

BLUE BOOK

Magazine

August

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Private Jungle by T. S. STRIBLING

Winner of this year's Pulitzer Prize for the Best American Novel

Sioux in Ambush, by Chief White Bull

Smuggler's Cove A LIGHT-HEARTED NOVEL by
Talbert Josselyn

A Prize Winner's Story

THIS issue begins with "Private Jungle," the latest short story by T. S. Stribling, whose novel "The Store" has recently been awarded the Pulitzer Prize as the best novel of the year. You will, we are confident, share our pleasure in this remarkable story, for it clearly reveals the fine qualities which have made his novels so impressive. Foremost of these qualities, you will find, is his ability to see and convey to you the extraordinary and picturesque side of what, to many, would be the most commonplace of American places and people. And in this fascinating Florida adventure of a professional criminologist, he is at his best.

As to Mr. Stribling himself—he was born in Clifton, Tennessee, in 1881, and still lives there. But he knows and loves all of this America well, as his novels "Birthright," "Teefallow," "The Forge" and "The Store" well attest. . . .

Often an author or author's association makes inquiry of us concerning what sort of stories we most need for the magazine. Usually we reply: "Something new, something better—something different." For—though we are careful each month to give you, in ample proportion, stories of the tried-and-true types you have liked in the past—we do earnestly strive always to give our readers something that is new, or different or better.

With this thought in mind we wish to call your special attention to two other items in this issue besides Mr. Stribling's "Private Jungle:" Chief Joseph White Bull's story of the famous Fetterman fight, as told to Stanley Vestal, is a remarkable historical document as well as a thrilling battle-story. For this old Sioux chieftain is the only survivor of both the Fetterman and the Custer battles, and his narrative is truly unique.

Talbert Josselyn's sprightly "Smuggler's Cove" also deserves particular attention; but the merits of a story of this type can't be described; and we know you'll quickly discover them for yourselves.

Next month—we expect also to give you something new, something different, something better.

—*The Editor.*

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BLUE BOOK



AUGUST, 1933

MAGAZINE

VOL. 57, NO. 4

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Except for stories of Real Experiences, all stories and novels printed herein are fiction and are intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or to actual events.

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DONALD KENNICOTT, *Editor*

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Why don't you write?

Private Jungle

This fine story of a criminologist's strange case in Florida is a fascinating narrative—and a notable example of the talents which recently won for Mr. Stribling's "The Store" the Pulitzer Prize for the best American novel of the year.

By

T. S. STRIBLING

Illustrated by
John F. Clymer

ON the southbound express out of Tampa, the bride in the seat just ahead of Mr. Henry Poggioli was of the velvety prettiness characteristic of the Spanish strain in Florida women; and so the criminologist had fallen into conversation with the husband.

After they had talked on for some bit, the men telling their names and occupations after the fashion of American travelers, Poggioli was wondering how he could draw the girl into the conversation and hear the quality of her voice, when she looked around and asked with interest:

"And you are a criminologist?"

"Yes, Mrs. Blackmar."

The girl hesitated. "I wonder—I wonder, Mr. Poggioli, you being a criminologist, if you could prove that somebody didn't do what he is accused of?"

A quirk of humor went through Poggioli at the prevailing need of human beings for the service of criminologists. Here was this girl returning from her honeymoon! Aloud he said: "Some one accused of a crime, Mrs. Blackmar?"



"Elora—" warned the husband in an undertone.

A renewed rattling of the rain against the car-window gave Mr. Poggioli a chance to veer politely from what appeared to be a delicate matter between husband and wife.

"Does it rain like this all through the wet season in Florida?" he asked.

Mr. Blackmar began explaining that it usually came in squalls like the present, when the girl interrupted with unmistakable earnestness:



JOHN · F.
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"Mr. Poggioli, when we were coming out into this jungle did you have a feeling somebody was telling you to stay out?"

"Yes, a crime, Mr. Poggioli, a very dreadful crime—at least the accusation of one."

This headed the conversation once more toward shoals.

Poggioli answered gravely:

"Wouldn't proving a man's innocence be a case for a lawyer rather than a problem for a psychologist, Mrs. Blackmar?"

"This has nothing to do with courts," returned the bride, disturbed. "It's a tale, a rumor that keeps floating around El Jobe-An—why, it happened more than sixty years ago."

The psychologist showed surprise. "Would it be possible today to verify and settle such an old rumor?"

"That's the point," explained the bride earnestly: "a psychologist might do it. You understand how people's minds work; you could show that Grandfather's mind couldn't possibly have worked—"

The young husband interrupted again with some concern: "Which grandfather, Elora?"

"Grandfather Blackmar, of course, Julian; I'm a Blackmar now."

It may have been the bride's emotion, or her dark dramatic eyes, or small eloquent hands; but at any rate, on this rather vague mission, Mr. Poggioli eventually got off the train with the Blackmars at El Jobe-An.

At the way station a gloomy negro driver in an ancient motorcar awaited the couple. Presently this equipage set forth amid an endless level of lean pines and palmettos following a lane of reddish-brown water which represented a public road in this part of Florida during the wet season.

The black man who drove the car kept to the flooded roadbed by a sort of divination. He was oddly silent for a colored man; only once did he speak.

"Mas' Jule, one o' dem Mendezes was at de station jes' befo' yo train come in, an' he lights out dis dorection."

"Yes, that's all right, Goolow." And Julian turned and continued to Poggioli

that the rainy season made hunting very good on the high lands, and that the Blackmar estate stood well above the floods.

"What elevation have you above the general level?" inquired Poggioli, who was also making conversation.

"Oh—eight or ten inches or more."

Presently the car came to the junction of another perfectly straight avenue of water amid the endless pines. As the negro turned into this private thoroughfare, he suddenly kicked on his brakes. The white passengers were annoyed at the rough stop. Blackmar rapped out:

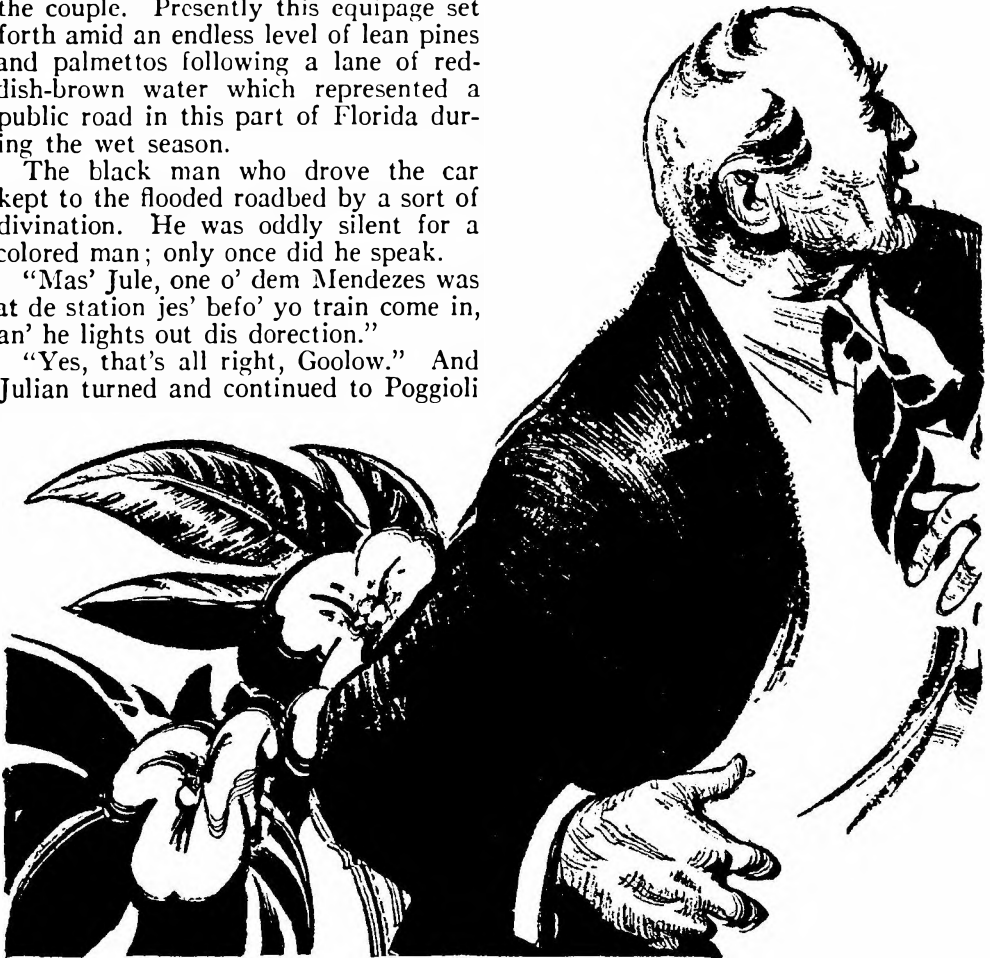
"Goolow, what in the devil—"

The black man said in a scared voice: "Dey's a washout, Mas' Jule."

"Washout?" repeated the master incredulously.

He opened the door, stood on the running-board and peered forward.

The dark red water from the deluge moved deliberately along the drainage ditches toward the sea.





"He sent me fuh you quick,"
gasp'd the black, "—to set up
wid Miss Lory. . . . She's
—she's daid!"

"Get in there and wade, Goolow, and see what you can find out."

The black man stepped out into water that was ankle-deep on the road-bed. He splashed toward the culvert—and suddenly, without warning, went under head and ears. He came up blowing and splashing.

"I knowed hit! I knowed hit! Dat low-down Jim R. Mendez floated huh off."

Young Blackmar made a silencing gesture. "You know nothing of the sort. Nobody need have floated it off. The culvert was wooden; it could have washed out or rotted out."

"You cain't tell me, Mas' Jule, what did Jim R. wait at de station fuh twell he see you-all git off'n de train, 'n'en tu'n his flivvah roun' an' come tearin' back dis dorection lak a speed-boat—"

"I don't know what he did it for—he

wouldn't want to chop a culvert from in front of our car when he knew Elora was in it!"

The negro blinked the water out of his eyes and slapped it out of his wool.

"Somebody boun' tinkah wid dat culve't, Mas' Jule; hit nevah did wash out befo'."

"You cut some logs and float down here; we've got to get this car across some way or other."

Goolow came dripping to the car, fished an ax from under the rear seat, then swam to the other side of the ditch and began chopping down some tall cabbage-palms. Julian Blackmar slowly discarded his own shoes and socks to help his servant. Poggioli briskly followed his host's example. The bride protested against a guest's taking part in the labor, but both men made ready, and presently stepped out into the water.

When they had waded out of earshot of the car, Blackmar said in a lowered tone:

"Before Elora, I had to let on that I didn't believe it was Jim R. But if he drove right ahead of us, it *was* him—it couldn't be anybody else."

"What is Jim R. Mendez to your wife?" inquired the psychologist.

"Why, they're first cousins," explained Blackmar, frowning. "Elora was a Mendez before I married her."

Poggioli stood rather at sea. "Would Mendez try to head your car into a ditch of water with his own first cousin in it?"

BLACKMAR nodded gloomily. "More than that, I believe this was aimed directly at Elora."

Poggioli was astonished. "Why do you make such a statement as that?"

The host cleared his throat uneasily. "Well, you see, if Elora has a child, it will inherit the Mendez groves and grazing land. That was the way the old man Jimenez Mendez willed it. The Mendez boys are living on it now, but it will finally go to Elora's children, if she has any."

Poggioli was shocked. "You don't think Jim R. is trying to murder his cousin to prevent her from becoming a mother, do you?"

"Why, of course that's it. That culvert didn't just wash away. The land's too flat. There's hardly any current at all."

In the midst of this conversation old Goolow shouted a warning. The white men looked up, then waded quickly to avoid the crash of a palm top as it fell across the ditch. While they were lost in these green curtains, there sounded a pattering down the road, and a little later Goolow called in an undertone:

"Mas' Jule, yonder come 'at Jim R. now. As he go by, stop him an' look at he breeches."

Poggioli peered out of the leaves. "Why do you want to look at his trousers?"

"To see if dey wet," explained the black in a low tone, "to see if he been out in de water choppin' loose de culve't."

"He might have changed his trousers," suggested the psychologist.

"Huh," grunted the negro; "when Mistuh Jim R. change he breeches, he pulls 'em off, an' when he changes ag'in, he puts 'em on."

The scientist nodded at the single-

breeched idea and made a note to observe the newcomer's trousers. The pattering increased, and presently a dilapidated car came plowing through the water, leaving a long "V" of waves behind it. The rusty machine stopped opposite the men, and its driver called out in a hearty nasal voice:

"Hey-oh, sir, you-all stuck somehow? What's the matter?"

Julian Blackmar, halfway across the bole, seemed about to return a scathing answer when Poggioli hastened to explain:

"The culvert's washed out."

"Huh, that's funny," ejaculated Jim R., looking up and down the waterway, "funny it washed out on the very day Jule an' Cousin Lory got back off their weddin'-trip. . . . It shore is quare."

"We thought it very strange, too," returned Blackmar pointedly. "Why should it float off just before we arrived?"

"Naw, I imagine you cain't un'erstan' that," agreed Jim R. sardonically.

It was evident the two men would be in a quarrel the next moment. Poggioli interposed to say they were chopping down palms now to bridge the stream and set the Blackmar car across.

At this Jim R. stepped out of his car into the water, saying:

"By grabs, I don't pass up nobody tryin' to git his car out of trouble. Besides, Jule is kin to me now—cousins by marriage, aint we, Jule!" And with this the yokel suddenly laughed, and a moment later, as suddenly stopped.

THE newcomer fished an ax out of his car and came wading to the palm, to cut off its head and allow its bole to float down to the marooned motor. Poggioli made way for him among the leaves. The fellow pulled off his wet shoes, after the manner of an expert woodsman, then stood poised on the bole in his sock feet and fell to work with dexterous strokes. As the fibrous body notched under his labor, Jim R. found time to glance around and wink seriously and significantly at Poggioli.

The scientist was somewhat puzzled at the gesture; whether it was a denial or an admission of guilt, he did not know. Within a few minutes the trunk parted; Jim R. stepped across the gap and joined Poggioli among the leaves. He winked again, satirically, pulled down the corners of his lips, and nodded across at Blackmar.

"I don't reckon Jule has no idee a-tall who chopped loose that culvert."

"You think it was chopped loose?" inquired Poggioli.

"I shore it was. You know it didn't float away by itse'f. They aint no current here, hardly."

"Who do you think did it?"

"That nigger Goolow, nachelly," retorted Jim R. sharply. "He driv over that culvert this mornin', an' he jest clim' out an' busted that culvert up behint him."

Poggioli appraised the fellow to see if this were a false trail he was laying.

"Why should Goolow do such a thing?"

"Well, two reasons," answered the rustic: "One is them other Blackmars aint going to want a Mendez to step in an' git a wife's share of ol' pirate John Blackmar's holdin's. Another is Jule wants to heir what his wife's got of the Mendez lands. . . . That's why he married her."

POGGIOLI could not tell by the rustic's wooden countenance whether or not he believed what he was saying.

"If Goolow chopped away the culvert, why didn't he drive the car in the ditch when he got back?"

"Because his nerve failed him. Take it the other way, if he didn't know it was gone, what made him stop? You can't see the culvert through that red water; you can't tell whether she's thar or not thar."

This reasoning Poggioli was unable to answer, and he wondered if by any possible means Goolow had destroyed the culvert, and at the behest of whom.

The two axmen finished their work, floated the palm-boles down the ditch and established them crosswise. Then they began the ticklish task of rolling the Blackmar car across the ditch. When the machine was finally on the other side, the master of the Blackmar estate began a cold thanking of Jim R. for his services, when the rustic interrupted to say that he would go along with them to their home-coming.

"You know,"—and he nodded his oily black head in open good-fellowship,—"I thought some of Lory's fam'ly ort to be here to welcome you-all back."

There seemed no way to order the fellow off after he had been of such service with his ax, so the interloper swung on the running-board, and the car moved forward.

Once in the private thoroughfare the water grew shallower under their wheels, and presently the motor rolled onto a wet sandy road elevated a few inches above the surrounding water. This was the highland of the Blackmar estate. A mile or two farther on lay an ancient house set back behind a scraggly wire-and-board fence that somehow gave an impression of a barbed-wire entanglement before a fort. Behind the house itself arose the densest mass of vegetation Poggioli had ever seen.

The old automobile presently stopped in front of a gate; the cracker swung off the running-board, and with the helpfulness natural to a Florida rustic took one of his cousin's bags out of the car. Everyone got out. Jim R. maneuvered with the bag beside his cousin and started with her for the house. The girl could hardly get away from him without giving offense. Why Jim R. was doing this, Poggioli could not guess; whether it was affection for his cousin, impudence, or an overture to some deviltry, he did not know. By way of passing over his unspoken thoughts, he said:

"That's quite a jungle behind your house."

"Yes; my grandfather, Captain John Blackmar, was a college man, the same as I am. His hobby was botany. He collected all sorts of trees when he went to Cuba in his cattle-schooner."

"Yeh," put in Jim R. dryly, "collected trees—and other things."

"His main interest was trees," repeated Julian coldly; then with a change of tone: "You'll love it, Elora; and you, Mr. Poggioli, as a scientific man."

IN the midst of their conversation Jim R. lurched with the suitcase and gave a sharp blow to the bride. The girl, whose nerves must have been at a tension, screamed and staggered away. A sudden horror flashed through Poggioli that Mendez had stabbed the woman, but the next moment he saw the fellow perform some grotesque leaps in the uncut grass.

Julian had rushed to punish the assailant of his wife, when Jim R. made a sudden catlike dive and pinned something in the thick grass. The next moment a dry whirring set up—and the group, horrified, saw Mendez straighten with his fingers gripping the neck of a rattlesnake. The reptile was corded around the cracker's arm as it strained to retract its head through his grip.



Julian
Blackmar

Mendez himself bent his arm swiftly toward his mouth; and to the horror of the watchers, bit the vertebrae of the creature just back of its triangular skull. The coils loosed, and Mendez tossed the twitching rattler into the grass, and spat.

Elora screamed; Poggioli blew out a breath of nausea and ejaculated:

"My God, man, how could you do that?"

The rustic turned sharply.

"Why, it was about to strike Cousin Lory. I had to do some'n!"

Julian put an arm around his wife, who appeared half-fainting, and supported her to the house. Goolow picked up the bag which Jim R. had dropped, and followed his master. Poggioli remained with the cracker in the uncared-for grounds of the Blackmar estate. Mendez appeared at his wits' end.

"Well, I guess I cain't foller her in the house an' see what they got rigged up ag'in' her there."

"Rigged up against her—what do you mean?"

"What I say, of course. Didn't that Goolow chop away the culvert to drown her, and then didn't he tether this rattle-snake where Lory would shore tramp on it as she come past?"

"Tether it?"

"Yes, with a hoss-hair, aroun' its rattles."

"Do you mean you can tether a snake with a horsehair?"

"Shore. I've done it many a time when I didn't have no box."

Poggioli dismissed the technique of snake-catching.

"You really believe that negro is trying to murder Mrs. Blackmar?"

"Oh, he's doin' it fer somebody—maybe Jule hisse'f, to git rid of her and git her proputt'y."

Poggioli was disgusted. "How can you imagine him so depraved and blood-thirsty?"

"Imagine him!" cried Mendez disdainfully. "Why, he comes from that kind of folks. His granddaddy, ol' pirate John, was the thievin'est, murderin'est ol' devil that ever sailed the sea." He checked his own violence and asked: "Look here, you goin' to be aroun' here for a while, aint you?"

Poggioli said he was.

"All right—will you do me a favor?"

"If it isn't something against Mr. Blackmar. I'm his guest, you know."

"Oh, it won't be against him. It'll be a favor to him, too."

"In that case, what do you want?"

Mendez' eyes narrowed,

"Jes' tell Jule, I'm goin' to be aroun' here: and if anything happens to Cousin Lory, the same thing, only a thousan' times wuss, will happen to him. . . . Jes' tell him that from me."

Poggioli was shocked at the man's intensity. "Now, that's all right, Mr. Mendez; don't work yourself up over this. I can promise you nothing will happen to your cousin."

"Oh, you promise that?"

"Yes, I feel I can promise that."

"Do you mean," inquired Jim R., looking hard at Poggioli, "do you mean yore skin will answer for anything that happens to Cousin Lory?"

An uneasy feeling went over the psychologist. "I mean I am simply giving my best opinion as a psychologist and a student of human nature, that Julian Blackmar is in love with his wife, and will do everything in his power to defend her," he explained precisely.

The rustic turned with a shrug. "Huh, a feller that won't back up his opinion with his hide, aint very shore of what he says. . . . Well, you jes' carry Jule my word; that's all you've got to do with it."

Then without further adieu, he turned and started back to his own car on the public road a mile or two distant.

MR. HENRY POGGIOLI turned and walked slowly toward the ancient house of the Blackmars, rather disturbed at the belligerent chivalry of Jim R. Mendez. He was glad he had postulated himself out of Jim's reach. As he approached the house, he was surprised to see the girl herself out on the piazza with a basket on her arm. He called to know if she would not bet-

ter go back and lie down; but she called out that she had heard of her grandfather Blackmar's fruit-garden all her life, and for Poggioli to go with her, and they would see it together.

With this the girl picked her way around the wing of the ramshackle two-story house, to the dense tangle of vegetation in the rear. As the two entered the heavy draperies of green, the girl took Poggioli's arm:

"You know, this scares me a little, to go in here."

"I imagine it is a left-over from tales you have heard about it as a child," suggested the psychologist, who was beginning to catch the drift of neighborhood gossip.

This observation seemed to comfort the girl.

"Maybe that is it." She started to ask a question, then thought better of it and kept silent.

IN the garden there was nothing to be frightened at. Its dense, struggling growth was decorated with exotic fruits; red banana plants upholding their scarlet candelabra; an Australian fig with its round globules spewing straight out of its bark; Kaffir oranges from the West African coast. Such dank crowded proliferation charmed the botanist in the guest. As Mrs. Blackmar began filling her basket, she asked in an intimate tone:

"Mr. Poggioli, do you know yet why we wanted you to come here?"

"I think I have an idea, Mrs. Blackmar. . . . It is undefined—"

"We wanted you to look at this estate and house and garden, especially this garden, and tell us what you really think about Julian's grandfather."

"What I think about him?"

"Yes. A lot of people claim to believe that he was a—a freebooter, a very terrible man; do you believe that was possible, if he were so cultivated and scholarly as to make a collection like this garden?"

It was an odd but very earnest interrogation. The psychologist put a question in return:

"Of what weight would my opinion be, Mrs. Blackmar?"

"Oh, you are a criminologist and a psychologist. You know how people's minds work. If you should say that a man of such scientific taste as Grandfather Blackmar could not be a sea rover, it would have very great weight."

"With the people here in the neighborhood?"

"No; that's envy. I mean with me and Julian."

Poggioli perceived the couple really wanted their own confidence buttressed.

"Well, if you must know, Mrs. Blackmar, I think your deductions are exactly right," he comforted. "It would be incompatible for a man to lead a lawless life and at the same time pursue the higher law of botany with such a painstaking collection as this."

Poggioli divined that this sentence was just cloudy enough to sound very profound and comforting to the bride, and sure enough it was. She said earnestly and gratefully:

"Oh, I'm so glad to hear you say that."

The psychologist paused a moment. Then, "What did your grandfather Blackmar really do?" he queried.

"He ran a cattle-schooner from Tampa to Cuba; that's all."

"No other ports?"

"No, just Tampa, Key West and Havana. . . . Sometimes he met storms, Julian tells me, and would be gone for a long time, and that's how such evil gossip got started."

Poggioli nodded slowly, and glanced at the Australian fig, the West African orange and a Fiji palm-nut.

"No, I'm sure a man of Captain John Blackmar's scientific attainments couldn't have been engaged in an illicit calling," he repeated.

THIS completely reassured the girl; she began filling her basket again, making graceful reaches a-tiptoe for some Tahitian passion-apples. As Poggioli got them for her, she asked queerly:

"Do you believe in bans?"

"Bans—what do you mean?"

"Why, they say when Grandfather Blackmar died, he cursed any Mendez who ever comes into this garden."

"Why, that's absurd," scoffed the psychologist. "There is no such thing as a curse—not in that sense; you know that."

"Why, yes, of course, I know that."

"So the best thing to do about a curse is to forget all about it."

"I know that. . . . Still—now you'll think this is silly; but awhile ago when we were coming into this jungle, did you have a feeling that—that somebody was here in the dark telling you to stay out?"

"Why, no, of course I didn't!"

"Well—you wouldn't."

"Look here," protested Poggioli earnestly, "now that is nothing but a complex left over from your childhood. When you caught my arm, you were a little girl again, ten or twelve years old. But you are a grown woman now, married, returned from college, and you can't be frightened by old granny tales."

"That's right," agreed Elora gratefully; "that is good sound psychology, isn't it? It was sweet of you to come here with us; it really was."

She finished gathering her fruit and started into the house.

POGGIOLI took the basket and went with his hostess into the decaying manor. They found lunch waiting for them. At the table Julian introduced to Poggioli his Aunt Tabitha, his father's sister, whom he called Aunt Tab. Julian was interested in what Poggioli had thought of his grandfather's garden, and then went on to ask his guest if he did not think his grandfather could have bought these various foreign plants from some arboricultural dealer in Havana.

At this a twinge of amusement went through the psychologist. He saw that Julian was trying to devise some explanation for the garden that would have confined his seagoing grandfather to a strict cattle-trade between Havana and Tampa. The ironic fact titivated the guest that within three generations, if the Blackmars prospered financially and socially, the family would be immensely proud of a pirate in their lineage, and would resent it bitterly if any genealogist should suggest that the buccaneer in their family was nothing more than a pacific collector of trees.

Miss Tabitha Blackmar phrased Julian's thought precisely by saying:

"The Mendezes always tried to prove Pappy was a rover, by his trees comin' from so many dif'runt places; but it didn't require trees or anything else to prove the Mendezes were cattle-thieves. Ever'body knew that."

"Aunt Tab," interposed the host, "that has nothing to do with Grandfather Blackmar."

"It hasn't!" cried the old woman. "Sence when, I'd like to know? Old Carlos Mendez not only stole cattle; he shipped 'em by Daddy's boat, then claimed he driv aboard more than he had, an' killed Daddy for not payin' him for 'em!"

"Aunt Tab!" cried the groom in a shocked voice. "That's past!"

"Part of it's past and part aint!" snapped the old woman, glancing at Elora.

"Aunt Tab, Elora has just been through a very trying experience," reminded the nephew in controlled anger.

"Jule," flung back the aunt in exasperation, "what would Pappy think if he knewed his grandson would bring a Mendez into this house for its mistress. . . . A Mendez!"

"Aunt Tabitha!" cried the master in desperation.

The young woman arose with a colorless face.

"I'm not well, Julian. . . . I feel faint. If you and Mr. Poggioli will excuse me, I'll—go to my room."

The bridegroom arose with her.

"No, stay with our guest," she begged. "I'm all right."

Young Blackmar hesitated, then called Goolow to take a bowl of fruit up for his wife. And the two went up the stairs, the velvety brunette girl followed by the ancient ebony servant bearing a bowl of exotic fruits collected from the garden of a dead corsair.

When they were gone, young Blackmar turned on his relative:

"Aunt Tab, it wasn't necessary for you to mention Elora's grandfather. She is a Blackmar now."

"Well," snapped the old woman angrily, "they all said I wouldn't be able to stay on the place after she come, and I see I cain't. I'll go with the rest of our folks. I won't stay where I'm not wanted, even if it's a Mendez as doesn't want me."

THE young nephew sat silent. The old woman got up, clapped on a hat greenish with age, and walked out the back door, followed a path through the jungle her father had planted, and was gone.

A feeling of loneliness and embarrassment penetrated the two men at the table.

"Go to your wife," suggested Poggioli. "I know you are disturbed about her. I think I'll take a walk out into the garden and look at the trees again."

"No, I'll let her rest; but if you don't mind, I will lie down too. . . . The train ride and everything—and I'm accustomed to a nap after lunch."

The psychologist nodded agreement, and then remembered something:

"I don't know whether to mention this or not. I talked to Mendez down yonder in the field."

"And what did he say?"

"Well—he told me to tell you if anything happened to his cousin, he would hold you responsible for it."

BLACKMAR stared. "Anything happen to her—what happen to her?"

Poggioli hesitated.

"I don't know whether I ought to mention it or not. . . . He believes you married his cousin to inherit her property."

"Suppose I did, would that cause anything to happen to Elora?"

Poggioli cleared his throat.

"He believes, or pretends to believe, that you—er—plan to put her out of the way."

The bridegroom's face went bleak with anger.

"Don't you see what that means? He has simply credited me with motives like his own. He has tried twice to murder Elora before she has a child; now he suspects that I will murder her."

"But look here," put in Poggioli, "that's illogical. If Jim R. thinks her death would save the property to the Mendezes, it wouldn't make any difference who caused it, you or he. He would see that."

"No, he wouldn't see anything! He probably thinks the one who killed her will get the property! You don't realize the ignorance of these damn' Mendezes. He threw that rattlesnake in her path. He has been a snake-man all his life. Ever since he was a boy, I have—"

"Well, I know nothing of what he thinks; but I believe if anything serious should happen to Mrs. Blackmar, Mendez will make an attempt on your life."

"If anything serious happens to Elora, Jim R. can do what he pleases with my life: it won't be worth anything to me."

With this he went to his room for his own siesta. Poggioli was not accustomed to a noontide sleep, and walked out once more into the jungle. The place fascinated him. The very kinds of trees old Captain John Blackmar had collected bespoke rather the curiosity of an actual voyager than the choosings of a naturalist. The old seafarer's taste had turned to extraordinary trees. In the tangle Poggioli remarked an upas tree, the *Antiaris Toxicaria*, which the rover probably had picked up in Java. Another was a *Peul* which must have come from the African coast, and so on and on. In fact, the



Aunt
Tabitha

whole jungle rattled in the wind, a tacit corroboration of the scandals and crimes laid at old John Blackmar's door.

A breaking of the twigs behind him caused Poggioli to turn with a start of something like superstitious fear. He recalled Elora's saying she felt a sinister presence in the green gloom. Then he did make out a figure through the tangle, and ejaculated:

"Are you still here, Jim R.?"

The rustic said in his dogged voice:

"Yes, I'm here. . . . Are you still here, too?"

Poggioli disregarded the insolence and went around to the fellow.

"What are you doing?"

Jim R. set his heel on something in the moldy earth.

"Gartersnake," he said briefly, "hit-tin' an' spittin'."

The scientist glanced down at the tiny red-banded thing squirming in the mold.

"Why did you come here again?" he inquired antagonistically.

"Why, I come back to ast you what you come here for?" returned Mendez with a hard look.

"I'm here as a guest; and now you?"

The cracker reached in a pocket and drew out a scrap of newspaper.

"Aint this you?" he asked suspiciously.

Poggioli looked at the clipping, and saw his own picture with a brief personal note saying: "CELEBRATED CRIMINOLOGIST VISITS FLORIDA."

"Why, yes, it is," he nodded, wondering at the point of this.

"I thought it was. I got it from the station-agent, who reads papers."



Jim R. blinked. "Aint a criminologist a man that a criminal goes to when he wants he'p?"

The scientist was perplexed.

"I don't see what my profession has to do with your appearance here. You don't require the services of a criminologist, do you?"

"Naw! I don't want no crime committed!" announced Jim R. hotly. "But by God, I want to know what you're workin' fer Jule Blackmar fer? What kind of a crime is he tryin' to commit, that he has to call in outside he'p!"

Poggioli was amazed. "Do you imagine I assist at a crime?"

Jim R. blinked his eyes. "Well, aint a criminologist a man that a criminal goes to when he wants he'p?"

"Why, of course not. A criminologist is a man who studies to—"

"But look here: a druggist is a man you go to fer drugs; and a dentist is a man you go to—"

The psychologist laughed briefly. "Yes. But a criminologist is a man who prevents crimes; he doesn't abet them, I'm—er—sorry the mistake came up."

"Well, it's all right—it's all right if you're what you say you are."

With this Mendez moved away through the dense growth with curious ease and disappeared in the green gloom.

Mr. Henry Poggioli stood for a long time reflecting on the ignorance and vengefulness of the crackers, and hoping that Jim R. Mendez believed his definition of the word *criminologist*. A hope flitted through Poggioli's mind that Mendez would look the word up in a dictionary and be certain about it, but then he realized that the fellow possessed no such book.

PRESENTLY it struck Poggioli that now was a good time for him to go back to the railroad and continue his journey to Key West. His own services to the Blackmars had really come to an end. All they had wanted was his opinion to establish their confidence in the honesty and uprightness of old Captain John Blackmar, pirate. Well, he had given that, such as it was, and his mission was ended. He looked at his watch, and wondered if Julian Blackmar were awake. He would like to have Goolow take him back to the station.

In the midst of these thoughts, he heard some one crashing his way toward him from the big house. He became alert with a feeling that something had happened to Elora Blackmar, and her animal-like cousin was rushing back to take vengeance on him.

Instead of Jim R., however, he saw the negro Goolow pushing aside the rank growth and looking everywhere for somebody or something.

Poggioli watched him a moment and then spoke: "Do you want me, Goolow?"

The black man's eyes were distended and showed startling whites.

"Yas suh—oh, Lawd, he sent me fuh you quick!"

"Me!" Poggioli moved toward the manor. "What does he want with me?"

"Set up wid Miss Lory!"

"Sit up with her—what for?"

The black man wet grayish lips. "She's daid. . . . Miss Lory's daid."

The white man's heart stopped beating. "You don't mean—she's *dead*!"

The black man nodded in silent horror, and hurried toward the house. Poggioli hastened his stride to a run, with the wildest conjectures as to the catastrophe.

IN an upper chamber of the manor Julian Blackmar stood over the motionless form of his bride, who lay on an ancient four-poster bed. When Poggioli entered, the bridegroom turned and asked in a gray voice:

"Have you seen Jim Mendez around here?"

The psychologist hurried over to the woman, and felt of her hands:

"Has she been shot?"

"Oh, you have seen him?" divined his host.

"Yes, a few minutes ago—half an hour. . . . What—killed her? . . . Is she dead?"

Blackmar made a desperate gesture. "You see she's dead—poisoned. . . . Some kind of a snake."

Poggioli was seized with revulsion. He bent down and began examining the motionless figure; he felt for the heart; he put his ear to her chest and listened for her breathing.

"You don't mean—he came up into this room—with a serpent!"

Blackmar made a striking motion, and a spasm went across his face. He straightened and strode across to an old chest in the bridal chamber.

"But look here," argued Poggioli, "Mendez couldn't have got up here unperceived. You were asleep in the room below. Goolow, where were you?"

"'Sleep on de steps outside dat do'."

"There you are—asleep on his mistress' steps. . . . How could Jim R. have got here unobserved?"

Blackmar drew two pistols out of the chest.

"Where did you see him?" he asked in a monotone.

"Wait! Wait!" begged the psychologist. "Let me examine everything. Don't start a gunfight on bare suspicion!"

"Where did you see him?" repeated Blackmar with a rising voice.

"In the jungle—he came to ask my business."

"What was he doing?"

"He was—" Poggioli caught his breath as the significance of this dawned on him. "He was—killing a snake, a garter-snake."

Blackmar nodded: "Just back from her murder."

He started for the door with his pistols. Poggioli thought swiftly.

"Stop! Don't go now! I think your wife is still alive. . . . Her heart—have you camphor—ammonia—strychnine—"

Blackmar looked at him steadily a moment. "You're trying to stop me—set me to work."

"No, I swear, I thought I saw a muscle twitch. . . . For God's sake, man, won't you help me with your own wife?"

The scientist put a knee on the bed, leaned over, placed his palms on the girl's sides, and began artificial respiration.

Blackmar came across to his motionless bride.

"Here, I'll do that. . . . I've studied first aid." He broke off suddenly and said: "Listen, if you're doing this just to keep me from shooting Jim Mendez, I—I'll kill you, Poggioli!" Blackmar made a gesture to Goolow, and the ebony negro shuffled downstairs for the things Poggioli had ordered.

THE psychologist divined that his host did not want any other person to touch the body of his bride, even if she were dead. He stood thinking swiftly over the situation.

"If we only knew what poison it was!"

"Why, a snake—a snake!" cried Blackmar, swinging to and fro above the girl.

"But that's impossible! Mendez couldn't have got in here with a snake. . . . Goolow was on the steps; the windows are too high and narrow, and this is the second story."

Blackmar turned a tortured face to his guest.

"He came up through the chimney. . . .

My grandfather, old Captain John, built a tunnel to it from the jungle. Jim R. knew about it. . . . All the Mendezes know."

AT this extraordinary information, Poggioli looked at the big fireplace in the end of the room. Near it, on a table, lay a paring-knife and the dish of fruit Goolow had brought up for Mrs. Blackmar. The plan came at once to the scientist to defend himself from Blackmar's anger with the ancient fireplace. He went over to it and began to examine its blackened interior. Its ashes were untracked, its soot appeared untouched. He almost turned to point this out to the tortured man at the bed, but decided to save it until his host was calmer. He continued his investigation to fortify his position that Jim R. Mendez had never climbed through the tunnel, up the chimney into the room. The time might come at any moment when he would need such a demonstration out of a bitter necessity.

Poggioli stooped down and entered the fireplace, then stood up inside the chimney. On the right hand side was set a square of sheet-iron. He worked at this for a moment or two, and succeeded in shoving it to one side. It disclosed a well, a kind of false chimney set with rusting iron rungs. Poggioli stepped into it and began a hazardous descent among a maze of cobwebs. He struck a match in an attempt to determine whether the webs had been recently broken by the passage of a man's body. As he studied the maze of dusty gossamers, the light showed something like a shelf in the side of the false chimney disclosed by the falling out of one or two crumbling bricks; and back in this hole lay a package quite covered with dust. The match flickered out. Poggioli reached into the darkness, took the package and returned to the light that fell into the great fireplace above.

The thing he had found was an old book. In the light he opened it and saw it was a ship's log.

As he did so, he heard a sound from the room. He stepped out of the fireplace and saw Julian Blackmar alternately compressing and releasing the girl's diaphragm at far too swift a tempo.

Poggioli dashed out.

"Stop it! Quit that!" he shouted.

"But she opened her eyes once!" quavered the husband in an agony of excitement.

"Take it slower—slower! Here—let me do it—get away!"

He pushed his host aside, and began a correct timing of the respirations. At that moment Goolow appeared in the door with a great brass basin on his head, and his arms stuck full of bottles.

"Now, what'll we give her?" cried Blackmar, hurrying to the negro.

"What poison was it? What could she have taken?" cried Poggioli.

"Why, a snake—that gartersnake!"

"No, damn it, no! The chimney has never been entered. . . . Something else. But what, in heaven's name—" He stared about the room as if he would see the poison. His glance fell on the plate of fruit once more. A sudden possibility flashed over Poggioli.

"Listen!" he cried. "Was your wife familiar with the fruit out of that jungle?"

"No, of course not; this is the first time she was ever here!"

"Did she—could she possibly have eaten the seed of any of that fruit?"

BLACKMAR looked at his guest with a sharp surmise in his face.

"That was her habit—to bite the seeds of fruit. . . . She said they tasted like almonds. Could that have anything to do with it?"

Poggioli motioned to Goolow.

"Mustard—eggs—milk—quick!"

The three men began working with the recovering girl.

"But Poggioli—why?"

"It's the Kaffir oranges. Their seeds are poisonous, but their flesh is good. It never occurred to me she didn't know that."

The men got the emetics down the girl's throat. The ebony Goolow bent over the shining copper basin of hot water, bathing the bride's small feet. Gradually their ivory turned pink with a renewed stirring of her blood. She passed through the usual phases of extreme nausea and hemorrhage. After a long while the sleep of recuperation fell upon her.

Blackmar still sat watching her closely; Goolow had left the room; and the criminologist seized the opportunity to pick up the logbook from the table where he had placed it, and withdrawing to a window, leafed it through. The first entries that caught his eyes were the records of the purchase of a Malay palm from a Señor Moa, a horticulturist in Havana.

Such a proof at such a time, when Elora Blackmar, who had wanted it so, was near death, stung Poggioli with its ironic barb. The pathos of the thing set him so to trembling he could hardly turn through the book. There was mention of the purchase of other rare trees. The log made it clear that old Captain John bought the strange crowded jungle of trees that screened the end of the tunnel. But there was much more in the log: entries of sails sighted, of ships captured; booty taken; men and women dispatched; and their names and addresses. Old Captain John Blackmar had used a scientific precision in everything he did. With this yellowed log Poggioli could prove that the first of the Blackmars had purchased his trees in peace; but the Mendezes, also, could have proved their contention that their ancient enemy had been a pirate.

Poggioli glanced again across the room toward the bedside. . . . Elora seemed awakening, and her husband entirely preoccupied with her. So the criminologist again leafed rapidly through the log, selected all the exonerating passages he could find, quietly tore them out, then took a match and set fire to the rest of the volume. Then he stepped over to the bedside.

Elora smiled at him weakly. The bridegroom tried to say something, but his voice was so emotion-torn that Poggioli was afraid he would excite the invalid. The scientist began in the cheerful tones one uses toward the sick:

"I found something that will please you very much: The log of the schooner your grandfather Blackmar used to run. I have proof positive that Captain John Blackmar bought every one of his trees from a Señor Moa, in Havana. I found it in the chimney."

THE girl turned her head wonderingly toward the old fireplace.

"He did—*buy* them?"

"Every single one. You can prove it to anybody." Poggioli walked across to the table where he had laid the leaves out of the log.

Pleasure shone like a pale sunbeam in the young wife's pallid face.

"Oh, that's—such a relief." She drew the short breath of the very weak.

"What—what is that—still burning—in the fireplace?"

"Oh, that's where I started a fire. . . . I thought at the time we were going to heat the water up here."

Smuggler's Cove



Decorations by Margery Stocking

Illustrated by Harry Lees

FOR a large man, Frederick Alonzo Binns could at times act with amazing speed. Before the third round of pistol-fire from the shrubbery flanking the old Du Port house had died away, he was in gear and rocketing around the oval, forest-crowded drive. On the two wheels the roadster took the turn at the stone pillars and howled back along the narrow, night-shrouded road over which it had just come.

If Frederick Binns had been an inch taller, the three bullets from the shrubbery would have ventilated his cap.

He thought, and tried not to think. The while, he continued to drive with leaden foot, with accelerator flat on the floor-board.

Fool! Served him right, sticking his nose into a place like that at this hour of the night. . . . Past midnight. He'd praise the caretaker for his watchfulness when he went back in the morning.

All this time, in the other half of the Binns mind, the other view of the shooting screeched and clamored for recognition: A lonely old house set above a secluded ocean cove. A car going slowly past him just before he had entered the drive. Shots blazing from undergrowth at the great gray house's corner—shots from a caretaker who should have been abed long ago. Shots covering something. Covering what?

Shot at in his own yard! If not exactly his own yard, at any rate from property that he had owned since that afternoon. Shot at while going in to claim his own property!

Through the star-blazing California summer night the roadster winged down into the sleeping town of Seashore, with the opposing forces of the Binns mind fighting for control.

Shot at, shot at! Damn' fool—yet shot at.

And here, on a side-street, a green light shining over a gate caught the rolling Binns eye, and tipped the balance to a decision. Beneath the green light ran the words "CHIEF OF POLICE."

"You're damn' right!" cried Frederick Binns, and scrambled out of the long car.

He flung open the gate and thumped up the cottage steps. His knuckles resounded on the door.

From within, a voice suddenly demanded: "Who's dere?"

Frederick Alonzo Binns cut to the heart of the matter without going into family history.

"I been shot at! I been shot at three times."

"Shot at." There was a pause. Then bare feet sounded on a floor, the cottage door opened, and the dim figure of a big man in pajamas appeared on the threshold.

"What's dis? You say you been shot at t'ree times?" The questioner's accent was of the Scandinavian countries. "Where?"

"Where? Why, up the road a piece, north of town. I was going in a drive—my drive—and—"

"Oh. Up on Tamale Flat. Say, dem Mexicans—"

Frederick Alonzo Binns had been through enough that day, and three bullets almost parting his hair had more than topped things off.

"No, not up on Tamale Flat!" he snapped. "And it wasn't Mexicans! I'm trying to tell you that up north of town—"

"Oh, you mean clean outside of town!"

*A sprightly narrative of
joyous adventure.*

By **TALBERT
JOSSELYN**



I'm afraid I can't do a t'ing for you. Dot's outside the town limits."

"What?" A wild surge went over Frederick Alonzo Binns. Quibbling, when a man had been shot at!

"But just the same I been shot at!"

"I know, I know," commiserated the police force, now coming out upon the porch. "And it aint no fun. I'd go in a minute if I could, but the town council won't let me. They wouldn't let the fire-engine go, eeder. I mean, if there was a fire outside of town. So you see how I'm fixed. But I got a telephone, and you get the sheriff on long distance—"

"You're right I'll get the sheriff!"

But young Mr. Binns did not get the sheriff. For thrusting into a mind already overtaxed with remembrance, came realization like a six-tined pitchfork that the Seashore region lay in the same long county over which Clarendon Webster held political sway. To ring up the sheriff's office, after all of the unpleasantness of that afternoon, and state that it was F. Alonzo Binns calling, and that he had been shot at—no! The amount of help that F. Alonzo would get you could put in your eye, and the eye would never know it. The sheriff's office would be highly indignant because the shooting hadn't been straighter.

"No," said Frederick Binns dully, "I guess I won't ring up the sheriff." He turned away.

The police force put a hand on his arm. "Say, now don't try to settle it yourself. Or maybe dere aint nothing to settle. Maybe it was some automobile backfirin'; maybe you just t'ought you was shot at."

"Yeah," agreed Frederick Binns. "I guess that's it. Maybe I got excited." He started down the steps.

Affairs having reached this happy conclusion, the protector of Seashore's peace took a stride indoors, then turned back.

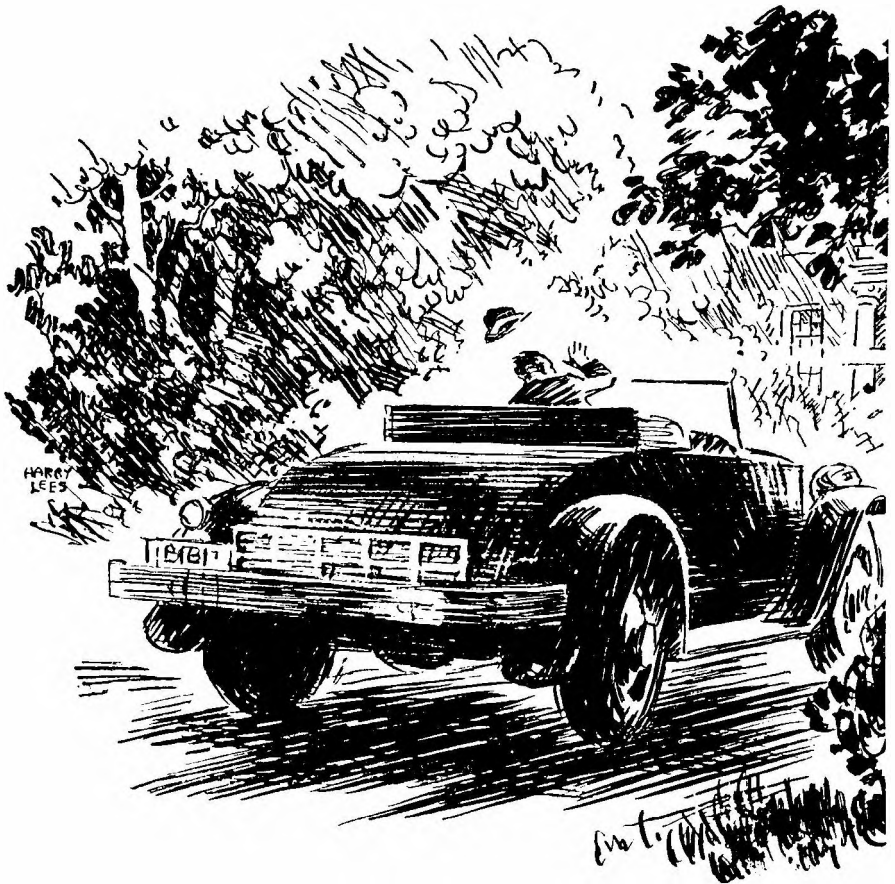
"Say, you know,"—and he chuckled,—
"when I first heard you yellin' that you'd been shot at, I t'ought it was one of those two families that been fightin' all day over the house they rented. Two different real-estate men rented 'em the same house, and they moved in at the same time, and neither would give it up, and one family is camped in the front room, and one is in the kitchen, and when you come telling about shooting, I t'ought—"

But Frederick Binns was in no mood to listen to the tale of the two families, enthralling though at ordinary times it might be.

"I got to be shoving along." He climbed into the roadster and sent it slumping back to the town's main avenue. He drew it up beneath a great, center-avenue pine tree, and let heavy hands fall from steering wheel into his lap. And the events of the day, like a dread phantasm, came up and leered at him and danced about.

IN the Binns home city that afternoon, the nation's most recent hero aviator had landed at the municipal field. Landed; and a hundred thousand awaiting welcomers had knocked down police and soldiery and stampeded forward. The descender from the skies, not desiring to cause a wholesale funeral, had slewed his craft to the far side of the field.

Frederick Alonzo Binns, because he had arrived late, stood here. A personable young man, Frederick Alonzo, six feet by two hundred pounds, not every ounce of which was bone and sinew, yet looking that way under a new tweed



suit. On the breast of the suit gleamed the deputy sheriff's badge that he had borrowed from old Clarendon Webster, the power behind the sheriff's throne. Blue-eyed, stiff-mustached old Clarendon, father of Mary Webster, Frederick Alonzo's affianced bride.

The gleaming badge had got him this far. It now got him farther. Somewhere beneath the feet of the hundred thousand, the mayor and the welcoming committee were profanely and fruitlessly trying to haul themselves right-side up. Of their existence Frederick Binns had no knowledge. All that he knew was that there seemed to be nobody present on the far side of the field to give greeting. Ever a young man ready to make himself useful, Frederick Binns volunteered himself, his six feet and his gleaming badge.

He was the first to reach the man of the skies and his ship, and to peer in at him in his little glass house. Pulling at door-handles, he opened it up.

"Howdy," he said, and extended a welcoming hand.

"Why, hello," returned the man of the skies, returning handshake and grin.

"I guess," said Frederick Binns, casting an eye about, "that the first thing we'd better do is to get a cordon around this plane."

Thereupon Mr. Binns, with the aid of a bull-like voice and a scratch picking of helpers, established a cordon. Those in the front rank were told that they could stay where they were if they kept the others back, and they kept them.

The extreme in democratic welcome continued.

"Maybe, if you'd like to get out of this crowd and downtown," suggested the welcomer, "I've got my car parked over here."

At this the now-descended man of the skies all but wept upon the Binns shoulder.

"This is the finest reception I've ever had!" he blurted. "No fuss and feathers—no agony and gold lace at all. Wonderful! Yes, let's go."

They went. By the time His Honor the Mayor and committee had elbowed across a quarter-mile of field, the volunteer welcomer and the city's guest were on their way by back streets to a downtown hotel.



From behind the high shrubbery came a spurting flame, followed by a roar. Shot at—in his own yard!

Fourteen heads of the hotel bounded forward.

"I'll never forget this," assured the helmeted guest, pump-handling a Binns arm before being whisked skyward in an elevator. "No parade. No top hats. Nothing! Say, you come on up to the room after I've got cleaned up a bit."

Hummingly content, F. Alonzo and badge lolled on a deep divan in the lobby. Eyes were upon him. Well, if they wanted to take him for an old chum of the hero's—even somebody big in aviation himself—that was all right. Let 'em. When he heard a voice say "That's the man!" he turned an affable countenance in that direction.

Before him stood a caricature of a mayor in top hat, with a welcoming committee.

"You!" cried the mayor. And then cried many, many other things.

Out of caldron of words, a gape-mouthed Frederick Binns picked up a coherent phrase here and there. Pieced together, they spelled out Conspiracy. A conspiracy of the damnable, double-faced sheriff's office, age-old foe of the mayor, with whom he thought he had

concluded a truce only last week. Under this cloak of truce, it had knifed him; had not only conspired to have a hundred thousand feet trample on him, but to have a sheriff's man—an underling—greet the hero of the skies and ride downtown by back ways with him, while the mayor fought and elbowed, and thousands of welcomers (and voters) stood waiting to greet the city's guest—and continued to stand.

The caldron of accusation boiled completely over when the worst trampled-on of the committee brought to the mayor's attention the fact that the sheriff's underling was none other than the prospective son-in-law of old Clarendon Webster, power behind the sheriff's throne, with whom His Honor had just concluded the political truce.

THE mayor became purple at the ears. Then, at this happy moment, he espied a thick-set man with a light blue eye and gray mustache that stood out as though it had been starched. His Honor became purple all over.

Clarendon Webster had arrived in the hotel lobby.

"Traitor!" shouted the mayor. He heaped epithets on. "Double-face. . . . Trickster. . . . Machiavelli!" And reached magnificent if inaccurate heights by concluding with, "Ring-tailed polecat!"

Clarendon Webster was not the sort who backed up. Although possessing only a rudimentary idea of the case, he went in with both hands. Nobody could call him that and get away with it. The review of the present administration was, to say the least, illuminating. Not more than a thousand people heard His Honor called a sag-knee and a dough-face and a stuffed-shirt.

Affairs ended with an apoplectic mayor casting down the remnant of a top hat and trampling on it, and departing carrying the fires of war that it would take twenty years to quench.

Upon Frederick Alonzo Binns his prospective father-in-law now turned words and an ice-blue eye. That these were turned in a semi-private alcove of the lobby didn't make them any less effective. Clarendon Webster had known Frederick Binns ever since there had been a Frederick to know, and had known his father before him, but if he ever thought he'd see the day when his old friend's son— From a start like this, one can trace the rest of Web-

ster's oration. "And on account of you, sir, all my work thrown in the ash-heap!"

Where the elder Webster left off, a younger Webster took on. A clannish family, the Websters. From a divan in a corner of the writing-room, Mary Webster supplied the finishing touches.

Blue were Miss Webster's eyes, but unlike her father's, a dazzling, sky-and-sunshine blue. Wisps of hair, showing beneath a small hat, were seen to be brown, with enough red to give authority. Her nose was just the least tip-tilted. Mobile lips revealed small, white teeth. A man running a weighing-machine at a beach would have approximated her weight at a hundred and fifteen pounds, and he would not have been three pounds wrong. A student of the spirit would have said that within the hundred and fifteen pounds dwelt volcanoes and glaciers, and he would have been right.

Upon Frederick Alonzo Binns the volcanoes and glaciers now played. They played for some time.

"I sha'n't give you back your ring," Miss Webster finally made concession. "Not this time." She glanced down at a diamond ring which, if it wouldn't have choked the proverbial horse, would have made a pony cough violently. "But you can see that it's mighty loose on the finger; and if you pull one more helpful good deed,—the way you've just helped Father,—it will slip right off altogether. Now I don't want any promises; I've had enough of them from you to sink a ship—a good big ship."

Wholly illogical, wholly feminine, Miss Webster made conclusion. "Now kiss me good-by. Besides," she added, "it may be the last one you'll get."

It was a dazed Frederick Binns who left the hotel, slowly fingering a lapel of the tweed suit. The lapel looked as though it had been operated on by an amateur surgeon.

"He needn't have been in such a hurry to get his badge," muttered F. Alonzo, "that he couldn't have unpinned it."

In the portals of the hotel he paused, then shook his head and went on. "No, I guess I won't go upstairs and say hello." He sought out the big roadster that had once been a triumphal car, and sent it pottering homeward.

IN the house that had been in its day one of the show places of town, the last of the Binnses and the one who had

been cook, counselor and commandant in the Binns family for forty years made greeting.

"Hello," said Frederick Alonzo.

"H'lo," said Chinese He Gow.

THE thin elderly cook and commandant, cropped of head and stooped of shoulder, with sagging white jacket and round-kneed trousers, gave Frederick Alonzo studious inspection. Master Freddy was low. Well, he'd seen him that way before. Also high. But right now he was low.

"Supper all ready. Nice, hot supper."

"Don't want supper," said Freddy.

"Nice hot supper," repeated He Gow. "Ketchum right away."

Freddy knew He Gow as thoroughly as He Gow knew Freddy.

"Oh, well, all right, He Gow." Here for the first time a flicker of life went across the round Binns features. "I guess I better eat. I've got to keep my strength up."

When he finally sat down in the ornate old dining-room, he looked up at where He Gow stood at his elbow.

"Awful tough day." He sighed. "It has always been my custom, He Gow, as you know, to try to go through this vale of tears like a sort of heavy-set boy scout, shedding a little sunshine here, shedding a little sunshine there, if you get what I mean. But I guess people don't want sunshine."

"Soup," said He Gow, putting down a plate. "Nice hot soup."

Frederick Binns made helpless gestures. "Oh, what's the use?" he picked up his soup-spoon.

The He Gow shoes went to sideboard and back. "Letter." A letter was presented to the diner.

It was flipped away. "Bill!" cried the diner. "Gosh, it never rains in this house but it pours." But he glanced again at the envelope—and started violently. "Hey!" cried F. Alonzo, and grabbed the envelope. "This isn't a bill! It's a—it's from—old Wally Pidge. Why, good Lord—" He swallowed a ham-bone. Wildly his eyes sought about the room. "Calendar! Calendar! Where the devil's a calendar in this house?" The evening paper was clutched at to take the non-existent calendar's place. Swiftly the Binns brain made computation.

"Sure! That's it—the year's up. But how could I be expected to remember it, with all the hell I've had? Money!

The money I loaned when I had it, before this infernal depression—”

Up from the table as though by mesmerism he lifted his two hundred pounds, of which not every ounce was bone and sinew, and went padding across the room as far as the stone mantel clock surmounted by two fighting bronze stags, to whirl and come padding back, face radiant, eyebrows going furiously up and down.

“Money!” he cried, flaunting the letter. “More money in this envelope, He Gow, than an octopus could shake sticks at. Fate! By gad,”—and his face grew even more radiant—“that’s what it is, fate!”

ONCE more he was the Frederick Binns of early afternoon, as bubbling as an artesian well, as talkative as a short-tailed parrot.

“Just like an old-time melodrama, He Gow. When life is darker than a Siberian night, and F. Alonzo Binns, condemned to the salt-mines, is about to end all, through the driving snow comes the sound of sleigh-bells. The door bursts open. Saved, saved! And the fiddle down in the orchestra leaves off its waily tune and breaks into a rollicking refrain, and everybody puts away the handkerchiefs, and we put ours away too, He Gow. Money to do what we want with.”

A shadow fell upon the Binns face. The memory of the afternoon smote him.

“Well, if not to do what we want with, at least to go into some business, and all will be as merry as a wedding bell. That’s it, wedding bells, and you’re going to hear ’em, too. Wonderful little woman, Mary; a little sharp at times—would have made a good prosecuting attorney. But you’re going to hear those bells now, all right. I’m a changed man.”

The side-porch screen door slammed behind a returning He Gow. All through the Binns discourse he had been out on the porch calling through the dusk, across an acre of lawn and trees, something that sounded like “Here kitty, kitty, kitty,” followed by a mutter of “Damn’ cat, damn’ cat!” Neither call proving effectual, he was again within doors.

“Through with soup?” he demanded.

The exuberant young Mr. Binns broke off sharply to hold his wonder letter up to the light.

“I hope Wally Pidge didn’t risk send-



ing it in bills. When brains were being given away at his house, he was off visiting.”

The light-test failing, the letter was hefted, and the Binns brows came down sharply. “Not heavy enough for bills.” The brows went up. “A check, of course.” Followed further hefting.

“Maybe you find out if you open um,” suggested a slightly frowning He Gow. He had brought on the roast beef.

“Show you,” said Frederick Binns.

Followed swift slitting of the envelope with a butter-knife, an in-thrusting of thumb and forefinger, a swift hauling out of a folded sheet of paper—a sheet that inclosed within it another sheet.

“There—” cried Frederick Binns, then stopped.

Within the Binns dining-room there ensued what dramatic writers would have called a dread pause. The only sound was the slow *tick—tock* of the two-stag clock.

“Money?” hinted He Gow.

With an effort Frederick Alonzo Binns got a creaky voice to working.

“There—there seems to be some kind of a mistake.” He took up the two sheets of paper.

One was a letter, a typewritten letter. On the other was scrawled something in pencil that looked like a map—like the floor-plan of a house.

A HOUSE. Binns’ brain caught staggeringly at memory. At the time that he had made the loan to the Pidge person, a house had been put up as security; but this of course, as Mr. Pidge had assured him, had been done only as a matter of form. And yet here—no check, but a letter, and the floor-plan of a house.

He caught at the letter.

“Dear Old Horse,” it began. “Well, here we are at the end of the stipulated year, and you’d certainly have your check and I’d have the house if I hadn’t run into a little more hard luck. But the business flyer that I went into petered

out, so the old Du Port place is being turned over to you."

"Ow!" cried Binns, and clutched at the table. "I never did like that man."

He resumed reading; nor did he again stop until he had finished.

"*Yep, the house is now yours, and you've got a mighty fine place, if you ask me. While I haven't lived in it for five years, it's in good condition, and what if it is old-style mansard-roof French? It might have been modern Mexican or period Norwegian.*

"*As you know, it's in a secluded location, with ocean frontage and a deep cove that they say smugglers once used. Not a bad piece of property at all, and with only county taxes, for you're outside the limits of the town of Seashore. If you were inside, all you'd get would be police protection; and what's police protection with one cop? Ha, ha!*

"*Speaking of protection, the caretaker before the present one was a mealy-mouth, always complaining in letters to me about people approaching him for this or that; but the present one—name is Harley Gann—is the right sort and hasn't yipped at all. You might want to keep him on.*

"*One other thing. Remembering how keen you always were on blood-hounding clues to their lairs, I've drawn a rough sketch of the basement floor-plan of the house. The old hide-out Frenchman Du Port who built the place sure must have had a guilty conscience, what with his get-away tunnel from basement to stable, and also from basement to cove, to say nothing of the dizzy secret stairway in the big chimney. He must have always been looking for some unwelcome guest to drop in, and then, the fast horse or the rowboat for his.*

"*Well, this is sure a long letter for me, and I'll ring off. Deed follows just as soon as I can get it around. Write and let me know how you find things whenever you go down there. Reservoir, Wally Pidge."*

CHAPTER II

In the dining-room of the home of Frederick Alonzo Binns could be heard only the ticking of the two-stag clock. At the table the master of the house sat staring and continuing to stare at the Wally Pidge letter. Then, with swiftly indrawn breath, the master was on his feet, had fiercely wadded the letter

into a ball, and had thrown it the length of the room. He sat heavily down.

"Robbed. Robbed! Just as if a pistol had been put to my head. Yes, He Gow,"—as the counselor and commandant came through the kitchen door,—*"robbed just as if two pistols had been put to my head. I loaned more money than I ever want to think about, and I get a house—a crazy old loon of a Frenchman's house—that I've never been inside of, and maybe have driven past half a dozen times. Robbed!"*

"You catchem robber?" demanded He Gow.

"Ha!" The laugh was hollow.

THE eyes of the robbed young man took in the second sheet of paper, the alleged floor-plan of the basement. Whereupon he made clucking sounds. "That dim-wit couldn't even draw a decent map!"

Intensive study of childlike pencilings discovered the tunnels running from a square marked "*Basement*," the shorter of the two, at the right, going to a penciling indicated as "*Stable*," with the longer one, at the left, running down to what was labeled "*Ocean Cove*." In the back wall of the basement was the base outline of a huge chimney, with the printed legend "*Press third brick from left in tenth row above floor*."

Such was the contribution of Wally Pidge to the art of cartography.

"Gah!" said Frederick Binns.

Followed a wadding of the map, and an upraising of arm. Then the arm was lowered, and the map was tossed upon the table. It wasn't even worth throwing.

"Robbed," repeated F. Alonzo Binns, and turned beetling brows upon He Gow. "Robbed, and if I do say so, He Gow, you're no help to me. I meet with hellish adversity, but do I get words of cheer from you? I do not. In books, when people have met with hellish adversity, they always get something pat from the Chinese; quotations from the Book of the Fourteen Jade Elephants or the Song of the Water Lily. But in real life, nobody does any more than to ask 'Another cup coffee?'"

"Another cup coffee?" said He Gow. He flapped kitchenward.

F. Alonzo Binns put both hands to his head. . . .

At this moment a yellow tornado, having its starting point in a syringa hedge on the far side of the Binns

lawn, came whirling across the grass, contrived to pry open the porch screen door and proceeded twice to encircle the dining-room at but little less than the speed of light. It then flung itself at a hanging corner of the tablecloth, and thus swinging on its impromptu trapeze, resolved itself into a cat weighing in the neighborhood of twelve pounds, green as to eyes, stub as to ears, and with fur like a worn Brussels carpet.

The trapeze started to slip. The feline acrobat unloosed scimitar claws, and an instant later was stropping these claws on a leg of Binns' pajamas.

"Ow-ow!" yelled Frederick Binns, and kicked out.

The claw-stopper did another hippodrome about the room. It skidded to a stop, rolled over on its back, and giving forth a humming sound like a one-horse-power dynamo clogged with sand, clearly expressed the desire of having its stomach rubbed.

F. Alonzo Binns, solicitously patting his leg, gave up trying to glare. He directed his voice toward the kitchen.

"Oh, He Gow! I believe that your infernal Kitty-cat Ash Can has again come home."

The kitchen door was whacked open, and He Gow stood in the dining-room. The creature on the floor gave wider waving of paws.

Cook He Gow thrust out a wrinkled hand and opened his mouth. Three minutes later the mouth closed. In that time, while it is true that he did not quote from the Book of the Fourteen Jade Elephants or the Song of the Water Lily, he did express himself warmly, shifting now and then from Cantonese idiom into the free-running English of "goddam cat, goddam cat," and thus refreshed, plunging back into Cantonese again.

The three-day wanderer had once more been welcomed home.

F. Alonzo Binns sat morosely regarding the kitchen door.

"Some people lead a mighty happy, simple life. Now all that He Gow has to do to make his day complete is to sharpen his six bread-knives on the stove-pipe. And look at my day!"

SINCE looking long enough at such a day leads to madness, F. Alonzo wrenched his gaze away and caught up knife and fork. Whole-heartedly he began to clear the board.



Kitty Ash-can was approached with blandishments and an open traveling-cage, eventually entrapped.

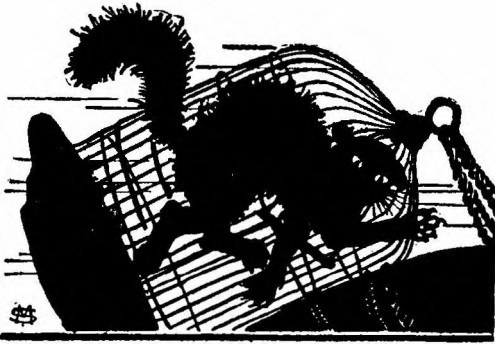
"A man," he announced, "has got all the right in the world to go without food when one thing hits him. But when seventeen pile-drive into him all at once, he's a fool if he doesn't eat. He's got to eat!"

As the board became less crowded, the Binns face gradually lost its ebony hue. The masticative monologue took on a more positive note.

"I'll show 'em! Old man Webster and Mary and the whole gang. I'll sell that cuckoo of a Wally Pidge place. Put it up at auction. Get the money and—"

He stopped chewing.

"Say!" He rose swiftly to his feet, eyes agleam. At the far end of the room he fished out the wadded Wally letter from behind the fighting stags, returned to the table and made slow re-reading. He smoothed out and studied the excuse for a ground-floor plan; hovered over tunnels and secret stairway.



He thrust back his chair and began to pad-foot about the room, hands deep in coat pockets. All at once he stopped marching and threw out one of the hands as though addressing an audience that had been insistently demanding that he speak.

"Why not? She likes the town of Seashore. If she didn't, she wouldn't drag her father down there to that cottage of theirs so often. And this place that's been wished on me by that dimwit Wally Pidge isn't a mile from Seashore. It isn't a mere cottage, either. It's big—got possibilities. She's been past it; I've heard her talk about it. . . . Romantic old place. Now, if I go and provide her with a home within several hours after she has called me a waster and a wastrel, how much of a waster and wastrel am I? Huh, I'd like to know!"

The round Binns face was glowing. He put right hand into left hand and gave a shake like two politicians meeting.

"Man of genius! With a rope of sand you've pulled yourself right out of the bottomless pit. Waster and wastrel, my eye! I'll telephone her right now."

At the telephone he paused. "Wait. Better idea. Telephone her, of course, but don't tell her where I'm going, or why. Just a business trip. Then when I take her down and show her the place, she'll be all the more surprised and pleased. Yes, and will put in an hour and a half begging my pardon."

Miss Webster was at home.

"This is Frederick. I've rung you up to tell you that I'm going away."

"What?" And then contrition welled over the wire. "Now, Freddy, you mustn't do that, just because of what happened this afternoon! And I—maybe I shouldn't have spoken as sharply as I did."

The Binns voice was testy as it cut in.

"I'm not going away because of that!

Any time you think I'd leave town just because I tried to help somebody. . . . Huh! I'm going away on business."

"Oh, is that so? Well, I'm going away, too, and I was going to tell you about it, but I sha'n't now."

There was a hiatus in the conversation.

"Suits me," said Frederick Binns, not knowing what else to say. "Well, see you when I come back. Good-by."

"Good-by."

Telephones clicked.

"Doggone it!" cried Freddie Binns. "Nothing's gone right! Let's get the hell out of this town. He Gow—He Gow! We go!"

Appeared He Gow, the third of his six bread-knives in hand.

"Go where?"

"Go Seashore."

"Oh." He Gow would have said the same thing if it had been across the street, or the North Pole.

"Go half-hour," said Frederick Binns. "Get hell out of town."

Bags were packed. Kitty-cat Ash Can was approached with blandishments and an open traveling-cage that was a one-time parrot prison, and eventually entrapped. The speed with which the roadster left the drive caused rubber to fly from the tires. "I've had just about for one day!" said Frederick Binns.

THE roadster shouldered through city traffic toward open country and settled to the task of eating up miles on the highway. All the world seemed to be on the march. A multitude of cars ahead, behind; a constant stream of approaching lights nearing, nearing, flashing by. Howling fast cars; slow, puttering, protesting cars; big ones and little ones; single trucks; trucks with trailers; double-decked stages. . . . The pulsing life of the nation at a continuous flow. Adventurers of the dark winging their way toward countless destinations.

Some with no lights. . . . One, fastest of all on the black sea that night, slipping northerly over the long, heaving swells at express-train speed, its appointed harbor a narrow cove set below cliffs topped by age-old oaks and pines, where, awaiting, stood a high-powered car among the shadows of a tall gray shuttered house.

The roadster at length swung from the main highway, leaving the great traffic stream behind, and started winding

westerly through a sycamore- and oak-filled pass in the rolling hills—the Seashore road. An hour, and the roadster came to a halt at a fork in a road now heavily shrouded with pine forest, and within sound of a hidden, hammering sea.

Driver Binns groped for an electric torch and sent its ray tunneling about the roadside blackness until it lit upon a metal sign.

The sign read "SEASHORE, ONE MILE."

The roadster swung along, and a moment later began to drop down a hill at the base of which gleamed an arc-light. Here the highway split to become a double avenue, with a row of tall, heavy-branched pines running down its center toward the sea. Scattered buildings closed up ranks, finally to stand shoulder to shoulder. Seashore.

BLANKLY dark windows stared at the passing car. All save one. From the ground floor of a two-story frame building shone a lone light that looked as though it too might gulp out at any moment and leave the street wholly to the dark pines and the throbbing sea. The Binns roadster drew up before the lighted window.

"*Delfus Jones—Restaurant,*" stated letters on the pane.

"All out, He Gow," urged F. Alonzo. "Stretch the legs and get coffee and information. Leave Kitty-cat. Nobody steal him."

They entered the restaurant of Delfus Jones, and the past of thirty years ago rose up and made greeting. Though not present in the flesh, the spirit of the good old twenty-five-cent full-course dinner abounded in each curly-backed iron chair, in the gloom-filled woodwork, in the figured wall-paper, in the huge gilt mirrors, and in the chromos. Colorful, inspiring chromos—The Stag at Bay, Baby Helping Grandfather, The Lady on the Cliff Clutching the Anchor of Hope. A fine, homelike restaurant.

The seekers after coffee and information, after fighting their eyes past such extra bits as stuffed birds under glass and bouquets of wax flowers, at length saw a man and a boy seated at a table in the corner.

The man was in his late fifties, red-faced, short-nosed, with eyes black as huckleberries, and a chin that looked as though it had been patterned after a flatiron. Set well back on his head was a white, tight-fitting, visorless cook's cap.

He was in his shirtsleeves, which were rolled up. Around his waist was a stout white apron.

The youth seated across the table from him had a tapioca blue eye and not too much chin. He also was in shirt-sleeves, and his apron was a bib one.

"Evening," greeted Frederick Binns, unbuttoning the ulster and tugging up the roll-effect cap. "My friend He Gow here and I saw a light, and we thought we could get a cup of coffee before turning in, and could maybe learn from you about the best hotel. . . . You're Mr. Jones, aren't you?"

"The same party," admitted he of the cook's cap. His voice had a rough, pleasing harshness. "Hotel? Why, now, there's the Pine Tree Inn, three blocks down the street, American plan if you like it that way, and liable to burn down any night, it's such a firetrap. But don't let that keep you from going there. Then there's the Seashore House, brand-new and the rates a mite steep, and there's two or three rooming-houses; and I have rooms myself. Nothing fancy about 'em, but nice and clean."

"No need to look any further," said Frederick Binns. "You've sold me two rooms. Now if we might have a cup of coffee—"

"Set right down," said Mr. Jones, indicating a table as he rose. "This here's Chesterfield Wurzel, my delivery boy. I have a grocery store next door, and it's more bother! And you'd better be getting off to sleep, Chesterfield, as soon as you finish your coffee. This time of year in this town they sure run a delivery-boy ragged."

Mr. Jones rolled off toward the kitchen with swaying shoulders.

"How are you?" greeted F. Alonzo Binns to young Mr. Wurzel.

"H'lo," acknowledged young Mr. Wurzel, busy with cup and doughnut at the same time.

MR. JONES returned, walking on his heels, with two steaming cups and an explanation.

"Now this coffee aint maybe quite as good as it should be because it's been standing, but it's all that we've got. We don't usually stay open as late as this. We'd have been closed an hour ago if some of this Celebration Committee hadn't said they might drop in for a bite."

The restaurant door had opened and many shoes were tramping in.

"There's the Committee," explained Mr. Jones. "You'll excuse me. You see, we got a three-day Celebration on in Seashore beginning tomorrow—celebrating the cannery reopening, and the new sash-and-door-mill starting." He rocked toward the Committee.

With his eyes, Master Wurzel followed his employer across the floor.

"Huh," he snorted, "that gang makes me sick." He wrought his features into the facsimile of ill health. "That old Committee thinks all I got to do is to work half the night for their old New Deal show. Made me decorate my delivery truck, and I bet all them ribbons and flowers don't stay on two minutes. And maybe they won't, either," he added darkly. "I'm going to bed." The door slammed after him.

From the Committee table there rose further words: "Precedence in the Venetian boat parade . . . galleys, gondolas . . . a hundred full-grown Indians . . . red fire, skyrockets . . . wigs and breech-clouts and doublet and hose."

The Binns nose-tip began to twitch. A rapt look came into his eyes.

He fought the look down. After the day's experience with the nation's hero aviator, to get mixed up with another celebration . . . Good night, what was he thinking of? He rose precipitately.

"I guess, He Gow, that we'd better be getting to bed. Lots of work to do tomorrow."

CHAPTER III

THE travelers emerged into a street peopled only by the night and the wind, but as they were taking luggage from the roadster, a newcomer added itself to the pair as above the tree-serrated horizon rose a late golden moon, and began to finger its way across the false-fronts and Spanish arcades of Seashore's main avenue.

"Mighty fine!" said an admiring Frederick Binns; and whether it was because of this, or the Jones thrice-boiled coffee, the desire for sleep now left him. Why turn in, when he felt wakeful as a screech-owl?

"You go on to bed if you like," he said to He Gow, "but I'm going to walk around a little."

With an aphorism concerning the day being made for labor and the night for rest, He Gow went toward the Jones lodging-house stairs.

F. Alonzo again regarded the moon. Why walk around? Why not ride? Why not ride out past the Du Port place and just sort of look at it?

The big roadster turned, gathered headway, and streamed up the hill. The forest stood close on either side, at times thrusting out interlocking branches to form a leafy roof overhead. From off at the left, the hidden ocean made continuous roar. "Spooky place," mused the driver.

The roadster topped a rise, and now, at the foot of the slight grade, a car was seen to be approaching. Beyond it, the roadster's headlights picked up rough huge stone pillars flanking a driveway. Whether the car had come out from the driveway Frederick Binns couldn't tell. It slowly passed him and went over the crest.

The Binns eyes were on the pillars and driveway—the Du Port place.

And then, on sudden impulse, he pulled the wheel hard over and sent the roadster down the curving, weedy driveway.

"I'll just drive right in and out," he explained to himself. "And if that caretaker happens to be up, I'll tell him who I am."

The roadster pattered around an oval drive bordered with a tangle of high shrubbery and backed by great moss-hung oaks and pines. Through these, at the head of the oval, now loomed a tall gray house.

The new owner slackened the car down still slower, looking.

"This is it, all right," he announced. "I wonder—"

Whatever he may have wondered, he got no farther than wondering. From behind the tangle of high shrubbery, came a spurting flame, followed by a roar. By another spurt and another roar.

Pistol-fire!

Then the Binns machine was leaping away like a wild thing.

And out in the roadway, hidden beyond the crest of the low rise, another car was suddenly, furiously gathering speed.

SHOT at. . . Shot at in his own yard! Frederick Alonzo Binns, seated in his roadster beneath a tree in front of the Delfus Jones lodging-house, with the moonlight streaming down the avenue to the sea, ran a hand across a forehead on which sweat had dried. Shot at, and the bullets had almost punched initials right above his eyes.

The door opened; the head of Roger Boy appeared, followed by his flying body. Accompanying, was a yellow tornado—a spitting, ripping tornado.



A lonely old house set above a hidden ocean cove; a house with tunnels and a secret stairway; and some one in that house with too ready a trigger-finger who didn't want visitors. Why?

The Binns deductive powers began to whirl: Rum-runners—counterfeiters—moonshiners—fences for stolen goods—practicers of strange religions—a rookery for thieves. . . . And there had been a car loitering about—the possibilities were legion.

And they had shot at him. It was a grim, and at the same time a happy-jawed young man, who turned key in lock of car, gathered up his luggage, and went across the moonlit avenue to the Delfus Jones lodging-house door. He would need a lot of sleep.

"I'll stalk 'em down," he gritted. "I'll make 'em sweat!"

Through sleeping and waking hours numbering eight, the best method of stalking felons down and making them perspire freely had not been exactly revealed, and while breakfasting in the Delfus Jones restaurant, the problem was still with him.

A muttering young Mr. Binns finished off his tanbark coffee and tried to super-concentrate. Of course, viewed in the light of reason and broad daylight, he could go right over to the Du Port place and say to caretaker Harley Gann:

"Why, hello, young man. I was the one you shot at last night. Perfectly all right. All my fault." And that would be that.

But on the other hand—the Binns brows were pulled lower.

Two people thumped into the restaurant, and F. Alonzo looked up. The one in the lead was the Jones delivery boy, Chesterfield Wurzel, clad as on the night before in undersize cap and over-size apron. Closely following on his heels was a large, erect man, stiff of lip, gimlet of eye, on the breast of whose olive-green uniform shone a badge, a police officer's badge.

Frederick Alonzo Binns started. It was the Seashore police force. Young Master Wurzel raised his voice, directing it toward the door leading to the kitchen.

"Hey, Jones! Come on out here. The old Marshal has pinched me again."

The door flapped open. Appeared restaurant and grocery-owner Delfus Jones, like Master Wurzel capped and gowned in the manner of last evening. Instantly, on catching sight of Chesterfield Wurzel and the officer, Delfus Jones burst into speech.

"Now—now look here, Marshal, I know he's been driving too fast again, but you got to overlook some things and—"

He took the stub of a cigar from out of his mouth and interrupted:

"I aint arrested him for speedin'." The cigar stub went back into the mouth again.

"Then what the hell *have* you arrested him for?" demanded Mr. Jones.

It was Master Wurzel, standing with arms defiantly akimbo, who gave illumination.

"He says I aint of driving age. I aint fifteen yet, and won't be till next week. As if one old week mattered!"

The cigar-stub was again removed from the mouth of the sorrel-colored wearer of the badge. "It's der law," came intonation. "And I got to see that der law is obeyed." The stub popped back in again.

"Hoh!" cried Chesterfield Wurzel, and his arms went even more akimbo. "Yes, you do—not! How about all them girls that you let drive cars? Not old enough to be out of kindergarten, some of 'em aint, and you let 'em go around town driving great big cars with one hand and putting on lip-stick and rouge with the other!"

"I don't know nothin' about that," countered the upholder of the law. "All I know is, people have been complainin' and I got to do my duty. So you stop driving. And dot's final."

The Law wheeled about and marched away, toes out and shoulders back.

"Hell!" said Delfus Jones. "Now we are in for it."

From the table beneath the chromo of the Lady and the Anchor, an all-earred and all-eyed Frederick Alonzo Binns sat galvanically up. The solution of his problem for making somebody sweat was so clear as to be almost blinding.

Delivery boy! Akin with telephone repair-men, meter-readers, messenger-boys and ice-men, delivery boys could be seen anywhere without exciting suspicion. Delivery boy—detective—and the Du Port place!

SWIFTLY noting that Delfus Jones and Chesterfield Wurzel still watched the Law's exit march, F. Binns covertly reached for the big-city daily paper lying on the table. He turned it to a page, thrust face close as though seeking up and down columns, stopped, then gave a cry like a man who has been hit in the stomach with half a brick.

Messrs. Jones and Wurzel spun around to stare at F. Binns, then ran heavy-footed toward him.

"What's the matter?" clamored the restaurant owner, and added, not unnaturally: "Something you et?"

Frederick Binns waved limp wrists, and indicated the paper.

"Stock-market," he mumbled. "Stocks. Down—down—down. Ruined. Cleaned out. Not a sou left." He tapped a pants pocket. "Just enough to pay local

bills. I've got to get a job—go to work—do anything. Do anything that's honorable. But it's awful limited. Only thing I know how to do is to drive an automobile." He picked up the paper of the fatal tidings and again peered at the column that had spelled disaster.

"Cleaned out!" he said.

"Gee," breathed Delfus Jones, "that's too bad." But alongside concern and two gold teeth in the Delfus Jones face, there now showed something else, the gleam of an idea.

WHY," continued Mr. Jones, "that's too bad. I never played with stocks myself; too much like monkey-on-a-stick. But if you really are broke, I got a job for you—it aint anything of a job, but it will tide you over until you can sort of get on your feet. It's driving a delivery truck for my grocery store. The Marshal just now come in here with a song and dance about Chesterfield not being allowed to drive, and I—"

The restaurant door opened, and there trooped into the room a grenadierlike woman in tweed jacket and knickers, stout, knee-high boots and a cloth Tyrolean hat. Following this personage was a dog large enough to be put to hauling trucks.

"Good God," mumbled Delfus Jones. "Here they are again."

The Alpine climber fixed Mr. Jones with a look.

"Breakfast, Mr. Jones! The regular substantial one. There is much to be done down on the lagoon today. Now, now, Roger Boy, come away from that gentleman and sit down."

The horse-sized Roger Boy obeyed by taking another searching sniff at a Binns knee with all the vigor of a high-pressure, double-action steam pipe, and then marched stiff-legged in the direction of the kitchen, sniffing harder as he marched. Suddenly he gave a delighted, deep-throated cough, and thrust open the swing door with a butt of his hamlike head. He leaped into the kitchen.

"Roger Boy!" chided the grenadier lady.

From beyond the door, up until the moment that Roger Boy leaped, had been coming a steady stream of sing-song conversation in the Cantonese dialect. The instant after Roger Boy leaped, the sing-song broke into a squawk. Followed a roaring bark—this from Roger Boy. Followed almost instantly thereafter a

yelping howl, this possibly also from Roger Boy. But one couldn't be sure until the door opened.

It opened. The hamlike head of Roger Boy buttingly appeared. Followed, his flying body. Accompanying both Roger's head and body, was a yellow tornado—a spitting, humming, ripping tornado.

Roger Boy and tornado went down the length of the restaurant. The hamlike head again butted. Roger dived into the street. At the curb the tornado left off clawing and skipped to a stop. Roger Boy went on. So busy was he in going on, that no sound came from him save the rasp of toe-nails digging into concrete and measuring the fleeting yards.

Back into the Delfus Jones restaurant sauntered a yellow cat whose hide looked like a worn Brussels carpet. Catching sight of the open kitchen door in which were framed three Chinese faces, the yellow cat gave a contented "*Prraow*" and bounded thither. Kitty-cat Ash Can, after a busy moment, was again among friends.

"You!" The grenadier woman's voice boomed like a cannon. The owner of Roger Boy advanced a stride upon Delfus Jones. "Think you're humorous, don't you, setting that animal upon my poor pet! If there was a law covering such things, I'd have it on you. As it is, I shall never come inside your place again!"

She about-faced. The floor trembled beneath her march, and the rest of the restaurant, out of sympathy, trembled with the floor. The door slammed.

Frederick Alonzo Binns groaned. Sunk! Just as he had things fixed, Ash Can had to go and ruin them.

He looked at Delfus Jones. Delfus Jones looked at him.

"That your Chinaman's cat?" said Mr. Jones.

NO matter what the situation, Frederick A. Binns defended his own. "Yes, that's his cat, and I don't blame it for going after that meat-hound! Of course, Mr. Jones, I'm awful sorry—"

"Sorry?" Delfus Jones thrust out a hand.

Frederick Binns grasped it.

"Say," went on a beaming Mr. Jones, "this is the happiest day of my life." Two gold teeth gleamed to their limit. "I'm going right back into that kitchen and cut that cat the finest tenderloin

steak it ever put its face into. I been trying to get rid of that woman and dog for years. I don't allow dogs in this restaurant, and she knew it, yet she's kept right on bringing him in."

Mr. Jones started to disengage his hand, in order that he might start steak-cutting. Frederick Binns held on. F. Binns knew opportunity, when he finally saw it.

"You were speaking about a job—a delivery-boy job—just before the earthquake happened."

"Sure I was," said Mr. Jones, "and it's yours."

"Fine!" said Binns. Then his face fell.

"What's the matter?" demanded Mr. Jones.

"My old cook, He Gow."

"Been out in the kitchen for the past three hours, talking an arm off my two Chinamen," triumphantly stated Mr. Jones. "Don't you give no worry about him. He's already made himself right to home."

"Then there's only one thing else," said Frederick Alonzo Binns. "Where's my cap and apron?"

CHAPTER IV

DURING the two hours preceding noon, many and sundry dwellers in the town of Seashore found forced upon their attention a grocery delivery truck scratchily decorated with bunting and greenery, at the wheel of which sat a young man encased in a near-white apron, and on whose head was a quick-fitting cloth cap bearing across its front the printed words "EAT MORE HAM."

At the side of the truck-driver sat a youth also enveloped in an apron, and also wearing a cap—a yachting cap. The eyes of the youth, along with an open mouth, were fixed upon the driver in a manner suggesting unbounded admiration. And as the truck, laden with a hundred Seashore necessities, took turn after turn with splendid defiance of the law of gravity, the admiration on the youth's face grew.

"Gee," said Chesterfield Wurzel, "you sure know how to drive a car!"

"Racing driver once," explained Frederick Alonzo Binns.

Only for one moment had Frederick Alonzo Binns had any qualms. When they had come into that part of town

where he approximated the Clarendon Webster cottage to be, he had asked his guide of its whereabouts.

The guide nodded at a house ahead. "'At's the place you were asking about."

IT was indeed the Webster place, and Binns felt a quickening of pulse. Life would be a drab affair if the young lady of the outspoken opinions were not to be included in the Binns cosmos. A nice enough cottage, as a cottage, noted the driver, but wait until he got the Du Port place fixed up—when he got it fixed up. Well, that would be darned soon now!

Grocery delivering continued. Soon an empty delivery truck was heading back toward the Delfus Jones grocery store. Only, it wasn't heading back toward the store. Chesterfield saw this.

"Hey!" he announced. "You're drivin' the wrong way. Huh, you would get lost," he added patronizingly, "if I wasn't along."

The truck continued on its original course. "All the groceries delivered, aren't they?" demanded driver Binns.

"Yeah."

"Then why waste half an hour when we can drum up trade for the firm? Go get orders. That's the only way, Chesterfield, that Mr. Jones can buck competition; rival stores, and one thing and another. You just sit back and breathe fresh air and watch a go-getter in action."

"Well, it's your funeral," said Master Wurzel magnanimously. A moment later he gave further information.

"Hoh, you won't get any order at this place you're comin' to."

The truck was topping a rise in the narrow, forest-bordered road. From off to the left, through great oaks and pines, came the surging roar of the sea. At the foot of the slight grade, on the road's left side, stood two rough stone pillars flanking a driveway.

"You won't get no orders in there," repeated Chesterfield Wurzel, wagging his head. "Only a caretaker lives in 'at house. That's the old Frenchy Du Port place."

"What do you bet I won't?" rapped out Frederick Alonzo Binns.

The Delfus Jones delivery truck turned into the driveway, the driver's eyes straight ahead, yet flicking in everything on both sides.

On the left, within the heart of this long, elliptical drive, stood many huge-

trunked, low-limbed oaks, heavy with moss, filtering patchwork sunlight down through to the brown, leaf-carpeted earth below. On the right, closely following the curve of the road, ran a more than head-high screen of lilac. At the far end of the ellipse, flanked by oaks and pines, stood the house, tall, gray, formal, high-windowed. Just before the house was reached, a slash through shrubbery disclosed a tributary driveway, going past the house at the side.

"Here's where he shot at me," inwardly commented Frederick Binns. "From behind that shrubbery. We'll stop here. And walk as far as we can."

The brakes gripped. Groceryman Binns swung down, directed his assistant to remain where he was, and strode down the tributary driveway whistling a lilting tune. And prickles were on his skin.

Now the house bulked close above him, on his left. It needed painting. Each curtained, dark, tall window seemed an eye, watching, watching. Wind moaned through tall, moss-hung pines. From beyond the stable sounded the surge of the hidden sea. Below, somewhere, lay the cove—the cove from which ran a secret tunnel up to the basement. The Binns eyes caught sight of small windows set in the foundation, windows curtained, and barred. The Binns palms tingled. Curtained windows, barred!

The kitchen door opened, suddenly. A bare-headed man came swiftly down the half dozen steps.

Frederick Binns broke off whistling and looked up.

"Hello!" he greeted. "Grocery boy from Delfus Jones."

THE bare-headed man at the foot of the kitchen steps was in his middle thirties. He was slender, with a high-bridged nose and a prominent Adam's apple. He wore a khaki shirt, open at the throat, and his corduroy trousers were tucked into high laced boots. In one hand he held a large-mouthed curve-stemmed pipe.

He looked as characterless as chalk and water.

"Grocery boy from Delfus Jones," repeated Mr. Binns. "Out drumming up trade. Getting orders." He broke off to smile. "Competition is getting awful fierce, Mr. Gann—this is Mr. Gann, isn't it?—and we, as the oldest grocery store in town, can't afford to see the newcomer stores grab all the gravy. Didn't find



"A lady give me something for you," stated Master Wurzel. "I got a hunch it's a bribe." One feel of it was enough for Binns—it was a ring!

your name on our lists, so thought I'd drop by. Anything in the line of food-stuffs—and always mighty willing to serve."

The groceryman again beamed, pulled a pad from under his apron belting, and a pencil from behind an ear.

Caretaker Harley Gann continued to regard the delivery boy, slowly, methodically, at so many blinks per minute. But the searching quality of the stare, so evident at first, had now gone. Here was nothing but a grocer's boy. Mr. Gann tucked the wide-topped, curve-stemmed pipe into his mouth and drew upon it. *Puff—puff—puff*. He eased his stand and hooked a thumb into his belt.

"Why, hello," he said with a flat voice. "But I don't believe there's a thing. I always do my own marketing." Then, catching the obvious disappointment on the face of the groceryman, Mr. Gann royally relented. "Of course, I could have you bring out a bottle of ketchup, maybe, and a—"

"Ketchup," said the groceryman, brightening and feverishly writing.

"And maybe a package of tobacco. Kentucky Clippings. But that's all." He again resumed the joy of his pipe.

"That's more than enough," radiated Frederick Binns; and if caretaker Harley Gann had known just how much this was, his pipe would have suddenly clogged. But he didn't. So he went on serenely puffing.

"Ketchup," read aloud the drummer-up of trade, looking at his pad. "Kentucky Clippings. That's right. Yes sir. Be back with them this afternoon."

CHAPTER V

"WELL, you lost your bet," greeted Frederick Binns, swinging aboard the Jones delivery truck. "I got my order."

"How much of an order did you get?" "Bottle of ketchup and a package of tobacco."

"Hoh!" The Wurzel scorn rose loud. "You call that an order, and you come way out here!"

The truck clattered out of the Du Port grounds. The Binns eyes scarcely saw the road, being with his thoughts, which were back in the Du Port yard. That old stable, with every window boarded up . . . the basement—that caretaker Gann—

A figure stepped from beneath a tree out into the narrow road. A woman, a young woman. She gave signal that the truck stop.

Chesterfield Wurzel snorted. "Oh, gosh, here's that Lotus Givens! Drive on. Go ahead and drive on!"

But the truck had already stopped.

"Hello," greeted the young woman, and without more ado climbed into the Jones vehicle. She was bareheaded; her

hair was neither long nor short, but that desperate in-between length, and it had no curl. She was good-looking in a fierce, untamed sort of way, with a hard, straight mouth and full black eyes.

The bare-headed Miss Givens climbed aboard the truck with shoulders back and chin up, the mouth a severe line, and without even looking at Chesterfield Wurzel, proceeded to haul that young man to one side and seat herself next the deliveryman at the wheel.

"Hey!" roared the dispossessed Chesterfield, now sitting on the edge of nothing, and strove mightily to regain his rightful place.

BUT Miss Lotus Givens was not to be moved. Unheeding of Master Wurzel, the young woman directed her full-eyed gaze at Frederick Alonzo Binns.

"You're the new delivery boy," stated Miss Givens, and the words fell precisely, like so many chips. "I've heard about you. I think you're wonderful."

Mr. Binns attempted to acknowledge the compliment, but the right words at that moment did not seem ready. So he said nothing, just looked.

Miss Givens continued: "And I think you're wonderfully brave, too. Coming right out from the yard of that murder farm. Oh, I saw you."

The Binns eyes opened full width. So full, as not only to take in Miss Givens, but Master Wurzel beyond her. Chesterfield was making frantic signals; indulging in wild pantomime, rapping his forehead with one hand, making rotary motion about an ear with the other. His mouth framed the words "Cuckoo! Bugs!" Also he indicated that Frederick Binns drive on.

"Murder farm?" said Binns slowly, at the same time watching the Wurzel histrionics.

"Well, if it isn't a murder farm," retorted Miss Givens primly, "it ought to be. Enough goes on there, I dare say, to make it one."

"Oh, for gosh sake," cried Chesterfield Wurzel, now articulate, "let's drive on! Think we got all day to listen to goofy talk?"

"Chesterfield," explained Miss Givens to the driver, and her mouth came down all the tighter, "Chesterfield is a realist. You're not a realist, are you, Mr. New Delivery Boy?"

"I—I guess not exactly," said the new delivery boy. It was the first thing that he could think of.

"There!" cried Miss Givens. "I knew it. I knew that you didn't go into that dreadful place just to deliver groceries."

Frederick Binns jumped like one who has been jabbed with a pin.

Chesterfield Wurzel relieved the tension.

"Haw, haw! Shows how much you and your bunk talk know. We didn't go in to deliver groceries at all. We went in to get an order. Hoh!"

As far as Miss Givens was concerned, Master Wurzel continued nonexistent. She threw back her head to reassemble her hair in orderly lines. "We understand," she said to Frederick Binns. "We know what's going on there. We'll work together."

Again Frederick Binns felt a pin-thrust. Again Chesterfield Wurzel roared into speech.

"Aw, you think there's something goofy going on in half the places in town. Ghosts and clankin' chains and I don't know what else. You got too much imagination; that's what you got."

Miss Givens, very erect, turned and looked at Chesterfield for the first time. "You do a good deal of talking yourself, little boy."

"I only talk about what I see," was the retort. "And 'little boy,' nothin'! I guess you tried to kiss me once."

"I shall not do it again," prophesied Miss Givens. "Not when there are nice young grocerymen around."

Frederick Alonzo Binns threw off brake and put on power all at one motion. The truck sprang ahead.

"That's right!" commended Chesterfield. "Now you're gettin' some sense. Let's get back to town. I suppose you're going to ride with us?"

"I am," said Miss Givens. "That was my intention when stopping you."

THE working force of the Delfus Jones grocery store and their passenger racketed toward Seashore. Frederick Binns thought; continued to think. Of course she was fey, a little bit touched. But then, she might be a help. She might really know things. Murder farm—he hadn't thought of that.

"Let's sing," said Miss Givens.

"Why not?" said Binns.

"Let's sing 'I Was Seeing Nellie Home'."

"Why not, again?" said Binns.

"Not that I am Nellie, you understand," said Miss Givens, and smiled archly.

"Certainly not," agreed Binns.

Nellie was seen home. Miss Givens had a surprisingly good voice. The baritone of F. Binns could have been sourer, but not very much. The silent Chesterfield Wurzel looked as though he had taken an exceptionally agonizing poison.

So, the decorated and vocal Delfus Jones delivery truck bowled on into town, came upon a tree-guarded crossroad, and so coming, all but collided with a large coupé occupied by two people. The coupé, with tires burning, stopped with front bumper against the truck's running-board.

Truck occupants and car occupants looked at each other. Singing died away with Frederick Alonzo Binns, died with a choke.

The girl at the wheel of the car was bare-headed. Her hair was brown, with just enough red in it to give authority. Her eyes were blue, a dazzling blue, sun-flecked. Certainly she would have been called attractive. Attractive, and capable.

The man at her side had on a pulled-down Panama hat, and his iron-gray mustache was stiff enough to have been starched. His eyes were blue, like the girl's, only they were more a white-blue, like ice. And the gentleman's jaw might have been cut from granite.

FREDERICK BINNS saw all this—all this, and more—in a single blinding flash, and still had time to continue to choke.

The blue, sunshine-flecked eyes of the girl at the wheel of the coupé took in the decorated delivery truck, the capped and aproned truck-driver, the freely clad young woman at his side, the aproned youth beyond, and came back to the benumbed truck-driver again. And the girl's blue eyes went as cold as those of the gray-mustached man beside her. Her lips moved, moved in biting, flaming scorn.

One could almost guess what they were saying. "Business trip!"

Miss Mary Webster, affianced of Frederick Alonzo Binns, backed her car with a grind of gears. Backed it, swung it, sent it howling ahead. It disappeared toward Seashore in a wild swirl of dust.

Not until dust cloud had vanished did a numb-armed Frederick Binns seem capable of motion. It was as though the cloud had cast horrid spell upon him. Then he came alive, maniacally alive.

His foot whanged against the starter. The starter took the matter under advisement.

"Oh, for God's sake, go!" roared Frederick Binns.

The motor coughed, and then, as though tardily remembering its manners, stopped coughing and died. The starter again did so many revolutions per year. F. Binns again spoke. The motor this time forgot all about manners and almost coughed its bearings out. The Jones delivery truck raged ahead.

MISS LOTUS GIVENS parted tightly compressed lips.

"That," said Miss Givens, "is the way rich people always act! All but run you down and stretch you out a corpse, and then drive away as though it was your fault. Did you see the look on that young thing's face?"

Chesterfield Wurzel put in his two bits' worth.

"That old guy sure looked like he could eat nails. I'd hate to have a guy like that down on me. I wish we'd have run over him."

To all of which the Frederick Binns of cap and apron said nothing, but urged the truck to a speed at which it began to go sideways.

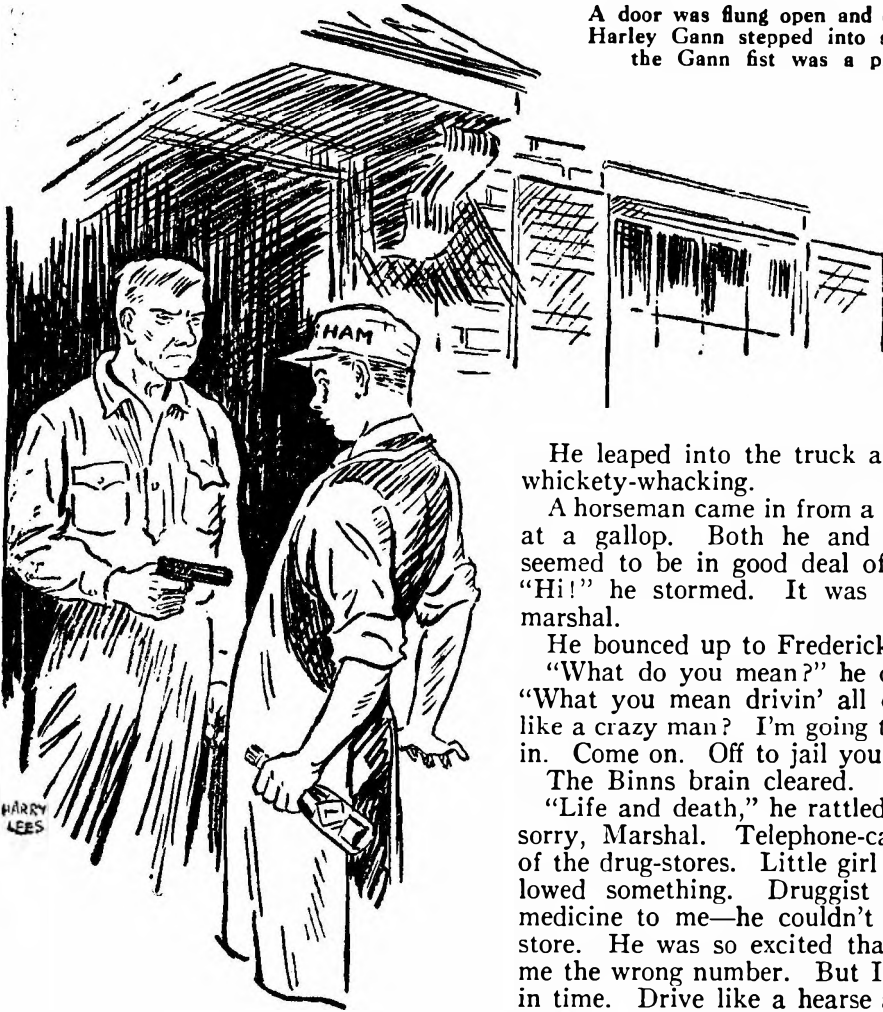
Singing was not resumed, not even when Miss Givens urged that something of a stirring nature be rendered, in keeping with the exhilarating speed of the truck. The Binns brows were a low black line; his eyes two dusty coals; his mouth a vise closed down for the day. The truck continued to go sidewise.

The Jones vehicle swooped down the highway into the double avenue of Seashore with its center row of tall pines. From pines to buildings now blossomed strings of gay bunting, like exotic plants that had flowered overnight. Men were putting up flags along the sidewalks. Truckloads of cut pine branches were being unloaded. Up and down the double avenue of Seashore was a gay and festive air. Play—celebration—was in the spice-scented breeze. Celebration of the reopened cannery, the new sash and door mill, the New Deal. But there was no celebration in the heart of Frederick Alonzo Binns.

"Here's where you people get out," he commanded.

For a moment it looked as though Miss Givens was about to debate the issue. Then she capitulated with a radiant smile.

A door was flung open and caretaker Harley Gann stepped into sight. In the Gann fist was a pistol.



"I always like to hear strong men speak their own true minds!" She tapped the truck-driver on the shoulder, turned and shoved aside Chesterfield Wurzel, and stepped to the sidewalk.

What an accompanying Master Wurzel said to her did not fall on the ears of Frederick Alonzo Binns. He and the truck were already gone.

The Webster cottage proved to be right where it should have been; right where Chesterfield Wurzel had pointed it out. The coming driver fell off the truck seat like a volunteer fireman late to the season's best fire. His feet sounded upon porch; his knuckles beat upon door. No one was there. He stared at a window. A number of suit-cases and bags stared back, but of the Websters, father and daughter, there was no sign. They had come, had left their luggage, had gone again.

"Ow!" said Frederick Binns. "Got to find 'em!"

He leaped into the truck and sent it whickety-whacking.

A horseman came in from a side street at a gallop. Both he and his horse seemed to be in good deal of a lather. "Hi!" he stormed. It was Seashore's marshal.

He bounced up to Frederick Binns.

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "What you mean drivin' all over town like a crazy man? I'm going to run you in. Come on. Off to jail you go."

The Binns brain cleared.

"Life and death," he rattled. "Awful sorry, Marshal. Telephone-call at one of the drug-stores. Little girl had swallowed something. Druggist gave the medicine to me—he couldn't leave the store. He was so excited that he gave me the wrong number. But I got there in time. Drive like a hearse after this, Marshal." He smiled apologetically at the man on the roan horse.

The horseman's face relaxed.

"Well," he grugged, "for once dot's different. But I got my eye on you. You delivery boys are too fresh in this town."

A portentous Delfus Jones greeted the wanderer in front of the Jones emporium.

"Where you been?"

"Forgot an order and went back to deliver it." F. Binns was down to clutching at straws.

"Well, now, that's different." Mr. Jones' face cleared. "Yes, sir, that's all right. But get right down off that seat now, Lonnie. The wholesaler's truck is waiting to be unloaded back in the rear."

Mr. Binns got down off his seat and went toward the rear and the wholesaler's truck. The first thing that he put hands on was a case of eggs. Back into the store he strode, and here he came face to face with Chesterfield Wurzel.

"I been lookin' everywhere for you!" reproached that young man. "Right after you left like you was goin' to a fire, a lady come in. I think it was the same one that nearly run us down. She give me something for you. I got a hunch that maybe it's a bribe not to report her for reckless driving."

Master Wurzel fought with his apron until it gave up and allowed ingress to a pants pocket. He produced a small, a very small package that had been hastily twisted up in paper.

Frederick Binns felt of it between thumb and forefinger. One feel was enough. It was a ring.

He dropped the case of eggs.

CHAPTER VI

WHEN complete consciousness returned to Frederick Binns, the wholesaler's truck had been emptied and he and Chesterfield Wurzel, caps still on, were eating at a table in the smoke-heavy kitchen of the Jones restaurant. The Binns jaws, having to fasten upon something, fastened upon food, and at each bite ground it to a pulp.

Over and over one lone, single thought ran backward and forward in his mind, like a crazy shuttle train in a subway. Let Mary Webster go her way—he would go his. Working to get a home for her; that's what he had been doing, working to get a home, and she had taken snap judgment on appearances—merely appearances—and had flown right off the handle. All right, let her go her way. He'd go his.

The noon hour went. F. Alonzo Binns thrust plate aside and stalked from restaurant to grocery-store through the connecting door.

"Ready for afternoon deliveries," he said to Mr. Jones. "Awful sorry about those eggs. Spots before the eyes, then everything black."

"Accidents will happen," condoned Mr. Jones. "I once slipped in some molasses, and by the time I'd gotten through catchin' holt of things trying to keep my balance, you'd a-thought a cyclone had struck the store. But before you go out with the afternoon deliveries, I want you and Chesterfield to step over to the post office and get some hams that are coming by parcel post. They aint heavy, and you two can walk over and get 'em."

Drawing heartily on an Old Scratch

cigarette, Master Wurzel fell into step with F. Alonzo, and the two aproned workers strode along Seashore's decorated and festive street, with the smaller of the pair furnishing up-to-the-minute comment.

"Ho, old Dutch Mike's drunk again. . . The Surf Store is selling out. 'At's the third time they sold out this year. . . . Huh, here comes old Mrs. Chichester, but I don't see her dog with her now. After the lickin' your Chinaman's cat give it this morning, I'll bet it's hiding in some cellar. She's got that soft boiled Ducey with her. Any time I'd tag around a woman like that!"

Frederick Binns looked dully up. As Chesterfield had observed, the grenadier woman of the Jones breakfast scene was without the horse-sized Roger Boy. As he had also observed, a young man was with her. A pale, bespectacled young man with a breadcrumb mustache and a higher-thought look. He was listening respectfully to the grenadier woman's flow of words.

Groceryman Binns again regarded the Roger Boy owner. So this was the Mrs. Chichester who had written the lagoon pageant and who was producing it. Well, that didn't mean anything to him. The ring—his ring—had been given back by Mary. No explanations. Just the ring, done up any old how. . . .

"I guess," grimly announced Master Wurzel when they had gotten past, "I guess now you know why I won't wear no plush hats!"

Here a small, passing automobile with a delivery truck body, and painted a flaming red even to tires, caught the Wurzel eye. It even claimed the attention of the lugubrious Mr. Binns. On the box-like body of the truck, in black and gold letters, were the words *Vesuvius Fireworks Company*. At the truck's wheel was a stalwart man with a happily preoccupied air; like the truck, he was clothed in red picked out strikingly with black and gold.

THE Wurzel eyes followed the flamboyant pair until out of sight.

"Hot dog! Now 'at's something like. 'At's the fireworks man and his truck, that's going to set off the fireworks from a barge in the lagoon at the end of the show. He knows everything in the world about powder and fireworks. I talked with him yesterday. 'At's the kind of a job to have, instead of driving an old grocery wagon!"

Frederick Binns had also followed the red automobile out of sight. He had never thought of it before, but what a picturesque existence, going from town to town and setting off skyrockets. Some people seemed to have all the luck!

The questers after hams trudged on, halting farther down the block to permit a small, bald-headed, energetic man and his non-energetic helper to struggle across the sidewalk from a truck into a vacant building with a large wicker hamper.

At which sight Master Wurzel loudly snorted.

"Huh, I guess the old show-clothes have come."

Although slate-gray was the Binns outlook, he flattened a nose against a window pane and peered long into the building, like some one looking in upon Paradise denied.

"Six hampers," he announced at length. "Sure are going to have a lot of costumes, aren't they?"

"For down on the lagoon, Eytalian stuff," enlarged Chesterfield. "And Indian ones for up in the woods. I guess a hundred Indian suits alone."

"A hundred Indian suits," breathed Frederick Binns. Then roused himself. "But that doesn't mean anything to us! We got other things to think about."

"Hams," said Chesterfield.

"Yes, hams," agreed Frederick Binns.

ONCE more a laden truck pulled away from the Jones emporium; once more it shed deliveries about town. At length a steaming Jones truck, now empty save for a lone, small order, swung northward beyond city limits and began to follow a forest road set near the hidden, sounding sea.

The Binns face was grim, his eyes hard and bright. For all that had happened to him, something was going to be taken out on somebody, and that somebody was preferably caretaker Harley Gann.

Old stone pillars, flanking a drive, loomed on the left. The truck turned into the grounds that had once belonged to Frenchman Du Port. Shadows were lengthening under the great oaks; tall loomed the gray old house at the drive's far end. From beyond, sounded the muffled thresh of the hidden sea beating upon hidden cliffs. All around was the whisper of wind. And though the sun still shone, a chill seemed to have suddenly come into the air.

The Jones truck with power shut off, coasted noiselessly to a stop.

Deliveryman Binns caught up the Gann order of ketchup and tobacco and cat-footed down the side drive, his eyes sweeping about like a searchlight. The stable, the same as that morning, tight-shuttered. The basement, with its windows heavily curtained, and barred.

He reached the kitchen steps, and eased up them. He put a hand upon the doorknob. He tried it, and it gave.

BINNS' nostrils went wide. With his free hand he beat loudly upon the door. At the same time he flung the door open and stepped swiftly into a huge, high-ceilinged, high-windowed, gloom-steeped room.

In jovially professional manner he called out: "Grocery boy!"

One — two — three seconds passed. Three waiting seconds.

A door on the far side of the room was flung open. Caretaker Harley Gann stepped into sight. In the Gann fist was an automatic pistol.

Deliveryman Frederick Binns didn't even blink.

"Oh, hello," he greeted, as offhand as though his customers were quite expected to appear with a cannon in their hands. "Guess I must have scared you," he apologized. "Well, lots of people are like that. Hear a noise and they imagine . . . And I don't blame you, living away off here as you do. Now here's the ketchup." The deliveryman looked around for a table. "And the tobacco. Bargain rates today. Ketchup down three cents, tobacco down a dime. That's a saving, and as I say, take care of the pennies and the pennies will take care of you."

With a flourish, the talkative deliveryman placed bottle and package upon a broad table set against a wall. He beamed.

Caretaker Harley Gann gave a return smile which, for an imitation one, was a good one. And Mr. Gann had found his voice.

"Say," he snapped. "You don't want to do that again! You know, burglars have tried to get in here once or twice, and whenever I hear a voice—" Mr. Gann indicated the weapon in his hand, and thrust it relaxedly into a coat pocket.

"Sure, I understand," said the dolt deliveryman. "I should have yelled louder. I'd feel the same way if it was me. But

say,"—the deliveryman's eyes roamed the huge room in frank admiration,—“it's a swell big kitchen you got, anyhow. Gosh, if the rest of the house is like this, it must be like a palace. Say, you ought to see some of the houses I go into, and the kitchens in 'em. Two apple boxes nailed together would be big.”

The Binns gaze swept the room, and as it swung out of the Gann orbit, a wild light flamed up in it. On the trail! Caretaker Gann carried a gun by day as well as by night. Why? What lay in the other rooms?

“Oh, yes,” conceded caretaker Gann, also looking around the kitchen, his voice again pleasantly tolerant. “It aint so bad.”

It wasn't. It was a room large enough to have gone roller-skating in. The hooded range took up the same space as would a couple of grand pianos; a three-burner kerosene stove stood beside it. Copper pots and pans hung clustered around the range to perhaps the number of fifty. The heart of Frederick Alonzo Binns, hidden under a groceryman's apron, gave a delighted thump even as the Binns mind set itself toward ferretting out what was beyond the closed kitchen doors. Wasn't old He Gow going to like it! And what a room for Kitty-cat Ash Can to go galloping around in, knocking down pots and pans! And wouldn't Mary— The Binns heart stopped its joyous pound-pound.

His face darkened. Darkened, that is, while still turned away from Harley Gann. It was bright enough as it swiveled back upon the caretaker.

“Gee,” breathed the grocery deliveryman, “enough kettles to start a hotel. Say!” Into the deliveryman's countenance and voice came a wistfulness, an ineffable wistfulness of one who hopes for something and hoping, knows he'll not get it. “Say, do you suppose the owner of this place would mind if you let me poke my head into some of these other rooms? I'd like to see 'em. I aint never been in a house like this.”

LIKE a guardian closing the gates to heaven, caretaker Gann closed the gates upon the delivery boy's desires—closed them, and at the same time caused the delivery boy's eyes to flame brighter.

“Nope,” crisped Mr. Gann, with shake of head, “I can't show you the house. Them's my orders, and I got to stick to them. Aint much to see, anyway.

Just mirrors and paintings and gilt furniture and things like that. I'd show you around in a minute if it wasn't for orders, but you know what owners are like.”

“Sure,” agreed Frederick Binns. “Of course I know what owners are like.” He knew what one owner was like, and his heart was thumping happily.

“Well,” he said, “I guess I'll be going.” He turned, and from out in the drive below the kitchen there came the sound of a car's brakes going on.

“Hello, Gann!” cried some one.

“Hello, Mr. Caretaker!” added a girl's voice.

The knees of Frederick Alonzo Binns buckled under him. The voice was that of Mary Webster.

“Oh,” said Mr. Gann. He threw open the door and went down the kitchen steps. The door closed behind him, and he could be heard greeting people.

Deliveryman Frederick Binns stood alone in the great kitchen. That is, for an instant after the door closed, he stood; then he slipped puma-like across the floor, inched an eye up to the base of a high window, and peered out.

“Good God!” cried Frederick Binns.

It was Mary Webster. It also was young Mr. Morley Buck.

FOR years unnumbered Frederick Binns had known the good-looking Morley Buck, and for the same number of years Morley Buck had known Mary Webster. By force of circumstances over which Frederick Binns had, up to this day, held control, young Mr. Buck had been forced to play a most ill-tempered second fiddle in the graces of Miss Webster. Under this musical arrangement young Mr. Buck had chafed continuously and by both word and act had given repeated warning that he would tip over the orchestra at the first opportunity.

Opportunity had come; and now, but several hours after the Binns ring had returned to its own cote like a bewildered homing pigeon, the collar-advertisement features of young Mr. Buck reposed behind the wheel of his new sport touring car in close proximity to the piquant features of Miss Mary Webster.

For a painfully long period of time it seemed as though the portly young groceryman of cap and apron, peering out from the high window in the great kitchen, was going to explode and scatter personal fragments all over the room.

This period passed, to be supplanted by one in which it appeared that he was about to dash out from the kitchen and down the steps, hurling maledictions and commands as he did so.

BUT no, it wouldn't do. To rush out of a house and tell people to get the hell off the premises is one thing. To get them off is another. Especially when the person doing the ordering has on a spotted white apron, and a cloth cap, set well over ears, bearing across its front the legend *EAT MORE HAM*.

So Frederick Alonzo Binns left off slithering toward the door, and after making a series of faces unequaled in the history of mimetics, padded to the high window again. The Buck car, a thing whose color scheme would have delighted the heart of a negro clog-dancer, was preparing to leave.

Morley Buck waved a hand at caretaker Gann, then car and Morley Buck and the girl seated beside him passed out of the peering groceryman's range of vision.

Gann returned, his face wreathed with pleasure.

"Couple of rich young friends of mine," said Mr. Gann, voice throatily important. "Wanted to know if they could have a beach supper for a crowd down in the cove this evening."

"Wanted to have a what, where?" cried the groceryman, spinning about.

"Picnic supper in the cove. Why? What's the matter with you?" The Gann eyes were hard upon the wearer of apron and cap.

The pseudo groceryman tried to retrieve his blunder.

"Huh," he snorted. "Some people are mighty funny. Go away off from a comfortable home to eat in the sand. That aint my idea of a good time."

"That's all you know about it," countered the superior caretaker. "They have swell picnics. The young fellow has had a lot of 'em here. Always asks my permission," he added importantly. "And the girl has had several herself. They're going to have a bang-up one tonight, and they've asked me to come down. I guess you don't know much about beach picnics."

"I guess I don't," agreed the groceryman. His face was cherry red.

Picnic in his cove! Morley Buck and Mary Webster and a whole insufferable gang. In his cove! The Binns breath came raspingly as he left the house,

made his way out to Chesterfield, and set the truck in motion back to town.

Upstairs, in his pitcher-and-bowl lodging-house room that evening Frederick Alonzo Binns gave way to long-repressed, hideous strong language and wild swinging of the arms. . . . Morley Buck with Mary Webster!

Without letting this in the least slacken him, he ripped off groceryman garb and plunged into an old gray suit, supplemented by an equally unobtrusive cap and a pair of rubber-soled shoes. He slipped down the back way, cut around a corner, and came to the garage in which the big touring-car was parked.

"Taking her out for a while," he said to the garageman.

That worthy nodded affably.

"Sure. The celebration don't begin till eight o'clock."

"There's going to be plenty of celebration, all right," said Frederick Binns, at the wheel—and he let the big car rip.

CHAPTER VII

THE big Binns car pulled out from Seashore, northward.

"Getting to be a regular commuter on this road," growled the driver. "And no home to commute to, either! Well, we're going to fix that." The Binns brows were dark.

When beyond the main highway, in the narrow, forest-shuttered road, he began to look searchingly to right and left, and found what he wanted as he caught sight of an old abandoned wood-road twisting away into thickets of pine and tall huckleberry. He sent the big car into it; undergrowth was crashed over; a turn, a couple more turns, and the car was as hidden from traffic sight as if in a tunnel.

He hopped out, rummaged under the front seat and brought forth a piece of iron about a foot and a half long which people of a cynical nature might have called a jimmy. It was thrust into an inside coat pocket, and its thruster set off swiftly and noiselessly through the dry grass and pine-needle-carpeted woods. At length he saw old stone pillars that flanked a drive. He continued on for another hundred yards, then edged through wild lilac and huckleberry down to the road.

He peered cautiously out. Nothing in sight either way. Just the empty road, walled by tall, moss-hung trees. He

bolted across the road and plumped into the protection of its far side.

Now he began to work his way toward the boom of a hidden sea, at the same time bearing gradually off to his left. He wormed through more undergrowth, into a ravine, fought his way up the ravine's far side. A great horned owl blinked myopically from an overhanging branch, then spread thick, heavy-feathered wings and sailed away down the ravine as soundlessly as light.

"Hooie!" coughed Frederick Binns. "Why go way to South America to explore?"

The explorer ducked back to the edge of the small pines, and in their shelter wormed along until he saw above their tops a one-time gilt weather vane. He had reached the stable. A craning of the neck, and the frame of the building itself came into view. Along with it, the stable drive, and a corner of the big house.

Scarcely had the watcher crouched behind a lilac clump, when an automobile bursting with people like a full corn-popper, whirled into view and came to swift and noisy stop in the weed-filled parkway before the closed stable doors. The first of the picnickers had arrived.

"Hey, Gann," went up a cry in chorus. "Here we are!"

The voices had hardly died away when another car gritted to a stop beside the other, and another followed this one. The drive became filled with youth and noise and color.

The brows of the watcher behind the lilac clump went wildly up and down; his mouth set itself sullenly. "Bringing the whole damn' town!" he muttered, and left off muttering to fight a bevy of gnats that suddenly began to dive into his eyes.

Another car flashed into sight. It was the calliope-effect car of Morley Buck.

The heart of Frederick Binns did a double thump-thump. Mary Webster stepped out, in sport clothes and a pulled-down hat. She gayly returned greetings, yet to the portly watcher of the lilacs it seemed that she was only giving her outer self, and that her inner self, her mind, was elsewhere. Hopefully he thought this; then, remembering that he had done with her forever, he briskly and scowlingly left off thinking it, immediately to pick it up again.

The kitchen door of the big house opened. Caretaker Harley Gann appeared on the top step, jaunty in broad-



brimmed felt hat and corduroy jacket, in khaki trousers and high laced boots.

"Howdy," greeted Harley Gann, and descended amiably to mingle with his rich young friends. Yet he did not descend until he had turned and locked the kitchen door, and put the key in a flapped buttoned pocket.

"Thought so!" said Frederick Binns, and the thought made the gnats almost unendurable. A house that was kept locked!

"Whoopee!" said the picnic party and started for the cove—the Binns cove.

FOR a long minute the owner of the cove continued to crouch behind his lilac screen and fight gnats—his gnats. Then he was up and circling the stable, eyes searching, and the piece of iron made for prying was out from pocket and in his hand.

The stable that had been built for the Frenchman Du Port these years ago was of two stories, with double carriage-doors fronting the driveway, with two pairs of windows on the house and ocean sides, and a series of smaller, square windows on the north. All of the windows were now tight-shuttered, as were the several of the second story. The circling Frederick Binns stopped beneath one on the farthest side away from the house, which was the north, and fell to work.

The prying iron performed nobly. Creak, snap, creak—*snap!* The shutter lock gave way. With gusty exhalation, F. Alonzo Binns darted a lightning look both ways. No—nobody coming around

either end of the stable, gun in hand. Silence, save for the wind and the sea.

He swung a leg up and over the sill, swung the other, and lowered himself. He hauled the shutter tight, and darkness fell. Crouching, he waited.

Nothing happened. Slowly he pulled himself upright, shuffled across the stall, felt his way to the open space beyond. His hand went into a pocket, came out with an electric torch. He sent its ray swiveling—stalls, a carriage space, a small touring-car—evidently that of Harley Gann—wash-rack, harness-room, loft stairs. The torch snapped out.

HE paused, then went toward the loft stairs. Torch again on, now pointing at his feet, he mounted the steps. When his eyes were level with the second floor, he lifted the torch, swept it once around. An empty loft—wisps of age-old hay, cobwebs.

He went back down the stairs. Well, they'd be fools to have kept anything in the stable, anyway.

"Tunnel!" he decided.

It was easier, however, to say "Tunnel!" than to find it.

After ten minutes of sweaty-handed search he gave vent to ill-suppressed feelings. Where would a cuckoo old Frenchman hide the entrance to a tunnel, anyway? Not in a box-stall, where an ill-tempered horse could kick in a skull just as though it were a cantaloupe, as soon as it appeared underfoot. Not where a man would have to climb out from under carriages, either. Maybe under the stairs, or—a bran-bin caught the rays of the searching torch.

The bin was twisted aside.

"Hah!" said the seeker. "Gottum!"

The flooring beneath the bin had been cut to make a two-foot-square trapdoor. The prying-iron went under an edge. The door came up. The torch was sent peering below, and revealed a narrow tunnel, walled and floored with planks, with ladder-rungs leading down.

It revealed something else: footprints, faintly discernible, on the dust-filmed floor.

Frederick Binns pondered, then cut off the light, and in darkness so thick that it seemed to have weight, he groped down the rungs. His feet found the flooring; he squared himself around. He whipped on the light for an instant to see a door, closed, some fifty feet away—the tunnel door leading into the basement.

He shut off the light and edged forward. His hands came upon the door, found the lock, turned it. The door yielded.

Through the narrowest of slots, he peered out into a gray twilight that seemed brilliant in contrast to the blackness of the tunnel—the basement, with its high, small, curtained windows: Musty, silent; crammed high with boxes, crates, old furniture, empty barrels, rolls of carpeting, firewood. The flotsam and jetsam, the dead accumulation common to most basements.

Frederick Binns slipped into the room, circled the flotsam and jetsam. Well, this was only the basement. There were forty rooms upstairs, and—there was the other tunnel; the tunnel going down to the sea. To the cove.

To the eye, the other tunnel's door did not exist. There was nothing but wall. But to the Binns hands, fingering along, there suddenly came the sensation of air, fresh air, blowing in upon them through the narrowest of slits. Air, blowing up a tunnel, from the sea.

The prying iron again went into play. A spring lock clicked. The concealed door quietly swung open.

The torch lighted up the wooden walls and roof, the earthen floor, of a narrow tunnel, sloping down and down, away and away. Dimly the light-beam struck something at its far end: the door, the door above the sea.

AN empty tunnel, utterly empty! Yet one having a door that led to a hidden cove.

The explorer switched off the light, and started down the long incline, body bent, head drawn in, hands and feet searching the way. The earthen floor was uneven, and the owner of Du Port house felt perspiration start as he remembered what the somewhat aberrated Lotus Givens had implied. Of course, Miss Givens was not all there, but at the same time— And the floor was uneven; to the Binns feet, in places it seemed like mounds. Murder farm. . . .

It was with a sense of relief that his hands came upon the seaward door. Only a smudge of light showed where door fitted against jamb. He stood as though blindfolded.

For this reason, on the instant, life became nothing but a desire to look beyond the door. Even if all his plans went smash—to look beyond that door.

This blithe tale of romance and mystery continues in the next, the September, issue.

The Soldier's Scrapbook

"There's a dale more done in the field than iver gets into Field Ordhers!" —Private Mulvaney.

I—Charley the Sniper

By LT. ALFRED S. REYNOLDS

COMPANY B of the Shanghai Volunteer Corps christened him "Charley the Sniper." When the U. S. 31st Infantry from Manila arrived and relieved the S.V.C. in that sector of the defenses of the International Settlement which included Blockhouse B where Thibet and Paoshan Roads met Boundary Road, both Charley's name and reputation were well established.

Charley was a sniper, as his sobriquet indicates, and he was a good one. His position was the second-story balcony of an old house on the Chapei side of Boundary Road, and a scant hundred feet from the northwest corner of Blockhouse B. He was an undersized, anemic Cantonese, but his courage and resourcefulness were unexcelled.

Charley rose to his greatest heights one day in February. The Japanese, fed up with Charley's accurate aim, decided that a thorough machine-gun strafing at close quarters, and from the protection of an armored car, might put the persistent sniper out of business.

One morning we saw one of these ungainly-looking vehicles coming down the street from the Nipponese position. It drew to a stop in front of the Chinese barbwire, and the gunner proceeded to rake Charley's roost up, down, and fore and aft with a savage burst of lead. Following this initial challenge of approximately a hundred rounds, there was a dead silence for a few seconds, while we wondered if Charley's charmed existence had been terminated by a chance bullet finding one of his peep-holes at a time when Charley's slanted optic might have been glued to the other end.

Our anxiety was short-lived. The silence was broken by the familiar staccato barking of the sniper's own weapon spewing a stream of steel-jacketed venom from a small opening in the sandbags to which the gunner in the turret of the armored car replied with gusto. To add to the din the Chinese at Charley's left opened up on the attackers with machine-gun and rifle-fire, though it was quite

obvious that no harm would come to the armored car from that source. These vehicles have narrow openings at the front and rear of the turret to allow room for the operation of machine-guns, but are otherwise entirely closed in by armor-plate and bullet-proof glass.

After perhaps twenty seconds of furious firing Charley's weapon became silent, and a fusillade of hand-grenades rained down on the Nipponese from the balcony. Either Charley had despaired of scoring a hit through the narrow aperture in the turret of the car or the Jap marksman had found the range on the sniper's own firing shelf, rendering unwise further exposure before the opening.

Charley's "potato-masher" barrage proved highly successful, for after he had heaved down seven or eight of these vicious grenades, the assailants gave up the fight, and the armored car backed off. As it withdrew, Charley's machine-gun again came into action, maintaining a steady fire on the receding vehicle until it disappeared around a corner.

Apparently fragments of a few of Charley's generous offering of grenades must have flown through the long narrow slit of an opening in the armored-car turret, and if not actually striking the occupants indicated the hopelessness of operating a machine-gun against an enemy who offered no target at all.

WITH the retreat of the 19th Route Army we saw the last of the plucky little sniper whose colorful and courageous exploits had been the admiration of us all, and which had gone far toward varying the monotony of long weeks of standing guard along the fringe of the International Settlement. Charley stuck to his post until the very last—spraying the Japanese positions with a two-hour machine-gun peppering before finally evacuating the lone outpost he had held so successfully throughout five long weeks of vicious street-fighting.

I have often wondered what happened to this indomitable little Cantonese.

Sioux in Ambush

The sole survivor of both the Fetterman and the Custer battles, the Sioux war-chief White Bull has only now consented to tell the story of those stricken fields as an Indian fighting-man saw them. Here follows this unique historical document—and this vivid account of fights no white man escaped to describe.

As told to

STANLEY VESTAL

By CHIEF JOSEPH WHITE BULL

THERE have been two great disasters to U. S. troops on this continent, which no American soldier survived. The first was the so-called "Fetterman Massacre" near Fort Phil Kearny, Wyoming, when the Sioux and Cheyennes destroyed the entire command of Captain (Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel) W. J. Fetterman, on December 21, 1866. The second was the fight on the Little Big Horn River in Montana, when General George Armstrong Custer and five troops of the Seventh Cavalry were wiped out by the same Indians, June 25, 1876. There is only one disaster comparable to these—the heroic fight at the Alamo, where the Texans were killed to the last man by General Santa Anna and an overwhelming force of Mexicans. On the monument which commemorates the heroism of the Texans is this inscription: "*Thermopylæ had her messenger of defeat; the Alamo had none.*" That inscription would serve equally well for the monuments on Massacre Hill, Wyoming, and on the Custer Battlefield.

No Mexican participant of the fight at the Alamo now lives to tell how Davy Crockett and his brave comrades died there. Very few Indians remain alive who took any great part either in the Fetterman fight or the Custer battle.

But there is one man living who has the distinction of having taken part in *both* the Fetterman and Custer fights. Not only that—he also took a leading part in both! That man is Chief Joseph White Bull, nephew of Sitting Bull. The most successful Indian fighter on the plains, General Nelson A. Miles, once declared that of all the Indians he had fought, Chief White Bull was the greatest daredevil. That tribute is no more than his unflinching valor deserved.

The Sioux Indians fought for glory. To strike an enemy, to kill one, to capture a weapon or a horse, or to be hit in battle were all rated as honors, and in each of these famous battles Chief White Bull won them all. He has now broken the silence of half a century to tell the story of those tragic conflicts. No Sioux has ever before told the Indian story of the Fetterman fight.

In 1866 White Bull was seventeen years old, but already a warrior who had killed three men, captured horses, and rescued a comrade in distress. In December of that year a great camp of Sioux (Minniconjou and Oglala) and Cheyennes was on Tongue River, all brought together to avenge the wrongs of their people. Contrary to the treaty, the troops had built forts along the Bozeman Trail to protect gold-seekers rushing to the goldfields of Montana and Idaho.

White Swan, a leading chief of the Minniconjou Sioux, hated the whites and had fought them often. He fell sick and knew his time had come to die. White Swan had himself dressed up in his fine war-clothes, painted his face ready for burial, and summoned his headmen and comrades-in-arms to his bedside. When they were all together, he uttered his last request.

"Friends," he said, "look out for yourselves and protect your people. Try to kill white men, for the white men have come here to kill you. I am dying. I can kill no more. Therefore I look to you. Carry on." Soon after this, White Swan died.

The Sioux did not forget his last words. They organized a great war-party to carry out his dying wish, and a thousand Minniconjou Sioux sharpened their



Illustrated by Charles Fox
and Chief White Bull

knives and made arrows for the coming fight. Crazy Horse brought his Oglala to join them, and many Cheyennes smoked the war-pipe with the Sioux. It was decided to go and attack the troops at Fort Phil Kearny.

In preparation for this campaign some of the warrior societies selected certain young men and appointed them leaders. White Bull was named Drum-keeper of the Fox Soldiers. A Drum-keeper was expected to do something very brave. Next morning the Minniconjou, under Chief Black Shield, rode out on the war-path, followed by the Oglala and Cheyennes. It was cold weather, and in places snow lay on the hillsides.

When that great war-party reached a point some ten miles northwest of the fort, the Indians halted and made camp. There the chiefs held council. They knew that Indians armed only with bows and lances could not hope to capture the fort by assault. They therefore decided to lure the troops out of the fort and along the trail into the rough country to the north. In the forks of Peno Creek, five miles from the fort, was a long narrow ridge, high and steep. The trail passed along the top of this ridge. The plan was to lie in wait on each side of this ridge and send a few young men on fast horses to tempt the troops out of the fort and lead them into the trap. By means of this ambush the chiefs hoped to kill all the soldiers and afterward burn the fort. Six young Sioux and several Cheyennes were chosen to act as decoys.

At daybreak next morning these young men rode off to the fort to make an attack, and at sunrise all the warriors saddled up, mounted, and followed Peno Creek up to the forks. There they halt-

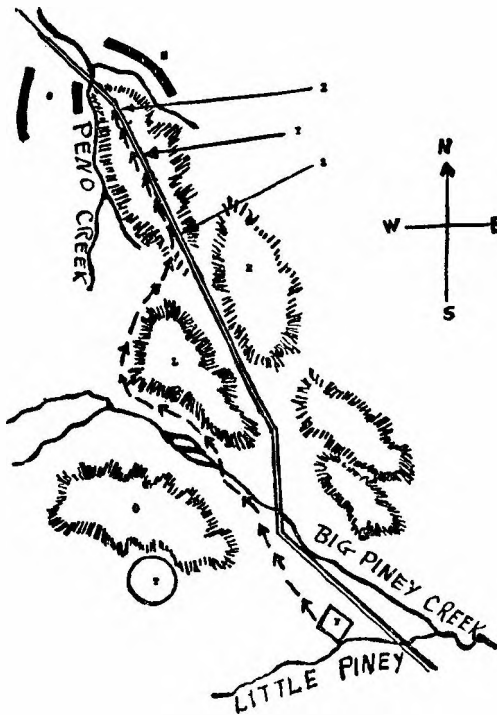
ed to conceal themselves. As the Cheyennes were guests of the Sioux, they were given their choice of positions. They and the Oglala chose the west side of the ridge. Some who were on foot stopped near the lower—north—end of the ridge, close to the stream. Those on horseback went on higher, and took up positions almost a mile distant from the trail. The Minniconjou hid themselves behind a ridge to the east of the road within half a mile.

Young White Bull stood with the others in the ravine, armed with a lance, a bow, and forty arrows, holding his gray warhorse and eagerly waiting for a chance to show his valor. He had a four-point Nor'west blanket, red as blood, and because of the cold he folded this blanket and fastened it around him like a short coat. He had two eagle-feathers in his hair.

When White Bull peeped out of his covert he could see no one; all the Indians were hidden. Straight ahead of him to the west were the grassy flats and the shallow stream from which the road climbed up the ridge to his left and disappeared in the direction of the fort five miles away. The Indians stood quiet, waiting to spring their trap.

At Fort Phil Kearny that morning there were less than four hundred soldiers. The commanding officer, Colonel Henry B. Carrington, well knew the dangers which surrounded the little post, and he felt a heavy responsibility for the women and children there. He knew how numerous and brave the Sioux and Cheyenne warriors were.

Some of his officers, however, knew nothing of Indian warfare and were eager, overconfident, and impatient of Colonel Carrington's cautious methods.



AT about eleven o'clock the morning of December 21, the lookout on Pilot Hill signaled "Many Indians," and orders were given to send a detachment to the relief of the wood-train then corralled some distance west of the fort. At his own request Captain W. J. Fetterman took command of the detachment, which Captain Brown joined without orders. The little force consisted of three commissioned officers, seventy-six enlisted men, and two civilians. As they moved out, Colonel Carrington gave orders to, "Relieve the wood-train, but under no circumstances to go beyond Lodge Trail Ridge." It was with great anxiety that Carrington saw Fetterman's command moving straight for Lodge Trail Ridge instead of going toward the wood-train as ordered.

All this time White Bull and his comrades had been waiting in their concealment. Suddenly, far away to the southeast, White Bull heard on the frosty air a faint sound of firing. It lasted only a few minutes. After a silence he heard it again. It seemed nearer, but did not last long. After a time came a third burst of shooting, not far off this time. Within a few minutes he saw the decoys at the top of the ridge riding back and forth across the trail in their retreat, and shooting as if trying to stand off the soldiers and save some one behind them. Immediately after, the blue-coated sol-

diers came into sight and the Sioux began to get ready, grasping their weapons and pinching the nostrils of their ponies to keep them from whinnying to the troop horses. They were all waiting for the signal to charge.

Down the trail along the ridge came the soldiers, almost a hundred of them, in two bodies, half of them afoot, half mounted, the infantry in the lead. They were in no hurry; they kept on coming slowly down the ridge, firing at the decoys until the infantry reached the flat near the forks of Penno Creek, and the cavalry behind them were already well inside the trap. Then the decoys forded the little stream at the end of the ridge and divided into two parties. These two parties separated and rode in opposite directions, then turned and crossed each other. At this signal, the Indians on both sides jumped on their horses and rushed yelling out of the ambush. The Minniconjou, being nearer the trail than most of the Oglala and Cheyennes, reached the infantry first. Thunder Hawk was in the lead; he was first to strike a soldier.

When the soldiers saw them coming they halted; but when the Indians came close and arrows began to fly, and one or two of the soldiers had been shot down, the infantry quickly fell back up the hill to some large rocks which lay on the slope. They flung themselves down behind these rocks and began to shoot. The cavalry moved back and took a position on the hillside about a hundred yards above the infantry.

This left the infantry between the Indians and the cavalry, and the Indians therefore spent their first fury upon the infantry among the rocks. The Oglala and Cheyennes swept around the infantry to the north and east, the Minniconjou circled to the south and west, and for a short time there was hot fighting in which the cavalry took little part. The infantrymen defended themselves bravely, firing their muzzle-loading rifles at the circling Sioux. The Indians greatly outnumbered the whites, but their advantage in numbers was balanced by their lack of firearms. It took courage for a man armed only with a bow or lance to charge in the face of forty rifles, especially as the two civilians with the troops had up-to-date Henry rifles. Nevertheless one brave Minniconjou, Eats-Meat, rode his horse right through the infantry. They shot him down after he had passed. He was the first Indian killed.

The Indians kept riding around, hanging on the sides of their horses and loosing arrows at the infantry—and there were so many of them that the fight with the infantry did not last long, though long enough to kill and wound a number of Indians and their horses.

The Sioux always carried off their wounded and dead if possible.

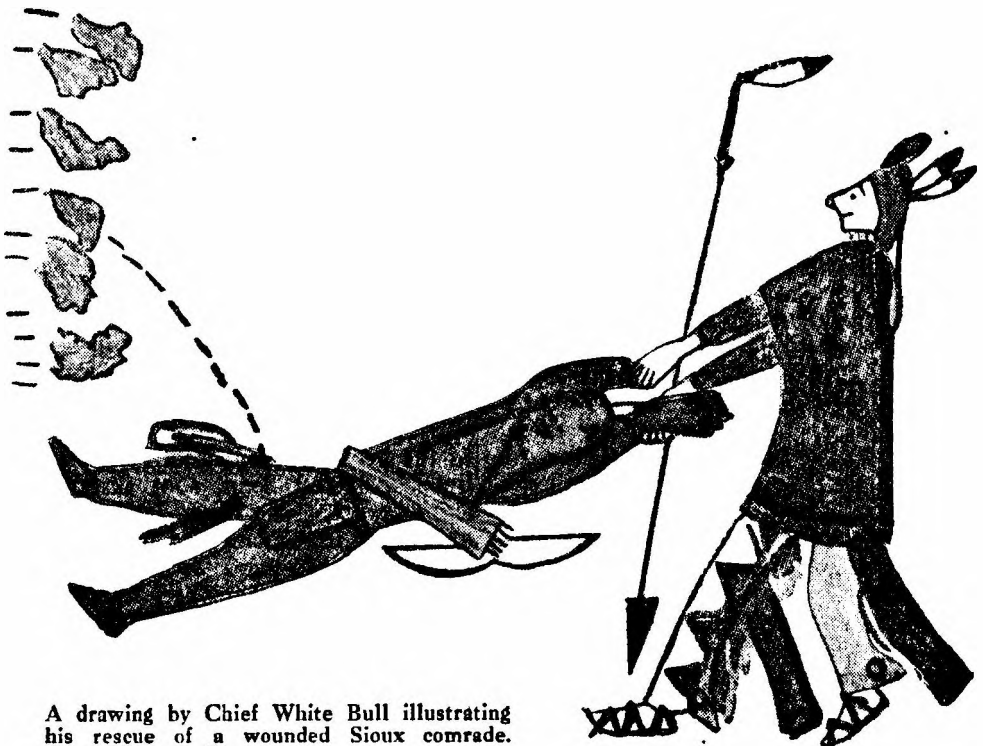
But when Bull Eagle was shot from his horse, the fire of the soldiers was so hot that no one dared go to his rescue. Nearly all of the infantry had been killed, when three of the survivors jumped up and ran up the slope to join the cavalry. When the Sioux saw these three men running past, they all rushed them. Bull Eagle, on foot, was in the lead. With raised bow, ready to strike his victim, he ran right up within two paces of the foremost soldier. One of them fired, and dropped him. He lay on the prairie, shot through the right thigh, unable to move. His comrades ran to cover; no one went to his rescue.

Then young White Bull remembered his duty as Drum-keeper of the Fox Soldiers. When he saw his friend lying helpless, he jumped off his horse, and ran out to him under fire. Bull Eagle was bleeding freely and groaning—but bravely—like a wounded bear. White Bull seized Bull Eagle by the wrists and

dragged him away over the edge of the ridge to safety. There the wounded man's uncle took charge of him. Then White Bull ran back to his horse, mounted and joined in the charge. The Sioux were killing the infantry one by one, with their arrows; the rifle-fire was steadily lessening; the white smoke drifted away. Suddenly, as White Bull dashed along, circling the rocks, he was shot from his horse; he fell with a thud on his shoulder, but managed to keep hold of the lariat tied about the horse's neck. A bullet had passed through the red blanket behind his left shoulder and had knocked him off his horse without touching him. There were two holes through the blanket.

Then White Bull ran to his horse and remounted. Being knocked off his horse that way made him angry, instead of afraid. Soon after, the Indians rushed the last of the infantry, and killed them in hand-to-hand fighting. When they had wiped out the doughboys, they turned their attention to the cavalry farther up the ridge.

Up to this time the cavalry had held their ground, but now as the Indians rushed them from all sides the troopers began to fall back in a compact body, shooting all the time. They were half-hidden in the powder-smoke. Some of



A drawing by Chief White Bull illustrating his rescue of a wounded Sioux comrade.

them were on foot, leading their horses. Others, whose horses had been shot, would stop, kneel and fire, then go on. In the rear White Bull saw one trooper on foot, facing the Indians, running backward and yelling at the top of his voice. He carried a carbine with which he was threatening the Indians, pointing it first one way and then another.

Young White Bull thought he saw a chance to distinguish himself. He made up his mind to charge that man. Quirting his pony on both flanks, he raced forward ahead of all the Sioux, holding an arrow on his bowstring, and expecting the soldier to shoot. When within ten feet of the trooper he drew his arrow to the head. The trooper seemed too much excited to resist. He did not try to shoot until White Bull was almost on top of him. White Bull let his arrow go and shot the man from in front, through the heart. As he fell, White Bull cracked him across the head with his lance, knocking the man's cap off. Thus he was first to strike that soldier. He counted the first *coup*.

WHITE BULL'S charge put heart into his comrades; after this soldier was killed the Indians swarmed up the icy slopes, while the cavalry made more and more haste up the ridge. Almost every minute White Bull shot an arrow at the troops. He killed a troop-horse here. All the Indians were shooting; arrows were flying in every direction. Indeed, several of the Indians were hit by arrows, among them Thunder Hump and King. The ground was so covered with arrows that a warrior did not have to use his own; he could pick one up almost anywhere.

Under this hail of arrows many of the troop-horses were hit, or became frightened and broke away. Finally the soldiers reached the upper end of the long ridge and all at once let their horses go. The Indians were all eager to capture a cavalry-horse. They stopped shooting then, and raced after these animals. This gave the soldiers time to breathe. They ran up and flung themselves down behind some boulders which lay close together at the top—south end—of the ridge. White Bull took after the horses also, though the ground was very steep and icy, and his own horse was slow. He caught only one, for the other Indians outrode him. When all the horses were captured, the Indians came back to the fight.

The ridge on which the troopers had flung themselves down was high and narrow, only about forty feet wide—just where the monument stands now. On every side but the south, the ridge fell away steeply into the bottoms far below. It was no place for horsemanship, more especially as the slopes were covered with snow and ice, and the weather had now become so cold that blood froze as it flowed from a wound. The chiefs called out, ordering the Indians to leave their horses in the ravines and to fight on foot.

Up to this time White Bull had been fighting to the north and west of the troops, but now he crossed the ridge and joined the warriors who were creeping up the eastern slope. The fight with the infantry had occupied only a few minutes, but the destruction of the cavalymen among the rocks on the steep ridge was a longer business. The cavalymen were armed with single-shot breech-loading carbines, using percussion caps; they could fire more rapidly than the infantry had done. For all that, the Indians kept advancing, swarming up the slopes and shooting back and forth across the ridge. The air was full of arrows. All this time the Indians kept encouraging each other and advancing foot by foot toward the doomed troopers. White Bull moved forward side by side with his friend Charging Crow, a Minniconjou Sioux. He says that the Minniconjou braves did most of the fighting at this end of the field.

When the Indians were already crowded close up to the top of the ridge, on both sides, Long Fox, leader of the Minniconjou on the west side of the ridge, stood up and yelled, "Let's go!"

ALL the Indians jumped up and rushed forward; White Bull and Charging Crow reached the top of the ridge at the same moment. An instant later Charging Crow tumbled at the boy's feet, shot dead. This man's death frightened the boy for a moment; he dropped to the ground. Immediately after, Flying Hawk fell dead, shot through the right breast. The other Indians rushed on—right in among the rocks. They fought hand-to-hand with the troopers, stabbing and scuffling there in the smoke and dust. It was a dreadful mix-up, the kind of fight which the Sioux call "stirring gravy." That charge ended the battle and killed the last white man. Because of his delay when Charging



The Indians fought hand-to-hand with the troopers until they killed the last white man.

Crow fell, young White Bull got there just as the last soldier was killed. But he was in time to capture a carbine.

After that the Indians stripped the soldiers, and White Bull took two pairs of trousers. He cut off the legs so that his father could use them for leggings, and threw the rest away. In the pockets of the troopers, he and the other Indians found paper money and silver coins. They knew the value of the silver, but paper money was unknown to them. They saved only the new bills; they thought the children at home might like to play with them. White Bull also got an overcoat from the troops and some cartridges. He says that less than half the ammunition carried by the soldiers was used in the fight. He himself had shot away twenty of his forty arrows. The length of the fight, estimated by those in the fort by the duration of the firing, was hardly more than forty minutes. If each of the other two thousand Indians present shot as many arrows as White Bull, one can imagine how the ground was littered with those feathered shafts. White Bull picked up many of these arrows and filled his quiver with them, for arrows were valuable and hard to make.

All the troopers were killed in the battle, fighting, with weapons in their

hands and ammunition in their possession—it was therefore no “massacre,” as it has been called. It was all over by about noontime.

When Colonel Carrington at the fort heard all that heavy firing, he realized that a desperate fight was going on beyond the ridge, and within twelve minutes Captain T. Ten Eyck was dispatched from the fort with infantry and cavalry, two wagons, ambulances, and two surgeons. He went on the run, but just as he reached the hillside overlooking the battlefield, all firing ceased. He saw the Peno Valley full of Indians. At first they beckoned him to come down, but he stood his ground until they left the battlefield.

Then he advanced and found Captain Fetterman, Captain Brown, and more than half the command, lying in a space about forty feet in diameter. A few cavalry-horses lay dead not far off, all with their heads toward the fort. Fol-

lowing the road down the ridge he found the naked bodies of the infantrymen, the two civilians, and Lieutenant G. W. Grummond, surrounded by ten dead Indian ponies and sixty-five pools of blood. Only six men of the whole command showed gunshot wounds. The dead soldiers had been stripped, cut to pieces by the Indians, scalped, and shot full of arrows; one man had more than a hundred arrows in his body. All the bodies lay along or near the road on the ridge.

White Bull thinks the Indians cut these enemies to pieces because they had put up such a good fight and had killed so many Indians. Of the Sioux, the soldiers killed or mortally wounded Bear Ears, Little Crow, Yellow White Man, Lone Bear, Clown Horse, Male Eagle, He-Dog, Eats-Meat, Fine Weather, Charging Crow, Eagle-Stays-in-Air, Broken Hand, Eats-Pemmican and Flying Hawk. Flying Hawk was White Bull's uncle, the brother of his father Makes-Room. The dead man's two brothers, Long Ghost and Crazy Thunder, took his weapons and horse home with them. The Indians laid away their dead a few miles from the battlefield, wrapped well in blankets, and covered with rocks to keep the wolves away.

When Captain Ten Eyck returned to Fort Phil Kearny with forty-nine dead bodies and the dreadful news of the disaster, those in the fort were terrified. Guards were doubled, and every man slept in his clothes with loaded weapons at hand. The officers did not sleep at all, expecting an immediate attack. The women and children were placed in the powder-magazine, which had been stocked with water, crackers, and other supplies. There an officer was on duty pledged not to allow the women to be taken alive, if the Indians should get over the stockade. Colonel Carrington then

set out to bring in the remaining bodies left on the field.

All these precautions were unnecessary. The Indians were satisfied with their victory. They knew they could not take the fort. Had they wished more fighting they might have attacked Captain Ten Eyck. Instead, they rode home to the camp on Tongue River. There, four days later, they danced the victory dance. This victory dance was the first occasion on which White Bull began to pay attention to the girls. He was only a boy, seventeen years old. The girls must have been friendly toward him, however, when he came home with a horse, carbine, a "wound," a rescue, and a *coup* to his credit!

The monument on the battlefield gives Chief Red Cloud of the Oglala Sioux credit for leading the Indians in this battle, but Indian testimony, both Sioux and Cheyenne, is unanimous in stating that Red Cloud was not present and took no part in the fight or in planning it. Crazy Horse was the leader of the Oglala, Black Shield of the Minniconjou.

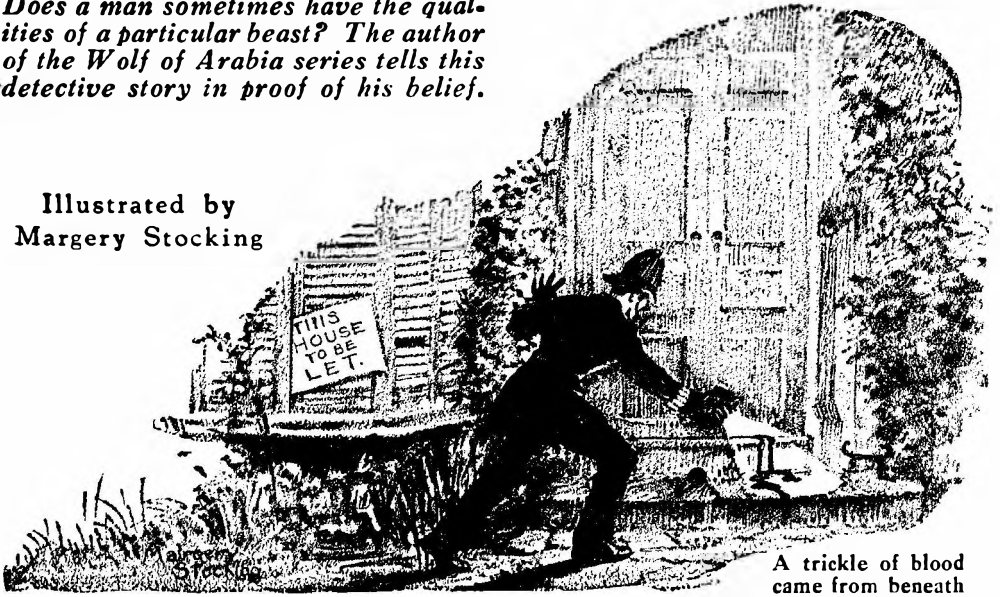
Many of the chiefs besides Red Cloud led their warriors against the white men in that year of '66. Every wagon-train which passed over the Bozeman Trail was attacked. More than a thousand head of horses and mules were captured and about two hundred whites were killed and wounded. It was the most sustained warfare the whites had ever encountered from the Sioux. But the biggest battle of all was only the fulfillment of the wish of a dying man, Chief White Swan.

And of all the warriors who took part in this fight none showed more courage or won more honors than Chief Joseph White Bull, nephew of Sitting Bull. Ten years later White Bull distinguished himself in the Custer fight.



Does a man sometimes have the qualities of a particular beast? The author of the Wolf of Arabia series tells this detective story in proof of his belief.

Illustrated by
Margery Stocking



A trickle of blood
came from beneath
the door.

The Rhino Charges

By WILLIAM MAKIN

AT ten o'clock that night the little man with the electric lamp in his hand turned into a street that was a *cul-de-sac*. He flashed his white light at the numbers on the doors of the houses, as he muttered:

"Five—seven—nine. . . . This must be the house!"

He creaked open a garden gate, and stumbling over a broken-flagged path he came to the door. Not a light showed in the house. His electric lamp revealed a rusty bell-handle at the door. He gripped it and pulled; somewhere in the darkness of the house a bell clanged.

He waited. There was no response. He flashed his lamp upon the doorway again, and compared the number with a sheet of paper he held in his hand.

"This is the house, sure enough!"

Once again he pulled out that rusty bell-handle. Again the clang resounded in the regions beyond. Then he detected the shuffle of feet approaching the door. A key turned. A bolt was drawn. Slowly, ever so slowly, the door was opened a few inches.

"Good evening!" said the little man brightly. "Does Simon Grant live here?"

There was an answering grunt.

"I have called on behalf of the Independent candidate, Sir Joseph Rope. I feel sure that when you have heard what I have to say you will realize that he is the only man to represent this constituency in Parliament."

There was silence. The little man put his electric lamp down on the doorstep.

"Now I have with me here, Mr. Grant, the election-address of Sir Joseph Rope. Perhaps you would care to read it. Also his exposition of the tariff question, in this pamphlet." The little man was diving into the pockets of his overcoat for literature. "Perhaps there is some point that you would like me to elucidate?" he queried hopefully.

The door creaked open a few inches farther. "P'raps I would," said a voice in the darkness. "Come inside!"

The little man entered. Silently the door closed; the key was turned; the bolt was shot. But the electric lamp still shining remained on the doorstep. . . .

At eleven o'clock that evening, Constable Browne of the Ferryton police observed this electric lamp burning against the doorway of Number Nine.



"Do you know, young man, that Tom Towers will probably be defeated?" Lowe asked. "I thought you weren't interested in politics," I retorted.

"Queer!" he muttered. "Them boys been up to mischief again?"

He drew forth his own lantern, opened the garden gate and walked heavily along the flagged pathway. The electric lamp blazed cheerfully. Constable Browne then turned the beam of his own lantern on the house. It showed him an ivy-grown frontage, and a big bay window with drawn, slatted blinds. But in the window was a white placard; it was the announcement of a real-estate agent.

THIS HOUSE
TO BE
L E T

Constable Browne examined the electric lamp, then replacing it on the doorstep, he plodded back on his beat.

At midnight he was again passing the house. This time the electric lamp was flickering; the battery was almost finished. With a puzzled expression on his face, he again opened that garden gate and walked along the flagged pathway.

He flashed his own lamp, bent down to pick up the electric one, then stood transfixed. A trickle of blood came from beneath the door.

Constable Browne realized he must act quickly. He scurried to the gate, opened it, and started, half-walking, half-running, to the police station.

"I'M not interested in politics," growled Jonathan Lowe, "and therefore I fail to see why I should be interested in the brutal murder of an obscure little election-canvasser."

The man who was known to the Indian natives as the "Father of the Jungle" stretched out his long legs before the fire in the dining-room of his house in St. John's Wood and lit one of his rankes cheroots. His white monkey Blanco sat on the arm of the chair.

"But the circumstances, at least, are queer," I protested.

"All murders seem queer—until they're explained," he pointed out. "The ways of a man-eating tiger are queer, until you know his habits. Then you go out and get him. Man-hunting can be as simple as big-game hunting."

"Yet here is a man found murdered in an empty house," I insisted. "The house hasn't been occupied for over twelve months. It's said to be haunted. Now why should the body be in that particular house?"

Jonathan Lowe snorted behind the blue cloud of smoke sent up from his cheroot.

"Use your common sense, young man," he advised. "Think a little. Do you know that there is only one safe place where a murderer can hide a body?"

"And where is that?"

"On a battlefield," he retorted unexpectedly. "But your murderer today cannot find a battlefield conveniently near. He *can* find an empty house. He naturally imagines that the body will be safe there, for a time."

"If it hadn't been for the electric lamp left on the doorstep I don't suppose this man's body would have been discovered soon," I said. "A policeman gave the alarm. An Inspector and two men broke into the house after midnight; they found the body of Ambrose Price lying battered to death in the passage—a bru-

tal murder. He'd been dead about two hours."

"Well, it oughtn't to be difficult to find the murderer," yawned Jonathan Lowe, luxuriating before the fire. His eyes closed as though he was no longer interested in the affair. Even the white monkey drooped his tail listlessly.

BUT I knew Jonathan Lowe was most alert when he adopted this pose of indifference. He had told me that this was the camouflage of the jungle. "It is when the tiger is slinking away that he is most to be feared," he had said. "The beast does not want you to read in his eyes what he is plotting in his mind."

So I continued folding garments into my traveling-bag in preparation for my journey to the little country town of Ferryton. The news editor of the *Daily Courier* had called me back from a dull day's reporting at the Old Bailey and thrust the first "flash" of the affair into my hands.

"This by-election has been dull enough, so far," he growled. "A murder makes it a front-page story. Get to it, my lad, and see if you can persuade that lion-tamer to go along with you."

The news editor had never met Jonathan Lowe. He had an idea that Lowe was a mixture of an out-of-work circus-hand and an old gentleman who stroked stray cats. But he never failed to chortle with joy when I brought in an unusual story for the paper, the thanks for which were really due to Jonathan Lowe and his uncanny jungle instincts.

"That empty house will make a fine story," I said now to Lowe, exercising what I considered my journalistic flair. "I rather think it would be a good idea if I spent the night there. One never knows—the house may really be haunted, and the murderer a ghost."

Jonathan Lowe snorted his disgust. He crossed and uncrossed his long legs.

"If you think you'll find a murderer by sitting and mooning in an empty house, you're vastly mistaken," he growled. "Go into the streets—go among the living! Your man will be hiding in the biggest crowd. It's always the safest place. You say there's an election on. Go and listen to the speakers. He'll be there, listening and watching, licking his chops like a wild dog that has fed. By the way, who are the candidates in this election?"

I grinned secretly at this angry enthusiasm.

"There's Sir Joseph Rope, who insists upon being Independent, and there's the Labor candidate, Tom Towers. Labor held the seat at the last general election, but I'm told that Sir Joseph is making great headway."

Jonathan Lowe grunted. I closed my bag.

"I suppose it'll be like all other elections," he said. "I'm never quite sure which is in the worse taste—the rash promises made by the candidates, or the bad tomatoes thrown by some of the crowd. Who was the murdered man canvassing for?"

"Sir Joseph. Our political man interviewed him this morning. He's highly indignant. Says it's another example of the lawlessness that is spreading to this country from America."

"Did he now?" smiled Jonathan Lowe. "And how does he propose to end it?"

"By creating a new party, the Independent Party—of which he will be the first member if he's elected."

"I'm beginning to be roused," said Jonathan Lowe, stretching himself. "And I always thought politics so dull! Have you a picture of Sir Joseph?"

I was waiting for this. I produced the picture page of the *Daily Courier*.

"There he is, addressing a crowd in the market square. A powerful-looking fellow, isn't he?"

Jonathan Lowe squinted his gray eyes at the picture. The monkey lifted a paw as though to grab it. Lowe stroked the soft white coat of the little animal.

"I suppose he does look powerful," he drawled. "But from this very bad photograph he might be a cheap-jack trying to sell a corn-cure, in the marketplace."

"Maybe," I said casually, and took up the bag. "I must be off, if I'm to catch that train."

JONATHAN LOWE uncrossed his long legs, and rose.

"Give me five minutes," he growled. "I'm coming with you. You'll only make a fool of yourself and your paper if you go alone."

He clapped his hands. The negro servant appeared.

"Yes, *baas*?"

"There's a man coming today, Milestone, with a young lion cub."

"Really, *baas*?"

The negro looked startled.

"Tell him to take it away and bring it next Thursday, as I won't be here today."

"I sure will, *baas*," said the negro decisively. "And if he ask where you gone, *baas*?"

Jonathan Lowe scratching the ear of his white monkey in farewell, grinned.

"Tell him I've gone big-game hunting," he said.

WE arrived in Ferryton amidst the excitement and panoply of the election. Motorcars with streamers choked the main street. Crowds gathered at street corners. This was polling-day, and therefore all speeches had finished. But the amateur politicians of the country town were still airing their views amidst a fire of derisive comment.

Everywhere posters proclaimed the merits of the rival candidates. "*ROPE AND PROSPERITY*," one proclaimed in brilliant blue. "*TOM TOWERS IS YOUR MAN*" asserted a poster in red. The little country town hummed like an angry hive. And Jonathan Lowe stood amidst the crowds with his white hair bared to the breeze and seemed to be enjoying himself.

In fact, Lowe began to disappoint me during the next few hours. He was like a schoolboy at a pantomime. He couldn't keep his eyes off the political stage.

"I'm going along to see the house where the body of Ambrose Price was found," I whispered to him, as we stood on the outskirts of a little crowd that jeered at a self-appointed speaker.

Jonathan Lowe nodded casually.

"All right. You go along," he said. "We'll meet at the Blue Lion for tea."

And he turned again with a grin on his face to the rattling repartee of the crowd and the huckster.

In the bright noonday I went into that *cul-de-sac* and like the doomed Ambrose Price passed one house after another until I came to the fatal Number Nine. It looked shabby, disreputable, and even sinister, by daylight. The "To Let" notice still stared from the window. How the miserable little canvasser could have mistaken this for an occupied house passed my understanding.

A solitary policeman stood at the doorway. My newspaper-pass and a few words sufficed to gain an entry. The local Inspector was there, and evidently gratified that this murder should have attracted the attention of a London newspaper, personally took me in hand.

"The poor fellow was murdered just inside the doorway," he explained, "on the very spot where you are now stand-

ing." I hastily moved. "He was killed by some bludgeonlike instrument. The attack must have been brutal and sudden."

"Have you any suspicion of the murderer?"

The Inspector smiled tolerantly.

"I don't think we shall have to call in Scotland Yard for this affair," he said. "It seems obvious to me. A tramp had been sleeping in this house. We discovered footprints in the thick dust of the floors. He was disturbed last night by Ambrose Price ringing the bell, having mistaken the house.

"The tramp went to the door and invited Price to enter. Unsuspecting, the election-canvasser did so. No sooner had he stepped inside than the tramp brutally attacked him. It was all over in a few minutes. The murderer washed his hands at the kitchen sink, and then lost his nerve."

"Lost his nerve?"

"Yes. He left the house—ran away. He's probably roaming the roads somewhere now. I've telephoned the whole County police-force, and every tramp in the vicinity is being arrested. It won't be long before we get our man."

"What was the motive of the murder—robbery?" I asked.

The Inspector shrugged his shoulders.

"Who can tell? When we discovered the body of Ambrose Price he had on him exactly"—the Inspector glanced at his notebook—"a sum of two pounds eight shillings and fourpence halfpenny. The murderer didn't take it."

"Then the motive wasn't robbery?" I hazarded.

"Probably fear—stark fear," said the Inspector. "The tramp was hungry and desperate. He had settled down for the night. Suddenly the bell is rung, and a man is on the doorstep. Unreasoning fear drives the tramp to murder. I think that explains it."

I FOLLOWED the Inspector as we made a tour of that empty house.

"It's an uncanny sort of place," I shivered, as we went from room to room. "Is there any truth in the report that the house is haunted?"

The Inspector smiled.

"None at all. The original occupant, Simon Grant, was a queer old bachelor, but he left the place about a year ago. Went to London, I believe. Never heard of him since. Haunted! Well, I expect that'll be said about the house now."

My short tour of the house ended. The Inspector himself opened the door. I thanked him.

"That's all right," he remarked. "But please see that your newspaper gets my name correctly. It's Detective Inspector Toaste—with an 'e' at the end. I'm in full charge of the case."

"I won't forget, Inspector," I said, writing down the name boldly in my book, while he scrutinized my writing for the final "e."

"—And if you come to the station later on this evening, I may have news of an arrest for you," he condescended at parting. . . .

It was not until late afternoon that I again saw Jonathan Lowe. His mahogany face flushed, and his white hair blown about by the wind, he strode vigorously into the Blue Lion and rubbed his hands gleefully in front of the blazing fire.

"Let us have tea and hot buttered toast," he commanded the waiter. "Lots of toast, and lots of butter. I'm famished."

"Been enjoying yourself?" I asked.

He turned to me, a grin on his face. It was then I noticed that the snuff-colored coat he wore was decked with a blue ribbon. He was wearing the badge of Sir Joseph Rope, the Independent candidate.

"I'm enjoying myself immensely," he chortled. "Do you know, young man, that Tom Towers will probably be defeated? This is a Labor seat, but it seems likely to be lost. I shouldn't be surprised if Sir Joseph Rope gets home with a good majority."

And he began to whistle, badly out of tune, something that resembled "Rule Britannia."

"I've been visiting the house where the murder was committed," I interposed soberly.

But he ignored my remark.

"A remarkable man, Sir Joseph Rope," he went on. "The sort of man who gets what he wants. Forcible, direct, decisive. Imagine, he began life as a boy laborer on one of the farms here! Now he owns the biggest bacon factory in Britain. Captured a title. Possesses a fortune. Now he's after a seat in Parliament. And he looks like getting it."

I was thoroughly disgruntled.

"It's a pity all the electioneering speeches have been made," I retorted. "You would have been an excellent supporter for Sir Joseph."

"A remarkable man, Sir Joseph Rope—the sort of man who gets what he wants."



He gave an irritating cheer as the tea and toast arrived, and set to, without delay.

"It's going to be an exciting evening," he went on. "This election fight has been one of the keenest ever known in Ferryton. I've been invited to see the counting at the Town Hall tonight. I think I shall go."

"I thought you weren't interested in politics," I said witheringly, and snatched a piece of toast before it was seized by Lowe.

"I'm not," he replied. "But I'm interested in men—and beasts. That is why Sir Joseph Rope interests me so very much."

"Have you met him?" I asked idly.

"Of course!" He smiled. "Who wouldn't want to meet such a powerful, headstrong man? I made it my business to meet him. And I was not disappointed."

"And does he fit into your theories?"

"What theories?"

"That men are like beasts."

He nodded. There was silence for a moment; the eyes of Jonathan Lowe seemed lost in speculation.

"He reminds me of a rhino," he murmured. "A charging rhino. Piglike eyes, head lowered, and charging straight for the nearest object within his vision. No hesitation—a roar, and off he goes like an express-train, shouldering all obsta-

cles aside. That's the real secret of the man's success."

"Rhinos are ugly brutes," I said. "At least, those I have seen inside the Zoo are."

"The rhino is the most dangerous beast in the jungle," said Jonathan Lowe quietly. "Even the lion and the tiger fear him. With his ugly snout he can rip the hide of an elephant. He is the mad beast of the jungle, and the hardest to kill. You've got to shoot and shoot straight for one vital spot."

I lit a cigarette and yawned.

"Anyhow, I must begin writing my story of this murder for the *Daily Courier*," I said. "I think my news editor will be more interested in that than the result of the by-election."

"Ah, yes, I had almost forgotten," said Jonathan irritatingly. "What happened at the mysterious house you visited?"

I told him briefly. For once, he listened attentively.

"And so they think a tramp committed the murder, eh?" he murmured.

"It seems feasible," I suggested.

He snorted, and lit a cheroot.

"There isn't a vestige of proof. Not even robbery," he said.

"I saw the footprints in the house, myself," I argued.

"Of course there were footprints. You're not still trying to persuade me that there's a murderous ghost in Number Nine?"

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Anyhow, I'm calling at the police-station later this evening to see if they've made an arrest," I said. "The Inspector told me he expected to have the murderer by tonight."

"I expect he will," mused Jonathan Lowe. "But don't waste your time going to the police-station this evening. Come and watch the counting of the votes in the Town Hall."

"Damn the Town Hall!" I exploded. "Why should I go there?"

"Because the murderer of Ambrose Price will be there," said Jonathan Lowe slowly. "I'll point him out to you."

And with a nod, he walked out of the room, smoothing the blue badge on his coat with a sort of boyish pride.

IT was a strange scene. Long bare wooden tables with the ballot-boxes being emptied. Piles of paper slips on which the marked crosses determined the fate of one or the other of the candidates. A medley of hands, grasping the slips

and rapidly dividing them into two piles. And alongside the sorters were watchful men who oversaw the proceedings.

Outside the Town Hall, in the main square, a large crowd had already gathered in anticipation of the result. They surged and sang, while good-humored policemen kept them in order.

THE two candidates, at this the eleventh hour, stood in the center of the room. Outwardly calm, they were nevertheless two men on the rack.

It was the first time I had seen Sir Joseph Rope. How apt was Jonathan Lowe's description! A rhino. Big and solid, he stood there, his small eyes staring out of a fleshy face. His head wavered nervously from side to side and his big broad nose seemed to be scenting hostility. Yet there was a confident smile on his face. He felt he had won. He was a man who must win. And the dapper election-agent at his side endeavored to emphasize that confidence by cackling absurd and meaningless jokes.

His opponent Tom Towers had seated himself in a chair. Already the stacked-up votes showed that it would be a near thing, a very near thing for the victor. Towers, a thin, nervous-looking man, merely grinned amiably when anybody made a remark.

Whatever the conversation taking part in the center of the room, it must have been mild compared with the exciting whispers exchanged between Jonathan Lowe and the local Inspector as they stood in a corner, regarding the scene.

"Three tramps arrested, and each with a perfect alibi?" Jonathan Lowe smiled. "Well, I warned you, Inspector. You were concerning yourself too much with the murderer and too little with the corpse."

"You mean we ought to have inquired into the life of Ambrose Price?"

Jonathan Lowe nodded.

"Then you would have discovered," he went on, "that Price was one of the cleverest blackmailers in London—clever, because he didn't look the part. He deliberately accentuated his shabby, nervous appearance. Yet out of his trade, a dirty trade, he was making at least six thousand a year. But I've no doubt Scotland Yard has confirmed that."

I stared at Lowe reproachfully.

"And you've discovered too, I suppose, that this blackmailer Ambrose Price, was deliberately recommended for canvassing work by Sir Joseph Rope."



Head down, and bellowing rage, Sir Joseph charged through the window.

"Yes, his election-agent confirmed that," admitted Inspector Toaste. "But that's what I can't understand. Why should Sir Joseph go out of his way to recommend the man for such work? And why should Price accept such a job?"

"Simply because Price was blackmailing Sir Joseph, blackmailing him heavily. It was necessary that Ambrose Price remain on the scene. He was dangerous and expensive, as long as the election lasted. You'll probably discover that Sir Joseph was paying him a thousand pounds a day for his services. Moreover, it suited the camouflaged crookedness of Ambrose Price to be on the scene, apparently an ordinary election-canvasser."

"But the murder—" began the Inspector.

"Became inevitable," Lowe broke in. "Sir Joseph Rope was not the man to stand continuous blackmail. Just take a look at him! He must have been hard pressed by Ambrose Price. He realized, too, that these first payments during the election were only the beginning of life-long blackmail. So he determined to get rid of Price; and naturally, he determined to do it himself. He evolved a clever plan.

"There was the empty, supposedly haunted house once occupied by Simon Grant. It would be easy enough to break into during the darkness. He decided upon this house as the scene of the mur-

der, and all that remained was to entice his victim to it. The fact that Ambrose Price was taking his duties as an election-canvasser seriously, helped him in his plan.

"He drew up a special list and casually instructed his election-agent to hand it to the new canvasser from London—Ambrose Price. On that list he had put down Number Nine, in that *cul-de-sac*. Against it, he put the name of Simon Grant. He also penciled some instructions: '*Anti-Labor sympathies. Will probably vote Independent. Call at ten o'clock.*'"

"How do you know that?" I asked.

Jonathan Lowe smiled.

"I calmly lifted the list from the committee-rooms of Sir Joseph's election-agent this afternoon. I found it there, because I suspected it existed. The murderer took it from the pocket of his victim and was then fool enough to let it lie with other electioneering papers in the committee-room. I took it to the police-station."

"Yes, those instructions were certainly in Sir Joseph's handwriting," the Inspector murmured. "And the election-agent confirmed that he handed it to Ambrose Price that night, on instructions from Sir Joseph. But of course he didn't understand the significance of the question."

Jonathan Lowe smiled grimly.

"Well, the rest is mere supposition,

but I think you'll discover I'm correct. Sir Joseph broke into that empty house an hour before the canvasser was expected. He waited there, bludgeon in hand. Right on time, Ambrose Price appeared. It was dark enough for him not to notice that the house was empty. Probably Sir Joseph had taken down the 'To Let' card, and replaced it after the murder. He opened the door when the canvasser rang. He invited him inside. Then he charged, bludgeon in hand—charged like a rhino!"

Jonathan Lowe's words seem to ring through the room; for at that moment a deadly silence fell on all. The counting was finished. The Mayor, a slip of paper in his hand, was coming forward to the center of the room to announce the result. Even the crowd in the square seemed to sense that moment and waited, tense.

"Ladies and gentlemen," began the Mayor. "It is my duty to declare to you the result of this by-election in Ferryton. The figures are—"

"One moment, sir!"

It was the Inspector who broke in. Slightly pale and nervous, but nevertheless determined, he stepped forward beneath those glowing electric lights and approached Sir Joseph Rope.

"Sir Joseph Rope," he said, and his voice sounded strained, and reedy in that silence. "I hold a warrant for your arrest."

The piglike eyes were turned upon him.

"—For the murder of Ambrose Price. It is my duty to tell you that anything you say may be used in evidence against you."

The silence was suffocating. In the middle of it some one laughed hysterically. That laugh broke the spell.

"Look out!" yelled Jonathan Lowe.

Head down, and bellowing rage, Sir Joseph charged. He cleared a table, smashed his way through the window onto the balcony where the victorious candidate was expected to address the crowd. A cry of horror rose from the crowd in the square below. For nothing stopped that mad rhinolike charge of Sir Joseph—to the screams of women and the cries of men, he toppled over the balcony and went thudding to the ground beneath.

"He's killed 'isself!" screamed a voice from outside.

Jonathan Lowe nodded to me.

"It's time you were on the telephone to your newspaper, young man," he said.

The Night

Here you meet Windy Cox, a character even more attractive than Mr. Richter's well-liked Broady; and his adventures are exciting indeed.

By CONRAD
RICHTER

Illustrated by Monte Crews

SOMETHING unwholesome, almost grisly, was wrong with the Texas town of Nauvoo. The dusty rider could sense it as he rode up the main street and stopped at the Prairie Flower. Men on the sidewalk eyed him strangely, secretively. He was struck by the town's peculiar silence as he threw his reins over the ancient pine rack that had been chewed by generations of horses. People moved on the sidewalk, but he heard no cheerful greetings. Men passed each other with short nods. Women spoke in low, strained voices.

The stranger's cedarberry-blue eyes scanned the Prairie Flower. More than a saloon, it was a hotel with separate entrances for men, women and horses. Here, the stranger judged, cattlemen stayed all night when they and their families came to town to trade.

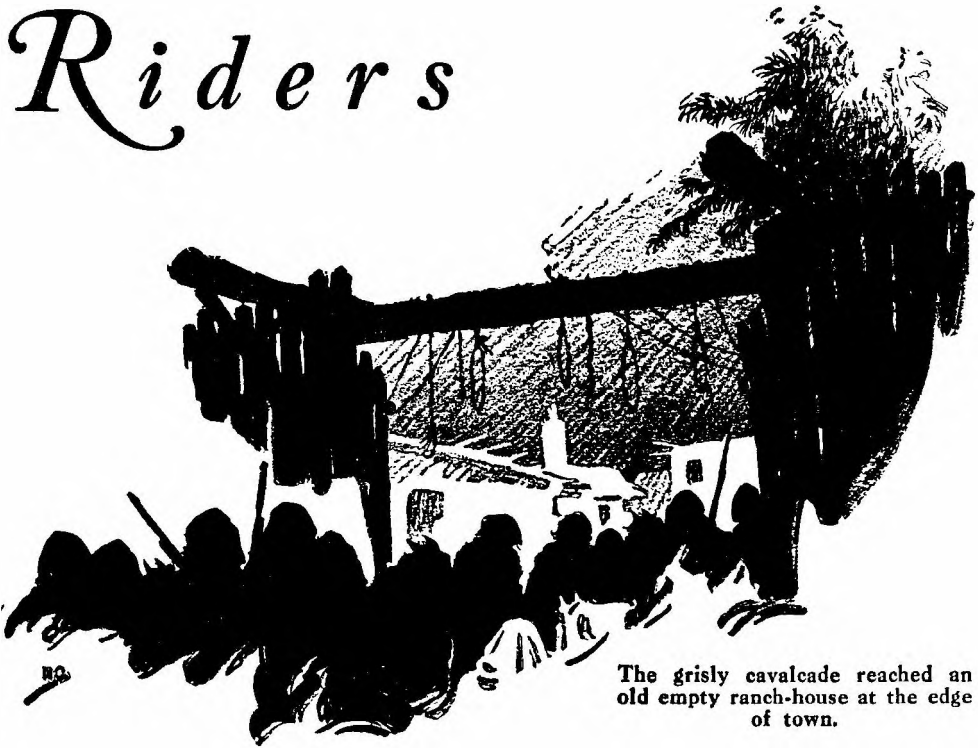
He could smell the blend of undiluted liquors as he sauntered into the saloon. The same ominous tension hung in here. No banter or laughter rose from the men at the bar; they drank as if it were grim business. The blue-eyed stranger downed his liquor. He hunted a long time through his worn pockets until he managed to dig out a two-bit piece. Men watched him in silence as he tried to find another coin.

He gave up at last in disgust.

"Reckon I'm plumb dehorned," he admitted to the expressionless watchers. "Any you gents know where I can pick me up a job?"

No one answered. A few pairs of eyes strayed to a stout figure sitting on a barroom chair, his fat legs crossed on a

Riders



The grisly cavalcade reached an old empty ranch-house at the edge of town.

card-table. His small eyes were encased in rolls of fat. The stranger instantly liked the stubborn naturalness of the man. In the entire saloon he was the only one who looked unaffected by this sinister, mysterious fear.

"What you know about horses?" the bulky figure grunted.

"Me?" The stranger beamed. "Everythin'! I can gentle 'em, doctor 'em, high-life 'em, shoe 'em, tell their age without openin' a mouth, an' name their past an' future like readin' a chapter out o' the Bible. Up in Indian Territory they used to call me Hoss Cox."

"Well, if you worked for me," the stout man croaked dryly, "your main business'd be keeping the stables clean."

The shabby stranger did not seem offended by the menial post.

"You need a stableman? Give me a pallet to sleep on, a couple shots of tarantula-juice a week, some pesos comin' at the end of the month, an' I'll stable anythin' that's got hair. They used to call me Currycomb Cox, when I was hostler at San Antone for the Rangers."

At the mention of the word *Rangers*, an electric wave circled the room. The stranger's blue eyes caught the almost infinitesimal movement of the door to the hotel side of the house. Somebody was listening. Then it opened steadily,

and he saw a small boy about nine with wide, staring gray eyes. It was plain that he too had heard the significant word *Rangers*.

The stranger pretended he didn't see him and went on glibly:

"Cap Toombs of the Rangers had one hoss he said wouldn't bed down in no stable for nobody. He was a big roan, all bottom, but got spoiled by a Cherokee Indian. Every time they tried to keep him under roof, he yanked out the manger an' kicked his way out o' the stable. I tol' Cap Toombs I'd stable him or eat oats an' hay the rest o' my life. Next mawnin' when Cap Toombs come out to the barracks stable, his Cherokee roan was standin' in his stall, meek as an ol' jack burro. The Cap's eyes was big as silver dollars, but all he said was: 'Cox, you wanta stop yore drinkin'—it smells like a distillery in here.' The wust of it was I hadn't drunk a drop, but I couldn't say nothin' because I'd fed all my whisky out of a bucket to that kickin' roan, till he was plenty glad to bed down in his stall an' sleep it off. Since then they call me Cherokee Cox."

The stout man recrossed his pudgy legs. "You sure got plenty names!" He stuffed tobacco into a pipe with a fat finger. "My name's George Shepherd. I own this shebang. If you work for me,



The blue-eyed stranger managed to dig up a two-bit piece.

I reckon I'll have to change your name to Windy Cox."

The stranger didn't bat an eye.

"Windy!" he puzzled. "It aint windy aroun' here! If you wanta get blowed clean off yore saddle, try the Panhandle. I remember once—"

A hard voice interrupted him. It came from a stiff figure with a V-shaped scar on his cheek.

"You talk too much, stranger. Maybe that's what was wrong with the last stableman at the Prairie Flower. He woke up with a rope around his neck."

"Me talk too much!" ejaculated Windy Cox. "You got me saddled up hind-foremost, Mister! I can be the two closest-mouthed *hombres* in the State o' Texas. I recollect when I was with the Rangers some Mexes across the river from Brownsville tried to make me spill where I'd buried the eight thousand pesos I got for savin' the life of the governor. One of the Mexes was an artist from Guadalajara. He drew pictures on the bottom of my feet with a red-hot poker—an' I never opened my mouth except to spit. I aint seen the pictures to this day, because it's hard

for an *hombre* to gaze on the bottom of his own feet, but everybody that's seen 'em tol' me I could go with a circus any time."

Derisively the V-scarred drinker noted the stranger's shirt with a patch on the shoulder, the chaps that had most of the conchas missing, spurs of solid rust and a flapping top-piece that might have been fished out of the Rio Grande.

"Eight thousand pesos!" he jeered.

"How about lettin' us see the pictures on your feet?" mocked his companion.

Windy Cox lighted a cigarette.

"If I got eight thousand pesos, I reckon I got 'em. An' about the pictures, I aint showin' inquisitive strangers my feet. Besides, it's about time to rustle chuck for the hosses." He turned to the fat proprietor of the Prairie Flower, who had been surveying him from small, curious eyes. "You hirin' me, Mister?"

"Come on!" grunted George Shepherd. With difficulty he managed his pudgy legs to the floor. They threatened to give way as he raised his stout body from the arm-chair. Then he waddled toward the rear door.

In the stable he turned on the blue-eyed stranger.

"Listen, you windy son of the prairie," he wheezed. "If you know what's good for you, you'll tell me to keep my job—and you'll move on across the Wichita. You heard what those *hombres* said!"

"No. Who was they?" inquired Windy Cox innocently.

"Maybe I don't know—maybe I do," grunted George Shepherd. "If I do, I can't tell you. But plenty's happened to this town since they live here." He had not put out his pipe in the stable but stood drawing on it with short puffs, his tiny eyes boring at the other. "Now do you want this job or don't you?"

"Shore!" said Windy. "Yore askin' reminds me of—"

"All right!" The fat hotel-keeper's lips closed tightly over his pipe-stem. "You can't say I didn't warn you." Then he waddled back to the bar.

BY night Windy Cox was thoroughly installed in his job at the Prairie Flower stables. About ten o'clock he stretched himself out on the old cot in the hostler's room. He fell asleep with the pleasant sounds from the barroom in his ears. It must have been well after midnight when he found himself instantly awake. He lay silent a moment.

Then he heard what had roused him—a significant tapping on the other side of the pine boards.

"You hear me?" asked a level voice that Cox thought sounded vaguely familiar.

"Shore!" said Windy, sitting up. "You wanta bring a hoss in?"

"Naw!" the voice answered coldly. "I'm here to tell you and your horse to dust out of Nauvoo and stay out!"

"I been out o' Nauvoo all my life up to now," Cox protested. "Besides, I need a little money to ride out on. Yo're onreasonable. You remind me of the time my hoss got bogged in the Rio Grande twenty mile outside of Mave-rick. Cap Toombs of the Rangers yelled at me, 'Get out o' that river, you blamed fool, or yo'll be plumb drowned in mud!' I yelled back at him, 'Yo're supposed to be Rangers—why don't you drive in some range cattle?' He an' his men hazed a bunch o' ga'nt ol' longhorns into the river. When they got bogged down, I stepped off my hoss onto the back of the nearest steer, an' walked all the way to land without gettin' my feet wet, packin' my saddle an' bridle along. Once my weight was took off my hoss, he started comin' in by his lonesome. He was an ol' cow-hoss, an' he brung in those bogged-down steers hisself. Not that they was wuth it. He jes' did it from force o' habit."

"Yeah?" came the coldly ironic voice on the other side of the pine boards. "Well, see if this greases yore trail any!"

A gun started barking on the other side of the pine wall. It roared loudly in the little room. Through the din, Windy's ears could hear the sputter of each bullet as it split the boards and buried itself in the opposite wall. He sat rigid as six shots sounded. When the reëchoing had subsided, he heard the tattoo of galloping hoofs growing fainter down the alley.

A safe interval after the shooting, all the night-owls from the Prairie Flower barroom surged out, headed by the night-shirt-clad bulk of its proprietor, carrying a lantern.

"What's going on here?" Shepherd demanded, puffing. "Windy! Are you all right?"

As the party crowded into the hostler's room, Windy rose from his bed. He had moved the cot between parallel barricades of baled hay. He indicated the bullet-holes in the pine partition.

"Some *hombre* must 'a' been playin' woodpecker," he decided. "Made me think of the time down in Laredo I got measured for a coffin. Some peon shot me in the wishbone, an' Cap Toombs said I was stiff as a rifle-barrel. The boys wanted to give me a good send-off, so they took me to an ol' Mex carpenter an' tole him to nail me up in a fancy planed box an' trim it with store goods. That ol' *carpintero's* planed boards wasn't long enough, an' they cramped me in the stomach, but not enough to wake me up. His poundin' made me dream it was thunderin' an' lightnin', but I was still passed out, when that carpenter made one mistake—he forgot to clinch a ten-penny nail. It caught me behind the ear, an' *pronto* I was plenty alive. I spit a couple border bullets into his face. They said that ol' *carpintero* never stopped runnin' till he hit the Rio Grande."

When he finished, George Shepherd's fat-enclosed eyes were peering at him in puzzled fashion.

"You better come in the house," he wheezed. "I'll give you a room upstairs."

"Much obliged," said Windy, "but I been sleeping aroun' hosses so long I'd have to take a smelly ol' hoss-blanket to bed with me, to go to sleep, an' the womenfolks wouldn't like that."

He watched George Shepherd's fat legs waddle back to the hotel in the light of the lantern. Then he lay down again between the bales of hay. This time he took from under his old hat a holstered forty-five which he placed where his cheek could feel the cold steel. Then he dropped off to sleep.

NEXT morning he was sitting on a bale of hay, writing a letter, when his sharp ears caught the crunch of a light step at the doorway. Paper and pencil vanished into his shirt. He turned his head. Standing in the entry doorway, watching him with intent gray eyes, stood the small boy he had seen from the saloon the night before.

"Hullo!" the boy ventured.

"Hullo!" said Windy. "You must've got up afore breakfast."

"I slept all through the shooting last night," the disappointed boy confessed. "I never even knew about it till this morning! Will you show me where they shot at you?"

"Shore," said Windy. He led the way to the hostler's room.



Some one had thrown a bottle of blazing oil through a window. There were yells of triumph.

The boy's breath came fast as he fingered the grim holes.

"Weren't you scared? You know who did it, don't you?"

"Well, now," said Windy, "I might have suspicions."

The boy went to the door. When he returned, his voice was shrill with repressed excitement.

"It was the Night Riders!"

"Night Riders!" Windy puzzled innocently. "What kind of thingumbobs are them?"

"They run everything around here!" informed the boy. "About everybody belongs—even the Sheriff, my dad says. You have to join up or get hung. They're always hanging somebody. Just a couple days before you came, they hung Pablo. He used to have your job, and he never hurt anybody. He made me a willow cage once; I still got my mocking-bird in it."

Windy Cox's eyes were very blue as he asked:

"An' who might yore ol' man be, sonny?"

"You don't know my dad?" ejaculated the boy. "Why, he's the one that gave you the job! He's big and fat, but I'm not. I take after my mother. She's dead for a long time, but she wasn't hung by the Night Riders. They don't hang women."

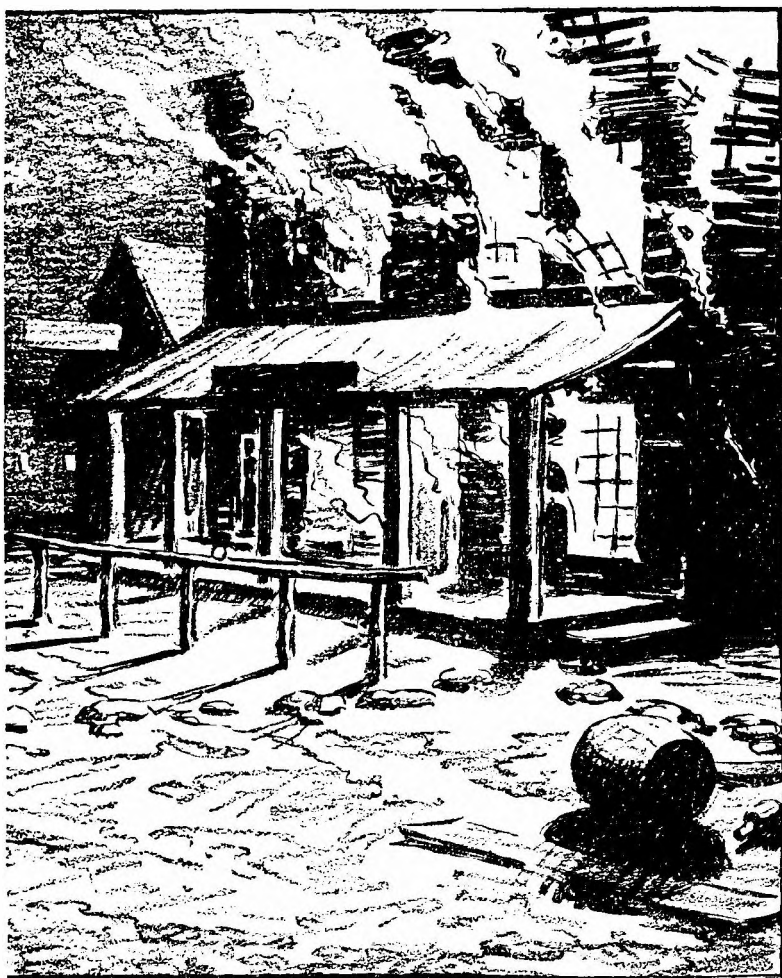
Windy Cox stared out of the doorway.

"Then yore ol' man aint one o' these Night Riders?"

"He's too stubborn!" declared the boy. "He says when my mother was living, she used to say if you threw him in the Wichita, he'd float upstream. That's why the Night Riders hate him. Juan—that's the bartender—says they hung Pablo just to get back at my dad for not joining. He says it's a bet who gets hung first—you or him. Did you know they were going to hang you?"

Windy Cox crossed his legs.

"That so?" He spat at the doorway. "You sorta remind me o' when I was a



"They don't hang me," wheezed the proprietor of the Prairie Flower. "I burn up with the place."

Ranger. A cattle-rustlin' gang I was trailin' ambushed me an' strung me up on a cottonwood. It shore was lonesome after they rode away, hangin' there with nobody to talk to. O' course I allus keep an extry gun packed away in my hat, but my hands was tied tighter'n a drum behind my back. They wasn't no other way. I had to kick off one shoe an' sock an' reach up till I got hol' of the gun with my foot. I stuck the barrel against the rope an' kicked the trigger with one toe. The lead clipped the rope an' I dropped to the ground on one foot. I sliced the ropes on my wrist the same style. You can still see the ring aroun' my neck, on a rainy day."

The boy was staring with distended gray eyes. After a time he swallowed. "My dad and Juan don't believe you when you tell stories. They don't believe you ever even saw a Ranger."

"Wha—what's that!" Windy sputtered in mock astonishment.

"But *I* do!" the boy declared.

EARLY that evening Windy had a new horse to put away, a buckskin with a ewe neck. Windy rubbed him down and talked to him like an old friend. About eight o'clock, the stableman was sitting in the entry doorway, listening to the sounds from the saloon. The night was damp, with a little rain, and he could hear through the rear windows the tinkle of glasses and slap of silver on the bar. Some one was singing, and when he didn't sing too loud, Windy could hear the quiet voices from the rear card-tables.

Suddenly all sound ceased as if cut with one sweep of a knife. The singer's voice halted in the midst of a note. Windy rose from his hay-strewn doorstep, went to the hostler's room and slipped the heavy holster on his belt. He heard a pounding in the barroom. Everything else was silent.

As he stopped outside the rear door of the saloon, a strange sight met his eyes. Three men on the front threshold held

guns on the small crowd. A fourth was nailing a piece of cardboard against the top of the polished bar. The curious thing was that all four men had red cotton blankets over their heads and shoulders. There were holes for eyes, mouths and arms. The blankets draped their wearers effectively, hiding every vestige of their identity.

THE stout proprietor of the Prairie Flower sat in his favorite arm-chair, his huge pudgy figure rigid with anger. Windy could see that every nail into the shiny bar was driven also into its proprietor's fatty heart. Behind the bar Juan's swarthy face looked gray. The card-players stood with raised hands above their tables scattered with Mexican decks and money. The leader finished driving his last nail. He threw his hammer into the mirror behind the bar, shattering it. Windy heard the gallop of horses after the four masked figures had left.

When he entered the room, the gold and silver on the card-tables had been scooped up, and the men were crowded into a knot at the bar, reading the placard. Faces paled; one by one the men slunk out. Finally only four were left—Shepherd, Juan, Windy and a beardless lad sitting with a sardonic smile in a corner. Windy knew him as the rider of the buckskin with the ewe neck that had been brought in that day.

"This here tonight reminds me," Windy drawled sociably, "of the time Cap Toombs sent me to get a bad Mexican. All I knew was his name an' that he was ugly as Judas Iscariot's mule. It was Saturday night, an' they tol' me he was at a *baile*. I walked into the dance-hall in my uniform, a gun on each hip an' looked aroun' for the ugliest-lookin' *hombre*. The girls was all pretty as dapple dun fillies, but I never seen so many ugly-lookin' men. The fust I looked at give me a guilty look, an' snuck out. So did the next *hombre*. Final, they was nobody left but me an' the music-players an' all them pretty Mexican girls. They plumb fought over me for dances the rest o' the night."

Only the smooth-faced youth in the corner appeared to have listened. He maintained an ironic poker smile. The stout proprietor and his barkeeper were staring hypnotized at the placard on the bar. Abruptly the door from the hotel side opened and the boy came running in with a mocking-bird in a cage. He looked frightened.

"Dad!" he called shrilly. "Rosita and the kitchen girls are going! They say they can't ever come back."

The stout hotel-man lifted the boy and cage up on one end of the bar. Then he turned to the others.

"You boys better be going!" he wheezed. One pudgy hand pointed to the bar. "This notice tells me I've got an hour to get out of Nauvoo."

"You goin'?" asked Windy.

"Do I look like it?" retorted the hotel-man, his stubborn, fleshy face flushing.

"You can't get rid o' me thataway," Windy grumbled. "I aint throwin' up my job the next day after I come."

"Me stay *tambien!*" stammered Juan, but his face was twitching.

The beardless young fellow in the corner leaned back in his chair.

"I reckon I'm stickin' till the cows come home," he said.

"Mebbe you figger you are!" replied Windy, giving him a look. "But yo're mistook. A kid like you is headin' for home an' mother." He pulled the youth out of his chair and propelled him toward the rear door. "Get yore hoss an'—wait a minute! Pack this kid along. If his ol' man or me never come after him, see how he gets a good home." Windy went to the bar, picked up the frightened boy clinging to his bird-cage, and put him in the youth's arms. When the stout father sputtered in protest, Windy held him off.

"I know this young feller an' where he comes from!" he asserted. "Yore kid'll be safe as a banty in a barn. But if you wait too long, mebbe none of us can get away."

WINDY came back from the stable alone. He found the bulky figure of Shepherd panting and wheezing as he waddled into the barroom with an array of rifles and pistols. Some few minutes later, Juan hurried in. He said he had locked all the doors and windows in the house. Everybody had gone but themselves.

The stout proprietor had a look of stubborn courage on his ponderous face.

"If I go out of Nauvoo tonight," he uttered oratorically, "I won't know it!"

"This here reminds me—" began Windy.

"Somebody come!" Juan interrupted nervously.

They listened. A body of men on horseback was advancing down the street.

George Shepherd jerked out his watch. "A short hour, I call that!" he sputtered angrily. "Put out the lights!"

Juan and Windy hastened to obey. Juan wanted to close the front door also, but Shepherd barked that he was to let it open so he could tell these night-riding lobos what he thought of them. They heard the riders halt somewhere in front of the darkened Prairie Flower.

George Shepherd went to the door.

"Yep, I'm still here!" he blared. "And the first *hombre* tries to set leg inside the Prairie Flower tonight, gets a free drink of lead on the house!"

After a moment's silence, wild hoots and jeers answered him. Windy could hear low voices in the darkness, then the spatter of hoofs as some of the riders spurred their horses direct for the hotel. The street rang with the sound. The unseen attackers were riding straight for the open doorway.

"Hol' yore fire!" came Windy's soft Texas drawl. He could hear Juan's teeth chattering. "Wait till the fust one's plumb in the doorway!"

The shod hoofs of the rider in the lead clattered up over the stone step. A dim shape appeared in the doorway; shod hoofs rang loudly on the barroom's pine floor. An abrupt red blast belched from Windy's forty-four, followed by the report of George Shepherd's rifle. Windy could hear the fat proprietor grunt with satisfaction as the dark form crashed back from the door.

The horses just behind halted, snorting. They started to mill on the stone sidewalk, then stampeded. The men inside the barrroom heard some one groan as he dragged himself away. Windy could feel Juan shivering beside him.

Some distance down the street they could hear an angry muttering, then a harshly familiar voice was raised:

"Remember the orders—no shooting!"

"That's a funny one," Windy commented. "I never heard of lobos lockin' up their teeth."

"Night Riders don't get their pleasure shooting," croaked Shepherd. "They want us alive at the old Marihuana house. That's where they do their dirty work. They want to see us squirm and kick when they yank us up on the gate-pole."

Windy scratched his head audibly in the darkness.

"I shore hope that gate's made outa piñon. They say it's good luck to get hung on piñon. I knew one *hombre* got hung on piñon, an' three weeks after they buried him, his wife's uncle died an' left her a couple thousand head o' cattle."

"Leesen!" said Juan suddenly.

In the silence they could hear the crackle of flames.

Windy grabbed a collar in each hand, and dragged his charges into fresh air.



Shepherd raised himself to look out of a rear window.

"The horses! They've lighted the stable!"

"I let 'em out," Windy mentioned. "Same time the kids dusted." He spat in the darkness. "I figgered we wasn't a-goin' to need hosses no more."

"Damn!" fumed the hotel-keeper. "This barroom'll be light as day in a minute. We've got to get behind the bar."

"Suits me," said Windy. He followed his employer, guided by the latter's grunts and wheezes. "This might be as good time as any to get what wages I got comin' to me. I'll take her out in trade. Juan, you oughta be able to name 'em in the dark. How about a peso's wuth of some high-class stuff?"

Juan fumbled at the back of the bar. Windy took a long drink and passed the bottle to the others. George Shepherd fell into a fit of coughing. They could see each other now. The flames from the stable were roaring. Red light poured in the rear windows. It flickered ominously up and down the walls.

The blaze from the stable had begun to die, when the crash of glass sounded from upstairs. Windy went to the stairs. By the time he reached the top, he knew what had happened: Some one had thrown a bottle of flaming oil through a window. Other bottles followed. When the door was opened, he was met by a belching sheet of red flame. Already it had gone too far to control. Somewhere outside he heard wild yells of triumph. He went down to the barroom and told Shephérð.

"THAT'S the finish!" wheezed the proprietor of the doomed Prairie Flower. "But they don't hang me! I burn up with the place."

"Me *tambien!*" whimpered Juan.

"Never give up till they throw the last shovelful on you!" adjured Windy. "I recollect one time I had a hoss shot under me on the Brazos. He came down like the side of a mountain, plumb on top o' me. He must've weighed ten hundred. The hoss was dyin'. I could hear his last heave. About two hundred yard away, ridin' for me with blood in his eyes, was the snake who shot down my hoss. I reached for my gun, an' found she'd slid out o' reach when I hit the sand. I was held down tighter'n a vise. It looked like I was shore cooked! But I still had a whisky flask. I reached

out, held up that hoss' head an' poured the whisky down his throat. The hoss was dead, but that lickier raised him halfway up on his feet. Jes' for about a second, but that was long enough to pull myself out an' grab my gun. That *hombre* never shot down no more hosses. Since then they call me Whisky Cox."

BUT the recital of this event failed to generate encouragement. Smoke was already drifting down into the barroom. Windy wormed his way from the bar and lay with his nose to the door. A cool draft entered here. Overhead he could hear the fire roaring and crackling in the pine timber. It grew steadily hotter. Now the flames were starting to break through at the rear of the room. A great red eye glowed through the thick haze. When he raised his head from the floor, he found dense layers of smoke choking the room.

"You all right, boys?" he called.

There was no answer. Creeping rapidly on his hands and knees, holding his nose to the floor like a galloping setter, he made his way behind the bar. It was doubly stifling here. He found both men overcome by smoke. The bulk of George Shepherd was propped up against a keg. Windy gripped a collar in each hand. Juan was light and easy to move, but the proprietor of the Prairie Flower dragged like a stage-coach. Before Windy reached the door, his head was reeling from the fumes. He dragged his charges as far as he could into the blessed coolness of fresh air, then found himself surrounded and overpowered by a dozen figures masked in red blankets. . . .

Juan came to, first. He looked about stupidly. A red-clad form threw a bucket of water over George Shepherd. His huge bulk struggled up, gasping and sputtering. Several of the blanket-garbed men had lighted torches made of staves wrenched from the pine hitching-rack. The three prisoners were herded up the street like cattle in the center of the exultant Night Riders. Windy had a glimpse of white-faced men and women peering from darkened windows.

"I don't see yet," gurgled George Shepherd, "how we got outside!"

"It must've been the lickier," speculated Windy. "I remember once that double-crossin' Brent outfit along the Pecos got the drop on me. They tied me up till I couldn't wiggle finger or toe, an' threw me on top of an ol' hay-pile in them meadows above San Marcial.



"Here's my signature—*Midnight Cox*," he promised. His pen-hand moved.
 . . . The lamp was swept to the floor.

Then they fired the hay. I figgered I was plumb done for that time—the hay was dry as powder. All the time I was hearin' somethin' besides the cracklin'. Then I savvied what it was. One o' their own men had drunk about two gallons o' licker an' crawled in the hay to snore it off. His breath was strong as a distillery. I could smell it plain as the shoes on my feet burnin'. But I

didn't smell it long. Bang—that breath of his'n exploded, an' I found myself blown clear out o' the hay pile. My arm-an' leg-ropes was burned off clean as if a hot poker had done it." Windy spat. "I reckon that's mebbe what happened to us. The licker exploded an' blowed us out."

George Shepherd gave him a disgusted look, as he waddled along.

"Can't you stop lying even with a rope around your neck?"

"Lynin'!" expostulated Windy. "I can show you the dent in the ground my arm made when I landed. Last time I saw it, the prairie dogs was usin' it for a hole."

The stout figure of the hotel proprietor was panting and wheezing and muttering curses when the grisly cavalcade reached an old empty ranch-house at the edge of town. The high-arched gateway was fashioned of heavy pine poles. On the tall crossbar hung the remnants of a dozen ropes, ghastly reminders of what had taken place here before. The riders dismounted in the courtyard and herded their prisoners into the main room of the old house.

IT was a huge *cuarto* and once had been used for *bailes*. Now the plaster was falling down. Some of the pine flooring had broken through. As most of the makeshift pine torches had burned out, some one lighted an old lamp that stood on a thick buttress of the wall. The lamp had a cracked chimney and cast a smoky, lurid light on the misshapen costumes and staring eyes of the Nauvoo Night Riders.

While the others guarded the captives, five of the order vanished into a small adjoining room and closed the door.

"They're deciding whether hanging is too good for us!" George Shepherd wheezed bitterly.

"Probably just figgerin'," speculated Windy, "whether to string us up all at one yank, or make the show last longer. So far as I can see it, each side's got its good points. I recollect one time we cornered the hull Brent gang. We strung the hull outfit up on one pine tree, an' when—"

The door from the next room creaked, and the five figures reappeared. The leader's eyes burned through the holes in his blanket like small red fires. He held up his left hand, and the room grew still. His voice, when he spoke, had the dead metallic sound of lead.

"The powwow's over! Tonight the one who has kicked us for two years, and killed our brother only an hour ago, is getting the medicine we gave the others!"

A ruthless chorus of approving yells rose from most of the Night Riders. Windy glanced at the hotel-man; his pudgy face was pale, and he wheezed with each breath, but he gave no other

sign of fear. The leader went on brutally:

"We're giving the other pair a chance. If they want to keep themselves from getting strung up with their boss, they can take the oath and join us and help string him up." He turned to the bartender. "What do you say, Juan?" His voice was hard and jeering.

"He didn't plug yore brother!" announced Windy. "He wouldn't savvy how to fire off a cap pistol."

"I nevaire keel no *hombre!*" begged the Mexican incoherently. "I have old mothair een Las Trampas. *Madre de Dios*, have peety!"

The leader's eyes glittered.

"Sure, we'll have pity! We won't hurt a hair of your head. All you got to do is pull your old boss up on the rope. Then we know you'll keep your mouth shut."

The Mexican, unnerved by the events of the evening, fell groveling on the floor. Some one put a pen in his hand. The leader brought out a worn account-book and opened it at a blank page. Deliriously the bartender let them guide his hand to sign the page.

"Now the windy hostler!" directed the hard voice.

THE fat face of the hotel-keeper held an expression of scorn, but Windy paid no attention. He came forward blinking. The book was put in his hand. He stared at it stupidly.

"This signin' business," he began, "reminds me o' that ol' sayin': *Don't sign no paper without readin'—don't drink no water without seein'.* I recollect—"

"Choke it!" interjected the leader.

"Let him tell it!" sang out several voices in the rear.

"I recollect one time," Windy began again, "it was darker'n a cowboy's grave. But I was in a hurry. I jumped off my hoss an' drank out of a water-hole near the Pecos. The fust thing I savvied, somethin' half as big as a yearlin' calf slipped down the inside o' my neck. I tried to coax him up ag'in, but the varmint wouldn't come. That night when I got to camp, every time I settled down to sleep I got woke up by that dodgasted critter croakin' inside o' me. The other boys heard him too. They sat up in their blankets an' claimed I had a bullfrog hid in my wagon sheet. I *tol'* 'em I didn't have—but they wouldn't rest till they had every stitch o' clothes, blankets an' wagon sheet off o' me. It

was cold too! There I stood without a thread on me, an' that bullfrog bellerin' jes' the same. Then they claimed it was the hiccups I had. They made me drink some whisky. The minute that frog got a taste o' licker, he went crazy. He'd give a beller an' jump ag'in my heart till he plumb near knocked me out. They was only one thing to do—pour down water like it was a fire. Pretty soon I was full to the gills; I couldn't lean over without spilling some out. Shore enough, like I figgered, that bullfrog had to come up to git air. I reached in an' pulled him out. Since then they call me Bull Cox, an' I never sign nothin' without readin'."

"Read it, then!" bit off the leader.

Windy walked to the light and opened the book. The first few pages were scrawled with a forbidding oath. The signatures of five men followed. Opposite each name had been drawn a crude horse in red. Windy decided these men were the leaders. The rest of the book was filled with several hundred names, both American and Mexican, in every manner of handwriting and many witnessed marks.

He looked up and saw the leaders watching him like wolves.

"You want me to sign it now?" he drawled.

"Sign it, or don't sign it!" snarled one.

Windy saw that the last of the pine torches had burned out. He laid the book open on the adobe buttress beside the lamp.

"Here's my signature — Midnight Cox!" he promised. His pen-hand moved with extreme swiftness. Like a flash the lamp was swept to the floor. Instantly the room was in total darkness. Windy leaped for the spot where a moment before the leader had stood. He was still there; Windy's fingers caught an unprepared throat. He dragged the struggling, flapping figure into the small adjoining room, and kicked the door shut.

"The fust *hombre* touches that door," he sang out, "gives his foreman a bung-hole in the neck!"

STRAINED silence from the big room greeted that. Then a rough voice shouted: "That's one of his lies!"

"Stay back!" bawled the unmistakable voice of the leader. "He's got my knife at my throat. Surround the house! He can't get away!"

"George Shepherd! You all right?" called Windy.

"They're holding me down!" panted the wheezy tones of the hotel-man.

"The second you can't answer yo're all right," answered Windy, "the night foreman gets his neck branded with the Half Circle Slash!"

The hard breathing of tensely waiting men could be heard through the ill-fitting door. Windy smelled the strong odor of oil running over the floor. After minutes he thought he heard a sound in the distance, a sound his ears had been straining to hear all evening. It grew steadily nearer. Now he heard the Night Riders leaving the house with exclamations of dismay. Then came a volley of horses' hoofs in the ancient courtyard.

When his door was kicked open, he looked into a lighted lantern and a stream of cool, level-eyed men in uniform.

"Hullo, Cap!" greeted Windy. "About time you come! My hands is plumb asleep holdin' down this white-blanket Indian." He jerked off the red cotton material from his prisoner—he was the man with the V-shaped scar who had been drinking in the Prairie Flower the day Windy struck Nauvoo.

INTO the big room a minute later there burst a boy of nine. His eyes were wide with excitement.

"Hi, Dad!" he shrilled. "Gee, it was a wonderful night with the Rangers! They were all waiting on an old ranch near the big mesa. Didn't I tell you Windy was a Ranger? And so's Dick!"

The stout hotel-keeper looked up bewilderedly at the sardonic features of the beardless boy who had ridden up to the Prairie Flower on the ewe-necked buckskin. George Shepherd's pudgy face was a picture.

"You mean to tell me," he stammered to the Captain, "that Windy's a Ranger?"

"Windy!" grinned the officer. "You mean Whisky Cox, Bull Cox or Currycomb Cox? Or didn't he tell you that one?"

The late stableman of the Prairie Flower tossed a worn account-book to his superior.

"I reckon that gives you the information yo're after, Cap. George Shepherd can tell you which *hombres* need hangin', an' which joined because they had to." He looked up at the others. "Boys, this here reminds me—"

A chorus of protests from his companions greeted the words.

The Breath of Peril

A swift-paced novelette of adventure in Chinese waters by the author of "Gods Guard the Brave."

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

GODWIN knew they were after him, for yellow men can use cables as well as white men. It was not ten minutes since the motorboat service had landed him at the tram terminus; out ahead glittered all the electric lights of Bangkok. On the tram with him were yellow and brown men, and among them, no doubt, one or two trailing him.

When he left the tram and set out on foot, therefore, he was fully conscious of his danger. Long Tai did not live on the western bank with lesser mortals, but in a handsome villa near the St. Louis Hospital, as befitted a wealthy man with connections all over the south of Asia. Godwin, who was one of those connections, swung along the broad tree-lined avenue, with its automobiles and police and soldiers, and more than one turned to look after him as he passed. Godwin was not tall, but something in his perfect symmetry of movement drew the eye; the high, almost arrogant set of his head, the aquiline brown carving of his features. When a man deliberately picks adventure for a career, particularly in Siam and parts adjacent, he faces the survival of the fittest. Godwin had survived some six years, was one of Long Tai's best agents. Long Tai trusted him implicitly, which is description enough.

He was not a hundred feet from his destination, when the two assassins appeared.

Godwin did not hear them, he certainly did not see them, but he could feel the breath of peril at his back. He glanced about swiftly, just as they closed in, one from either side, with a glitter of steel plunging for his back.

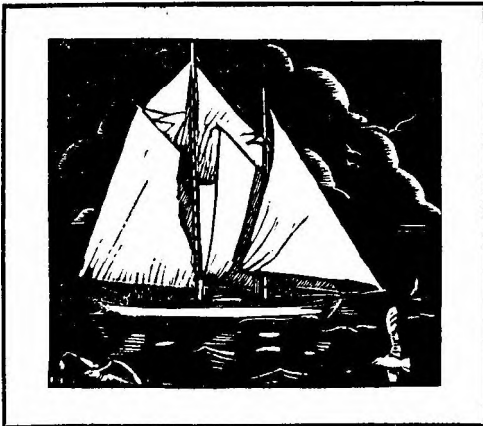
No time to turn. He dropped like a shot, let himself go straight to the sidewalk; and all three plunged down in a huddle, as his outstretched arms tripped the two yellow men. With a scrambling catlike leap, Godwin was away from them and on his feet. Then he smashed into them. And picked killers as they were, chosen from all the White Lotus criminal organization, they were no match for his dazzling speed and reckless audacity. One of them slumped down. The other, with a low groan, turned and went into the shadows with blood streaming on his face.

Godwin stooped, picked up the knife dropped by the senseless man, and went on his way. So rapidly had everything occurred that no attention had been drawn to the scene. . . .

Ten minutes later Godwin was ushered into Long Tai's sanctum, a quiet little room with a desk, a couple of chairs, and an old Chinese painting on one wall. Long Tai rose from the desk to shake hands—a frail old man with a long gray mustache, and horn-rimmed spectacles.

"No refreshments, thanks," said Godwin, as Long Tai was about to order wine. "I left the lugger downriver, below the cable crossing, and want to get back to her as soon as we clean up matters." He took an envelope from his pocket. "Here are the returns from the cargo I delivered to your agent in Trengganu. Everything correct."

The knife fell with a tinkle to the floor. Godwin picked it up, and his thinly cut face warmed in a swift laugh. "Here's another return," he added.





Illustrated by
L. R. Gustavson

Three of them down
—two more on the
ladder, with pistols
out, firing!

"Two of them jumped me just outside, in the street."

"So?" Long Tai regarded him curiously. "You are not disturbed at having won the enmity of the White Lotus Brotherhood? Me they cannot reach; but with you it is different."

Godwin shrugged. "That criminal outfit? Nonsense. I had to shoot two of them in Trengganu."

Long Tai fingered his wispy mustache. "You are not a patient man, Cap'n Godwin," he said reflectively. "Now that the affair is concluded, I shall make peace with the White Lotus fraternity; but it will take a little time, since they have a blood-feud against you—and against Riordan as well."

"Eh?" Godwin glanced up sharply. "Who's Riordan?"

"First let us conclude our present transaction." Long Tai in turn produced an envelope from his desk. "The amount in cash—I thought you would prefer cash."

"Thanks." Godwin pocketed it without examination. "Now, about Riordan—"

"He is at the present moment on his way to Chumpawn. He is a superior man, but his luck is not the best. He sold out his rubber plantation and supposedly started for Europe. In reality, he left Rangoon secretly; the White Lotus have a blood-feud with him, for he aided the officials in suppressing that brotherhood in Kelantan State, and his testimony hung three of their best men, who had murdered a woman somewhere. . . . Perhaps you will have some wine?"

"I will," said Godwin dryly.

So Long Tai clapped his hands and

ordered hot wine brought in; and Godwin knew the business was not over by a good deal.

CHUMPAWN told the whole story, of course. This town, twenty miles from the sea, was in the center of the Malay Peninsula—here less than fifty miles across. Anyone wanting to gain Siamese territory could very easily reach Chumpawn, and from there could go on to Bangkok by the tri-weekly steamer.

Such a trip would be obviously unsafe, however, for anyone in the bad graces of the White Lotus society.

This fraternity of criminals, stamped out ruthlessly in the British states, was a powerful organization elsewhere. Its members, recruited from the lowest ranks of Chinese, recognized no law except the dictates of the society, and did not hesitate to go to extremes where blood-feuds were concerned. Riordan had doubtless found life very unsafe for him, and pretending to sail for Europe, doubled back instead to make Bangkok. Why?

"You doubtless desire to know why Riordan would come here?" asked Long Tai, sipping his tiny porcelain cup of hot wine. "His daughter has been here for the past year at school—his half-daughter, I should say. The names are different. He feared to have her join him in Rangoon and go to Europe; he desires to join her here and go, or else have her brought to join him. He cabled me about it; and being under certain obligations to him, I have consented to arrange the matter."

"Oh!" said Godwin. "Meaning me?"

"Exactly. It is my thought that you might carry this woman across to Chumpawn; he will come aboard you at one of the islands, say. Then you will go on to Singapore, where they will be entirely safe."

"Sounds simple," said Godwin dryly. "Where's the catch? Is there any?"

"He who treads upon the tail of a tiger has little security," said Long Tai calmly. "If I guarantee the safety of this woman, and of Riordan after he comes aboard your schooner, my word must be inviolate. It will be learned that she has gone aboard your ship, and from that moment I depend upon you to guard her. They will soon trace the relationship. Before you are halfway across the gulf, they will be in action. By then Riordan may be dead, of course. In that event you will secure his effects and take his daughter to Singapore."

"Yeah?" Godwin lighted a cigarette. "It's easy to talk about a tiger when he's a long way off; but he looks bigger, the closer he gets. This seems simple—but is it?"

Long Tai grinned at this.

"It is not," he said frankly. "I will deliver her aboard the ship in safety. Riordan did not ask my help until he got to Koh Tron Island—it is in the Bay of Chumpawn, a few miles from shore. He can reach it easily in a boat from the town. Your task will be to pick him up there, or go up to the town and get him."

"I don't like it." Godwin's tanned features fell into wrinkles of perplexity. "It's an uncertain job, and I've learned to my cost what it means to fight the White Lotus. I don't care about myself, but this is risking the schooner."

"I know you love her," said Long Tai. "But you are one man who can make this affair end in success. You are lucky. I have not told you the worst, however. San Tock himself is trying to catch Riordan; whether he is on the trail or not, I am not certain."

Godwin whistled. "The president of the White Lotus, eh? I've heard San Tock is about the worst thing on two legs that's walking loose. Why is he so cursed interested?"

LONG TAI smiled. "Because Riordan has secured copies of the rituals of the society, with their lists of members and so forth. If those reach the Government here, the society is in bitter danger. Thus, at least, the White Lotus reasons, little knowing that it is to me, not to the Government here, that Riordan is bringing them."

"I see!" A light laugh broke from Godwin. He seemed always cheerful, as though no breath of peril could ruffle him. "So this is part of your war on the blamed criminal tong, is it?"

"We have no such things as tongs, outside America," said Long Tai patiently. "You know this very well; so why not use the correct words?"

"I'm plain shiftless, that's why," Godwin chuckled. "Amounts to the same thing, anyhow. Well, you've put up a stiff one to me, and no mistake! If I take on this job, I'm going to earn my pay. What do I get out of it?"

"Your regular salary, of course. If no harm comes to Riordan and his daughter after they are in your care, and they are safely landed in Singapore, a thou-

sand extra. If Riordan is dead before coming aboard, that does not affect it. If you bring me the documents from him, you get five thousand as an extra extra."

"Whew! Long Tai, you must want those papers badly, eh? You wouldn't let him stick them in the post, I suppose?"

"I do not trust the mails; and there is no hurry," said Long Tai placidly. "Do you desire help in the way of men or arms?"

"No," said Godwin. "I'm moored off your wharf, and will tie up there in the morning. You put a cargo aboard me for Singapore. When do I start?"

"When the woman comes aboard," said Long Tai. "Tomorrow night, sometime, she will come. Your cargo will go aboard tomorrow. Get what supplies you wish and send the chit to me."

"Understood," said Godwin.

THE passenger was no more than a cloaked figure in the darkness. She stood by the rail as the big electric signboards of the cable-crossing dropped astern, the schooner moving along under her auxiliary engine; and she said nothing at all. The six Malays—efficient, faithful men who had been a long time with Godwin—avoided her.

One of them called out sharply. From astern came a hail. The lights of a launch swept in alongside, and an English voice hailed again.

"Ahoy, there! Cap'n Godwin on deck?"

"Aye," said Godwin curtly.

"Shut off your engine. Harbor police launch, with a messenger for you."

The Malay at the engine shut it off at Godwin's command. The launch drew in until the gunwales met, and a man came aboard. Even in the darkness, Godwin noticed the swift precision of his leap, the springy quality of it. Almost at once the launch sheered off, and was gone.

"Hello!" said Godwin. "Who are you and what d'you want aboard?"

"A message for you, sir, from Mr. Long Tai. He sent me to act as comprador in case you needed me. He must have decided on it at the last moment, for he was writing the note when he called me. I just missed you at the wharf."

"I don't want any comprador," said Godwin curtly.

"Pardon, Cap'n," came the response. "It is only a courtesy, that word. I am

an agent, an assistant, what you will. It is possible that I may be very useful to you. I know a great deal about the White Lotus and other such societies, too."

Godwin turned to Kapas, who was not only *serang* of the crew, but also a *nakhoda*, or trading skipper, in his own right. Kapas acted as mate, and if he had no Board of Trade ticket, Godwin cared not a snap.

"Hold her steady, quarter speed. Watch the red light over Mid Junk Shoal, and the Outer Bar Light. Don't pass the pilot's hulk outside the bar, in case I want to put this man ashore, until you hear from me."

"It is an order, tuan," came the meek response. Malays invariably strike a stranger as being meek; and so they are—but not at all times.

"You, below," said Godwin to the stranger, and moved to the companion-way. He led the way down to the large cabin, struck a match, and lighted the lamp slung in gimbals. He had already taken the newcomer to be a Chinese, despite the fluent English, and now saw he had been right.

"Your name?" he demanded, dropping into a chair.

"Hai Chung, Cap'n."

The speaker was Chinese, right enough, but was dressed in tailored whites, a flower in his lapel, a diamond of quality blazing in his cravat. His face drew Godwin. It was absolutely devoid of expression, as though cast in stone; rather thin, with aquiline nostrils and a slit of a mouth, its predominant feature was the eyes. These were large, more oblique than is usual with Straits Chinese, and very piercing beneath their heavy lids.

"GOT anything to prove your story?" Godwin asked. The other produced a paper from his pocket, and Godwin unfolded it.

Long Tai's writing was peculiar—immaculate copybook English; and Godwin recognized this at once. The message was very short:

"Hai Chung is a relative of mine. He may serve you well."

Following this was the small vermilion seal which Long Tai habitually used for his more intimate correspondence, in place of signature.

"Right," said Godwin. He had been somewhat at a loss how to treat this man, but the fact that he was a relative

of Long Tai settled everything. "I've a spare cabin aft, fortunately. Did you bring any luggage?"

"I left in haste." Hai Chung remained imperturbable, expressionless as a stone man.

"Well, sit down and make yourself comfortable. Where'd you learn such good English?"

"I was in San Francisco two years, in business." Hai Chung took a chair, and fastened his eyes on Godwin. That piercing, stony gaze could not be fathomed. "Then in Singapore, handling certain affairs for my worthy relative. Then up country. I have much knowledge of the criminal societies."

"Very well. I'd rather you weren't aboard, and I don't see how you can give me any help; but since Long Tai desires it, all right." Godwin rose. "I'll show you your cabin—just across the passage, here."

PRESENTLY he was back on deck, relieving Kapas at the helm. The cloaked figure came closer to him.

"Was he all right?" The voice was cool, impersonal, well-poised.

"Quite. Had a note from Long Tai himself. Hadn't you better turn in, Miss Ferris? It's pretty damp along here, until we're out of the river."

She laughed a little; her laughter had a ringing, bell-like note.

"No; I like it. It's wonderful—the lights, the smooth, quiet water, the sea ahead!"

"Won't be so quiet when we catch the swell."

She drew away presently, remaining by herself at the rail. When they were across the Outer Bar and were passing the pilots' hulk, he glanced around for her, but she had vanished. The canvas went up, the schooner heeled over to the westerly wind, and they were off across the Gulf of Siam. . . .

Godwin saw neither of his passengers again until morning. He was smoking his pipe and giving one of the Malays a few pointers on steering, when Miss Ferris came on deck with a cheery greeting. Then he saw that she was slender and dark, small-fashioned, with an oddly compelling gaze, a tempting pair of lips, and a cool self-possession which belied the temptation.

"Had breakfast?" he asked, as he shook hands. "Mighty few comforts aboard here—"

"I like it. Yes, I had a bite, thanks.

How does it come that you have passengers? I thought small vessels like this could not carry any."

"You sail with me," said Godwin whimsically; "and you'll see lots of impossibilities. Does the craft suit you?"

"She's beautiful!" exclaimed the girl, for she seemed little more. "Varnished spars, all clean white canvas—and one could eat dinner off the deck, eh? I like puttied seams. Why do so many boats around here have them?"

"Hot sun doesn't melt it out. Have you met the other passenger?"

She gave him a flashing look and turned carelessly to the rail.

"Yes. He's at breakfast."

"Hm!" said Godwin. "What's wrong with him?"

"Who said anything was?" she demanded, with a quick glance.

"Your eyes—as though his presence made you shudder."

"It does, exactly. I can't say why. He's very polite. Tell me, Captain—when do we reach the island where my father meets us?"

"This time tomorrow. I'll have to hold off a bit and make the island after daybreak, on account of the shoals. Your father may not be there yet, however."

"You'll go to Chumpawn to find him?"

"If he's not there, I suppose I must," he rejoined. A slight frown drew at his eyes. "I hate to leave the schooner, though. We'll see."

He decided that he liked her, that she was an uncommonly good sort for a woman. She wore sensible clothes, too, for such a trip: trim corduroys touched with silk, and a beret enclosing her dark brown hair.

HAI CHUNG came on deck and stood looking around. Miss Ferris turned to Godwin again.

"If you go ashore, I'm going with you," she said. Godwin took the pipe from his mouth and gave her a slow look.

"You're not," he said calmly. "You'd better understand that this is no pleasure-trip, Miss Ferris. If I go upriver or ashore—"

"You're not going to leave me with that death's-head," she said decidedly, with a gesture toward Hai Chung. "Not for a minute!"

"You're not in command here, and I am," said Godwin harshly, losing his smile. "As for him, he's a relative of Long Tai, here to protect you. And both



No time to turn; Godwin dropped like a shot, let himself go straight to the sidewalk — and all three plunged down in a huddle.

of you will obey me. I say you're going to stay aboard this craft, and that settles it."

She gave him a look, then shrugged and turned away, going forward. After a little, Hai Chung approached the wheel and spoke abruptly to Godwin.

"Cap'n, can we have a private talk?"

"No," said Godwin cheerfully. "Say what you have to say. I've no secrets from my men."

"Very well," returned the other impassively. "From the little said by my esteemed relative, I believe you are in some danger from the notorious San Tock. I have met him. That is one reason I might be of assistance to you.

Also, if you obtain the papers carried by Mr. Riordan, I am to take charge of them."

"Are you?" said Godwin. "We'll talk about that when the time comes, Hai Chung. Did Long Tai give you the money he was going to send me?"

For just the fraction of an instant the other hesitated.

"He said something about giving you money, Captain, but our haste was so great that it made little impression upon my unworthy brain. If you could recall the amount—"

"Is it so easy to forget a hundred English pounds?" asked Godwin dryly. The piercing eyes of the Oriental lighted.

"A hundred pounds—of course! I remember now; it was to come from the money he supplied me. I will get it at once, Captain."

He departed below hastily. Godwin squinted out at the horizon, held a match to his pipe, and puffed reflectively. Why would Hai Chung hand over a hundred pounds? Why, for that matter, would he fall into so palpable a snare? Certainly, it appeared, he had not been sent by Long Tai at all. On the other hand, there was the letter, undeniably genuine, to prove he had been sent.

"It's a bit thick, right enough," thought Godwin. "Something phony about it, but I can't locate the rotten spot."

Hai Chung reappeared and impassively handed him a hundred pounds in bank-notes. Godwin tucked them away with a nod of thanks and made no further reference to the matter. He kept his eye on the yellow man, however, and noted one or two things. He observed, too, that the Malays unobtrusively watched this impassive, silent Oriental, who kept so much to himself. After a bit he addressed the man at the wheel in Malay, no one else being within hearing.

"Your people do not like yellow men."

"True, tuan," said the man frankly. "By Allah! Are we not to despise infidels who worship idols?"

"What do you observe about this man?"

"Tuan, when he looks up, it is not idle staring, but the glance of a seaman who watches how the canvas takes the wind. And when he walks, his balance is sure."

True enough; and rather odd, thought Godwin, for a self-confessed landsman and merchant, occupied with the affairs of Long Tai. The lean Chinaman made no further conversational attempts, and seemed to avoid the girl as though conscious of the effect he produced upon her.

AS for Godwin, he avoided both his passengers, being busy with repairs below. To him, this schooner was the whole world, and when she needed any work done, he did it; that is to say, when the work concerned her or her sailing qualities in any vital manner. Registered as the *Emily*, she was to him nameless, for he detested the name, and avoided using it whenever possible.

He was replacing a shattered red teak panel in the wall of the saloon cabin—

a trim, beautiful room, for the walls were all of rich red teak—when Miss Ferris appeared and stood watching him at work.

"Carpenter?" she asked.

"No; first cousin," he rejoined, and grinned at her. "This craft is part of me."

"Oh! I see. How did you break that panel?"

"I didn't. A couple of White Lotus chaps did. One hit it with his head; the other used a gun. Hunting for a hidden compartment when I found them."

"Really?" She glanced around, vivid interest in her eyes. "And have you any hidden compartments here?"

"A couple of them, sure. So many people have foolish legislation, you know, that some of us are kept busy evading the law—"

He broke off suddenly. The schooner had swung about, coming to an even keel, her canvas flapping and booming in the wind. With a leap, Godwin darted for the companionway, catching a thin, shrill yell from the deck. In the passage he almost collided with Hai Chung, who was just leaving his cabin.

"Something wrong, Cap'n?"

WITHOUT response, Godwin leaped up the ladder to the deck. Kapas and another of the men were running aft. The Malay who had been at the wheel was lying on his face beside it, a red stream of blood running out from beneath his body. He was quite dead.

Godwin leaned over the man, just as the others came running up. The helmsman had been shot from behind, the bullet entering beneath his shoulder-blade and tearing out half his chest as it emerged. Startled, Godwin straightened up, and met the gaze of Kapas.

"Who did this? I heard no shot."

"Nor I, tuan. But I was below. Klang was on lookout."

Klang nodded violently. "Yes, tuan. I was up forward. There was nobody on deck; plainly, some devil did this."

"Some one must have been on deck," snapped Godwin. "Were you looking aft when it happened?"

"No, tuan. I was looking at those dolphins to starboard." Klang indicated a line of plunging porpoises a quarter-mile ahead. "When she yawed, I looked around. Min Das was lying here, and no one else was on deck. Some devil—"

"Devils do not shoot bullets."

This was not at all certain, to the Malay mind. Godwin found himself at an *impasse*, for there was no bad blood among his men, nor did any of them have firearms. Here was Min Das, dead; yet he himself could swear there had been no shot fired, or he would have heard it. That the man could have been hit by some stray bullet was out of the question. There was no land under the horizon; no other boat was in sight.

Stooping, Godwin examined the body again. The faded silk sarong about the dead man's body showed distinct powder-burns in back.

He pointed them out to Kapas.

"Some one held a gun to this man's back and murdered him," he said, looking around at the startled faces. "That may be why the shot was not heard. Kapas, account for every man."

This was readily done. The cook had been in the forecabin with two of the men. Kapas had been eating rice in the galley; the lookout and Min Das made up the tally. Godwin met the gaze of Miss Ferris, found it thoughtful and cool.

"You were with me in the cabin," he said slowly. "Hai Chung was below—"

"I met you as I was leaving my cabin," said Hai Chung, his face stony, impassive. "I had been sleeping for an hour."

"Search the ship," said Godwin. "Kapas, you and two men forward. Klang, come with me. Miss Ferris, will you and Hai Chung remain on deck?"

The search netted absolutely nothing. No one was hidden aboard the schooner. Nor, except for a small automatic pistol in the cabin occupied by Miss Ferris, was any weapon turned up.

Hai Chung was the only person aboard who voiced the logical explanation of the murder—the Malays, even to Kapas, were firmly convinced of a supernatural element. Neither their faith nor their intelligence offered any obstacle to the belief in devils who could shoot a bullet.

GODWIN dined that evening with his two passengers, after the body of Min Das had been consigned to the deep. He was perplexed, angry, unsmiling. Miss Ferris was silent. Hai Chung, his eyes burning in his stony features, was impassive as ever.

"I believe, Cap'n, there is only one explanation of today's occurrence," he

said in his precise English. "Pardon my saying so, but no white man is fully in the confidence of another race. It is obvious to me that a feud existed between two of your men."

"I've known 'em for years," snapped Godwin. "Any feud would be brought to me for judgment."

HAI CHUNG inclined his head. "So you believe. You may be wrong. And you let them conduct the search forward, whereas *you* might have turned up an unexpected weapon, if you had searched. Or the man who used it might have flung it overboard, of course."

"That would put the murder squarely up to the lookout, then; and Klang didn't do it. I'm convinced of that."

"Or Kapas, who was alone in the galley."

Godwin met the brilliant dark eyes angrily.

"Kapas! Impossible. He's the last man on earth to do such a damnable thing, or to lie out of it afterward."

"Perhaps," said Hai Chung. "But you know that Malays are afflicted with two kinds of nervous spasms. One when they run amok, in pure madness. The other is what they call *lateh*, when they commit crimes almost involuntarily, often without knowing it; this is more like an inherited disease."

"That is true," said Godwin thoughtfully. "But none of my men are so afflicted."

"To your knowledge," returned Hai Chung with quiet insistence. "And if one of them had done the murder, the others would certainly lie about it."

Godwin was shaken. After all, this was entirely possible; and the presentation of the theory was impressive, extraordinarily so. Hai Chung, in his cold-blooded inhuman manner, possessed a great force of character.

Miss Ferris went on deck. Hai Chung, when they were alone, fastened his gaze on Godwin and spoke quietly.

"Cap'n, do you object if I smoke a pipe or two?"

"Eh? Certainly not. Why should I object?" said Godwin.

Hai Chung waved his hand.

"You might object; and I was told to pay you every deference. Two or three pipes in the evening hurt no one, and give much pleasure."

"I thought you brought no luggage aboard?" said Godwin curiously.

"None except what I carried. Fortu-

nately I had my little bag and case with me, in which my outfit is packed, when I was summoned by the respected Long Tai. You would like to see the case? I have it here. The pipe is handsome."

He produced a large morocco case and opened it. Inside was a vial of peanut oil, parts of the lamp, a little horn *toi* or jar of the finest Macao opium, and a small pipe in sections. The pipe was interesting indeed, being made of deep green Burmese jade mounted in gold.

"A beauty," said Godwin, and smiled. "But don't your people believe that jade and gold in combination are unlucky?"

Hai Chung grunted. "That is folly. It comes from the fact that jade and gold, both being perfect minerals, should not be combined; each offsets the beauty of the other. Stones of but small value should be mounted in gold. Jade should be combined with brass or bronze. That is the practical base of the superstition."

"And has its points, I grant," said Godwin.

The meal over, he went into the cabin, closed the door, and pressing upon the hidden spring, opened one of the red teak panels to disclose a neat and well-stocked little armory. From this he took a small automatic in an armpit holster, which he slung under his coat, and three more pistols with extra clips of ammunition. With these he went on deck, and found Kapas aft, talking with Miss Ferris.

He gave the weapons to the Malay.

"One for you, one for another man in each watch," he said. "We'll break out the rifles in the morning when we get there. Miss Ferris, if I were you, I'd certainly carry that little pistol in your cabin. We can't tell what may break loose around here any time."

"In the middle of the ocean?" she asked, laughing a little.

"Haven't we found that death is here as well as elsewhere? Hm; I've got an hour before taking over the deck. If you played chess, I'd challenge you to a match, but—"

"But I do!" she broke in quickly. "Come along, by all means! I used to play every night with Father."

THEY went to the cabin, lighted the lamp, and Godwin got out the chessmen, which pegged into their places lest the movement of the schooner clear the board suddenly. He lit his pipe, and a moment later they were hard at it.

"Hai Chung seemed quite certain about Kapas," she observed, as she pondered a move. "I was just talking with Kapas, and he seems a good sort."

"He is. Comes of royal blood, too, and that means a lot with Malays," said Godwin. "That Chink has brains, all right; he almost made me believe his theory."

"Just what do you believe about it?"

"Nothing," replied Godwin. "I'm completely stumped. If we—"

He broke off suddenly, came to his feet, listening. She looked up at him.

"Nerves, Captain?"

GODWIN nodded, and pointed to the telltale on the ceiling of the cabin.

"She fell off her course for a moment; I was afraid another helmsman might have had an accident. Evidently not; nerves, as you suggest."

She broke into a quick laugh. "Nerves! You're about as free from them as any man I ever saw. Did you hear anything?"

"Imagination. Well, with this wind we'll walk along all night at a good pace. My move?"

They resumed the game. Presently Godwin glanced at the ceiling again, and frowned. He shoved back his chair.

"Sorry, but I'll have to go up. Can't afford to have her off the course a couple of points, even, in these seas. That chap isn't watching his business."

He was emerging into the starlight at the top of the companionway, when he encountered Kapas heading aft.

"Not eight bells yet, tuan," said the Malay. "Is anything wrong?"

"A couple of points off the course. Who's at the helm?"

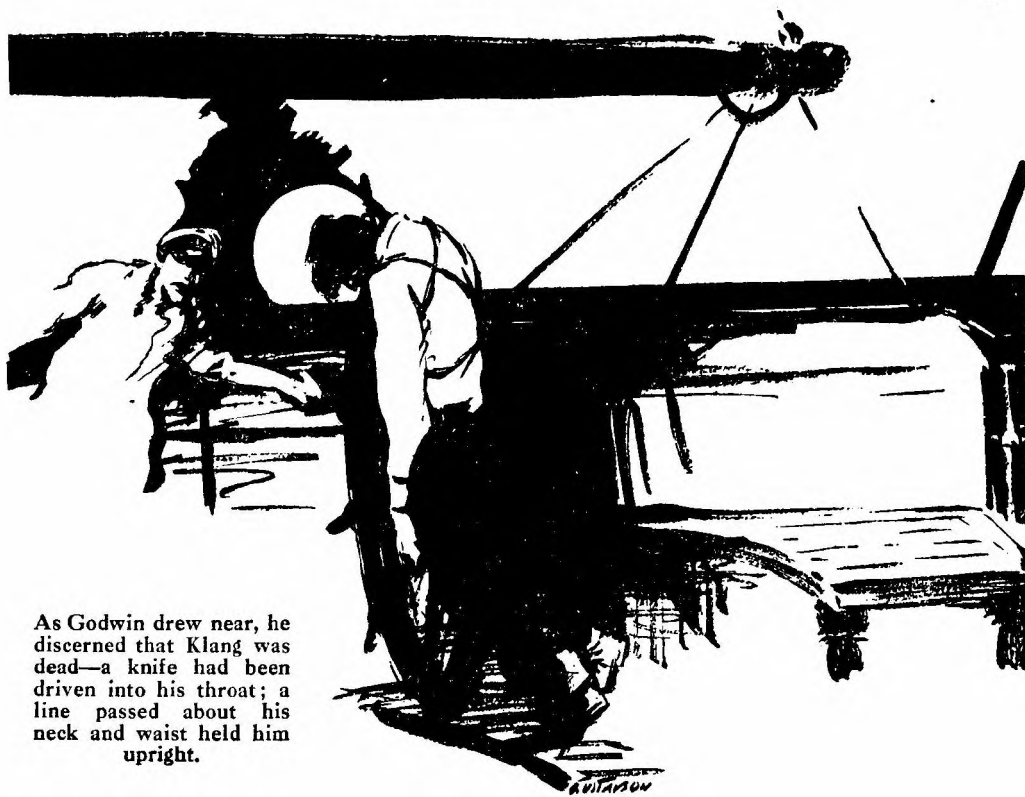
"Klang, tuan."

Godwin strode aft. He could see the figure of the Malay at the helm, but as he drew near, discerned something very singular in the man's attitude. A low cry burst from Kapas, who darted past him and caught the sagging figure.

"Look, tuan! Blood—by Allah, he is dead!"

Klang was indeed dead. A knife had been driven into the side of his throat, no doubt from behind, and on down to the heart. Lugs had been thrown over the spokes to either side to hold the schooner steady, approximately on her course, and a line passed about the neck and waist of Klang had held him upright.

Turning abruptly, Godwin strode to the companionway and descended. He



As Godwin drew near, he discerned that Klang was dead—a knife had been driven into his throat; a line passed about his neck and waist held him upright.

knocked sharply at the door of Hai Chung's cabin, and a sleepy voice bade him enter. He threw open the door, and was met by the sickly tang of opium smoke.

"Is that you, Cap'n?" said the voice of the yellow man.

"Yes," said Godwin. "Another man killed. You'd better come up and take a look."

He withdrew, and glanced into the main cabin, to meet the inquiring look of Miss Ferris.

"Another murder," he said. "Get your gun and load it and keep it handy."

He made his way back to the after deck, where the men had gathered. Kapas had taken the helm, for none of the others would accept it. Godwin did not argue the matter with them.

"Kapas, keep the wheel until eight bells. I'll relieve you, then. —Sumbing! You're afraid of nothing. Sit there watching by the transom; watch only the helmsman, and keep your pistol ready. You understand? Another man will relieve you at midnight."

"It is good, tuan," said Sumbing. "Scarred," as his name testified, he bore the marks of more than one fight by sea and jungle, and was normally quite without fear. Where a devil was concerned, however, it was another matter.

"Where's the knife?" demanded Godwin. Behind, Miss Ferris and Hai Chung were approaching. A lantern had been brought and was set on the deck by the corpse.

"Here is the knife, tuan," said the man who had withdrawn it. Godwin held it to the light.

"Whose?"

"None of ours, tuan," said Kapas with assurance.

"That is true, Cap'n." Hai Chung leaned down his tall form and pointed to the blade of the knife, upon which two Chinese characters were engraved. "Do you know what these are? '*Sun T'ien*,' meaning '*Obey Heaven!*' That knife belonged to a killer of the White Lotus Society, and upon the other side of the blade are two more characters: '*Chun Ming*' or '*Turn to the Light.*' Is it not so?"

Godwin turned over the knife and saw two other characters engraved there.

"Somewhere aboard here," said Hai Chung solemnly, "is a member of this society. There is no devil; but there is a man who can kill."

Godwin rose.

"We've searched," he said briefly. "I'll take the deck, Kapas. Prepare the body for burial. Well, men! Are you satisfied now about the devil?"

"We know not, tuan," said one of the remaining three men uneasily, while Kapas took over the wheel. "Allah alone knows all things! Certain it is that who takes this helm, dies. And those who watch see nothing."

"No, but I noticed the lurch off her course when poor Klang died," said Godwin savagely. "It wasn't five minutes before I came on deck, either. The murderer was clever enough to get himself time to hide away once more before we discovered this killing."

"Why didn't he use his pistol again?" queried the voice of Miss Ferris.

"Not silent enough. Who was on lookout? Did any of you men see anyone aft here?"

No one had seen a thing, it proved. And there the matter ended.

"Do you mind if I stay up here a bit?" asked Miss Ferris. "I'll run down for my coat. Want the cabin light out?"

"Please," said Godwin, and she departed. "Sumbing, are you there?"

"Here, tuan," said the voice of the scarred Malay from the shadows.

"Watch and sleep not."

MISS FERRIS reappeared after a little. She joined Godwin and lighted a cigarette, and smoked silently for a space. Then she spoke, abruptly.

"Well? Are we going to get there by morning?"

"Yes," said Godwin. "We ought to pick up the fixed red light of Matafon Island about three o'clock—it's off the river mouth, and visible for about ten miles. Then we'll lie, to until daylight. Islands all around there, and practically uncharted."

"Hm!" She was silent again. "What was it you thought you heard, when we were below? A shot?"

Godwin laughed a little.

"Not in the least. The third step from the top of the companion-ladder squeaks. I leave it that way."

"What?" Her voice was startled. "You're sure of it?"

"No, unfortunately."

"But that would mean—if it were true, then our friend the death's-head—"

Godwin glanced down at the binnacle, put over the wheel a trifle; the wind was shifting a little. The schooner plunged on, leaving an iridescent wake behind as the waves lifted her and fell hissing away in bursts of phosphorescent light.

"The possibility has occurred to me, never fear," he said quietly. "For more

reasons than one. And yet it seems utterly absurd. The members of this Chinese society are rats, not men. None of them would dare come aboard here and pose as a relative of Long Tai. Besides, this chap carried a letter which was genuine beyond any question."

"THERE is something I should have told you, perhaps," she said quietly. "You know, Long Tai himself called for me and we had a talk, before he sent me away with two men to escort me aboard here. He said that he might send a relative of his aboard, a man whom I would find very interesting, and who had met my father. I imagine from the way he spoke that the idea had just occurred to him."

"Did he mention his relative's name?" asked Godwin quickly.

"Hai Chung."

"Oh!"

"But it is odd that in talking with Hai Chung, he has never mentioned my father."

Godwin held a match to his pipe.

"Maybe," he grunted, as he puffed up the glowing light. "And maybe not."

"You're an exasperating person!" she said, irritation in her voice. "Why don't you say what's in your mind?"

Godwin grinned at this. "If I don't, it makes others talk. What's in your mind?"

"I think this Hai Chung is a fake," she exclaimed. "If you want to know, you can have it straight. I think he's the murderer. And he might well know all about that knife, if he had used it."

"His letter wasn't any fake," said Godwin calmly.

"That proves nothing. He might be impersonating the real Hai Chung."

Godwin started slightly.

"You're a clever young woman," he observed.

"You say that to avoid saying you think I'm right. Why don't you come out flatly and say what you really believe?"

"Can't be done. I'm captain, supreme ruler aboard here; in a matter like this, I can't go off half-cocked. Too many lives, and the success of my job, depend on my head staying clear. I'm practically convinced that Hai Chung is our man—but I'm not certain of it. Your idea of impersonation never occurred to me before."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing, at present," said Godwin. "I suppose you figured out how he might have done the first killing?"

"Of course. He could have had a silenced weapon, for one thing, or the sound might have been muffled by his victim's body. He just walked around behind him, killed him, and slipped down to his cabin without the lookout's observing him. He probably had a close call from the fact that the schooner swung into the wind—that taught him to take no chances."

"You'd better take command of this here outfit," said Godwin whimsically.

"Don't be sarcastic."

"I'm not. If you're right, then you've got me beat a mile, young lady, at my own business. We'll see in the morning."

"Are you going to act on what you think?"

"Yes."

She stamped her foot angrily. "Why don't you *talk*? You're the most uncommunicative man I've ever known!"

Godwin laughed heartily. "Really? Well—"

"That's right, more evasions! Good night. Let's hope we'll have some action by morning."

"You're liable to, at that," returned Godwin. "Good night."

She disappeared below, and Godwin chuckled again. She resented his taciturnity, of course, and it mattered not a whit to him. He did not propose to be prodded into any hasty action. On the other hand, he had a shrewd conviction that if necessary he could count upon this cool and self-possessed young woman to an astonishing degree.

"We'll see in the morning," he thought. "I believe she's right, at that. With sunrise, I'll take Mr. Hai Chung in hand and open him right out and look through him."

Sunrise, however, found the schooner without a captain.

AT six bells, three o'clock, Godwin took over the deck from Kapas—an hour earlier than usual. He wanted to be at the wheel himself when they got into dangerous waters.

The night had passed without incident. About midnight Hai Chung had appeared, smoking a little steel-bowled sleeve-pipe, and after exchanging a few words went below again. When Godwin relieved the *nakhoda*, an hour before dawn, he purposely dismissed the

Malay who had been on watch in the shadows. He felt amply confident to take care of any human or devil who might loom up to thrust a knife into his back.

It was half an hour later when he picked up the glow of the Matafon light against the horizon. He at once changed the course slightly, to make Koh Tron, the northernmost of the islets scattered across Chumpawn Bay. This had been named by Riordan as the meeting-place. All these islands were mere spurs of naked rock jutting up three or four hundred feet sheer from the water, with ten-fathom depth outside of Koh Tron. Godwin intended running down fairly close to the island and then waiting until daylight to make a nearer approach.

HE saw Hai Chung again emerge from the companionway—a statuesque, impassive figure, giving no sign of the agility displayed in coming aboard. The Oriental wore only shirt and trousers; eyeing him sharply in the starlight as he drew close, Godwin was convinced that he carried no weapon.

"Good morning, Cap'n!" said Hai Chung. "I find it hard to sleep. I have been thinking, and sleep does not go well with thought."

"Correct," said Godwin cheerfully. "What's on your mind?"

"The death of those two men." Hai Chung came and stood beside him, facing forward, and lowered his voice. "I am more than ever convinced that somewhere aboard here is one of the White Lotus killers, Cap'n. That society has three methods of killing: the pistol, the knife, and the silken noose. I believe that if another of our men dies, he will be found strangled."

"There won't be another," said Godwin. He held the wheel with his left hand, slipped his right negligently inside his jacket, feeling for the pistol under his arm.

"Let us hope not," returned the other calmly. "Are those islands ahead? Or the coast?"

"Islands," said Godwin. "There's Koh Tron—that mass to the left—where Riordan is to meet us. We'll not go in much closer. Reefs around here."

"I have not been altogether frank with you, Cap'n," said Hai Chung suddenly. "Something has happened that disturbs me. Do you remember that I came on deck about midnight, for a few moments?"

"Yes," answered Godwin.

"When I got back to my cabin, some one had been there. On my pillow I found this." And he handed Godwin a paper. "It is the death-warning of the White Lotus society. If you read Chinese, you can see at once—"

Godwin was undeniably startled. If this were true, if he had been led into misjudging Hai Chung, as now appeared, he had better know it at once. His caution fled. He placed the paper close to the tiny glow of the binnacle light, looking closely at the red-brushed characters sprawled across it. . . .

Something touched his face. He jerked up his head sharply, felt the cord slip under his chin. Then pressure—awful, intolerable pressure, shutting off his breath, like a hot iron burning into his throat. He was jerked backward.

His hand went to the gun under his armpit, but another hand slipped there first and took out the pistol. A crash, and he went limp amid myriads of stars.

Gripping the pistol whose butt he had just brought down with stunning force, Hai Chung loosened the cord from his left hand and stood up. There was no stir, no sound of alarm. He slipped a lug over the wheel to hold it in place, then stooped and lifted the body of Godwin, apparently without an effort.

To the rail was only a step. He stood there an instant, poised, then flung the body over.

Held only by a single loop, the wheel bucked suddenly, spun, jerked back. At the erratic movement of the schooner, a cry came from forward. Hai Chung cursed softly and darted back to the wheel. He twirled the spokes. The schooner heeled more sharply, rushed through the water.

TWO shapes came aft hurriedly, Kapas and Sumbing the hunter.

"Is anything wrong, tuan?" sang out Kapas at the indistinct white figure. For answer a harsh and unmusical laugh broke from Hai Chung. He left the wheel and strode toward them.

The pistol in his hand spat flame. Two short, barking reports broke on the wind. He was not ten feet away when he fired, deliberately shooting down both men, needing no second shot for either. As they fell, Hai Chung darted down the deck, jerking a knife from his left sleeve.

No haphazard work here. More rapidly than he could have thrown loose the lines, the razor-edged steel shore through

the stout hemp. Down came canvas and spars in a welter over the deck; the gaff dragged down the big close-hauled mainsail over the companionway, as the schooner righted to an even keel. Forward sped Hai Chung, and the knife flashed. Within thirty seconds the schooner was a littered wreck, to all appearance.

Out of the forecastle crawled two Malays. Hai Chung was there, waiting for them, only a few feet distant. He pistoled them both with cruel deliberation, then picked up the still quivering bodies and flung them over the rail. Making his way aft to where Kapas and Sumbing had died, he rid the deck of them likewise, first taking the pistol from the body of Kapas.

HE was alone on deck, and the schooner rose and fell sluggishly, unmoving. The false dawn was just lighting the sky.

Now he fell to work, unhurriedly piling up and folding the fallen canvas, dragging the jib inboard, clearing the deck after a fashion. He knew well enough that no particular damage had been done; a few lines reeved and spliced, and the momentarily crippled schooner would be herself again. For the present, however, she was as he wanted her. A shackle knocked out, and her anchor would plunge down, whenever he desired.

There was more work aft; it was not easy for one man to clear the gaff and mainsail out of the way. A voice was calling from below—the voice of Miss Ferris, calling Godwin. Hai Chung paid no heed, until he cleared the companionway; then her figure appeared, and he stood motionless, close to her.

"What has happened?" she demanded. "Where is Captain Godwin?"

"Gone," said Hai Chung. "All gone. We are alone. Where is your pistol?"

She started. Now, facing him, she could see the pistol in his hand as he flung up his arm. Her swift movement was checked.

"So you have your pistol there?" he said. "Take it out and drop it on the deck. Shoot me if you desire to try; it will be a poor gamble, for you will die also. Obey me! You will not be harmed if you obey."

"I was right, then," she murmured.

"You were right," said the Chinaman impassively. "I am not Hai Chung; he is dead. My name is San Tock. Will



"What has happened?" she demanded. "Where is Captain Godwin?" "Gone," said Hai Chung. "We are alone."

you drop that pistol, or must I take it from you?"

She caught her breath. San Tock! That explained everything: the deserted, empty deck, Godwin gone—and this man facing her. Her pistol came out, finger closing on the trigger, and the temptation was sharp; but as he had said, the gamble was a poor one. She knew, in her shuddering detestation of him, that this man would shoot her down callously.

Her pistol fell to the deck.

"Very good, Miss Ferris," said San Tock, having now laid aside his assumed name. "I heard your talk with the Cap'n last night; I was listening. You are very clever, and I congratulate you. It was easy, as you thought, to waylay the real Hai Chung and take his

place. Let me assure you once more that you are in no danger from me, so long as you obey me. Go below. I will remain on deck."

"Is—Captain Godwin—is he dead?" she asked.

"He is dead and gone with the rest," said San Tock. "I will bring you food and water. In a day or two, perhaps today, my men will arrive. You may then go ashore."

"My father!" she exclaimed sharply. "When he comes—"

"It is possible that he will purchase your life and his own," said San Tock. "Go below and stop talking."

The flat finality of his voice was decisive. With one last glance around the obscurity of the deck, the girl obeyed.

Behind her, San Tock drew shut and fastened the hood of the companionway. The dawn was slowly stealing across the waters; when he had finished getting the mainsail out of the way, he glanced aloft and nodded with satisfaction. The topsails had been furled, and his knife had not disturbed them. A couple of men could have the schooner under way again in half an hour's time.

For a long time San Tock stood at the rail, watching the high mass of the islands slowly evolve from the obscurity, taking shape off to port. All along this portion of the coast, the land was very low; but along the land, two to five miles from it, were the huge masses of rock that made shoals and islets.

THE fixed red light of Matafon was now well to the southward and hidden by intervening islands. Koh Tron showed itself as a stubby mass of rock, and San Tock was startled when he realized that it was not a half-mile distant. Evidently there was a strong current setting toward the island and the scattered rocks that showed near it.

Striding up forward into the bows, San Tock fell to work. Presently there was a dull, heavy splash, and chain roared out through the hawse-hole. After a little the schooner was riding gently, tugging at her mooring.

Rummaging in the galley, San Tock ate what he could find, then brewed tea and prepared a tray for Miss Ferris. It was broad daylight now. Koh Tron lay to port, not over a quarter-mile away; the schooner had swept in fast while he worked at the anchor. The coast here all trended south by west, and inside this first island, two miles from the next mass of rock, San Tock could look down almost to the river-mouth; with binoculars, he might easily pick up the channel buoys from aloft. Nothing was in sight hereabouts.

He took the tray below to the main cabin, set it on the table, and knocked at the door of Miss Ferris. She opened it at once, meeting his impassive gaze.

"Well?"

"I have put some breakfast on the table in there for you. Do you know how to open the concealed panels in that cabin?"

"No," she said curtly.

"If you wish to come on deck, you may do so," he said calmly. "I see in your eyes that you have the thought of killing me. Let me advise against the attempt.

Even if you succeeded, you could not get away from here, and unless I protect you when my men come, you would be very unlucky, since they have acquired a taste for white women. This in itself shows their depravity. Thanks to the gods, I do not share it. I desire you to remain alive, because you will be of use to me in my dealings with your father when he arrives; but if you offer any interference, I shall kill you at once."

He turned and went on deck again.

The girl realized that this calm, phlegmatic speech was thoroughly Chinese, and showed that the man was no mere coolie; for to the higher classes white women are palely pitiful objects and make no appeal. She saw, too, that he would murder her without a qualm if she gave him the least excuse.

Stunned as she had been, she forced herself to go into the main cabin and attack the food and tea on the tray. The sunlight at the port drew her; and crossing to it, she swung the port open, breathing deep of the sunrise. She stood there, staring out at the water; could it be true that the laughing, teasing, manly Godwin lay somewhere out there, and with him the laughing little brown men who had walked the deck only yesterday?

"Good sailing, my captain, wherever you are!" she called softly, impulsively, stifling the sob in her throat. "Good sailing, brave blue eyes! Good-by, Captain Godwin." *

She reached out to close the port.

"Don't you mean good morning?" said Godwin's voice, faint but distinct.

SHE drew back, looked around the cabin in frightened incredulity. It was empty. From overhead came a thump of bare feet, and a clatter; San Tock was at work at something, up there on deck.

Then, abruptly, she realized the truth, and flew to the port again. It was too high for her to thrust out her head.

"Captain Godwin!" she gasped. "Are you there?"

"Quiet!" His voice was very low, but imperative. "Pass out a line. Make it fast. There's one—in my cabin—in the locker."

His voice ended in a little gurgle, as though he had given out and gone under.

She darted across the cabin to the passage. There were only four little cabins, tiny things. For an instant she hesitated, then tried the door of God-

win's cabin and stepped inside, closing the door and looking swiftly around.

There was the locker. She opened it, clutched at the coil of half-inch line which met her gaze, and was outside again, running swiftly to the port. It was only the work of a moment to knot the line about the hinges of the massive brass-bound port, and drop the coil outside. After a moment she saw the line drawn taut, saw the knots tighten and stretch.

Godwin, out there—alive!

HORRIBLE fear gripped her lest San Tock come down at this instant. She recalled his mention of the panels; she recalled what Godwin had said about White Lotus men trying to smash through to some secret. If the man came now, she was helpless, Godwin was lost! She listened, watched, every nerve on acute tension. From outside the port she caught a low, groaning gasp—such as a man makes when at the last extremity of effort. The rope quivered, jerked, remained taut. An instant later, a groping hand came into sight, and she heard Godwin's voice, faint, desperate.

"Help! Quick—"

She leaned forward and caught his hand. The fingers gripped hard on her own. Then the face and head of Godwin rose, as she braced herself against the pull. But what a face! Drawn and brine-encrusted, blood matted over the eyebrows, a gash at the hair-line showing the blood-drained whitened flesh where the edges had drawn apart, the mouth contracted with effort—and from that face, the blazing will of the man showing in naked exertion as he got one arm through the port, and his head.

"Thanks!" he gasped. "All right—now. I can—make it—"

He rested a moment, then struggled to get himself through. Fortunately, he was naked to the waist, and had not an ounce of superfluous flesh. She tugged at his hand; then abruptly, he was coming in, and she upheld his dripping figure as he half fell inside.

"Quick—out of here before you get the floor all wet!" she exclaimed. "Get into my cabin. Hurry!"

He staggered, collected himself, and nodded. Then he was gone, swiftly, reeling rather than walking.

She moved rapidly, loosening the line and letting it drop, closing the port, glancing around swiftly. Nothing here. She went to the passage, darted to her

own cabin, and slipped in. Godwin had fallen across the bunk, but she only caught up a couple of towels and was gone again to mop up the water.

Two minutes later she was back in the cabin, bringing the tray with her. Godwin had fainted. She locked the door, then turned to him, lifted him a little so that he lay on his back in the bunk, and stooped above him for a moment. Except for the gash on his head and an odd red circlet about his neck, he seemed unhurt.

Drawing fresh water from the basin, she wet a towel and bathed his face and head, examined the gash, and nodded. There was a medicine-chest in his locker; she had seen it when getting the line.

IN five minutes she was back, breathless but exultant. She worked over him while he lay unconscious, not attempting to sew up the gash, but clipping his hair and drawing the edges together with plaster. As she finished the task, his eyes opened and a hand clutched at her arm, to relax instantly.

"You!" he breathed. "So it wasn't a dream!"

"Pretty close to it," she said. "Sit up, now, and eat something."

He obeyed, only to repress a groan as he sat upright.

"I've got to get into the other cabin."

"Sit quiet," she said. "And talk softly. He was coming down the companion-way a moment ago. He's probably in there now. You're all in."

Godwin relaxed. "Worse. Weak as a cat. Who's the *he*? Hai Chung?"

"San Tock. That's his real name."

He whistled softly, then took the cup of tea she had poured, and gulped it.

"Good," he said. "Thought I was done for. If he'd pulled that noose tighter about my neck, I would have been a goner sure. Cracked me over the head, too, and tossed me into the briny. I woke up swimming, and hung on somehow. Got under the stern just before day broke, and clung there. Was just about going down when I heard your voice, and took a long chance. Lord! Thought I'd never get up that line—any of my Malays around?"

"No," she said, and meeting her eyes, he nodded a little.

"Thought so. Well, young lady, I'm all in. Must have lost a lot of blood."

"You stop talking and eat," she commanded abruptly. "You look like a ghost, and you haven't strength enough



Godwin's wrists jarred as the pistols spoke; the swift reports were deafening. . . . So she had not stayed hidden!

to walk. You're going to eat something, then sleep."

"All right," he said, with the shadow of his old smile. "You tell me about things here, then."

So she obeyed. And from the main cabin resounded the crashing blows of an ax splitting the red teak panels. . . .

It was afternoon when Godwin awakened.

He was alone in the cabin. Swinging out of the bunk, he whistled softly as the blood receded from his hurt head and the pain struck; then he glanced around. Upon a chair was another tray, the meal partly eaten. Knowing that Miss Ferris must have left it for him, he attacked it ravenously, put down a long drink of water, and went to the door, suddenly conscious of his half-naked condition.

Opening the door, he found the passage empty. His own cabin was opposite, and he darted into it, locking the door. Some one had been through the place thoroughly, ransacking everything, but he paid no attention to this. He was soon dressed, and again peered out into the passage. From the open companionway, he heard the voice of San Tock, on deck, probably talking to Miss Ferris.

This was a wreck, and sharp anger dilated his eyes as he glanced around at the split and shattered panels. One of them revealed a safe set in the wall.

San Tock had been unable to open this safe, and had stopped his search there.

With a chuckle, Godwin went to the untouched panel that concealed his armory. It slid back at the touch of his fingers, and he caught out two automatic pistols, seized on spare cartridges and clips. It was in his mind to settle everything now, to go straight on deck and pump lead into San Tock—

"Very well!" It was the girl's voice, from the companionway, lifted in anger. "I'll do it—but I'm warning you that you'll go too far yet, San Tock!"

Like a flash, Godwin slipped the panel shut, was across the cabin, saw her there on the ladder. She made a quick, frightened gesture, and he obeyed, slipping into her cabin and waiting for her.

She came in, closed the door, leaned against it.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Godwin, startled by her face.

"Plenty," she said. "I saw you—spoke to give you warning. He made me come down here; threatened that they would strip me and bring me down—oh, I had to come, I had to come! And yet—"

"Good Lord!" Godwin saw that she was on the verge of hysterics. She, of all people! He sprang to her side and caught her shoulder, forced her eyes to his. "Come, tell me what's going on. Facts. Hurry up with it."

"It's my father," she said, controlling herself with an effort. "He's coming, in a native boat. Don't you see? I can't warn him. If I were on deck, I could

do it. I had to come down here and let him come straight into a trap—”

“All right. I’ll settle that,” said Godwin quietly. “Get out of the way—”

“No, no!” Her voice rose shrilly. “You don’t understand—he’s not alone!”

He stopped short. “Eh?”

“His men came, a couple of hours ago. A native boat fetched them out from shore and then departed. Six of them.”

GODWIN’S eyes narrowed. He perceived that all the while both he and Riordan had been within an ever-narrowing circle—the net of the White Lotus. Riordan’s message to Long Tai had been intercepted. San Tock, in Bangkok, had bided his time and had accompanied the schooner, while his men had kept Riordan under surveillance.

“What time is it?” he demanded.

“About three in the afternoon.”

“Stern’s swung about toward the coast, then?”

She nodded. “Tide’s changed, yes. Father’s boat is coming up on the starboard side.”

“Let’s have a look.”

He went into the passage and crossed into his own cabin, Miss Ferris at his elbow. From the port, here, he anticipated a view of the approaching boat, and was not disappointed. She was a quarter-mile distant; a fishing craft of good size with a half-deck aft, where a spot of white denoted the passenger.

Godwin took binoculars from his locker and focused on the craft. All depended now on any possible help from Riordan; he saw at first glance that he would get none. The man was sitting propped up on a pile of fishing nets. He was bare-headed, his right arm in a sling, a bandage about his head. He turned over the glasses to the girl.

“They tried to get him and failed; but he’s out of the fight,” he said.

He reflected swiftly, while she studied the boat and the white figure aft, gradually approaching them with the light offshore breeze.

Here was the crisis drawing down upon them with each instant. Regardless of what San Tock had told Miss Ferris, the instant Riordan stepped aboard the schooner he would be shot down; the White Lotus wanted his life and what he carried. He must be warned. That was easy enough, for he would be on the alert; but what of the result?

“Seven to one! Long odds to face; impossible odds in any open fight.”

“Oh, surely we can do something!” The girl turned, her eyes wide with anguish. “Even if I could shout to him—”

Godwin nodded with curt decision.

“No shouting; wouldn’t reach him in time,” he said, and took out one of his pistols. “Here. Fire twice from this port. We’re up against it, young lady, and if we’re going to save him, we’ll have to take a long chance. Three boatmen in sight aboard that craft, but native fishermen, and no good to us. Your father’s knocked out. After the two shots, you duck behind the door, here. Leave it open. Plug any yellow devil that shows up. Can you do it?”

She took the pistol. “Yes. But they’ll come down here when I fire.”

“That’s what I figure on,” and Godwin’s flashing smile broke out. “Remember, we’re up against killers—men who make murder their specialty, men who haven’t an atom of pity or scruple I hoped to walk in on him and get him before he realized I was no ghost—but in any way. San Tock thinks me dead. that’s all off. We have just one thing to depend on: the clip of bullets in each pistol. Here’s an extra clip in case you need it. Are you all set?”

Her eyes had steadied. She was herself again, cool, self-possessed, capable.

“Yes,” she said quietly. “I’ll do my part.”

He turned to the door. Her part! Well, he would do his own part too; it consisted in concentrating the enemy’s attention on himself. It was not a bad gamble. If San Tock came down first, things would quickly be settled.

“Too bad you’re not a tailor,” she said. He glanced back.

“Why a tailor?”

“Don’t you remember the fairy-tale about the tailor who killed seven at one blow?”

“Oh!” He chuckled. “No such luck here. All right, Princess! Let her go.”

HE slipped out into the passage, and to the main cabin, which opened off the foot of the companionway. As he gained the open doorway and stepped inside, he heard the jarring report of her pistol. Then came a second.

Sharp voices on deck, a thud of feet, made swift response. The companionway at his left was darkened by descending figures; he drew back a trifle, waited, his pistol ready. San Tock would not be with them. He would wait on deck, his attention concentrated on Riordan.

The flashing instant seemed ages as he waited there, until they were down. Then, suddenly, the passage filled with fierce, bestial faces of yellow men. Godwin's wrists jarred as the pistols spoke; the swift reports were deafening. Shrill voices screamed wildly; one or two shots answered the blasting cracks of the automatic.

Three of them down, four! Two more on the ladder, pistols out. An explosion from the passage, and one of them pitched forward. Good Lord! So she had not stayed hidden!

The last of them was firing. One of the fallen men shoved up a pistol, pressed the trigger. Godwin shot him down with a bullet through the head. Something jerked at him and shoved him half around. The last man, above the shambles, turned to retreat, but Godwin's bullet took him between the shoulders, and he plunged down the ladder.

SIX of them, all of them! It was incredible, but it was true. San Tock alone remained, up there on deck; but he was worth the lot of them. Godwin shoved a fresh clip into his pistol and darted for the ladder. A hand struck up at him with a knife—a writhing yellow shape half lifted. His pistol exploded, and it fell away.

He was on the ladder, now. The hot white sunlight blazed before him. Careless whether he met a bullet or not, he leaped up and sprang out on deck. There, standing at the after rail, turning to face him, was San Tock. For once that stony saffron face was set in wild amazement at the sight of Godwin. San Tock took a step backward; his mouth flew open in astounded horror; an incredulous cry burst from him.

It was the decisive moment. Godwin's brain sent the impulse to jerk up his pistol and fire. Something was wrong. Nerves and muscles refused to obey brain. He seemed to be standing there for hours; this agonized split-second of time was endless. The boat with Riordan had not taken warning after all, but was standing in for the schooner, close aboard now. Godwin was helpless, could not move. His fingers relaxed and the pistol slipped from his hand.

He glanced down and saw the blood running down his jacket. So that was it! A bullet had reached him after all. He reeled, took a staggering step, put out a hand to the rail and saved himself from falling.

San Tock laughed; a shrill and mirthless sound as his hand lifted and his pistol jerked up. No matter, thought Godwin dully, as he drooped at the rail. They had failed. Riordan, the poor fool, had not taken warning—everything was gone to smash! He looked up and saw only the face of San Tock. Everything else was a blur before him. That stony yellow face—

"Shoot, damn you!" muttered Godwin. And as a pistol cracked, he slumped to the deck.

San Tock's weapon had not exploded, however. The report came from the companionway.

At the sound, San Tock whipped around violently, half fell against the rail. He remained there, leaning over, a splotch of crimson growing on his left shoulder. A frightful grimace wrenched at his face—malignity unutterable, swept across that hitherto impassive countenance. He saw the girl standing on the companion ladder, and his pistol rose.

From the fishing craft, now almost alongside, came a sudden eruption of shots. Men had appeared aboard her, yellow men. Above them, at the rail, San Tock jerked frightfully as the bullets thudded into his head and shoulders; he doubled up and fell and lay quiet, his pistol unfired.

WHEN Godwin opened his eyes, he lay under the sail-awning, on the after deck. Miss Ferris was bathing his face; beside him sat Riordan—unbandaged, without the sling. He stared at them in wonder, as Riordan smiled.

"Not hurt?" Godwin asked.

"No, but you are," said Riordan. "Couple of broken ribs and so forth. Take it easy. . . . Damn it, Godwin, if you'd only waited until we came aboard! I know the whole thing now. Long Tai cabled over and arranged the trap. He found Hai Chung's body and guessed what had taken place. We were coming out to catch that devil at his own game—a dozen Chinese came along, hidden aboard my fishing craft—"

"No matter," said Godwin faintly. "Have you got the stuff—the papers?"

"All safe. These chaps will remain as crew for you, old man. We'll head for Singapore and—"

Godwin closed his eyes. His fingers gripped on the hand of Miss Ferris and met an answering pressure. A smile touched his lips.

The game was won!



The able author and sports-authority who gave us "Dead Man's Hand" and "The Son of Stardust" is at his best in this fine story.

By EWING
WALKER

Illustrated by Monte Crews

The Valobusha Red

FURTIVELY, Major Dorsey Peabody stepped into the dimly lighted hallway and listened. Below-stairs sounded the voices of his fellow-boarders at their belated Sunday breakfasts. The Major, too, was hungry; but he wasn't hungry enough to brave the unblinking gaze and crisp words of Mrs. Cornelius. And all because he was behind—a mere few weeks—with his board-bill! Stealthily he started toward the stairs.

The door of the room adjoining his own opened. "Good-morning, Major!"

He caught his breath. "My dear Claire! You startled me." He bowed. "But beauty, I think, will always do that."

"Now, Major!" She waved a reproving forefinger. "Here's your flower. Kept it in water for you all night." She drew its stem through the buttonhole of his faded lapel.

His round bald head to one side, his short plump figure relaxed, he took her hands, studying her a long moment. "You've had a flower for me every morning since you came."

"I like to have it for you."

"And how's my young friend Ralph?"

"Fine, Major. If everything goes just right, in a few weeks now we'll—"

"Be married?" he supplied.

"Uh-huh!"—smiling.

"Splendid! Don't forget I'm to be there."

"Of course not. 'By!"

"Good-by, my dear."

Entering her room, she closed the door behind her.

Again pausing to listen, Major Peabody tiptoed down the stairs, noiselessly opened the street door and softly closed it behind him. Once past the windows of Mrs. Cornelius' boarding-house, his furtiveness fell from him. Glancing at the flower in his buttonhole, he so twisted his sleeves that the worn elbows were hidden, jauntily made his way to the corner, and boarded a surface-car. Suavely bowing to a wondering conductor, he seated himself and contentedly leaned back. Of course, there was that matter of a past-due board-bill, with Mrs. Cornelius daily growing less tolerant of his courtly excuses; but—somethin' would turn up; somethin' always did.

In the back of Major Dorsey Peabody's mind is the glowing conviction that one of these blithe days his short plump legs will carry him around a corner where Fortune will await him with arms spread wide. It seems he will never learn—perhaps it's his dimming vision—that she's but a hoydenish jade gathering up her skirts ready to flee at his approach, and mockingly thumbing her nose at him.

As the street-car jounced along, the Major thoughtfully closed his eyes. He had to have money—and mighty quick. If somethin' didn't turn up pretty soon—

The car reached the end of the line, and the Major, alighting, glanced about. Before him was an unpaved street. He

started along it. He didn't know where he was going, and certainly it didn't matter. His head was high, his plump shoulders back; a confident smile rested upon his ruddy countenance. Soon the houses grew farther apart; the promises of open country urged him on.

AFTER walking somewhat wheezingly for rather more than a mile, he halted abruptly; an expression of delighted surprise stole into his eyes. There had come to his ear the crow, crisp and clear, of a gamecock. Hopefully Major Peabody waited. Again it came.

To his left stood a gaunt, weather-stained structure that a half-century before might have been a roadside tavern, and beyond it, in a clump of oaks, a dormered barn. Hurrying across the unkempt yard, the Major halted before the barn's door. Within, a cock crew; in a stirring medley, a dozen or more answered the challenge. Major Peabody placed an eager ear to a crack, and words came to him.

"Twenty on the red."

"You're on, Bill."

"Who likes the blue? Come on, boys, speak up. They're ready to pit."

"Four to five, and take your choice."

"Fifty to your forty. I got the blue."

"It's a bet!"

The Major's ear was still pressed to the crack; now another sound came to him—a sound not unlike the roll of a muffled drum. The Major could endure it no longer. He knocked on the door.

It opened an inch or two; a coldly questioning eye observed him.

Major Peabody smiled. "Good-mornin', suh!"

"What do you want?" demanded a harsh voice.

"I'd like to come in, suh—that is, if I'd not be intrudin'."

"Who're you?"

"Major Dorsey Peabody, suh."

"Never heard o' you."

"I can well understand that, as I'm a comparative newcomer to your city. I was passin' along the road just now,"—the Major's smile broadened—"and when I heard a gamecock crow, I just nachally had to stop, suh. It was music—music, suh, that I haven't heard in a long while."

Another eye, not quite so cold, suddenly appeared above the other one; and a voice, less repellent, inquired, "Where are you from?"

"From Mississippi, suh. It's been so long since I saw the feathers fly, I'm downright thirsty for a sight of a cock-fight."

The door opened. "Come in," invited the second voice.

In the center of the room was a circular cock-pit. Perhaps a hundred men milled about it; across one end of the room stood slatted coops; a dozen or more gunny-sacks—gunny-sacks which squirmed now and then, for a gamecock was in each—hung about the walls.

The referee's voice droned on as the Major elbowed his way to the pit-side. "Eight-een, nine-teen, twen-n-ty! The red wins."

Delightedly, Major Peabody glanced about. Certainly was good—the babel of voices, the smoke eddying about the ceiling, the pit with feathers scattered about it, a bucket of water with two sponges floating in it, a set of small scales at the pit-side.

A man stepped into the pit, a gray cock in his hands.

"What does he weigh, Tom?" It was he who had opened the door for Major Peabody and who was, the Major had long since decided, a man of substance.

"Five pounds and nine ounces," Tom answered.

Lips impressively drawn in, eyes thoughtfully squinting, Major Peabody studied the bird. Then he said to the handler, "Do you mind, suh, if I feel him?"

Hesitating a moment, Tom handed him the cock.

A long moment, the Major's eyes were closed, the better to enjoy that exquisite moment. He held the bird tenderly, caressingly, one plump hand stroking the glossy feathers. He returned the cock to its handler.

"How do you like him?" asked the man who had admitted the Major.

MAJOR PEABODY paused judiciously. "I don't know how he's bred, suh, nor how he can step, never havin' seen him spar; but I *will* say he's in apple-pie order."

The other extended a smooth hand. "Thornton's my name."

"Major Peabody, suh." He bowed. "Proud to meet you, specially as you're a votary of one of the oldest and grandest sports known to man. You like it, I see."

"*Like it?* Major, that doesn't half express it! I'm a right busy man; and

a day of this now and then— Well, the cares fall away.”

“And the years, suh. I can’t just explain it, but we cockers are a long-lived race. Just run over ’em in your mind, suh: the Gillivers, John Harris, Whitehead, the Eslins, Clark, Morgan, Grist. . . . Three-score-an’-ten’s but a milestone to a dyed-in-the-wool cocker.”

Thornton chuckled. “Thanks, Major. That’s another excuse I can offer my wife. Think that gray’s worth a bet?”

Major Peabody raised a stubby finger. “I can’t properly go that far, suh. I’ll stake my reputation on the cock bein’ ready; but whether he has class, whether he’s a cuttin’ cock, I cannot say. And, o’ course, I don’t know what he’s meetin’. Maybe the other cock feels as good or better.”

“We’ll find out,” said Thornton. A second handler had entered the pit, a blue cock in his hands. “Slim! Come here a minute.” Thornton turned to the Major. “How does *he* look?”

Major Peabody frowned. “My friend,—if I may make so free, suh,—just lookin’ at a cock tells a man mighty little. If I must pick a cock either by lookin’ only or feelin’ only, blindfold me and place the bird in my hands. It’s the feel of him that tells the story, suh.”

Thornton placed the blue cock in the Major’s hands. One hand under its breast, the other across the cock’s back, the Major critically studied legs, toes, wings, back, breadth of back and breast, depth of keel. He returned the bird to its handler. “I thank you, suh.”

“How you like *him*?” asked Thornton.

“They’re both in shape, suh; but I’ll hazard the statement the last one, the blue, has just a lee-tle edge on the other in condition.”

Thornton straightened. “Wheeler!”

“Here I am, Henry,” called a bright-eyed little man across the pit—another, the Major noted, with the earmarks of wealth.

“Five hundred on the blue,” challenged Thornton.

“You’re on,” said Wheeler. “Want to pay off now? You can’t beat me, you know.”

Major Peabody moistened his lips. Five hundred dollars on a hack fight—a single fight! That was more money than the Major was accustomed to seeing wagered on such a battle. He certainly had come to the right place! It looked like somethin’ was about to turn up.

Thornton leaned toward him. “Best

Major Peabody
tiptoed down
the stairs.



friend I’ve got in the world; but we’d rather beat each other at a cock-fight than make a killing in the market.”

“All right, boys,” called the referee. “Let’s go.”

The two pitters advanced with their birds, each holding the steel-armed legs of the feathered warriors between the fingers of one hand.

“Bill your cocks,” the referee commanded. The birds were allowed to peck each other a few times, the pitters retreated the prescribed distance, the referee called, “Get ready-y-y! Pit!” and the eager birds, placed upon the ground, rushed together.

It was a short fight, the blue winning in the second pitting, or round.

Thornton, collecting his winnings, beamed. “Good tip, Major! I’d like to share my winnings with you.”

Had he noticed the worn elbows, the faded lapels? Major Peabody swallowed hard. His palm itched, but his control held out. No sense in takin’ pin-money, when if he only played his cards right—“I thank you, suh; but I couldn’t think of it.” He hoped he hadn’t used too much emphasis. . . .

Eight more times that day, Major Dorsey Peabody studied eight pairs of cocks, and expressed his opinion to

Thornton; and eight more times Thornton bet with his friend Wheeler. Six of the Major's selections won, one fought a draw and the eighth lost. Long before that last fight, the crowd had gathered around the rotund Major, who accepted their homage with becoming modesty.

"How'd you like the fights?" asked Clancy, owner of the pit.

The Major weighed that. "If I must answer that question, suh, I'd say their condition was superb, but the birds only ordinary. Understand, they're game enough; but they lack certain qualities high-class cocks should have."

Clancy didn't relish that. "Think you could show some that could whip ours?"

"The kind shown today, suh? Yes, I do. But don't misunderstand me. I don't wish to disparage your cocks. I'm merely expressin' my opinion, which may be wholly wrong."

Thornton took him by an arm. "Let's go. My car's waiting. I'll drive you home."

Rolling along, Thornton turned to him. "Major, I've been thinking about a remark of yours back there. Do you think you have some cocks that can whip the kind you saw today?"

"I have, suh—or what amounts to the same thing. It's a strain that's been in my family for generations, a strain we have cherished, suh. When—ah—my interests took me away from Mississippi, I turned my entire flock over to my nephew, with the understandin' none should ever pass out of our family."

Thornton pondered that. "When do you suppose we could get a few up here?"

"Within a week, I should say, suh."

Thornton's hand fell upon the Major's knee. "Let's wire for them, right now. If I could just whip Wheeler— Who'd condition them?"

"I would, suh, if I had the quarters."

"Quarters? Why, bless your soul, Major, if necessary I'll empty half the place. What'll you need?"

"Aside from the usual supplies, we'll want a room with plenty of fresh air, scratch-coops to sun them in, an exercise-board and a small darky boy."

"A—small black boy?"—wonderingly.

"Yes, suh; a small darky. I like for my roosters to have plenty of singin', and a darky 'round 'em."

SEATED in a deep rocking-chair, Major Dorsey Peabody dozed. He was content. Four gamecocks had arrived from Mississippi, and were in their

coops. Somehow, with their coming, had come clearer memories of broad acres and amber-colored streams, of a great house in a grove of low-spreading oaks, of spirelike pines, of the sound of a bell at noon, of negroes dozing in the sun. . . .

He straightened, smiling. Pretty soon, now, he'd have plenty o' money; he'd walk into Mrs. Cornelius' with head and shoulders back; and, if he wanted another egg, he'd just up and ask for another egg. He could fancy no greater proof of the security of his position. The smile lingering upon his lips, Major Peabody dozed again.

HE awoke with a start. The garage was silent. Stretched on a plank in the sun, with splay feet spread wide, his small black assistant slept.

"You, Bucephalus!" shouted the Major. "How come you aint—"

"Yas, suh! Yas, suh!" Quickly Bucephalus slithered into doleful song. . . .

Sunday morning. Sun shining brightly and air crisp. Major Peabody was pretty sure that the close of the day would find him so fortified with this world's goods he could enter Mrs. Cornelius' boarding-house as noisily as he pleased; yet he wasn't happy. His short squat figure slumped in his rocking-chair, his blunt fingertips meditatively met.

"Bucephalus," he said, "you can quit your singin'. It won't help the roosters now—and I don't need it."

Thornton entered. "Morning, Major! How're the birds?"

Major Peabody looked up gloomily. "Mr. Thornton, I've bad news, suh."

"What's wrong, Major?"

Slowly the Major rose, walked toward the coops, took out a gamecock and pointed toward its eye, in the corners of which small bubbles had gathered. "Cold—roup," he pronounced sepulchrally. He held the cock's head against his cheek. "Fever!" He gloomily passed through the same procedure with two others. Then, his round face drawn, he turned to Thornton. "Last night I gave 'em just a lee-tle limberin'-up to keep 'em on edge. It struck me then they acted sort o' sluggish—all but one. This mornin', when I took 'em from their coops, they wa'n't cleaned out—still had feed in their craws; and I saw it was cold, roup."

"Tough!" Thornton thrust hands into pockets. "Wheeler'll swear! —How's the other one?" he demanded.

"You, Bucephalus!" shouted the Major. "Yas, suh! Yas, suh!" And quickly Bucephalus slithered into doleful song.



The Major straightened. "Fit to fight for a king's ransom, suh!"

"All right. But only one, huh? Well, let's take him. We'll sink the ship on him. Ready to go?"

"At your service, suh."

Almost before he realized it, he was in the barn, at Thornton's side, and Wheeler was speaking:

"Morning, Henry! Bring plenty o' money?"

Thornton managed a wry smile. "I think so; but, you see—"

"Where are your birds?"—crisply.

"Well, you see, Bob, we had four—fine as split-silk; but, when the Major looked 'em over this morning, he had to throw out three. Roup, cold."

Wheeler eyed him skeptically. "So you didn't bring any roosters, eh?"

"One."

"Let's see him."

With arresting deliberation, Major Peabody took from its bag a mahogany-red gamecock.

The crowd had gathered about him, Clancy the pit-owner in the fore. "That one o' those Mississippi roosters, Major?"

Major Peabody stiffened; his head came higher. "He is, suh; a Yalobusha Red, bred and walked on the banks of the Yalobusha."

"Can he step?" asked Clancy.

"Such a question, suh, should be answered in the pit."

"What's his weight?" Wheeler interposed.

"Five pounds, eight ounces."

"I can match him, Thornton. How about a thousand?"

"If you insist," conceded Thornton.

Wheeler's eyes twinkled. "'Insist?' Well, if you're afraid, and want to be a piker—"

"I was about to suggest that, as I've got only one, we make it three thousand."

"You've made a bet," said Wheeler. "Heel up."

Major Peabody, Thornton and young Wirt, who was to handle the Yalobusha Red in the pit, retired to a small room at one side of the barn. Taking up a pair of shears, with infinite care the Major trimmed out the cock, cutting the tips of the saddle-feathers drooping from its back, the long gleaming sickle feathers of its tail and the tips of its wing-feathers. Carefully sighting, he tied on the gaffs or heels. "They were made by Huff, a great artist," he explained. Holding the cock tenderly, he walked toward the pit. "For the honor of Mississippi—and the Yalobusha!" he murmured, but only the cock heard. He handed the bird to Thornton's pitter.

"All right, boys," called the referee. "Bill your cocks."

The two pitters or handlers advanced, each bird—Wheeler's was a gray—eagerly reaching with eaglelike beak toward the other.

The Major's threadbare elbows were forgotten; his short fingers opened and closed; such a southing was in his ears, he barely heard the referee call, "Get re-e-eady! Pit!" But he saw, clearly enough, the gamecocks flash from their scored starting-lines, six feet apart, as streaks of gleaming fury; he saw them rise in the air, the steel upon their legs glinting and their wings fashioning a sound as of muffled drums. And he saw the red,—the Yalobusha Red,—a product of himself and his forebears, go higher in the air; he saw that, as they came down, the red was playing a tattoo upon the back of the gray. And then, before the Major could swallow more than twice, the gray lay upon the ground, and his own bird—his mahogany-red from the banks of the Yalobusha—"shuffled" upon the vanquished.

Major Peabody, of a sudden, realized he was moistening his lips and rapidly blinking his eyes, and that Wirt, the handler, was standing before him smiling, and that Thornton was pounding his back and saying, "Great Cæsar, what a cock, what a cock!"

Slowly the Major reached for the Yalobusha Red, and gently stroked its throat and back. Head flung back, he held the cock before him. "Well done, General Beauregard!"

"I didn't know you'd named him," commented Thornton.

"I hadn't, suh. I never name one till he's won a fight. I'm of the opinion this one fought a gallant fight; so, I've named him for a gallant gentleman."

WHHEELER approached. "Well, Thornton, too bad you can't fight any more. I'd like to get even."

Major Peabody's squat figure straightened. "We can fight some more, suh!"

"Why, I thought you told me—"

The Major held up the mahogany-red. "If I'm not mistaken, suh, here's a gamecock."

"You mean you'll fight him—again?" Wheeler asked eagerly.

"If you'll lay the right odds," Thornton interposed.

"Odds? Not any odds. That bird's not hurt!"

"If you'll pardon me, suh," broke in Major Peabody suavely, "I'll correct you. No man's eye is quick enough to follow the strokes of a gamecock. I am free to admit I don't think this cock was cut; but neither you nor I can state that for a certainty. In addition, suh,

the energy he has just expended militates against him, takes away a lee-tle of that edge a cock must have to be at his best. Yes, suh, you should lay my friend Mr. Thornton odds."

"I've got a five-nine," offered Wheeler.

"Lay me twenty-five hundred to two thousand," challenged Thornton, "and I'll fight you without cutting the gaffs off."

"It's a bet!" pronounced Wheeler, striding away.

A QUARTER-HOUR later, Wheeler's man entered the pit with a broad-backed, rugged blue cock that seemed ready for battle brief or long. The Major's plump hands opened and closed; his eyes blinked rapidly and his round ruddy face was tense.

Again the cocks rose in the air. When they came to the ground, with beating wings and flashing legs, there was a long shuffle and both lay still, the steel spurs or gaffs of each caught in the other. A second time they were pitted, and a third; then the blue cock, Wheeler's, was carried from the pit dead.

Even more tenderly than before, Major Peabody held the mahogany-red to his breast. The cock breathed a little laboriously; some of its wing- and tail-feathers were broken.

Thornton, grinning, led the Major away; one arm hugged him affectionately. "This is worth a fortune to me! I've certainly got Wheeler where I want him now."

If Major Peabody heard, he gave no sign. He held the bird before him; his eyes were just a little misty; one shaking finger stroked the cock's throat. "Stonewall Jackson, I'm proud o' you!"

Thornton started. "Stonewall Jackson! I thought you—"

"I did, suh," soberly admitted the Major. "I did name him General Beauregard; but, when a gallant bird has done what you have just seen, he merits greater distinction. We'll call him, suh, Stonewall Jackson."

Wheeler approached. "Nice bird," he commented, a bit grudgingly.

"I thank you, suh. He is a right nice rooster. In fact,"—he placed an ear under the bird's wing, listening to its breathing—"in fact, I'm of the opinion he could win again today."

Wheeler's eyes widened. "Great guns, man! I'd rather beat Thornton than eat, but I'm no robber."

This Major Peabody ignored with dig-



It was a long fight—first one cock, then the other, in the lead.

nity. "Have you another cock of his weight, suh?"

Wheeler referred to the back of an envelope. "Got a cock that weighs five pounds ten ounces."

"This cock should *get* weight, not give it. However, as my friend Mr. Thornton has been guided somewhat by my counsels, I'll engage to say that if you'll lay my friend here two thousand to one thousand, we'll have another cock-fight."

Wheeler, striving to hold back a smile, turned to Thornton. "How 'bout it?"

"Suits me." There was a note of resignation in his tone. . . .

"Get re-e-ady! Pit!"

The mahogany-red—the Yalobusha Red—this time did not rise so high. Another blue cock was facing him, a blue that rose above him as a falcon above its prey; but, when the blue came down to earth, the red sidestepped and met him with a flashing of legs and a beating of gleaming wings.

IT was a long fight—first one cock, then the other, in the lead. Now and again Major Peabody closed his eyes. If the worst just naturally had to come, he'd rather not see it. By the tenth pitting, or round, both birds were ex-

hausted. Gameness alone would win this battle; to the one that tried last, however feebly, would go the victory.

At the beginning of the fifteenth pitting, Major Peabody rose from his seat; beads of perspiration appeared upon his forehead, though the day was cool. "I think I'll step outside a moment," he muttered somewhat uncertainly to Thornton. "The air's so close—"

Closing the barn door behind him, the Major leaned against a convenient oak. His eyes closed, and, his lips moved. "Oh, Lord, I know it aint right to pester You with such things as cock-fights, but if You could see Your way to lettin' Stonewall Jackson win just this once, I won't ask you for nothin' else—for a long time," he qualified. "It sure would help this unworthy sinner that's speakin' to you!"

The Major walked, somewhat uncertainly, toward the barn door and placed an ear to a crack. Catching his breath, he heard the referee slowly intoning, "Fourteen, fifteen, sixteen—" Major Peabody swallowed. One cock was winning on that technicality termed the "count," resorted to when one of the combatants is *hors de combat*. Was it Wheeler's blue or—Stonewall Jackson? Closer Major Peabody pressed his ear to the chosen crack. "Eighteen. . . ! Nineteen!" "Oh, Mr. Referee, not so fast—give 'im time to break the count!" "—Twenty! The red wins!"

THOUGH Major Peabody's knees were not behaving just right, he glanced toward the flower on his lapel, and opened the barn door. Thornton hilariously flung both arms about him. "Great grandaunt, what a cock! Three fights without cutting the gaffs off! Happiest day o' my life! Here!" Drawing from his pocket a thick wad of bills, he thrust part of them into the Major's moist palm. "Not a word! By rights, it's all yours."

Dimly Major Peabody saw Wirt the handler standing before him, a ruffled mahogany-red gamecock in his hands. The bird's legs were wearily hanging down, its head drooping, its eyes closed.

"Is—is he—dead, suh?" falteringly asked Major Peabody.

"No, Major. By careful nursing, there ought to be a chance."

The Major reached for the bird. With one hand he supported its weary head. Swallowing, he turned to Thornton. "I'm afraid I was guilty of a mistake, suh—

an egregious mistake. After what he has done today, we should call him for the peerless one, Robert E. Lee."

HIS head flung back, his plump shoulders squared, Major Dorsey Peabody approached the establishment—rooms with or without board—of Mrs. Cornelius. His key he thrust into the lock with needless rattling; entering, he closed the door with a bang. At the moment, there was nothing furtive about Major Peabody. He was willing, even eager, that all might know of his arrival.

Far down the dimly lighted hallway a door opened, and a head bristling with kid curlers was thrust out. "Who's that?" crisply challenged Mrs. Cornelius.

On the third step, the Major halted. "This, madam," said he with calm assurance, "is Major Peabody."

"Oh! Go right up, Major," said Mrs. Cornelius ingratiatingly. The bristling head disappeared; her door closed softly. When Major Peabody entered noisily, and spoke in that tone, Mrs. Cornelius knew he had money and was prepared to pay.

Mounting the stair, the Major entered his room, removed the wilted flower from his lapel and seated himself upon the edge of his bed. "Hrumph!" The wavy mirror of a cheap bureau confronted him. A long moment he studied his squat figure with obvious satisfaction. Lips drawn in, eyes half-closed, chin thoughtfully resting upon blunt fingertips, he suggested a sober judge profoundly weighing a fine point of law. Slowly his expression changed; his eyes closed; a smile of contentment wrinkled his florid countenance. The hoyden Fortune had waited for him after all—had thrust into his hand that which he so sorely had needed. He had felt in his bones somethin' would turn up!

Now to count it, to weigh the munificence of the whimsical jade who so often at his approach had thumbed her nose at him, and gathering up her skirts, had scurried away. Slowly, pleasurably, he counted the money: Ten one-hundred-dollar bills and—he chuckled at Fortune's crotchety humor—a single one-dollar bill. Huh! Well, well. Everything fine. First, of course, he'd pay Mrs. Cornelius; then, probably, he'd drop by Tomlinson's and be measured for a suit or two. Shoes, shirts, ties—these he'd pick up as he casually strolled about the city. And a scarfpin—nothing ornate, but just a lee-tle—

Abruptly, Major Peabody's reverie was broken. Head to one side, he listened. From the room adjoining his own came a vague and disturbing sound. Rising, he pressed an ear to the wall. Some one was sobbing brokenly. Claire, of course—couldn't be anybody else. Hurrying into the hall, he tapped upon her door.

"Who—who's that?" asked an uncertain voice.

"Major Peabody, my dear. Open your door, please."

"I'm—I'm all right, Major"—huskily.

"Open your door, my dear."

In a moment she stood before him, eyes red, a wadded handkerchief pressed to her lips.

ENTERING, he softly closed the door behind him; two plump hands rested reassuringly upon her shoulders. "Now then! Tell an old man just what seems to be wrong."

Sniff! "Everything's gone"—*sniff*—"wrong!"

"Oh, it's not quite that bad! Things'll work out. Somehow, things always do. Now tell me all about it."

"Ralph and I"—*sniff*—"were going to be married tomorrow."

"All right. Just what you both should do. He's a fine boy, and a mighty lucky one."

"And now we can't."

"Can't?"

"No. He'd bought a shop up at Churchill and Twenty-second. He was to get possession Thursday. So"—*sniff*—"he gave up his position at Tyrone's."

"Certainly," said the Major. "Nothin' else to do."

"And I—gave up mine."

"Of course you did, my dear. Who expects a beautiful young bride and the finest little housewife in the world to be filling a job? Course you quit."

"I know." Somehow, before she quite realized it, her face was pressed to his shoulder, her hands desperately gripping his arms. "Ralph was to pay the man so much down and so much a month. There wasn't a written agreement; and now, now—"

"What is it, my dear? Tell me all about it."

"Now he wants *all* cash; and Ralph hasn't it, and can't get it. And now neither one of us has a job! Oh, it just seems like—"

Major Peabody sucked in his breath. Eyes wide and unblinking, he stared over Claire's shoulder. At last—

"How much—more—does it take?"

"Oh, an awful lot! We couldn't ever get it."

"Just how much is an 'awful lot?'"

She swallowed. "A thousand dollars."

A long moment Major Peabody stared at the wall before him. Slowly his eyes closed; his teeth pressed his full and somewhat pendulous under-lip. It would seem the Major was suffering acute pain. At last, his eyes opened again; he moistened his lips; he swallowed. It was not easy, but he managed a wan smile. His plump hands still gripping her young shoulders, he held her before him. "Look at me." A blunt finger tilted her quivering chin. "Didn't I tell you, my dear, things have a funny way of workin' themselves out? *Didn't* I? Course I did. It don't matter how dark things seem, somethin's mighty apt to turn up. Now, you sit right down there and close those pretty eyes a minute."

A pudgy hand was thrust into a pocket of his bagging trousers. Slowly it was withdrawn. For a moment his eyes closed; again he moistened his lips. Abruptly, his squat figure stiffened. He smiled. From a pad of currency, he removed a one-dollar bill and placed it in his pocket. He bent over Claire. "Open your eyes," he blithely ordered.

Wonderingly she looked up.

"There, my dear—there's the thousand dollars; go buy that place. And I wish you all the happiness you so richly deserve."

Back in his room, Major Peabody held before him, between thumb and forefinger, a one-dollar bill. "Uh! One-dollar! An' just when it 'peared like—"

Turning, he took up a wilted flower and drew its stem through the button-hole of a faded lapel. Cautiously he opened his door, listening; then furtively he made his way down the dimly lighted stair.

ONCE upon the sidewalk, he hurried away. For a block, a mantle of dejection enfolded his squat figure. Suddenly his plump shoulders squared; a smile stole to the corners of his mouth as he peered ahead. His eyes brightened. Perhaps he had caught a glimpse of that hoydenish jade Fortune, and fancied she was beckoning to him. Possibly, a kindly dimming vision hid from him the fact she had but gathered up her skirts, ready to flee at his approach, and was mockingly thumbing her nose at him.

To the Savage and Bold

A deeply interesting story of the African wilderness, by a man who knows his subject at first hand.

By W. J. WILWERDING

Illustrated by the Author

THINGS were happening with too much rapidity and violence for Pictus, and his wild young brain was filled with bewilderment—with doubt—with panic—with fear!

In the breathless hour of dawn, that time in Africa just before the sun shows its fiery globe above the rocky hill-tops, when weaver-birds start chirping restlessly and all the world is orange and rose and gold, the old hyena-dogs had taken Pictus and three other young on their first hunt. So the lesson might not be too severe, they had unfortunately chosen the sheep-fold of a white settler as their place of operation. In his reckless disregard for all danger, the male had cut a fat sheep from the flock in full view of the black herders—who had just released their charges from the kraal to drive them to water—and started to chase the bleating, fear-stricken sheep toward the female, in the African wild-dog's age-old trick of pursuit and relay.

The alarmed cries of the blacks aroused the settler, who having been harassed before by this mottled crew, lost no time in getting on the scene with his rifle.

From the time Pictus had been weaned, death had meant life to him, for such is the law of Nature where meat-eaters are concerned, but now death came into his life in a different manner. Five times the rifle spat destruction. Five times Pictus saw one after the other of his kin—father, mother, brother, sister, brother—drop to earth and lie very still.

He too would have been added quickly to the rifle's toll, but it held only five cartridges, and before the settler had time to reload, the black herders, determined to have some share in the killing, ran toward Pictus, brandishing spears. He came from a super-courageous clan, but he was still far from full-grown and there were too many of these yelling blacks

for him, so he turned tail and made for the safety of the thorn-bush.

He reached the cover none too soon; the rifle was already reloaded and the settler was shouting to the black boys to get out of his line of fire and let him finish the business, just as Pictus entered the thorny protection and left his pursuers behind. . . .

Nature made a strange beast when she fashioned the Cape hunting-dog, hyena-dog, or *vilde-hond* as the Boers call him: she started to make a dog, changed her mind and thought she would make a hyena; then, ever fickle, changed her mind again and tried to fashion a wolf; and the result is an animal that looks like a hyena, having the same ugly visage, bat ears and four toes on each foot, but carries itself more like a police-dog, without the hyena's slouching gait; a beast that hunts in packs, like the wolf, with the discipline of a well-trained hound and all the courage of the hunting beasts of prey thrown into one.

And nature, apparently still undecided about this strange creature she had put upon the earth, gave him a coat of yellow, black and white—all mottled over like a harlequin Great Dane—and set him loose to scourge the veldt with the ringing call of the hunting hound, the gibbering of the hyena and the sharp bark of the collie.

Untiring stamina she gave him, unusual reasoning powers for a beast, and a sense of organization and brute cunning that is unsurpassed by any beast of prey upon this earth.

Woe to the flock or herd these dogs attack; woe to the creature they select as their prey. Their bold savagery, their uncannily well-organized hunting forays, their never-tiring gallop can spell but one end for such. When wild-dogs bay, death runs forth upon the veldt. . . .

All day Pictus lay in a secluded spot

near the home den. This had been his home since birth; here he had always been safe, and here, therefore, he came in his first great hour of distress; waiting and listening for the rest of the family to return, as the old ones always had, after going hunting, and as he was sure they would again. Into the darkness of night he waited; he even raised his young voice in the call of his clan; but no answering call, no pattering of feet, no eager nuzzling of his mother rewarded him.

Then he went back hesitatingly toward the *shamba* where they had gone sheep-hunting that morning. His nose sought eagerly for a trace of the others near the place where he had last seen them, but the blacks had taken the skins away, the vultures had attended to the rest, and the bones he found conveyed no tale to him.

For a long time he skulked about; then, seeming at last to sense that some nameless catastrophe had left him alone in the wild, he took a silent course away from this vicinity and struck a trail for the open veldt.

Hunger was sending its insistent message that he must get out and hunt, if he were to eat. It was now up to the pup to procure his own food instead of depending upon the old ones to bring it to him.

He wandered about aimlessly, as young dogs will, sniffing here and there at strange trails, starting at unfamiliar sounds and testing the night air hopefully. Once he came upon a herd of small gazelle, the kind men call "Tom-mies." The wind was from them to him and their scent brought new confidence, for the old ones had often brought these pretty veldt inhabitants to the home den;

but he was new in the ways of hunting, lacking the experience that gives wild creatures their education—in place of instinct, as most folks think—and instead of stalking them carefully, he ran rashly at them.

One sniff, when he came close enough, sufficed to send those gazelles away on winged feet. He gave chase in the joyous thrill of his first real hunt, but he was yet too young and untried to be able to run them down, as an old hyena-dog would have done, and when a herd of snorting zebras, made panicky by the headlong flight of the gazelles, stampeded across his path, he turned tail, retreating into a thorny cover to keep from being trampled upon by this striped crowd.

ALL night he ranged, with no better success, until toward morning a wind brought the smell of meat, and he followed the alluring scent until it brought him to a place where some beast had been pulled down. Others were feasting there, to be sure—for when an animal is down in Africa, there is always some one eating it—but this troubled Pictus little. In fact, he was rather elated about it, for their gibbering and quarreling and crunching of teeth made him sure that he had again come among his own kind, and he ran up hopefully.

To his surprise, these others immediately left the feast and gave him plenty of room. Their noses had brought them

They had closed in on Pictus, when the leopard which had made the kill sprang into the combat.





the wild-dog scent; and no hyena, for such they were, cared to match fangs with the wild-dog clan. He was no little astonished by their aloofness, but as he was hungry, he approached the kill and started to help himself. Then the leering crowd saw that he was small and quite alone, and they came back at once in gibbering force; for an uneven fight, with all in their favor, suits their humor exactly.

Their manner left no doubt of their evil intentions; but the scent of the fresh meat right under Pictus' nose had brought the age-old courage of the hyena-dog clan uppermost at once, and instead of giving ground, the plucky little fellow met the foremost fang to fang.

The evil-visaged brute was much too heavy for him and lunged forward with a mighty chop of yellowed fangs, intended to cut the muzzle of Pictus in twain. But Pictus was the quicker, for the hyena was gorged with meat; for the moment the battle was in the wild-dog's favor. Then the rest of that rascally crew closed in, in their odd slumping manner, and it looked as if the snickering of their fangs would soon add Pictus to the carrion on which they feasted this night.

He snapped with lightning speed to right and left, and whirled to add a slashing stroke at another behind—but they had closed in on him at fore, aft and on both sides. He was fighting a hopeless battle that could have but one end—when a leopard, the one which had made the kill on which they had been feeding, sprang in crazily to the combat and was all over the gang of hyenas at once. From one to the other he bounded, faster than eyes might follow, sending raking paw-strokes this way and that, leaving his livid mark on each one in turn.

IF Pictus had not been small, and surrounded by that repugnant crew, he would have fared like the rest, but the

hyenas had crowded upon him when the leopard sprang, so that he had escaped the big cat's wrath, and seeing an opportunity to slink between two of the yammering hyenas, he made swiftly for cover.

He lost no time in putting distance between himself and this ill-mannered company, but for a long time he heard the lamentations of the hyenas, as they bemoaned their ill luck at having the leopard catch them at his kill when he had returned from the water-hole. They would have caught the leopard's scent had they been minding their business, but he had surprised them in the evil moment when their minds were on Pictus.

Their wailing complaints became fainter and fainter and dissolved into the night's far stretches; but Pictus had learned about hyenas from them and knew that, although they somewhat resembled his kind, they had nothing in common, so he added them and the leopard to his memories of the white man as creatures to be avoided.

PICTUS' wanderings took him farther and farther from the place where the family had denned. Perhaps it was the roving spirit of the hyena-dog that urged him on, or it may have been the memory of what had happened to his kin that caused him to leave the partly settled district where he was born—but when the sun raised its fiery sphere above the veldt the second day, he found himself in a vast primitive wild.

Here huge boulder-heaps dotted the landscape, and the everlasting flat-topped trees and great fastnesses of thorn-bush bordered the stretches of waving veldt-grass. Game was everywhere: the bisonlike wildebeest grazed as far as the eye could discern their blue-black forms. Kongoni—those queer, high-withered antelope with angular horns—stood about in small groups, grazing in apparent unconcern while one of their kind stood guard on an ant-hill. Gazelle, their tails incessantly wagging, grazed near their larger cousins, like a great flock of small goats. The stripes of zebras twinkled in the morning sun, and among the flat-topped acacias, some tall slender forms wove slowly in and out, for the giraffe were feeding there on the tender shoots and leaves.

Pictus loped toward this vast congress of hoofed veldt life, but they seemed to melt away before him and wherever he went, he found himself alone, while the

game grazed at a respectful distance. These creatures knew all about hyena-dogs and were taking no chances with his kind. Their keen eyes told them that he was alone, but they knew from past experiences that one wild-dog might mean others in hiding, so they opened up a wide avenue for him wherever he went. It seemed, indeed, as though his gnawing hunger was never to be appeased.

His long wandering from his home den, his two nights and a day without food, were taking their toll. His feet dragged as he loped along; his sides showed an impressive array of ribs; his tongue lolled and there was a glassy stare in his eyes. He sorely missed the guidance of his elders, and more than ever he was filled with the wild-dog's longing for the company of the pack. The heat of the day added thirst to his hunger and he began casting about for a place where he might drink.

He came to a spot where the vegetation was greener than elsewhere, and about which game was congregated. The breeze blowing from that direction brought the scent of moisture to him. He followed the welcome scent without further delay and soon was quenching his thirst, while the game stood back at a respectful distance and snorted or grunted or honked at him, according to their kind.

On leaving the water-hole, he passed close to a herd of zebras just approaching the drinking-place, and a stallion ran at him, squealing and kicking. Pictus bared his teeth in a snarl, but he knew he was no match for this vicious fellow, and ran in a wide circle to avoid the striped troop, who seemed inclined to follow the

stallion's example and "gang up" on the young wild-dog.

Through the heat of the day he rested in the shade of a disordered thicket of thorn-bushes, waking now and then to gaze at the game herds that grazed at every side, hoping that a young one would come close enough to this covert so that he might drag it into the fastness of the bush and relieve the hunger that gnawed at his vitals and bade fair to consume him.

Toward late afternoon, his eyes noted another beast upon the veldt, walking slowly and deliberately through the waving grass toward the game herds. Pictus lifted his nose to test the wind, and the scent of the beast set the hair on his back to bristling. This was the first of its kind that he had ever seen, but it had the cat-smell and from its size, seemed to him to be the giant of all the cats.

Stealthily the great feline stalked through the grass and then suddenly disappeared into a thicket of thorns, so that Pictus could follow its movements by scent only. For a long time the big cat lay there in hiding, while the game unconsciously grazed nearer and nearer to its ambush.

The lion had gone up-wind, and though his scent was strong in Pictus' nostrils, the herds of game knew nothing of the menace that lay in waiting.

Closer and ever closer the herds of game grazed and still the tawny feline kept to cover. Then two wildebeest started to wheel and cavort about in a mock battle, as is their foolish custom. With shaking heads, switching of horse-like tails and queer grunts, they charged each other. They pushed and snorted

Instantly Pictus was on his feet, but instead of giving ground as before, a warning growl emerged from his throat.



and dropped to their knees, stirring up clouds of dust, while the rest stood in a long line and stared in a bored manner.

Then they were on their feet again, chasing each other in a widening circle. This circling about took them close to the tangle of thorns where the lion hid, and one, as he ran past, suddenly made an awkward side-jump and stared grotesquely at something that seemed to attract his attention in the thicket.

At once the afternoon air was rent with a heavy rumbling grunt; a tawny streak hurtled upon the wildebeest, and even as the other stood uncertainly for a moment before his precipitate flight, the first wildebeest was stretched on the ground with a broken neck.

No sooner did the great cat start his feast than Pictus found his furtive way to the thorn-bushes, where the lion had lain in hiding, and waited there until the king would be through with his meal. He knew full well that the lion would seek water after eating, for the taste of blood induces thirst; but the vultures had gathered, apparently out of nowhere, and they worried him considerably, for though his hunger filled him with a desperate ravening, he was too weak to contest the right to eat with these winged ghouls.

But as he waited impatiently, the sun started to tint the wild with purple, mauve and rose, and when the lion had finished and, full-fed, was taking his leisurely way to the water, darkness soon followed, for the night comes quickly after sunset in these parts.

The darkness dissipated Pictus' worries about the vultures, for these feed in daytime only. They would perch in the near-by trees all night, hoping that jackal and hyena would leave something for them to pick from the bones at sun-up.

THE lion had no sooner deserted the scene, and Pictus had started his ravenous meal, when sirenlike calls in the distance showed that the hyenas were already on the way. "*Woo-ow-uh, woo-uh, woo-uh, woo-uh!*" they moaned their way to where their keen noses led them to the kill. Then a jackal sang his high-pitched evening song and was soon joined by another; and Pictus had no more time than to bolt a few hasty mouthfuls before the pattering of feet in the dark, the gibbering and wailing and fiendish laughter, told him that he was no longer alone.

He held his ground for a few more

flat-eared, growling moments, while he bolted hasty mouthfuls of meat; then, remembering his other experience with these leering night prowlers, he cautiously withdrew.

The scant feeding had given him a bit of renewed strength, but it seemed his every meal was snatched from him before he had barely begun and he was filled with an immeasurable loneliness. So once more he set out upon his quest, hoping that by chance he might again come among his kind.

He had gone but a short distance when his keen nose told him that a leopard had made a kill and was feeding in the seclusion of a mimosa thicket. The urge to stay about until the spotted cat had fed was strong within him, but the memory of the one that had leaped upon the hyenas was still fresh, so he circled the place with infinite caution.

SO on through the night, from one strange, forbidding scene to another, sniffing the wind, smelling the myriad scents and trails, puzzling over the many new things that eyes or ears or nose brought to him. Restlessly hunting, seeking, searching; always looking for the trace of other hyena-dogs—yearning for the company of the pack and to run shoulder to shoulder with his own kind.

A faint green glow in the eastern sky showed that the day was near at hand; and Pictus was questing about for a likely place to spend the hot sun-lit hours, when a faint chorus of sounds floated to him on the air.

At once Pictus was on the alert, head up, ears forward and muscles tense, while the calls came closer and closer. He needed none to tell him the nature of the creatures that were calling; too often he had heard the hunting-cries of his own sire and mother to be deceived by the sound. He was anxious to answer, but some hidden voice within him told him that he must remain silent, that the hyena-dog in advance of the pack must do no baying.

Soon they were close and the air rang with the bell-like notes, the hunting-call of Africa's wild-dog clan. Then Pictus caught the sound of a wild beating of hoofs, and even as he discerned this, an oryx, running like a stag before the wild-dogs, raced past him and tore his hasty way through grass and thorn-bush. Every muscle was extended to the utmost; his eyes stared wildly and his breath came audibly with each pounding of hoofs up-



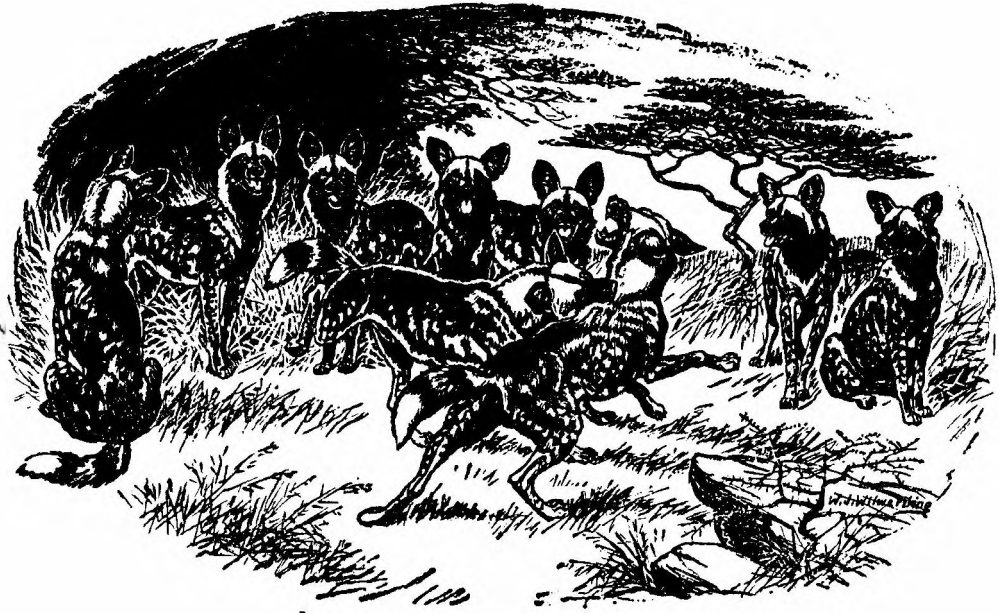
With an eager jump Pictus joined the pack following at the doomed creature's heels.

on earth—while at his very heels, lightly galloping, the wild-dogs followed in such close formation that it appeared as though he were pursued by a floating, mottled rug.

One look was enough for Pictus; then with an eager jump he had joined the pack and was following at the doomed creature's heels. The others seemed to take him for granted, even though he was young and small, for it is the habit of

these beasts to send some of their kind ahead, along the expected run of the victim, so that these can relay others who have become tired in the chase. No pack of hounds, no matter how well trained and directed by a master, could do a better—or as strategic—a job of hunting.

Pictus now had an excellent opportunity for gaining experience in these methods, for the pack chased the oryx in a circle, and at intervals others, who



Embwa tore Pictus' shoulder open with a searing slash of fangs.

had stationed themselves ahead, would join the hunt while the winded ones rested. So the chase continued: tired ones dropping out, while others, fresh and rested, continually ran in to take their places, with such dexterity that it was difficult to tell when one had left the pack and another had joined, until at last, winded and desperate, the oryx stood at bay, sweeping great circles about him with his twin, saber-pointed horns.

One wild dog was tossed, run through the neck; another got a point through the belly; still another was raked from chest to tail. But then an old campaigner rushed up from behind and with two great snaps of fangs, the valiant oryx was hamstrung and helpless. His useless hind legs gave way and the pack was upon him. . . .

Then they ate—and when the sun rose, the oryx was but a mass of splintered bones. It was time to den up for the day; so, loping along in the bright African morning, with Pictus following a bit timidly near the rear, they betook their mottled forms to a desolate stretch of veldt. Here, in holes in the ground, dug by wart-hogs and appropriated by this wolf-like crew—who had no doubt made meals of the original owners—the wild-dog pack made their homes.

IT would seem Pictus' troubles were over when he joined the pack—but every Paradise must have its serpent, and Pictus soon found that Embwa, an ill-

tempered old male, took it as his special duty to harass and pester the young dog.

The old dog had been whipped consistently by every male member of the pack, and now he took keen delight in the fact that he had at last found some one that he could bully.

Feeding or drinking, at rest, or loping about on the veldt, it was always the same. If Pictus chose a certain burrow in which to hole up for the day, Embwa would be sure to hunt him up and rout him out so that he could use the burrow himself. When game was run down, the bully was sure to worry Pictus aside so that he could take his place at the kill. If other wild-dogs contested the right to eat with Embwa and drove him away, he would in turn drive Pictus away from wherever he found him feeding. It was the age-old game of the weak giving place to the strong.

Pictus had, however, the blood of a bold and pugnacious sire in his veins and one evening, when he had killed a *springhaas* all by himself, which Embwa at once tried to take from him, he turned with bared fangs to defend himself. For a moment the old scoundrel gave ground; then, realizing that he had the advantage in size, he rushed in to annihilate this young one who dared defy him.

In a flash he had thrown Pictus off his feet and was reaching in with dagger-like fangs to tear out his throat. In that moment Pictus' self-confidence deserted him and he yelped like a puppy,

for he was still little more than a cub. The yelp saved his life, for a female, who had pups of her own in the home den, recognized the call as that of a young wild-dog, and mother-instinct brought her instantly to Pictus' aid.

Like a battle-seasoned Amazon, she threw herself at the murderous Embwa and diverted his attention from his intended victim. Then, standing between him and Pictus, she defied him with glistening fangs.

For a moment the old dog debated whether or not he should attempt to drive the female away and finish the business with Pictus; but the rumpus had brought up others of the pack, who were ringed about in a menacing circle, and he dared not, for the wild-dog law keeps the female inviolate and he knew if he should attack her, these others would tear him to fragments.

He looked about uneasily, growling low in his throat; then, recognizing her mate in the crowd that circled them, he slunk away, for he had had experience with this one's fangs before and the memory made him doubly cautious.

However, this day's experience seemed to increase his dislike for Pictus and he continued to harass him on every occasion. Only in the hunt he dared not molest him, for there the iron rule of the wild-dog clan was that discipline must be preserved.

But there was plenty of game, the kills were frequent, and in spite of the bullying and pestering, Pictus grew rapidly. In his second year he was a splendid beast, whose wits and senses had been unusually sharpened, by the necessity of looking out for himself from puppyhood.

Then he cast a longing eye upon a she, for it was the mating moon when fierce hyena-dogs soften their hearts and think of domesticity as well as hunting. But here again Embwa came into his life, for he had also looked upon many shes with favor and each time had been obliged to contest, with other males, the right to mate. Each time, as had ever been the case, he had lost.

Now, as he had always helped himself to whatever Pictus had, he proposed also to help himself to the mate that Pictus had selected. At any rate, he thought this could be readily accomplished, for hadn't he driven this young upstart about whenever he wished?

One thing, however, he had failed to recall—this was that Pictus was no longer the small weak puppy which he had

been when he had joined the pack. It had of late been more habit than anything else for Pictus to give way to Embwa. He had grown in size and strength without realizing it, which was the sole reason why he had not turned upon the older dog since the time the female had saved his life.

PICTUS lay by his new mate's side in the early flush of the African sunset time. Francolin called, "*More-rain, more-rain!*" in the veldt-grass, as they made their cautious way to the places where they would roost in the thorn-trees. Guinea-fowl flocked in stridently calling black masses, preparatory to flying to the flat tops of the acacias. Sand-grouse winged their way to the open veldt from water, calling their guttural, "*Eh-ah-ah, eh-ah-ah!*" as they flew. A distant, nervous band of zebras—conscious of the wild-dogs' presence in this place—galloped to their evening drink, stopping every now and then, with necks stiffly erect, to test the wind.

Pictus listened to the varied sounds of the veldt, his eyes taking in the movements of everything that passed before him, but most of all his eyes were on the sleek black, white and yellow mate at his side, and he did not notice Embwa's approach until the old dog was almost upon him. Instantly he was on his feet, but instead of giving ground as before, a warning "*Keep-off!*" growl emerged from his throat.

This was a new experience for Embwa, as far as Pictus was concerned, and with a hideous growl he rushed at Pictus to drive him off. But instead of running away, Pictus rushed him in turn, and in a rage, laid open the skin on the old dog's neck with a raking slash.

For a moment the older dog stood back in surprise; then, enraged by his wound and feeling sure that he could best the younger dog as he always had, he returned to the attack like a fiend.



The veldt rang with the combat. Pictus' mate ran to one side to give them room, and the whole pack, attracted by the tumult, ringed round about and watched, with tongues lolling.

Slash, counter, circle about, snarl and growl, and snap and chop of fangs! Running in and out again and again; leaping deftly to one side; biting quickly and getting away; ripping at mottled hide; fang against fang!

Now the old dog's hide had the color of red added to its black and yellow and white, but still he could not believe this younger dog would best him in battle. Maliciously, fiendishly, viciously, Embwa fought back, not daring to believe that he would lose.

Then fortune favored Embwa for a moment, for Pictus oversprang in the fury of an attack, and as his feet slid in the dry earth and carried him past the older dog, Embwa took advantage of the situation. Turning savagely, he tore Pictus' shoulder open with a searing slash of fangs, sending Pictus off his feet with the impact of the attack. At once he was at Pictus' throat and the ring of wild-dogs stood up eagerly, ready to tear the vanquished Pictus to pieces, for such is their way.

But Pictus met those closing fangs with fangs of his own; in a split atom of time, he regained his feet and was at the old dog again.

The wound on his shoulder filled him with a crazed fury, and leaping under Embwa's fanged guard, he tore at his enemy's throat. Again and again and again he leaped in swiftly, until it seemed there were wild-dogs jumping in at Embwa from every direction. Suddenly the old dog was off his feet—one growl, one sickening slash of fangs, one worrying shake. . . . The pack closed in and it was over.

And if the moon had ears, as she rode high over the veldt that night, she would have heard the bell-like hunting call of the hyena-dogs as they scoured the veldt, and if she had eyes she would have seen one of that pack running proudly by the side of a beautiful female—one who had won the right to run with the foremost of the hunters, and whose days of furtive skulking on the outskirts of the pack were past.

"Hoo-o-o-o, hoo-o-o-o-o, hoo-o-o-o!" Pictus added his voice to the baying chorus. Life was perilous, furious; life was fierce and savage; but—life could also be sweet.

Ride Him,

Wherein a Dark Knight rides forth in armor, and a one-man parade thereupon becomes a riot.

By ARTHUR
K. AKERS

"FROGFACE" REEVES didn't care who made his nation's laws, so long as the right boys continued to count his lodge's ballots. For he had just been named Supreme State Potentate of the dusky Sons of Asia, Africa, and America by a majority inadvertently but slightly exceeding that organization's total membership—a feat already giving rise to reliable reports that his defeated rival, the short-legged little Napoleon Nash, was "settin' in his pressin'-shop hollerin' like a hog under a gate" about it, and meditating mayhem upon Mr. Reeves.

But as the larger, louder man, Frogface was refusing to worry: mistakes occurred in even the best-conducted election frauds! Besides, was not all fair in love and war? And he and Napoleon were already at war, for the love of the fair Geraldine Ford—Geraldine, who was ever apt in following the fads and fashions of her sisters under the skin, the white-folks ladies of Capitol and Commissioners streets. If they swam, Geraldine swam; if they rode—

Which but brings up the bitterness in which Napoleon—on her front porch with the giggling Geraldine a morning later—had to absorb fresh irritant in old wounds as a gay group of these ladies cantered across the end of Hogan's Alley, for they reminded Geraldine in their passage: "Mist' Reeves done say he gwine give *me* a hawss today to ride, too."

"*Hawss to ride?*" yelped Napoleon as Mr. Reeves' latest stroke in his campaign penetrated far beneath his spiritual skin.

"Uh-huh. Boy what own him jest git in de jail-house, so Mist' Reeves 'range

Frogface!



"Make jest one more crack around Ge'dine about no hawss," he hissed, "and I knocks you loose from yo' face an' hands."

Illustrated by
Everett Lowry

for me to have de hawss—keep him in de stable back here left over from my papa runnin' de dray-wagon. Sho is noble!"

Mr. Nash squirmed anew. Geraldine on horseback would be looking down from fresh altitudes on a pedestrian suit-or like himself! "Frawgface gwine set down on a tack one dese days, too," he prophesied yearningly. "Den aint be nothin' left but de bang. He aint nothin' but a lot of noise."

"Jealous, aint you?" sniffed Geraldine happily. "Well, den, all you got do is jest keep on settin' here, and you'll see!"

"See what?"

"Mist' Reeves comin' ridin' up on what gwine be my hawss till de other boy git out of de jail. Classy!"

"Sets and sees no two-legged hipp'-potamus ride up on *no* hawss!" rebelled Mr. Nash firmly. "Gal, I's lovin' wid you, but I aint dat lovin'—yit! Frawgface makes my ankles ache, nohow!"

"Little anklin' along liable to help 'em, den," suggested Geraldine pointedly.

Napoleon ankled—to come upon something that fired his soul with an unholy joy. Six blocks down all-but-deserted Ash Street he came upon a catastrophe—one centering about a large, bony white horse that stood first upon his hind legs and then upon his fore; rearing and plunging with a fire and spirit totally at variance with an outward appearance of having just missed the glue-factory by

a hair. Between buckings, he reached savagely with yellowed teeth for the two hundred pounds of dusky rider who clung noisily to his neck.

"*Frawgface!*" cried Mr. Nash, joyously recognizing the rider-in-distress.

"*Hold de hawss! Help! H-e-l-p! Hold de hawss!*" howled the frantic horseman. But he was too late. With a final convulsive leap, the animal rid himself of his incubus—and spread-eagled, squalling hideously, the new-made Supreme Potentate sailed headfirst through the air, crashed sickeningly against a vacant house, ricocheted, and fetched up in a shower of glass and kindling-wood on the floor of its porch.

The horse snorted, whirled, and galloped from the scene in a clatter of hoofs that further belied the prominence of his hips and ribs.

This action gave to the agape Mr. Nash a better idea than waiting around for the breath to return to the flattened Frogface. Why not see Geraldine first, tell her all the gruesome details before Frogface could arrive to gloss it over?

Upon which Mr. Nash too was gone at a gallop.

But Fate—and the horse—conspired to upset his apple-cart. In that, as he arrived panting before the house of Ford, the horse was already there! Geraldine was patting him proudly, fussing with his saddle solicitously.

"Jest gittin' dis sharp rock out from under his saddle." She held up an object that could well account for what Mr. Nash had just witnessed.



"Mist' Reeves done say he gwine give me a hawss today to ride."

Napoleon gulped—and lost an opening. "Mist' Reeves gittin' be powerful big man in de lodge now!" she rattled on. "Must've been too busy to ride de hawss here hisself; so he jest sent it. And I thought I tells you good-by, mad, a little while ago. One thing I aint got time to mess wid is little sawed-off runts what also-ran in de lodge election! De boy what steps out wid me got to look good on a hawss, from now on, too!"

Still in a fog from the turn events had taken, Mr. Nash limped toward a familiar haven. Cupid had few sorrows that a little barbecue wouldn't help.

Mr. "Bees'-Knees" Thompson, proprietor of the Hill's favorite stand, proved to be not only alone but inclined to broadcast. "Hears de lodge boys is gwine throw a big one next week," he brought gossip along with Napoleon's coffee.

"Hears what from who? —And craves my sugar widout."

"Widout what?"

"Ants."

"Talks like you was payin' cash! —Hears it from Frawgface, dat who. He gwine pull off de big State con-vo-cation of de lodge here, he say—wid parade."

Napoleon looked outside and shivered. "Mighty cold weather to be pullin' no parade," he deprecated.

"Aint care how cold 'tis; Frogface fixin' bust Fish Alley wide open! Cain't

see nobody but him when de parade gits movin'!"

"Cain't hear nobody but him, you means. Dat big-mouth boy aint got no sense—jest lungs. Gwine set on a tack some day."

"Boy wid a bright yaller unifawm like his'n aint need no sense: women sees and hears him afur off."

Mr. Nash bit a segment out of his cup and choked on it, at the accuracy of Mr. Thompson's observation. Geraldine was just like that!

Leaving his lunch unfinished, the distraught Napoleon shuffled forth to die in the open. All the world loved a horse-man, it seemed; but he couldn't qualify—while the sharp rock explained Frog-face's recent downfall, even had Geraldine known of it.

But his feet, like his heart, proved creatures of habit. Too late, he again found himself midway between a familiar gate and porch, where voices first arrested, then invited him.

"Come right on up, 'Poleon!" boomed the one he hated most to hear. "Craves myself creases in my unifawm breeches. Tell me you shoves a mean goose in yo' pressin'-shop."

Mr. Nash gulped helplessly. His call was already getting to be business instead of social!

"Dat's right!" chimed in a yet-invisible Geraldine. "'Poleon presses pants swell."

Mounting the steps failed to improve the situation for the fussed Mr. Nash, merely bringing into clearer view as it did the portly form—in riding-breeches—of his rival in lodge and love.

"Aint had no hawss-trouble lately, is you, Frawgface?" queried the angered Napoleon more pointedly than politely.

Mr. Reeves' instant answering glare was capable of killing at forty paces. But Geraldine was too busy enjoying a couple of gentlemen hating each other over her to bother with innuendoes.

"Naw!" snapped Mr. Reeves venomously, as he got swiftly to his ample feet. "And, speakin' about pants, Ge'ldine, I got to give mine to dis pressin'-boy here, like I says. He's leavin' right now, so I goes to de gate wid him, tell him whar to git 'em."

But, *en route* to giving Mr. Nash the gate, Frogface's talk was not of trousers. Rather: "Make jest *one more crack* around Ge'ldine about no hawss!" he hissed, "and I knocks you loose from yo' face and hands! I stomps you so

flat de sparrers has to kneel down to peck you! You hear me? Beca'ze *Ge'ldine* aint know I aint ride no haws before." Then, raising his voice to its usual bellow, "—and you git de creases in dem pants sharp, too, you hear?"

"What 'Poleon gone off mumblin' to hissself now?" shortly after inquired a curious Geraldine, when Frogface had returned, making self-dusting motions with his palms.

"What dat boy mumble to *hissself*," boomed Mr. Reeves significantly, "aint 'mount to nothin'; it's what he mumbles to *me*—or about *me*—dat liable make de difference is dey lilies or vittles on de front of his vest from now on!"

A GAIN a pedestrian in a world of horse-men, it seemed to him, Mr. Nash sought saddened surcease in barbecue.

"Whar you gwine next?" the affable Bees'-Knees climaxed comment on the coming lodge parade.

"Take my brains out and shoot 'em; dey aint doin' dey stuff."

"Maybe dey jest needs sharpenin', git a point on 'em—" hazarded Mr. Thompson jocosely, then paused agape. Even as he uttered his latest words, lightning seemed to have struck his customer. Under its impact, Mr. Nash seemed to have stepped upon two live wires and a wasp, and been jolted into an animation that made his eyes shine with a new and unearthly light, as though he were dreaming dreams and seeing visions. Then he was overturning his chair, clattering toward the door.

"Whar you say you gwine?" called the astounded Bees'-Knees after him.

"To de lodge! Wid a double-barreled idea—old lodge gwine have parade *now* what *is* a parade!" caroled this new Napoleon in his flight.

And it was in this fine glow and fervor that Mr. Nash came at length to the lodge hall, to find the parade committee fortuitously assembled upon its steps in deep discussion of ways, means, and novelties.

"Shove over, you boys, and listen!" Napoleon joyously joined them. "You aint never been nowhar and you aint never seen no parade, till you gits a load of what *I* just thunk up!"

Skepticism reared its head, however. "Us been listenin' to ideas all day—and aint none of 'em no good! Spill another bum one, and let's git it over wid."

But as Mr. Nash revealed his idea, a change came over the assembled ex-

perts; there was a gradual exposure of awed tonsils as mouths fell ajar in admiration. *This* would be a wow! "—And us announces de plans as a surprise Sat'day night, at de big joint-meetin' of de Sons and de Ladies Auxil'ary!" applauded the chairman. "It'll show de brothers de committee is on de job—not countin' knockerin' dem visitin' brothers from Bessemer for a row of owl-aiggs besides! Aint never been no parade like dat round here before—only jest in de movies!"

Fanning himself in yellow-uniformed glory on the Three-A lodge-hall platform Saturday evening, Supreme Potentate Frogface Reeves looked patronizingly about him. When he pulled this coming State convocation, even Napoleon Nas' must admit that the end had justified the means—of Frogface's election.

Bursting with big and unrevealed secrets, the parade committee sat in the front seats immediately before the Potentate. Convenient to a rear exit, in case of accidents, stood that idea-man Napoleon Nash. Routine business ended, the Supreme Potentate swelled still further—and called for a report from his committee on parade arrangements.

HE got it. "—And so," its chairman at length neared his climax, "us pulls something brand-new and novel in dese parts, to astound, fumigate, and flabbergast de visitin' brothers; in a word, Mist' Reeves and fellow-members, a *roamin' parade*—"

"Pulls *which*?" puzzled Mr. Reeves.

"Roamin' warriors, like in de movies," explained the chairman proudly yet condescendingly. "Wid shields, and spears, all de brothers marchin' bare-laigged in sheets behind you, and you—"

Frogface tried to look modest but muffed it.

"You—" the chairman was looking right at him, "ridin' noble, in shinin' armor, *on a hawss!*"

A pin could have been heard to drop as, rapt, the startled membership *got* it! Envisioned ecstatically the embarrassment of rival lodges; the discomfiture of Dothan, the envy of Epes, as magnificent in their minds at the head of his Roman legions rode that mighty potentate, Frogface Reeves, America's newest Man on Horseback!

So rapt, indeed, that they missed a sudden alien sound—like water gurgling from an emptying bathtub—as the full import of the scheme also penetrated

the Potentate! A Potentate for whom the tracks of his rival, Napoleon Nash, had become sickeningly plain about the trap that had been set and baited for him. He who had never ridden a horse in his life, but once—and as he thought of that catastrophe, shudders shook his frame, sweat started.

But even as Mr. Reeves reeled from memory of the actions of his horse that time, vague new hopes were dashed to earth, as the chairman piled Pelion upon equine Ossa with: "And for which purpose us is done arranged also for de hawss, borrowin' it from Sister Ge'dine Ford—"

The same horse! From the stricken Chair issued moans as of some wounded animal licking its hurts in the underbrush, only to be instantly drowned by the swift-mounting acclamations of the crowd—a Chair whose attempts to look overjoyed at the outlook collided chillingly with apprehensions over the outcome. Horror reared higher its hideous head—and looked exactly like a horse! Wait until he could catch this Napoleon! But meantime—

"Sh—sho is a swell idea some f—somebody done thunk up!" rallied the greenish-gilled Mr. Reeves.

ON Geraldine's front porch the next Sunday, matters proved to have taken a further turn for the worse with the trapped Frogface, equinely speaking, for Geraldine was thrilling and Frogface chilling for exactly the same reason: her man and her horse were both fixing to get in the limelight. Until, if her heart still whispered of the humble, pants-pressing Napoleon, her head kept cheering for Frogface as the more glamorous and glittering prize.

"Whar at you gwine git yo'self your shinin' armor, Mist' Reeves?" she chattered.

"Frisco Johnson makin' it for me, over at de roof-and-gutter shop," Frogface continued strangely to lack enthusiasm.

"All dem warriors gwine look swell, too! Marchin' deyselvs barefoot amongst de onlookers, wid shields and spears, behind you!" rhapsodized Geraldine.

"Sho is," Frogface endorsed the parade as planned by Napoleon, as he would the smallpox.

"Sounds like you is sick," his love caught the flatness of his tone.

"I is—sick of Napoleon Nash!"

Geraldine giggled delightedly. Playing gentlemen against each other was the

royal road to results. "Why aint you git out on de hawss and practise ridin' him some, too?" she queried. "Wants see you knock 'em dead, big boy, when dat parade start!"

"Aint *need* no practise!" Frogface hurriedly headed off complications. "Gal, when *I* rides, *hawss-flies* takes lessons! Besides, ride dat hawss too much before de parade, and liable tame him down. Craves my women and hawsses wild."

BUT in a later conference with a certain jaundiced-souled Marmaduke Brown, long his involuntary assistant and accomplice, Mr. Reeves' note was different; his long brain-racking since Napoleon had pulled his latest *coup* was beginning to bear fruit.

"How you gwine stick on dat hawss, wearin' all dat gutterin'-work, Frawg-face?" Mr. Brown was proving that no man is a hero—or a horseman—to his valet. "He done done eve'ything but step in yo' face de *last* time you gits on him."

"Been thinkin' some," essayed Frogface hastily, "of—"

"You better do more'n think: you better look—see is dat hawss weakenin' none yit," countered Marmaduke. "Come on."

Whereupon, in Geraldine's father's former stable abutting the alley, Frogface looked at the horse, and the horse looked at the two-hundred-pound Frogface. And sickness seemed to enter the soul of each.

"I had a uncle once—got arrested for throwin' rocks at a hawss," recalled Mr. Reeves gloomily. "Sho was a smart man!"

He circled the horse glumly. Geraldine's gain was visibly some glue-factory's loss. Yet horses were temperamental: look what happened last time he mounted this one! And a Potentate who got astride an unreliable horse in a lot of tin armor to parade before the admiring and envious eyes of thousands—including his lady-love—needed guaranties. Beyond a few stirrings, his intellect had evolved no exit from the predicament into which Napoleon Nash had so hideously plunged him. He *had* to ride now!

Yet suddenly, as Mr. Reeves re-shuddered at a memory, and the prospect, he staggered, gasped, and swelled. He had it! And Napoleon thought he had him sewed up, to be made a laughingstock before Geraldine and the visiting thousands, did he? Well—there might not

"Whar-at my hawss? Craves me my hawss! R'arin' to go!" bawled Mr. Reeves.



be anything Frogface could do with the situation, but with the horse—

"Mammaduck," he whirled happily on his aide, "you is been fotched up in a stable: what is dey do when dey craves a bum hawss to pep hisself up and win a race?"

Marmaduke blinked apprehensively. "Gen'ally gingers 'em up," he drew on shady past experience.

"And suppose dey *aint* want him to win? Craves to calm him down, reliable?"

"Dopes him den, sometimes. Why?"

"Beca'ze," revealed Mr. Reeves triumphantly, "dat is what *you* is gwine do to dat hawss of Ge'aldine's, de night befo' I rides him in de parade: you dopes him, till I rides while he sleeps!"

"Burglary," rebelled Mr. Brown firmly, "is low-down as I gits, workin' for you."

Frogface turned on him angrily. "Git some sense in you!" he bellowed. "I ax you how it look for *me* to do it? Supreme Potentate of de lodge—back in a alley at night, dopin' a hawss!"

"Look like hell," conceded Marmaduke obstinately. "Dat how-come I aint—"

"But you *is*—else aint nobody but you can save me de trouble of tellin' de

white-folks who borrowed dem two tires off de policeman's motorcycle last Sat'-day—"

"Whar-at de dope?" surrendered Mr. Brown, ungraciously but unconditionally.

"De paregoric pain-killer sets handy by de clock in my room. You gits it and sweetens dis hawss' rations heavy wid it de night befo' de parade. Also, you sleeps wid de hawss too—see dey aint no *more* skullduggery. Craves my hawsses reliable. Now stand back while I circulates. Aint no runt like Napoleon can pull a fast one on me! Spreads de word pussonal dat I rides dis heah hawss to a standstill in de big parade. Den I does it."

"At a standstill, you means!" mumbled Mr. Brown sarcastically.

But Frogface was leaving, not listening, serene in new assurance that no horse would throw *him* in public again. A smart man could always out-think and out-woo a runt, anyhow—as Geraldine would see for herself when the applause had died down at the end of the parade.

Yet, in the meantime, Frogface found himself incomplete without an audience.

But there were audiences and audiences; with his need now being for one composed only of Geraldine and Napoleon: one to hear and the other to overhear. For the hatchet needed ostensible—and ostentatious—burial now, that it might be dug up undulled later.

OPPORTUNELY Mr. Nash hove in sight. "How about swallerin' yourself a little barbecue wid me, 'Poleon?" Frogface sang out disarmingly to him.

Mr. Nash hesitated, then fell. He would swallow his pride any time an adversary proffered the peace-pipe—or a little hot barbecue.

"Ge'ldine comin' too," added Frogface as Napoleon indicated his acceptance.

A worried look got entangled in Napoleon's eyebrows and worked up into his scalp. Greeks bearing gifts like this would again bear watching.

"Supreme Potentate 'bleeged to act friendly wid all de brothers," Mr. Reeves noted and answered it, "—aint matter how close dey resembles a skunk. Here she come now!"

Geraldine proved all eager appetite.

"How de hawss gittin' on?" keynoted Mr. Reeves through his first mouthful.

Geraldine's eyes widened. So did Napoleon's; horses, he had thought, would be a sore subject with the trapped Frogface.

"Steppin' about," rejoined Geraldine. "But remembers you say you likes 'em wild."

"Hawsses and women," rejoined Mr. Reeves largely, "I craves 'em both wild. Cain't git 'em too wild for me no more."

Mr. Nash's lower jaw went and sat down in his lap. The worried look passed his ears, going south. For he had detected a distinct new emphasis on Frogface's last two words—as though something new and dark had developed in the woodpile. Frogface, though crushed to earth, it seemed, would rise again, flying fresh symptoms of a new ace in the hole!

"Fish Alley," where Napoleon drifted, afforded no comfort, filled as it was with out-of-town lodge brothers whose mouths and minds seemed wholly occupied with the coming glories of Frogface on horseback, at the head of his legions. New hints arose that Frogface was going up again, Mr. Nash coming down—hints that Geraldine would be sure to harvest and harbor.

All of which but further reminded and roweled Mr. Nash as signs that some

new and damaging understanding had been reached between Frogface and the horse, while Geraldine's air had made it all too plain that if Frogface rode Napoleon walked—alone forevermore. None but the brave deserve the fair—and Frogface's personally broadcast bravery could already be heard for nine blocks roundabout when the wind was right.

Mulling over this built up in the bothered Mr. Nash a vast fascination: he must go and look upon this horse that had unhorsed him. And it would be better if he went after dark, for tomorrow was the parade.

"Brains, step on yo'selfs!" urged Napoleon listlessly as he strove to spur an exhausted organ into life. But it lay dormant, barren after the magnificent effort that had brought forth the scheme of the Roman parade.

Now Frogface had somehow blocked him there as well, turned it to his own mysterious advantage, and was facing the parade with puzzling confidence.

AT length night came to Geraldine's alley. Napoleon Nash crept sadly, stealthily up its darkened way toward the horse which the boastful Frogface had converted now into a boomerang to bring low the Napoleon who had flung it.

Then he came to the stable, where he gazed long and despairingly through a crack at the shadowy figure of the horse, a horse that no longer reared and plunged, but stood quietly, all fire and spirit gone. Indeed, the very aroma of somnolence seemed about him, embodied in an odor familiar yet perplexing, as though left over from his childhood. Curiously, again Napoleon sniffed; he had smelled that smell before. Then he had it! *Paregoric!* So that was why Frogface's noisy confidence had returned with such a rush: the horse that he now would ride was—and would be—all but asleep on his feet!

Then a new element entered, the sound of a snore. And in all Demopolis there was but one snore like this snore—that of Marmaduke Brown, Frogface's shrimp-sized accomplice. Even as Napoleon recognized it he realized that Marmaduke was present in the stall in the capacity of insurance: Mr. Brown was Mr. Reeves' insurance against any further dirty work at the crossroads. He who double-crossed last, double-crossed best. And cannon-fire would not arouse this



"Whoa! Whoa! Whar-at de brakes? Whoa!" howled the frantic Frogface.

Marmaduke, Frogface, and—later—Napoleon Nash, loud among the fire-fighters. Indeed from the excited throng that gathered, only Frogface's horse seemed absent. And he, as the returning Marmaduke carefully reassured himself in the darkness before resuming his own roof-raising snores in the hay beside him, had slumbered paregorically through it all.

Then, all too soon, it was morning. Reluctant fire-fighters aroused themselves, to find the rest of Baptist Hill astir. It was the Day! The day-of the great lodge parade. Only Frogface's horse could remain asleep in the face of that. And him Marmaduke awoke with difficulty, that he might munch further upon hay that had been duly dosed with soothing fluid.

All dusky Alabama, it seemed, was trying to crowd into Bees'-Knees' barbecue-stand, where Supreme Potentate Reeves nourished noisily in riding-breeches and the limelight.

At length Mr. Reeves heaved himself to his feet. "Fire up dat solderin'-pot now, Frisco!" he addressed his personal tinner loudly. "I is fixin' to lead dem legions!"

Then, turning magnificently to a hanger-on, "Boy, *my hawss!* Tell Mamma-duck to fetch my hawss!"

In mid-bite, cotton-patch delegates paused to marvel! Geraldine giggled and gurgled. This was her man—also

horse again—with the Big Parade not twelve hours away.

Desperately Napoleon racked and roweled his brain, but nothing happened.

"Gives you one more chance," the foiled and despairing Mr. Nash at last addressed the numbed and inert mass within his skull that once had been a brain. "But lay down on me much longer, and I shoots you like a dawg!"

Yet it was hours later before, in the Bees'-Knees' barbecue-stand, the shrunken and saddened form of Napoleon Nash was suddenly seen to straighten sharply in the gloom behind the stand's stove: "I tells Ge'ldine! I tells Bees'-Knees! But I aint never thunk to tell myself! Boy, you is got it!" he was heard to mutter then, before he plunged headlong and hatless into the night.

Quite in another direction, sometime later, however, the pre-Waterloo quiet of Baptist Hill was rudely broken. By discovery of a fire in the same alley with the home and stable of Geraldine, but some four blocks distant. . . . A fire in which six empty barrels and a chicken-coop were mysteriously consumed; with

her horse. She cast a fleeting glance toward Napoleon. If Napoleon only had some class to him, rode a horse, gave a girl *something* to brag about—instead of all the time humping in a corner as if he was waiting for something. . . .

Emerging, it was to find the streets of Baptist Hill already jammed with early seekers after vantage-points. Curbs grew crowded as the zero-hour neared for the great parade.

Revision of plans had put Geraldine on a porch instead of in the procession: "Whar-at you can see me go by better," Frogface had pointed out the advantages of this change. "And kind of stand back too, gal, is de hawss act up. I takes in a whole mess of territory sometimes when I tames a hawss."

Napoleon said nothing, not even of what his mysterious flight from the barbecue-stand the previous evening had meant, until upon him the exultant Frogface paused to loose his first approving glance in months. Here, his patronizing look plainly said, was a boy who knew when he was licked.

Napoleon in turn continually eyed the Potentate's bulk with what seemed a new interest—estimatingly, appraisingly—and kept on saying nothing. All with the air of one who at last can wait. . . .

Then armed hosts from Demopolis Lodge Number 268 began pattering volubly past, bearing shields of gilded pasteboard and spears of river-cane, while along the Hill sounded the preliminary stir and boom of drums, the far faint tootling of a calliope.

Field Marshal Aspirin Edwards, of the parade—in civil life chauffeur on the municipal dog-wagon—shot sputtering back and forth on his motorcycle. A lodge brother from Boligee was run over twice, in his eagerness to miss nothing. Everywhere grew and swelled the noisy conviction that this would be Demopolis'—and Frogface's—greatest day.

AT the roof-and-guttering shop, meanwhile, Frisco Johnson was looking askance at an expanding client. "Let Frawgface swell a *little* more," he grumbled to a sweating assistant tinner, "and old size forty-eight stouts' armor aint gwine fit him no more—bust hisself up de back in it like a locust in August!"

Then suddenly all was hushed before the impatient outcries of a horseman again calling for his horse, but slightly muffled by the tinware of his helmet.

"Whar-at my hawss? Craves me my hawss! R'arin' to go!" bellowed Mr. Reeves.

At which the ninety-pound Marmaduke appeared, to edge his way glumly forward.

"Old hawss right outside," he reported under his breath. "Rides him over here in his sleep."

"Aint no rocks nor nothin' under his saddle?" the mighty horseman checked up.

"Nothin' dar but de saddle-blanket," gloomed Mr. Brown.

"Okay! Lemme at de hawss!" clarified Mr. Reeves, reassured. And magnificently a-clatter, like knight in armor that he was, he strode to the door, flung it wide, and revealed himself proudly.

BEFORE him to the very crest of the Hill stretched his audience, a sea of dark but ivory-punctuated faces. Among them, he recalled happily, was Geraldine's—also Napoleon's. And it would do Napoleon good, teach him his place, to see a Potentate ride as a potentate should this day! Then he brought his gaze nearer, to focus it upon where his waiting mount, gayly caparisoned, leaned somnolently against a post and all but snored. There, expanded Mr. Reeves, was a horse that would give no trouble!

Squires sprang forward, hostlers strained at heel and thigh, and with a vast heave and clatter of guttering, Supreme Potentate Frogface Reeves was aboard his steed. Behind him stood his legions; before him lay Geraldine and glory! While as for Napoleon Nash—

But just here, as the Potentate's weight settled snugly in the saddle, something seemed to happen, to the horse. He looked up, back, and then—despite ample olfactory evidence that he had been duly dosed, new life inexplicably appeared. Without warning he leaped wildly into the air.

Mr. Reeves squealed. The horse also squealed, then stood straight up upon his hind legs and whinnied wildly.

Mr. Reeves whinnied too, and clutched madly at his horse's neck. The horse moved his neck. Also all four of his legs—stiffly but violently.

"Ride him, Frawgface!" came delighted cries that swelled to a roar. Frogface had been loudly promising them horse-taming. And publicly he had craved them wild!

"Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! Whar-at de brakes? Whoa!" howled the frantic

Frogface. But his every movement seemed but to disturb his steed the more. Then the horse bolted with him, headlong and straight down the line of march. With the agonized Potentate, his coveted neck-hold achieved, now clinging clamorously there, streaming backward in the wind like some huge metallic mane.

Ahead, the field marshal, all but caught napping, shot madly into action, mistakenly clearing the way on his motorcycle for what was rapidly becoming the world's fastest one-man parade. While behind—far behind—panted the bewildered band, the wheezing calliope, the outrun and outraged legions of the lodge.

"*Ride him, Frawgface!*" roared ever louder from curb and fence and roof.

"*Whoa! Whoa, I hollers!*" shrieked the speeding and unheeding Potentate. But only a wilder clatter of hoofs joined and answered the wilder clangor of his personal tinware as his speed increased. Old paregoric, wailed Frogface to the winds, was unaccountably working in reverse. Somewhere, some one had done him wrong!

But, "*Ride him, Frawgface!*" rang the mounting roar. Faces on the sidewalks had long since become an indistinguishable blur of ivory-shot brown. Before him the brief-glimpsed Bees'-Knees' barbecue-stand was a landmark, only to indicate, in turn, a new cataclysm ahead. For it meant that in another block now he would be passing the spot—soon to be marked X—where he had so proudly parked Geraldine, for the purpose of impressing her as he passed!

Gooseflesh sprang out upon him, but ever the panic of the horse fed upon the panic of the rider, it seemed. Mr. Reeves could no longer think: he could but suffer and squall—and impotently suspect.

THE saddle-blanket was working loose now, the saddle turning, but the girth still tightly held. The runaway had become a riot, life a nightmare, all centering about the vast uproar emanating from his own clanging armor. While, "*Ride him, Frawgface!*" ever rose the ecstatic shouts of the spectators, to mingle with his misery.

Then suddenly, spectacularly, Frogface no longer rode: he flew. Familiarly he found himself soaring again over the head of his maddened mount, in magnificent and shrieking parabola—until, with all the sound and fury of a train of empty tank-cars colliding head-on with a can factory, he crashed ingloriously to the

sidewalk at the startled feet of Geraldine his love!

His steed bucked once again, slackened speed, sought a tree—and leaned gratefully against it in slumber as incredible as it was undeniable!

MELLOW that night shone the moon upon the porch of Geraldine Ford, where behind the sheltering vines love—and enlightenment—made happy progress at last.

"Took de lodge-boys about two hours wid a can-opener and a blow-torch to git dat Frawgface four-flusher undressed out of all dat shinin' armor of his'n!" giggled Geraldine reminiscently. "Wonder what make dat hawss act up so—den go back to sleep again!"

Beside her in the swing a Napoleon who had suddenly begun to bear a startling resemblance to the well-known strategist Bonaparte, of the same name, moved an arm with a new assurance and possessiveness. "Maybe," he edged still nearer to her, "it was de saddle-blanket."

"Saddle-blanket?"

"Gal, when two boys like Frawgface Reeves and Mammaduck Brown starts double-crossin' *me*, I spits on my brains and shows 'em what double-crossin' *is!* Ricollects in de barbecue-stand last night late what *I* been tellin' eve'ybody all de time!"

"Says you! Why, what could you do? Wid dat runt Mammaduck rooming wid de hawss—guardin' him day and night. Den rides him, sleepin' peaceful, right plumb up *to* de parade, and hawss still aint act up—"

"Not till dat fat crook, Frawgface, git on him—naw. Dat's whar my brains comes in! —Also de tack I keeps on tellin' eve'ybody old Frawgface gwine set on some day."

"Tack?"

"What I sticks *almost* through de saddle-blanket last night while Mammaduck off fightin' fire I starts. Mammaduck can't see it. And Mammaduck so light he aint start nothin'. But, gal, when old fat Frawgface git aboard, he so heavy he mash dat tack right on through—to de hawss. And den de fireworks starts! Till old hawss flings him overboa'd—"

And for all the clank of ruined tinware just here, far off in outer darkness, Napoleon heard her murmur—interruptingly, illuminatingly: "Till *me and* de hawss flings him, you means, big boy! *Me and* de hawss!"

There's Murder

A powerful and fascinating novel, based on an idea that is really new, by the brilliant author of "The Game of Death" and "The Eternal Light."

By ROY CHANSLOR

The Story So Far:

A GIRL was playing the violin in a house in New York on the evening of February 15th, 1933, a girl who was young and beautiful—and blind and who was gifted with a strange power. With her were her father—Daniel Tyler, a former district attorney; and Nathaniel Benson, a young scientist.

Suddenly, there was a crashing discord and the music ceased.

The girl stood stiffly, bow aloft.

"Murder!" she said, hoarsely. "*Murder!* Black hate. . . . A mind churning with hate! Death. . . . Kill all rulers!" She gave a little gasp of horror.

"He is going to shoot Mr. Roosevelt!"

"Roosevelt is speaking at Miami Beach tonight!" Benson cried.

He ran to the radio, turned the dials. A confused roar could be heard, then the voice of the radio announcer:

"An assassin has just attempted to kill the President-elect! Mr. Roosevelt is unharmed, but Mayor Cermak of Chicago and others were struck by bullets."

"Mr. Tyler," said Benson later, "this is nothing supernatural. But we may be on the threshold of something so big—so important that it may affect the whole future of mankind.

"It's something that science has not been able to explain yet. We know that some persons, a very rare few, seem to have the power of receiving, as it were, *thoughts* or *images* or *something* from the minds of others. Almost as if the mind were a sort of super-acute radio antenna. Your daughter seems to have this power to a remarkable degree. Think what it may mean if, instead of knowing when disaster strikes, *she can foretell it!*"

"What a terrible responsibility for a child!" said Tyler.

"And for us," Nat said, gravely; for by the advice of Dr. Jan Karasc, an emi-

nent psychiatrist, Tyler had engaged him, without Ruth's knowledge, to live with them and study her strange power.

A few weeks later this power was manifested again. This time also it was while the blind girl was rapt in the music of her violin that the message came to her—some one, somewhere hated with a fury that meant murder. Finally the name came to her—Paul Gordon.

Tyler looked up that name, found it that of a wealthy financier. They called upon him at his country place—a great estate, close-fenced and guarded, where he lived with his son David, his second wife Carlotta, his daughter Hélène and his adopted daughter Doris.

He proved skeptical of Ruth's power—though guards about him proved what he denied: that he lived in fear of attack.

But a few nights later, the message came to Ruth again; Nat Benson called Gordon on the telephone to warn him; and even as Gordon answered, the crash of a pistol shot drowned his voice over the wire. But Gordon's movement in answering the phone was sufficient to distract the assassin's aim. The financier escaped—that time. And the would-be killer vanished. It seemed all too probable that he would try again, however; and it was therefore arranged that Ruth, with her father and Nat, should occupy a cottage on the Gordon estate, so any future warning might be given instantly. An elaborate burglar-alarm system, which would floodlight the whole place in case of intrusion, was also installed.

Sure enough, Ruth received another warning. And almost immediately the burglar-alarm sounded, and the great floodlights illuminated the whole estate. A man leaped from the ledge where he had stood outside Gordon's window and ran; but Nat intercepted him with a football tackle, and he was captured.

in the Air

Illustrated by
Joseph Franké



"Say!" Harrigan exclaimed. "This guy may still be in the house!"

To little immediate purpose, however; a typical gangster killer, the man maintained the obdurate silence of his kind. "Could it be Gaudio?" Gordon exclaimed. And this gave Tyler and Nat confirmation of their belief that some secret out of Gordon's past explained these attacks. And later Gordon partly explained it. David had been kidnaped as a child; he had been recovered, and the kidnapers convicted; one of them, Gaudio, had escaped and had sworn vengeance. . . .

Again Ruth received that dreadful message of imminent murder—this time, strangely the threat menaced Héléne. Nat ran for the house, plunged through open French windows, saw a pistol thrust from between heavy curtains. He heard a shot, felt a searing, stabbing pain. (*The story continues in detail:*)

HALFWAY down the stairs of the cottage Ruth stood, clutching at the banister with one hand, holding her vio-

She collided with the table in the living-room, quickly put her violin down, fumbled ahead of her and made her way to the door. Impatiently she opened it, stumbled into the garden. She stopped for an instant, listening, trying to orient herself, for she had never made the trip from cottage to house without aid.

Then she began to hurry directly to-



Halfway down the stairs, Ruth heard the shot. For one moment Nat's mind revealed itself to her: Pain, and then a name—Doris.

lin to her with the other. Then she heard the shot. For one suspended moment Nat's mind revealed itself to her: Pain—a sudden stabbing pain. . . . And then a name, etched in his brain in utter bewilderment — *Doris!* Immediately afterward—blankness.

The blind girl gave a little gasp.

"Nat!" she moaned. "Nat!"

A dreadful certainty, then: Nat had been shot!

From some inner reserve she found strength, controlled her rioting nerves. She raised her head firmly, her face filled with determination. Then, scarcely feeling her way, so powerful was her instinct, she was descending the stairs, the violin and bow still in her hands.

ward the house. Her outstretched fingers touched the bark of a tree. She veered around it without mishap and hastened her steps. She brought up against the edge of one of the stone benches with a little exclamation of pain, a pain which was instantly forgotten for her purpose—to get to Nat as fast as she could.

Then, oblivious of the bushes which clutched at her filmy negligée, and scratched her flesh, she was hurrying toward the house, toward where, she knew now, Nat lay unconscious—perhaps dead! That blackness which had closed in on his mind terrified her. She began to call his name. Then she was free of the garden, felt the solid lawn under her feet and was running.

Gordon, unable to scale the balcony behind Tyler, had run around to the

front door and was pressing the bell frantically. He heard Ruth calling, turned and saw her flying across the lawn. A steamer-chair lay directly in her path. Gordon called out sharply and she hesitated. Then he ran to her, took her arm.

"Take me to Nat, quickly!" she implored.

He guided her swiftly to the steps, helped her onto the porch. The door opened suddenly and Johnson peered out. Seeing them, he ran to Ruth and took her other arm. They led the girl inside. Her great eyes were wide with fear and worry. From above they heard a woman moaning hysterically. . . . Hélène. Gordon gave an exclamation and sprang up the stairs ahead of them. The blind girl strained to follow. Johnson, speaking to her in a soothing voice, assisted her up the stairs.

Gordon ran to Hélène's room, toward the sound of her sobs. As he entered the door he saw Carlotta bending over her. The girl was sitting bolt upright, blankly staring, held in the grip of hysteria, her shoulders shaking with the sobs which racked her body. Gordon heard his wife's voice, then. She was trying to calm Hélène. He ran to his daughter, put his arms about her. She seemed not to recognize him.

"She's—hysterical," said Carlotta. "But she's not hurt. Some one—some one shot Nat."

GORDON straightened quickly. Voices came through the door from the other room. He stepped over the crumpled curtains. Nat lay on the floor. Tyler, bent over him on one knee, was ripping away his shirt.

Doris, a book clutched to her breast, was staring down at Nat, eyes dilated. Ruth, on Johnson's arm, came into the room.

"Father! Nat!" she cried.

Tyler looked up, spoke quietly, reassuringly: "Nat's all right, darling. It's only a flesh-wound."

Doris gave a little sob of relief. Ruth, disdainful of Johnson's aid, made her way to her father, sank to her knees beside Nat, caressed his face with her hands, murmured his name. Gordon heard his son's voice. David was at the telephone, urging Dr. Grace to come at once.

Nelson and Harrigan entered from the hallway, stared at Nat. Tyler quietly reassured them. Nelson turned to Gordon.

"He'll never get away this time," he said.

Harrigan nodded emphatically.

"We've got this place sewed up like a sack," he declared.

Johnson emerged from the bathroom with towels, bandages and alcohol. He bent over Nat. Quickly, expertly he began to clean the wound. Gordon heard him talking, half to himself: "Clean wound. . . . Bullet went right through the flesh—didn't strike a bone. . . . Just so we stop the blood—"

Nat opened his eyes. Johnson smiled at him reassuringly. Nat tried to sit up, but Johnson pressed him back.

"Easy does it," he said. "Don't get it started bleeding again."

NAT nodded and relaxed. Then his eyes went to Ruth, standing with her face toward him, full of sympathy and concern. He smiled and said, softly: "I'm all right, Ruth." The girl's face lighted up. Doris pushed into his sight then, bent over him.

"Nat," she said. "Nat, you're sure you're all right?"

Back through his mind came the picture of her standing in the doorway. That look on her face! It had been so strange and terrifying. Now it was filled with anxiety. He heard himself saying: "Quite all right."

He saw Ruth turn, tight-lipped, toward Doris, wondered at the expression on the blind girl's face. Then Tyler was talking, in a low voice, asking the two girls not to talk. Ruth nodded, stepped back out of sight. Tyler took Doris' arm.

"He's not badly hurt," he said. "Please—Hélène needs you now."

Doris made a strange little noise in her throat, half sigh, half sob. Then she seemed to hear Hélène for the first time. She hurried into the other room, Gordon following. Carlotta had her arm about Hélène, who was half sitting up in the bed. She was talking in a soothing voice.

Doris went to the bed, pushed Carlotta, almost roughly, away from the sobbing girl, and placed her own arms about her shoulders. Gordon placed his hand under Hélène's chin, lifted her face. It was still blank and staring.

While Doris caressed her, he spoke to her gently, soothingly. The girl made no response. David entered from Doris' room, followed closely by Harrigan and Nelson.

"Musta fired from the balcony," Nelson was saying.

"What's that?" said Gordon sharply.

He turned toward Nelson, who gestured toward the open French windows.

"He musta stood right out there," said Nelson.

Gordon shook his head emphatically.

"No, no," he said. "There was nobody there. I was outside, on the lawn, when I heard the shot. I could see clearly in the moonlight. There was nobody on the balcony when the shot was fired."

DORIS seemed to be paying no attention to the talk about her. She was holding Hélène close, murmuring to her. And the girl was gradually calming. But Carlotta was listening to the men. She broke in: "But he couldn't have been inside, Paul. *The alarm didn't go off.*"

Gordon stared at her and then smote his palm.

"By George!" he said. "It didn't—even after both Benson and Tyler had barged right through those windows!"

"Right," said Tyler. "I was wondering about that myself."

Gordon turned and saw him standing in the doorway.

"Where do you switch the thing on and off?" Tyler asked.

Gordon gave a little exclamation, his eyes going to the wall behind Hélène's bed. There was a small switch there. He hurried to the wall, peered at the switch.

"The alarm's been cut off from this room!" he exclaimed. Tyler joined him quickly.

"Is there a cut-out switch in every room?" he asked.

Gordon nodded. Tyler turned quickly and went back into Doris' room. The others, save Doris, who kept talking in a soothing voice to the apparently oblivious Hélène, stared at the switch.

"Say!" Harrigan exclaimed. "This guy may still be in the house!"

"We'll turn it inside out," said David, starting for the door.

"Wait," said Gordon. He bent over Hélène, placed his hand under her chin, gently. She had ceased to sob, but her whole body still trembled and her face was void of expression.

"Darling," Gordon said, "did you turn off your alarm?"

The girl stared at him dully.

"Paul," protested Carlotta. "She's in no condition—"

Tyler reappeared.

"It's turned off in Doris' room too," he said.

Gordon stared down at Doris.

"Doris—"

"I don't know anything about it," Doris said.

Gordon straightened up, faced Nelson.

"All right," he said. "Search the house."

When Dr. Grace arrived, he nodded approvingly at Johnson, after a brief examination of Nat.

"You did the right thing, Johnson," he said. "It's not a bad wound at all. The only danger was in loss of blood."

Johnson nodded.

"I'll have a look at Hélène before I fix you up, young man," said Dr. Grace.

"Go right ahead, Doctor," said Nat. "I'm all right."

Dr. Grace went into the other room. He motioned everyone back out of his way and bent over Hélène. She was still white and her breath was coming in jerky gasps. He shook his head gravely at the expression on her face. He spoke to her but she did not answer.

"I'll give her something to put her to sleep," he said, turning to Gordon. "If she can just relax, she may be all right. Meanwhile, I suggest that you all leave me with my two patients."

"Isn't there anything I can do?" asked Carlotta.

He shook his head, then turned to Johnson.

"Get one of the maids to come up here and sit with her," he said.

Johnson nodded and started to leave.

"We'll all go to Mr. Gordon's apartment," said Tyler abruptly. "Will you join us there, Johnson? I've got a few questions to ask everybody."

"Very good, sir," said Johnson, and continued on out.

GORDON was ushering the others out of the room. Tyler went to the door of Doris' room and looked in. Ruth had not moved from her position a few feet from Nat. She was standing there very quietly, so quietly that he apparently did not realize her presence.

Tyler put his arm about her shoulders. She turned quickly. Nat opened his eyes and smiled at Tyler.

"He'll be all right, dear," said Tyler. "Won't you, son?"

"Certainly will," said Nat.

Ruth smiled then and accompanied her father out of the room.

Dr. Grace gave H el ene an opiate and sat beside her until she had begun to breathe deeply and naturally. Johnson returned with the maid and then went on up to Gordon's apartment. Dr. Grace instructed the maid to sit by H el ene quietly and to notify him if she woke. Then he went back to Nat.

UPSTAIRS Gordon was pacing up and down the floor. Tyler had seated the others in a semicircle, with Ruth at one end. The blind girl sat quietly, her face calm and serene now. The others all kept their eyes on Tyler, waiting for him. As soon as Johnson appeared, Tyler waved him to the empty seat at the other end of the semicircle.

"Now then," he said, "we've got to have a complete picture of this thing, as far as you people can piece it together. We're sure of two things: The alarm was cut out in both Doris' and H el ene's rooms, and this would-be killer fired the shot from inside the house. To be exact, from the curtains which cover the door between the bedrooms occupied by Doris and H el ene. I saw that much myself."

He looked slowly from one to the other. All were leaning forward, apparently absorbed. Doris was deadly pale. The others exhibited varying degrees of excitement.

"This thing was carefully planned," Tyler went on. "And by some one familiar with the workings of the alarm system! The intention was either to make a get-away through the French windows of either Doris' or H el ene's room, or *to make it appear that he had escaped that way.*"

He turned his glance toward Gordon.

"But you say the balcony was clearly visible in the moonlight, and that you saw no one," he said significantly.

"That's right," said Gordon. He paused, then added: "But of course I was terribly excited, and some one *might* have slipped out of Doris' window without my seeing him. I—I was looking especially at H el ene's window. But if the fellow didn't escape by the balcony, we'll soon know. I'm having the house ransacked. We'll turn him up if he's still inside."

Tyler turned to Johnson.

"We'll try to find out what we all know about it," he said. "Where were you, Johnson?"

"In my room," said Johnson promptly. "I heard the shot and ran to Mr. Gor-

don's room. His door was unlocked. When I saw he wasn't there, I got downstairs as fast as I could. Miss Doris' door was open. I saw her inside, with Mrs. Gordon, Mr. David and Mr. Tyler, who was bending over Mr. Benson. The bell began to ring at the front door then, and Mr. Tyler told me to let Mr. Gordon in. I found him with Miss Tyler on the front porch."

Tyler nodded, and turned to David.

"I was asleep," said David. "I sprang up at the shot, grabbed my dressing-gown and ran into the hallway. Carlotta was coming out of her room. We ran to Doris' room, where we saw Doris and Mr. Tyler, and Benson lying on the floor."

"You saw no one in the hall?" Tyler asked.

"No one," said David.

Carlotta spoke up: "I was in bed but not asleep. I slipped into a neglig e and ran into the hall. I saw David there. The rest is as he told it. I saw no one else in the hall."

ALL eyes turned toward Doris. She raised her white face.

"I—I couldn't sleep," she said in a low voice. "Finally I gave up trying, went down to the library to get a book. I found one fairly quickly and started back to my room. I was just passing H el ene's door when I heard the shot, realized it was from her room. I tried the door, found it locked. I ran to my own door, opened it. Then I saw Nat pitch forward into my room. He—he stared at me—dreadfully. As if he thought I— Oh, God, I thought he was killed!"

She covered her face with her hands, shuddered. There was a dead silence for a moment. Then Tyler spoke, quietly: "You say H el ene's hall door was locked?"

Doris nodded.

"But it was unlocked when I came in," said Gordon.

"I unlocked it," said Carlotta. "Then I tried to quiet H el ene. She was hysterical."

Tyler nodded absently, then turned to Doris again. She had dropped her hands from her face, and now she raised her eyes to Tyler.

"You were the first one to reach the hall," he said. "You saw no one?"

"No one," she said.

"Then it's obvious the fellow escaped through her windows," said David.

There was a knock at the door. It was Nelson and Harrigan.

"We've gone over every inch of the house," said Nelson. "There's nobody inside, that's a cinch."

Then he held out his hand. In it was something wrapped in a silk handkerchief. He threw back the handkerchief. Under it was a black pistol.

"We searched Miss Doris' room last," he said, "on account of the Doc and Mr. Benson being there. We found this under the bed. One shot fired."

ALL stared at the pistol. Then David put out his hand, as if to pick it up.

"Don't touch it!" said Tyler sharply. "May be fingerprints."

David withdrew his hand quickly. Nelson was shaking his head.

"Not a chance," Harrigan said. "Look."

From his pocket he produced a large rubber glove.

"Found this beside the rod," he said. "This guy was takin' no chances on prints."

Doris drew in her breath in a half-rasping sob.

"I didn't do it!" she cried. "I didn't do it!"

Carlotta placed an arm about her shoulder.

"Don't be silly, darling," she said. "Nobody thinks you—"

Doris wrenched free.

"Don't—don't touch me!" she said intensely.

Gordon went to her, took both her hands.

"Now, now," he said. "Don't let your nerves get the best of you, darling. Carlotta was only trying—"

Carlotta was smiling at her.

"It's all right, Paul," she said. "The child's upset—and no wonder. I understand."

She put out her hand again, but Doris shrank back into the arm of Gordon.

"What's the matter with you, Doris?" said Gordon sharply.

Carlotta made a pleading gesture toward him.

More gently he said: "What is it, darling?"

Doris drew in her breath.

"Nothing," she said in a low voice.

"Pull yourself together, child," said her foster-father.

Tyler, glancing at Ruth, saw that she had turned her face toward the sound of Carlotta's, Doris' and Gordon's voices.

There was a curious expression on her face. Gordon put an arm about Doris' shoulders.

"Come, Doris," he said. "Don't be childish."

Doris nodded, and managed a weak little smile. Carlotta put out her hand again, and Doris allowed her to take her arm. Tyler saw that she was fighting for control of her nerves. He broke in, briskly: "Well, it looks as if our man got away again. He must have thrown the gun under Doris' bed, and somehow or other have slipped out by way of the balcony in the excitement. The only thing to do is keep careful watch—and search the grounds. Meanwhile, I move we adjourn till morning."

"But this—this man," Carlotta said. "Suppose he's still inside the grounds?"

"Don't worry, darling," said Gordon. "He can't get in again. I've posted a man in the hall downstairs, and another on the balcony. That will take care of the rooms on that floor. Now let's see—Doris, suppose you take Dave's room for the night. We can't move Benson."

Doris nodded.

"Of course," she said.

"I can bunk on the couch in your sitting-room, Dad," said David promptly.

"Fine," said Gordon. "Nelson, see that a man's put in this hallway. That'll take care of Dave and Johnson—and myself."

"Right," said Nelson.

He went out quickly, Harrigan starting to follow.

"Wait, Harrigan," said Gordon. "Put a man in the cottage too."

"Kayo," said Harrigan.

He left to carry out his orders. Dr. Grace came upstairs. To anxious questions he replied:

"The boy'll be all right. He's young and strong, and the wound is trivial. Ought to be up and around tomorrow."

RUTH turned an eager, hopeful face toward him. The physician patted her arm reassuringly. She sank back in her chair, relaxed and happy.

Dr. Grace turned to Gordon, his voice troubled.

"But I don't know about Hélène," he said.

Gordon clutched at Dr. Grace's shoulder.

"There's—there's nothing serious the matter?" he asked huskily.

"She's had a terrific shock," said the physician. "I'm hoping a night's sleep

will make her all right. But I can't be sure."

He regarded Gordon for a moment. The man was tragically worried. Carlotta slipped her hand into his.

"We searched Miss Doris' room last," said Nelson. "We found this under the bed. One shot fired."



"I think you'd better go to bed, Paul," said Dr. Grace. "I've had Johnson get one of the maids to stay with Hélène for the night."

"But she shouldn't be left. . . . I'm—I'm going to stay with her tonight," declared Carlotta suddenly.

"She has a maid with her," objected Doris.

"She needs some one closer to her—some one who loves her," said Carlotta.

"Then *I'll* stay with her," announced Doris.

Carlotta's eyes flashed, and she turned angrily on the girl. The two stared at each other. Carlotta flushed angrily.

"See here, Doris, enough's enough!" she said.

"I've as much right to stay with her as you," replied Doris.

Gordon broke the tension.

"Come, come!" he said. "Both of you'd best go to bed. We'll take care of Hélène."

Doris shook her head in rebellion. Gordon took her arm, smiled at her indulgently, gave her arm an affectionate squeeze.

"All right, Dad," she said meekly. She kissed him, murmured good-nights, and was gone.

Carlotta had recovered her composure. She smiled after her.

"Poor child, she *is* upset, of course," she said. "But I still think some one should stay with Hélène."

"You may stay with her, of course," said her husband. "I don't know what's the matter with Doris. This—this petty jealousy isn't like her."

"I've already forgotten about it," said Carlotta. "She'll be all right in the morning."

She raised her face, and Gordon kissed her.

"Good night, Paul," she said. "Try to get some sleep."

She bade the others good night also and left the room. Gordon turned to Dr. Grace.

"Can you stay the rest of the night?" he asked. "We can put you up in one of the guest-rooms. There's one right across the hall."

"Certainly," said Dr. Grace. "I'll want to have a look at both of them in the morning."

He looked at Gordon searchingly.

"Paul," he said, "was there—anything at all peculiar about Hélène this evening?"

"Peculiar?" he said. He shook his head, slowly. "Not that I noticed. Let me think—she *did* say right after dinner there was something she wanted to talk with me about."

"You talked to her?" Tyler asked interestedly.

"Why, no, I didn't," said Gordon. "Something came up. I don't remember what. . . . Oh, yes, Doris—"

He stopped. Tyler looked at him curiously.

"Doris had—something to tell me," he went on. "When I came back, Hélène had gone to bed."

"Did anyone hear Hélène ask to speak with you?" asked Tyler.

CHAPTER XI

FEAR

"Why—yes," said Gordon. "I believe Doris was there—and perhaps Carlotta."

"I heard her too," said David. "It was just before I went up to my room."

"That's so," said Gordon. "But—"

"It's nothing," Tyler smiled. "Now, I think we'd better say good night."

Harrigan appeared as Tyler and Ruth were coming out of Gordon's apartment.

"I've got a man in the cottage," he said. "I'll just walk along with you now."

He escorted them to the cottage, where they found a man on guard in the living-room, prepared for an all-night vigil. Harrigan cautioned him to investigate the slightest sound outside the cottage and then took his departure.

TYLER picked up Ruth's violin from the table and went with her up to her room. He turned on the light and put the violin in its case. Ruth had seated herself on the bed. He saw her face turned toward him, questioningly.

"Who do you think, Ruth?" he half-whispered.

She didn't answer for a moment. Then she raised her face, filled now with tender concern.

"Father," she said, "the moment after that shot was fired, I—I knew exactly what was in Nat's mind. It was terribly sharp—and clear."

"What was it, child?" Tyler asked gently.

"First—pain," said Ruth. "Physical pain, the reaction of his mind to that bullet. And then—astonishment—and pain; but a different kind of pain—a pain that struck at his heart. And—and finally, a *name*." She raised her face. "*Doris*' name," she whispered.

Then she gave a little half-sob.

"Oh, Father, I can't believe it!"

Tyler gripped both her shoulders and stood off, looking into her face.

"Ruth!" he cried. "You are sure?" She shook her head, miserably.

"No," she said. "Because at the moment that name was in Nat's mind, I had no communication with—with the mind of the—the one who fired. . . . I don't know it was *Doris*—but who else could it be?"

"My God," Tyler said heavily. "I was positive it was an inside job. . . . But *Doris*—it doesn't seem possible!"

"And Father," Ruth said, "Nat—Nat loves her."

Great tears welled up in her dark and sightless eyes.

NEXT morning Tyler went out into the garden to have a smoke while he waited for Ruth. Upstairs, Olga was helping her dress for breakfast. Tyler had taken a turn about the fountain when he saw Gordon approaching. The two men leaned against the fountain.

"Dr. Grace is having a look at the patients," Gordon said.

He took out a cigarette, lighted it and stared thoughtfully into the cascading water. Tyler kept silent for a long moment, expecting Gordon to speak. When he did not, Tyler brought up what was in his mind.

"You were telling us a story," he said quietly. "I'm eager to hear the rest of it."

Gordon regarded him silently for a moment.

"Very well," he said finally. He turned, leaning against the edge of the fountain. "The facts, as Benson learned them from the news-stories, are correct," he said. "I notified the police when my boy was kidnaped, because I thought it was my duty as a citizen to wipe such vermin out."

Tyler nodded sympathetically.

"Of course they agreed to make no move until David had been returned," Gordon went on. "But as the news-stories said, they followed the man who got the money; and as soon as David was sent back to me, they trapped the Gaudios. Justice worked swiftly; they were promptly convicted."

He sighed.

"Then—came the jail-break," he continued. "I realized that with Joe Gaudio at large, myself and my family were in danger. I asked for police protection—and received it. But—but my house was bombed. My—my wife was killed."

He sank his head into his hands, paused, shaken by the memory of that far-off tragedy. In a moment he raised his eyes, controlled his voice.

"The other attacks followed. It was plain that Gaudio's Sicilian friends were carrying on the feud. I knew our lives would never be safe in Chicago, at least as long as he was free. I didn't care, for myself; at that time, to tell the truth, I would have welcomed death. But I had David to think of—and Hélène. She was only a baby then.

"So I—I converted all my securities to cash, took my children and slipped

away. In New York was my friend of college days, David Grahame, then an important financier. I communicated with him, and got him and his wife to take charge of my children. I couldn't forget the awful thing that had happened to my wife. And I *had* to forget or go crazy."

He turned a tortured look on Tyler, who nodded understandingly.

"The war seemed the best way out," Gordon went on. "We hadn't gone into it yet, but I was passionately for the Allies. I joined the British and was soon sent to the front. I was reckless and desperate, caring nothing for my life; and this very quickly resulted in my being badly wounded."

He gestured toward his face.

"In one of the base hospitals I slowly recovered. But my face was a hideous mask. There was a great plastic surgeon there—Harold Welles. He said he could rebuild my face from a photograph. But I had none of myself. I was still dazed and indifferent. He performed the operation without a photograph—and this was the result."

HE paused and stared at Tyler. "I—I didn't even think of the significance of it," he went on. "I was invalided out of the army, still very weak. I went down to Spain to convalesce. There I met—Carlotta. She was an American girl, of Spanish extraction, an orphan, with a small legacy, studying dancing in Madrid.

"She was very sweet and kind and gentle. I—I fell in love with her, and she with me. I told her my story, and asked her if she could share the life of a man who might always be in the shadow of death.

"She not only said yes, but she showed me how I could outwit my enemies. It was really very simple. I no longer resembled the James Moridon that they knew. Therefore I would take a new identity. We were married in Madrid; and when we returned to New York, it was as Mr. and Mrs. Paul Gordon."

He paused and made a little gesture.

"So—there you are," he said. "I went into partnership with my friend Grahame. Then he and his wife were both lost in a wreck at sea. And I adopted Doris. I never heard of Gaudio again, and never had a moment of anxiety—until that bomb was found in my car. Then I was afraid that he had caught up with me at last, though I couldn't

be sure. Because the underworld did have cause to hate me."

"When did you begin to finance this campaign against the gangsters?" asked Tyler.

"Several years ago," said Gordon. "It began by my having a quiet search made for Gaudio, hoping to put him behind the bars. But he had completely vanished. My investigators, however, discovered so many shocking things about the underworld that I determined to do my share in combating it. A good many gangsters, now in prison, can blame me for it."

"And perhaps they know that?"

"I don't know," said Gordon. "The whole campaign has been a secret, of course. But those things can leak out. That's why we thought the bomb attack—and even the others—might have been inspired by gang vengeance. I couldn't see how Gaudio could have learned my identity."

"Which, as far as you know, is known only to yourself, your son and your wife?" said Tyler.

Gordon nodded.

"And now by you," he said. "You can see why I was reluctant to tell anyone—even you. I knew that if Gaudio were still alive and ignorant of my identity, in other words, if these attacks were not directed by him, that I was at least safe from that source. But that if my identity were ever made known, none of my family would ever have a moment's security again."

"But now you are convinced that he is behind the whole thing?" asked Tyler.

"He must be," said Gordon. "Who else would think of striking at me through my daughter? That's like *him*."

GORDON stopped and sighed heavily. Tyler glanced at the big house.

"Mr. Gordon," he asked, "how long have you lived in this house?"

"Since it was built," said Gordon.

"Is there any possible way for some one to get into the house without passing through the regular doors or windows?" Tyler asked.

"How could there be?" demanded Gordon.

"I mean—any secret passages?"

"No," said Gordon. "I supervised the building myself. There's no such nonsense as secret passages or sliding doors. It's—just an ordinary house."

"Then," said Tyler, "you must see that there are only three possibilities.

One, both Doris and Hélène just happened to switch off their alarms. . . . Two, some one inside the house switched them off, deliberately, to allow the assassin to enter. Three—the assassin is one of your immediate household."

"All three are preposterous!" said Gordon hotly.

TYLER sighed and gave a shrug. Then he saw Dr. Grace coming across the lawn, a nervous frown on his face.

Gordon turned eagerly.

"How are the patients?" he asked.

Dr. Grace glanced first at Tyler.

"The boy's all right," he replied. "Impatient to be up and about." He turned troubled eyes to Gordon. "But Hélène—" he went on, then shook his head gravely. "Paul, she's had a tremendous emotional shock. I—I'm worried about her."

"She's still—" Gordon began.

Dr. Grace nodded.

"She's—even worse," he said.

"What—what do you advise?" Gordon asked huskily.

Dr. Grace ran his hand through his hair.

"Paul, I don't know *what* to advise," he said. "This is a little out of my line."

Gordon turned quickly to Tyler.

"What about your friend Dr. Karasc?" he asked hopefully.

"I'm sure he can't take charge of her personally," said Tyler. "But I can telephone him, ask his advice. Probably he can recommend some one."

"That's a good idea," said Dr. Grace.

"I'm no sharp at that sort of thing."

Tyler looked at Gordon.

"By all means telephone him," he said.

"I'll do it this morning," said Tyler. He glanced at Dr. Grace. "Under the circumstances, I don't suppose it would be wise to press Hélène—about last night?" he asked.

"If you mean asking her a lot of questions, I'd strongly advise against it, at this time," said Dr. Grace. "Dr. Karasc, of course, may think differently."

"Then I'll wait," said Tyler. "I suppose it's all right to talk to Benson now?"

"Certainly," said Dr. Grace.

"Then I'll go have a talk with him now," said Tyler.

He excused himself and went to the house. He was raising his hand to knock on the door to the room where Nat had slept, when he saw Doris come out of David's room, where she had spent the

night. She stepped back quickly into the room.

Tyler rapped lightly on the door, heard Nat's, "Come in," and entered. Nat was propped up in the bed. To Tyler's question he said he was feeling fine, except for the slight pain and the considerable stiffness of his right side.

"I'm getting up as soon as the Doctor okays it," he said.

Tyler sat on the edge of the bed and looked at Nat thoughtfully.

"Just what happened, Nat?" he asked.

"I saw the pistol and made a dive for the curtains," Nat said. "I heard the shot, felt the bullet hit me, grabbed at the curtains for support. Hélène began to scream. I half-turned, saw you come through the windows. Then the curtains gave way. I fell into this room."

"What did you see?" asked Tyler.

Nat did not answer. Tyler repeated the question. Still Nat hesitated.

"I saw—Doris, standing in the door to the hall," he said. "Then—I guess I passed out."

There was a light knock at the door. The two men glanced at it. Then Tyler called, "Come in." The door opened to reveal Doris. She looked hesitantly from Tyler to Nat. "Come in," Tyler repeated. She came in, quickly, closed the door. She went directly to the bed, looked down at Nat.

"You—you *are* all right?" she asked.

NAT dropped his eyes from hers, nodded slowly.

"Nat!" she cried. "You don't think I did it?"

He raised his eyes then.

"Of course not—dear," he said.

"Oh, you do, you do!" she said. "I can't bear that. Whatever anyone else thinks, I can't stand it—if you—" She turned to Tyler. "Oh, God, Mr. Tyler, I—I think the world of him! You know I didn't do it!"

"Of course I do, child," said Tyler soothingly.

He observed her keenly. Her breast heaved.

"Let me show you something," she said intently.

She crossed the room swiftly, stopped at a door.

"Do you know where that door leads to?" she demanded.

Tyler nodded. "To Mrs. Gordon's room."

"Yes," she said. "And here's the

truth about last night: That door closed as I opened the other one. I heard the key turn in the lock—from the other side! That's how this—this person got away!"

Nat was staring at Doris. Tyler forced himself to speak very calmly.

"But Mrs. Gordon told us she was in her room when she heard the shot," he said.

Doris met his look directly.

"Then you can draw your own conclusions," she said.

"You realize that you are practically accusing her of attempted murder?" Tyler asked.

"It's she or I!" said Doris. "And if she did try to kill Hélène—and shot—Nat, I want her—*destroyed!*"

"Nat!" she cried. "You don't think I did it?"



She drew in her breath with a rasping half-sob. Then she covered her face with her hands. Her whole body shook with emotion.

"But even if the killer did escape through her room, that doesn't prove it was she," said Tyler.

"Then who was it?" demanded Doris, raising her flushed face.

"I don't know," said Tyler. "Perhaps—Johnson."

"Johnson!" she gasped. "Why, that's absurd. He'd *die* for any one of us."

"You don't seriously think that your—that Mrs. Gordon—" Nat began.

"I only know I saw that door close, heard that key turn," she said. "Who but Carlotta could have done that?"

"It would have been barely possible for some one else to do just that," said Tyler. "Here's the situation: the would-be killer, knowing about the alarm, either himself turns the switches in your room and in Hélène's, or bribes some one in the house to do it. He intended to kill Hélène and either escape by the balcony or make it appear that he had. Now just suppose that Johnson—"

"Why should he, of all people, want to kill Hélène?" demanded Doris.

"Why should anyone want to kill her?" asked Tyler. "Why should Mrs. Gordon?"

DORIS shook her head helplessly. "I say just suppose, for the moment, that it was Johnson," Tyler went on. "Knowing the house, and realizing the chance he was taking, he would leave every possible avenue of escape for himself open. That would include this door from your room to Mrs. Gordon's, which he could easily unlock during the day. I'm assuming the key is ordinarily in her side of the door."

"That's right," said Doris.

"Now," said Tyler, "the killer is about to shoot Hélène, when he is surprised by Nat, and hears me on the balcony. He shoots Nat to avoid discovery, and knowing his escape by the balcony is cut off, takes a desperate chance and runs into Mrs. Gordon's room."

"Where, if it were Johnson, he'd know he'd run into her," said Doris.

"True," said Tyler. "But remember, he is completely desperate. If necessary, he'd kill her. But the breaks are with him. She has heard the shot and has run into the hall. He peers out of her door, sees her enter your room with David, and then quietly joins them, as if

he were coming from upstairs. The bell is ringing, and I send him to let Mr. Gordon in. How's that?"

"Yes," said Doris heavily, "but *Johnson*—no, I can't believe it!"

"One little detail," Nat put in. "Is it reasonable to believe that if he knew there was a chance he'd run into Mrs. Gordon, he'd throw his gun under this bed before he went through that door?"

"Of course he wouldn't," said Tyler. "But if he had that gun on him, he'd darned well want to get rid of it. It would have been easy for Johnson to have thrown the gun there after he'd come back into the room, while we were all excited and concerned over you."

Nat looked skeptical, but a look from Tyler silenced further questions. Doris was looking at the door to Carlotta's room thoughtfully.

"It couldn't have been Johnson," she said. "But—I'm glad you've said what you did. Some one else could have done just that—and then escaped through the hallway while everyone was crowding into this room."

"That's possible," Tyler admitted.

"Oh, thank God you've freed my mind of that awful thought—about Carlotta," she said. "How I hate myself for it! I should have known she couldn't. . . . How can I ever make it up to her?"

Nat put out a hand and took one of hers. She looked at him gratefully. Then she turned and left the room.

Nat turned a puzzled glance toward Tyler.

"Why did you make up that fantastic story about Johnson?" he asked wonderingly. "Nobody in his right mind would have taken all those chances. It was a miracle he wasn't caught."

"Not a miracle," said Tyler. "But certainly lucky. But remember this, whoever it was, couldn't very well expect us to come charging in just as he was getting ready to shoot."

THEN he told Nat the rest of Gordon's story, as it had been told to him. Nat listened, absorbed.

"Well, that's that," he said. "That explains the gap in his past. And it must be Gaudio who is behind all this. But it—it's incredible that any of this household could be in league with him. The man *must* have bribed one or more of those guards."

As Tyler came out of the house and started for the cottage to fetch Ruth for

breakfast, he saw Carlotta Gordon in the garden. He bade her good morning and started on for the cottage. But she came toward him.

"I must talk with you," she said in a low voice.

QUICKLY Tyler stole a look at her face. It was full of concern.

"It's—it's about Héléne," she said. "You know I spent the night in her room. She—oh, Mr. Tyler, I'm afraid the shock has—has affected her *mind*."

Tyler looked at her sharply. She seemed greatly distressed—and hesitant.

"It's—it's a pure delusion, of course," the woman went on. "But she seems obsessed with the idea that Doris—Oh, I don't know what to say!"

"Perhaps you'd better just tell me," said Tyler quietly.

She nodded and began to walk slowly through the garden, Tyler keeping pace.

"You see," she said, turning toward him as she walked. "I know what Héléne's been through. I know that as soon as her mind clears, she'll feel differently; but now—well, she's terribly frightened—of Doris. During the night she kept—kept murmuring her name. And her voice was full of—horror—and dread."

She looked at Tyler appealingly.

"I—I can't mention this to Paul," she said. "At any rate, not as long as—as it looks as if some one inside the house . . . Oh, you see the position this puts me in! Because I know how Doris idolizes her. She wouldn't harm a hair on her head!"

"You mean that Héléne—thinks Doris—tried to kill her?" said Tyler quietly.

"Oh, I don't know what she thinks," said Carlotta. "It's—too dreadful. Héléne's—simply not herself. My God, if Paul should hear her talking this way!"

"What do *you* think?" said Tyler.

"I—I don't trust—" She paused, lowering her voice. "I don't trust—Johnson," she said, barely whispering the name. "Oh, I know I shouldn't say that. Paul is terribly fond of him. But who else—who else inside the house—"

"Perhaps—*Gaudio* was able to get a man inside," he said, looking at her closely.

She stopped, stared at him. "You—you know about *him*?" she said.

Tyler nodded.

"Your husband told me the whole story," he said.

"But how could anyone get inside?" she asked tremulously.

"Some one may have helped him," Tyler said.

She nodded, then resumed walking.

"*Johnson* knew all about those switches," she said. "He could have seen Doris go downstairs, slipped into her room, turned off her alarm. . . . Oh, it's too terrible to think!"

"And yet Héléne is afraid—of Doris," said Tyler.

"Oh, it must be that she just doesn't understand," said Carlotta. "She knows the shot came from those curtains—doesn't realize that Doris herself was not in her room at the time."

"But perhaps she was," said Tyler. "Do you know that she wasn't?"

"No, I don't know," said Carlotta. "But I don't believe for one moment that Doris— No, she's telling the truth. Some one—some one is trying to throw suspicion on her. It's—it's monstrous."

Tyler nodded gravely.

"Monstrous—if true," he said.

"Mr. Tyler, I have utter faith in Doris!" said Carlotta. "I *know* she's innocent!"

"I'm glad you feel that way," he said gravely.

He looked at her troubled face. "What shall I do?" she asked.

"I should do nothing—for the present," he said.

There came to them, suddenly, the sound of the violin. Abruptly Tyler excused himself, strode toward the cottage. The music stopped as he stepped into the house. The maid Olga, wide-eyed and frightened, appeared on the stairs.

Tyler motioned her to remain below, and hurried to Ruth.

"You must get Héléne out of that house, immediately," the girl said. "The danger is not past. Some one is afraid of her—of something she knows. Unless she's taken away—she'll be killed!"

CHAPTER XII

DISAPPEARANCE

TYLER hurried to Dr. Grace's room, where he found the physician about to descend to breakfast. He asked Dr. Grace to accompany him, and the two men went to Gordon's apartment. There Tyler told them of Ruth's warning.

"Dear God!" Gordon exclaimed. He began to pace up and down the floor.

"That settles it," said Dr. Grace. "I shall take her to a hospital this morning."

Gordon stopped and looked at the men helplessly. He threw out his hands.

"Of course," he said. "But where—"

"I haven't yet phoned Karasc," said Tyler. "Perhaps he can recommend—"

"An excellent idea," said Dr. Grace.

"Yes, yes," said Gordon.

Tyler went to the phone, called Baltimore, got Dr. Karasc on the wire. Omitting only Gordon's story of his past, he recited the new developments in detail.

THE psychiatrist was excited. "But certainly," he said, when Tyler had finished. "You must get the girl out of the house immediately. I know the symptoms. It's a frightful condition of shock. In addition to the—ah—physical danger, there's a definite possibility that any further strain might permanently affect her mind."

"We wondered if you could recommend—" Tyler began.

"But yes," said Dr. Karasc. "I know the very place. It's a sanitarium in Westchester. Not far from where you are. It's run by a colleague of mine, Dr. Joel Peters. An excellent man for this case. If you wish, I'll phone him, make the arrangements. I suggest that you take her there at once."

Tyler held the wire and told them what Dr. Karasc had said.

"A good suggestion," said Dr. Grace. "I know Peters—an able man. I should have thought of him myself. We'll take her there this morning. —You agree, Paul?"

Gordon nodded.

"Thank you, Dr. Karasc," said Tyler. "If you'll phone at once—"

"This very moment," said Dr. Karasc. "One more thing: I suggest that you tell no one exactly where you are taking the girl."

Tyler hung up, and repeated this suggestion to Dr. Grace and Gordon. "Personally I agree with Dr. Karasc," he added.

"All right," said Gordon. "I—I'll do as you gentlemen say."

Dr. Grace slipped an arm through Gordon's.

"Paul," he said, "you ought to have your breakfast."

Tyler returned to the cottage for Ruth, and told her the decision which had been reached. She nodded in agreement.

"The sooner she is out of this house—

the better," she said, with a little shudder. "There's something—evil—about the place."

After breakfast Gordon announced that Dr. Grace was taking Hélène to a hospital for a few days. Doris started up from the table.

"No, *no!*" she cried.

Gordon looked at her in surprise.

"But she needs attention, and there's an excellent doctor—" he began.

"We don't want any strange doctors!" the girl cried. "I'll take care of her. I won't leave her side for a moment. No harm can come to her."

Gordon took her hand. "We must do what is best for Hélène, dear," he said, gently.

"Of course we must, Doris," said Carlotta. "I'll go with Dr. Grace and see that she's comfortable."

"That won't be necessary, darling," said her husband.

"Let me go with her," said Doris quickly.

"There's no point in us all going," said Gordon. "Mr. Tyler and I—"

"Sha'n't I go along?" asked David.

"It's entirely unnecessary," said Gordon. "You've things to do in the city, Dave. I think you'd best attend to them."

David hesitated, then nodded agreement. Doris began to plead with Gordon to be allowed to go along.

He put his arm about her shoulder. "We'll take care of her," he said gently.

She looked up into his face. "Whatever you say, Dad."

He smiled then and drew her closer to him. "Dave's going into town," he said. "You stay and keep Ruth and Nat company."

WHEN David had departed, Tyler took Ruth to her room and then returned to the house to see Nat. First he told him about his talk with Carlotta in the garden. Nat was deeply puzzled.

"Do you think she was really trying to protect Doris—or very subtly trying to incriminate her?" he asked.

"I wish I knew," Tyler sighed.

Then he told him of Ruth's latest warning, of the conversation with Dr. Karasc, the decision to take Hélène to Dr. Peters' sanitarium and Doris' instantaneous reaction against it.

"That's perfectly natural," said Nat defensively. "She is terribly fond of Hélène. She doesn't want her that far away."

Tyler shrugged. Nat glanced at him, hesitated, then said: "I—I suppose you know about—Doris and me?"

Tyler smiled.

"It's fairly obvious," he said.

"Then you can understand my position," said Nat. "I—I'm a prejudiced observer, of course. She *couldn't* have done anything like this. And yet appearances—some one is trying to make it look as if she—don't you see how impossible it is?"

"I know how you feel," said Tyler. "Let me ask you something. From your experience with mental cases, would you say there was any sign of derangement in any of these people?"

Nat shook his head.

"No," he said. "I'd say they were all normal people. Of course I haven't seen Hélène since—since this shock. It's possible that such a shock, to one so young, might—well, unbalance her mind temporarily. That might account for her delusions about Doris. Because they *are* delusions!"

"I wasn't speaking of Hélène," said Tyler quietly. "I mean, could it be possible that one of the others—"

"You mean Doris!" Nat cried. "Mr. Tyler, it's utterly impossible for me to suspect her!"

"I know," said Tyler sympathetically. "But if she's—"

"Please!" said Nat.

"Ruth says that when you fell through those curtains—there was a terrible pain in your heart," said Tyler gently. "And a name in your mind—her name."

Nat nodded.

"It—it was an awful shock to see her standing there," he admitted. "I suppose there did flash across my mind. . . . But now, I simply can't encompass the possibility that she— Only insanity could drive her to such a thing. And—well, I'm *sure* that Doris is not insane."

There was a low knock at the door. Tyler went to it. Johnson stood in the hallway. He looked at Tyler inquiringly.

"Could I have a word with you, gentlemen?" he asked.

"Certainly," said Tyler. "Come in."

Johnson closed the door behind him carefully and advanced to Nat's bedside.

"I don't know exactly how best to begin—" he said.

"Speak freely," Tyler urged.

Johnson looked at Tyler steadily.

"I'm not a fool," he said. "I know



"It was as if some one were laughing!"

that everything points to this attack on Miss Hélène being made from inside the house. And since it's incredible that Mr. David or Miss Doris or Mrs. Gordon could be involved—that puts it squarely up to me."

"Do *you* think the attack was from the inside?" asked Tyler quietly.

"What else can any sensible person think?" asked Johnson. "Mr. Tyler, I've spent sixteen years with this family. I've seen those children grow up. I love them. I'd gladly give my life for any of them. And here I am in a position that would cause anyone but those fine people to suspect *me*."

"I'm sure they don't," said Tyler.

"Do *you*, sir?" asked Johnson.

"I suspect no one," said Tyler calmly. "And *everyone*."

Johnson looked at Nat, who nodded in agreement.

"I—I feel that I've got to clear myself," said Johnson. "I want to help you. I'd want to anyhow, of course. Let me tell you what kind of a man Mr. Gordon is: Last year, when I had completed fifteen years of service, he called me in, told me that he had invested the sum of fifty thousand dollars for me, and suggested that I retire."

"That was generous," commented Nat.

"He's the most generous man alive," said Johnson warmly. "I—I have no life outside of this household, gentlemen. I wouldn't know what to do with myself. I refused to retire. But he insisted on my taking the benefit of the investment. I have no need of money. I've no one but myself. I—I'd like to make that money available to you—to help clear this thing up."

"Thank you, Johnson," said Tyler. "That won't be necessary. But we'll be glad to have your help."

He rose and extended his hand. Johnson, seemingly much affected, took it.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "You'll call on me—for anything?"

"We will," said Tyler.

Johnson bowed and left the room. Tyler stared after him thoughtfully.

"That man's either a consummate actor—"

"Or utterly and touchingly faithful," Nat finished. "Which do you think?"

"I wish I knew," said Tyler.

WHILE Hélène was being prepared for the journey, Dr. Grace visited Nat, looked at the wound, nodded with satisfaction and changed the dressing.

"Any reason why I shouldn't get up?" Nat asked.

"I think not," said Dr. Grace. "But take it very easy. I'll drop in some time tomorrow."

Dr. Grace bade him good day, then, and went to find Johnson to ask him to assist Nat to dress. This was managed without too much difficulty, and Nat descended to the living-room. There was no one else there. He stepped out into the warm sunshine, strolled across the garden to the fountain.

Here, only a few hours ago, he had held Doris in his arms. He sat on one of the benches, facing the fountain. He closed his eyes, pictured her as she had been in the moonlight. Then, like an evil dream, he saw her again as he had seen her when he had fallen into her room, standing in the open doorway with dilated eyes. Resolutely he shut that vision from his mind.

Presently he heard voices, glanced across the garden and lawn, saw them all come out on the porch, group about Hélène. He rose hurriedly and went toward them.

Carlotta and Doris kissed Hélène. She was utterly unresponsive. Tyler and Gordon helped her into one of the big cars, took seats on either side of her. The chauffeur started down the driveway. Dr. Grace followed in his car.

THE group on the porch waved and Tyler waved back, reassuringly. Carlotta excused herself and went into the house. Johnson walked off toward the main gate. Doris turned to Nat.

"I'm—glad to see you're up, Nat," she said. "How do you feel?"

"Great," he said.

"You ought to stay out in the sun today," she said.

"Good idea," he said. "How about the sand over by the pool?"

He took her arm casually. She gave him a quick, grateful look. Then they strolled toward the green pool. Both were silent until they had reached the sand. Nat stretched out, and Doris sat beside him. He shaded his eyes and looked at her. She was regarding him gravely.

"Nat," she said. "It was—wicked of me to say what I did about Carlotta."

"You were just excited, dear."

She looked at him strangely.

"You—called me—dear," she said. "Oh, Nat, you do love me?"

"You know I do," he said.

He extended his hand, caressed her arm. He felt it tremble.

"Nat," she said, "somebody tried to make it look as if I—" She paused, gave a little sob. His pressure on her arm tightened reassuringly.

"You—you have faith in me?" she whispered.

He nodded, his heart too full to speak. She smiled at him, bravely. He lay back, grateful for the sun. She began to stroke his hair. The sun warmed his body, and the caress his heart.

DR. PETERS was expecting them. He shook hands with Dr. Grace, who introduced the others. Hélène was made comfortable in a large and airy private room overlooking a small artificial lake. Her father kissed her good-by. She merely stared at him dully.

"We'd like to talk with her, just as soon as she is entirely able," Tyler said, when they had returned to Dr. Peters' office.

The physician nodded.

"I'll telephone as soon as I'm sure she's quite normal," he said. "Probably a day or two of rest will fix her up. She seems strong and healthy."

"One more thing," said Tyler. "It's important that *no* one talks to her before Mr. Gordon and myself."

"So Dr. Karasc said," said Dr. Peters. "I assure you no one will."

Dr. Grace left them in front of the sanitarium and drove off in his own car. The men were silent as they were driven swiftly back toward the house. When they were a mile from the estate, Tyler turned to Gordon.

"Mr. Gordon," he said, "I'm well acquainted with the new police commissioner of New York City. He was a detective assigned to my office when I was district attorney. I suggest this as an excellent opportunity to go have a talk with him."

Gordon hesitated.

"I can assure you he will treat whatever we say as strictly confidential," Tyler smiled. "Under the vest, as they say in the Department."

"All right," Gordon said.

They drove to Manhattan, to Center Street. Tyler sent in his name. The Captain on duty returned immediately and showed them into Commissioner John Kilrane's office. The Commissioner greeted Tyler heartily. They shook hands, and Tyler introduced Gordon. Kilrane was flattered and impressed.

Very sketchily, Tyler explained that Gordon and his family were being menaced by assassins. He asked if they could look at photographs of known racketeers, those of standing and power. Kilrane was glad to oblige. He accompanied them to the Bureau of Identification. They pored over photographs, but Gordon could recognize none of them.

"Of course we've only got the mugs of those with criminal records," said Kilrane. "Lots of them are too smart ever to get caught in anything that's not legit. Those are the most dangerous. We're helpless to deal with them. All their dirty work is done by hired hoodlums."

He ran through a list of half a dozen names: Flush Goldman, Danny Crew, Jim Gabriel, Nick Rampone, Guido Morio, Bart Crescent.

"We haven't got a thing on any of those birds," said Kilrane. "Yet we're pretty sure they're all in the racket. They've got too much dough to come by legitimately. The Federal men have tried to hook them all on the income-tax gag, but they're too smart for that too. They always file returns on every dollar that can be checked against them."

AFTER they had returned to the Commissioner's office, Tyler drew from a pocket the faded newspaper picture of Joe Gaudio, which Nat had obtained at the *Star's* morgue.

"Mean anything to you, Jack?"

Kilrane stared at the picture for a long moment, scratched his head.

"It's—just faintly familiar," he said regretfully, "but I don't quite make it. I must have seen this guy somewhere—or his picture. Guess it must've been a long time ago."

"The name's Gaudio," said Tyler. "Joe Gaudio."

But Kilrane shook his head again, after a moment.

"He and his family kidnaped a boy in Chicago sixteen or seventeen years ago," Tyler said, trying to prod the man's memory.

"Wait!" Kilrane said. He threw back his head, closed his eyes. Then he smote his palms together.

"I got it," he said. "Sure, Joe Gaudio! Something about a jail-break. This guy got away clean. I was just a precinct dick—detective," he corrected, hastily. "There was a general alarm at the time. I don't seem to recall whether they ever collared him."

"They didn't," said Tyler. "And he's the man we're looking for now."

Kilrane looked at the photograph.

"It's been a long time," he said. "But I tell you what I'll do. I'll revive that alarm. I don't say we'll be able to pick him up, now. But we may."

IN the afternoon they returned to the estate. Carlotta, Doris, Nat and Johnson were waiting for them when they got out of the car. Gordon assured them all that Hélène was in good hands.

"Can't we go and see her tomorrow, take her some things?" Doris asked.

"We want to wait until she's entirely recovered," said Gordon.

"But it wouldn't hurt to take her some flowers or some candy," said Carlotta.

"The poor child, she'll be lonely."

"We'll see," said Gordon.

"At least we can send her something," said Doris. "Give me the address, and—"





On the third day, in the forenoon, Dr. Peters telephoned.

"I think the girl's quite normal now," he said to Gordon. "She keeps asking for all of you. I think it will be all right for you to run over tomorrow."

"Can't I come today?" Gordon asked anxiously.

"Give her one more night," said Dr. Peters. "I'll tell her you'll be here in the morning."

"A terrible thing has happened. Two loads of armed thugs held up the sanitarium awhile ago and took Miss Gordon away!"

"I'll see that she gets it," said Gordon quickly.

Doris flashed a glance at him.

"Oh!" she said. "You don't want me to know where she is!"

She turned and hurried away. Gordon impulsively started to follow her, but Carlotta touched his arm.

"Don't, Paul," she said gently. "Doris is still upset. You mustn't pay any attention. I'll try to explain to her that Hélène needs absolute quiet."

"Thank you, dear," said Gordon gratefully.

Next day Gordon telephoned Dr. Peters, who said that Hélène had shown improvement. But he urged that she be given a day or two more.

Two apprehensive days passed. The house, with guards both inside and out now, was more than ever an armed camp. But nothing happened. Doris made every effort to be friendly with Carlotta, and the tension between them soon eased.

Gordon left it at that. At luncheon he told the others.

"May we all go?" asked Doris.

Gordon shook his head.

"Mr Tyler and I want to talk to her—alone," he said gravely. "Perhaps she can shed some light—"

"Of course," said Carlotta quickly. "We can send her heaps of flowers. And this afternoon I'll run into the village. There's something I know she'd love."

"And I'll go with you," said Doris.

"Fine," said Carlotta.

"I don't think you'd better—" Gordon began.

"Nonsense," said Carlotta. "Nothing's going to happen to us in broad daylight. We'll take one of the chauffeurs."

Gordon glanced at Tyler, who shrugged. Somewhat reluctantly Gordon agreed. In the afternoon they appeared, ready to go to the town. At the last moment Gordon insisted on Harrigan's going with them. Doris protested that this wasn't necessary, but Carlotta smiled indulgently at her husband, and said if it would make him feel easier, it was a fine idea. They promised to return before dusk. . . .

But when darkness came, they had neither returned nor telephoned. Gordon, more and more worried, telephoned the cottage. Tyler tried to reassure him, saying that nothing could have happened, or they'd have heard from Harrigan. It was just a case of two women on a shopping orgy, forgetful of the time.

But Gordon was so nervous and worried that Tyler and Nat decided to go to his apartment and smoke and chat with him, hoping to keep his mind off his fears. The telephone rang, and Gordon jumped for it. It was Doris on the wire. Nat and Tyler could hear her voice plainly. It was full of excitement and fear. "Dad! We can't find Carlotta anywhere!"

"You can't find her?" Gordon demanded.

"We got separated in one of the shops," the agitated girl said. "I—we've looked in every other store in town, thinking she'd slipped off to buy some secret gift for Hélène. Dad, something dreadful must have happened. She—she's simply disappeared!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE HAND OF GAUDIO

GORDON'S face went gray. "Disappeared?" he repeated tonelessly. Then his voice rising: "*Disappeared?*"

His hands dropped limply. Tyler supported him with an arm, and Nat seized the phone from his nerveless fingers. He could hear Doris frantically calling into the phone.

"Carlotta's disappeared," Gordon repeated dully.

Nat spoke to Doris, while Tyler still kept a firm grip on Gordon's arm.

"Tell them to wait right where they are," said Tyler. "We'll be there in fifteen minutes."

Nat repeated this. Gordon, with a tremendous effort, pulled himself together. He waved Tyler's arm away.

"I'm all right," he said. "We must go at once. There must be some mistake. They haven't looked for her properly. We've got to find her." His voice rose, almost shrilly: "We've got to!"

"You go with Gordon, order the car," said Tyler to Nat. "I'll join you in a couple of minutes."

Nat nodded, and left the house with Gordon. Tyler quickly put on his coat. He glanced up the stairs toward Ruth's door. All was quiet. He shook his head,

puzzled. Then he mounted the stairs. He opened his daughter's door, called to her. She woke instantly.

He went to her side, took her hand.

"Ruth," he said gently, "something's happened. Did you—get anything?"

He felt her hand tighten, convulsively.

"No," she said. "I've been taking a nap. I had a headache. I—I got nothing. What's happened?" Her voice rose suddenly, frightened. "Not—murder?"

"No, no," he said.

"Hélène?" she asked. "Has something—"

"Carlotta," he said. "She's disappeared."

"Carlotta?" said Ruth, puzzled. "Carlotta? I—I don't understand at all."

Tyler kissed her, and urged her to lie down again.

"We'll probably find her, then," he said reassuringly. "Surely you'd have known if anything serious had happened."

"But I got nothing," she repeated, bewildered.

Tyler gently pressed her back on the pillow. He told her he was going to investigate, but that Nat would stay with her. Nat was already in the car with Gordon and Nelson when Tyler came out. He was disappointed at being left behind, and started to protest.

"Some one has to stay with Ruth," Tyler said.

"I know," said Nat. "But can't Johnson—"

"No, no," said Tyler sharply. "*You* must stay."

Nat nodded resignedly and climbed out of the car. The chauffeur stepped on the accelerator, gears meshed, and the car roared down the driveway. Nat watched it descend to the main road and disappear swiftly in the direction of the town.

"Just my luck!" he muttered disgustedly.

IN the car Gordon leaned forward, urging the chauffeur to make faster time. Tyler and Nelson were silent. The harassed Gordon was in no mood for conversation. He kept his hands clenched, staring straight ahead, repeating: "Faster, *faster!*" His mask of a face was oddly incongruous with the pain in his eyes.

They found Doris, Harrigan and the chauffeur, the same chauffeur who had driven them to the sanitarium, waiting for them on the main street of the town. Doris' face was tragic.

She ran to Gordon and threw her arms about him. Gently he freed himself, turned to Harrigan. The man met his eyes squarely.

"I wanted to tag along with them when they went into that store," he said. "But they wouldn't let me."

Doris nodded.

"It wasn't his fault, Dad," she said. "It was mine! I should never have left her out of my sight."

"You've been everywhere?" Gordon asked.

Harrigan nodded.

"We went to the stores we hadn't yet visited," he said. "They all know her, of course. But nobody'd seen her. Then we went back to all the stores we'd been in. She hadn't returned."

Gordon stared helplessly at Tyler, who addressed Harrigan.

"You called all the hospitals?"

"There's only one in this burg," said Harrigan. "She wasn't there. We went to the police-station too, fearing maybe she'd been hit by a car or somethin'. But there'd been no accidents reported. The cops are snooping around now. But you know these town clowns—a bunch of whittlers."

Tyler nodded.

"Suppose we can't expect much of them," he admitted.

Gordon motioned to Tyler and hurried into a drug-store. Tyler squeezed into a phone-booth with him, and Gordon gave a number. "The sanitarium," he explained. "Perhaps she slipped away to surprise Hélène."

"But she doesn't know where Hélène is," said Tyler, surprised.

Gordon turned away from the phone.

"That's so," he said heavily. Some one came on the wire, and he spoke, giving his name, asking if his wife had been there or called. She hadn't. He asked how Hélène was, then, and was told she was much improved.

HE came out of the booth, his shoulders sagging. He looked appealingly at Tyler.

"Now what?" he said.

"I suggest that we go see your friend the local police commissioner, and lay the whole thing before him," said Tyler.

"No, no, we can't do that!" said Gordon. "It will get in the papers. That would be—fatal. If it's Gaudio—he'd kill her!"

"You can impress him with the necessity for complete secrecy," said Tyler.

"And I'm sure I can get Kilrane to help us out too. Of course this is out of his jurisdiction, but he'll cooperate—spread the word to look out for Gaudio."

Gordon stood for a moment indecisively. Then he nodded.

"I suppose it's all we can do," he said miserably. "My God, if it's only just a question of ransom! I'll pay every cent I've got for her safe return!"

"All of which they probably know," said Tyler. "You'll probably hear from them. But meanwhile the police *may* be able to help us. After all, it's possible she—well, had some kind of attack—wandered away. Such things happen."

"All right," said Gordon dully. "We've got to do everything we can."

AS they turned in at the gate, David, who had returned from the city during their absence, ran toward the two cars, followed by Nat. Nat looked at Tyler sharply. The man shook his head.

"Dave!" Gordon cried, at sight of his son. "Did she phone?"

"No, Dad," said David. He stepped onto the running-board and gripped his father's shoulder. The older man leaned back wearily. Tyler told the chauffeur to drive on up to the house. Nat climbed into the other car beside Doris.

She was white and trembling. She leaned against him, dropping her head on his shoulder. He spoke to her, tried to bolster her courage. When the car stopped in front of the house, he helped her out.

Johnson appeared and began to ask questions. Tyler silenced him and led the way to the living-room. Gordon sank into a chair, as if utterly spent. Tyler, as quickly as possible, told Nat, David and Johnson what they had done.

"Kilrane will have a check made on every gangster within a hundred miles," he said. "And we can trust him absolutely. He knows what this sort of thing means. If she has been kidnaped, and they communicate with us, he'll keep hands off until she's safely returned. He knows that's the one important thing."

Tyler and Johnson urged Gordon to go to his room and try to get some rest. But the man seemed hardly to hear them. He shook his head firmly, however, when David also tried to persuade him, and sank into a chair, holding onto the edges so tightly that his knuckles stood out.

Doris absolutely refused to go to her own room.

"I—I can't stand it," she said. "With

both of them gone—those empty rooms on either side of me—no, no, I'll stay right here!"

"But there's no good in just sitting here," Nat protested.

Between them, they finally persuaded her to stay in David's room again. David took her upstairs. The man who had been posted in the hallway was on duty, as was the guard on the balcony. When he came downstairs again, his father was standing by the door.

"I—I can't be alone," he said. "Come, David, we're all going to wait in the cottage. At least we can—try to plan what to do. Tell the operator to switch any calls that come for either of us to the cottage."

David went to the telephone and made that request. Then the four men went silently across the lawn, through the garden. The cottage was in darkness. Tyler opened the door and reached for the light-switch. They heard Ruth's voice in the darkness: "Father?"

"Yes, darling," he said, and turned on the light. She was lying on the couch in the living-room. On the table at the end of it lay her violin, beside its case. She sat up as Tyler went to her. He put an arm about her.

"Did—did you find her?" she asked.

"No," said her father.

"Oh, I was afraid of that!" she said. "I—right after you left, I played. . . . And I—I got something."

Gordon stared at her.

"It—it was as if some one—some one were *laughing*," she said.

Gordon groaned. He sank into a chair, buried his face in his hands.

"There was nothing about—Mrs. Gordon?" Tyler asked.

The girl shook her head.

"Nothing about anybody," she said. "Just—*laughter*—satisfaction."

Gordon sprang to his feet. His son took hold of his arm, urged him to sit down.

"I can't stand this!" Gordon cried. "Ruth, you've got to get through! You've got to find out!"

"I'll try," the girl said. She reached for the violin. Her father stared at her, anxiously. Hurrying footsteps sounded on the gravel path. David opened the door. It was Nelson, carrying an envelope in his hand.

"This just came by a motorcycle messenger," he said. "The boy said a

man left it at the village telegraph-office for immediate delivery."

Gordon hurried to his son, took the letter. His name was typewritten on the envelope—nothing else. With shaking hands he ripped open the envelope, stared at a sheet of typewritten paper.

"Gaudio!" he cried.

David took the letter, the others crowding about him. The letter read: "*I've got your wife. You know what will happen if you crack to the bulls. Instructions will be sent you tomorrow. Sweet dreams.*" It was signed, "*Lovingly, Gaudio.*"

"That means ransom!" said Nat.

"Oh, thank God, thank God!" Gordon cried. "She's unharmed. Phone Kilrane, Tyler. For God's sake, have him call off his men! I can't take the slightest chance. I'll do anything they want!"

He turned pleadingly toward Tyler, then stopped, hushed. Ruth had placed the violin to her shoulder, and now she drew the bow across the strings, slowly. She blanched, dropped the bow to her side.

"Hélène!" she said, her voice rising almost to a scream. "It's *Hélène!*"

She began to sob. Tyler put his arms about her. Nat ran to the telephone. "What's the phone-number of the sanitarium?" he cried. Gordon, half-dazed, told him. Nat called the number. He could hear the operator ringing and ringing. But there was no answer. Impatiently he jiggled the hook.

"Operator," he said, "that's the hospital. They must answer!"

"They've had some trouble out there," said the operator. "They called the police."

"Trouble?" said Nat. "Please try them again. Try them till they answer!"

The ringing sound continued. Finally there was an answer.

"Hello?" a voice said.

"I'm calling for Paul Gordon," said Nat rapidly. "His daughter—"

"We've been trying to get you," the voice said. "Just a minute."

Everyone in the room was staring at Nat and the phone in his hand. He recognized Dr. Peters' voice on the wire.

"This is Peters," he said. "A terrible thing has happened. Two sedan-loads of armed thugs held up the sanitarium awhile ago and took Miss Gordon away!"

"Took her away!" Nat cried.

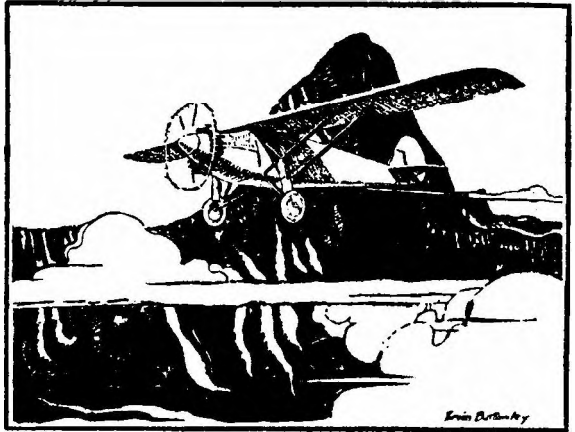
"Kidnaped her!" said Dr. Peters.

This thrilling mystery continues in the forthcoming September issue.

*An adventure of the
famous Free Lances
in Diplomacy.*

By CLARENCE
HERBERT NEW

Illustrated by Austin Briggs



The Strange Case Of Lady Anne

WHEN Dr. Samuel Adams of Boston rented the small house in Redburn Street, Chelsea, in the early spring, his immediate plans were to work at a series of experiments in the laboratory of the Royal Institution in Albemarle Street during the summer, then return to New York—where he had retired from a large practice to devote all his time to biological and psychological investigation. But he had received such flattering attentions from the great scientists living in London that he finally bought the Chelsea house for an indefinite stay and added an extension over one corner of the rear garden for the most thoroughly equipped laboratory, consulting-room and technical library that he had ever dreamed of owning. In this he was influenced also by the fact that he had drifted into several cases of crime-investigation with two friends at the head of the C. I. D. in Scotland Yard; and more important, because through them he had made the acquaintance and won the friendship of those two famous Free Lances in Diplomacy, Earl Lamerford and George Trevor, Marquess of Lyonesse.

Dr. Adams was smoking an after-dinner cigar in this consulting-room one evening and had turned on his powerful radio because he wanted to hear a talk on aviation by Lady Anne Herriott, a skillful aviatrix. She had invited Dr.

Adams down to her Cornish estate only the week before to fly with her in a plane which she had designed, and concerning which she now was talking from the studios on Savoy Hill.

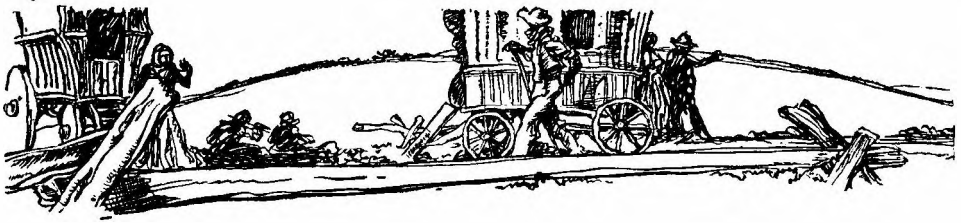
On the air, Lady Anne proved a very interesting talker and at the start, she seemed to be in excellent form. But presently the ear of the listening physician caught something in the tone of her voice which attracted his attention. Before long, Doctor Adams knew that his recent acquaintance was having an increasingly difficult task to go on with her talk. Three minutes later she faltered:

"I—I'm really frightfully sorry, but I fear I can't finish what I wanted to say! It—it seems impossible—for me—to go on! Frightfully sorry—"

Her voice trailed away into blank silence; then came the voice of the announcer:

"We regret exceedingly that Lady Anne will be unable to finish her extremely interesting talk this evening. She appears quite ill—and is being taken home. We hope to announce another talk by Lady Anne as soon as she has recovered. Meanwhile, our studio orchestra will play for you two of the Wagnerian preludes."

As the announcer's voice stopped, Dr. Adams got out of his chair and switched off the set.



"That woman is *sick!* She has pluck enough to have finished her talk, if she could have kept on her feet!"

He picked up a telephone from the desk and called one of the garages in the center of the block—which originally had been a small mews reached by an alley running behind the garden-walls of the houses.

When his man answered, Adams said: "That you, Jenkins? Get the car out—have it at the alley door as soon as I can get down there! Emergency-call!"

He went downstairs, out through the garden, and was opening the door in the brick wall in just under two minutes. Six minutes later, Jenkins stopped the car before Lady Anne's town-house in Kensington, and as Adams was admitted, Her Ladyship's American cousin Betty Manning—an old friend of the physician—came running down the stairs.

"Oh, Doctor, I've been trying to get you on the phone for the last ten minutes. Did you hear anything about Anne?"

"I was listening to her through my radio. In her bedroom, isn't she? Let's go right up! Is she conscious?"

"Yes—but feverish and dazed. No strength at all!"

BETTY MANNING and the maid had gotten Her Ladyship's clothes off, put on a negligée, and propped her up on pillows in the big four-poster. She glanced up at Adams with a forced smile as he came in.

"Topping luck, Doctor! . . . I didn't fancy you *could* get here as soon as this! What in the world is the matter with me? . . . You gave me an absolutely clean bill down in Cornwall, when you made that examination."

"That's what I'm here to find out. Give this thermometer a chance for just one minute. What's wrong with your left hand and arm?" For a strip of court-plaster had been applied diagonally across the palm of her left hand which, with the forearm, was swollen and of a purplish tinge.

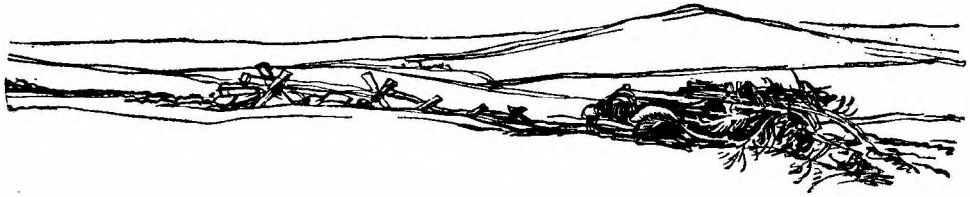
"Got a little scratch from the plane-motor the day before you came down. Washed it out an' rubbed permanganate over the scratch—paid no further attention to it until yesterday, when it began to pain a little. Put on more antiseptic and the plaster. Felt dull all day—but I was getting along very well at the microphone, when I got the most frightful feeling—had to apologize, and stop. I must be feverish, I fancy—"

"Naturally. You've got infection as far as the elbow in that arm! I'll take you around to the hospital room I've fitted up in my house. You'll need a little watching for the next forty-eight hours! Suppose Betty stays there with you."

When they had taken her to his house and she was as comfortable as possible, the Doctor asked Betty Manning up to his consulting-room for whatever information she could give him. Adams evidently was trying to get something clear in his mind.

"Y'know, Betty—I don't get this at all! I went over that woman down in Cornwall almost microscopically, and she was absolutely sound in every organ—her blood was in such perfect condition that it should have thrown off any infection she *could* get from a rough-steel scratch on the palm of her hand! By the way, how did she happen to suggest my overhauling her?"

"Why, I suppose two or three different factors might have put that into her head. She had heard me speak of you as an old friend whom I'd known from babyhood. Then she read a couple of your lectures, and when I told her you were interested in the development of aviation, she thought it would be rather nice to have you down there with us for a week-end. But the day before you came, she had a little experience which she herself laughed at. She and I had been motoring, and on the west slopes of Dartmoor we saw a man and woman with a small gypsy caravan—man was carelessly dressed as the usual Romany, but the woman in a slightly better grade



of clothes—and elbow-gloves, if you please, to keep her hands and arms from getting tanned! She was evidently proud of her skin, which was lighter than that of the Romany women you generally see.

“When we came up to them, Anne took the fool notion to have the woman tell her fortune, and gave her a couple of crowns. After studying the lines of Anne’s hands a couple of minutes, the woman shook her head—muttered something about not being clairvoyant that day, or something to that effect, anyhow—and actually handed back the two crowns! Said she couldn’t take money for what she saw in Anne’s hand, because it was pretty bad and she didn’t want to tell her about it. Anne said that was absurd. Finally the woman asked if Anne could go to some milder climate—if she remained in England a month she was pretty sure to die before the expiration of it. Well, considering that she’s lived about three-quarters of her thirty-six years in England, Anne thought she could risk it indefinitely—but you know how a thing like that sticks in one’s mind. I know she wanted you to overhaul her to see what you’d strike. She’s much too level-headed to be frightened by any such talk as that gypsy’s—but prob’ly thought she’d just check up on general principles. Now—what *is* the matter with her?”

“Can’t tell yet. As I said before, there’s something wrong that I can’t see any reason for! Er—had either of you ever seen those gypsies or their little caravan before?”

“No. Anne asked the local postman about them—but he hadn’t seen any Romanys in the neighborhood for some time.”

“And it was just pure chance that you happened to ride across into Devon that day?”

“Oh, no—we motor over that way every fortnight at least. You see, the farther you get toward Okehampton, the more elevation there is on the moor. There’s a tor we usually make for, which is nearly two thousand feet above sea-level. In

an airline from Herriott Hall it would be about twenty miles—but over the only decent south road, it’s at least six miles farther.”

“H-m-m—that would seem to settle any question as to the gypsies having any previous knowledge of her, unless by hearsay—and of course they’d have no idea as to who she might be. Very likely that woman meant to follow up her prophecy in some way so as to get a much larger sum from your cousin eventually. They wouldn’t have any trouble in locating her—finding out where she lived—if they had an object in it.”

FOR the next forty-eight hours the atmosphere in Adams’ house was rather hectic.

Lady Anne’s father, the old Viscount of Durnforth, who had been located at his country estate, motored up at once to see his daughter. But—she died. And almost at the same moment two burglars forced an entrance through an electrically protected hatch in the Doctor’s roof, pitching down twelve feet from the top of a steep ladder in the attic, after a shock from the high-tension wires. One of them broke his neck—the other was so badly shocked that he remained unconscious for several days.

Adams paid no attention to what had happened in the attic until he had satisfied himself that he could do nothing more for Lady Anne. Then, after examining the burglars, and replacing the scuttle-hatch, he put through a call for Victoria 7000, asking his two C. I. D. friends to come around at once. In twenty minutes the Deputy Commissioner, Sir Edward Pelham, accompanied by Chief Inspector Beresford and four constables, reached the house. After the constables had taken the two intruders away, Adams took his friends up to his consulting-room and gave them a résumé of everything that had happened since he’d heard Lady Anne’s voice fail over the air. He described her symptoms, his previous examination in Cornwall, Betty Manning’s account of the gypsies, the

battle for Her Ladyship's life,—assisted by his friend Dr. Mackenzie, one of the most eminent toxicologists and germ-specialists in Europe,—and their belief that Lady Anne would recover, barring unforeseen complications, and the apparently irrelevant attempt at burglary.

"THE infection baffled me from the first," said Adams. "For twenty-four hours I succeeded in checking it. I'd sent a sample of her blood around to Mackenzie, who made a number of exhaustive tests. He fetched around his memoranda, and we went over them carefully. He was convinced that the microbe was almost identical with one isolated by a Russian, which he'd seen but once in all the course of his practice—and told me that a certain antitoxin serum I had concentrated from a distillate of snake-venoms seemed to be indicated as about the only remedy which would kill that microbe. He was careful to say that after administering it in a fiftieth attenuation, the patient must have absolute quiet for at least another twenty-four hours, as her heart-action would be weakened by the serum and infection combined.

"Well, we gave her two hypodermics of the serum, with most encouraging results. The pain stopped altogether, and she dropped into a healthy natural sleep. Everybody in the house was moving softly in felt slippers—there wasn't a sound except faint echoes from the streets. Hour by hour, she showed a perceptible gain. By noon today she would have been out of danger—or by three o'clock anyhow. Then those damned brutes on the roof opened my hatch, touched the high-tension wires with which I protect the house, and shook the building down to its foundations when they fell to the attic floor with blood-curdling screams. Nurse said Lady Anne just gave a faint sigh, turned slightly—and passed out! I don't know whether those brutes were ordinary burglars, or criminals who had it in for me on account of the work I've been doing with you two. But there's no getting away from the fact that their falls and screams killed Lady Anne as certainly as if they had cut her throat—and I mean to see that the one who survived is hanged for it, if there's any way I can bring it about! You had a good look at 'em before your men took 'em away—are their faces familiar to you? Know anything about 'em?"

"The living one has been known here as Patrick Murtagh—a Red revolutionist who mixes a good bit with those East End communists—but we've not had him inside of an English prison, to the best of my knowledge. The dead one looks to me like one of the East End Russians. We've never had *him* in stir either—ord'n'ry crimes are out of their line, d'ye see. But murder—oh, aye, quite possible! I say! . . . D'ye really mean that the row they made in breakin'-an'-enterin' killed Lady Anne? What a rotten shame!"

"You'd think so if you'd been trying as hard as I have the last forty-eight hours to save her life! Another twenty-four hours, and she'd have been out of danger!"

"How the deuce did she get so much infection in her arm? She was one of the most careful, level-headed women in the country!" Sir Edward protested.

"That question has been bothering me ever since the first glance at her hand. She said she scratched the palm of it on a bit of rough steel in her plane-motor the day before I went down to fly with her in Cornwall. But if there had been any infection on that motor, I can't see why her mechanic didn't get it too—he handled it a lot more than she did! While I was at Herriott Hall I never saw a woman in more perfect condition. She ought to have thrown off any ordinary infection."

DOCTOR ADAMS told them all he had learned from Betty Manning and Lady Anne herself. But the Deputy Commissioner and the Chief Inspector dismissed the gypsy incident as having no possible bearing upon Lady Anne's death:

"Hmph! . . . You say yourself, Doctor, that she'd have been out of danger in another day! All gypsies will scare a person a bit if they can in order to get a larger tip for their fortune-telling—why, giving back her two crowns is proof enough of that! Prob'ly they knew who she was an' meant to meet her again some day when she might offer 'em three or four quid at least—then say that whatever danger there was had passed, an' she was safe enough in England now. That's their game right along!"

"Well, you know your gypsies a lot better than I do. But there was something peculiar about that infection, if we really know everything there is to know. I don't believe we do. . . The

Viscount will be here just as soon as he can. The shock of her death will be hard enough on him at the best, without having any sordid criminal business mixed up in it. But I wish you chaps would take early breakfast with me up in my consulting-room—the features of this case that we know don't satisfy me—I think there's a lot more behind them. Want to go over every point with you."

"Glad to, Sam! . . . Deuced unpleasant business for you all round—bein' an old friend of Miss Manning's, an' all that."

Word came over the phone that Durnforth would reach the house shortly after breakfast. Up in the consulting-room, an hour before sunrise, the three men sat around the Doctor's big table-desk.

NEITHER C. I. D. man suggested in any way his police connection. Sir Edward's taste in clothes was perhaps a shade less noticeable than Beresford's—but both of them patronized tailors who turned them out very well indeed. In their methods of approaching a criminal problem, Beresford was inclined to be the materialist, with the Deputy Commissioner the one who always looked for a bit of extraneous evidence. He was admittedly intrigued by the indisputable fact that the burglarious attempt had killed Lady Anne, even though it was accidental.

"I feel as you do, Sam, about charging that brute with murder—but of course no jury would let it stick. What a jury might do is add five years to his stretch because she died as a result of his attempted burglary. But of course he really didn't murder her."

"Well, who did?"

"Why—nobody! There's no question, is there, as to the fact that the cause of her death was infection—blood-poisoning?"

"Who infected her—and why? For what unknown reason?"

"Oh, come! Certainly no house that she's been into for a week or more is dirty enough to have infection that rubs off on one's hands!"

"Mackenzie says the only germ he ever saw which in any way resembled those in this infection was isolated or bred in a petroleum-jelly culture by that Russian biologist who was experimenting here some three years ago. Voyonavitch was supposed to have gone back to Moscow to live and study there because Russia appears to have produced more

virulent bacilli of various sorts than any other country in the last four or five hundred years. Nobody has heard of the man since. Now how did that germ of Voyonavitch's get into Lady Anne's blood unless somebody put it there deliberately—with a purpose?"

"Oh—I say, Doctor! That's pretty far-fetched, isn't it? You don't mean you'd hesitate for one moment in signing a death-certificate as blood-poisoning—do you?"

"Last night I didn't think I would—because she was getting better every hour. If I wanted to figure out that germ at some later time, it would have been a purely academic side-interest with me. But ever since she died I've been slowly coming around to a belief that she was deliberately murdered for some reason or other. In fact, I'm even wondering if those two burglars didn't break in here just to finish the job—when they knew she wasn't yet dead, and might recover!"

"Hmph! . . . You do chase an idea when you get one, Sam! Prob'ly you've even some inclination to perform an autopsy—eh?"

"The cold fact is that it *ought* to be done! I know a lot about the condition of her blood right now—but examination of the heart would show considerably more. When the Viscount comes in, I think I'll put it up to him."

"Without any police order to warrant such a proceeding? This is a sad enough case for him as it is, Sam—why aggravate it?"

"Look here, you chaps! If his daughter was really murdered; do you suppose he'd rather hush the matter up and let it go than run down her murderers and punish them? That's exactly what it amounts to, you know!"

BERESFORD lifted a deprecatory hand. "But, man—you've not a shred of evidence to indicate such a possibility! The girl scratches her hand—thinks she's disinfected it, but prob'ly didn't do it thoroughly enough—gets a slowly increasing infection which suddenly becomes dangerous and knocks her out. You seem to have stopped the infection; then it comes back—she's under your charge all the time. Then you an' Mackenzie confer, an' agree upon using your serum. She shows marked improvement—is actually recovering. Then those fellows come along an' make a row that's too much for her heart in its weakened

condition. How much nearer 'death from natural causes' than that, can you get?"

"All the way—if the cause was not accidental in the first place! —There's the bell—it may be His Lordship now."

After the Viscount had sadly gone in to look at Lady Anne, and had listened to what Dr. Adams, the nurse and Betty Manning told him, he went up to the consulting-room to talk with Sir Edward and Beresford, whom he knew quite well. Presently Adams asked:

"Can Your Lordship tell us whether, at any time, Lady Anne did any Secret Service work?"

"I couldn't say definitely as to that, Doctor. The Home Secretary, Sir Julian Dart, has known her all her life—they've always been great pals, an' he's been down at Herriott Hall frequ'ntly. It's possible enough that she's looked up something for him, occasionally, while flying about in her plane or during some of her motor-trips on the Continent. That sort of thing would have appealed to her, I fancy. But I've never had evidence that she did mix in anything of the sort. What put the idea into your head, if one might ask?"

"Well—her death was caused by a type of microbe which couldn't possibly have got into her blood in any accidental way, as nearly as Doctor Mackenzie and I can figure it. If Lady Anne had been doing Secret Service work, and some gang of criminals she was after decided to eliminate her—eh?"

"**B**UT—but—my God, Doctor! Do you realize what you're implyin'?" cried Durnforth. "Why, that would mean she was practically murdered!"

"It would mean that she *actually* was murdered, Your Lordship! And the question is whether you prefer to drop the matter and avoid newspaper publicity—or have the feeling that we ought to leave no effort untried in running down and hanging her murderers."

"Why—why—dammit! . . . If there's anything whatever to indicate murder I'll spend a good half of what I've got to hang the brutes who did it! Justice, you know! Can't have that sort of vermin permitted to go scot-free, d'ye see! . . . Too dangerous for the whole country!"

"Well, if you've no very great objections, I think an autopsy might give us enough evidence to be fairly convincing as to whether it was death by accident or intention. With Dr. Mackenzie to

assist me, we would be fairly sure as to what we found."

"Dev'lish disagreeable idea, y'know! Still, it would, as you say, settle any doubt. Aye—you have my consent, Doctor, if you consider it advisable."

THAT afternoon, the two doctors were convinced that the germs they found could not have got into Lady Anne's blood in any accidental way—also, that the condition of her heart indicated that, although its action had been much weakened, the virulent germs had been killed by Adams' serum—making her recovery practically certain if she could have had absolute quiet. The two C. I. D. men couldn't quite accept the murder theory, despite this finding. But that same afternoon, Adams went with the Viscount to call upon Earl Lammerford, the famous Diplomatic Free Lance. Durnforth gave him a detailed account of what happened to his daughter from the time she got the scratch on her hand, to her death in the Chelsea house—then said Adams had the impression she might have been mixed up in Government work at some time or other, in which she would have incurred the enmity of men among the criminal classes.

"If there was any basis of fact in that supposition, we would appreciate all you can tell us. We've no disposition to draw the Govern'm't into any inadvisable publicity, and would treat the case as a purely criminal one for some personal reason."

"Aye—and this Govern'm't will give you every assistance possible, Durnforth, in runnin' 'em down. I fancy Doctor Adams is quite right. She prob'ly was murdered to keep her from probin' further into something she was investigatin' for us down there on Dartmoor. It seems that in her flights over Cornwall an' Devon she had spotted a little depression on the highest part of the moor—a cleared spot in the center of a wooded tract. Twice she saw half a dozen planes hidden there—four very fast scout-planes an' two larger ones that could have carried torpedo bombs upon occasion. As you may know, Dartmoor is honey-combed under certain tracts with intercommunicatin' underground caves—some of them quite large an' a couple of hundred feet below the surface—others nearer the top. It is supposed a number of escaped convicts have taken refuge in those caves at one time or another—but it would take an army to explore an'

police them. I fancy it's quite possible that there is an entrance, concealed by the trees at the edge of that clearing, large enough to permit of the smaller planes at least being run in through it. Lady Anne was systematically flying over that clearing every week or so to pick up what information she could, with her glass. I'll admit that I can see no possible way in which any of that gang could have put that germ into her blood—or how they could have known her identity in another county."

Adams had been thinking back to the flight he had made with Lady Anne. Now he said slowly:

"Hmph! . . . I know exactly where that clearing is on the moor—I could describe it to a pilot so that he could take his plane directly over it—for I recall Lady Anne pointed her hand over the side of the cockpit for me to look down below, and I saw two planes in that little clearing. I remember taking a cross-bearing from three tors which we could see. Something put it out of our minds when we got back, and we didn't speak of the place again, but I'm now of the impression that she had it in mind to tell me something about it—she may have made that particular flight with some such purpose."

When they returned to his house, Lady Anne's body had been removed to her own house, and Betty Manning was overseeing the funeral arrangements there; but as the Viscount was staying at his club, Adams suggested over the phone that she should spend her nights for the next week or so in his house—and she gladly accepted the invitation. That evening the Doctor said:

"Betty, there's no longer the least doubt that Lady Anne was deliberately murdered—Lammerford agrees with me, and both he and the Viscount are as determined as I am to run down her murderers and hang them. Now my mind has gone back repeatedly to the day you and she motored over to Dartmoor and met those gypsies. From your account of it, I can't yet see how they could have given her any infection—but let's go over it again, and see if we can't bring out something which didn't crop out before. You said no gypsies had been seen within miles of Herriott Hall for a long time—also, that neither of you ever had seen the man or the woman anywhere in Devon before. . . Was it Lady Anne's proposition, or theirs, that they should tell her fortune?"



Two burglars forced an entrance—pitching down twelve feet after a shock from the high-tension wires.

"Anne's. Apparently, they wouldn't have spoken to us as we drove by. They seemed to be studying our faces, and the car. But in a moment or two the woman smiled, walked over to the car, and held out her hand—for the customary 'crossing her palm with silver,' as we supposed. Anne opened her bag and fished out two crowns which she laid on the woman's hand—"

"Did Anne have her gloves on?"

"Yes—thick dogskin 'Capes'—she always drove with gloves. The woman, who was on the left side, next to Anne, said:

"'You mus' take off ze glove, if you pliz—so I see ze lines of ze han'.' And she dropped the crowns into the pocket of her red skirt—it seemed to be a good-sized pocket, the way her hand went down into it."

"Wait a minute, Betty! Did you happen to notice anything about those two crowns Anne gave her? Were they new, or worn—rather bright, or dull?"

"Let me think about that. I didn't give that detail much attention, of course.

But somehow I've a recollection that one of those crowns was a new one, but not bright. That is, the die-stamping was a bit tarnished, as if it had been hoarded in a box for some time. The other was cleaner, but older—more worn. Yes—and I saw the date distinctly—I fancy it was 1919."

"The woman put those into the big pocket of her red skirt—and then took Anne's hand, to study the lines. Say anything about the scratch?"

"Yes, she said it partly covered one of the palm-lines, and she pulled at the scratch a bit to see if she could make out that other line."

"I thought they always told fortunes with the right palm?"

"She asked to see that afterward—said the left 'looked bad.' Then when she saw the right hand, she dropped them both—fished around in her pocket for possibly half a minute, until she located the two crowns—pulled them out and laid them back on Anne's left hand—"

"Same coins, of course?"

"Why, I suppose so. She might have had other crowns in her pocket, but probably not—nearly every one dislikes such big coins as that. As a matter of fact, I didn't look at the coins when the woman handed them back; Anne didn't either—we were both too much surprised by her action. Anne just dropped them in the side pocket of her motoring-coat, and put on her glove again."

"Did she take the coins out of her pocket when you got home?"

BETTY shook her head. "I don't imagine she ever thought of them again—they're probably still in that pocket. The coat is hanging in the closet at the Kensington house right now—"

"Wouldn't her maid take it out for a brushing?"

"No—Anne's servants understood thoroughly that they never were to do anything without direct instructions from her, first—they never moved furniture from its regular place, or meddled with books or papers lying about, or disturbed anything whatever, without first asking her about it. I can see now—after what you've told me about her Secret Service work—that it was probably the reason for her being so particular."

"What did she do with her motoring-gloves when she came in?"

"Stuffed them in one of the door-pockets of the car, where they always were kept—they must be there now."

"H-m-m! If I'm right in my suspicions, that motoring-coat and those gloves may be deadly dangerous to anybody who fools with them too closely. I'd like to have you come with me to Kensington and point them out—but not touch them. I'll put on a pair of old gloves which I can burn in the furnace afterward. Come along! The sooner we get those things in a safe place the better for everybody!"

AFTER they returned—with coat and gloves done up in a tarpaulin bundle—Adams took them into his laboratory, and with rubber gloves on his hands, fished the two crowns out of the motoring-coat pocket, laying them on a glass slide. It took but one glance for Betty to assure him that neither of the coins had been given the gypsy by Anne.

"H-m-m—had a smaller pocket, of rubber or oiled-silk, opening from the inside of the larger one in her red skirt!" he commented. With a powerful glass, he saw smears of petroleum jelly upon both sides of the coins—and something else. On either side of both was a tiny dab of glue in which a sharp fragment of glass was imbedded—one could scarcely have handled the coins with naked hands without being scratched by the little glass points, for the glue had hardened like vitrified tile. A person might have glanced at the coins half a dozen times without noticing them—yet even without any previous scratch he, sooner or later, would have received tiny cuts.

Adams thereupon began a series of careful microscopic tests. . . . An hour later, in response to his phone messages, his two friends from Scotland Yard came in, followed shortly thereafter by Earl Lammerford. (His even more celebrated collaborator Lord Trevor, Marquess of Lyonesse, was absent on a cruise aboard his yacht the *Ranee Sylvia*.)

"Still got the murder-bee in your head, Sam?" inquired Beresford.

"Did you know that Lady Anne was in the Secret Service—actively working for it at the time she took me for that flight in her plane?"

"You're not spoofin' us, by any chance?"

Lammerford inclined his head gravely. "She died in the service of the nation."

"I've an exhibit here," said Dr. Adams, "that I want you to glance over. See the coins in this test-tube? Well—they're the ones the gypsy woman gave back to

Lady Anne—but not the ones she gave to the gypsy! And they're smeared with cultures of the same microbes which killed Her Ladyship—with bits of glass attached to 'em to make sure of cutting any hand. Do you get that? Now I want warrants for those two gypsies, the man and the woman—whom you may as well describe as Slav Reds at the start, for they're no more gypsies than we are. Miss Manning will identify them, wherever found. That woman's wearing elbow-gloves to keep her skin untanned didn't strike me as out of the way when I first heard it—sort of thing any woman careful of her skin might do. But the more I thought of those coins being handed back, the more it struck me that she could safely handle them in her pocket *with gloves on*, and run practically no risk of infection!"

"D'ye know, Doctor," Beresford observed, "there's one bally coincidence which makes me fancy you may be on the right track. Murtagh hasn't recovered consciousness yet, but he's delirious an' keeps muttering: 'Put it on the cursed Romanys — thot's tha gime! Serve 'em well right f'r hangin' round our caves! Ah—Nora! . . . She'll be suspectin' ye, nixt. Clane out, an' we'll hide ye f'r a bit! 'Tis runnin' too much risk ye are!' That about covers it. From what you've told us this 'Nora' must have been the fake gypsy woman—Miss Manning said she seemed too white-skinned for a Romany—and they're trying to implicate some lot of real gypsies in the neighborhood—"

"Say—wait a minute, Beresford! I'll just call Betty Manning up here and ask her a question. If she says what I think she will, there may be a rather amazing development in this case."

HE went down the lift, and returned with Betty in a few moments.

"Betty, Lady Anne's butler, Higgins, mentioned to me the night she'd been broadcasting that the household was a little short-handed on account of the footman's leaving the day before. Do you remember what nationality that footman was?"

"Irish, of course—what else would a man by the name of 'O'Connor' be?"

"What sort of build and looks?"

"Dark complexion—very good figure. Anne took him largely because his legs were so good in breeches and stockings."

"Make a good footman?" inquired Lammerford.

"Technically, yes—onto his job all right. But he seemed to hate the aristocracy—I noticed his face a few times when we had County people there at dinner. Always the perfect footman, but I never felt as though I could trust the man—he seemed to be listening to what we said."

"Suppose you'd recognize him if you saw the fellow in ordinary clothes and rather bunged-up?"

"Why, I think I would."

"All right—put on your hat and coat. We'll take our friends here, with us and drive around to a place which is under control of the Yard. This man we're going to see is ill—delirious, in fact."

WHEN they reached the building, Betty bent over the muttering man and studied his face. In less than a minute, she nodded:

"Yes, that's O'Connor—no question about it!"

"How long ago did Lady Anne take him on?" asked Lammerford.

"Not much over a month. Listen! . . . Hear him saying 'Nora! . . . Nora!' I *thought* he was rather gone on Anne's maid—she hired them within a few weeks of each other, and he seemed attracted, from the start. That's the girl—Nora Rabbinoitch. Unusual combination of names, isn't it—she may have had an Irish mother."

"She's still at the Kensington house, I suppose?"

"Yes—but she's leaving tomorrow, after the funeral."

"In that case," interjected Lammerford, "we'll have to work fast. Suppose we all go around to Lady Anne's house and stage a little trap. We can't arrest anybody without evidence. We can't lay a finger on that maid without risking some sort of a scratch that will send us beyond the pearly gates. I remember that Beresford is a darned good ventriloquist—here's a chance to see what he can do. We'll go up to Betty's living-room, which is just across the hall from where Lady Anne is lying in her casket. Betty's feeling pretty well done—she asks Higgins to fetch up a quart of champagne and some biscuits or cakes. When the four glasses are filled on the tray and a sip or two taken out of them, Betty sends for the maid. I dope one of the glasses. Maid comes up. Beresford gets up to look at a picture not far from the door. Suddenly we all hear Lady Anne's voice calling 'Betty! Betty! Come to me,

STRANGE CASE OF LADY ANNE

please—and fetch Nora!’ —Got that, Beresford? I know you can imitate her voice. Then if I’m right, the maid screams and nearly has a fit—Sir Edward grabs up the glass of doped wine and makes her drink it. The rest is easy. I want to search her belongings and room while she’s unconscious, and Sir Edward is watching her—with Higgins guarding the front door!”

THE trap worked like well-oiled mechanism. Beresford’s imitation of the dead woman’s voice was so good it made them all jump. Nora Rabbinvitch, in spite of all her callous hardness, nearly dropped in a faint and only too eagerly gulped down the drugged wine. Then Lammerford courteously assisted her over to a divan where she became unconscious inside of a few minutes.

They searched the maid’s clothing, and searched the room she had occupied. They found a good deal—a complete gypsy costume; a number of mysterious vials and test-tubes plugged with cotton; and some incriminating letters in Russian and in a curious cipher. Whether this circumstantial evidence would have been enough to convict her before a British jury is not certain. But when later, she was confronted with the gypsy costume and the letters, she made a complete confession—by suicide. A swift movement of her hand to her lips, and a hollow ring containing cyanide, put an end to the earthly career of Nora Rabbinvitch.

After that, Murtagh broke and confessed. He had given up his berth as footman the day before his employer had been stricken down in order to have a perfect alibi—the maid having told him that the hand was already infected. When Adams removed Lady Anne to his own house, they expected her to die before morning. When it looked as if he might save her after all, Boratov and Murtagh had been ordered by the Russian Circle in London to break into the Doctor’s house and make sure of her death.

A week after Nora Rabbinvitch’s death, three regiments of Devon and Cornish yeomanry surrounded the airplane rendezvous seen on Dartmoor by Lady Anne and captured it, with some casualties. They found a well-equipped aviation and wireless base, and a printing-plant turning out Red propaganda by the ton. So Lady Anne’s work was accomplished after all.

REAL EX-



Shifted

By CHARLES

I FIRST went to sea as a cabin-boy when I was thirteen years old. . . . My most unusual experience was a voyage in which we put the ship about after being baffled by head-winds off Cape Horn, and sailed around the world to our destination in the other direction!

In February of 1882, my ship, the *C. C. Chapman*, left Dublin for San Francisco with a cargo of railway material. I did the work of a bosun, though I didn’t have that rating.

Nothing eventful happened until we got almost to Cape Horn. Then we commenced to get bad weather, gale after gale from the west, and we never made any headway; never did we set our top-gallant sails for six weeks, and mostly we were hove to under lower topsails.

One afternoon our watch had been called to reef the main topsail. The second mate came on deck with his monkey-jacket over his arm, and went to put it on; but hardly had he got his arms in the sleeves, when he went into all sorts of contortions, everyone thinking he was having a fit; he could not even speak. The poor old fellow slipped on the wet deck, and down he went flat on his back. We helped him to his feet, and tried to find out what the matter was, but all he wanted was to get his coat off. We got it off and then found out—a rat had been in the sleeve of the coat, and when he

PERIENCES

Perhaps your own life has included some experience as exciting as those described here by your fellow-readers. If so, you may be interested to read of our prize offer on page 3 of this issue. . . . First, Charles Brower, whose "My Arctic Outpost" aroused so much favorable comment, tells of an earlier experience as a sailor.

Cargo

M. BROWER

put it on, the rat had got between his shoulder blades. When he fell, he landed square on the rat, and when we got the coat off, the rat was flat. The second mate weighed over three hundred.

Beating back and forth under short sail all the time, we gradually drifted a long way south of the Cape, and we began to feel like the Flying Dutchman, beating eternally to windward and drifting back faster than we went ahead. After five weeks of this kind of weather, we got a real gale, during which our cargo shifted—that is, the trucks we had on top of the railroad iron went adrift, and all slid to the lee side of the hold. The *Chapman* lay down on her starboard side, and for a while we thought she would turn over. We had been hove to, but there was only one thing to do—put the ship before the wind, and run.

This was a ticklish job at any time, but in our condition with the heavy sea running, we were taking a long chance. Getting before the wind, there was hell to pay in the hold, the trucks banging from one side to the other as though they would knock the side of the ship out. It was up to us to get the cargo chocked, and some of the trucks back where they belonged, and this was a job no one cared for. Finally George, the third mate, and I went below with some of the crew to see what we could do.

It was no nice situation working by two lanterns, down in that hold, but by good luck all the mooring-chains and a lot of large rope used in mooring the ship were stowed down below in the forepeak; these we could use to good advantage. After sizing up the situation we started to lash the trucks on that side to the knees and to the mooring-chains, so that we eventually had half of them fast, and when the ship did roll, that many less went chasing across the ship. It took us all of twenty-four hours to get that done. By the time we had the first half fast, we were getting accustomed to dodging the trucks, and we started to work on the port side. First we got things ready for lashing and the timbers we had for chocks handy, then when the ship gave a heavy roll to port, the trucks still left loose would come over to that side; before they could all get back again, we would corral one or two with our ropes and chock them in place; finally we had them all secure.

All this time we were running before the west wind, making good time; and after I had a sleep, we were still on the same course. Then George told me that the Captain had made up his mind to run all the way around the world, almost, and instead of trying to round the Horn, we were going the other way, south of Cape of Good Hope, Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand. This was a long journey, but we were a long way south, where the degrees of longitude were short and with the strong westerly winds, we made good enough time.

It was winter down here and we suffered a lot with the cold; our decks were never dry, neither were we. After we squared from Cape Horn, our Captain commenced to be ailing; he had not come on deck much, and when he did, took hardly any notice of what was going on, leaving the running and navigation of the ship entirely to the mate, Mr. Wells. The "old man" was gradually losing his mind, and after we had crossed the equator, his mind was gone entirely.

We were making a long passage, and long before we got to the line, we were on short rations. Even water was scarce.

Just as we arrived near the Pitcairn Island, the mate was thinking of putting in there for provisions; but we did not have to do this, as we spoke the American ship *Ocean King*, from Frisco, and sent a boat aboard her. She let us have quite a lot of things, so we kept on our way. Halfway from the line to San

Francisco we commenced to get scurvy, and before we arrived all hands were having it, I being one of the last to get it, but when I did, it affected me differently from any of the others, and several days before we arrived in port my legs swelled, while at the same time the muscles contracted, and I could not walk.

Although we all had scurvy, with swollen legs, soft flesh like putty, teeth loose and gums black, everyone was able to get around deck and do a little work. Some were able to still go aloft, but all were more or less afflicted, even the mate. It was a good job for us that this was so, for as we neared the California coast the weather was foggy most of the time. We were standing inshore on the starboard tack the night before we got in. It was eight o'clock and foggy. All at once the bows lifted—there was Point Reys almost under our bows! The lookout let out a yell that brought Mr. Wells on deck, half undressed. He must have taken in the whole situation at one glance, then he called to the man at the wheel to put the helm hard down.

The ship had good way on her, and as she came up in the wind, I heard him sing out "Hard-a-lee," which meant that someone was to let go the jib sheets, so we could come around more quickly. I was in the hammock under the forecastle head, unable, as I supposed, to walk. Somehow or other I managed to get out of there and cast off all the jib sheets, and then I flopped.

A good job for us that the fog lifted when it did, and that Mr. Wells was a good seaman, and had his wits about him all the time. That jumping out of the hammock did more to straighten out my legs than anything I could have done, but how they did hurt for a while!

In the morning we got a pilot, and sailed up the bay that afternoon, with the usual fine breeze. The runners came, and when they heard we had scurvy, some went back ashore for fruit, and others helped get the sails off and bring her to anchor.

The *C. C. Chapman* had been given up for lost; we had been two hundred and ten days on the voyage—the longest I ever made, or ever want to.

Old Captain Pete went home; some of his family came for him. I did not see him to say good-by, and he probably would not have known me if I had. The old man lived two years more, I learned later, and up to the time he died he never recognized anyone, even his own family.

A Flight

By DENIS
ROOKE

IN May, 1927, I conceived the idea of flying a light plane solo from England to Australia—I wished to prove that a plane of this type could be used to advantage for economical long-distance flying.

I'd had a lot of experience: for (after being wounded while serving with the Australians at Gallipoli, and service later in France) I had joined the Royal Flying Corps and served in Palestine; after the war had been a test pilot in India, and took part in the third Afghan war. . . .

I purchased a four-cylinder sixty-five horse-power Haviland Moth, in which I planned to fly the air-line distance of some ten thousand miles, by way of Italy, North Africa coast, Egypt, Palestine, Persia, India, Dutch East Indies, and thence to Port Darwin, Australia.

Of the whole flight my closest brushes with death came through endeavors to fly through the height of the Indian monsoon from Allahabad to Calcutta, some five hundred miles.

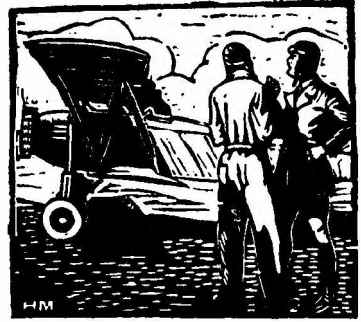
"I hate to see you go, old boy," my host at Allahabad had said. "For if you ever get into one of these terrific storms in that frail machine she won't last a minute."

My course to Calcutta brought me within two hours into drenching rain-storms. These storms became increasingly worse. The roar of the rain became so loud I could not hear my engine working. I was in constant fear that the light wooden propeller would tear itself to pieces against the almost solid streams of water through which it was cutting, and force me down in the worst tiger-jungles in all India. Nor was there any safe place to land. I could not see. I tried to climb above the rain, but these monsoon clouds are sometimes eight and nine thousand feet in thickness and very dark inside.

I tried to use my flashlight to illuminate my instruments but that only made

That Failed

When fate turns enemy, the story is more interesting than the record of easy success.



it worse, lighting up the fog and blinding me. Then, all of a sudden, *phit! Bang! Crash!* The clouds lit up like a sheet of flame. Lightning! In the disturbed air following, I fell into a spinning nose-dive in which I lost a thousand feet before there came another tremendous thunderclap. Flash and crash seemed simultaneous, while this time I received a most amazing electric shock, which doubled me up in the cockpit, causing me to lose control of my machine. Overloaded as it was, again I went into a spin. I could not even see my instrument-board.

"Good God!" I thought. "Have I been struck blind?"

We were plunging, plane and I, downward at terrific speed, engine full on in an uncontrolled spin. And I could not have moved hand or leg, numbed and lifeless as they were from shock.

"This is the end!" I told myself. But after an eternity of only a few seconds my sight returned and to a degree feeling in my numbed hands and feet. Pulling back the throttle, I eased my speed, moved the control lever forward, centering the rudder with my feet, until at last, only a scant two hundred feet above the jungle, I was safe—but with my engine missing increasingly. Something must be done!

After thirty terrible minutes the jungle ended and rice-fields appeared. But they were flooded; to attempt a landing would be all but suicide.

Finally, to my huge relief, I saw a piece of ground, boggy but possible. And down I nosed to a "pancake" landing.

Natives rushed forward, some of whom spoke quite good English, and said that I was near the village of Aurangabad, and that a white man lived by, "a planter named Wintle, *sahib*."

Presently a car drew near by on the Grand Trunk Road and Wintle appeared to take myself and plane in grateful charge.

But how was I to get away? There was no way to get out of the muddy morass under the plane's own power, let alone room in which to take off again. To solve this, having secured planks and ropes and grass-matting, we finally laid a track on which the machine was rolled to the Grand Trunk Road. But that was too tree-bordered to take off from. Finally the situation resolved itself into one desperate chance—the village *Maidan* or sports-field.

To visualize the hazards, one must know that this field was in the form of an ellipse, the long side about two hundred yards in length, and about eighty yards in width, and surrounded on all sides by palm trees some sixty feet in height, except that at the southwest corner was a gap seventy feet wide, formed by the Grand Trunk Road. This road had a border of tall trees on one side, while on the other a palm tree plantation bordered it for about half a mile. The ground in this gap was rough at first, then leveled out and was covered by small palm trees twenty-five feet high, while just in the gap itself were some straggling trees. Through here Wintle opened a road for my tiny chance of get-away by having these straggling trees cut down.

Lightening my machine of every surplus ounce, I started up my engine, waved good-bys, and was off toward the gap. Everything was staked on this gap. The plane gathered speed but did not rise. The rough ground was being neared at a terrific speed, but still I was not in the air.

Then, sluggishly, the ship rose, hesitated as though about to sink back, and began to climb. The rough ground flashed by underneath my wings, and I was off!

But already I was at the entrance to the gap, where I had to make a fairly steep left-hand turn before I was clear. I banked the machine to the left, my left wing-tip almost brushing the ground;

A FLIGHT THAT FAILED

then when fairly down the middle of the gap in the trees, I brought the machine onto an even keel. She was climbing very, very slowly. I saw the low palms coming closer and closer. Would I make it? But I did. Again an obstacle was beneath me, not ahead of me as I cleared the tree-tops.

Yet still I was not out. I was now on a level only with the high trees on either side, and over the low trees in the center. Then all of a sudden my motor coughed, sputtered, and died!

I could not clear the trees, I could not turn back. I had to hit a tree. The choice had become, which tree? Selecting one a little taller than the rest, I decided in one awful second of thinking to try to knock my engine out of the plane, to one side, in order to eliminate possibility of fire due to my fuel tank being in the fuselage between my engine and myself. I had already cut my switch to lessen this fire possibility, and now my machine was heading straight for the tree. All I was thinking about was that tree! Just before reaching it, I eased the control lever back slightly, and at the same time pushed it hard to the right, simultaneously putting on left rudder, causing the machine to side-slip to the right.

Then the crash. The right-hand side of my engine, as planned, struck terrifically against the left-hand side of the tree, breaking the engine out of the wooden engine-bearers to the left. The tree broke, and the tall stump of it tore through the fuselage, carrying my auxiliary gas-tank out through the bottom just before it crashed through my pilot's seat.

But I—my belt broke at the first impact, and I was being shot headlong through my windshield along the top of the fuselage.

When I regained consciousness ten days later they told me the rest: How the plane had turned a somersault after catapulting me from my seat, and landed upside-down in a very small cleared space just ahead of it. The watchful Wintle and his faithful natives not only had to turn the plane upright but take it apart in order to rescue me.

The wreck of my plane—and personal wreckage including a broken jaw and fractured ribs—of course prevented completion of the flight. That I am again able to fly a plane is due to the great kindness and generosity of my hosts Mr. and Mrs. Ashton Wintle.

A young ambulance surgeon enjoys a wild ride with a car full of gangsters pursuing to complete a job of murder.

By DR. NORMAN
GOLDSMITH

'Twixt Gang

IT was during the latter part of my internship. We were sitting in the hospital emergency-room: Nevins and O'Hara of the homicide squad, and I, who had charge of the place at night. They had brought in a young girl who had tried to drink iodine, but who was really more scared than hurt. They were waiting for the nurse to get her dressed before they took her to the station.

"What's the latest?" I asked.

"Well, Doc," Nevins drawled, "it looks as though the Razetti boys might be shooting fireworks soon."

"How's that?" I asked—for the unity of the Razetti brothers was famous. Mike was an ex-yegg and was the brawn of the gang; Joe had been a confidence man and was the brains. Together, they controlled every racket in town.

"Well, it seems," O'Hara explained, "that Joe snaked away Mike's girl—Chicago Kate, she's called. There's plenty bad blood between them now."

It was drizzling outdoors and looked like a quiet night, so after the officers had left I sent the nurse to dinner and picked up a magazine.

Everything was quiet till after three o'clock, when the phone rang.

"There's been a gang shooting at the Purple Tavern," the nurse said. "Some woman's yelling for help."

"Tell her we'll send the ambulance right out," I shouted. "Ring for Pat."

I ran upstairs and gulped a cup of coffee, then hurried over to the garage. The Purple Tavern was a notorious roadhouse about twenty miles out, and was well known as a Razetti rendezvous.

When I reached the garage, crazy red-headed Pat was backing the big blue am-



and Gun Girl

balance out. He had driven over in Flanders, and between a touch of shell-shock and a wee drop of Scotch, managed to be at once the best driver and the most reckless in town. This particular morning he had had more than his wee drop of Scotch, and the combination of wet roads and wet breath spelled danger.

I was dead tired, having been up the whole previous night with a difficult obstetrical case, so I crawled in the back, lay down on the litter, and went to sleep, while Pat headed for the country, siren screaming.

I woke when our wheels dug into the gravel road at the Purple Tavern. The place was pitch dark, which was unusual; for ordinarily at four o'clock of a Sunday morning it would be wide open. Now there was no music and no shouting, and only one parked car.

A man stepped from the deep shadow of the porch; there was a fresh gash across his left cheek, and the blood had streamed down his stiff shirt-bosom.

"You the doc?" he asked.

I opened the ambulance side door, took my emergency bag, and climbed out.

We entered the main room of the Purple Tavern. By the light of my electric torch, I could see some of the havoc. Tables were overturned, chairs broken; bottles lay everywhere. We stumbled on and came to a closed door off to one side. My guide stopped, then muttered half threateningly:

"Be a good idea, Doc, to forget what you see here. Might be even better to forget all about this place. Savvy?"

I savvied.

When Gash-Face opened the door, by the yellow light of a smoky oil lamp, I

could see four people. Two were men, sprawled on the floor; there was that certain limpness to them that could spell only one thing—death. Joe Razetti, or what was alive of him, lay gasping for air like a fish in the marketplace. And holding him, rocking him to her breast, with the mascara streaming down her cheeks, was a girl.

"For Chris' sake, do something, Doc," she wailed.

I cut open his bloodstained shirt. A bullet had gone clear through his right chest; there were three wounds in his abdomen. If ever I saw a man on the brink of death, it was Joe Razetti.

"There's no use moving him," I said.

"You got to do something, you got to, Doc," she screamed.

"Shut up, Kate," growled Gash-Face.

"I can't do anything here, lady," I told her. "A hospital's about his only chance, and moving would kill him sure."

There wasn't much use in arguing. The girl insisted that he be taken to the hospital; and Chicago Kate, with blood in her eye and an automatic in her handbag, which she didn't hesitate to show me, wasn't the sort of woman to refuse. I've never heard such curses pour from any other woman's lips.

I injected an ampoule of stimulant into his veins, more to appease Kate than for any good I thought it would do, and we prepared to move him. Gash-Face and I wrapped him in a blanket and converted one of the chairs into a litter. He was so far gone that he didn't even groan when we picked him up.

It was not easy plunging through the mazes of a wrecked cabaret, carrying a hundred eighty pounds of Razetti, while a hysterical woman shouted behind. I was sure I couldn't go another step when we finally reached the ambulance.

Pat slumped off his seat and staggered around; he had grown much drunker already. Between pushing and tugging, we lifted Razetti on to the wheeled litter, bundled him in blankets, and put some chemical hot-water bags around. We hoisted him into the ambulance, placed Kate beside him, and slammed the door.

I told Gash-Face to call the hospital immediately.

"Tell them to set up the operating-room," I ordered. "Tell them to get some blood-donors for transfusions. And above all," I finished, "have them call E. J. Patterson."

"E. J." was our chief surgeon; what he didn't know about gunshot wounds

wasn't worth knowing. If Joe Razetti had a chance, it was with "E. J."

"Let me drive," I suggested to Pat.

"G'wan," he growled, shoved me on to my regular seat beside him and released the brake.

IT was about four-thirty now, beginning to grow a little light, and raining hard. Pat kept swinging the big car from side to side, singing happily at the top of his voice. Chicago Kate screamed to me what had happened. They had been drinking together in the room. Mike and his gang suddenly appeared and mowed down Joe and his two bodyguards before any of them had had a chance to draw his own gun. She ended with a great oath against Mike.

We had traveled about ten miles along an absolutely deserted road when I noticed a pair of bright headlights following. Pat was using every bit of gas he could, but gradually the distance grew less and less.

The pursuing machine began to toot its horn. Pat tried to get more speed into the ambulance, but it had reached its limit, so he veered over and hogged the center of the highway. It was one of those old macadam crown roads, high in the center with soft mud shoulders. No car could pass us at the speed we were going.

Crash! Something nicked our left front mud-guard, and a moment later I heard a loud report. Then some one opened with a pistol and five more bullets came whistling by. Pat took his foot off the accelerator, and we began to slow down.

And then a woman's hand pushed back the plate-glass partition separating the front and rear of the ambulance, and the barrel of an automatic poked its nose through.

"Damn you, keep on going," screamed Chicago Kate.

Between the gangsters behind and the crazy woman with us, Pat decided in her favor. He stepped on the gas again. Another fusillade of shots greeted this maneuver. We crouched low in our seats and scudded along. Drunken driver, crazy woman, firing gangsters, and badly scared interne!

The pursuing machine continued to gain; first there was fifty feet between us, then forty, then thirty, then ten. I turned the spotlight backward, and for a moment we caught a glimpse of the pursuers. There were five men in the

machine, a low-slung, powerful touring car. "It's Mike!" Kate screamed.

We learned later that they had caught Gash-Face soon after he had telephoned, and found that Joe was still living and was *en route* to the city. Immediately they had followed in mad pursuit.

The big car was catching up. Its front wheels were almost even with our rear ones. Pat was zigzagging both drunkenly and purposely from side to side. Once we swerved off the road, and just missed turning over in the ditch.

Then we struck the level concrete only a mile from town. The pursuers advanced. One of the men was raising his gun. There was a spurt of flame. Something whizzed through the back of the ambulance, midway between me and Pat, and through the front windshield. "It's all over," I thought. I waited for the shot that would finish things.

And then Kate poked her own gun through the broken side window and blazed away. Her aim may not have been so good, but at sixty miles an hour any sort of shooting is disconcerting. Mike Razetti's car swerved sharply, struck the soft mud shoulder, plunged into the ditch, and turned over.

We sped on and on, Pat considerably sobered after the last bullet had skinned his head. Soon we reached the outskirts of town and I started our siren working. We sped screaming down the avenue, passing red lights, dodging milk-wagons, skidding on car tracks, till we reached the emergency entrance.

They were ready for us. Joe was still breathing when we unloaded. We rushed him to the operating-room, and "E. J." started working. He did a beautiful job, the finest exhibition of human tailoring I've ever seen. And all the while we could hear Chicago Kate outside cursing and praying alternately, though where she ever learned the prayers I could never figure out. Then we started the transfusions and began injecting saline and glucose into his veins, and pumping oxygen and carbon dioxide into his lungs.

FOUR months later making all sorts of noble promises to quit the racket and to go straight, Joe Razetti left the hospital. And that evening, while he was walking along one of the side-streets, somebody drove up behind him and blew his brains out with a sawed-off shotgun.

And me—I'm going into dynamite-transportation or something safe. Ambulance-riding is too tame.



It is, naturally, impossible to verify the records of espionage work. This is, however, an intensely dramatic story.

The Story of a Spy

By ERWIN SULTAN

WHEN my country entered the war, I asked to be transferred from the British Intelligence, where I had been known only as P-10, to that of my own country. And by the time the first contingent of the Rainbow Division had reached France I had already received my official transfer and was on my way to Paris to meet my new commanders.

Before I continue, I should like very much to say a little in defense of my work and my profession. The word *spy* is a much-hated one. But it is to be appreciated that the work of spies during a war is of the utmost importance. Those who know will confirm my statement that the Intelligence Department is the brains of an army or fighting body. It is their work and reports that guide and decide the movements of the millions on the battlefields. If I were permitted, I could relate tale after tale of the bravery and heroism of these spies.

Many may doubt the authenticity of my story. But I vow that it is every bit true. All names will be fictitious.

Move back the pages of time. It is a week or so before the memorable November 11th, 1918. At this stage the Allies anticipated a surrender by Germany. I was staying in a little shell-raked villa called Audenard. The Germans had been driven out of there the night before.

There remained for our soldiers sights of cruel destruction and horror. I recall one pathetic scene clearly: a peasant mother, a baby at her breast, and leading a blind child by the hand, stopping at each house—surveying it as if to see if it was her own and then moving on.

Beyond the village were miles of dead country. Marshes and shattered portable bridges left behind by the enemy in his retreat. Barbed-wire entanglements in rust and rot. Miles and miles of empty country around us with no sign of life, human, plant or animal. A creepy silence!

We had been in Audenard but two days when I received a message by motorcycle carrier to the effect that my presence was wanted immediately at headquarters in a small city some thirty miles toward the rear. A good-hearted ambulance-driver gave me a lift, and an hour after receiving word I presented myself at headquarters, which proved to be a ramshackle brick stable.

General — — scrutinized my credentials carefully, then started speaking. The enemy morale was failing, apparently. But there was urgent need for us to know more of conditions within the enemy lines, both among the soldiers and regarding the civilian population, which here was mainly of German blood. . . . I was to penetrate the enemy lines in disguise, and report. Details were to be arranged with a certain Captain Dobbs.

Captain Dobbs proved a most pleasant and agreeable personality. It was decided that I was to leave at four the next morning disguised as a German peasant. We were to fly by plane to a familiar little clearing beyond Rams-cappelle where I would hop off with my cage of two carrier pigeons. On the third day I was to meet the same pilot toward dusk. . . .

There was a tinge of dampness and oncoming rain next morning. As I sipped my hot coffee I could hear my plane be-

ing warmed up. My pilot was a lanky New Englander who towered more than six feet. In a few seconds we had taken off into the low-hanging clouds and on to Germany.

There was little doing at this time of the day, and we soon sighted Rams-cappelle—a little hamlet far behind German lines. But we flew onward for more than a mile or so to where we knew was a flat open field.

As the plane hopped over the rough ground to a stop, I jumped out, and the pilot took off once more. I watched him circle into the clouds and steer straight back whence he had come.

I chose a good hiding-place for my pigeons between two shell-raked trees that had fallen close to each other, camouflaged the cage with leaves and branches and started off.

Ramsappelle proved to be a town of about five thousand inhabitants with more than half soldiers. Allied guns had not worked much havoc. Cows grazed peacefully, and chickens hopped around proudly. Certainly there was no food crisis here, I thought. No tumble-down homes or charred churches as in so many French towns.

I registered at a small inn as Herr Wilhelm Battman.

DURING the afternoon I sallied forth for news, and got plenty. I learned that they suffered an oil shortage, and a rubber shortage. Many of their motor trucks ran on rims only. Stoves burned oil mixed with water. They were quite plainly short on material. This news I gathered and condensed and by afternoon I released my first pigeon. When I arrived back in town I heard the unmistakable sound of American artillery.

That afternoon as the firing got louder and shells began exploding near the village, a retreat was ordered—and this order included civilians too. Here is where I pulled that boner that almost cost me my life.

With everybody scurrying before the invaders, I decided to await their coming. And so when I was sure that not a soul was left in the town, I took myself on a run to the largest building, which had been occupied by the commanding officers and staff, in the hopes of picking up some stray piece of valuable paper.

As I looked into every corner of the building, I suddenly heard a step, like a scraping boot, and whirled around: Four German soldiers stood in the door-

way with gleaming bayonets. I glanced around for an open window. They must have read what was in my mind, for they moved quickly and in a jiffy I was overpowered and tied up.

Presently I was in a motor truck with my four hosts, moving on a very congested road toward the next village.

With surprising speed I was taken to headquarters at this place. Here I was taken before a stern-looking individual with a gray mustache.

"What is your name?"

"Wilhelm Battman," I answered.

"Come, come—I asked you for your own name, not your alleged one."

I remained silent.

"Are you positive that you are German, my good Herr Wilhelm Battman?" he inquired.

"Very positive," I answered.

"Very well, then, search him."

In a moment they had two papers I had stolen and some cipher notes I had prepared to dispatch by my second pigeon were discovered.

"Call a court-martial at once, orderly," instructed the officer. And in half an hour I had been found guilty of treason to the German High Command or some such other charge; I was to be taken out and shot at sunrise. Immediately I was taken to an old barn that was serving as prison. They assigned a sentry to pace before my room to see that I did not commit suicide.

I passed the greater part of the night in prayer and writing my last letters. I wrote to my mother and father, to my sisters and brothers and friends. And when I was through, it was almost two in the morning and I had quite a stack of manuscripts. . . .

I awoke with a start. The sun was shining into my room, and for a moment I reveled in its warmth, forgetful of my fate. I pinched myself to see if I were not dreaming. Then a corporal appeared, and said the General wished to see me.

IMAGINE my surprise when he came over to me from behind his desk and extended his hand. I grasped it in dazed fashion.

"What does it mean?"

"The war is over. Finished. At eleven o'clock this morning. I might have executed you as scheduled, but I think enough blood has been shed."

That was my last assignment and my closest call in Intelligence work.



A war-correspondent here brings his series of remarkable reminiscences to an end.

By GERALD BRANDON

More News of Battle

IN April 1920, a syndicate sent me into Mexico again to find Pancho Villa. It was a large order, for nothing had been heard of Villa during five years, and Mexico is quite a sizable country to comb for a missing bandit.

I had known Villa very well six years before. This, however, was previous to the United States declaring war on him in retaliation for the raid on Columbus, New Mexico.

If I found Villa, would he treat me as an enemy or friend?

Venustiano Carranza was then President of Mexico. He had deported me only a few weeks previously because I had revealed how the Mexican courts had "framed" the American consul at Pueblo, who had been kidnaped by bandits and held for ransom. I had also prophesied Carranza's speedy overthrow by a military *coup d'état*.

I was therefore obliged to keep under cover during my quest for Villa, because the police and soldiery are supposed to shoot on sight any deported aliens who venture back on Mexican territory.

I browsed around the Mexican quarter of El Paso until I learned in smuggling circles that the easiest place to slip across the Rio Grande was in the Big Bend country, between Laredo and El Paso.

With the Mexican army gunning for me, and the attitude of the Villistas problematical, I thought it would be a good thing to have some one on my side, so I ran up to Washington and obtained credentials to commanders of U. S. Army posts on the border. In exchange I promised to map all water-holes I ran into, south of the Rio Grande.

How many Americans outside of Texas have ever heard of the Big Bend? It is a stretch of rough country bounded on the north by the Southern Pacific Railway and on the south, east and west by the Rio Grande. Nowhere in the United States are there twenty million acres more sparsely settled or less productive. There is a standing joke in the Southwest that some day the United States will make war on Mexico and oblige her to take back the Big Bend section.

I alighted from the train at Alpine, Texas, ninety miles from the border village of Lajitas, where I was told I could buy a horse and a pack-mule. The U. S. cavalry commander at Lajitas was scornful of my chances to find Villa, but was helpful in helping me get my outfit together.

Before daybreak I forded the Rio Grande. Progress was slow, for there were no trails, and my pack-mule would not follow me, having been used to being driven. I had no idea where I was going, but kept moving in a general southerly direction until I met a goatherd who directed me to the adobe village of San Carlos, where the mayor entertained me at luncheon and assured me that he had not seen a revolutionist for several years. While he was protesting his ignorance of everything I wanted to know, a group of armed men entered and made me prisoner. They had been watching me ever since I crossed the river, they said, and wanted to know who I was and whither I was bound.

My story did not convince them. In the first place, they would not believe I was an American. My Spanish was too

fluent. In the second place no newspaper man would be so reckless as to attempt to reach Villa, who had shot the last civilians who had reached his camp.

They were not bloodthirsty, however, and were willing to take me back to the border if I would go quietly and leave my arms, horse and pack-mule.

THINGS looked black. However, I pulled out a scrapbook with pictorial proofs of my acquaintance with Villa—photographs where I appeared not only with the bandit chieftain but with Francisco Madero, the martyred apostle of Mexican liberties. My self-appointed judges wavered; whereupon I got rough and dared them to touch my stuff, warning them Villa would take vengeance on any who failed to help me reach him.

It worked. At least, the revolutionists agreed to pass me on to their commanding officer, General Albino Aranda, who would decide as to my fate. They warned me, however that if Aranda had the least doubt of me he would be forced to eliminate me in order to preserve from betrayal such knowledge of revolutionary movements and hide-outs as I would necessarily acquire on the way.

Four days and four nights I rode southward under heavy guard. My rifle and revolvers were taken from me, but other personal possessions were untouched. I was passed on from one rebel group to another, riding sometimes as much as seventy miles a day. We never knew whither we were bound, for our itinerary would be changed several times a day as a result of whispered information from men who would encounter us in most unexpected places. We avoided all traveled roads and towns where there were Carranzista garrisons. We had plenty to eat, but it was not very palatable. We would slaughter a steer or goat, cut strips of meat two or three yards long; wind them around a ramrod and toast them over the camp-fire. Then we would scrape off the charred portions and eat the core.

When we put up at a ranch-house where there were women, we might get some hot soup and tortillas. There was a dearth of coffee, sugar and salt. I had about five hundred dollars in gold in a belt under my clothes. The poverty of these people was appalling, and I tried to present them with money in payment for their hospitality. Impossible. No one would take my money.

If I was a friend, I was welcome to all they had. If I was an enemy, my money belonged to the revolutionary cause, and Aranda would be glad to use it to buy ammunition.

At length we reached Los Hechiceros, where General Aranda was mobilizing his men to make a raid on the Durango mining district. There were some three hundred men there—the raggedest and toughest outfit I had ever seen. Aranda had with him Colonel Benjamin Rios, an old acquaintance of mine, at this time chief of staff of General Hipolito Villa. Rios identified me to Aranda's satisfaction, thus putting an end to my fear that my equipment might be taken from me. My arms were returned to me, and I was made welcome. I was told, however, that Pancho Villa had not been in that part of Coahuila for a couple of years, having transferred his activities to the northwestern part of Chihuahua. The chief of revolutionary operations in Coahuila was Hipolito Villa, Pancho's brother, one of the most bloodthirsty bandits developed during Mexico's decade of revolution. Colonel Rios advised me not to put myself within Hipolito's reach, for he would certainly shoot me.

I STAYED with Aranda a few days to rest up, before taking the back-trail. I was given a couple of guides and an orderly. It took us a week to reach Lajitas over a different route. We slept each evening at some adobe hut beside a water-hole in the Coahuilan desert. Everywhere I was welcomed and given the best that the scant larder afforded.

The cavalry commander at Lajitas gave me the merry laugh when I showed up without having found Villa.

"Villa is a myth," he insisted. "He was killed by Pershing five years ago."

That evening a Texas ranger rode into the army post to arrest the man who had been seen crossing the border with a pack-mule. The commander tried to convince the ranger that I was not a dope-runner, but a properly accredited person who had reasons to keep his identity secret.

Unable to make an arrest in camp, the ranger stationed men all around the post to get me when I left. But my officer friend wirelessly to regimental headquarters at Marfa, Texas, and the next day a plane arrived with an officer of the Intelligence service who took me with him over the heads of the discomfited rangers.

The revolution was now spreading fast throughout Mexico; and this suited me down to the ground, for with a change of government I anticipated no difficulty in lifting the ban of outlawry placed against me by Carranza.

As the border garrisons had not yet declared themselves, I slipped over the Rio at Ojinaga and spoke to the Mexican commander there. He said that he was a staunch admirer of Obregon but did not want to take definite action until hearing from his immediate chief, the commander of the military district at Chihuahua. There was a dearth of reliable news, and he wanted to be sure of what was happening in Mexico City before committing himself irrevocably.

I then took the train to El Paso and sent word over to the Mexican commander at Juarez that I had news for his private ear if he would meet me at the International bridge. He came over in civilian clothes and assured me that all the Chihuahua forces would join the revolution as soon as the movement in the south had assumed such proportions as indicated its definite success.

MY information, gleaned both from newspapers and State Department sources, decided him, and he sent me on a military train to Chihuahua City to talk to the commanding general, the understanding being that if everything came out right, I would be permitted to wander about Mexico at will.

On the day of my arrival in Chihuahua all but one of the military units in Chihuahua City declared for the revolution. The militia regiment that remained loyal to Carranza was shelled into submission in short order.

Two days later official news was received that Carranza had been killed when the train on which he was fleeing from the capital to Vera Cruz, was attacked by Zapatistas near Esperanza. This put me in strong with the Chihuahua military, since I had persuaded them to get on the right side of the fence.

Obregon's first act was to offer an amnesty to all revolutionists who would recognize his regime and lay down their arms.

Pancho Villa was now of supreme importance, and Obregon did everything possible to bring him to a parley, but the suspicious Pancho mistrusted him and gave no signs of life.

Obregon thereupon ordered all the troops in Chihuahua to fall back on the

capital city, leaving the mines and haciendas unprotected. This to prove to Villa that he was not trying to lure him into an ambush.

For the first time in five years Villa came down from the mountains with his "Dorados," one thousand strong. He was still suspicious, however, and cut ~~a~~ telegraph-wires that word of his exact whereabouts should not reach the military. Besides, there were certain things to be attended to—money to be raised and private vengeance to be taken on enemies in this district he had been driven from previously.

I now knew within a few hundred miles where Villa was to be found. To locate him precisely without exposing myself to the danger of snooping around, I watched the railroad express office for shipments of American fruit going to that section. I knew that Villa never missed an opportunity of varying his beef and tortilla diet with apples and grapes.

Sure enough, I spotted a few crates of fruit on a southbound train and bought a ticket to the same station. Hiring a horse and mule, I followed the wagon that drove westward over the prairie with the fruit until near Delicias, I ran into a body of horsemen wearing the characteristic leather "charro" uniforms and hip-high leggings of Villa's famous bodyguard—the Dorados or "Golden Ones."

NOW it was the same old story again! Suspicious ignorant peons armed to the teeth, and disposed to shoot first and parley afterwards. The same protestations on my part. The same story of my old friendship with Villa, more fluent now from constant repetition.

"What one of Villa's old officers are still with him? Any of the old-timers will remember me and identify me."

I was in hard luck. Every one of the officers who were with Villa in 1914 had either been killed or was operating somewhere else, at the head of his own men. The present officers, they told me, were men who had risen from the ranks during the past few years.

"Some of them will know me," I insisted. "Disarm me and hold me prisoner until some one has identified me. I realize that you have to be careful, but I warn you that the General will never forgive you if I fail to reach him with the news I bring."

They took me at my word and held me at Delicias that evening until Colonel

Trillo, Villa's secretary, arrived to look me over.

Trillo remembered me, although I had forgotten him. He was a young university student of somewhat radical complexion, who was Villa's liaison officer with the various revolutionary movements in other parts of Mexico. Trillo said he had been present at the ceremony when Madero had decorated me in 1913. He said that he was sure that Villa would be glad to see me again, but the time was not exactly propitious, as Villa was busy raising money and was in a bad humor due to certain business set-backs.

"You know how the General is when he is crossed," Trillo explained. "Imagine, he needed some money to send to the widow of an officer who was killed at his side, and he called on two merchants of Rosales to contribute twenty-five thousand pesos each.

"Would you believe it! Although we know that these fellows have been making all kinds of money supplying forage to the Carranzistas during several years, yet they allege poverty and offer only two thousand pesos apiece. The general is very put out, and is in no shape to see you today."

Trillo thereupon left me in Delicias, with instructions that I was not to leave my room until he saw me again.

THE following night Trillo returned saying that Villa was feeling better since the two merchants, who had been strung up by their thumbs, had come through with checks on the bank of Chihuahua for the money he needed. He advised, however that I await the return of the courier who had been sent to cash the checks, before presenting myself.

The next day Trillo reported that the General had arisen with bloodshot eyes—a bad sign.

I began to wonder whether Trillo were spoofing me; and was about ready to adopt heroic measures when at daybreak on May 20th, my door was thrown open and Pancho Villa himself stepped in, throwing his arms around me in an effusive Mexican embrace. "You are still alive! All the rest of the compañeros are dead. Where have you been since I last saw you at the taking of Saltillo in 1914? You should have been with us at Aguas Calientes to have written the truth about the Convention. Perhaps Woodrow Wilson would not have backed Carranza against me if he had been better informed."

I had a hard time getting Villa to talk Mexican politics. When I told him that I had been in the World War with the French Foreign Legion, he asked innumerable questions in an attempt to get the picture of a warfare so different from that which he had known.

At length Villa opened up on what I wanted to know. He distrusted Obregon, and until I gave him every assurance, he had not believed in the reported killing of Carranza. He reminded me that a similar ruse had been worked by General Pablo Gonzalez to draw Emiliano Zapata down from the mountains to his death.

"I am the last paladin of Mexican liberties and I must take care of myself for the sake of the Cause," he said sententiously. "However, if Carranza is truly dead it is a step in the right direction and I am willing to hear what Obregon has to offer in the way of guarantees of his good intentions toward the common people."

Villa expressed nothing but liking and admiration for the United States, although he was bitter against Woodrow Wilson. He told me that Pershing had him on the run several times, and that once he took refuge in a cave after having received a bullet in the leg, and saw American troopers pass within a couple of hundred yards of his hiding-place.

Villa assured me that he had nothing to do with the Santa Ysabel massacre, but refused to talk about the raid on Columbus.

Next day I took snapshots of Villa and his men. He had all his officers trim their hair so as to make a good appearance. Those in the front ranks hung cartridge-belts on themselves, to make a show of a plenitude of ammunition.

I LEFT Villa at Rosales and went to New York with my story.

Later Villa made a deal with Obregon and retired to a ranch with his entire bodyguard, where he attempted to found a sort of cooperative agricultural colony. Some months later, he was assassinated by men who claimed to be motivated by a blood feud. It is believed, however, that the assassination was a political one.

Shortly after finding Villa, I married and settled down in Havana, Cuba, where I am correspondent of several American newspapers. If present political unrest in Cuba culminates in revolution, perhaps I will again become a war correspondent, but it is no job for the father of three children.

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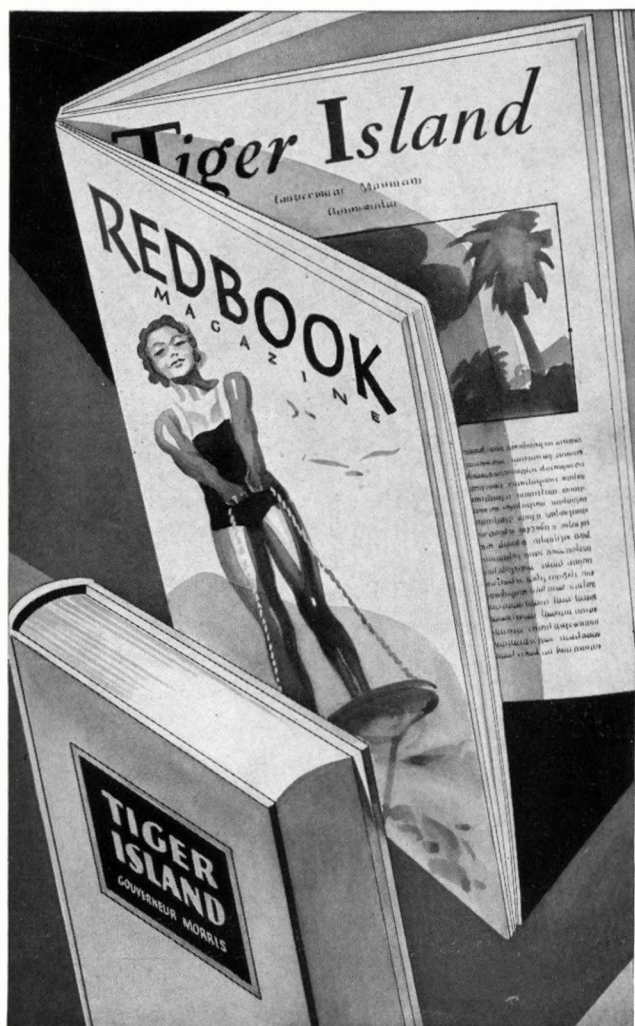
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