously explored the pockets of the dead man's jacket.

Then, from the breast pocket he drew forth a folded paper, opened it, and held it in the dim yellow light of the sperm oil lamp.

"A warrant from a Boston justice's court," he said in an even tone: "a warrant for the arrest of one Michael Martin, alias Captain Lightfoot, for robbery on the public highway of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The warrant is issued on the complaint of one Major John Bray, of Boston."

"This man, then, was a peace officer!" exclaimed Richard.

The man who still held the empty pistol changed his attitude to one of grim control and cold dignity.

"Calm yourselves, young gentlemen," he advised. "I did nothing but to defend myself from assault with a dangerous weapon. I knew nothing of that warrant, if that is what it is; and I never heard of Captain Lightfoot, by that or any other name. If that man was an officer, or a deputy, then he was a great fool! No word was spoken of a warrant. The man came upon me, stealthily, like a thief. I have property here, and I had to protect it. My life is precious to me, and I had to protect it."

"There is a constable in the village?" queried Richard, turning to the innkeeper.

"Oh, yes, sir, there is a constable."

"Go fetch him, then!" ordered Richard sharply. "It should have been done before. Tell him that a man has been killed, and tell him to bring deputies or citizens to assist him." The innkeeper bobbed his head and backed out of the door, glad to make his escape.

"I am a reputable citizen and merchant," said the man Mitchell coldly. "I deny your right to hold me here, and I assert my right to protect my own interests."

AS he spoke he quietly placed the empty pistol on the table in front of him, among the dishes and cutlery. "I claim the privilege," he went on, "of taking my personal property and leaving this place, of my own will. I shall meet the constable in the village, and render my report of the affair to him."

Speaking calmly, showing no excitement, he lowered his right hand below the top of the table, then stooped slightly.

Like a flash, Richard snatched a pistol from the double holster which still swung from his left arm, and leveled it at the man's head.

"Hands up!" he shouted fiercely.

The man's face blanched, he fell back a pace against his chair, and his hands went up.

"Now," said Richard sternly, "don't lower your hands to the level of your waist, but catch the lapels of your great coat, throw them back, and let the coat fall from your shoulders."

"And—if—if I refuse?"

"Then my companion, Mr. Winters, may be good enough to strip and search you for me."

The man shrugged his shoulders disdainfully, pulled back the broad

lapels of the coat, and let the garment fall to the floor.

"Ah, but how pitifully you shrink before our eyes!" exclaimed Richard. "You see, Winters, how this full-fashioned, well-fed fellow is changed magically to a spare and almost under-nourished jack-of-diamonds! Yesterday he was masquerading in broadcloth, with the willowly figure of a subaltern—as Captain Lightfoot has so often been described; and now he would play the part of a portly merchant, rather sedentary in habit, while he is making off with his loot."

"A damned lie!" gasped the man.

"Your mask should have covered the chin," said Richard. "I marked that jaw, while you held us with your pistol. Now there is stubble on it, needing a razor, but that jaw bone cannot be disguised.

"The packets attached to your belt account for the filling out of the great coat, and I shall ask Mr. Winters to examine them, before we go through your saddle-bags for my father's property."

"A pleasure!" Winters said ironically. "The fellow has presented a series of surprises, and there may be more to follow."

HE put his holsters down, across his saddle-bags on the floor, and started to pass around the end of the long table.

All at once, the man lurched forward drunkenly, as if swooning. The table tipped, then crashed over in a prodigious wreck of chinaware and glasses, and the sperm-oil lamp was shattered and extinguished, leaving the large room in total darkness.

"Guard yourself, Haskins!" shouted Winters, and Richard heard him moving toward the windows and flinging the furniture about.

Then an orange flame shot through the blackness with a loud report, and

a bullet sang above Richard's head and thudded into the wall.

Richard got his other pistol in his left hand and held both weapons ready, then backed toward the door to the porch, meaning to guard against the man's escape.

He heard a man breathing close to him. "Where are you, Winters?" he called.

"Here, by the kitchen door," said Winters. "Watch the doors!"

Some heavy object hurtled past Richard's head, missing it by a hair, and there was a rush for the door.

Richard fired into the blackness, then leaped forward and flung his left arm around a shape that blocked the doorway. The two bodies crashed together, and Richard lost the pistol from his right hand, but wrapped both arms about his opponent and battled to overpower him.

THE man was wiry and agile, and presently they were both on their feet; and then they blundered over a chair and plunged to the floor, and the breath was almost driven from Richard's body. Still, with all his will and strength, he held on, and got an arm about the other's neck and rolled on top of him. Winters ignited a candle that stood on a table by the wall.

The man heaved himself up and tried to fling Richard away from him, but Winters sprang across the room and pointed a pistol at his head. As the man groaned with anguish and despair, and yielded, there was a rush of footsteps on the porch, and men with lanterns burst into the parlor, a constable with his official staff leading the charge.

They shackled the prisoner, hands and feet, and tumbled him into the chaise which he had called his own, and, in the lantern light, Richard surveyed the contents of the saddle-bags and pouches, and identified his

father's money, papers and jewelry. Other property in the bags tallied with the account of the Cherry Valley robbery, and the constable was grimly gratified and thrilled to his official heart. Horses were brought from the stable for a cavalcade to the town jail, and Winters blithely mounted a little dapple-gray mare, clean-legged and mettlesome.

"I shall rest here till dawn," Richards announced, "and then return to Boston. If the local magistrate requests a deposition, I shall wait here to make it."

The constable, preparing to start the solemn procession on its way, once more addressed the captive, who writhed in torment in the chaise.

"Mind you well, my man," he said impressively, "that I arrest you as the notorious and villainous Captain Lightfoot, otherwise known as Michael Martin. You know well enough what's contained in the Boston court warrant, and—added to that, I arrest you and hold you for the murder of a man unnamed, but who shall be named in due course of law. And I arrest you for highway robbery at Framington, and highway robbery at Cherry Valley. And I do furthermore—"

**G**OOD constable!" cried Winters in mild protest, "you'll overwhelm the culprit with the very weight of the manifold charges. Pray let the magistrate have his will with him, and pass him on to the higher tribunals. As a matter of fact, constable, you dignify him over-much, for the fellow, though he has murdered, is little above the rank of a common chicken thief."

"How, then?" demanded the constable. "A chicken thief?"

"A cheap jack, my dear constable! A poor braggart, and a tawdry imitation of the gentleman he would

palm himself off to be. It's unfortunate, you must know, that whenever a Captain Lightfoot rides across the land and makes a gentle art of the transfer of certain property from one gentleman to another, always, and inevitably, these cheap charlatans come flocking from the fields and pastures to ape him, to cheapen his name and fame, and to mock him with their uncouth antics.

**T**HIS clown has slain a man, and he has robbed good folk at Framingham and at Cherry Valley. Hang him, I beseech you, as speedily as may be, and make an end of him! But you must know that he *could not* be Captain Lightfoot, the cavalier, gentlemen, and artist, who rode from Canada to Boston to exact tribute from the distinguished guests of the Governor of Massachusetts."

"Not Captain Lightfoot!" gasped the constable. "What—"

"Because *I* am Captain Lightfoot!" cried the young man, "and I wish you a good morning!"

The little gray mare seemed to rise from the ground at his last word. She spurned the five-barred fence at the side of the stable yard, and was off, extending herself on the turnpike till she was a fleeting shred of gray mist in the half-light of approaching dawn.

Richard Hankins was struck dumb. He saw the man who had been for those few hours his loyal comrade, soar into the air like a sprite and fade out of the landscape.

Almost at the moment the gray ghost disappeared, he came to life, jumped to the top of the gate, and flung his hat in the air.

"Good-by and good luck, Captain Lightfoot!" he shrieked, and laughed aloud as he turned and saw the gaping constable staring into the dark distance.

# GREEN BOTTLES



*“Joker” Jim Borden Was Very Fond of His Practical Jokes—But One of them Backfired!*

By G. WAYMAN JONES

*Author of “The Phantom Detective,” “Alias Mr. Death,” etc.*

**I**F IT'S PEARLS that are pearls you're after—here are the beauties to knock yer eye out!”

With a flourish “Joker” Jim Borden, skipper of the *Last Laugh*, spread the mouth of the little leather sack he was fondling and sent two dozen beautiful milky white pearls rolling gently out onto the green cloth which covered the cabin table.

At his side, Pat Lonergan, his gangling mate, gazed at the softly shining, satiny globules with wide eyes and working lips. From the

gems his glance shifted furtively and anxiously to the young man who sat at the table and studied the display with professional eyes.

One by one George Harper picked up the gems and examined them minutely. They were flawless—as fine a collection as he had found in his years of pearl buying in the scattered islands of the South Seas. His eyes gleamed appreciatively as he cupped a perfectly matched half-dozen in his hand. If he could buy these gems at a reasonable price the

success of his trip was assured, regardless of what old Turaki might have.

That meant a great deal to Harper. Misfortune had camped on his trail for the past two years. Finally he had gathered all his funds and decided to stake everything on one more trip to the islands. The main thing that had determined his decision was a tale that had come up out of the Paumotan Archipelago.

**O**LD Turaki, king of far-off Makatea, according to rumor, had a rare stock of pearls. The reputation of Makatea was bad; that of its king, Turaki, worse. Cannibal and pirate, they called him, and traders were not anxious to stop at his island.

George Harper had decided to chance it. Seldom-visited Makatea should be an easy trading ground, and if Turaki's pearls were only half as valuable as rumored the trip would be well worth the risk.

In Suva Harper had bought his trading goods, but not until the *Last Laugh* came into harbor had he found a vessel suitable for his requirements. The little schooner was sturdily built and light-drafted, admirably suited for navigating the shallow, coral-studded waters surrounding Makatea.

Joker Jim, her skipper, was taking a passenger as far as Papeete and had readily agreed to continue on to Makatea—particularly when he learned that Harper was a pearl buyer.

On the second day out the skipper had turned the conversation to pearls and mentioned his own gems. Well aware of Borden's reputation for outrageous pranks, Harper had been prepared for another of the skipper's hoaxes; but this time Joker Jim was apparently in earnest.

Now, Harper sat surveying the

gems with amazement. These pearls were every bit as perfect as Borden had claimed. In the elite markets of Europe they should bring forty to fifty thousand dollars.

"Yes, they are nice specimens," he admitted. "What are you asking for them?"

"Me—I'm not one to bargain," Joker Jim pronounced flatly. "I have one price—take it or leave it."

"And that is?"

"Ten thousand dollars—cash!"

Borden sat back in his chair and folded his brawny arms across his wide, hairy chest. Lonergan, standing behind him, sucked in his long lower lip and held his breath.

The pearls were worth far more than ten thousand, Harper considered. Yet he could discover no joker in the proposition. Probably, he decided, Borden had reasons of his own for desiring a quick sale. Most of Harper's capital had gone into his trade goods. Ten thousand dollars would leave him almost penniless—but with a fortune in pearls.

"Sold!" he closed the bargain.

**F**ROM the drawer of his desk Joker Jim drew a sheet of paper and scribbled a bill of sale, while Harper picked up the pearls one by one, fingering them delicately before he put them back into the leather pouch and drew the fastening cord.

"There y' are!" Borden completed his task with a sigh of satisfaction.

Harper put the leather pouch on the table and glanced over the bill of sale, then unbuttoned his shirt and removed a money belt from around his waist. Carefully he counted out ten thousand dollars in bills.

"Well, we'll have to have a bit of a drink on that," Joker Jim declared heartily, with a sly wink at Lonergan. "I've got something special for an occasion like this."

From a locker the mate brought forth three champagne glasses and a gorgeous green bottle, clothed in a closely woven mesh of gilded wire and topped with a goldfoil cap. "Bottled Sunshine—Extra Special," read the ornate label.

"The best that money can buy!" the skipper boasted as he displayed the bottle proudly. "Here—you do the honors, Mr. Harper."

WITH his pocketknife Harper cut away the gilt cap and severed the wire mesh around the neck of the bottle. Then he started to work on the hard rubber cork.

Suddenly it shot from the bottle with a report like a cannon in that little cabin and slapped against the ceiling with terrific force. Harper had no time to follow the cork, however; in his hands he gripped a foaming, spurting fury. Out of the neck of the bottle he clutched the seething yellow liquid shot up to the ceiling. It drenched him and blinded him.

In an incredibly short time the storm was over. The bottle was empty, and nothing remained of the champagne but a drug store smell and the damp surface of Harper's shirt, which was already starting to dry. He blinked and stared at the bottle unbelievably. Then he noticed Lonergan convulsed against a wall, while Joker Jim rocked in his chair.

"Ha, ha, ha-a-a!" he roared. "That's a good un! 'Bottled sunshine', they call it! Ha, ha, ha-a-a-a!"

"Bottled dynamite would be more like it," Harper grumbled, as he remembered how close to his eye that rubber cork had passed, and as he noticed the deep dent it had made in the hard wood of the cabin ceiling.

"Wait a minute," Joker Jim called as his passenger started to leave the

cabin. "We'll have a drink of some quieter stuff I got here."

But Harper had had all he wanted of the skipper's drinks. Picking up his bag of pearls, he declined emphatically and went out on deck.

At the rail Cartwright, who was the only other passenger, turned a grinning face to meet him.

"So the skipper had his little joke, eh?" he commented. "I'd have warned you, old man, but the blighter never would've forgiven me. That trick's half the trip for him and his mate."

"What did they have in that bottle anyway?" Harper asked.

"Champagne, all right," Cartwright assured him, "but champagne that nobody'll ever be able to drink. There was a shipment of it lying around in Suva for months. The warehouse manager told me that in bottling the stuff in Germany the chemists slipped up and instead of putting in the decoloring solution they put in an aerating powder intended for Burgundies and Sauternes.

"Champagne is hard enough to bottle. This powder gave it an added pressure of ten pounds to the square inch. Figure it out for yourself; it's a wonder it doesn't blow up of its own accord. Of course nobody wanted the stuff—until Joker Jim came along. He thought it was the best joke of the year. He has cases of it stored down there. Got it for next to nothing."

QUITE a joke, all right," Harper commented, "but it won't be so funny if somebody loses an eye trying to open one of those bottles."

"It will for Bill," Cartwright disagreed; "that's the kind of bird he is."

When Harper reached his cabin he learned more about the peculiar character of Joker Jim Borden. Taking the leather pouch from his

pocket, he carefully poured out the pearls on his bunk.

For a moment he gazed at them admiringly. Then his brow wrinkled. Quickly he picked up one of the gems and examined it; then another, and another.

They were paste! Beautiful imitations of the real thing—but paste; worth about fifty dollars!

**F**OR a while Harper could not believe the evidence of his eyes. These were not the pearls he had examined and bought in the cabin. They looked just like the genuine gems, but under his expert inspection they were quickly revealed as nothing but paste.

Certainly he could not have been fooled by them in the cabin. These could not be the pearls he had bought; yet here they were in the little leather pouch in which he had placed them himself. After he had put them into the pouch he had laid it on the table. Yes, it was there on the table when the champagne arrived. It was there on the table after that infernal stuff had stopped sputtering over.

But was it? With sinking heart Harper realized how he had been tricked. Under cover of the spurring champagne Borden had switched pouches; he had grabbed the pouch of real gems and put this pouch of imitations in its place! No wonder he and his mate had so uproariously enjoyed the joke.

It was useless to accuse the skipper, Harper realized. Joker Jim would only laugh. He had the money, Harper had the pouch, and the sale had been witnessed by the mate. Harper could not even take his case to court.

His only hope lay in recovering the gems from the skipper. That chance was slim, he admitted. Against Joker Jim's brawny two

hundred and fifty pounds, his own hundred and seventy would stand little chance—not to mention Loneragan and the crew of Kanakas and half-castes, who would undoubtedly back up their skipper. Force was out of the question.

For the next three days Harper lost no opportunity to search for the pearls. From stem to stern he combed the ship. To his surprise Borden and the mate made no attempt to interfere with him. Often as he straightened up from his search he would hear Loneragan's chuckle behind him and catch the mate snickering at him.

Even the main cabin Harper searched as thoroughly as he could.

A stormy day which kept both Borden and his mate on deck gave him the opportunity to search the skipper's desk. That, too, proved fruitless. Just as he was finishing the last drawer, Joker Jim loomed up in the cabin doorway.

Harper wheeled, expecting trouble, but the skipper only grinned broadly.

"Whatcher lookin for, Mr. Harper—some more of that bottled sunshine?" he gibed.

**F**ROM Papeete the *Last Laugh* bowled along through two days of squawls and rough weather, but on the third morning the sun came out at full strength. The wind died down completely and stifling tropic heat descended upon the schooner.

Soon they sighted the black steaming mass of half-coral, half-volcanic Makatea, and with the auxiliary engine barely turning over they crept toward the uninviting island, a man aloft and another in the bow watching and sounding for treacherous submerged reefs.

Harper stared at the gloomy black bulk of the island dispiritedly, but Joker Jim kept his glasses trained

on the darker blur that seemed to be the entrance to the lagoon.

"Hi! There's a sail!" he called suddenly. "It's a canoe—coming out to meet us."

**I**N a few minutes an outrigger canoe could be clearly distinguished, its sail almost limp, but with two dozen flashing paddles sending it leaping toward the schooner. Within fifteen minutes it was alongside.

"That's Turaki, there in the middle," Borden pointed out a splendidly proportioned figure, clad only in a red *pareo* and a shark's-tooth necklace. "A fine bunch of cut-throats he has with him, too."

A ladder was lowered for Turaki's convenience, but Joker Jim posted himself at its head and belted orders that only the king and two of his men would be allowed on board.

Disdaining the ladder, Turaki leaped lightly over the rail and was followed in like fashion by two of his huskiest men.

With great ceremony Turaki presented Borden and Harper each with a large pearl which shimmered milkily in the bright sunlight.

"We have had word that you would visit us," he explained in the Marquesan dialect. "and all Makatea has made preparations to receive you. I have come to pilot you by a safe channel to the harbor."

"I don't like this business of running in too close," Borden whispered to Harper. "Let's stall a bit. Invite them into the cabin for a drink."

Turaki was delighted with the invitation and soon he and his two lieutenants were munching delicacies and drinking wine in the stuffy little cabin with Harper, the skipper and the mate. Borden was wary of the old cannibal, but his suspicions were dulled by the beautiful

gem Turaki had given him. From time to time he would examine it with avid eyes and whisper to Lonergan.

Turaki, too, noticed the skipper's interest.

"Many, many more have we on Makatea," he informed, between mouthfuls of chocolate wafers and canned salmon.

Then it happened, with startling suddenness.

With an effortless leap Turaki bounded to the top of the cabin companionway and shouted orders to his men. At the same instant his lieutenants swung handy bottles with great accuracy and effectiveness upon the heads of Joker Jim and his mate. Lonergan's skull smashed beneath the blow and he sank without a groan. Borden gave a better account of himself, but he was no match for the swinging bottles.

"You dirty, double-crossing rats!" he panted, and then a blow stretched him out beside his mate.

**H**ARPER knew that it was useless to struggle, but he met the combined rush of the natives with all he had. A well-aimed uppercut to the jaw sent one of them hurtling across the cabin. Then a bottle crashed down on the pearl buyer's head and darkness descended upon him, blotting out the oppressive heat and odors of the cabin.

When Harper came back to consciousness he discovered that the schooner was under way. He was lying on the floor of the cabin, his hands and feet tightly tied with napkins. A few yards away, near the center of the cabin, Joker Jim Borden lay groaning and cursing.

"This means the cooking pots for us if we don't get loose," he warned. "I know, now, what sort of preparations they made."

With all his strength he tugged at his bound wrists, but the natives had done their work well and even his mighty efforts were useless.

In another corner of the cabin lay the body of poor Lonergan. They had not bothered to tie him up, Harper observed. Then his attention went to Turaki's lieutenants.

They had finished up all the wine in the available bottles and were now busily ransacking the cabin from end to end in search of more. Heedlessly they scattered clothes and papers and dumped foodstuffs right and left, but nothing to drink came to light.

**H**ARPER found that his own throat was parched, and the thought of a drink of any sort made his mouth water. The natives were searching with increased fury as the heat in the cabin added to their thirst.

Again Harper tugged at his wrists. The napkin lashing gave a little! Another tug—and it gave more. He was sure now that he could free himself in a few minutes. Then, if he could get the cabin to himself, there might be a chance. But how to get rid of these natives—

Once more desperate necessity was the mother of invention. A plan—a wild, crazy plan—came to him. It might possibly work. At least he could try it.

"Try your damndest to get your arms free," he whispered to Borden. "I'm going to try a stunt that may give us a chance."

The skipper's response was a struggle that turned his face apoplectic and left him panting.

"Wine! Wine!" Harper called to the natives in Marquesan. "I am thirsty. Give me wine."

Distastefully they told him that there was no more wine. They had searched all over this cabin and

there was no more wine. The greedy white men had drunk it all up.

"There is plenty wine," Harper told them. "There—on the other side." He directed them to the wine lockers underneath the starboard transoms.

Eagerly they pulled these open, and then a wild yell of joy burst from their dry throats. There before them stretched endless lines of glorious cool-looking green bottles bound in a wonderful gold network. Through the strands of this golden web they could see the precious liquid bubbling and flashing.

Each of them grabbed a bottle and set to work on it, but the wire was too much for them and they were still struggling with it when Turaki burst into the cabin.

It had been hot work under the blazing sun piloting the *Last Laugh* through the tortuous channel to his harbor, and Turaki at that moment wanted a drink more than anything else in the world. At the cabin doorway he stopped and stared.

There, in the hands of his lieutenants, were two bottles filled with the wonderful fluid he craved. But why didn't they open them? Why were they wasting all this time while his parched throat clamored for a cooling drink? He would show them how to open those bottles.

In a stride he was across the cabin and had grabbed the bottles.

**N**OW was the moment on which Harper was betting. In a moment he would know whether or not his plan was to succeed.

Turaki impatiently grasped a fancy gold-meshed bottle in each hand and deftly opened the two at once by knocking their heads together.

Harper turned his face away just in time to avoid the shower of glass that rained over the cabin as those

two overcharged bottles went off with a terrific bang. But that report was nothing compared to the detonation that followed immediately, as the force of the explosion, kicking downward, set off the whole mine in the lockers.

Tossed and worked up by the stormy weather of the past two days, that overcharged champagne needed only a tap to send it off. With a tremendous boom it blasted forth and shook the schooner from end to end!

**M**ANY things happened in that thunderous moment.

The wine lockers disappeared, and the furniture in the cabin was tossed aside like chips in a gale.

Harper felt himself lifted and rolled across the floor to the wall, but the force of the explosion had passed over him. It hit Turaki and his lieutenants with all its might.

The king, who had been bending over his pleasant task, sailed through the air and crashed his head against the cabin ceiling so that Harper was sure the skull must be splintered. In a limp heap Turaki dropped to the floor. His lieutenants fared somewhat better. They were picked up and slammed against the opposite wall, where they fell breathless to the floor.

All of this Harper witnessed in the same second that he saw the heavy cabin lamp lifted out of its gimbals and catapulted against the ceiling—to come crashing back to the floor, straight for Joker Jim Borden. The skipper did not catch that blow fully; the heavy lamp would have crashed through his skull if he had not been lurching out of the way just as it struck. But it stretched him out senseless on the floor and then landed with a crash beside Harper.

After that awful moment of pandemonium an unearthly stillness settled over the cabin. Harper could hear nothing but the madly sizzling champagne rushing to escape from what remained of the bottles which had held it.

Then one of the natives groaned weakly and started crawling toward the companionway. His companions followed him. Soon many bare feet came padding across the deck. A few startled explanations in Marquesan—

Harper could only make out that it was something about devils—then there was a rush for the side of the schooner. Splashing in the water. It grew fainter, and soon the quiet outside was as complete as in the cabin.

Again Harper worked away at the napkin that bound his wrists. It gave a little more. Then it held and his best efforts would not budge it farther. If he could only get to a knife so that he could cut his way free—

There on the floor a few feet away from him was the answer to his problem; half of a shattered, quarter-inch-thick green bottle. Harper edged his way over to it and soon had it in his lap. A few minutes careful sawing away on its sharp edge and he was free.

**O**NLY then did he notice the cabin lamp on the floor beside him. Its ornate cast-iron bottom was broken—and beside it lay four beautiful pearls.

"Well, I'll be damned!" Harper whistled his surprise as he picked up the gems and studied them.

Carefully he lifted the lamp and examined the break. Beneath the oil tank was a hollow space in the ornamental casting. He tilted the lamp and into his lap poured a beautiful milky stream. Twenty more match-

less pearls lay there beside the others.

WHEN Joker Jim came back to the world of his schooner George Harper was working over him, pouring water over his face and stinging rum down his throat. His wrists and ankles had been cut free and he struggled up on one elbow, to shake his head dazedly as he surveyed the wreckage around him.

"God—what happened?" he mumbled thickly.

Harper told him.

"How about the crew? Is the ship all right?" The sailor's first thought turned to his schooner.

"The schooner's all right," Harper reassured him. "I liberated the crew. They're all right except for a couple of broken heads. The natives had them all tied up and laid out in a nice orderly row. There's not a sign of a native anywhere now. Even the shore is deserted."

Then Borden noticed the missing lamp. Frantically he searched the cabin with his eyes until he spied it lying there on the floor. Its bottom was broken, and four pearls lay spilled out on the cabin floor!

Anxiously the skipper looked at Harper, then took an opportunity to edge his way across the floor until he leaned back against the lamp and covered those telltale pearls. With one hand he scooped up the four gems from the floor, then carefully shoved the lamp into a corner.

At the first opportunity, when Harper stepped out of the cabin, Borden emptied the lamp's treasure into his hands. They were there—the whole twenty-four pearls! Hastily he crammed them into his pocket as Harper appeared at the head of the companionway.

"Turaki's coming around," he observed, as the king groaned and

stirred. "We'd better tend to him before he gets on his feet."

But there was little need for Harper's assistance in handling the Makatean. Turaki had had all the scheming and trouble knocked out of him. When he regained consciousness he cowered against the wall and surveyed the wrecked cabin with wide eyes.

Solemnly he promised to trade his pearls without further delay if the white men would only protect him from the devils who had come out of the green bottles.

Turaki was as good as his word. His awe-stricken tribesmen were as docile as lambs, and Harper's trading on Makatea proved to be the most successful of his career.

Before nightfall the *Last Laugh* had again threaded her way out of the shoals and was beating her way out to sea.

Once they reached deep water Lonergan's body was lowered over the side and the schooner headed for Papeete.

IT was altogether proper that a skipper who had just lost his mate should be gloomy on the return trip, Harper observed, but when the *Last Laugh* was safely at anchor in Papeete harbor, he felt that Joker Jim should take things a bit more cheerfully.

"Come on up to the club and we'll have a farewell bottle," Harper proposed. "They have some fine old champagne."

Whereupon Joker Jim Borden proved himself most ungrateful to the sparkling beverage that had saved his life. The ringing curses with which he damned all champagne sizzled and sputtered from his enraged lips with even greater fury than the turbulent liquid which had gushed from his beautiful gold and green bottles!

# VENGEANCE



## *A Gripping Story of Oriental Treachery and an American's Daring Adventure*

By **LIEUT. SCOTT MORGAN**

*Author of "Riley of the Bengal Lancers," "The Way to Danger," etc.*

**T**HE Lascar ran softly through the night pulling the rickshaw effortlessly behind him. His bare feet patted monotonously on the road, while at the rear, the twinkling lights of Singapore grew smaller and smaller as the miles passed beneath those untiring brown feet.

Rand Donaldson sat behind in the seat of the vehicle, staring with unseeing eyes into the night. On his sunburned brow a deep frown persisted. The cool evening breeze

swept down from the hills with refreshing breath, but so engrossed was he upon his own thoughts that he failed to notice it.

Though he had thought about it all afternoon, he was still puzzled about San Foo's summons. Admittedly, the Chinaman and himself were not on the best of terms. In addition to their business rivalry, bad blood had always existed between them. The Oriental's suave treachery stood in marked contrast to the open-handed methods of Donaldson.

The rickshaw suddenly left the road and turned in between the pagoda gates of a walled estate. A hundred yards up the gravel driveway, Rand vaulted lightly from his seat, instructed his boy to wait and entered the ornate gilded doors of San Foo's palatial residence.

A servant met him at the door and ushered him into a dimly lighted reception room. He waited there while the weazened little yellow man disappeared to announce his arrival. The house held the silence of death, broken only by the sleepy chirp of an exotic bird in a cage by the window.

**D**ONALDSON had an uneasy sensation that unseen eyes were watching him. With studied indifference he moved leisurely until his back was against the wall. The servant reappeared, bobbing and smiling like a mechanical doll.

"Follow, please," he said in his best English.

He led the way down a hallway into a well lighted room. Book shelves reached from floor to ceiling. Behind an elaborately carved ebony desk sat San Foo, well fed, placid and a little past middle age.

The heavy lids of the Oriental's sloe eyes drooped ever so slightly. Something smoldered there for a brief moment. Then suddenly his gaze shifted. He glanced out the window toward the distant lights of Singapore for a moment before he turned again to his guest.

"Perhaps," he said in a low insinuating tone. "Perhaps, some day you shall kill French Louie, Mr. Donaldson?"

Rand's lean jaw set and he regarded the other through contemplative eyes.

"Perhaps I shall," he said noncommittally.

The Chinaman beamed benignly

upon him. He took in the strong rugged face with its broken nose slightly askew; the scarred gnarled fists toughened by salt water; the muscular arms with their crisp crop of coarse red hair.

San Foo had long since ceased to wonder why the Americans dominated even the far reaches of the world. He had learned that America bred men—barbarians, according to the celestial light and philosophical learning of his own tranquil and honored ancestors—brute men with shrewd brains who refused to die gracefully. Some of them refused to die at all.

He hated them.

But in spite of his Mandarin superiority, he admired some of them; even respected a few.

"Come, San Foo," Donaldson asked impatiently, "why did you send for me? We aren't such damned good friends. There was a time when you would have cut my throat and grinned like a Buddha when it was being done."

The Chinaman smiled faintly. "Maybe I would still do the same thing, my friend."

"We understand each other, anyway," said Rand with a grin. "But let's get down to business."

"If you will sit down. It is more comfortable to talk so," San Foo observed.

**D**ONALDSON drew a carved stool from a corner and sat down, his back against the wall. He lit a long black cheroot and waited, staring hard at his host's inscrutable face.

"French Louie now takes most of your trade in Sarawak and Dutch Borneo—" San Foo paused significantly.

"If he does, that's my business," said Rand brusquely. "He's cutting in on you plenty, too. Isn't he?"

"He killed Creston — your best

man," San Foo went on imperturbably.

"One of his men killed Creston," corrected Rand. "Say—what the hell are you driving at?"

San Foo ignored the question. "French Louie," he continued calmly, "is pearly near Aroo Island. It is a very rich bed. His divers have brought up much shell—many good pearls."

"Well?"

The Chinaman pointed his long-nailed forefinger at the American.

"You and I shall have those pearls."

"How?"

"You shall kill French Louie!"

**D**ONALDSON sprang from his seat and leaned angrily across the desk.

"Look here—I'm no damned pirate. And who the hell are you to give me orders?"

San Foo regarded him placidly.

"I have heard that when you find the man who killed your brother, you will kill him."

Rand Donaldson's tense body relaxed slowly. His scowl disappeared. A strange expression filtered into his weather beaten countenance. A hard light burned in his slate gray eyes as he stared at the Oriental.

"You mean that French Louie—"

"French Louie killed your brother," said San Foo slowly.

Donaldson inhaled sharply. "How do you know?"

"This is the East, my friend. There are many ways of knowing many things."

The white man searched the other's face keenly.

"How do I know you're not lying?"

"San Foo does not lie."

The hell he doesn't, thought Rand, but he said nothing. The Chinaman reached into a drawer of the desk and produced a small package

wrapped in water-proof silk. Silently he handed it to the white man.

Rand unwrapped the silk and found himself gazing at an old faded photograph. His hand trembled as he held the picture up to the light. The last time he had seen that photo was in the cabin of his father's schooner many years ago.

It was a picture of himself and his brother, Tom. The latter he had not seen since childhood. Separated by the sudden death of their father, he had lost all trace of him until recently when a Dutch trader, Van Vandt, had told him of a Tom Donaldson who had been knifed in New Guinea.

On that day Rand Donaldson had sworn a bitter and mighty oath to slay the man who had killed his brother. And now at last, it seemed that through the offices of San Foo, his enemy, he was on the trail of the vengeance he had sworn. He looked up, his face pale and drawn.

"Where did you get this?"

**I**T was brought to me from New Guinea. By one who saw your brother die— And it was French Louie who killed him!"

For several minutes the white man stared silently at the bland inscrutable face across the desk. Then carefully rewrapping the photograph he put it in his breast pocket. When he spoke his voice was hard and metallic.

"You say French Louie's pearly at Aroo Island?"

San Foo nodded. He read the terrible purpose in Rand Donaldson's face and he was well satisfied.

"I think perhaps, now," he said softly. "I think perhaps, now you will kill French Louie?"

An hour later the Chinaman escorted his guest to the door and they parted with friendly words on their lips. For in that single hour

a strange alliance had been formed. Together they would be strong enough to dare much. And they were spurred onward by two potent motives. The Chinaman wanted pearls; the white man, blood.

Twenty-four hours later two schooners hauled in their anchors and left Singapore bound for the West coast of New Guinea. Square jawed and red headed, Rand stood upon the poop of the *Viking*, while in the owner's cabin of the *Peiping*, San Foo sipped tea, a placid expression on his bland countenance which mirrored the complacency of his treacherous soul.

Only once did the two ships lose sight of each other. That was when they struck the tail end of a typhoon which whipped across the Java Sea. For a day and a night they were separated. When they came within hailing distance again, good winds carried them swiftly toward their destination.

Donaldson cracked on a full head of canvas forcing the *Peiping* to strain every timber in an effort to keep pace with him.

IT was late in the day when they at last sighted Aroo Island. The vessels hove to while Rand went alongside the Chinaman's ship in a dinghy to consummate their plans.

San Foo's idea of the attack was elaborately cautious. He favored putting in at the far end of the Island and making a journey on foot to a point where, with the aid of binoculars, they could spy upon the pearlery. In that way they could ascertain the enemies strength and plan the actual attack more intelligently.

But Donaldson was for descending upon the man he had sworn to kill that very night under cover of darkness. His impatience finally prevailed over the Oriental's caution.

At sundown the two ships weighed anchor. With sails furled they proceeded toward the island under the power of their auxiliary engines.

The *Peiping* led the way, for San Foo's mate was familiar with these waters. When darkness fell no lights were lit. It was past midnight before a light was discovered riding high upon the mast of a shadowy hull that lay off the *Viking's* starboard bow. Motors were shut off. Heavily muffled anchor chains were let out with painstaking care.

Several boats put out from the two schooners. There was San Foo and his score of Chinese coolies, and Donaldson's Malay crew in three boats. Al Jenkins, the *Viking's* mate, was the only other white man. With muffled oarlocks they moved silently upon the swiftly running tide toward their unsuspecting prey. Coming in alongside, they swarmed over the rail like monkeys.

Rand was the first aboard. A sleepy lookout aboard the pearler managed to shriek a startled warning before steely hands gripped his throat and prevented further outcry.

But the damage had been done. A rudely aroused crew rolled out of the forecabin to fall upon the intruders with knives and belaying pins. There were yells, curses and imprecations in half a dozen dialects and languages.

A VOICE roared orders from the poop. Rand leaped toward the after deck. A naked form sprang toward him. A long knife flashed. Rand's pistol barked. The man shrieked and pitched forward, but not before the flat side of his knife struck Rand's hand, sending his gun clattering to the deck.

He did not pause to retrieve it. Unarmed, he plunged on toward the poop. In the darkness, he was met

at the head of the companionway by a white man dressed only in a pair of trousers. There was the glint of steel in his hand.

"Are you French Louie?" shouted Rand above the din of battle.

"Yes—what the devil do you want?"

"You—you—"

Rand sprang up the companionway toward the pearler. French Louie's gun sputtered fire. Hot lead seared Rand's cheek. With a snarled oath he leaped upon his enemy.

THEY came smashing together like two charging bulls. Rand drove a hard right to the jaw that sent the other staggering back against the rail like a drunken man. But French Louie came back as if catapulted from a giant sling-shot. He sent blow after blow in rapid succession to Rand's head and body, driving him back along the poop deck toward the stern.

The two men had the after deck to themselves. Forward, on the main deck, men of many races fought—Malay, Chinese, South Sea Islanders, Japanese. Their mixed battle cries and growls of pain rose above the clash of knives, the whack of belaying pins on bare flesh, the crack of pistols, the impact of fists. Desperately they fought in a darkness so black they could hardly see each other, close as they were.

Rand ducked low and closed with his man, encircling his arms. Carried backward by the momentum of Rand's rush they crashed violently to the deck. It was a rough and tumble battle with no odds given or expected.

French Louie drove his knee into Rand's groin with a force that sickened. For a moment the American yielded to the spasm of pain and nausea. In that instant a big fist smashed into his jaw and his senses

reeled from the shock. Calloused fingers clutched at his throat.

With a sobbing intake of breath Rand thrust the palm of his left hand against French Louie's chin, forcing his head back. His fingers pressed against the other's eyeballs. Slowly, with desperate stubbornness, French Louie's throat hold yielded.

Rand's strength was returning. He drove his gnarled right fist into his enemy's taut, exposed throat.

The two men broke away and sprang to their feet. For a moment they stared at each other through the darkness. Rand's straining eyes could scarcely make out the other's white trousers in the gloom. For a moment as he leaned breathless against the hatch his hand came into contact with the cold, round end of a belaying pin. He barely had time to grip it securely before French Louie charged him.

Swiftly he raised the weapon above his shoulder and brought it down hard upon the pearler's head. French Louie fell at his feet with a low moan. His body quivered convulsively for a moment, sprawled face downward on the deck.

SPENT and exhausted, Rand swayed unsteadily on his feet. The wild yells and curses which had punctuated the free-for-all were completely stilled. The conquest of the pearling schooner had been swift and complete.

A voice spoke at Rand's elbow. He turned his battered face toward San Foo. The Chinaman's clothes were unruffled, the placid face expressionless, save for the sloe eyes that stared down at the prone body of French Louie.

"So—you did kill him?"

Before Rand could reply, a woman's white face appeared at the after companionway. She tried to penetrate the darkness. Then her

eyes fell upon the sprawling form lying so still upon the deck. She went over and knelt beside it and took the shaggy head in her arms and pressed it to her breast.

Rand flinched visibly. He heard San Foo giving orders to his coolies in rapid Chinese. Two of them sprang upon the girl and dragged her away from the still body.

Suddenly Rand leaped forward. His bruised and swollen right fist shot out to the jaw of one of the coolies. The other he seized by the neck and hurled him crashing down the companionway leading onto the main deck. Then he whirled upon the astonished San Foo.

**YOU** and your yellow rats keep your filthy hands off her—savvy?"

He thrust his chin belligerently into the mandarin's face. He was not aware that San Foo made the slightest move until the muzzle of a short-barreled automatic was thrust against the lean, hard muscles of his belly.

"Don't move, my friend," came the Chinaman's expressionless voice. "You are my prisoner."

"You — yellow - livered, double-crosser!"

The muzzle of the gun was pressed a little harder against him.

"Don't be a fool, San Foo! My men'll make shark meat out of you and your crew for this!"

"Your men are not capable of being much assistance to you," replied the Chinaman. "They are my prisoners. More than half the crew on this boat were my men."

Rand was beginning to think he understood a little more about San Foo than he did before. Still, for some unknown reason the Chinaman might be bluffing. Ignoring the gun which menaced his vitals, he called out to his men.

"Jenkins! Lay aft here!"

A string of oaths from somewhere amidships came in reply. "I'm sorry, sir. But this gang of yellow cut-throats have got me tied fore-an'-aft!"

San Foo chuckled mirthlessly. He issued swift orders and half a dozen brawny coolies fell upon Rand. Despite his struggles he was soon bound hand and foot and propped up against the low deck house. French Louie's woman came up to him and raised a tearful face.

"Who are you? How do you come to be with these pirates?"

Rand Donaldson was inarticulate. He could scarcely bring himself to meet the woman's eyes. He had never before seen a girl exactly like this one.

San Foo came up to them. He spoke to the grief-stricken, frightened girl.

"You are French Louie's wife?"

She nodded silently, too overcome by emotion to speak.

There was a flicker of triumph on San Foo's face when he spoke again to her erstwhile ally.

"You do not seem happy to meet the wife of your brother for the first time, my esteemed friend."

**R**AND glanced quickly at the girl and then at the prone body upon the deck before him.

He turned upon San Foo in deadly quiet.

"Quit sparring, damn you! What is your game, anyway? He was not my brother. Van Vandt, the shell buyer, saw my brother knifed in Suva."

San Foo chuckled sardonically.

"Van Vandt spoke the words I put into his mouth," he said, "French Louie was your brother—that is why I planned to have you kill him."

San Foo's face was no longer placid. An ugly scowl of black

hatred had filtered into the yellow countenance.

"Many years ago in Penang, your father did a very great wrong to Ling Soy. For this thing he died—Ling Soy, whom you know as San Foo, saw to that. You have played your part well—for that you will be rewarded. You will be the last of the Donaldsons to die—"

The Chinaman spoke to his coolies. They picked up French Louie's limp body and heaved it overboard.

**R**AND was carried below and thrown upon a bunk in one of the cabins beneath the poop. Torn by an avalanche of emotions, dazed and horrified by the terrible thing he had been tricked into doing, he lay quietly.

For the first time in his life Rand felt utterly, miserably helpless. From an adjoining cabin the sobs of a broken-hearted girl came to torture him. He would be glad when it was all over. But if he was going to die, he would like to go out fighting—for her.

He was barely conscious of the door opening and closing noiselessly. After a moment he realized that someone was in the cabin with him. He could hear a man's heavy breathing. A big hand gripped his arm. A hoarse whisper warned him to silence.

When Rand turned his head, he started violently. There, close to him in the ghostly moonlight that came through the open port, he saw the big head and shoulders of French Louie. But the man was dead! He had killed him. The body had been thrown into the sea.

Still Rand knew that what he saw was no apparition. Ghosts did not breathe heavily like living men. This man was alive—very much alive.

It was the first opportunity he had had to study the pearler's features.

For a long silent moment the two stared at each other. It was Tom! The family resemblance was strong. A younger, handsomer counterpart of himself. Square-jawed. Red-haired.

"What—how the devil—" burst out Rand, unable to restrain himself longer. "I thought you were done for!"

The younger man chuckled. "I've got a hard head. That crack you gave me just made me sleepy for a minute or so. I came to on deck while the Chinaman was talking to you. I overheard most of what he said—enough, anyway. I played possum. Crawled back up the anchor chain."

"Good boy!" murmured Rand. "Quick—untie me."

Soon his hands and feet were free. He stood up. The brothers were the same height; two powerfully built men, though the younger was narrower of hip, slightly lighter of carriage. A strange pride beat in Rand's breast as he surveyed the figure before him in the gloomy little cabin. They clasped hands silently. Nearly twenty years had passed since they had done that.

There was a sound of someone moving about in the main cabin. Tom raised his hand in warning and motioned his brother to lie down in the bunk. Then he took a pistol from his belt and moved cat-like to one side of the room.

**T**HE door opened and San Foo stepped into the room. He went to Rand's side and gloated down upon him. But his expression changed as the muzzle of a pistol was jabbed into his back.

"Keep quiet, or I'll put a bullet in your spine!" Tom's voice hissed behind him.

San Foo's face became a mask. His body remained motionless.

Rand sprang to his feet; frisked an

automatic from the Chinaman. Then the prisoner was thrown face down upon the bunk and the stateroom locked. Tom led the way into the main cabin. It was deserted. He moved swiftly on.

With Rand trailing him, he moved quickly across the cabin and opened a secret panel. He took out two repeating rifles and a couple of boxes of shells.

"They are already loaded," he whispered, passing one of the guns to his brother. "Come on—let's fill the yellow devils' bellies with a lead breakfast!"

The first streaks of the tropical dawn were lighting the sky over Aroo Island when two grim, red-haired, square-jawed men crept up onto the poop deck of the schooner.

**O**NE moment the early morning air was still, save for the slap of water against the ship's side. Then death fell with terrifying swiftness upon a group of coolies eating rice on the deck amidships. Hot lead poured from the two rifles on the poop. There were cries of agony, confused yells, and the shouts of Rand's crew held prisoners in the hold below.

Then of a sudden the cabin door burst open. San Foo appeared on the threshold, a revolver in his hand. A revolver which apparently had remained concealed in his blouse, and with which he had blown the lock.

He shouted staccato orders in Cantonese to his men in a desperate

endeavor to rally them. The revolver in his hand spat viciously in the direction of the two white men. A savage slug whined its way over Rand's head, and smashed into the ship's clock behind him. His eyes narrowed with hatred as he gazed at the yellow traitor who had essayed to send him to his death. His rifle pressed hard against his shoulder. His finger constricted on the trigger. A single shot rang out, and a lead slug buried itself in San Foo's heart, before he could retrieve the error of his inaccurate aim.

**B**LOOD ran suddenly down his blouse.

He staggered forward, a scream of pain on his lips. Then he fell face downward on the deck, a crimson rivulet running from his body to the scuppers.

With the fall of their leader the coolies' rally was broken before it had fairly started. Abject and fear-stricken they dropped their weapons and thrust their hands above their heads.

And the staccato crackling of the rifles ceased as suddenly as it had begun.

The febrile tropical dawn hurled itself upon the world. Long silver phantoms cut through the water and the sea was stained with crimson. Yet on the poop stood two red-headed men, their arms thrown about each other's shoulders, and beneath the grimness of their bearing was an expression of tender friendship.

*Next Month: Read **BROTHER OF THE TONG**,  
the First of a New and Exciting Series of  
Stories by Lieutenant Scott Morgan.*

# The White-Haired God



## *Breathless Danger in the Cannibal Solomon Islands— to the Savage Beat of the Devil-Devil Drums*

By EDMOND DU PERRIER

WITH morning the sound of the devil-devil drums died away. The red, fierce glow of the feasting fires against the velvet night was now dispelled in dull, gray smoke. Tinava, one of the largest of the cannibal Solomons, was as still as death.

The two men at the rail of the *Moa*, anchored a scant quarter-mile from the mango-fringed shore, were not deceived by that brooding stillness. If anything the hateful mystery of that brooding shore grew

more intense. Treachery, superstition, savagery, death—it held both men silent for a time.

At last the smaller of the two men, Captain Dickson, skipper of the *Moa*, spat suddenly over the barb-wire tangles jutting from the rail, and said slowly, "I'm glad those drums have stopped. I get the creeps every time I hear them. Drive a man mad, they would."

George Marshall laughed. He was a tall man, still young, bronzed and scarred by the tropics. His

placid blue eyes twinkled slightly, and his strong brown hand seemed to grasp the rail a little tighter, but he did not answer.

"An' if I'd 'a' known what a fool's venture you were headed on I'd never have come," growled the old captain petulantly. "He's been there six months. He wouldn't live—"

"He's alive!" Marshall spoke suddenly, explosively. "And I'm going—"

"They *kai-kai'd* him the night he landed," snapped Dickson. "And if you go after him they'll have your head alongside of his in the devil-devil house before mornin'."

GEORGE MARSHALL disregarded the captain's prediction. He studied the grim shore for a moment, and then stated: "They'll be asleep until afternoon. That *kava* is powerful hooch. Now that we're here, I'd like to hear again just what happened."

"I picked Winkler up in Apia," Dickson related. "He just said he wanted to see the Solomons. So I took him aboard. He had a recruit with him. Picked him up the same place as you did that boy." He indicated a black crouched near the rail not far from them. "Then when we got into the islands he said he wanted to go ashore here."

"Why here?"

"The boy belonged here. He'd made friends with him. Probed him all day long. So when we anchored, I looked the shore over. I didn't like it. This island has had a bad name lately. But now it was all quiet."

"Like this?"

"No. There was no feasting. The chief just came out, yelling for rum. We gave them some and some trade goods. Old Silas made right up to the chief—wanted to go ashore. Said this was to be the prize of his ethnological studies."

Marshall smiled.

"So he went ashore—alone. Just him and the boy in the chief's canoe. Then things happened. In about an hour we had the whole sheebang of them out here. They had mats and went over the tangles. We had a fight—lost two men. Guess they lost more. Anyway, we were glad to get away from here. That's all there is to it. They got him—and they'll get you."

George Marshall took a lean cigar from his pocket and lighted it. "I don't think so," he said after he had got the cigar going. "I'm one of them—"

"What!"

"Yep. I've been here before. Eaten the flesh and been smeared with the blood. Fifteen years ago. I was mate of the *Loko*. I did the trading, and treated them decent. They had a scrap between the tribes and invited me to a feast. I thought I was eating wild pig, but from the pig I've tasted since I think it was one of the hillmen they had in the pit."

CAPTAIN DICKSON stared, as if the tall bronzed adventurer had exposed a new and surprising angle of his personality.

"But that didn't make me any better in their eyes," Marshall went on. "Except that we were at peace, and trading and getting shell off the reef—"

"Not much good shell now," Dickson interrupted.

"No—it was virgin then, and we got the best of it. We'd been here a week when Samson, the blackbirder, ran in here to load up on squabs. I was ashore. He was going to run us out of here, too, after he had taken our shell.

"It was a nice little scrap while it lasted. I was fighting with the niggers. I helped them, and so they

made me a warrior. Smear me with the blood of one of Samson's men. Noko was chief then—maybe he is now—and his son, Naku, and I were made blood brothers. Sometimes that goes a long way here."

"H-m-m," Dickson murmured. "I see now why you wouldn't bother with a crew when you came here. Figure to play it a lone hand—"

"That's the only way. If we started a row, and Winkler was alive, how long do you think he would last?"

DICKSON stared for a moment at the tall man. "Well, you got a surprise coming to you. Noko got in bad for encouraging blackbirding to increase his own wealth—and they got rid of him. The devil doctors did that. I never did hear what happened to Naku."

A slight frown creased the adventurer's smooth features. He tapped on the rail and whistled thoughtfully.

"I'm going in anyway," he said. "This boy I've brought with me says that Naku—"

"That was four years ago. Don't forget this boy's been a recruit—"

"I know." There was stubborn insistence in Marshall's voice. "I'm going in anyway. If he's gone—I want his head to prove to myself—" He broke off and straightened up. "You can lay offshore for a week. Get ready to go the minute I get off the ship."

Dickson frowned. "I don't like it," he repeated. "I wish I'd known—"

"Listen," snapped Marshall irritably. "I'm not risking anyone but myself. I owe a debt to Silas Winkler and I'm going to get him out of there if he is still alive. It's the least I can do. That's that."

Dickson shrugged his shoulders. "You're crazy, I guess. How long will I wait for you when I come back?"

"I'll be here," Marshall said stubbornly.

"There's nothing more to be said then."

"Not a thing," Marshall agreed.

Not until after noon was there any sign of life from the shore. To go in while they were sleeping off the effects of the kava had its dangers. So he waited patiently.

A few hours would not make much difference.

It had been a long time since he had seen Silas Winkler. When they had separated after a trip into North Borneo, he had been in difficulties with the Dyaks. Yet the old man, with his kindly ways, his absorption in his ethnological studies, had walked among them without fear, and without danger. He seemed to imbue the natives with his own kindness.

He shuddered a little at that memory. If it hadn't been for old Silas—no wonder he had confidence in the white-whiskered old chap's ability to live among savages.

Yet, the Solomon islanders were a treacherous, changeable crew. They were never to be trusted. Kindness was not a word in their language. He had made good with them as a warrior. Yet—something seemed to tell him that the old man was there.

HE stared at the savage crouching below the rail of the ship. Nothing distinguished him from his brothers on the shore. Ornaments dangled from his ear-lobes, and his only clothing was a string and pouch around the middle.

Marshall knew that he was throwing a great deal of faith on the friendship of this savage. He had saved him from longer years of recruit work. Had plied him with goods. He would be his badge of protection with the tribe. Or would he? He wondered.

"Fella one time walk along shore?" he demanded of the black.

THE native stood up. He was tall and well-muscled. "Too much fella marster ready walk along shore?" he asked in turn.

"Yes," Marshall said, and nodded.

The black picked up his simple rag of belongings, and walked to the rail.

"You wait," Marshall said.

"They'll come out," Dickson said, coming up beside them. "I see some of them on the shore now."

Almost as he spoke a canoe put out from the shore. It came out swiftly, and circled the ship. "Catchum rum," the natives shouted up to the ship.

"Let them come aboard and break out some rum," Marshall said. "I'll take some ashore with me along with the trade goods."

The natives swarmed aboard. They immediately pounced on their brother native. Each in turn smelled him, and he smelled them in return. Then they turned and demanded the rum for which they had come.

Through the time that it had taken to perform these offices of hospitality Uru, the black guide, had been talking in a steady stream to the other natives.

"Fella marster walk along shore in canoe?"

"Okay," answered Marshall. "I might as well go with them, and then if they try to pull anything you'll have a chance to get out."

The keg, and Marshall's rifle, and his small store of trade goods, was lowered into the canoe. It pushed off toward the shore.

"Take care of yourself," Dickson shouted. Marshall merely waved a hand in answer, and returned his gaze to the coral beach.

Marshall scarcely listened to the incessant chatter of the blacks. He

felt it was the newcomer among them. In the limited phrases of his language he was no doubt pouring out the tale of his adventures as a recruit.

He was balancing his chances of success in the almost foolhardy adventure ahead. To live alone with the blacks for a week. He scarcely trusted them. Nor did that blood-brotherhood rank high in his mind. Here they thought differently. Under the spell of the devil doctors superstitions held them in thrall. If he did find Nuka—

Yet he had taken adventure in his hands before. It had been a stern burden to carry, something that took all he had of nerve and sinew. He hadn't done badly. But now he was dealing with the unknown. Men had never yet been able to say just which way the Solomon islander would work. He could change in a moment, from a friendly, inquisitive, childlike man to a seething, murderous cannibal.

He was trusting to friendliness—something of the same spirit with which Silas Winkler had imbued him years before. To recognize that they were savages, and to be considerate of them as such. Yet the wild, howling, dancing, spear-armed mass that crowded at the water's edge did not add to his feeling of security.

MARSHALL grinned and waved his hand in a gesture of peace. Uru spoke to the assembly and they quieted, especially after the native had pointed to the sprig of flower in Marshalls' sun helmet.

The chief harangued the mass of blacks, and then with a motion he invited Marshall to get out of the canoe. So far so good. The flowered branch had been merely the invitation of one man. He looked for additional formalities. They did not

come. There was none in the group that stepped forward to sniff of him. He felt uneasy, though he smiled pleasantly, and turned to Uru.

"Tell fella chief talk along Nuka. Along, too, too much fella marster—" He made a motion of squinting and looking in a book which would be Silas Winkler's clearest pantomime.

HIS motions and his words made a startled angry thread of indignation run through the mass. They had bristled at the word Nuka. Then a cry behind him made him turn. One native was pointing out toward the *Moa*. From her stern came the churning of her auxiliary.

Marshall turned and grinned. "Too much fella marster stop along friends."

There was a hostile sneer on Uru's face as he listened to the words, and then he turned to the natives. He spoke long and feelingly. Marshall listened with a quiet smile wrinkling the corners of his blue eyes, but through the gibberish he could sense the menace.

Uru silenced abruptly, and then made a gesture. Marshall fell in behind him, then motioned for the natives to precede him as he saw they started toward the path through the mangoes.

They went ahead steadily. There was an ominous quiet in this trough of a path beneath foliage so dense that it shut out the sun.

They hadn't started right he knew, as he slid on the dank sickly-smelling moss. Something ominous, dangerous was going on in the encampment. The spooky path, the now silenced natives, and the wild screeching of the cockatoos, added to his sense of forebodings.

They came to a break in the path. It wheeled sharply to the left, a tortured pig-run through the jungle.

He pressed behind them. He had a smile on his tanned cheeks. He knew the secret of that path to the right. Had he taken it, with its deceptive broadness, he would have soon found himself impaled on poisoned bamboo splinters in a trap.

"They'll change their tune if I see Nuka," he said, using the memory of that blood brotherhood to strengthen himself.

They twisted along the path for a thousand feet. Then they stepped into a clearing before a black-mouthed cave. They went on through the cave. Nearly through and they slipped out through a little tunnel. They emerged on the other side into daylight.

"Catchum tunnel along here," he said to Uru.

"Better fella too much not talk," Uru growled sullenly.

Marshall shrugged his shoulders. He knew the wisest course was to feign indifference. Yet so far they were acting peculiarly. They had taken no interest in his gifts. Though they had carried the rum keg up, it was laid on the ground and seemingly forgotten.

They stood before a bamboo structure, with posts jutting high above the thatched roof. He looked for the skulls that should have been there. They were gone. He peered inside the dwelling. It was empty!

THE building was the kamal of the devil doctors. No one but they or their intended victims ever entered this place. The absence of the heads bothered him. There certainly was something wrong. He frowned. His strong hands clutched a little firmer to the rifle. The tension of the natives increased. There were hundreds of them now. They surrounded him and Uru, chattering angrily and gesturing with their weapons.

"Fella marster talk along Nuka now," Marshall repeated.

"Sut'm mouth belong along you," growled Uru. He turned to the chief, and his angry chatter rose in a high whine. He could get a little of it, and he began to understand some of their enmity.

At last Uru whirled on him and pointed an angry finger. "Too much fella marster want catchum heads belong along Tinava fella boy."

That was it! Marshall understood now. And even as he shook his head, he knew that it was hopeless to try to answer. He was sunk. Uru had mistaken his mission. The cannibals had been robbed of their heads, and he knew that these gruesome trophies often brought good prices outside.

To the cannibals there was no greater crime. They were not interested in the pearls, sandalwood and ebony that the traders took. But in the theft of the heads they had taken from their enemies they struck at the very superstitious roots of their religion. It was a crime that would arouse every vicious instinct.

He realized that he stood alone. It made the hair tingle at the back of his neck. Friendship with them was hopeless. They considered that they had one of their bitter white enemies in their grasp.

It had all come through that idle boast that he would bring back Silas Winkler or his head!

Uru gibbered at his native friends again. A hundred spears swung toward Marshall. He squared his shoulders and laughed contemptuously. He brushed aside the spears and faced Uru at the side of the devil house. Fire jutted from his pale blue eyes. The black's gaze faltered, dropped.

"Fool!" snorted Marshall. "Slap

head belong along you. Walk along quick. Catchum hell me no talk along fella chief Nuka."

At that word another growling arose. Uru lifted his head. "Catchum *kai-kai* along you. Too much fella talk."

He knew that sane reasoning was out of the question now. He did not know the answer to that threat. Only force remained. He swung the barrel of his rifle toward the grimy chief.

"One fella chief too much gone," he said, and the chief started to melt backwards. "Walk me along, Nuka."

The natives circled away from him. He backed against the devil house. A roaring growl rose from a thousand throats, it seemed by the echoes and re-echoes in the ravine.

"Fool belong along you," Uru snapped at him. "Nuka now make fight along this tribe. All kill and *kai-kai* now for damn sure."

Marshall leaned back against the house. The thin lattice gave behind him. He faced the jeering, sneering natives. For a moment all was still, motionless. Then a spear sparkled toward him. He ducked. It split the bamboo pole beside him like a pea-pod.

MARSHALL'S rifle cracked—once! The chief fell. He fired into that screaming mass. He ducked low against the shower of spears. One pinned his sleeve against the lattice.

He jerked it loose and dived backward through the lattice into the devil house.

It gave him a momentary respite. None, he knew dared, against their powerful superstitions, follow him into that grim house of mystery and death.

He stopped long enough to fire back through the lattice, and then dove out the other side.

That momentary pause gave him time to get his bearings. Before him was a steep incline leading to a small plateau about forty feet above the devil house. He scrambled up the cut steps, loading as he went. At the summit he whirled and fired.

**A**VOLLEY of spears and arrows answered him. They fell short of their mark. Confusion reigned below him. In that squalling mass no aim was good. His lips tightened, and he laughed grimly. He could hold that plateau as long as his ammunition held out.

He took swift stock of his position. He remembered the small pass at the side of the little rise. It was for the use of the devil doctors at the time of sacrifice. It was death to anyone, including the chiefs, who dared use it. For once he thanked the superstitions that ruled these blacks.

Baffled by the devastating aim of the white man, the blacks milled, screaming in rage and anger. Only one man at a time could use that incline. Marshall shot to wound rather than kill.

He heard the wails increase. The ravine filled with angry sound that drowned the sound of his gun. He heard a series of yells behind him. He whirled. A body of natives were descending on him from above. He wheeled back of one of the sacrificial tables, using it as a barricade.

The arrows and the spears of the newcomers were not aimed at him alone. They were fired into the milling mass below. He had stumbled on an inter-tribal battle!

He wavered in his decision. He could not fight them all. He would have to pick a side. The men below won his favor. He would win victory for them as he had for that other tribe so many years before.

He jumped to the center of the

plateau and waved to them. He signaled for them to come up with him. They hesitated. Then he turned and fired into the approaching hillmen. Uru's men caught the significance immediately.

He laughed deep in his throat. He knew them. They would fight on the side of the gun, the strongest weapon among them.

The strength of the tribe below was enormous. And the hillmen seemed a small party. It settled down swiftly to a rain of spears and arrows. Side by side he fought with his enemies of a moment before.

He fired at strategic points, doing excellent damage. The hillmen seemed to wilt before that blast of rapid fire. Then the tide of battle changed swiftly. It seemed that the ravine poured hundreds upon hundreds of blacks.

**B**EFORE he had time to reload they were upon them. Marshall had no time to reload. He swung the clubbed rifle madly. He pounded right and left, clearing a space.

Back, back, back, he was driven. Still he swung until he saw the butt of the rifle splinter in his hands. He side-stepped a spear thrust and brought down his bursting rifle on the head of a short, powerful black. He ducked to avoid the swing of a war-club. He slipped in the edge of the tiny plateau. A million stars whirled in front of his eyes. He felt himself go backward down the steep incline. Then he knew no more.

He lifted his head. It split with the aches of a thousand furies. The pain was so bad he couldn't open his eyes. He tried to lift his hands to his head. He couldn't. He was tied, and tied ingeniously. He was bent almost double with his hands clasping his ankles, and knotted tight with vine. A bamboo pole,

connecting him with a black on either side, was run through the hole between his elbows and his knees.

HE groaned and shook his head. His tongue was like a huge furred thing in his mouth.

He straightened his head, squinted through his swollen eyes. He was in the darkened interior of a bamboo shed. A line of captive blacks, bound as he was bound, lined each side. They sat dumb, inured to their fate.

He was in the devil-devil house! He laughed grimly. He had picked the losing side. He had lost. A shudder ran through him.

The drums!

Boom! Boom! Boom! Incessantly they went on. They drove their measured beat into his brain with savage monotony. The feasting had started. Long would they beat. Beat nightly with their messages of hate and superstition until the devil house was empty of its victims.

He wanted a drink of water. But he knew, only too well, that none would be forthcoming. No food or drink for men who were to die.

He shook off the fear and the pain for a moment. He looked at the end of the devil house. In their cages were the devil doctors, guardians of the house of death. Grim figures they were, painted in stripes to resemble a skeleton, and with human bones, sharks' teeth, and gleaming pearl shell in their dirt-sticky hair.

Then Marshall laughed. Laughed half insanely. It was a grim joke. One figure not far from him was Uru, who had unwittingly betrayed him.

"Too much fella *kai-kai* along Uru, eh?" he asked in a grim jesting voice.

The black was too apathetic to

answer. Then the racket increased. The devil dancers would be starting, he knew, on the High Place below. The pits would be gleaming hot with the feasting fires. The drums took on a new note, a steady beat, and fear crept into Marshall's soul.

Death alone did not bother him. Too often he had stared it in the face. But to go this way. His head, pounding with its beat of pain, sank on his knees.

It had, he decided, been a futile gesture. Of course Silas Winkler was dead. No doubt of it now. But he had thought. And he had thought wrong. Well, no matter now.

The roar rose. It became a hideous din just outside the *kamal*. It was the chanting of the devil doctors.

They uttered their wild chants of victory. Conch-shells whined dolefully.

MARSHALL'S head came up again. There was a song in the air that he caught. A familiar name. A new god. "The White-Haired God." Hope ran through him. Could it be Silas Winkler?

"Uru," he called.

The cannibal twisted his kinky head.

"Talk-talk devil doctor who much fella White Haired God."

"Me *kai-kai*," Uru whimpered.

"You *kai-kai* one time anyway," Marshall said. "You ask. Maybe no *kai-kai* if White Haired God too much fella friend belong along me."

Light lifted in the smudgy eyes of the black. He turned his head toward the cages. Then came an interruption.

Through the door of the *kamal* swayed a fantastic line of devil dancers. The beat of the drums was an agony. The chants were maddening, unbearable. Marshall sank his head against that savage beat.

No wonder it got under the skins of the superstitious blacks.

THE devil dancers, fantastic in that gloom, wended through the lines of almost fifty victims. Suddenly they acted. They lifted their victims on bamboo poles, and went out through the door again.

Marshall's heart lifted again. They had chosen their victims for the night. He was safe for another twenty-four hours. In that time perhaps Uru could get the devil doctor. He turned his head. Uru was gone!

All through the night that mad dance of death went on. It roared in Marshall's ears. But he was slowly sinking into a coma. He struggled at his bonds, but they were inescapable. The pain in his head was frightful. Without food and water he could offer slight resistance.

He knew that he was sinking, and he was glad. If he could not escape the pain soon he would go mad. His hands and ankles were swelling, and the flies were at the wounds on his head. The stench of the *kamal* was almost too much for him. He sank his head in his hands and was glad when blessed oblivion came to him.

He was conscious of the passing of another day. The quiet woke him. The natives, drunk on *kava*, the powerful drink that brings sleep after eating, would keep them somnolent until the next night's feast.

He was dimly aware of the passing of hours. Of the booming of the drums far away now. The sound of it was not so insistent in his brain. He was going quickly.

He screamed with pain when they lifted him. He awoke from the stupor and struggled. But he was trussed on a pole between two natives. He was like a pig going to

the feast. Sheer terror gripped him, awakened and sharpened his mind.

This was the end, then. They had him! He thought grimly that he was paying for all the white man's sins in the islands.

The pain kept him sharp. Every movement of the men, every step they took, shot fire through him. It awakened the numbness of his wrists and ankles, and the thousand pains of awakening seared him like hot irons.

Yet now he was calm. He could laugh at it. Once he had sat in the High Place, had seen this bitter feast.

There he would once be a victim he had never imagined. Yet perhaps there was a queer justice that had determined his fate.

AS they drew near the place of sacrifice the terror rose again. They were moving down a skull-lined path. Then they came into the clearing and the din arose.

The clearing was surrounded by buildings for the feasters and the priests. One small hut, on stilts, stood near the place of sacrifice. The club lay ready for the hand of the executioner.

Death at least would be speedy, surely.

The roar increased, seemingly more savagely joyous because of the white man. The beat, beat, beat of the drums pounded through him. He felt again that queer savage streak. Perhaps it was fitting. Perhaps—

Yet he would make one try. He shut off the pain with an effort as they carried him to the place of sacrifice. He knew one of the men who carried him would wield that club.

They dropped him unceremoniously. The native reached for the club. Marshall gritted his teeth,

(Continued on Page 128)

# The GLOBE-TROTTER



JACKSON COLE dropped in on the Globe Trotter a few days ago. He threw his latest manuscript for THRILLING ADVENTURES down on the desk and started out the door again without even taking off his hat and coat, or sitting down to spin one of his proverbial yarns of red-blooded adventure in the far places.

"What's up, Jax?" Ye Olde Globe Trotter yelled at his back and shoulders as he was going through the door. "What's your hurry? Sit down and have a cigar."

A steamer tied up at the wharf on the near-by Hudson gave a couple of sharp blasts on her whistle.

"Hear that," Cole called back over his shoulder as he wheeled around the corner and disappeared in the descending elevator. "That's my tub. I got about two minutes to make it. Will write you from Majorca—"

That's all there was. There wasn't any more. He was gone in the twinkling of an eyelash.

Real adventurers are like that. Inaction and lack of movement absolutely appalls them. They are always moving, going somewhere. It makes no great difference where. The great barrens of the upper Siberian steppes offer their appeal one day. The next day it is the headwaters of the Amazon or the Bolivian Chaco, or even the tortuous and burning sands of the arid Gobi desert.

The call of the wild is in their

blood. They can't resist it. It's their life. Conflict, hardship, action, fast movement; they love it.

They hear the blast of a steamer whistle and the sound stirs strange visions in their souls. Off they go to answer the clarion call of the wild.

Civilization knows them only through the stories they write—such stories as appear regularly in the pages of *Thrilling Adventures* every month.

But all of us are adventurers. Most of us less fortunate than Jackson Cole are restricted to taking our adventures vicariously, but they are just as enthralling none the less—if a slight bit safer to body and limb.

Adventurers are a brotherly sort. Their hearts beat in a common rhythm. Word of a new revolution in the *opera bouffe* lands spreads sub-rosa by means of the grapevine telegraph to which the sense of all true adventurers are ever attuned, and immediately they start moving towards the spot from all corners of the globe.

Usually the arrival of such numbers of formidable fighting men, with the experience of many years and many lands behind them, is enough to deter even the strongest rebel leader if his rival is clever enough to gather most of the adventurers under his banner.

In such cases the incipient revo-

lution is more often than not quelled before it is born, and the adventurers who answered the grapevine summons are immediately off again in answer to new calls that come to them in the same manner.

Such is life. Movement, action—and lots of it; fighting the seas and the elements, the burning heat of the desert, the enduring cold of the great Ice Caps; it's all the same to a true adventurer. He does it because he loves it, not for pelf or profit, but because it is in his blood. It's his life, he does so for the fun of it. That's it, the fun of it. What is life without fun?

The adventurer takes his fun raw, nature in the nude, just as the great God made it, without any of the false embellishments of a tea sipping civilization.

All you fellow adventurers have had experiences, and you are not a real adventurer unless you like to talk over those experiences once in a while.

That's what this department is going to be devoted to from now on.

It's going to be a general meeting place where we can get together and chin the old fat, slinging it high, wide and handsome. Of course there will be arguments. There always are when two-fisted, horizon-sponging he-men get to spouting off.

But both sides of the arguments will be printed in this department, and the Globe Trotter is going to remain strictly neutral until he finds out which side of the bread has the most butter on it.

All kinds of questions will be answered in this department, send in your comments on the stories and authors. Tell us what kind of yarns you like and what you don't like. Shoot in questions about guns, pistols, and all kinds of heavy he-man artillery. Ask us about expeditions, past, present, and in the making.

The Globe Trotter is sitting here at the helm of this department to give you that information. If he can't give it, there are other adventurers that can. Sooner or later they all get together here.

So start shooting, fellow adventurers, the faster you shoot the better we'll like it. But, remember—no blanks!

Here's a letter from a guy that knows his onions. He's down in the South Seas now, taking a little rest from more active adventuring in sterner climes. Things were pretty nice when I was there about five years ago. From what Hoag says I guess they still are.

#### THE MAGIC ISLES PAPEETE, TAHITI

Dear Globe Trotter:

Sometimes I wonder why people ever landed on northern shores at all, when they could just as well have started their endless chain of trading down here where it is warm and life stays intact without constant fighting.

So far, Tahiti has not become a commercialized tourist bait like most other attractive spots on earth. There are no huge, million dollar hotels here as there are in Hawaii, there are no exclusive restaurants, there's not even a cable connection!

Down the street is Moo Fat's restaurant up a rickety flight of stairs where you hold your nose against the odor of his un-American filthiness, and go out into the kitchen to choose your dishes. You can buy anything—his sign outside says Tahitian, Chinese, and White Man's food—which includes everything from sea slugs to roast chicken.

In the lagoon you swim in water that is warm enough for a bathtub. Little copra schooners snuggle along the waterfront waiting until their masters shall feel rested enough to take them out again. There are no sharks inside the harbor, for they never come inside the coral reef which surrounds the whole island like a wall and moat.

Living is cheap and pleasant, the climate is healthful and doesn't get too hot, even though the islands are inside the torrid zone. There's a breeze most

of the time, and the nights are quite pleasant.

But don't—let me warn you—don't get the idea that you can come down here and live off the country as you can in some parts of the tropics. The French officials are oh! so watchful, and they're not at all eager to have their beautiful island overrun with undesirables, which would surely happen, you know, if they opened the gates too wide.

Save a few dollars—oh, a hundred, say, above your steamer ticket—and come on down for a few months!

If any of you care to write to me, I'll be mighty glad to hear from you and will do my best to answer all letters. But send them in care of this magazine so they'll be forwarded. I don't know where I'll be by the time you see this letter in print!

Yours,  
Doane R. Hoag.

There's an invitation, adventurers. If you want to know anything about the South Sea Islands, dash off a letter to Hoag in care of The Globe Trotter. I'll see that he gets it.

Here's another fellow writes in from Montevideo. What he has seen and writes about is plenty interesting. Maybe some of you adventurers can explain the strange mirages? I'm matching this fellow's experience with one of my own. You will find it further on.

#### MIRAGE? TRICK OF THE MIND, OR WHAT?

Dear Globe Trotter:

Just last month I had a funny experience that I can't get any of my friends to believe. Maybe you will?

While flying across the Andes on the route from Santiago to Buenos Aires as the only passenger in the Pan-American Grace air liner, I chanced to look out the left window as the plane climbed through a cloud bank.

What I saw was a perfect image of the Empire State building sticking up through that sea of clouds, yet the plane was at the time 3,000 feet above the Andes and fully 7,000 miles from Fifth Avenue and 34th Street. There it was just as plain as day, yes, even plainer than I had seen the same thing when approaching New York from the Jersey side—and even more shiny and

glistening in the fading light of the setting sun which had tinted the cloud base a delicate pink and lavender.

I turned from the window in surprise, but looked back six separate times while we were above the cloud bank, and each time I looked back I saw the same image. It didn't disappear until we had glided down through the clouds and landed on the field at Mendoza. I told the pilots about it then, but they hadn't noticed it. I was the only one who had.

Was it a mirage, or just a trick of the mind?

Yours,  
Will H. Gardiner

Well, Gardiner, I don't know what it was. But I had exactly the same experience happen to me when I was overseas in the American Air Service during the late war.

Only it was the Statue of Liberty that I saw, and saw it just as plainly as you did the Empire State Building. And I'm sure the altitude has nothing to do with it, nor the clouds, either, for that matter. For I was only flying at 8,000 feet when it happened, and there were no clouds. But there was a low hanging ground haze, a violet purple in tone, so thick that it streamed back from the propeller in visible streaks.

You have me bested in points, however, for I only saw the statue three times. After that I was afraid to look back. It may be still there for all I know.

So, there you are, adventurers. Here's two strange and almost similar experiences happening to different people—and fifteen years apart. One in war time, one in peace time.

Were they mirages? The Globe Trotter will be glad to get letters from other adventurers who think they can offer explanation. Any explanation or theory that will shed light on these strange experiences will be published in this department.

And if you can't explain the above, maybe you have some strange experiences of your own to detail. If

so, send them in, and we'll see what the boys who read the *Globe Trotter* every month can do about clearing them up.

### BOLO THROWING OR BOLO SWINGING, WHICH?

Some time ago, one of the authors who writes knockout fiction for *Thrilling Adventures* made mention of one of his characters throwing a bolo. Some of the readers took objections to that statement.

I asked C. A. Freeman (recently deceased) to set me straight on that statement. Freeman put in a lot of years in the Philippines and ought to know what he writes about. I am printing his letter to me.

St. Thomas,  
Virgin Islands.

Dear *Globe Trotter*:

It's darned unoften I get mixed up in long distance arguments, but that reader out in Montana who objected to an author having one of his characters *throw* a bolo has pulled the right stuff.

I am not saying it isn't possible. Perhaps Christian Filipinos and Moros have slung bolos, barongs or kris's, but I never saw or heard of it during the 25 years I put in on the Islands. But the author should have a break if it was a fiction story. I don't know the author of that yarn you mentioned, but I believe he was in Manila during a portion of the time I was there. Some day I would like to get in touch with him and talk over the old days.

There are 7,086 big and little islands in the Philippine Archipelago. Some of them are uninhabited and I can't conceive of any one man hitting them all—so maybe things have happened that I didn't see or hear of.

I made the first accurate road guide of the P. I. for the *Manila Times* in 1920-22, and put in a few years with G-2 Military Intelligence, also was in the Customs Service, and Chief of Native Police in Mindanao. Those jobs required travel. What that guy in Montana said about bolo handles is okay, they are wooden sheaves entirely enclosing the blade and held tight by lashings of native hemp or even grass. In action the bolo fighter heaves his bolo around his head and brings it down hard

against the neck of his enemy. The centrifugal force engendered in the swinging drives the heavy bolo blade from the sheaf the instant it makes impact with the neck—and the next minute, well, the poor *googoo's* head is rolling by itself along the ground, just like a bowling ball.

I tried to learn swinging in Mindanao, using Spanish made working bolos, but I gave it up as a bad job. One has to be born to it. The Spanish handles were smooth with no knob on the end.

But say, if bolos are not thrown, the stone throwers of Batangas are darn good with their confetti. So are the Sinimay peddlers of Maccabebe who sling their brass bound yard sticks.

Anyhow, give the poor authors a break. I've seen high hat authors for the *Sat. Eve. Post*, etc., gum up their facts, so the readers shouldn't squawk too much if the author gives them a really good story. After all the story's the thing. That's what he bought the magazine for—otherwise he'd gone out and got himself a *National Geographic*, eh what?

C. A. Freeman.

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Dear *Globe Trotter*:

Is there any place within the borders of the United States where free gold can be panned profitably?

A. V. C.  
Marshalltown, Iowa.

Answer:

What do you mean by profit, A. V. C.? A lot of dough or just a livelihood, beans and buns and tobacco money? If the first, no, is my answer. If the last, well that's different. The Salmon, Snake and Columbia Rivers in Washington, Oregon and Idaho run very freely with a free gold called flour gold. But it is very fine and hard to collect, that is why it is called flour gold. It is almost as fine and light as wheat flour. However, there are panners making beans and buns from those rivers.

It maybe better though for you to pick on some of the smaller and more turbulent streams in the Cascade Mountains of Washington, or in the Rocky's west of Denver. Once in awhile in these spots you can find

nuggets that are really worth dough, but the going is hard, and you have to pan steady and long to make ends meet. My own opinion is that there are much easier ways to make a living. However, if you are going for health in the great outdoors, or for adventure's sake, go to it. You'll get a kick out of it.

Dear Globe Trotter:

Is it still possible for a young man ambitious for a life on the sea to learn how to handle sailing vessels? Are there any square riggers still engaged in commerce upon which one can serve as an apprentice seaman?

Chester L. Myers,  
Socorro, New Mex.

Answer:

Yes, Myers, it is still possible to learn real sailing. The best way to go about it is to go to one of the fishing ports—Seattle, Los Angeles, Gloucester or Boston, and try to sign up there on one of the fishing fleet. The work will be hard, but you will learn how to handle sail. As for getting a chance on a square rigger that is something different. There is only one such vessel, the *Corialanus*, and the crew is always pretty well filled. And with reason. There are hundreds of fellows like yourself waiting for a chance to get on a square rigger, and only a few want to sign up on a schooner.

Dear Globe Trotter:

Is there any regular passenger steamer connection with Tristan de Cunha? I hear there is not, but that is just why I would like to go there if possible.

Lawrence Brown,  
Providence, R. I.

Answer:

No, there isn't any regular passenger connection with that far away isle. But it is possible to get there if you are willing to wait for one of the irregular British tramps that makes a call there about once a year. Write the Ministry of Marine, Lon-

don, England, and inform them of your intentions. They will notify you when a steamer will leave from London for that little known land.

My space is getting limited now and some Questions and Answers have been crowded out of this issue, but they will appear in the next one. What I want you fellows to do now is to write in and tell me which stories in the present issue you like the best, and why. The best letters will be published in the department.

We have to give the authors a few flowers and spinach once in a while to keep them encouraged, so they'll pound out real yarns that keep us teetering on the edge of our chairs. So write in and tell what you think of the stories and the authors.

If you have any squawks send them along, too. Nothing helps a magazine editor so much as an occasional loud squawk in a tight corner. We have to keep the authors on their toes.

Last month *Thrilling Adventures* ran a novel by an author new to the pages of the magazine. We were not so sure just how you readers would react to the innovation for Lieutenant Scott Morgan's story, *Riley of the Bengal Lancers*, was slightly off the beaten track—but in the last few weeks we have had positive proof that we were right. Hundreds of letters have come in to the Globe Trotter praising Lieutenant Scott Morgan and his smashing, dashing novel of India.

The readers liked it and immediately began crying for more by the same author.

And you'll have them! From now on stories by Scott Morgan will appear exclusively in the pages of this magazine. He has signed a contract to write only for *Thrilling Adventures*. This news should warm the cockles of your hearts, for Lieutenant Scott Morgan is one of the best

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Also, next month, the first of a new series of stories by Lieutenant Scott Morgan—*Brother of the Tong*, introducing Larry Weston, master of the secrets of China. Follow him on his breathless trail of adventure in Thibet.

*Dance of the Drowned*, by Arthur J. Burks—a fantastic story of the Marines—the *Jungle Renegades*, by Captain Kerry McRoberts—taking you to the heart of Africa—are two more of the stories that will make our next issue a knockout!

Don't miss it!

There's a coupon at the bottom of this department for your convenience. And if we don't get a whole flock of them this month with the knock-out assortment of yarns that are in the present issue, well, ye olde Globe Trotter is going to be bitterly disappointed.

What say? Nuf sed?

See you next month with more strange experiences and a lot of your letters, *in print*, I hope.

*Adios amigos,*

THE GLOBE TROTTER

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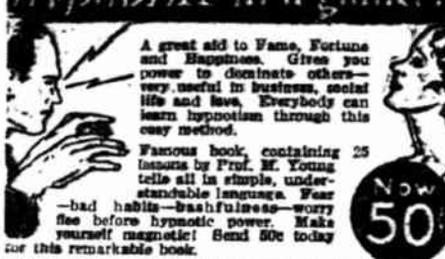
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## THE WHITE-HAIRED GOD

(Continued from Page 119)

and jerked. His bonds, weakened by his struggles, and the long carry, parted. The club swished through the air. He rolled sideways, and staggered to his feet.

The club was lifted again, and he staggered sideways. The high doctor in front of him raised his spear. He thrust forward. Then he halted. The spear went sideways instead, and thrust away the club. He dropped the spear, thrust his arms around the collapsing man and smelled him.

"Nrgm!" he shouted. And Marshall lifted his head, for Nrgm had been his tribal name.

"Nuka!" he gasped.

A roar of anger arose from the natives. They had been cheated of their victim. They started to rise, pressing forward angrily. "White Haired God—quick!" Nuka shouted.

A thunderous, squealing siren-like wail came from the little house. A curtain of bamboo parted, and the white beard of Silas Winkler came through. He harangued the natives long and sonorously as Nuka helped Marshall up the steps, and laid him on the floor, where he collapsed.

"Marshall! Where did you come from?"

"To get you," Marshall said weakly.

"Too late," Nuka said. "He sick man. Done. Finish. He stay here now. God." Marshall pulled himself around where he could see Winkler. "That was a close one," he said. "If it hadn't been for Nuka—"

"I not know white man in there," Nuka explained. "I don't go along *kamal*. Tribal law." Marshall looked up. "Where did you learn that?"

Silas Winkler chuckled. "We kind of run this show together," he explained. "Nuka was run out down below, because he was a friend to

me. I helped him up here. Told him to take the high devil doctor's job. Bigger control, you know. I haven't interfered. I study them. Compensation for being god, you know." He lay back as if exhausted.

"Long time sick," Nuka said. "We see your ship. Go to look. Make fight below. When win, ship gone."

"It will be back. I came alone."

Winkler stirred on his pallet. "I've been waiting for some one to come along." He pointed at a box at the foot of the bed. "I want my papers to go out. I'm not leaving. Too near finished. And I guess they'll want their god, anyway."

"Then you've—"

"Yep. Finished my work. It's all in there. My final ethnological chapter. It'll surprise people. These cannibals are all right. But I'll send you out with safe escort when you want to go." He smiled again. "I stopped the show with my voice and now I'll have to speak again."

He reached up a frail old arm and pulled heavily on a string. Marshall grinned. It was nothing but a fog siren with a peculiar wail, which Winkler, with full knowledge of the savage, had rigged up. It sounded and the dance of death went on again.

Marshall lay and smiled at the silent figure of the old man. Winkler was perhaps a little cracked. He could see that he had taken a serious attitude toward his position. But Marshall knew that for the rest of his life he, too, would offer praises to a White Haired God with a fog siren for a voice.

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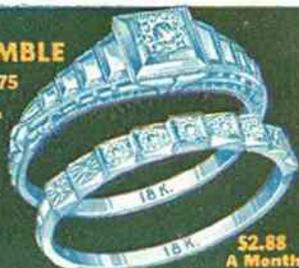
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