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JUNE 1929

THE Illustrated BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

N.S.E.

"TANAR"

By the Author of "TARZAN"

James Edwin Baum,
Clarence Herbert New,
Bertram Atkey,
J. Frank Davis & others

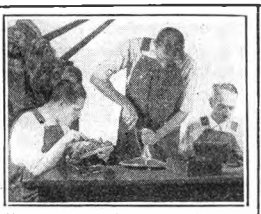
$500 IN CASH FOR Real Experiences

JUNE-1929 THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE VOL. 49 No. 2

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

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

The Time Clock—a badge of hawk-like supervision and The Rut. A constant reminder that one is "just another name on the pay-roll."



Human cogs in a great machine. No chance to meet people, travel or have interesting experiences. A long, slow, tiresome road that leads nowhere.

Always wondering what would happen in case of a "lay-off" or loss of job. No chance to express ideas and ability—no chance to get ahead. COULD there be a way out?

I Said "Good-bye" to It All After Reading This Amazing Book— Raised My Pay 700%!

Where Shall We Send Your Copy—*FREE?*

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

True, it is only a book—just seven ounces of paper and printers' ink—but it contains the most vivid and inspiring message that any ambitious man can read! It reveals facts and secrets that will open almost any man's eyes to things he has never even dreamed of!

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For example, R. B. Hansen, of Akron, Ohio, is just one case. Not long ago he was a foreman in the rubber-curing room of a big factory at a salary of $160 a month. One day this remarkable volume, "The Secrets of Modern Dynamic Salesmanship," fell into his hands. And from that day on, Mr. Hansen clearly saw the way to say "good-bye" forever to low pay, long hours, and tiresome routine! Today he has reaped the rewards that this little volume placed within his reach. His salary runs well into the 5-figure class—actually exceeding $10,000 a year!

Another man, Wm. Shore of Neenach, California, was a cowboy when he sent for "The Secrets of Modern Dynamic Salesmanship." Now he is a star salesman making as high as $525 in a single week. F. J. Walsh of Ludlow, Mass., read it and jumped from $1,000 a year to over $7,200 annually. C. V. Champion of Danville, Illinois, raised his salary to over $10,000 a year and became President of his company in the bargain!

A Few Weeks—Then Bigger Pay

There was nothing "different" about any of these men when they started. None of them had any special advantages—although all of them realized that SALESMANSHIP offers bigger rewards than any other profession under the sun. But, like many other men, they subscribed to the foolish belief that successful salesmen are born with some sort of "magic gift." "The Secrets of Modern Dynamic Salesmanship" showed them that nothing could be farther from the truth! Salesmanship is just like any other profession. It has certain fundamental rules and laws—laws that you can master as easily as you learned the alphabet.

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Free to Every Man

See for yourself WHY "The Secrets of Modern Dynamic Salesmanship" has been the deciding factor in the careers of so many men who are now making $10,000 a year. Learn for yourself the REAL TRUTH about the art of selling! You do not risk one penny nor incur the slightest obligation. And since it may mean the turning point of your whole career, it certainly is worth your time to fill out and clip the blank below. Send it now!

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

THE BLUE BOOK

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Frontispiece: "America's First Pioneers?" Drawn by W. O. Kling.

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MAGAZINE

JUNE, 1929

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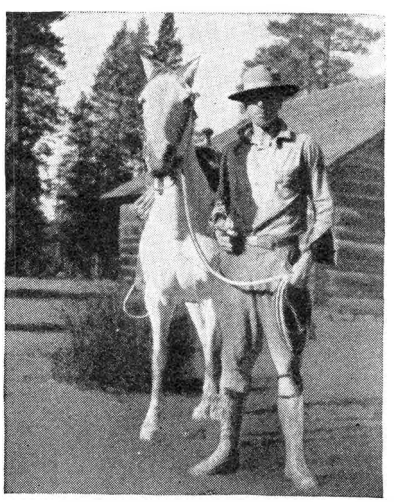

Harold Channing Wire

From time to time we have enjoyed short stories by Mr. Wire, written and sent to us from his post as U. S. Forest Ranger in the high Sierras — stories like "Rock of Ages" and "The Day's Work." In the next, the July, issue begins his fine novel of Forest Ranger life, a splendid story of the real West in this year 1929, entitled—

"MOUNTAIN MEN"

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: $3.00 a year in advance. Canadian postage 50c per year. Foreign postage $1.00 per year. Subscriptions are received by all newsdealers and booksellers, or may be sent direct to the Publisher. Remittances must be made by Draft, Post Office or Express Money Order, by Registered Letter or by Postage Stamps of 2-cent denomination, and not by check, because of exchange charges against the latter.

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

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

Advertising forms close on the third of second month preceding date of issue. Advertising rates on application.

To the man who is 35 *and* DISSATISFIED

WE DELIBERATELY pass over a large proportion of the readers of this magazine in order to address this page directly to *men in their thirties.*

There is a powerful reason for this.

The dissatisfied man of twenty-five is not usually in a difficult position. He has few responsibilities; he can move easily; he can take a chance.

But from thirty-five to forty is the age of crisis. In these years a man either marks out the course which leads to definite advancement or settles into permanent unhappiness. There are thousands who see the years passing with a feeling close to desperation.

They say, "I must make more money," but they have no plan for making more.

They say, "There is no future for me here," but they see no other opening.

"I am managing to scrape along now," they say, "but how in the world will I ever educate my children?"

To men whose minds are constantly—and often almost hopelessly—at work on such thoughts, this page is addressed. It is devoid of rhetoric. It is plain, blunt common sense.

Let us get one thing straight at the very start—

We do not want you unless you want us

There is the dissatisfied man who will *do* something and the one who won't. We feel sorry for the latter but we cannot afford to enrol him. We have a reputation for training men who—as a result of our training—earn large salaries and hold responsible positions. That reputation must be maintained. We can do much, but we cannot *make* a man succeed who will not help himself. So rest assured you will not be unduly *urged* into anything.

Now what can happen to a dissatisfied man who acts?

We wish we could answer that question by letting you read the letters that come to us in every mail. Here is one, for example—from Victor F. Stine, of Hagerstown, Md.: "I was floundering around without a definite goal," he says, "and was seriously considering a Civil Service appointment." (You can tell from that how hopeless he was. A Civil Service appointment means a few thousand dollars a year *for life.)*

"The study of your Course and Service was not a hardship," he continues, "rather it was a real pleasure, because it is so practical and inspiring thruout." (The *method* of the Institute makes it practical and inspiring. We teach business not alone thru study, but thru *practice.* You learn executive thinking by meeting executive problems and making executive decisions.) "Added self-confidence and increased vision gained from the Institute's work," says Mr. Stine, "enabled me to accept and discharge added responsibilities successfully."

He is Secretary now of the organization in which he was then a dissatisfied cog.

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For a man like Mr. Stine we can achieve really great results. By learning the necessary fundamental principles of business, he insures his success. His judgment, his value, increase. The closed roads open. The worries disappear.

We attach a coupon to this advertisement. It is a little thing, but our experience proves that it separates out of every hundred readers the few who can act. If you are one of these let us mail you that wonderful little book, "Forging Ahead in Business." For thousands it has turned dissatisfaction into immediate progress. Mail the coupon today.

Announcing Three New Management Courses

The rapid developments in modern business have brought increasing demand for an extension of Institute service to executives.

To meet this demand the Institute now offers three new Management Courses in addition to its regular Modern Business Course and Service. These are a Course and Service in:

1—Marketing Management
2—Production Management
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These new Courses are of particular interest to younger executives who want definite training in the management of the particular departments of business in which they are now engaged.

The details of this interesting development in business training are included with the booklet which the coupon will bring you. Send for it.

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THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE
Vol. 49 JUNE, 1929 No. 2

Authors Who Are Men

"THOSE authors," observed Disraeli, "who . . . . forget that they are writers, and remember they are men, will be our favorites."

In this office we have not been much given to rules or strait restrictions in the choice of the stories offered you. But in coming upon this acute remark of the famous Englishman we were struck by the fact that it did define with remarkable accuracy the sort of writers who most contribute to the BLUE BOOK'S pages.

Our writers are not indeed deficient in literary background or in academic training; but they are conspicuously men first and writers afterward, like—

Edgar Rice Burroughs, whose typically masculine imagination has created for you those splendid novels of adventure in a primeval caveman's world like "Tarzan, Lord of the Jungle" and "Tanar of Pellucidar."

Like James Edwin Baum, who piloted a patrol plane over the North Sea in the Great War, and was a ranchman in Wyoming and a museum explorer in savage Abyssinia before he turned his hand to those picturesque novels of far places like "Spears in the Sun" and "The Lair of the Leopard."

Like Harold Channing Wire, who in the leisure hours of his work as a Government forest ranger in the high Sierras wrote that stirring novel of the real 1929 West which will begin in these pages next month, under the title "Mountain Men."

Like Leland Jamieson, an Army pursuit pilot at Kelly Field, whose authentic and vivid dramas of adventure along the high frontiers of the air—stories like "The Chinati Hills Affair" and "Flood Waters"—have been so attractive, and whose novelette of the air service, "Crash Pilot," will be a memorable feature of our next issue.

Like Warren Hastings Miller, whose career includes training and experience as a civil engineer, as a naval officer and as editor of a sportsman's magazine, and who has made repeated journeys to the Orient and to Africa in order that the backgrounds of his stories—like "Mrs. Ung Makes a Call," in this issue, and the first of a new Foreign Legion series in the next number—shall be fresh and authentic.

Like Clarence Herbert New, who also was trained as an engineer, who has five times voyaged around the globe, and whose stories are conspicuous not only for their accuracy and ingenuity, but for their fine humanity as well.

Like Bud La Mar, a professional bronco-buster; like Lemuel De Bra, a Federal officer in the "narcotic squad;" like Seven Anderton, a reporter on sixty-seven different newspapers; like Arthur Carhart, and Stanley Young of the Biological Survey; like Jay Lucas, Captain Dingle and many others.

And the stories of real experience—is not their absence of literary pretension an added charm?

—*The Editors.*

Drawn by W. O. Kling

AMERICA'S FIRST PIONEERS?

SOME years ago while traveling in search of data in connection with a proposed history of the Norwegians in America, Mr. H. R. Holand of Ephraim, Wisconsin, was told of a curiously inscribed stone that was being used by a farmer near Kensington, Minnesota, as the door-step to his cow-stable. The farmer presented the stone to Mr. Holand, who thus translates the Runic characters inscribed upon it:

"Eight Swedes and twenty-two Norsemen on an exploration-journey from Vinland through the western regions. We had camp by a lake having two rocky islands, one day's journey north from this stone. We were out and fished one day. When we came home we found ten men, red with blood and dead. Ave Maria! Save us from evil!

"We have ten our party by the sea to look after our vessels 14 days' journey from this island. Year 1362."

Year 1362! Over a hundred years before Columbus!

Since the discovery of the stone, a number of medieval European weapons, including axes and a bill-hook, have been found in the same vicinity; and it seems probable that they and the stone were left by a missionary expedition sent out by the king of Norway and Sweden in 1362 for the purpose of bringing back to the church a large body of Norse Greenlanders who, in the middle of the fourteenth century, apostatized from the Christian faith and emigrated, presumably to other parts of America. There is, however, no proof of this.

JAN of SUTRA

By

HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

A vivid drama of Amadan the accursed island—of the two there cast away, and the malevolent Crusoe who attacked them.

Illustrated by William Molt

THE sudden tropical storm had blown them miles out of their course. The lateen sail had been whipped to strings. Yet an outrigger canoe can stand a lot of weather. Jan and young Rothwell were drenched and battered by rain and wind; yet they were not altogether disheartened—especially Jan. She was getting a thrill that all her father's money could not have bought, even if he had been willing to pay for the thrill. Young Rothwell also was thrilled, and a bit worried. The canoe, half-full of water, rode heavily. If an atoll or even a small island happened to get in their way, all the paddling in the world wouldn't save them from a crash. And presently, through a slanting gray wall of rain loomed what Jan described as "the inevitable island."

She was kneeling in the bow, doing all she could to help keep the canoe from slipping sidewise into the surging green valleys. The clumsy native paddle tired her wrists. She felt that she wasn't helping a great deal. Young Rothwell was putting his shoulders into each stroke of the stern paddle. When he saw the island, he worked cannily, saving his strength. The canoe didn't draw much water, but sooner or later she would hit, or be swamped. Jan could swim. But those crashing green mountains ahead weren't surf; they were individual, diabolical catastrophes.

Jan pointed toward the island with her upraised paddle, just as the canoe shot halfway out of water on a sharp crest. She turned her head and smiled. Young Rothwell grinned and nodded. He wanted to propose to Jan, there and then. Jan had lived in Sutra, the principal island of the group, all her life. It wasn't as if she didn't know the danger of the immediate moment.

The unknown island seemed to him to be rising and falling in a silly sort of way. And it was growing bigger. The surging, green valleys were growing steeper, the crests more sharp. The canoe rose on a crest. The wind hit it. The canoe swung round and began to slip sidewise into the trough of the sea. It staggered to the top of the succeeding crest, hung for an instant and then started down.

Young Rothwell knew that the next wave would swamp them. "Jump clear!" he shouted to Jan. She rose, stood poised in the careening craft for a fraction of a second and then dived into the comber. Young Rothwell followed her. When he came up, he saw her head. He dived through another comber. After that he didn't know just what was happening. He felt himself lifted and pounded, tumbled and rolled. Finally something caught hold of his wrist and with the rush of a wave, dragged him up on the sand. When he had coughed the salt water out of his throat, he sat up and gazed about. Jan was kneeling on the sand, doing something to her hair.

"WELL, we're here," said Rothwell, "and I suppose we'll have to make the worst of it."

"You did."

"Thanks, Jan. But I wasn't trying to beat you to shore."

"Your nose is skinned," said Jan. "At least two freckles' worth."

"Freckles and sandy hair," said Rothwell, grinning. "Did you notice how well my clothes fit?"

Jan didn't seem interested.

"It's still raining," declared Rothwell.

"I lost my ukulele," said Jan, running her fingers through her short, boyish-looking hair.

"Did you?"

"Yes. Years ago. Have you any dry matches?"

"Dry matches! Jan, wont you ever be serious? Don't you realize we're rather up against it?"

"I'm not frightened. I'm just wet."

"But I'm serious."

"Well, I don't feel exactly like a musical comedy, myself. We're here—but then, *where* are we?"

"Don't you know this island?"

"Just met it. I'm thinking."

"Well, if you wont be serious, just once, I think I have some dry matches." Young Rothwell drew a small metal match-box from his trousers' pocket.

"Then why don't you make a fire?"

"Here, on the beach?"

"Of course not! Make it on top of your head." Jan's gray eyes were quite serious. She smiled. But it wasn't a smile young Rothwell enjoyed. Jan could smile in so many different languages.

"I believe you are serious about the fire," said Rothwell. Jan wasn't doing anything to her hair now. She was gazing past Rothwell, toward the fringe of tropical foliage behind him. He got up, marched to the edge of the foliage and began to look for dry roots and sticks. They were hard to find. But he determined to build a fire if it took him a week. He thought it would. The wind taunted him. He pressed farther into the jungle. A rock, about the size of a large table, had thrust itself up through the undergrowth. Now for a fire in the lee of the rock—he would make a fire if he had to start it in his pocket!

HE went down to the beach to call Jan. She wasn't there. "Of course," he remarked casually. Then he punched his head with his fist.

He went back to the fire. It was a sad, anemic little blaze, mourning at its own funeral. Rothwell was careful about its diet, but it expired. He made a tiny tepee of twigs and risked another match. Did Jan realize they were castaways? Would she ever take anything seriously? Perhaps the prospect was so grave that she didn't want to be serious.

"Shine, little glow-worm, shine on, shine on!" Rothwell encouraged his fire. He hovered about the inconsiderable flame in a paternal way.

"We'll dry this first," said Jan, behind him.

Young Rothwell didn't turn his head.

"Well?" The same voice, but in a different tone.

Young Rothwell turned toward the voice. Jan, her wet brown hair rumpled like a boy's, and in the same outer clothing, held out a damp, jade-green bathing-suit, last seen by Rothwell on the beach at Sutra, with Jan inside it.

"Thanks," he said. "But I don't think it will fit me."

"Where's the fire?" asked Jan.

"Down here. Haven't you any imagination?"

"Oh, there! Poor little thing! Let me take it." Jan knelt and administered first aid. "The Vestal and the Lamp," said Rothwell to himself. You had to have an olive skin and dark hair and a manner, to say such things out loud. . . . .

The fire thrived under Jan's delicate attention. "Don't even breathe!" she said, getting up.

"Breathless!" declared Rothwell, gazing at her instead of the fire.

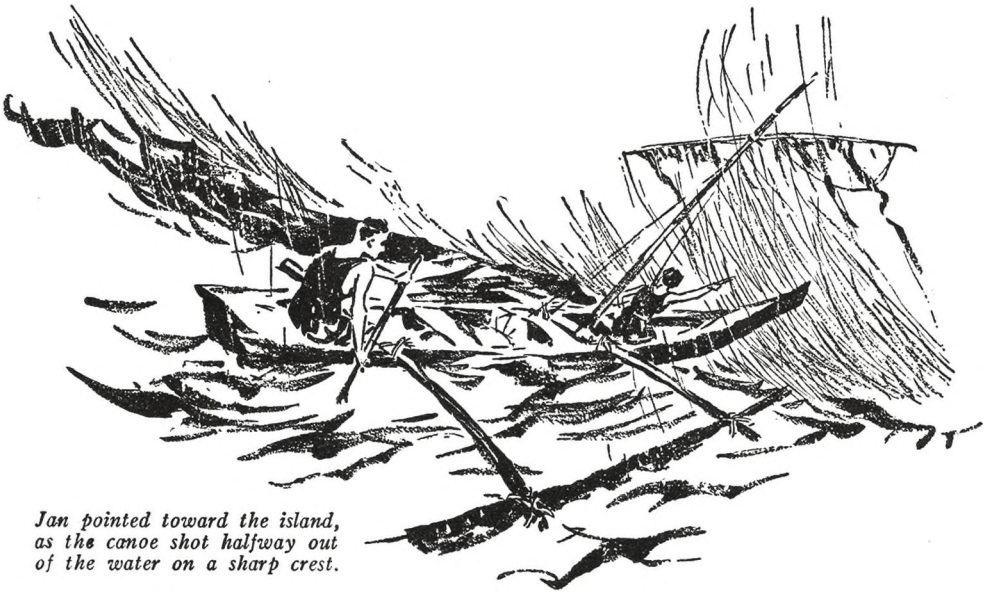
NOW what was she up to? He wished she wouldn't disappear like that. He fed the fire cautiously. Jan came back with two long sticks which she fastened together, crossed, with her handkerchief. She thrust the longer stick into the soft earth and draped the bathing-suit on the cross-piece.

"Oh, I see!" said Rothwell.

"No, Stanley. I'm drying it so it will flaunt. If you will break one of those big roots from that fallen tree, we can have an earnest fire. The dry root will burn for ages."

Young Rothwell strode over to the tree, and inspected its thick, stubby roots. He seized a root, braced his feet against another.

"Now, all together!" cried Jan. Stanley Rothwell had freckles and sandy hair. He also had good shoulders and a back, as well as a keen interest in Jan's future.



Jan pointed toward the island, as the canoe shot halfway out of the water on a sharp crest.

He arched his back. His fine wet shirt clung to his swelling muscles. Jan whistled softly—to herself, of course. She had never seen Rothwell in action. The stubborn root cracked, gave way suddenly. Rothwell sat down, with the heavy root across his legs.

"It has stopped raining," he declared. "Don't you think I'd make an acceptable rain-beau?"

JAN shook her head. "No. Tropical sunset, which cannot be described in words. All novelists of note say so."

Rothwell mentally damned the novelists. He wanted to talk about life, not literature. He was doing stuff for an American publication in New York—South Sea Island sketches, without the red ink. He wanted to put Jan's name in a book. Not a novel, but in a book where his name would be by her name, with the customary witnesses.

As Rockwell carried the heavy root to the fire, he noticed that the wind was letting down. The storm had about blown itself out.

"Shall I put our fire out with this?" he asked, indicating the root.

"No. Put the fire against it." With two twigs for chop-sticks, Jan transferred tiny embers to a crack in the root. "Now blow," she said. Rothwell knelt and blew. The root burned like coal, with a soft glow. There was no flame.

"It wont blaze," said Jan. "It will just eat its heart out—burn and burn till there's nothing left."

Rothwell glanced at her quickly, but Jan was gazing at the fire.

The surf boomed loudly on the beach, then dragged back with a rush of pebbles, and occasional raindrops spattered down through the foliage, like afterthoughts. Jan and Rothwell sat on either side of the fire, their backs against the rock. Jan's jade-green bathing-suit looked like a scarecrow. Now, if she had been inside it! Rothwell was thinking of the beach at Sutra.

"I'm done, on this side," he declared, finally. "Let's change places, and get done through."

"You're improving, Stanley."

"Thanks. No magic could improve you."

"I could furnish the retort obvious, but I wont. Too cheap and easy. Do you ever think before you write?"

Rothwell ignored the question. They exchanged places.

"By Jove!" Young Rothwell thumped his chest. He took a cigarette-case from his pocket, leaned toward the fire and opened it. *"Eeny, meeny, miny*—the third one looks dry."

"But it can't be! Don't touch them! Stand the case up in front of our fire. They will be dry in no time. You can't smoke macaroni."

"Macaroni! Why did you say its name?"

"Because I'm not so very hungry. But if you'll take one of those broad leaves, and make a drinking-cup—here, let me take your penknife."

Young Rothwell watched Jan cut off the leaf, split it and pin the overlapping edges together with a splinter of wood.

"There!" she said proudly.

Rothwell dipped the leaf into the scant inch of water on the concave top of the rock. He presented the cup to Jan. She thanked him. He filled the leaf-cup and drank.

Then, sitting down, he examined the cigarettes. They seemed dry. He proffered one to Jan. They smoked: he, because he had the habit; Jan because she could if she cared to, and she was hungry. A cigarette would dull her hunger.

The glow of the burning root became a comfort. It cast a soft, warm radiance on Jan's pensive face. Jan was good to look at when in any mood—but when pensive!

Young Rothwell sighed. "*Robinson Crusoe* didn't have a wife, did he?"

"Not in my edition," replied Jan, still pensive.

Stanley Rothwell gazed up through the cavern of darkness. He saw a lone star anchored in a drift of scurrying clouds. He hoped Jan wasn't worrying. Hang it all, if he were only clever enough to cheer her up without seeming to do so!

"Stanley!" she whispered. "Look!"

"I am looking—at a star."

"No. Over there! What is it?"

Rothwell came to himself with a sharp start. Jan had not been joking. Beyond the farthest, fading glow of the firelight gleamed two phosphorescent eyes — diabolical eyes, detached, and burning green in the velvety darkness. Rothwell was startled. His back chilled suddenly. The eyes were about two feet from the ground. A man wouldn't squat down and glare like that. Couldn't be a python. The eyes were too far apart. A human? Some castaway, crazed by loneliness? If the thing would only declare itself! Rothwell glanced swiftly at Jan. She was staring at those hypnotic eyes.

"Get behind me," he whispered. "If the thing should tackle us—"

He rose, crouching.

SOMETHING detached itself from the vicinity of the glowing green eyes—a white something that moved awkwardly, hesitantly. Rothwell braced himself. The white something stepped timidly toward the fire. The white something also had glaring green eyes, and four stiff legs. It bleated, rather plaintively. "Lord!" exclaimed Rothwell. "It's a goat!"

"Of course!" Jan's tone intimated that she had known all the time that it was a goat.

"It's two goats," added Rothwell a bit carelessly.

"Isn't it, though! Wilhelm, and the dowager."

"What are we going to do about it?" Rothwell seemed cross.

"They're not wild goats," declared Jan. "They're simply curious."

"And because they are not afraid of us, that means—"

"Some one lives on the island. Stanley, do you know how to milk?"

"I do."

"Then sit still." Jan rose, and picking up the leaf-cup, held it out toward the kid. The mother goat came forward, sniffed at the cup and nibbled its edge. "There's a strap on her neck," said Jan; and she slipped her fingers under the strap. "Don't pay any attention to the kid, no matter what it does," she cautioned Rothwell. "If you frighten it, the mother will pull away from me."

JAN talked to the mother goat and stroked its coarse hair. Rothwell approached cautiously. The little white kid reared and butted him on the shins. Rothwell elbowed it away and by careful manipulation managed to fill the leaf-cup. Jan drank the warm milk. And Rothwell again filled the cup and drank hurriedly, for fear the source of supply might stampede. "Hadn't we better keep her here?" he asked.

"No," declared Jan positively. "She has done her share. I'm going to let her go now."

"Well, anyway, she's a gentleman!" said Rothwell heartily.

"Stanley, I'm wondering who lives on the island."

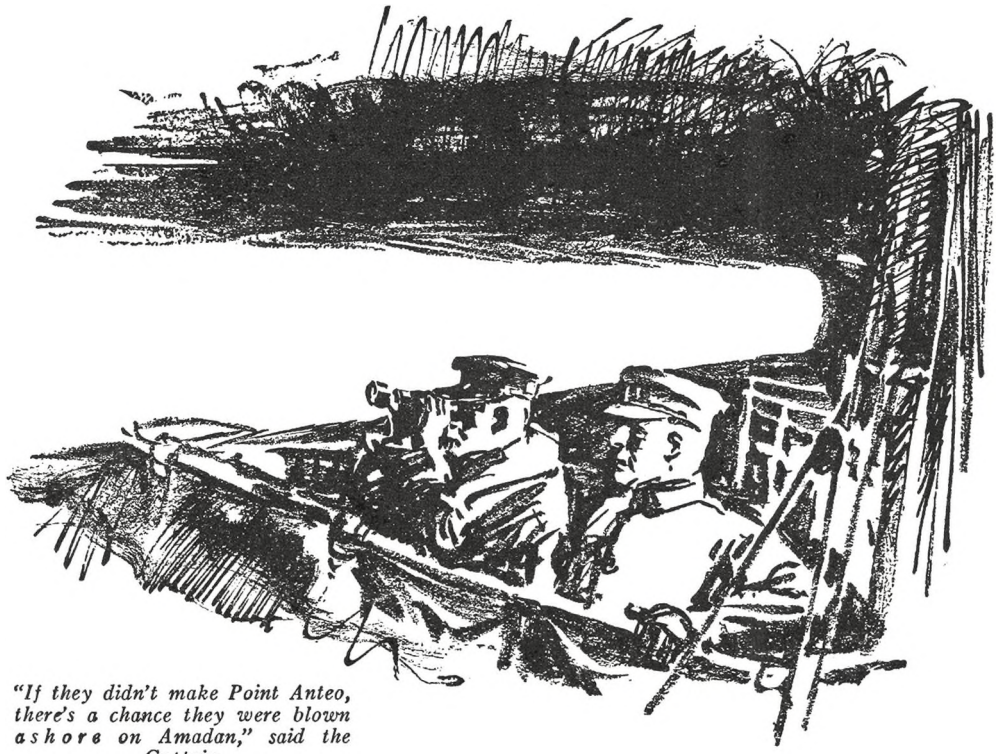
"Well, I hope it's a missionary. Missionaries are ministers, aren't they?"

"Usually. That wasn't very clever, Stanley."

"Oh, I know it! And I know I haven't a chance in the world."

"Of becoming a missionary?" asked Jan, sweetly.

Rothwell frowned, but withheld the obvious retort. "The darn' goat isn't going to leave, after all," he observed enthusiastically. "Look at her! She has actually



"If they didn't make Point Anteo, there's a chance they were blown ashore on Amadan," said the Captain.

settled down for a snooze. And the kid has folded up its table-legs and is also going to stay. . . . . Think I'll go down to the beach and look for the canoe."

ROTHWELL thought the canoe might have washed ashore. He doubted that the outrigger would be intact. Even if it were, their sail was gone. Being shipwrecked wasn't so darned romantic, even with a companion like Jan. Rothwell walked along the beach, irritated by the booming of the surf. He wasn't especially interested in looking for the canoe. He wanted to think of Jan—of what he would say to her, now that they were alone. There hadn't been half a chance in Sutra, with the dancing, swimming, and horseback riding, and so many young fellows about. And Jan was so everlastingly elusive!

He heard Jan whistle like a bird. Not whistling for him. Oh, no! Jan's methods were more or less indirect. Just a bird-like whistle, irresponsible, joyous, chirpy. Young Rothwell dug his hands into his pockets, and frowned. "Cave-man stuff is all right, in pictures. I suppose a cave-man castaway would say, 'I don't like whistling. Cut it out, or I'll wring your beautiful neck.' A hundred feet of close-up. Bunk!" Young Rothwell stumbled up the beach and entered their modern Garden of Eden. Eve was sitting with her back against a rock, her hands clasped round her knees.

"See the mother-goat's beard wiggle," observed Jan. "She hasn't had a bite of anything, yet she is chewing."

"Sleepy, Jan?"

"Oh, so-so. Could stay awake all night, but wont."

"Thirsty?"

"No. Stan, you're so funny."

"Funny?"

"Yes. You want to kiss me good-night, and you hate yourself for even thinking of it, under the circumstances."

"You win, Jan."

"Perhaps. Here, Stanley."

Rothwell gave her his hand and helped her to get up. Then both her hands rested for a moment on his shoulders. A moth's wing brushed his lips, a crimson moth that vanished in laughter. "Good-night, good boy."

"Not fair, Jan."

"Why, Stanley, you're not serious?"

"No. I accept your challenge."

"Of course. Knew you would. Do you think I'm a child?"

"No, sweet elusive, I don't. Do you think *I'm* a child?"

"Yes."

"Oh, confound it!"

"But you're growing. Grown a lot since we landed. Good boy with sandy-haired temper. Promised himself he wouldn't make love to Jan until—until when, Stanley?"

"Oh, what's the use! Till we are among white folks again—our own kind."

"But suppose never?"

"In that case you'd be sensible enough to realize what a thumping good provider I'd make."

"I shouldn't want a thumping provider."

"I suppose not. Well, I'd try to be the kind of provider you would want."

"That's better! Now—didn't we say good-night quite a while ago?"

"Ages. It ought to be morning."

Jan curled down beside the rock. Rothwell stretched out lazily on the other side of the fire, his hands clasped beneath his head. He gazed up at the sky. He thought Jan was asleep. But Jan always surprised a person. "Isn't she nice?" said Jan drowsily.

"Yes. Who?"

"The mother goat. She's still chewing something. So placid and philosophical."

"Yes. Well, perhaps it's because it's her own kid she's looking after, and not a stranger."

"Poor orphan," said Jan. Rothwell knew that she was smiling.

He grinned. The grin extended to a yawn. "By Jove! This isn't so bad."

Jan thought it wasn't half bad, but she didn't say so. She told herself that Stanley was a nice boy, even nicer than she had supposed he could be. The mother goat lay with its forelegs folded under. Her beard wiggled as she chewed reflectively. The little white kid lay close to its mother. The surf boomed lazily.

WITH the harbor-lights of Sutra far behind, a slim white yacht nosed into the heavy seas, the silver shaft of its great searchlight rising and falling, cutting a sharp path into the blue-black of space. Jan's father, John Pomeroy, gripped the rail of the bridge, as he followed with frowning gaze the erratic lunging of the silver shaft of light. Beside him stood squat Captain Jacobs, in dungarees, tennis shoes and a sweater. "If they didn't make Point Anteo, there's just a chance, sir, that they were blown ashore on Amadan," said the Captain.

"Just a chance," said John Pomeroy.

ROTHWELL sat up, stared awake at the dawn-light. He enjoyed a mighty stretch and an uncovered yawn. Jan was still curled beside the rock, asleep. Rothwell glanced at her approvingly. The fire had burned out. He touched the heap of feathery ashes with his foot. Another day. A white man's day usually began with breakfast.

Speaking of breakfast, he reflected, the mother goat was gone. Rothwell caught a glimpse of something white moving away among the ferns. "Hey, breakfast!" he shouted. He lunged up and started after the white something, which immediately vanished.

In a few minutes he came slowly back, displaying empty palms in a first-rate imitation of dejection. "The dowager is on her way east," he explained to Jan. "Also Billy the kid. They're not hurrying. Once or twice the dowager stopped and looked at me over her left shoulder. She's like royalty—hard to approach. Oh, by the way—good-morning, Jan."

"Quite aside from breakfast, good-morning, Stanley."

"Will you have a cigarette?"

"Not before breakfast. Men do."

"Thanks. We will."

Rothwell found that there was very little water left on the top of the rock. He managed to fill their leaf-cup twice. Jan ran her fingers through her hair, shook her head, coltishly. Lacking a powder-puff, she patted her nose and her cheeks with the tips of her fingers. Then they set out on the trail of the goat. Goat with a strap on its neck might mean a habitation. Jan doubted it. The island should be Amadan. She thought it was. And no one lived on Amadan. The natives had either died of disease or had gone to Sutra. The trader had gone.

Amadan, she said, was an unlucky island. Captain Searles, of the schooner *Morningstar*—he could tell you of Amadan in the old days! "Cannibals, miss, as I'm a Christian!" Then gruesome details, to substantiate his declaration. A fever-shot, rum-drinking, quinine-riddled Christian, plethoric, sweltering and profane—but always a gentleman when there were ladies present. He never failed to admit it. But you liked Captain Searles—old Billy Searles, with the queer, puckered spot on his bald head. "Hatchet wound. Trepanned, miss. Silver plate as big as a dollar." And the zig-zag scar across his

chest, like a streak of lightning. Yes, Amadan was unlucky. Amadan the deserted, the accursed. "Nonsense!" concluded Jan.

"Phew!" Young Rothwell felt that way as they reached the top of the ridge that traversed the island from north to south. The sun fought through a blanket of steaming foliage on the eastern slope below them. And far below lay a tiny harbor, in delicate miniature. The bleached roof of a hut showed near the edge of the lagoon. To the right of the hut stood a small, corrugated-iron warehouse. A skeleton staging ran from the warehouse out over the water.

"Well, they did live here, if they don't now," declared Rothwell.

"Several years ago. The island is deserted. But there was a strap on the goat's neck. And she is tame."

"Worst of it is, the kid will get all the grade-A milk this morning. We'll have to be satisfied with grade-B."

"Would my friend look a gift-goat in the mouth?"

"Oh, I suppose her teeth are all right," said Rothwell. "But when we meet again, I intend to look her right in the eye and tell her something."

"I'm awfully dense, Stanley."

"Well, we may be here quite a while. And we've got to eat."

"You sha'n't kill the dowager!"

"Don't intend to. But the heir apparent—"

"Nor the kid—unless we are starving!" cried Jan.

"Of course! I'm not altogether a brute."

LIKE Eden might have been; this hushed island of Amadan. But it was not a joyous situation for Rothwell. It was all well enough for Jan to make light of their predicament. She had suggested the sailing voyage to Point Anteo, but that didn't mean that he was not responsible for its disastrous climax. And wouldn't John Pomeroy foam when he heard that his daughter and young Rothwell had left Sutra for Point Anteo in a sailing canoe! Rothwell told himself that he was in it up to his ears; that he would tell the old boy (disrespectful young modern, what?) that it was his party, and that Jan had reluctantly consented to go, after much persuasion. Might as well make it a good one. Might just as well be hung for a sea-serpent as a flounder. Premising, of course, that he survived to be hanged for anything.

The goat-trail wound on down the gentle slope, thus far a well-defined trail, almost too well-defined for a mere goat-trail. Jan had stopped and picked up something. A tiny metal cylinder, the empty shell of a Luger. The brass was discolored—an old shell.

"Tired, Jan?"

"No. I've been thinking."

"I haven't a penny."

"Oh, just that Father will be scouring the Seven Seas in the *Minerva,* after having put in at Point Anteo. Our hurricane was traveling east-by-south. Father wont give up until he has made the rounds. You see, he has a great deal of confidence in me. I know, now, that we're on Amadan. The old warehouse, and the harbor, and the hut—all abandoned. I was just wondering what Captain Jacobs will say when he sees my bathing-suit flaunting in the breeze. I left it where it would flaunt."

"Now, I wouldn't have thought of that."

"Of course not. You didn't have a bathing-suit."

"Well, I'm wondering what your father will say."

"Oh, nothing that the men will hear. Father will save a speech for me, no doubt. Yet he'll be very judicious."

"Wise parent."

"Yes, he is. But aren't you glad you're not one of the family, in view of what he'll say?"

"No!"

"You may be a very distant cousin. There was a Rothwell hanging on our family tree, in England, ages ago."

"Let him hang! I'm going on down and find out where the goat went."

"May I come along?"

The rank vegetation had so overgrown the original clearing that they came upon the long, low, thatched hut unexpectedly. "Well, we're here," said Jan. "But then, again, where are we?"

"Magic casements, opening to the foam of perilous seas," quoted Rothwell.

THEY were on the harbor side of the abandoned dwelling. Jan stepped up on the *lanai* and peered in through the doorway.

"But, Stanley, some one does live here!" she exclaimed. Rothwell came and stood beside her. They saw, in one corner of the room, an American cook-stove. On

it were blackened pots and pans. In another corner was a camp cot and blankets. Against the south wall, under the hole that answered for a window, was a big empty packing-case, its top stained and spotted with grease—an improvised table. Above the packing case hung a Luger pistol in a military holster. The odor of recently cooked meat hung in the hot air.

THEY stepped in and began looking at the rude furnishings. Rothwell poked about the room, and stopping, looked again at the holstered pistol. Jan was examining the blankets. They were of soft, fine wool, tan-color; on the corner of each was embroidered in silk the word *Minerva*. She had embroidered the name of the yacht on all their blankets. And about two years past, a pair of the blankets had been stolen from the yacht. But who had fetched them to Amadan?

"Don't know his name," said Rothwell. "But the initials J. P. are stamped on this holster."

"Whose initials? Where?"

"On the pistol holster. And the gun isn't rusted, even in this climate. It's clean, and it's oiled. Wonder where the owner is?"

"Is it loaded?" asked Jan.

"I suppose so. I'll see. Yes, the magazine is filled, and there's a cartridge in the chamber."

"Unload it," said Jan in a queer tone. "Put the magazine in your pocket, and put the pistol back in the holster."

"But it isn't my gun, Jan."

"Please, Stanley. Quick!"

"Of course. But what's the matter?"

Jan gestured toward the cot. "These blankets were stolen from the *Minerva* about two years ago. Father's pistol was taken from the locker in his cabin. There were other things—cigars, some money, and a watch and some canned provisions. That same night the engineer, Doughty, disappeared. And Captain Bent, who was sleeping on board, was found murdered. Father had told Captain Bent to discharge Doughty for drunkenness. The natives said that Doughty was drowned. It was never known just what became of him. I don't know much about pistols, but I do know Father had his initials stamped on his holster. And I know I embroidered the name on the blankets."

"Let's take stock of this wikiup," said Rothwell. "Stove, cot, blankets, packing-case, water-pail made from a five-gallon oil-can, gourd cup, two old pots and a frypan. No clothing, but plenty of ashes and filth." Rothwell gestured toward the Luger. He stepped to the lidless stove and cautiously touched the ashes in the firebox. "Warm. And here are the remains of a stew. Smells fresh. Don't see any matches round the place. The present incumbent must use a watch-crystal, or flint and steel. What did this man Doughty look like?"

"A gorilla—when he wasn't in uniform. But there wasn't a hair on his head or neck or face. Some disease—"

"But a good engineer, eh?"

"Very capable. Father saw to it that he didn't get drunk while we were cruising. Doughty was short and broad, with long arms, and the jaw of a beast. I disliked him and I think he knew it."

"Well, if he should happen to be the present incumbent,"—Rothwell gazed about the room,—"it might not be so pleasant for our side."

"Oh, I don't know that he is. The natives have always declared that he was drowned. I hope I'm not imagining things."

"Somebody lives here. And the initials on the holster, and the marked blankets do look a bit queer." Rothwell offered Jan a gourdful of water from the improvised pail. She tasted it; said it was fresh, but a bit warm. Rothwell drank and laid the gourd on the packing-case. "I'm going out and look round a bit. If you don't mind, I think I'll try some of that stew. Wont you have some?"

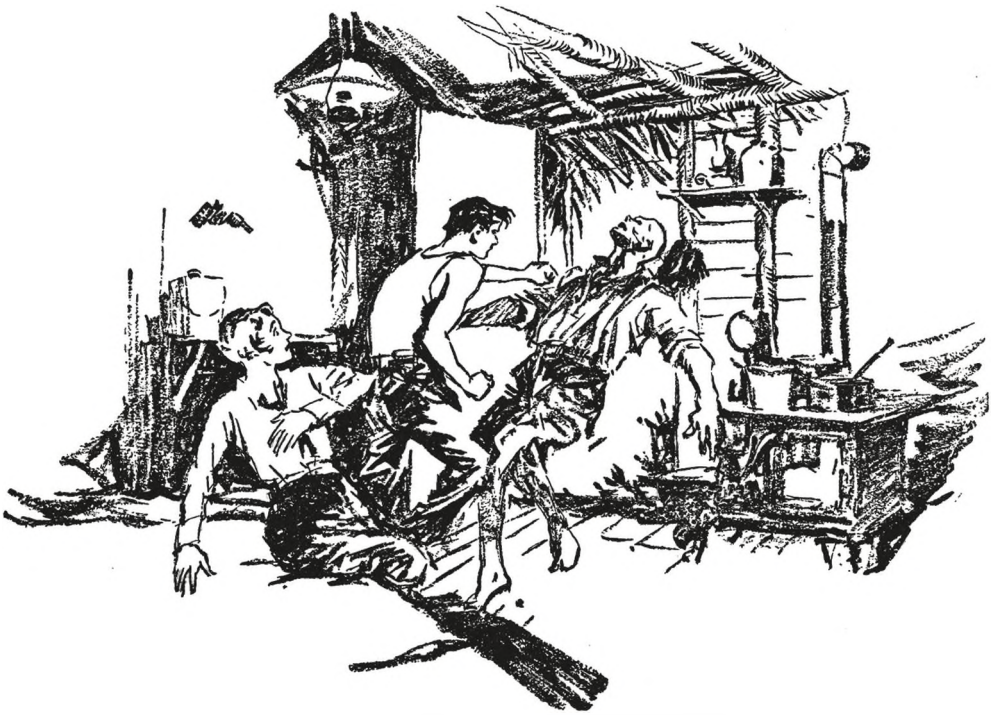
JAN was sitting on the cot and gazing toward the doorway. Rothwell noticed that she seemed preoccupied. She turned and glancing up at him, pressed her finger to her lips. He nodded. The doorway framed nothing more than a vista of the harbor and a stretch of open sea beyond. He came over and sat beside her. "There's some one out there," she whispered. "I saw a shadow on the *lanai*." Then in an easy, conversational tone: "I wonder when the others will get here. They weren't so very far behind us."

Rothwell played generously to her lead. "Oh, the boys may have stopped to shoot at some of those dinky little birds we saw on the way over."

"I wonder if anyone lives here?" said Jan.

"Regular rat's-nest," said Rothwell. "Let's go out and see if our crowd is in sight." He rose and gestured to Jan to keep behind him. He was within a stride of the doorway when it was blocked by a squat, broad figure. "Oh, hello!" cried Rothwell, a bit startled by the grotesque creature that confronted him. The man wore a ridiculous head-covering fashioned from goat-skin. His torn and faded shirt are intruding. We found this hut, and stepped inside to see if there was anyone at home."

Rothwell glanced furtively at the other's forearms. A formidable beast—one that would be mighty hard to put down in a tussle. And Rothwell thought pretty well of himself as a rough-and-tumble fighter. He had had four years of it in the First to Go and the Last to Come Back.



"Run, Jan!" cried Rothwell, as he tried to stop Doughty's charge. The straight, clean punch jolted the ex-engineer; he staggered.

but half covered his tremendous chest. His burly arms were bare, tattooed, and blotched with freckles. From his knees hung strings of what had once been trousers—strings that dangled about his bulging calves. His feet were bare, his toes blunt, almost shapeless. A white man turned savage. Rothwell noticed that the man's face was hairless, without eyebrows, eyelashes, or beard. The nose, flattened to almost nothing at the bridge, the pouched and staring eyes, the loose lower lip—Rothwell recalled Jan's description of the ex-engineer Doughty.

"Well, hello, once more!" said Rothwell genially.

"Don't be in any hurry to go, Mister," growled the hairless man.

"Why, there's no hurry. Sorry if we

"Where you from?"

"Sutra. We're exploring the island. The rest of our crowd are up on the ridge, somewhere."

"You're a liar! Your canoe piled up in the West Cove last night. Saw her there on the rocks, this morning. I don't know you, but that's John Pomeroy's girl."

"Yes," said Jan. "And you're Doughty. Now that that's clear, wont you come in and sit down? There's nothing to get excited about."

"You got your nerve, asking me to come into my own house! But you always was a nervy one. Put your old man up to firing me. And now you're thinking as how you'd like to see old Doughty behind the bars for swiping a couple of lousy blankets, maybe!"

ROTHWELL stepped between them. "Talk to me, little stranger. I don't like the way you talk to Miss Pomeroy. What's it all about, anyway?"

"That's my business."

"All right. Have a cigarette! Bet you haven't tasted tobacco for a century." Rothwell presented his cigarette-case. Doughty seized a cigarette and thrusting it into his mouth, chewed hungrily.

"There's another one left," declared Rothwell. If he could get Doughty farther into the room and away from the door, Jan could slip out. There might be a row. Rothwell sized up the other, and decided that he could keep him busy for a round or two, in case he got ugly. But if the ex-engineer ever got hold of him—

Rothwell snapped his cigarette-case shut. Doughty stood just inside the doorway, his knees sagging, his long arms relaxed. "He wont stand up to it," thought Rothwell. "He'll rush, and clinch." Deliberately Rothwell glanced toward the Luger on the wall. Naturally Doughty would think it was loaded. Rothwell stepped back, stopped and again glanced toward the Luger. He knew that argument would mean nothing to this half-crazed animal. Doughty's teeth showed above his pendulous lower lip.

"You would, eh!" he snarled, and he leaped at Rothwell.

"Run, Jan!" cried Rothwell, as he tried to stop Doughty's charge with his open left hand, and all he had in his right. The straight, clean punch jolted the ex-engineer, but didn't stop him. Rothwell broke back and shot his left into Doughty's stomach. The other staggered. Rothwell jumped in and got Doughty square between the eyes. Doughty drew back, spitting blood that trickled into his mouth. Rothwell rushed and swung for the ex-engineer's jaw, but missed. Doughty grunted and rushed in. The younger man danced away out of danger and sparred, trying to keep the other from clinching. A wild swing from Doughty caught Rothwell on the ear and turned him halfway round. Before he could recover, Doughty swung again, and Rothwell went down in a heap.

He heard Jan cry out—realized vaguely that she was still in the room. Doughty rushed to the wall, jerked the Luger from the holster, and swinging down on Rothwell, pressed the trigger. An answering empty click, and he yanked the bolt back and pulled the trigger again. Rothwell got to his feet just as Doughty flung the empty pistol at him. He tried to stop the ex-engineer with a stiff right, but the blow glanced on Doughty's head, and again he clinched.

Rothwell realized he hadn't a chance in a hundred of downing the wild man, so he fought like a lumberjack. He went for Doughty's throat. Doughty sank his teeth in Rothwell's arm. Rothwell jerked loose and thrust his stiffened fingers into Doughty's eyes. But Doughty had him by the throat. They crashed down, fighting like maniacs. Rothwell felt himself going limp, prayed that Jan would get out of it somehow. Then the room grew black.

HE seemed to have been away, somewhere for a long time. He heard some one calling his name. He raised on his arm, swayed dizzily. Jan was calling him. The tone of her voice was shrill, desperate. He brushed the mist from his eyes, and saw Doughty fling Jan into the corner of the room. Rothwell gritted his teeth, tried to get up. As in a dream he saw the Luger on the floor beside him. He fumbled in his pocket, managed to slip the magazine into the butt. Still as in a dream he saw Doughty step back from the corner—heard him say: "Now I guess I got you, all right." Rothwell braced himself on one arm, brought the Luger up, and groaned as it wavered. Doughty swung round. Rothwell caught the color of the ex-engineer's chest above the sights. He fired, stiff-armed, and as fast as he could press the trigger. Crouching to rush at him, Doughty flung out his arms and pitched forward, knocking the Luger from Rothwell's hand. Rothwell saw the ex-engineer's face as he fell. "I guess that settles it," murmured Rothwell. And he sank down, his propped arm giving way under him.

Jan's face was in a mist, a mist tinged by sunlight that filtered through a crevice in the broken roof. But it was Jan. And that was good. Her mouth was tremulous, her eyes questioning. That is, until Rothwell tried to grin. Then: "Woozy, just a bit?" she asked.

"Yes. But rather comfortable, in spots."

"You fought clean," said Jan.

"Oh, not so very, toward the end. I—the gun—I had to do it."

"Of course. And that was clean too. He didn't move after he fell."

"Jan, would you get me a drink?"

Doughty rushed to the wall, jerked the Luger from the holster, and swinging down on Rothwell, pressed the trigger.

"Right here. Fresh from the stream. I fetched some in."

"Jan, you're a darling." Rothwell drank, and lay back on the cot, wondering how he happened to be there.

"I suppose you really mean it."

"Mean it! Good Lord, yes! You're alive, and safe—"

"Yes. But the flies!" And Jan shuddered.

"I know. We'll get right out of here. I can say 'Cheerio,' but I can't do it. The damned doorway keeps shifting round. Lend a hand, mate, and we'll try for the open."

Jan helped him up. "There's a stream, south of the old warehouse, and shade. But going over, you'll have to put on this." She picked up Doughty's goat-skin hat, and made him put it on in spite of his protest. It was not far to the stream, but the sun was vicious, the air heavy with moisture. "Legs rather disconnected," mumbled Rothwell as Jan helped him along. "Yes, I'm trying to be funny. Don't feel humorous, though."

"Bite your lip if you want to. It's not so far now, *compadre*."

"Grand old word, that! Helps a lot." Rothwell's face was white and streaming with sweat. He felt weak and silly, wanted to laugh. Instead, he bit his lip. When they reached the bank of the stream, he lay flat on his stomach, his head on his arms. He felt something cool and soft on the back of his neck—Jan's handkerchief, which she had dipped in the stream. Presently he turned over and raised on his arm. "Is the gourd handy?"

"Here."

"You went back for it?"

Jan nodded. She dipped the gourd in the stream and gave him a drink.

Rothwell drew a deep breath. "Feel better. Jan, how did I get on that cot? I was on the floor when I went woozy."

"Oh, I dragged you over and just heaved you up in sections. You didn't seem to mind."

"The pictures do get it right, sometimes, don't they?"

"Motion-pictures? Yes. People like impossible heroics."

"Well, I'll just rest up a bit. Then I'll go back to the shack and—"

"No. You have some matches left?"

"Two or three."

"Then we'll set fire to the hut. If the

Minerva should happen to come nosing along, looking for us, the hut will be a heap of ashes."

"I understand. Hang the *Minerva!*"

"You are feeling better, aren't you?"

"Yes. Getting selfish again."

"Really?"

"Yes. I'd be contented to live here the rest of my life."

"With me, of course. Well, I shouldn't."

ROTHWELL saw tears in Jan's gray eyes. But then, after what she had been through, she had a right to weep, or become hysterical or do anything. "What is it, Jan?" he asked. She shook her head.

"Jan, aren't we playing a game, like a couple of children?"

"I'm not."

"Well, if I have done anything to make you unhappy, call me a cad, or a piker. I can't stand it to see you unhappy."

"I'm not."

"Well, I'm mighty glad!"

Jan tried to smile. Rothwell wanted to put his arms round her. But it didn't happen that way. Jan always surprised one. She flung her arms round his shoulders, drew him back so that he lay with his head in her lap. Her fingers touched his cheek. She brushed the damp hair back from his forehead. Rothwell smiled up at her.

"Jan, I'm a renegade. My promise is broken and I've thrown away the pieces. I love you so much that I'll go and sit on the other side of the island, if that will make you happy. And if we get back to Sutra, and you tell me that this was a mistake, I'll take my medicine. But I'll love you every day of my life."

Jan pressed her fingers against his lips. "Stanley—about that man Doughty, over there."

"Yes. I know I put him out. I had to. And thank the Lord I made a clean job of it."

"Yes. You had to. And you're here, alive, and safe." Jan's arm was beneath his head. "I broke your promise," she said. And her lips found his.

And now, whether or not the *Minerva* found them, it didn't matter. Jan knew that sooner or later they would get back to Sutra. In her ecstasy she didn't care just how soon or how late that might be. Only, there was the hut, and that horrible thing, lying there. . . . .

The boom and echo of a distant explosion—and Jan was on her feet and gazing out toward the harbor. "The *Minerva!*" she cried.

"Damn the *Minerva!*" said Rothwell.

THE yacht came gliding into the blue harbor like a shadow. They could hear the soft hush of the water as it curled fanwise from her slender-sharp bow. Then, quite distinctly:

"It's them, sir!"

"That," said Jan, "is Captain Jacobs. He's a peach."

"You're not excited."

"Why, no! I expected to be rescued. But Stanley—about Doughty. You had to kill him. You were helpless, and he was choking me—the beast! But I don't want you to go back to Sutra and be known as the man that killed Doughty. They'll tell it in the clubs, everywhere, for the next ten years. Of course I'll tell Father. But the others—"

"Will any of the crew land?"

"Not if I can help it. I'll tell Father I want to get aboard just as quick as I can Captain Jacobs will land, with a man or two. And they'll poke about. You have some matches."

"I'll do it. Hold the enemy for five minutes, Jan."

A cable's-length east of the staging the yacht came to anchor. John Pomeroy was in the bow, immaculate in white, and smoking the inevitable panatela. Jan cupped her hands.

"Hello, Dad!" she called. "Send Captain Jacobs in the dinghy for us. We're simply starving!"

"All right, Jan."

"Father's in a good humor," said Jan to herself. "He didn't say 'Janice.'"

BEFORE the dinghy got halfway to shore, Jan called on Captain Jacobs to land where she was—that the staging was rotten and unsafe. He promptly changed his course. It wasn't his job to row a dinghy, but bless you, Miss Jan had said "send Captain Jacobs in the dinghy"—and he rather relished the distinction of lone rescuer. Rothwell came from the hut and walked slowly toward Jan. The squat, ruddy Captain beached the dinghy and stepped out, mopping his forehead. "It's a blessing!" he boomed. "Yes, it is!"

"You're a dear!" Jan kissed his ruddy cheek. Captain Jacobs rubbed his mouth with the back of his hand. "Took my breath, miss. It did! And you're here,

safe and sound. Saw the wreck of your canoe, in the west cove."

"Captain Benny,"—Jan lowered her voice,—"do you think I'd waste a minute getting you aboard the *Minerva* if you were starving?"

"Good Lord, miss! To be sure! I'll have you aboard in a jiffy, if you'll step in the bow, Mr. Rothwell. Found your bathing-suit, Miss Jan. It gave me a turn, it did! Amadan is unlucky, for some. I had a mind to take a look at the old place. You see, I'm not afeared of smallpox. I had it, I did."

"I'm afraid of it," said Jan.

WHEN they stood on deck, the somewhat disheveled castaways, and the cool-eyed, white-garmented John Pomeroy, Captain Jacobs stepped aft and bit a more than generous chunk from his plug of chewing-tobacco. Ordinarily he didn't chew tobacco when on duty. "Smallpox!" he mumbled. "Now, it aint like Miss Jan to be scared of anything."

Pomeroy stood with his arm about Jan's shoulders. She had kissed him with even more fervor than the occasion seemed to demand. She was looking up into his face, but he was gazing over her head toward the landing-place, and the curl of smoke that drifted through the ragged doorway of the hut. Rothwell also was gazing toward the hut. "Tell Jacobs to make Sutra tonight, Dad," said Jan. "I want to get home right away."

"I set it on fire," declared Rothwell, gesturing. "If Jan will excuse us, I'd like to talk to you."

When Jan had disappeared into her cabin, and the *Minerva* was under way, Pomeroy turned to Rothwell. "I'll show you where you can wash. Then we'll have a bite, and that talk you mentioned. Steward, you might see if Miss Janice wants anything."

"Yes sir."

Rothwell luxuriated in the hot water and soap and the soft towels, then came back to the main cabin. Pomeroy was walking up and down, smoking, as usual. He gestured toward a chair. The steward fetched thin sandwiches, a bottle, a siphon and tall glasses.

"Do you drink?" queried Pomeroy.

"Yes."

"Smoke?"

"Yes."

"Know anything about women?"

"Not much. Are you familiar with Mr. Kipling's poetry, Mr. Pomeroy?"

Pomeroy smiled. "Why?"

"Well, I rather think Mr. Kipling didn't tell all he knew."

"Possibly not. All right—go ahead."

"I killed a man named Doughty, this morning. And I'm going to marry Jan."

"Doughty! On Amadan! You sure?"

"Jan recognized him. He got rather nasty. Knocked me down twice. I shot him—with your Luger, Mr. Pomeroy."

Pomeroy filled two tall glasses. He drank slowly, gazing at the younger man.

"And that's why you set fire to the hut?"

Rothwell nodded. "I'll begin at the beginning." And he told all that there was to tell, and briefly.

Pomeroy stroked his gray mustache, and stared at the cabin floor. "So you are going to marry Jan?" he said suddenly.

"Yes sir."

"Why are you so positive?"

"Jan says so."

Pomeroy frowned. Then, with a queer, quick lift of his eyebrows, he said dryly: "That settles it."

"I'M coming in," called Jan. The men stood up. "Famished!" She took a sandwich. "Please sit down. And please, what settles what?"

"You seem to have settled everything but your husband's salary," said Pomeroy.

"Thank you for your graceful forecast, Dad. Stanley is making about five thousand a year, writing, in New York. That isn't stupendous. Neither am I. He's not going to accept a position as superintendent of our plantation, because he doesn't know the first thing about business. He's not going to be the husband of the wealthy Mrs. Rothwell. Rather, I'm going to be his wife."

"Just when did you make this decision?"

"That's not a fair question, Dad. But it was blowing pretty hard, and the canoe was pitching like a porpoise, and we were simply booming right toward Amadan. Just before we went overboard, I looked back at Stanley—and he grinned."

"I was scared purple," declared Rothwell.

"And your throat looks as though you hadn't entirely recovered," said Pomeroy. "Doughty must have given you a hard tussle. You'll find some liniment in the medicine-cabinet. Jan will show you where it is. I think I'll go on deck."

TANAR of Pellucidar

By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

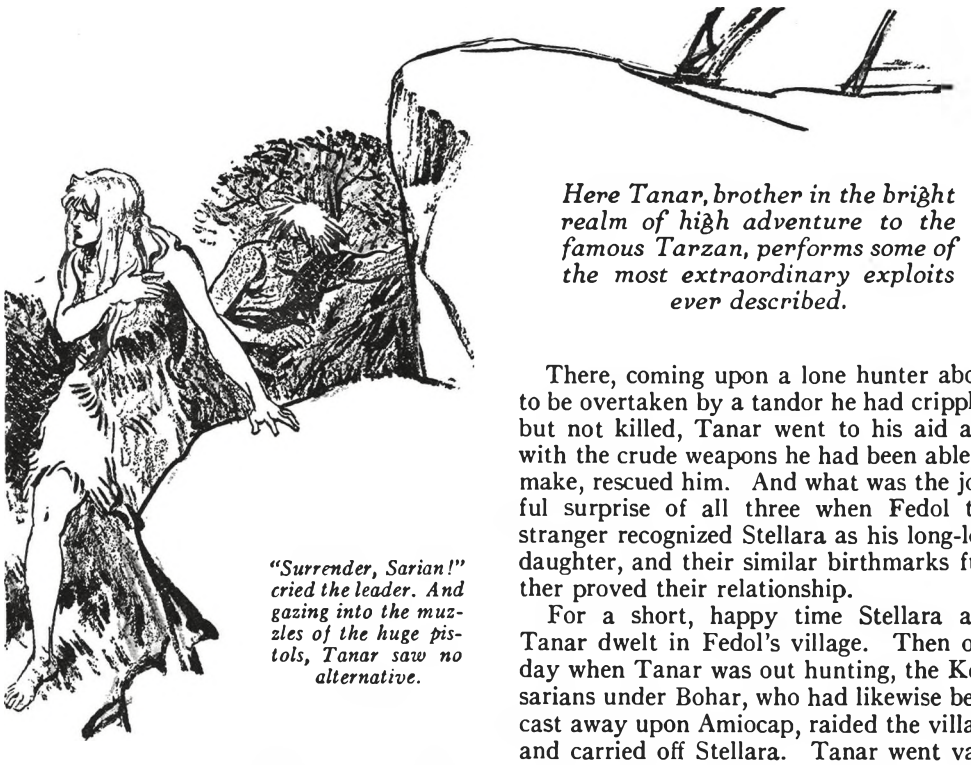
The Story So Far:

IT was a startling world, this Pellucidar in which Tanar and his primeval companions lived—a world of the cave-bear and the saber-toothed tiger; of the Buried People, a strange half-blind savage folk who dwelt in caves; of those able intrepid seamen the Korsarians, who sailed far and harried many a distant coast; of the Place of Awful Shadow, and of many another strange region.

To this world of Pellucidar in the hollow center of this our earth had penetrated two men of our own external world and time—David Innes and Abner Perry; while experimenting with a tremendously powerful "iron mole," a boring device designed to prospect in the earth's crust for valuable minerals, David and Abner lost control and presently, after terrific adventures, found themselves in this strange, primitive reversed cosmos of Pellucidar.

There their adventures had been no less terrific. They had aided the Pellucidarians in their war with the terrible Mahars, vicious winged prehistoric monsters; and contriving to manufacture gunpowder and crude firearms, they had all but exterminated the enemy. But now a new menace threatened; and the fascinating story of the amazing events which followed came to Edgar Rice Burroughs one night through the far-reaching waves of the radio. . . . .

A powerful raiding armada of a strange semi-civilized white race, the Korsarians, had landed on the coast of Pellucidar and sacked many towns. Retreating at last in their high-decked Elizabethan ships, the Korsarians—a picturesque red-sashed gang armed with medieval arquebuses and led by a burly buccaneer called the Cid—carried off with them the young chieftain Tanar as hostage. And David Innes, giving



"Surrender, Sarian!" cried the leader. And gazing into the muzzles of the huge pistols, Tanar saw no alternative.

Here Tanar, brother in the bright realm of high adventure to the famous Tarzan, performs some of the most extraordinary exploits ever described.

instructions to the Pellucidarians to build a fleet and sail in pursuit when it was ready, himself set out in a small boat with one companion and a captive Korsarian as guide in a forlorn hope of effecting rescue.

Meanwhile on the Korsarian ship Tanar met the lovely Stellara, supposed to be a daughter of the Cid, but in reality a captive stolen in childhood from the beautiful island of Amiocap. And Tanar won at least the gratitude of Stellara when he rescued her from the attentions of the brutal Korsarian sub-chief Bohar.

Shortly thereafter a violent tempest scattered the Korsarian armada. The ship of the Cid was all but foundering, and the Korsarians took to the boats while Tanar and Stellara, unobserved, remained with the ship; and drifting unguided, the vessel was washed up on the shores of Stellara's native Amiocap.

The people of Amiocap, however, refused to accept Stellara's claim to kinship with them, and Letari, a comely maiden of the village who had been much attracted by Tanar, came and told them that they were to be burned alive as a warning to intruders. But before the sentence could be carried out, the village was attacked by a troop of mastodons, and in the confusion Tanar and Stellara made their escape into the forest.

There, coming upon a lone hunter about to be overtaken by a tandor he had crippled but not killed, Tanar went to his aid and with the crude weapons he had been able to make, rescued him. And what was the joyful surprise of all three when Fedol the stranger recognized Stellara as his long-lost daughter, and their similar birthmarks further proved their relationship.

For a short, happy time Stellara and Tanar dwelt in Fedol's village. Then one day when Tanar was out hunting, the Korsarians under Bohar, who had likewise been cast away upon Amiocap, raided the village and carried off Stellara. Tanar went valiantly in pursuit and came up with the Korsarians, but to escape their firearms he had to take refuge in a cave, and there was made captive by a band of the hideous Coripis, weird sightless hardly human folk who dwelt underground.

From these, after a savage struggle, Tanar contrived to escape along with a fellow-captive named Jude. Then, overtaking Bohar before he had embarked in the boat the Korsarians were building, Tanar managed to kill him in single combat. But his joy and triumph were short; for the treacherous Jude, a native of the neighboring island of Hime, carried off Stellara while Tanar slept, and placing her in a canoe, set out for his native Hime.

Awakening, Tanar discovered his loss. While seeking a canoe in which to pursue, he was set upon by a saber-toothed tiger, but conquered the beast when it leaped after him in the water. And at last after a difficult voyage he came to the island of Hime. *(The story continues in detail:)*

TO the Sarian it seemed wisest to follow the coast-line back until he found the spot at which Jude had landed and then trace his trail inland, and this was the plan that he proceeded to follow.

Being in a strange land, and therefore in

a land of enemies, and entirely unarmed, Tanar was forced to move with great caution; yet constantly he sacrificed caution to speed. Natural obstacles impeded his progress. A great cliff running far out into the sea barred his way and it was with extreme difficulty that he found a path up the face of the frowning escarpment and then only after traveling inland for a considerable distance.

Beyond the summit rolled a broad tableland dotted with trees. A herd of thags grazed quietly in the sunlight or dozed beneath the shadowy foliage of the trees.

At sight of the man passing among them these great horned cattle became restless. An old bull bellowed and pawed the ground, and Tanar warily eyed the distance to the nearest tree. But on he went, avoiding the beasts as best he could and hoping that he could pass them without further arousing their short tempers. But the challenge of the old bull was being taken up by others of his sex until a score of heavy-shouldered mountains of beef were converging slowly upon the lone man. They stopped occasionally to paw or gore the ground, while bellowing forth their displeasure.

THERE was still a chance that he might pass them in safety. There was an opening among them just ahead of him, and Tanar accelerated his speed; but just at that instant one of the bulls took it into his head to charge, and the whole twenty bore down upon the Sarian like a band of iron locomotives suddenly endowed with the venom of hornets.

There was naught to do but seek the safety of the nearest tree, and toward this Tanar ran at full speed, while from all sides the angry bulls raced to head him off.

With scarcely more than inches to spare Tanar swung himself into the branches of the tree just as the leading bull passed beneath him. A moment later the bellowing herd congregated beneath his sanctuary and while some contented themselves with pawing and bellowing, others placed their heavy heads against the bole of the tree and sought to push it down, though fortunately for Tanar it was a young oak, and withstood their sturdiest efforts.

But now, having treed him, the thags showed no disposition to leave him. For awhile they milled around beneath him and then several deliberately lay down beneath the tree as though to prevent his escape.

To one accustomed to the daily recurrence of the darkness of night, following the setting of the sun, escape from such a dilemma as that in which Tanar found himself would have seemed merely a matter of waiting for the coming of night, but where the sun does not set and there is no night, and time is immeasurable and unmeasured, and where one may not know whether a lifetime or a second has been encompassed by the duration of such an event, the enforced idleness and delay are maddening.

But in spite of these conditions, or perhaps because of them, the Sarian possessed a certain philosophic outlook upon life that permitted him to accept his fate with marked stoicism and to take advantage of the enforced delay by fashioning a bow, arrows and a spear from material afforded by the tree in which he was confined.

The tree gave him everything that he needed except the cord for his bow, and this he cut from the rawhide belt that supported his loin cloth—a long, slender strip of rawhide which he inserted in his mouth and chewed thoroughly. Then he bent his bow and stretched the wet rawhide from tip to tip. While it dried, he pointed his arrows with his teeth.

In drying, the rawhide shrank, bending the bow still farther and tightening the string until it hummed to the slightest touch.

The weapons were finished and yet the great bulls still stood on guard; and while Tanar remained helpless in the tree, Jude was taking Stellara toward the interior of the island.

IMPATIENT of further delay, Tanar sought some plan whereby he might rid himself of the short-tempered beasts beneath him. He hit upon the plan of yelling and throwing dead branches at them, and this did have the effect of bringing them all to their feet. A few wandered away to graze with the balance of the herd, but enough remained to keep Tanar securely imprisoned.

A great bull stood directly beneath him. Tanar jumped up and down upon a small branch, making its leafy end whip through the air, and at the same time he hurled bits of wood at the great thag. And then, suddenly, to the surprise and consternation of both man and beast, the branch broke and precipitated Tanar full upon the broad shoulders of the bull. Instantly his fingers

clutched its long hair, as with a bellow of terrified surprise, the beast leaped forward.

Instinct took the frightened animal toward the balance of the herd, and when they saw him with a man sitting upon his back, they too became terrified, with the result that a general stampede ensued—the herd attempting to escape their fellow, while the bull raced to be among them.

Stragglers that had been grazing at a considerable distance from the balance of the herd, were stringing out to the rear and it was the presence of these that made it impossible for Tanar to slip to the ground and make his escape. Knowing that he would be trampled by those behind if he left the back of the bull, there was no alternative but to remain where he was as long as he could.

The thag, now thoroughly frightened because of his inability to dislodge the man-thing from his shoulders, was racing blindly forward, and presently Tanar found himself carried into the very midst of the lunging herd as it thundered across the table-land toward a distant forest.

The Sarian knew that once they reached the forest he would doubtless be scraped from the back of the thag almost immediately by some low-hanging limb, and if he were not killed or injured by the blow he would be trampled to death by the thags behind. But as escape seemed hopeless he could only await the final outcome of this strange adventure.

WHEN the leaders of the herd approached the forest, hope was rekindled in Tanar's breast, for he saw that the growth was so thick and the trees so close together that it was impossible for the beasts to enter the woods at a rapid gait.

Immediately the leaders reached the edge of the forest their pace was slowed down and those behind them, pushing forward, were stopped by those in front. Some of them attempted to climb up, or were forced up, upon the backs of those ahead. But, for the most part, the herd slowed down and contented itself with pushing steadily onward toward the woods with the result that when the beast that Tanar was astride arrived at the edge of the dark shadows his gait had been reduced to a walk, and as he passed beneath the first tree Tanar swung lightly into its branches.

He had lost his spear, but his bow and arrows that he had strapped to his back remained with him, and as the herd passed beneath him and he saw the last of them disappear in the dark aisles of the forest, he breathed a deep sigh of relief and turned once more toward the far end of the island.

The thags had carried him inland a considerable distance, so now he cut back diagonally toward the coast to gain as much ground as possible.

Tanar had not yet emerged from the forest when he heard the excited growling of some wild beast directly ahead of him.

He thought that he recognized the voice of a codon, and fitting an arrow to his bow he crept warily forward. What wind was blowing came from the beast toward him and presently brought to his nostrils proof of the correctness of his guess, together with another familiar scent—that of man.

KNOWING that the beast could not catch his scent from upwind, Tanar had only to be careful to advance silently, but there are few animals on earth that can move more silently than primitive man when he elects to do so, and so Tanar came in sight of the beast without being discovered by it.

It was, as he had thought, a huge wolf, a prehistoric but gigantic counterpart of our own timber wolf.

No need had the codon to run in packs, for in size, strength, ferocity and courage it was a match for any creature that it sought to bring down, with the possible exception of the mammoth, and this great beast alone it hunted in packs.

The codon stood snarling beneath a great tree, occasionally leaping high against the bole as though he sought to reach something hidden by the foliage above.

Tanar crept closer and presently he saw the figure of a youth crouching among the lower branches above the codon. It was evident that the boy was terror-stricken, but the thing that puzzled Tanar was that he cast affrighted glances upward into the tree more often than he did downward toward the codon, and presently this fact convinced the Sarian that the youth was menaced by something above him.

Tanar viewed the predicament of the boy and then considered the pitiful inadequacy of his own makeshift bow and arrow, which might only infuriate the beast and turn it upon himself. He doubted that the arrows were heavy enough, or strong enough, to pierce through the savage heart and thus only might he hope to bring down the codon.

ONCE more he crept to a new position, without attracting the attention either of the codon or the youth, and from this new vantage-point he could look farther up into the tree in which the boy crouched and then it was that he realized the hopelessness of the boy's position, for only a few feet above him and moving steadily closer appeared the head of a great snake, whose wide, distended jaws revealed formidable fangs.

Tanar's consideration of the boy's plight was influenced by a desire to save him from either of the two creatures that menaced him and also in the hope that if successful he might win sufficient gratitude to enlist the services of the youth as a guide, and especially as a go-between in the event that he should come in contact with natives of the island.

Tanar had now crept to within seven paces of the codon, from the sight of which he was concealed by a low shrub behind which he lay. Had the youth not been so occupied between the wolf and the snake he might have seen the Sarian, but so far he had not seen him.

Fitting an arrow to his crude bow and inserting four others between the fingers of his left hand, Tanar arose quietly and drove a shaft into the back of the codon, between its shoulders.

With a howl of pain and rage the beast wheeled about, only to receive another arrow full in the chest. Then his glaring eyes alighted upon the Sarian, and with a hideous growl, he charged.

WITH such rapidity do events of this nature transpire that they are over in much less time than it takes to record them, for a wounded wolf, charging its antagonist, can cover seven paces in an incredibly short space of time; yet even in that brief interval three more arrows sank deeply into the white breast of the codon, and the momentum of its last stride sent it rolling against the Sarian's feet—dead.

The youth, freed from the menace of the codon, leaped to the ground and would have fled without a word of thanks had not Tanar covered him with another arrow and commanded him to halt.

The snake, seeing another man and realizing, perhaps, that the odds were now against him, withdrew into the foliage of the tree, as Tanar advanced toward the trembling youth.

"Who are you?" demanded the Sarian.

"My name is Balal," replied the youth. "I am the son of Scurv the chief."

"Where is your village?" asked Tanar.

"It is not far," replied Balal.

"Will you take me there?" asked Tanar.

"Yes," replied Balal.

"Will your father receive me well?" continued the Sarian.

"You saved my life," said Balal; "for that he will treat you well, though for the most part we kill strangers who come to Garb."

"Lead on," said the Sarian.

CHAPTER XIII

GURA

BALAL led Tanar through the forest until they came at last to the edge of a steep cliff, which the Sarian judged was the opposite side of the promontory that had barred his way along the beach.

Not far from the cliff's edge stood the stump of a great tree that seemed to have been blasted and burned by lightning. It reared its head some ten feet above the ground and from its charred surface protruded the stub end of several broken limbs.

"Follow me," said Balal, and leaping to the protruding stub he climbed to the top of the stump and lowered himself into the interior.

Tanar followed and found an opening some three feet in diameter leading down into the bole of the dead tree. Set into the sides of this natural shaft were a series of heavy pegs, which answered the purpose of ladder-rungs to the descending Balal.

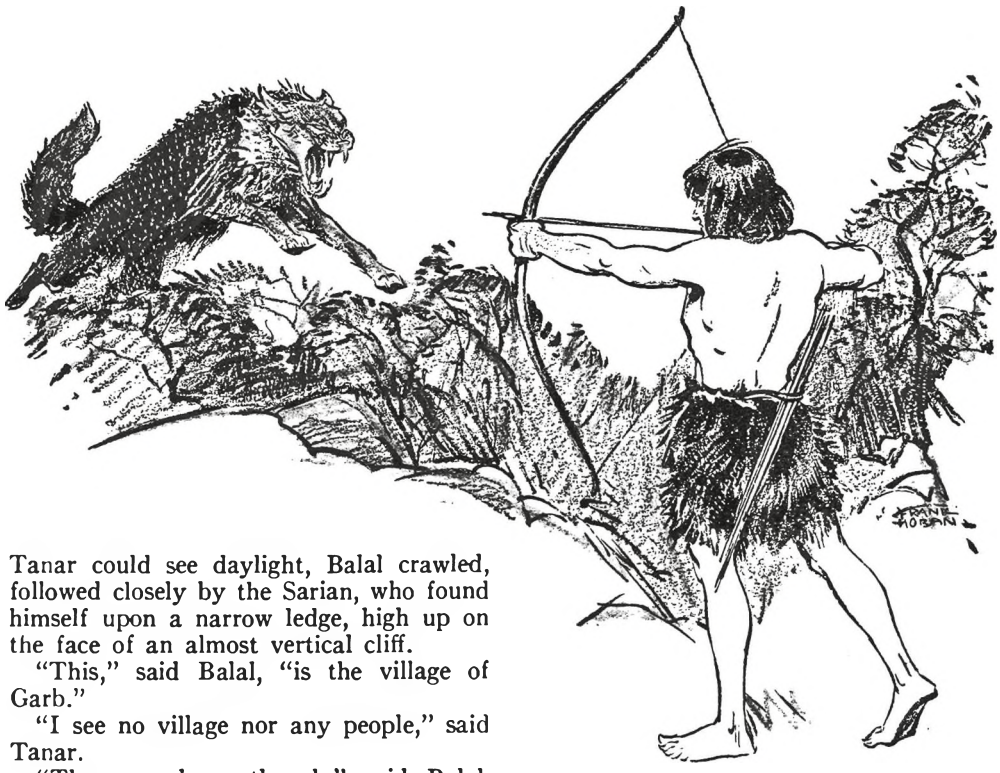
The noonday sun lighted the interior of the tree for a short distance, but their own shadows, intervening, blotted out everything that lay at a depth greater than six or eight feet.

None too sure that he was not being led into a trap and, therefore, unwilling to permit his guide to get beyond his reach, Tanar hastily entered the hollow stump and followed Balal downward.

The Sarian was aware that the interior of the tree led into a shaft dug in the solid ground, and a moment later he felt his feet touch the floor of a dark tunnel.

Along this tunnel Balal led him and presently they emerged into a cave that was dimly lighted through a small opening opposite them and near the floor.

Through this aperture, which was about two feet in diameter and beyond which



The beast wheeled; his glaring eyes alighted upon the Sarian, and with a hideous growl, he charged.

Tanar could see daylight, Balal crawled, followed closely by the Sarian, who found himself upon a narrow ledge, high up on the face of an almost vertical cliff.

"This," said Balal, "is the village of Garb."

"I see no village nor any people," said Tanar.

"They are here, though," said Balal. "Follow me." And he led the way a short distance along the ledge, which inclined downward and was in places so narrow and so shelving that the two men were compelled to flatten themselves against the side of the cliff and edge their way slowly, inch by inch, sideways.

Presently the ledge ended and here it was much wider so that Balal could lie down upon it, and lowering his body over the edge, he clung a moment by his hands and then dropped.

Tanar looked over the edge and saw that Balal had alighted upon another narrow ledge about ten feet below. Even to a mountaineer, such as the Sarian was, the feat seemed difficult and fraught with danger, but there was no alternative and so, lying down, he lowered himself slowly over the edge of the ledge, clung an instant with his fingers, and then dropped.

As he alighted beside the youth he was about to remark upon the perilous approach to the village of Garb, but it was so apparent that Balal took it as a matter of course and thought nothing of it that Tanar desisted, realizing, in the instant, that among cliff-dwellers, such as these, the feat they had just accomplished was as ordinary and everyday an occurrence as walking on level ground was to him.

As Tanar had an opportunity to look about him on this new level, he saw, and not without relief, that the ledge was much wider and that the mouths of several caves opened upon it. In places, and more especially in front of the cave entrances, the ledge widened to as much as six or eight feet, and here Tanar obtained his first view of any considerable number of Himeans.

"Is it not a wonderful village?" asked Balal, and without waiting for an answer, he added, "Look!" And he pointed downward over the edge of the ledge.

Following the direction indicated by the youth, Tanar saw ledge after ledge scoring the face of a lofty cliff from summit to base, and upon every ledge there were men, women and children.

"Come," said Balal, "I will take you to my father." And forthwith he led the way along the ledge.

AS the first people they encountered saw Tanar, they leaped to their feet, the men seizing their weapons. "I am taking him to my father the chief," said Balal. "Do not harm him!" And with sullen looks the warriors let them pass.

A log into which wooden pegs were driven served as an easy means of descent

from one ledge to the next, and after descending for a considerable distance to about midway between the summit and the ground, Balal halted at the entrance to a cave, before which sat a man, a woman and two children, a girl about Balal's age and a boy much younger.

As had all the other villagers they had passed, these, too, leaped to their feet and seized weapons when they saw Tanar.

"Do not harm him," repeated Balal. "I have brought him to you, Scurv, my father, because he saved my life when it was threatened simultaneously by a snake and a wolf and I promised him that you would receive him and treat him well."

Scurv eyed Tanar suspiciously and there was no softening of the lines upon his sullen countenance even when he heard that the stranger had saved the life of his son.

"Who are you and what are you doing in our country?" he demanded.

"I am looking for one named Jude," replied Tanar.

"What do you know of Jude?" asked Scurv. "Is he your friend?"

There was something in the man's tone that made it questionable as to the advisability of claiming Jude as a friend. "I know him," Tanar said. "We were prisoners together among the Coripis on the island of Amiocap."

"You are an Amiocapian?"

"No," replied Tanar, "I am a Sarian, from a country on a far-distant mainland."

"Then what were you doing on Amiocap?" asked Scurv.

"I was captured by the Korsars and the ship in which they were taking me to their country was wrecked on Amiocap. All that I ask of you is that you give me food and show me where I can find Jude."

"I do not know where you can find Jude," said Scurv. "His people and my people are always at war."

"Do you not know where their country or village is?" demanded Tanar.

"Yes, of course I know where it is, but I do not know that Jude is there."

"Are you going to give him food," asked Balal, "and treat him well as I promised you would?"

"Yes," said Scurv, but his tone was sullen and his shifty eyes looked neither at Balal nor Tanar as he replied.

IN the center of the ledge, opposite the mouth of the cave, a small fire was burning beneath an earthen bowl, which was supported by three or four small pieces of stone. Squatting close to this was a female, who, in youth, might have been a fine-looking girl, but now her face was lined by bitterness and hate as she glared sullenly into the caldron, the contents of which she was stirring with the rib of some large animal.

"Tanar is hungry, Sloo," said Balal, addressing the woman. "When will the food be cooked?"

"Have I not enough to do preparing hides and cooking for all of you without having to cook for every enemy that you see fit to bring to the cave of your father?"

"This is the first time I ever brought any one, Mother," said Balal.

"Let it be the last, then," snapped the woman.

"Shut up, woman," snapped Scurv, "and hasten the food."

The woman leaped to her feet, brandishing the rib above her head. "Don't tell me what to do, Scurv!" she shrilled. "I have had about enough of you, anyway!"

"Hit him, Mother!" screamed a lad of about eleven, jumping to his feet and dancing about in evident joy and excitement.

Balal leaped across the cook-fire and struck the lad heavily with his open palm across the face, sending him spinning up against the cliff wall. "Shut up, Dack," he cried, "or I'll pitch you over the edge."

The remaining member of the family party, a girl, just ripening into womanhood, remained silent where she was seated, leaning against the face of the cliff, her large, dark eyes taking in the scene being enacted before her. Suddenly the woman turned upon her. "Why don't you do something, Gura?" she demanded. "You sit there and let them attack me and never raise a hand in my defense."

"But no one has attacked you, Mother," said the girl, with a sigh.

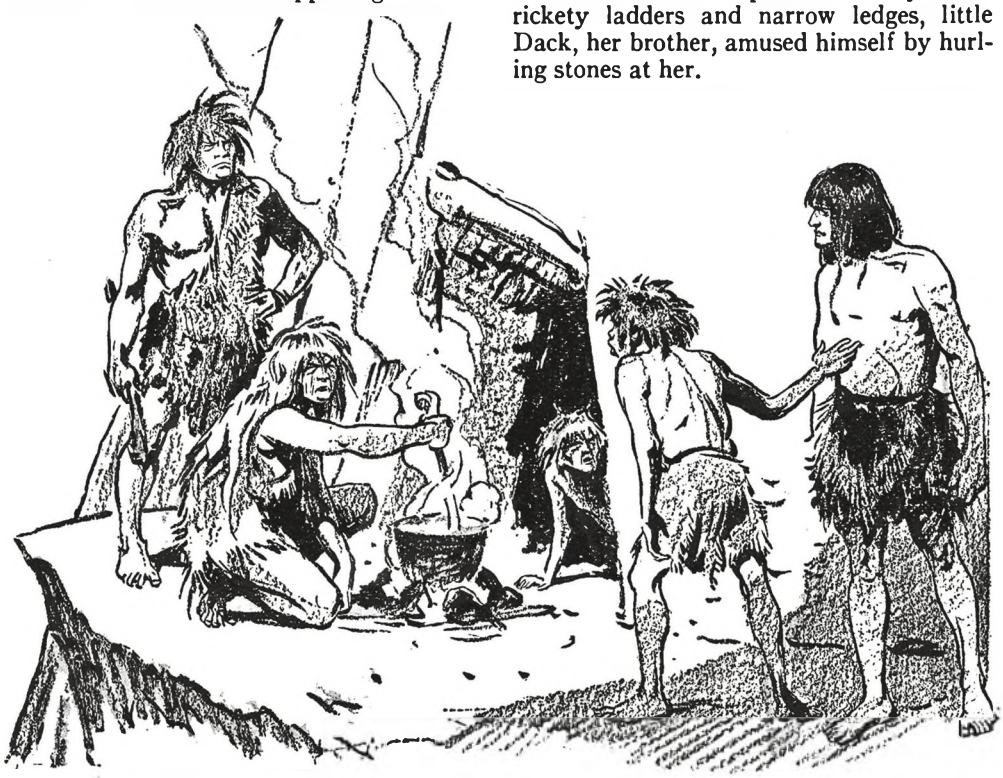
"But I will," yelled Scurv, seizing a short club that lay beside him. "I'll knock her head off if she doesn't keep a still tongue in it and hurry with that food!" At this instant a loud scream attracted the attention of all toward another family group before a cave, a little farther along the ledge. Here, a man, grasping a woman by her hair, was beating her with a stick, while several children were throwing pieces of rock, first at their parents and then at one another.

"Hit her again!" yelled Scurv.

"Scratch out his eyes!" screamed Sloo, and for the moment the family of the chief

forgot their own differences in the enjoyable spectacle of another family row.

Tanar looked on in consternation. Never had he witnessed such tumult in the villages of the Sarians and coming, as he just had, from Amiocap, the island of love, the contrast was even more appalling.



"Tanar is hungry, Sloo," said Balal. "When will the food be cooked?"

"Don't mind them," said Balal, who was watching the Sarian and had noticed the expression of surprise and disgust upon his face. "If you stay with us long you will get used to it, for it is always like this. Come on, let's eat; the food is ready." And drawing his stone knife he fished into the pot and speared a piece of meat.

Tanar, having no knife, had recourse to one of his arrows, which answered the purpose quite as well, and then, one by one, the family gathered around as though nothing unusual had happened, and fell to with avidity upon the steaming stew.

During the meal they did not speak, other than to call one another vile names, if two chanced to reach into the caldron simultaneously and one interfered with another.

The caldron emptied, Scurv and Sloo crawled into the dark interior of their cave to sleep, and were followed, presently, by Balal.

Gura, the daughter, took the caldron and started down the cliff toward the brook to wash out the receptacle and return with it filled with water.

As she made her precarious way down rickety ladders and narrow ledges, little Dack, her brother, amused himself by hurling stones at her.

"Stop that," commanded Tanar. "You might hit her."

"That is what I am trying to do," said the little imp. "Why else should I be throwing stones at her? To miss her?" He hurled another missile and with that Tanar grabbed him by the scruff of the neck.

INSTANTLY Dack let out a scream that brought Sloo rushing from the cave.

"He is killing me," shrieked Dack, and at that the cave-woman turned upon Tanar with flashing eyes and a face distorted with rage.

"Wait," said Tanar, in a calm voice. "I was not hurting the child. He was hurling rocks at his sister, and I stopped him."

"What business have you to stop him?" demanded Sloo. "She is his sister. He has a right to hurl rocks at her if he chooses."

"But he might have struck her, and if he

had she would have fallen to her death below."

"What if she did? That is none of your business," snapped Sloo; but grabbing Dack by his long hair she cuffed his ears and dragged him into the interior of the cave, where for some time Tanar could hear blows and screams, mingled with the sharp tongue of Sloo and the curses of Scurv.

Finally these died down to silence, permitting the sounds of other domestic brawls from various parts of the cliff village to reach the ears of the disgusted Sarian.

Far below him Tanar saw the girl Gura washing the earthenware vessel in a little stream, after which she filled it with fresh water and lifted the heavy burden to her head. He wondered at the ease with which she carried the great weight and was at a loss to know how she intended to scale the precipitous cliff and the rickety, makeshift ladders with her heavy load. Watching her progress with considerable interest he saw her ascend the lowest ladder, apparently with as great ease and agility as though she was unburdened. Up she came, balancing the receptacle with no evident effort.

As he watched her, he saw a man ascending also, but several ledges higher than the girl. The fellow came swiftly and noiselessly to the very ledge where Tanar stood. Paying no attention to the Sarian, he slunk cautiously along the ledge to the mouth of the cave next to that of Scurv. Drawing his stone knife from his loin-cloth he crept within, and a moment later Tanar heard the sounds of screams and curses and then two men rolled from the mouth of the cave, locked in a deadly embrace. One of them was the fellow whom Tanar had just seen enter the cave. The other was a younger man, smaller and less powerful than his antagonist. They were slashing desperately at one another with their stone knives, but the duel seemed to be resulting in more noise than damage.

At this juncture, a woman came running from the cave. She was armed with the leg-bone of a thag and with this she sought to belabor the older man, striking vicious blows at his head and body.

This attack seemed to infuriate the fellow to the point of madness, and rather than incapacitating him, urged him on to redoubled efforts.

Presently he succeeded in grasping the knife hand of his opponent, and an instant later he had driven his own blade into his enemy's heart.

With a scream of anguish the woman struck again at the older man's head, but she missed her target and her weapon was splintered on the stone of the ledge. The victor leaped to his feet; seizing the body of his opponent, he hurled it over the cliff, and then grabbing the woman by the hair he dragged her about, shrieking and cursing, as he sought for some missile wherewith to belabor her.

AS Tanar stood watching the disgusting spectacle he became aware that some one was standing beside him, and turning, he saw that Gura had returned. She stood there straight as an arrow, balancing the water vessel upon her head.

"It is terrible," said Tanar, nodding toward the battling couple.

Gura shrugged indifferently. "It is nothing," she said. "Her mate returned unexpectedly. That is all."

"You mean," asked Tanar, "that this fellow is her mate and that the other was not?"

"Certainly," said Gura; "but they all do it. What can you expect where there is nothing but hate?" And walking to the entrance to her father's cave, she set the water vessel down in the shadows just inside the entrance. Then she sat down and leaned her back against the cliff, paying no more attention to the matrimonial difficulties of her neighbors.

Tanar, for the first time, noticed the girl particularly. He saw that she had neither the cunning expression that characterized Jude and all the other Himeans he had seen; nor were there the lines of habitual irritation and malice upon her face; instead it reflected an innate sadness and he guessed that she looked much like her mother might have when she was Gura's age.

Tanar crossed the ledge and sat down beside her. "Do your people always quarrel thus?" he asked.

"Always," replied Gura.

"Why?" he asked.

"I do not know," she replied. "They take their mates for life and are permitted but one, and though both men and women have a choice in the selection of their mates, they never seem to be satisfied with one another and are always quarreling, usually because neither one nor the other is faithful. Do the men and women quarrel thus in the land from which you come?"

"No," replied Tanar. "They do not. If they did, they would be thrown out of the tribe."

"But suppose they find that they do not like one another?" insisted the girl.

"Then they do not live together," replied Tanar. "They separate, and if they care to, they find other mates."

"That is wicked," said Gura. "We would kill any of our people who did such a thing."

Tanar shrugged and laughed.

"At least we are all a very happy people," he said, "which is more than you can say for yourselves, and after all, happiness, it seems to me, is everything."

THE girl thought for some time, seemingly studying an idea that was new to her. "Perhaps you are right," she said, presently. "Nothing could be worse than the life that we live. My mother tells me that it was not thus in her country, but now she is as bad as the rest."

"Your mother is not a Himean?" asked Tanar.

"No, she is from Amiocap. My father captured her there when she was young."

"That accounts for the difference," mused Tanar.

"What difference?" she asked. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that you are not like the others, Gura," he replied. "You neither look like them nor act like them—neither you nor your brother Balal."

"Our mother is an Amiocapian," she replied. "Perhaps we inherited something from her; and then again, and most important, we are young and, as yet, have no mates. When that time comes, we shall grow to be like the others, just as our mother has grown to be like them."

"Do many of your men take their mates from Amiocap?" asked Tanar.

"Many try to, but few succeed, for as a rule they are driven away or killed by the Amiocapian warriors. They have a landing place upon the coast of Amiocap in a dark cave beneath a high cliff and of ten Himean warriors who land there scarce one returns, and he not always with an Amiocapian mate. There is a tribe living along our coast that has grown rich by crossing to Amiocap and bringing back the canoes of the warriors who have crossed for mates and have died at the hands of the Amiocapian warriors."

For a few moments she was silent, absorbed in thought. "I should like to go to Amiocap," she mused presently.

"Why?" asked Tanar.

"Perhaps I should find there a mate with whom I might be happy," she said.

Tanar shook his head sadly. "That is impossible, Gura," he said.

"Why?" she demanded. "Am I not beautiful enough for the Amiocapian warriors?"

"Yes," he replied, "you are very beautiful, but if you went to Amiocap they would kill you."

"Why?" she demanded again.

"Because, although your mother is an Amiocapian, your father is not," explained Tanar.

"That is their law?" asked Gura, sadly.

"Yes," replied Tanar.

"Well," she said with a sigh, "then I suppose I must remain here and seek a mate whom I shall learn to hate and bring children into the world who will hate us both."

"It is not a pleasant outlook," said Tanar.

"No," she said, and then after a pause, "unless—"

"Unless, what?" asked the Sarian.

"Nothing," said Gura.

FOR a time they sat in silence, each occupied with his own thoughts, Tanar's being filled to the exclusion of all else by the face and figure of Stellara.

Presently the girl looked up at him. "What are you going to do after you find Jude?" she asked.

"I am going to kill him," replied Tanar.

"And then?" she queried.

"I do not know," said the Sarian. "If I find the one whom I believe to be with Jude we shall try to return to Amiocap."

"Why do you not remain here?" asked Gura. "I wish that you would."

Tanar shuddered. "I would rather die," he said.

"I do not blame you much," said the girl, "but I believe there is a way in which you might be happy even in Hime."

"How?" asked Tanar.

Gura did not answer and he saw the tears come to her eyes. Then she arose hurriedly and entered the cave.

Tanar thought that Scurv would never be done with his sleep. He wanted to talk to him and arrange for a guide to the village of Jude, but it was Sloo who first emerged from the cave.

She eyed him sullenly. "You still here?" she demanded.

"I am waiting for Scurv to send a guide to direct me to the village of Jude," replied the Sarian. "I shall not remain here an instant longer than is necessary."

"That will be too long," growled Sloo, and turning ill-humoredly on her heel, she reëntered the cave.

PRESENTLY Balal emerged, rubbing his eyes. "When will Scurv send me on my way?" demanded Tanar.

"I do not know," replied the youth. "He has just awakened. When he comes out you should speak to him about it. He has just sent me to fetch the skin of the codon you killed. He was very angry to think that I left it lying in the forest."

After Balal departed, Tanar sat with his own thoughts for a long while.

Presently Gura came from the cave. She appeared frightened and excited. She came close to Tanar and, kneeling, placed her lips close to his ear. "You must escape at once," she said, in a low whisper. "Scurv is going to kill you. That is why he sent Balal away."

"But why does he want to kill me?" demanded Tanar. "I saved the life of his son and I have only asked that he direct me to the village of Jude."

"He thinks Sloo is in love with you," explained Gura, "for when he awakened she was not in the cave. She was out here upon the ledge with you."

Tanar laughed. "Sloo made it very plain to me that she did not like me," he said, "and wanted me to be gone."

"I believe you," said Gura, "but Scurv, filled with suspicion and hatred and a guilty conscience, is anxious to believe anything bad that he can of Sloo, and as he does not wish to be convinced that he is wrong it stands to reason that nothing can convince him, so that your only hope is in flight."

"Thank you, Gura," said Tanar. "I shall go at once."

"No, that will not do," said the girl. "Scurv is coming out here immediately. He would miss you, possibly before you could get out of sight, and in a moment he could muster a hundred warriors to pursue you, and furthermore you have no proper weapons with which to start out in search of Jude."

"Perhaps you have a better plan, then," said Tanar.

"I have," said the girl. "Listen! Do you see where the stream enters the jungle?" And she pointed across the clearing at the foot of the cliff toward the edge of a dark forest.

"Yes," said Tanar. "I see."

"I shall descend now and hide there in a large tree beside the stream. When Scurv comes out, tell him that you saw a deer there and ask him to loan you weapons, so that you may go and kill it. Meat is always welcome and he will postpone his attack upon you until you have returned with the carcass of your kill. But you will not return—when you enter the forest I shall be there to direct you to the village of Jude."

"Why are you doing this, Gura?" demanded Tanar.

"Never mind about that," said the girl. "Only do as I say. There is no time to lose—Scurv may come out from the cave at any moment!" And without further words she commenced the descent of the cliff face.

TANAR watched her as with the agility and grace of a chamois the girl, oftentimes disdaining ladders, leaped lightly from ledge to ledge. Almost before he could realize it she was at the bottom of the cliff and moving swiftly toward the forest beyond, the foliage of which had scarcely closed about her when Scurv emerged from the cave. Directly behind him were Sloo and Dack, and Tanar saw that each carried a club.

"I am glad you came out now," said Tanar, losing no time, for he sensed that the three were bent upon immediate attack.

"Why?" growled Scurv.

"I just saw a deer at the edge of the forest. If you will let me take weapons, perhaps I can repay your hospitality by bringing you the carcass."

Scurv hesitated, his stupid mind requiring time to readjust itself and change from one line of thought to another, but Sloo was quick to see the advantage of utilizing the unwelcome guest, and she was willing to delay his murder until he had brought back his kill. "Get weapons," she said to Dack, "and let the stranger fetch the deer."

Scurv scratched his head, still in a quandary, and before he had made up his mind one way or the other, Dack reappeared with a lance and a stone knife, which, instead of handing to Tanar, he threw at him; but the Sarian caught the weapons and without awaiting further permission clambered down the ladder to the next ledge and from thence downward to the ground. Several of the villagers, recognizing him as a

Gura came close to Tanar. "You must escape at once," she said, in a whisper. Scurv is going to kill you; he thinks Sloo is in love with you."

stranger, sought to interfere with him, but Scurv, standing upon the ledge high above watching his descent, bellowed commands that he be left unmolested. Presently, therefore, the young Sarian was crossing the open toward the jungle.

JUST inside the concealing verdure of the forest he was accosted by Gura, who was perched upon the limb of a tree above him.

"Your warning came just in time, Gura," said the man, "for Scurv and Sloo and Dack came out almost immediately, armed and ready to kill me."

"I knew that they would," she said, "and I am glad that they will be disappointed, especially Dack—the little beast! He begged to be allowed to torture you."

"It does not seem possible that he can be your brother," said Tanar.

"He is just like Scurv's mother," said the girl. "I knew her before she was killed. She was a most terrible old woman, and Dack has inherited all of her venom and none of the kindly blood of the Amiocapians, which flows in the veins of my mother, despite the change that her horrid life has brought over her."

"And now," said Tanar, "point the way to Jude's village and I shall be gone. Never, Gura, can I repay you for your kindness to me—a kindness which I can only explain on the strength of the Amiocapian blood which is in you. I shall never see you again, Gura, but I shall carry the recollection of your image and your kindness always in my heart."

"I am going with you," said Gura.

"You cannot do that," said Tanar.

"How else may I guide you to the village of Jude, then?" she demanded.

"You do not have to guide me; only tell me the direction in which it lies and I shall find it," replied Tanar.

"I am going with you," said the girl, determinedly. "There is only hate and misery in the cave of my father. I would rather be with you."

"But that cannot be, Gura," said Tanar. "If I went back now to the cave of Scurv he would suspect me of having aided your escape and they would all beat me. Come, we cannot waste time here, for if you do not return quickly, Scurv will become suspicious and set out upon your trail." She had dropped to the ground beside him, and now she started off into the forest.

"Have it as you wish, then, Gura," said Tanar, "but I am afraid that you are going to regret your act—I am afraid that we are both going to regret it."

"At least I shall have a little happiness in life," said the girl, "and if I have that I shall be willing to die."

"Wait!" said Tanar. "In which direction does the village of Jude lie?" The girl pointed. "Very well," said Tanar, "instead of going on the ground and leaving our spoor plainly marked for Scurv to follow, we shall take to the trees, for after having watched you descend the cliff I know that you must be able to travel as rapidly among the branches as you do upon the ground."

"I have never done it," said the girl, "but wherever you go I shall follow."

Although Tanar had been loath to permit the girl to accompany him, nevertheless he found that her companionship made what would have been otherwise a lonely adventure far from unpleasant.

CHAPTER XIV

"I Hate You!"

THE companions of Bohar the Brutal had not waited long for him after he had set out in pursuit of Stellara and had not returned. They hastened the work upon their boat to early completion, and storing provisions and water sailed out of the cove on the shores of which they had constructed their craft and bore away for Korsar with no regret for Bohar, whom they all cordially hated.

The very storm that had come near to driving Tanar past the island of Hime bore the Korsars down upon the opposite end, carried away their rude sail and finally dashed their craft, a total wreck, upon the rocks at the upper end of Hime.

The loss of their boat, their provisions and one of their number, who was dashed against a rock and drowned, left the remaining Korsars in an even more savage mood than was customary with them.

The part of the island upon which they were wrecked afforded no timber suitable for the construction of another boat, so they were faced now with the necessity of entering a land filled with enemies, in search of food and material for a new craft, and to cap the climax of their misfortune they found themselves with wet powder and forced to defend themselves, if necessity arose, with daggers and cutlasses alone.

The majority of them being old sailors they were well aware of where they were and even knew considerable concerning the geography of Hime and the manners and customs of its people, for most of them had accompanied raiding parties into the interior on many occasions when the Korsar ships had fallen upon the island to steal furs and hides.

A council of the older sailors decided then to set off across country toward a harbor on the far side of the island, where the timber of an adjoining forest would afford them the material for building another craft with the added possibility of the arrival of a Korsar raider.

As these disgruntled men plodded wearily across the island of Hime, Jude led the reluctant Stellara toward his village, and Gura guided Tanar in the same direction.

Jude had been compelled to make wide detours to avoid unfriendly villagers; nor had Stellara's unwilling feet greatly accelerated his pace, for she constantly hung back and though he no longer had to carry her he had found it necessary to make a leather thong fast about her neck and lead her along in this fashion to prevent the numerous sudden breaks for liberty that she had made before he had devised this scheme. Often she pulled back, refusing to go farther, saying that she was tired and insisting upon lying down to rest, for in her heart she knew that wherever Jude took her, Tanar would seek her out.

Already in her mind's eye she could see him upon the trail behind them and she hoped to delay Jude's march sufficiently so that the Sarian would overtake them before they reached his village and the protection of his tribe. . . . .

Gura was happy. Never before in all her life had she been so happy; but she saw in the end of their journey a possible end to this happiness. So she did not lead Tanar in a direct line to Carn, the village of Jude, but by a roundabout way, that she might have him with her for a longer time.

It was not love that Gura felt for Tanar, but something that might have easily been translated into love had the Sarian's own passion been aroused toward the girl; but his love for Stellara precluded such a possibility and while he found pleasure in the company of Gura he was yet madly impatient to continue directly upon the trail of Jude that he might rescue Stellara and have her for himself once more.

The village of Carn is not a cliff village, as is Garb, the village of Scurv. It consists of houses built of stone and clay and, entirely surrounded by a high wall, it stands upon the top of a lofty mesa protected upon all sides by steep cliffs, and overlooking upon one hand the forests and hills of

Hime, and upon the other the broad expanse of the Korsar Az, or Sea of Korsar.

Up the steep cliffs toward Carn climbed Jude, dragging Stellara behind him. It was a long and arduous climb and when they reached the summit Jude was glad to stop and rest. He also had some planning to do, since in the village upon the mesa he had left a mate, and now he was thinking of some plan whereby he might rid himself of her; but the only plan that Jude could devise was to sneak into the city and murder her. But what was he to do with Stellara in the meantime? And then a happy thought occurred to him.

"Where is Stellara?" demanded Tanar. "I do not know," replied Jude. "I have not seen her!"

He knew a cave that lay just below the summit of the cliff and not far distant; toward this he took Stellara, and when they had arrived at it he bound her ankles and her wrists.

"I shall not leave you here long," he said. "Presently I shall return and take you into the village of Carn as my mate. Do not be afraid. There are few wild beasts upon the mesa, and I shall return long before any one can find you."

"Do not hurry," said Stellara. "I shall welcome any wild beast that reaches me before you return."

"You will think differently after you have been the mate of Jude for awhile," said the man, and then he left her and hurried toward the walled village of Carn.

Struggling to a sitting posture, Stellara could look out across the country that lay at the foot of the cliff and presently, below her, she saw a man and a woman emerge from the forest.

For a moment her heart stood still for the instant that her eyes alighted upon him she recognized the man as Tanar. A cry of welcome was upon her lips, when a new thought stilled her tongue.

Who was the girl with Tanar? Stellara saw how close she walked to him and she saw her look up into his face and though she was too far away to see the girl's eyes or her expression, there was something in the attitude of the slim body that denoted worship. Stellara turned her face away, buried it against the cold wall of the cave and burst into tears.

GURA pointed upward toward the high mesa. "There," she said, "just beyond the summit of that cliff lies Carn, the village where Jude lives; but if we enter it you will be killed, and perhaps I too, if the women get me first."

Tanar, who was examining the ground at his feet, seemed not to hear the girl's

words. "Some one has passed just ahead of us," he said; "a man and a woman. I can see the imprints of their feet. The grasses that were crushed beneath their sandals are still rising slowly—a man and a woman—and one of them was Stellara and the other Jude."

"Who is Stellara?" asked the girl.

"My mate," replied Tanar.

The habitual expression of sadness that had marked Gura's face since childhood, but which had been supplanted by a radiant happiness since she had left the village of Garb with Tanar, returned as with tear-filled eyes she choked back a sob, which went unnoticed by the Sarian as he eagerly searched the ground ahead of them. And in the cave above them warm tears bathed the unhappy cheeks of Stellara, but the urge of love soon drew her eyes back to Tanar just at the moment that he turned to call Gura's attention to the well-marked spoor he was following.

"Gura!" he cried. "What is the matter? Why did you cry?" And impulsively he stepped close to her and put a friendly arm about her shoulders, and Gura, unnerved by kindness, buried her face upon his breast and wept. And this was what Stellara saw—this scene was what love and jealousy put their own interpretation upon—and the eyes of the Amiocapian maiden flashed with hurt pride and anger.

"Why do you cry, Gura?" demanded Tanar.

"Do not ask me," begged the girl. "It is nothing. Perhaps I am tired; perhaps I am afraid. But now we may not think of either fatigue or fear, for if Jude is taking your mate toward the village of Carn we must hasten to rescue her before it is too late."

"You are right!" exclaimed Tanar. "We must not delay!"—and followed by Gura he ran swiftly toward the base of the cliff, following the spoor of Jude and Stellara where it led to the precarious ascent of the cliffside. But as they hastened on brutal eyes watched them from the edge of the jungle from which they had themselves so recently emerged.

WHERE the steep ascent topped the summit of the cliff, the bare rock gave no clew to the direction that Jude had taken, but twenty yards farther on where the soft ground commenced again, Tanar picked up the tracks of the man to which he called Gura's attention.

"Jude's footprints are here alone," he said.

"Perhaps the woman refused to go farther and he was forced to carry her," suggested Gura.

"That is doubtless the fact," said Tanar, and he hastened onward along the plain trail left by the Himean.

The way led now along a well-marked trail, which ran through a considerable area of bushes that grew considerably higher than a man's head, so that nothing was visible upon either side and only for short distances ahead of them and behind them along the winding trail. But Tanar did not slacken his speed, his sole aim being to overhaul the Himean before he reached his village.

As Tanar and Gura had capped the summit of the cliff and disappeared from view, eighteen burly men came into view from the forest and followed their trail toward the foot of the cliff.

They were bushy-whiskered fellows with gay sashes around their waists and equally brilliant cloths about their heads. Huge pistols and knives bristled from their waist cloths, and cutlasses dangled from their hips. Fate had brought these survivors of the Cid's ship to the foot of the cliffs below the village of Carn at almost the same moment that Tanar had arrived. With sensations of surprise, not unmingled with awe, they had recognized the Sarian who had been a prisoner upon the ship and whom they thought they had seen killed by their musket-fire at the edge of the natural well upon the island of Amiocap.

THE Korsars, prompted by the pernicious stubbornness of ignorance, were moved by a common impulse to recapture Tanar. And with this end in view they waited until Gura and the Sarian had disappeared beyond the summit of the cliff, when they started in pursuit.

The walls of Carn lie no great distance from the edge of the table-land upon which it stands.

In the timeless land of Pellucidar events which are in reality far separated, seem to follow closely, one upon the heels of another, and for this reason one may not say how long Jude was in the village of Carn, or whether he had had time to carry out the horrid purpose which had taken him thither, but the fact remains that as Tanar and Gura reached the edge of the bushes and looked across the clearing toward the

"Stop!" cried Stellara. "If you kill him the Cid will be furious with you—and you all know what it means to anger the Cid!"

walls of Carn they saw Jude sneaking from the city. Could they have seen his face they might have noticed a malicious leer of triumph and could they have known the purpose that had taken him thus stealthily to his native village, they might have reconstructed the scenes of the bloody episode which had just been enacted within the house of the Himean. But Tanar only saw that Jude, whom he sought, was coming toward him, and that Stellara was not with him.

The Sarian drew Gura back into the concealment of the bushes that lined the trail which Jude was approaching.

On came the Himean and while Tanar awaited his coming, the Korsarians were making their clumsy ascent of the cliff, while Stellara, sick with jealousy and unhappiness, leaned disconsolately against the cold stone of her prison cave.

JUDE, unconscious of danger, hastened back toward the spot where he had left Stellara and as he came opposite Tanar, the Sarian leaped upon him.

The Himean reached for his knife, but he was helpless in the grasp of Tanar, whose steel fingers closed about his wrists with such strength that Jude dropped his weapon with a cry of pain as he felt both of his arms crushed beneath the pressure of the Sarian's grip.

"What do you want?" he cried. "Why do you attack me?"

"Where is Stellara?" demanded Tanar.

"I do not know," replied Jude. "I have not seen her."

"You lie," said Tanar. "I have followed her tracks and yours to the summit of the cliff. Where is she?" He drew his knife. "Tell me—or die!"

"I left her at the edge of the cliff while I went to Carn to arrange to have her received in a friendly manner. I did it all for her protection, Tanar. She wanted to go back to Korsar and I was but helping her."

"Again you lie," said the Sarian; "but lead me to her and we shall hear her version of the story."

The Himean held back until the point of Tanar's knife pressed against his ribs; then he gave in. "If I lead you to her will you promise not to kill me?" asked Jude. "Will you let me return in peace to my village?"

"I shall make no promises until I learn from her own lips how you have treated her," replied the Sarian.

"She has not been harmed," said Jude. "I swear it!"

"Then lead me to her," insisted Tanar.

Sullenly the Himean guided them back along the path toward the cave where he had left Stellara, while at the other edge of the bushes the Korsarians, warned by the noise of their approach, halted, listening, and presently melted silently from view in the surrounding shrubbery.

They saw Jude and Gura and Tanar emerge from the bushes, but they did not attack them; they waited to see for what purpose they had returned. They saw them disappear over the edge of the cliff at a short distance from the summit of the trail that led down into the valley. And then they emerged from their hiding-places and followed cautiously after them.

JUDE led Tanar and Gura to the cave where Stellara lay and when Tanar saw her, her dear wrists and ankles bound with thongs and her cheeks still wet with tears, he sprang forward and gathered her into his arms.

"Stellara!" he cried. "My darling!"

But the girl turned her face away.

"Do not touch me!" she cried. "I hate you!"

"Stellara!" he exclaimed in amazement. "What has happened?" But before she could reply they were startled by a hoarse command from behind them and, turning, found themselves looking into the muzzles of the pistols of eighteen Korsarians.

"Surrender, Sarian!" cried the leader.

Gazing into the muzzles of the thirty-six huge pistols, which equally menaced the lives of Stellara and Gura, Tanar saw no immediate alternative than to surrender.

"What do you intend to do with us if we do surrender?" he demanded.

"That we shall decide later," growled the spokesman for the Korsarians.

"Do you expect ever to return to Korsar?" asked Tanar.

"What is that to you, Sarian?" demanded the Korsarian.

"It has a considerable bearing upon whether or not we surrender," replied Tanar. "You have tried to kill me before and you have found that I am hard to kill. I know something about your weapons and your powder and I know that even at such close quarters I may be able to kill some of you before you can kill me. But if you answer my question fairly and honestly and if your answer is satisfactory I shall surrender."

At Tanar's mention of his knowledge of their powder the Korsarians immediately assumed that he knew that it was wet, whereas he was only alluding to its uniformly poor quality, and so the spokesman decided that it would be better to temporize for the time being at least. "As soon as we can build a boat we shall return to Korsar," he said, "unless in the meantime a Korsarian ship anchors in the bay of Carn."

"Good," commented the Sarian. "If you will promise to return the daughter of the Cid safe and unharmed to her people in Korsar I will surrender. And you must also promise that no harm shall befall this other girl, and that she shall be permitted to go with you in safety to Korsar, or to remain here among her own people as she desires."

"How about the other man?" demanded the Korsarian.

"You may kill him when you kill me," replied Tanar.

Stellara's eyes widened in fearful apprehension as she heard the words of the Sarian and she found that jealousy was no match for true love.

"Very well," said the Korsarian. "We accept the condition. The women shall return to Korsar with us, and you two men shall die."

"Oh, no," begged Jude. "I do not wish to die. I am a Himean. Carn is my home. You Korsarians come there often to trade. Spare me and I shall see that you are furnished with more hides than you can pack in your boat, after you have built it."

The leader of the band laughed in his face. "Eighteen of us can take what we choose from the village of Carn," he said. "We are not such fools as to spare you that you may go and warn your people."

"Then take me along as a prisoner," wailed Jude.

"And have to feed you and watch you all the time? No, you are worth more to us dead than alive."

AS Jude spoke, he had edged over into the mouth of the cave, where he stood half behind Stellara as though taking shelter at the expense of the girl.

With a gesture of disgust, Tanar turned toward the Korsarians. "Come," he said, impatiently. "If the bargain is satisfactory there is no use in discussing it further. Kill us, and take the women in safety to Korsar. You have given your word."

At the instant that Tanar concluded his appeal to the Korsarians, Jude turned before any one could prevent him and disappeared into the cave behind him. Instantly Korsarians leaped in pursuit, while the others awaited impatiently their return with Jude. But when they emerged they were empty-handed.

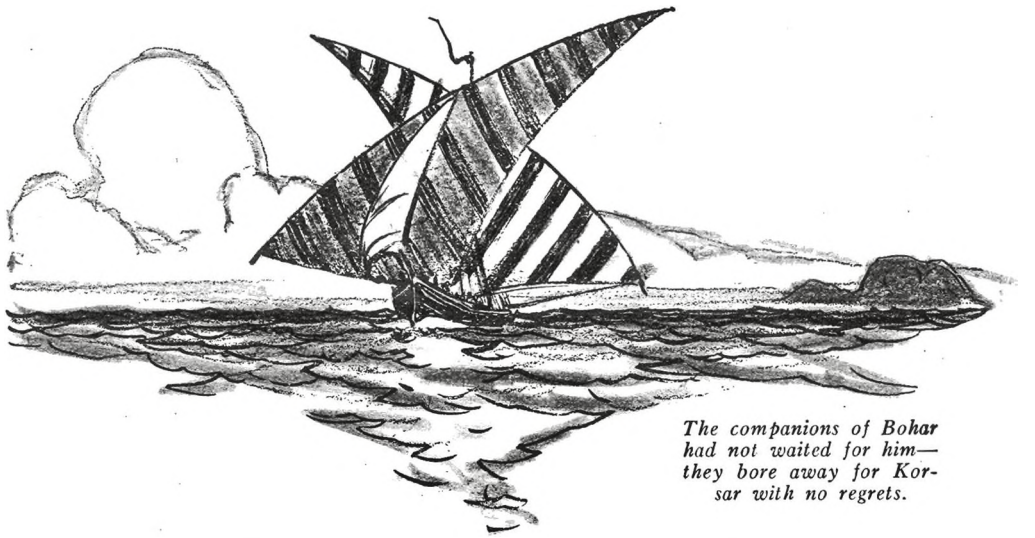
"He escaped us," said one of those who had gone after the Himean. "This cave is the mouth of a dark, long tunnel with many branches. We could see nothing and fearful that we would become lost, we returned to the opening. It would be useless to try to find the man within unless one was familiar with the tunnel which honeycombs the cliff beyond this cave. We had better kill this one immediately before he has an opportunity to escape too." And the fellow raised his pistol and aimed it at Tanar, possibly hoping that his powder had dried since they had set out from the beach upon the opposite side of the island.

"Stop!" cried Stellara, jumping in front of the man. "As you all know, I am the daughter of the Cid. If you return me to him in safety you will be well rewarded. I will see to that. You all knew that the Cid was taking this man to Korsar, but possibly you did not know why."

"No," said the Korsarians, who, being only common sailors, had had no knowledge of the plans of their commander.

"He knows how to make firearms and powder far superior to ours and the Cid was taking him back to Korsar that he might teach the Korsarians the secret of powder-making and the manufacture of weapons that we do not know. If you kill him the Cid will be furious with you, and you all know what it means to anger the Cid. But if you return him also to Korsar, your reward will be much larger."

"How do we know that the Cid is alive?" demanded one of the Korsarians. "And if he is not, who is there who will pay the reward for your return, or for the return of this man?"



The companions of Bohar had not waited for him—they bore away for Korsar with no regrets.

"The Cid is a better sailor than Bohar the Brutal—that you all know. And if Bohar the Brutal brought his boat safely through to Amiocap there is little doubt but that the Cid took his safely to Korsar. But even if he did not, even if the Cid perished, still will you receive your reward if you return me to Korsar."

"Who will pay it?" demanded one of the sailors.

"Bulf," replied Stellara.

"Why should Bulf pay a reward for your return?" asked the Korsarian.

"Because I am to be his mate. It was the Cid's wish and his."

BY no change of expression did the Sarian reveal the pain that these words inflicted, like a knife thrust through his heart. He merely stood with his arms folded, looking straight ahead. Gura's eyes were wide in surprise as she looked, first at Stellara and then at Tanar, for she recalled that the latter had told her that Stellara was his mate and she had known, with woman's intuition, how much the man loved this woman. Gura was mystified and, too, she was saddened because she guessed the

pain that Stellara's words had inflicted upon Tanar, and so her kind heart prompted her to move close to Tanar's side and to lay her hand gently upon his arm in mute expression of sympathy.

For a time the Korsarians discussed Stellara's proposition in low whispers and then the spokesman addressed her. "But if the Cid is dead there will be no one to reward us for returning the Sarian; therefore, we might as well kill him—for there will be enough mouths to feed during the long journey to Korsar."

"You do not know that the Cid is dead," insisted Stellara; "but if he is, who is there better fitted to be chief of the Korsarians than Bulf? And if he is chief he will reward you for returning this man when I explain to him the purpose for which he was brought back to Korsar."

"Well," said the Korsarian, scratching his head, "perhaps you are right. He may be more valuable to us alive than dead. If he will promise to help us work the boat and not try to escape we shall take him with us. But how about the girl here?"

"Keep her until we are ready to sail," growled one of the other Korsarians, "and then turn her loose."

"If you wish to receive any reward for my return you will do nothing of the sort," said Stellara with finality, and then to Gura: "What do you wish to do?" Her voice was cold and haughty.

"Where Tanar goes there I wish to go,' replied Gura.

Stellara's eyes narrowed and for an instant they flashed fire, but immediately they resumed their natural, kindly expression, though tinged with sadness. "Very well, then," she said, turning sadly away, "the girl must return with us to Korsar."

THE sailors discussed this question at some length and most of them were opposed to it, but when Stellara insisted and assured them of a still greater reward they finally consented.

The Korsarians marched boldly across the mesa, past the walls of Carn, their arquebuses ready in their hands, knowing full well the fear of them that past raids had implanted in the breasts of the Himeans. But they did not seek to plunder or demand tribute, for they still feared that their powder was useless.

As they reached the opposite side of the mesa, where they could look out across the bay of Carn, a hoarse shout of pleasure arose from the throats of the Korsarians, for there, at anchor in the bay, lay a Korsar ship. Not knowing how soon the vessel might weigh anchor and depart, the Korsarians fairly tumbled down the precipitous trail to the beach, while in their rear the puzzled villagers watched them over the top of the wall of Carn until the last man had disappeared beyond the summit of the cliff.

Rushing to the edge of the water the Korsarians tried to discharge their arquebuses to attract attention from the vessel. A few of the charges had dried and the resulting explosion awakened signs of life upon the anchored ship. The sailors on the shore tore off sashes and handkerchiefs, which they waved frantically as signals of distress, and presently they were rewarded by the lowering of a boat from the vessel.

WITHIN speaking distance of the shore the boat came to a stop and an officer hailed the men on shore.

"Who are you?" he demanded, "and what do you want?"

"We are part of the crew of the ship of the Cid," replied the sailors' spokesman. "Our ship was wrecked in midocean and we made our way to Amiocap and then to Hime, but here we lost the boat that we built upon Amiocap."

Assured that the men were Korsarians the officer commanded that the boat move in closer to the shore and finally it was beached close to where the party stood awaiting its coming.

The brief greetings and explanations over, the officer took them all aboard and shortly afterward Tanar of Pellucidar found himself again upon a Korsar ship of war.

The commander of the ship knew Stellara, and after questioning them carefully he approved her plan and agreed to take Tanar and Gura back to Korsar with them.

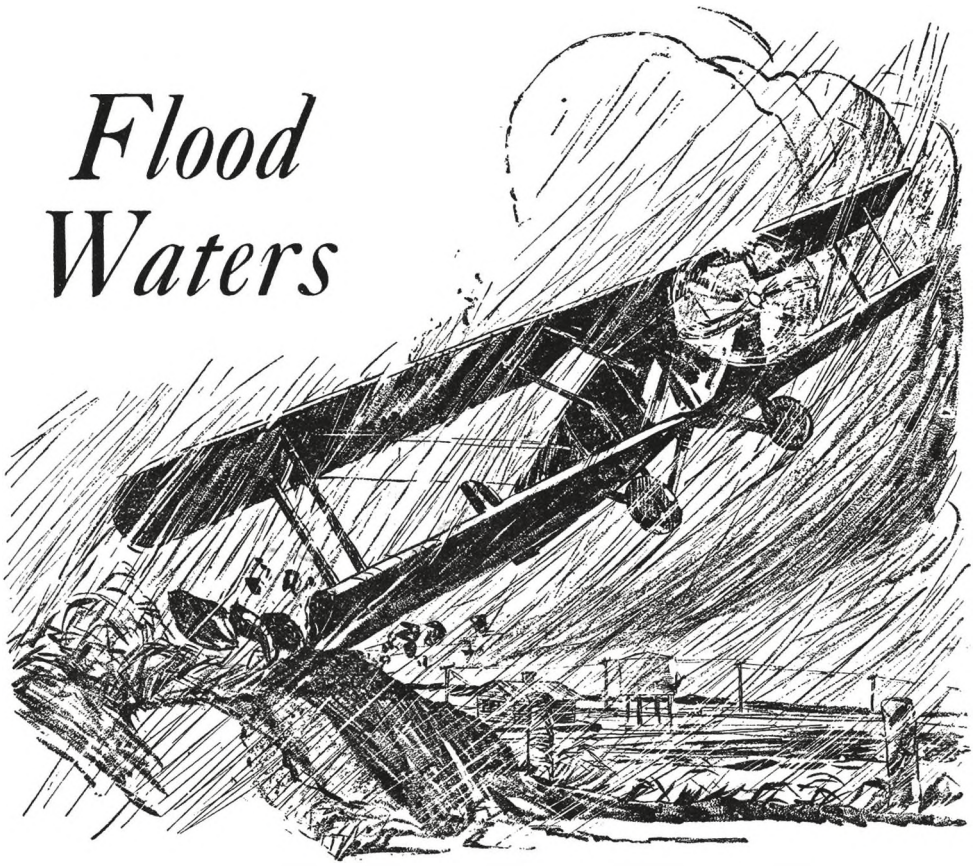
Following their interview with the officer, Tanar found himself momentarily alone with Stellara.

"Stellara!" he said. "What change has come over you?"

She turned and looked at him coldly. "In Amiocap you were well enough," she said, "but in Korsar you would be only a naked barbarian!" And, turning, she walked away without another word.

The great adventure of Tanar comes to its most interesting episodes in the next installment—in our forthcoming July issue.

Flood Waters



It was clearing nicely, when the right wing-tip struck the bank.

By

LELAND S. JAMIESON

A stirring story of an adventure by the Kelly Field pilot who gave us "The Affair of the Juxacanna" and other memorable stories.

Illustrated by Paul Lehman

SLOW rain for days, falling interminably from leaden skies that hovered just above the earth. A chill northeast wind, gusty at times, never changing in direction; a wind that brought more rain. The dreary patter of water on shingled roofs, falling now as a gusty shower, sounding like a handful of pebbles striking overhead; then settling into a slow descent maddening in its monotony. Gray dampness in the air; a sticky dampness that soaked through one's clothing and into everything. Day after day, tedious in its incessancy, dribbling down in a steady, growing stream that seemed mechanical. Rain falling from a solid blanket of wet fog above, in which there were no broken patches, no blue sky, no promise of relief.

For a week rain fell almost unbrokenly, until every slight depression in the ground, every track of man or beast, held water that dully glistened. Roads became impassable; here and there a car was stuck, its rear wheels burrowed deep in mire that had no bottom. Teams of horses, their backs steaming from the moisture in their coats, struggled through the slimy, glutinous muck, tugging patiently at wagons piled high with the household goods of refugees. Gaunt-eyed men, their faces blackened from days of neglect, sloshed wearily along behind their teams, turning now and then to speak some word of encouragement or caution to their wives and children who clung to precarious positions among the water-whitened furniture on the wagons.

The rain continued unabated. Creeks and bayous, dry ordinarily, filled now to their banks, then overspread the flattened countryside with their regurgitations. Inch

by inch the water crept up, snarling viciously at the underpiling of bridges, grinding sedulously at the approaches of culverts and the embankments of fills. One by one the bridges over streams and creeks gave way to the ugly swirlings of the water; one by one the avenues of escape were beaten down; men and women and children were trapped, some of them to be snatched, horror-stricken, by the muddy flood when the earth of roadways was eroded relentlessly away beneath their feet. Others, more fortunate, reached higher ground; but even they were hardly better situated, for they were cut off without sufficient food or clothing. Disease set in; death threatened hideously the survivors who existed now in wretched deprivation on the tops of hills or ridges. Helpless in themselves, they stolidly awaited help; and yet they knew that for many of their number it would not come in time.

THE Mississippi had been in flood stage nearly a week before Nick Wentworth, chief pilot of the U. S. Air Patrol, received orders from Stiles, of the Treasury Department, to drop his work with prohibition and narcotic officers on the Border and proceed with all his ships to Little Rock for work under a representative of the Army seventh corps area. The quartet of Patrol pilots departed at once, arriving in the Arkansas town in the afternoon of the day Nick received his orders. They reported to Major Morehouse, of the Army Air Corps, for instructions. The Major, an austere man who had been harried almost to a nervous collapse during the past three days, explained the situation quickly.

"The water covers the entire river district," he told them. "Some of the smaller towns near the Mississippi are completely submerged, and most of the people who lived in them are camped for the time being in emergency quarters on high ground—out of danger if the water doesn't rise, or if disease doesn't become too prevalent. Conditions are frightful. We can't hope to do very much in getting these people out of the flooded area entirely, but we can take food and medical supplies forward and drop them wherever they are needed. I'll want all four of your planes in the air constantly; I'll have mechanics at your disposal so you can save your energy for flying. What we want is action—speed; you've no idea of what the people down there are going through."

"What about landing-fields?" Nick asked.

"I'll send you down to Monticello tomorrow. A small field is available there, and in a few days a new field at Pine Bluff should be finished—" A telephone at the Major's elbow jangled restlessly, and he paused to answer it. He listened tensely, nodding his head and speaking a word of confirmation or denial occasionally, scratching down figures and jumbled words upon a pad of paper as the information was forthcoming. Presently he hung up the receiver and turned back to the Patrol pilots. His face was grave.

"Have any of you men had experience flying big ships—transports?" he asked. "Quick," he added, when no one spoke for a moment. "Wentworth, can you fly an Army transport?"

Nick had had some experience with the large planes used by the Army in transporting passengers and supplies, but he was by no means an expert in handling one of them, especially under the operating conditions he knew he would encounter in bad weather and wet landing-fields. But the Major's manner forewarned him of some emergency to be met, and he replied, "Yes, sir, Major. What's up?"

"Train wreck. Piled up down near McLearson—trying to get through with supplies before the roadbed washed out. Hit a soft place in a fill and went into a ditch. Engine crew hurt badly, and a brakeman isn't expected to pull through—engine fell on him when it went over—both legs crushed."

"Where's the plane I'm to take?" Nick asked.

"Wait," said the Major. "There's no place for you to land at McLearson. The nearest landing-field is at Plateau—twelve miles north of there. You'll have to get a boat at Plateau and go after 'em. You land at Plateau and I'll try to get word through that you're on the way. I'll have the ship fixed up with three stretchers and a place for a doctor." He telephoned his orders to the crew-chief of the plane, then turned back to Nick. "If you can't get down at Plateau, find a landing-field as near McLearson as you can, then go back to the wreck and drop a note telling them where you're going to land. You've got only three hours of daylight left, so you'll have to hurry. I can't send a mechanic with you because they've got more work than they can do—rush stuff. I'll put your other pilots to work."

NICK found his plane—a single-motored Douglas—in the hangar, with mechanics just finishing the transformation of its cabin to an ambulance. He waited impatiently while these men pushed the huge plane out on the flying-field and warmed up its motor; then, after a final scrutiny of his map, he climbed up into the cockpit.

The flying-field was muddy to such an extreme that any kind of flying from it was hazardous. Ten days of ceaseless rain, falling in a slow drizzle that allowed the water on the ground to soak in, had transformed the sodded surface into a slushy expanse of blackish, soupy mud that was flung from the revolving wheels of the ship like spray from the bow of a racing speedboat. The Douglas was slow in starting to roll over the ground; it was slower yet in lifting itself, light as was its load, but finally it climbed awkwardly into the air. Nick turned quickly away from the field, making no effort to climb for altitude, and settled the ship upon a compass course that would take him directly to McLearson, seventy-five miles to the southeast.

Fifteen miles out of Little Rock he crossed the engorged Arkansas River, its waters flattened out over an area of ten miles on either side of the main channel. The water looked like some huge tropical lake, with weather-blackened vegetation jutting raggedly up through the surface and extending a few feet into the air. Here and there was a high ridge or hill, and not infrequently Nick could distinguish the tents of refugees pitched in precarious uncertainty upon their topmost areas.

Occasionally, and with increasing recurrence as he neared the badly flooded area, a rowboat flicked past under the wings of the racing plane—rescuers seeking out the isolated people stranded upon the tops of barns and houses. These men waved as the plane passed over them, and Nick waved in response. Almost paralleling the course of the Arkansas, Nick presently passed a town, the low buildings of which were all engulfed in the sluggish flood. In the railroad yards, as he passed, he saw the tops of freight cars; and a few hundred yards up the track from the station a locomotive was stalled, canted on the rails, as if the roadbed had partially been torn away from under it.

AFTER fifty minutes in the air Nick saw McLearson, and he turned to the left and followed the invisible track toward where he expected to see the wreckage of the train. He knew, from his map, that McLearson was at the end of the railroad, and he observed, when he passed the town, that it was almost completely out of water. It was situated on high ground, and the flood had not as yet climbed to that level. Fields surrounding the town were water-soaked and glistening; they were without exception small, and partially or completely surrounded by tall timber. Nick examined them appraisingly as he passed, but could not find one that would be suitable. There was only one in which he could have landed, and with three men and a doctor in the cabin of the plane, he would have no chance of taking off again.

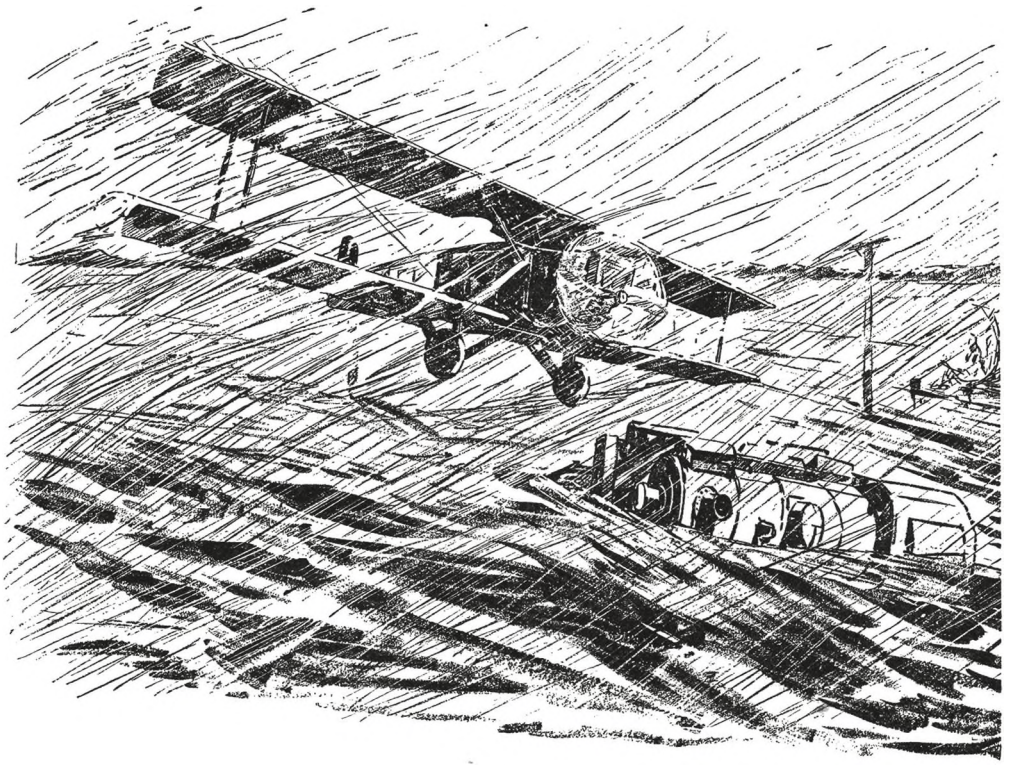
The railway yards in McLearson were out of water, but immediately north of the town the right-of-way dropped into a cut and out of sight. Nick, taking his direction from the portion of the track that he could see, flew up the road for two miles, found the wrecked train, and circled over it.

The locomotive had left the track and was lying now upon its side in the water a few feet from the edge of the rails. The cab and tender were more than half hidden by the muddy water. When he saw the engine Nick wondered how the crew had escaped at all!

The first box-car also had left the rails, but had remained upright, and was now standing in water that covered the trucks and lapped at the bottom of the car. The other cars of the train—three—had not been derailed, and from the platform of the caboose two men waved excitedly as Nick passed them at a low altitude. He raised his hand in a return salute, then flew on toward Plateau.

SINCE leaving McLearson, he had been wondering how the injured men could be brought ten or twelve miles in a boat in time for the plane to return to Little Rock before darkness set in. If the brakeman were in serious condition, it would prove difficult to transfer him without increased injury to his wounds. If the case were as urgent as seemed apparent, a landing at Plateau would take too long! For ten minutes he flew, holding, as near as he could estimate, the line of the right-of-way. The water, as he proceeded, was deeper; the track was nowhere evident.

At Plateau, although the town was above the flood level, the flying-field was al-



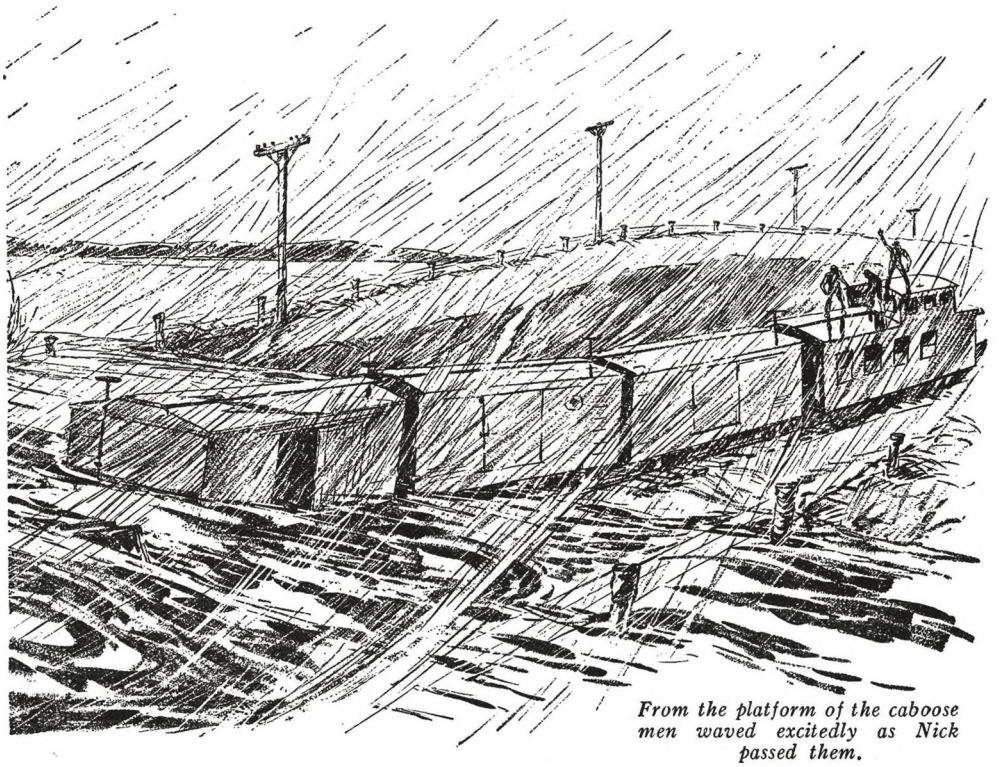
most completely submerged. At one corner of the area, fluttering in damp dejection, the "wind sock" showed that the wind still blew from the northeast. Nick looked the place over and shook his head. He was doubtful about attempting a landing there; after several moments' consideration he decided that the pasture at McLearson would prove better, so he turned back and raced downwind.

The "field" at McLearson was in reality a farmer's rye pasture. The green shoots had pushed themselves through the water-soaked soil and into open air; yet they did not form a sod, and Nick could see, even from the air, that his plane's wheels would sink down into the mud so far that there was a possibility of "nosing over" when he landed. On three sides of the pasture pine trees lifted themselves forty feet into the air; on the fourth side—the one toward which Nick would approach in landing—there was only a low fence, which, at one point, dipped down into a ravine and then up again to the level of the ground.

The field sloped rather steeply from the fence up toward the trees; and the wind was blowing up the hill. Nick had his choice of landing over the trees, into the wind and downhill, or over the fence and uphill—but downwind. And the wind at his back increased the possibilities of the plane nosing over when its wheels sank into the mud. But landing up the hill was the only logical way, for the trees were so tall that if he approached the field over them he could not settle the ship to the ground before he reached the fence.

He cut his gun and glided in, rolling the stabilizer back until the plane was decidedly tail-heavy. He came in on a long glide, downwind, and crossed the fence at five feet above the ground, gunning his motor spasmodically to keep the ship in the air until it was over the fence. He cut his gun, jerking the lever back violently, and pulled his control-wheel back into his stomach with both hands. The plane settled into the mud with a soft splash; the mud from the spinning wheels slapped up against the taut fabric of the wings with a crackle like the splattering of hail on a tin roof.

The muck clutched at the tires and dragged them down; the plane, with the flippers hard up, reared its tail off the ground and tried to bury its nose into the mud in front of it, but Nick slammed the throttle open before the propeller was far enough down to flick the ground. The propeller blast slapped back at the tail, but at the same time it pulled forward on the plane, and thus created forces that opposed



From the platform of the caboose men waved excitedly as Nick passed them.

each other. While the tail tended to be blown down into its proper position, the wheels were almost stuck, and tended to nose the ship downward. The tail remained four feet in the air—higher than normal take-off position—and gradually the plane decelerated to a pace that permitted safe taxying. The mud was so deep that at fifteen hundred revolutions of the propeller, the ship barely crept over the ground.

"I've gummed things now!" Nick muttered, when the ship had stopped. "We'll never get out of this field before next summer! That brakeman will have to stay where he is."

But, hopeless as he was of taking off from the field again, he left the Douglas in a corner of the field and hurried to town. He went first to the depot, and routed out the station agent.

"Where're the men who got hurt in the train wreck?" he asked. "I'm down here with an airplane—an ambulance—to take them to a hospital."

"Up the track a piece," the agent replied. "The conductor walked back through the water and told us about 'em, but there haint nothin' we can do about it."

"Do? Haven't you got a boat?"

"No, haint a boat in McLearson. The conductor, he thought they'd send a seaplane down here for 'em—they're still up there in the caboose. I reckon that brakeman's sufferin' suthin' too, the way he got that engine on his legs! Wouldn't be surprised they'd have to amp'tate them legs. Mirac'lous, too; he'd oughtta been drowned, but somehow or other he got out from under that engine!"

NICK looked at his watch. He had consumed an hour and twenty-five minutes of precious time in getting to McLearson; only slightly more than that amount remained before darkness, and at all costs he must be in the air before night: he knew that he would never get out of the field after dusk—if he did then.

"Got a hand-car around here?" he asked the agent.

"Nothin' but a push-car—you couldn't do no good with that. The water'd come up over the top of it. We thought o' that, but we knew we'd drownd them fellers if we tried to bring 'em through on a push-car."

"Where is it? We're going after those men. Is a doctor up there with them?"

"Sure, they's a doctor up there—walked up through the water. But I'm a-tellin' you, you can't do no good with a push-car."

"Get it!" Nick snapped, and the agent moved with alacrity to obey. While he was gone Nick looked around the yards. A pile of ties stood back of one switch, and he estimated their weight.

"Now, Mister," he told the agent, when the man returned, "we're going to load this car with ties so the tops of them are out of water, and we're going after those men! Are you good at pushing?"

In spite of his objections and his insistence that it could not be accomplished, the agent helped Nick pile two layers of ties upon the hand-car, and together they pushed it up the main track toward the wreck. It was, at best, a slow progress that they made; at times the water rose so high that it floated the ties, and when that occurred one of them climbed up upon the stack and weighted it down. They pushed through cuts and over fills, all of them invisible under the murky water, and after forty minutes arrived at the rear of the caboose.

Two of the men who had waved to Nick were standing on the platform of the car waiting for him. One of them wore the cap of a railroad conductor; the other was dressed in business clothes.

"You the doctor?" Nick asked the latter, and without awaiting a reply added: "I landed my ship at McLearson. As soon as we get the men on board it I'll have them to a hospital in Little Rock within forty-five minutes—or kill them trying to get off the ground."

Doctor Matthies, a short, stumpy man, still very wet from his walk through the water from town, introduced himself.

"We'd kill the brakeman if we tried to take him to town on a hand-car through this water," he said. "We thought of trying that, but he's too weak to be moved with safety. He ought to be in a hospital—quickly; but we can't take him there on any hand-car!"

"That's what I been a-tellin' him all the way out here!" the station agent said resentfully. "But he don't seem like one to—"

"Shut up!" Nick barked. "Doctor Matthies, I landed just as close to the wreck as I could get. This hand-car is the only way to get the men to my ship. If the brakeman can't be moved, suppose you stay here with him and I'll take the others to town. I've got to hurry—it'll be dark in a little while and I'll have—"

A woman's wail inside the caboose startled him. He heard the groans of one of the injured men.

"What the hell!" he ejaculated. "Is a woman out here too?"

"The brakeman's daughter," Doctor Matthies replied. "She came out with me as soon as we got word. Couldn't keep her at home—insisted on coming. She waded out through that water right behind me!"

JUST at that moment the girl came to the doorway of the car and stood, a handkerchief clutched in her hands, looking at the four men. She was sobbing brokenly; there was about her a note of tragedy, Nick thought, but at the same time fortitude. Through tear-filled eyes she looked quickly from one man to the other.

"Can't you do *something?*" she choked. "Don't just let him lie there like that and suffer and—and—"

"We'll do everything we can, Miss Richardson," Doctor Matthies assured her gravely. "Try not to worry about your father." He went with her back into the car.

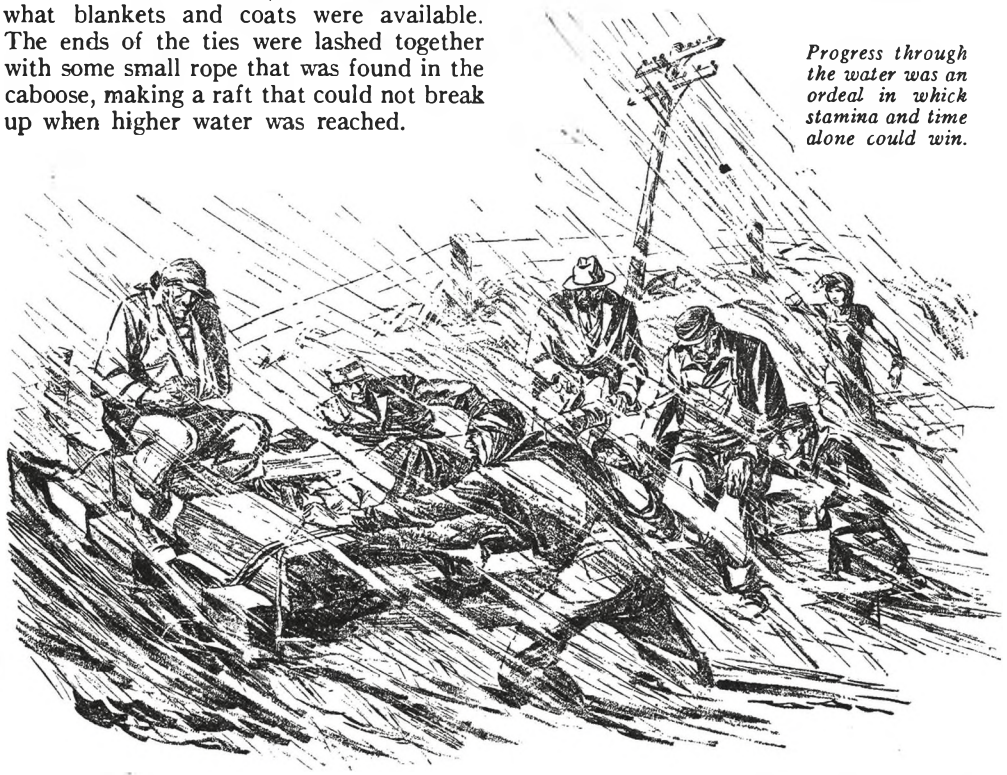
"What about the others?" Nick asked the conductor. "Are they badly hurt?"

"Burns, mostly. The hoghead has a broken arm, but Doc set it for him and he's resting pretty easy now, I guess. Tallow-pot—that's the fireman—was on the high side when the engine went over. He got burned some, but not bad. We were running slow—water up to the axles of the drivers; I don't see yet why all of 'em weren't drowned. . . . . Damn this rain!"

Doctor Matthies emerged from the caboose. "Richardson is likely to die at any time," he told them in a whisper. "I'm sure he can't last two more hours unless we get him to a hospital. He's losing blood, and I can't help him much—and she's willing to risk it. He wont die any quicker, I suppose, on that hand-car than he will lying in there. Let's try to take him along—we *might* save him."

"All right," said Nick. "I'd like to speak to Miss Richardson a moment." He called softly to her, and she came out to the platform. "My ship is stuck in the mud at McLearson," he told her, "and I'll need all the men you can get for me. I want you to hurry back to town and get all the men in town out to my ship. It's in a field on the north side. Now hurry." The girl nodded. "You hurry, too," she said, and stepping down into the water, she started out along the track.

ONE at a time the three injured men were carried out and placed on top of the ties upon the hand-car. The enginemen were able to sit up, although in terrible pain, and one of them was placed at each end of the car. Richardson, the brakeman, was laid between them, and covered with what blankets and coats were available. The ends of the ties were lashed together with some small rope that was found in the caboose, making a raft that could not break up when higher water was reached.



Progress through the water was an ordeal in whick stamina and time alone could win.

Slowly, for the water was rising and was higher than when the outbound trip had been made, Nick and the conductor and the station agent started pushing the hand-car along the track. Doctor Matthies rode upon the car, watching the ebb and flow of Richardson's pulse with tense concentration.

The rain, which had fallen most of the morning in a slow drizzle, had ceased about midafternoon; but now it commenced again, dribbling down from lowered clouds. Nick watched the weather apprehensively, fearing that fog might set in as dusk approached.

As they pushed the car the three men walked in water that came almost to their hips. Their coat sleeves, being in water almost continually, soaked up moisture and let it drain down against their bodies, bringing even more discomfort. They stumbled for a footing on the submerged ties below their feet, and more than once one of them would have fallen if he had been unable to grasp the ropes that bound the ties, and thus support himself more firmly. Progress through the water was won only by torture; it was an ordeal in which stamina and time alone could win.

All three men were tired, Nick and the station man from pushing the hand-car to the wreck; the conductor from his walk to McLearson to report the accident. For nearly an hour they labored through the rising water, saying little to each other, each bent upon conserving his strength until the goal was reached.

At times the water lapped at the top layer of ties, almost floating them in spite of the weight of the four men who rode there. When the water was at its deepest, as when crossing fills in the railroad, progress was even slower; yet somehow they slowly won advancement and kept the car creeping through the rising flood.

AFTER an hour of almost insurmountable difficulty they passed through the last cut and rolled the car out of the water toward the station. From that point on, their progress was much faster; they broke

into a ragged trot, using up the last of their energy in an effort to get speed.

The streets of McLearson, though a veritable mire, were passable for motor traffic, and Nick and Doctor Matthies loaded the three injured men into an automobile and proceeded as quickly as possible to the edge of town where the Douglas was waiting. Dusk was lowering down upon them; the light of day was already failing and the rain had increased and fell in fitful, gusty showers. The men were transferred from the car to the stretchers of the plane, and Nick hurriedly examined the line of his take-off. He walked the full length of the field—some seven hundred feet—noting holes and ridges he must avoid when he started the mad rush to get off the ground. He noticed that at one point along the fence—where the ravine intersected it—there was danger of striking his wing against the bank, yet because of the added slope at this point he decided to take off toward it. He walked back to the plane quickly, knowing that he had less than fifteen minutes of daylight still remaining.

When he returned to the ship he found about thirty men and boys who had come to the field at the girl's request. He cautioned them about the propeller, then climbed into the cockpit and started his motor, returning to the ground, while it warmed up, to instruct the men in aiding him to make the take-off.

"This field's too muddy to get started rolling unless you help me," he said to them. "First, I want six men to go to the end of the field"—he pointed out the ravine to them—"and wait there. I may crash this ship, and if I do there'll probably be a bonfire. You wont have a chance to get me out—I'll be right in the middle of it—but you can get the Doctor and the men out of the cabin if you're right there when it happens, and work fast."

THE six men whom he had selected tramped off through the mud and rain, and Nick turned to the others. Under his instructions they picked up the tail of the Douglas and rolled the ship back until the tail-surfaces were almost against the fence; then, with the Patrol pilot telling each of them where to stand, they stationed themselves in two groups at the trailing edge of the lower wings, each man having a handhold on the wing.

"When I open the throttle," said Nick, "I want every man of you to push like hell! I mean *push!* Run with the ship just as long as you can keep up with it *pushing*—but don't trail along behind after it is going faster than you can run. When you let go of the wing, look out you don't get hit by the tail—step to one side and get out of the way."

HE climbed into the cockpit again and settled himself in the seat. He was surprised, just as he was ready to gun his motor, by the girl's appearance through the passageway between the pilot's compartment and the passenger's room to the rear. She stepped up through the aisleway and seated herself at Nick's side.

"The Doctor wont let me ride back there," she said without emotion. "I wanted to be near my daddy all the time, but he wont let me. I'll have to ride up here."

"You'd better climb down," Nick replied hurriedly. "There's no telling what may happen to this plane—we may all be killed. I don't want you on board if we crash."

The girl looked up at him gravely, but made no move to get out of the cockpit.

"Hurry!" Nick ordered. "It's almost dark and I've got to get away from here! I can't take you."

"I wont get out," she said, without raising her voice. "My daddy is in this airplane and I'm going to stay near him. If we—if we have an accident and all get killed—well, I'm not going to get out, anyhow!"

"Listen, girl," Nick snapped, "I haven't got time to listen to the whims of anybody! I'm trying to save your father's life. Now you get back there on the ground—and get there in a hurry! It's getting dark!"

"I wont! You'll have to throw me out! My father will need me when we get to the hospital, and this is the only way I can get there." She began to sob. "Anyway,"—she looked at him pitifully,—"anyway, he's my papa and—and—"

"All right," said Nick, as gently as his temper would permit; "but get that safety belt around you." He helped her fasten the safety belt around her waist. "I don't want any of my passengers thrown out on their necks when we turn over."

He made a last inspection of the plane, then unbuckled his own belt and climbed to the ground. He let the air out of both tires, so that they were almost entirely deflated, and presented a flat cushion to the mud.

"Almost forgot that!" He grinned at the

waiting men. "All ready? Now for God's sake; *push!*"

IN the cockpit again he opened the radiator shutters so that the motor wouldn't boil under the labor of the take-off, raised his goggles to his forehead so that his eyes would be free from shattering glass in case the plane crashed at the end of the field, and pressed the throttle slowly forward until it struck the end of the slot. The motor picked up its revolutions slowly—it was swinging a big propeller—and gradually the ship began to roll, mushing down into the soft mud as each foot of advance was gained. Nick felt its tendency to nose-over as it picked up a little speed, and he was forced to pull his flippers up to prevent the nose from burying itself in the ground, although in doing that he knew that he prolonged the take-off. Half the length of the field had been used before the men who were pushing against ship began to drop away from their places at the wings; when that much speed had been obtained the acceleration was fairly rapid, and within a hundred feet more the last man let go his hold upon the wing and flung himself upon his face to dodge the tail of the ship as it flicked over him.

The take-off had been made directly toward the ravine, just as Nick had planned it, but he expected the Douglas to pick up speed quicker than it did. When the edge of the ravine was reached, the fence still fifty feet away, it was not yet in the air. It rolled over the edge of the ravine and settled down, picking up speed more quickly because of the greater slope. Slowly it began to rise; it was clearing the ground nicely when the wing-tip on the right side struck the bank of the declivity with a soft, sickening sound. The ship swung sharply, shuddering and almost out of control, to the right; for a moment it seemed to hesitate as if wavering just before a fatal plunge into the ground. But Nick was quick on the controls; he wound the wheel hard over and leveled the plane in time to prevent the crash; he looked out along the right wing and saw that three feet of the wing-tip had been torn away, and was hanging now, an inert but dangerous mass of debris, to the spars and wires of the wing structure.

WITH full aileron control depressing the left wing of the plane, it would fly level, but try as he might, Nick could not roll the ship into a left bank. He skidded the Douglas around in a left turn, hoping to increase the lift on the right wing enough to bring it up into a higher-than-normal position, which would have offset to some degree the decreased lifting surface of the right wing caused by the accident. He eased the plane around, finally reaching the direction which he must fly toward Little Rock, but the plane was still flying level—with the aileron control hard over to the left side.

Above him now, Nick saw the darker gloom of wet clouds, three hundred feet above the earth. At times he flew in the base of them, the black water of the earth invisible below. Rain still filtered out of the clouds, and the ship flew into it and brought it back into the faces of Nick and the girl with a velocity that made it feel like grape-shot. It was almost impossible to face it, yet it must be faced; refuge behind the windshield of the ship was impossible—the utter black of the night required constant vigilance.

FOR perhaps five minutes the Douglas handled normally enough that Nick was able to hold it on its course, flying by "feel" and his compass and his altimeter. A gnawing fear of a hidden hill or ridge in front of him clutched at the Patrol pilot; he had had friends who met their death by colliding with such barriers, made invisible by fog or darkness. From the disablement of the plane itself there seemed no immediate danger of a crash; it was extremely right-wing-heavy, but still manageable.

He was seven minutes away from McLearson, battling doggedly with the Douglas, when he felt a severe shock against his controls. He could not see what had happened, because of the darkness, but a moment later he felt the plane rolling into a right bank. He realized, then, that some part of the injured wing had given way. He did not know whether a crash would result immediately or not, but he knew that the crash *would* come, in spite of everything he could do. He experienced a pang of regret for the injured men—they would never see a hospital; if not killed in the crash, they would drown in the angry water into which they would be thrown when the ship lunged in!

The girl beside Nick had seen the wing strike the bank and had seen him struggling with the controls since that time. Perhaps she understood something of what was taking place, but that realization pro-

duced no display of emotion. She looked at the damaged wing, then at Nick, then down into the blackness beyond which the ugly waters of the flood were concealed. She looked back at Nick—and *smiled!*

The Douglas had been rolling into a steeper bank momentarily. Nick knew that it was a matter of a few seconds until it would tilt up and slide off into the ground—unless, by some means, a weight could be placed on the left wing to counteract the decreased lifting surface of the right one. He placed his lips to the girl's ear and shouted out his lungs above the roar of the motor.

"Going to crash!" he yelled. "Climb out on the left wing to balance the ship! Hurry!"

The girl nodded. Nick unbuckled her safety belt with a single fling of his hand, and she stepped up on the cowling just behind the cockpit. Slowly, fighting for every inch of progress against the biting wind and the sting of rain, she made her way to the edge of the fuselage and down upon the left lower wing. The force of the propeller blast struck her and slammed her up against the cutting edges of the streamlined flying-wires; by the pale glow of the exhaust Nick could see her clutching desperately to hold her place. She moved farther out upon the wing, and Nick lost her in the darkness; but he knew that she made progress because the ship slowly began to right itself. As she neared the wing-tip the plane resumed normal flying position.

CLINGING against the strut, clutching the icy metal to save her life and the lives of all the men in the plane, the girl fought the cold and fatigue and growing numbness for forty minutes. Nick opened his throttle wide and the ship plunged through the darkness at a hundred and twenty miles an hour, despite the resistance of the débris that clung to the jagged spars of the broken wing-tip. He flew entirely by his compass now; the lights of towns below had been blotted out when the flood waters destroyed power-lines. He wondered how long the girl could stay there, for he realized the fight she was putting up to cling to the strut.

The lights of Little Rock blinked up ahead of them at last, and Nick circled the field and landed by the beacon light. The plane rolled out of the beam, and Nick turned back to the hangar. He taxied to the "line" and without stopping his motor scrambled out along the wing to help Miss Richardson to the ground.

But she was not there!

NICK was stunned. He pictured her being torn from the strut by the fury of the wind; he visualized her falling into the black waters of the flood. Then he realized that she had fallen to the ground after he had landed; otherwise the plane would have been unbalanced, and he would have been unable to maintain it on an even keel. She was somewhere on the flying-field, probably having fallen in exhaustion, when the Douglas landed.

Borrowing a flashlight, and leaving the injured men to the care of Doctor Matthies, Nick hurried out across the flying-field, throwing the beam of light ahead of him, swinging it back and forth across the wheel tracks and out into the misty gloom of the flying field. He broke into a run, splashing through the mud wearily. He reached the point where he had turned the ship out of the beacon light, then hunted downwind in the darkness toward the point where the plane's wheels first had touched the ground.

Failing to find her there, he retraced his steps to the plane—and found her almost under the wing, lying prostrate in the muddy water of the field, unconscious and exhausted from her struggle with the elements of Nature. He picked her up gently and carried her to where an ambulance was waiting.

In the ambulance, with Nick and Doctor Matthies riding by her side, she opened her eyes and looked vaguely around her. She recognized them both presently; then her gaze wandered out the window of the car. At last she looked back at them.

"We made it, didn't we?" she asked weakly. "Will—will Daddy get all right?"

Doctor Matthies patted her hand. "He'll be all right," he said softly. "He's better now—he's at the hospital."

She was silent again for several minutes, and then smiled wanly.

"I'm sorry I fell off—I didn't know what happened—I was so cold. If Papa just gets well—"

"Try to sleep now," said the Doctor. "You can see him in the morning."

"I knew he would get well—if I could just stay out there on that wing. . . . . I'm sure he will—now. . . . ." And a moment later, to Nick: "Sometime, when you're not too busy, could I take a ride with you—*inside* your airplane?"

The famous Easy Street Experts take an amiable but competent hand in the game when a friend is held for ransom.

By
BERTRAM ATKEY

"Easy, Sing," warned Mr. Brass. "Twist the cords round his hand—that's the style!"

A Bad Bit of Trouble

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

IT was about a week after their return to London from a month's grouse shooting from the bonny butts of Scotland—where they had been honored guests of their old friend Mr. Ebney Rush, the Ferro-Concrete Substitute millionaire of New York—that the Honorable John Brass and his partner in polite crime Colonel Clumber received an unexpected telephone-call from Mr. Rush himself.

It was so late at night that both the sharksome old *bon viveurs* had reached that genial, mellow and lenient-minded stage where all seemed for the best in this heavy-hoofed world, in spite of the fact that the old brandy had waned low in its decanter.

They had not quarreled for over forty minutes, and though Mr. Brass had explained at some length the reasons why his mentality was so superior to that of his partner, the Colonel had not disputed one word of it all. It is true that he had twice almost waked up, but the long and soothing drone of the Honorable John's voice had lulled him off to sleep again before he gathered what his partner was talking about. So, as Mr. Brass droned himself to sleep almost immediately after, all was peace—when the telephone suddenly started into life.

John glared at the instrument, then rose, looked at the decanter, sighed, strolled across the room to another chair near the telephone, made himself perfectly comfortable, lit a cigar and finally unhooked.

The old adventurer's scowl of annoyance faded out as he learned that the caller was Mr. Rush. And by the time he hung up again, his lassitude had left him completely and his hard eyes were as keen and bright as if he had dined lightly off toast and spinach washed down with clear water.

FOR a moment he stood looking down at Colonel Clumber, who, partially roused by the imperious trill of the telephone, was slowly winning his way back to consciousness.

"Slow off the mark—he always was. He eats too much; that's the truth of it. He always did. Bad for the brains!" said Mr. Brass, talking aloud to himself, as he stared, not without a kind of indulgent affection, at the man who so long had been his partner.

The observation penetrated the Colonel's sleep-clouded understanding, and he sat up in his chair like a moose in his wallow.

"That's right—that's the style! Choose a time when I'm asleep and defenseless to make insulting remarks about me!" he began furiously, but Mr. Brass stayed him with an urgent hand.

"Later on, Squire, later on for the argument, if argument over a plain straightforward statement there is to be. Though I'll say that I don't see what objection there is in my observing—entirely as a friend—that the way you eat accounts perfectly for the state of your brains. Personally, I wish you wouldn't. It can but do you harm, man."

He beamed on his irritated partner in the friendliest way.

"Nunno, Squire, I'm not going to quarrel with a man in your condition. We're too old comrades for that. Nor am I going to insult you. I said you are slow off the mark—but we can't all be quick, anyway. I think none the worse of you for that. And if you feel you must solidify yourself every time you face a meal, why, so do, Squire, so do. You've got the food; you can afford to eat till it hurts; you're your own boss—Good Lord, man, I should be ashamed to reproach you, an old friend, merely because what you gain on your bulk you lose on your brains—"

"But I don't, damn it—you're wrong—wrong, you insulting old glutton!" bawled the Colonel.

"Glutton, man—glutton! *Me!*" The Honorable John's eyebrows went up. "That's a hard word to use to a man who is notoriously one of the greatest epicures—one of the daintiest, most fastidious *gourmets* in the country! Glutton! *Me!* Nunno," denied Mr. Brass warmly. "There may be one of this partnership commits the sin of glutting—gluttoning—every time he gets near the materials, but he's not me, Squire! No, sir, not *me!* . . . . However, later will have to do for that," he went on hurriedly, pressing the bell. "Our good friend Rush has just rung up, and he wants us to step round and see him. There's what sounds like rather an ugly bit of trouble taking place round there."

THE COLONEL forgot his grievances, for Ebney Rush was a man both partners admired, liked and respected. Some years had passed since they first made his acquaintance, and that of his daughter—then the Princess of Rottenburg, previously Mrs. Geoffrey Beauray, and now, thanks to the alchemy of love and the sleights of Mr. Brass, his partner and the divorce court, Mrs. Geoffrey Beauray again. That is to say, her first husband was also her third, legally speaking. Prince Rupert of Rottenburg had been her second until the lovely little lady realized that to be the wife of a Continental royalty of Rupert's class was not quite precisely the dream of happiness she had once imagined it was to prove.

For Rupert, in spite of his title, was a hairy-heeled scoundrel at his very best. At his worst, even strange dogs declined to bite him. In any case it had been a misunderstanding which had separated her from her first husband Geoff Beauray, and she had been as glad to get him back as he had been grateful to come.

It had been some fairly fast work by the Brass partnership which had made their reunion possible. And neither of the young folk, nor Ebney Rush nor his wife, had forgotten it—not even though there were now three delightful little Beaurays running around to distract their attention. . . . .

"Yes, a bit of bad trouble," insisted the Honorable John urgently. "And the sooner we get around to Eaton Square, the better. It seems that Geoff Beauray is missing!"

"Geoff missing! That wont do for me," growled the Colonel. "That's a nice boy, that boy Geoff, and if he's missing, then the sooner you get those swelled-up brains working, the better for all concerned!"

But Mr. Brass was already doing that.

SING, the Chinese chattel who had acted with great enthusiasm for the past ten years as the Honorable John's private and personal valet, cook, chauffeur, assistant-tough and all-round general dray-horse, was already bringing in their fur coats. Five minutes later they were on their way, having only paused at the sideboard to speed their brains into top gear with a stimulant so stiff that it would have blown out rather than have stimulated the brains of men less accustomed to what they termed "the gifts of Providence to a world that doesn't deserve 'em."

The house of the Beaurays in aristocratic Eaton Square—a casual little third wedding gift to Clytie Rush from her god-papa Mr. Lehay, the lard czar, who was so dizzily rich that he could have bought Eaton Square if he felt like it—was only a short

stroll from the quietly secluded but nevertheless central flat of the grim old adventurers.

CLYTIE BEAURAY, charming as ever, was undisguisedly glad to see them. Mrs. Rush was genuinely relieved that they had been available, and Ebney Rush himself insisted on the production of a bottle of the special wine which past experience had taught the Ferro-Concrete Substitute magnate was ever effective in clearing their massive heads.

Nobody knew better than the keen-eyed American that Mr. Brass and the Colonel were a pair of pretty sharp old customers. But they had never sharped *him*—on the contrary, Fate had decreed that on several occasions they should prove of seriously important and profitable service to him. And so, like a wise man, he took them as he found them. Moreover they amused him, and he admired their gift of getting life's little difficulties straightened out the way they wanted them.

"I see, plain enough," said Mr. Brass, putting down a totally empty wineglass, "I can see you've all been worrying yourselves again. Now, that isn't going to do, for a start. Let's take things easy—that's the word, *easy*. Geoff's missing. Well, maybe he is. But nobody's going to destroy him for destruction's sake. That would be folly. That would be silly. There are some pretty damned fools in this country, but not many quite so foolish as that. If he's missing, there's a reason. As it's not likely that he's missing by his own wish, it's obviously because somebody else wishes him to be missing—d'ye see that? You want to think these things out the way I do—"

The Colonel intervened.

"If you'd just get yourself under some sort of control and give friend Rush a chance to get a word in edgewise, man, maybe he'd tell us what has happened before you tell us why and how it happened," he said flatly.

The Honorable Mr. Brass looked just a shade disconcerted.

"Hey? Huh! Well, maybe you're right. Perhaps it would be as well—in a way." He patted little Mrs. Beauray's arm. "Forgive the old man for hurrying on a little too fast, in his anxiety to help you, my dear," he said apologetically, and then listened intently to Ebney Rush as he made clear the exact situation.

It only took him a few minutes:

"Geoff went to a dinner at his club given the evening before last to some swell empire-builder who is a member of the club and is on leave here. The boy told Clytie he would be home just as soon as he could crawl out without attracting notice, when the political speeches started. He didn't return at all—hasn't been here since. Now, that's not like him, but he's a level-headed lad, Geoff, and none of us were worrying much—though I'll not deny that we weren't any slower getting to the telephone as time went on.

"It was beginning to get just a little on our nerves, maybe, when sure enough, about an hour ago there comes a note—this note. It's from a party that this family figured it had finished with for good—that false-alarm husband that Clytie dropped into the discard some years ago—Prince Rupert of Rottenburg! Here's his note—better read it."

The partners did so.

EVIDENTLY Rupert was keeping his end up tolerably well in spite of the fact that Germany, not unwisely, had decided to stagger back to prosperity without the kind assistance and the ungenial presence of Rupert and his like.

For he wrote—or rather an underling of some sort wrote for him—from the Astoritz Hotel, thus proving that he had, or seemed to have, what the Astoritz invariably required in large quantities from its patrons, money. The letter was curt but condescending.

The secretary or gentleman-in-waiting or whatsoever the party writing styled himself, said that he had been commanded by His Very Serene High-born and Generally Exalted Royal Highness the High Prince Rupert of Rottenburg, to forward to Mr. Ebney Rush, if he deemed fit, the enclosed missive.

Mr. Brass was reading aloud, and here the hard-eyed Mr. Rush intervened.

"Here's the missive," he said. "Better glance at that before you read any more of Rupert's note."

Retaining the Prince's sheet in his left hand, Mr. Brass took in his right the "missive" offered him by Mr. Ebney Rush.

It was candid and flowery, and ran as follows.

To the Prince Rupert of Rottenburg:

The writer is well aware, in spite of the dog you put on, the swank you emit, and the general brazen front you carry round, that if

the British Empire were for sale, price 2d, you could not buy as much of it as that bank of Thames mud called the Isle of Dogs. He knows, too, that the reason why you are in England is to try to borrow from your once-upon-a-time father-in-law Mr. Ebney Rush as much as you can persuade him to lend you for old times' sake! He knows that, too, the writer of this. *He* knows. Very well. You will probably remember Mr. Geoffrey Beauray, who was husband of Miss Clytie Rush before he was rather foolishly discarded by Clytie, who then married you, found you sadly wanting, threw you out on your ear, and wisely remarried Mr. Beauray, whom she now values above rubies. The writer has got said Geoffrey Beauray quietly laid by in cold storage, where he proposes to keep him until his wife or Mr. Ebney Rush, his father-in-law, cares to buy him back. The price is a trifling £5000. For reasons which do not concern either you or Mr. Ebney Rush, the writer desires you, Rupert, to acquaint Rush with the foregoing facts, to ascertain whether Rush is prepared to pay said £5000 for the recovery of Geoffrey—who is in good health but will rapidly sicken unless prompt attention is given to this—and to telephone North Central 996 (asking for Mr. Phœnix Balt) Mr. Rush's decision as soon as you get it. This telephone is an empty house, but Balt will get your ring all right. If you, Rupert, or Mr. Rush, try to be clever, Geoffrey will be injured somewhat—scalded, maybe—cooked a little—some trifling retaliation of that kind. If you wonder why you are used, keep wondering hard—also Rush; and when you and he call to mind a man whom you have both injured in the past, you will probably guess as to the identity of the merry little kidnaper who signs himself. —Phœnix Balt.

MR. BRASS passed the letter to his partner.

"Humph! Pretty rum customer, this Phœnix Balt," he muttered, and resumed his reading of Prince Rupert's letter.

This was cold and uppish, but in its way candid.

The Prince did not deny that one of his reasons for visiting England was to discuss with Mr. Rush a matter with a financial aspect.

"And that means a bit of royal borrowing if possible," murmured the Honorable John, *sotto voce.*

The letter went on to state that although Prince Rupert had personally thought a good deal about the matter and moreover had consulted with his secretaries and valet and others likely to know, he had not been able to identify the jaunty Phœnix Balt. He was not aware that he and Mr. Rush had ever jointly inflicted injury on any man, and he volunteered the information that he had not the slightest notion why

Mr. Balt should select him, the Prince of Rottenburg, to be the intermediary between him and Mr. Rush.

The letter concluded with a rather unenthusiastic statement to the effect that if Mrs. Beauray or Mr. Rush should feel that the Prince's services were likely to be of any value to them, he, Rupert, would not be indisposed to oblige them, though he trusted that they would find it possible to arrange matters without involving him. He suggested, finally, that the police might profitably be consulted, and finally had the honor to be signed for as Rupert von Rottenburg.

Mr. Brass stared at the letter.

"Well, that was never written in what you might call frenzied anxiety to help," he said, and scowling, passed the letter on to his partner.

"At first glance it looks a worrying bit of work," he said, "but come to think of it, I've got very little doubt that something can be done about it before many hours are past. Have you done anything yet?" he asked Mr. Rush.

Ebney nodded.

"I phoned the Prince at the Astoritz accepting his offer of help, and he behaved pretty well, I thought. He said he would call here at eleven o'clock. He seemed a little more cordial than in his letter. Offered to bring some Scotland Yard men with him if I thought it wise."

"Better glance at that before you read Rupert's note," said the hard-eyed Mr. Rush.

"Hah! Did you?" demanded Mr. Brass.

"I did not—at present," said Ebney Rush.

"I think you were right." John glanced at the clock. "He'll be here in five minutes' time. Now, that's good and businesslike. I shall be very interested to see friend Rupert again, Rush. Shouldn't be surprised, to judge from his letter, to find him improved."

BUT there Mr. Brass was wrong.

The man who, punctual to the least little second, was presently shown in, was only a fine, imposing, almost distinguished-looking figure when glanced at swiftly in deep shadow. In any good light he showed as a tall, broad, fat upstander with a military carriage that was obviously the result of that stern and early training which forms a habit. But the red, square, deep-jowled, thick-lipped face was not so good. Nor were the cold, sunken grayish eyes, very small, closely set and, in spite of the ingrained arrogance of their owner, shifty. Prince Rupert of Rottenburg in the pride of his youth, in a brilliant uniform and at the head of his regiment (if any) of Rottenburg Guards, might have looked like Alexander the Great at a fancy-dress ball. Now he looked rather like a busted hotel-porter who has taken earnestly to drink.

Behind him hovered a curious, undersized party in rather shabby evening dress who looked like a croupier without references in search of a job. This was, claimed Rupert, Baron von Klick, his "gentleman." But he spoke English like an Oxford man gone to the dogs ages ago.

Ebney Rush greeted them civilly, introduced them to the partners—they had met before, but all seemed willing to forget it—and invited them all to sit.

The ladies were no longer present. Mrs. Rush hated Rupert—always had. And Clytie despised him, though she had not always—to her sorrow.

It was at once evident that Rupert was civilly disposed. His opening observations proved that to all but Mr. Brass, who had left the room, more or less unobtrusively, as soon as he had nodded to the Prince. But he returned perhaps ten minutes later, in time to note that everything was going as merrily as a marriage bell—if indeed the knelling of that implement is any indication at all of merriment.

"I've mulled the thing over in my mind, Prince," Ebney Rush was saying as Mr. Brass came in again. "But I can't place that man Balt. There are a few hundred crooks in this world who'd probably claim I've injured them, and maybe there actually are one or two folk that I have hurt inadvertently in my time. But I'm a business man—not a professional injurer; and in any case I don't recollect ever coupling up with you, Prince, to hurt a man! For all

he means to me, Phœnix Balt might as well call himself Bill Smith."

"To me also. I have never heard of the ruffian," said the Prince. "And if it had befallen that his insolent letter had referred to any other man but the present husband of your daughter, I should have ignored it. But there is that between your family, Mr. Rush, and mine, which cannot be washed out, even though it belongs to the past; and for that reason I bestirred myself. Regard my services at your disposal in this serious affair!"

"Thanks," said Rush rather dryly. "Have you any suggestions?"

"I have," replied the Prince, with a sort of dignity. "But I do not propose to advance them except personally and privately to you."

"I see. Well, no doubt that can be managed."

Ebney Rush glanced inquiringly at Mr. Brass, who waved a genial hand at him and the Prince.

"Take him to the library, Rush—or send us there, just as you please," boomed the cheerful old adventurer. "And the sooner you do one or the other, the less time will be lost."

So Mr. Rush, the Prince and his shady-looking "gentleman" disappeared.

Mr. Brass promptly locked the door and reached for the telephone. It was Sing, back at their own flat, whom he called, and he called that yellow speedwell in no uncertain manner. For three minutes he talked, then hung up and turned to Clumber, who was standing by the table, absently toying with the wine—though not too absently.

"My brains are snapping like electricity tonight," said the Honorable John. "Pour me a glass of that wine."

He thought, took a drink, and thought some more.

"Yes, like electricity," he decided. "It was a lucky day for you, Squire, when you decided to come in as partner with *me!*"

"Oh, was it? Well, prove it," snapped the Colonel, and chuckled. "That's it—*prove* it!"

"I will so," declared Mr. Brass, his cheerful red face shining with faith, hope and charity. "You heard me start to do it, didn't you?"

THE Colonel shrugged a pair of shoulders as broad as a big sideboard.

"I heard you instruct Sing to bring round here to the door that old taxicab you bought last year at that motor sale you looked in at one afternoon when you must have been owl tight."

"Tight is as tight does," repartee-ed Mr. Brass rather confusedly. "I never made a better bargain in my life. I've proved it before—that time we met the daffodil dame—and I'm going to prove it again. . . . . What d'ye think of Rupert these days?"

"I rank him with the rotters," said Colonel Clumber bluntly. "I always did and I always shall. Still, I don't deny he's showing up very well, all things considered, in this business. That letter from Phœnix Balt was an insulting thing to receive, and I'll say frankly that I don't think any the worse of Rupert for having the decency to show it."

MR. BRASS pondered that for a moment, smiling quietly. Then he laughed softly, not without a touch of affectionate indulgence.

"You are a real reliable old blockhead, Squire, and you always run dead true to your natural form, don't you? I like you because I can always depend on you. When I want to find out how any particular thing strikes a man who can't see half an inch in front of his nose, and who thinks as if his head were full of cold ham-fat instead of brains, why, I always turn to y—"

But here, fortunately, Mr. Ebney Rush and the Rottenburgers reëntered, all looking quite satisfied.

The millionaire wasted no time.

"Well, my friends, we've gone into the thing very closely. I've got to get back to New York pretty soon,—spent too much time playing about over here as it is,—and I guess it's going to work out cheaper in the long run to pay up and look pleasant. Prince Rupert has been sort of arguing that we ought to have the police in and so forth, but that doesn't appeal to me. It will mean delay, and fuss and red tape, unless I badly miss my guess. And moreover it might be serious for Geoff. For I don't like that letter from Balt. It's ugly even if it is kind of funny—and it wouldn't surprise me if the man who wrote it is a little unbalanced. Now, you can trust a plain crook not to do anything foolish. He'll go for the money every time, every chance. He'll be consistent. But a man who has a grievance that has eaten into his sanity is different. He's likely to do something that we might regret. Is that so?"

The partners agreed that it was very much so.

"Well, I'm willing to pay to avoid that. My little girl adores Geoff, and a few more thousands spent on her happiness aren't of much consequence. She and her matrimonial affairs have cost me something near a million of good United States dollars already, and I consider I'd be weak-kneed to shy at a few more of those same dollars. So I've accepted Prince Rupert's offer to get in touch with this damned scoundrel Balt just as quickly as he can and to make the best terms he can. What d'ye think of it, friends?"

Mr. Brass did not hesitate.

"You're right, of course," he said crisply. "Considering the foully insulting tone of the Balt letter, I think Prince Rupert is doing the truly sporting thing. I congratulate him! I'd like to drink a glass of wine with him."

That ceremony was duly carried out in spite of the fact that the Prince had totally destroyed a quart of that same hefty wine during his conference—out of a silver tankard, a romantic little custom of the huge Prussian.

Mr. Brass accompanied the Prince and Mr. Rush to the front door.

The butler had already called up a taxi —the Prince claiming to have left all his cars on the Continent this trip.

Mr. Brass and Ebney saw them into the cab. It was the Honorable John who cheerily said: "Where to, Prince?"

"The Astoritz Hotel."

"Right!" Mr. Brass turned to the driver, a hard-featured, yellowish-looking person in a peaked hat that hid half his face.

"Astoritz Hotel, my man, and get a move on."

The driver nodded, and the taxi slid away.

EBNEY RUSH and the Honorable John lingered a moment, looking after it.

"Well, what d'ye think of him these days, Brass?"

Mr. Brass laughed.

"Much as I did in the old days. Hog from his hair to his heels. Not quite so domineering as he used to be, perhaps. How much did you have to lend him to get him interested?"

Ebney Rush shrugged.

"You guessed it, did you? Oh, well, he was grateful—he said—for my promise of a couple of thousand. Continental royalties come cheaper than they used to. I suppose that man has run through a million in his day. Now he's glad to beg the loan of a couple of thousand."

"Prefers it that way—it's good pay for doing next to nothing," observed Mr. Brass dryly. "When d'ye pay out?"

"Just as soon as the Prince can get into touch with this Balt hyena and bring Geoff home. He's going to try right away and telephone me the result."

"Tonight, huh?"

"If possible. It depends on whether Mr. Phœnix Balt is really at the end of his telephone line."

Mr. Brass nodded.

"Well, let's get indoors. No use standing about asking for a chill on the liver. We've only got one liver apiece. You're a quick man, Ebney Rush. Result of having all these big bales of money, I take it. I think my partner and I will wait around for an hour in case the Prince fixes up things for tonight. If he contrives it, I'd like to be one of the party that goes to fetch friend Geoff. But what about the ransom? You don't keep five thousand cash in the house, do you?"

Ebney Rush laughed as he entered the house.

"You've been reading fiction, haven't you? The sort of stuff which tells you that as soon as a man happens to make a pile, he stops carrying around more than two cents! I guess I can manage to chase up five thousand in currency without having to borrow much of it from the butler. Man, don't you know that occasionally in the life of a business man there occur chances of doubling or trebling a large sum —provided he can produce the cash instantly? I've known a man to buy the entire cargo of a big steamer for a fifth of its value simply because he could put that fifth down in cold cash—*click*—like that!"

"Yes, I knew it," said the Honorable John urbanely. "I just wondered if *you* knew it. Personally I always keep a large sum handy."

He chuckled. "When I've got one!" he added.

IT was less than a quarter of an hour later, just as Mr. Brass was explaining to the anxious Clytie that it was hardly worth her while to go to bed before Geoff, for the reason that Geoff would so shortly be home, that the telephone call from Rupert of Rottenburg came through.

Ebney Rush answered it, and it was instantly apparent from Ebney's observations that all had gone well with the royal negotiations.

"What's that? You got Balt on that number? Good—that's good, Prince. . . . . Yes. . . . . Hey? . . . .Yes, I say. Hard cash? Certainly—if clean new hundred-pound bank-notes are hard enough for him. . . . . Here — now — waiting for you, Prince. . . . . Insolent, was he? . . . . Well, some fine day maybe we'll find time to make him pay for that. Meantime, *we* do the paying. . . . . Yes, I know, I'm grinning and bearing it. . . . . You'll be around at once. . . . . Good!"

EBNEY RUSH rang off and turned to the company, beaming.

"Rupert's no sloth when he can pay ready money," he ejaculated. "John's right, my dear. We'll be having Geoff home before they've time to get a little meal prepared for him—in case he calls for it."

He turned to the Honorable Mr. Brass.

"It seems to be just an ordinary hold-up. Rupert got hold of Balt at once, and Balt said that any time during the night he'd be ready to hand over Geoff with the left hand provided he received the cash in his right at the same moment."

"That's fine—good work and quick," said Mr. Brass.

"It might have been a whole lot worse," admitted the dour Colonel.

Mr. Brass spoke again.

"I'd like it, Rush, if you'll agree that this old he-bear of a partner of mine and I should go with Rupert to fetch Geoff away from the place where Phœnix Balt has had him in storage. I think you'd be wise to agree—for we've only got Rupert's word that Balt will hand over when he's paid. I'll be frank enough to say that, in spite of what he's just done for your family, I shall never get any inferiority complex on account of Rupert of Rottenburg, and if you're going to let him loose with five thousand pounds of good valuable money, then you can do a lot worse than let two old watchdogs go along with him."

"That's true," growled the Colonel.

"I was going to ask you to do just that for us," agreed Ebney Rush. "I'd be glad to have you along."

Mr. Brass stared.

"And I'd be glad to have you *not* along," he said bluntly. "There's no need for you, with your responsibilities, to run any risks. Is that right, Mrs. Rush? Here we are, going we don't know where, to meet with we don't know what kind of a criminal, or how many. You don't know London as we know it, and you're a rich man. It would suit our friends Balt and Co.—for I don't figure he works alone—to hand over Geoff and keep you. And it's just on the cards that we couldn't stop them. It's not necessary for you to hover round what may be a trap, Rush. Do *you* think it is, Mrs. Rush?"

"Most certainly *not!*" said Ebney's wife with an edge to it. "I think you are entirely right, Mr. Brass, and I appreciate enormously the sensible advice you offer. If Ebney goes, *I* shall go—and that settles it."

"Yes," said Mr. Rush, "it settles it. For I haven't any notion of allowing you to go along, my dear."

"Nor I, you."

"Good. That's settled, then," beamed Mr. Brass. "And now hadn't you better be getting out the money, Rush, for I fancy the Prince will be here in a few seconds; and," he continued, "if I am any judge of a man, he'll be perfectly willing to take one of his tankards of wine to kind of fettle him up before he starts."

The gentle John was entirely right. The Prince (and gentleman) arrived, beaming broadly, before Mr. Brass had finished.

"Except for only the insolence of the low-born Balt, there was no trouble," explained Rupert. "The man is an ordinary brigand who captures and holds to ransom."

Murmuring something about getting his overcoat, and leaving Mr. Rush to explain to Rupert why he needed said coat, Mr. Brass moved out of the room.

BUT he did not immediately get his coat. He whispered a few words to the butler —who seemed to be waiting for him—and passed out of the house to the taxicab waiting at the door. He gave one glance at the saffron visage under the peaked hat of the driver and sighed with relief.

It was Sing.

Master and man whispered swiftly together for a few seconds; then Mr. Brass reached for certain articles which the Chinaman drew from his pocket—two of them—a pair of articles with blued barrels, that looked big enough to blow an elephant into its future state with any one of the half dozen cartridges each contained.

"That's a good lad, Sing," said Mr.

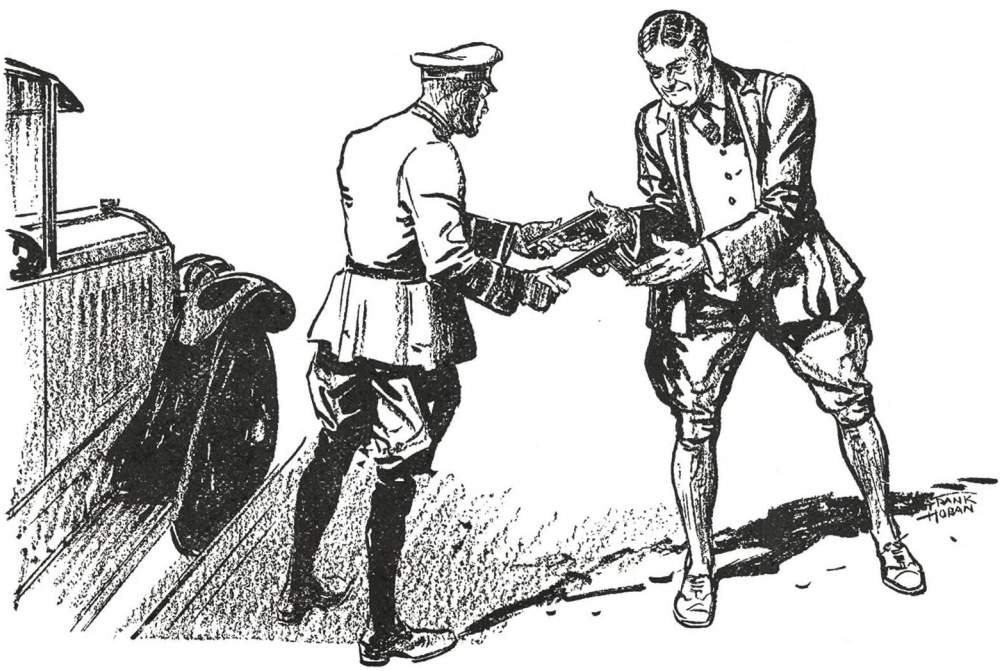
Brass. "Keep on as you're going, and I'll give you a rare good testimonial when you leave me—if ever you do."

He returned to the house, slipped one of the pistols into his partner's overcoat pocket, the other into his own, and then bustled briskly in to join the others.

"Well, come along, come along. Nothing like getting on with it. Got the money, Prince? Good—that's good."

Prince Rupert of Rottenburg, on the contrary, was in a comparatively joyous mood—probably inspired by the fact that he had so easily earned the two thousand pounds loan from Mr. Rush, plus the generous influence of the half-gallon of costly wine which he had un-tankarded that night.

He grinned at Mr. Brass like a big old bear who has found a few hundredweights of wild honey.



Mr. Brass reached for certain articles that looked big enough to blow an elephant into its future state with one cartridge.

He shepherded them all out to the taxi-cab.

The Prince's "gentleman" instructed the saffron-featured driver to go quickly to Number Ninety Fitzgore Square, and Mr. Brass smiled an extremely contented smile as he listened.

"Not so far to go that we shall be kept out of bed half the night, Prince," he said cheerily. "Phœnix likes to operate from a pretty central position, hey, Colonel?"

The Colonel grunted a sort of sour agreement. He was entirely devoid of any idea why his partner should seem so jolly about things in general, though he certainly knew that Mr. Brass had not slipped the big pistol into his overcoat pocket mainly as a sort of practical joke. He was content to sit in a species of sullen and slightly bewildered silence till he was required to arouse himself for action.

"Ach! I am accustomed to deal with every kind of desperado," he said. "This Balt! Pah! He is nothing! He is only a what-you-call snipe—piker, eh? A pike-snipe—a petty villain—nothing serious. One gives him his trifle of money, and he no longer exists for one—quite like a taxi-driver, *hein?*"

HE laughed excitedly—and was still doing it, at intervals, when the taxi turned into dark, unfrequented, little-known Fitzgore Square—that small oblong of out-of-date houses, ill-lit, unfashionable, quiet, which only survives so near the heart of things in London because the owner cannot get the truly affrighting price he is asking for it.

The taxi slid round to Number Ninety, which stood in a darkish corner, its front door facing the square. It was favored

above the neighboring houses by possessing a side door opening onto a passage or superior alley, forming, for pedestrians only, an extra exit from the square.

Down this alley the Prince led them.

"The man Balt requested that we should take possession of Mr. Beauray at the side door," he explained. "He wished that we should enter without ringing."

The taxicab driver had left his seat, apparently to look at a suspected tire.

"He seems a trusting sort of kidnaper," said Mr. Brass, following Rupert and the "gentleman." Dropping back a few paces, he whispered sharply to the Colonel.

"Hey, there!" said that individual, like one inspired. *"Right!* I understand!" And he nodded violently.

The side door opened easily under the Prince's hand, and all entered a narrow hall so bare that it was practically unfurnished. There was nobody in the hall, but a door at the far side stood ajar.

The Prince looked surprised.

"The man Balt should be here—" he began, and broke off as the street door opened quietly and closed again behind the taxi-driver, who advanced with the sparse yellow grin that was peculiar to John's Chinese hireling, the inscrutable Sing.

"What is—" began the Prince, and broke off abruptly, as the large and powerful hand of Mr. Brass clamped itself about his throat.

"Not a word, Rupe, or I shall hurt."

"Rupe" lashed out at the Honorable John's legs with his foot and made muffled sounds, but he got no further than that, for Sing, perceiving that the Colonel was dealing with the Baron Klick with complete ease, proceeded to enwrap himself about the Prince like a yellow octopus.

THERE was no use struggling; and in any case, in spite of his great size and formidable appearance, Rupert of Rottenburg was not a good struggler. He never had been—all his life he had employed professional strugglers to do his struggling for him.

"Easy—easy, Sing," warned Mr. Brass. "No need to strangle the shifty hound. Twist the cords round his hand—that's the style. Better take it quietly, Rupert—quietly, I say, or Sing'll all-but tourniquet your greedy hands off your arms! That's better."

He slipped a deft hand into the Prince's pocket and brought out the bulging wad of banknotes which Ebney Rush had so cheerfully passed over.

"*That's* better—much better," said Mr. Brass, and put them in a safe place he knew of near his own great chest.

"Secure him, Sing, my son. Then make Baron Klick safe, and cord 'em together so that you can guard them both."

He waited till that was complete, then invited his partner to join him in searching the house. . . . .

They had no trouble at all. In an ill-furnished back room with shuttered windows, on the first floor, they found Geoff Beauray, collarless but still in dress clothes, asleep on a cheap iron bedstead.

Quite obvious, on a table beside him, was a hypodermic syringe.

MR. BRASS looked at the Colonel and shrugged his shoulders as he moved to Beauray.

"He's probably not far from waking, Squire—Rupert will have timed things pretty close, if I'm any judge," he said.

The Colonel scowled.

"I suppose you know what you're talking about—but I don't," he growled. "Where's that hound Balt? That's the man I want to get my hands on."

Mr. Brass laughed.

"Balt?" he said. "There's no such party—unless maybe it's that mute little blackguard downstairs who acts as Rupert's 'gentleman.' Probably that's the answer. Can't you see what's happened? Man, it's staring you in the face! Rupert and his pal got hold of Geoff Beauray as he was leaving that dinner—probably had been watching for a chance for days. This place was all ready. They shot a dose of some drug into him, waited a couple of days, composed that letter addressed to Rupert, and got in touch with Rush. You've seen what happened afterward, haven't you? It was a good scheme—the way that letter insulted Rupert and generally showed him up, the way Rupert advised calling in the police! Who would have guessed that Rupert was the man who wrote it, or, more likely, got that shifty 'gentleman' of his, (an Englishman, I should say, considering the tone of the letter) to write it? Rush believed that there really was a Phœnix Balt—as did you—so did everybody except the old man. Me, in fact—old Signor Wise-ulini! Hey?"

Mr. Brass laughed.

"The letter looked funny to me from the

first word," he claimed. "And it was quite easy to see whether I was right or wrong. I telephoned to Sing to bring the old taxi, and I squared the butler to make quite sure that the Prince and his pal used that taxi when they went to 'get in touch' with Balt. They never even went near a telephone; they pulled up at a quiet little saloon bar not far from Eaton Square and had a couple of drinks. Sing watched them all the time. Then they came back to Eaton Square. Sing reported to me while Rush and Rupert were fixing up the money end of it, and then—why, then, even *you* could have seen the idea, Squire. A good idea, for a crook. Good business, it was, because it was so simple. Suppose Ebney Rush hadn't thought of ringing me up? Suppose you had just gone on dozing whilst I sat thinking back at our flat? Rupert would have come here, collected Geoff, and handed him in to the folk at Eaton Square. Probably they'd have given him just a small dose on the way—to last him till next morning, when they would have been well on their way to some hole on the Continent. D'ye see that, Squire?"

HE broke off as Geoff Beauray stirred.

"Hah! There you are! See to him, Squire," said Mr. Brass, hastily. "I'll be back in a couple of minutes."

He hurried downstairs.

Sing had the malefactors safe enough.

"Well, Prince, you've missed your haul by half an inch," said the old strategist genially. "And it will cost you both about ten years apiece—maybe more, if you've injured Geoff Beauray with your drugs."

The Prince went white.

"He is not injured—at any moment he will awaken now. I swear to you—"

But the Honorable John ignored him.

"Have you searched them, Sing?" he asked.

Sing had. Only the Prince had been armed, and Sing now had his battery.

"Good!"

Mr. Brass stared thoughtfully at Rupert and his aide.

"Yes, ten years," he said at last, "and a good job, too!"

He examined the cords which linked them to certain of the fixtures in the room. Some he tightened—others he loosened.

"That will hold them till we send the police to collect 'em," he told the smiling Chink. "Now come and help get Mr. Beauray down to the taxi."

Together, he and Sing went upstairs.

At the top of the stairs Mr. Brass paused to listen. His smile broadened as he caught the sound he expected. The Prince and his pal were already struggling with their bonds.

"Well, well, they'll find it easy enough to escape if they put their backs into it."

Something snapped.

CHUCKLING happily, the smooth old craftsman moved into the room where Geoff Beauray was already sitting up, a little dazed and dull, but obviously not much the worse for his adventure.

The partners did not hurry him.

"No hurry—no hurry. Take it easy—just nice and easy," advised Mr. Brass.

It was the Colonel and Sing who presently settled Geoff Beauray in the taxi, Mr. Brass lingering for what he called a last look round.

That inspection was brief but quite satisfactory.

The room in which he had left the prisoners was no longer occupied. The Prince and his gentleman had escaped quite according to John's plan—and as that far-sighted old crook had left in the Prince's pocket enough small notes to make fast traveling easy, no doubt they were traveling fast—and far. At any rate they never came back to deny it. . . . .

It was a great reunion at Eaton Square. Geoff Beauray was permitted to linger with the men-folk only long enough to explain that the Prince had caught him just leaving the Club, and on the plea of having something to tell him "vital to his and Clytie's happiness,"—something, he had hinted, to do with the period when Clytie had been Princess of Rottenburg,—had persuaded Geoff to accompany them to his sitting-room at the Astoritz. It had been simple enough to drug the coffee which Geoff had carelessly accepted, and to get him, already drowsy, into the taxi which put them down at Fitzgore instead of Eaton Square.

IT was told in a few-score words, after which Mr. Beauray was affectionately but firmly shooed out of the library in the care of his lovely little wife and his solicitous mamma-in-law.

"A good fellow—a sportsman, Geoff is! I always liked that lad—I always shall. You've got a plain Mister son-in-law there, Rush, that's worth fifty gross of royal high-

nesses of Rupert's altitude," said the Honorable John.

"I know it," agreed Ebney Rush. "Why didn't the Prince come back with you? There is his loan—that two thousand pounds—waiting here for him. Where is he?"

Mr. Brass laughed.

"Where? You can search me for the answer, Rush, but you wont find it. You need a clairvoyant. Rupert and his pal are probably streaking it for safety like greased rabbits. Listen—I'll tell you why. Just pour me a glass of wine and listen to the old man."

HE drank his wine, lit a cigar and dumped on the shining table before him the big bundle of notes he had taken from Rupert of Rottenburg.

"Leave 'em lie there for a bit and listen," he said.

Ebney Rush listened to all the details to the very end.

The American's face was hard as Mr. Brass finished.

"I see," he said quietly. "Yes, I see. The man never was anything but a damned scoundrel. I knew it. But he slipped under my guard that time. I admit it. Clytie and her Geoff kind of sap my judgment. She's all the daughter I've got," he added simply.

"Well, old man, he didn't slip under mine, I'll trouble you to note. Here's the money," said the Honorable John.

He slid over the notes. Ebney Rush stared at them—and pushed them back.

"We know each other pretty well, we three folk, huh?" he asked coldly. "I paid those notes out to get Geoff back, didn't I? And I've got him back, huh?"

"It looks like it," agreed Mr. Brass with entire amiability.

"Well, then, what in hell have those notes got to do with me now?" demanded Ebney Rush flatly.

Mr. Brass picked them up in a leisurely sort of way.

"Nothing at all," he said. "I see what you mean exactly and"—he drove them home into the pocket of his dinner jacket like a person driving a sword into its scabbard—"I think you're right, Rush. Thanks for putting *me* right. Those notes, as you suggest, are a matter between Prince Rupert, friend of Phœnix, my partner and me. Right! I'll settle it with them! Leave it to me. Good health!"

The Gray Terror

By

ARTHUR H. CARHART *and* STANLEY YOUNG

The actual life-story of a great buffalo wolf, by a one-time Forest Ranger and a prominent officer of the Biological Survey.

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

THE blizzard god chortled over the barrens where the shoulders of the hills splay out. It was fierce Wyoming winter in the northern spurs of the Neversummer Mountains. Dizzy ghosts formed of swirling snow were caught in the arms of the storm and danced away while the wind-demons howled in glee.

Lean, tough-sinewed, with thick fur sheltering his powerful wolf body, Gray Terror faced the storm. It was his country. It was his kind of day. He was as vicious as those beguiling snow-images that faded in the gusts of ripping winds.

Gray Terror was an old wolf.. He had seen many such winters, and had always gloried in them. Even when it meant hunger for several days while the other life of the range dug out, the old wolf would range through the storm, a part of its fury.

Long before, when he was a yearling, he had known other country. There was a place where winter came with more moderation. The southern slopes of the hills kept fairly open during the snowy weeks. Stock could weather through on ranch lands without being frozen stiff by some swooping sub-zero blast. That other country was great wolf territory; there were cattle and wild game to kill, runways on slopes and through cañons, and—other wolves.

The wolf turned into the face of the wind. Something strange, new, laid quick grip on him. His teeth bared; his lip

The wolf turned, snarled; hate of the storm filled his soul. Half bark, half howl, his challenge was lost in the louder baying of the wind.

lifted. He thrust forth his long nose, snarled. The flowing wind-current caught his hair and brushed it back.

Suddenly Terror howled, bellowed defiance against the thing that a moment before he had considered a kindred spirit. For subtly it had challenged his right to live, threatened his supremacy. Hate of this storm that had worried him, that he had before considered almost a thing to play with, to run before and consort with, filled his soul. Half bark, half howl, his challenge was lost in the louder baying of the winds.

Through the fading white dusk of the late sunless afternoon the wolf loped along the hunting trail, stalking a thing which he could not find. Midnight found him still hurrying. But his direction of travel had changed. He was journeying at an angle with the storm. His nose pointed more southward. He had suddenly recalled vividly that country where there were fat beeves, wooded slopes, craggy mountains and—other wolves to romp with, to master, perhaps to mate with.

FOR full two years the range of Old Lefty in the Burns Hole country had not been trod by wolf feet. Sagewa had eradicated the remnants of Lefty's pack. Four-legged dwellers in the region had not cringed to the cry of the hunting wolf and ranchmen had breathed easier.

There had been forays on sheep flocks by coyotes; chicken coops had been raided; and tawny death in the form of mountain lions had ripped the life from buck, doe and fawn. But the master murderer, the wolf renegade, had not been on the range. Weasels had fattened their lithe little bodies on birds they had killed. Magpies had robbed, eaten carrion and quarreled. Foxes had caught nesting grouse. This was mostly normal wild life on the range.

Then came back Fear!

The coyote pair that had dug their den in an old rabbit-hole on the head of Milk Creek watched this new ambassador of wilderness-death on his first trip through the sloping breaks of Castle Peak. They knew if they kept their place they would not be molested. They rejoiced, even while worried by the stranger's coming, for they knew they now would have more cattle carcasses on which to feed, less work in getting food. The magpie rabble chattered raucously, celebrating the return of wolf killers. Over the ridges, the cañons, through the aspen groves and under shady spruce boughs the rumor spread, as rumors will in the land of the wild, and before that long, rangy gray form of the invading wolf had completed the swing of his first circling scouting trip in the Burns Hole country the woods and mountain creatures of fur and feather knew he was there.

With quick fiendishness the killer struck. He raided the Maller ranch. William Maller shook his head when he found the ripped and torn bodies of three young beeves. One was still alive, the other two dead. Little was eaten from any of the three. Instead there were lacerations, chunks torn out, rips in the hides of the cow brutes.

After this, man, as well as the wildlings, was warned that a wolf had again come to the old stronghold in Burns Hole.

SNOWY patches were mottled on the south slopes where the winter sun had warmed drifts until little rivulets raced down hillside or soaked into the earth. The north slopes were still solid white. Snow was banked on the north side of the buildings in the little town that is headquarters for a vast sweep of the country between the Mount of the Holy Cross and the Colorado River. Spring was not far away.

Three men stood in front of the bank, talking. The first was short, broad-shouldered Ben Wright, who had the year before served as president of the Colorado Stockgrowers Association. He wore a weather-bleached hat, duck coat with sheepskin collar, dark trousers tucked into riding-boots. His reddened face, usually cheery, was troubled and serious.

"I don't agree with you, Maller," he said, turning to the tall, broad-shouldered, round-faced rancher. "That doesn't sound a bit like wolf killing. What do you say, Towne?"

The third man in the group squinted his eyes a bit. He was of medium height, and wore the uniform of the Forest man. He had charge of this district of the Holy Cross National Forest. Both of these ranch men were permittees on the Forest and the killing of their stock by any predatory animal was of concern to ranger Towne.

"Well, it don't exactly sound like wolf work," replied the Forest man. "More like dogs."

"That's what I think," agreed Wright positively. "You know how a wolf kills. He hamstrings."

"Well, there's always an old she-wolf with whelps to take into account," suggested Maller slowly. "And there sure were wolf-tracks at those kills."

They all considered a moment. Then Maller contradicted himself.

"No, it couldn't be a pack of whelps very well. They'd be too small now. But this is for all the world like some young pack bein' trained. Cattle ripped all to pieces and not killed."

A fourth man swung around the corner of the bank, caught his stride almost in mid-step, stopped, stuck out his hand to first one of the group and then to the others.

"You're just in time, John," declared Wright. "Heard about this stock killed at Maller's? Wolf killing, he thinks."

"No, I should say not."

John Nelson, treasurer of the State Board of Livestock Inspection Commissioners, with a ranch up Wolcot way, was instantly all interest. Nelson, rancher, stockman, among the leaders in his field of activity, knew what loss to ranchers a new wolf drift in the Burns Hole country would bring.

"I claim it's a pack of wild dogs," said Wright.

"Tell me about it," suggested Nelson.

Briefly Maller told of the killings, how the cattle were torn and lacerated, going around with great chunks of their flesh ripped out while they still lived, of bitten noses and chewed ears, almost sure sign of dogs doing the killing; of tails ripped off and rumps cut up, leaving the steer or heifer to die a lingering death or get well, as fate might decree.

"Well, whatever it is, dogs or wolves, we've got to stop it, *pronto*," said Nelson. "Twentieth is the monthly meeting of the Inspection Board. You'll be in to Denver for that, Ben. We'll meet Young there. Don't know if you fellows know or not that the Inspection Board has been made the coöperating agency of the state to work with the Biological Survey on predatory animal eradication. Took it out from under the Game and Fish department. We intend to give the Survey men real co-operation every step of the way."

THE group broke up. More immediate business called them and engaged their attention. But following the agreement, Nelson and Wright did meet with Young in Denver.

"I can't help you right now, boys," declared Young. "But if you'll wait until Big Bill Carwood gets back from Kansas, where he is mopping up on a bunch of coyotes down in Rawlins County, I'll shoot him right over there. I haven't another man that I could send now. But Bill is one of the greatest authorities living in Colorado on trapping wolves, and if there is a wolf in there he'll get him."

The stockmen agreed, and Stanley Young wrote to Carwood that a queer killer that slaughtered, butchered, cut and maimed instead of killing and eating, awaited his return.

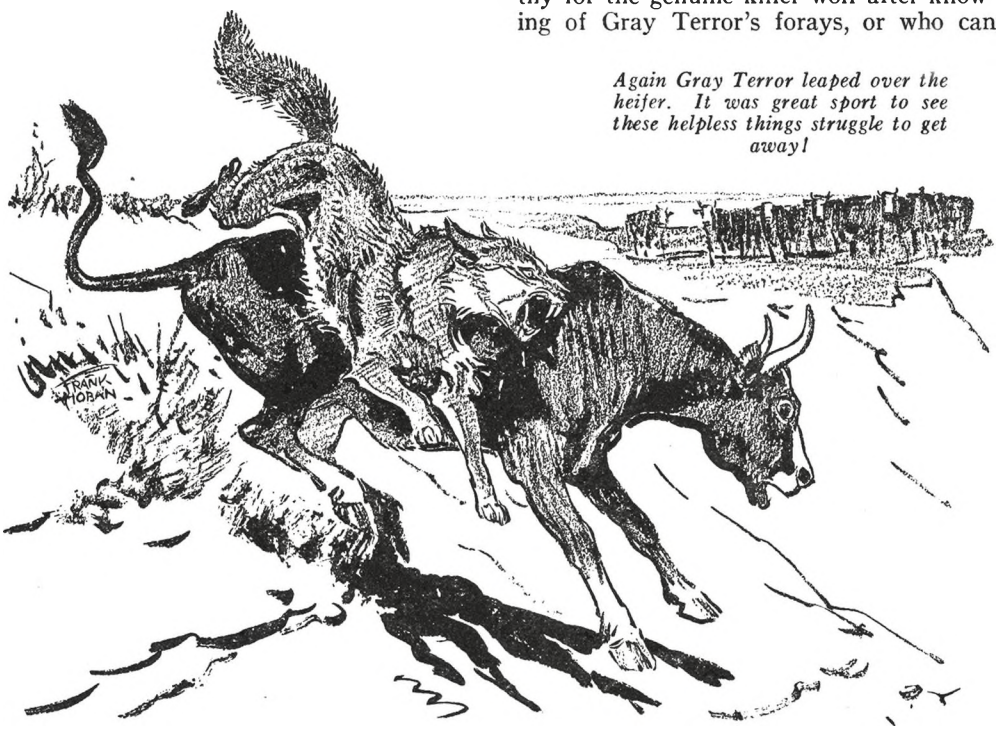
Meanwhile cattle were cut and torn by this strange four-legged demon. Deer fell before his driving attack. Calves suffered most among the domestic stock. Ranchers became more worried. The sight of the

stock sick from their wounds, teetering on the verge of death, or slowly getting well, was more disquieting than dead carcasses.

Lefty and his pack had been killers. They had killed for food. But this newcomer killed, slashed and maimed for the very love of it.

why they drive into the wilderness, silent, grim, determined to "get their wolf."

Gray Terror, the butchering wolf of Eagle County, was one of the most fiendish, most heartless killers that ever engaged the attention of Biological Survey hunters. Anyone who can muster sympathy for the genuine killer wolf after knowing of Gray Terror's forays, or who can



Again Gray Terror leaped over the heifer. It was great sport to see these helpless things struggle to get away!

Blood-lust, killer joy, the sheer brutality of the animal bully had stalked into the old range of Lefty, with Gray Terror, the wolf from the north country.

WOLVES are like men. There are brave wolves; there are cowardly wolves, others that are sneaking; and there are bullies. They know fear, jealousy, hate, love-hunger, and all the other man emotions. When they go "bad," they are like brutal two-legged criminals.

Man is likely to have sympathy for animals. Even when they are renegade he is likely to excuse their faults as he does sometimes excuse the viciousness of his own, saying that they know no better. But the wolfer knows. He will tell you that renegade wolves are brutes, that they kill for the joy of killing. That is why the Survey hunters, men of the open, lovers of all outdoor life, scowl or are sober and thoughtful when they hear of a wolf renegade, and blame the Government hunters for their unwavering efforts to shoot, poison, snare, trap wolf renegades, after acquaintance with the history of any bad wolf, simply is sentimentally blind, does not see the situation from the side of the game, wild life and stock.

No mercy dwelt in the heart of Gray Terror. Had there been a wolf-pack he would have companioned with them, would have found a mate. There would have been whelps to think of. The law of the pack would have held him somewhat in check. Killing would have been for food, except when steers were lacerated while young whelps were taught the art of murder. But alone, with no other thought to dominate his mind, killing became his greatest pleasure, his constant pastime. . . . .

Gray Terror lay looking over the slope of a rolling, sage-covered hill, watching a group of cattle in the pasture below. His nostrils quivered with brutish anticipation.

Slowly, stealthily, he rose from the grassy bed on which he lay. His lower jaw chattered as he skulked forward. The fact that he had been enjoying this ghastly sport for weeks did not lessen his excitement.

Sage brush, mountain mahogany, some scrubby native currant hid the death-walk of the wolf. His shoulders hunched, he crouched, his legs—springy, tense—doubled under him as he wormed his way down the hill. Emboldened by the lack of challenge, he had come to this killing in the full light of day. It was more fun to see plainly the herd milling in fright than to stalk in the dusk.

The wolf stopped, peered out from blazing tawny eyes at the cattle. He could not restrain himself. With a leap he shot through the brush, heading like a streak for a white-faced long yearling.

The steer sprang away clumsily. He bawled. The others scattered, milled in the space beyond, looked back, fascinated, watching the game of death between the whiteface and the wolf.

Rocks rolled; dusty little puffs of dirt were kicked up by the lumbering steer's feet. Almost as though he were running through a lane of air without any obstacles whatever, Gray Terror found his way through the sage and mahogany.

He leaped in ecstasy as his prey ran headlong down the slope. He threw his body from uphill, hit the steer head-on, teeth closing over soft flesh of the inner flank.

Down went the steer as though he had been tripped. He struggled up. Blood oozed from his flank.

Terror licked his bloody lips.

Again he dived. He hit the steer at the head, caught his teeth in the cow brute's nose. The steer stumbled, bellowing. His eyes were wide from the fright that comes when death is near.

Terror backed away. The steer sprawled on the ground, kicked, got up, lowered his head, dived at the wolf.

This was a new move. The wolf danced away. His grinning jaws were red with blood, his furry coat stained crimson. The steer bellowed, dived, stopped as the wolf again circled in quick leaps.

Teeth met in the tender thigh, tearing it cruelly. The steer squalled miserably, stumbled, fell, got up, and tottered off.

Away Terror drove through the brush, seeking that poor maimed steer. The whiteface saw his fate coming like a gray streak. He started down the hillside, seeking the slight advantage of level ground.

A gully got into the way of the death-run. The steer saw it too late. He stumbled, went in, kicking up moist earth and dusty soil.

The wolf dived in at the throat of the whiteface. The steer struggled, lay still.

LEAVING the steer, Terror raced away at the staring boobies among the other cattle that, fascinated, had watched the murder of the whiteface.

A heifer broke away from the little bunch of long yearlings. Terror leaped into the killing-run. In a moment he was by her side. He jumped, soared over her back, landed on the down side of the hill. She bawled, tried to run uphill as he lunged at her head.

By her side, around her, inevitable death raced. Again Terror leaped over the heifer. Oh, it was great sport to see these helpless things struggle to get away, to see them with big fright in their great wide eyes, to hear them bawl as he struck, ripping and tearing!

The wolf dived in, nipped at the tender flank meat of his victim. A strip tore away. The heifer fell, got up in a stumbling run. In a flash the wolf plunged again. His teeth closed. The heifer sank to her knees, bawling in sick anguish.

The wolf stood for a few moments, dived in, harried the maimed creature a moment, then turned toward the others. This had been but play. Now for the kill!

A heavy two-year-old was cut out of the bunch with machinelike precision. There was a run. The wolf headed the steer downhill. Just as the sharp slope of the hill broke away and spread out in the flat, at the point where loose rocks gathered after rolling down the slope, where racing horse or cow would stumble, Gray Terror struck.

His teeth closed over the hamstring, the great tendon of Achilles. They snapped. The steer rolled, bellowed, tried to get up, stood helplessly on three legs. Again the wolf attacked. The other tendon snapped as his teeth clicked through it.

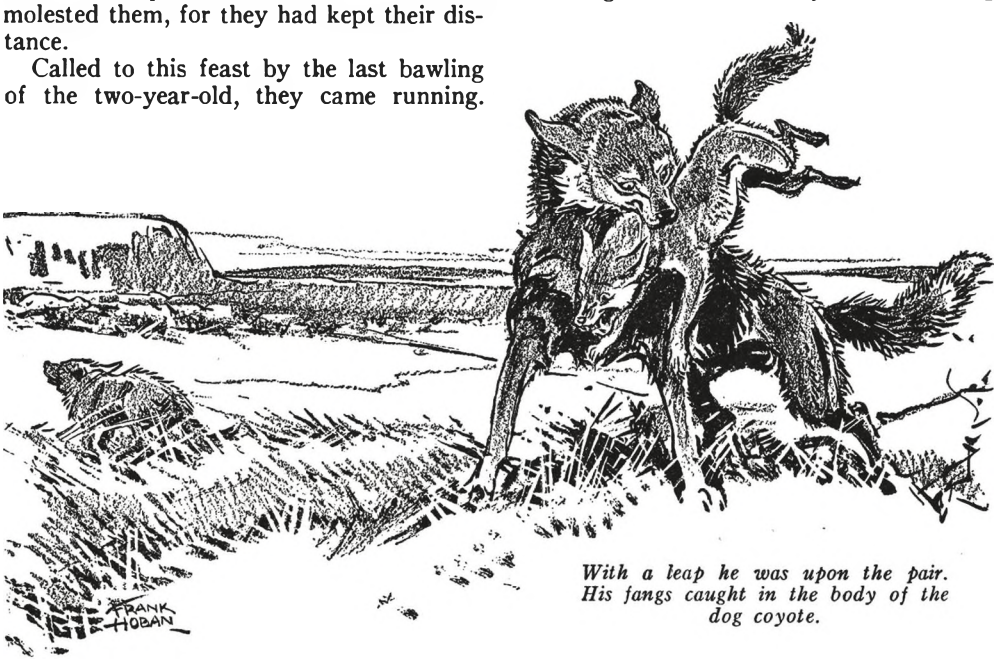
Now it was the throat. This was a kill!

With quick, snarling, ripping slashes, the wolf chewed at the flank fat of the animal. This was his own tidbit. Other wolves might prefer the kidney fat, eating it only, leaving the rest of the carcass to rot; still others might favor mares in foal. But the

Terror liked flank fat and for this he made many of his kills.

Hurrying stealthily, two gray forms approached the place where Gray Terror gobbled at the carcass of the two-year-old. They were the coyote pair from near the head of Mill Creek. For days they had fattened on the kills of this wolf, had become his camp-followers. Nor had the wolf molested them, for they had kept their distance.

Called to this feast by the last bawling of the two-year-old, they came running.



With a leap he was upon the pair. His fangs caught in the body of the dog coyote.

They raced into the slight opening near the Terror. They stopped, hesitated, then started forward a step or two. Following the wolf day after day, they had come to have less fear of him.

For an instant there was tense quiet. Then gigantic anger thrashed through the Terror. It was quite agreeable to him to have these scavengers follow him. But to try to consort with him was gross disrespect. To attempt to feed with him at one of his kills was an insult.

With a leap he was upon the pair. The little female yapped and ran. The dog coyote made a brave attempt to threaten this sudden and unexpected attacker. Their bodies crashed. The coyote leaped away in fright, yelping.

Terror sped after him. Their bodies thumped again. The wolf's teeth slashed mercilessly. The coyote dived away, his body bleeding from a dozen wounds, crying for mercy. But there was no such element in the heart of the wolf.

Terror leaped, his fangs caught in the body of the coyote. He threw his weight away, twisting and pulling. The coyote screamed in death-fright. The wolf snapped at a new hold. The coyote fought feebly. Wolf teeth clicked. The coyote quivered, died jerking and twitching.

Nor did Terror leave the coyote immediately. He shook the carcass crazily in mad anger. Then with eyes still flaming with murder light, he stalked back to the interrupted meal.

The next day Maller stood looking at the maimed steers and heifers, and swore deeply, impotently.

"I wish some of those sentimental fools might see what we've seen here today," he said, turning to ranger William Towne. "There's some that think it's cruel to trap a big gray wolf. I wish they could see the suffering of these cow brutes just for a little while. They'd change their minds."

"You know it," agreed Towne.

"It's got to stop," declared Maller. "Wolf, dog, whelps, or devil—whatever it is—it can't go on. Young's got to get a man in here and get whatever it is."

TWO men faced each other across a paper-littered desk in Denver—Stanley Young of the Biological Survey, and Bill Carwood, Federal hunter. Carwood turned his gaze thoughtfully from the gray-white pelt of old Whitey, where it hung on the office wall.

"If it's a pack of dogs, as you think, instead of a wolf renegade—"

"Clean 'em out, Bill. That's your job. Whatever it is, mop up and stop that killing."

"Bueno."

Young had waited with no small impatience for the completion of another task to permit chance to send Carwood into the former range of old Lefty. Brutal, ghastly slaughter had ruled on that range throughout the whole of the spring. Now it could be stopped. . . . .

With his pack-animals, traps and camp outfit, Carwood stopped for a day at the Maller ranch. Here he heard more than Young had been able to tell him of the fearful slaughter wrought by the butchering wolf Gray Terror—of cattle killed, of many more poor beasts maimed beyond recovery and then left by the butcher to die.

"Wolf," said Bill Carwood. "A bad *hombre*—but a wolf! No hound in the country could throw a steer the way this fellow does."

"Whatever it is, I hope you get him quick," replied Maller. "This just can't keep up much longer. I've stood about all one rancher can absorb in that style of punishment. It's getting my goat."

Maller spoke the truth. Just before Bill Carwood had come, the butchering wolf had killed in one night seventeen head of livestock—slaughtered them for the joy of killing—and had not eaten a pound of meat from any of the seventeen. There was no limit to the damage he might do if not captured.

Next day Bill Carwood moved to Maller's cow-camp. Before the setting of another sun he was on the trail of the heartless killer that had cast a spell of dread over Burns Hole.

The Forest ranger knows that unless he gets to the fire and smashes it, he will be grilled officially for failing in line of duty. The Royal Mounted Police have a slogan that they "get their man." Considerable romantic luster has been shed on these organizations because of the grim tenacity with which they fight against enemies of the community.

Never in any history has there been a more determined campaign against a criminal of any kind than that which Bill Carwood launched against the elusive, unknown killer in Eagle County. He was out to get his wolf.

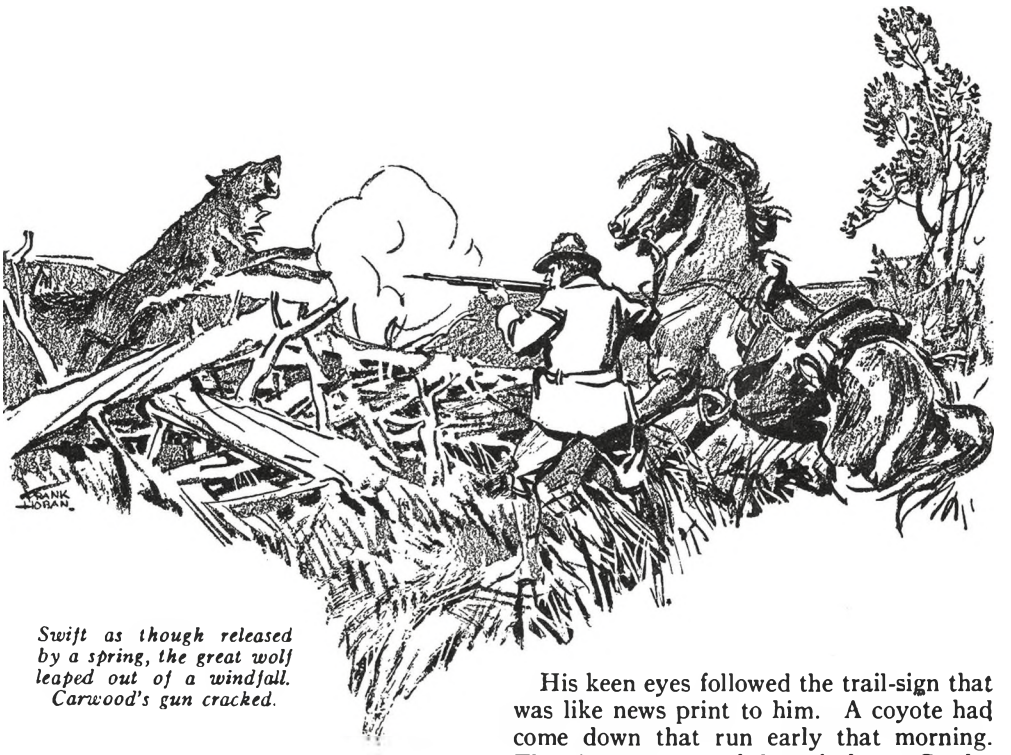
A frontiersman by inheritance, Carwood loved animals. Unable to talk mutual language, able only to attain wordless understanding, he and his horses became real partners on the trail. And this love and understanding extended to the wild life. Deer, their fawns, camp robbers, chipmunks, all friendly life of the forests were fellow-spirits. Even for the gray wolves, the killers, he had great compassion. He would let them live if they could be turned from their inherent instinct to murder. But there was no hesitancy in Carwood's mind when he started on the trail of a renegade. For he knew from decades of experience the limitless cruelty that fills the heart of the outlaw wolf.

EARLY morning found Carwood on the trail. Late dusk and the bright flaming Colorado sunset found the silent, grim rider guiding a weary horse back to the cow-camp. On all sides there was the sprightly wild life of the range, the brilliant flower gardens of timber-line, the elusive bird life of the undergrowth, the beauty of the cloud patches as their shadows moved in stately measure over the valley lands or the mottled hillsides.

The usual wolf runway is established because of food conditions. It is often as much as fifty miles long. It follows ridge, mesa, cañon or open valley. Its width is sometimes as much as a quarter of a mile, sometimes narrows to fifty feet or less as it threads through cañon or over pass. The first move of the wolfer is to figure out the runways of the wolf he stalks.

Trails led over sage flats where cattle lolled in the sun or sought the shade of scrubby cottonwoods in the draws, while magpies flopped away, their spiky black tails suggesting a bit of a black comet flight. Or the trails threaded through little cañons where the granite rock dripped in the shadow of the fir thickets and moss spread green cushions over the deep red tones of the stone. Again they would lead up where the straight-growing lodgepole pine stood so thick on either side of the trail they almost made stockades which would resist the intrusion of a large animal. At other times the way would take the rider far up where the last thinning bit of the tree army would finally blend through the scrubby stands of alpine fir into the bald uplands above timber-line.

No other man has ever surpassed the knowledge of the renegade wolf possessed by Federal Hunter Carwood. His knowl-



Swift as though released by a spring, the great wolf leaped out of a windfall. Carwood's gun cracked.

edge of the wolf mind, amassed through years of trail-riding, trap-setting, bitter campaigns against the cruel gray wolves, is uncanny. And into the pursuit of the Terror he threw every bit of his skill.

First he sought the wolf footprint which would be the starting point of his campaign. He must know the sort of killer he dealt with before traps were set. Dog-tracks there were in plenty, coyote-tracks too. They did not interest him. He looked for the big, broad track, the size of a big Alaskan husky, but unlike the dog's in that the long toenails would show in the trail.

Nowhere did he find such a mark. The raiding, the slaughtering attacks of the killer had ceased. . . . .

Ten days went by. But they did not stop that campaign. Carwood still was positive that he trailed a wolf—a lone, hard-bitten, merciless big gray. With all the evidence of the moment pointing against him, he stuck to the theory that no other killer would do all the things that the butcher of Eagle County had done.

The tenth day had been long, wearisome, without any more results than those which had preceded it. He was more grim than before as he rode. It did not matter that the sun was dropping down back of Castle Peak and there were miles between him and the camp.

His keen eyes followed the trail-sign that was like news print to him. A coyote had come down that run early that morning. Then it swung out of the soft dust. Cattle-tracks of the day before were plentiful. Stock was spread over the range. This was perhaps the reason there had been no recent report of the butchering raider; he could kill in some far distant meadow, and his victim would not be found for days.

Ten days! And thirty miles of trail each day Carwood had ridden. In all that distance no sign of significance had escaped his eye. Persistent, careful trailing would bring him the fragment of knowledge he needed, just one significant track would start his whole campaign against the killer.

REWARD for persistence came suddenly. Carwood reined in his horse, dismounted, strode to a place where water had stood days before, and stooping over, peered at the one solitary wolf-track he had seen during all those days of dogged trailing.

It was in old adobe mud. It had been made by the big dog wolf Gray Terror days before. Sunbaked and cracked, it was yet as definite as though cast in plaster. . . . .

On that bit of evidence that there was a wolf in Burns Hole, Carwood launched his campaign. Next day traps were thrown out. Blind sets were placed, a few scent-post sets, and sets in runways.

"Think you'll get the old devil?" asked Maller anxiously when Carwood reported

the finding of the track and the setting of the traps.

For a long moment Carwood was silent. Then he bent over slightly and with methodical deliberateness projected a shot of tobacco juice at a horsefly that buzzed near the bottom of the log steps.

"You don't need to worry, Maller," he assured the rancher. "It's a wolf. I'll get him. Maybe not first trip. But I'll get him!"

The hunter was silent again for a moment. Then he took off his stained range hat and scratched his dark hair, which was just shot with little silver streaks.

"I'll be just plumb thankful, Maller, when I do stop this killer. Mean? Why, there's nothing more so. When wolves go bad like this fellow, there aint nothin' they wont do. Go crazy for blood. Just cut up anything they can get at."

"Aren't all wolves bad?"

"No, not exactly. Can't truthfully say that all wolves are just blood-crazy. Most real renegades are, though. All of them kill game and stock. All are butchers at heart. No use talkin', wolves and civilization can't bunk together."

THERE were no illusions in Carwood's mind when he rode away from the cabin the day after he had talked to Maller—the day after the last of his traps were set. Just possibly, he might catch the wolf the first time he came back through the country. Or he might still be there in the fall, still riding the trails, looking for the sign.

Across the rolling hills, through a little cool cañon where a crystal brook leaped in the mottled sunshine and shadow, the trail wound. Later it climbed over a ridge, slanted across the side of a brush-covered hill, then entered a broad upland valley.

Noon came, followed by the slanting shadows of the last half of daylight. Then something Carwood saw made his nerves tingle; made him spur his horse a little!

In the soft earth of the trail there was the track of the big dog wolf.

Straight ahead, right in the line, there was one of Carwood's trap-sets!

He urged the horse along the trail. Occasionally he glimpsed the track and knew the wolf had not changed his line of travel.

The way seemed long to the next trap. He tried to peer ahead to see through shadows. He came to a point where the trail swung a little. His heart pounded faster.

The trap-set was reached. And Bill Carwood let out a yell. The unbelievable had happened!

With the one track to go on, on the first trip through, he had snagged the killer.

WOLF-TRACKS were everywhere; the ground was torn; the earth was scattered where the surprised wolf had sprung into the air.

Carwood scrambled off his horse, yanked his light high-power rifle out of the scabbard. The horse started to follow. Bill, crouching a little, worked forward, eyes alert.

He passed a thicket of evergreens, then a tangle of sage, stopped, waited, listened—moved forward again. This renegade would meet death the moment Carwood could clap eyes on him. . . . .

Swift as though released by a spring, the great gray wolf leaped out of a windfall. In almost the same instant Carwood's gun came up for snap sighting—cracked.

The wolf leaped, struggled, lay still.

Gray Terror had come to the end of his criminal career.

Back at camp Carwood laid out the pelt and skull of Gray Terror. He knew he had the killer. There might be other wolves, or even some few killer dogs, but here was the worst. Subsequent riding did show that this had been the only killer—a lone wolf that slaughtered more than even a small pack.

Carwood called Maller by telephone.

"Heard any more about that supposed wolf up here?" he asked, as Maller answered the phone.

"Nope," replied the rancher. "I've just about come to the conclusion that he's left the country."

"He has," replied Carwood with a chuckle. "I trapped him last night—killed him this afternoon; got his hide here now."

"*Wh-a-a-t?*"

"Fact. Caught him in a set up near Hannewald's cow-camp and—"

Carwood stopped to listen, for Maller had dropped the receiver and was shouting in excitement to the others in his house.

For a moment Carwood stood looking down at the furry bundle on the floor. He touched it with the toe of his shoe. He turned abruptly to the little stove and took up the coffee-pot preparatory to brewing the nectar of the cow ranges. Peace was with Carwood in the little cabin as he ate his homely meal, by the light of the kerosene lamp.

A man came into Levering's office with five cashier's drafts for a hundred thousand dollars, each.

Mysteries of Today

By CULPEPER ZANDTT

"The Disappearance of Mrs. Camden-Forbes" deals with a mystery strange indeed—as the unexpected solution clearly demonstrates.

Illustrated by William Molt

THE old gentleman who got out of a stylish car in front of Mrs. Camden-Forbes' house in East Seventy-first Street, near the Park, took his time about going up the brownstone steps, and rested a few seconds before ringing. When the maid said that her mistress had gone downtown shopping, he looked astonished.

"Why—er—I thought she would have been expecting me this afternoon! You see, I wrote her yesterday—the letter would have gone up on the tug from Quarantine, with the rest of the steamer-mail—"

Here a pleasant voice came from the rear of the hall, speaking to the maid:

"Is that Mr. Higginbotham, Annie? Show him into the drawing-room, please—I'll see him in a moment."

The old gentleman had scarcely seated himself when a smartly dressed young woman came smilingly in to shake hands.

"You remember me, don't you, Mr. Higginbotham?"

"Why—er—yes—yes! Of course I do! You're Miss Ives—my old friend's secretary? Yes—yes—to be sure! Let me see—it was in Paris, last summer, was it not?"

"No—the year before that. You were in Hongkong the past summer when we crossed; it's nearly two years since we saw you last. Your letter came this morning in the first mail—and I put it, with half a dozen others which I knew she'd wish to see at once, on the tray when Annie took up her breakfast. Presumably she read it—but it's quite possible that she didn't, because there are so many details in preparation for this seventieth birthday party, that she's a bit rushed this week. —Judging from the way you spoke at the door, you had made an appointment with her for this afternoon, hadn't you?"

"Yes—yes—that was it exactly! You see, Miss—er—Ives, it will be practically impossible for me to be here Thursday night to attend her birthday reception—very much to my regret. I have an interview with the British Ambassador in Wash-

ington that evening and must be there for an interview with the President the day before. You know they sometimes make use of us old fellows just because we've passed the age of recklessness and can be depended on to keep our mouths shut."

"But you're still far from being a very old man, Mr. Higginbotham! I'd say you were pretty active—and mentally as keen as you ever were."

"I'm six months past the seventy mark, my dear; there's just that difference between Janet and me—we went to school together. And I have to climb stairs pretty slowly or lose my breath—can't walk as far as I used to, either, nor—"

"I wonder if it isn't a case of not trying to do what you really could do—and feeling a lot better if you did? Your 'schoolmate' walks more than a mile every day—rides any horse around the Park, if it isn't a mean one—can swim a thousand feet in still water, any time—stands as straight as the mast of a ship—and is only partly gray. If you're mixed up in politics, you must know how active she is in the National Committee—and also that she frequently makes money in Wall Street. I'll admit, of course, that Mrs. Camden-Forbes is a very exceptional woman—really a wonder. But don't you think perhaps the reason for it is that she never gives up—keeps her mind active with interesting things?"

"Not entirely, my dear. Janet lived on a farm until she was eighteen—had a magnificent constitution to start with, and has never abused it. We city-born folks burn the candle too fast—after sixty, we begin going to pieces—disintegrating—and there doesn't seem to be any way of getting back. Living to great age in fairly good condition is a matter of inheritance, good constitution to start with, and living simply all the way through. One reason why I'm so anxious to have an hour or two with Janet is to size her up and see if what I've heard during the last year can be true—to see if, with but six months' difference in our ages, she really is the active, well-preserved woman they say, while I know myself to be getting older by the minute. There's something vastly amazing about her if this is true. Well—I have until four o'clock, at liberty. Possibly she'll return by then."

He waited until four—then, as Mrs. Camden-Forbes had not returned, went away much disappointed.

After he had gone, the incident puzzled Miss Ives somewhat, and she called up several of the department-stores along Fifth Avenue—from one of which she learned that her employer had been there, and might, indeed, be in the store at that moment. But they couldn't seem to locate her. Then she asked the maid Annie if she remembered whether her mistress had read all of her letters that morning.

"Indeed she did, Miss Flora—iv'ry wan of them! An' I do be rememberin', now, her sayin' somethin' about this Higginbotham man comin' to see her sometime soon, but she didn't say nothin' about it bein' this afternoon. Mebbe she got the date twisted-up, like—an' thought 'twould be to-morrey."

"No, she isn't that kind, Annie. If she read that letter, she knew he was making an appointment for this afternoon. It's a trifle odd about her going downtown this afternoon, anyhow—she spoke of papers she wanted to go over with me today, connected with the Presidential campaign. Did she say anything to you about things she had to buy in the shops?"

"Not a blissed wor-r-d, Miss Flora—just passed the order for Jenkinson to fetch the car around an' said she'd be doin' a bit of shoppin'. I asked mebbe would she be a few minutes late f'r dinner—but she didn't hear me an' wint without sayin' nothin'."

"H-m-m—she knew I wouldn't be in my apartment this evening; I remember telling her that I was dining out and wouldn't get home until late. It really *is* odd!"

WHEN Mrs. Camden-Forbes was driven down to the shopping district early that afternoon, her chauffeur parked near one of the side entrances of a large department-store after she had entered by the Fifth Avenue door. When she hadn't appeared at the end of two hours, Jenkinson began to feel a bit uneasy, for he knew she had three or four other appointments before going home. So, beckoning the doorman over to the landaulet, he asked him to see if he could locate Mrs. Camden-Forbes on any of the floors—just a quiet inquiry, such as is frequently made concerning prominent individuals who are well known to the store-management.

The door-man telephoned in to Information—where one of the girls called, one after another, the managers of the various floors. The lady was reported as having been seen about an hour previously, but not noticed since then. None of the door-men had seen her leaving the building. Of

course, when a number of people came out of the doors at the same time, or if the man happened to be opening the door of some patron's car, any one person could easily emerge without being seen, and knowing exactly where her car was parked, Mrs. Camden-Forbes might have decided to telephone from some other shop along the Avenue. In this case the message would be relayed to the Thirty-eighth Street entrance, where the door-man would give it to Jenkinson, whom he knew.

In fact, Mrs. Camden-Forbes had done this at least a dozen times since Jenkinson had been in her employ—so he was not free to leave that spot, until the big store was closed for the night and there were no operators or door-men to give him a message, should one come. Then, having received no word, he went home.

His employer's niece and nephew—Nina Goldthwaite and her brother—occupied a West Side apartment, but Nina frequently spent a night at her aunt's house—and on this evening she dropped in shortly after Jenkinson arrived. She listened to his story but was not disturbed by it. Miss Goldthwaite supposed her aunt had merely gone home to dinner with some of her friends and forgotten to phone; she might have met them on the Avenue or in the department-store and entered into their car without at the moment thinking of her waiting chauffeur.

"Of course, she's all right, somewhere, Jenkinson—and will have a perfectly good explanation when she gets home," Nina assured the anxious servant. "Nothing could have happened to her—she always has identification memoranda on her, and she's a very well-known woman!"

"Quite so, Miss Nina—but never since I've been here has she dropped out of sight for half a day like this, without getting some word to me! She'd not be leaving me parked there until after the shop closed, unless there was something wrong. I've been fancying she might have felt ill on the street and been taken home by one of her friends."

"H-m-m—I'll call up the ones I know best and see if any of them happened to see her this afternoon."

AN hour later, while Mrs. Frederick Marshall was playing bridge with her friends the Stracheys, and two other couples, she rose to answer the phone. "Long Bill" Strachey (so called from his lantern jaw and his six-feet-two of "jack-knife" build) was McMurtagh's special emergency-man on the staff of the *Tribune*—a reporter who usually managed to get all the news worth getting, in his quiet way, while the cub reporters were spending much effort on trifles.

When the hostess sat down again, she asked Strachey if he had caught anything of what was said.

"Well—I did or I didn't—whichever you wish me to do. It was front-page news, of course—but there are other ways of getting it in preference to eavesdropping on my hostess," he replied dryly.

"Mrs. Camden-Forbes was in Lugg and Murdock's at half-past two this afternoon—and nobody has had a glimpse of her since!" said Dorothy Marshall excitedly. "Her seventieth birthday reception and dance on Thursday night is to be one of the biggest affairs of the season—they say the cake is to be four feet in diameter, with the seventy candles burning on it. And now her niece says that she's missing! Why don't you go up there, Bill, and see if you can't help them out—with no unnecessary publicity?"

"I'll just do that—provided you phone 'em ahead; say I'm not working for one of the yellow sheets—and that they're going to like me."

In twenty minutes, the doorbell rang at the house of Mrs. Camden-Forbes, and Strachey asked to see Miss Goldthwaite. Annie, who answered the bell, recognized him as a newspaper man of whom her employer had approved upon one occasion—so went back to the library with his card.

"Your aunt knows this Mr. and Mrs. Strachey, Miss Nina—and likes them," she volunteered with characteristic informality. "I think you'd better be seein' him!"

"Dot Marshall said over the phone she was quite sure he'd know where to look for Aunty," replied Nina worriedly. "Show Mr. Strachey in here—then bring some cocktails and good cigars."

Strachey said simply that he had been at the Marshalls' when Miss Goldthwaite called up, and that Mrs. Marshall had suggested his coming at once to see if he could be of assistance.

"I told her we wouldn't publish anything until we were sure the report of your aunt's being missing had gotten out where the other papers would grab it as hot stuff. My impression is, however—after we've seen what we can do by telephone—that

decent, conservative publicity will help you more than anything else. It will start everyone in the city looking for her—and if she should *not* turn up, it's the easiest, quickest way of calling off that birthday celebration for Thursday night."

Colby Staunton, an old friend of Mrs. Camden-Forbes', came in at this point. He was not pleased at finding a newspaper man there, but Strachey relieved his fears.

"I'm not going to phone in a thing to my paper before midnight, Mr. Staunton. By that time, we may get word of some sort which will make any mention of the occurrence unnecessary. If we don't, we'll handle the matter conservatively in the morning edition, unless it's sensational enough to demand more space. But first, give me a line on Mrs. Camden-Forbes' habits—let me question her chauffeur a bit, and her personal maid. She has a secretary, of course—couldn't handle her social affairs without one. See if you can't get in touch with her; possibly the maid will have heard where she was going this evening. Get the secretary here as soon as you can, even if you have to ring her phone every little while. I'll call up the morgue and hospitals with a personal description, but no name mentioned—provided your house-phone is not in the book. If it's not listed, Information wont give the name or number to anybody—so no one can find out where the calls are coming from. If it's in the book, I'll have to go out to some drug-store along Madison Avenue."

"The number isn't listed, Mr. Strachey—Aunty'd be bothered with calls all the time if it were!"

"That's about what I figured. All right; I'll use this phone, here—you two can listen to what I get."

DURING the next forty minutes, Strachey checked up one hospital after another until he had covered all the boroughs in the city. This left only the Police Department. He shook his head at that.

"No use calling Center Street—we know all they can tell us and there's no sense in letting 'em know the newspapers are interested in a woman of her age and description—not for another day or so, anyhow."

"I'm glad you decided that way, Mr. Strachey," said Staunton approvingly. "One doesn't like to call in the police unless it seems necessary. But I don't quite see why you're so positive you know all that they do at this moment."

"Well—it's fair to assume that Mrs. Camden-Forbes hasn't committed any criminal act, such as shoplifting, larceny or assault! And it couldn't be any motor-law complication, for she wasn't in her car. That about covers everything which would give the police a chance to interfere with her—and on her general appearance, they'd be mighty slow about running her in, anyhow. This leaves ambulance-cases, hospital-cases, police-wagon to the morgue or an undertaker's parlors—not the station-house. But there is no record of her being picked up by an ambulance or treated, temporarily, by an ambulance-surgeon. She is not in any hospital, and not in the morgue. If she'd been hurt too badly to walk, the cop would have called an ambulance—not his station-wagon. If she'd been slightly hurt and then started off by herself, she'd have reached home, sent word from somewhere, or taken a taxi—or a cop would have taken her name and called the house. Had she been arrested, there must have been things in her bag—memoranda on her which would have insured identification at the police-station—and the yellow sheets would have been on the streets with an extra before now. Their men are always hanging about the stations or have an arrangement for tips to be telephoned in. As it looks to me right now—well—either she is with friends whom you haven't located yet, or else—or else we aren't likely to see her for some time—if ever!"

The color suddenly left Nina Goldthwaite's face. Staunton was perceptibly nervous, as he asked:

"You mean—eh? *Dead?*"

"Not yet, anyhow. Death on the streets or in any public building would have been reported at once. Murder in any dwelling, flat or private building is practically negligible within any radius she'd get to on foot. From what you say her doctor has said, she's in perfect health—no organic trouble whatever—nothing which might possibly cause amnesia—nothing of the sort in her family for generations back. She's not in the least the sort of woman who would get into a strange car just because some woman or man asked her to—she's too level-headed even to do it with a casual acquaintance whom she'd known but a short time. It's possible she might have had some errand in mind which she didn't want known—something political or financial—and took the subway to a distant point in the Bronx or Brooklyn. But

The house had been mobbed by reporters all day, but the servants refused to answer questions.

from what Jenkinson says, she wouldn't even think of doing anything like that unless she called the store from some office, house or drug-store, and had the door-man send him home."

"But—Strachey! A woman as well known as she is simply *couldn't* disappear completely from the crowded shopping-center of New York City without leaving a trace of some sort! The thing's impossible!"

"It's beginning to look as if that's what happened, just the same. It's not in the least impossible, you know—that's nonsense! Don't forget the scores of individuals who have done just that thing. But we'll have this Miss Ives here soon. She'll suggest a number of friends or acquaintances whom you haven't called yet. We'll make a thorough job of it—just to be sure. To be frank, I don't see how Mrs. Camden-Forbes could drop out this way unless she did it intentionally."

"Oh, that's simply out of the question, Mr. Strachey! What possible reason could she have for doing a thing like that?"

"Let's put the question up to Miss Ives —I think the maid is letting her in, now."

FLORA IVES had been located dining with a friend in one of the larger hotels, whence they intended going on to a dancing-club—but had come in a taxi, at once. It took less than ten minutes to put her in possession of all the facts they had. Then Strachey put the same question up to her: Could she conceive of any reason why her employer might consider disappearing?

"Well, Mr. Strachey—let's go over what we know of her—and see," Miss Ives replied carefully. "She is actively interested in the Presidential campaign, and rendering valuable assistance in it, as Mr. Staunton knows. Her sudden disappearance might easily be a political catastrophe—depending of course, upon all the combinations and complications. She is financially interested in four big railway systems—owning enough stock to start a bear-raid if there should be any uncertainty regarding her holdings, as there's likely to be if she has really disappeared. She's as full of life, of mental activity, of all sorts of plans and projected organizations, as a very efficient woman of half her age. She's intensely fond of life—assured by her physician of a possible twenty or thirty years more, judging from her present condition. No belief in immortality—hence, a determination to get all she can out of life while she's here. And she was going to celebrate her seventieth birthday Thursday evening. No—I simply can't see any reason under the sun for her dropping out of sight unexpectedly and completely! It doesn't match up with a single thing I know of her!"

As she put it, Strachey couldn't imagine any reason either—the proposition seemed too absurd for a moment's consideration. And yet, as a newspaper man, an investigator in all types of human life, a keen logician—who knew that logic has a way of proving, again and again, in spite of everything to the contrary—his inner consciousness kept repeating: "How could so well-known a figure be forced out of sight by anyone in broad daylight, on a crowded street, in the fashionable shopping-center of a great city—without creating enough disturbance to bring instant investigation and rescue?" He weighed every possibility, considering her age and temperament, and rejected them all. The known facts were dead against logic in this case—so Strachey didn't press the point. He telephoned McMurtagh at midnight and went home at one—promising to call upon Miss Goldthwaite and Staunton every evening during the week, at the house of Mrs. Camden-Forbes, where Nina decided to remain until something definite were known. Colby Staunton said that he would fetch Mrs. Camden-Forbes' personal counsel, John Hinton; if nothing had been learned by the end of the week, the lawyer might decide to look into her affairs as far as he had any authority for doing, and see if they could hit upon some clue that way.

NEXT evening, Nina, Flora Ives, Staunton and Judge Hinton had just finished dinner when Strachey arrived. As Ned Goldthwaite was on the Pacific Coast, they had not considered it essential to notify him as yet.

A few moments later, Tom Raynor of the *Sun* came in. The house had been mobbed by reporters all day, but the servants had refused to answer any questions, and had shut the door in their faces. At Strachey's suggestion, however, Miss Goldthwaite had telephoned Raynor as an acquaintance of her aunt's, and asked him to call upon her for a brief statement of the facts.

Raynor grinned when he found Bill Strachey there.

"I knew you'd let me in on this, Bill, when I saw the *Tribune* this morning; and so I revamped your statement for our afternoon editions—then got busy with Center Street. They don't know a thing down there—no trace of the lady whatever. Now the question is—what do Miss Goldthwaite and her friends want done about this? The police and the newspapers will naturally investigate the matter all they can, as a matter of public information and news—but suppose that doesn't get anywhere? What then? Will her heirs and counsel merely wait a specified time for news of her and then ask the courts to declare her legally dead—or will they spend time and money to find her? As her counsel, Mr. Hinton, what's your opinion upon that point? I suppose she left no will?"

"On the contrary—four months ago we did finally persuade her to execute a will. Her bankers and I are the executors. Up to this time, her direct heirs have had very small incomes aside from the allowances she has made them — presumably they wouldn't have enough money set aside to spend more than a few hundred dollars upon investigation, if they were disposed to do it. Her estate can't legally spend it until the will is probated—and without actual proof of her death we can't file it for probate under a year; on the other hand, her executors would be eventually reimbursed for all expenses connected with the estate and will unquestionably get their fee for administration. If, after considering the situation, they think it advisable to spend money on investigation, they can easily get a court order to do so, chargeable against the estate. Considering one rather surprising feature connected with the will, I'll say right now that the executors will spend any reasonable sum at once to ascertain where she is, bring her back in good condition to her home—or prove her death. We can't lose sight of the fact, you know, that the handling of a seven-million-dollar estate is held up—depends absolutely upon her appearance or the possibility of her death."

"What's the surprising feature to which you refer, Mr. Hinton?" Strachey inquired.

"If I tell you that, Mr. Strachey, it's distinctly understood by everybody here to be strictly confidential—not to be mentioned to others by any one of you—or published. Agreed? Very well. . . . . Her estate is divided between the two Goldthwaites, minor bequests including charities, and—her daughter, Janet Camden Bruce."

Nina Goldthwaite started up from her chair, her cheeks blazing.

"That's impossible! A criminal plot! Aunty never had any children! Did she, Flora?"

Miss Ives shook her head. Hinton merely smiled.

"She had us write the bequest into the

will—and signed it, in the presence of witnesses, Miss Nina! No question as to her being mentally competent at the time, either. It was a secret marriage, in Mentone. Bruce died accidentally in Switzerland not long after the daughter was born. As I understood it, he was rather a soldier-of-fortune with no near relatives; the two quarreled and he left her, shortly after the marriage. The daughter was reared in Charleston by a family who knew your aunt only as 'Mrs. Bruce'; they educated her with the ample funds provided—sent her to study music in Paris, with their own daughter as governess. Since the girl came of age, she has lived abroad on an allowance paid through bankers in Paris, and has become quite an accomplished musician. Your aunt has left you and your brother very comfortably provided for, however, Miss Nina. I suppose you can draw upon the executors for any immediate funds you may need, within reason, but of course the bulk of the estate goes to the daughter—unless she marries. In that case she would get a great deal less and you two a great deal more. None of this is to be mentioned to anybody until the will is probated—I'm exceeding my authority in mentioning it at all, though I consider that the circumstances warrant it. Mr. Raynor raised the question as to expense being authorized for investigation. Were it not for this unexpected feature in the case, I'm not sure I would consent to any expenditure for a month or two at least—but in the circumstances, I think we should promptly use every endeavor to find her. Now, Mr. Strachey says that possibly neither the police nor the newspapers may discover what has became of her. Can he suggest any more promising assistance?" He turned inquiringly to that man.

"Well, yes—I think I can," Strachey responded. "Raynor and I have both worked on cases with a certain man downtown who has solved mysteries which completely baffled everyone else. He's an artist who specializes in the sort of portraits which reveal a person's inner character as well as the outward appearance. But at heart the man is a born investigator with an uncanny capacity for deduction. As I just said, he has solved baffling mysteries which everyone else had given up, and that's about all the recommendation you need."

"Do you suppose you could get to him this evening?"

Strachey picked up the telephone and asked for a Bowling Green number. After a brief phone conversation he reported:

"He says he can see us at ten o'clock—it'll be that by the time we get there."

THE two girls and the four men went down in the car of the missing Mrs. Camden-Forbes, with Jenkinson driving them. On the twenty-fifth floor of a skyscraper at the lower end of the Island, they were taken into a big room with a great mullioned window overlooking the Upper Bay. The walls were covered with dark green velour, upon which hung paintings, trophies, etchings and photographs. An easel, two divans, props, and a few chairs were scattered about. A smiling Cantonese served them with cakes, wine and tobacco while they were sizing up Normanton, a tall, well-built man with graying hair.

He followed attentively as Bill Strachey gave him all the details they had concerning Mrs. Camden-Forbes' disappearance. Then he got out of his chair in a leisurely way and took from a portfolio a large print of the lady from the studio of a famous photographer on upper Fifth Avenue.

"She's been reproduced so frequently in the Sunday supplements that I'd have recognized her in Timbuctoo," Normanton observed. "I made a point of getting this print because her face rather intrigues me. There is a deal of driving force behind it—courage, daring, adventurous disposition. Such a woman isn't likely to be incapacitated even at ninety. Well—you folks, representing her heirs and estate, want to find her or prove her death in the shortest possible time, eh? I suppose it hasn't occurred to you as a possibility that she may not want you to do anything of the sort?"

"Yes—we've gone all over that. Miss Ives is her secretary; she knows more about her everyday affairs than anybody else. We put the question up to her, and she didn't give any snap judgment on it, either—she ran over some of the many reasons why intentional disappearance is just about the last thing under the sun that would occur to her employer, and it seemed to all of us that her reasoning was fairly conclusive. Mind telling us why you asked that question, Normanton?"

"Because, logically, it's scarcely possible that she could have dropped out of sight in that neighborhood where she was so well-known unless she did it intentionally and with considerable forethought as to just how it might be carried out. As newspaper

men, I think that both Strachey and Raynor will agree with me upon that point." Both of them nodded. "Mind you, I said *logically*—but that wouldn't have prevented her from being influenced by some unexpected consideration which came up suddenly and made her act more hastily than she usually does. Having once started to do anything of the sort, she has just the temperament to go through with it, rather than risk ridicule by quitting on what might seem rather a silly action to anybody else.

"On the other hand, the action may have been premeditated for some time in advance—for private reasons which none of you could even guess. That secret marriage proves there may be a number of things connected with the lady which you couldn't possibly know. And yet the odd feature about that is that it's the only point in the whole case which looks fishy to me. I can't explain why. It certainly would be the compelling reason for her final consent to make a will when she had refused so many times before—because, without a will or a memorandum which her heirs would consider binding, they would naturally inherit her entire estate. Suppose that for some reason she didn't want them to have the whole of her estate. She could easily get a miniature of a supposititious daughter painted, and leave it, with signatures and letters from herself, with her London and New York bankers as proofs in identification. They couldn't prove that previous remittances to the girl had not been sent through other bankers or some commercial house. If they couldn't locate the girl within six years, or if she didn't turn up, the courts would simply order the executors to divide the estate according to the other provisions of the will.

"This, of course, is all pure theory on my part. Presumably, the girl is a *bona-fide* person, who actually exists and will inherit according to that will. But if her supposed mother wanted to keep the bulk of her estate from being split up, in the event of her unexpected disappearance, that legacy would do it effectually. I can't swear that the woman wasn't kidnaped for ransom—she certainly was rich enough to make that an inducement—but I do consider that a more improbable theory than intentional disappearance, in spite of all the surface arguments against it."

"But she'd be about the last woman in the world, Mr. Normanton, to forget her responsibility in regard to her railway investments and political activities! This sudden dropping-out is likely to be a serious matter in either or both directions—"

"Unless she has made some provision unknown to you for taking care of both."

"Don't see how she could! Questions come up every few days or weeks which none but she herself can answer—out of her wide experience and knowledge of the details."

"H-m-m—that does rather put the matter in a different light! I'm beginning to be interested in this case. Do I understand that you wish me to see what I can do—regardless of expense?"

"Regardless of any expense within reason, outside of your personal fee, Mr. Normanton—yes; we certainly do—after what Strachey and Raynor have told us about your work."

"All right. My fee will be five thousand if I succeed—merely a nominal charge for time spent if I don't. And of course you reimburse me for any cash I have to spend. I also stipulate that if I'm successful you split a couple of thousand between Strachey and Raynor for turning over the case to me instead of trying to handle it themselves and get the probable rewards offered. Most newspaper-men would have done that, you know—but they'll be assisting me on the case in any way they can.

"Now, I'll want a dozen or more good-sized photographs of the missing woman—particularly, one or two dating back thirty or forty years. I want to see Miss Ives, Miss Goldthwaite, also Mrs. Camden-Forbes' personal maid, for two or three hours tomorrow morning, at the house—getting notes on the lady's habits and activities. Then I'll see Mr. Staunton and her bankers—and have an interview with Mr. Levering who, you say, handles most of her stock transactions. —Miss Ives, who generally travels with Mrs. Camden-Forbes when she's abroad?"

"I do—with her personal maid, Rose Martin. I'll have Rose talk with you in the morning."

WHEN Normanton called at the house, shortly after nine o'clock the following morning, the two young women were strongly impressed by the quiet way in which he got down to business without wasting time.

"Ladies, each of you is bound to have her own individual slant on Mrs. Camden-Forbes. Actions or sayings that would

Nina started up, her cheeks b l a z i n g. "That's a criminal plot! Aunty never had any children!"

make an impression upon one of you might seem to the other too negligible even to remember. If I talk with all of you at the same time, one will dispute or try to modify something the others say; I can get much nearer the cold facts if I talk with each one of you separately—then compare my notes from one with those from the others, after I get back to my studio. Let me talk with Miss Goldthwaite first, please, Miss Ives."

When Normanton and Nina were alone, he said:

"Miss Goldthwaite, think back as far as you can remember anything about your aunt and give me a brief sketch of her—when you recall her being abroad or traveling about this country—all the places she has lived—her earlier friends—when she was married, and how long—what you remember about your uncle Camden-Forbes. Not a fully detailed history—I just want the main points."

After she had done this to the best of her ability, he sent her out and called in Flora Ives.

"Miss Ives, some of my questions to you will be suggested by points Miss Goldthwaite has covered in another way. First—how many European trips did you make with your employer during the past two years?"

"Three—one winter trip of three months and two summer ones of eight or ten weeks each. Mediterranean in the winter—farther North in the summer."

"She was in good health on all those trips?"

"She's practically always in good health. Last summer, though, I think she got slightly poisoned by something she ate in Geneva. She said that if she really must consult any doctor over there, she'd trust Ben Morgan farther than anyone else—so we went right through to Vienna, and she sent for him. He's the son of an old friend; he graduated with honors at Johns Hopkins as a physician and surgeon—practiced three years in Philadelphia, and then went over to study for a year under the Austrian specialist Borgfeld, in Vienna. He put her in a private sanitarium and kept her there three weeks. She didn't seem to me really ill, but there were five or six days when he wouldn't let her see anyone and had Borgfeld examine her. Then he kept her another ten days merely to get the rest he said she needed. I'll say that boy understands his business! She's been in better health since then—more active, able to stand more—than I ever knew her to be before, and I've been with her seven years. Dr. Morgan showed us all around Vienna as soon as she was out, and spent a week with

us in Paris before we went home. He returned about a month later and bought a nice practice in Philadelphia—a neighborhood where he's well known. He comes over to dine with us every few weeks."

"Has she consulted him again professionally?"

"Not to my knowledge. She wouldn't leave Doctor Middleton—he's been her regular physician for the last thirty years, though he's not a surgeon. Oh, I suppose Ben may have given her some indigestion tablets once or twice—but nothing in the way of professional treatment."

"Miss Nina told me quite a lot about Middleton and mentioned Dr. Morgan as the son of a very dear friend who comes over to see her quite frequently," Normanton agreed. "H-m-m—well—that covers about everything concerning her health. Did you ever catch any hint over there about this daughter?"

"No suggestion of such a person! And yet, I've known of her transferring quite a bit of money to the banking-house of Monroe and Company in the Rue Scribe—ten thousand at one time—twenty thousand at another. That account, like half a dozen others connected with her Wall Street speculations, never passed through my hands—she kept the check-book and deposit-book in her big safe-deposit box down at the Equitable."

"Did Hinton say anything to you about her leaving with Burke Brothers a picture of the daughter?"

"Yes—after we left you last night. He said you couldn't possibly have known anything about it—yet you struck it right when you suggested a painted miniature. That's exactly what she left them—done on porcelain—together with a dozen letters from the girl who, she said, has in her possession many letters from her mother. Mr. Hinton said there would be no question as to identification—the resemblance between mother and daughter was altogether too striking, though she can't be much over thirty-five. That, of course, would kill your theory as to a dummy daughter who'd never turn up if her supposed mother disappeared—a 'plant' on the part of my employer!"

"I'm not at all sure that it does," countered the man. "Don't fool yourself into an impression that I've discarded that idea altogether. I never throw away what looks like a promising lead until I get something better in its place. Supposing, for argument, that the woman did disappear intentionally. How could she work it so as to prevent any financial or political slip-up if it were a case of something up to her, personally?"

"That's what I've been trying to figure out, Mr. Normanton! I just can't see it at all! Not one of her brokers would act in an emergency without some direct word that they were positive was from her—a written message or her voice over the phone. If it were a case of some political combination where she would be the only one likely to hold the key, none of the National Committeemen would be inclined to take any other person's say-so. Not getting that word, they might easily make serious blunders. Knowing of her disappearance, from reading the newspaper reports, they wouldn't believe any message came from her unless they had some way of checking up on it. I can see you're practically convinced that she intentionally dropped out—but you don't know her as well as we do; it's normally impossible!"

AFTER a few more questions, Normanton finished his notes and asked to see the maid Rose Martin—who came in rather nervously, but was soon put entirely at her ease by her questioner's quiet and courteous manner.

"Rose, you want to find Mrs. Camden-Forbes and get her safely back home, as much as we do, don't you?"

"Indeed yes, Mr. Normanton! I'll do anything in the world I can! All of us loved her—were proud of her!"

"And if I ask rather personal questions, you'll understand it's only that I may get some trace of where she is now?"

"Yes sir—I understand that."

"Good! Now, you were in the habit of dressing and undressing her—seeing her without any make-up—noticing whether her motions seemed to be stiff and old, or to the contrary. Would you say, from what you know of her, that she really is a woman who had difficulty keeping up the bluff of being fairly active—or do you think she is a good deal younger than most women of her age?"

"Mr. Normanton, that woman is a holy wonder—and that's the cold truth!" said Rose fervently. "If I say I think she's getting younger instead of older, you'll think I'm crazy—but listen! You know how an apple or potato looks when it begins to wither up and shrink? Well—the skin of

most old people gets that way, doesn't it? But she never had more'n a few little wrinkles like that anywhere on her body up to last year. Then she had that little sickness in Vienna when we were over in the fall—nothing serious, it wasn't, even if Doctor Morgan wouldn't let us see her for a few days. Well—she ought've had a few more wrinkles after that, hadn't she? Instead of that, she's seemed to get healthier and fill out every day since then. There isn't a wrinkle on her now that I could see the last morning when I prepared her bath! And here's another queer thing about her. Her hair was getting gray, you know—that is, pretty well sprinkled with gray, but nothing like the white hair women of her age have. Well—ever since we were on the other side last summer, it's been coming in a rich natural brown again, with hardly a single gray hair in it! She had it bobbed over there, but it began to get so much more color in it that she had to buy several of those very thin French wigs in Paris—expensive ones, like the gray hair she used to have—and she wears 'em all the time. I don't think Miss Flora is on to it, because she has never seen the mistress in the morning without a boudoir-cap. Without that wig, and with different clothes and hats—you'd take her for at least thirty years younger, on the street. And, honest, Mr. Normanton, that nice old lady can do twice as much this year as she could last, without getting tired out! Doctor Middleton says her heart's good for thirty years yet."

"Her face intrigues me," Normanton observed. "Well, you want to find her or prove her death, eh?"

"You think that neither Miss Ives nor the niece know as much about this as you do, Rose?"

"I'm quite sure they don't, sir! Of course they both know she's a wonder for her age—but they don't know anything about her young-looking hair coming in, or the lot of pep she's got now!"

"Has she ever said anything to you privately about any particular plans she has in mind to keep her busy during the rest of her life?"

"Well, sir—it would be only in little ways—a word, here and there, when we're

alone. But as near as I can make it out she's awful keen on cleaning up politics in this country, specially in her own party. And she's set on making enough money—in Wall Street, or some other way—so she can really do something."

"Hmph! Rose, I wouldn't be surprised if you've told me about where I might start looking for her, right now. But keep it under your hat! Don't breathe a word to anyone else of what you've told me!"

DURING the following two weeks, a couple of unusual incidents were reported to Normanton, automatically—but with little idea that they might give him fresh clues. Staunton described a note he had received, and his vague recollection of Mrs. Camden-Forbes having told him she considered the writer the best-informed woman in the party. The note had read:

My dear Mr. Staunton:
It begins to look as though the Committee is entirely overlooking the situation in Wisconsin. There is a strong Socialist bolt to Smith under way. I suggest that the two best available speakers and the best organizer you have go there at once and work until there seems to be some chance of carrying the State. We'll lose it if you don't. Answer—Box 17230, Philadelphia.
Sarah L. Warriner.

The other communication came from Francis Levering, the broker. He said that a strong bear-raid had developed when the Exchange opened that morning—that, just before ten, a man came into his office with a note enclosing five cashier's drafts for a hundred thousand dollars, each. Unfolding the note, he had read:

Dear Mr. Levering:
Please buy any of the stocks in which Mrs. Camden-Forbes and I—as a syndicate—have been interested, as soon as they have dropped ten points. Don't let them go below that mark. Don't buy above it. We will furnish more margin if necessary.
Mrs. Sanderson.

"No use asking the bank whose half-million it was—they wont tell me. But the drafts were emphatically good."

The moment Levering had gone, Normanton had the city room of the *Tribune* on the phone and asked for Bill Strachey—who, fortunately, was in.

"Beat it down here, Bill—soon as you can!"

When Strachey arrived, Normanton asked:

"Ever hear of a big surgeon-specialist in Vienna by the name of Julius Borgfeld?"

"Hmph! Who hasn't? He's the latest, biggest and most successful glandular-treatment man in the profession; it is stated as cold fact that he has performed stunts in rejuvenation which are simply weird. But he wont take any case with a bum constitution—says that, with a good inheritance and foundation to build on, he can add a possible sixty or eighty years to an individual's life, but that when tissue and organs have begun to break down, it could never be more than five or ten years. For that sort of case, his charges are practically prohibitive—but a lot of men and women pay 'em."

"Ever hear of Doctor Ben Morgan of Philadelphia?"

"Sure! One of the exceptionally brilliant younger men. He's been studying with Borgfeld for over a year and intends to experiment with his treatment over here. He attracted considerable attention a month ago with an operation in one of the Philadelphia hospitals."

"All right, Bill! You go borrow that porcelain miniature of the old girl's daughter from those bankers—it was painted from a photograph taken thirty-five years ago. Hinton will fix that up for you. Then you hike over to Philadelphia with one of your cub reporters who is good at shadowing. Keep Doctor Morgan under observation until he visits some patient or calls upon some woman who's a dead ringer for that miniature—particularly, some woman who has been in a sanitarium visited by Morgan during the last two weeks. When you spot her—if you're reasonably sure—have her shadowed until she comes to New York. Then get a snapshot of her on the street and find out where she's settling down to live—under what name and circumstances."

Ten days later, Normanton called his several employers down to the studio for a conference. By this time—a month after Mrs. Camden-Forbes' disappearance—the vanished woman was no longer front-page news, though there were reports every day or two that somebody had seen her in another city. Her heirs and friends were beginning to give her up for dead—were rather on the defensive against possible fake evidence which they thought Normanton might spring on them to get his fee.

"Well, ladies and gentlemen. I've located your missing old lady—but I may as well tell you frankly, that she wont thank me for bringing you together."

"Why, what do you mean, Mr. Normanton? Are you telling us that she actually disappeared intentionally—doesn't want to be found?" Staunton ejaculated amazedly.

"That's the situation—precisely."

"Nonsense! This is absurd of you! You can't get by with it!"

"Oh, yes, I can! She has just taken a handsome flat on Park Avenue near Forty-ninth Street—moved over from Philadelphia—and settled there as Miss Janet Bruce, a wealthy heiress with plenty of cash at her disposal and a deep interest in politics. I have made an appointment with her for eleven o'clock in reference to a certain will by which it is supposed she may inherit considerable money, and have obtained her permission to fetch all of you with me. Evidently she is positive there will be no chance of recognition upon your part. Let's go!"

MISS BRUCE'S hand was being forced somewhat faster than she had intended; she had had no idea of presenting her credentials to the bankers for another six months at least. However, she decided that she might as well get the identification over with one time as well as another. She was puzzled over the fact of Normanton's tracing her, and who the man might be—supposed him some one connected with the bankers who had recognized her on the street from the miniature. When the six were ushered into the drawing-room of her apartment, they saw a handsome woman of apparently thirty-five who greeted them smilingly with perfect poise. Normanton—just as smilingly—held out the miniature for her inspection.

"Is this a portrait of you, Miss Bruce?"

"Well—what do you think—now that you've seen the original? I had no intention of identifying myself at Mother's bankers' for some time—but as you have traced me in some way, there's no sense in denying the fact."

Her voice suggested that of Mrs. Camden-Forbes to them, although it sounded fuller and stronger. "These, I suppose, are Mother's intimate friends?" she asked. "One of you must be my cousin Nina."

"No, Miss Bruce. Sorry—but she's still your niece! Frankly, you know—if I hadn't a reputation as an investigator to sustain, I'd have let you get away with it! The whole stunt is too corking good to spoil! But your relatives and friends employed me to find you; they were positive you'd *want* to be found if you were alive—and the executors of a seven-million-dollar estate simply had to know whether you were dead or not. It's really a pity! Logically, of course, you couldn't disappear as you did, unless it was done intentionally. All you had to do was buy a younger woman's cloche hat in Lugg and Murdock's—take it up to one of the private rooms off the restroom—remove the gray wig—change hats—wash off the make-up—and not a person in that store could have identified you.

"Well—then came the question *why?* You were absurdly active for your age—had plans in mind which implied thirty or forty years more of intense activity. New wonders are performed every day by modern science and surgery. It began to strike me that you might be a great deal younger, in everything but actual years, than you even seemed to be—which certainly would be going some. So I began checking up your activities abroad. I learned about Morgan's operation in Vienna under Borgfeld's supervision—your increased activity and health—the purchase of wigs in Paris. Then it was merely a question of shadowing Doctor Morgan until he made one of his regular calls upon you in Philadelphia."

NINA'S face was white, while Hinton and Staunton looked incredulous.

"Oh, it can't be! . . . . The thing is simply impossible! If you really are Aunt Janet—why did you do it?"

The handsome, youngish woman smiled and shrugged.

"Aren't you answering your own question, Nina? And don't you see how silly a one it is? I took thirty-five years of age and failing strength from my life—replacing them with youth enough to live and work, actively, at least forty years more! Show me the woman of my age in this world who wouldn't do the same thing—if she could! As for the change in identity, I think my reason should be obvious! I preferred to look thirty-five, since I felt that way—and it was easiest to change my identity. Age is a handicap; nobody credits a woman of seventy with the strength or ability to carry out anything really big. I'm sorry Mr. Normanton felt he had to show me up in this way, instead of letting me stay 'dead'—because none of you ever will regard me in the same way. But I certainly must compliment him upon his remarkable deductive powers!"

There she was—on the power-house floor, not twenty feet from young Colville!

Mrs. Ung Makes a Call

By

WARREN HASTINGS MILLER

The far-traveled writing man who gave us "A Soldier of the Legion" here contributes a stirring tale of adventure in Burma.

Illustrated by W. O. Kling

"I WISH your Yank joy of 'em! And I say, Newt, dear old chap, I really wish you wouldn't go around unarmed this way. Mrs. Ung, y'know."

Lord Jock Burleigh screwed in his monocle and looked upon the iron-visaged Newt Fuller, C. E., with serious concern. Newt nodded, but he did not seem impressed over the lady. "Mrs. Ung" was a female tiger who had devoured a respectable bachelor of the village, named Ung. He was the first of her many misdeeds—about twenty natives eaten after that—but the grinning Kachins, who wore no pants, had named her for the late lamented Ung since he had taken no wife while in this existence. It was a lapse that would bring him on earth again as a fly according to Buddhist tenets—once separated by death from Mrs. Ung!

It was complicated, the present state of Mr. Ung; but Mrs. Ung was still more complicated, for her way of taking a man now and then from Gyi Pyo's army was becoming a habit. And still Newt carried no gun. Obstinate about that, thought Lord Jock, but it seemed one of Newt's fetishes that the wild animals would leave you alone if you left them alone. Well, maybe!

At present Newt was more interested in a long train of bullock-carts, seventeen days in from Taung-gyi, that held crates of electrical machinery from America, two seventy-five K. V. A. alternating-current dynamos, a pair of 2,300-volt transformers, several miles of copper wire on spools, a complete switchboard of Vermont marble, Philadelphia switch work, and Newark, N. J., instruments. They represented the installation for this hydro-electric power plant that he had been building for that progressive Sawbwa of Möng Nam, Sir Hkun Thyat, who wanted his town—and particularly his great pagoda—lighted by electricity. A young American electrical engineer called Colville was coming to set them running, and it was to him that Lord Jock was referring with his remark: "I wish your Yank joy of 'em!"

"JUST to construct anything civilized is a struggle in this blawsted country, y'know," went on Lord Jock, switching nonchalantly at a weed with his swagger-stick. "You remember, Newt, how we started up your turbines for the first time, and Mrs. Ung dropped in on us, as it were? And neither of us with so much as a pen-knife on us! Burma certainly has her moments!"

Newt grinned. He loved these wild hills

of Upper Burma that were seven thousand feet to their crests and were separated from the barbarous Wa states by the mighty Salween. Lord Jock was governor of the Wa. He loved them too, in a way, but as they killed and ate everyone who came into their country, his governorship consisted mainly in watching the Shan bank of the Salween with a police brigade of Kachins. Against them both was the implacable jungle, its swarms of ferocious cats, its herds of wandering wild elephants that no one could reckon on, its pugnacious *saladangs,*—first cousin of the African wild buffalo,—its ponderous but peevish rhinos.

Newt glanced over at the immense straw-thatched shed, constructed *à la* Kachin long-house, that was to be the Sawbwa's power-house. Down to it led a long iron pipe from the head of Hat Nam Falls, up the ravine. In it were two turbines, with gates, on their concrete foundations, and ready, now, for the dynamos. The first time they had been tried out, Mrs. Ung had landed without warning in their midst. There had been a terrific, nerve-shattering roar, a smash like a stroke of lightning of an immense striped paw, and out of the shed she had sprung with one of Gyi Pyo's best Laos in her teeth—before either Newt or Lord Jock could draw breath or gun in their paralysis. Also Spots, the leopard, was not merely a sporadic nuisance around here—he was a disease, a calamity; for not a hen, a dog or a goat could they keep.

"Gyi!" ordered Newt, and held up one finger. At the signal Gyi Pyo's army stormed those bullock-carts. They were a glorious lot of cutthroats; red Karens, coal-black Laos, nut-brown Shans, Chinese-visaged Kachins of rich olive-yellow complexion. They wore crossbows, *daks,* and rifles; and nothing much else save a string around their middle with half a gourd pendant therefrom, and a thong securing said gourd in place. For ornament, a circlet of white cowrie shells over seamed and scarred foreheads, with generally a small silver bell tinkling over one ear. Fine, playful little chaps! Good with ax, saw and spade; better with *dah,* crossbow, and their ancient rifles. They fell to on the crates with venomous cries, and Newt's electrical equipment began moving ashore via improvised skids.

GYI came running now out of the ruck of noisy workmen and planted himself before the two white men. A stout fellow was Gyi, a huge and truculent Shan with a chest like a gorilla, a low-brow visage to match, and great hairy legs in baggy yellow silk pants. A heavy bellow like a fog-horn came from him as he announced:

"Ho, Sahib! Lo, there is a new sahib in the last bullock-cart! Him I laid hand on foot and would have dragged the loafer out before the Presence but that he kicked; and lo, it was a white man! Shall I ask my discharge because a white man has kicked me?"

Newt laughed, and Lord Jock whistled and said: "My aunt, but it must be your Yank, Newt! *Could* he have come in with the equipment?"

He might have—there being no other transportation from Taung-gyi save bullock cart. They went along the line of crates, to arrive at a proper *donga,* all right, a sort of hay-cart with a thatch covering over it. And from it was already emerging a—well, a nice young man, with a large rifle, a small dog, and an air of anxiety. They had evidently scared the life out of him down in Rangoon, what with lurid tales of the up-country and Rangoon's own native alleys that reeked of cholera, plague and smallpox!

To the large electric company he was "our Mr. Colville." To Newt and Lord Jock he was going to be a problem, they could see at first glance; for just to keep him alive until he had this electric equipment installed and running promised to be one of those little things that pester men in Burma.

"Mr. Fuller, I presume? And you, sir, are Lord Jock Burleigh?" opened up our Mr. Colville, rubbing the sleep out of his eyes with one hand while with the other he clutched fast his rifle. "Here, Wags! Heel! Keep close!" he broke off to order his dog; one of Gyi's army had already made a pass at Wags, with the idea of dog stew for supper.

He wore horn-rimmed goggles and was a graduate of some engineering college back home. Newt sized him up: Sandy-haired, freckled complexion, blue-green eyes that were keen and intelligent but mild and thoughtful. The tall iron-gray civil engineer looked down on him tenderly. A boy from Home! He had good American stuff in him, would do his job here all right; but never in his life had he been threatened with any more deadly danger than perhaps a savage dog. Here everything was deadly: the cobra sunning himself on the

rocks up in the ravine, the hamadryad that attacked on sight, the leopard lurking in almost any convenient grass patch—and Mrs. Ung. Poor innocent, thought Newt. Nice chap, like thousands of his fellow-graduates, this boy from Schenectady; but the wilds of Burma were somewhat different, rather trying to the nerves at times!

NEWT took him by the arm after some more introductory talk and led him to Gyi Pyo. "This man's your Chota Sahib, Gyi!" he told that invaluable native foreman. "His life be on your heart!"

Gyi salaamed low, but snorted under his breath. He took it out, however, in booting a dozen choice Laos all over the place for some clumsiness with the ropes. Young Colville clutched Newt at that scene of violence. He was entirely too near too many unwashed savages for a first go at life in Burma, that clutch of fear and indecision said. Also he was alarmed over the way four of them were attacking his precious switchboard crate with pick-axes.

"Do stop them or they'll ruin it, Mr. Fuller!" he cried out.

"Do it yourself," said Newt brutally, and turned away. It was the only way, he knew. This boy would have to break himself in—Newt solely to take care lest he died.

"Hey!" called Colville at them.

"Thou white-faced horse with the weak eyes!" stormed Gyi upon him in Shan. "That is not the way, Chota Sahib!" he added in English. "Thus: Ye misbegotten children of noseless mothers, have a care or I break your tooth-jaws!" he bellowed at the Karens wielding pickaxes, and smote them with punches.

The boy took his cue and jumped in with high, throaty crows. That equipment was precious to him—what he had come here for; and it was war to mistreat those crates! Newt drew off near Lord Jock, watching him take charge with fist and boot. In five minutes he was master of that gang, directing the propping of unsafe skids, laying track over toward the power-house shed, all over the place. Some elementary savagery, perhaps of the football field, had come to life in him.

"He'll do, my word!" laughed Lord Jock. "But dammit, Newt, he's so abysmally ignorant of our little ways up here, isn't he? I fancy we'll have to watch him rather carefully if the Sawbwa is ever to have his electrics!"

Newt agreed, but he was interested in this young Mr. Milton Colville from Home. He remembered when he himself was a new chum in this country, at first afraid of everything seen and unseen, then over-confident and careless, and finally hard-boiled. You had to scan even a tree carefully here, before you sat down under it, or a poisonous green viper would loop down and kiss you on the ear!

Rather! It was going to be an elaborate affair keeping our Mr. Colville still ours, or Burma would get him! Any one of half a dozen unpleasant animals would be sure to stalk him within the next three days! It was a matter of character-development, and rather rapid development, at that. A man came out here having a mauve-pink soul, and his tendency was to stand paralyzed with fright when sudden danger came upon him. Which was just what Burma counted on—the roar of her tiger, the horrid snarl of her leopard, the snort of her saladang, the hiss of her cobra and squeal of her rhino, had no other purpose than to make the victim freeze to a petrified dummy of nonresistance.

After that came nerve—if the victim was still alive. The point was how to break in our Mr. Colville with the necessary swiftness. He had the stuff in him, Newt was sure. He liked the way that boy had sailed into Gyi's army of poisonous ruffians after the first rebound.

THAT night Newt rode into camp having had troubles of his own. The pole line that ran across the hills to the Sawbwa's town of Möng Nam had been trifled with by a herd of near-sighted elephants. They had playfully pulled ten of them up out of their holes, under the impression that this was some game of the white man's and it was their move. Newt, weary with the work of planting them all back again, flopped on his tent cot and luxuriated in a pick-me-up of champagne.

"How goes it, son?" he asked Colville.

"Fine!" And Colville grinned cheerfully. "Dynamos bolted down and hooked up to the turbine couplings today. I'll set up the transformers and switchboard tomorrow, and begin wiring."

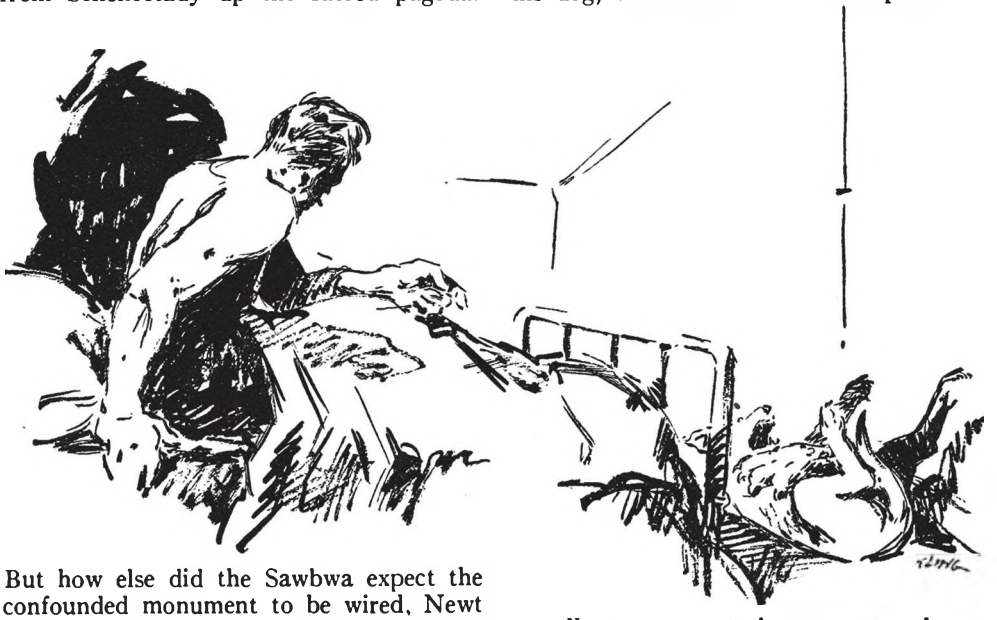
So far nothing had bitten or mauled him, and he seemed quite at ease. These Shan mountains were very like the Big Smokies at home, where he had once been trout fishing—only they weren't quite so innocent!

"Any trouble?" asked Newt, who had

had a private report on the day from Gyi Pyo.

"Only at the village," said Colville evasively. "I climbed up the big pagoda to lay out its wiring scheme. They didn't seem to like it."

Newt chuckled. Gyi's succinct report had been: "Chota Sahib making bad hell among the *pongyis*." In fact, it had been a horrid sacrilege, that climb of the youth from Schenectady up the sacred pagoda.



Newt saw a spotted paw sweep under the tent-hem, and heard a yelp from Wags; then the dog vanished.

But how else did the Sawbwa expect the confounded monument to be wired, Newt wondered. He had not thought of that, in initiating all these modern improvements! Newt felt that he would have a first-class insurrection on his hands presently, fomented by the scandalized *pongyis*, those yellow-robed priests of Buddha who for two thousand years had held all religious edifices inviolate.

"Hum!" said Newt. "Did you get a lay-out?"

"Oh, it's a beauty!" came back the man of electricity with enthusiasm. "I'll put a big arc light at the summit—Light of Asia stuff, you know. Then lines of lamps running down the pagoda, outlining it like a huge candlestick of fire. Like Shwe Dagôn in Rangoon, only they've never seen it. The Sawbwa ought to be tickled pink!"

"Mebbe," admitted Newt. He could see those wires, studded with sockets and spread like a net of black lines over the sacred white pagoda—and could envisage the horror in the *pongyi* breast! Also anger, rebellion, open civil war.

"Look out you don't get a knife in you!" he laughed. "However, I'll put Gyi wise to that. And don't ever let a priest get behind you!"

Colville had no reply to that, but he was doing considerable thinking. Also the implacable jungle all around them was making itself audible, for night was coming on. The throaty cooing of two leopards in love somewhere up the ravine of Hat Nam was disturbing Mr. Colville, and particularly his dog, who cowered and whimpered under his tent cot. Their caterwauls sounded like the usual tom-cat performance, only magnified to forty horsepower violence. They would be in need of lunch after these amours, Newt knew, and wondered if there was anything edible, save man, left in the camp.

Aoum!

It was a petulant tenor yowl, far off in the hills, and young Colville unconsciously clutched at his Adam's apple and coughed nervously.

"What's that?" he asked Newt, his eyes dilating in the dim light of the carbide.

"That's Mrs. Ung, poor old thing!" Newt enlightened him. "She's getting too old to earn her living in the natural manner, so has taken to man-killing. Lord Jock objects to her; he's out with a pegged goat nearly every night, but I'm afraid her taste has got depraved, for she wont touch 'em. Prefers man."

"Us?" asked Colville uneasily.

"Not in particular," said Newt cheerfully. "Natives smell much more attractively, it seems. We have lost eight to her on the job, so far; and the village ten. She's a nuisance!"

WELL, so was Spots, for that night one of the amorous pair—smelling dog several miles—came in to get Wags. Newt was awakened by a strong tug at one of their guy ropes that nearly brought down the tent. Their carbide lamp still burned in a tiny spark of blue, and outside was a red glow from the great camp-fire where Gyi's army lay behind a tall boma of thorns with sentinels guarding it against Mrs. Ung. Newt reached sleepily for something to throw, but had no time. He saw a spotted paw sweep under the lower tent-hem and heard a yelp and a smothered *"wurp!"* from Wags; then the dog vanished under the tent-wall, dragged out by that savage paw. There was a crash outside, and the leopard was gone in one jump.

"Hell!" muttered Newt wearily. Wasn't it just Burma? You couldn't keep anything in this poisonous place!

Our Mr. Colville woke up with a yell. And curiously, the theft of that dog was the last straw, to him, when told about it by the sympathetic Newt. He wrathfully grabbed up the large rifle and set out in pajamas, bent on vengeance in spite of Newt's remonstrances as to its uselessness.

Somewhat later Newt heard the loud crash of the rifle echoing down the ravine, and following it, a ringing and ferocious roar. Newt jumped out of bed on the double, yelled for Gyi. The boy hadn't overtaken any leopard—but he *had* flushed Mrs. Ung in one of her usual nightly prowlings; that was certain! Also there were snakes. Some of Gyi's army made a business of catching them for the fakir trade, one of them amusing the cobra with a lantern while the other crept up behind and seized him with a swift pinch at the neck. Without any lantern at all, our Mr. Colville was likely to step on one—and it would be a long business getting another electrical engineer out here!

But Colville came in, all right, flushed and elated. "Dammit, I got in a shot at *something*, anyhow!" he told Newt with enthusiasm. "Some big brute that roared and was gone like a squirrel in the cane. Was it a tiger, Mr. Fuller?"

Newt collapsed. Was it a *tiger?* God bless him, he had run slap into Mrs. Ung, but luckily had missed her!

"You're coming along, Milt!" he said with appreciation. "You need to, in this country! See any lights out there tonight?"

"Two—three," grinned our Mr. Colville. "Scouts?"

"In a way," laughed Newt. "Some of our Laos out after snakes! Hardy lot! They know that Mrs. Ung's around, and carry crossbows that can shoot through and through her. Only, you never see her first."

"Well, *I* did!" crowed Colville. "Big head like a barrel, low down in some canes. I got the flash of eyes and fired."

"Whew!" whistled Newt. "Close call, if you'd known it! Lucky you missed!"

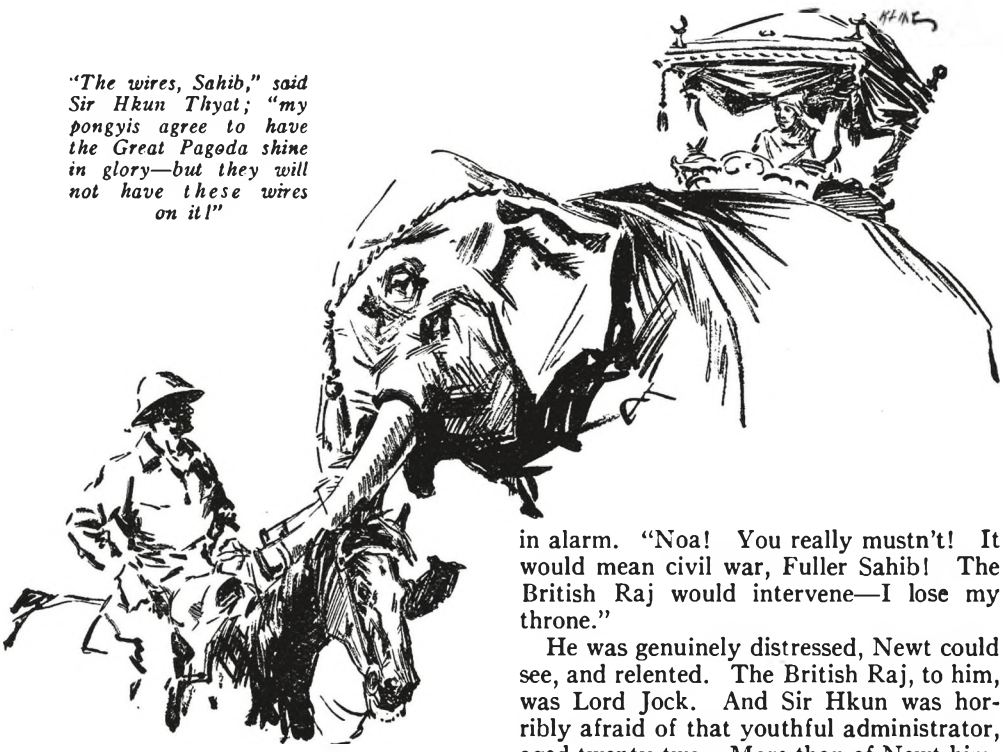
"Did I?" asked Colville, crestfallen. Those snakes were sobering, too. The Lord had been with him, that he had not trod on one inadvertently—with no shoes on!

THE next day Colville was up and at it with vigor. Newt worried because the boy had reached the superconfident stage now, but he had no time to stick around. He set off with about a third of Gyi's army carrying bags of glass insulators, iron braces, locust pins and pine cross-trees for the power-line. They were primitive sort of linemen, for they wore no spikes. But give a naked Lao a belt of rope, and he will walk right up a pole on his flat feet! The rest was bolting on the cross-trees and their braces, screwing on insulators, and the line would be ready for Colville's wires —three-phase, sixty-cycle, twenty-three hundred volts tension.

But it was not to be quite so easy as all that—not in Burma. An elephant—a tame one—came lumbering up the hill where Newt sat his pony directing, and on it was a shimmering howdah of gold canopy and posts. And in it sat a Sawbwa who did not look happy as Newt saluted him and all the ground-men fell flat on their faces before the exalted ruler of Möng Nam.

"In the name of the Blessed One, on you be peace, Sahib!" the Sawbwa greeted Newt, and coughed nervously.

Newt sensed trouble and asked, directly: "What is it, Your Highness?" Sir Hkun Thyat, the Sawbwa of Möng Nam, was a handsome young prince, with the refined Hkmer features so common among the Burmese nobility, but he had imbibed at Oxford and in Rangoon more progressive ideas than had ever encumbered King Am-



"The wires, Sahib," said Sir Hkun Thyat; "my pongyis agree to have the Great Pagoda shine in glory—but they will not have these wires on it!"

anullah of Afghanistan. And apparently he was having the same difficulties with the changeless East.

"The wires, look you, Sahib," he said hesitatingly. "My *pongyis* agree to have the Great Pagoda shine in glory, like unto Shwe Dagôn. But they *will* not have these wires on it! Can it not be arranged, my great and good friend?"

Newt suppressed a yell of merriment. Typical of Burma, that reason why all this work should come to a sudden stop! They wanted the lights, but would permit no such sacrilege as wiring for them on the pagoda! The white men performed miracles—such as illuminating the Great Golden Pagoda of Rangoon so that all the Buddhist world thrilled over the glory of it—why not continue the miracle and omit the wires altogether, the Sawbwa wanted to know. He had heard vaguely of wireless and had evidently soothed his *pongyis* with that promise.

NEWT laughed jovially. "Leave all that to us, Your Highness!" he reassured the worried ruler. "I'll just throw Gyi's army into the town, and there'll be no trouble."

"Oh, don't do that!" cried out Sir Hkun in alarm. "Noa! You really mustn't! It would mean civil war, Fuller Sahib! The British Raj would intervene—I lose my throne."

He was genuinely distressed, Newt could see, and relented. The British Raj, to him, was Lord Jock. And Sir Hkun was horribly afraid of that youthful administrator, aged twenty-two. More than of Newt himself and the redoubtable Gyi Pyo, for Lord Jock had uncounted soldiers at his back—even though but one company of the Kachin Irregulars was his sole visible force!

Well, thought Newt, in a country where fantastic reasons were perfectly valid against doing some simple and sensible thing, you could go the limit with an equally fantastic and incredible remedy and get by with it. He thought over this matter of wiring that pagoda while Sir Hkun eyed him in troubled perplexity from the howdah. To get this whole monastery of *pongyis* out of town was the thing—send 'em off on a pilgrimage or something! So long as the priests were not around to raise a howl, the populace would do nothing rebellious. Wire the damned pagoda in peace while they were gone, decided Newt; and he proceeded to put his imagination to work.

"I have it, Your Highness!" Newt exclaimed brightly. "Up north yonder in the hills I came upon some ancient Hkmer ruins, some time since. A temple town, it was, Sir Hkun. You know—squares within squares, and in the center the foundations of a great pagoda."

Indeed Sir Hkun knew! His great dark eyes glowed with excitement, for he was a very pious person and had given much

study to those early cities of the Hkmer Empire that once dotted all this region. They dated from about the third century before Christ—the second century after the death of the Gautama Buddha. Many priceless relics of that saint were known to have been kept in the crypts of those temples, objects of veneration and pilgrimage from all over India, Siam and China.

"Down under the foundations of that pagoda," went on Newt's invention, "I came upon a crypt, Your Highness. And in it was a great box of transparent onyx. Behind it I held a match, for one brief moment—and lo, within it a great tooth, like unto that at Kandy—"

Sir Hkun let out a yell. A tooth of the Blessed One! Was not Shwe Dagôn itself built over but eight hairs from Guatama's head! And Kandy in Ceylon had the sole remaining tooth! The rest, every venerable relic of them, were lost in countless wars and ransoms, destroyed by the Brahmins or hidden away and forgotten. Great glory, a *tooth* for his pagoda! Newt had difficulty in holding him long enough for directions, so in haste to be gone was he! The entire monastery would march in state to this place, he told Newt excitedly; in state they would return, bearing this relic of the Blessed One.

Oh, well, it could be managed, thought Newt. He *had* discovered another of those ancient Hkmer temple towns, its walls and fosses faintly outlined in the dense jungle of today. He *had* come upon a crypt, but there was nothing in it but snakes. There would have to be a tooth, though. That would be easy, for Newt's hobby was geology, and he had many a fossil tooth that would do. The one at Kandy weighed about three pounds and originally grew in the jawbone of a mastodon. Newt could match it, with ease, out of his own collection. Remained but to send a trusted messenger ahead to that crypt with it, in a suitable box. And meanwhile young Colville could go ahead wiring the pagoda.

THUS easily is Burma managed if you know her little ways, thought Newt cheerfully when his last pole was fixed that day and he rode back to camp to attend to the matter of the tooth. But she turned out more complicated than that. She still had the Wa, and two irresponsible herds of ambulatory wild elephants—and Mrs. Ung—to be reckoned with in the lighting of Sir Hkun's pagoda.

They had three days of peace at first; that day in which the monastery parade set off in great state, a long line of singing yellow-robed priests two by two, eleven state elephants magnificently caparisoned, the Sawbwa's troops bearing green-and-red Shan flags, fans on long poles, bagpipes, drums and a few real guns. Came the day when young Colville took the town with Gyi's army and had a hectic session stringing wires and sockets up and down the pagoda like a Christmas tree. It glistened, now, with shiny lamps, and was much embellished, according to the views of the townsfolk—though they shook their heads over the sacrilege of naked Laos swarming all over the sacred edifice, and a white man, the Chota Sahib, daring to climb to the very *ti* and rig an arc-light on the top of its spire.

And then came the third day, in which the power-house and line wiring was completed. They had to work fast, for Newt's idea was to finish up before the *pongyis* got back and then celebrate the arrival of the Tooth by the further miracle of an illuminated pagoda.

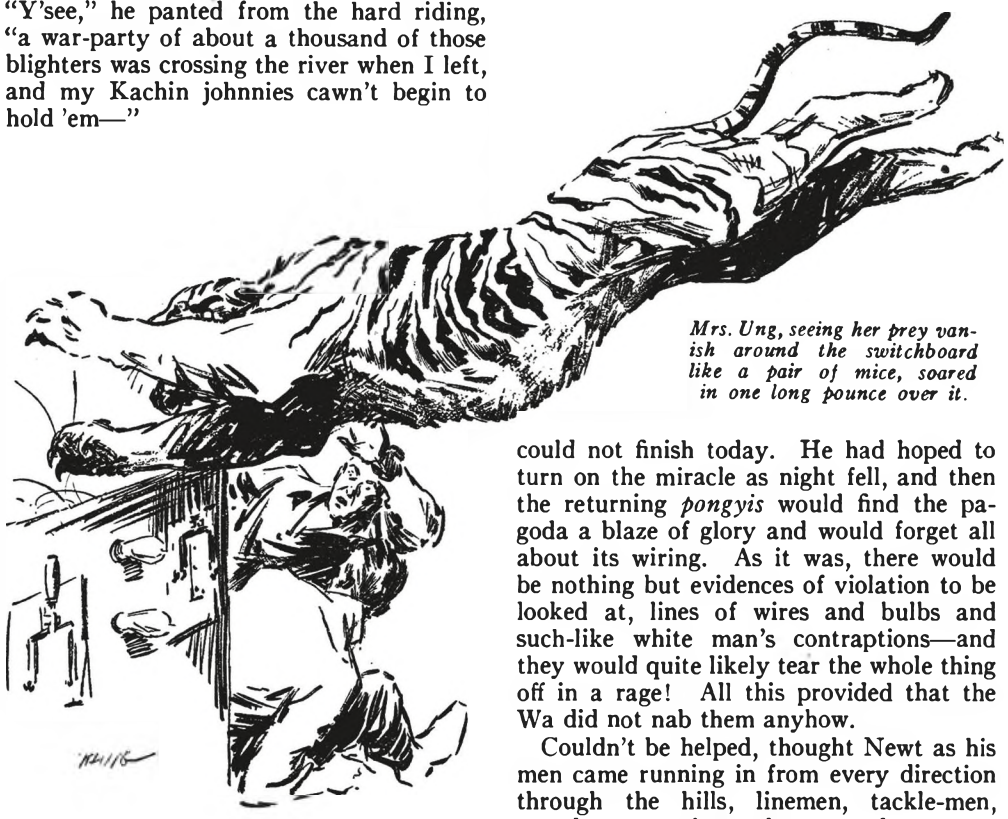
Nice as nice; but about then the Wa heard about those *pongyis* too.

These poisonous savages lived across the Salween, in fortified villages perched on inaccessible promontories throughout their outrageously steep mountains. They raised poppy for the China opium trade for a living, but their pet occupation was war. The well-dressed man among them wore no gourd at all, nothing whatever below his neck; and above it an unique style of hair dressing that consisted in greasing the locks and building them up into two cunning, curved horns. And with this outfit, by way of stick and gloves, was worn an instrument bristling with prongs, a fire-hardened ironwood spear, and a bow seven feet long. Also an opium pipe, like a jazz horn, if you would be really swank. Further customs among the Wa: to build any house in their fortified towns there was first required four human heads under its four main posts. They ate the owners of these heads; but it was a domestic difficulty, at that, because there were never enough heads to go around—in spite of bullish enterprises among themselves when the stock ran low. So periodically they raided across the Salween into the Shan states for more—this time under the overpowering temptation of forty *pongyis*.

Newt's first hint of this particular raid

was Lord Jock riding furiously into camp and announcing abruptly: "Sorry, old chap, but you'll have to knock off here. I've got to borrow your whole army, if you don't mind—I really have!"

He was distraught, was His Lordship—unusual for the youthful Governor of the Wa states, whom Newt had seldom seen with so much as an eyelash displaced. "Y'see," he panted from the hard riding, "a war-party of about a thousand of those blighters was crossing the river when I left, and my Kachin johnnies cawn't begin to hold 'em—"



Mrs. Ung, seeing her prey vanish around the switchboard like a pair of mice, soared in one long pounce over it.

"Good God!" gasped Newt. "And I sent off that pilgrimage of *pongyis* up your way! They'll bag the lot—dammit, Lord Jock, it just *can't* happen!"

Newt reached for the rubbing-stick hanging handy on a tent-pole and with it smote upon a huge Burmese gong of thick plate, cut in the form of a pagoda outline. Its long musical note rang out like a reverberating bell across the jungly hills. Then three strokes, sharp, distinct, at slow intervals—*War!*

No, it just could not happen! Where was the protection of the British Raj if a pilgrimage of forty holy priests was to be carried off and eaten in spite of the armed force supposed to police the North Shan states? Pitiful was that force assigned to Lord Jock, wherewith to cover some sixty miles of river front; but with Gyi's cutthroats to aid, they might, just barely might, repulse this invasion of the Wa! Newt regretted that all his plans for smoothing out their religious difficulties at home would have to be abandoned. They could not finish today. He had hoped to turn on the miracle as night fell, and then the returning *pongyis* would find the pagoda a blaze of glory and would forget all about its wiring. As it was, there would be nothing but evidences of violation to be looked at, lines of wires and bulbs and such-like white man's contraptions—and they would quite likely tear the whole thing off in a rage! All this provided that the Wa did not nab them anyhow.

Couldn't be helped, thought Newt as his men came running in from every direction through the hills, linemen, tackle-men, guards, gangs from the power-house and dam. They dropped their tools and took to their weapons with shouts, starting up a war-drum of their own. And with them came the Chota Sahib. Our Mr. Colville was not pleased and had been swearing like a major at his supposed deserters all the way in.

"What's all this, Mr. Fuller?" he demanded hotly of Newt as his pony clattered up to where the chief stood beside Lord Jock and was giving Gyi some hasty directions about ammunition. "I just got all hooked up down in the town, when away runs the whole push! Had to take the torch and finish up myself!"

Newt looked on him benignly. Good kid! It hadn't taken him a week to break in out here, and he was still alive. And how

he had laced into Gyi's blighters, any one of whom would have murdered him for nothing, had he not been Chota Sahib and let them damn' well know it!

"Show's off, Milt!" said Newt. " 'Nother of Burma's little breaks, that's all. This time it's the Wa. About a million of them are crossing the river, right now!"

The Chota Sahib's eyes dilated. "Scrap?" he asked joyfully.

"Considerable scrap," admitted Newt. "I shouldn't wonder if it would finish right about here! Muster those men, Gyi!" Newt turned to order his burly Shan foreman. "Time you got under way."

The Chota Sahib stamped his foot. "And leave this plant unprotected, sir?" he demanded incredulously.

"Have to. It's a case of those *pongyis,* y'see," said Newt. "They're somewhere up the valley. Have to protect *them,* ahead of everything else, or Lord Jock and I lose face! This work is nothing compared to that duty. You see? Prestige of the British Raj involved; so no *pongyi* massacre—"

Colville grinned happily. "Easy, Chief!" he told the worried Newt. "If you mean that bunch of religious fanatics, why, they're not three miles out of town right now! Saw 'em as I came up the ridge! That means we've got just one hour to hook in up here. Let me at it!" He still had the kerosene blow-torch in his fist, as a kind of badge of office, and was gesturing with it eagerly.

Newt blinked at him. He was seeing things; if Colville's news was true, they were free to protect the plant. And moreover, they could not be too soon in getting it started! Lord Jock put in: "I say, Newt! Must be off, y'know. It's four miles back to the Salween, and I left my blighters going it strong, but the Wa were taking it handsomely. River looked like a coconut raft dotted with their black heads! I'll take Gyi's lot, if you don't mind. Suppose you stay here with Colville and start the bally works? —Sure it was our *pongyi* friends, Colville?" he inquired for a parting assurance.

"Sure thing! They had a canopy-business over a sort of Noah's ark, and were all singing as they marched. I ought to know a *pongyi* when I see one by this time!" said our Mr. Colville.

"Your Tooth, Newt!" declared Lord Jock with sparkling eyes. "Bringing it back in state—my word!"

The three impious white men roared with laughter, and then Lord Jock set out for the Salween with Gyi's mob at his back. Newt was left practically alone with young Colville in camp. Every man who could shoulder a weapon had gone off to the war; Gyi's ten picked scoundrels with rifles, a contingent of Laos with their powerful crossbows, the rest carrying a nasty-looking assortment of barbed spears, *dahs* and ironwood throwing-sticks studded with old razor blades that Newt had discarded from his safety-hoe.

Newt gave them all his blessing and went into the power-house shed to be of use in helping young Colville. That technician was busy with blow-torch and solder, hooking in the last of the leads to switches and bus-bars. It was a race against time—one precious hour in which to finish up and throw on the juice! Newt held a carbide lamp on the work as the sole assistance he could render. He saw the Chota Sahib glance, from time to time, at his wrist-watch as one lead after another was soldered in and screwed home. He was envisaging that march of the *pongyis,* drawing nearer and nearer to the town. With fast work, their first sight of it would be that great pagoda blazing with miraculous illumination—and all would be well. They would forgive those wires, once they saw *that!*

"Ready here; start up your turbines, Mr. Fuller!" announced young Colville after a time, and turned off his torch for good.

NEWT groped his way out from behind the switchboard and reached the great turbine gates. All was dark gloom under that big tropical shed, the jungle outside noisy with its night cries, bark of sambur deer, caterwauling of leopard, diapason of insect and lizard life. For once Newt wished that he had a gun on him as he slowly turned the wheels of his gate valves. Trust the jungle, never—not even at the last moment! Yet it had always left *him* alone, during twenty years of service as a Roads and Forest engineer. . . . .

Water was gurgling through the giant sluice-pipes, the turbines revolving slowly in a deep rumble, then picking up speed. A glow appeared on the switchboard face; red filaments of pilot lights as the exciters built up current in the main dynamo fields. Newt gave his turbine gates a last turn, then came out to watch young Colville put the alternators in parallel. The boy's dim form could be seen in front of the board, closing switches, manipulating rheostat

handles. Newt's eyes were elsewhere, all over the confines of the shed, searching with practiced jungle eyes for any intruder. There was always Mrs. Ung! And this plant was not running yet, troublesome as had been its installation.

A weird and ghostly business, this half-born electric plant, thought Newt as he watched. The high whine of the dynamos filled all the semi-darkness with a keening note, promise of power, light, wonders. Three miles away, the Sawbwa's pagoda would suddenly burst out in a glory of miraculous outline, and natives would fall flat on their faces in awe. . . . .

The equalizer light was dimming and rising faintly as both dynamos approached equal phase. And then Newt's sixth sense of danger made him turn suddenly to the right. Perhaps it was some faint taint of musk, of wild and reeking fur, that had touched his nostrils—but there *she* was: two green, smoldering eyes, low down on the power-house floor, and not twenty feet from where young Colville stood before the board!

"*Behind you! Jump!*" Newt yelled warning. He knew it was useless. Colville would simply stand there paralyzed, and Mrs. Ung would get him with her spring!

But Colville didn't. Newt heard a snarled contemptuous, "*Hell!*" escape him, then the crash of the main switch as it went home. Instantly light flooded the power-house, all its own lamps getting current from the bus-bars. It showed Mrs. Ung blinking in the glare, nonplused for the moment. Her great striped head rose over two enormous forepaws, the one already stretched out and claws gleaming. Behind the head was packed the long, lithe body and a tail that twitched. Newt knew that it would not take her one second to recover; her eyes were fuming still upon her prey—that harmless youth from Schenectady, with but a moment more to live.

Well, he was young; and Newt was old, past fifty. The sacrifice was up to him, —and Newt made it without hesitation. He would receive that paw-stroke, thought Newt as he jumped between them—it was the older man's duty.

BUT young Colville was equally quick; to Newt's intense surprise, he met him in mid-jump, grappled, and in a complicated kind of twist had whirled them both around the end of the switchboard and in behind it, where they fell in a heap. It was the quickest and brainiest kind of thinking Newt had ever dreamed of, and a wild hope took possession of him as his wits returned. For Mrs. Ung, not knowing much about electricity but seeing her prey vanish around the switchboard like a pair of mice, had changed her spring somewhat. She soared in one long pounce clear over it—and landed on a nest of bare transformer wires with all their hooks and prongs, of more than two thousand volts tension!

Newt and Colville cowered under the green shower of copper sparks that instantly sizzled and crackled above them. The two dynamos said *Unk!* and went right on spinning as if nothing had happened. And Mrs. Ung quivered convulsively up there for some seconds, then slithered down of her own weight—the deadest tiger that had ever tried to argue with two dynamos!

She had not struck out, yowled, moaned, even; paralyzed instantaneously by the jolt of that current, every muscle had been stricken rigid. She fell down behind the switchboard in a great limp mass of scorched striped fur, while Newt and young Colville stared at her aghast. There was something inhuman about it—the way those machines went right on spinning as though they had not just electrocuted the most violent and vigorous form of life the world knows! Newt had seen tigers die under the punch of a heavy bullet with five thousand foot-tons behind it—the awful flurries, the convulsive smashes of flailing forepaws—and he could not get over Mrs. Ung lying so quietly there.

"You win, son!" he finally found voice to breathe out. "By all the laws of the jungle, she had us both, though!"

Young Colville's eyes snapped with excitement—it was his first tiger. "Shucks! It all came to me in a flash, Mr. Fuller," he gabbled. "Throw the main switch and jump behind the board! I had a hunch she'd get a jolt, in back there, before she ever got *us!* Come on, let's go up on the ridge and see how the pagoda looks," he suggested with cool indifference.

That for all his interest in his first tiger! And Mrs. Ung, at that—the one brute that from first to last had been Burma's ace in hindering the march of modern progress in these parts! Newt followed our Mr. Colville up the trail to the ridge. Over there three miles away in the valley was

the little town of Möng Nam, and out of it now rose a fairy pagoda of fire, a delicate tracery of light in the form of a tall candlestick. Thousands of devout Buddhists were kneeling before it at that moment. You could hear, even at this distance, the faint tinkle of its silver bells—and in another direction the mutter of rifle-shots where Lord Jock was driving back the Wa.

Newt soliloquized over his adopted country as he gazed on that impressive bright white star that now crowned the summit of the great pagoda. The Light of Asia, it symbolized; that sublime Truth that for twenty-five hundred years had shone here, illuminating the lives of men with the lofty precepts of the Buddha. It would endure forever. Savages like the Wa would assail it in vain; missionaries pattered their tales of other beliefs, and left the East unmoved; even Nature, with her teeming denizens of the jungle, flourished without slaughter under the Buddha, for he had room for them all in his benign philosophy. Yes, the Sawbwa, progressive soul, was right: Embellish the Buddha's temples; call in the white man's science to aid; do all things to enhance its symbolism as a living, burning Faith! It was worth the struggle—even here where every invention of the white man required special safeguards against the hostilities of the jungle!

"What do you think of it all, bub?" Newt asked young Colville standing beside him. He was filled with a reverence and a love for this Arcadia of a land, and hoped that our Mr. Colville was beginning to understand it.

"It's a damned menagerie, if you ask me!" laughed Colville. "But do you know, Chief, I'm beginning to like it! Fellow feels kind of—er—different out here, if you get what I mean," he attempted awkwardly to explain. "Pioneering—yes, that's it! Difference between this country—where everything and everybody wants to dine on a man—and a job back home where all you have to do is to hook 'em up. Guess I'll stick!"

Newt wrung his hand cordially. "Stout fellow, Milt! And Burma can use you, all right! As for Mrs. Ung calling on us, she was boring but needful, eh, what?"

Colville agreed, grinning cheerfully. He didn't know it, but he was hard-boiled now—thanks to Mrs. Ung. She had made him think quick—and right—as the price of staying alive. Once you had that automatic faculty, you belonged, in Burma!

Double Play

By

JONATHAN BROOKS

A stirring story of our deservedly national game, by the able author of "Tails We Win" and "Horse Tracks."

OLD Miss Milligan, back in high-school glee-club days, said: "Tombo has a strong voice, and Joe has a sure voice; Joe, you stand beside Tombo." And at Harley College, Coach Wharton told his football captain: "Tombo will call signals, as long as Joe is in the game at fullback; Joe holds him down, see?"

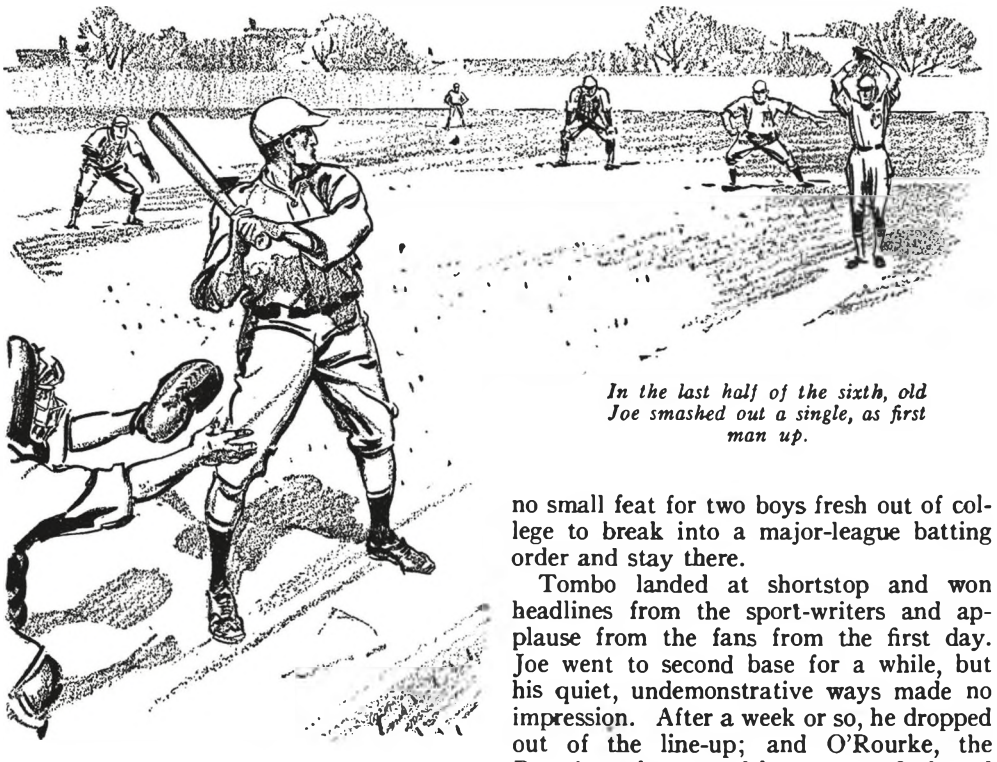
Their fraternity spiked the slow-going, deliberate Joe Elliott in order to be sure of getting his brilliant if erratic buddy Tombo Jordan. All through their college careers, Tombo took the same courses Joe took, where he could, because Joe always had his notebooks up and his outside reading done. Joe was a good guy to lean on, if you asked Tombo.

It was the same way in baseball, there at college. Tombo flashed brightly at shortstop—so long as the steady, reliable Joe Elliott plugged along at second base. They made a strong combination around the bag, Tombo yelling, taunting, grinning and making the impossible plays, the placid Joe stolidly making the necessary ones.

Between them, they put Harley on the baseball map. Major league scouts came to see them play, and big-league salaries tempted them off the route back home to their fathers' small-town businesses—away, too, from the girl back home. In this respect also it was the same old story.

"Joe," little Thea Moorefield appealed to Elliott, "I'm sorry you're going away. And you'll keep an eye on Tombo, wont you—sort of look after him, Joe?"

"Sure," said Joe, grinning slowly to hide the hurt in his brown eyes. "We'll be all right, Thea. Tombo's O. K., you know."



In the last half of the sixth, old Joe smashed out a single, as first man up.

"But he's such a—well, such a playboy, you know. Look after him, Joe."

If it was on the tip of Joe's slow tongue to say that if Tombo wanted to be a playboy, he'd have to be a payboy too, he crowded the thought back. It was hard because Thea—well, Thea was the girl, and it always seemed to Joe that she preferred Tombo. Now she was asking him to look after Tombo, and it hurt. His teeth shut tight, he parted his lips in another grin, and withheld his thoughts. Yes, he would look after Tombo. He always had, everywhere.

If Tombo drew all the attention in the glee-club, and all the applause in football and baseball for his flashing brilliance—well, what of it? Tombo could do things. And when you were with him, you had to like him. They had been winners together all along the line, thus far, and if he had been good for Tombo, maybe Tombo had been good for him as well. Let it go at that, Joe reasoned. And yet—

THEY went up to the big city after graduation at Harley, and within three weeks both were in the Bears' line-up. If you are a baseball fan, and remember that the Bears, that year, were a second-division club going nowhere but through the schedule, please do not turn up your nose. It is no small feat for two boys fresh out of college to break into a major-league batting order and stay there.

Tombo landed at shortstop and won headlines from the sport-writers and applause from the fans from the first day. Joe went to second base for a while, but his quiet, undemonstrative ways made no impression. After a week or so, he dropped out of the line-up; and O'Rourke, the Bears' regular second baseman, a firebrand like Tombo, took over his old job. Then the first baseman broke his leg; and in despair the Bears' manager sent Joe Elliott out to cover that bag.

Joe had never played first base, but he was tall, strongly built and steady. He was smart enough to master the details of first-base play, and within a month had clinched the job so well that even if the regular first baseman had returned, Joe would have stayed on the bag. And he went on looking after Tombo.

When Tombo, racing back of second base to snag a hard grounder, shuffled, skipped and then flipped a poor throw in the general direction of first base trying for an impossible play, it was Joe Elliott that gritted his teeth and strained every muscle to reach the ball without taking his toe off the bag, or dug sharply into the ground to take the ball out of the dirt for the put-out.

"Jordan outdid himself with a beautiful stop and hurried throw to nail his man." This, in the papers, may have rankled in Joe's heart, but if it did, he said nothing. He had to look after Tombo, and this must be part of the job. Besides, Tombo, to do him credit, always had an enthusiastic slap on the back for Joe—when they were alone in their room in the team's home town, or in the hotel when they were on the road.

"Sure picked 'em outa the air today, old kid," he would say. Or, "I'll say you got a pick and shovel, to dig 'em out of the dirt."

And Joe would grin and feel better with the world in general, and Tombo Jordan in particular—even, on many occasions, to the extent of sending clippings about the games back home to Thea Moorefield. He wrote to her, now and then, usually on postcards showing the Chicago lake front, or the Mississippi at St. Louis, or Bunker Hill monument at Boston. But when she wrote to him, and asked how Tombo was getting along, he had to write a letter, for Tombo never seemed to have time for letter-writing. Faithfully Joe bragged about Tombo's feats afield, at bat and on the bases; and left her to discover from the box scores, if she were interested, the results of his own efforts. The stories with the box scores rarely mentioned him, for baseball writers seek more attractive copy than a man steadily sawing wood.

"Man, we got a infield, now," the Bears' manager enthused. "This little Tombo Jordan is sure a ball of lighted kerosene at short, and O'Rourke goes with him at second. Joe Noland takes care of third, and this young Elliott holds 'em, and holds 'em down, there on first base. Next year, if I can find a couple of good flingers and one, just one, outfielder that can throw, we'll sure go to town."

HE could not have known that, more than anything else, Joe Elliott's lifetime job of looking after the irrepressible Tombo, was responsible for his club's climb from last place in early June to fifth place in late August. Any other first baseman would have been more careful to protect himself against errors. Your professional guards his fielding average almost as zealously as he fights for his batting percentage.

Why try for a rotten throw when, if you lose it, the official scorer is sure to give you an error, overlooking the way in which the star shortstop got the ball to you? This question never occurred to old Joe Elliott, out there digging 'em up, and up in the air pulling 'em down. He had to look after Tombo. And once in the habit of going after everything, he was also protecting O'Rourke on hurried pegs, and fighting to get the reliable Noland's occasional poor throws. If his fielding average suffered, what of it? He had to look after Tombo.

Now and then Tombo said:

"That ought to have been *my* error, Joe. Official scorer's crazy."

JOE forgave him everything. They got along together, for reasons no one will ever understand. If Joe could have been analyzed, his innermost wish might have been found to be a desire to get out of his slow-going ways into the paths of inspired brilliance along which Tombo raced, light-hearted and free. And if Tombo's heart could have been taken apart, it might have revealed a hope that some day he could steady himself into old Joe's sober-going habits. But whatever the reason, they continued buddies, standing together against the world of professional baseball, which is none too generous with green boys out of college.

Off the field, too, Joe looked after Tombo. When continued newspaper publicity began to draw attention to Tombo, and he was invited to parties by all kinds of people, Joe went along as a matter of course. It was always Joe who talked Tombo away from flasks freely proffered by admiring fans. It was always Joe who got in between Tombo and gamblers seeking to trim him for some easy money at cards. It was always Joe who suggested it was time to get back to the room and to bed—game tomorrow, remember. And finally it was Joe, looking after Tombo, who precipitated the quarrel that had to come. . . . .

"Some little woman I had tonight, hey?" demanded Tombo blithely, entering his room at the hotel two hours after Joe had left a downtown party and gone to bed. The team was on the road, playing the Goliaths in the Goliath park.

"Oh, I don't know," said Joe, sleepily. "She must have been, to keep you out all hours like this."

"A grand little girl," mused Tombo, smiling in recollection of his triumphant evening. "Doreen Fane! What a name!"

"Sounds like a movie actress," Joe commented, rolling over in bed and facing away from the light.

"And she *is* one," Tombo replied. "A good one, too."

"If she is, why does she train with a bunch of bums?" asked Joe. He had not cared at all for the overdressed, made-up girl, or her loud friends.

"Why, those were nice people, a good gang!" retorted Tombo angrily. "Seems to me you're always crabbing the friends I

make. After this, I'll leave you out of it, if you like."

"Come on to bed, and forget it," Joe replied, evenly.

"And tomorrow night, I'm going out with her and a bunch of people—how do you like that?"

"Suits me—but count me out," said Joe. "I'm in training."

"What you doing—hinting you'll squawk on me if I get in late?" demanded Tombo angrily. Joe wondered whether he had been drinking.

"Oh, no, I'm not that kind of guy," he replied. "I was just thinking about Thea, and what she would think."

"Who, Thea? Say, she's a good little country kid, Thea is," Tombo laughed, derisively. "But she's not in the same class with this queen of mine."

"She's crazy about you," muttered Joe.

"Who, Doreen? Think so?"

"No—Thea," said Joe.

"Aw, rats," growled Tombo, and turning out the light, he climbed into bed.

THAT was the beginning of the rift in their companionship. Next day Tombo was aloof. He played a brilliant, devil-may-care game against the Goliaths; and Joe, attending strictly to his own business, upheld his end nobly. But they said nothing to each other. That night, Tombo went out on his party with Doreen Fane, the too-blonde girl who dazzled him, and Joe stayed in his room. It was late, very late, when Tombo came in, and Joe, to avoid a quarrel, pretended to be asleep. Joe feared Tombo's dissipation, however far it had gone, would affect his old buddy's game, but he need not have worried. For in the closing contest with the Goliaths, Tombo outdid even himself, making all manner of impossible plays afield, and starring at the bat as well. Doreen Fane was in a box, with a party of her friends.

"The door was open," Joe laughed, "so I came right in." "Any more blackmail from home?" Tombo demanded.

He ate dinner with them, before catching the train for the Bears' home town. Joe ate with Dempsey Myers, sporting editor of the *Bulletin,* who had made this trip with the club to see why it was beginning to win games and to be respected throughout the league. He hit it off with Myers, for neither talked much.

It was Myers who came to him, a week later, to get some material for a feature story about Tombo Jordan, the star shortstop whose work was thrilling fans all along the circuit.

"Jordan's good," said Myers. "Awfully good. He's your buddy, and I'd like to get you to tell me about him. Club's giving him a doubled salary contract for next year. He's bought a new car on the strength of it—nifty roadster. Now then, when did you two begin playing ball? What was he like? Always play short? Understand he was a star quarterback, in football. Shoot me the works, kid."

And poor old Joe Elliott, unaware of Tombo's good fortune, ignorant as to the new car, since he and Tombo had drawn apart, wondered and wondered as, mechanically, he told Myers all he knew about his old chum. He had to look after Tombo, even to seeing that his buddy received good and accurate publicity.

"But say," Myers exclaimed, "I've been thinking about you, see? You're not so slow, yourself. You're hitting .332, a good twenty points ahead of Jordan. And you get your extra base slams, too. You've been driving in runs for us. I'll say you're good—you and this Tombo! Man, but he's a darb!"

Joe could only grin dubiously at this casual compliment to his own ability. What of it? Would the club offer him an increase? Would he even be asked to sign for the next year? Tombo'd bought a car; Tombo'd received a big boost in salary; Tombo—well, he'd been looking after Tombo all this time, but how about old Joe Elliott? Dumbly, Joe shook hands with Myers as the sport-writer left him. That was in the forenoon. He played his game that afternoon as if in a daze, while Tombo, flaunting all his brilliance with the confidence inspired by the new contract, shone even more brightly than usual.

THE evening baseball extras ran over with Tombo Jordan's exploits, and the *Bulletin*, besides, played up Myers' feature story about him. One of the other papers carried a paragraph to the effect that besides starring on the diamond, young Jordan shone in society, wherever the lights were bright. It mentioned Doreen Fane, the motion-picture star, and Joe scowled as he read the item. If this Doreen, he mused, were really a star, she would do well to get back to her own firmament and let ballplayers alone!

He wrote a letter to Thea Moorefield, back home, enclosing a clipping of the *Bulletin* article about Tombo.

He even felt a foolish thrill of pride as he read the article again before folding it into the envelope. Thea would get a kick out of that story about old Tombo—shining-eyed, daring, irresponsible Tombo Jordan, his buddy! Surely he and Tombo'd get things squared around before long. They'd been chums too long to let anything come between them—salaries, or roadsters, or whatever. He went to bed, wondering where Tombo was, and feeling guilty because he did not seem to be looking after him as he should be.

FOR two days he saw almost nothing of Tombo, except on the diamond; he and Tombo might as well have been strangers in strange lands, for all the contact they had. But on the third day, Tombo confronted him, half-laughing, half-angry, just as he was leaving the apartment in which they lived, to go out to lunch.

"What's the big idea, Joe?" Tombo demanded, thrusting a card under Joe's eyes. Joe looked at it anxiously. "You been mailing that clipping out to Thea?"

"Why, no, Tombo, not that one," Joe protested, awkwardly. He looked hard at the card. Pasted on it was the paragraph referring to Doreen Fane and Tombo's social activities. Under it, in a thinly disguised handwriting, were the words:

"Now, now, Tombo, naughty!"

"I wish Thea hadn't sent that," said Joe slowly. "But *I* didn't send it to her, Tombo. I sent her the story from the *Bulletin* about your new contract and your new car, and everything. And by the way, let me congratulate—"

"That's a hot line—who else would send it to her?" demanded Tombo. "Nobody else in town here ever heard of Thea."

"Well, I don't know who did, but I certainly did *not*," Joe insisted. "Not me, Tombo, I'm not that kind of a guy."

"Yeah? And you're not burning up because I've made a hit with this movie queen of mine, either? I suppose not!" Tombo laughed scornfully. Then he turned and hurriedly walked away from Joe.

Joe suffered all that afternoon, and his game suffered, too. Tombo played well, with a defiant, daredevil air, and as usual won the applause of the crowd, even as the Bears won their game. The season was closing and the Bears could not get out of the second division, but the fans of the city were out in force to cheer them along, surprised and proud of them for climbing to fifth place after two seasons as tail-enders.

That night Joe returned to his rooms after eating dinner alone, and found only a short letter from Thea Moorefield to keep him company.

Slowly he read the cordial little note:

Dear Joe:

Thank you for that nice letter you wrote me about Tombo. I hope he does not get into any kind of trouble. He's such a playboy, Joe. Are you sure you're looking after him? But then that was not what I intended to write. Father is coming to the city on business tomorrow, and he has promised to bring me with him. We'll be out to see your game, and we'll stop at the Regent Hotel, Father says. —THEA.

"Wonder where Tombo is," thought Joe. "I'll have to tell him this, so he'll be on the lookout to see Thea. She'll want to see him."

He took his hat off the hook in the closet and started for the hall door before he remembered that he had no idea whatever where Tombo might be. As well search for a haystack in Gotham as look for Tombo in this big city. But just as he reached the door, he heard a knock. Opening it, he found Dempsey Myers, of the *Bulletin*.

"Hello—going out?"

"Well, I was, but I'm not," Joe grinned sheepishly. "Started to, but remembered that I didn't know where I was going, so I stopped."

"Mind if I come in?" asked Myers, entering the room and closing the door behind him. "Listen, where's Jordan?"

"Why, I don't know," replied Joe. "I was just going to look for him, and I didn't know where to look. So I stopped."

"You know anything?" demanded Myers, shortly. Suspicion was in his voice.

"Not much, except I wish Tombo wouldn't run around so much," said Joe.

"Well, I can tell you a mouthful. Listen—" But before continuing, Myers turned back to the door and locked it. "Sit down. Listen," he resumed, "there's dirty work at the crossroads. Somebody's framing to buy off the Bears in this two-game series with the Goliaths. The Goliaths have got only three games left, when they get home, with the Royals. If they win two here, they can lose two to the Royals, and still grab the flag. If they lose one to us, they'll have to have two out of three in the Royal series, see? So they'll be trying to sew up one game here."

"Afraid of us? Say, that's a good one—" began Joe.

"I got a tip, straight," Myers insisted. "Fellow that writes the Royals tipped me off. Bunch of crooks trying to buy a game from our bunch. I don't know whether they'll be working for the Goliaths, or for themselves, to cover some money they've got bet on the Goliaths. Most likely that, because the Goliaths are a bunch of good sportsmen."

"Gee whiz, but that's a filthy mess!" Joe shuddered, instinctively. This was a new side-light on major league baseball, for him. He had never thought the activities of the gamblers could reach out to include the players. "Why don't you tell the boss of the club? Why do you want to see Tombo?"

"I've told the boss, and he's watching," said Myers. "I want to see Jordan, because I'm tipped that he's one of the men the gang is after. He's brilliant, but erratic, see? I didn't tell the boss that. But Jordan makes hard plays, and sometimes misses easy ones, see? If he boots a couple in a tight place, nobody will suspect,—that's the way they figure. Now then, where is he?" .

"But he's not that kind of a guy," protested Joe, loyally. "He wouldn't—"

"They tell me he's been training with some of this bunch, already," Myers insisted. "Where is he?"

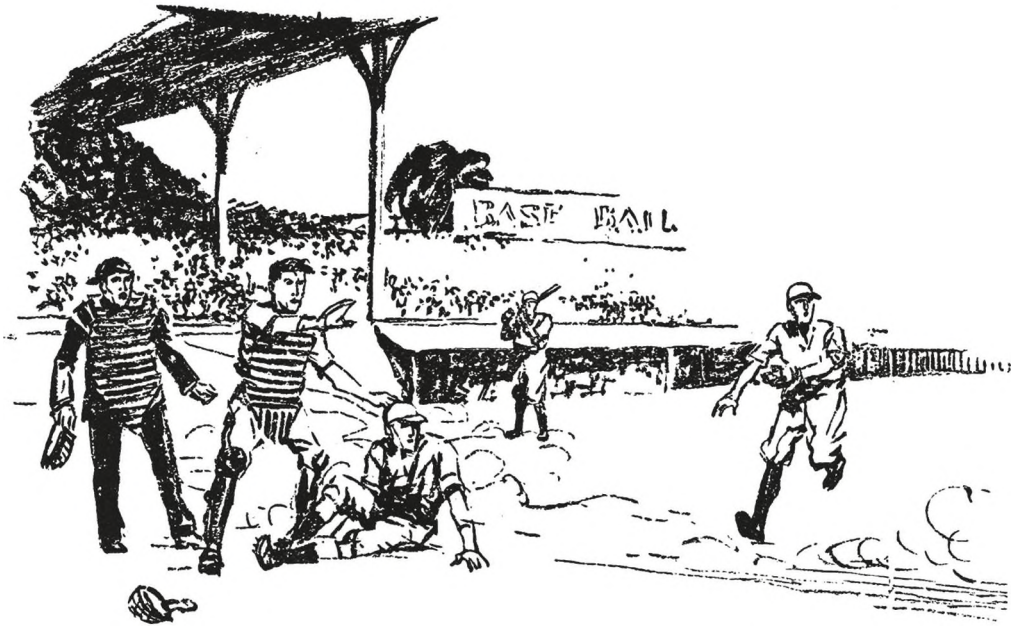
"I don't know where he is," said Joe slowly. "But if you have any ideas, I'll help you try to find him. I've got to keep him out of anything like that. Tombo's sore at me, but I've got to look after him."

IT was the first time Joe had ever put into words this duty imposed on him by little Thea Moorefield, back home. He flushed as he spoke.

"Yeah? Well, he needs some one to look after him," Myers replied.

They went out together. Myers called a taxi that passed, and they started their search. Three hotels gave no clue. A Chinese restaurant popular with the players gave no sign of Tombo, nor did two so-called "social clubs." But finally, about ten o'clock, they stumbled upon Tombo, in the refreshment room of a gambling club. Myers had led the way through a big gaming-room, and as they passed an open door, Joe caught sight of Tombo within, sitting at a table with Doreen Fane. They appeared to have been eating, but only a wine-bottle and some glasses remained on the tablecloth.

"Here he is," said Joe to Myers. The



sport-writer looked in. Seeing the girl, he drew Joe aside.

"Never mind, he's got a date with some girl," said Myers. "Let's leave him alone, and grab him when he leaves her. He'll be pulling out before long, to get to bed, see? Then we can talk to him."

It went through Joe's head that Doreen Fane was a part of the only crowd Tombo had been joining. If a gang of gamblers had been playing around with Tombo, as Myers had said, this girl must be part of the gang! He thought more quickly than was his custom and turning to Myers, said:

"You wait for me out here. I'm going in and talk to him a minute."

SO saying, he left the sport-writer, and walked into the little private dining-room where Tombo, his face flushed somewhat more than even the season in the sun warranted, sat laughing with Doreen Fane.

"Oh, look who's here!" The girl smiled, looking up at Joe, sarcasm in her voice. "The old boy friend!"

"The door was open," Joe laughed awkwardly. "So I just came in."

"Any more blackmail from home?" Tombo demanded, scowling.

"No, but I did have a letter," said Joe, his hat in his hand. "Some friends of ours are going to be here tomorrow to see the game with the Goliaths, and I thought I'd tell you so you could get some sleep. You'll want to go good, tomorrow."

"Oh, not *too* good," laughed Doreen Fane, meaningly. "Listen, boy friend, pull up a chair and have a little drink with us. No? Listen, do! And about this game tomorrow—" She plunged ahead recklessly, ignoring Tombo's efforts to interrupt her. The girl, intoxicated by her apparent success with Tombo, as well as the wine she had been drinking, seemed to think all ball-players gullible and pliable. She smiled her sweetest lacquered smile on Joe, and hurried on with her talk.

"You see, the Bears are not going anywhere. They'll be whipped tomorrow, anyhow. Now then, you're not too anxious to win that game, are you? Tombo's not, I know. Are you, Tombo, old dear?"

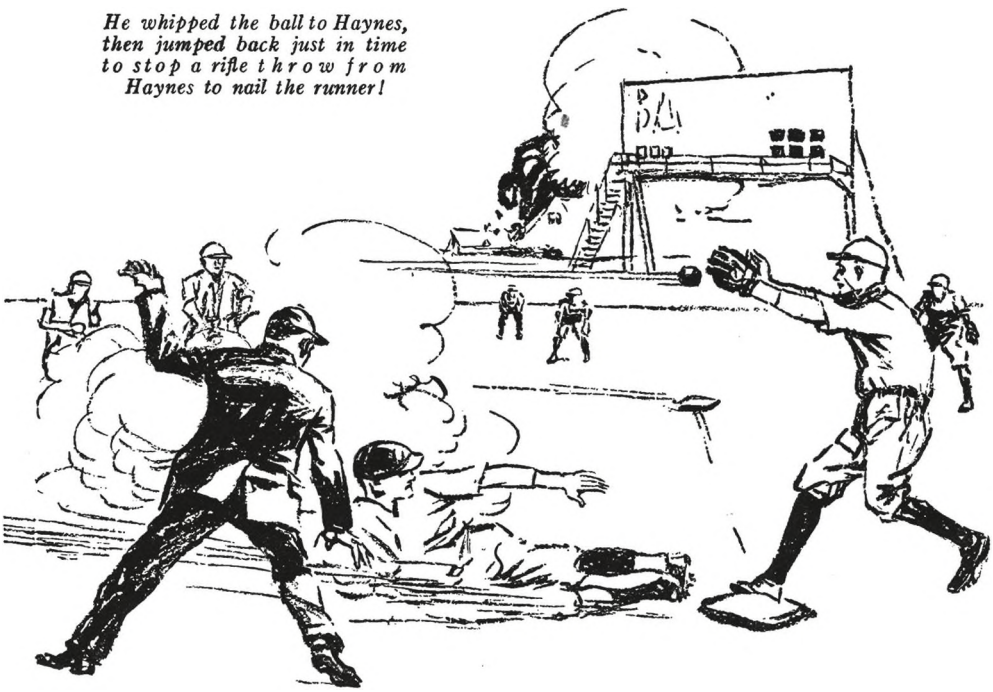
Tombo merely scowled, as Joe dragged a gilt chair up to the table.

"What's the old plot, anyhow?" asked Joe, his voice as casual as he could make it, though he trembled from a mixture of anger and excitement.

"Well, some friends of mine are awfully interested,"—the girl smiled again,—"and they asked me to help them out. The Bears don't need this game. The Goliaths do. Nobody will know it if you boys do not try too hard to win, and you're the stars of the team—now, aren't you? Of course you are. I've seen you play!"

"But just how much are they interested?" asked Joe, doggedly repressing a desire to turn this old-young girl with the hard face over his knees and spank her as he would a bad child.

"Well, for you, just the same as for



He whipped the ball to Haynes, then jumped back just in time to stop a rifle throw from Haynes to nail the runner!

Tombo—and O'Rourke, wasn't it?" She beamed on Tombo. He ducked his head and looked away. "Two hundred apiece in advance, and eight more to come, *after* the game is lost by the Bears. Isn't that pretty soft, or isn't it, what I mean?"

FOR answer, Joe could only stare at her. Movie queen! His lip curled in disgust.

"Tombo, have you got that money? Give it back!" he snapped, angrily, turning to confront his old buddy. But Tombo could only shake his head miserably.

"It's out there," and he nodded his head toward the gaming-rooms.

"Well, then, here." Joe plunged into decisive action. He drew a piece of paper from an inside pocket, and his fountain pen. Hastily, he scribbled a note: *"Thirty days after date I promise to pay Doreen Fane the sum of $200 with interest at six per cent."* Then he said:

"Here, Tombo, sign that!"

Tombo looked at the paper, through eyes that saw none too well, and then slowly shook his head again. He did not open his mouth to speak.

"All right, then I'll sign it myself, because I can't write a check for that amount," exclaimed Joe Elliott resolutely. "Here!" And he hastily signed the note himself, and offered it to the girl.

"Do you think I'm silly?" she laughed, disdainfully. "Run along and peddle your paper somewhere else. This gentleman and I have an agreement of our own, and you're out. See? Out!"

"What do you say, Tombo?" asked Joe, miserably now. His *coup* had failed. If only Tombo would stand up and help him, —but Tombo again could only shake his head lugubriously. "All right then," exclaimed Joe, suddenly inspired. "I've got the sport-editor of the *Bulletin* out here! He tipped me off that this movie queen of yours was one of a gang of gamblers, Tombo! He brought me out to look for you, see? You've got to get out of this mess, or the *Bulletin* will have it all in print tomorrow! That ruins you! And it queers you, too, Miss Fane," he added, turning to the girl.

"Oh, give me the silly note," she exclaimed, angrily, and snatched at the paper. "I should worry what it says! I've got my bargain with Tombo Jordan, and I've got *your* name. Talk it to the papers all you please!"

WITH that, she turned and ran out of the refreshment-room, through a side door. Tombo, in a daze, clambered to his feet and made as if to follow her, but Joe laid a hand on his arm and held him.

"Wait, Tombo, don't do that," begged Joe.

"First you queer me with Thea, and now with Doreen," mumbled Tombo. "Fine kind of a buddy you are!"

"But I didn't queer you with Thea," protested Joe. "She's coming tomorrow to see you play. Wants to see you, too. Hotel Regent, with her dad. Come on, now, and go home. Get some sleep, Tombo, so you can show her and her dad your real game. Come on, Tombo," he pleaded.

Tombo hesitated, and then jerked away. Without saying a word he grabbed his hat from a dingy gilt tree, and shuffled out another side door, leaving Joe alone. "Now I've made a mess of it," thought Joe, wretched all through. "Fine fish I am, to be looking after anybody!" Then he reflected that, after all, he might have broken up the conspiracy, and turned back out of the room to find Myers.

"What do you say?" demanded Myers, impatient after the long wait. "Break it up?"

"This girl claimed to have bought Tombo and O'Rourke," said Joe, slowly. "Two hundred each in advance, eight more after the game. I gave her back Tombo's money and chased her. I chased Tombo out, too, for home. I told them—"

"But how do you know you broke it up?" Myers asked insistently.

"I told them you knew about it, and would print the whole story," said Joe. "Scared them, right. The main thing's to keep this game clean, isn't it? No use to spill the ink all over Tombo to get at these crooks, is there? Listen, Myers, he's really a good guy. Decent, see? This girl got him off the track, but she's gone. He's gone too, Myers! You leave him to me, and let's don't ruin him for just this one slip!"

"Say, I'm not trying to ruin him, am I?" Myers asked, irritably. "I'm trying to help keep the game clean—keep the crooks out of it, and make 'em let the boys alone! I'm trying to help him, not ruin him!"

"Then don't print anything—" Joe began again.

"Not unless it looks to me like O'Rourke and Tombo lose tomorrow's game for us purposely," Myers declared. "If it does, I'll sure spill this story."

"They wont lose it," exclaimed Joe, stoutly. He wondered, even as he spoke, where he got his confidence. "They wont lose it. I'll not let 'em, even if they try! Got to look after Tombo," he concluded, lamely.

If Joe Elliott, good old Joe, always looking after Tombo Jordan, his buddy, had gone through tortures that evening, the night and the next day were even more excruciating for him. Tombo did not come home to sleep with him. He looked about for Tombo, after a sleepless night, but did not see him until time for practice before the game, and even then Tombo, with a hangdog look, evaded him. Meantime, Joe ordered seats for the game sent to the Regent for Thea and her father. He was hoping strenuously that things would go right, and throughout practice, as a result of his lack of sleep and his agonizing worry, he was as nervous as a cat. He dropped thrown balls, and threw badly himself. In hitting practice, he failed to get his bat on a ball.

Strangely enough, by contrast, Tombo Jordan went through his paces as brilliantly as ever, eliciting cheers from the early crowd. Instead of cheering up as he watched Tombo, however, Joe Elliott only worried the more. He watched O'Rourke, and thought the second baseman seemed nervous. He wished he could talk to Myers and once, when he saw Myers, at the bench, whispering to the manager, he tried to speak to him, but Myers merely nodded to him, and hurried off to the press box.

"Well, there's nothing to it but what I can do," thought Joe. "These two guys will have to throw the ball over the grandstand if they want to get it past me. And I'll not throw to them all afternoon. If they lose this game, Tombo, especially, they'll have to do it all by themselves."

AND in that frame of mind, determined if nervous, Joe Elliott started the ball against the Goliaths. It was a great game, for the Bears, more confident than ever as the season closed, gave the Goliaths, fighting for the pennant, a real battle all the way. Bill Lynch, pitching, and Obed Haynes, catching, made up the Bear battery, a formidable pair of veterans. When they conferred, between the box and the pitcher's mound as the game started, Joe Elliott, with a flash of inspiration, ran over to join them.

"Keep that old ball out of play down there at second," he said. "We got to win this game."

"Yeah?" queried Lynch.

"Both of them kids down there are green

and wild," Haynes explained, thinking he understood Joe's meaning. "That's right. Don't throw to them if there's any chance for a play, see?"

"Sure," said Lynch. "Let's take these Goliaths once!"

The game began. Joe Elliott felt guilty for his treatment of Tombo Jordan, but then, well, he had to look after Tombo, protect him against himself, didn't he? Wasn't Thea Moorefield, up there in the stands watching, crazy about Tombo? Old Joe Elliott had his work cut out for him. In the very first inning he had to leap high in the air to spear a wild throw by Tombo, but he snagged the ball and came down with one foot on the bag in time for a put-out.

The crowd roared in applause for Tombo, who had made a brilliant stop of a hard smash far to his right. The smash had been labeled "Hit," but Tombo got it. He had to hurry the peg. Tough if it was high and wide—but Joe, scowling at his buddy, could say nothing.

In the second inning with a man on first, a Goliath hit to O'Rourke, who tossed to Tombo to start a double play. Tombo took the ball, side-stepped the runner heading at him; and shot to first—the ball striking the dirt. But old Joe ducked his head, scooped up the ball and had his man. Again he frowned in Tombo's direction.

It certainly looked as if Tombo was defiant and meant to go through on his promise to the fake movie queen. So in the fourth, with two men on, old Joe refused to throw to second, where Tombo waited, after breaking down a hard bounder. Instead he made a whistling throw to third, where Joe Noland took the peg and nailed the first runner. The crowd wondered why he had not tried for a double play by throwing to second base. Tombo Jordan stared at him in amazement. In the next inning, Tombo fumbled a grounder hit by the first batter, but no harm was done because Lynch struck out the next two men and got the last one on a fly to the outfield.

Old Joe Elliott, looking after Tombo, had settled to his task. Playing in a cold, deliberate manner, he made brilliant and seemingly impossible stops at first base. He saved himself, or Tombo and O'Rourke, probably half a dozen errors, and stopped the Goliath attack times without number. And at the plate? In the last half of the fourth Joe stepped into a straight ball for a solid three-bagger to left. Obed Haynes brought him home. But in the sixth the Goliaths took the lead, with a single and a home run. Then in the last half of the sixth, old Joe smashed out a single, as first man up. Haynes sacrificed him down, and when Noland beat out an infield hit, old Joe, sprinting like a wild man, went all the way in from second to tie the count. "Hold this old ball-game!" he muttered, as he reached the bench with the cheers of the crowd ringing in his ears.

BUT it was in the eighth inning that the crisis came. Lynch walked one Goliath. The second hit to O'Rourke, who first booted the ball, and then tossed badly to Tombo in a belated effort to force the first runner. The next batter dropped a short looping fly back of the third base that nobody could reach. Bases filled. Old Joe, sick at heart, stared at O'Rourke and Tombo, hurt all through. Nobody out. Three men on! What could a man do? Play for a double, and give the Goliaths one run, as safety work? There was no time to think. The Goliaths, fighting for the game, were coming hard and fast. Their hitter crashed the first ball pitched to him, and the runners were on the wing.

What—the ball came down to old Joe on a hard bound! No time to think. Look after Tombo—there, shoot it home, get the big one! In a trice he whipped the ball to Haynes, and then jumped back, awkwardly but quickly to the bag. Just in time to get his hands up and stop a rifle throw from Haynes to nail the runner! Two down, the hitter and the would-be scorer. The crowd went crazy. Tombo Jordan and little O'Rourke, who had been set for a possible double play at second, stared at him in amazement. The Goliaths could hardly believe they had seen such defense. A second later their rally was snuffed out completely, for their next hitter rammed a grounder at Tombo, who picked it up and shot it hard and true into Joe's hands. If Joe had been a catcher, the throw would have been a strike, so true did it come. Old Joe Elliott breathed more easily.

Tombo Jordan, a queer grin on his face, ran over to walk to the bench with Joe.

"Hey, kid, great work!" he said, slapping Joe on the shoulder. "But why did you do it? Might have cost us a run or two. Why didn't you throw to me, or O'Rourke for an easier double?"

"Aw, listen—" Joe could only mutter.

"Didn't trust me, hey?" demanded

Tombo. "Listen, Joe, I've come clean! I'm trying to help win this old ball-game."

Joe stared at him dully.

"On the level," said Tombo. "I was nuts, but I'm off that stuff. See?"

"That's the boy, Tombo!" laughed Joe suddenly, the strain easing down. He grinned and threw an arm around Tombo's shoulders. It was great to trust his old buddy again! "We'll take these fellows, yet."

"Joe, I'm first up this time," exclaimed Tombo. "Look, let's pull the old stuff on them! Way we did back at Harley, and back at home, before that, hey? If I get on will *you* bring me in?"

"A bet," Joe snapped. "You're on, kid." Which was confident talk for two first-year major-leaguers, still green from college, hitting against Goliath pitching.

TOMBO JORDAN, his teeth gritting and a light in his eyes, went up to hit. He was going to get on, some way. He watched a strike. He waited for a ball. Then another ball. The next one had to be good,—he swung,—a foul. The next, a ball, the pitcher trying to work him. Then came a "cripple," splitting the pan, and Tombo met it squarely for a single to center, as the crowd roared encouragement. The next hitter sent him down with a sacrifice, and old Joe Elliott, looking after Tombo, went up to the plate swinging two bats. Got to bring Tombo in. A bet. Win this old game, see? How—what?

Why wait? Eying the ball carefully, old Joe Elliott crashed the first one thrown to him, intended as a sneak strike, crashed it hard and far to left center for a solid two-base hit. Tombo raced over the plate and old Joe, the strain snapping completely, brought up on second base laughing like a schoolboy. Things were all right again! And Tombo, too! If only Thea saw it—but then, she must have.

The Bears did not score again, but it made no difference, for old Bill Lynch whiffed the first and third Goliaths in the first half of the ninth, and Tombo Jordan pegged out the middle man after a great stop back of second. Old Joe grinned as he clutched that throw. Tombo Jordan didn't need looking after, not his buddy, Tombo!

On the way to the club-house, past the bench, Tombo took Joe's arm and whispered in his ear:

"I'll give you that two hundred out of my next pay-check, and you make Doreen give back that note. I never want to see her again, kid."

"Sure, O. K., Tombo." Joe grinned. "But say, let's hurry and get dressed. Thea and her dad will be looking for us at the Regent, for dinner."

"Never mind about me," Tombo began. But just then Dempsey Myers climbed over the rail near the bench and interrupted them.

"Hey, Elliott," he grinned. "You're the goods! I never saw anything like you on first. I've told the boss he could raise you, like Jordan, or I'd write him out of the big leagues, see? You sure saved that old ball-game! And that double play—but then, it was more of a double play than the crowd knew anything about, hey?" He looked at Tombo with a grin.

"Say, Myers," said Joe impulsively, "this Tombo is a ball-player, don't forget it! See those stops he made, and those throws? He was in there to win, too, Myers."

Together the reunited buddies went on to the showers.

"SOMEHOW Tombo gave me the slip, Thea," Joe explained, an hour later at the hotel. He was uneasy. "I told him you'd be here, and for him to come along. He's a great guy, Tombo is, and I'm sure sorry—"

"Yes, he called me up a few minutes ago." Little Thea Moorefield had a twinkle in her dark blue eyes. "You two must have a regular admiration society. He could hardly quit talking about what a wonderful fellow you are, Joe. But he was not telling me any news."

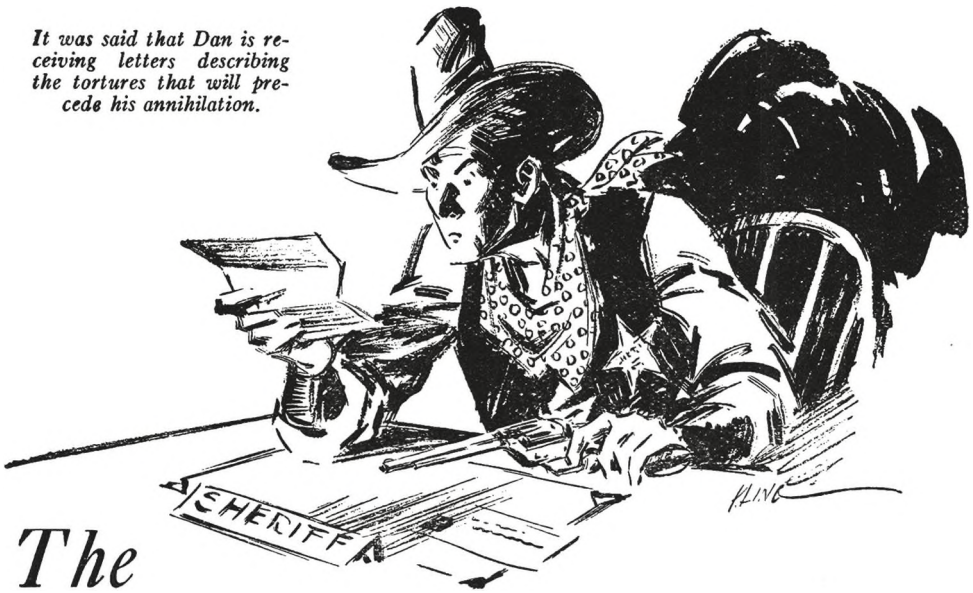
"Listen, Thea, Tombo—" Joe began, ill at ease and flushing.

"I'm sick of hearing about Tombo," Thea pouted. "You were always writing me about him, and sending me clippings about him, and—"

"But you told me to look after him!" Joe protested, his heart stuttering within him. "You always asked about him."

"Well, I couldn't be showing too much interest in *you*, could I?" Thea fended. "How would *that* look?"

"Wait, wait a minute, now, Thea," Joe stammered awkwardly, as warm realization of an unknown truth raced through his whole being. A moment later when he had recovered his balance, old Joe Elliott began looking after himself—and Thea.



It was said that Dan is receiving letters describing the tortures that will precede his annihilation.

The Capture of Bad Bill

By

Bass Yarling

Wherein the mystery of Skeena Dan is solved at last and a remarkable journey is veraciously described.

Illustrated by W. O. Kling

ONE of the most mediocre things in the world is an unraveled mystery. Even members of the mystery-solving fraternity, which includes all newspaper reporters as well as an occasional detective, feel this way about it now and then. There's something inherent in a solution which keeps it from living up to the mystery it abolishes.

I don't suppose there ever was a more stimulating creature than the "Hound of the Baskervilles"—as long as he was a mystery. The Baskervilles or anyone else could have been justly complacent about having him around the premises. But when the mystery was unraveled, so was he; he turned out to be nothing but an ordinary hound-dog that had been to the drug-store. The "Gold Bug" itself was in dénouement just a lot of algebra.

Contrary to good usage, the "Skeena Dan" Higgins mystery died in the sheriff's office. I shall never forget that whistling Montana midwinter night in the cluttered headquarters of county law enforcement, with Skeena Dan standing grim and silent over the remains of a mystery that deserved a better fate.

The sheriff's office was built across the front of the jail and just back of the rear entrance of the courthouse. It was a nervous frame structure and seemed to hang, as if for protection from a bad town, to the heavy masonry of the jail. It comprised the sheriff's business headquarters, an apartment for his family and a small sleeping-room for a deputy who went out on night calls. Building it was the idea of the county commissioners in the days when the coroner's inquests in Butte attracted bigger and more enthusiastic audiences than the coroner's old office could peaceably accommodate. They erected new quarters for the sheriff and moved the coroner into the rooms in the courthouse that he vacated. I think the commissioners had it in for the sheriff!

A jailer stayed up all night in the business headquarters of the sheriff. At one side of this room was a little chamber

where the night deputy slept; at the other side was the door to the sheriff's residence; the back door of the room was the iron entrance of the jail. The place was illuminated by a single electric bulb that glowed rather somberly under a green shade.

The office-room was as untidy as sheriffs' offices usually are. There were several worn chairs that always looked a little lopsided—they were occupied during the day and early evening by deputies, and there never was a sheriff's deputy in the history of the world who sat in a chair any way except tilted back with his feet on something. There were two roll-top desks, hypothetically in use by the sheriff and the under-sheriff. These were a chaos of papers, and their tops were never down. Across the surface of a scarred table where the jailer cocked his feet was spread the jail register, smeared and soiled and for the education of newspaper reporters, mostly illegible. The walls were placarded with notices of escaped criminals and badmen at large. You could usually find two or three notices whose pictures looked like fellows that you had seen somewhere and had probably known.

The night jailer here was "Skeena Dan" Higgins. Dan's hair was the color of a canary-bird that has careened into a well of red ink—sometimes you thought it was yellow and sometimes it seemed red; the skin of his face was always slightly flushed. He was thin, of about medium height and, although not of intimidating physique, he was the sort no one ever looks over and then lures into a brawl. His small, deep blue eyes had the expression of a man about to say, "What the hell!"

TWENTY years or so back when Butte was what old-timers refer to as a "real town,"—which means one where whisky, life, money and women are taken easily,—Skeena Dan was sheriff, and ever since his term as sheriff he has been sheriff's deputy. Five or six years ago he asked to be appointed night jailer. Usually none of the deputies craves that job, and Dan has been able to keep it without biting anybody.

Dan is believed to have killed thirty or forty tough *hombres* during his years with the sheriff's force. He wiped the Egan gang off the face of the earth, and the county set up a stone marker on Cadaver Gulch road where he shot it out with Sam Egan. After the big U. P. train robbery in Wyoming, he went down into the Gallatin country and took the Madden boys, who were trying to make a get-away to the coast across Montana. When his gun was emptied, he laid Perry Madden out cold with the butt, and broke Bert's neck in some kind of wrestling hold.

Most new reporters in Butte quickly learn about Dan's record and try hard to ingratiate themselves with him. I used to bring him hamburger sandwiches every night about midnight when I was making my last call at the sheriff's office before our deadline. We all figured him as a mine of red-hot copy, ready to be worked for feature stories. It didn't take us long to discover that only the first half of that appraisal was true. After you had become real chummy with him you might be able to trick him into saying something about the weather; the comment was likely to be derogatory. But I tapped him for a flow of language that lasted for a good three-quarters of an hour on that wild, blizzard-ridden night of the mystery-unraveling. In view of this fact, I suppose I ought to be satisfied, even if my choicest mystery was ruined—for Dan was the silentest of all the silent men of the great open spaces.

SEVERAL years before Skeena Dan became sheriff, and just a little after his old man traded enough votes to old Jake Thorkelson to get him a job on the deputy force, the big mystery started. When I came to town this mystery had become an ancient wheeze in the newspaper office. Instead of showing a cub reporter type-lice, the way they do in Roundup or Big Timber, a city editor in Butte was in the habit of sending him over to see Skeena Dan and get the story about how Dan brought "Bad Baltimore Bill" McGuire, the famous killer, all the way across the country from Baltimore to Butte. That's how a cub was initiated. If the boy seemed rather young, Dan was moderately gentle about throwing him out.

The milder rumors concerning the mystery were to this effect:

—That when Dan was a punk of a deputy, about twenty-five years of age, he was sent to Baltimore to bring back a notorious killer known as Baltimore Bill McGuire, who was wanted in Montana for some vague atrocity.

—That Baltimore Bill had established himself as leader of the amalgamated criminal gangs of the East Coast, was six and a half feet tall, weighed two hundred eighty

pounds and had once licked John L. Sullivan and his sparring-partners in a barroom fight.

—That Dan captured Bill after a gun-battle in which half the Baltimore police force was massacred.

—That on the North Coast limited, another gun-battle took place and after Baltimore Bill had been subdued at the point of a gun, Dan invited him into a stateroom to fight without firearms and stripped to the waist, and that Dan "broke Baltimore Bill with his bare hands."

—That Dan brought McGuire to the Montana State Prison, from which he escaped, killing half a dozen guards and tearing out a section of the surrounding stone wall.

—That Baltimore Bill went back East and established himself as crime caliph of the nation, and that the crime waves in New York and Chicago are traceable to him.

—That Baltimore Bill vowed terrible vengeance on Skeena Dan and that Dan is constantly receiving letters describing the tortures which will precede his annihilation.

—That McGuire is wearing Dan down by postponing the fatal blow.

—That Skeena Dan's spirit has been broken by the years of suspense and the knowledge that ultimately he will meet a horrible death.

Of course, Skeena Dan had only a faint idea of these rumors, but I think he knew their general import. Surely they were given support by the flavor of his conduct after he became jailer. He was rarely seen outside the sheriff's office, and when he did appear on the streets during the day he wore a pair of dark spectacles which most people took for a disguise. I didn't believe a small fraction of the rumors but I thought it probable there was a story lurking among them somewhere.

I TOLD the boys at the Butte *Miner*, where I worked, that I was going to sift them down some day; I had a clue or two. I shouldn't have used the words, *sift* and *clue*, for they won me the name of "Hawkshaw" and I found myself committed to something altogether unreasonable. Still, there is nothing more pestiferous to a newspaper reporter than rumors that mess up the imagination and refuse to hatch out. I know that a rumor which, though resembling a whale's egg, hatches out a gnat, doesn't improve the sum-total of human happiness by its hatching. That is, I know it now—in those days it was something I had yet to learn.

ON the morning of the day that ended with Skeena Dan's talking marathon, I arose with a night-club headache. I usually quit work at an hour when foundations for many of tomorrow's major headaches are being laid at the Brown Derby, which is two blocks down the street from the Daily *Miner* on the way to my room. The night before, I'd dropped in the Brown Derby for a night-cap; we morning-paper men work from two in the afternoon until two in the morning and have to figure out for ourselves what to do in the remaining twelve hours. I didn't get away from the Derby until I had absorbed the story of a blonde's life, in the first person, and night-caps for two weeks in advance.

The next afternoon, I managed to agonize my way to the office an hour or so late. "Sligo" Cummins, our city editor, was enjoying a grand Irish tantrum. It seemed the wife of Walter Hildebrand had left him. He had taken her out of the Follies to preside over his "model ranch" down near Bozeman. He was the son of old John F. Hildebrand, railway czar and "empire builder," so Walter didn't have any more money than a promising railroad and five thousand acres of Montana could make him. News of Mrs. Hildebrand's departure from the ranch was communicated to me by Sligo in between unpleasant generalizations about newspaper reporters. I told him that I didn't have her.

"Now don't get shmart!" howled Cummins. "Sure an' she's come in town this marnin', and filed suit for divorce."

"Life is like that," I sympathized; "but I'm not covering the courthouse, you know, old son."

"I'll cover *you!*" bawled our genial city ed. "She's the rale Polly LeClere that was in the Follies. Her man is worth five million. You'll be afther gettin' to hell over to the Finlen Hotel—and have me a column of interview from the poor thing on how he mistr'ated her!"

Wind was beginning to whine in the canon and wisps of snow were blowing about as I started to the Finlen.

I telephoned the suite of Polly LeClere Hildebrand. She had as chaperon an old battle-ax who answered the phone, and who refused to let her girl friend be interviewed. She had been attached in some way to

Polly, in the East, and had come West in the rôle of companion, to live with the Hildebrands—no doubt to testify in the inevitable divorce proceedings.

It didn't take me long to guess that this was going to be a gilt-edged, million-dollar divorce-suit. The plan to separate Walter from all of his matrimonial and most of his transcontinental railway ties, had been worked out with real acumen. The complaint showed the battle-ax had snooped efficiently—she had done her job well.

Foiled over the phone, I went to the Hildebrand suite and knocked at the door. Several times the battle-ax slammed the door on me. At last I borrowed a coat from a bell-hop and effected an entrance with a tray of dinner.

The ex-chorine was reclining on a *chaise-longue,* playing a languorous game of solitaire. I placed my tray on the bed and had cleared my throat to tell her that the only way for her to protect her own interests in the suit was to tell the whole pitiful story to a sympathetic sob-brother like myself, when I was recognized by the duenna. I hope to be caught with a Government oil-lease if the old dragon didn't haul off and fetch me as authentic a belt under the right eye as ever reëchoed in these mountains.

"Will you get out and stay out?" she inquired. It occurred to me that I would.

My right eye had closed up for the night when I returned to the office. Cummins saw me and burst into a sarcastic laugh. I told him what had happened, and he regarded me with an Irish emotion that passes in this country for pity mingled with disgust. "You might as well quit for the night," he brogued. "Sure, there's nothin' left for the likes of you but to get the Higgins story. Ye've sunk that low!"

THAT was appreciation, in the journalistic argot. I went to the Brown Derby and laid up night-caps for another week in advance. The blonde came in. It was my turn, so I told her the story of my life up to the last chit-chat with the city ed. We had more night-caps. She wept and told me I needed the inspiration of a woman. The blonde, it seemed, had inspired a number of men to big achievements but they were all ungrateful. They had kicked her out of the window when success flew in at the door—or something like that. The thing for me to do, she said, smiling bravely through her tears, was to turn the laugh on the city ed by really getting the Skeena Dan story—then I'd have the laugh on everyone. I suddenly wanted to have the laugh on everyone. What could be more reasonable than simply getting that story? I started for the sheriff's office with new courage and vision.

IT must by this time have been eleven o'clock. Wind screamed through the neck of the cañon and blasted the town. It blew up typhoons of dust and new snow in the street and flecked the plate-glass of store windows with particles of ice. Street lights did intermittent jigs on their rusty suspensions. It was a grand night for the unraveling of an ancient mystery. The mystery was soon to unravel, and I was to feel that something big had gone out of my life. A mystery unraveling is like a reunion with an old girl whom you've dreamed about for a long time. Henceforth, despite the persuasive words of blondes and city editors, I shall leave my mysteries and old girls alone. They fare better confined to the imagination.

The sheriff's office shook and rattled in the gale. As I reluctantly turned the door-knob, the wind took the play away from me and bashed the door open.

"Shet that door!" yelled Skeena Dan from the inside.

This was encouraging—Skeena Dan's greeting amounted almost to garrulity, in the ears of one accustomed to his grudging monosyllables. I dropped into a chair and rested my feet on the sheriff's desk. "Terrible night," I remarked.

"Um," commented Dan.

I could see now that he had noticed my black eye and wanted to say something about it. Instead of doing so, he began plodding around the office, his hands locked behind his back. Now and then he would stop in front of an escaped criminal notice and read it through from beginning to end.

At last he was before me, looking at my shiner again. With a mighty effort, he released the words that were itching to get out. "Where'd you git that?" he asked.

Just then I had a stroke—probably a stroke of genius. A newspaper reporter is lambasted with everything else; perhaps he's lambasted with genius once in a long while.

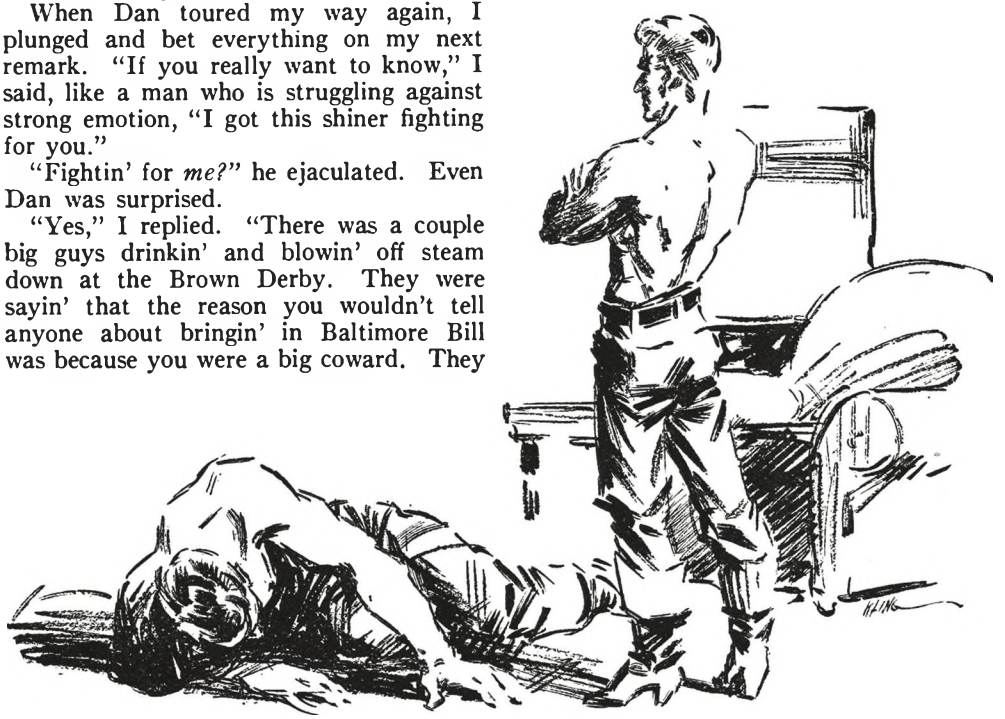
"I'd rather not talk about it," I responded craftily. "All I got to say is, these guys can't razz you when *I'm* around, and get away with it!"

Skeena Dan gave me a blank look and went for another promenade. Several times he seemed as if about to speak, but headed himself off; he was used to overcoming such silly impulses. I was beginning to fear I had overbid my hand.

When Dan toured my way again, I plunged and bet everything on my next remark. "If you really want to know," I said, like a man who is struggling against strong emotion, "I got this shiner fighting for you."

"Fightin' for *me?*" he ejaculated. Even Dan was surprised.

"Yes," I replied. "There was a couple big guys drinkin' and blowin' off steam down at the Brown Derby. They were sayin' that the reason you wouldn't tell anyone about bringin' in Baltimore Bill was because you were a big coward. They said you were afraid somebody'd get you if you spilled that story."



Rumors were to the effect that Dan invited him into a stateroom to fight without firearms, and that he "broke Baltimore Bill with his bare hands."

"Who was those guys?" he asked sharply.

"Just a coupla big guys," I said hurriedly, feeling that I was letting myself slip into a bad place. "They said that was the reason you stuck around the sheriff's office. Course, I couldn't stand to have no bozos talkin' like that about as good a friend of mine as you are."

"Um," said Skeena Dan.

"So I give battle. . . . . Guess I'm billed to lose my job on account of this eye," I added plaintively.

DAN stared at me for a moment. I didn't have to simulate misery; life in general had been contributing to the effect all day. He resumed his tour of the room. Conscientiously he re-read each bad-man notice. He wandered to the window and gazed out at the blizzard for a long time. The wind sobbed in the canon. The swinging of the corner light kept the long slim shadows of trees lengthening and contracting in a grotesque dance on the street. So powerful were the assaults of the storm on the flimsy office of the sheriff that the electric light, hanging from the ceiling, was ticking back and forth.

It seemed as if the elements themselves had taken pains to produce a perfect setting for the unraveling of a great mystery. I shouldn't have been surprised had Baltimore Bill made a dramatic appearance, ready to fight it out to death with Dan there in the office.

Abruptly, Skeena Dan turned from the window and came to me.

"Sonny," he said, placing his hand on my shoulder, "I never went back on no friends of mine yet and I don't aim to start in now. Yore fool editor's been pesterin' you fellers for years to git this here yarn out of me, but I didn't figure it ever was anybody's business. Still and all I didn't allow you'd ever have to take out after anybody on account of gittin' mixed up with me. You didn't have to light into

them fellers, but sence you did I want you to know I right down appreciate it. I aint much of a talker, but you jest pacify yoreself and I'll tell you all the story there is to it. There aint much."

I KNEW I'd won—I knew I'd bust a big one in the *Miner* the next day and ram a real yarn down Sligo Cummins' Irish throat. For some reason though, I didn't feel very proud of myself as Skeena Dan walked up and down the room, doing violence to my most intriguing mystery. . . . .

Dan talked in a low voice, lest he disturb the deputy, sleeping in the next room.

"I never said nothin' about this here so-called mystery," he mumbled, "because I never figured it was nobody's business. It kinda reflected on me as an officer, you might say. Leastways, it was a joke on me any way you look at it, although it come out all right.

"It wasn't no mystery at all—and it wasn't rightly no story, neither, till folks got to buzzin' around about it years after it happened—like them galoots you took out after. Sech people as that was the people who made a mystery out of it, the durn fools! It wasn't no mystery at all.

"The way it started was this way. My pap, he was a political power in the old days up thar in the Squawfoot mountain district whar I was raised. Mighty fine man too. Took nobody's lip, Pap didn't. Wal, Pap, he fixed it so old Jake Thorkelson who was runnin' for sheriff wouldn't have to worry none about the Squawfoot Mountain vote if Jake would take holt of me and l'arn me somethin'. I was jest a green punk of a kid about twenty-five years old, and I hadn't got no further out of the mountains than Horse Prairie. When old Jake was elected he made me a deppity.

"I done right well to start with. Lot of luck, of course. First pop out of the box, I brought in an old feller who was rated as a purty bad customer. He was an old mountaineer up thar in the mountains, who had shot his woman when she—wal, they aint no call to go into that; you wouldn't believe it nohow. They made a common joke out of it. I was goin' to say that he shot her, like he would a horse, when she broke her leg—but we'll pass that over.

"I done right well with some other bad *hombres,* but it didn't l'arn me nothin'. Jest the matter of gittin' the drop on a feller and then singein' him up a little if he got mean.

"So one day Sheriff Jake, he called me in and said he had a big job for me. Said he wanted me to go clean to Baltimore to bring back the roughest feller that was ever in Montana. He was wanted for stealin' somethin' out here and they had him locked up in Baltimore. He was wanted for a lot of deviltry in the East too, but we had the first call on him. Jake called him 'Bad Baltimore Bill' McGuire or some sech fool handle. Said I knowed him when he was around Butte. I didn't ric'lect nobody with no sech fool handle as that, though.

"Jake, he explained to me about how to handle the exterdition papers. 'Dan,' he said, 'you come back with this here Bad Bill, and don't let nothin' stop yuh. The county's standin' all yore expenses and if you let him git away the Daily *Miner's* jest nacherally goin' to skin me alive. I wouldn't of picked you out for this here job if I didn't allow you had more gumption than all the rest of my deppities put together.' He really said that, only I wouldn't want you put that in yore paper. The *Miner* in them days was jest like it is now—always blowin' off about somethin', an' they wanted to git Jake Thorkelson turned out.

"Wal, I got there all right, except the niggers wouldn't let a man alone on the trains, and the fellers in the hotels was always grabbin' a body this way and that. I got the exterdition papers fixed up and went down to the Chief of Police. I told him I come to bring William McGuire back to Montana and give him my credentials.

"He looked at me for a minute and asked me whar my deppities was. I told him I was all the deppity I had. He said I wasn't aimin' to take Bill McGuire back to Montana all alone, was I? I said I didn't have no orders to take but one pris'ner back. He said he didn't mean it thet-away, but one man couldn't take Bill McGuire clean across the country to Montana without no help. I said the State of Montana was a powerful rich commonwealth but it couldn't afford to hire no militia to act as nursemaid to a burglar jest because they caught him in Maryland.

"THEY was a bunch of young dudes standin' around with paper and pencil writin' down ever'thing I said. They crowded up to me and asked me a lot of fool questions. Then they all run out.

"Hell's fire—when the papers come out that evenin', you never seen anything like

"'Dan,' he yells, 'yo're goin' to make me lose my senses—you've made me stand about all flesh and blood can stand!'"

it! They was big headlines about '*Tough Wild Deputy Dumfounds Chief Wagner; Says He'll Take Bill McGuire Back to Montana Alone.*' I read the writin' until I got clear plumb disgusted. In one of 'em they was a pitcher of me comin' out of the city hall. Some danged smart-aleck ph'tographer took it, with me in my old five-gallon hat! I had my Sunday hat along but it had been pinchin' my head and I was wearin' my old one.

"They had a long piece about McGuire —how he'd licked nearly ever' officer on the Baltimore police force, and was wanted in half a dozen states. He was supposed to be the worst *hombre* in them parts. I aint sayin' I wasn't beginnin' to git a mite oneasy by then, though.

"Wal, the next mornin' I went to the Chief ag'in, to git my pris'ner. He said shorely I aint serious about tryin' to take McGuire back alone. I said, 'Why not?' He said Bill was twict as big as me, and the toughest char'cter they ever had in Baltimore. Then some of the newspaper fellers rushed at me and I guess I did blow off a little steam. Some of the pieces they put in was sent back here and the boys joshed me right smart about 'em when I come back.

"Wal, a whole squad of policemen went down to the cells with me to bring McGuire up. We was a-goin' along the corridor fearful-like when some one hollered, 'Hey, Dan!' I looked around and the feller that hollered was a-stickin' his hand through the bars to shake hands. I never was so doggone beat in my life! It was Little Willie McGuire, that I knowed well in Butte.

"We called him Little Willie as a kind of comical joke, you might say, because he was so big—about six feet six inches, and all gristle. I don't know why it didn't strike me that the man I was to bring back was Little Willie, 'less it was because no one ever called him Bad Bill, or Baltimore Bill, in Butte.

"He wasn't bad and he didn't mean no harm. He was jest a big, good-natured, fun-lovin', clumsy boy who was strong as a ox and bigger'n one. Boylike, he was always fightin' and playin' pranks and gettin' into scrapes. He was always flingin' folks around when he got to scufflin'. But he was straight—I would have banked on it. One time I and he had to clean out a joint in Butte all by ourselves when we caught 'em stackin' the cards in a poker game; we was bein' took. Willie, he didn't mean no harm.

"One of the policemen said: 'Don't try to go in that cell alone, Officer! That feller's dangerous!' They unlocked the

cell and I told 'em to git on away. I wanted to talk to my man alone, I told 'em. Wal, the policemen drawed their guns and backed away and kept Willie covered when I talked to him. Great big grown men!

"Pore Willie had ball and chains on and was manacled up somethin' scandalous. 'Pardner,' he said, 'if you got any regard for an old pal, git me out of this here hell-hole! The people around here is clear plumb crazy and the cops is jest like a lot of flies buzzin' around a man.' He complained with tears in his eyes that they wouldn't give a man nothin' to eat fittin' for a hawg.

"I told him I'd come to take him back to Montana to the hoosegow and I thought he was a-goin' to break right down and cry, he was so happy. I never seen a feller so pleased to go to jail.

"Wal, the policemen undid his manacles and marched him down the hall to the office. We marched in between them. They went four abreast in front of us and four abreast behind us. All of 'em had their shootin'-irons out. I couldn't keep from sniggerin'.

"When we got to the office the Chief had the ungodliest assortment of chains and sech-like out that I ever laid my eyes on. They was an Oregon boot, a strait-jacket, ball and chains, great big handcuffs, and more iron riggin' than you could shake a stick at.

" 'You'd better git this feller trussed up good and proper before you start out to Montana with him,' the Chief said.

"I said, 'I don't want none of them things.'

"He like to had another fit, but it didn't do him no good. Willie and I jest walked out of that place like nothin' had happened." Dan gave a faint chuckle.

"WAL, we went to the station," he continued. "Willie's pa and ma was there. His home was in Baltimore, and they'd come down to see him off. She was a little white-headed woman and cryin' like all get-out. The old man was a-tryin' to comfort her, but I couldn't see that it done much good. I walked away so Willie could talk to his kin private-like.

"All of a sudden the danged train come snortin' in. A big crowd was a-pushin' around tryin' to git on and the first thing I knowed, Willie had disappeared. That give me a scare, but I didn't know what else to do about it but git on. The nigger, he showed me to my place and when I got thar, thar was Willie, lookin' solemn.

" 'Dan,' he said, 'you aint very careful about yore pris'ners. I might of took a notion to got away.'

"I said, 'I aint afeard of nothin' like that, Willie.'

"Wal, we rid several hours without sayin' a word. Willie was purty glum. Finally he turned to me and said: 'Dan,' he said, 'I don't know how to say it, but yo're all right with me as long as you live. Ef you aint a white man, they never was no sech animal! My old pa and ma know I been a purty harum-scarum boy, but they've yet to see me the first time in handcuffs. You've shore made me beholden to you long's I live.'

"I said, 'Say no more, Willie,'—and we rid on. We got up a pinochle game with a coupla fellers and I never once let on Willie was a pris'ner. One of the fellers was a salesman from Fort Wayne. I don't ric'lect what the other one did.

"Wal, we got to Chicago and had to change trains there. I knowed Willie was a great baseball bug, so I said what did he say if we stay there all night and take in a baseball game. He said did I mean it and I told him I wouldn't of said it if I didn't mean it. We checked our grips and went out to the ball-park. Bein' early, we went to a saloon across the way from the grandstand and had a bracer or two.

"Then we went to the ball-game. Wal, they must have been a big lodge convention in town, for I never seen as many people in my life. A mob was millin' around at the gate and what did I do but lose Willie again. I was genu-ine uneasy this time, for I knowed it would mean a lot to Willie to make a get-away. I set through the game but I didn't see no more baseball than if I was a-brandin' steers.

"After the game, I tried to figure out what to do. I thought of tellin' the Chicago police. It looked like that would be an ornery way to do Willie, but it didn't seem like anything I could do would be halfway right. So I went across the street to the saloon whar Willie and I got our drinks and set down to think it out.

"I hadn't been thar five minutes till some one runs up and grabs me. It was Willie.

" 'Dan,' he said, exasperated-like, 'yo're the carelessest feller I ever seen! You act like you was tryin' to git shet of me.'

"I said, 'Don't git no ideas like that in yore head, Willie,' I said. 'If I come back

without you, I wont have no more job than a jack-rabbit. I knowed you'd be here somewhar!'

"THE next mornin' we had to git a train out o' town at a little after ten," Dan went on, his face flushed with the unusual strain of talking. " 'Gainst we got up and looked at the sights for a while, it was train-time, and we went to the station on a run. We got thar and had to run for the train. It was leavin'. All Willie had was a little foody bag and I had two big suitcases with all my truck and ever'thing.

"Wal, the long and short of it was he caught the train and I didn't! I was purt' near crazy. Willie, he must have figured by then that I was jest tryin' to give him a chanct to make a break—and anyways, it looked like no man was goin' to be big fool enough to let a chanct like that go by.

"I set down in the station and danged near cried. I wasn't much more'n a kid, you might say, and it looked like I'd shore went back on old Jake. First I thought I'd stay in Chicago and git me a job till things had kind of blowed over back in Butte. Then I thought that would be an unmanful way to do Jake. A *man* would of come back and face the music. So I took the next train out, which was about twelve hours behind Willie's train.

"That was the miserablest day and a half I ever spent. We come to Montana and Billings was the first stop. It was about 'leven o'clock at night. I couldn't sleep none, so I got off the train to walk up and down the platform and think. I was tryin' to figure what to say to Jake when I got to Butte, for I was just eight hours away. Wal, I'd no sooner stepped off the train steps than I thought some one was a-tryin' to blackjack me—I was hit an awful belt between the shoulders, and dragged on the platform. It was Willie.

" 'Dan,' he yells, almost cryin', 'yo're goin' to make me lose my senses! You've made me stand about all flesh and blood can stand!' He wanted me to take handcuffs and handcuff us together till we got to Butte. I laughed at him and said I wasn't frettin' none—I knowed he'd show up somewhar along the line. Maybe I wasn't some liar!

"Wal, we got back to Butte and went to the sheriff's office. Willie kept squirmin' in his seat and watchin' me as if he was afeard somebody was a-goin' to sperrit me away.

"We went in and set down. Old Jake was thar. 'Glad to see yuh, Dan,' he said. 'Hope you didn't have much trouble bringin' this tough feller back.'

"Willie, he wilted in the chair. 'Sheriff,' he said, groanin'-like, 'if you had any idea the hell I been through bringin' yore deppity back, you'd almost want to turn me loose!' "

Skeena Dan fell silent. The walking continued. I couldn't think of anything to say. Even the wind had ceased to howl; the blizzard had blown over.

Few Easterners have any conception of a Montana chinook. The bitterest weather in the dead of winter is often suddenly broken up by one of them. A warm wind blows in from the west and almost instantaneously slices the snow off. Now a chinook obviously had struck. Already it was getting warmer. The courthouse clock bonged twelve-thirty.

I ROUSED myself. A single detail still troubled me. "Dan," I said, "there's just one thing I'd like to have cleared up. If that's all there is to the story, why do you stick around the sheriff's office all the time? Looks to me like you'd want to be out in the hills pinchin' guys, the way you used to. People wonder about that."

"Son," he replied, "they aint no work for a sheriff's office now'days except arrest a few pore old dry-land stillers that's starvin' to death and can't make a livin' except by makin' up a batch of whisky now and then. You aint tryin' to sujest that a real man would waste his time sloshin' around in the mud after them pore old coyotes, are you?"

"Well, if you aint figurin' some one's layin' for you, why do you have to wear a disguise whenever you go out in public?"

"Disguise? What disguise?" he asked in evident amazement.

"Those dark glasses."

"Dark glasses? Hell!" snorted Dan. "Them dark glasses aint no disguise! When the movin' pitchers come in, I got an awful hankerin' for Westerns—seemed like I jest couldn't pass a day without seein' some shootin'-match in the pitchers. Danged near ruint my eyes!"

I left the office; somehow I couldn't help thinking of the day when the big boy down the alley told me there wasn't any Santa Claus. A soft wind was blowing from the west; the eaves were dripping.

Sic semper mysteries!

The LAIR

By

JAMES EDWIN BAUM

The tremendous adventure of an American in that Forbidden Land of Africa — Abyssinia — by the author of "Spears in the Sun."

Illustrated by Paul Lehman

The Story Thus Far:

"IT is a land from which no man has ever returned," explained Martindale's interpreter Birhano. And the Abyssinian went on to say that the Danakils, who dwelt in the northern part of his country, were a people of unexampled ferocity, and killed all intruding strangers.

But to Martindale, collecting specimens of Abyssinian birds and beasts for his museum back in America, the proximity of this unexplored land with its strange fauna was a challenge not to be denied.

He called upon the regent Ras Tessayah to ask permission for his collecting expedition, and was introduced to one Trajanian, a sleek Levantine acting as adviser. Afterward Martindale rescued Trajanian from a pack of the pariah dogs which infest the Abyssinian capital, and which had already bitten him painfully. . . . .

As Martindale's collecting expedition progressed toward Danakil-land, he heard repeated stories of the *jingassa,* a strange predatory beast unknown to science that ran in packs through the jungles there. What a feather in his professional cap if he could bring back a specimen! And at a village on the borders of the Danakil country he found wild excitement: the Danakil had raided it and carried off a number of women—and had left behind one prisoner, a hardy upstanding fellow who won Martindale's regard by his courage in the face of imminent execution. Martindale saved the Danakil—the Leopard, his native

The Sheik fired; the Nubian dropped like a shot bird. Then—Martindale leaped across the fire!

of the LEOPARD

name was translated—by buying him from the village chief; he tried the man out as gunbearer—taking the precaution of removing the powder from the cartridges in the gun; then convinced of his loyalty, the American boldly set forth under his guidance into this land from which no man had returned.

It was shortly afterward that Martindale made a discovery of great significance—found in a shallow well a stratum of diamond-bearing clay. And, when he resumed his journey, a handful of the precious stones were hidden in his baggage.

Martindale was ill-received by Ibn Ali, the Danakil sheik. When a search of the scientist's baggage disclosed the treasure of diamonds, the explorer was ordered to tell where he had found them. Realizing that his secret was the only guarantee of his safety, Martindale refused until he had been escorted safely out to the borders of the country. Whereupon the explorer was tortured to make him disclose his secret.

The surprising arrival of Trajanian and an American named Todd James won Martindale temporary reprieve. The newcomers, it appeared, were making a fortune by selling in Arabia the slaves they bought from Ibn Ali in exchange for guns. Observing in Trajanian symptoms of hydrophobia, and recalling the adventure with the pariah dogs, Martindale predicted his illness and death—and won respect in consequence. Todd James, however, in rescuing Martindale had threatened Ibn Ali—and was to have been tortured to death when Martindale in turn saved him by offering to guide Ibn Ali to the diamond-field. *(The story continues in detail:)*

A FEELING of relief and light-hearted cheerfulness engulfed Martindale with the announcement of the Sheik's decision.

But he recognized it for a mere physical reaction to that tremor of horror that had passed through his mind at the sight of Todd James lying helpless, spread-eagled upon the sand—silent and apparently without fear at the dread prospect of torture and death. He knew he had not saved the man's life; and he wondered if after all he had done him any real service in thus postponing the inevitable end. But that deep feeling of horror had been so genuine that its reaction did not quickly pass away.

"You will not regret this choice, Ibn Ali," he said. But the Danakil chief merely grunted in reply. The shock and disappointment of Trajanian's death bringing with it the crash of his ambitions, had left him in a state of depression from which he had not yet been able to lift himself. Martindale, looking keenly into his face, saw that this would be the opportune time to press upon him the suggestion he had made before—that the Sheik consider *him* a fit subject to take up the broken thread of international intrigue where Trajanian had dropped it. The Danakil chief had received the proposal before with cool scorn. He had rejected the overtures with acute and penetrating wisdom, likening Martindale's attempt to supplant Trajanian to the actions of a reedbuck in a pit-trap. But upon that occasion Trajanian had been alive and well and his death had seemed to the Sheik too remote a possibility for serious consideration. Now, however, things were different. Ibn Ali stood with the shattered wreck of his ambition at his feet; was that consuming ambition strong enough to cloud his mind?

"Ibn Ali," Martindale craftily proposed, "have you considered the fact that I can find out who Trajanian's backers are, and possibly, without even mentioning the diamond field,—which you and I can keep for ourselves,—secure their assistance? Trajanian is not vital to your plans. You see, if I understand what you said correctly, the Feringi nation from which Trajanian received his pay desires and expects nothing more from you, when they set you upon the ancient throne of Ras Tessayah, than certain concessions, the exclusive trade of the country and your signature upon a few treaties and documents. Trajanian was nothing to them but a tool—a sharp tool, yes—but still only a tool. They will be as pleased to use me in the rôle of go-between as you should be. I can do a great service to you and to them."

Martindale, in thus shrewdly guessing at the demands of Trajanian's backers, felt that he had made a close surmise of the way the Levantine had approached Ibn Ali; he paused with rapidly beating heart for a reply. But the Sheik only grunted again and appeared to give the proposal not the slightest consideration. He called two or three minor chiefs to his side and talked with them in the Danakil language. But as he continued to speak in the guttural tones of his native tongue Martindale, watching his features, saw a look of cunning and feral malice come into his eyes. Then Ibn Ali said with a humorless smile:

"Trajanian is dead. W'en we are go to fin' the place of the lit-tle stone' tomorrow, we are talk of these thing'."

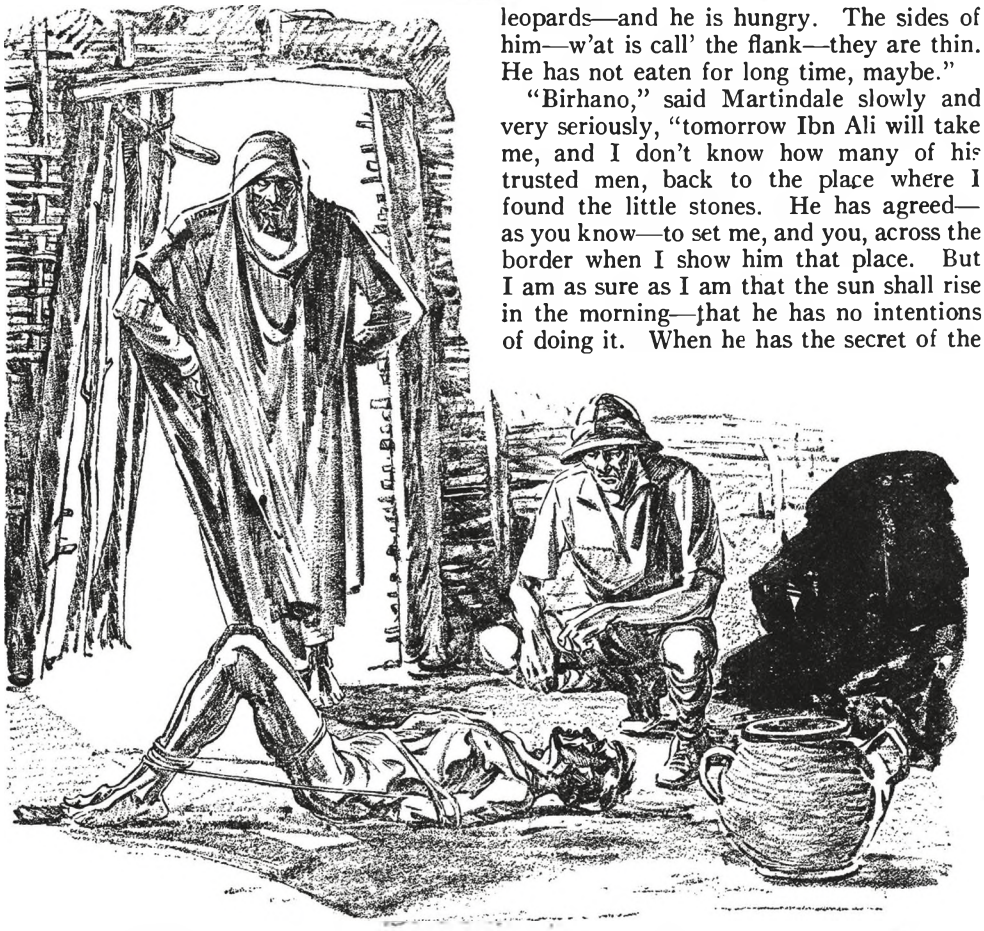
THE first real ray of hope that Martindale had known since his captivity came over him with a rush. Could it be possible that this astute intriguer would fall into his trap? Would he actually come to trust him far enough to allow him to leave, to go scot-free, under the hallucination that he would work for the accomplishment of the sinister scheme that had animated Trajanian? It would be an easy thing for the Sheik to understand a prisoner's *profession* of faith to obtain release, but could he, could any man, believe that once free he would stick to such a promise?

"Ibn Ali," Martindale replied firmly with the appearance of trading upon his advantage, "I must be well paid for my services. That must be understood between us."

The fixed smile deepened on the bearded face. "Oh, that is to be all right. Those thing' are surelee to be taken care of."

"And one more thing," the white man stipulated, "Todd James must not be harmed until you and I return from the place of the little stones." Martindale had been watching the Sheik with deep concentration, turning over in his mind the chances a demand for the Southerner's release would have. But he knew such a proposal would never do: Ibn Ali would refuse it and might also construe such a demand as a proof of bad faith.

"That, too, is all right. But thi-is thing is not to be talk' about now." Ibn Ali withdrew it summarily from discussion. "W'en we are go for fin' the stone' is much time for talk." He gave orders for the prisoner to be led again to his *tukul*, and with the well-armed and vigilant guards



"Todd, Ibn Ali and I are leaving—take it as easy as you can until—one of us returns."

surrounding them, Martindale and Birhano marched to the Sheik's grass-roofed hut.

Birhano had been much shaken by the sight of the lion. The loose, easy, feline stalk of the great beast, its size, the magnificent black mane, the big yellow glaring eyes, round as fiery balls, and the air of irresistible strength and power that accompanied every motion of the brute had left him in a cold sweat. Lions have been, through a hundred generations, the terror of Africans. It is respect for the great carnivora that keeps the African in his hut every night of his life from sundown until sunrise; the earth-shaking roar of the king is the curfew of a continent and it is rigidly obeyed. Birhano's inherent dread of the lion was even more deep-seated than his fear of the Danakils.

"Oh, Gaytah," he said after they reached the Sheik's hut and seated themselves on the dirt floor, "the *ambassa* is veree *kufanoo*. He is as strong as three *nebur*—leopards—and he is hungry. The sides of him—w'at is call' the flank—they are thin. He has not eaten for long time, maybe."

"Birhano," said Martindale slowly and very seriously, "tomorrow Ibn Ali will take me, and I don't know how many of his trusted men, back to the place where I found the little stones. He has agreed—as you know—to set me, and you, across the border when I show him that place. But I am as sure as I am that the sun shall rise in the morning—that he has no intentions of doing it. When he has the secret of the place he will put me to death. Unless—and it is a very slim chance—he can be persuaded to use me in Trajanian's place. For I have lied to him and promised to help set him upon the throne of Abyssinia. He is so anxious to get there that he may, possibly, let himself be deceived. But I think there is almost no chance for that. The chances are a hundred to one that I shall never come back." At those words Birhano's emotions overcame him, and he seized his master's hand and rubbed it against his forehead with soft, crooning words—this *gaytah* had been good to him.

Martindale withdrew his hand and continued in his low, firm tones:

"It is almost certain that both Ibn Ali and I will not come back. One of us will return—but not both. If Ibn Ali appears at the end of six or seven days then I should advise you to leap upon one of your guards and force them to kill you—quickly. For that will be the best way."

Birhano nodded and Martindale went on, this time musingly:

"It seems that I have been wrong in my opinion of the Leopard. He and his father are still trusted by the Sheik and I don't think this would be true if they had any intention of helping us. However, the Leopard did show by his expression that poison was in the horn cup the slave gave to Todd James. So, if the Leopard speaks to you and makes any suggestion, you must follow—no matter how it seems. For you cannot be worse off than you are now. And of course, it goes without saying, if the Feringi, Todd James, should, by some magic, escape and come for you—you must follow him as your new *gaytah*. I do not know, but I think, he is a very great one—in some ways, far greater than I."

"But that cannot be, Gaytah," the faithful boy replied incredulously.

"It is so," his master replied with conviction. "You do not understand what is in the hearts of Feringies and I tell you—that Feringi has the heart of steel, the metal from which the blades of scimitars are made."

"All these thing' shall be done as you say, Gaytah," Birhano promised fervently.

"The journey to the place of the stones will be three days each way. If you take a pebble each day and put it in a little hole in a corner here—then when there are six pebbles you will know it is time for Ibn Ali or myself to appear."

"Thi-is too shall be done."

CHAPTER XI

SOON after daylight next morning, Ibn Ali summoned his leading chiefs. The Leopard's father, wearing his bright green turban as usual, was prominent in the delegation that waited upon the Sheik. And during the talk that passed between the ruler of the Danakil tribe and his more important henchmen, Martindale could detect a note of disagreement. Understanding not one word of the language, it was some time before he could even guess at the cause of argument. The strenuous and expressive gestures, however, led him to believe that the chiefs were protesting against what they considered a risky decision. Ibn Ali, calm and regal upon his couch, waved aside their fears with a faint supercilious smile.

"He is telling them," Martindale thought, "of his intention to make the journey with me. What reason he gives for doing so I cannot imagine. But today we start for the diamond field. They are protesting, because they fear I may use the same magic on him that they think I employed to kill Trajanian." And then Martindale studied the face of the old mullah with great interest. That crafty individual, curiously, was the only one who seemed to be of the same mind as Ibn Ali. He supported his master and pointed with scorn to the prisoner standing between his guards in a corner of the *tukul*.

Martindale could guess, without using much imagination, that the Leopard's father was extolling the warlike abilities of the Sheik and ridiculing the fears of the other chiefs. So dramatic and expressive were the gestures of the old priest that Martindale, without understanding a word of his talk, could not help feeling the force of his argument. Indeed, he agreed with the mullah entirely. Ibn Ali would be well armed and would take with him at least a few trustworthy men. Given all the luck in the world, how could a single, unarmed white man hope to overcome such an astute master of craft, well armed, even if he should go with but a single retainer?

Watching the mullah's shifty eyes,—those eyes that contradicted so strongly the benign cast of the features,—Martindale felt a slight hope rise within him. Was the old fellow, in his ambition to supplant the Sheik, eager to have his master make the journey because it would leave an opening for a sudden stroke of some sort? Recalling the mullah's passive behavior during his torture, he was forced to admit that the chance of help from the head of the priesthood was almost negligible. But Martindale still half-believed in the Leopard. The young savage's refusal to accept his liberty when bought and paid for at such a high price and his stanchness when the lioness had charged like a tawny bolt of sudden death, were indications of a spirit of loyalty uncommon with savages. The white man concluded that the Leopard, if left to his own devices, would have, before now, made a bold attempt to come to his assistance. Unquestionably he had been prevented by his calm and calculating father whose personal ambitions would govern them both. The fact that the mullah encouraged Ibn Ali to make this journey with his prisoner might mean something—or nothing. But in all likelihood he supported his chief merely from force of habit;

the sane and careful policy of acquiescence that had raised him to his present power.

"No," thought Martindale, for the tenth time, "there can be no help from anyone!"

THE consultation turned out to be a mere matter of form. Ibn Ali listened to arguments impatiently and then announced his decision. More than half the time was consumed by the Sheik in giving orders for the conduct of affairs in his absence, and two or three times Martindale caught the name, "Todd James," and the word "Feringi." The Southerner was to be guarded with a care that perhaps had been accorded to no other prisoner in that boma. Ibn Ali had seen one evidence of the man's quiet deadliness, and Martindale was sure he was emphasizing the dangerous character of the Southerner when he punctuated his guttural words with gestures of great force, striking the couch beside him with tightly clenched fist.

Abruptly the Sheik dismissed the chiefs, and as they filed through the door, stooping to avoid the low-hanging thatch of the roof, he turned to the white man with a shrug that showed more eloquently than words his opinion of the combined brain power of his nominal advisers. He smiled mirthlessly:

"Those ones are say Martindale is the gr-reat mullah in the country of the Feringies. They say he has already kill' Trajanian, and if Ibn Ali go with Martindale into the desert, he too shall die like the mad hyena, jaws lock' tight as with the band' of steel." And the Sheik laughed in a low metallic, grating chuckle. "They are as the lit-tle children. For they have not been to Khartoum, to Aden and to Cairo. They do not know that Ibn Ali and Martindale are the good friend' like the brother. They do not know that Ibn Ali has made the promise to send his friend Martindale to the Feringi countries for buy the guns." And the Sheik's dark visage beamed, and he broke into a smile that was meant to be confidential and reassuring but succeeded only in being craftily enigmatic.

Martindale, noting shrewdly the signs, thought:

"Why should the old wolf attempt to make me believe that I am to be raised to Trajanian's place—to be set free? I would bet a hundred to one he has no such intentions—but why, in the name of heaven, should he try to make me think he has? Why bother to lull me to a sense of false security? Surely not because he fears me! But whatever his reasons, my rôle is to pretend to believe him, for after all, there is an outside chance that his ambitions have, for once, got the better of his astuteness. And I must not forego any chance, even one so remote as this."

Martindale managed to join the Sheik in a laugh at the simple-mindedness of the departed chiefs.

"If they knew of our arrangement," he said, "and if they knew that you will soon be seated upon Ras Tessayah's throne through my efforts, they would realize that I would not call down upon Ibn Ali the curse that destroyed Trajanian—"

But the Sheik wanted it clearly understood that he was far too wise to believe for a moment in the power of that curse.

"Such thing' is nize way all-right to fool those savage' and wild men." His fixed smile reflected a serpentine wisdom, but Martindale saw that in spite of his entire disbelief in the curse, Ibn Ali, try as he would, could not understand how it had worked out so precisely.

"You mus' tell the reason w'y Trajanian died. To your frien' Ibn Ali, you mus' tell the reason."

Martindale would not relinquish even the small advantage that secret gave him.

"It is better not to talk about such things," he said mysteriously.

"W'en the lit-tle stone' is found," the Sheik persisted, "then Ibn Ali mus' know of the reason Trajanian is dead."

"Oh, there's plenty of time for everything," Martindale countered quietly. He was enjoying the Sheik's uncertainty. "When do we start?"

AS if in answer to his question a band of Danakil warriors arrived before the Chief's *tukul*. With the crowd a Somali slave led a beautiful dark chestnut horse, accoutered with the high cantled red leather saddle in vogue all over North Africa. A gay yellow saddle-cloth and martingale adorned with flat silver disks, and a bridle of red leather set off the spirited animal. They stopped outside and waited for the Sheik to appear. Birhano, when he saw that the time had come for his master to leave, kneeled down and touched Martindale's foot with his lips. The gesture, as performed by Abyssinians, has none of the abasement in it one would commonly suppose. How such a thing can be done with dignity is a mystery, but Abyssinians can

do it and lose none of their natural independence of spirit. Birhano stood up and Martindale clasped his hand warmly.

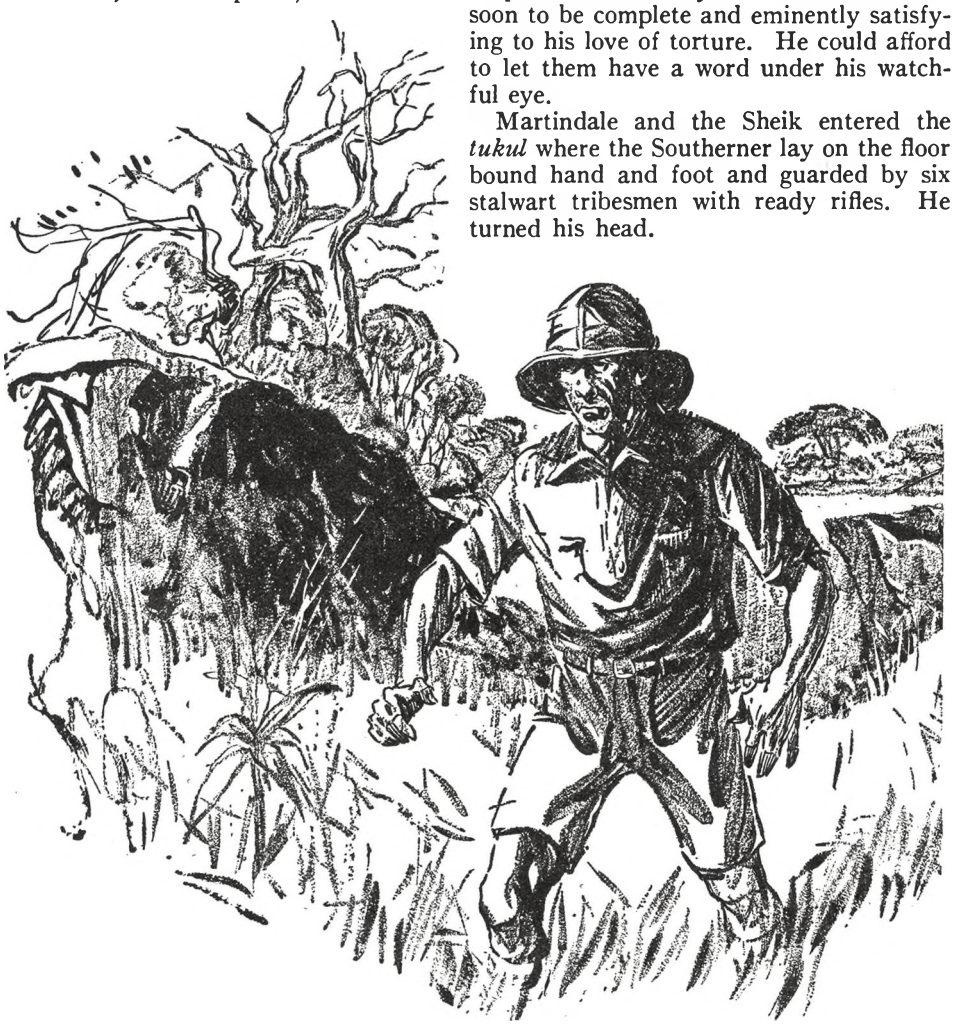
"Remember," he whispered, "all that I told you. Good-by, Birhano, and the best of luck."

"It shall be as you say, Gaytah." Tears were streaming down the boy's cheeks and his master turned away with a heavy heart. Birhano had not once, by so much as a hint, blamed him for embarking upon that rash pursuit of the unknown animal—the *jingassa*—that had led them into this position from which there seemed no retreat. He accepted his condition as he found it, hopeless and despairing, but with his native fatalism a shield and buckler.

Martindale addressed Ibn Ali:

"Before we go," he said, as a matter of course, "I shall say good-by to Todd James." He expected the Sheik to refuse, but Ibn Ali was supremely confident in his power over these two Feringies. His triumph as far as they were concerned was soon to be complete and eminently satisfying to his love of torture. He could afford to let them have a word under his watchful eye.

Martindale and the Sheik entered the *tukul* where the Southerner lay on the floor bound hand and foot and guarded by six stalwart tribesmen with ready rifles. He turned his head.



"Good mawnin', Ma'tindale," he observed in liquidly soft drawling tones. "I hope you rested well."

"Oh, yes," Martindale answered with a cheerfulness he did not feel. And then as he stood looking down upon the serene countenance of the cruelly bound captive, a great pity filled his heart. The man was as surely doomed—and doomed to a terrible death—as a man could be. His bonds must be cutting into the flesh of wrists and ankles, and the spear wound in his arm must be terribly painful, but in spite of it all his rugged features were tranquil as the surface of a sheltered pond. Martindale did not know what to say, what *could* be

It was the afternoon of the third day; Martindale, as he walked ahead, considered his course of action when they should reach the well.

said to this man that would not sound flat and puerile—so he avoided any false note of encouragement.

"Todd, Ibn Ali and I are leaving this morning for a six-day trip." Todd James raised his eyebrows slightly and smiled a polite smile of interest. "We go on an errand. I have Ibn Ali's word that no harm shall come to you until we return." At that phrase the Southerner met the speaker's gaze with a humorous twist of the mouth. Martindale let his right eyelid fall slowly. They understood each other perfectly where Ibn Ali's "word" was concerned. "And before I go," he added, "I want to thank you for what you tried to do for me yesterday."

The bound man shifted his position slightly on the hard earth, a motion of remonstrance. He smiled again whimsically.

"Don't mention it, please, suh. I made a great error there. I should have shot our friend first." And he nodded in the direction of the Sheik, "and finished that little chore. Ah, well," he added resignedly and with entire good nature, "hindsight is always better than foresight."

Ibn Ali's brow darkened, and Martindale feared he might take a forward step and grind that calm face into the hard dirt of the floor with his bare heel. So he said briskly:

"Well, so-long, Todd. Take it as easy as you can until—one of us returns."

"Good day to you, suh—and good luck."

MARTINDALE turned and strode through the low doorway. The Sheik followed with lowering brow.

Ibn Ali had arranged all details of the little expedition in his talk with the underchiefs, for he mounted the restless chestnut horse, seated himself comfortably in the saddle, thrust the great toes of his

bare feet in the small Abyssinian toe-stirrups, picked up the gay red leather reins, spoke a few words to the bystanders and with a keen glance checked up the equipment. A shiny black Nubian slave held a pack-mule laden with water-gourds and food wrapped in goatskin sacks. Two fierce-eyed warriors, armed, however, only with the long-bladed Danakil spears, stood in readiness.

A second slave approached carrying Martindale's heavy double-barreled cordite rifle. He handed the weapon to Ibn Ali and passed up the same small rawhide pouch for cartridges that Birhano had made for his master. The Sheik tucked the cartridge bag somewhere in the folds of his clothing, seized the big rifle, snapped open the breach, examined the two loads with experienced eye, and glanced at Martindale with a derisive expression.

After a few words to his retainers, Ibn Ali spoke to his captive:

"You will walk in the lead. We will follow. It is the time to go."

Martindale set off down the steep slope toward the west. He glanced back and saw the Sheik, riding easily, the big express rifle resting across the chestnut horse's withers, and the two tall spearmen, naked except for rawhide sandals and breech-clouts, striding by the side of the horse. The shiny Nubian slave, leading the pack-mule brought up the rear. A great crowd of warriors and villagers stood in respectful silence watching the departure of the autocrat to whom they belonged, body and soul. That they did not understand the purpose of this journey Martindale knew only too well. It was not for them to know that a diamond field lay only three days' march from their homes.

AS he walked ahead at his long, swinging pace the white man considered this little party: There was but one gun. That the two retainers carried only spears was, he thought, an especially clever provision. Had they too been armed with rifles there would have been a chance—a slim chance to be sure, but still a chance—that the prisoner could secure possession of one gun by a quick move in an unguarded moment; the fallibility of human nature might have given him his chance. But as it was, with Ibn Ali himself carrying the only rifle such risks could be cut down to an absolute minimum. Should one of the vassals relax his vigilance for an instant the white man, at most, could arm himself with nothing better than a spear and, unless very close, this would be useless against the heavy double rifle.

"This old lad," thought Martindale, "gives me new evidence of his unusual thoughtfulness each day. He is far too clever ever to allow me to come within reach of that gun. Escape from an armed and mounted man on this flat desert is as impossible as escape from a speedy gunboat in a canoe at sea. It simply could not be done. Trickery too, is about out of the question. I think he can give me cards and spades at trickery, let me deal, and then beat me—for that is his particular forte and at best I fear I am a poor hand at intrigue. Well, there is one thing though—both of us will not return to the boma! A shot from that big rifle—my own gun—or even a spear-thrust will be infinitely more merciful than his devilish entertainments at the village. Yes, if nothing else offers, I will whirl and make a run for him! Force him to shoot me down. But I shudder to think of the fate in store for Todd James and probably Birhano! Oh, if he only gives me half an opportunity—just a shade of a break!" And he added with a decided shake of his head:

"But he never will. He is too smart!"

THE morning sun was already an hour high when Martindale and Ibn Ali set out but this time it was directly behind them. Martindale knew he would have little trouble retracing his steps and reaching the desert well where the diamonds had been found. During the long wakeful hours of the night he had considered a plan to lead Ibn Ali in another direction; but he had already mentioned that the place of the stones was a three-day march, so no delay could have been gained and there was always—against his better judgment—the thought in the back of his mind that perhaps, after all, the Sheik would be foolish enough to fall in with his suggestion and allow him liberty to carry on the international intrigues of the late Mr. Trajanian. "On the whole," he had concluded, "nothing can be accomplished by setting out in the wrong direction—and if, by a remote chance, the Sheik does intend to fulfill his promise, a false move now would nullify that hope." And so Martindale, after much deliberation, determined to lead his captor as straight as he could to the diamond field.

The first day they made a long march

and camped by a tiny pool of rainwater collected in a rough jumble of lava rocks, sheltered from the fierce rays of the sun by an overhanging ledge. Immediately upon arriving and dismounting the Sheik stationed the two spearmen at Martindale's side while the Nubian slave picketed the horse and pack-mule and cut handfuls of grass from the water's edge for the hungry animals. Ibn Ali sat upon a rock with the big gun across his knees directing the slave and superintending his crude cookery arrangements.

Promptly after the sun dropped, like a red ball of fire, behind the wide expanse of sand the earth cooled with surprising rapidity and a refreshing breeze blew across the desert. The Sheik finished his solitary meal and then ordered the Nubian to relieve each guard in turn. When they too had eaten the slave carried a wicker basket of native bread and a portion of jerked or sun-dried meat to the prisoner. While Martindale ate Ibn Ali came and sat, with the heavy rifle across his lap, some thirty yards in front of the white man.

MARTINDALE, more to make conversation than for any real expectation of receiving information, asked:

"How long do you intend to remain at the place of the little stones?"

"Oh, it is not make much difference," the Sheik answered, carelessly. "This trek is made jus' so Ibn Ali will know w'ere is the place of the stones."

"I am taking you there," Martindale stated, watching his captor's face, "because I rely absolutely upon your word. You have promised that I shall be given my liberty when I have showed you the place. When I get outside I will, of course, find out who Trajanian has been working with, and where he has arranged to get the guns. Then you and I, Ibn Ali, can continue with your plans. There will be no difficulty in putting you upon the throne of Ras Tessayah."

Ibn Ali's eyes met those of his captive and the habitual, fixed and humorless smile was very much in evidence as he answered:

"Cer'ain-ly. The word of Ibn Ali has been given. A great chief does not lie like the common people." But with that apparently frank and conclusive speech Martindale saw the heavy lids veil the dark eyes and sensed an impression of cruel derision, but so intangible that it was almost imperceptible.

"Unless I miss my guess by a mile," the white man thought, "he has no more intention of living up to his agreement than he has of cutting off his right arm. But I must not let him know I suspect that."

"Good," he answered, "and now that we understand each other, it is not necessary for you to keep me longer under guard."

"My veree good frien', Martindale," answered Ibn Ali, raising a hand in good-natured protest, "it is for these savages that you mus' be guarded. They would not understand. It is for w'at you call the scenery of the thing." And he smiled ingratiatingly.

Martindale well knew the Sheik's reasons and readily saw through that slim excuse, but he answered:

"Well, perhaps you're right. You know your own people better than I do."

And he wondered why it was that Ibn Ali seemed so anxious he should believe so obvious a lie. And then it occurred to him that perhaps the Sheik really doubted his ability to force from his captive the secret of the diamond field and because of this was keeping up his pretense and promise of freedom until the place had been reached.

"That, too, with a few other things," he thought, "will come out in the end." And he dismissed the problem from his mind.

WHILE Ibn Ali sat with the big cordite rifle across his knees and talked with his prisoner, the two tall spearmen squatted a few steps behind Martindale and talked together in low gutturals. The Nubian slave busied himself collecting dry grass for the Sheik's bed. At intervals, Ibn Ali raised the rifle and squinted through the open sights. He was testing the light and when only a few moments of the short, tropical afterglow remained and sighting became difficult, he called the guards and ordered them to bind the prisoner's arms securely.

Martindale knew it would be a waste of time to protest against this, so he submitted without a word. He was tired from the long day's march and ready for what sleep he could secure in the uncomfortable position his bound arms necessitated. Ibn Ali ordered the Nubian to arrange the dried gazelle-hide that served during the day as a blanket beneath the crude native pack-saddle and Martindale lay upon this. The slave built a small fire between the captive and the Sheik and retired to the cooking fire where the two spearmen now crouched upon their haunches.

As the tropical night deepened, Martindale lay awake and gazed into the fire in a fit of abstraction. The multitude of thoughts coursed through his mind in endless procession; thoughts of his far-away home, memories of his boyhood on the Midwestern farm. He saw again the pleasant meadow that sloped gently from the old-fashioned rambling house to the cottonwood grove by the meandering stream. He heard his mother's clear voice calling him to dinner—or supper, as it was called on the farm. He remembered that thrilling day so very many years ago when he had dug out a badger on the hillside near the tumbledown stone wall; and his crude attempt to skin the animal by the light of a lantern behind the cow-shed. This had been his first effort at taxidermy and he remembered how the wet skin, filled with inadvertent cuts, had thrilled him. The next day, he had drawn upon his meager savings and sent for a book on taxidermy.

ALL that summer in spare time between the rush of stacking hay and shocking corn, he had studied taxidermy and experimented on gophers, squirrels, rabbits and a miscellaneous assortment of birds until the harness-room in the old barn looked like an animal and bird morgue with his stuffed specimens. Then had come the years of practical work in the small museum of the State agricultural college and, after that, his first collecting expedition, a summer among the Rocky Mountains. After that, any indoor work had been a horror to him. Came more books, with field work during a large part of each year.

Then the fine offer from a big Eastern museum, whose director had seen and admired some of his later work; more years of work and study; collecting trips to Alaska, Mexico and Central America, and later the planning and mounting of large animal groups. Then had come success, recognition, and the privilege to choose from among the great museums of the country; a corps of experienced taxidermists under his direction; a curatorship in one of the finest museums in the world; magazine articles on the far places to which his work had taken him; his first book, a technical treatise on the distribution of species; and a year later, the rambling, conversational book on his first African expedition, a work that achieved real popularity. His lucky discovery of the ancient Maya city and the fame—or notoriety, as he called it—that pleased him in some ways, but bored him in others; and finally this Abyssinian expedition and the rumors of the unknown animal, the *"jingassa,"* that had led him to take such chances in the interest of his profession. His wandering thoughts came back to the present with a shock. Ibn Ali, muffled in his burnous, was speaking:

"The Feringi w'at is tie' up back in the boma, the str-ronghold of Ibn Ali—he is veree bad man, no?" And the Sheik moved nearer to the fire.

Todd James was a knotty problem to Martindale, and he was more than willing to discuss him.

"When did you first meet Todd James?" he asked.

"It was two-three year ago w'en Trajanian bring him to the boma. Trajanian is say: 'Here is the man w'at will get for us the gun, the cartridge. He is veree nize man. Todd James, this is my frien', Ibn Ali, w'ich is the chief of all the Danakils.' " The Sheik paused and Martindale could well believe those remarks had been an exact repetition of the introduction.

"Then, they are go away. Soon is come the guns w'ich are trade for the slave'—oh, it is veree nize business for long time. Then Trajanian come alone to the boma. Todd James is not with him. He say:

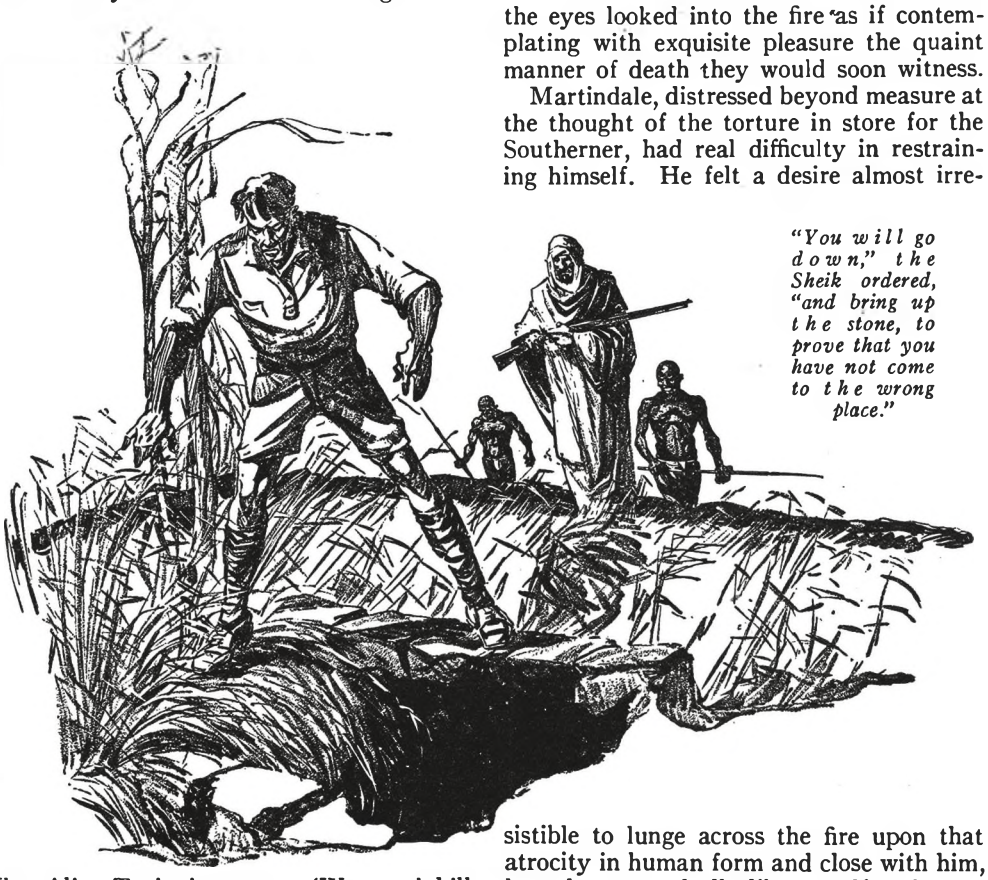
" 'Ibn Ali, you are the great chief. W'y is it not that you are sit in the throne of Ras Tessayah? W'y not?' I say: 'The Danakils are fierce warriors, Ibn Ali is a gr-reat man to fight—but Ras Tessayah have the zebania w'at fight too and there is veree manny. There is too manny for Ibn Ali and the Danakils. That is w'y not,' I say.

"Trajanian, he go *'pouf!'* And he say: 'Oh, ho! That is nothing. I am gr-reat man with the Feringies. If you do w'at I say, you are king of all Abyssinia.' And Trajanian is pound himself in the chest, like that." And the Sheik struck his breast with clenched hand. Martindale could picture the little Levantine outlining his tempting scheme, flattering, pointing out its advantages, making light of difficulties and finally convincing the Sheik that he was too great a man to waste his life as chief of a single barbarous tribe.

"We make the plan," Ibn Ali continued, "and then he say:

" 'It is much foolishness to pay money to Todd James for the guns w'en there is a big Feringi country w'at will give me all the guns I want for Ibn Ali. We mus' kill

this Todd James, you and me. I will bring him here nex' time so he is kill' more easy.' Then you, Martindale, come to the boma. That is veree bad for us. But the lit-tle stone w'at you have—that is veree good for



"You will go down," the Sheik ordered, "and bring up the stone, to prove that you have not come to the wrong place."

Ibn Ali. Trajanian say: 'We mus' kill this one too.' But Ibn Ali—well, you hear w'at I say about the bird and animal and w'y I will not kill you then."

"How fortunate that I refused to tell him where the diamonds came from when he brought out the leopard," Martindale thought. "And by the same token when he knows the location of the diamond field—I am a dead man! Two more days."

THE reflection of the fire showed in bold highlights Ibn Ali's dark face framed in the burnous, the arched nose with its thin, cruel nostrils, the heavy black brows, the Arab beard and that infernal fixed smile that had not the slightest approach to humor in it. Martindale would have felt the most powerful aversion to that countenance even if he had known nothing of the man beneath. As it was, his fingers itched to clasp that hairy throat in a death grip. The Sheik continued:

"It will be for Ibn Ali the gr-reat pleasure to accomplish the death of Todd James w'en this lit-tle *tchid*—trek—is over." And the eyes looked into the fire as if contemplating with exquisite pleasure the quaint manner of death they would soon witness.

Martindale, distressed beyond measure at the thought of the torture in store for the Southerner, had real difficulty in restraining himself. He felt a desire almost irresistible to lunge across the fire upon that atrocity in human form and close with him, bound arms and all; like a wolf at bay to sink his teeth in that bearded throat. With an intensity of disgust that left him weak he turned upon his side and made a bluff at falling asleep. The two wild spearmen returned at a call from their chief and while one lay upon the ground wrapped in a sun-tanned skin, his long-bladed spear beside him, the other stood a few feet behind the prisoner, vigilant and alert. Ibn Ali walked slowly to the bed of dry grass the Nubian had prepared for him, leaned the big cordite rifle against a rock within reach of his hand and lay down. . . . .

The booming cry of a hyena, a succession of deep grunts, came across the desert from a great distance. It was answered by others. Then silence for a long time while the stars looked down through the dry, clear atmosphere, shining and blinking in that intimate, confidential way stars seem

to have in the wilderness. The hyena chorus was resumed, this time much closer to the camp, borne down on the night wind in wild volume. In a short time the foraging cries changed to that triumphant, insane bedlam of sound that announces the finding of a carcass; barks, yaps, ululations, weird and unearthly; a jumble of sound that gives the impression of several dozen dogs engaged in a life-and-death battle—but which only means that two or three hyenas are feeding on a putrid carcass. Martindale, lying on the hard ground, his arms tightly bound behind his back, listened absent-mindedly.

"And that is the song they will be singing over my bones two or three nights hence," he thought. "Yes, these muscles, this flesh which has housed that strange thing I call my 'personality' since the day of my birth, shall be torn asunder and disappear down those red and fetid throats while that same ghoulish concert rises to the calm, smiling stars! What—in the name of those countless shining worlds—is it all about? What is life—death—Time—Space—Eternity? And *what* am I that I should struggle in slavish desperation merely to restrain within this carcass for a few short years that evanescent something we call spirit—when perhaps, like a bird escaping from a cage it will be far better off unfettered, at liberty to seek a far destiny in the illimitable reaches beyond imagination."

THE next day's march was a repetition of the first: the slow pace across the flat tawny desert, the relentless sun, the hot sand and hotter stones underfoot, the Sheik riding comfortably upon the chestnut horse, the big rifle across his saddle, his face muffled to the eyes in his burnous; the two spearmen, vigilant as ever, always by the side of Ibn Ali's horse; the shiny Nubian slave bringing up the rear with the pack-mule. The second camp was arranged in the same careful way as the first; and the prisoner's arms were securely bound as the light began to fail. One or the other of his guards always stood on the alert within spear-length of Martindale's couch. And the heavy cordite rifle was never beyond reach of the Sheik's hand. . . . .

It was the afternoon of the third day; and Martindale, as he walked ahead, considered his course of action when they should reach the well in which he had found the diamonds. His sense of direction had been true, and he was sure they were on the right track. They would reach it before night and that would be the end of the trail, in a very real sense, for him. There was but one thing to do, he had decided. He must make a run for the Sheik and receive a charge from the great gun full in the chest. That was the only alternative to the same horrible fate in store for Todd James. And he must do this before they bound his arms for the night, otherwise Ibn Ali would calmly knock him down with the butt of the gun, not deeming it necessary to shoot a prisoner charging with arms bound.

But Martindale had always that faint vestige of hope—that the Sheik, after all, did intend to use him in Trajanian's place. During their conversations around the fire in the evenings Martindale had played upon the alleged advantages of such a course. He had harped upon that chord to the limit, but he was forced to admit to himself that, judging from the Sheik's answers and his facial expression, the thing was the remotest of remote possibilities.

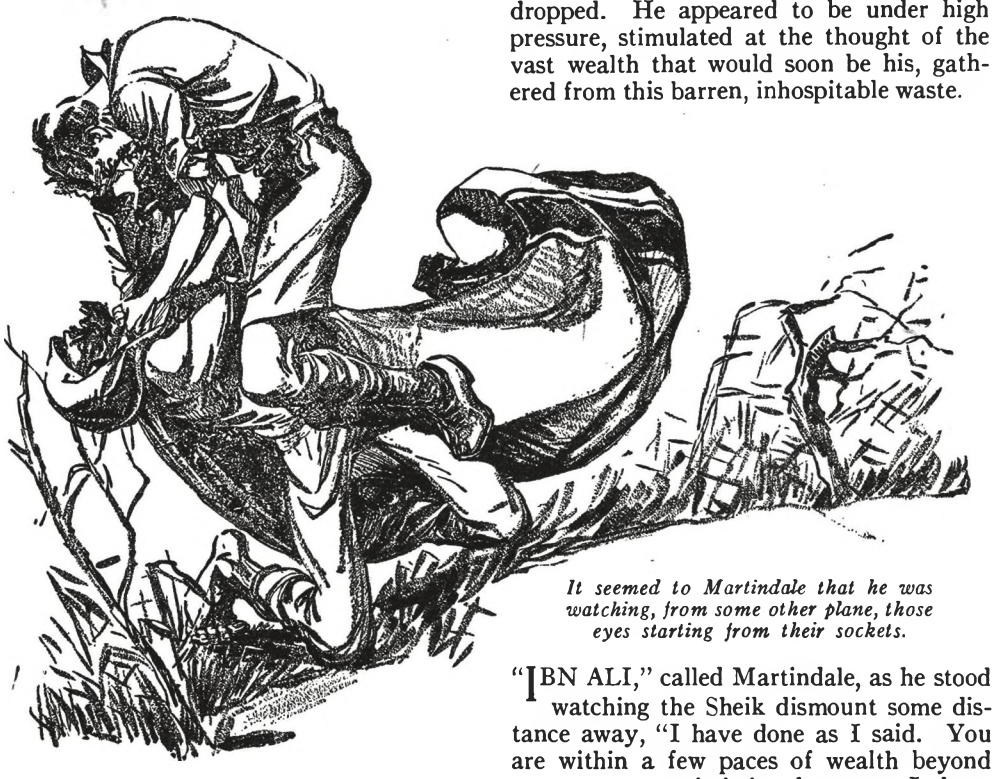
He had studied intently for three days a plan to seize one of the spears from a savage guard, run the man through, and close with Ibn Ali. But such a plan rested upon a combination of favorable circumstances. It demanded the relaxed vigilance of all three, a quick and successful scuffle with the first, while the second spearman must be too far away to aid his fellow-guard. And Ibn Ali must be, for a discouraging length of time, deaf and blind to the danger. And during those three days and two nights there had not been a single instant when a sudden leap would have netted him anything more than a sure spear-thrust or a bullet. It was extremely unlikely that the two sentries, under the piercing eye of their chief, could ever be caught off-guard. Alone, the opportunity might have arisen through native carelessness; but with the Sheik in constant attendance—never.

MARTINDALE squinted to the westward toward the lowering sun. There in the sandy plain he could make out a raised unevenness on the flat sand. Was it a pile of rock or the sun-baked clay troughs that surrounded the well where, a few days before, he had found the diamonds? He plodded ahead for fifteen minutes, then looked again. There was no mistaking the place. They had arrived at the diamond-field.

The sun was still an hour high when they came to the deserted well and the Nubian unsaddled the Sheik's horse and the slow-moving pack-mule, and the usual camp-pitching activities were in order. Martindale tilted his sun-helmet back and glanced appraisingly toward the west. Yes, it would be a full hour before the sun met the level horizon, before they bound his arms for the night. Sometime within that short hour he must act. During the afternoon he had scanned the far horizon eagerly, hoping against hope that a band of raiding Somalis, Abyssinians, or even French native troops from far-away Djibouti would show upon the skyline. But the shimmering yellow waste stretched to infinity, tenantless, a flat, tawny void empty of human life.

He had hoped, with a kind of blank surprise at the unreasonableness and far-fetched desperation of his hope, that a furious sandstorm would sweep down upon them, causing confusion and excitement, a mêlée in which his chance might come. But the weather, as usual at this time of year, remained unchanged. The customary evening breeze would be springing up shortly after sunset—that was all.

Martindale noted a decided change in Ibn Ali's demeanor. His orders to the tall spearmen and his instructions to the Nubian were now uttered in crisp, concise sentences. His face was stern, and the motions of hands and arms were quick and business-like. The slow, easy-going deliberation, the relaxed and even conversational mood that had marked him during the journey was dropped. He appeared to be under high pressure, stimulated at the thought of the vast wealth that would soon be his, gathered from this barren, inhospitable waste.



It seemed to Martindale that he was watching, from some other plane, those eyes starting from their sockets.

"IBN ALI," called Martindale, as he stood watching the Sheik dismount some distance away, "I have done as I said. You are within a few paces of wealth beyond your most optimistic dreams. I have played fair with you,"—and he added a declaration that he did not at all believe but which he thought might be a helpful touch,—"because I know you intend to play fair with me."

"But the stones—I do not see the lit-tle stones here." The tone was brusque.

"Come with me to the waterhole."

Martindale walked toward the well without looking behind him. The two warriors were signed by the Sheik to follow, and spears in hand, they trailed after. Ibn Ali, eyes burning with eagerness, was too intelligent to allow his enthusiasm to overcome his caution. He brought up the rear with the double-barreled rifle over his arm, leaving a space of forty or fifty yards between himself and the two spearmen. At the well Martindale turned around. His two guards stood beside him. Ibn Ali stopped, leaving

a wide space between them. Martindale, his mind keyed to a high tension, measured that distance in a quiet glance. It was twice too great to offer the slightest chance of closing before the gun could be brought to bear.

"I found the diamonds in the well," he stated calmly and simply, "embedded in the sides near the bottom."

The Sheik spoke a few crisp words to the guards. They pushed the prisoner, turning him by the shoulder, and with lowered spears, escorted him some distance to the right of the well. Ibn Ali walked to the opening, his dark eyes watching the white man with catlike alertness. He reached the edge, peered into the twenty-foot depth, saw nothing in the gloomy shadows, and quickly retraced his steps to his former position. He seemed to be keenly alive to what was going on in his prisoner's mind. His every action since their arrival at the diamond-field had been one of redoubled caution. Martindale, watching him and speculating upon the change, was sure now that Ibn Ali had never even considered allowing him to step into Trajanian's place and depart from the country!

"You will go down," the Sheik ordered, "and bring up the stone' to prove that you have not come to the wrong place."

MARTINDALE returned to the well, tightened his belt, and with feet straddling the narrow hole, let himself slowly to the bottom. As before, in the dim light, he saw several whitish pebbles that glowed and reflected what little light there was. He dislodged a half dozen of these with his finger-nails and climbed laboriously to the surface.

"There," he announced in a casual tone, "I have done my part. Look at them."

"You will lay them on the ground," Ibn Ali directed.

Martindale favored him with a slight smile of cynicism and disappointment. He had hoped the sight of the diamonds would cause excitement, and that a moment's carelessness would follow. He laid the stones upon the sun-baked earth and walked away. Ibn Ali came forward and examined them, holding them up to the sun, turning them over in his hand, and rubbing them with a corner of his burnous. At length he tucked them away in his clothes, called to the guards to take the prisoner back to camp, and followed in the rear, the big gun in a ready position across his arm.

CHAPTER XII

THE Nubian slave had prepared his master's evening meal, and the Sheik marched straight to the fire and sat down to eat. Martindale, following with his guards, was halted on the opposite side, some thirty yards from his captor. He knew it would be useless to attempt to take a position nearer; Ibn Ali's watchfulness warned him that such a transparent move would mean the immediate binding of his arms. Martindale sat down, his eyes upon the heavy rifle across the Sheik's knees. He glanced over his shoulder at the sun. It was perilously near the horizon.

"Not more than a half hour," he thought, "before they produce the rawhide pack-rope to bind my arms for the night. And tonight would be the last time. Ibn Ali's redoubled caution makes it plain that he has never had any intention but to put me to death. My hope of taking Trajanian's place has been all along a foolish dream! The only question is, does he plan to murder me here or lead me back to the boma to furnish a spectacle for his savage people?" It was almost time to act, but Martindale decided to delay, if possible, until one of the guards began his meal. Then he would attempt to seize the spear from the other and take his hundred-to-one chance. There was nothing else left to do, and if it were not done before they bound him, in all probability, even that small chance would never come again!

Ibn Ali finished his meal and set down the drinking gourd after a long pull at the narrow neck. His right hand fell caressingly upon the breech of the big gun across his lap. He settled himself more comfortably and made the surprising observation:

"W'ere the ghost go w'en the man die—ah, that is the gr-reat mysterious thing—is it not?"

This line of thought was such an entirely new departure that Martindale took an instant to recover from his surprise. It occurred to him as particularly ominous that Ibn Ali's mind should speculate upon this abstruse question, now that he had secured the information he wanted from his prisoner.

"Your Prophet tells you plainly in the Koran," he replied.

"Oh, yes. That is nize thing for some man to think," answered the Sheik, his humorless and fixed smile showing disbelief. "That is good thing for the foolish ones

w'at mus' believe somet'ing. It is strange. The wild man, the savage, in the big forest to the westward—he is say the ghost go to one place. The Somali is say to anoder place. The Habish, the Abyssinian, he is claim somew'ere else. Mohammed is write one t'ing. The Feringies, they are swear it is somet'ing else." He paused, fondling the big rifle. Then raising his eyes from the fire, he looked at Martindale with a peculiar expression of penetration:

"Do you know w'at Ibn Ali think?" And as his captive said nothing, he went on: "There is no man w'at know anny more about those thing' than Ibn Ali; and Ibn Ali—he do not know nothing about it!" And an expression of amusement rested upon his dark features. As far as he was concerned, the question had been disposed of. He had stated his entire philosophy, and already that keen, unnatural mind was arranging to dispose of another problem.

He reached slowly and carefully beneath his burnous, took out the small rawhide cartridge pouch that Birhano had made for his master, opened it and laid five or six of the big cordite shells upon the ground at his right side. Martindale watched the purposeful deliberation of his movements intently. To the white man in his present state of tension, the Sheik's hands seemed unnecessarily deliberate. But so sure and definitely planned did those quiet movements appear, and so filled with sinister meaning was the expression of that countenance, that Martindale's pounding heart thumped his ribs so loudly he almost expected the Sheik to hear it. Had the time come? Was this to be the end of the world for him?

IN such situations the human mind works at many times its customary speed. In a flash Martindale estimated the number of flying steps it would take to reach his executioner. In another fraction of a second he would have leaped to his death—but his quick eyes, now blazing with the light of desperation, saw that Ibn Ali's amused but venomous gaze was directed not to him but to the guards standing a few paces in his rear. The Sheik raised the gun to his shoulder. Martindale followed its line, turning his head. The two savage guards apparently did not realize that the big rifle was pointing in their direction. Martindale glanced back at the Sheik, fascinated, wondering what was to happen.

Ibn Ali lined the sights with great care, slowly, elbows resting on his knees—in his sitting posture an excellent position for steady sighting. Not the slightest haste was apparent in his movements, and then—the first barrel of the big cordite rifle rang out with a heavy detonation that broke upon the still air of evening like the crash of colliding worlds. Martindale heard a heavy fall behind him, a dull thud and then a rattle of loose pebbles and a horrid gurgle ending in a long-drawn-out sigh as the dying man's last breath rushed from the torn lungs to mingle forever with the shifting winds of the desert.

Martindale was so shocked that for a second or two he remained frozen, his eyes glued to the dark inscrutable face wrapped in its burnous across the fire. There was no need for him to turn around to know that one guard had been shot down in his tracks and lay dead not twenty feet behind.

Ibn Ali, his features as free from emotion as those of a graven image, but with swiftly moving hands, opened the gun-breech, threw out the empty shell, picked up a new one from the handful at his side, and thrusting it into the empty chamber, clapped the breech shut with a snap. Again the heavy piece went to his shoulder, and Martindale turned his head. The second guard stood staring down at his fallen comrade, blank astonishment on his face. The full import of the proceeding had not yet penetrated his slow mind. And as the white man watched, the expression of blank amazement relaxed, the man went limp and at the same instant a second deep explosion broke the stillness. The body fell forward on its face with the soft clumsiness of a pole-axed ox. A great jagged hole showed between the shoulder blades and a mixture of blood and lung tissue gushed forth. Martindale's eyes flashed back to the Sheik in time to see him insert another fresh cartridge and close the breech.

So suddenly and unexpectedly had that cold-blooded business been done, that it was not until the second man had been shot and the gun reloaded that Martindale realized he had missed his chance! Then it came over him—he should have sprung across the fire at the first shot—or even the second—when one barrel of the gun had been empty! He would then have had just twice the chance that was left to him now with both barrels loaded.

Ibn Ali rested the rifle across his lap. Great satisfaction was the only emotion that shone on his face.

"It is not good that some one beside Ibn Ali should know of the place of the lit-tle stones," he announced, "and it is not good to shoot the two bullets at the one time. It is more better to shoot the one side and then to reload that one, is it not?" And he surveyed his prisoner with a sophisticated regard that seemed to read his mind. "These lit-tle thing' mus' be think of if one is to live, is it not?" And he smiled widely.

With that calculating and cruel smile passed the last vestige of hope from Martindale's mind. This barbarian was, after all, too clever to allow him even a hundred-to-one chance for life. Martindale knew then he was no better off than a dead man. But with that realization, with the departure of the last atom of hope, came a great calmness. The element of doubt had been removed, and he was surprised to find that with its removal came peace of mind. Yes, he could die like a man—shot down in cold blood by the side of this little campfire on the wide desert. Now, at least, there could be no torture, but a clean, quick death, and it would come in a very few minutes.

The Sheik continued: "And now you will explain to Ibn Ali w'at is the thing w'at kill my frien' Trajanian."

Martindale paid no attention to the question but asked another:

"Why did you lead me to believe that you intended to use me in Trajanian's place?"

"Oh, that is jus' the way Ibn Ali like to do things," the Sheik replied, his smile one of gloating satisfaction. "If you think you are to be set free maybe, then you are surelee to lead Ibn Ali straight to the place of the lit-tle stones. That is one thing. Then it is nize to see the Feringi in the gr-reat disappointment in the end, is it not?"

But the great calmness and resignation that had come upon Martindale made him proof against even that goading confession. He looked across the fire at his executioner only with frank curiosity—as he would have appraised some new animal—the *jingassa* for instance. In all his experience he had never before encountered a human being without at least a spark of charity somewhere within him, unless it were Trajanian. He wondered vaguely and without heat why such men were created, as he had often wondered why poisonous snakes should be at large upon the earth. He gave it up and turned his head for one last look at this fair earth.

There was not a cloud in the vault of heaven, and the deep, unfathomable blue gave him an unreasonable desire to see once again—just once more—that commonplace nightly pageant of stars marching in silent gleaming legions across the sky. The sun hung—a fiery ball—on the rim of the world, and there was not a tree or a hill or a green thing to catch the eye, just a still surface of gray reaching interminably to the shores of a sea of red, the magnificent desert sunset. His gaze, after sweeping the wide horizon, came back to the cooking fire near at hand. He saw with a start the Nubian slave standing, still as death, regarding Ibn Ali with an expression of abject dread. Martindale had forgotten that poor animal-like creature in the excitement of the past few minutes. It occurred to him now that the Sheik intended to use the slave on the return trip and would shoot him down when within sight of the boma.

And before his gaze passed on to the wide horizon again, the Nubian stirred. He began to walk swiftly, and then broke into a run in the direction of the chestnut horse which he had already picketed for the night. His intentions were plain. He would untie the saddle animal, mount and escape before he too, like the unfortunate guards, should be murdered. Martindale, wishing him all the luck in the world, glanced apprehensively at the Sheik. Ibn Ali, too, had seen. He raised the rifle with the same deliberation he had used before. The Nubian reached the chestnut horse, fumbled with the picket-rope, cast it off, and with a wild leap was on the animal's bare back. Ibn Ali had had time to shoot while the slave was fumbling with the rope, but then, Martindale realized, a bullet would have killed man and horse both. The Sheik fired just before the horse gathered his legs for the first leap. The Nubian dropped like a shot bird. And then—Martindale leaped across the fire!

THERE was a full thirty yards to cover before his hands could reach that hairy throat, and he started with a bound that almost equalled the terrific speed of a charging lion. But to him, so stimulated was his mind, the pace was fatally slow. He seemed to be traveling as one in a slow-motion picture. And he saw, as in a nightmare, Ibn Ali swing the heavy rifle to cover him. A faint wisp of white smoke from the recent shot still curled from the right barrel.

Martindale drew the sights a few inches below a pair of the gleaming balls of light, and pulled the trigger.

The Sheik appeared to be in no hurry, and as Martindale drew nearer, propelling himself forward with every ounce of strength in his limbs, he saw plainly behind the two wide holes in the muzzle, the gloating satisfied smile on the bearded face and the cheek snuggled down against the rifle-stock. Ibn Ali, expert rifleman as he was, was using his intelligence to the last and allowing his victim to come so close that there would be no possibility of a miss. And then, Martindale was conscious of a light *snap* instead of the shattering explosion he had been keyed to expect. He felt no pain, and the wild thought flashed through his mind:

"I am still alive, and I may retain strength long enough to kill this monster before the wound that I must have somewhere—proves fatal."

FOR it did not occur to him that the metallic snap he had heard could be anything but a real explosion, dulled and blanketed by some trick of his overwrought nerves. He was upon Ibn Ali before the Sheik could take the gun from his shoulder, and as Martindale's strong hands grasped the hairy throat, a flood of concentrated fury broke down all the artificial barriers of his scientifically trained mind. He saw, as through a red mist, a dark, bearded face straining above two hands. Slender, desperate fingers clawed at a pair of white forearms, tearing away the sleeves of a khaki shirt and gouging the skin beneath. But ever relentlessly, with a power that nothing could stop, those two white hands applied an inexorable pressure.

It seemed to Martindale that he was standing aside, watching from some place of vantage—some other plane—the eyes in that dark face almost starting from their sockets. And then, after a long, long time, he saw, from his seemingly detached position, the frenzied light go out of those dark eyes, the face relax, drooping in every line, and become the color of old ivory. And he noticed, with a feeling of surprise, that his own hands were cramped and hurting him. He lifted them to see—and Ibn Ali crumpled to the ground at his feet, dead. Then Martindale came out of his berserk trance, and realized that those white hands he had been watching were his own. He had done it—with his own two hands: he had

rid the world forever of that bargainer in the flesh and blood of his own kind!

Little by little, the events of the past few minutes took their proper sequence. He must be desperately wounded, he thought. Why wasn't he dead? He should be, by all rules of the game. He glanced down at himself, expecting to see a gaping red hole in his torso. But there was no wound.

He picked up the heavy rifle and opened the breech. He ejected two empty shells. The one in the right barrel had killed the Nubian—he had seen that. Why had not the one in the left killed him? Could Ibn Ali have missed his charging captive at a range of ten feet? Could that calm and skillful marksman have become excited and pulled off, spoiling his aim with a spasmodic jerk upon the trigger? But Martindale knew that Ibn Ali had not been excited. He had seen the cold and calculating glitter in the eyes above that shining barrel. Puzzled, he dropped the empty cartridges and squinted through the open breech. The right barrel was clear, but no light came through the left. The heavy metal-jacketed bullet was lodged in the barrel. And then Martindale knew!

HE saw himself standing in his tent that evening many days before, removing the powder from two cartridges, pulling the bullets from the brass cases with his small pliers, emptying out the powder upon the tent floor-cloth and replacing the bullets in the empty cases. He remembered the look of blank astonishment on Birhano's face when he had thrust the two harmless cartridges into the breech and handed the gun to the Leopard to test the intentions of that young savage. And he thanked his lucky star for his carelessness in neglecting to throw away those innocuous cartridges and leaving them lying around loose where Birhano could pick them up and put them back with the rest in the rawhide bullet pouch he had made for his master. And now it had come to pass that Ibn Ali had relied upon one of those dummy cartridges! A great wave of thankfulness engulfed Martindale. He bowed his bare head to the disappearing sun, and whispered slowly, with heartfelt sincerity:

"We human beings are little children complaining querulously in the darkness, crying aloud in the wilderness over our broken toys. We rail against our luck and whimper like blind puppies because some little thing seems to our sightless eyes a stroke of ill-fortune. Our vision cannot penetrate the immediate surroundings, and we cannot see beyond the present moment. With what infinite contempt the calm and tolerant stars in their mighty orbits must look down upon our petulant lamentations! Never again will I become so arrogant as to pretend to be able to distinguish between what is good fortune and what is bad!"

SWIFTLY the tropical darkness fell: "Twilight, the timid fawn, went glimmering by; and Night, the dark blue hunter, followed fast."

It would have been more difficult to remove the bodies from the camp than to carry the small amount of baggage to the desert well and there establish a new camp for the night and Martindale, in a state of mental and physical exhaustion from his days and nights of uncertainty, took the easier way. But first he transferred the rough, glittering stones to his own pocket. The pack-mule stood not far from the cooking fire where the Nubian had picketed him for the night, but the chestnut horse had long since disappeared in the gathering darkness. There were no implements but the spears of the two dead guards with which a grave could have been dug in any soil; but Martindale, after a single experimental attempt, gave up the idea of burying the four dead men; the gravelly soil of the desert had been baked to the consistency of concrete under the burning rays of that vertical sun. He picketed the mule near the waterhole, carried a burning thorny desert shrub to the place he had selected for his fire, and moved the remainder of the food, the cartridges and the heavy rifle. The bullet was still lodged in one barrel, and he would not be able to remove it without a cleaning-rod. The first barrel was, of course, in as good working condition as ever, and Martindale felt like a new man as he thrust in one of the big cordite shells and closed the breech. The gun, in its present condition, must be used as a single-shot rifle, but that made little difference, and Martindale patted the stock affectionately.

"You have lifted me out of a bad hole more than once, Mighty Voice," he remarked as he laid the gun down carefully in the circle of firelight, "but you never lifted me up by my bootstraps as you did this evening! And I sincerely hope such a ground-hog case will never occur again."

BUT Martindale's problems were not over. He prepared a meal from the Sheik's stores and ate in thoughtful appreciation. The dry brush collected from the immediate vicinity of the well burned rapidly, and there was little of it. He nursed his tiny fire carefully and considered his procedure upon the morrow. He thought of Todd James, lying bound and awaiting torture, and the faithful Birhano in much the same unfortunate situation at the boma of the Sheik. Martindale had a horror of that stockaded stronghold upon its rocky hill in the wide plain. Could he accomplish anything for the two prisoners if he returned there?

The other tempting alternative presented itself: He could mount the pack-mule, and with gun and cartridges and a little food and a water-gourd, set out for the border of French Somaliland. By traveling only at night he would have an even chance of avoiding the scattered bands of nomadic Danakil—and with the big gun and plenty of ammunition, he could defend himself against any small wandering groups he might encounter.

The prospect was alluring; he found himself subconsciously inventing excuses and reasons why he should adopt that course:

"Todd James is an outlaw, a pariah, a ghoulish dealer in human beings, an international character of the worst stripe. His removal from the world will leave the world a better place to live in! I have already saved him from death by poison. I owe him nothing; and if I return, the chances are greatly in favor of my execution as well as his own. And Birhano, although a faithful servant, is still nothing but a superstitious barbarian, but one step removed from savagery. His life is of no real benefit. I am an educated, enlightened white man, a scientist of some attainments. I have accomplished something for the advancement of the knowledge of the world; my discovery of the ancient Maya city alone should entitle me to consideration. And I have killed Ibn Ali and broken up, once and for all, that abominable slave-trade between the Danakils and the Red Sea Arabs. And with the death of Ibn Ali, I have thwarted some European power in its designs against the independence of Abyssinia. My life has its value to civilization. It is, in a way, not mine to squander upon a quixotic, single-handed foray to rescue an ignorant black boy and a dangerous enemy to society!

"There is also my knowledge of this diamond-field. The great wealth lying here, hidden in the ground, can be used to the best advantage. It can be employed in the advancement of science for one thing; in relieving distress, for another; in education for the masses—in many other ways. Taking these things into consideration, would it not perhaps be almost criminal in me to go back to the boma on a ten-to-one chance of rescuing those two persons? For if I fail, all this will be lost to the world. And the world, if it ever knew, would applaud the more *intelligent* course."

THE logical side of Martindale's mind saw clearly the broad justice of these things. But there was in him another side, an entity far removed from his trained reasoning. That phase of his personality was answerable to the heart alone; it was the result of heredity, the environment of his childhood, the influence of the friends he had loved and respected through life. It was unreasonable, he knew, and should have no influence against the cold dictates of logic. But it was stronger than reason.

He gazed into the fire reminiscently. The picture of Birhano protesting against this reckless journey arose before him—the lad's stout refusal to have anything to do with it, and then, when sure that his master would not give up the idea, his brave decision to go where his master went, to follow upon a course that seemed to him sure death! Real moral courage that had taken. And he saw again Todd James, lying bound upon the sand, awaiting torture and death for his abortive attempt to aid his countryman. He saw in the flickering fire that calm, rugged face awaiting the horrible end, composed and steady as the hills! And he heard the Southerner repeat, apologetically, in his soft, liquid drawl:

"Ma'tindale, I felt I owed the best I had to you, suh, so I played the ca'ds the best I knew. I hoped I might make 'em win. It was a po' hand, though—a mighty po' hand. I beg yo' pa'don, suh, fo' makin' a failure."

And he remembered his admiration for the gameness, the hardy spirit that could accept a defeat that meant death with more calm imperturbability than many a man could accept a small loss at cards. And last, he recalled the manner in which the Southerner had thanked him for prevailing upon Ibn Ali to postpone the torture. The iron self-control, dignity, and lack of effu-

siveness with which the words had been uttered:

"It seems, suh, that I fall deeper in yo' debt every day I live. I'm greatly obliged to you, suh." And again Martindale felt his heart go out to that soft-spoken man.

He rose and stretched his arms, taking a deep breath and shaking himself. And with the action, he felt that he had shaken from him, as a dog shakes water from his coat, the insidious temptations that his mind had been presenting in the attractive and pleasant disguise of Reason.

"What do I care," he said to the velvety darkness with clear decision, "what the world or anyone in it thinks?" His natural independence took charge. "I must live—as long as I *do* live—with myself. And if I did not go back to the aid of those two men—worthless to society as they may be—I could never again endure my own company. All the days of my life I should hate myself—intelligence, common sense, reason, to the contrary notwithstanding!" And with his firm decision came relief, a mood light-hearted and joyous.

"Mr. Mule," he observed happily to the picketed pack-animal, "in the morning we hit the back trail for the boma of the late Ibn Ali. Come hell or high water—death, damnation and destruction—that is the thing to do." And he added quietly: "And so—we shall do it."

JUST before morning Martindale was awakened by a chorus of hyena cries from the darkness not far from the former camp where lay the bodies of the Sheik and his three murdered victims. He had not been able to gather enough fuel from the scanty desert thorn to make a large fire, and he knew that the cowardly scavengers would soon creep closer until finally one more bold than the others would seize an arm or a leg; and the rest, reassured, would rush forward to the ghoulish meal. And as he listened, the terrific babble of canine yelps punctuated by whines and weird ululating cries that he had heard so many times before, announced that the gruesome feast had begun.

But now, for some unaccountable reason, the unearthly cries ceased. The desert became silent as the grave. And then—from far off—Martindale heard for the second time in his life a strange, booming roar that ended in a deep and resonant bass that rivaled the roar of a lion in its volume.

"*Jingassa!*" he exclaimed, jumping to his feet. Instantly he forgot the dead men lying out there in the darkness. He seized the big rifle, concealed the glowing embers of the fire by a ring of large stones, collected an armful of dry thorn and laid it near-by in readiness to be thrown upon the coals at the proper time; a certain amount of light would be necessary to show the sights. He became again the keen hunter, the rapt and earnest scientist upon the verge of a great discovery. He led the mule closer, to picket him near the well, hobbling the animal's front feet with a piece of the rawhide pack-rope as an added precaution.

From all reports the *jingassa* was—as Birhano had put it—"a veree *kufanoo* brute-beast." The hyenas had become silent and perhaps left the carcasses while the new arrivals were still a mile or two away. This was most surprising. Martindale could not picture an animal with power to inspire such terror that a voracious band of hyenas would leave fresh meat until actually driven away. He discounted the native reports of the ferocity of the *jingassa* about fifty per cent, but the actions of the hyenas disturbed him.

"I will make sure of one or two specimens," he said to himself, "and then, if they should prove dangerous when the fire dies, I'll simply let myself down the well and spend the rest of the night there. But I *must* make sure of my specimens, regardless of risks."

In a short time, low, steady, rumbling growls came through the darkness. There were moments when Martindale was almost convinced that the marauders were lions, but there were other times when he was sure those rumbling sounds issued from throats the like of which neither he nor any other white man had ever seen. He could only guess at the number, but he was positive that at least a half dozen were in the troop. They were slow coming in; they circled the little camp, growling and moaning like lost souls, and occasionally roaring with a tremendous volume of sound.

IN another half-hour the troop had approached so close that Martindale could occasionally hear the *clink* of an overturned shale rock, and then, after a moment of comparative silence, a long-drawn cry rose to the stars, and a scuffling noise came from the direction of the dead bodies.

"They have found the meat," Martindale whispered tensely. And the grim

irony of the situation caused him to smile: the body of Ibn Ali, his arch-enemy, was the bait by means of which science was to be enriched by the discovery and classification of a new animal! And to the despised prisoner of the Sheik would fall the honor of that discovery.

With the big gun in readiness, Martindale reached behind him, seized a handful of dry brush, threw it on the coals and brought the rifle to his shoulder. As the brush caught fire and began to blaze, round glowing points of light, always in pairs, showed through the gloom of night. Martindale spread a row of cartridges on the ground within reach of his right hand, drew the sights a few inches below a pair of the gleaming balls of light and pulled the trigger.

To Martindale's amused surprise, he entered to the din of unrestrained shouts of welcome.

The flash of the explosion revealed six or seven heavy, outlandish forms, standing with uplifted heads, regarding the blaze with snarling lips and bared fangs. Rough manes reached almost to the ground, and the heads had the long-nosed resemblance to those of the dog-faced baboon that Martindale had been led to expect from the descriptions of the natives. In that impressionistic picture he could see nothing of the legs. But the species was grotesquely new, and he was not disappointed in the size. For the height of those strange beasts was almost that of a full-grown Somali lion!

Throwing out the empty shell, Martindale hastily reloaded the right barrel. Low growls answered the shot, and the big brutes made no move of withdrawal. Sighting again in the gloom, he fired a second time. By the flash he saw one animal—the victim of the first shot, lying still by the body of Ibn Ali himself, and another sinking slowly and biting weakly at his own right shoulder. The rest, with a chorus of deep, rumbling growls, retired beyond the circle of illumination, their eyes showing only as pin-points of reflected light as they stopped occasionally in their retreat and turned to look at the fire. Martindale reloaded and took that opportunity to make a small sortie for more brush. But the strange beasts did not return, and with the coming of daylight the band disappeared. Martindale walked out to the carcasses.

THE first one he had shot lay with a bullet-hole in the deep chest, and the head was resting across Ibn Ali's knees. Martindale turned the brute over and found it very heavy. He estimated the weight to be in the neighborhood of three hundred pounds. And he was overjoyed to note the long legs with their round, hyena-like feet, the long mane and the unnatural baboon head. Native report, for once, had been remarkably true. The second *jingassa* lay dead a short distance away. Both specimens were in excellent pelage, and he at once went to work removing the hides. The *jingassa* was indeed entirely new to science, and the find more than came up to his most optimistic expectations. He wasted no time in an examination of teeth, contour of skulls and other technical points by which science could deduce the ancestry of the species. That could all be done later, at leisure. The problem now was to save the skins without salt. Using a sharp, curved knife he found on the body of the Nubian slave, he started the job; and so carefully did he work that it was late afternoon before the skins were off and scraped down as thin as he wanted them. They were then hung up beneath a shelter of thorn brush with the Sheik's burnous as a cover to keep out the burning rays of the sun. Beneath this makeshift shade the pelts would dry in the hot wind of the desert, and the hair would not slip too much.

Two days Martindale remained in that camp before the skins were in proper condition to be folded and transported. They were then packed carefully on the mule with the water-gourds and the rest of Ibn Ali's dried meat and tef, or native millet flour, and Martindale set out for the boma afoot, leading the pack-mule.

CHAPTER XIII

ON the morning of the third day, when the stronghold on the hill was still far ahead, Martindale saw, coming toward him across the desert, an imposing array of horsemen. They galloped forward; and as they drew near, Martindale, waiting with the rifle across his arm and ammunition pouch ready to hand, recognized the green-turbaned mullah in the lead. The Leopard rode a few paces behind his father, and as the white man watched them come, he muttered grimly:

"Now we shall see—now is the time to collect—to reap the benefit from that theatrical curse! Perhaps I can make it stick—perhaps not. If hostile—they shall never take me alive. We'll soon know."

And then a frenzied figure upon a small gray horse forged ahead, passing even the green-turbaned mullah and the Leopard, and with bare heels thumping the pony's ribs dashed toward the white man, uttering wildly hysterical cries:

"Gaytah! Gaytah! *Melifiano!* It is Gaytah himself, all alive!"

Birhano tumbled from his mount, tears of pure joy running down his dusky cheeks. He rushed up and prostrated himself on the sand, touching his lips to his master's worn shoes. He leaped to his feet, recovering his Abyssinian dignity, and Martindale grasped the black hand in a firm and hearty grip.

THE horsemen had pulled up fifty yards away and sat their mounts watching Birhano's demonstrative greeting in impassive silence. The interpreter spun around and faced them. His face was alight with the boundless relief and happiness in his heart. He spoke a few fast sentences in English before he remembered that not one word was understandable to that mounted throng:

"Gaytah has come back! Ibn Ali is nowhere to be seen! The big gun—Boom-Boom itself—is in the hand of my master! The magic of Gaytah is the most powerful of any in the world!"

Martindale smiled at the faithful lad. The fact Birhano was at liberty augured well. Then he cut short Birhano's panegyric to inquire: "Where is Todd James—the other Feringi?"

"Oh, Gaytah, there has been a great thing happen w'ile you are gone! A veree great thing! Thi-is Nebur—thi-is Leopard and his father—they are wait till Ibn Ali is gone three-four day', and then they are make the big talk. W'at it is they say I do not know, for I do not know the Danakil talk. But for one whole day they talk, talk, talk. It is veree fierce the way they are talk. I can hear from the *tukul*. One—two chiefs are shot in the night after the talk, and then—" Martindale, his watchful eye never leaving the Leopard and his father, interrupted:

"Where is Todd James?"

"Oh, that one—he is still kep' in the boma. Thi-is Nebur and his father they are come to me and say:

" 'Ibn Ali is dead. Your master, he has kill' the Sheik. We are now rule the Danakils. We are go now to fin' your master, for his magic is veree strong.' And soon they bring the *ferass*—the hor-rse, and we have come. But—how do they know that Ibn Ali is kill'? That is strange, Gaytah!"

Martindale pondered that question for a moment, and then he smiled.

"Pshaw," he said, thinking aloud, "that sounds mysterious but there's nothing to it. They didn't *know*—but they were completely sold on the power of the curse, and therefore they think me capable of anything. They wanted Ibn Ali out of the way. They had been doing their best to make the rest believe that he would never come back. Whether or not they managed to convince the others by their talk—they certainly convinced themselves!—which is a way people, both black and white, have, when they argue strenuously."

The Leopard and his father dismounted —a sign of great respect—and came forward afoot. Martindale's keen and watchful eyes missed no slight indication the faces might give, and he saw there what he wanted above everything else to see—real pleasure at his return mixed with a sort of respectful awe. He smiled grimly at a comparison that leaped to his mind:

"They are proud to know and be seen with one who possesses my alleged power of magic—and still, they are a little fearful. They remind me of two dogs walking with a lion, so carefully and gingerly do they step."

The green-turbaned mullah spoke, and Birhano translated:

"He say he is now the Sheik of all the Danakils. He say you are free to go w'ere you will. He would like it, veree much, if Gaytah will go wi-ith him to the boma and tell him w'at is the pleasure to do wi-ith the other Feringi."

MARTINDALE heard this with infinite relief; but he assumed a dignified attitude and gave no evidence of surprise, receiving these honors as a matter of course.

"Tell the mullah," he instructed Birhano, "that I shall go back to the boma with pleasure. I shall remain there a day or two, and then the affairs of my own people, who are even now wondering where I am, demand that I return to my own country. But I shall leave the Danakils, especially the Leopard and his father, with the greatest regret."

IN the late afternoon the cavalcade arrived at the stockaded village upon the high hill. The natives had gathered in crowds to witness the arrival of the white man whose terrible magic had caused Trajanian to die a mysterious and horrible death before their very eyes: the man whose occult power had also, in some unfathomable manner, overcome their own powerful Sheik for whose craft and sinister abilities they had the greatest respect.

They saw their mullah, resplendent in shiny green turban, and his stalwart son the Leopard, marching gingerly beside that tall, bronzed Feringi of the careless, swinging stride; that white man whose face showed nothing more than human kindliness and quiet self-confidence but who was, they knew, in reality a creature of secret and obscure affiliations with strange powers.

It was with a feeling of relief that they saw the mullah and his son occasionally converse with this man of mystery through Birhano. They watched the Profound One smile calmly in anticipation perhaps, of his meeting with his white brother lying bound in the *tukul* of an under-chief. Clearly, he held no resentment against the village. It would be the part of wisdom to greet this superman with a demonstration fitting to his mysterious powers!

And to Martindale's amused surprise, he entered through a lane of shining, almost naked bodies to the deafening din of wild and unrestrained shouts of welcome. Spears were held aloft and shaken, gleaming dazzlingly in the light of the setting sun. Guns waved above bushy heads, and a dense crowd fell in behind and followed him to the door of a certain grass-roofed *tukul* in the heart of the village.

The Leopard and his father, with Birhano following, accompanied him. At the low doorway the mullah dispersed the crowd and spoke to the guards who quickly stood back against the mud and wattle walls. Todd James, lying on the hard dirt floor was facing the door as they entered and Martindale saw a momentary flash of exquisite relief show upon those rugged features—a look so poignant it was almost painful. But that superbly schooled countenance resumed its calm placidity and the voice came steady and soft as always:

"Hello, white man. I trust you had a successful journey. It's been so long—Ibn Ali didn't come back—so I reckoned you must have—met up with some delay. Right glad to see you, suh."

Martindale was immensely pleased to be able to rejoin in Todd James' own words:

"Don't be a fraud, Todd. Don't be a fraud." And he smiled genially.

"Pshaw!" grinned the Southerner guiltily. "There's no use lyin' to you, suh. I'm ashamed of myself fo' thinkin' it. But I wouldn't have blamed you—not one bit. I'd never have returned myself, you see, if I'd had the chance to make my getaway, so I naturally hahdly expected to see you again."

"Don't lie, Todd," Martindale said. "You'd have come back for me if you had to wade through blood knee deep—and you know it!"

"I give up," drawled the Southerner.

Martindale knelt down and cut the rawhide bonds. Todd James, with a spasm of pain as the blood rushed unrestricted through cramped and bruised veins, sat up and stretched his arms. The spear-wound was still an ugly sight, but in spite of its rough handling, had not become infected.

"And now tell me, if yo' please, suh, how you managed it. Ibn Ali—is, of course, dead—or you wouldn't be here. How did you do it? He was a scound'l of brains—and I congratulate you, suh."

MARTINDALE suppressed all reference to the diamonds. He gave the details of Ibn Ali's death but made no reference to the reason for their journey and Todd James was far too much the gentleman to inquire. If Martindale chose to remain silent upon that point it was not for him to descend to boorishness and pry into it. He was intensely interested in the account of the Sheik's death. And the disclosure of the life-saving "dud" cartridge caused him to sit for a long time gazing straight ahead at the opposite wall of the *tukul.* What thoughts were passing through his mind Martindale never knew. At length he looked at his companion with puzzled amusement:

"Tell me, Mahtindale," he said, "how the devil you managed that curse! Trajanian died just as you said he would. I'll swear you've got me plumb out on a limb. The first thing I know I'll be seein' ha'nts. That was a queer one."

And when Martindale had finished, Todd James slapped his knee in appreciation.

"Well, I'll be teetotally damned!" he exclaimed, admiringly. "Yo' head sure was workin' to recognize the signs when that black wench spilled the water at Trajanian's feet! How he did stah't back in fear and dread! He acted mighty queer befo' that, too, but I took it fo' a touch of sun. Yo' head was sure workin' to connect up those strange actions and his fear of water with those dog-bites back in Addis. Rabies—he went mad—and you called the turn!" And the Southerner was for once at a loss for words. "I'm—I'm proud to know you, suh!"

The Leopard and his father withdrew, and Martindale ventured to ask a question that long had troubled him—how a man like James ever came to be engaged in the ugly business of slave-dealing. James answered him frankly—telling a dark story of an experience with renegade negroes which had imbued him with a violent if wholly unfair hatred of the entire race—telling also of a need for money which had seemed further to justify what he now admitted was an indefensible crime.

CHAPTER XIV

THREE weeks later Martindale again stood before Ras Tessayah, regent of Abyssinia. The large barnlike audience hall in Addis Ababa with its loopholes for riflemen, its grass roof and stone floor and the crowds of shamma-clad vassals and retainers loitering in the courtyard were unchanged except for Trajanian's absence.

Martindale and Todd James had bid each other good-by the morning after Martindale's return to the boma of the dead Sheik. The Southerner had set out with a powerful and now friendly escort for the French post at Djibouti, there to take ship for America. Martindale had pleaded business of the most serious nature with Ras Tessayah in his capital, business that he had merely mentioned but had not explained to Todd James. And now as Martindale stood before Ras Tessayah, he said to Birhano:

"Say to His Highness," — Martindale went straight to the point,—"that much has been going on in his kingdom that he knows nothing about."

Ras Tessayah sat straighter in his European chair and the line of Abyssinian dignitaries behind him looked at the white man in sudden surprise—this was hardly the proper manner to use in addressing royalty. The white man continued:

"There has been smuggling of arms into the Danakil country. That—you have

known for some time. But you do not know that your principal adviser, Trajanian, was the moving spirit in that dark business."

Ras Tessayah's features betrayed the utmost surprise. His lips parted and he appeared ready to dispute the statement. Martindale went on without heat:

"Trajanian was in league with Ibn Ali, the Danakil sheik. Guns and ammunition were coming in by way of the Red Sea. Ibn Ali paid Trajanian for them in Abyssinian and Somali slaves raided by his warparties. The slaves were sold by Trajanian to the Red Sea Arabs who took them across to Arabia."

RAS TESSAYAH studied Martindale's face with a keen and piercing regard. As Birhano finished the translation, the ruler of the Abyssinians addressed the interpreter in short, clean-cut decisive words.

"He say," repeated Birhano, "that Trajanian is not 'ere to defend himself. He say he will summon Trajanian w'en he is return from w'ere he is gone to Cairo."

"Tell him," said Martindale, smiling a trifle grimly, "that Trajanian will not return. For Trajanian did not go to Cairo, but to the boma of his partner, Ibn Ali. Explain the nature of his death—from rabies, the bite of dogs received here in Addis—as I have explained it to you." And then Martindale laid bare the plot of Ibn Ali and Trajanian to usurp the throne of Abyssinia. He drew attention to the veiled motives of the European power in whose employ Trajanian was operating, and finished with a short account of Ibn Ali's death.

When Ras Tessayah had heard everything, he sat in deep thought. Many of Trajanian's unaccountable actions now appeared perfectly plain, and as his mind went deeper into the complicated affair, there remained no longer a doubt of the genuineness of Martindale's information. The mysterious raids into Somaliland that had brought such alarming protests from the British government became clear.

The harassed ruler of a barbarous people raised an arm in despair, and voiced the disillusioned cry that so many in power have uttered in the history of the world:

"Who, then, of men, can be trusted?"

Martindale knew something of the many intricate and difficult problems this ruler had had to face in his lifetime; his gallant and clever diplomatic struggle through the long years of his reign to protect his turbulent country from European aggression; his difficulty in handling the more powerful Abyssinian chiefs; the lack of European sympathy and understanding; and now the bitter knowledge that his trusted adviser had been working against him, encouraging, arming and preparing to set his worst enemy on the throne!

Ras Tessayah sat drumming with his fingers upon the arm of his chair, his thoughtful gaze inexpressibly sad. Martindale knew that he was thinking of the hollow pomps and vanities of his position, the medieval show that his ignorant people demanded should be kept up, of his sincere attempts to establish a system of education and the heart-breaking and successful efforts of the influential reactionaries to prevent it, of the almost hopeless fight he was making to retain the independence of his country, and of the intrigue, the double-dealing, the crookedness that surrounded him. Martindale suspected he was wondering fearfully how much longer his country could resist the imperialism of Europe.

But a hopeful light came into the harassed eyes. He asked an eager question, which Birhano translated joyfully:

"Oh, Gaytah, he is say—if you will stay 'ere wi-ith him to help, you will be made the one to give him all the advice. It is a veree gr-reat thing, thi-is offering. He will pay you, oh, veree much money, he say."

Martindale was immensely pleased, but he thought of his work, its fascination for him and his last discovery; the finding of the *jingassa,* that new large animal perhaps more important to the science of zoology than Sir Harry Johnston's discovery of the okapi. He knew himself, and he knew also that his scientific training was perhaps the worst possible schooling for one who would plunge into the devious entanglements of near-Eastern diplomacy.

"Tell him," he stated firmly, "that his offer is a very great compliment. But I cannot accept. It is out of the question—for a variety of reasons. And now, if he will dismiss his retainers—everybody—I shall confide something that is for his ears —and his alone."

WITH a kindly, apologetic motion, Ras Tessayah dismissed the group behind his chair. When they had retired, Martindale turned to Birhano:

"Tell him that I found these in the Danakil country." And he took the small

handful of rough diamonds from his pocket. He had studied the problem of that diamond-field through many days and nights and had come to the conclusion that the only way to handle it was to lay the cards on the table, face up, and rely upon Ras Tessayah's sense of fair-dealing. He could not exploit any mineral deposit in Ras Tessayah's dominions without the knowledge and consent of the monarch—unless willing to take the responsibility of embroiling three European countries, the Danakils and the Abyssinians in a war that, whatever its outcome, would mean the eventual reduction of the last independent African kingdom to a European protectorate. Perhaps Ras Tessayah would allow him to recover stones enough to make him financially independent for life.

The Abyssinian ruler half raised himself from his chair. He received the stones fearfully, in trembling hands, and cast a swift glance behind. He looked at them long and great apprehension shone upon his features. Then he rose and walked to the wall of the big hall, picked up an old musket of the type carried by his zebanias and retraced his steps slowly to the side of his chair. And while Martindale watched, Ras Tessayah laid the diamonds, one by one, on the stone floor and deliberately smashed them to glittering dust with the heavy gun-butt! Martindale was too surprised to say a word. As the last of the rough diamonds was broken to bits and its dust scattered with a contemptuous motion of his foot, Ras Tessayah turned to Martindale and a smile of quiet relief broke upon his features. He spoke gently:

"You are wondering," Birhano translated, "why I have destroy' so much of value. I will tell you. If it is known that those lit-tle stone' are to be found in my country—my country would remain my country no longer. It is all I can do now to keep my people free from the European nations. You have said that you will not remain here. You mus' go home to your own country. I do not murder people. Therefore I will pay a fair value for your secret—w'ich shall then be your secret no more, but shall belong only to me, Ras Tessayah."

And without waiting for Martindale to recover from his surprise, Ras Tessayah bowed ceremoniously and left the room. He had not inquired even the approximate location of the diamond-field!

THAT evening an under-secretary of the British legation called upon Martindale in his rude quarters. He found the American preparing his *jingassa* skins for the long journey to the other side of the world.

"I say—are you David Martindale? You must be, you know," he added, "for you're the only white man here outside the legations. I've a sort of mission with you. Don't know what it's all about, 'pon me word, I don't. But Ras Tessayah sent over to the legation this afternoon a bally lot of gold—an indecent amount, positively indecent—asked us to hand you a check on London to cover. Mystery to us all, assure you. Curious—no end. Glad to oblige, though." And he held out a check on a London bank—a check with a row of figures fairly staggering in their amount. Martindale took the paper and gasped. The young Englishman regarded him quizzically:

"Strange thing, that, what? None of my business, though, 'course."

MARTINDALE recovered his self-possession. He knew the youthful secretary was consumed with curiosity and he could imagine the eagerness of the entire legation staff to know what it was all about. So he remarked carelessly:

"Oh, yes—little remuneration from His Highness for services rendered." And then, confidentially: "You see, I've been instructing Ras Tessayah in the rudiments of—of—oh, yes, of natural history. Fearfully interested, he is. But of course, the lessons come high. Out-of-the-way corner of the world—instructor hard to get—all that sort of thing—you understand, of course."

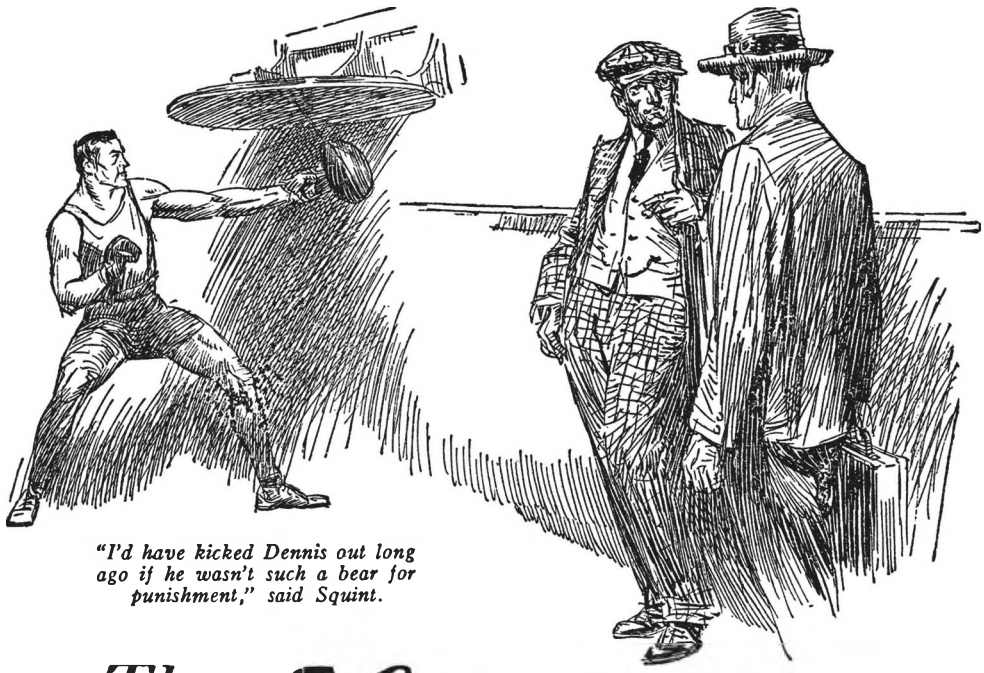
"Oh—ah—of course—of course." And the young man returned to the legation in a daze. And later at dinner he leaned across the table and addressed his superior with elaborate seriousness:

"I say, Chief: Do you know anything about natural history?"

"Natural history — natural history?" that diplomat answered vaguely, twisting his mustache. "Indeed I do, 'pon me word, yes. Studied it at Eton. Skinned a butterfly once—or was it a trout? Pinned something on cardboard too—bristly little thing—bug, tadpole, badger—'pon me word, can't remember which. Why?"

"Oh, nothing," his secretary murmured enviously; "only there's millions in it—millions of pounds sterling!"

THE END



"I'd have kicked Dennis out long ago if he wasn't such a bear for punishment," said Squint.

The Medicine Man

By SEVEN ANDERTON

The able author of "Three Who Would Hang," "The Corpus Delicti" and other good ones is at his best here.

Illustrated by O. E. Hake

DR. MARTIN RATHBURN was walking slowly toward his office in the heart of Chicago's near West side. He had just ushered another baby into a Polish family where there were already too many offspring. Dusk was settling over the dingy neighborhood inhabited by the city's foreign element and laboring-class.

They called him "the little Doctor"—those people among whom he had cast his lot upon becoming a full-fledged M. D. four years before. They kept him busy, and paid him a few pennies now and then.

It was only because of an income from nearly a million dollars in good securities that he was able to carry on in a district where his fees had never yet paid his office-rent. The securities were a double legacy from his mother and an aunt. His mother had died when he was seven and his aunt, who reared him, died a month before he finished medical college.

Martin Rathburn was one of those serious young men who regard life as a responsibility, and service to humanity as both a duty and a privilege. He gave freely of his energy and his income in an effort to decrease suffering among the folk of his neighborhood. They loved him and took him for granted.

The coming of a new life into the world never failed to thrill Martin Rathburn, and the tragedy of seeing it begin handicapped by poverty and the environment of the slums, never failed to weigh upon his heart. He loved babies—even the dirty, under-nourished and subnormal ones.

Deep in thought, the young physician picked his way along the squalid street. In one hand he carried a black leather case of instruments and medicines, while the other hand cuddled the blackened bowl of a briar pipe, as he stepped from the curb to cross one of the side streets leading off Milwaukee Avenue.

SUDDENLY a huge car swung into the side street from the direction of the Avenue. There was a fusillade of shots from heavy-caliber guns. Rathburn looked up, to behold the big car bearing down

upon him at a terrific speed. He was blinded by its brilliant lights—he seemed unable to gather his wits and make a move to save himself, but stood like a frozen man. It seemed nothing could prevent that speeding car from grinding out his life under its huge wheels in another moment.

But something did.

Rathburn heard a shrill scream from behind him. The next moment something struck him sharply in the back and sent him stumbling ahead, to lose his balance and roll across the dirty pavement into the gutter. As he rolled he realized that some one was rolling with him.

The huge car roared past, missing the tumbling bodies by a scant six inches. A second car sped past in hot pursuit of the one from which Dr. Rathburn had been saved by a miracle.

The young Doctor disentangled himself from the miracle and looked at it. He found himself gazing into the flushed face and dark eyes of a pretty Italian girl in her early twenties. He knew the girl—her name was Rosita Scarpa. Rathburn had called at her home a few days before to examine the eyes of her blind sister Theresa, a year or two younger than Rosita. Theresa had been born blind and medical science could do nothing to bring light into the darkness which would last while she lived. The girls' father, Michael Scarpa, kept a flower-shop on the Avenue, and his family lived above the shop.

RATHBURN scrambled hastily to his feet and helped the girl to rise. By the light of a street lamp almost directly over their heads he could see that one of her knees had burst through its thin silk stocking and one foot was slipperless. He stepped into the street and retrieved the slipper. As he knelt to put it on the tiny foot, he saw that the knee which had burst through the stocking was bruised and bleeding.

"You are not hurt, Doctor?" asked the girl, her voice trembling slightly.

"I think not," answered Rathburn. "But I would surely have been a candidate for the morgue if it had not been for you! Your knee is badly lacerated; you must come to my office and let me dress it."

The street was now swarming with people who had rushed from shops and dwellings. Speculation as to the nature of the battle—now a dozen blocks away, but still in progress—was rife. Questions were being asked in a half-dozen tongues. The Doctor rescued his bag from the gutter and slipped his hand under the girl's arm.

"Come," he said. "My office is in the next block."

In his spotless operating-room, Rathburn set about dressing the girl's injured knee. She set her white teeth on her lower lip as he washed the laceration with an antiseptic, but she uttered no sound.

"Did you know who I was before you pushed me out of the way of that automobile?" he asked.

"Who does not know the kind and wonderful Dr. Rathburn?" the girl rejoined.

"You might have been killed," said Rathburn, ignoring the tribute. "Why did you risk your life to save mine?"

"Your life means so much to the poor people," answered the girl simply.

The young Doctor flashed a glance into the dark eyes. What he saw caused him to turn his attention back quickly to his professional task. Men like Dr. Rathburn do not like to be worshiped.

When the dressing of the knee was finished, the Doctor led the girl into his comfortable reception-room and asked her to be seated. He stood looking down at her, speculation in his gray eyes.

"Miss Scarpa," said Rathburn, "I want to do something to show you how grateful I am. You saved me from almost certain death—at least from terrible injury. I will take care of your injured knee, naturally, and you shall have a new dress and stockings for those you ruined in saving me—but I would like to do something more."

"I don't want anything," murmured the girl. "It is an old dress, anyway."

The Doctor stood studying the flushed and pretty face.

"But I really want to do something to repay you, Miss Scarpa," he insisted. "What do you want, most of anything in the world? Pretend that I am a sort of good fairy and wish for what you want most. I'll try to see that you get your wish."

"You couldn't," said the girl, shaking her head.

"Make your wish just the same," smiled Rathburn. "You might be surprised. What do you want most of all things?"

"I want Dennis McCafferty to be the lightweight champion," came the low answer.

Rathburn sat down on the edge of the small table in the center of the room. He

had been thinking of his securities nestling snugly in his deposit-box, and feeling confident that he would be able to gratify the wildest wish of this quiet little Italian girl. Her words drove home anew the limitations of wealth.

"That is quite an order, at that," chuckled the man of medicine. "But since I promised to try, I'll have to see what can be done. Why do you want Dennis McCafferty to be lightweight champion?"

"So that he can get married," murmured Rosita, her face flushing, but her big dark eyes looking steadily into the Doctor's. "You see, Dennis has to take care of his mother and his two little brothers and a sister. His father is drunk all the time that he is not in jail. So Dennis cannot marry until he gets big money like the champion makes."

"I see," nodded Rathburn.

HE knew Dennis McCafferty as he knew Rosita, through professional calls at the McCafferty flat. Mrs. McCafferty was an invalid, spending most of her time in a wheel-chair. The Doctor remembered that Dennis fought now and then under the management of one "Squint" Dugan, who kept a stable of mediocre "pugs." He hadn't known that there was a romance between Rosita Scarpa and the young Irishman—but his business concerned the health and not the emotions of his people.

"So Dennis is the sole support of his family?" queried Rathburn.

"Yes." The girl nodded.

"What does he do to make money when he isn't fighting?"

"He works evenings in Limpy Steve's blind pig."

"Does he earn much money fighting?"

"Sometimes fifty, sometimes a hundred dollars," answered Rosita. "But he does not get to fight often enough, so he works for Limpy Steve to earn three dollars every evening."

"Can't Dugan make a champion of Dennis?" asked the Doctor.

"Mr. Dugan says he will not give Dennis any more fights if he does not win tomorrow night at the Milwaukee Avenue Athletic Club," answered the girl. "He told Dennis that last week—and Dennis does not think he can win."

"What's the matter?"

"I don't know."

The Doctor sat stroking his lean chin in silence. He had quite a job before him—to take an unknown fighter who worked in a blind pig nights and who didn't think he could win over some other ham-and-egger and make a champion of him. Rathburn smiled.

"All right, Miss Scarpa," he said. "Let me think this thing over until tomorrow. Come to my office at three o'clock tomorrow afternoon so I can take care of that knee; I'll tell you then whether I can do anything for Dennis."

Rathburn opened the door of his office and stood watching the girl until she reached the bottom of the stairs. Then he sat down in an easy-chair, lighted his pipe and puffed for a long time in moody silence.

It was half-past ten the following morning when Dr. Rathburn walked into the Milwaukee Avenue Athletic Club and introduced himself to Squint Dugan. The trainer - manager - promoter was leaning against a wall, watching a wiry boy pummel a punching-bag.

"What's on your mind, Doc?" inquired Squint.

"I called to have a talk with you about Dennis McCafferty."

"Yeah? What about him?"

"I understand you are releasing him if he does not win his bout tonight."

"You understand right," growled Squint. "That baby either wins tonight or he gets the gate."

"Who does he fight tonight?"

"Buster Gaffney."

"Do you think Dennis may win?"

"Not a chance," declared Squint. "Buster has licked him three times in the last year and he'll do it again."

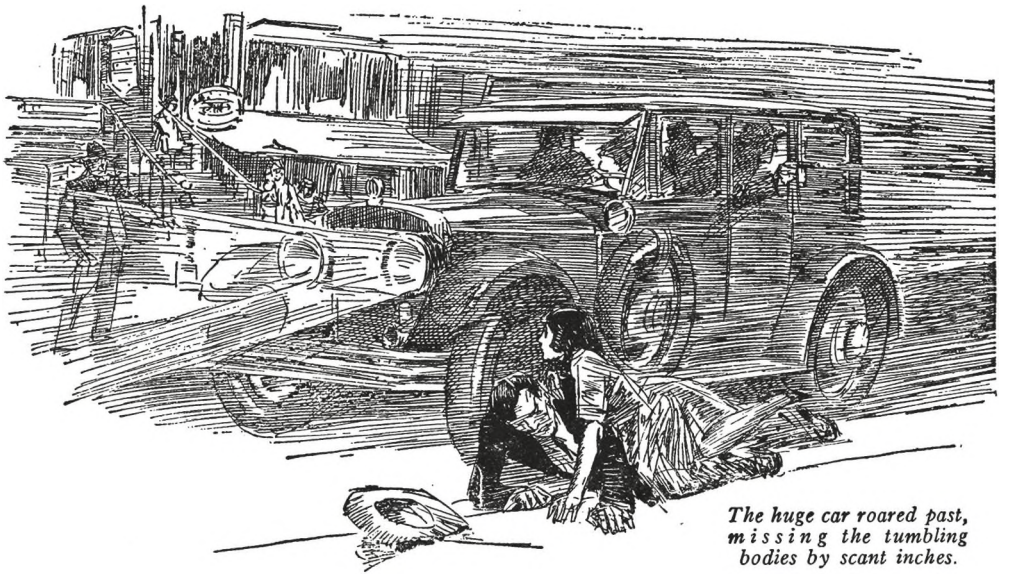
"You don't think Dennis has a future as a fighter?" asked the Doctor.

"I used to think so," replied Squint. "But I've lost faith. I'd have kicked him out of my stable long ago if he wasn't such a bear for punishment. They all lick him, but the best of 'em can't rock him to sleep. I've kept on sticking him in, just to see him knocked out, but he stays on his feet no matter how bad they beat him up."

The Doctor talked with Squint for a quarter of an hour, and left the club with a ticket for the bout that evening in his pocket.

PROMPTLY at three o'clock that afternoon Rosita Scarpa appeared in Dr. Rathburn's office. In silence the Doctor attended the rapidly healing knee.

"There," he said, when the task was



The huge car roared past, missing the tumbling bodies by scant inches.

finished; "do not remove that dressing for twenty-four hours. Your knee will be as good as new after that."

"Thank you." The girl rose, her soft dark eyes looking wistfully into the Doctor's face.

"Now you want to know what I decided about Dennis, don't you?" he asked.

She nodded.

"Well, I haven't decided yet," Rathburn admitted. "I'm going to see the fight tonight and I would like to see Dennis before the fight. Could you get word to him that I want him to come to my office about seven o'clock this evening?"

"Yes," said the girl. "I'll tell him. He will come to our house tonight before he goes to the club."

"Do you think he will come to see me?"

"He will be here," declared Rosita. "I know."

The Doctor drew a yellow bank-note from his pocket and pressed it into the girl's hand.

"This is to buy some new clothes to replace those you ruined saving my skin," he said.

"A hundred dollars!" cried Rosita, after a quick glance at the note. "I cannot take it; it is too much! My father—"

"You must take it," insisted the Doctor. "It's not too much. I will stop at the store and explain to your father."

Still clutching the yellow bank-note doubtfully, Rosita departed. The Doctor turned back to his office, a frown knitting his brows. Why couldn't he take his mind off this girl? He smiled slightly; there was a faint fragrance in the office to remind him of her visit. Then a patient entered the reception-room, and Rathburn became the professional healer, resolutely putting from his mind the tiny, olive-skinned, raven-haired vision that was Rosita Scarpa.

THE Doctor ate his dinner in a restaurant on the Avenue. He returned to his office to find Dennis McCafferty waiting in the reception-room.

Dennis McCafferty was no beauty. There was no way of telling what sort of features Nature had originally designed for him, for innumerable blows from well-directed fists had scrambled those features thoroughly. One ear was a distinct cauliflower; the nose had been broken and had healed crooked; one eyebrow was split and twisted by a scar. The only redeeming feature was the level, deep blue eyes that usually looked at the world with a twinkle. Those eyes were not twinkling, however, as they met Rathburn's. They were worried.

Rathburn wondered at the whim of fate which had bestowed the heart of the beautiful Rosita on this pugnacious youth with the grotesque features.

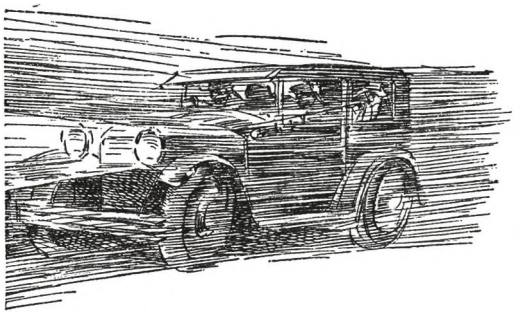
"Hello, Dennis!" the Doctor greeted cheerfully.

"Hello, Doctor," answered the lad. "Rosita said you wanted to see me."

"Did she tell you why?"

"No," muttered Dennis, "but if it's about Mom's bill, I'll try to pay some on it tomorrow. I'm fightin' tonight at—"

"Never mind your mother's bill," interrupted Rathburn. "We can talk about that some other time. Sit down, Dennis—I want to have a talk with you."



The youth sat down, a puzzled look in his eyes. The Doctor took a chair facing the lad.

"I'm going to tell you something, Dennis," began the Doctor. "It's just between you and me, and I want you to promise not to tell Rosita I told you. Let her tell you herself, if she wishes."

Dennis promised, then listened in silence while Rathburn told how Rosita had saved his life, and of her wish concerning Dennis and the lightweight championship.

"Would you like to be champion, Dennis?" asked the Doctor.

"Sure, I'd like it," nodded Dennis. "I'd like to be a millionaire, too."

"You don't think you could do it?" asked Rathburn, smiling.

"I aint never licked anybody yet.'

"What seems to be the matter?"

"I don't know. Just don't seem to be able to stop 'em."

"Dugan tells me that you've never been knocked out."

"Naw," said Dennis. "I can take all they can hand me, but I can't pass it back well enough to get a decision."

"I hear that you work in Limpy Steve's place," said Rathburn. "Do you drink much?"

"I never touch the hooch at all," replied the lad. "I've seen enough of what it's done to my old man."

"What hours do you work there?"

"From seven till midnight, except on nights when I got a fight."

"Would you mind stripping so I can give you a physical examination?"

"What's the idea?" asked the lad.

"I think perhaps I will undertake to make a champion of you after all," replied the Doctor.

Twenty minutes later, Rathburn laid down his stethoscope and told Dennis to dress. The lad was a perfect physical specimen. Narrow of hip and with slender, supple, tapering legs, he had a marvelous chest and shoulder development. More than half his weight was above his slender waist. Lungs, heart, everything about him was in perfect condition.

The Doctor stood deep in thought until the lad had finished dressing.

"I'll walk over to the club with you," Rathburn said then. "I'm watching you fight tonight. I'll want to talk to you after you finish your scrap. I'll wait for you near the door."

Sitting among the crowd in the smoke-filled loft two hours later, Dr. Rathburn watched young McCafferty take a cruel beating. The lad made a poor showing against the beefy Buster Gaffney who pounded him mercilessly and incessantly. Dennis, however, finished the ten rounds on his feet and walked, bleeding and shaky, toward the dressing-room after the referee had given Gaffney the decision. That decision meant that Dugan would give Dennis no more fights. The extra money the lad had been able to gather by taking an occasional beating would be sadly missed by the McCafferty family.

RATHBURN sought out Squint Dugan.

"Do you care if I take McCafferty in hand for a while?" asked the Doctor.

"I don't care if you take him in both hands forever," growled Dugan. "I'm all washed up with him."

The Doctor walked over to the door to wait for Dennis.

"Let's walk over to my office," he said, when the battered lad joined him.

The two walked the few blocks in silence.

"Let me see your hands," said Rathburn when they were in his office.

Dennis held out his hands; the physician took them in his slender, sensitive fingers and examined them thoroughly. They were large hands, well-muscled and yet supple. The bones were short and the joints rather large.

"Ever break a bone in either hand?" asked Rathburn.

"No."

"Are you sore from that thumping you took tonight?"

"Not yet," replied Dennis. "I'll probably have a few sore spots by tomorrow."

"Boy," said the Doctor, "you sure can take it! I did a little boxing in my school and college days. I watched you tonight. You don't make any effort to cover up; you

just let the other fellow batter away, while you keep trying to give back as good as you get. I've got an idea. Will you follow my orders for the next ten weeks, if I cancel your mother's bill and lend you fifty dollars a week, to be paid back out of the first thousand dollars you get for a single fight?"

The youth was regarding the Doctor with a puzzled look. He licked his swollen lips.

"What do you want me to do?" he asked.

"I want you to quit working at Limpy Steve's and go into training under my direction for ten weeks. At the end of that time I'll decide whether I can make a champion of you or not."

"And you'll pay me fifty dollars a week?"

"Yes."

"You're on."

THE following day Dennis McCafferty entered upon a period of strange training, living according to a schedule drawn by Rathburn. The schedule included nine hours' sleep and an early morning walk of five miles along the lake shore. The lad ate meals prepared at a near-by restaurant under the direction of the Doctor. He put in four hours every day slugging a leather bag, hung from the ceiling in a vacant room across the hall from the Doctor's office.

That leather bag contained three hundred pounds of flour—and Dennis didn't punch it—he slugged it! The Doctor came in frequently to watch, and to instruct Dennis in the art of getting every ounce of his weight behind the blows he shot into the heavy bag.

"Remember," Rathburn would tell the lad, "the other fellow can't hit you hard enough to hurt you. So all you have to do is develop a blow that will hurt *him,* no matter where you hit him. You've got to become able to sock the other fellow so hard that after you hit him the first couple of times he'll dread to see your fists coming!"

Dennis would nod his head and tear into the bag, putting every ounce of his strength and weight behind his fists as he struck with first one and then the other.

Almost daily the Doctor found himself walking past the flower-shop of Michael Scarpa. He did not always see Rosita, but she often flung him a smile through the blossom-filled window. Now and then she came to the door to chat a few minutes about the progress of Dennis.

Rathburn told himself that he was a fool, that Rosita belonged to Dennis and that he was nothing to her but a nice, kind doctor who perhaps was going to make a champion out of Dennis. But he kept on finding excuses for passing the flower-shop; he kept on feeling a warm sensation about his heart when Rosita flashed him her shy smile.

One day when the ten weeks of training was almost finished, Rathburn stood watching the piston-like arms of Dennis drive those hard fists into the heavy bag. The lad had developed a terrific wallop in each hand.

The balanced diet, the fresh air, sufficient sleep, and hard work at the bag were doing their work well. Dennis was becoming a tireless, double-action human trip-hammer.

"I saw Dugan this morning," said Rathburn. "He says you can have a go with Buster Gaffney next Saturday night."

"Buster Gaffney!" cried Dennis, turning to face his mentor.

"Yes," nodded Rathburn. "And now you've got to forget that Buster has always won when you mixed with him. You've got to hit him as you never hit him before. He can't run you any worse than he ever did—but you can land on *him* so hard he will think he has been struck by lightning! Remember that!"

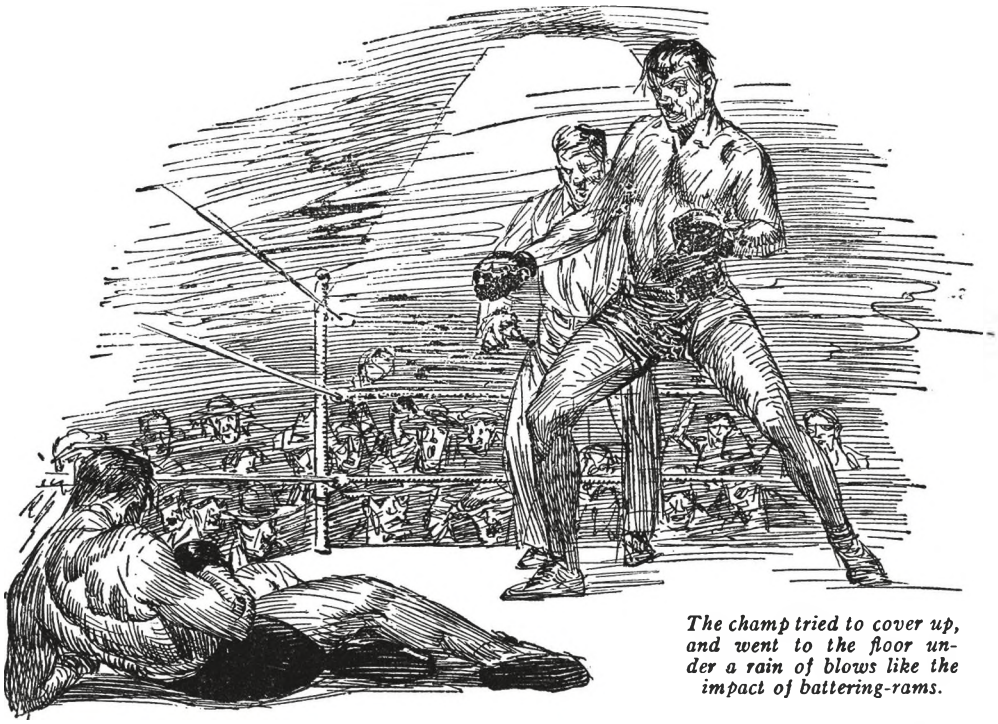
"I'll remember."

"And remember also," said the Doctor, "that you've got to win over him Saturday night, if I am going to make a champion of you—for Rosita."

Dennis nodded his head and Rathburn returned to his office. . . . .

The tiered seats around the roped arena in the smoke-filled club were packed on the following Saturday night when Rathburn picked his way to his ringside seat. He had arrived just in time for the semifinal between Buster Gaffney and Dennis McCafferty. He was barely seated when the pair entered the ring. The crowd was apathetic. The only remarkable thing about this bout would be the amount of punishment McCafferty could take and still stand up.

Now the hand-shaking was over and they were at it. Buster tore in, determined that this time McCafferty should not stay ten rounds and live. He jabbed a left to the slim body of his opponent and threw up his arm to ward off a blow Dennis had aimed at his face. The arm broke the blow—but Buster thought for a moment that the blow had broken the arm! It hurt and it knocked his body back far enough to disturb his balance. He saw McCafferty's right coming at his solar plexus. He threw down his guard. The blow landed on his



The champ tried to cover up, and went to the floor under a rain of blows like the impact of battering-rams.

right forearm. It hurt like the devil; it also finished the work of unbalancing him. Buster went backward to the canvas, floored by two blows on the arms.

Gaffney was on his feet before the referee could begin to count. He rushed. He would annihilate this fool kid! He jabbed his right to the body and flung up his left to block McCafferty's swing at his jaw. McCafferty's left landed in his short ribs.

Buster thought Dennis had hit him with a brick. He felt sick. Then McCafferty's right came flashing up under Buster's left arm—and it was over!

BUSTER came to in the dressing-room. Out in the hall, the customers were still celebrating. For once, Dennis McCafferty had handed them their money's worth.

"What in hell did you shoot into that boy's arm?" asked Squint Dugan, locating the Doctor near the door.

"Confidence," chuckled Rathburn.

"Well, it sure did the business," remarked Squint. "I'll match Dennis up two weeks from tonight with a bird he wont stop so easy. What do you say?"

"Go ahead," answered the Doctor.

"Well, Dennis, Rosita shall have her champ," said Rathburn an hour later as he and Dennis sat in the Doctor's reception-room. "You've developed into a killer. Keep it up! And I learned something else tonight: Remember this—never hit them when they are backing off. Get them following you, or rushing you if possible. Then stop quickly and sock it to them. That will make your blows land with more telling force."

"That sure was a cinch tonight," said Dennis, his battered face lighting up with a grin. "I only hit him four times."

"But *how* you did hit him!" smiled Rathburn. "I thought that last one was going to tear his head off!"

"Is Dugan going to get me some more fights?" asked Dennis.

"Yes," replied Rathburn. "You are to see him tomorrow about a match in two weeks."

The following afternoon Rathburn, coming down the avenue, saw Dennis McCafferty standing before the flower-shop talking with Rosita. Both greeted him warmly as he came up.

"Well, Rosita," said the Doctor, "it looks as though you were going to have your champion."

"If it comes true," murmured the girl, "we can never thank you enough."

"Don't try." Rathburn grinned. "It makes me feel foolish."

The young Doctor was angry with himself as he walked away from the couple—angry because he envied Dennis McCafferty and couldn't help it. What right had the

uneducated Dennis—with the face of a chimpanzee crossed with a bulldog—to the love of Rosita Scarpa? It didn't help any when the Doctor reflected that he had been the cause of helping Dennis climb nearer to his goal of marriage to the little dark-eyed beauty.

A few nights later the Doctor saw Rosita and Dennis walking through one of the neighborhood parks. They were taking Theresa, the little blind girl, for a walk. They kept Theresa between them as they guided her steps over the gravel paths through the crisp autumn dusk.

Rathburn reflected that Dennis was a good-hearted kid, even if his face had been used badly. The lad was kind to everybody. But why did he have to be the possessor of Rosita's heart? Sadly the Doctor watched the trio out of sight.

AUTUMN turned to winter and winter passed. Dr. Rathburn went steadily about his work, his heart aching with a love that his code forbade him to voice. He loved Rosita Scarpa desperately, but he held his peace and went on making a champion of Dennis—for her.

Dennis meanwhile was climbing steadily toward the top of his class. One by one he eliminated the pugs who stood between him and a try at the champion's crown.

As McCafferty's star began to ascend, Squint Dugan brazenly proclaimed himself the trainer, manager, and discoverer of the coming champion—he conveniently forgot that he had once consigned the Irish lad to fistic oblivion. He was filled with a growing hope that he was to manage a champion at last.

Rathburn merely smiled—and went on putting Dennis through his paces. The Doctor did not neglect his patients, but merely drew on his reserve energy and lengthened his hours.

Rigidly Rathburn looked after the diet, slugging practice and daily routine of his protégé. He had promised to make a champion of Dennis and he went about it seriously, as he went about all things. There was a tired look in the little Doctor's eyes now as he made his rounds among the sick and afflicted, but they put it down to long hours and hard work.

May came, touching with its magic even the sordid near West side. Dennis McCafferty's trip-hammer fists had battered a path to the feet of the champion; he was now the challenger—and the champ yielded to the clamor of the press and sportdom. Negotiations for the title bout were opened.

Few days passed that Dr. Rathburn did not stop in the flower-shop for a few words with Rosita. He talked of Dennis while he drank in her soft beauty with hungry eyes. He longed to tell her of his love, but instead he spoke of the approaching day when Dennis McCafferty would be champion.

Dennis had been "in the money" for months. He had paid back the five hundred dollars advanced by the Doctor during his first ten weeks of training, and had moved the family to better quarters.

The lad had also bought a handsome car and Rathburn often saw him driving it proudly about the neighborhood. The new car, however, was never loaded with rowdies or flappers. Its passengers were either Dennis' invalid mother and the young McCaffertys, or Rosita and little blind Theresa.

Dennis was a dutiful son and a good, clean youngster. The little Doctor could have loved him as a brother—if he had only chosen to win another heart than Rosita's.

"When is the wedding to be?" asked the Doctor one day, during one of the frequent physical examinations he gave Dennis. He hated himself for asking the question, but he couldn't help it.

"First Sunday after I'm champ," said Dennis, coloring.

"You are getting a fine girl," Rathburn commented.

"The finest in the world!" said the youth, awkwardly but fervently.

In silence the Doctor proceeded with the examination.

FINALLY came the night—a Wednesday—when Dennis was to battle for the crown. That day the lad ate but one meal, and did no work. In the afternoon he dropped in at Rathburn's office and waited until the Doctor had a free minute.

"Rosita wants to go to the bout tonight," said Dennis.

"Yes?" said Rathburn. He could no longer hear her name without a quickening of the pulse.

"She asked me to ask you if you would take her," said Dennis.

"Why, certainly. Tell her I'll call for her at eight."

Thus it happened that Rosita sat beside the little Doctor in a ringside seat, while Dennis McCafferty battled for the championship.

IT was a battle and no mistake. The champion was a tough, wiry individual four years older and slightly heavier than Dennis. He was wary; he was a fighter—and he was ring-wise. He watched those smashing fists of McCafferty's and avoided them carefully. By the end of the third round the customers were yelling in disgust. They wanted a fight, not a foot-race.

Dennis was obeying the Doctor's last-minute instructions, saving his strength until he could induce the champion to come after him.

In the fifth round the champ took the aggressive. Dennis let himself be driven back. He retreated, covering up as best he could. The champion had the challenger in a corner when the bell rang. He had sent home some telling punches, and Dennis had not retaliated to any damaging extent.

The champ rushed out with the tap of the bell. His mind was made up that the sixth should be the last round. He would finish off this ape-faced kid in a hurry! He rushed and Dennis retreated a few feet. Then the retreat suddenly stopped, and the champion found himself falling back before a solid wall of battering fists. He was unable to face that furious whirlwind of swings and punches—wherever they hit, they hurt. The champ's right arm was numb from a blow that had landed on flexed biceps. He was slow in getting it over his ribs and McCafferty's right tore into his side with a thud that could be heard in the back seats. The champ tried to cover up and went to the floor under a rain of blows like the impact of battering-rams. He took a count of nine, and got up to go down under another barrage of fists. Once again the champion rose, but it got him nothing but the credit of "dying game," for McCafferty bored in, his battering fists landing like sledge-hammers. The champion went down to stay, and the referee raised the hand of a new champion—Dennis McCafferty!

The crowd had gone wild. Rosita Scarpa, tears of joy streaming down her face, was clinging to the Doctor's arm.

"There's your champion!" said Rathburn, trying in vain to put a glad ring into his voice.

His whole body was tingling with the touch of her fingers on his arm. He wanted to take her in his arms and kiss those trembling lips, fiercely and tenderly—but she was Dennis McCafferty's. . . . .

They had promised to wait for Dennis. The new champion was besieged by reporters and admirers, so the wait was long. They talked of Dennis and what the championship meant to him.

"I suppose the wedding will be next Sunday?" the Doctor queried.

"Yes," cried Rosita, her eyes glistening. "You will come?"

Rathburn wanted to refuse, but he took a firm hold on himself. He would see the thing to the bitter end—he would stand by. Then he would build the children's hospital that had been his dream, and forget—if he could.

"I'll come," he said.

It was past midnight when the new champion's car dropped the Doctor before his rooms. He stood on the curb and watched the auto disappear in the direction of the Scarpa home. Then he went slowly upstairs. During the long hours before sleep finally brought relief, Rathburn passed through the torment of a man who is to hear the only woman pronounced the wife of another. He prayed for Sunday to arrive quickly.

THROUGH the gathering dusk of Sunday evening, Dr. Rathburn dragged unwilling feet toward the little flat over the flower-shop. He climbed the stairs, to be met by a starry-eyed Rosita. He followed her into the flower-bedecked parlor—and stood looking in dazed wonder at Theresa, arrayed in the white gown and flowing veil of a bride!

Slowly the truth dawned on the little Doctor. It was Rosita's blind sister who was to marry Dennis McCafferty, the lightweight champion! The boy with the battered features had picked a bride who could know only the caress of his voice and hands. His scrambled face would never smite the vision of Theresa—she couldn't see it.

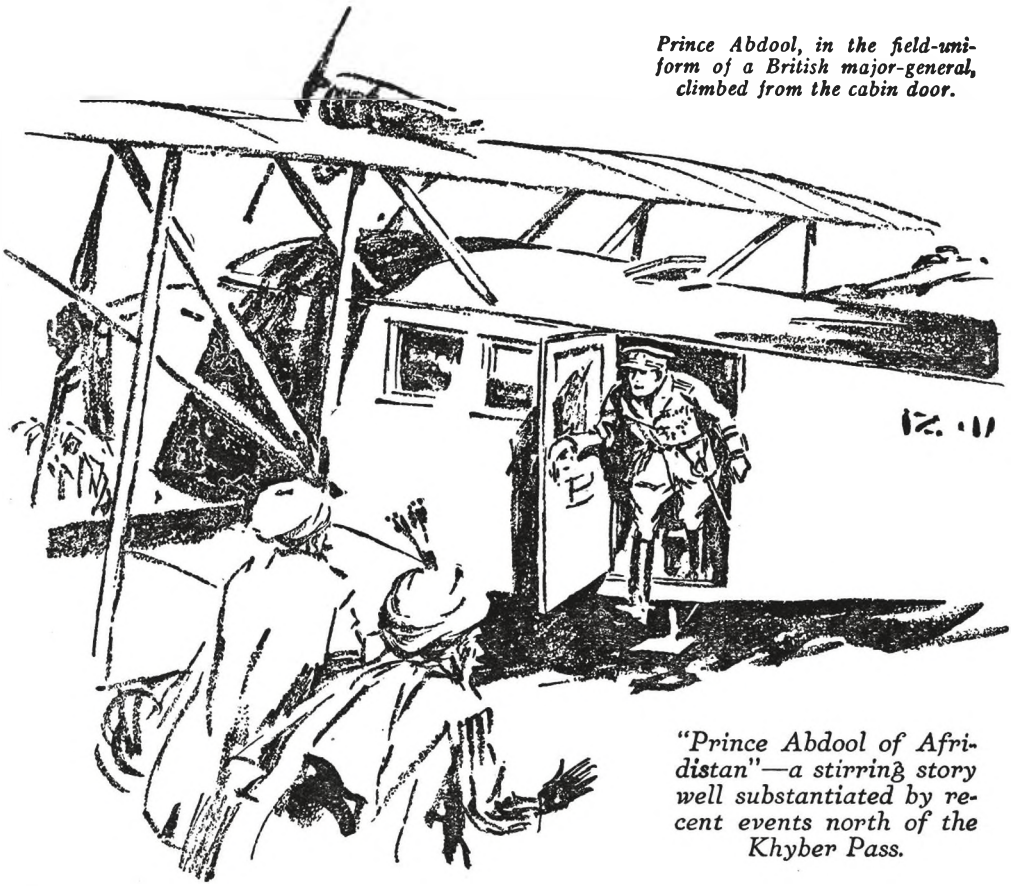
Rathburn's heart was thumping wildly. Beside him he heard Rosita speaking.

"She's so happy," said the proud sister. "Isn't she beautiful?"

"She's the most beautiful thing in the world—excepting you!" said the little Doctor, his hand groping until it found Rosita's. "But she's no more happy than I am—I thought it was *your* wedding I was to attend!"

Her dark eyes fell before the light that burned in the eyes of Rathburn—but her soft fingers answered the pressure of his.

"Let's go down to the shop and bring up a few more flowers," she murmured.



Prince Abdool, in the field-uniform of a British major-general, climbed from the cabin door.

"Prince Abdool of Afridistan"—a stirring story well substantiated by recent events north of the Khyber Pass.

Free Lances in Diplomacy

By

CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

Illustrated by William Molt

IN the Cabinet room at Number Ten Downing Street, that morning, the Foreign Secretary, the Secretary for India, the Secretary for War and Lord Privy Seal were discussing the Afridistan question. His Excellency of the War Office was rather regretting the sums which had been spent some months before upon the entertainment of the Emir (or King, as he had more recently styled himself) and his handsome queen, who had enjoyed freedom never before permitted an Oriental consort.

"It's quite all right as a matter of policy, you know, to spread ourselves in the way of entertaining Oriental rulers, but one could have wished for a hint or two as to how the chap stood with his own people before letting the expenditure run too far. He's out of it now, d'ye see — and our money might as well have been chucked into the Thames!"

The others laughed.

"We'll not losé out on the expenditure in the long run, old chap. Every brownie on an Eastern musnud has heard how the man was entertained and honored. Whoever succeeds in grasping and holding the governm'nt out there will feel that he may count upon the same amount of attention if he makes a similar trip—it's respect paid to the position, not to the individual. In this case there's a bit of a joke on us, lookin' at it in one way, but practically nothing wasted in the final analysis. On the other hand, that same expenditure will count materially in assisting us to mediate if necess'ry. The situation has rather serious possibilities, you know! A general upheaval resulting in a split-up under local chiefs is about the last thing we wish to see in that corner of Asia. If we don't watch out, that's exactly what we *will* see!"

"That seems quite possible. I don't see how we can very well prevent it in the circumst'nces—short of intervention with a punitive expedition upon one pretext or another, and that's a course to be avoided if we can keep out of it. Any suggestions, Trevor?"

"Well—yes. I fancy I've a good one. It will take a bit of explaining, but you'll catch the point. You're all quite well aware of the considerations which led to Baron Abdool's being raised to the peerage in spite of the precedent which has governed such cases. He had rendered His Majesty's governm'nt secret and immensely valuable services, many times, which could be neither recognized nor rewarded in any other way. Although actually a prince of the blood-royal in his own country, he had become a British subject and was in a diff'rent class altogether from the Eastern potentates who have been knighted and given baronetcies but never sent to the upper house. The man's family, you understand, are of pure Aryan stock, not Mongolian, and run back in an unbroken line to the earliest Persian emperors. Consequently you stir up a good deal of pretty fierce pride when any reflections are cast upon his race. He is quite well aware of the prejudice against Orientals in the upper house, and for that reason never has taken his seat there as an English baron—never *will* take it. The title he accepts as a mark of the respect due him—but entirely a courtesy one. . . . . You follow me—so far? Now—one doesn't resign from a peerage. It isn't done. But any way which can be found to eliminate that title in his case would be quite welcome to him, I fancy—particularly a way that would give him an even higher one."

"You mean—elevate him to an even higher rank in the peerage?"

"On the contr'ry, I'm suggesting his removal, to all intents, from our peerage altogether. Of course he'd still retain his barony and the income from it, but nobody ever would think of that again."

"DEMMED if I follow you, Trevor! How could you do that?" asked Sir Austen.

"The man is already prince of a royal house in a sovereign state—even if it's a small one. Why not publicly recognize him as such? I'm proposing this for two reasons—first as a concession to the personal pride of an exceedingly fine and valuable character, one of the most loyal friends we have, and second as one of the best bits of international policy we could think up in a month of concentration on the subject. Consider! Every man of his seven million countrymen at once feels a personal pride in the fact that one of his own princes, recognized as such, is actually one of the powerful British Raj—a minister in its governing Cabinet. That's quite a lot—to the Afghan. Then, in all the local squabbling for the musnud he is in exactly the position to be a confidential mediator without any charge of trying to seize it for himself or even take it unless by popular demand. If ever he did take it because of such a demand, they'd be sure of a strong and powerful governm'nt backed by all the assistance needed from the British Raj."

"My word, Trevor! That would be one of the cleverest diplomatic strokes I've heard of in some time! But—how do we go about recognizing him as Prince of Afridistan? What's the procedure?"

"I don't know. I'll have to look up the precedents, if there are any. But unless I'm altogether mistaken, it'll not be a matter of going before Parliam'nt with the question at all. It seems to me that it's altogether within the province of the Cabinet or the Privy Council, or both—for sufficient diplomatic reasons. All it amounts to is this: It's announced in the official gazettes that his status as prince of the blood-royal has been recognized by His Majesty's governm'nt—that, when acting formally in any part of the world as official representative of the British governm'nt, he gets a salute of fifteen or more guns—whatever an official prince's salute is—and that he is entitled to the style of 'Your Highness' when one addresses him."

"But suppose we can find no established precedent for doing anything of the sort?"

"Oh, buncombe! Then we'll cut the red tape and do it anyhow! Give ourselves the chance to do a little original thinking and carry out what it comes to! We'll not get anywhere if we stay hide-bound forever, you know! There's no legal impediment to doing it. Anybody will admit that it's a dev'lish good political move—one of the things which ought to be done in the circumst'nces. Let's simply give it to the gazettes as a Cabinet measure, enter it officially in the Foreign Office archives—and then let the critics howl if they wish to do so—pay no attention to 'em! What's done's *done!*"

"Faith, I believe you could carry it

through, Trevor! But the people and Parliam'nt will take a lot from you that it might be diffic'lt for the rest of us to put through. Of course we'll do it as a majority Cabinet measure—but hint about that you're sponsoring it."

"No—that'll never do at all! It would be said at once that I was making personal use of the Governm'nt to benefit my friend! That destroys its political value. But if Sir Austen will propose it as a diplomatic measure, that gives the best possible explanation anyone could ask. You see that, don't you, Sir Austen?"

"Why—I fancy you're quite right upon that point, Trevor. I'll sponsor it, with pleasure, as a corking good and timely diplomatic move!"

BARON ABDOOL MOHAMMED got no hint of this, even from his friends, until he saw the announcements gazetted. Then he asked them—at dinner, in Park Lane—if the gazette editors weren't having him on—pulling his leg. They assured him that the action was no joke at all, but a measure which the Cabinet had already carried out, voting upon it during his absence, for a few days, in France. But he was still puzzled.

"Then, as I understand it, I resign the barony at once?"

"Positively not! Can't do! Isn't done! You receive the income just the same—you've earned that, ten times over; but the title is dropped for the higher one. In a month people will forget you ever were a baron. You are now a duly recognized prince of your own country, entitled to be addressed as such."

"This is your doing, old friend, to save my pride," remonstrated Baron Abdool.

"Nons'nse, man! Sir Austen's proposal—diplomatic reasons—all that, you know!"

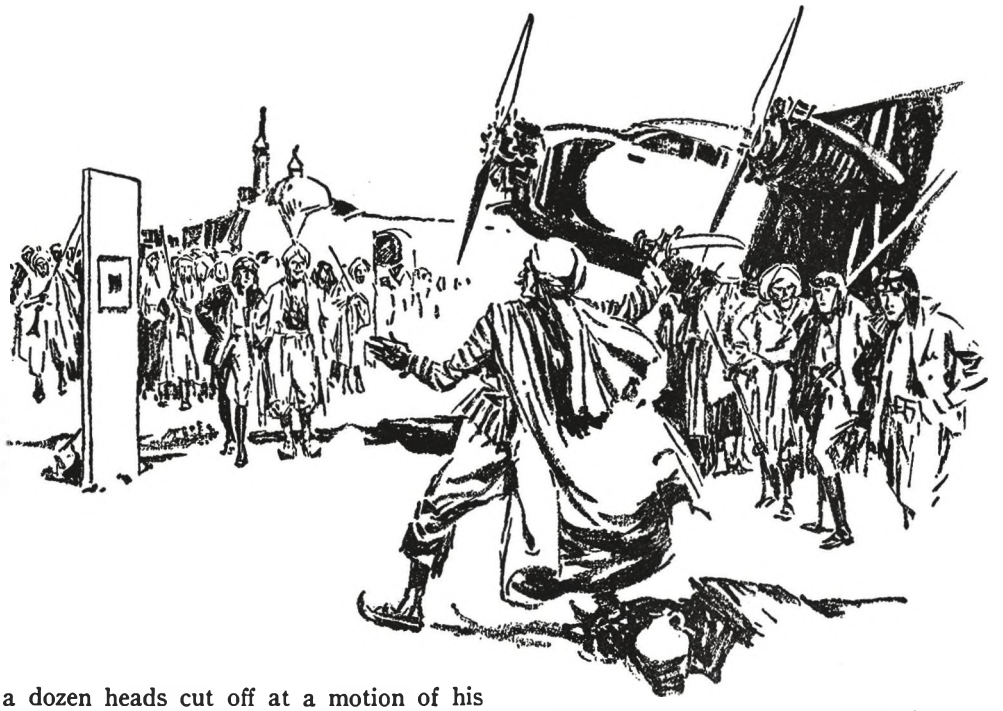
"Faith—it may be an even better move than he imagines. I've risked my life so many times for the British government that a few more are of no consequence. He'll be thinking of sending me out to Kabul and Kandahar, of course. If I don't get my throat cut the first of the week, I'm likely to find out just how much of a mess Ramanallah has got us in and who are working, under cover, with the opposition. I think the best means of approach will be to go up from Peshawar as official observer for the British Raj—as a member of that Raj. Take along Captain Billy Hanshew as chief pilot, Leftenant Tom Blake for assistant, and Ted MacWhirter as mechanic—with a big tri-motored plane. We'll need to use it as both house and conference-room—may want to carry some of the Khans with us to one part of the state or another. Probably be a mistake for me to wear Afridi clothes at all."

"Why so? Wouldn't they feel more at home with you, that way?"

"Too much so, altogether! They'd fancy I had the prodigal son in mind and was coming home for my fatted calf—the musnud—all for myself. But if I go in British staff uniform, wearing a lot of decorations, that has the psychological effect of putting my visit in a more academic light, without personal motive. You can commission me as an honorary major general, detailed to the F. O. for a diplomatic mission. We'll fly the diplomatic ensign, with the Lion and Unicorn on a white disk in the center of the jack. You might be surprised at the number of hill-tribesmen in Afridistan who know that flag—also many others—when they see them. Not that it makes the least difference in what they do! If some of those tribesmen get the idea into their heads that it would be a joke on the British Raj to cut off the legs of a diplomatic commission sent into their country, and leave 'em propped up on the road that way, near the end of the Khyber Pass, they'd do it in a minute—and you'd never catch the ones who were responsible! If some innocent tribe got wiped out by a punitive expedition, it would be considered another joke on them for being around, unsuspecting."

"Hmph! Lovely character you're giving your countrymen, Abdool!"

"I'm not speaking of my countrymen as a whole—merely the reckless, irresponsible element you find in every country. But you must take into consideration the fact that, from the time there were first human beings in Asia, some millions of years ago, the people in our territory always have been a free people—like the Persians, the Kurds, the Turkomans. A large majority are nomads, moving from one spot to another according to the pasturage for their goats or sheep. Those who build stone huts in the mountain valleys often move to other valleys. They have little to move—and camels for transportation. Why should they always stay in one spot? So you see, when a man like Abdur Rahman establishes his rule over the whole state, he must be a strong man—with common-sense ideas, a strict sense of justice, power enough to have



One of the disputants hurled his knife. It struck inside of a target chalked upon the board.

a dozen heads cut off at a motion of his thumb if the men prove insubordinate. Our cities, in the days when the power of one Emir extended but a short distance outside of them, were never as large or industrious as they are now. Our family always have been a strong race—but never has it been good for us when we came to the musnud too young. The very strength of mature years is but rashness when we are young. Ramanallah's ideas were progressive, good for the country; but no Emir could carry them out for several years to come—our people have been too much isolated from contact with Western civilization. They live exactly as their ancestors lived ten thousand years ago—are devout Mohammedans, resenting everything not approved in their religious beliefs. One thing you must understand: All the luxuries of civilization which might come to them with the adoption of Western ideas wouldn't make them one degree happier or more contented than they are now—than they always have been. They're entirely satisfied with the life they live—detest even the *idea* of change. As a race, we have almost unlimited possibilities—because we've always struggled for a living against odds that would simply wipe out the softer, more civilized peoples. But developing those possibilities against our will is a stiffish job."

PRINCE ABDOOL received no command from the Government to undertake a mission to his country. In its unsettled state, it was too well understood that such an order might be equivalent to a death-warrant, and he was too valuable a man to throw away. But the recognition of his Afridi rank and title was all he needed to make the suggestion himself and ask that one of his friends take over his Cabinet duties for a few weeks while he was in Afridistan on an official tour of observation for the Government. To the suggestion of his friends that one of them accompany him, he shook his head. In moments of sudden peril or emergency they would be invaluable—but their very presence with him might precipitate the emergency. Sending for the men he had spoken of accompanying them, he said:

"Gentlemen, I suggested that you come along with my show for two main reasons. You are some of the most reliable aviators and mechanics I happen to know—you're also three of about the quickest on the draw and shoot that I ever saw. But I've to be frank with you—I've a number of friends out there whom you'll find most hospitable if we manage to get in touch with 'em; there are also a few thousands who, just at present, don't seem to like any of my family and rather fancy elimination at sight. There's just one little point which may get us through even the worst of these: It's considered humorous among

our people to hold a man's arms and legs while some one presses a keen-edged knife against his throat. If he shows the slightest sign of nervousness, the cream of the joke is to draw the knife clean through to the backbone. If the victim laughs at them, he is usually released with considerable admiration of his nerve. Sometimes—not. One never shoots unless positive it's the last chance. Catch the idea? Want to go?"

"We're on, Your Highness! Sounds like good nerve-practice. Not that we're precisely keen about findin' ourselves in the helpless positions you describe—but we'll back your play, whatever it is."

THEY made the flight to Peshawar, in a powerful tri-motored cabin plane, inside of three days—coming down in the British cantonments and being received with much pleasure by the commissioner for that district, who had had code-advices by radio from Downing Street.

"I fancy Governm'nt couldn't have made a better move at just this moment than accepting Your Highness's suggestion about coming out here in person. I can post you up on conditions beyond the Pass as far as we know 'em—an' there's a chap in the air force who can give you a good bit more. One of the mechanics, as I understand it—but he's been all over the shop—talks four or five languages and half a dozen Arabic dialects. Tom Shaw—ever hear of him?"

"My word! Is the Colonel really in Peshawar at this moment? We've never happened to run across each other, but I'm frightfully keen about meeting him and talking over several things! Where is he?"

"Prowling through the bazaars, I'd say, at a guess. You'd take the chap for an upper-class Pathan of medium height, anywhere. He'll turn up for dinner, I fancy."

Shaw did turn up—or rather, a grave and dignified Afghan in a camel's hair burnous, with black, yellow and white stripes, came silently into the commissioner's dining-room, threw back the cowl until his head was bare—and with a courtly bow to the ladies, seated himself at Prince Abdool's side. As the two grasped each other's hands, a winning smile wrinkled the corners of the supposed Afghan's mouth.

"This is a pleasure I've been anticipating ever since I heard thou wert on the way, O Khan! Peace and good fortune be with thy father-son."

"And to thine also, O Colonel Bahadur. I thought your happy hunting-ground was in the Hejaz—along west of the Euphrates valley?"

"Well, some of the tribesmen over there were being very good—and others were representing to the Raj that I was a son of Shaitan whose presence anywhere on earth was offensive. They paid a few assassins—rather heavily, I fancy, it is even supposed in some quarters that they earned the money. Presently I may be again needed back there—I've rather powerful friends, as you may have heard. Meanwhile—there's a good bit of underhand soviet work going on in Persia, Turkestan and Afghanistan—even some in the northwest provinces."

"Er—are we quite safe in talking here?"

"I looked into that carefully—tested out every one of His Excellency's servants. Fancy he's very well guarded by them—which was to be expected, since three are of the Indian secret service."

"My impression has been, ever since we heard of it, that this raid of Shabiballah's—the revolts among the tribesmen—all have been instigated by Moscow agents, working among them—working during the Emir's absence in Europe. Eh?"

"They certainly were doing what they could—but Saroya was the bird who fired the train. The Emir might have known that the unaccustomed liberty and unlimited money to spend would go to her head! The mullah used her to point their arguments with him on the woman question—said she had proved that no woman was a responsible creature who could be trusted with education and liberty to do as she chose. Ramanallah is certainly progressive; his ideas are thoroughly sound; but like all other reformers, he wants to get everything done in a year or so—tackles a one- or two-century job in that spirit. Lord Birkenhead warned him he was biting off more than he could swallow, when they met in London. As Secretary for India, His Lordship knew precisely what he was talking about—but Ramanallah was cocksure about his ability to carry through everything he had figured out, mainly because Mustapha Kemal was getting away with it in Turkey. He didn't stop to consider that Turkey and civilized Europe have been next-door neighbors for centuries, getting accustomed to each other's habits, while his own state is still almost as isolated as it was a thousand years ago. As long as your best transportation is by camel, contact

with the outer world is a little blurred along the edges. The Emir and his air-force may use a few planes, but the mass of his people still travel 'on the hump,' and probably will for some time to come—centuries perhaps—unless a miracle happens."

"Is Ramanallah still in the country?"

"Not only there, but evidently means to fight it out! Inayatullah got cold feet—quit in three days—about the time you left London. We've got him and his women here in Peshawar now—fetched 'em down in planes. When Shabiballah took Kabul, Ramanallah and Saroya scooted for Kandahar by motor. The tribesmen down there seem unexpectedly loyal and are backing him for a come-back—so Ramanallah has rescinded his abdication, and is going to give his cousin a little argument in the matter. He has promised the mullahs to cut out his reforms on the woman question—back to the Koran, all that sort of thing, for the present anyhow. If one could weed out possibly a dozen Muscovites in this territory, the whole mess would settle down pretty soon—and Shabiballah would find himself in a cask of fresh plaster of Paris—which was rapidly setting. Abder Rahman or his predecessor actually did that to a rebel tribesman once—while three of his confederates were dancing on nothing, suspended from a forty-foot gallows over his head. Funny what a weakness your people have for a real high gallows, Prince—and no wasted technique on breaking their necks, either—just tie their arms and haul them up as is."

"HAVE you spotted any of those Muscovites, Colonel?"

"Well—I fancy I've checked out every one who has been working here for the last six months—difficult to be positive, of course. I'll write out names and descriptions for you to be studied at your leisure. —You weren't thinking of interviewing Shabiballah, were you?"

"Sometime tomorrow afternoon, I think —as a British commission of observation—under the diplomatic flag."

"H-m-m-m—it *might* work. He'd certainly admire your nerve in even making the attempt! Not much doubt as to what would have happened to the ex-king if the 'Water Boy' had laid hands on him—he was out to make his play unanimous. In British uniform, as a British officer—there's no suggestion of your having an eye on the musnud yourself. I—don't—know. . . . . Yes—it might work—if some of his followers don't devil your companions to the point of resistance. That would settle it for all of you! Just what would you expect to gain by the interview?"

"Some idea of what backing he's got—or thinks he's got—whether he thinks there may be force enough against him to call his bluff. Russia surely isn't insane enough to give him troops and munitions; that would be a flat declaration of war against Britain—"

"Which they might risk to run Britain out of India—considering the unrest there. Eh?"

"My word, Colonel! You're putting our little mess up here in the same category as a flare-up in the Balkans would mean to Europe!"

"Precisely. It's at least a possibility—isn't it? Get England fighting for her life in India—two hundred million brownies against half a million English. If England brings in any allies to help, then Germany joins Russia—and chaos is let loose. China and Japan are on the verge of war at this moment. With half of China sovietized, at least two hundred millions out of her four hundred million would join Russia on the east. Instead of having a caldron of hell boiling over in Europe, you'd have it spread over the whole Eastern hemisphere! As I see it, O Khan, we've to clean up this little mess of yours about as quickly as Allah will let us, and somehow eliminate those soviet agents in the process. Of course, like the endless swarm of locusts, others will replace them—but they may not be received in as friendly a manner."

There was no attempt upon the part of the British commissioner or any of the officers to dissuade the Prince from going to Kabul, next morning. They knew he had come from London with that as one of his primary objects—knew that, if he safely accomplished it, the result was likely to be of first importance to the British Government. But one and all of them regretted that there should have been any good excuse for it—knowing the Afghan temperament and ideas of humor as they did from years of close contact with it. The mysterious "Tom Shaw"—actually, a man who probably has more personal influence with the Mohammedan races of western Asia than any other living—had insisted upon accompanying the four unless His Highness had some reason for objecting—which was certainly not the case. As they circled

over Kabul, giving those below plenty of time to make out the diplomatic flag which was flying from the end of one wing, they saw through their glasses a camp of possibly five thousand tribesmen not far from the level ground where they were coming down, presumably the fighting force with which the "Water Boy" (Bacha Sakao) took the city while Ramanallah and his modernized queen were making their escape southward in a motorcar. Captain Billy Hanshew brought the big plane down in a perfect landing—then Prince Abdool, in the field-uniform of a British major general, a number of decorations glistening across his chest, climbed down from the cabin door and stepped out away from the plane until he could be seen distinctly from both city and camp. After standing there motionless for a couple of minutes, he sent out a peculiar bubbling cry which seemed to have rather amazing carrying-power, because in half a minute two or three hundred men came running out from camp and city. When they stopped and salaamed within hearing distance, he spoke to them.

"Peace be with ye, O Brothers of the Black Kamrai—the Wise Afridi. I come to ye as one of the British Raj—who would sit in durbar with the son of my father's cousin—the Emir Shabiballah, who is now king in Kabul—and speak of many things. One of ye will go to him with the message, saying that Abdool Mohammed Khan awaits his invitation. That misunderstanding may not arise, the rest of ye will remain here to guard my friends and their bird-of-the-air until I return to them. And that ye be not weary as ye wait, some of ye shall go into the city with this purse —fetching out much good food and tobacco for your refreshment. It be understood?"

Broad grins appeared upon every face. Rifles were held up at arm's length in the air. There was a roar of welcome and pleasure. Commenting upon this, Tom Shaw remarked to the other three as they stood by the big plane:

"Deuced clever move—that! I'd no idea the Prince was a blood-brother of the Black Kamrai—though I fancy I might have guessed it. The Water Boy and his following will think twice before doing him any real injury, because there are men of the Kamrai mixed in with the Shinwari, the Ghilzais and practically every other tribe in the country—you'll even find 'em in Persia and Turkestan. Why—oh, I say! D'ye know, I fancy that, with their help, Prince Abdool would have little diffic'lty in grabbing the musnud for himself—and his cousins must know that! H-m—puts him in a somewhat different light—that. They *might* consider it worth the risk to just wipe him out and settle his side of it, permanently. Still—hmph! What white man ever plumbed the mind of an Asiatic?"

In half an hour the messenger returned with a couple of dignified Khans to escort Prince Abdool, as a mark of diplomatic respect. Here again, a man who was not himself Afridi might have made a false step by stepping back to shake hands with his companions before proceeding alone into the city. The Prince, on the contrary, appeared to have forgotten their existence —walking off with the Khans without turning around for even a backward glance. And Shaw muttered:

"Good man! All the impress of thirty years' civilization hasn't made him forget the peculiarities of his countrymen. He couldn't have done anything which would have more impressed those Khans with his absolute confidence in himself than to walk off into that burg as if we were merely his servants. Presenting himself, d'ye see, as a 'one man commission of observation' without trimmings—complete as he stands."

WITH a European, the escort very likely would have led the way through many twisting and narrow streets before reaching their destination—to emphasize the King's usual inaccessibility. But in this case they were convinced that they'd better dispense with that, and took him to the palace by the shortest cut. As they went through various halls and foyers to the durbar chamber where the Water Boy sat on the raised dais covered with rugs and cushions —the musnud—waiting for them, Prince Abdool noticed little indications, in the decorations and furnishings, of that Western taste which Saroya had brought home with her. In another moment he was salaaming, with hand on forehead and heart, to the unsmiling figure who sat imperturbably smoking his narghile.

"Peace be unto ye, O King—and unto ye again, O son of my father's cousin. May Allah bestow upon thee the wisdom of Nag and many brave sons."

"And unto thee, O Khan Bahadur, may Allah bring many blessings. There is but one God—and Mohammed, whose name thou bearest, is his prophet. It is said thou art now one of the British Raj? Aie—

a strange thing, but an honorable one, for a prince of the Afridi. Perhaps thou mayest consider it even as high as the musnud?"

"When two men be of equal stature, O King—one does not overlook the other. Their eyes are upon the same level in order that they may read each other's souls the better. So—come I to thee as one of the British Raj with message of good will—with inquiry as to thy plans—and thy chances of success."

As the coins spun into the air, the crowd looked up at them. Three sharp reports barked out.

"It is a bold beast, O Khan, who comes to the tiger and asks of him matters that be of the tiger's own affair."

"Yet even so, O King—the lion may sit in durbar with the tiger and say: 'Today Allah giveth us sunshine. Do you think it is going to rain?' Neither will unsheath his claws—those of the one being as sharp as the other's—so they speak of divers matters. In Allah's good time the tiger returns the visit—and there is peace between them."

"Thou wouldst have me believe then, O Khan, that there is to be peace 'twixt me and the Angresi—that they favor not my enemies?"

"As thou thyself, O King, will not favor theirs. On the basis of the old agreements, the Angresi will favor him whose stronger grasp holds the musnud, here, in a friendly way—rules wisely—keeps the faith."

"And—otherwise?"

"Who can say? What is to be—will be. (The words of Allah.) The Angresi would be the friend and ally of Afridi's king. If he will not have their friendship, what hath happened in the past will happen again. No king—or man—be greater than his kismet."

"Perhaps thou thyself wouldst be a king to the liking of the Angresi, O Khan—if it be thy kismet?"

"I am already of the British Raj, O son of my father's cousin. Of what advantage is such a change to me? My word today is a part of that force which says to five hundred millions: 'Do ye this thing'—and they do it—for it is our law. As king of the Afridi I could say that to but seven millions. Where does such a change advantage me?"

"Nay—nay—that is not the question! But—where would the change advantage the British Raj?"

"No king, O cousin, is greater than the wishes of his people. If they support him, one is as another to the British Raj. There is no question as to thee or me—soon there will be neither me nor thee, as Allah wills. Yet—being of a third less years, thou wouldst be longer a king than I. So—I come not to ye as a rival for the musnud—but as the kinsman of both thee and Ramanallah—asking which of ye is to hold it, in friendship with the British Raj. Know ye not the truth when it be spoken?"

"Perhaps, O Khan—perhaps. Truth oft wears garments of different colors—which change not the truth, but the appearance of truth. Will ye eat with me—partake of my bread and salt—sip my coffee?"

"Aie—that will I do, O King—gladly. For—seest thou—if it be the will of Allah that they disagree with me until I join Him in paradise, who shall gainsay the will of Allah? But if it be Allah's wish that I live a long and useful life on earth, then no food can disagree with me. Even though thou heldest a knife against my naked throat, thou couldst not draw it deep—or if thou didst, Allah would send thee eternal torment both here and in that other land. It will give me pleasure, O King, to join thee in the midday meal."

IF one could but put upon the English or American stage a truthful representation of the meal which followed,—with all its grim possibilities thrown upon the wall from time to time by a fade-out camera,—one would venture to predict for it a run of several years. It would have to be done exactly right—the whole undercurrent would have to be projected across to the audience until they thoroughly grasped the significance of the byplay—or the show would lack the punch altogether.

Here was a man of the same race, alone, in the power of a second cousin who was to all intents a raiding usurper at the moment, an adventurer to whom any human life was merely a negligible factor in his schemes as long as it could be removed at will.

The Afghan is never willing to accept what he is asked to believe until the accomplished fact proves it. To a hill tribesman who never had been outside his own country, the statement that his kinsman had no desire for taking over the supreme job of governing and making a fortune out of the state—that he considered his own position in the British Raj a far better one—seemed so utterly ridiculous that it simply couldn't be the truth. If, then, it were but a lie, what purpose could lurk behind it save that of seizing the musnud for himself? The fool—evidently believing his lie accepted as truth—was taking the chance, in a spirit of bravado, of eating with his cousin, who had everything to gain by causing the food to disagree with him permanently. Even if the meal proved harmless, were there not many other ways? The accidental discharge of a guard's rifle, the stumble and fall of a servant passing behind him with a clean knife. An accidental push—sending him over a roof-parapet to be crushed on the stones of the court below. Behind all this was the same barbaric desire to test an enemy's nerve which prompted the American Indians to torture before killing their victims—the Afghan idea of humor in bringing death so near that the victim was counting the seconds. . . . .

The first intended jolt to the nerves of the guest in this case was a noticeably flat taste in the curried rice and cabobs—there was not a particle of salt in them. And men of the Arabic races do not betray their salt. If one breaks bread and eats salt with them, he is safe while under their roof or in their village. No salt—so, ominously, no guarantee of safety. But Prince Abdool gave not the slightest evidence that he even noticed it, as he chatted gayly with his host.

Get the picture into your imagination. Try to visualize an English officer and two ladies of his family dining with an Oriental potentate—when they suddenly realize that there is no salt in their food! Imagine the quick, veiled glances of horrified suspicion, the sudden loss of appetite, not knowing whether death may lurk in the next mouthful of curry—in the pastry, in the first sip of coffee! There are English men and women—Americans too—who have gone through such an experience with perfect *sang-froid* without betraying their feeling of cold horror by so much as the flicker of an eyelash—and thereby gained far-reaching influence among Hindus, Pathans, Malays. But don't ever try it with jumpy nerves or a disordered digestion, because then you *will* get what's coming to you. The game is played that way.

A grim smile faintly wrinkled the corners of the King's mouth. His kinsman certainly was an Afridi. Well—there were still other deals in the play. As the preserved figs and nuts were being disposed of, the King's left hand crept stealthily inside his burnous and came out with something in the palm—a little lump of candied sugar which, presently, and with apparent absent-mindedness, he rolled between the ends of his fingers until the warmth softened it a bit. Then—the tall brass pot of steaming coffee was fetched in on a tray with a couple of porcelain cups in filigree-brass standards. When the cups had been poured full by the khansamah, the tray was held before His Majesty—who, in taking one of them, dropped the sugary lump into the other one rather clumsily, so that his guest could scarcely fail to notice it. Prince Abdool paid no attention to this—blew into his steaming coffee, noisily, in the

Afghan manner—then lifted the cup to his lips for a trial sip. He would have taken it, too—none of the tribesmen standing about the durbar chamber even questioned that, and they had been watching the proceedings with silent but intense interest. Before a drop of the liquid touched the Prince's tongue, however, the King's drawling voice made him look up inquiringly.

"The coffee is not as good as I should offer you, O Khan—one of my men shall drink it while a better lot is being prepared. Thou wilt pick out the one to be honored."

AS Prince Abdool had spent half the previous night studying and memorizing the descriptions furnished him by Shaw of the Muscovite agents known to be within the borders of the State, he had been watching closely for one or more of them ever since the plane came down, and had spotted four that he was certain of—one being a cross-eyed supposed Afghan tribesman who had been standing against the wall during the meal, scarcely taking one of his eyes off from the King's guest, whom he momentarily expected to see dying, from one cause or another. Had he known the Afghan character better, he would have more closely watched the King's motions and made a point of being somewhere else at that particular moment. The real tribesmen who stood around him would have accepted the coffee without the least sign of nervousness—expecting His Majesty to stop them with one excuse or another before they had quite swallowed the stuff (unless he was bored with the victim or tired of him, which gave some edge to the proceeding), but Marovski never had seen any such game played before and had no reason to suppose himself in danger. He accepted the cup from the Prince's hand with a cross-eyed grin of self-importance as the guest nodded toward him with the remark:

"There is one, O King, who doubtless has never drunk even such coffee as this. —Thy health, Effendi—may eternal peace be with thee."

The remark was ominous—but Marovski supposed it merely a part of the customary ritual and tossed down the scalding fluid in one gulp. For a second a startled look came into his fishy, convergent eyes—as he wondered if the coffee really *had* been too hot for even his vodka-lined throat —or whether it was—something else? With but a single screech of horrified realization, he crumpled down upon the floor and was carried out by the much relieved tribesmen—who weren't quite sure whether the Prince had picked the man out from previous knowledge of his identity and a kindly desire to save the rest of them, or whether it had been just blind chance. In general, they were convinced the Prince knew—and respected him accordingly.

The Water Boy was by now a little tired of the game. His kinsman seemed confident that he was being received in good faith on his own representation—apparently not doubting his personal safety for a moment. But—as the King reflected with a grim smile—the nerves of a liar would never have stood the jolt of seeing another man die from coffee which he had been about to swallow himself. Abdool Mohammed certainly reflected credit upon the family—the tribesmen in the room would spread the tale far and wide. So the remainder of the conference was upon a basis of more or less mutual trust. The Water Boy was reasonably frank in claiming that his fighting force of various tribesmen, whom he named, should be sufficient to win out over any revolt which might arise in different sections of the State. Prince Abdool, for his part, asserted that the British Raj wished to be assured that a strong man of common-sense, and such progressive ideas as might be carried out with the consent of the mullahs, was seated upon the musnud.

MEANWHILE Captain Hanshew and his companions were having their own experience with a people whom they didn't understand but were likely to know better if they returned to England alive. It was certainly much to their advantage that Shaw had accompanied the party and was now mixing with the men of the Black Kamrai, who, squatted upon the sand, were feasting upon the bountiful meal provided by Prince Abdool's purse. Shaw spoke to them in their own dialect, which he had mastered since coming to Peshawar, and learned something new which he thought even the Indian Government did not as yet know. When one of them recognized him as the great Colonel whose tact and diplomatic ability had done so much toward bringing peace to Mesopotamia and the Hejaz, he called out to the others the name by which the man was popularly known among the Arab races, and there ensued much salaaming. Presently Shaw returned

to the plane, in which Hanshew and the other two were eating their lunch.

"You chaps will be in for a rather trying experience soon. So far, this has been strictly a Black Kamrai proposition—the other tribesmen haven't made any attempt to butt in—and they wont, in any numbers beyond what the Kamrai can handle, because these birds are a fairly powerful tribal organization. But a number of those others will be happening this way pretty soon, and they'll try a few methods of their own to see how game you are. The Kamrai wont interfere in that—they're a bit curious about you themselves. They'll not let anyone touch the plane—which you'd best put in shape to leave here on the jump if necess'ry—and I fancy they'd not quite stand for your being actually killed—they know Abdool Mohammed would hold 'em accountable for that. But they might let matters go fairly close to it in testing you out. Overhaul your plane within the next few minutes; then come down and smoke while you squat on the sand with 'em. I'll be around somewhere if it comes to a showdown—but don't let it come to that. Prestige is worth a hell of a lot here—just as 'face' is in China—or any good bluff, the world over. Just carry on!"

IN less than an hour a hundred of the tribesmen came strolling over from the camp—standing around, looking curiously at the big plane—exchanging Oriental jokes with the others. Presently there was a dispute among two of the newcomers. Curved Afghan knives with razor edges were drawn from velvet-covered wooden sheaths in the cummerbunds. A man was hastily dispatched for something—and came back dragging a two-inch wooden plank, a foot wide, which he proceeded to set in a hole scooped out of the sand, until it stood upright. Then one of the disputants stood off about forty feet and hurled his knife through the air. It struck inside of a target which had been chalked upon the board. More than that, it went through the two inches of hard pine until half an inch of the point projected at the back.

Hanshew and his companions clapped loudly at this—at which the knife-thrower grinned amicably, and the Captain came forward to see him pull the knife out of the plank. He had to put his foot against it to do so—then motioned for Hanshew to try a throw. But the Captain smilingly shook his head—he had no idea of making himself ridiculous. While he was casually excusing himself, the knife-thrower walked away toward the surrounding circle. Hanshew didn't realize that he was standing alone by the plank until something zipped through the fold of his flying-suit at the back of the neck. Instantly sensing what was being done, he paid no attention to this, though he could plainly feel the weight of the heavy knife in the wool-lined cloth—but bent over to examine the hole in the plank. A shout from Lieutenant Tommy Blake made him turn about and look back inquiringly. Blake touched the back of his own neck and pointed. The Captain didn't seem to understand. Blake ran out to the plank and pulled the knife from his friend's suit, as Hanshew whispered:

"Don't jump or show a sign when you get one of those—in a second or so, Tommy! Hmph! . . . . Here they come—two of 'em!"

A knife went through the loose leg of Blake's flying-suit—and a second through the other one—but he never appeared to feel the twitches. Hanshew threw back his head and roared with laughter as he poked Blake in the ribs and pointed to his legs. The Lieutenant pulled out the knives with an expression of surprise which bore testimony to his ability in private theatricals at the flying corps mess.

"I say, Bill! The Fuzzy-Wuzzies are havin' all the fun in this game! I'm going to stage a little grandstand play. Watch out—an' let me stand against that plank!"

Placing his back squarely against it—so that two feet projected above his head and a little more than that appeared between his outspread legs—he shouted to the circle of tribesmen and pointed to the exposed portions of the plank.

"If they try any amateur throwers on me, I'm done in, old chap—but I fancy they'll not risk any but their best men, an' not further than twenty feet at that!"

HE had figured them pretty closely. The distance was about twenty-five feet when a tall Afghan stepped forward and poised his knife above his head. As it happened, none of them ever had seen a European circus—but even in those the live target doesn't stand up before a knife-thrower whom he or she doesn't know. And the heavy razor-edged Afghan knife is a far different proposition from those used in a circus. One requires perfect nerves to do what Blake was doing. The first

They poured a stream of bullets down into the cockpits of the other plane until the only unwounded pilot was forced to make a landing.

knife cut a small lock of hair from the top of his head as it went clean through that plank—an inch lower, and it would have gone through skull and brain. The second pinned the crotch of his padded flying-trousers as it also went through the plank. A pounding of brass knife-hilts against rifle-barrels came from the circle by way of applause—then several of the tribesmen crowded forward to pull the knives from the plank. Hanshew now thought it about time to reverse the play. Calling up Ted MacWhirter, the three of them stood in line about six feet apart—asked three of the tribesmen to stand by the plank with similar intervals between them and toss as many silver rupees into the air about thirty feet.

It could be seen that automatics were in holsters upon the hips of each Englishman, and that the flaps were unfastened—but there was no motion toward drawing them as they stood there with empty hands hanging by their sides. As the coins spun high into the air, the crowd looked up at them. Three sharp reports barked out. The glistening coins jumped backward several feet, and fell to the sand—bent completely out of shape by the heavy, steel-jacketed bullets which had struck them. When the tribesmen turned to look at the aviators, they were standing there smiling, with folded arms—their automatics in the holsters. Not a single man in the crowd had seen them draw or fire. The Black Kamrai decided that the game had been a draw, with the edge, if any, on the side of the Angresi—for whom they now had a most profound respect. One might, it was true, hurl a knife through such a one's back—but if he should catch a glimpse of the motion first, the thrower would die. That could be easily seen!

ABOUT that time Prince Abdool and the Water Boy rode out to them on beautiful Arab mares—as the only two field-guns which the usurper possessed began firing the Prince's customary salute. Then with a waving of hands from the cabin windows, the big plane lifted into the clear air—the diplomatic flag still flying from one wing. As the cabin had been sound-

proofed against the roar of motors and exhaust, discussion was possible. Shaw had gotten from one of the Kamrai who had been in the durbar hall a vividly realistic account of what had happened there before he thought it advisable to leave, and the story lost nothing as he told it—giving the Prince, in return, an account of what had happened outside the city.

"As a diplomatic envoy, O Khan, I wish to say that you have accomplished more in these few hours—you and our friends, here—than any other four possibly could have done! I'm very proud of Hanshew, Blake an' MacWhirter! Consider—not one of them ever had been up against such a game before! They'd wide-awake sense enough to realize that they were facing death at every jump—yet they called the bluff on those tough birds until they were willing to quit. My word! Who says an Englishman hasn't nerve when you jam him right up against it? Your personal reputation and influence, Prince, are more far-reaching than ever they were before! With the Black Kamrai behind you, there'd be little doubt as to your sweeping the State and taking over the musnud, but I consider that you're in a far stronger position as one of the British Raj. You're the one ideal mediator in the show-down which is coming here pretty soon. Have you picked up any hint of the latest development?"

"Little more than a better knowledge of about how far the Water Boy can go. I doubt if he wins. What else is there?"

"EVER hear of Mohammed Omar Khan?" asked Shaw.

"Naturally! He's another of my kinsmen—son of the Sirdar Mohammed Ayub Khan, the only Afghan who ever defeated a British force, and a claimant to the musnud against his cousin, Abder Rahman, who got it—my grandfather, by the way. Mohammed Omar is my second cousin—has been on parole in India for many years."

"Well, he's broken his parole, managed to slip through the Khyber; is actually here in Afghanistan, alone, without a rupee, with no following, but with an immense amount of prestige as a legal claimant to the musnud—a fighting man in spite of his years. So we now have: Mohammed Omar—an unknown quantity, confident that the Momands and Shinwaris will back him to the limit. Bacha Sakao—holding Kabul and representing the Kugistan emirs, probably backed by Russian influence although they deny it. Ramanallah—holding Kandahar, backed by the Ghilzais, the strongest tribe in the state, and some of the Shinwaris, who may all go over to Mohammed Omar a bit later. The Surianis, in rebellion on the western border—holding Farak, after murdering the Afghan officials. It's one holy mess, if you ask me! My word! Pearls and rubies certainly fell from the lips of whoever said *Cherchez la femme!* If Saroya ever visualizes the whole picture as she has painted it, she may be pleased with herself, no matter what happens. For one woman—one half-emancipated woman—to accomplish what she has brought about in a few months is a good refutation of the mullahs' theory that women are negligible. Where do we go from here, O Khan Bahadur?"

"Back to Peshawar for the night. I want to get hold of Colonel Sir Thornleigh Warrington, if he can be located. He got out of Kabul that night with Ramanallah, then took one of our planes and came down through the Pass for a pow-wow. He's been commissioner at Kabul for the last few years—can form probably a better estimate of Ramanallah's chances than I can, offhand. He's a fellow-victim of your own habits, Colonel—prowls through the bazaars in native make-up half the time. That's why he's about the most valuable man in the I. S. S. at this time. You've met him—not?"

"Oh—quite so. We started quarreling over coffee and fig-paste in the Great Bazaar, one night—as a supposed Pathan and a foul-smelling Mahratta. I fancy we actually fooled each other—at first. Then I corrected his slurring of a word in Persian Arabic—and he was on. But—what about the Kandahar proposition?"

"That's what I want to see Colonel Warrington about. I picked up a scrap of talk back there in the palace, at Kabul, which makes me a bit uneasy. Either the Water Boy himself, or some of those Moscow agents are hatching up something against Ramanallah which isn't straight, honorable fighting by a damned sight. Of course anything goes in actual warfare—whether it's rotten or not. But if I should happen to see anything which looked like a bombing-plane coming down from the north, before we reach the Khyber. . . . . My word! They took it right out of my mouth! Look, will you—*look!* Coming straight down from Turkestan—a big Handley-Page — making something over

eighty! Well, we can do a hundred and fifty with no trouble at all. —I say, Billy! Just meet that plane—get close enough to see the men in her cockpits!"

"Aye, sir—about five minutes."

"Colonel, see if you recognize any of those men through your prism-binocular!"

A FEW minutes later Shaw nodded—and let his glasses hang from their strap.

"Five of the Moscow agents who have been working here. From the look of those containers slung on cradles under the fuselage, I'd say they were filled with that new gas which has been developed by the soviet. It has a spread of two hundred feet radius from each container; it penetrates every crevice—lethal inside of five minutes—disperses and becomes harmless in three or four hours. At least, that's the yarn which comes out of Russia about it. I'd discount that about fifty per cent if it were not for the fact that some of our chaps saw it tried out; they said it would do pretty much what they claim. Now—where are those bounders likely to be going with those twelve flasks of the stuff?"

"Kandahar, Ramanallah and Bacha Sakao inherit the same quality of persistence from their grandfather—but it takes a different slant in each. With the one, it's all in the line of progress for his country—modern ideas. He's kept mulishly at it until it has run him in the ditch. In his cousin it takes the form of concentrating and hammering upon one serious obstacle until he clears it out of the way. In this case it's Ramanallah. He wont stop until the ex-king is permanently eliminated. I suppose the Russians suggested this idea—it sounds like them. But the Water Boy means to try it out. That plane will be over Kandahar by eight o'clock. Ramanallah's arc-lights will enable them to locate the palace easily. They'll gas it—good and plenty!"

"H-m-m—that would eliminate one of the contestants. We're supposed to be an observation-expedition—strictly?"

"But we're not in British territory. In Afghanistan, in the circumstances—I do as I damned please—as one who is a legal claimant to the musnud if he wishes to be! One thing I wont stand for is Russian meddling down here—we've troubles of our own without that! So—Billy, fly back toward Kabul until out of sight from that other plane—then make Kandahar as fast as you can. There should be time enough to get Ramanallah and Saroya out of the palace, into this plane, before those bounders reach there. Then we'll see how they like what they're carrying!"

By sheer luck this plan worked without a hitch. The King and his consort were taken into the plane—the people warned to scatter outside of the city until it returned—and the big machine got into the air again, heading northeast, Hanshew pointing out that by keeping east of the other plane's direct line, there would be still enough of a faint glow over the western mountains for them to make it out. In half an hour they spotted it—flying without lights, of course. It took but a moment or so to circle about and climb over the Russians, their greater speed making this a simple matter. With the machine-gun Prince Abdool had taken the precaution of bringing from London they poured a stream of bullets down into the cockpits of the other plane until it was so nearly out of control that the only unwounded pilot was forced to make a landing on the sand below. But in the darkness he pancaked—smashed open the flasks underneath the fuselage.

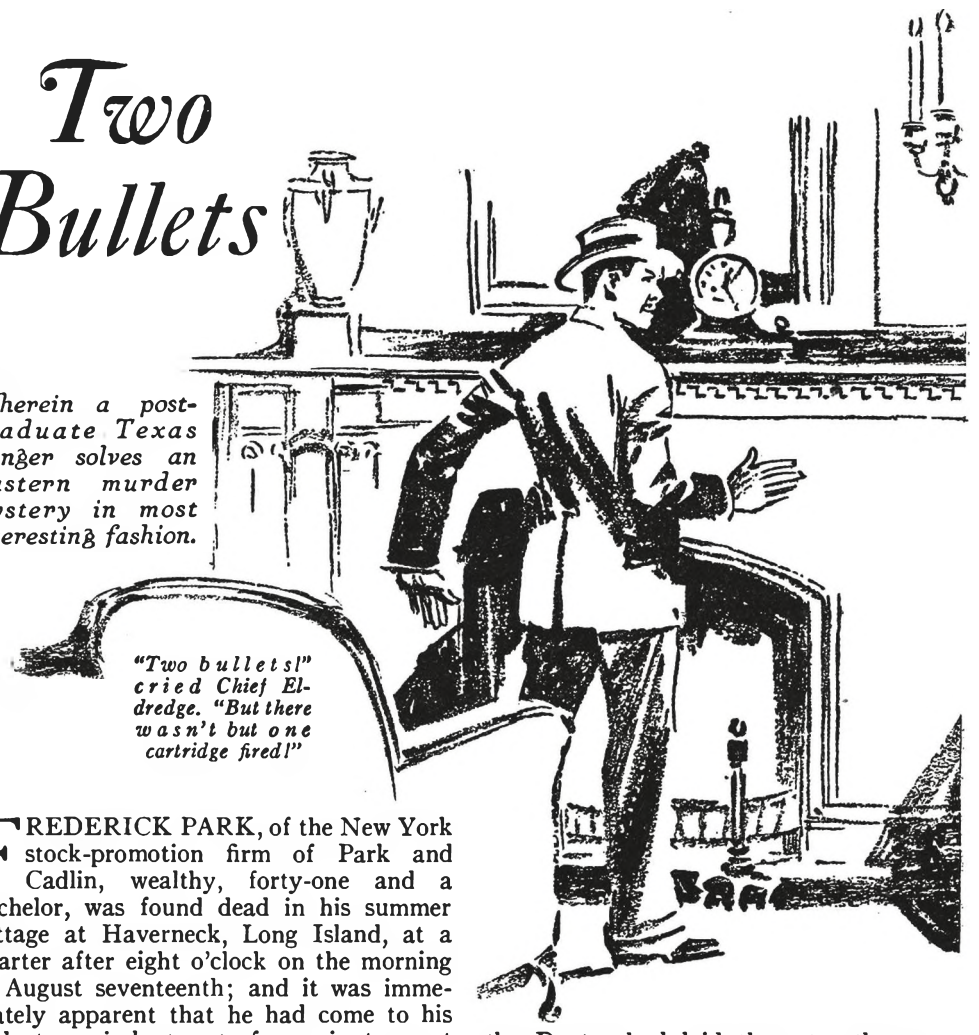
The five bodies lay there for many days as an exhibit to the tribesmen.

WHEN the ex-King asked his cousin what his plans were, Prince Abdool considered the question before replying:

"I came out here to get in touch with you, O son of my father's cousin—and see what might be done. I have talked with the Water Boy today—have eaten with him—and I still live, somewhat to my surprise. Until we got up in the plane again, it was by no means certain that any of us would live. As another part of the day's work, we have killed six of the twelve foreign agents who have been meddling here—not such a bad start. But Mohammed Omar is going to complicate the situation. He has betrayed the Angresi salt, and they will naturally try to recapture him—with fairly good chances of success. Without him, I could make your position on the musnud secure in a few weeks. As it is—well, anything may happen. What is to be—will be. Allah is great. I shall remain for the present in Peshawar, as one of the British Raj, to mediate betwixt all of ye if need arises. With Colonel Warrington and our friend here we will be able to accomplish much or little—as Allah wills. Meanwhile—Saroya would better cover up her face until a softer wind blows."

Two Bullets

Wherein a post-graduate Texas Ranger solves an Eastern murder mystery in most interesting fashion.



"Two bullets!" cried Chief Eldredge. "But there wasn't but one cartridge fired!"

FREDERICK PARK, of the New York stock-promotion firm of Park and Cadlin, wealthy, forty-one and a bachelor, was found dead in his summer cottage at Haverneck, Long Island, at a quarter after eight o'clock on the morning of August seventeenth; and it was immediately apparent that he had come to his end at precisely twenty-four minutes past twelve.

At first sight it seemed equally obvious that Park had killed himself—the bullet had entered above his right ear and a thirty-two-caliber automatic pistol, with one empty cartridge shell, lay on the living-room floor beside his fully clothed body—but the official medical examination speedily disproved this. There were no powder-marks.

"That gun was more than three feet from his head; he couldn't have fired it," Dr. Rylander said. "You've got a murder, Chief."

Chief of Police Eldredge, who had never previously had a murder, tried to repress any evidence of the excitement he felt.

"Hm!" he said, taking a long breath and looking about him. His eyes fell upon the contents of the dead man's pockets, where the Doctor had laid them together on a table beside a lot of typewritten papers which had been there when the body was found. "His watch and money still in his clothes—two hundred and ten dollars. It isn't robbery—unless we find something missing somewhere else in the house."

"In the stock-promotion game, wasn't he?" the Doctor suggested. "Those papers on the table deal with an oil company. It may have been some enemy he made in business."

"Hm!" said Eldredge, concentrating. "It may have been an inside job. What I want to know is where is that man that works for him?"

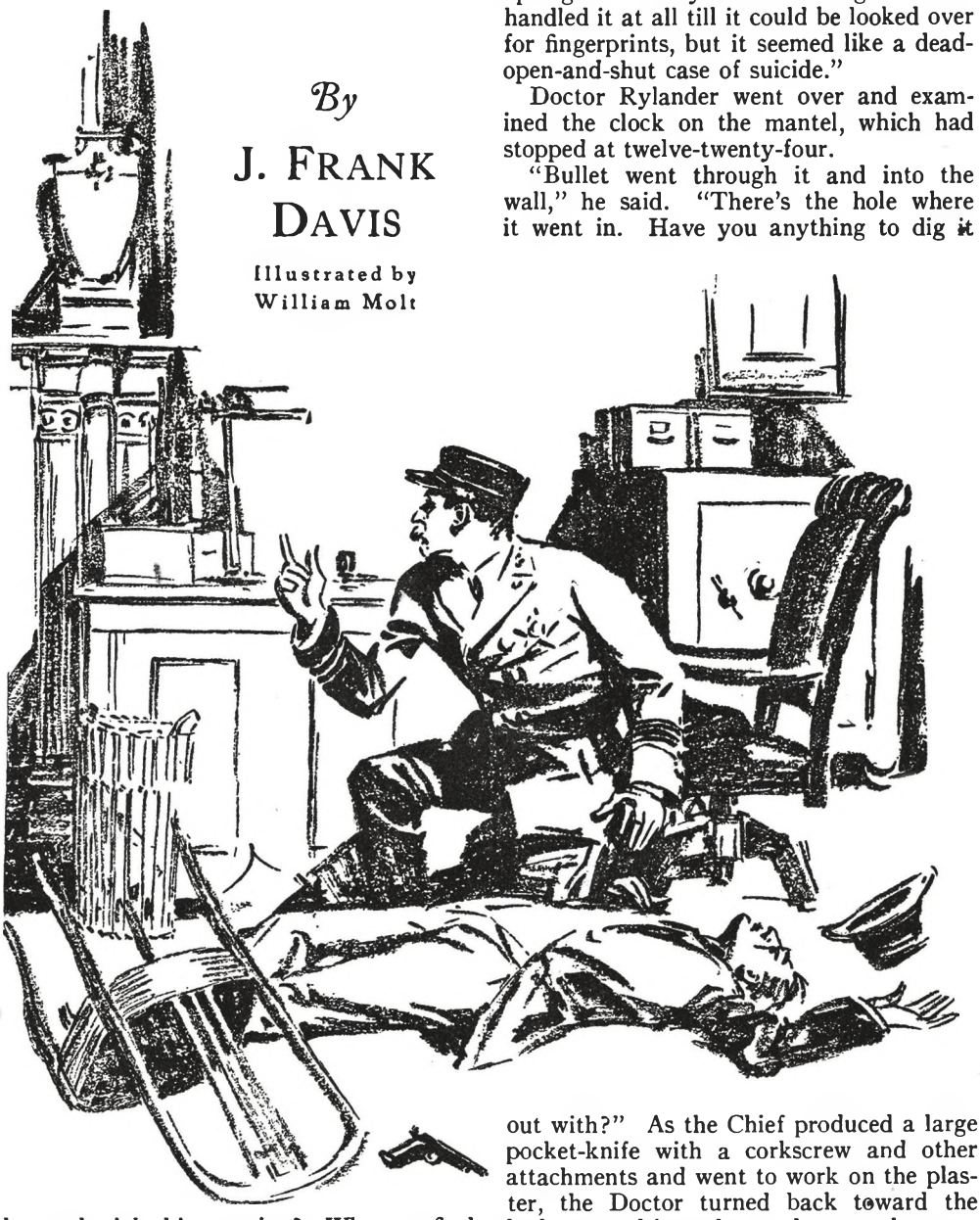
"Didn't you say he discovered the body?"

"That was his shofer. There's another man—a sort of man-of-all-work. Cook. Kind of a valet too, I guess. Why isn't

By

J. FRANK DAVIS

Illustrated by William Molt



he on the job this morning? When we find him, we'll know more than we do now. . . . . You notice the clock. Bullet went into it after it went through his head."

The Doctor studied the position of the body on the floor.

"He must have twisted considerably after he was hit to fall as he is—but it is possible. How much have you handled that automatic?"

"No more than was necessary to see how many cartridges were in it. They're all there but one." The Chief's voice became apologetic. "Maybe I hadn't ought to have handled it at all till it could be looked over for fingerprints, but it seemed like a dead-open-and-shut case of suicide."

Doctor Rylander went over and examined the clock on the mantel, which had stopped at twelve-twenty-four.

"Bullet went through it and into the wall," he said. "There's the hole where it went in. Have you anything to dig it out with?" As the Chief produced a large pocket-knife with a corkscrew and other attachments and went to work on the plaster, the Doctor turned back toward the body, passed it, and moved across the room to view it in line with the clock. Returning to the rug before the unfilled fireplace, he stepped upon something small and hard, looked down, ejaculated, and stooped; when he straightened up there was a slug of metal between his fingers and a puzzled frown on his face.

The Chief had retrieved the bullet behind the clock, flattened against a metal lath, and was kneeling again by Park's body as the Doctor exclaimed:

"Look here! A bullet!" Rylander's eyes went from the slug in his hand to the fireplace. "And, unless I'm mistaken, there is where it struck." There was a distinct fresh scar upon one of the higher bricks, just below the mantel. He started to lay his find gingerly upon the table.

"Two bullets!" cried Eldredge. "But there wasn't but one cartridge fired." He himself saw the inference, and voiced it as the physician's mouth opened to do so. "At least, only one cartridge out of that pistol. There were two shots fired here last night—from two guns."

He rose, picked up the bullet from the table and scrutinized them both closely. "Don't mix them!" the Doctor exclaimed, and Eldredge hastily set them down, saying, "Both the same caliber."

Rylander passed the body again, studied its position as compared with the mark on the fireplace, and declared: "That was the bullet that killed him—the one that lay on the rug. Wrap them up separately, and mark which is which. It may not be important to know, but in cases like this—"

"They must have both been fired at practically the same minute," Eldredge said. "It's pretty plain what happened, isn't it? Somebody came here to kill Park, and Park had this gun of his own. They both fired. The other man got him. Whether he hit the other fellow or not is something else; maybe we'll find a wounded man but it isn't likely or there'd be some other bloodstains. Park's bullet smashed the clock—and left word for us exactly what time the thing was pulled off."

"It did if the clock was running, and if it kept good time. You'll need to find out about that."

"I have. I asked the shofer. He says it was always running. More than that, he happened to look at it and then at his watch, when he came in here yesterday afternoon to bring a bag, when they got back from New York, and they didn't disagree more than a minute—and his watch keeps good time. . . . . Come and take a look over the place, will you, Doc? Let's see if there's any evidence of anything being stolen—any ransacking of drawers or anything like that."

THERE was not. Park's bedroom—the bed in perfect order and unopened—showed no evidence of any search, hasty or otherwise. The other rooms of the house produced no further evidence.

"Exactly how was it discovered?" the Doctor asked as they came back into the living room. "By his chauffeur, you said?"

"He comes every morning at quarter past eight to drive Park into the city. He came as usual this morning. The house was closed. He couldn't see any sign of life around the kitchen, and he went around to the front and rang the bell. When nobody answered he thought something must be wrong, so he tried to look in the windows. The shades in front were all down. He came around, and the shade at this side window was up two or three inches, and he peeked in. He could see Park's feet. He hustled away and found a policeman, and they called me. We came in through a window in the kitchen that was open a little ways and didn't have any screen— Say, I wonder if the fellow that did it mightn't have got in through that window."

"Very possibly."

"If it was some enemy, it don't seem likely Park would have let him in through the door, at that hour of the night. . . . . Well, that's all. There's no suspicion can fall on the shofer of knowing more than he's told; I've known him ever since he was a baby—he's always lived here, and his wife, too. Good kids, both of 'em."

"There might be a woman in the case, somewhere. What have I heard recently about Park and some girl in one of the big New York revues?"

"You could hear about him and a good many girls, I guess—he was some rounder! Jim Dacey, the night officer, could tell quite a lot about parties right in this house. Being quite a ways from other houses, like it is, nobody ever complained of the noise—I s'pose that's one reason he picked the place. And that explains, too, why nobody heard the pistol-shots. But he had the reputation of never letting his parties interfere with his business. Never lost his head."

"His relatives must be notified, of course. Know anything about them?"

"No, but his partner will—Vincent Cadlin. I've had him notified. He lives here, at the Milano Club, but he'd already gone into town, on the eight-eleven; he always does. We've phoned their office. . . . . I'm going to start right in looking for that man-of-all-work. He didn't live here at the house; came early in the morning and left after Park didn't need him any more at night. He was here in town last evening—I saw him myself, in front of a

picture show when I was going home, at about ten. His name is Vedder—John Vedder. When we get him—"

They got him without difficulty, still in bed at the house where he roomed. He said he had come in at half-past ten o'clock—but was wholly unable to prove it; neither his landlady nor any of the other lodgers had seen or heard him. He maintained he had left Frederick Park's employ, of his own accord, at eight-thirty o'clock the night before. For a long time he had been resenting the long and irregular hours of his job—Park often kept him on late at night to serve drinks and lunch when he had little parties—and after dinner, which Park had eaten alone, he had declared himself.

He and Park, he insisted, had had no words about it. He had simply said he was going to quit, and Park had paid him off. He had turned over his key to the house, washed his dishes, and left by the back door.

He was utterly unconvincing. Cross-examined harshly, he contradicted himself on a number of details as to his conversation with his employer. They searched his room and in his trunk found a thirty-two-caliber pistol and cartridges. The pistol was clean and there were no oily rags or other evidence that the cleaning was recent, but there had been ample time for him to attend to that. Chief Eldredge locked him up.

Met upon his arrival at the firm's office by the news of the tragedy, Vincent Cadlin rushed back to Haverneck. He had last seen his partner in the cottage living-room, the room where his body had been found, at nine-thirty or thereabouts the evening before. Park at that hour, he said, had certainly been in his usual health, spirits and condition of mind. They had briefly discussed a business matter that had come up at the office after Park's departure that afternoon, relative to the offer of stock in a new oil company. The promotion was a matter involving a lot of figures and statistics. Cadlin had brought Park the reports upon the property and prospective plans of the corporation, and Park had said he intended to stay at home and go over them until he had the thing worked out, regardless of how late, in order that he might speak authoritatively of it in the morning.

Park had mentioned to Cadlin, not as being of any particular importance but in explanation of why Vedder was not there as usual to wait upon them, that a half-hour before Cadlin's arrival he had discharged the servant for dishonesty, that Vedder had been angry, insolent and threatening, and that he had finally told him to get out or he would kick him out.

Again cross-examined and bullied, Vedder—although he insisted the accusation of dishonesty was false and that he had not returned to Park's house—reluctantly admitted the discharge, the quarrel and his hot-tempered threats.

CHAPTER II

Colonel Robert Lee Negley, capitalist of Texas and New York, heard of Park's death at ten-thirty, when he came down to breakfast at the Milano Club, his late appearance that morning being due to the fact that until two o'clock he had participated, in one of the club's cardrooms, in a session of America's favorite indoor sport.

Colonel Bob, as he attended whole-heartedly to his melon, bacon and eggs and coffee, gave small thought to the violent passing of the summer resident; he had no reason to foresee that he was to become involved in it. The clerk at the desk, in referring to what at that moment was still supposed to be a suicide, had naturally mentioned Park's business partner, who lived at the club, and Colonel Bob knew him—had sat across a poker table from him only last night for four hours. But this casual card-playing association was the only acquaintance he had with Cadlin, and he did not know Cadlin's partner at all. So the death was of no particular interest to him, and it passed completely out of his mind as he became engrossed in a newspaper story dealing with a Riverside Drive realty transaction which promised to add another hundred thousand or so to his own millions.

The Colonel was a man of leisure today; in August he never went to town on Friday or Saturday unless some special business made it imperative. He played a round of golf after breakfast, and he did not think of Frederick Park again until, coming in from the course, he heard that the case was not one of suicide. Still he did not give any great thought to it. Vedder had been arrested; the case was apparently cleared up; there was no mystery to attract him.

The late afternoon sun was burnishing the waters of the Sound when, sitting with a book in a shady corner of the wide veranda, he read the card that a trim bell-boy presented. It said, "Hobart Runyon." He rose quickly and followed the lad into and across the club-house to its main entrance on the landward side.

Tall and wide-shouldered, Bob Negley was as erect and almost as slim-waisted at fifty as he had been when he was a cowboy at twenty, a Texas Ranger at twenty-five, and a cattleman with his later great wealth already beginning to accumulate at thirty. His correct city-tailored clothes sat well upon him: his eyes were shrewd but normally friendly, with smile-wrinkles beginning to be graven about them; at ease in any company and distinctively ornamenting it, only a persisting drawl, Southwestern idioms and sometimes careless grammar betrayed his origin—when he spoke, the discriminating traveled hearer was likely to visualize him as covering his thick graying hair with a wide and peaked Western hat, which, except when on one of his properties in Texas, he had not done for many years.

HOBART RUNYON, whose hand Bob cordially grasped in the little visitors' reception-room, was of about his own age, not as tall but powerfully built, white-haired and inconspicuously dressed, with nothing whatever about his appearance which at first glance would identify him as a metropolitan detective, not even his shoes.

"Howdy, Inspector—glad to see you," Bob said; and the other, from force of habit, looked about them, although the room was unoccupied save by them, to see if the title had been overheard.

"I hope I'm not butting in on you at a bad time," he said. "But if you've got a few minutes—"

"All the time in the world," Bob told him.

"I'm making a little investigation. You might be of some help to me, if you will."

"Nothing will suit me better; you know it," the Colonel responded. "Is the gallery all right—the veranda? It's cooler there than in my rooms. We can find a corner."

"Any place where nobody can listen." The Inspector added: "There can't be any secret who I am—not in this club. Too many members have seen me, one time and another."

"To their profit—if they were the ones who sent for the police," Bob asserted. He led the way to the veranda, and found the corner where he had been reading still deserted. When they were seated and his cigarette and the detective's fresh cigar going, Runyon came to his business without delay.

"There's a little case broke down here," he said. And inquiringly: "You as much interested in little cases as ever?"

"And always will be, I reckon."

"I'm never going to forget the help you were to me in that Worden shooting," Runyon said. "And that Equitable bond robbery, too—the case where I first run into you. Well, I don't know as this present thing is going to call for any figuring on your part—it's mostly that I need some pieces of information down here, and you're in a position to save me a lot of time getting 'em, maybe. Know anything about this Park case?"

"No more than the rest of the world does."

"Did you know Park?"

"Never saw him in my life, as far as I know. I've met his partner once—last night." He explained: "There was a little game of draw and stud here in the club. He and I both happened to sit in."

"And he bluffed you to death."

"Why, no, I can't say he did." The Colonel grinned pleasantly. "He was a winner—a little—but he wasn't any more winner than I was."

"Few ever are." The Inspector grinned back. "If I had your judgment at poker, I'd get off the force and make a living without work. . . . . I don't know this Cadlin, except by sight. I've seen him in Howard and Collins', where I do a little tradin' when I haven't got too many murders and such—I've made more'n eighteen cents myself in this crazy bull market. But I've heard he's a ring-tailed bluffer in a poker game. . . . . However, Cadlin hasn't anything much to do with what I'm checkin' up, unless he knows something that will help."

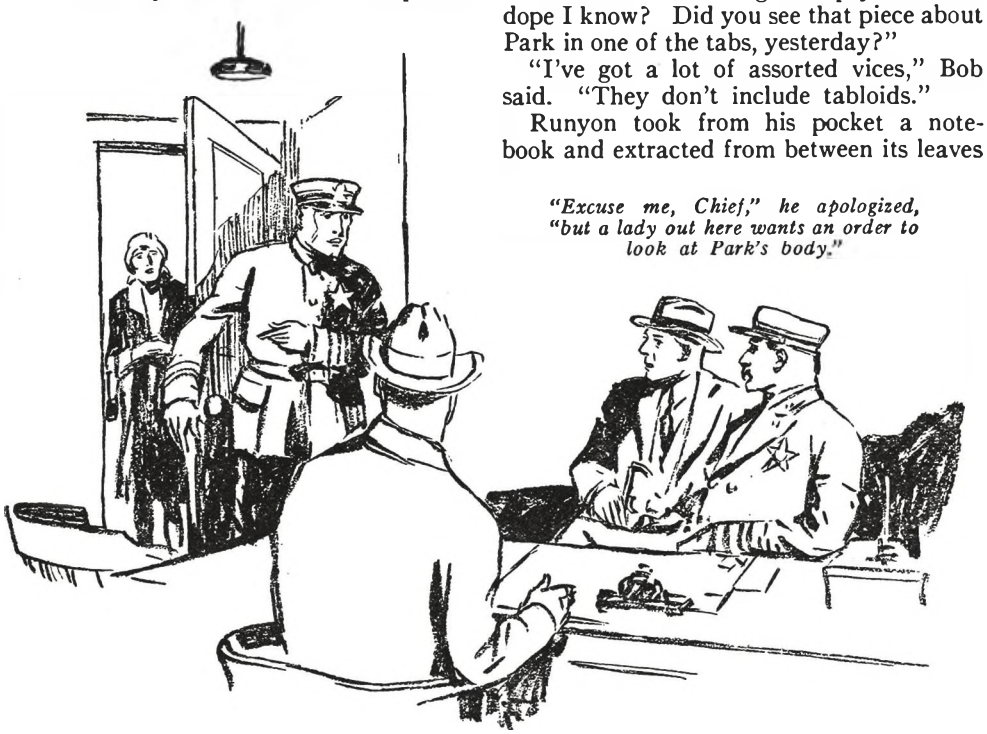
"Has this man Vedder a police record?"

"No—and he didn't do it any more than you did."

BOB looked inquiring.

"It's a cinch he didn't, on the face of it," Runyon said. "The big idea is that he got fired by Park at half-past eight. went away, got his gun, waited till midnight, came back, killed him—and then

cleaned the gun, put it carefully in a place where the first search that was made would find it, instead of throwing it away—out there in the Sound, f'rinstance—and then went to bed and slept the sleep of the honest till they came to make the pinch.



"Excuse me, Chief," he apologized, "but a lady out here wants an order to look at Park's body."

Now—a man of his kind would either have chucked his gun or got as far away from Haverneck as possible before morning. He got fired for crooking Park—which explains why he lied at first about the circumstances of his quitting—but he didn't go back. He's probably a thief, but no murderer."

"All right," Bob said. "Who is? And where does the New York angle of it come in? Or has Chief Eldredge sent for you?"

"Any time a hick chief of police sends for a detective from the city!" Runyon scoffed. "No, he don't know I'm interested in the case at all—not yet. I want to talk to him without his feeling sore at my butting in; if you know him that's one of the ways you can help. But the first way, probably, is to get me a talk with Cadlin. Where there's a skirt complication these business-men shut up like a padlocked hooch joint, unless they know the officer that's asking them aint going to run to the newspapers with it. You can tell him I don't try my cases in the papers."

"Gladly," Bob assured him. "What sort of a skirt complication, if it's any of my business?"

"It's all your business," Runyan said reproachfully. "Don't you know me well enough to know I wouldn't ask you to help me unless I was willing to slip you all the dope I know? Did you see that piece about Park in one of the tabs, yesterday?"

"I've got a lot of assorted vices," Bob said. "They don't include tabloids."

Runyon took from his pocket a notebook and extracted from between its leaves a small newspaper clipping. Colonel Bob read:

DANCING INTO DOUGH

Marie de Mar, shapeliest and most featured of hoofers with the Summer Revue, is due to be wed, no later than the coming week-end say the wise ones, to the heavy sugar papa whose presence with her at the night clubs and squeakeasies has been noted for the past month. Fred Park, of the firm of Park & Cadlin, dealers in oil, mining and industrial unlisted stocks, is a bachelor who was quite a big boy when Dewey took Manila. Marie is nineteen.

"True?" asked Bob, as he passed it back.

"I don't know," Runyon said. "But what brings me into the case is that Smiling Frank Sabin thinks it is. Sabin's real moniker is Sabatella. And I've had my eyes on him for three months—without ever being able to get him right. One of these handsome, oily-haired boys. In the hootch game, anyway, and probably a gun-man. I suspect him of being in two bumpin' jobs and haven't been able to get the goods on him in either one of 'em. Well, I happen

to hear that he saw this piece in the tab and that it burned him up. Frank wants to marry Marie himself. He's known her a long time—was raised in the same neighborhood. Her name is Maria Marturo."

"And you think this Sabin might have killed Park?"

"I don't ever think anybody killed anybody, till I've got some evidence to prove it. But I'd like to know where Smiling Frank was last night. He was at one of his usual hangouts till a little before ten o'clock, and then he disappeared. He got into his car and went away—across the Interborough bridge, somebody said. I can't find anybody who saw or heard of him afterwards until he appeared in a night-club at about three o'clock."

"I see," Bob said. "So he easily could have been here in Haverneck at quarter past twelve."

"And back in New York before three."

FROM where Bob and the Inspector sat, away from the crowd that filled the water-side veranda, there was a view of the street which led down from the town's center to the club-house. Approaching, now, Bob saw a well-set-up, good-looking man in his late thirties, and indicated him to Runyon. "Here comes Cadlin. Would you like to talk to him now? We could meet him at the door."

"Let's," the detective agreed. They were in the club entrance when Park's partner reached it. Bob greeted him, spoke a few words of sympathy, and introduced Runyon, by his title, as an old friend. "He has two or three things he'd like to ask you," he said, "and I can guarantee his discretion; he doesn't make a practice of spilling loose talk to the newspapers. If you have a few minutes—"

"As many as you want," Cadlin said gravely. "Will you come to my room? I'd rather not go out on the veranda. So many there I know—I don't feel like a lot of conversation with them. It's been a hard day."

"Natchully," Bob agreed, as they moved with him toward the elevator. And Runyon said: "It must have been a good deal of a shock. How long have you and he been together?"

"Ever since the war," Cadlin told him. "We were buddies in France. Both hit in the same battle—Sedan. Were in the hospital together. Been together ever since. First as stock salesmen, then as partners."

"You knew him before the war?"

"No. He was from Colorado—Denver. My home was always Chicago."

"I suppose you've notified his relatives?"

"He hadn't any. Neither have I. Perhaps that's one of the reasons we've been pals as well as partners." They came into Cadlin's room and found seats. He looked inquiringly at Runyon. "Is there anything new—any development in the city? How do you come to be in on it?"

"Was Park going to marry Marie de Mar?"

"Why, I haven't any reason for thinking so. On the contrary. It's no secret from anybody that Park wasn't any plaster saint. Women and he weren't strangers. But he wasn't the marrying sort." Cadlin smiled slightly. "Less than a week ago—we were talking about some old fellow who had got hooked by his stenographer—he said to me that he figured he had at least ten years more to go before he got to the dangerous old-fool age. No. He and De Mar have been playing round a lot, but I feel sure he hadn't any intention of marrying her, or anybody else. Why? Does she say he was going to?"

"Didn't you see it in the paper yesterday?"

"Why, no. Nor hear of it. That's funny. What paper?"

"The *Star*."

"Oh! I never look at that rag—and I don't believe many of my friends do. That explains it."

RUNYON showed him the clipping. He read it slowly and handed it back.

"I think it's bunk," he said. "Just Broadway bull." He frowned. "Maybe not," he admitted on second thought. "I don't mean it might be true, but it might be true so far as the reporters knew. The girl might have told it. Such things have been known to happen—frequently."

"Do you know Frank Sabin?" Runyon asked.

Cadlin's forehead wrinkled. "Not so far as I can remember. Who is he?"

"A friend of Marie de Mar's. When you left Park, last evening, did he seem any different from usual? As if there was anything on his mind—like getting married this week-end, f'rinstance?"

Cadlin shook his head. "He didn't act a particle different from any other day or night. Except for telling me about firing Vedder and having a little twist with him

about it, he talked of nothing except the business I had come to see him about—I brought him a lot of papers about an oil company, which had come to the office after he left. He does—did—all the deciding on oil securities. Do you think perhaps Vedder didn't do it?"

"Do you think he surely did?"

"Why—I have, ever since they found that pistol in his trunk, with his threats and all. But it's circumstantial, of course. I haven't been able to think of anyone else that might have any motive."

"Motives," Colonel Bob remarked, "are likely to be jealousy, hate, revenge, fear, and money. About how much money does he leave?"

"That's hard to say. We've made a good deal, and he's spent a good deal. But I should think at least half a million—perhaps a little more than that."

"And no relatives? Who will get it?"

"No," smiled Cadlin. "Your motive doesn't lie in that direction—because I get it. And if I had died first, he would have got mine. We each drew wills, when we went into partnership in 1920, each leaving everything to the other. The idea was, of course, that it made a lasting partnership of all our funds. As to those other motives, I don't know about the jealousy—there's always a chance of somebody being jealous when a man has as many women friends as Fred has had. But if anybody really hated him or feared him or wanted to be revenged on him, I've never heard of it—and it would seem as if I would. Unless, of course, you can apply those things to Vedder's being sore over getting fired."

"What did Vedder steal from him?" Runyon asked. "And why didn't he have Vedder pinched?"

"It wasn't a thing you'd have a man pinched for. He said Vedder, who passed on all the house bills, had been in a deal with a grocer to fat the bills close to double and split the graft. He didn't go into any details. It was only in passing that he told me about Vedder at all. We got down to business right away."

"How long were you there?" inquired Runyon.

"Well, I don't remember noticing the clock or looking at my watch at any time—there was nothing to be in a hurry for—I had nothing on for the evening. I left here right after dinner—a little before nine. That means I got there at nine-ten or so. Then I strolled back—fifteen or twenty minutes more, say. I came around to the water side of the club, and heard a speedboat party leaving down at the landing—wandered down there, but they pushed off while I was on my way—came back and into the club-house, and old man Benson hollered that he was getting up a card game." Cadlin looked at Bob. "Do you know just what time we sat down?"

"Ten minutes of ten," the Colonel told him.

"Then I must have left Fred's house a little before half-past nine. I was there about fifteen minutes."

"And he acted perfectly natural, during your business talk?"

"Perfectly, so far as I could see."

The Inspector came to his feet. "I don't think of anything else," he said. "If you hear anything more about that marriage to the De Mar girl, I'll appreciate it if you'll let me hear from you right away."

"I surely will," Cadlin assured him. "But really, I'm certain there wasn't anything in it. Fred would have told me."

DOWNSTAIRS, the Inspector said to Colonel Bob:

"Pretty valueless, that evidence that Park wasn't thinking of getting hitched. His partner might think he was in his confidence, but when a usually wise guy is going to make an old fool of himself over a woman, he's likely not to tell anybody. Least of all, any friend who might say what he thought about it. There's less grief if they wait and tell it afterwards, when it can't be helped. Let's go see this hick chief of police."

Chief Eldredge knew Colonel Bob, very greatly respected him, and liked him as one summer millionaire in Haverneck who never high-hatted the natives. Whether, normally, he might have resented the intrusion of Inspector Runyon into a local case without invitation was not apparent. Under the circumstances of Bob's introduction, he gave no indication of displeasure but politely greeted Runyon and took them into his private office. As he was closing the door, Bob, through a side window, observed, without giving any special thought to it, a New York taxicab coming toward the station.

"I want to find out, if I can, Chief," said Runyon as soon as they were seated, "whether a certain party was in your town last night, around midnight, in a big light green Lincard."

"A good many cars go through this town around midnight and at all other hours," Eldredge said. "And plenty of 'em are Lincards, and light green isn't a freak color. Unless some accident happened to it, or it speeded or something, our officers wouldn't be likely to notice. What's the idea, Inspector? Who was in it?"

Runyon decided not to beat about the bush.

"I'm not at all sure your man Vedder killed Park," he declared bluntly.

To his and Colonel Bob's astonishment the Chief replied: "And I know darn' well he didn't!"

There was a tap at the door, and a policeman opened it, came in, and closed it behind him.

"Excuse me, Chief," he apologized, "but there's a lady out here that's in a hurry; she has to get back to New York before half-past seven. She wants an order to look at Park's body at the undertaker's. Says her name is De Mar."

CHAPTER III

"HIS girl," Runyon told Eldredge. "Can we have her in?" The Chief nodded to the officer, who went out. "You talk to her. Get her to tell you all she will about their relationship. No need of introducing us. I'd like to ask her a question or two later, if it comes right and you don't mind."

"All right with me," the Chief said. Immediately the door opened and the policeman showed the dancer in and closed the door again, at a signal from Eldredge, with himself on the outside.

Miss Marie De Mar, born Maria Marturo, was as attractive as a featured performer in the famous Summer Revue would be expected to be; an intense, black-haired, sloe-eyed, shapely, graceful girl, with modish clothes and complete sophistication. She hesitated and looked from one to the other, and Bob believed, without knowing exactly how she indicated it, that she recognized Runyon.

"I want to see Mr. Park," she said to the Chief. "I was at that undertaker's, and they said I have to get a permit from you. I would like to get it quick, please, because I've got to get back to work. I'm in the Summer Revue."

"How does it happen you didn't come earlier?" the Chief asked.

"I didn't hear about it. I sleep pretty late. When I got up, I saw it in the paper. Can I see him, please?"

"Why?"

"We were going to be married," she replied. "Tomorrow night, after the show."

"Well, well," said the Chief. "I hadn't heard that. Secret, was it?"

"It was supposed to be, but it got out. I thought everybody knew it; it was in the *Star* yesterday. Maybe you don't get the *Star* out here. Everybody in New York seemed to have seen it."

"Tell me about this marriage. How long had you planned it?"

"About a week. We'd decided on tomorrow night, because then we'd have a day off for a sort of a wedding-trip. I can't get away from the show, naturally, except Sundays. He was going to make the arrangements today, with some Justice of the Peace over in Connecticut—" She swallowed and choked. "Poor old Freddie!"

Rather to Bob's surprise, there were tears in her eyes. It hadn't been all gold-digging, evidently. She had some affection for the man.

"How come, Miss de Mar," he asked sympathetically, "that he didn't stay in town to see you last night? You and he spent most of your evenings together after the show, didn't you?"

"He told me Wednesday night he wouldn't be seeing me till this evening. He wanted to pack up some things—and clean out a room—and generally get ready for me. We were going to live here the rest of the summer." She glanced at a platinum wrist-watch. "Gee, the curtain is at eight-thirty, and I've got to be in my dressin'-room an hour before that, and these taxis aint so swift." She addressed the Chief. "Can I see him right away, please?"

Eldredge looked at Runyon and the Inspector said sharply:

"That piece in the *Star* didn't make any hit with Frank Sabin, did it?"

"How do you know it didn't?" she demanded. She was meeting his eyes with frank hostility and her voice was harsh.

"I know a lot of things," Runyon countered. "Do you know who I am?"

"Sure," she said. "You're Hobe Runyon. I've seen you a hundred times."

"Yeah. And I've seen you—and Sabin, too. What did he say to you last night?" The dancer perceptibly hesitated. "Oh, I know what's doin' on Broadway—all the time," he added.

"Frank Sabin never wrote that," declared Runyon; "but it's a threat."

"What do you mean, what did he say to me? When?"

"Say, you aint denyin' you saw him, are you? Not to me."

"Suppose I did. What business is that of any cops? I haven't done anything to get in wrong with you guys."

"No?" The way Runyon said it implied anything or nothing. "Then why don't you come clean with what he said to you?"

"He didn't say anything that was anybody's business. Asked me if I would go out with him after the show."

"Where was this? I know. See if you'll tell me the truth."

"At the stage entrance, when I came to work. And I told him I couldn't; I was goin' straight home from the theater. And then I had to hustle in. I was a little late already."

THERE was a sneer of disbelief in Runyon's voice as he said:

"So, although he's been beefin' all over town about that piece in the *Star,* he didn't say a word to you about it."

"Say, you don't think he had anything to do—"

"Well, finish it! I don't think he had anything to do with what?"

"This bumpin' Fred."

"I didn't say so; you did. Come on! What did he say to you about Park?"

"He said he hated to see me marry him, but if I was set on it, why, he give me his good wishes."

Colonel Bob was as certain as though he had been present at their conversation that, whatever Sabin might have said, it was not that. She was lying, but not convincingly.

"And then where'd he go?" The Inspector slammed the remainder of his question loudly and accusingly: "Where did he tell you he was goin'?"

The girl wet her over-carmined lips. "He didn't say he was goin' anywhere. And I don't know where he went. You can find out easy enough, I guess. He's always hangin' 'round Broadway somewhere at night—till any hour anybody would want him."

"Was he last night?"

"As far as I know, he was." And now Bob thought the girl was telling the truth. Sabin might have threatened to seek out Park, but if he had done so she did not certainly know it.

"Look here, Maria!" Runyon rasped. "If you want to get back to work in that show tonight, you come across with what he said when you told him Park was going to be here in Haverneck last night."

"Honest to God, I didn't tell him that!" she cried.

"What did you tell him?"

"I only said he wasn't in New York. I said I didn't know whether he was in Haverneck or not."

"Why—when you did know?"

SHE was caught. "Well, if you want to know, because Frank's got a rotten temper. And he was sore. But he didn't threaten to smoke him or anything like that —as God is my witness he didn't! Honest, Mr. Runyon. I thought if he met him he would ask him whether he was goin' to treat me right or not—and maybe tell him if he didn't there'd be hell to pay. Frank thinks a lot of me. He wanted to be sure I wasn't going to get in wrong. That's all I thought."

"Is that all you think now?"

She twisted the end of one finger with the fingers of her other hand. "I—I don't know," she faltered. "But I think so. I told him I was really crazy about Fred and he was about me. He isn't a bad boy, Frank isn't. I don't think he'd do anything that would make me—unhappy."

The Inspector smiled and spoke disarmingly:

"Well, if it's any interest to you, you might as well know he seems to have been in New York all night," he said. "He could have sent one of his gang, of course, but I guess with any job like that to do he'd have attended to it himself. I aint lookin' for him. But I gotta follow up every lead—you know how that is."

"I'm so glad!" she exclaimed, and explained: "He's a good kid—when he's good. And I've known him as long as I can remember. I didn't want to think he'd do it."

"All right; don't worry. Now, if the Chief hasn't any objection, you can go over and see Park and run along back to your job."

Eldredge stepped to the door and instructed the officer to go with her to the undertaker's and remain while she viewed the body. She prepared to go, turned back, and said to him and Runyon:

"The piece in the paper said Fred had a gun. They guessed that, or made it up, didn't they?"

"Why?" Eldredge asked.

"He never had a gun—at least he said he didn't—not since the war."

"When did he say this?"

"One night about three weeks ago, when we were ridin' out in the country—he was drivin' himself—and the gas give out and we had to walk to a fillin'-station. I said something about the road bein' lonely and did he have a gun, and he said he didn't even own one. He said out West, where he used to live, it was the pistol-toters that usually got hurt. He didn't have a gun last night, did he?"

"There was one there, but probably it wasn't his," Runyon said. He and the Chief went with her to the station door, and the moment she had driven away the Inspector put in a telephone call for the New York detective headquarters.

"Take this taxi number," he commanded. "It will leave here within a few minutes and come across the Queensborough bridge. With a frail in it—Marie De Mar of the Summer Revue. Pick it up at the bridge and tail it with two men. If she drives anywhere to meet Smiling Frank Sabin—you know him, don't you?—collar him and bring him in. If she uses any phone, find out who to. If she goes straight to the theater, wait and pick her up again when she comes out and follow her until she either leads you to Sabin or turns in for the night. . . . . All right; got that? . . . . Now send two or three other men out looking for Sabin. Take him in if you find him; tell him it's something to do with bootleggin'; and don't let him see anybody till I get there. And watch out when you make the pinch—he's likely to have a rod on him, and if he's done what I think he has he wont be afraid to use it. . . . . I'll be there in an hour or two and go after him myself—may be there before the girl is."

HE hung up and turned to the curiously listening Chief. "That's better than trying to follow her in my car," he said. "If she has it in her head to tip Sabin he's suspected, she'll be looking out for a car behind, and we'll fool her."

Colonel Bob was frowning thoughtfully. "If Park didn't own a pistol—" he began, and Runyon broke in:

"Of course he did. That was a stall of some sort—to protect Sabin somehow. I don't know her game, but she's got one."

"But, look here!" the Chief said. "I didn't put any stock in it when he told me —but Vedder says Park didn't own a gun."

"He may not have known it. Say, where would that idea get us? Two men—neither of 'em Park—shooting at him or each other in that house, and one of 'em leaving his gun to be identified later. That don't make sense! Sabin wouldn't bring one of his gang with him on an errand like that, and, anyway, he didn't. He was alone in his car when he left New York."

"Who is this Sabin—a lover of hers?" Chief Eldredge asked.

"And a gun-man. A forty-minute egg."

"But that don't fit. She referred to him as a kid; he's young, isn't he?"

"About twenty-two."

"He wouldn't know anything about what Park did ten years ago."

"What do you mean, ten years ago?"

"I told you I knew Vedder didn't do it. I've been searching Park's house and I found something."

Striving to do it with proper modesty, the Chief opened a drawer of his desk and carefully lifted out a piece of window-glass upon which were pasted irregular bits of paper matched together to form a rectangle.

"This was in his wastebasket," he said, "with a lot of other torn-up papers. I got to looking them over, and I saw the word 'gun.' It wasn't as hard to sort the pieces out as you might think, because nothing else in the basket was on paper anything like this; it looks as if it came off a cheap pad. I got all the pieces and there was writing on both sides—so I got this glass and pasted it up. I read about that being done in some case, where they had to read both sides. I'd got it finished just before you came."

With Colonel Bob looking over his shoulder, Runyon read the letter aloud. It was an illiterate scrawl. in lead-pencil, and was undated.

Freind Park. I been to your office 3 times now and they say you are busy. It dont do no good to say you are busy. I got to have 200 dollars and have it quick. If I dont I spill the beans. Dont think becaus it was 10 yrs ago it wont hurt a rich broker to have it get out. I want the 200 to clean up here and get back to gods country quick and I am getting tired being told you are busy. I am coming again Thurs or Fri and you had better not be busy or hell is going to pop. I know what you said last time about not coming again or youd make troubble but you cant run no sandy on me and dont try no rough stuff I pack a gun for myownself now as much as I did for you at moonshine hill.

SIME

"And yesterday," the Chief said, "was Thursday."

"Frank Sabin never wrote that. Nor any of his gang," declared Runyon.

"That's what I said. It don't fit."

"Then I'd say it hasn't got anything to do with the murder—that is, I'd say so if I was sure Frank Sabin came to Haverneck last night, and I'm betting he did. There's nothing to show this wasn't some old letter. Park was cleaning out a desk, probably—she said he was going to clean house before she came, and he wouldn't leave anything like this around for her to find and read."

"But it's a threat."

"That don't necessarily mean anything. All big business-men get crank letters, all the time. And if it ever meant anything, the fact that he destroyed it shows it wasn't recent. And here's another thing. This fellow wants two hundred dollars. There was more than two hundred in Park's clothes, last night. If the guy that wrote that letter had done the killin', he'd have taken the roll."

A KNOCK at the door was followed, at the Chief's call, by the entrance of a policeman.

"What is it, Dacey?" Eldredge asked.

"I got something to report—about this Park case," the officer said, and looked at Bob and Runyon. "You can speak in front of them; they're on it too," the Chief told him, and said to them: "Dacey is a night officer; Park's house is on his beat."

"I went fishin' with my wife's cousin that is visitin' us when I come off duty this mornin'," Dacey said. "And then I slept until just now, so I never heard about the murder. There was something last night—it didn't seem like anything then—Park always had visitors all hours of the night—but in the light of what's happened— I went by Park's house, as usual, at about quarter or twenty minutes past twelve. There was a car standing there in front—a big car. It was empty. About ten minutes later, as I was turning into the Cove Road, that car came by, goin' like a bat out o' hell, headin' towards the city. Well, that's all right; it was goin' fast but safe enough on that good road, and if I tried to stop every speeder at that hour of the night—"

"Get to it!" Runyon broke in. "Did you get the number?"

"No. No reason why I should, that I knew. But I saw it under a light, so I could see the color. It was a green car. Light green. A big Lincard."

Runyon nodded triumphantly.

"Cinched!" he said to Bob and the Chief. "You didn't make any investigation at the house?"

"Why should I?" Dacey asked. "Cars comin' and goin' from Park's place aint anything to attract attention, at any hour. I noticed there was a little light under a curtain at a side window, every time I went by, but lights all night don't mean anything there."

"You didn't try to look in?"

"Me a peepin' Tom?" Dacey said. "I had no reason to be watchin' summer residents and their friends."

"How far from the house were you at twenty-four minutes past twelve?" Bob asked.

"Well, I had kept walkin'," the officer replied. "And I didn't hear the shots, if that's what you mean. If I had, I'd have gone to investigate, of course. I must have been at least a quarter of a mile away, maybe more. I don't know, of course, exactly what time I passed the house and saw the car—there was nothing to make me look at my watch. I figure the time from the fact that I usually get along there at about quarter or twenty minutes past the hour."

"All right," the Chief said when neither Bob nor Runyon spoke further. "Unless there's something else."

"Nothing else," Dacey told him, and went away.

"I'll be leaving you," Runyon said briskly. "Sabin figured last night that the safest thing to do was get back to his regular hangouts, but, thinking it over, he may have decided to try to make a get-away. I must get back in a hurry. Thanks for the help, both of you. It's made a nice, quick clean-up."

"Wait a minute, Inspector," Bob objected. "I'm not at all satisfied that nobody else but Sabin could have done it. This 'Sime' letter is surely written by a Westerner. Park was a Westerner. There are three or four other little things—"

Inspector Runyon smiled tolerantly and interrupted Bob's slow, thoughtful drawl:

"There most always are, and they throw amachures off the main track—and no blame to the amachures, either; they aint used to sortin' out things. Did you ever hear that old story about the kid in school that the teacher started to tell him and the rest of the class a story? 'Once there was a rabbit,' the teacher says, 'and he got chased by a dog. And the dog chased him under the house and they upset a candle that was lighted there'—and then the story goes on at great length about what happened, one thing after another, with the house burning down, and the barn catching fire, and the horses being in a stampede, and all hell happening. And when the teacher was all through, this boy—the only real smart one in the class—says, 'What became of the rabbit?' That's me, or any other man with experience in my line. I'm interested in all these other things, but they're side issues. The thing to stick to is the rabbit."

"Right, if you're sure who the rabbit is," Bob agreed. "I merely say I'm not sure it's Sabin. I think you're overlooking two or three bets."

RUNYON demonstrated his memory ran back to a day before too many crooked faro boxes made that game unpopular in New York by saying:

"If so, you can have the sleepers. You follow up those bets if you want to, but don't bother me about 'em. I've got a murderer to catch—the rabbit with the big motive." He sought to take any sting out of his words by adding: "Don't think I aint appreciative, Colonel. But, right now, I haven't any time. You can see that."

He had his hat and was on his way to the door.

"You really mean," Bob said slowly, "that you'd like to have me go ahead investigating, myself, and not tell you?"

"Tell me some day when it's all over." Runyon smiled good-naturedly. "I'll be at leisure after I collar Frank Sabin." At the door he said: "I'll phone you and let you come in and hear his confession, if you'd like."

"I would, suh," Bob told him gravely.

"It's a promise," Runyon replied. "And I'll be sending for you too, Chief."

"Well, what do you think?" Bob asked when the door had closed behind Runyon. "Is he necessarily right, and you and me necessarily wrong?"

"That letter—" the Chief began.

"Yes suh," Bob agreed, interrupting. "And both the girl and Vedder say he didn't own a gun. They could be right. Suppose you take both those bullets and the pistol in to one of these experts in the city that can tell from the marks on a bullet and in a gun-barrel, and see whether the bullet that came out of that gun was the one that killed him or the one that stopped the clock."

"But if it was the one that killed him, that would mean, like Runyon said, that there were two men shooting at him, and one of 'em left his gun. . . . . Or the guns could both have dropped, and the murderer pick up the wrong one."

"That could happen. You find that expert—have him look for fingerprints too,

Steele unfolded his bundle and displayed a pistol, around which had been wrapped a pair of gloves.

of course—and I'll dig into two or three other things I've been thinking of that might develop something and might not. If anything comes of it, you'll get my share of the credit, of course; I'm no detective—merely an old fellow that's always been kind of interested in crimes and so forth, ever since I used to work on 'em in Texas. . . . . Hobe Runyon's a fine man, but I didn't especially admire that remark of his about amachures. He rather figures you and me as countrymen from the sticks, don't he, Chief? . . . . Can I look at that oil company report that Park was working on? I'm interested in some oil companies myself."

The Chief produced the typewritten sheets and Bob skimmed their contents. "Hm!" he said. "It looks, at first glance, like a pretty fair prospect. . . . . Who's the best swimmer and diver around here?"

"Jimmy Steele. He's won all kinds of prizes in the water."

"Where can he be found? Can he keep his mouth shut? Is he trustworthy?"

"Yes, he's a good boy. He lives with his folks on Surf Avenue. Why?"

"I might want to see him sooner or later. If I were you, I'd get at finding out about that pistol and those bullets tonight. I'll guarantee you the expense, if there's any doubt about this town or the county paying it. I'll see you tomorrow. . . . . Countrymen, speaking by and large, know more about rabbits than city folks. I've killed many a one, to eat; they used to be thicker in South Texas than pear cactus. I can't ever remember getting my heart set on any one particular rabbit to the exclusion of all others. If I had, seems to me it would have been a mistake."

CHAPTER IV

Colonel Negley went from the police station to the Public Library, where he briefly consulted a history of the World War. He walked, then, to the Milano Club, where he stood on the veranda for several minutes, looking out meditatively across the Sound. Then he had dinner, ordered his driver to have his car at the club entrance in half an hour, and in the gathering twilight strolled over to the Surf Avenue home of Jimmie Steele, an intelligent-appearing youth who listened to what he had to say, at first carelessly, then eagerly, and said, as he pocketed money:

"Around noon tomorrow—the sun'll be about right then, and the tide'll be out. It aint more'n eight or ten feet deep anywhere along there at low tide, and the bottom is pure hard sand—but with three tides scouring since then, even if the weather has been calm, it's a long chance."

"I know," Bob said. "I'm willing to take it. And the fee is exactly doubled if nobody knows what you're doing—however it comes out—till I tell it."

"Don't worry; nobody'll know what I'm up to," Steele assured him. "I'm always in swimming and doing stunts."

Bob returned to the club-house, where his car was waiting, and was driven to New York, where, in his apartment, he put in a long-distance telephone call to Washington, and presently spoke with an official high in the War Department.

"There's some information I need, and I need it in a hurry," he said when their personal exchange of polite and cordial greetings was over. "If possible, I'd like to have it dug out tonight; I know that will be hard to do, but I hope you can find some way. You can pay whatever is necessary to put some people on it, and I'll be very glad to send you a check to cover, of course. I want to get the complete record of Frederick Park, who was probably in the Ninetieth Division in France. I don't know what regiment, so it is a pretty big job. But if you can get hold of some clerks who want to earn a little extra money—be liberal with them."

"I think it can be done," the official said. "Of course *Park* is not a rare name, and *Frederick* is very common. In a whole division there may have been several of them."

"This will help to narrow it down some: He was in the same regiment, I think, and probably in the same company, as a man named Vincent Cadlin. . . . . No, not *Catlin—Cadlin—a, b, c, d.* . . . . That's it. *Cadlin* is an unusual name, and the *Vincents* are limited—it isn't likely there were two of them in the Ninetieth. Looking for him ought to lead you to the right Park."

"All right, Colonel, I'll be very glad to get somebody right at it. If we find what you want, it ought to be ready for you by morning. Just his war record?"

"No. His complete record. Birthplace, town or city where he was drafted—all the facts of any sort that are in the file . . . . While you're about it, send along the Cadlin record, too; it may help. And there's another man—Sime—*S-i-m-e.* I don't know his other name, but *Sime* is peculiar enough so that perhaps you can find it. Don't waste too much time on him, though; I'm not sure he was in the Ninetieth or even that he was in the war at all, but he seems to have known Park ten years ago, and ten years ago Park was in France. Will you have the report wired to me, at my office here, as soon as it is ready? Sorry to bother you so much, but a little matter has come up."

"I'm very glad to do it, Colonel," the official replied.

"Thank you. My best regards and compliments to the family. Good night."

Bob hung up the receiver and sat in thought a moment. Then he lifted it again and after some difficulty located the broker who was his principal representative on the floor of the Stock Exchange.

"I have some important confidential inquiries I want made in the morning, at the earliest possible minute, before the Exchange opens," he said when, from a club, the broker's voice came over the wire. "I doubt if any subordinate could get the information, but you yourself can, I think, if you'll be good enough. I don't want to go into it over the phone. Can I see you if I come over there right now? . . . . Why, that's very kind of you. I'll leave word downstairs to have you shown right up."

CHAPTER V

THERE were many words in the morning papers about the Parks murder, but no news that the late afternoon editions had not printed. Marie de Mar was prominently present—she had refused to talk to reporters but the press agent of the Summer Revue had done his duty—and John Vedder, and Chief Eldredge; but no paper had esteemed the case to possess any mystery, and nowhere was there any reference to either Inspector Runyon or Smiling Frank Sabin. It looked as though Sabin, as Runyon had feared might be the case, had decided to make a get-away.

The telegram from Washington was at Bob's office when he arrived there, and when he had read it he secured a long-distance connection with Austin, Texas, and talked with the adjutant-general of that State, who is the official head of the Texas Rangers. He asked him if any present members of the Ranger force were in or around the Humble oil-field in the spring of 1917, and if so, where they could now be found.

Clerks at each end held the wire for five minutes, and then the adjutant-general told Bob that Tom Fleetwood was one of the Rangers on duty at Humble at that time and that Fleetwood, now a captain in

the service, could be reached at Fort Worth. While Bob was waiting for a person-to-person call to that city to be put through, the broker with whom he had talked the night before came on to the phone. He spoke guardedly.

"I saw those parties myself," he reported. "The answer is: On the wrong side of the market."

"How bad?" Bob asked.

"Very bad indeed. They've been getting worried and calling for more margins, and he's had trouble putting them up. Had to hock everything in sight to do it, and didn't get things covered as much as they ought to be at that. A big bull day might wipe the account out. He has always been a high-roller, you know—night-clubs, wine and chorus-girls—and he's spent more of his income than his friends ever knew—or his partner either, I think. His credit has been getting shakier every day for a month."

"Thank you," Bob said. "I appreciate your service very much, suh."

WITHIN an hour came, over the wire from Texas, the soft drawl of Captain Tom Fleetwood of the Texas Rangers. He and Colonel Negley talked nearly ten minutes. When they had finished, Bob got into his car and reached Haverneck in time for lunch. From his window in the Milano Club, while he made ready to wash up, he observed that a number of people were bathing in the Sound. One of them, a barrel-chested youth with powerful shoulder and leg muscles, at some distance from the others, seemed to be practicing fancy diving from a rowboat.

Chief Eldredge was in his office when Bob arrived there soon after lunch.

"I took those things in last night," he said, "and I got the report about an hour ago. The bullet from that gun on the floor was the one that killed Park. . . . . And there were no fingerprints on it—except mine."

"I'm not surprised," Bob told him. "Can I see John Vedder—in your presence, of course? I want to ask him two or three questions."

The Colonel was smiling grimly when he left the police-station to return to the club. His smile became one of satisfaction when he found the barrel-chested Jimmie Steele waiting for him there, now fully clothed and carrying in his hand his rolled and still somewhat soppy bathing-trunks, wrapped snugly around some hard and relatively heavy object.

Steele went with the Colonel to his rooms, where, when the door had been locked, the youth, breathlessly excited, unfolded his bundle and displayed an automatic pistol of thirty-two caliber, around which had been wrapped and tightly fastened with stout cord a pair of tan kid gloves.

"Good work, son!" Bob commended. "Now, before anybody but you touches any of those things, take a knife and make a private mark on the pistol and each of the gloves—one that you can swear to when you have to identify them in court."

The youth obeyed. "But whose—" he began. Bob broke in on him amiably:

"You keep your hair on, your ears open and your mouth shut, and sooner or later you'll hear. Here's the rest of the money I promised you—and, like I said, there'll be as much again if nobody, not even your best friend, hears a word about this till I tell it. . . . . And, after that, don't mention me, unless you absolutely have to, on a witness stand. It was Chief Eldredge that hired you."

"You didn't know about the gloves, did you, Mr. Negley? You didn't say anything to me about the gloves."

Bob was looking into the wrist of one of the gloves.

"Those gloves, son," he said, "were almost too much luck for anybody to expect. . . . . Why don't you go to New York or somewhere for the rest of the day, where you wont run into a lot of folks you know and be tempted to spread the glad tidings? I rather think you wont have to keep your mouth shut more than through today and perhaps tonight."

As Steele disappeared down the hall toward the elevator the telephone bell beside the bed tinkled. It was Chief Eldredge, who said:

"Runyon just phoned. He's got that fellow—you know who I mean—the man in the green car. He says he wants me to come right in. And Cadlin'll be there—Runyon reached him at his office—and he told me to tell you, so you could come along too if you want, like he promised."

"We'll go in my car, right away. I'll stop by for you. How did Hobe's voice sound?"

"Mighty satisfied."

"Hm!" Bob said. "Well, it ought to, I s'pose. He's got his rabbit. I'll come by in ten minutes."

CHAPTER VI

IN a room at detective headquarters they greeted Inspector Runyon and Vincent Cadlin, who had arrived just ahead of them. The Inspector said to Bob, grinning triumphantly: "He decided hiding out was safer than trying to make a get-away, but there aint many places in New York a man can hide from me—and me not find out where he is. He did the job, all right."

"Confessed?" Bob asked.

"Not all—only that he did ride down to Haverneck night before last. He says he went just to take the air. I've postponed giving him the works till you could all be here."

Runyon pressed a button and an officer entered.

"Bring Sabin," he ordered.

He said to them as the officer went out: "Had a gun on him when we found him, but we didn't give him any chance to use it. A thirty-two. The same one, sure as you live. Been cleaned and reloaded, of course."

Frank Sabin was brought in. He was a handsome youngster, but there was nothing now in his expression to warrant his sobriquet of Smiling Frank. He sat where Runyon told him to sit and looked alertly from one to the other.

"Listen, you!" the Inspector snapped. "We've got the goods. You might as well come clean."

"You aint got nothin'," Sabin replied, "except that I happened to be in that town —like a thousand others."

"Here's what we got—part of it," retorted Runyon harshly. "I'm going to tell you, because we can prove it, and if you come across and don't make us any trouble, we'll see what we can do for you. As long as he fired at you too, you might make self-defense stick. You were sore night before last about this De Mar and Fred Park. You know what you said to her at the theater stage-entrance; so do we. You went to Haverneck. You got there at a little after twelve. You went to his house. He was ready for you, but you were readier than he was. He pulled a gat, but you beat him to it—at exactly twenty-four minutes past twelve! You came back to town as fast as you could step on it. You came past the corner of the Cove Road down there, a quarter of a mile from his house, at better than fifty an hour. That was at just twelve-thirty." The Inspector climaxed: "And we've got your fingerprints."

"Not in that house," Sabin said. "You may frame me—I wouldn't put it past you or any other bull—but there ain't no fingerprints of mine in that house! I never was in it. Listen, Inspector, I'm comin' clean on this thing—"

"You'd better."

"I been thinkin' it over, and I'm goin' to tell all I know. You may have me for packin' a rod, but you aint goin' to burn me for no murder. I did go out there Thursday night, just like you said. I wanted to have a talk with that guy—and whether we'd have had trouble or not might have depended on what he said. But he didn't say nothin', nor me either. He'd been croaked before I got there."

"Yeah," said Runyon.

"Yeah," retorted Sabin. "I rang his doorbell, and there didn't no sound come from inside. I was bound to see him if he was home. Well, I did—through a window at the side, where the curtain was a little ways up. I know dead men's feet when I see 'em. And I knew right off it might look like I done it, and I beat it like hell. And that's the truth, so help me God!"

"What time did you say you got there?"

"About five minutes past twelve; there's an illuminated clock on some buildin' there in the burg—a church, I guess. And it wasn't but about twelve-twenty when I come past it again, headin' for home."

"It was past twelve-thirty. You bumped him at exactly twelve-twenty-four. If you've got to be made to tell, don't get it into your head we can't do it."

"Inspector," broke in Colonel Bob mildly, "there's one or two little things I've found out since I saw you. Would it be all right if you sent Sabin out for a few minutes and let me tell 'em to you? Yes, you really need to know 'em, right away."

THERE was something in Bob's face or voice that made Runyon hesitate. He nodded to the policeman who had remained standing at Sabin's side, and the officer led the prisoner away.

"I'd have told you those things—so far as I knew 'em—yesterday, if you'd have let me," Colonel Bob said to the Inspector apologetically, "but you wouldn't. The conversation got to running, somehow, on rabbits—"

"What do you know that I don't?"

"In the first place, the best firearms

expert in New York says the pistol that killed Park was the one that lay on the floor—the one you'd natchully suppose busted the clock. And there wasn't a darn' fingerprint on it, except Chief Eldredge's. That would make it look as though the fellow that fired it wore gloves."

"Perhaps he did. Perhaps he always wears gloves when he's driving at night. We'll find out about that when we get him back in here. If he denies it, some of his gang will know."

"But I've got it in my head Sabin saw that body through the window, just like he says he did. Is it likely he went out and looked in after he did the killing, to see if it could be seen? And if he did, why didn't he go back and pull down the shade?"

"There could be a dozen reasons. He was in a hurry to get away."

"But not too much of a hurry to go look in the window? There's another reason why I think Park was already dead when Sabin got there. You didn't have anybody that knows oil promotions look over that report Park was studying, did you?"

Runyon frowned.

"No. What of it?"

"Mr. Cadlin, here, left that report with him at nine-thirty, and he was still reading it when he was interrupted and killed. It's a good, well-drawn report—but it couldn't possibly take a man that knew anything about such things more than an hour at the outside to analyze it."

"He could have finished with it and gone to doing something else."

"I don't think he did. I think he was still looking it over when he was killed—not later than ten-thirty. Want to hear my theory? Even if it seems to show that you might have the wrong rabbit?"

"Look here—are you claiming I know about that murder, just because those are my gloves?"

Runyon grinned amiably. "I told you I'd be glad to hear anything, once I'd got the collar on Sabin. I've got plenty of time now. He'll still be here when we want him. . . . . If you think Park was killed at ten-thirty, how do you explain the clock?"

"My theory takes care of that," Bob said. "The man that killed him had planned it, and planned it carefully. One of these perfect crimes, as they call them. Every contingency taken care of, so the killer can't be caught. Perfect—unbeatable—as far as can possibly be figured in advance. Let me tell you what I think happened.

"Park was reading the oil-report. The murderer, wearing gloves, shot him, and dropped the pistol he shot him with near the body. That might get it figured as suicide; he knew the bullet had gone through Park's head, but he didn't know it had struck the fireplace and would be found. Still, he couldn't know it wouldn't be found, so he had prepared for that. If the suicide idea didn't work, the evidence,

with only one cartridge fired from that pistol, would seem to prove a gun-fight—just as we all supposed at first.

"He set the clock ahead from whatever time it was to twenty-four minutes past twelve, got out another gun and stood off and shot a hole in it, being careful not to hit the hands. If that second gun was an automatic, he picked up the ejected shell. Then he took off his gloves and got away from there in a hurry. He had to leave the electric lights on; if he hadn't, some one might have noticed, before twelve-twenty-four, that the place was dark, and that wouldn't fit in with the clock. He got rid of the pistol, the cartridge shell, and the gloves, *pronto,* by throwing them into the water. That's what you said yesterday, when you told me you felt sure Vedder wasn't guilty. If Vedder was the killer, you said, he'd have chucked his gun in the Sound."

"That's a nice interestin' little theory, Colonel," smiled Runyon. "All it needs to make me let Sabin go, with apologies, is for you to show us some facts to prove it."

"Yes suh," Bob agreed gravely. He turned to Park's partner. "Did you ever happen to meet or hear of a man named Simon Bush, Mr. Cadlin?"

CADLIN wrinkled his brows in an effort at recollection. "Not that I can remember," he said.

"A Westerner," Bob told him. "A little fellow, not over five feet six—but with hands big enough to work a forty-five. Maybe you wouldn't have heard his last name. Most everybody called him 'Little Sime.' "

"Sime!" exclaimed Runyon, no longer smiling, and Bob said to Cadlin: "I'm sure Park knew him."

Cadlin thought further, but shook his head. "If he was a Westerner, perhaps it was before I knew Fred," he suggested.

"I've got reason to believe Park met him somewhere before the war," said Bob, "but he came to New York later. Not so long ago, comparatively speaking."

"I never met or heard of him, I'm sure."

"A bad *hombre,* that Sime," Bob informed Runyon. "Used to be a gun-man by trade; there was one time he was a bodyguard, as they call 'em down in that country, for some fellow that didn't pack his own protection at Moonshine Hill. Ever hear Park speak of Moonshine Hill, Mr. Cadlin?"

"No," Cadlin replied.

"Where is it?" Runyon demanded.

"Humble oil-field, Texas," Bob said. "It was some wild camp in its day, just before the war."

"What has Bush to do with this?" asked Cadlin.

"He wrote Park a letter."

Runyon queried sharply: "Where is he now? Have you any idea?"

"He was here in New York when he wrote that note. Before I go any more into that, I want to show you something a swimmer found in the water this afternoon—in the Sound, as you suggested." Bob picked up the small package that had been on the floor beside his chair, opened it, and exhibited, without any apparent attempt to be dramatic, the automatic in its wrapping of gloves. "About a good throw from a landing-float," he said. "The barrel hasn't been examined yet, but I'm gambling you'll find this gun fired the bullet that stopped the clock."

"What's your connection?" snapped Runyon. "Does that gun belong to this Sime? Are those his gloves? You said he's got big hands."

"Small chance that gun can ever be positively identified," Bob admitted. "It isn't easy to identify thirty-two automatics; there's thousands of 'em, all alike. No suh, the fellow that threw this pistol away might be safe—at least so far as connecting him with this gun goes—if he hadn't felt he natchully had to get rid of the gloves at the same time. If anything had gone wrong with his plans and he'd got searched or anything, he'd have had a job explaining why he had kid gloves on him on a hot night in August—they aint the kind anybody would use driving a car. And, besides, he couldn't be sure there wasn't some oil or powder or something on them that would show he had handled a pistol."

BOB laid the still soggy bundle on the Inspector's desk.

"Do you know," he said, almost conversationally, "these fellows that plan these perfect crimes always make at least one mistake that will trip 'em if it ever shows up? Now nobody was going to search this *hombre* and find those gloves, but he couldn't be sure. Even then, he might have escaped being traced if he hadn't hitched the gloves to his pistol, but natchully he wanted to be sure they would sink and stay sunk. And he couldn't know the water

was going to stay perfectly calm through three tides, so they wouldn't be scoured into the sand, or moved; no human could foresee that.

"Most gloves, of course, aint identifiable, but did you ever in your life see such long fingers in a pair of gloves that width? The man with those fingers, if he's a stylish dresser and wants to have gloves that fit right, has to have 'em made to order, and you'll find the name of the maker— Sit down, Cadlin! And keep your hands away from your pockets!" Bob's voice had wholly changed; it contained, now, the timbre that had made prisoners flinch and do his bidding in the days when he was a Texas Ranger. "You said, Inspector, that the rabbit to go after was the one with the big motive. What motive could be bigger than to be the sole beneficiary under a rich man's will—and to know that if the rich man lived two days longer that will would be made void by his marriage?"

"Look here!" cried Cadlin hotly. "Are you claiming I know anything about that murder, just because those are my gloves? Of course they're mine—but I lost them way back last spring. I'll make you pay for it if you slander me. Kill Fred Park? He was my best friend."

" 'Pals as well as partners'—I know," Bob said. "And Vedder has heard you quarreling with him half a dozen times—once about his being set on marrying Miss de Mar."

"Vedder! Of course he'd say that."

"Maybe. But if he heard you, perhaps others did."

"He stole the gloves, of course. I probably left them some time in Fred's rooms in town. Don't be a fool, Negley! Just stop and think a minute. You yourself were playing cards with me when it happened."

"When—from the busted clock—it seemed to have happened," Bob amended. "And I noticed those long fingers of yours, natchully. They riffle the cards very pretty. You told the Inspector and me yesterday your home before the war was always Chicago—and then overtalked yourself. First you referred to Vedder's run-in with Park as 'a little twist,' and that's Southwestern language, not Chicago. And then, to get over that pal-as-well-as-partner stuff, you told us you were both wounded at Sedan. There was only one Southwestern division at Sedan. It wasn't hard to find out that you and Park were both drafted from Harris County—Humble. Or, after we knew that, what your trade was during the oil-boom there."

"What trade?" demanded Runyon.

"Crooked gambler, at Moonshine Hill; and so was Park. But Park had a prejudice against toting a gun—never carried one; that's why he hired Sime Bush as bodyguard. Bill Cadlin—his middle name is Vincent—packed his own firearms, and he shot and killed a man in cold blood only a month or so before he was drafted. Things were pretty easy in that camp, and with the help of a shyster lawyer and some lying witnesses he got turned loose,—he claimed self-defense,—but he's a dirty killer."

"That's a lie!" Cadlin shouted.

"Ranger Tom Fleetwood arrested you, and I talked to him this mawnin'," Bob said. "He'll be on to identify you about Tuesday."

WITHOUT taking his eyes off Cadlin, Colonel Bob addressed the Inspector.

"As crooked as a barrel of snakes, both of 'em. And both high-rollers, after they got into a paying business. But Park stopped gambling, saved some of his money, and died well off. Cadlin—except for his interest in the firm, and I think we'll find that is all hocked somehow—is plumb broke. He's been on the bear side of this bull market. You told me where to find that out, Inspector, when you said he traded with Howard and Collins. . . . . He's getting uneasy, Chief. Better put the cuffs on him, if the Inspector don't mind. It'll save watching him so hard."

"You've got no warrant," protested Cadlin. "The law—"

"You'll get plenty law," said Eldredge. "Hold out your hands."

"That pistol and gloves—were they in the water near Park's house?" Runyon asked.

"No. A good throw out from the Milano Club landing-float. He strolled down there just before he came into the club. He told us he did, you remember—to cover the possibility of some one having seen him."

Bob turned grimly to Cadlin.

"Killing Park was mean," he said, "but the meanest thing you did was to make sure Vedder wouldn't be there Thursday night by telling Park that day that you had learned he was crooked—which he hadn't been—and then talking about it yesterday to the Chief, so as to cinch it that Vedder would be held for the killing."

"Who says I told Park?"

"Park himself. He told Vedder you did, when he fired him. . . . . You had some talk with Park about Vedder, of course, when you gave him that oil report; you had to know Vedder was through, so as to be sure he wouldn't be coming back. And Park told you what Vedder said when they quarreled. . . . . There's only one other thing I can think of, Inspector. That torn-up letter from Sime Bush— I found out who he was, natchully, from Cap'n Fleetwood of the Rangers; Sime said in the letter he used to pack a gun for Park at Moonshine Hill, you know. Well, Sime must have come to New York and got broke and blackmailed Park in a small way not to let folks know he used to be a crooked gambler. And I reckon Park gave him money enough to get back home when he called that Thursday or Friday he spoke about, because he showed up in Texas again about a year ago and was killed in Eastland County last January. The letter was an old one, just like you thought it was."

"Good Lord, was I right in one thing?" murmured Inspector Runyon, with creditable humility.

Bob smiled, not a particle triumphantly. "We can't all be right always," he said, "and my happening to know about some of those Texas angles was just luck. It's understood, of course, that my name isn't to get into this thing at all; I only tangle into these things once in awhile for the fun of it—you know that, Inspector. What goes into the newspapers is that Chief Eldredge worked the case up, with your help. You did furnish a lot of the ideas, you know. And you got Cadlin here for the clean-up and arrest."

"Well, fella!" snarled Runyon at Cadlin. "What have you got to say?"

"I demand a lawyer," the prisoner replied sullenly.

"When we get back to Haverneck," Eldredge promised him, trying not to grin happily.

"And you'll need a hundred of 'em," Runyon said. "Listen, Colonel! What first started you to getting suspicious of this guy?"

"You did," replied Bob, "when you told me he was a ring-tailed bluffer in a poker game! I'd played with him for four hours, and he never bluffed once. It looked like something must have been keeping his mind off the game."

THE END

REAL

A Winner Who Lost

JOKES and wagers do not always turn out the way we intend them to. Twenty years ago I found this out, and while today I smile a little over that affair, there is still a painful and disgruntling angle connected with it.

It was one of those hot, soggy nights in August; my police uniform clung unpleasantly to my skin, and as the cheerful lights of Meeney's Corner Saloon loomed up before my eyes, I could not resist the temptation to enter.

"Hot night," saluted Meeney. "What'll it be tonight, Officer Haight? Ale?"

"And ice cold!" I ordered, unbuttoning my coat a trifle.

"The treat's on me, Officer," spoke up a lounger at the bar. "By thunder, no officer should have to buy his drinks on a night like this!"

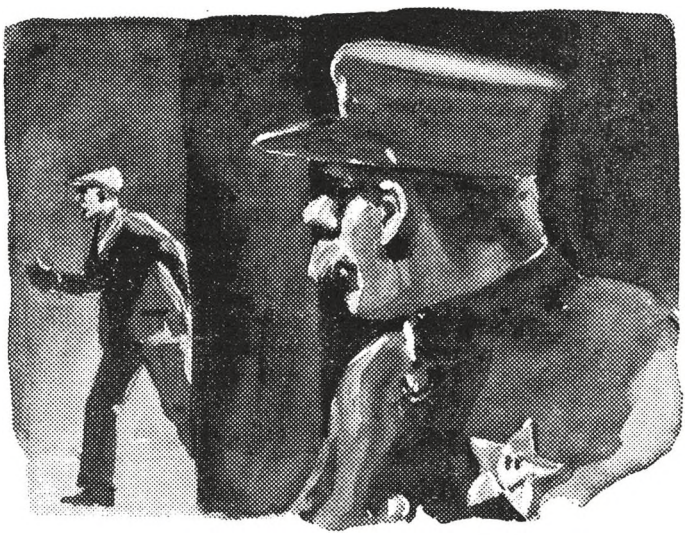
We downed our ale. Then I took stock of the fellow who had set up. Recently I had seen him once or twice in Meeney's before. He was well-dressed, intelligent-faced, with a keen humorous twitch to his eyes. I felt that he was aching to say something that apparently was burning him up, so I kept silent as an invitation for him to talk.

"I was just thinking, Officer," he said, "what a mighty slack organization you police are. Why, while you're in here, quenching your thirst, somebody might be busting into a store."

The ale had tasted good, and had put me in a pleasant mood, so I answered rather banteringly:

"Well, partner, I've been on this beat for the last ten years, and there's nary a store been busted into. Thugs don't go so much

EXPERIENCES



By
Gustave Haight

The quaint confession of a policeman who made a bet with a casual acquaintance, won it—and wished he hadn't.

for the smaller stuff like what's on this avenue. They usually hit uptown."

"Maybe you're right," he half smiled. "Mind, now, I'm not knocking on you coming in here while on duty and having a glass; it's while cops are right out there on a beat with their eyes supposedly open that things usually happen."

"Not on *Haight's* beat!" I challenged. "You notice I said there's never been a store broken into on this block. Well, that isn't altogether because some haven't tried. As a matter of fact, I've nabbed a few in the attempt!"

"Good for you, Officer," he laughed.

WE had had several drinks by now and I was feeling pretty cheery. And I supposed my friend was.

We chatted for a few minutes longer, then he slapped his glass down on the counter and said, "I'll tell you what I'll do! I'll make a little bet with you. Whatever you say."

"Well," I answered, thinking that he was merely joking, "I don't usually bet, and right now I've got only about twenty dollars on me. What's the bet anyway?" Of course I was curious, and he seemed very amiable.

"I'll bet," he offered, "that I can break into a store right on the avenue, on your beat, while you're patrolling it. How's that sound?"

"No bet," I replied, with firmness. "First place, I don't want you breaking into any stores, or even trying. It isn't ethics, even in fun."

"You seem to have gotten me wrong." He looked at me good-naturedly, while he treated to another drink. "Here's my proposition. All in fun, of course, and to take some of that ego out of you. You know that unrented store on the opposite side, near the middle of the block? Empty as a politician's head! It's got a lock and also a strong padlock fastened on the outside of the door. I'll bet you twenty dollars that I can unfasten that padlock and open that door, right while you're on your beat—without you catching me!"

As I said, I was feeling pretty good by now, and if we could arrange it satisfactorily, his offer struck me as good, ethical, and sportsmanlike. It never entered my head that he appeared to be exceptionally well versed in the layout of this particular block.

"I don't know," I said evasively. "How'll we arrange it? I know you can't do it, not while I'm on duty! But if you want to try, and bet on the attempt, why, I might as well take your money as the next."

"Easy enough," he explained. "You say you have twenty dollars. Put it up! Let Meeney, here, hold the money. Now, here's the way I got it doped out. If you

come by that store and find the door unlocked and slightly ajar, you'll know I did it—and that I win the bet. Lock it up again and come down to Meeney's. I'll be waiting, and at your word he'll pass me the winnings. On the other hand, if you so much as catch me in the doorway, we'll assume that if I were a crook my game would have been spoiled. We'll come down to Meeney's together—and you'll get the money. That's gambler square, isn't it, Officer?"

I thought it over for a minute or so. It was a silly thing to do—a foolish wager! But the money looked good; it was a little sport; and he had pricked my pride.

"You're on!" I agreed.

We gave Meeney our money to hold, then left the saloon, separating and going off alone into the hot, stuffy night.

IT was about an hour later, midnight, and dark. Few people were out and I told myself that it was an ideal night for any crook to work. I kept my eyes almost continually glued on that vacant store, whenever I was within range; and when I was not I hurried feverishly on my beat to get the store back into sight. There were only a few minutes, at each end of my patrol, when I could not see the vacant plate-glass windows; and I felt sure that it was going to be easy money. "Glue your eyes on that spot, boy!" I told myself. And that was about what I did.

My friend—I didn't know his name—came down the street once, and paused opposite the store, then went on as he caught a glimpse of me watching him. Perhaps a half dozen times he did this, then he disappeared around a corner and did not return for some time. I'm telling you, my eyes and that store certainly got acquainted!

Another half hour slipped past. Tiring somewhat of the game, and weary with the oppressive heat, I decided to relax my vigilance a little and give the fellow a chance. If things went on in this manner, neither of us would win; by the terms of our bet I had to catch him in the doorway to win that money!

More time went by. I wondered if Meeney had closed and if I would have to wait until morning to collect that money. Probably Meeney was still open. Hot nights like this he frequently kept open until three o'clock in the morning. Couldn't sleep, anyway, he said.

Then I started down the block again, keeping close to the windows and on the side of the street where the vacant store was located. When within three or four rods from it, I thought I caught a shadow through the plate glass. My heart seemed to skip a beat and I started on a swift run for the entry.

JUST as I reached the doorway, somebody bumped into me and I saw that it was the fellow with whom I had bet.

"Well," he said, a little crestfallen, "I guess you win. You caught me in the doorway and as you see I haven't got the lock open. Come down to Meeney's and I'll settle up. I'm a good loser."

And he was, as the twenty dollars in my pocket a little later proved.

At five o'clock that morning I reported off duty at the station, and then went home to sleep.

I had just dozed off to sleep, it seemed, though it was over two hours later, when my wife woke me up, telling me that the Chief was on the wire.

"Hello; Haight speaking," I said, yawning.

"Haight, this is the Chief. Say, d'you see anybody suspicious around your beat last night? Kresenky's store was broken into. He just came down to headquarters in a rage. Says the crooks got away with about a hundred rings he got in last week. Cheap stuff, his line of course. Worth about fifty dollars apiece. But altogether they're worth about *five thousand!*"

"See anybody suspicious?" I repeated stupidly. "Why, no, Chief—nobody *suspicious.*"

He hung up abruptly while I flopped into a chair dazedly. I had won twenty dollars, and thought myself clever! The other guy had stolen five thousand, under my very nose. Of course, it was all plain enough. My friend of the night before had led me on until I had eaten his bait; then while I kept all my attention on an empty store, he had broken into Kresenky's jewelry place.

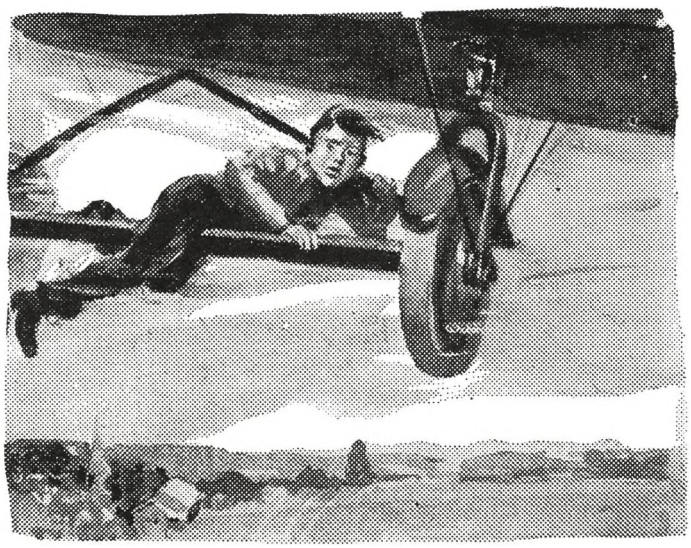
AS I say, that was twenty years ago. Of course the thief was never caught. I had to keep my mouth shut, for more reasons than one, as you can plainly see. But some day, maybe, I'll meet that good *loser*, and as man to man we'll make another bet—that Officer Haight's a better man!

And who do you think will win?

Hooking a Sky Ride

By
Dan Morrissey

A kindly Providence was on the job—or this story would never have been told.



THROUGHOUT the summer my interest in aviation burned at steady white heat. I was thirteen years old at the time and lived just outside of San Antonio, Texas. A wire fence and the width of a dusty road were all that separated my father's farm from Brooks Field, and Kelly Field was only two miles away. San Antonio was ringed about by huge army training camps and flying-fields. Everywhere you looked you could see khaki, and airplanes were as thick as crows. They buzzed overhead from daylight till dark.

With my brother Frank, younger than I by a year, I found the aviation field across the road fascinating beyond the wildest tales of Nick Carter or Buffalo Bill. Our eyes followed the planes all day. We talked of nothing but airplanes; we read of nothing but airplanes; we dreamed of airplanes at night.

Hundreds of flying cadets were in training at this and other near-by fields. They were all quite young, some of them boys not many years older than ourselves. And all of them were objects of our admiration and envy.

At Brooks Field the more advanced students received instruction in combat maneuvers and stunt flying. It was a small field with a group of hangars in one corner and a row of neat barracks where the cadets and soldier mechanics lived. Back of the barracks was the road, and across the road was our home.

When the field was laid out the year before, my father saw an opportunity to profit by it. He built an addition to our little cottage and opened a lunch-room and soft-drink place which soon became popular. Frank and I used to fall all over ourselves to wait on the young flyers when they dropped in after a soda or a sandwich. We listened to their stories with wide eyes and open mouths, and our hero-worship was repaid with an amused friendship.

ALTHOUGH the field supposedly was closed to all civilians, we boys in time acquired certain privileges. The guards would look the other way when we sneaked under the fence, and unless some high-up officer was around, we had the run of the place as long as we kept out of mischief.

From some favorite vantage-point we were observers of the exciting life that passed on the field. More than once we witnessed the result of a mechanical defect or a cadet's instant of panic or bad judgment in the air. There would be a flash of hurtling wings in the sunlight; then a heap of twisted metal and splintered wood and torn cloth on the ground—and the ambulance racing out to collect its gruesome freight.

Or lying on our backs in the dusty grass, we watched the silvery specks high above us as they dipped and soared and looped, or came fluttering down in long, giddy tailspins. We knew the different makes of planes, their horsepower, their speed, their dependability. We knew the names of the instructors and cadets, and their nicknames. We knew each one's reputation for skill and daring.

The possibility that sometime we might

be taken for an air ride ourselves was a thing we often discussed. I would have given my right arm gladly for such a chance. The cadets would promise us rides easily, but when we approached anyone with real authority, we were summarily dismissed and threatened with being chased off the field.

I DON'T remember how the idea of stealing a ride first came up, but it grew to be our most absorbing topic of conversation. Frank and I had hooked rides on the big army trucks that lumbered up and down the road. We had hooked rides on freight-trains down in the railroad yards. Hooking a ride on an airplane, while it was a hundred times more daring, didn't seem utterly impossible to us.

One hot, dazzlingly bright July afternoon, Frank and I decided to visit the field. Coming around the corner of the hangars we saw there was something of special interest going on. A group of officers and cadets was gathered about a trim little monoplane standing headed out toward the field with its engine throttled down and running smoothly.

As no one stopped us, we soon brazenly pressed in closer. It was a new ship, a Vicker-Vimy pursuit plane imported from England which was about to receive a try-out. Two of the field's best flyers were in the cockpit, coats buttoned and helmets strapped on, all ready to start.

We slipped around to the other side of the plane where nobody happened to be at that moment and crouched down under the trailing edge of the wing. The wheels and axle of the landing-gear were only a few feet away. No one was paying any attention to us.

"Now's your chance to steal a ride," said Frank, pointing to the axle. This was a stream-shaped wooden strut, flatly oval, about ten inches wide and six feet from wheel to wheel. There were bracing wires and struts crisscrossing above it that looked like good hand-holds.

"No," I objected, faced with the actual chance to put my wild talk into action. "I'm scared to."

"Dare you to," Frank taunted me. "Double-dare you to!"

Trembling with excitement, I crawled under the fuselage and up onto the axle strut. I don't know to this day whether I really meant to stay there or not—for the choice was taken out of my hands. That very moment the pilot in his seat above me opened up the engine with a deafening roar, and the plane commenced rolling down the field. Taken by surprise, I clutched the axle tightly and by the time I had my wits collected again, we were moving along at an alarming speed.

Beneath me the ground was flowing away in a dusty gray stream. I wanted to drop off, but I could see the tail skid bumping along behind, and I was afraid I might not be able to roll out of its way. While I was mustering up the courage to chance it, the plane took the air, and when I looked down again, a hundred-foot gap had suddenly opened between me and the earth's surface.

The plane banked over, tilting sharply; I slid down on the axle until I could feel the toe of my shoe scrape on one of the wheels, which were still spinning. I got hold of a wire and pulled myself back, clamping the strut between my legs like a vise. I felt dizzy and horribly frightened. Then the plane straightened out and sailed over the hangars, at a height now of several hundred feet, and I forgot my fears in the spectacle which spread itself out below me.

THE ring of the horizon had widened magically. I could see all of San Antonio, with the river winding through it like a green watersnake, and the Plaza and the old Alamo in the center. I could see Kelly Field two miles away and Camp Travers and Fort Sam Houston. Directly beneath me the group of men we had just left was scattered, running about excitedly like ants stirred up with a stick. My escapade had been discovered. They were trying in vain to draw the attention of the pilots, who were, of course, quite ignorant of the fact that they had a stowaway on board. The white canvases used to signal from the ground to the air were being dragged out,—radio communication was undeveloped then,—but the flyers were so interested in the performance of their new ship that they never looked back.

Just as the plane banked again, I saw my brother legging it for home at top speed, but for the next few seconds I was too busy holding on to notice anything else. I discovered my arms were beginning to ache severely from the strain I was placing upon them.

The next time we passed above the field, the scurrying figures on the ground were so tiny it was hard to believe they were men.

The hangars and barracks were about the size of a kid's building-blocks. The countryside reminded me for all the world of a big relief-map I had to study in school one time.

Ever so often the map would tip itself gradually up on edge until it was steeper than the steepest mountainside and it seemed a wonder to me that the houses didn't slide off. I knew the plane was banking in another turn then, and held on tighter than ever, waiting for the ground to change back into level prairie again. We were climbing higher all the time. Hot as it had been on the field, I grew chilly from the wind which whipped through my thin clothing like a hurricane.

The queerest thing, though, was that the feeling of fear had left me completely. I felt exhilarated and happy, and immensely proud of myself. I began to sing and shout at the top of my lungs, while the engine thundered above me and the vibrating wires whistled and whined.

But with every passing minute my arms and legs were growing more tired from the task of keeping a stationary position on the axle. I remember thinking that soon I would be too tired to hold on any longer, and then I would go tumbling head over heels down through a few thousand feet of empty space. However, it seemed too fantastic for me to be frightened. Falling off the roof of our barn would be every bit as scary, I thought.

SUDDENLY the plane started back toward earth in a crazy, sickening rush, and with a speed that all but tore me loose from my precarious perch. It was surely all over with me, I decided, and shut my eyes, lost in a horrible swirling nausea. But instinctively, I hugged the strut in a regular death-grip. I dropped into bottomless abysses and suffered such terrifically violent changes of direction that up-and-down and sideways were all scrambled together into one hodgepodge of tipsy motion. When I opened my eyes, I found that the earth and the sky had changed places in an extraordinary sort of waltz they were dancing with each other, and once it looked as if we were falling straight into the sun. After that I kept my eyes tightly closed.

The pilots were testing out the ship, putting it through every stunt it was capable of. Maneuvers which had looked so graceful and easy from the ground left me feeling much as though I had been a handball swiftly batted through the air by a company of playful giants. And when the plane looped, I felt I was being whirled about at the end of a long string, and that the string was slowly slipping out of my grasp. In fact, my grasp on the axle *was* weakening. Terror-stricken, I screamed again and again, but the wind wiped out my voice, and the men only four feet above me might have been that many miles away for any chance they had of hearing me.

AFTER what seemed long and intolerable hours to me, the pilots throttled the engine down for an instant, and in the comparative quiet they must have heard my shouts. I opened my eyes again to see the top of a leather helmet leaning far out of the cockpit to peer under the wing. Immediately the plane slanted back toward the ground, keeping as even a keel as possible. One of the pilots leaned over once more to wave an encouraging hand at me, and in a few moments we landed safely in the middle of the field. . . . .

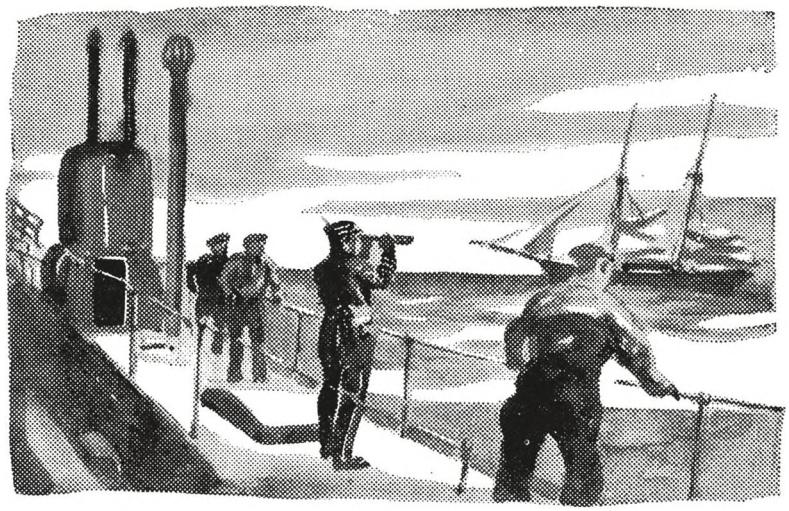
It was none too soon. My arms and legs were quivering from fright and exhaustion, and before the plane could come to a stop, they abruptly gave way and I rolled off on the ground. The tail skid handed me a vicious bump in passing, and I lay there desperately sick, while everything continued to whirl madly around and my ears rang like a set of chimes.

The major in command of the field came driving up to me with his car, and I will never forget the mixture of relief and anger on his face when he picked me up. He took me home, where Father was trying to calm Mother and Frank, both of whom were nearly hysterical. They were so glad to see me alive and all in one piece that I escaped a scolding that day. But my father and the major agreed that if we boys were ever caught on the field again, we were to be marched home, there to receive a sound walloping.

Needless to say, these orders were strictly obeyed for a time, although the flyers patted me on the back and told me I was a "nervy little brat" whenever they saw me around home. However, I had lost all desire to steal any more airplane rides, or even to go aloft as an authorized passenger. In fact, since that day the farthest I have been off the ground was to take the elevator to the top of the Woolworth Tower in order to please some friends of mine who were showing me the sights of New York.

By
Christopher Sheils

One of the strangest of the Great War's episodes on the sea, vividly set forth.



A Strange Meeting

SEVERAL years before the war I shipped aboard the British four-masted barque *Dunstaffnage,* laden with coke and bound from Hamburg to Santa Rosalia in the Gulf of California.

Previous to joining her I had been in schooners in the coasting trade around the British Isles; but as I was still young and had never before been "deep water," my rating aboard was that of ordinary seaman.

At that period the *Dunstaffnage* was, I think, the fourth largest sailing ship afloat, the *Ptosi* and the *Preuser,* two large German ships, and a seven-masted American schooner which turned turtle in the English Channel, and whose name I cannot now recall, each had her beaten by a few hundred tons.

We carried a crew of thirty-four A. B.s and two ordinary seamen. I was ordinary seaman of the starboard watch, and being Irish, I was of course called "Paddy" by all on board. The ordinary seaman in the port watch was a young German named Heinrich Weissman. As our ages were much the same, and as our duties held much in common, he and I became fast friends. He was extremely well educated, and could speak English and French fluently. During the long passage out he grew very confidential, and would often speak to me of his home, his mother and dad, and of the brilliant future they had planned for him. His father was a high official in the German Admiralty, and had sent Heinrich in sail so that he would get a thorough training in seamanship. Before joining the *Dunstaffnage,* however, Heinrich had already served a term in the German navy—principally in underseas craft.

We were one hundred eighty-six days on the trip out. In these days of swift transportation a six-months' passage may seem unbelievably long, but in the windjammers of that period it was nothing at all unusual. As a further sidelight on the lives of those who went down to the sea in the ships at that time, I might mention that the ship's crew themselves had to turn to and discharge their own cargo. This we proceeded to do. The working hours were: turn to at six A. M., work till nine, when we had a half-hour for breakfast; we then worked till twelve-thirty, when we had an hour for dinner; after which we worked till four, when we had a fifteen minutes' spell, during which each man was served a glass of grog; we then worked till six P. M. This was the routine from six A. M. Monday morning till six P. M. on Saturday night. The pay for this killing labor was three pounds per month, about fifty cents a day, while Heinrich and I received the princely sum of thirty shillings a month, or twenty-five cents a day.

Nor was that all. In the British ships of that period, when you signed on the ship's articles, you signed away your liberty for three years, and you could not legally claim a penny of your pay, small as it was, till that time was up, or till you reached the final port of discharge. If you got dissatis-

fied and escaped from the ship before that time was up, the British ship-owner held on to your pay and auctioned your clothes. That was the "freedom of the seas" as it was known to the merchant sailor of that period.

HAVING finished discharging our cargo in Santa Rosalia, we loaded ballast for Newcastle, N. S. W., where we loaded coal for Valparaiso. After leaving Newcastle, Heinrich fell sick of dysentery, and was confined to his bunk for six weeks. During this time I filched many little delicacies from the cabin for him, and performed many little services for him. These acts were nothing in themselves, yet Heinrich was full of gratitude to me for them.

When we reached Valparaiso, he was still sick, although he was around on his feet. Nevertheless the mate insisted that he get down in the hold and help dig out our six-thousand-ton cargo of coal. A few of us went aft and protested that he was in no fit condition to perform such killing labor, but we only got abuse for our pains.

We finished discharging, and loaded saltpeter for Hamburg, and it was a mighty relief to us all when we got headed homewards again. Before we reached Hamburg, Heinrich had given me his address, and we promised to write each other.

The day we paid off I met him at the shipping-office, and he introduced me to his father and mother, who had come to Hamburg to meet him. I have even yet a distinct recollection of the pride in his mother's eyes when she looked at him. His father was a fine figure of a man, and was dressed in a brilliant naval uniform, but as I knew little of German naval affairs, I was unable to discern his rank.

When I paid off, my intentions were undoubtedly good, but the Hamburg of pre-war days offered many temptations to a young sailor with a little money, and who had no objection to seeing the sights. I don't know just exactly what came over me, but after a hectic fortnight ashore, I woke up aboard the full-rigged ship *Celestial Empire*, bound out for San Francisco with a general cargo. My money and clothes were gone, and even the address that Heinrich had written down for me. I had nothing left except the proverbial sheath-knife and a suit of dungarees.

When we reached Frisco I decided to be done with deep-water ships, poor pay and poor food; so the day before the *Celestial Empire* was due to sail, I quietly deserted her. I knocked around the Pacific Coast in various ships for some time, and having saved a little money, I decided on going up for my mate's papers. I passed my exams successfully in Vancouver, and shortly afterward went mate of a ship owned by the Vancouver Island Light and Power Company. It was soon after this that the war started, and like countless others, I followed the excitement. First I went trooping from Montreal; then I went mine-sweeping; then I went back to schooners, in the coasting trade, and here I got all the excitement the heart of man could wish for.

THE pay was poor, and as I had saved a little money, I thought I would sit in on the ship-owning game myself, even if only in a small way. I looked around and finally found a little double topsailed schooner, called the *Eva*, of two hundred tons burden, which just suited me. I refitted her, and as the submarine campaign was then at its height, I had no difficulty in picking up cargoes at what were almost fabulous freights.

I had only Canadian mate's papers, but at that time the British Board of Trade were more interested in getting the cargoes moved than in scrutinizing the qualifications of the men who were taking all the risks in moving them. I knew the coast like a book, was making rapid passages, and had just begun to think that Lady Luck was with me—I was going to be one of the lucky ones who beat the game!

Then one afternoon, when bound to Waterford with a cargo of coal, a periscope suddenly bobbed up on our weather bow. As we were quite unarmed, there wasn't anything we could do, except await the destruction which we knew was soon to follow. In a few minutes the submarine broke the surface close aboard, the conning-tower hatch lifted, and we were ordered to heave to, take to boats and come alongside the submarine. We were on a wind, and therefore had no foresail bent; so we just backed the topsails, swung the only boat we possessed off the hatch, and proceeded alongside the submarine. There were only five of us, and as we were only small fry, I knew the submarine would scarcely waste a torpedo in sinking us. I guessed that it would either be shell-fire or bombs—the method probably being decided by whichever the submarine had the largest supply of.

As we drew up alongside the submarine, I looked up and for the first time caught sight of her commander. His face was haggard and drawn, yet I had a vague recollection of having seen it somewhere before. He was staring intently down at me with a puzzled look on his face. A dozen faces of former shipmates came to my mind, as I tried to recall where I had seen his face before. Then suddenly in a flash it came to me.

"Heinrich!" I shouted, and simultaneously I heard him cry: "Paddy, Paddy!"

In a moment I was shaking him warmly by the hand, while both crews gazed on in amazement. We were both carried away by emotion for a minute, at thus meeting each other in such strange circumstances; but the grim realities of the moment quickly returned. I realized his position, and he realized mine. There was no time to waste in discussing old times, as every moment he remained added to his danger, and I knew it.

"She represents every nickel I possess, Heinrich," I said, waving toward the *Eva,* "but it's all in the game. Go to it!"

"I'm sorry as hell, Paddy!" he said simply, and there was a break in his voice. We shook hands silently, and I slipped back into the boat and rowed away a little distance.

PRESENTLY the submarine glided alongside the schooner. A few sailors climbed aboard and we could see bombs being passed up. Then Heinrich himself went aboard the schooner. In a few minutes the sailors returned, and after a short interval Heinrich came back to the schooner's side and climbed down into the submarine. Shortly thereafter the submarine swung in a short circle and headed for us. As she passed close aboard, I hailed Heinrich, whom I could see in the conning-tower.

"What about towing us in a little toward the land, Heinrich?" I shouted.

"You wont need a tow, Paddy," he called back, and in a few minutes he was submerged.

"The bloody swine have fixed her!" the mate swore. "And if it comes on to blow, they have fixed us too," he added, and spat savagely in the direction where the submarine had become lost to view. It was true that if it came to blow hard, we stood little chance of making land. For a moment I was undecided as to what Heinrich's remark meant. Surely he wasn't callous enough to infer that there was a storm coming, and that presently we wouldn't need a tow, or anything else, for that matter! Yet what else could he have meant?

Five, ten, then fifteen minutes passed, and still the *Eva* floated. The crew were anxious to get started, and try to get as near the land as possible before dark finally set in. Then I made up my mind to know definitely just what they had done.

"I'm going aboard," I said to the mate. "The minute I get my foot on the ladder, sheer off, so that if she does go, she'll only take me with her." He protested strongly, saying it was only a trap. But I had my way, and presently was standing on the *Eva's* deck again.

THE first thing I noticed was a wicked-looking bomb lying on the surface coal of the main hatch. I was undecided for a moment how to act. Then as I looked closer, I saw that the fuse was extinguished; so I grabbed it and hove it over the side. Next I went down the fo'c'stle, and there, nestling beside the pawl-bitt, was another, with its fuse also extinguished. As I carried it gingerly on deck, however, I noticed that its fuse had been cut, because the unburned edge was not singed or frayed. After I hove it overboard, I hurried aft and down into the cabin, and there, in one of the locker seats, another bomb had been placed. As I picked it up and turned to ascend the companionway, I noticed a soiled envelope lying on the cabin table. I knew the bomb was harmless, as its fuse had been cut, too; so I took time to read the penciled note the envelope bore.

Dear Paddy:

There is a war on, but you and I are not at war, Paddy, and another little schooner more afloat is not going to beat the Fatherland. —Heinrich.

That was all. I rushed quickly on deck, dropped the bomb overboard, and signaled the boat to return. When I explained what had happened, they agreed that there was at least one U-boat commander who had a little bit of sentiment and sportsmanship somewhere in his make-up.

I would like to be able to add that my good luck held, and that I continued sailing the *Eva* for the rest of the war without mishap. Unfortunately I can't finish this little experience that way. Two months later I fell afoul of another U-boat off the Longships. But this time it wasn't Heinrich!

The Trapper Trapped

By

Gardner A. Pease

The Biblical "pit that he digged" nearly ended this contributor's life.

ALONE, in one of the wildest, most inaccessible spots to be found in the Cœur d'Alene country of northern Idaho, far from any human habitation other than my home camp, with my left foot tightly clamped between the toothed jaws of a great steel bear-trap! That was the perilous position in which I found myself one spring day some years ago.

One of the worst American game destroyers, a mountain lion, was the primary cause of the predicament in which I found myself. The trapping season being practically over, I had pulled most of my traps with the intention of finishing up and moving out in another week. When returning to my camp from a round of the short line of traps remaining set, I found where a lion had pulled down a deer, eaten his fill and pawed leaves and small twigs over the remainder of the carcass.

Having a natural hatred for the great mountain cats because of their destruction of deer and other game, I never missed a chance of trying for their scalps. Therefore, the following morning I dragged an old bear-trap from under my bunk, slung it over my shoulder, picked up my rifle and a light ax, murmuring, as I sallied forth: "Now to fix a surprise for Mr. Lion!"

Upon arriving at the kill, I found that the trail near by followed along a great log, some four feet in diameter. A spot between this log and a large boulder, where the trail was narrow, I selected for the "set." A trap carefully placed there should capture the lion.

I noticed that the big log was hollow, also that a limb had rotted away, leaving a smooth round hole, just opposite where I wished to set my trap. As the trap was heavy enough to hold a lion under any conditions, I decided to make the chain fast to the log instead of using a drag as is customary. I just slipped the chain through the knot-hole, then cut a six-foot length from a hard dry pole, and taking the stick with me, crawled into the hollow log far enough to reach the chain, which I looped around the pole, wedging it securely, so there was no possibility of its working loose. The strength of a dozen lions pulling from the outside could not break away.

SLIPPING my outside coat from my shoulders, I removed the clamps from one of the pockets and tossed the garment on the end of the log. Then I quickly adjusted the clamps on the springs of the great trap, twisted them down and set the trap. Next, removing the clamps, I stepped over and dropped them back into the coat pocket.

After carefully moving the trap aside, I prepared a bed for it, then placed it in position. Turning away, I gathered an armful of leaves and litter to be used in covering the trap. But as I turned again toward the

trap and endeavored to take a step, I found myself hobbled—one of my buckskin bootlaces had become entangled with a hook on the opposite boot. I staggered, jerked my foot violently, snapping the lace; again I staggered, trying to regain my balance, and I realized with horror that I was falling into the great bear-trap. I tried to jump clear of the deadly machine, but failed. With a sickening snap the great steel jaws closed on my foot.

I cried aloud as full realization of my position flashed through my brain. Of outside help there was no chance whatever: I must manage to free myself, or perish miserably.

FOR a time, stark fear and panic overwhelmed me. I fought the trap as would a wild beast, without sense or reason, tearing at the cold steel with my bare hands, as a trapped wolf would with his teeth. Gasping for breath, dripping with perspiration, I paused. The period of unreasoning panic passed, leaving me shaken and trembling, but sane, able to think. Surely my precarious position demanded head-work if I was to escape. My first thought was of the clamps. They were in my coat pocket ten feet beyond my reach. And all sticks or pieces of brush long enough to be of use were likewise out of reach.

A hurried examination of the imprisoned foot relieved my mind somewhat. A heavy boot and its position in the trap had saved the foot from being crushed. The wide, strong heel was caught close to the lower end of the jaws, holding them apart somewhat, but in spite of this lucky fact the cruel steel-toothed monster gripped my instep crushingly, although the boot saved the flesh from laceration.

I tried to force my hand through the hole in the log, hoping to be able to work the chain loose, but gave it up after scraping most of the skin from the back of my hand. I tried to enlarge the hole with my clasp-knife; the old weather-beaten shell was not more than six inches thick, but it was as hard as ironwood. And in trying to make haste, I snapped the knife-blade from its handle and it disappeared inside of the log.

I pounded the tough steel chain between rocks until my hands were numb, but the chain was hardly marred. I had a goodly supply of matches which I used to the last one trying to set fire to the log after gathering what light litter I could reach. The wood was damp, and refused to burn.

WHILE casting about for other means of deliverance, I thought: "Why, oh, why did I fasten this trap to a stationary object instead of to a drag as is customary? Surely I must have been prompted by an evil genius." With the trap fastened to a drag I could in time work my way to camp, and there, with tools at hand, I'd soon be free.

Vain regrets! Here I was trapped, as I in the past had trapped hundreds of creatures of the wilds. Must I stay here and perish miserably, die by inches, as had some of my victims?

The clamps, the clamps! My only hope, and they were far beyond my reach. Then a thought struck me, and with feverish haste my hands explored my pockets. Thank God, it was there: a silk fishing-line with a hook attached. With trembling fingers I fastened a sliver of rock to the line to give it weight; then I edged along the log toward my coat as far as the trap-chain allowed. Hope was mounting high in my heart; all I need do was to hook the coat and draw it to me. The clamps were in a pocket, and I would soon be free.

My first casts with the line were wild, but at last the hook caught in the collar of the coat, which lay on the log with the skirt hanging down on the off side. Very carefully, with a thumping heart, I pulled on the line. The coat moved, starting to come over the log in response to my steady pull; I dared not jerk or draw quickly, fearing the coat might catch on the rough bark, and I'd loose my hook and also all hope of getting the coat and the treasured clamps.

Inch by inch the coat came over the log; it was just on a balance, about to slide down on my side when the precious clamps (which seemed to represent the difference between life and death to me) slipped from the pocket and dropped down into a narrow space between the log and a boulder, where I could not even see them.

MEANWHILE the pain in my imprisoned foot was becoming more unbearable; and this together with the mental suffering caused by my seemingly hopeless plight, unnerved me. Casting myself down on the ground, I cried like a hurt child.

I am a strong man and have faced death times without number in various ways during my years in the wilds; I'll not say that on these occasions fear was unknown; but I had always met the crisis with a bold front. Never before had I given way to

such weakness as on this occasion when stark terror overwhelmed me; for some unexplainable reason the thought of being trapped like a wolf, there to linger, suffer and die, unmanned me. I crouched close to Mother Earth, muttering: "I wont—I wont lie here and die! I'll kill myself; there's no hope; I'll die and end my misery."

The thought steadied me. Quite calmly I questioned myself—how could it be done quickly? My knife was broken. My ax was firmly imbedded in the end of the log near where I had last used it, and thus far beyond my reach. Lying on the ground ten feet away was the instrument I desired, my rifle.

While lying there eying the gun longingly, my brain was working slowly. Testing and rejecting plan after plan whereby I could get the rifle, finally the thought of wire brought me up with a jerk: there should be some snare wire in my coat pockets, and I drew the garment to me with the line which I had dropped when the clamps slipped from the pocket.

A QUICK search of the coat pockets brought to light but a few short pieces of wire, not enough if all were spliced together to reach the rifle. But there was enough to twist together and make a crude grappling-hook, and a few moments later I had such a hook attached to the silk line and was making casts. After countless trials, each one made with fear in my heart that the hook would catch on something stationary and thus be lost, I succeeded in catching the loading lever, and drew the gun within reach of my hands.

Reclining with my shoulders against the great log, a feeling of lassitude stole over me. Here in my hands was a means of escape; a bullet would be more merciful than the thing of steel gripping my foot.

With an instrument in my hands wherewith to end my suffering, I rested, feeling calm, and peaceful, while idly gazing at the great steel trap which (owing to the position of my leg) was now turned up sidewise, bringing the bottom plate into view.

My eyes rested on the trap, seeing it dimly, as in a dream without consciousness of the fact. Presently my sight became centered on two nuts, one at either end of the bottom plate under each spring, and I realized they were there to hold the lugs (to which the jaws of the trap are hinged) in place.

Dimly the thought came to me: if I only had a wrench I could remove the nuts and free myself!

Hope dies hard. Without my knowledge a tiny spark must have smoldered in my breast, and fanned by a thought of freedom, it came alive, arousing me to a point where I cudgeled my brains, trying to devise some method whereby I could remove the two nuts.

Finally the flicker of hope died. "It couldn't be done without tools." Again my eyes wandered to the trap, to the two nuts. I started violently as the thought came: "Why not shoot them off?" It seemed a chance, for a high-powered rifle-bullet strikes a tremendous blow. Placing the rifle in position, its muzzle within a foot of one of the nuts I pressed the trigger.

My foot received a cruel jerk, but the nut was gone, sheared off clean—and one of the great springs had jumped open! A moment later I had repeated the operation and with a cry of joy I realized that I was free.

THANKS to a good heavy boot, my foot was not seriously injured. With the help of a couple of forked sticks I hobbled to my home camp, where a few days' rest and liberal applications of liniment put me on my feet again.

One only needs add a lingering death to my terrible experience to realize what creatures of the wild must suffer when caught in the most cruel contrivance ever invented—the common steel trap.

Since that well remembered day I have set no steel traps for wild animals, predatory or otherwise, except in such a manner as to kill the catch quickly.

You see, I had literally put myself in the other fellow's place; I know (in part) the suffering of the trapped.

By **Kent Howard**

The Deserter

The dark tale of Casey Jones, who went A. W. O. L. and for a time drew an income in consequence.

THE other day I ran across a package of old letters. There was one in that pile which never fails to amuse me whenever I think of it. I retain it to recall a certain post-war experience in which I was detailed to investigate an odd and rather unusual case of fraud against the Government.

The letter was written late in 1919 by a jealous negro girl to thwart the plans and wreck the happy home of a successful rival. The latter had "done took up" with the "cullud boy" in the case and the two lived a life of such evident prosperity and ease on an income from unknown sources that the forsaken one just couldn't stand it. So she wrote this letter.

For the lack of a better name I shall call the boy Casey Jones. He was too simple and too good-naturedly ignorant to run a hand-car—yet innocently and without criminal intent he engineered one of the neatest and most successful little frauds against Uncle Sam I have yet encountered. Here's the story.

Running down crooks who ran off with truckloads of supplies from the rapidly disappearing army cantonments where I was stationed proved to be rather dead sport—there was too much work involved in identifying cots, bathtubs, and other unmarked articles as Government property.

But the human element in the investigation of the many desertion cases I found intensely interesting and at times unquestionably laughable.

CASEY JONES was a deserter—but he didn't know it! He "suspicioned" that there was something wrong about his Army service, but never having heard of the Articles of War—he wouldn't have recognized them if they had been something good to eat—he lost no sleep worrying about it.

About the time the United States declared war Casey Jones was having his own fight for freedom. His affections were pretty strong for one Annabel, but the latter's rival—a persistent and strong-willed girl—so successfully pressed her case that Casey was worried for fear Annabel might meet with disappointment.

Then the draft came, and Casey went—which simplified the romantic situation for the time being.

Then one evening he returned. It was just the kind of a return one would expect Casey to make—simple and without acclaim. He wandered in, dressed in blue denim, and announced that he was no longer a soldier, although he had been gone but a few weeks.

He told the colored folks of the little community that he guessed Uncle Sam

didn't miss him, and had let him come home—which was virtually the truth. His friends, in their ignorance, accepted him and promptly forgot the incident of his return.

All through the war Casey lived contentedly in his little shack and fought off two desires—one to resist the attentions of the persistent, strong-willed lady, the other to prove his worth to the desiroys Annabel.

His desertion might never have come to light had it not been for a sudden and successful decision in 1919 to become the putative husband of Annabel. Then did the wrath of the woman scorned descend upon him.

LATE one night in the spring of 1920 my sergeant-assistant laid a letter on my desk. The address was scrawled in atrocious handwriting, but after much guesswork I finally discovered the addressee to be: *"the Mr. ofiser in Chg. of The camp."* From the torn flap I noted that "Mr. Officer" had opened it, and the sergeant informed me that our Colonel desired the accusation therein to be looked into.

I removed the inclosed sheet, flipped it open, and attempted with poor success to solve its contents.

Being a whiz at both cipher and script, the sergeant was hugely amused.

"S'matter, Lieutenant?" said he. "Don't you read African?"

"African!" I replied. "Do you?"

"Sure—but this aint African. This is jes plain old honest-to-goodness, American cullud folks' writin'! Listen!"

He read with a chuckle:

"Der Sur—You shudd no Casey jones lef the arme in The war. Unkl Sam Gives his wif Mony evry Month. They Lives At Troy. How Come? Aint it wrong?"

We both laughed.

"I'll bite," said the sergeant. *"Aint* it?"

"We'll run over in the morning," I replied; and this we did.

We arrived at Troy, a small town over the mountains, at eleven A. M. next day.

It was a town of about five hundred population, situated in a wide valley. Being familiar with small towns south of the Mason-Dixon line, I went at once to the local justice of the peace—termed "the Judge." I was reasonably sure he would be able to help me out; and he was.

"Jones—Casey Jones?" He scratched his head and pondered my question.

"Yes, seems to me I remember a Casey Jones. He lives 'cross the valley."

The judge was a true son of the hospitable South. He insisted that we lunch with him first, then look for Casey Jones.

"Do you know anyone who would know of Government funds arriving in town?" I asked during the meal.

"Mr. Stiven, the banker," replied the Judge.

After lunch we went to Mr. Stiven, who proved to be a find.

"Why, yes," he said without hesitation. "Mrs. Annabel Jones has been receiving fifty dollars a month from the Government for over a year. I've often wondered why, but Uncle Sam usually knows his business, so I never questioned its being all right."

"Has she a husband?" I asked.

He laughed.

"A husband? Oh, yes, Casey Jones is a model husband—he never bothers her or anyone else."

WE set out for the shack across the valley. It turned out to be a two-by-four affair made of new boards, and situated in a small clearing among the pines. Smoke curled from the rusty pipe-elbow sticking out of one side.

The sergeant went around through the woods in back—he was quite a sleuth—a gesture I rather opposed as being unnecessary. But he was right.

The judge rapped. Nobody answered. We looked in through the open door. The single room was empty save for a stove, a table, and a rickety iron bed. However, when we went around to the back, here came the sergeant, propelling an inoffensive and comical-looking little darky whom the judge identified as Casey himself.

He seemed badly worried to see men in uniform, and more so at the presence of the judge.

"Naw, suh," he replied to our question as to his wife's whereabouts, "Ah aint seen huh in mos' a week."

As he watched us his eyes rolled from one to the other till the whites looked like glazed doorknobs imbedded in a bucket of tar. He shivered—a light snow had fallen and the ground was covered with slush. So we went inside.

"Whut does yo aim to do wif me?" he ventured affrightedly, backing to the wall. He was funny—also pathetically ignorant. Finally we got him to tell us where his wife Annabel was. He said she worked at the

home of a doctor in a near-by town. But he would not talk about himself.

Taking him along, we went to the doctor's house, where after much persuasion we got both their stories.

"Yassuh," Annabel agreed, "Ah been gittin' fifty dollahs fo' nigh onto a yeah. Whut fo? Lawsy, Ah dunno! De check done sayed somethin' lak's if it wuz a 'lotment—somethin' lak dat."

"An allotment," I thought. "That must be insurance." But that only made the case more obscure than ever.

"Casey,"—I turned to the colored boy, —"tell me the truth. Were you ever in the Army?"

"Naw suh," he lied, shifting uneasily.

"Co'se yo wuz, honey," corrected Annabel. "Tell de truf!"

With her help we learned that he had gone to an Eastern camp where he found Army life a hard and terrifying experience after his simple existence on the farm. He became extremely homesick. And how those Army sergeants did lay it on to him! The crap-shooting line sergeants took his money, the mess sergeant always hooked him for K. P., the supply sergeant wouldn't give him any clothes, and the first sergeant—to put it in Casey's own words: "Lawdy, Jedge, dat man done wu'ked me fum mawnin' ontil night lak's if Ah wuz a hawse. Ah lak to died, hones' truf!"

So after being buffeted around camp for six weeks and being issued nothing but blue denim in lieu of a uniform, Casey had decided to come home, where he would find a little sympathy. He was a home boy anyhow, he said. Of course it was easy enough to walk out of camp and go home.

CASEY stuck to this story, so we were no better off than before. That didn't explain the allotment and income received by Annabel. He declared he "didn't make no 'lotment Ah knowed of."

The judge said he knew both of them and would vouch for their appearance when we returned. So I went home and wrote a letter myself.

The answer came directly. By putting two and two together I got a big laugh out of the result, and the real truth about Casey's homecoming; I also found where Annabel got her money.

Casey's tale about the hard camp life was probably the truth.

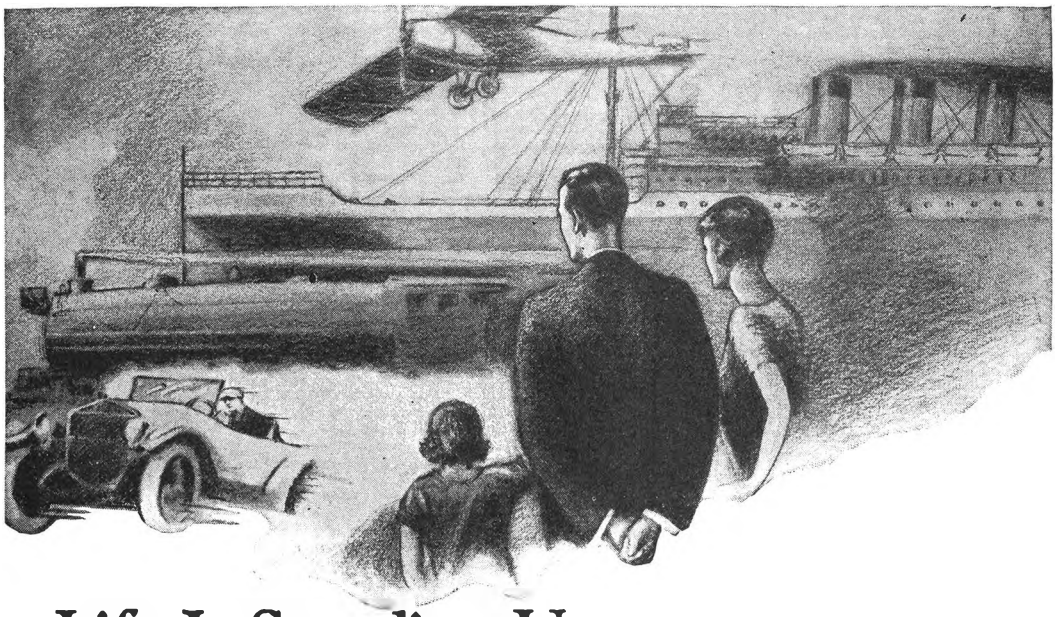
It will be remembered that all soldiers were urged to take out Government insurance; when the Captain asked Casey Jones who his beneficiary was, Casey had given the name of Annabel. Of course he didn't have any idea what it was all about.

THEN the company went to New York and embarked for France. The transport anchored somewhere in the river near the Battery awaiting the rest of the convoy. Casey got a good look at the heaving Atlantic, and with all the terrifying talk of submarines found it too much for his peaceable and home-loving disposition. During the night he slipped overboard unseen, swam ashore, and came home.

The convoy left the next day.

Casey had been carefully checked when he came aboard. When the ship arrived at Brest, roll was called and a search revealed him to be missing. A report was then rendered which read: *"Missing at sea en route to France."* So the Government started paying Annabel the ten thousand dollars of his insurance in fifty-dollar monthly installments.

Can you beat that? To all appearance Casey Jones was dead; yet he and his wife were living on an income—the income of his insurance!



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STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912

OF THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE, published monthly at Chicago, Illinois, for April 1, 1929.

State of Illinois, } ss.
County of Cook. }

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Charles M. Richter, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of the Blue Book Magazine and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publisher, The Consolidated Magazines Corporation.....1912, North American Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

Editor, Edwin Balmer.....North American Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

Managing Editor, None.

Business Manager, Charles M. Richter.....North American Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

2. That the owners are: (Give names and addresses of individual owners, or, if a corporation, give the name of the corporation and the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of the total amount of stock.)

Louis Eckstein .....North American Bldg., Chicago, Ill.
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Benjamin J. Rosenthal.....North American Bldg., Chicago, Ill.
Stephen Hexter .....North American Bldg., Chicago, Ill.
Estate of A. R. Stumer.....North American Bldg., Chicago, Ill.
Charles M. Richter.....North American Bldg., Chicago, Ill.
Ralph K. Strassman.....420 Lexington Ave., New York City

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders, owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of the stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company, but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest, direct or indirect, in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

CHARLES M. RICHTER, Business Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 21st day of March, 1929.

[Seal.] LOUIS H. KERBER, JR.,
Notary Public.

(My commission expires Jan. 15, 1933.)

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