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APRIL 1930

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

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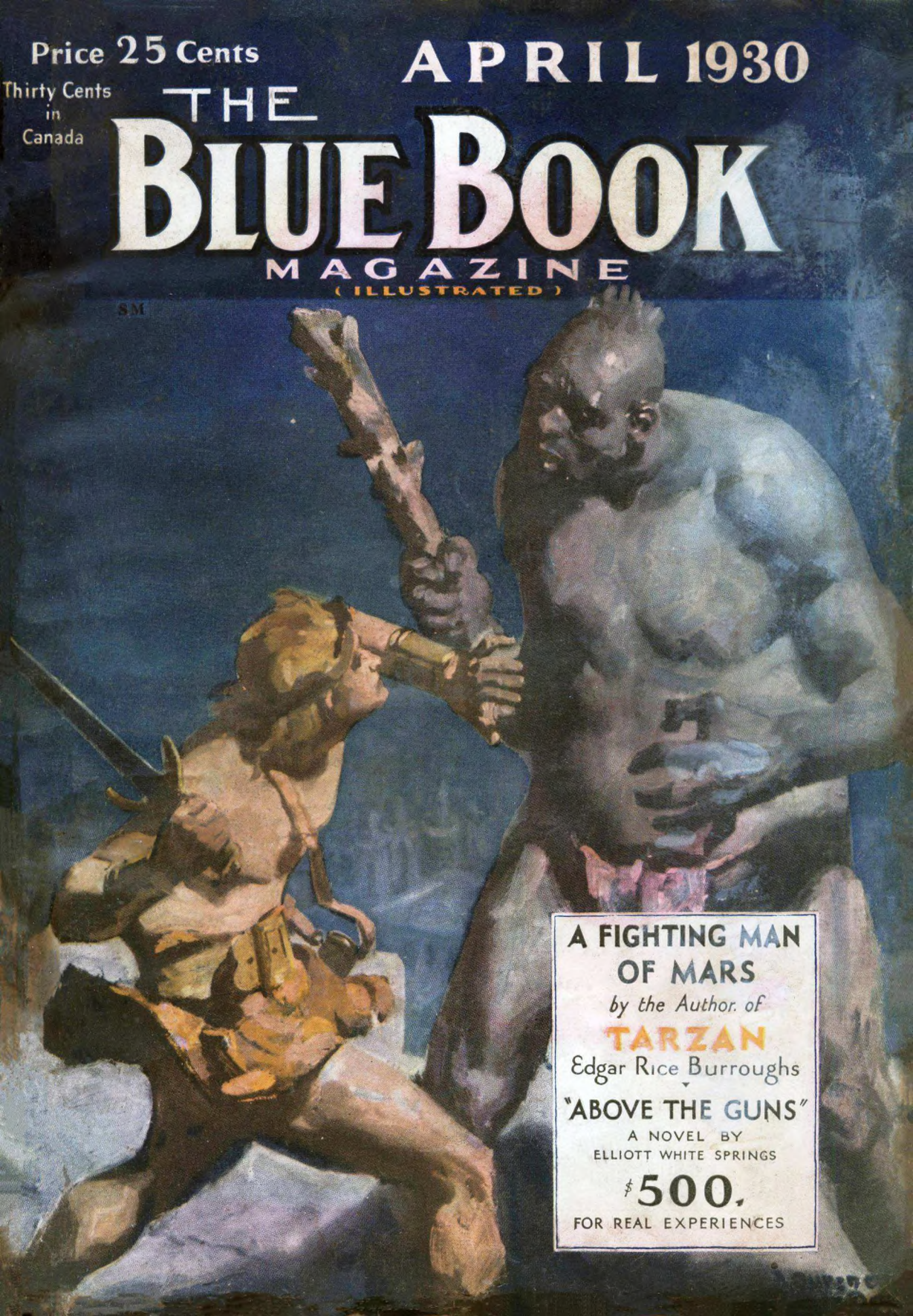

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by the Author of
TARZAN
Edgar Rice Burroughs

"ABOVE THE GUNS"
A NOVEL BY
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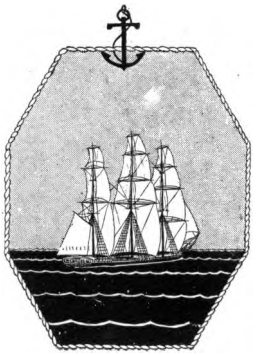

"Deep Water Men"

By Stephen Hopkins Orcutt

THE eternal glamour and mystery of old Ocean is by no means gone in this day of Diesel engines; nor has drama departed from the lives of seafaring men—as this series of splendid sea-stories well attests. Mr. Orcutt has spent many years at sea and many more in developing his notable skill as a writer of fiction. The first of this vivid series is, "The Sinking of the *Rangoon City*."

"Say It with Clubs"

By Bertram Atkey

IN this issue "Back to Babylon" introduces you to a gentleman marvelously enabled to return, for fortunately brief periods, to former incarnations. But his power involves serious risks: he never knows whether he will become, temporarily, a toad or a tiger, a slave or an emperor. But always in his leap back to less civilized times, he finds life tremendously exciting. And you who follow his amazing venture in "Say It With Clubs" may be assured of a most amusing half-hour.

"Raffling Romeos"

By Arthur K. Akers

"TO paraphrase one of the better-known negro spirituals, Napoleon Nash was beefing all over God's heaven. Napoleon was a small darky with a big grievance. Like his illustrious prototype, Napoleon's trouble was women. A friend inquired: 'Who done step on yo' face, 'Poleon? Yo' mouth all hangin' down open like a coal-hole!' " Napoleon explained; thereby hangs one of the funniest stories even Arthur Akers ever wrote. And that is saying a lot. Be sure to read it and the many other good things by,

Edgar Rice Burroughs, Frederick Bechdolt, Seven Anderton, Clarence Herbert New and other noted writers, all in the next, the May, issue of—

The Blue Book Magazine

The McCall Company, Publisher, 230 Park Avenue, New York

LOW PAY.. LONG HOURS.. ROUTINE.. NO FUTURE

Always worrying over money. Always skimping and economizing—going without the comforts and luxuries that every man DESERVES for his family and himself.

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WHEN a man who has been struggling along at a low-pay job suddenly steps out and commences to earn real money—$5,000, $7,500 or $10,000 a year—he usually gives his friends quite a shock. It's hard for them to believe he is the same man they used to know—but such things happen much more frequently than most people realize. Not only one, but HUNDREDS have altered the whole course of their lives after reading the amazing book illustrated at the right.

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National Salesmen's Training Assn., Dept. D-32, N. S. T. A. Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

Without cost or obligation you may send me your free book, "The Key to Master Salesmanship."

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Address .....

City ..... State .....

Age ..... Occupation .....

THE BLUE BOOK

APRIL, 1930

Cover Design: Painted by Laurence Herndon to illustrate "A Fighting Man of Mars."

Three Remarkable Serials

A Fighting Man of Mars By Edgar Rice Burroughs 6
Wherein the most daring imagination writing today takes you through breath-taking adventures on another inhabited planet. (Illustrated by Frank Hoban.)

Above the Guns By Elliott White Springs 62
One of America's foremost aces and best-liked writers tells of another combat pilot—his training, his patrols, his battles. (Illustrated by Clayton Knight.)

The Hazardous Highway By Frederick R. Bechdolt 116
Swift action and continual surprise enliven this picturesque romance of old California. (Illustrated by W. O. Kling.)

Spirited Short Stories

Ebon Joan By Ewing Walker 31
A delightful story of Kentucky and Kentuckians—and of a horse that ran a good race. (Illustrated by Lee Townsend.)

The Wreck of the Sea Gull By L. Patrick Greene 40
Strange events in the South Seas culminate in an under-water drama that is interesting indeed. (Illustrated by Otto Hake.)

Back to Babylon By Bertram Atkey 53
A London novelist is marvelously and amusingly enabled to jump back to his job at the court of Queen Semiramis. (Illustrated by Everett Lowry.)

Fishy Finance By Arthur K. Akers 85
An Afro-American money-lender suffers for his sins and adds to the gayety of the nation. (Illustrated by Everett Lowry.)

Conversation By J. Frank Davis 94
A brief but very tense little drama wherein the right words are said at the right time.

By Desert Law By Roy Norton 97
The noted author of "The Vanishing Fleets," "Drowned Gold" and other noted novels tells a captivating story of the Sahara. (Illustrated by Frank Hoban.)

The Killer By Henry Gore 108
The author of this unusual story knows a lot about the box-fighting game and writes with real power. (Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson.)

THE McCALL COMPANY, Publisher, The Blue Book Magazine

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MAGAZINE

Vol. 50, No. 6

Special Notice to Writers and Artists: Manuscripts and art material submitted for publication in The Blue Book Magazine will only be received on the understanding that the publisher and editors shall not be responsible for loss or injury thereto while such manuscripts or art material are in the publisher's possession or in transit.

Special Note: Each issue of The Blue Book Magazine is copyrighted. Any republication of the matter appearing in the magazine, either wholly or in part, is not permitted except by special authorization.

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The Path of Famine By Henry C. Wolfe 196
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George Allan England

This old favorite BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE writer—remember "Bennington's Babes" and the Pod Bender stories?—has completed a group of specially joyous stories for you. The first of these describes the surprising events which accompanied the meeting of a simple citizen of Maine with a pair of confidence men, and will appear in our next issue under the title—

"Mamma Told Me"

Your Next Raise —

Will it be a small one—grudgingly given? Or a big one, made unasked, because the firm wants to keep you satisfied?

You can compel the raise you want—fairly and squarely

When and Why?

YOU don't start home nights with your eyes closed—stumbling and groping—and expect to get there.

Then why are you stumbling blindly along, hoping and waiting for your next raise, praying that it may be more than a few dollars a week and knowing you'll probably be disappointed.

Common sense—your own experience—tells you that while modest raises may be given for loyalty and long service, the *big* ones come only as rewards for *increased ability*—greater value to your employer.

What's the answer?—It's simple if you're serious.

If you want to get to the place where salaries are substantial and raises come unasked instead of as a form of business charity, you must prepare. You must make yourself an unusual man—you must *train* yourself out of the masses into the classes.

Look—if you want to know *exactly* what we mean—here are three cases. There are over fifty thousand in our files.

What Home-Study Training Did for a College Man

He had a college education, but he had not been able to climb higher than a mechanic's job in a little Ohio garage—working long hours for a pittance—until he learned three years ago from a LaSalle representative about our home-study training in Modern Salesmanship.

Two years later, he was manager and his pay check was large in proportion.

"Fired" Into a Bigger Job

You would have thought that when paved roads and motor trucks wrought havoc with the freight business of this western electric railway, our graduate—then in charge as Traffic Manager—would have found himself out of a job.

And he might have—but for the fact that his training with LaSalle in Traffic Management had made him so valuable as an executive that he was retained in a different capacity and steadily promoted.

"Good-Bye, Bench, I'm Superintendent Now"

"A year ago the third of March, I was a tool and metal pattern maker. I was that day made a foreman, and soon afterward I took up LaSalle training in Industrial Management. On May 24 of the following year—due largely to the application of the efficiency principles laid down in your training—I was made superintendent of the factory. During this time I made a reduction in my department overhead of about 6 per cent and an actual labor-cost reduction of 25 per cent."

So writes another LaSalle member after only 15 months of spare-time study.

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You probably are saying right now, "But aren't those exceptional cases?" The best answer to that question is to give actual facts.

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Would you like to know more about the special training LaSalle offers in the field you'd like to be in, about the way you can fit it into your evenings and apply it in your daily work? The coupon below, filled out and mailed, will bring you this detailed information, without cost or obligation, quickly and in interesting form.

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- ☐ Effective Speaking
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- ☐ Paper Salesman's Training
- ☐ Law—Degree of LL. B.
- ☐ Commercial Law
- ☐ Credit and Collection Correspondence
- ☐ Industrial Management
- ☐ Modern Foremanship
- ☐ Personnel Management
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- ☐ Stenography—Stenotypy
- ☐ Railway Accounting

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Present Position.....

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THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE
Vol. 50 APRIL, 1930 No. 6

New Worlds to Conquer

FACT follows fancy. We imagine things before we know them to be true. Only in this way are discoveries and inventions made.

Our imaginations, of course, are often in error—and often singularly close to truth. Columbus sought India in his westward voyages, and went to his grave believing he had found it; but his imagined spherical world was none the less true.

Jules Verne imagined the submarine; and it has come true. Most of us remember our delight when Kipling's "With the Night Mail" was first published. Already that has come true. As regards the immediate world, indeed, the more obvious facts have been pretty well demonstrated—the Poles have been discovered; desert and jungle and even the deep-sea floor has been mapped and measured and photographed. And so our fancy now joins Alexander in longing for more worlds to conquer. . . . .

These longed-for worlds are ours for the conquering, of course, a myriad of them, as anyone who considers the sky at evening must realize. Will they then be conquered? Who knows? Who, a hundred years ago, would have believed we could ever fly, or talk from London to New York?

Meanwhile, we have begun to imagine what life may be like on another inhabited planet. And the Jules Verne of our own day, Edgar Rice Burroughs, has employed his unique creative imagination to write for you a story of life on Mars. Fascinating as this story is, it is probably, in detail, far from the truth of the matter; but in view of the facts that have followed fancy in our own short lifetimes, who shall say it is not close to the truth in essentials?

Fascinating, at any rate, this novel certainly is, as you who have read Mr. Burroughs' extraordinary stories of Tarzan and life in Pellucidar confidently expect. Its charm, moreover, increases with every page, as you become more familiar with the bizarre background and novel situation; you may anticipate, in other words, even greater pleasure from the succeeding installments.

So too, indeed, Elliott White Springs' vivid biography of another American combat pilot, "Above the Guns," well sustains its power in the second installment, in our forthcoming May issue; and the climax of Frederick Bechdolt's stirring novel of old California, in that same May number, is something no lover of the best in fiction should miss.

The first of a fine new series, "Deep Water Men," by Stephen Hopkins Orcutt, will take you through lively adventures as they still occur on the high seas in this year 1930. "Murder for Sale," a thrill-filled mystery novelette by Seven Anderton, who wrote "Six Bombs" and "Three Who Would Hang," will likewise delight you. And many other good things will make the May issue a special joy.

—*The Editor.*

The distinguished author of "Tarzan at the Earth's Core" and many other famous novels here offers you a veritable masterpiece of creative imagination—a fascinating story of adventure among the amazing people of another inhabited planet.

By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

A FIGHTING MAN

TO Jason Gridley of Tarzana, discoverer of the Gridley Wave, belonged the credit of establishing radio communication between Pellucidar and the outer world.

It was my good fortune to be much in his laboratory while he was carrying on his experiments, and to be also the recipient of his confidences, so that I was fully aware that while he hoped to establish communication with Pellucidar he was also reaching out toward an even more stupendous accomplishment: he was groping through space for contact with another planet; nor did he attempt to deny that the present goal of his ambition was radio communication with Mars.

Gridley had constructed a simple automatic device for broadcasting signals intermittently and for recording whatever might be received during his absence.

For a period of five minutes the Gridley Wave carried a simple code signal consisting of two letters, "*J. G.*," into the ether, following which there was a pause of ten minutes. Hour after hour, day after day, week after week, these silent, invisible messengers sped out to the uttermost reaches of infinite space, and after Jason Gridley left Tarzana to embark upon his expedition to Pellucidar, I found myself drawn to his laboratory by the lure of the tantalizing possibilities of his dream, as well as by the promise I had made him that I would look in occasionally to see that the device was functioning properly and to examine the recording instruments for any indication that the signals had been received.

My considerable association with Gridley had given me a fair working knowledge of his devices and sufficient knowledge of the Morse Code to enable me to receive with moderate accuracy and speed.

MONTHS passed; dust accumulated thickly upon everything except the working parts of Gridley's device, and the white ribbon of ticker tape that was to receive an answering signal retained its virgin purity; then I went away for a short trip.

I was absent for about ten days, and upon my return one of the first things with which I concerned myself was an inspection of Gridley's laboratory and the instru-

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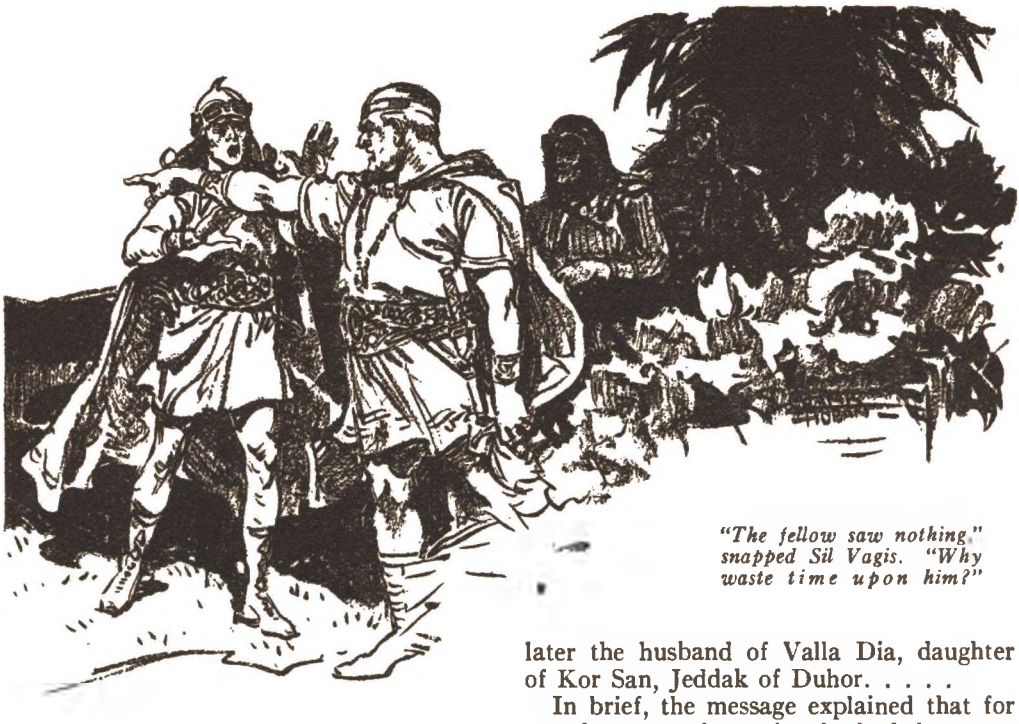


"The fellow saw nothing," snapped Sil Vagis. "Why waste time upon him?"

OF MARS

ments he had left in my care. As I entered the familiar room and switched on the lights, it was with the expectation of meeting with the same blank unresponsiveness.

As a matter of fact, hope of success had never been raised to any considerable degree in my breast; nor had Gridley been oversanguine—this was only an experiment he considered it well worth while to make.

It was, therefore, with feelings of astonishment that assumed the magnitude of a distinct shock that I saw upon the ticker tape the familiar tracings which stand for the dots and dashes of code.

Of course I realized that some other researcher might have duplicated Jason's discovery of the Gridley Wave, and that the message might have originated upon earth; or, again, it might be a message from Jason himself in Pellucidar. But when I had deciphered it, all doubts were quickly put to rest. It was from Ulysses Paxton, one-time captain, —th U. S. Infantry, who, miraculously transported from a battlefield in France to the bosom of the great Red Planet, had become the right-hand man of Ras Thavas, the master mind of Mars, and later the husband of Valla Dia, daughter of Kor San, Jeddak of Duhor. . . . .

In brief, the message explained that for months mysterious signals had been received at Helium, and while they were unable to interpret them, they felt that they came from Jasoom, the name by which the planet Earth is known upon Mars.

John Carter being absent from Helium, a fast flyer had been dispatched to Duhor bearing an urgent request to Paxton to come at once to the twin cities and endeavor to determine if in truth the signals they were receiving actually originated upon the planet of his birth.

Upon his arrival at Helium, Paxton immediately recognized the Morse Code signals, and no doubt was left in the minds of the Martian scientists that at last something tangible had been accomplished toward the solution of inter-communication between Jasoom and Barsoom.

Repeated attempts to transmit answering signals to Earth proved fruitless; then the best minds of Helium began the task of analyzing and reproducing the Gridley Wave.

They felt that at last they had succeeded. Paxton had sent his message and they were eagerly awaiting an acknowledgment.

I have since been in almost constant communication with Mars, but out of loyalty to Jason Gridley, to whom all the credit and honor are due, I have made no official announcement; nor shall I give out any important information, leaving all that for his return to the outer world; but I believe that I am betraying no confidence if I nar-

rate to you the interesting story of Hadron of Hastor, which Paxton told me one evening not long since. I hope that you will enjoy it as much as I did.

BEFORE I go on with the story a brief description of the principal races upon Mars, their political and military organization and some of their customs may prove of interest to many of my readers. The dominant race in whose hands rest the progress and civilization—yes, the very life—of Mars differ but little in physical appearance from ourselves. The fact that their skins are a light reddish copper color and that they are oviparous constitute the two most marked divergences from Anglo-Saxon standards. No, there is another—their longevity. A thousand years is the natural span of life of a Martian, although because of their warlike activities and the prevalence of assassination among them, few live their allotted span.

Their general political organization has changed little in countless ages, the unit still being the tribe, at the head of which is a chief or *jed*, corresponding in modern times to our king. The princes are known as lesser jeds, while the chief of chiefs, or the head of consolidated tribes, is the *jeddak*, or emperor, whose consort is a *jeddara*.

While the majority of red Martians live in walled cities, many reside in isolated—though walled and defended—farm homes along those rich irrigated ribbons of land that we of earth know as the Canals of Mars.

In the far south, that is, in the south polar region, dwells a race of very handsome and highly intelligent black men. There also is the remnant of a white race; the north polar regions are dominated by a race of yellow men.

In between the two poles and scattered over all the arid waste lands of the dead sea bottoms, often inhabiting the ruined cities of another age, are the feared green hordes of Mars. The terrible green warriors of Barsoom are the hereditary enemies of all the other races of this martial planet. They are of heroic size, and in addition to being equipped with two legs and two arms apiece, they have an intermediary pair of limbs, which may be used at will either as arms or legs. Their eyes are set at the extreme sides of their heads, a trifle above the center. The iris of the eyes is red, as in albinos, while the pupil is dark. The eyeball itself is very white, as are the teeth; and it is these latter which add a most ferocious appearance to an otherwise fearsome and terrible countenance, as the lower tusks curve upward to sharp points which end about where the eyes of earthly human beings are located.

They are a cruel and taciturn people, entirely devoid of love, sympathy or pity.

They are an equestrian race, never walking other than to move about their camps. Their mounts, called thoats, are great savage beasts, whose proportions harmonize with those of their giant masters. They have eight legs, a broad flat tail larger at the tip than at the root, which they hold straight out while running.

Like the red men, the green hordes are ruled by *jeds* and *jeddaks*, but their military organization is not carried to the same detail of perfection as is that of the red men.

The military forces of the red men are highly organized, the principal arm of the service being the air navy, an enormous air force of battleships, cruisers and an infinite variety of lesser craft down to one-man scout flyers. Next in size and importance is the infantry branch of the service, while the cavalry, mounted on a breed of small thoats, similar to those used by the green Martian giants, is utilized principally in patrolling the avenues of the cities and the rural districts that border the irrigating systems.

The principal basic unit, although not the smallest one of the military organization, is a *utan*, consisting of one hundred men, which is commanded by a *dwar* with several *padwars* or lieutenants junior to him. An *odwar* commands a umak of ten thousand men, while next above him is a *jedwar*, who is junior only to the jed or king.

Science, literature, art and architecture are in some of their departments further advanced upon Mars than upon Earth, which is quite remarkable when one considers the constant battle for survival which is the most marked characteristic of life upon Barsoom. Not only are they waging a continual battle against Nature, which is slowly diminishing their already scant atmosphere, but from birth to death they are constantly faced by the stern necessity of defending themselves against enemy nations of their own race and the great hordes of roving green warriors of the dead sea bottom; while within the walls of their own cities are countless professional assassins, whose calling is so well recognized that in some localities they are organized into guilds.

But notwithstanding all the grim realities with which they have to contend, the red Martians are a happy, social people. They have their games, their dances and their songs, and the social life of a great capital of Barsoom is as gay and magnificent as any that may be found in the rich capitals of Earth. That they are a brave, noble and generous people is indicated by the fact that neither John Carter nor Ulysses Paxton would return to Earth if they might.

And now to return to the tale that I received from Ulysses Paxton across forty-three million miles of space.

CHAPTER II

Sanoma Tora

THIS is the story of Hadron of Hastor, Fighting Man of Mars, as narrated by him to Ulysses Paxton:

I am Tan Hadron of Hastor; my father was Had Urtur, odwar of the 1st Umak of the Troops of Hastor. He commands the largest ship of war that Hastor has ever contributed to the navy of Helium, accommodating as it does the entire ten thousand men of the 1st Umak, together with five hundred lesser fighting ships and all the paraphernalia of war. My mother is a princess of Gathol.

As a family we are not rich except in honor; and valuing this above all mundane possessions, I chose the profession of my father rather than a more profitable career. And the better to further my ambition, I came to the capital of the empire of Helium and took service in the troops of Tardos Mors, Jeddak of Helium, that I might be nearer the great John Carter, War Lord of Mars.

My life in Helium and my career in the army were similar to those of hundreds of other young men. I passed through my training days without notable accomplishment, neither heading nor trailing my fellows, and in due course I was made a padwar in the 91st Umak, being assigned to the 5th Utan of the 11th Dar.

What with being of noble lineage by my father and inheriting royal blood from my mother, the palaces of the twin cities of Helium were always open to me, and I entered much into the gay life of the capital and it was thus that I met Sanoma Tora, daughter of Tor Hatan, odwar of the 91st Umak, to which I was attached.

Tor Hatan is only of the lower nobility, but he is fabulously rich from the loot of many cities well invested in rich farm land and mines, and because here in the capital of Helium riches count for more than they do in Hastor, Tor Hatan is a powerful man, whose influence reaches even to the throne of the Jeddak.

Never shall I forget the occasion upon which I first laid eyes upon Sanoma Tora. It was upon the occasion of a great feast at the marble palace of the War Lord. There were gathered under one roof the most beautiful women of Barsoom, where notwithstanding the gorgeous and radiant beauty of Dejah Thoris, Tara of Helium and Thuvia of Ptarth, the pulchritude of Sanoma Tora was such as to arrest attention. I shall not say that it was greater than that of those acknowledged queens of Barsoomian loveliness, for I know that my adoration of Sanoma Tora might easily influence my judgment, but there were others there who remarked her gorgeous beauty which differs from that of Dejah Thoris as the chaste beauty of a polar landscape differs from the beauty of the tropics.

WHEN at my solicitation I was presented to her, she glanced first at the insignia upon my armor and noting therefrom that I was but a padwar, she vouched me but a condescending word and turned her attention again to the dwar with whom she had been conversing.

I must admit that I was piqued and yet it was, indeed, the contumelious treatment she accorded me that fixed my determination to win her, for the goal most difficult of attainment has always seemed to me the most desirable, and so it was I fell in love with the daughter of my commander.

For a long time I found it difficult to further my suit in the slightest degree; in fact I did not even see Sanoma Tora for several months after our first meeting, since when she found that I was poor as well as low in rank I found it impossible to gain an invitation to her home and it chanced that I did not meet her elsewhere for a long time—but the more inaccessible she became the more I loved her, until every waking moment of my time that was not actually occupied by the performance of my military duties was devoted to the devising of new and ever increasingly rash plans to possess her. I even had the madness to consider abducting her, and I believe that I might eventually have gone this far had there been no other way in

which I could see her; but about this time a fellow officer of the 91st, in fact, the dwar of the Utan to which I was attached, took pity on me and obtained for me an invitation to a feast in the palace of Tor Hatan.

My host, who was also my commanding officer, had never noticed me before this evening and I was surprised to note the warmth and cordiality of his greetings.

"We must see more of you here, Hadron of Hastor," he had said. "I have been watching you and I prophesy that you will go far in the military service of the Jeddak."

NOW I knew he was lying when he said that he had been watching me, for Tor Hatan was notoriously lax in his duties as a commanding officer, all of which were performed by the senior teedwar of the Umak. While I could not fathom the cause of this sudden interest in me, it was nevertheless very pleasing, since through it I might in some degree further my pursuit of the heart and hand of Sanoma Tora.

Sanoma Tora herself was slightly more cordial than upon the occasion of our first meeting, though she noticeably paid more attention to Sil Vagis than she did to me.

Now if there is any man in Helium whom I particularly detest more than another it is Sil Vagis, a nasty little snob who holds the title of teedwar, though in so far as I was ever able to ascertain he commands no troops, but is merely on the staff of Tor Hatan—principally, I presume, because of the great wealth of his father.

Such creatures we have to put up with in times of peace, but when war comes it is the fighting men who rank, and riches do not count.

But I left the palace of Tor Hatan that night with a feeling of elation for I had Sanoma Tora's permission to see her again in her father's home whenever my duties would permit me to pay my respects to her.

Returning to my quarters I was accompanied by my friend the dwar, and when I commented on the warmth of Tor Hatan's reception of me he laughed.

"You find it amusing," I said. "Why?"

"Tor Hatan, as you know," he said, "is very rich and powerful, and yet it is seldom, as you may have noticed, that he is invited to any one of the four places in Helium that ambitious men most crave to be seen."

"You mean the palaces of the War Lord, the Jeddak, the Jed and the Carthoris?" I asked.

"Of course," he replied. "What other four in Helium count for so much as these? Tor Hatan," he continued, "is supposed to come from the lower nobility, but there is a question in my mind as to whether there is a drop of noble blood in his veins, and one of the facts upon which I base my conjecture is his cringing and fawning reverence for anything pertaining to royalty—he would give his fat soul to be considered an intimate of any one of the four."

"But what has that to do with me?"

"A great deal," he replied; "in fact, because of it you were invited to his palace tonight."

"I do not understand," I said.

"I chanced to be talking with Tor Hatan the morning of the day you received your invitation and in the course of our conversation I mentioned you. He had never heard of you and as a padwar in the 5th Utan you aroused his interest not a particle, but when I told him that your mother was a princess of Gathol, he pricked up his ears and when he learned that you were received as a friend and equal in the palaces of the four demigods of Helium, he became almost enthusiastic about you. Now do you understand?"

"Perfectly," I replied, "but none the less, I thank you. All that I wanted was the opportunity and inasmuch as I was prepared to achieve it criminally if necessary, I cannot quibble over any means that were employed to obtain it, however unflattering they may be to me."

FOR months I haunted the palace of Tor Hatan and being naturally a good conversationalist and well schooled in the stately dances and joyous games of Barsoom, I was by no means an unwelcome visitor; also I made it a point often to take Sanoma Tora to one or another of the four great palaces of Helium, where I was always welcome because of the blood-relationship which existed between my mother and Gahan of Gathol, who had married Tara of Helium.

Naturally I felt that I was progressing well with my suit, but my progress was not fast enough to keep pace with the racing desires of my passion. Never had I known love before and I felt that I should die if I did not soon possess Sanoma Tora; and so it was that upon a certain night I visited the palace of her father definitely determined to lay my heart and sword at her feet before I left and although the natural complexes of a lover convinced me that I

"Even if I returned your love I am not for you, Hadron of Hastor," she replied coldly.

was an unworthy worm, which she would be wholly justified in spurning, I was yet determined to declare myself that I might openly be accounted a suitor, which, after all, gives one greater freedom, even though he be not entirely a favored suitor.

It was one of those lovely nights that transform old Barsoom into a world of enchantment. Thuria and Cluros were racing through the heavens casting their soft light upon the garden of Tor Hatan, empurpling the vivid, scarlet sward and lending strange hues to the gorgeous blooms of pimalia and sorapus, while the winding walks, graveled with semi-precious stones, shot back a thousand scintillant rays.

In one of the spacious halls of the palace, that overlooked the garden, a youth and a maiden sat upon a massive bench of rich sorapus wood, such a bench as might have graced the halls of the great Jeddak himself, so intricate its rich design, so perfect was its carving.

UPON the leathern harness of the youth were the insignias of his rank and service—a padwar in the 91st Umak. It was I, Hadron of Hastor, and with me was Sanoma Tora, daughter of Tor Hatan. I had come filled with the determination boldly to plead my cause, but suddenly I had become aware of my unworthiness. What had I to offer this beautiful daughter of the rich Tor Hatan? I was only a padwar, and a poor one at that. Of course, there was the royal blood of Gathol in my veins, and that, I knew, would have weight with Tor Hatan, but I am not given to boasting, and I could not have reminded Sanoma Tora of the advantages to be derived because of it even had I known positively that it would influence her.

I had, therefore, nothing to offer but my great love, which is, perhaps, after all, the greatest gift that man or woman can bring to another.

"You are uninteresting tonight, Hadron of Hastor," said Sanoma Tora after a rather long silence, during which I had been endeavoring to formulate my proposal in some convincing and graceful phrases.

"Perhaps," I replied, "it is because I am trying to find the words in which to clothe the most interesting thought I have ever entertained."

"And what is that?" she asked politely, though with no great show of interest.

"I love you, Sanoma Tora," I blurted.

She laughed. It was like the tinkling of silver upon crystal—beautiful but cold. "That has been apparent for a long while," she said. "But why speak of it?"

"And why not?" I asked.

"Because even if I returned your love, I am not for you, Hadron of Hastor," she replied coldly.

"You cannot love me then, Sanoma Tora?" I asked.

"I did not say that," she replied.

"You could love me?"

"I could love you if I permitted myself the weakness," she said; "but what is love?"

"Love is everything," I told her.

SANOMA TORA laughed. "If you think that I would link myself for life to a threadbare padwar even if I loved him, you are mistaken," she said haughtily. "I am the daughter of Tor Hatan, whose wealth and power are but little less than those of the royal families of Helium. I have suitors whose wealth is so great that they could buy you a thousand times over. Within the year an emissary of the Jeddak Tul Axtar of Jahar waited upon my father; he had seen me and he said that he would return; yet merely for love you would ask me to become the wife of a poor padwar, I who may some day be Jeddara of Jahar."

I arose. "Perhaps you are right," I said. "You are so beautiful that it does not seem possible that you could be wrong, but deep in my heart I cannot but feel that happiness is the greatest treasure that one may possess, and love the greatest power. Without these, Sanoma Tora, even a Jeddara is poor indeed."

"I shall take my chance," she said.

"I hope that the Jeddak of Jahar is not as greasy as his emissary," I remarked, rather peevishly, I am afraid.

"He may be an animated grease-pot for all I care, if he will make me his Jeddara," said Sanoma Tora.

"Then there is no hope for me?" I asked.

"Not while you have so little to offer, Hadron of Hastor," she replied.

IT was then that a slave announced Sil Vagis, and I took my leave. I had never before plumbed such depths of despondency as that which engulfed me as I made my unhappy way back to my quarters, but even though hope seemed dead I had not relinquished my determination to win her. If wealth and power were her price, then I would achieve wealth and power! Just how I was going to accomplish it was not entirely clear, but I was young and to youth all things are possible.

I had tossed in wakefulness upon my sleeping silks and furs for some time when an officer of the guard burst suddenly into my quarters.

"Praised be the ashes of my ancestors!" he exclaimed. "I feared that you were not here, Hadron."

"Why should I not be?" I demanded. "What is this all about?"

"Tor Hatan, the fat old treasure-bag, is gone mad," he exclaimed.

"Tor Hatan gone mad? What do you mean? What has that got to do with me?"

"He swears that you have abducted his daughter."

In an instant I was upon my feet. "Abducted Sanoma Tora!" I cried. "Has something happened to her? Tell me, quickly."

"Yes, she is gone, all right," said my informant, "and there is something greatly mysterious about it."

But I did not wait to hear more. Seizing my harness, I adjusted it as I ran up the spiral runway toward the hangars on the roof of the barracks. I had no authority to take out a flyer, but what did that mean to me if Sanoma Tora was in danger?

THE hangar guards sought to detain and question me. I do not recall what I told them; I know that I must have lied to them, for they let me run out a swift one-man flyer and an instant later I was racing through the night toward the palace of Tor Hatan.

As it stands but little more than two haads from the barracks, I was there in but a few moments and as I landed in the garden, which was now brilliantly lighted, I saw a number of people congregated there, among whom were Tor Hatan and Sil Vagis.

As I leaped from the deck of the flyer, the former came angrily toward me. "So it is you," he cried, "what have you to say for yourself? Where is my daughter?"

"That is what I have come to ask, Tor Hatan," I replied.

"You are at the bottom of this," he cried. "You abducted her. She told Sil Vagis that this very night you had demanded her hand in marriage and that she had refused you."

"I did ask for her hand," I said, "and she refused me. That part is true; but if she has been abducted, in the name of your first ancestor, do not waste time trying to connect me with the diabolical plot! I had nothing to do with it. How did it happen? Who was with her?"

"Sil Vagis was with her. They were walking in the garden," replied Tor Hatan.

"You saw her abducted," I asked, turning to Sil Vagis, "and you are here unwounded and alive?"

HE started to stammer. "There were many of them," he said. "They overpowered me."

"Was I among them?" I demanded.

"It was dark. I could not recognize any of them; perhaps they were disguised."

"They overpowered you?" I asked him.

"Yes," he said.

"You lie!" I exclaimed. "Had they laid hands upon you they would have killed you. You ran away and hid, never drawing a weapon to defend the girl."

"That is a lie," cried Sil Vagis. "I fought with them, but they overpowered me."

I turned to Tor Hatan. "We are wasting time," I said. "Is there no one who can give us a clue as to the identity of these men and the direction they took in their flight? How and whence came they? How and whence did they depart?"

"He is trying to throw you off the track, Tor Hatan," said Sil Vagis. "Who else could it have been but a disgruntled suitor? What would you say if I should tell you that the metal of the men who stole Sanoma Tora was the metal of the warriors of Hastor?"

"I would say that you are a liar," I replied. "If it was so dark that you could not recognize faces, how could you decipher the insignia upon their harness?"

At this juncture another officer of the 91st Umak joined us. "We have found one who may, perhaps, shed some light upon the subject," he said, "if he lives long enough to speak."

MEN had been searching the grounds of Tor Hatan and that portion of the city adjacent to his palace, and now several approached, bearing the figure of a man, which they laid upon the sward at our feet. His broken and mangled body was entirely naked and as he lay there gasping feebly for breath, he was a pitiful spectacle.

A slave dispatched into the palace returned with stimulants and when some of these had been forced between his lips, the man regained consciousness and revived slightly.

"Who are you?" asked Tor Hatan.

"I am a warrior of the city guard," replied the man feebly.

An officer approached Tor Hatan excitedly. "My men have just found six more bodies close to the point at which we discovered this man," he said. "They are naked and similarly broken and mangled."

"Perhaps we shall get to the bottom of this yet," said Tor Hatan, and turning again to the poor broken thing upon the scarlet sward, he directed him to proceed.

"We were on night patrol over the city when we saw a craft running without lights. As we approached it and turned our searchlight upon it, I caught a single, brief glimpse of it. It bore no colors or insignia to denote its origin and its design was unlike that of any ship I have ever seen. It had a long, low enclosed cabin upon either side of which were mounted two peculiar-looking guns. This was all I had time to note, except that I saw a man directing one of the guns in our direction. The padwar in command of our ship immediately gave orders to fire upon the stranger, and at the same time he hailed him. At that instant our ship dissolved in mid-air; even my harness fell from me. I remember falling, that is all,"—and with these words he gasped once and died.

TOR HATAN called his people around him. "There must have been some one about the palace or the grounds who saw something of this occurrence," he said. "I command that no matter who may be involved, whoever has any knowledge whatsoever of this affair, shall speak."

A slave stepped forward.

"Well," demanded the odwar, "what have you to say? Speak!"

"You have commanded it, Tor Hatan," said the slave; "otherwise I should not speak—for when I have told what I saw I shall have incurred the enmity of a powerful noble," and he glanced quickly toward Sil Vagis.

"And if you speak the truth, man, you will have won the friendship of a padwar whose sword is not so mean but that it may protect you even from a powerful noble," I said quickly, and I, too, glanced at Sil Vagis for it was in my mind that what the fellow had to tell might be none too flattering to the soft fop who masqueraded beneath the title of a warrior.

"Speak!" commanded Tor Hatan impatiently, "and see to it thou dost not lie."

"For fourteen years I have served faithfully in your palace, Tor Hatan," replied the man, "ever since I was brought to Helium a prisoner of war after the fall and sack of Kobol, where I served in the bodyguard of the Jed of Kobol, and in all that time you have had no reason to question my truthfulness. Sanoma Tora trusted me

and had I had a sword this night she might still be with us."

"Come! Come!" cried Tor Hatan; "get to the point. What saw you?"

"The fellow saw nothing," snapped Sil Vagis. "Why waste time upon him?"

"Let him speak," I exclaimed.

"I had just ascended the first ramp to the second level of the palace," continued the slave, "on my way to the sleeping quarters of Tor Hatan to arrange his sleeping silks and furs for the night as is my custom, and pausing for a moment to look out into the garden I saw Sanoma Tora and Sil Vagis walking in the moonlight. Conscious that I should not thus observe them, I was about to continue on my way about my duties when I saw a flyer dropping silently out of the night toward the garden. Its motors were noiseless, it showed no light—it seemed a spectral ship and of such strange design that even if for no other reason it would have arrested my attention, but there were other reasons. Unlighted ships move through the night for no good purpose, and so I paused to watch it.

"It landed silently and quickly behind Sanoma Tora and Sil Vagis; nor did they seem aware of its presence until their attention was attracted by the slight clanking of the accoutrements of one of the several warriors who sprang from its low cabin as it grounded. Then Sil Vagis wheeled about. For just an instant he stood as though petrified and then as the strange warriors leaped toward him, he turned and fled into the concealing shrubbery of the garden."

"It is a lie," cried Sil Vagis.

"Silence, coward!" I commanded.

"Continue, slave!" directed Tor Hatan.

"Sanoma Tora was not aware of the presence of the strange warriors until she was seized roughly from behind. It all happened so quickly that I scarce had time to realize the purpose of the sinister visitation before they laid hands upon her. When I comprehended that my mistress was the object of this night attack, I rushed hurriedly down the ramp, but ere I reached the garden they had dragged her aboard the flyer. Even then, however, had I had a sword I might at least have died in the service of Sanoma Tora, for I reached the ship of mystery as the last warrior was clambering aboard. I seized him by the harness and attempted to drag him to the ground, at the same time shouting loudly to attract the palace guard, but ere I did so one of his fellows on the deck above me drew his long sword and struck viciously at my head. The blade caught me but a glancing blow, which, however, sufficed to stun me for a moment, so that I relaxed my hold upon the strange warrior and fell to the sward. When I regained consciousness the ship had gone and the tardy palace guard was pouring from the guardroom. I have spoken."

TOR HATAN'S cold gaze sought out the lowered eyes of Sil Vagis. "What have you to say to this?" he demanded.

"The fellow is in the employ of Hadron of Hastor," shouted Sil Vagis. "He speaks nothing but lies. I fought the invaders, but there were many and they overpowered me. This fellow was not present."

"Let me see thy head," I said to the slave, and when he had come and knelt before me I saw a great red welt the length of one side of his head above the ear—just such a welt as a glancing blow from the flat side of a long sword might have made. "Here," I said to Tor Hatan, pointing to the great welt, "is the proof of a slave's loyalty and courage. Let us see the wounds received by a noble of Helium who by his own testimony engaged in single-handed combat against great odds—surely in such an encounter he must have received at least a single scratch."

"Unless he is as marvelous a swordsman as the great John Carter himself," said the dwar of the palace guard with a thinly veiled sneer.

"It is all a plot," cried Sil Vagis. "Do you take the word of a slave, Tor Hatan, against that of a noble of Helium?"

"I rely on the testimony of my eyes and my senses," replied the odwar, and he turned his back upon Sil Vagis and again addressed the slave. "Didst thou recognize any of those who abducted Sanoma Tora," he demanded, "or note their harness or their metal?"

"I got no good look at the face of any of them, but I did see the harness and the metal of him whom I tried to drag from the flyer."

"Was it the metal of Hastor?" asked Tor Hatan.

"By my first ancestor, it was not," replied the slave emphatically; "nor was it the metal of any other city of the Empire of Helium. The design and the insignia were unknown to me and yet there was a certain familiarity about them that tantalizes me—I feel that I have seen them be-

fore, but when and where I cannot recall. In the service of my Jed I fought invaders from many lands and it may be that upon some of these I saw similar metal many years ago."

"Are you satisfied, Tor Hatan," I demanded, "that the aspersions cast upon me by Sil Vagis are without foundation?"

"Yes, Hadron of Hastor," replied the odwar.

"At that instant our ship dissolved in mid-air; even my harness fell from me. I remember falling; that is all." And with these words he died.

"Then with your leave, I shall depart," I said.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To find Sanoma Tora," I replied.

"If you find her," he said, "and return her safely to me, she is yours."

I made no other acknowledgment of his generous offer than to bow deeply, for I had it in my mind that Sanoma Tora might have something to say about that, and whether she had or not, I wished no mate who came not to me willingly.

Leaping to the deck of the flyer that brought me, I rose into the night and sped in the direction of the marble palace of the War Lord of Barsoom, for, even though the hour was late, I was determined to see him without an instant's loss of time.

AS I approached the War Lord's palace, I saw signs of activity unusual for that hour of the night. Flyers were arriving and departing and when I alighted upon that portion of the roof reserved for military ships, I saw the flyers of a number of high officers of the War Lord's staff.

Being a frequent visitor at the palace and being well known by all the officers of the War Lord's bodyguard, I had no difficulty in gaining admission to the palace, and presently I was awaiting in the hall, just off the small apartment in which the War Lord is accustomed to give private audiences, while a slave announced me to his master.

I do not know how long I waited; it could not have been a long while, yet it seemed to me a veritable eternity, my mind, harassed as it was with the conviction that the woman I loved was in dire danger and that I alone could save her.

But at last I was invited to enter and when I stood in the presence of the great War Lord I found him surrounded by men high in the councils of Helium.

"I assume," said John Carter, coming directly to the point, "that what brings you here tonight, Hadron of Hastor, pertains to the matter of the abduction of the daughter of Tor Hatan. Have you any knowledge or any theory that might cast any light upon the subject?"

"No," I replied. "I have come merely to obtain your authority to depart at once in an attempt to pick up the trail of the abductors of Sanoma Tora."

"Where do you intend to search?" he demanded.

"I do not yet know, sir," I replied, "but I shall find her."

HE smiled. "Such assurance is at least an asset," he said, "and knowing as I do what prompts it, I shall grant you the permission you desire. While the abduction of a daughter of Helium is in itself of sufficient gravity to warrant the use of every resource to apprehend her abductors and return her to her home, there is also involved in this occurrence an element that may portend high danger to the empire. As you doubtless know, the mysterious ship that bore her away mounted a gun from which emanated some force that entirely disintegrated all the metal parts of the patrol flyer that sought to intercept and question it. Even the weapons and the metal portions of the harness of the crew were dissipated into nothing, a fact that was easily discernible from an examination of the wreck of the patrol flyer and the bodies of its crew. Wood, leather, flesh, everything of the animal and vegetable kingdom that was aboard the flyer, has been found scattered about the ground where it fell, but no trace of any metallic substance remains.

"I am impressing this upon you because it suggests to my mind a possible clue to the general location of the city of these new enemies of Helium; nor am I convinced that this is but the first blow, since any navy armed with such guns could easily hold Helium at its mercy, and few indeed are the cities of Barsoom outside the empire that would not seize with avidity upon any instrument that would give them the sack of the Twin Cities.

"For some time now we have been deeply concerned by the increasing number of missing ships of the navy. In nearly all instances these were ships engaged in charting air currents and recording atmospheric pressures in different parts of Barsoom far from the empire, and recently it has become apparent that the vast majority of these ships which never return were those cruising in the southern part of the western hemisphere, an unhospitable portion of our planet concerning which we have unfortunately but little knowledge owing to the fact that we have developed no trade with the unfriendly people inhabiting this vast domain.

"This, Hadron of Hastor, is only a suggestion; only the vaguest of clues, but I offer it to you for what it is worth. A thousand one-man scout flyers will be dispatched between now and noon tomorrow in search of the abductors of Sanoma Tora; nor will these be all. Cruisers and battleships will take the air as well, for Helium must know what city or what nation has developed a weapon of destruction such as that used above Helium this night.

"It is my belief that the weapon is of very recent invention and that whatever power possesses it, must be bending every effort to perfect it and produce it in such quantities as to make them masters of the world. I have spoken. Go, and may fortune be with you."

YOU may believe that I lost no time in setting out upon my mission now that I had authority from John Carter. Going to my quarters I hastened my preparation for departure, which consisted principally in making a careful selection of weapons and in exchanging a rather ornate harness I had been wearing for one of simpler design and of heavier and more durable leather. My fighting harness is always the best and plainest that I can procure and is made for me by a very famous harnessmaker of Lesser Helium. My equipment of weapons was standard, consisting of a long sword, a short sword, a dagger and a pistol. I also provided myself with extra ammunition and a supply of the concentrated ration used by all Martian fighting men.

As I gathered together these simple necessities which, with a single sleeping fur, would constitute my entire equipment, my mind was given over to consideration of various explanations for the disappearance of Sanoma Tora. I searched my brain for any slightest memory that might suggest an explanation, or point toward the possible identity of her abductors. It was while thus engaged that I recalled her reference to the jeddak, Tul Axtar of Jahar; nor was there within the scope of my recollection any other incident that might point a clue. I distinctly recalled the emissary of Tul Axtar who had visited the court of Helium not long since. I had heard him boast of the riches and power of his jeddak and the beauty of his women. Perhaps, then, it might be as well to search in the direction of Jahar as elsewhere; but before departing I determined once again to visit the palace of Tor Hatan and question the slave who had been the last to see Sanoma Tora.

AS I was about to set out, another thought occurred to me. I knew that in the Temple of Knowledge might be found either illustrations or replicas of the metal and harness of every nation of Barsoom, concerning which aught was known in Helium. I therefore repaired immediately to the temple and with the assistance of a clerk I presently found a drawing of the harness and metal of a warrior of Jahar. By an ingenious photostatic process a copy of this illustration was made for me in a few seconds, and with this I hastened to the palace of Tor Hatan.

The odwar was absent, having gone to the palace of the War Lord, but his major-domo summoned the slave Kal Tavan, who had witnessed the abduction of Sanoma Tora and grappled with one of her abductors.

As the man approached I noticed him more particularly than I had previously. He was well built, with clear-cut features and that air which definitely bespeaks the fighting man.

"You said, I believe, that you were from Kobol?" I asked.

"I was born in Tjanath," he replied. "I had a wife and daughter there. My wife fell before the hand of an assassin and my daughter disappeared when she was very young. I never knew what became of her. The familiar scenes of Tjanath reminded me of happier days and so increased my grief that I could not remain. I turned panthan then and sought service in other cities; thus I served in Kobol."

"And there you became familiar with the harness and the metal of many cities and nations?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied.

"What harness and metal are these?" I demanded, handing him the copy of the illustration I had brought from the Temple of Knowledge.

HE examined it briefly, and then his eyes lighted with recognition. "It is the same," he said. "It is identical!"

"Identical with what?" I asked.

"With the harness worn by the warrior with whom I grappled at the time that Sanoma Tora was stolen," he replied.

"The identity of the abductors of Sanoma Tora are established," I said, and then I turned to the major-domo. "Send a messenger at once to the War Lord informing him that the daughter of Tor Hatan was stolen by men from Jahar and that it is my belief that they are the emissaries of Tul Axtar, Jeddak of Jahar,"—and without more words I turned and left the palace, going directly to my flyer.

As I arose above the towers and domes and lofty landing-stages of Greater Helium, I turned the prow of my flyer toward the west and opening wide the throttle sped swiftly through the thin air of dying Barsoom toward that great unknown expanse of her remote southwestern hemisphere, somewhere within the vast reaches of which lay Jahar, toward which, I was now convinced, Sanoma Tora was being borne—to become not the Jeddara of Tul Axtar, but his slave, for jeddaks take not their jeddaras by force upon Barsoom unless they have failed to win them by honorable means.

I believed that I understood the explanation of Sanoma Tora's abduction—an explanation that would have caused her intense chagrin, since it was far from flattery. I believed that Tul Axtar's emissary had reported to his master the charm and beauty of the daughter of Tor Hatan, but that she was not of sufficiently noble birth to become his jeddara, and so he had adopted the only expedient by which he might possess her. My blood boiled at the suggestion, but my judgment told me that it was doubtless right.

DURING the past few years—I should say the last ten or twenty—greater strides have been taken in the advancement of aëronautics than had been previously achieved in the preceding five hundred years.

The perfection of the destination-control compass by Carthoris of Helium is considered by many authorities to have marked the beginning of a new era of invention. For centuries we seem to have stagnated in a quiet pond of self-sufficiency, as though we had reached the acme of perfection beyond which it was useless to seek for improvement upon what we considered the highest possible achievements of science.

Carthoris of Helium, inheriting the restless, inquiring mind of his earth-born sire, awoke us. Our best minds took up the challenge and the result was rapid improvement in design and construction of airships of all classes, leading to an absolute revolution in motor building.

We had thought that our light, compact, powerful radium motors never could be improved upon and that man never would

travel, either safely or economically, at a speed greater than that attained by our swift one-man scout flyers—about eleven hundred haads per zode (approximately one hundred and sixty-six earth miles per hour), when a practically unknown padwar in the navy of Helium announced that he had perfected a motor that with one-half the weight of our present motors would develop twice the speed.

IT was this type of motor with which my scout flyer was equipped—a seemingly fuelless motor, since it derived its invisible and imponderable energy from the inexhaustible and illimitable magnetic field of the planet.

There are certain basic features of the new motor that only the inventor and the government of Helium are fully conversant with and these are most jealously guarded. The propeller shaft, which extends well within the hull of the flyer, is constructed of numerous lateral segments insulated from one another. Around this shaft and supporting it is a series of armature-like bearings, through the center of which it passes.

These are connected in series with a device called an accumulator through which the planet's magnetic energy is directed to the peculiar armatures which encircle the propeller shaft.

Speed is controlled by increasing or diminishing the number of armature bearings in series with the accumulator—all of which is simply accomplished by a lever which the pilot moves from his position on deck where he ordinarily lies upon his stomach, his safety belt snapped to heavy rings in the deck.

The limit of speed, the inventor claims, is dependent solely upon the ratio of strength to weight in the construction of the hull. My one-man scout flyer easily attains a speed of two thousand haads per zode (approximately three hundred miles per hour). Nor could it have withstood the tremendous strain of a more powerful motor, though it would have been easy to have increased both the power of one and the speed of the other by the simple expedient of a longer propeller shaft carrying an additional number of armature bearings.

In experimenting with the new motor at Hastor last year, an attempt was made to drive a scout flyer at the exceptional speed of thirty-three hundred haads per zode (approximately five hundred miles per hour, a haad being 1949.0592 earth feet and a zode 2.462 earth hours), but before the ship had attained a speed of three thousand haads per zode, it was torn to pieces by its own motor. Now we are trying to attain the greatest strength with the minimum of weight and as our engineers succeed we shall see speed increased until, I am sure, we shall easily attain to seven thousand haads per zode (over one thousand miles per hour), for there seems no limit to the power of these marvelous motors.

Little less marvelous is the destination-control compass of Carthoris of Helium —set your pointer upon any spot on either hemisphere, open your throttle and then lie down and go to sleep if you will. Your ship will carry you to your destination, drop within a hundred yards or so of the ground and stop, while an alarm awakens you. It is really a very simple device, and I believe John Carter has fully described it in one of his numerous manuscripts.

In the adventure upon which I had embarked the destination-control compass was of little value to me, since I did not know the exact location of Jahar. However, I set it roughly at a point about thirty degrees south latitude, thirty-five degrees east longitude as I believed that Jahar lay somewhere to the southwest of that point.

FLYING at high speed, I had long since left behind the cultivated areas near Helium and was crossing above a desolate and deserted waste of ochre moss that clothed the dead sea bottoms where once rolled a mighty ocean bearing upon its bosom the shipping of a happy and prosperous people, now but a half-forgotten memory in the legends of Barsoom.

Upon the edges of plateaus that once had marked the shore line of a noble continent I passed above the lonely monuments of that ancient prosperity—the sad, deserted cities of old Barsoom. Even in their ruins there is a grandeur and magnificence that still has power to awe a modern man. Down toward the lowest sea bottoms other ruins mark the tragic trail that that ancient civilization had followed in pursuit of the receding waters of its ocean to where the last city finally succumbed, bereft of commerce, shorn of power, to fall at last an easy victim to the marauding hordes of fierce green tribesmen, whose descendants now are the sole rulers of many of these deserted sea bottoms. Hating and hated, ignorant of love, laughter or happiness, they

"It is identical with the harness worn by the warrior with whom I grappled at the time Sanoma Tora was stolen," said the slave.

lead their long, fierce lives quarreling among themselves and their neighbors and preying upon any chance adventurers who happen within the confines of their bitter and desolate domain.

Fierce and terrible as are all green men, there are few whose cruel natures and bloody exploits have horrified the minds of red men to such an extent as have the green hordes of Torquas.

The city of Torquas, from which they derive their name, was one of the most magnificent and powerful of ancient Barsoom. Though it has been deserted for ages by all but roaming tribes of green men, it is still marked upon every map, and as it lay directly in the path of my search for Jahar and as I had never seen it, I had purposely laid my course to pass over it and when, far ahead, I saw its lofty towers and battlements I felt the thrill of excitement and the lure of adventure which these dead cities of Barsoom proverbially exert upon us red men.

AS I approached the city I reduced my speed and dropped lower that I might obtain a better view of it. What a beautiful city it must have been in its time! Even today, after all the ages that have passed since its broad avenues surged with the life of happy, prosperous throngs, its great palaces still stand in all their glorious splendor, that time and the elements have softened and mellowed, but not yet destroyed.

As I circled low above the city I saw miles of avenues that have not known the foot of man for countless ages. The stone flagging of their pavement was overgrown with ochre moss, with here and there a stunted tree or a grotesque shrub of one of those varieties that somehow find sustenance in the arid waste-land. Silent, deserted courtyards looked up at me—gorgeous gardens of another happier day. Here and there the roof of a building had fallen in, but for the most part they remained intact, dreaming, doubtless, of the wealth and beauty that they had known in days of yore, and in imagination I could see the gorgeous sleeping silks and furs spread out in the sunlight, while the women idled beneath gay canopies of silks, their jeweled harnesses scintillating with each move of their bodies.

I saw the pennons waving from countless thousands of staffs and the great ships at anchor in the harbor rose and fell to the undulations of the restless sea. There were swaggering sailors upon the avenues and burly, fighting men before the doors of every palace. Ah, what a picture imagination conjured from the death-like silence of that deserted city—and then as a long, swinging circle brought me above the courtyard of a splendid palace that faced upon the city's great central square, my eyes be-

held that which shattered my beautiful dream of the past. Directly below me I saw a score of great thoats penned in what once may have been the royal garden of a jeddak.

The presence of these huge beasts meant but one thing—that their green masters were near by.

As I passed above the courtyard, one of the restless, vicious beasts looked up and saw me, and instantly he commenced to squeal angrily. Immediately the other thoats, their short temper aroused by the squealing of their fellow and their attention directed by his upward gaze, discovered me and set up a perfect pandemonium of grunts and squeals, which brought the result that I had immediately foreseen. A green warrior leaped into the courtyard from the interior of the palace and looked up just in time to see me before I passed from his line of vision above the roof of the building.

REALIZING immediately that this was no place for me to loiter, I opened my throttle and at the same time rose swiftly toward a greater altitude. As I passed over the building and out across the avenue in front of it, I saw some twenty green warriors pour out of the building, their upward gaze searching the skies. The warrior on guard had apprised them of my presence.

I cursed myself for a stupid fool for having taken this unnecessary chance merely to satisfy my idle curiosity. Instantly I took a zigzag, upward course, rising as swiftly as I could, while from below a savage war-cry rose plainly to my ears. I saw long, wicked-looking rifles aimed at me; I heard the hiss of projectiles hurtling by me, but though the first volley passed close to us, not a bullet struck the ship. In a moment more I would be out of range and safe and I prayed to a thousand ancestors to protect me for the few brief minutes that would be necessary to place me entirely out of harm's way. I thought that I had made it and was just about to congratulate myself upon my good luck when I heard the thud of a bullet against the metal of my ship and almost simultaneously the explosion of the projectile. Then I was out of range.

Angry cries of disappointment came faintly to my ears as I sped swiftly toward the southwest.

I had already flown about seventy karads (a karad is equivalent to a degree of longitude) from Helium, but I was aware that Jahar might still be fifty to seventy-five karads distant and I made up my mind that I would take no more chances such as those from which I had just so fortunately escaped.

I was now moving at great speed again, and I had scarcely finished congratulating myself upon my good fortune, when it suddenly became apparent to me that I was having difficulty in maintaining my altitude. My flyer was losing buoyancy, and almost immediately I guessed, what investigation later revealed, that one of my buoyancy tanks had been punctured by the explosive bullet of the green warriors.

TO reproach myself for my carelessness seemed a useless waste of mental energy, though I can assure you that I was keenly aware of my fault and of its possible bearing upon the fate of Sanoma Tora, from the active prosecution of whose rescue I might now be entirely eliminated. The results as they affected me did not appall me half so much as did the contemplation of the unquestioned danger in which Sanoma Tora must be, from which my determination to rescue her had so obsessed me that there had not entered into my thoughts any slightest consideration of failure.

The mishap was a severe blow to my hopes and yet it did not shatter them entirely, for I am so constituted that I know I shall never give up hope of success in any issue as long as life remains to me.

How much longer my ship would remain afloat it was difficult to say, and having no means of making such repairs as would have been necessary to conserve the remaining contents of the punctured buoyancy tank, the best that I could do was to increase my speed so that I might cover as much distance as possible before I was forced down. The construction of my ship was such that at high speed it tended to maintain itself in the air with a minimum of the Eighth Ray in its buoyancy tanks; yet I knew that the time was not far distant when I should have to make a landing in this dreary, desolate waste-land.

I had covered something in the neighborhood of two thousand haads since I had been fired upon above Torquas, crossing what had been a large gulf when the waters of the ocean rolled over the vast plains that now lay moss-covered and arid beneath me. Far ahead I could see the outlines of low hills that must have marked the southwestern shore line of the gulf. To-

ward the northwest the dead sea bottom extended as far as the eye could reach, but this was not the direction I wished to take, and so I sped on toward the hills hoping that I might maintain sufficient altitude to cross them. But as they swiftly loomed closer this hope died in my breast and I realized that the end of my flight was now but a matter of moments. At the same time I discerned the ruins of a deserted city nestling at the foot of the hills; nor was this an unwelcome sight since water is almost always to be found in the wells of these ancient cities, which have been kept in repair by the green nomads of the wasteland.

By now I was skimming but a few ads above the surface of the ground (an ad is about 9.75 earth feet). I had greatly diminished my speed to avoid a serious accident in landing and because of this the end was hastened so that presently I came gently to rest upon the ochre vegetation scarcely a haad from the waterfront of the deserted city.

CHAPTER III

In the Deserted Tower

MY landing was most unfortunate, in that it left me in plain sight of the city without any place of concealment in the event that the ruins happened to be occupied by one of the numerous tribes of green men who infest the dead sea bottoms of Barsoom, often making their headquarters in one or another of the deserted cities that line the ancient shore.

The fact that they usually choose to inhabit the largest and most magnificent of the ancient palaces and that these ordinarily stand back some little distance from the waterfront rendered it quite possible that even in the event there were green men in the city I might reach the concealing safety of one of the nearer buildings before I was discovered by them.

My flyer being now useless, there was nothing to do but abandon it, and so with only my weapons, ammunition and a few concentrated rations I walked quickly in the direction of the age-old waterfront. Whether or not I reached the buildings unobserved, I was unable to determine, but at any rate I did reach them without seeing any sign of a living creature about.

Portions of many of these ancient, deserted cities are inhabited by the great white apes of Barsoom, which are in many respects more to be feared than the green warriors themselves, for not only are these manlike creatures endowed with enormous strength and characterized by intense ferocity, but they are also voracious man-eaters. So terrible are they that it is said they are the only living creatures which instill fear within the green men of Barsoom.

KNOWING the possible dangers that might lurk within the precincts of this ruin, it may be wondered that I approached it at all, but as a matter of fact there was no safe alternative. Out upon the dead monotony of the ochre moss of the sea bottom, I should have been discovered by the first white ape or green Martian that approached the city from that direction, or that chanced to come from the interior of the ruins to the waterfront. It was, therefore, necessary for me to seek concealment until night had fallen, since only by night might I travel in safety across the sea bottom, and as the city offered the only concealment near by I had no choice but to enter it. I can assure you that it was not without feelings of extreme concern that I clambered to the surface of the broad avenue that once skirted the shore of a busy harbor. Across its wide expanse rose the ruins of what once had been shops and warehouses, but whose eyeless windows now looked down upon a scene of arid desolation.

Crossing the avenue, I entered one of the taller buildings, which I noticed was surmounted by a high tower. The entire structure, including the tower, seemed to be in an excellent state of preservation and it occurred to me that if I could ascend into the latter, I should be able to obtain an excellent view of the city and of the country that lay beyond it to the southwest, which was the direction in which I intended to pursue my search for Jahar.

I reached the building apparently unobserved and, entering, found myself in a large chamber, the nature and purpose of which it was no longer possible to determine, since such decorations as may possibly have adorned its walls in the past were no longer discernible and whatever furniture it may have contained to give a clue to its identity had long since been removed. There was an enormous fireplace in the far end of the room and at one side of this fireplace a ramp led downward, and upon the other a similar ramp led upward.

Listening intently for a moment I heard no sound, either within or without the building—so it was with considerable confidence that I started to ascend the ramp.

UPWARD I continued from floor to floor, each of which consisted of a single large chamber, a fact which finally convinced me that the building had been a warehouse for the storing of goods passing through this ancient port.

From the upper floor a wooden ladder extended upward through the center of the tower above. It was of metal called skeel, which is practically indestructible, so though I knew it might be anywhere from five hundred thousand to a million years old, I did not hesitate to trust myself to it.

The circular interior core of the tower, upward through which the ladder extended, was rather dark. At each landing there was an opening into the tower chamber at that point, but as many of these openings were closed only a subdued light penetrated to the central core.

I had ascended to the second level of the tower when I thought I heard a strange noise beneath me.

Just the suggestion of a noise it was, but such utter silence had reigned over the deserted city that the faintest sound must have been appreciable to me.

Pausing in my ascent, I looked down, listening; but the sound was not repeated, and I continued my way on upward.

Having it in my mind to climb as high up in the tower as possible, I did not stop to examine any of the levels that I passed.

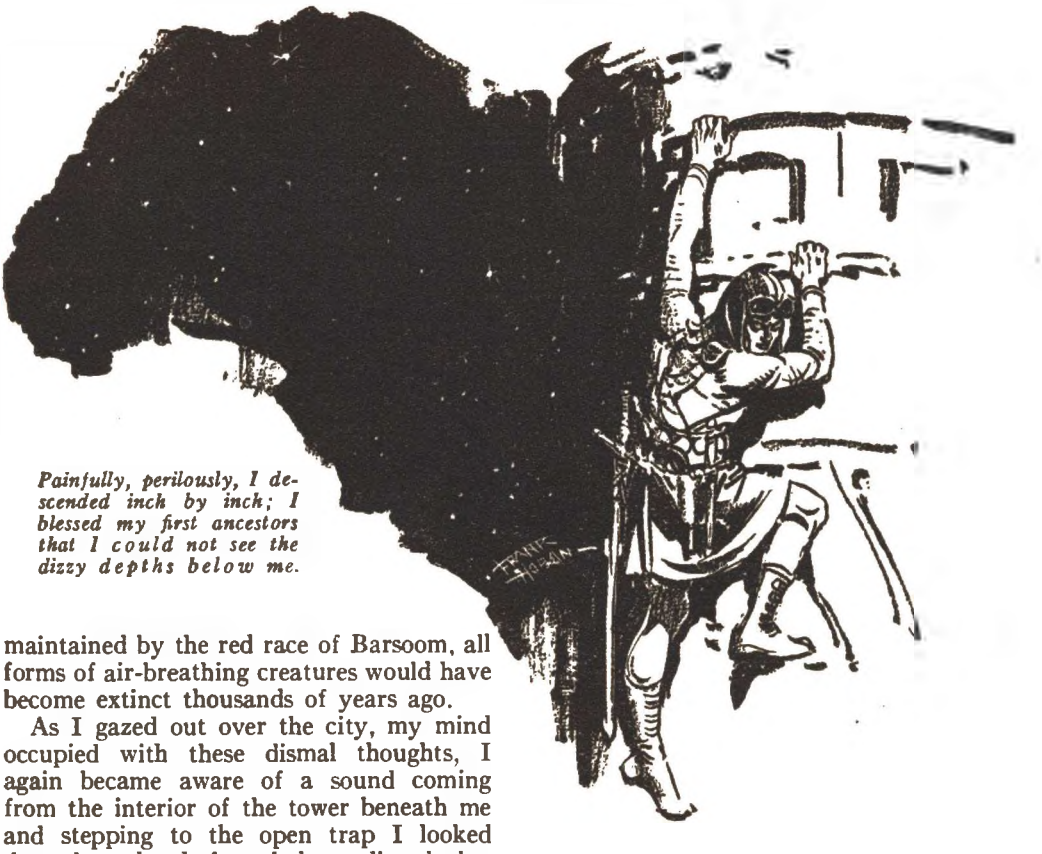
CONTINUING upward for a considerable distance, my progress was finally blocked by heavy planking that appeared to form the ceiling of the shaft. Some eight or ten feet below me was a small door that probably led to one of the upper levels of the tower and I could not but wonder why the ladder had been continued on upward above this doorway, since it could serve no practical purpose if it merely ended at the ceiling. Feeling above me with my fingers I traced the outlines of what appeared to be a trapdoor. Obtaining a firm footing upon the ladder as high up as I could climb, I placed a shoulder against the barrier.

In this position I was able to exert considerable pressure upward with the result that presently I felt the planking rise above me and a moment later, to the accompaniment of subdued groans, the trapdoor swung upward upon ancient wooden hinges long unused. Clambering into the apartment above I found myself upon the top level of the tower, which rose to a height of some two hundred feet above the avenue below. Before me were the corroded remains of an ancient and long-obsolete beacon-light, such as were used by the ancients long before the discovery of radium and its practical and scientific application to the lighting requirements of modern civilization upon Barsoom. These ancient lamps were operated by expensive machines which generated electricity, and this one was doubtless used as a beacon for the safe guidance of ancient mariners into the harbor, whose waters once rolled almost to the foot of the tower.

THIS upper level of the tower afforded an excellent view in all directions. To the north and northeast stretched a vast expanse of dead sea bottom as far as the eye could reach. To the south was a range of low hills that curved gently in a northeasterly direction, forming in bygone days the southern shore line of what is still known as the Gulf of Torquas. Toward the west I looked out over the ruins of a great city, which extended far back into low hills, the flanks of which it had mounted as it expanded from the sea shore.

There in the distance I could still discern the ancient village of the wealthy, while in the nearer foreground were enormous public buildings, the most pretentious of which were built upon the four sides of a large quadrangle that I could easily discern a short distance from the waterfront. Here, doubtless, stood the official palace of the jeddak who once ruled the rich country of which this city was the capital and the principal port. There, now, only silence reigns. It was indeed a depressing sight and one fraught with poignant prophecy for us of present-day Barsoom.

Where these ancients battled valiantly but futilely against the menace of a constantly diminishing water-supply, we are faced with a problem that far transcends theirs in the importance of its bearing upon the maintenance of life upon our planet. During the past several thousand years only the courage, resourcefulness and wealth of the red men of Barsoom have made it possible for life to exist upon our dying planet, for were it not for the great atmosphere plants conceived and built and



Painfully, perilously, I descended inch by inch; I blessed my first ancestors that I could not see the dizzy depths below me.

maintained by the red race of Barsoom, all forms of air-breathing creatures would have become extinct thousands of years ago.

As I gazed out over the city, my mind occupied with these dismal thoughts, I again became aware of a sound coming from the interior of the tower beneath me and stepping to the open trap I looked down into the shaft and there, directly below me, I saw that which might well make the stoutest heart quail—the hideous, snarling face of a great white ape of Barsoom.

As our eyes met the creature voiced an angry growl and, abandoning its former stealthy approach, rushed swiftly up the ladder. Acting almost mechanically, I did the one and only thing that might even temporarily stay its rush upon me: I slammed down the heavy trapdoor above its head, and as I did so I saw for the first time that the door was equipped with a heavy wooden bar, and you may well believe that I lost no time in securing this, thus effectually barring the creature's ascent by this route into the veritable culde-sac in which I had placed myself.

NOW, indeed, was I in a pretty predicament—two hundred feet above the city with my only avenue of escape cut off by one of the most feared of all the savage beasts of Barsoom!

I had hunted these creatures in Thark as a guest of the great green Jeddak, Tars Tarkas, and I knew something of their cunning and resourcefulness as well as of their ferocity. Extremely man-like in conformation, they also approach man more closely than any other of the lower orders in the size and development of their brain. Occasionally these creatures are captured when young and trained to perform and so intelligent are they that they can be taught to do almost anything that man can do that lies within the range of their limited reasoning capacity; but never has man been able to subdue their ferocious nature and they are always the most dangerous of animals to handle, which probably accounts more even than their intelligence for the interest displayed by the large audiences which they unfailingly attract.

In Hastor I have paid a good price to see one of these creatures and now I found myself in a position where I should very gladly pay a good deal more not to see one, but from the noise he was making in the shaft beneath me it appeared to me that he was determined that I should have a free show and he a free meal. He was hurling himself as best he could against the trapdoor, above which I stood with some misgivings which were presently allayed when I realized that not even the vast strength of a white ape could avail against the still stanch and sturdy skeel of the ancient door.

Finally convinced that he could not come

at me by this avenue, I set about taking stock of my situation. Circling the tower I examined its outward architecture by the simple expedient of leaning far outward above each of the four sides. Three sides terminated at the roof of the building a hundred and fifty feet below me, while the fourth extended to the pavement of the courtyard two hundred feet below. Like much of the architecture of ancient Barsoom, the surface of the tower was elaborately carved from top to bottom and at each level there were window embrasures, some of which were equipped with small stone balconies.

As a rule there was but a single window to a level, and as the window for the level directly beneath never opened upon the same side of the tower as the window for the level above, there was always a distance of from thirty to forty feet between windows upon the same side. As I was examining the outside of the tower with a view to its offering me an avenue of escape this point was of great importance to me, since a series of window ledges, one below another, would have proved a most welcome sight to a man in my position.

BY the time I had completed my survey of the exterior of the tower, the ape had evidently come to the conclusion that he could not demolish the barrier that kept him from me and I hoped that he would abandon the idea entirely and depart. But when I lay down on the floor and placed an ear close to the door I could plainly hear him just below as he occasionally changed from one uncomfortable position to another upon the small ladder beneath me. I did not know to what extent these creatures might have developed pertinacity of purpose, but I hoped that he might soon tire of his vigil and his thoughts be diverted into some other channel. However, as the day wore to a close this possibility seemed to grow more and more remote until at last I became almost convinced that the creature had determined to lay siege until hunger or desperation forced me from my retreat.

How longingly I gazed at the beckoning hills beyond the city where lay my route to the southwest—toward fabled Jahar!

The sun was low in the west. Soon would come the sudden transition from daylight to darkness, and then what? Perhaps the creature would abandon its vigil; hunger or thirst might attract it elsewhere, but how was I to know? How easily it might descend to the bottom of the tower and await me there, confident that sooner or later I must come down!

One unfamiliar with the traits of these savage creatures might wonder why, armed as I was with sword and pistol, I did not raise the trapdoor and give battle to my jailer. Had I known positively that he was the only white ape in the vicinity I should not have hesitated to do so, but experience assured me that there was doubtless an entire herd of them quartered in the ruined city. So scarce is the flesh they crave that it is their ordinary custom to hunt alone, so that in the event that they make a kill they may be more certain of retaining the prize for themselves—but if I should attack him he would most certainly raise such a row as to attract his fellows, in which event my chance for escape would have been reduced to the ultimate zero.

A single shot from my pistol might have dispatched him, but it was equally possible that it would not, for these great white apes of Barsoom are tremendous creatures, endowed with almost unbelievable vitality. Many of them stand fully fifteen feet in height and are endowed by nature with tremendous strength. Their very appearance is demoralizing to an enemy; their white, hairless bodies are in themselves repulsive to the eye of a red man; the great shock of white hair bristling erect upon their pates accentuates the brutality of their countenances, while their intermediary set of limbs, which they use either as arms or legs as necessity or whim suggests, render them most formidable antagonists. Quite generally they carry a club, in the use of which they are terribly proficient. One of them, therefore, seemed sufficiently a menace in itself, so that I had no desire to attract others of its kind, though I was fully aware that eventually I might be forced to carry the battle to him.

JUST as the sun was setting my attention was attracted toward the waterfront where the long shadows of the city were stretching far out across the dead sea bottom. Riding up the gentle acclivity toward the city was a party of green warriors, mounted upon their great savage thoats. There were perhaps twenty of them, moving silently over the soft moss that carpeted the bottom of the ancient harbor, the padded feet of their mounts giving forth no sound. Like specters, they moved in the

shadows of the dying day, giving me further proof that Fate had led me to a most unfriendly shore, and then as though to complete the trilogy of fearsome Barsoomian menaces the roar of a banth rolled down out of the hills behind the city.

Safe from observation in the high tower above them, I watched the party as it emerged from the hollow of the harbor and rode out upon the avenue below me, and then for the first time I noted a small figure seated in front of one of the warriors. Darkness was coming swiftly now, but before the little cavalcade passed out of sight momentarily behind the corner of the building, as it entered another avenue leading toward the heart of the city, I thought that I recognized the little figure as that of a woman of my own race. That she was a captive was a foregone conclusion; and I could not but shudder as I contemplated the fate that lay in store for her. Perhaps my own Sanoma Tora was in equal jeopardy. Perhaps—but no, that could not be possible; how could Sanoma Tora have fallen into the clutches of warriors of the fierce horde of Torquas?

It could not be she; no, that were impossible, but the fact remained that the captive was a red woman, and whether she was Sanoma Tora or another,—whether she were from Helium or Jahar,—my heart went out in sympathy to her and I forgot my own predicament as something within me urged me to pursue her captors and seek to snatch her from them; but, alas, how futile seemed my fancy! How might I, who might not even save himself, aspire to the rescue of another?

THE thought galled me; it hurt my pride; and forthwith I determined that if I would not chance dying to save myself, I might at least chance it for a woman of my own race—and always in the back of my head was the thought that perhaps the object of my solicitude might, indeed, be the woman I loved.

Darkness had fallen as I pressed my ear again to the trapdoor. All was silent below, so that presently I became assured that the creature had departed. Perhaps he was lying in wait for me farther down, but what of that? I must face him eventually if he elected to remain. I loosened my pistol in its holster and was upon the point of slipping the bar that secured the door when I distinctly heard the beast directly beneath me.

For an instant I paused. What was the use? It meant certain death to raise that door, and in what way might I be profiting either myself or the poor captive if I gave my life thus uselessly? But there was an alternative—one that I had been planning to adopt in case of necessity, from the moment that I had first examined the exterior construction of the tower. It offered a slender chance of escape from my predicament and even a very slender chance was better than what would confront me should I raise the trapdoor.

I stepped to one of the windows of the tower and looked down upon the city. Neither moon was in the sky; I could see nothing. Toward the interior of the city I heard the squealing of thoats. There would the camp of the green men be located. Thus by the squealing of their vicious mounts would I be guided to it. Again a hunting banth roared in the hills. I sat upon the sill and swung both legs across, and then turning on my belly, slipped silently over the edge until I hung only by my hands.

Groping with my sandaled toes, I felt for a foot-hold upon the deep-cut carvings of the tower's face. Above me was a blue-black void shot with stars; below me a blank and empty void. It might have been a thousand sofads to the roof below me, or it might have been one; but though I could see nothing I knew that it was at least one hundred and fifty and that at the bottom lay death if a foot or a hand slipped.

IN daylight the sculpturing had seemed large and deep and bold, but by night how different! My toes seemed to find but hollow scratches in a smooth surface of polished stone. My arms and fingers were tiring. I must find a foot-hold or fall—and then when hope seemed gone the toe of my right sandal slipped into a horizontal groove and an instant later my left found a hold.

Flattened against the sheer wall of the tower I lay there resting my tired fingers and arms for a moment, and when I felt that they would bear my weight again I sought for hand-holds. Thus painfully, perilously, monotonously, I descended inch by inch. I avoided the windows, which naturally greatly increased the difficulty and danger of my descent; yet I did not care to pass directly in front of them for fear that by chance the ape might have descended from the summit of the ladder and would see me.

I cannot recall that ever in my life I felt more alone than I did that night as I was descending the ancient beacon-tower of that deserted city, for not even hope was with me. So precarious were my holds upon the rough stone that my fingers were soon numb and exhausted. How they clung at all to those shallow cuts, I do not know. The only redeeming feature of the descent was the darkness, and a hundred times I blessed my first ancestors that I could not see the dizzy depths below me; but on the other hand it was so dark that I could not tell how far I had descended; nor did I dare to look up where the summit of the tower must have been silhouetted against the starlit sky for fear that in doing so I should lose my balance and be precipitated to the courtyard or the roof below. The air of Barsoom is thin; it does not greatly diffuse the starlight and so while the heavens above were shot with brilliant points of light, the ground beneath was obliterated in darkness.

YET I must have been nearer the roof than I thought when that happened which I had been assiduously endeavoring to prevent—the scabbard of my long sword clattered noisily against the face of the tower. In the darkness and the silence it seemed a veritable din, but however exaggerated it might appear to me I knew that it was sufficient to reach the ears of the great ape in the tower. Whether a suggestion of its import would occur to him, I could not guess—I could only hope that he would be too dull to connect it with me or my escape.

But I was not to be left long in doubt, for almost immediately afterward a sound came from the interior of the tower that sounded to my overwrought nerves like a heavy body rapidly descending a ladder. I realize now that imagination might easily have construed utter silence into such a sound, since I had been listening so intently for that very thing that I might easily have worked myself into such a state of nervous apprehension that almost any sort of an hallucination were possible.

With redoubled speed and with a measure of recklessness that was almost suicidal, I hastened my descent and an instant later I felt the solid roof beneath my feet.

I breathed a sigh of relief, but it was destined to be but a short sigh and but brief relief for almost instantly I was made aware that the sound from the interior of the tower had been no hallucination, as the huge bulk of a great white ape loomed suddenly from a doorway not a dozen paces from me.

AS he charged me, he gave forth no sound. Evidently he had not held his solitary vigil this long with any intention of sharing his feast with another. He would dispatch me in silence—and with similar intent I drew my long sword, rather than my pistol, to meet his savage charge.

What a puny, futile thing I must have appeared confronting that towering mountain of bestial ferocity!

Thanks be to a thousand fighting ancestors that I wield a long sword with swiftness and with strength; otherwise I must have been gathered into that savage embrace in the brute's first charge. Four powerful hands were reached out to seize me, but I swung my long sword in a terrific cut that severed one of them cleanly at the wrist, and at the same instant I leaped quickly to one side; and as the beast rushed past me, carried onward by its momentum, I ran my blade deep into its body. With a savage scream of rage and pain it sought to turn upon me, but its foot slipped upon its own dismembered hand, and it stumbled awkwardly, trying to regain its equilibrium. That it never accomplished, however; and still stumbling grotesquely, it lunged over the edge of the roof to the courtyard below.

FEARING that the beast's scream might attract others of its kind to the roof, I ran swiftly to the north edge of the building, where I had noted from the tower earlier in the afternoon a series of lower buildings adjoining, over the roofs of which I might possibly accomplish my descent to the street level.

Cold Cluros was rising above the distant horizon, shedding his pale light upon the city so that I could plainly see the roofs below me as I came to the north edge of the building. It was a long drop, but there was no safe alternative, since it was quite probable that should I attempt to descend through the building, I would meet other members of the ape's herd who had been attracted by the scream of their fellow.

Slipping over the edge of the roof, I hung an instant by my hands and then dropped. The distance was about twenty feet, but I alighted safely and without injury. Upon your own planet, with its larger bulk and

What a puny, futile thing I must have appeared confronting that towering mountain of bestial ferocity!

greater gravity, I presume that a fall of that distance might be serious, but not so, necessarily, upon Barsoom. From this roof I had a short drop to the next, and from that I leaped to a low wall and thence to the ground below.

Had it not been for the fleeting glimpse of the girl captive that I had caught just at sunset, I should have set out directly for the hills west of the town, banth or no banth; but now I felt strongly upon me a certain moral obligation to make the best efforts that I could for succoring the poor unfortunate that had fallen into the clutches of these cruelest of creatures. Keeping well within the shadows of the buildings, I moved stealthily toward the central plaza of the city, from which direction I had heard the squealing of the thoats.

The plaza was a full haad from the waterfront, and I was compelled to cross several intersecting avenues as I cautiously made my way toward it, guided by an occasional squeal from the thoats quartered in some deserted palace courtyard.

I reached the plaza in safety, confident that I had not been observed.

Upon the opposite side, I saw light within one of the great buildings that faced it, but I dared not cross the open space in the moonlight and so still clinging to the shadows I moved to the far end of the quadrangle where Cluros cast his densest shadows, and thus at last I won to the building in which the green men were quartered. Directly before me was a low window that must have opened into a room adjoining that in which the warriors were congregated. Listening intently, I heard nothing within the chamber and slipping a leg over the sill I entered the dark interior with the utmost stealth.

Tiptoeing across the room to find a door through which I might look into the adjoining chamber, I was suddenly arrested as my foot touched a soft body; I froze into rigidity, my hand upon my long sword, as the body moved.

CHAPTER IV

TAVIA

THERE are occasions in the life of every man when he becomes impressed by the evidence of the existence of an extraneous power which guides his acts, which is sometimes described as the hand of Providence, or is again explained on the hypothesis of a sixth sense which transports to that part of our brain which controls our actions perceptions of which we are not objectively aware; but account for it as one may, the fact remains that as I stood there that night in the dark chamber of the ancient palace of that deserted city, I hesitated to thrust my point into the soft body moving at my feet, which might after all have been the

most reasonable and logical course for me to pursue. Instead I pressed my point firmly against yielding flesh and whispered a single word:

"Silence!"

A thousand times since then have I given thanks to my first ancestors that I did not follow my natural impulse, for in response to my admonition a voice whispered: "Do not thrust, red man; I am of your own race and a prisoner." And the voice was that of a girl.

Instantly I withdrew my blade and knelt beside her. "If you have come to help me, cut my bonds," she said. "And be quick, for they will soon return for me."

Feeling rapidly over her body, I found that her wrists and ankles were secured with leather thongs, and drawing my dagger I quickly severed these. "Are you alone?" I asked as I helped her to her feet.

"Yes," she replied. "In the next room they are playing for me, to decide to which one I shall belong." At that moment there came the clank of sidearms from the adjoining room. "They are coming," she said. "They must not find us here."

TAKING her by the hand, I moved to the window through which I had entered the apartment, but fortunately I reconnoitered before stepping out into the avenue, and it was well for us that I did so, for as I looked to the right along the face of the building, I saw a green Martian warrior emerging from the main entrance. Evidently it had been the rattling of his sidearms that we had heard as he moved across the adjoining apartment to the doorway.

"Is there another exit from this room?" I asked in a low whisper.

"Yes," she replied. "Opposite this window there is a doorway leading into a corridor. It was open when they brought me in, but they closed it."

"We shall be better off inside the building than out for a while at least," I said. "Come!"

And together we crossed the apartment, groping along the wall for the door which I soon located. With the utmost care I drew it ajar, fearing that its ancient hinges might betray us by their complaining. Beyond the doorway lay a corridor dark as the depths of Omean, and into this I drew the girl, closing the door silently behind us. Groping our way to the right away from the apartment occupied by the green warriors, we moved slowly through a black void until presently we saw a faint light just ahead, which investigation revealed as coming through the open doorway of an apartment which faced upon the central courtyard of the edifice. I was about to pass this doorway and seek a hiding-place farther within the remote interior of the building, when my attention was attracted by the squealing of a thoat in the courtyard beyond the apartment we were passing.

FROM earliest boyhood I have had a great deal of experience with the small breed of thoats used as saddle animals by the men of my race, and while I was visiting Tars Tarkas of Thark, I became quite familiar with the methods employed by the green men in controlling their own huge vicious beasts.

For travel over the surface of the ground, the thoat compares to other methods of land transportation as the one-man scout flyer does to all other ships of the air in aërial navigation. He is at once the swiftest and the most dangerous, so that, faced as I was with a problem of land transportation, it was only natural that the squeal of the thoats should suggest a plan to my mind.

"Why do you hesitate?" asked the girl. "We cannot escape in that direction, since we cannot cross the courtyard."

"On the contrary," I replied, "I believe that in this direction may lie our surest avenue of escape."

"But their thoats are penned in the courtyard," she remonstrated, "and green warriors are never far from their thoats."

"It is because the thoats are there that I wish to investigate the courtyard," I replied.

"The moment they catch our scent," she said, "they will raise a disturbance that will attract the attention of their masters, and we shall immediately be discovered and captured."

"Perhaps," I said; "but if my plans succeed, it will be well worth the risk—though if you are very much afraid I will abandon it."

"No," she said, "it is not for me to choose or direct. You have been generous enough to help me, and I may only follow where you lead; but if I knew your plan, perhaps I might follow more intelligently."

"Certainly," I said; "it is very simple. There are thoats. We shall take one of them and ride away. It will be much easier than walking and our chances for

The girl and I were able to mount with ease, and I urged the fleet animal along the ancient thoroughfare.

escape will be considerably greater, at the same time we shall leave the courtyard gates open, hoping that the other thoats will follow us out, leaving their masters unable to pursue us."

"It is a mad plan," said the girl, "but it is a brave one. If we are discovered, there will be fighting and I am unarmed. Give me your short sword, warrior, that we may at least make the best account of ourselves that is possible."

I UNSNAPPED the scabbard of my short sword from my harness and attached it to hers at her left hip, and as I touched her body in doing so, I could not but note that there was no sign of trembling, such as there would have been had she been affected by fright or excitement. She seemed perfectly cool and collected, and her tone of voice was most reassuring to me. That she was not Sanoma Tora I had known when she had first spoken in the darkness of the room in which I had stumbled upon her; and while I had been keenly disappointed, I was still determined to do the best that I could to assist in the escape of the stranger, though I was confident that her presence might greatly delay and embarrass me, while it subjected me to far greater danger than would have fallen to the lot of a warrior traveling alone. It was, therefore, reassuring to find that my unwelcome companion would not prove entirely helpless.

"I trust you will not have to use it," I said as I finished hooking my short sword to her harness.

"You will find," she said, "that if necessity arises I can use it."

"Good," I said. "Now follow me and keep close to me."

A careful survey of the courtyard from the window of the chamber overlooking it revealed about twenty huge thoats, but none of the green warriors—evidence that they felt secure against enemies.

The thoats were congregated in the far end of the courtyard; a few of them had lain down for the night, but the balance were moving restlessly about as is their habit. Across the courtyard from us, and at the same end, stood a pair of massive gates. As far as I could determine, they barred the only opening into the courtyard large enough to admit a thoat and I assumed that beyond them lay an alley leading to one of the avenues near by.

To reach the gates unobserved by the thoats, was the first step in my plan; and the better to do this I decided to seek an apartment near the gate, on either side of which I saw windows similar to that from which we were looking. Therefore, motioning my companion to follow me, I returned

to the corridor, and again groping through the darkness, we made our way along it, and in the third apartment which I explored, I found a window letting into the courtyard close beside the gate, while in the wall that ran at right angles to that in which the window was set I found a doorway that opened into a large vaulted corridor upon the opposite side of the gate. This discovery greatly encouraged me since it harmonized perfectly with the plan I had in mind, at the same time reducing the risk which my companion must run in the attempted adventure of escape.

"Remain here," I said to her, placing her just behind the gate. "If my plan is successful, I shall ride into this corridor upon one of the thoats, and as I do so, you must be ready to seize my hand and mount behind me. If I am discovered and fail, I shall cry out 'For Helium!' and that must be your signal to escape as best you may."

She laid her hand upon my arm. "Let me go into the courtyard with you," she begged. "Two swords are better than one."

"No," I said. "Alone I have a better chance of handling the thoats than if their attention is distracted by another."

"Very well," she said; and with that I left her, and reëntering the chamber, went directly to the window.

FOR a moment I reconnoitered the interior of the courtyard, and finding conditions unchanged, I slipped stealthily through the window and edged slowly through the gate. Cautiously I examined the latch, and finding it easy to manipulate, I was soon silently pushing one of the gates back upon its hinges. When it was opened sufficiently wide to permit the passage of a thoat, I turned my attention to the beasts within the enclosure.

Practically untamed, these savage creatures are as wild as their uncaptured fellows of the remote sea bottoms, and being controlled solely by telepathic means, they are amenable only to the suggestion of the more powerful minds of their masters, and even so it requires considerable skill to dominate them. I had learned the method from Tars Tarkas himself, and had come to feel considerable proficiency, so that I approached this crucial test of my power with the confidence that was absolutely requisite to success.

Placing myself close beside the gate, I concentrated every faculty of my mind to the direction of my will, telepathically, upon the brain of the thoat I had selected for my purpose, the selection being determined solely by the fact that he stood nearest to me. The effect of my effort was immediately apparent. The creature, which had been searching for the occasional tufts of moss that grew between the stone flags of the courtyard, raised his head and looked about him. At once he became restless, but he gave forth no sound, since I was willing him to silence. Presently his eyes moved in my direction and halted upon me. Then, slowly, I drew him toward me.

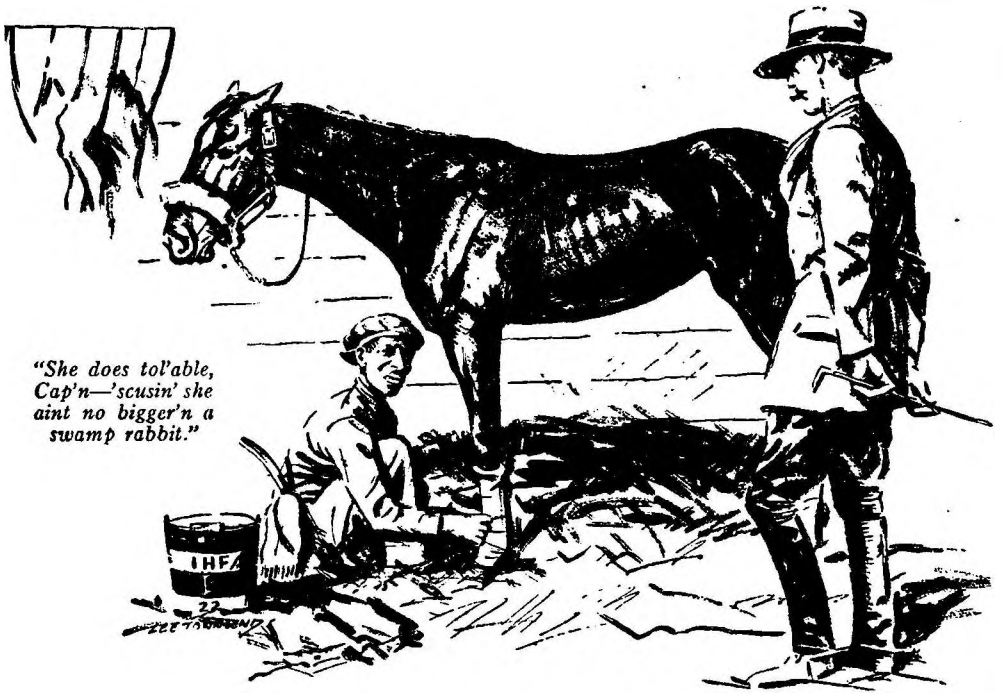
IT was slow work, for he evidently sensed I was not his master, but on he came. Once, when he was quite near me, he stopped and snorted angrily. He must have caught my scent then, and realized that I was not even of the same race as that to which he was accustomed. Then it was that I exerted to their fullest extent every power of my mind. He stood there shaking his ugly head to and fro, his snarling lips baring his great fangs. Beyond him I could see that the other thoats had been attracted by his actions. They were looking toward us and moving about restlessly, always drawing closer. Should they discover me and start to squeal, which is the first and always ready sign of their easily aroused anger, I knew that I should have their riders upon me in no time, since because of his nervous and irritable nature the thoat is the watchdog as well as the beast of burden of the green Barsoomians.

For a moment the beast I had selected hesitated before me as though undecided whether to retreat or to charge, but he did neither; instead he came slowly up to me, and as I backed through the gate into the vaulted corridor beyond, he followed me. This was better than I had expected, for it permitted me to compel him to lie down, so that the girl and I were able to mount with ease.

BEFORE us lay a long vaulted corridor, at the far end of which I could discern a moonlit archway, through which we presently passed onto a broad avenue.

To the west lay the hills, and turning this way, I urged the fleet animal along the ancient deserted thoroughfare between rows of stately ruins—toward what?

Even more tremendous adventures are described in the next installment of this captivating story—in our forthcoming May issue.



"She does tol'able, Cap'n—'scusin' she aint no bigger'n a swamp rabbit."

Ebon Joan

A romance that flowered in old Kentucky—and a race that was gallantly run and won.

By EWING WALKER

Illustrated by Lee Townsend

A LANGUOROUS July afternoon; a young darky, with strangely old features, contentedly leaned against the smooth bole of a cottonwood tree, a racing-saddle forgotten at his side as he raised a mellow and indolent voice in drowsy song:

Gon-na ti-i-ie mah hoss-a to a swingin' limb—

A long pause; a laggard bumblebee indifferently droned before a wilted bloom; deepening shadows mottled the parched earth; the plaintive note of a turtle-dove sounded off yonder in a browning meadow.

Dey bin witches' saddles in mah koss' mane;
An' Ah sho don' want 'em in dar again.

A third pause; a lone buzzard lazily floated about the sky; off beyond the paddocks a mare whinnied; a hidden rain-crow languidly sounded its guttural forecast. The indolent voice concluded its drowsy song:

Gonna ti-i-ie mah hoss,
Gonna ti-i-ie mah hoss,
Gonna ti-i-ie ma hoss-a to a swingin' limb,
Oh h-h, Lawd!

A faint tapping approached along Alan's Walk, and glancing up, I saw Aunt Fran with Beth Carewe at her side—Aunt Fran and her long ebony stick and her dear unseeing eyes, those eyes that I sometimes think see more than any other eyes. We speak of that ribbon of worn brick that leads from the big house to the paddocks as Alan's Walk. It was old Major Alan Churchill who first felt the need of having it there, and who traced its course with the ferrule of his testy "walkin'-cane"—abruptly to the right at one point to save an ancient cottonwood tree planted by his grandfather, and quickly back to the left again, as though nettled at displaying such sentiment. This crotchety bend or crook has come to be known as the Elbow.

AUNT FRAN halted before the small darky, who is known at Oakmead as Mary's Jim. "You brought her?" she asked.

"Yas'm. Put her in de long barn."

Aunt Fran turned to me, her fingertips resting upon Beth's young arm. "I've something to show you. Come along." She led the way along Alan's Walk and halted before the open door of that squat log cabin that has come to be called Mercy Lodge. "Gill!" she called; and again: "Gill!"

Soon he was standing before us, one shoulder lower than the other, one leg shorter than its mate—grim mementoes of his last race in England—and a hint of embarrassment in his eyes and in the way he held his frayed cap.

"We want to look at Ad's filly," Aunt Fran explained, starting along the Walk again. "What do you think of her?"

"I believe she'll do, ma'am," he stated in his hesitant way. "Somehow, she strikes me as 'aving plenty of promise, as you might say. Right here, ma'am."

He led us to a stall at the end of the long barn, and we peered over its half-door at a clean-limbed, somewhat undersized animal, black as night save for a single white star in her forehead, that eyed us soberly.

I turned to Little Gill. "What does Ad call her?"

"Ebon Joan, sir."

"Are you going to train her here?" I persisted.

"I believe so, sir. You see—"

"It is time," crisply interrupted Aunt Fran, "that we go to the house. We've guests for supper."

It was clear enough there was something afoot that I was ignorant of; and it was equally clear that any questioning on my part would be bootless, which you'd understand if you knew Aunt Fran.

Even our guests that night mystified me, but glancing toward the faint smile that lurked upon Aunt Fran's lips, I knew there was method in it all. There was old Carewe, Beth's father, his eyes sparkling, his plump cheeks showing red above his belligerent and animated goatee; Beth, fresh as a spring morning and doing her best to enliven the conversation; Eph Shaddock, dark, smiling, assured and with the air of withholding a deal more than he gave out; and toward my end of the table, Ad Hughes, his eyes sober, his thin lips pressed close.

From time to time I saw Carewe's glance rove from Shaddock to Beth and back to Shaddock again. Though Aunt Fran and Little Gill might mystify me with their doings, I at least knew how the wind blew in that quarter.

Finally they had gone, and only Aunt Fran and I remained in the room. She sat uncommonly erect, her head thrown back, her eyes wide, her hands palms upward upon her lap, her long ebony stick upon the floor at her side. "Open the windows," she abruptly ordered. "—Eph Shaddock's a blackleg. His grandfather before him sold slaves; his father was a sharper; and if I'm not badly mistaken, he's the worst of the lot. I told you," she concluded, "to open the windows."

I KNEW that Ebon Joan had ostensibly been brought to Oakmead for training; but somehow I sensed it also had somewhat to do with Beth and Ad Hughes and Shaddock.

The training of Ebon Joan went on. She was a filly of good blood-lines, well put together and with plenty of heart, it seemed; but whether she could run with the better class of horses was a thing none knew. She had never faced the barrier, for Ad had held her back throughout her two-year-old form. Little Gill saw to her feed and training, while Mary's Jim, Oakmead's first-string rider, gave her her exercise.

In the early haze of each morning, as he jogged her about the farm track, Jim's droning voice reached me, clearly as he started from the gate, faintly as he reached the far turn and then stronger again as he entered the short stretch:

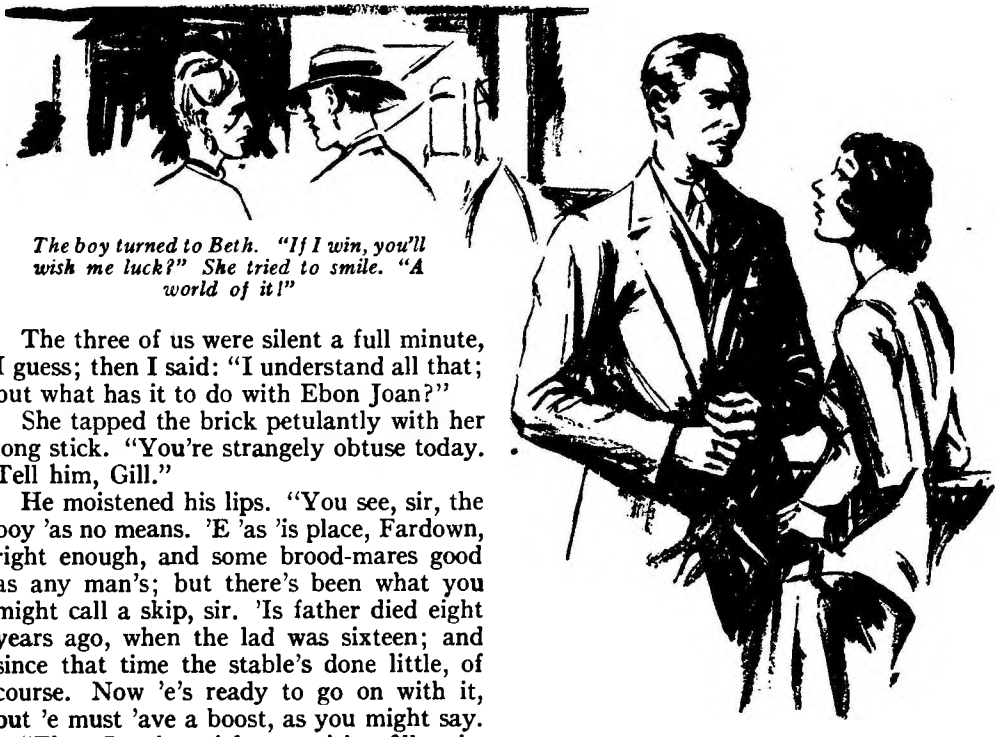
Oh-h-h, yo' can't-a git rich 'dout yo' work-a down heah—
Work-a down heah.
Hit's sweat-a what counts when de boss-a man neah—
Boss-a man neah.
Stri-ped britches an' a red necktie
Don' spell no ticket to de by-an'-by;
Oh-h-h, yo' can't git rich,
Yo' can't git rich,
Yo' can't-a git rich 'dout yo' work-a down heah!

One afternoon in late August I started down Alan's Walk, and came upon Aunt Fran and Little Gill at the Elbow.

She had me sit by her, and for a long moment was silent. Then: "You've been wondering what it's all about?"

"Frankly, yes," I admitted.

"The boy needs help,"—I knew, of course, she meant Ad Hughes,—"and we propose giving it to him." Then she fell silent again, her fingertips tapping the lavender puff at her throat—a habit she has when agitated. Finally: "The idea of that old rooster forcing Beth into a match with that blackleg Shaddock!"



The boy turned to Beth. "If I win, you'll wish me luck?" She tried to smile. "A world of it!"

The three of us were silent a full minute, I guess; then I said: "I understand all that; but what has it to do with Ebon Joan?"

She tapped the brick petulantly with her long stick. "You're strangely obtuse today. Tell him, Gill."

He moistened his lips. "You see, sir, the boy 'as no means. 'E 'as 'is place, Fardown, right enough, and some brood-mares good as any man's; but there's been what you might call a skip, sir. 'Is father died eight years ago, when the lad was sixteen; and since that time the stable's done little, of course. Now 'e's ready to go on with it, but 'e must 'ave a boost, as you might say.

"Ebon Joan's a right promising filly, sir. If we can round 'er into form and win the Fayette Oaks with 'er, why—well, it would bring the boy a right sizable purse, sir, and encourage 'im too, we figure. She'd pay a good price, for she's never started, and the public 'as no line on 'er."

"And that isn't all," interjected Aunt Fran. "Old Carewe's blinded by Eph Shaddock's apparent success and by his flattery! Now, if Ad can only have a little luck—" Abruptly she broke off; then: "I want to see Beth mistress of old Fardown."

"You're a born matchmaker," I laughed.

"There's no match-making needed," she countered, "for they're mad about each other—and neither will admit it. Beth wont go counter to that old strutting rooster of a father,—oh, if her mother were only living!—and Ad, with his silly, lovable ideas of chivalry, will say nothing until he has more to offer. I don't believe in human sacrifices," she ended.

"What other fillies are starting in the Oaks?" I asked.

Little Gill drew a crumpled sheet from his pocket. " 'Ere's a list of those already nominated, sir. The entries wont close for a week or so yet."

I glanced over the list, recognizing most of the entries and all of the owners, of course, for it was a race for Kentucky-bred fillies. "I see none here that stand out," I said.

"Nor I, sir," agreed Gill. "If Ebon Joan continues to train well, I think as 'ow she 'as a good chance, sir."

"I don't see her name in the list," said I.

"We decided to 'old off awhile, sir. There's plenty of time." He moistened his lips and glanced away.

"You're a sly pair," I accused. "Somebody you don't want to know she's starting, eh?"

"Curiosity is not supposed to be a masculine trait," Aunt Fran parried.

"Shaddock doesn't seem to have anything entered," I remarked.

"Not as yet, sir," confirmed Little Gill.

A FEW days later Aunt Fran, Little Gill, Ad and I were loitering at the Elbow discussing Ebon Joan and her progress, when we heard horses coming along the driveway, and glancing up, saw Beth and Shaddock riding toward us.

After we had touched upon little inconsequential neighborhood doings, Shaddock turned to Little Gill. "How are the two-year-olds coming along?"

"Fairly well, I suppose, sir."

"Let's look them over," Shaddock proposed. "It's been a good while since I visited the paddocks."

"Gladly," agreed Aunt Fran, rising.

We passed on down Alan's Walk to the paddocks, and we peered over half-doors,

studying the sleek heads of the Oakmead thoroughbreds quartered there. Suddenly, from the last stall of the paddocks, a low, rhythmically indolent voice reached us—a voice referring to a swingin' limb and witches' saddles, meaning the tangles that come in a horse's mane during the night.

"Is that Mary's Jim?" asked Shaddock.

"I believe so," said Aunt Fran.

He chuckled. "I'd like to speak to him. Great little darky. Haven't seen him since he rode that dead heat at Bowie." And he strode forthwith toward that end stall.

I saw Little Gill once more moisten his lips; and I saw Aunt Fran tightly grip her ebony stick; and I saw Ad stiffen. Then we followed Shaddock.

Within the stall was Ebon Joan, her black coat gleaming, the star in her forehead glistening as a white gem upon a square of velvet. Mary's Jim, upon his knees and wrapping a bandage, looked up.

"Hello, Jim," said Shaddock.

"Howdy, Mr. Shaddock. How you-all come on?"

"First rate." And though he continued chatting with the boy, of weights and condition and bygone incidents, I saw that his eyes, the while, closely studied the black filly before us. "That's a right likely looking filly there, Jim."

"She does tol'able, Cap'n—'scusin' she aint no bigger'n a swamp rabbit." Mary's Jim, be it known, is not one to give out information.

Shaddock eyed him narrowly. "Black Gold wasn't so big—nor Billy Kelly."

"No suh, dey warn't; but you's talkin' 'bout stake-hosses now. Dis heah's jes' a green filly."

"They're all green at the start." He turned toward us. Undoubtedly he had detected our wish to keep him away from that stall. "Interesting-looking filly," he announced. "How is she bred?"

There was a pause. It seemed each of us was groping for a reply that would not be downright discourteous, but which would tell him nothing.

"She's mine," stated Ad of a sudden, a bit too loudly. "By Ebony out of Joan J."

"*Yours?*" Shaddock seemed a little surprised, and possibly, a trifle amused. "And training at Oakmead?" The question was simple enough, but there was a subtle implication in his tone. "Starting her in the Oaks, I suppose."

"Perhaps," the boy admitted, coloring.

I saw Shaddock glance toward Beth. Then he turned to Ebon Joan's stall again. "You've surely picked a hard race for her first time out."

The boy ignored Shaddock—or strove to make it appear that he did so. He turned to Beth, studying her face a long moment. "If I start her, you'll wish me luck?"

"A world of it!" She tried to smile, but her tone was sober enough.

As I saw the look that came into Shaddock's eyes and the smile that stole to his lips, I knew a challenge had been issued—and accepted.

A FEW days later, I came upon Aunt Fran and Little Gill at the Elbow, the one glancing away meditatively, the other tapping the brick walk with her long stick.

"What conspiracy is afoot today?" I asked.

"Show him the list, Gill," she ordered.

He handed me a revised list of the nominations for the Oaks, and in that list I saw the name of Shaddock's filly Bay Malta.

I glanced from Aunt Fran to Little Gill and back to Aunt Fran again. "Why, Bay Malta hasn't the class for that sort of company," I protested. "She's little better than a selling-plater."

"Yes?"—with a rising inflection. There are times when Aunt Fran can be provoking enough. "That should be consoling."

"It certainly should," said I. "Ebon Joan can give her ten pounds at any distance."

She rose, touching the lavender puff at her throat with the tips of her fingers and tilting her chin rather disdainfully. "It isn't a question," she said, "of what Ebon Joan can give Bay Malta, but of what Eph Shaddock can give others somewhat more scrupulous."

I glanced toward Little Gill; but as I saw him innocently peering off toward the paddocks, I knew there was nothing to be gained by questioning him. At the proper time the two conspirators would tell me all; and until that proper time arrived, they would tell me nothing.

One day, just as I entered the house, I came upon Aunt Fran putting in a long-distance call for our old friend Milo Brent of Covington. When, finally, he was on the line, she spoke cryptically, though the wind-up of the conversation was clear enough.

"You'll come tonight?" she asked; and when he had answered her: "Be sure to get here after dark—and come by the back road."

Aunt Fran and Gill had not seen fit to take me into their confidence, and the thing had reached the point where my pride would not permit me to question them.

A bit before nine that night a car rolled up the Oakmead drive, and in a few minutes Milo was with us. It was good to see him again—his short, square figure, his laughing blue eyes, his graying hair, his immaculate neatness despite open collar and wrinkled tie and bagging clothes.

Aunt Fran sat rigidly erect, toying with the lavender puff at her throat; Little Gill, now and again moistening his lips, critically examined the frayed visor of his riding cap. I could see with half an eye I was neither needed nor wanted, so I left them to their mysterious cabals.

That night Milo drove into Lexington and stayed at a hotel—an odd procedure, I thought, for one so at home at Oakmead. By noon the next day he was back, smiling.

"What luck?" asked Aunt Fran.

"Oh, I got her all right. But whew! What a price the robber charged me!"

"It will prove a splendid investment," stated Aunt Fran, reaching for her checkbook. "We'll charge it," she added, "to housecleaning."

"If it cleans the house," chuckled Milo, "I want to bear part of the cost. That's a job I've been wanting done a long while."

Within an hour Milo was gone again.

NEXT evening shortly after dark a horse-van halted before our door. Evidently Aunt Fran and Gill had been expecting it, for they were waiting at the edge of the drive before the wheels stopped turning.

"Where shall I unload her, ma'am?" asked the driver.

"Right here," stated Aunt Fran. "Did you come the back way?"

The fellow laughed. "I sure did, ma'am. Like to got lost, too!"

As I stood there, they unloaded a light-bay filly, started the van's motor, and in a few moments were gone again.

What this phoning Milo and his hurried trip meant—above all, this bringing to Oakmead, after dark and by a circuitous route, an unknown bay filly—all this was more than I could fathom; and while I would permit myself to ask no questions, I would at least keep my eyes open. So, when Little Gill started through the night toward the stables leading the strange bay filly, with Aunt Fran tap-tapping behind, I decided to trudge after them.

The mystery grew as they came to the paddocks and passed by the last of the stalls and continued on their silent way, halting only upon coming to a small stable at the back of the place well hidden in a cluster of low-limbed walnut trees. The filly was placed in the stall, and we turned toward the house again.

"Why are we training Ad's Ebon Joan at Oakmead?" I demanded.

"There are at least three reasons, my dear," she explained. "The track at Fardown is grown up in grass and weeds; there's no Little Gill there to supervise her training; lastly, Mary's Jim is to ride her, and having her here affords him an opportunity of getting acquainted with her and of giving her her workouts without having to neglect his other duties."

"Right. Now we're getting somewhere. But what's this bay filly you've hidden away down in the grove stable?"

"This bay filly?"—airily. "Why, to all appearances she's a thoroughbred not in training."

"I gather as much. But why hide her down there?"

"Why *not* there, my dear? It's a snug place for the young thing."

"Damn!" I ejaculated. Then: "Why did Shaddock, all of a sudden, decide to start a filly in the Oaks when he'd said he was starting none?"

"The gentleman—I beg your pardon—Shaddock," she corrected, "is considerably interested in Beth."

"Good judgment, that."

"The best. And so Eph Shaddock does not intend the boy to win that race if he can prevent it—he feels, I gather, that his own suit will be furthered if he can defeat Ad."

"But beat that field with Bay Malta? She hasn't a chance; she doesn't rate with them!" I protested.

"Perhaps not," acknowledged Aunt Fran; "but you seem to forget Mr. Shaddock."

"No, I don't forget Mr. Shaddock," said I. "He's slick and all that, but he can't put heart into a filly that hasn't it and he can't give speed to one that never had any."

"There's an old saying in Northumberland, sir," Little Gill mildly interposed, "that a fox doesn't visit a 'en-roost for exercise."

"And," added Aunt Fran, rising, "you may be interested in learning we are guarding the hens."

A BETTER day for the Oaks could not have been asked. There lurked in the air of that Indian-summer day a stimulating crispness and yet a pleasing warmth, and the track was lightning-fast. In Oakmead's box Aunt Fran, erect and smiling contentedly, glanced about as though those dear eyes of hers could see as did other eyes; old Carewe, stiff and with stubby beard thrust out, peered about importantly; Beth, a little wan, strove to appear at ease, and I saw her smile gratefully whenever Aunt Fran whispered to her or patted her hand; Ad stared straight before him, his face drawn, his thin lips pressed close.

The horses were coming to the post for the fourth race when Shaddock joined us. After a word or two to the rest of us, he turned to Ad. "Well, my boy,"—somewhat patronizingly,—"think you have a chance with Ebon Joan?"

Ad straightened. "Chance? Of course. That's why I'm starting her."

Shaddock laid a hand upon his shoulder and smiled down at him. "Son, take a tip from an older head: Don't bet your roll on her."

"Thanks—for your advice." There was meaning enough in the pause. "And you? Think you have a chance with Bay Malta?"

"Chance?" Shaddock laughed easily. "She'll breeze." He leaned nearer us. "I'm not in the habit of doing this, but— I've a sizable wager on my filly. Use your own judgment. See you after the fifth." And he was gone.

Old Carewe rose. "Well, that's good enough for me," he announced. "I'm going down and buy a few tickets on Bay Malta. I'll risk a thousand on that boy's judgment any time."

Aunt Fran glanced up, smiling. "I would not do that, if I were you."

"Why—" Carewe spluttered, "why, you heard what he said, didn't you?"

"Perfectly," she acknowledged.

Abruptly he seated himself and stared at her questioningly. "Aren't you betting on the race?"

"Oh, yes. I'm placing a little one, by way of wishing my friend luck, on Ebon Joan. You see, I'm just a foolish old woman who bets on sentiment—and Little Gill's judgment."

Old Carewe fumed. It was obvious enough he expected Shaddock's Bay Malta to come home in front, and would have a wager on her but for the fact his hostess apparently wished him not to.

I rose, preparing to go down into the palm garden, and was a little surprised when Beth got upon her feet and stepped to my side. Swiftly she glanced toward her father, to make sure he was not observing her, and then toward Ad. Furtively she handed me a small roll of bills. "Ebon Joan—to win," she whispered.

THE fillies for the Oaks were entering the paddocks, so I decided to look them over before placing my money. I studied each in turn: Winthrop's chestnut Sacrilege, her head flung high, her eyes flashing; the Cherokee Farm's gray Daffodil, a nervous, snappy little minx that would, I decided, give trouble a-plenty at the post; Shaddock's Bay Malta, a drab, placid, business-like lady strangely composed; all of them I studied, wondering, the while, if Ebon Joan could show them the shape of her heels.

Finally I came to Joan's stall.

"I'd keep my eye on Dodger Ware," muttered Gill, adjusting the saddle. " 'E'd foul you for a shilling."

"Ah'll sho do dat," said Mary's Jim.

"There are twelve in the field," pointed out Gill, tugging at a stirrup leather. "Watch 'em at the turns, or they'll pocket you."

"Ef dey pockets dis little gal an' me," chuckled Jim, "dey sho gotta do some tall movin'."

"I'd take it easy," advised Gill, "till you 'it the far turn. Then I'd make my play."

"Yas suh! Us'll float along till home's in sight!"

I hurried away; somehow my heart was racing a bit as I made my way to one of the windows and bet all that I had on Ebon Joan to win. I had not planned doing this. I had meant to make a modest wager and let it go at that; but after watching Little Gill and Mary's Jim, and after listening to the two of them—well, I bet what I had.

WHEN I reëntered the box, Beth glanced up inquiringly and smiled when I nodded; and making sure her father did not look on, leaned over and furtively—and encouragingly—touched Ad's hand.

Of a sudden, off to the right of us a bell rang and a bugle sounded "Boots and Saddles."

As the horses paraded to the post, I leaned over Beth and Ad and studied each filly as she passed, trying to gauge her chance of beating Ebon Joan. I moistened

my lips and swallowed as Ebon, black as night, with a single white splotch in her forehead that gleamed as a lone star in the heavens, minced by.

Past the stands the red-coated rider upon his piebald pony led them; they wheeled and strode toward the tape. My heart racing, I thought for a moment it was to be a perfect walking start; but of a sudden, Thompson's Selim lurched through the tape. Starters' whips cracked and bit; the head starter shouted a warning; the line divided into two crowding, shoving halves; jockeys' heels pounded upon heaving sides. They steadied, straightened.

Halfway down the stretch the drab bay filly thrust a head in front; whereupon Mary's Jim shook up Joan.

My eyes rested upon Shaddock's Bay Malta, and I think my heart must have pounded the harder, what with the fear that came to me. She had drawn the rail position, and stood there as motionless as the odds-board across the track. "There," thought I, "is one that'll never be left at the post." But why watch her? In that field she was not even a contender.

And then a gong sounded and a tape flashed and a great rolling, hurtling sound crashed upon my ears as twelve thoroughbreds leaped away toward the first turn.

I WATCHED the black form of Ebon Joan and black Mary's Jim crouched upon her. "She's off well," I muttered.

"Fourth," stated Ad.

"Do you reckon— Who's that in the lead?" I demanded.

"Daffodil." The boy spoke evenly, but his cheeks were drawn and his eyes wide.

The crowd acclaimed her. "Attagirl!" " 'Et's go, Daff!" "Watch that filly run!" And run she did. Too eagerly, in fact, did she run, for no being of flesh and sinew and bone could set such a pace at the quarter-pole and hold it home. Back of Daffodil was Thompson's Selim, and in third position, running smoothly as an oily stream, was Ebon Joan. Just back of Joan, nose even with her rump, was Shaddock's Bay Malta, eating up distance as I had never seen her do before.

They wheeled into the back-stretch, and with hands none too steady, I focused my binoculars. Selim had moved up on Daffodil and was running nose-and-nose with her. Two lengths behind was Ebon Joan. Her head was high, and I knew she had plenty in reserve.

Halfway down the back-stretch I saw Daffodil falter; her tail switched, and she fell back, and in a brief moment half the field had passed her.

I found myself clutching my glasses with one trembling hand and pounding Ad upon the back with the other, for across the track at the three-quarter pole two fillies were running head and head. One was a chestnut I recognized as Sacrilege, and the other a gleaming black that I knew was Ebon Joan. Two lengths behind these two raced Bay Malta.

I leaned over Aunt Fran. "Joan and Sacrilege are out in front," I stated, trying to control my voice.

"Where is Bay Malta?" she asked serenely.

"Third," I growled; "but she can't—"

"Don't forget Mr. Shaddock, my dear," said she.

Then I saw that which had me remembering Mr. Shaddock well enough and that left my hands at my sides and my shoulders sagging. They had rounded the far turn and were tearing toward the stretch. Still two horses were running head and head, with a third two lengths behind; but two of them, I saw, had changed places. It now was Sacrilege that was running third, and it was Bay Malta that had moved into her place and was fighting for the lead with Ebon Joan. Once more I pressed my glasses to my eyes, and I saw Mary's Jim turn his head, swiftly glancing toward Bay Malta and her rider; and then I saw his head again press upon Ebon Joan's neck.

They wheeled into the stretch, and still a single blanket would have covered the two of them. The crowd was shouting, roaring, screaming. "Ebon! Ebon!" "Come on, you Malta girl!" " 'Et's go-o-o, Bay! 'Et's go!" "Attagal, Joan! Wheel home!"

Halfway down the stretch the drab bay filly thrust a head in front; whereupon Mary's Jim shook up Joan. She responded gamely, and I saw the star in her black forehead gleaming an instant in front again; but it was for an instant only, and then smooth-running Bay Malta had the lead once more. They clattered past us and past the judges' stand; and I sank back in my chair, mopping my face, my heart pounding madly. Bay Malta had won by half a length.

I glanced toward Beth. The blood had left her cheeks, but she was smiling bravely enough; and I saw her hand rest a moment upon Ad's; and I saw the boy, his face drawn, glance up gratefully.

"That's what I get!" Old Carewe was upon his feet, his stout legs braced, his graying goatee thrust out belligerently. "I wanted to place a bet on her; and she'll pay ten to one if she pays a dime!"

Slowly—all too slowly, it struck me—Aunt Fran turned to him; and still she smiled tranquilly. "A race is never won till the bell rings," she said enigmatically.

"Won? Great Cæsar!" he spluttered. "What margin do you want? A furlong?"

This she smilingly ignored, and turned to me. "Do you see Little Gill near the judges' stand?"

I rose, peering down the track; and I did see Little Gill. For a moment he spoke with an officer stationed at the foot of the narrow stairs that lead up into the judges' post; then he mounted those stairs.

I turned to Aunt Fran. "He—why, he's talking with the stewards," I looked again. "He—Milo—Milo Brent is with him."

"What an odd time"—she was smiling toward each of us in turn—"to call upon the stewards!"

THE horses had wheeled and were trotting or slowly galloping back to the stand; and I saw Shaddock standing upon the track and smilingly awaiting Bay Malta. And then I felt Aunt Fran's hand upon my arm. "Do you see a horse coming from the stables?" she asked, innocently enough.

Turning, I glanced to the left, and I saw approaching the stands a light-bay filly—a filly that seemed strangely familiar, but which somehow I could not identify; and my eyes widened when I saw atop her one of our stableboys from Oakmead. And I continued staring as I saw the boy halt her beneath the judges' stand and as near Bay Malta as the fence of the winner's ring permitted. She might have been Bay Malta's twin, so like her was she. And then I saw the presiding steward lean from his window and beckon to Shaddock; and I saw Shaddock, a different expression upon his face, mount the stairs. The next instant I was racing toward the judges' stand.

The crowd was craning its necks and asking what was wrong, for the "official bell" had not rung, though Bay Malta's number was in the winner's place right enough, with Ebon Joan's second and Sacrilege's third.

I elbowed my way through the throng; and soon, after displaying my owner's badge and giving a hurried explanation to an officer or two, was with them in the stewards' room.

Milo Brent, smiling as ever, seemed to have the floor. "I'm trying to tell you the filly that just won isn't Bay Malta, that I own now, but Beulah B."

Shaddock leaned toward him; and I give him credit for a bit of good acting. "Do you mean to accuse—"

"Yep!" interrupted Milo. "Just what I'm doing. I'm accusing you of starting a ringer, of running Beulah B. under the name of Bay Malta." He turned to the stewards. "You see, Miss Churchill and Mr. Gilliver, here, had their suspicions that there was a nigger in the woodpile, so they called me on long-distance. I drove down from Covington, took a back road to Oak-

The head steward turned to Shaddock. "If you've entered any other horses, I'd advise you to withdraw them!"

mead, and they gave me the lay o' the land. They had found that Shaddock had bought Beulah B. from the Belhaven Stable; so I drove out to Shaddock's and looked over the stock, and finally we came to a stall with a bay filly in it. 'What's this?' I asked. 'That's Beulah B.,' he said. 'I bought her from the Belhaven people.' 'Want to sell her?' I asked. He sort o' laughed. 'Well, I'll sell anything I've got, at a price,' he said. I laughed with him. 'Strictly business, eh? What'll you take for her?' I asked. Finally he made me a price, and I gave him a check. Here it is—canceled. Now, I happen to know Beulah B. as well as I know—well, my feet; and though she and Bay Malta are as alike as two peas, there are a few little marks on each, and I saw I was getting Bay Malta, that's just a good plater, and not Beulah B. Step downstairs with me, and I'll show you—though I 'spect you know well enough I'm not in the habit of barkin' up the wrong tree."

Then he told of sending a van to Shaddock's and of its heading down the main road toward Covington, but doubling back into a side road to Oakmead, where the real Bay Malta had been kept under cover.

There was a deal of sputtering on Shaddock's part, and some grim-faced questioning by the judges, and a quiet word or two—a telling word or two—by Little Gill. All the while the crowd was milling about and wondering and shouting to the judges.

Finally the head steward turned to Shaddock. "You'll hear from us further before morning. If you've entered any other horses, I'd advise you to withdraw them!"

An order was given. Bay Malta's number was removed from the winner's position; Ebon Joan's was moved up into first place, Sacrilege's into second and Selim's into third.

BACK at Oakmead we stood a moment before the door. Alan's Walk dimly stretched before us through the twilight; off toward the paddocks I saw vaguely outlined Alan's oak, which marks the Elbow. From somewhere down by the paddocks a mellow and indolent voice reached us:

"Gon-na ti-i-ie mah hoss-a to a swingin' limb—"

Ad turned to us, smiling. "Great little rider—and more," he said.

" 'E's all of that, sir," said Little Gill. " 'E's black, but very w'ite, as you might say. Very w'ite indeed, sir."

Aunt Fran touched her ebony stick to the walk. "Meanwhile, supper will soon be ready. Perhaps—"

Old Carewe stepped up, his graying beard thrust out, his stout legs braced. "That—that crook! And to think—"

We strolled on—Aunt Fran and old Carewe and I, while Little Gill turned toward Mercy Lodge. But Ad and Beth lingered and I saw them make their way, hand in hand and arm in arm, down Alan's Walk to the Elbow, where so many others—arm in arm and hand in hand—had lingered for moments that grew into years.

The Wreck of the Sea Gull

A strange drama of the South Seas—with its still stranger climax fathoms deep on the ocean floor

By L. PATRICK GREENE

Illustrated by O. E. Hake

HE was as innocent as a newborn babe—and looked it. His curly hair had golden tints in it; his eyes were clear, candid and as blue as a tropical sky.

What brought him to Papua no one knew. Although distressingly frank about many things, he kept a close mouth about that. One gathered that he was an American of good birth and education—his accent and manners proclaimed that; and his name, he said, was Jerome Withers. But no one called him by that name. A drunken lout of a beachcomber, seeing him for the first time, had called him "Cupid," and the name stuck. It was so appropriate.

But he was popular with the men.

A number of them—this was in the club at Port Moresby—took it upon themselves to warn him against going on a pearling expedition with Dago Sam.

"Now we've told you about him, wont you change your mind?" said one.

"I can't afford to," Cupid answered. "Besides—we've signed a contract."

"He'll rook you as sure as you're born," said bald-headed, fat-paunched Resident Magistrate Simpson.

"I shall watch him very closely, sir."

"Look here, you young fool," blurted Trader Skemp, and his reputation was none too savory, "on your own say-so you know nothing about sailing a ship, you know nothing about pearling or niggers. You're as ignorant as a babe—an' yet you sink all your capital in a lousy tub of a pearler that any of us could have told you is only fit for breaking up."

"Some of you did," Cupid admitted.

"Well, then,"—Skemp became wrathfully indignant,—"you spend all your money in a leaky tub, and moldy gear—"

"I bought most of my gear from you, sir," Cupid said suavely. "I'm sorry to hear it's moldy."

"Well—it might be worse. Anyway,"—Skemp concluded his indictment,—"knowing nothing, you go out with a wormeaten ship,—her bottom planks are so rotten you've got to tread light or you'll go through 'em,—rotten gear and the biggest blackguard unhung for a partner."

Cupid laughed. "He knows pearls and he's a good diver, isn't he, gentlemen?"

"Yes—no doubt about that."

"Then I don't see any reason why our expedition shouldn't be a huge financial success. The boat may be leaky; but if an experienced sailor O. K.'s it, and is ready to risk his life in it, that's enough for me. Same goes for the gear. With his morals I'm not concerned—as long as he don't force them on my notice."

"He will—he will," a big hulking fellow from the gold-fields exclaimed. "And what will you do?"

Cupid looked absently at his closed fist.

"There are ways," he murmured.

"*And* ways," countered the miner. "Such as a stab in the back, or a dose of poison, or a revolver bullet, or to be gently dropped overboard with a gale blowing. Dago Sam's experienced in the use of all—an' worse."

Cupid smiled, and said:

"Nothing you can say will make me change my mind. I've gone into this with my eyes open—"

"But they aint educated," Skemp growled. "They're weak—like a pup's."

"And"—Cupid ignored the interruption—"I'm convinced that it will pan out well. I'll come back with my pockets full of pearls! As for Dago Sam—tell me one

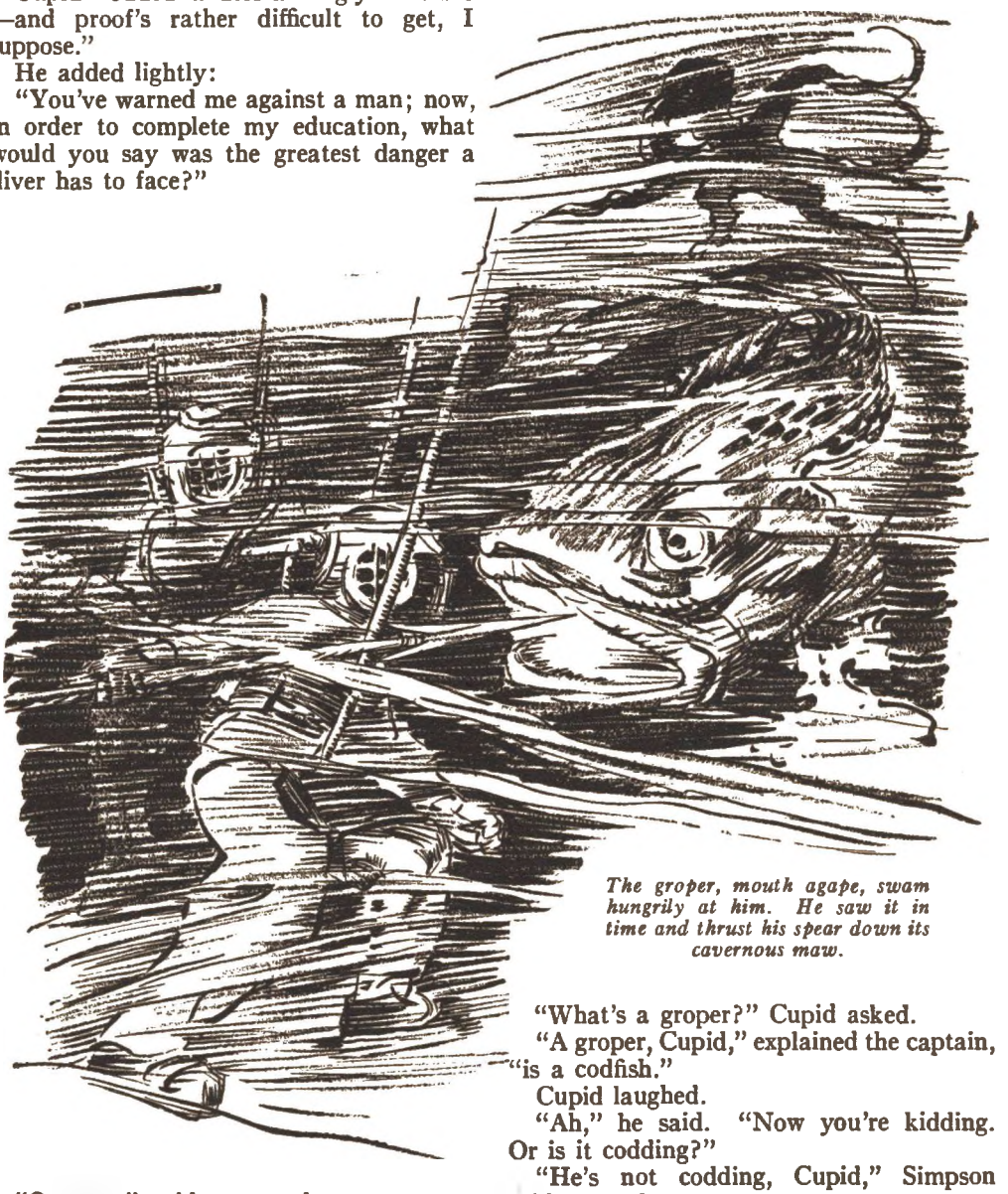
thing, sir." He directly addressed R. M. Simpson: "If he's all you say, why hasn't he been arrested and hanged?"

"Suspicion's not proof, Cupid."

Cupid nodded understandingly. "I see—and proof's rather difficult to get, I suppose."

He added lightly:

"You've warned me against a man; now, in order to complete my education, what would you say was the greatest danger a diver has to face?"



The groper, mouth agape, swam hungrily at him. He saw it in time and thrust his spear down its cavernous maw.

"Octopus," said one, and gave a gruesome account of a diver's experiences.

"Shark," said another.

"Giant clam," said a third.

"Crocs—if you're diving near a river's mouth!"

"You're all wrong." The speaker was the wizened little captain of a trading schooner. "There aint anything worse than a groper. That's what one of 'em did to me, Cupid." He raised his right arm above the table. It ended abruptly at the wrist.

"You're right, Andy!" the others assented. "We'd forgotten the groper."

"What's a groper?" Cupid asked.

"A groper, Cupid," explained the captain, "is a codfish."

Cupid laughed.

"Ah," he said. "Now you're kidding. Or is it codding?"

"He's not codding, Cupid," Simpson said earnestly.

"Oh—but draw it mild!" Cupid expostulated, and somehow he gave the impression that he knew all about cod.

Beckoning to the club waiter, he ordered a round of drinks. When they arrived—

"Your health, Cupid," said Captain Jerry, "an' here's wishin' you good winds!"

"I'll give you top price for your pearls," said Trader Skemp.

"Let the natives know you're a friend of mine," said R. M. Simpson.

"A shotgun loaded with buckshot is a powerful argument!" said the miner.

"An'," Captain Jerry concluded warningly, "if you run across a groper, don't hang around to argue the point with him. I did, an'—it was damned hard having to learn to write all over again."

"Thanks, gentlemen!" he said. "An' now I must go an' pick up Dago Sam. We sail on the noon tide."

CUPID found his partner at the appointed place, a low dive on the waterfront, a place frequented by beachcombers and half-castes, by gold-diggers and traders whose ethics were peculiar and whose morals were decidedly flexible.

Dago Sam was seated with two half-caste girls at one of the small tables. He waved as Cupid entered, calling:

"Come an' join us, Mister. We've been so lonelee waiting for you—yess!"

Cupid did not move from the doorway.

"It's time we were on board, Sam," he said. "We have no time to waste if we want to catch the tide."

"There are other tides, Mister. Truly there is no hurree. You must make the acquaintance of these charming ladies. Their skin is so-a soft."

And he rubbed his unshaven chin brutally against the naked shoulder of one of the girls, laughing at her cry of pain.

Cupid's eyes narrowed. He advanced a step or two into the room. Men and women sitting at their tables sniggered fatuously. A grizzled beachcomber, a gin-soaked giant of a man, whispered a hoarse warning as Cupid passed.

"Careful, youngster," he said out of the corner of his mouth. "Don't try no Galahad stuff in a place like this."

Cupid's eyes thanked him for the warning. And he said equably:

"We must sail on this tide, Sam. I can't afford to hang about any longer. Come along, there's a good fellow."

Dago Sam rose at that, leering contemptuously.

"When the mister talks like that," he said, "what can one do? So I come, Mister—and these ladies, they come too."

He spoke to them sharply in the native dialect, and grinning self-consciously, they too rose and followed him as he walked with a swagger toward Cupid.

Cupid said bluntly:

"The girls are not coming, Sam."

"Oh, but yess," the other said easily. "They are so-a verry nice. You will say so, too, when you get to know them. Now you say to yourself they are black. But by an' by, you will say: 'They are women. An' that is all that matters.' Yess! So we will go now to the boat."

"The girls," Cupid repeated firmly, "are not coming."

Dago Sam laughed as, with a shrug of his shoulders, he returned to his table.

"Then I too," he drawled, "are not coming."

"By God you are!" Cupid exclaimed wrathfully. "You agreed to come; you've been living on my money, you and your crew, for the past month. You can't back out now—you signed an agreement."

Said Dago Sam:

"Nevair have I been held by a piece of paper, Mister. I go *pouf* an' the piece of paper, it is not. It is all one to me whether I go or stay. Maybe so it is better that I stay. I do not like you as much as I did. I think, too, you do not like me. I think if we voyaged long together we should try to kill each other. An' that would not be so-a verry nice for you. But I am a gentleman. I cannot see so handsome a young man distressed. I will go with you—but the girls too come."

"You come—alone!"

"No, no. Alone—I stay. An' there the matter ends." He added something in the native vernacular which made the girls laugh.

"You're wrong," said Cupid. "The matter does not end there. You're coming with me—and now!"

AS he spoke, he moved swiftly to the table, and grasping Dago Sam's coat collar, jerked that man to his feet.

"You are crude, Mister," Dago Sam said, breaking free from Cupid's grip with an eel-like twist. "An' I do not like crudity."

His hands went swiftly to the back of his neck—he kept a knife hidden there—and came away empty.

He swore viciously, swore again when he saw that Cupid now held the knife in his hand, and with a mocking light in his blue eyes, was testing the keenness of the blade with the ball of his thumb.

"But this one you did not get, Mister," Dago Sam snarled. "You shall have it now."

He drew another knife—the one he wore

so prominently in a sheath at his belt—and with almost the same motion, hurled it at Cupid.

But his aim was hurried and the knife missed its target; Cupid's rapid swerve had something to do with it. The next moment Dago Sam dropped to the ground, felled by a bone-crushing uppercut, delivered with all the force of Cupid's two hundred pounds.

Instantly the place was in an uproar; most of the men there had, at one time or other, shared in Dago Sam's enterprises to their own material advantage. He was to many their one source of income and, though they inwardly gloated over his defeat, they had no intention of permitting his victor to escape. Knives flashed.

Cupid looked at the men appraisingly.

Stooping swiftly, he picked up Dago Sam, slung him easily across his shoulders. The men halted, undecided; knife-throwing was barred now, lest by chance they hit the man they wanted to rescue. Cupid seized that moment of their indecision to act. Swinging a heavy chair in his right hand, he made a rush for the door.

The men gave way; one, a little slower than the others, got in the way of Cupid's clumsy club and collapsed with a yell.

Cupid had almost won clear; two more strides, and he would have gained the street where the men would not dare to follow him, for they confined their evil doings to the den which housed them.

They rushed at him, closing in on him from the rear. He tried to wheel in order to meet their attacks; he swung his chair desperately until it splintered in his hands; then their weight of numbers overwhelmed him, and he went down.

Only their vicious eagerness saved him. They got in each other's way—pushing, snarling, kicking.

Cupid, dizzy,—but still holding on to Dago Sam,—almost succeeded in rising to his feet.

Some one leaped on him from behind; a bottle was brandished above his head. Then a revolver-shot sounded; the bottle was smashed to pieces, and the wielder stood looking stupidly at the bottle-neck he held in his hand while Cupid, grinning, shaking his head, was saturated with the rot-gut whisky the bottle had contained.

The shot halted the other men, and they drew back scowlingly as a dried-up, bandy-legged little man reeled to Cupid's side, flourishing a revolver.

"Fair play's a jewel!" he bellowed. "An' if any of ye scum wants to come up one at a time, or mebbe two at a time, against the pretty boy here,—an' sure he's a broth of a boy!—I have nothin' to say. But otherwise, you have me gun to contend with."

HE waited a few moments but no one seemed anxious to respond to his invitation.

"Then now we will leave ye, gentlemen, though gentlemen ye are not—but low scum you are, a black curse on you all." And he said with an elaborate bow to Cupid: "After you, sir!" He motioned that man to precede him out of the door.

He himself backed out, his revolver covering the men who, contenting themselves with shouting threats, sullenly returned to their tables and resumed their drinking.

Cupid looked gratefully down at the man who had supported him, and discovered to his astonishment that he was crying: Maudlin tears of self-pity rolled down his wrinkled cheeks and lost themselves in the tobacco-stained, age-whitened hairs which fringed his chin.

"Why—what—" Cupid began.

The other had slumped to the ground, holding his head in his hands, rocking back and forth.

"It's always the way," he wailed. "I'm always letting me heart rule me head—an' now look at the fix I've got meself into. I can't go back in there—they'd bide their time, then jump on me! I aint got nowhere to go. I got no money; I got nothing. I'm an old man an' me eyesight's going. I meant to hit that devil who was going to brain you, on the wrist. Instead of which I misses an' only breaks the bottle. Och! It's a sad world, an' so it is."

Cupid checked a laugh. "Do you know anything about sailing a boat?" he said.

"Can a duck swim? I've sailed many a boat, single-handed, through bigger gales than you ever thought of. But what of it?"

"If you'd like to come with me—" Cupid began tentatively.

The old fellow took him up immediately. He jumped to his feet.

"Come on," he said. "Let's get aboard. Only, I warns you, the first day or so out I'll be fit for nothing. I'm always seasick the first two or three days."

Cupid nodded.

"What's your name, Granddad?"

"Martin—Ginger Martin—Gin for short, unsweetened. That's me. An' I reckon I

ought to know your name, but I can't remember. . . . . Let's see: you're the dead spittin' image of a lad I knew three four years ago. Met him on one of the Trobriand islands. I forgot his name. Maybe I never knew it. My memory aint what it was. An' my eyesight's getting bad. I meant to hit that fellow on the wrist."

He collapsed again to the ground in another fit of maudlin weeping.

The man on Cupid's back was beginning to stir fitfully. Once he moaned.

"Come on, Granddad!" said Cupid.

"I aint comin'," Ginger said stubbornly. "Not if that limb of hell you're carryin' is goin'."

"He's coming, Granddad," Cupid said firmly. "An' you're coming too."

He pulled old Ginger Martin to his feet, and without further speech, strode down across the beach to where a dinghy, manned by two natives, awaited him.

Dago Sam still hung limply over his shoulder, and he dragged Ginger Martin —indifferent to the old man's struggles, curses and tearful entreaties—by his coat collar. It was an unusual spectacle even for a place inured to the unusual; and it seemed that the total population of Port Moresby was on hand to see him embark.

Once on board his ship, the *Wasp,* an untidy-looking cutter of some eighteen tons, Cupid left Ginger Martin to his own devices, and Dago Sam he locked in the cabin —first securely binding and gagging him.

Then he went on deck and ordered the crew to line up before him.

They obeyed, grudgingly: six dirty, villainous-looking Papuans.

"We are going," Cupid said slowly, "to the Trobriand Islands. Do you know the way?"

They laughed, at that. Did this white fool think the sea was crisscrossed with paths like the jungle? Cupid looked at them thoughtfully. He said presently:

"Where is the old white man?"

More grins answered him, then one pointed aft where Ginger Martin sprawled fast asleep, snoring loudly, an empty gin bottle in his hand.

Cupid frowned. "Who," said he, "is the mate—the boss boy?"

A pockmarked, cross-eyed individual sidled forward.

"I am, boss," he said truculently. "Name for me is Tom."

"Well, Tom," Cupid said easily, "you give all orders—see? We sail now. Quick!"

Tom shrugged his shoulders.

"Dago Sam—he cap'n. He no give orders, we no do. We sail without he say-so—we catch 'um plenty hell. You only a fool white man."

He shrugged his shoulders, laughed insolently and turned away, spitting on the deck as he did so.

The next thing he knew, he had been seized by the waist and lifted high.

"You need to be taught manners," Cupid said, and dropped him overboard. The others muttered angrily; their hands dropped to their knives. But there their demonstration ended. They were a little awed by the white man's strength and rapidity of movement. Furthermore, they had been warned by local members of the armed constabulary that this white man was a friend of *Boka bada*—the fat Resident Magistrate. And they intended to do nothing which would bring them face to face with his withering wrath. They would wait until they got out of his jurisdiction. And then—

They looked apathetically at Tom who now climbed aboard, his face convulsed with wrath; but Tom's fighting mood evaporated as Cupid walked menacingly toward him.

"Do we sail," said Cupid, "or—"

There was no need to complete the threat.

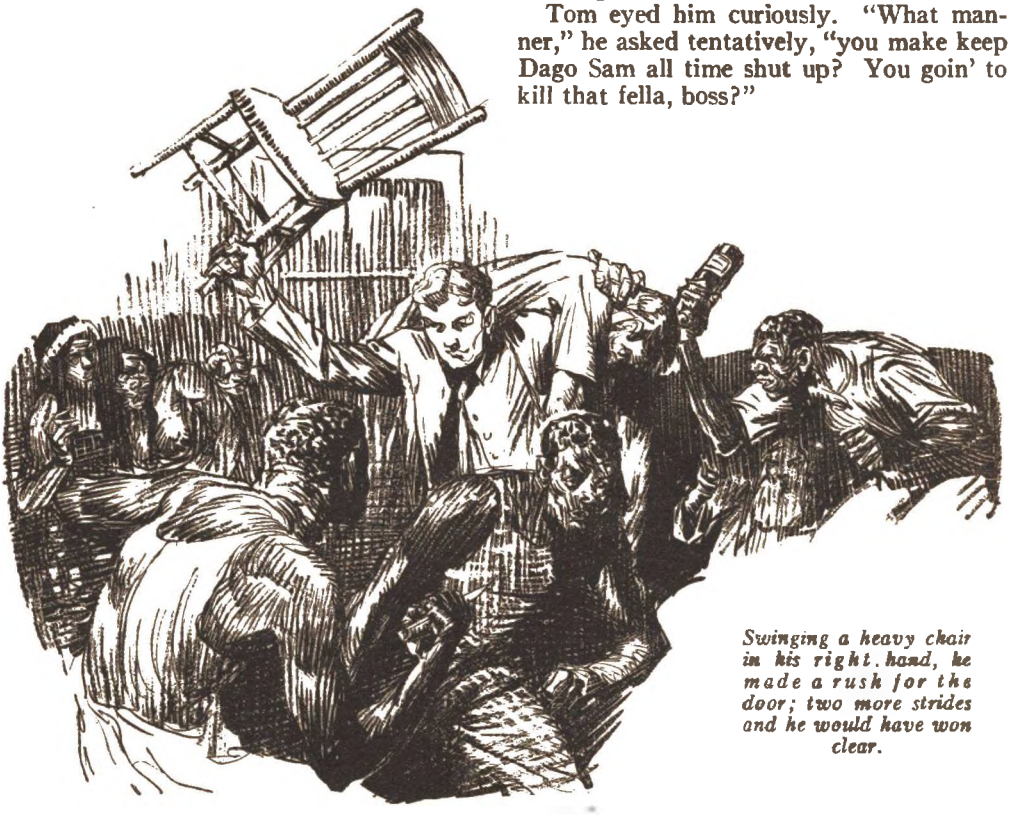
Tom turned wrathfully on his fellows, cursing them, bellowing orders, speeding the laggards to the tasks he had given them with kicks and blows.

And so in due course the anchor was raised, the sails set, and the cutter moved sluggishly to sea.

IT was two weeks later, and the *Wasp*—she had just played a game of touch with the mushroom coral reefs which dot the sea between Goodenough Isle and the Trobriands—lay thankfully at anchor. Her mast was gone, her dinghy smashed to firewood; she listed heavily to port, and she was so full of water that she rode the swell like a rotten log.

That she still floated at all was a miracle. That she had survived the battering of the storm through which she had driven these past three days and had escaped running her nose into one of the many half-submerged reefs which make the chart look as if it were fly-specked—not to mention those reefs which are *not* charted—is a still greater miracle.

The sea was dead calm, but occasionally it heaved mightily, and here and there mushroom reefs broke the surface and emphasized the danger of anchoring in such a place. But the danger of drifting was well guarded against. The *Wasp* was on the lee side of a half-submerged ledge between Baimapu and Kiriwini—her anchor was on the top of the ledge, and she had a kedge out astern. Everything that could be done to insure security had been done, and now Cupid was looking shoreward through his telescope.



Swinging a heavy chair in his right hand, he made a rush for the door; two more strides and he would have won clear.

The beach at Kiriwini swarmed with natives; some launched their canoes and paddled toward the schooner. Suddenly they turned with one accord and paddled furiously back to the beach. The men on the cutter could hear their yells; five minutes later the beach was deserted. Cupid turned to Tom who stood passively beside him.

"What does that mean?" he asked.

Tom grinned.

"Maybe they saw me. They know me boy belong Dago Sam. They no like him. They hate him for true. They think now he be going along shore an' give them fella boy plenty hell. Them fella go back in bush an' hide."

Cupid nodded thoughtfully. He had lost his pink-and-white complexion. The sun and wind had worked their alchemy upon him, and his bare arms and shoulders stood out like bronze against the white cotton singlet he wore.

Tom eyed him curiously. "What manner," he asked tentatively, "you make keep Dago Sam all time shut up? You goin' to kill that fella, boss?"

"No!" Cupid said. "We're going to dive here. He will dive too."

"He will kill you for sure," Tom said "That fella—he'll be plenty mad. He kill you, Ginger, me—he kill everybody!"

"And you will let him?" questioned Cupid. "He is only one, while you—"

"You only one fella, boss," Tom interrupted. "You say along of us fellas—you sail damn' boat to Trobriands. We say, 'No damn' fear!' but we do. You plenty smart fella—but Dago Sam, he smart too."

"You have laughed at Dago Sam?"

Tom raised his eyebrows signifying assent, then hurried aft to join the rest of the crew, who were making merry over a bottle of gin Cupid had "dashed" them in celebration of a difficult voyage safely ended.

Cupid looked after him thoughtfully, pulling at his lower lip; then he walked

slowly to the cabin amidship. The door was strongly padlocked, and lolling negligently against it was Ginger Martin.

The old man's eyes were brighter than they had been for many years, and he had filled out considerably: good food, clean clothing and association with Cupid had gone a long way to restoring his self-respect. He was mentally alert—and very happy. He grinned affectionately at Cupid.

"He's madder than a wet hen, he is," Ginger Martin said. "Listen to him!"

From the cabin sounded angry curses; fists pounded on the heavy door.

"He'll be madder before I've finished with him," said Cupid. He unlocked the door, entered the cabin, closing the door behind him.

Ginger crouched down, his ear to the keyhole. Then he shook his head self-condemningly, and muttering, "None o' my business," rose to his feet and went "forrard," where he sat in thoughtful silence. Occasionally he looked toward the cabin; occasionally he looked aft, licking his lips thirstily. He would have liked to join the natives: that he resisted the temptation indicated the vast strides he had made, with Cupid's help, to rehabilitation.

AS Cupid entered the cabin he was greeted by a snarl of rage, and Dago Sam rushed furiously at him, his fists swinging wildly.

Calmly Cupid held him off with one hand, as with the other he locked the door. Then he said sharply:

"Sit down!"

And Dago Sam sat down.

"You're going to pay for this, Mister," he lisped.

"Maybe!" said Cupid, and smiled.

"You will find it no joke, Mister," Dago Sam continued. "You have abducted me. I will go to the Resident Magistrate—"

Cupid laughed uproariously at that.

"What a tale to tell!" he spluttered. "Dago Sam—the man everyone fears—abducted, carried to sea against his will, shut up in a cabin and not allowed to see anyone! But they saw *you*, Sam. Believe me, they did."

Dago Sam swore viciously, but he was evidently uneasy. He looked like a burlesque comedian. Half his head had been shaved; the hair of the other half was long and matted. He was dressed in woman's clothing: long, full skirt and tight bodice, with leg-of-mutton sleeves.

Day after day, since this voyage had commenced, he had fought against wearing the clothes which Cupid had insisted he wear, until at last he could hold out no longer. To a certain extent his spirit was broken, and he was almost unconscious of his bizarre attire.

He said: "Where are we?"

Cupid walked over to a chart which hung on the wall.

"Right there," he said, indicating their position with his thumb. And then he laughed, for Dago Sam, endeavoring to take advantage of the fact that his back was turned, had leaped on him.

Cupid bent under the attack; his arms reached up and backward; his hands closed on Dago Sam's shoulders. He pulled forward and heaved, and Dago Sam hurtled forward, his body crashing against the wall of the cabin.

Dago Sam dropped in a huddled heap to the floor. For a moment he did not move; then, stirring fitfully, he stared up malevolently at Cupid like a venomous, broken-backed snake.

Cupid whistled a queer plaintive melody. A furtive look of fear came into Dago Sam's eyes, and accompanying it was a strained expression, as if he were trying to remember something.

The whistling ceased, and Cupid laughed again; but there was no mirth in his laughter.

"And so," he said suddenly, "we are at the Trobriands—and the islanders do not like you, Sam."

Dago Sam scowled thoughtfully.

"You said you could not sail a ship, and the boys couldn't have navigated her, Mister. They'd have piled her up on the reefs—I know them. How did you get here? How do you know you're at the Trobriands?"

"We are, Sam," Cupid replied easily. "No doubt about that. We're at anchor at a favorite place of yours. Where the *Sea Gull* was lost, to be exact."

"Ah!" Dago Sam's exclamation was eloquent of many things.

"Who sailed the ship?" he asked again.

"I brought along a white mate—" Cupid began.

Dago Sam spat contemptuously.

"Ginger Martin knows nothing about ships, Mister. Do not fool with me. He can shoot straight with a revolver—if he is not too drunk; an' that is all he can do. He knows nothing of ships, or the sea—"

"I discovered that myself, Sam," Cupid said. "It was a great disappointment to me. But he *can* shoot—and he's never drunk now. Interesting fact, that. Don't forget it."

"Still you have not told me, Mister, who navigated the ship."

"I did, Sam. All alone I did it—with Tom's help. I used to know these seas. When I was a boy—"

Again he whistled that plaintive melody. It was a native air which had been adapted by the missionaries.

"So you see!" Cupid exclaimed, breaking off abruptly in the middle of a bar.

Dago Sam cursed.

"He can't be that one," he muttered. Then, aloud:

"Just the same, Mister, you have made much trouble for yourself. You can not keep me locked up forever. By an' by I will get free, and my crew will remember that I am boss. Hell, I will teach them never to forget again! And if the niggers on the Trobriands hate me, they also fear me. And so—"

He shrugged his shoulders and sang the song Cupid had whistled. But the words were not those the missionaries had written for it. They reeked of the water-front dive in which they were written.

Cupid's face was grim. Somehow he looked much older and harder. His face no longer had that unsophisticated look of innocent youth.

Dago Sam came suddenly to the end of the song. "It can't be," he said again, unconsciously uttering his thoughts aloud.

"But it is," said Cupid—and laughed.

Dago Sam's eyes lost their reptilian coldness. They dilated; he looked as terrified as a snake-charmed rabbit.

"What are you going to do," he said hoarsely, "now we're here?"

"We're going to dive, Sam. And then—when the natives ashore see how peaceful we are—we are going ashore. And we're going to have a talk with old Enamakala. Maybe he can tell us something amusing. Though it's doubtful if I find anything more amusing than you, Sam."

Dago Sam scowled.

"You wont get me diving here, Mister. You wont get me ashore."

"I'll do both," Cupid said, grimly opening the door and flinging it wide. "Get out on deck."

"But not like this, Mister," Dago Sam protested.

"Yes and like that! Here—put on your hat. You might get sunstroke!"

And from a nail he took down a floppy straw hat, trimmed with red and yellow roses.

"Put it on!" he said sternly as Dago Sam hesitated. "Put it on, or—"

Dago Sam interpreted the threat in that *"or,"* and he crammed the hat on his head and edged out of the door.

THE natives greeted his appearance with howls of laughter. Ginger nearly fell overboard in a paroxysm of mirth.

"You—pigs!" Dago Sam yelled at the crew, the men he had counted on coming to his rescue. They had been accustomed to obeying his slightest wish because they both feared and hated him.

But there can be no fear where there is laughter. And Dago Sam was only an object of ridicule. His curses, his fiery gestures, his threats, only amused. The natives laughed continuously; they pointed in derision at him.

He rushed toward them, tripped over the long skirt and sprawled helplessly on the deck.

The natives laughed still harder. How could they fear a villain in petticoats? Presently they would remember their hate for him. And then!

Cupid watched them for a little while. As Dago Sam scrambled to his feet, he said:

"Get out the diving-gear!"

The celerity with which the crew obeyed was a striking confirmation of the fact that Dago Sam's hold on them had vanished.

DAGO SAM watched the proceedings listlessly. But when Cupid donned the diving-suit, he looked more cheerful.

"You wont be able to do a thing," Cupid said, waddling menacingly toward him. "You will sit here—doing nothing, saying nothing. You see—"

He waved his hand to where Ginger Martin sat, revolver in hand.

"If you move, or if you talk," Ginger explained, "I'll shoot—an' I don't miss. *An'* I hopes you talks."

Dago Sam scowled and Cupid, beckoning to Tom, gave final instructions regarding signals and the manning of the pumps; he glanced once again at Dago Sam. Then men screwed his helmet on and as the men at the air pump commenced their work tested his valves methodically.

The next moment he clambered over the stern down the anchor-chair and sat astride the anchor,—it had been pulled up and they were drifting a little,—which was lowered slowly until within about six feet of the bottom. There Cupid signaled to halt; and still seated on the anchor, he scanned the bottom as the vessel drifted.

With the first rush of air into his suit, Cupid's placid good-natured temperament vanished. He was conscious of great irritation; the smell of rancid oil with which the pumps charged his air almost sickened him; there was a bit of grit in the pump's plunges, and the regular sound it made, communicated through his air-pipe, maddened him beyond belief. Even the noise of the pump-beats annoyed him, and when the pace presently slowed, he signaled frantically for more air, causing the four natives to increase the beat to such an extent that he was forced to let air out through the valve on his helmet and he cursed because he had arranged no tug signal for less air.

But presently his common-sense reasserted itself; he knew that he was experiencing the irritation common to all divers. Still, now that he was here, alone, in the gloom and uncanny calm he wondered at the wisdom of his conduct.

DAGO SAM might be able to reassert his authority. If that happened, Cupid knew he would never reach the surface again alive. That was one reason why he was so acutely conscious of the throb of the pump, so alive to the slightest variation in its speed.

"I may be all wrong," he mused. "I may not get the proof I want. Perhaps I ought to be satisfied with the evidence the men say they're ready to give. But it might not be sufficient; a clever lawyer might be able to get him off. Besides I'd rather do without the men's evidence. They'd be punished too—and it's not right they should suffer. They only obeyed Dago Sam. They did nothing wrong according to their standards. And, anyway, Dago Sam's got to be punished. And so—"

He gave two sharp tugs at his life-line, a signal which meant: *"Slack life-line and pipe—let go anchor."*

Immediately the first part of his order was obeyed, he leaped from the anchor; and before it came to rest, he was fighting his way against the current to the wreck of a vessel just ahead.

She was a small cutter of five or six tons: Her name, plainly legible on her bows, the *Sea Gull.*

She looked in good condition, in better condition, Cupid concluded grimly, than the *Wasp* overhead. And she was strangely free from barnacles or marine growth.

"Looks," muttered Cupid, "as if she was only lowered here the other day."

HE fetched around her, tapping meditatively on her hull timbers. Then he climbed aboard and made his way down a narrow companionway, cautiously making sure his pipe and life-line were free.

He entered the tiny cabin. The door had been broken off its hinges; the panels had been smashed in; the key was still in the lock—on the inside.

On the floor was a skeleton to which still clung rags of silk. Cupid knelt beside it for a few moments, a chaos of memories rushing through his brain. Then he stumbled out of the cabin again and explored the rest of the boat, swiftly.

"Just as I thought," he concluded. "Her cargo gone—not a movable thing of value left. Well—we'll now have a talk with Dago Sam."

He walked back toward the anchor and almost into the open jaws of a groper—a giant cod—which had suddenly appeared.

The beast was a maritime nightmare; it had all the evil potentialities of a mental deficient. Its stupidity and inane curiosity cause it to be feared by divers as much as they fear the octopus. This one—its bottom jaw was resting on the bed of the ocean, and its upper one was almost on a level with Cupid's helmet—now closed its jaws and swam sluggishly toward Cupid.

Cupid gave a sharp tug on his life-line, signaling:

"More air. I am in danger—pull me up."

There was no response. The beat of the pumps did not increase. On the contrary they got slower, slower.

He signaled again, desperately.

Still no response.

His head ached violently; he felt that his heart, keeping time to the failing beats of the air-pump, was ceasing to function. He was bitterly self-reproachful. He had played into Dago Sam's hands. That man had regained control of the crew! They had either killed Ginger Martin, or that irresponsible old man had thrown in his lot with Dago Sam.

But if that was so, why did they supply

"You need to be taught manners," Cupid said—and dropped him overboard.

him with any air at all?—unless they meant to kill him slowly. That would be Dago Sam's way.

Meanwhile the groper was swimming lazily around him, was staring now through the face-glass of the helmet.

Cupid stood perfectly still, his hands behind his back, hoping that the groper was merely curious and not hungry—but sensing despair, for a groper is always hungry.

And then, suddenly, the beat of the pump increased, his suit was distended, and he rose. The big fish followed him up a few feet, then dropped back sluggishly to the bottom.

Cupid's ascent became more rapid; he rose like a bubble swept upward by a strong wind, and he felt strangely exhilarated.

But he did not relax his caution. Dago Sam might be playing with him. At any moment the air-supply might cease again. He rose in a half-lying position, on his back, one hand on the air-valve, watching carefully for surface light and the shadow of the *Wasp's* hull.

A shark, a giant man-eater, rushed by him, turned again, and rolled over—

Cupid opened his valves, and the cowardly sea-scavenger, frightened by the sudden hissing rush of air-bubbles from the helmet, darted away.

His ascent continued; the slack of his life-line and air-pipe was being methodically hauled in.

He regulated his speed by the valves: he still had dangers to contend with. His suit leaked; it contained water up to his thighs. Should he by accident let his head get too low, that water would rush to his helmet, and its weight would stand him on his

head: he would be drowned inside his helmet. Or if he rose too fast, he might smash his helmet on the keel of the *Wasp*.

But he guarded against both these dangers. He reached the surface and floundered there helplessly. A few minutes later he was safe aboard.

DIVESTED of his diving-dress, he took in a deep breath. Apparently the situation had not changed. The natives grinned affectionately at him: Ginger Martin brought him a pannikin of steaming black coffee; Dago Sam, white-faced, sat on the hatchway, scowling angrily.

"Why," Cupid said suddenly, "did you not answer my signals?"

Ginger Martin grinned and gestured toward four silent forms stretched out on the deck.

"We had a little fight, so we did, whilst you was down below! The niggers from yonder island caught us napping, they did. They wanted to pick a bone with Dago Sam here. An' they nearly picked it, they did. He yelled for us to protect him—like a yeller cur, he yelled—an' so we did. We drove 'em off. See—there they go!" He pointed to where a number of outrigger canoes, loaded with men, were speeding toward the island. "But them poor devils stay behind. An' sure it's a pity they had to be hurted. They are better men than Dago Sam ever thought o' being. Still, it didn't seem right he should go into their cook-pots. He'd 'a' made 'em all ill. So we fought 'em off—I had to shoot them four. They was the most persistent, they was—an' only one man worked at the pump the while. No, they aint dead. I didn't shoot to kill. I reckon you thought of a lot o' things at the time."

"I did, Ginger," Cupid said fervently. "And they were all wrong."

"An' did ye find shell?"

Cupid nodded. "Sure. Lots. Gold-lipped."

"You're a damned liar, Mister," Dago Sam snarled. "There is no shell here."

Cupid looked at him coldly.

"No? Well—you're going down, anyway. And listen: there's a wreck down there. The wreck of the *Sea Gull*. You're going to stay down there until you have discovered why she foundered. And I want the truth, mind. And I want to know how Laura Devine died. You'll find her skeleton in the cabin.

"I know the truth—but I'm going to keep you here diving until you're ready to tell it."

"An' what good's that going to do you, Mister?" Dago Sam sneered. "I take it my niggers have been lying to you. I take it you've got it into your head I foundered the ship an' killed the girl—just because I was here at the time. Well, suppose I confess it: that confession wont hold water in court of law—"

"No court of law is going to deal with you, Sam," Cupid said coldly. "The sea's going to be your judge, jury and executioner."

Cupid turned to the natives.

"Get him into the suit," he ordered.

THEY rushed at Dago Sam, stripping the clothes from him. Then, despite his struggles, they forced him into the diver's suit.

At Cupid's orders they washed his hands thoroughly with soap and soda in order to remove from them any trace of grease or sweat. Then, before the helmet was screwed on, Cupid said, giving the man a large canvas bag which had been neatly folded into a compact bundle:

"Into this you will put the bones of the girl you murdered, and bring them to the surface. And you'd better let your thoughts be clean ones as you do it."

Dago Sam flinched at the cold hatred in Cupid's eyes.

Cupid turned away from him; the natives screwed on the helmet; then they pushed him overboard. He sank quickly and they played out a fathom of line before they indolently worked the pump.

Dago Sam's punishment was beginning.

Cupid leaning against the taffrail, his head buried on his arms, looked up with a start as Ginger Martin touched him gently.

"I know you now, and I'm sorry for you, boy," the old man said. "I know who you are. You're the son of the missionary who used to live over yonder, aint you?"

Cupid nodded. His sorrow seemed to have destroyed all power of speech.

"An' she—she was going to marry you. Aint that it?"

Again Cupid nodded.

"Ah!" The old man nodded sympathetically. "That was four years ago, and people forget quick in the islands. Course I'd heard rumors of what happened. Lots of us heard rumors—but never knew the truth, we didn't." He added bluntly. "What *is* the truth, sonny?"

Cupid made a tired gesture.

"Dago Sam saw her at Port Moresby an' got here ahead of her. I was over at the Goodenough Isles at the time. You see Laura came a month earlier than I'd expected.

"He got the natives drunk on gin and led them against the mission. He killed my father and mother; he killed the mission natives, and then he waited for Laura. When the *Sea Gull* anchored, Dago Sam captured her and—"

Cupid passed his hands across his eyes and did not continue until Ginger Martin prompted him gently with:

"An' how did you find out?"

"I came back to the island, suspecting nothing. Dago Sam had vanished by then. The natives let me land. Not until I got to the ruined mission did I know that a devil had been at work.

"The natives followed me there. They sang songs—mission tunes my father had taught them. But the words—Dago Sam had taught them the words. They boasted of their deeds and of the things Dago Sam had done. And then—I went mad, Ginger. I rushed at them with my bare fists. But they didn't kill me—because I was mad; they kept me alive to laugh at.

"By and by my madness went from me, but I still acted as if I were mad. That was my only hope of life and revenge.

"After many months I escaped in a one-man outrigger. . . . .

"The rest doesn't matter—save that I lived only for the day I could meet Dago Sam. And I trained myself for that day, Ginger. Now it's come."

"Murder don't wipe out murder, son," Ginger Martin said softly.

"Murder!" Cupid's eyes blazed. "It isn't murder to kill a thing like Dago Sam. It—"

He turned away abruptly and walked to where the four wounded natives lay. They had been securely bound.

CUPID looked down at them, his face stern. One he saw was old Enamakala, chief of the Trobriands.

"And what," he said in the vernacular, "should be the fate of dogs who turn against their friends?"

Enamakala said submissively:

"They should be beaten and killed lest the disease spreads." Adding: *"Ou!* I know you. Your vengeance was slow—it now reaches its fulfillment. We have suffered for the evil we did. Yet it was not our evil but that of the man who led us."

"I have not forgotten that."

"Give him to us now," Enamakala pleaded, "and he will die slowly."

Cupid shook his head.

"He is of the sea. He has committed sins on the sea, against the sea and under the sea. The sea shall judge him."

"And what of us?"

"That is something yet to be considered."

Cupid turned away and coming to the air-pump, sat down moodily on an upturned bucket, his hand on the signal-line.

Once he glanced sharply at the men at the pump and commanded them to labor more diligently.

Ginger Martin came and sat beside him, his hand resting comfortingly on Cupid's shoulder.

"I don't know," he said presently, "what you're goin' to do with him, I don't. But don't do it, that's all." He continued, ignoring Cupid's impatient gesture: "Oh, I know what he did to your kin. And that aint the whole tale of his dirty work. He deserves death a hundred times. But keep your hands clean, boy. I'm old—an' I know. Kill him in open fight; that's all right. But don't put yourself on a level with him."

GINGER MARTIN watched closely; he saw Cupid's hand jerk twice, and knew that down in the depths Dago Sam was facing danger and was signaling for more air, signaling that he wanted to come up.

Cupid said hoarsely, his eyes set and strained:

"Slower, boys!"

They grinned as they obeyed.

"Don't!" old Ginger Martin exclaimed sharply. "Don't, lad! Hell—I'm only an old beachcomber, and I was down an' out, just a drunken old fool, when you brought me along with you. An' if you don't play the game now, you'll be driving me back where I came from. An' it aint only me; it's yourself. You'll be letting the worm into you—an' it'll send you *kava-kava;* it'll drive you mad, it will. Your life'll be one long regret—"

"I don't intend to live, Ginger," Cupid said wearily. "When I've finished with Dago Sam, I'm finished with life."

Ginger Martin sighed sorrowfully.

"An' is that all everything means to you?" he pleaded. "Hell! What's the

killing of Dago Sam if so be you're going out yourself? He wins in the end—there's mercy for them what dies by sudden violence. But you—hell! There's things you can do with your life. There's other men like Dago Sam—go get 'em. There's niggers being ill-treated; there's other bums like me. Why—"

THERE were two more frantic tugs on the life-line.

Cupid tensed. Then, sharply:

"Pump!" he exclaimed. "He needs air. Pump! Haul in the slack."

Ginger Martin gasped with relief.

Four natives worked with a will at the pump; others hauled on the life-line and pipe.

They tugged and strained, but there was no slack to haul in!

The signals continued, conveying the frantic fear of the man down in the depths.

"He no fit for come, boss," Tom said. "That fella caught."

Cupid moved swiftly; his crisp orders followed in rapid sequence.

As he stripped himself, the natives attached a heavy weight to a stout line.

Cupid snatched up a spear—it belonged to the old chief; and then holding the weight in his left hand, the spear in his right, he turned to Ginger Martin.

"You win," he said. "I'm going down for him."

"Let one of the niggers go, boy," Ginger shouted.

Cupid smiled. The next moment he had dived overboard.

Down he went, the line snaking after him. For a moment, Ginger Martin, who had rushed to the side and was staring down into the sea, could mark his progress, could see the air-bubbles which rushed up to the surface. Then he could see no more, but his imagination carried him on, down and down with the hissing rope.

At ten fathoms the outgo of rope ceased, moved slowly—ceased again.

CUPID'S downward rush was very swift; his ears buzzed; his lungs felt as if they would burst.

A million years seemed to pass slowly before him. . . . . His descent halted. He was on bottom. Still holding the weight, he moved to where Dago Sam swayed helplessly back and forth.

The man's foot was trapped in a giant clam. But that was not all. A groper was nozzling him, its jaws clamping slowly, and the water was tinged with a feeble stream of red; one of Dago Sam's hands was missing.

Cupid worked swiftly—a very little time was left him; presently he would have to obey the urge of his tortured lungs.

He slipped his line round the two-hundred-pound shell, using the haft of his spear as a lever to shift the giant mollusc from its hold on the bed of the sea. As he was making the line fast, the groper, mouth agape, swam hungrily at him.

He saw it in time and thrust his spear down its cavernous maw. The next moment the creature had vanished, maddened by the pain of the spear-thrust, blood gushing from its mouth.

Cupid gasped faintly; he just had strength to give the arranged signals. . . . .

WHEN he recovered consciousness, he was in his bunk. Ginger Martin was sitting beside him. In the doorway stood Tom and two others of the crew.

They grinned with relief when Cupid opened his eyes; then, shouting exultantly, hastened to take the news to the rest.

"You did it, lad, sure you did," Ginger Martin said, answering the question in Cupid's eyes.

"We hauled him up an' cut him loose an' doctored his arm. He'll live—long enough to be hanged. Sure he will. He's half crazed with terror, lad. He keeps talking about the cod a-kissin' him. He went through hell down there. The Government cutter's here—they've taken charge of him. He's confessed all his dirty sins to 'em. Justice'll do the right thing. An' your hands are clean. Sure they are."

"I'm glad of that, Ginger," Cupid said softly. "But—how did I come up?"

Ginger grinned.

"You come up half dead—with a big shark after you. You'd have been in its belly now if it hadn't 'a' been for Tom. He come in after you. He's a good lad, Tom is. So are the others—with the right man to boss 'em. An' that's you. Sure it is."

"I wonder," Cupid said drowsily. Then: "You know, Ginger, I thought of a lot of things when I was down there. About what you said to me. And I made a vow to do the sort of thing you suggested, to do it for her memory's sake. An' I want you to help me. You're a good scout, Ginger. You—"

His eyes closed, and he slept.

Back To Babylon!

"Thou art Obar-Unni, the corn-cutter of Paradise Lane?" said the captain in a harsh military snarl.

The author of the famous "Easy Street Experts" here relates the joyous adventure of a man enabled to revert to a previous incarnation.

By BERTRAM ATKEY

Illustrated by Everett Lowry

"IF the lama told the truth, and the interpreter conveyed his meaning correctly," mused Mr. Hobart Honey, gazing curiously at a bottle on the Moorish coffee-table next to his armchair, "I am about to embark upon the most extraordinary series of adventures that the mind of man has ever conceived. Yes! It has, of course, been done in fiction—indeed, I have written things of the kind myself,"—(he was *the* Honey—the novelist and all-round fiction hack) "—but that I should ever actually experience—" He stopped abruptly. "The thing's impossible," he said flatly, "—quite! And yet the letter read like truth—as nearly as I could judge. The lama may have been an—er—liar—but he has a knack of making things look true. I wonder—"

Mr. Honey looked at his cat Peter—a black cat with one white ear, very quaint—who was regarding him reproachfully.

"If you could speak, Peter, it would be easy to ascertain the facts!" he said.

Mr. Honey leaned forward and turned the gas-fire a little lower. Then he got up and switched off two of the larger lamps, leaving only the table-lamp on his writing-desk burning. It was now pleasantly warm and religiously dim in the comfortable study, and Mr. Honey had given his man Trapp—who with Mrs. Trapp did the work of the bachelor flat which the novelist occupied—orders that he was not to be disturbed till twelve o'clock. It was now a few minutes to nine, and all was ready for the experiment which Mr. Honey was proposing to make—and which he had made, without communicable results, on Peter the cat, upon the previous night.

He filled a glass of sherry, took a bottle containing perhaps two hundred and fifty whitish-gray pellets or pills, of sizes varying from a pin's head to a pea, and began slowly to work out the cork.

He seemed a little nervous. But the astonishing thing was that he did not seem more so. For, as he had truly said, if a certain aged lama from Tibet had not lied, then Mr. Hobart Honey was about to engage in a very remarkable enterprise.

TO glance back for one moment— It was when Mr. Honey, touring in India to glean material and local color for his thirty-fourth book, was trotting through Benares, that he had seen a dog rush across the road evincing symptoms of desiring to bite some one abundantly. The dog did so desire. But it was not Mr. Honey whom the animal desired, at the moment, to mangle. It was a rather frowsy old gentleman walking just in front of the novelist, upon whom the dog rushed to bestow his attentions. Mr. Honey, however, thought that the creature was aiming at him, and with rare presence of mind, promptly flung his fully loaded half-plate camera at the dog. Immensely to the surprise of both the novelist and the target, the camera landed fairly upon the dog's skull, flooring it abruptly, and so completely and instantaneously dissolving its ferocity that within a second and a half it had vanished round a corner, complaining bitterly of the English.

But the old gentleman in front—who proved to be one of the most distinguished and competent lamas ever exported from Tibet—was under no delusion as to the original purpose of the dog. He knew the brute had proposed to enliven himself —not Mr. Honey. And since one of his weaknesses was a detestation of dogs—which his religion forbade him to put into practice—he was almost embarrassingly grateful to Mr. Honey, and upon subsequently learning that the Englishman was a writer of tales, had bestowed upon him a remarkable gift—namely, a bottle, itself a rare and most valuable example of Chinese glassware, containing the pellets aforesaid, which Mr. Honey learned—when, in due course, he found a man competent to translate the hieroglyphics inscribed upon an accompanying parchment —possessed the singular power of temporarily reinstating the swallower of any one of them in one of his previous existences.

Divested of the most of its flowery, picturesque, but irrelevant detail, the written message of the lama to Mr. Honey, when condensed was somewhat as follows:

"In the practice of thine art thy mind roameth afar but ever returneth unto thee heavily laden with the fruits of its wanderings. Then dost thou set thine ink-horn before thee. So it is understood by he who sendeth thee this. But it were better for thy disciples that thou shouldst know surely whereof thou writest. And how can this be if thy body accompanieth not thy wandering mind? So that thy screeds and inscriptions shall be informed with full knowledge, I send the means of sliding, as it were, thy body back through the ages, where with thine own eyes thou canst witness the things of those days as they verily were, and not as the peoples have come to imagine them to have been. Swallow the pills, which I have made with mine own hands, singly, and seek thy couch forthwith. Be not alarmed if thou shouldst awake in the form of a swine of ancient days, a lizard of the rocks, or a humble flea, for thy days thereas will be but brief, and ere thou hast time to accommodate thyself to thy new surroundings and therein take thine ease, lo! the power of the pill shall have waned and thou shalt find thyself again upon thy couch in these latter days. Fear not that thou wilt ever be what thou hast not once been. If thou hast been a great king heretofore, mayhap the power of the pill will again reinstate thee in thine ancient glory; or if thou hast been heretofore but an ass upon the hillside, a rat crawling darkly through her tunnels, or a grub, that enlargeth himself fatly and silently in the heart of the fruit—so, by my favor, thou mayest be again! And thy knowledge of things past shall wax to the uttermost limit of two hundred and fifty pills, and thou shalt be exceeding wise—so that thy fellow-scribes, scratching busily like fowls behind the granary, shall behold thy works with amazement."

SO much for the lama's letter. There was a good deal more, but not especially to the point. The extract conveys the idea tolerably well.

Mr. Honey—unmarried, middle-aged—had taken some months to screw himself up to the point of an experiment. Nothing but an insatiable curiosity and a very good opinion of himself would have driven him

to it. If he could swallow a pill and be certain of finding himself back in the days when he was, possibly, King Solomon, Julius Cæsar, Richard the First, or some such notable man, that would be quite satisfactory. But there seemed to be a certain risk that he might select a pill which would land him back on some prehistoric prairie in the form of a two-toed jackass, or on the keel of an ancient galley in the form of a barnacle, or something wet and uncomfortable of that kind.

It was undoubtedly a risk. He wished the lama had been a little less sketchy and haphazard about things; at least, he might have dated and labeled the pills. It would have been quite simple—"King; B. C. 992," for instance; or "Centurion; Early Roman." Or, if clammy incarnations had to be introduced: "Eel; 1181 A. D." or "Squid; Stone Age." Then he would know which pills to take himself, and which to set aside for editors and publishers.

However, there it was. He could take them or leave them. He might become King of Egypt for a week-end, or he might become a jellyfish for a brief period.

He took out a pill and looked at it. Was that little, ordinary-looking thing a free pass to the palaces of Cleopatra in the form of Antony, or was it the "open sesame" to a brief existence as a weevil in a ship's-biscuit on board the old *Victory?* Who knew?

The first rub the Queen endured, but at the second she went into the air with a shriek.

He might find himself King John signing the Magna Charta, a galley-slave with cracked lips eating salt fish in a freezing northeasterly gale, or a sixth-century bullfrog baying the moon in an undiscovered Louisiana swamp.

He might find himself the Great Mogul or T'Chaka—Jonah, Shakespeare, Jack Sheppard, Adam, Oliver Cromwell, a dromedary, a polecat, a starving wolf, a skunk, or merely a house-fly in a spider's web.

He might even be Louis XIV, Francis Drake, William the Conqueror, Nero, or Robbie Burns— But at this stage he realized sharply the treasury of "local color" awaiting him, and without further consideration he took the pill in his mouth, washed it down with a gulp of sherry, and then,

realizing what he had done—the awful risks he had taken—he tried to rise with the intention of hurrying to the nearest doctor. But a sudden dizzy faintness glued him to his chair. It was growing dark.

He heard the clock upon his mantelpiece as if far off—then all grew dark and still.

MR. HONEY woke, as it were, from deep sleep very abruptly. He was aware instantly that wherever he was, certainly it was not in his extravagantly easy-chair at home in his London flat—for he was lying at full length.

For some moments he dared not open his eyes to see whom or what he was. He could hear a faint murmur of voices, a splashing sound, and a curious bubbling. He pondered desperately, afraid to move a muscle. Was he a man or a mollusk—Charlemagne, for instance, or a mussel? It seemed to him that the air was intensely hot, and he decided, with a thrill of relief, that he was not under water, at any rate.

Was he the ass of whom the lama had spoken—browsing or basking in the sun upon a hillside? Or a swine of ancient days? Or a venomous serpent coiled in the sand of a desert? Mr. Honey shivered a little. But he did not feel coiled; on the contrary, he felt quite straight.

With a violent mental effort he shut out the crowding thoughts and apprehensions besieging his mind, cautiously raised his hand and felt himself. To his intense relief his hand closed upon a leg—his own leg, for he felt the touch of his hand.

He was a man, at any rate!

"Hooray!" gasped Mr. Honey, and opened his eyes. He shut them again instantly, dazzled, half-blinded for an instant, by the glare of the sun reflected from the sands of the desert in which he lay.

"Foreign country, evidently," muttered Mr. Honey to himself, rolled over, and opened his eyes again.

This time they fell upon a sight which explained the bubbling and splashing sounds. Some twenty yards or so away were a number of camels and of strange-looking men, all more or less busy round a pool of water which lay under a clump of palms.

"Hah! An oasis—certainly an oasis. Good!" mused Mr. Honey. "I am not a servant, at any rate, not a slave, whatever the place—and the date—may be, or I too should be cleaning camels. So far so good—"

And then his jaw dropped, as he remembered exactly what he was, where he was, and why he was there. London and the twentieth century receded in a bound to an age so monstrously, incredibly remote that Mr. Honey suddenly turned cold with terror.

Was it possible that he would ever see London again? London! Why, there wasn't any London—it wasn't built—it wasn't even thought of. Why, Babylon wasn't completed yet! Mr. Honey knew that for certain. Hadn't he just come from Babylon as fast as camels could carry him, and hadn't he noticed as he crossed the new Euphrates Bridge how well they were getting on with the work since they had discovered the new bitumen supply, and Queen Semiramis had caused her new system of bricklayers' and stonemasons' bonuses to be explained to the workers?

Yes, London was a long way off—in the future.

It was amazing to reflect that he, Hobart Honey, who lived in London and knew London by heart, should be lying here in an Assyrian oasis ages before London was thought of.

He shut his eyes again, and London—England, the twentieth century—slowly receded farther and farther from his mind, while his thoughts centered more and more upon his present position, which, contemplating it as an up-to-date Babylonian, he swiftly decided was the result of a mistake—a bad mistake. What on earth had possessed him to elope with the elderly ex-beauty, who, he knew, would arrive at the camp at any moment? He groaned slightly as he turned the thought over in his mind, and sitting up sharply, took a half-brick from his pocket and proceeded to re-read the message inscribed thereupon by the infatuated woman.

It was dated the evening before, and, as could be seen from the deeply engraved heading, was carved upon a slab of the palace stationery. The chisel of the writer had slipped in one or two places, but Mr. Honey was easily able to decipher the hieroglyphics. He read:

"Behold, then, Dazzlef of Mine Eyes, this is the plan that I have designed, that we two shall fly on the wings of love unto Nineveh. I have sent forth to the Second Oasis four camels laden with my treasure, to the extent of one gold talent and a half, and my raiment also. Be thou there, Beloved, at the rising of the sun, when, while

the Queen yet sleepeth, I will join thee, and so set forth together upon our journey. Thy Rose and Perpetual Pomegranate.

—IMMI.

"P. S.—Please excuse scrawl, Sun of my Soul, but I am using a blunt chisel borrowed from one of the slaves, as all mine are packed."

His fascinated eyes fell upon one huge brute leaping high above the others.

Mr. Honey replaced the note in the pocket of his skirt, which already was sagging from the weight of a number of receipted accounts—he had settled all his bills, like an honest Babylonian, before leaving town—and gazed across the desert.

THERE was no sign of Immi yet; nor, to his relief, of any of the troops, which he knew, sooner or later, would be sent out by Queen Semiramis after them.

For as Immi was her favorite coiffeuse, or—since French was not invented then—her hairdresser, and Mr. Honey was merely a chiropodist in rather a small way in a shop in a back street behind the Temple of Belus, and consequently, by no means a suitable match for Immi, the lovers both were fully aware of the fact that long before they got even halfway to Nineveh, the Queen would have sent after them, and they would need all their luck and nerve if they were going to avoid her fleet horsemen.

Mr. Honey thought of these things seriously as befits a man contemplating death or matrimony, and he bitterly reproached himself for the ambition and avarice which had brought him to his present position. He ought to have been satisfied with the chiropody; the business had been doing moderately well, and the new sandals with brass filigree uppers, which were becoming so fashionable among the officers and Court dandies, were just the things to give a fillip to trade He realized that now. It had been a mistake to stock the sideline in combs, brushes, chignons, curls, ringlets, and so on, which that commercial traveler from Nineveh had unloaded onto him. He ought to have kept things separate and stuck to his last; if he had not had that stock of curls on show, probably the Lady Immi would never have come into the shop in her life—she might never have set eyes on him at all.

As it was—

It was her money that had done it. A gold talent and a half was a lot of money—

more than he, Obar-Unni the chiropodist, could ever hope to make. True, the lady was no longer beautiful, but she was said to have a beautiful disposition.

Immi had come into his shop to see if he had a bottle of Titian dye, a color to which the Queen had suddenly taken a violent fancy, and she had fallen in love with him at first sight. In the good old Babylonian way, she had said so frankly, freely, and without beating about the bush.

Dazzled by the notice of this Court lady, hypnotized by her gifts and the rumors of her wealth, Obar-Unni had meekly agreed with her plan of eloping to Nineveh. They would have preferred to settle down quietly in Babylon, but that was impossible. Obar-Unni was not in the same social "push" as the Lady Immi, and they knew that haughty and ambitious Queen Semiramis would never give her favorite hairdresser permission to marry a mere chiropodist who was barely able to pay his rates.

It was decided, therefore, to elope to Nineveh at Immi's expense, and there settle down quietly. In accordance with the scheme Obar-Unni had camped at the oasis overnight, and was now awaiting his betrothed.

He was not happy, and he heartily wished himself back in London or Babylon—London, for choice. For he had a presentiment that there was grave trouble coming.

However, he was too far gone to back out. Already a cloud of dust on the horizon hinted that his lady was not far. So, with a sigh, he rose, deciding to keep a stiff upper lip.

He clapped his hands sharply and an Ethiopian in white pants came running from the camels to him.

"Ho! Slave, bring me a sherbet!" he said robustly. "A good stiff one, mark ye!"

The slave cringed.

"It shall be done, Lord," he muttered; and went away toward a tent.

Mr. Honey perceived that the husband of Immi was not going to be denied his comforts and the prompt obedience of her slaves, and, with a slight access of cheeriness, turned again to watch the approaching dust-cloud on the horizon.

"After all, it mayn't be so bad if we can get well away," he mused.

"Lord!" said a low voice behind.

He turned. The slave was proffering a foaming goblet.

Mr. Honey took it and drained the goblet. His cheeriness increased as he realized that this was a very different vintage from that with which Obar-Unni was accustomed to quench his thirst.

He returned the goblet.

"I'll have another," he said in English.

"Pardon, Lord?"

"More sherbet, son of an ass!" snarled Obar-Unni, coming abruptly out of his reverie.

The slave understood that.

BUT Mr. Honey perceived that he would have to be very careful to keep his mind concentrated upon his singular position. Either he was a Babylonian or a Londoner; he could not be both. Nor would it add to his reputation for sanity if he allowed himself to behave alternately as an eloping Babylonian chiropodist and an English author.

"It must be one of the two," he said. "And as I'm in Assyria, I'd better do as the Assyrians do."

He sipped at his sherbet, and fingered the beard he wore—a square-cut, well-oiled, plaited beard that somehow struck him as being humorous.

The dust-cloud drew nearer, and Mr. Honey presently perceived that the cavalcade which raised the dust was composed entirely of horsemen plentifully bedizened with brass and amply supplied with weapons—bows and spears and swords.

There was nobody among them in the least resembling Immi, and with a thrill of apprehension, Obar-Unni recognized them as a half squadron of the Queen's Own Babylon Light Horse.*

They came down upon the oasis in the famous Assyrian "Wolf-on-the-fold" formation, and Mr. Honey had only just time to finish his sherbet before he found himself ringed round with fierce-looking, black-bearded troopers.

"Thou art Obar-Unni, the corn-cutter of Paradise Lane?" said the captain of the troop in a harsh military snarl.

Mr. Honey folded his arms, not without dignity.

"I am Obar-Unni, the chiropodist!" he said, with the accent on the last word.

The captain laughed sourly.

"Ha! Thou art my prisoner, chiropodist!" he said; and turned to a troop ser-

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* Modern equivalents are used to describe the Assyrian soldiery in order to save time—the author's. —Author.

geant-major near him. "Ho, there! A horse for the prisoner!"

The sergeant saluted. "Very good, sir," he barked; and passed the order.

A led horse was brought, and Mr. Honey mounted. Two troopers ranged alongside, and the captain, having ordered two other troopers to escort the slaves and camels back, Mr. Honey and his guards set out for Babylon.

For a few moments Mr. Honey rode in silence, thinking; then, observing that his escort regarded him not unsympathetically, he asked where they were taking him.

"Where to, but before the Queen?" said one of the men. "And by the brazen gates of Babylon, corn-cutter, I do not envy thee this day!" he added.

Mr. Honey's heart sank into his sandals.

"What hath befallen the Lady Immi, who was to have come to meet me at the oasis?"

"She rode forth from the city an hour before dawn. But the Queen had slept ill by reason of an angry pain in her right foot, and she arose early. There came to her even as she arose—in but a dour mood, mark ye, corn-cutter—certain of the police crying that the bricklayers' laborers that work upon the new quays fronting the river had thrown down their tools, demanding more pay, and that they were powerfully supported by the populace. The Queen in her mercy forbore to loose us upon the mob, but instead she said that she would go forth into the city and herself do justice. She is a great Queen.

"So she prepared to issue forth—but lo! when the Lady Immi was sent for to tire the hair of the Queen she was found to be missing. So the Queen went forth with her hair undressed, and quelled the riot. Fifteen hundred bricklayers' laborers have been fed to the crocodiles this morn, corn-cutter! Great is the justice of the Queen!

"A slave of the Lady Immi, deftly tortured, confessed that his mistress had ridden forth from Babylon to meet her lover at yonder oasis and fly with him to Nineveh. So a troop was ordered forth to outride and retake her, and another troop to capture thee. So it was done. We go now to deliver thee to the justice of the Queen, and, by the foundation-stone of Babel, I do not envy thee this day, corn-cutter! How sayest thou, Bil?" he added to the trooper on the other side of Mr. Honey.

"It is even so, Nob-bi," replied Bil, briefly but significantly.

Obar-Unni was inclined to agree with them. He said no more. It was only too evident that unless what the lama had called the "power of the pill" waned very shortly, he was in for a rugged time.

TWO hours' fast riding brought them to the outskirts of the great city, which, under the hands of the vast army of workers, collected for the purpose from all parts of the empire by Queen Semiramis, seemed to be growing almost visibly.

Mr. Honey, however, was not so interested in the sight of the city as, had he been considering the matter in his London flat, he might have expected to be—for the simple reason that, as Obar-Unni, he was already quite familiar with Babylon and the stupendous building operations of the Queen, and in any case, he was not feeling interested in Babylon just then. He would have given all he possessed, and all Immi possessed as well, to be safely in Nineveh or Ascalon, or indeed, anywhere but Babylon.

The horsemen closed in about him as they thundered through the streets, and long before he had formulated any sort of scheme of defense, Mr. Honey found himself being hustled into the palace. There he was handed over to the Queen's bodyguard, two officers and four men of whom promptly conducted him towards the great hall in which the Queen was waiting to do justice upon him.

As they passed down a mighty corridor there stepped suddenly from behind a great statue of Nimrod, a woman. She was veiled to the eyes, but Mr. Honey recognized her by a little habit of sniffing which she possessed. She was the Lady Immi.

For the first time since he had met her, thought Mr. Honey, she had something to sniff about. She glided forward and whispered swiftly to the officer in charge, who nodded.

The men, at a word, fell back a few paces, and Immi approached Mr. Honey.

"Hearken unto me, beloved," she said. "Our plans have gone astray, but there is no time to talk of that. Thou goest now before the Queen, and her mood is—not favorable unto thee. But there is hope for thee yet. The anger of the Queen is bred by the pain which she suffereth in her foot—a strange and stabbing pain. The physicians know not what causeth this pain—and they are divided in their counsels. One sayeth it is a sprain, another stated that it was a corn caused by the wearing of too

tight sandals—the fool is meat for the crocodiles this half-hour! But none knoweth the true cause, pomegranate of mine eyes. I know that thou art learned in the feet, beloved—and I have come here unto thee by stealth to warn thee how thou mayest escape thy doom and come to high honor—yea, even to be Court chiropodist! Thou must inform the Queen that thou canst soothe and assuage the pain, send for thine instruments, and use all thine arts and skill to subdue the agony. That is all—forget not! I go now. Farewell, pineapple of my soul."

And she glided away.

The soldiers closed in again, and thrilling with a new hope, Mr. Honey was marched into the presence of Semiramis.

The Queen was reclining upon a great couch, strewn with tiger-skins. From the dark frown upon her brow, it was only too apparent that she was in a deadly temper, and she was of an age when bad temper was a more permanent affair than it had been in the days when King Ninus had wooed her in Ascalon. She was no longer an April-shower belle of the town—now she had developed into a January-blizzard Queen of Babylon with a touch of gout in her right foot—which, heavily swathed, rested upon a soft hassock at the side of the couch.

But nobody in that city had ever heard of gout, and naturally, therefore, nobody, not even Obar-Unni, had the remotest idea of how it should be treated. Indeed the unfortunate chiropodist had practically made up his mind that the Queen was suffering either from an ingrowing toe-nail or a sprained joint.

The sight of the Queen's frown had driven completely from his mind all recollection of his later existence in London. He was too busily concerned fighting for his existence in Babylon to worry about London just then.

HE dropped to his knees and crawled up to the Queen in his best Babylonian manner.

She surveyed him in disdainful silence for a moment; then she spoke.

"Dog, thou art doomed!" she observed tersely.

Obar-Unni made sorrowful gestures. He dared not speak, for it was not etiquette.

"I have gone forth into the city with undressed hair because of thee!" said Semiramis.

The courtiers made shocked noises, and the Queen turned on them with a snarl.

"Be silent, herd, lest I have thee baked in brass ovens!" she said.

The courtiers were extraordinarily silent.

Mr. Honey wriggled uncomfortably.

"Yet it is in my mind to spare thee, if thou are indeed so skilled in thine art of foot-healing as the Lady Immi hath claimed for thee! Arise!"

Mr. Honey arose.

"Canst thou cure angry pains in the feet?" continued Semiramis.

"It is even so, Splendor of Assyria," replied Mr. Honey humbly.

The Queen beckoned her physicians—three of them.

"Remove the swathings—tenderly, I warn thee!—that this wise man may banish my pain. And tenderly, I warn thee—lightly as down—or by the Winged Bulls of Nineveh, I will have thee flayed!"

They moved the bandages—tenderly—and Obar-Unni examined the foot. It was as complete a touch of gout as ever had visited anyone in the world.

"What sayest thou, healer?" inquired the Queen presently.

OBAR-UNNI abased himself. "The pain ariseth from the spraining of a small muscle of the toe, Brilliance of Babylon. It can be healed by mine art," he said.

The Queen's frown lightened.

"Heal, then," she said.

Obar-Unni sent for fine oil, strips of fine linen, and a vessel of the finest cold water.

He proposed first of all thoroughly to massage the foot, then rub it with oil, and finally to bind it in cold-water bandages.

He softened his hands with oil, and—first craving pardon for presuming to touch the foot—which Semiramis graciously granted—began briskly to massage the swelling!

The first rub the Queen endured, but at the second she went straight into the air with a shriek that startled half Babylon.

An old and diplomatic-looking physician pushed forward.

"I am assured that this is the wrong treatment!" he said firmly.

So was Queen Semiramis. Gasping for breath, she glared at the terrified chiropodist. As soon as she could speak—

"Cast me this witless mule to the crocodiles!" she hissed.

The captain of the guard came forward.

"Pardon thy slave, Queen of the World,

but the crocodiles are full fed," he murmured.

"To the tigers, then!" snapped the Queen. "What matters the destination so that he reacheth it?"

Then things happened swiftly.

Mr. Honey felt himself whirled along corridors, round corners, down steps, and through tunnels, until finally a savage roaring broke upon his senses, and he perceived that he was standing at the brink of an enormous circular pit, built up of stone and iron bars.

gazing straight at the red tongue of Peter the cat, yawning as though he would dislocate his jaw.

Mr. Honey listened. There was still a furious roaring close at hand; but it was only the sound of a passing motor-bus.

Trembling, Mr. Honey gazed about him.

He opened his eyes—and found himself gazing straight at Peter the cat, yawning as though he would dislocate his jaw.

In and about this pit prowled some fifty tigers. Evidently they knew what the arrival of the soldiers and Mr. Honey signified, for already some of them were bounding halfway up the steep sides of the pit—roaring until the slabs of stone under Mr. Honey's feet vibrated.

He felt busy hands removing his raiment, lest—he dimly heard some one say—"a good tiger be choked." And then he was urged forward.

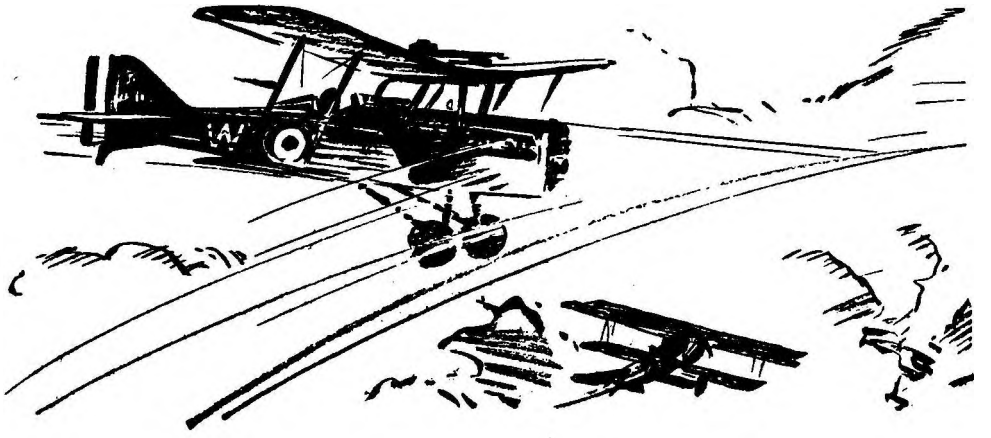
His fascinated eyes fell upon one huge brute leaping high above the others—a colossal beast, almost black, with one white ear and a mouth that was incredibly huge.

It seemed to Mr. Honey that he would pitch clean into that fanged and gaping mouth—and he shut his eyes. He opened them the next instant—and found himself

Gone were the roofs and pillars and domes of Babylon, gone the towering bulk of the Temple of Belus; the soldiers and the pit of tigers were gone also. He was back in his flat in London—in the twentieth century. The "power of the pill," to quote the lama, had waned just in time to save him from the vengeance of Semiramis.

"Thank God!" muttered Mr. Honey, rising stiffly and switching on the lights. He glanced at the clock. It was striking the last chime of nine o'clock. He had been away perhaps a half second—the most crowded half-second he had ever known!

(But Mr. Honey was tempted again. Though he didn't know whether he would become a king or a crocodile, he tried another of those pellets—and the amazing result will be described in our next issue.)



Above the Guns

One of America's foremost aces in the Great War, and one of our best-liked writing-men since—author of "Above the Bright Blue Sky" and "Leave Me With a Smile"—here contributes a fascinating novel: the story of another American combat pilot, his training and his battles.

By ELLIOTT WHITE SPRINGS

IT was a cold raw December morning, and the fog was just lifting from the meadows of the Midlands. The far end of the airdrome was now dimly visible from the hangars, and the mechanics were dragging out the planes for the morning's flying. A dozen pilots were huddled around a brazier, smoking and warming their hands by the fire. The damp cold air penetrated their fur suits and gloves and made their cheeks glow like winter apples.

"The main trouble with this war," one of them announced, "is the climate. You spend the summers in Texas and the winters at the North Pole. I wish somebody had told me England was in cold storage. I could have stayed in Texas."

"Cheer up. We got to go to Scotland later," some one encouraged him.

"Yea. I suppose we'll live in igloos up there. It's the same latitude as Greenland. Gosh, I'll bet it's freezing upstairs this morning. But I can't be any colder than I was last night. Say, Winnie, are you going solo this morning?"

"Yes, if this fog ever lifts."

"Well, for Pete's sake, don't bump yourself off. We gotta play bridge this afternoon and get our money back."

"All right. How many hours solo have you had?"

"Five."

"Had any trouble?"

"No. It's a cinch. Just keep your head and don't get fancy at first. Don't get the wind up, whatever you do."

BUT Winnie wasn't reassured. He walked about nervously, trying to keep his body warm and his spirit resolute. Finally he sought the flight commander in his office. "Captain Young," he began, "do you mind if I ask you a few questions before I solo?"

"Certainly not. Fire away, old bean. Have a gasper?"

Winnie took the proffered cigarette and lighted it.

"I'd just like to rehearse what I am to do, if you don't mind, sir. First, I get in the seat and run up the motor. If it turns up over 1350, it's all right. Then I—"

"I say, you can't fly by any such ruddy formula," Captain Young interrupted him. "Forget it. Do it by the feel of the thing. You'll be all right as soon as you get off the bloody ground. Don't get the wind up your back. I tell you, you're all right. I

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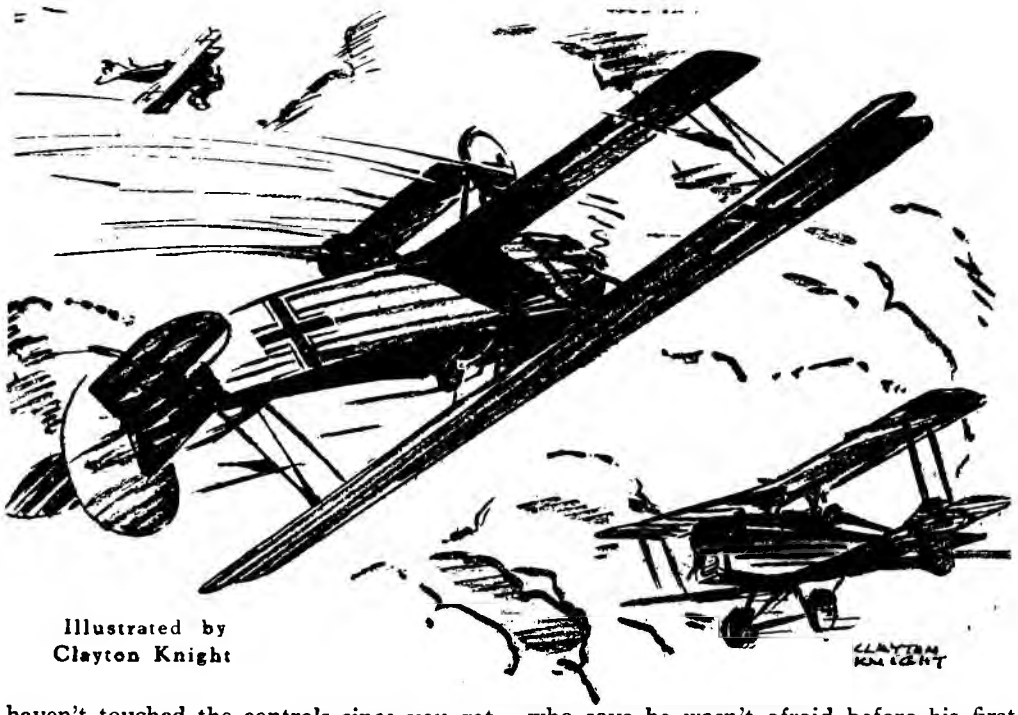


Illustrated by
Clayton Knight

haven't touched the controls since you got in the back seat."

"But Captain, I've only had four hours in the air and I might crack up."

"What if you do? Any of us might. Want to get rid of some of these old crates, anyway. Can't get new planes until we crash the old ones. Tell you what I'll do. You take 1285, and if you write it off, I'll buy the drinks before lunch. How's that?"

"Very nice, I'm sure, sir," said Winnie, his jaw trembling at the thought of a crash, "but—er—don't you think I'd—er—better have a bit more instruction?"

Captain Young looked at him closely.

"Oh, so that's it? Well, four hours is as much as you need. You're welcome to all the dual you want, but you'd better go solo now. I'll give you some more time later if you need it, but go ahead this morning. Yes, you'd better. I'll tell you why: You're nervous. You're afraid of it. Well, you'll always be afraid of it until you do it. So go do it now, and you'll be all right. You aren't going to crash—and if you do, you wont get hurt—and if you do get hurt, you wont be hurt bad—and if you are hurt bad, you'll probably get over it—and if you don't—well, what the hell? Two days ago you were begging me to let you go."

"I'm not afraid, Captain. Please don't think that."

"Piffle. Of course you are. Any pilot who says he wasn't afraid before his first solo is a liar. I don't care whether you're afraid or not—so long as you don't get panicky and dive into the ground. Tell you what you do: Go out and have the AK Emmas prop up the tail of 1285 and get in the seat. Then close your eyes and imagine you're up, and move your controls around where you think they ought to be. Start the engine up and taxi around until the fog lifts. Then go ahead."

"But what will I do if the motor stops after I get up?"

"Do? *Do?* What could *I* do? What could anybody do? Cut the switch and turn off the petrol and glide down and try to get into a field somewhere. If there's no field below you, it isn't your fault if you crash. Don't stall, but let the plane pancake if you haven't got enough room to make a pukka landing. Keep cool, and you wont get hurt. And remember, don't try to save the plane; save your neck. To hell with the bloody plane! Plenty more planes—only one neck. Out you go now; get in the cockpit and quit thinking about trouble. The plane may fall to pieces in the air, but you can't help that."

WINNIE thought to himself that Captain Young could hardly be considered a comforter. In fact, he was more nervous now than before he had sought counsel. But why should Captain Young bother

about his nervousness? He had ten other pupils who went solo at his bidding, to fly easily or crash cheerfully. Two rides in the front seat, ten landings, and up they went alone. What happened after was the adjutant's worry. That was what adjutants were for—to look after pupils when they went solo, to put wings on their chests or lilies in their hands.

The mechanics propped up the tail of the plane on a dolly for him, and he got into the seat. The plane was now in flying position, and the nose was pointed where the horizon would be when the sky was clear.

But his mind wandered. Why was he doing this thing? Why was he tossing his life into the pot as if he had another stack of chips? Why didn't he go back and tell Captain Young that he was afraid—that he didn't want to die now? He would never see his mother and father again. He remembered vividly his father's words:

"Good-by, Winnie. From now on you're Private Chappel, and nobody can help you but yourself. You're on your own. I've got nothing more to do with your movements. I wont be able to help you over the bumps. You've got to fight your own battles. I hope you're a good soldier. That's all I ask of you. Come back if you can—nothing else matters. But do it honorably. I don't know this new kind of warfare, so I can't advise you about it. I'm glad you'll be up in the air, though. You'll miss the dirt I was in. I'd like to be with you. If it lasts long enough, I'll be along. And don't forget that women ruin more soldiers than powder and ball. For some unknown reason soldiers can't leave the women alone. Maybe it's because the women can't leave the soldiers alone. From Samson on, the ladies have been making an undue effort to glorify the uniform. So be careful. I've put ten thousand dollars in the bank to your credit. Don't be foolish with it. Write me the truth—and lie like hell to your mother. Good-by—play your game—but play it square. Good-by!"

That had been more than six months before. He had played the game and played it square. But so far, it had been an easy task. Just work hard and obey orders. That was all that had been asked of him. Here was the first real test, and it had found him weak. Well, why shouldn't it? Anybody that didn't value his life was crazy. It was all you had to value. This business of the glory of dying for your country—bunk! Let the other fellow do it!

Jerry Walsh had picked the right thing, he reflected. Jerry had been his roommate at college. They had climbed the ladder of learning as far as the Easter holidays of senior year when the specter of war passed over the country like the first shadows of dawn. War! They had greeted it coolly. Would it be the war of the headlines, the war of atrocities, the war of the feature writers, a debacle of misery and mud, or would it be the war of legend, of romance, of glory, young heroes riding out the storm, lifted overnight from obscurity to a marble pedestal in some rural hall of fame? Death or glory? The Apocalypse or Armageddon? Marche Funèbre or Marche de Triomphe?

That was the question before them as they wandered aimlessly across the campus to classes. Five times had the sons of Nassau Hall doffed the cap and gown for the livery of Mars. It was understood that everyone would volunteer. There was no haste or excitement; each student was carefully considering, not if he would serve his country, but how he would serve it.

The prophets were having a busy season. Some said the war would be over before we could get our forces into action, that the Germans were practically defeated, and all that was needed abroad was our navy and supplies. Many joined the navy. Yale, Harvard and Princeton undergraduates appeared casually at Newport with the mosquito fleet of submarine chasers. A Yale and a Princeton football captain scrubbed decks side by side on a destroyer. Six months before, they had butted the wind out of each other in the same position.

Others said that the war would last for years, that the German lines were impregnable and that the fighting would go on until Germany was starved into submission inside a ring of steel. Our men were needed in the trenches. Many, believing this, begged certificates from the dean to show to the recruiting officers, and went off to officers' training camps. . . . . War—what was it? Every man made his own guess.

JERRY was for going over as soon as possible any way he could.

"I want to get over and get into it before it's all over," he told Winnie. "I'm afraid to wait until our army is ready. Take too long and I might get side-tracked. What do you say we join the American Ambulance? You've got to pay your own way, but once you get over, you can transfer to something else."

"Nope," Winnie told him. "I'm going to be a flyer. I want to do my own fighting. I don't want to wander around in the mud and get killed by a shell I never hear fired by a man I never see. I've been to a military school, and I know what the army is—a mob of sore feet. Me for the air. It's the first chance for real fighting since shields went out of style. I've been up in a plane twice, and I like it. Dad told me all about the Spanish-American war. He pounded the ground in a fever camp until he was too disgusted to fight anybody but Congress."

So he and Jerry had gone their separate ways after sharing the same room for four years. Now Jerry was driving an ambulance somewhere, out of range of the firing with his feet on the ground, taking the wounded from one hospital to another. Winnie envied him. At least he was going to be alive to go home and tell about it. While he—he shuddered at the thought and went back to his controls. He had seen one man hurl himself into eternity four days before. There was just a streak and a flash—a hole in the clouds and a hole in the ground!

He wished he could talk to his father about this. How much was his honor worth? Was this price too high? He was alone; there was no one to advise him. His father had said: "Come back—nothing else matters—but come back honorably." That didn't mean he could sneak through.

It seemed strange that his thoughts should turn back only to his father's words. What of his mother? What of her words, tears and pleas? All she wanted was that he should come back. He loved her so dearly! Would he never see her again? A big lump came in his throat. And Laura? His reluctance at leaving this world was somehow involved with Laura, though it seemed ages since he had told her good-by.

He had applied for a commission in the Aviation Section in April, and the middle of May he had been summoned to Philadelphia. There he blew into the little tank with sufficient force and coughed satisfactorily and was duly made a private, first class, in the United States Army, Aviation Section, Signal Enlisted Reserve Corps. He celebrated this event with a few friends by drinking beer all evening in the Nassau Inn and singing a few burlesque military songs.

At eleven they marched home in a column of fours and tried to drill each other in loud officious voices.

He paid a final flying trip to his home in Chicago and told everyone good-by solemnly. He wanted to get that over with. From now on he was a soldier. But no one seemed to think that they were telling him good-by. The Middle West had not grasped the significance of war as had the East. He felt that his trip was an anti-climax.

LATER he ran up to New York to see Laura over the week-end. He found her with her eyes brighter than usual, and here he thought he felt the climax of war. He dined at her house just off the Avenue and took her to the theater afterward. Her mother and father were very cordial to him, and this time nothing was said about chaperonage or the hour they were to return. Suddenly he had grown up—he was a soldier!

Laura was tenderly solicitous about his plans and sweetly anxious about the dangers he must face. He had been fond of Laura for years; she had come down for the Yale game and the Prom with him that fall, and he had been to her début and to a number of social functions with her during the winter. From the first she had seemed equally fond of him, yes; but she always held away. She was always sympathetic but never personal, keeping him deftly at arm's length. Now she warmed to him impulsively—her soldier! She let him hold her hand during the show, and when they went to the Cascade Garden to dance she came closer to him than she ever had before.

He took her home shortly after midnight and held her hand again in the taxi; something in him was deeply stirred. This was his mate—he felt it; she was tacitly claiming him. Neither had much to say. She wanted to knit socks for him, and a flying helmet—he was to come to New York to see her as often as he could; there was a spare room for him if he would use it. He was curiously thrilled. He kissed her tenderly, and she responded a little—more a promise than a caress.

He rode back to his hotel feeling that he was a different man. She loved him—he felt it; he should have asked her to marry him—he would the next time he came up. And after the war was over, how proud he would be to claim her and take her home with him! She was the finest girl he had ever known; there was something different about her from the other girls—something that made her stand out

of the crowd, something that always drew his eyes to her. It was not her beauty alone, though she was extraordinarily pretty, but there was something in her smile, something in her carriage, something about her eyes, something in her voice, that kept her above all others. She had poise, a dignity that set her aside. But it was delightfully tempered by a sense of humor which completely charmed him.

Several summers they had been at Bar Harbor together and played around with the same crowd. Their parents were friends, and it was only natural that they should be together. He had always regarded her as a girl apart. There were other girls he had known—doubtful little girls that he petted sometimes, but he had little regard for them. They were not like Laura. He couldn't imagine taking liberties with her. He was surprised now that Laura had let him kiss her—surprised and quite elated over it.

Two days later he received a letter from her.

"Oh, Winnie," she wrote, "why must you go away now just when I've found out I love you? Something is sure to happen to you—I feel it. I've heard such dreadful tales of what is going on over in Europe. Papa says this talk of Germany being beaten is all foolishness. He says that so far they are winning and that France and England will let our men be killed by thousands to save them."

THERE was much more of a like nature. Suddenly Winnie saw the seriousness of the situation. He had enlisted in the Aviation Corps, the most dangerous branch of the service; and now he was about to take a young girl's heart into battle with him—she would ache with anxiety at home while he fought above a foreign land. He must stop this. He mustn't ask her to wait for him. He mustn't go on with this.

But the sweet perfume of Laura overcame him. What if he were to lose her? It would kill something inside him. He couldn't go to war unless he could look forward to coming back to her.

He went up to see her the next week-end. She greeted him at the door with a hearty kiss. How bright were her eyes!

He was to stay at the apartment, and Laura's parents received him as if he were already a member of the family.

Coming back from the theater he held her close.

"Laura, if I come back from the war all right, I'll want to see you first thing. I wont ask you to wait on me, because I may not come back. It's rather unfair to you. The chances are against me. But I do love you so—"

She was crying on his shoulder now. "Don't—don't let's talk about it. I just want to be with you while I can."

On Monday he got his orders to report to another college at once to take a course in military aëronautics. He packed and hurried off. Then followed eight weeks of the hardest work he had ever done. From five-thirty in the morning until ten at night he drilled, studied, recited, took notes, buzzed wireless code and swore at the young West Point major who refused to let him go to New York over the week-ends to see Laura. To have her so near and yet so far made him frantic.

A notice was posted on the bulletin-board that volunteers were wanted to go abroad and learn to fly with the Allies. He signed his name at once. He must either marry Laura or put distance between them. It wasn't fair to marry her now, so he'd have to go on over at once and get it over with.

Ten of his class were ordered to Governor's Island to be mobilized for service abroad. They reported and were given two days' leave to make their final arrangements. There wasn't time enough to see his father and mother, but he rushed in to see Laura. This year her family had given up their summer vacation and stayed in the city, so that her father could be near his work, which was now of paramount importance. There was something romantically tragic about this. A soldier's farewell! And no soldiers had ever left their ladies with less chance of returning.

Laura was sweet and affectionate; she showed her love in countless small ways—her eyes never left his face; yet when he took her in his arms the heat in his breast seemed to cool. The divine fire was lacking. Well, this was love, he thought. Anything more would be a display of passion.

His final parting was a tearful affair. He even cried a little himself. He felt that his life had a purpose. He must not risk it unduly, for it was now dear to her.

NOW that he was facing danger for the first time, his thoughts fixed themselves on Laura—he didn't count the two days on the boat when they were in the submarine zone. There were so many of them to-

"Captain Young, do you mind if I ask you a few questions before I solo?"

gether then that no real fear gripped him. And he was fatalist enough not to worry over a theoretical danger. Now an actual one was before him. And he was lonely. This danger must be faced alone. . . . .

The fog had lifted now, and an instructor took off, as was required each morning, to test the air. He found the fog had lifted to fifteen hundred feet, and landed to announce that the air was now fit for students.

A mechanic stood in front of his motor.

"Switch off, sir."

"Switch off."

The mechanic spun the propeller around a few times.

"Contact, sir."

"Contact."

The motor started with a splutter and then settled down to a steady roar. He let it idle for five minutes to warm up. He was ready now, if only his heart would not beat so fast.

He wiggled his arm about. What if he broke it? What good would his honor do him if he had to go through life without his right arm? What if he lost a leg, and had to limp about forever on crutches? And his eyes! Many pilots had lost their eyes in crashes—many would spend their lives in a framework with broken backs!

Well, what of it? He had volunteered as a pilot, and he was going to be one. The time to think of the cost was past. There was nothing to do but go ahead and take what was coming. All he could do was his best. He swung the plane around, looked ahead carefully to make sure that his path was clear, and opened the throttle wide. His tail came up until the fuselage was horizontal, and as the plane gathered speed across the field, he pulled back slowly on the stick. His wheels came off the ground after a bounce, and the plane began to climb slowly.

He climbed to the edge of the fog and then turned gently. He skidded badly and felt the icy wind across his cheek. He got the plane straight and looked about.

He flew straight until he was just over the field and turned again. He felt a little easier now, and he didn't skid so badly. He practiced turning first in one direction and then in the other.

After he was satisfied with his turns he flew to the lee side of the airdrome to glide

in for the landing. This was the critical test, but he knew he wouldn't be killed now. He might get hurt—but not badly. Well, that one flight was worth it. He was a man! He was no longer afraid! He was surprised to find that his fingers were so cramped from gripping the stick that he couldn't move them. How long had he been up? He glanced at the clock—over an hour! Certainly he could fly. He glided down to the ground.

NOW to land! He pulled the stick back slowly and watched the ground under his wing. He seemed to be going up again. Why wasn't he on the ground? Something was wrong. The plane was sinking. He pulled back on the stick to keep it up, but it only sunk faster. His left wing dropped. There was a jolt, and the sound of splitting wood and ripping linen. He was thrown forward in his seat, and as the plane somersaulted, he bumped his head on the padded cowling. The next second he found he was hanging by his belt upside down with his head on the ground. He had crashed. This was the end!

The ambulance crew and some idle pilots lifted up the tail of the plane and released him. He scrambled to his feet and was surprised to find that he wasn't injured. The undercarriage of the plane was smashed; the left lower wing was crushed; and the top wings were slightly damaged; but there was nothing serious.

He rode to the hangars on the ambulance. Captain Young was standing outside his office.

"I say, Winnie," he called to him, "what the bloody hell are you trying to do? First you dive at the ground with your bloody throttle wide open and put the wind up me, and then you disappoint me by not crashing. Then when I am just about to scratch you off the bloody list, you come down like a bloody umbrella and stall at fifty feet."

"I'm sorry, sir," said Winnie sadly. "I thought I was doing all right. I must have been higher than I figured I was. I told you I needed some more instruction. But I have at least learned to make turns and get out of a stall."

"Bully for you. Now go and make ten landings before lunch. You can wash out then and get full this afternoon. You'll feel like it. Nothing like a few good stiff drinks after your first solo. Don't get too screwed though, or you'll have a hang-over tomorrow. There's 1230 on the end of the line. Take it. It's a good bus. Don't crash it."

"You mean I'm to go up again after what I just did?" Winnie asked incredulously.

"Surest thing you know. Always go up again after every crash. You'll never lose your nerve then. If you don't go up now, you wont feel like flying later. And you wont sleep any tonight. Hop to it."

This time it was easy. He took off without bouncing and pulled up like an experienced pilot.

Captain Young took him in to town afterward in the staff tender with the instructors. They all had something pleasant to say about his crash.

"Two more crashes, and you'll get your wings," Captain Young told him. "Have to have three crashes before you're a real pilot." Everyone agreed, and advised that he get them over with as soon as possible. Several offered to lend him a plane for the purpose. They were all good-natured and light-hearted. Captain Blayney had written off a plane, and was the butt of their gibes. There was no mention of the funeral of one of their number the day before—two planes had collided in the fringe of the fog; three men were burned to death, an instructor and two pupils—yet the flying had not stopped for an hour. Carry on—that was the spirit: life was nothing; sacrifice meant victory; victory meant salvation.

After lunch they had some port, and Winnie went over to his room feeling like Alexander with a new world.

HIS two roommates, Carter and Chandler, were sitting on the bed eating a box of candy.

"Hey," Carter greeted him, "you're too stuck up to eat with us since you went solo, but we're still democrats enough to hobnob with you. We were even considerate enough to bring your mail over to you. Some girl seems to think you are in need of a little candy. That's a girl after my own heart. Have a—"

Winnie snatched the box out of his hand.

"You four-bladed bums," he shouted, "you've eaten half the box already! And I haven't had a piece of candy in a month! Why, you—"

"Shut up and pass the box," Chandler told him, "or we'll take it all away from you. Hear you had a crash this morning."

"Yep," Winnie agreed, cramming his mouth full of candy. England was short of sugar, and candy was no longer for sale.

Reduced rations made them crave sweets. "I managed to pancake from fifty feet and smashed 1285."

"Thank God! Now I wont have to push that tub around the sky any more. While you're here, dig up a pound for the rent. The landlady just reminded me."

Carter, Chandler and Winnie had roomed together now for over three months. When they sailed from New York, they had been put in the same stateroom on the boat because their names were in alphabetical order on the roster.

They had become friends in a few days, and since then had not been separated. When they left New York, they expected to go to France, but their orders had been changed when they reached London, and they had been sent to Oxford to take the regular course at the Royal Flying Corps School of Military Aëronautics.

Carter was a youngster from Iowa. He was a sophomore at the State College when he had enlisted and gone to ground school. Chandler was originally from Kentucky and was the oldest of the lot. He was twenty-seven and had enjoyed a varied career. He was a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and had been an engineer for two years, but had not liked it and had taken up flying. The war found him in California with an old pusher biplane that he had built himself. It had a remodeled motorcycle motor, and he sat out in front of it with an automobile wheel and a shoulder-yoke for controls. He was barnstorming through the rural districts and taking up passengers at ten dollars apiece unless there was a County Fair to pay for exhibition flights. When he read that war was declared, he sold his plane for enough money to buy a ticket to Washington, and caught the next train east.

Though a graduate of Boston Tech, he was taught elementary mechanics in two ground schools; though an electrical engineer with some experience, he had listened for hours to lectures on simple condensers and coils; though the builder of three planes, he had taken notes at lectures on aërodynamics delivered by a man who had never been off the ground. Now he was being taught to fly. But he had ceased to complain and waited his turn for instruction patiently. Finally an instructor took him up for ten minutes and then, foaming at the mouth, brought him down.

"You bloody fool! What's the big idea? Why didn't you tell me you could fly?"

"Sir," said Chandler, with a red face, "I've been trying to tell everybody that for six months, but no one would believe me."

"I can't help that. I'm an instructor, not a damned mind-reader. I take you up and let you have the controls, and what do you do, you bright-eyed beggar? You loop a D.H.6! You priceless blighter! Don't you know a D.H.6 wont loop?"

Chandler grinned.

"Yes, I know you eventually got over, you cock-eyed, one-gallused jackass! But I didn't have my safety-belt fastened, and I was hanging by my toes while you got it off its back. So if you're satisfied now, go get in the blasted crate and fly to your heart's content, but don't come near me again or I'll bust your dome with a lead pipe."

"Say, where do you live when you're home?" Chandler asked him.

"Detroit," said the instructor, "but I crossed the river when the *Lusitania* went down. Go on back up, and I hope to hell you break your neck."

IN the room with them at Queen's College was an Australian sergeant named Waller. He had seen service at Gallipoli and again in France, where he had grown tired of the eternal trenches and perpetual machine-guns and had transferred to the flying corps with the idea of enjoying a short life and a merry one. He could not understand the attitude of complaint from the newcomers who chafed at this loss of precious time. They wanted to learn to fly before winter set in.

"Rest yourselves, rest yourselves," he would tell them, as they paced the room. "There'll be plenty of Huns left for you. The first seven years of this war are going to be the worst, so you needn't hurry. Don't believe what the papers tell you about Jerry. He's a tough egg.

"Don't you boys be impatient. You'll look back on Oxford some day and think it was heaven. This is your last holiday. You got a bed to sleep in, food four times a day regular, nobody shooting at you, nothing to do but sit all day and listen to some beggar gassing, plenty of girls that aint bad as these blighty women go, and something to drink besides issue rum. Man, it is heaven! Stir the fire and pass me the whisky and shut up."

Poor Waller, how brave he was during the day and how he cried aloud in terror in his dreams all night! He usually drank

himself to sleep, but as soon as the effects of the whisky wore off, he was back at his nocturnal duties in the trenches. His soul still paced the beach at Suvla Bay. . . . .

After their course at Oxford was finished, the Americans, sixty strong, had been sent to Stamford in the Midlands to a Primary Training Squadron along with the British officers, while Waller had gone to another squadron at Northolt. A hundred and fifty more American cadets arrived at Oxford before they left. They thought they were going to Italy and weren't pleased with the switch to Oxford. And they insisted they had already been taught all there was to learn at ground school. Well, they'd soon learn better.

AT Stamford they found difficulties. British officers were billeted on the town, and lived in comparative comfort as paying guests in private homes. But according to British law no foreign soldier can be billeted on British subjects. The workhouse, empty since the war, was turned over to the Americans. One night they pitched their cots in its unholy walls, and the next day sent a deputation to the major.

"Sorry, sorry," said the major, "but really I can't help it. The law says we can't billet you. Nothing but tents for you. Tents are cold and damp. You might get pneumonia. The town offered the workhouse—very generous of them, I'm sure. It's better than what the French gave us in 1914."

"But Major, the place is filthy," some one told him.

"I dare say. But I can't give you each a servant to keep it clean—haven't got them to spare. Tell you what: I'll give you one batman for every four of you. But I say, why don't you go to the hotel? Three fine hotels here. They'll be jolly glad to take you, at good rates too."

"Do you mean to say we can live where we please? That we don't have to stay at the workhouse?" they demanded incredulously.

"Of course, my dear fellows. You can stay in London, for all I care. We're short of planes just now. I'll drop you a line when I want you. Toodle-oo."

Everybody moved at once. The hotels were filled, and the workhouse was deserted once more.

Carter and Chandler and Winnie located a large airy room in town near the mess and decided that they preferred it to the noise of the hotels, which were now nothing more than dormitories with ribald shoutings up and down their dark corridors all day and all night.

THE candy was finished, and Carter and Chandler left to go out to the field. Winnie decided that now was a good time to take a bath. He communicated his desire to the landlady, and in a few minutes she rolled in a huge tin tub and brought him a small kettle of hot water and two big pitchers of cold. Well, it was better than nothing, and he felt stiff and dirty.

When he undressed, he noticed a red spot on his knee, and he was surprised to find that he could scarcely move it. It was bruised, badly bruised, and was beginning to pain him. In the excitement of the day he had not felt it at all. He also found that the top of his head had a small egg on it where it had hit the ground, and his elbow was skinned. By the time he finished his bath, he was quite upset. He began to think that he had really had a narrow escape. He thought of that dive at the ground, and the cold shivers ran up and down his spine until he could scarcely feel the temperature of the water. He dressed in a paroxysm of fright. He must get over it—this would never do! He was lonely—that was why he got panicky in the air. That was the first time he had ever been alone, really alone. For he was in another world then—only one thing stood between him and annihilation—complete separation from his world: that was his wits; that was all that would take him home to Laura—his skill, his nerve, his brain! And it had failed the first test!

He went over to the club and found a game of *vingt-et-un* in progress. He joined it, and after two double whiskies was warm and happy again. By dinner he was quite drunk and when he tried to play bridge afterward he could scarcely follow the game. They ended the evening playing war like a group of children in the mess, with all the furniture piled up as a barricade, and each man conducting his own trench raid.

CHAPTER II

MORE Americans had arrived from Oxford, and there was a shortage of planes. Winnie flew a D.H.6 a little, but didn't like it. After a Jenny it was a truck.

One morning Winnie had just come down from a flight and was warming himself by the brazier when an orderly saluted and told him that Captain Young wanted him in his office.

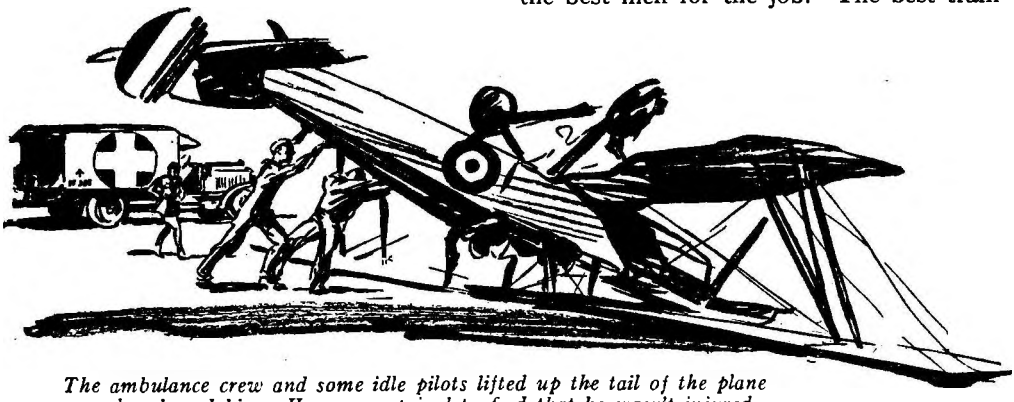
He found Captain Young poring over a list of names.

"Hello," he greeted him, "I've got some news for you. It may be pleasant."

"Yes sir," said Winnie.

"For the love o' Mike, drop that 'sir,' "

"Hate to say. I've been two-seater fighter and night-bomber both. You live long on two-seaters. The scouts are fast and dangerous. They kill about thirty per cent in training, and about fifty per cent at the front. But you do your own fighting, and you're the pet of the army. They're like riding one of your bucking broncos. If you're worth a damn, you can get a chestful of decorations before they bury you. But you've got to be good to stand the gaff. I'm supposed to pick the best men for the job. The best training squadron for scouts is down at Colney. It's near London, and the C. O. is a priceless beggar—was my flight commander when I went out in '16. I can give you a note to him that will make you welcome."



The ambulance crew and some idle pilots lifted up the tail of the plane and released him. He was surprised to find that he wasn't injured.

the Captain told him. "Save it for the general. Sit down and put your feet on the table and give me a cigarette and be human."

Winnie complied reluctantly. To him Captain Young was an Olympian, a knight of many battles. He wore two decorations and a wound-stripe, and had been in France for three tours of duty, one with the infantry and two with the flying corps. The fact that they were the same age did not lessen Winnie's reverence nor dim his admiration. Somehow he didn't like Captain Young's insistence on familiarity.

"We're going to have to lose you chaps now," Captain Young continued. "Hate to do it, too. You've put new life in this old graveyard. Thought I'd go nuts until you men came. Jolly lot you've been. The major wants to keep you here for duration. But the wing sent a chit to post you to the advanced squadrons. Where do you want to go?"

"I don't know, sir." The Captain scowled. "Beg pardon. I don't know, damn you. Where'd you suggest?"

"What do you want to be—scout, two-seater, fighter, artillery observation or bomber? Take your pick."

"What do you advise?"

"Thank you. The scout idea sounds good to me. But I want to go along with Carter and Chandler. Can you fix that?"

Captain Young looked over his list again.

"Right-o. They seem to know their left from their right. So I'll check you off. By the by, the staff is giving a farewell party for you tonight at the club. Give the men a buzz, will you?"

THE party that the staff gave the departing Americans is part of the history of Stamford and the flying corps. The adjutant, who had made the lives of the men miserable by herding them into wireless and machine-gun classes, was visited by appropriate revenge. At one stage of the dinner some one poured a glass of champagne on his head. He snatched up the tablecloth and sent platters and glasses flying as he dried his dripping hair.

Later the furniture was piled in the middle of the room and trench raids were launched and repulsed until the celebrants began to drop out one by one. Everyone

seemed to pile on the adjutant. Some one hit him in the eye with an ink-bottle, and he was last seen in his car with an empty bottle of champagne in his hand, backing at full speed down the dark narrow streets.

Winnie and Captain Young finished the evening by climbing to the top of a huge bookcase and sitting there dividing a bottle of port while they sang in complete oblivion of time or key:

> The young aviator lay dying, and as 'neath the wreckage he lay,
> To the Ak Emmas around him assembled, these last parting words did he say:
> "Take the cylinders out of my kidney, the connecting rod out of my brain,
> From the small of my back take the crankshaft, and assemble the engine again."

The next morning the town was horrified by the spectacle of their sacred cathedral spire. Some overzealous bibulant had climbed to the top and decorated it with six blue china mugs from the hotel. The fire department was called out and worked all morning trying to remove them but was unable to do so. Finally the aid of the Americans was sought, and Tipton climbed the spire with the whole town below cheering. No one was able to prove that he had ever made the ascent before, but there was a strong suspicion of it, owing to the fact that he always seemed to know where to put his hands and feet for the next move.

The mayor complained, so the Major had to take official notice of this breach of the peace and ordered a curfew for all officers at Stamford. They were required to be in their billets by midnight, and a patrol was sent out to see that they were. The patrol would start out six strong and make the rounds of the bars. Everybody who was out would join the patrol. It would end up fifty strong, and then another party would start. After a week the mayor begged that the patrol be abandoned.

CHAPTER III

COLNEY was not the place that Captain Young had led them to expect, but the Major there made up for their disappointment. He warmly welcomed the three Americans when they reported to him.

"How did you leave jolly old Young?" he asked them after he read the note.

"He's fine," Winnie told him. "He came down to the station with us this morning."

"What? And you're here already? Frightful hurry! What's the big idea?"

"We thought we were to come straight here."

"Jolly good idea, but not practical. Not practical. Leave's been stopped, you know. Can't give you any leave until you graduate. Order from the brigade. Better take what you can get now. Run away and come back in three days and tell me you missed your train. I haven't a bloody machine for you to fly, anyway. I'll send for one. Run along. Pip-pip!"

Outside the office, Winnie and Carter and Chandler stared at each other blankly.

"What do you think of that!" muttered Chandler. "I told you we were doing something wrong. He seemed glad enough to see us, and then he tells us to vamoose for three days. Where'll we go?"

"What places have you?" Carter asked.

"Well, judging from the map, dear old London cawn't be more than an hour by these street-car railways. Let's find out. I could do with a six-course dinner, a four-poster and the sight of forty pairs of fat calves kicking over the footlights. I suppose they'll let us privates into a theater."

They wandered over to the mess and found a lieutenant talking to the barmaid and drinking a whisky-and-soda. He invited them to join him. They had a round of drinks and put their plight up to him.

"The old man's all right," he told them. "He'll let you swing the lead all you want as long as you keep quiet about it. I've been here six months. Going to vote in the next election. And whoever heard of reporting anywhere without taking a couple of days' leave on the way? No wonder he sent you away. It would ruin our discipline if it got noised about. So beggar off to London. Ever been there?"

"One night when we first landed," Winnie told him, "but we didn't see much. We were in ranks and stayed at a Y. M. C. A. hut."

"Well, you'll have to walk over to the station. That's about three miles from here. You can get a train any time. Or you can walk two miles to the High Road and get a bus. When you get to London, go to the Savoy. That's the place. Just stand-to when the bar opens at six, and you'll find it full of your pals and my pals. Make yourself known. . . . . Half a mo—you're new here. Maybe the E. O. is soft-hearted. Come along, and we'll touch him for a tender."

THEY went over to the equipment office. The equipment officer listened to the impassioned appeal from the lieutenant, and after much pencil-tapping agreed to give them a tender to take them to the station. They threw clean linen and toilet articles into musette bags and departed gayly. . . . .

There were no taxies at the station in London, but they found their way to the Savoy on a series of busses. It fascinated them. The big lobby was full of officers in various uniforms, and many girls—most of them very pretty. They were not so chic, but their complexions made up for anything else they might have lacked. Their cheeks had all the natural blush of a ripe peach.

"This is the place for us," exclaimed Chandler. "I vote we stay here."

"Do you think it's all right?" asked Winnie. "I don't see anything but officers in here."

"Well, we're officers now," said Carter, "whether Washington says so or not. We can fly, and pilots are officers. This is where I pitch my tent. Who'll know what we are? Let's get a room."

They registered and were shown up to a large double room. As they followed the page down a long corridor, they turned a corner and ran into a Canadian officer.

"Hello, America," he greeted them. "Where'd you come from?"

They told him.

"Throw your things down and come on over to 304. We're having a binge over there. Better still, I'll wait for you."

They left their kit in the room and followed him around a long maze of corridors to 304. Four officers were in the room, half hidden in a cloud of smoke behind a screen of glasses.

"What ho!" their guide shouted to the others. "Here're three of our noble allies from below the line—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Meet these ruffians: Captain Smyth, Lieutenant Elliott, Major Walsh and Captain Brokes-Watson. And over here is Miss Muffet, Madame Bo-peep and Mary-Mary-quite-contrary."

The three girls were very attractive.

Winnie was dazed for a moment at the tableau, but was soon at ease. Captain Smyth began to ask him questions. Where did he live? Did he know Walter Marsh? Sure! Poor Walter was killed at Vimy. Where did he go to college? Is that so? Did you know Bill Walker? Fine chap—got it on the Somme—tank expert. And so on. In a few minutes he was comfortably sitting on a sofa with one of the girls and drinking a whisky and soda.

These Canadians were back from the front for two weeks' leave. They had shaken the mud of Flanders from their uniforms and the thoughts of battle from their minds and were on a holiday—their first in six months. London was a playground to make them fresh for the slaughter again.

Chandler and Carter found something in common with the others, and one of the girls had been on the stage in New York for a season. Several other officers joined the party and the afternoon passed quickly.

Officers came in with girls and left them. Others took them away. It was a house-party. There were five suites on the same hall and several others scattered about. The party moved from one to the other, gathering size like a snowball. . . . .

Four days later three weary young men reported to the Major at Colney again.

The Major looked them over carefully.

"That's better," he told them. "You have apparently been to London and gotten fried on both sides. I still haven't got anything for you to fly, but you can amuse yourselves with machine-gun classes and wireless. I have positive instructions from the brigade that you must do an hour of each every day. But remember I didn't invent either one of them, and address your prayers to the general. Buzz off, and the mess-sergeant will assign you to quarters. Your orders call you privates, but we have no enlisted men under instruction here, so you will have to be officers. I can't commission you, but I will see that you are treated as officers. You will wear Sam Brownes and parade with my other officers who are under instruction. I don't suppose you know that Captain Young bumped himself off night before last? He was up chasing a couple of Gothas, and a fog came in below him. He crashed into a steeple. Jolly fine chap. Well, that's all."

The three weary merrymakers filed out and sought the mess-sergeant to find a place to lay their aching heads.

CHAPTER IV

THREE weeks passed, and Winnie was no closer to the war. He had one ride in a plane. Captain Walker took him up in an Avro for twenty minutes, during which

time he was right-side-up for forty seconds. Walker had not been back from the front long, and seemed to consider the war a huge joke. He wore the Military Cross and two wound-stripes. The three Americans were assigned to his flight for instruction, but there were no planes available for dual instruction.

They had made another trip to London, and the rest of the time had been spent at wireless and machine-gun classes. They played bridge continually, and sometimes *vingt-et-un*. The mess was a poor affair of composition-board and very cold when the winter wind would whistle through the cracks. They wore their fur flying boots and kept warm by stoking the fire from within. Fuel for the stove was scarce, but for the internal furnace it was more than plentiful. The food was almost negligible and consisted of boiled potatoes, Brussels sprouts, bread puddings and occasionally a little iridescent meat. They kept their ribs from showing by toasting huge slices of bread before the fire and covering them with margarine and jam.

The first week in January the squadron inherited three Avros, and Winnie got his first instruction. He found the Avro a very sensitive machine, but not difficult to fly.

"You're all right," Captain Walker told him. "Get in about five hours, and then you can take up a Pup."

THE foggy winter weather was bad for flying, and it was three weeks before he got in his five hours. By that time he was quite at home in an Avro and had grown to like the rotary motor. Then came the day he was to take up the Pup. It was a tiny little plane with a big Gnome motor like the Avro, and even more delicate on the controls. There was just room enough for one man to squeeze into its tiny cockpit. Captain Walker took him out after breakfast and showed him all the switches, gauges and cocks and gave him final instructions.

Another instructor had a pupil ready to go in another machine, so they waited to see him get off.

The engine was started and allowed to turn up its full revolutions against the chocks in front of the wheels. Then the pupil waved to the mechanics, who jerked away the blocks, and away went the Pup with a roar like a startled monster. It swerved sharply, straightened out and left the ground within a hundred feet after one high bounce. It climbed steeply with the motor sputtering. The pilot pushed the nose down and adjusted his mixture—up went the Pup again with a roar. The nose was rising; it hesitated and stopped climbing, fluttered, and suddenly dropped toward the earth. There was a roar, a streak of smoke and oil, a terrific crash and a bright burst of flame.

Everyone rushed to the wreckage and left Winnie standing by his plane. He was rooted to the spot. His feet were lead; his mouth was dry and his heart was racing. The smoke was rising above the shattered plane as the fire-extinguishers played on it hopelessly. He shuddered as he thought of the horrible death awaiting him. His knees were weak; they were knocking together. He shifted his weight; still they shook. He leaned against the fuselage; still his knees wouldn't support him, and he slowly sank to a sitting position on the wing.

This wouldn't do! He must get up. He got to his feet but his knees wouldn't obey him. He climbed into the seat of the plane and began to go over the gadgets and move the controls to occupy his mind. He must carry on. But he never wanted to fly a Pup!

In a few minutes the ambulance came dashing by, and Captain Walker dropped off it as it slowed down.

"All ready?" he called to Winnie.

"You want me to go on up?" Winnie asked tremulously.

"Sure. Too bad that fellow stalled. Remember these things are tail-heavy. Keep your eye on the *pitot* and don't let it get below sixty. And watch your pressure. Take off with the mixture lean, and you'll be all right. Let it splutter a little." He called to a couple of mechanics who were coming back from the wreckage.

IT was now or never. Winnie gritted his teeth to keep them from chattering. His knees shook so he could scarcely keep his feet on the rudder. He braced his heels. This was worse than his first solo. But now his thoughts were not back home. He had learned not to think of anything but the actual flying. His mind was on his task. But he was frightened physically. He was not frightened at the prospect of death—but his flesh flinched from the actual ordeal of it.

They put the chocks in front of his wheels and yelled to him:

"Switch off, throttle open, sir."

"Switch off, throttle open," he repeated.

The mechanic spun the propeller around until the gasoline ran out of the valves.

"Throttle closed."

"Throttle closed."

Backward went the propeller.

"Contact, sir."

"Contact."

The motor started with a roar. He let it die down and opened his throttle until it roared again. Everything was all right. He pressed his switch and nodded to the mechanics. They pulled the chocks away —a roar and he was gone. The wheels touched the ground gently twice, like a farewell kiss, and then he was off, skimming along the ground like a swallow. His right arm was rigid, and as he released the pressure against the stick, the Pup shot up three hundred feet. He pushed the stick forward again quickly. My God, this was sport! He pushed his rudder ever so gently with his left foot. He was around in a split second, headed back with a strong blast of air on his right cheek. . . . . He was skidding. Steady!

In an hour he was at home, ready for any tricks the Pup might try to play on him. Now for a landing! He came down close to the ground and pulled the stick back gently to level off. Just as his wheels stuck the second time, he released his switch. Fine—just in time. He was running along the ground blipping his motor now, and as he lost speed he turned toward the hangars. He was a pilot now. Five hours more, and he would have his wings!

Captain Walker was waiting on him with a smile on his face.

"Fine stuff!" he told him as he climbed out of the tiny cockpit. "No damage except a bent axle."

"What? Did I do that?"

"Yep. Can't be helped. The damn' things are weak, anyway. Come inside and we'll have a long drink to warm up. I'm frozen stiff."

Winnie was surprised to find that he was drenched with perspiration, but his knees were steady. He was a pilot now.

CHAPTER V

FIVE hours on Pups, and Winnie was ready for Spads. He was sent on a cross-country flight of fifty miles, up to ten thousand feet for an altitude test, and was examined on machine-guns and wireless. Captain Walker made the examination standing in front of the bar one night while Winnie bought double whiskies for them. He finally pronounced him a graduated pilot, entitled to wear wings and speak disrespectfully to all ground officers. He then ordered Winnie to help him to bed.

The next morning Captain Walker sent for him, and Winnie found the mechanics warming up a Spad.

"That for me?" he asked.

"Sure. How do you feel?"

"All right. But I don't know the gadgets in a Spad."

"Get in, and I'll show them to you. Your motor ought to rev fifteen hundred with that prop. Don't be afraid if it misses a little. These Hispanos all skip like the devil—double jets, you know. Be sure it's warm before you take off. All right. Take it easy."

Winnie's head was full of cobwebs from the night before, but his hand was steady and he had confidence in himself. He ran the motor up and waved to the mechanics to take the chocks away.

He opened the throttle, and the Spad started slowly forward. He lifted the tail and held the plane straight as it gathered speed. Halfway across the field it ran, and then a bump threw the wheels a couple of feet off the ground. They came back down with a clatter, and after three more bounces the plane left the ground in a slow climb. He gathered speed and pulled slowly over the trees on the edge of the road. Not much room to spare. He climbed until he reached five thousand feet and then throttled back and began to play with the controls. In five minutes he got more sensations than he had ever had before in his life. One minute his stomach would hit him in the face, and the next his safety-belt would squeeze the wind out of his lungs. His ears ceased to function after a steep dive. He yanked back on the stick and cut his lip against the cowling. My God, what a plane! Plane? A comet! He felt like a witch astride a broom. There didn't seem to be any lift to the wings at all. He had a sensation of hurtling through space sitting on a motor.

In an hour he was master of the Spad. He hurled it at the ground at ninety miles an hour and held his wheels two feet off the turf as he sped across the field. A bump, and he was rolling along toward the fence at the far end of the airdrome. As

the wind drifted him to the left, he kicked on right rudder and swung around so sharply that he nearly upset. One wing dragged the ground for a moment as the plane tilted over on one wheel and then settled back on both. He taxied to the hangars with a feeling of triumph.

"Score one right lower wing," Captain Walker greeted him. "For God's sake, let's go get a drink. I'm so hung over I hit my own backwash."

"So'm I," agreed Winnie, as he realized that he was very dizzy. But he knew he could fly a Spad. And if he could fly a Spad, he could fly anything.

"All right," Captain Walker told him at the bar. "Now take it easy. Five hours on a Spad, and you're ready for service. Don't hurry. You can drag out five hours for a couple of months."

"But why should I?" asked Winnie.

"You don't want to go to the front, do you?"

"Sure."

"You're either a liar or a fool. Take it easy. There's plenty of time. You'll get bumped off soon enough without begging for it. And you don't want to go out until it's warm. Winter fighting is hell. How old do you think I am?"

"Thirty-five," Winnie guessed.

"I was twenty-two last month," Captain Walker told him. "That's what the front does to you."

Winnie marveled. Captain Walker was no older than himself! Yet he talked like an aged veteran. He was. Six months must be a lifetime at the front.

CHAPTER VI

CHANDLER had little trouble with Pups or Spads. He seemed to take to the fast little planes naturally. They were different from anything he had ever flown, but the difference was all in their favor. At least, they had plenty of power.

For ten days everybody was happy learning new stunts and getting new sensations. Carter crashed an Avro and had to have more instruction before he could fly a Pup. But he had no more trouble and was soon with the others on Spads.

The Spads had machine-guns on them, and every time a pupil took one up he was supposed to fire a load of ammunition at a target on the ground in an adjoining meadow. The guns and the sights were both bolted to the fuselage, and the gun was aimed by directing the whole plane at the target. It was a difficult thing to learn, but very accurate shooting was possible, particularly on a moving target.

One day on reporting they found Captain Walker scowling at the sky.

"Ceiling too low for stunting," he told them. "Suppose you go up and do a little target-practice until it lifts. Chappel, you take 7614; Carter, you take 7291. And Chandler, you take the first one that comes down. And, for Pete's sake, don't kill any sheep in the next meadow. We've been strafed twice for that."

Winnie got in 7614 to start it up, but the magneto was sulky and required attention. He climbed out of the seat just as Bob took off. Chan came over and they stood watching Bob.

Bob had climbed to a thousand feet and dived on the target which was in the adjoining field. He came down in a steep dive with his gun spitting tracer ahead. Then something went wrong. His gun stopped and the plane stayed in its dive. Down he came to the tree-tops. Chan and Winnie held their breath as the Spad rushed at the ground like a meteor. There was an ear-splitting crash like a clap of thunder and a shout went up from the hangars. The ambulance was already starting across the field.

"Come on, Winnie," yelled Chan.

Winnie shook his head. There was no use to go over there. Bob wasn't over there—he was gone now. Suddenly he was sick at his stomach. He got out of the plane, but his knees weren't working. He walked into the hangar with difficulty and lay down. He thought he had fainted.

After a while the mechanics came back. He got up and steadied himself. He must get up in the air. He called to the mechanics and got back in the cockpit.

"Contact, sir."

"Contact."

He cranked his booster, and the Hispano started with an uneven splutter. He warmed it up quickly and took off.

In the air he was calm. The earth was far below. He was with Bob now. He looked down and saw the wreckage of Bob's Spad near the target. He pulled up to the edge of the clouds and rolled and spun. He even tried to loop. He couldn't do it. He dived once on the target. He felt better now. He zoomed to one thousand feet and started to turn. *Pop-pop-pop-plop!* The

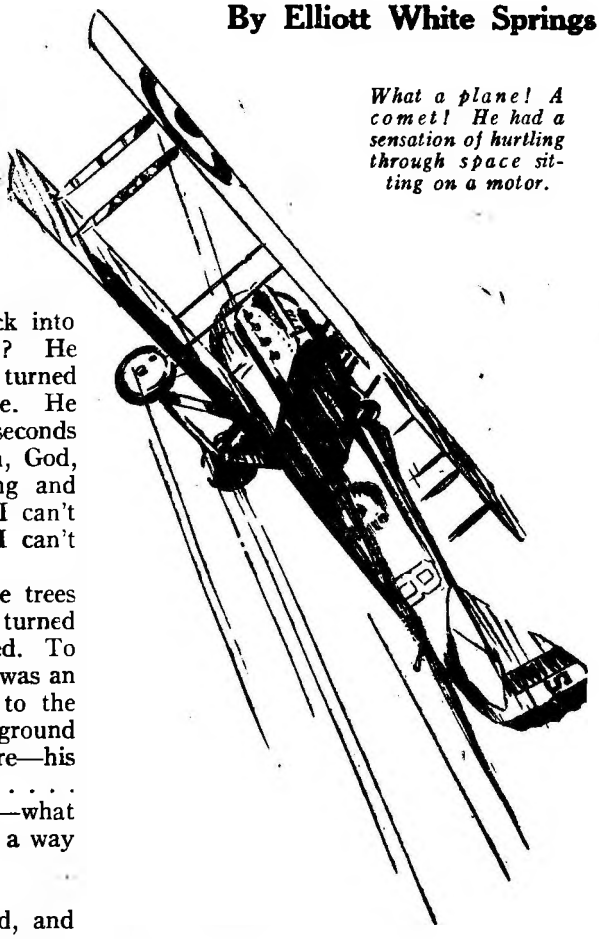
By Elliott White Springs

motor spluttered and stopped. It was his turn now. He looked at his gasoline pressure. Two pounds. That was all right. It must be the ignition. Damn these Hispanos with only one magneto!

He let the stick forward to put the plane in a glide, and looked down over the side.

He was too far away to get back into the field. Where should he land? He searched eagerly for a field as he turned into the wind. Nothing down there. He was losing altitude fast. Fifteen seconds to live. Ten seconds to live. "Oh, God, don't let me die now! I'm young and Laura's waiting on me at home. I can't die. I came over here to fight. I can't quit now!"

There was a small opening in the trees below him, and a short field. He turned into it. He must keep his flying speed. To stall a Spad was sure death. There was an embankment to the left and trees to the right. He kept to the middle. The ground was coming up toward him. There—his wheels touched. . . . . Easy now. . . . . Crash—he was going over! Crash—what a mess—just a stone wall—a hell of a way to die. . . . . Darkness.



What a plane! A comet! He had a sensation of hurtling through space sitting on a motor.

GRADUALLY his senses returned, and he knew that he wasn't dead. How badly was he hurt? He tried moving his hands. Fine. Then his legs. He drew a long breath. All right. His spine wasn't hurt. And his eyes were safe too.

"Atta boy! How do you feel?" It was Chan's voice. He was in the ambulance with him.

"Am I hurt bad?" Winnie asked, holding his breath. His body was numb.

"Not that we can notice. Just a crack on the coco."

"Oooch! The left elbow." He howled as they hit a bump.

"That's all right," the orderly told him. "Here's the hospital now."

They carried him in on the stretcher and put him to bed. The doctor looked him over and strapped up his arm.

"You're lucky, young man," he assured him. "You aren't hurt badly, but we'll keep you here a few days and give your a rest. Make sure your head isn't hurt. You had a nasty crack on it. Your elbow is sprained, but not badly. Soon be all right. Here, hold still while I give you a shot of tetanus serum. Let's take no chance."

Winnie slept well that night, for the doctor gave him a sleeping powder. The next day he found he was very tired. This wasn't surprising. It was eight months since he'd spent a day relaxed. The strain had told on him more than he suspected.

He was in a base hospital which had formerly been a hotel. He had a nice airy room and a comfortable bed. Americans were very popular, and as soon as his arrival became known, he had plenty of company. One of the nurses was from Buffalo. Another was from Detroit. Everybody wanted news from the States. How soon would our army be ready? That was the question on everyone's lips. There was a procession in and out his room all day, and he was practically a guest of honor. There was a lull in the fighting at the front, and the hospital was less than half full.

That night he slept for several hours and suddenly found himself wide awake with the cold sweat pouring from his body in a torrent. He was back in the Spad again, just below the clouds. He was diving, and he couldn't pull the nose up. He'd get the

nose up, and then the motor would stop. He was going to be killed! As the stone wall came up at him, he awoke slowly with the sweat trickling over his chest. It was only a dream, he realized, but he was still in agony. How could he go on? He was sure to be killed if he flew a Spad again. Or any other plane. He wasn't going to fly again. He'd go to London and tell them at headquarters he was through. They could court-martial him for cowardice if they wanted to, but he wasn't going to fly again. He couldn't. He tried to shake off the nightmare, but his mind had congealed. This wouldn't do. He was having a violent chill, yet the sweat still poured from his body. He rang for the nurse. She came in a moment.

"What's the trouble, America?" she asked sympathetically.

"I don't know. I feel funny all over."

She put her hand on his forehead and felt under the covers.

"I'll say you do. Here, cover up warm, and I'll fix you in a jiffy."

She came back in a moment with a big drink of whisky and dry bedclothes.

"Here, drink this and you'll feel better. Then I'll dry you off and fix your bed."

He did feel better in a moment. Just her presence reassured him. She dried him off and tucked him in a dry bed.

"Sorry to be such a nuisance," he apologized.

"That's all right. You had a bad crash."

"It couldn't be so bad if I wasn't hurt."

"The worst ones don't show a scratch sometimes. But you're all right now. A nervous reaction is to be expected."

"Sorry to put you to all this trouble. It's just the heebie-jeebies, that's all."

"What's that?"

"The blue devils. The furies. The face on the barroom floor laughing at me."

He was feeling better. He felt like laughing. Instead he was crying. He wanted to laugh, but he couldn't stop crying. Why was he crying?

The nurse patted his cheek.

"Brace up. Mustn't let go. You're all right now."

"But I'll have to fly again as soon as I get out of here."

"Sure. You'll be ready in a week."

"But I can't. I'll never be able to fly again."

"Oh, sure you will. They all feel this way about it at first and soon get over it. Mustn't think about it now. Go to sleep."

"I can't. I can't stop thinking about flying. I enlisted to be a pilot and then I chose to be a scout pilot. Now I'll never be anything. I can't just give up, but I know I'll never be able to fly again—I can't do it."

"Nonsense. That's just the reaction to your first bad crash. You'll get over it. See if you don't. Just like a woman with her first baby. For a week afterward she's in mortal terror. Then before long she wants another one. In a week you'll be deviling the doctor to let you fly. You wont want your friends to get ahead of you."

"Where's Bob Carter?"

"You mean the boy who was killed yesterday?"

"Yes."

"He's down in the morgue in the other building."

"He was my roommate. Is—was he smashed up badly?"

"Well, he's gone. Never mind how he is now. Let the dead bury their dead. Here, finish this whisky and go on back to sleep. I'll sit here with you awhile."

She turned off the light and drew up a chair. He was glad she was there. It kept his thoughts off Bob. And his crash. He had been so close to death. Next time he'd join Bob. No, he wouldn't. He'd fight it out again. He must never turn yellow—he must— He dropped off to sleep.

THE next morning he heard the sounds of a parade below and rushed to the window. It was the guard of honor for Bob's funeral. There was a band and a firing-party from the local regiment, and the mechanics and officers from the squadron. Three planes were circling above to escort the casket to its final resting-place.

Chan was bringing out the coffin now. It was covered with the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack. That was nice. We were all together now—one against a common foe. Here he was in a British hospital, staffed by American doctors!

The coffin was placed on a gun-carriage. The British pallbearers took up their positions. The band struck up the Marche Funèbre and started forward.

Something icy gripped Winnie's heart. Tears poured from his eyes. His knees were weak and he stumbled blindly back to bed. Bob was gone!

That afternoon Chan and Captain Walker came to see him and brought a bot-

tle of good whisky which all three drank while they joked.

"What a head you have, Winnie," Captain Walker told him. "The whole bloody Spad landed on it after the under-carriage smashed against the stone wall. The Major says to thank you for saving the ship. He's going to recommend you for the O. B. E. for balancing a Spad on your bottom while you stood on your head. Not many soldiers would do that for their country. You're a good pilot. Damn' fine landing you made. Kept your head. I thought sure you were gone. Knew there was no place over there for you to land. Jolly good show. You'll be a great pilot some day."

"That's two crashes for him," Chan put in. "One more to go, Winnie, and you get your wings. I wrote off a Pup this morning, myself."

"How come you flying a Pup?"

"I wasn't. I was flying a Spad."

"How'd you smash a Pup, then?"

"Somebody else was in the Pup. It was waiting to take off after me and I swung into it as I was getting off."

"But that doesn't count," Captain Walker told him. "You've got to crash three times yourself to get wings. So you wasted a Pup. The Major was quite displeased about your little error."

"Why?" asked Winnie. "What kick has the Major got about that? We've got plenty of Pups."

"Yes, but the Major happened to be in this one at the time."

And they all laughed. It was good to be alive. And the future was never brighter.

BUT that night it came on again. He was lonely. It depressed him to be alone. The thought of flying again was like a weight on his head. He'd never be able to do it. Poor Bob! How his body must have been mangled! He could hear the slow music and see the casket drawn by the black horses start away from the morgue door. What if he were in that casket? He would soon be in one like it! Perhaps he wouldn't even get a casket. He'd be left to rot beneath his wreckage in No Man's Land. He couldn't go on!

The perspiration was pouring from his body again and his teeth were chattering. He rang for the nurse.

"What again?" she asked cheerfully. "Come, come! This isn't cricket. I've got some real sick boys to look after."

She brought him a glass of whisky and changed his clothes.

He felt better immediately. It was just being alone that set him off. After all, twenty million men were in the same fix and still carried on cheerfully. He was a baby; that was the trouble. He was made of soft stuff. He must brace up.

"You're very kind, sister," he thanked her. "I hate to be such a nuisance. I realize I'm not sick. And I guess you have plenty to do without humoring me. How long have you been at this job?"

"Two years and a half. I started my course six weeks after the war and I can tell you I'm fed-up with the whole jolly show. And when I see some of the women out being butterflies while I slave to keep the war going, I get jolly well mad. And you men prefer the butterflies, too. Yes, you do! Go to town any night and what do you find? All the men making fools of themselves over some bit of fluff. They've forgotten who washed them when they came back from France covered with blood and mud, and who held their heads while the doctors sewed them together again, and who nursed them through their nightmares. No, as soon as they get well, off they go after some lazy flapper, never thinking to take sister out. Oh, it's sister, please bring me a glass of milk—sister, please fix my pillow—sister, please move my game leg. But as soon as they get the blue band off their arms, they're out after a slacking scatterbrain."

"It's a damn' shame, sister, it is. Would you like to go out and dance with me some evening after I get well?"

She laughed. "Oh, I wasn't fishing for an invitation. That's not what galls me. You'd never think it, but I'm not bad looking when I get on my war-paint. I haven't worn an evening dress in six months but I used to be quite comely in décolleté. I could hold my own in any ballroom. I used to shake a wicked foot in the cool of the evening. It's the plain ones that I was referring to. Whoever heard of a man taking out a homely nurse, no matter how much she'd done for him?"

"Well, I wouldn't deserve any credit for trying to take you out, but just the same, wouldn't you have dinner with me and maybe dance a little afterwards or go to a show? I'd really like to take you."

She patted his cheek.

"You're a nice boy. Thank you. It helps my vanity. But I wont go with you.

I've put all that sort of thing behind me. I used to go out a lot. But it always made me dissatisfied with my work after I'd have a holiday so I dropped it entirely. My people want me to give up nursing and come home but I can't—not while there're so many wounded to come back this spring. You can't imagine what this place will be like in the spring after the fighting starts again. Oh, I hope the Americans will be here for it! We can't stand another year like the last."

There were tears in her eyes.

"They're coming, sister. You wait and see. We'll have a million men in the trenches this summer."

"If we can only last until then! Tell me, where do you live?"

"Chicago."

"I remember it. I was there when I was a little girl. My uncle lives there. It was cold and I didn't like it."

"It's not much for climate. Mother writes that they've just had a blizzard and coal is very scarce."

"Have you written your people this week?"

"No."

"You must. Write them a cheerful letter and don't tell them about your crash. You ought to write to them every week. They'll worry about you more if you don't. It's the least you can do to write regularly. And always be cheerful. Pretend you've got a cushy job."

WINNIE remembered what the nurse had said, and wrote three long cheerful letters home. One was to Laura:

"Dearest Laura:

"War isn't always a tragic struggle. We have our comic interludes. Last week there was a good one. Chan was the cause of it. He was up in a Pup and decided to go over to Northolt and see Waller, who is over there flying Farmans, commonly known as Rumptys. When he got over there, he circled the field to see what was going on and spied a machine-gun class in a pit just off the field. He dived down in it to see if Waller was there. Everybody climbed out of the pit in a great hurry. He pulled up and then came down again and ran along the ground coming back toward them. Everybody jumped back into the pit again. That seemed a lot of fun to Chan, so he spent half an hour chasing them in and out of the pit. One man tried to run to the woods and Chan caught him and made him lie down. Finally Chan saw that Waller wasn't there and landed by the hangars.

"The C. O. was there to greet him. Now, over here at our squadron everything goes. If you want to stunt, you go up and stunt. If you want to run your wheels on the sides of the hangars, it's all right. Everything is full out. If the Major should walk across the field every plane in the air would dive on him. He'd expect it. And they'd make him crawl back on his hands and knees. It's sort of a ground rule. Pukka flying is encouraged.

"But at Northolt it's different. They have rules for everything. Major Cutting doesn't allow any stunting and everyone is supposed to do everything according to the D. O. R. A. There's wind-up at the place all the time and nobody has any fun because they have such a pious major.

"Chan's stunt was more aggravating to this Major than any red flag to a bull. He was boiling. As soon as Chan got out of the plane, he walked up and pitched into him. When he found out he was just a cadet, and an American at that, he nearly had apoplexy. He gave his opinion of Colney with footnotes and glossary. He called Major Wheeler sixteen kinds of a pukka fool and told Chan to go back and tell his instructor he ought to be shot at sunrise for turning loose such a pupil. Chan got in the Pup and sneaked off with his tail between his legs.

"He came back and told Captain Walker about it. Captain Walker took him to Major Wheeler, and he literally pawed the earth. He and Major Cutting had been in the same squadron in France and he read his title clear. Said he always was the sort of old maid to wear rubbers and sleep in a bomb-proof dugout. He and Captain Walker cried to heaven for vengeance.

"FOR a couple of days they conspired and then went into action. They drew complete new flying outfits—new leather coats, face-masks, boots, goggles and gloves. They got big padded crash-helmets like first-soloists wear, and dressed themselves up as the greenest of green pupils. That's how you can tell who's who in the flying corps—by the amount of grease and dirt on their flying togs. No one would think these two had ever been in a plane before.

"They got an old Avro with a Le Rhone motor and took off for Northolt. There was a strong wind blowing, and they arrived doing a falling-leaf. They pretended

to try and land, bounced fifty feet and took off again. They went around to the left instead of to the right as they should have, and nearly collided with a couple of Rumptys that were up. The next time they came in short and almost pancaked on the C. O.'s office. They gave it the gun and got the plane in a vertical bank about five feet off the ground. The Major was already out watching and thinking up things to say to them if they didn't get killed. They nearly knocked him down twice and tried to land again. This time they pancaked from three hundred feet. Just as they were about to crash, they gave it the gun and pulled out of the stall. The plane bounced fifty feet and took off again.

"From all reports it was the greatest exhibition of flying ever staged. For half an hour the two fools did everything wrong that could be done with a plane and chased all the other planes away from the field. Every time another plane would try to land, they'd get in front of it. They went right under one Rumpty that was trying to glide in.

"Major Cutting was foaming at the mouth. The whole squadron was out to watch and thought it was a three-ring circus. Odds of four to one were given that they would crash if their gas held out. Meanwhile the old Avro was apparently doing its best to land. It would come in cross wind and drift and next time down wind and overshoot. They half-rolled at two hundred feet and finished a loop below the tree-tops. They touched their wheels on the hangars twice and knocked the wind cone down with their landing skid. Major Cutting had to have first aid.

"FINALLY the Avro came down cross-wind in a vertical sideslip and landed on the tarmac between the hangars and a line of planes. They didn't hit anything and ended up by coasting into a hangar. It looked like a miracle. Maybe it was.

"Then out stepped this fresh-looking pair of fools. Simple Simon would appear a sage compared to them.

"Major Cutting walked up to them to get a good look and the whole squadron gathered around to hear his remarks. There never was a pair of clowns gotten up any better. Their leather coats were so new you could still smell the cow.

" 'What in the name of holy hades are you two bloody idiots trying to do?' the Major demanded. 'Where are you from?'

" 'From Colney, sir,' said Major Wheeler, meekly, with his goggles and face mask still on.

" 'I might have known it! Hasn't your commanding officer got any more sense than to let you take off without teaching you how to land? I knew he ran a madhouse over there, but I never thought it would come to this. What's the matter with him? Is he in love with your wife?'

" 'Our major is an honorable man, sir.'

" 'Well, he's a bloody fool to turn you two loose.'

" 'Our instructor said we were good pilots, sir.'

" 'Well, he'll have to send over better ones if he wants his Avro back. I don't care to have my hangars knocked down. What are you doing over here and why did you try to land?'

" 'We were lost and we thought we were out of petrol, sir.'

" 'What made you think that?'

" 'We didn't seem to be going fast enough, sir.'

"Everyone laughed loud and long. Major Cutting gasped at such ignorance. He explained to them carefully their mistake. He examined the plane and told them the gauge showed that the tank was half full. Then he gave them a lecture on aerodynamics and gas engines that lasted half an hour. Everybody hung around and snickered at his wit.

" 'Very well, sir,' Major Wheeler told him; 'since we are not welcome here, we'll go on back.'

"They started to get in the plane.

" 'No, you don't,' Major Cutting bellowed. 'I'm in command of this squadron. If you touch that plane, I'll put you under arrest.'

" 'You can't put us under arrest, you silly old blighter,' Major Wheeler said, loud enough for the whole squadron to hear. 'So toddle along. Don't be an ass all your life.'

"Major Cutting turned livid and yelled like a stuck pig. The squadron stood back and gasped. Where was the firing-party? There hadn't been such insubordination in the British army since Cromwell beheaded Charles I.

"But before Major Cutting got his breath, they took off their helmets and goggles and face-masks. The crowd broke into a cheer when they realized that the miracle was nothing but good flying—very good flying—and a good joke besides.

"'The drinks are on you, Cutting,' Major Wheeler told him. 'I'll have bubbly. Lead on to the bar. We enjoyed the flying lesson. Wish I'd taken notes!'

"They didn't get back to Colney until next day so it must have been a good party. The whole squadron over here laughed until we were sick.

"A COUPLE of days later the major at Hendon called up to warn us that the new colonel of this wing was going to make a tour of inspection and we'd better get ready for it as he was all full of hot air. He had a general with him, and they were looking for trouble.

"One morning the colonel's Bristol landed on the field and taxied up to the tarmac. Out stepped a colonel and a general. They changed their helmets for brass hats, and the C. O. dashed out to greet them. They said they had come over to make an inspection, and they did. They stuck their noses into every corner of the place and bawled the C. O. out for anything that wasn't clean enough to eat off of. They had his face red for an hour and kept him explaining why the squadron was so sloppy. Then they said they'd like to see some formation flying by him and the instructors.

"Up they went in all the machines that were serviceable and some that weren't. It was a rotten exhibition if I ever saw one. Spads, Pups and Avros all in one formation. Their speeds varied fifty miles an hour, and the Pups and Avros have no throttles so they couldn't stay within a mile of each other. And to top it off there were three forced landings. It looked like the C. O. was going to lose his job. There's no alibi for bad mechanical conditions.

"About that time a dozen Rumptys arrived in formation. The sky was full of them. They landed and taxied up to the lines just as the Major came back from his formation with the survivors.

"In the Rumptys were Major Cutting and all the instructors from Northolt. He walked up to Major Wheeler on the tarmac. "'I say, Wheeler, old chap,' he greeted him, 'we heard you were serving free drinks today, and we came over to join the party.'

"'Shush! Be quiet,' Major Wheeler told him. 'The colonel and the general are here on an inspection tour.'

"'Can't be, old bean. They were over at my place this morning and went into town in my car. A couple of my pupils borrowed their Bristol for a hop. Wonder where they are. Lead on to your bar and let's see if they aren't in there. They said they were going to hurry over to the party.

"And in the bar were two American privates, Hank Winton and Johnny Warren, that had come over on the boat with me, disguised in trench coats and brass hats, and wearing fake mustaches and monocles.

"'Well, well,' said Major Cutting, 'I do believe you've been spoofed. It was a rotten trick. Very disrespectful of them. I'll have to court-martial these youngsters.'

"'Not on this field,' said Major Wheeler. 'I'm in command here. You were correctly informed, the drinks are on me today. Get your feet in the trough. I'll see that you get a skinful.'

"And they did and we did. Only one Rumpty got smashed on the way back.

"That's the way to run an army.

"All my love,

"Winnie."

CHAN and Captain Walker came to see Winnie again next day.

"Well, we're through with Chan," Captain Walker told him. "He knows more about flying than I do, so he's going up to Turnberry tonight."

"What's at Turnberry?" Winnie asked.

"The School of Aërial Gunnery. It's a ten-day course."

"Then what?"

"Ayr. The School of Aërial Fighting. You stay there until they need you at the front."

"And how long before I can go?" If he went right away he wouldn't have to fly a Spad again for ten days!

"As soon as you are well enough to travel."

"All right, Chan. You wait for me at Ayr."

"All right. Don't do anything funny in a Spad until I see you again. Rest on your laurels. I'll wait for you."

He'd have to hurry up and get out now. He tried working his arm and found it was not so bad. A couple of days and he'd be out. And ten days later he wrote to Laura again:

"Dearest Laura:

"Here I sit in a luxurious hotel looking out upon the Firth of Clyde and wondering whether the Scotch mist will ever lift enough for me to finish my course. At least, it used to be a luxurious hotel. Now it's our barracks.

"I am at Turnberry, which is nothing but a big resort hotel on a hill overlooking a golf-course down along the shore in the dunes. It's on the cold bleak coast of western Scotland, and I realize now why my ancestors emigrated to America.

"There are about three hundred British officers here under instruction, and classes begin at eight in the morning and last until sundown, with a lecture at night. It's hard work, let me tell you, and I am glad to get in bed every night. I know as much about machine-guns now as the man who invented them. They school us in handling them until we are automatons. We have to strip a gun with our gloves on, with one hand, blindfolded, and in a dummy fuselage while an energetic sergeant is rotating it in three dimensions to confuse us. One man got seasick yesterday.

"Chan has gone on to Ayr to the School of Aërial Fighting, and I'll join him as soon as the weather is clear enough for me to make my four flights.

"My boon companion here is a Scotch captain. Together we wander about in the afternoon when we're off, looking for something to eat. We get tea two or three times. We need it—we're half-starved."

"You might pass the word around to those who have friends over here that they had better put away their knitting needles and get out the old saucepan. England is lousy with wool. The angels above blush every time a soldier smacks his lips over a big juicy parcel from home, and then opens it to find a sweater, a pair of socks, a muffler and two Bibles. We've had to invent a new kind of profanity to cover it. So far, I have received fourteen sweaters, seventeen helmets, nine mufflers and twenty Bibles, to only two boxes of candy—one from you and one from Mother. And confidentially, I might as well tell you that we wear fur and leather stuff that keep us warm and the wind out as well. We are amply clothed but poorly fed.

"Later: There are some American mechanics here at the flying field who were on the torpedoed *Tuscania*. They are attired for the most part in cast-off Scotch uniforms and present a very unusual appearance. I gave them my entire collection of sweaters and mufflers and socks. I had no trouble getting them to wear the woolen goods, but so far I haven't found anybody to read all the Bibles. Pass the word that our souls are in the pink; it's our stomachs that need ministration."

CHAPTER VII

WINNIE scored 97 in his examinations and was sent down to Ayr. Chan had a room saved for him at Wellington House, a large private house which the R. F. C. had taken over for quarters, and Winnie found a big party in progress. They were no longer students, but warriors, awaiting their turn to go out to do battle. There was some doubt about what would be the fate of the American pilots. There were about thirty of them here mixed in with two hundred R. F. C. officers, but no one seemed to have any idea what was going to happen to them.

Every morning all officers were required to report to the airdrome at nine. Then a list of names was read off. These men were selected to go to the front and went back to pack and get their clearance papers. The others went over to the hangars on the edge of the race-track and got planes if they felt like it. Otherwise they went back to town to keep from freezing if they could find a fire.

The School of Aërial Fighting was a school in name only. It was really a sort of purgatory. Here the warrior awaited the casting of his lot, the final sorting into the seven pits of hell. From here they would go out to meet their ultimate fates—death, captivity, wounds, nerves; a soul seared by cowardice or a body broken in vain effort. After this the sheep would be separated from the goats. A machine-gun respected no reputation, and a father in Congress couldn't support a crumpled wing. But meanwhile the neophytes were permitted a last breathing-spell.

THE first day Winnie wanted to fly—he was in a funk about it and he wanted to get up and get it over with. Could he fly again? He must. He now saw the wisdom of going up immediately after a crash. He wouldn't suffer this way if he had. He asked for a Spad but they were all out of commission. Some one hit the telephone wires with one and Carol Banks had wrecked another when he hit a fence after the motor cut out. Bim Oliver and Alex Matthews washed-out the last one trying to loop it.

"Spads are napoo," Captain Foggin told him. "They are being replaced with Dolphins at the front. Nobody wants to fly these 150 Spads. Try something else. Take an S. E."

"I've never flown an S. E., sir."

"I don't care. There's one over there. Take it up."

Chan had flown an S. E. already, and so he showed Winnie how to work the gadgets and the adjustable tail. Winnie was very nervous as he taxied out to the middle of the race-course and took off. It was sluggish as compared to a Pup or a Spad, but he felt at ease in it—no danger of it turning upside down with him unexpectedly.

His first two attempts at landing were miserable failures. The gliding angle was very deceptive, and he didn't have his tail set right. The third time his judgment was better, and he landed on the second bounce.

That afternoon he flew an S. E. again and learned to land it. It was tricky about landing but once he got the hang of it, he made fifteen good landings.

The next morning Winnie was walking toward the S. E. hangars and found a group talking excitedly in front of the Camel hangars.

"What's up?" he inquired.

A sergeant answered: "One of your chaps just killed himself, sir."

"Who was it?"

"Don't know his name, sir. He was a Naval officer."

"Too damn' bad. How did it happen?"

"He took off in a right-hand climbing turn, sir, and hit the ground before he got it off its back."

"Too damn' bad."

"Yes sir."

He walked on over to the S. E. hangar meditatively. He thought of a quotation: "There but for the grace of God, am I."

At the hangar he found Chan arguing with Captain Foggin.

"Yes," the Captain was saying, "I used to fly one of those old crates. I remember the one you had, too. I saw it at Oakland. I had a Blériot with a 50 Gnome in it. Remember it? That was before I lost my eye. They don't want to let me go back to France now, but I can see more Huns with one eye than you youngsters can see with two telescopes. You don't see Huns anyway. You feel 'em. It's second sight. I'd get a glass eye and bluff it like Mick Mannoch does, but they all know I'm short one peeper. I was out in 1914 on Rumptys doing battle with a rifle and hand-grenades. Never hit anything. One machine-gun would have won the war then. Look."

A Camel had just taken off and was rising over the adjoining meadow. The pilot turned slowly to the right. Down went the nose; over on its back went the Camel; it did one turn of a spin; then there was a deafening crash and a cloud of dust and smoke.

They all turned away with one accord. The ambulance was rushing across the field. What was the use?

"Let's go see who it was."

They made inquiries at the hangars.

"Another American. Tough luck," Captain Foggin commented. "You fellows are getting a bad break. That's five in two weeks. Damn these Camels, anyway. And they're no bloody good now."

Winnie wrote to his mother that night: "Dear Mother:

"Don't worry about me. I've finished my flying training and ought not to have any more trouble. The only danger I face at present is starvation, but as long as I stay at Ayr I shall take on weight. There's more food here than any place I've been in England."

He went on through four sheets in the same vein and ended:

"Don't worry about me. Only the good die young.

"All my love,

"Winnie."

NEXT morning Winnie was told he was through flying and to report to Captain De Burgh for orders.

De Burgh was the pool officer. He sent men overseas in their turns or back to training squadrons to instruct if they weren't needed at the front.

"All right," he greeted Winnie. "What'll you have? Leave, France, Egypt, Italy, Mespot or instruct for a while?"

"I think I'd like France."

"All right. I'll put you down. But I don't know when you'll go. There's a row on about that now. And I've got a hundred ahead of you."

It was a slow process, this going to war. Winnie was getting impatient. He was uneasy and wanted to get it over with.

Then there was bad news from France. The long-awaited spring drive had begun. The lines had sprung back and broken in Picardy. The hundred pilots in the pool were sent out immediately. All leave was canceled.

Winnie's battles in the sky over France are vividly described in the next installment—in our forthcoming May issue.

Fishy Finance

Wherein a highly colored financier falls into the pit that he digged, and an exciting time is had by all.

By

ARTHUR K. AKERS

Illustrated by Everett Lowry

GLADSTONE SMITH—colored—started out of his front door, then hastily reversed himself and used the back. The signs weren't right. Not with all those peanut-shells scattered around his front steps. Everybody knew that goober hulls about a boy's door meant *some*body was going to the jail-house soon. Gladstone wasn't running any personal risks.

In view of the possibilities thus suggested, he began to crave financial backing. Sure did feel noble to have a good strong bank behind him, he was telling himself a few moments later as he backed up against the white folks' First National to start his day's loafing. And there, among earlier arrivals against the same warm wall, he discovered a friend, Frisco Johnson—a man acquainted not only with banks but reputed to be on excellent terms with a Government official, the colored janitor at the post office in Linden, the near-by county seat. Just at this moment, however, Frisco seemed to be conducting a careful search underneath his tightly buttoned coat.

"Been doin' li'l bus'ness wid Samson G. Bates," he complained. "An' jes' checkin' up to see is I still got my shirt lef' on me: he git ev'ything else I had in de trade."

"Dat big nigger sho spreads dest'ution when he trades," sympathized Gladstone.

"Dat's all right; dat's all right," quarreled Frisco further. "I git even wid him if hit takes all winter. You 'member whut I say."

Idly Gladstone watched the bank's janitor at his morning chores. There was something soothing about watching another negro work. "Sho would relish dat bank boy's job—close to all dat money in dar," he opined aloud.

"Hmph! Dat money aint do him no good," returned Frisco. "He jes' de same as stahvin' to death right outside a rest'rant. Got to be like Samson G. Bates befo' ol' bank do you no good. Only time mos' folks c'n git money from bank is when dey aint need hit. 'Sides, Samson aint even *use* money to spend no mo'."

"Huccome?"

"Why, he jes' sign li'l paper an' give hit to 'em when he buy somep'n. Dat's all he need."

Gladstone glimpsed the key to half his troubles. "Dey all wants see de money firs' when *I* trades," he related sadly.

"Dat whar you slips up," counseled Frisco. "You got to make writin'. You aint

been givin' out de right papers when you buys."

"Whar at c'n git me some dem li'l papers?" Gladstone was all interest.

"Easy. Jes' ax dat bankin' boy wid de broom fo' some notes. Dey aint cawst nothin' twel dey's writin' on 'em."

ALL the way back up Baptist Hill, Gladstone kept his mind and hand on the pad of blank notes he had secured. Everything was going to be different, now that he had solved the mystery of white folks' finance and could turn it to his own advantage. Even the sight of Samson G. Bates, the negro financier and note-fancier, did not cause him to practice safety first by crossing the street, as heretofore.

Samson hailed him with disturbing joviality: "Whar at you gwine, long boy? I jes' finish fixin' up a way to keep you out de jail-house!"

"Jes' rushin' round 'tendin' to my business," replied Gladstone uneasily. "White folks got so dey slap a boy in de jail-house fo' fragrancy ev'y time he set down to rest hisse'f all day."

"Trouble wid you, you rests too long an' too often," explained Mr. Bates. "But I done got you fix' up now. Come on, lemme show you somep'n good."

Gladstone paused to inventory his eyeteeth. Samson might have made away with them while he wasn't looking. "Good fo' who?" he queried distrustfully.

"C'm on!"

Weakly and meekly Gladstone followed him. Three blocks farther on, and directly opposite the fried-fish stand lately taken over by one Shakespeare Shackelford, Samson halted his party of two.

Gladstone sniffed the surrounding atmosphere approvingly. Across the upper front of the stand ran a sign totally unnecessary for anyone with olfactory nerves in good working order—HOT FISH WITH COME-BACK SAUCE.

"How hit look to you?" demanded Mr. Bates.

"Too busy smellin' hit to look at hit good yit. Sho is smell nourishin'."

"Hit *is* nourishin'," agreed Samson. "How you like own dat stand?"

"Got too dawggone many cust'mers," estimated his prospect dubiously. "Boy couldn't git no time to eat fish hisse'f fo' waitin' on 'em."

Samson didn't have time to fool further.

"Boy, you done bought dis place an' aint know hit yit," he divulged. "Shakespeare dee-fault on payin' an' I's fo'closin' on him so fast I smokes. Ol' stan' reopens in de mawnin' under new management—dat's *you*."

"Ain't got no money." Gladstone clung desperately to the buyer's ancient defense.

"Aint need no money when you does business wid a business man. Ol' stan' pay fo' hitse'f, an' you pay me out de profits. Limber up yo' right han' an' git ready to make yo' cross-mahk on all dese heah noteses whut I done fix up fo' you to sign."

At the word "notes" a bell rang in the rear of Gladstone's foggy consciousness. He had heard about them before. And a boy didn't more than learn a thing, looked like, before he had a chance to use it in his business! Hanging around banks sure did help. Still—

"I—I aint spect I better buy dat stan'," he resumed his backing down on the deal.

"You done *bought* hit, I says," amended Samson testily. "An' you gwine be whole lot better off, too, runnin' dis 'Hot Fish' stan' dan you'd be sittin' by de side de big road all winter wid a chain on yo' laig, ruinin' rocks wid a hammer."

Memory of those goober-shells about his door finished the penal picture for Gladstone. A boy couldn't mess with signs. "Meet you heah in de mawnin', wid a pencil," he acquiesced.

SO at eight the following morning Gladstone was again before the fish-stand. Preliminary reconnoitering established two facts—that friendship with Shakespeare didn't include free fish, and that that gentleman was keeping a kettle of hot water handy in memory of the mule and coal-wagon that he had swapped for his present precarious equity in the fish-stand.

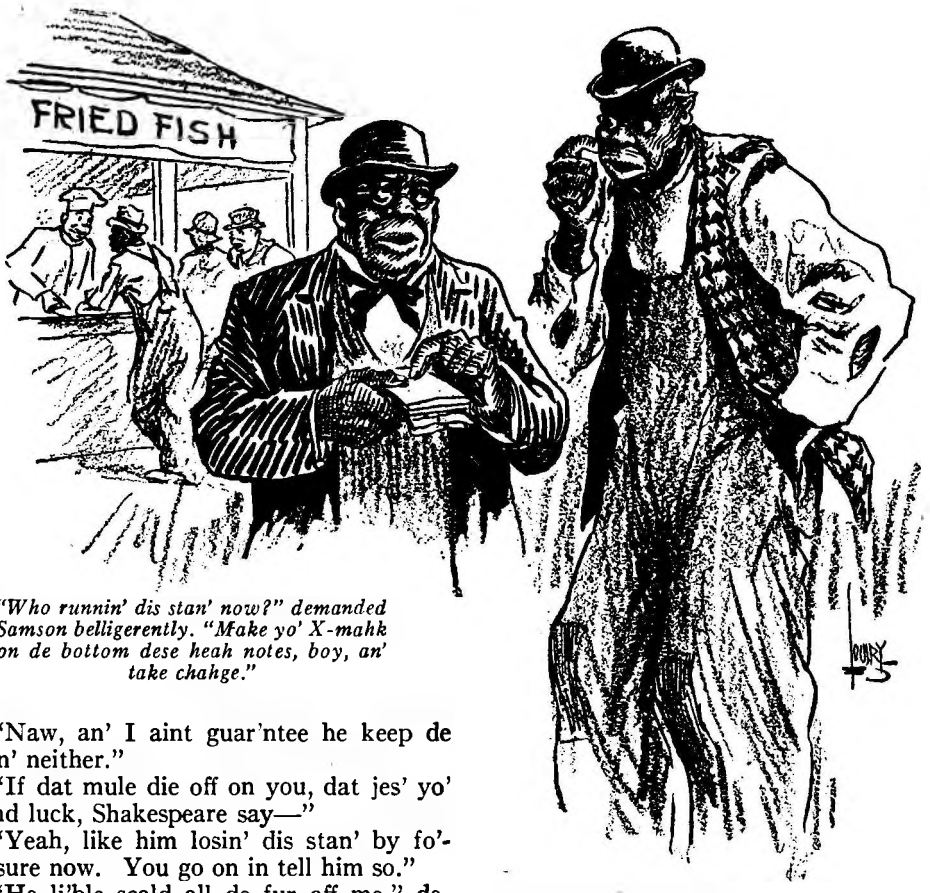
When Mr. Bates at length showed up, Gladstone was hanging warily about.

"Who runnin' dis stan' now?" demanded Samson belligerently. "Make yo' X-mahk on de bottom dese heah five notes, boy, an' take chahge."

"Shakespeare runnin' hit right now," returned Gladstone as he followed directions with the stub of a lead pencil. "But I spect you better do de talkin' to him: he all he't up. Say he done pay you a mule an' waggin on dis stan'—"

"Yeah, but de mule done die since. Dat jes' de same as givin' me bad check."

"Shakespeare say he aint guar'ntee de mule—"



"Who runnin' dis stan' now?" demanded Samson belligerently. "Make yo' X-mahk on de bottom dese heah notes, boy, an' take chahge."

"Naw, an' I aint guar'ntee he keep de stan' neither."

"If dat mule die off on you, dat jes' yo' hahd luck, Shakespeare say—"

"Yeah, like him losin' dis stan' by fo'-closure now. You go on in tell him so."

"He li'ble scald all de fur off me," demurred Gladstone firmly, "if I try dat."

"All right: stan' hitched twel I throws him out pussonal, den!" snapped Samson.

Gladstone stood, obediently. In these dispossession cases a heap depended on who went in first. Proof of this immediately followed when a whole window came out of the front of the fish-stand—the one farthest from where Shakespeare kept his kettle. Samson Bates, it appeared, was making room for himself in a big way—traveling under a tremendous head of steam which arose visibly from the tender area between his shoulder-blades where his drenched coat clung scaldingly to him.

Shakespeare thrust his head through the opening to watch Samson dwindle in the distance. The enlarged aperture proportionately enlarged the public fragrance of the fish-stand.

"Dat big nigger sho is layin' out a straight line fo' de river!" he commented admiringly.

"Spect all dat cold water look good to him right now," contributed Gladstone. "Ol' fish-stan' sho is smell up de outdoors noble since you bust de winder, too. . . . . How 'bout me an' you doin' business 'bout hit while Samson gone?"

"I aint mind sellin' out—I jes' hates to git swindled out," explained the existing proprietor.

"Dat right. Sho is," agreed Gladstone vaguely. "Whut you want fo' hit?"

"Fawty dollars—as is."

Gladstone considered. He had just bought this stand from Samson for five notes—whatever they were. But Samson had immediately rushed off to the river without remaining to deliver it. Besides, Gladstone had plenty of notes still left.

"Give you fo' notes fo' hit," he counter offered.

"Whut dem?"

Gladstone peeled off four blank notes from his pad and laboriously X'd them.

"Dey's whut ev'ybody usin' fo' money now'days," he enlightened the ignorant Shakespeare. Sure was good to find somebody knew less than you did! "I gits 'em at de white folks' bank dis mawnin'."

"I be back if dey aint spen' good," Shakespeare accepted them dubiously. "Right now I aint crave stay round heah so much—dey's coupler white gent'men li'ble show up. Is dey come, you tell 'em you's de new man'ger, you heah?"

GLADSTONE took his place between a tubful of fish on ice and a gasoline stove, and wondered why he hadn't gone into business for himself before. This note scheme fixed everything just right and made paying off easy. All it took, apparently, was a dull pencil and a bright mind. Then you weren't taking orders any more from anybody but your customers.

"Sho is smell noble in heah!" Gladstone appreciated his good fortune to himself aloud. "Wonder is us feed white folks too?"

The occasion of that question was approaching, a white gentleman.

"This your stand, boy?" he queried pointedly, as he entered.

"Yessuh, sho is. Jes' bought hit," agreed Gladstone. "Is you crave yo'se'f some fish?"

"Hell, no!" returned the white gentleman. "I just came after that gas stove there."

Gladstone batted his eyelids in alarm. Looked like old stand was liable to turn out all fish and no luck. "Huccome, Cun'l?"

"'How come?' is that it was bought on credit and aint been paid for yet. No spondulix, no stove—that's the way *we* do business."

"Yessuh. Sho is. But, Cap'n, how us gwine cook no fish widout no stove?" Gladstone submitted a problem that he personally was finding unanswerable.

"Well," weakened the white man, before the possibility of locking up the goose that might possibly lay a golden egg, "give me some way of knowing that I'll get my money, and maybe you can keep it until it pays for itself."

"Yessuh!" agreed Gladstone with alacrity. "Jes' fixin' do dat." He reached for his trusty note-pad. "Jes' fill out one dem li'l papers fo' de stove, please, suh; an' I makes a *X* on de bottom."

And: "Dar now! Ol' stove done paid fo'!" Gladstone congratulated himself a moment later. All it took to do business was a business man!

As he fried fish with both hands Gladstone wondered who was going to fix that window the outbound Samson had ruined.

This kept him so busy that he didn't notice at first the look that came over the face of a second newly arriving white gentleman with a paper in his hand. When Gladstone did notice him, he was already making writing on the paper, like he was adding up something. But Gladstone was broad-minded about that. He had plenty else to bother about, like where he was going to get some more fish.

Then the white gentleman came in and ruined everything with: "Look here, boy, what did you tell me yesterday about the rent? And who's going to pay for that busted window?"

Gladstone's jaw dropped approximately to his instep. Samson hadn't hit the river good, and here the white folks were after the rent! A boy sure bought trouble when he bought a business.

"Jes' buy dis stan' 'bout a' houah ago," he mumbled lamely. "Aint had time yit to study 'bout de rent."

"I'll study it for you," affirmed the collector-gentleman. "Ten dollars back rent—and five for that window—or I'll close you up."

Evidently this white gentleman had been dealing with the ordinary or Frog Bottom type of negroes. Gladstone itched to demonstrate the difference.

"Cap'n," he suggested as he fetched forth his now-dwindling pad, "jes' fix up one dese heah li'l pieces paper fo' de rent. I cain't write, but I makes a mean X on de bottom of a note."

Here was something new in Demopolis! But so lively a business looked good for another week's credit, especially as two dollars would have been a liberal rental.

So: "Dar now! Ol' rent's done paid!" Gladstone congratulated himself further. These little note-papers sure were powerful when a boy understood them! He saw now why the white folks never had to worry about money.

WEARILY that night Gladstone cooked his last fish by the light of a gasoline torch. Business sure had been good all day. Old tub was empty and old cash-box full—of I.O.U.'s. Colored folks didn't care how much they ate if you'd take a ticket for it. This was a heap better than using money. And when boys bought from you on credit, they ate more. In turn, when you bought something—like a fish-stand—you just signed paper for it. Just enough cash in the box now to buy more fish from the canebrake negroes down the river that didn't understand credit except going one way. Sure was noble. The only fly in the ointment was a little one: Samson Bates had returned from the river with his clothes still dripping, and busied himself with carefully drying out those notes Gladstone had signed and given him. That big colored

man sure did set a heap of store by little pieces of paper, Gladstone reflected. But Gladstone should worry: he had plenty left in his pad. And he knew the bank janitor when he needed more. Buying a stand twice, from two different owners, didn't worry a boy, either, when he paid off in notes that way.

NOTHING makes time fly like having a bunch of notes fall due. Gladstone awoke to this with a bang. Being one hundred per cent hazy about what a note was, anyway, merely made the speed greater, and the bang bigger. Scarcely had Frisco revived him from the extremely low state to which he fell, mentally, on receipt of the information that there was more to a note then just signing it and forgetting it,—that it had to be paid later,—when Gladstone's blinking eyes registered the painful sight of Samson B. Bates wheezing up the slope, the collector's gleam in both his optics.

"First note done due. Pay me eight bucks. I collects or cripples," Samson confirmed Frisco's explanations.

Gladstone buttoned his ragged vest against a cold wind that suddenly seemed to be blowing over the situation. Not only did it appear that these notes a boy handed out so happily had to be paid, but if one of Samson's didn't last any longer than this, how about those he had given the stove gentleman and the rent white folks—and the ones Shakespeare must still be holding? Not to speak of the further items of the series Samson was so busy with!

Dispirited scraping of the bottom of the cigar-box brought no comfort. Due to the extreme prevalence and popularity of the I.O.U. system, there was but eight dollars and sixty cents in real money in the house—and the fish-tub all but empty.

"Rest of dem notes is three days apart," Samson wrecked Gladstone further as he pocketed practically his all. "I calc'lated how fas' you'd take in de money when I dated 'em. Aint none of hit gwine git cold

In these dispossession cases a heap depended on who went in first. Proof of this immediately followed.

in yo' hands on me. An'—I like to fo'got. Aint no place fo' grudges in business: I buys off him dem notes you give Shakespeare fo' dis stan', too. So you pays dem off to me, too—stahtin' nex' week. Plus fo' dollars apiece 'torney's fees fo' me fo' collectin' 'em out of you. I collects or cripples. See you ag'in We'nesday."

GLADSTONE staggered in circles, mentally, uttering low moans. A half-knowledge of this note business was a dangerous thing—if a boy didn't know the other half. Otherwise he sure could plav thunder with a lead pencil!

Get a white man in trouble, and he looks

up a banker or a little prussic acid. Get a negro in trouble, and he hunts up a pool-parlor. Gladstone shuffled into Mose Monroe's combination speak-easy and billiard hall on Strawberry Street in a cold sweat.

"Boy, when did *you* die?" his one-time friend Frisco greeted him there.

"Nex' Wednesday," Gladstone mingled prophecy with repartee.

"Huccome?"

"Done put my X on too many dem li'l noteses. Samson Bates jes' collect one, an' say he done bought all dem whut I gives Shakespeare, too. Stahts collectin' *dem* nex' week. An' dat aint count whut I gives de rent gent'man an' de stove white-folks!"

"Aint I tell you dey aint cost you nothin' twel dey's writin' on 'em? An' aint I tell you you better count yo' lungs befo' an' after when you does business wid Samson?"

"Yeah, but you aint tell me plain 'nough dat note's jes' like ol' bumblebee—got a stinger on de fur end."

"Hmm!" reflected Frisco. "Is dey give out medals fo' bein' dumb, you'd make all de other numbskulls jealous. Sho is got yo'se'f in a jam."

"You aint tellin' *me* nothin' new. Whut I craves is to git out de jam. Let's see you ag'tate yo' brain some—all time blowin' round 'bout whut a good fixer you is."

"I aint fo'git whut Samson do to *me*, jes' befo' you runs hawg-wild 'mongst de notes," Frisco ignored the slurs of his client-to-be. "An' I gwine get even wid him if hit takes my las' tonsil. Now dat you's in sich a jam, look like heahs whar I kills one bird wid two rocks—yourn an' mine."

"Done talkin' so I c'n und'stand you now," approved Gladstone, mollified by the prospects of double-barreled revenge on Samson. "Both my ears settin' straight up to listen."

"I jes' find out," Frisco pursued his subject, "dat Samson been makin' reg'lar business of sellin' dat fish-stan', an' den fo'closin' on hit befo' de nigger whut buy hit c'n finish payin' fo' hit. Den he keeps de payments dey done made, an' sell hit fo' full price all over ag'in. Dat way he keep de stan' an' sell hit, too."

"Sho is a fac'!" agreed the semi-enlightened Gladstone. Half was the most he had ever understood of *any* subject to date.

"So watch my smoke—an' stan' back while I tames dat Samson!" declaimed Frisco. "He done sold dat stan' de las' time. Don't you fo'git dat—'ca'ze *he* aint!"

Here Gladstone thought of something else: "Never seed nobody git de best of Samson yit," he advanced dubiously.

"Dat 'cause he never git *me* an' you *both* mad at him befo'."

"Dat's fac'. Whut you gwine do?"

"First thing, you got to do mo' business—make de stan' look snappy."

"Aint got but one fish lef'—an' hit's weak'nin'." Gladstone hastened to the front with an objection to what sounded like additional personal work for himself.

"I aint say fish: whut yo' business needs is *gin*."

Gladstone's ears all but stood erect and quivering. Anything was better for a little gin in it; why not a business, too?

"I puts in a case on 'signment fo' you," elaborated Frisco. "You sells hit fo' cash money, keeps ha'f de pro-ceeds, an' pays off Samson wid hit. Dat way he cain't fo'-close on you."

Gladstone stood around on one foot and gave rousing mental cheers for Frisco's intellect. Fish and gin in the same stand! It sounded too good to be true!

Thereafter Frisco lost no time. Neither did Gladstone's clientele. Trade picked up even before the word-of-mouth advertising among the elect was well started. Everything got rosier and stayed that way. The stimulating effect of irrigation on business was at its height when Samson G. Bates again appeared, collection-bent. Gladstone met him outside with eight dollars. Samson's nose might pick up too much valuable data on the inside if given a chance.

Mr. Bates, in turn, labored nobly to keep his jaw from dropping in too-visible surprise. Getting eight dollars from Gladstone had hitherto ranked with pulling rabbits out of a hat: it took a magician to manage it. Yet here he was paying off without a murmur!

SAMSON polished his broad brown face in perplexity and descended Baptist Hill with his eight dollars and a fresh cause for worry. For if this unaccountable prosperity and rush of business to Gladstone's stand kept up, what chance would there be to foreclose? Samson saw his stand gone glimmering, along with the tidy profits inherent in his present scheme of quick sales and frequent foreclosings. And here was *Gladstone*, of all Demopolis heretofore the least likely, giving promise of paying all his notes and getting the fish-stand!

Worse, three days now stood between Samson and another note falling due. Not

"Cap'n," Gladstone suggested, "jes' fix up one dese li'l pieces paper for de rent. I cain't write, but I makes a mean X on de bottom of a note!"

even one of the purchased notes of Shakespeare would be due in the meantime, either. Something must be done.

Samson paced his floor in perplexity and gloomy forebodings that would have delighted the vengeful Frisco—paced it, that is, until word was brought him of the discovery of a prominent colored drayman, in a ditch and full of Gladstone's gin.

Samson worked fast. At the end of the strenuous sobering and pumping processes instituted by him, Samson was full too—of important information as to how Gladstone had so suddenly grown financial. Following which, Samson was twice distinctly seen to lick his chops—calculatingly—as he watched the flow of custom, in at Gladstone's front door, and thence out through the back with a display of mouth-wiping not wholly to be accounted for by the fish.

Then Samson disappeared, taking the chastened drayman with him. Which caused him to miss the significance of Frisco's later return to Demopolis after an unadvertised absence in the direction of Linden, the county seat, where his Government official friend labored with broom and duster, and kept track of important happenings—future as well as past. For at Linden Frisco stumbled upon information and inspiration, resulting in radical revisions of his plan of campaign. . . . .

Dawn of Wednesday found Samson G. Bates on the front steps of Gladstone's fish-stand, eagerly and anxiously awaiting that worthy's arrival—a vigil disturbed only by slight ratlike noises within that soon subsided. And among them a *clink* not displeasing to Samson—a clink, indeed, that fitted perfectly into his business as planned.

Meantime, where was Gladstone? Haste in collecting was imperative, in the light of events that had been set in motion by Samson during his recent absence.

When at eight o'clock the missing proprietor of the fish-stand shuffled into view, Samson arose and followed him inside of it so closely that they might have passed for Siamese twins.

"Second note done due. Eight bucks. I collects or cripples," Samson repeated his formula for such occasions. "Work fas' wid de money—I's got to git 'way from heah."

Gladstone reached confidently for his cash-box. Eight dollars didn't bother a boy who had Frisco doing his thinking for him! Why—

"Whut you see, boy?" Samson demanded, at the sight of what was suddenly happening to Gladstone's face. "A ghost?"

"T-t-t-taint whut I sees—hit's whut I *aint* see!" gasped Gladstone. "Aint got no mo' money lef' in de box dan a jay-bird!"

Personal peering on Samson's part confirmed the statement. Gladstone's cash-box was as empty as a January gourd.

"Eight bucks—or I fo'closes," reiterated Samson mechanically. Here was fresh evidence that the Lord was on the side of the righteous and the property-owner! The old game was working again! Fast sales and frequent foreclosures: a smart business man could still have his stand and sell it, too. Even a burglary was helping to deliver Gladstone into Samson's hands.

"A-a-aint got no eight bucks—nor eight cents, neither!" mourned the stricken Gladstone. "Fawty dollars in de cash-box las' night when I shets up—an' nothin' in hit now!"

Mr. Bates' heart leaped for joy. Nor did he see occasion for further delay. A good business man took his foreclosures where he found them. With haste in so doing, other impending and prearranged events—due to his recent out-of-town activities—could still be taken care of. And a fish-stand in the hand was worth two in the bush. Samson saw a string of sales and re-sales reaching far into a cloudless future.

"Done demand hit, an' you aint pay off," he complied with his ideas of legality in lawlessness. "Now stan' back an' gimme plenty room while I fo'closes!"

Gladstone stood back—four blocks back, while Mr. Bates took off his coat and engaged in happy if hurried preparations for personal recapture of the most profitable fish-stand he had ever plastered frequent repossession notices against. Preparations which even included carefully satisfying himself that there was none of Gladstone's bottled stock left about in sight to embarrass him later when he should adjust everything with a few amusing explanations.

THE dispossessed Gladstone dragged his large feet toward Strawberry Street, his wrath beginning to mount against the missing Frisco—Frisco who was all the time bragging what a fixer he was! And look at Gladstone's business now! Burglary and foreclosure operating in it as cause and effect.

What Frisco needed, Gladstone began to convince himself, was for some one to shatter a couple of flower-pots over the bony knob that housed his alleged brain. Preferably large ones. Gladstone's hands began to itch for the job.

In which state of mind and belligerency he turned in at Mose Monroe's pool-parlor—only to find himself face to face with the prime cause of all his misfortunes.

"Dar you is! You flat-footed fo'-flusher!" he addressed Frisco on sight. "You *fixer!* Boy, you couldn't fix a secon'han' razuh, even, fo' me ag'in! You's so low-down you c'n w'ar stilts an' still walk under a snake!"

"Is *dat* so?" commented Frisco calmly. "Whut's all de bellerin' about? Aint I tell you I fix ev'ything?"

"Dawggone right you fix ev'ything!" howled Gladstone. "But not like you say! An' you tells me special dat Samson done sold dat stan' fo' de las' time. Well, boy, listen: All de money done gone out my cash-box! Samson fo'close on my fish-stan' an' fixin' sell hit ag'in! An' you—y-y-y-you— *Stan' back, niggers, while I flings stoves!"*

But at Gladstone's words just here something came over Frisco's face that halted even the berserk Gladstone.

"Fo'close?" he demanded. "Is you say Samson fo'close?"

"Sho he fo'close! Whut funny 'bout dat? Aint he all time doin' hit?"

BUT Frisco seemed unaccountably dazzled by the news—as though it fitted into matters already in his mind. And, "Oh, boy!" he chortled. "Fixer I is, but I aint never fix nothin' like dis befo'! Lawd he'p me to wait!"

Bewilderment began to dispel some of Gladstone's wrath. Frisco talked and acted too confident. He even threw a fresh bomb casually into Gladstone's camp with, "Heah, big-mouth, jes' to show you I aint sore at you, heah's yo' money—fawty dollars whut I took out yo' box 'bout daylight dis mawnin' while I wuz 'tendin' to li'l business in yo' place. Li'l later in de day you gwine und'stand mo' 'bout dat."

Gladstone at this began to make motions as of one fighting off bees. Apparently the hum of mysterious and conflicting data in his dazed dome of thought had become too much for the feeble organ housed therein.

"You gits up de gin idea," he recited thickly through the darkness that covered him. "An' den you steals my money. An' den you gives hit back to me. An' den you

gits so tickled you pretty nigh busts when you heahs Samson done fo'close on me. Right after, you says you done fix hit so Samson cain't sell dat stan' no mo'—"

"Not *dis* yeah," agreed Frisco complacently. "An' aint no way to tell you no mo' jes' now—yo' brain caint stand hit. 'Twouldn't do yit fo' you to know all I finds out from dat Gov'ment boy whut jan'tors in de Linden post office jes' befo' I done a li'l high-class fixin' over dar wid him my ownse'f. You jes' stick round—an' watch dat fish-stan' from heah."

Nor did Gladstone have long to wait. Outside somewhere, a whistle shrilled. And as though boiling up out of the earth, white gentlemen suddenly began appearing from all sides and converging upon the foreclosed fish-stand.

IT was all over in a moment. Before the pop-eyed Gladstone could finish figuring where he would be by now if Samson hadn't foreclosed when he did, he beheld two astonishing things—both in the clutches of the fast-working white gentlemen. One was something that gave Gladstone apprehensive chills all over again—since it gave point and conviction to the entire procedure. And the other, firm-held and protesting—was Samson G. Bates! Samson seemed to be making a carefully prepared speech that wasn't going over well. Not in the face of what the other arresting officer was carefully, even triumphantly, carrying. Innocence and evidence were clearly conflicting in his case.

Gladstone's eyes and mouth widened until they all but met.

"Told you Samson gwine l'arn not to mess wid *me,*" breathed Frisco ambiguously in Gladstone's still startled ear. "He aint know I wuz in Linden right after he wuz t'other day. Him an' dat dray-nigger."

An ugly light shone on Gladstone's fog-bound mental horizon. "You mean *you* tells de proh'bition white folks over at Linden 'bout de fish-stan' sellin' gin?" he questioned suspiciously. "An' git hit raided?"

"Naw, I aint tell 'em," returned Frisco virtuously. "I aint need to."

"Whut you mean, you aint need to?"

"Jes' whut I say. An' come on round whar you c'n see de front of de stan'—dat whar de *big* show gwine be in a minute."

Gladstone was all but collapsing with curiosity, on two counts. One was inability to reconcile what he had seen under one raiding officer's arm with his personal knowledge that the last bottle of gin had been sold out the previous night.

But Frisco seemed changing the subject. "Me an' dat Linden nigger b'longs to de same lodge," he rambled. "An' after I sees him, an' find out whut Samson been up to dar, I jes' fixes de *finish* to whut Samson done *stahted.*"

"To whut *Samson* staht?"

"Yeah. When he find out you's sellin' gin, Samson do jes' like I knowed he would—dat nigger so greedy he gwine swaller hisse'f some day. He lopes out fo' Linden to infawm on you. Den he hurry back to collect one mo' note from you befo' he fo'-close an' de pro'bition gent'men puts you in de jail-house fo' sellin' licker. Dat way he know you cain't pay no mo' notes. But Samson *stay in de stan' too long* den—an' look whut happen!"

Gladstone caught a gleam. "You mean Samson set a trap fo' *me?*" he queried, "an' den cotch he ownse'f in hit?"

"Well, dat de way hit work out," admitted Frisco modestly, "wid li'l he'p from dat Linden boy an' me over dar—"

"Must been Samson, 'stead of me, dem goober-shells wuz talkin' 'bout all time," murmured Gladstone in relief.

"Whar Samson slip up," pursued Frisco, "wuz he fo'git 'bout dat time he trim all de tail-feathers off me in dat trade, an' I's layin' low to git even wid him ever since. . . . . But you gwine see somep'n else in a minute dat make yo' ha'r stan' up."

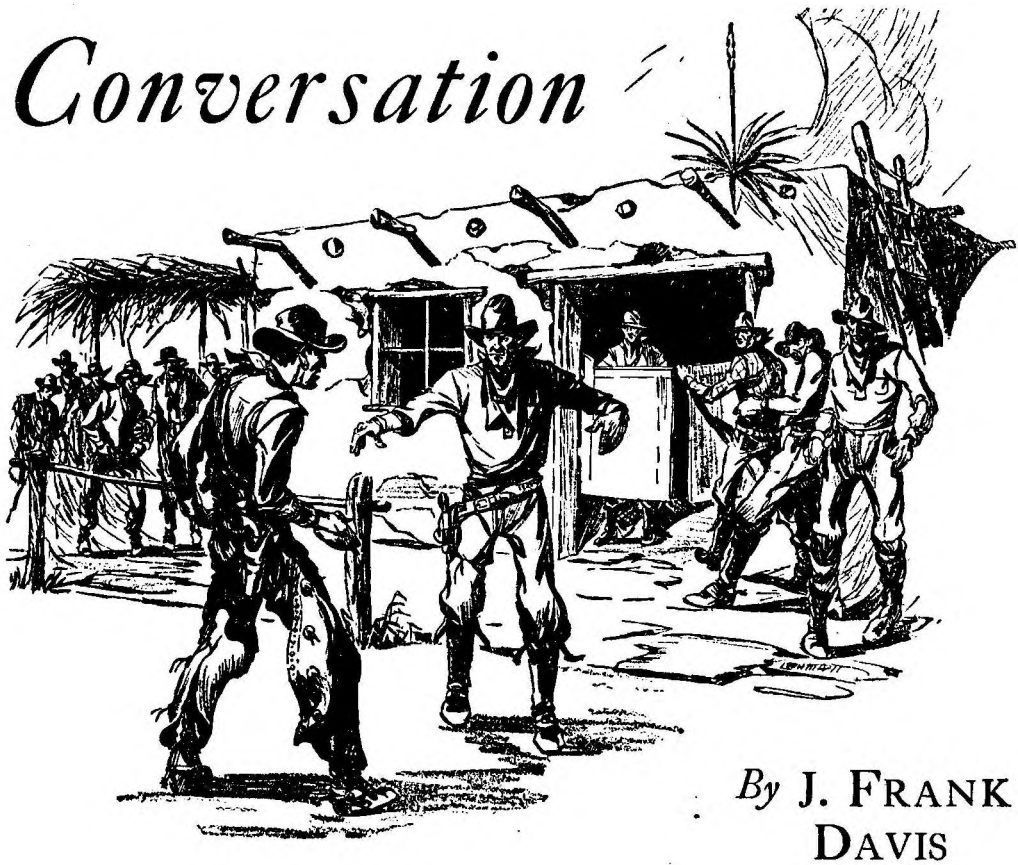
EVEN as Frisco spoke, they rounded a corner and the front of the fish-stand came into view—causing Gladstone's eyes to lay fresh burdens upon his brain.

"So I done fix ev'ything, you sees—plumb on down to de landlawd an' de stove gent'man," continued Frisco proudly. "Dey cain't tetch you now, but they c'n git dey prop'ty back still—nex' yeah."

But, *"W-w-w-whut dat on de front door of de stan'?"* was the sudden and burning question with Gladstone. The object was familiar, but its purpose far from clear to him.

"Dat padlock? Well, you sees, fo'closin' an' arrangin' to get you 'rested fo' sellin' gin wuz Samson's notion. But plantin' dem three bottles of gin in de stan' while I wuz robbin' hit, an' fixin' hit up wid dat Linden boy to tip off de off'cers whar to find 'em, so dey'll padlock de place an' Samson cain't sell hit no mo' fo' a yeah—*dat* wuz *all my own idea!*"

Conversation



By J. FRANK DAVIS

OF all the twenty-odd legal justifications for homicide in Texas, the second most common is the epithet which is never spoken by gentlemen in the presence of ladies except on the New York stage. There were no ladies in front of the Somersworth post office when Jim Begley culminated a sharp quarrel over a horse-trade by speaking this epithet distinctly and viciously to Newt Shaw; and Newt, under all the rules and precedents, was justified in his immediate action, which was to draw a forty-five revolver, place the muzzle of it against Begley's stomach and begin shooting. He fired three rapid shots.

This would have seriously discommoded Begley if he had not been wearing a metal breastplate beneath his vest. It bruised him somewhat even as it was, and made him stagger as he pulled his own pistol. He didn't pull it as fast as he might have been expected to, some of the witnesses said afterward—they thought it had caught in his holster, although others gave him credit for deliberately letting Newt get so much of a start that there could be no question as to his having the right to kill Newt, which he did with one shot as soon as he got the gun out.

The coroner's jury had no difficulty in reaching its decision. Another of the twenty-odd justifications, naturally, is self-defense, and as a juryman said succinctly during their brief deliberation: "If a man aint shooting in self-defense when another man has a pistol stuck in his ribs and it's smoking, then there aint no meaning to the English language."

So the jury turned Jim Begley loose; the lodge buried Newt, and the incident closed for the moment with a few mildly-spoken but admonitory remarks by the sheriff as he gave Begley back his gun.

"Newt wa'n't exactly what you could call a leading citizen," he said. "He aint as much a loss to the community as some would be. But if ever you should happen to kill a man that was popular, in just that way— I wouldn't do it too many times, Begley. I don't know, if I was you, as I'd go to do it *any* more times—not with a breastplate on."

"The breastplate is off—from now on," Begley said.

"I'll pass the word around," the sheriff told him. "I'd be kind of hurt if you should ever make me out a liar about that. . . . . So would you."

"You can trust me, Sheriff," Begley assured him.

"Yes suh. And watch you!"

THAT might have ended it—Somersworth being one of those Texas towns where personal criticism is soft-pedaled in the interest of public and private health—if Curly Stewart hadn't been seriously in love with Mamie Goodale, who had black hair and blue eyes and was the junior biscuit-shooter at the Eagle House dining-room.

Curly, until Jim Begley struck town, had seemed to be sitting pretty with Mamie, but now he wasn't sitting pretty with her; he wasn't sitting with her at all; Begley was. Almost every night, after the dishes were washed at the hotel, and always, on Saturday nights, at the picture show. Curly had cared very little for Newt Shaw, but now he felt a distinct personal resentment over his killing. He almost succeeded in convincing himself that Newt had been a friend of his.

He touched upon the subject of Newt and Begley and the ethics of breastplates, in general conversation, to a number of people. He touched upon it to Mamie one night when he was the last man in to supper at the hotel, and his language was not tactful.

"Jim Begley coming round tonight, as usual?" he asked.

"What if he is?"

"He aint the right kind," Curly said. "It aint that I'm jealous or anything—oh, yes, cuss it, of course I am! But there's more than that. I don't admire to see you running round with a feller like him. He aint the kind for you."

"Is that so?" replied Mamie.

"He's yellow. Any man that'll put on a breastplate when he isn't going to fight but one man is yellow. The whole town thinks it. The only reason they don't say so is because they aint looking for trouble."

"You must be," said Mamie.

"No, I aint. I aint no gun-fighter, and you know it."

"You're a good talker."

"You can't marry him, Mamie. Now, listen—"

She interrupted him.

"I aint aimin' to marry anybody, not at this minute. When I do, though, he'll have to be good at something more than conversation."

"At dirty killings, maybe," Curly retorted. "All right, go to it and marry him. You'll find he aint got no real sand."

"Who aint?" growled Jim Begley, behind them.

"I aint got no gun on," Curly told him. "Seeing as you asked, I was speaking of you."

"And it's safe to, when you aint," Begley said. "But have one on the next time I see you. I've been hearing some of the things you've been saying about me. Now you'll back 'em up, or get out of the county. This town's got too small for both of us."

MAMIE, her eyes wide, spoke not a word. "I'm leaving on the Number Eight tonight for San 'Tonio; got some business there that'll take two days," went on Begley. "I'll be back Saturday mawnin'. When you and me meet, you'd better come a-smokin', because I will. . . . . If you've got any sense, you wont be here when I get back. Go get you another place to live in—if you want to live a'tall. Hear me?"

Curly's mouth was dry. In all his twenty-two years he had never shot at a man, and he had hoped he never would have to. He ought to have known his free conversation might lead to this, yet now it came as a shock. He swallowed hard and said lamely: "I hear you."

"For your last thought—if you see fit to stay here till I get back," Begley sneered, "you can remember that it don't pay to be too talkative. . . . . Nothing else you want to say, suh?"

"No," Curly replied. He was perfectly aware that he was making a weak showing, and he couldn't help it. He knew Jim Begley's ability at gunplay and he knew his own. He could shoot straight, but he couldn't draw fast, and Begley could do both.

Yet, as he left the dining-room—and wondered just what the look in Mamie's eyes meant—he knew he was not going to leave town.

HE avoided speech with Mamie throughout Thursday and Friday. He cleaned his revolver and reloaded it carefully, though he knew he would probably never have a chance to fire it.

The sheriff came to him on Friday night.

"I hear you and Jim Begley had a few words," he said. "I can arrest him when

he gets off the train and put him under a peace bond, if you say so."

"I'd stand great in this town after that, wouldn't I?"

The sheriff, who liked Curly, showed relief. "Good!" he said. "He wont have any breastplate on. And I'll be handy to see fair play." He added: "Don't let anything scare you. Keep your nerve. He may not keep his. I aint at all sure he's got anywhere near as much as he wants folks to think he has. He was asking quite a number, before he left town, night before last, about your shooting—and he seemed right anxious. I gather all the boys spoke highly of you."

"That's good," Curly said, wholly unable to look cheerful. "Maybe they'll attend in a body, with flowers."

"Son," said the sheriff, "barring me and one other, the folks around town don't know whether you are quick on the draw or not—and neither does Begley. And I think his gun did stick when he killed Newt Shaw, and he'll remember that—he can't help it. If you could bust his nerve—"

"What with? Conversation?" Curly asked bitterly.

The sheriff smiled grimly. "Well, that's been done," he said. "And between you and me, Mamie Goodale was saying a little while ago—to me, confidential—that she believed you could do it. You're some talkative—but conversation aint all you've got."

"Did Mamie say that?"

"She said she believed so."

Curly grinned, naturally, for the first time in two days. "Thanks, Sheriff," he said. "Maybe I can think up something."

THEY met at noon, Curly and Jim Begley, in the little plaza in front of the post office, both coatless, both with holstered pistols at their thighs, well forward, within easy reach of swinging right arms. And to the surprise of all the well-out-of-range spectators and the horror of Curly's friends, he spread his hands and lifted them, and thus in a position which forbade Begley's shooting unless he wanted to face a charge of murder, walked swiftly toward him. Begley stopped and waited, tense.

His hands still raised, Curly began to talk when he was yet thirty feet from his enemy. His voice was clear and carrying, and untremulous.

"Say, I'm tired of packing this gun," he said. "I aint in the habit of doing it, and it's heavy, and I don't like it, hot weather like this. Maybe there's a misunderstanding. Maybe when you heard I said things about you, you didn't hear it straight. I want to tell you just what I said. Maybe when I'm through, you wont figure it's necessary for us to have any trouble at all."

Apologizing! Quitting! Jim Begley's pose relaxed. His face, somehow, registered intense relief.

"Go ahead. I'll listen," he said tolerantly, almost smiling.

"You can't draw while my hands are up," Curly reminded him. "When I get through talking, you can go after your pistol if you still want to,"—he was four feet away now, and he stopped, his eyes on Begley's,—"an' be deader'n hell before you get your hand halfway to it! And your face'll look as scared as Newt Shaw's did when you got him. Remember how he looked? Remember how he must have felt? That's how you'll look. That's how you'll feel—if you ever start your hand after your gun. All I said about you around this town was that you were a dirty, lyin', double-crossin', breastplate-wearin', cowardly low-down whelp. If you heard I said anything worse than that, you was misinformed."

BEGLEY'S mind adjusted itself to the changed situation slowly and painfully. He looked into Curly's eyes. They were hard, unflinching, boring. He looked at Curly's right hand. It was well out and shoulder high, but its fingers were bent, ready to clutch as it came down to the gun. It had two feet farther to go than Begley's hand. If Begley started first—and if his gun didn't catch in the holster— The odds were all against Curly, but he looked as though he was satisfied with that. Worse, he sounded so.

"Well!" Curly snapped. "What are you waiting for? Let's go!"

Slowly, Jim Begley's hands went out from his sides, shaking, and he muttered: "I don't want no trouble."

Trying successfully to keep his own hand from trembling, Curly took Begley's pistol from its holster.

"I'll turn this over to the sheriff," he said. "He'll give it to you when you take the next train out of town. Which way—east or west?"

"Why — why, the — the Number Four east, I reckon," Begley stammered. "I—I got some business that's—going to take me permanent to San 'Tonio, anyway."

"'There is nothing evil in a kiss,' he exclaimed."

This engaging drama of the great Sahara is in the best vein of the man who gave us "The Master of the Steadfast" and other well-remembered stories.

By Desert Law

By ROY NORTON

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

STATELY and tall, his flowing robes looking silvery white in the moonlight and shadows between the motionless palms, the Sheik Abdullah had walked beside me through the oasis of *Ayn Musa* until we reached the rocky protuberance at its edge by which, according to legend, the Prophet Moses stood after that tragic passage of the Red Sea and found a spring of cool, fresh flowing water. I looked back and, where the great palms were sparse, saw it sparkling and running its way out to that place where it was lost in the sands of the desert. I saw beyond it the flat waste and in the far background the grim barriers of the Gebel Raha, whose feet were piled with white hills of treacherous, ever-shifting sands—sands as fine as flour from a mill. Sinai, the land of silence! It is unconquerable. The foot falls upon the sands, and there is—silence. A voice cries loudly, is carried upon the pinions of sound but a short distance, and is smothered in that vast stillness. The voice may cry in prayer, in the songs of desert love, or in despair, but always the end is the same—silence.

I thought this then when I heard, faintly, the weary, grunting moan of one of the camels of our caravan going to rest—back there behind the palms through which Abdullah and I had passed; for we had halted there for the night, weary beasts and weary men. Turning away from the oasis *Ayn Musa* I could see, in violent contrast to the view behind, the shimmering waters of the Gulf of Suez. A tramp steamship crossed the track of light. It moved as a shadow, moon-thrown, a mere splotch of black restlessly escaping through the night. Away off in the distance, low-lying, were the shores of Egypt—Taufik, Suez, and, scraping the horizon, the searchlight of a liner slowly debouching from the mouth of the Suez Canal. Modernity out there in front, and behind, the great un-

changeable deserts and mountains of Sinai —unchanged since that day when the unchanged sea in front had opened to make passage for the pitiable, and closed upon the armed men who pursued to slay. It was only men who changed, I thought. Those had been barbarous times. Men thought less of vengeance nowadays and even points of honor were adjudicated by the courts of law.

MY meditations were disturbed by a sudden violent movement of Abdullah. He threw himself forward, lifted the staff in his hand and struck rapidly, then with its tip tossed far to one side a broken, writhing shape, one glimpse of which sent a chill through me; for he had destroyed almost at my feet a horned, malignant, venomous asp—the "flying asp" of Biblical times, so-called because it leaps and leaves either a curious question mark upon the sand, or—death!

"*Inshallah,*" he said quietly. "It is the will of God that tonight thou shouldst not die. But—close, friend, close!"

"Too close, Abdullah," I said fervently. And then, turning to jest to relieve my shock I said: "Over there on the mainland, Cleopatra, when all was lost, opened the gates of the Hereafter with an asp."

"Cleopatra? Who was she?" he asked. "I have not been over on that side for many years. I like them not—those of Suez. Was she—this Cleopatra of whom you speak—of Suez?"

I hesitated as to my reply. Of what use to involve myself in a recountal of that tragedy that was so old? "She was one who used an asp when honor was done," I said.

He made that peculiar, familiar, inimitable clicking noise with his tongue that none but a Bedouin can make, and for a moment was silent. And then with that same remarkable philosophy that is also characteristic of his people sighed: "Well, what else could she do—this woman for whom honor was done? Hers must have been a great soul. It is the little ones who falter. Honor is—is—a compact. The asp—Death—may keep it. So it was with one whom I well knew, the Sheik Mustapha, who is long since in the bosom of the prophet. And strangely enough, it was here, in this oasis, that he kept his honor, did this Sheik, until the end."

Now between this companion of mine and myself there was the tie of some unbroken years of friendship, my knowledge of his tongue, and a certain passport of thought that comes from hardships shared and deserts traversed. Otherwise I should not have dared to display curiosity.

"The Sheik Mustapha? I knew him not; but may he be restful in Paradise. What of him?"

For some minutes he sat motionless, dreamily contemplating the arm of the Red Sea, as if considering the worth of speech. He appeared a mere spot of white save for the twisted ropes of camel's hair around his head, and the moon shone strongly upon his hawklike face that was framed in the pale folds of his burnous, bringing out the high, thin nose and the warrior strength of chin. And then at last, as if in proof of his confidence in our friendship, he turned and talked of what might be taken as his ideal of honorable action in a crisis that could occur in no other land or amongst other people than those of his, the Bedouins of that unchanged, grim, barbaric country over which he and his roam as do the winds, uncurbed. And this is the story as he told it to me:

"IN the time of the Sheik Mustapha there came to this land, by the will of Allah, a man named Carpenter. An *Effendi*, I think this man must have been in his own country, but certainly a man of influence, for otherwise he would not have been given a permit to enter Sinai by the white Governor Bey of the North. And the Governor Bey who knew and vastly trusted the Sheik Mustapha sent him word —thus: 'You will meet one man Carpenter, Mossaafer, when he reaches *Ayn Musa*, the Well of Moses, whither he will be brought after arriving by sea, and have ready eight good camels to transport him and his camp across the mountains and deserts as he may direct. You will pledge yourself for the safety of him and his belongings while he makes this journey, from the time he leaves *Ayn Musa* until his return thereto. And the price of each camel for each day shall be forty piastres, and for each man twenty-five piastres. Is this agreed?'

"For many days my friend Mustapha pondered, for his mind was troubled as are the sands when the *Khamasin* winds blow hot from the south. His people were in need of gold, and this payment was a fortune; their camels were idle; their tents in want; but from across the mountains

had come whispers of grave unrest. Bands of raiders from the east had swept down here and there to seize what they might, and one caravan had been heard of no more. Yet need is ever the master driver, and the Sheik Mustapha was driven. So in the end he went to Suez and made answer over the Governor Bey's iron wire that he would go if permitted to arm himself and four men for the journey; for in those days, as now, the white Bey had taken arms from all but his soldiers and police. But the Governor Bey was ever cautious and had trust in none but the Sheik Mustapha, so he sent but one rifle with much ammunition to the Sheik, holding him responsible for its return.

"And Mustapha was troubled and disappointed, but urged by his men, who were eager for employment, finally gave the great white Bey his pledge and thereafter took his women and such members of his tribe as were in Schatt, up the seacoast, and brought them to this oasis to await the arrival of Carpenter, the traveler, whom some called Carpenter Bey. . . . .

"You see that point out there in line with the far light? It was there that a ship landed him, and there were carriers to bring him to this oasis, and a horse for him to ride. They reached here one afternoon, and then ship and carriers returned to the other side of the sea, and the Sheik's responsibilities had begun.

"This Carpenter was a big man, young, and for a white man very handsome. I know, because I camped here that night having come from the far northeast with dates and rugs for the Suez market, and saw him. His resting-place was there by the big pool just outside these ruins, pale in the night-light—the ruins that were once the summer home of a caliph and his harem. He sent for me, desiring to ask questions about the country through which my caravan had passed, and although it was my due that he should seek me, not I him, I went; but when I stood in his great square tent that had rugs on the floor, a folding table, a lamp, a cot, and all those soft things that the white traveler loves, he did not get up from the big easy-chair in which he lounged, nor ask me to a seat, or to smoke, or to coffee. Hence I knew that he was ill-bred and inhospitable —no fit man for our land. *W'allah!* He was insolent in manner and brusque in voice as he spoke to me in his broken, book-learned Arabic; but worst of all, when I volunteered grave words of warning regarding the bands of raiders, he who was young enough to be one of my latest sons laughed in my face as if I were a cowardly old woman filled with alarms and fit to shiver if a jackal ran round my tent. He did not so much as thank me when I bade him good night, but turned to his table and went on checking lists of supplies he had thereon. 'The word of courtesy unspoken is registered on black scrolls to bring misfortune,' was once written by a wise man of Araby, and it must be so, because on that very night Carpenter Bey learned that some of those things he deemed necessary for his fat comfort were missing, and that caused delay, and delay caused—many events. *Kismet!*

"The Sheik Mustapha himself went up the coast to Schatt, crossed to Suez and bought what was required lest his guest be robbed by the thieves and swine who do sell merchandise in that plague-hole that can be seen over there beneath those lights.

"Now, the Sheik had solemnly instructed his people that no matter what befell, was either Carpenter Bey or any of his belongings to suffer harm, and that all must be courteous and gentle with him—that he must be unmolested and made free of the camp. So this insolent young man wandered whither he listed, defiled the pool by bathing his unclean Christian body in it, walked here and there and peered into the tents and into the faces of the women if, unawares, their *maliehas* were not folded secure. And yet they held their tongues and forbore to curse him in the name of the Prophet because of Mustapha's spoken word. All this and more they endured during that week whilst the Sheik was absent in Carpenter's behalf. More— *aiwa*—much more!

"THE Sheik Mustapha had a daughter, Zachia, the rose of his tents and owner of his heart. Tall she was, for her age, and beautiful, with an oval face, and with teeth like deep-sea pearls—so brilliant that not even the folds of her holiday *yashmak* could conceal their luster when she laughed. Her eyes, like those of the gazelle, were filled with innocence and wonder. Her voice was like the murmurings of deep and overflowing pools to the ears of one who perishes from thirst, or the mellow tones of a bulbul singing in the moonlight for its mate. Of such as she are the *houris* of Paradise. And the girl was trustful and

unafraid of this white man—probably one of the first she had ever seen, and the first to whom she had ever spoken,—because was he not her father's guest?

"She was amused by his ignorance, perhaps, when, meeting her unawares as she playfully herded a camel-foal back from the pool, he addressed her in his broken, book-learned Arabic. She drew the enveloping folds of her *malieha* about her face, and seeing no harm therein, conversed with him. I do not know of what they talked, but he must have fanned her curiosity to flame and gained her confidence, for in following days they had other conversations until she no longer avoided, but mayhap sought opportunities of meeting him. And in the end he besought her to slip to this spot, on which we now stand, when night had fallen and Allah's stars were outhung to soften the darkness of his hall of worlds.

"I SAID that she was curious, that she was ignorant; but now she proved foolish, for she trusted this man of the outer world who was her father's guest, and—came. Came as does the gazelle to which I likened her eyes; when lured by the hunter, and fascinated, it comes timidly, but nevertheless comes in response to the mysterious flutter of a silken scarf. Either that, or the call to adventure which rushes through the blood of those born of the brave, regardless of sex, impelled her to dare. And I suppose that to one who had never talked with a man outside those of her own tribe, the adventure was inviting.

"Probably they talked gently, murmuring, lest the night have ears. I know not what he said, save that he implored her to lower her *yashmak* that he might gaze openly; but she, true to her faith which decrees that from dawn of womanhood to the end of life no man outside her family may ever see a woman's face bared, laughingly refused. He promised her presents. He swore himself to silence. He urged the profound yearnings of love. Then at last, before she could take flight, he reached out, caught her, tore the veil from her face and held her struggling in his arms.

"'*La eib fi al bos!*' (There is nothing evil in a kiss) he exclaimed, and pressed his lips to hers despite her efforts to avert her face. Terrified, humiliated and angry, she strove to fight him off and to release herself from his arms. He with his great strength held her closer, laughed recklessly, and repeated that age-old assertion of the libertine. Voicelessly she fought against him. And then in the last despairing efforts for the preservation of her honor, she screamed. A single, long scream, high and wailing, the scream of one overpowered and in imminent distress—the scream that reaches the ears of Allah up there among the stars.

"'You fool!' he cried, as, alarmed and frightened to a sense of his own danger brought on by her outcry, he momentarily released that savage clutch which held her slender young body against his own. Instantly she seized the advantage, tore herself loose and ran past this rock and out into the desert that rested gravely brooding and old—so old!

"Men of Mustapha's tribe, aroused by that single cry, seized their blades, and thinking to defend this worthless life that had been intrusted to their keeping, ran to his tent. He met them at its opening, standing there in his white clothing outlined against the dark of the palms, and said: 'What are you here for? What does this mean?'

"They bent forward and stared at him to make certain that he was safe, a score of shadowy fighting men aroused from sleep, and slowly their blades slipped back to scabbard and to sheath.

"'We thought—we thought, *Effendi*—that we heard a cry for help,' the foremost man explained. 'And thou art our guest and charge. So we came.'

"For a moment he stood peering at them, and then suddenly burst into laughter, loud and mocking. *W'allah!* He mocked and laughed at those who had sprung from dreams and peace and the blessed healing of sleep to bare their hearts for his defense. It is not safe, as you, my brother, know, to laugh at men of my tribe. Those lean-faced men of ours cannot bear ridicule. He added a further and gratuitous insult.

"'You must have bad consciences, or sleep with memory of crimes,' he sneered, 'that all of you imagine outcries. Go back to your tents. Nothing can hurt me. I can take care of myself.'

"For a moment, there in the dim light, they exchanged glances and—perhaps it was well that Carpenter Bey could not see their faces; for by the scourge of Allah, he was in graver danger at that moment than he knew. They drew themselves up: the foremost of them said: 'The *Effendi*

is our guest and in our care. We did but seek to protect him. We are sorry to have disturbed his rest. *Sa'id wumbarka.* May you sleep peacefully and gently.'

"And then the soft sand beneath the palms whispered and rustled as, with their flowing robes, they moved quickly away into the shadows and returned to their *Kheimas,* still wondering whence came that lone cry; perhaps some of them, the more superstitious, believed it to have been the cry of a *djinn* whirling through the skies.

"'This Nazarene should die —from him I can bear no more, O Sheik!"

"ON the next day Sheik Mustapha returned, his journey well performed. But his face was gloomy with the further news he had heard whispered in the bazaars of the raiders over to the north, beyond all the stern mountains of rock and sand. Of this he told Carpenter Bey and advised him to postpone his venture into the barren, uninhabited depths of Sinai. Again the man showed that Allah in his great justice does not always endow the unbeliever with brains, for he sneered at the Sheik and said: 'Oh, so you're frightened, are you? Well, don't be alarmed. I can protect you and these brave men of yours if we are attacked.'

"He laughed with that great coarse laugh of his and turned into his tent. The Sheik Mustapha stood for a moment with one hand clenched over the hilt of his sword and the other clutching the edge of his burnous as if to cast it aside lest it impede action. Then slowly he bent his head—a fine head, my friend—with the nose of a warrior and eyes that were as deep and fearless as those of the mountain eagle, a beard that he wore close in a point, and—he bent his head as if in submission to his given pledge and turned back to the camp where he quietly gave orders for the next day's start. He went alone to his tent and entered therein lest his men see that in his face which betrayed the first unavenged insult in his life. *Ya Salam!* A lesser man could not have endured it; but a lesser man would have forgotten the pledge given to his friend the great Governor Bey of the north.

"And so, as dawn paled all but the braver stars, the eight chosen camels grunted and whined and complained as camels do when being loaded, each grumbling that its load was heavier than those of the others; then got to their feet, and now the big white tent of Carpenter Bey and

all his belongings had disappeared, the horse on which Carpenter Bey was to ride was saddled, and the Sheik and his men who were to accompany him on the journey bade their families good-by. The Sheik, on a swift trotting camel, moved into the lead, called back, and out they passed to those white mountains of sand at the feet of the great ramparts of gray rock, the Gebel Raha. The *fantasses* of water gurgled on the baggage camels, a man called back to another that the dawn was propitious and of good omen, another in a wailing voice sang a few bars of a parting song, another clicked the beads of his rosary, the barkings of the camp dogs grew faint, and the first of the long daily marches into the land of silence was begun.

"I never knew why Carpenter Bey went into Sinai, this desolate peninsula that bore nothing but camel tracks probably thousands of years before the prophet Moses knew it, and is today as it was when he passed. Who knows the follies of white men? But I believe he sought places where oil might flow from the ground—sought them in that land where not even water bubbles up to make the oasis. He must have been mad. But on and on he went, ever farther into the interior until one evening they reached the bleak and chill heights of Heitan Pass from where one looks down into the Wady-el-Haj and on across the spreading wastes that never end until in the far land of Palestine.

"THERE was portent in the clouds that veiled the stars but the wind was cold, so they urged their camels downward into the *wady,* which was narrow and with deep sides, and leagues in length. Carpenter was complaining and at last, yielding, Mustapha made camp. I cannot quite forgive the Sheik for that negligence. He must have known the dangers of such a camp, but he may have been too tired and weary to insist on forcing the camels onward. Allah knows! But, unusual for that time of the year, there came a cloud-burst in the pass and when the torrent awakened the tired men and beasts it was too late to think of mistakes.

" 'Two of you cut the camels' hobbles and the others come with me to the tent!' the Sheik cried in the darkness. 'We must save our guest and his possessions.'

"Through the deepening waters they ran to arouse the white man, but he in a panic turned, bewildered, in the wrong direction to where the *wady* was deeper. Into the flood after him raced Mustapha the Sheik, who knowing little of rivers, could not swim. The top of a scrub tree that he clutched enabled him to seize Carpenter's clothing just as the latter plunged into the swirling blackness and there they clung until the moon came out again, abruptly, as it does after desert storms, and there they held until the waters subsided. They saw figures beyond them on a shelf of rock, called, and Mustapha's men, peering, anxious, discovered and rescued them from the little islet where the scrub trees grew.

"Carpenter Bey forgot to thank the Sheik Mustapha for saving his life; but he was voluble and spoke many angry words because some of his smaller and more insignificant belongings had been swept away. And to all the Sheik Mustapha stood and listened in utter silence, although his men shrugged their shoulders, lifted their hands, exchanged meaning looks, and moved away to recapture the camels.

"In the dawn they returned to the pass by the white man's orders and there made camp; for it was this man's way to halt in a place and then wander over the hill-tops alone seeking whatever it was he came to find. And here there came another happening to bring care and apprehension to the Sheik; for he saw at twilight of one evening, clear against the sky-line, the head of a man watching the camp. Now had this lone man been friendly, he would have descended when the Sheik hailed, and sat by the fire and taken coffee and his turn at the hubble-bubble; but he did not. He fled, nor could Mustapha and all his men find him. Mustapha the wise was troubled, but he said nothing to Carpenter Bey lest again he be called a coward. And he was glad when, on the following morning, his employer ordered the march resumed.

"Down through the long *wady* they passed and then out on to the broad plains until the mountains lay dim and purple against the horizon and were finally lost, and in all the days neither the keen eyes of the Sheik nor his men, watchful, could see a living being. They moved over the desert where the stones are sharp flints broken as by Allah's sledges and ten-score paths have been worn therein from horizon to horizon by the plodding feet of the camel trains. They came to the mountains of Bruk—*Gebel el Bruk*—high, desolate, and in parts probably never trodden by the foot of man or beast. And here in a narrow gut

stretching up to the still peaks, Carpenter Bey would camp and follow his mad quest.

"NOW, the Sheik Mustapha could find no pretext to refuse, for but a few days before they had filled the *fantasses* with water, there was food enough in the *wady* where the untouched *tibbin* bush grew to feed the camels for days, and yet his heart was troubled for the safety of Carpenter Bey. Before starting on his journey a sand diviner had thrown the sifted grains and spread the shells, and had foretold that in such a place as this would come grief. My friend the great Sheik recalled the prophecy and—yet could do nothing but endure, as was his way and the way of the true believers who know that it must be as Allah wills and that none may evade his trials or his call. *W'allah!* It is true! But he did say to Carpenter Bey, 'Be thou careful when alone in the mountain-tops, for the spear of the striking Bedouin who raids may be far cast.' Again he was derided for his fears and said no more.

"*Aiwa!* The sand diviner had foretold the truth! For on a night when the camp was still and the half-moon was lighting the gray desert at the foot of the *Gebel el Bruk* and making shadows of the stern peaks the raiders charged fiercely down upon the camp, leaping ghostly from stone to stone and firing as they came. Nothing but the watchfulness of the Sheik Mustapha kept the raid from being over almost as abruptly as it began; but the Sheik sprang out to meet the attack and his rifle stabbed the gloom with its finger of flame that was like the thrust of the adder's tongue. A shot ripped through his shoulder, and he fell behind a boulder and tore off his white burnous, being a fighting man and suddenly realizing that with it on he could be seen.

"One of his men came leaping to his side with drawn blade, and the Sheik turned and bade him lie concealed. And then, firing whenever he could see a moving thing, he waited and listened impatiently, hopefully, for the shouts of that other rifle that he knew lay in the tent of his guest. Hearing nothing, he called his man to him and crouching behind the rock, bade him bind his wound. This done he gave to this man the rifle and told him to fire truly and hold the raiders at bay; for these, coming unexpectedly upon such resistance, had themselves fallen behind shelters and fired at random.

"But there was one amongst them who could shoot, as the Sheik learned when, fearing that some stray shot fired through the canvas had found the life of his charge, he jumped and ran toward the tent of Carpenter Bey. A bullet tore away the braided rope of camel's hair that thrice bound round his turban proclaimed his rank. Yet he ran on and reached the tent that lay pale and quiet in the moonlight. He thrust the fly aside and found Carpenter Bey lying flat behind his piled baggage and with the rifle and its box of cartridges beside him.

" 'Come with me,' said the Sheik. 'It needs but that rifle in thy hands to drive them away. There can be but a score of them. We will charge and drive them forth and destroy them to a man.'

"But this guest of his was weak in the knees and shouted back: 'Why not let them have what they want? What do they seek? Camels? Let them have them. I will pay and somehow we can get a runner to the coast at El Arish to bring more."

" 'Thou fool!' exclaimed the Sheik, forgetting himself in that moment of great contempt. 'Where the raiders pass the vultures and the sands nurse nothing but bones of the dead. You must come with me and we shall drive them off. Come quickly! Now is the appointed hour.'

"THEN, as if scourged with words, did this man get slowly and reluctantly to his feet and he followed the Sheik Mustapha outward. Now, I as well as any know that the white man is usually brave to war. I have seen and know when there is that steel in the heart of a man that makes him go calmly to meet his fate; but this man was not like those. As he followed the Sheik out into the open light, the rifles of the raiders spoke and the Sheik felt another wound, and his guest fell. Mustapha ran back and picked him up. The bullet had grazed the man's skull, no more. But between fright and shock he was unconscious. Heedless of the whipping lead that tore the sands about him, Mustapha carried his guest on his back into the tent, piled the baggage around as a barricade, took from him a belt with cartridges and one of these new-made pistols that shoot so fast and so many times, ran out—jumping swiftly from side to side to make it more difficult for his enemies—picked up the fallen rifle, the cartridges and fled upward to where his men were resting in shelter.

"There, panting, he pondered. He knew that two of his men had knowledge of the

rifle, and he himself had once curiously watched a white man load and handle one of the pistols. So he gave the rifle to another man, and seated behind the rock, studied the new firearm until he learned how to load it, and then was prepared.

"A wise old warrior this! He stripped his men until they were bare, told them to creep out in different directions; a man with a rifle at either side and scattered in between those who crawled with blades held in their teeth and knives at girdles. Like a great crescent they were to go, closing in the thin pointed horns until he from the center gave the signal. The signal was to be when he arose from behind his shelter and charged. Patiently he waited. He dared not fire that new arm yet for he feared that it did not carry death to any distance, and that the shrill song of its lead would fail before it found a mark. He repeated verses of the Koran to gauge the time. And then, when he deemed the horns of his crescent closing in, he called to Allah, and leaped. Up through the strewn boulders he charged, recklessly, fearlessly, and—the Prophet protects the brave, for it was not written that on this night was the Sheik Mustapha to die. The bullets whipped about him but found no mark and then, in terror, and weakening, one of the raiders sprang from shelter to run. He ran not far, for Mustapha fired. Another cursed and charged with a blade and he too fell. Now the fight became scattered. Meeting with such unexpected resistance the raiders sought safety but—Mustapha slew the last with his knife because he had not time to reload that weapon of which he knew so little. And the knife is sure in such hands as were his. It struck twice, thrice, and then found a heart. The fight against even such great odds was done!

"ONE of Mustapha's men would never again return to the black tents by the borders of the Red Sea. Another had the fingers of a hand shot away. One other had a clean bullet through the fleshy part of his arm. They returned to the big tent where they found Carpenter Bey, and it took but a few minutes to patch up his wound. After that, in the moonlight, they buried the dead, and placed over friend and enemy alike the twin stones that guide the way to Paradise. It was not until dawn that their work was finished and then, athirst from their toil, they sought water.

"'Allah! What means this?' cried the man who had gone to where the *fantasses* were piled, their square metal sides making it possible to keep them thus compact. The others hastened to him. The sand at the bottom of the water tanks was wet in a great round space. The bullets from the raiders, whether by intent or not may never be known, had cut through every *fantass* but one. The Sheik and his men stared at one another in a silence that was as tense and meaning as the desert's own, for the ever-brooding and most fearsome terror of the great sands, thirst, menaced them. They fell to their knees and with their hands dug deeply into the sand hoping that some firmer layer of earth beneath might have held a few quarts; but their hope was vain.

"They rubbed their limbs and faces in the moist sand, and prostrated themselves toward Mecca; for now it must be as Allah willed. Then they aroused Carpenter Bey who was sleeping, none the worse for his scratch, and told him of their distressing discovery. Instead of thanking his God that he had at least escaped with his life and that all the water was not lost, he used oaths in the tongue of the unbeliever, of which, my friend, I regret that you are one, and then in his scant Arabic fell to upbraiding the Sheik Mustapha, who, humiliated before all his men, stood dumb and frowning at the sands upon which he stood until the sudden movement of a man by his side caused him to start. He threw himself forward and his strong hands clutched an upraised wrist that held a naked blade.

"'By Allah! This Nazarene should die. Let me but slice through his craven heart and thou canst send me too to Paradise, but from him I bear no more, O Sheik!' the man cried as they wrestled to and fro. And it speaks well for the strength of the Sheik Mustapha that he twisted and struggled until that hungry blade fell to the sand, for that was a strong man with whom he fought, as I do well know. And then, as the man stood subdued, did Mustapha prove that authority which had made him Sheik; for he commanded them all.

"'I have given pledge to a friend,' he said quietly, 'that our guest shall be returned to *Ayn Musa* protected, unharmed. Would my own people have their Sheik break his word?'

"He stared at them with fierce eyes, and stood with his great arms folded across his breast, until one by one they muttered: *'W'allah! La-la!* No!'

"Heedless of the whipping lead that tore the sands about him, Mustapha carried his guest on his back into the tent."

" 'Then give heed,' he said, more quietly, seeing that the crisis was passed. 'It is four days' journey to the nearest well. In three days our camels must drink, or begin to die. This unbeliever who is with us cannot endure as can we, who are children of the sands. And so—of that water which we have been spared by the will of Allah, but little must be for us though our tongues hang dry from between our parched lips.' They moved restlessly, angrily, and watching them he added, 'The sons of my tribe would not have their Sheik break his pledge. But, if they can not endure small rations, then it is I who will go athirst! For I swear that until we reach the wells no drop of water laves my throat though I fall! And—I have spoken!'

"Instantly they rushed to him, gesticulating, protesting their determination to endure with him as he willed.

"NOW, all this time Carpenter Bey stood behind, watching, perhaps afraid, perhaps perplexed, and not understanding all that was said; but of this I am certain that he knew enough Arabic to gather the meaning of it all and—he did not volunteer to bear that coming hardship with them; did not urge them to share and share that life-giving liquid until it was gone; did not even thank them for their consideration. Had he done so—who knows! The end might not have been the same. And yet—I doubt. . . . .

" 'Bring in the camels. Take down the tent. Pack the things,' said the Sheik Mustapha, ignoring the unbeliever at his elbow. 'From now we must make haste.'

"And so the camels again swung out, grunting, complaining, as the sun, heedless of all suffering and of all time, once more swept unblinkingly across the edge of Allah's world. Back they came to the Wady el Bruk, and thence onward to Bir el Nekhl, that oasis that once held a palace and where hundreds lived. Thirsty camels, regurgitating in vain, staggering men who clung to the tails of the beasts that they might be dragged along and yet afraid to ride their animals, they came wavering and dying into that oasis with parched, blackened tongues and deep-sunk eyes, seeking water! That is, all save Carpenter Bey who, selfish, unpitying, ungrateful, rode one of the camels after his horse had fallen exhausted and Mustapha, breaking the laws of the Prophet, but pitying, had ended its misery by a swift slash across the throat.

"The palace was in ruins; but deep in the cool shadows of the neglected palms they found a spring, living, untainted, and men and beasts threw themselves into its edge. The camels nuzzled deep beside those men who had so nearly died, and being fortified by the knowledge that some one of them is custodian of the hundredth prayer of Mohammed were more dignified than their human masters and showed less haste. I say that men and camels knelt together beside that pool and lived. I can see them now, so close together, in such intimacy and dire distress, there beneath the palms, drinking deeply when torture had passed

torment, and the half-dying eyes had for so many hours beheld the mirages—pictures of Paradise where are cool lakes with bordering palms, though bordering sands do burn livid and white for the unbeliever about Allah's garden of the blessed.

"I WISH to tell you of the crowning infamy of this man of the white race—Carpenter—who throughout those heated days had been given certain portions of water for which those humble men trudging beside beasts would have bartered everything but their souls—all they had. He cursed because he had not been first to drink! He who had suffered least complained most. And this time he was in no danger. He cursed unheeded. For men who are near the gates of Death and find succor flowing beneath their knees give no ear to the babblings or vaporings of fools. All they could think of was to drink—drink deeply from the cool spring there beneath the grateful shade of the palms.

"It was not until the next day, there in the garden of the long-dead princes and beside the ruins of their palace, that there came any clash of authority between Carpenter Bey and the Sheik Mustapha. The white tent had been pitched as always, with rugs upon the floors, with folding tables and easy-chairs, for not much had been lost.

" 'Now that we have water again, and the raiders are dead, we will return to the mountains of the Bruk,' said Carpenter Bey as he came upon the men resting in the comforting shade and drawing again the deep moist breath of life.

" 'But—if the *Effendi* will but think,' protested the Sheik, 'it is not wise to return over that long hot way. The *Effendi* does not know that those raiders we slew may be but a few of many, and that while the first came to seize camels and such things as they covet, their fellows will come seeking vengeance and in numbers great. We dare not return.'

" 'Nonsense!' sneered Carpenter Bey. 'The others will come—*Bukra fa mish-mish!*' (When the apricots bloom double! That Arabic term of contempt meaning *never.)*

"The Sheik Mustapha arose and strode across until he looked down upon this foolish obdurate man, this fool in the ways of the desert lands! He folded his arms across his broad chest.

" 'Tomorrow we start homeward,' he said. 'For I who speak am pledged to return you safe and unharmed to the Well of Moses, far down to the south beside the Sea of Red. And I who speak do know that death lies back there whence we have escaped. Tomorrow at dawn we go. It is said.'

"There must have been something in his manner that impressed this white unbeliever, for when the Sheik slowly turned and reseated himself, the man merely went away, muttering threats, it is thought, in his own barbarian tongue. But at dawn, as was written in the high scrolls, the caravan started southward.

"And so, as Allah willed, in time they returned in the *Ayn Musa,* tired from their long journeyings and vicissitudes, and the Sheik Mustapha's work was done, and his pledge to the great man of the North fulfilled. The caravan arrived late in the afternoon, and for the last time Mustapha's men pitched the big square tent and spread the rugs upon its floors and opened the folding tables, and the easy-chairs, and the folding cot and prepared it for sleeping.

"That night the Sheik came to the broad opening of the tent where, beside the lamp on the table, Carpenter Bey lounged in his easy-chair.

" 'I have but one thing more to do,' said the Sheik, 'to have completed my work for you. And that is to send a messenger tomorrow to Suez notifying those who brought you, my guest, that you await their coming to remove you and yours to the mainland whence you came. And, that the great Bey of the North, His Excellency, the Governor, may know that I have done my best, faithfully, I ask you to write on paper to him words to that effect.'

" 'Humph! That is unnecessary. I'm here all right, and that's all there is to it,' ungraciously responded the younger man.

" 'But, does not the *Effendi* know that such a letter is valuable to me in proof that, to the letter, I have kept my pledge? If the *Effendi* would be so gracious as to—'

" 'Oh, write the cursed thing and I'll sign it,' was all that the Sheik could get. 'Bring it tomorrow. I don't want to be bothered tonight. And—get out!'

"Gravely the Sheik salaamed and walked away through the palms to the other end of the oasis and the camp of his people. And on the following day after dispatching a man on a fast-trotting camel to Suez with a letter from Carpenter Bey he prepared his own screed and took it to the unbeliever for signature. It read thus—for with my own eyes I have seen it:

"'By the mercy of Allah! This certifies to all that the Sheik Mustapha, in fulfillment of his pledge complete, escorted me throughout those portions of Sinai which I directed and has returned me safely to the starting point of my journey, the Well of Moses, without loss of any of my belongings save one camp-chair, four blankets, one rug of camel's hair and three boxes of photograph films—all of which were lost in flood and for which the Sheik Mustapha is not held responsible. Furthermore this attests that the contract of the Sheik Mustapha having been thus faithfully performed, I from this moment no longer hold him responsible for my safety, welfare, or transportation.'

"Carpenter Bey again proved unworthy, for he did not immediately sign the letter, being perhaps suspicious, for men of evil minds suspect all others.

"But during the afternoon there passed through the oasis a white missionary bound down the coast to one of those missions where the unbeliever strangely insists upon trying to induce the follower of the Prophet to change his faith. Needlessly! Carpenter Bey had the white *rissaalaman* read and translate the Sheik's letter before he would sign it. He added no word of praise, or recommendation, or acknowledgment of the saving of his life, or that others had endured much deprivation for his comfort. Not a word. He did but grunt, scornfully sign it, and throw it to the Sheik. It fell to the floor and for a moment the Sheik stared as if inclined to let it rest there; but after consideration he stooped, picked it up, folded it and slipped it into his pouch.

"And this time as he walked from the tent he did not salaam or show sign of obedience or respect, but moved slowly with his head held very high and very stiff.

"'A sullen dog!' said Carpenter Bey to the *rissaalaman*.

"'No,' said the missionary, rising to his feet, 'a very great, trustworthy and noble man, infidel to us though he be. I bid you good day!'

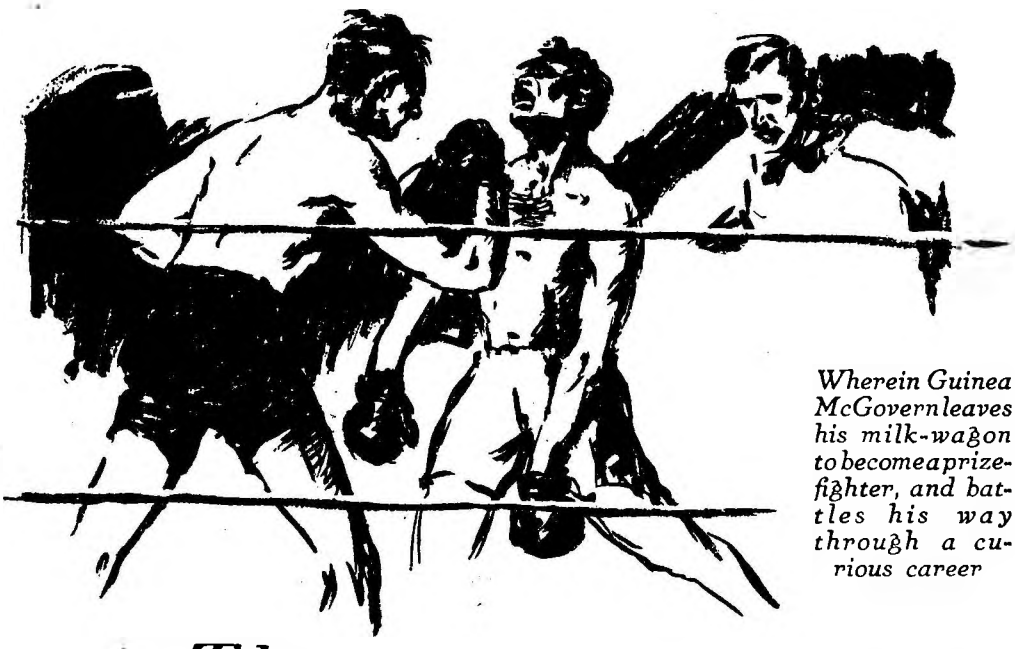
"ALL the remainder of the afternoon, as though brooding, the Sheik Mustapha, dressed in his clean white robes as if for a ceremony, loitered around this spot near where we now sit. And not until evenfall when Carpenter Bey sauntered out this way as if for a walk, did he leave. Then, as if avoiding this man for whom he had endured so much and wishing nothing more to do with him, the Sheik Mustapha passed round the other side of these rocks, back into the oasis, past the great pool, past the ruined palace, past the great white tent and onward to his camp.

"Night fell. Carpenter Bey was served with food. The table was cleared away. The stars came out, stabbing spangles of light on the black robe of the skies—up there where Allah—blessed be his name! —sits in judgment and justice. It was as still and silent as it is tonight, as it has been for myriad nights since the desert that is now so old was young.

"THE palms hung still as they do now. Even the sea out there had gone to sleep. And the shadows on the tent of Carpenter Bey showed that he too was preparing for rest. Then his light was extinguished, as he moved toward his cot. There was the creaking of canvas and the soft rustle of sheets as he crawled between them; and then the silence was broken by a shrill scream—the scream of a man in the anguish of fright and alarm! Up from the deep shade of the palms, as if it had but waited for that signal, sprang a swiftly moving shape of white, called softly but clearly through the tent wall: *'Akhiran,* Carpenter Bey! Thou son of an infidel! Thou brokest the honor of my tents and laid hands on my daughter. Dost thou remember saying 'there is no evil in a kiss'? Well, thou hast been kissed—by death—Carpenter Bey!'

"And not until then did that doomed man within the tent, frenzied with terror and pain from the deadly bites of three asps that had been put beneath his sheets, realize that his assault upon Zachia had been known to her father, the Sheik Mustapha, throughout all those preceding days; that the Sheik had kept his pledge of honor—but when his compact was done had struck savagely, remorselessly and adroitly through his reptilian tools.

"When the men came to transport the belongings and person of Carpenter Bey, that man lay dead upon the rugs and the Sheik Mustapha exhibited the broken bodies of three dead asps, and gravely explained to the authorities that the white man had evidently trodden upon them in his tent whither, to escape the chill of the night, and by the will of Allah, they must have crawled. And then, reverently bending his fine head, he repeated, piously: *'Inshallah'*—it is as God wills!"



Wherein Guinea McGovern leaves his milk-wagon to become a prize-fighter, and battles his way through a curious career

The Killer

By HENRY GORE

Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson

THIS story is about a preliminary man—one of those he-species the world sees so much and hears so little of—one of these gangling gawklings who barters his services for a sop, and gets a sock!

Now, if you know why every boy has a secret ambition to pilot an airplane into Paris and why every girl pines to be in the movies,—since she can now talk in the movies,—you know why Guinea McGovern gave up a milk-wagon in drab Jersey City for a career with the gloves in gay Manhattan. And right here it might be remarked that this is the only case on record where anyone named McGovern ever stayed in the preliminary end of the fight game very long!

Now, in the Guinea's strange and picturesque career in the scientific art of manmauling, he fought just two important engagements. Only two, mind you. One of these engagements brought him a lot of fame—notoriety, if you prefer it—and a match with the champion. The other one brought him—

But getting back to the story, there's a street in Jersey City, called Nebersink Avenue. To the layman individually, and the world at large, the word *"nebersink"* is meaningless. But to the boys who live on and about that thoroughfare—the boys who have made it what it is today, *"nebersink"* means something. It is horse Latin for *"never sink."*

And the fact that "nebersink" was a slogan of long standing may have been responsible for the Guinea throwing out the milk business and taking on the leather-pushing business. Who knows?

IN my eighteen years as official matchmaker for the Manhattan Sporting Club—that old barnlike structure which sprawls out so prominently on West Forty-ninth Street—I have at one time or another come in contact with nearly all of the fighters whose names have graced the billboards in red letters from coast to coast in the pasf two decades. I take great pride in my ability to "spot" a fighter whenever and wherever I see one. A battered nose, a bluish eye, or the cauliflower ear, of course, makes my task easier. But here and now I want to confess that when the Guinea first fluttered into my private office my first impulse was to toss him bodily therefrom.

Not that fighters are not always welcome to my den, for I have cultivated their friendship, and most of the boys, I am pleased to say, have come to know that my latchstring always hangs on the outside. It

was because I was worried over the scarcity of prospective fighters and I did not have any time to waste on individual loafers and curiosity-seekers.

"What do you want here?" I demanded, trying to look as furious as possible.

The kid doffed his cap.

"I'm looking for Mr. Mitchell, the matchmaker," he replied, looking me straight in the eye. Now when a man looks me straight in the eye—

"Does he owe you money?" I fired back. The kid uncorked a broad grin, and I could see that he was sincere about something. But I still was puzzled.

"No," the kid replied, "he don't owe me nothing. I—"

Then, "I'm Mitchell, the matchmaker," I interrupted. "What can I do for you?"

"I want a job," he said.

"This is not an employment agency," I countered, reaching for my "busy day" sign. "I'm sorry," I said, "but I'm busy and shall have to ask you to get out."

"But, don't you need no sparring partners?" he persisted. "I heard 'em say—"

"Do you want to get killed?" I fired back at him.

"I'm willing to risk that," he replied.

SO I gave him the "once-over," as the saying goes, but disqualified him for the following reasons: Fifteen inches too tall for his weight; muscles and chest too flat; hands and feet too large; too many freckles. Furthermore, there was no division that he would fit into. He was too light for a middleweight, and too long and skinny for a lightweight. I figured, though, that if he was wrapped around a sizable T-bone steak he might scratch into the welter class.

"Had any fighting experience?" I asked.

"Plenty," he replied, warming up.

"Where have you been fighting?"

"Over in Jersey."

"How long?"

"All my life."

"What club?"

"Didn't fight in a club—we fought with 'em."

"Where did you fight?"

"In the alleys."

I gave him another close scrutiny, but with the same hopeless impression. Then:

"How's your physique?"

"Aint got none."

"I mean," I said, "what kind of physical condition are you in?"

"Oh, first class."

"Are you ready to meet all comers?"

"Sure. When do I meet 'em?"

"Soon enough," I said. "This is no kindergarten," I added, "but if you can stand the gaff I suppose you can make board and lodging out of it."

WELL, I turned the kid over to Billy Gates, the handy man round our gym, which we operate as a sort of by-product to help young fighters along, and forgot him. I knew if there was anything in him I'd hear of it soon enough.

Well, I was so busy thinking and trying to get hold of promising material that I didn't see the gym for quite awhile. I don't pay much attention to it anyway; I just turn that part of the business over to the boys and let 'em have their own way, which is good policy. Besides, I knew that we didn't have any Corbetts or Dempseys in the making. Ballou was the best we had and he was short of wind and too slow.

Well, one morning, about a month later, I strolled back in the stable just as Ballou was putting the finishing touches on the new kid. He was crowding him hard and had him flapping about the ring like a duck in a spring rain. Ballou always did like the grandstand stuff, and when he saw me he reached for the kid's jaw, which happened to be handy. But the kid jerked it back to his chest quick like a mud-turtle, and Ballou's glove went on up and got his nose and splashed catsup over his map.

But before Ballou could try again the kid's left shot out, short and swift like a piston, and connected with Ballou's chin. It was easier to hear than see. Ballou rocked back on his heels, stiffened and did a Brodie in the middle of the ring. Nobody counted him out—nor was it necessary. But when he was able to sit up and say: "Is the fight over?" I told him yes, and so was he!

I pulled Billy Gates off to one side.

"What's that kid's name?" I asked him.

"Oh, that ring-worm?" Gates sneered. "I call him the Guinea."

"The Guinea?" I gasped.

"Yes," said Gates, "that's on account of him being so speckled."

"How does he stack up as a fighter?" I said to Gates. "He looks pretty good to me."

"His fighting is terrible," Gates flashed back, "absolutely hopeless. Why, that sap can't get about in a ring fast enough to keep himself warm."

"But," I protested, "he kayoed Ballou. I saw it with my own eyes."

"Accidents will happen," laughed Gates.

But after I saw the wallop the Guinea gave to Ballou, I began paying more attention to him. It looked like we had something sprouting under our roof besides cauliflower, and in my eighteen years as official matchmaker I have never yet turned down a chance to help develop a young fighter's ability when—and if—he had any. I noticed, too, that the kid's ribs weren't as prominent as they had been, and his eyes were getting brighter.

I set about to match him up to see what was in him. There was some pretty good preliminary boys about town that drew well, so I went after them. But I didn't want to rush him into something that he couldn't get out of. One has to be careful with a new man, for his reputation can be knocked down a lot faster than it can be built up. One can't always afford to meet all comers with only a comer, so I wanted to play safe.

In my spare time I did all I could with the kid. I got him so he could take his feet off the floor and put them back again without tripping over them, but it was some job. His wheels were more like caterpillars on a tank than racers, but I worked up all the speed I could in him. I figured, too, that in an endurance test he would wear down a racer. It's always better to have something that will keep going than something that will burn the road up and itself with it.

Well, the Guinea and I sat in a ringside seat one night when a young wop from the East Side, under the *nom de guerre* of Mike Finello, was fighting a prelim in our place. And what Mike did to his man that night was a plenty, for Mike was nobody's spring tonic. He came from Mott Street, which, by the way, runs parallel with the Bowery, and when one of those Irish wops from Mott Street fights himself as far north as Forty-ninth Street, he is known as "one of them tough guys."

The Guinea eyed Mr. Finello closely as he polished off his man; then he grinned.

"What do you think of him?" I asked.

"If that's all he's got, well—lemme loose and call the ambulance," he replied.

NEXT day I started the kid in training in dead earnest while I went out to nail the match. But Mr. Finello's services were in great demand, it seemed, and I wasn't able to hook 'em up for a couple of months. By this time, however, the kid was coming on pretty good; but on the night of the engagement, there wasn't a single, solitary fan up there to root for him.

"Here's where he starts or finishes," I said to myself as he climbed into the ring.

The wop got a noisy hand, but all the Guinea got was some individual catcalls from the gallery, and you could hear the ringside bettors laying five to one and no takers.

Well, it wasn't any Dempsey-Firpo affair. In the first round the Guinea did nothing but just flap his wings and keep out of the way of Mr. Finello the best he could. His feet were a great handicap, but Mr. Finello was a man of discretion and didn't take any chances till he felt his subject out. In the second, though, the wop started his fast left to work and he managed to connect with the Guinea's nose frequently enough. It didn't hurt him any, but it started the crowd hollering when they saw red, and this gave the Mott Street idol more confidence and he started right in to rushing. He punished the kid severely with a bombardment of right hooks to the body, and short, solid lefts to the head, and near the end of the round he dumped the kid on his ear for a count of six with an overhand right to the chin.

THEY struggled through the third without causing any excitement, but in the fourth round the wop started in for a quick finish. He was fast on his feet and had the best of it there, because the Guinea's feet were built more for comfort than speed, but they served him pretty well because they were heavy and he needed a lot of foundation before the round ended. His feet were planted in the middle of the ring and Finello saw that he couldn't get him into a foot-race, so he stopped and began peppering him in the face, and even let fly a shower of long shots with his right. It looked awfully good to everybody except me—who was the only rooter the Guinea had except Tim, our towel-boy and chief second, and when the gong tapped again the wop got all of the applause.

But the Guinea was back out there waiting for him at the beginning of the fifth. He didn't have to wait long, however. The wop came out of his corner with intentions of wearing him out and then driving home the sleeping punch. But the Guinea just tucked his chin in, hunched up

his shoulders and banged away every time he got a chance, letting Mr. Finello do all the work. The wop turned loose everything he had, but he couldn't get set for the sleeping wallop, for the Guinea wouldn't tire. There was no use trying to drive him into a corner, for he parked himself in the middle of the ring again and there he stayed, taking everything that Mr. Finello had—which was good and plenty—but asking for more. He was still eating it up when the bell rang, and all through the intermission he sat grinning like a boy with a sore toe, while the wop puffed and blowed like a blacksmith's bellows.

The wop came out of his corner a bit slow in the sixth. But Finello was game—make no mistake about that. He met the kid halfway and gave punch for punch and blow for blow. The kid didn't have a round to his credit, but he had begun to get the crowd by now. I watched his legs closely as he hopped about, which is a sure barometer of what a fighter has left in him, and they were as steady as they were in the first round. I was slightly encouraged.

Well, the kid started sizing his man up, and when he figured the wop had shot his bolt, he turned himself loose. He beat him down with a wicked right which he worked overtime, then when the wop was hanging onto the ropes, the Guinea's curious, piston-like left shot out and the minute it lit it was curtains for Finello.

Well, after that night things began to take on a brighter color for the kid—and me. He might not be championship timber, but he would help me solve some of my problems as matchmaker by filling up the yawning gaps in the preliminary programs. We just went jostling along nice and pretty, not going in too often, and the Guinea was working out just as I said and eating up my advice. I'll say this for him: He was a hard worker and a good listener.

He was lucky enough to win, on an average, about three out of five of his battles, which is better than the ordinary preliminary man usually does; but he would build up a fair reputation by winning half a dozen or so bouts in a row, then send it tumbling down again by taking a terrible lacing from some comparatively unknown.

It looked good to everybody except me—who was the only rooter the Guinea had.

At the time the Chicago Express whizzed into town the Guinea was going strong, and I decided that if the fans and sport-writers would stand for it, that I'd take a chance and push the kid up into the first money. If he derailed the Express, then he was ready for the big-time show and the red letters on the billboards. If not, there wasn't any question as to what he was ready for.

Now the Chicago Express was a going piece of machinery. He was all steamed up and popping off at the exhaust when he breezed into my office, and, as I recall, the first words that he said were these:

"Mitchell, who do you want me to kill—first?"

The Express' reputation was not unknown to me, so I replied:

"I have a large list, but shall have to consult it and pick one out."

I might explain here and now, however, that when I picked out the Guinea for the

"kill" I bore him no malice. I was merely trying to do him a good turn; or a "bad" one—depending on the point of view. It might be added here, though, that the word "kill" in prize-ring vernacular is not as serious as it sounds. In the *patois* of the profession, "kill" merely means "stopped."

Luckily, I encountered no serious objections on the part of the sport-writers and fandom over the match. They fairly ate it up, so to speak, and some of the newspaper boys made it easier for me by saying that the winner of the fight would be the logical contender for the welterweight crown. A "logical" contender, as is well known, is supposedly the best man in his class. All prizefighters are contenders—for something—but a "logical" contender is sitting on velvet, for he has reached a coveted position.

IT was a great battle while it lasted, as the reporters are wont to say. I believe it was Jim Corbett who coined that phrase. The Guinea reached his zenith that night. He surprised a capacity house of twenty-four thousand spectators who packed our place to the roof; he surprised the sport-writers who packed the telegraph booth; he gave the Chicago Express the one great surprise of his variegated life, but, above all, he probably surprised himself the most. As one sport-writer described it, "it was one of those nights when the Guinea could have licked any man on earth."

The Express packed a terrible wallop and was a fast worker, always in a hurry to get it over and grab the purse—but never since he left the old Windy City did he sweat so much as that night. He got off to a flying start and gave the Guinea everything he had for six rounds—then when he was dripping and slipping, the Guinea started right in to make it short and snappy. He nailed him continually with long rights to the face and head, and pumped a succession of hard lefts to the body. When the Express attempted to rush, he found his eyes, nose and mouth full of hot leather that came from nowhere and everywhere; when he pressed into close quarters he suddenly found his flanks pounded into rising red welts.

They coasted through the seventh without either doing any serious damage, but in the eighth the Express started to rushing again. He was spouting and missing on three cylinders and puffing like a baby cyclone, but still working fast and hard. But the kid was right there, eating it up—and so was the crowd. Toe to toe they stood, heads down and gloves flying; not an iota of science, but each refusing to back up one single inch. In such a combat there can be but one result.

It came early in the ninth. The house was on its feet and in a mighty uproar, with each individual pleading—as if it did any good—for his favorite to "come on." I was watching closely, trying to figure out just which one would cave in first, when I saw the Guinea work in close to his man. Then I saw that curious left shoot out, and the moment it struck the fight was all over. The Overlander's knees buckled and he took a nose-dive into the resin dust and stayed there. Even after the count the boys had to take him to the dressing-room to bring him to, and then it was some job.

"Well, what do you think of the Guinea now?" I asked big Bob Comstock, our active vice-president, the following morning. But Comstock's estimation of the Guinea, which he had expressed to me previously as strongly unfavorable, was unchanged.

"You'll admit that you, yourself, were surprised at the result last night," he fired back.

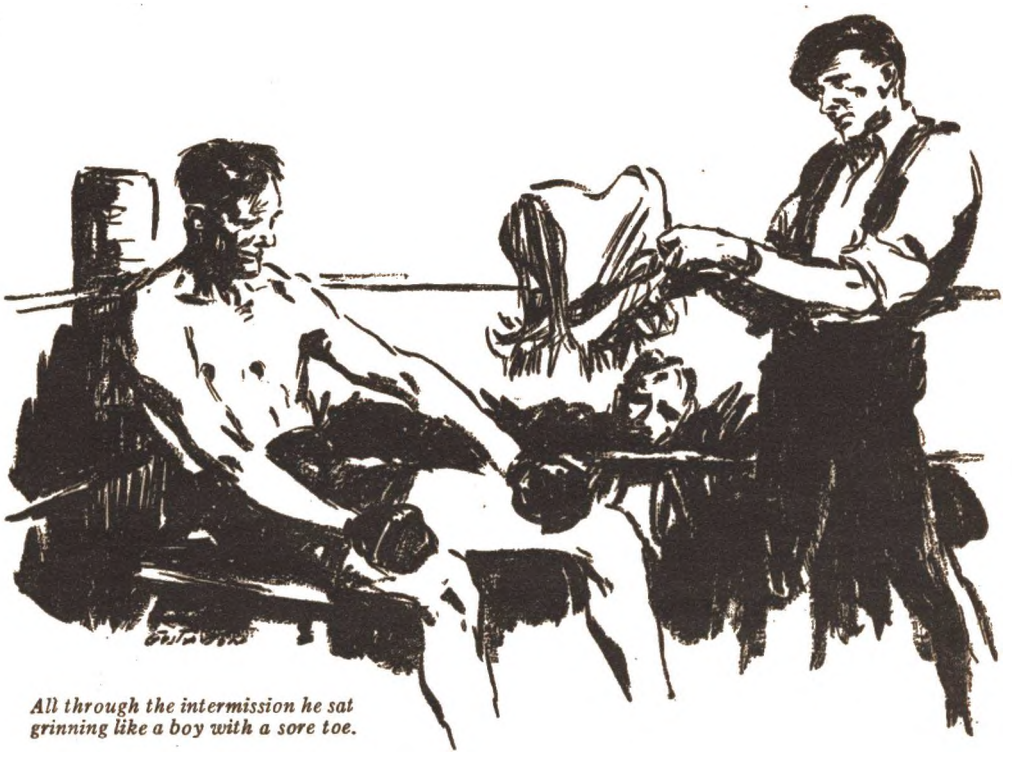
"Yes," I replied, "it was an upset—but who ever thought Gene Tunney would lick Jack Dempsey?"

Comstock never could argue a question, so he walked away and left me.

WELL, in the following weeks I kept a close watch over the Guinea; I didn't dare have him matched up with some hash-thrower that would tear down my playhouse with any rough stuff. My job as matchmaker is strictly a business proposition and the board of directors look to me to fill the house and pay them dividends, and while I had the kid's reputation set up in a nice glass cage I meant to keep it there till I landed a go with the champion.

The champion was away out on the Coast at the time, grabbing up all the easy money he could by bowling over set-ups, so I didn't bother him for awhile. Finally, though, he came East again and I began to do my stuff as a matchmaking diplomat. I was frank enough to tell the champion that I considered the Guinea a set-up, since his victory over the Chicago Express was the only major engagement that he had ever won.

I placed special emphasis on the big gate the match would draw and the small



All through the intermission he sat grinning like a boy with a sore toe.

amount of energy that the champion would have to exert to win. I did this because it is sometimes a hard task to match a champion, even against a third-rater; and a real proposition when the contender is a tough nut to crack. Most of the champions of today covet their celestial crowns as though they were a sort of Heavenly Send, and they frown upon any thought of losing them. Once they obtain them, they like to strut about like little Napoleons, and showering them with offers of large purses only brings from them the usual retort: "Ha! Ha! Don't make me laugh."

When I had obtained the signatures of both fighters to the contract and had received their cash forfeits, I called the newspaper boys over to my den and gave them the dope. And, true to my expectation, when they broadcasted the coming event through their columns, there was a wild scramble for pasteboards at the box-office, and on the final night we had an elite crowd that was good to behold: Society from the polite Sixties; politicians and brokers from the Bronx, with their silk hats and canes; wholesale produce dealers from Brooklyn, and the plain, every-day fan who came for the sheer love of the sport.

The old wall clock tolled off ten just as the preliminary boys finished settling their differences and the new referee pulled himself up through the ropes to announce the main event. At about the same time the Guinea climbed through the ropes and the boys from old Nebersink, who had come over in the tube, did their level best to tear the roof off. They came pretty near it, at that—they were so close to it. Then there was a hush. People turned in their seats. A dozen cameras clicked. A champion was arriving! Applause!

He came imperiously down the aisle, his cream-silk trunks scintillating under the powerful funnel lights, his chin well up in the air. He looked bored as he pushed his handlers aside and climbed into the ring. But his lack of enthusiasm was well made up by the solicitous multitude. Smart society held its breath; politicians and produce dealers lit big cigars and twiddled their thumbs; and the ardent sport-lovers leaned back comfortably in their seats to enjoy the evening.

THE champion ground his toes in the resin and cast a glance of contempt at the Guinea in the opposite corner. Who was this manner of man that had the dispropriety to climb into a ring with as great a champion as he? An attentive second noted the scowl upon the champion's face and sought to curry favor.

"Gonna make short work of 'im, eh, champ?"

"Yeh—*one round.*"

"Atta baby, champ."

The referee gave his final instructions, then:

"Dong!"

The champion leaped halfway across the ring at a single bound and started a right from the hip which he calculated would end the fight. It was aimed straight at the Guinea's jaw; but, having previously collided with similar blows, the Guinea had no thought nor intention of using his chin as a shock absorber for any such punch. He gave his neck the old mud-turtle yank, and the blow sizzled over his head, missing its mark by fractions. The champion hit the ropes a broadside, and, before he could get himself balanced again, the Guinea came up from behind like a smiling matador and speared him with a stinging right and left to the ribs. This made the champion, a temperamental man, seethe with rage. He whirled upon his assailant with annihilation in the heart.

But, for the first time in his life, the Guinea was thinking fast and mapping out emergency maneuvers. Discretion—at that particular moment—seemed a better part of valor, and while his legs were still good he might as well use them.

ROUND and around the ring the Guinea raced, with speed hitherto unknown; the champion bounded close on his heels, gritting his teeth and swinging wild. Eventually, though, the champion caught up with his marathon-runner, and a quick right to the back of the Guinea's neck felled him like an ox. But the Guinea, after turning a nifty somersault, was up like a balloon and raced into a clinch. A moment later he slipped in an uppercut to the champion's chin and got in a few free-style swings to the kidneys. This made the champion roar and he retaliated by pounding the Guinea with merciless body blows.

"Break!" snorted the referee.

The champion followed up the break and pelted the Guinea with right and left jabs to the face, but soon they were clenching again.

"Why don't ya come on and fight me, li'l' Boy Blue?" the champion whinnied. "I got in here to fight, not foot-race." As he said this, he shot a savage uppercut to the Guinea's chin which loosened the clench and a couple of teeth. Spurred by the applause which rocked the old stadium, the champion flung his back against the ropes for a flying start, and sailed into the Guinea like an airplane propeller, and the idol of old Nebersink hasn't quit wondering yet where all those gloves came from.

BUT somehow he lived through it,—nobody seemed to know how,—and coming up where the champion was least expecting it, he reached out with his short, snakelike left and connected solidly upon a loose chin, and down went Mr. Champion and his pretty silk trunks into the dust.

The Nebersink boys in the upper tiers lost no time in broadcasting their wares. And, as a matter of record, it might be stated right here that when those lads from old Nebersink did open up, their section was second to none. They yelled, they shrieked, they stamped, and when the champion limped to his corner at the tap of the bell, they greeted him with hoots, catcalls and raspberries.

The champion, greatly chagrined but far from being discouraged, sat down upon the three-legged stool that was thrust under him.

"Aint hurt, are you, champ?" a cautious second queried.

"Hurt?" growled the champion. "Whatta ya mean, am I hurt?"

"I mean," said the second, wilting under the champion's scowl, "I mean that bozo didn't hurt you none when he knocked you down?"

"When who knocked who down? You must be crazy! Why, I—I slipped—and fell."

"Sure, champ, that's what I mean. You didn't hurt yourself none when you slipped?"

"Get busy with them towels," growled the champion.

When the bell rang again, the champion tore into his man like an enraged bull—or an outraged bull, rather—and when he hit the Guinea he made the feathers fly. The Guinea took to his heels again—it was a measure of self-defense—but he could not escape the charging, vaulting, snorting champion's rushes, and, by actual count, he kissed the resin exactly nine times during the second chukker.

Johnny Risko, the bouncing baker's boy of Cleveland, earned the title of "rubber man" by his elasticity; but the original rubber man was Guinea McGovern. He won popular approbation of the appellation

the night that he went down nine times in one round under the force of the champion's good right hand. Went down nine times, mind you—and got up nine times!

As the Guinea wafted to his corner, swallowing air in great gulps, the fickle-hearted audience stood up in their seats, tossed their hats into the air and rocked the ramshackle old building from ring to roof.

The champion from his corner cast a curious glance in the direction of the Guinea. What kind of specimen was this he was fighting, anyway? Always before when his man went down he usually had stayed down. A few of them had gotten up once; a fewer had gotten up twice, but it had been many a day since one had gotten up more than twice. But, here he had hit this human punching-bag with everything he had, time and again, and still he would not stay put!

WHEN the gong clanged, those next to the aisles began to edge toward the exits; the Nebersink boys in the gallery echoed a sickly groan; society begun putting on its wraps; politicians and produce dealers began tossing their cigar-butts under their seats. The newspaper boys got set for the "flash." The end would be short and sweet. The champion would retain his crown by a knockout over the Guinea in about one minute and thirty seconds of fighting in the third round—nothing could deter that.

I myself, watching the performance from the ringside, mashed the fire from my own cigar under my heel and reached for my overcoat just as the Guinea fluttered out of his corner. I could see his knees wabbling beneath him and I half turned my head to keep from seeing a sight which I have never learned to relish—the equivalent of a man walking into a circle saw.

The champion scowled as he leaped from his corner. An air of impatience was visible to all. A fight was going into the third round that should have ended in the first. He had an appointment to keep, and now he would be late. Absent-mindedly he glanced up at the old wall clock. It was exactly ten-sixteen; but to this sweet day, the champion hasn't found out what time it was.

The Guinea lunged forward. His eyes were glassy and his ears were ringing and stinging; but within him still lived the soul of some gladiatorial ancestor. He had only one blow left. A curious, free-style, left-hand swing it was, with no timing or precision, but this time it started from the hip, and it caught the champion flush on a wide-open jaw. There was a dull thud, then a louder one and the champion and his pretty cream-silk trunks were immersed in the resin dust once more; this time he stayed there.

PRIZEFIGHTERS, as a general rule, have less gratuitous instinct than any other species in the whole wide world. Bob Comstock, our active vice-president, said so himself. He said it after he had taken matters into his own hands and offered Guinea McGovern the largest purse that any fighter in his division was ever offered to defend the title—and the Guinea had laughed in his face.

Since the Holland vehicular tunnel under the North River has been completed, I see the Guinea occasionally when I'm down around Washington Market. He drives a truckload of fresh milk over nearly every morning. He tells me that since retiring from the ring he has bought out the dairy that he used to drive a wagon for, and is doing well. He also tells me that he married the original owner's daughter, and has a healthy boy whom he has named Robert Comstock McGovern, after our active vice-president. The kid smiled broadly when I asked him about this.

"You know," said he, "I owe a lot to that Comstock feller. I had no idea that I'd blow the game until he came over and began telling me how good I was. He told me, you know, that I could lick anybody on earth in my class; said that I was the killer type, I believe he called it. Aint that what they called Dempsey?"

"Anyway, you licked a mighty good champion," I reminded him; but the kid kept right on smiling.

"Yeh, I know," he replied, "but this Comstock bird made me believe that he believed it—that I was actually the best man. So I thought if that was the way people looked at it that I'd better quit while I had my rep up."

NEEDLESS to say here, the kid's "rep" *is* up along the Rialto of old Nebersink. It's sky-high and still soaring; and it is a source of unabridged pride and pleasure for the populace to point him out as the only undefeated welterweight champion in the world today!

The Hazardous Highway

By FREDERICK R. BECHDOLT

Illustrated by W. O. Kling

REBELLION was seething in Hugh Dallas this morning as he sat pulling at his oar in the smallboat sent to bring wealthy Don Pedro Solis aboard the *Lucy Flint*. For Dallas was no mere foremast hand. He had left his home in New Orleans two years before to seek his fortune, had adventured variously in the West and had shipped aboard the *Lucy Flint* seeking adventure. He had encountered only hard knocks—in particular a beating from the burly mate Goodall.

Don Pedro bargained with Captain Brewster of the *Lucy Flint* for powder—to be landed secretly—which he planned to use in a rebellion which should win him the governorship of California from his cousin Alvarado. . . . . Next day the good people of Monterey flocked out to the *Lucy Flint,* making a gala occasion of the opportunity for trading. So it happened that Hugh was able to do a favor for lovely Luisita Sanchez—and because of her was the more determined to desert the ship. And when he and another sailor rowed Goodall ashore, Hugh's chance came. As they landed, the mate moved to strike Hugh, because the boat had shipped water. And Hugh, with the good familiar ground under his feet, was able to win the bitter fight that followed. With his enemy at last knocked out, he fled for the concealment of the town, with a party of sailors in pursuit.

Meanwhile Solis had carried forward his conspiracy—had won the aid of the military commander Avila by promising him the hand of his orphan niece Luisita Sanchez; and together they planned the murder of the loyal mayor Munras. But, curiously, Hugh Dallas' escape interfered a bit. For later, fleeing pursuit, Hugh blundered into a wine-shop, where he overheard Don Pedro giving instructions to an assassin. And after a fight that followed, Hugh left Solis seriously wounded.

Fate seemed indeed bent on using this fleeing desperate American as its instrument. For that night, still seeking escape, he rescued Luisita from a band of cutthroats who had murdered the servants of her escort. But now his luck turned, for as he was taking Luisita back toward town, he was set upon by armed men and made captive. *(The story continues in detail:)*

THERE was a waning moon, and it had risen above the tree-tops, casting long black shadows from the live oaks, burnishing the wild oats which lay along the hillside. Luisita rode down the slope toward the scattered houses on this side of the little plaza; her sorrel horse gleamed, a pale gold shape speeding through the field of rippling silver. She crouched in the saddle, a little figure, and her face was whiter than the moonbeams; her eyes glowed dark and large in vivid contrast to its pallor. There was no softness in them now, and the gentle curves of her body seemed to have hardened; she was tense with desperation.

In these last few minutes all the world had changed for her. She had discovered more of life than she had dreamed of in the years she was growing to her womanhood.

She glanced to her right where the road from the crossing of the Salinas wound in to the town at the base of the hills. She could see the dark loom of the woods where she had left Hugh.

"I'll find help for you. It will be all right," she had called, as she rode away. And it had seemed so easy! To reach the house and, when she woke her guardian, to tell him what had taken place—how this young fellow had saved her life, how the soldiers had taken him. Then the word would go and he would be released.

But when she had entered the door to face Sebastian Avila, a revelation had come to her. Something had happened—what it was she did not know—but it was not to bring Hugh back to the ship that those soldiers had taken him. There was more behind it. And Avila had a part in it. She was as certain of this as if the Commandante had told her. And she was just as certain that Solis was concerned in it. She had expected help—but as she spoke to the old woman servant when Avila had

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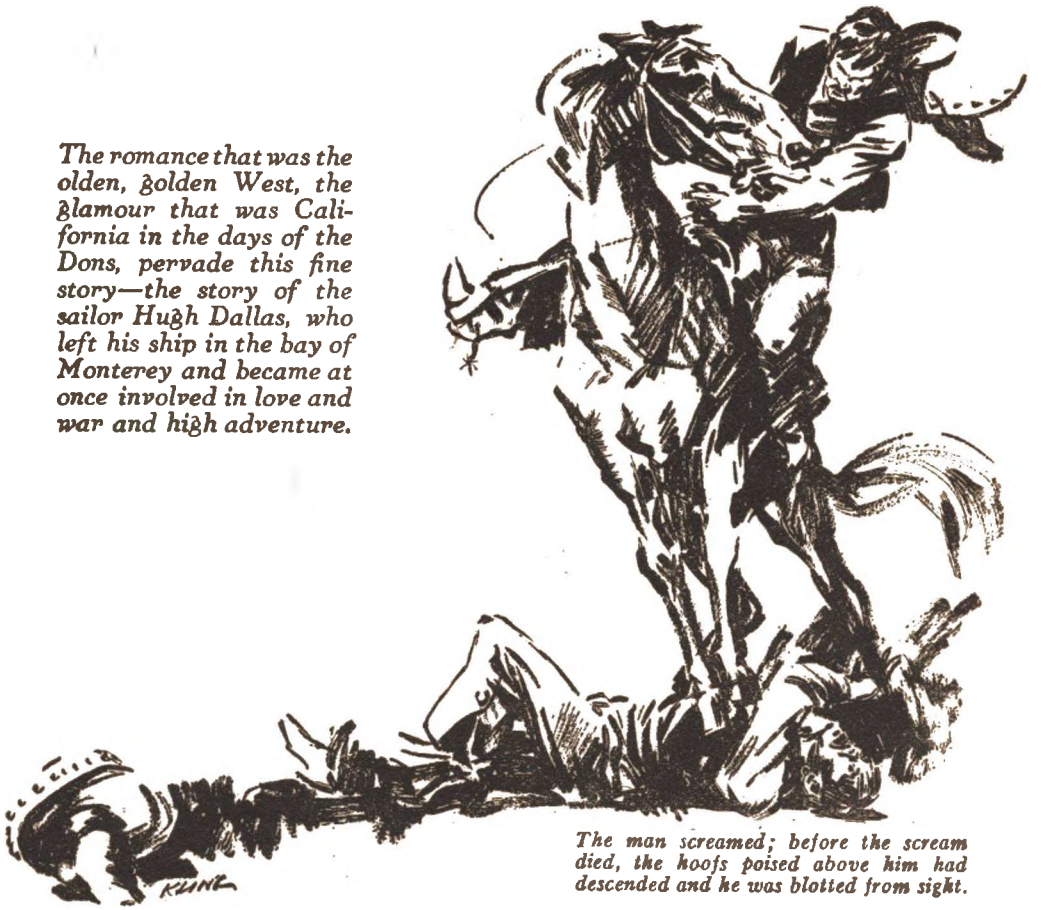
The romance that was the olden, golden West, the glamour that was California in the days of the Dons, pervade this fine story—the story of the sailor Hugh Dallas, who left his ship in the bay of Monterey and became at once involved in love and war and high adventure.



The man screamed; before the scream died, the hoofs poised above him had descended and he was blotted from sight.

gone, the realization that she was by herself with these two men against her had come full strength. And with the words of the Indian woman,—the frightened warning against her going forth alone,—she had seen in a flash how great a step this was which she was about to take: how it meant the risking of her good name. In those days a girl's reputation was a cherished thing.

All the feeling which she had held for Hugh before became of small account compared to that which swept her being then. So she had turned her face against Avila and Don Pedro, and had turned her back upon the conventions which were a large part of a woman's life; she was riding down the hillside to save the man she loved.

The plan which had occurred to her was simple, born of stories which were common enough in old Monterey, stories which she had heard many times: of men who had been taken prisoner during various political tumults, and had bribed the ragged soldiers of the garrison. If they had done it, why, so could she. That sergeant knew who she was. Hunt him out and find his price. Get the money, and the thing was as good as done. If she did not have enough in her possession, why, she knew where Don Pedro's iron strong-box was, and with him helpless in bed, it would be easy to lay hands on the key!

Now it occurred to her that Avila would not be far ahead. She pulled the sorrel down to a gentle trot.

So she was riding in the moonlight, this little Luisita who had gone out so eagerly to the *Lucy Flint* that morning. It was past midnight now. And she who had clapped her hands in longing for a silver-backed mirror, was drinking deep of emotions which many women go through their lives without so much as tasting.

A SOUND turned her cold. It came from off to her right, where the road from the ford of the Salinas approached the town, where Hugh should be now. A musket-shot. Three or four more followed, so close together that they seemed like one report. And then a scattering of others.

"They have killed him."

She heard her own voice, and it sounded strange to her—it was so weary and so broken. She pressed her lips tight, and straightened in the saddle. Reining off the winding cart-track which wound down the hill toward the plaza, she struck through the scattered live oaks toward the spot on the highway whence the shots had come.

It is curious—how two human beings can do and say the same things, and still be as far apart as the poles when it comes to their motives. At just about the moment when Luisita spoke, Sebastian Avila, then nearing the presidio, said:

"They have killed him." His voice was filled with satisfaction and he too rode toward the spot where the shooting had sounded.

Where the road from the Salinas drew near to the old mission chapel and the presidio, it made a wide turn rounding the landward end of a deep lagoon which led in from the bay. Here, where the rank smell of tules and the dampness of still water were heavy on the night air, the thing was taking place. But the events which led up to it were not without their own complications. These had begun almost as soon as Hugh was pulled from his horse by the soldiers.

The surprise of his capture had been so complete that he stood there in the roadway, dazed and shaken for a moment. He heard the voice of Luisita.

"I will find help for you. It will be all right." And after that she rode away.

"Now, *hombre,*"—it was the sergeant in command of the squad,—"get on that horse and behave yourself." The soldiers had taken his knife from him and rifled his pockets. They were quarreling over the loot in undertones when he climbed into the saddle. They started on; a dozen of them gathered round him; and it struck him that they were an indifferent lot, for instead of keeping any sort of formation, they were straggling along in a go-as-you-please fashion, more like a crowd of *vaqueros* than the members of a garrison troop. The moon had risen, and the growing light revealed the long open spaces on the hillside at his left hand leading off among the shadows of the live oaks. His eyes went toward them and lingered with the rising of a fierce desire to take his chances in one brief burst of speed. They came back to the soldiers. Already two or three had dropped to the rear and were talking with their companions behind him.

But as he looked closer, he saw that they were not so careless as first appearances had led him to believe. He noticed how they were, every one of them, holding their muskets ready across their thighs. And there was a certain tenseness in their attitudes—or did he imagine this?

So he bided his time, and they clattered down a little grade and came beside the lagoon. They were traveling around its inward end and, as far as the men between him and the side-hill off to his left were concerned, he might as well have been without a guard. The presidio was not far ahead. Only a few minutes more, and he would be clapped in a cell, with all chances for escape gone. He thought of Luisita's promise when she had left. But Luisita did not know of that man whom he had stabbed.

"All right," he told himself, "I'll take a chance."

Where they were now, a steep-banked arroyo led up the slope from the head of the lagoon. It would be hard going here in daylight; and in the night there was no telling what a running horse might come to with such poor footing. He must wait until they had traveled a few rods farther and the hillside led away unbroken again.

But even as they were taking the brief interval at the Spanish trot, the noise of voices burst upon them. Several men emerged from the shadow beside the road, and a suspicion which Hugh had felt when he first heard them became a certainty. That was Goodall the mate, leading them.

They were crowding around his horse already; his chance was gone.

"YOU got him, hey? That's good!"

In spite of three voyages to the west coast, the mate's Spanish was abominable, and the sergeant in command of the squad was feeling decidedly irritable just then. Things had been promising so nicely. From the tail of his eye he had himself seen the prisoner swerving his horse toward the edge of the road. Another second or so, and the man would have been off at a gallop. The muskets would have crashed out a volley; and the whole affair would have been over—all in accordance with the instructions which Avila had given him. Like Dallas, the sergeant was regretting the lost opportunity. And it was this long-legged gringo who had spoiled it all. So he merely grunted:

"*Quién es?*" It was—literally too—as if he had said: "And who are you?"

"You know who I am." The mate's manner became more assertive, for it was his belief that the sergeant was worrying over the reward. "Just turn him over to us, and I'll give you your money, right now."

Instead of answering, the sergeant spoke to his men: "Forward!"

They started to advance. Goodall seized the check-strap of the sergeant's mount.

"Easy, now," he growled. "What d'ye think you're going to do? That man belongs to us."

The sailors leaped to his side. As far as Dallas was concerned, their hearts were not in this affair at all. The only mitigating circumstance in their night's work was the fact that they had had a drink or two at Goodall's expense. But now this complication promised something to their liking. The chance for a free fight with men of alien race appealed to them.

WITH this movement on their part, there came a corresponding surge by members of the squad. They clattered up beside their commander, and for the moment all hands forgot about the bone of contention. There was a scuffle of hoofs and a mingling of oaths in two languages.

And now the pretense which had been so carefully arranged for Hugh's destruction became of a sudden reality. This time he did not wait. His spurs sank into the flanks of the big bay. The horse sprang up the hillside; he was a hundred feet away and speeding fast when the sergeant recovered his senses and shouted the order to fire.

The muskets flamed. But horse and rider were in the shadows of a cluster of live oaks; and in another stride they were rounding the foot of a knoll beside the arroyo. Those who were shooting were pulling their triggers with no knowledge of where their target would be. Now the muskets were empty, and before the men had finished reloading, he was out of sight.

While the ramrods were still thumping down the lead, Sebastian Avila rode up. His face was heavy with satisfaction.

"Well," he demanded, "where is he?"

The sergeant saluted carelessly after the manner of the Spanish-American garrisons. He told what had taken place. The Commandante's face became white and terrible. When he spoke again, his voice was quiet, but there was a rasp in it which made the hair rise on the backs of the soldiers' necks.

"If he isn't taken before daylight, I'm going to make you men remember this."

CHAPTER IX

IT was a few moments after Avila had come when Luisita reined up in the shadow of a huge live oak hard by the lagoon. The soldiers were in their saddles, deploying into a wide line. The rattle of hoofs, the jingle of accouterments and the blowing of the horses had smothered the sound of her approach. Two of them passed her,—one on either side,—and the nearest was so close that she could see his eyes out there in the moonlight. Yet he had not caught sight of her. She smiled to herself, thinking of what little use these shabby troops would be now, with Hugh already half a mile ahead of them, and all the pine forest for him to hide in.

But the smile was bitter, and her eyes were hard; her face was white as paper under the black mantilla. For a sense of her own futility was like a heavy weight upon her: she had meant to save him, and then the sureness of her power to get his freedom had vanished; she had done nothing. And as she sat there in the saddle, Avila came riding past her. She heard him call out to the sergeant. The man spurred back to meet him, and the pair of them halted in the moonlight just outside the shadow which was hiding her.

"Remember, now," the Commandante said, "there is no need to bring him back this time. Shoot him on sight. I'll pay ten pesos to the man that drops him." She saw the sergeant salute and ride away. Avila remained there looking after them.

A horse whinnied in the line climbing the hill; her golden sorrel threw up its head and answered. Avila reined his mount about with an abruptness which brought the animal back on its haunches.

"Quién es?" He had snatched a pistol from beside the saddle-horn.

"You need not fear, señor. It is not the American." She was riding out into the moonlight, and her own voice sounded strangely hard to her. Some one laughed down in the road—one of the seafarers from the *Lucy Flint*.

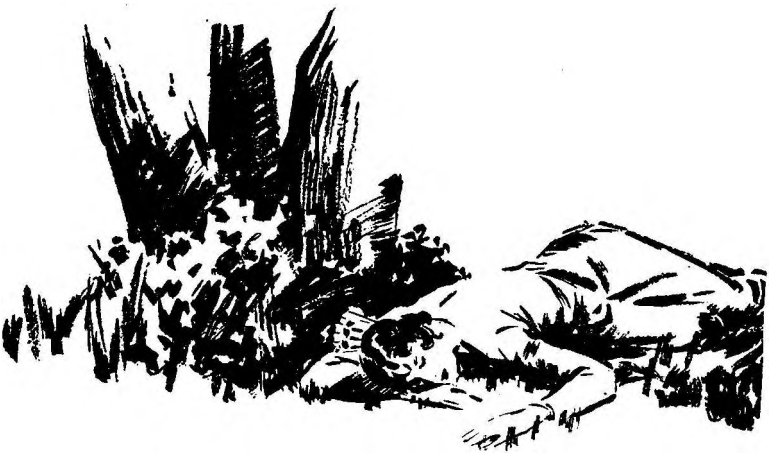
"Luisita!" Avila's voice was shaking with bewilderment. But she did not notice that. She was thinking how he had called her by her given name; and this familiarity on his part frightened her. He had always been very punctilious before. "What are you doing here?"

There was more of wonder than of reproach in his demand, as if he could not

persuade himself to believe the truth of what he saw. Her eyes had become cold gray. Her voice was icy as she answered:

"Listening to your orders, señor. If one of those men should shoot him now—I wonder would you keep your word as well as you kept your promise to me?"

His face turned dark with anger. And it were now hateful in her sight. Up on the hillside a trooper called out to his fellows, and the sound of that voice brought her back to Hugh. It was for love of him that she had left the house. But she had never known, until this moment when she heard them hunting him as if he were an animal, how deeply love could stir her. She touched



She must have slept, for now the stars were pale. And Hugh was standing above her. "Luisita—" She heard the tenderness in his voice.

came to him how she must have distrusted him from the first, else she would not have ridden here; how she must care a good deal for this runaway sailor, to have done a thing which would make her name common property if it were known.

"Señorita," he said, and his voice was harsh, "you will ride home now, and I will ride with you, to see you safely there."

She had read the jealousy flaming in his eyes; the manner of his speech increased the fear which she had already begun to feel—the foreboding of that news which she had been long dreading. But her head remained back, and her voice was cold as if he were a common *cholo:*

"Who are you, to speak this way to me?"

"As to that," he answered hotly, "I have the right. This afternoon Don Pedro gave it to me. I have his promise for your hand in marriage."

It had come, this thing which she had been fearing for a long time. And now it was, for her, a tragedy. As she sat there, holding her head proudly, staring scornfully at him, she realized the change which had come into her life. If this had happened yesterday, it would have brought her sorrow; but the chances were she would have bowed her head and yielded. Now it had made her hard. As for these two men whom she had never liked,—the one her guardian, the other her formal suitor,—they her horse with the spur and came a step closer to the Commandante.

"There will be no marriage between us," she said slowly. And then her eyes flashed, and her words came fast: "And if you try to follow me, I will lash you with my quirt." She raised the rawhide whip as she was saying it. "What a dog you are, Sebastian Avila!"

She reined the sorrel about, and was off at a run. For a moment he was about to follow; but he heard the voices of the sailors in the roadway a few yards below him. If they had not understood the words that had passed within their hearing, they had not been slow to sense their meaning, for they were laughing at him. The light of hate blazed in his eyes, and he spurred his horse up the hillside to join the soldiers in their hunt for Hugh.

NOW Luisita pulled up and rode slowly through the scattered live oaks along the lower slope. The lush wild oats were swishing about her horse's knees. Midnight was long past. And where was she to go now? Down to her right the red tile roofs of the adobe houses shone in the moonlight. Not there, surely. For she had turned her back upon the home of Don Pedro Solis, and by so doing had put herself where none of those whom she had known could give her shelter if they would.

It was a day when such matters were handled along tight lines, and to deviate was to set oneself against the world. Over in San Benito valley where she had lived through the years of her girlhood—she could find more than one old friend of her father's there, who would give her shelter even after what had happened. But the San Benito was a long way off, as distances went then—a full day's ride.

And Hugh was here. She heard the noises of the man-hunt, growing fainter with distance, to remind her of his danger.

Then she remembered one to whom she could go and tell her story, one from whom she could get advice and comfort. It was the road which wound up the long hillside that reminded her of him. It lay there before her, a rutted cart-track showing faintly in the moonlight, the old road which had been beaten down by the sandaled feet of the padres, which governors of Spain and caballeros of Mexico had traveled through the years—the trail to the mission of San Carlos by the Carmel River, five miles away. She had ridden there before many times, one of the few who went over the hill these days, to see the lonely Franciscan who was still abiding at the church, doing what he could to hold together a pitiful remnant of the once great throng of neophytes. A gray old friar in a worn old gown, in his eyes the patience which comes to men of simple faith.

When the daylight came she would go to the gate opening into the half-ruined quadrangle, and she would see him there among his handful of dusky Indians. And she would enter, as one seeking sanctuary. She would tell him what had taken place; and perhaps he could tell her what to do.

So she turned her horse into the road.

ONE thing she had for comfort: Hugh was living. And as the time went on, the chances for his escape were growing greater. Already it was plain that their first dash after him had been without result. She could hear their voices as they called to one another in the dark pine forest which reached down toward her from the summit of the hill, and the crashing of the horses in the underbrush.

Presently she came among the shadows of the trees. The moonlight filtered down through their branches, all hung with long beards of the gray Spanish moss; it made intricate patterns of glowing bronze on the carpet of brown needles. Here, near the summit of the grade, she pulled up the horse and let him rest.

A group of riders came clattering down the hill past her. They were talking among themselves, cursing the hard going in the brush, and they were close beside before they saw her. Their swarthy faces showed in the moonlight, turned toward her in a sort of dull wonder, as if they could not believe it to be true that a girl of good people would be abroad alone. And one of them crossed himself.

She went on once more. Gradually the noises of the hunt died away entirely.

So she came to an open space where the hills begin to fall away toward the sea, the place which they called Tres Cruces. Here in the old days the padres had planted three huge crosses of redwood as a symbol of the crucifixion; and they still remained in the open park of wild oats and nodding mariposa lilies: three gaunt crosses of hewn redwood. Near by, the trail split, one branch leading to the mission, the other to the upper valley of the Carmel.

On the right a steep-walled cañon fell away, and on the left there was a growth of chaparral, beside the open space, so thick that no rider could break through it. Whoever traveled across the hill must pass this spot close by.

Had Hugh passed it? And if he had,

which of these two trails had he chosen? Would she ever see him again?

What she was doing was because of him. And she did not even know that he loved her. She told herself this. But her heart kept answering the question which her doubting mind was asking: her heart and her own longings. If she could only see him, this once, to say good-by to him before he went away!

Two hours until the dawn, and in the meantime he might be passing here. She slipped from the saddle and sank down among the tall wild oats and the folded poppies, holding the hair rope while the horse cropped the rich feed. She was very weary, and she was very lonely—a little shape, here in the shadow of an oak, near the three crosses, half hidden by the nodding wild oats and the flowers.

SHE must have slept. For now the stars were pale; the dawn was making a bright line above the eastern pines. And Hugh was standing over her.

"Luisita—" She heard the tenderness in his voice, and she knew his love then. But with the knowledge there came to her a sudden fear. She sprang to her feet.

"They will be coming any minute now," she cried.

And this was true, for with the light the man-hunt would be on again. He realized it. But he shook his head.

"I can't go on and leave you here." He would have said more, but she interrupted him fiercely.

"It is your life!" And she told him how she had heard Avila give the order when the soldiers started up the hill. While she was speaking, the young man's eyes were searching hers.

"When I was riding here," he said gently, "I was thinking that I would go on into the hills, and that perhaps I might never see you again. And I was very lonely." He saw her eyes grow softer, and he went on, swiftly as one does when he says what he is fearful of telling: "I love you, Luisita."

And then he caught his breath, wondering at his own rashness. But she was smiling up at him, and she answered softly:

"And I love you." He felt her coming close to him. He took her in his arms, and he bent his head. Their lips met. . . . .

Somewhere in the forest behind them a horse whinnied loudly. They looked at each other in silence; then she pointed to the trail that led to the old mission. He helped her onto her horse, and he swung into his saddle, and as they started down the winding cart-track among the bearded pines, the first faint streamers of pink began stealing over the eastern sky. It was then that he remembered the reason why he had lingered here, and as he thought of the Alcalde Munras and the plan which he had overheard, he was sorely troubled. Yet he could not leave her here alone.

She was telling him of the mission, and of Father Paul, the padre; and all the time the picture of that man riding to his death remained in his mind. So, when they were coming out of the forest with the valley opening before them and its river winding like a silver ribbon to the curving beach between the rock headlands where the white surf thundered, she saw the line between his eyes and asked him what was troubling him.

"But there is time yet," she cried when he had told her, and she spurred her horse. So they came on to the old stone church with its Moorish belfry and the dusty square within the quadrangle of adobes, roofed with the red tiles; and when they had pulled up before the gate of redwood planks, gray with the years and sagging on its rawhide hinges, she showed him the faint cart-track leading up the valley.

"He will come by the other trail, the one we left at the Three Crosses. A mile from here it joins this one. The ford is four miles farther on."

"And you?" he asked.

"I will be here when you come back."

He lingered long enough to lean from his saddle, and when he had kissed her lips:

"God be with you!" she cried. "Ride hard."

And so he left her, and pressing his horse to the dead run, he saw the first shafts of red climbing up the eastern sky.

WHERE the three crosses of redwood stood gaunt and lonely in the little meadow of wild oats, Sebastian Avila stopped his horse. He had come on alone before the other searchers who were combing down the forest; and here, at the forks of the trail, he found the hoofprints leading down the cart-track toward the mission. So he rode on, slowly at first, watching the tracks, uncertain as yet as to their meaning. But when he reached the old stone church to see Luisita's sorrel tied before the gate, and the fresh trail leading

off up the valley, the uncertainty vanished. He spurred his mount until the steel rowels were stained with red; and his face was ablaze with an ugly exultation as he raced away to overtake the fugitive.

CHAPTER X

ESTEBAN MUNRAS, alcalde of Monterey and the good friend of Governor Alvarado, was riding alone this morning as was his custom, for he had no fear of any man. A fine figure of a horseman, leaning back in his huge Spanish saddle against the slope of the grade which he was descending; tall and wide across the shoulders, he only lacked the steel headpiece to look like one of those *conquistadores* who had come across the pine-clad hills more than a hundred years before his time. He had the same proud, bold carriage, and his big, blunt features were all stained by the wind and weather just as theirs had been; anyone could see that he was fashioned for a rover rather than a man of law.

Always when he reached this place and saw the valley flats before him with the timber-streaked mountains coming down to the sea beyond, he threw back his head and sang. So now his bass voice boomed, and his eyes were alight with the joy of living a man's life.

On his way over the hill from Monterey he had run across some of the soldiers, and he had heard from them of the manhunt. But he was not one of those to whom the idea of combing down the brush after a panting fugitive held much appeal. If it had been a grizzly bear, to be cornered in a nook among the rocks and captured with a reata—that would have been worth while. But a man, with the sweat of fear upon his face! He had frowned over the news and the prospect of a trial where he would sit in judgment on the luckless prisoner. And then he had dismissed the matter from his mind. . . . .

The trail looped down to the flat-lands and turned now into the faint cart-track which followed the base of the eastern hills up the valley. The scarlet streamers of the dawn were glowing overhead. Esteban Munras pressed his big horse to a gallop, and his voice was still rising above the rattle of the hoofs when he drew near the river ford.

Here, just ahead of him, the trail turned sharply to the right to plunge through thickets of cottonwood and willows to the crossing of the Carmel. On the other side of the stream he could see the great hills of the Santa Lucia opening like an enormous gateway into the cañon of the Potrero, where the adobe buildings of the San Carlos rancho stood.

He was about to make the turn when the noise of hoof-beats reached his ears. A bend of the road hid all behind him. The rider must be coming on the dead run. He thought of the sailor from the Boston ship, and of the soldiers he had run upon traveling across the Carmel hill.

"So," he told himself, "this is the runaway, and by my ill luck I must be the one to take him."

But he was not one to waste good moments in regrets when the time for action was at hand. To his right the trail leading on toward the ford; and to his left a narrow arroyo cloven into the steep hill. He drew off into this. When he showed himself, the fugitive must stop or else swerve off to cross the river—which latter course would lead him into the cañon where capture would be easy. So Munras figured it. He drew a pistol from one of the leather holsters beside his saddle-horn and waited.

The noise of the hoofs drew nearer; then suddenly the tempo changed. The horse had pulled up. Animal and rider came in sight, before the gully's narrow mouth.

THE two men's eyes met. And Hugh cried:

"Good! I was afraid you had gone on!" He turned into the arroyo, and his face was lighted with a great relief.

"That will be far enough." The Alcalde's heavy brows drew close together, but there was more of perplexity than sternness in the frown. No doubt of it; this was the sailor whom they were hunting. The flimsy shirt, open at the breast, the bare head and the dungarees told their story. But why that joy at seeing him?

"You are Señor Munras?"

The Alcalde nodded to the question.

"And you," he said dryly, "are the sailor who deserted from the Boston ship, I take it."

"I am. But while I was escaping in the town, I heard a thing which I must tell you. And you need not watch my hands, for I'm unarmed."

Then Hugh recited briefly what had taken place in the room where he had hidden by the plaza; and when he finished

with the stabbing, Munras frowned more deeply than before.

"I am," he said, "a magistrate, remember."

"And I," the young fellow retorted quickly, "am wanted by the law. But I could not ride away and let a man be murdered."

"As to this one you stabbed," Munras inquired,—a little less of the official now and a little more of the man,—"tell me: What manner of a man was he?"

"A blocky man," Hugh said, "and dressed as well as you are, dark-skinned, with coarse black hair." And then remembering the visit to the *Lucy Flint* in the hour of the dawn, he went on to tell what he had heard aboard the ship. The Alcalde's face cleared as a man's does when he ceases to puzzle.

"I think that I begin to understand," he muttered. And after a moment: "If this turns out to be true, what you have told me, you are my friend. If not—well, then you are my prisoner."

HUGH looked him in the eye. "If ever a man needed a friend, I do now. I will not try to leave you."

"You could have hunted me out at my house last night instead of hiding in the brush," the other went on, as one who is trying to sort out the facts.

"Small chance I had of that," Hugh said, and told what had followed the stabbing.

"Luisita Sanchez." The older man's voice softened as he said her name. "Her father was my good friend. And she left the house of her guardian!" His tone grew harsher. "I do not like this."

"Señor Munras," Hugh reminded him, "she did this for my sake. And I am the one to blame for the position she is in."

The Alcalde smiled, and his eyes became kinder. And then—the noise of hoofs came from the valley trail. A horse and rider shot past the opening of the gully.

It had happened with breath-taking suddenness: The rattle of hoofs, the apparition. And in the instant it was gone. Munras turned to Hugh, and his face wore a curious expression.

"That," he said quietly, "is Captain Avila—the man who seems to be so anxious to have you shot."

It was Hugh who first realized what was about to happen.

"He's riding into the ambush that was arranged for you!" he cried.

The Alcalde raised himself in his stirrups and uttered a shout that set the echoes racing back and forth between the hills. He drove his huge spurs in, and as the horse leaped forward,

"Follow me," he called. And Hugh rode headlong after him.

IN the thick timber and the jungle of blackberry vines which here covered the rich bottom-lands, the narrow road was like a winding tunnel, roofed with overhanging branches, lined on either side with walls of green. A man could not see more than fifty feet before him. Boughs slapped their faces; sometimes they swerved low, dodging the limbs that reached out to sweep them from the saddles. And as they rode, they heard the report of a pistol. . . . .

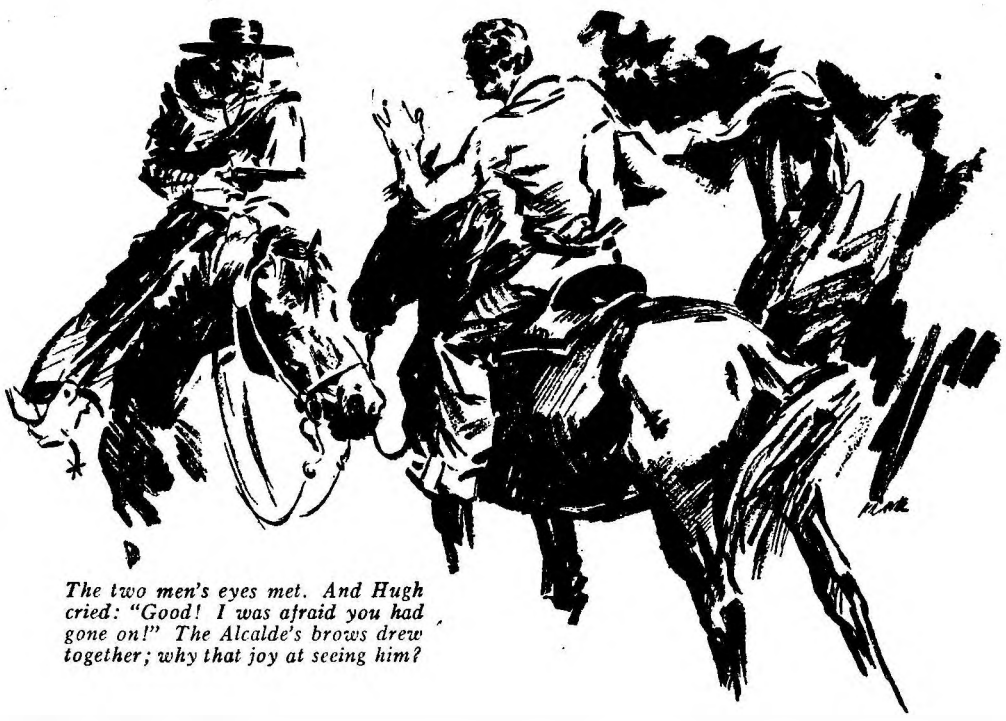
A moment later they rounded a sharp turn, and the scene burst into sight ahead of them—a vivid picture sharply outlined; and even as they saw it, changing, to leave itself as a memory.

Avila, sitting like a centaur, straight and rigid, while the horse reared under him until it seemed as if it must crash back upon him. And on the trampled earth, his upturned face all stained with red, a man. His arm flew out in a wild gesture of agony; he screamed. Before the scream had died, the great hoofs poised above him descended, and he was blotted from sight.

During this time—it was only a matter of seconds at the most—the second of those two who had been sent out here to do the murder was leaping beside those brandished hoofs, reaching wildly for the bridle with his free hand; and in his other hand a knife flashed, sweeping toward the rider. The blow missed; and his fingers, which had been groping for the check-strap, closed on empty air. The man turned and dived into the jungle of blackberry vines like a fleeing cat. Avila drove in the spurs, and the horse crashed through the thickets after the fugitive, but the other was gone. And the Commandante returned to find Munras facing him. The battered form in the trail was still now. The two caballeros looked across the body into each other's eyes. The Alcalde spoke.

"Well, sir?" Just the two words, but they held a wealth of inquiry.

"It was your shout that saved me." Avila was breathing hard; his left hand held the bridle-reins, light as a feather against the big Spanish bit; his right hand held a pistol. As yet he had not appeared



The two men's eyes met. And Hugh cried: "Good! I was afraid you had gone on!" The Alcalde's brows drew together; why that joy at seeing him?

to notice Hugh, waiting a few yards behind the older man. "I pulled up when I heard it. If I'd ridden on, they'd have got me. But they showed themselves, and—one of them fired; I ran him down." He shrugged his shoulders. His face was impassive, and his pale eyes were like old ice. "You saw the rest."

THEN, for the first time, he looked fairly at Hugh. His lips twisted in a smile of triumph, and the hand that held the pistol swept up from beside the saddle-horn. Munras dug the spurs into his horse's flanks. The animal made a mighty leap and crashed against the Commandante's mount. The weapon went off harmlessly.

There was a scuffle of hoofs, and the two men reined off, regarding each other through the thinning powder-smoke.

"That is the man," Avila's voice was harsh. "It was for him I came."

"Señor Capitan," Munras said quietly, "what is it you want of him?" But the other was silent. "You will," the Alcalde went on in the same level tone, "ride back to Monterey; and if you have any charge to make against him, I will look into the matter. Rest assured of that. And I will answer to you or to any others that he will be on hand to face your charges. In the meantime he rides with me. And I will deal with any man that seeks his life, be he soldier or civilian."

He reined his horse aside and pointed up the trail—and Avila rode silently away past them.

When the Commandante had vanished through the thickets, Munras got down from his horse and looked at the dead man. He shook his head.

"I had to send him to jail for stealing last year."

And even as he was remounting, a pair of swarthy *vaqueros* came riding through the shallow river from the adobe ranch-house at the cañon mouth. When they saw the body, they crossed themselves.

"Take him to the higher land and bury him," Munras bade them. He turned to Hugh. "Now we will go to the mission where the Señorita Sanchez waits."

When they had come to the open lands:

"This is going to be a wild business before we are through, my friend," the Alcalde said grimly. "Well, let it come. I am not so old that a good fight should trouble me."

CHAPTER XI

NOW the Commandante was doing some hard thinking as he rode down the valley from the river ford. From the beginning the situation into which he had been plunged was of another's making. These plans which had so sadly miscarried, and by their disarrangement threatened his own hopes, had been conceived by Pedro

Solis. Avila cursed the burly landholder whose ambition to be governor was far greater than his finesse as a conspirator, and he resolved that from now on he himself would take the leadership.

Avila was not so much a man of action as he was a schemer; he had no particular desire for this revolution which Solis had been plotting; and now that the latter was out of commission for the time being, he saw clearly that it was going to need some careful work to keep the thing from ending in a complete fiasco. He had been pondering over that end of the affair for some time before he happened to think of a detail which was far more personal.

Luisita's golden sorrel horse, standing there at the old mission gateway! He forgot politics when he remembered that.

Then all the hot jealousy which had come over him last night when she had ridden away from him among the live oaks—and all the rage born of the humiliation which she had heaped upon him—returned. During these hours which had gone by since she had faced him, he had been in the saddle, driving the easy-going troopers to the hunt for Hugh; and the excitement of the chase had done a little to erase the memory of that scene with her. He had not known, until this moment, how bitter the taste was that it had left, nor how the desire for her had grown into him.

Now he rode hard; when he reached the mission, he left his horse beside hers and entered the wide courtyard, with the tiled adobes on three sides, and on the fourth the yellow stone wall of the church with its moss-grown buttresses and the mud nests of the swallows under the belfry eaves. Save for himself and the twittering birds there was no sign of life out here. The mellow morning sunshine warmed the place, and bees hummed among straggling roses.

And then as he was standing there, a brown-robed figure appeared in the chapel door which gave entrance from the square into the church. A tall old man, his face was lean from fasting, brown from wind and weather; his fringe of gray hair straggled about the bare tonsure; his robe was sadly worn; his feet were shod in rawhide sandals. He had abided here for years alone, doing his best to hold together the remnants of the Indians who, in days gone by, had toiled and gone to prayers and made the land fruitful under the guidance of the padres.

"The Señorita Sanchez—she is here?" Avila's voice was harsh, his manner brusque. The padre inclined his head.

"She is inside the church." His voice was gentle with the patience of an old man, and it was steady with a quiet dignity. And Avila of a sudden felt himself put on the defensive, for what reason he did not know.

"I have come for her." He took a step toward the chapel entrance as he was speaking, but the spare figure in its robe of brown remained within the middle of the doorway, and though there was no change in attitude, though the face remained tranquil, a presence had come upon it—it was inflexible. Avila felt the change, and his own manner became more brusque.

"She has left the house of her guardian."

"So she has told me," the padre replied quietly.

There was that in his patient voice and in his immobility which roused the younger man to a blaze of anger.

"I have come for her—to bring her back." He took another step; it brought him within arm's-length of the priest.

"You will remain out here." The old man made the statement with the calm sureness of one who is speaking to a child.

THEN, while they stood there, these two, facing each other, a light step sounded within, and Luisita appeared. She came beside the padre.

She said nothing. Her eyes were fixed upon Avila's face, and her head was back.

"Señorita," the Commandante said autocratically, "you will do me the honor of riding with me to your home."

"Señor," she told him, "I will do nothing of the sort." And there was a curl in her lip, and a coldness in her voice, that stung him more deeply than her words. The sight of her standing there,—this slip of a girl whom he could have swept under one arm and carried away with him,—mocking him, roused his fury.

The priest saw it in his face, and he raised his hand—a slow gesture, involuntary, full of dignity. And while they were facing one another, these three, in the morning sunlight, at the foot of the weather-stained old tower where the bells hung, the silence of the courtyard was broken by the noise of hoofs.

The gate of redwood palings, gray with age and lichens, creaked upon its rawhide hinges. And Avila saw Luisita's eyes grow

large and soft, looking beyond him. He turned to discover Hugh Dallas and Munras at his elbow.

"Well, sir?" The Alcalde's voice was harsh.

Avila smiled unpleasantly. He was feeling more at his ease now.

"This girl has left the house of her guardian, and I am here to take her back."

Hugh took a step toward him, but Munras gripped him by the shoulder.

"This," said he, "is my affair." He turned to the Commandante. "Who are you, sir, to come here for the Señorita Sanchez?"

"Don Pedro Solis has given me the promise of her hand in marriage," Avila answered quietly. "He is disabled by a wound, and so the matter falls to my hands."

"I have heard of that wound," the Alcalde said dryly.

He got no further. For Luisita had left the doorway. She passed the Commandante as if he were not there. She came to Hugh's side. And there was something very brave about her then—this little figure with her head back and her great eyes ablaze, as she looked from one of the men about her to the other. Hugh's arm went round her.

And Esteban Munras uttered a low whistle of astonishment.

"So," he was telling himself, "this is the way of it? He does not waste much time, this sailor."

But she was speaking now; and hearing her words, the Alcalde felt his wonder changing to a great tenderness. For he was thinking of a day, long years ago, when he had ridden down to Santa Barbara and carried off his bride from the house where she was to have married another—whom her family had chosen.

"Señor Avila," Luisita was saying now, "—and you, Father Paul,—and you too, Señor Munras: I have told this caballero that I love him. And when he asks me to marry him,—if it be now and here,—I will do so."

All of this time Hugh had been looking down into her eyes. And when she ceased, he bent his head and kissed her on the lips as if the two of them were alone here. Then Munras spoke.

"Señor Capitan," he said, "the Señorita Luisita Sanchez is coming to my house. She is coming there as my guest. You will tell this to Pedro Solis; and for me, you may tell him that I am taking charge of her affairs. If he or you see fit at any time to call me to account—I am at your service."

AVILA'S lips were working, but he said no word. And Munras pointed to the gate. The two of them walked together to the roadway in silence, and when the other had mounted and ridden away, the Alcalde returned. He shook his head, and he looked first at Luisita, then at Hugh. His big features relaxed, and he smiled slowly.

"My friend," said he, "you do not lose much time." His manner became graver. "For the present Luisita comes to my home." He frowned. "It is a bad business, I am afraid—this Pedro Solis. And this powder landed. And this Commandante of ours." It was as if he had been voicing his thoughts to himself. But now he turned his eyes on Hugh again. "You speak of marriage. You will remember this: when it comes to asking for the hand of the Señorita Sanchez, you will ask me. You understand?"

"Señor," Hugh told him, "she has already promised me her hand. And it is for her to say when I may claim her as my wife. But I am thankful she is to go to you. She said you were her father's friend."

Then the older man laughed quietly, and there was something in his voice as he laughed that made Hugh like him better.

"At any rate," the latter said, "you will bid her good-by now. For she rides over the hill with me to Monterey. And you ride out to the rancho. I have an idea that it will be some time before you see her again. For this is only the beginning, and you're going to have your work cut out for you. It will not be an easy task."

So these two who had first seen each other less than twenty-four hours before, and in this little time had come so close, had their sweet moment here in the sunshine by the mission church. And then they rode away from each other, the one to the Alcalde's adobe mansion across the hill in Monterey, the other to the ranch-house in the cañon which opened beside the ford of the Carmel.

A drowsy spot between the tall hills along whose flanks the redwoods climbed in the gulches, dark streaks of green against the tawny wild-oat ridges. Indian women were grinding corn in the stone *metates*, and swarthy *vaqueros* lounged in

The man was bending over him, and something made a pallid streak in the firelight—the long blade of a knife.

the sunlight. But Hugh saw these things only vaguely, for he was thinking of the little figure in the saddle looking back at him as he rode away from the mission gate; and he was wondering what was that work which he must do before he would see her again. But he was weary with much riding and lack of sleep, and glad to seek the bed they gave him.

CHAPTER XII

THE murmur of voices rose in the bedchamber of Don Pedro Solis. Now it was the low growl of the wounded man, and now Sebastian Avila's harsh baritone. And while he told the events of the night, the Commandante paced the floor, pausing occasionally to look down upon the dark face on the pillows and to gloat over the rage that changed to terror as he let the tidings sink in. It was not only the enjoyment of his hearer's pain that led him to dwell on the ugly complications which were involving them; he had his object—to take the leadership. And he knew this other would not yield the reins as long as he could see a way out by himself.

So, when he had described the affair in the river bottom—

"Mark you how nicely these plans of yours have worked out," he said. "When your two cutthroats are about to kill me, it is Esteban Munras who saves my life. And I must sit on my horse and listen to him, with no reply to make, while he takes good pains to let me understand that he has your good name in his hands. Your good name—and for that matter, your liberty." He shook his head. "You could not have arranged it more perfectly if you had tried. If you had sought this sailor as a confidant, you could not have told him more."

But when he had done with the scene at the mission, he waited some moments before he spoke further.

Don Pedro swore.

"I shall call Munras to account for this."

Avila laughed unpleasantly and came a step nearer.

"And if the Alcalde should demand an accounting of you?" he asked quietly. "If, for instance, he should choose to make certain charges as to the administration of the Señorita's property—have you stopped to think of that, my friend?"

He resumed his pacing back and forth across the floor.

"See how you have worked it out!" He flung the words over his shoulder as he walked. "When I sought this marriage, you put me off. Well, then, perhaps this other—this gringo sailor—perhaps he will be more complaisant as the husband of your ward. It is possible, I suppose, that you can arrange matters with him and his friend Munras, so that there will be no need for an accounting on your part."

Solis strove to rise, but sank back with a groan. Beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead, and he was white with pain.

"All that is needed now to make this complete," the Commandante went on mercilessly, "is for Alvarado to return."

WHILE he was speaking, some one knocked on the bedchamber door. He crossed the room in silence and he opened it a crack. The old Indian servant-woman stood in the hallway.

"One is waiting downstairs," she told him; "a rider from the south." The voice of Don Pedro came from behind him.

"What is it?"

Avila turned his head, to give him a cold glance.

"I will attend to this. Do you think over what I have said." And he followed the woman down the stairs.

"You will say nothing of this to Don Pedro," he bade her, and she bowed her head. Then he went on to the little room on the first floor, where he had held his conference with Don Pedro the day before. The visitor was sitting in a huge rawhide chair; a caballero like himself, but his clothes were dust-stained, and his lean dark features were lined with weariness. He rose on Avila's entrance.

"Señor Capitan," the latter said. The man shook his head.

"Señor Capitan last week," he answered quietly. "Now it is plain Señor Rodriguez." Then he paused abruptly. "But you are with the Government."

"My friend," Avila bade him, "seat yourself again. And tell me what has happened."

"It was for Don Pedro that I brought my message." The lean face showed perplexity.

"You spoke of the Government just now." Avila smiled. "First let us understand each other as to that. I am for Don Pedro Solis. And he is in his bed now with an injury. You may give me your message as freely as you would to him. The news is—"

"For Don Pedro," the other persisted.

"If I should tell you I have promised Don Pedro the garrison will rise against Alvarado, when the word is given—" Avila said softly.

"So? Then I can tell you freely," the messenger replied. Then he added:

"Governor Alvarado and General Castro met our forces in the San Fernando Valley four days ago; and"—he extended his arms with a weary gesture—"we have lost."

AVILA nodded. His face remained unmoved. He seated himself across the table from the other and rolled a cigarette; he lighted it before he spoke.

"It was a rout?"

"Complete," Rodriguez answered.

"Come now," the Commandante bade him. "There are some things that I would like to learn." And for some time they sat there going over the details. When they had done, Avila called the woman servant and bade her show the other to a room. And before they parted—

"You have told none save me?" he asked.

"I came straight here."

"Then, señor, we will say nothing of this news. And take this with you to sleep on—we are not done yet!"

When he was alone, he sat there for a long time thinking. At last, "It will work out," he said aloud.

IT was more than an hour before he sought Don Pedro's room again. And when he came this time, the skipper of the *Lucy Flint* was with him. Captain Brewster's greedy little eyes were roving furtively from the face on the pillows to the face of the Commandante, and he sank into the chair to which the latter pointed—it was as if he were a prisoner. Avila stood regarding the two of them. He held a paper in his hand.

"Señores," he said, "I have a proposal to make to you. It is for you to answer as you please. But first, you will listen to me that you may be certain where you stand."

"It is known that you two have conspired against the Governor. And the Alcalde will send that word to Alvarado; a messenger will go tonight."

They faced each other—the one with his naked weapon, the other unarmed. Then Hugh's hand caught the wrist above the knife . . . . they wrestled in silence.

He bent his eyes on the skipper, whose face had turned a dull gray.

"It will mean the loss of your ship and a jail for you." And now he fixed his gaze on Solis. "For you—well, there are complications which we have discussed before. And now for me—

"As commandante of the presidio, my duty is plain enough, of course." His smile became sinister. "And I can place you both under arrest."

AN exclamation from Don Pedro interrupted him. He shook his head.

"And why not, pray?" he asked softly. "I have taken no part in this affair. And there is something which you do not know as yet:

"Alvarado is moving northward. The rebellion south of the Santa Margarita is over." He recited the news in detail as the messenger had told him. And when he had done—

"So then," he said, "this is how it stands."

"And your proposal?" Captain Brewster asked dully.

"My proposal," Avila replied, watching Don Pedro and not the skipper, "is that you take your orders from me and follow them out, to save yourselves from the consequences of your own bungling. Either that, or submit yourselves to arrest."

Solis lay back on the pillows staring at him as one who cannot believe his senses. Avila shrugged his shoulders.

"Señor," said he, "read this," and handed him the paper. Solis read. It was one of those high-worded proclamations so common in the Latin American revolutions, a long recital of grievances alleged, and at the end a declaration—

"Now, therefore, I, Don Pedro Solis, declare myself to assume the office of Governor of Alta California."

As his eyes fell on that clause, they widened.

"Ha!" His voice was a strange mixture of incredulity and hope.

"Three days from now," Avila resumed quietly, "Alvarado and Castro will still be in Santa Barbara. For the people are to hold a fiesta in honor of the victory at San Fernando. In the meantime—

"There are a number of things to be done. Munras, I have said, will send a messenger. He must be stopped. I have already looked toward that. I will set out tonight for Santa Barbara, and I will take this. And you, Señor Capitan,"—he turned to the skipper,—"you will weigh anchor and sail for Santa Barbara with the night tide. So you will reach the port before the Governor. And when he arrives, you will go ashore as is your custom to pay your respects to him, of course. And as is the custom, you will invite him on board your ship. Well, then—

"He will come. And Castro with him. And when you send your boats to the beach for them and their party, you will arrange it that those two go first and none others with them. Then, when they are on board, you will set sail for Monterey—with them as prisoners.

"I will be in Santa Barbara that day. And when your ship has gone with them, I will see that the proclamation is read to the troops. They will be without a leader."

"I do not like this," the skipper muttered.

"Perhaps," Avila suggested softly, "you will like the *cuartel* in San Blas better."

Solis swore a mighty oath.

"Give me a pen," he growled. So it was arranged. And the three of them went over the details. When they had done, Avila sought his bed to snatch a few hours' sleep before the long hard ride southward across the Santa Margarita.

But before he departed, he visited Don Pedro.

"There is," he said, "one thing for you to do. The Señorita must come back to your house."

"I understand," the other told him. "It will be done."

CHAPTER XIII

IT was late in the night when Hugh awakened to see Esteban Munras leaning over him, a candle in his hand.

"You have slept well," the Alcalde said. "Now dress yourself and come with me." His big blunt features were grave; his voice was hushed. He left the room without more words; and when Hugh sought the torn garments of the sailor which he had taken off more than twelve hours ago, they were not there; instead of them he found a caballero's garb, even to the soft-topped boots and flat-crowned wide-rimmed hat. Outside the door Munras was waiting, and he took his guest in silence to the long, low-ceilinged living-room where an Indian woman brought them beef and chili peppers and

tortillas and hot chocolate; and he ate his fill, still wondering, still unenlightened by his silent host. Afterward they went outside.

The low adobe ranch-house lay like a sprawling shadow under the tall hills whose timber-streaked flanks showed reaching faintly toward the stars. Two horses were standing at the hitching-rack; and when Hugh had swung into the saddle to which Munras had assigned him with a silent gesture, he saw a pair of pistols in their leather holsters on either side of the high horn. A rangy animal, a deep-chested buckskin, and Hugh could feel the limbs like steel springs under him as they started off at the gentle Spanish trot. All this time his curiosity had been growing, but he had said no word, waiting on the other's pleasure. Still Munras remained silent, until the little grove of horse-chestnuts and live oaks was behind them, and the darker lines of the redwoods; then when the grassy hill-slopes opened out, giving a widening vista toward the valley of the Carmel, he began talking.

"It is an old saying that walls have ears. And in these days a man cannot trust those around him. My friend, you remember that dead man under the hoofs of Avila's horse this morning? Well then, that one, who was to have killed me for Pedro Solis, had a companion who got away, as you yourself saw. And that companion I recognized—in years gone by he had been a *vaquero* on this rancho—until he lamed a horse by his mishandling, being drunk on aguardiente, and I drove him from the place. Well, then—there may be others, who are near by, taking Don Pedro's pay as he did; so I have waited to talk with you. For this is a grave matter—my life and yours, and the happiness of the little Luisita Sanchez. And if those others learn what you are about to do now, we may fail."

He was silent again. A coyote shrieked on a hillside; a fox barked in some far-off thicket; and the steady *thump-thump* of the dancing hoofs on the soft dust of the trail went on. Then abruptly Munras asked:

"You will serve me in this?"

"In this or anything else you ask," Hugh answered swiftly.

"Good." The other threw back his head and swept his hat from his brow. He drew a deep breath of the scented night air. "There is that about it—this presence of the danger—somehow it makes a man feel better. I think there is a good fight coming."

The huge hills opened like the portals of a gigantic door, and they passed from the cañon out into the valley; on across the stream, now dwindling with the first hot flush of summer, and through the thickets of cottonwood and willow; and when they were once more in the open road to Monterey, Munras resumed:

"It is a pity you did not have a heavier knife last night! God knows how soon this thing that they have planned will start. And Alvarado is in the South.

"So now, we must get word to him. If you will pass your hand within your jacket, you will find a letter sewn there. I have written the facts for him to read. And I am sending you to hunt him out. It may be in Santa Barbara; it may be down in the San Fernando Valley or in Los Angeles pueblo, that you will find him. And with him General José Castro."

THEY traveled on down the valley and up the long grade to the summit of the hills which make the backbone of the peninsula. They talked but little. Hugh was thinking of Luisita; and as they passed the three crosses of redwood in the little park of wild oats and flowers which opened among the pines, he could see her now, as he had last night, before the coming of the dawn, lying asleep at the foot of the live oak. Luisita! It seemed as if this short time while they had known each other were longer than all the years which had passed before. And perhaps Munras sensed the younger man's thoughts, for he said quietly:

"She will be safe while you are gone. And when you come back, you will find her in my house, to pay your court to her as a caballero should."

They passed on among the dark pines all bearded with the gray Spanish moss, and they came to the beginning of the long grade down to Monterey. They could see the faint outlines of the bay in the starlight far beneath them.

"I will ride with you as far as the sand dunes," Munras said, "and I will tell you of the road beyond." And while they rode, he named the ranchos and the old abandoned missions, some of them with little hamlets of adobes about their crumbling walls.

With these directions and many others he put in the time until they had come to

the sand dunes where Hugh had left the road the night before.

"This you must remember," Munras said: "Pedro Solis is the good friend of General Castro. And Castro is close to Alvarado, fighting for him in the south. It may be that Solis has sent some word to Castro; and it may be that he has foreseen what we are doing and will try to prevent your getting through. Keep your eyes open and your ears for those who might be awaiting you in ambush along the road."

"I will remember," Hugh said.

And now there came to them the sound of a horse blowing, and Hugh saw dark shapes in the gloom ahead of them.

"Six horses and a *vaquero* to ride with you," the Alcalde told him. "Four animals running loose, with the man to herd them. He knows the road and where to make the changes. They will carry you more than a hundred miles a day. Good mounts—in all Alta California there are none better."

AS he was speaking, the herder rode out to meet them; and when he drew near, Munras uttered a sharp exclamation:

"How did you come here?" he demanded harshly.

"Señor Munras,"—the *vaquero's* voice was thin and high, and when Hugh heard it he had a sudden uneasy feeling of having listened to it somewhere before,—"Pablo Escobar, who was to ride for you, he is lying drunk in Monterey. And I came for him. You know me, Pedro Rominez, señor."

"I know you," the Alcalde growled. And he drew Hugh aside. When they were out of hearing:

"It is in all probability as he tells it," he said. "The other man is a drunkard when he gets to town. And this one is a good rider—the best hand with a reata in this part of California. But he is no man of mine, and I do not like it. However, there is no time to waste. And it would be morning, maybe, before we could find another fit to make the journey. You will keep your eyes open."

Then he leaned from the saddle and em-

It was a pleasant scene, that table in a space opening into the plaza; it was like a picture by some jovial artist.

braced Hugh after the manner of the Spanish-Americans.

"Adios," he said, "and God go with you."

Long after the little cavalcade had departed he sat there looking off into the darkness which had swallowed them.

CHAPTER XIV

THE sun had risen over the tawny Gabillon hills, bathing the wide reaches of wild mustard on the valley flats, turning them to melted gold; and the deep cañons in the lofty Santa Lucia range across the plain were revealing glowing mysteries. It was an hour when all things seem honest with the passing of the shadows. But the presence of uneasiness was heavy upon Hugh. It was like a bad note in a beautiful piece of music, that jars the ear and intrudes upon the harmony of other sounds.

Since they had started, they had been riding at a sweeping lope. The four loose horses ran on before them, tossing their heads, now slackening down to a fast trot, now breaking into a gallop. One bore a light pack of two bearskin robes and a few pounds of jerked beef; the other three were naked. Their satin coats gleamed in the slanting sunlight of the early morning. The drumming of their bare hoofs on the soft sod made a constant low undernote to all other sounds.

Pedro Rominez rode well behind them, now trailing a length of his rawhide reata, now whirling it to touch some laggard and urge him on. They had come more than thirty miles, and they were running as easily as colts turned out to pasture. The *vaquero* dropped back beside Hugh: there was an easy swing in the lean body which suggested a wild animal; and in the swarthy face there was that which one sees in the eyes of a hawk: a proud straight gaze, merciless and asking no mercy. Hugh called to him:

"When do we change mounts again?"

"At the old Mission Soledad, Señor." The man's voice was a clear high tenor, ringing like sweet music above the drumming of the hoofs.

As he spoke, the feeling of uneasiness returned to Hugh: the strange vague sense of incompleteness—the bothering illusive resemblance which sometimes hangs in the background of a man's thoughts for days, until some face or word or name returns to the mind. Yet he was sure that he had never seen this man before.

"That would be how far?" he asked.

"Twenty miles from the last change, Señor." Pedro edged his horse closer. "But they can stand much more." He pointed to one horse that had been leading from the beginning. "You see that cinnamon, Señor. He would carry you to the pueblo of Los Angeles in three days without a change. He would die for you. There is a horse!"

And now the lean face had changed; its hawklike fierceness had departed, and the eyes had softened, looking at the cinnamon. Pedro leaned forward in the saddle, and his mount sprang ahead; he swooped in a wide semicircle to bring back two of his charges who had wandered from the trail.

"Yes," Hugh was thinking, "it is the voice. I have heard it before. But where?" The sense of danger returned, but he shook it from his mind. Watching the free horses, he told himself that he had never seen their like. And in this he was quite right, for these animals were but a few generations removed from the finest Arab forefathers brought over by the *conquistadores:* a different breed than the hardy ponies of the Texas prairies, grown larger with good feed and easy climate.

Ahead of them fresh tracks lay in the trail. Now and again they vanished, only to return again—the marks of hoofs. Some one had ridden here within the past few hours, and the riders had driven free horses even as they were doing. When the dawn had come and the light had revealed them, Hugh had pointed to them and asked the other as to whom they might be, but Pedro had shrugged his lean shoulders, and his face had been expressionless as he answered with the old retort of his race:

"Quien sabe, señor?" So from that time Hugh did not mention the tracks again. But as the day wore on, he thought of them more and more.

The wind was sweeping southward up the valley, running with them as they ran, billowing the golden mustard, tossing the branches of the willows and cottonwoods over by the winding river—the persistent wind which never ceases on the Salinas plains. No building was in sight; there was no fence, no sign of man. Wind and the tall hills and mile on mile of flowers in the bright sunlight; meadow larks singing on the hillsides; and he was riding for the girl he loved, for the man who had befriended him. One should feel his heart beating faster for an errand such as this. But even as he was telling himself so, the feeling of uneasiness returned.

AT the old Mission Soledad, whose roof was fallen in, whose adobe walls were already showing gaps, there was still some life remaining. A lank-haired Indian came forth from one of the outbuildings to watch them, while Pedro swept past the loose horses and held them up. The *vaquero* slipped from the saddle and walked slowly toward the cinnamon, which had been running before the others. The animal faced him with arched neck and nostrils distended; Pedro spoke a word; and the cinnamon stepped forward, hesitant at first, then more surely, and so they met.

While the change of saddles was being made, the lank-haired Indian sidled closer to Pedro and said something in an undertone. And the latter went on with his work as if he had not heard. But Hugh saw the hawklike eyes rove swiftly toward the other; and in that brief glance it seemed to him that there was much of understanding. The Indian slouched back to his home in the ruined mission. They started on again.

It happened once more at a ranch-house of adobe near the mission of San Antonio. This time it was a woman who came forth while they were making the change. As the man had done, she passed near Pedro

and said a word or two into his ear; and he did not even nod but went on tightening the latigo. Hugh saw the confusion of fresh hoof-marks where those who were going on before them had rounded up their horses here, to saddle their fresh mounts. . . . .

The old road twined in and out among the lofty hills through forests of huge oaks, and as the country grew more rugged, the shadows lengthened. Dusk found them in a wild cañon where the San Antonio comes out to the Salinas, a cheerful place in midday, with the sunlight on the parks of wild oats and bright flowers; but the sun was gone behind the western ridges now, and there was a weirdness in the gnarled trees, all hung with clumps of mistletoe, and the flanks of the hills were turning black above them. Monterey was more than one hundred miles behind them now.

"It is the country of the white bears," Pedro said; and when they stopped to make their camp for the night, they saw the huge tracks in the gravel where one of the brutes had come down to the stream to drink. The horses sniffed the air uneasily.

After they had eaten of the tortillas and the strips of jerked beef, broiled over the fire of dead oak limbs, the *vaquero* lounged by the dying coals, graceful as a wild animal that has thrown itself down to rest; and he told stories of great grizzlies in these hills as large as full-grown steers.

"I have seen one of them knock down a bull," he said, "and it is the truth, señor, that the hair of some of them is so thick that a musket-ball will snarl up in it and not pierce the hide. And the old people say that they are bewitched—that they are not animals but devils." He crossed himself and looked over his shoulder as he was speaking.

BUT as Hugh listened, he was not thinking of the bears of the San Antonio. He was thinking of Pedro lounging there beside the dying fire; the lean face seemed more than ever like a hawk's; little red lights were dancing in his dark eyes. To lie down and sleep beside this man—it would be like lying down beside a mountain lion!

The horses were feeding up a steep-walled gulch, and one of them was tethered by a rawhide rope, that the others might not wander too far. At the narrow mouth of the gully the fire burned.

"El corral de tierra," Pedro said—a pen fashioned by Nature. "For," he went on, "if the bears should come, the horses will not stampede, because we will be here to block the way." He yawned and stretched his limbs. "Time we should be asleep," he announced, and got to his feet to seek the great robes. While he was away in the shadows Hugh was puzzling over the illusive resemblance which the thin clear voice had again suggested. He knew that he had never seen this man before; but he had heard that voice somewhere, and whenever he had listened to it today, there had come to him—as if it were associated with that former time—a sense of danger.

But the day had been a long one, and he was weary from hard riding. He had hardly rolled up in his bearskin before he was asleep—sound slumber and without a dream. It was the bears of the San Antonio who saved his life that night.

THE scream of a horse awakened him. Of all the sounds of terror, there is none more poignant. It was ringing in his ears, long-drawn, piercing. His senses quivered with the pain of its loudness. And he was as wide awake as if he had never closed his eyes. . . . .

Wide awake, and every nerve was tingling. Every muscle in his body was tightened. He saw the faint light of the dying fire reflected in a pair of eyes above him. They were looking down into his own eyes. The firelight glowed upon them, turning them blood-red—less than a yard away. The scream of the frightened horse was echoing from one wall of the narrow gulch to the other; it was followed by the crashing of hoofs.

The slim form of the man showed, dark as one of those old silhouettes which they used to cut from black paper. It was bending over him. And something gleamed close by.

It made a pallid streak in the firelight—the long blade of a knife. It was like a stream of liquid quicksilver as it flowed through the darkness, it moved so swiftly. It swept upward, and Hugh saw the dark arm sweeping with it.

Even as these things were registering themselves upon his mind,—the scream of the horse, the noise of the animals rushing from one side of the gorge to the other, the eyes glowing red in the firelight, the arm flying back, raising the weapon about to strike,—Hugh leaped away. The movement was instinctive. There was no time

for thinking. Body and limbs acted together, and he leaped as a trout does from the water. The knife came down where he had been. He heard it thud in the dry earth, and he heard the man utter a short "Hah!" as a woodchopper does when he strikes with his ax. He heard the thunder of horses' hoofs coming down the ravine toward them.

HUGH sprang to his feet. And the sight of him rising suddenly in the firelight there before them turned the stampeded horses. They swerved and raced back up the ravine. There they got the scent of the bears again, prowling among the shadows of the trees. For a moment they halted, trembling, between two fearsome things—the beasts above them and the forms that moved so violently in the firelight below.

Hugh had sprung to his feet. Pedro had pulled his knife-blade free, and was crouching like a cat. So they faced each other for an instant, the one with his naked weapon and the other unarmed. Then the *vaquero* closed in swiftly. Hugh's left hand caught the wrist above the knife. They rolled together upon the earth, and wrestled there in deadly silence.

The shadows had closed in over them, hiding their entwined forms, blending them into the earth. And the terrorized horses saw only darkness down there in the neck of the gorge.

And then while the two men were struggling, a thunder of hoofs descended upon them. A tornado of black shapes came hurtling through the night, blotting them out. The red brands of the fire became a swirl of sparks, and the sparks winked into nothingness. Hugh felt the wind from the flying hoofs. And the stampede swept on by.

Something darker than the shadows was there beside him. A huddled thing, as motionless as the earth on which it sprawled. Hugh bent over it and felt warm blood matting the hair. The knife had slipped from the limp fingers.

CHAPTER XV

LIVE coals still glowed among the embers of the scattered fire. Hugh gathered them and fanned them to a little blaze; he nursed the flames, feeding them with dried twigs until the circle of red light widened to reveal the space within the narrow boundaries of the gulch. He brought water from the stream and bathed the ugly cut. The *vaquero's* eyelids fluttered, and he moaned.

And then the memory which had been eluding Hugh returned to him with the strange abruptness of such fugitive recognitions. He recalled the man as vividly as if he had known him for years: the owner of the voice which he had heard the night before while he was hiding in the room beside the chest of drawers, and Pedro Solis was sitting at the table giving his instructions for the murder of the Alcalde!

What was he to do now?

Perhaps, if he had been less seasoned to danger and thereby more of a coward, the answer would have been simple enough. Or if he had been more hardened—it would have been the same then. He had the knife which the other had been about to use when the horses stampeded over them, and if he did not use that weapon—it was not only his own life that he would risk. There was his errand and all that depended on it. Nevertheless—

"I'll take a chance," he told himself, and looked about him for his pistols. They were where he had left them beside the bearskin robe, untouched by any of those flying hoofs. He laid them within reach and sat there waiting. The dried oak limbs crackled, sending out showers of sparks; a horse whinnied down the cañon. Hugh watched the face in the firelight; it was curious, but he was feeling no resentment. A little while ago he would have p'unged a knife hilt-deep into that fellow's body and been joyous at the chance. And now with the passing of his danger, enmity had gone.

SO he had been sitting for some minutes when he saw the lids open. A moment passed. The dilated pupils narrowed, and the eyes met his own. The lean face tightened. Hugh remained motionless, watching in silence.

The eyes roved to the weapons by his side. A puzzled look came into them. They returned to Hugh's face, searching it as if to find the answer to a question.

"No," Hugh said quietly, "I have not killed you."

The lips pressed tightly together, and Pedro passed his hand over his forehead. He brought it back and stared at the blood. Then:

"It was the horses!" He spoke dully as if to himself. He lay frowning, as one who

The cinnamon had already leaped to follow Pedro's mount, and the two men were charging the group of five on foot.

is striving to solve something beyond his understanding. And after some moments had passed:

"I am going to let you live," Hugh told him quietly. He was watching the eyes while he was speaking, and he saw a change come into them. The ferocity which made them like those of a wild animal gave way to incredulity; and suddenly they became like the eyes of a dog.

"Señor, my life belongs to you," Pedro said simply.

After that there was no speech between them for some time. But more than once as he was moving about to replenish the fire, Hugh caught the *vaquero's* eyes following him with that same doglike look in them, and he was surer from this than he would have been from many words that he had gambled wisely in letting the other live.

The cut had ceased bleeding and the dizziness was passing. Pedro staggered to his feet and looked about him in the darkness.

"We must wait for day to find the horses," he announced. Then he sought his bearskin and rolled up in it. And there was only one more remark passed concerning their new status. Hugh had made down his bed, and he was stowing away the weapons beneath it. Then Pedro said:

"You need not be afraid, señor. I am your man." Nevertheless the two knives and the pair of pistols remained beneath the bearskin, and when Hugh awakened with the morning sunshine upon his face, they were still there.

But Pedro was not there. And there was no sign of him, nor of the horses down the gulch. Hugh was beginning to wonder whether he was to find himself set afoot here in the hills, when he heard a hulloa, and the welcome tramp of hoofs sounded on the hillside above him. The *vaquero* rode behind on the cinnamon, using his reata for a hackamore. When he had driven the animals into the gully and slipped from the bare back, he clapped the gelding on the withers.

"There is a horse!" he cried.

Now there remained no sign of what had happened the night before save the bloody handkerchief around Pedro's forehead and the doglike look in his eyes. And neither man spoke of the matter until they had been a good ten miles on the road. Then the *vaquero* edged his animal closer to Hugh's and pointed to the hoof-marks in the trail before them.

"It is the Captain Avila and his man, and they are riding hard," he cried.

"He was the one who hired you?" Hugh asked. The other nodded as indifferently as if the employment of which they were speaking had been the breaking of a colt.

"It was yesterday in the morning. I had come to the house of Don Pedro Solis to ask him of another matter; and the Señor Capitan promised me twenty pesos to do this. I was to find the *vaquero* whom the Alcalde was sending southward and get him

out of the way first." He shrugged his lean shoulders. "It is as God wills," he said.

"You killed the *vaquero?*" Hugh asked. Pedro shook his head.

"It was not needful, señor. I had but to get him drunk. That was less trouble." He pointed again to the trail before them. "We have lost good time. And they are well mounted. They will be far ahead of us."

And this was all the information he had. Of what lay behind the work which he was to have done he was in ignorance; nor did he care. He had been hired to kill, and he had done his best; and having failed, it had fallen out that his life went into another's hands. And this other, who had given life to him, he was serving with a devotion which had never gone into the service of those men who had offered him twenty pesos.

That day they rode down across the pass of the Santa Margarita and into the hamlet of adobes by the old mission of San Luis Obispo. They rested there, and fed the horses barley. Avila's party had gone through a good seven hours ahead of them. While they were waiting for their animals to finish the grain, Pedro spoke again of Solis, and when he said the name he cursed.

"Yet you were willing enough to kill for him," Hugh reminded him.

"Señor," the *vaquero* said, "it was like this: Two years ago, riding a roan colt, I broke my leg. And while I lay there helpless in my mother's house, she too was taken sick. And at that time, my father being dead within the same year, she was in debt to this same Don Pedro Solis, for my father's sickness had cost her all she had and more. So Solis came to get his money, and she had none for him; and it was then I promised him to pay the debt myself, if he would give us time. And from the day when I got on my feet, he has held that over me, señor, the debt we owe; and more than once he has brought it to my mind, how he can take my mother's house from her if he would choose. So now you understand."

"And now?" Hugh asked.

"And now," the other answered, "it is in my mind to kill him as I had thought of doing many times before."

THIS little talk between them freed Hugh of a doubt which had persisted; for he had asked himself more than once how he could put his trust in one who was willing to change masters so readily.

Before midnight they were riding on again. But the trail was poor, for there was little travel up and down El Camino Real in those days, and it was hard to keep the loose animals to the road. So they made poor time of it. It was past noon the next day when they came along the flanks of the tall hills that rise from the sea and saw the tile roofs of Santa Barbara along the slopes that reach down from the old mission to the channel's edge. And as they drew on toward the town, Hugh caught sight of the *Lucy Flint* riding at anchor two cables'-lengths from shore.

CHAPTER XVI

IT was the third day of the fiesta in honor of Governor Alvarado and his victorious little army. There had been a great time in the plaza that afternoon, nothing less than one of those old bear-and-bull fights; the two animals tied leg to leg with a rawhide reata, battling to the death, while the crowd roared their applause at the bloody spectacle; for there was a savage streak in these easy-living children of a tawny coastland, and even the dainty señoritas could clap their soft hands watching such sights as this. But now the show was done; sand had been scattered over the spot where the great grizzly had died like a good warrior; the crowd had dispersed; caballeros on their dancing horses, women in their bright ballooning dresses, dusty soldiers and the dark-skinned Indians. Many had gone down to the shining beach, where the Governor and his party were to embark in small-boats to the Boston ship which was lying at anchor in the channel; others were eating and drinking at a long table in the open.

That was a pleasant scene, that table in a space opening into the plaza between two of the tile-roofed adobe buildings. It was like a picture painted by some of those jovial Dutch artists of the Renaissance. Soldiers in their ragged nondescript uniforms, buxom women, children running underfoot, wood-peddlers and *vaqueros,* crowding the long benches. Three fat musicians were strumming guitars near by; in the background a corral where horses rolled in the dust or stood placidly before their bundles of hay. . . . . It so happened that this same corral was the only

public place for travelers to stable their animals. Otherwise it would not have come into this story.

In one of the adobe buildings which flanked the eating-place, five men were sitting about a table. Of these Sebastian Avila was one; and the other four were caballeros from the south. Their saddled horses stood before the door, and on the table between them was a paper, the proclamation which Don Pedro Solis had signed in Monterey. Avila faced the window, and it gave a view of the gentle slope leading down to the beach with the growing crowd of townspeople on the sand, and the *Lucy Flint* at anchor in the background. And while he was talking, his eyes were on that scene.

"The boats," he was saying, "are leaving the ship. It is only a short time now, señores." He pointed to the paper. "We will have copies made, and before the afternoon is over they will go about."

A clatter of hoofs reached their ears from the street, and the window was darkened, the view obscured by two horsemen. One of them was driving four loose animals. They turned the corner into the passageway between the feasters and the building wall which led to the crowd. Avila had ceased speaking. He was on his feet, and his face was livid.

HUGH and Pedro were lounging in their saddles as men do at the end of a long hard ride, while they waited for the man in charge of the corral to come and open the gate. And the former was listening to the news of the day which a herdsman from the hills was telling him—how Alvarado and Castro had come from the San Fernando Valley, and the town had given them this welcome.

"If you were to go down to the beach now, señor," the man was saying, "you would see them for yourself before they go on board the Boston ship."

Now Pedro, being himself part Indian, had eyes and ears for all things about him, even when he was at rest. So it was he who caught sight of the five caballeros who were coming around the corner which he and his companion had turned a few moments before. And it was he who heard the low order which one of them was giving to a soldier—the words did not reach him, but he had recognized Avila standing beside the speaker.

"Señor," he shouted, *"vamos!"*

Hugh whirled his horse. Before he had time fully to grasp the situation, the cinnamon had already leaped to follow Pedro's mount. And the two of them were charging the group of five on foot who blocked the entrance to the passage to the street.

Cries rose from beside the long table. Some one overturned a bench. The dust made a thin brown fog around the horses and their riders. A pistol flashed. Hugh saw the caballeros scattering before them. Then he was out in the roadway with Pedro at his side, and they heard the clatter of hoofs behind them. He pointed to the beach and the *vaquero* nodded. The race was on.

GOODALL, the first mate, had charge of the boat which was to take Governor Alvarado and General Castro on board the ship. Just what was in the wind he did not know, for the little skipper of the *Lucy Flint* was one of those close-mouthed men who never share their secrets until they must; but he had his instructions, and these were explicit: to get the pair on board and none others with them. While he was standing there on the beach beside his grounded boat, with the growing crowd of townspeople and caballeros from the great ranchos gathering near by, he could hear the voice of Captain Brewster coming across the water. And the order which the skipper was giving set him to thinking; for he was bidding the foremast hands to stand by the capstan—which in plain language meant that the anchor was to come up on short notice. So Goodall's heavy brows were knit, and he was watching his oarsmen out of one eye to see that they were attending to their business, and with the other eye he was keeping cognizance of the pair whom he was to take as his passengers.

They had come down here on horseback, as everyone came in those days to any destination which was more than one hundred yards from his starting-place; and they had left their animals with two soldiers to hold them not far away. They were taking their good time about it, after the sensible manner of their race who kept their haste for emergencies and did not waste it in the everyday affairs of life. A fine pair of caballeros, with the streaks of gray in their black hair, and their bronzed faces alive with the joy of good living, decked out in their slashed breeches of velvet and their short jackets, with the huge silver spurs rasping the sand as they walked toward the boat.

The crowd made a wide ring around the two—men and their ladies and all talking in low voices: the Spanish of the west coast, which was as musical a language as was ever spoken. They bowed, returning Goodall's clumsy salutation, and stood at the boat's prow. Alvarado was about to step aboard, when the sound of hoofs came down the beach, and suddenly the crowd scattered before the animal.

Hugh's hat was gone. His bare hair stirred in the breeze as he drew the cinnamon up on its haunches at the water's edge. He threw himself from the saddle, and came on swiftly toward the pair beside the boat's prow. They had turned at the outcry from the crowd, and now they stood facing him. They saw his hand go beneath his jacket. Then Castro shouted a word of warning and leaped between Hugh and the governor. And Goodall bellowed:

"I know that man!"

But the hand which General Castro was watching, even while his own hand was seeking a weapon, came forth from beneath the jacket and it was holding nothing more formidable than a paper.

"Well, sir?" Castro demanded. "What does this mean?"

"It is," Hugh told him breathlessly, "for Governor Alvarado."

Castro took the paper; he shrugged his shoulders as he gave it to the Governor.

"All things in their good time," the former said. "You will wait here if the matter is important, señor, and we will return from the ship within the hour."

Now when he had first heard that Alvarado was going on board the *Lucy Flint*, Hugh had been seized with a great uneasiness. For he remembered Captain Brewster's part in what had already come and gone. That uneasiness, which had been crowded from his mind by the excitement of the race from the plaza, returned now.

"Governor Alvarado," he said, "this message is from your friend Señor Munras, the Alcalde of Monterey. It is important. And I have reason to believe—"

He got no further. For the mate Goodall was a single-purposed man, and memory of that fight on the beach of Monterey was smarting within him. He leaped toward Hugh; and Pedro, who had edged through the ring of spectators, sprang at his throat.

A dozen men from out the crowd rushed in to pull the pair apart.

"This fellow," the mate bellowed, "is a deserter from my ship!"

"So?" Castro bent his eyes on Hugh. But before the latter could answer, the voice of Governor Alvarado came, in quiet, even contrast to the tumult of the other voices. He held the open paper in his hand.

"I have read enough," he said, "to make me wish to finish with this message." He left the boat and nodded to Castro. "You will come with me. —And you too," he bade Hugh.

THE three of them stepped to one side; and while they stood there talking among themselves, with the ring of curious onlookers about them, a thing took place unseen by them which had its own consequences in days to come. Sebastian Avila, who had been foremost in the pursuit, only to draw in his horse at the last moment, dismounted now and came on afoot. He came in silence, and he passed the edge of the crowd unnoticed. He reached the mate and said a word into his ear.

Alvarado finished reading the letter and handed it to Castro. But when the latter had glanced down through the first words, he shook his head.

"Solis!" he cried. "Why, he is your cousin. And my good friend Avila! It is not believable." He would have gone on further, but the thump of oars came to their ears, and a murmur from the crowd. And when they looked about to learn the cause of the fresh disturbance, the *Lucy Flint's* smallboat was a hundred feet from shore.

Hugh pointed to the passenger in the sternsheets. It was Sebastian Avila.

It was Pedro who supplied the final link of evidence. He came slouching through the crowd, to hand Hugh a paper.

"It fell from the Señor Commandante's jacket," he said—and there was reproach in his eyes now. "If you had but given me back my knife, señor, he would not have got away this time."

It was the proclamation which Don Pedro Solis had signed in Monterey.

And now the dull clank of the capstan reached their ears, and the hoarse rattle of the *Lucy Flint's* cable coming inboard through the hawsehole. They stood watching her great sails flutter out, and when the canvas was filling, Castro spoke.

"It is to Monterey we must be looking now," he said.

The climax of this spirited romance of old California occurs in the next installment—in our forthcoming May issue.

They saw a man come out and take a taxi to a disreputable pub in Wapping.

Free Lances in Diplomacy

The broadcasting of hostile propaganda from ships at sea gives the Free Lances an insidious enemy to combat.

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

Illustrated by J. Fleming Gould

THE new West End theater was packed with an audience which represented the cream of London society—to see an actor who had become famous during the last two seasons as one of the greatest portrayers of character the British stage had seen in years.

In one of the proscenium boxes there was an after-dinner party of well-known people—a group known the world over, consisting of two Earls, a famous Countess, an Afghan Prince, a former Premier and a French Cabinet Minister. All of them had seen John Seldon Fortescue act before.

AS the play went on into the second act, M. Duchanel remarked to His Lordship of Dyvnaint, in his quaint English:

"Me—I do not know whether this Fortescue is not in his usual form this evening or whether his conception of the part it makes him so many little shades from usual. You have observed this, *mon ami?*"

"Aye—it's been puzzling me a bit, Henri," replied Trevor. "I've been studying the chap closely. Frankly, you know—I'd say it's not Fortescue himself that we're seein'!"

"But — one does not comprehend how that is possible!" M. Duchanel demurred. "It is the face of Fortescue—the figure of Fortescue—the voice of Fortescue! How, then, could it be not the man himself?"

"Well—the points which I fancy I've noticed are very slight—merely differences in gesture an' manner, d'ye see. One learns to be rather closely observant after many years in diplomacy — to watch for little things which never would strike the average person at all. This'll be the fifth time I've seen this John Seldon Fortescue in one performance or another—five different impersonations, as it happens—an' I'm almost by way of bein' able to swear either that the chap sinks his own personality in the character to a greater extent than any other

actor I ever saw—or else that I've seen three diff'rent men appearing as Fortescue! If it were not for my being so thoroughly familiar with what may be done in the art of make-up—having been obliged to do it myself to keep the breath of life in my body, upon occasion—I'd say, just as this entire audience prob'ly would say, it's a ridiculous absurdity to suppose that any but the one and only Fortescue has played those five parts. But if there were any way of testing it out, I'd wager a thousand guineas that three diff'rent men have taken the parts on those five nights!"

And during the last two acts, they studied the man closely—and other members of the cast as well. . . . .

Duchanel was a house-guest of the Trevors,—and after the party, including the ex-Premier, John Craithness,—had reached home that night it was he who, while admitting the possibility of a dual or triple impersonation of Fortescue, expressed disbelief.

"If this Fortescue have the *malade*, it explains itself pairfectly for one of the undairstudy to act—but *two* men would not be sick at the same time, making of necessity for the third man. Also it would, how you say, leak out?—in the daily journals—it could not be kept so altogether quiet—*non!* Upon any othair groun', for why should Fortescue be away from the theater?"

Trevor had been considering this same point, and now he said:

"Look you, Henri! You've been telling me that your Governm'nt an' the Prefecture are having a good bit of trouble with a flood of the most radical propaganda, an' that as fast as you run down one source of it, another flood of pamphlets are directed from another quarter—the whole proposition having the appearance of being planned by some damned clever scoundrel whom you can't get evidence against. Well—we've exactly the same proposition here in the United Kingdom. You could do a good bit more in running down those rotters were it not for the radicals an' communists in your Chamber, who never will consent to extreme measures against such propaganda. We could do a lot more over here, were it not for the present Labor Governm'nt. The sane an' sensible men in it know that propaganda which incites the people to destructive revolution is so cursed dangerous that it must be dealt with as severely as any other menace to the welfare of the country—but the Left Wingers howl for absolutely unrestricted free speech, no matter how incendiary it may be, nor how inflammable the minds of those who hear it.

"There is at least one man in London—possibly three or four—addressing secret meetings of the masses an' advocating actual murder of such Members of Parliam'nt or Cabinet Ministers as are most active in blocking the impossibly radical measures which are bein' introduced. Well, d'ye see, there's still enough self-protecting sentiment in Parliam'nt to back up arresting those men an' giving them terms of imprisonm'nt at hard labor, at least—if the police could lay hands on 'em!

"Now if this actor-chap Fortescue happens to be a Slav in the pay of the Reds, there's prob'ly no line of activity in which he would be as safe from discovery and arrest as that of bein' the most popular actor in London at the moment—in the limelight all the time, but with ample opportunity for doin' something vastly diff'rent when some other chap is taking his place on the stage."

Craithness, who had been listening to this discussion, admitted the possibility of this, but was unconvinced.

"That's all very int'restin' in theory, Trevor—but I much doubt its bein' done more than once or twice, if at all. First place—you yourself will admit having no evidence whatever beyond mere gossip (and little of that) as to Fortescue's not being English-born—or the members of his cast, either. Their English and manners are perfect. Your idea would be capital for the plot of a play, d'ye see—but that sort of thing doesn't happen in actual life!"

Lammerford and the Countess exchanged amused glances at this. John Craithness had been a popular statesman, but he knew nothing about the seamy side of international intrigue!

MEANWHILE, at the theater, Fortescue had hurried down to his dressing-room after the final curtain. Here his valet removed the grease-paint and assisted him to change into evening clothes, then made him up a second time with practically invisible lines on his face to represent Fortescue, offstage, as he would appear at a Park Lane supper-dance half an hour later. Meanwhile, the original John Seldon Fortescue, in a black wig and beard, had just addressed a warehouse-loft meeting of workingmen and women in Lambeth, with a line of seditious revolutionary talk. At the close he said:

"We are much more fortunate than our brothers and sisters in Russia because there is no censorship here, on our wireless sets—as is necessary over there on account of the capitalist plots. Of course many of us haven't the money to buy a first-class set—but those who understand wireless'll be glad to show you how to build your own two- or three-valve set for a few quid. There's a deal of talk on the air concernin' the rich toffs—also Governm'nt matters which all of you should hear. Many of you have wireless sets already. Those that haven't can listen, free, to the loud-speakers on the sidewalks in front of the little shops. Sometimes, you'll hear somethin' to your advantage. Stick about the radio-shops."

FROM the cellar in Lambeth, Fortescue (born of a family named Cropatkin, in Warsaw, and raised in Minsk) crossed in a disreputable car to a house in Bermondsey. Letting himself in with a latch-key, he climbed to an upper room where five men sat around a small table near a hob-grate, red with cannel coal. They asked a number of questions about the meeting he had addressed—and the general feeling among his hearers about what Parliament was doing or failing to do for them.

Presently one of them banged his fist upon the table.

"We're having too much trouble in rousing the damned swine! With a Labor Governm'nt, we should have it all our own way, but the Cabinet are a lot of old women—they don't even try to force corrective legislation through! Trouble is we've not enough speakers in the country who know how to heat up the blood of these slow-witted workingmen, an' there's too much trouble in getting 'em together where one can speak freely to 'em without riskin' arrest. We're not reachin' enough of the people at one time—that's the cold truth!"

"Well, why not reach more—millions instead of a few hundreds?" Fortescue asked quietly.

"Oh—aye! Why not, to be sure! How would *ye* do it, for example, Murphy?" They knew him for a Russian secret agent—but also knew that he'd lose his influence among the masses if he had a Russian name.

"Broadcast it to 'em from a fifty-kilowatt station every night!" he replied promptly. "I doubt if you realize how many of the working-people in the United Kingdom have wireless sets—good or bad—or how many friends and neighbors come in during the evenings to listen. Nothing to hinder our talking to ten million people at once."

"Well—that might be true enough. But how long will your broadcastin' station be allowed to operate before Governm'nt shuts it down—confiscates the equipm'nt—arrests the men workin' it?"

"As long as there's any reason for our using it—indefinitely—because it wouldn't be located where British law could possibly touch it."

"An' where the devil would that be?"

The pseudo-Murphy laughed.

"The trouble with you chaps is that you lack imagination! You must be vaguely aware that there are hundreds of small cargo-boats—two thousand to four thousand tons—anchored around nearly every shipyard in Europe at this moment—too small to make their living as modern freight-carriers—waiting to be broken up for old metal or sold for a song as coasters in the Oriental trade. How much do you fancy you'd have to pay for one on a six-months' charter? Engines perfectly serviceable — bottoms needing only a good scraping in dock—hulls good for several years. New rigging and deck-gear, of course, but that's at owners' expense. Some of them will do eighteen or twenty knots in a fair sea if you want to burn the coal. Their capacity is too small for ocean-freights in these days — but they've space enough in their holds for a generating-plant which'll put fifty kilowatts on their aërials as a carrier-wave—an' they can be cleared from one of the Russian ports as 'proceeding in ballast,' or something like that."

"But—how could you use such a boat for a broadcasting station—anchor her in one of the smaller ports along the British coast?"

"Oh, come, Bunner—use your head, man! If she was anchored, the messages would be traced to her very shortly and the Governm'nt would take possession on perfectly legal points which she'd be violatin'. Why bring her into port at all? What range do you suppose fifty-kilowatt broadcasting has at night under average atmospheric conditions? From the tip of Scotland to Lands' End is no more than seven hundred miles if it's that! And fifty kilowatts with ninety per cent modulation can be heard distinctly at fifteen hundred in average weather—three thousand under favorable conditions. Consider! Here is your broadcasting station talking to the whole United Kingdom from, say, the neighborhood of Brighton.

Coast-guard boats look for it there as a matter of information—but it's then off Newcastle. Another night, Edinburgh—then Inverness—then around in St. George's Channel, and so on. In the daytime, just a rusty old cargo-boat goin' about her business with no aërials in sight—too unimportant, in fact, to be equipped with wireless."

"I fancy such a boat is bound to be caught, sooner or later."

They went rapidly through books, papers and documents, jotting down memoranda as they went.

"What can any Governm'nt legally do if she is overhauled—on the high seas? She has a right to broadcast what she pleases as long as it doesn't interfere with the Navy and Marine channels. Certainly no warship will be permitted to interfere with her. To make the thing effective, our men will have to obtain employment in the little radio-shops all over the country—so they can tune in on our particular wave at least four evenings out of every week and let the crowds along the sidewalks hear what we're saying—give 'em the wave-length and hours for their own sets. It'll be safer to change the hour and the wave-length every night we're broadcasting so as to confuse the police when they try to do something about it. There is also one point to which I fancy we'd best devote some thought. In my talks to the people, I've found that these British fools are mighty squeamish about goin' out and slitting a few throats when it seems necessary. They don't like what they call 'murder'—and they back the legal forces in hanging men or women who commit what they consider murder. Yet those same people will—if it's shown that certain men in power are letting 'em starve on the streets without clothes or shelter—arrange some convenient 'accident' for putting such men out of the way. What our broadcasting must stick to all the time is moderate language, but incontestable argum'nts showing just who are grinding them down an' keeping 'em in misery—not forgetting that many of them are living more comfortably on the 'dole' than they would at work, with the usual wages. We're talkin' now, d'ye see, of starting a wholesale campaign with millions listening every night instead of a few hundreds—so that we can afford to use more moderate language and we'd be foolish to stop with one boat. Why not another one patrollin' the French coast — and a third one, Italy? Talkin' radicalism in Italy just now is risky business—they shoot a man for too much of it. But from a boat off-shore—broadcasted in the dialect of the masses — well — that's something else again."

NEXT morning at breakfast, Lord Trevor got into a discussion of Fortescue with Earl Lammerford and Prince Abdool

before the Countess appeared. They were inclined to agree with him in the belief that at least one and possibly two understudies had taken the parts at different times.

"What's behind it, in your opinion?" Trevor asked.

"Your theory last night, George, was as good as any. If the fellow is a radical or Bolshevist—in fact if he's engaged in anything outside of the law—he couldn't strike a more clever dodge to escape discovery by the police or F. O. than having this actor-personality. It's an alibi which is pretty nearly unshakable. If he is one of the Reds, I fancy it's rather in our line to dig into him a bit. Eh? If he's a crook of some other sort—well—that's more in the C.I.D. line—that of our friend Sir James Baldwin."

"Humph! D'ye know, Lammy, I fancy it mightn't be such a bad idea to put it up to him. What?"

They were now smoking in the big library across the hall. Trevor picked up one of the telephones on the long table and asked his operator to put him through to Scotland Yard. He was in touch with Sir James within a few moments. Not being very busy that morning, the genial Superintendent agreed to come over and join them in Park Lane. When he arrived, they gave him their impressions concerning Fortescue.

At first the Superintendent was inclined to laugh at them. Then he remembered the sort of persons these were—his own suspicions that they knew a great deal more about disguise and underground diplomatic intrigue than anyone supposed.

And too, the more he considered the possibilities such a dual personality offered to an unquestionably talented actor like Fortescue, with his fixed position in the public eye, the more he saw that an arch-criminal of one type or another might use such a position with perfect impunity.

Finally, after some consideration, he said:

"You people had something in mind when you called me up. Suppose you go a bit further—say just how you fancy I might come into the matter. Of course you're not preferrin' charges of any sort?"

"Oh, not at all—not for the present, at least! If the man chooses to go about as half a dozen diff'rent persons I fancy there's no law against it, as long as he doesn't go *outside* of the law. But this is what I had in mind somewhat vaguely, Sir James: I'd like to obtain a dozen good photographs of Fortescue—half of them in costume and half of them in street or dinner-clothes. For obvious reasons, I don't wish to go into any photographer's shop and purchase them myself, or send anyone connected with me who might be traced. Then I want to know where the man lives, and obtain a careful description of his house or every room in his apartment. And I fancy it may surprise you to learn what a couple of your best men may possibly dig up if they shadow Fortescue a couple of weeks. For example—if he were followed some night from his diggings to a house in the East End or the West, it would absolutely settle the point about an understudy going on in his part at the theater—whether he went to that other house in disguise, or as himself."

"By Jove! . . . . That point is well taken, Your Lordship! H-m-m—it's not at all likely, you know—but—well—we might have some data on the chap in the files at the Yard. If it just happens that he was in this country durin' the War, we'd have a *dossier* on him. Whether he served, and with what unit; and if not, why not. Then—if he's connected in any way with the Third Internationale, as you seem to half suspect, I fancy there'd be a note or two about him in the vaults at the F. O. At all events, we'll get you the chap's photos—an' dig into the records a bit durin' the next fortn't or so."

THE Superintendent had little difficulty in ascertaining the facts that Fortescue had come to England from New York in 1917 as clerk for a bankers' commission sent over to confer with British bankers about some of the munitions credits. He spoke and acted like an Englishman, at that time, but explained that he was a naturalized American citizen. With the unusual facilities at his command, Earl Trevor called up one of his bankers in New York and in twenty-four hours obtained the additional information that Fortescue had come there from Minsk in Russia some years before the War, under the name of Cropatkin, but claimed to be a Pole by birth—that he had taken out naturalization papers—had not been called in the draft—had been with a theatrical stock-company until 1917, when some Congressman he knew had obtained the clerical berth for him with the bankers' commission. None of this was at all to his discredit.

Further inquiries turned up the fact that he had lived with the Russian colony on the East Side in New York and had been mixed up with radicals much of the time.

IN three weeks of espionage, he hadn't been spotted away from the theater a single evening except Sundays—but as Sir James' men were about ready to give it up, they saw a black-bearded man come out of the apartment one evening and take a taxi to a disreputable pub in the Wapping neighborhood. They obtained entrance to a cellar room, where he talked straight nihilism for an hour—in a restrained way which made it subtly effective—and then followed him back to the West End apartment. This time a man for whom they had telephoned the Yard was concealed inside the building and saw him enter Fortescue's apartment, which he did not leave again that night.

This settled all doubts that Fortescue was deliberately using his theatrical personality as a cloak for Bolshevist activities. The constables who had tried several times to arrest him for revolutionary speeches and inciting people to violence were given a hint to lay off the attempt to interfere with him, but make notes of exactly what he said and the places where he had been under observation. They were told that the man could now be arrested at any time, as he was known.

At this stage in their investigations, His Lordship asked Sir James if he fancied a search-warrant might be obtained for Fortescue's apartment on the strength of what they had so far ascertained.

"Well—it'll be stretching a point if one is given us—because, d'ye see, we've no direct evidence against the actor himself," replied Sir James judgmatically. "We've traced a dangerous radical, who goes by the name of William Murphy, from his flat in the West End to a cellar in Wapping an' back again. As far as we know, he remained in that apartment all night an' hasn't been seen to leave it since. But there is a rear passage, out through an alley and mews, which we turned up yesterday,—it communicates with the janitor's cellar in the rear,—used by tradesmen coming to send up provisions in the service-lifts. Murphy could have gone out that way before we discovered it an' stationed a constable in the mews. Or there could be other ways of his leaving unobserved. Or—again—this Murphy could have entirely altered his appearance in Fortescue's flat, or one of the others in the building, and walked out like any other tenant. I fancy I *could* get a search-warrant on the evidence so far—but we'd have to assume that we're practically certain who this Murphy is. Was it your idea to have us go there when the chap is at home?"

"Rather not! I don't want him to know that he's even suspected—until we've evidence enough to put him entirely out of business at the theater. Suppose we arrange it this way: Have one of your men take an impression of his apartm'nt lock, and get a key that will open it. Then have Fortescue shadowed to the theater tomorrow night—or the first evening we're certain that the chap will be on the stage for two or three hours. One of my cars will fetch you from the Yard as soon as he has left for the theater and you've telephoned me that fact. In the car with you, there will be a man I know, made up as Fortescue himself—I fancy you'll consider the resemblance a fairly close one. Of course, lookin' like that, he can take you into the building by the front door — he will be taken for the actor by anyone you might meet on the stairs or in the halls, or anyone you may unexpectedly find in his rooms. (Easy enough to make the excuse that he had to rush back for something!) And the search-warrant needn't be shown at all unless you get into a jam where it'll protect the two of you from arrest. You don't know who the other chap is, of course—don't need to know—prob'ly better if you say you met him on the street—showed him the warrant an' fetched him along with you. Nobody could blame you for being fooled by some unknown impersonator."

AND this plan was carried out. Two of the other tenants passed them in the hall, greeting the supposed Fortescue pleasantly; when one of them afterward spoke of it to the man himself, he supposed it must have been one of his understudies and thought no more of it, at the time. In the six-room suite, luxuriously furnished, the Superintendent discovered a small safe let into the wall behind a lowboy, and the two of them had little difficulty in opening it by listening to the clicks of the tumblers as they turned the combination-knob. Carefully observing the exact position of everything in the safe, they went rapidly through books, papers and documents, jotting down memoranda as they went. There were letters from Reval and Petrograd mentioning five small steamers of twenty-five hundred to thirty-eight hundred tons—formerly passenger-boats with limited accommodation but recently converted for cargo-use only, though they had exceptional

"Really, you know—this is goin' a bit too far, even as a joke! I'm John Seldon Fortescue, myself—an' I fancy I should know, if anyone!"

speed for such service. Their signal-letters and wireless-calls were stated, together with the names of masters and mates — with dates when they were clearing for various ports in ballast or with part-cargo. There was a list of names in thirty cities of the United Kingdom — bills for what seemed to be wholesale purchases of radio-supplies. There was a memorandum-book showing various social engagements with penciled notes showing at what hours it would be possible for the actor to keep such engagements. Among them were several evening dates when, owing to a double bill being shown, there would be an hour, from nine-thirty to ten-thirty, that Fortescue would not be on the stage. Every name and address they found was jotted down.

IT happened that they hadn't driven beyond the first corner when Fortescue passed them in another car, returning from the theater—which was cutting it a bit finer than they had intended. But as they had left no traces of their visit, the man never suspected it.

As Sir James and his companion came into the Park Lane mansion upon their return, the masquerader disappeared—and Baldwin talked with Countess Nan for some time before Earl Trevor came in.

When they were going over the data that had been obtained, Trevor said:

"This wholesale purchase of wireless material rather suggests that they may have broadcastin' activities in mind—but with the use of my big beam-station in South Devon, we can locate within an hour any station they may build or rent. If we can't stop 'em legally, we can drown 'em out with our own broadcasting on the same wave-length. We've a hundred kilowatts of power down there—talkin' to the States, the Cape and Australia all the time. What I don't understand is their purchase of those five small steamers an' converting 'em into cargo-boats. They must have chartered 'em for a song, because a cargo-boat of that size can't make her living in these days—but I can't see any way in which Fortescue himself could use 'em and still go on acting on the stage every night! At all events, we've discovered enough about him to know that with his theatrical camouflage he's one of the most dangerous men in the United Kingdom. So if we can manage it, we'd best make a start by driving him off the stage altogether."

"Hmph! . . . . I fancy that'll take some doing—unless we arrest him for talking high treason, and succeed in getting a conviction. I'm by no means sure we've evidence enough to convict him of that, as yet. An appearance of false arrest, d'ye see, would make him one of the most popular men in the country, an' have a rotten political effect!"

"Oh, I'm not suggesting an arrest—not for a moment! Er—you had a chance to

study the chap I sent with you to his flat, at pretty close range—and you've seen Fortescue near enough to remember his face. How much resemblance would you say there was between the two?"

"Well—frankly, Your Lordship—I fancied it was either the man himself or one of those understudies. An' I couldn't see that he was made up very much, at that. He must have been one of the three—who decided for some reason to betray Fortescue himself—can't understand how you managed to get hold of him!"

"He wasn't either one of them, Sir James—but if he could fool *you*, not two feet away from him, I fancy he'll pass as Fortescue anywhere he appears. I'm going to start in by getting Fortescue tangled up."

UPON the following Thursday evening, Lady Mary Townley—who liked to consider herself a patron of the arts—was giving a reception and ball in Grosvenor Square, and expected Fortescue shortly after nine-thirty. When he arrived a few minutes after the hour, she said:

"Aren't you a bit early, Mr. Fortescue? How did you manage?"

"The curtain-riser went off without a hitch—not a very full house. Most of the people will be coming late for the main performance, which will keep us till midnight, I fancy—particularly if there are a number of curtain-calls."

"Well—I'm delighted to have you a bit longer. Several of the ladies have asked me to present you."

At the end of another twenty minutes, the pompous butler at the drawing-room door announced: "Mr. John Seldon Fortescue"—and the actor's double came in. He sensed a curious pause in the conversation as he entered the room, but walked unhesitatingly across to where Lady Mary was standing with a little group around her. He bowed and started to speak, but the expression of amazement upon the faces stilled the words. Everyone seemed to be looking from him to another man, standing in the next group with his back turned.

As the breathless pause attracted his attention, the supposed Fortescue swung around with a look of inquiry upon his face—which changed to amazement as he saw the other man.

The first arrival deliberately screwed a monocle into his eye-socket, remarking:

"Well—upon my word! It seems I've had a double all these years an' never knew it! Fancied at first you were my understudy, don't you know—but you certainly aren't Harris — he'd be half a stone the heavier. . . . . I say! Would you mind tellin' us who you are, sir?"

"Of all the cool nerve! Most of the people in this room know *me* as John Seldon Fortescue! But who, may I ask, are *you?*"

"Really, you know—this is goin' a bit too far, even as a joke! I'm John Seldon Fortescue, myself—an' I fancy I should know, if anyone!"

The thing was fairly stupefying. Lady Mary prided herself upon never being at a loss in an emergency — but the situation was too much for her. One of these men must be the real Fortescue—but which? She caught the eye of a pleasant-faced young fellow whom she knew to be a special writer for one of the great syndicates, and beckoned him to her with a slight motion of the head, then whispered: "Do you know which of them really is Fortescue, the actor?"

"The first who came in, Your Ladyship—but I'll admit I never saw such a resemblance in my life!" he replied. Brayton did specials for the Universal Press System in which the Trevors owned controlling shares—and had been tipped off by the managing editor of the syndicate to be near Lady Mary at just that hour, with definite hints as to which man was the real thing and which not. "It's a simple enough matter to prove it," he added. "The main feature at the West End starts promptly at ten o'clock and Fortescue speaks a prologue before the curtain rises. As he anticipated being here at that hour, his understudy was to speak the prologue and carry on until he returned to the theater—there'll be nearly forty minutes before Fortescue takes the stage in one of his big scenes. If you'll come with me to the telephone in the hall, I'll have them put me through to one of our men who is now at the theater and find out if the understudy has started."

She nodded and went out with him, leaving one of the supposed Fortescues chatting with half a dozen guests who were positive about him, and his double rather irritably talking with others who were not so sure. It took but a few minutes to get the theater and the other syndicate man.

"I say! . . . . Are you there, Nixon? Tell me—is Fortescue's understudy now delivering the prologue—in front of the curtain?"

"Fortescue himself is deliverin' it — in great form! If he does his big scenes the way he's startin' in now, it'll be the triumph of his whole career!"

"Oh, but I say, Nixon! That's really not Fortescue, you know—because he's here in Lady Mary Townley's drawin'-room at this moment — with a chap who's his twin — prob'ly another understudy. No question as to this bein' the real Fortescue, you know—I've talked with him only a foot away, while you've been lookin' from a distance of fifty or sixty feet at least—across a lot of footlights!"

"Hmph! All I've to say is that if this chap is the understudy, Fortescue had best take an indefinite vacation! The London stage doesn't need him in the least!"

With her head close to Brayton's, Lady Mary had caught nearly every word that Nixon had said. With an impish smile, she came to a sudden decision which promised novel amusement for her guests.

"I say, Mr. Brayton—this is going to be good! An idea has just occurred to me —come back into the drawing-room and I'll explain it to the people."

Approaching the "twins" and their supporters, she said:

"Gentlemen—this is one of the most curious and amusing situations I've ever experienced. Each of you swears that he's the only original Fortescue—yet there is at this moment another Fortescue upon the stage of the West End Theater who is in such exceptionally good form that the audience is fairly shouting applause at him. If he keeps it up for the next two hours they say it will be the crowning triumph of his career. So I suggest that we call our cars—go down to the theater with these twins here—and ask the manager to let them walk out on the stage with the other Fortescue. We'd all swear, I fancy, that the only original is one of these two—so they can't refuse such a test as this. If they can still leave us in doubt afterward, it will be the most unique situation the London stage ever has seen. What do you say?"

The proposition was received with laughter and hearty agreement.

IT happened that the real Fortescue had suddenly realized his opportunity for making a tremendous hit in the longer feature billed for that evening and had instructed one of his impersonators to keep the date for him with Lady Mary, feeling certain that neither she nor her guests would discover the substitution — and of course neither of them had foreseen Earl Trevor's move in their game.

The management of the theater refused emphatically to let the three men walk out upon the stage together—but after a dozen of the best-known reporters in the city had mentioned what their newspapers would print in the morning, they had to submit.

Fortescue himself was bewildered when he realized that the second double was a total stranger whom he didn't know at all and who was likely to say anything that came into his head. Trevor and the newspaper-men forced him to change his costume for evening clothes to match those of the other men. He saw absolute ruin materializing, but was perfectly helpless; he was tempted to shoot Trevor right on the stage —but if he did so, he would be of no further use to the inner circle of Reds whose successful tool he had been for several years, and he knew positively that they would kill him for making such a mess of things. So when the three walked out upon the stage in a dignified manner, he stepped down to the footlights and began speaking to the astonished audience. He said that for years he had been a sufferer from asthma and bronchitis to such an extent that when troubled with a severe attack it was impossible for him to act. For this reason, he had hunted through the cities of Europe to find exceptionally good actors who could substitute for him in an emergency. How well they had done this, he left it to the audience to decide.

Then the understudy came down to the footlights—said that the situation had been fully explained—that he had nothing further to say except that he hoped they had been pleased while he had been carrying on for his chief.

The situation was amazing, but there was a ripple of faint applause at this—the man certainly had done his best for them and his employer.

When Trevor's turn came, there was a diversion. He and Sir James, with the Scotland Yard men, had managed to run down the second substitute—whom the police now forced to step out from the wings in evening clothes precisely similar to the other three. Nobody in the audience could distinguish any difference between them—there was a roar of laughter which shook the house; the people felt that they'd been fooled—but on so gigantic a scale that it was screamingly funny.

Then Trevor, with a serious face, held up his hand for silence—and the noise died down.

"Friends—if all four of us told the same story you'd get a bit tired of us—and miss the point of the joke. You see, what really happened was this: The original John Seldon Fortescue was a Scotsman who died in the Highlands shortly after a Yankee acquaintance called him up on the transatlantic telephone—and reversed the charge! John Fortescue had known us as bairns—from the time we came into the world four-at-a-birth. As he lay dying, he begged us to carry on in his name, according to the best traditions of the Scottish stage. Jamie, over yon, grew up a blacksmith—used to recite poetry at the forge. Sandy, next on my right, was aye a drover who used to gie his beasties characters from Shakespeare whiles drivin' 'em to market for butcherin'. Charlie, on my left, wair apprenticed to a vintner in Lunnon—a grreat mon f'r the tavern scenes—when an empty stomach forced him out an' awa' wi' a road-show! As for mysel', I wair a sailor—an' pickit up a bit o' play-actin' in Zululand. We'd a' agreed tae meet in Lunnon whin we had our common birrthday in ouf thirtieth year—an' carry oot our sacred promise tae John Seldon Fortescue—rest his soul! Sin' then, we've a' played in the Provinces—in the States — in mony places — but alway' improvin', as ye've seen. An' noo—as the only collective an' original Fortescue — we thank ye!"

Another roar of applause started—then suddenly died away. The situation was irresistibly funny—yet there was something here which the audience couldn't understand—a suggestion of comedy—nonsense—tragedy—so interwoven that one could make nothing of the snarl. In a moment, a voice came out of the pit wishing to know if the play were to go on—or not?

The three impersonators gravely bowed to the real Fortescue, whose face was ghastly—but who assured them that the play would go on with one or the other of them in the leading part.

As it proved, it really was a triumph for Fortescue, after all. He acted with a finesse he never had shown before—was called before the curtain again and again. But when he came out after the final curtain, he raised his hand for silence.

"Good friends, misfortune has overtaken me," he said. "I had hoped to play for you many years—but after what has happened this evening, that will be impossible. I—can only thank you—and say good-by!"

In the wings, he approached Trevor—who, he was convinced, must be responsible for his farcical downfall.

"I don't know who you are, sir—but—you have killed an actor this night; possibly, some day, there may be some one kind enough to say, a *great* actor. I—I hope you're—satisfied."

"Fortescue, I'll say *now* that you *are* a great actor—one of the best I've ever seen," Trevor responded. "I'm honestly sorry this had to happen. If the man Cropatkin only could have dropped his former activities when he became Fortescue, your name might have lived as long as the annals of the British stage. The pity of it, man—is that he didn't. Again—I'm sorry!"

NEXT morning Harry Archer, the chief electrician and master mechanic at Trevor Hall in South Devon, called Earl Trevor on a private telephone-wire.

Archer had tried to get His Lordship during the previous evening in order that he might listen to a radio-broadcast, which the beam-station had picked up on eighteen hundred and fifty meters, and which Archer considered the rawest Bolshevist propaganda he had yet heard.

"Did you locate where it was coming from, Harry?" Trevor queried.

"Somewhere east of here—due ninety degrees—but the signals appeared to be too strong for anywhere in France or even Eindhoven—which of course would be farther north, from here. They commenced broadcasting shortly after nine—shut down at nine-thirty—were on the air again at ten-thirty—off at eleven—on just after midnight. If you will be at home this evening, start tuning about nine — run your condensers down from three thousand to twelve hundred. You'll catch 'em somewhere if they're working tonight. With the sort of stuff they're putting out, they'll prob'ly shift both the wave and the hours—possibly skip a night or two. But the first night I hear 'em again, I'll ask our Paris station if they're getting them also and have Louis Foix give me a cross-bearing—that'll locate them within two or three miles at the outside. Then I'll call you. Whoever happens to be in the library can get the stuff on your big four-foot cone. Lammerford is a shorthand expert—you might get him to take most of it down for your press syndicate."

"Listen, you damned vulture! You're doing what will cost millions of lives if you're not stopped!

That evening, Countess Nan joined the men in the big library where they tried for two hours to pick up anything like a Bolshevist broadcast. But presently Archer called up again to say that the stuff was coming in on very sharp tuning, and that he'd located the station about ninety degrees from him, approximately two hundred miles. From Paris—three hundred and ten degrees, approximately one hundred and thirty-five miles. This would place it about the middle of the English Channel, halfway between Brighton and Dieppe.

Lammerford was about to say Archer was off in his figures somewhere—the power being far stronger than any steamer-equipment—when Trevor's lips puckered in a low whistle.

"My word! . . . . Those five little cargo-boats mentioned in Fortescue's private memoranda which Baldwin and I found in his diggings! I'm beginning to grasp the whole proposition! Clever—my soul, but that's clever! Why, the damned scoundrel is evidently more dangerous even than we fancied!"

LEAVING Earl Lammerford to take down in shorthand the broadcast coming through the big cone, and Countess Nan to check up with him afterward, Trevor and Prince Abdool ordered a fast car to be fetched from the garage at once—stopping only long enough for His Lordship to call the offices of the big press syndicate in Red Lion Court, Fleet Street, and ask the managing editor to send two of his best men down through the East End and listen to anything broadcasted through the sidewalk speakers of the little shops along Commercial Road. Getting down to Mile-end Road as fast as they could in the car, they began to hear the propaganda in the neighborhood of the People's Palace—then all through Limehouse, Wapping, Stepney, Hackney and the other slum districts. To their surprise, the broadcast was much less violent in tone than the usual mass-meeting speeches—but they realized in a few minutes that it was more convincing from that very fact. Cause and effect were twisted beyond facts in order to make them more inflammatory. It seemed to work like slow-fuse whisky.

When Trevor and his friend returned to Park Lane, the syndicate editor called up to ask whether the Earl considered it advisable to print what had been broadcasted. It seemed to him giving the Bolshevists that much extra publicity—and likely to precipi-

tate a crisis in Parliament. But Trevor pointed out the other side of it.

"It will be a showdown on the floor of the House, Cranford! . . . . Give members of all parties a chance to ask if Parliam'nt an' the whole country is going to stand for a revolution destroying the British form of governm'nt! Don't forget that British workmen are an independent lot who frequently make a decent living — and are plenty shrewd enough to know that men who can't earn money can't keep it if it's given to them. I'll promise you there'll not be near as much of this broadcasting propaganda as the scoundrels behind it seem to fancy. Make the most of it while you're getting it red-hot—not forgetting to analyze each argum'nt, pointing out the lies and fallacies as your copy goes into type."

IN a few moments there came another call from Archer, at Trevor Hall. He'd just been talking with Louis Foix, who reported that a flood of anarchist propaganda was being broadcasted in French from the Bay of Biscay, off Bordeaux, and the Mediterranean off Marseilles. He'd been talking with the big radio-station at Rome, where they were getting similar broadcasting in the Italian of the masses. Trevor scarcely had put down the telephone when his Afghan *khansamah* admitted the French statesman Henri Duchanel, who had arrived at Croydon in a private plane from Le Bourget. Duchanel was excited and apprehensive over the broadcasting of the previous evening, which had been traced to some unknown craft offshore, on the high seas.

"*Mon Dieu!* . . . . What is to be done, my friend? This word spreading to many thousand at once, it is to cause the most extreme apprehension. *Oui!* How to handle this?"

"We've got the same problem here, Henri. Some boat offshore with a forty- or fifty-kilowatt equipment is flooding the United Kingdom from one end to the other! If we raise the question in Parliam'nt an' ask to have destroyers sent out after that craft, the Left Wing immediately wants to know what possible right we have to interfere with any craft on the high seas as long as she's not tryin' to land contraband or destroying commerce. Of course forcing anarchist propaganda on us like skyrockets dropping their sticks pretty well inland *is* landing contraband, unquestionably — but that's a nice little question of international law for the courts to settle—and we can't wait. Point is—we don't get our destroyers —we don't get any Governm'nt action at all toward stoppin' the broadcasting—you don't either—an' we can't afford to let it go on for another night! Well—what's the answer?"

"*Mon Dieu!* . . . . One cannot see! It is an *impasse!*"

"Not as far as we're concerned, Henri—an' I doubt if you're going to lie down like that and let 'em get away with it, either! By tomorrow night, there's going to be at least one heavily manned boat, mounting a few guns—able to go twenty-five or thirty knots if necess'ry—out in the Channel hunting for that damned Bolshevik tub! It's quite possible, d'ye see, that some of us may be on her. Just a little private enterprise on the part of a private British subject who likes to fancy himself a bit of a patriot at a pinch, an' is quite willing to risk being considered a pirate if it comes to extreme measures. It's the sort of a proposition which maritime law hasn't dealt with up to this."

"But — but — where do this so-cursed broadcast-ship come from, my friend? Who would buy—equip—clear him—send him out for such a purpose?"

"Five old craft—each under four thousand tons—were chartered two months ago in as many diff'rent ports—converted from old-type passenger craft to cargo-boats—with nothing in their holds but generators and big water-cooled tubes. At least, that's what I assume must be taking up all their space except coal-bunkers. Well—there is only one country in the world that is systematically trying to rot every other country and governm'nt from the inside—destroy constitutional governm'nt completely. There are agents of that country in little radio-shops all over the United Kingdom pouring out its propaganda through loud-speakers on the sidewalks—just as there are in France an' Italy at this moment. It's a clever idea, because legally their floating broadcast-stations can't be touched by any Navy boat of any Power. However—we're going into that a bit. Now—haven't you a few conservatives in Paris, Bordeaux and Marseilles, who are rich enough to own deep-sea yachts with fairly good speed—yachts that will carry an emergency crew of a hundred men, well armed?"

"*Oui!* Of a certainty!"

"Well—there are a couple of small planes in our private hangar just outside the lines

at Croydon—their pilots live within a few hundred feet of them, so they're always in readiness. One of them will land you at Le Bourget in less than two hours after he takes off. Then get after your yacht-owners as soon as you can. Don't sink the Bolshevist boats if it can be avoided—that might prove a serious matter in the courts—but convince those damned scoundrels that you *will* do it, if you have to! Then put fifty men aboard them and destroy their generating outfit so that it can't be used again—ever. Catch the point?"

Early next evening, the Trevors, Prince Abdool and Earl Lammerford went aboard their deep-sea yacht, *Ranee Sylvia,* at Southampton, and started up the Channel after leaving Spithead for the position reported by Archer the night before. They saw no craft lying to with her engines stopped—but at eight-thirty they got the Red propaganda on nineteen hundred meters through the *Ranee's* powerful receiving set, from a point due three hundred and sixty degrees, as their radio-compass showed, and a bearing which they immediately got from Archer in South Devon showed the Bolshevist as off Chelmsford in Essex. As they had run pretty well up to the Goodwin Sands on the supposition that the cargo-boat might be edging farther north, they were east of Chelmsford in two hours— having raced through Dover Strait at twenty-five knots or better. Apparently the signals were coming from a point not more than ten or fifteen miles from them.

WITH all her lights doused, the *Ranee* edged up closer until they were afraid of a collision, as the other craft wasn't showing any lights either. The detector, in the hull under water, gave no sound of screws turning. Evidently the broadcasters were at anchor. So the *Ranee* dropped two large electric launches filled with men into the water. They scouted ahead in the darkness until a blacker shape loomed up in front of them. A grapnel was hove up, catching upon the rail of the after-well, and thirty armed men were aboard before anyone heard them. One of them signaled with a powerful electric flashlight until a tiny answering spark showed the yacht's position; she then edged up to within two hundred feet. In the midshiphouse, after the crew had been locked into the fo'c's'le, they found a large wireless-room with two operators manipulating switches on a big black marble panel, while another man with a powerful bass voice read typewritten propaganda into a triple-gang of microphones.

ONE of the *Ranee's* machinists smashed the microphones to fragments with a clubbed rifle, while his companions kept the operators from interference. Pistols were covering every man in the midshiphouse by this time. They found the master in his cabin, sputtering out a protest against what he called "piracy on the high seas"—but the two Earls and all of their men within hearing laughed at him.

"You're anchored in a North Sea fairway, yourself—no lights showing—no name on your bows or your boats! I presume you've papers showing when and where you cleared, but you needn't bother about showing 'em—no point in it—we know all about you. Cropatkin's about through, we think Our craft? Oh, I see! You haven't noticed any cap-ribbons with her name on 'em, or any jerseys either, have you? Well—that's immaterial, too. You might say we're in the Preventive Service of the International Navy if you must have details to swear by after we're gone. Now I think we'll go below and overhaul your generators. Fine equipment you have on board' . . . . . Your signals were heard as far south as Bordeaux, last night—and we were picking up your other two boats as we came up the Channel."

"If you really have the nerve to injure our equipment, you'll answer for it in the Admiralty Courts, sir! We're on the high seas, you know!"

"Committing an act of war against a friendly nation with whom you're supposed to be at peace! I wonder, now, if you'd really dare taking us into court? . . . . Now listen, you damned vulture! If this sort of thing is tried again with other craft, there'll come a time when *any* Governm'nt will lose patience with you—and send your craft to the bottom without the slightest compunction, as a measure of national self-defense! For you're doing what will cost millions of good valuable lives if you're not stopped before you drive weak-minded men and women crazy. We're just telling you! Best not forget it!"

Before daylight, the generating plant was taken apart, smashed, and most of it dumped overboard in forty fathoms. Two days later, the boats off the French coast had a similar experience. As for Italy—well, Italy was more businesslike. Destroyers were sent out, there!

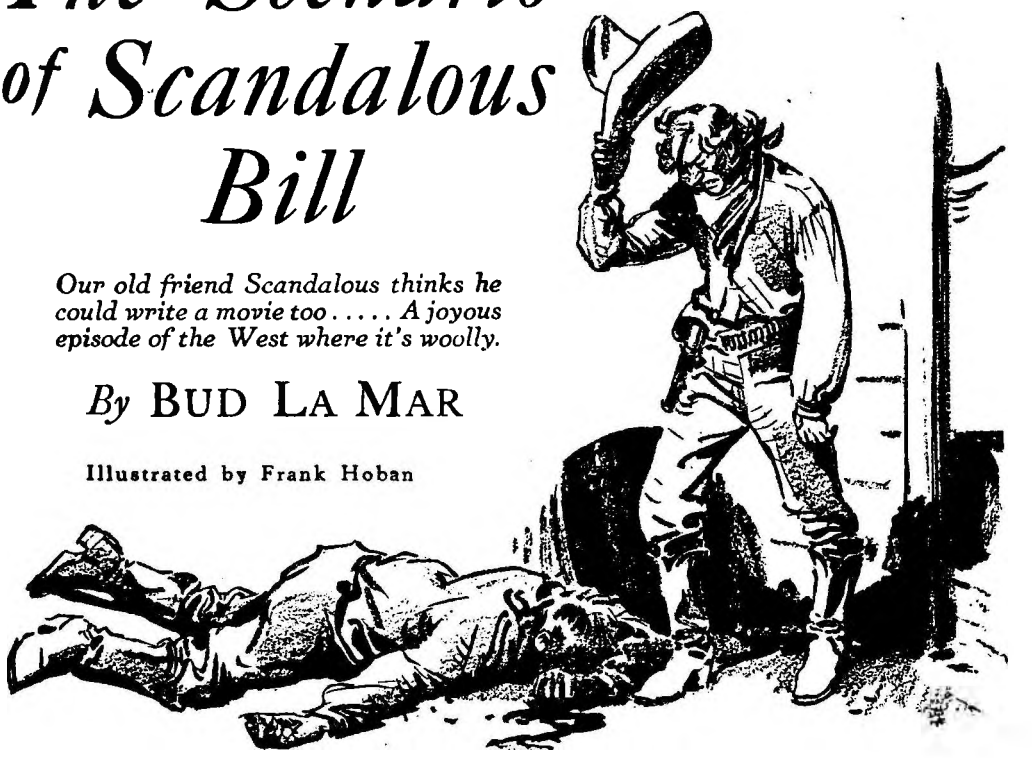
The Scenario of Scandalous Bill

Our old friend Scandalous thinks he could write a movie too . . . . . A joyous episode of the West where it's woolly.

By BUD LA MAR

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

"Ah—ah! Poor fellow! You should not have droo that ace from your vest pokit!"



MR. SILAS N. BLATT, President of the Echo Fillums, Inc., Hollywood, Cal.

Dere Sir: This sceenario which I am sendin you inclosed is the gospel trooth, every word of it set down here in black and white, taken from my own life and adventures. It is not likely that you have a man actin for you which can do the part like it ought to be did, it is a very ruff part, but even so you must keep in mind that Scandalous Bill is an old time Cowboy, there aint many of them left any more, and nobody on the Western Planes never done any more shootin, drinkin and cussin than he, spechally in his youth, but he always remained a Champeen of the Rite and a defender of the Week. And so I would advise that you send for me, I could do it better myself but you can suit yourself about this, and I would not mind quittin my job on the old TV ranch,—TV on the rite ribs,—where I am a top hand Cowboy workin for that old slave driver of a Pete Dodinger.

It had ought to be a Sounds Picture, with here and there some dialog and I am not set on any title, you can pick one out from the list which follozs:

THE LIFE AND DEEDS OF SCANDALOUS BILL.
SILENT LOVE OF SCANDALOUS BILL.
SCANDALOUS BILL TO THE RESKUE.
THE UNSELFISH LOVE OF SCANDALOUS BILL.

As for me, myself, I think SCANDALOUS BILL and nothing else would be more fittin. What the Fans want is something short and snappy and you could save quite a bit by not settin so many words in electric lites. Besides they would not know what it was all about and that way they would be kept in suspense and it is always what makes the success of a picture, to keep the Fans in suspense until the end where we have the Grate Dramatic Climax Sceene:

THE SCEENARIO

THERE had ought to be rite at the start a close-up of Scandalous Bill comin out of a Saloon. They did not have Probichon in them days and the action takes plase in Tombstone Arizona. It is a very tuff town and some of the things they did there you would not beleive if I was to tell you. To show the Fans what a tuff town it was, you could have a man layin by the Saloon door with a big hole in his head and the blood dribblin from it. He is dead and the people

go back and forth, all around him, never payin no attention to the poor prostrate form. This is very effective and there would be no doubt left but what this was a tuff town.

But Scandalous Bill is a man whooze heart has never become hardened to suffering. He goes over to the corpss and looks down on it very sad and goes into some dialog.

SCANDALOUS BILL: "Ah—ah! Poor fellow! You should not have droo that ace from your vest pokit! This is a hot day, I will have your remanes took to Boot Hill Cimatary. It is alas the only thing I can do for you!"

He walks across the street shakin his head, and enters another Saloon.

Now you want to show a man comin out of the first Saloon, rite behind Scandalous Bill. He is a dark, sneerin young Cowboy very dissapated lookin. His name is Pecos City Jack, and he is the ennemy of Scandalous Bill. They work on the same ranch and are both heads over heels in love with the same girl which will be interdooced later in the sceenario.

Every time the swingin doors open you can hear loud noises from inside of the Saloon. Be sure the music and crashin of glass is very loud so as to drown the cussin.

Pecos City Jack is lookin very darkly at the back of Scandalous Bill when he would do better to look for obstacles at his feet, which in this case it happens to be the corpss and he trips over it and falls flat on his face utterin a terrible curse. It is all rite to have a laff now and then, even in a trajic story like this is, and every word true from my own life and experences. He gets up mouthing fowl words as follozs.

PECOS CITY JACK: "Damnation! Plague take the dirty skunk who left this carcass underfoot! What is it comin to, leavin bodies stroown about!" (He makes a wild kick at the poor defenseless corpss.)

THIS is a delicate way to show the difference in karacter between the two men, their attitude towards the corpss. Of course Scandalous Bill did not fall over it, and maybe it is not a fare comparison, you can use your own judgment. But do not get the idea that Scandalous Bill is a sissy; he is just as tuff as the next fellow, but compachonit.

Then there had ought to be a close-up of Pecos City Jack gnashin his teeth and fingerin his pistol. He is thinkin what he would like to do and there can be some flashes showin him in the dark of nite, aimin a pistol at his ennemy whooze unawares of his presence and cookin bacon over a camp fire. You can decide on the music yourself but what you want here is a lot of *brrrrrrr* from a drum and some deep *booms* here and there, because all this is of a very ominuss nature. And also the wind whisslin up the cañon. This will make goose-pimples on the Fans and make their blood run cold.

NOW we better have the love intrest make an appearance because if you dont bring in a Beautiful Girl pretty soon, all the Fans will walk out on you—you know how it is as well as I do. Her name is Miss Mazie Fisher, and she is a fair young blonde maiden, but very shy. The way it happened she got mixed up in this is because her father was a failure in Life and back in Boston where they use to live he was engaged in the Vermin Extermination business, but he was too full of pity and human kindness to make a success of it. And when the people found out he was not puttin enuff pison in his powders, they took their business to the competition and left him to starve.

There had ought to be flashes of him mixin up his powders, he is a sorry lookin washed-out old man. In one hand he holds a big bottle with the word *Pison* on it, and a skull. He is undergoing a struggle which is reflection on his features by flinchin, twitchin, blinkin, and maybe a teer or two rollin from his eyes. Finally he makes a desision and goes into some dialog, something like this—

MR. FISHER: "No! Lord help me, I am a poor man, but I will not put it in!" (He flings the bottle away with grate determination.)

Then there is a musical voice as follozs.

THE VOICE: "Oh, you dere old daddy, I have been watchin you, and I am so glad you throo the bottle away because I am fully in accord with your humane ideas." It is Miss Mazie Fisher, and that is the kind of a girl she is, not one of them flippers you see nowadays.

Then there was one of them Reel Estate Slikers. You dont need to ring him in—it can all come out in the dialog, and I will write it for you later if you want it. With nefarious methods he sold them a peese of land in Arizona where they could make another Bid for Life under the Western sun,

which it is hot enuff to fry eggs but he did not tell them that. And so they headed Westward with grate hopes and a spring wagon.

Remember, this is in the early days, and people thought nothing of going from Boston to Tombstone in a spring wagon. Look it up, you will be surprized what large quantity of distances people covered in spring wagons at this early date. There had ought to be flashes of the grate dangers and suffering encountred on this long journey, such as once a wheel fell off the spring wagon, and they had an awful time gettin it back on.

You could put in an Indian attack or two, altho it was kind of late for that, and the Indians was already fixin up for the tourists. But if you think there ought to be an Indian attack, use your own judgment and I will write you one. This is a true story of my own life and experences, every word true in black and white; but if the Fans want an Indian attack—why, you got to give them one.

THEY arrive at this plase they have perchased from the Reel Estate Sliker, and the spring wagon is all but wore out. (The sounds of a wore-out wagon can be made by rubbin an old boot on a peece of glass. What you want is a squeakin noise.) They hurry up the hill dancin up and down on the seat in the thros of joy, and urgin the horse to grater speed. I have not mentioned the horse before, because I took it for granted that you knew it took a horse to pull a spring wagon, and he is pretty tired, you can see that, walkin from Boston to Tombstone, Arizona.

And lo, they round up the hill and come in site of their new home and it is nothing but a peece of desert land with an old water-hole in the middle and some dead cows and bones all around it.

There is a close-up of Mr. Fisher and daughter with a grate dispare settlin deeper on their features. They sink to earth sobbin and shakin their shoulders. This is a very trajic momment, and you want to have some sad music here. It is very sad.

The close-up of Scandalous Bill ought to show the awakenin of a grate Love. It will be sufficient to show Pecos City Jack rollin his eyes and curlin his mustache.

IN the distance appear two mounted figures. They are lookin for stray cows and going thru some dialog as they ride along.

SCANDALOUS BILL: "This is a very dry summer. I dont know what it will come to if we do not get some rane pretty soon. The water holes are all dryin up."

PECOS CITY JACK: "What care I if it never ranes. I do not own any stock!"

SCANDALOUS BILL: "Take back them crool words, you unspeakable cur. Have you no pity?"

PECOS CITY JACK: "Keep your shirt on, I was only jokin." He fingers his pistol and goes thru a struggle but thinks better of it and sneers.

SCANDALOUS BILL: (scannin the horizon) "What is that I see by the side of Lonesome Hole? It looks like a wagon with some folks around it."

PECOS CITY JACK: "Ah—ah! Another

batch of homesteaders! We will make short work of them, never feer!"

IT is easy to see by the look on Pecos City Jack's face that he would like to murder the strangers, not because they are squatters, but because the bloodlust is upon him. Scandalous Bill lays a restranin hand on his arm and witholds his progress.

SCANDALOUS BILL: "Them people need help, my frend, and they will not be mistreated in my presence, bare that in mind!"

They lope to the water-hole and reelize at once that one of the strangers is a girl, a beautiful blonde maiden with a stunnin figure. There is a good chance for some close-ups of how this disclosure made a grate change in the two men's lives. The close-up of Scandalous Bill should ought to be a long one to show the awakenin of a grate Love. It will be sufficient to show Pecos City Jack rollin his eyes and curlin his mustache—yes, he had a mustache.

And now there is a Lapse of Time durin which the two cowboys have built a house for the Fisher family. It is not an elaborit residence by any meens, but it is snug and comfortable, and they are puttin the finishin touches on it. Miss Mazie is laffin coyly and helpin stir up a batch of dobe mud with her delicate hands, and she goes into some dialog.

MISS MAZIE FISHER: "You boys are wonderful. I do not know what we would of did but for your kind help."

SCANDALOUS BILL: "It is nothing, Miss. Us Westerners is always happy to assisst poor ignerant Eastern people."

PECOS CITY JACK: "Spechally beautifull ones like you, Miss Mazie. It is a grate pleasure. But maybe, ere many moons have passed, I will be rewarded."

Miss Fisher hangs her head and blushes, but she is not displeased. She does not know the kind of a man which is payin her compliments; and his ententions are not honorable, you can see that.

Scandalous Bill walks away slow and lookin sad. He had hoped. . . . . But he was too much of a man to force his attentions in this unbecomin manner. There had ought to be some close-ups of his shattred dreams and some flashes of a little home in the mountains with Scandalous Bill and Miss Mazie Fisher entwined in each others arms on the portico, and a couple of Fond Loved Ones rompin on the grass. You can have 3 or four of them—use your own judgment; but 2 is enuff for a start.

We better hurry up now. My advice is to make it reel snappy, or the Fans will quit you cold; it aint any too comfortable in these new theaters with coolin systems, and I got some pretty ruff stuff comin along soon.

The way it was is that Old Man Trigger run short of water; it was a dry summer, and he decided to drive his herds to the Lonesome Hole, which he had always done this for 25 yeers altho he did not own it. It was an old Western custum.

And when he received the report that the water-hole was fenced up and somebody raisin tomatoes on the adjacent land, he was fit to be tied. He is an old cow man; they are all dead now, and he goes into some dialog as follozs.

OLD MAN TRIGGER: "Burn 'em out! Shoot 'em full of holes! Chase 'em out of the country! I'll have no damned wrinklebellies squatted on my water-holes, sir! Wipe 'em out! String 'em up! Wait, I will go along and see it is done rite."

YOU want to get it in that Scandalous Bill had heard all by listenin at the window. This aint a habit with him, but he was passin by and become attracted by the loud voice of his boss. There is a close-up of his face palin under the tan. Without a word he makes for his horse and rides away Hell Bent for leather. We see him racin across the planes, and the sound of his horses hooves can be made with a rollin of a drum—but do not make it too fast; a horse can go so fast and no faster, even if all the homesteads in Arizona is burnin down. It is too funny for words how fast horses is made to run in some of the pictures. But the Fans are ketchin on; you got to be careful.

Scandalous Bill arrives at a crossroads and almost comes in collision with Pecos City Jack, whooze also racin in the same direction. They stop and eye each other with distrust.

SCANDALOUS BILL: "Where are you goin?"

PECOS CITY JACK: "Stand back. I have business in yonder direction!"

SCANDALOUS BILL: "Your business is not so pressin as mine; it is for you to stand back!"

PECOS CITY JACK: "Do not push me too far, I am desprit!"

SCANDALOUS BILL: "A maids life hangs in the balance, clear the way!"

PECOS CITY JACK: "O, so you have be-

come a defender of maidens. Well, you can turn back and join the forces of your employer. That girl is mine, and I will defend her, never feer!"

SCANDALOUS BILL: "I have not seen any marridge announcement as yet."

PECOS CITY JACK: "You will see the business end of a .45 if I catch you within a mile of her house!"

SCANDALOUS BILL: "Oh, oho, so that is the way the land lies! Dismount and prepare to difend yourself!"

HERE you want to be sure and get it in that Pecos City Jack tried to draw his pistol, but Scandalous Bill is too quick for him, and pulls him off his horse and they have a fite.

It is a terrible fite. You could never go too far with it. There was nothing barred; that is the way they use to fite in the early days.

Anything you put in here will be all rite, such as kikin, bitin, eye-gougin, buttin and hittin below the belt. But Scandalous Bill is a more scientific boxer and a bigger man, and after they had battled for 45 minutes, he put an end to it all with a terrific solar plexuss bloe which landed smack on his jaw, and he fell into the dust bleedin and all out of breath.

Scandalous Bill had not reelized how fast the Time was passin, and now it is all over he says in dialog: "Oh, migod, maybe I will be too late!" Of course you cannot have the fite on the screen for 45 minutes, but you want to ring it in somewhere in the dialog, because it is important to the story as you will see later.

THE next sceene, he is ridin across the planes, weavin in the saddle back and forth like a drunk Arapahoe. Of course this is not the case, but he has got all busted up in the fite and it is very paneful to ride a horse in that condition.

He rounds up the top of the hill and comes in site of the Fisher homestead; and lo, there is a body of men on horses pullin up in front of the door! Now you can see for yourself that if the fite had not lasted 45 minutes Scandalous Bill would of had ample time to warn Miss Mazie and take her away elswhere, and they could of built another house where there wasnt no waterhole. But a crool Fate would have it otherwise—and be sure to put in some close-ups of this and of the dispare settlin deeper and deeper on Scandalous Bills face.

But he shakes off this feelin and his eyes begin to shine with a grate determination. He pulls his gun and goes into some dialog as follozs.

SCANDALOUS BILL: "Well, old pal, you have bumped my hips for many a mile, and put many a blister there. We have shot our way out of many a fray, but this is a time for caution." And while he is speakin thus, there had ought to be some flashes of gun-battles in which Scandalous Bill took plase. Bill is in a crouchin position, and smilin, and shootin from the hip, this is his favorit shootin position. And you can use your own judgment about the gun-fites; this is a true sceenario—every word can be backed up by old settlers around here. You cant go too far; this is in the early days, and anything you put in there will be sacred Trooth.

Scandalous Bill sneeks thru the grass and sage-brush to a point of vantage where he can see everything and take a hand if necessary.

The men on horses are Old Man Triggers hirelings and a very tuff crew of desparadoes, every man with a reward on his head and wanted in every State for several murders and horse-stealin, and they would set fire to an orfan asylum, you can see that.

Old Man Trigger is ragin and mouthing fowl words in the front yard.

OLD MAN TRIGGER: "Look at that! They have fenced the water-hole all around and raisin tomatoes! What is it comin to, raisin tomatoes while my cattle is dyin of thirst! Come out of there, sir! Before I blast your hovel off the fase of the earth!"

The door opens, and Mr. Fisher comes out. He is cryin and quakin with feer. He goes into some dialog.

MR. FISHER: "Take pity on us, sir; this is all we have left. A crool Fate drove us here, and the spring wagon is all but wore out; we cannot get back to Boston!"

OLD MAN TRIGGER: "I am sorry to heer it, but I did not send for you. Pack up your duffel bag and be gone!"

AND now Miss Mazie Fisher staggers out. She's all in teers and makes a pitiful figure, but very charmin. Her hair has come untied, and in the sun it shines like a brass cuspidor.

MISS MAZIE FISHER: "Would you leave us to dye a feerful death, unprotected on the prairy?"

Old Man Trigger cauffs and sputters and speaks in a whisper: "What devil's

Scandalous Bill deels him a terrible triphammer bloe rite on the button of the jaw. .

work is this! Migad, she is a peach! *Mmmmmm!"* And in a gruff tone of voice: "Young lady, it panes me to see you in these surroundings. You had ought to have better sense than to be an immigrant. All squatters I ever seen before was skinny and wild and locoed as peach orchard boars."

MISS MAZIE FISHER: "It is the fault of a Reel Estate Sliker. Wouldst that I had never cast my eye on this sceene!"

OLD MAN TRIGGER (in a whisper): "Well, now, I don't know! *Mmmm"* (Then aloud): "Young lady, do I look like a man what would do a woman harm?"

MISS MAZIE FISHER: "You seem a kind and noble gentleman, and I admire grately your uprite bearing."

OLD MAN TRIGGER: "And I aint so old as I look, either! I led a ruff life, slayin Indians and tailin up sick cows in the winter times. See here, I got 15,000 head of cattle grazin these planes, money in the bank, a good ranch-house and the best outfit of corrals in Arizona. I need a pardner, and I aint never seen such a likely one as you before. And you'd be a damn' site better off in my house than cluttering up my water-holes! I'm askin for your hand in marridge, and I beg your pardon, ma'am, but you better talk fast; my cows is thirsty."

Miss Fisher is blushin; she is undergoing a struggle. I couldnt see so good from behind them bushes, but it aint likely that she was tickled, altho you never can tell about wimen. Old Man Trigger was a pretty well preserved old ranny, and he cut quite a figure on a horse.

Here you want to put in a close-up of Scandalous Bill behind the bushes. This is the dramatic sceene, and you want to play it rite with some soft music. He loves Miss Fisher; it is a grate unselfish Love. But he aint got nothing only 30 dollars a month and two months drew in advance for a new saddle. What can he do? This is a sad dilemna as you can see. He knows what he would like to do, and that is shoot old man Trigger and dash across the planes with Miss Fisher across his saddle. But there is the renigades to deel with. They would raise hell at such goins on. Scandalous Bill is not afeerd of them, the danged outlaws, but he cannot put Miss Fisher in jeopardie, and his face gets soft and the teers roll from his eyes. Maybe she will be happy with so much money and lots of horses to ride.

Now his pistol drops from his fingers, and he goes into some dialog. The words come out soft and low and kinda quivery.

SCANDALOUS BILL: "Good by, sweetheart. You will never know what a grate

chance you have missed to be loved by a reel man."

The sun is going down; it is evening. Miss Fisher and her dad have packed up their meeger belongings and they ride away with Old Man Trigger and his gang. Miss Fishers horse passes close to Scandalous Bills hidin-plase, and she drops a handkerchief. A hand reaches out and grabs it; it is Scandalous Bills hand.

There had ought to be a fade-out of Miss Fisher on top of the hill on her horse, and she looks back once, and maybe there is a teer in her eye—you can use your own judgment.

Scandalous Bill stands up and looks over the prairy with sad eyes. His face becomes hard; he will go out and raise hell—you can see that. People had better look out; he is now a Bad Man. That is how Bad Men get started—they are disapointed early in life.

There is a sourcastic laff from behind. It is Pecos City Jack. Scandalous Bill turns around and walks up to him, and they have another fite, but it does not last 45 minutes, oh, no. Scandalous Bill deels him a terrible triphammer bloe rite on the button of the jaw. Pecos City Jack falls down a deep gully out of site. You can heer the rocks and gravel rollin for a couple of minutes.

Scandalous Bill gives a laff but his heart is not in it. He goes to his horse and rides away a broken hearted man.

THE ENDING

THIS is a true story, in black and white, and I know it is not a happy ending, but the Fans are gettin tired of seein a *hombre* which looks like an underware salesman kissin some woman which reminds you of a poor range critter in the spring of the yeer after a hard winter, at the end. Miss Fisher was not like that; she was a reel girl, with some meet on her bones in the rite plases, and I am sorry to say she led a happy life with Old Man Trigger, and they have now four children.

I hope you will take some panes with this, because it will be reward enuff for me when Mazie goes to the picture show, some Saturday nite, and finds out that she had been loved by Scandalous Bill. It will be a grate revalation to her, and I would not be surprised if she was to bust out in teers rite there in plane site.

I remane very truly yours as ever,

SCANDALOUS BILL.

He heard of the murder first when the newspapers printed his picture as the probable culprit: a mystery novelette of exceptional interest.

Wanted

By LAURENCE

Illustrated by

JIMMY WELDON stared at his likeness in the tabloid sheet. The portrait was a crude smudge of black on dirty white, a ghastly caricature of his own clear, fine features, yet the resemblance was there. It was unmistakably his picture on the front page. Jimmy's fatigue-blurred gray eyes cleared suddenly in the shock of recognition and his mind sprang to the alert with a foreboding of grave peril.

The "tab" was held in front of his face by a strap-hanger who peered at it through thick, concave glasses and moved his lips

Jimmy saw something that lent wings to his feet—a blue uniform and, behind, unmistakably a plain-clothes man.

for Murder

EDHOLM

Allen Moir Dean

as he read. The sheet swayed and jerked with the motion of the car, but still Jimmy managed to catch a glimpse of the caption. It was as shocking as the distorted and brutalized portrait, for it read: "Turn in this man and receive $1,000 in gold. James Weldon. Wanted for Murder in Mystery Room.—Story on Page 3."

At that same moment the train swung clanking and roaring around a curve; the lights blinked and jumped; the passengers were flung against each other violently, and all that uproar and confusion was magnified a thousandfold in the young man's brain. His thoughts ran in giddy circles. Wanted for murder! Incredible—a frightful hallucination! Jimmy Weldon closed his eyes, rubbed his hands over his aching temples and tried to force himself to believe that he was "seeing things."

"Snap out of it, kid!" he muttered. It was no go. The picture remained too clear in his mind to be only a fantastic vision. The boy racked his brain for the answer to this monstrous puzzle: last night and the night before, where had he been? What had he done?

THOUGH it was the beginning of the morning rush hour, Jimmy was not on his way to work. He was finding his way home, exhausted, unshaven, with a funny taste in his mouth and a terrible head.

As the train jerked to a stop there was the customary stampede of passengers to

rush out and rush into the car at the same time. The spectacled man with the "tab" dropped it and bolted for the door. Jimmy snatched at the paper, feverishly turned to Page Three—and saw with a sickening feeling of frustration that the page had been ripped out. He turned back to Page One and again saw his own picture staring at him with an expression so beastly and so cunning that the portrait alone would be enough to convict a man of murder. This was too wild to be true. Yet it *was* true: Jimmy was a fugitive from justice, wanted for a murder that he could not deny, inasmuch as his memory of the last forty-eight hours was like a clean-wiped blackboard.

The train was slowing for the next station when blind panic seized the boy. He fought his way to the door. Before it was fairly open Jimmy had squeezed through, plunged against the crowd trying to get aboard and was racing across the platform to the waiting express. Out of the tail of his eye, Jimmy saw something that lent wings to his feet; a blue uniform and shield, and behind the patrolman a heavy-set fellow—unmistakably a plain-clothes man.

Jimmy did not halt. His frantic leap landed him against a door that was sliding shut. He caught it, wrestled fiercely with its weight, forced it back and jammed his body into the crowd within. A platform man cursed. The door closed, the train jerked forward and, disregarding the growled insults of the passengers he had stepped on, Jimmy panted in momentary relief. He was safe now until Times Square.

He shuddered and nausea seized him. Jimmy Weldon, who never before had been furtive and afraid of the law, kept his chin down in his collar and tugged his hat brim still lower. At Times Square the car doors opened and Jimmy was shot out with the crowd like a straw in a torrent. A few minutes later he was on the crowded street.

Without stopping he snatched up a copy of the "tab" from a pile, dropping the even change in the news-vendor's grimy palm to avoid delay. Jimmy could not wait to get under cover before turning to the story on Page Three. He read as he walked west on Forty-second Street. There it stood, the account of the crime.

"Rolf Derek slain!" Jimmy's heart thumped. Why, Rolf Derek was his boss!

ROLF DEREK, the famous inventor, had been found murdered in his laboratory, that glass-inclosed workshop on the roof of the Skytower Office Building. This was the "Mystery Room" of the headline writer. The ghoulish photographer had been quick at his trade. His snapshot of the crime setting showed the body of the stoutish, elderly scientist sprawled before a great sphere of steel; the safe in which secret formulas and diagrams were kept. An insert showed the .38-caliber automatic with which the crime had been committed. The gun had been positively identified as the property of James Weldon, a clerk employed by the inventor to attend to his correspondence and make himself generally useful about the office. Other evidence pointed to him as the murderer, and the enterprising paper, therefore, offered gold, a thousand dollars in gold, to the man who turned him in.

Like a wounded animal limping through the brush to its hole, Jimmy had been directing his steps toward Mrs. Nelly Oneely's dingy house in the far West Forties, where he had a furnished room all to himself and a bath which he shared with nine other lodgers on the third floor.

As he approached the shadow of the Ninth Avenue El, it occurred to him with a qualm of dismay that even that humble shelter was out of the question now.

In all New York, with its swarming millions, Jimmy Weldon knew but a single steel-true friend who would not double-cross him for money.

TILA WARE had a tiny apartment in the fringe of Greenwich Village. She would not be there at that hour, of course, for the girl had a time-clock job uptown, but Jimmy knew how to get into her living-room once he succeeded in reaching her house. If he could only reach it! He staggered forward from the curb—and a heavy hand seized his shoulder with a grip of iron. A harsh voice was in his ear, the voice of authority. Jimmy's blood curdled at the sound. Trapped! The policeman's voice was saying: "With the load of gin you're carryin', young fella-me-lad, kape away from the trucks!" And he was swung to safety as a heavy vehicle lumbered by.

"Better go home in a taxi, young fella," added the red-faced Patrolman Kelly, and signaled for a hovering cab. A few seconds later, Jimmy Weldon, wanted for murder, was being helped carefully into the machine by a kind-hearted cop, who also had been a wild lad in his youth.

"Bedford Street near Barrow," Jimmy

told the driver and sank down into the shadow of the seat, hoping that the fellow was nearsighted.

He felt in his pockets to make sure that he had the necessary fare and to his surprise found a thick roll of currency on his hip. There was a familiar five-dollar bill on the outside of the roll. But when he peeled it off, Jimmy gasped.

The balance of the currency was of denominations he had not even seen before. Thousand-dollar bills! And there were at least twenty of them in the roll. And in his other pocket was a wad of crumpled paper money that he had no time to count before the cab jerked to a stop.

BEFORE the taxi was at a standstill, he was out of it and, not waiting for the change from his five-dollar bill, Jimmy raced across the sidewalk, up the steps of the shabby apartment house and darted through the half open door. In the musty passage he almost collided with an angular, gimlet-eyed female, who had often sniffed her disapproval when she met him on his way to or from Tila's apartment.

As Jimmy had expected, Tila Ware's door was locked and his rapping brought no answer. Hurriedly the youth made for the narrow staircase to the roof, saw with great relief that no tenant was hanging out her wash on the festoon of clotheslines, and then as the coast was clear, he darted across to the fire-escape, descended a few rungs and a moment later was at the girl's window. She always left it partly open, preferring fresh air to security against sneak-thieves. For that matter there was little in her tiny apartment to tempt a burglar. Jimmy raised the sash, slid inside past the cretonne curtains, and was in the shelter of his sweetheart's living-room.

How colorful and cheerful it was! Even in his panic, Jimmy felt a comfortable glow at the inviting, homelike interior. Tila's apartment was like herself, never otherwise than fresh and attractive in appearance. The boy flung himself on the couch with its soft cushions and lay there panting for a few moments, resting and trying to collect his thoughts.

Suddenly he sat up with a jerk. That mysterious roll of high-denomination bills! What did it mean?

He spread out the roll on the couch and an odd thousand fluttered to the floor as he pulled the crumpled bills from the other pocket. Before him lay a tidy fortune. He feverishly counted up to forty thousand dollars, mostly in big bills, before a sudden grating noise overhead made him sweep the mass of green and yellow paper together, and conceal it under a pillow.

Jimmy slid back of the couch and listened, trying not to breathe so hard and keeping his eyes on the window beside the fire-escape.

Voices floated down to him. "It was the young fella that's buzzing the girl on the top floor," said one.

"Oh, him?" There was a loud, disdainful sniff. "That young squirt!"

"Yeah. He musta let himself in with a pass-key. Like as not she gave him a key."

"She *would*, the hussy! Fine goin's on fer a dacint house!"

"Aint it the truth! Would ye mind helpin' me with them big sheets, Mrs. Galloway? Sure, I don't know what the world's a-comin' to, I declare!"

"Me neither!"

Jimmy breathed more freely. It was just the neighbor women after all, dishing their daily dirt. Not the police! He went cautiously to the bathroom for a glass of cold water and then let the stream from the faucet run over his aching head. The chill cleared his brain, but still the questions remained unanswered.

Here was a double-barreled problem to think out. If only his memory would return! How did he come into possession of more than forty thousand dollars? And why was he pictured in the "tab" as a fugitive murderer? And who had killed Rolf Derek? Suddenly a fresh dismay seized him. He had been recognized by the neighbors as Tila Ware's "boy friend." Would the sharp-tongued gossips recognize his portrait in the tabloid sheet as well?

Jimmy felt the perspiration start on his aching head. But his first thought was for his little friend. "Got to get out of here," he muttered. "Mustn't get Tila into this."

Just then the knob of the entrance-door was turned hastily; then there was a rap at the door—short, sharp and imperative.

CHAPTER II

MEANWHILE in the laboratory of the late Rolf Derek, the powerful machine of the law was getting in motion ponderously. Three men were in conference in the laboratory atop the Skytower Building.

At the start there was a difference of

opinion between two officers who had come into the case from different angles. One was the square-jawed, heavy-featured Sergeant Broderick of the Homicide Squad assigned to take charge of the case by his superior, Inspector Grier. The other was Tom King, a blond, unaggressive-appearing investigator, working with the Secret Service in view of a certain startling disclosure. In the pocket of Rolf Derek's coat there had been found a set of steel plates used for counterfeiting thousand-dollar bills. Carefully wrapped in a silk scarf, they were the first things the officers had found in searching the corpse. Apparently they had been designed by an expert. They seemed flawless. And in the dead man's billfold were ten bills of thousand-dollar denomination, quite fresh and crackling, evidently the product of the false plates.

It seemed that Rolf Derek, the eminent inventor, had tried his hand at counterfeiting, with his usual brilliant success at mechanical problems.

Therefore the investigation was two-fold from the start: the police were interested in laying hands on Rolf Derek's murderer; the Federal Government was no less keen to get all the facts about the making of spurious thousand-dollar bills, and to put behind the bars all those who had been concerned in placing them in circulation.

For they had been floated in quantities. Reports had come in from banks as far away as Florida and California, and from points as near as Philadelphia and New York. The specimens picked up were so nearly perfect that only an expert could detect them—in fact, no more dangerous counterfeits were known to exist.

IF the counterfeiting was an unsolved case, the murder itself seemed "open and shut" to one expert at least.

"The only mystery about this killing is that any guy would be dumb enough to leave so much evidence lying around," said Sergeant Broderick, wheeling on Tom King. He sat in a steel chair before a steel desk in the "Mystery Room," where the body of Rolf Derek lay before the safe just as it had been found some hours ago. Only now it was covered by a sheet.

On the polished metal surface of the inventor's worktable lay the weapon that had inflicted the death wound. It was a blue automatic with the clip full except for a single cartridge. The empty brass shell lay beside the gun. Near by was a sheaf of papers, creased from being carried in the pocket of a coat.

Tom King picked them up and looked at them one at a time while Broderick continued: "There's the gat that did the killing. Positively identified as Jimmy Weldon's gun. There's the boy's formal request of a month ago asking for a raise. It was in the old man's desk, marked in red pencil as you see."

Tom King saw. On the sheet was scrawled with vindictive energy one word, "Refused."

"And here is the motive for robbery, Broderick added. "Bills, bills, bills! These are from young Weldon's desk downstairs. The last one contains a threat to recover one platinum ring set with a sapphire and small diamonds, unless remittance is made by return mail."

"Well," answered Tom King, "Jimmy Weldon is not the first lad who spent more money than he earned and was refused a raise in salary."

"And he is not the first underpaid clerk who tried to rob his employer's safe, and shot to kill when he was interrupted," retorted Broderick.

"Now, let's get down to cases. Here's the facts so far: Rolf Derek was shot last night about ten o'clock as near as we can check up on it.

"At that time the porter, Franz Fein, was in Derek's business office right below this workshop. He heard what might have been the shot, but did not investigate right away, for loud noises like explosions were nothing unusual in the laboratory where all kinds of experiments were tried out."

"What was Fein doing in the room below at that hour of the night?" asked King.

"Setting the place to rights. Sweeping and emptying the waste-baskets. Anyhow he was a sort of special watchman and was on duty all night long."

"I see. Go on."

Sergeant Broderick continued: "After a while Fein remembered that he had been ordered to deliver a package for the boss at ten o'clock. He went up the staircase to inquire whether it was ready to go and tapped at the door. He tapped again, but got no answer. That was queer, for if Derek didn't want to be disturbed, he would always let out a yell fit to scare a man. That was Derek's way with his help, crabbed, violent and loud-mouthed.

"Then Fein tried the door and found it unlocked. He had not expected that, for

the laboratory was closely guarded against snoopers and nobody went in without Rolf Derek's special permission. As a matter of fact, Fein says he had never been in here before, so, being anxious to see what the mysterious workshop looked like, he went inside on tiptoes.

almost finished and he would come over as soon as the show closed. As a matter of fact Mr. Wyle was here right on the heels of the police. He was present when Inspector Grier questioned Fein and also while the medical examiner was making his survey of the body."

He staggered forward from the curb—and a heavy hand seized his shoulder with a grip of iron.

"That's what he saw," Sergeant Broderick waved to the sheeted body before the polished steel sphere. "There before the safe was his boss with a bullet-hole in his head and Jimmy Weldon's gun on the floor beside him."

"What did Fein do next?" asked Tom King.

"First he looked carefully to see whether the man was really dead; then he jumped for the phone and called up headquarters. Fein was badly rattled, for he had been in the pen some years before and he knew that the cops would try to pin the murder on him—as was perfectly natural. So the next thing he did was to ring for a friend to get him out of this jam. He called up another number, the Galaxy Theater where Mr. Wyle here," (the Sergeant nodded to the third man in the group) "was playing, Mr. Wyle being a friend of his and also the nearest kin of the dead man. Mr. Wyle's valet, Poe, answered the phone. Poe said that his master was on the stage at the moment, but his scene was

"That's correct," remarked Alan Wyle, lighting a cigarette.

"Did Fein see anybody enter or leave the workshop?" asked Tom King.

"No. And the elevator starter said that he saw no one. But the murderer could have used the staircase."

"Of course Fein was pretty thoroughly grilled?"

"I'll say so. He was handed a little rough stuff too. But he told a straightforward story and was not to be shaken. Naturally he is held for further grilling. But Jimmy Weldon's disappearance makes it look as if the boy is the party we want. If you ask me, I'll say Jimmy done it."

"What do you think of it, Mr. Wyle? Do you think Jimmy shot your uncle?" Broderick turned to the actor.

"I'd hate to believe it of the boy," replied Alan Wyle thoughtfully. "He was always so quiet and gentle in his manner. And there's nothing in his past record in the way of crime. No, I can't believe Jimmy would kill a man."

TOM KING sent a glance at the speaker, who was regarding Broderick with a steady look in his brown eyes, that expressed a generous desire to shield the boy. Wyle was a handsome, well-set-up man in his late thirties and fairly successful in his profession. For about a year he had been playing on Broadway in the "Jazz Dream." As Rolf Derek's nephew and nearest kin it was quite reasonable for Fein to notify Wyle of the murder as soon as the body was discovered.

Tom King questioned: "You know this boy quite well?"

"Oh, yes. You see, Jimmy Weldon had often come to my hotel room with messages from my uncle."

"What kind of messages?"

"Usually money, and a receipt to be signed." The actor noticed a slight start and a change of Broderick's expression at the word "money." He smiled. "Don't worry, Sergeant, the money that Derek sent me was not any of his counterfeit stuff, I am sure. In fact, it was usually in bills of small denomination that had been circulated and were no longer new. The reason he sent me money was this: He was trustee of a fund from my mother, who was Uncle Rolf's sister. In that capacity he sent me a stated sum every month. Jimmy Weldon was the messenger when I was in the city. At other times the currency was sent by registered mail."

Broderick interrupted sharply: "And all that time you had no suspicion that Derek was engaged in counterfeiting?"

Wyle disclaimed all such knowledge with a gesture. "I never even dreamed of such a thing," he replied. "Otherwise I would have notified the authorities."

Tom King noted every word, but abruptly changed the subject, as he frequently did in conducting an investigation. Turning to Broderick, he said: "Of course you had the fingerprint expert go over everything?"

"Of course. Roy Hardin took care of that job. He's a good man."

"Did he find anything on the gun or the safe?" asked King.

"Not a mark. Everything had been carefully wiped off. Or else the murderer wore gloves."

KING nodded. "Naturally. Only an amateur in crime would leave fingerprints in this day and age." He turned once more to Alan Wyle.

"So you think the boy was too harmless, too inexperienced to commit such a crime?"

Wyle shrugged his shoulders. "I hate to think it of Jimmy. He was a nice kid, as I said. Still you never can tell—one drink and he'd do anything crazy."

"Then you do think he might be the killer after all? You are sorry for him, but you think it is reasonable to suspect him of this crime?"

WYLE nodded a silent and grave assent, and Broderick broke in:

"Why *shouldn't* Jimmy be suspected? I've showed you a stack of circumstantial evidence. His gun, the dunning bills—and the boy had been leading a double life, as the sayin' is."

"How do you mean that?"

"Mrs. Oneely couldn't even say when he was home last. By day he was a poor, hard-workin' clerk. By night he was chasin' about at all hours, dolled up like a Broadway sport, stepping out to night-clubs and tony shows. The boy was running wild with some broad," explained the Sergeant. "The poor sap stepped out with her until his jack was all spent and his credit used up. Then maybe he took a couple of drinks, which as Mr. Wyle says would be a full-size jag for him, and after that he tried to rob the safe and shot his boss. It's open and shut. Like that!" Broderick opened and closed his fist rapidly.

"Did you give his picture to the newspaper?" asked King.

Broderick smiled in embarrassment. "Naw," he admitted, "one of them fly reporters beat me to it. He was with the search party at Mrs. Oneely's and I guess he stole the picture from the kid's room."

"And his editor persuaded the owner of the sheet that it would be good business to offer a reward."

"Why not?" asked Broderick. "There's not much news just now. This offer of a lot of jack will jump the sales, and it may do us some good at that. The kid may be turned in."

"He's almost sure to be," agreed Tom King. "In this money-mad city, his own friends would be glad to earn that thousand dollars."

Broderick chuckled. "I'll say so. I could use a grand myself." He turned to Alan Wyle for confirmation and the actor remarked cynically, "Chances are his little blonde gold-digger would be the first to sell him out. Women are like that."

ONCE more King changed the subject abruptly. "What about getting into Derek's safe? That's where I expect some interesting facts about the counterfeiting."

"Madden, the safe expert, is due here any minute now," replied Broderick consulting his watch. All the men looked at the big sphere of steel that stood in the middle of the workshop. Evidently the robber had expected to open it by means of the combination: there was nothing to indicate that an attempt had been made to blow it open.

Tom King walked over to it and began twirling the combination. As he did so there was a faint metallic click. Suddenly the room which had been lighted from yellow sunshine through the walls of clouded glass was suffused with a brilliant greenish glare from overhead tubes.

Broderick jumped to his feet with an oath of surprise and Alan Wyle turned pale, though his face, the mask of a trained actor, showed no change of expression.

"Very interesting," said Tom King. "Rolf Derek was a genius for inventing startling devices. As you see, this combination was electrically wired so that it would light up the room brilliantly in case of tampering."

"What's the good of all that?" asked Broderick, recovering his self-possession. "Those lights were always kept going all night and every night."

"I know that," Tom King replied. "The lighted workshop on the tower was known to every nighthawk in the city. Who turned out the lights this morning?"

"I did," answered the sergeant. He went to a wall switch and pressed it. Instantly the green lights faded and there was a faint grinding sound that lasted a few seconds.

"You can see that Derek was taking no chances," remarked Tom King. "He wanted that safe illuminated twenty-four hours a day. I suppose he thought that yeggs would be afraid to work in such a brilliant light."

"The old boy thought of everything," agreed Alan Wyle. He lighted a cigarette on the end of the one he had been smoking and added, "If I am not needed here, I think I'll go to the hotel and get some sleep. This has been a long session for me, worse than an all-night poker game."

"That's all right, Mr. Wyle," said Broderick. "We don't need you now."

When the door closed behind him, Tom King said: "I suppose you are keeping him shadowed."

"Mr. Wyle? Oh, no—he's not suspected."

"Why not? He would come in for a fortune on Derek's death. He is the inventor's heir, as nearest kin."

"Well, he's not likely to inherit, for Derek never liked him—but even if he had a motive for his uncle's death, his alibi is perfect."

"How so?"

"Because, as I told you a while back, at the time the murder was committed, he was on the stage at the Galaxy Theater. Thousands of people saw him doing his famous blackface impersonation."

"You know that for a fact?"

"Sure. When he was phoned at the theater, he was on the stage and had been for half an hour. His valet, a man named Poe, took the message and said he would deliver it as soon as Mr. Wyle came to his dressing-room."

"Galaxy Theater," mused Tom King. "That is six blocks from here, isn't it?"

The telephone bell shrilled.

Jason Trude, one of Tom King's operatives, was on the wire. "I have a report of Alfred Orr," said Trude. "He is on his way to the laboratory now. Will be there in five minutes."

"Good," answered Tom King. "I want to see that man."

Turning to Broderick he added, "Of course you know of Alfred Orr. Next to the great Derek himself, he ranked as one of the cleverest inventors in the country."

Broderick nodded. "Made millions out of his inventions."

"That's right. Well, Orr and Derek are two men who had been our list as possible counterfeiters. Not because of any criminal record, for neither had one, but because both had the technical skill and appliances to turn out almost flawless counterfeit."

"Were they supposed to be working as a team?" asked the Sergeant.

"On the contrary, they were rivals, envious of each other's success. I fancy that Orr is delighted at this chance to see his chief competitor's workshop."

CHAPTER III

AS Jimmy Weldon heard the sharp, imperative knock on Tila's door, he had only one overpowering impulse. Flight!

His imagination pictured the neighbors

summoning the nearest policeman and in his mind's eye he saw a blue-coated figure outside the door with a nightstick ready for action. But his own safety was not the first consideration. If the police found him in Tila's apartment, the girl would be haled to prison as a witness or a possible accomplice: she would be exposed to merciless grilling and other humiliations.

Without further hesitation he leaped for the window, making no more noise than a cat and in an instant was on the fire-escape and fleeing to the roof.

It was hung with washing now and at the head of the staircase he saw a woman ascending with a basket of wet clothes. She stared at him suspiciously; but Jimmy did not intend to go down by those stairs. With a flying leap he was over the coping in the other direction and ran from roof to roof, searching eagerly for a staircase leading down to another house.

He shook one door after another: they were all locked, and to add to his anxiety, heads were soon projecting from neighboring windows that overlooked the roof; suspicious faces were eying him. He looked like a sneak-thief trying to make a getaway, and somebody shouted a shrill alarm.

At that moment Jimmy saw a pent-house door ajar, slipped into it and almost broke his neck on the dark, slippery steps as he raced down. A colored girl with a mop was cleaning the hall as he dashed through it. She was a big, husky Amazon and there was a dangerous glint in her eye as she saw him coming.

Jimmy caught himself up short and walked toward her slowly. By an inspiration, he removed his soft hat and bowed gallantly: "Excuse me, Madam," he said. "I'm the city radio inspector. I am inspecting all roofs for static. How are your radios working?"

"Bless de Lawd, Mr. Inspector, we aint got no raddio in this house," answered the colored woman, grinning widely. "But I thanks you for askin', jest the same."

She made way for him to descend, removing the scrub bucket from the head of the stairs, and a minute later Jimmy was in the street and walking rapidly toward the Hudson Tubes, feeling that he would be happier outside New York State.

BY the time Jimmy had reached the roof, the door had been opened with a key and Tila Ware had stepped into the living-room.

The girl looked around with a keen sense of disappointment. Her dark eyes clouded and her slender figure sagged dejectedly.

During the morning, while at her desk in the Occidental Hosiery Company, she had seen the tabloid in a waste-basket and Jimmy Weldon's features had seemed to leap at her from the printed sheet. In a second she had pounced on it, read the startling news about her friend's misfortune, and hurriedly resolved to help him.

"If Jimmy is in trouble," she thought, "he wont dare to go home. Where would he go?" Then with a start, "To my house first! He may be there now."

On the plea of a violent headache, Tila begged permission from her department head to leave for the day. The shock had driven the color from her cheeks and her delicate features were drawn and haggard.

"You do look terrible, child," agreed Miss Blossom, her chief. "Hurry home and make yourself a hot cup of tea and go to bed right away."

Tila put on her hat and coat and raced through the busy streets to the subway. The ride was like a nightmare. Having once seen Jimmy's picture in the "tab," it seemed to her that she saw it fifty times before she reached her house. In the hall, she noticed half a dozen women with their heads together, who stared as she went by and hushed their whispers.

AN intuition told her that Jimmy was in the apartment, that he had been seen to enter, and she hastily decided to rap, so as not to startle the boy by walking in on him unexpectedly.

And now he was gone! That some one had been there, she could not help seeing at the first glance. The disordered cushions, the wide-open window, told the story of a hasty flight. She stepped to the window, looked out and closed it.

But why had the boy come to her home only to hurry away again? The girl went into the kitchenette and the bathroom to see whether he might be hiding there—and as she returned to the living-room, her heart seemed to turn over and settle like a leaden weight in the pit of her stomach.

Inside the living-room door, which she had left ajar, stood a burly, blue-clad figure with a shield on his chest. He looked at her as no man had ever looked at her before, with a complete disregard of her feminine weakness and charm.

"What—what do you want here?" she

"Pick it up," he commanded. "An' it will do ye no good to hide out any of this jack in your clothes!"

managed to gasp. Her throat seemed paralyzed.

"You know what I want. Where is he hiding?"

The patrolman's hard eyes were searching the room back of her. His fist was hard on the nightstick.

Tila gasped, her black eyes distended with fright—yet she sought to assert her rights.

"Nobody is hiding here! You have no business to walk into my apartment like this. How dare you come in without knocking?"

"Snap out of it, sister. That stuff don't get you nowhere," retorted Officer Biltz. "The people in the house reported that you are harboring a man wanted fer murder. Where is he?"

"It's a lie." Tila's eyes blazed.

"Don't stall," he said curtly. "Do you know what you are? I mean if you harbor and give shelter to a murderer. You are an accessory after the fact, and can be held to answer a murder charge yourself. How would you like that, now? A murder charge!"

The girl braced herself, her anger conquered her fear.

"You're raving," she said. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"You're wasting time, sister. I gave you a chance to come clean. Now you'll have to take the consequences."

WITH a heavy step the officer brushed past the girl and searched the bathroom, kitchenette and clothes-closet. He opened the dumbwaiter shaft and looked down, then, returning to the living-room, stooped to peer under the couch. A scrap of yellow paper caught his eye and with a grunt of triumph he rose to his feet clutching the thousand-dollar note that Jimmy had dropped.

"I've got the goods on you," growled Officer Biltz. "Derek was counterfeiting thousand-dollar bills and the man who killed him got away with a big haul in phony money."

Tila stared at the currency in astonishment. "I don't know how it came here," she protested through dry lips.

"No?" Biltz ripped the cover from the couch with a single tug. The pillows flew in all directions and with them a shower of yellowbacks.

Even the stolid policeman was surprised at the amount of the hidden loot.

"Pick it up," he commanded brusquely. "An' it will do ye no good to hide out any of this jack in your clothes, for the matron at the stationhouse will search you."

The girl obeyed, with tears brimming her eyes that had flashed defiance only a few minutes before. Her mind was in a whirl. Jimmy had been there. He had hidden all that money in her room and fled. How was it possible that the boy could be innocent?

As she obediently handed the money to the policeman, he noticed the ring on her engagement finger.

"Oho, that's a classy stone for a workin' girl to be flashing," he observed. "A sapphire set with diamonds! Your boy friend sure was generous with his moll. Come on, now. I'll take ye to the station an' you can tell your story there."

CHAPTER IV

WHEN Alfred Orr entered the laboratory of his dead rival, both Sergeant Broderick and Detective Tom King arose with the deference due a distinguished scientist. He was entitled to a great string of letters after his name, indicating doctorates in various Old World universities, but no one thought of calling him either Doctor or Professor. Alfred Orr was a greater name than any degree.

Alfred Orr returned their greeting in a jerky, absent-minded manner, like one who was used to public tributes. He strode over to the rigid body lying before the safe, lifted the sheet and stared long at the pallid face, so rugged and uncompromising even in death.

While he did so, both Broderick and King looked keenly at the newcomer. He was a slightly built, stoop-shouldered man in his late sixties, with a wizened face and thin, bony features. The mouth was drawn to a taut, bluish line and the eyes were cold and fishy.

He had removed his hat on entering the office and disclosed a dome of bald head fringed with gray hair that hung over his collar.

There was silence in the room until Orr replaced the sheet with a decisive movement and turned to the officers.

His first words were surprising: "There lies the world's greatest crook," said Alfred Orr.

Both the hardened police sergeant and the detective were startled at this callous speech. They had expected some perfunctory expression of sympathy, or a tribute to the dead man's genius, but not this scathing denunciation.

Orr wheeled upon them sharply. "I am informed that Derek was a counterfeiter," he said. "I am not surprised."

Sergeant Broderick silently indicated the plates and spurious notes on the desk. Orr picked them up and for several minutes examined them carefully. Suddenly he took a jeweler's magnifying-glass from his pocket, screwed it in one eye and studied a corner of the note.

"There is a flaw here," he announced. "A break in the line of the scroll work."

Broderick stared, examined the note and shook his head.

"You are right," answered Tom King. "That is the defect by which the counterfeits were traced—a single break in a line no thicker than a baby's hair. You have astonishing powers of observation, sir."

The inventor removed the glass from his eye, laid it on the desk and regarded Tom King with a coldness verging on contempt. "That is part of my profession," he replied. "I must see the slightest flaw at a glance. In my delicate experiments, a minute error would ruin months of work."

Tom King nodded assent. Broderick had picked up the glass and was studying the note with a puzzled expression, but the detective was looking at Alfred Orr.

The inventor continued: "No doubt you wonder, gentlemen, why I am here. To be perfectly frank, I made this visit out of curiosity. I am intensely interested in all phases of human character, and I wanted to see the last of a man who was so high in his profession, yet was so low in his moral standards."

THERE was no reply, and Orr continued, glancing at the steel sphere, "I suppose the safe was full of spurious notes and more plates."

"We haven't opened it yet," answered Broderick. "Our safe expert is due here right now. I'm surprised Madden's not here yet. I'll call headquarters." He used the phone, then hung up with a shrug. "Madden's on another job, can't get here until this afternoon."

"Perhaps I can open it for you," suggested Orr.

"Do you understand opening safes?" asked Broderick in surprise.

"Of course. Anything mechanical is as clear as print to me." The inventor stooped to look at the combination for a few seconds, then delicately touched it with his thin, nervous fingers. He turned the knob while his ear was held close to the safe.

ONCE again, as before, the greenish glare of overhead lights filled the room and a grinding sound followed the slight click.

"Good God! What is that?"

Alfred Orr sprang back as if a rattlesnake had fanged him. His keen gaze swept the beams that supported the glass roof, eagerly searching for the sound.

"I should have warned you," King said gently. "This safe is wired to switch on powerful lights when it is touched. Evidently it was Rolf Derek's device to discourage burglars."

Alfred Orr looked at the two officers with a face that had suddenly become expressionless, like a carving in gray granite, but under the mask it was evident that the man's brain was working fast.

Presently he spoke in a husky voice. "Gentlemen, as I said, I can open this safe for you. It is my secret just how this is done, and I cannot disclose it, but if you will leave me alone for ten minutes, I can do you that service."

Broderick gazed doubtfully at the man. Tom King regarded him with a non-committal air.

"It's very irregular," objected the sergeant. "What do you say, Tom?"

"I'll leave it to you. There's nothing against it as far as I'm concerned."

"Why should there be?" Alfred Orr interposed hastily. "Surely you do not think I am going to rob the safe?"

"Oh, no. Nothing like that. Only I'm assigned to this case, to run down the murderer, and I'm supposed to watch every move."

The inventor showed a flash of temper. "Listen, Sergeant," he said. "I may be able to help you catch the young man you are looking for. I have more sources of information than you suppose. Now if you will listen to reason, I'll promise you to have Jimmy Weldon in your hands within twenty-four hours. Give me just five minutes alone with the safe. Surely in that time I could do no harm."

"Why are you so anxious to open the safe yourself?" demanded Broderick.

Alfred Orr blinked, then answered: "This is confidential. Derek stole certain formulas of mine—bribed an assistant to hand them over. You can see them and so can Mr. King; they would mean nothing to a layman, but to a rival inventor they would be a weapon against me. Do you understand?"

"I guess so," the sergeant asserted grudgingly. "But you are not to remove them without my permission."

"Not at all. Just make sure that no other inventor sees them."

Broderick shook his head stubbornly, but Tom King nudged him. "Don't be obstinate," he said. "I think it will be all right."

"O. K. For five minutes," growled Broderick and Orr could not conceal his relief.

The telephone rang. Tom King answered it, then turned to Broderick.

"They've brought in the girl," he remarked softly. "Patrolman Biltz caught her."

"What girl?"

"The one who has been floating the counterfeit thousand-dollar bills."

His eyes sought the inventor's face, though he addressed himself to the officer. "Shall I have the girl brought up here?"

"Sure! We'll get some facts about the killing from that broad. Bring her along."

Tom King spoke into the phone, hung up and remarked: "Well, Sergeant, let's leave the room for five minutes and give Mr. Orr a chance at the safe."

He took the other's arm and led him into the corridor. The men heard the door being locked behind them.

REALIZING that he was locked out of the workshop, Sergeant Broderick emitted a grunt of dismay and looked about for something to smash the door, but Tom King smiled reassuringly and opened his hand. In the palm was a key that the detective had taken from Rolf Derek's desk.

"I made sure of getting back before leaving that man alone in there," he whispered. "Give Mr. Orr a couple of minutes' time. I want to know what he is up to."

The sergeant nodded silently and the two men stood in the corridor listening. There was the sound of clicking metal and the noise of something heavy being dragged along the floor, then silence for a minute or two, after which the dragging sound was repeated.

Quietly Tom King inserted the key in the lock and turned it cautiously. The doorknob yielded to his pressure and in a moment the two were inside.

What they saw was astonishing. Instead of leaning over the safe, Alfred Orr was standing on a steel stepladder that had been in the corner of the workshop with some heavy tools. From his ears extended thin rubber tubes, a device like a surgeon's stethoscope, and by means of this instrument the scientist was listening for faint sounds in the metal beams that supported the glass roof.

He held a fairly heavy hammer in one bony hand, but as Tom King announced his presence with a cough, Orr let it drop, and it struck the concrete floor with a resounding crash.

"An unusual way to go about opening a safe," commented the detective dryly.

Alfred Orr scrambled from the ladder, pale with fury. He jerked the tubes from his ears and stuffed the instrument into his pocket. For a moment he could find no words, but only choked angrily at being spied upon, then he blurted out: "You have broken your word; spied on me as if I were a criminal! I am a scientist, sir. I was interested in the overhead lights and wanted to examine them. As for the safe, I can open that in a minute, and as you are so curious to see how it is done, I'll do it before your eyes."

"You'll do no more tricks in this room," asserted the sergeant roughly. "I've a good mind to hold you as a suspicious character."

Orr's laugh was grating and charged with contempt. "Go on—do it! You police are always making yourselves a laughing-stock. On what grounds could you arrest me?"

BRODERICK hesitated, not knowing what charge he could prefer against the man, and fearing ridicule if he should hold a distinguished and wealthy inventor on nothing more than vague suspicions. He glanced at the detective. To his annoyance, Tom King sided with Orr.

"After all, there is nothing out of the way in this gentleman's interest in the lights. We left him alone of our own free will, and he has not damaged anything."

"Yes, but he didn't open the safe like he promised," the sergeant insisted.

"Well, safe-breaking is a crime, but leaving a safe alone is within the law." Tom King was smiling quizzically. "You can't charge a man with neglecting to open another man's safe, you know."

Alfred Orr glared at the two men malevolently. He shrugged his shoulders, like one who is annoyed by childish prattle.

"If you two specimens of official blundering have no objection, I'll bid you both good day," he said stiffly and picked up his hat.

"Good day, sir. I am greatly obliged to you for calling," replied Tom King ironically with a bow. He laid a restraining hand on Broderick's arm and the latter stood aside to let the angry man pass.

In the corridor Alfred Orr turned on them and snapped out his farewell: "You need not expect any further help from me in running down the murderer."

"Aw, go chase yerself, you old windbag!" growled the irritated Broderick.

Tom King made no reply to Orr's last remark, but as soon as the man was in the elevator he hurried to the phone and called up his chief operative, Jason Trude.

"The great man has come and gone," he said. "His temper is ruffled. Keep an eye on him and report instantly anything peculiar in his actions."

He listened to Trude's answer, then added: "You kept a man on Number 2-XY, of course? That's right. Hand in reports tonight at my apartment as usual."

HARDLY had he hung up when the bell rang violently and Tom King answered its summons.

"Oh, the girl's here, is she? You have her downstairs in the office? Jimmy Weldon's girl? All right."

The detective called to Broderick. "Sergeant, will you question the young lady? No. I don't care to talk to her. Not now at least. But, listen old man, do me a personal favor and go easy with her. No rough stuff!"

Broderick growled something that might be assent, then asked: "Shall I bring her up here?"

"Not if you can question her downstairs in the office. I want to look over this counterfeiting evidence a little more carefully. And I'll have some phone calls to make."

Broderick departed and Tom King, left alone in the laboratory, glanced at the spurious notes, but only for a moment.

When he was sure that Broderick was busy, the detective turned off the lights by pressing the wall switch, then turned them on as before by twirling the dial of the safe. Then following the example of Alfred Orr, he mounted the steel ladder and applied his ear to the beams of steel overhead. What he heard gave him satisfaction and he examined the hollow structural steel more

carefully. It was studded with small polished rivets and close inspection showed peculiar features. He fingered them and found two that were loose and easily detachable.

"Thanks for the tip, Mr. Alfred Orr," murmured Tom King in a gratified tone. "Without your visit, I might have passed up something."

For an hour he was busy in the laboratory and when he left he was carrying a heavy square package.

"An unusual way to go about opening a safe," commented the detective dryly.

At the door of the office on the floor below he stopped long enough to call Sergeant Broderick. As the officer opened the door, Tom King had a glimpse of Tila sitting there with traces of tears on her cheeks while a couple of plain-clothes men plied her with questions. Uniformed police were in the room and a Department stenographer.

"Don't be rough on the girl," the detective admonished him. "And by the way, be sure to put a guard on the workshop. I'm leaving."

"All right. The attendants from the mortuary will be here this afternoon to get the body," answered Broderick. "I'll send Patrolman Cullinane up there right now."

IT was the middle of the afternoon before Tom King reached the Galaxy Theater and as it was not a matinee day there was little sign of life about the stage entrance.

The detective approached the doorman with a politeness that disarmed the crusty hostility of that guardian. "I am looking for Alan Wyle," he explained, producing his card. "I am helping him solve the mystery of his uncle's death."

"Oh, yeah? I heard old man Derek was worth a million. I guess Mr. Wyle will be too prosperous to work any more when he cashes in. Sorry, but Mr. Wyle aint in now. I'll tell him you called. Any message?"

"You're very kind. I'll wait a while and if he doesn't come I'll leave word for him to give me a ring. Be sure to tell him. Here's something to stimulate your memory." King handed the man a five-dollar bill, which the latter pocketed with a grin.

"Tips like this usually come from Johns who want to date up one of the girls," he observed. "Don't worry; I'll remember to tell him."

"Is his valet here—Mr. Poe?"

"No sir. Poe is not around neither. He just left. You must have passed him when you came along the block. He aint been gone a minute."

"Maybe I did pass him on the street. What does he look like?"

"About the size of Mr. Wyle; a classy dresser, too, just like his boss. Only Poe is blond and Wyle is dark. From the back

they look like brothers. An' he'll be a great actor some day. The lad has talent."

"An actor? I thought you were talking about Poe!"

"That's who I mean—Ferdie Poe, Mr. Wyle's dresser."

Tom King was surprised. "Has Poe been on the stage?"

"Not for the last couple of seasons. He was sick. Elbow trouble." The doorkeeper tossed off a drink in pantomime. "That's how he came to take a job as dresser for Mr. Wyle." Tom King nodded and the doorman added, "Yeah, his nerves is all shot to pieces. Every little while he has to get out and walk it off an' take a bracer. Why only last night he was away for a good half hour. In some speakeasy, I guess. His nerves is that shaky."

KING listened to the doorman's garrulous ramblings with more attention than his casual manner indicated. But the guardian's next comment acted on his nerves like an electric contact. "I was kiddin' him today about being away from the show just at the time old man Derek was shot. I sez to him, 'Poe, aint you ashamed of yourself to sneak out and shoot a man when you're supposed to be on duty. You'll give the theater a bad name,' I sez."

The doorman leaned back in his chair and chuckled. "He was sore as hell! I'll say he was sore! —Holy cats! *What's that?*"

Both men were brought up with a jerk by the rasping, tearing sound of high explosive, followed by a shuddering vibration. It was succeeded by a heavy silence, as if all Broadway were holding its breath to listen, then an uproar of excited voices broke out, followed by the sirens of fire-department cars, and the clangor of gongs.

"There's been a pineapple tossed not far from here!" exclaimed the doorman; but already Tom King had darted away and was running with the crowd that streamed toward the Skytower Building.

A POLICE runabout charged through the mob and Tom King leaped on the running-board, with a nod of recognition to the driver.

"What is it, Jerry?"

"Search me! Gang war, I guess." The driver stepped on the gas, the car leaped ahead. When the corner was reached where the lofty tower could be seen looming against the sky, the scene of the bomb outrage was before them. The laboratory of glass and metal was etched upon the blue, a jagged confusion of steel girders, twisted and thrown violently in every direction. A thin column of greenish smoke rose from it. Glass had been scattered in every direction.

Below on the street was a yelling mass of humanity, with the police and a few firemen trying vainly to fight back the mob. The terrified occupants of the offices were swarming from every exit, the men white-faced and smitten with panic, the girls disheveled from the mad rush and many of them hysterical. A few had fainted and were being carried limply away.

The police car forced its passage through this bedlam like a tug bucking heavy seas, and stopped at the curb where a space had been cleared at the main portal of the building.

Under the arch was Sergeant Broderick and beside him stood a plain-clothes man still holding Tila Ware by the arm. It was just like Broderick: even though hell boiled over, he would not let go of a prisoner.

AS King approached, the officer greeted him. "Lucky fer you that you left. Cullinane was blown to hash. That rat done it!" He indicated a crumpled figure under a canvas just inside the lobby.

"Who was he?"

"Not identified yet," replied Broderick. "Just a small-time gunman, I guess. Nobody saw him before. But I've got a hunch who he was trailing with."

"How did he get in?"

"Soon after the mortuary men came fer the body," answered the sergeant, "this little slicker went to the workshop carrying a small leather bag and asked whether Madden was there. Cullinane told him no. Then the fella said he was working for Madden and had a bag of tools that was to be used for opening the safe. He wanted to leave 'em there for Madden and said he'd come right back. Joe Cullinane told him it was all right and the fella put the bag by the safe.

"Then Joe reported to me by phone and I told him to see what was in the bag and to hold the man till I could talk to him. Madden had no assistant that I ever heard of, you see, and I thought I smelled something rotten."

Tom King nodded. "It was a long chance to get away with. Somebody must

have been desperate to try that scheme." He looked at the body and asked: "How did you get this man?"

"Cullinane said that the guy had just left the office. I told Murphy to hurry down and pick him up in the lobby. Murphy caught up with him just where he lies. The fellow flashed a gun and Murphy gave him the works. It was just then that Cullinane must have opened the bag. The explosion rattled every bone in my body. I thought the building was coming down in a heap.

"The office was filled with dust and chunks of plaster. The furniture was thrown about and we were knocked from our chairs. Lucky there was a heavy concrete floor in the laboratory or we'd have all been killed. As it is, we have lost one witness."

"Who is lost?"

"Fein, the porter. A chunk of concrete dropped on his skull and laid him cold. We didn't wait to bring him down; his body is still there. But that's nothing compared to losing Cullinane." Broderick's stern face relaxed. "Poor Joe Cullinane!" he said. "He was torn to ribbons. A better cop never wore out shoe leather."

Changing the subject quickly, the detective asked, "What was back of this plot?"

"It's as plain as the nose on your face," Broderick replied. "All the evidence against Jimmy Weldon was in that room; his gat, the letters, the diagram of the safe, everything that would send him to the chair. He was tipped off by his pals, the night-club gangsters, and hired one of them to do the trick."

"So that's your theory?"

"I'm dead sure of it. Most likely he thought his girl would squeal and expected to blow her up too. He's a yellow killer and would stop at nothing."

Tila Ware jerked her body free from the plain-clothes man. Her eyes were wet, but flashing with defiance. "That's a lie," she cried. "A black lie. Jimmy's not like that! I've told you the truth again and again—still you don't believe me! —Well, you wont get me to say a thing against him!"

"You've said enough," growled Broderick. "You admitted that he gave you that ring and the fancy lamp in your room, and that he spent a barrel of money on you in night-clubs."

"It was his own money!" cried the girl. "He earned it. He sold a patent—a patent lock for safes."

"Yes, we heard all that," Broderick retorted curtly. "Think up a new alibi. The truth is, and you know it, that he was stealing phony money from old man Derek and you were passing it for him. There was more than forty thousand dollars in your room. You can't tell me that the kid was paid forty grand for a safe patent, and all in counterfeit bills. It don't make sense."

"I don't know how the money got there."

"You'll remember after a while," Broderick answered meaningly. "We'll have your boy friend on the grill soon. You'd better get your confession in first. He'll get the chair sure; but maybe you can get off easy if you act sensible."

Tila buried her face in her hands, and her body shook with violent sobbing. King regarded her sympathetically as Broderick led her away; then he turned his attention to the dead man in the lobby.

THE turmoil of the crowd about the building did not disturb his quiet examination of the bomb-planter, who was a little, blond, small-boned chap, smooth-skinned and sickly looking: the thin face was contorted by the last agony and the hands were clenched. He had been shot through the vitals; death had not been merciful.

Tom King saw at a glance that his disguise as a mechanic, or assistant, was very hasty; merely a soft cap, overalls and a tool bag. The man's well tailored suit, fine shoes and expensive shirt did not tally with the rest of the details. And the hands were soft and well tended; the hands of an idler. He was even perfumed and his hair was like a varnished surface.

No letters or papers were in the pockets, as was to be expected, and the labels were neatly removed from the garments. But one betraying clue had been overlooked—the laundry mark on the collar.

Those disfiguring scratches of marking ink that appear so meaningless to an average man are like fingerprints to an expert. Within an hour after he had noted down the marks, Tom King had located the laundry that was responsible for them and secured a report on the customers.

The owner of that collar was listed as Earl Scott, and the address was a remodeled brownstone in the West Fifties, once a mansion, now an apartment house divided into one-room-and-bath studios.

The detective went there at once, explained his mission to the superintendent, a

stolid, beefy-faced Briton, like a footman, and gave him a tip that instantly won the fellow's esteem. He was admitted with a pass-key to Earl Scott's living quarters.

If the house was dingy and commonplace, the studio was a jazz-mad riot of futuristic colors and forms. The walls were hung from ceiling to floor with silk that flaunted a pattern of rainbow stripes; the low-built furniture was of glass, steel and polished brass, all sharp angles and unexpected sweeping curves. The single painting on the wall was a still life of green apples and broken bottles on a table that was tilted to spill everything on the floor.

"Who painted that?" asked King.

"Mr. Scott painted it."

"Was he an artist?"

"You can judge for yourself. Anyhow he painted that picture. He was very proud of it. Said it always gave him a thrill. A great hand for thrills, he was."

"Broken glass and green apples on a tipsy table would give most anybody a thrill. It sets your teeth on edge and makes you seasick at the same time. Did he make a living selling his pictures?"

"Oh, no sir. His sister is very wealthy. She took care of him. She is very liberal. A big blonde lady; expensive-looking."

THE detective pulled open the door of a dynamic cabinet of jade green and jet lacquer and saw a sheaf of yellowbacks held down by a paper weight of quartz crystal. Tom King looked at them one by one carefully.

"His sister must have been liberal," remarked the detective. "Thousand-dollar bills. Twelve of them. Left in an unlocked cabinet."

The superintendent stared at the wealth with greed. His thoughts showed clearly on his red, stupid face; if only he had used his pass-key before, and discovered that money himself!

Tom King turned on the man. "Did Earl Scott pass any money like this on you?" he demanded.

"Oh, no sir. Never more than ten-dollar bills or twenties. I wouldn't know what to do with thousands."

"A present from the wealthy sister, no doubt. Do you know her name or address?"

"No, I don't. It may be among his papers, sir."

Though the detective opened one drawer after another, there was nothing in the way of letters or notebooks about the place. Nor was there any trace of the stuff that bombs are made of. Several twisted, dried tubes of paint were found in a closet and one-half finished canvas, covered with dust. Evidently Mr. Earl Scott had not been very prolific in his art.

"He slept most all day, sir, and at night went out to get new thrills—or at least that's the way he put it. He was a queer customer if you ask me."

"Did the man have any friends come to this place?" asked King.

"No sir."

"No ladies? No wild parties?"

"Oh, no. He was a model young man. Very quiet. His sister came once or twice in the afternoons. That's how I saw her. She drove a big car—very classy."

"Did you get the number?"

"Sorry. I wish I had now."

"It would be worth money to you, if you had noted the number. Maybe I could trace the owner through the agency. You say she drove it herself?"

"Yes. Both times. She came alone."

The telephone rang. Tom King swung a pyramid of burnished steel aside and disclosed the instrument. He spoke into the receiver in an affected voice.

A man asked cautiously: "Is this Interlude 23234?"

"Yes."

"I want to speak to Earl. Is he there?"

"He just stepped out. Shall I take a message?"

"No." Decisively.

"Do you want to leave your number?"

For answer there was the click of a receiver brought down.

IN great haste King got the operator, stated his profession and demanded: "Get me the number of the party who just called."

The girl responded after a slight delay. "It was a public booth in the Grand Central Terminal," and gave the number.

Tom King was disappointed and showed it. The man had suspected a ruse and hung up. Now he would be warned that a stranger was in Earl Scott's room. Nothing could be more tantalizing than to know that another conspirator in this murder and bomb plot had been at the other end of the wire—and had eluded him.

The voice had sounded familiar, yet Tom King could not place it. That was the devil of this situation.

"Remember some more," growled a voice. "Tell us how you shot Derek!"

The shrill short blast of a motor-horn sounded in the street below; the red-faced superintendent hurried to the window, looked cautiously through the curtains and whispered: "That's his sister's car. I remember her signal."

"Let her in. Don't say that Mr. Scott is not here. I want to talk to her."

The man departed and a few minutes later the studio door was pushed open and a tall, luxuriously dressed woman strode in hastily. She was heavily made up and around her face was a fringe of glittering, brassy hair like a gilded frame about a picture.

"Say, Earl," she began breathlessly. "Why, where's Earl? —Who are you?" Defiantly, with a blend of surprise and anger, she stared at the stranger.

"My name is King." The detective bowed. "I have some grave news about Mr. Scott that concerns his nearest friends. May I know your name?"

The woman started. Her hand flew to her heart with an instinctive gesture of dismay. She looked at the stranger wide-eyed. The detective noted how blue her eyes were, the doll-like eyes of a professional beauty, and how artificial was every detail of her face from the carmined lips to the sharply arched eyebrows.

Her voice was equally artificial; she spoke like an actress, not a very good one:

"My name is Flo Mascotte. I am Earl's sister. What has happened to him? Is it anything serious?"

"Very serious, indeed, Miss Mascotte. I am sorry to tell you that he has been in an accident. You must prepare yourself for the worst."

"Oh, my God!" Instantly, like a falling mask, the woman's theatrical pose was abandoned. The color fled from her face, leaving the grotesque effect of a carelessly painted plaster cast. Her features, drawn with suspense, looked old and haggard. Tom King felt sorry for her distress and helped her sink into a chair, for she seemed about to fall.

"What has happened to Earl?" she gasped. "Is he badly hurt? Will he recover?"

The detective shook his head gravely. The woman divined his meaning. "He is dead!" she screamed. "Dead! They have killed him!"

"Try to be calm. Try to control yourself." Tom King was genuinely sorry for her. Flo Mascotte, woman of the night-clubs and gilded underworld, was no less a suffering human being than her more conventional sisters. Her need of comfort was as great as any other woman's in meeting the loss of one who was dear to her. In the past of this Broadway gold-digger was a quiet Pennsylvania village and working-class parents: under the make-up was a terrified heart; back of her professional name,

which she had assumed for the cabarets, was simple Florence Scott. At that moment she was just the big sister of little Earl Scott, whom she had cared for and mothered since he was a baby learning to walk.

"Oh, this is horrible!" the woman sobbed. "How did it happen?"

"He was involved in the explosion in the Skytower Building. It was not, strictly speaking, an accident."

"Earl was dragged into that mess! Oh, no, that's not possible. I can't believe it!"

SUDDENLY she jerked herself upright and suspicion froze her face to the hard and repellent expression of a trapped criminal.

"Who are you?" she blurted. "I don't know you. Maybe you're a blasted dick, trying to throw a scare into me. If you're lying, damn you, I'll make you pay for it! I'll have your heart sliced out and thrown into the gutter."

"Unfortunately I am *not* lying. I saw your brother's body and there is no doubt he was in the bomb outrage. He carried the explosive in a tool bag and left it in Rolf Derek's laboratory. In attempting to escape, he was shot."

All the softness of her first grief had hardened into vindictiveness and she resembled a fury, keen for revenge.

"Somebody's got to pay for this!" she muttered. "My kid brother. My poor little Earl. I can't believe it. —Yes, I can! Those devils would be guilty of that—and worse!"

The phone rang. Flo sprang to the instrument before Tom King could stop her and answered in a metallic voice: "Yes. —Yes, this is Earl's apartment. This is Flo speaking. Oh, it's you!"

There was a brief pause while a cautious murmur came from the receiver, then the woman cried bitterly: "He's dead. Yes, dead, dead, dead! You and your gang murdered him. You—you filthy rats!"

There was a click. The other speaker had hung up abruptly. Flo Mascotte sank limply into her chair, white-faced and apparently lifeless. Her eyes were closed, her face twisted in a spasm of pain, then relaxed.

Tom King felt for her pulse, pulled open a cabinet containing liquor and forced brandy between her teeth, then ran from the room in search of the superintendent. No one was in sight in the dark halls; no one answered his calls or knocking.

The detective hurried to the street, unlatching the house door and walked rapidly toward a building where he had noticed a sign in the window, "DR. PRICE." There was some irritating delay before the physician could get rid of a patient, put something in his bag and follow Tom King on his emergency call, back to the apartment. As they neared it something unusual caught Tom King's attention. The street was empty. No car was in sight.

With the anger of a man who has been tricked, the detective thought: "She was shamming to get rid of me. The moment I left the house, she ran down to her car."

Taking the steps at top speed, he was at the apartment door in less than a minute. It was closed, locked. The detective threw himself against it and the lock yielded. A second time and it broke. The door flew open.

Tom King entered and saw, as he expected, that the woman had gone.

The room was in wild disorder; doors of cabinets ripped open and drawers emptied of their contents on the floor. Bottles of liquor were broken among the wreckage, tables were overset, the couch pulled from the wall at an angle and the rugs kicked aside. The spurious thousand-dollar notes were gone.

Dr. Price, who had followed Tom King up the stairs, looked on the wreck with disgust and walked away, back to the office and his patients.

Only Tom King remained. Searching among the debris he had found a small bottle. It was uncorked and gave out a peculiar odor.

CHAPTER V

WHEN Jimmy Weldon, haunted by the fear of arrest, dived into the Hudson Tube and the hoped-for security of New Jersey, he had forgotten all about that fortune in currency left in Tila's room.

In his pockets were a few dollars in small bills and change; not enough to carry him very far away.

All day he kept moving from one dreary resort to another; poolrooms, cheap restaurants where he could hide his face behind a newspaper over a cup of coffee, and late in the evening he went to Jersey City where he took refuge in a German establishment where the drinks were supposed to be soft, but the customers were hard.

Nobody paid attention to one more seedy-looking patron. The lights were dim, and under his hat brim, the boy's features were concealed.

A couple of policemen walked into the place, gave the customers a passing glance and lingered near the door talking in low tones. Jimmy's heart seemed to choke him. He wondered why the officers did not hear it thumping. But after a few minutes of suspense they walked out with a parting look about the room.

Then a boy entered, yelling, "Extry! All about the horrible bomb outrage! Extry!"

When the boy passed his table Jimmy bought the late afternoon paper. It contained the story of the bombing of Derek's laboratory in all its startling details, and by all accounts, a pal of Jimmy Weldon was the criminal. Search for Jimmy was being made in every direction, and the reward had been increased for his capture.

The boy sat there in a cold sweat. Could he escape from this net that was spread to tangle his feet? It seemed hopeless.

HE turned the page and finished the news story. There it told about Tila's arrest by Officer Biltz (who was mentioned for promotion) and related with gusto that the girl would undoubtedly break under the merciless grilling.

Sick at heart, Jimmy stared at the pink sheet, where an odious caricature of Tila Ware confronted him. The thought of the girl's suffering was more than his nerves could endure. He laid some money on the table, staggered to the door and hastened to the ferry.

He dreaded what was ahead of him, yet the knowledge that his little friend was already in the grip of that ruthless machine was enough to keep his purpose steadfast.

When the ferry boat lurched into the slip, he was among the first to leap ashore and run ahead of the crowd.

Hardly had he run ten steps when a voice was in his ear and a hand was heavy on his shoulder. He tried to jerk loose, and then followed a grip on his arm that seemed to wrench the bones apart.

A burly detective had seized him; a second lent a hand.

"It's him, Jake."

"I'll say it is!"

WITHOUT loss of a second he was jerked into a taxi and the two officers were rushing their prisoner to Headquarters. All the way Jimmy kept repeating, "I came to give myself up. Can't you see? I came back to surrender!"

They only laughed.

He was trapped—run down by these two detectives, who would divide the reward between them. He admitted he was Jimmy Weldon. That was enough. They had the butcher who had shot down his employer! Jimmy admitted, when taken to a room with his inquisitors, that he knew Earl Scott, the dead bomb-planter. That he had met him at night-clubs, that he had been sitting with him in a club, drinking ginger ale just before his memory went blank. But from then on the detectives could get no confession.

"I don't know. I don't remember. No, I didn't shoot Derek. I never fired my gun at anybody. I had a permit to carry one, but never fired it. I kept it in the office."

Sergeant Broderick was short of temper and inclined to be rough. He had been under a great nervous strain since the killing, and now in the excitement of questioning his man he may have been rougher than he intended.

"Why can't you let the girl free?" demanded Jimmy. "I tell you she had nothing to do with it."

"Come clean and maybe we'll turn her loose," said one fox-faced inquisitor.

"You want me to lie? How can I confess it if I didn't do it?" Jimmy's voice rose to a shriek. The officers glanced at each other meaningly. The kid's nerves were snapping.

THE questioning began all over again. One man shot a question before another was through speaking. They tried to trip him up. To make him admit saying things he had not said. When they were tired, another set would pounce on him and the mental torture would begin afresh.

The boy was stunned, dazed, exhausted. "Come clean and we'll lay off," the voices said again and again. "It's your only chance. Tell everything and you may not get the limit."

"But I have told everything. All I can remember."

"Remember some more," growled a voice. "Tell us how you shot Derek!"

Like a wolf pack they surrounded him, snapping in his face with their furious eyes, their big jaws, their insults and violent threats.

Finally consciousness left him and no violence could bring him to. The officers looked at each other, then at Broderick.

"Chuck him in the cooler, boys," said the Sergeant curtly. "He was close to breaking when he fainted. We'll get him to sign a full confession inside of twenty-four hours."

IN that way the officers of "the old school" tried to secure the evidence. Uptown Detective Tom King was going about it in a different way.

When King stood in the débris of Earl Scott's apartment, holding a tiny bottle that he had found, he realized that Flo Mascotte had not tricked him. She had been dosed with chloroform as she lay in a faint and rushed away in her own car by some one who had a motive for sealing her lips. That person had removed the spurious notes. It was like the bombing of the laboratory; a desperate measure to destroy evidence.

The detective asked himself: who would be so reckless in his efforts to get rid of the notes and silence the woman who had been passing them? That Flo Mascotte had done so was indicated, though not proved. A sheaf of counterfeit notes in her brother's room, the brother whom she supported, pointed to her as one of the agents who placed them in circulation. Flo Mascotte was the type who could handle the job, living in a world of gamblers and other big spenders.

Clearly enough it was her principal whom she had accused over the phone as her brother's murderer. Earl Scott had placed a bomb at this man's behest, and that mysterious person had telephoned Earl's apartment after the explosion to find out whether he had returned safely.

Probably it was the same stranger with whom Tom King had spoken a short time before. The man who had rung up from a telephone-booth in the Grand Central Terminal. It seemed quite certain that this man had abducted Flo Mascotte when her violent outcry, "You and your gang murdered him!" showed that she was ready to turn State's evidence.

With these thoughts clear before his mental vision, Tom King hurried to the mid-town apartment where his agents left their reports with his secretary, or phoned in. The steel box held several scribbled cards. Among them was one that read:

"Number 2-AB left his home and went to Grand Central Terminal shortly after the Skytower explosion. He made repeated calls from a booth in the Terminal. The number he called was Interlude 23234. This is the apartment of Earl Scott at Number —, West 54th Street."

King smiled. These and a dozen other informal reports all initialed and time recorded, showed that the men he had reason to watch were being shadowed. If 2-AB had abducted Flo Mascotte he could not escape. There should be another report in almost any time.

He did not have long to wait. When the phone rang, Tom King was ahead of the secretary. It was a call from Jason Trude. He said, "Hello, Chief! Flo Mascotte is in the house of 2-AB, carried in unconscious. The place is guarded front and back by our men."

"Good work," answered Tom King. "Now in twenty minutes 2-AB will leave his house. The newspapers report that he is due to speak at a dinner of the Scientific Crime Detectors' Club at the Hotel Crœsus. He will not fail to be there, for it is necessary to avert suspicion. After the dinner, the club is to have a theater party at the Galaxy Theater where two rows in the orchestra have been reserved. This will give us all evening to force our way into his house and remove the lady to a safe place."

KING'S next move was to call on the Police Commissioner, one of his oldest friends, asking him to be his guest at the Galaxy Theater that night in a box. "This is going to be an interesting evening," he said. "New mechanical sleuths and everything. The Scientific Crime Detectors' Club will be there in a body."

"I know. I was invited, but had to refuse. That Skytower case is giving me a headache, Tom. Weldon was brought in."

"You don't say."

"Broderick is putting him on the grill. The kid is a wreck."

"Naturally. Say, Chief, do me a favor. Have Broderick lay off the rough stuff. It's crude and inaccurate. Out of date!"

"Maybe so, Tom. But it gets results."

"Well, I'm getting results from a different angle. I'd like to see what I can do with that boy and his girl. Meanwhile go easy with them."

The Commissioner chuckled. "Always the same old Tom. Too soft-hearted for the game. Well, I'll be there later." He hung up.

WHEN 2-AB, otherwise the distinguished Alfred Orr, left his home in the East Sixties, he felt more easy in his mind than he had at any time since the murder of Rolf Derek.

The imprisonment of Flo Mascotte in his home before she had a chance to squeal, removed the weak link in the chain. Earl was dead, Fein was dead; both weak-willed fellows. Wyle and Poe could be trusted, he believed. As for the secrets in the laboratory, his bomb had accounted for them. He could attend the banquet, deliver a talk on "Crime, Its Cause and Cure," and enjoy the show later with no worries. The program had some new technical twists at the end, for the benefit of the club. It was going to be an amusing evening. His house was guarded by two strong-arm henchmen and the prisoner was in charge of his dragon-faced housekeeper, Mrs. Holzhauer, a former penitentiary matron discharged for the good of the service.

In spite of these guards the entry of the law was accomplished without violence. Tom King's aides were not without resourcefulness. A fist-fight was staged in front of the house that drew the guards to ringside seats in the windows overlooking the street. While the battle was in progress, the other men who made up King's Secret Service squad entered the rear very neatly and quietly, armed with a search warrant and skeleton keys. The strong-arm men were overpowered before they knew the house had been entered. Mrs. Holzhauer in a secluded room upstairs, answered a tap at the door and was confronted by a man with a badge. Her surrender was abject. The ex-matron had a wholesome fear of the law. Her prisoner lay on a couch in a condition of sullen despair and she welcomed Tom King like an old friend.

CHAPTER VI

AT Headquarters, Jimmy Weldon was roughly shaken from his stupor. It was not sleep. It was the coma of absolute exhaustion. The boy was dragged before the inquisitors once more in a blaze of light that made his eyes blink. He staggered, sank on a chair and the barrage of questioning began afresh; a merciless battering of his morale.

The detectives were more than ever infuriated because in the interim they had been plying Tila Ware with questions and she had defied them.

"You may as well come clean, sister," Broderick had urged her. "Jimmy's in the other room. He's squealed. We've got it in writing. He told us he killed Rolf Derek."

"That's a lie."

"You want to see the confession?"

"No. I want to hear Jimmy Weldon say it in his own words. With no one to threaten him. And even then I wont believe it. Jimmy's not like that."

They led her away and brought Jimmy Weldon back to the grill.

When he was at the end of his strength, Broderick said, "Your girl is having a bad time of it, buddy. She's weakening."

"My God! Is Tila getting this punishment too?"

"Sure. Only worse. She can't stand so much."

The boy's head dropped limply. Broderick added with a false note of friendliness, "You can let her out of this grilling if you'll come across, kid. Once you sign the confession, all this is over an' done with. Maybe we'll even turn her loose."

"You would?"

"Yeah, I guess so. No use in keeping her here, if you admit you done it."

JIMMY'S face sagged from exhaustion. His mind was hazy—only the thought of the girl's misery was clear. He spoke huskily. "Give me the paper; I'll sign it."

The ordeal was not over so soon. A lot of questions were shot at him to which he answered, "Yes, yes. Oh, for God's sake get it over! Yes."

Then he signed.

He was a confessed murderer.

There was a loud rap at the door and a voice said: "Sergeant, the Commissioner wants to talk to you."

Broderick ran to the phone and announced to his superior: "You got me at just the right time. The kid's put his fist on the paper."

"Jimmy Weldon has confessed?"

"Sure. There's one killer that will burn."

"Is that so? Now listen. I want you to bring Jimmy Weldon and his girl uptown in my car, to my apartment. Give them hot coffee first. And lay off the rough stuff, Broderick. It's out of date."

"Yes sir." The Commissioner had hung up. Broderick looked about him, puzzled. He had no inkling of what had happened. He did not know that following Flo Mas-

cotte's confession, the detective had reported it to his chief.

While she told her story, Flo Mascotte's eyes were blazing blue fires. All the feminine allure was gone from her features and they were contracted in lines of hate.

"Now, I'll tell everything!" she cried. "That dog has got to suffer! He was the brains of the gang: the devil who made us do his dirty work. —And then double-crossed us!

"He knew how I loved my brother—my kid brother. Poor little Earl! The kid meant well enough, but he was weak as water. And now he's dead. And I have not a soul left I care for. —Wyle? Oh yes, Wyle was my lover. Only you can't call it love. No, Wyle was nothing to me. I know it now. He was one of the gang. Shoved the queer. Took orders from the Boss like all the rest of us. Sold himself for easy money.

"And Ferdie Poe. Poe is a bad one. He would stoop to anything. He was low.

"I know that Jimmy Weldon did not do the killing. He *couldn't* have done it. At the time Derek was shot, the kid was in my apartment. Dead to the world. Earl brought him there late Sunday night.

"Jimmy missed a date with his girl for that night. She called it off on account of a headache or something and Jimmy went to their usual hangout alone. Earl was expecting him. Earl had been told to slip the drops in his drink and take him out to my place. It was easy, for they were acquainted.

"Earl laughed because the sucker was so easy. You see the idea was to frame Jimmy so that the real criminal could get away with it. I didn't know that a murder was planned. All I knew was that the fake money game was up. The dicks were getting wise. The Big Boss had warned me to plant the stuff on a certain sucker who would be brought to my place that night. I was to get rid of him early Tuesday.

"That's what I did. I kept the boy under the influence and filled his pockets with all the phony bills I had in the house. Then early Tuesday morning I took him from the house in my car. Earl drove. I sat in the back with Jimmy. He was still unconscious. We drove to a place I had in mind for dumping him. It was away from houses and overgrown with trees: on the upper end of the Drive before you come to Inwood Hill.

"That's where Earl and I dumped him out. He looked like a dead man there among the bushes. It gave me the creeps to see him lying in a heap there, so still and pale, with his clothes all crumpled. He looked dead, but I knew he would come to his senses and get to the subway before very long. The drug was due to work off by that time.

"Earl left me after we drove home. I never saw my little brother again. And I never dreamed that the poor sucker I had planted the money on was framed for the chair. If I had known that, I would never have done it. I hope you believe me. I'm willing to swear to that!"

"When did you find out about that detail of the plot?" asked Tom King.

"Later in the day. Much later. When I saw Jimmy's picture in the paper and the reward-notice, then I got wise. I had been played for a sucker. Made accessory in a murder plot. It was no time then to confess. I was scared. I tried to get hold of Earl. No go. What I wanted was to get clear out of the country with him before the truth was discovered. I tried to telephone. No answer. When I went to Earl's place at last, it was too late. Mr. King was there," she nodded to the detective and tears came to her eyes. "He broke the news that Earl was dead."

The woman sobbed. "That's when I made up my mind to get square with the man that made all this trouble. He called up, asking for Earl, and I told him what he was. After that you know what happened. I must have fainted, for when I came to, I was in Alfred Orr's house and his old witch of a housekeeper was sitting by me on guard."

CHAPTER VII

AT the Galaxy Theater the last act of the Jazz Dream was drawing near to its glittering finale. The take-off on the movietone had received its usual meed of laughter and applause. The house lights were off; the spacious stage was filled with flickering azure rays as the Tanglefoot Blues dance-number came on.

The box reserved for Tom King was in the second tier back, a deep, curtained box from which one could see without being conspicuous. During the first act and the intermission it had been empty. Now it had four occupants; Tom King and the Commissioner—and in the deep shadows

behind them a pair of frightened young lovers.

Jimmy Weldon and Tila had not been released. Far from it! They were handcuffed together with a fine steel chain linking them wrist to wrist, for Flo Mascotte's uncorroborated confession was not sufficient grounds for setting them free, so the authorities said.

Nevertheless the boy and girl were not altogether wretched now. At the Commissioner's apartment they had been fed and allowed to rest and make themselves presentable. Then the Commissioner had brought them to the Galaxy Theater to be questioned by Detective Tom King. As they held hands tightly in the dim recesses of the back of the box, their misery seemed to vanish like a bad dream. They had each other—and youth and hope.

The Commissioner and Tom King were discussing the Flo Mascotte confession in whispers. The Commissioner was saying:

"After all, Tom, there's no witness to back up the Mascotte statement. Her brother is dead. No one else saw young Weldon at her place. And against her confession, we have incriminating evidence and the statement signed by Jimmy that he did the murder. And if Jimmy Weldon didn't shoot Rolf Derek, who did? Suppose we admit that Franz Fein and Ferdie Poe were members of the counterfeiting gang, as well as Mr. Alan Wyle who is on the stage before us. What can we *prove* against them? Fein might have done it. Not likely, though. Poe was away from the theater while the murder was being committed (so the doorman said). It's physically possible that he did the killing. Still that is not much to go on. Wyle's alibi is airtight. He was playing before a house like this all the time."

The theater shook with applause as the amber lights flashed on the stage and the principal comedian began his imitation.

Down in front the dinner-jacketed members of the Scientific Crime Detectors' Club beat their palms together. They were feeling fine after a long dinner and short speeches. Alfred Orr was there also, finding the evening vastly amusing.

The big number went over with a bang, and then came the finale. The lights blazed on the entire Jazz Dream company—principals in front, ladies of the ensemble displayed on glittering terraces in the rear, and beside the blackface comedian another laugh-maker, the burlesque detective.

The curtain descended in a blare of exit music, the song hit of the Jazz Dream.

Tom King whispered to the Commissioner. "I've a man backstage. By this time Poe has been arrested in the dressing-room."

The Commissioner nodded. The curtain was rising again. Half the audience was streaming down the aisles. Others remained to applaud. They saw another officer at the comedian's elbow—not an imitation one this time, but the audience did not notice the difference. The detective suddenly produced handcuffs and shackled the man, the house clapping at this realistic touch.

BEFORE the curtain dropped a second time, the officer, with a comic gesture, had snatched off the wig of the comedian, disclosing under the kinky wool a sleek head of yellow hair.

The audience was leaving. All but the Club members who were awaiting a special program of movietones in police work.

The Commissioner stared at Tom King.

"That was a real officer?" he said.

"Yes, one of my own men. He placed the star under arrest."

"But that actor had yellow hair! Alan Wyle is dark."

"That shoots Wyle's alibi to pieces," answered Tom King. "As I suspected from what the doorman told me, Ferdie Poe was capable of doing Wyle's blackface act. Tonight he did it, as you see. Why not last night, as well?"

The house manager, a white-haired man in evening dress, stepped before the curtain. "Gentlemen," he began, "Members of the Scientific Crime Detectors' Club, you are about to witness a demonstration of the movietone as applied to criminal procedure. As you have all read in the public press a prisoner's confession recorded by this process has been admitted in a court of law as legal evidence. The present showing is somewhat on that order, while not the one originally scheduled."

There was a confused noise like a small riot backstage, an uproar that was quickly checked as the house manager went behind the curtain. Without further introduction the program continued. A screen flashed white in the darkened house and the beams of the projector focused upon it.

This is the all-talking demonstration that the guests witnessed:

A man was working before a spherical steel safe in a workshop fitted with me-

chanical appliances. Bright light beat upon him from all directions. He looked up from the combination, which failed to respond. He was Alan Wyle. Something had startled him. Another man had walked on the scene, Rolf Derek, the aggressive, big-muscled inventor whose picture had been featured in every newspaper. The sound of his harsh, angry voice reverberated through the theater. "What the devil are you doing here? You ungrateful whelp!"

Alan's reply was a curse of baffled fury. He shrank away from his uncle's attack. The latter brandished an automatic and shouted. "I have pulled you out of one dirty scrape after another. I've paid you money, year after year. Now I'm *through!* I'm going to turn you over to the police. You'll rot in jail for all I care."

Alan Wyle leaped at his uncle, struck out with his fist and dropped him like a log. The gun fell beside the stunned man with a crash so realistic that the theater echoed from it. Wyle crouched beside the figure, lifted his head, then turned to the safe. It resisted his efforts.

A voice sounded in a harsh whisper, "Quick, you fool! What are you waiting for?"—and another figure hurried into the scene. It was Alfred Orr.

IN the second row of the orchestra, the real Alfred Orr had jumped from his seat with a growl of animal-like rage, but two athletic secret-service men gripped him before he could escape. While he struggled with them in maniacal desperation the inexorable drama continued on the screen.

"I can't open it," said Wyle. "The combination Fein gave me is wrong."

"Damn Fein! He's a fool."

"What shall I do with the plates?" Alan produced a small package from his coat.

"Put them in his pocket. That will do as well. And put those notes in his wallet."

Alan emptied his uncle's billfold of its currency and put other bills in its place. Alfred Orr bent over the stunned man. But still he was not satisfied. Seizing the automatic he aimed at the helpless man on the floor. Alan Wyle put out his hand to stop him but he was too late. Orr had pulled the trigger. The crash of the explosion resounded through the auditorium and the spectators gasped as they realized that they had witnessed a murder.

"My God! Why did you do that? Why did you kill him?" cried Alan Wyle and stared in horror at the murderer. Then he fled. Alfred Orr was left alone by his dead rival. He was entirely self-possessed, though he moved with rapid, catlike movements, wiping the gun with a handkerchief before he laid it down, and obliterating all fingerprints from the safe. Then he turned swiftly away and the scene darkened.

KING said to the Commissioner: "The movietone apparatus was in the steel beam over the safe. It was a miniature outfit that Derek constructed. Luckily I got it out of the place in time. I think the evidence explains the bomb outrage. Also it explains how counterfeit plates and bills were found on the body of an innocent man."

From the darkness of the auditorium came a startled outcry. "Is there a doctor in the house? This man is sick. Or dead!"

The house lights flashed on brilliantly. Between the secret-service men hung the inert form of Alfred Orr, the penetrating, pungent odor of prussic acid about his lips.

Tom King and the Police Commissioner hurried down to where the excited little crowd of Club members bent over the body of the suicide, while in the box above, the boy and girl remained forgotten, their wrists still chained together by the fine steel links of fetters—that were not galling.

Jimmy was saying, "Tila, darling, now you *know* I didn't do it."

"I knew it all the time, Jimmy. I told them you were not like that."

Their hands clung together tighter than ever. . . . .

Tom King was telling his friend, the Commissioner: "Orr, you see, was desperate. He knew that the counterfeiting was about to be traced to him, unless he could plant evidence in Derek's laboratory. No doubt he did not foresee the need of murder, but when it became necessary he did not hesitate to kill. His oversight was that he knew nothing of the concealed movietone apparatus. When he visited the laboratory to assure himself that all was going well, he heard the mechanism start and stop and became suspicious. When he tried to destroy it, I got my clue that proved the murder was his work. The discovery did not surprise me: I knew he was capable of murder, while I felt sure Jimmy was not a killer. His girl was right: Jimmy was not like that!"

THE END.

An officer of the Marines here tells an inspiring story of the Great War—of "heroism shorn of heroics."

Just A Replacement

By **Carl Nostrand**

"THE company commander's compliments, sir: he wants you to report to him at once."

I turned to go to the company P. C., and in the rainy darkness collided with a man. Somewhat irritably I inquired who he was and where he was going.

"I am just a replacement and I am looking for the lieutenant of the 3rd platoon," he answered.

"Well, you have found him. What is it?"

"Sir, Corporal Talbot reports with ten privates from the replacement battalion. Captain Hunt told me to report to you."

"Very good; where are your men?"

"At the company P. C., sir. I came up alone to report and get your orders."

"Very well, come along; I am on my way to the P. C. now."

The captain's orders were brief and to the point. "We are moving up at once. Our position will be here,"—pointing to a map spread out on a poncho on the floor of the dugout,—"in the trench 'Elbe.' Your platoon will be on the left flank and establish contact with the 6th Marines on our left. The hour will be 4.05 A. M. sharp. Let us synchronize our watches. It is exactly 9 P. M. There will be a standing barrage before the hour, rolling after that one hundred meters every ten minutes. The Sixth leads in the column of battalions. When the third battalion of the Sixth has cleared our position, we move to the left and follow in column. Before the hour my P. C. will be about two hundred yards to the rear. When we move, I will be at the head of the column."

WITHIN five minutes we were on the move. Corporal Talbot and his ten men were hurriedly assigned to squads. These replacements brought my platoon up to its full complement of fifty-two men.

By the time we reached the outskirts of what had once been the town of Somme-Py, now a mass of ruins, the rain had stopped. Guides from the French unit we were to relieve were waiting for us, and I started off behind an undersized French corporal

who was much the worse from exhaustion. These French guides invariably lost their way, and the present one proved no exception to the rule. After twice being led past the ruined church of Somme-Py, I gave him up as a bad job and decided to be my own guide. Shaping my course by compass bearings, after orienting the position from the map by the aid of my electric torch, I made a bee-line for the trench Elbe. As the intervening landscape was a veritable network of barbed-wire entanglements, we had a tough job getting through. When we did, it was minus the major portion of the seat of my breeches, which I left to grace the hillside, attached to a very penetrating barb.

FIGHTING on this sector had been very fierce for several days. Time after time the French had attacked, only to be driven back into their trenches with heavy losses in killed and wounded. The trench into which we marched a few minutes after midnight, October 2nd, 1918, was occupied by nearly as many dead French soldiers as there were live ones. The survivors were too exhausted to bury their dead comrades and had propped them up against the parapet, where they reclined, silent sentinels of the night, mute witnesses to the horrors of war. The young French officer whom I relieved lost no time in leaving. He had already drawn in his sentries, and his men were lined up ready to march.

I had just finished posting my sentries when a message from Captain Hunt was delivered stating that the attack had been postponed for twenty-four hours—that the hour would be 4.05 A. M., October 3rd. I was rather pleased at this news for the reason that it would give me a chance to get acquainted with the men who had joined the platoon only a few hours ago, and also give them a chance to know what the front line was like before being rushed over the top in an attack on an enemy well entrenched in positions which the veteran French troops had failed to weaken.

Up to now the enemy had behaved rather well. An occasional shell whizzed overhead or struck the ground well back of us. Intermittently a burst of machine-gun fire would scatter the dirt from the parapet. The advance posts of the Germans were only fifty yards in front of us, and all conversation was, therefore, carried on in whispers. Every little while a flare would go up over No Man's Land and a few rifle-shots were exchanged, but we had no casualties as yet. These tactics I later found masked the retirement of the Germans from the trench immediately in front of us, called the Essen trench, to a position farther back. I soon realized that something was afoot, and I called the non-commissioned officers together and asked that one of them volunteer to crawl across No Man's Land and find out what was going on.

To my surprise, the first one to volunteer was Talbot. I asked him if he had been in the line before and found that he had not, that he had been in the service only a few months and in France but a few weeks. I sized him up, however, and decided he would do. He was young, probably not yet twenty, short in stature, slim, wiry and unafraid—just the man for the job. In half an hour or less he was back and reported that there were apparently only five or six men in that part of the Essen trench lying immediately in front of our position. I reasoned that these men had been ordered to remain in the abandoned position while the retirement of the main body was in progress, firing a shot in our direction now and then to divert attention, and at a specified hour join the main body in their new position. I reported these facts to Captain Hunt by messenger, and stated that I was organizing a raiding party.

TALBOT insisted on going with me on the raid. With a sergeant and four privates, we started out. Wriggling our way over the rough ground, through shell-craters and getting muddy up to our eyebrows, we reached our objective. Carefully we peered over the parapet. There were five of them, and they were together—in violation of the order given them, I have no doubt. I could direct my men by signals only, and it was still dark. I reached out and touched the man next to me; he edged closer; I indicated, by showing him my trench-knife, the method of attack; he in turn passed the word on to the others; touching the man next to me again, I slowly drew up my legs to a crouching position; this signal was also passed on.

When I thought that sufficient time had elapsed for my purpose to be clearly understood, I made my leap, and almost simultaneously the others followed. . . . .

It was over in a few seconds. Heaving the bodies out of the way, we made a hasty inspection of the trench; there were no more Germans in sight. One of the men

called out, "Here's a dugout!" We started toward him and suddenly from the other side of the trench sprang a dozen Germans. One of them had a hand-grenade, which he dropped at my feet. Some one reached down and grabbed it by the handle (it was a "potato-masher") and hurled it back. It hit a Heinie on the helmet, exploded, and several of them dropped. I looked to see who the quick-witted fellow was—Talbot!

Two of my men, with clubbed rifles, accounted for one more of the enemy each, and one remained. He made a lunge at me with his bayonet. My back was against the side of the trench. I aimed my automatic and pulled the trigger, but no use—it was clogged with mud. A shadow shot past me, and the German dropped backward with Talbot's trench-knife in his throat. My replacement corporal had made a dangerous reconnaissance alone, killed at least five of the enemy and twice saved my life, and all in his first five hours of front-line service!

THIS little exploit cleared the way for the company's advance into the Essen trench, and when our planes came over at daybreak, we had our panels out and were able to wave a cheery greeting to the pilots. It continued more or less quiet during the day; runners came and went; rations and water were brought up, and we spent an average day and night of trench warfare.

About three o'clock in the morning of October 3rd our artillery opened up on the German positions, and it was heartening to know that our big guns were giving them something to think about. Just before the H hour the bombardment ceased and a standing barrage was laid down as scheduled. Day was just breaking, and we could see the shells explode about two hundred yards to the front, the shells spaced about ten yards apart. My respect for the science of artillerymen went up many notches. At precisely the hour and minute designated we saw the Sixth regiment over on our left spring into life, and wave after wave swept forward behind the barrage. We could by now see them plainly as they emerged into the open field beyond, and we could see from the number of men who dropped that they were under heavy fire. As the last waves of the Sixth swept by, Captain Hunt gave the signal, and we started our move by the left flank, down the trench, down the hill into the territory the Sixth had just crossed. And now the fun commenced.

Over on the extreme left of the division sector was a high rocky hill, strongly fortified with machine-gun nests. This position, because of the formation of the trench system, which curved northward at this point in such a way that its shape resembled a hook, was called "the Essen Hook." The terrain in front of the Hook was absolutely bare as to trees, brush or any other sort of natural shelter, except for shell-craters and small ridges and hummocks. The enemy position consequently could command the entire field which we now had to cross. While the Sixth was advancing, our artillery had concentrated a box barrage on the Hook and thus reduced the fire from that point to a minimum, but the barrage had now been lifted, and machine-gun bullets were coming thick and fast.

Leading my platoon in single file, I was repeatedly forced to halt and order the men to lie down. Then we would get up and run a few yards, and in this way we crossed until we had gained our proper distance. Several of my men were killed during this advance. It was now time to change direction and move to the front, but the rest of the Fifth regiment had still to cross where we had crossed, and this could be done only with very heavy losses. Hunt and I were debating what should be done next, when orders came from the battalion commander for the 17th company to attack and capture the Hook.

IN order to protect the advance, our one-pounder gun was brought into action. Through our binoculars we spotted several enemy machine-guns from the flash, and as the little one-pounder got into action, we were elated to see several Heinies rise and scurry for other shelter.

I was ordered to take the third platoon around to the northeast and attack from that end; the fourth platoon was sent around to the south end of the hill, while the captain and the other two platoons remained to attack from the center, at the proper moment.

My mission was the most difficult of execution, as we had the the most open territory. I formed my platoon into two groups and advanced by alternating rushes from fifty to one hundred yards. Ten or twelve men were sacrificed before we gained the foot of the hill, where we were in a dead angle and comparatively safe. Halting the platoon to give my men a breathing-spell, I found Corporal Talbot close at my heels.

"How goes it, boy?" I asked.

"Fine, sir. I am sticking close to you."

We now had to ascend the hill, through barbed wire and over pill-boxes—not a cheerful prospect, by any means. We started off again, in wave-formation this time. Before we had gone fifty yards, we were under heavy fire again. Machine-gun against machine-gun was the answer, but I had no machine-gun. Well, then I must get a machine-gun. "Who will go back to Captain Hunt and ask him to send me a machine-gun?" I asked.

"I will," said Talbot, and before I could tell him I wanted him to remain and let some one else go, he was off and away.

How he did it I don't know. It seemed miraculous. I could see Talbot as he bounded from shell-hole to shell-hole. Little clouds of dust sprang up in front of him and behind him, to his right and to his left, and still he kept on. The whole platoon was watching him. From my heart sprang a silent prayer: "God, watch that boy—let him through!"

The machine-gun came along. Lugging their gun-tripod and ammunition they came, over the same ground, Talbot with them, and a merciful providence let them through in safety. I heard the machine-gun corporal say, "Where is the target, sir?" His voice sounded far away, and I realized that I had witnessed heroism shorn of heroics—and I was proud to be a Marine.

It was short work now. The machine-gun did the trick. Before we reached the crest of the hill, the Jerries came out of their holes, hands in air, two hundred or more; and in their pits we found eighteen machine-guns with enough ammunition to annihilate a division. They were the sacrifice troops left to cover the retreat of the main body, at that moment hurrying north with our own Sixth Marines at their heels.

MY report of the events described cited Corporal Talbot for the Medal of Honor, for extraordinary heroism over and beyond all call of duty. He was to perform an even greater feat the next day before a German bullet got him. Months later I read the citation under the heading:

POSTHUMOUS AWARD
OF THE
DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS

If I could write the epitaph for his headstone, I would have it read: *"Just a Replacement."*

The Sinking of the Sydnes

IN the latter part of February, 1920, I shipped in a Norwegian four-masted barque *Sydnes*, and we left Norfolk bound for Montevideo, Uruguay, with fourteen hundred tons of sand in the hold for ballast. We got a fair wind as soon as we got outside. The wind increased daily and at last ended up in a blizzard which forced us to take in all the sails but the lower topsails, which are often left till the wind blows them out of the bolt-ropes.

On the fifth day we were about a thousand miles or more east of Norfolk—that is to say, practically right in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Late in the afternoon of the same day, a sailor from the watch on deck came into the fo'c's'le and woke us up to get out and get the lifeboats ready; at first we thought that he was joking, and none of us would believe it until one man went out to see for himself, but sure enough they were placing water and provisions in the boats. We now found out that the ship had sprung a leak, and as the pumps would not draw, we had to go down in the hold and bail with buckets. After doing this for awhile, steam was got up on the donkey-boiler, and we rigged a barrel so that we could hoist it up on deck with the steam winch. This was much faster work, but it was not fast enough; the water was steadily gaining, and after working hard at this all night there was four feet of water in the hold.

All this time it was blowing a heavy gale; the sea was high and the ship was rolling badly. The water was now starting to eat into the sand ballast which had been bulkheaded off amidships between high wooden bulkheads; as the water dug tunnels into the sand, the sand collapsed, and more and more of it went over to leeward, so that the ship was heeling over to that side rather badly and would eventually capsize.

The Captain now called all hands together, and it was decided that we should

One of the crew of a Norwegian barque which foundered in mid-Atlantic tells of the desperate days that followed.

By
J. Moldestad

take to the boats; as we had one boat on each side of the ship, we had to hoist one over to the lee side, because it would be impossible to turn the ship around, under the circumstances. This was finally done after working nearly all day. While most of us were doing this, some of the men had made a last desperate attempt to get the pumps working. They had connected the pump handles to the steam winch by means of ropes, and the pumps were now drawing water; but this did not last long for soon there was more sand than water and this stopped them at last for good.

We launched the first boat to go out, and eight men went into it, while sixteen remained on the ship to launch the other one. How we got it clear of the ship without smashing it to pieces is nothing less than a miracle, in the mountainous seas that were running. The worst time was under the stern, when we came swooping down on the crest of a wave, and were literally pushing away for our lives to get clear from under. In this struggle we lost our rudder and a couple of oars. The ship was drifting fast and we had a long painter out as we intended to let the ship tow us until she went down. We now had to get the oars out and start rowing in order to keep the boat from getting swamped. In the meantime the men on the ship started a big fire on the fo'c's'le head to attract the attention of other ships, if there were any around; after a while we saw them clear the stern in the other boat; they now joined us and transferred four men over to us, so that we were now twelve in each boat.

It was now dusk, and the doomed ship with her hull high on the water, her tall masts and yards outlined against the sky, the flames from the bow and occasional lightning flashes, was a wonderful sight. We gave the other boat a painter from ours, and both were now trailing behind the ship. About midnight the rope had chafed off underneath the ship's keel, and soon she drifted out of sight. We had to let go the other boat and were keeping in touch with each other by means of flashes from flashlights, but after a couple of hours they disappeared. We put out the sea anchor and all hands took to the oars to keep the boat head on to the sea, for otherwise it would surely capsize; we kept this up all night.

NEXT morning it moderated a little, and we set the sail and steered south toward the southern steamship lane. We sailed all night until the forenoon of the second day when it began to blow a whole gale and we had to put out the sea anchor again and all hands to the oars; this turned out to be a terrible night! The heavy seas were keeping the boat half full of water most of the time, and several of us were washed overboard, but not very far from the boat, so we all got aboard again. All hands were very tired but we had no time for sleep; the main thing was to keep the oars going, for if we should let up for a minute we would soon be goners for good.

There was no change in the weather the next day, either; nasty cross-seas would fill

the boat occasionally and two men were constantly bailing. In the afternoon the boat was visited by a school of sharks; they surrounded the boat for the rest of the day and probably carried away our sea anchor. We cut about six feet of the mast; with this and some canvas we made another one. It is a well-known superstition among old-time sailors that when sharks follow a vessel, some one is going to die, but most of us didn't worry about it.

The fourth day in the evening we sighted the lights from a steamer, but they did not see our signals. The same day we noticed that a sailor by the name of Jim was acting queerly; he was talking about jumping overboard, but we got him quieted, and he lay down to sleep. The weather was now moderate, and we were sailing south.

About ten o'clock in the evening we were roused by a terrible scream, and at the same time a bloody knife was thrown toward the stern. It cleared my head by less than an inch, but no one was hit. Jim was now lying in the bottom of the boat with a gaping cut in his throat. He had in a moment of madness decided to die. He was still alive, and we gave him water, which he drank eagerly; there was no hope of saving his life, but we bandaged his throat and did what we could.

We now sighted another ship less than a mile away. We hoisted the lantern up on the mast; the ship seemed to stop, and we could see lights being moved about. We were now in high spirits as we thought we were as good as saved. After about ten minutes she started on her way again, and our hopes sank. Turning our attention to Jim now, we found that he was dead. The next morning we buried him; we had no weights to make him sink, so he was floating when we saw him last. His madness was the result of drinking salt water; our water supply was low; we had a mouthful three times a day, and our biscuits were soaked with salt water. We had plenty of cigarettes and tobacco and this helped us a lot.

IT now began to blow again; the wind increased to storm force, and the sea became so heavy that we had to begin rowing as before. We passed another night that seemed like an eternity and the next morning we could hardly stand on our feet. We had lost most of the oars during the night and had only three left, one for steering and one on each side. The wind was so strong that it flattened the crest of the waves, the air was filled with spray and we could only see a few hundred yards. Most of the men put their life-preservers on; there was no more rowing; nobody did much talking. I got hold of a biscuit, and when I started to eat it, one of the men said: "It is no use for you to eat now; we will soon die."

We all sat down in the bottom of the boat; many a time it looked as if it was going to capsize and throw us out, and we were now waiting for the end. All the continuous hard rowing, the cold, thirst and hunger; and being soaked with salt water for a week, had made us so stiff that we could hardly move our arms and legs. It was torture only to shift a few feet, and to crawl from one end of the boat to the other was like walking a mile. The next day we were feeling better; the sun was shining, and the chief mate, who was commander of the boat, took an observation of the sun and laid a course for Bermuda, which was calculated to be about six hundred miles away. In the evening we took in the sea anchor and set sail.

It was my turn to bail out the water; this was a very tiresome task, and I was thinking that if I could only sight a steamer now, I would get out of the bailing. I took a good look at the horizon, and the first thing I saw was the headlight of a steamer! After looking at it for a while to be sure that it was not imagination, I said: "It looks like a light over there."

Instantly a wild commotion took place; the lantern was lit in a hurry, and the third mate was sending S. O. S. with it, making flashes by shading it with his sou'wester; others were tearing up their under-clothes and making torches by soaking the cloth in kerosene and setting it on fire. The sail was pulled down in a hurry, and the three oars were manned by willing hands. The ship was now aware of our presence; she changed her course and was soon heading straight for us; as she came nearer there was a wild rush for the water-breaker which still held a little water. Some one on the ship sang out: "Who is there?"

"Shipwrecked crew," we answered.

"All right, come on board, fellows!" the answer came.

When we were sitting in the officers' messroom a couple of hours later, eating a hearty meal, we were feeling great, and I don't mean maybe; it was a feeling I shall never forget! The ship was the Italian freighter *Elba,* bound for Italy, where we landed three weeks later.

The story of a hunter who was charged by a bull moose—and taken for a ride in wilderness fashion.

By
Jefferson Reeves

The Horns of Dilemma

THE next time I go hunting big game in the Canadian North Woods, I'm not going to allow my heart to soften and stray from my purpose to release a yearling calf moose from a precarious position in an abandoned pitfall. And if I ever go moose-hunting again I will go fully equipped with glass reflectors on either side of my head so I can see what is going on behind me, for in spite of his bulk, a full-grown moose can tread the soft pine needles with the inspiring quietness of a Crow Indian. You wouldn't hear him at all if you were busily engaged in trying to jack another out of a hole!

Of the dozen or more bulls I have shot in various expeditions into the North, I can say honestly that I've never harmed one which was not actually dangerous to my life. I've been in some tight scrapes, cornered, chased and tossed, but the very unusual situation of this particular case makes it worthy of record, although it nearly cost me my life. But I feel amply repaid in the possession of a set of horns which adorn the wall of my cabin in the Sierras.

FOR months my friend Bill Hastings and myself planned a trip into the vastness of the great North, and finally the day arrived when we climbed aboard a train in Los Angeles bound for Vancouver, British Columbia. Hampered with nothing but our favorite rifles and ammunition, we arrived at the Canadian border and transferred at Vancouver for the interior as far as the Athabasca River, where we outfitted, obtained a guide, a canoe and other necessities for water travel. Altogether the outfit was as light as any I had ever used and we departed from Athabasca in high spirits, paddling upstream for three solid days.

The guide, whom our outfitters had recommended, was a Cree Indian of ancient vintage, wrinkled, but sharp of eye, strong as a mule and with a reputation for reliability. He directed the movement of our birch-slab canoe.

At a fork in the broad Athabasca River, muddy and swift at that time of the year, we swung off the main course toward Lesser Slave Lake. Another day we paddled from dawn until dusk and the guide, in pidgin English with a mixture of French and Cree, declared we had arrived at the best moose-yards in the Canadian Northwest. He swung the canoe toward the western shore and we pitched our camp a short distance from the water's edge.

Night was upon us before we had the tents pegged down strongly. A large silver moon literally jumped into the sky over the eastern horizon and supplied us with light almost as bright as day. A cool breeze was blowing in over the lake and it had the tang of snow and ice of the great north. The Cree sniffed snow in that breeze.

We were squatted around a blazing camp-fire when we heard the mating call of a bull moose coming in from the opposite side of the Lesser Slave Lake. It gave us ample proof of the Cree guide's abil-

ity to select a hunting-ground and one at that which had been the game paradise of his forebears. The Cree grabbed a curved horn from his pack and proceeded to blow an answer to the call from across the shimmering lake—a long-drawn-out bellow that echoed and re-echoed throughout the woods—the female's answer to her lord.

"Keepum roun'," the Cree said, returning to the fire. "Ketchum 'long sun-time. Bull buck think moose squaw blow love-call. Ugh!" His face wrinkled into a wry smile which revealed a million wrinkles in his weather-beaten visage. He seemed pleased because the bull had bellowed his return call, which was significant of the fact that he would remain in that vicinity for some time to come.

The evening wore on and was quite cold. It was frosty and our nostrils stuck together when away from the warmth of the blaze. Hastings suggested that we turn in for sleep after the long arduous paddling up the Athabasca. He wanted that bull from across the lake. We bade good night to the Cree and sought our sleeping-bags in the tent. The guide curled up by the fire and was asleep ere his head touched the poncho beneath him.

It must have been midnight when we were awakened by a terrific crashing in the brush. Hastings swore and struggled out of his sleeping-bag, rifle in hand. He pushed open the tent flap; the Indian was gone. The fire had died down to a mere glow, but the crashing continued. Not wishing to become lost in the vast wilderness of the Saskatchewan country, Bill and I waited the return of the guide. The tent we had erected to house our supplies was a wreck and the contents were scattered hither and yon. Yes, we had had a visitor, and a mighty big one at that!

SUDDENLY to the west of us we heard the sharp whiplike snap of a high-powered rifle. We figured that the Cree had met the marauder and pilferer of our stores, and in this supposition we were correct, for shortly the Indian returned carrying a ham, a side of bacon and the haunch of a black bear. Bruin had not escaped the wary eyes of the Cree.

After hearing the guide's recount of his experiences we returned to our sleeping-bags.

The Cree awakened us two hours before daybreak. The moon was overhead, cold and silvery. We set to work preparing breakfast, filling our cartridge-belts and looking to our rifles. With camp routine over, we were ready for the hunt.

Figuring that in comparison with the Indian's knowledge of the game and the wilderness, ours was meager, we permitted him to give us our directions. He illustrated the trails each should take by drawing a sketch in the dead ashes of the campfire. I was to go south about a quarter mile inland from the lake shore, Hastings was to go directly parallel to my trail and the Cree was to go north and beat back in a wide half-circle to run any game into our hands that might be within the range of his trail and the lake side. The idea met with both my approval and that of Bill. We shook hands and started off. It was still an hour before daybreak and the right time to bag our game.

I trailed perhaps two miles south before I came in contact with anything worthy of a shot. I had frightened out several deer and other sundry small game and had found a yard in which several moose had bedded down for that night. I hiked a half-mile farther on and my attention was attracted to one side from which came the squeal of an animal in distress. At least it sounded appealing to me anyhow and I started off in direction of the sound. I had not gone more than a hundred yards when I found my quarry.

HEAD showing above level ground, I discovered a young moose apparently trapped in a pitfall. Helpless as he was, I was half tempted to put him out of his misery because I could see no way to help the beast out of its predicament. For some reason I couldn't pull the trigger. Each time I drew the bead the moose turned his head in my direction, eyes big and glossy and appealing to me, it seemed, in a dumb appeal for help.

Looking over the situation I figured that his weight would not be more than several hundred pounds and I might be able to pry him out with a lever., I had not once given a thought that the youngster's mother or ferocious daddy might be in the vicinity. I stood my rifle against a tree and lopped down a narrow but substantial young pine tree with my handax. I was clipping off the branches to make the lever when I heard a thumping of hoofs behind me and suddenly felt a desire to duck.

But I flattened too late.

The impact of the blow in the small of

my back knocked the wind out of me completely and I felt myself being shaken like a mouse in the mouth of a cat.

I opened my eyes, grabbing simultaneously. My hands clutched the rough horns of one of the biggest bull moose I have ever seen. With my legs hanging down by the bull's nose, his horns entwined inside of my belt, vest and heavy fur-lined mackinaw, I found myself in a very precarious situation. My head cleared at the realization of the danger and my brain immediately explained to me how it happened.

I WAS stooped over the tree when the bull moose scented me and charged furiously. The pine-needles had deadened the sound of his beating hoofs until he was on top of me. When I ducked instinctively I had saved my life—I had saved myself from being gored through by the sharp horns of the big brute—the mad beast of the Northwest. Horns had missed my skin by a fraction of an inch, the impact driving them through my clothing, binding me to the bull's head.

The bull moose was pawing the earth furiously and try as he might he could not shake me off his horns, so locked there was I. His great body trembled and with a final shake of his head he bellowed and started off through the forest aisles with the speed of a flying express-train.

I have ridden bronchos in Arizona, straddled camels and bulldogged steers many times, but the ride and bouncing I received on the horns of the bull moose outshone any other jolting I had ever received. And the realization of the fact that I could not dismount when I desired added much to my discomfort, I assure you.

The bull literally tore through the forest, his head low, to push aside any small bushes and short trees with his wide-spread horns. A low-hanging branch of a cedar tree knocked the wind out of me as we raced along. I expected momentarily to have my back broken or brains knocked out by the sudden headshakes of the anger-crazed beast.

Many schemes to escape from my predicament entered my head but were discarded as impossible. I even thought of using my light caliber pistol on the beast but this thought was given up when I decided that I would be ground to death in event I should succeed in hitting a vital spot in the head of the terrified bull. The chance was slim that the bullet would even penetrate the thick skull of the animal. So I decided just to hang on and wait the hand of Providence to permit me to escape.

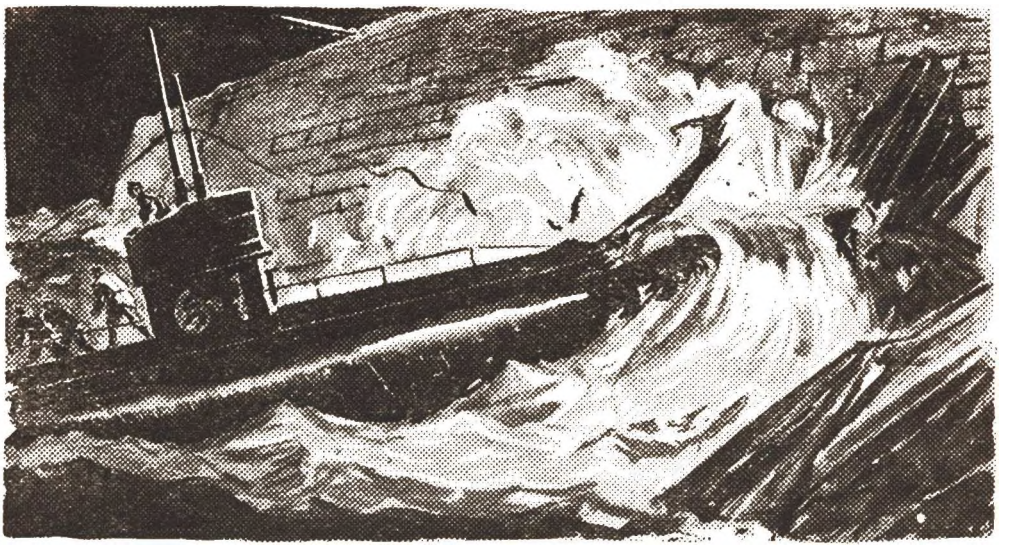
I figured that if Hastings and the guide were downwind from the bull, his mad race might carry him right into their hands. This possibility was soon realized when I heard the shout of the Cree. He had apparently witnessed the odd sight of the moose racing away with me entwined on his horns. He seemed to be directly in front of the charging beast, for the sound of his voice brought the bull to a dead stop, the horns digging into my flesh under the sudden impact. He pawed the earth, reared, screamed and rubbed his horns on the bole of a towering jack-pine. I was protected, I discovered, from this procedure, by the outcropping of the prongs—I was strung in the center on the narrow prongs.

THEN came the snap of a rifle. The bull stiffened and fell to his knees. He staggered to his feet—all fours, but before he could start into another mad race the rifle cracked again and he leaped into the air, tearing my face badly in the pine-branches above.

The giant bull fell, shuddering, kicking and tossing his head. Into the scratches of my face, dirt was ground and the skin scraped from my back.

By this time the Cree had reached me and sent another slug into the beast's brain. He ceased struggling immediately. The Cree cut me loose from my hang-hold and I was free once again and thanking my stars that the bull had not deliberately crashed into a tree. Had he headed for the lake I should have been drowned. As it was I suffered five broken ribs, a twisted thigh, abrasions of the first degree and minor cuts and bruises.

An estimate made by the Cree set a ten-mile gap between the spot where I was picked up and the spot where the Indian first witnessed the spectacle. But for all that, I did not interfere with the enjoyment of my friend Bill Hastings. I lay in my sleeping-bag for six days to permit him to continue the hunt, telling him that I was feeling fine—though really more dead than alive. By the end of that time, however, my wounds were healing and was on the road to recovery, the Cree proving as handy as any doctor in case of emergency. Hastings had later returned to the trapped yearling, but it was dead, and partly devoured by gray wolves.



At Zeebrugge

One who took part in the assault on this famous German submarine base tells of his share.

By **Arthur E. Thompson**

ON a dark foggy night in April, 1918, the flotilla commanded by Admiral Keyes crept slowly toward the Mole at Zeebrugge, through the lines of the enemy mines. From the photographs and T. D. information we were fairly sure of the lanes to follow in order to miss the mines.

For three nights we had waited a favorable wind before striking our blow at the might of Germany. This night was perfect for the job in hand—foggy, and with a strong land wind blowing our smoke-screen landward, rendering the enemy searchlights ineffective.

Through the periscope I could see faint splotches which I judged, correctly, to be the enemy searchlights; then the Mole itself loomed up.

I felt a quiver of excitement pass through me as I sighted our objective, and turning the periscope over to the sailor who stood alongside of me, I went to report to my senior and commanding officer, Lieutenant Hugh Sandford.

I found him studying his charts very earnestly, a grim, set look on his face. I would like to give you some idea of the man chosen for this particular dangerous bit of work. Lieutenant Sandford is tall, muscular and very dark, a comparatively young man then in his early thirties. Attention was immediately directed to his eyes, which are a light frosty blue in color, and a decided contrast to his dark skin—the type of man who fairly radiates confidence and ability. Instinctively I knew that the admiralty had made no mistake in choosing this man.

He was deep in his charts when I entered, and apparently did not hear me.

I coughed and saluted. "We are approaching the Mole, sir."

SANDFORD nodded without looking up. I waited for a full thirty seconds; then he spoke, and looked me in the eyes.

"Arthur, you haven't the slightest idea what our part in this is, have you?"

"No-o, I haven't, Hugh," I replied, "except that it's pretty important, and is apt to—cost us our lives."

"Well," he said, "this is the story." And in short rapid sentences he explained to me our part in the strafing party: Lieutenant Tommy Outerbridge of the *Warwick* was to leave his ship in a small motor-driven dinghy and under cover of darkness make his way under the wooden part of the Mole.

There he would set off a flare as our guiding mark and wait to take us off our ship in his dinghy. We were to take the flare as our objective, drive the submarine directly for it at full speed and jam it (the submarine) into the piles and blow her up, by means of a time fuse—giving us five minutes to escape in Tommy's cockleshell. The chances were five to one against our coming out alive. Big odds, but a stake.

Hugh Sandford finished his story and left me to make my peace with God. While I was turning the thing over in my mind, I felt the old bus coming to the top, and in a few minutes we were riding the surface, still traveling at quarter speed.

I found Lieutenant Sandford on deck peering anxiously through his night glasses toward the wooden part of the Mole. I think we both saw it at once, a red flash close to the water, then another, and this one burned steadily. Hugh went below and took the wheel and gave the order *"Full speed ahead!"*

THE crew, volunteers with no one dependent on them, were taking it as easily as if we were on a pleasure cruise.

Hawkins, a little cockney product of the Limehouse district, said something which made the men nearest him grin. I didn't get the remark, and probably couldn't print it if I had.

Suddenly Sandford's voice snapped: "Hang on!" And in a few seconds there was a resounding crash. In spite of the warning injunction to hang on, I was thrown against the wall with a force that left me half stunned and gasping for breath.

Picking myself up, I came to the conclusion that no bones were broken, though my shoulder ached where it came in sudden contact with the steel wall.

The men were already on their feet, cursing softly and feeling various parts of their anatomies tenderly. Strange, I thought, how well the old ship stood it.

"Into the dinghy, men!" called Sandford, his face slightly flushed from excitement.

The men filed out and into the little power-driven boat which was waiting. Sandford touched off the fuse, took one last look around, put on his cap, and followed us to the boat, which immediately put off in the direction of the *Warwick,* Admiral Keyes' ship.

I was just beginning to think we were well out of it, when the engine of the dinghy failed, leaving us to the mercy of the tide and the enemy marksmen on the Mole. We had been sighted and were being fired on. Bullets struck the gunwales with a splintering crash, or went ricocheting off the water alongside. Fortunately the fog made us a poor target; a flying splinter sliced an inch of skin off my chin, and I heard Outerbridge curse fluently. A bullet got him in the fleshy part of the right arm as he wrestled with the tiny engine. Hawkins, the cockney, started convulsively, then sank back, and a bright red flow of blood bubbled from between his clenched teeth. . . . .

A motor launch bore down us from the port side and ordered us to "Leave that damned eggshell and climb in here." We effected the change with no further casualties, and in record time.

Hawkins was lifted into the launch by Sandford and myself. The commander of the launch, who was Sandford's brother, wasted no time returning to the *Warwick.*

We had just reached the side of the Admiral's ship when our little surprise packet went off. We turned around, saw a blinding sheet of flame, then total darkness; then, as our eyes became used to the dark again, we saw that over a hundred feet of the Mole was blown away and the rest was burning merrily. All the enemy on that part of the Mole were killed instantly.

AFTER reporting to Admiral Keyes and being congratulated on the success of our mission, we were free to watch the rest of the fight. Owing to the surge of tide, the destroyers could not stay alongside the Mole long enough to make fast and discharge their landing parties. The auxiliary ship *Vindictive,* however, was kept pressed against the Mole by the *Daffodil,* and landed her parties, who accomplished their object—namely the silencing the ten guns on the end of the Mole. Three parties then started for the shore end of the Mole, but had to be recalled owing to the terrific machine-gun fire which met them.

The *Isis,* with orders to sink herself in the mouth of the harbor, fouled the nets. The crew scuttled the ship and took to the boats, every man being saved; and the *Isis* sank a few minutes later.

The *Daffodil* and the *Vindictive* were recalled, and "Keyes' Volunteers" made their way in safety to their home fort after achieving one of the maddest and most impossible feats in naval history.

The Path of Famine

An American relief worker here contributes a strange story of a perilous journey in the Volga Valley.

By **Henry C. Wolfe**

IN January, 1922, I was an officer of the American Relief Administration at Samara, Russia. At that time the great Volga Valley was experiencing one of the worst famines in history. The suffering of the inhabitants of this district was past description. Millions of people were starving, and to make matters even worse, a frightful epidemic of typhus was raging.

Soon after my arrival in Samara I was assigned to Melekes, in the northern part of the province. In winter the trip from Samara to Melekes by sled takes three days. When we began to prepare for the journey, we discovered that most of the horses had already been eaten, and those which survived were in such a weakened condition that they would have lasted only a few hours out on the steppes.

We examined many horses, but they were so emaciated from their diet of straw from thatched roofs of abandoned houses that we knew they were quite hopeless for our purpose.

After two weeks of search we found a man who had contrived somehow to keep his horses in fair condition. For twenty-five million rubles, he agreed to transport my interpreter and me to Melekes.

Our party consisted of two Russian drivers, my interpreter Freedman, and myself. There were two sleds, each drawn by a single horse. My interpreter and I rode on the smaller sled, which went ahead. The other carried our baggage, food and forage for the horses. The drivers were big blond peasants who had somehow managed to escape starvation, although they were on the verge of it.

WE left Samara in a snowstorm with the temperature about thirty-five degrees below zero. My interpreter and I pledged ourselves to watch each other's faces, especially the nose, and to rub on snow, at the first sign of freezing. Before the end of the trip we had to do this many times.

After proceeding about ten miles we reached a village where we planned to rest our horses. There we saw a peasant driving an emaciated horse which was having the utmost difficulty in making any prog-

ress at all. Just before we came abreast of it, the poor beast toppled over exhausted in the snow, where it lay still.

Suddenly, as if they were obeying a signal, a crowd of wild-looking peasants poured out of the houses on both sides of the street. With maniacal yells they fell upon the animal and literally tore him to pieces. Some hacked and ripped with knives and axes, while others attacked the carcass with their teeth and fingernails. As the body was torn apart, these mad wretches fought to drink the blood.

To prevent an attack on our horses, I walked by the side of our rear horse, revolver in hand, till we were out of this condemned village.

That night we slept in the house of a formerly prosperous peasant at Krasny Yar. The interpreter and I had a cow for a roommate. Our host explained that her milk formed the sole source of food for his three children, and that if he allowed her out of the house, she would be set upon by the horde of starving people in the town.

BEFORE going to bed, Freedman and I went through our typhus-prevention performance, which consisted of stripping and examining the inside of our underwear. Insects congregated there, and if they had bitten anyone with typhus during the preceding ten days, the chances were a thousand to one that we would get it. To keep as free of these pests as possible, we changed our underwear twice a day. At night we hung the underwear out of the window. By morning the bitter cold had destroyed any insect life that had been on them the night before.

The following day we reached Kuroyedova, where the famine and typhus were raging. The head of the town Soviet reported that thirty-one people had died during the preceding twenty-four hours. He took me to a warehouse wherein were stored over eight hundred dead bodies, piled row upon row like cordwood. When I asked him the reason for this collection, he told me that the relatives of the dead were too weak from hunger to dig graves.

It is only human to want to help a man dying of starvation. When we left Samara, we carried enough bread to last till we should arrive at our Melekes warehouse. However, before we had proceeded very far, I found myself doling out some of our

(Continued on next page)

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(Continued from previous page)

slender supplies to the starving, though I realized the utter futility of giving a man a piece of bread if I could not follow it up with more.

And so before we had proceeded a third of our way to Melekes I had given away nearly all our bread. Suppose one of the horses should die? Suppose we should be delayed or we should have to complete our journey on foot? I knew it was foolhardy, but I couldn't resist the temptation to give out bread to these doomed men and women. The result was that on the second day we had almost nothing to eat. We had to depend upon tea which we made at our stops in villages. Not even gold could buy food; even the dogs, cats and rats had been eaten.

Famine bread consisted of a combination of tree-bark, ground bones and manure. Not a very appetizing *ersatz* at best, but the man who had an ounce of even that was extremely fortunate. When our last white bread was gone, the drivers produced some of this frightful stuff and ate it. However, my interpreter and I relied on tea and hoped that nothing would delay our arrival in Melekes.

MANY times during the trip our first horse stepped into blind snow-filled ravines and floundered around helplessly till we could beat down the snow around her. It was slow, cold work, especially for men faint from hunger. Almost invariably, in the midst of one of these rescues of our good Marusha, Freedman and I would have to take our mittens off and massage our noses with snow. And this was done to the accompaniment of a penetrating February gale across the Russian steppe.

Our drivers were willing to help in this frequent digging operation, but the poor fellows were so weakened from months of hunger that they would tire completely after a few minutes of effort. Fortunately, Marusha seemed to realize we were helping her, for she coöperated by not kicking when the snow was being removed.

There was the constant danger that one of the horses would break a leg in some snow-filled hole or upon a snow-covered stump. In that event we would have been forced to kill the animal, abandon our baggage and ride on the remaining sled. We realized that if both of our horses were injured, our chances of ever getting to Mel-

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ekes would be slim indeed; for by the beginning of the third day, Freedman and I were so weak from hunger that we could not have walked very far.

In the evening of our third day on the trek, we were pressing on toward Novo Maina where we were to spend the night. As we could not live out on the steppe overnight, it was a life-and-death matter. Shortly after dark we entered a wood.

Suddenly the horses began to snort and jump in terror. Freedman and I peered into the gloom, but we could see nothing but the dim outlines of the trees. However, our driver kept his sharp ax between his knees while he talked encouragingly to our faithful Marusha. But she became so panic-stricken that there was grave danger our sled would be dashed into a tree and our horse would break loose.

I noticed that she kept crowding toward the left, and that her terrified snorts were directed toward the right of us. Something had to be done, so I fired three shots into the tree-tops at our right. Whether the danger was from wolves or men, I thought it best not to empty my revolver. Our horses quieted down now, and we reached the village safely.

AT Novo Maina we stayed at the home of a family whose head had been a grain merchant before the Revolution. Somehow they had been able to horde a little food, and though hungry, they were not actually in the starvation stage.

Freedman and I were suffering from headaches which were induced by the snow-glare, the bumping of the sled and our hunger. We took aspirin, which helped to relieve our throbbing heads, and our tea helped us forget our empty stomachs. We sat around the samovar and talked and drank tea with our hosts till dawn.

During the night I was startled to see a great gaunt wolf with his feet against the window-pane, peering into the room at a sheep which was kept in the house to protect it from the neighbors. Its bleats had attracted the wolf. I could have shot the wolf easily, for he did not even show fright when the family set up shouts at him. He looked hungrily at the sheep for a minute, and then disappeared.

Next day there was a terrific, blinding snowstorm. We had the utmost difficulty in finding our way. At times we were completely lost. It would sometimes take us a half-hour to locate the next stick in the ground which showed the way. We took turns leaving the sleds and hunting these guide-posts. There was the extreme danger of becoming confused and wandering away from the others in this storm.

Digging the horses out of holes was nothing short of a nightmare. Freedman and I were now so weak from hunger that we could scarcely work for five minutes without becoming exhausted. At times we put the horses together and all huddled between them to keep from freezing.

It was a slow trip. We progressed only by inches, and very painful inches at that. At times we thought we were lost and doomed. But each time one member of the party would find the next stick and our journey would be resumed. Toward evening we reached Melekes.

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