

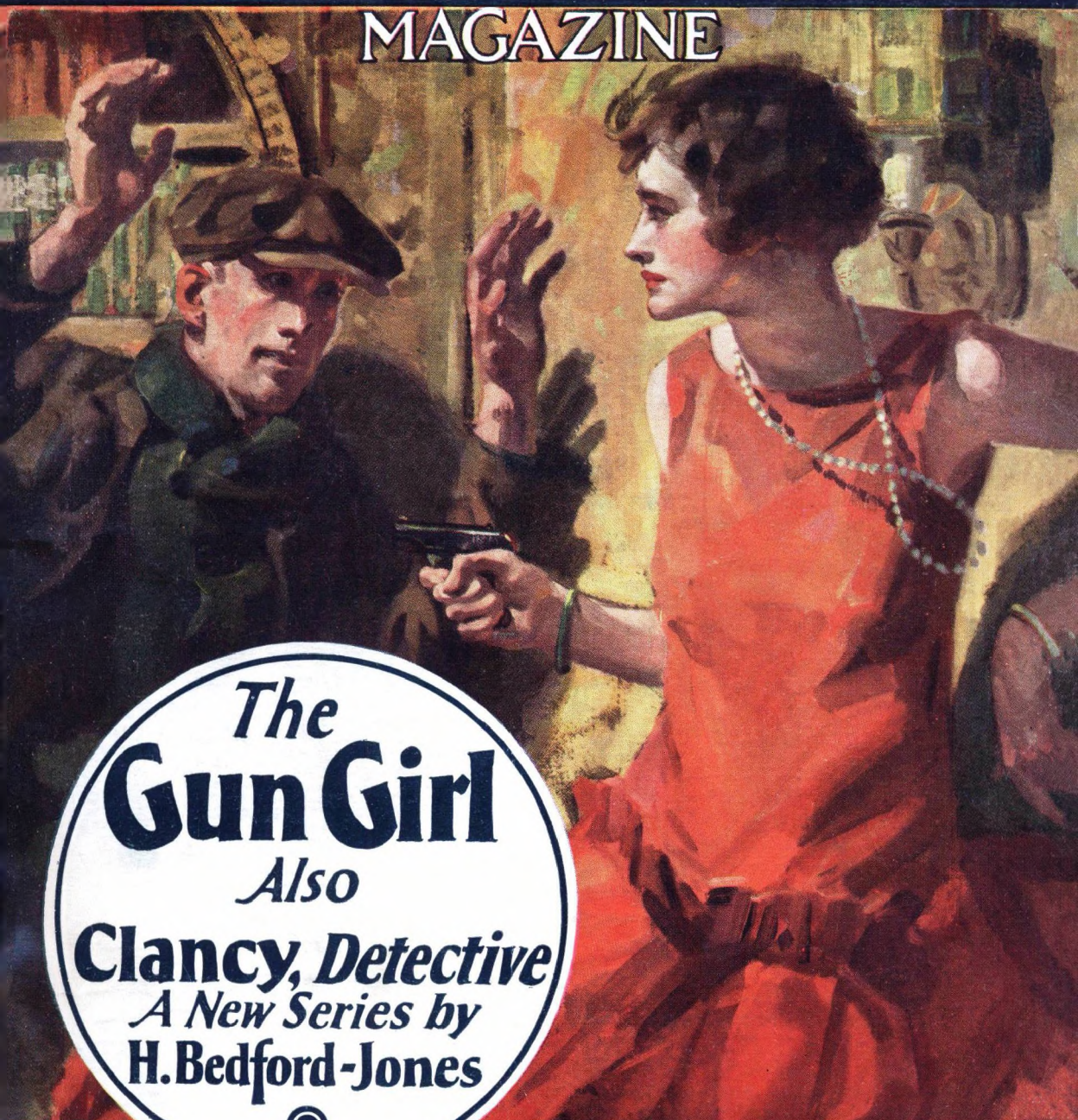
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APRIL 1926

No Continued Stories

THE BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE



The
Gun Girl
Also
Clancy, Detective
A New Series by
H. Bedford-Jones



New Stories of the Free Lances, Easy Street Experts and Others **\$500** in Cash Prizes for Real Experiences



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THE BLUE BOOK

KARL EDWIN HARRIMAN, Editor

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A Short Novel You Will Remember

The Comeback By Joe Mills 146

This vivid drama of the wilderness is the work of an authority and an enthusiast; it takes you on an exciting trail that you will find well worth while.

Fourteen Attractive Short Stories

Clancy, Detective By H. Bedford-Jones 6

The first of a fascinating series of mystery stories, centering about the exploits of an American detective in Paris, by the author of "The Man With the Silver Face" and "The Frontier Below."

Double-Gaited By Jonathan Brooks 22

Our old friend the trotter Lamentation is well handled in this specially attractive story by the man who wrote "Split Interference" and "The One-horse Guy."

McKeever's Dinosaur By George L. Knapp 32

Have you a little dinosaur in your home? McKeever had, and the beast made life too, too interesting for Mac.

The Crooked Trail By Edwin L. Sabin 42

The man who wrote "White Indian" and "The Devil of the Picuris" here contributes a memorable story of a crook who was not at home in the mountains. (With a portrait of the author.)

Free Lances in Diplomacy By Clarence Herbert New 51

"To Be—or Not to Be—Annihilated" is the amazing story of a recent aerial attack upon London and the ingenious fashion in which it was frustrated.

The Gun Girl By Rathburne Case 65

Strange events in a little Ohio town come to a surprising climax in this unusual and absorbing story.

The Joke By Jay Lucas 75

The cowboys put up a job on the Perfect Tenderfoot in this lively story, but when the bear proved to be real and grizzly, the P. T. showed true mettle.

Flat Feet By Bert Mohrman 82

Can a gunman ever reform? In this impressive story a bad man from the city tries to retire. But! (With a portrait of the author.)

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MAGAZINE

APRIL
1926

DONALD KENNICOTT, Associate Editor

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Chaulmoogra By Warren Hastings Miller 89

A hazardous quest in a savage jungle is here tellingly narrated by the man who wrote "Cold Steel" and "The Coming of Siti."

Alias All Around By Frank Sparks 98

In this striking story of lumber-jack life, a writer new to Blue Book readers offers something notably interesting. (With a portrait of the author.)

Easy Street Experts By Bertram Atkey 107

"The Deadly House" reveals anew the quaint gifts of two good-tempered, well-fed, venturesome and entirely criminal go-getters.

The Laughing Man By W. D. Hoffman 117

We have here a romance of the mining country that you are certain to enjoy. (With a portrait of the author.)

Heads and Tails By Calvin Ball 128

The demon mechanic of Skinner's garage again demonstrates his fitness for the job and the hand of fair Caroline.

Balance Brought Forward By Carl Clausen 135

Wherein a perfectly feasible scheme to rob a bank is developed to its logical conclusion. (With a portrait of the author.)

Five Prize Stories of Real Experience

With Naked Hands By Robert Jess 181

An avenger overtakes a murderer in Alaska and kills him in a fair fight: an extraordinary adventure.

The Making of Gol Sogg By Neal Jones 184

There's a laugh in every paragraph of this barrack-room ballad in prose.

The Man in Car 39 By Marvin Beard, Jr. 188

A mystery in real life that's easy to read about but hard to explain.

The Falling Business By Clark Burroughs 190

A professional thrill-maker here gets a little private excitement of a desperate kind.

My Whaling Voyage By Ralph Shaw 193

The straightforward narrative of an American boy's venture with a whaler in the Antaretic.

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IMPORTANT NOTICE: Do not subscribe for THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE through an agent unknown to you personally, or you may find yourself defrauded. Many complaints are received from people who have paid cash to some swindler, in which event of course, the subscription never reaches this office.

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE is issued on the first of the month preceding its date (April issue out March 1st), and is for sale by all newsdealers after that time. In the event of failure to obtain copies at news-stands, or on trains, a notification to the Publisher will be appreciated.

Advertising forms close three weeks prior to the time of issue. Advertising rates on application.

Why do successful men enrol in the Institute twice?



THE professional schools of great universities, such as Harvard, Yale and Columbia, are accustomed to having their alumni return for summer courses or special work.

But have you ever heard of an institution conducting its instruction by correspondence, which re-enrolls men in the same course a second or even a third time?

The Alexander Hamilton Institute has this experience constantly. Among the successful men who have taken the Course once and then, after a period of years, enrolled for it a second time, are the following:

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- W. P. LUDLOW, *Vice-President*, Kenton Baking Powder Company, Cincinnati, Ohio.
- CHARLES H. REMINGTON, *Vice-President*, Aetna Life Insurance Company, Hartford, Conn.
- J. A. ZELINDORFER, *President*, Jantzen Knitting Mills, Portland, Ore.
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Why do these men pay for the same thing twice?

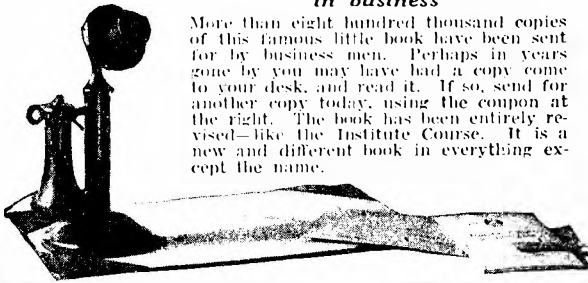
The answer is two-fold:

1. In the first place these hard-headed successful men are *not* buying the same thing. The Alexander Hamilton Institute Course is different. At tremendous expense an editorial department is maintained which gathers the new developments of business from every source and incorporates them in the Course immediately. If you enrolled five years ago, or even three years ago, clip the coupon below. Let us tell you the big, vital changes that have taken place—splendid changes, keeping the Course and Lectures and Problems abreast of the very latest methods and ideas.

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The most famous little book in business

More than eight hundred thousand copies of this famous little book have been sent for by business men. Perhaps in years gone by you may have had a copy come to your desk, and read it. If so, send for another copy today, using the coupon at the right. The book has been entirely revised—like the Institute Course. It is a new and different book in everything except the name.



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"As I look back over the years since my first enrolment, the latest revision seems like a post-graduate course. If I needed the Course then, the increased responsibility of running my own business makes this up-to-date information doubly important now.

"What I have been able to apply already from the facts in Volume I, more than offsets the entire cost of the new Course. I am looking forward to another two years of inspiring contact with the Institute."

A free guide to new ideas

This page is directed particularly to men who have already enrolled in the Alexander Hamilton Institute Course and know its power to increase incomes and shorten the path to high positions. But the invitation to send for "Forging Ahead in Business" is extended to every reader of this page who would like to know just what the Institute training can do for him. "Forging Ahead in Business" is pictured below. It is a fascinating little book. Thousands of men have said: "In 30 minutes it gave me a clearer picture of my business future than I had ever had before." Whether you are an old friend of the Institute or a new one, let us send you the new "Forging Ahead in Business," completely rewritten and revised. Clip the coupon and mail it today.

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Twenty New Lives for You

YOU live again and again in the stories of this magazine. Dull or laborious your own life may be—perplexed, even tragic. But through the gracious medium of the printed page you may live through the most interesting careers imaginable—may enter each of these vicarious lives, moreover, at its most colorful and most dramatic climax.

Thus in the pages which follow you may in succession take for your own a round score of conspicuously worth-while lives—each far different from the other, for the editors of this magazine are at special pains to offer the widest possible variety in its pages. And next month you will find an equal, if not even greater, opportunity for a diverting enlargement of your experience.

For example, in this forthcoming May issue Roy Norton will present his picturesque and full-of-action short novel "The Chimney of Gold." Now, Mr. Norton has won real fame with his previous novels "The Vanishing Fleets," "Captains Three," "The Unknown Mr. Kent" and others; but never, we believe, has he achieved a story quite so consistently engaging as in this great story of the Arizona mining country.

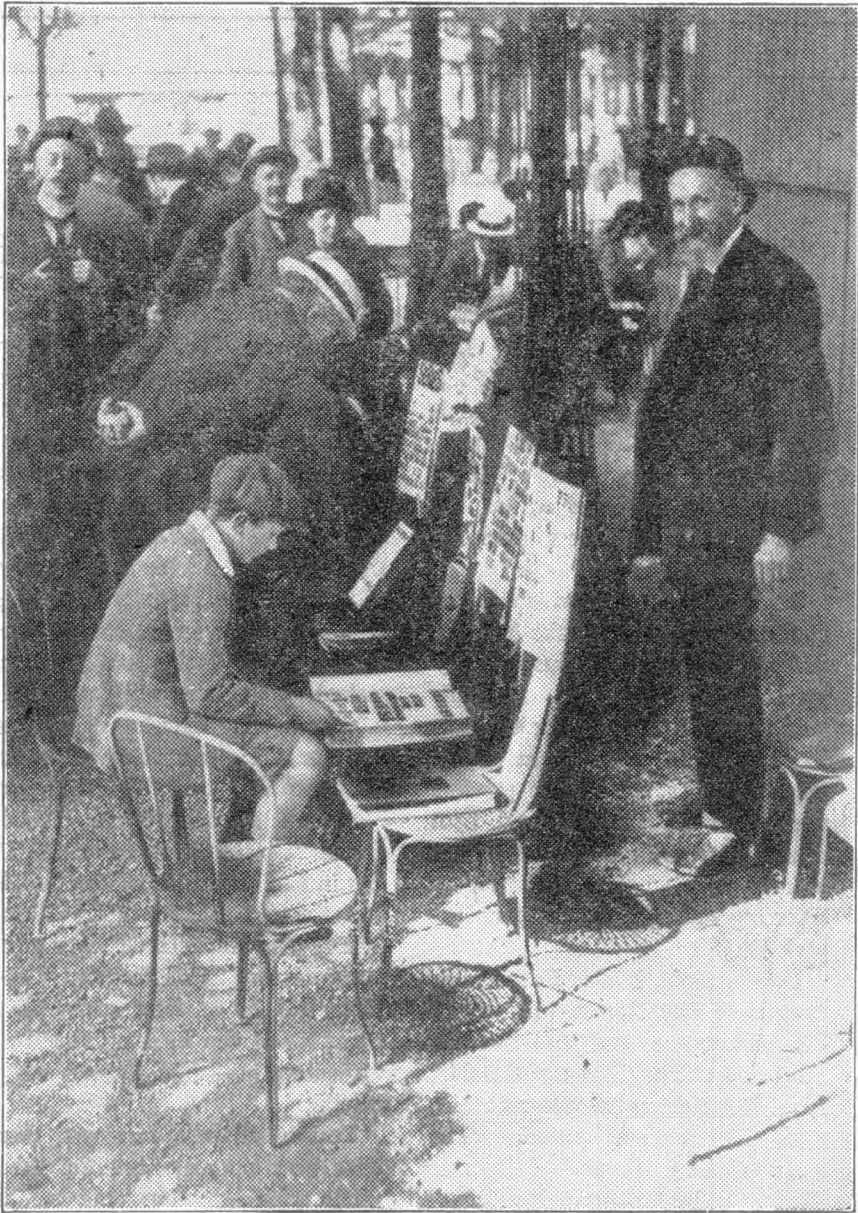
A number of the same characters you have learned to like so well in

this and the immediately preceding issues are scheduled to appear next month also: Bertram Atkey's delectable rapsSCALLIONS the Easy Street Experts will again put over a choice bit of good-humored rascality; Clarence Herbert New's adventurous civil engineer Grigsby will once more look upon the bright face of danger in "The Back Country;" H. Bedford-Jones' detective, Clancy, will undertake a specially engrossing problem in "Japanese Fans;" and Calvin Ball's quaint and gasoline-soaked garage hero will get himself into even more amusing difficulties.

Other stories deserving of particular mention are William Byron Mowery's splendid North Woods drama "Up the Keewateena Trail," Edwin L. Sabin's tale of the buffalo and the old frontier "The Water Stand," and Kenneth Gilbert's great aviation story "The Kingbird;" and there will be at least seven other examples of the kind of fiction we believe in—vivid, human, swift-moving.

Besides all these, moreover, there have been chosen, from the thousands offered by our readers, five prize-winning narratives of remarkable Real Experience that are memorable indeed. . . . Yes, this coming May issue is something to which you may look forward with eager anticipation.

—The Editors.



Photograph from Wide World Photos.

THE open-air postage-stamp market in Paris, where—
as is brought out in the intriguing mystery story
which begins on the opposite page—stamp-collecting is
at once an almost universal fad, a passion and an art.



Clancy, Detective

The first of a captivating series detailing the exploits of the most interesting detective since Sherlock Holmes—by the author of "Madagascar Gold" and "Geyser Reef."

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

HALF a second more, and the truck would have backed the little old man out of existence. It was one of those traffic jams for which Paris is famous, at the corner of the narrow Rue Caumartin. Caught between two lines of taxicabs, oblivious of the truck coming at him from behind, with everybody vociferously shouting at everybody else, the old chap stood bewildered and hesitant, or so I thought.

Consequently, I made a grab for him, rushed him under the nose of a taxi, and literally carried him to the sidewalk. There, to my surprise, he turned on me savagely with a flood of French.

"Save your breath," I said. "I don't savvy half what you say, anyhow—"

His face lighted up and he switched into English.

"American, are you? Well, what the purgatory do you mean by assaulting me that way?"

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed. "When a man saves your life, you jump on him! In another—"

"Oh, you make me tired!" he snapped.

"You're another fool tourist who thinks this is America. Don't you know such things don't happen here? They have jams, but accidents are rare, and they never run over anyone except—"

"Suit yourself," I told him. "In another jiffy you'd have been the exception, that's all."

He laughed suddenly and put out his hand. "Thanks," he said. "I was thinking about something, to tell the truth. Perhaps you're right. Allow me—"

He extended a card. I read: "Peter J. Clancy, D. D. S." and then heard the suggestion that we have a drink. I assented.

"Sorry I haven't a card, Doc," I said. "My finances haven't extended that far yet. I came over here to take a newspaper job, got done out of it, and am on my way to book steerage home again. Here's a café. My name's Jim Logan."

We strolled into the café and ordered a drink, and I took stock of Clancy.

He was a queer duck. He was small, about five foot five in his boots, and had long gray hair and a gray imperial. His clothes were black once, perhaps, but now

they were greenish and frayed; he wore the red ribbon of the Legion in his buttonhole. His face was wrinkled—kindly, shrewd wrinkles, they were—and his eyes were very bright, of a piercing gray. He wore the wide-brimmed black felt hat of the Parisian, and looked as French as they make them.

"Glad to meet you, Logan," he said. "I've lived here fifteen years, and sometimes I get pretty homesick. So you're going back steerage, eh?"

"Anyway at all," I said, sipping my Rossi. "This is the land of liberty, all right, but what I need is a job and not liberty."

"Very well," he said, with a nod. "I'll give you a job—if you can tell me the difference between a Sydney View and a Saint Helena grilled."

FOR a moment he had me stumped, until I saw in his eyes that he was earnest enough, and deadly serious. Then I laughed. If this was a test, he had chosen it just right for me!

"The difference would be about a hundred dollars, if both were in good condition," I said. "Or, the difference between high value and worthlessness, as you prefer."

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Then you collect stamps?"

"I don't," I told him frankly. "But I used to. And I know a good deal about 'em. Do you?"

"Everybody in France does," he said. "Bless my soul, this is providential, Logan! Do you know, I'm really in need of you? Can you speak French?"

"Army French," I said. "I can understand it perfectly, but I'm no linguist."

"Better and better! And I perceive you're something of a boxer, from the way you handled your feet. You're powerful, you have a good brain, and you're not afraid to look at a dead man, or you'd not be in the newspaper game. I can use all these qualities."

"How?" I asked, rather amused, to tell the truth. "Pulling molars?"

"No." He glanced at his watch and paid for the drinks, with a careful French tip. "We've got time—just. Have you a pencil? Give me that card of mine."

I gave him card and pencil. He scribbled a few words in French and returned them to me.

"My office is at 33 Bis, Rue Cambon,"

he said. "Second floor, French style—you'd call it the third. You have some money?"

"Enough for my steerage passage home."

"Good. I needed a messenger—and I have him." He drew me out on the sidewalk as he spoke. "Take a taxi and go to the Préfecture of Police, the central bureau on the Ile de la Cité. Ask for the prefect himself—show this card. It'll get you instant admittance. Tell him I want to take over the case of the stamp dealer Colette, who was murdered this morning in his shop in Rue St. Honoré, just around the corner. Tell him I'll go there at twelve-thirty and want him to have all arrangements made to put me in charge."

I took him by the arm.

"Listen, Doc," I said quietly. "This cat can jump three ways. Either you're crazy, you're trying to work a practical joke on a tourist, or else I'm in over my head. Which is it?"

He looked at me, and broke into a laugh.

"Oh! I forgot to explain, Logan. You see, I'm pretty well known at the Préfecture, but my connection must remain unknown to the public at large. I often take over interesting cases. This is most interesting—"

"Are you a dentist or a detective?" I demanded.

"Both," he said. "And good either way, young man! I'll give you a hundred a month—not francs, but dollars—and all the rewards that happen along, to throw in with me."

"You're on," I said. "I'll take a chance once, anyhow, and if the prefect kicks me out, no harm done. I'll be back at your office by noon, if this is on the level; if not, I'll be back there before then."

I hopped a passing taxi and went on my way.

TO be honest, it seemed to me that the little dentist was probably just a bit cracked in the upper story. From what I had seen of Paris, however, this was nothing extraordinary, as anybody would know from walking down the street a few blocks. If, by any accident, he could make good on his promises, I would get on the inside of a few police jobs and this would mean the glad hand for me at any newspaper office. I was risking nothing except being kicked out at police headquarters, so it was a good gamble.

As my taxi purred up the quay toward Notre Dame, however, and I thought things over, I grew less positive as to Clancy's mental disturbance. Those sharp gray eyes of his were very sane, very humorous, sparkling with vigor and acuity. It was much more likely that he was putting over a practical joke, and that I would find myself politely deposited outside the Préfecture with a gendarme for company.

"Well, I can risk that, too," I reflected. "Wonder if there was a murder in Rue St. Honoré this morning? Come to think of it, I did see quite a crowd down toward Castiglione. But that test question of his—there was a queer one!"

No mistake about it, either. Only for the odd chance that I knew something about stamp collection, about which all the French are crazy, Clancy would not have gone on with his line of talk. This went to show he was in earnest, and the whole affair left me up in the air and puzzled.

WE got to the Préfecture at last, and I passed the sentries without difficulty. Having applied for a card of identity after being tipped off how to do it easily, I knew how much stock to take in the usual methods of reaching anybody in Paris. Pull, influence and the back door were all invented by Frenchmen.

I reached the offices of the prefect, and they were crowded. I beckoned the gendarme and gave him Clancy's card. It bore, in French fashion, a tiny miniature cross of the Legion of Honor after his name. With the card, I gave him a ten franc note.

"My business is important, and I'm in a hurry," I said.

He shrugged and disappeared through a doorway. In two minutes he was back again, holding the door open for me. Then I had an idea whether or not my friend Clancy was crazy.

I was ushered into an office, where the prefect sat behind his desk, talking with a man whom I recognized instantly from his pictures. He happened to be the Premier of France, the actual ruler of a nation whose president is a figurehead meant to preside over charity bazaars. I waited. The Premier rose, shook hands, and departed. The chief of police looked at me and then stood up for the usual handshake and polite phrases.

Summoning up my best French, which was perfectly understood by chauffeurs and

the usual Parisian, but which made educated Frenchmen grin, I gave him Clancy's message. He fingered his flowing whiskers, and then nodded.

"Very well, it shall be as M. Clancy wishes," he said. "Tell him, however, that there is no mystery whatever in this case. Certain fingerprints were found, left by the murderer. They were investigated. The man who made them was arrested forty-five minutes ago. He cannot account for his whereabouts during the early hours of the morning, and M. Colette was murdered shortly after nine o'clock, upon his arrival to open the shop. The murderer had been hiding there. He is a common Apache with a bad record, Gersault by name."

"I'm surprised," I said.

"Most people are usually surprised by the efficiency of Paris police," he returned, beaming on me. I gave him a smile.

"No, it's the other way round, monsieur. I'm surprised that you should be so far behind the times as to place any dependence on fingerprints. It has been proved over and over in the American courts that they can be forged. There are different ways of transferring the fingerprints of an innocent man to the scene of a crime. The chief of police of Los Angeles was charged with a crime by a friend, who thus demonstrated the feasibility of transferring prints, for by all evidence the chief was guilty. The Australian courts have recognized these things and have dismissed—"

The prefect rubbed his whiskers the wrong way, in some agitation.

"We are aware of these things, my friend," he said hastily. "We are aware of them, I can assure you, and shall bring them all into consideration. In the meantime, you will honor me by informing M. Clancy that full details of the affair will be waiting for him at the scene of the crime, by twelve-thirty. I shall be very glad to place the case in his hands, and pending the result of his inquiry we shall do nothing, beyond keeping the man Gersault in prison."

He bowed, I bowed, and with the parting ceremonial handshake, I got away.

It was five minutes to twelve when I reached Clancy's address in Rue Cambon. It was an old barn of a place, gained through a courtyard, and his offices were old-fashioned and high-ceilinged. He had a patient in his dental chair, and nodded to me.

"I'll be free presently," he said, and there was a twinkle in his eye. "So you didn't get kicked out?"

"No," I said, and let it go at that.

I HAD a look around the outer or waiting-room. Obviously, the old chap had an eye for good furniture, and knew a rug when he saw one; he had few of the gim-cracks which crowd the usual office of the French professional man.

At one side of the room was a big, glass-doored cabinet, standing open. An unmistakable loose-leaf album lay inside, and I could not resist the temptation to take it out and have a look. Then I saw half a dozen other albums below. Glancing over the book, I found that Clancy had a superb collection of Great Britain and colonies, largely in blocks of four. Then I put back the album, as he escorted his patient to the door, and turned to meet him.

"Isn't it rather injudicious to leave the cabinet open?" I asked.

"Nothing there worth your time or trouble," he answered. "Shut it, and come along inside. We'll have a chat, and get a bite to eat when the opportunity offers."

He must have left the cabinet open by forgetfulness, since it had a spring lock, opening only to some intricate key. He motioned me to the dental chair, and I declined promptly.

"Too reminiscent, thanks."

"Please yourself." He offered a cigarette. "Of course, our friend the prefect has caught the murderer by this time?"

"How did you know that?"

"It's the usual custom, unless the affair is something very simple or very big. Well, what happened?"

I told him, and he listened in silence until I had finished. Then those bright gray eyes of his flamed suddenly.

"So you didn't think it unusual that the Premier would be calling on the chief of police, eh?"

I whistled. Now that he mentioned it, the incident was unusual—in the ordinary course of nature, it would have been the other way round. I said so, and he nodded.

"Of course, of course. However, the prefect is unlike the majority of his countrymen. He is not a stamp collector. He collects something, of course—a Frenchman has to collect something—but he runs to coins."

"Old or new?" I queried facetiously. Clancy chuckled.

"Old. Hm! Our little murder case, except for the Premier calling on the prefect, would be simple robbery—"

"How do you know the call has anything to do with this case?" I demanded.

"I don't. I just make a guess, my good friend! But yes, it would be simple robbery."

He was silent for a moment, smoking thoughtfully, then he broke into explanation.

"Colette had a pair of the Niger Coast one-pound surcharge—of which only two copies were ever in existence. It is less known than the Mauritius 'post-office' stamp, but equally rare. The two stamps were overprinted together, and one was subsequently torn off and used. What became of it is unknown; neither the sender nor the recipient was a collector, apparently. The other one came into Colette's hands about six months ago. He has advertised it at the price of twenty-five thousand dollars, but has not yet sold it. Thus, an apparent motive for robbery."

"The police have arrested a man named Gersault, of the Apache class, on the strength of his fingerprints," I reminded him.

"And Gersault will probably confess," said Clancy. "We must look up everything and everyone connected with him, and lose valuable time—humph! Meanwhile, we'd better get along to the late and lamented Colette's place. When we have played our little parts to the satisfaction of M. le Préfet and his men, we'll begin the serious end of the business—humph!"

FOR the time being, he forgot me, and went into dreamy abstraction. He reached down his black felt hat, put it on and made for the door, stroking his gray imperial. I followed him.

In two minutes we were in the Rue St. Honoré, and strode along till we reached the tiny shop of Colette. The steel shutters were pulled down, leaving the only entrance at the rear, by way of the courtyard. A gendarme stood there—not the usual agent, but the rarely seen gendarme, in all his glory—and he saluted Clancy at once. Clancy nodded recognition.

"Ah, the prefect sent you, eh?"

"To receive you, monsieur," said the gendarme. He took out a sheaf of papers and handed them to Clancy, who pocketed

them impatiently. "The formalities have been finished, but everything has been left untouched for your inspection."

We went in, and he switched on the electric light. Narrow-fronted as it was, the shop was twenty feet deep. In the right-hand corner at the back, facing the rear entry, was a large safe. Anyone standing at the safe would be invisible, for the entire window and front door were closed in by cards of stamps offered for sale. Colette's body lay before the safe.

"Stabbed?" demanded Clancy abruptly.

The gendarme, who apparently had charge of the case, nodded.

"Under the left arm, monsieur. The main artery, not the heart."

"Where is the knife?"

"Not found, monsieur, but it was no knife. It was a long, stiletto-like blade, very thin. The doctor could only judge from the nature of the wound."

"Of course," said Clancy. He had an irritating way of saying the two words, as though everything was clear to him. After the two questions, he disregarded the body and turned his attention to the safe. "Gersault's fingerprints were found here?"

The gendarme nodded and showed us. The safe door was partly open, and Clancy took a magnifying glass from his pocket, pushing open the door. The shelves were filled with albums, small *classeurs* or pocketbooks for stamps, and loose sheets. Below these was a row of small drawers, one standing open and empty. Clancy pointed down at it.

"Gersault's fingerprints there, also?"

"Yes, monsieur," answered the gendarme.

"And on the front door also?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"How much money did Gersault have on him when arrested?"

"Two thousand-franc notes, six hundred-franc notes, two ten-franc notes, eighteen francs in bronze, two ten-centime copper pieces, and two five-centime nickel pieces," said the gendarme without hesitation. "Also, five Italian thousand-lire notes."

"Ah!" said Clancy in a curious tone. He turned and looked at me gravely. "Logan, never dare tell me these police are not efficient!"

HE went to the safe and peered into it, **I** inquisitively. On the upper shelf was a row of little books or *carnets* bound in morocco. One projected slightly beyond its fellows, and it was bound in red, in-

stead of in black like the others. Clancy suddenly reached up and pulled it from its place, and gave it a quick examination. Then he sniffed.

"So that's it!" he exclaimed. "There'd be no prints, of course—gloved hands." He swept around and thrust it under my nose. "Know the smell?"

"Apple-blossom," I said promptly, wondering what he was driving at.

"Hm! They're so used to scenting themselves—" He broke off, and handled the little *carnet* almost reverently. "He kept his rarities in this. A true collector, Colette! Now, Logan, we'll see! Everything neat, immaculate, in the best French manner—except this little book of rarities! It's obvious. Everything's obvious!"

I watched him go through the little book page by page, entirely disregarding the two of us. Here and there he lifted a specimen carefully to inspect its back. There were things in this booklet to make my fingers itch; the rare first printings of Newfoundland, French and English colonials, early Mauritius—all with prices penciled beneath, of from one to ten thousand francs, even more.

Clancy turned page after page. About two thirds of the way through, he came to a page on which was a ruled oblong in the center, but no stamp. Below the oblong was this inscription:

No. 37. Gibbons—10s., in black, on is.—\$25,000

The price of twenty-five thousand dollars, in dollars, showed that Colette had hoped to sell the vanished stamp to some American tourist or dealer. One might have equally set a value on the unique Guiana rarity, on the Venus de Milo, or any other treasure of which only one specimen exists. And Clancy examined this blank page very carefully with his magnifying glass, and then held it under my nose.

"Gloves save prints," he observed grimly, "but they carry scent."

Apple-blossom again. The gendarme, who spoke English fluently, smiled.

"M. Clancy has found something?"

"What I sought is not here," said Clancy evasively, then his tone became sharper. "I have finished, m'sieur. If you question Gersault, you'll find that he'll confess to theft from this safe—"

"He has confessed, monsieur," said the gendarme. "A copy is in the *dossier* I gave you."

"Good," said Clancy. "Take a look at the body, Logan. The rest is a matter for the nose—the trained, inquisitive nose—and for plodding research."

I looked at the dead man. A small, swarthy, fat little chap, he had been one who dressed carefully for his business, with morning coat, starched front and cuffs—even a rosebud in his buttonhole. The left arm was stretched out away from the body. Under it, the coat had been pulled away, vest and underwear cut to permit examination of the wound. From the man's immaculate appearance, I concluded he had been caught unawares. Whoever had looked at the wound had probably done the slight disarrangement visible—or so I thought.

"Come along, Logan," said Clancy.

WE said farewell to the gendarme, and went out to the street. Clancy led the way, more or less in one of his absent-minded dreams, and I tagged along toward the Madeleine. At the Trois Quartiers corner, he halted suddenly.

"How much money have you, Logan?"

"All of it," I responded. "A couple of thousand francs."

"You may need to use some of it. I expect you to work—no Watson business for you, my friend! I'm depending on you for a good deal. To follow your nose, for one thing—would you know that smell again?"

"Anywhere," I answered readily. "It was faint, but remarkable. Quite unlike the ordinary perfume, I imagine."

He nodded approvingly, then gave me a sample of his surprising general knowledge.

"It's used very seldom—is made by an English firm, oddly enough. They put it on the market some fifteen years ago and at first it swept things. Then the demand died out, for this apple-blossom had no lasting qualities. It could not be fixed, like ordinary perfume, but died out and was gone. Women wouldn't use it, despite its rare flavor, for this reason. There are others like it, of course, but none with its peculiar bouquet. Think you'd be misled?"

"No," I said, with conviction. One could not easily be misled there.

"One thing will help you—whoever uses it, must use it heavily, owing to its evanescent quality. Colette was murdered this morning. Whoever did it, used this

perfume at home, put on gloves, came straight to Colette's place and killed him, then got the stamp. Perhaps took off the gloves to pull the stamp loose and pocket it—well, no matter! You must follow your nose."

"To find who uses this perfume—in Paris?" I laughed skeptically. "It's a large order."

"You're not Watson—I hope," came the biting response. Then Clancy smiled and put his hand on my shoulder. "Go to it! The stuff is imported from England and very few people use it nowadays; that's all the help I can give you. You're new to this game?"

I shrugged. "I'm a newspaper man."

"There are as big fools in that game as in others," he said calmly. "You know enough, then, to neglect no customer who buys that scent. And remember the sort of weapon used! I must interview Gersault and one or two others. We'll meet around the dental chair at eight this evening—eh? If not before."

"Right," I said.

BACK in my youthful days, I once had a girl who liked apple-blossom perfume, and I bought her so much of it, and she used it so freely, that I became sick of the odor for life. The usual odor, that is. This one particular brand was different, a sweet and freshly invigorating smell that took one straight back to an apple orchard.

I left Clancy on the corner and ducked down to Prunier's for a bite to eat. Not the grand joint where tourists get bled, but the little one where you sit at the counter and pay French prices. And, as I crossed the street intersection, apple-blossom struck at me from a gorgeous limousine—the same rare scent. It's odd how you neglect the existence of a thing until the need comes for finding it, and then you meet it from every angle!

It was a big car. I was dodging through the traffic, and could only tell from the back wheel hubs that it was of Italian make. When I reached safety and turned to look, the limousine had swept away and gone in the tide of traffic. I had to give it up and run along to get my sandwich and demi of bock. There was no particular haste, for despite the apparent magnitude of my task, I could do little until the noon hour was past and the shops opened up at two.

A little reasoning over my lunch showed

me that one who used apple-blossom and knew Colette's, must be in the habit of shopping in the Rue St. Honoré neighborhood among the solemn tourists with their long purses and omnipresent canes. So I set forth to dip into the perfume shops, even unto the Rue de Rivoli, but none of them yielded anything beyond the modern variant of my apple-blossom—a sweeter, more enduring, sickish smell. The one I wanted could not be fixed in its alcohol base, so was not popular; but while it lasted, it was like a breath of orchard with children playing in it.

I thought of an English druggist, and looked one up. Here I struck oil. He found a wholesaler's list which gave the address of the Paris importers of this stuff, he gave me a card and his blessing, and I sallied forth on sounder premises.

This trail took me to a third-floor office near the Porte de St. Denis, where the druggist's card made things easy for me. A very efficient girl clerk looked up the four shops in Paris where this perfume was sold and wrote down the addresses—four places in all Paris! Which shows how one cannot see the trees for the forest. One of those shops, and the likeliest, was in the Rue de Rivoli, not far from Rumpelmayer's, and had been almost under my nose!

This shop drew me first. I found a stodgy, middle-aged man who regarded my inquiries with distinct suspicion until, French fashion, I reached his interest by telling my personal affairs, or seeming to. When my hints made him understand that this was an affair of a secret passion and a beautiful incognita, he woke up.

He had two steady customers for my apple-blossom. One was the Baronne de la Seigny, at present in charge of a base hospital on the Moroccan front, where her husband held high command. She, obviously, was out of it. The other was a certain Madame de Lautenac, probably gone to her villa at Nice, but perhaps still in Paris. The address of this so charming madame—he hesitated doubtfully, but the fact of being in on the edge of a love affair shattered his commercial virtue. So did my hundred-franc note. I got the Lautenac address.

I DEPARTED for the other three establishments. In one I was refused information point-blank: confidential hints effected nothing, nor did the bark notes.

I tried to buy two bottles of the perfume, but they had only one. Back to the Porte St. Denis I went, interviewed the wholesaler's clerk again, spent a little money. The last order from this shop had been for three bottles, twelve months previously. Obviously, they had no regular customer for it. Time gone to waste!

One other shop, toward the Place de la Republique, was uncertain of its customers and afforded nothing. The fourth and last, near the Printemps, yielded gracefully to my persuasion. Four regular customers; Marquise d'Auteuil, a wealthy title bought under the Empire and of high society. A première danseuse at one of the Folies run for tourists. A lady, about whom the less said the better, just now sharing the establishment of a deposed potentate from the far east; and last—ah! A milliner in the Rue St. Honoré!

There came the difficulty; a flat-footed refusal to furnish names and addresses of the last three. The hunt was over, I told myself, and went for the milliner's address. I bought her business name—Nicolette—for five hundred francs, and went my way rejoicing to see her.

I think Nicolette had a lot of fun with me. She was fat and fifty, if a day. When I asked to buy a hat and obviously knew nothing about millinery, she gave me pleasant ridicule. Neither she nor her assistant was perfumed. My idea of buying a hat without bringing a lady to try it on struck them as delicious. When I asked abruptly if there were any stamp dealers in the vicinity, they evidently thought me crazy.

"Ah! That poor M'sieur Colette was murdered this morning!" responded Nicolette. "So far as I know, there are no others nearer than the Rue Drouot. My husband, who was killed at Verdun, was a *collectionneur*, but I myself am not interested. Perhaps if you will bring madame, or mademoiselle, to choose her own hat—"

I got out of the place. In Paris, they suffer fools gladly.

The afternoon was wearily wasting along by this time. I went back to the English druggist to make sure of my premises. No, the English makers would supply only through the wholesale house; they were very strict about it as regarded the Paris trade. I had missed nobody.

I went to Fauchon's, which opened earlier than most, and dined by myself. The four

shops selling my apple-blossom had not provided one decent clue among them. The première danseuse and the potentate's lady friend I had failed to locate, and Nicolette was ruled out. None of these was probably on the lookout for a Niger Coast one-pound surcharge at any price, even that of murder. There remained two very unlikely candidates—Madame de Lautenac, who seemed out of the city, and the Marquise d'Auteuil, member of very exclusive circles. I got an evening paper and read about the murder of Colette.

Nothing new there, except that he was really an Italian, whose original name had been Coletti.

IN something of a bad humor, I entered Clancy's office at eight o'clock. He was in the dental chair, with a packet of stamp mounts scattered over the instrument tray, a loose-leaf album in his lap, and the operating light blazing on him. He glanced up but did not rise.

"This business started me off again," he said dreamily. "Niger Coast—mine is a fine set, too. The ten-shilling red surcharge on fivepence, for example: I came across it ten years ago at the Hotel Drouot—"

He closed the album and nodded happily. "I've tracked down the apple-blossom," I said abruptly.

"With no result, eh?"

"How do you know that?"

"By your face. How much did you expend?"

I told him. He brought out a wad of notes and refunded my expenditures, and I gave him an exact account of all I had done. He stroked his goatee and nodded.

"You did well. Hm! The première danseuse can be ruled out—she would not be up before noon, and those ladies are hard-working. They do not go around sticking knives into shopkeepers. About Madame de Lautenac, I know nothing; it will be easy to find whether she has gone to Nice. However, I am attracted by the two remaining possibilities: the Marquise, and the pretty favorite of the eastern potentate. She must be Lottie Harfleur—of course!"

He got out of his chair and went to the shelves on the wall. He took down first one and then another volume of "Le Bottin"—the voluminous directory that will give you all France and its people, if you know how to use the thing. Then he

gave me a cigarette and lighted another at my match, and smoked thoughtfully.

"There's a stamp auction tomorrow at the Drouot," he observed dreamily. "Another of those sweet little games managed by the dealers for their own benefit. Everything in Paris touches the Hotel Drouot at some point; draft horses and Greek statuary, all come to the auction block there—they sold Marie Antoinette's night-cap the other day. I'd be tempted to look there, except—the Premier visiting the prefect of police—"

"Politics?" I asked hopefully. Clancy smiled.

"Why not? This Colette was an Italian, yet in Paris you can never tell who anybody is in reality. He may have been a secret agent for some foreign government—anything! Yet, his murderer took a stamp of priceless value, a Niger Coast stamp also, a colony in which few collectors here are interested—"

He tossed his cigarette to the floor, French fashion, and stepped on it, then looked at me.

"Do you know any newspaper men here?"

"One or two," I said.

"Good. Find out all you can about the private life of the Marquise d'Auteuil. Leave the others to me. Follow your nose. To tell the exact truth," and he smiled in his whimsical, kindly fashion, "you and I are both up a stump, young man! I want more information and I mean to have it—from somewhere. There's something to this I don't know."

"Obviously," I said with heavy wit. He chuckled and slapped my shoulder.

"Right! We'll get it tomorrow. Follow your nose—follow your nose! Eight tomorrow night at the dental chair, if not before. And here's luck to you!"

I went back to my lodgings, feeling that my first essay as a detective was not up to storybook style, by a long shot.

With Phil Brady, who does a weekly column for New York and syndicate papers, and who knows everything and everybody in Paris, I had a nodding acquaintance. Like most of the top-notch correspondents, Brady has the Legion of Honor. I reached him by telephone, and next morning he met me at a corner terrace table outside the Café Madrid. He was large, comfortable and middle-aged, had married a Frenchwoman, and was universally liked.

"Spill it," said Brady, when we had ordered a café fine. "What d'you want?"

"The Marquise d'Auteuil," I said.

"Expensive," grunted Brady, "but get her if you want her—not with my help. Run your own tourist agency. I thought this was serious business."

"Confound you!" I exclaimed. "I didn't mean what you mean. I've got a line on something in this Colette murder affair, if you've heard of it, and this dame is one of the exhibits."

"Oh!" Brady grinned. "Exclusive story to me when it's ready for release."

"Agreed. If I'm on the right track we'll both win."

"Who you working with or for?"

"A chap named Clancy."

He gave me a queer look. "Oh! You're a lucky devil. What do you want?"

"The lady's life history. Perhaps an introduction."

HE grunted. "You don't want much. Meet me at the Gallos Café, back of the Louvre store, at one-thirty. Best place to eat in the city and not a confounded tourist to be seen. I don't carry life histories in my head, but I'll have the dope for you then. Order a bottle of their Vouvray '06 but go light on it—strong stuff. What's back of this Colette murder?"

"Search me, so far. Know anything? Politics?"

He sniffed. "I know your friend Clancy—he doesn't fool away time on nothing. If it's politics, it may reach anywhere. Well, see you for lunch, then."

His opinion of my new employer was extremely reassuring, but I wondered whether Clancy had not side-tracked me. It did not seem probable that a marquise would have committed the murder, though I did not have any high opinion of Continental nobility. Clancy's half-formed notions about the Hotel Drouot, however, struck me as more to the point. This huge building of lofty halls, center of all the auctions in Paris, was a remarkable institution. Here were sold estates, goods seized for taxes, government confiscations, collections of books, stamps, coins, everything! Few tourists ever reached it: the place was haunted every afternoon by all the antique dealers in Paris, by collectors of every walk in life, by society women and hotel-keepers. Something might show up in line with my quest at this afternoon's sale, and I determined to drop around.

AT the time and place appointed, I met Brady again. He brought three different portraits of the Marquise d'Auteuil, two being studio views and the third a snap taken at Longchamps. This gave her as tall and willowy, wearing the last thing in summer frocks, with a feather boa about her swan-like neck—the odious phrase fitted her exactly. The portraits showed her classic features as cold and proud, somewhere in the early thirties, and I did not care for her looks a bit.

"And what about her?" I demanded.

"Convent educated," said Brady. "Daughter of Armand de Chevrier, of the old noblesse. Married Auteuil at nineteen, when he was forty. They have a big place in Auteuil, another at Cannes, another in Normandy, but have let the chateaux—money is rather tight with them just at present. Neither she nor her husband are up to snuff. He has his actresses, she has her lovers, to put it baldly. Just now, Jean Galtier is the favorite of the fair dame. That's about all the general information I can pick up, and blessed if I can see where it would lead to the Colette affair."

I agreed with him. "Who's this Jean Galtier?"

"Average man about town," replied Brady. "If you golf, I can get you in with him—if he's any use to you. He has money and time to spend, that's all; a languid devil, despite his passion for golf."

"Does he collect stamps?"

"You can search me." Brady shook his head and attacked his Chateaubriand. "However, I have something useful for you. There's a big political reception in the Avenue Kléber tonight, with some of the press invited—you can take my card and go if you like. Galtier will be there; he has stock in a newspaper, which means politics. The Marquise may be there. Georges Lebrun is the general master of ceremonies. Tell him I sent you, and he can manage an introduction to the lady—if you want it."

I pocketed the pasteboards he handed me. "And the Marquis?"

"If he's not at the reception, you'll find her there, and vice versa," said Brady with a touch of cynical amusement. "He patronizes Montmartre, however, rather than social affairs."

"And this Georges Lebrun?"

"You can't miss him. Just five feet, rosette of the Legion, beautiful black hair

with a white patch over the left brow. He's very proud of it. Mention my name and he'll do anything in reason for you. I've a few further details, if they're any use."

He had—many of them, and I wondered how he had got hold of them. An expensive lady was the Marquise. He had a list of her debts, her habits, and her companions; and before our luncheon was finished I had a worse opinion of my fellow man than previously. It was a scandalously intimate story, once Brady was fairly launched.

"She doesn't look it," I observed.

"Hm! Does any woman ever look it? Though at the back of my mind I think you're barking up the wrong tree, and Gersault will go to the guillotine for the murder. Why should a marquise murder a stamp-dealer?"

"I never said she did," I returned.

"Well, get the yarn, old man, and then spill it to me."

I promised and we separated.

SINCE it was now past two, I made for the Hotel Drouot, having nothing better on hand. I knew the place slightly—knew it well enough not to seek my quarry on the first floor, where only cheap things were sold. The upper floor was devoted to collections and art sales, and for this I struck.

Passing down the central hall, glancing at the huge rooms to either hand, I came to a pause. To my right was the sale—chairs and benches three deep around a green baize table the length of the room, with a scanty crowd standing behind. Before the table was the desk of the auctioneer and accountants. Commissaires displayed the lots, passing them around. To one side of the desk sat the expert, who looked as though he might possibly, as a baby, have suffered the indignity of a bath. He was handing out the lots.

I wormed my way along to a good spot and waited. British colonials were being sold. A scraggy old woman and a fat collector were pushing a first issue Nauru ten-shilling to fabulous prices. Dealers around me whispered; the woman had ten million stamps in her collection, the fat man was an industrial millionaire. Both were fools, said the dealers angrily.

The next lot came up, and I started at hearing its description. Niger Coast, ten-shilling surcharge on English five-penny! The catalog value of the stamp was fifteen

hundred francs. No dealer would pay more than five or six hundred for it at the outside. The expert started the lot at fifty francs.

The old woman and Fatty pushed it up to a hundred at once, then others chipped in and it went to two hundred. "Two-fifty," said the expert, with a magnificent air. This staggered the others: your Frenchman counts the centimes, let alone the francs! However, Fatty came back, and the old woman snapped into the bidding again, and they shoved it up to four hundred.

Then, close beside me, spoke out a cool, lazy drawl. "Five hundred!" I looked at the bidder. He was faultlessly attired and looked much out of place here. He had been tailored and hatted at the best establishments; was young, fairly good-looking, and like four out of five French people, ran to nose.

The old woman glared; Fatty looked stupefied. The expert barked: "*Cinquante!*" in a savage tone, as though to frighten off the exquisite. The latter waited until the ivory hammer rose, then spoke again.

"Six hundred."

The expert shoved a dirty hand in the air, as though to say that the fool could take the lot for all of him. Fatty examined the stamp, and nodded a bid. The old woman fought him up to seven hundred. Again the ivory hammer rose, and again the fashion-plate near me spoke.

"Seven-fifty."

One could see the old woman committing murder in her mind. "*Soixante!*" she snapped, and Fatty stuck with her. Youth and beauty let them contest it up to nine hundred, then came in with a flat bid of a thousand. All eyes went to him. Fatty pulled at his collar apoplectically and shook his head. The old woman snapped a raise of ten francs, and the exquisite went to eleven hundred. That was killing. The hammer fell, and the commissaire handed him the stamp.

"Name and address, monsieur, if you please."

"Levallois, twenty Avenue Wagram."

HE paid, took his change, and then he sauntered out carelessly. I watched one or two more lots go, but lost interest. I departed, sought the chauffeurs' rendezvous near the end of the Passage Jouffroy, and ordered a demi of *brune*.

Levallois! It was a keen let-down to

me. Here was a Frenchman sufficiently interested in Niger Coast stamps to pay eleven hundred francs—much more than actual value—for one. I had confidently expected to hear him give the name of Galtier. It was a stamp of the same set as that for which Colette had been murdered, and the man had obviously attended the sale in order to buy this one stamp and no others. My disappointment, then, was acute. My notion of connecting Marquise d'Auteuil with the crime, through him, had suffered a setback. If this had only been Galtier, I would have been convinced.

I went along to my lodgings, across the river, and got into my glad rags. By the time I got out and dined—the usual restaurant does not serve until seven—it was nearly eight, and I went on to Clancy's apartment-office. I found him working over some dental instruments.

"Going gay, are you?" he exclaimed. For response, I handed him the card of invitation Brady had given me.

"Nine o'clock—that means nine-thirty," he commented. "On the trail of the Marquise, eh? You've begun, but not finished, a good day's work."

"Then you think—"

Clancy shook his head. "I don't. It's fatal, in this game. I had an interesting talk with Gersault."

"Then you learned something?"

"No. The type of man, not the talk, was interesting. Not a sound tooth in his head, and knows a dozen places to get absinth by asking for Rossi-Vermouth."

"Sounds rather silly."

"All life is silly," said Clancy, and gave me a cigarette. "Why do any of us ever do anything? Crackling of thorns under a pot, as the preacher said a long time ago. Why did Colette deal in little bits of paper? Silly. Sillier still to have any thousand-lire notes in his safe. Sillier still of Gersault to take them. Why did the Premier call on the prefect of police?"

"I'll bite," I said. "Why? What are you hinting at?"

"Politics," and Clancy chuckled. "Come, give an account of yourself."

I did so.

"Interesting," he commented. "This Levallois is a friend of Galtier. You'll see him there tonight. I'm half tempted to be there myself—hm! Of course. By the way, Madame de Lautenac is in town. She moves in the same set. Well, run along!

See you tomorrow if I'm not there tonight."

I ran along, feeling rather disgusted with my new profession.

THE reception at a big mansion in the Avenue Kléber, being political, was a full-dress affair, "le smoking" being held to its strictly masculine place by fashionable Paris. My poor glad rags looked nothing at all amid the uniforms, for your Frenchman runs to decoration and medals in quantity, and is happy as a child when wearing high colors.

Lebrun was not hard to locate. He was almost a dwarf in size, but his pride made up for lack of inches. When I presented Brady's card, he shook hands warmly and spoke in English of a sort.

Yes, any friend of M'sieur Brady might rest assured of his services. Of course, I would want to know who was who. He began pointing out couples, lingering with appreciation upon their titles, and then going into a cynical chronicle of their doings. It was amusing, but in the midst of his discourse I caught a passing breath of apple-blossom.

To trace it was impossible. Everyone was perfumed insufferably, new arrivals were coming in every moment, and I gave it up. Then Lebrun interrupted some highly spiced tale to indicate a man just entering.

"There is Galtier, Jean Galtier."

I caught at the name. "The stamp collector?"

Lebrun shrugged: "Why not? Everyone collects stamps—perhaps Galtier does."

Pale-haired, chalky of face, indeterminate, thin-lipped, a man of perhaps thirty-five, Galtier looked no man to be the lover of a fashionable beauty. I understood that these women reduced their lovers to a platonic state, however, making them fetch and carry more like dogs than men. For such a part, it struck me, this Galtier would be an ideal subject.

"What does he do?" I asked.

"What would you do, if you could spend a thousand francs before breakfast and not miss it?"

"Probably what he does," I said, and laughed.

"You would find him interesting," said Lebrun.

The spacious, ornately decorated salon, with its shifting groups, was well filled. For the moment Lebrun left me, to speak

with some friends. Galtier came toward me, looking around as though in search of some one, until he was within three feet of me. Then he spoke suddenly as some one tapped him on the shoulder. That some one was Levallois.

"Ah, my dear friend! I was looking for you—"

"And," said Levallois, laughingly, "your dear friend will undertake no more such commisions! It was very amusing, but a filthy place, filthy people—bah!"

"You got it?" demanded Galtier.

Levallois nodded. "Eleven hundred francs, and the tax besides—"

"Spare me the details," said Galtier. "You did not bring it? Then, in the morning."

"Yes. An excellent copy, too. You now have the set complete?"

Galtier shook his head mournfully. "Nobody will ever complete it," he replied. "There are two I can never hope to see, at any price."

OBVIOUSLY, Levallois had been buying the stamp at that sale for his friend. Good! My hopes rose. I knew, too, that even if Galtier possessed the stamp stolen from Colette, his statement would still be correct, for three of those stamps are extremely rare. Of two, only two copies were printed, and five copies of the third, making them easily among the rarest stamps in the world.

Did Galtier hope to get one of the five copies, or did he already have Colette's stamp? His words gave no clue, yet his manner showed that the hobby was an absorbing one to him. I was now convinced that my time had not been wholly wasted. Somehow, Galtier would prove to be connected with the murder in the Rue St. Honoré.

Again, suddenly, the tang of apple-blossom drew my gaze swiftly around. Now I saw the Marquise, recognizing her instantly. She was approaching Galtier, and Levallois turned away. Galtier bowed over her hand, and my eyes went to the diamond-studded object on her corsage—a tiny stiletto, an ancient bit of gold-work. Its hilt would have meant a year's income to me. Small as it was, it was large enough to let out a man's life.

The two talked together, low-voiced. Galtier seemed embarrassed, and I thought she must be reproaching him. I could build it up in my mind—despite Clancy's

remark anent the folly of thinking. Galtier would never murder for the sake of a stamp, which he might buy, but here was a woman who would put her soul in pawn for the sake of the man she wanted.

Galtier had cooled toward her, then, and she wanted to keep him. She, not he, had gone to Colette's shop. Perhaps Colette had promised the stamp to some one else, and refused to sell it; perhaps she was unable to pay some extortionate demand. Perhaps she had tried to steal it, and had been detected—

No. Somehow, it wouldn't hold water, though it was very plausible. I could not see a woman like this one killing Colette, though she had both strength and courage for it. Then her voice lifted a little and reached me clearly.

"Tomorrow, then, before *déjeuner*. A surprise for you, my friend—"

So, then, it was settled! She had the stamp, and on the morrow would hand it over to him; such a gift would cement him firmly. She was safe enough, for the supposed murderer was already in custody and the stamp would not be traced—indeed, only Clancy had divined its loss.

THE two parted. Galtier stood alone, rubbing his forehead and looking distinctly relieved at her departure. Exactly. He was tired of the intrigue, and she was mad to get him back at her beck and call.

Meantime, I thought, watch Galtier and let her alone. She had the stamp. The chief thing would be to call at her house in the morning, and obtain it. Clancy must handle this end of it, naturally. Galtier moved about the place, speaking, shaking hands, kissing fingers. He still seemed searching. Levallois had disappeared in the throng. I followed Galtier, feeling awkward and conspicuous, yet exultant over my success—

Apple-blossom again! Galtier swung around, and a sparkle of animation came into his face as he bowed above the hand of a very brunette, almost swarthy, young woman. Her lack of any jewelry was noticeable. So was the brilliance of her eyes, the extreme vigor and depth of her personality. She was beautiful, and she had character plus. Galtier retained her hand and beamed at her.

"It is good to see you again, *mon ami!*" she said. "You see, since you would not come to Cannes, I have come back to Paris!"

"But you did not tell me!" he ejaculated.

She laughed. "I waited for tonight. You are leaving?"

"I am due at the Opéra, to my sorrow, madame!"

"But that does not take the entire evening," she said, with a significant look. Galtier gave her an eager smile, and murmured something I could not hear. Undoubtedly, he was going to call on her later in the evening, whoever she was.

Knowing now that Galtier was bound for the Opéra and later for her, I felt it was no use hanging on his trail longer, and I might as well drift along. I obtained my things, and left the place, pausing at the entrance to light a cigarette.

Two men were standing outside, talking. One was a tall man in brilliant uniform—the minister of something, war or foreign affairs or state—and the other was very short and dressed up to the nines. Both had their backs to me. Suddenly the shorter man swung around, showing his decorations in all their glory—

"You might bring up a taxi for me, Logan," he said.

I was stupefied, then went on past and at the street hailed a taxi. Clancy here! Then something was up! I waited, standing in the porte-cochère to which the taxicab had come. A moment more, and Clancy appeared. He took my arm, and told the chauffeur to wait.

"But, m'sieur," came a flunky protesting, "it is not allowed here—there will be other vehicles—"

"The other vehicles," said Clancy dryly, "may go somewhere else."

The flunky waxed indignant. A gendarme, stationed outside the place, came up to us; he was the same who had come as messenger from the préfecture. The flunky appealed to him hotly.

"But what has M. Clancy said?" asked the gendarme.

"That this species of a taxicab must stand here while others—"

"Then it must stand here," said the gendarme, and that was that.

Clancy drew me to one side, out of ear-shot, and lighted a cigarette.

"We're waiting for a lady," he said.

"I know," I told him. "I've got the whole thing clear enough now—"

HE smoked silently while I outlined the case, but made no comment until I was through. Then he chuckled.

"Suppose you listen to me—I've been busy. First, Gersault told me a queer yarn. He passed the door of Colette's shop, saw it open, saw a woman come out. He had a back view of her only. Then, glancing into the shop, he saw a pair of feet—and knew something was up. He was sharp enough to slip in. An open safe, a dead or dying man—why resist? He went for the cash, got it, and slipped out and away. He left fingerprints, however."

"And the woman was the marquise?"

"It was not," said Clancy, and laughed at my disconcerted expression. "The description doesn't fit her—she's tall, above the average. Well, you ran down the apple-blossom, and I ran down the narrowed trail. All the time, I was wondering about Colette being an Italian, and the thousand-lire notes Gersault had grabbed with the rest. There was one lady unaccounted for, your Madame de Lautenac, presumably gone to the Riviera. I found she had gone last week."

"So she's out of it too, then?"

"Not at all. She returned to Paris the night before Colette was killed. So I looked her up—yes, my friend, I've been a busy man today! She has an apartment in the Avenue Friedland, not far from here; she is presumably a widow, but little is known about her. I had a chat with her concierge this afternoon."

Significant enough. To every apartment-block a concierge—a registered person, too, who must be responsible, who must be known to the police as of good character. Male or female, a concierge in Paris does not get the place easily. He knows every detail in the life of his tenants.

"Two minutes after you left me this evening," went on Clancy, "the concierge telephoned me that Madame de Lautenac was departing shortly to this reception. Also, her *bonne à tout faire* had departed, and her maid was leaving for the night. So I dressed and went to her place—and searched it. I had some luck, but there are many points I do not understand, so we must wait for her to explain them."

I was bursting with questions, but just then came out to us the same dignitary who had been talking with Clancy on the steps. The gendarme, at one side, saluted him impressively. He glanced at me, and then spoke to Clancy, with an anxious air.

"You did not say, monsieur, when you would let me know—"

"M. le Ministre is going to the Opéra, I think?" said Clancy reflectively.

"But yes. We are very late now—but it is 'Faust,' which matters nothing until the ballet at the end—"

"Very well," said Clancy. "When the ballet begins, monsieur, I will come to your loge, with the treaty."

The minister started. "You—you are certain?"

"I have promised, monsieur," said Clancy. He enjoyed being theatrical, and laughed softly to himself when the minister departed.

"The treaty?" I demanded. "Clancy, what in the devil's name are you driving at?"

He touched my arm. "You'll learn presently—there she comes, now! Madame de Lautenac, poor woman! Come along."

I stared. The woman descending the short steps toward us, ordering her car brought up, ordering our taxi out of the way, was the brunette with whom Galtier had made an appointment. Madame de Lautenac! And she was unescorted.

MY friend removed his hat and bowed. "Madame, I have a taxicab awaiting you," he said pleasantly.

She looked at him, with a puzzled frown. "You mistake, monsieur."

"Not at all, madame," returned Clancy. "If you will honor us, we will escort you home in our taxicab, instead of in your car. Unless, of course, madame would prefer going direct to the préfecture with a gendarme."

Possibly a newspaper man sees more singular things than most people, because he is looking for them. However, never have I seen anything more swift and shocking than the change in Madame de Lautenac. One moment proudly beautiful, the next she was shrinking in stark terror.

Clancy offered his arm, and mechanically she accepted. The three of us went to the taxicab, and Clancy directed the driver. None of us spoke a word on the way, and when the short drive was ended, Clancy ordered the chauffeur to wait and the three of us went into the elevator and up to her floor.

There, before her door, she paused and turned on us as though to resist or protest. She lost her nerve again, and produced a key.

"Allow me, madame," said Clancy, and

opened the door. "Into the small salon, madame."

We followed her inside. She seemed dazed, hopeless, as she led us into a very beautifully fitted salon. Then, throwing aside her wrap, she faced us with returning composure and a hint of defiance.

"What does this mean—"

"It means we had better sit down, if madame will permit," said Clancy. When she met his gaze, terror flickered again in her eyes. She seated herself abruptly.

"What I would like most to know," said Clancy reflectively, as though we were engaged in a light conversation over the coffee cups, "is the connection between Madame de Lautenac and the stamp dealer Colette. I refer, of course, to the antecedent connection."

"I never heard of such a man," said the woman coldly, her self-possession returning.

"No?" said Clancy softly. He looked at me and smiled, and spoke in English. "Did you notice that Colette's inside coat pocket had the lining pulled out?"

"Perhaps it had," I said. "It had been disarranged by the surgeon, no doubt."

"No, not by the surgeon." Clancy nodded and reverted to French. The woman's eyes showed me she had understood every word perfectly. "I suppose, madame, it is useless to ask for the document you took from Colette's pocket after you stabbed him?"

HER pale face became yet paler, but her composure was perfect. Even her fingers, which had been nervously playing with a handkerchief in her lap, became still.

"I know nothing of what you refer to," she said calmly, her eyes fastened on Clancy.

He nodded and turned to me.

"Will you be good enough to invert the Dresden china vase at the left of the mantel?"

I rose, went to the mantel, took the vase from it, and inverted it. Something heavy fell to the carpet, and I picked up one of those tiny miniature swords which can be found everywhere in Paris. This one was a rapier, perhaps six inches long, beautifully made and inlaid with gold. It might have served as a cabinet curio, as a hair ornament, or as anything. Halfway up the blade, toward the golden hilt, was a brownish stain.

"Now, perhaps," said Clancy quietly, to the woman, "you will tell me the antecedent connection between yourself and Colette?"

"He was my husband," she said, half whispering the words.

There was a moment of silence—a moment can be a long time. Only the ticking of the clock on the mantel disturbed us, and I saw the woman's eyes go to it with a sudden flash. She had remembered her appointment with Galtier—there was still hope!

"The document," said Clancy gravely, "is for the present immaterial. I wonder why you stopped to abstract a rare stamp from Colette's safe, madame? There was your mistake."

"It is nothing to you," she answered, calm again. A good antagonist, this woman! "I admit nothing. I know nothing."

"But," said Clancy inexorably, "you expect to give that stamp to Jean Galtier in an hour or less."

She sagged a little, and her steady gaze flickered. Clancy saw it, and drove home at once. "Perhaps you'd better give me the stamp, instead."

"Very well," she said, to my surprise.

On the table lay a card-case. She reached out and took it, opened it, and extracted a tiny bit of paper. For a moment, it fell to me to see one of the world's rarest stamps. Clancy held out his hand to take it.

Instead, with a swift movement she shot it into her mouth and swallowed it.

CLANCY uttered an exclamation of dismay. So rapid was her action, neither of us had a chance to stop it, and Cleopatra's vinegar destroyed no greater value than this little meal. Madame de Lautenac smiled slightly.

"I do not know what stamp you are talking about," she said calmly. "One cannot have committed a crime without evidence—"

Clancy recovered, and pointed to the little rapier, which I had laid on the table.

"The principal evidence, madame."

"Planted here by you, evidently during my absence."

Well shot. But Clancy only smiled.

"And then, madame, have we also planted the text of the Franco-Italian

treaty, which you removed from Colette's pocket?"

In a moment, her defiant beauty became haggard, she became an old woman. The glitter of her eyes swept into a frightful despair. Somehow, Clancy had nailed her this time.

"How long is it since you left Colette?" demanded Clancy.

"Six years," she whispered. "Because—because he was a spy for Germany—in the war—"

"And you," said Clancy, pitiless, "take money from Moscow. Where is the difference? This treaty was signed three days ago in Paris. You were told at Cannes that Colette had it, for Germany. You were told to get it. You came and got it. Then—the stamp! Why the stamp?"

"For—for Jean," she whispered, her face terrible to see.

"And he will be here for his stamp presently," said Clancy. "Good. Then he, too, will become implicated in the murder—"

She half came to her feet.

"Stop, stop!" she cried out horribly. "He is innocent of it—he knows nothing of it—you must not drag him into it!" She thrust a hand into her low corsage and dragged out a paper packet, and flung it to the floor. "There is the treaty—take it, but do not bring Jean into it—spare him, spare him!"

She sank back, put her handkerchief to her face, and huddled down in her chair.

Clancy picked up the paper packet and broke it open. He nodded slightly, and put it in his pocket. Then he got out a cigarette and lighted it, and handed me one.

"Well, Logan," he said in English, "I think we'd better be getting along. We must not miss the ballet, you know. It wouldn't do to be late."

"But—"

I motioned toward the woman, who had not moved. Clancy sniffed slightly, and I started. In place of apple-blossom, a thin odor of bitter almonds was quivering on the air.

"A prussic-acid capsule in her handkerchief," said Clancy, with only a glance at her huddled, motionless figure. "No need to verify it. Shall we go?"

We went. Phil Brady did not get much of a story out of it, after all.

"Japanese Fans," an even more interesting exploit of Detective Clancy, will be H. Bedford-Jones' contribution to the next, the May, issue.



DOUBLE

A jocund tale of our old friends Lum Bagley, the trottin'-horse Lamentation and her hard-boiled owner — by the gifted author of "Ketch As Ketch Can," "The One-Horse Guy" and "Split Interference."

"INCONSISTENT? Consistency's the bugaboo of small minds," says Lum Bagley, throwin' away a cigarette, and watchin' it fall in the ironweed. "Variety is the spice of life."

"Is that so?" I said. "You live two or three days on spice, and see where you land. Consistency aint no bugaboo to small stomachs. Like old Lamentation, here. If she didn't go out and trot all a time, and stay on a trot, and never run, nor pace, but trot consistent, what'd we do for sumpin to eat? No sir—"

"But listen, Perk," he tries to interrupt.

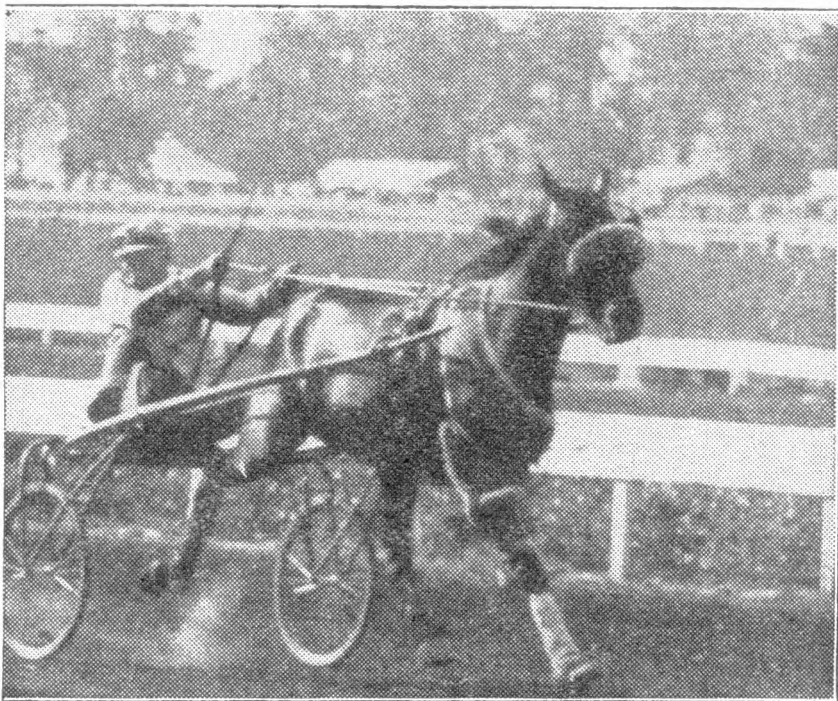
"I s'pose if yuh had *your* way, old Lamentation would trot and pace both, by turns, hey? Double-gaited, mebbe," I said.

This guy gives me a pain. Always talkin'. If he liked work as well as he likes talk, and could find as much, he c'd buy

out Henry Ford, fire Edsel and buy up Standard Oil outa the change. Always punchin' the bag. Half the time I don't pay any attention. Usually I have some thinkin' to do and all he does is get me offa the track, just like this time, when I'm tryin' to figure what we'll do in Baybridge, the town we're comin' to.

Old Lamentation is joggin' along mournful in the dust, pullin' Lum and me in a buckboard, with Tommy Tharp sittin' on the tail-gate draggin' a sulky behind us. Baybridge is a town where there used to be a lotta trotters and men crazy about racin'. It's about seventy-five mile north of the last town where we made a cleanin' with the old mare. Tommy, who swipes for me, used to know sumpin about the place, and he thinks we can pick up some money.

"What I'm thinkin' about," I said, "is



GAITED

By Jonathan Brooks

not some of y'r high flown philosophy, but some consistent money-earnin' proposition. We gotta eat consistent, and to do that, we gotta win consistent. So don't pull any of that bugaboo stuff on me. I'm single-tracked, I am, and not double-gaited on 'at track. We gotta clean up once or twice more, and then beat it south before we get snowed in for the winter. Here it is well into November already."

Three men and one trottin' mare takes some supportin' in this day and age. What makes the job all the tougher is the fact we can on'y race about once in each town, and it's gettin' harder alla time to find towns with trotters in 'em and sportin' guys willing to back their hosses. No purses to race for, because the fair season is over with. Nothin' but match races, with side bets.

But I handle all the money and pay

the bills, because I own Lamentation, and I don't spend a nickel without due provocation.

"When winter hits us," I said, "we're through. Gotta lay up till spring, and if we don't freeze, we may starve to death. Unless'n we can pick up some more jack somewhere."

Well, prospects don't look any too bright when we hit Baybridge. I can see it is not much of a town. Gasoline stations and moving pictures are gettin' alla spare cash here, like in most every other town. Couldn't find any livery stable, so we asked the way to the fair-grounds, and went out there. The blame' place is about to fall to pieces, but we find a stable with doors on it, and move in. Tommy rubs the mare down, I go out to rustle some feed for her, and Lum hits for town to find a reasonable boardin'-place for a few days.

WHILE Lamentation is restin' up from her road trip, Lum and I and Tommy put in our time combin' Baybridge with a fine-tooth comb in search of a hoss race. We loaf in all the pool rooms, and in the cigar-stores, and hotel lobbies. Tommy hangs around a coupla feed stores. Lum gets acquainted with the editor of the newspaper. But the sum total of all we find out is that there's on'y one hoss in the whole town that's ever been tracked, and he's not been raced much lately. Name of Bass Fiddle, a big black stallion, belongin' to a bachelor, name of George Dinwiddie. Good enough bred hoss, and I guess a purty fair trotter at one time.

"But I can't get him interested in any kind of a race," complains Lum. "I've got acquainted with him, and bought him two cigars, but he don't warm up. Says he don't know whether Bass Fiddle would take kindly to racin' again, and besides, he haint any jack to be puttin' up for side bets."

"And there you are," I said. "A week wasted, and more time flyin'. Purty soon the snow will be flyin', too."

"We might get as far as—" Tommy Sharp starts to name another town.

"Yeah, but it might be a dud, like this," I said.

"Let's wait here awhile, and see if I can't rustle up sumpin'." says Lum. "We're not spendin' much right now."

That's true, because the fair-grounds hasn't any caretaker, and we're not payin' any rent for Lamentation. Besides, we've got rooms with an old lady who beds and boards us on prices like they used to charge before the war. Actually, we're almost savin' money. Might not be a bad place to put in the winter at. We decide to lay around awhile, so Tommy and I put in a few days workin' with the old mare. She's rested up some, and feels like steppin' out a little, although she looks purty sad. Lamentation is blind and she's thirteen or fourteen year old. Besides, she's nothin' but skin and bone, and on top of ever'thing else, she's got a naturally blue and melancholy disposition.

Looks like an old hen that is moultin', and anybody that took her for a trotter without seein' her in action, would be sent to the asylum as plain crazy. She don't look any more like a trotter than I do, exceptin' she's got four legs to my two, but she sure can get over the ground. What I mean, she's blame' deceivin' in her looks.

"Well, Perk, things are movin'." says Lum Bagley, right cheerful, at supper Saturday night when Tommy and I have come in from the fair-grounds.

"If they aint, we will be," I said. "What's up?"

"Baybridge merchants are gettin' up a Fall Festival, to take the place of the county fair, which was called off in September," says Lum. "Gonna hold it on Thanksgiving Day, with exhibitions of punkins, airplanes, automobiles, and merchandise. Advertisin' it, and expect a big crowd out."

"Any speed program?" I said.

"Not yet, but there's gonna be," says Lum. "I'm workin' on that. I told them the celebrated blind trottin' mare, Lamentation, was bein' wintered in the city by Perkins and Bagley. I told them that for a very moderate consideration—"

"Don't make it so damn' moderate!" I said.

"—We would be glad to drive her an exhibition mile, as a special feature and attraction for the Fall Festival," Lum says. "Advertise her, and all that. And mebbe as a result, we'd hear from some trotter out in the woods to give us a match race."

"How much d'you ask 'em for?" I said.

"A hundred dollars," says Lum, "and I agreed to give half of it to charity right here in Baybridge. You see—"

"I don't see it, at all," I said. "It's out, all of it. We can't afford to give away fifty iron dollars, we can't afford to wait ten days to earn the other fifty, and besides and on top of all the rest, we cert'n'y aint gonna have any pictures took and printed of old Lamentation. Too much publicity, see? The kind of stuff we've been pullin' don't look so good in daylight."

"Poor old Lamentation is a good deal like a blind fish," says Lum. "She does work best in the dark. But listen, Perk, this here little Baybridge paper aint gonna circulate outside of the county. These other towns where we've been will never hear about it."

Well, sir, we had quite an argument about it. Lum says we aint got anything else in prospect, and we might as well be doin' this as nothin' at all. And if we leave Baybridge, we don't know where we're goin'. So finally, I figure we might as well give it a whirl.

"But none of these here photographs,"

I said. "I'm not gonna take any more chances than I have to. Lamentation aint winnin' any beauty contests, and I wont have her humiliated any more than necessary. She goes around now with her head down, ashamed of the whole business. Besides, some of them other towns might recognize her from the pictures--"

"That's bunk, Perk, and you know it," says Lum.

All day Sunday we argued, and it was Sunday night when Lum made the only sensible point he'd offered.

"And when this town sees what a poor, forlorn old mare she is," Lum says, "w'y, they'll say: 'That old skate can't trot!' And some horseman somewhere around these parts is bound to decide any nag in his barn can outstep her. *Then* we'll get a match, see? Looks to me like it's about the only chance."

"Mebbe y'r friend Dinwiddie will get brave if he sees her picture," I said, sarcastic. "Or can he read?"

"Well, mebbe he will, at that," says Lum. And so we drop the subject. Lum goes ahead with his plans, but you can bet that I made him understand the business men had to pay the expense of havin' Lamentation's pictures took, and the cuts made for the paper. He put that over, and brung out a photographer. I got me a shave and had my black silk jacket pressed by this old woman we're stayin' with. I didn't look so bad myself, but Lamentation was sorta mortified, as if this here publicity was the last straw in her carrer of shame. Fin'ly had to put a rein on her to hold her head up.

WHEN the photographer showed me the proof, I ordered him to retouch it, and to keep as many hollows out of Lamentation's ribs as he could. No use lettin' her look any worse than she had to. But when the paper come out, the picture looked terrible. I jumped Lum about it, because it was his idea, and he admitted it, and said he'd told the photographer *not* to retouch the proof. Wanted to have her lookin' bad.

"Lum," I said, mad as a straw-hatter in wet weather. "This'll be about all. I'm through. There's no gettin' along with you at all. This is my mare, it's my money that brings in cash when any is brung in, and I'm head of this here firm. You've overruled me several times, and I've stood for it. But when yuh start double-crossin'

me, I'm through. You can pack y'r shoe box any time yuh like, now, and pull out. Tommy and I'll get along, some way, without yuh!" This last was sarcasm. Get along without him? Say, I never had as much trouble in my life till we took pity on this loose-tongued bird over in Ohio where a sheriff had closed out on his confidence-game.

"Well, how about my split on the roll?" says Lum. "If that's the way you feel about it, divvy up, and I *will* beat it. If brain-work isn't needed, my time's wasted, and you and Tommy *can* get by."

"Your split? Listen, Lum," I said. "Try and get it. You've had y'r board and keep, and 'at's all you've got comin' to yuh, see? I said we'd split when winter comes, but winter aint here yet. But I figure when a guy double-crosses me, he's through, that's all."

This thing made me so blame' sore I couldn't stand to hang around the house arguin' with him. 'Fraid I'd get violent, or sumpin. So I put on my hat and tromped outa there for the fair-grounds. Found Tommy Tharp, and he's joggin' old Lam around to the buckboard. I set down on a box by the stall door to think things over. I know blame' well I've got close to twenty-five hundred dollars sewed in my shirt, but I know just as well that this fool Lum Bagley aint gonna get a dime of it. Not if I keep my right mind.

"Hello," I hear somebody sayin', and I look up. Here stands a big, plump, prosperous-lookin' man with a curly black mustache.

"Howdy, stranger!" I said.

"Mr. Perkins?" he asks. "My name's Dinwiddie, George Dinwiddie. Pleased to meet yuh!" And he offered to shake hands, which I got up and done.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Dinwiddie?" I said.

"Oh, nothin'," he says, smilin'. "I just read in the paper about y'r trottin' mare, and thought I'd come out and look her over. Horseman, myself. Seen her picture in the paper."

We talked about this and that until Tommy come back with old Lam, and she's lookin' as downcast as usual. I keep my eye on this Dinwiddie to see how he feels about her, and he has a tough time to keep from laughin'. When I see how hard he falls for the notion that there's just an old bag of bones, I have a hard time to keep from laughin' myself.

"Got anything in y'r own barn these days, Mr. Dinwiddie?" I said.

"Why, yes, and no," he says. "That is, I've got a purty fair hoss, but I throwed him outa training after the county-fair circuit around here closed last September. Not a bad hoss, at that."

"Pacer?" I said.

"No,—uh,—that is, he trots," says Dinwiddie. "Well, I guess I gotta be goin'. See you again, sometime, mebbe. I'll be out to see y'r exhibition mile."

"Wish yuh had sumpin in shape to go along with us," I said. "Two hosses are better'n one."

But he didn't bite on that, bein' busy thinkin', and he went on away. Well, I and Tommy hitched up old Lam to the sulky and I drove her a lively half-mile, and we rubbed her down, and I let her out again for a mile at a purty good clip. When we'd finally cooled her out, and put her away for the night, we went on back to the boarding-house. I asked the landlady if Mr. Bagley was in, or had been around, and she said he'd left. Wanted her to tell me he had a dinner engagement, and would be late gettin' home.

SO I had to save up my apology till first thing in the morning. I talked to Lum at breakfast, and I played square with him.

"Listen, Lum," I said, "you come on and play ball with us. Mebbe I shot off my mouth too quick yesterday when I told yuh to beat it. This scheme of yours looks like it might work, and I'm sorry I accused yuh of double-crossin' me."

"I only had the best intentions, Perk," says Lum, shakin' hands with me. "'At's all right. But I couldn't beat it, yuh see. Haven't got enough train fare in my pockets to take me any farther than the caboose."

"If y'r hintin' around for money," I said, "it's no use. We're not gonna spend any jack in this town till I can see it's gonna bring back some more with it."

"Well, I've got a live prospect on the line," Lum says. "Didn't this Dinwiddie come out to see yuh, and look over old Lam, yesterday afternoon?"

"Yes, but how did you know it?"

"I told him to," says Lum. "He saw the picture of her in the paper, and said there never was a race-horse looked as bad as that picture. I told him she looked worse, and—"

"Oh, no, Lum," I said. "Listen, now, no hoss ever looked as bad as that."

"You're prejudiced in Lamentation's favor," Lum laughs. "Anyway, he said, if she looked like that, why, he could bring his big hoss, Bass Fiddle, outa the barn without a day's work, and lick us."

"He can't do anything of the kind," I said. "Tommy's been inquiren' around about this black hoss, and he never trotted faster'n 2:14 on a half-mile track in his life. Let this Dinwiddie bring him out, 'sall I gotta say."

"Let him?" says Lum. "The problem is to make him. And that brings me around to the job in hand, Perk. Dinwiddie lives with his sister. She's a widow woman, awfully nice, and she swings a mean skillet. Cook? Oh, man! Had dinner with them last night, and spent the evening. Tonight I'm gonna take her to the movie, if you'll slip me some jack."

"Why d'yuh always have to play the women?" I said. This bird is always shining around with the ladies. "Stick to business, just once!"

"The reason, Perk, is that she is well-to-do, and Dinwiddie hasn't got a nickel," Lum explains. "If we're gonna shake down this big boob with his Bass Fiddle—"

Well, I let Lum have a ten-spot, and told him to handle it his own way, just so he coaxed Dinwiddie into a match race and got some sort of a side bet out of him. That night, after I'd spent another day with old Lamentation, Lum come in late and said things was movin'. They must of been, too, because when I saw Tommy at lunch-time the next day, he said he'd heard somebody trottin' a hoss out on the track that morning, but couldn't get over to the track in time to see who it was. Couldn't have been anybody but Dinwiddie, because there's not another guy with a trotter in ten miles of here.

I looked for Lum that night to see if there's any developments, but he stays out too late for me. And I got up early next morning to go out to the track, so that the first I heard of it was when I read it in the Baybridge paper that evening. Big headline—for a little town paper! Great match race arranged, replacing exhibition mile by blind trotter Lamentation! Special three-heat trotting match between mare and locally-owned black trotter Bass Fiddle! And so forth. Lot of blah, to drag in the country folks and others to the Fall Festival. But I had to laugh, because it shows this bird Bagley produces the goods. Looks like we're all set to trim the town, if he

can only drag a side bet out of this boob Dinwiddie.

"The merchants have agreed to change the scheme, and offer a purse of \$100 to the winner," says Lum, when he explains it all to me.

"They oughta get generous and put up a bag of peanuts as an extra inducement," I said. "These guys are so tight they could hold an eel in olive oil with a buttered banana skin."

"They do the big thing, as they see it," says Lum.

"Well, it's up to you to snake a side bet outa this Dinwiddie," I said, "and then get some other bets up, besides, with the town boys."

"Have you ever known me to fail?" asks Lum. "But listen, this Dinwiddie lives with his sister. She's got the jack. I'll have to make a play for her, and—"

"How much for current expenses this time?" I said, reaching for my pocketbook.

"Well, you might let me take ten, as promotion money," says Lum.

So I let him have it, and lay all over him that he's got to get the money up, while Tommy and I are gettin' old Lam ready to trot the race of her life. This is one week before Thanksgiving Day, when the race is to be trotted. Lamentation is roundin' to in nice shape, though as glum as ever. No joy in her life, whatever. Well, we get her as fit as human hands can make her, all the while this Dinwiddie is workin' out his big black Bass Fiddle. I feel sorry for this fish, because Bass Fiddle has been outa training two months, fat and not fit to race a hearse around the block. He puffs and blows like a grampus.

Tommy and I laid out in the grass one morning just after sunup to see him work the track. We waited so long we went to sleep, and then this snortin', blowin' old hoss woke us up. Looks like he might have some foot, when in shape to race. But he's cert'n'y not in shape just now, lookin' fat like a show hoss.

MEANTIME I don't see Lum Bagley till the night before Thanksgiving Day. It's about five o'clock in the afternoon, and we get together at the boarding-house. I ask Lum if he's all set, and he says not yet.

"Now, listen, Lum," I said. "This thing can't fall through. We gotta drag some dough outa this town. Here it is less'n twenty-four hours till time for the race,

and no signs of prosperity yet. What's a big idea?"

"Takes time to work out this proposition, Perk," says Lum. "But I plan to complete the deal, tonight, after dinner. Mrs. Clark is asking me to Thanksgiving dinner, which we are going to have at her house. Man, she's *some* cook! I've got her in the notion of putting up five hundred beans, through Dinwiddie. Been eggin' him on, by pretendin' to sell you out, see? She's asked me whether she sh'd let him have it, and I've told her I'd let her know tonight whether we could fix the race."

"Looks like purty raw work, to me," I said.

"My orders are to get the money in," Lum laughs. "But yuh know, I feel sorta squeamish, myself. This Mrs. Clark is a dream. Never met a finer woman. For half a cent, or less, I'd settle down right here in Baybridge, and—"

"Listen!" I said. "You, married, would be just like a pillow without feathers. Flat failure, that's all."

"Well, I don't know about that," says Lum, thoughtful. "She sure can cook, and she's got some money, and this aint a half bad little town."

"Well, can the sentiment," I said. "After yuh get the bet down with Dinwiddie, what then?"

"Then I'm goin' downtown and canvass around among the sports," says Lum. "And tomorrow at the track, I'll line up some more hicks and limb grippers."

"See 'at yuh do," I said. "Up to one thousand bones. But let's get this straight: We tell Dinwiddie we will lose to him. We bet him five hundred, and tell him we'll get the money back betting on his hoss. Then we go out and bet on old Lam instead, and win with her?"

"Correct," says Lum.

"All I gotta say is, this Dinwiddie's a bigger sucker'n what I thought," I remarks. "Yuh can't think what a big boob he is," says Lum. "But don't worry. I'll make this an oral bet—wont put up a dime."

Well, this is purty raw stuff, I'll admit. But I figure that if we can pick up fifteen hundred, besides the hundred bucks purse money which will just about pay expenses here in Baybridge, w'y, the town will have paid us its fair and proper tribute. So we leave it lay. Lum shaves and puts on his clean collar, and goes out to do the dirty work, on a full stomach of Mrs. Clark's

best cookin'. Tommy and I eat a snack, and then go downtown to accept any bets that might fall in our laps. But none do, and so we come back home and go to bed. I'm just about half asleep, at half-past ten, when the landlady knocks on the door and says I'm wanted on the phone. To bail Lum outa jail, I'll bet.

"Mr. Perkins?" and it's a woman's voice.

"Yes, ma'am," I said.

"This is Mrs. Clark," she says. "Perhaps Mr. Bagley has spoken of me. I wonder if I could see you for a moment?"

"W'y, Mrs. Clark—" I said, stallin' for time.

"I know it's late, but this is important, and I could run over in my car in just a few minutes," she says.

"W'y, cert'n'y, ma'am," I said. "I'll be glad to see you." So I got dressed as quick as I could, and went down in the parlor. She got there almost as soon as I did, and while I may have been asleep, I think my eyes was open wide. If they wasn't they soon was, because this lady is a looker. Little, slim, with a laughin' mouth, and snappy brown eyes. As naturally happy lookin' as poor old Lam is solemn.

"MR. PERKINS?" she asks, smilin' at me. "I know this is rather queer, but I just had to see you."

"I'm glad to oblige you any way I can," ma'am," I said.

"Well, then," she says, sittin' down in a rockin' chair. "I'll not waste any time. Perhaps my visit is nothing but a waste of time and worry, but I couldn't help it. I wanted to see you before Mr. Bagley gets home. He—ah—he has told me something that rather worries me. My brother George wanted to borrow five hundred dollars of me. That is a very large sum of money, Mr. Perkins."

"Yes, ma'am," I said.

"I did not want to let him have it, but Mr. Bagley assured me that it was all right. He said you agreed to let George win the race," she says, talkin' faster'n Bass Fiddle can trot. "I told him that seemed queer, but he says you and he are a wealthy firm—"

Firm? I c'd kill 'at guy, f'r his nerve!

"—And that you could afford to do it. He said everybody would look at your wonderful blind mare tomorrow, and see at a glance that she could beat Bass Fiddle, and everybody would be anxious to bet on her. That you and Mr. Bagley,

then, would immediately bet on Bass Fiddle, and let him win," she says, comin' down the home stretch and under the wire with her whole story at a two-minute clip. "Is that all true?"

Well, fan me with a brick! It wouldn't hit me any harder than this layout of Lum's. But what could I do? I had to toe the mark, or see our whole campaign shot. So I rose right up and subscribed to Lum's double-crossin' plan.

"Of course, Mrs. Clark," I said. "You see, the racin' game is sorta peculiar. Ordinarily, we don't do this kind of thing. But in this case, well, you see, Mr. Bagley has spoken very nice of you, and your entertainment of him—"

"He's a charming gentleman," exclaims Mrs. Clark.

"And so we have decided to work it a little differently," I said. "Our first plan was to trot an exhibition mile, but so much interest has been stirred up, and now, Lum wishes to do the nice thing by you—"

"I ought to be ashamed of myself for mistrusting him," says Mrs. Clark, flushing. "But you see, I'm not used to such things, Mr. Perkins. I believe him, now. And Mr. Perkins, you'll do something for me, wont you?"

"Anything you ask, ma'am," I said.

"Please don't tell Mr. Bagley—ah, Lum—that I came to see you. Please?" And she gives me one of her nicest smiles, lookin' me straight in the eyes.

What is this, a romance or a horse-race, or both? I give her my promise, of course. Who wouldn't? She goes home, and I stay up awhile to wait for Lum, but he don't show, so I go to bed. Last thing I remember thinkin' is, that she must be settin' her cap for Lum, same as he seems to be layin' his lines for her. If she's got money, w'y she can afford to carry the big loafer, or set him up in business, or sumpin. Though with one loafer, this George Dinwiddie her brother, she'd oughta have her hands full. Never saw such a woman. Young-lookin', too. Almost make up my mind to get her five hundred back to her, after the race is over tomorrow. And for half a cent, I'd turn in and beat Lum's time with her myself!

"Lum," I said, at breakfast, "get the money down?"

"Got a lotta word bets," says Lum. "I never had a nickel to bet, because the cashier never loosens up a nickel's worth. Got a five-hundred-dollar lay with Dinwid-

die. About five hundred more with the town sports, and I figure to spread myself around the grounds today to the extent of another five hundred."

"All on old Lam's nose to win?" I said. "Y'r double-crossin' them, not me?"

"Sure, of course," says Lum, takin' a third egg offa the plate. "Why do you ask me that?"

"Oh, you've pulled so many funny games on me, I never know where I'm at," I said, laughin'. But that satisfied me he's on the level. Satisfied? I mean, convinced. I wasn't quite satisfied, because I couldn't keep from thinkin' of that lovely little Mrs. Clark. Hated to think of him trimmin' her, even if she *is* rich—she havin' been so decent to Lum, and ever'thing.

Well, sir, it's a large day. The kind of a day to make everybody thankful, even the poor people of Baybridge after they've been trimmed. They all turn out for the Fall Festival at the fair-grounds, on full stomachs. And the country people are there, too. Band concert; exhibits; fat cattle show—almost like an old-fashioned county fair, only not quite so hot. Lum takes Mrs. Clark, and leaves her in the grandstand.

I look over old Lam, and she's feelin' fine, havin' been offa the gravel roads now over two weeks. Looks sad and blue, but I can tell she's got the old gimp. I round up George Dinwiddie, and we see the officials, headed by William Henry Simmons, an old hay-and-feed dealer who used to be head of the fair association. He's the judge, and ever'thing.

"American Trottin' Hoss Association rules?" I said.

"Cert'n'y," says Mr. Simmons.

"Two heats in three?" says Dinwiddie, rubbing his fat cheek.

"Yeah, on'y two will be enough," I said, grinnin'.

"I don't know about that," Dinwiddie says, pullin' his mustache. He's tryin' to be cocky and he winks an eye at me like we've got an understanding. But I'm cussed if I've got any understanding. He can believe Lum if he wants to, but I'm out to win, see? And when I met Lum on the way back to the barn, I ask him if he's got the money all placed on old Lam to win, and he says he has. So I know we've got to win, even if Dinwiddie and Mrs. Clark are expectin' us to lose a-purpose.

Well, we warm up, and the crowd gives us the razz, because old Lam looks so

poorly. Dinwiddie comes out with Bass Fiddle snortin' and blowin', and the crowd gives him a big hand. Local pride. Besides, Bass Fiddle's their idea of a race hoss. He looks like a good old lady's fat phaëton plug, if y'ask me. Wish I'd told Lum to shoot the works, 'stead of holdin' a thousand in the hole. Always was conservative.

WHILE we're scorin' and foolin' around to make it look like a regular hoss race, I sh'd tell yuh about this track. It's ankle deep in dust, because the fair-grounds owners wont spend the money to drag or work it. I'm glad of it, because that will help old Lam's feet. They're tender, anyhow. And it makes the track heavy, which will hurt Bass Fiddle, because he's not in good condition. That's one thing. The other is, that over on the back stretch, there's a great long patch of weeds right down the middle of the track. This patch runs from one turn to the other, right down the middle, dividin' the track in two stretches, and these weeds are as high as y'r head. Now then!

"Go!" yells old man Simmons, after we've scored and jockeyed around awhile. We're off. I'm outside, and I give Lam her head a minute. She lets out, and we cut across to take the pole. Figure to keep her inside. Around the turn we go. Into the back stretch. I take hold of her, and ease down. Pull over by the fence, to give Dinwiddie room, but what does the big fish do? W'y, he takes outside of them weeds.

"Trot two miles 'steada one, hey?" I yelled at him. But he paid no attention. We go along nice and easy down the back stretch, me nursin' old Lam along. Wanta laugh—but just when we're almost at the far turn, I see a great big cloud of dust in front of me, and there goes Bass Fiddle and Dinwiddie.

"What the Sam Hill?" I said to myself. "This big black hoss must have more'n what I thought."

But I let 'em go ahead. Dinwiddie musta kept pushin' on the lines, because when we hit the home stretch, he's 'way ahead. I can't even see 'em for the dust. But he'll come back to me, I figure. Fat hoss can't trot like that, two laps. Y' oughta heard the crowd yell when I trail 'em around the turn after eatin' dust all down the home stretch!

Once more Dinwiddie, the big boob, drives 'way outside the weeds, but I hug

the rail, and this time I step on it. Give old Lam the works, and she trots like a fool. Guess this'll make up the lost ground—but no! There goes Dinwiddie again in a cloud of dust! Hittin' the home stretch, I see it's no use tryin' to ketch him, so I on'y drive hard enough to keep from gettin' distanced. Gosh, we got razzed! And Bass Fiddle and Dinwiddie cert'n'y got a hand from the home folks.

But man, I'm doin' some thinkin'. Fifteen hundred dollars of my money are up in the air a mile high, and I gotta drag 'em down. Believe me, I'm hard. If this Lum's double-crossed me again, for the sake of his lovely little widow, I'll kill him. Mebbe he knows sumpin about Bass Fiddle, and is holdin' out. But Tommy, while we're coolin' out old Lam, says he's positive Bass Fiddle never trotted faster'n 2:14 in his life. Time of this mile was 2:13 and a fraction. Lam can beat that.

Scorin' for the second heat, Dinwiddie grins at me. I give him a dirty look.

"Musta had two runaways down 'at back stretch," I said.

"Nope, never broke," he says. "This hoss never runs."

I'm outside again, and I get a hunch all at once. We get away, and I stay outside. Think I'll see what happens outside them weeds on the back stretch. It's a long way, and all that, over by the outside fence, and it's almighty rough on me, joltin' and humpin' over ruts. But we trot around like a team, and when we hit the stretch the second time, I give old Lam the word and we go away from Bass Fiddle like he's tied. I look at Dinwiddie, as we get back to salute the judges, and he scowls at me. Mebbe he suspects now 'at we're double-crossin' him. I laugh. But the crowd jeers, because the time is a lot slower'n the first mile.

STILL I don't know how to explain it. But this thing is for blood, as well as fifteen hundred beans, and I go out to kill, the third heat. Dinwiddie's sweatin' and nervous, himself, and his fat face is set. He's watchin' me like a hawk as we leave the wire, with a crowd yellin' and rootin' for Bass Fiddle like a bunch of college kids at a football game.

"I'll go the long way this time," I yelled to Dinwiddie, as we went around the first turn.

"Suit y'rself," he says.

So I pulled out from the inside, across

in front of him, and headed outside them weeds. But what did he do? W'y, this time, he swung inside along the inner rail and there was the weeds between us again. When I saw that, I hit old Lam a crack with the whip, and lit out on the full trot. Didn't pay much attention to him, and figured to reach the far turn ahead of him and swing in to the rail again. But when we reached the end of the weeds, here he was, comin' like a runaway, on'y this great big black Bass Fiddle was pacin', yes, sir, *pacin'*, a regular Dan Patch gait!

And there we were neck and neck, me outside goin' the long way! I was so mad I wanted to reach around and wallop this Dinwiddie with my whip. But then I remembered the rules, and I laughed.

"Hey, brother, this is a *trottin'* race," I said. "Pull up, and get back on a trot!"

"Is that so?" was all he said.

The crowd cheered like mad when Dinwiddie and Bass Fiddle led us by the stand again, with his old black hoss pacin' along like he had hobbles on. They didn't know the difference between *pacin'* and *trottin'* and *bunnyhuggin'*, I guess. Anything suited 'em, so's old Bass Fiddle won. All gaits look alike to flivver drivers.

"You take 'at hoss back on a trot, or I'll protest 'is race," I yelled, while we're goin' around the turn.

"All right," says Dinwiddie, laughin'. "Beat yuh at y'r own game, trottin'," and he laughs again. Takes ahold of his hoss's head, and pulls him down, jerks the lines, and throws Bass Fiddle back to the trot. Meantime, I shoots ahead, and grabs the inner rail. Start a fire under old Lam, and she goes away boilin'. Settle to my work, and for a minute, forget all about Bass Fiddle.

But when we pull around the far turn again, and slow down to keep from fallin' on the short curve, here's old Bass Fiddle, goin' like a house afire, about five lengths ahead of us. I'm so dumfounded I blame near faint, and old Lam musta been plumb disgusted too. But I see what's happened, now, clear as coal oil. When I'm inside the weeds, I can't see what Bass Fiddle's doin'! Dust's so th'ck and heavy, I can't hear his hoofs, to tell whether he's trottin' or pacin'. And fr'm the judge's stand, they can't tell, either, though they can see Bass Fiddle's pacin' when he goes by the stand.

"Well, that'll help," I said. "Those guys wont give him the race if he goes

by there pacin'. But I'd better take out after him." All this to myself, at the same time I'm drivin', and countin' up 'at fifteen hundred of mine.

So I and old Lam, we put on an exhibition of trottin'. She lays down to her work, lets out them long legs of hers, stretches her neck, and we go down 'at home stretch faster'n any Fourth of July auto race ever did. And right at the wire we almost overhaul 'em.

Bass Fiddle slows down all of a sudden under a terrific pull from this fat Dinwiddie. He jerks the reins, Bass Fiddle does a quick step from the pace to the trot, and he jogs under the wire, mebbe a neck to the good. That crowd went crazy! But if you think it went any crazier'n what I did, you're wild y'rself. I c'd hardly get back to the judge's stand quick enough.

"Y'r honor," I said,—though I afterward wondered why I complimented this hay-and-feed merchant thataway,—"I protest awardin' this heat to Bass Fiddle. He was on the pace the first time round, to take the lead. He went on the pace behind them weeds, and took the lead again. Illegal, that is. It's our heat, and our race."

"We didn't see any pacin' behind the weeds," says this Mr. Simmons. "We did see Dinwiddie pull his hoss off the pace, twice, as he should. Bass Fiddle didn't run, on'y paced, and his driver took him offa that. We don't know that pacin' gave him the lead—"

Shades of George Wilkes and Joe Patchen! Can yuh tie that?

"But this was a trottin' race!" I yelled.

"Don't remember that the word trot was mentioned in the agreement," says this big robber.

"All bets are off," I yelled. "Just announce that," I said.

"We announce Bass Fiddle wins," says Simmons, pickin' up a megaphone. "But we don't know anything about any betting. It's illegal in this state."

"I s'pose that's why Dinwiddie put up five hundred, and thirty-one other guys put up a total of a thousand, hey?" I said. "And I s'pose 'at Dinwiddie mebbe owes yuh a feed bill, too, hey? Well, try and get it, because he don't collect a nickel fr'm me, see?"

And while the crowd cheers his announcement that Bass Fiddle wins the heat and race, I climb down outa there. So blame' mad I c'd hardly see. Almost

didn't see this lovely little Mrs. Clark, where she's waitin' for me, out near our barn.

"So sweet of you, Mr. Perkins," she smiles, and offers me her hand. I took it before I knew what I was doin'. "Mr. Bagley said you were the soul of honor. And it gave me a wonderful thrill to see George win the race and the money, after I had backed him."

She still thought we was on the level with her, while double-crossin' the crowd, instead a the other way about!

DON'T know what I said, or how I got away from her. Musta been dazed. Don't even remember slippin' Lum Bagley five hundred. He says I did. Don't recall how we escaped the mob of people tryin' to collect Lum's word of mouth bets. Don't know how we got away from Baybridge, but after we'd been in Wilkinton about three days, Tommy Tharp thought we'd oughta send that old landlady in Baybridge a money-order for our board-bill.

"She was nice to us," he said. "D'yuh s'pose Lum will turn up again?"

He did, while we was in the post office buyin' that money-order.

"How come, Lum?" I said. "Thought y'd settle in Baybridge, with that lovely little widow woman."

"She found out I was a bum, about the time I found out she didn't have anything except a pension and the house she lived in," says Lum, grinnin'. "So I come on away from there. Romance is blooie!"

"But not as blooie as our five hundred," I said. "Nothin's blooier'n that."

"Yes," he says. "It is. I've got the money. But I had to slip outa Baybridge between dark and daylight. George Dinwiddie and thirty-one guys still lookin' for me. But I'm a consistent performer. Always get away with the goods, Perk!" And he laughs.

"Consistency?" I said. "On'y thing consistent about you is the way yuh fall fr' the women."

"Well," says Lum, "that reverses the argument. Now you favor inconsistency. Didn't you fall for her far enough to gimme five hundred to pay her with? Y'r about as consistent as old Bass Fiddle!"

"Sorta double-gaited myself, I'll admit," I said. "But no bones broke."

"Not even the five hundred bones," Lum laughs. "Here they are. Where do we eat?"



McKeever's Dinosaur

*He was a quaint household pet, and he made no end of trouble, but—
he knew when to bite after all: a fine fantastic tale by a gifted writer.*

By GEORGE L. KNAPP

EVERYBODY remembers the story told to the prohibition authorities a few months ago by "Lengthy" Ryall, the Kentucky mountaineer who came down from his native hills and stills, and threw in his lot with a rum-running wharf-rat from New York by the name—or alias—of Kees. The two quarreled over their illicit profits: Ryall was badly wounded, and about to be murdered by his treacherous partner, when the Devil appeared and carried Kees away. That is the gist of the tale. Of course it was received with whoops of derision, and witty comments on the quality of hooch that could stir the imagination to such flights. . . . But I happen to know that Ryall was telling the truth as he saw it. Here is the whole story:

Wallace B. McKeever is well known to many scientists and a few prominent manufacturers; but he needs an introduction to the general public. He is Scotch, as one might guess from his name. He came to this country while a boy, and there is only a slight burr in his speech, unless he is excited, or—which happens frequently—in a mood that makes him "wishful to get

mair out o' the guile words than can be done by singin' 'em through your nose, ye ken, or bitin' 'em aff wi' your teeth." He is a chemist of sorts—a familiar figure at gatherings of the fraternity, and enjoys a good income from some of his discoveries. But he is first and foremost an adventurer. Fate built a wall of duties and necessities around him that kept him from seeking adventures on strange coasts when he was young; so now, in the afternoon of life, he seeks them in the laboratory instead, and has more joy over some useless stuff that can be exploded by radio than over a practical improvement that will bring cash in the open market. That is not the character which the world ascribes to Scotchmen, nor even the one which Nature gives to most of them; but it is true of McKeever.

I HAD not seen him for weeks, when one day I found him lying in wait for me at the club. He led me to a secluded table, and when the waiter disappeared, leaned over and asked in a stage whisper:

"Do ye mind my tellin' you a good while

back that I'd made a discovery, an' was waitin' to confirm it?"

"Yes," I said. He told me something of the sort several times a year, and I had not the remotest idea about this particular prophecy. He nodded wisely.

"'Tis confirmed," he said. "A great discovery—greater than I dreamed!"

"Does it run to explosions or to smells?" I asked, having had some experience with his discoveries. He regarded me with indulgent pity.

"Neither," he said. "It lives, moves an' has its being. Though there might be something verra like an explosion, given the right provocation. I'll take ye to see it this afternoon. Don't tell me you're busy."

"I'm not," I said; and then, as the logic of his reply penetrated my slow brain, I exclaimed:

"You don't mean to say that you've been able to make life, in the laboratory?"

"Hush!" he said, as some fellow-members looked our way. "Not quite makin' life, though 'tis a long step that way—a long, long step. There's another chap I want!" He signaled a tall, cadaverous-looking man, famed on two hemispheres as a mighty hunter and a traveler of almost superhuman endurance. "Ho, Greene! This is the head table!"

"Sure," said Greene, coming at the call. "Where McKeever sits—you know the rest." He smiled pleasantly, and the piercing black eyes that hardly seemed to belong in his pale face twinkled as he surveyed the little Scot. "Another invention to announce?"

"Precisely!" returned McKeever. "A biological invention. When ye have fortified yourselves wi' a good meal, I'll take ye to inspect it. As a hunter, 'twill be of interest to ye."

HE refused to say more, and we knew there was no use in pressing him. We finished our lunch and went down to the street. McKeever was about to signal a taxi to take us to the station; but Greene had his car handy, so we went out in that. A little less than an hour of the hunter's emotionless driving brought us to the bungalow where McKeever lives most of the year, alone save for his Chinese servant and the occasional visits of his two grown daughters. It is a lonesome place, too far from town to be cut up into lots, and too barren for truck-farming; the nearest

neighbor is almost half a mile away. We supposed the "discovery" would be in his basement experiment station; but he turned toward the structure, half barn, half laboratory,—where garden tools and chemical reagents often repose on the same bench,—but steam heated and electric lighted.

"Prepare your eyes to gaze on wondrous things!" he intoned, rolling his *r*'s as he unlocked the door. We followed him inside; he pointed to a big glass case, and proclaimed:

"Look!"

"Good heavens!" I cried; and even Greene, usually as impassive as the Senecas whose blood he boasts, gave a grunt of surprise. Behind the thick glass was the largest python either of us ever had seen. The biggest snake of my acquaintance was reputed to be twenty-five feet long, and I always thought they stretched it at least half a yard. This fellow—I measured the coils with my eye as well as I could, discarded the result as incredible but found no change on repeating the process—was well above thirty feet.

"Thirty-eight," said McKeever at my question. "A bit mair, now. 'Tis a week or so since I had the tape on him."

"Where on earth did you get him?" asked Greene. The Scot ignored the question to put one of his own:

"Did ye ever see the like o' him?"

"I never did," said Greene frankly. "The longest skin I ever saw was twenty-nine feet, and that had been stretched. He's a whale—and a beauty."

He was a beauty, even to me, who hate all snakes. As we talked, he came out of his coils and began circling the cage, flowing round it, one might say, so smooth was his motion. I repeated Greene's question:

"Where did you get him?"

"I made him," said McKeever. We stared, and he went on, grinning at our surprise. "That is, I made twenty-seven feet o' him. He was eleven feet long when I got him, not two years syne. I ha' made the rest."

He stopped, waiting to be questioned further. Greene, with his Indian patience, would have outwaited him; but McKeever always wins a contest of that sort with me. "Will you kindly tell us what the devil you mean?" I demanded.

"Surely. Not out of deference to the power ye naturally invoked, but juist as a matter o' politeness, I will tell. I ha' discovered and partly isolated the sub-

stances which caused growth, an' fed them to the serpent, here. That is all."

"I should think it was enough," murmured Greene, as he watched the restless giant circling the cage. "Pituitary gland, I suppose?"

"At first, yes. Then I went further, an' now I find I can get the same substances out o' fresh liver an' thyroid. Juist what they are, I do not know, beyond the fact that they contain a larger percentage o' phosphorus, iodine an' potassium than the average o' body tissues. But they give a characteristic reaction in the test-tube, besides the reaction ye see here."

"Liquid?" asked Greene; and at the answering nod: "Then you must inject it into the animals you give him for his food?" McKeever nodded again, glumly, and I inquired:

"Why didn't you try this on some worthwhile creature?"

"It doesn't seem to work well on warm-blooded animals. They grow—I had a white mouse nigh as big as a rabbit—but they get all out o' proportion. Reptiles an' fish are different; the maist o' them grow as long as they live, anyway, an' it works no havoc to speed up the process."

"Will he get any bigger?"

"No doubt. But not through my meenistrations. I've sold him to the zoo at the Big Town; they're comin' for him Monday. I think he's about as big as they can handle; an' besides," he added, confidentially, "it's no a pleasant task to feed a beastie that has to get his meat alive. When he goes, I'll be ready for the real job."

"Which is—"

"I'm goin' to make a dinosaur!"

"**YOU'RE** crazy!" I exclaimed. Greene shook his head, and McKeever answered with cool confidence:

"Crazy like a fox. Yes. I'm no talkin' about hatchin' those ancient eggs, ye ken, or callin' fossils to life. But the main veesible difference betwixt the dinosaurs an' some o' our modern lizards is the matter o' size. I'll furnish the size."

"Jove!" exclaimed Greene, as the possibilities of the weird scheme rose before him. "If it works, you could put a new thrill in hunting. But be careful, old man. Don't make the Gila monster or that Australian chap—Moloch—any bigger than they are now."

"I'm not a fool!" said McKeever acidly.

"The creature I ha' chosen for the next demonstration is harmless." He led us through the building to a yard at the back, enclosed by a high, solid board fence. In one corner, basking in the still warm autumn sunshine, was a lizardlike creature about three feet long. A row of spines ran along its back, longest in the neck and shoulder region and dwindling to little knobs on the tail, and the hindlegs were somewhat longer than the front ones.

"Oh, an iguana!" said Greene. "From Mexico?"

"Aye. As far up the mountains as they could find one, so that he wouldna be too sensitive to cold—though the building's heated, as ye see."

"I've seen these fellows five feet long, anyway," said Greene.

"Sometimes six," answered McKeever. "I'll multiply that by four or five, maybe more, wi' fair luck. I only started feedin' him the extract last week, an' there's a difference already."

"His intelligence doesn't seem to be speeded up very much," I remarked.

"He's verra human in some respects," retorted the Scot. "Still, he can learn. Sandy! Sandy! Come here!" He clapped his hands loudly, the creature came at the call, and McKeever began feeding him bits of dog-biscuit from a capacious pocket.

"See?" he said. "He knows the call to meals. When he doesn't obey, I spank him lightly wi' a wooden paddle, and he comes to order. His hearin' is no his strong point, though. I ha' my own ways o' discouragin' the curiosity o' neighbors; I've spread the word that I'm experimentin' wi' explosives, an' set off a harmless powder now and then. Sandy's got so he expects to be fed when he hears them."

"What do you feed him, aside from your mysterious extract and dog biscuit?"

"Lettuce, green corn, a wee bit meal an' alfalfa hay, which I sprinkle wi' the growth elixir."

"You'll have to enrich that diet," said Greene. "These brutes get a go a deal of animal food in the wild state; they're far from being pure vegetarians. You'll have to give this chap something of the sort or he'll wink out on you, as most o' 'em do."

"I'm averse to that," said McKeever, in a troubled tone. "An appetite for meat would be hard to handle in a creature the size o' an elephant."

"Get your dog-biscuits baked specially,

with an extra amount of animal food in them," suggested Greene. "And don't talk about elephants. If you get this fellow as big as a Shetland pony, you'll be doing well."

"Will I, noo?" demanded McKeever in a huff. "You watch!"

A MONTH later, I came to see Sandy again. He had grown rapidly—there could be no doubt on that score; and it seemed to me that he had changed shape in some degree. The tail was fleshier and the neck longer. I mentioned this to McKeever, who nodded.

"The hindlegs are growin' longer, too, compared to the front ones," he said. "I didna foresee this, but I should ha' done so. I am givin' the beastie an excess o' the elements o' growth, and ancestral tendencies that ha' been suppressed are stimulated to new activity. 'Tis a more illuminatin' discovery than I dreamed mysel'."

"You'll never die of ingrowing modesty," I remarked. He answered only with a grin.

Some weeks later I was summoned by phone, and asked to bring Greene with me. The hunter was out of the city, so I came alone, and found McKeever in much distress. His pet was sick.

"He got chilled, I fear me," he said. "But warmin' him does na good now. He will na eat, an' seems in pain."

"Have you called a veterinary?" I asked. Mac gave me a look of scorn.

"No, nor yet a plumber, nor an astronomer, nor a specialist on Hebrew folklore. What should a vet' know about a beastie like this?" We stood by idly for a while, and then, with a gesture that bade me wait, McKeever went to the house. In a few minutes he was back with a large bottle, from which, as he uncorked it, came an unmistakable aroma.

"A remedy that's done much gude to man an' beast, an' no so much harm, when used in moderation," he announced. "Here, Sandy, taste the blood o' John Barleycorn. 'Twill make you feel better, whether ye are so or nicht. Down it, now."

He worked the neck of the bottle into the creature's mouth while talking, and tilted the fiery liquid down its throat. Sandy never stirred. McKeever rose, held the bottle up to the light, and swore, softly.

"A pint, or mair, at one fell swoop! 'Tis either a copper-lined belly ye've got, Sandy, or a taste three million years ahead o' your

time. Well, it should soon bring results."

Privately, I thought it would bring a funeral, for though the brute was then more than seven feet long, it seemed impossible that he should swallow such a dose of raw whisky without disaster. But I reckoned without reptilian digestion. A few minutes passed. Sandy suddenly raised his head, looked round, and settled back into his original position. A minute later he gave a start, and then, as an after-thought, scratched himself on the neck with one hind foot.

"'Tis workin'," said McKeever. The lizard was still for a brief space, then raised up its forequarters, looked around the building with an air of disapproval, stood up on three legs, and rubbed its stomach with one forefoot. Evidently things were getting warm in Sandy's interior. He twisted his head, looked back at us over each shoulder in turn, and presently stretched his neck as far as it would go and gave a bawl that sounded like a steam whistle with a sore throat.

"Lord love us!" cried McKeever; and I echoed the surprise if not the words. It was the first time I had heard the brute utter a sound. Apparently cheered by his own music, Sandy pushed himself up, and for the first time balanced wabblingly for a minute on his hind-feet alone.

"Look! Look!" McKeever was fairly squealing with excitement. "'Tis a dinosaur already, no less! The iguana has become an iguanadon! Man, I ha' builded better than I knew!"

Sandy dropped on all fours—we jumped back as his knobby tail lashed our way; he upended again, took two steps that way, slapping his feet like Charlie Chaplin, dropped again. We did not suspect his aim till he halted at a shelf, far out of his normal reach, reared up and swept it clear of bottles, tools and paraphernalia, with a fine smashing of glass.

"Here, ye disorderly de'il!" shouted McKeever, springing forward. Sandy answered with his new-found squawk, and started off at the most outlandish gait ever known since time began. He was trying to run on hind-feet alone, but regularly lost his balance after the second step in that fashion, came lurching down on his forequarters, reared up and tried it over again, with the same result. It was pure awkwardness; but it looked like an incredibly grotesque dance. *Plop, plop, pullallop—plop, plop, pullallop*—he went round and

round the room, letting out his war-cry at every other lurch, while McKeever and I held to each other to keep from falling, and laughed ourselves faint.

"J-J-Jurassic jazz!" gasped McKeever. "Hey, ye bletherin' anachronism!" For Sandy was reaching toward another shelf. His keeper ran forward, and the paddle not being handy, brought down the flat of a spade on the creature's rump. I doubt if it hurt him in the least; but Sandy gave over his riotous designs, galumphed to the opposite corner of the room, sat up, tried to scratch himself, tipped sideways and sprawled at length, tongue sticking foolishly out of one corner of his mouth. He gave a vast sigh and lay still, save for an occasional wriggle in the stomach region. McKeever covered him with a blanket, and stood looking down, fairly bursting with pride. "I ha' made a dinosaur!" he said.

SANDY slept off his souse with no apparent ill effects, though his appetite was small next morning. McKeever soon had him back on full rations, but for a time omitted the growth extract. After a month he resumed it again; and Sandy, who had lagged for a space, spurted up till you could almost see him grow. Day by day, in every way, he was getting bigger and bigger—and uglier and uglier, too, though no beauty at the start. His neck was quite long, now, his hind legs ditto; the horny spikes on his back had grown in proportion. When he balanced on his hind feet and peered round with his staring, reptilian eyes, one had to admit that he was the reincarnation of a remote past, a creature which so far as outward appearance went, might have waddled into a Mesozoic marsh and dined on tree ferns. Greene, back in the city again, came out for a visit, and shook his head.

"Better get this brute out to my place on Crockett's Bar, Mac," he said. "He's going to make trouble if you try to keep him here."

"He's gentle as a lamb!" declared McKeever indignantly.

"He wont stay so. He hasn't brains enough to tame and train like a sensible brute, and he's getting too much muscle to handle. He could kill a man in half a minute, now, if he knew it."

McKeever surveyed his pet. The brute was nearly twelve feet long, and though more than a third of that was tail, when standing on his hind feet, he was taller

than a man, and already heavier than the pony that Greene had set for his limit. The fleshy tail, huge hindquarters and sagging paunch were the first things to catch the eye; but the fore-limbs were not weak; the neck was heavily muscled; and though the head held only a paltry excuse for a brain, it was well armed with teeth. The Scot spoke doubtfully:

"I do not like to call on my friends to help me see a thing through, and it happens that just now, I am in no position—"

"Never mind that," interrupted Greene. "I've got to stay at home till that suit is settled, and I'll be glad to put some of the savings into Sandy. He's your dinosaur, nothing can change that; but you can't keep him here much longer. If it wasn't for your vile reputation as a dynamiter, the neighbors would have run you and your pet out long ago. I'll send some men down to fix a corral. You and Lee Fat can live in the shack and ride herd on him."

"'Tis more than kind of you," said McKeever. "Lee calls him a dragon and expects him to breathe fire, but he'll stick. I'll have to see about some supplies."

"Give me a list, and I'll have 'em there when you come," said Greene.

And so it was arranged. Always a man of action, Greene ordered the lumber at once by long-distance telephone, and took down some workmen the next day. It was an almost ideal place for such a tenant. Crockett's Bar is a sandspit, a dozen miles in length and from half a mile to three miles wide, curving between the ocean and the sound. Some of it is covered by scrubby trees; some is marshy and overgrown with reeds; some lies bare of all covering; and none is thirty feet above high tide. Near the upper end, a smaller spit, a mile long and a quarter of a mile wide, projects into the sound; and on this Greene had his "shack," a comfortable log dwelling of two rooms. The corral was to be in front of this—a substantial inclosure that would keep Sandy in and prying visitors out—though there was small reason to look for visitors. Four miles away, on the ocean side of the main peninsula, was a tiny hamlet of half a dozen cottages, occupied by folk who were fishermen once, and perhaps occasionally spread a net now, though reputed to be actively engaged in rum-running.

But before the corral was finished, Sandy was in trouble. For several days, he had been extremely restless, and during

that time, McKeever watched him like a hawk. Then the brute calmed down; Mac came to the city to order some things needed for the proposed trip, and as if waiting for this opportunity, Sandy began to patrol the narrow boundaries of his yard, catching the top of the fence now and then in his forepaws, and pulling himself up till he could look out at the world. Apparently, he liked the view, for the next Lee Fat heard was a racket in the barn, and as he ran to investigate, the door came crashing outward. The lock and staple had held, but the hinges gave way, and Sandy floundered through. The Chinaman retired hastily to the house, locked the door, pulled down the blinds, and then called "Mista Glcene" and myself on the phone with the news that the "dtagon" was loose, and eating up everything; and that we should seek the master and hurry him home with all possible speed.

It was really not so bad as Lee Fat said. Sandy *plop-plopped* toward the house, came across a flowering almond in full bloom, took a nibble at it, and the whole shrub came up with his tug. He moved on to the garden which McKeever and Lee managed between them, inspected the compost heap, decided that it was not edible, and sat down in the cold frames. Paying no heed to the smashing glass, he looked round at the landscape for a few moments, then got up and ambled away. One of the cold frame sash stuck to his latter end; he paused, pulled the wrecked framework away with his teeth as casually as a man might pick a bur from his coat; and started to visit the neighbors I have mentioned, half a mile down the slope.

Jobson was away, the children were at school; but Mrs. Jobson, an ample and militant lady, had hung out her washing that morning, and was now crating eggs for market. She heard a warning bark that ended in a howl of fear, looked out, and saw the grotesque shape entering the yard. Running out on the porch, she sicked the dog on the intruder; and with heroic courage but wretched judgment, the black mongrel obeyed. As he jumped for the enemy's throat, Sandy sat back and slapped. His forepaw caught the luckless canine broadside, and Towser landed ten feet away, with no breath and three broken ribs, entirely out of the fight. Mrs. Jobson screamed. Sandy paid no attention, and lumbered forward to inspect the poultry. A big rooster ventured near. Sandy re-

garded him mildly, and gathering confidence from neglect, the rooster stretched his neck to crow. He squawked, instead, a cry cut off in the middle as sharp, reptilian teeth literally bit him in two.

"The murderin' blackguard!" cried Mrs. Jobson. Sandy merely swallowed the part of the rooster that happened to be in his mouth, moved toward the clothesline, and sampled a union suit. He had to put one foot on it and tear it in two before he could get it down; but apparently it tasted good, for he followed it with a pair of stockings. A towel came next, and he might have cleaned the line, but Mrs. Jobson, blood in her eye, charged to the rescue. By vast good luck, she caught up a shovel standing by the porch, and rushing in from the rear, whanged Sandy over the rump.

Of course this did not hurt him; but one of the few lessons he had learned was to stop whatever he was doing when he got that whack on the reverse, and bolt. He bolted now, up the hill; and Lee Fat, watching from behind the blinds, vows that the angry dame followed him more than halfway.

BEFORE McKeever got home Sandy had gone into his yard, and Lee Fat, with much misgiving and many prayers to his honorable ancestors, ventured out and nailed up the door. But it was clear that another domicile must be sought at once. Jobson came up in righteous wrath, to collect damages and lay down the law that that damned cross between an alligator and a kangaroo had to move. Mac pacified him with words and cash, and next afternoon, Greene was on hand with the largest size of moving van. I think we all had dreaded the transfer and expected trouble; but Sandy never performed according to schedule. It took some time to inveigle him into the van; but once there, he curled down, peacefully enough. McKeever sat with the truck driver; Greene led the way in a touring car with Lee Fat and myself as passengers and the tonneau filled with supplies. We started late in the afternoon, circled the city, drove all night, and reached Crockett's Bar next morning. The truck driver stared round at the empty landscape, the scrubby trees growing out of the sand, the belt of weeds and reeds that fringed the placid sound, looked back over the lonely road he had come, and remarked:

"Well, if you can get away with that kind of a stock-farm anywhere, this ought to be the place."

We unloaded Sandy in the nearly finished corral, the driver slept a few hours, and departed with a fee in his pocket that bought forgetfulness as well as service. Lee Fat, with the Chinese capacity for doing without sleep, straightened out the bungalow, arranged the stores, cooked meals and gathered wood. I loafed and drowsed; but there was no rest for McKeever and Greene; the men refused to work around Sandy without a guard. Protected by the hunter's rifle and the Scot's paddle, however, they spurred valiantly and finished their task. There was a high, close fence inclosing a yard across which ran a stream of fresh water, forming a delectable puddle in the middle; inside the yard was an open shed, facing south, and feed-troughs that could be filled from the outside. This was Greene's precaution, which McKeever pooh-poohed. Against the fence on the outside, at the west of the corral, was another shed, in which to store the bulkier supplies, meal, hay and the like. It was pretty well stocked. That night, we slept as we could on bunks and floor, and in the morning, drove away with the workmen. They asked questions about the huge beast, of course, and Greene answered, without the faintest trace of a smile:

"It's a damfinosaur from New Guinea, named after the Dutch explorer, Dampf. Nobody's ever been able to trap a grown one, and Mac, here, is the only man that's managed to raise a young one in captivity."

Apparently, the explanation was accepted.

GREENE drove down alone next week, taking down a few additional supplies and a motorcycle. Everything was lovely, but when I saw him later in the week, he was apprehensive.

"I don't like it," he said. "It ought to be all right. I've been to the prohibition officials, and they've given the coast dry squad orders to let Mac alone; and I've been to the village, and squared him with the bootleggers. And still I feel it in my bones that there's going to be trouble."

"Your Seneca great-grandmother is whispering to you," I said, repeating one of his own phrases in regard to a "hunch." He nodded.

"Very likely; but she always tells the

truth. I can see one place where trouble might come from, myself. There's an independent rum-runner, Kees, that they say is a right bad actor. I went to his hang-out, a shack on the main bar, down below that narrow neck, on a little cove just off the sound. Slick place, reeds around it so thick you can't see it from either water or land; but Kees wasn't at home."

"He isn't likely to come five or six miles out of his way to hunt for trouble," I returned. Greene nodded, but stuck to his hunch.

A month or so later, I went down with him. Lee Fat seemed a bit more silent than usual. McKeever was absurdly happy, and Sandy was growing like the list of a miser's heirs. He still came to order at the whack of a spade; but it seemed to me he was growing obstreperous. Greene thought so, too. He stayed on the Bar all he could, three weeks, on one occasion, to guard against trouble or be on hand when it broke; but disaster caught him off base, after all.

Lee Fat had been in bed for hours one night, and McKeever was thinking of turning in himself when he heard the sound of a motor. He peered out, nothing was in sight, and supposing himself mistaken, started to undress. There came a heavy knock at the door, and a voice:

"Open up there, an' make it damn snappy!"

At the same moment, there was a crash of glass, and Mac looked round into the muzzle of a sawed-off shotgun, stuck through a window pane. He opened the door, and five men filed in. All were obviously city gunmen, and three had the pasty faces and abnormally steady hands that belong to the "snowbird" when properly "coked up." They had come down on a hijacking job, missed their quarry, and, scouting round, had seen McKeever's light.

"What the hell you doin' here?" demanded the leader.

"Mindin' my own business!" retorted McKeever.

The hijacker raised his pistol.

"Another crack like that, an' you'll be pushin' up the daisies. Where's your gang?"

"I haven't any gang—just a Chinese servant who takes care of me."

"Like hell! Turn out the joint!" It does not take long to search a two-room bungalow. Lee Fat was routed from his

cot in the kitchen, and the seekers reported no other persons present, and no stores of booze. The hijacking leader turned on Mac with a snarl:

"What's your lay, mud or coke?"

"I don't know what you mean," said McKeever. "I'm here on a work o' science. I'm raisin' the greatest reptile the world has seen for ten million years. He will be—"

"Shut up! What you got in that yard?"

"The creature I'm tellin' ye about. I—"

"Come along!"

THEY took both men to the yard, but when McKeever would have opened the gate, the leader halted him. "You said you had a reptile here," he said. "Snake, or alligator?" Without waiting for a reply, he climbed on the feed-trough supports which projected outside the fence, two of his companions following. There was no moon, but the stars and a flash-light showed a huge shape, wallowing in the central puddle. Aiming carefully, the hijacker fired his automatic. The bullet went through one of the horny plates projecting from the spine in the region of the shoulders. It was about the equivalent of a slap on the back for a healthy man, and Sandy floundered up to see what the greeting meant.

"Hell's hump!" cried the hijacker, and the three came tumbling down as one. They looked at each other, to make sure that all had seen it, and that they were not dreaming. Satisfied on this point, the leader barked an order, and his men jumped to obey. They took their prisoners back halfway to the cabin, tied the hands of each behind his back with cord, and bound his ankles with baling wire. "Not too tight," said the leader. "We don't want to hurt 'em, special. You was raisin' that brute for meat, wasn't you? Well, we'll roast him for you!"

They made a cursory search of the feed shed for liquor and drugs, but apparently had about accepted the Scot's denial of such activities. Then they dragged out the baled alfalfa, cut the wires, and scattered the hay all along the base of the fence. McKeever's pleas and protests did not even get an answer. When their kindling was laid, they set it on fire in twenty places, and gathered to watch the fun.

For several minutes, the flames went straight up in the still night, getting higher and higher, and no sound came from the

corral. Then a puff of wind from the west billowed the blaze from the feed shed into the yard; Sandy gave a hoarse bawl, and they saw his head as he retreated to the farthest corner. He must have squatted back against the fence, staring at the burning shed till the fire behind him burned through the heavy boards and scorched his tail. Then there was a roar that made his earlier efforts seem puny, a splash as he went through the pool instead of going round it, a crash as he struck the fence. Weakened by the flames, it gave way, gaped outward, and the frightened dinosaur hurtled through and came straight toward the group of hijackers. They scattered like quail; one of their number fell, and Sandy stepped on his leg; another huge foot came down within inches of McKeever's head; and Sandy vanished into the wilderness of Crockett's Bar, somewhat singed in the after region; but not otherwise harmed.

IT must be said to the hijackers' credit that though they drove away in panic at first, they came back and got their injured comrade. Lee had gnawed the cords that bound McKeever's wrists, and he was bandaging the bandit's leg when his companions returned. When they were gone again, Lee took the motorcycle and rode ten miles through the night to a telephone. Half an hour later, Greene and I were starting toward the cabin, with three heavy rifles in the back of the auto. A heavy rain struck us shortly after sunrise, but we reached the scene of hostilities at noon. McKeever had just come back to the cabin from a fruitless search.

"He's most likely in the marshes below the neck," reported Mac. "I've been to the village, to buy fish, of course, an' they told me a bear had come in from the cane-brakes on the mainland, pushed over one of their outbuildings, an' stolen a pig. The rain washed the tracks out, ye see. I've hunted half the ground this side o' the neck an' no Sandy."

"Good thing you didn't find him," returned Greene. "He might have eaten you as well as the pig."

The meal Lee cooked was breakfast and lunch for Greene and myself. When it was finished, we started on the search; McKeever most reluctantly carrying one of the rifles. The rain had washed out all tracks, but we found other evidences of Sandy's progress; bushes uprooted, a young pine tree broken down, a trail as if a log

had been dragged through a patch of reeds. Scouting with the care learned on the game trails of four continents, Greene made sure that the escaped creature had taken refuge below the "neck," a place where the bar narrowed till there was less than half a mile between sea and sound. He called a halt.

"Too late to tackle that now," he said. "He's not likely to come back in the night, and if he does, his tracks will show. I can do with a little extra sleep."

"We must try to take him alive," said McKeever, for the fiftieth time that afternoon.

"We'll try, but there isn't one chance in a thousand that we can do it. Even if he's good-natured when we find him, where can we keep him till a new pen is built?"

WE were up with the first gray of the morning, ate a good breakfast, and climbed into the car. Picking our way carefully, we drove across country to the neck. Ten minutes showed that Sandy had not come northward during the night. We looked to our guns and started. McKeever lamenting audibly. I with an uneasy feeling inside, Greene cool as a spring morning. We had not gone a hundred yards when we heard a shot, ahead and to the right.

"Pistol," said Greene, as we halted. "Came from over there, where Kees has his hang-out." He turned in that direction, rifle at the ready, and we followed. Two minutes passed: there came another shot, a third, a hoarse bawl which we knew too well, a human scream of utter terror, more shots, close together—and silence. . . .

Ryall's story never has varied in any important item. The day before, he discovered that Kees had been cheating, and taxed him with it. The dispute went to the verge of murder, there and then; but they needed each other, and a truce was declared. Ryall announcing that henceforth he would handle the cash. They slipped out to a rum ship that night, loaded their motorboat with whisky and gin, exchanged a few shots with fellow pirates, and ran into their hang-out on the bar. During the engagement, a bullet had gone through a case of gin. When morning came, they lifted the damaged case to land, opened it, and poured what was left in the broken bottles into a bucket, for transfer to a small keg.

Both sampled the gin while this salvage work was in progress; they began to quarrel; Kees spat out a tirade of abuse, and

Ryall knocked him down. Pretending to be stunned, he managed to get hold of his pistol and fired from the ground, shooting Ryall through the right shoulder. The long mountaineer fell, Kees sprang up, and stood over him, gloating.

"I'm goin' to shoot your damned guts out!" he said—and just then the Devil stuck his head through the reeds!

I can see that scene as Ryall describes it: the mountain man, helpless on the ground, the city killer standing over him with a pistol, the flat, reptilian head, ten feet in the air, peering down at them. They stared agape, their feud forgotten. Sandy waddled into the clearing. Perhaps he just wanted to be sociable; perhaps he smelled the liquor. At any rate, he stuck his nose into the bucket and took a long drink; and at this sign of kinship with normal life, as he knew it, Kees recovered his nerve. He fired twice, one bullet going through Sandy's forepaw. Then came that roar. The Devil's head went back, says Ryall, and he struck like a heron spearing a frog. The gunman's shots and frantic scream ended as armored jaws bit through neck and chest; he was lifted in air, shaken like a rat in a terrier's mouth—and Ryall fainted.

KEEES had vanished when we reached the scene. At first we thought only one man had been there and that Sandy had mauled him; but the dropped pistol and the nature of the wound told the truth. Greene produced a first-aid packet and we bandaged Ryall as well as we could, while McKeever thoughtfully lifted a case of Scotch from the motorboat, and bestowed it at the edge of the glade. Leaving Ryall still unconscious, we followed Sandy's broad trail through the reeds till he splashed across an inlet which we had to circle. It was here, no doubt, that he dropped the gunman's body, which other rum-runners found floating in the sound some days later.

"We've got to kill him," said Greene. "Don't all shoot at once. Let me start it, and if I'm hard pressed, you relieve me. I'm afraid he'll take a lot of pounding."

"Poor beastie!" said McKeever.

Sandy was no mean traveler, and for some miles, he kept to the marshy edge of the sound, forcing us to make detours. We were not a mile from the southern point of the bar when on entering an open space hemmed in by a thick growth of scrubby

trees, we spied Sandy, coming toward us. His size was appalling. McKeever's prediction of a creature as large as an elephant had not been realized in bulk or weight, but it had been surpassed in length; and as he padded forward on his hind feet, his great tail serving as a balancing pole and his jaws snapping from side to side, it was plain that the dinosaur was in a bad temper. "Sandy! Oh, Sandy!" called McKeever.

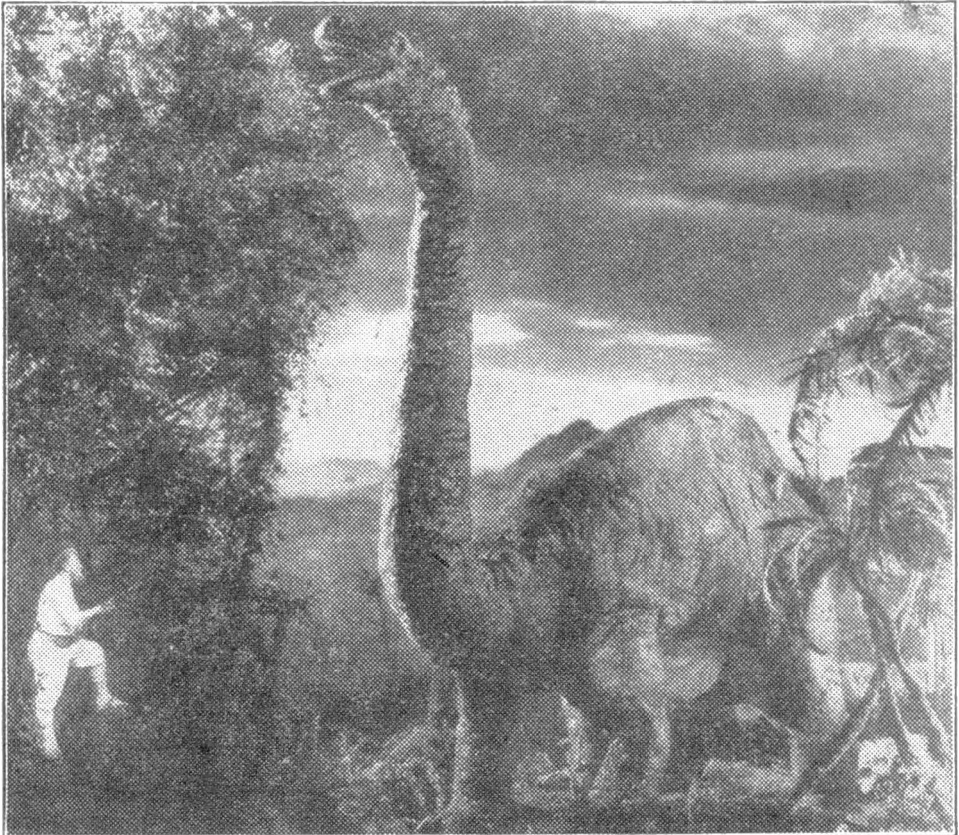
The beast's answer was a battle roar and a hip-hopping rush that covered the ground with surprising speed as Greene stepped forward to meet it.

Never have I seen before nor do I ever expect to see again such an exhibition of chilled steel nerve. Greene was working in the dark. No tradition tells the right spot at which to aim when hunting dinosaurs; the jerking head was no mark; and, standing lank and impassive, he probed that awesome thing with bullets, seeking a vital spot. One shot went through the heart, four more through other parts of the chest; and though each blow checked him

for the fraction of a second, the brute kept coming. I had opened a raking fire from the flank when Greene's bullet smashed a vertebra at the base of the neck, and poor Sandy toppled forward, his head not ten feet from the hunter's toes.

"Umm," said Greene. "Rather too close for comfort. Now we'll go pick up that bootlegger, and then for the taxidermy work."

But when we got to the hang-out, Ryall was gone. He had come to his senses, found himself alone, and, convinced that he had escaped by inches from being carried bodily off to hell, got into the motorboat, piloted it across the sound with his one good hand, and delivered it to the authorities. They accepted his cargo and his promises of reform, howled with glee at his story; and he went back to the mountains to atone for his sins by powerful preaching. Next month, when Sandy's skeleton and mounted skin are set up in the museum, I mean to bring Ryall down from his hills to look again on the Devil that saved his life and frightened him into paths of virtue.



Photograph by Firat National.



The Crooked Trail

A distinctly different story of the West, this: and the unexpected dénouement is, we think, the sort of touch that could only be given by a real genius in fiction-writing.

By EDWIN L. SABIN

A CHILL like the ocean's breath had damped the sunshine, this fall day, so that the great serried reaches of evergreens were sober. Cloud-caps, drab and heavy, saddled the major peaks, contrasting there with the new snow that would steadily deepen and flow lower until the winds of spring drove the white levies back to the heights again.

But the winds of spring were not yet mustering. Winter prepared first a wide barrage to be loosed at signal, and this was only October—Indian summer in the Colorado Rockies.

Since he had been ousted from the rods, at the water tank upon the Pass (name unknown to him) this morning, and abandoned with a gay *ha-ha* from the brakeman, Buffalo Eddie, upon the downward path, had rather enjoyed himself. Downward path is literal, for he had wasted no time in hanging around that isolated tank, but had trudged away upon a short-cut toward the smoky haze of the valley town from which they had climbed the tortuous grade. In the town there would be other rods headed for California, the hobo's winter paradise.

The October portents of air and sky and peaks did not bother Buffalo Eddie in this, the West where men are men and back doors are generous. To him the air was spicy with the drying sumac and pin-oaks, the sky was benignly blue, the snow peaks were far and tolerant, the scurrying conies and chipmunks whiskered with forage hastily gleaned were amusing, the brooding hush of expectant Nature spelled only peace and independence; the last of the sandwiches in his ragged coat had provided him with breakfast (devoured at speed, as it were), and he was accustomed to making his way over or under, and even through when necessary.

In this high country, however, distances were deceptive, and so were directions when interrupted by gulches and stiff slopes. Somehow or other, plunging on down with misplaced confidence, Eddie did not encounter the tracks where, by his reckoning, they ought to be; instead, the tracks and he had veered apart—were sundered, the one from the other, by a league of hill and timber. North persisted in posing as south. Consequently, with



EDWIN L. SABIN

THIS tried and true Blue Book Magazine writer was born in Illinois, but has long been identified with life farther west. Since his first book, in 1900, his work has steadily grown in power, and he has a fine list of achievements like "Treasure Mountain," "Scarface Ranch," "Range and Trail," "Desert Dust" and "White Indian" to his credit, besides many attractive shorter stories like the interesting drama which this portrait accompanies.

rancor at the mischievous trainman and this cajoling domain now hot within, he was hungry and thirsty and footsore when, near noon, under a flat sky, he broke out into the rear view of a cabin perched at the side of a rather steep descent broken by rocky ledges, and marked faintly by a trail.

The draw ended far below in a narrow valley, thinly timbered with sharp pines and threaded by a road. He had been getting glimpses of the valley, and of the elusive smoke, yonder, promising a town: but the smoke from the kitchen chimney of this cabin bespoke him more invitingly, and he made for the back door with the hardihood of long experience.

THE back door of this shed-roofed kitchen was framed in a small sentry-box porch of upright weathered boards, which, with the kitchen's rusty sheet-iron roof lapped to a shakes roof, would indicate that the cabin had grown, from time to time. The main part seemed to be of logs, weather-beaten and gray.

The prevalent currant-like native bushes laden with glistening light-red berries (the glutinous squaw-berry bush, had Eddie wished to inquire) on either side screened the juncture of kitchen and main cabin. They gave a housewifely touch to the premises; but the back yard—a mere clearing in the brush—was littered with chips, some of them fresh, and a bright ax sticking deeply in a chopping-block symbolized the proximity of a man.

Mindful of that, and wary of a probable dog, with his animal senses poised but with his mien honest and ingratiating, Eddie shuffled through, prepared for exigencies.

The little porch was sweet with the smell of bacon, the bacon sputtered just beyond the door; these good-wife tokens augured well, and he knocked. The door opened, and he was confronted by an old man, in denim shirt and sagging trousers—a shaggy old man, with fierce gray eyes beneath bushy brows and with a long fork in his hand. Of a woman there was no sign.

"How do you do?"

"Could you give a feller a bite to eat?" Buffalo Eddie propounded: a stock query adapted to all occasions save when a susceptible personality, like that of a timid woman, called for "poor feller"—delivered in a whine.

"I guess so. Come in."

Removing his hat and scraping his soles Eddie entered to the crackling stove and its skillet of frying bacon and potatoes.

"Guess I can," the old man repeated. "There's generly enough for one more. Find a cheer while I rustle. Down from the tie camp?"

"Yes," said Eddie.

"Wall," said the old man, "winter's comin'. It's a case of bein' snowed in or gettin' out."

He hustled with gratifying briskness; added slices of cold boiled potato to the skillet; with his long fork fished the crisped bacon aside, to make space for more ribbons; peeped into the bubbling coffee-pot, and into the oven out of which was wafted the aroma of browning biscuits.

Between-times he stumped from the cupboard to the oil-cloth-covered deal table just across the threshold of the other room. The table was set for one, and he doubled the lay-out of utensils.

From his kitchen chair Eddie could see into that other room. It was lined with a composition wall-board that sealed it completely against draughts and vermin; had a generous stone fireplace and a few chromos, a rag carpet, a rocking chair, a curtained-off bunk, a front door and a window or two hung with cheese-cloth. It looked cozy.

"Keeping house by yourself, Mister?" he asked.

"Yep. All alone. But I'm goin' out purty soon. Jest about ready. I only stay here summers, to work my mine."

"Got a mine, eh?"

"Wall, call it so. I've a hole back up a leetle piece, that I dig away at."

"Gold, eh?"

"Wall, pay dirt. May turn into a free-millin' proposition. Yep. Crumbly enough to wash out like a placer. Guess it was an old stream-bed."

"Struck it rich, have you?"

"Me? Nope, wouldn't say that. It's pockety, but I manage to buy flour an' bacon. I can't work it winters, though. Snow blocks it up. Haint had time to timber it proper."

The old man prattled and stoked and cooked—a spry, large old man who once had possessed great strength, but now the bulk of him had sunken and he limped. Presently, while Eddie cogitated and observed, he bade with a sigh of achievement:

"Take your cheer an' draw up. Want to wash, fust?"

"No," said Eddie, conscious that his hands were not tie-camp hands. He could say, however, that he had been cook. Still—"I washed on the way down," he explained; and was fortified by his railroad grime.

They sat opposite to each other, at the deal table, with the biscuits and the coffee-pot and the heaped tin platter of bacon and fried potatoes between them.

"Help yourself," the old man urged, with open gesture to the long fork upon the platter. "I aint much for style, but sech as you see you're welcome to." His cordiality was genuine; he had a heartiness and a lack of curiosity that proved him to be of simple mind.

EDDIE scraped and speared and poured; they ate and swigged, squaring off each to his fashion. The old man remarked:

"Glad you didn't pass this way tomorrow; you might have gone hungry."

"How's that?" asked Eddie.

"I kalkilate on goin' out. The weather's due to change."

"Going out for the winter?"

"Yep. Allus do, twentieth day of October. That's the limit."

"Stay in town, eh?"

"Denver, this time. I can keep warmer there. Did winter in Crystal, last year, but my rheumatiz was bad. I reckon I'll get a steam-heated room in Denver."

"How far is that town?"

"Crystal? A good ten mile."

"Going to hoof it?"

"Where to? What for?"

"To ketch your train to Denver."

"Me? Nope, I don't have to hoof it clear to the station. There's a trail of about six mile over to where the freights on the stub road slow up for a grade, so I can hop aboard. I know the conductors; 'twont cost me nothin'."

"You can afford to pay fare if you have to, I guess," Eddie suggested. "You don't take a chance of being thrown off."

"Yep, I can pay my way. Sometimes there's a change of conductors, an' sometimes there's a spotter. I paid my way last time I went down to Denver, I recollect. It's best to be prepared."

"A man with a gold-mine don't have to hop a freight. He can ride in the Pull-man," Eddie bantered.

"Some can, if they want to waste their money. Yep," chirped the old man. "But I allus found a caboose comfortable for me; an' the accommodation train carries a cheer car. That's free."

The old man talked like a miser.

"What do you do with all your gold, anyhow?"

That brought a quick glance out of those truculent gray eyes.

"Gold's easy to get rid of. Never had no difficulty yet. Trade it, cash it; what I don't use the mint'll take."

"Send it out, I suppose."

"When I have enough to make worth while. But the mint don't keer to fuss with a few ounces. The banks are better. I don't figger on makin' much more in the summer than will carry me through the winter, though. I only gopher away, jest gopher away. Keeps me busy."

"Pulling out tomorrow, are you?"

"Yep, if weather permits. I look for a big snow. 'Bout time for one in 'arnest. Gener'ly get a snow an' cold spell 'round the twentieth."

"You don't have much to carry if you hoof it," said Eddie. "Close up and leave everything and light out, do you?"

"That's right. Close up shop an' get. Nobody bothers other folks' property in here. There aint any tramps, specially in winter. I allus find things jest as I left 'em. People in town know I'm away an' some of 'em keep an eye on the place if they're around, but nobody has any call to meddle. 'Taint like the city, where you have to double-lock every door an' windy an' then nothin's safe. Have some more coffee? Fill your cup ag'in. You'll be glad you tuk it, 'fore you get to town."

"I'm full, myself," said Eddie.

"If I'd known I was to have comp'ny I'd have baked a pie," said the old man, genially. "But I guess I'm out of dried apples, anyway. I clean up, jest before I leave. Stuff is like to spile unless it's air-tight."

"Clean up, do you, at the last?" said Eddie, significantly. He remembered that this was a mining term.

"Shorely. But I'm glad you dropped by. Once in a while somebody stops, but 'taint often. I never refused anyone yet to beans an' bacon. Wall, I guess you've time for a smoke. Here's 'baccy; there's another pipe somewhere—on the shelf over the fireplace, I reckon. Yep, here it is."

They stuffed their pipes, and smoked,

leaning back comfortably in their chairs.

"When you get to town you can tell 'em there I'm pullin' out in the mornin' for the winter, as usual," said the old man. "They'll know who you mean. Be back in the spring, when the country opens, though, an' go to gopherin'. Think you'll come in ag'in?"

"Haven't decided," said Eddie.

"Wall, you didn't come down any too soon. The snow'll be gettin' mighty deep up at that tie camp, from now on. Yep, an' we'll have plenty here, too. It's brewin'." The room had grown dull; the old man shivered. "When I feel a chill in my bones then I look for a change. I'm 'most strapped of wood," he added, "but I can take the ax an' rustle some more to do me if I can't get away tomorrow. Ax is still out. That's the last thing in."

"Last thing, eh?" Eddie repeated idly.

"Yep. No ax, nobody home. People all know."

They smoked. The old man spoke again, tapping the ashes from his pipe.

"I don't aim to hurry you; but it's a long ten mile an' you mayn't ketch a ride. The valley road aint traveled much. I'd advise you to set on purty quick. I can't bunk you, for I haint the room or the beddin'. Never do keep anybody. But any time you're passin' this way ag'in you'll find something in the pot."

BUFFALO Eddie took the borrowed pipe from his teeth and laid it upon his well-cleaned plate; then he made proposal:

"I'm broke, Mister. Could you loan me a little stake—enough to tide me on for a couple of days?"

"Didn't you get paid off?"

"Nothing coming. Had to send everything to a sick wife."

"Whereabouts is she?"

"Back East."

"Who's your boss, up at the camp?"

"Don't know his name. I helped the cook. Called him Shorty. I wasn't there very long; didn't pay much attention to names."

"No, I can't give you any money," said the old man. "I don't keep much about me; haint any need for it, over what I pay in settlin' up for supplies. I settled up, t'other day. You can get a job in town if you go right down before the camps are closed. You can 'arn board an' lodgin', anyhow, to spell you temporary. They're allus short of indoor help. Men

can make more in the hills while the weather lasts."

"You ought to stake me to a few dollars," said Eddie. "I might not find anything for a day or two. You wouldn't turn a feller off without a cent, would you, Mister? These nights are cold."

"I never refuse anybody grub or 'baccy," replied the old man. "I've fed you, an' you're welcome; you can take that pipe along an' fodder for it to last till you get more. But I aint fixed to put you up, I said; an' I haint any money for you."

"I guess you have, or same as," Eddie insisted. "You're going out well heeled. What do you do with all that gold, Mister? Good as cash, aint it? You say you've cleaned up. I'll bet you have."

The air was still. Not a step nor other sound drifted in. He was alone with the old man. His voice roughened: "Come on, now. Fork over. Don't try to hand me the bull."

Into the old man's fierce eyes there seeped a new look: a look startled, questioning, debatable—a look of fear. His lips trembled.

"Nope; gold don't lay 'round long with me, friend. That aint my way. Whatever I clean up, at the hole, I send out or use. All I aim to make is livin' wages, an' enough for winter. You don't find no gold here, or money either."

"You're scared and lying, you old whelp," thought Eddie.

"I've fed you, an' glad to," the other mildly continued. "You come in an' I never see you before, but I sheered you the best I had. Of course," he broached, out of reservation. "I wouldn't work no real hardship on any man. If it set in to storm too bad you might camp in front the fireplace, an' chop a snag of wood to last the night, if you're willin'. But you're able-bodied an' fed up; I reckon you can make town if you start, an' I haint anything more for you an' that's the plain truth."

Eddie laughed. Chopping wood did not appeal to him. He leaned forward, with change to an oath and menace of mean tone and features.

"I don't go before I have that stake or a peep into your poke of yellow, Mister. Do you get me? Now hurry up!"

THE old man's troubled gaze suddenly flamed. "By Jupiter!" he roared. "You don't stay here, after all!" He



Photograph by Grier Productions.

"A cabin perched at the side of a steep descent, broken by rocky ledges."

grabbed the long fork. "You're nothin' but a common bum! Now travel!"

The fork—a threat! But Eddie was the quicker—he whipped out the leaded little leather billy in his pocket and with the retort: "None of that!" he struck across like a cat.

He had not intended to swipe so shrewdly. The leaded end met the old man rising; landed upon his forehead above the temple. There was just a vision of the astonishment in those baleful eyes—a piteous astonishment almost childish—and the old man huddled sideways, dropped against the table edge, with eyes turned in and grip relaxing upon the fork handle.

A thin trickle of red flowed from the gray hair and meandered down a paled and ghastly cheek. The end of the billy, Eddie suddenly remembered, was worn through to the lead, in one spot.

He stared. The outside world was still; this inside world was still, and all the room had gloomed and was cold, as if shocked with this violation of hospitality at the very board itself. A craven fear, a chill paralyzing funk blended of horror and unbelief, held Buffalo Eddie to his chair, in that accusing room. Murder! No, no! But—

Cripes! Had he killed him? He ven-

tured to reach over, to feel for the pulse; couldn't feel it—the old man's mouth was open, the eyes set. Cripes! If the old man hadn't grabbed up the fork—he was a big man, too, and scared. Something had to be done, but not this, not this!

And something had to be done now and damned quick! Eddie wrenched free from the stifling thrall. His thoughts jostled one another, and straightened out. He must make his get-away, but first—There was no use acting foolish. He was in for the limit, anyhow. . . .

Working swiftly, with ears primed, he dragged the limp old man from the chair to the low bunk and by main strength hoisted him inside. Gingerly searched the pockets; found about five dollars in bills and silver; left a little change, for looks; drew the hangings again, and rapidly explored for the poke. That old man had gold hid somewhere; he surely had—there ought to be a fat little sack of the yellow ready to be taken out in the morning. He'd been scared of it, hadn't he? Wouldn't keep a fellow over night!

But the bunk yielded nothing—was tight to the floor—hinted of no panel, either; and the fireplace yielded nothing except soot and ashes; table drawer, kitchen cupboard, the old clothes hanging at the

ends of the bunk, the top of the bunk where the curtains were fastened—they were likely places but they didn't cough up the poke.

No trap in the floor underneath the rag carpet. The smoothly lined walls were baffling to the eye, and solid—as solid as concrete, save where the composition board apparently had warped—to his hasty tapping.

The gold must be buried somewhere outside.

Hark! Who moved? No, only a squirrel or rat, under the floor or upon the roof. Anyway, time warned him to quit this and to make for cover with what little he had obtained from the old man's pockets.

EDDIE'S mind had been functioning accurately. He locked that front door; the window curtains were closed. He gave a final look around. It was a snug room, doubly weatherproofed, walls firm and sealed clear up—he guessed that, if he had played his cards different, in case of storm he might have sat at that table again this evening, and have spent the night. The old man was coming to it; had mentioned wood. Now, for Buffalo Eddie it was the tall timber and the first rattler to other parts, and the less he lingered here, the better.

He stepped into the kitchen; shut that door behind him; tossed the skillet into the woodbox, so that the stove was clean. Anyone able to look through the dingy kitchen window would see nothing of occupancy—and could not see into that front room. No!

The fire in the stove was about out, the chimney would not be smoking. The kitchen was still pleasantly warm, but he could not dally with that. With intake of resolution he peered from the little porch. He heard nothing, saw nothing, and was nerved to shut the kitchen door behind him and pass on at once when he did see the ax, sticking in the chopping block.

Cripes! That would never do. He tugged at the helve. The deeply embedded blade resisted, and only by dint of repeated efforts did he uproot the stubborn steel. No weakling had planted this blade. No weakling could have worked it loose, either. That old man was strong; or had been.

He tossed the ax also into the woodbox, noting that the box was nowhere near emp-

ty, and derisively smiled. Then he shut the kitchen door; locked it from the outside, flipped the key into the bushes and with eyes searching the draw and the slopes he exchanged warmth and shelter for the rawness of a somber open. Walking rapidly he made for the sanctuary of the brush, avoiding the steep down trail.

The old man had been going out in the morning; always left at this time; just closed the shack and went; nobody ever bothered it—when they saw it wasn't occupied, no smoke, no ax, doors shut and curtains drawn, they let it alone. Folks in the town would think he'd caught the train for Denver; other folks would take a look, if they happened by, and would see he wasn't there. With cold weather he might lie in that bunk all winter, and nobody be wise to it.

Buffalo Eddie once in covert hastily buried his billy in the leaf-mould. Then he straightened with a breath of relief. Nothing could be proved on him. He would slip into that town from another direction, by a circuit; had grubstake for supper and for a night, and could beat it out in the morning or even the next day.

A clean slate, even to the ax! Lucky he had thought of the ax and had stowed it inside.

He seemed to have spent considerable time hobnobbing with the old man,—and after,—for the day had grown dusky. And now, while he was toiling up out of the shadowed draw, to strike a trail that would lead him down the course of the valley but apart from it, he felt a spit of snow upon his cheek.

By cripes, snowing, sure! Turning cold, too. The old man had said that a storm was getting ready; but wouldn't this kill yuh! Snow, same as winter, in October! Couldn't last, though; not at this time. The old man had tried to bluff him into hurrying.

Buffalo Eddie was bred to the city and moderate altitudes.

The tentative breeze moaning through the pines increased; the snow, at first a mere scud of tiny particles like spindrift, increased also, in size and volume; and when he emerged to the rim of the draw he bowed to a stern, steady wind thick with large flakes and stinging cold.

With his thin coat buttoned to his throat and his hat pulled low he forged on, cursing the weather and not at all inspired by the ten miles before him. He

would rather have been in that snug cabin. Wood? Plenty of wood. The box had been half-full; and what about all those chips in the back yard? Another bluff!

There were several trails, all seemingly toward the town. He trudged upon one trending in the right direction: had difficulty in keeping to it, among the brush and the trees. How fast the snow gathered! A corker of a storm! Well, it would cover his footprints too. That was a cinch. Now if he could only get to town before dark—or before he froze to death! He sweated, while chilled; stumbled and slipped; was off the trail—no—yes. . . . Curse the brush and the trees! He'd do better down in that valley. Everything up here looked alike: one ravine after another, trees, bushes, rocks, and he was wet and blinded and puffing. Shoes were soaked through, hands smarting in his pockets.

He couldn't go back to the cabin. Might have gone back and have been let in for the night, if he hadn't spilled the beans; might have been warm and dry even now, if he had talked pretty and managed to stick around a little longer. He wished that he had not scared the old man and stirred him up, and been obliged to hit him.

During the next hours the thoughts of Buffalo Eddie reverted a great deal to that cabin, and its stove—and to its bunk. The cabin would be cold and dark; he could make a fire and a light—but he could not sit in company with that bunk.

DESCENT into the valley was farther than he had counted on. He veered more and more to the right, to quarter the wind and the driving snow. The snow in his face was annoying. Finally he guessed that he was down in the valley, for the smothered landscape appeared to be level and comparatively open. He was in a vast wilderness of monotonous white—white was the surface and the air and the curtained sky, all merged together: the wind, at full sweep, was bitterly cold. Occasionally he had to pause and turn about and pant; then he tacked on again, hoping to find the road ruts under his numbed feet.

Once upon the road, he could use it as a guide. He had no idea how far he had navigated; but up on the hills the storm had come from the north, and according to his recollection the town lay north, down the valley. He wouldn't be obliged to get

clear to town, though. There should be other cabins, in those ten miles. Nobody would refuse to take him in out of the weather; nobody would rebuff a dog, on the eve of a night like this was going to be. He'd began to feel that he'd risk anything, for warmth and shelter.

At last, the road—or felt like it! He plodded, panting. The road smoothed out, or he had lost it. The snow filled his footsteps, so that when he tried to back-track he speedily had lost them, too.

He stumbled around, trying to relocate the road. Gave it up and set off again, at a venture. This open country was deceptive.

Perhaps he would have done better to have stayed among the trees; to have camped under a big spread of branches and built a fire. He'd have done a damned sight better, though, to have fixed a berth for himself at that cabin, with the old man, and have let the jack slide!

The storm and the darkness were shutting down together. Buffalo Eddie kept on; he went staggering, all plastered, through the whitish murk, upon a kind of treadmill. The legs that carried him had little feeling, but the rest of him was tortured by the pangs of cold and of labor.

THE valley had no end. He was frightened when he found himself climbing a steep slope—he seemed to have crossed the valley when he had thought that he was still traveling down it. He recoiled and took another direction, and was appalled by a sense of confusion. That mysterious slope had thrown him aback. It certainly was one side or the other of the valley, but he could not figure things out.

Laboriously he still kept going, with foot lugged before foot in sluggish steps, and with breath wheezy. He was paying for that break he had made, in the old man's place; had given up hope of reaching the town and banked only upon getting to a house, any kind. He'd apply at the first door, if he hanged for it. All that he wanted was shelter and a fire; and the people could do with him as they pleased, afterward.

Stump, stump. The wind had dropped; the snow fell thickly through a tense and silent cold. Encased in white amid that white world Eddie plugged on like a wraith in a purgatory. He was beginning to have difficulty in regaining his feet after his falls; on hands and knees was a restful posture and he would like to crouch, that

way, for a few minutes, but he dared not. Who would have thought that the trail down the valley could be such a long and blindly lonesome trail?

A LIGHT! The town outskirts, at last? What? Halting, he wheezed and peered, blinking through the dusk and the sift of flakes. Hope surged wildly. It was not the town, but a light it was, nevertheless, glimmering yellow there before him. Thank God, a house by the trail! That was a lighted window, a beacon to guide the wanderer from the stormy waste into warmth and shelter.

Desperately strengthened, he made for the light. No matter what kind of people lived in that place, they would let him in. They'd got to let him in, for the night. He didn't care what happened in the morning. Coffee! Cripes, what wouldn't he agree to for a cup of hot coffee, like he had had at the old man's!

With his eyes fastened upon the guiding light, for fear that it would be lost to him, after a time Eddie arrived. He was aware that the snow had slackened, that the cold was keener, and that the first stars of night twinkled early through black rifts in the clouded sky. He was here just in time.

He stumbled over a flat-topped stone, used for a door-step; and saw this was a log cabin, with its rear premises veiled in obscurity deepened by the lamp-light shining into his face from the closely curtained window. He was not concerned with the cabin's extent nor size, however. A log cabin—it would be warm!

He called out, in a hoarse voice:

"Hello! The house! I want in."

He heard nothing while he waited impatiently, but he knew that somebody was there. He fancied that the window curtains slyly parted. He pounded upon the door, to draw attention; he kicked at the door—swinging feet that had no sensation, pounding with fists that barely tingled.

"Hello! Hello! Let me in, will you? Open up! I say, open up!"

A wild rage at the silence infused him. He was freezing upon the doorstep. Western hospitality, this? They weren't going to let him in? What were they afraid of? But he could not stand upon ceremony much longer. He heard himself cursing while he shook the latch. Perhaps he was threatening a woman, but he could not help that. He was determined to get inside, away from the agonizing cold.

"Hello! Hello! Open up! I want in, I say!"

Again he pounded and kicked, striving to prevail upon that awed and stealthy silence.

Then reckless frenzy seized him. "I'm coming in!" Blubbering madly he charged, to batter and ram; to the set of his shoulder the door yielded with a crackle of lock torn from its socket, and he followed, lunging forward into haven at last.

Blessed warmth smote him, the lamp-light dazzled him; he tried to pull himself together, for indignant plea—for an explanation to the hard-hearted or covering tenant of this log outpost. But his words died unuttered. . . .

Where was he, and how could it be? Porch? Stone? The rear? The front? Out one way, in the other? He had committed a stupid, an inexplicable error. And he caught his breath, mazed by the treachery of the storm, by the familiar aspects of this snug interior, and by the suddenly looming inmate.

He saw a large, disheveled old man, of bandaged head, and of fierce eyes in a countenance contorted with frightful resolution, tottering for him with bright ax—the ax of the woodbox—raised aloft.

"Back, are ye, for what ye didn't get? Now get it!"

Eddie had no grace to defend himself; he had upon his lips no plea. His knees gave under him; he was done. The raised ax flashed for his feebly lifted arms—and fell; but it fell clattering along the floor and these words graved his brain with fire:

"Come in, then!" the old man said.

Next month Mr. Sabin will contribute "The Water Stand," a tale of the buffalo and the old frontier that will remind you of his celebrated "White Indian." With it will appear William Byron Mowery's North Woods story "Up the Keewateena Trail," Roy Norton's "The Chimney of Gold;" new stories of H. Bedford-Jones' detective Clancy, Bertram Atkey's Easy Street Experts, Clarence Herbert New's engineer Grigsby and Calvin Ball's garage comedian; and many other stories you will read and recall with delight.



Free Lances in Diplomacy

The defense of London against a threatened gas attack from the air is ably worked out in this, one of the most fascinating of all this brilliant series.

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

THE feeling in Paris and London was optimistic. Nobody quite understood how far the Chamberlain-Briand conversations had gone in the way of committing either country, but it was felt that, taken all around, the balance of power was sufficiently strong to prevent any serious war-conflagration within a period of years at all events. Men interested in commercial aviation and in position to know what was being done toward developing the science did not share this optimism to any noticeable extent—nor did those connected with the intelligence departments of various governments. To both of these classes, it seemed more a question of secret preparation until some particular power felt strong enough to start something with a reasonable chance of getting away with it. Down at Trevor Hall in South Devon—where the Earl and Countess of Dyvnaint were spending some of the hotter days with a distinguished and carefully picked house-party—you got both views in the dinner-talk and

the discussions among groups on the terraces. General Lord Eltingham—nominally head of the Army—naturally took the optimistic side, as did Admiral Viscount Odyke, the First Sea Lord—both of them being quite nettled at the skepticism of General Sir Harry Beamish of the Royal Air Service.

“What you fail to consider, Beamish, is that in the five- or six-power treaty which is now sure to be signed, any one of the signatory powers who unexpectedly starts something will have all the others down upon it at once!”

“Yes? And in that event—what will happen?”

“Pressure brought to bear upon the offender—obviously!”

“What kind of pressure?”

“Moral suasion at first, of course. If that fails, economic pressure—a general boycott upon all necessities entering that power’s territory. If that fails to subdue him, drastic measures—force, if necessary!”

"What kind of force?"

"Oh, come now, Beamish—you're not havin' us on, I trust! 'Force' means force of arms, naturally!"

"What kind of arms?"

"All kinds, damme! *All* kinds! The army—the navy—and, of course, the air force, where it can be used to advantage! You see I'm fair to your own branch of the service."

"I see that you mean to be, My Lord. Gentlemen—do you really wish me to believe that you learned nothing from the Great War—that the development of aviation since the Armistice, and of various poison gases, has taught you nothing which you are willing to concede as fact? Have you both done so little reading of the news-sheets and scientific magazines that you've missed what actually has been accomplished in those lines? Come now! Allowing for your quite natural unwillingness to admit that today both your branches of the service are almost obsolete—that in the next war it is doubtful if either is brought into action at all—don't you really know, deep down inside, that armies and navies as major forces have fought their last war?"

"Really, you know, Beamish! I think you should not permit yourself to convey any such implication as that—even among ourselves, in a friendly discussion! Of course it'll go no farther, because Trevor's most extr'ord'n'ry precautions in guarding this estate of his make leakage practically impossible—we're safe to say what we think. But it's not safe even to think what you imply—what you actually state as fact!"

"That is the most serious menace, My Lord—not only to us here in Britain but to our cousins in the United States. France and Japan are the only powers outside of those secretly preparing for another war that seem to comprehend what is going on and have the foresight to prepare for the trouble when it breaks. Foreign Office sees it as clearly as France—but knows our fellow-countrymen *wout* see it and back the Government in prudent measures for defense when they are needed. I make every allowance for the old die-hard feeling in the Army and Navy that a war in which they aren't used at all is simply an impossibility—but consider! In every demonstration made by airplanes against battleships during the last two years, the planes have hit and destroyed at least one of their targets without being touched by any sort of anti-

aircraft weapon—not put out of business, at all events. Granted, that it would take an immense fleet of bombing-planes, and the lighter craft to guard them, in order to destroy a city the size of London,—call the area, roughly, ten miles square,—there is no question whatever that such a fleet could drop enough 'mustard' or lethal gas upon that area in one swift raid to make it a cemetery with no living thing in it—unless we discover and perfect an absolute defense against such gases before such a raid is made! That's all there is to it, gentlemen! When we lay down new battleships today,—turn out so many batteries of coast and field artillery,—or so many million small-arms,—we are wasting time and money which wont save us one bally second from annihilation when the next war is declared! Every minute and every shilling we expend upon discovering the defense against air-raids and poison gas is helping materially toward our winning the next war instead of losing it!"

IN the fading twilight after dinner when everyone had strolled out on the terraces or along the brow of Scabbacombe Cliffs, nearly all had heard the motor of a plane and had made out the airship on the underside of a pink-tinged cloud, pretty well up. What none of them knew at the time—and not over a dozen, later—was that he came down on the aviation-ground, a half-mile farther along the cliffs and surrounded on three sides by forest, where the Earl's mechanics tested out the new machines they built on the estate.

When the guests went back to the "long gallery" and smoking-rooms, there was a new arrival whom some of them knew as Sir Donald Tintern of the Foreign Office—a promising young diplomat who it was vaguely understood had a very creditable record with the Government. Only the five with whom he afterward permitted himself a confidential talk in the privacy of the Earl's personal suite knew that he had made a non-stop flight from Moscow since morning—about fifteen hours—in a stolen plane recently built in France for the Soviet, or that he was the bearer of news too serious for the news-sheets to get a hint of it.

"Gentlemen—putting it as briefly as I can, the general situation is about like this: A certain power has today in perfectly serviceable condition over three hundred bombing-planes, with a hundred and sixty

of the lighter accompanying craft. They've been in the air with every one of them for twenty-five hours or more—consider it entirely practical to fly from their nearest border over London and get back again before they are forced to descend. The bombers carry loads of five to seven tons in addition to fuel and crew. They've got what they consider the most deadly types of mustard and lethal gas yet produced. Probably no worse than what is now stored in Britain, France and the United States—but presumably as bad. They've been drilling in twenty-four-hour air-raids until they can put one over like clockwork any time they decide to pull it off—have gotten their other arrangements along to where they are only waiting until the time is ripe for trying it."

"With what object, for example—Sir Donald?"

"Conquest, primarily—heavy tribute, at all events. As nearly as I could judge, they are awaiting reports from their spies in other countries before they mean to make a move, the intention being to delay only until conditions appear to promise entire success in the attempt. I doubt if they start anything for some months yet—but something may influence their decision to a sudden and totally unexpected move at any time. From what I know of our own defenses, if they begin with us, we couldn't successfully oppose them for three minutes—even by concentrating every available plane in Government or commercial service under a single chief of operations. France is in a much better position if warned in time,—as I intend that she shall be,—because the French haven't minimized the menace of sudden and unlooked-for war. They could do a good bit in the air! What they've worked out against poison gas, if anything, I don't know. But—point's this: We have—according to my belief from a study of the enemy at close range—anywhere from a week to eight or ten months in which to prepare adequate defense for ourselves against conquest by air. Only question is: can the people and Parliament be aroused to the danger sufficiently to get anywhere along that line? It's 'Hands up!' if we don't! Merely the resignation to accept whatever terms the enemy imposes upon us! Any suggestions?"

AFTER a moment's silence Earl Trevor quietly remarked:

"A few of us have been quite alive to

this menace for the past year—and as private individuals with no encouragement whatever from Government, have spent a good deal of time and money to develop a defense against such warfare. We've made progress, too—though nothing like as much as nation-wide effort in that line under Governm't direction might have accomplished. I think, as a first step, it might be well to have you five and a majority of the Cabinet dine with us in Park Lane tomorrow night, Sir Donald laying before them what he has seen and learned—then see how far, in their opinion, Parliament is likely to go in the way of intensive preparations. If we can't stir up the Cabinet to immediate action of some kind—well, I'll force Parliament to act by sheer weight of public opinion. My press syndicate is a rather powerful weapon when we consider ourselves justified in using it!"

The Army and Navy chiefs were doubtful as to such a conference accomplishing much but had no better suggestions to offer, so the invitations were given at once by telephone and accepted by all except one man, who was in Paris that night. At the appointed time the Cabinet men began to arrive, and went in to dinner shortly afterward—Countess Nan was the only woman at the table. When the coffee and tobacco were reached, Sir Donald Tintern gave them a detailed account of his months in the enemy country, in disguise—while on leave from the F. O.—and his escape from Moscow after getting there by devious ways. He presented merely bare facts which he could vouch for, but didn't hesitate to give the opinions he based upon those facts when asked for them. It was apparent that most of the Cabinet men thought he was magnifying the danger considerably more than his observations warranted—until the Earl began talking to them.

"**G**ENTLEMEN, we might as well accept the fact of aërial warfare—not waste time in argument over it. Everything we've known concerning war, before, is now practically obsolete. Let's go on from there and see how we actually stand today. First—we have the Herriott gas, which will put more men out of business per cubic centimeter than anything yet discovered, and not injure them permanently. But to be of any real use, Governm't should begin to prepare and store at once the greatest possible quantity, against a sudden need for it. We have also the Herriott absorbent

for lethal gas, which has stood a number of severe tests but will be developed still further. This should be produced by Governm't and stored in even larger quantity. Captain Herriot is now working upon a neutralizing solution for mustard—but every chemist in the country should be studying each one of these problems! We can't get such neutralizers one second too soon! Besides these, we have the 'arresting ray,' which has been given exhaustive tests and has met a number of them successfully. It should meet all of them—until we can depend upon its stopping every motor in an airplane fleet ten miles away, at least—whether straight up or along the horizon. I may say that I have a simple defense of my own which would cost very little to use, in comparison with the others, but would take at least two months to install in an area like that of London—possibly four. This I will not describe to you just now, because I mean to make a convincing test of it as soon as I can get Governm't to cooperate with me. If Governm't wont do it, I'll force Government's hand in the matter—that's all!

"We're in a very insecure position at present, gentlemen—facing almost certain annihilation if we don't accede to whatever terms a successful enemy imposes upon us—and by thunder, it's full time to face the situation and get busy! Are we Englishmen going to lie down just because war-development has reached a stage where it amounts to obliteration—or have we common sense enough to know that the same human brains which have evolved such terrible engines of destruction are fully as capable of evolving the defense against it, and devote every energy to perfecting that defense in the shortest possible time? Can there be but one answer to that question?"

"We don't know how much time we've got! I make these suggestions—in order to wake the people up until they fully support our efforts: First—if Governm't wont do it, I'll take at my own expense a page ad in every leading paper of the United Kingdom and the Colonies, offering a reward of five thousand pounds for the best practical defense against poison gas which will successfully stand our tests. Second, I'd have Governm't challenge the Royal Air Service or any of the commercial companies to make a test upon an area of open ground near Stonehenge, half a mile square,—the area to be thickly dotted with condemned dogs from the pound, or condemned

animals of every sort,—each plane towing a target-kite at a safe distance behind, for the Army and Navy to fire at from the ground, a single hit on any target putting that particular plane out of commission. If the planes destroy the animals, they win. If enough targets are hit to cripple the fleet, Army and Navy win, whether the animals are killed or not.

"This is just the sort of test which the senior branches of the service should be most anxious to make—because it will give them a far better opportunity for scoring against the Air Service than they ever would get in war-time during an unexpected raid. Two months after this test is made, no matter which way the decision goes, I'd have Governm't offer another challenge upon the same area—this time a purely defensive one, without firing a shot. I'll put in practice one of the ideas I've myself worked out. If the Air Forces kill but twenty-five per cent, or less, of the condemned animals—they lose. If, in spite of the defenses, they kill three-quarters of them, they win—and we shall have to look for other means of defense. The whole idea, as you see, is first to arouse the people to actual existing conditions—and then clearly to demonstrate that the situation isn't hopeless at all, as the incessant propaganda would make us believe."

IT was evident, as His Lordship talked, that some of the Cabinet men were not in accord with him at all. The Honorable Secretary for War got upon his feet to say as much—claiming that he spoke for his colleagues—which was far from the truth.

"I think, Trevor, that I voice the general opinion among us in saying that Government could not consider your suggestions for the present, at all events. You quite overlook the fact that we are just now in the midst of very delicate international considerations—conversations with representatives of various cabinets—all with a view toward establishing a condition which will preclude the possibility of war."

"Among those with whom you are dealing, Your Excellency—quite possibly. The presumptive enemy concerning whom Sir Donald has just given us such vital information, however, is *not* among them—and is sufficiently unscrupulous to laugh at any diplomatic agreements if he were. It makes no difference who the enemy is who threatens us, or how much balance of power may be established by general agreement—as

long as the bald fact remains that any enemy is able to conquer us and levy tribute inside of thirty hours after a declaration of war unless we devise measures for defense which will prove effective."

"His Majesty's Government, sir, does not admit any such possibility as that—it is ridiculous on the face of it! And that is another argument against your suggestions. By exposing all this for public discussion, you convey the impression that this government feels itself unable to protect its own people from conquest or annihilation! You create panic at a time when there is easier feeling than at any period since the Armistice. You make it exceedingly difficult if not impossible, to get from Parliament appropriations for the largely increased budgets needed for the Army and Navy—"

"Aye—Your Excellency. That is one of the things I hope and mean to do—if possible. Why throw away a hundred millions sterling, on branches of the service which will not even get into action after the next declaration of war? What we need today—most desperately need—is adequate means of defense against the sort of war that is to be waged against us—adequate means of carrying it into the enemy's territory! Even if we do not spend an extra shilling on the Army and Navy for the next two years, we need every available penny where it *may* protect us!"

In the dead silence which followed this, another Cabinet man got slowly upon his feet, glancing speculatively at the faces around the table.

"H-m-m—for the first time, I believe, I find myself not in accord with my confrère, the Honorable Secretary for War. It is a British trait, which all of us must recognize if we are honest with ourselves, not to abandon fixed ideas which have proved their value in the past. If they have repeatedly enabled our armies to win, to extend and protect the Empire up to this time, it seems incredible that suddenly, between night and morning as it were, the whole science and procedure of war should have become so completely revolutionized as to render them practically obsolete. Yet, as I said,—if we are honest with ourselves, able to look at facts without blinking them,—we must admit that actual conditions are what His Lordship so clearly points out—that the menace reported by Sir Donald Tintern at the risk of his life is an exceedingly real one, to be dealt with before anything else. Contrary to the Honorable Sec-

retary's opinion, I think a majority in His Majesty's Government will vote to accept Lord Dyvaint's suggestions and give the question publicity enough to get somewhere in the way of defensive measures."

THIS started a buzz of discussion—the upshot being that, while Government consent would be almost unanimous, it would be modified to the extent of avoiding as much publicity as Trevor had suggested. His plan to offer a large reward in newspaper advertisements for the best defenses against poison gas and airplane attack was changed to Government circulars—privately mailed as "confidential communications" to every officer in all branches of the service, and to every experienced chemist and engineer in the Empire. Then a square half-mile on Salisbury Plain was turned over to Earl Trevor for his proposed experiments, with the promise of full cooperation from the Army, Navy and Air Service. As his guests were finally leaving, some of the Service chiefs remained for a few moments after the others had gone, to consult with him as to the details he had in mind.

"If you carry out the first experiment on the general lines you suggested, Trevor, it will be what the senior branches have been hoping might be tried for some time. We've done something of the sort, you know, but it was inconclusive—neither we nor the Air Service thought the tests by any means decisive, d'ye see, an' both aviation and anti-aircraft artillery have been developed a good bit recently. As I understand your proposition, we're to drop off the air fleet if we can, before they drive any gas on the animals—each hit on the targets they tow behind, putting that particular plane out of the fleet and prohibiting it from dropping more gas? Eh? In other words, we're to use every means now available in drivin' 'em off and savin' the poor doggies? What?"

"Precisely! Even to the extent of sending up whatever planes, blimps or observation-balloons now belong to your two branches, if you wish. Make it partly an aerial battle if you like—firing at the targets of the attacking planes and having them fire at yours. I've considered that feature—because the planes now used as Army and Navy auxiliaries represent just about the proportion our entire aerial force, available, would bear to those which Sir Donald has reported in the possession of our presumptive enemy. And in order to make the test as fair as possible for the

attacking air fleet, both the Countess and I will pilot the fleet. The test will not be advertised—so that there will be spectators from official circles only; but I shall insist that the result of the test, one way or the other, shall be reported in the news-sheets. If we make good our contention, the public must be given the facts—just as I intend that the second test, in which some hitherto unknown means of defense will be used, must be afterward published in the same way.”

AMONG Government officials, everywhere, it was generally considered that in permitting the Army and Navy to use whatever aircraft they had, Earl Trevor threw away his best chance of winning. They'd been through the Zeppelin raids upon London during the war and were quite willing to admit that aircraft had the advantage during a night attack. In broad daylight, however, they considered the position reversed, because the defenders had every opportunity for preparation and knew, approximately, when the attack might be expected.

As the admiral in command of the attacking fleet, Earl Trevor showed himself a first-class tactician through every moment of the mimic battle. He had previously drilled his bombing-planes until the personnel had become accustomed to handling the deadly gas with as little risk as possible—chancing the success of the experiment upon lethal gas alone, as “mustard” would have rendered the ground dangerous for any other use until all traces of the stuff had been destroyed. Furthermore, he had drilled his craft in squadron evolution and a few little tricks of his own which had been worked out with just this sort of opposition in view. The ground forces surrounding—at a safe distance—the half-mile area inside the barbed-wire fence, expected the fleet to come in sight from the direction of Croyden, where the bulk of them had been assembled the night before. Instead of this, the fleet, which had used Dartmoor as their rendezvous in the early morning, approached Stonehenge from the west, toward which the wind was blowing, at an altitude of six thousand meters. In the partly cloudy atmosphere they were practically indistinguishable until near enough to plane down swiftly on the half-mile inclosure—upon which the outlines of four battleship hulls had been outlined in white, surrounding groups of the animals.

With the wind blowing toward the attacking fleet, there was no sound to indicate their approach.

Most of the defending planes were still on the ground—there having been no radio from the few scout-planes announcing the enemy's approach. The anti-aircraft guns were all slewed around pointing east toward the expected path of approach—and so sluggishly does the human brain often work in unexpected emergencies that most of the damage was done before they could be brought to bear upon the targets—by which time, the fleet was flying due south and rapidly climbing as they went. In their swoop upon the inclosure, they were not three hundred meters up when they dropped their bombs—exactly as they had been patiently drilled to do, in successive diagonal lines which flooded the entire area with the gas excepting a zone near the barbed-wire to minimize the risk of its spreading anywhere near the defending force outside, which had been stationed “up-wind” from the inclosure—the fleet being compelled to fly over them in its escape.

It did so—every unit of it. But owing to Earl Trevor's surprise tactics, it might have been at least a mile away. Official count of the shots fired from all classes of weapons used placed the number at 92,512—which scored just a single hit on the tail-edge of one target after the plane had dropped its gas. Out of 841 animals—including diseased cats, dogs, mules, cows and chickens—only nine were able to move after the gas had spread among them. As far as telescopic examination could decide, death had been a matter of but a few seconds with most of them—less than five minutes with the toughest of them, which was a rather effective demonstration of what the service had up its sleeve in the way of poison gas.

That night newspapers of the United Kingdom carried the announcement in big type:

AERIAL FORCES WIN
ARMY AND NAVY LOSE
in what probably was the most thorough
and scientific test ever made
AT STONEHENGE

PUBLIC reaction to this test was about what might have been expected. The few who didn't skip the news report altogether in their eagerness to read the sporting news and scandals merely accepted the occurrence as one of the things Govern-

ment always seemed to be doing toward keeping the service in shape, and would lead to whatever Government thought best. Not one per cent of those who read the daily newspapers at all sensed any menace in the bare facts. Parliament was always appropriating large sums for the military and naval budgets—and undoubtedly would remedy whatever defects there might be. It was generally understood that the diplomatic conferences had been entirely satisfactory—that Europe was safeguarded against another war for many years—and the feeling, everywhere, was optimistic. The Air Force had put one over on the Army—which in itself was reassuring, as proving how really valuable it was—and no other Air Force was going to attack it for the present.

Most of the Cabinet men—at another meeting which Earl Trevor called immediately after the test—were openly pleased that no panic or even general uneasiness had been caused by it, but the Earl and some of the Army men told them there was no cause whatever for congratulation.

“We didn’t expect to start a panic, gentlemen—in fact, we looked for just about the amount of apathy which has been shown. And that very indifference upon the part of the public is the most serious menace of all. The public doesn’t want another war—is quite determined not to consider such a thing possible; consequently it believes what it wishes to believe in spite of all evidence that very real danger exists. Well, the public will get a jolt with the first declaration of war. We, however, can’t wait for that—we must go ahead with every preparation for defense that we can bring about, and we can depend upon Parliament for *some* help because it always has been accustomed to voting defense-budgets of one sort or another. I think that all of us here—representing a majority of the Government—will now admit the fact of what we are facing. After our next test at Salisbury Plain, I look for undivided support from you in any measures which may be decided upon. Meanwhile, as a private citizen, I mean to start a few defensive measures at once. I will form a syndicate backed by private capital to the extent of a hundred millions sterling, and proceed with certain construction throughout the city which I know to be a fairly good emergency defense. In the event of war, we will expect Government to reimburse us for whatever amounts we have

spent. If there is no declaration of war, we will demonstrate the value of what we have done and bring suit against the Government if we are not reimbursed. Of course we take some risk in that direction, but I think I know some capitalists who are public-spirited enough to chance it for their own protection as well as for that of the people.”

“Will Your Lordship give us some idea as to the sort of construction you have in mind? Parliament *might* be induced to vote it.”

“Not without protracted debate at a time when every hour counts. After our second test, you’ll catch the idea very clearly.”

THE Earl’s next move was to call a meeting, at his famous Jacobean mansion in Park Lane, of the managers of the Metropolitan and all the other London subways, together with certain property-owners in various parts of the city—all of them representing large amounts of underground construction. His syndicate had been formed and he already had millions at his disposal, to use the moment an agreement was reached with these men. As most of them were engineers, they readily comprehended his plans as soon as they were explained. Their knowledge concerning the way poison gas usually worked when used by an attacking force was first-hand experience obtained during the war—those of them who hadn’t been at the front accepting the statements of those who had, and having a vivid recollection of the Zeppelin raids over London. Before any of them could act in starting new construction that would run to money, it was necessary to put the proposition before their various boards and have it voted—but His Lordship made a suggestion which seemed likely to get the authorization with practically no opposition.

“If you put it to your boards as a purely defensive idea, gentlemen—against some possible but very improbable war—they’ll be inclined to vote it down. On the other hand, if you put it to them as a badly needed system of ventilation for your ‘tubes’ which will add materially to the comfort of your passengers and the popularity of your transportation-system, I fancy there’ll be little or no opposition, because the need is self-evident. The news-sheets all the time are running leaders about the poor ventilation upon some of your

lines. As for you others who own large department-shops and warehouses,—or dwelling-property of sufficient extent to permit of large cellar-construction beneath it,—you already have, as managing directors, sufficient authority for going ahead and building any improvements you consider necessary. As to the financing, the proposition of my syndicate is this: You have all admitted—since reading reports of the test made at Stonehenge—that some workable system of defense for the city should be started at once. If, in an emergency, your precautions save a million or more lives, it is quite certain that the fact will not be forgotten—you're sure to derive increased patronage and good-will from it, so that from the advertising point of view alone, it is a good proposition for you. Well—considering the possibility that none of you may have large sums available for such construction at this moment, my syndicate offers to put up half the cost of construction if you guarantee the rest and agree that the work shall be pushed to completion in the shortest possible time. We are gambling, of course, that our services will be appreciated at some later time to the extent of Government reimbursement. If not, we shall sue for it—with an excellent prospect of getting an award from the courts. Now—how soon can you let me know of the decisions by your respective boards?"

"I think Your Lordship may depend upon receiving a decision within forty-eight hours, as we will call special meetings of our boards at once—by telephone. In the meantime, we will proceed with the assembling of material and labor as if we already had obtained a favorable decision. In fact, I think that with most of us, it will be merely a matter of form, inasmuch as we already have practically enough authority for going ahead with the scheme."

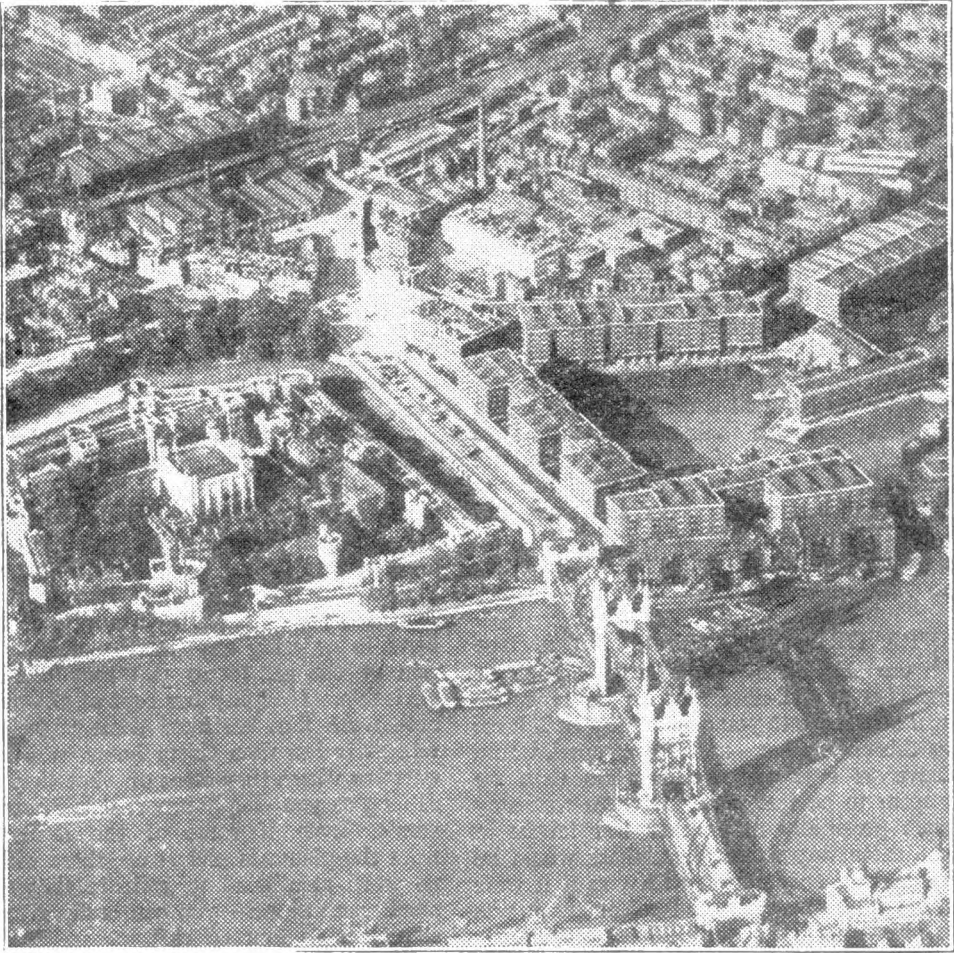
CONSTRUCTION actually began at several different points the following morning, but it attracted no attention whatever beyond occasional news-paragraphs that the Underground and the Tubes had been finally chivvied into doing something toward better ventilation, and that some of the coöperative stores were adopting a similar system for their sub-basements. As the work progressed, some of the scientific weeklies and magazines asked permission to publish descriptions of the system with illustrations of its application when in use.

For two or three weeks they were unable to obtain this permission—while the question was being forwarded to Earl Trevor in Paris. But upon his return, he laughingly told some of the managers that he saw no reason why they shouldn't permit this.

"Let 'em have your blue-prints! Let 'em make the best an' clearest illustrations their staff artists can draw from them—by all means! When the articles are published, they'll show an exceedingly practical system of ventilation—but that's all! Not one of 'em in a million will see the application as a defense-measure, because, while a lot of 'em were gassed during the war, they've no scientific idea as to how poison gas works. If it occurs to them at all, they'll have mustard in mind—which doesn't penetrate very far into underground spaces unless exploded right against an opening. Mustard is something else again—requiring a diff'rent remedy which, thank kind fortune, is nearly ready for use."

What the magazines presently did illustrate and describe was this: At half-mile intervals along every underground line, a chimney of boiler-iron twenty feet in diameter had been erected to a height of two hundred feet and guyed with iron rods to resist wind-pressure. At the top of each chimney was a double hollow cone of steel—one cone under and inside the top one—with ample space around under the bottom of each for the admission of air. From a concrete chamber at the base of each chimney, a horizontal flue led directly through the side-wall of the railway-tube. At each exit and entrance from the street-level, ten-foot fans—when running—forced a high-pressure current of air out into the street from the tube or station. It was explained very clearly to the magazine men that under ordinary everyday traffic conditions, it would be necessary to keep only one fan running in each alternate station—as operating all of them would make so powerful a draught as to be intensely annoying to passengers, especially women. During a thick black fog, of course, more pressure would be needed.

These same two-hundred-foot chimneys were being run up all over London wherever there were large department-shops—the current of fresh air being drawn down through them to the lowest subcellar and forced into ventilating flues throughout the lower floors. What gave rise to some speculation was the erection of these chimneys in several residential sections—but some one dropped the



Photograph © by Underwood and Underwood

London—which Trevor planned to defend from aerial gas attack.

hint that a strong fresh-air service would keep fog and stagnant air out of dwellings as well as from subway or shop. What escaped the inquisitive reporters entirely was the fact that, from each underground cellar of whatever sort into which the fresh air was drawn, there was but one door through which anybody could get in or out of it—the cellar being made airtight with the exception of a flue from the chimney and this exit door—also, that the “open-cut” portions of the Metropolitan were being roofed over with planking and earth—much purer air being obtained by the new system.

HIS LORDSHIP was now ready for other, more diplomatic, measures of defense which had been in his mind—and he took the morning plane from Croyden to Le Bourget, making early appointments with the Premier and some of the French cabinet at his Paris home on the Avenue

de Neuilly. As Countess Nan had more influence with some of them than anyone else in the country, she had preceded him—and saw that the dinner was such that everyone was in his most receptive mood when they adjourned to the billiard-room for coffee and cigarettes. After half an hour of general chat, one of the Cabinet Ministers asked if M. le Comte had had anything particularly in mind when he invited them. He smiled—lighted one of his long brown cigars—and gave them the details of Sir Donald Tintern’s report after his grilling flight from Moscow.

“He obtained no direct evidence, *messieurs*, as to which of the European powers was likely to be the objective in this particular air-raid which the nation he was watching certainly intends to make as soon as it considers all the conditions most favorable. It may be us. It may be, quite as possibly, Paris. You are in better position to withstand such a raid than we, because

you have never minimized the constant danger of such a thing and have built up your air service until it is but little smaller than Sir Donald reported the enemy's to be—unless they have more in reserve than he saw. They have a noticeably greater fleet—but you've enough bombers and combat-planes to prevent anything like the walk-over it would be with us. The question I have in mind is whether you would feel inclined to assist us in case we are attacked?"

"But—M'sieur le Comte—that is precisely what our statesmen have been trying to bring about in their conversations with yours! *Mon Dieu!* It is that we are more than willing to meet you halfway in that direction—but your statesmen and your Parliament will not conclude such agreement with us, though it is obviously to your advantage."

TREVOR nodded assent. "It is true our Air Service isn't large enough or sufficiently well-developed to be of much real assistance to you against any such force as this enemy has—and if destroyed, would leave us even more defenseless than we appear to be just now. If there were any such possibility as another war fought in the same way as the last, there would be no lack of coöperation with you if it were a question of saving civilization, as it was before—or saving Europe from conquest—which nobody can deny was the intention. The general feeling among English-speaking peoples today is an ostrichlike refusal to recognize the possibility of war in the near future—on the ground that warfare has now reached the point of complete annihilation, and that if some other country wants and means to obliterate us, they don't believe that anything can be done about it. Fortunately our thinking men don't agree with that view—we are quietly taking measures for defense which we think will, at least, prevent complete subjugation or destruction. But if—promptly after a declaration of war—France should be willing to make an offensive demonstration with the view of stopping the matter then and there, it would probably save the European States from being enslaved piecemeal. What I'm suggesting would amount to nothing more than a bluff upon your part—costing you nothing but the petrol—a valuable demonstration in army tactics. But it would put an end to every other attempt of that sort until some power gets together

a larger fleet of aircraft than any other four nations put together—which we're not likely to see in our lifetime. In exchange for your coöperation in such an event, I propose to give you, now, all the details of what we are doing to defend London against an attack of that sort."

There was some conferring in whispers among the little group as the Trevors left the billiard-room for a few moments upon some household matter. When they returned, it was evident that the proposition rather appealed to the statesmen—if practical.

"The difficulty, you observe, m'sieur le Comte, would be in getting consent from the *Chambre*—"

"I fancy you'd not really need it. For example, your campaign in the Riff? You are now mobilizing against various possibilities down there. Your Excellency of the *Ministère de la Guerre* has a pretty free hand in ordering any practice demonstration of the air forces you may consider advisable. If eighty per cent of the available force flies eastward some night and returns in less than thirty hours, who is to question where they went or what they did as long as you simply report it 'air maneuvers'? Even if some of the radio-talk from the planes is picked up, there will be no word mentioned to indicate that they are French planes—you can easily give instructions to that effect."

"And—if the what-you-call 'bluff' fail to work? Eh?"

"Your planes bomb the enemy's capital, of course—with the deadliest gas you have—paying particular attention to hangars and gas-reservoirs. Consider, if you please! Suppose an attack on London successful—most of the population destroyed, Government compelled to capitulate, attacking fleet getting safely back to its base to load up with more gas and explosives? Who is next in line for their attentions? You would put up a first-class show in the air, but all Europe would be demoralized—you couldn't get assistance anywhere, for every other power would be thinking only of self-defense against annihilation. If the enemy gets after us first, knowing that we have no defensive treaty with France, you can stop the whole business with one corking good bluff—stop it for years to come! If you permit him to destroy us—well, you'll have to fight for your lives, with the advantage against you. What I'm suggesting, messieurs, is no more than a little game

of international poker. If you can't see it, you'll have to figure out your own methods of defense, I fear."

DURING the two months succeeding the first experiment, Trevor's workmen had been constructing on Salisbury Plain, within another half-mile inclosure, five concrete pits thirty feet below the surface—roofed with arches supporting ten feet of solidly rammed earth. Each of these pits was thirty feet square and had a four-foot shaft leading into the base of a 150-foot chimney, from which another underground flue connected it with the next pit. At the other end of each chamber was a short tunnel ending in a ramp of easy gradient to the surface. Ten feet back of this tunnel were two motor-driven fans six feet in diameter. In either side of each pit stood a motor-truck chassis upon which had been mounted a large tank, from which led a three-inch armored-rubber hose ending in a large spraying nozzle. With the completion of these pits and chimneys, the preparations were complete for the proposed final test—and this time, invitations to witness it were issued to representatives of the press from all over the United Kingdom. Upon the evening before, a conference was held with all the Service chiefs to get the Earl's final instructions—the test being timed for ten in the forenoon on Salisbury Plain, not far from Stonehenge.

"**G**ENTLEMEN," Trevor said, "this event is intended to reproduce as closely as possible actual war conditions with all of the risks, and no quarter asked for anybody participating. It is possible that somebody may be hurt or killed—but I consider anything of the sort extremely unlikely, because we've been all through this, down on the Cornish cliffs. The air-plane fleet is to include every sort of boat used in warfare or commercially. There is to be no opposition whatever from the ground—no anti-aircraft artillery—no army-planes going up to shoot at 'em. The fleet will drop mustard, phosgene, chlorine—whatever it pleases, within the square half-mile—with the privilege of destroying all of the five chimneys if it can. In order to show that actual lethal gas is being used, forty head of diseased cattle will be tethered at intervals all over the inclosure. Up to the time when the planes are within three miles of a position directly over the half-mile square, I and twenty men from my

Devon estate—together with a dozen others who volunteered to join us—will remain standing in plain sight on the surface. At that moment, we will all run below and remain there, probably for about an hour. Do not attempt to lead a rescue-party within the inclosure—as I fancy it would be fatal within that time. Each pit has telephone communication with the others. The fleet will make but the one bomb-dropping raid—because in actual warfare, enemy planes would be compelled to return to their own base for another load of gas, petrol and explosives. It is believed our test will show that a city like London can safely withstand a number of consecutive raids—and it is fair to suppose that in each one of them the enemy would lose a number of planes."

There were protests against his risking his own life or those of his men in any such deadly attack when putting live cattle in each pit would demonstrate his contention—but he laughingly shook his head.

"It wouldn't be a war-test, gentlemen, without the human element. There always would be some to express a doubt that such a raid would not be fatal to live men. Aside from that, we must have men in the pits to handle the mustard. Lethal gas is one thing—mustard something vastly different, requiring a different remedy altogether, and it's the only part of the proposition we're not dead sure about. The defense never has been tried under actual war conditions. Another point is—when we get all through with this, there will be none in the country to say we were afraid to risk our own lives in a doubtful experiment, or fail to get some idea of what future warfare means." Raising his glass, he looked smilingly around at the circle of faces. "Till we meet again—on Salisbury Plain!"

THAT night there was no other topic of conversation in the London clubs. Had almost any other man been making the experiment, the odds would have been in favor of a trick somewhere, insuring a much greater degree of safety than appeared in the simple statement of the conditions governing the test. But Earl Trevor of Dymnaint was known the world over as a dare-devil aviator,—one of the pioneers, in fact,—a rear admiral with brilliant service to his credit during the war, and at all times a man whose simple word was as good as any other person's bond. So the lively betting took no account of chicanery

anywhere—being laid for or against the men in the pits surviving at all, on the chance that some would be killed through faulty working of their protective arrangements—and a very few accepting long odds that the experiment would prove enough of a success to dispel the pall of fear which was lying upon everybody.

The morning couldn't have been improved upon for the occasion. A cloudless sky, no wind, not enough heat for discomfort. The gallery proved far larger than had been anticipated, owing to the sporting character now given to the event—and the groups of half a dozen men could be clearly made out through the glasses at the base of each tall chimney. The attack also was on time to the minute. There had been much consulting of watches and nervous expectancy as the minute-hands neared ten o'clock—but those which were fast or slow could have been set by the drone of the motors as the dark specks came rushing onward in the eastern sky from Croyden, which had been the rendezvous this time. The drone deepened to a roar which was overpowering—terrifying.

The majority kept their eyes glued to the glasses, nervous as they unquestionably were—the experiment had about it more than a little suggestion of an execution. The shower of bombs could be traced as they fell—a groan went through the crowds as one of them scored a fair hit upon the nearest chimney, blowing off twenty feet of the top. Knowing nothing of the connecting flues underground, it was assumed that a quantity of the deadly gas must have gone down the chimney with the fresh-air intake—but the men in the pit below were not worrying to any great extent. All had gas-masks on, and the moment they heard the cones fall from the chimney, they took a couple of hens from a coop and put them in the flue which led from the base, tied by a leg so that they couldn't move very far—then they reported to His Lordship by telephone, in the next pit along the square. (They were arranged like a five-spot of diamonds.) His immediate question was:

"How are the hens?"

"Feelin' fine, sir! Eatin' the corn we're chuckin' at 'em!"

"If they're all right in fifteen minutes, take off your mask and get a sniff to see if it was mustard. I doubt if there's force enough in the phosgene bombs to rip off those cones in that way—and if mustard,

it's unlikely that any of the vaporized stuff got inside the chimney. At all events, the hens'll get it before you do, and it'll go through their feathers like shot! If they seem uncomfortable for one second, close the draught tight and take your fresh air from our chimney! The attack is over! We're safe enough to go out in an hour, with masks on, and spray the mustard!"

TO the distant onlookers, the feeling of horror grew as they saw through their glasses one after another of the cattle totter on its legs—throw up its head gasping for breath—sink down and roll over. This was convincing demonstration of what they'd got! There was no trickery here, but the cold murderous fact of modern warfare illustrated for everyone to see. To suppose that the men in the pits had fared any better seemed incredible. (No mention had been made of the blowers, in the press reports—practically nothing was known of the ventilating system beyond the chimneys, which obviously supplied fresh air in some way or other.) Poison-gas was known to be heavier than air—what was to prevent its sinking down into the pits through their open entrances? It was known there were no doors. If the men were still alive, the gas would surely get them when they came out!

At exactly eleven o'clock, however, a murmur of amazed relief ran through the crowds as they saw through their glasses four masked figures coming up the ramps from each pit in the wake of a queer machine which appeared to be spraying the ground ahead and at both sides of it. Down the half-mile stretch they came—like so many cultivators on a farm—then back again, farther over. Back and forth—until every inch of ground had been sprayed. After that, the machines were parked like a field-battery—each with a hen-coop on top of its tank—and the thirty-three men who had gone down into the pits just before the attack, came marching along the Plain to the army base in company formation, with Earl Trevor at their head, in command.

Then—what the spectators afterward described as a "jolly row" broke loose, cheering until throats went hoarse.

The heroes were mobbed. As for the man whose intelligence had devised this defense, his friends and several of the officers had to smuggle him away in a waiting car, which took him home to a very proud

Countess in Park Lane. There was a big dinner-party of statesmen and officers that evening—and Trevor finally rose at the head of the table to make his system of defense clear to them.

“First—let me describe, more or less, the gases in use. Most of you are familiar with their effect—but not as much so with the way they act under different conditions. Any gases of the mustard type are in the form of a heavy oil which may be sprayed from aircraft or exploded into fine mist by shell. If any of this mist is breathed into the lungs, it burns through the tissue and causes death. If it falls upon food which is afterward eaten, it causes ulcers in the digestive tract—and death. Food wrapped in tarred paper will not be affected by it. Mustard freezes at fifty Fahrenheit—consequently may remain upon any substance without deterioration for months or years, becoming active again as soon as warmed up. Likely to cause death, serious discomfort, or render an area untenable for an indefinite period. But common chloride of lime sprinkled over the mustard neutralizes it very materially—and the Herriott solution, just perfected, absolutely destroys its toxic effects! It was the Herriott solution with which we sprayed Salisbury Plain—with which we would spray the London streets—housetops, window-sills—after an enemy raid. Don’t forget the remedy in case you may have to make it yourselves!

“But the so-called lethal gases, such as phosgene, chlorine and the like, are only deadly in concentrated form and for a period not usually exceeding thirty minutes. They may be exploded in shells at the desired spot or released down the wind from containers. But they are quickly dissipated and must act at once if they are to be deadly at all. No gas yet isolated or compounded can be forced against a strong current of air or wind. Consequently any door, window or opening through which a powerful current is being forced outwardly is as securely defended against gas attack as if the space inside were ten miles above the earth’s surface. As long as powerful draughts are being forced out through every opening from an underground railway, from cellars or any confined space, people inside of them are absolutely safe from gas-attack! The Metropolitan, the tubes and a number of large cellars are now equipped with two-hundred-foot chimneys which take in pure air from a level higher than

poison-gas will lie, and with powerful blowers at every exit. We had one blower working in each pit, down there at Salisbury Plain, and a second one in reserve which could have been started up instantly if the other stalled.”

“Suppose that the whole city is drenched with mustard—as one of our novelists stated in a recent magazine story, *Your Lordship?* Wouldn’t a lot of it penetrate even your underground refuges—cause a number of casualties?”

“No mustard vapor would get past the current from a ten-foot blower, in the first place. The job of spraying, afterward, would be a big one, but merely a matter of detail. Let’s go into that question of ‘drenching the whole city’ a bit. We’ll say the city is approximately ten miles square—a hundred square miles—taking three thousand tons of mustard to give it a fair sprinkling in every part. But the stuff must be carried in explosive containers or in tanks with spraying apparatus, either of which would double the weight, making it at least six thousand tons. The largest bombers carry about seven tons in addition to fuel and crew—making a fleet necessary to cover London consist of eight hundred and fifty-six bombers alone—twelve hundred, with the protective planes to accompany it. The enemy most likely to attack us has but four hundred and fifty planes all told—only three hundred of which are bombers—and in any raid by a fleet of that size needing at least twenty-four hours, there is certain to be some percentage of balky motors—various troubles preventing them from reaching their objective. But suppose their three hundred bombers drop fifteen hundred tons upon half the city? We’d have warning enough to hurry underground; there would be few casualties—the spraying-machines would be at work an hour afterward neutralizing the mustard in the streets—and the enemy couldn’t return in another raid for at least forty-eight hours. Let’s look this poison-gas business straight in the face, gentlemen—and laugh at the bogey! But—I can’t impress it upon you too strongly that we need a fleet of a thousand planes just as soon as we can build or buy them!”

FOR the next fortnight optimism was rampant. Earl Trevor was—temporarily, at least—the most popular man in the United Kingdom. Then a sinister rumor began creeping about, whispering itself in

business offices, at afternoon teas, in official circles, in private dwellings. The British ambassador to a certain country had been openly insulted—pelted with refuse as he drove through the streets. And when he demanded official apology from the travesty of government then in power, he was laughed at—told to go home if he didn't like the atmosphere. When his code-radio had been deciphered at the Foreign Office, a special commissioner was ordered by wireless to proceed from a neighboring country at once and join the ambassador as quickly as he could get there. His first message indicated slightly more politic treatment, but it was evident that diplomatic relations could not continue in the circumstances. Earl Trevor and three of the Cabinet men were calling at Downing Street when the message came over the telephone from the Government radio station, and the Foreign Secretary read it to them with a look which invited an expression of opinion at least. They turned to His Lordship.

"Well—if you ask me, I'll say it! Three months ago, when Sir Donald came out of that section of Europe in a stolen plane and told us what he knew, there would have appeared to be little we could do but truckle for a while in a case of this kind. Today, however, we're in a far stronger position than they imagine—in spite of our ridiculously inadequate air force. My suggestion would be to recall our ambassador at once—and tell them to go to hell!"

"Figuratively speaking, of course. But—do you comprehend, Trevor, that it would mean an immediate air-raid from the greatest aerial fleet ever assembled?"

"Perfectly. Let 'em come! We're ready! It will be 'passive resistance' on our part, for a bit—but they'll really do amazingly little harm—an' I'll wager any of you a thousand pounds that when they cross the Channel, they won't drop a single bomb of any sort upon London!"

"Trevor—you're crazy! If you mean it, we'll all take you up on that!"

"Very good—I'll book it for the three of you! Now radio the ambassador and let's see who's right! I'll admit I'm gambling, because I'm by no means sure—but the bets stand just the same."

BY morning the declaration of war came—and the various chancelleries of Europe were notified by the British Foreign

Office. Trevor went to Paris in one of his own planes and secured an immediate interview with one of the French Cabinet—who smilingly whispered:

"Our own ambassador has just notified us that their fleet will leave at four in the afternoon, being over London by midnight—they're quite openly bragging about it. But our Minister of War is maneuvering somewhere with the entire Air Service—it is not known just where."

Just before midnight an anxious London became a city of moles as it heard the drone of the approaching enemy fleet—but to the amazement of everybody, it simply circled the city and flew away again. The flight commander had received radio-orders from home which made him curse with rage and amazement. It had been a perfectly successful raid up to that moment—working like well-oiled machinery.

The order read:

"Capital threatened by powerful Air Force—nationality unknown. Population will be wiped out if London is bombed. We have no alternative. Return at once. Avoid any hostile act."

Eventually the enemy guessed what fleet had threatened them—but they hadn't a shadow of proof. They were at peace with France. It was known that no defensive pact existed between France and England. But until their air force was strong enough to attack any three European states simultaneously, they never would make another similar attempt. Upon the morning after the frustrated raid the Army chief and the First Lord of the Admiralty were breakfasting at their Club—deep in thought.

"D'you know, old chap—in all these tests of Trevor's an' that dud of a raid last night, it has just occurred to me that neither the Army nor the Navy took any part whatever. Trevor's experiments might be called purely commercial ones, with a lot of bally mechanics. Some of my men fired a few shots from anti-aircraft guns in the first one, but it was merely a gesture! The only hit was from an airplane machine-gun. Strikes me that it was no test of the Army at all! An' if these bally raiders had done any bombing or gassing, the thing would have been over an' settled, one way or the other—underground defense successful or not without anybody thinkin' of telephoning for the Army—"

"Or the Navy—either!"

"Fancy!"



The Gun Girl

This strange drama which comes to its exciting climax in a little Ohio town constitutes one of the most unusual and absorbing stories we have ever printed.

By RATHBURNE CASE

THE youth in the gray-green ulster peered cautiously along the edge of the train and then dropped to the ground from the rear platform and stepped rapidly across the tracks toward the screening barricade of a row of box-cars. His lean jaws were set, his gray eyes uneasy.

All Woodford seemed to have come down to the station to watch the unbelievable arrival of No. 43-West. And that was not good. He had counted upon no such enthusiastic reception. Enough that he should dare to come back to the town of his birth and risk a casual recognition, without running the gantlet of the entire community the moment he stepped from the train.

It was to have been expected, of course, that watching the arrival and departure of the train would constitute one of Woodford's principal amusements. The town was what it had always been, conservative, unchanging, as bigoted in its pleasures as in its morals. And so it would always be until it should die of inanition. But in the old days—so far away now that they seemed like a period in a previous incar-

nation—the important work of making certain that No. 43-West got in on schedule and out again had been intrusted to a distinct group that seldom changed its personnel: old Truax, driving the bus for the Overton House; Hendryx the hardware man; Miller the editor; Miss Agnes Adams, the social arbiter; Freddy Millet, the town drunkard; Jacques Frect, the town idiot; and a few other dignitaries of similar note. But today, despite the chill wind from the north and the hint of snow from off the lake, at least fifty men, women and children were pressing toward the forward Pullmans, where a porter had alighted with his little rubber-topped stool to carry out the provisions of the time-card and assist in detaining a "passenger from points east of Pittsburgh."

THE significance of this matter came to David Branscombe before he was well across the tracks, and he came to a sudden stop. He would have to investigate: better now than later—and easier. He dropped his bag, stepped quickly back to

the rear platform, and peered around the corner for a second time.

Up toward the center of the train the porter was pushing back the press of citizenry with a black handbag and flaming yellow suitcase. He turned again to give a hand to some one coming down the steps of the car and for a moment Branscombe caught a glimpse of a slim, lithe figure in purple and furs—a queen, from the studied angle of her chin to the calm certainty of her step. She was holding a corsage of violets and a beaded purse in her right hand, and reaching for the guard-rail with the left.

If he felt relief at the discovery that the assembling of the tribes of Woodford had been brought about through no indiscretion of his own, that the high-priests and the pharisees were gathered here to welcome home a great lady, the young man gave no sign. Momentarily he had forgotten the reason for his interest, in the sudden discovery that he knew this girl and that yet she was some one he had never known. It was not her queenly poise—he had had little to do with queens; nor was it the beauty of her profile against the dark background of the cars. . . .

As he puzzled over it, the queen reached the bottom step and did a very unaccountable thing, for a queen. She tripped. Her corsage and bag flew out into the crowd, and she pitched forward into the arms of the startled porter. When she regained her balance, her little toque, a thing of fur and gold, was pushed down over one eye, and her right leg was amazingly entangled in an egg-crate. Branscombe started with a glad cry that might have betrayed his presence had not the welcoming populace been occupied in a closer inspection of the queenly downfall.

"Miriam Halley!" He repeated the name almost prayerfully. He moved back toward where he had dropped his baggage, no longer aware of Woodford and its hideous red station or its background of flaming oak trees or the wrinkled ghouls who were milling around back there on the platform. . . . He was walking across the rails with a little girl in pigtails—poor little awkward Miriam, helpless hoyden and harbinger of trouble. In the old days, if anyone had to fall out of a hayrick, or break through the ice, or lose her pocket-book, or miss her train, or come undone on a dance-floor, or otherwise contribute to the general embarrassment of her escorts and

the amusement of the cynically tolerant *haut ton*, that one would be Miriam! She was beautiful now—splendidly beautiful. But apparently she had not changed.

THE sight of a shed nestling under the north fence of Spencer's lumber-yard beyond the switch-tracks brought him out of his reminiscent mood. He recalled that he had seen the girl in the dining-car, and that momentarily he had felt the suggestion that he had known her somewhere. He felt that she had not seen him. And he was thankful for that. The chance that had placed him on the same train with her out of New York apparently had compensated somewhat for the error by keeping her out of his way during the journey. It would not be well to renew the acquaintance of this girl, above all others.

He selected a key from his ring and slipped it without hesitation into the lock on the shed door. He stepped inside and surveyed with considerable satisfaction a mud-spattered car that filled the inclosure. It had one flat tire.

So far, his orders had been well carried out. If luck remained with him, he would be out on the Northfield road before the train was well on its way, and he would slip into the Goodcare Garage a casual overland tourist in trouble, instead of a pseudo-stranger who might be metamorphosed into the returning prodigal that he was if he stepped from the New York train under the inquisitive noses of townspeople who had known him from boyhood. From his suitcase he took two Idaho license-plates which he fastened on the empty racks. Then, with a brief glance to make certain that this back alley was as it always had been, completely deserted and screened from the vision of station loiterers by the implement-shed along the switchtrack, he backed slowly out and moved silently away from the railroad in a detour to the Northfield road.

Five minutes later he came slowly to a stop in front of the garage. Cyrus Friend—proprietor of the livery stable in that previous existence that was now coming back to Branscombe so vividly—shuffled out to the curb.

"Trouble?" he inquired hopefully.

"Yes," said Branscombe from the depths of his ulster collar. "Blowout. There's a knock in the motor, too. Better take a look at it. The old can hasn't had much attention since I left San Diego."

"Umph," replied Friend. He paid no attention to Branscombe—did not look at him after the first glance when he emerged from his office. Branscombe was pleased to note that the psychology of the situation was working out as he had planned it. In a few brief words he had established himself as a motorist from California. From that point it would require real effort to make Friend believe that he might be somebody and something else. One changes even under normal circumstances in six years.

"Big jam at the station," observed Branscombe confidently. "Coolidge paying you a visit?"

Sour old Cyrus Friend wrinkled his cracked old face into a leer.

"Funnier than that," he declared. "Little Mimmie Halley just come home from Paris to give us yokels a treat. Been studyin' music there.

"You gotta know the Halleys to appreciate it. Yessir, you gotta know 'em. . . . Aint had their noses out the air for forty year come Christmas, when Old Tom Halley falls heir to some title with a couple o' second mortgages on it in England. It purty nigh busted him clearin' title to his ancestral estate, an' then he loses the whole works. But old Helen Halley—that's Mimmie's granny,—the one that comes home today from Paris where she's studyin' music,—she aint never forgot what good people she is. It's plumb sickenin'.

"Well, today Mimmie's comin' home. Everybody knows it. S'far as I know, nobody cares a hoot except to hope she doesn't bust somethin' while she's here. An' then this mornin' here comes a Toledo newspaper which everybody in this town reads; an' look what it says—"

Friend drew a folded paper from the hip pocket of his graphite-etched overalls and extended it. For all his nerve-control and preparation, Branscombe felt a sudden unaccountable shock as he found himself looking at a picture from which stared up at him the troubled eyes of Miriam Halley. It was only later—a definite time later—that he was conscious of the caption which emblazoned the photograph:

"World's Champion Pistol-shot—Mlle. Artheris in U. S. for Short Tour."

It was none of Branscombe's business, but he felt himself growing irritable. The caption explained everything. The Toledo

newspaper inadvertently had played an excellent jest. It had poked fun at the sacred Halleys. And then all of Woodford had gone down to the station to see with its own eyes the dénouement of this merriment. It would not have been Woodford had the town overlooked this chance to sneer at greatness even as exemplified by poor little blunder-footed Miriam. And it was like Miriam that she should have been the victim of such an egregious mistake, and that she should have done her part so thoroughly in adding to its effect as a jest by leaping into the arms of a stout porter.

"Well, that ought to please old Mrs. What's-her-name," he said noncommittally as he handed the newspaper back to the garage man.

"Yeh," retorted old Friend with a still wider display of yellow teeth. "That sure put a dent in the old high hat—sure did!"

MIRIAM HALLEY preceded her grandmother up the broad steps of the old brownstone house on the lake front, conscious at every stride that she had hoped quite fervently never to see the place again. Helen Halley, a stately figure despite her seventy-odd years, and beautiful with that patrician poise and charm with which years deal so lightly, came serenely behind her like a mother who must keep a watchful eye on a difficult child. Miriam submitted without visible resentment to this obvious patronage. It was as if the years of her absence had never been, and she was once more in her girlhood as she had been before she went away, subject in all things to her grandmother, conscious of her need for this enveloping care.

And yet psychologically she was not as she had been—as she should be now in this step back into the bourne behind the calendar. She was conscious of a fierce and indescribable hatred for Woodford and all that it represented. She hated this gloomy old manse for its position, its architecture and its traditions. She hated the weird plaint of the wind in the tops of the oaks, eternally chanting the bugaboos that had frightened her as a child. She hated the ceaseless lapping of the waves about the little boat-landing that jutted out into the lake at the end of the leaf-strewn drive. She hated the morrow that would find her there in that house with a respectful sun peering in solemnly under the heavy hangings of her window.

The limousine drew away down the drive, crackling over dead leaves. Miriam and her grandmother stood without speaking at the top of the steps while the bell tolled somewhere away in the depths of the house, and a maid's steps echoed in leisurely cadence over the parquet floors in answer to it.

IT was not until they stood before the blazing log fire in the library that Grandmother Halley embarked upon the indictment that Miriam had been expecting since the moment her heel caught on the bottom step of the Pullman.

"Well," she said, "your home-coming was certainly characteristic."

Miriam turned her eyes to the fire.

"I dare say it was," she replied resignedly. "I guess I never shall learn. But you must admit that I started out well."

Her grandmother considered a moment.

"Yes," she admitted at length. "I must confess that for the moment I had hopes. I was boiling angry at all those nincompoops there just to see you make a show of yourself, and I prayed that you might disappoint them. It was almost pitiful to see their faces when you came down the first two steps—"

Miriam turned quickly and angrily. But when she replied, it was to walk over and put an arm about Helen Halley's lean shoulders.

"I'm sorry, Grandma," she said. "I was nervous. I've always been nervous. And when I saw that horrible picture in the paper just before I got off the train, I knew what was in store for me."

The old lady sank into a deep leather chair and for a long time stared silently into the fire. Suddenly she covered her eyes with her hands.

"I hate this place," she declared with a display of emotion that brought a chill of fright to Miriam. "I hate it."

"But, Grandmother," protested the girl, kneeling hastily at her side. "I thought—"

"I hate it," repeated Helen Halley. "The devil is in the town, and there's worse than that in this house. I am an old woman, child. I came here with your grandfather when I had a rifle in my hands more often than my baby. I helped him to fight the Indians for the right to live, and the whites for the right to eat. I wanted to make sure that my children and my children's children would have what I had missed. . . . Always, until the very

last, I hoped that we might go back one day to England, where blood and breeding stand for something. And now there is very little left to fight for. Everything that I loved is gone. I have no friends—not a friend in all Woodford, and I believe I should miss my enemies."

"You are overwrought," said Miriam soothingly. "You mistake isolation for enmity. People could not respect you as they do if they didn't love you."

Grandma Halley seemed to be paying no attention to her.

"Why," she suddenly demanded, "why should anybody break into this house?"

"I can't imagine," answered the girl. "I don't know why anybody should. I don't suppose anybody ever will."

"That's just it. Somebody would. And somebody has."

"What?"

"It's the truth, Mimmie. Not once, but three times. I put dogs out in the park, and they were poisoned. I hired watchmen, but somebody left a case of whisky on the boat-landing, and they found it and got drunk. I know I oughtn't to be talking about this to you, of all people—but I have to tell some one. . . . If I only knew what they want—I think I could face a burglar, even at my age. But I can't keep from being frightened at prowlers who never take anything, who come and go as they please in the night. . . . Oh, Mimmie, if only you had been a boy!"

MIRIAM averted her head at the final prayer. Yet it gave her definite relief, in that it showed her grandmother's mind to be working normally. Helen Halley had never been entirely reconciled to Miriam's sex. Probably the very first *faux pas* of the long list that had made Mimmie's life of such interest to Woodford had been her failure to be born a boy. And with her realization that Grandma Halley was talking much as she had always talked came a shiver in sympathy with her grandmother's fears.

"Why not move away from here?" she suggested with all her old-time helplessness. She knew in advance what Helen Halley's answer would be.

"I'll not move away. I'll not be frightened out of my own house. Your cousin George suggested that. It was like him to want some one else to run away from a responsibility. He'd have done it himself long ago, but he was afraid to. Heaven

has certainly showered me with blessings in my grandchildren."

Miriam remained meekly silent. There had been an occasion—so many years back in her childhood that the details of the incident had been forgotten—when she had learned the futility of argument with this purposeful old crusader. Something had happened to her—perhaps it was the time when she had broken her leg attempting to ride David Branscombe's pony. . . . David Branscombe—what had become of him in those six long years?

"I am sorry, Grandmother," she commented dutifully, only half detaching herself from her reverie. "But I cannot forget the ill-luck that has attached to this neighborhood. We were happy here when we were children, but I think that was only because we could not realize what unhappiness was. Something was always happening here. . . . Does anyone ever hear anything of the Branscombes?"

The old lady looked at her sharply, with a sudden tightening of the lips.

"You mean David Branscombe, I suppose," she replied, bitterly ironical. "No. We haven't heard about him here. I suppose he has been in the penitentiary. A proper place for a thief."

Miriam seemed not to have heard her. "I don't believe he ever was a thief," she said mechanically. "There was something about Davy Branscombe that I liked."

"The Branscombes were no good," declared the grandmother harshly. "Not any of them. They came of poor stock."

"Anyway, I liked Davy."

"It would be like you to show affection toward them, Mimmie. It would be thoroughly in keeping with your capacity for the unexpected. But you can put Davy Branscombe out of your head, child. He wont come back. Gallows-birds never do." She paused and looked into the fire without displaying the emotions that were surging within her.

She was experiencing a sense of defeat. She had planned when Miriam went away to have forgetfulness assist in the elimination of the troublesome David Branscombe. And now it was evident that there was no forgetfulness. Fear and hope and several well-directed hatreds struggled within her. The sun was sinking behind the oaks, and the color of the dying autumn was red on the window and on the paneled walls of the library. There was something pro-

phetic in the desolation of the scene—something more prophetic in the howling of the wind that presently would bring the snow.

"I called you home," she said abruptly, "to tell you that Henry Savage wants to marry you."

THE news was delivered slowly and with emphasis. Helen Halley was not the one to overlook its dramatic value. Henry Savage, of the Twin Island Savages, was a man of breeding and great wealth—an aristocrat and distinctly a "match." But Miriam, whose nervous excitement on occasion could be so overpowering and so provocative of embarrassment, heard the message with a stoical lifting of her eyebrows.

"I don't want to marry Henry Savage," she stated with finality. "We don't need his money. I don't like his company and never did."

Grandma Halley accepted the decision placidly.

"As for his money, it might some day be much needed," she said. "As for his company, one might reconcile oneself to that if the necessity were great enough."

"I cannot imagine so great a necessity."

"It really is not so difficult to imagine. Our support—your support—is beginning to look to me just as mysterious as the other strange things about this house. There's nothing more queer about a thief who never steals anything, than about a quarterly income from a dead uncle who never lived."

"What do you mean?"

"My meaning is plain enough. I haven't said anything, because you had to have your schooling. And besides, I didn't want to do anything that would give these Woodford fools a chance for gossip. But our income has puzzled me since the day that Cleveland lawyer came here and spoke to me about it."

"But I know all about that, Granny. It's all legal and complicated, but really there's nothing mysterious about it. Somebody dies and makes a will, and then the probate court does something to it, and then they pay you your money every so often."

Helen Halley smiled, and waved her hand.

"I know all about that part of it," she interrupted. "I have seen a lot of wills made and probated since this family had money enough to hold its head up. I have

seen estates go into the probate court, and nothing but receipted bills come out. But I wish you'd tell me who made the will that gives us ten thousand dollars a year income without warning or explanation."

"The lawyer from Cleveland said it was Uncle Henry's will. He said—"

"Yes, child, yes. I can remember what he said. The point I'm getting at is: who is—or was—Uncle Henry? He was no kin of mine. I was an only child, and so was my mother. My father's brothers died when I was a young girl. And yet this 'Uncle Henry'—this shadow from Colorado who conveniently dies and providentially leaves us a two-hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar estate when poverty is staring us in the face—this benefactor is called by the lawyers 'Henry Westcott.' And Westcott is my name."

MIRIAM shrugged deprecatingly.

"I don't think I should worry about it," she said. "So long as the money comes in, we have only to use it."

"We can't help ourselves," declared her grandmother with a hint of bitterness.

"Well, then let's not go looking the gift horse in the mouth. Uncle Henry must have been somebody, or he wouldn't have had the money. That seems to be obvious. And he must have willed the money to us, or the Cleveland lawyer would not have said so. I wouldn't bother to say a word about it."

The old lady sighed.

"There isn't much that can be said about it," she admitted. "But it worries me—and it always has worried me. At first, when your father's estate was reconstructed from the bills he left behind him, I was glad of any relief from the ghouls who were waiting to make gossip out of us. Everybody knew that the creditors had inherited the factory, and the whole town had hopes of seeing us behind a counter in some store. Of course I didn't argue with the lawyer when he came and told me that we had been left a fortune. It was a gift from heaven, and I accepted it without any questions, praying all the time that he might not discover his mistake. But now I wonder if I did right."

"Of course you did. There was no mistake about it. Lawyers don't make mistakes like that."

"Perhaps—but unknown relatives who die so conveniently are less numerous than you might think, Mimmie. And I am get-

ting too old to care for mysteries. There have been so many of them. First there was Davy Branscombe turned thief—natural enough, when you analyze it, considering his stock and everything. . . . Then there was all that money missing when your father died. . . . Then this Uncle Henry, whoever he may be. And finally the prowling about this house. I wish you'd marry young Savage, Mimmie, and come back here to live with me. I wont go away, I wont be forced to do anything by Woodford and its vultures. . . . And I'm getting too old to be alone."

She rose suddenly and walked out of the room, motioning Miriam back when she sought to accompany. The firelight was giving its own coloring to the room. The sun had dropped out of sight beyond the grove, and the autumn twilight was thickening fast. Already the shadows were deep and purple under the trees, and the motor-drive was a vague streak of gray.

Beneath the broad French windows Miriam caught a faint but startling sound. It seemed to her that stealthy footsteps were moving quickly among the dry leaves along the roadway. She ran to the windows, precipitously as always, and swung them over with a squealing of hinges that could be heard as far as the boat-landing. When she looked out, there was no sign of an intruder in the shadows—no sign that anyone had been there.

AS Helen Halley had said, the family had been a great disappointment to Woodford. The prestige of the blood, so great in the days when a few English families had brought their spinning-wheels, their civilization and their traditions to this wilderness on the Lakes, had lost its potency as new racial mixtures came to make up the bulk of the population with the lengthening years. By sheer force of personality Grandma Halley had forced her leadership upon these people when the family was in funds. By sheer personality she had commanded their grudging admiration when Tom Halley had sacrificed everything in his wild bid for aristocratic distinction. The town bowed the knee dutifully to her now, and resented her rulership with caustic bitterness when her back was turned.

Who were the Halleys, that they should set themselves up as arbiters for their betters? There was Mimmie Halley, whom

the town remembered principally as a misfit little creature, all legs and arms, who was never out of trouble. She had gone to Paris, abode of wickedness, to acquire a knowledge of music and heaven only knew what other subjects. There was George Halley, her second cousin, last of the Halley male line—a merciful Providence be praised for that! He lived all alone over there by the lake shore beyond old Helen's place in his rambling bungalow since his wife hanged herself there three years ago—a pleasant creature, very, to be held up to the townsfolk as the heritor of the purple!

George's wife who had hanged herself had, in the opinion of the citizenry who survived her, shown great good sense.

She had not been the first to come to a bad end through having been too intimate with the Halleys. Davy Branscombe's turn to thievery was a case in point. Woodford did not sympathize much with Davy. For that matter, it did not sympathize much with the late Mrs. George Halley. It seemed to be useless to spill theoretical tears over the accomplishment of the foreordained. Davy Branscombe had been a thief, worse than that, a confessed thief; and virtuous Woodford naturally could hold no converse with so abandoned a creature. For a time at least he had been in the graces of the Halleys, favored even by Helen above the other boys who fished Mimmie out of the lake or carried her home from her other numerous accidents. It gave her a feeling of superiority to the proletariat to despise him, now that test had shown him to be a felon.

Had he been an enemy of the Halleys at the time of his defection, Woodford might have found a saving clause in its moral code to excuse him—perhaps even to feel sorry for him. For it was Tom Halley's money that he was supposed to have taken. A rare joke on the Halleys it had been, too: Davy there in the old house with George and Mimmie; Tom shouting for the police like any ordinary citizen of Woodford, and complaining bitterly that he had been robbed and ruined; old Stockbridge, the butler, telling everyone who would listen that such things must happen where commoners are admitted to the presence of the elect; Helen stern and relentless and silent, reserving judgment; little Mimmie weeping hysterically at the foot of the broad stairs; and Davy calmly

admitting the theft and refusing to divulge what he had done with the loot—a splendid scene! Woodford would never forget it.

It was already a popular topic at all the dinner-tables in the town. Miriam's arrival, with its weird advance notice in the Toledo newspaper, and its consequent dramatics at the railroad station, had revived the whole affair with vividness and detail.

The quiet, gray-eyed young man who looked so much like some one the hotel proprietor had seen somewhere before, was told all about it as he inquired about the best road to Cleveland while waiting for his evening meal.

DARKNESS had settled down like a widow's veil over the grim old house by the lake front when Cousin George arrived to pay his belated respects. Miriam found that he had changed only slightly, and that for the worse.

George, the pimply-faced, oily-haired boy, had become George, the pimply-faced, oily-haired man. Age and a certain restraint of manner were the only gifts that the years had brought him.

He held out a limp hand and looked at Miriam disapprovingly.

"You don't look well in red," he told her after a critical glance. "But you're a little fatter than you were, and that's an improvement."

"I don't know whether you have changed or not, George," Miriam answered. "I don't seem to remember how you looked before I went away."

"They tell me you kissed the porter good-by when you left the train."

"How stupid of me to have been so demonstrative in public! Of course nobody in Woodford could understand how kind he had been to me."

"It shows that Paris hasn't spoiled you, anyway. You were always impulsive. I can remember the day you pulled the tail of Jones' mule—"

"It overwhelms me to think that I have been in your mind all these years. But I have thought of you too, George. I can remember the time little Phil O'Malley blacked your eyes for kicking his dog."

George did not reply immediately. He looked at Mimmie in obvious surprise. Her descent from the Pullman car as described by William the gardener had not prepared him for any such psychological change as was evident in her speech. Her

memory was longer than he had supposed, and her tongue had become much too facile.

"Did Granny tell you that we have been having burglaries and other mysterious doings hereabouts?" he inquired, with patent intent to steer the conversation away from unpleasant personalities.

"Yes, she said something about her suspicions," Miriam replied. "I wondered that you hadn't moved over here to look after her."

"Just my idea," stated her cousin briskly. "I suggested it to her. But she wouldn't hear of it. You know Granny. She wouldn't accept help from anyone if the house was besieged. Let's go into the library, and I'll show you just where the burglars broke in."

"I don't want to go into the library," declared Miriam with a keen glance at him. George looked back at her for a silent moment, obviously puzzled. Then with studied effort he shrugged his shoulders.

"Have it your way," he agreed. "We'll go into the living-room." And before she could phrase a further refusal, Helen Halley came down the stairs for dinner.

AT ten o'clock George went home. Grandmother Halley moved slowly about the lower floor, inspecting the locks on all of the windows. The wind was high. The old house rattled and wheezed. The moan of the lake was so loud that it seemed to come from the roadway in front of the door. The first flurries of the expected snow were beating softly against the panes from the north.

"This will be a bad storm," the old lady said. "I can feel the twinges of rheumatism in my right arm. I only wish that rheumatism was the only trouble I could look forward to tonight."

"Not even a burglar would venture out on a night like this if the snow starts to blow in from the lake." Miriam answered assuringly. "Anyway, I shall sit up awhile and read. Prowlers or no prowlers, it's much too early to go to bed."

"You'd better be in bed at eleven o'clock," declared Grandma Halley. "But no matter. Read if you like. You'll be glad enough to come upstairs when the gale gets to shrieking through the trees. There's a good book on the mantel. And there's a pistol in the library table drawer. Look out how you go stirring around in there, or you'll shoot yourself in the foot."

And then with a display of emotion as disconcerting as it was unexpected, she put her arms about Mimmie and kissed her tenderly. . . . The girl stood and watched her as she moved stiffly up the stairs to bed.

ONCE she was alone, Mimmie did a very unexplainable thing. She walked into the library, took the family Bible from its shelf in the cases alongside the fireplace and laid it in plain view on the table under the reading-lamp. Then she opened the table drawer, found the pistol, a heavy automatic, and laid it near the Bible. With these preparations completed, she switched out the lights and sank into the chair before the fire.

It was in the nature of things, where Mimmie was concerned, for events to develop quickly. And if she expected dramatics, she was not disappointed. Above the wailing of the wind she presently caught the sound of something scraping against the French windows. She arose silently. In a stray beam of light from the outer hallway she saw the glint of a knife-point moving cautiously up and down the sash. She picked up the pistol and backed toward the light-switch. The window opened, and a form only slightly less black than the dark of the storm-filled night was silhouetted momentarily in the square frame. The window closed again, and Miriam knew that a man was in the room with her.

The girl's hand was on the switch, and she felt like a stage manager who could bring a melodrama to its climax at will. She did not feel afraid. But that was not remarkable in Miriam Halley. A meeting with a burglar could be no stranger experience than others she had survived. A touch of a button, a flood of light, and she would be in command of the situation before he could recover from his surprise. And yet, instinctively, she hesitated.

She peered without seeing into the blackness where she knew the window to be. Something was about to happen there. She felt a premonition that could not be discouraged. Her hand dropped away from the switch, as she half decided to wait and see what would happen. Then she heard a creaking of the stairs, and looked out past the shadows into the hallway. Grandmother Halley, still fully dressed, was just crossing the landing with a flickering candle in her hand.

The girl, angry at her untimely appearance, realized without thought that she must act before old Helen could inject herself more intimately into the scene. She raised her hand quickly and pressed the button.

With a thrill she watched the situation develop as she had foreseen it would. A man who had been edging along the wall from the window toward the fireplace swung about in obvious amazement.

"Put up your hands," she ordered quietly. And he complied. From the stairs came the panic-stricken voice of Helen Halley:

"Miriam, Miriam, what's the matter? Put down that gun, child! You'll kill yourself."

Miriam did not heed her.

"Keep close to the wall," she commanded. "Then step sideways into the light where I can get a look at you." She waited expectantly with one eye on her prisoner, the other on the window.

THE advantage seemed all in Miriam's favor. For once in her life she had not blundered, and her assurance was self-evident. However, the intruder was in twilight at the edge of the light from the dim shaded bracket-lamps on the wall, whereas Miriam was in the full glare.

The burglar, no less alert than his captor, noticed one point even before his attention was directed to it by the painful fright in the voice of Helen Halley, who could see part of the scene from the stairway:

"Mimmie, Mimmie! Don't hold that pistol that way. Put it down. You can't handle firearms. You'll kill yourself!"

Miriam's trigger finger was not in a position to do any damage. It was wrapped around the outside of the guard.

With a quick intake of breath, the burglar leaped at her. But he took only one step before he brought up short again, glad that he had not thrown himself far enough to lose his balance. By some unexplainable accident the gun had gone off. By some miracle the bullet had sped from that wabbling muzzle so squarely that he marveled to find himself alive. It had struck the left side of his cap, and the draft of it seemed to have left a permanent iciness on his left cheek. Then—it seemed a long time afterward—he was conscious of the roar of the gun and the echoes it had stirred in that close room.

All of the critical action came in a few closely crowded seconds. Lapse of time was registered only by startled instincts. It was almost as the bullet flattened into the wall that the man judged the miracle for what it was, noted that Miriam's finger was still outside the guard and decided that the impossible could not happen twice. He leaped again. And again he stopped in his tracks, this time for good. The pistol had discharged a second time, seemingly of its own volition, and there was another bullet-hole in his cap—just over the right ear, this time.

Through the house echoed the shrieks of Grandma Helen:

"Mimmie! Mimmie! Have you gone crazy, child?"

Accident, the patron deity of Miriam's interesting life, seemed to be working this time in her favor. From the switching on of the lights until the boring of the second bullet-hole in the stranger's cap, Helen Halley had come down only four steps, and in that time little blundering Mimmie had done quite as well with her dubious talents as any of her Indian-fighting forebears might have asked. But the action of the piece was not yet ended. Mimmie herself would not have asked for a curtain so early in the drama. She glanced at the French windows, warned by premonition or quick ears, and found her instincts vindicated.

The windows swung inward with an icy swirl of snow, and a new character appeared at the edge of the light. His face was hidden by the blanketing storm, but his right hand held a pistol that was raised and aimed squarely at her.

The weapon in Miriam's hands seemed to be entirely out of her control. It was shaking perceptibly, and her forefinger was still curved about the guard—separated from the trigger by a ring of steel. But for the third time that night the gun discharged. The man at the window disappeared.

Grandma Halley had reached the hallway, and for the first time was able to see what was happening in the library. In sudden uncontrollable panic, she hobbled over the bare parquet toward the rear of the house, screaming for Cousin George. A moment later the back door opened and slammed behind her.

Miriam lowered her pistol. For one who had just been saved from disaster by accident, she seemed astonishingly calm.

"Step into the light, Davy," she suggested. "Why didn't you ring the bell?"

The burglar, with his hands still above his head, followed her direction.

"You may put your hands down," she told him. "It is very tiring to hold them up that way." He did as he was bidden, and stared at her uncomprehendingly.

"You know me," he said in a surprised voice. "You knew I was coming?"

"I suspected you might be here when I saw you getting off the train. The other visitor was a bit of a surprise. I did not think he would be around quite so soon."

There was a moment of silence.

"What are you going to do with me, Mimmie?" asked Branscombe tremulously after the pause.

"I don't know—yet," replied Miriam airily. "You're the first burglar I ever caught." The man made a hopeless gesture.

"It's just one mess after another with me," he told her. "Once a thief, always a thief, I suppose."

"Are you a thief, Davy?" she asked gently. He looked at her as a mother might look at a changeling.

"No," he said very slowly. "I may have the same trouble convincing you that I shall have convincing a jury. But I am not a thief. . . . I thought once—many years ago—that you knew I was not. You see, that night when only the three of us were near that cubbyhole where your father kept his money, I thought that you were the thief—" He hesitated, but his confession did not seem to startle her.

"And you took the blame, Davy," she recalled with a trace of unsteadiness in her tone. "You took the blame for me, Davy, when you knew I had stolen the money."

"I know who stole the money," he interrupted. "That's why I came here tonight. I ran into old Stockbridge the butler in New York, just before he cashed in the other night, and he told me how he had helped in it, and of the confession he had pasted in the cover of the Bible. Novel idea! Wanted it always close to your grandmother so that he could carry on enough blackmail to make up for his loss of the loot."

She stopped him with a gesture.

"I know," she said. "I found it three years ago, and ever since I have been trying to find you. I couldn't tell Grandmother. It would have killed her. I knew that George would come to his reckoning

sooner or later. Stockbridge must have written him some time ago. Somebody came looking for the Bible three times during the past month, and I just knew he would be back tonight." David Branscombe was startled out of his dejection.

"Then it was George—" he whispered. "Your own cousin—and you may have killed him with your crazy pistol-shooting."

Miriam smiled.

"It was George," she said. "But I didn't kill him with my crazy pistol-shooting. If you ever find him again, you'll see that I creased him along the top of the head just about where he parts his hair." And strangely enough, he seemed to take her word for it.

"I thought that night when all the trouble happened that you were going to marry George," he said. "Your father seemed to favor him, and you—"

She shook her head.

"It was never George," she assured him in a voice that was almost a whisper. "There was only one, and there never has been another, Davy. And I've looked all over the world for you."

"YOU'RE worth the risk, Miriam," he told her as he drew her down to him in the chair before the fire. "But you are just as you always were, the daughter of trouble. You came near killing me tonight, girl."

She laughed and moved closer to him.

"No, Davy," she contradicted. "You were never farther from death than you were tonight. My shooting was 'beside the mark.' I had to handle the pistol like that. Grandma was watching me, and Grandma knows firearms. I was born with a short fourth finger that can be slipped under a trigger-guard very easily. Pistol shooting is a natural gift with me. A heritage from Grandma probably."

"Grandma must never know, but I had to put such base talents to use when Father's estate turned out as it did."

"I am Mlle. Artheris, and I am also my own distant Uncle Henry, and ever so many other things I shouldn't be."

"You are the world's most perfect accident," declared David Branscombe with conviction as he drew her head down to his shoulder and enfolded her in his arms.

There, sitting silently in front of the fire, the scandalized Helen Halley found them when she returned some time later with the constable.



The Joke

This notably attractive story of an Easterner who makes good in a cow-camp is by the cowboy-hunter-writer who gave us "To Hold the Herd" and "Trouble on the Range."

By JAY LUCAS

ONE meets strange people here in the cattle-country. For instance, there was Jack Fordyce: when the lawyer motored out to the ranch to tell him that he had succeeded to one of the oldest titles in England, he swore heartily at him for coming so close as to frighten the bronc' Jack was trying to saddle. He's here yet, Jack, and wealthy now—just as English in appearance and manners as ever, but just as deeply rooted to the soil of Arizona as I.

And I know that I too must seem out of place here. Of course I was born on the Arizona range, as my father was born on the New Mexico range, and my grandfather on the Texas range. But from youth to middle age I kept a bookshop in Boston; and not infrequently, to my disgust, I am pointed to as a typical Bostonian, when in town dress. And my hobby of collecting first editions is not quite understood here by my neighbors. But after I had disposed of my bookstore and bought the outfit, I hadn't been a month in the saddle when I felt as though my many years in the East had been but a vague dream. In two months I could rope as

well as the average range-reared cowboy.

Yes, "cow sense," as we call it here, is like a knowledge of swimming; once acquired, it cannot be forgotten. And to acquire it, the first thing necessary is care in selection of one's ancestors for several generations. For, despite popular fiction, it is the rarest of rare things for an outsider to become even a passable cowboy. And perhaps it is still more rare for one of those outsiders to be fully accepted by the cowboys, accepted so fully that they throw off that mask of reserve which is all the outer world ever sees of them. But there are exceptions—a few reach the inner circle. Jerry Blake was one who did.

HE arrived at an inauspicious time: the herd had stampeded the night before, and we had been trying all day to regather it. And there were other things to be done at the same time—a million things, it seemed. We were all dog-tired, and not in the best of humor, for ten of us had been trying to do fifteen men's work. I had sent Buck Lorey to town to try to hire other hands, though I knew that at

that time of the year it would be almost impossible to find one, with all the wagons out. I had sent him partly to get rid of him for a day, for his eternal jokes were getting on our tired nerves. Besides, he could not be depended on: he would leave the most important work to play some newly thought-out trick on some of the other boys. Of course I could not think of discharging him: the ranch would have seemed too lonesome without him—and all the other boys would probably have left with him. But they, as much as I, were glad to have him out of the way for a day.

Evening came, and we were dragging ourselves wearily to the chuck-wagon. Then in rode Buck, and following him came Jerry Blake, bouncing a foot from the saddle every step the horse took—Buck had given him the roughest horse on the range. I wondered who he could be—probably a son of some Boston friend, I thought, who had come to visit me. He was rather tall and slender, about eighteen or so, with big, soft eyes, and a somewhat girlish face—girlish, at least, compared to the tanned cowboys. His hands were very carefully manicured. And his clothes—but the less said about them the better. They were the clothes of a “lady-chaser”—immaculate, a year ahead of the fashions. We, in our greasy chaps and Stetsons, felt like murdering him on sight. And then Buck rode up to me with that look of cherubic innocence that we all knew and dreaded:

“Mr. Carson, let me interduce you to Mr. Jerry Blake.”

I shook hands with the boy, wondering who he could be. Then came the thunderbolt: Buck turned to me again:

“Jim—” His tone showed consciousness of the knowledge of a difficult task well performed: “Jim, it’s shore hard to hire a cowboy now, with all the wagons runnin’, but I got you one.”

I gasped, as the truth struck me.

“An’ here he is, Jim!” Buck waved his hand toward Jerry proudly.

It was several seconds before I could trust myself to speak without hurting the feelings of the boy, who, of course, was innocent—too damnably innocent! Then I turned to Buck and asked ironically:

“What outfit did he work for last, Buck?”

“Why, Jim, he aint never worked for no outfit yet. But that’s jest because he’s jest out from New York City, an’ aint had

time to. But you can tell he’ll make a top hand in a week or two.”

And Buck knew as well as I the years and years it takes to make an average good hand, not to mention a top hand. He walked over to Jerry, who had climbed stiffly from his saddle, and began to feel him all over as one would a horse.

“Jest look at them laigs; they aint exactly bowed, but they’re kinda thin, an’ will take the bow easy. An’ see how graceful-like he walks—he’ll soon learn to balance on any hoss-critter in the mountains. An’ them big eyes of his’n should be able to spot a cow or hoss ten miles off, an’ read a brand at a mile flat. An’ jest look at his hands—how long an’ slim they are—they’re just nachully made for a rope—bet he’ll win the ropin’ contest next Fourth. An’ moreover—”

Suddenly Buck stopped short, and stood staring at me open-mouthed, thunderstruck.

“Don’t,” he gasped, “don’t you *like* him?”

THE tears sprang to Buck’s eyes,—I’m not exaggerating,—and his big, red, innocent face trembled all over. The corners of his mouth dropped pathetically. What an actor that fellow would have made! I had wanted him to go East, with an introduction from me to a theater manager, but he would not leave the range. Now he sighed pathetically, dashed the back of his hand furtively across his eyes, and turned away with drooping head, leaving me staring in puzzlement at Jerry, wondering what to do with him. But Buck’s tomfoolery had made me grin—who could have done otherwise? And there is something about a grin that warms one’s heart toward his fellow-men. So I walked up to Jerry and placed my hand on his shoulder.

“Kid,” I said, “you’re out of your place here. You’d better go back where you came from.”

“I can’t, sir. I haven’t got the fare—I’ve only fifty cents left.”

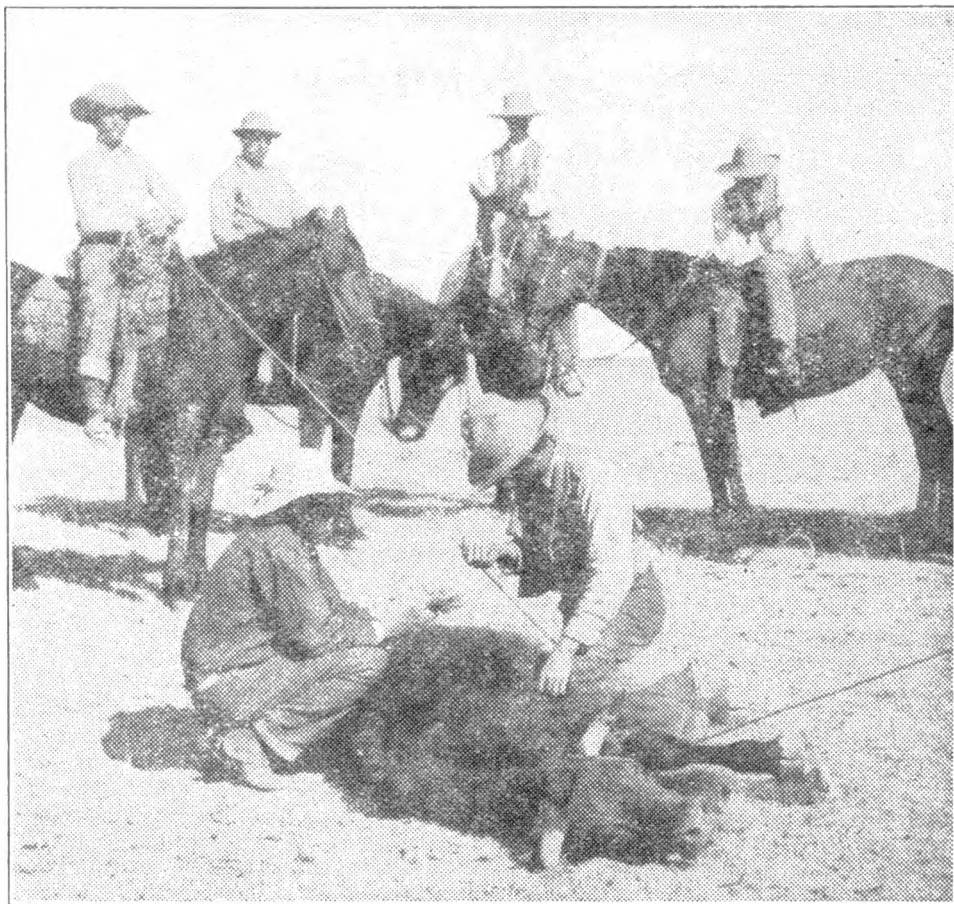
He looked me straight in the eye in a way that I liked, and spoke in a firm, quiet voice that I couldn’t help liking too.

“Well, son,” I said, “if that’s the case, I’ll lend you the money to go back on; this gang of wild men of mine would probably kill you inside of a week.”

“I’m not going back, sir.”

That made me angry. The young fool! I turned on him:

“Seen too many Wild West pictures, I



Photograph © by Underwood and Underwood

"Jerry rapidly picked up knowledge of the handling of cattle."

reckon, and think the range is like that! Well, it's not—it's *work* here. And not only that, but you risk your neck a few times every day, to earn your fifty a month, and what meals you may get."

"Oh, no sir!" he exclaimed. "It's not that at all. I didn't tell Buck, but I'll tell you now: My father came out here when he was a boy, and was a cowboy for several years. Then a horse fell on him and crippled his hip so that he couldn't ride any more—to hold a job, that is. He had to go back East and work in an office. He was always talking about the West, and the open range, and seemed homesick for it. Then, when I wanted to come out here, he gave me the last money he had to pay my fare, and keep me till I got work. But—but I lost all my money last night playing poker."

"Quite natural—got up against them damned sharks in town," I remarked. "But didn't your father know that you'd have a hard row to hoe out here?"

"Yes sir, but he said—he said—"

The boy stopped and reddened.

"What did he say?" I demanded, looking him straight in the eye.

"Well, sir, he—he said he'd rather see me in my grave than growing up as I was growing. I couldn't understand him—I was no worse than the other boys I knew."

BUT I saw it all. Those lady-killing clothes—and the lady-killing manners that went with them. And I could see the old crippled cowboy, and see those things through his eyes—see why he was willing to throw his green boy on the tender mercies of the cattle-country. I thought for an instant what a relief it would be to me when my daughter had finished her education, so that I could bring her out here. And Jerry—that settled it, that and the fact that there was something about the kid's quiet, firm manner of looking at one that showed me that he had a backbone lying dormant somewhere.

"Well, Jerry," I said, "you stay. Go to the bunkhouse, and some of the boys will show you an empty bunk."

"Thank you, sir! Buck will show me one, I know. He's a fine fellow. Buck—typical Westerner. I know he'll show me lots of things."

"Never doubt it!" I exclaimed.

So the kid trusted Buck! Well, it was just as well. Buck would initiate him faster than any other six men on the range could, and would probably get him through alive—he couldn't afford to let such an excellent butt for his jokes get killed! And anyway, Buck, with all his failings, had a heart as big as a beef-steer, damned rattle-head that he was!

Poor Jerry! He had the most implicit confidence in Buck, whom he regarded as his predestined partner. Buck could be so kind to him, and never laughed at him as the other boys did. And whenever a rough joke was played on him, Buck would explain gently that it was a rough—a vulgar—joke. But he never found out in time to explain until after Jerry had been victimized. And Jerry never suspected for an instant that Buck himself was the author of practically all those jokes. It seemed heartless so to impose upon his confidence, but Buck would play a trick on the angel Gabriel himself, and risk salvation to do it. And it was one of the most heartless of those very jokes that at last led to Jerry's acceptance in full by the outfit—and to other very curious consequences.

IT was after the round-up. We were all sitting around the blacksmith shop one evening after supper. Conversation was dying away; the usual verbal battle regarding the relative merits of "rimmy" and "center" saddles having produced the usual draw, and the usual slight irritation. I was smoking a cigar, and all the others brown cigarettes—which, by the way, Jerry had already learned to roll. Buck suddenly drew our eyes by a deep, heart-felt sigh. He was sitting with his head lowered sadly. Then he looked up slowly, and in a voice that trembled just a trifle, remarked to no one in particular:

"Shore too bad about pore Petey Duncan!"

Buck was so doleful that some particularly mad joke must be brewing, as everyone knew, and instantly all were willing to help him out—at least until they discovered who was to be the butt of it. The

other cowboys—all cowboys—had one thing in common with Buck; they could maintain solemn visages under any circumstances, and most of them could use tricks of intonation to express emotions that they were far from feeling. So no one cracked a smile, and, after a short pause, some one asked listlessly:

"What did he do this time? Get bucked off again?"

Buck sat bolt upright and stared at us.

"Why—hadn't you heard? Old Splatterfoot got him!"

No one could have suspected from the incredulous and sympathetic exclamations that all were wondering who the deuce Petey Duncan and Splatterfoot might be. Jerry, scenting a real Western story, was wide-eyed.

"Pore ol' Petey!"

"An' Splatterfoot got him!"

"Well, I'll be dog-goned!"

Then all relapsed into gloomy silence. And of course Jerry bit—"swallowed hook, line, and sinker," as the saying goes.

"What was it, Buck? Who was Petey Duncan?"

"Who! Why, you met him in town—he was range-boss for the Flying Catfish outfit over on Squeegie Lake. Big, fine-lookin' feller with curly hair an' a small scar over his right eye where a wildcat bit him. Don't you remember him?"

"I—no, I'm afraid I don't. But what happened to him?"

"Why, Splatterfoot killed him last Sunday over in Black Cañon."

"Splatterfoot? Who is he?"

"What!" Buck sat up and stared at Jerry in amazement. "Aint you never heard of Splatterfoot?"

"Why, no, not that I remember."

"Well, what *do* you think o' that!" Buck looked around the group in astonishment—astonishment that anyone who lived had not heard of Splatterfoot. And the other boys succeeded in looking almost as blankly astonished as he.

"Why," he continued, "Splatterfoot is the biggest grizzly bear ever heard of in Arizona, an' pore ol' Pete makes seven men that he's killed this last three year."

JERRY digested this a long time, and at last turned to Buck:

"But why don't a lot of men go out together and kill him?"

"Well, I don't know. We've been talking about it a long time."

Red Simpson spoke suddenly and vehemently:

"Yes, an' by the holy, it's time we quit talkin' an' done something about it! Here we've been talkin' about it an' let him get pore ol' Petey, the best-hearted waddy that ever straddled a bronc'."

"Why—why, I suppose we should go after him some time." Buck seemed to have lost interest. So had the others—they figured that it was Jerry's move, though none but Buck knew just what was to come of that move. And Jerry made that move, after a few moments of thought—he was in the West, and aching for Adventure with a big A.

"Well, tomorrow is Sunday; why don't we all go after him?"

They mumbled something—and waited for Jerry to speak again, which he soon did:

"Why, fellows, Black Cañon is just two or three miles away. You don't know which of you he'll kill next!"

"Aint that the truth!" murmured Buck meditatively. And then, more vigorously, after a few moments' thought:

"Aint that the truth, cowboys? I say the kid's right! Let's ride over there tomorrow, and see if we can't round him up an' shoot him."

Now, Sunday is not regarded as a holiday on an old-fashioned outfit like mine; and the boys knew that well. But on the other hand, those boys who work uncomplainingly day and night for a month or two at a time, retain the privilege of taking a holiday whenever they want to, when work is not too pressing. I interposed weakly:

"But those bronc's have to be gathered—we're late with the breaking now!"

"Do you work every Sunday?" asked Jerry curiously.

And of course that started Buck off on another tangent. He whirled on me angrily:

"Jim, you've been makin' us break the fifth commandment long enough by workin' on the holy Sabbath. We talked it over last Sunday, and decided that that would be the last time. So we wrote to the Federation of Cowboys an' Bronc-Twisters Unions about it, an' they told us to walk out on strike tonight unless you—um—um—exceed to our demands of a six-day week an' a livin' wage, an' pie three times a month at least. What you goin' to do about it?"

He was standing there shaking a finger in my face, a picture of righteous indignation and outraged Christianity—I doubt if he's been in a church twice in his life; so there was but one thing to do, and I did it. I picked a large lump of coal from the forge, chucked it heartily at his head, and walked to my car, to spend Sunday in town going over the books.

WHEN I got back to the ranch Monday morning, the surprise came. The boys had finished breakfast, and were walking toward the corrals when I joined them. I was just in time to hear Red offer Jerry to "stake him" to a gentle horse, in order that he might rest his. All our horses will buck when you don't expect them to, except a few of the oldest, such as the two we had managed to hunt up for Jerry's slender "string," but Red's were all, without exception, to be classed as man-killers—he drew fifteen a month extra for riding them. So I withdrew quietly from the boys, determined that the instant Red turned one of his string over to the unsuspecting boy, he, Red, would find himself out of a job.

So you can fully imagine my surprise when Red came from the corral leading his own private horse, Rolling Stone, which he prized above the apple of his eye. I had never seen him allow anyone but himself to ride it except his sister, when she came to visit for a few days once. He turned Rolling Stone over to Jerry, and carefully supervised the saddling. Jerry's "thank you," showed that he had no conception of the great favor that was being done him. And the other boys had a new way of addressing Jerry, too. They did not grin any more when they spoke to him.

But the greatest surprise of all came when they were ready to go: Buck rode up to Jerry with a quiet, casual, "Ready to go, partner?" And I could see that the "partner" was good for face value, that the next one to try a rough joke on Jerry would have Buck to fight. The whole thing amazed me so that I asked Red to remain behind to help me shoe one of my horses—so that I could find out the reason of the change. I have often heard it told since, with slight variations, but this is about what had happened:

They left camp early Sunday morning, eleven of them, including Jerry, who was mounted on one of his two old horses. Poor Jerry! They had armed him with

an old musket that my father had carried when he fought in Quantrell's division. That this musket was a treasured heirloom, they well knew, but—Buck Lorey! And he was given no less than four cartridge belts, two strapped around his waist, one above the other, and one, bandolier fashion, over each shoulder. Of course if he had been given the four belts at the start he might have become suspicious, so he was given two, and Buck came from the house wearing three. Then a discussion began as to who was to "haze the bear," and Buck was selected unanimously. Of course Buck could not "haze the bear" (whatever that was) with any extra weight to carry, so he gave his extra two belts to Jerry to carry. And the cartridges in those belts! They ranged from .25/20 to .405, with some .110 shotgun shells to fill out. About the only cartridge missing from the collection was the .45/70 that the old musket shot.

And of course the bear had to be skinned! And Jerry, as the least expert shot, and so the least likely to take part in the actual killing of the bear, was selected to carry the four hunting knives, and the sheaths were calmly slipped over one of his belts. And his pockets were filled with "pegging strings." Just what part pegging strings were supposed to play was not quite clear. But bear-hunting was a new thing to Jerry, and he had already learned that it is not good form to ask too many questions on a cow outfit.

They started for Black Cañon. Buck kept Jerry beside him at the lead, so that the others, following behind, could grin and wink to their heart's content. And Jerry must, indeed, have presented a laughable spectacle, mounted on that poor old horse, with all his warlike accoutrement—a sort of modern *Don Quixote*, bent upon the rescue of cowboys from the depredations of the mythical monster Splatterfoot. The whole thing sounds grotesque, impossible. But the average Eastern city man is grotesque and impossible from the cowboy's point of view; he can scarcely open his mouth without asking some question that will leave his hearers too amazed to laugh at his wild misconceptions and ignorance of the West. And Jerry was just a green kid at the time.

THEY arrived at Black Cañon. Then it was decided that Buck would need help to "haze the bear," and Jerry, as Buck's

partner, was selected for the position of assistant hazer. The other cowboys were posted on a high point overlooking the cañon, to act as executors—with the accent on the second syllable! And up to now, Buck had been telling poor Jerry bear story after bear story, so that his mental condition may well be imagined. Need I say that the redoubtable *Baron Munchausen* is a rank amateur beside the average cowboy when it comes to solemnly and earnestly telling weirdly impossible tales? And Buck was supercowboy in that respect at least.

Buck and Jerry left their horses, and started afoot down the steep, brush-grown trail into the cañon. And here was where the cowboys began to respect Jerry: he was obviously frightened half to death, but never faltered an instant. The cowboy has so many things to fear in his hazardous occupation that he fully realizes that the man with real "sand" is not a superman without fear, but a man who forces his will to conquer his fear to the extent of permitting him to go forward.

Where the trail forks, they parted, Jerry being sent down the left fork, while Buck took the right—that is, he said he was going to take the right, but of course he climbed upon a convenient boulder near the fork, where he could see the sun.

And poor Jerry marched bravely down into the almost impenetrable brush, carrying the antiquated musket for which he had no ammunition. Looking back he saw the other boys perched on the point, as on a grandstand, and, he said, it was only then that he, for the first time, began to suspect that he was the victim of a huge joke. He stopped short, a hundred yards below where he had left Buck, and decided angrily to climb back. He fully intended to fight it out with Buck on the spot when he returned to where he had left him—Jerry was handy with his fists, and far more active on his feet than the saddle-stiff cowboys.

Then, just as he turned, something made him look down in the cañon. A short distance below him lay a mountain lion, basking on a rock, after a night of hunting and feasting. It suddenly struck Jerry that here was a chance to turn the joke on the cowboys. If he should come out of the cañon with a skin of a big lion, he would have the laugh all to himself. He raised the musket and aimed—he had been practicing a little with rifles and six-shooters

since his arrival. Of course, the gun snapped. Then he tried other cartridges from his belts, and soon saw that not one of them would fit his gun. He began to be afraid then, for he did not know, of course, that the lion is about the biggest coward in the mountains, and about as likely to attack a man as a chipmunk would be.

But the lion had not seen him, and he dodged down behind the brush out of its sight. He surely must have become angry then, sitting there, looking at the old musket—he found the date of its make on it in looking it over—and the belts of useless cartridges. One thing he made up his mind to: that either he or Buck was going to take a father of a thrashing within a very short time. Of course Buck would not have fought him—he'd have blarneyed him into better humor.

BUT Jerry started quietly back up the trail, leaving the musket and belts where they lay, for some one else to go back after later on. He moved as quietly as he could, as he suspected—knew, rather—by this time that Buck would be near where the trail forked. He slipped back to the fork, but did not see Buck; so he circled around cautiously, looking for him. He came onto a little level sandy bench there, with all but the edges bare of brush, and a few big boulders scattered around the opening.

He pushed quietly through this fringe of brush, and peered into the opening. And there he saw Buck. Against the wall of rock at the other end of the opening he stood, staring in mortal terror, white-faced, at a spot near Jerry. And in the middle of the opening was Buck's six-shooter and belt, resting neatly on a boulder where he had laid them in order to dispense with their weight while climbing to a vantage-point from which to laugh at Jerry's antics below him. Jerry craned his neck farther out of the brush, and looked toward the point where Buck's horror-struck eyes were fixed.

There, not twenty feet from Jerry, stood a huge grizzly, clotted blood on his shoulder telling of a recent wound. I need not tell what it means to encounter a wounded grizzly in the brush. Many tales have been told of them, and it is doubtful if even one of the wild ones told to Jerry could have been exaggerated. A big grizzly can, with one sweep of a paw, break the neck of the biggest bull. And the

highest-powered of modern rifles is needed to be sure of killing one—unless one shoots from the vantage-point of a tree or bluff as our fathers did with their .44/40's.

The boys across on the point were watching, dazed. It was out of pistol-range for them, and they had left their carbines in the scabbards on their saddles some distance away—they well knew that there would be no time to get them.

The bear rose to his hind feet, emitting the roar that, once heard, is never to be forgotten. Then he sank down again, and started toward Buck, slowly. He was very lame from the wound in his shoulder. He was probably starving, too, as the wound had prevented his hunting a cow to kill, and there were no berries or other things for him to eat so early in the year.

Then Jerry showed the stuff he was made of. He had had but an instant to think. He sank down and dug his right toe in a small depression in the ground, like a runner getting ready for a sprint. And sprint he did. With a wild yell, a mixture of terror and God knows what, he dashed from the brush almost beside the great brute, and toward the boulder where the six-shooter lay. The bear had not known of his presence, and paused just a moment in surprise, a moment that gave Jerry a slight lead. Then he dashed after the boy, forgetting Buck, who stood as if paralyzed, his arms outstretched against the face of the rock. And this time he did not go slowly, as before, but, with another roar, charged as fast as his lame shoulder would let him.

Jerry was a good runner, but not, of course, to be compared with a charging grizzly. The bear gained rapidly. And then he sprang for Jerry's back. But Jerry had made a dive, like a tackling football player, toward the gun, and sprawled over it, trying to drag it from the holster. And the bear shot over him, a raking paw knocking his hat from his head.

Then Jerry was on his feet again—he was active as a cat. But the bear had whirled back, and was almost upon him. Jerry threw up the gun, and fired without aiming—lucky that he did, as where he aimed would have been the last place he would have been likely to hit. And by some wild chance the bullet caught the bear fair between the shoulders, and severed his spine. It caught him just as he sprang, and his great body hurtled upon Jerry, and knocked him sprawling in the

The Joke

sand, then collapsed on top of him. Jerry was knocked unconscious, but not injured.

That's all there is to the story. In the months that followed, Jerry, under the careful coaching of the boys, rapidly picked up knowledge of the handling of cattle and horses. He seemed to possess "cow sense" from the start. Perhaps those years his father had spent on the range had something to do with it. Far be it from me to controvert the theories of Lamarck, or of his present-day proponent Kammerer. Of course it took several years to make a cowboy of Jerry, but he makes a good one, and is still improving. Last summer I made him range-boss, as I am getting too old to stand the steady riding myself.

The day I made him range-boss, I brought a deep-laid plot into effect. I had liked the kid from the start, and knew that he had the right stuff in him, and this liking had steadily increased. So the first day he rode at the head of my cowboys. I wired my daughter, who had just finished school, and was staying with some cousins, to come out West to visit me.

Well, you know how such things go: They were both young, and had many things in common, and there were no others to interfere; I had sent the two other eligible cowboys to the most distant camp on the range, to stay there until further orders.

I allowed Jerry and Dolores to be together as much as they wished for a few days. Then I suddenly "woke up" to what was going on, and frowned upon them very thoroughly, and sent Jerry off without her whenever I could manage to do so. I made it *very* plain that I did not relish the companionship that had sprung up between them—oh, *very* plain!

I had arranged it with the sheriff: when they ran away, he arrested them—after they were married, of course—and held them until I got to town to "forgive" them, and take them back to the ranch. They were both of age, so I had to let the sheriff in on the joke, so that he'd know that he wouldn't get in trouble over the arrest.

Well, that's all, except that with Jerry managing things for me now, and his father here to keep books, and ride stiffly around to help supervise the work, I have a great deal of spare time on my hands. I am now trying my hand at writing of the things that have happened on our outfit, to pass the time. That's how I came to write this.

FLAT FEET

The story of a gunman who tried to reform—by a writer new to these pages who shows a real gift for fiction.

By BERT

TO color the chronicle of the Swede with pigment filched from the rosepot would be sacrilegious and rawly unjust to him. He would have rebelled at the attempted grandeur, and the application of a pink flush to his tawny career would most certainly cause his soul to writhe. Therefore, with a nod and a wink to literary form, if such exists, we will take the Swede as he most desired to be taken—without the buffoonery of plumage.

He rode out of the West, did this man, the Swede, on the back of a murky dawn. The fact that he fought cinders, and jagged bits of flying earth that bit viciously into his face, means little or nothing. He who intrusts his carcass to the brake-beams of a fast freight needs must suffer these slight inconveniences.

To Manhattan, the Swede brought his assets—a terrible reputation, the bearing of a college professor and the loose-muscled sway of a tiger on scent. And for five years thereafter New York twisted her fog-wet neck, threw back her head, and belled that the Swede must be withdrawn from circulation.

The word *Swede*, when applied in thugdom, is generally used as an invective, implying stupidity, square-headedness, a slowness to rise to the issue. But not so this Swede. The slight hiss of the fjords still flavored his speech, but the brain propelling the spoken word was in reality seven



MOHRMAN

leagues ahead of the phrasing. With infinite regard for detail, he plotted his activities in the art of marauding, and the respect paid him by lesser lights of the craft bordered on idolatry.

TONIGHT the loft of the Reynolds Silk Company was his objective. Through the waterfront haze the Swede pointed his long nose saddled by the silver-rimmed spectacles. The steaming air glazed the spec's until the Swede appeared like some Martian *voyageur*. In the right-hand pocket of his jacket reposed a stub-nosed machine mothering six steel-coated whelps, six .38-caliber bullets.

By well-plotted route he reached the loft of the Reynolds plant, where, behind the black-faced safe, one hundred thousand dollars in unchecked currency snuggled. Crusty Gorham had arrived on the scene before him to take lookout post. Catching the agreed O. K. signal, the Swede ascended to the loft by a rear entrance, and before his efficiency, the latest model in money vaults swung wide.

The bills now reposed in a long sweat-stained money-belt strapped against his abdominal muscles. He worked rapidly and without waste motion. There must not be a slip; for the Swede, trussed and ready for a cell, meant never-tarnishing glory for his captor.

Then came the blast of a police whistle.

The Swede, dashing to a side window, caught sight of Crusty Gorham scuttling from the areaway, leaving him sealed like an animal in a high-tension trap. The Swede catalogued that for later payment.

A door opened creakily, and the Swede caught the glint of brass buttons against the black of the loft. He fired, and the brass-studded thing dropped. Then he swung to the floor, crawling close to the baseboard.

Another body, blue-sheathed in the play of an explorative moonbeam, rose between the Swede and the window. The Swede's hand spewed fire, and the blue figure cried out and fell.

Dropping twelve feet to the rear alley, the Swede hardly started a muscle. His animal body rocked with the impact of the leap, but his legs kept uninterrupted stroke as he rippled toward the exit.

Again the gun-arm lifted, but withholding fire, he crashed the butt end of the revolver down on the head of the officer guarding the alley. The policeman groaned, and death clasped him icily and quickly.

In a taxi he had kept idling in a blind street that skirted the rear of the loft, the Swede directed a course that circled the police and dock-workers milling before the loft building.

Three blocks south, he marked Crusty Gorham, taking advantage of the side shadows and concentrated bedlam at the loft, slink from his covering. The Swede barked a halt to the cab's scurry, dropped to one knee and fired through the half-lowered window. Crusty Gorham died with his left foot lifted for a step he would never take.

The Swede now settled back against the cool leather and calmly diced again with capture by ordering a course for the flat he occupied with Lily.

Damned lucky, he mused, that he had changed his manner of exit. He was to have left by the front of the building, but a last-minute check-up on detail showed a rear alley get-away and the Swede had shifted.

IMEDIATE danger past, the Swede thought of the barrier he must yet clear. At the flat Lily would be waiting, ready to aid him in flight. They had planned everything, even to this upset in a seemingly perfect schedule.

Good old Lily! But the Swede had played fair with her—given her the unprecedented prize sought by a crook's consort:

marriage, and the right to a name, no matter its color—decency to a limited degree. In fact, the Lily had insisted upon it.

"I'm no moll, Swede," she had told him after staking him to tide-over money when he landed via the brake-rods. "But I'm wise. I've been makin' my own breaks since I was ten. New York is tough, and I know New York and all her crooks. I've gotta price; it's high, but it holds--marriage."

The Swede purchased—love was not exactly dominant in his category.

The cab, despite its anemic appearance, housed an eight-cylinder engine that presently slid them to a soft halt before the apartment-house. Refusing to take a chance on a scrimmage with the law on the stairway, the Swede scooted for the cellar. And there he managed to bunch his body into the tiny compartment of the dumb-waiter.

Hand over hand, the peasant-born strength of the man hauled the shaky box to the fourth floor. A soft rattling of the door, and the Swede unfolded and stepped out onto the floor of Lily's kitchen.

He hurried to the bedroom, Lily following him slowly, almost casually. She knew instinctively what had happened. The Swede needed a bag and a change of clothes. His body bent double as he dragged the bag from under the dresser base. And as he straightened, the Swede saw, reflected in the tilted mirror, the body of a man, from feet to waist.

The feet were enormous and murderously flat. The legs were covered by a dark cloth that hung in untidy folds. The Swede had studied feet and legs, especially flat, headquarters feet.

The Swede blanched but thought with the blenching. He saw it all now—a frame. Crusty and Lily had sold out. He was not surprised at Crusty—Crusty was a needle-wielder, and all dopers are yellow. But Lily—well, a crook can beat the cops, but a woman never.

Kiely of headquarters had his gun drawn and braced against his body. Better to take the Swede alive, he thought—it meant more in promotions and publicity.

"Straight up, Swede, or you're dead," he barked.

The Swede beat Kiely to the shot, scoring a dead center. But Kiely nicked his target in a dying spasm. Another two inches nearer center, and the Swede would have dropped, never to move. Instead, he

took the bullet in the left shoulder, spun half around, ripped his gun from his pocket and released death for Lily.

The beautiful body that had mated with the tiger fluttered to the floor, dying like a bird—a yellow-tinted bird. Lily was not a strong-enough mate for the big cat.

SKETCHILY but efficiently, the Swede dressed his wound and by some means boarded the train for Chicago. The gun, with one cartridge remaining, was carefully tucked in his right-hand pocket.

In Chicago the Swede bargained with death for two months. Then gangrene bowed before his steely defense, and convalescence came. The Croaker, the physician who catered to Loop thugdom, told him: "You're through. The muscles and arteries around your heart wont stand the pressure of a hearty laugh. Quit the game."

The Swede laughed, jiggled his spec's by wriggling the skin of his long nose, and said: "Guess I will—I've got mine." Then the Swede, ready to venture forth again, shifted the automatic with its one remaining cartridge from his jacket pocket to the inaccessible pocket on his hip—peaceful repose.

So far the rose-jar had not been called upon for the slightest aid.

THE fungi-incrusted Star Shoe Emporium in Custer, Iowa, bowed to a new proprietor. Thor Jensen, pale, efficiency-bitten, purchased the place, and the community wrapped dry arms about him. They like efficient people in Custer.

The women called him silent and interesting—bromidic it was, but descriptive. He had brought them the joy of an excellent stock of shoes, Paris modes for country feet, painful but satisfying.

Only once had Thor Jensen figured in any unpleasantness. That was when Curt Graham, known through the Middle West as a "hot man on the road," miscued in the stocking of Jensen's store. He believed Jensen slightly more than a glorified hick with a correspondence-school veneer. Curt's "line" was "confidence." He had mastered the slap on the back, the knowing wink and Brother Bill manner of approach.

"It's one thing you've gotta have for these yokels, Thor," Curt confided, "something that sells and that they've gotta take like medicine. And that's a good strong shoe for flat feet."



L "LEFT college and the study of medicine for a war," writes Mr. Mohrman. "Took a severe beating and was returned to civil life minus many illusions and one right lung which was lunched upon by machine gun bullets fired by the w. k. common enemy. Oscillated between Colorado and New York since 1919, slaving in the newspaper business and incidentally endeavoring to rebuild the lung. Learned what little I know of writing in the mill of the newspaper." . . . You who read this excellent story will agree that Mr. Mohrman's "little" errs a good deal on the side of modesty.

Jensen's eyes seemed to bulge; his face twitched, and Graham lost his go-getter air. Curt witnessed the metamorphosis from a peaceful shoe-merchant to a long-limbed, tigerish annihilist.

Jensen bellowed some unintelligible phrases that smacked of the urge to kill, and then, by systematic lifts of the boot, kicked Graham from the center of the store to the center of the street.

Custer was bewildered, but became soothed when Thor apologized to Curt. But he did not buy the shoes.

Then Thor Jensen married Lydia Hanson, third generation removed from migratory Minnesota Swedes. Custer practically demanded it. Jensen should be represented in the community life by bridge tables, crocheted doilies and other homelies that only a woman like Lydia could deliver.

She cooked and planned well, and played "Poet and Peasant" with a faked bass. Her left hand was tricky and unreliable, but at times the thing sounded almost acceptable. To Jensen, Lydia was a relief from the shoe-business, and her stolid acceptance of life and the rigid acceptance of death as a final but effective operation, amused him.

As a wedding gift from Custer, the Rotarians accepted Jensen into their palms and midweek luncheons. And Jensen became an authority on weather, shoes and corn, by the acre and on the hoof. He was active in Custer's campaign for better street-lighting and the suppression of the pool-hall.

And then, as though further to enrich the loam in which the Iowa town had planted Jensen's laurel bush, Thor was invited by the Reverend Quincy Backus to deliver a post-service sermon at the regular monthly special Sunday.

Thor reddened brightly and scraped and refused. Then he grinned, probably stimulated by the ironic possibilities of the bid, and the Reverend Backus interpreted the smile as acceptance.

To the shallowly convoluted mind of Lydia Jensen, this honor was the culmination in the romance of Thor's battle for success. In twenty years of such fêtes only Carter Beams, president of the bank; Marshal Higby, king pin of local pig-raisers; and Alanson Proule, who had attained prominence in a Chicago haberdashery firm, had been allowed to taste of such nectar.

"You must, Thor. To refuse would be

too openly ungrateful to Custer," she told him.

"But what can I say?" Thor returned dumbly.

IT so happened that at that moment Lydia was gloomily rehashing for the seventh time the editorial on crime that appeared semi-monthly in a weekly edition of the Custer *Sentinel*.

"The worth of leading an honest, righteous life. Why, just look at what Simmons says." And she handed the diatribe to Thor.

A slight grin tugged at his mouth as he read the morbid meanderings of Simmons, the champion quill-wielder of Custer. And he agreed with Lydia—a talk on righteousness by Thor Jensen would be a reliable text indeed.

And Custer, a Sunday Custer in alpaca, voiles, black gloves, shining cheek-bones and polished boots, heard one of the most fiery sermons its dusty minds had yet absorbed.

Thor, in the pulpit, seemed to forget his hiss, forget any tang of foreign birth, and drifted into a nasal exhortation that pierced and held despite its monotonous drone.

"Crime and unrighteousness will come home to roost," Thor repeated as he warmed to his subject.

"It may be kept hidden years; it may be well-veiled for a lifetime; but before death, and even after, it will seek out the offender and brand him with its screaming denunciation," he dinned into the adoring ears of the women and respectful attention of the menfolk.

"He aint bad a tall," remarked Briggs to his tightly trussed spouse.

"It will come home, no matter where, no matter how; revelation to the world will follow as surely as the night the day. The criminal always pays." And Thor Jensen bowed and stepped from the pulpit, and behind his hand, he grinned.

The affair had been a success. If there had existed any doubt as to Jensen's worth as a citizen, it was forever dispelled. Jensen shook many hands and murmured many "Thank you's."

SINCE Thor's sermon he seemed to take on a beatified air of solicitousness for those mentally or physically oppressed. And things went well with him for nearly another year. But omnipresent misfortune finally wiggled her nose at the Jensens.

At the Armistice Day dance, Thor, engaged in his charitable task of piloting fat ladies around the floor, collapsed during the unprecedented feat of dancing a full waltz with the obese Russel girl.

"Be real careful of him, Lydia," Doc Willoughby advised. "His heart is bad, very bad. An old war wound, he tells me. It's left him physically unsound, and any sudden excitement will kill him. Be careful, real careful."

Lydia gravely batted her cow-brown eyes and accepted her cross. The word went about Custer that Jensen was "sick." Then the community was even kinder than before. Thor hated the honey, but the Kiwanians enfolded him, and the Rotarians elected him president.

Of course Thor sickened sometimes of Lydia's acceptance of him as her husband. She would not so much as allow him to cut his own food. Jensen cursed, but Lydia looked shocked and terribly religious, and proceeded to shred the food on his plate.

Gradually Lydia worked herself into the shoe-business. Nothing would suffice but that Thor should remain at the house and tend the garden, leading the life of a Mid-western success.

It palled, but Jensen remembered some things and accepted the inevitable. Inactivity tended to unnerve him. There were nights, now, haunted by twisted feet being chased by enormous flat feet, and Jensen would awaken in a blanket of cold perspiration. He began to know fear, the worst kind, expected and prepared for, but knowing not its form or manner of arrival.

One morning he awoke with that distinct sensation of choking that most children of intuition are wont to experience. Uncomfortableness impended, he knew—mayhap disaster. But the nature of it he could not determine.

The uncanny feeling followed him to the breakfast-table, to the hammock, to the rose-bed and back to bed again.

Then Sunday, with its sermon, came around as it will, no matter what the weather. He and Lydia returned from church and began the routine of a summer Sunday in Custer.

Thor divested himself of the broadcloth coat and vest, and strolled to the front of the garden. Standing at the gate, he gazed across the hot street to a vision of fog-wet pavements and people, hordes of people, sliding along the way. The clutter of

weeds could not hide the dirty buff of elevated pillars, and momentarily he expected to hear the harsh grinding whine of the overhead trains.

DRESENTLY from the turn in the road a figure, swinging a well-groomed paunch, blocked Jensen's vision. The figure was moving toward Jensen's cottage.

Something gripped Thor, an apprehensive chill, like the cold hand of a brooding secret, and discomfort ran full through his body. The figure wore a black felt hat, and as he neared, Jensen noted a half-dead cigar drooping from the starboard side of his purple-veined jowl. The figure was sauntering, nothing hurried, the steps studied to appear careless, Jensen thought.

His eyes were attracted to the feet of the oncoming figure. They were encased in dull black shoes, and they were enormous and murderously flat. The trousers flapped in the low, ground-clinging breeze.

Thor stiffened; his huge steely fingers clutched the gatepost. As the figure neared him, the man placed a hand in his coat pocket. Thor felt the hot gush of racing blood fly to his temples. Staring straight ahead, the man passed Jensen with a cursory side nod of his head. Jensen's eyes were riveted to that hand—fumbling, gripping something—then fumbling again as though to make sure his grip was proper.

When ten paces beyond Jensen, the figure wheeled and stared at Thor, who stood as though stricken. He was thinking swiftly—of another world, of figures just like this that he had studied and catalogued in his brain. Feet—enormous flat ones—had been his especial study.

From the tip of the black felt hat to the flat feet, Jensen knew he had seen that figure a hundred times before: the drooping jowl, the pudgy hand, the blue shaven cheeks, the rounded paunch heaving contentedly like that of a well-groomed pony.

Jensen's stare lifted to the left coat lapel of the figure. He expected a breeze to lift that coat ever so slightly and disclose something that would glisten.

Then the figure advanced toward him. Jensen became a bundle of bouncing nerve controlled only by that massive thinking machine inside his skull.

"Have—" the figure started. But the emotion had been far too great for Jensen. He crouched, and his right hand brushed at what should have been the side pocket of his jacket. He crumpled jerkily and

then slumped between the gateposts, eyes strained and legs quivering slightly.

The man with the flat feet emitted a wet gurgle, and Lydia came rushing out, and between them they carried Jensen into the "parlor."

"Some wet towels for his head," Lydia jabbered. "There—on that shelf," she pointed. The flat-footed one had followed her into the kitchen.

He climbed on a kitchen chair which squawked painfully under the punishment. He tugged at the pile of carefully cut rags, packed with Iowan thrift on the upper cupboard shelf.

FINALLY the bundle loosened, but as it did, a black something bounced to the floor, struck the sharp edge of the table-leg, and a roar filled the tight little room.

The flat-footed one flopped from the chair; Lydia shrieked hysterically and ran to the parlor, where Jensen lay stretched out on a couch.

His lips were fluttering. Lydia, her cow-brown eyes batting as on the day Willoughby had told her of Thor's "bad heart," lifted him as best she could.

"Lily," murmured Jensen. A pause, and the lips struggled to open. "Lily—frame—Lily—" and Jensen sighed and winged on. Outside the window the stirring breeze lifted two petals from a rose, a second late to tint the life of Jensen.

Lydia interpreted the "Lily" as "Lydia," and kissed the parted lips of Jensen. Her head dropped to the taut chest; and Lydia Hanson Jensen, third generation removed from Minnesota Swedes, cried in new widowhood, guarded by the chipmunks in the glass globe.

"Colt automatic," mused the flat foot as he picked up the black object that had roared.

A foot from the gun lay a .38-caliber shell. The flat-footed one broke the clip, but there were no more cartridges—only that one—the last of six.

HEART-FAILURE," was Willoughby's verdict at the inquest.

Then, walking down the patch with the flat-footed one, he said: "Tell me about it. You were the first to reach him. What was the cause of the shock?"

"Well, I'm Stein, in ladies' undergarments out of Chicago. Business is lousy, and I make a stop in Custer to see if maybe I can't unload something. I'm taking a slow walk to kinda break in these shoes. I got flat feet, you know.

"I walk down this street because it's soft on the feet. I'm wanting to light my cigar, but aint got matches. I pass this guy—what you call him, Jensen?—and I turn back. I start to ask for a match; and look—he drops dead."

Willoughby shook his head; Stein grumbled about lousy business for gentlemen in ladies' undergarments out of Chicago. And the wraith of the Swede may have at that moment started making his peace with Kiely and Lily and Crusty Gorham and the three policemen.

They still quote Thor Jensen in Custer. His sermon on crime is a doctrine handed down to the youth of the community. And Lydia Hanson Jensen wonders, at times, behind the counter of the shoe-emporium, how Thor accumulated nearly one hundred thousand dollars during four years in the shoe-business in Custer.

"Up the Keewateena Trail," a stirring story of the North country by William Byron Mowery—who wrote "The Loon Lake Patrol" and "The Red Heritage," will be a feature of the next, the May, issue. And it is only one of the twenty carefully varied and individually excellent stories that will go to make up that most interesting of magazines.



Chaulmoogra

A quest through the jungle for the tree from which the cure for leprosy is made, and a desperate battle with savage warriors—perhaps the best story yet contributed by this favorite writer.

By WARREN HASTINGS MILLER

"NEWT FULLER! Newt Fuller! Newt Fuller!"

The inflections of unanswerable certainty in Lord Jock's voice left no doubt that Newt was his one and only choice. Sir Edward Weare listened without reflecting any appreciable enthusiasm. He was a little dry man, who looked as if he might have spent half his life over a microscope; and he had. But the value of his life work to the world could not be measured by any known standard of dollars and cents, for it was to him that the world owed its cure for the incurable, the dread scourge of leprosy.

"Why this man, Your Lordship?" asked Sir Edward in his precise voice. "I need credentials, as it were, before entrusting anyone with such a mission as this."

Lord Jock, the youthful governor of the Wa States, laughed, entirely at ease with his world—which consisted of a group of tents across the Salween from the outrageous Wa Country, a police brigade of tame Kachins, a young Captain Bruce commanding them, and Newt Fuller.

"Because he took the Wa census for us, Sir Edward," he said, and told the scientist that story.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Sir Edward with bated breath when the tale of that incredible and intrepid adventure had finished. "By Jove, y'know!"

He had no further words, being mostly a man of deeds; but Lord Jock knew he had him convinced. "I shall send for Newt, if you like," he suggested. "He was wrestling with some sort of fossil scarab in his tent when I saw him last—a bally trilobite or something."

Sir Edward beamed. An adventurer who was also an amateur man of science just suited him; it argued idealisms and broadnesses of interest in the wonders of this old world that gave one the "winning heart," when added to the cool courage of the explorer. Lord Jock clapped his hands, and a Kachin orderly presented himself at salute. Very neat, natty and Oriental was that native soldier, in his flowing blue Shan uniform, his peaked straw hat with a black tassel pendant atop his turban, and the

polished Enfield slung loosely over shoulder.

"Bo Ng, the Hoozur's compliments to Fuller Sahib; and will he have the goodness to step over to H. Q.?" said Lord Jock.

THE orderly crossed palms outward over his forehead, salaamed low, and withdrew. Presently Newt Fuller came sauntering over and was introduced. Sir Edward's keen eye appraised him from head to foot, noted the lean, sunburned, craggy features, the cool gray eyes, the long rangy limbs, and decided that here was his man.

"Fuller, we have a bit of a show on," said Lord Jock. "An expedition after chaulmoogra seeds, all we can get of them. The bally tree is scarcer than rubies, and it flowers and seeds by no known system. What there is of it in Burma grows in the Upper Kachin and the La'hu Country, so it looks like a very decent form of suicide to me—but it's just a trifle important to get some, just now."

Newt said nothing, looked neither pleased nor otherwise. Sir Edward, who had been warned in advance that the Yank was notably brief, cut in on His Lordship's rather rambling exposition: "Chaulmoogra-oil ester is a positive cure for leprosy, Mr. Fuller," he began, and stopped; for the sudden leap of interest into Newt's eyes, the gesture of his hand, the inarticulate sounds of emotion and catch in his breath, were all arresting enough.

"Wait up a moment—cure, you say? Cure?" queried Newt breathlessly, and halted, quite evidently gripped by some inward and powerful emotion. Lord Jock looked at him curiously; most extraordinary, this display by his imperturbable Newt, who had faced a Bengal tiger unarmed and had taken the Wa census!

"I say, old chap—y'know?" he murmured interrogatively.

A slow grin came into Newt's craggy and weather-pickled features. The emotion, whatever it was, died, conquered. "Oh, I haven't got it myself, or anything like that, Lord Jock!" he smiled. "Some one I know—a child. . . . The bare idea that there *was* a cure rather floored me at first. I can't stand the thought of children suffering; slow death through the years and all that—ugh! Loathsome and incurable, that's the way all the world thinks of leprosy. . . . Go on, Sir Edward. I didn't mean to interrupt."

"As I was saying," resumed the man of science, "the essence of chaulmoogra oil contains the positive germicide. I shall never forget my own sensations, Fuller, when I first watched through the microscope those little germs like bundles of sticks dissolving under the essence!" he exclaimed with considerable warmth. "There was no one dear to me affected; but, think what it meant to the world! That was five years ago. We have had a long fight, since, to find a preparation in which the essence could be administered to the human body in any mild form, but an American chemist finally solved it, with esters of the oil—"

"I say, I want to put in a word here, since Sir Edward seems bent on hiding his own lamp," broke in Lord Jock. "It was our friend, here, that started it all, let me explain, Newt. He began with nothing but an old Buddhist legend of a Burmese king who went and lived in a chaulmoogra tree and was cured. It has been known that the natives in India get a certain relief from drinking the oil, but the dose is simply hellish. That king receiving a cure from simply *living* in the tree argued the presence of some subtle essence—and Sir Edward is the man who located it and studied its effects on the germ under the microscope."

NEWT listened with rising enthusiasm. These men were opening up before his eager mind a whole vista, gorgeous in its sublimity of altruistic human endeavor, inspiring in the robust strength of that emotion we call Mercy. Men, all over the world, giving their life's work to abate this scourge of the human race, to find a cure for the incurable and the loathsome! He thought of that child,—no relation of his,—who had no claim on him save that of pity, and shuddered. He wondered if all this was too late for her. . . . And then that American who finally solved Sir Edward's problem of how to get the essence into practical shape, so that it could be administered to the afflicted. . . . Whatever small part they had for *him* in this great fight for humanity, he would gladly play!

"The cures have been coming on famously, all over the world, since then," went on Sir Edward. "Hundreds have been discharged from the leper stations, particularly the American one in the Philippines. Our difficulty now is to get enough

of the oil itself. The chaulmoogra is rare, and grows in mountainous regions restricted apparently to Nepal, Bhutan, North Burma and Chinese Yünnan. You get the range?"

"Poisonous country, all of it!" grinned Lord Jock as Newt nodded understandingly. "The Burmese part of it is La'hu. Blighters who all carry crossbows shooting bolts tipped with aconite, and love white men so much that they abolish them on sight. You know them, Newt? North of the Wa. Part live in Yünnan; the rest north of our own administrative line."

"What the India station wants is this, Mr. Fuller," said Sir Edward: "We have decided that a chaulmoogra plantation is the only sure source of supply. We need seeds, all that can be got. The Americans are sending in an expedition across French Laos, to the east of us, for the same purpose. We have heard that the beastly tree is reasonably plentiful in the La'hu Hills, but as it flowers and sets fruit under no known system of seasons, our expedition may have to find a number of trees before they get one in seed. Lord Jock has kindly offered me as many native troops as may be advisable; what we are looking for now is the man to lead it."

Newt took a step forward, his face drawn with eagerness. "I offer to be that man, if you like, Sir Edward!" he said with quiet intensity.

Lord Jock shook his head. "Topping, old skin!" he crowed. "But for heaven's sake, take care of yourself. This is no Wa scout! It means war to so much as set foot in the La'hu country; yet you'll have to avoid a row if it's at all possible. And I'll have to insist on giving you one more white man. I'll detail young Bruce, if he'll go. And at least forty troopers, tame Wa and Kachins."

"I should say ten, Your Lordship," objected Newt respectfully. "We simply can't take along a provision-train. Ten good riflemen, who can live on the jungle. And I'll be glad to have Bruce; nervy kid, that youngster!"

"Oh, well, have it your own way, old hide!" agreed Lord Jock. "I'd rather go in with an army and elephant howitzers, but Rangoon would quash that right off. These La'hu swine kill leopards and tigers with their crossbows, so don't let them get within a hundred yards of you if you want to live. Aconite is deadly; does you in as quick as a cobra. And I've seen one of

their bolts go right through a shield of pyngado wood an inch thick."

Newt grinned: "We'll manage," he said briefly. "Chaulmoogra or bust!"

Sir Edward looked mystified over that Yankeeism, which was all lost on him, but Lord Jock knew his man.

"Jolly good!" he ejaculated. "Well, get on with it! You have carte blanche. Tell Bruce he's relieved for special field service." And then, after Newt had paid his respects and gone, to Sir Edward: "I'd give more than a quid to know just *who* is the female child that aroused our good Newt so! A bachelor well on in his forties; yet the longer they wait, the harder they fall. And invariably some flapper. I wonder if we've unearthed a romance in flinty old Newt?"

Sid Edward nodded somberly. Old, was that precise scientist, but he had seen much of life that went on outside the field of his microscope. And he could have told Lord Jock two things: That in all the world there is just one girl destined for every man; and that once the electric spark of that recognition passes between two pairs of eyes, its memory is imperishable.

CAPTAIN MAC TAVISH BRUCE, of the Burma Irregular Light Infantry, was a tall, sandy and freckled Scot of exactly the age of twenty-one. He was not pretty to look at, being composed entirely of bones with a sunburned integument, on which were draped flapping khaki running shorts, a ragged short-sleeved shirt, and tight-wound puttees that appeared to unwrap rake-handles. Mac resembled a bifurcated hatrack with a huge brown topee atop; but he possessed a cheerful countenance and the endurance of tungsten steel. He heard the news of this "show" from Newt with hoots of delight, and together they picked their men. Only tried and proved murderers were chosen, out of the hard-visaged lot that composed Mac's company of Shans, Wa and Laos, known officially as the Burma Irregular Light Infantry. One Hat Gyi, a roaring bull of a Shan wanted for seven proved atrocities over in French Laos, was *havildar* (sergeant)—Bo Ng (one passed up that gentleman's last name) was his corporal—one whose authority resided mostly in a prod-stick with two ears of razor steel that jabbed a man's rearwards, causing yells, if Gyi's orders were treated casually by anyone. And the other ten swine were skilled technicians in the arts

of collecting forage in the jungle and of abstracting life whenever convenient.

Newt looked them over with pride on their final muster. "Poisonous lot!" grinned he. "I'll take that sample of your chaulmoogra, now, if you don't mind, Lord Jock."

The youthful governor, who looked so like Wales as to have been kidnaped for him once in Paris, handed over the dried calyx of seeds that meant so much to this world. It was emblematic of the power of Mercy amongst men, that token for which fourteen men were now about to risk their lives. It represented romance of the highest, the unselfish labors of men all over the world, the long years of patient study and experiment, the heroisms of thousands who had gone clear-eyed to their deaths to relieve, by ever so little, the hopelessness and misery of a leper colony. And that little calyx of seeds was also witness that the long centuries of human misery were at last drawing to an end, that men were going to plant this tree in thousands, so that there would be cure enough to wipe the scourge from the earth—a gospel of good tidings that seemed to Newt almost too good to be true!

But all he said was: "We'll have to meet the headman of the first La'hu tribe once, anyhow, Your Lordship. We'll show him this burr, and try to explain. If he can't see it, or us—" Newt waved a lean hand significantly toward that file of Irregulars being inspected by Captain Bruce.

"Get it done without a row if you can, old thing," said Lord Jock. "It's going to be no end of a show, I fawncy. But if you don't get back in three weeks, I'm coming up there with a brigade!"

"We'll be back," said Newt, and stowed the chaulmoogra burr in a buttoned pocket on his belt. He nodded to Bruce, who gave a last look down the file of peaked brown straw hats cocked rakishly over tight blue turbans. Bruce barked an order, and the rank of burnished barrels swung to the right-face. "*March!*" yelled Hat Gyi; tramping the jungle quick-step, the file swung out of camp and headed north for a gap in the huge limestone mountains of the Salween Basin that led to the country of the chaulmoogra tree and the La'hus.

IT was two days later when a gentleman with a circlet of white shells about his black dome, and having a bell pendant from it over one ear, invited them politely

but firmly to stop. He emphasized it by tapping the ironwood crossbow that lay in the hollow of his arm, and whose heavy bolt was at that moment pointed directly at Newt's midriff. There were other yellowish-black gentlemen behind him, all with strung crossbows that could shoot clear through a tiger from side to side, and all carrying an assortment of thin daggers two feet long, and throw-sticks with V-shaped steel prongs like serpents' tongues in their girdles. They wore sketchy jackets of Chinese cloth ornamented with beads, and skirts that hid but little of their wrinkled black legs. And their faces were curiously lacking in hospitality.

Newt produced the chaulmoogra calyx and said a few deft words of Tai. The chief grinned once,—with recognition of what the thing was,—jerked a thumb over shoulder up a mighty ravine, and then became noncommittal, watching the two white men and their guard hostilely, and ready to fight, then and there.

Newt put on the face of urbanity. "Well, now, that's fine!" he might have been saying over the telephone to some administrative friend in Rangoon. Only, he wasn't. He produced beads, and more bells, and a fascinating pewter whistle that had a small compass in its bowl. These could be had for these, he pantomimed, referring to the chaulmoogra burr and pointing up the ravine.

The chief looked longingly at that whistle and was almost won when Newt blew it. Then he shook his head angrily, gesticulated for them to go back, demarked with pointing finger the limits of the La'hu country, and made sounds that were unmistakably: "No can do!"

"Gowk! Let the blighter hae it, richt noo!" whispered Mac, nettlesomely. "We're about equal. Wan good poak—teach'm a lesson—"

"Seeing that one touch of that trigger abolishes *me*, not so good," said Newt out of his left ear. "Messy thing in one's gizzard, that bolt!"

He held out the whistle, and the chief reached a lean arm over the crossbow and took it. Then he raised his eyebrows and motioned for them to get out. That he had let them live was the price of that whistle, his expression said.

"Retreat in good order does it!" said Newt, *sotto voce*. "Put on some fancy drill, Mac. We have gained a lot; no use rowing just yet."

"Aye. — *Bayonets*, low right short! Rear step—*march!*" snapped Bruce at his line of pirates. The La'hu watched, somewhat disconcerted to see that line of rifles moving off backward with the precision of a machine. That they were ready to fire from the hip at any moment was quite patent; or perhaps they would return again—on the charge. Newt stood alone; and after a time called out: "Halt!"

The line stopped. The La'hus were looking at it, that line of a dozen armed men. Their crossbows, with the great thick iron-wood staves bent to stiff arcs by stout twisted thongs, hung poised and ready in their hands. Things were about equal as matters then stood, for the range was not over sixty yards.

The chief grinned upon Newt. He was impressed by that "Halt!" and its instant obedience. Evidently this man was the Big Sahib. Newt thought of giving the command for extended order by the left flank, but decided against it. A very little drill demonstration was best, just a hint. Any further maneuvers might be taken alarmedly and precipitate a fight.

He smiled amicably. "Well, so long, Chief!" he said, and walked away obliquely out of the line of fire of his own men. He might, or he might not, receive a bolt in his back; at least there were a dozen men at hand who would riddle the first La'hu to point his crossbow.

HE reached Mac and they right-faced the men to form a single file column and then marched down the valley, leaving the La'hu in possession of their territory. Once around the promontory of a jib-nosed rocky hill flung down into the valley, they halted the file and considered.

"Not bad, Mac!" said Newt cheerily. "We got off without shooting, and we know that some of the damned trees are near here, up that ravine. Looks like a cutting-out party to me."

Bruce scratched his head with perplexity. "Hoot-oot," said he. "Ye'll no do it, Newt, in broad daylight, wi' yon horde of black men in the hills! But a deevarsion, I'm thinkin'—'twould be fair proveedential, noo?" He grinned dourly upon Newt, who smiled his slow smile.

"Diversion is good! Suppose we seize and fortify this hill? That will be something to occupy and amuse them. We ought to collect about every La'hu within miles with a show like that! Then I'll slip

off with two picked men and have a go at the chaulmoogras."

"Comedietta," agreed the Scot. "Eh, 'twull be a grand show! I didna study fortifications at Sandhurst for naught. For the chaulmoogra, let's e'en talk to Hat Gyi." He called over the Shan *havildar*.

"For the fort, God be praised!" said the sergeant with enthusiasm when their plan was explained, for he and his men had been glum about being led tamely away without any prospects of amusement with unlimited Government cartridges. "But as to finding a *kalaw*-tree, Fuller Sahib—as well try to milk a he-goat into a sieve!"

Newt smiled grimly. "By thy life! The casters of pebbles and the watchers of the flight of birds—how know they what God is doing?" he retorted. "Tonight I take Bo Ng and one other."

"By God! And that other is thy servant, Sahib!" said Hat Gyi impetuously. "Allah knows that a man can die but once!"

NEWTON was secretly glad. Bo Ng was a quiet, capable man, but a Buddhist—therefore too apt to be resigned to Fate if their venture took a desperate turn. Not so Hat Gyi. Once a man accepts Islam, there seem to be no limits to his courage and daring. Newt knew that he could do almost anything with the big and warlike Shan if they got into a tight place—and it looked that way to him.

They led the column around back of the hill, ascended it by its rearward flank, and began scouting for a good site. The valley below was still full of La'hu, and back in the mountains a distant syncopated booming of long hollow drums told Newt and Bruce that reinforcements were pouring in from all the villages. The mere presence of a force of white men and their soldiers from the south had been enough to call out the reserves, so to speak! Newt studied carefully with his glasses that huge ravine up which the La'hu chief had pointed. His precious trees were there, somewhere. Whether in bloom or in seed—he could only hope for enough luck for it to be the latter! The infernal tree had a bright orange flower, which was a guide, in a way, but it seeded at any season throughout the year. As this was March and the end of the dry weather, he hoped that the natural harvest chances would favor him. The rest was Mac's good idea of clearing the jungle for him by giving the La'hus a

proper "show." They would not be long in discovering their fort and attacking it!

THE La'hu are a serious and single-minded folk. Like most hill tribes of savages, they ask nothing of the white man but to be left alone. And it is probable that the British Government, as represented by Lord Jock Burleigh, *would* have left them alone, had it not been that the confounded chaulmoogra tree chose to grow in their midst. But Newt, who had got off before dawn and was high up the ravine flanks toward the sky when Burma's enormous sun rose over the mountains, saw that the inevitable clash of races was now on, with consequences that no man could foresee. A thin haze of white smoke was drifting out from Bruce's position on the escarpments of that hill. There was the rapid and faint whip of rifles; bright, curving arcs of crossbow bolts whizzing up in streaks that flashed in the sun like small rockets. His glasses showed him no human forms, albeit the debate was proceeding merrily. He clicked his teeth with regret; but it could not be helped. And there was resentment in his heart, too, at the prompt opposition of all savages when white men proposed to do anything whatever that involved an entrance into their territory. Even an errand of mercy like this one!

His glasses swept the ravine bottom below, searching it for chaulmoogra trees eagerly. Mac was enjoying this siege for *his* benefit; and there was no time to lose, for the siege might end in a total obliteration of the entire party if the La'hus had courage enough to charge home!

Beyond him and below to the left he caught a dot of orange in the dense green foliage that filled the ravine bottom. Newt studied it carefully. Not an orchid; too small. Not golden mohr, for there was only one bloom. Not padauk; that tree bloomed all over in a showy profusion that was far redder than this spot of color.

"Worth trying!" he commented under his breath. "Might be the last bloom, or it might be the first." He hardly dared hope it was the elusive chaulmoogra—but there was a child he knew that needed it, to save her from a fate worse than death!

They crept down cautiously through the dry yoma scrub. The jungle thickened rapidly—banyan, jack-fruit, then bamboo and aren palm. And, in a still woodland peace, dripping with the notes of birds, they reached that clump of slender ashlike

trees where shone the single orange bloom. Newt felt queer thrills as he picked up a shriveled and brown calyx from the leaves and compared it with the sample in his hand.

Chaulmoogra!

Men had given their very lives, freely and self-sacrificingly, to the study of that rare tree; for its name was *mercy*. In the oil from its seeds was the one subtle essence in all the world that was hostile to the leprosy germ. What generations and generations of men had perished, without one ray of that precious human possession, hope, while the world was groping slowly but surely for the secret of the chaulmoogra! What a romance it was! From that early Burmese king who had cured himself by simply living in the tree, through long centuries when the ignorant Hindoo tried to reach its benefits by drinking the oil or deluging himself with it, to the white man with his microscope and his laboratory who isolated the essence and tried it on the germ—and then at last found the chemical combination that would introduce it successfully into the human body! And now the last act in the drama, this desperate expedition into the La'hu country to secure seeds for a plantation. . . . It was more than idealistic with Newt, he admitted; it was personal. There was a child he knew—

And, as if to remind him of the ring of intolerant savagery that hedged about this whole enterprise, humane though it was, at that moment the astounding "*Eee-whoop! Whoop! Whoop! WHOOP!*" of a Burma gibbon burst out near by. Newt swore, as he and the two natives turned to look for the monkey. This fellow would arouse the whole jungle with his alarm-cries! And if there were any war parties of La'hu anywhere near—

AT last they caught sight of the ape, a big brown gibbon hanging in the dense foliage of a mango close by. He looked down at them hostilely, his eyebrows working up and down like a small gorilla's, his mouth an open diamond of malevolence. And again came his prodigious series of whoops. Newt thought upon whether to abolish him or no. He had but one weapon, a long-barreled .38 revolver, but a shot from it would be unmistakable, disclosing the presence of white men.

He could not risk it, he decided. This ape was but one more of that ring of ignorant savagery, hostile to them all and

incapable of appreciating even the nature of their errand. He would have to be endured. Hurriedly Newt scanned the branch tips of the chaulmoogra trees above him.

"Luck!" he murmured. "Up with you, Hat Gyi and Bo Ng! Catch 'em plenty these." He pointed to the burr in his hands. The natives, completely mystified but used to the incomprehensible desires of white men, swarmed up and began shaking down the seed-burrs. This particular tree happened to be ripe—more luck than Newt had dared hope for! Swiftly he gathered the burrs as they fell; and always that malign monkey kept up his abominable whoops. He might bring a tiger, or a leopard, or a party of investigating La'hus—it was all one; haste was what was wanted now.

"Enough!" called up Newt after a period of urging and of vigorous shakings. He had perhaps thirty-odd burrs stowed in his rucksack. With care they might yield a thousand trees. "Come down and let's go! Hasten!"

THEY picked up their rifles and hurried up the slopes to the scrub again. That gibbon proceeded to follow. He swung through the trees in long leaps, scolding them furiously, now and then giving vent to whoops that carried a mile. Newt cursed him fervidly, but he dared not risk a shot. And then, from above, came whizzing one of those crossbow bolts, struck Newt's helmet violently from his head, and broke the chin-strap with its force.

Newt dropped flat instantly. Beside him lay the two natives, and around them a thick, thorny, and utterly silent scrub. There were cautious rustlings in the dry leaves.

"And they don't mean maybe, either!" grinned Newt, peering cannily. They held the high ground, where was safety. Newt noted that his heart pulsed with its usual slow, steady, phlegmatic beating; it faced the situation coolly, his mind thinking straight and clear. Good old pump! Never yet had it driven him into any panic! That gibbon was an ally, now! He was shaking branches and barking raucously, and he told Newt just where the La'hu were, above him to the right, and some of them flanking him.

Well, two could play at that game! "By the left and up," he whispered to Hat Gyi.

"In the name of Allah!" beamed the Shan. "Swords out, Bo Ng!" Together

they drew the long, keen *dahs* that crossed their chests in wooden scabbards at a slant. Newt left bait—two jaunty peaked straw hats and a battered topee judiciously planted on stakes—and followed, revolver in hand. It was a game of listening and watching and slow, creeping advance. The *dahs* slid along and severed, noiselessly, vines and whips in the way; and once he saw Hat Gyi's swing in sudden twist and passed the writhing black body of a cobra six feet long. The gibbon remained stationary, still keeping up his prodigious racket. He was good as gold, that monkey! He would not move until the La'hus he was watching did. Quite evidently they were working toward that position where the white man had been seen to fall—now occupied by three empty hats. . . .

They came upon him quite suddenly, that La'hu picket squatting in the bush, his crossbow poised on his knees, his seamed and scarred black face peering intently toward all the noise. There was an instant, startled glare of surprise,—a wild swing of his bow, the twang of its thong,—and then a dismayed yelp, dying to a choke, as Hat Gyi's *dah* went through his throat with a lightning-swift lunge.

"Now then—on the double!" yelled Newt, leading his men at top speed. To the right and behind them the bush was full of yells. Black La'hus appeared and there was the crash of rifles, the whang of Newt's .38, the sharp zip and whistle of bolts. Newt did not wait. Watching over shoulder, firing at every mark that showed, they ran on down the ridge, pursued by earnest La'hus like angry hornets. It was a race that required wind, no end of it, and soon it developed complications as Mac's stockade came in sight across the valley. It was still sputtering smoke. The rapid whip of Enfields smote the valley with sound, a nest of noise under the hot sun that seemed to have the industry of some boiler factory.

And the swales below were filled with La'hu. Behind every convenient bush and rock they lay, in the tall lalang grass, squatting black dots of humanity all motivated by a fanatic and wholly preposterous urge to make an end of these strangers in their midst.

"Hard at it!" observed Newt with brevity as he and Hat Gyi stopped to consider their chances of ever joining their main body again. From where they stood the entire La'hu position was exposed to

view from the rear. The chief had placed his warriors well. From ambushes they encircled Mac's casual stockade, from hill flank to hill flank, and had already wormed in quite close, some seventy yards, Newt judged. He watched the busy little figures stringing crossbows by hauling prone, with feet braced against the central bulge of the bow-stave, which itself was about six feet long.

"Hoo!" said Hat Gyi. "It is in my mind, Sahib, that if we come upon them from three different points, and with many shooting and much yell, we might seem—as it were—a new army."

"Might, in truth!" grunted Newt with a flash of appreciation for that bold scheme of Hat Gyi's in his eyes. "I take it that Bruce Sahib will want to move as soon as we get back. He only stays and makes battle for our sake. Therefore do we open a route for him. On his left flank, mind you. Consider, Hat Gyi, the black swine on the hill behind yonder rock. And near him another under an acacia bush. And two more beyond him, seest thou?"

"In truth they are very insolent persons," agreed Hat Gyi. "May the wrath of Allah overtake them!" He waggled the long *dak* in his fist suggestively.

"This we do," said Newt: "These owls behind us will keep straight on to their main body, if we but move to the right and shake them off. And then we will be in such place as we can fall upon those on the hill, as it were, a new army, as thou hast said. It is a good plan, Hat Gyi! Come, Bo Ng!"

They left the ridge in haste, bearing down to the right. They crossed a deep ravine and gained the slopes of Mac's hill. And presently they opened up an attack of unexampled fury and intensiveness, firing volleys now here, now there, yelling war-cries ferociously. It was an astonishing battle for three men to stage, and it stampeded the La'hus with all the effect of a surprise attack from their own rear. The valley grass was filled with black men breaking from cover and running—to stumble and fall as swift bullets from Mac's stockade caught them. The flank in front of Newt crumpled, its attackers shot down or dealt with by hungry *dahs*, and then Mac came out, carrying his dead and his wounded.

"Losh, 'twere a tight fit, that!" he beamed upon Newt as they met. "I'm no one that fashes himsel' for eeventualities,

but—fifty against ten!—no, six, that can shoot, to be preceese. Did ye get the perishin' chaulmoogras, man de-arr?"

"Thirty-five burrs, in ripe seed!" said Newt. "We retreat in good order."

"Praise be! But the clearing my flank, so we could e'en get out?" persisted the Scot. "'Twas an inshot, that!"

"Thank Hat Gyi for that!" said Newt. "Le's go!"

Up the hill they retreated, from cover to cover. There was one more determined attack, for the La'hus re-formed and came up for more, once over their stampede. But it was beaten off with equally determined rifle fire; and then they had gained the crest and had set off for the mountain defiles to the south.

THREE days later Newt and his youthful Scottish captain made their report in Lord Jock's tent. That rucksack of chaulmoogra burrs—they could tell quite a story! That they could tell still another one, vastly important to the world, Sir Edward Weare made plain as he crooned over them happily and spoke of the world's first plantation of leper-healing trees to be. And then he turned to Newt with an air that said: "Entirely aside from the appreciation of brave men for a dangerous duty well done, what is there, Mr. Fuller, that we men of medicine can do for *you*?"

"Well," said Newt, gathering breath for the longest speech he ever hoped to make. "I'd like one bottle of the finished cure and directions for administering it," he asked, and then stopped.

They all looked at him, astonished. "I say, you know," began Lord Jock, embarrassed. "These things, you know, are entirely in the hands of our medical department, old chap. Every leper in Burma has been segregated and removed to our station in Mergui, long ago. What possible use, old thing—"

"All, but one," interrupted Newt, and then launched into a speech that was sheer difficulty to a silent man. "She is the daughter of a Sawbwa whom I prefer not to name. But I can see her now, your Lordship, that little round face, piquant as the very soul of Asia, with its merry brown eyes and its lips and cheeks always seeming about to burst into a smile. But it was then suffused with woe with frightened tears; and the Sawbwa glowered, grim and threatening; while outside the palace door one of your men, Sir Edward, was

examining a bit of skin—under the microscope that cannot lie. Just a little white spot on her arm no bigger than a pea; but it meant that she was to be torn from her people and herded for life upon a desert island, far from those she loved, condemned to a living death, without hope, without one glimmer of any of those simple joys which are all of life to these merry people that we rule. . . .

"Well, she didn't go. And I'm afraid that I connived at it. That child! She is at this moment living in a ruined and abandoned pagoda in the jungle, not thirty miles from here. Her people minister to her, secretly—without hope, of course, as the thing spreads from year to year and there is no cure. Heaven knows where she got the infection; but there it is, you see; and that child has haunted me ever since. . . . "If you think it is not too late, Sir Edward—it happened a year ago—I'd like to go to her now with the cure. I'll be responsible, of course. It's all irregular, I know, but, you see—no leper colony for her—"

"My dear fellow!" exploded Sir Edward. "Of course! Here!" He darted hastily into the baggage that lay piled under his tent cot and presently emerged with a small bottle filled with a light yellow oil and a bright and shiny hypodermic syringe.

"Here you are! An injection into the muscles of her arm, daily. With so small an infection, if her general health is good, it cannot have made much headway by now. You should knock it out in a month. When you see healthy flesh forming, let me know, and I will test it personally for positive—and God bless you, dear chap!"

His eyes said that, so far as the Medical Service was concerned, it would be all quite *sub rosa*.

Newt wrung his hand and turned to Lord Jock inquiringly.

"Leave, old skin? All you want! You've earned it, by Jove! And the best of luck;

—it's all quite extraordinary, this, y'know!"

Newt thought that virtually *all* the queer combinations of chance by which things get done in this world were quite extraordinary. If Sir Edward Weare had not needed seeds for a chaulmoogra plantation, and come to Lord Jock for the man to get them, he himself might never have even heard that a cure for leprosy had been discovered. But his eyes were seeing a little Burmese child, the daughter of a Shan prince, once so merry and bubbling with tinkling laughter that she was fascinating just to watch; and now immured in a somber solitude that had no hope, no smile, nothing but the ghastly terrors of a relentlessly advancing disease, an outcast, buried forever in a living death, deprived of even the simplest of human happinesses. His heart could not bear the thought of children suffering so; particularly this Burmese butterfly, whose own impulses of mercy and charity had undoubtedly brought her in contact with the dread disease on some poor beggar. . . .

"Well, so long, fellows," said Newt. "The quicker the better!"

And a moment later he was gone, striding long-leggedly down the slopes from Lord Jock's encampment, and headed for the cloud-capped peaks of the North Shan Hills.

"Good old Newt!" ejaculated Lord Jock after a time. "I say—" He relapsed into thought, and the others remained silent. They had no words as yet; but it was Romance, this story of the chaulmoogra, all of it! That was the idea they were groping for. And there was Romance waiting for old Newt in a ruined pagoda, even if he did not know it himself as yet, they guessed shrewdly. Child? *Pah!* They were all children, until you came to know them better! And the Burmese made charming little wives, as Lord Jock's social career in Rangoon had given him reason to know.

Another splendid story of adventure in the Orient by Warren Hastings Miller will appear in our next issue. And with it you will find "The Chimney of Gold," a fine short novel of the West by Roy Norton; "Japanese Fans," the second exploit of H. Bedford-Jones' "Clancy, Detective;" a new tale of the Easy Street Experts by Bertram Atkey; a memorable story of Grigsby the engineer by Clarence Herbert New; ten other vigorous and swift-moving stories by America's best fiction-writers; and five remarkable stories of Real Experience by our readers.



Alias All Around

Wherein Cal Kinaide fights an epic battle with the lumber-jack champion— and a wedding follows soon thereafter.

By FRANK M. SPARKS

IN every small city where everybody knows everybody else, and the police force consists of perhaps a dozen men, one among these blue-coated guardians of the peace and pesterers of small boys is always the idol of every kid in town; one policeman is always pointed to as the one man who can lick anybody or anything that comes along. His presence in the town is, to the small boy, sufficient guarantee that no harm can possibly befall. Moreover, that particular idol is always the one man of the police force who is utterly blind to the indiscretions of the boys, is always their friend and so is popular always—because the boys, grown up, never forget his kindnesses in their youth.

So it was in Bangor, and Cal Kinaide was the blue-coat at whose feet every small boy worshiped. Cal Kinaide was the copper who, when sent out to arrest the kids for coasting on the sidewalks, always stood astride while the sleds whizzed between his legs; who always returned to headquarters with the report: "Violations of sidewalk coasting ordinance not found." Cal was,

therefore, a total loss so far as satisfaction for some old crab, who wished to deny the youngsters a little joy, was concerned. And, again, if he were sent out to investigate a complaint that a lot of little rowdies were pelting snowballs at dignified persons, Cal always returned with his face flushed and smiling, and with many wet spots on his coat—but never once was he able to find one of these arch-criminals.

Bangor was not an altogether easy place for a copper to work. It was here that the lumber-jacks and the river-drivers came in, got their pay, bought a new outfit of clothing and a lot of hard liquor and set out to enjoy themselves before dispersing to their several places of abode. It was here that the sailors of all nations might be found in those days when seamen were sailors and not mechanics. The copper in Bangor, especially on certain of the river-front streets, must be a real he-man, willing and able to defend himself and the law with his fists, club, gun or whatever else might be at hand. Let him once shun a fight and his best move was to promptly

F RANK M. SPARKS hails from Bangor, Maine, and has had a varied and interesting career as a newspaper man in several American cities. He is the author of two books on municipal government and has written a good deal of fiction—of which this story “Alias All Around” is an attractive example.



turn in his badge. Otherwise his chances were good for waking up in a nice soft cot in the hospital, even if he escaped a cold hard slab in the morgue.

Cal Kinaide for years had had the lower Exchange Street beat, the toughest in town. Here were hotels and boarding-houses for lumber-jacks and river-drivers, sailors and dock-wallopers, railroaders and construction gangs. Here at certain seasons might be found numberless Swedes, Norwegians, French-Canadians, Indians, Portuguese, Blue Noses and P. E. I.'s and, above all and more numerous than all, big healthy, fighting Irishmen. Each little boarding-house and hotel had its bar over which flowed one way the accumulated silver of a hard winter's work in the woods, a dangerous spring drive or months at slushing masts, tarring rigging and working ship. Over those bars the other way flowed red liquor, liquor that would "cut." Here old acquaintances were renewed and new friendships made. Here could be heard any number of tales of prowess along many different lines but usually centering about the particular power which lay behind the big hard fists of the champions of the several camps. The stories grew in proportion as the hard liquor flowed. Arguments frequently followed and usually these were settled either in the alley or right there in the bar-room—until finally Cal Kinaide, attracted by the crashing of furniture and the breaking of glass, would swing in, land a sturdy right and left upon the struggling lumber-jacks, commandeer a jigger and cart them both off to the lockup.

CAL KINAIDE was not a big man but he was put together for business, to withstand the shock of battle. Moreover he was clever with his maulers and packed a wicked punch. He scorned to use his club or his gun, no matter what the conditions might be. He depended upon his educated fists and let his other equipment serve only as ornaments to supplement his badge of authority.

But there came a time when things didn't seem to be going as well as they should on his beat. Cal Kinaide had not been bringing in his customary jigger-loads of brawlers, nor had he himself worn a scar in a long time. Indeed, Cal Kinaide hadn't been in a fight all spring and his name seemed to be losing something of its terror for Exchange Street.

Old Cap Whalen was getting out of pa-

tience with the situation. On this particular afternoon, when reports had come in of a small-sized riot down on Cal's beat, and no arrests, Whalen just blew up and relieved his mind.

"What's the matter wid the lad?" he barked. "He used to be the best skull-cracker on the force. Now he's a-moonin' 'round like he'd got tangled wid a skirt."

And that *was* the secret of it all: It was a "skirt" that was ruining Kinaide as a copper for the lower Exchange Street beat: it was a "skirt" that was keeping the skin on Cal's knuckles; it was a "skirt" that was responsible for the loss of power in the name of Cal Kinaide.

Now that "skirt" was draped around the lithe and shapely figure of Nory O'Brien. Nory O'Brien, when she was just a little freckle-faced, red-headed, scrawny Irish kid, had been the childhood sweetheart of Cal Kinaide while he was peddling papers and fighting all the other kids in the neighborhood. In those days when both Nory and Cal were just kids, children of poor and hard-working parents, they had lived neighbors on York Street not far from its intersection with the tough end of Exchange Street. That was where Cal had learned to fight, early in life and where he had been fighting ever since—until now.

Cal had realized his ambition to be a policeman, and good fortune had befallen Nory O'Brien. Nory's father, big Mike O'Brien—who had swung the best ax in the north woods, and who had broken more than one jam on the Passadumkeag drive—had been thrifty and wise. Instead of rolling his whole season's pay over the bars on lower Exchange Street, he had invested some of it in timber-lands, and these holdings had grown until big Mike O'Brien had become "pretty well fixed," to use the envious phrase of his neighbors.

NORY O'BRIEN was the pride of her father. He had always declared he loved her because she was so homely nobody else would. When money came his way, he determined that whatever Nory lacked in good looks, he would make up for her by giving her the best kind of education, plenty of money and good clothes. He would "make a real lady out of her!"

And Big Mike had done so. He had sent Nory away to school where she had learned music and art and how to be a lady. She had been gone several years and it was only late the past summer that

she had returned. But it was not the freckle-faced, red-headed, scrawny Irish kid, who returned! It was an extremely handsome young woman with wonderful brown eyes, laughing red lips, a wealth of bronze hair over which everybody raved and a figure which had filled out and rounded in curves to make Venus jealous; a young woman—a lady, if you please—who knew how to wear fine clothes, how to behave in the best of society and who had developed a contralto voice which people were glad to pay well to listen to. Nor was it *Nory* O'Brien who returned. No, indeed! It was Miss Norah (accent on the "rah") Obrienne—who had packed the big City Hall auditorium at three dollars a seat, to hear her sing.

Cal Kinaide discovered it was not *Nory* O'Brien the first night he had gone up to call on his old-time sweetheart. Unchanged himself, he had burst in upon her as he used to do when they were just two Irish youngsters. He had been shocked when she greeted him as "Mr. Calvin Kinaide," a name by which he had never before been called—but before the evening was over, still another shock came his way. Just at that time he was nursing a badly skinned set of knuckles, the result of subduing a pretty tough dock-walloper. As he rubbed the cut and bruised knuckles from time to time, the attention of Miss Norah Obrienne was attracted to them. Now, when they were kids together, *Nory* O'Brien had been proud of the fighting qualities of Cal Kinaide and many a good battle had he put up in her behalf when some fresh kid had jeered at *Nory* as "Brick-top." But things were different now.

"Why, Mr. Kinaide," Miss Norah Obrienne had said that evening: "Can it be that you have been engaged in a brawl? It is highly unbecoming an officer and a gentleman to engage in fisticuffs with a lot of intoxicated rowdies."

Cal Kinaide had sought to explain that it was necessary for him to fight if he were to keep lower Exchange Street in subjection. Miss Norah Obrienne had turned up her pretty nose, sniffed and informed him that "one of superior intellect to those over whom he seeks control should be able by strength of personality and force of moral suasion to accomplish his purpose without need to resort to the cave-man method of using his fists!"

Cal had been entertaining dreams that

when *Nory* O'Brien had finished her schooling and returned home, he would be about ready to settle down in a home of his own with *Nory* at the head of the household. But it was manifestly not *Nory* O'Brien who had returned. This was a far different girl. *Mike* O'Brien had made a lady of his girl all right but Mr. Calvin Kinaide felt she had been raised far above his reach. However, whether he was Mr. Calvin Kinaide or just plain old-fashioned Cal Kinaide, he had never yet run from a fight and he didn't propose to abandon his dream without a battle. He told Miss Norah Obrienne all about his dreams for the future and with reckless abandon sought with words to drag her up to the altar just as by physical force he was accustomed to drag to the lockup disturbers of the peace of lower Exchange Street.

Now Miss Norah Obrienne in acquiring her culture had learned how to use soft words. She didn't tell Mr. Calvin Kinaide that she had risen above the level of a fighting policeman; she told him quietly and sweetly that when she married, the man must be a gentleman—and that gentlemen didn't fight with drunken lumber-jacks. He must be a man of impressive personality, one who would be respected by the entire community and especially by those of inferior station and intellect!

THAT was about the nearest to a knock-out Mr. Calvin Kinaide had ever suffered, but he refused to be licked. His fighting blood was up. He must win this battle as he had always won. He didn't propose to turn in his badge just because a woman had landed a hard one on him! He could, however, change his tactics—and so he declared to himself that although just a bit hazy as to procedure, he would show his superiority by impressing his personality upon the rough stuff of his beat; and by moral suasion he would seek to maintain the peace.

All this had happened during the late summer, after the drivers and lumber-jacks had all been in, spent their money and gone, not to return until the following spring. It had not been difficult to avoid fighting during the absence of the lumber-jacks. Until now, the personality stuff and moral suasion had worked all right and Cal Kinaide began to have hopes that he might yet prove himself a gentleman of the type demanded by Miss Norah Obrienne.

But spring had come again and the lumber-jacks were beginning to sift in. Pretty soon the drives would be coming down. Already the personality and moral suasion methods of holding lower Exchange Street in subjection were skidding. At least that was what old Cap Whalen thought. You see old Cap was of the old school of hard-boiled police who believed that the only way lower Exchange Street could be kept out of a state of war was by the use of superior physical force and the cracking of a few skulls.

Old Cap knew that the worst was yet to come. When the two thousand or so men off the Mattawamkeag and Passadumkeag drives landed in lower Exchange Street, old Cap knew there would be war unless he had a good skull-cracker on the beat. He knew, too, that whatever might be the cause, he was not getting the customary results from the man he did have down there.

Mr. Calvin Kinaide, too, was doing a deal of thinking as he walked his beat on lower Exchange Street. He was wondering how much his "personality" was going to impress this hard mob which after a winter in the woods and a spring on the river would be looking for an outlet for their long-pent-up vitality and the sacks of silver each would have. He began to have a lot of doubts about the efficacy of Miss Norah Obrienne's "moral suasion" idea when he sought to apply it to Red Horgan, Frenchy LaBeau and some of the other two-fisted drivers who would soon be arriving.

Over in the ramshackle York Street House bar, Cal had overhead something of an argument between two lumber-jacks who had come in from the woods early. They had been discussing what was going to happen when big Red Horgan met up with the new giant from Engle's Number 4 camp, who was coming down with the Mattawamkeag drive. According to one of these men, the new giant was a Swede beside whom Red Horgan's six feet would seem dwarfish. The big Swede who was known only as "Swede" was said to be well over six feet in height and built proportionately, was tremendously powerful, had an undershot jaw and just loved a fight. He had, during the winter, cleaned up with most of the champions of the camps within reach and had announced that after he had cleaned up with the best men on the drives, he proposed to come into Bangor and clean up lower Exchange

Street—including big Red Horgan and this Cal Kinaide of whom he had heard.

News was now sifting down from the drives that "Swede" was making good his threats so far as the drives were concerned. He was just waiting until the Passadumkeag and Mattawamkeag river men met at Bangor to take on Horgan, for while the Swede was coming down with the Mattawamkeag, Horgan was with the Passadumkeag. The word had also come down that Horgan was perfectly willing to take on the Swede or anybody else, indeed that he had been swinging an ax all winter and a peavy all spring and was just spoiling to swing his mighty fist into the fat face of his challenger.

ALL this gossip came to the ears of Kinaide, and as he paced his beat he was just wondering how far Miss Norah Obrienne's moral suasion was going to carry with these two, especially after they had stood up to the bar of the York Street House together a few days. But Kinaide had a purpose in life now and he was always a determined sort of individual. His purpose was to prove to Miss Norah Obrienne that he was of superior personality; that he was no cave-man; and that, being a gentleman, respected by the entire community, he was entitled to consideration even at her lovely hands. Therefore he would not battle Horgan or the Swede. He would use moral suasion and strategy to keep them apart and thus avert the threatened clash.

Meantime, however, the moral suasion was not working perfectly on the lesser lights who were already in town. True, he had been able to stop most of the threatened battles by the strength of his former reputation. Most of the potential brawlers knew the old Cal Kinaide and were not anxious to start anything against his wishes. One or two, however, had gotten away from him and settled their arguments in the alley—and because some of them had begun to sense that Mr. Calvin Kinaide was not the old Cal Kinaide, there had been two or three outbursts in the streets in which citizens of Bangor had been mauled around somewhat. It was the suspicion that things were slipping in lower Exchange Street that had roused the wrath of old Cap Whalen.

At length the day came when the drives were in. The men had left the river at Oldtown, received their pay, cleaned up a

bit according to custom, bought new clothing and enough hard liquor to get a good start and then had boarded the train for Bangor. Lower Exchange Street was alive with big huskies who had spent the whole winter swinging the ax and all the spring with peavy and pike-pole, running logs down the rivers and streams. They were hard physically and under the stimulus of liquor were hard morally as well.

From each of the little boarding-houses and hotels around the lower end of Exchange Street could be heard snatches of song as the reunions got under way; raucous laughter and wild yells came forth as old friends met or parted. Occasionally came the rattle of broken glass as some big lumber-jack sought to impress upon the bartender the desirability of haste in producing the bottle. But it had long been the policy of the police department not to interfere so long as the lumber-jacks confined themselves to their own quarters, kept off the streets and avoided downright murder. They brought into Bangor many tens of thousands of dollars which went for clothing and food, as well as for drink. So long as they remained within reasonable bounds, they were left to themselves.

Cal Kinaide had been watching for big Red Horgan. He wanted to get to Red early to try out the moral suasion method of preventing a big fight on lower Exchange Street. When at last he saw the big fellow swing off the train at the Exchange Street depot, he lost no time in getting to him. Horgan, when not in liquor and not challenged, was, like most big men, good-natured even if rough. He had not been drinking much when he arrived in Bangor and the time was propitious for Kinaide to impress him with superior personality.

"Say, Red," he said as he took the big fellow by the arm and led him aside, "got a favor to ask yer."

"Shoot!" blurted Red, for he and the old Cal Kinaide had mingled on several occasions and he had a wholesome respect for the officer: "Want somebuddy licked?"

"Nope," was Cal's response. "I can 'tend to that pretty well. What I want is nobody licked! I don't want you and the Swede to mix it while you're in Bangor."

Big Red Horgan looked at Kinaide, wide-eyed with astonishment. This wasn't the method he had known heretofore, in Bangor! Then he drew himself up to his full six feet, stuck out his great chest and bellowed:

"Aw, go bite yerself, Cal! When I meet that big stiff I'm goin' to make him look like a pike-pole 'longside a cantdog! Get that, Cal? I'm goin' to ruin him forever!"

And in apparent disgust, the big fellow turned and walked away. Mr. Calvin Kinaide seemed to feel an emotion rising within him which he had not felt since Miss Norah Obrienne had returned home. But he mastered himself and went about his business. Superior personality and moral suasion had been set back upon its heels—but what was all that compared to the winning of Miss Norah Obrienne?

THINGS kept getting more and more boisterous in lower Exchange Street. Old Cap Whalen was sweating himself into a rage. "If that skull-cracker don't get busy down there, we'll have a riot on our hands," he fumed, and each day when Mr. Calvin Kinaide went out upon his beat, old Cap admonished him: "Make them lubbers kape the p'ace, Kinaide, even if ye haf to kill a few of 'em."

Mr. Calvin Kinaide knew just what old Cap Whalen meant and the feeling which had started to rise in him when Red Horgan had refused to listen to moral suasion, threatened to rise again. It took about all his will-power as he made his way down to lower Exchange Street to master the thought that if he were to preserve the peace on his beat, he must wade in and give somebody a good thrashing. But the image of Miss Norah Obrienne filled his mind and heart and all hope of becoming a gentleman in her eyes would be lost, should he resort again to his cave-man methods.

Day after day had been the same, but on this particular day he was rather congratulating himself that it was becoming easier to swallow that thing which was always rising within him. With a real lightness of heart, therefore, he swung upon his beat just after noon. His first round took him past the York Street House.

Even before he had turned the corner he could hear the racket and he quickened his pace somewhat, but just before he reached the door of the hotel, there came a wild yell, followed by a crash of glass as a chair came through the front window of the place—while the doorway belched forth a crowd of lumber-jacks.

Instinct always acts first, and it did so now with Mr. Calvin Kinaide. He clenched fists on which every bit of the

skin was whole and smooth; he gritted his teeth and took about three running steps. It was a return, for just an instant, of Cal Kinaide. Then memory overcame instinct and as quickly as he had started to run, he halted and opened his fists. "Personality" and "moral suasion" were going to have their innings!

With a dignified step, Mr. Calvin Kinaide strode into the York Street House. Through the little old office and into the big bar-room at the rear he walked—for from here yells were still coming. His pathway was well strewn with wreckage—for the hardwood tables and chairs which stood around the bar-room chiefly as roosts upon which the lumber-jacks, when overcome, might lay their heads to sleep it off, had quite generally been wrecked or sent out through the windows of the hotel. Things had started early today. Usually it took the whole forenoon for the boys to recover from the joys of the night before, and a few hours after they began to come to, to get another start. Evidently somebody had started early—and as Mr. Calvin Kinaide strode dignifiedly through into the bar-room, a glance told him it was not one of those with whom he was acquainted.

The bar-room was deserted except for one man. Bartenders had long since taken to cover, and most of the huskies who would generally have been hanging around there were either out in front at a reasonably safe distance or out in the alley looking though the windows and door. But that one man was a whole crowd. Striding up and down the top of the bar, digging holes in it with his calked boots, waving a whisky-bottle and challenging the world to fight, was a giant of a man. It was easy from advance descriptions to recognize the Swede—and he was crazy drunk.

Mr. Calvin Kinaide, repeating over and over to himself, "Personality, moral suasion," strode in majestically.

"Come down off'm there," he said, calmly, but in a commanding tone.

The giant stopped, a wild yell only half uttered, swung around and still holding his bottle aloft, looked down in astonishment and curiosity upon Mr. Calvin Kinaide.

"Come down off'm there!" repeated Mr. Calvin Kinaide still calmly but with somewhat more emphasis.

"You bane damn' right Aye will," cried the giant, as with a scream he leaped into the air, letting fly his bottle through the fly-specked mirror just above the head of

Mr. Calvin Kinaide, and himself landed just in front of that exponent of personality and moral suasion.

"Come on, now, set down and keep quiet," said Mr. Calvin Kinaide, exerting about the last ounce of his will-power in favor of personality and moral suasion.

FOR an instant the giant towering above the officer looked down upon him. "An' who the hell bane you, little man?" he said finally.

"I'm Mr. Calvin Kinaide," was the reply of the officer, who was fast slipping.

"Mr. Calvin Kinaide, eh? Aye been lookin' for you!" and with a yell the giant swung his mighty fist in the effort to annihilate with a single blow the man whose fame had reached clear to the north woods.

Mr. Calvin Kinaide ducked, but not quite enough. The wallop just touched him high up on the head and glanced over—but that touch had been sufficient to send Mr. Calvin Kinaide struggling among the débris of chairs and tables.

With the agility of a cat Cal Kinaide was on his feet again—the old Cal Kinaide! Gone were the ideals of personality and of moral suasion. Vanished was the vision of Miss Norah Obrienne. The old fighting spirit, the cave-man, had mastered, the lust for battle had conquered. He saw red.

"Gangway!" he yelled and made for the door and York Street. As he went, he cast from him club and gun and handcuffs. Behind him roared the drunken giant—out for a kill! That his opponent was running made him all the more determined, for he interpreted Cal's action as cowardice.

"Thought you bane fighter!" laughed the Swede. "One wallop enough, eh? Come on! Stand up! Aye got more!" And he swung after his enemy, while the crowd which had gathered made way for them.

Out in the street it was different. Here was plenty of elbow room and foot room, and here Cal Kinaide turned to face his huge opponent. From every hotel and boarding-house, from around corners, from everywhere, came lumber-jacks and river drivers like rabbits popping from their warrens. Almost before the pair of champions had reached the middle of the street, a thousand big, hard-faced men were crowding in to see the greatest battle in the history of the drives and of lower Exchange Street.

Let it be said to their eternal credit, too,

not one of these men would have permitted anything unfair in this fight. Cal Kinaide had many admirers in the crowd, for a fighting man loves another of his kind. Then, again, the big Swede towered so much above the policeman that Cal seemed little by comparison, and this made an appeal to that American love for the under-dog.

Even as Cal turned to face his antagonist, the mass of humanity had formed a big circle. No time was lost. The officer who had apparently been fleeing swung around in the middle of the street to face the derisive giant.

THE Swede was close up now, his great fists beating the air. With a roar he let fly a wide swing with his right. That, he immediately discovered, was a big mistake. The fist hit nothing—but at the same moment something hit him full in the mouth and, carried around by the force of his own blow, something else hit him a tremendous jolt back of the ear, just when he was off balance. The result was that, spitting out several teeth, the giant tumbled headlong to the pavement.

But while not badly hurt, he was made twice as angry. More, he had learned two or three things: He had learned that he was not going to kill Cal Kinaide with one mighty swing; he had also learned that Cal packed a wicked wallop in his own maulers; he had discovered that he must fight a man who was worthy of his prowess.

Scrambling to his feet, the big man rushed upon his pigmy opponent. It was his desire to land one solid blow which he felt would crush his rival. It was, further, his desire to get this little man within the grasp of his powerful arms. Then he could maul him at will. On he came—and the battle of cave-men was really on. Cal Kinaide, with more science, sidestepped and ducked, struck straight from the shoulder and landed frequent blows. His enemy, without science but with a tremendous advantage in height, reach, weight and strength swung giant arms like flails. Many blows he missed—but many, too, he landed, although few of them found their mark squarely.

It was but a moment before both were bruised and bloody. The Swede kept boring in, giving Cal no rest from his ducking and sidestepping. At last one enormous hand caught the arm of the policeman. In an instant it had jerked the blue-coated

body against that of the Swede. With a yell of delight the big fellow crushed the body to him. Now he had the redoubtable Cal Kinaide where he wanted him—the fight would soon be over!

But that lithe strong body refused to be crushed. Arms, legs, and body itself, writhed and twisted and squirmed. Somehow the Swede couldn't get it in just the position he desired to give it the finishing blow. They staggered and swayed dizzily, tottered a moment uncertainly, then toppled and crashed to the ground. Immediately the knot in the middle of the street became a writhing, twisting, rolling mass. It was hard to tell who was on top. The science of Cal Kinaide was being matched against the superior strength of the Swede. There was a glimpse of a torn and dirty blue coat on top; then a ragged shirt and great hairy back came to view. There came from the rolling, squirming mass a thud and a grunt as each drove with his fist into the other whenever position gave opportunity.

Somehow they rolled apart. Each leaped to his feet and again the arms lashed out. But fists, calks and the stones of the street had stripped the officer of most of his uniform, while the scanty clothing of the Swede was hanging in ribbons from his huge frame, and neither bore the same facial resemblance to the two men who a moment ago had been standing in the middle of the street. One of Kinaide's eyes was entirely closed and the other threatened to close at any moment. The Swede was bleeding at mouth and nose, his face badly cut. Which one was in worse condition would be hard to tell, but each was still full of fight. The big fellow kept coming on, with Kinaide ducking and dodging and sidestepping. Heavy blows were landed by each, but those of the officer were more telling—for most of them landed squarely, straight from the shoulder, while the wild swings of the giant were either half blocked or partly ducked.

ON came the Swede, taking severe punishment, but refusing to falter. A heavy right starting from his heels refused to be halted because a straight jab had landed squarely on his mouth. Cal Kinaide fell heavily—then made the quickest move of his life, for above him, seemingly suspended for an instant, was the huge bulk of the giant. The Swede, seeing victory near, had sought to finish it decisively.

Leaping high into the air with a yell, he expected to land his full weight with those calked shoes upon his opponent. Then it would indeed be over.

He missed by inches only. That lightning move rolled Cal Kinaide just out of the danger zone. He was on his feet again, ready for the next attack. More enraged than ever, the big man bellowed madly as he charged again. Giant arms swinging like windmills, on he came, raging, determined to land a finishing blow.

Cal Kinaide suddenly shifted his plan of defense. Instead of ducking a great swing, he stepped close inside it. At the same instant he planted his right heel behind the right heel of the Swede and putting all he had into the blow, shot his right fist upward.

It landed squarely and solidly under the chin of the big fellow. His arms dropped and he staggered. Cal's foot held firmly. Over his thigh and knee the giant fell backward crashing down, his whole weight landing on the back of his head and shoulders. Kinaide followed through, to land another if necessary, but the Swede lay quiet.

The crowd which up to this moment had been looking on in breathless intensity, burst into a yell. A rumble was heard and from his nearly closed eye, Cal saw a jigger coming down the street.

"Drive that jigger over here." He tried to shout but his swollen lips gave forth only a croak.

The crowd knew what he meant and the jigger was driven over alongside the fallen man. Cal tried to lift the big bulk upon it, but his strength was so far exhausted that he was unequal to the task. It was big Red Horgan who stepped forward and lifted the inert body upon the jigger.

"Rotten trick, Cal," he said as he did it. "You ast me not to fight 'im so you could do it yerself! I wanted to lick that big Swede myself!"

With that Horgan patted Cal on the back and helped him, too, to get upon the jigger—where he sank down, mumbling to the driver to go to the lockup.

THAT night the *Evening Commercial* carried a story of the battle between Cal Kinaide and the big Swede, and announced that both men were in the hospital, in a serious condition.

Cal Kinaide lay upon his cot, his head, his hands and most of his body swathed

in bandages. Beside him sat old Cap Whalen, chiding himself for having ever thought ill of his best skull-cracker and worrying lest perhaps he had lost the pride of the police force, for Cal Kinaide's hurts were not all visible ones. The pummelling he had received from the fists of the big Swede had injured him badly.

A doctor entered the room and old Cap with a worried look in his face, pulled him aside to ask: "Is he hurted bad, Doc?"

And the "Doc," having just come from the bedside of the still insensible Swede, and having those injuries in mind, answered:

"Oh, he's hurt all right, badly hurt. Concussion of the brain—just possibly a fracture of the skull. He *may* pull through, though." Old Cap Whalen thought he was talking about Cal Kinaide.

Again the door opened and there stepped softly into the room a wonderful girl whose head was crowned with a wealth of bronze hair. She cast a questioning look at the doctor and as he nodded she stepped to the side of the injured policeman.

"It's Miss Obrienne," the doctor said softly to the fallen gladiator.

He stirred on his cot and through his bandages mumbled: "It's sorry I am, Miss Obrienne. I tried the personality stuff and it wouldn't work. I had to turn cave-man. But, by gorry, I licked him!"

NORAH O'BRIENNE sank to her knees by the bedside. Tears began to flow. Old Cap Whalen, standing farther back, hadn't heard Cal's mumbled speech and immediately took fright.

"Do yer want me to call the priest, Miss Obrienne?" he asked with almost a sob. "Does he want absolution?"

If big Mike O'Brien had been there then he would have discovered that all the money he had spent to make a lady out of his daughter had been wasted. The veneer of culture which wealth and education had put on, fell off. The hands of Time had been moved back: she was just a red-headed, freckle-faced, scrawny Irish kid once more, whom somebody had called "Brick-top" and her champion as of yore had stepped up to her defense. She turned quickly from the wounded officer and with flashing eyes and that broad brogue which had been hers in youth, responded:

"Absolution, me eye! Call the priest and tell 'im to publish the marriage banns of Cal Kinaide and Nory O'Brien!"



Easy Street Experts

"The Deadly House" describes a specially remarkable exploit of those partners in amiable wrong-doing whom the gifted Mr. Atkey has made so famous.

By **BERTRAM ATKEY**

NOW, I consider that this is about as good a book as was ever written. It's interesting, it's sensible; it hasn't got a lot of frills and things, and it's valuable. Listen to this, Squire!" said the Honorable John Brass to his fellow-crook Colonel Clumber, in their London flat one afternoon.

"Listen to this—it's written by a man who knows what he's talking about." And he proceeded to read slowly, and with considerable emphasis, from a slim volume entitled "Queries at a Mess Table," which he had bought that morning.

"'Cheese may be taken in moderation with advantage' mark that, Clumber—with advantage, after dinner. A small quantity is considered to assist the digestion. . . . Toasted cheese, no matter of what kind—for in all the consistency becomes close by toasting—is the most indigestible article that can be eaten, and I am sure accounts for disturbed nights and troublesome dreams.' Absolutely true, Squire. 'Yet—alas!—what is nicer than a well served up Welsh rabbit, and what a wonderful flavor cheese adds to many

dishes—macaroni, etc.! After this, one may assist the gourmet by reminding him that the juice of the pineapple at the end of a meal is an agreeable and powerful digestive agent.' Now, that's a thing worth reading and worth remembering. And the little book is full of sound sense like that. We'd better tell Sing to get in a couple of pineapples tonight."

The Colonel nodded.

"Very fine bit of writing," he said. "How about wine? Does the man mention drinks?"

"Mention drinks—man alive, he's got a whole chapter on 'em! It's entitled 'What Shall I Drink?' Shall I read it?"

"Sure—half a minute, though. It makes me feel thirsty. Touch the bell."

The Honorable John rang for Sing, his Chinese manservant, and ran his eye quickly through the chapter which he was about to read.

"Listen—this man is a genius. He says: 'The strong sweet wines—Constantia, Malaga, Tokay, Malmsey—are best appreciated with a plain biscuit, when the stomach is not full. Thus taken, they are a whole-

some substitute for tea.' So bring in some of that Tokay we've got, Sing. Never mind about the biscuit. That's a matter of taste."

SING vanished, and the reading continued until the Tokay arrived, when the partners proceeded to drink the health of the author of the cheering volume which had so aroused their enthusiasm. Just as Mr. Brass was on the point of resuming, Sing entered again with a note for the Colonel.

He took the note, glancing carelessly at the address, and suddenly paled a trifle.

"What's up?" asked the Honorable John, watching him.

The Colonel showed him the envelope. It was addressed to "Lord Fortworth"—not as usual to "Colonel Clumber."

The Honorable John whistled—a low discordant whistle.

"Better open it," he suggested.

The Colonel inserted his thumb under the flap.

"I don't like it," he said heavily. "I've got an idea there's trouble floating about somewhere. Some guy has got on to me, and it might be awkward."

It may be re-explained here that in the days when from his zenith as a self-made millionaire-brewer, banker, company promoter, and all-round money captain, he had taken a high dive to the depths of an almost limitless insolvency, he had not waited to answer any of the innumerable questions which hundreds—yes, even thousands—of creditors were waiting to ask him. Not at all.

To the contrary, acting on advice of the Honorable John Brass, then a friend of the family, he had performed the operation he sometimes described as "pulling his freight" with such swiftness of decision, and, with the aid of Mr. Brass, such masterly skill, that a day after the news of his hopeless smash—due to wild speculation with a view to making greater dividends for a tolerably hungry crowd of shareholders—he had vanished as completely as the capital of his various companies. His wife had promptly left him at the first sign of his ruin, and, indeed, it was only due to Mr. Brass that the Colonel was not even now sojourning in funny clothes at Parkhurst, Portland, Dartmoor, or some one or other of our leading official resorts. The Honorable John, who had lost the hard and dishonestly earned savings of a lifetime in the Fortworth smash, nevertheless

stuck to the fallen financier. As he put it with cynical bluntness: "If Fortworth's spec's had turned out well, and he'd been able to pay that gang of shareholding wolves that are now howling for his blood an extra five per cent, they would not have asked any questions as to how he got it. They'd have sharked it and asked for more. But as the spec's went wrong they got it in the neck—good and heavy—and serve 'em right. Teach 'em not to be greedy."

So he and Fortworth, warm friends already, with almost identical tastes, became partners. That had been some years before, and no one that mattered had ever recognized in Colonel Clumber the red-headed, short-bearded Lord Fortworth. Even the police had given him up.

And now he had received a note addressed boldly to Lord Fortworth!

HE read the letter. It was quite short, and was addressed from 412 Garden Square, London, W. It ran:

My dear Lord Fortworth:

Can you make it convenient to do me the great favor of calling tonight at nine o'clock and discussing with me the science of swindling and the art of absconding—two features of our present day civilization upon which I should greatly like to have the opinion of an expert such as yourself.

I am, my dear Lord Fortworth,

Yours very sincerely,

LUBIN LAZAR.

The Colonel dropped the note.

"A nasty, polite, dangerous swine," he growled, suddenly purple-faced.

Mr. Brass looked grave.

"A blackmailer!" he said. "It was bound to come. Sooner or later in our line of business you tread on one, and he crawls up your trouser leg. Ever heard of him before? It's a queer kind of name!"

The Colonel shook his head slowly, his brows knitted.

The Honorable John's face set hard.

"I don't like the sound of the man," he said. "These polite sports are pretty cold-blooded cards when it comes to collecting the ready iron as a general rule. We shall have to go and see him—after dinner."

He rang for Sing.

"Ever heard of a sarcastic tough named Lubin Lazar, Sing, my lad?" he asked.

The Chink shook his head slowly.

"Ah, it's a wonder! You know most of the crooks in the town," said Mr. Brass sourly, for he was disappointed. "Skate out."

Sing "skated," smiling blandly.

"Well, we've got a couple of hours before dinner; it's only about half past five. We might do worse than go over to Garden Square and have a look round," continued the Honorable John. "Or I'll go alone; he probably knows you."

The Colonel, with language, agreed that perhaps it would be wiser for Mr. Brass to do the scouting by himself, but he insisted that his partner should not in any case harm Mr. Lazar, even if opportunity arose. He wished to reserve that pleasure for himself, he explained, with the air of a grizzly bear who has just been visited by a stiff-stinged hornet.

"We ought to get Lubin carted without violence," said Mr. Brass reprovingly. "Neatness is what we want to use with him."

He put on his hat, attached himself to a cigar, and sallied forth.

An hour later he was back, but had little news.

"It's a biggish, dark house opposite a kind of church," he said, steering a whisky-and-soda to a place where it would be safe. "Mysterious kind of a house. He had one visitor while I was there. Poor man, I should say, judging from the look of him. Youngish, nervous party, looked half-starved. I shouldn't be surprised if Lubin has got his net round him, too. I arranged to be drifting past when he came out, and he wasn't any happier than when he went in."

"If he don't get any more out of him than he does out of me," replied the Colonel, with a somewhat bloodshot smile, "he wont get much."

"Ah, well," said Mr. Brass soothingly. "We'll see what his particular stomach-ache is, tonight."

The Colonel reassured him, and they began to prepare themselves to get ready for the chief rite of the day—dinner.

Even the advent into their lives of Lubin Lazar could not destroy their interest in dinner. They were neither young nor emotional, and they permitted no outside issues to affect their inside tissues.

IT must be admitted that the partners¹ looked a more than ordinarily hefty brace to tackle when at about ten minutes to nine they stepped out to the superb Rolls-Royce limousine which helped them through life. Reasonably tall, broad like the side of a battleship, built "chunky,"

as the Colonel put it occasionally, with smooth, slightly hard, clean-shaven faces, and correctly attired from the crowns of their opera-hats to the soles of their dress-boots, they did not strike one as being the sort of individuals that the gentle confidence-trick man or any dark-alley tough would approach with genuine optimism.

Sing, who with his usual ability had contrived to wind up dinner in his best *cordons-bleu* style and yet leave himself time to make a quick change, was at the wheel, and lost little time in sliding them over to Garden Square.

They alighted, and the Honorable John tendered his last word of advice.

"Easy with him at first," he said quietly, for he was fully aware of the big, business-like automatic pistol that sagged the pocket of the Colonel's dinner jacket under his overcoat. "Let him show his hand before we show him his error."

THE Colonel nodded grimly. As the Honorable John's hand hovered over the bell-push the door swung open and a lady appeared. Evidently she was just leaving the house. She seemed a little excited, and was talking in queer, rather pretty broken English to the manservant who was showing her out.

"I wan' that you should tell heem yet again eef he not to leave alone my husban' that I shall fin' a plan yet. This is mos' cruel t'ing he try to accomplish—to crush, to grind under the heel—"

She saw the partners waiting on the step, stopped talking suddenly, passed out, and went slowly down the street.

She was rather shabby, but very pretty and graceful, with something about her that made one think both of Tokio and Paris.

"Lazar in?" asked the Colonel of the manservant.

Evidently they were expected, for the man closed the door and conducted them to a room across the rather dark and gloomily furnished hall.

He announced them: "Two gentlemen, sir!" and left.

The partners found themselves facing a huge man, seated at an elaborately carved writing-table. He was six feet six inches tall, if an inch, but his breadth was so terrific as to make him at first glance seem almost short. His face was probably the most handsome the partners had ever seen—but only in the sense that the chiseling

of the features was without flaw, for there was no expression upon it. It was utterly blank and inscrutable. The eyes were of a singular dull green, lightless and dead. There was no trace of color, red or pink, upon the uniformly olive complexion, and the man's hair, thick, heavy, parted in the center, and brushed away from the parting in a perfectly flat sweep, was snow-white. He made a strange and terrible figure as he sat facing the partners—perfectly still, perfectly silent, waiting.

The Honorable John afterward confessed that when he stood there taking in Lazar's appearance he experienced for the first time in his life a thrill of fear. And the Colonel in turn, confessed that he, too, had endured the same sensation.

"He made me think of a thundering great white python that had *got* you, but wasn't in a hurry to begin on you," said Mr. Brass.

BUT they were not the kind of men to allow the appearance of any man—or white python either—to cow them long. Unconsciously, perhaps, the Colonel pressed with the inside of his forearm the comfortable bulge of the big repeater in his pocket, and was cheered on the instant. He had seen too many strange men and sights in unswept corners of the world to lose his nerve permanently before the man Lazar, and Mr. Brass, too, had a rarely tapped vein of cold-blooded pluck somewhere in him, upon which he now proceeded abruptly to draw.

The Colonel took out the letter with a jerk.

"You Lazar?" he asked, the veins across his forehead beginning to bulge a little.

The blackmailer nodded.

"Sit down," he said in a slow voice, so shrill and reedy that the partners almost started. They had expected any kind of voice but that thin, high note. It was weird.

"No, you white-headed hound," rasped the Colonel. "We wont sit down. I want to know just what you mean by this. I take it you've got something to say about it. Say it, then, and we'll settle it now."

The Honorable John shrugged his shoulders slightly. He had urged the advisability of diplomacy on the Colonel. But he knew from the thick note of rage in his partner's harsh voice, from the pale, glaring eyes, and the engorged veins that were cording themselves on his heavy forehead,

that the only kind of diplomacy the ex-millionaire was in the least likely to employ was the kind that is backed by a .45 "gun."

Without a trace of emotion and without a movement save of the lips the gigantic man at the writing-table answered:

"You are Lord Fortworth, the bankrupt, who absconded eight years ago. I have all the facts, all the proofs. You will pay me one hundred thousand pounds within one month, or I will hand you over to the police."

IT was simple, undisguised blackmail. There was not the least attempt to gloss the thing. There was no embroidery upon it, as the Honorable John said afterward.

"I want 'yes' or 'no,'" continued Lazar. "I am busy. I have no time for talk. The sum is one hundred thousand pounds in notes, bearer bonds, jewels or cash. That is all."

Mr. Brass broke in hurriedly, as the Colonel gasped.

"He hasn't got the money," he said simply. "How can he pay if he hasn't got the money? You're one of the cut-and-dried yes-or-no guys. Well, so are we! You want one hundred thousand pounds; he hasn't twenty thousand. So what are you going to do about it?" It sounded true, and Lazar recognized that.

"Very good. He must pay the twenty thousand," he said, wholly cold-blooded. He made an alteration on a slip of paper before him as he spoke.

"And *you* can go to hell!" bawled the Colonel, fighting mad. He lugged out his big pistol and jammed it into the face of the expressionless giant at the table.

"Move a finger and I'll splash your brains into the coal-scuttle!" He gasped for words; he had so much to say that the phrases seemed to jam his mouth.

Lazar stared at him without a tremor.

"You will pay within seven days," he said in the tones of a man concluding an ordinary business deal. His eyes shifted, looking over the Colonel's shoulder and a little to the left of him.

"No," he said. "Don't shoot."

The partners wheeled.

Two men stood in a corner of the room with rifles—not pistols, but rifles—leveled on the Colonel and Mr. Brass. There was a singular quality of brutality in the fact that the men had rifles—the partners were aware of it simultaneously.

The Colonel choked himself to silence and dropped the repeater.

"Seven days?" said the Honorable John blandly. "You will have to extend that time. A man can't realize to his last penny within a week. Make it a month, Lazar, and I give you my word that—"

"I cannot accept the word of a fat black-guard whose criminal tastes are only paralleled by his gluttonous tendencies," interrupted Lazar coldly. Evidently he had been making careful inquiries about the partners.

"Why, damn your eyes!" stuttered Mr. Brass, so taken aback that the Colonel grinned, despite his wrath.

Lazar rose, towering over them. "Get out!" he said. "One week!"

They hesitated, surveyed the men with the rifles, and finally went. The manservant was waiting for them just outside the door. They followed him into the hall—sullenly. But with his hand on the catch of the outer door, he paused and spoke in a low whisper, his eyes stealthily watching the door of Lazar's room.

"I shall call at your flat at two o'clock tonight. Be in," he said. His lips did not move, and without even looking at them he opened the hall door and ushered them out.

They went down the steps, and even as Sing switched on his engine and they were on the point of stepping into the car, they were accosted by a tall, thin, shabby man, who was standing close by the curb. In the lamplight they saw that his face was white and drawn. His long mustache hung limp and untended, and his eyes glittered wildly from their cavernous sockets.

"**A**RE you gentlemen victims also?" He jerked his head sideways, indicating the house of the blackmailer.

The Colonel fired up.

"Not by a tank-full, old man," he said, with the fey, deadly hilarity of a roused fighting man.

The shabby nondescript, who talked like a gentleman, gazed curiously at them.

"I talked like that once," he said, "but I've lost my nerve now," and snapped his fingers sharply. It must have been a signal, for a woman appeared from behind the car, opened the door and entered. Mr. Brass recognized her as the girl who had made him think of Tokio and Paris.

"If you will give my wife and myself a lift to your house I think we might talk

things over to our mutual benefit," said the shabby young man.

The partners looked at each other, nodded, and the three joined the lady in the car.

THE shabby man seemed to brighten up a little, and plunged into his explanation without delay.

"It has been my lot to hang round the den of that octopus, Lazar, quite a good deal," he said, "and I have come to learn that when a car which obviously belongs to a rich man stops at Lazar's door it usually belongs to a rich victim—like myself. You look surprised. Nevertheless I possess an income of six thousand pounds a year, of which five thousand nine hundred goes regularly to Lazar—blackmail, every halfpenny of it. Why I find myself compelled to pay this outrageous sum does not matter, any more than why Lazar is victimizing or attempting to victimize you and a host of unfortunate people beside. But it cannot continue—it is my lifeblood. I can't fight him—he can destroy me."

The girl, who had been leaning back in a corner, stirred suddenly, leaning forward.

"I have jus' the ghos' of a plan," she said softly. "It has but jus' come to me, and perhaps he is not very good plan. But he is better than no thing." She looked only at Kendale, as the shabby man had introduced himself.

"You mus' not be angree," she said. "You promise me that?" He nodded.

"I think that man who has opened the door and shut him when we go to see Lazar, and admit us to enter the house, has feel a little interest for me. He have not tol' me anything of love, but I have think his eyes speak of it two—three—times, those days when I have insist' to see Lazar and begged him that he do not blackmail more. Thees evening also his eyes they are kind for me, but he say no thing, perhaps because these gentlemen are come to the door."

It was the shabby man's turn to scowl, but the girl put up her hands, laughing.

"There is no need for angree," she said in her queer, tangled, pretty broken English. "I have no thought for that man—not any man but for you. Only I jus' tol' you those things."

"And quite right, too," said Mr. Brass heartily. "Why, you ought to be proud, man! If that guy who doorkeeps for Lazar has weakened on Madam here, it's

a compliment to her and a gift to us. Why, he's calling to see us tonight, and if we play our cards correctly he's the key that's going to pick the Lazar lock. I think he's pretty well through with Lazar anyway—but we'll see!"

The car drew up at the mansions in which the partners occupied a first-floor flat, and they entered the building.

"What made you sort of confide in us, Kendale?" asked the Colonel curiously, as they went up.

The shabby man smiled.

"Well, you looked as though you were the sort that would put up a pretty sporting fight with that blackguard before you gave way," said Kendale. "That was it chiefly, I think. And probably it is what Lazar's doorkeeper thought."

The Colonel nodded.

"Well, although I don't mind admitting he made us look a little foolish tonight, I guess you're right. Why, if it comes to a pinch, or if Lazar did no more than put my partner off his appetite, I believe, apart from what we should do, that little primrose who drove the car tonight would catch him and torture him in some gentle Chinese way until he got the name of his partner, then kill them both and burn their houses down, and enjoy doing it."

Kendale laughed.

"A friend in need, eh?"

"Sure," said the Colonel, "—and a wonderful cook!"

IT needed little discussion for the partners to realize that nothing very effective could be done against Lazar until the butler or doorkeeper had called, and his reason for calling had been disclosed.

Therefore, with their accustomed bluff hospitality they devoted the remainder of the evening to entertaining, not without success, Kendale and his beautiful wife. It was not difficult to understand that the doorkeeper had fallen in love with Soya Kendale. The partners in the course of business and pleasure had encountered many pretty and charming women, but as the Colonel expressed it later, Mrs. Kendale, despite her simple, inexpensive and, indeed, rather shabby costume, had the rest of the Venuses whipped from the word "go." Sweet, unaffected, a little quiet, and obviously adoring her husband, she pleased the two old wolves immensely. Aided and abetted by Kendale, they encouraged her to talk simply for the sake of hearing her

delicious mistakes, and Mr. Brass found it necessary to make many visits to the kitchen in order to correct and improve upon an already sumptuous supper which Sing was preparing.

"We don't want Mrs. Kendale to go away from here with any idea that we starve our guests or strangle 'em with any charity dope, my lad," he was careful to explain to the busy Chink. "Understand that!"

Naturally the result was a meal of a kind which the Kendales had not faced for many moons, and to which they did justice. The partners joined them—successfully, as usual.

At two o'clock precisely the electric bell whirred sharply and a moment later Sing showed in and announced "Mr. Robur Roburton." It was Lazar's doorkeeper.

HE was one of those dark, square-faced men, with a jaw like the butt end of an anvil, and deep, dark, watchful eyes. He seemed very self-possessed, but the partners noticed, nevertheless, that his eyes brightened as they fell on Soya Kendale, to whom he bowed scrupulously. Then he faced the others.

"An association with Mr. Lubin Lazar, extending over some six months or more, has taught me the habit of being direct," he said quietly, "and I think that you gentlemen would prefer to get to work without preliminaries. Very good." Although he was addressing himself to the men of the party, his eyes returned again and again to Soya Kendale. "I have decided that Mr. Lazar's business must come to an end. I need not go into the circumstances which compelled me to join him, any more than we need go into the matters which caused him to blackmail you gentlemen. Briefly, I have come to the conclusion that Lazar's methods are too brutally merciless. For some time past I have been looking for two or three determined and absolutely reliable men to help me deal with him, and when you two gentlemen came tonight I fancied I had found them.

"I overheard your interview. I have come to ask if you will cooperate: it will be dangerous to the last degree, for Lazar is a man of infinite resource and has a body-guard of ruffians that fear nothing in the world but the contingency of being discharged. Yet it can be done: we can draw his teeth at least, but we must do it tonight. There is not time to outline my

plan; you must put yourselves at my disposal, and do with minute scrupulousness all I say. And *tonight!*"

He paused a moment, waiting. His few words, quietly spoken though they were, had rung with truth. The man knew what he was saying. That he believed it to be completely true was as obvious as the fact that he loved, or at least was on the verge of loving, Soya Kendale. Probably it was the contemplation of the unhappiness of the girl which had guided his decision to break with Lazar.

"What do you say, gentlemen?"

"We agree." They spoke simultaneously.

Robur Roburton smiled—a quick, short smile that was gone in an instant.

"Good!" he said. "Let us start now. Mrs. Kendale, perhaps, will wait here until we return." He went across to the girl, extending his hand.

"Good-by, Mrs. Kendale," he said softly.

Outside, Sing pushed himself blandly into prominence.

"Please, master, you wantee me?" He gazed at the Honorable John yearningly with his mouth open like a dog begging to be allowed to exterminate rabbits.

Mr. Brass looked interrogatively at Roburton, who ran his eye calculatingly over the tough, muscular form and whale neck of the Chink, and nodded.

"Fall in—at the back," said the Honorable John, and the Chink fell in.

THEY walked to Garden Square, and they were a hardy-looking crew. Robur Roburton explained his plans and gave his instructions as they went. Association with these capable gentlemen, brief though it had been, seemed to have restored Kendale a good deal of that "nerve" which he had lost, and he hummed softly to himself as he went, lightly twirling a lead loaded cane which he had found in the umbrella-stand at the flat and which was capable of felling a camel at one blow, properly steered.

Arrived at No. 412 Garden Square, Roburton produced a latch-key, opened the door, and the party passed silently in.

As they entered the hall a switch clicked and the place was suddenly flooded with light. A man who had been sitting in the darkness rose—a big, clumsy, pistol-like weapon in his hand. Roburton explained a little later that it was an air pistol, powerful enough to send a bullet through a man, and practically silent.

The man lowered the pistol as he recognized Roburton and stared interrogatively. He was a big, savage-looking brute, one of the rifle-brigade the partners had met in Lazar's room. Roburton went up to him, whispering softly.

"What say?" asked the man, stooping a little, half turning his head, craning to hear what the doorkeeper said.

If he had tried he could not have posed better for Roburton's purpose. He was just at the right distance, at just the right angle. Roburton's fist, with all of Roburton's hundred and sixty pounds weight behind it, took him on the curve of the jaw, and he went down on the soft Turkish carpet like a wet sponge. In a second Sing was on him with a coil of cord, and in an incredibly short time he lay bound, gagged, and helpless, at their feet.

"One!" said Mr. Brass with satisfaction.

They followed Roburton down a narrow passage. The house was silent as death, and they were lighted only by the slender ray from an electric torch carried by Roburton. They passed through a sliding panel and came upon a long flight of steps, down which they went in single file.

Three steps from the bottom Roburton stopped.

"Miss the last step—don't tread on the last step!" he said warningly. "It's live—the last man who trod on it at night was electrocuted!"

They felt themselves paling.

"This is a man-trap of a house," snarled the Colonel. "I want Lazar bad."

It seemed to the Honorable John for a moment that an icy-cold butterfly was fluttering up and down his spine. Before Roburton had come upon the scene he had been planning to pay a night visit to the house with the Colonel.

"I am glad Roburton fell in love with that little woman—glad like a child eating cake," he muttered.

The narrow passage, lined with glazed bricks, along which they now proceeded, seemed to be some forty yards long, and, warned by Roburton, they went silent as a string of phantoms.

They went down three very steep steps—the treads were so narrow they were ledges rather than steps.

EVEN as Roburton stepped again on the level ground something hissed sharply immediately in front of them.

"Ah!" said the doorkeeper, and swung

the long, thin, tarnished sword which the others, wondering, had seen him take from a rack of trophies on the wall of the hall.

There was a wet flop, as though a half-ripe pear had fallen on the hard brick, and a sudden sound of slithering.

"A cobra! Stand back, for God's sake!" hissed Roburton. His light searched the darkness before them. The ledge-like steps led down into a little pit formed by sinking the floor of the passage some five feet. Across the pit was slashing and squirming the divided body of the snake, and on the far side near a similar set of steps was another of the hooded horrors, its head reared high over its nest of coils, awaiting them.

Of a sudden a shaking fit seized upon Roburton.

"T-t-take the l-l-light," he said to Mr. Brass, his teeth chattering. "I s-s-shall be all r-r-right in a m-minute."

The Honorable John took the light, and with his free hand fumbled for his flask, his eyes fixed intently on the sinuous, swaying neck of the killer that hissed gently on the far side of the pit.

"Minute be damned!" he said. "You take a pull at this!"

The Colonel unscrewed the top and Roburton sucked greedily at the rare old brandy without which Mr. Brass rarely went out on business.

"Master!" Sing squeezed past Kendale, whose nerve had gone again, and whose breath came and went in a queer, dry whistling. "Master, me no flaid snakee--me killee! Me show. Plentee snakee China."

He took the torch and sword and dropped into the pit, from which they had scrambled. Quite what he did they could not see, but in a second or so there sounded another of those wet "*plops*" and the hissing of the reptile ceased.

The Chink came back, smiling blandly as ever.

"Put blade in him bellee!" he said, and respectfully took his place in the rear again.

ROBURTON, steadied by the brandy, stiffened himself.

"Good!" he said. "Snakes always give me the shudders. I didn't quite expect them there tonight, either. I just took the sword in case. This was a new pair. The last couple died, and I did not know the new ones had arrived yet."

"Where are we, anyway?" asked the

Colonel sullenly. "And how many more obstacles are there in this race?"

"No more between us and Lazar—that I know of—except another man at the end of the passage. We are in the tunnel leading from 412 to 406 Garden Square. Lazar is Lazar at Number 412, but he is Mr. Remer-Venn, a collector of antiques, at Number 406."

"Huh!" grunted Mr. Brass. "He's very nearly collected four moderns and a Chink in his tunnel tonight. We'd better make a move!"

They passed the pit.

Some three yards farther on Roburton stopped again and asked the Honorable John for his torch. Then he directed both rays on the floor a few feet in front of him.

"What's wrong?" asked Mr. Brass in his ear.

"Those floor bricks—see? They run across like a ridge; they are half an inch higher than the floor. I don't like 'em."

The Honorable John pondered.

"Look as though they might be meant to be trod on. Try 'em with the sword."

Roburton pressed the square of slightly raised bricks. The sword bent, but nothing happened. Still Roburton shook his head. Sing stepped forward again.

"Me tread on blocks," he volunteered.

But this unseen danger was different from visible cobras.

"You close your face, banana," growled the Honorable John, "and keep your place, d'ye hear? You're getting above yourself."

Sing slunk back, and they all stared at the little square of bricks.

"I wouldn't tread on 'em for half a million," muttered Kendale.

"Only a blank fool would offer more than that," snapped the Colonel.

Their nerves were on edge.

"Pull off the air pistol at it," suggested Mr. Brass. "Is it a repeating tool?"

"Yes, three shots," said Roburton. "I'll try one."

He pulled the pistol; there was a tiny hissing pop, and the bullet hit full in the center of the raised patch. At the same instant, whistling through the air with a note so sharp as to be a scream, a huge blade flashed in a semi-circular rising swoop from the base of the tunnel wall a few feet on the farther side of the raised bricks. It sheared over the suspected part and shot into position against the wall on the expedition's side of the passage, quivering like a steel tongue. It was enamelled

white, and was engraved to match the bricks of which the tunnel was built. The whole device was much as though one had fixed a vast handleless table knife to the floor and bent it down curving sideways and back along the ground, until it fitted into a twist in the bottom of the wall, the tip being secured by a spring working in conjunction with the raised bricks. When "set" the blade fitted so well into the specially grooved face of the wall that it was invisible, but now it was "thrown," the infernal trap was obvious.

THE party stared wildly at each other. Had any one of them trodden on those bricks he, and any two behind him, would have been lopped in half like cucumbers.

The Honorable John pulled himself together with a very sickly smile.

"If it hadn't been for Roburton and me, Sing," he said hoarsely, for he was shaken, "you'd have been in a fine state—all over the passage, practically speaking!"

"For pity's sake, let's get out of this!" said Kendale and began to laugh hysterically.

"Shut up!" hissed Roburton viciously, but the wild mirth of the overstrained man rang louder.

The Colonel seized Kendale by the throat. "Quiet!" he ground out. "Quiet, or I'll kill you!"

Taken at the right moment, Kendale's hysteria subsided.

But nevertheless he had been heard. A door opened at the end of the passage, a few yards along, a flood of light poured in, and a man appeared at the opening. But Roburton was expecting him, and even as the guard swung up his arm the door-keeper's pistol gave its queer little breathless "pop" and the guard fell forward, shot through the hip. His pistol clattered out of his hand along the floor toward them.

"Good! Now for Lazar!" said Roburton. They hurried forward, leaving the wounded man, temporarily, to look after himself.

They went up an interminable flight of steps, still in a brick tunnel, like a pack of hounds.

"We're inside the wall of Number 406," explained Roburton as they went. "The steps lead to two rooms at the top of the house—and this is the only way by which these rooms can be entered, except by a fire escape through the window. The rooms are cased in with steel, like strong rooms

with a window. He keeps all his papers here. If we had gone in at the door of Number 406 we couldn't have got into the rooms at all. There is a secret door, no doubt, but only Lazar knows it."

He signed for silence.

The stairway curled round like that of a church tower. "Wait here," whispered Roburton, crawling round the last corner.

A few seconds later he returned and beckoned to them. Soundlessly they followed him. The stairs ended in a level platform leading to a door through which could be seen a brightly lighted room.

In the room was a big desk, and a man of gigantic stature was sitting at this desk asleep, his head resting on his arms which were spread on the desk before him.

"The lair of Lazar!" whispered Roburton with a theatrical touch, probably due to the nervous strain he was enduring.

And even as they stared one of the blackmailer's arms slid off the desk, slowly, inertly, striking heavily against the edge of the chair seat. So it hung laxly.

"See that?" whispered the Honorable John, and there was something in his voice that thrilled them.

A second passed, then suddenly, as though acting on impulse, they all walked quietly into the room.

The Honorable John touched the man on the shoulder, but he did not move—for he was dead. There was a bullet-hole in his right temple.

They lifted him—four were needed to do it with decency—to a couch at the side of the room. Then Mr. Brass crossed over to pull down the blind. So it was he who noticed the little starred hole in the windowpane.

"Some one shot him from a house on the other side of the Square," he said. But none of the others—except Sing—heeded him. They were at the big safe in the corner, the door of which hung open. It was crammed with papers—each neatly endorsed with a name.

PRESENTLY Kendale rose, a bundle in his hands, his eyes glowing. Evidently he had found the documents and letters which had given, or helped Lazar to retain, his power over him. And a moment later the Colonel had his.

Roburton—evidently a victim who had been called upon to pay blackmail in the shape of service rather than money—soon found his bundle, also.

"Good!" he said.

But Mr. Brass disagreed.

"You might think so," he said. "But I don't believe in going through a safe without looking in the money-box compartment!"

Then he took *his* turn at the safe. The drawers were crammed with money—notes and gold to the value of two thousand pounds.

MR. BRASS and Sing packed the money in a small bag they found near the desk, while the others examined the various papers relating to themselves.

But as the Honorable John closed the bag, an idea occurred to him.

"Who shot Lazar? Have you got any idea, Roburton?" he asked.

Roburton nodded.

"I can guess—a man named Talen whom Lazar had bled dry. He could not have had more than the price of a rifle and the rent of an attic to use it from. He was in his day a prize-winner at Bisley."

Kendale nodded corroboration.

"He was another poor victim," he said. "He was always swearing to settle with Lazar. It was bound to come. His wife died a month ago, and—I suppose he just didn't care as long as he got even with Lazar. He's probably been waiting his chance across the Square by day and night, and tonight it came. Lazar must have been busy, and switched on the light without pulling down the blind!

"That made him an easy mark for a shot like Talen. He's probably been dead some hours," added Kendale.

The Honorable John dumped the bag of money on the desk.

"Well, *we're* leaving here!" he said. "You'd better divide the money with the most needy ones of Lazar's victims, Kendale. Or, say, half to them and half to Roburton."

But Roburton shook his head.

"I didn't do this for money or for hatred of Lazar," he said, looking them all squarely in the eyes. "I did it for love of a woman I shall never see again—but whom I have helped to make happy."

They knew he meant Soya Kendale.

THERE was a pause. Then Roburton went on:

"You people had better get out now.

We'll get back through the passage, and you can leave the rest to me. I'll see the money goes to the right people, and their *dossiers*, too. I can deal with Lazar's guard—and with Lazar also."

The partners glanced at each other. Roburton was right—in every way. He knew the houses, the secrets of the place, the guards, the victims of the blackmailer—everything. He was the right man to wind up the thing.

They returned along the way they had come—Roburton having switched off the current that made a death-trap of the electric step—and so went quietly out into the street—four of them—as they might have been four revelers homeward bound from a card-party.

Soya Kendale was curled up on a big lounge in the flat, fast asleep, when they arrived home.

She looked very sweet and pretty, and they had no difficulty in understanding that Roburton found it easy to pity her first and so come to love her.

"That man may have been a black-mailer's butler," said the Honorable John softly, "but he was a white man tonight, whatever he was yesterday or will be tomorrow. That's what. Fetch in the old brandy, Sing."

The Kendales left the flat next morning for Paris, where they settled down, and a few days later Roburton called.

"Everything's fixed," he said briefly. "I sail for New York next week. You'll hear no more of Lazar!"

WHAT he had done with the guard, with the blackmailer's body, with the *dossiers* and with Lazar's loot of years, he did not say. Nor did the partners ask. He gave them the address of the man Talen, and this, with their knowledge of how Lazar was killed, was all they needed as a safeguard against the improbable chance of being entangled in the killing.

Then he left. They never saw or heard of him again.

"Well," said the Colonel, summing up, as they lingered comfortably over breakfast one morning, "whatever Roburton did, he did thoroughly!"

Mr. Brass agreed.

"Yes," he said thoughtfully, reaching for the kidneys. "Yes. But then, he was a thorough kind of man!"



The Laughing Man

This romance of the mining country is of exceptional interest, and will lead the reader to watch for Mr. Hoffman's future work.

By W. D. HOFFMAN

JOHN BAYLIS tilted back his broad-brimmed hat, stepped back a pace, and viewed the work on his tunnel heading of double-thickness posts and caps, happy as a schoolboy. He scanned the initial timbering, chuckled at the skill he had shown, then rubbed his hands as his eyes fixed themselves on the packed gravel in the center of the bore. It looked good—very good! Barker, of Free Gold Consolidated, could have no kick on that!

He stood there for a moment debating whether to use the hand steel again on that soft shale above and below the gravel, or to call it a day. It was dismally lonesome up here on the Fiddler, in the old deserted cabin he had fitted up for a dwelling, and the urge to continue work won, although the sun had gone down. Soon he would have company, when his crew came.

John Baylis had been here for four days now, alone, except for Rabb and that other—the one whom he had heard but not seen! He had not expected to find a man like Frederick Rabb in the hills. His neighbor, occupying a cabin on the slope above him, was not a prospector, seemed

more of a business man, and admitted that his chief purpose here was to get rid of asthma. He was affability itself, outwardly at least, and seemed glad to see young Baylis come up.

As to the depressing lonesomeness up on the abandoned old placers of Fiddler Creek, among the tumbledown cabins falling into ruin after more than a generation of disuse, John Baylis expected that. But he had not counted on anything like the eerie laugh he had heard the third night.

It was an uproarious laugh, there in the wilderness, one that for a brief instant had the quality of being infectious, but that quickly changed to a sardonic, dry and sepulchral series of tones that pierced one's brain like a knife, so cold and mirthless was the sound. At least, it seemed so to John Baylis—as though it broke the stillness with loud merriment, then quickly became the icy chuckle of *Mephistopheles* himself as he reached out a beckoning hand to *Faustus*.

It was after dark, but still early in the evening, that Baylis had heard the sound. A mighty queer place for travelers to

he going through, he thought idly, as he came to the cabin door to listen. There was no trail through here, nothing but a jumble of boulders in the creek, and a tangle of manzanita, madrona, bay and larger trees, chiefly fir and pine. Possibly a pair of prospectors had got off the trail, he concluded—must have been more than one, for no one man would laugh thus in the wilderness alone. Yet it was the voice of only one man.

Prospectors were rarely found here, so thoroughly had the ravines and the creek-bed been worked since Forty-nine. In his own case, as a prospector, it was different. When he left the college of mining he had a well-worked-out theory about the whole of the mother lode country, particularly the Fiddler Creek section, where ancient river-beds should yield heavily in nuggets—if uncovered. The lost Chinese gravel mine he believed to be something more than a myth. It is true that wiser men than he had tried to uncover those old underground river channels; but he was young and full of enthusiasm. Instead of using his Bachelor of Science to land a job with the big companies as others of his classmen had done, John Baylis put it up direct to Nathaniel Barker, of Free Gold Consolidated. He made his argument, and won the necessary financial backing.

"We don't often do it," grumbled Barker, convinced against his will by the blueprint diagram of the young engineer. "This treasure-hunting for mythical lost Chinese mines means nothing to us. But we'll back you for one tunnel on the showing you've made to tap that old river-bed. If you reach it, you can go high with us, or take your fifty per cent—"

"I'll take the fifty per cent—"

"And if you don't—you'll be out of a job."

That suited John Baylis to a suppressed shout. Within a week he had got into action on the Fiddler.

AFTER surveying the heading he set to work again. He had stooped down to take up a cap from its little flat box when his neighbor came over through the hill-side chaparral, picking his way with the aid of a gold-headed cane.

Frederick Rabb, a man of perhaps fifty, his face speckled with little broken blue veins, watched the young workman insert the cap in a stick of powder, coughed rather nervously, and grinned.

"You're not looking for a vein; hence you are trying to tap a gravel bed." He smiled knowingly.

"Right! No secret about it," admitted the other.

"I'm on the same level, on the other end of the slope," went on Rabb, coughing again. "Excuse me,—that blamed cough,—reason I'm up here, to get rid of that bad throat and asthma. As I was saying, I'm on the other side; got a theory of my own—might start a prospect and beat you to it."

"Hope you do. Every man to his theory."

"You may be hitting it closer than you think," resumed the visitor. "Two years ago an old fellow came into my office in San Francisco with nuggets running from one dollar to twenty. Got 'em till the channel suddenly walled up. He told me of the place—you may be pretty close. Since I'm here, away from railroads, towns, even stage roads, I might combine health and digging."

"You hear visitors in the ravine last night?" the younger man asked suddenly.

"Visitors?"

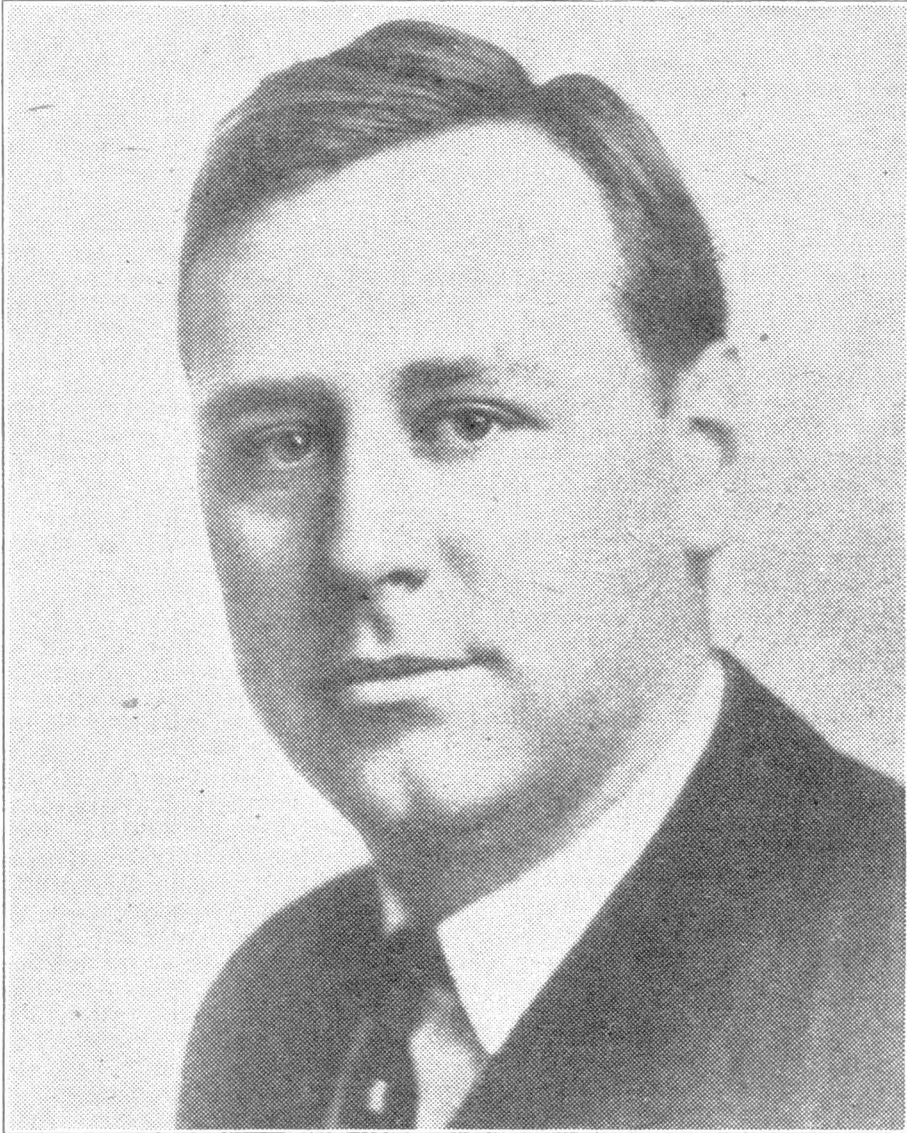
"Heard a man laughing in the ravine—a loud laugh. Thought surely you'd hear it from your cabin."

RABB eyed the other curiously, toying with his gold-headed cane. "You're the first man in to this spot on the Fiddler in six months."

John Baylis tilted back his hat, and changed the subject, meanwhile crimping on a fuse and preparing his "shot." Rabb remarked about it getting too dark to work and wandered up the slope toward his cabin.

That same evening John Baylis was in his log hut, the door ajar, preparing a late supper. He had taken up a frying-pan and stepped to the small cook-stove. Suddenly he tensed, his body set, motionless, as a deep-throated chuckle drifted down from the ravine, then burst into a loud, startlingly plain laugh. For a half-minute the sound swelled in increasing cadences, then broke into cold, gurgling notes and died out.

John Baylis dropped the frying-pan and hurried out and up the ravine. Vainly he searched the locality. Finally he squatted down among the manzanitas in the moonlight and remained very still near the spot where that laugh must have originated, ears



A old-time Westerner, W. D. Hoffman has owned a ranch on the Rio Grande, edited newspapers in New Mexico and Arizona, knew Fort Worth in its woolly days. He filed the first account of the shooting of Pat Garrett, slayer of Billy the Kid, and was on the scene when Mannie Clemens was shot to death as the culminating chapter of the Lincoln County feud. Later he succeeded Mitchim as editor of the *El Paso Evening News* after Mitchim killed Harrell. The romance of the mining country which we print herewith is thus the work of one who knew the West when it was wild.

straining for sound of a crackling twig that might betray a man. After an hour of waiting in utter silence he gave it up.

NEXT morning, early, working at his tunnel heading, he heard it again—loud, deep, at first, breaking off in a series of hollow notes. For reasons of his own he had not mentioned the experience of the evening before to Rabb; he did not want his neighbor to think him "queer." He decided to go up to Rabb's cabin, casually, to give the other an opportunity to mention it, if he had heard it.

That is where he met Elsa George. She was standing entranced before a full-bearing apple tree among a tanglewood of scrub oak and brush, a hundred feet from Rabb's cabin. John Baylis stopped abruptly when he saw her—a lovely creature in spite of severe mannish attire, boots, khaki trousers and blouse; her profile finely cut, cheeks and chin full; her hair a rare golden brown in the sunlight where it fell from under her wide man's hat. Her eyes were turned from him. It was not so much the fine figure she made there in the morning light, but her presence in such an unexpected place, that held him in amazement. He was conscious he was staring, and moved on, toward the cabin, his head still turning her way. She must have heard his footsteps, for she uttered a flood of exclamations:

"How wonderful! Red apples, here in the wilderness! Not a soul has lived on this mountain since the gold rush—and this apple tree, among thorns and tangled brush, has been bearing season after season ever since the Forty-niner planted it here! Probably that seed came around the Horn from Connecticut, or over the plains from Missouri! Isn't it wonderful?" She turned suddenly, and as her eyes met his she gasped in surprise.

"I—beg your pardon!" she faltered. "I thought it was Uncle!" She turned hastily and walked toward the cabin, and at that juncture Rabb came to the doorway. He sauntered out, with his cane, smiling.

"My niece, Miss George—Mr. Baylis!"

They talked, then, for some time, before John Baylis learned how the young woman had reached so inaccessible a region. He knew she had not been here before when he had visited Rabb. His neighbor explained that Elsa had for some time been his secretary in San Francisco, and that she now was doing some writing

and had coaxed him to allow her to come up to his cabin, to study the old placers. "Yes," laughed the niece, "and I had to haze you nearly to death before you would grant me such a little thing!" John Baylis thought the remark significant at the time. Rabb had gone down to Wagon-tongue, end of the stage line, to meet her, and they had come up together that morning. She would not remain that evening, but would go back to the village, where she had a room at the one hotel. But Elsa would be around that section of the mother lode for perhaps a week, collecting material, her uncle explained.

Rabb, then, might have heard the laugh of the evening before, and possibly of that morning—it had been just after daylight. But John Baylis refrained from mentioning it, in the presence of the girl. In fact, he had other things to think of, for Elsa George accepted his invitation to look over the new tunnel working. They spent several hours together about the claim, and when finally they went back to Rabb's cabin John Baylis felt that Elsa and he were warm friends. One remark of hers struck him during that visit:

"I cannot understand why, since it is so hard to get up here, Uncle doesn't want me to stay overnight."

"Perhaps there is no suitable accommodation in these crude old cabins for a young woman," he suggested.

"Indeed! Do I look as though I were afraid of roughing it? I'd be delighted!"

He admitted that this young woman, of superb build, athletic to a degree, would be able to weather a night on the Fiddler. He had taken note also of the fact that Rabb's cabin, unlike the others, was a two-room affair. He wondered if there was another reason why the uncle had demurred at her visit in the first place, and then, yielding, opposed her staying overnight.

WHEN John Baylis and the girl returned to the cabin Rabb upbraided the young engineer good-naturedly for stealing his niece's company for so large a part of the day.

"But I shall be here—lots!" she proclaimed, joyfully. "Oh, Uncle, why don't you fix up a place for me here, tonight?"

"Sorry." He raised his cane hand, gesturing negatively and determinedly; she must go back that night to Wagon-tongue, to which he would accompany her.

"Well, I will come up again," she insisted. "I shall never tire of going about among these old ruins, fallen-down log shacks and mines. There is romance in every pile of fireside stones where once the Argonauts sat evenings and recounted their luck—in the days of Forty-nine! I shall come up again day after tomorrow—that is, if it isn't too much trouble to you, Uncle. There isn't a semblance of a trail!"

Rabb frowned dubiously. The younger man broke in promptly: "I'd be very glad to call for you and guide you up here, Miss George."

It was arranged that way, although Rabb seemed none too pleased. John Baylis left them then and went back to his tunnel, for he had lost most of the day's time—time that he did not consider lost, however!

NEXT morning again, while working at his tunnel heading in the bright sunlight, he heard that laugh distinctly, loud and prolonged, succeeded by convulsive chuckles that came so plainly he knew the man must be near. He dropped his hand drill, sped to the cabin and obtained his rifle, then ran quickly to the ravine. So thoroughly did he examine the ground in that hollow and on the slope nearby that he knew the laughing man was not there.

Rabb must surely have heard it this time, he concluded, for his cabin was little farther from the ravine than was the tunnel. He went to Rabb's door after making his vain search.

"Did you hear it?" demanded the visitor.

Rabb grinned, from his chair, where he was poring over a book.

"If I could tell you what that laugh is, I'd hand you a thousand in cash," he said, coughing a little. "Didn't want to admit that I heard it the other time, for fear it might scare you away. It's good to have some one else here on the Fiddler for a change. But for that laugh I'll be perfectly happy in these hills. I'm not superstitious—a hard-headed business man—but I've hunted for days for that laughing man, without success, and it's making me creepy in spite of myself. If it keeps up, I'll not stay here."

"Is that why you didn't want Miss George—"

"Exactly. This thing is enough for a man's nerves, let alone a woman's."

"You don't seem to bother yourself

much, looking, any more," remarked the other, glancing at the book in his hand.

"You're right—I've given it up. But still—" He looked at John Baylis with sudden interest, "—now that you are here, we might work together on it. The sound comes from below my cabin usually, and above yours, in the ravine. Next time you hear it, come a-running, up the ravine, and I'll hurry down. We may corner him, that way."

THE other agreed, with enthusiasm. For several days he heard nothing of the sound—it was as though the fellow suspected the trap. John Baylis went down to Wagontongue for Elsa George, found her on the hotel veranda listening to the tales of old Eric, a Forty-niner, then tramped up with her to Rabb's place, crossing several ridges through dense chaparral and timber before reaching the Fiddler. He observed her pausing frequently, studying landmarks. Finally she asked him for his jackknife.

"Why are you doing that?" he asked, as she laboriously blazed a tree.

"Who knows,—I may want to run up here alone,—can't expect to bother you men to act as guides, always!"

He insisted earnestly that she never try to come up to the Fiddler alone. "Tell me what days you want to come up, and I'll be only too glad to go for you," he declared. "Or your uncle would do it."

She laughed in a way that made him uneasy. "I am marking a trail," she said. "Don't you think I am woodsman enough to follow these marks?"

He did not want to frighten her with mention of the laughing man. Presently he exacted a half-promise from her not to attempt the inadequate trail alone.

She favored him again that day with much of her time—strolling about his claim, asking countless questions about his theory of the underground river-bed placers, his contract with Free Gold Consolidated, the fabled lost Chinese mine. She seemed never to tire of romancing about the past, humming frequently and dreamingly:

The days of old,
The days of gold,
The days of Forty-nine!

"And if you do not find gold, you will be out of a job?" she asked suddenly.

"Well, yes—you see, I've made this job. But Barker is banking on me to the extent

of ten thousand dollars—and I can't afford to disappoint him, not only for my own sake, but for his."

"Yet gold-seeking is always a gamble; it seems strange you should stake your professional career on—chance."

"Perhaps you are right—I'm plunging, on a pet theory that I can't shake."

Her uncle accompanied her back to Wagontongue that afternoon, although Baylis would have liked that privilege. He felt that Elsa George was more than an attractive girl—she was alive with good fellowship, one in whose companionship one finds delight, radiating all the wonderful outdoors spirit of California girls.

The next afternoon John Baylis was returning from his tunnel, rifle on forearm—he had taken to carrying that weapon constantly—when he heard that sound again, louder than ever, bitter, menacing. He tried an experiment, to satisfy himself that Rabb was not perpetrating a hoax. Instead of running up the ravine, he took the slope above the point of sound, just as the last jerky tones ceased. Then he cut over to Rabb's cabin, knowing his neighbor could not have got back there without passing him.

Within a few moments Rabb came to the doorway of the cabin, above him, his rifle under his arm, and started down the ravine, meeting him.

"It's probably the old story—not a trace," commented the other. Together they combed the ravine and hillside, without success.

"Devilish funny—what's the answer?" demanded the younger man.

"Not being superstitious, I'll guess it's a lunatic, with a good pair of legs."

That seemed to John Baylis the only plausible solution; yet he and Rabb had both failed to find evidence of recent habitation in any of the old cabins within five miles; even a crazy man must live somewhere.

UP to that time John Baylis had heard the uncanny sound only in the evenings or in broad daylight. That was weird enough. But he had not yet been awakened in the dead of night; hence when he was roused from sleep by that unnatural laugh, struck a match and saw it was 1 A. M., he found it nerve-wracking indeed. At that time of night the noise seemed to him positively hideous, with much of terror in it. He slipped on

trousers and boots, grabbed coat and hat, and started out into the darkness.

But he was to be disappointed, and after his fruitless search he went up to Rabb's cabin. His neighbor had evidently been sleeping too soundly to hear the laugh, or had ignored it, for John Baylis hammered at the door for some minutes before the other came out, coughing his throaty cough.

"I've steeled myself not to hear it—at night," he grunted. "Bad enough when you're awake. Take my advice and do likewise. He's got everything in his favor for a get-away, in the dark."

John Baylis grinned at the sound sense of that, went back to his cabin and, by sheer force of will driving the laughing man from his mind, he slept until morning.

THE day was Thursday, and John Baylis had arranged with Elsa to go down to Wagontongue in the morning and bring her up for the day. It was to be her last visit to the Fiddler, she had explained; she wanted to visit some of the other old gold camps, like Downieville, Jimtown and Angels Camp. She had spent a busy week at Wagontongue, trudging about with old Eric and interviewing other pioneers about the days of the Argonauts.

On the way down John Baylis met a pair of prospectors, with pack animals, headed for the Fiddler. The day before a Cornishman had gone through to the upper Fiddler. Baylis chuckled inwardly; the reason for these arrivals was obvious. Although those diggings had been thoroughly worked in the past, the very presence of Rabb and the younger man there had stirred the curiosity of Wagontongue. Those two must be up there for only one thing—gold—and others were beginning to come in.

When he got down to the village, several old-timers asked him pointed questions about his tunnel operations—was he trying to find the lost Chinese mine, the mine of fabulous wealth that the pig-tailed gold-diggers had in some secret way sealed up, to remain hidden since 1851? John Baylis saw how easily a rumor of a new gold strike might spread through some simple unguarded word, and told them seriously there was no more evidence of gold there now than there had been for fifty years. He went on to the lower end of the narrow street and to the weather-beaten hotel, the "Paragon"—once considered a paragon of elegance, now empty

and ramshackle save for a few rooms on the lower floor.

"Miss George?" queried the spectacled old lady proprietress. "She's been gone for an hour—up the Fiddler."

"Gone up the Fiddler—alone?" demanded the young man quickly.

"Why, yes; she said she knowed the trail."

John Baylis paled slightly, and the old lady followed him to the door. "What you skeered of? That gal kin take keer o' herself," she proclaimed vehemently. "She's been hyar nigh onto a week, allus pokin' round these old mines—alone. Don't you worry none 'bout that young lady!" she insisted, tossing her gray head.

As John Baylis bolted out to the veranda a hand seized his shoulder. He whirled to face Nat Barker of Free Gold Consolidated.

"Thought I'd run up to see how you are making it," grunted the mining man. "Ready for that crew yet?"

"I'll be down later!" shot out the young man. He started away, while Barker glared at him in astonishment.

John Baylis went back the way he had come. It struck him as strange that he had not met Elsa when he came down. If she had followed the direct line—the trail she had blazed—he would have met her. One thought reassured him: she knew he was to come for her, and possibly she had played a girlish prank, hiding until he passed, to show her independence and skill in woodcraft. He blamed himself for not dropping some word of the laughing man in her presence, so that she would have taken his warning seriously.

HE went up at a wind-taxing stride, keeping a sharp lookout on the steep climb. His thought was to get to Rabb's place as quickly as possible; if Elsa had reached there, all would be well.

Reaching the top of the last ridge, he started down the slope of the creek, intending to pass his own cabin and cut directly up to Rabb's. He had not proceeded fifty feet until he heard that maniacal laugh, far below him. Now for the first time the sound made his blood run cold, for his fears were for Elsa George. He started to run, and in another minute saw the two prospectors whom he had met earlier. Both men, grizzled old fellows with straight noses, one with an excessively long face, stood motionless beside their

burros under a sugar-pine. They waited until he came up.

"What in tarnation was that?" demanded the long-faced individual, whom the other addressed as Hespil. "Heerd it twict sence we come over the ridge. A lunytic up hyar?"

John Baylis smiled, but the effort was a weak one. "Somebody trying to have some sport," he suggested, without conviction. He plunged on down into the ravine, toward the direction of the echoing laugh. Looking back, he saw the two prospectors following slowly. He knew these hardy old fellows were not the kind to be easily frightened, yet they were unquestionably startled by that hideous sound.

WITHIN a few minutes he had passed the spot whence the laugh must have come, but as usual saw no one. He hurried on to his cabin, glanced within, then cut over to Rabb's dwelling.

"Has Miss George come up here?" he demanded sharply, as his neighbor appeared at the door.

"Why, no—I thought you—"

"I did, but she had already left—to come up here alone!" Baylis flung out, as Rabb's eyes widened with a peculiar stare. "If she isn't here, she has lost the trail, as sure as that laughing fiend is at large in these hills. We've got to find her—quickly!"

Rabb darted into his cabin and seized his rifle. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed, as he came out, "I hope she didn't hear that laugh—and become terror-stricken—and run from the trail—"

"Or worse than that!" interjected Baylis. "We should have told her, for her own protection, that there was a madman up here—better that she had stayed away altogether than risk the trail alone, with that menace in her path!"

But both realized this was no time for recrimination. They were moving as they talked, hurrying over the slope. They went to the tunnel working, on the chance that she had gone there, then back to the Baylis cabin for a second look, then took the trail back to Wagontongue.

"We'd better separate, make a wide path, back to the village," the younger man suggested. "Call out for her as you go: I'll do the same."

Middle afternoon brought them to Wagontongue, and no Elsa. It would be evening before they could get back to the

Fiddler, and to John Baylis the possibility that she should spend the night in the mountains alone, with a lunatic in the vicinity, was unthinkable. The two men spread the alarm in the village and called for volunteers to hunt the lost young woman. John Baylis did not even take time to look up Nat Barker of Free Gold Consolidated.

Within a surprisingly short time a dozen men joined them and more promised to follow. They started again up the ridges and cañons toward the Fiddler. The path they made was fully a mile wide; they fired shots frequently, and the slopes resounded with calls of "Elsa!" "Elsa!" "Elsa George!"

IT was near sunset when John Baylis, in the lead, reached the Fiddler, and again went to his cabin, then to Rabb's, but found no trace of the missing girl. Others trailed in with no word. Then ensued a frantic last-minute roundup before darkness should fall, the searchers spreading out into a huge wheel, with Rabb's cabin as the hub, from which each man went out along the line of a spoke. They walked until dark, cutting a circle eight miles in circumference, then drew back to the starting point. As one after another came in with no news, John Baylis' fears mounted. Even if Elsa should escape the laughing man, the nights in the high mountains were bitterly cold, and she was ill-clad for such exposure. Besides, there was no telling how terror might affect a girl of nineteen, lost in the wilderness.

John Baylis and Rabb led the party out again, into the dark, after lighting lamps and lanterns in their own and other deserted cabins, for refuge. No man stopped to eat a bite. During the night the shouts of men and frequent shots broke the wilderness stillness. There was no further laughter, however, from that man they feared. Which might indicate either that the laughing man was cautious—or something very much worse.

John Baylis noted that Rabb was distracted, and pitied him. By spells he chattered incoherently about the girl—what a wonderful young woman she was, how she had helped him financially, in a business way, down in San Francisco. He seemed completely broken up over it.

And the younger man, although he maintained outward calm, was sickened to the heart over the girl's plight; he realized

now definitely for the first time how much she meant to him.

They had agreed upon a signal of two quick shots if any of the searchers found trace of the girl. It was considerably after midnight when John Baylis heard Rabb fire those two shots, where he was scouring the brush nearby. Baylis hurried over to him.

"I can't stand this any longer," Rabb almost sobbed. "I've got a confession to make. Come with me down to my cabin, will you?"

John Baylis suspected that the man might be slightly demented over the strain of that night, for he was not physically robust.

Sympathetically he accompanied Rabb down the slope. The signal had brought men to the scene from the other parts of the hills, and all hurried toward the cabin. When the crowd had drawn in, including the two old prospectors who had joined in the hunt, Rabb turned to them, coughing violently, his face like putty in the cabin lamplight.

"I guess—I've got the punishment I deserve," he rasped, chokingly. "I did it—frightened my niece unintentionally—I am the laughing man!" He staggered to a corner and lifted a buckskin sack and poured out nuggets and dust on the pine table. "I struck it rich up here—I took out six claims, as much as one man could keep up the assessment work on. I conceived the idea of that maniac to scare others away, while I worked quietly to grab all the slope. But I didn't expect to frighten my niece!" He stared at Baylis and the others pitifully, as though expecting a beating.

John Baylis' eyes held a strange glint in them, but he was silent. That confession had relieved him of his greatest fear—that a maniac might have found Elsa.

"You are a damned fool!" ejaculated Hespil, the long-faced prospector, stroking his beard. "But—rats with you and your troubles—we got to find that gel!"

"You better stay here," remarked John Baylis dryly to Rabb, "while we keep up the hunt." The searchers filed out of the cabin, leaving Rabb coughing and near exhaustion. Again the hunt proceeded.

DAYLIGHT brought the searchers in, empty-handed. Rabb's larder was attacked and his coffee supply depleted to make a hurried breakfast for the tired

villagers, before starting out again. Most of them were in the cabin when a boy from Wagontongue came up with news.

"She came in early this mornin', about 3 o'clock, and is at the hotel now," said the lad. "Must have been wanderin' around most of the night."

That announcement had an electrical effect in two ways. There was a chorus of vigorous cheers, and a moment later fourteen men, including the two old prospectors, were demanding of Rabb the location of his six claims. And having got that information, they started up the slope to file claims of their own adjoining.

Monuments were hastily piled up, trees blazed, paper dug out of pockets and location notices stuck about, on trees and under rocks. Tired mountaineers, suddenly fired with new energy, began to move on Wagontongue forthwith, to take the stage to the county recorder's office, and to tell their friends.

John Baylis was among those who started for Wagontongue—from different motives. He wanted to see Elsa George. When he reached the little village, he was astonished at the scene; a runner had already arrived with the news. The general store was jammed with men clamoring for provisions, shovels, picks, blankets, canvas, gold-pans, cooking utensils. In the street wheelbarrows were being loaded, burros packed. Some had "teamed" off, weighting poles with sacks and implements, to be carried shoulder to shoulder. A few were already starting up the ridge, packs on their backs.

It was as though the old days on the Fiddler had returned, a new rush in full swing, taking old men and boys, even the hotel's Chinese porter. Later, as news came down that Heslip had sampled Rabb's dirt, finding it a dollar to the pan, the lawyer, Drake, and the justice of the peace started up to file on claims.

John Baylis had passed the noisy, laughing, cursing crowd and gone to the Paragon Hotel. As he entered, Nat Barker came toward him, glaring.

"You've got us protected on this rush, of course?" he demanded. "How many claims you got filed up there?"

"One!" returned the other. "I'll see you in a moment!" He hurried to the old lady in the musty office. Within a few minutes Elsa George came down to meet him in the old-fashioned parlor. John Baylis thought she appeared startlingly

fresh and rosy-looking for one who had suffered a night of exposure in the mountains; there was a roguish light in her eye.

"I am very sorry all you men spent the night looking for me," she said. "I was in no danger—at any time!" The young man stared at her, half in suspicion, and she added quickly: "Please do not ask me to explain—now!"

HE insisted that she tell him how all those searchers missed her, but she was adamant. "Oh, I should like to tell you very much," she laughed. "You have been so kind. But if I do, it will spoil everything!"

She would say no more, and John Baylis rose with his brain in a whirl of doubt. Barker met him at the door.

"Well?" he demanded. "What's the riddle? You right on the ground here, a big rush starts, and you asleep? Only one claim, eh?"

"Your company is financing only one tunnel," returned John Baylis warmly. "We've got our proposition in writing. You want to go up with me now, to the Fiddler?"

Barker puffed in anger. "Yeah, I'll go—and I'll file on a bunch of claims, for Free Gold Consolidated—myself! We'll have to take the leavings, now!"

That afternoon, when they got up to the Fiddler, the place was transformed. Men were digging everywhere. Barker took a hasty look at his young associate's tunnel work, grunted, and the two went up to Rabb's cabin. They found it in possession of eight men, including Drake, the lawyer, the justice of the peace, Heslip and his prospector partner. The men had formed a company with Drake at the head of it, bought out Rabb for \$10,000 and the lawyer had given his check. Rabb had already left the Fiddler.

Barker drew John Baylis aside.

"On your own ancient river-bed argument, I'm going to bid in these claims if I have to pay \$25,000 for them!"

John Baylis faced his superior squarely. "If you want my advice—don't!"

He did not confide his suspicions, then, but it was not necessary.

In voluble indignation Heslip came stamping up to the cabin, his long face very long indeed.

"Salted!" he yelled, in shrill, agitated tones. "That ornery son of a cock-eyed skunk! Found an old shotgun, bar'l

coated with gold dust, 'longside the rotten stump above that middle claim! There aint none o' this ground wuth a cent, and that rapscallion has dug out. He's probly still laughin'—at us!"

He paused for breath.

"And that gel," he snorted, "was in on it, too—part o' his trick. If I ever git my paws onto 'em!"

Lawyer Drake's features fell. "It's a swindle—plain swindle," he groaned. "And the worst of it is, it is legal-proof."

Nat Barker grunted, turned to his young associate, grinned, and started down the ridge for town.

JOHAN BAYLIS did not wait for more. He walked along the slope, passed his tunnel without looking up, and strode down to his cabin, where he sat in the doorway, in the sunlight, eyes on the silvery thread of the Fiddler, without seeing it.

It was not a great surprise to him, in view of the morning's developments, that Frederick Rabb had turned out the clever crook that he was, cleaning out even a lawyer and justice of the peace, with those two experienced old prospectors, leaving the country with ten thousand dollars which he probably had cashed at the Wagontongue bank that same morning. But it shocked him immeasurably that the girl should have been involved in such a trick.

She did not seem to be that kind—he would have staked his last dollar on Elsa George, on her simple honesty and fairness in all things. She had such a frank way about her! And that frantic search through the night, with her in peril—as he thought—had driven home to him what he had vaguely realized before—that he was desperately, irrevocably, in love with her.

He sat with his brain in a whirl, his emotions rising to do battle with his better reason. One voice said she was blameless, innocent, a dupe in that game if, indeed, involved at all; the other voice recalled her own words: "Please do not ask me to explain—now. If I do, it will spoil everything!"

He shook himself; Elsa George was the finest girl he had ever known. He would go down to the hotel now; he counted on her being there—knew she would not flee the country like her uncle had done. An injustice was being done her, by those

fleeced gold-hunters who accused her equally with Rabb.

On the trip down but one thought engrossed his mind—to vindicate her before the eyes of those rough men of the hills.

LIE was not in the least surprised to find her at the Paragon two hours later, and to rejoice in her clear, clean eye when she faced him in the hotel parlor.

"It's done now," she sighed, "and I can tell you all about it. From the time Uncle persuaded me to invest my two thousand inheritance in his investment business I became dubious of his methods. For awhile I was his secretary, then resigned. There was the case down at Bullfrog—that crazy man ruse, you know!" She shrugged her shapely shoulders, and resumed:

"When he came up here on the Fiddler and took that old cabin I suspected something, and made an excuse to follow, to gather story material, in which I am really interested. Uncle liked me well enough, personally, but knowing my scruples he did not trust me in a business way, although still using my money. He tried to make me think he had a legitimate proposition—showed me that old mine leading from his cabin, and said the adjoining ground was rich. I suspected he had salted it. That old mine led into the ravine—that's where that laugh always came from!"

John Baylis shot her a quick glance. "You knew, then, all about that laugh?"

"Not at first. But two days ago old Eric mentioned that on one of his tramps he had heard a laughing man—and I knew what was being done." Her eyes sparkled.

John Baylis nodded.

"Then I arranged with Eric to go to the old mine with me, to tell if it had been salted. Of course it was. And I had another purpose in mind, to teach Uncle a lesson—he would not heed my pleas to invest our joint money legitimately. I intended to cure him of that crazy man trick for all time—by making him think it had frightened me and perhaps cost my life, for I knew he was fond of me, personally." She searched John Baylis' eyes, seeking approval.

"You wanted him to think his trick might have tragic consequences?" queried the man, uncertainly.

"Yes! I'd like him to think it had killed me! That is, if such a thing would make Uncle drop his swindle plans and

save those intended victims their money. I expected to stay lost, and disappear for several weeks, for Uncle's punishment."

John Baylis looked puzzled. "But you didn't! You came back to the hotel next morning, early."

"But that is getting ahead of the story. Well, that morning, old Eric and I awaited our opportunity and when Uncle left the cabin we went in and entered the old mine. We explored it to its mouth—to the opening hidden by boulders, fallen rock and earth and mountain growth—the spot whence Uncle always sounded that hideous laugh."

"No wonder we never could locate anyone!" laughed John Baylis.

"Eric explored the old tunnel thoroughly, with the eye of an expert miner. Suddenly he called to me, and pointed to one of the walls in the faint lantern light. 'Old cave-in,' he said briefly, and set to work with a rusted pick-point he found in the old working. Years of settling had finally cracked the wall. In about ten minutes, he had dug through the cave-in, to another tunnel.

"We went in. The sight shocked me. In that inner tunnel we found the bones and rotted blouses and sandals of four Chinese miners who had been buried since 1851. There was an old wooden bowl partly filled with nuggets." She drew from her purse a half-dozen lumps of dull yellow gold.

"THE lost Chinese mine!" exclaimed John Baylis, rising, his eyes shining. Elsa George nodded, smiling, and the man sat again beside her.

"Yes, the lost Chinese mine—not a myth after all. Old Eric deserves the credit for the discovery. Well, then I got an inspiration that changed my plans about remaining 'lost.' If Uncle was going to swindle those people anyway, having salted the ground next the tunnel, I decided to let him go ahead. After he had sold his claims he would find that he really sold part of the rich lost Chinese mine. Do you think I did wrong, Mr. Baylis?" she asked quickly.

"Wrong! Why, it's a stroke worthy of the cleverest girl—"

She interrupted: "Instead of remaining there, in hiding, we came back to the main tunnel, went out through the cabin and

back to Wagontongue, before daylight. When I saw you in the morning I could not tell you, for fear Uncle would not complete his deal. According to what you say, he even used my absence to fool those people into paying over their money."

"But," protested John Baylis, "what of your own money, invested with Rabb? You lost, too, by doing that!"

"Charge it to profit and loss. I think it will cure Uncle of that laughing trick, when he learns that those eight men who bought him out got many times more than they paid!"

John Baylis sat buried in thought. A figure appeared at the parlor door and Barker looked in.

"DARDON the interruption!" he puffed, striding in. "Stage goes in five minutes. Just wanted to say, John, that you did a fancy bit of work for Free Gold Consolidated—keeping us out of that salt-trap—ha! ha! Got to go now!" He shot the girl a glance, grinned in good humor, and suddenly bolted out before John Baylis could perform an introduction or say anything else. How little Nat Barker knew about the real worth of those Rabb claims now! But he would not long remain in ignorance.

John Baylis stirred uneasily, and a troubled look came into his eyes. "Now you are leaving?" he asked.

"Yes."

"But before you go—" he felt the faint flush rise in his cheeks, "—I'll want to say something, although I've probably lost my job—"

"Before I go," she broke in, "I'll want to mention something else that will interest you, John." Her lips curved in a smile; she read his discomfort. "That lost Chinese mine does not only extend to all the claims that Uncle sold, but to many taken up by others—being an extensive old buried river channel—and it is directly in the path of your own tunnel, according to Eric!" She grew silent, and did not object when John Baylis took her hand and holding it, said:

"You and I, with old Eric and Barker—let us own and operate that tunnel together. You won't leave the Fiddler now, will you, Elsa?"

He read her answer in her eyes, not needing to hear the word that formed on her smiling lips.

"The Return of Stiletto Sofie," a vivid tale of adventure with the Federal narcotic squad by Lemuel De Bra, will appear in an early issue. Watch for it.



Heads and Tails

A new breed of crook tangles the skein of life for Ed the wise guy of the garage in this specially joyous story by the author of "Annabelle Struts Her Stuff."

By CALVIN BALL

A INDIVIDUAL of heavy size, he was coming up the main highway, keeping at one side the road so the touring cars wouldn't bump him, and carrying his hat in his hand. From where I stood in the door of the garage I works in, I watched him, interested. He was taking his time, kind of strolling along, and kept on twisting his head looking over the wheat-fields around him.

There being very few buildings on the road between here and Junction City, he brightened up when he spotted the garage with me standing in the door. While I eyes him over, he turned off the road and eased up to where I was standing.

As there is plenty of hard characters wandering through the country, especially in the harvest season, I've learned that I got to watch my step when dealing with a stranger. By looking this one over, I wouldn't say he looked crooked, because I am not one to brand a party before I have given him a opportunity to prove it: still, at the same time he had a kind of oily look, and his eyes certainly was small and shift.

While he was still ten feet from me, he spreads a smile between his ears, and stretched out a hand to shake with me.

"Aha," says he, when he got close enough to grip my fingers, me giving him small encouragement: "this is a pleasure to meet you. My name is Mr. Smiler."

"Is that so?" I says, eying him kind of skeptical and leaning over a little to see did he have something behind him, as that's the way book-agents work it.

"Yes," he continues, after pumping my hand a while and then dropping it, "this fresh air has a invigorating influence; and what could be better from a healthy viewpoint than a walk in open air? Could you think of anything better?"

I give him another close look.

"No," I says, "I couldn't think of anything better. Maybe I could later on, and would let you know. Where are you walking to?"

HE rocked himself up and down on his toes and heels, sticking his thumbs in the armholes of his vest.

"I got no positive destination," he says,

rocking faster; "as what I am looking for is a place where a honest man could settle down in the country and get a benefit from a simple farm life. This would be a good plan; what do you think?"

"I think it would be a good plan for you to settle down on either your toes or your heels, Mr. Smiler," I says, "and stop rocking that way, as you might get seasick. You want to buy a place?"

"Is there one for sale?"

"Well," I says, taking another squint at a couple of holes in his shoes and a spot on his coat where it was kind of thin, "there's ninety acres down by the river I hear's on sale."

"What would that cost?"

"I figure they would sell it for twenty thousand."

ROLLING his eyes around, he pulled a handkerchief out of his pocket, and lifting up his hat, began rubbing his head.

"Don't believe I'll buy at present," he says. "I want a place where they have got good meals. Also it should be a place where they pay high wages, as I hear in harvest time it's easy picking for honest men, and I'm as square a one as you could find in the State."

Pulling out a package of cigarettes, I lights one. "You mean you're hunting a job, then?" I says. "This is a different tune which you are now singing, Mr. Smiler. On the next farm they're hiring men, and while I couldn't guarantee about the wages, you will anyhow get plenty of open air."

"That sounds reasonable. I was thinking maybe if it aint far, you might take me over for a introduction to the employer."

"Well, maybe," I says. "If I walk that way after supper."

He picks up his ears when I mentioned supper.

"Aha!" he exclaims with a smooth smile. "So you didn't eat yet, and neither did I. This being the country, with no restaurant handy, could you accommodate me for a meal?"

I live upstairs with the boss who owns the garage; and as there was nobody home but his daughter Caroline, I figured I could do a good turn and oblige him, because I have heard about it's a good policy to cast some bread in the water.

"All right," I says finally, "you come upstairs with me, and I will see you get a meal."

HE rubbed his hands like he appreciated it, and taking my elbow starts walking through the garage to the stairs, his eyes rolling around over the insides of the place.

"Nice-looking machine you got here," he says, getting his eye on the flivver, which the boss lately bought it with extra money. "That yours?"

"It's a excellent machine," I says, not telling him I didn't own it, because it's not a good policy to explain too many private affairs to a stranger.

"You probable got considerable money in the bank?"

I took another sharp squint at him.

"If I have, it's going to stay there," I says. "What makes you mention about money in the bank?"

"I just happened to think of it. I like to meet other people of prosperity. And honesty is the best policy."

When anybody harps on the subject of honesty and he is the squarest in the State, I'm always looking to smell a mouse: but as I already had agreed about giving him supper, I took him with me upstairs.

Caroline being the one who I am going to marry, I didn't have to argue much before she consents about letting him stay for a meal.

"He is a guest," I told her; "so you know he is all right."

"Where'd you pick up such a guest with thin spots worn out of his coat?" Caroline asked. "And all I say is, don't get too friendly with strangers."

The manner in which this cuckoo packed away victuals was something special to look at. When he finished the second plate and was going at it a little easier, I noticed one of his eyes had got glued on Caroline where she was fixing up the dishes in the corner.

Caroline is a knock-out for good looks, with a first-class style of dressing, and you know she must be like that as I have picked her for a fiancée. I could tell by the way his eye kept pointing in her direction that Caroline made a big hit with him, like she does with all others.

"Handsome young woman," says he, when we finished and got down in the garage. "You wouldn't expect to see such a one in a place like this. Is she married?"

I squints at him to see if he means it, and he looked serious.

"Not yet," I says.

"That's all right, then. Is there plenty men working at this farm you spoke of?"

"They got a big crew," I tells him.

"As this is Saturday, it must be payday, aint it?"

"You certainly got your mind on the important part of this job," I says. "If you are ready, I will take you over."

"I'm ready; and I suppose these men plays cards?" says he, kind of wiggling his eyes around over my head.

I pulled up to a short stop.

"Look at here," I demands in a sharp tone: "you figuring on getting this job so you will have a chance to gamble and win their money?"

"Gamble?" he repeats. "I wouldn't try to win anybody's money."

"Then what you mentioning for about do these men play cards?"

"Because if I make any money, I don't want to take chances that some one might skin it away from me."

"You sure you don't play cards?"

"You can depend on me," he says; "and while we're walking over there like this, don't you think it's a good plan to stop talking so we could get a better benefit from the open air? It's certainly a invigorating influence."

I introduces this bimbo to Hank, which Hank was glad to get a new farmhand and didn't lose any time telling him the wages and showing him the hayloft where the crew sleeps. While I waited outside for Hank, I got a squint at the crew through the door, and saw they were bunched up in one corner where a card-game is in full swing. The Smiler bird which I had brought over perked up his ears when he saw it; and before the door went shut, I saw he was making a straight line for the game.

"I don't know much about this fellow who he says his name is Mr. Smiler," I says when Hank had come outside again.

"That's all right," Hank says. "He can work, and we need hands."

"Maybe, Hank. But I didn't like the way his eyes stuck out when he saw that card-game. I wouldn't bring over somebody and have him fleece your men out of wages, because it would look like I was responsible; and that is not the kind of a mechanic I am."

WHEN I got back to the garage, I puts in the evening doing a little extra work on a overhaul job, but at the same

time worrying about what kind of a slicker Mr. Smiler might turn out to be. I have met card-sharps before; and when I remember the kind of lily fingers Smiler had, it certainly made me skeptical. As I am a mechanic of good reputation in this vicinity, I absolutely don't like the idea of bringing over a suspicious one to prey on a crew of working farmhands.

About eleven o'clock, while I packs away the tools and got ready to go to my room upstairs, I heard a knock at the front door. Before I could answer, the door pops open and Mr. Smiler strolls into the garage. He had a large-size smile on his face like he must be pleased about something. When he sees me, he walks in my direction, rubbing his hands brisk.

"The cat came back," says he. "And I suppose it is a surprise to see me again so quick."

I give him a iceberg stare.

"What you doing back here?" I demands. "Didn't I get you a good job? And why didn't you stay there?"

"I got reasons. One thing is, I didn't pay you for that supper I had. Here's a dollar."

"If you wanted to pay me for this supper, why didn't you do it before?" I asked.

"Well, I was a little short."

"Then how does it come you got money now?"

"I made a little."

"You been playing cards?"

"They talked me into it."

"Who talked you into it?"

"These farmhands. They have got gambling natures."

"They haven't got a gambling nature like somebody else I could mention," I says, "and from the way I saw you streaking toward that card-game, it don't look to me like they had to talk very hard to get you started. Did you win much?"

"Only a little."

"A little, eh? Then what made you leave there?"

He kind of shifted his weight to the other foot, like I was pinning him down in a corner.

"The truth about it is," he says finally, "that I was afraid to sleep in a haymow with a bunch like that. Robberies happen right and left around here in harvest season, and with my pockets full of bills, I wouldn't take a chance sleeping in any hayloft."

"Is your pocket full of bills?" I asked.

"Well, yes, pretty full."

"How much?"

"Maybe five hundred."

The way I stared at this crooked shyster was something awful. That's how it goes with me whenever I do a good turn to one of these wheat-field transients. Instead of showing it is an appreciation to them, they give you a double-cross.

"Mr. Smiler," I says in a harsh tone, "you was practically broke this evening, and you know it. This five hundred which you have got is a sum which you skinned them farmhands out of."

He lifted up his hands in a excited way.

"I didn't skin them. Can I help how luck runs?"

"It's a swindle, and you know it. This is a hot one for me, because I am the one who introduced you. Is this a fine way to pay me back?"

"You are hinting I am crooked," he says. "I am as square a one as you can find. I have a good object for this money. And he will be glad to get it."

"Who will be glad to get it?"

"The minister."

"What minister?" I demands.

"The minister of the church."

FOR a minute I stood staring at this grafter without speaking.

"See here," I says finally. "Can you tell me what any minister of a church has got to do with such a deal like this?"

His eyes wiggled back and forth.

"The church gets all money which I wins," he states. "I wouldn't keep a penny. It has got to be used for a good purpose or it would not be a honest deal; and honesty is the best policy."

The brass he has in throwing such a bluff about giving it to a church was enough to floor me.

"You claim you're going to pass it over to the church?"

"Tomorrow morning," he insists. "I will walk to Junction City for church, and also get the benefit of the open air, as it's a invigorating influence."

The longer I stood there looking at this sharper, and the more I thought about the underhand game he had worked, the madder I got. At the same time, he was a heavy-set individual of good size; and as I only weigh in at the feather-weight class, I could see it wouldn't help any to bring things down to a rough-and-tumble situation. I figured if I was husky enough, I

would certainly have took the loot away from him by force and carried it back to them workers over at Hank's, as that's the kind of a man I am. I am never opposed to a honest game of cards with a little money in it for interest, but it certainly makes me hot under the collar to see a swindler sneak in with a crooked advantage.

"Mr. Smiler," I says at last, "you got to admit this story about giving it to the church looks fishy."

"I'm fair then," he says, quick. "I'll flip a nickel heads or tails to see if I give it or don't."

When he mentions about flipping nickels, heads or tails, I felt my brain jump, because about six weeks ago I got a counterfeit nickel passed on me, which it had a head on both sides. I figured somebody must have made this nickel special for gambling purposes; and while I didn't have a use for it myself, I slipped it into my pocket for luck. As I still has the nickel, I saw this was certainly a opportunity to get the money back for the farmhands. While I would not do a deal like this to a honest person, I figured that in this case it would only be a justice; and it would certainly help my standing in a community if I could put the money back in the owners' hands. I am always ready to do my duty in such a respect, as that is the kind of a nature I have got.

I lights a cigarette in a slow, casual way.

"I wouldn't mind flipping, Mr. Smiler," I says finally, "as that's a honest game which nobody could cheat at. But it's no use flipping to see if you give it to the church, because how would I know what you did with the money? I was thinking maybe we could have a little pastime."

He opened up his eyes.

"You want to play heads and tails with me?" he asked surprised.

"It would be a entertainment," I says.

"You got much money?"

"A hundred dollars in my pocket."

He blinks at me a couple of times and then begins rubbing his hands in a eager way. I scraped the nickel out of a vest pocket and balanced it on my thumb. Smiler being a tough customer, I had to be sharp about working this game, and at first bet small amounts.

"We'll play for quarters," I says. "and I'll take heads."

"Not quarters." Smiler objects. "Make

it more interesting. Bet a dollar, at least."

It didn't take more than five minutes before I had a dozen of his dollar bills stacked up in front of me, but to make it look a little reasonable I let him win a few by changing the nickel in a sleight-of-hand manner.

"Let's bet fives," I says finally, "as it will make the game go faster."

"Maybe you mean it will make my money go faster," he says; "but I wouldn't back out."

I got a few of his fives added onto my pile when the nickel bounced and rolled into a dark corner. I made a fast scramble for it, but before I could get there, Mr. Smiler was already kicking his foot around, trying to find it.

"There it goes down a crack," he says, sudden.

I twists my neck to where he pointed, and saw the crack.

"You see it go down?" I asked

"I kicked it by accident," he tells me, "and it rolled in."

As the floor was a old-fashioned one made of square logs, it would take a half of a day's work to dig a nickel from such a spot.

"What's the difference?" Smiler exclaims, pulling out a handful of change. "A nickel wouldn't break you, and I got plenty more."

Stopping the game suddenly would certainly be a suspicious-looking act, so I lights up a cigarette and tells him to go ahead.

I has a small run of good luck which made it look all right. but anybody who has experience in a gambling game knows what a up-and-down business it is. Before I could get a check-up on how it stood, I was thirty-five dollars in a hole. A few more breaks of bad luck coming on top of this, and the amount which I was out raised up to fifty.

Anybody knows how it goes when you are losing in a game: you begin figuring the best way is to raise the bets and get it back. I slipped into this trap also, and with the play now ten dollars at a clip, it took my breath to see how fast a hundred dollars dwindles into nothing.

When he saw I had dug up the last bill, Mr. Smiler pushed the stack of money into his pocket and started to get up.

I was by this time certainly excited.

"Wait a minute," I objects. "You going to quit with all my money? I have

more upstairs, so wait till I get it, and give me a fair chance to win back what I lost."

I dashes upstairs to my room and dug out the other four hundred which I had it packed away in the bottom of a trunk. I got back into the game with a fresh supply, but the same kind of tough luck hung on. I couldn't kick that he was cheating me, because in throwing a nickel in the air you can't regulate which side it comes down on. Also I was the one which started the game, and I am not a welsher, as that is not the kind of a way I am built.

I kept going deeper trying to get even, which this is certainly a rotten policy for any man. The way the four hundred faded away made my hair stand up.

"Well, I'm broke, Mr. Smiler," I admits at last.

"How about the flivver of yours which I was looking at?" he says.

The way he was cramming away my money into his pockets was getting me reckless. I know how to advise other people about throwing good money after bad, but when it is my own personal case, I certainly did want to get back the five hundred.

This was a lesson to me, because when he mentioned about the flivver, I did my first crooked act. He figured I owned the flivver, instead of which it belonged to the boss; but as he didn't know the difference, I saw it was a opportunity for me to keep up the game and have another chance of getting square. Taking a chance like this has been the cause of many others besides me getting into the arms of the law.

At two o'clock in the morning we finished playing, and my thoughts was spinning like a fast top. Mr. Smiler owned the flivver which it belonged to Herman.

WHEN I took him upstairs and give him the room next to mine, my head was still whirling so I couldn't think. Losing five hundred of your own money is enough to worry any man, but when you have also squandered away a automobile which don't belong to you, you are then in a pickle in which you couldn't sleep a wink.

At eleven o'clock the next morning, and it was Sunday, Mr. Smiler got up, it being a relief to me to find out that Herman, the boss, has already gone to Junction City and wouldn't be back till evening.

"Good morning," Smiler says to me in a cheerful way. "This is a beautiful morning for a walk in the open air and to get its invigorating influence. Or maybe I might test out my flivver."

Whenever he mentioned about the flivver, I felt kind of weak.

While we went through breakfast, Mr. Smiler keeps a fast line of talk going, saying things which made Caroline suspicious; but whenever he started to mention about now owning something, I was quick to break in with a new remark and change the subject. Smiler had again got his eye fastened on Caroline; and if I am a good judge of such a situation, he was interested in her and no mistake. When he finished eating, I didn't lose any time about getting him out of the room. Seeing that he had gone downstairs, Caroline walks over and stopped in front of where I was sitting.

"Ed," she says to me, "who is this cuckoo who you call Mr. Smiler?"

I picks up a newspaper and begins looking it over in a casual way.

"He's a friend of mine," I says.

She eyed me like she was suspicious.

"I never heard about this friend before," she says. "Where'd you pick him up?"

"I just met him recent," I says, evasive.

"Well, for one which you only met recent, he is certainly making himself at home. From the way he acts, it would look like he owns the place. What were you doing downstairs till two o'clock this morning?"

Caroline is the inquisitive kind which keeps pumping at you till she gets the facts she is after. With one question leading to another I saw she was pinning me down tight.

The way she looked at me when I gave her the whole story which she finally wormed out of me was enough to make any man crawl into a small space.

"You have certainly pulled a hot one," she says. "And is that grafter still downstairs, or has he got away?"

"He is downstairs," I says. "He now figures he owns the flivver and is looking it over to see what would a hock-shop give for it. There is only one thing I can think of, Caroline, and that is that I have got to make a sneak away from here before Herman gets back."

"The one which will sneak away from here is that flimflam agent below," says Caroline. "If you are a easy mark, then

I am not one. Get the constable in Junction City on the telephone. And don't stand there looking, because we haven't any time to waste."

"Are you going to tell the constable about this, Caroline?"

"Don't worry about who I am going to tell. The constable is a good friend of mine; now, you call him on the phone and tell him to drive out here in a hurry, as it's something important. Also when you go downstairs, you tell Mr. Smiler I would like to see him, and send him up here. All you then got to do, Ed, is wait downstairs till the constable comes, which you could let me know he is here by pounding a hammer a few times on the anvil."

AS Caroline is a fast worker with a strong determination to have things her own way, it was no use putting up a objection.

I put through a hurry-up message to the constable, telling him don't lose any time getting here. He says he would make speed, and I then beats it down to where Smiler was kind of sizing up what the garage was worth.

"Mr. Smiler," I says, "the young lady upstairs would like to speak to you, and asked me wouldn't I tell you to come up."

Smiler's eyes got brighter. "She wants to see me? Certainly I would go up!"

Sliding back to the stairway, Smiler humped up the steps out of sight.

As it was five miles to Junction City, it would be a few minutes before the constable arrived; and while I am not one who is a eavesdropper by nature, I figured anyhow that I better get a earful of what is going on upstairs.

Gum-shoeing up to the floor above, I slips through the hall and in through the dining-room where I could hear Caroline out in the kitchen talking with Mr. Smiler. As I know Caroline like a book, I was quick to see that she was kidding him along in a way that was certainly smooth. You have got to hand it to Caroline for being able to flicker her eyes at somebody and make them jump over her finger.

After a few minutes I takes a peek through the curtain and saw that Mr. Smiler had planted himself in a chair which he kept hitching along like he was nervous. He was twisting the hat in his hand, so I could tell that he had fell flat for Caroline's vamp talk.

I sneaked downstairs for a squint up the road to see if there was any signs of the constable's flivver, and from the dust rolling up at the bend near Junction City I guessed it must be him on the way. Hustling back upstairs I again got my ear to the curtain.

"Of course you know, Mr. Smiler," Caroline was saying, "that marriage is a awful important step for a girl to take."

"Why not take this step," he comes back at her, "as you claim I have made a hit with you, like you also have with me. I have good circumstances with some money for a start, and I am as square a man as this State has produced."

"I have only one objection," says Caroline—"it's about Ed. He has been thinking I am his fiancée. This would surprise him."

"It would be a good surprise," Smiler answers, rubbing his hands like he was pleased about it. "He has had other surprises lately, and this will be a climax."

"The only way I could do it," says Caroline, "would be to elope in a hurry. Would you do this, Mr. Smiler?"

"I got a flivver downstairs," he answers, "and we could be in it in five minutes if you say the words."

"I'll get my hat and coat," she says.

IT sounded like a machine buzzing up the pike. Sliding across the room, I goes downstairs three steps at a time, arriving at the front door just as the constable walks in. After pounding a couple times on the anvil, I pushes him into a corner and whispers the situation into his ear.

"That gambling crook?" says the constable, opening his eyes. "He is the one which I chased out of town, as he has been sleeping under the city hall steps. I have got it in for him, anyhow, so I would be glad to nab him."

I hissed at the constable to be quiet, as at this minute I heard a noise at the back end of the garage; and twisting my neck for a squint in that direction, I saw Caroline and Smiler coming down the stairs, Smiler carrying her hat and coat. They disappeared out the back door.

A couple of seconds later we heard a scream from Caroline that sure did set up an echo. Making a run for the back door, we got outside in time to see her on the running board of the flivver hollering for help, and hanging on the coat lapel of Mr. Smiler.

"Kidnapers! Kidnapers!" she screamed.

Smiler's mouth dropped down open, and his eyes was popping out with surprise.

The constable made the car in two bounds, and grabbing Smiler by the collar, yanked him off to the ground.

"You crooked vag," says the constable. "So you have now turned kidnaper!"

"But she was the one that offered we should elope," Smiler gasps.

"Now you are making it worse by not telling the truth," says Caroline. "As you know you dragged me down the stairs by brute force. This is a plain case of abduction which any judge will say so."

Smiler had by this time dropped his grip on Caroline's hat and coat, one eye being fastened on her, and the other on the constable's badge.

I sees Caroline whispering something in the constable's ear, which he then turned around and disappeared in the garage.

"Mr. Smiler," says Caroline, looking him in the eye, "you are one crook that has got tangled up with the law, but as I am a friend of the constable, he is going to wait inside till we talk it over. Now what you going to do?"

"What do you suggest?" he asked in a scared voice.

"My suggestion is that you dig into your pocket and produce this money you got illegal, and you then streak it out of here and down the road as fast as you could paddle. This is a excellent suggestion; and if you don't like it, the constable is waiting inside for me to call him. Kidnaping is thirty years."

Smiler's face turned a kind of sick color. Searching into his pockets, he dragged out the money and passed it over to Caroline. As I am not one to let him get away with something, I also examined his pockets to see if we got it all.

"That's all of it," I says. "The money from Hank's farmhands is here, so that makes us square."

"Here is a little more change," Caroline says, slipping her fingers into his vest pockets and pulling out some dimes and nickels. "Now, when you start walking down the road, Mr. Smiler, it is good advice to go fast, so nobody catches you!"

While Smiler makes fast time down the road, Caroline looks over the change which she had snaked out of his pocket.

"It sure is queer-looking money," she says, handing it over. "Here's a nickel with heads on both sides!"



Balance Brought Forward

The remarkable story of an airtight scheme to rob a bank—and the unexpected factor that so dramatically shifted the course of events.

By CARL CLAUSEN

IT was the proud boast of President Halliday of the Oil and Grain Commercial Bank that his institution had never lost a penny by robbery, embezzlement, forgery or any other irregularity, in the twenty years of his administration.

Halliday was a small man, well past middle age. His hair was almost white, but his face was smooth, without a wrinkle of any kind, and ruddy with the glow of perfect health. He was a genius in his line. Some people called him a financial wizard, which he was not. He was merely possessed of the amount of common sense and sound judgment which is the natural heritage of any normal human being in good health. Being physically fit was his hobby.

No one ever saw him "fagged out." As far as he was concerned the word *tired* did not exist. He worked silently, swiftly, with the speed and precision of a dynamo. He was never known to raise his voice in anger, nor to permit himself to be carried away by excess of emotion of any kind. Still, he was not at all taciturn. He knew that the only recipe for success was to

make a hobby out of his work, and this he did.

He was liked, feared and loved by his subordinates according to their temperaments, but he was hated by none—except Walter Cronin, the senior teller. The reason for Cronin's hatred of Halliday was the oldest in the world: professional jealousy. Not long ago the newspapers contained a paragraph about a famous prima donna who hurled a flower-pot at the head of another prima donna because she sang too well. While Cronin did not hurl flower-pots at Halliday, the poisoned darts which he secretly flung at his superior were far more deadly.

Cronin's jealousy was perhaps prompted more by ill health than by actual covetousness. He was the exact opposite of Halliday—tall, gaunt, surly and slow moving. The glowing health of his employer enraged him. Further, in disagreeable moments of self-appraisal, Cronin realized his own shortcomings. While he coveted his employer's position, he knew he could never fill it, even if it were tendered him, and this made him still more bitter.

The pardonable pride with which Halliday had made his boast about the bank never having lost a penny from dishonesty, made Cronin sneer. The most recent occasion was at the annual banquet of the bank's employees, a month or so earlier. Cronin smiled wryly as he idly considered Halliday's statement. For weeks he toyed darkly with an idea, then dismissed it resolutely, until one morning, when, among his mail, he found a letter from an out-of-town depositor, addressed to himself:

Mr. Walter Cronin.

Dear Sir:

Enclosed please find my check for \$1,000 made to cash. Please debit my account with this amount and wire it, collect, to me at once, care of Shasta Springs Hotel, Shasta County, California. I must have it to close a deal.

Yours truly,

GEORGE P. HALLET.

Cronin glanced at the signature the second time, then after consulting his file for verification, and the ledger for the man's balance, he shut the door of his teller's cage and crossed the tiled lobby to Halliday's private office, handing him the letter for his O. K.

Halliday read it.

"How much is his balance?" he asked.

"A little over nine thousand."

"Know this man Hallet?"

"No sir. His account is at Window Six—Murchison's window. I've never seen the man, but I looked up the signature on file. It seems all right."

Halliday frowned, mildly.

"A little irregular," he said, "but I guess we can't afford to antagonize a valuable customer. Have Anderson make out a cashier's check and send Parks down to the Western Union with it."

And with a quick movement of his hand, he scribbled his O. K. on the bottom of the letter and handed it back to Cronin.

The senior teller returned to his cage, after leaving Halliday's instructions with Anderson, the assistant cashier. As Parks, the bank's messenger, trotted off to the telegraph office with the certified check, Cronin consulted the ledger again. He noted that the account of George P. Hallet was what is known as an inactive account. All banks have a few such, and large institutions like the Oil and Grain Commercial have more than a few. These inactive accounts are carried mostly by elderly people of means—people whose bulk of capital is invested in realty or

stocks, but who keep a certain amount of ready cash on hand for an emergency, year in and year out. Such accounts are usually savings accounts with checking privileges, and carry from three to four per cent interest, which is credited twice a year, on the first of January and June. Quite often, neither checks nor deposits are drawn against them or made upon them for many months. Although they are in the minority, these accounts are highly profitable because of their stability.

Such an account was George P. Hallet's. Cronin noted that this was the first check drawn against it since it was opened nearly a year earlier. He also noted that the only deposit memorandum upon the ledger page during the same period was the item of interest,—\$135, three per cent on nine thousand dollars,—credited on June first, more than seven weeks before.

This gave him food for thought. As he closed the ledger and went back to his cage, he considered the account of George P. Hallet, and in the same breath the statement of Halliday to the effect that his institution had never lost a penny through dishonesty. A queer, crooked smile played upon Cronin's bloodless lips. A scheme had suggested itself to him as he closed the book. It was a daring, clever one and as absolutely safe as it was daring and clever. He glanced at the calendar suspended above his head. Today was July 25. The next interest-bearing date was January first, over five months away. He had plenty of time to put his scheme into operation.

AT noon, when he and the assistant cashier went to lunch together, Cronin said:

"I guess I'll start on my vacation next week, if it's all the same to you?"

Anderson nodded.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"High Sierras," Cronin answered, easily. "The fishing is good on the creeks, this year."

"So I heard. I suppose you want to leave Saturday?"

"If you don't mind."

"Sure not, run along."

"If anything comes up, I can be reached at Cardinal, Inyo County, at the Valley Hotel," Cronin said. "I'll strike into the mountains on foot. Want to get off the beaten track," he explained with a laugh.

Anderson sighed.



Photograph by Rex Studio, Los Angeles.

CARL CLAUSEN was born in Denmark and came to America as mate of a sailing vessel. In California he deserted the ship and found work in the redwood lumber industry. Later he became a structural iron worker and for a time a window cleaner. All this time he was learning the English language—learning to speak it and to write fiction in it. Like Joseph Conrad he eventually succeeded, and though employing a language acquired after he had grown to manhood, he is steadily winning enhanced reputation.

"Hope you have a good time," he said. "You single fellows certainly have it pretty soft. It's eight years since I've had an outing by myself."

"Hostages to fortune, you know," Cronin quoted.

Anderson smiled, sheepishly.

"Well, they are a pair of pretty nifty little jailers. Sam'll be seven next month." He pulled his wallet from his pocket and produced a snapshot of a small curly-haired boy in a sailor's suit. "That's him. Some kid, eh?"

Cronin held out his hand, mechanically, for the picture. His thoughts were far away. As he looked into the laughing eyes of the child, a shock seemed to pass through him.

"Nice youngster," he said with an effort, as he passed the picture back to Anderson.

THE following Saturday, Cronin began putting his plan into execution. During the week he had made a careful survey of the ledger for inactive accounts. He was surprised at the number he found. There were well over a hundred. From these he selected the account of Howard Criswell. He noted that Criswell's account showed that neither withdrawals nor deposits had been made within the past ninety days, also that it showed a considerable balance—nearly forty thousand dollars. Cronin was no piker. He was after big game.

On a slip of paper he copied the name from Criswell's signature on the filing card, to assure himself that he had the spelling correct. He did not try to imitate the signature. Forgery was not part of his plan. It was too dangerous and much too difficult. His plan was a much more clever one than forgery, also much simpler and perfectly safe. In fact its safety and utter simplicity almost took his breath away. He wondered why it had never occurred to him before.

In addition to the name and address, he also copied the standing of the account in detail since its opening a year earlier. The last thing before leaving, he went down to the old vault in the basement where supplies were kept, and took from it a handful of blank filing cards and a bundle of blank check forms. These he stuffed into his overcoat pocket.

As he left the bank by the side entrance, Anderson waved his hand to him.

"Have a good time, Walter!" he called.

"Leave it to me," Cronin called back.

On his way to his apartment, he stopped in at the railroad office and bought himself a ticket to Cardinal. Riggs, the clerk who waited on him, knew him well.

"We have a special two-week excursion rate to Independence, Mr. Cronin," he said,—"thirty-two ninety, return. The regular fare to Cardinal is thirty-one fifty. For a dollar forty extra you can go over a hundred miles farther, right into the heart of the big fish country."

Cronin seemed to be considering. He shook his head—impressing Riggs with the fact that he was going to Cardinal was good for his plan. Also, the mountains could be crossed more easily at that point than at Independence.

"No, I guess I'll go to Cardinal. I know the trail thereabouts."

The clerk reached for a ticket, stamped it and pushed it across the counter to the teller. As he counted out the change from a fifty-dollar bill, he said:

"The train leaves at ten p. m. tonight. Good luck and plenty of fish."

"I always get 'em if they are there to get," the teller retorted. "So long!"

The first thing Cronin did upon arriving at his apartment was to pack his suitcase. He put no outing togs into it, merely a dark business suit, his shaving things and brushes, and the blank filing cards and check blanks. With the suitcase in his hand, he made his way downstairs and caught a southbound street-car. He rode some forty blocks, then got off in a dense part of the tenement district.

LAURENCETOWN was a big city. To lose himself here in the crowded laboring district was not difficult. He found the number he was looking for—1016 Crocker Street—and rang the bell.

"Your suite is ready for you, Mr. Roberts," the landlady said, as she opened the door of a large cavernous room facing the street. Suite was hardly the correct classification of the apartment. It contained a moth-eaten rug, an ill-assorted collection of chairs, and an old-fashioned walnut desk with a top of green baize cloth. Upon one wall hung a map of the State of California; on the opposite one an oil painting, very evidently by a pupil of one of those new masters who teach art by mail in six lessons. The third wall was draped and behind the drapes stood a wall-bed, its jointed legs dangling listlessly. A

large bay window in the fourth wall, facing the street, afforded ventilation of a sort and a certain amount of light, to the room.

Cronin put down his suitcase and looked about.

"You can hang your business sign in the window," the landlady said. "Mr. Bower, the former tenant, was a real-estate man. He had this room for nearly a year, and liked it very much."

The teller nodded, absently.

"I'll have one made." He pulled a roll of bills from his pocket. "Here's the balance of the month's rent in advance as per agreement. Make me out a receipt and leave it on the desk, please. I'll be out of town for a few days."

Returning to his own apartment, he changed into his outing togs and with a pair of woolen blankets, his fishing traps and an extra suit of underwear, made up a bundle; much too light, however, for an extended mountain trip.

Then he called up the *Laurencetown Daily News* and asked them to insert the following advertisement:

Opportunity knocks on your door but once. Learn modern banking in your spare time. Personal instruction. Terms \$2 per week to a limited number of pupils. Apply 1016 Crocker Street, Suite 1. Professor Morgan Roberts.

He gave instructions to insert this advertisement for two weeks, beginning the following Friday, giving as his telephone reference, Atlantic 47298, the number at 1016 Crocker Street.

Then he picked up his bundle of blankets and locked up his apartment. To casual queries he stated that he would be gone for a month on an extended fishing trip in the High Sierras.

CARDINAL is a small town at the foot of the Sierras; a bit of the old South set down at the edge of the great desert valley from which the town derives its name. Built upon the mesa of the great Continental Divide and watered by the swift, cold waters of Cardinal Creek, this settlement is unique in its way. The first dairy in California was established here, when the mines of the two forks of Cardinal Creek gave out. The city awoke early to civic consciousness. It was one of the first towns in California to go "dry." Ten years before Prohibition went into effect, the saloons were ousted.

Cardinal is essentially a city of homes.

The giant poplars and cottonwoods which line every roadside, and the rich green of the fields of alfalfa, are a welcome sight to the desert-weary vacationist, resting up before passing into the big game and fish country of the High Sierras.

From July until September a continual stream of devotees of gun and rod pass back and forth on their way to and from the mountain meadows below the timberline.

Cronin registered at the Valley Hotel and told the clerk to call him at six the following morning, also to hold any mail that might arrive for him, until called for. That the hotel clerk might remember him without fail if it became necessary, the teller lingered at the desk and made a nuisance of himself asking tenderfoot questions, which the clerk answered patiently. Before retiring, and further to impress the man with his identity, Cronin handed him his business card with the name of the Oil and Grain Commercial Bank engraved upon it.

Early the next morning, Cronin was up and on his way with his bundle of blankets. The trail was an arduous one. Under ordinary circumstances he would never have dreamed of taking such a trip. He was not an out-of-door man. His idea of a vacation was a two-weeks' drowse at his favorite club with his feet on the window-sill and his teeth clamped shut about a black twenty-five-cent cigar. He loathed exertion of any kind. Therefore the trip was for him a heroic undertaking. He comforted himself with the thought of the financial independence which lay at the end of it, and with visions of endless, indolent days with his feet on the sill and an unlimited supply of black cigars.

The first night out he camped on a bench at the timberline just below the summit of Piute Pass. He spent the most uncomfortable night of his life here. Long before dawn he arose, shivering with cold and lit a fire, and after a hasty breakfast, he started on the trail again.

At nine o'clock he climbed the summit of the Continental Divide and paused for a few minutes to rest. Before him to the west mountain range after mountain range fell away toward the Pacific. Behind him to the east lay the wide expanse of Cardinal Valley and the great Mojave Desert. To the south rose white-capped Mount Whitney, the highest point in the United States. It was a panorama unsurpassed in

beauty and grandeur, but Cronin was not interested in scenery. Munching a bar of chocolate, he gazed at it all with a savage scowl, and trudged on.

He chose the little-used trail which skirted Desolation Lake, and struck the first timber of the Pacific slope at the headwaters of Piute Creek. He followed this creek through French Cañon and arrived at Blaney Meadows at dusk, tired, cross and furious with himself for having undertaken this arduous trip.

TWO days later he made the last lap of his journey on foot, passing out of the mountains at Willowville on the Pacific side and caught there a train back to Laurencetown.

It was midnight when the train pulled in. He hurried through the almost empty railway station, pausing for a moment to buy himself a copy of the *Daily News*, at the station news-stand. Then, hailing a taxi, he told the man to drive him to 1016 Crocker Street.

While the taxi threaded its way through the traffic, Cronin turned to the classified advertising pages and smiled. The advertisement was running.

The following morning he did a little shopping. In a second-hand store he purchased an old file to fit the filing cards which he had taken from the vault. Also a typewriter of the same make as the ones used by the Oil and Grain Commercial Bank.

Early that afternoon the first applicant for tuition presented himself, and during the rest of the day, and the day following, Cronin had enrolled ten—eight men and two girls. All were foreigners, as he had hoped and expected, and all of them lived in the immediate neighborhood of 1016 Crocker Street. They were ambitious youths and girls attracted, as he had known they would be, by the ridiculously low terms of the advertisement.

Cronin opened his class at seven P. M. the Monday following, with a brief talk, in which he informed his pupils that his tuition would consist of a series of lectures on modern banking, followed by half an hour of practical demonstrations on the making out of financial documents such as promissory notes, mortgages, and liens: how to open and close accounts; how ledger records were kept in large banks; and the proper and improper way to write checks.

He noted with satisfaction the impres-

sion he was making on his auditors. When he dismissed the class at nine P. M., he felt very satisfied with himself. Everything was going according to schedule.

As the days progressed a subtle intoxication began to take hold of him. He liked the feeling of power this experience gave him. He sometimes almost forgot the rôle he was playing, when he stood before his class and looked down into their eager faces.

One of his pupils in particular, a young girl of Italian parentage, intrigued him. Her name was Lina Modotti. Cronin was not interested in women, but he realized vaguely that Lina was beautiful. He remembered having seen faces like hers in picture galleries, hauntingly beautiful faces set against somber backgrounds. After his class had left he tried to dismiss her from his thoughts; but she refused to be dismissed. He decided that it was her eyes which haunted him. They were large, brown and very soft. There was something else about them which disturbed him. He wondered what it was.

ACCORDING to his plan, he began on the third evening to give his first practical demonstration of how to make out legal documents. In a near-by stationery store he had bought the necessary blank forms for his pupils to practice on. He showed them how accounts were opened, and used the old file to demonstrate how the records of signatures were kept. He also opened a ledger account. In every instance he used the name Howard Criswell.

He found himself growing interested in his work, so much so that at times he almost forgot the sinister part he was playing, particularly when he caught the eager, questioning eyes of Lina Modotti. He noted how quickly she learned, also that she was quite a good typist. Upon inquiry she told him that she had taken a short course in stenography some months earlier. She confided to him that her ambition was to become private secretary in a bank or a trust company.

Cronin looked at her in silence. The rest of the class had gone home. The girl was buttoning her coat. On the impulse of the moment Cronin asked her to go to dinner with him.

Lina quite frankly showed her pleasure and accepted. Cronin, cautious to the last, said:

"I suppose you know of a good place near here?"

"Yes—Marco's, down near the old Plaza. But perhaps you don't like Italian dinners?" she asked.

"I do," Cronin replied, firmly, although he loathed them.

He was amazed at finding himself walking down the crowded sidewalk with Lina. She had taken his arm, quite naturally, and was chatting gayly, as they elbowed their way through the evening crowd. He found an odd, strange pleasure in her company, which he could not define. He even felt a sense of triumph at the envious glances cast in his direction, as they entered Marco's and took a booth at the rear.

The place was full of noisy diners. A harsh-voiced soprano sang something foreign and unintelligible from an elevated platform in the middle of the floor. He found himself not minding the noise and clamor. Some strange, boyish elation seemed to sweep over him every time he looked at Lina.

That she felt her power over him was quite evident. With the perfect frankness of her race, she showed her liking for him. Was he not a great professor, a learned and wise man?

When they walked home together, his mind was in a whirl. She took possession of his senses completely. Her vivid personality enveloped him, her naïve admiration for him captivated him, utterly. At the door of her flat she insisted that he come in and meet her father.

At first, with visions of a coarse foreign household, he demurred. He was reluctant to break the charm of the evening. But in the end he assented. He was pleasantly surprised. Lina's father, a white-haired maker of violins, welcomed him with the quiet dignity of the old world. Her mother, it seemed, was dead.

CRONIN spent the most agreeable evening of his life with the old violin-maker and his daughter. He was amazed at the old man's fund of information upon any subject that came up during the conversation.

When the violin-maker finally excused himself and left the two of them alone in the room, Cronin was still reluctant to leave, although the hour was late.

"You will come again, soon?" Lina asked, as she gave him her hand.

Cronin nodded. She switched on the hall light and followed him downstairs. With his hand on the door knob, he paused. He looked down into her face in the half-light of the hall, as if searching it for something he had lost, years ago. Sensing it she moved slightly toward him. For one moment there came to him an almost uncontrollable impulse to sweep her into his arms, but, instead, he opened the door and said, huskily:

"Good night, Lina."

She answered something in a barely audible tone. He jammed on his hat and left.

From that evening on there began a struggle between Walter Cronin and Morgan Roberts, the instructor of modern banking—Walter Cronin, the creature of long-established habits and Morgan Roberts, the man projected into a new and strange world, and finding that world singularly pleasant. He knew that to date he had not lived at all. This came to him most acutely when he looked into the eyes of Lina Modotti. He began to realize how completely she had entered his life; and at the same time he knew the end was very near.

The new filing cards were signed and the requisite number of checks were made out, payable to himself, and signed "Howard Criswell." He had selected Rudolph Wolff, a young Swiss immigrant, as the one among the ten pupils whose handwriting most nearly resembled that of Howard Criswell. Quite unsuspectingly the young Swiss had gone on signing the checks and the filing cards with Criswell's name, under the expert guidance of Professor Roberts.

Cronin was mildly amused when he thought how easy it had been. His purpose was completed. There was no reason to stay on. Still he lingered to the last day of his vacation, reluctant to break away. He knew that in a few hours all would be ended. Lina Modotti would pass completely out of his life.

He went to dinner at her house that night as he had done many times now. The old violin-maker brought forth a bottle of old Italian wine. Cronin stayed very late. He welcomed the wine and drank inordinately, for, sober, he could not trust himself to meet Lina's eyes. It came to him, suddenly, that their charm was not their coloring, nor yet their size or beauty, but their frankness and honesty.

This realization came to him as a shock. From that moment he avoided meeting them. Even slightly under the influence of liquor as he was, he could not bring himself to do this. He felt, more than once during the evening, the sudden impulse to bolt and run, but something restrained him, for he knew that the moment he was outside, the only chapter in his life which mattered would be closed forever.

IT was very late when he finally rose from his chair. Arm-in-arm they walked downstairs, together, and in the hall he put his finger on the button at the switch and turned out the light. Reaching for her in the darkness he took her face between his hands, raised it to his own, and kissed her, not fiercely, but tenderly, and with infinite regret. Ever so gently her soft arms stole about his neck, and she laid her cheek close to his.

"Good night, my lover," she whispered.

"Good night," he stammered, hoarsely.

The next moment he was walking blindly homeward along the deserted street. Arriving at his room, he set to work packing his few belongings and preparing for an early departure on the morrow. Resolutely, he put Lina Modotti out of his mind for good and all.

When he reported for work at the Oil and Grain Commercial Bank, two days later, he was his old confident self once more. In the absorption of the remaining details for the consummation of his scheme, he banished all thought of the pleasant weeks he had spent at 1016 Crocker Street. Any qualms of conscience over his conduct with Lina he promptly sandbagged with a shrug of his shoulders. She was young and would soon forget him. They always did.

During the noon hour when half of the tellers were away to lunch and in consequence, those remaining on duty were extra busy with their long lines of customers, he went to the file and extracted therefrom the card of Howard Criswell. After assuring himself from the ledger that no withdrawals or deposits had been made during his absence, he substituted for the card the one upon which Wolff, the young Swiss, had signed Criswell's name.

That same afternoon he dispatched by mail one thousand dollars in cash, to the Bank of Belvedere, a small financial institution in the fashionable suburb of that name, instructing them to open a checking

account for that amount in the name of Morgan Roberts. He gave as his address a box at the main post office, explaining that he was a mining man with interests in Kern county, and that he had not as yet located permanently in Laurencetown.

In the course of a day or so he received his pass-book with the one thousand dollars duly credited, and a letter thanking Mr. Morgan Roberts for his business, and assuring him that the Bank of Belvedere would be glad to handle his account by mail as suggested in Mr. Roberts' letter.

Four days later, Cronin mailed them his first check, signed in the same hand as the signature upon the newly substituted filing card. He possessed nine such checks, all told, for varying amounts, signed by young Wolff, "*Howard Criswell*."

The genuine Mr. Howard Criswell would have been severely agitated had he known what was happening to his account. Also the young Swiss immigrant, Rudolph Wolff—late pupil of Professor Morgan Roberts, of 1016 Crocker Street, eminent authority on modern banking—would have been rather astonished at the potency of his very excellent chirography.

The first check came back to the Oil and Grain Commercial Bank for collection the following day. Cronin watched the ledger until the amount, sixteen hundred and fifty dollars, had been debited against the account of Howard Criswell, and the canceled check dropped into the file next to the new filing card. He smiled. His scheme was working without a hitch.

FROM time to time now, and always at correct intervals so as not to excite suspicion, he sent the remainder of the nine checks through until thirty-nine thousand nine hundred of Mr. Howard Criswell's forty thousand dollars reposed securely to the credit of Mr. Morgan Roberts, at the Bank of Belvedere.

When the last check came in through the collection department and had been debited against Criswell's account, Cronin removed all nine of the canceled checks from the file and disposed of them, definitely, by burning them in his cheerfully blazing bachelor's grate that evening.

He congratulated himself upon his cleverness. Not once in the whole transaction had his name or personality appeared. There was not a chance in the world that suspicion would be directed against him, when the bank should find itself thirty-

nine thousand nine hundred dollars short.

The last thing Cronin did was to remove the spurious filing card from the file and replace it with the original one which contained the genuine signature of Howard Criswell. The spurious card he burned. This, together with the destroyed checks, removed the last shred of evidence of what had taken place.

So far everything had gone off without a hitch. There still remained the final coup—the withdrawal of the money from the Bank of Belvedere. He must not run the risk of appearing in person to do this lest later some official of that bank should recognize him. There was always the chance of somebody in that institution remembering that the checks of Morgan Roberts had gone through the Oil and Grain Commercial Bank, and thus put two and two together if the fact that the Oil and Grain had been robbed of thirty-nine thousand nine hundred dollars became public property.

To withdraw as large a sum as this in a lump without appearing in person, was out of the question. Then, too, a small institution like the Bank of Belvedere would not be likely to have such an amount on hand and would in all probability be forced to call on its reserve in the Federal Bank of Laurencetown.

Cronin had foreseen this, and had laid his plans accordingly. Hence the mailbox at the post office in the name of Morgan Roberts.

He permitted two weeks to elapse during which time he daily watched the account of Howard Criswell. When nothing happened to arouse his suspicions, he drew a check for five thousand dollars, mailed it to the Bank of Belvedere and asked them to ship him this amount by mail to his box at Laurencetown in denominations of twenties, tens and fives, for his payroll.

HE worked in a fever of excitement all the next day, but got through the day somehow and hurried to the post office, opened his box and found there the package of money. He had asked them in his letter to insure it rather than register the package, explaining that registered parcels were stolen more frequently than ordinary mail.

He hurried home and opened it. It contained five thousand dollars in bills of the specified denominations. Tucking them away carefully on the bottom of his trunk,

he went over to his club and treated himself to a two-dollar dinner and an extra black fifty-cent cigar.

Every week, he went through the same performance. The Bank of Belvedere began looking for his payroll check as a matter of course every Friday, and to prepare themselves with the necessary number of bills in the requested denominations.

On Friday of the eighth week, Cronin drew his last check for four thousand nine hundred dollars, leaving as a balance the original one thousand with which he had opened the account, further to allay suspicion. Then with the last dollar of the thirty-nine thousand nine hundred tucked safely away in his trunk, he drew a long breath and called it a day.

AN ordinary man, having done what Cronin had, would have left the employ of the bank and have gone away. But Cronin was not an ordinary man. He was far too clever to bolt. Besides, he wanted to be in at the final dénouement. He smiled, grimly, as he pictured to himself how utterly confounded Halliday and all the rest of the officials would be when Howard Criswell showed up on January first to have his pass-book balanced and his interest credited. He gloated as he thought of the expression on Mr. Halliday's urbane face when the banker found himself unable to produce the canceled checks to prove that Mr. Criswell had withdrawn all but one hundred of his forty thousand dollars.

Cronin was checking over his cash one morning, when Parks, the bank's messenger, came to his window and informed him that Mr. Halliday wished to see him. The teller drew a deep breath. He was conscious of a momentary spasm of fear. Composing himself, he said in a steady voice: "All right, Parks,"—then put his cash out of reach and locked up his cage.

The few steps across the tiled floor to Halliday's office seemed like that many miles. He wondered in a sudden wave of panic if he had slipped up somewhere. Confronted with the door whose frosted pane bore the legend "Private," he paused. His knees seemed to suddenly become bereft of their carrying power. It was with a supreme effort that he raised his hand and knocked. Halliday's voice from the inner office bade him enter. He did so, closed the door behind him and stood blinking in the presence of his superior.

Halliday motioned him to a seat without looking up. He was busy dictating a letter to his secretary. Cronin took the chair indicated with a sigh of relief. His eyes wandered about the office and came to rest upon the face of the girl at Halliday's elbow. He rose halfway in the chair, then dropped back, stunned. His face turned the color of chalk. The girl was Lina Modotti.

PENCIL poised in midair, the girl sat staring at him, then her free hand moved across her face, as if she were trying to brush away some hallucination. Cronin sat gripping the arms of his chair until his knuckles turned as white as his face.

Halliday, sensing the girl's preoccupation, glanced up.

Lina was the first to break the silence. She said just one word:

"Morgan!"

Halliday glanced from one to the other in well-bred astonishment. Then a light seemed to dawn upon him and he winked at the shaking senior teller.

"That'll be all, Miss Modotti," he said, to Cronin's intense relief. The girl arose, white-faced and silent, picked up her things and left.

Halliday was human. When she had gone, the banker leaned across his desk and said to Cronin, in a tone of mocking irony:

"Oh, Morgan!" Receiving no answering smile from Cronin, he went on in the same tone: "A little clandestine summer flirtation under an assumed name, eh?" Still receiving no answer from Cronin, he frowned, mildly. "Don't take it so seriously, my boy. Such things happen to the best of us."

He paused, a friendly smile on his lips. "I sent for you to tell you that as senior you are in line for promotion. Markley, the chief teller, is leaving us next week. He has accepted the cashiership of the Bank of Belvedere."

Cronin's face turned from chalk-white to a sickly green. He wanted to scream. He sat shrunken in his chair, lips moving, spasmodically.

"Of course," Halliday went on, "your salary will be raised, commensurate with your new responsibilities."

The senior teller tried to speak but his tongue seemed to cling to the roof of his mouth. Wetting his lips, he managed to stammer out an incoherent:

"Tha-thank you, sir!"

Halliday waved his feeble protestations of gratitude aside.

"The Oil and Grain always stand ready to reward faithful service," he said. His bright eyes twinkled. "Now run along and square yourself with that little new black-eyed secretary of mine—if you can."

Cronin arose unsteadily and almost staggered out of the door. In the outer office he came upon Lina seated at her typewriter. She raised her head and gave him a look in which there was neither blame nor scorn—merely sorrow.

"Morgan—how could you?"

Cronin raised both hands in a gesture of abject terror.

"My name is Cronin—Walter Cronin," he said, hoarsely. "If—if you still—care,"—his voice trailed off into a whisper,— "don't ever mention that—that name again."

The girl's hand was at her throat.

"I—I don't understand," she faltered:

"I'll be at your house tonight, at eight," he stammered, "to explain." He stumbled out of the office and closed the door behind him.

BACK in his cage, he tried to steady his shattered nerves, and to think. For the first time, the enormity of his crime stood revealed to him in all its ugliness. Through avarice and jealousy, he had allowed himself to become a common thief, had robbed the institution that had given him a livelihood, even while promotion and honor was being contemplated for him. But most perfidious of all was his treatment of the girl who had trusted him with her love.

He moved about his cage in a sort of helpless apathy, waiting on his customers, mechanically. More than once his trembling hand moved toward the drawer under the wicket, where a small loaded automatic pistol lay. But he knew that he could never summon up courage to press the muzzle to his throbbing temples.

His eyes kept roving toward Halliday's office across the room. Through the frosted glass of the partition, he could see the blurred profile of Lina, as the girl bent over her machine. Once he saw her pause in her work and raise her hand to her face with a gesture of utter weariness.

He could stand it no longer. Closing his wicket, he told Murchison, the teller next to him, that he was going to lunch

a little earlier than usual. When he went downstairs to his locker for his hat, a moment later, there was a determined look on his harassed face.

He fairly ran all the way home, flung the cover of his trunk open, and stuffed the stolen money into his suitcase. Returning to the bank, he entered stealthily by the side door, slipped down the marble stairs leading into the vault, opened the suitcase, and stacked the packages of currency neatly into a half-empty cash tray on the top shelf.

Then he tiptoed upstairs again, put his hat and the empty suitcase away in his locker and returned to his cage, with a sigh of relief. Opening the drawer under the wicket, he picked up the automatic pistol with a firm hand, and looked at it with a half-serious, half-quizzical smile on his lips.

"Fooled you this time, old six in the box," he whispered.

"Nice little gun," said a genial voice on the other side of the wicket.

He glanced up. It was Sanderson, the Federal bank examiner. Cronin's jaw dropped wide open. He stared at Sanderson as if that gentleman was some new species of the genus presented to him for classification. The thought of what he had missed, by the breadth of a hair, made him go limp.

Sanderson was smiling.

"Mr. Halliday told me to get you to help me check up, Mr. Cronin." He thrust a chubby hand through the wicket. "Congratulations on the coming promotion. Let's get busy. What say?"

"Right you are, Mr. Sanderson," Cronin replied, briskly, as he put the pistol away and shut the drawer with a bang.

ON the way to Lina's that evening, Cronin stopped in at a florist's and bought an armful of La France roses. As he passed 1016 Crocker Street he noted a "To Let" sign in the window. He smiled.

and went on, head erect and shoulders squared.

He found Lina by the blazing grate, alone. She arose as he entered. No word of blame came from her lips, not a question of any kind. She came up to him and put her hands on both his shoulders and looked deep into his eyes, and he met them squarely now and without any feeling of fear or diffidence.

He laid the roses in her arms and drew her to a seat beside the fire.

"I did it to earn a little extra money," he said, averting her gaze. "I didn't want the bank to know that I was doing any work on the outside, so I changed my name. I wonder if you can forgive me?"

"I love you," she replied, "and because I love you, there is nothing to forgive."

He kissed her tremulously, thankfully.

"Isn't it funny that your tuition should land me a job in the very bank where you worked, after I had given up in despair?" she asked.

"Funny is hardly the word," he mused.

He was thinking of his thousand dollars that lay in the Bank of Belvedere, as finally and absolutely lost as if he had thrown them overboard in midocean. To appear in person to withdraw them was out of the question, and to write another check would be tempting Fate once too often. He drew a sigh of genuine distress. At the same time, the thought of the utter amazement of Halliday, on January first, when he found that although Mr. Howard Criswell's account was thirty-nine thousand nine hundred dollars short, the bank's cash balanced to a cent, gave Cronin a certain measure of amusement and satisfaction.

"Why the deep sigh?" Lina asked.

"I—I was just wondering—is there any reason why we couldn't get married right away?"

"None that I know of, Morgan, dear," she replied.

"Walter," he corrected, solemnly.

ROY NORTON, who wrote "The Loner," "The Toll of the Sea," "The Flame," "The Vanishing Fleets," "Captains Three," and many other noted stories, will contribute to our next issue "The Chimney of Gold," a short novel of adventure in the Arizona mining country that will hold you spellbound. Be sure to read it—in our forthcoming May issue.

The COMEBACK

This memorable short novel deals with a dog, a wolf and the coyote clan; and with men and mountains. The author is the man who wrote "The Prize of the Desert," "The Captured Rainbow" and "The White Gander;" he has lived for many years high in the Colorado Rockies and so knows his subject well; and he has done his best work in this epic of an exciting trail.

By

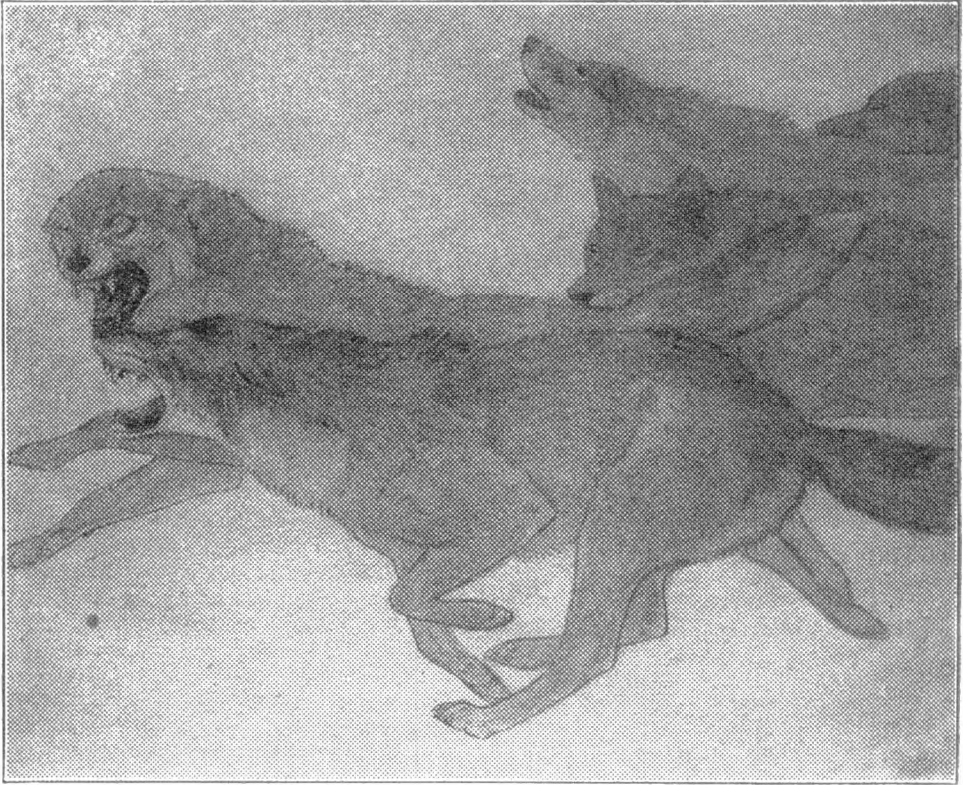
JOE MILLS

JIM HUNTER paused in the doorway of the little log cabin and surveyed the peaceful scene within. Old Hopkins, the cattle-man, was asleep in his chair before the open fire, which had burned low and threw a soft, yellow light over the sleeper. A collie lay stretched comfortably upon the hearth. Beyond the circle of fluttering firelight, the interior of the cabin was dim—lost in vague shadows. From the darkness above the mantel, staring fiercely down, was the hoary head of a grizzly; in the far corner, hardly discernible in the gloom, lurked the vague form of a lobo wolf as if waiting to creep upon the sleeper. Its head was lifted, its lips cupped, as though it were about to send forth the call for the pack to rally.

Hunter closed the door behind him and took his customary seat before the fire, the dog wagging a welcoming tail without getting up. Sprawling down into a chair, he slowly searched out his pipe, moodily gazing into the fire as he filled it. From time to time he glanced toward the sleeping

man, turning from him to the mounted specimen in the corner. The cattle-man was a hearty fellow of sixty years; his tousled head was thatched with heavy iron-gray hair; his big body was hardy and vigorous; his hands were gnarled, like the arms of a timberline tree. Old Hopkins was a man whose type was passing. . . . Dreamily, Hunter smoked on. He had come to the Hopkins home ranch to spend a summer, and had lingered three years. The longer he remained, the less desire he had to return to his home in the East. He rode the region as a free lance, at times setting out traps and helping Hopkins rid the range of coyotes.

A MEDLEY of night sounds came faintly to the cabin. The fall round-up had filled the big corral with cattle, now milling about restlessly. From the cottonwoods came the mournful screech of an owl. Somewhere, high overhead, geese were babbling on their way south. A coyote lifted weird notes to welcome the rising



moon—and the collie raised her head inquiringly. A second coyote joined the first—then came a yapping chorus, wild, uncanny, that filled the valley and ascended among the cliffs until it was faint from the echoing distance.

The long howl of a distant wolf drifted down from the mountain above the ranch. Instantly all other sounds—chorus, duet, solo—ceased. Hunter sat up rigidly, alert. The collie jumped to her feet and rushed outdoors. Hopkins awoke with a start, jerked his feet from the chair in front and rapped out in amazement: "A wolf!"

Hunter's shoulders shook as though he were cold. "Br-r-r!" he shivered. "That gave me the creeps."

The cattle-man nodded understandingly. "I've always had that feeling about a wolf's howl. I can't tell the difference between the howl of a wolf and a cross-breed in the sound, but I can in the feel. A cross-breed doesn't make the chills run up my spine."

The wolf-howl was not repeated. Grad-

ually the customary night sounds were resumed.

Hunter paced the floor with quick, jerky steps. He paused at last, and turned to the cattle-man. "That's the first wolf I've heard in the three years I've been here," he marveled.

"It's the first we've had around since I got Pegfoot." Hopkins indicated the vague form in the corner.

"I remember your prediction," said Hunter as he stooped to examine the lobo skin on the floor. "You said that some day we'd have wolves again—as soon as the elk starved in Wyoming."

Hopkins nodded, filled his pipe, and looked long into the fire. "Yes," he answered slowly. "I was sure we'd have them again. Wyoming is pretty much settled up now. They've fenced up the land in the valleys where the elk ranged in winter, and the ranchers are cutting the grass for hay. Every winter now thousands of elk starve to death. They're going fast—same as the buffalo." He paused a mo-

ment, and turned to the wolf. "Pegfoot came down from the north. He was a buffalo gray—a lobo that had followed the few remaining buffalo on their retreat into the mountains up north. Later, when the last of them had perished, he drifted south, back to the cattle-ranges."

THE collie scratched open the door and padded softly into the room. Hunter resumed his seat, holding her head between his knees.

"I'd learned a lot about trapping," the old man went on, "before Pegfoot came our way. When we settled here, fifty years ago, there was hardly a coyote to be seen this far up in the mountains. They ranged mostly out on the plains, or maybe in the foothills. But when settlers took up the land and began raising things, the coyotes followed the settlements. The more ranches, the more food for coyotes, so they spread everywhere. And when the buffalo were all gone, the wolves came back from the north. Then we had 'em both, wolves and coyotes, on the same range."

The old man sat in silence for a long time. At length he continued:

"Settlers killed off the game-- then the wolves began killing the cattle. The stockmen organized--got together and offered rewards for coyote and wolf scalps. They set out traps and scattered poison everywhere. Looked like, for a time, that we were going to get rid of all the pests. We did thin them out a lot. But we made one big mistake--keeping traps and poison out all the year. The few wolves that were left got wise to the traps and would starve before they'd touch meat they hadn't killed."

"But you wiped them out--almost," Hunter congratulated reassuringly.

"Yes--almost." Hopkins jerked his head impatiently. "We thought that we had 'em just about exterminated. Then something happened that we weren't looking for. They staged a comeback. Brought out a brand new breed to devil us. Restocked the cow ranges."

"You mean the cross-breeds?" Hunter cut in with interest.

"Yes, cross-breeds--worst devils that ever traveled--more trouble than lobos. They've got all the cunning of the coyote, and the daring of the wolf. They'll steal chickens like one branch of the family--and kill cattle like the other. They've got all the cussedness of both breeds."

Hopkins knocked his pipe out and arose. "Well, good night, Jim," he said. "Hope you decide to spend the winter with us--and get the wolf."

Mentally, Hunter accepted the invitation. The old cattle-man's tale thrilled him. It predicted a foe worthy of his best efforts in the trapping line.

Hunter was happy rambling through the wilds with the collie as his lone companion. They were inseparable. The dog loved him with all the fierce intenseness of her collie nature. She frisked away joyfully to do his bidding whenever he sent her on an errand. And Jim was an appreciative master who took joy in training the dog, and comfort in her companionship.

The summer Jim Hunter came to the home ranch there was a family of little collie pups tumbling about their mother. And when an unlucky mishap took away the mother, Hunter became a willing foster parent to the pups. He selected the smallest pup for his own and named her Jane. The name, he said, was old-fashioned and stood for faithfulness. Jane was not a true collic type--but a throwback, reflecting by form and color and action something of her jumbled ancestry. Her head was too short for a collie; but it was broad and ample and reflected sharp intelligence.

From the moment Hunter first petted her as a pudgy little puppy, Jane gave him her absolute, loyal devotion. In return he taught her--not the tricks of a town dog, but usefulness.

Early in her puppyhood Hunter taught her about traps, for he was determined to protect her from the dangers of the cattle-range. Many times on the range he had found dogs caught in traps set out for coyotes; and frequently he had come upon the pitiful sight of a dog, crazed from eating poisoned meat, running about in circles and snapping at everything in its path.

By wrapping the jaws of single-spring rat traps with cloth, so they could not really bite, Hunter began the dog's education. He set the padded traps about the yard; and Jane, as a puppy, blundered awkwardly into them, yelped with fright and fled to him for aid and consolation.

Fear of poison bait was harder to teach--but he accomplished it by painstaking efforts. He had withheld food from the dog until she was ravenously hungry, then he had taken her afield where tempting morsels of fresh meat had been scattered. Jane had charged headlong for the food,

and Jim had held her back. The dog persisted—and he had slapped her away, much as he'd seen the pup's mother warn her away from things she was not to touch. Later, when the dog was half-trained, he had strewn meat-scraps about with sickening doses of quinine concealed in them.

In time the collie learned that any meat not given her by Jim Hunter was apt to contain nauseating surprises. Once, when her master apparently neglected her, Jane went four days without eating, with meat all about to tempt her. She had learned her lesson thoroughly, and observed it unflinchingly.

HUNTER sat late before the embers of the fire. From time to time he spoke to the dog, or turned toward the shaggy form of the wolf: "So you led 'em a life for ten years—sure must have been mighty sly—old Hopkins after you too—he's a mighty smart trapper." The dog got up and thrust her head into Hunter's arms.

"Jane," he said soberly, looking down into the dog's eyes, "I'm going after the lobo—going to stay on here until I get him. What say—will you help?"

She barked in eloquent assent. . . .

An hour before dawn the wolf howled again, the howl drifting down from the heights, faint from distance. Jim Hunter sat up in bed and listened. He dressed quickly, and with the collie at his heels began the long climb to the top of the ridge that overlooked the valley where the home ranch lay.

A thousand feet up the steep slope, where a shoulder of the mountain jutted out and ended in a promontory, Hunter found wolf-tracks. But the tracks were many hours old—likely those of the evening before.

He knelt to examine the tracks. "He's marked, all right," he commented, "—got only three toes on his left front foot. He's likely been in a trap—he's trap-wise—and sly. We'll call him Three-toes, Jane."

Hunter put in the day among the ridges. The region made good wolf country—rough and broken, with ridges that ran down toward the cattle-range, deep cañons, thickets of aspen, and heavily wooded slopes that offered shelter from the riders who carried powerful glasses and long-range rifles. Three-toes had learned that the open range was risky.

He had spent most of his years in Wyoming. His mother had denned high

up in the mountains, and had taught him the trick of pulling down elk and deer, or an occasional bighorn sheep on the higher ranges. His ancestors had witnessed the advent of man into their territory, and had learned to fear these slow-moving creatures and to respect their guns, their traps and their poison baits. They had seen the slow and the stupid wolves slain before the guns, and had seen crazed coyotes and wolves running madly about after eating poisoned meat. They knew that the clank of a trap-chain meant death to the careless ones of their kind. And Three-toes had acquired their wisdom.

Three-toes was beautiful in his own wild way. His head was broad, with ample brain space for his wonderful store of wisdom. He was unbelievably strong and rugged, swift as a lightning-flash, courageous as a grizzly. He fought only when it was necessary; then he was the aggressor, unafraid, bold, dauntless.

As soon as he had eaten his fill he retired immediately to some high point where he bedded down for the day, keeping watch of the valleys below. If a man appeared, he left his bed at a run; and by the time the man had trailed him up the slope, he would be far away, following a course that a horse could not travel.

In Wyoming, as the cattle herds came in, Three-toes had discovered that they were accompanied by men. He found that cattle were very stupid, and easy to pull down, but the men that guarded them were quick to punish—with traps and dogs and guns. Experience taught him that after a few raids it was wise to flee from the region of his kill. Craftily, then, he moved about the cattle-range, killing as he rambled, avoiding the ranches, making his kills far from the trails as possible.

FROM where Three-toes had bedded down, he could watch his back-track and overlook the ridges below. He roused from time to time and searched the region with keen eyes. Down in the valley he heard coyotes wailing in broad daylight; he howled only at night. . . .

When Three-toes howled, an hour after dark, Jim Hunter was waiting for the call. In spite of that fact he felt a chill creep along his spine. The collie growled uneasily; the hair along her back stood on end. Every other wild thing was dumb.

An hour later Three-toes howled again, this time from far up the valley. It was

the hunting cry for the pack—though there was no pack to rally. The coyotes did not answer, but they drifted in his direction. Three-toes had been in the region less than a week before every little, yellow wolf knew of his presence and followed him at a distance, watching for the kill they knew he'd make, and edging up eagerly while they waited for him to finish his feeding and move away before rushing in to fight for a share of the spoils he left behind.

Some of the old coyotes grew bolder and ventured close while Three-toes was still feeding at the carcass of a cow he had killed. Their action meeting no rebuff, they edged nearer. Three-toes raised his head to look at them, but offered no resistance, for it was the habit of his breed to send forth a call, a welcome cry, whenever there was meat at hand. The coyotes were cautious. They kept the carcass of the cow between themselves and the wolf. And thereafter, the coyotes were present to share in the spoils whenever the lobo fed.

At dawn every morning Jim Hunter was afoot with the collie, seeking out the kill the wolf had made and unraveling the maze of coyote-tracks he found about the bare bones of the animal that had been pulled down.

At night, before the open fire, he recounted to Hopkins his experiences of the day.

"There's getting to be a marked difference in the way Three-toes tolerates the coyotes," he told the cattle-man. "At first he loped off in disgust whenever they trailed him too closely. But now, when he howls, they answer him; and he waits for them before starting on a hunt."

"He'll be mating with one of them—more ornery cross-breeds," said Hopkins disgustedly. . . .

Jane came wearily into the cabin and plumped herself down upon the hearth.

THE mountains were a blaze of color.

The aspen trees were aflame with gorgeous yellow and orange. Autumnal haze hung over the mountains and blurred the peaks with soft purple. Three-toes and his coyote pack rambled the length of the cattle-range. They explored the mountains to timberline, and ventured far down into the foothills. They killed from time to time, over an area forty miles long by thirty wide. But the rough region above the Hopkins home ranch they adopted as their home range. Whenever they discov-

ered traps or poison anywhere, they avoided that locality.

"That old lobo's too wise to stay around one place very long." Hunter had dropped into his customary chair before the fire, tired and a bit discouraged. "I've followed him north to the Poudre, and back again. I haven't set a trap—don't want him to be suspicious of me. I ran across old Jenkins, a wolfer, the other day, and he told me of catching Three-toes' mate. Said he kept her alive for a week, using her as a lure to get Three-toes into a trap. Finally the sly old fellow tried to rescue his mate, and got into a trap—that was how he lost his toes. The old wolfer says he's been after Three-toes ever since, but the old lobo is too wise to go near a trap-set."

BEFORE daylight next morning Hunter was on his way to the top of a little knoll that rose in the middle of the home ranch valley. He concealed himself among some stunted pines, and with rifle ready, and the collie at his feet, he settled down to wait. From his outpost he could see in all directions.

Three-toes howled from the low shoulder of a ridge that extended down from the higher mountains. Instantly the coyote pack answered. From his concealment, Hunter watched the wolf emerge from the shelter of the woods and join the little yellow wolves that waited for him.

Down the valley came the pack, heading straight for the knoll where Hunter lay concealed. The light was improving. Hunter smiled grimly and reached for his rifle. It was the only time he had carried his gun, for he did not want to frighten the wolf away from the range he had adopted near the ranch. By going about unarmed, and refraining from setting traps, he hoped to render Three-toes less suspicious of his actions. When he turned his eyes toward the dim objects advancing in his direction, he received a surprise that jolted him like an electric shock. Three-toes had dropped behind the coyotes. Two hundred yards in front, and the same on either side of the wolf, ran coyote scouts. These cunning devils would discover any lurking danger and warn off Three-toes.

Hunter swore softly as he saw a coyote stop at the foot of the slope and nose his trail. The coyote whirled about instantly and went bounding away a short distance; then stopped and faced toward the man's hiding-place, the hair along its back rising.

Three-toes saw the coyote and swung wide of the knoll. He went on down the valley with his coyote pack spread out ahead of him.

"He's learned that there's apt to be a rifle on any point overlooking the valley," decided Hunter in admiration, "so he gives 'em all a wide berth. He keeps out of range as a matter of habit. He doesn't know but what there's a man with a gun hiding wherever there's cover—so he moves about as though he knew there was an enemy in every hiding-place. And the way he's using the coyotes—"

A commotion suddenly arose among the beef cattle.

Hunter focused his powerful glasses, then steadied them against a tree, and watched Three-toes and his pack pull down a fat steer. When roused to his danger, the steer went lumbering awkwardly away. From either side coyotes flashed close—then Three-toes came swiftly from behind and launched forward for the steer's hamstring. The lobo's teeth sank home into the steer's meaty hindleg. The animal staggered, bellowed from pain and fright, and whirled to face Three-toes. The wolf circled to the rear again; meantime the coyote pack pressed about the scene in a half-circle that blocked the steer's escape. Once more the big wolf struck, and this time his terrible teeth cut through the tough tendons until the steer's leg dangled uselessly.

Coyotes leaped and struck viciously, but the steer shook them off. A cross-breed lunged at the flank and ripped it open. But Three-toes dropped behind and waited. While the steer struggled on a brief hundred yards, the big wolf swept the valley for signs of enemies. And when the steer at last went down with the pack tearing at him from all sides, Three-toes lifted his voice and sent forth the message that here was meat for all.

NOW the color had gone from the aspen groves, and the still water was freezing of nights. Riders had gathered the cattle off the range and drifted them to winter pastures close to the home ranch, where hay could be fed during deep snows. The pinch of winter was being felt by the wild things.

Hunter packed a horse with traps and supplies and moved five miles up the valley to the deserted shanty of a homesteader. It was in this vicinity that he

had found Three-toes' tracks most frequently. He knew that somewhere on the ridges overlooking this old cabin the wolf bedded down during the day, and at night descended from his lofty retreats to lead his adopted pack of coyotes. Many times Hunter had lingered in the locality of the old cabin until after dark. A dozen times he had heard Three-toes howl from the last promontory before coming out into the open. And in spite of the fact that he was waiting for it, the sound always sent the shivers down his back.

From the crest of a ridge a mile away, Three-toes watched the man unpack the horse before the old cabin door. He had come to watch for this man who was ever about the cattle-range on foot. The other men of the range were always mounted. In spite of the fact that this man did not carry a gun or set traps, Three-toes was suspicious. He distrusted all men, and in spite of Hunter's seeming harmless intentions, Three-toes remained in hiding during the day; and never, so far as Hunter could discover, did the wolf for an instant relax his vigilance.

Jane was always at Hunter's heels, except when he sent her off upon some errand. These errands were a definite part of his program, and he was directing them shrewdly that he might not excite the coyotes or arouse the suspicion of Three-toes. More frequently, now, the lobo found the collie's scent upon the trails, and even along the ridgetops. At first his hair rose; and he bared his teeth when he came upon her scent. But as time passed, he lost his antagonism for the collie, and crept curiously along her trail, stopping reluctantly when it led him dangerously near the cabin.

At night, when the coyotes filled the valley with their weird chorus, Hunter would open the cabin door and send the collie forth.

"Go out, Jane," he would command the dog, "go visit 'em."

And the collie, eager to obey the man she loved, would race out into the open where the coyotes awaited the coming of Three-toes. At first the coyotes stood aloof or ran away from her because she smelled of man, or chased her back to the cabin. But it was mating time, and the three old dog coyotes soon accepted her presence and came to watch for her coming nightly.

Hunter spent busy days reading the myriad of coyote-tracks around the cabin.

"Well, Jane," he praised the dog, "you're a wonderful flirt—you've got those three old wise guys making love to you. We'll show them a new trick now." He patted the dog and pointed to a track of a twisted foot—a mute testimony to its owner's experience with traps.

For a long time Hunter had been preparing for his next move. He had discovered that the collie frequently ran along the trails, especially when some ardent coyote chased her. At a spot where three trails converged, between an aspen grove and some tumbled rocks, he had carefully dug holes in which he would later set traps; then there would be no fresh dirt about to warn the coyotes. He laid the traps in the trail, then sent Jane in their direction. He noted with satisfaction that the dog either left the trail in passing the spot or else leaped high into the air and cleared them safely. He put on a pair of gloves that for days had been in the collie's bed, and set the traps, after rubbing them over the dog's shaggy coat.

That night, beneath the young moon, the coyote with the twisted foot met the collie as soon as she came from the cabin. Up and down the valley they raced; sometimes the dog leading, and again the coyote running ahead. At the end of an hour they approached the cabin. The collie leaped high over the trap-set; but the coyote with the twisted foot, bent upon his love-making, planted a foot squarely upon a trap pan.

Within a week Hunter had taken the three unmated dog coyotes. Then he sent the dog farther afield to tempt Three-toes.

High upon his lookout, Three-toes, eyes slitted narrowly, watched the man potter overlong at the place where the traps were set. At night he ventured down to investigate—but the trap was too near the cabin. He circled the house at a safe distance, sniffing at everything that had the slightest man-odor about it. At length, when he had finished his round, he lifted his voice for the pack. Instantly the coyotes answered his call and moved in his direction.

A quarter of a mile behind the pack the collie followed curiously. She had lost her fear of the coyotes, because they had accepted her as a cousin, and held her in no way responsible for the disappearance of their mates.

Three-toes dropped behind the pack to see what manner of wolf it was that would

not join his followers. Each time the collie turned tail and raced back toward the cabin, Three-toes circled warily around a low hill and came between the dog and her refuge. They were miles away from the cabin now, and the coyotes were hunting far ahead.

The collie sat down and watched the approach of the big wolf. He came trotting easily along until within twenty feet—the nearest he had ever come to her. The dog whined—half through fear, and half with excitement. Three-toes circled until he had the advantage of the wind; then he stopped and sniffed suspiciously, for there was a definite taint of man about the dog. The hair along his back lifted, and he bared his teeth. For a long time he stood motionless. Then the taint vanished, and he moved nearer.

Jane raced away at top speed, but Three-toes overhauled her. She whirled and snapped at him, but he shouldered her aside. Again and again she ran away, but each time the big wolf ran her down and brought her to a stop. They circled, doubled back and forth, and ran on and on.

The coyote pack scattered, and went about its business of finding food. The moon dropped low until it touched the tops of the high peaks to the west. Abruptly, then, the collie deserted Three-toes, returning slowly toward the cabin. The wolf halted a half-mile from the spot where he had seen the man linger on the trail.

HUNTER was dozing before the fire when the dog pushed open the door and entered. The creaking of its rusty hinges roused him. He replenished the fire, and looked at his watch.

"Jane," he exclaimed reprovingly, "it's four o'clock in the morning—and you're just getting home!"

The collie looked up into his face and wagged wearily.

"Where you been?" The man's voice was coaxing. "Got a case on Big Boy, this time?" he teased.

Night after night the collie was absent from the cabin. After dark, when Three-toes called from some ridge above the cabin, she would run outside and cock her head to the call. Then, when its echoes had died away, she would lift her voice and answer. Her tones were pitched lower than the weird wailing of the coyotes, and

they were longer sustained. Her howl fairly ached with loneliness.

Hunter, listening shrewdly, recognized that the time had come to act. The next morning he went up the narrow valley with his load of traps in a sack that had been a part of the collie's bed. The week before he had planned this trap-set which was to be his crowning achievement as a trapper. He knelt upon one of the coyote skins as he worked; and kept Jane close at hand that her scent might give Three-toes a measure of assurance and thus lull to rest his suspicions.

When the five traps were finally in place, Hunter stood up and carefully surveyed the spot.

"There's not a trace of them," he stated proudly to the dog. "There's even coyote tracks right over them—" he boasted as he surveyed the tracks he had imprinted there, using the foot of one of the coyotes he had killed for the purpose.

"Now, Jane, we'll rehearse your part of the game. Up the trail a ways—and back," he motioned the dog up the trail.

Obediently the collie moved away. She circled around the trap-set and trotted on.

Hunter whistled, and the dog stopped. He beckoned to her, repeated the whistle, then called.

"Come on, Jane, down the trail—don't forget the traps."

Swiftly she came, increasing her speed to a run. Ten feet in front of the traps she leaped, and landed safely beyond the lurking danger.

Hunter dropped to his knees.

"Now you bring in Three-toes—that way," he enthused, "and we'll be the greatest trappers in the Rockies."

The dog stirred uneasily in his arms, whined and broke from his grasp.

An hour after dark came the call of the wolf. Jane, lying at Hunter's feet, sprang up and dashed from the cabin. She did not wait to voice her answer, but raced away to carry her message to Three-toes. Hunter, watching from the cabin door, smiled approvingly and turned back to wait out the night.

He sat before the fire and smoked. At times, when coyotes howled, he got up and went outside.

"It's my guess she'll bring him in," he assured himself. "If she does, it means that the range is free of wolves again. He hasn't mated—or he wouldn't be running with her. Guess old Hopkins' prediction

about this second comeback won't come true." He chuckled, for events seemed about to reward him his patient planning.

Hours and hours he waited. The moon dropped behind the Great Divide—and still the dog did not return. He got up and paced the dirt floor of the cabin. Frequently he stooped close to the fire to look at his watch.

"She's got a case on Three-toes—seems as crazy about him as the wolf is about her." He lifted his arms, stretched lazily, and settled down to doze before the fire. At length he got up, walked to the door, went outside and circled the cabin. He returned and resumed his seat. But he did not doze now. He looked at his watch, snapped it shut impatiently.

"It's past the time she usually comes in." He resumed his pacing—went outside again and listened. He whistled, but only echoes from the cliffs answered him. With an armload of wood he went inside the cabin again and piled fresh fuel upon the fire. As the fire leaped up, he looked at his watch once more.

At daylight he was on his way to the trap-set. He carried his rifle for the first time since coming to the cabin. The dog had not come in—and he feared that she might have blundered into the traps. But he hoped that she had lured her ardent lover to his fate and was lingering near him in his extremity.

Fifty yards below the traps he stopped to examine the trail where it led along the bottom of a little run. Here the sand lay deep, and he could read the tracks without effort.

He leaned low, looked sharply at the trail, then straightened with a jerk.

"He's ahead," he exulted, "going straight for the traps." He gripped his gun and hurried forward.

LATE that evening Jim Hunter trudged wearily to the home ranch. He paused in the doorway of the little log cabin and surveyed the peaceful scene within. Old Hopkins, the cattle-man, was dozing before the fire. The grizzly's head stared down as fiercely as ever. Pegfoot loomed ominously in the corner. But Jane was not stretched before the fire. He entered and took his customary seat.

Old Hopkins roused up. "Any luck?" he yawned.

"Yes," Hunter answered disgustedly, "bad luck: I've lost Jane. She led Three-

toes around my traps—shouldered him clear off the trail—and eloped with him.”

Old Hopkins was wide awake now.

“We’ll have a new breed of wolves on the range. Old Three-toes will sure stage a comeback!”

CHAPTER II

AT dawn next morning Jim Hunter led a pack-horse up the valley toward the old cabin where he had spent weeks in careful preparation for his campaign against Three-toes. He carried a rifle, and as he moved slowly along the trail, he searched the ridge-tops with his twelve-power glasses, steadying them against a boulder while he focused them upon distant points. He plodded along doggedly, but he had lost heart for the hunt. All night he had wrestled with his problem and though the decision had cost him dear, he knew he must kill Jane. He flinched at the thought, even though his grasp tightened upon his rifle.

At the cabin, Hunter unpacked his horse and turned it homeward. He flung the supplies inside and pulled the door to with a bang, turning away hastily as though something sinister threatened. Then he halted—for all around were tracks where Jane had circled about. She had returned in the night to visit her master and the spot which for weeks had been home. Her tracks showed that she had lingered about for some time.

“If I had stayed here,” he reproached himself, “maybe Jane would have come into the cabin. Then I might have saved her. And now, from what Hopkins says, I guess she’s gone for good.” He heaved a troubled sigh—and went on to the trapset, where he paused. The tracks of the day before were still plain in the sand. Clearly he saw the collie’s between the wolf’s and the waiting traps—read the message that the dog had shouldered Three-toes off the trail, out of danger.

The tracks went on up the narrow valley toward the pass overlooking Buckhorn Creek. Slowly Hunter picked up his rifle and took the trail, eyes upon the ground.

In late afternoon Hunter made camp. He gathered wood for an all-night fire, for he carried no blankets. Nor had he stopped for a grub-pack; his one urge had been to get the dreaded deed over with. He killed a rabbit with a stone—fearing

to frighten Three-toes out of the region if he shot it. Half the rabbit he reserved for his supper; the rest he set out on a boulder in a little opening some fifty feet from his camp.

“Maybe the smell of cooking will bring Jane in,” he hoped, yet dreaded, as he settled down before his cooking fires. He built two small fires, and when they had burned to glowing, smokeless coals, he placed his portion of the bunny upon a flat stone between them. From time to time he leaned forward and turned the roasting meat with a stick.

THE sun dropped behind the Divide. Fleecy clouds changed from flying white banners to streamers of burnished red and gold and orange. Sunset flamed gorgeously—yet Jim Hunter never knew. Morosely he sat before his fire, rifle across his lap, eyes shifting slowly, peering into the deepening shadows until the moon silvered the snowy range and peeped down upon him, wonderingly. High above him the wind was wailing; a bungling owl, crying plaintively, brushed by him on silent wings; far away came the lonesome wolf-howl, rising with steady volume, then falling away to silence.

Hunter felt the old creepy chill along his spine. He wanted to get up and move about,—to replenish the fire,—anything to break the uncanny spell which the wolf-howl has always cast over man from time immemorial.

A shadow moved close to the spruces. Cautiously Hunter shifted his rifle, slipping it to his shoulder and covering the moving specter. From the trees came the half-eager, half-fearful whine of the collie. Instinct warned her to keep out of sight—but love prompted her to creep close to the man. She wanted to hear his voice, quiet, soothing, commanding. But suddenly she had become afraid.

Three-toes called again. The collie answered. She forgot Hunter’s existence—and all caution. Eagerly she trotted through the spruce grove, headed straight for her calling mate. All at once she stopped and faced back toward the camp. She was torn between her loyalty to her master, an acquired trait, deep-grounded through generations of domestication—and the instinctive, primitive call of the wolf.

Slowly the night’s sounds began again. From far across the cañon, coyotes called, their thin, wavering yelps coming from

afar, faintly. The collie lifted her nose and sniffed at the camp-smell which the breeze brought down to her. The odor of roasting rabbit-meat overbalanced her caution. She hungered, too, for the old gruff fondling of her master. She turned and went back through the spruces, stopping twenty yards from the fire. Then she edged forward and ate the portion of rabbit Hunter had put out for her.

Slowly the man aligned the sights, finger upon the trigger. His teeth were chattering, the rifle wavering. Then his jaw set—the rifle steadied, his finger tightened upon the trigger. For a second he hesitated. He wanted to close his eyes and blot out the sight of Jane standing there in the moonlight—unsuspicious.

HIS rifle cracked. Echoes leaped back from near-by rocks, then grew fainter and fainter and died away.

The dog spun half-around and threw herself backward, giving vent to her outraged feelings in a prolonged, agonized howl in which startled surprise and terror almost drowned the note of pain. For a moment she thrashed about in the open, then made for cover, hopping on three legs.

Hunter did not move. The cry of the collie had frozen him. He watched with horrified astonishment as the dog hobbled away. He was a good shot, and he missed his mark so rarely that he had expected to find the deed done the instant he pressed the trigger. But now—

"I've messed things up again—worse this time." He threw a cartridge into place and ran toward the spruce grove.

Across the low ridges he made his frantic way. He hunted through the groves and ran feverishly in and out among the gullies. He circled, stopped to listen, climbed to high points and watched, but his efforts were all in vain. The collie had vanished. On and on he searched. He was determined to find the dog and finish her, to end the job he had come to do.

The moon was low over the Divide when, disappointed and weary, he returned to his camp. The fire had gone out. He lighted another and sat down to wait for daylight. Mechanically he searched out his pipe—and forgot to fill it.

"She knows now—the worst; that even I've turned against her—am a traitor." He thrust a log at the fire, setting it in place with a savage kick. Disgust, remorse, discouragement assailed him.

At dawn he took up the trail of the wounded dog.

"It's her front foot," he mumbled as he stooped low to examine the tracks.

After fifteen minutes' trailing he found where Three-toes had met Jane, and where she had lain down while the wolf licked her wounded foot. Then the tracks vanished.

He doubled back and forth, circled, searched the sand in the cow trails without finding further trace of the dog. But everywhere were the tracks of the lobo.

"Jane's hiding," he decided after an hour's fruitless tracking. "She's somewhere close at hand."

He hunted carefully among the jumbled rocks. Then one after another he investigated other piles of rock—huge slabs which had come down in slide or thaw, and lay with many sheltering openings beneath them.

Finally, in midafternoon, he climbed to the top of a towering crag that stood high above the near-by treetops, and from which he could oversee the surrounding region. Panting from his exertion, he lay down to rest, intending to keep on the lookout; but two days of constant travel, and two nights with but little sleep, and much worry, had wearied him more than he realized. He stretched out flat, relaxed, inviting the bright sun's cheering rays. The heat penetrated his leather vest. Contentment fell upon him. Abruptly he slept.

SOMETIME later he stirred drowsily, then lay motionless, half-torpid as a sunning lizard. Presently the memory of his purpose flooded in upon him. He sat up, rubbed his eyes and glanced quickly around. Three deer were crossing an open park a hundred yards below—so there was no use looking further in that direction. He faced around. His eyes discovered a moving object coming down a trail between low ridges. He snapped to attention, shaded his eyes, then caught his breath.

"Three-toes," he gasped. "He's coming straight toward me."

The suspense brought the sweat out on his forehead, but fearing to attract the animal's attention by the slightest movement, he did not stir until Three-toes passed behind a group of trees; then sliding swiftly down the rear side of the rock, he took his stand among some stunted shoulder-high pine, about fifty yards from the trail. He examined his rifle and swung it toward the

spot where Three-toes would appear. He raised it to his shoulder by quarter inches. He wanted to try out the sight—to test his aim—to shift his position.

"Careful, old boy," he admonished himself, under his breath. "Three-toes could see a flea hop off the shooting-iron. Slow and steady on the trigger."

He thought he heard something behind him and looked stealthily across his shoulder. He saw nothing. Seconds crept by. His arms grew weary with the tension and weight of the rifle. He eased it down. Minutes crawled past. Would the wolf never show up? He peeped cautiously from behind the rock. Not a sign of his quarry! Ten interminable minutes longer he hid there. At last he went forth to investigate the crafty lobo's tracks.

His trail led straight down until it reached the grove. Here it showed he had halted, turned aside, and keeping out of sight behind a tumbled pile of rocks, had stolen into the next gully, where he had doubled back at a run.

"He must have been watching me from the first," Hunter grumbled. "Foxy cuss! Kept straight on toward me until he could make his get-away. Umph!"

He circled across the ridges, stopping to examine the trails. Frequently he picked up the wolf's, but never the collie.

"She's close by, though, or Three-toes wouldn't show up," he guessed shrewdly, and resumed his hunt.

HIS attempted ambush failing, Hunter returned to the crag and surveyed the surrounding region from its summit. A pair of magpies, flying in and out of a clump of dense young spruces, were agitated about something. He sat down, resting elbows upon knees, and turned the twelve-power glasses upon the trees. He caught a fleeting glimpse of something moving—then Three-toes emerged from the grove and paused for an instant before dropping into one of the little gullies sloping gently toward the lookout.

Hunter exchanged the glasses for his rifle, adjusted the sights for four hundred yards, and shifted to position to cover the trail where it came out of the gully.

"It'll be a long shot." He hesitated. "Don't know if I ought to take it or not. Might get closer—he's got Jane hid around here somewhere, and keeps trying to coax me to follow him."

But Three-toes did not come down the

expected trail. Instead, as soon as he dropped into the gully, he crossed it at right angles, circling to approach the crest of the next ridge from behind. From his post upon a promontory he watched the man.

Methodically Hunter searched the ridgetops. Somewhere in sight, he felt quite sure, Three-toes was watching. At length his glasses came to rest upon a little rocky point. He focused sharply, looked long, and at last decided he had seen nothing. Three times he returned his gaze to the spot. Then, as the wind ruffled the wolf's hair, he caught the movement, and made out the form of the lobo carefully concealed among the gray boulders. The camouflage was perfect. The wolf's gray coat faded into his background so completely that an eye less experienced than Hunter's would have passed him by.

The man lay prone upon the rock and sighted the rifle. He estimated the velocity of the wind, made due allowance for it, aimed carefully—and put down the gun.

"He's too far away. A shot at him would send him out of the region. So long as he hangs around here, I've got a chance." He laughed, mirthlessly. "Perhaps!"

He slipped out of his coat and placed it around a little pile of stones. He topped this with his hat, and left his glasses beside the figure. Once again he slid swiftly down the rear of the rock and ran northward, using boulders and trees to screen his movements. He dropped into a certain gully he had marked from his lookout post and turned west with the wind in his face. Fifteen minutes later he was edging his way up a little ridge that overlooked the one where the lobo lay. A pair of long-crested jays scolded him for his intrusion.

Three-toes had crept carefully in among the rocks overlooking the spot where his enemy sat, training his glasses upon him. When the man's gaze had returned to his location and rested there, he knew he was discovered. So as Hunter slipped out of his coat and slid off the rock, Three-toes sprang up and raced down the slope. When the man turned north, the wolf headed straight south and dropped over the edge of the cañon rim. He swung to the left and circled east. By the time the jays scolded Hunter as he was edging his way up the ridge, Three-toes lay with his head resting on his outstretched paws—in a new place of concealment a half-mile east of Hunter's crag.

THE sun went down and darkness came creeping up the slopes. Still Jim Hunter had not succeeded in getting a shot at the elusive lobo. He gathered wood for his night fire and made camp behind the rock he had used for a lookout post. Here he was sheltered from the west wind that came down from the higher mountains with its chilling breath of snow.

While gathering wood he marked a hole beneath a rock where a frightened rabbit had darted for safety. In the entrance to the hole he set a snare to provide his breakfast.

Soon after dark the coyotes lifted up their voices, but Three-toes did not howl. Jim Hunter sat before his campfire, smoking, his shoulders sagged forward, his head drooping. By and by he lay down with his feet toward the blaze, and slept. From time to time he half roused, put on fresh wood, and fell asleep instantly. Once he started up, wide-awake, and sat up. He stared around uneasily. He had a feeling that he was being watched—that something out in the blackness beyond the circle of his campfire was staring at him.

The wind swung away from the Continental Divide and came pouring through the cañons. It carried snow from the heights and sifted it down upon the lower ranges. At midnight the storm ceased as suddenly as it had begun—leaving a white world.

Jim felt the snow and woke up.

"Tracking snow," he exulted. "Now I'll finish my job."

He fired up, and lighted his pipe. From the ridge-top came the squall of a fox. Then the roar of the wind drowned out all lesser sounds.

AN hour before dawn he returned from his snare with a rabbit, which he dressed and started roasting before the fire. When daylight finally crept across the mountains and touched the powdered peaks with rosy dawn, he was ready to start. There was an inch of snow upon the ground. But this, he knew, would vanish within an hour after the sun came up. His hope was in locating the wounded collie while the snow lay on the ground.

As Three-toes had appeared several times upon the ridges above his lookout rock, Hunter decided to search in that direction. Gun in hand, he swung around his camp rock—and stopped stock still.

"Tracks!" he gasped in surprise.

"Jane's tracks!" He straightened, with a jerk. "She's been hiding right under my nose!"

Chagrin twisted his features.

He turned toward where huge rock slabs lay in a jumbled heap at the foot of the crag. Beneath the slabs he found where the collie had been hidden. She had left the hiding-place on three legs—her left front foot had been smashed by his bullet.

He emitted a long, low whistle—too dumfounded for speech. For there beside Jane's were Three-toes' tracks—he had taken his enemy into camp, so to speak, and spirited the collie away.

Jim Hunter turned and followed the tracks in the snow. The trail held steadily toward the north.

"He's heading for the Poudre—new country for me," the tracker observed. "He wants to get out of the region—thinks it's risky to have Jane near me. Don't mind me, old boy, I'm harmless," he jeered bitterly.

The sun was two hours high when Hunter reached the rim of Poudre cañon and halted. The snow had vanished like magic. But his skill as a trailer had enabled him to trace the eloping pair to a break in the cañon rim. He stood now debating whether to follow them or not. It was rough going down there—heavy forest, a jungle of down timber, bogs and more bogs.

"I never could stalk them down there. Three-toes would hear me before I got within a mile of 'em. He'd slip away with Jane before I was in sight. There's not a chance down there."

He sat down and swept the cañon with his glasses. But he could not penetrate the dense forest. It confirmed his former decision: pursuit down there was futile.

"It's got to be a waiting game," he mused aloud. "Three-toes will never bring Jane near my region again. I'll have to go to theirs. Just have to wait until they show up somewhere, then pack into the region and take up the trail again. Waiting will be harder than trailing—but they've licked me fair. Now I've got to tell Hopkins the news."

Three-toes led his mate straight down into the cañon. Then he left her and circled back to watch for the man upon their trail. When Jim Hunter shouldered his gun and started southward, the lobo was watching from a rock-pile three hundred yards away.

CHAPTER III

"I'VE missed my chance," Hunter admitted glumly to himself. "Jane's crazy about Three-toes, or she'd never have run off with him in the first place. He was coaxing her to quit the region with him—but habit, or loyalty to man, or what you will, made her return to the cabin, despite his urging her away. Their tracks show that every time she stopped and turned toward home, he shouldered her around, away from it."

For a moment he stood irresolute; then briskly turned away to the south.

"They'll show up again," he consoled himself, "and when they do," he hesitated,—"I'll get 'em."

Three hundred yards away the crafty old wolf lay concealed among some rocks. He watched the man depart; but for a long time afterward, he remained motionless. At last, after an hour, he slipped down from the rock-pile, and ran off southward, following a course parallel to the one taken by his enemy. Without once showing himself, he cunningly slipped from cover to cover. He moved rapidly until he picked up the scent and learned what he sought to know—the man was traveling steadily away from the cañon.

Having determined this fact, he returned to the rock-pile near the cañon rim to watch. Though his enemy was apparently departing from the region, still he did not relax his vigilance. His experience had taught him that so long as there was a man anywhere about, there was danger. Men resorted to so many tricks—disappeared in one direction—and reappeared from another.

Until late that afternoon Three-toes kept vigil. His keen eyes swept the region south of the cañon for the man's return. His sharp ears were pricked forward for the slightest, warning sound. His nose lifted from time to time to sample the breeze that came down to him.

Deep down in the cañon early evening shadows were gathering, and darkness was at hand when Three-toes jumped up from the rock-pile and headed eastward along the rimrocks. Where a little "wash" cut into the apparent level of the mesa, he went down into the thickening gloom.

At the approach of her mate the collie whined and crept forth from the tangle of vines where she had been hiding throughout the day. They touched noses

briefly; then she lay down while the great wolf licked her wounded foot.

When her mate slipped away at length, she knew instinctively that she was to wait for his return before moving. An hour later he trotted back proudly, bearing a snowshoe rabbit which he placed on the ground beside her. Then he stretched out ten feet away and watched her tear greedily at the meat. Her confidence in him was mounting daily. First he had warned her away from the cabin; and he had tried to prevent her from venturing near the camp of her former master. The rifle-shot that had smashed her foot had strengthened her confidence in his judgment. Now he had brought her food at a time when she was helpless to forage for herself.

When the goblin moon peered at them through a notch in the cañon's rim, it was near midnight. Three-toes urged his mate to rise and then led her slowly along a game-trail to the river. The Poudre roared through the gorge, and the crippled dog did not dare attempt to cross the churning rapids. Three-toes turned downstream, seeking quieter waters. After a while, where the cañon walls swung wide apart, they came to a meadow overgrown with willows. Into this dense jungle the wolf guided the collie, and searching out a wide beaver pond, he led her across the dam, where the water was shallow and slow.

ONCE across the mighty Poudre, the lobo again headed northward, halting from time to time for the dog to rest. Limping on three legs was slow and painful traveling, but her love of life and faith in her mate kept her going.

Daytimes they hid deep in the forest; each night they managed a few more miles, leaving Jane's old home farther and farther behind. Nightly the wolf brought food and lay down to watch while his mate devoured it. But in spite of his faithful attention the collie often faced off vaguely toward the south, whimpering and straining eyes and ears toward the darkness beyond which was her master and their cabin.

Slowly the collie's foot healed, and she began to use it, cautiously. When they came to smooth, sandy stretches, she put it down gingerly, walking slowly while she tried it out, and now and then halting with a whimper, for the slightest twist shot it through with pain. As storms came down from the north and piled snow upon the higher ranges, they forsook the upper

reaches of the Poudre and descended to the foothills, where they overtook the game bands that had deserted the heights before them. They had fed on rabbits and grouse, and Three-toes had pulled down occasional stray cattle they encountered. But now the grouse had migrated also—to the spruce groves at timberline.

THEY were trotting slowly along a bare ridge-top one day when suddenly Three-toes stood still. Jane stopped and looked at him inquiringly. Three hundred yards away a small band of elk were scattered, feeding.

The furtive action of her mate warned the collie to caution. Instinctively she flattened down and lay motionless while the lobo stalked the elk. Dogs commonly make much fuss and noise in attacking, but wolves stalk and strike in deadly silence.

A young bull elk was separated twenty yards from the nearest of his band. Three-toes spotted him and stole slowly forward, using a sprawling tree upon the ridge-top as a screen for his approach. So cautiously did he move, picking up and setting down each foot with such extreme deliberation that not a twig snapped nor a pebble crunched under his weight. He had advanced twenty yards when the young bull lifted his head and stared around. He had neither seen nor heard anything—it was his inherited protective instinct warning him.

When the elk glanced up, Three-toes had one front foot upraised. He froze into a statue. So long as his victim's eyes swept the vicinity, he remained motionless, with uplifted foot. At length, when the elk resumed feeding, he crept forward again. He reached the stunted tree, stretched out flat and waited. Ten yards away was a rock, but an open space was between. The bull was feeding down the slope, and his course would take him behind the rock for a few brief seconds.

Craftily Three-toes waited. When the elk moved slowly out of sight behind the boulder, he rose and trotted swiftly forward. He stopped at the rock which sheltered him from the eyes of his victim. The wind was toward him, so that no telltale scent revealed his nearness to his quarry.

Patiently Three-toes waited until his prey fed out of sight behind a screen of young spruces. Instantly he advanced. His quarry was moving from right to left, so he went around the grove toward the left.

Ten minutes later the elk emerged from behind the grove and looked carefully about. Nothing moved except the members of his own tribe scattered far down the slope. Reassured, he started feeding.

From behind a bush five yards uphill sprang the murderous form of Three-toes.

The young bull spun around and fled on long legs, jumping high above the bushes and jumbled rocks. With the wolf almost at his flank, he leaped into the spruces. Three-toes lunged after him, directing a quick, chopping bite which would have opened the paunch had it reached its mark. But his teeth barely grazed the hide, and the elk went thrashing his way through the trees. His escape seemed certain, but his pursuer was not yet ready to abandon the chase. He craftily withdrew, cunningly circled the grove, and was waiting to renew the attack the instant the bull broke cover.

The collie had flattened herself at her mate's first warning, moving when he moved, stopping whenever he stopped. Now as the frantic elk crashed his way into the clearing, she appeared before him. He swerved aside in headlong flight. Even as he fled, there flashed upon him the bulky form of the wolf. Too late he saw the charge—half turned—felt Three-toes' teeth slicing into his hind legs, and stumbled to the ground as with one vicious snap his hamstring was severed.

Thereafter, whenever Three-toes hunted, the collie was his able assistant. She was given to great excitement at such times, and being a dog, she barked wildly and created a great commotion. But this helped, rather than hindered their attack upon the deer and elk. The dog's sudden darting appearance as she cut off the retreat of the terror-stricken was always effective; and she turned them quartering aside, thus giving Three-toes the opening he sought to strike at the flank or to hamstring them.

Sometimes the pair left their regular hunting grounds and descended upon the ranches in the valleys. On such visits they delayed their raids until after dark, striking where least expected. Several times the collie trotted boldly up to the house and lured the foolish, barking dogs to their death, leading them far from the protection of the buildings to where the savage Three-toes waited. Whenever his mate ventured so near a ranch, the great wolf kept vigil to cover her retreat. But he never risked accompanying her.

OFTEN, when starting out to hunt, Three-toes lifted his voice in a long, blood-curdling howl. Some ancestral impulse prompted him. Down in the valley coyotes and cross-breeds answered the call—but Three-toes slipped from the ridgetop and hunted with his mate. He preferred to remain aloof from the pack.

The gathering in the foothills of the coyotes and the cross-breeds caused the ranchers to take up arms. They set out traps, but these coyotes were the battle-scarred survivors from many packs, and were trap-wise. Failing in this, the stockmen resorted to poison. This bait, coming as it did at the end of winter, found the coyotes thin and weak, and hunger robbed them of their caution. . . .

Three-toes and Jane were skirting a snowbank on the north slope of a wooded hill. A pair of magpies swept overhead and darted down suddenly. From another direction several long-crested jays came on hurried wings. Two crows, cawing loudly, went flopping by. The wolf's cunning warned him that something unusual was taking place. He understood these signal messages of the birds. He turned into a sheltering fringe of trees to reconnoiter. Presently he stopped, with Jane beside him, a hundred yards from a curious sight.

A dead calf was lying in a little park-like opening. Upon a fire-killed tree near by sat the wise old crows, watching, but taking no part in the scene. Around the body of the calf swarmed magpies and jays, squabbling and squawking, as they pulled at the meat.

Within a few minutes a jay fluttered unsteadily to wing, wavered uncertainly about, then dropped into the snow at the foot of the tree. Two magpies left off feeding, and flew upward in eccentric, vacillating flight, their long tails jerking convulsively. After fifty yards they crumpled and dropped to the ground with a thud. The crows bounced upward off the limb as though a shot had been fired. They flew swiftly down the valley, and as they went, they set up a loud cawing calculated to notify every other crow within hearing of what had taken place.

All at once Three-toes turned and ran, Jane hard at his heels. The sight of the dying birds filled him with foreboding. It recalled to him glazed-eyed coyotes whirling about in death-dances, foam slaving from their mouths and wild maniacal shrieks issuing from their convulsed throats.

Within a short time the coyotes and cross-breeds were "wise" to the poison bait strung out in the foothills. In some mysterious manner the intelligence spread—and at once they avoided all meat they did not kill themselves. Thus the experiment cost the cattle-men dearly. Coyotes, under the leadership of cross-breeds, killed wantonly, isolated cows with young calves being their especial prey. Though not so many cattle were pulled down as when wolves were numerous, the loss was even greater, because the range was now stocked with pure breeds, and the loss of a few of these was more costly than that of scores of the longhorns of early days.

About the remains of the dead cattle riders often picked up the trail of Three-toes. They were quick to credit him with leading the killing, and to pass the word to neighbors about his ravages. These raids were not to go unpunished. The cattle-men grew desperate at the continued ravages, and imported a new form of death.

THREE-TOES and Jane were bedded down upon the shoulder of the mountain that overlooked the long valley. From somewhere there floated up to their sensitive ears the distant baying of dogs, and the occasional upraised shouts of men. The wolf raised his head and listened. An hour later, when distant specks appeared far down the valley, he sprang up and led his mate along the crest of the ridge toward the higher mountains.

Down in the valley the coyotes pitted their craft against that of the dogs. They appeared far ahead of the dog-pack, and when the clamoring hounds chased them, the cunning yellow devils dropped out of sight into some gully and doubled back. While the baying pack yelped past, they hid in some cross-gully, then turned tail and sped for safety in the opposite direction. Sometimes a luckless coyote lost his life in so doing, for in eluding the dogs he unwittingly ran into the riders and their rifles.

The great numbers of the coyotes and cross-breeds helped save Three-toes and Jane from capture. Occasionally fugitive coyotes unwittingly cooperated. A coyote would, sometimes, flee before the hounds, cross their cold trail, and leave his own hot one, which the pack took up instead and so missed Three-toes and his mate. The wolf always bedded down on high ground from which vantage he could dis-

cover the hunters and the dogs long before they could pick up his trail. Too crafty to risk an encounter, he slipped away at first glimpse or sound of them.

The ranchers soon found that Three-toes was not to be taken by the ordinary means employed against his less cautious kin. They knew of the collie's elopement with him, and they offered one thousand dollars, dead or alive, for the pair. This sum would set a cow-puncher up in business for himself, besides giving him renown for his prowess. Lone riders took up the chase, threading the remote trails of the high country, carrying their rifles and keeping on the alert for the great gray wolf and his mate. Many a man thrilled when he came across the lobo's trail, plainly distinguishable on account of its size and the queer track of his maimed front foot. Invariably the collie's ran close beside.

Three-toes led Jane higher and higher into the mountains as the hunt for them persisted. Often his mate's actions were beyond his ken. She lagged behind when he ran away from the hounds. As time passed, she refused to make the long excursions, even for safety, back among the higher mountains. When they dropped down to the flats, she grudgingly climbed back up to the ridges. Many times, too, as they lay concealed upon a promontory, she would move about, exposing them to the riders. She seemed to invite their gaze, rather than to avoid it. He was deeply puzzled and troubled at her carelessness.

ONE day Three-toes had long-range warning of the hunting pack. He got up promptly and tried to lead Jane away, but the dog would not budge from her bed atop the ridge. After many attempts he finally returned and lay down beside her. At length, when riders spread out fanlike across the valley, with darting dogs flying here and there before them, Three-toes froze into position. He did not so much as lift his head. His ears were pricked sharply forward to catch the faintest sound—but aside from this, he might have been asleep.

But Jane moved about restlessly, whining eagerly as the wind brought the faint scent of the men. She seemed homesick for the ranch and the man she loved, yet was fearful, since that night she had been lured into the circle of firelight and the rifle had cracked. Since then she, like

Three-toes, left a tell-tale track wherever she went. Her broken, twisted foot gave mute evidence of her whereabouts, and prevented her from losing her identity by mingling with the coyotes or the ranch dogs.

From behind, where the ridge shouldered against the higher mountain, came the distant bay of a dog. Three-toes swung his head in that direction. He knew that dogs and men were swarming down the ridge. He left the bed at a run and went straight down the steep slope. And Jane, belated terror seizing her, ran close at his flank. From behind came the sudden outburst of the hounds. Three-toes knew they had struck his fresh trail. He turned sharply westward toward the high mountains. Three minutes later the dogs also turned westward.

All at once he spun around and stopped. His mate was fifty yards behind, and the dogs were gaining rapidly on her. The lobo waited until the collie came up, then urged her forward. But she was already panting heavily and was unable to increase her speed. Desperate at their plight, Three-toes snapped at her.

The pack broke into sight, and swarmed forward, full voiced. The lanky hound leader bared his teeth and charged headlong. The collie snarled, but the lobo waited in silence.

The hound launched forward, confident he would kill the gray wolf, even as he had killed many coyotes.

Three-toes sprang aside.

The dog whirled about and came back, growling.

Again the wolf avoided the rush, and as the hound's charge carried him past, he struck savagely. With a quick, chopping bite, he tore the hound's unprotected flank.

Furious, the dog forgot caution, and spun around to face the wolf.

Jane propelled herself straight at him, enraged at the attack upon her mate. She buried her teeth in his side, distracting his attention from Three-toes; and that wavering split second cost him his life. For Three-toes, watching silently for an opening, struck with all his savage strength, his powerful jaws driving cruel teeth until they met the dog's throat.

Baying, barking, yelping, howling, the rest of the pack ran up. They wanted to be in at the kill, and like all domestic dogs, they gloated in attacking a stranger. With wild clamor they joined the fight.

Three-toes' acts were lightning-swift. He

slashed one dog, chopped and paralyzed the hindleg of another. This was a duel to death, and he was prepared. His life had been filled with such encounters, for the world had ever been against him. And he had survived because he had profited by the experiences of his ancestors. He had courage, and cruel, deadly cunning. He wasted no effort, nor gave tongue to wild outcries as did the dogs. He was dumb as a specter.

Jane was beside herself with excitement. She rushed at first one, then another. She sank her teeth indiscriminately into any intruder within reach. Her furious, impulsive charges divided the pack's attention, or they might have closed in on Three-toes, and borne him down.

Three-toes backed against a boulder and forced his assailants to charge straight up the steep slope. When one sprang headlong toward him, he avoided the attack—did not meet it as a dog does, but caught his enemies as they hurtled past him. He waited silently, cold-blooded, calculating—far different from the panicky coyotes. He was big and powerful and unafraid; and his chopping bites were never futile.

The fight was brief. The men, riding after the hounds, were met by four yelping, mangled dogs in full retreat. Nor could they force them to return. They rushed pell-mell up to the scene of the encounter. The leaders lay dead—and all was quiet. Three-toes and Jane had vanished—but all about were signs of the struggle. Never afterward could they get their hounds to follow the gray wolf's trail. They would take it up and start off full-tongued, but they would abandon it for the first coyote's scent they crossed. After a week the hunters abandoned their pursuit and with the remainder of the pack left the region.

A CHINOOK wind, balmy as a summer breeze, came down from the heights, and the snow vanished like magic. The deer and elk left their winter range and followed the receding snow-line up the mountains. Three-toes and the collie moved to where sandstone cliffs were up-thrust beside slabs of solid granite.

Upon the warm, southeast exposure of a ridge Jane started searching for a den. At the first warm spell she had shown uneasiness. About the region were a dozen she-coyotes, digging dens that were practically identical, their mates, coyote or

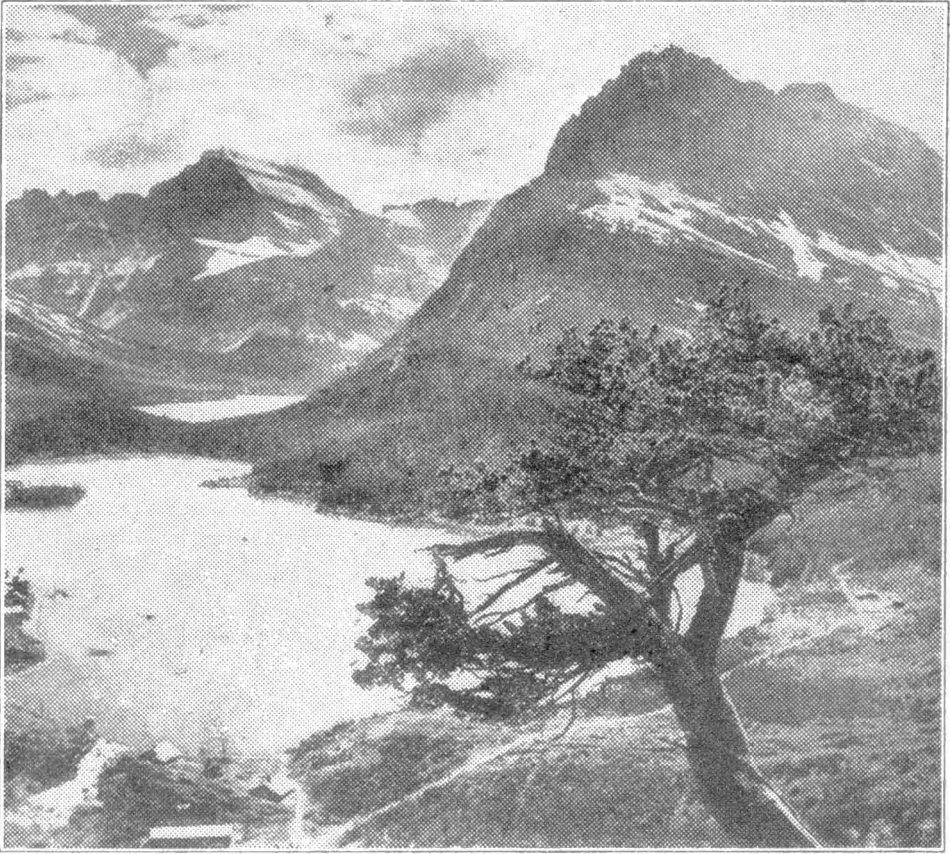
cross-breed, helping. The collie searched in and out among the sandstone ledges, seeking a suitable home already built. Instinct from remote ancestors warned her to den up; but long association with mankind clouded her decision. At last she found an acceptable cave, where a bulging wall of sandstone protected a ledge from the slide-rock coming down from above. Here she found a tunnel high enough to enter without stooping, and extending back along the overhang of the wall. She improved it by scratching out the loose rubble and making a hollow four feet across. But her nest was unlike those of her coyote neighbors, for it had but a single opening. The coyotes had two or three emergency tunnels leading into and out of their dens. Often these safety exits were concealed by bushes or heavy sage clumps or the low limbs of trees.

Three-toes and Jane were forced to search far for food. The coyotes had cleaned out the rabbits; and the population was increasing daily. More coyotes swarmed in from the near-by prairie to raise their young, for the foothills afforded better hiding-places and greater safety.

There came a time when Three-toes hunted alone, for Jane had disappeared into her cave. Each night he hunted far from this cliff, and trotted home beneath the paling stars, proudly bearing offerings of rabbits or gophers. These he put down respectfully near the entrance to the cave, and watched curiously as the collie darted forth, snatched up the food and flashed back into the dark cavern from which issued unusual sounds—faint whines, impatient little snarls, and weak, baby wails.

But his mate would have nothing to do with him, and so Three-toes spent his time far from the den. During the day he would keep watch from some gray rocky ridge, for he hunted only at night. At times he howled, through long habit rather than desire for a pack; but always the coyotes rallied at the sound. Sometimes he led them, making a kill, and announcing to the silent, listening night that there was food for all. Then he tore at the warm meat greedily, gorging himself, and slipping away while the coyotes still snarled and fought among themselves.

Often men picked up the lobo's tracks. Always they led away from the sandstone cliff where the collie and her pups were denned up, and usually they vanished on the granite ridges.



Photograph © by Underwood and Underwood.

“By the icy waters of a spruce-fringed turquoise lake he made camp.”

THREE-TOES was sunning himself atop a lookout post when he caught sight of a distant moving speck. He focused keen eyes upon it and lay still, his head resting upon his outstretched forelegs.

At the end of an hour the object had taken shape—a man was coming down the trail from the higher mountains, leading a pack-horse.

The ears of the wolf flattened, a silent signal that an enemy approached. Even at that great distance, Three-toes recognized Jim Hunter. He bared his teeth in a low snarl, for he was afraid of this man and therefore hated him. The memory of Jane's injury burned in his brain.

When Hunter swung out of sight for a moment behind a sandstone up-thrust, Three-toes left his post at a run and headed straight down the opposite side of the ridge. He reached the bottom, cut across the narrow valley, and disappeared around another sheltering point before the plodding man appeared from behind the up-thrust.

Jim Hunter stopped abruptly, and dropped to his knees to examine the tracks

that cut across the level of the narrow valley. Then he gave a long whistle.

“Three-toes!” he exulted. “He's discovered me already. Been watching from some lookout point—and he's run away. Well, the game's on again. No foolishness this time. If I get another shot, I'll not let sentiment weaken me.”

By the icy waters of a spruce-fringed turquoise lake, he made camp, hobbled his pack-horse and turned him loose. Then, instead of taking up the trail of Three-toes, he started circling. At times his experienced eyes picked up old trails where Three-toes had run. These old trails invariably led away from the immediate vicinity.

“Jane's not with him,” Hunter commented. “That means she's denned up somewhere about. It's up to me to locate her before the pups are old enough to run.”

For a week the intriguing game of stalking Three-toes went on. It piqued Hunter's pride, though he knew the main thing was to find the den and get the pups.

On the south and southeast slopes he searched methodically, for he knew that

instinct would lead the dog to den up on the warmer slope. Occasionally he found anemones peeping up and putting forth their early blooms. Patches of fresh wet green showed in sheltered spots. A pair of eagles were nesting near the top of the giant red cliff. Magpies were bickering about nest-building, while long-crested jays sought secret retreats for their nurseries. The Great Divide, standing high above the lesser peaks, glistened with clean, new winter snow.

Then came a storm—a wet, heavy snow that buried the green grass and the flowers beneath six inches of soft, clinging white. For two days Hunter lay in his camp and fumed at the time he was losing.

“The pups’ll be ready to run before I ever find them,” he grumbled. “Every day counts.”

THE third morning after the storm Hunter was abroad at daylight. He circled, seeking Three-toes’ tracks, and making haste to avail himself of easy tracking before the snow melted.

Five miles south of his camp he found fresh tracks that told of a hunting spree on the part of Three-toes. He had worked up the wind, swung aside to catch a mouse that had ventured out across the snow, crept up and pounced upon a meadowlark that had just returned from the south. These tidbits he ate as soon as he captured them. Then his trail cut that of a big jack-rabbit, and went forward with longer strides, showing haste to make the kill.

“The old boy is out for meat. He’s got a family now,” Hunter laughed as he read the footnotes on the snow. “If it wasn’t for them, he wouldn’t stay here in the valley with me snooping around.” He hurried along, translating as he went. “Used this bush as a screen till he got within twenty yards of the jack—ten feet short of it he started forward—got going full tilt inside three jumps—halfway to him before the stupid rabbit knew he was near—short reel—less than a hundred-yard dash. Good-by, rabbit! Here’s where you make the main course for the little lobos—umph—going north—toward the red cliff. That’s queer—wouldn’t think the foxy fellow’d head straight for my camp—all his other tracks lead from it.”

The trail of the wolf held straight down the valley. Instinctively the canny fellow had swung wide around the rocky penin-

sulas that jutted out into it. A mile above the big cliff that terminated the ridge he had turned aside, left the flats, and angled up the long slope toward the castellated crags that fortified its top.

Along the way were innumerable ledges, separated by ancient rock-slides. Upon these exposed points there was no snow, and here Hunter lost the trail. Tracing it out a few yards at a time was too slow. He climbed to the top of the cliffs and hurried along to where a break forced a descent of a hundred feet. Here in the sand of a little “saddle” were the tracks of Three-toes going straight across. Hunter exulted in his good luck at picking up the lobo’s trail so soon. From time to time other tracks justified his course, and he contented himself in tracing the general direction the wolf had taken, and was interested to note that he was headed toward the big cliff.

Two hours after sunrise the southeast slopes were bare, and by noon the flats below had emerged from their white coverlet. Hunter had made the most of the sharp snow-trail, and now, under the hot noonday sun he was working his way down the great cliff, swinging back and forth along the ledges, searching every overhang for a possible hiding-place for the collie’s den. All through the weary afternoon he hunted. Many times he gripped his rifle hopefully when he discovered promising caves beneath huge rock-slabs, or yawning caverns beneath overhanging cliffs. Three times he found tracks, made out those of the wolf, and discovered where the collie had climbed up from below. When early darkness forced him to abandon the search, he had not covered half the face of the cliff.

As he reached his camp in the valley, he faced back toward the sandstone up-thrust, glowing softly in the pale light of the young moon. “Wonder if I better try it again tonight,” he mused. He studied the radiant wall a moment, then fell to cooking his supper.

Daylight found him making his way along the ledges again. He realized that if he was to surprise the dog, he must work fast. His one appearance upon the cliff, where undoubtedly her den was, might be regarded as an accident; but a second call would surely alarm both the dog and her wild wolf mate and cause a magical disappearance of the hidden family of pups.

The arduous hunt went on in silence. At times the eagles hovered overhead near

their nest upon a slender pinnacle. At midafternoon Hunter lay down to rest. Three times inside an hour he saw a magpie circle up to a certain rocky point and alight upon a slab there. There was but one thing a magpie would be after—food. In haste he went down to the spot where the bird had alighted. He turned a sharp corner of the cliff-wall, and was face to face to a low opening.

He knelt down and peered in. Rank odor assailed his nostrils. He backed away a few steps, examined his rifle, looked behind, above, below. He was cautious, not because he was afraid, but through respect for the resourcefulness of wild things in time of danger. He feared that the collie would slip away. He wanted to make sure of her first—and put an end to the pups afterward.

Very slowly he crawled into the cave, pushing his rifle before him as he progressed. The light that came from the opening behind did not extend far into the tunnel. Beyond its radius was murky blackness. He could hear and see nothing. He decided the den had been abandoned, and was backing out when a slight sound arrested his attention. Almost in his ear came the soft, baby-whine of a puppy. He lay still and waited. His eyes were adjusting themselves to the gloom, and vague outlines began to take shape. From behind a corner of rock shone two luminous disks. He laughed quietly at the sight. The puppies were knowing enough to be curious, and not yet experienced enough to be cautious.

Another and another pair of eyes peeped around the rock and disappeared. Muffled thumps and thuds came from the nest as the roly-poly youngsters crowded out to peek at the stranger.

Hunter reached forward and caught the nearest pup.

Instantly there was a snarl as the little whelp twisted about in its loose hide and tried to bite him.

He laid aside his rifle and reached for a second.

A moment later he was out in the sunshine with two blinking babies in his arms.

"You're surely game little fellows," he admired as they struggled with astonishing strength to free themselves and scamper back into the cave.

"You've got the marks of both parents," he went on, interestedly, "some yellow fur along with gray."

Some occult sense made him turn.

The collie was behind him, her teeth bared. She was half-crouched, ready to spring.

FOR a brief pause they faced each other upon the ledge, Hunter with the squirming pups in his arms—the dog with fear and hate flaming in her eyes.

"Jane—Jane!" Hunter exclaimed in surprise. "Don't you know me?"

But the collie showed no signs of recognition. The passionate mother-instinct blotted out her years of training and her adoration for the man. Somewhere, far back, she was related to the wolf. The few months with her wolf mate had almost bridged the gap of centuries of domestication. Submission to and reverence to mankind, obedience, she no longer felt. She was the primitive female—savage, fearless, deadly.

With an almost imperceptible movement Hunter stooped and dropped the pups, never taking his eyes off Jane. His hands felt blindly for a weapon—loose rocks with which he might defend himself against this furious mother he had once fondled.

The collie's claws rasped upon the rock. She launched forward, striking at his throat.

He jerked aside, avoiding the hurtling body as best he could in the narrow confines of the ledge, throwing up his arms to protect his face and neck. He felt her hot breath against his hands and flinched as her sharp teeth ripped through his clothes.

The force of the attack unbalanced him. Desperately he struggled for a hold. He got an instant's grip on the sloping ledge. Then, to his horror, the furious dog was at his throat.

He let go and dropped straight down. Thirty feet below he struck loose rocks, and his body bounded outward. He clutched at the unstable, moving mass. Something must stay his fall. Loosened rocks bounded after him. He tried to ward them off. Then he struck the slide again, many feet below the spot of his first collision, and the blow stunned him into unconsciousness. His body relaxed, turned over, then rolled to a stop at the foot of the cliff.

HOURS later, when Hunter came to, the sun was just setting behind the Divide. His clothes were torn and bloody,

his body cut and bruised. Painfully he tried his right hand, then his left, to test them for broken bones. After a while he attempted to rise. On the third attempt he got unsteadily to his feet, and staggered to his camp.

At the lake he dropped down wearily and plunged his head into the clear cold water. He gulped some down feverishly—it felt grateful to his parched throat. Presently, having revived somewhat, he faced back toward the cliff that harbored Jane's pups.

The crimson rays of the dying sun illuminated the sandstone. It seemed suspended in mid-space—a bit of another world. He wondered hazily whether it was real as his eyes sought the location of the den.

"Guess I'm cuckoo," he scoffed.

Just then he saw Jane emerge, trotting swiftly and surely along the narrow ledge. In her mouth she carried a pup. Another second, and she passed out of sight around the corner of the cliff wall.

CHAPTER IV

JANE'S first leap at Hunter's throat had almost carried her off the ledge. But for her teeth tearing through his sleeve and into his arm, which retarded her headlong charge, she would surely have gone over. As it was, she slid to the very brink, tottered, and finally recovered her balance. Then she had immediately whirled about to renew the attack. The man had fought desperately for a hold on the smooth granite—she had leaped straight at him, aiming again at his throat. He had dropped just as her jaws snapped shut above him.

She had stood with her feet braced against the very edge of the precipice, watching, as the body of the man who was once her master hurtled down. There was no affection in her gaze, no regret that he was probably dashing to his death—only hate. She growled and snarled and screamed, her voice rising from deep, throaty huskiness to thin, shrill wails. This meddling man had dared to invade her home; he was about to carry off her young; he would have killed them and her too had he been able!

Jim Hunter's body had come to a rest at the foot of the cliff. She ceased her cries and crouched upon the ledge in bristling silence, eyes ablaze, ears laid back, slaver-

ing fangs bared. After a moment she rose and shifted along the ledge, seeking a way down.

She was still pacing back and forth, her excitement mounting, when the pups, aggrieved at her long neglect, started up an insistent whining protest. After the gloom of their nest, the glaring sunshine was blinding. They had not seen their mother's attack upon the intruder, but they had sensed it and had huddled together in silence, frightened and bewildered. But now, the conflict over, they could not understand why she did not come to them. They wanted her reassuring fondling.

If their baby snarls had lured Hunter into danger, their indignant plaints now probably saved his life. Their mother, recalled to their existence, turned to them tenderly, her threat to plunge after the fallen man forgotten, her eyes softening and solicitous. She was the gentle devoted mother they loved so well. She nuzzled them fondly, licked their fears away, and shoved them, toddling, back into the familiar den.

But instinct warned her not to linger in this cave, now that it had been discovered by their human enemy. As soon as the pups were happily dozing, she picked up one of them and set off along the narrow shelf at a run. She recalled a deserted coyote den a half-mile away and headed in its direction. The coyote's family was three weeks older than hers and had recently left their birthplace to investigate the alluring world beyond its tunnels. She had sniffed at its empty door the day they had left it. The next day she had gone through it on an investigating tour. She had entered by one dark tunnel and had emerged from another, craftily concealed in a thick sage clump. Now in her extremity she turned to it for refuge. Five trips she made, each time carrying a pup by the nape of the neck. She thrust each startled youngster into the dark tunnel, whirled about, and returned at top speed to the home cave for another.

From his camp below, Hunter saw her as she carried the last of her litter to safety. He grinned in spite of his chagrin and weakness.

"Go to it, Jane," he cheered. "You've won again."

But he had no intention of giving up the chase. Next morning, hobbling slowly, he climbed up to the abandoned cave and recovered his gun. He followed Jane's

trail beyond where it left the cliff and turned toward her new home, circling carefully through the region where she and her young were hidden. The she-coyote had selected the site for her den wisely, and had dug the tunnels leading into it with extreme care. The removed dirt she had scattered about in the sage so that it did not attract attention. Experienced tracker though he was, Hunter passed it by.

A FEW nights later Three-toes howled, and Hunter sat up in his blankets to listen.

"All right, old boy," he laughed. "I hear you, but I'm not going to be led off on a wild-goose chase after you."

Day after day he searched, circling farther and farther from the red cliff. Several times he picked up the collie's tracks, but he failed to trace them to her new den.

The second night after her hurried flight with her brood, Jane again moved her family. This time she carried them more than a mile to another deserted coyote den. And a week later she moved to still another. This last one was far up a little winding valley that came down from the remote peaks and narrowed into a cañon near the sandstone up-thrust. Jim Hunter, ranging the main valley into which it opened, did not suspect the little cleft cutting into it.

During the day Three-toes lay hidden upon the ridge-top watching the flat where the man was camped. At dusk he slipped down and joined his mate.

As Jane's tumbling, husky family grew older, she led them often out into the sunlight. She selected a little secluded park, shut in on one side by huge boulders and nearly surrounded by an evergreen grove. And then she watched over them while they romped about, wrestling, rolling, fighting, racing, and stalking with comical seriousness the tiniest things that caught their attention. A wandering butterfly furnished them with great sport. If it alighted, they would crouch cunningly, then, stooping low, sagging little bellies almost touching the ground, they would creep forward and fling themselves upon it with infantile exaggeration, as though vanquishing a deadly enemy.

They were growing rapidly and developing pronounced color-strains. The smallest was nearly all collie—fluffy and dun-colored; three had traces of both wolf and

collie in their markings; one, largest of the five, was pure lobo except for his mother's eyes. He stood an inch taller than the rest; his head was noticeably broader, and his eyes were set wide apart. All of them were beginning to lose their early puffball appearance and to indicate by distinctive mannerisms their predominating individual inheritance. The last one, most like his mother, had the behavior of a dog. It would bark at strange objects and retreat to her for protection whenever startled. But the big lobo pup, strong and wary, was silent as his father. He missed nothing that moved, and his nose was ever busy sampling the cross-currents of air that eddied about the glade. If he did not understand, he slipped out of sight among the trees, and surveyed from ambush the puzzling and the unfamiliar.

ONE soft, warm evening in early summer Jane lay fifty yards from the mouth of their den, watching her family play. The menace of Jim Hunter was a dim memory now, and there was peace in the hidden valley. The puppies were romping about, darting among the shadows of the trees and out again into the open. Her tall lobo son was stalking a chipmunk. But as twilight deepened, his quarry retired for the night into its hole, for with darkness came its devourers—the cat family, coyotes, wolves and owls; even the stealthy mountain lion would not disdain such a tidbit.

An owl was adrift in the forest aisles. He moved on silent wings, that he might surprise an unwary rabbit or pounce upon a roaming pack-rat. Swiftly he emerged from the trees and sailed across the opening as the pups darted in and out. Of a sudden he tilted his wings, turned half over and stabbed the smallest pup with piercing talons. The youngster gave an agonized yelp and snapped at his captor's legs with his sharp little teeth, but he was helpless in that relentless clutch.

Down the slope leaped his mother, barking wildly in her alarm. A gray shape shot out of the shadows, reaching the scene ten yards ahead of her.

The owl could scarcely rise with his heavy load, but holding his howling, struggling victim fast, he took off six feet above the ground and started to sail away. Then Three-toes leaped upward and his heavy jaws snapped shut. The bird died in midair—but too late to save the pup.

Jane sprang upon the lifeless body of the raider and ground her teeth through its tough skin, shaking it ferociously, snarling and raging as she tore it to pieces. But Three-toes, after the one fatal snap, stood apart and watched his mate without emotion.

THE remaining pups were learning rapidly. Of nights, now, Three-toes hunted with them, stalking painstakingly the tiny field mice and young rabbits they found, and setting an example of silent patience they tried hard to emulate. Jane persisted in hunting during the day, but her mate stuck to his custom of watching from atop a commanding promontory, rousing from time to time to scrutinize the surrounding region for signs of enemies. Upon her daylight excursions the collie sometimes took her family. Occasionally, on their midnight rambles, their father pulled down a calf or a cow that crossed their path. During the critical moments when his prey fought for their lives, their mother barked loudly, and three of her family joined her. But her big-framed son was silent, like his father.

One day the mother was hunting within fifty yards of them, while they were following an old cattle-trail leading down to water. There came a vicious snap, and the head pup bounded into the air with a startled yelp of pain. He jerked aside, dragging a clutching coyote trap and its dangling chain and clog. The other pups ran to their mother. But she scattered them and sped to the rescue of their unfortunate brother. She ground her teeth viciously upon the rusty steel thing gripping his tender paw, while his howls echoed from the surrounding rocky cliffs.

From a ranch in the valley below a dog set up a furious barking. A boy by the corral stopped in the midst of his chores and turned toward the mountain-side, listening. Then he ran to the house at top speed. A few minutes later he was climbing the ridge, carrying a gun, his dog flying ahead and barking excitedly.

As he neared the trail, he caught a glimpse of the flying collie as she darted for cover. He took one quick snap-shot as she flipped out of sight behind a granite slab. A minute later came a second shot, and the pup's howls ceased.

As summer advanced, Three-toes led the family higher and higher. They trailed the deer and the elk to the heights, and

sometimes stalked them just below timberline in shady groves of towering spruce.

The pups were big enough now to shift for themselves. Sometimes the family pack-hunted together, but more often the pups went off upon errands of their own choosing. Their big lobo brother had outstripped the other two in size and now stood full six inches taller. He was their leader. In the grassy glades higher up were fat marmots which they delighted in stalking. Sometimes the three of them pulled down a calf, or more rarely, a colt.

Three-toes and Jane once more ran together. Life was easy now. The anxiety of raising the family had passed, and there were no dogs baying along their trail. Occasionally, though, upon their excursions, they encountered traps set with tempting food. They shunned them. There was other food in plenty. Nesting birds supplied them with dainty morsels, and scampering chipmunks furnished bits of diversion as they dug them out. They teamed against stupid rabbits and picked them up before they could reach the safety of their shelters beneath near-by rocks.

HUNTER had recovered from his injuries and was out exploring the mountains again. Frequently he had moved camp a few miles, talking with riders he met upon the cattle trails, and visiting with wandering prospectors. He heard rumors of the yellow wolf. A prospector had seen the dog hunting in the broad light of day. A dog, he said, with wolf-pups. Cattle-men had reported seeing the collie. An old trapper whom he encountered had found the tracks of Three-toes in the region where the riders had seen the dog.

One night late in August as he lay in his blankets listening to a family of coyotes making merry, he sensed something moving beneath the trees. He strained his eyes to see what lurked so close at hand, but could make out only a spectral shadow.

Next morning he discovered the collie's tracks. She had crept close to his camp, but with all the cunning of her wolf mate. She had stuck to the trees and had faded into the night at his first move.

For a week he camped there, waiting, watching, leaving tidbits of food for her, and often calling for her to come, but she remained aloof. She sniffed suspiciously at the treats he set out, though sometimes she answered his call with eager whines.

But she did not venture into camp nor show herself; her maimed foot was a constant reminder of his betrayal.

In September, Hunter glimpsed the pups. He was watching with his glasses from a lookout post when a distant horseman stopped to examine the remains of a calf that the lobos had killed the night before. Knowing that wolves would not travel far after gorging on meat, the rider picked up their trail and followed them.

The big lobo pup roused from his sleep when the man was still half a mile away. He left his bed at a run and angled down the opposite side of the ridge, with the other pups flying at his heels.

Hunter marked the flight of the three young wolves and left his post to head them off. He guessed shrewdly that they would continue up the valley they were following, because the running was easier there. He picked up his rifle and ran down the slope to where some rocks at the bottom afforded his concealment. Here he waited.

The three young wolf-pups were strung out ten yards apart, running easily, with the larger one ahead.

Hunter's rifle crashed out. Instantaneously the leading pup doubled back on his tracks—and the bullet passed harmless. Again a bullet cut close to him; he leaped aside, turned at right angles, and before the third shot rang out, he had vanished into a little wash that cut into the slope.

Hunter did not waste precious time waiting for him to reappear. Instead he opened fire on the other two, who had betrayed their dog inheritance by keeping in the open and relying on speed. At the third shot one of them doubled up and rolled over and over, coming to rest against a fallen tree-trunk. Again and again Hunter fired at the last one, now a swiftly vanishing mark, but the distance was too great and the diminishing target too small for accuracy.

"So you're one of Jane's pups?" Hunter knelt beside the limp form and examined it curiously. He noted the suggestion of collie about the dead pup's long, thin nose. There were distinct yellow markings on its under side. But the back was streaked with the gray of its lobo father.

"One less, anyhow," the man reflected grimly, as he turned to face the rider who had come up.

"What is he—wolf?" the rider asked as

he slid out of the saddle to have a look at the pup.

"Yes, mostly," Hunter said, "but he's got some collie in him."

"I saw the three of 'em a month ago," the man cut in, "hunting with a collie dog. They're halfbreeds. There'll be hell to pay for sure, unless somebody gets them before winter."

Hunter carried the dead wolf to camp, where he skinned it and threw away the carcass.

Late in the night he was aroused from deep sleep by an unearthly wail, unlike anything he had ever heard before. For a moment he had mistaken it for a human cry. Then he recognized Jane's voice raised in lamentation, grieving for her dead pup.

After that night of mourning she never was seen about his camp. For when she had found the dead body of her pup, she had discovered his scent about it. She knew him for its slayer.

EARLY September snow touched the peaks with white. High around timberline the aspen trees were turning to gold; and the ribbons of color were winding down the slopes. The deer and elk were banding together and preparing for their annual migration to lower altitudes. In every mountain meadow the beaver had been paddling up and down the streams all summer, taking a vacation with their families. Now they were busily at work rebuilding their dams, and trenching canals in which to bring down the aspen trees they would fell soon to use for building material and for food.

With the first pinch of bitter weather the coyotes and breed wolves began to make their presence upon the cattle-range felt. Ranchers reported an increasing number of raids. The remaining two of the collie's pups were a noticeable reinforcement. Before winter passed the pair would account for a score of slain cattle.

"Old Three-toes has staged a comeback," Hopkins asserted in his address before the annual meeting of Stockmen's Association. "You all know about his running off with the collie. Jim Hunter reports that two pups got through the summer. It won't be long now before they cross with the coyotes. Then we'll have the new breed I predicted. Our experience has been that wolves are bad enough, but after they cross with coyotes they double our troubles,

for then we have the cussedness of both breeds to contend with. Now we've got another breed started—part wolf and part collie. If we let these two pups live, they'll cross with coyotes—and we'll have all the tricks of three breeds concentrated in one."

The Association doubled the price on the head of Three-toes and the collie. For each of the two wolf-dog pups they offered a thousand dollars.

NEWSPREADS in the wilds even more rapidly than in civilization. The price put upon the head of the lobo and his mate, and their progeny, brought a horde of trappers into the region. Along the eastern slope of the Rockies, from the St. Vrain in Colorado to the Laramie in Wyoming, traps were scattered in every valley.

The unwritten law of the range apportioned the region among the trappers. The man who set his trap-line first across a valley had the trapping privilege there without encroachments from others. And as Three-toes and his mate, and the hunting pack that followed them, ranged a hundred miles up and down the cattle region, there seemed room for as many trappers as cared to try their hand at snaring the elusive lobo.

Once more poisoned baits appeared upon the range, set out by the trappers this time, and not the cattle-men. A few stupid coyotes nibbled at the tempting snares, and either died instantly or ran mad about the range, snapping with dire results at every living thing, the hair slipping from their bodies. Rumors of hydrophobia were about.

But most of them remembered their last experience with man-tendered food and left the prepared meat severely alone. In the end the ranchers suffered more from the ravages of the poison on their unsuspecting stock than they did from the marauding coyotes and cross-breeds.

Jim Hunter was camped once more in the old cabin above the home ranch. He alone knew that the wolf and his renegade mate frequented the region about it.

"The cattle-range will be too hot for Three-toes and Jane," he told old Hopkins one day when they met on the trail. "They'll naturally drift back this way. I haven't set out a trap or poisoned a bit of meat. Want Three-toes to feel secure around here. I've got something planned, a little surprise for him."

Trappers continued to swarm in, their

trapping territory overlapping. Around the home ranch Hunter encountered two, and found signs of others.

"The trails aren't safe to travel," he complained to old man Hopkins. "There's traps everywhere. Some new fellows are putting them out without guarding them from cattle or horses. I found one the other day set in a waterway. It was not marked or fenced off at all. Pretty soon it'll cost us more than Three-toes and his pack."

The raids by Three-toes and his pack extended the length of the region. They made a kill, picked clean the animal's bones, and vanished before daylight. Perhaps the very next kill, made the very next night, would be miles away. The trap-sets that were flung out around the scene of previous kills waited in vain for their return.

HUNTER had crossed the Buckhorn and searched the mesa between it and the Poudre for signs of Three-toes and Jane. He had hunted the great stretch thoroughly, had climbed up until he had encountered the descending snow-line, and had gone down the ridge between the rivers until they dropped away into the foothills overlooking the great plains. He was returning to his camp, following an old game trail that dropped down toward Buckhorn Creek, when he stepped into a concealed bear-trap. If it had been a big grizzly trap, weighing forty-two pounds, it would have crushed his leg as it snapped shut. But it was of lighter build, sufficiently strong to hold a bear or mountain lion, and yet small enough to grip a chance wolf's or coyote's foot.

Hunter went down with the trap crunching his right ankle. The pain, as the toothed jaws set into the flesh, was agonizing. During the first moments he could do no more than grip his leg and rock to and fro, the sweat streaming down his face. He fired his rifle, signaling for help. Three shots in measured time, a pause, three more and another pause.

The only answer to the shots were the echoes that came back faintly from across the cañon. Again and again he fired, stopping at last for fear of using all his ammunition.

His leg was swelling rapidly. He was growing weak with the pain of it. The sun had dropped beyond the cañon rim and the chill of late November was biting.

From where he sprawled, he collected small dead twigs and broken bark and started a fire. With his rifle he pulled in a longer limb, which he used to rake together such meager fuel as he could reach.

The jaws of the bear-trap fitted at either end into holes forming a T. These T's in turn passed through holes in the ends of the trap-springs and were held in place by nuts beneath the heavy frame of the trap. It flashed to Hunter that the only way to free himself was to unscrew the nuts. But when he shifted the trap and caught sight of the nuts, he groaned and fell back upon the ground with his face even whiter than before.

The nuts had been riveted in place, and some painstaking trapper had pounded the protruding threads down flat!

Danger to a courageous soul is the greatest stimulant in the world—a brain-clarifier. It eliminates conflicting interests and focuses the mind, full power upon the emergency at hand. It is upon occasion of extreme danger that men rise to their best,—to their super-best. Under great stress they accomplish the impossible of humdrum existence.

It took Hunter many minutes to recover from the shock of finding the nuts riveted solidly in place. The mental shock was almost as great as the physical shock of the trap when it crashed shut upon his foot. He lay dazed and heartsick—looking at the torturing monster clamped upon his foot with half-closed, pain-ridden eyes, concentrating desperately on a possible release.

At length he sat up, and with an agony of effort twisted about and dragged the trap to his little fire. Carefully then he tended the feeble blaze, piling fresh fuel upon it as necessary, but making the most of his limited supply. Not a twig could he afford to waste. But for his purpose he had to have a hot fire. He kept one of the trap-springs in the heart of the flames. When it was dull red, he swung around to a rock and leaned forward with a heavy stone held in both hands. With his jaw set grimly, he beat the heated spring. Time and again he raised the stone and brought it crashing down upon the red-hot steel. Every blow sent a shudder of pain through his body. He fell back at last exhausted.

After a while he revived.

His carefully hoarded wood was burned up. He edged his way downhill toward

some more scattered beneath the trees. The pilgrimage was excruciating.

Night shut down—still he persisted at the spring. After eons of effort, it finally snapped—but another still remained.

On and on, into the dead of night, he fought for his life. He was miles away from his camp—the trapper who had set the trap might return to it in a day or two, but that would be too late. He knew he could not endure the racking misery so long. The cold would numb his aching hands unless he could keep the fire going. To have fire, he must move frequently. He broke out in a cold sweat at the thought.

WHEN daylight shaded the snowy heights to soft, misty gray, he dozed beside his dying campfire. Sometime in the long, dark hours of the night, the second spring had yielded to repeated heating and repeated pounding with the stone.

He was free at last. But his foot was mangled, and his right leg was swollen and useless. It would be weeks before he could walk. Yet soon he roused up and started gamely upon the long crawl toward the cabin. His brain was alert, and incredibly active. He perceived a hundred details, estimated carefully his own strength, and made plans while yet he had the power to think straight.

He had exhausted the food-supply he had taken on the trip, and was returning empty-handed. He must have food. The crawl to the old cabin would take a long time—too long, perhaps. Five cartridges for the rifle he stored away carefully in a pocket that buttoned shut. With the gun pushed ahead, he edged his way down the endless slope toward the Buckhorn. That night he camped beside the stream. He set fire to a windfall of trees and slept the sleep of exhaustion within the circle of their grateful heat. At dawn he shot a snowshoe rabbit and lingered beside the fire long enough to roast it. He ate half of it and stored the remainder in his pockets for future need.

Close of the second day found him near the end of his strength. He was yet two miles from the cabin, and though he clung tenaciously to his rifle, he had seen no more game. He had reached the top of the long slope that led up from the stream, and was now upon the downhill grade toward the cabin. For this he was thankful.

He lay before his campfire and estimated his chances.

"Another day will get me there—if I can hold out."

HUNTER lost track of happenings. It was daylight, and the sun was shining—but he was cold. He missed his rifle and had no idea where he left it. Mechanically he set fire to an old rotten log—then sank into a coma.

He came to with a feeling that he had been disturbed. The old log had burned out, and there remained only the fluffy ashes to testify that hours had passed. The sun was low over the Divide, and evening chill was in the air. His foot ached and throbbed, and his leg felt as if it would burst.

Ten yards away, eyes glared at him from behind a bush. He felt a chill along his spine, felt for his rifle, but it was nowhere to be found. Minutes passed. He sat transfixed—his muscles tense.

Slowly, an inch at a time, the tawny form of a mountain lion slid from behind the bush. It edged forward, jerkily, flat upon its belly, instead of with the usual smooth, gliding approach.

"A lion!" Hunter rapped out in surprise.

At the sound of the human voice the lion stopped and lay motionless except for the occasional twitching of the tip of his tail.

Hunter lifted his hand threateningly.

The beast's lips curled away from his long, cruel fangs in a twisted snarl. After a bit, it rose unsteadily, and Hunter saw how gaunt he was. It lurched awkwardly, staggering toward him with uncertain steps. Its eyes were staring and glazed, not the usual half-closed, piercing eyes of the cat.

"He's starving," Hunter observed aloud. "Been after a porcupine."

From the animal's nose and jaws protruded a dozen porcupine quills. Its mouth and throat were so obstructed by them that he had not been able to eat for days. It could not resist trailing the crippled man, but it was too craven-hearted to attack him. Hunter knew that ordinarily the cougar would not attempt to molest a man, and he did not believe that this one would really have the courage to attack.

"He's about done for himself," the crippled hunter decided. "but I wish to heaven he'd go away. He gives me the creeps. Those horrible eyes—"

Once more he took up his pilgrimage toward the coveted cabin where food and fire and shelter waited him. Presently,

when his strength failed him, and he had to stop for rest, he glanced behind.

The panther was following, keeping its distance, wabbly and tottering, but ever with preying eyes fixed upon him.

Where the trail dropped down from the last rocky shoulder, Hunter again was forced to stop to rest. Through the dusk loomed the old cabin—the mecca of his hopes. Another hundred yards—God give him strength to make it! He almost swooned from the nearness of the end of his suspense.

He glanced behind. The lion had disappeared.

WHERE the trail zigzagged down the last steep slope in the form of the letter Z, the animal had cut across and taken the short way. Then it had crawled out upon an overhanging rock after the nature of its kind, and lay in wait for the man to pass below. Instinctively it crouched, though too feeble perhaps to spring. Hunter crawled slowly beneath the rock. Still the beast hesitated—half rose, then settled back.

Bits of shattered rock rattled to the ground.

Hunter heard them and stopped short. He caught the glitter of the cat's eyes above him.

The beast turned slowly around as though to leave the rock. As it did so it lost its balance, clawed desperately for a foothold on the smooth boulder, slipped—slid—and tumbled off.

As it fell, the silence was broken by a shrill challenging bark. A dark form shot out of the darkness ten feet above where Jim Hunter lay transfixed. Jane had crept silently along, shadowing her old master, and warily watching, with eyes flaming with hatred, the stealthy stalk of the lion. Even as the tawny cat rolled off the rock, she flashed upward to attack. Her powerful jaws clamped shut upon the beast's throat while she was still in midair.

Jim Hunter lay in helpless amazement. He heard thumps and thuds as the struggling bodies went wrestling down the slope. The collie's teeth were tearing at the lion's throat. Her growls were deep and muffled. The great cat was four times her size, but too weak to fight. He tried to shake off the strangling fury, to run away. But the collie's wrath would not be gainsaid. Hers was the wolf's fearlessness and the dog's faithfulness.

The lion's gaunt body relaxed. Jane loosened her hold and sprang back. For an instant she waited, watching the cat for signs of treachery. Then, satisfied that he was dead, she slipped into the night.

IT was not until in January, some three months later, that Hunter rode again slowly up the valley to the deserted old log cabin that had served him for headquarters while trailing Three-toes. He recalled with a shudder his last journey to it—that excruciating pilgrimage on hands and knees after fighting free of the trap he had fallen into. The region was deserted now, the valley silent. No wavering coyote-call broke the stillness. In vain he listened for the long-drawn howl of the big lobo to set the ridge-tops shivering. Along sandy stretches he stopped from time to time, and leaned low from his saddle, searching for tracks. He found only a few deer and elk signs, weeks old.

Dejectedly he returned to the ranch-house. He was sitting chin in hand before the fire when the old cattle-man came in.

"Three-toes and Jane are gone—quit the region," he grumbled morosely.

"Well, son," soothed old Hopkins, "don't forget that Three-toes is a wolf. He's got brains. If he hadn't had, he wouldn't be alive today. You've got to keep right after him—that's the only way. May take you years!"

The cattle-man paused and glanced toward the mounted specimen of Pegfoot, that canny lobo he had finally caught after ten years' stalking. He went over and placed his hand respectfully upon the fierce gray head.

For a moment there was silence. The cattle-man looked from the wolf to the young man, and back again, mentally estimating Jim's chances against Three-toes—measuring and comparing the two wolves too. Then he spoke slowly:

"You must remember that Three-toes has help, while Pegfoot ran alone. Jane has intelligence, and I haven't a doubt she tips the old boy off on things outside his experience. Three-toes likely excels her in native cunning and running the gantlet of existence, as he and his ancestors before him always have—has no doubt made him far more cautious than she. He takes no chances. If things stir his suspicions, he simply quits the region. He's the original safety-first boy."

Early in March Jim was camped in the

foothills. He suspected that somewhere between the Big Thompson and the Poudre, Three-toes and Jane had their den. Riders occasionally brought him news of their raids, coloring their tales according to their imaginations, for the exercise of which they found plenty of time during their solitary labors. Some of them reported seeing tracks of a wolf and a collie together. The raids were always far apart. Jim knew better than to dash here and there in fruitless pursuit of the elusive pair.

"If they've made a kill over toward the Poudre," he surmised, "like as not their den is down this way. They're too smart to hunt near home."

The winter had been exceptionally dry and warm. Only the Great Divide was covered with snow. The foothills and the lower ranges were bare, and it was impossible to do much trailing. Rarely he came upon the tracks the two left in the soft telltale sand. These were of little help, but reassured him. His quarry was somewhere in the region, at least.

One night, while Hunter was camping near the old cabin, the wind, which had been blowing a gale, ceased. The moon bathed the peaks in soft, silvery haze. From near and far came the clamor of coyotes, sweet music to his listening ears.

"Just you wait," he challenged, "till I get Three-toes and Jane; then I'll come down and clean you yappers out." He smiled rather dubiously to himself at the thought of his so-far fruitless chase.

ALL at once the coyote clamor hushed; the medley of sounds was still. Hunter sensed a new, strange entrance into the nocturnal life about him. He sat up in his blankets, alert, straining his ears for sound of the intruder.

From far away came the faint, lonesome howl of a wolf. It swelled to full volume, then dropped away to nothing.

A chill crept along Hunter's spine. He shivered unconsciously and pulled his blankets closer. Instinctively his hand reached out and touched the butt of his rifle. He waited, tense and silent. The howl did not come again.

"Three-toes!" he breathed. "First time I've heard him in a year. I'd know his old howl in a hundred—brrr—always gives me the creeps."

Gradually the night sounds returned. Far down the valley a coyote lifted wailing voice. One by one others joined him,

until their yapping chorus once more filled the air.

"Wonder if Jane's with him?" Hunter mused aloud.

AT dawn Hunter was on the move. Fifty feet from where he had slept, he stopped abruptly and stared down at what he saw in a little dry wash.

"Jane's tracks!" He flung off his pack and dropped to his knees to examine the fresh footprints in the sand of the gully.

"She's been here during the night. Crept up while I was asleep." He straightened up and looked toward the left at the ridge from which Three-toes had howled.

"Foxy old cuss—watched from the ridge while she crept into my camp—tried to call her back." He paused, then stooped over the tracks once more and examined them closely. "Jane, all right. Couldn't mistake the print of that crippled left front foot."

He sat down, resting his elbows on his knees the better to steady his large, twelve-power glasses. Inch by inch, up and down, he circled, searching the ridge-top for Three-toes. Not a sign! At last he swung up his pack and headed for the higher shoulder that jutted out from the granite peak.

"I've been down here two weeks," he counted as he strode along. "Jane's surely been near the cabin before this—she wouldn't come in often. I wonder—" He halted as a new thought struck him: "I bet that's it. I'll go up and see."

He angled toward the ridge-top. Hours later he paused at a spot in the lee of the ridge where the eddying wind had strewn soft sand. Here were many tracks—a wolf's, —Three-toes,—the collie's, all plainly telling the things he sought to know. Three-toes had dropped down from above and waited at the edge of the sand. The dog's tracks climbed up straight from the direction of his last camp. She had circled her lord and had rolled at his feet to show her devotion. The tracks led on up the ridge, and Hunter followed.

An hour later he picked up their fresh trail, where they had been following a dry watercourse up toward the higher mountains.

"They're heading for the high country," he mused, puzzled. "Wonder why they're quitting the flats. It's too early for their pups to travel. They've not been chased down here."

He sat down to rest and to think through the mystery.

"It's too early for them to head back—unless something's happened to the family—that's it: some one's found their den and killed the pups, or else they hadn't any this spring, and are climbing back up to high country because it's safer there."

On and on he followed the trail beckoning so plainly, until it left the watercourse and zigzagged its way toward the top of the mountain.

TWO days later he discovered that Jane and Three-toes had crossed trails with their two pups of the year before. There were no signs that the reunion was marked by any demonstration, they had simply met, and started off to pack-hunt. They hunted together for several days before drifting apart again and going their separate ways. Three-toes had only toleration for his rangy progeny, but Jane remembered and cherished them. The wolf had no love for any but his mate. . . .

Jim Hunter was sitting upon a promontory, sweeping the valleys below and the ridges above with his glasses. He noticed some disturbance far up the valley, and focused his glasses upon the spot. Three times he marked the agitation of magpies. The birds sprang up suddenly as though disturbed, then circled back, as though to investigate the thing that had scared them. A pair of coyotes darted across the valley from the deep wood at its edge.

"Ordinarily they'd have stuck to the timber," Jim observed. "Something's up." He steadied his glasses against a stump and watched for several minutes more. Dissatisfied with his long-range findings, he descended from his lookout post, and headed for the spot from which the birds had broadcast their warning. The wind was coming down the valley, so that he could approach the spot unheralded. No telltale breeze would betray him. He moved noiselessly, with rifle ready, keeping out of sight, using the trees and the giant boulders along the way to screen his approach.

As he neared the spot he heard the magpies and jays bickering.

"Must be some food in sight," he decided, "way they're quarreling. If they were pestering an owl, they'd raise a great clamor."

Five minutes later, when he peered cautiously into a little open glade among the trees, he was astonished to see a young

wolf in a trap. He recognized it as one of the two survivors of Jane's litter, for it had the distinctive markings of both its lobo father and collie mother. It was fighting the trap silently, wolf-wise.

Hunter was amazed. He had set no traps in the region, and till now had found no signs of trappers. He watched the desperate, silent struggles of the entrapped creature, now it whirled about and snapped at the gripping thing with jaws that would have crushed anything but steel; now it jerked at the trap-chain, lunging headlong, using its weight in continued effort to tear off its imprisoned foot.

The memory of his own travail flooded over the man in a wave of acute nausea.

"Poor devil," he exclaimed. "If I hadn't happened along, you'd have suffered like this for days. And had to fight off these carrion too." He glanced at the magpies and jays, already collected in large numbers.

A rifle-shot rang out, all but one of Jane's litter was gone. Slowly Jim Hunter made his way down the valley toward the little old log cabin.

"One more pup, Jane—and Three-toes," he mumbled as he moped along. "Then I'm done—no more traps for me. If it wasn't for my obligation to the cattle-men, I'd quit now, let Jane go free, and leave them to deal with Three-toes."

That night the big lobo howled from far off toward the rim of the cañon. The call was from so great a distance as to be scarcely audible. But faint as it was, Jim recognized it. While he waited for its repetition, amidst the deadened silence of all other night sounds, there rose the unmistakable howl of a dog.

"Jane!" the man gasped as he cocked his ear tensely toward the direction from which it had come. "She's found the dead pup."

He went inside the cabin and closed the door. For a long time he sat before the fire, deep in thought. As the dying embers glowed and blackened, he mulled over the situation aloud.

"Course she'll hold *that* against me, though I was really humane. She can't know that. Still—it's queer, if Jane does hold a grudge against me, that she fought that lion to save my life. I wonder—brave Jane!"

AGAIN the cattle-men resorted to poison. At the end of a short dry winter, they sowed the range with poisoned meat, and

its harvest among the coyotes was terrible. The birds fell victims to the stuff also; magpies and jays died by the thousands.

"No wonder Three-toes left the cattle country," Jim muttered, after he had shot the third poisoned coyote. "Sure glad Jane knows too much to come to this kind of death. Bet they quit the range soon as they saw the first poison victim."

One day, from behind a screen of small trees, Hunter caught sight of Three-toes as he lay upon the topmost crest of a promontory that capped the end of a shoulder of the mountain. There was no possible hope of getting nearer, for here a forest fire had cut a wide swath through the timber, and there were no screening trees.

The big wolf was partially hidden by some juniper bushes, but Jane lay in the open. Frequently the lobo roused from sleep and circled the region with his all-seeing eyes. He would point his nose into the wind, sample the air critically, and then drop his head for another nap. But the collie did not rouse for more than an hour. Either her long association with man had dulled her caution, or else she placed supreme confidence in her mate.

Presently the lobo rose, stretched, and stood outlined against the sky. He was a magnificent specimen of his breed—in prime condition, at least twenty pounds heavier than any other wolf Jim had ever seen. The man paid silent tribute to his cunning, his caution, though he knew he was ruthlessly savage. After a moment of stretching, he lay down on the barren promontory where no sheltering bushes grow.

Slowly Hunter pushed his rifle forward. He adjusted the sights for five hundred yards, and drew a bead on the exposed form atop the ridge.

"Can't be sure," he hesitated as he eased the rifle down. "If I miss this time, I'll never get another shot at him. He'd beat it and I'd have to locate him all over again. Better let him go now on a chance that I'll get a closer shot next time."

He staked his chance upon the possibility that when the pair left their beds they might drop down into the valley. But two hours later, when they had finished napping, Three-toes led the way, up-wind, along the ridge. Instinctively he avoided the ambush. He knew his high-power nose would be useless if he traveled with the wind behind him.

IT was now late spring, and still no sign of greening in the mountain valley. Roaring winter winds had devoured the little snow which lay hidden in the deep forests, and had left the woods dry as tinder. Even the high peaks were not as white as usual. Bands of deer and elk roved about in search of succulent young shoots of scrub or grass. Mountain sheep, following immemorial habit, descended from their barren, wind-swept rocky heights, to the upper valleys, eager for their first taste of spring grass.

Hunter, concealed among some trailing timberline growth on the mesa separating the Buckhorn and Poudre valleys, thought he detected smoke suspended over the latter.

"Some rancher's taking chances, burning brush in this dry weather," he decided.

He settled back in his retreat, hoping to catch a glimpse of passing game—maybe of Three-toes or Jane! Frequently he had ambushed coyotes this way, and rarely he had seen Jane and the wolf. But the canny old lobo was always angling up the wind, or swinging back and forth across it, never traveling along with it.

"That's smoke, all right!" Jim sat up and verified his suspicions with his glasses. "Spreading, too—fire got away from that rancher. Whew! It'll run like chain lightning." He glanced uneasily at the distant forest, with its dry, dead needles and grass of the year before.

Far over in that valley into which Hunter was gazing so fearfully the forest stood awaiting its doom. The spreading smoke hung like a pall over its dauntless ranks; the trees seemed to bow their heads in noble submission to their fate. Theirs was an untimely, criminally unnecessary end. For centuries they had stood in their posts, harboring the winter snows, breaking the spirit of devastating winds. Because of them valleys turned green and fertile, cities flourished, little children grew rosy and strong. They had witnessed tragedy out across the mountain tops and deep down in the cañons. Former fires had swept among them, cutting wide swaths through their immobile ranks, leaving behind stark skeletons which stood fifty or a hundred years, marking, like tombstones, the spots where once giant trees had flung on high evergreen banners to meet the joyful summer breeze.

There came the whisper of a breeze, faintly stirring the needles at the ends of

the supple limbs. The trees swayed uneasily, their branches singing a mournful requiem. Into the dark and pleasant shadows beneath them sifted starry sparks. From high above the cañon rim little gullies sloped down, and sheltered dense groves of spruce. The fire crept slowly forward, edging its way into these miniature cañons. Almost instantly there was a roaring "*woo-ssch*," as the heat struck fire to the resinous needles, and the trees burst into living, gigantic torches, the flames shooting a hundred feet into the air above them.

This upward leap created a suction, sweeping everything in its path, until it encountered the regular wind-drift, which grabbed its burden of sparks and hot embers, carried them along, and dropped them far from the vicinity of the main fire. Smoldering "spot" fires thus incubated far and wide. These fresh fires ate their way slowly on the dry needles and mold of the forest floor until they met the main draught; then they suddenly burst into roaring furnaces that destroyed, inside of a few brief moments, forest giants that had endured for centuries—that had fought draught, and endured floods, that had outlived many human generations of changing scenes, that might have given joy and life to generations yet unborn.

HUNTER spent the night at his post upon the mesa. At dawn he marked straggling deer and elk drifting southward away from the region of the fire.

"Too far away yet to make them stampede," he observed, after searching the burning area with his glasses.

Before noon the fire crossed the Poudre and swung southward toward the Buckhorn. An impenetrable smoke-pall heralded its approach, and blotted from view the lofty peaks of the Mummy range.

"Wind's changed to the north—fire's heading this way." The lone watcher on the mesa was somewhat startled. "At the speed it's coming, it'll reach here before night."

The migration of the game was increasing. He knew that animals, in time of trouble, stick close to their home range, the country with which they are most familiar. Their reluctance to quit the Poudre Valley accounted for their precipitate flight now, as the flames came creeping, turning, twisting, spreading, running, leaping into their familiar haunts. Foxes slipped silently from

one hiding-place to another. Magpies and jays flew by, squawking insanely. Deer and elk moved slowly, pausing now and then to graze, and glance back at the advancing enemy. A few bear ambled along phlegmatically. Coyotes galloped nervously across the open, stopping short in their flight to sit down, and sagely view the unwonted procession of their neighbors.

Still Hunter stuck to his post.

"If these wary old cusses lose their heads like this, maybe Jane and Three-toes will overlook a bet," he speculated as he strung his traps across the narrow cañon where he had found their tracks most frequently.

"Here's my chance to pot these pesky coyotes, but if I open up on them, it'll scare old Three-toes clear away, if they're within hearing. Guess I better forgo the pleasure."

The air thickened with fumes that made his eyes smart and tickled his throat. The fleeing game thinned out. Only a few that had lurked in hiding until the fire was close upon them, now burst through the smoke-pall in cowering terror. Magpies and jays, which are commonly too shrewd to be trapped, circled about in confusion, some of them losing their bearings entirely and heading straight back for the flames. A black bear cub, singed by the fire, almost brushed Hunter as he loped past--his eyes were almost swollen shut, and his red tongue lolled out; he panted heavily as he toiled up the slope.

From a distance came a subdued roar. At times it died down to nothing; again it was plainly audible.

BEFORE noon Jim was forced to retreat from his lookout. He dropped down into the cañon of the Buckhorn, made his way upstream a few miles, in hope of escaping the worst smoke, and at last climbed up out of the valley and headed for the old log cabin. On top he turned to view the mesa he had quitted a few hours before. The fire was creeping over the top. Last season's dry grass was burning like so much excelsior; the scattered groups of stunted trees were flaming like huge bonfires.

"Guess the Buckhorn forest too is doomed," he mourned, as he looked down upon the heavy timber below him. "There's no such thing as sanctuary," he grieved, as he turned his back upon the scene.

After a few paces, he looked back toward the mesa he had camped on all night and morning.

"Surely Three-toes and Jane are out of there," he worried. Then reluctantly: "Guess I better set out the traps again. It's the psychological time; game's all excited; smoke's enough to dull the keenest nose; don't believe even Three-toes can smell anything through this thick wall; it'll about blind him too. So much noise, what with the roar of the fire, and the crashing about of the animals. Only thing to do."

He feverishly set out his traps. Wherever game trails led away from the direction of the fire, he planted them, covering them lightly with sand and pine needles.

Quite unexpectedly he came face to face with that pup of Jane's which least resembled her, the sole surviving member of her mongrel brood. He had been the biggest of the litter that day when Jim had his first glimpse of him, after he had climbed the cliff and found the collie's den upon the ledge, and had come so near losing his life through the furious attack of the outraged mother. He was a pup no longer now, but a powerful, rangy wolf; now, as then, all lobo. He was coming down the trail with the wind behind him, and blue, smoky haze enveloping him. Hunter was too dumfounded to move for a second, but as soon as he recovered from his surprise he jerked up his rifle. But the youngster was wise beyond his age: quick as the man's movements were, his own were quicker. He dived behind a sheltering rock and disappeared into a juniper thicket before Jim could shoot.

Late in the afternoon, Hunter found fresh tracks, where Three-toes and Jane had crossed the valley. He trailed them until dark and camped on their trail that night. He slept little. The wind, blowing from the north, was driving over the dense smoke from the spreading fire. His eyes smarted and watered continually. His raw throat sought relief in a constant, irritating cough, which annoyed him more because it might betray his nearness to Jane and Three-toes, than because of its actual discomfort, though that was considerable.

MORNING brought no abatement of the catastrophe. The whole world seemed afire. There from the shoulder of Mummy Mountain, he watched great clouds of smoke rise from Buckhorn Cañon, shrouding the Divide in its mournful gray pall, and blotting the lesser peaks from existence. His prophecy was fulfilled.

He had to give up trailing Three-toes

and Jane, for he was coughing continuously now, and his eyes burned and watered so that he could no longer follow tracks.

"They wont leave this region till they have to," he figured. "They hate fire, so they wont venture north. They wont risk the poison at the cattle-range—the old boy would rather take his chances up here than run the gantlet down there. They might go west, but there's the Divide to cross, snow and no food. Too many settlements south, toward Estes Park. They'll stay put."

HE descended into the valley in hope of relief from the smarting fumes. The fire had crossed the Buckhorn, and was rapidly climbing the slope toward Mummy Mountain. The smoke-pall thickened, its blinding reek seared as though it carried the flames themselves. He crossed the valley, and stumbled onward, in the direction of the log cabin. Now and then, he halted to plunge his head into the clear, cold stream, born of the glacier on Mummy, which tumbled beside the trail. He sat down to get his breath. Overhead the sun, distorted and ghastly, burned dimly through the smoke. The mad wind came in puffs, now from this quarter, now from that. A deathlike stillness was upon the stricken land.

"I've got to get out of here," he decided, as he saw the flames creeping upon the sides of the little valley. Yet, fascinated, he delayed to watch, despite the danger. The spectacle was magnificent though appalling. At long range, he had gained but a faint idea of the fierceness of the fire. Now, with the licking flames only a mile away, he was bewildered by their intensity. When burning brands came down with the wind, setting fire-vanguard of "spot" fires far in advance of the main army, he caught up his rifle.

"Here's where I light runnin'," he cried, springing to his feet. He followed up the stream, heading for timberline. Suddenly he spun round, listening.

From somewhere there came a piercing wail of anguish.

He continued to listen, tilting his head in the direction from which the cry seemed to have come. There was only the roar of the fire and an occasional crash of a dead tree as its anchorage burned out, letting it fall.

"Imagination!" He decided his overwrought nerves had tricked him. He was

on the move again, running swiftly, dodging in and out among the trees, circling boulders. On either side the cañon walls shut in—the little brook came leaping down.

Again came that anguished cry from above. There was no mistaking it. He hurried forward.

He whistled shrilly. He called: "Jane! Jane!"

The howl of a dog cut the roar of the fire.

"Jane's in trouble—" he panted, as he struggled up the steep slope. Above him, at the rim of the cañon wall, he saw a thicket of small spruces burst into flame. He paused, marked a pool between high boulders, and dropped his rifle into it for safekeeping. Then, unhampered, he sped directly into the oncoming fire.

In a hundred yards he halted. He rubbed his eyes, and tried to pierce the black, pitchy smoke that set his lungs aflame. By great effort he raised his voice and shouted: "Jane! Jane!"

Up the steep, narrow, tortuous cañon he stumbled, calling, choking, shouting, gasping. Unerringly he sought the traps he had placed in the gorge. He found a coyote struggling helplessly at the end of a trap-chain and ended its misery with scarcely a pause in his upward flight.

Where the cañon narrowed between close, confining walls, he had placed three traps. The sand just below them revealed a tragedy. From the many tracks imprinted there, he read the story of the recent flight of Three-toes and Jane.

Coming down, from the direction of the fire, were their parallel tracks. The dog, in her panic, had followed an old game-trail, in which the traps were set: the wolf, cool and cunning even under stress, had kept close beside it but had not once dropped into it. He had repeatedly crossed and recrossed the deep worn path, but always he had leaped lightly over it.

JIM had to plunge his head repeatedly into the cold water of the stream while he was unraveling the amazing story written in the lonely sand. He opened his eyes while his face was under the water, batting them rapidly, until he could see clearly. Here, deep down in the gorge, he had momentary respite from the stinging fumes. As soon as he could see, he resumed his hurried search for the dog. He called to her constantly. He stopped and

listened intently, hoping to hear the rattle of the trap-chain, or the clank of the trap as she struggled through the timber. Only the dash of some desperate, belated creature answered. A doe with a fawn passed—he sprang forward and shooed them around the remaining traps, and he sprang the traps to prevent tragedy. A black bear came crashing through the thicket and plunged into the stream. He kept on, splashing wildly as he went, unconscious of the presence of his ancient enemy.

To the animals, there was no danger equal to the fire. Their terror of it overbalanced their fear of man, and man's tricks. They were oblivious of all else. This was true of all save Three-toes. When the trap had snapped shut on Jane's foot, he had not hesitated a second. Instead of circling about the spot as any other animal would have done, he leaped into full flight and ran for miles without slackening speed—he deserted his mate without the least symptom of reluctance. In any other situation he would have fought for her to the death, courageously. Facing a dog-pack, he would have ripped and sliced and gone down to a worthy end without the slightest hesitation. But her accident was man-wrought. He might not have deserted her to the fire, had not that man-thing, the trap, reached up and clutched her. His fear of man transcended his fear of fire—and all other earthly forces.

Deserted, Jane snapped repeatedly at the trap, and flew into a rage. She tried to run away from the terrible, clinging thing; she wanted to follow her savage mate. The clog caught at every lunge; and jerked her headlong, bringing her to sudden, breath-taking stops that left her dazed and helpless. At last, unable to make any progress, too exhausted to struggle further, she reverted to the ways of her puppyhood. Lifting her voice, she sent long, agonized appeals forth for help. It was one of these wails that had arrested Jim Hunter's flight.

He marked the way she had gone by her tracks, and hurried after her. In the sand and soft soil beside the stream were the signs of her travail: here she had whirled and threshed about, striving to fling off the biting jaws; here, the mark of the clog, as tugging and panting, she had dragged it after her in her first mad bolt through the scrub growth of timberline. Under ordinary conditions, he could have followed her trail easily, so plain it was, but now he had no time to lose. The fire

was swirling nearer and nearer. The smoke cloud eddied and swooped down into the bottom of the cañon. The air was scorching hot. Breathing was almost impossible.

He gave up the trail and ran to the stream. He plunged headlong into the icy waters. In desperation, he retreated. He followed the bear's example and splashed a long downstream, slipping, stumbling, sprawling flat.

Frantically he shouted, "Jane! Jane! Where are you?"

His voice was drowned in the roaring blast.

THE collie, true to her dog nature, still loved her master. Dogs are faithful to mankind, even when beaten and abused. Jane's early years had been marked by nothing but kindness. Now in her terror, she turned to them for help in her extremity. But when Hunter's whistle answered her pathetic appeal, she fell silent. She was afraid. The cross-pull of her wolf ancestors warned her of danger. The association with the lobo made her wary. From the cover of the spruce thicket, she watched her former master plunge into the stream. She whined a little and crept forward to the end of the trap-chain. She longed to throw herself at his feet. Then—

Jim Hunter splashed out of sight.

She lifted her voice in a howl of desolation. She plunged forward, was jerked back by the clinging trap, whirled and snapped at it, breaking her shining teeth on the silent steel thing.

Hunter stopped in his tracks at the sound of her distress. He climbed up out of the stream and headed in the direction of the howl. Blindly, he groped. He could no longer keep his eyes open in that fume-filled air. He forced them open for an instant, made a mental picture of the lay ahead, then felt his way forward.

Jane whined eagerly, and stretched her long muzzle out to meet the groping hands of the man she loved. Of late she had feared and hated him. She had not been able to understand him. But now she recognized in the tone of his voice his longing to help her. She forgot the years he had hunted her; she forgave the murder of her pups; the persecution of her mate. Some twenty feet way, Hunter threw himself flat on the ground, striving to escape the suffocating smoke. When he could, he pried his eyes open for a brief glimpse.

"Jane!" he breathed in happy relief.

FOR a long moment, he remained motionless, his arms about the dog.

She licked his face and hands.

Swiftly he removed the trap, and she launched headlong into his arms. Blindly he turned in the direction of the stream. Together they fought for their lives. Behind them was the roaring fire. Everywhere beside their path downstream burning brands were falling. The dry needle-carpet beneath the spruces were dotted with tiny fires, spot-fires just starting.

Hunter followed the stream instinctively, his eyes no longer serving him. His lungs were afire, and his throat raw in spite of the water he gulped down every few steps.

In and out, and across the little stream the collie followed, sometimes howling with pain as her wounded foot came down on sharp boulders: sometimes whining happily, as she tried to lick the hand of her master. She was all dog again—the lure of her wild mate gone forever. In this time of mutual danger, they both forgot that one was hunter and the other hunted, that they had been playing a deadly game of hide and seek.

"We'll get out safe, old girl," Hunter mumbled reassuringly, through blistered lips. "Then we'll go straight home to Hopkins and the ranch."

Jane hobbled to his side and caught his ragged sleeve as though to say she understood, and believed him. She whined her willingness to follow him to the end of the world.

They were nearer death than Jim Hunter thought. The stream they were following blindly, descended a cliff in tumbling falls. Too late he recognized the sound of the cataract. He tried to turn back, and for a few seconds tottered with an even chance of success. Then the swift water carried him forward. His head glanced a half-submerged rock and he lay motionless.

From the bank, Jane whimpered uneasily. Daintily, she waded out and tugged at Hunter's sleeve. The water washed the body of the unconscious man around, and swept it downstream.

Terror seized the collie. In and out of the water she dashed in panic-stricken frenzy. She followed along the bank, barking desperately, urging her master to get up and come out.

A hundred feet below, where the cold waters eddied round and round in a deep, clear pool, she sprang in and seized the sleeve of Hunter's heavy, flannel shirt.

Heroically, she tugged at the inert body. She was hampered by her injured foot. Inch by inch, she backed upon the little sand bar, pulling her leaden burden with her. At last, with her master's head and shoulders safely upon the sand, she stopped to rest. Everywhere about her was fire—leaping, crackling fire that terrified her. Her beloved master lay strangely still.

Her memory reverted to the ranch—to Hopkins. He would know what to do; she would bring him to help. A few lengths away, she faced about uncertainly, then limped back to the helpless man on the sand-bar. She licked his face, whining anxiously the while.

Then straight for the home ranch she headed for help and old Hopkins.

WHEN Jim Hunter returned to consciousness, the fire had passed. Here and there the smoking ghosts of giant trees remained. A cool breeze came down from the heights above timberline. His body was stiff and wet. His lungs burned as though filled with liquid fire. His eyes were swollen almost shut. Carefully, he edged out of the water, and lay wearily upon the sand. Consciousness returned slowly, but, after a while, he sat up, half-dazed, and groped about fumblingly with his hands. He remembered that Jane had been with him; he felt about for her, calling to her huskily. He dipped his face in the cold water of the stream, and rubbed his eyes until he got them open. Then he took a nervous, apprehensive glance around, fearful that his brain had tricked him. But no, there in the sand were fresh tracks—her tracks—the print of her twisted foot.

He called again, and again, but his voice was cracked and he could not make a loud sound. He whistled, feebly. No answer. The silent, fire-scarred forest seemed to mock him.

"Surely she wouldn't run away," he murmured. His glance fell on the row of holes in his sleeve.

"Her teeth did it!" he marveled happily. Then he studied the tracks in the sand. "She surely had a hard time—dragging me out—don't see how she did it." He dropped upon his knees and reaching down, touched the mark of the twisted foot, almost reverently. . . .

Half a mile below he came upon the collie's seared body. In her haste to fetch help she had headed straight across the track of the fire.



THIS terrific story of the killing of a criminal by an avenger up in Alaska is perhaps the most remarkable of our real experiences.

By

**Robert
Jess**

With Naked Hands

ALTHOUGH I have roughed it in various parts of the world, and mixed with red-blooded men on many an out-of-the-way trail, in only one instance has it been my lot to see one man kill another with his naked hands. This grim experience befell me in Alaska.

I was bucking a blizzard that raged along the Kobuk Basin when I first met big John Banterman. For me that meeting was timely, for I was lost and in a bad way; the big Alaskan was obliged to drag me almost two miles to his shack on the Squirrel River. Once there, however, he and his old partner Fred Dunham soon nursed me back to normal.

The two men had struck pay gravel on a tributary of the Squirrel, and had been panning all summer with a fair amount of success. It had been their intention to run a trap-line during the winter, but the first cold spell had laid old Fred out with rheumatism; so when Banterman asked me to throw in my lot, I jumped at the chance.

The three of us got along well together; inside of a week the two men were calling me "Partner;" and I soon learned that

Banterman looked upon old Fred as a sort of a father.

One afternoon Banterman and I were engaged in overhauling some trapping gear; old Fred, being able to hobble around, was doing some chores, when into camp snowshoed a stranger.

The man was a Russian, and one of the biggest fellows I ever looked at; he told us his name was Seminoff, and said he was trying to buy dogs. Having no dogs to sell, Banterman kindly offered to put him up for the night; and being tired, the man gladly accepted.

The stranger left early the next morning, heading toward Shungnak; Banterman and I accompanied him a couple of miles down the trail, and then we left him and cut cross-country to reach a miner's shack, in order to borrow some tools that we needed.

It was on returning that afternoon we found old Fred shot dead, and the shack rifled. A careful examination of the body showed a bullet-hole between the shoulders; and the ancient revolver, still in the holster and fully loaded, was plain proof that

the killer had given the old miner no chance to defend himself.

BANTERMAN took it hard; indeed for a moment the big Alaskan was overwhelmed. But in cases like this men of the North Country waste no long time on sentiment. We immediately dug a grave, and buried our old companion; over that grave I distinctly heard Banterman make a vow to kill the murderer with his naked hands.

The picture was plain, and easily read: on parting with us, the big Russian had doubled back to the shack, shot old Fred, and decamped with the few ounces of gold the two miners had salvaged from the Squirrel.

Flinging together our packs, and wrapping the whole in the sleeping-bags, we soon picked up the trail, the Russian's big beaver-tails cutting a swath in the snow that was unmistakable.

The trail led straight out through the Kobuk Basin, then due north. Throughout the night Banterman set a pace I found mighty hard to follow; at last there was a graying in the sky as the Arctic day brightened. We breakfasted in silence on strips of meat and the last of old Fred's biscuits, then on into the North. At times I found myself wondering what were the big Alaskan's thoughts, for never a word had he spoken, but forged steadily ahead, in his eyes a grim set look that boded ill for the murderer of old Fred.

On the following day it commenced to snow; by noon we were heading into a blizzard, malignant, of an Arctic ferocity unprecedented in my experience. Never can I forget those hours of pitiless blinding fury; the wind, hell-driven from the crown of the world, swept down across the barrens with a force that was more than human endurance could face. All semblance of a trail was wiped out.

At the crest of a rising undulation we stopped; using our snowshoes we built a ridge against the wind, and crept into our sleeping-bags; then Banterman told me his plans. He figured the Russian would follow the Colville on a chance of getting through to Harrison Bay, where he might catch one of the whaling fleet and get out. No doubt he would count on the blizzard making trailing impossible.

The short Arctic day waned, and with its going a cold that froze to the marrow settled over the wilderness; many times

during that terrible night Banterman and I were forced to leave our sleeping-bags and jog up and down in the snow to start the circulation.

Morning dawned clear and cold; the snow had ceased, but the wind was still blowing half a gale when we started out. Off in the distance was the Colville, a bluish streak swept clear of snow; far into the vastness it led, fading amid a veil of snow mist. All things glistened cold, stark and white, with a gradual merging into blue, the colors that ever symbolize that land of cold and death, the Arctic.

On reaching the river the going became easier; the wind was still against us, but Banterman set a terrific pace, and somehow I managed to follow. Not the least sign of a trail was visible upon that steel-hard river; still, instinct told us that out there, somewhere across the reaches, beyond the rising heights of those hills the murderer of old Fred was working North.

IT was past noon; the wind had risen to almost a gale. Banterman, who was leading around a bend in the river, suddenly leaped forward, and landed between the shoulders of a big man who was sitting in the lee of a huge pack. There was no mistaking the size of him; it was the Russian. The man had been eating, and the roar of the wind drowning out the noise of our approach, he was taken by surprise.

I covered the big fellow with a revolver while Banterman searched him; in a pocket sewn into the inside of his parka was hidden the gold, and a small automatic that once had been my property.

When we charged him with the killing of old Fred, the big Russian coolly admitted it, and then with a calmness that was astonishing, challenged Banterman to fight it out with his fists. I noticed Banterman's face had paled a little, but there was a look of placid, assured strength about him that showed he had himself fully under control. With a few terse words he ordered the Russian to prepare. Then was I to see enacted a battle of giants, such as few men have ever witnessed.

Despite the cold, which was intense, the men stripped down to the waist, and I noticed out on the snow that the Russian looked the bigger of the two. Tall, grim and awkward, and thewed like the Bull of Bashan, he looked a formidable foe. Banterman was almost as tall, but shaped up clean-cut, and hard as a stunted oak.

The fight was on less than a minute before I knew the Russian could defend himself; God knows where he learned them, but certain it was he knew the rudiments of the game. Twice Banterman swung hard for the body, and both times his blows were neatly blocked. In a clinch that followed he had all the better of it, and at the break let go a right swing that landed full on the Russian's mouth, smashing the thick lips, and causing the blood to flow down over his hairy chest.

With a fury I have never witnessed before or since, in any of God's created creatures, the killer attacked; Banterman met him with a series of lightning jabs; then toe to toe the men hammered each other with battering blows that would have smashed a safe. Twice they went down locked in a clinch, gasping, panting, and clawing in the snow, only to get up again and attack with unabated fury.

Spellbound by a terrible fascination, I followed every move of that grim, relentless struggle. Time and again both men went down from merciless blows to head or body, and each in turn refused to stay. This was a battle to the death. Starkly silhouetted against the virgin whiteness of the snow, the pair were an uncanny spectacle, with death for him who faltered first.

I shall never forget the sight. Imagine, if you can, a fight to the death with only nature's weapons. Try to draw a mental picture of two human forms, battered and blood-soaked, in whose grim, distorted features there showed but one emotion, the desire to kill. I watched the countenance of each man closely, and each betrayed alike that terrible overpowering passion which can be quenched only by the taking of life.

I had about made up my mind to shoot the Russian and finish it off, when suddenly the tide of battle turned in Banterman's favor. A terrific left-handed blow to the jaw dropped the killer in a heap on the snow. I thought he was finished, but once again that brute struggled to his feet, and came back for more. Like a man bereft of reason Banterman went after him. Twice he drove home savage blows that split the killer's jaw to the bone. Cowardly murderer though he was, it's only fair to admit that the big Russian showed a world of brute gameness. Again and yet again he shook off blows that would have killed any other man on earth.

But nothing that lives can assimilate

punishment such as Banterman was handing out. Like some giant riveting-machine that has broken loose from all control, he drove mighty blows to the Russian's head and body. I could see the end was near; the killer was weakening; his breath was coming now in great choking sobs, as though the effort to breathe was tearing his very vitals. The huge head sagged forward on the hulking shoulders, and the great arms refused to obey the tired brain. Three consecutive times Banterman smashed home murderous blows against that iron chin; the killer reeled as if mortally wounded; then once again the grim avenger's mighty shoulder hunched, the powerful right arm formed a sweeping arc, and drove with soul crushing force to the body.

Without the semblance of a groan, the big killer spun round and fell face downward on the snow, the last spark of life driven from his battered body by that last death-dealing smash. I washed Banterman's bruised and swollen face and hands, and helped him into his sleeping-bag; then as well as could be done under the circumstances, scooped a shallow grave and buried that lifeless hulk that only a short hour before had been a pitiless fighting devil.

THE following morning, though bruised and sore, Banterman felt fit to travel; so we hit the trail for Shungnak. In due time we arrived, and while there learned that the Russian's soul, jarred loose from its earthly moorings by Banterman's mighty blow, would have two murders to answer for instead of one. It was claimed he had also killed a miner in Deering Village.

Nothing in this world could give me greater pleasure than to finish this story with the following statement: "My big Alaskan friend is still alive and doing well." But this is a true experience, and the truth is eternal. Somewhere in France a wooden cross bears the name of big John Banterman. To my dying day I shall always be proud of that name. Rough-and-ready adventurer, soldier of fortune, and care-free fighter he may have been—to me he was a square friend!

During my three years in France nothing so completely thrilled me as did that primitive struggle, fought to the uttermost dregs of cruel desperation, away out there amid the snow and sticks. It was a man's fight, fought in a man's fashion; and the best man won. May he rest in peace!

THIS Real Experience of training-camp days has real humor in it. Perhaps you can send one equally amusing.



The Making of Gol Sogg

By **Neal Jones**

THE last wavering flicker of an Iowa twilight had merged into the shadows of night. In lieu of the gold of the sunset had come the blue-black wall of clouds and their spasmodic flares of dazzling light, which were almost as much to be expected as the night itself.

In the orderly-room of Building 3842, which had descended from its position as a barracks to the indignity of the designation of "Guardhouse Number 2," I had finished the guard report and, barring additional arrests or disturbances during the night, the little black book was ready for its morning trip to headquarters.

From the big room overhead, where half a hundred prisoners spent their days and nights, came the subdued shuffling of feet and the occasional squeak of moving bunks. From the guardroom proper, I could hear the low murmur of voices as the reliefs off duty and the supernumeraries played cards

and talked, while from the hall and the hard-packed ground about the buildings, echoed the measured, clocklike tramp of the sentries.

The junior sergeant of the guard entered the room and picked up the desk telephone. With the receiver in one hand and his watch in the other, he stood motionless—listening. The third relief was forming out in front of the building, and I could hear the clatter of breech-bolts at the command: "Inspection Arms!" I could hear the muttered commands of the corporals and the clicking of bayonets and scabbards, as the different sections of a heavy guard got under way. Then over the wire came a voice, faint to me but clear enough to the man at the receiver: "ten o'clock." The sergeant hung up the instrument and repeated the words: "ten o'clock."

Out in the guardroom a soldier rose to his feet and stepped out into the night.

Out over the great camp floated the last call of the night, the most beautiful call of all, the silvery notes of "taps."

ONE by one the lights flickered and went out. One moment a brilliantly lighted city, the next a vast shadowy area of barn-like barrack buildings whose countless windows gaped back in seeming mockery at the feeble rays of street lights. Simultaneously with the last notes of the bugle, came the sharp, clear cry of a sentry: "Halt! Who's there?"—followed by the conventional: "Advance, friend, to be recognized." From now on, there would be little movement in the camp, for men without passes were persona non grata to the guard.

Under normal conditions my work would have been nearly finished for the night. True, there was one visit to the posts of the guard before daylight but the same shortage of officers which had made me, a first sergeant of infantry, into a more or less permanent commander of the guard, had made it highly improbable also, that either the Officer of the Day or the C. O. himself would show up.

Trusting that a combination of luck and stud-poker would keep the C. O. where he belonged, I stretched out on a bunk which I kept made up in the orderly-room, and contemplated a few hours of sleep. That was as far as I got, however, for this night of promised quiet was destined to be a busy one and from an entirely unlooked-for cause.

Halfway to dreamland, I heard the sentry at the head of the stairs call the corporal of his relief. There followed some clattering on the stairs and the arrival of the corporal, with the request of a prisoner to see the commander of the guard.

"What the hell's the matter with that bird?" I exclaimed. "Can't he wait 'til morning?"

"I don't know what's the matter," replied the corporal, "but he says he can't sleep until something is done about it."

I considered for a moment, but puzzling about it would merely serve to keep me awake, as well. The obvious solution was to send for him and get the thing off my mind.

"All right," I said. "Bring him down!"

In a few minutes the door opened again and the prisoner came in. For the purpose of this narrative, we will call him Private Blank. Private Blank was a "gar-

ri-son prisoner." In other words, a soldier serving time for a minor infraction of discipline which did not involve a dishonorable discharge nor a term in Leavenworth. As a matter of fact, Blank had gone A. W. O. L. (absent without leave) twice in succession and in addition, had become royally pickled on both occasions and had caused a bit of trouble for both the civilian and military authorities. In due course he ran afoul of a summary court and drew a ticket entitling him to the hospitality of my hotel for some little time.

"Well, Blank," I inquired, "why can't we sleep?"

Instead of answering my question directly, he began:

"Sergeant, would it be possible for me to speak with you alone?"

I motioned back the soldier with the sawed-off shotgun and closed the door. "All right," I said, "now let's get it over with."

"To begin with," he went on, "I want you to understand that during the infrequent occasions when I am sober, I make some slight pretense to being a gentleman."

I saw no reason to dispute his statement and none for agreeing, so I remained silent. After a few minutes of reflection he continued: "About two weeks ago they brought up a fellow by the name of Gol Sogg and put him in the bunk next to mine. Sogg is one of those birds you call a 'conscientious objector.' He's a big duffer with a beard clear down to his belt and he wont do a damned thing. He wont work; he wont put on a uniform; and I believe he's crazy, because half the time he wont eat. Just sits there on his bunk with an open Bible in his lap and glares at the rest of us. Then he's got another 'wont'. He wont take a bath. Now I don't care a hang whether he works or wears a uniform or eats or not, but the time has come when either that bird takes a bath or else I run your guard, buckshot and all, and find a bed in that cornfield across the road."

I SENT Blank back to bed and did some thinking. Gol Sogg's type was not new to me. We handled men from a number of religious sects who acted about the same. From one of them we drew what we had to admit were genuine conscientious objectors to the extent that they would not carry arms. but, on the other hand, they were good workers and willing to serve

in any dangerous capacity, providing they could have the privilege of being shot at without shooting back. For that type I had developed a large measure of respect but for the other—for the men of Gol Sogg's type, I had nothing but contempt.

AFTER a while I sent for a corporal, one from my own company, a big fellow with the muscles of an ox and the disposition of a schoolboy. When he came I told him to go out into the guardroom and pick out four of the strongest men he could find. "Get 'em big," I said. "I want the five of you strong enough to handle a powerful and probably angry man, without hurting him."

In a few minutes he was back again, and his search had not been in vain, for he had located a quartet of the toughest-looking specimens I had had the pleasure of meeting in many a long day.

"Now, Corporal, you go upstairs and tell that long-whiskered gentleman of leisure I want to speak with him. Go along and let's see what he says."

We didn't have long to wait before he came back and stuck his head in the doorway with the words: "Says he wont come."

"All right, Corporal, take your army and bring him down as quietly as possible."

The corporal was an old hand. Issuing a few orders to his squad, it was but a moment until they stood forth, clad in one piece of clothing contributed by Uncle Sam but mostly in that guise for which they were largely indebted to the Almighty.

Forming his weird squad in a line before my desk, the corporal gave his final directions for the attack.

"Number one on the right arm; number two on the left; three, you take the right leg, and four, the left. Now listen: you men pick him up and I'll pull the bunk from under him, then you fellows on the legs, pull them apart so I can get in between and hook my arms under his knees. Remember now, these movements are to be executed at ease. No talking and keep your feet under you."

Thinking of the black-clad minions of the Inquisition, I could not help smiling as my porous-knit brigade filed out of the room and I was still smiling when there came a violent interruption: "Halt! Who in hell are you?"

I dashed out of the room to find the corporal and his army halfway up the stairs and facing the muzzle of the sentry's

shotgun. "You guys think you can pull a nightshirt parade across my post? Where do you get that stuff anyway? Who's running this post, you or—"

"Shut up, you fool!" I broke in. "Pass these men up as they are, and out again with a prisoner."

The sentry fell back and the corporal motioned his men up and on, to the floor above. Back in the orderly-room, I listened. I heard a startled exclamation and a frenzied squeaking of casters. Padded footsteps on the floor above shook the building. There came a bumping sound on the stairs and then I saw two enormous feet coming through the door, followed by a sight calculated to make the average wild man of Borneo look like a broken-down funeral director. For the first time, Gol Sogg had obeyed an order from the War Department—but the perspiration streaming from the pores of my attacking party showed at what a cost. They stood him on his feet before my desk and then released him, but his captors still stood in a semicircle ready to grab him at the slightest warning.

"Gol Sogg," I began, "I've got some terrible news for you. So terrible, indeed, that I hardly know how to break it. I—"

"Aha! aha! aha!" he cried in a rapidly rising crescendo. "I am to be shot. I am to be a martyr. At last I am to die! For God, for God!" and he lifted the tattered Bible which he still clutched, in one hand, and waved it toward the ceiling.

NO, Gol," I said. "I'm sorry, but death is nothing to what you have to meet tonight. You are doomed to the awful terrors of a bath! The only question is whether you take it or receive it. The answer is up to you."

"To hell with the United States! To hell with your red, white and blue rag! To hell with your bath! I take *my* orders from God!"

"All right, Gol, go ahead and take your orders from God—but prepare your soul for a little soap and water from us!"

I signaled to the corporal and the fight was on again. Out through the door and the hall and along the narrow board walk to the latrine, the big fellow fought with a desperation worthy of a better cause. At last, however, he lay flat on his back on the concrete floor, while his captors knelt in a panting group on his arms and legs. Looking at the perspiration dripping from

their naked bodies, it seemed hardly worth while to turn on the water from the nozzle above.

At the expense of much ripping and tearing, they finally got his clothes off and then four of them sat back and pulled on his legs and arms while the big corporal went on with the ceremony.

A turn on the cold-water valve brought an involuntary squirm from Gol Sogg and a decided murmur of protest from the corporal's army which was receiving share and share alike with the conscientious objector. Following the water, the corporal produced a bar of yellow laundry soap which he applied from head to foot, working it in with a long-handled scrubbing brush built to scrub concrete.

RETURNING to the orderly-room, I picked up the telephone and called the barracks of my own company. The company barber was still awake and I told him to report to the guardroom with the tools of his trade. Another call located the supply sergeant of Gol Sogg's company, who happened to be a friend of mine.

"Been to bed yet, Lindly?" I asked.

"Bed! How come you get thataway? Who'd go to bed sixteen-forty ahead?"

"Sergeant," I said, "I've got a job for you. I am trying to make a soldier out of damn' poor material and I need a uniform."

"Yeah?" he replied, although somewhat reluctantly. "Yeah, I guess I can fix you out. What's his wheel-base?"

"What's his what?"

"What's his wheel-base? I mean how does he go horizontal and perpendicular?"

"Oh, I get you now. Well, he's a moose. When we brought him downstairs, he stood about six-feet-five, but he's shrinking all the time. The boys pried his shoes off and that'll cut him down an inch. They're working him over now with a floor brush and, if the fellow who sleeps next to him is right, that ought to cut off another half. Call him six-feet-four. He weighs around two and a half, net."

For a time there was silence. Lindly was evidently thinking hard.

"My gosh, I dunno. There's about one chance in a thousand I can rig him out. Had a baby elephant here the other day and we had to wire the Rock Island Arsenal for an outfit. If you'll send up your three-wheeled bathtub, I'll bring it down and see what we can do."

Returning to the latrine I found that Gol Sogg's skin was as clean as soap and water could make it. The corporal stood in the middle of the floor, holding an indescribable shirt and a pair of trousers between his thumb and forefinger. "What'll I do with them, Sarge?"

I pointed to the stove. "Empty the pockets and dump 'em in."

Gol Sogg raised his head and made a frantic attempt to free himself. "Katy!" he screamed. "Katy made those clothes and she put her very soul into them!"

"Uh-huh," grunted the unsympathetic corporal, as he jammed the garments into the stove, "and I suppose you'll be telling us in a minute that she is the one who breathed the breath of life into 'em!"

As Gol Sogg raised his head I noticed another change had come over him. Beginning at the point of his chin and extending in either direction, by the way of his ears and the top of his head, was a narrow streak of skin. It looked like a swath cut by a mowing machine in a badly tangled field of sweetclover—and even as I looked, the barber thrust the point of his clippers in under the giant's beard. In a moment I saw the points glitter in the open space which marked the position of Gol Sogg's mouth. Reaching the end of his nose, they climbed to the bridge and slid along, only to bury themselves to the hilt in the tangled mass above. When the swath in front had connected with those from the sides, the barber stood up and, cocking his head to one side, surveyed his work with the relish of a genuine artist. Turning to me he adopted a pleading tone and asked:

"Sergeant, don't you think we had better let it go at that, say for a week or so? Then if he doesn't take cold and die we can take another shot at it, an' so on until we get him out in the open, sort of by degrees?"

"No, go ahead," I said, "finish him up right now!"

An hour later Gol Sogg climbed the stairs to a freshly made bunk. His face was as smooth and pink as a baby's. His close-cropped dome gleamed white under the hall lights and from head to foot, he was clothed in the olive-drab of Uncle Sam. It was pitiful, too, in a way, for as he walked, with his head bent, I heard him murmur: "I have succumbed; I have succumbed—but only to force and to the strength of men!"



By

**Marvin
Beard, Jr.**

The Man in Car 39

Mystery has one of its most interesting manifestations in the strange events here chronicled.

WEBSTER defines it thus: "Mystery—something wholly unknown; something which has not been, or cannot be explained; specifically, that which is beyond human comprehension."

On all counts, then, the happenings I am about to relate constitute a true mystery. In my own mind there is only one explanation, and it is by no means reasonable or logical according to all accepted standards. More than that, I am convinced—I make this statement advisedly and with due regard for the vast amount of territory it covers—that there has never been a parallel case in the history of the world.

As for the truth of the story, there are

several reliable men who can and will substantiate the part which came under their observation. For the rest you must simply take my word. Realizing, however, that most people are prone to reject that which they cannot understand, I could hardly censure anyone for having serious doubts, not only of my veracity, but of my sanity as well. This, however, is beside the point. I can only relate the events as they occurred.

I am a civil engineer. In October, 1922, I accepted a position with a Florida development company. My work with this company consisted in surveying, draining, and grading lands which they owned, lying from the edge of the Everglades to the

East Coast between Miami and Palm Beach. This work kept me continually moving from place to place in the interior of Florida, living in camps a great part of the time, and often never seeing a town for weeks.

Living in this manner, it was practically impossible for my relatives to keep continually in touch with me. During this time much of my mail failed to reach me, because, hardly knowing where I would be next, I could not always leave a forwarding address.

IN December, 1923, I asked for and received a leave of absence to go home for Christmas. Naturally, having spent the last year and some months fighting palmetto scrubs, sand spurs, and rattlesnakes, I regarded my proposed vacation with a great deal of pleasurable anticipation. Could I have foreseen the fearful events into which my holiday was to plunge me, I think I would have been content to stay in Florida, drinking as a toast to the New Year the inevitable sulphur water instead of the equally inevitable eggnog of Kentucky.

From Eau Gallie, a small East Coast town, I went to Montgomery, Ala., where I spent three days transacting some business for my employers; and at five-fifty-six on the afternoon of the nineteenth of December I swung aboard Car 39 of the Crescent Limited for Kentucky.

After stowing my bags I immediately went into the smoking-room, stretched my feet across the vacant seats, lighted a cigar and proceeded to make myself comfortable. Thirty minutes later the green curtains of the smoking-room parted and a man entered. I glanced up casually—and sprang to my feet.

It was Jess Hawkins, a prominent business man of Harrisville, my home town, and a particular friend of mine.

I grasped his hand and pulled him down beside me. Remember that—I shook his hand! And after the greetings were over I began to ply him with questions. He answered my queries, both serious and frivolous, with his well-remembered bantering air; he laughed and joked; in every way he conducted himself in a perfectly normal manner.

He had been to Montgomery, he said, on business, and was stopping off at Birmingham for a couple of days before returning home for the holidays. I rather wondered, I admit, what business could

bring him so far from his insignificant establishment, but as he seemed rather reticent about that phase, I of course did not press the issue.

AT eight-thirty the train pulled into Birmingham. I shook hands with Hawkins again as he rose to go. Parting the curtains, he turned, smiled at me with a peculiar expression on his face, and said:

“If you see Will Jamieson tell him not to forget the engagement I have with him Christmas eve.”

I laughed and assured him that I would deliver the message. Because of the apparent slight embarrassment of his manner, I rather imagined the engagement which he mentioned was chiefly concerned with the fairer sex—to whose advances both Hawkins and Jamieson were notoriously susceptible. What a horrible significance those words have for me now!

I arrived at Harrisville the next evening at seven-twelve; went to my home; bathed; ate dinner; and wandering downtown entered Wessinger’s Drug-store. Several of my friends were already grouped about the red pot-bellied stove in the rear, where the inevitable game of casino was already in progress.

I was greeted hilariously. The Christmas spirit was strong in the air, and the ruddy stove added a touch of glowing live color to the red and green festoons that hang from the ceiling of every small-town drug-store at Yuletide. I offered drinks for the crowd; and in lieu of a bar the boys, with much friendly chaffing, lined up at the long fountain.

At that instant Will Jamieson blew in the door, throwing back his sheepskin-lined coat and dusting the snow from his hat by pounding it against his leg. He shook my hand and pounded me on the back boisterously. I ordered another drink; then remembering Hawkins’ request I winked at the group behind me.

“Will,” I said, “I have a message for you.”

Taking their cue from my wink, several of the crowd laughed uproariously, commenting facetiously upon his well-known reputation as a would-be Lothario.

Jamieson grinned at his tormentors.

“Yeah?” he drawled. “Well, let’s have it.”

Then, all unsuspecting, I threw the bomb.

“I saw Jess Hawkins on the train yes-

terday and he told me to tell you not to forget the date he has with you on Christmas Eve."

The laughter stopped as if it was all controlled by a switch which was suddenly thrown. All the faces in the room bore a look of ghastly, horrified surprise. Jamieson's hand stopped halfway to his mouth and trembled so that his drink was spilled. His face paled; he ran his tongue slowly over his lips.

"What a hell of a joke!" he muttered. Then, putting his glass down carefully, he walked from the room.

I was dumfounded. I could not imagine why my simple statement should cause such consternation; and as all eyes gazed at me in horror, my indignation was aroused.

"What the hell's the matter with Jamieson?" I growled. "And what's the matter with you fools?"

Eric Howard, a young doctor, walked toward me slowly, placed his hand on my arm and gazed intently into my face.

"You saw Jess Hawkins on the train yesterday?" he asked.

"I certainly did see him," I replied. "What's so strange about that?"

The doctor fiddled a moment with his watch-chain.

"It is rather strange," he said softly. "You see Jess Hawkins has been dead almost a year. He was found in his store last Christmas Eve with the top of his head blown off."

The sequel does not concern me. That is, it could not rightly be called an experience of mine, and therefore has no place in this narrative. But the story would be incomplete without it.

On Christmas morning Will Jamieson was found in his room, stretched across the floor dead, his revolver in his hand. In the wall, at about the height of a man's shoulder, were six bullet-holes so close together that the palm of your hand could cover them. The door was locked on the inside.

Now, here is the point: Jamieson was noted for his marksmanship. He was perfectly sober when last seen. It is absurd to suppose that he would shoot six times practically in the same spot without hitting what he shot at. Conclusion: the *something which he saw was not capable of being injured by bullets!*

The coroner pronounced death due to heart failure.

The Falling Business

By **Clark
Burroughs**

THE professional thrill-maker often leads a hazardous life—but the Real Experience narrated here is most extraordinary even in its author's profession.

FURNISHING thrills is my business. For several years I have been a professional stunt man for motion picture companies.

Such jobs as riding a motorcycle thirty-five miles an hour down the tracks just ahead of a passenger train, climbing the face of a Broadway skyscraper or making a flying leap from a horse to a fast-moving auto, are everyday occurrences.

Of course I occasionally get a "kick" out of a job, but I am not hankering for another experience like the one I had last April.

Fred Downs, production manager of a company putting on a Big Thrill Picture, offered me a job doing a fight on the top wing of an airplane and as a finish to be thrown off at a height of about three thousand feet. Of course I was to have a parachute pack strapped on my back, and, after leaving the camera's range, was to slip

The Falling Business



open the pack and descend nice and easy with the 'chute. Simple enough!

After we had haggled over the price for the stunt, and I had accepted about one-third of what I originally asked, we signed a contract to pull the trick the following Saturday, weather permitting.

In framing a stunt of this kind, there must be a perfect understanding between all hands before going aloft, so the director got us all together and this is the routine that was laid out for us:

The camera plane with pilot, camera and camera-man was to hit an elevation of about three thousand feet, the stunt plane keeping abreast of it, to the left and about thirty feet lower. This would give the camera a good view of us, the plane and the ground far below. When the sun was to our right the camera-man would signal with a white flag, I was to lie on the top wing and begin to shoot blank cartridges

from a revolver, over the front, supposedly trying to kill the pilot. Floyd Higgins, the observer, was to climb out and up on the wing from the rear and fall upon me; we were to roll and struggle until we were a few feet from the right end of the wing, then Floyd was to wrench the gun from me, hit me with it and I was to roll off.

As all five of us had done air stuff together before, this looked like easy money.

SATURDAY morning was bright and clear, so we took off from Hollywood about ten o'clock and winged north about thirty-five miles to Fillmore, where there were a lot of level bean-fields to land in. Then the planes began to jockey for the "shot."

Climbing out and onto the top wing, I clung there ready to "do my stuff" as soon as we got the white flag.

For the benefit of those who have never clung to the wing of an airplane three thousand feet up, I will say, there is *some* wind! In but a few minutes I was chilled through and through.

As the planes were circling, constantly elevating and were in nothing like position, I climbed down and signaled to Floyd that I was terribly cold. He handed up a large

leather coat which I put on and then climbed back onto the wing. I had no more than gotten into position when I heard the roar of the camera plane coming up and I was getting my signal to start.

Leaning over the wing and firing down I saw we had elevated until we were up about forty-five hundred feet. I mentally cursed the pilots for giving me an extra fifteen hundred feet to drop—little thinking those extra feet would soon save me from an awful bump!

After firing about three shots I felt Floyd coming up behind me and then we were messed in a fake fight, rolling over and over toward the tip of the wing, taking good care that one of us always had a good grip on the wing. In throwing my arms around Floyd I felt the parachute pack on his back, which he had strapped on for any emergency—and a horrifying realization came to me.

The leather coat was on and buttoned over my pack! I had to get that coat off *quick!* I leaned over Floyd and shouted in his ear, "Let go! Let go!" He, misunderstanding, struck at me with the gun, then gave me a shove that sent me rolling off the plane.

For an instant I was in a horrible panic, a sort of nausea came over me and I felt sick all over—then I mentally pulled myself together and thought: "I *must keep cool!* Get this coat off, boy, or it's curtains for *you!*"

All this time I was hurtling toward the ground at a furious speed, feet first with my hands over my head. I started to bring them down to unbutton the coat, but could not do so; the rush of air was so strong I could not force them down against it. Stiffening my legs, I brought them up and straightened out so I was falling on my back. Even then it took a superhuman effort to get my hands to the buttons and what an endless time it seemed before each button gave way!

After what seemed eons I got the last button loose. I tried to put my arms back to take off the coat and found I couldn't. As I was now falling on my back, the rush of air was holding the coat on me and I could not get my arms back against the pressure. Wrenching my body with all my strength, I turned on my side, then on my face. When I saw the terrific speed at which the old Earth was coming up to flatten me out, I threw back my arms and the rushing air, which was now stronger than any gale, whipped the coat from me with a *zip!* I was never so glad to get rid of anything in my life! As I finally pulled the rip-cord, it was a mighty relief to feel the parachute leave my back, for I was now scarcely a thousand feet from the ground and falling at an appalling speed.

THE 'chute opened with a crack, jerk and bound that it seemed would break every bone in my body. Then I heard reports like pistol-shots and realized my worries were not all over, by far.

The great distance of the fall had given me such a momentum that the jerk from the sudden stop was more than the 'chute could stand. Some of the cords had broken; this caused extra tension on the remaining ones and they were fast giving way, as the *crack! crack! bang!* testified.

Now, how slowly the old Earth seemed to be coming toward me and how I prayed that enough cords would hold to ease me down with only a few bones broken!

AS I hung helpless in the harness, hearing the cracking and popping of the cords breaking, that last thousand feet seemed far longer and worse than the awful fall. Then I was occupied fighting for my life—now all I had to do was worry, which I can assure you I did.

Less than eight feet from the ground the last few cords gave way easing me down in a nice soft bean-field.

I had fallen over three thousand feet, with the added weight of a parachute pack, and was still alive.

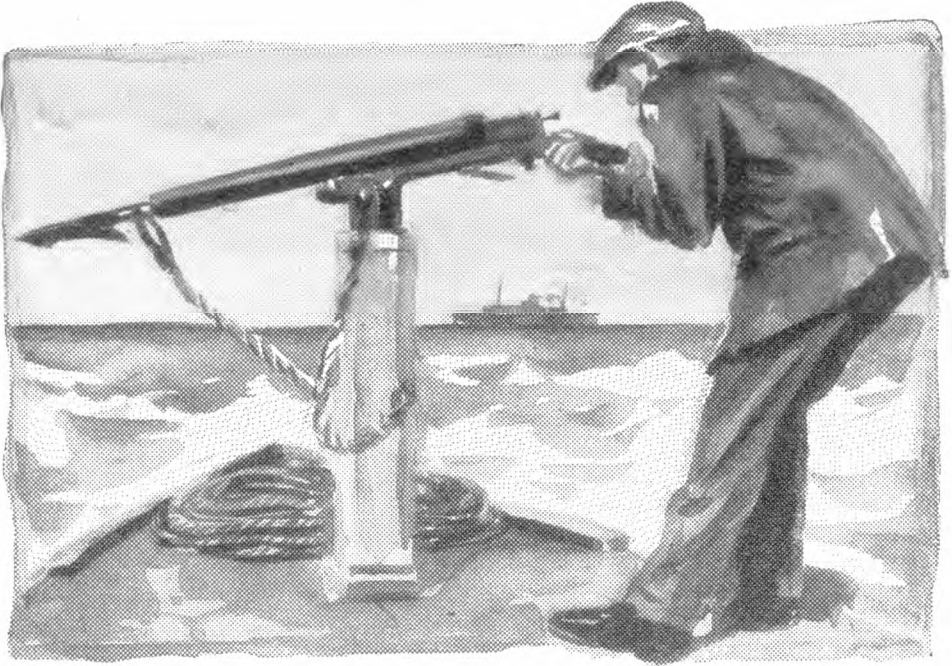
I was so exhausted from the exertion and, perhaps, from the scare also, that it was fully ten minutes before I got the parachute harness off; and on trying to stand found I was so weak I could not do so.

Fred Downs and the director had motored out to see the stunt and there they found me, sitting in the bean-field, weak, exhausted, and my teeth chattering from a nervous chill.

The first thing Fred said when they came up was: "Great! But you didn't need to fall so far. You were out of the camera long before you opened the 'chute!" I grinned feebly.

Since this time I made a fall for a news reel company, of over three thousand feet before opening the 'chute, followed down by a camera plane, the camera equipped with a telescopic lense. But on the latter occasion my pack was in constant readiness, and 'chute and cords were specially reinforced to withstand the terrific jerk when the 'chute opened.

"The Chimney of Gold," a splendid short novel of Arizona adventure by Roy Norton, who wrote "The Unknown Mr. Kent" and "Captains Three," will be a feature of the next, the May, issue.



My Whaling Voyage

By
**Ralph
Shaw**

The story of a boy who went to sea on a great sporting adventure—the pursuit of whales in the far Antarctic.

WHEN I was a boy my father used to tell me that I never would make a man of myself unless I spent a few years on the high seas. When he was a young fellow he made a few trips to Spain and France on sailing vessels, but he was always seasick and so he had to give that up, bought a farm and lived ashore.

But Mother wanted me to stay home as a good boy, and she did all she could to get me to stay. She would watch the ships in the harbor from her window lifting their anchors until they were out of sight. She often said: "I wonder if that ship will ever return!" And then I could see the tears in her eyes, wondering if she would ever see her boy going out of sight on one of those coffins, as she sometimes used to call those ships. She had lost her brother several years before, on a ship that went on a rock about three miles from her door; and so she begged me time after time to stay.

But I could never promise her, as I always thought of those words that my father used. For I thought on every ship there was nothing else but fun and play; so I made my mind up to try what my Dad wanted me to do. I got a job as deck-boy on a Norwegian tramp steamer bound for Norway.

I signed on, and everything was all set, but I didn't feel so very good after I had done this, knowing that I had done it against my mother's wish, and to think that I now would be among strange people. When I got home, I broke the news to her, and I could see the tears in her eyes as she said: "Well, my boy, do what you think is best."

So I packed my clothes and said good-by to Dad and my Mother. She said: "Be careful, my boy—good-by."

I soon got on board; then we lifted the anchor, and the hard-looking captain on the bridge turned the telegraph on "Full Speed Ahead."

While I didn't understand much of their lingo, they treated me pretty fair, and kept me so busy chipping rust all day that I slept well all night.

AFTER a month we reached a little town in Norway called Sandefjord; it was a great place for whale-fishing boats. I came in contact with some of these whaling-men, and I left my ship and signed on a six-thousand-ton whaling ship, and left that little town the first part of September, accompanied by three steel hundred-foot steam whaleboats, which were to be used for catching the whales, and tow them in to the big ship. Each one of these carried ten men; their speed was fifteen knots, and the big whaler carried ninety-eight men, and her speed was twelve knots.

Our first stop was Cardiff, England, where we loaded the ship with coal, enough to last us for eight months. While in Cardiff one of our men wanted to run away; a colored man was on the dock with horse and buggy ready to take the man away, and he just got in the buggy when the mate caught him. He pointed the pistol at him and made him go back on board.

When we reached the equator, the water was like a mirror. The engines were slowed down to half-speed; the whistle was blowing, and the bell was ringing; many of us didn't know what was going to happen, but we soon found it out. The boatswain came forward shouting: "All hands on quarterdeck!" Then we found out that every man that hadn't passed the Line before was going to get shaved, and that something else would follow.

Some of us got scared, and we went and tried to hide ourselves; but we were soon brought back on the quarterdeck by some of the men that were dressed like policemen. Then we sure got it! One of the crew was rigged out something like Santa Claus—he was the *Neptune* and had a paper in his hand, and then he started to read to us: "I am Neptune, king of the seas," and so forth. Some of us greenhorns really thought that he came out of the water.

After he had read to us, he ordered the policemen to give all of us that hadn't crossed the Line before a shave, and he found out that there were twenty-one of us. First they put us in the chair, and smeared our faces with a mixture of paint, coffee-grounds and grease, then scraped it off with a big wooden knife. Then they

put the fire-hose on us, and the last thing they threw us in a big water-tank on deck. When the fun was over, we all had a good laugh. The captain gave us all a drink, a cigar and an orange.

We anchored at Falkland Island for about a week. The island was covered with birds, sea-lions and sheep. While the sea-lions were lying on the rocks taking a sun-bath I got as close as ten feet from them. I knew they couldn't move fast on the shore, but they made an awful noise, enough to scare anybody. We caught a baby lion with a piece of rope, took her on board and kept her in a tank of water, but she lived only two weeks.

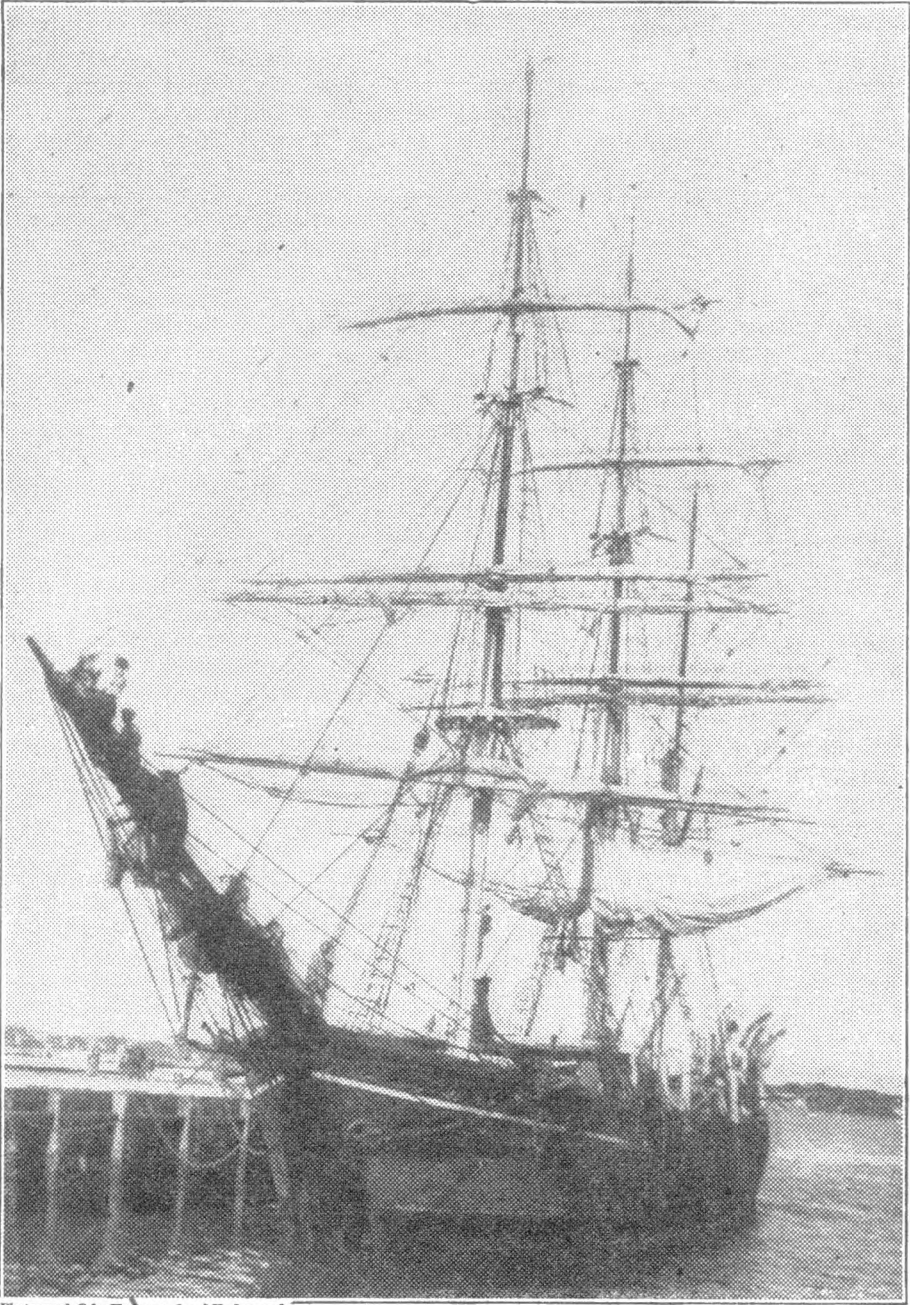
This was our last place to get provisions and mail for six months, so we bought a hundred head of sheep; then we lifted anchor, and full speed for South Shetland Island, our fishing-ground.

A FEW days out, we got in a northeast gale, and the ship was covered with ice; I was trying to be brave, but the sea that came over the rail threw me down twice, and broke up our port lifeboat. But fortunately the storm did not last long.

Shortly after the storm was over, we got a signal from one of our whaleboats that they were running short of coal and that they were using the last pieces of wood they could find for firing; so we had to coal her while running. We passed eighteen icebergs in eight days, but we were lucky enough to go clear of them all.

We saw several big whales blowing here and there. Finally we reached our "fishing-ground," which was a strange-looking place: where we entered was a narrow space about a hundred and fifty feet wide, with snow-covered mountains on both sides, but when we got through there, we were in a pretty good harbor with about ninety fathoms of water—but a very offensive odor, as the shore was covered with skeletons. No people lived there; there were no trees—only birds, seals, snow and ice.

Now we were ready for "fishing," and our three whaleboats were ordered out to shoot whales. Every whaleboat man got a certain amount of money for every whale that was caught, but the men on the big ship got a certain amount of money for every barrel of oil, from one cent up to five cents. When looking for whales there was always a man on the lookout in the mast, and when he saw a whale, he would shout: "Whale in sight!"



Photograph © by Underwood and Underwood

The last of the old-time whaling ships, the *Wanderer*

When they had got close to the whale and the gunner thought he could get him, he was relieved from the wheel, and went to the gun ready for business. Soon we would hear "*Bang!*" then some one would yell: "Fast fish—all hands on deck!" As soon as the whale was hit, he would dive and stay under for quite a while; then we had to watch very closely the line that

was fastened to the harpoon that was in the whale, so that he wouldn't come up on the ship's side, as he might turn the boat over.

One time the whale struck our boat on the side and bent the steel railing and part of the bridge. We had to keep on playing with him, heaving in and slacking out on the line till we finally got him dead.

Then we took him alongside, cut a small hole in him and pumped him up with air to keep him from sinking. Next we towed him in to the big ship and made him fast alongside. Then three men were put in a flat-bottom boat with big knives something like scythes, only they were sharpened on the opposite side, and with long wooden handles.

They would cut the outside part of the whale in long narrow pieces; then it was taken on board and went through a machine which cut it in small pieces, and from there it went in the boilers for twelve hours' boiling. Then the oil was pumped in big tanks, and the remainder was let overboard. We had special boilers for getting the oil out of the bones.

After a few weeks the ship was covered with oil and grease, and every man had to wear oilskins all the time while working.

The largest whale that we caught was a blue whale one hundred and ten feet long; it contained about sixty barrels of oil.

THE hundred head of sheep that we bought in Falkland Island were buried in the snow to preserve them, and that was about all we had to eat in those six months, and we had to melt snow to get water to drink. Two of our men died there; one got killed from a falling boom, and we buried him in the snow. The captain's wife on one of our boats made a wreath of rope and placed it over the grave, as there were no flowers there; the other man was a captain and gunner; he was embalmed by the ship's physician and was kept in a canvas tent ashore on the snow till the ship left. Then he was taken home. He had been at the gun ready to shoot a whale when all of a sudden a small iceberg came right under her bow and caused a great wave to go over the ship, and the wave threw the captain against the steam winch, killing him.

On November the 16th at five P. M. eight of us boys went ashore in a lifeboat to pick some penguin eggs, which are about three times as big as hen eggs. The penguins dug their holes under some big rocks, and under some shallow places at the foot of the mountains where the snow never reached. We picked eight buckets full in two hours. I killed a big seal, and had planned to bring the fur to Mother, but we soon forgot the fur, eggs, and everything, because when we reached our little boat, she was sunk. It was blowing a gale, also snowing, so we could not see our ship.

Soon the hours seemed like days as we were tramping in the snow to keep ourselves from freezing to death. We found some pieces of boards on the beach, and that's what we used to keep us alive shoveling snow. We all were soaked to the skin. Next morning at five o'clock a launch was sent from the ship to pick us up, and we sure were glad to see it, as it was still blowing and snowing. We reached our ship at nine o'clock, and the mate was very angry for our not getting on board in time to go to work, and for punishment he put us all in the coal bunker shoveling coal.

After a time, the whales got scarce around the place where we were, so we lifted anchor and went to another place. There was nothing here but straight walls of ice all around us—no one could ever climb those walls and get ashore, so we had to keep up steam at all times in case of icebergs drifting in on us. And one did, a small one about two hundred feet long and about twenty feet high. It slid along our side and broke up our port lifeboats and gangway, so that we had to go back to the place where we came from. We stayed there another month; then we lifted anchor and—full speed ahead, homeward bound, with seventeen thousand barrels of whale-oil!

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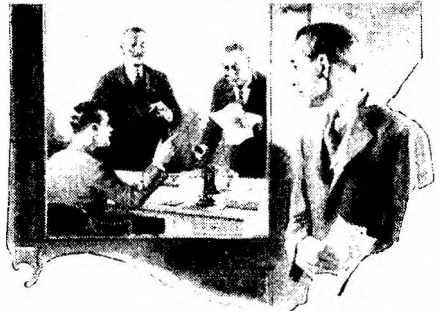


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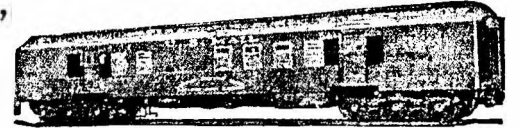


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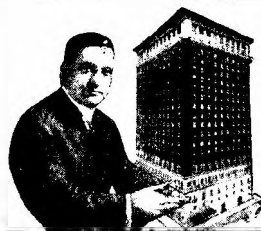
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