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Adventure

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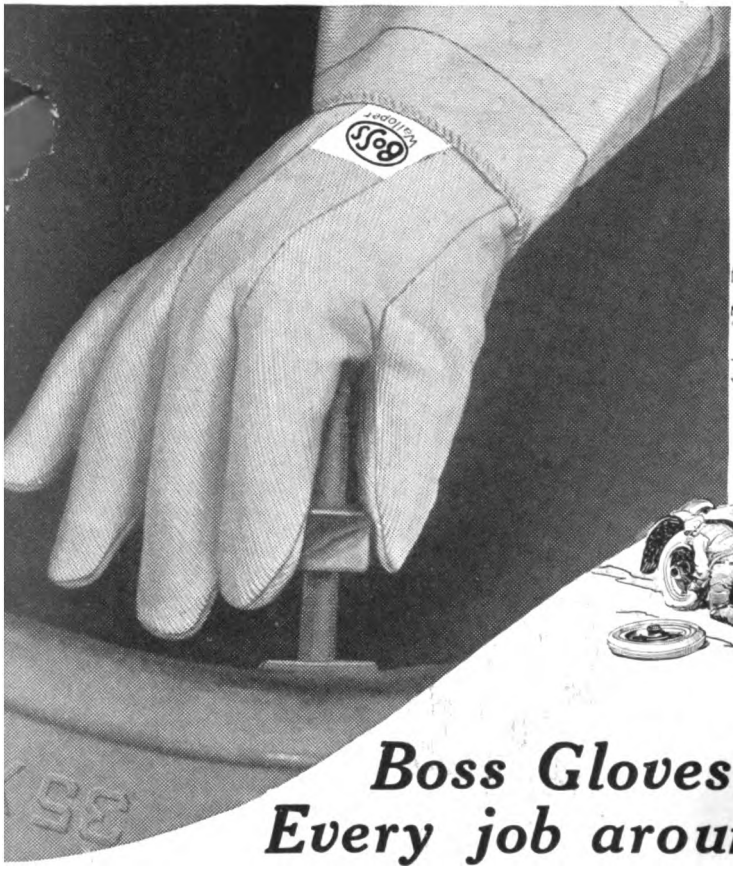

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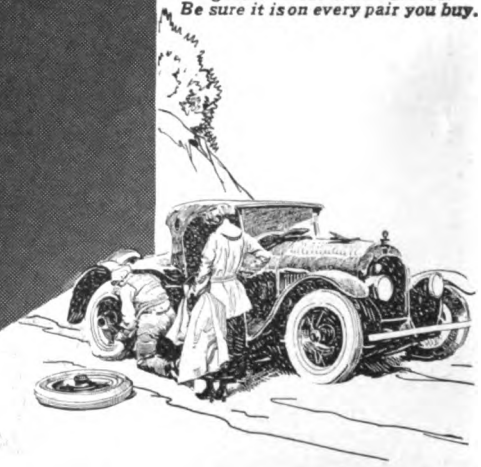

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BOSS WORK GLOVES

Millions of People Can Write Stories and Photoplays and Don't Know It!

THIS is the startling assertion recently made by E. B. Davison of New York, one of the highest paid writers in the world. Is his astonishing statement true? Can it be possible there are countless thousands of people yearning to write, who really *can* and simply *haven't found it out?* Well, come to think of it, most anybody can *tell* a story. Why can't most anybody *write* a story? Why is writing supposed to be a rare gift that few possess? Isn't this only another of the Mistaken Ideas the past has handed down to us? Yesterday nobody dreamed man could fly. To-day he dives like a swallow ten thousand feet above the earth and laughs down at the tiny mortal atoms of his fellow-men below! So Yesterday's "impossibility" is a reality to-day.

"The time will come," writes the same authority, "when millions of people will be writers—there will be countless thousands of playwrights, novelists, scenario, magazine and newspaper writers—they are coming, coming—a whole new world of them!" And do you know what these writers-to-be are doing now? Why, they are the men—armies of them—young and old, now doing mere clerical work, in offices, keeping books, selling merchandise, or even driving trucks, running elevators, street cars, waiting on tables, working at barber chairs, following the plow, or teaching schools in the rural districts; and women, young and old, by scores, now pounding typewriters, or standing behind counters, or running spindles in factories, bending over sewing machines, or doing housework. Yes—you may laugh—but these are The Writers of To-morrow.

For writing isn't only for geniuses as most people think. *Don't you believe the Creator gave you a story-writing faculty just as he did the greatest writer?* Only maybe you are simply "bluffed" by the thought that you "haven't the gift." Many people are simply afraid to try. Or if they do try and their first efforts don't satisfy, they simply give up in despair, and that ends it. They're through. They never try again. Yet if, by some lucky chance, they had first learned the simple rules of writing, and then given the imagination free rein, they might have astonished the world!

But two things are essential in order to become a writer. First, to learn the ordinary principles of writing. Second, to learn to exercise your faculty of Thinking. By exercising a thing you develop it. Your Imagination is something like your right arm. The more you use it the stronger it gets. The principles of writing are no more complex than the principles of spelling, arithmetic, or any other simple thing that anybody knows. Writers learn to piece together a story as easily as a child sets up a miniature house with his toy blocks. It is amazingly easy after the mind grasps the simple "know how." A little study, a little patience, a little confidence, and the thing that looks hard turns out to be just as easy as it seemed difficult.

Thousands of people imagine they need a fine education in order to write. Nothing is farther from the truth. The greatest writers were the poorest scholars. People rarely learn to write at schools. They may get the principles there, but they *really learn to write* from the great wide, open, boundless Book of Humanity! Yes, seething all around you, every day, every hour, every minute, in the whirling vortex—the flotsam and the jetsam of Life—even in your own home, at work or play, are endless incidents for stories and plays—a wealth of material, a world of things happening. Every one of these has the seed of a story or play in it. Think! If you went to a fire, or saw an accident, you could come home and tell the folks all about it. Unconsciously you would describe it all very realistically. And if somebody stood by and wrote down exactly what you said, you'd be amazed to find your story would sound just as interesting as many you've read in magazines or seen on the screen. Now you will naturally say, "Well, if Writing is as simple as you say it is, why can't *I* learn to write?" *Who says you can't?*

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ADVENTURE
September 3rd, 1921

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Volume 30
Number 5

An Amazingly Easy Way to Earn $10,000 a Year

Let Me Show You How FREE

TO the average man the $10,000-a-year job is only a dream. Yet today there are a surprising number of men earning five figure salaries who were merely dreaming of them a short while ago. The secret of their success should prove a startling revelation to every ambitious man who has ever aspired to get into the $10,000-a-year class.

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Earned $1,800 in Six Weeks
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Contents for First September, 1921, Issue

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(*Continued from preceding page*)

LEFT behind as hostages in the jungles of the Orinoco, Sir Walter Raleigh's scrivener and map-maker fearlessly pry into the mysteries of the strange new world. The Golden Mountain—the Valley of Monsters—El Dorado—the Island of the Comely Amazons—and the terrible headless warriors of Ewaipanomaia—lure them into amazing adventures.

"THE OTHER SIDE OF BEYOND," a complete novel by Stephen Chalmers, in the next issue.

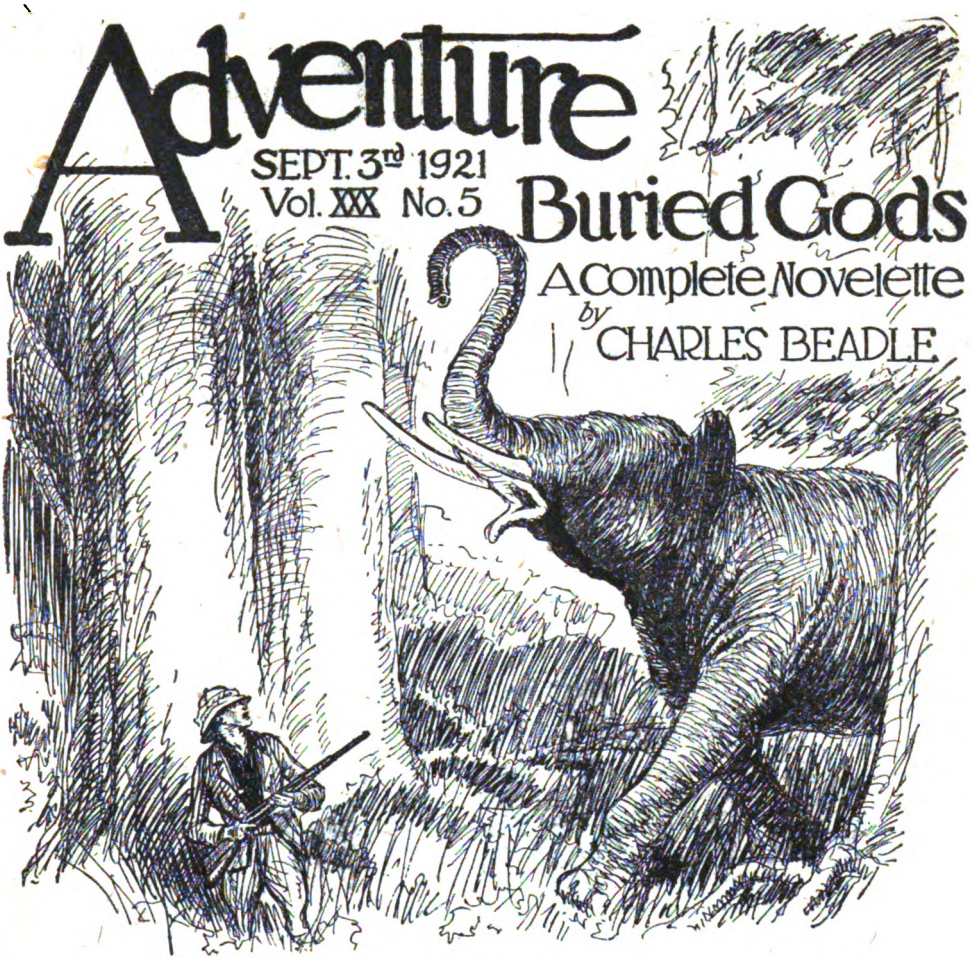
Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

Adventure
SEPT. 3rd 1921
Vol. XXX No. 5

Buried Gods

A Complete Novelette

by CHARLES BEADLE



Author of "The Alabaster Goddess," "The Christman," etc.

THE Mombasa-Kisumu express sneezed and coughed up the steep gradient near the summit of El Bergon. On each of the small platforms of the five coaches were whites, the men in terai hats and shirt sleeves, and the women in lawn.

On the edge of the roof of the second car was seated a young man in a solar helmet and khaki whose clear-cut lips in the clean-shaven face were set aggressively as if he were determined to register in his mind every sight of the trip through a country in which apparently the Bronx Zoo had cut loose. Passing through the dense forest around the Highlands, little was to be seen; yet any moment a glimpse might likely be caught of elephant, a fleeing koodoo or possibly a rhino prepared to dispute the passage of the other armor-clad monster.

As they snorted through a cutting and began to gather way on a short straight-away, there appeared in a clearing in the forest a blue glint in the sun, and a rhythmic panting was heard.

"I say, Beffert," called out a young English official on the platform beneath, "this is Macnamara's place. You'd better get your traps ready. They'll pull up for a moment, and you can hop off."

Dorsay Beffert slung himself down and yanked a Wolsey valise and a grip from the interior. They approached a small siding stacked with timber and slowed up before a sawmill worked by an oil engine beneath

"Buried Gods," copyright, 1921, by Charles Beadle.

a corrugated-iron roof some forty yards away. On higher ground were three shacks nestling against the deep blue of the forest edge.

After hurried good-bys Dorsay clambered down the car-step clutching his guns as the train slowed down, dropped his baggage and jumped off.

The equatorial sun was more than hot. A Wolsey valise packed with blankets is heavy. But the white men working at the mill showed not the slightest interest in the stranger, whom they must have seen alight.

"Well, I guess Macnamara will send a boy along," muttered Dorsay, and set out.

Beneath the iron roof, three white men and several natives manipulated the whirring circular saws in an atmosphere of heat and oil. They looked up at him as he approached. A young man said cheerily—

"Good morning!"

"Good morning," returned Dorsay a little bewilderedly, looking first at a tallish man with drooping mustaches in khaki slacks, and then at the other, a small man in soiled corduroys with a short pipe stuck in the nest of a scrubby beard who looked like a bad-tempered Scotch terrier. Dorsay turned to the most respectable man and said tentatively, "Dr. Macnamara?"

The man jerked his head toward the disreputable little man with the pipe. Dorsay repeated the inquiry. The sharp eyes looked up at him, and he nodded. Slightly annoyed, Dorsay tendered a letter. The doctor glanced at it and thrust it in his pocket with a gesture which did not conceal irritation.

"All right. Look around. Tiffin ten minutes," he growled, and went on pushing a log into the teeth of a saw.

Dorsay hesitated, annoyed and puzzled by the abrupt manner of a man from whom as a doctor and a friend of an uncle he had expected at least common courtesy if not a welcome. He caught the eye of the young man, who winked. Dorsay went over to him, intending to ask for some one to fetch his baggage; but:

"If the fellow's so darned sore about it I'll go back," he thought; but the knowledge that there was not a down train for two days complicated matters.

He glanced again at the doctor, who was working and smoking as if he had never seen or heard of him. The man in the khaki slacks smiled dourly and said—

"Jolly hot work, what?"

Dorsay agreed and began to ask conversational questions. He heard the little doctor suddenly bawl at some one in the native lingo, and, looking around, saw two natives carrying his baggage. Immediately afterward a steam whistle blew; and the doctor, walking across, stopped the engine, put on his coat, and said, "Come along."

"Crazy," Dorsay muttered to himself.

The little man led him in silence across the clearing to the center shack, which was evidently the mess-hut. In the corner was a basin and towels.

"Wash," said the doctor, and stood aside.

While obeying this mandate Dorsay politely tried to break this extraordinary taciturnity, but the replies elicited were a grunted, "yes" or "no."

Two Australians who had been working in the forest—a short, dark fellow and a medium-sized, fair man—came in, and they —Dorsay, the doctor and the two whites whom Dorsay had met at the mill—all sat down to lunch. Beyond a few curt sentences to the newcomers about tree-felling the little doctor spoke scarcely a word throughout the meal.

The man with the drooping mustaches—who, Dorsay learned, was the doctor's brother—seemed faintly amused at everything. The meal ended, the doctor strode back to the mill after a curt, "See you at dinner."

TO FILL up time and to avoid the doctor until he apparently felt fit to receive a guest, Dorsay accepted an invitation to go into the forest to watch the Australians' operations.

"Been here long?" remarked Dorsay conversationally as they walked.

"About two years," said Simpson, the fair man; "but Dorky here, he's an old-timer. Ten years, ain't it?"

"Yes, and a ruddy 'ole it is," grumbled his partner, Dorkin, who had never lost his Sydney accent. "If I could only lie me bloomin' 'ands on a pile me for 'ome and booty."

Dorsay looked at him.

"Queer kind of a man, the doctor, isn't he?" he continued.

"Bit off his nut," said Simpson. "Been here too long. But he's all right to everybody 'cept himself."

"Might make a mint of money outer this

outfit, but he won't. Won't answer letters. If anybody wants any timber they have to come or send personally.

"He's known from Uganda to the Coast. Came out here about twenty years ago with Lord Wintercomb as his private doctor and wouldn't go back. He's been right up in the interior. Had a —— of a time. Got a touch of the sun, I reckon; but he's all right."

Up a narrow track in the dense forest they came upon a bunch of natives who hauled the logs down to the mill. Stark naked they were, and as dark as sepia.

"Kavirondo from the Lake," said Simpson. "Black fellows around here—that is, out in the open—won't do a stroke of work. Never would. Masai, y'know. Scrap like ——; them and the Wakikuyu played old Harry for years in the early days."

"Oh, yes; guess I saw some of 'em coming up the line," said Dorsay. "Tall fellows, stark, with yellow ocher and white painted on 'em. Is that one?" he added, indicating a tall native who had suddenly emerged from a wall of undergrowth.

"No; that's Wondorobo, a hunting tribe. They don't seem to have any proper village. Just wander about through the forest."

Dorsay eyed the man interestedly. He seemed a finer specimen than usual of the African; slender, tall, graceful in his carriage and with what appeared a wild, amused smile on his lips which were not very negroid. He stopped to speak to the Australian lumberman.

"Says he's got some good news for the doctor," said Simpson. "Probably spotted some elephant. Not supposed to shoot without a license, but about fifty square miles of this stuff——" he waved a hand at the almost impenetrable jungle—"belongs to him; and he don't care a ——!"

"Oh, Lordy, what luck!" exclaimed Dorsay. "Wonder if he'll take me along?"

"Mebbe—if he happens to feel good and cottons to you. But take my tip; don't ask him. If you do he'll refuse."

As the native talked, Dorsay noticed an oblong tiny packet swinging from the man's neck by a small chain made of steel links.

"Is that a trade chain?" he asked.

"No. A tribe subject to the Masai make 'em and their spears. Beauties, aren't they? I've heard that they are descendants of people who used to make chain mail for the Abyssinians."

"Ask him if he wants to sell it," urged Dorsay. "It's the first like it I've seen."

"He says no," replied Simpson, " 'cos the charm is very powerful."

"What! That dirty, filthy packet thing on the end? Rot. Tell him I'll give him a dollar—I mean five rupees—for it."

"That's no good. He doesn't know what money is. Have to offer trade goods."

"Well— Say, I'm crazy to have that chain. Look here, I'll give him the wrist watch. Will he know what that is?"

"But it's far too much, man."

"Oh, it isn't up to much. Steel, but she goes well; and she's got a phosphorescent face. That'll amuse him."

While Simpson talked the native eyed the proffered watch, bent and listened to the ticking, grinned, and took off the chain.

"Ask him where he got it."

"Says he took it off an enemy he killed," reported Simpson. "But you mustn't believe everything they tell you."

Amusedly Dorsay left him futilely trying to buckle the watch on his wrist.

"Pouf! It stinks like a skunk!" Dorsay exclaimed as he examined the charm.

"What do they make these charms of?" he inquired, putting it in his pocket.

"Darned if I know," said Simpson,

Dorsay spent the afternoon with the two lumbermen who worked on contract for the doctor so that they did not mind his eccentric methods of doing business. The heat in the jungle was not so intense as Dorsay had imagined it would be, for there was very little moisture; and, being some six thousand feet up in the air, the climate was rare and cool; only the direct rays of the equatorial sun were no less fierce.

Here right on the line of the equator the sun drops almost as suddenly as a shooting star and night comes like a cold hand, making a warm jacket appreciated. At dinner the little doctor was still morosely silent.

After the coffee, when it seemed the custom for everybody to disperse to his quarters and Dorsay was wondering where he was to sleep, the little man said—

"Come and have a grog, young man."

HE LED him across to the other shack, which was divided into two compartments, the first a kind of office, and the inner a bedroom in which was roaring a great fire of logs. An extra camp-bed had been made up, on which was Dorsay's valise already opened out.

As silently as before, the doctor produced a bottle and glasses, and, thrusting some Indian cigars before his guest, lounged before the fire and appeared to fall into a reverie. Dorsay sipped his liquor and began to grow uncomfortable in the presence of this mute image.

Not knowing what to do, he began to fidget with the chain and essayed a question regarding native charms. To his surprize the doctor blinked at him in the light of the fire like a terrier on a rug, and, without preamble, launched into a most discursive mood, describing East Africa and his adventures.

Interested in the story, Dorsay forgot the charm until some hours later the doctor, noticing it in his hand, asked him where he had gotten it.

"Yours is probably merely some leaves from a sacred tree—if it's Wondorobo—giving keen sight to the hunter."

The expert's opinion somehow depreciated the value of the purchase in Dorsay's mind; and, prompted by an idea, he tore off the wrapping. The doctor, reading the reaction in his guest's mind, watched him amusedly. Inside the outer filthy rag was a skin covering, and within that was wrapped what appeared to be another piece of rag, fairly clean.

"Good Lord, what is it?" he ejaculated as he smoothed out in the palm of his hand what was evidently a piece of cloth torn from a shirt with dark stains upon it.

"Oh," said the doctor casually, "probably some part of the clothes of some murdered white which they think will give the wearer the power of a white. They think, you know, that whatever belongs to you is part of the soul, and consequently——"

"But there's writing on it—in blood!" exclaimed Dorsay. "Look!"

He spread out the remnant closer to the light of the fire.

"Look! 'Mount Elgon—help—buried—' What's that word? And this?"

"Let me see," said the doctor quietly.

He gazed at the message anew.

"Can't see. Get a light."

He rose, lighted a lamp, and flattened out the rag on the table.

"That's 'Mount Elgon—help—buried' right enough. Now, what's buried? The others are indecipherable."

"What d'you think's buried?" demanded Dorsay.

"Ivory probably. There's much buried ivory all over the country."

"But why should any one——"

"Blood. Nothing else to write with. Possibly dying."

"Can't make it out," persisted Dorsay. "'Mount Elgon,'" he repeated slowly, "'help—buried;' something about 'live' and 'gods'—and written in blood. What on earth can it mean? Where is 'Mount Elgon?'"

"To the northwest about a hundred miles."

"By ——, doctor," Dorsay exclaimed, looking up, "I'm going to find out what it does mean!"

"I shouldn't, young man. It's a dangerous country there. It's not opened up. Several have gone up there, but few ever come back. Probably this fellow was one."

"All the more reason to find out," persisted Dorsay. "Perhaps the ivory, or whatever it is, is still there."

"Possibly, and possibly not," returned the doctor, yawning. "I'm going to turn in. D'you want anything? Another drink? No? Well, good night then."

But half the night Dorsay stared into the flickering fire, clutching the mysterious message in his hand.

II

DORSAY was awakened by a boy with the coffee. The chain he found wound about his wrist as if symbolical of his determination not to relinquish the idea evoked by the message in the charm. Through the window the hard stars were paling.

Resentfully he eyed the stocky outline of the doctor pulling on his pants. The doctor grunted some unintelligible greeting and went out. By the time Dorsay had hastily dragged on his clothes and followed into the other room the day had come.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed. "Snow!"

For the clearing and the shack roofs were gleaming white beneath them as the sun shot above the trees as if hauled rapidly by stage mechanism.

"Hoar-frost every night," snapped the doctor, slopping in a basin. "Let me look at your charm," he added as he threw the water out of the door.

The rays of the mounting sun confirmed the previous night's discovery. The rag

was undoubtedly a portion torn from a shirt of striped cotton such as was sold in whites' stores. Evidently the message had been written with some blunt instrument, possibly a piece of stick, and the blood had soaked into the material like ink upon blotting-paper, but the words "Mount Elgon—help—buried—" were readable.

The rest was utterly indecipherable—a mere blob of stains and chunks of congealed blood except for one word which appeared to be "goods" or "gods."

"H'm," grunted the doctor, "some poor fool who doesn't know Africa's greed."

Vaguely startled by such words from the little man, Dorsay stared at him. The bright eyes twinkled like a terrier's at the sight of a bone.

"Come 'long; breakfast."

"But this?" said Dorsay, indicating the bloody message in his hand.

The doctor's black muzzle seemed to grin.

"Make a nice curio for you to take home."

"But, say, d'you really mean you're not going to do anything about it?"

"Pff!" snorted the doctor. "I've got my mill to look after. No time for wildcat schemes. Show you elephant tomorrow."

Dorsay looked at him, conscious of rising anger at what he considered the lack of sporting instinct in Doctor Macnamara.

"Thanks," he said a trifle stiffly, "but I sha'n't have time. I'll take the down train tomorrow, for I'm going after this."

"You don't realize what you're taking on," snapped the doctor.

"Probably," replied Dorsay. "That's what will make it more interesting."

"Probably make another who won't come back, young man."

"Still more interesting," retorted Dorsay.

At breakfast he could not resist showing the message to the others, hoping that some one would volunteer to go along. But the doctor's brother merely smiled amusedly, and the other deprecated the possibility of ever locating the site of the supposed buried ivory.

"Nothing to work on," said Simpson. "My ——, Elgon's as big as Tasmania, and the Turkana won't stand monkeying with. 'Sides Government won't let you go in."

Dorsay spent the whole day mooning about the shacks and wandering on the verge of the forest. Sometimes he sat in the shade staring at the blood-stained rag as if trying to extract more information, at other times day-dreaming of the tragedy or adventure that lay behind.

He couldn't undertand how any man with red blood could refuse such an opportunity. True, he didn't know all the difficulties ahead, but that's where the fun lay, to his thinking. The chief trouble as he saw it was the lack of the native speech. He would have to hire an interpreter. Anyway he would return to the Travelers' Club at Nairobi to see if he couldn't hunt up some one sporting enough to go in with him.

At dinner he might have been accused of sulking. Within, excitement was burning so intensely that he could not discuss the matter in cold blood; resentment, too, paralyzed his tongue. In the evening the doctor, after preparing his guns for the morrow, launched again into his discursive mood—which developed apparently only after sundown—but he did not mention elephant.

Next morning the doctor aroused Dorsay.

"Come on, young man; time to start."

"But there isn't any train until nine-thirty, is there, doctor?" inquired Dorsay.

"H'm. So you're going down then, eh?"

"Sure I am. Haven't I said so? I'm very much obliged for your hospitality, doctor," continued Dorsay stiffly. "And I'm sorry I can't stay on, but— Well, when I've made up my mind I kinder got to go through with it."

"H'm, I see. Obstinate young cub, eh? Same stock as your uncle."

"Sure, I hope I am."

"Good-by and good luck, my boy. If you get through alive come and tell me what you found. Good-by."

AFTER a tight grip of the hand the little doctor was gone. Conscious of a renewed sense of disappointment that the doctor hadn't changed his mind at the last moment, Dorsay lay staring at the embers of the fire, dreaming. Pity too, he thought; for apparently there wasn't another man as good as the little doctor in the whole country who knew as much about natives.

At breakfast Dorkin asked to have a look at the blood message again, and this time evinced more interest than before, poring over it for some time in the full rays of the sun together with his partner, with whom he had evidently been discussing the affair.

"—— queer, that's wot it is," said Dorkin. "But it ain't worth tiking up, Jack. Good luck to yer, mister."

"Thanks," said Dorsay, wondering vaguely why such a decent chap as Simpson seemed should be partners with such a shifty-looking specimen. At 9:45 he boarded the down train, and by the evening he was back in the Travelers' Club.

Macnamara had said the Turkana district, which was nominally British, was not under administration and had scarcely ever been explored, and moreover was forbidden territory to any save Government-organized expeditions. Therefore it behooved him to be careful how he approached any one.

He obtained surveyors' section maps of the country to the south and west of Mount Elgon, which he found to be about ten thousand feet high but with very long slopes. The western side was in the Uganda Protectorate and the eastern and southern in British East Africa, mainly distinguished by the large blank spaces.

He began to hunt about for some old settler from whom he would extract information on which to base the nominal reason for his trip. In the meanwhile he would quietly get together provisions and seek a reliable interpreter. He already had a big-game license, so that there was nothing suspicious in these maneuvers.

Four days after he had been back, a farmer named Ferney, whom he had met before and who had been in the country for some ten years or more, came into town. Dorsay had rather liked him before, and in him he decided to confide. On the veranda after lunch Ferney listened attentively to the little that Dorsay had to relate and interestedly examined the message.

"You say the Wondorobo you bought this from said he took it from an enemy killed in battle? Well, all that sounds pretty plausible. The enemy might have been one of the Turkana or allied tribes. They would make a charm out of this sort of thing.

"But I'm afraid you're on a wild-goose chase, my lad. The fellow who wrote this is probably dead, and what's the use of it? There's no clue at all. Elgon! My ——, you might as well say East Africa and finish with it. If you'll take my advice forget all about it. Besides the Turkana country is closed by the Government."

"Darn the Government" muttered Dorsay to himself. "All these darn Englishmen seem scared to their eye teeth of the government."

He retired feeling somewhat damped but nevertheless doggedly determined. He had succeeded in securing a cook, a Mohammedan, a reputable *shikari*, and an interpreter whose villainous face he did not like at all. However there was nothing to be done but to go straight ahead. He had another man in mind whom he determined to try later.

"There must be something to it," he pondered sleepily.

When the light was pouring in at the window he thought he was still dreaming for a familiar voice was saying:

"I say, wake up young man—Beffert!"

Beside his bed stood the little doctor, grinning at him.

"Hullo, doctor," said Dorsay drowsily. "You've come down?"

"Yes, I'm coming in with you if you're still game."

"What! You will! That's great! But why——"

"Oh that ruddy mill bores me," returned the doctor, "so I decided to come on. Anyway," he added, "you'd never get through yourself; and I owe your uncle——"

"Cut that out, please!" exclaimed Dorsay, bridling. "If I can't run——"

"That's all right, my boy. Have it any way you like. Get your bath and we'll talk plans over. You haven't been yapping all over the town I hope?"

THE doctor's explanation of why he had changed his mind never was satisfactorily explained—unless it be by his actions before and since; for times out of number had he solemnly declared to the countryside at large that he had given up the trail for good, was now to be depended upon as a practising physician, a farmer, a storekeeper, a lumberman—always with the result that, if some one didn't tempt him back, he took care to tempt himself.

However, under his experienced control the *safari* was quickly got together.

The quickest approach to the Elgon country was to go up to Kisumu on the lake and start from there, but the doctor, who preferred to travel with donkeys as being easier to control and feed than porters, proposed to visit property he had in the northern Wakikuyu country, which was almost on the trail from Nairobi, where the animals could be obtained. Besides a shooting-party at

Nairobi going to Kisumu to start for the Eldama Ravine would be open to suspicion, and the Government officials had quite as much dislike for the eccentric doctor as he had for them. Anyway, he said, there was no particular hurry.

The doctor, as leader of the expedition forbade any elephant-shooting.

However a week out, fate, through the medium of Mahomet, decided that Dorsay's thirst should be slaked. Mahomet, now cook, who had at one time been a syce and seemingly nourished an ambition to be a *shikari*, expressed in constant appeals to be allowed to accompany them upon their hunt for buck. One afternoon in a district where elephant were exceedingly plentiful the doctor and his Wondorobo hunter and Dorsay and the *shikari* set out as usual.

About a mile from camp when they were walking through open forest country about a hundred yards apart there came suddenly the report of a rifle followed by the trumpeting of an elephant near to Dorsay.

Wondering from whom the shot could possibly have come, he ran in the direction. As he rounded a great clump of trees he saw in an open glade fifty feet in front of him a slight figure in khaki fleeing madly just ahead of a charging elephant. Vaguely recollecting instructions, he aimed at the base of the uplifted trunk and fired.

As the great beast swerved aside, trumpeting ferociously, Mahomet had the sense to dart away to the right into thick bush. Standing in the middle of the open glade, the elephant winded Dorsay and charged.

As the brute seemed towering above him, Dorsay fired, realizing to his dismay that he had aimed at the mighty chest instead of the brain through the mouth.

He was seized and dashed to the ground. The elephant appeared to be falling upon him. He felt the contracting of the stomach muscle in horror of the coming impact, and wriggled. The wriggle and his slenderness saved his life, for the tusks passed on either side of his body. Then, possibly thinking that he had slain his enemy, the elephant rose, and picking up the body, cast it into a bush.

Stunned by the fall, Dorsay lay on his back, staring at the treetops. Then, the excitement spurring him, he scrambled to his feet and ran through the bush in time to see his quarry, who was leaning against a tree, sink on to the earth.

His second shot had passed through the joint of the foreleg into the lungs.

III

DORSAY had had no bones actually broken. He escaped with only some severe contusions which forced him to forego the hunt and to travel in a hammock for some days.

On the fourth day he had wanted to walk, but the doctor insisted that he had better rest a while longer. However, the doctor was proved wrong by a rhinoceros, which, charging the caravan, put the porters to flight and revealed to Dorsay that his tree-climbing powers had not in the least been impaired nor his injuries so serious as the doctor said they were.

They were now come to where the broken-forested country gives way to rolling plains which eventually run into the waterless tracts of the Nyasso Nyro.

Here, in the midst of a fairly thickly populated district, was the doctor's farm, as he called it, which, like so many East African farms of the period, consisted merely of virgin bush and grazing-land on which were some of the doctor's cattle in charge of a neighboring chief. For the benefit of Dorsay, El Hakkim—as the natives called the doctor—arranged a dance, and an impressive sight it was with the drums going and some thousand warriors, whose naked bodies gleamed with grease and paint, dancing and screaming as they brandished their spears with blades twice as long as bayonets.

They rested there for three days while the doctor paid off the porters, arranged for the donkeys, and selected a dozen warriors whom to their delight he armed with Martini rifles. However, an unexpected delay was occasioned by the chief wizard who, making magic to consult the oracle, reported that the venture was doomed to disaster. Instantly the dozen warriors recanted.

Dorsay, little used to the native, was naturally rather intolerant, particularly when the doctor insisted upon the gravity of the case inasmuch as they might well have to find soldiers elsewhere.

Talking the matter over that night by the camp-fire, the doctor admitted that he was somewhat puzzled; for, as an old hand at the game, he had not forgotten to tickle

the palm of the witch-doctor so that he could suitably propitiate the spirits.

There was to be another *shauri* on the morrow at sunrise. The returning porters were due to leave at the same time, but that did not matter much, as they, at any rate, had the donkeys for transport. Not yet realizing the power of superstition among natives, Dorsay suggested that the doctor use his personal influence with the chief to make the warriors think differently or the wizard alter his interpretation.

"No, my lad," vetoed the doctor. "Nothing in that. The chief is as scared of the witch-doctor as—well, as kings used to be of black magic. Even if he could persuade 'em to come along they would never be any good.

"First time we struck trouble their hearts would stick to their ribs, as they say, and they'd bolt, believing that the awful things the wizard had said were coming true. No, no, leave it to me. The only way out is to try to hold over for a few days and give the oracle a chance to change its mind—with the assistance of sheep or maybe a calf."

"You mean some one trying to get at us through the wizard, eh? But who could be doing that here, doc?"

"Dunno, my lad. Maybe just jealousy, or maybe some superstition about the color of your hair for instance. Lesser things than that have slaughtered tribes, as the Bible will tell you if you ever read it. If any one wishes to undersand the Old Testament let him live in Africa."

IN THE morning Dorsay awoke about the hour of the monkey. Somewhere far away a jackal was yelping dismally; and close by a night bird screeched harshly at regular intervals. He lay still sleepily formulating the fifty-first theory of the origin of the mysterious message which he wore on the aborigine's chain around his neck.

As he glanced through the tent, remarking that the stars were still brilliant, he noticed the canvas flap move. He remarked vaguely that there was no wind. As his eyes grew accustomed to the light he saw his coat, which was hanging on a camp-chair on the other side of the small tent, disappear.

"What the ——" he began and sat up.

He saw something like an enormous snake wriggling across the floor. As it came beneath the light of the stars he caught the gleam of a black body.

He snatched up his revolver, which he kept beneath his pillow, and dived from under the mosquito-bar. Opposite to his was the doctor's tent; to the right their servants' and *shikaris'*; to the left a *zareba* of branches and saplings.

He prowled around the encampment but nothing moved. Beginning to doubt whether he had really seen a man or whether he had dreamed it, he returned to the tent. Undoubtedly his coat was gone. Money, he supposed, the thief was after. There had been some thousand rupees in paper, a check-book and some loose cartridges. But the loss of his coat was annoying, in spite of the fact that he, of course, had a spare one. Naturally he related his experience to the doctor at breakfast. The doctor expressed surprize as the Wakikuyu are not very notorious thieves, and concluded that the thief had probably been one of the porters.

After a prolonged *indaba* the doctor contrived to arrange that they should stop for five days until a new quarter of the moon was due, when the wizard would again consult the oracle.

"BY THE way," the doctor said that night when, as usual before the camp-fire, he was in a loquacious mood, "I've good news for you, my lad. Talking with Yanganga, I very gently pumped him about the Turkana and tribes around there. Of course these people call 'em *shenzi*—savages, you know—and he says that they say they have a white god who is, of course, invulnerable and all that. He is, it seems, the spirit of the Elgon Mountain."

"Oh Lordy!" exclaimed Dorsay delightedly. "Then there is some truth in it, you think?"

"Very weird things are possible in Mother Africa, my son. As a matter of fact, these people here are jealous and think that the Turkana are trying to imitate them, for they too had once a white king. What? Oh, yes, I knew him. As a matter of fact, I made him king. He deserted from a ship in Mombasa and—— Mahomet! Boy! Whisky—soda! *Upesi!*"

Older and inured to native ways, the doctor was less impatient than Dorsay. However, they now filled in time with shooting.

Dorsay to his delight bagged two elephants and the doctor three; for here they were practically out of touch with the administration, in a district where usually the little man was accustomed to doing as he pleased.

On the fifth day and all night a dance was held in honor of the full moon, and the wizard, after casting his spells, declared that the times were propitious for the start —thanks possibly to the present of a calf. The chosen twelve were in excellent spirits.

Next day the donkeys were loaded up and the caravan started. After twenty-four hours' march the going became uninteresting, for they entered upon a tongue of the stony, waterless desert stretching up from the Nyasso Nyro. The doctor figured on striking the confines of the Turkana country on the sixth day out, traveling fairly hard.

In order to lessen the strain of the passage on man and beast, the doctor decided to make extra marches by night, profiting by the light of the moon; so that, instead of the usual five days to cross the strip of desert, they reached the country where there was sweet water, scrub and a few trees, on the night of the third day. Here they were to halt for twenty-four hours to give the animals time to recuperate and get a square feed.

Toiling for hours every day in the powerful rays of the equatorial sun across an expanse of dazzling white was both tiresome and trying.

The plan proposed by the doctor was that when they reached the first of the Turkana villages where they would have to sue the chief Yamba for permission to enter the country and generally be fumigated in the native way against white men's evil spirits, they would pose as traders wishing to traverse the country peaceably.

As the blood-stained message had failed to give them any hint of the locality, they would work up toward the mountain and judiciously attempt through their own men to discover the whereabouts of the reputed white king who, the doctor thought, would prove to be the writer of the message; or at any rate one who could aid them. Direct question to the natives would seal their lips for good, if it didn't lead to active and instant hostility.

The moon rose that night toward nine o'clock.

The order of march was to leave about nine and march until four or five and camp again for the day, as the animals could make better going in the comparative cool of the night. After that, since they would be getting into an inhabited country, this would be inadvisable lest they provoke an attack by the natives, who might suppose them to be evil spirits of the night.

They had been under way about two hours. In the lead was the Wondorobo hunter upon whom devolved the duty of selecting the path through the purple and silver of the night.

Following him came Dorsay and the doctor and six of the warriors, their long-bladed spears like white flames in the moonlight. Behind the donkeys, tail to tail, trudged as patiently as only a burro can. In the rear came Mahomet and the personal servants and the remainder of the Wakikuyu men.

As the Wondorobo turned down a shallow *donga*, or dry watercourse, he suddenly dropped on to his knees with his head to the earth.

"Down! Down! Quick!" whispered the doctor, imitating him.

As he obeyed, Dorsay saw that the Wakikuyu were already flat on the ground.

Doubling back on the trail, the Wondorobo ran like a monkey on all fours. Dorsay heard the doctor swear as the men whispered.

FOR a while Dorsay's untrained ears failed to note anything other than the usual murmuring of the *veld*. Then, just as the doctor spoke, he caught the faint but unmistakable thud of galloping hoofs.

As the doctor was speaking rapidly in the dialect, Dorsay's momentary bewilderment at the idea of horses in central Africa was solved by the recollection of a story of the doctor's in which it appeared that the Abyssinians and Somalis in mountainous country, who had and could keep horses, were in the habit of raiding south to the confines of the Wakikuyu and Turkana country, for ivory and slaves.

Just as some of the men, in obedience to the doctor's orders, were hustling the donkeys into a herd, came the sound of hoofs striking stones, and the figures of mounted men in what looked like Arab robes broke from a sparse clump of trees silhouetted against the sky.

"Quick!" exclaimed the doctor, throwing

himself out flat with his rifle. "Shoot for all you're worth."

As Dorsay followed his example the doctor's rifle spoke, and there began erratic firing from the Wakikuyu behind them and down the trail, answered by a wild yell.

Dorsay saw three men, one of whom he thought was his bag, tumble off their animals; then a crowd of some twenty were upon them. He was conscious at the same moment of a figure with wild eyes and hair brandishing a spear, looming above him, and of a donkey braying like a Scotch lament over the uproar of shots and yells.

He fired with his revolver and saw the fellow throw up his hands and pitch forward.

The pony swerved violently in full career. A frightened, or wounded, donkey crashed in between them, his loaded panniers knocking him down. As he rose on his knees to get up, slightly stunned, a gun crashed and then a loud yell from the doctor rang in his ears.

Simultaneously arms seized him from behind and he was swung bodily across a saddle-bow. The rifle was wrenched from his grasp.

The concussion had nearly knocked the wind out of him. His long legs were helplessly kicking the air, and he felt the man leaning heavily over his body on to the neck, crushing his stomach on the withers of the horse as it galloped. He gripped a bare leg with his left hand and tried to heave, but he could not get a purchase.

Then, pointing the revolver into the flanks of the horse, he fired.

Instead of dropping the beast bounded convulsively and galloped the faster. The second time the hammer clicked, for it was the last cartridge in the chamber. The plunge of the horse had either startled or nearly unseated the rider, freeing Dorsay's spine for a moment, which gave him opportunity to wriggle round for a hold.

Dropping the useless revolver, he managed to grab an arm and hauled himself up into an embrace of the fellow's neck, preventing the use of either gun or sword by the grip on the shoulders. Both Dorsay's hands were too busily occupied to permit of his reaching for his other revolver.

The Somali was both wiry and powerful. For some two minutes, while the horse raced madly on, Dorsay fought desperately to throw him, but the fellow had either twisted his bare right foot under the stirrup-strap, or cord, or had got a purchase of resistance by sticking a leg in the stirrup.

Suddenly the beast dived on to its nose, throwing both of them. They fell on a patch of long grass. But Dorsay had not relaxed his hold. The fellow wriggled and squirmed like a wildcat. Then, deprived by Dorsay's hug of the use of his arms and the sword—to which he still clung—he bit the other's ear. Maddened by the sharp and excruciating pain, Dorsay let go and crashed his fist into the bronze face. He saw the blood spurt, but at the same time the man wriggled from his left arm's grasp.

For one moment as he got free his back was turned. Dorsay released his hold altogether and leaped on to the shoulders, caught the chin in his cupped hands and jerked with all his might. The snap and collapse were almost simultaneous.

Bloody and hot, Dorsay sat in the moonlight beside a dead horse shot through the lower lobe of the heart and a Somali with a broken neck, listening to the twittering murmur of Central Africa.

IV

DORSAY'S first instinct was to listen for sounds of conflict, but, save for the shrilling of a near-by cricket, all was still. He couldn't be far away, he reckoned—not more than a mile at the most. The country around was lightly timbered but enough to prevent one seeing very far. His ear was lacerated and smarted, but otherwise he was uninjured.

The best way to get back to the scene of the fight and pick up the doctor was to follow the spoor of the horse. He rose and had a look at the Somali, who lay in a crumpled heap on his side with his sword like a streak of quicksilver a few feet away.

He pulled the torn robes over the body and began to hunt for the spoor, wondering what had happened to the doctor. Either, he mused, the Somalis must have been beaten off immediately after that first rush or they had taken the caravan.

Although the soil was soft and sandy the long grass made the hoof-marks difficult to follow, and in the moonlight the sheen of the grass after the passage of a heavy body was almost indistinguishable. Then, on a piece of stony ground, he lost the trail.

He began to cast about in circles, trying to pick it up again, but the fear that if he

wandered too far away he might lose it altogether decided him to wait until morning.

He sat down beside a big boulder near a tree. He still had his revolver and a belt full of cartridges and also the Somali's sword. Where he had lost the rifle he could not recollect. He reckoned that, if the caravan had beaten off the raiders, the doctor would surely camp right where he was.

The night was warm. The moon was like a gigantic arc lamp. A bird some way off kept screaming harshly. Presently, as he sat semi-dozing with the loaded revolver on his knees, a slight sound startled him.

In the open glade in front of him appeared the form of a big buck with the twisted horns flat upon his withers; behind him was the herd in full gallop. Again came the noise like a strangled cough which had startled him, and on their heels came swift gray shapes. They looked like wolves but as none are in Africa, Dorsay knew that they must be wild dogs.

The procession passed within a hundred feet of him as if across a film screen.

About an hour later jackals began to yelp not far away. Then above them rose a weird howl ending in a sound like a hoarse scream. The jackals and a hyena had found the two dead bodies.

The air grew fresher as the moon sank. When the foreglare of the sun was crimsoning distant Mount Elgon, Dorsay was up and began to hunt about for the trail, which after some difficulty he found, but only to loose it again a few hundred yards farther on. He adopted the same method of casting in circles, but this time he failed to pick it up. Possibly he had reached the point, he reflected, where he had shot the horse and the beast had darted off at right angles. If that were so he would not be so far away from the scene of the attack as he had reckoned.

He decided to fire three shots in rapid succession, trusting that the doctor would hear and understand—that is, if he were free. The alternative seemed no pleasant situation.

After firing, he climbed a small tree and waited on the lookout. Within twenty minutes he caught the glint of a spear. Presently he saw some half-dozen natives spread out in hunting fashion, evidently searching.

"Thank the Lord," he thought, "the doctor's all right. These must have been some of our Wakikuyu friends."

Then he made out that one was driving a donkey.

"Now, that's mighty thoughtful of the little man," commented Dorsay. "But what on earth did he send him loaded for?"

He slid down the tree to meet them. As soon as they saw him they promptly dropped into the grass.

"Now, what the—" began Dorsay, and then he realized that they must be strangers who were scared of him. "Now, what am I to do? I suppose if I don't look out they'll skewer me on general principles. Hi!" he shouted, using one of the few Kiswahili words he had already picked up, "*Njema! Njema!* (Good! Good!)"

Immediately a voice cried back at him from out of the grass. Of course he couldn't understand a word, but taking a chance he yelled:

"*Indio! Njema!* (Yes! Good!)"

SIX figures rose out of the grass within a spear's throw of him.

"Good Lord," he thought, "they could have had me sure enough. They must have come through the grass like greased snakes.

"*Hodi? Njema?* Huh?" he inquired, grinning and holding out his left hand.

The six jabbered at him simultaneously. He shook his head.

"No sabee?" Tapping his chest, he added:

"Friend, *njema*, huh? El Hakkim,"—and pantomimed to represent one looking around for something.

He pointed to the donkey, repeating the doctor's native name, and then touched himself.

"Mine. Sabee?" They stared. He began to imitate a donkey braying and continued tapping his chest. A scared expression flitted across the leader's face, and he tightened his grip on his spear suggestively. Then the donkey lifted up his muzzle and began to bray.

Dorsay stopped the performance, thinking correctly that the natives might suppose he was mad. One pointed toward the distant Elgon and beckoned him to follow. He reflected swiftly. They were too close for him to bring them down before one got home with a spear—that is, unless they bolted at the first shot. But supposing he were rid of them, what could he do? If the doctor had by any mischance been captured or wiped

out, he would quickly starve to death in the wilderness unless he could find a village. There did not seem much option, so he grinned pleasantly and gestured, saying—"Lead on, Macduff!"

Macduff, the tallest of the group, each of whom wore six square inches more clothing than the Wakikuyu, led on, and the others, rounding up the donkey, brought up the rear jabbering busily. Once he tried to get them to understand that he was thirsty, but they merely pointed ahead.

As he had no hat he took off his coat and wrapped it around his head as some protection against the equatorial sun. The six hunters—who, Dorsay learned later, while on the trail of some game had been forced to hide from the Somali party and had heard the fight but had not dared approach—led him on for three hours, when they came to an encampment of some fifty men, a small hunting-raiding party of the Turkana of which Dorsay at the time could not know.

It was difficult to determine which created more excitement, the donkey or the white man. They were both conducted inside the *zareba*. Dorsay was made to sit in the shade of a grass lean-to and given water while some of the leaders gathered about him discussing vociferously, and others began to unload the donkey.

At last one fellow with a tuft of gray wool, who seemed to be a chief, tried to interview him. Dorsay did his best to make the native understand that he was anxious to know the doctor's fate, and, to make it plain that if the doctor had escaped, he wished to rejoin him; but this was too complicated for sign language.

Eventually, as neither could get any of the information he wanted, the chief drew the other men away, and in the middle of the *zareba* began a lengthy debate regarding the fate, Dorsay supposed, of himself.

Noticing some of them bearing the contents of the donkey's pack, which happened to be one which bore his own clothes and also the terai hat, Dorsay got up and went over. Immediately he approached they formed a circle, jabbering at him excitedly. He pantomimed the lack of a hat, but they had no intention of giving anything up.

"Unless I want to fight the gang for it," he concluded, "I guess I'd better be good."

The result of the *shauri* was evident. Apparently he was of such importance that the hunting-party was to be abandoned, for they began to prepare for the trail.

Two hours after noon they broke camp. Dorsay, to his intense disgust, was compelled to march as before with his coat over his head in lieu of the terai hat, which, save for the six inches of skin, constituted the chief's sole dress, except that, in the lobe of his ear, in the place of the usual copper rings, was stuck Dorsay's safety-razor.

Several others had taken spare shirts and bound the arms round the waist apron fashion. One young man proudly strutted along in a pair of riding-breeches tied around his neck.

Whether they associated these belongings with him personally Dorsay could not guess. He had naturally decided not to give up his remaining gun in any circumstances. But they did not attempt to deprive him of it for a reason unknown to Dorsay, who, of course could have no conception then of a belief that any article actually belonging to a man is impregnated with his being, and therefore that it is mighty dangerous to monkey with a white man's demons—a consistent enough argument if you grant all the premises which the native accepts as indisputable facts.

On the trail he noticed that the very slight baggage, such as food. cooking-gourds, mats, and small tree-cutting adzes, were carried by men who evidently were slaves from another tribe. An hour before sundown they came in fairly thick bush to a water-hole.

The slaves set to work immediately to cut saplings and make a *zareba* and prepare food; but the hunters merely lolled in the shade, elegantly snuffing and discussing the captive.

Fortunately for Dorsay some of them, less lazy than the others, went out and returned with a couple of buck, and the chief graciously sent the white man a hunk of meat.

The situation which began to try his temper was slightly mitigated by a sense of humor, for when the blankets were divided between the chief and his cronies one man solemnly rolled himself up in the mosquito net and another in the canvas Wolsey valise.

Dorsay reasoned that the time had not yet come to kick; any attempt to hold them up he was sure—and was right—would have led to a sticky end. He endeavored to recall all that the little doctor had told him regarding the value of patience in dealing with

the native. However, the extreme need of sleep soothed him more than anything else; and, stretched out by the communal fire with the revolver tucked inside his shirt for safety, he slumbered until the dawn.

They marched for another two days.

On the morning of the third he saw signs of cultivation, and passed bunches of cattle and several small villages. Mount Elgon now appreciably closer, seemed less imposing because the slopes are very long.

The morning march was longer than usual. It was near to noon when, in the blazing heat in a rolling, lightly timbered country, they came upon native *shambas*, the size of which suggested a big village. Soon hordes of men, women and children came trooping along the paths from all sides to stare solemnly at a perspiring white man marching with a coat over his head.

The village, Dorsay noticed, was stockaded, whereas the smaller ones had not been; evidently the place of the chief, Tamba.

Inside the barrier were irregular streets of huts with odd chickens, with open beaks, roosting in the shade, and skinny goats dozing. He almost cried out in relief when he saw, seated beside one who was evidently a chief, beneath the shelter which is the village clubhouse, a white man. A wild hope that he would prove to be the doctor died, for the fellow was too big.

Then as he bent beneath the low roof he exclaimed in astonishment.

The man was Dorkin, the Australian lumberman.

V

"GOOD Lord!" ejaculated Dorsay in astonishment. "What on earth are you doing here?"

"Fort it wus yew," commented Dorkin. "Where's the dotty little doctor?"

"That's what I want to know," returned Dorsay anxiously. "A Somali party raided us and carried me off, and then these fellows picked me up. Don't they know whether our caravan was wiped out or not?"

"Nope. They come in 'ere and tells the old man they'd captured a white man. I wondered if it was yew, knowing as yew'd be along this w'y."

"Look here," remarked Dorsay, who was still standing, "can't you get me a chair or something?"

"Ain't no more. But you'd better powwow with this black fella 'ere."

He indicated the chief in the chair beside him, a fairly big, corpulent man with a big-bore cartridge stuck through an ear.

"But that's it! I can't speak a word."

Dorsay looked about him, naturally uncomfortable at the idea of sitting on the ground when a native was in a chair, and squatted on the floor.

"If you'll interpret I should like to ask him about sending out to find the doctor."

Dorkin grinned with his broken teeth.

"Yew gotter ruddy cheek!"

"I have?" demanded Dorsay. "How?"

"Only meant this 'ere black fella thinks e's a big bug," said Dorkin after a moment's hesitation. "Go on. Wot djer want?"

"Well, tell him that our caravan was attacked and I was carried off. I killed the man, but lost my way and his people found me.

"Tell him I want him to send back to the place near where they found me, and see if the doctor is still there; if not, to find out whether the caravan was wiped out, and if not to follow up the trail and tell the doctor where I am."

"Want a —— of a lot, doncher?"

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Wotjer going to pay 'im wiv?"

"Oh, we'll pay him as soon as he fetches the caravan here."

"But if there ain't no caravan?"

"Oh, well, I can buy——"

He hesitated, recollecting the stolen coat with the thousand rupees in the pocket.

"You know me. I suppose you'll sell me some goods?"

Dorkin looked at him and grinned again.

"Orl right, chummie; don't you worry."

He turned to the chief, who with the crowd of natives had watched every gesture and expression during the conversation.

"O son of Bafala," began Dorkin, "this white man was the servant of El Hakkim, the doctor, who, he tells me, hath been taken as a slave by the Somalis. At the beginning of the fight he ran away, so that your people found him wandering with his heart still stuck fast to his ribs. As he belongs to an inferior tribe I will keep him unless—" he looked at Dorsay interestedly, watching him, and smiled—"unless the son of Bafala wishes to trade for something for which he knows my belly yearns?"

"O Broken Teeth," replied the old chief

without a vestige of expression on his features, "indeed thy hands are large (generous) but such is not sweet in the eyes of the people who would commune each with his neighbor, saying, 'Is it then that whites are also gods and slaves?' "

"Orl right, old top," retorted Dorkin, "have it yer own w'y. If yer knew as much abart whites as I dew yew wouldn't fink they wus gawds!"

"What does he say?" interrupted Dorsay.

" 'Is nibs ses 'e'll send back some men and do wot yer want, but 'e wants a price."

"Oh, that doesn't matter," said Dorsay relievedly, "as long as he finds out what's happened to Macnamara. Say, there's another thing. In the fight I lost my helmet, as you see, but these fellows found one of our donkeys which had my kit.

"See the fellow with my safety-razor stuck in his ear? He's wearing my terai hat. He can keep the razor. Guess I'll have to grow a beard anyway."

Dorkin burst into a guffaw and told the chief that he wished to go to his camp and teach the white slave what he had to do.

"That's orl right, chummie," he said to Dorsay; "'e'll send it along ter me ternight——"

RATHER annoyed at having to walk with the coat over his head, Dorsay followed Dorkin through the village and to his camp, which was pitched just outside. He suspected, of course, that the blood-stained message had brought Dorkin on the same quest as the doctor and himself. Well, thought Dorsay, he had a perfect right to do so. He hadn't been bound to secrecy.

"It was my own fault for having shown it to him."

Yet it was annoying, although in his recent plight it didn't seem to matter if there were forty others chasing after the same will-o'-the-wisp.

"By the way," he remarked as they approached the camp outside the village, "where's your partner, Simpson?"

"Oh, 'im?" replied Dorkin with a note of contempt. " 'E's still 'auling lumber. 'E ain't no sport, 'e ain't."

As Dorsay was wondering what might be Dorkin's definition of a "sport" he continued:

" 'E's a regular 'new chum,' that's wot 'e is. I been at the gime too long ter monkey rahnd wiv the like o' 'im."

"I suppose," said Dorsay a bit stiffly, "you've come after the same thing as we have—although you said it wasn't worth the game when I showed you the message?"

"Wot d'yew fink! I want ter tawk to yer abaht that. Come in and sit dahn, will yer?"

They had reached his camp, consisting of a green tent and an old military bell tent for his men. As they sat in camp chairs Dorkin remarked suddenly—

"Yew ain't got any guns, 'ave yer?"

"No," replied Dorsay mendaciously, pulling his coat over the bulge of the revolver beneath his shirt. "Why?"

"Nuffin. I fort p'raps yer wanted one."

He shouted to one of his men to bring food, lighted a cigar, and turned to Dorsay.

"I s'y, mister, wot d'yew reckon to do?"

"Wait until these people here bring news as to whether the doctor is still alive or not."

"An' if 'e ain't?"

"I don't know," said Dorsay slowly. "Go back, I guess, and organize another expedition—to rescue the doctor if he was captured, and to avenge him if he's killed."

" 'Ow yer going ter do that?"

"Why, surely— As I said, you'll surely give me credit enough in goods to get back."

"Ain't yer got no brass?"

"Well, I haven't on me," admitted Dorsay. "Naturally I carried some with me; but some son-of-a-gun stole my coat with the cash 'way back at Yananga's."

"Go on!" said Dorkin, and grinned. "When do yer want ter go?"

"As soon as these people bring whatever information they can find. How long do you reckon that ought to be?"

"Ow, I'll 'ave an answer fer yer in four d'ys. 'Ave yer still got that bit o' bloody rag on yer?"

"Why, yes," said Dorsay, touching the chain about his neck.

"Gaw lumme!" ejaculated Dorkin. "I never fort o' that! I s'y, let me' ave a look."

Dorsay detached the chain and unrolled the message. Dorkin snatched and opened.

At that moment one of the village natives approached with a basket of food for sale. Dorkin instantly closed his fist over the rag and swore at him, telling him to go to the other tent where his men were.

"Don't do ter let these swine see too much," he added to Dorsay, who was wondering at the outburst. "See 'ere," he continued. "Yew're going after the

doctor, ain't yer? Well, yew give me this rag and I'll give yer enough ter get back."

"But that's no good," said Dorsay. "I mean it doesn't give any help to find the spot or the man who wrote the message. Why do you want it? You know all there is in it?"

"That's orl right. Let me 'ave it?"

Dorsay looked at him.

"Crafty eyes," he thought. "Now, what's behind all this? Has he deciphered something which has escaped me or what? No," he replied aloud. "I'll give you a check—or an order on Nairobi if you like."

"Fat lot o' good that is to me 'ere."

"Tell me what you want it for then."

"Me?" indignantly. "Not much! Jus' sorter want ter 'ave it wiv me—fer luck."

"So do I," retorted Dorsay, smiling. "No. I'm sorry, but can't let you have it."

"Oh, yew won't, won't yer?" said Dorkin with an ugly look. "We'll see abaht that."

Deliberately he placed the message in his pocket. "Why fer two pins I'll mike them niggers give yer ——"

"Good ——!" interrupted Dorsay, and stared at the boy bearing the food, who was wearing a khaki jacket. "That's my coat!"

He stared for a second at Dorkin, who was grinning at him insolently.

"Why," he said slowly, "you must have put that man on to steal my coat, to get that message. Is that it? I see."

"Yew ain't getting cross, I 'ope," demanded Dorkin with a grin.

"I'm liable to," retorted Dorsay gravely.

"Go on!" decisively.

"As soon as the doctor had left the mill," continued Dorsay, "you sneaked off and tried to steal a march on us! You're a thief!"

"Look 'ere, yew mind 'oo yer talking to," blustered Dorkin, who wore his gun in the hip pocket, rising from his chair.

"You put your hands on that gun and——"

DORSAY leaped and struck. Dorkin went backward over the table. As the native servant fled, he came up again like a cat and made a rush, cursing furiously. Dorsay met him with a left, which was partially countered. Dorkin got him with a right on the temple.

A half-hook from Dorsay's right on the jaw jolted him badly, and a left swiftly following brought curses and blood. He ducked, jumped around the fallen table, came again, feinted and succeeded in reaching Dorsay's jaw, which tumbled him on to the bed in back of the tent.

Dorkin drew the gun as Dorsay was on his knees on the bed. Instinctively he jerked the dirty pillow at the man's head. The bullet seared his hip as he sprang from the bed on top of Dorkin.

The two clinched. Dorsay gripped his arm so that he could not aim. Two bullets went into the ground. With a wrench Dorsay managed to twist Dorkin's wrist until he dropped the revolver; then, breaking, Dorsay leaped back and put the whole of his might into one right punch for the jaw. Dorkin went backward over the canvas wash-stand and lay still.

From a distance came cries and shouts, but, without the tent, not a native was to be seen. Dorsay stepped over and recovered the message from the man's pocket. Then picking up the revolver Dorkin had dropped he put Dorkin's terai hat on his own head.

Dorkin took the count and a bit more. As he raised himself on his elbow and saw Dorsay he scrambled to his feet, bent on continuing the fight. He faced the gun and stopped bewilderedly, not realizing that he had been knocked out.

"You sit down and try to behave," advised Dorsay quietly.

A torrent of language answered him.

"Now quit that. D'you want me to punch you again?"

Dorkin informed him foully that there were several different sorts of white-livered curs. Some of the epithets brought a flush to the young man's face. Dorkin saw it and persevered. Dorsay was well aware of the difficulties of his position and what game Dorkin was playing; but finally a certain reference was insupportable.

"See here Dorkin," he said with apparent difficulty in speaking, "you've been whipped and you know it, but if you don't understand this I'll surely smash you with my bare hands until you yelp. D'you get me?"

The answer was unprintable.

"Just you walk in front of me to the back of the tent. Your gun's in here on the bed. Now get!"

As Dorsay threw off his coat and Dorkin's terai hat—fortunately the sun was very low—Dorkin obeyed, cursing but game. Dorsay had intended to fight at the rear of the

tent, which would shelter them from the village. He noticed two woolly heads peeping out of the bell tent as he walked.

As he turned and threw the revolver on to the bed Dorkin wheeled about like a cat, rushed and planted one blow behind the ear. This treacherous attack maddened Dorsay. He sprang around, and, seizing the man by the waist, lifted him bodily and threw him.

"Now, you swine, come on!"

Although Dorkin undoubtedly knew how to fight, the contortion of his face reassured Dorsay. This time Dorkin did not rush. He held off for a second or two to recover his breath; but could not, after his kind, avoid wasting more in language. But the hesitation showed that he had at last realized that he was up against no tenderfoot. Dorsay was taller, but his adversary was stockily built and could give him a stone in weight.

Dorkin came prancing up with lowered head and his two fists slightly moving, more like a wrestler than a boxer.

Dorsay leaped, and, using his slightly longer reach, got within Dorkin's guard and smashed him on the nose. Dorkin replied with a nasty kidney punch followed by a whirlwind of body blows, leaped away, and, when Dorsay followed up, clinched.

By an effort Dorsay raised him off his feet again, but failed to throw him. But as he came down he managed to get Dorkin's head into chancery and smashed the face cruelly, intent upon punishing him.

Dorkin retorted with short drives at his kidneys, which made him gasp. As he released him and succeeded in getting clear, Dorkin, covered with blood and spitting teeth, rushed, desperately flailing blows regardless of what further punishment he took.

In the first onslaught Dorsay had received some telling blows on face, head and body, and fought for a chance to put Dorkin out again, knowing well that the man would kill him if he got the chance.

For a few seconds Dorkin's attack was so furious that Dorsay began to doubt how long he could hold him off. Then suddenly Dorkin broke away. Dorsay saw that he was groggy.

"If you've had enough—" he began, dropping his hands.

"I'll kill you, you ——," spluttered Dorkin, and rushed.

Dorsay had just time to get home with his left. and Dorkin dropped and lay still.

WHEN Dorsay became aware that around him, forming a large ring, was a crowd of squatting natives, who had watched with curious eyes this strange form of a white man's fight. Dorsay signaled to the boy who was still wearing the stolen jacket to help carry his master.

As Dorsay filled the wash-basin the natives crowded around the door, eager not to miss one action. With the cold water on his face the Australian came to and peered through one eye.

"'Struth," he spluttered through his bloody mouth, "yer licked me, then?"

"I did," said Dorsay shortly.

"You ain't no new chum," Dorkin went on, "for you've licked an ex-welterw'ight of Haustralia. A fair knockaht too, —— me ef it warn't'."

"Say," said Dorsay anxiously, "you're not wanting any more, are you?"

The bloody mouth contorted, apparently in a grin. "Crikey, not for me, mite."

He extended his hand.

"Yew done me fair."

Dorsay took the hand, and his heart warmed toward him thinking—

"Maybe he is a crook, but he's a darned good sport enough to take a licking."

VI

AFTER that episode Dorkin appeared to have decided to be reasonable. He called for his servant, and with a grin returned to Dorsay the stolen coat as the delayed meal was brought in.

"All's fair in love and war, y'know," he said sheepishly, and to Dorsay's surprize produced the thousand rupees from his own wallet. "'Ope yer ain't looking fer a comeback, are yer?"

"We'll cut that out," retorted Dorsay, "and anyway now you're kind enough to return me my own property, perhaps you'll sell me some goods?"

"Dunno as I mightn't," admitted Dorkin. "'Ere, I'll tell yer wot I'll do. Yew can 'ave enough for grub and trade-goods and I'll get the bloomin' chief ter tike yer back on the trile ter see if yer can't pick up the dotty little doctor. 'Ow'll that suit? W'ite, I call it."

Dorsay reflected. What to do without an interpreter he did not know. The suggestion seemed good, for with the protection of the chief's people he might discover

from the last camp pretty well what had happened, and at the worst he could continue on to the friendly Wakikuyu people, who were friends of the doctor, and so to Nairobi where he could begin over again.

He regarded Dorkin once more. Although Dorkin certainly was a rough-neck he appeared to bear no malice, and, thought Dorsay, he would be more than pleased to get rid of him, as long as he was not continuing on the search for the supposed ivory cache.

"That's a bet then; but you're goin' to play straight this time, Dorkin?"

A stream of oaths attested to his sincerity.

"Yer know," he added, "I wus a ruddy fool, I wus. Abaht that there dirty rag, y'know. Sorter got it in me 'ead that it 'ud bring me luck. Course, it ain't no good cep' fer wot it says, and I know that orl right. Then I finks yew're a sorter new chum. But, oh my, I s'y!" he grinned affably. "Yew're a wonder, yew are!"

"Yes," agreed Dorsay. "I couldn't understand why you seemed to put such a value on it anyway."

"Oh, I'm like that, I am. Once I gits a hidea in me 'ead, carn't sorter git it aht. Arsk Simpson. 'E allus says I'm wooden-'eaded. But there, we're chums nah."

He dived into his "scoff-box" for a bottle of whisky to prove the statement, and afterward began seriously to gather the goods which would be necessary for Dorsay.

"Carn't give yer a tent," he said; "but, 'ere—" handing out a water-proof sheet—"yer kin mike one o' that till yer git back."

In the afternoon Dorsay sent up, demanding an interview with the chief, Yamba; but a refusal came back, making an appointment for the following morning.

When twilight came Dorsay began to grow a little uneasy, wondering whether he had better lie awake all night revolver in hand; and later, noticing Dorkin taking some quinin, he wondered whether the Australian had a medicine-case containing opium or any sleeping-powders or poison. But evidently Dorkin had not, for, upon a casual inquiry for some Warburg's tincture, Dorkin swore he had forgotten to bring any.

However, to make sure, Dorsay used his coat as a pillow, although Dorkin, roughly solicitous, made him up a bed on the floor on the other side of the tent.

After dinner Dorkin became garrulous with whisky.

"Rummy, ain't it," he said once, "me and yew trying ter kill each other off, and 'ere we are a-sittin' as chummy as never was!"

Dorsay agreed dryly that it was, and became astonished when shortly afterward Dorkin relapsed into a semi-maudlin state, insisting upon telling a sentimental story about his old mother who was waiting in Sydney for her darling son to return.

"That's wot mide me do it!" he wailed. "I'm as tender-'earted as a kiddie, I am. Wouldn't 'urt a fly, gorlumme."

Dorsay grew suspicious. He pretended to doze off, although he had great difficulty in not doing so, for he badly needed a sleep.

For half an hour Dorkin rambled on—

"Yew awike? Ain't sleeping, are yer?"

At last he put out the candle and sank back with a prodigious sigh.

Faintly conscious that a drum up in the village was beating, Dorsay started awake at the creak of the camp-bed. After a slight interval came another creak. But Dorsay noticed that the regular breathing, as of a sleeper, ceased at each creak. As he felt for his gun he caught the faintest gleam from the tent-flap of light on steel.

Holding the gun in one hand, he rose in one motion, dragging the blankets with him, and leaped straight upon the head of the bed, pinioning the man's arm and smothering his head, from which came an oath.

"If you struggle, I'll put a hole through you," warned Dorsay.

"I ain't doin' nothin'," came the muffled voice. "Wot's the matter wiv yer?"

HAVING heard the light thud of the revolver on the floor, between the bed and the tent-wall, Dorsay released him, and pressing the muzzle against his middle, ordered him to light a match.

"Look 'ere, wot're yer plying at?" began Dorkin indignantly. "'Ad a nightmare or somefing? Ain't we chums nah?"

For answer Dorsay retrieved his revolver.

"This time I keep it until we part," said he sharply, "and you'll either consent to let me tie you up or you'll sit right there till morning."

Dorkin swore and blustered, but finally, sneering, said he supposed he might as well. Dorsay tied him well, and with the two

revolvers and Dorkin's rifle beneath the blankets went peacefully to sleep.

The difficulty of realizing that the springs of action in other people are not necessarily the same motives as one's own is well known to psychologists, and this fact faintly dawned upon Dorsay as they made their way to the village for the interview with the chief.

He began to doubt whether he had not after all made an error in the night; allowed his jumpy nerves to imagine the creaking of the bed and the thud of the falling revolver. Perhaps the latter had just naturally slid off the bed or from under the pillow.

As men of Dorkin's caliber were new to him, Dorsay found it impossible not to credit him with some sense of fair play; also, he very badly wanted to believe, for his own sake, inasmuch as his position was so very much the worse if that were so. Without even sufficient knowledge of the language to ask his way, and little idea at all of the lay of the country, for Dorkin had not supplied him with a map, he was in pretty bad case.

The more he pondered the matter the more he persuaded himself that Dorkin, at any rate, would play the game in interpreting, for the sake of getting him away.

They found the chief Yamba with his elders under the shade of the council club-house.

After the preliminary greetings of native etiquette had been passed and the usual fencing around the actual subject in hand, Dorkin, pointing to Dorsay, began a long harangue, listened to with great attention by the assembled chiefs. Dorsay, wondering what it was all about, noticed that the chief Yamba—he with the big-bore cartridge stuck through his ear—regarded him with the masked curiosity of the native.

After some crude rhetoric, complimenting the chiefs, and principally himself. Dorkin was saying:

"And as for this white man here who is no true brother of mine but an outcast, one driven from his own tribe, disgraced before his people, I deliver him back into thine hands as thou dost desire, O Black Elephant, son of Bafala. By reason of the water which floweth from my heart (pity) have I bestowed upon him a few inconsiderable trifles, which, at thy will, are thine. Let not his magic stick with five voices cause thy heart to stick to thy ribs, for truly are they so bewitched that they will be like the spittle of a jealous woman.

"And so as it seemeth good unto thee, take him away and make him a slave unto thy gods or take his body to make good medicine. For this do I ask of thee but one thing, O great chief; that I may trade peaceably among thy people as thou hast already granted me, and moreover that I be free to wander where I list, seeking to harm none and friendly with thy people of the mountains."

"What have you said?" inquired Dorsay anxiously, as the corpulent chief solemnly regarded the man who wore his safety-razor for an ear-piece and a shriveled old man wearing three black feathers.

"Don't yew worry abaht it," returned Dorkin. "I've been tellin' 'im orf proper. 'E's got to tike yew dahn to where they fahnd yer and find that there bloomin' camp jus' as yew says, see?"

"And then?"

"If yer carn't find yer dotty doctor, they'll set yer over on the Nairobi road."

"Is that true, Dorkin?"

"See me wet!" exclaimed Dorkin, eloquently, spitting on his fingers and wiping them across his throat. "See me dry! Cut me froat if I tell a lie! Swelp me!"

"H'm! Well, what have I got to do now?"

"Yew go along wif them fellas when I beggar orf, and they'll show yer the road."

"As Broken Teeth hath said, so shall it be," returned Yamba, the chief. "He shall be free to trade, as we have sworn, throughout our country, even to the mountains where no ivory is——"

"That's where the bloomin' stuff is!" muttered Dorkin. "Wot-O!"

"And with the inferior white man shall we do that which shall seem good unto us."

"As long as yer keeps 'im busy for a month or two I don't give a —— if yer cuts his bloomin' liver aht," mumbled Dorkin.

"What did you say?" asked Dorsay.

"Nuffin'! Jigger bitin' me."

He rose, holding out his hand.

"Good luck, ole top. 'Ope yer git 'ome orl right. Sorry we didn't seem ter 'it it off."

"If only," said Dorsay, accepting the hand diffidently, "if only I could talk the lingo! By ——," he added suddenly, suspicious of the man's grin, "if you've put me in, I'll come back and get you."

"Don't lose yer 'air, sonny," jeered Dorkin; and, turning on his heel, he walked back to his camp, leaving Dorsay with his few trade-goods and blankets.

"Is there truth in the son of Bangala that it was this Golden Teeth here who overthrew Broken Teeth?" inquired Yamba of the shriveled sorcerer.

"Aye, truly. He is the greater man, and in him is more strength. Let him be chosen."

"Be it so," assented the chief.

"But," protested Tanka, he of the safety-razor earring, "three gods be stronger than two, as is well known. Let Broken Teeth also be of the sacred band."

"Thou hast the truth by the ears," returned Yamba. "Is that not so, O great Mangu?"

"Thou hast spoken," said the old man.

"Come and feed as thou wilt," invited Tanka of Dorsay, "and we will make ready."

Although Dorsay could not comprehend a word, he understood the gesture of invitation; and obeyed.

VII

AS DORSAY followed the man to a hut allotted to him, where he found the goods Dorkin had "sold" him, he experienced, in spite of the bad character which Dorkin had manifested, a distinct regret at leaving him—even turned on the threshold to watch the retreating figure.

There had always been a hope, if a knock-kneed one, that the fellow was interpreting correctly, and the imperative desire that such should be the case was almost as strengthening as a leg-iron.

As he squatted on his haunches with his arms around his knees in the shade of the hut, watching and listening vainly to the chatter of the natives, he became the more depressed, wondering what had really happened to the little doctor, trying to decide whether Dorkin had played him false.

Without any means of communication with the natives, what chance had he? They might, for all he knew to the contrary, be taking him away to massacre, or Heaven knew what. The idea of death suggested the mysterious message written on the charm. Perhaps he, too, was doomed to a similar fate, whatever that was.

He pondered for a long while, trying to discover what motive had caused Dorkin to attempt theft and murder for the sake of the charm. But the more he mused the more puzzled he became. Perhaps after all the man had told the truth when he had confessed, or pretended to confess, that he had got a crazy idea in his head about "the bloody rag." He had certainly seemed more or less mad, and he was such a liar that one couldn't believe a word he said.

When the sun was about half-way down the western course his former friend, Tanka, who wore the safety-razor, came up and spoke volubly. From his gestures and the presence of some slaves, who proceeded to load themselves with his goods, he gathered they they were about to start.

As they left the village he saw the tail of Dorkin's *safari* disappearing over a slight rise in the direction of Mount Elgon. The sight gave another tug at his heart.

"Lead on, Gillette," said he cheerily, and fell in behind the waiting Tanka.

As he had never had any experience of the trail, he had little notion from which direction he had arrived in the village, or what general course he had traveled in company with the doctor. He retained a vague impression that the sun had set more or less ahead of them every evening. Now, it seemed, they were to continue in the same direction, parallel to Mount Elgon.

The more he pondered on the question the less certain he became, after the fashion of one lost in the desert. At length he decided to object and try to draw conclusions from the man's demeanor. Then what he thought was a brilliant idea struck him. Surely they would understand the word *hakkim*—doctor. He stopped and called—

"Hey, you—Gillette!"

Tanka, the chief with the safety-razor in his ear, turned about as if he really knew his name. Dorsay pointed down the trail they were following, and made a vigorous negative sign, and then, indicating the south, said repeatedly—

"*Hakkim, hakkim.* Savee? *Hakkim.*"

Gillette appeared to be very much interested. The slight expression of bewilderment which he permitted on the mask of his face faded, and he smiled amiably as if he understood perfectly. He repeated a statement several times in which Dorsay thought he distinguished the same word, *hakkim.*

Half-persuaded that the man comprehended, he pointed down the trail again, saying interrogatively—

"*Hakkim?*" and then, pointing south—"which, eh?"

"*Hakkim*," repeated Gillette decidedly, gesturing down the trail to the west.

They marched on through some forest country until half an hour before sundown, when they came upon a small village. As before he was given a hut, and very courteously a mess of native food was sent to him. But he had enough of that to last a lifetime.

Then he discovered that Dorkin had omitted to put a can-opener with the provisions. However, after half an hour's hard work he succeeded in opening a portion and scraping out some beef.

THE following day they were off at dawn, and except for a short rest at noon marched all day through dense forest, winding and turning until Dorsay had lost all sense of direction. For three more days the route was continued, never leaving fairly dense forest save for small glades which did not give the inexperienced Dorsay much chance to orientate.

On the fourth day he began to become fidgety and nervous, for he reckoned that by now they should be approaching the camp where the Somalis had attacked them.

He could not recollect such continuous thick timber on the journey from that spot; yet that, he argued, did not necessarily mean they were not making in that direction. There might very well be many other trails. But the observation made him more uneasy, and he noticed that the undergrowth was growing less dense and the ground more rocky. Several times he expostulated, pointing and saying—

"*Hakkim?*" But each time Gillette talked amiably and repeated the word as if he quite understood what was meant.

That evening they camped in the open in a *zareba* which the slaves made. During the night he was very much conscious of cold, and at dawn when he sat up he remarked with a shock that the blanket was stiff and the grass white with hoar-frost.

"My Lordy!" he muttered, rubbing his blue hands. "This is like the climate at the doctor's place, El Bergon."

He stared blankly at the group of natives squatting around their fire and added—

"Good Heavens, we must be half-way up Mount Elgon!"

The inference startled him. He had been deceived. They had been traveling in the opposite direction from the last camp of the doctor, where Dorkin had promised they should guide him. Even, instead of traveling west parallel to the mountain, as he had once suspected, evidently they had, under cover of the forest, made straight north for the mountain.

Why, why had he trusted the word of that blackguard? He had known that he was a shameless liar—should have known that he had been lying all the time. Where were his captors leading him?

He started to his feet in momentary panic, his hand upon his revolver. He was determined to be understood and obeyed.

Then he paused. What could he do? He could not communicate one word. Flourishing a gun wouldn't do any good; might scare them into reprisals.

And again, how was he to know where the doctor was? Perhaps he might be around. Perhaps, after all, they were conducting him to the doctor, who would not have stopped in camp forever.

Doubt and the realization of his impotence made him wish to cry or swear with rage; he didn't care which. Soberly he decided that the best thing to do was to wait and see what was going to happen.

With his faculties of observation sharpened by anxiety, he remarked that the sun rose above the forest at twenty past six. Allowing for the fact that they were very nearly on the equator he estimated from the approximate height of the trees that they must be on the northeastern slope of the mountain. As they started on the trail again, he demanded perfunctorily of Gillette—

"*Hakkim?*"

In the eyes of Tanka seemed to lurk a subtle sense of amusement as he politely repeated the word.

"Good Lord," reflected Dorsay with misgiving, "I wonder whether he does understand, or whether he thinks the word is some sort of magic or a white man's greeting? Heaven knows the way these minds work."

For lack of any other feasible plan, he followed docilely. Half an hour farther on they passed an abandoned *zareba*, by the dead fire of which Dorsay caught the gleam of an empty sardine-can. The sight cheered him. Perhaps the doctor had passed. Anyway a white man had camped there.

The aspect of the country changed.

The forest thinned; granite boulders and

outcroppings of rock streaked with quartz peeped above the sparse grass. Soon they were traversing open rolling downs. Ahead of them was a series of ragged escarpments and the blue of the mountain summits beyond.

At this sight Dorsay had another strong instinct to rebel. But the recollection of the sardine-can and the inability to formulate any feasible plan of action suppressed the desire. Instead of resting as usual the *safari* continued on through the heat.

About four he saw light smoke amid hummocky rocks. Presently they came to a village, a small one, but stockaded. As they conducted him to a hut he looked around vainly for signs of a white man.

Toward sundown a drum began to beat, and after dark he saw the flicker of many fires somewhere in the center of the village and heard the natives chanting. He pondered for a while, and then decided to investigate.

The village about him he found deserted. He made toward the light and sound. He could distinguish dimly in the night the silhouettes of men, forms prancing against the orange of fires.

Within a few more spaces he came up against a heavy palisade of ivory tusks. In spite of the danger and the uncertainty of his fate the thrill of treasure smote him lightly. Dorkin, he reflected, evidently had known what he had been talking about. Then a new idea struck him. Could the writer of the message be imprisoned here? Was this the "buried goods?"

The doctor had said that it would probably turn out to be ivory. Yet these tusks could scarcely be said to be buried. But the man, where was he? And "goods" or "gods," what had that meant?

In the center of the enclosure he saw a solitary tree with great boughs, having either falling branches like willows or creepers reaching the ground, forming a canopy within which he could discern, dimly seated upon a stool, the form of a man whom he knew to be Tanka by the glint of the fire on his safety-razor earring. Around and about the fires in the front circled and capered three men with three feathers stuck in the wool of each head.

AROUND the three witch-doctors, one of whom he recognized by the peculiar tufts of hair upon his face as the man who had been present at the *shauri* with the supreme chief, Yamba, were the villagers and the members of the *safari* grouped upon their haunches, grunting in chorus. Dorsay watched interestedly.

The three performers suddenly dropped flat upon their stomachs, facing the lone tree as simultaneously the drums ceased. A silence of several moments was broken only by the bleat of a kid. As Dorsay was wondering what the interruption portended, he observed that the eldest of the three was squirming forward toward something which had been placed, presumedly by Tanka, within the tree, upon the ground.

Mangu, the head witch-doctor, seized and raised the object in his hands.

Dorsay caught the glint of light on metal, and then with a thrill recognized by the shape of the brass cylinder a compass which had belonged to the little doctor. But his first conclusion that Macnamara must be somewhere around was dissipated by the reflection that perhaps they might have got it from his body or from the Somalis.

Evidently by the movement of the needle upon the disk it was taken by the savages to be alive, for, gingerly placing the compass in the full light of the nearest fire, the three crouched around it, and, pointing fingers, shouted something which inspired the crowd with awe.

During another silence the three men bent over the small cylinder as if consulting an oracle. Then, one, peering close above the glass, suddenly sprang to his feet and pointed in the direction in which Dorsay was standing outside the palisade. Instantly half the squatting natives beyond the fires leaped up and, rushing to the gate, raced around the ivory fence toward him.

As he faced the advancing throng, rather uncertain what he should do, they set up a terrific howl at the sight of him, echoed triumphantly by the three doctors, who immediately began cavorting around the compass, which they evidently believed had revealed the presence of the stranger. With his hand inside his shirt upon the revolver, Dorsay, knowing not what else to do, suffered them to lead him around the palisade and into the enclosure.

As he advanced toward the tree, to his astonishment the three witch-doctors ceased their howling and in unison with Tanka, who had remained seated within the canopy of the tree, threw themselves flat upon their faces before him. Bewildered at this

maneuver he half turned to find that he was the only individual within the enclosure who was erect upon his feet.

"Good Lordy," thought he with a thrill of relief, "they must take the doctor's compass for some kind of an oracle which they think has pointed me out as a god or something. "I wonder if the doc is somewhere around. Almost feel as if I could sense him. Perhaps, after all, he's fixed this business to get me free."

He gazed around, half expecting to see his deliverer walking out of the shadows. Looking down at the prostrate forms about him and buoyed by expectant hope, Dorsay almost laughed at the ridiculous figure that he felt he cut. But save for the persistent bleating of the kid, which had lost its dam, above the low grunting of the natives, nothing happened.

Suddenly Tanka, his quaint earring gleaming in the light, leaped up, screeching.

Instantly the drums began to beat wildly and everybody scrambled up. Darting forward, the three doctors snatched up three blazing brands from the nearest fire. Tanka, moving swiftly to Dorsay's side, shouted wildly: *"Hakkim! Hakkim!"* And pointed to the three magicians, who stood as if expecting him to do something.

"Hakkim!" repeated Dorsay exultingly.

Mangu led the way toward the entrance of the palisade. Tanka again excitedly shouted after them: *"Hakkim! Hakkim!"* mixed up with other words which Dorsay did not understand.

"Wants me to follow," interpreted Dorsay to himself and, excited by hope, obeyed.

The whole gang, whooping and screeching, followed as far as the stockade of the village. Then across the bare, rocky ground beneath the rising half-moon, went the strange procession.

The three witch-doctors pranced in the van, screeching and capering, their torches lighting the fair man's face as he followed, searching the darkness eagerly for signs of some white man's camp. The grave Tanka brought up the rear. Behind them Dorsay could hear the wild chant of the village people and feel the throb of the drums upon his ear-drums.

"Where the mischief can the camp be here?" he demanded of himself, remarking that the ground was growing steeper every yard. Then he noticed that the lower stars were suddenly shut off, and made out the dense gloom of an escarpment in front.

The next moment the torches gleamed upon the light blue of gneiss rock. The three doctors were screaming their chant and dancing with as much gusto as ever. Dorsay hesitated. Tanka, his eyes gleaming with ferocity or excitement, Dorsay did not know which, loomed beside him, whispering ferociously: *"Hakkim! Hakkim!"* and pointing ahead.

ONCE more Dorsay found comfort in the word.

"I suppose it's all right," he muttered, and walked on to find himself before a fairly large natural door of a cave in the blank wall of rock, into which without hesitation the three doctors pranced. Above them, by the light of the brands, Dorsay saw that the cave was enormous, the yellow light gleaming fantastically on great stalactites and stalagmites.

As he entered, the thrum of the village drums and the chanting was cut off. He followed a dozen yards or more, mazed by the profusion of bizarre effects. The three doctors had cavorted on ahead, seemingly too lost in frenzy to recall his presence at all. Leaping high in the air at every step, their screeching voices hit the roof and came back in a dozen different echoes until the place seemed alive with ghostly screams, and their black bodies and feathers in the flickering lights were like gnomes dodging among the pinnacles of rock. It occurred to him that the doctor surely could not live in a cave. Again he halted.

"Say!" exclaimed Dorsay, prompted by a suspicion that all was not right, as his hand clutched at his revolver. "I'm not going any farther."

He wheeled. But Tanka was not behind him. Simultaneously the three doctors ceased screeching and the torches were extinguished. For a few seconds he stood, merely conscious of red lights flitting across the retina of his eyes. The silence and darkness seemed like a flashing blow.

"My God, I'm trapped!" he exclaimed aloud, as the truth struck him.

He listened intently. Hearing a stone rattle, he fired in the direction. The flash and the reverberations blinded and stunned him. He rushed forward angrily. A blow nearly felled him. He put out a hand and touched jagged rock, and, placing his fingers

on his face, felt sticky warmth. The appalling suddenness of the change mazed him.

He stood stock still with the revolver clutched in one hand. He grabbed his pocket in a panic lest no matches were left. They rattled reassuringly. But there were not many. Cautiously he struck one, and, holding it in his cupped hand, peered around. The tiny flame was nearly swamped by the depth of the darkness; faintly it lighted a portion of the glistening stalagmite upon which he had bumped his head.

Which way was the cave door? In turning he had lost his bearings. He listened. The silence seemed as dense as the rock about him. He lighted another match, moved, and stopped. No use looking for the door with a light.

He stamped out the match and waited until he thought his eyes were focused to the darkness. Sticking the revolver in his pocket, he began to feel his way slowly. Several times, growing panicky, he lighted a match, only to find trunks of stalagmites which appeared like a forest. He had no idea which way he was going, yet he could not bear to stay still long.

At last—after half an hour or so, he reckoned—while pausing to strain his eyes in the blackness and to listen intently, he thought he saw a glimmer that was lighter than the cave darkness. Not daring to light another match for fear of losing the direction, he blundered on slowly.

Within twenty steps he was sure that he was not mistaken, and in ten more he felt the cooler air of the open. The door seemed to be the same, judging by the size and shape, as that by which he had entered. Then he noticed that he could not see the stars.

There seemed to be a wall in front of him. He looked up. There was a circle of stars as at the top of a shaft.

As he fumbled for the match-box he started at the shuffle of a foot. A voice close beside him giggled shrilly. He wheeled, conscious of goose-flesh, as he hurriedly struck a match.

In the circle of dim light the wild eyes of a white man were peering idiotically at him from out of a shaggy mass of white hair.

Dorsay's nervous fingers dropped the match.

"He, he, he, he!" giggled the man in the gloom.

VIII

THE unexpected vision, following upon the experience in the caves of stalactites, paralyzed Dorsay's faculties. He could merely stare without realizing that the dim figure in the dark was in the realm of reality. The giggling ceased.

He was conscious of hard breathing, the call of some bird a long way off, and the distant thrum of drums. Possibly a few seconds later, although it seemed to him many minutes, his mind started to work again; he realized that the man was not a ghost or a figment of the mind, but an indubitable white man, and he was aware that the fellow stank, a sour acrid smell. He said quietly—

"Who are you, sir?"

The answer was an appalling shriek, and as he involuntarily stepped back a pace he felt the wind of the man's arms. The next instant he had disappeared. Dorsay gazed around, wondering how the creature had so quickly vanished; then conscious of the cave-mouth immediately behind him, sidestepped so that he had his back against solid rock.

He was more nervous and shaken by the uncanny apparition than he had been when he had found himself trapped in the cave of stalagmites.

Holding the revolver in his hand, he tried to pierce the intense gloom of what had appeared to be the bottom of a shaft. In one direction he could make out some mass that seemed lighter than the rock, but too large to be human or animal. Of the stranger he could not distinguish any sign.

"Say, are you there?" he called softly, not wishing to startle the man.

At the third call a gentle giggle came from out the darkness, but from which direction he could not determine. The sound made him shudder.

"Good Lord, he must be mad!" he exclaimed aloud; and again as if in wild assent floated the giggle.

He looked up at the sapphire disc seemingly perforated with holes of brilliant light. The throb of the drums was rhythmic and unceasing. He realized that instead of finding the door by which he had entered he had stumbled into some new kind of a trap which seemed to be the bottom of a shaft or volcanic blow-out—where probably,

he reflected, they had intended that he should be.

But the white man? Was he the man who had written the mysterious message in blood on a piece of torn shirt?

There was no doubt that the fellow was mad now. A renewed slither of a bare foot on rock drew him about swiftly.

"Say, you!" he shouted. "I'm a white man."

The loud tones flew back at him in echo, mingling with another soft giggle.

"Don't do that!" he said sharply.

The answer was a shriek, which was echoed in a dozen muffled responses, revealing that the man was within the cave.

"My voice seems to irritate him," reflected Dorsay. "Better keep quiet till dawn."

He wondered what the time was, but decided not to light a match lest the flame excite the stranger. Holding the gun in his right hand, he began to edge along the wall of rock, feeling with his left. The wall was seemingly circular.

A few yards away he stumbled over something on the floor which rattled.

"He, he, he!" came the giggle from the other side of him.

"Go away or I'll shoot!" exclaimed Dorsay, startled at what he thought for a moment was another maniac.

"I'll shoot!" returned the mocking single echo, followed by a wild screech thrown back in turn.

Came the slither of bare feet on rock, and all was quiet again. Dorsay sank down cautiously on to his haunches, deciding not to move until he could see. Squatting with his back against the rock, he tried to puzzle out where he could be and what was about to happen. If this creature was the man who had written the message he must since have gone mad. Why?

The possibilities suggested were not pleasant. If this man had never succeeded in escaping, how could he expect to? But was there more than one man? What did the natives intend? Why should they imprison a white man in the bottom of a hole until he went mad? What did they gain? Was this the god the little doctor had spoken of, whom the Turkana were reputed to have? But a mad god—in a hole, kept in a pit like a bear?

He recollected the story of the man who had been king or god of the Wakikuyu, but he had been practically free, living like a great chief among them. Macnamara had told him that he could have no idea of the practises of which savages were capable, of the strange rites which their fantastic beliefs caused them to carry out.

The night was chilly, but Dorsay felt colder still within. Imagination began to suggest dreadful manners in which this wreck of a white had become insane.

"Not that," he muttered, tightening his grip on the haft of his gun.

Yet one couldn't— Perhaps the other fellow——

A soft giggle nearer to him seemed to pinch the valves of his heart.

"All right," he said soothingly, and stopped to clear his throat. "That's all right."

The man whined like a dog.

"Oh, ——," muttered Dorsay, stirring uneasily, "I shall go crazy before dawn if he goes on like that."

He looked up anxiously at the stars. A faint glow was staining one side; then he saw by the hue that it was caused by the half-moon mounting toward the zenith.

"I've got to hold myself together," he told himself sternly. "The day will come some time, and then I can see what I'm doing. Anyway things always look more awful in the night."

He sat on, gripping his nails into his palm occasionally at the frequent terrible sounds murmuring in the darkness.

AS THE horned moon sailed above the tunnel top he gazed eagerly about in the lesser darkness. The dull mass which he had noticed before, as lighter than the surroundings, glimmered brighter until he made out vaguely a stack of elephant tusks. That, he thought, must be the "buried" ivory or "goods" referred to in the message. The whereabouts of the madman he could not discover, and dared not investigate for fear of exciting him.

Slowly the light faded again, and the stars grew brilliant as the moon passed over the far lip.

Throughout the night the distant drums throbbed continuously. His legs and arms grew stiff with cold and the rigid position; for, every time he moved or coughed the other occupant made terrible whines—or giggled, which was worse. Time seemed to have stopped, but at length the pallor

of the old moon was warmed by the flush of sunrise.

His eyes strained eagerly to follow the light, slowly percolating like milk poured into rum, but not until the rim was stained crimson by the sunrise could he distinguish objects clearly. There was no sign of the other occupant, whom he had not heard for some time. The prison he saw to be the bottom of a volcanic shaft, about fifty feet across.

The walls were as perpendicular as a lamp glass. The things he had stumbled upon during the night, which had rattled, were, he saw, the bones of a sheep or a goat.

He rose and walked cautiously across to the great stack of ivory, which contained a thousand tusks at least, worth over a quarter of a million dollars. But he was too occupied with his position to be much excited at the moment.

He stopped cautiously at the edge and looked around. Through the cave door, and the only one, by which he had entered, the white stalactites and stalagmites gleamed in the growing light, suggesting the top and bottom jagged teeth of some terrible beast with its mouth open. Besides refuse and many pieces of broken native calabash blackened by fire, there was nothing on the smooth surface of the shaft bottom.

He continued on around the corner of the stack and stopped. Lying asleep on the hard floor within a crude hut made out of some of the tusks, was the white stranger. Dorsay tiptoed toward him and peered down at him.

The body was that of a big man. The shoulder-blades stuck through the remnant of a striped cotton hunting-shirt like the hips of an old cab-horse. The hair and beard were long, matted and snow white. One claw-like hand, protruding beyond the head, revealed long nails.

In the corner of the primitive shelter was a rifle with the barrel yellow with rust. A jack-knife, broken near the haft, was in another corner, peeping from behind a pile of blackened calabash. Asleep, the face of the man looked peaceful and untroubled.

Rather from the fear of witnessing the lunacy leap into the eyes than from any other consideration, Dorsay withdrew silently. For a moment he stood like a caged bird staring upward at the small circle of paling blue sky above him. He placed one hand over his brow for a moment as if the sight were too painful or brilliant.

He glanced again around the empty floor and at the teeth-staring cave. The rechecking, as it were, of the situation seemed like a heavy burden. He sat down and held his head in his hands and concentrated to marshal all the facts he had as yet observed.

Evidently the other prisoner had either been lowered into the trap or had been lured the same way as he had been. That was evident. The walls were quite twenty-five feet high and utterly unscalable.

Through the door into the cave and out by the way he had come in lay the only hope of escape. Yet why hadn't this poor soul, he asked himself, been able to find that way out? That he hadn't arrived crazy was revealed by the fact that he had been intelligent enough to tear off a bit, or several bits for all he knew, of his striped shirt and somehow heave them out of the shaft—probably by tying them to pieces of broken calabash, surmised Dorsay.

He wondered how long ago that had been. He had no means of even guessing, and the principal could not tell him now. Surely he must have been there for a very long time. One didn't go crazy in a few weeks. Yet——

He jumped to his feet muttering:

"It's no use sitting here. I've just got to find a way out."

He gave another glance to reassure himself that the other was still sleeping, and then made for the cave door.

"Cave can't be very big," he added to himself. "Ought to be mighty easy to find the glow of daylight through the other door."

He made straight ahead, keeping the door behind him; went on until the forest of stalactites and stalagmites shut it out. Then he peered in all directions, but no sign of a glow could he distinguish.

He struck a few of his remaining matches and continued on, telling himself that the reason why the other man had failed was because he had not had light to carry him far enough; he would succeed and come back to rescue the poor soul. The sense of desperation in the depth of his mind prevented him from thinking beyond that open door to the wide world.

Every two matches he stopped, peered, waited to focus his eyes, blundered on, and lighted another. He had meant to use only half the matches in case— The half was

gone, and more. Seven remained. But there was no sign of a light.

He sat down in the dark, trying to determine to return.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed aloud, and a dozen whispers came back to him mockingly.

He searched after and found the thought which had been startled away— Why had he decided to seek straight ahead? He must have already gone farther than he had come during the night. Why, perhaps the missing entrance was to the left—within perhaps a few feet of the tunnel mouth! How foolish!

He rose with renewed hope. Or the right? Ah! Or the left front? Or the right front? Or perhaps there was a passage through which he had blundered in the dark? Or possibly the cave mouth was blocked with stone or some sort of door? Possibilities dashed about in his brain like disturbed bats in an old tower.

"Oh, God!"

"'Od! 'Od! 'Od!"

He clenched his teeth and began again. His feet hit something which tinkled familiarly. He struck the last but one match. He saw the skeleton of a man who had evidently died in the dark, crouched against a stalagmite; already the shoulders were partially coated with the preserving calcium carbonate; beside him was an old-fashioned gun rusty and white.

Dorsay blundered on, doggedly feeling his way. . . . Distinctly he could make out sunlight, blessed sunlight. He shouted, in spite of the weird echoes, and ran.

The sun was right over the tunnel shaft; and, sitting in the warmth was the lunatic gnawing a bone like an animal.

DORSAY sat down in the sun feeling slightly sick and giddy, yet glad of the heat after the damp of the cave. The man continued gnawing his bone, which Dorsay noticed he had taken from an overset calabash near him, which had contained bits of a half-cooked goat.

But where had the food come from? Evidently it had been lowered from the shaft mouth by the fiber cord attached.

The sight stirred natural hunger and thirst. In the bright sun the man seemed just a poor witless soul who, as Dorsay approached, giggled ingratiatingly. Naively unconscious in his plight of any civilized tricks, Dorsay tore off a piece of meat and bone and began to chew hungrily. The other prisoner grinned and wriggled like a friendly dog.

Watching him as he ate, Dorsay realized that the ghastly shrieks and giggles during the night had had no malicious intent, but were the amicable gambols of a pup. Perhaps somewhere in the blighted man's subconscious mind he recognized Dorsay as a fellow white and wished to express his pleasure in primitive fashion. But the idea depressed Dorsay; for dimly he saw what he too might become some day.

As soon as he had finished eating his bone the fellow scrambled over to a fresh spot in the retreating sun-rays, curled up, and went to sleep.

Dorsay, vainly attempting to work out a solution, sat sadly watching the curve of yellow sunshine mount the eastern side of the tunnel. Try as he would he could not find a feasible method of escape; not even the wildest project.

He eyed the cord by which the food-gourd had been lowered, but the plaited fiber was far too fragile to bear a man's weight even if he could succeed in attaching it to something that would catch on the rim of the tunnel. He had five cartridges in his revolver and twelve in his pocket; the rifle-cartridges still in his belt were, of course, useless. He decided to use nine of the former for as many days, at sunset, in the wild hope that the doctor might be near at hand.

He had visions of lying in wait until the savages came to lower the food, and trying to drop one. But what good would that do should he be successful? That wouldn't help him to get out. He seemed doomed either to die of despair or become insane and live the life of a captive bear.

The other prisoner was still sleeping and continued to do so all the afternoon. Dorsay almost felt violently angry with the man because he had lost his reason and could therefore not give him any information or even the companionship which he craved.

He began to pace up and down the pit like one of the bears he had imagined. At last, feeling thirsty, he went inside the ghostly cave to drink from a pool, when an idea that already he was a primitive animal thrusting his snout into the water, sent him back to retain some of his human dignity with the aid of a broken calabash.

In the cooling of the twilight, for in the bottom of the pit the light lingered longer than the tropical dawning on the surface, the lunatic awoke. Dorsay was squatted in a corner by the stack of ivory.

He noticed that the man looked around expectantly. On seeing him, he giggled, and, shambling across, sat down close to him like a lost cat seeking protection. Yet the friendly action in this creature, with only the resemblance of a human being, made Dorsay shudder.

As soon as dark had fallen the fellow became restless, and, prowling about, began those ghastly giggles and shrieks, seemingly engaged in a monstrous game of hide and seek. A vision of himself, mowing and giggling, joining every night in this horrific play, sent Dorsay pacing to and fro in the darkness unable to tear his eyes from regarding the brilliant stars above.

There were no drums. He passed the night in slow pacing to and fro, feeling as if he was an officer of the watch on the Flying Dutchman, knowing he was doomed never to reach port.

Dorsay was rather astonished at the way in which he became accustomed to the giggling and shrieking of his companion, occupied in a world of primitive imagination, the mystery of which only a child could understand. The practical reason for playing at night and sleeping during the day was manifest to his calmer mind: in the chilly air one required exercise, lacking any method of making a fire or preserving natural heat.

About an hour after the rim of the tunnel had been stained crimson by the unseen sun a calabash containing goat-flesh, two chickens, and a gourd with milk warm from the cow was lowered. But the sight of the food cheered him.

Even his useless project of "dropping one" would have been impossible; for they did not reveal as much as a head, pushing the gourd over the rim most cautiously. Evidently the natives did not trust their gods, if such they were, although they fed them well.

The morning he spent anxiously watching for the first ray of sunlight to reach the bottom of the pit. His "pal," as he termed the lunatic with a faint smile, revealing the heart of the man in adversity, slept as usual, and he followed suit.

Many days and nights passed as like each other as cigars in a box. He refused to count them—on the same principle that any man who spent his time solely counting the number of possible days to his life would probably become insane, or as a philosophic smoker on a desert island would refuse to calculate how many smokes remained in the one box saved from the wreck.

Rather to his astonishment the fate of the little doctor appeared to have become a dematerialized memory, as indeed had many other facts of life—his mother, probably in Bar Harbor at this time of the year; a married sister, whom he had thought he cared for more than any other in the world, at Salem, N. C.; a lawyer brother in New York; and others. In spite of his will to the contrary concrete facts of life loomed as large as a pyramid in a desert: anxiety that the calabash of food would appear on the skyline; when the first ray of yellow heat would reach a tactile distance; when it would vanish too far up the wall to reach. . . . He was conscious, too, that he had grown older; that if ever he escaped he would be a man, no longer merely a careless boy bent on seeing something of the world.

But usually he dodged these reflections; deliberately he tried to shut his mind to the future, for a good reason. His attitude was summed up or symbolized by a habit of sitting with clenched jaws regarding the amiable imbecilities of the other man while he repeated as if it were an incantation:

"I've got to hold out. Never become like that. I can do it. I will ——"

ILLIMITABLE days and nights were broken one afternoon when the curve of the sun was a man's height above the pit bottom. Dorsay was seated against the wall on the spot where the last ray had disappeared, contemplating the charm, the message written in blood by his pal, who was sleeping in the ivory hut, pondering vaguely upon the strange chance that had caused him to buy that insignificant talisman which had led him into such a dismal plight, when a muffled yell, followed by gnome-like echoes, caused him to stare alarmedly at the cave mouth.

From the ghostly gleaming teeth of the fantastic dragon was erupted the form of Dorkin, bloody-faced and streaming oaths like the disheveled victim of some violent encounter.

IX

DORSAY imagined that he was dreaming. The man stood there blinking in the comparative glare with one hand to his brow, his squat shoulders humped, glaring around the pit bottom like a bull emerging into an arena. He did not see Dorsay, and his eyes were fixed greedily on the great stack of tusks.

An oath ripped from his lips, shattering Dorsay's sense of illusion. Dorsay was conscious of resentment at the intrusion of this person. He rose. Dorkin heard him and wheeled about, drawing up his gun. Then he stopped and stared.

"Blimey!" he ejaculated. "Yew!"

"Yes, I'm here," answered Dorsay, and, rather surprized at the futility of the question, added—

"What do you want?"

Dorkin scowled and looked suspiciously around. He seemed puzzled and uneasy.

"Wot d'jew want?" he demanded truculently. "'Ow did yer git 'ere, heh?"

"How did you get here?" returned Dorsay, more conscious of practical affairs.

"Me? Why, I came 'ere after the splosh," said Dorkin with a grin, glancing at the ivory. "Wot djer fink?—Thort yew wus 'ome by now."

Then he suddenly sidestepped to get the solid wall behind him instead of the cave mouth. Dorsay noticed the maneuver, and remarked the swift movements of the furtive eyes.

"The cave!" he muttered to himself. "But how did you get in here?" persisted Dorsay. "Don't you know where you are?"

"Course I do! But 'ow in —— did yew gif 'ere? That's wot I want ter know. See?"

They both had remained standing antagonistically. Dorsay glanced apprehensively—he did not know why—at the ivory hut where the lunatic was lying asleep.

"Well," said Dorsay patiently with a slight laugh, "I was foolish enough to walk here—apparently as you have done."

"Wot djer mean? 'Ow long yew been 'ere?"

"I don't want to know," returned Dorsay in a low voice.

Dorkin moved a pace sidewise watching stealthily.

"Wot djer mean?"

"Exactly what I said," said Dorsay with a sigh. "I don't want to know how long I've been here. Neither will you soon."

Again Dorkin glanced hurriedly about, as if suspicious of some kind of a trap in the words. Then he regarded Dorsay cunningly.

"Balmy," he rapped out. "That's what yew are!"

"Not yet. Not yet. Thank God!"

The tone of the voice puzzled Dorkin. He wiped the back of his hand across his beard, which was bloody, and took a step forward irritably.

"'Oo 're gittin' at?"

"No one."

Dorsay sank down in his favorite place by the wall, as if he were both tired and bored.

"You're a liar and a thief, Dorkin, and a would-be murderer—if you're not already, for all I know—but I wouldn't wish this fate on you even if you did——"

"Wot the —— djer mean?"

Dorkin glanced swiftly at the mouth of the cave as if fearful of something behind him, and, dragging the gun, strode across and bent over Dorsay menacingly.

"Look 'ere, none o' yer lip! Wot djer mean?"

"I mean," said Dorsay, slowly and tiredly, watching the mounting curve of sunlight on the circular wall, "that you've fallen into a trap, and that you'll never get out. As far as I understand from what the doctor told me these natives think we're kind of gods. Anyway we're fed and kept here like bears in a pit, and here you'll stop until—until— Oh, I don't want to think about *that*."

The information percolated slowly into Dorkin's mind. He straightened up. The small eyes blinked. Some knowledge of native ways and legends corroborated Dorsay's statement of the position.

"Garn!" he exploded suddenly. "Scared, that's wot yew are! 'Ow djer get 'ere? From that there cave?"

Dorsay nodded.

"Well, wot's ter stop yer gittin' aht the sime wy, heh? Garn, ye're orf yer crumpet!"

"If you mean I'm crazy already," returned Dorsay, "you're wrong. Nor do I intend to be, but *you* will very soon, Dorkin, just the same as that other poor soul."

Dorkin started, and glanced around.

"Wot!" he exclaimed. "'Nother feller?

W'ere? Black feller? . . . Oh, my——"

At that moment, like a lazy cat, the white-haired lunatic emerged from his hut, and, seeing the stranger, stood and giggled.

At the motion of Dorkin's gun the maniac leaped swiftly and disappeared through the cave mouth, from which echoed a dozen muffled echoes of a derisive shriek.

"Gor," muttered Dorkin, "'e's orf 'is nut."

"I told you he was," reminded Dorsay.

Dorkin looked at Dorsay and back at the cave mouth swiftly. The half-raised rifle quivered slightly.

"Leave that gun alone," continued Dorsay equably. "He's perfectly harmless."

"But 'e's balmy," spluttered Dorkin.

"Am I to shoot you as soon as you go crazy?" demanded Dorsay tetchily.

"Me? Crazy! Wot djer gittin' at? I ain't crazy. I——"

He stopped, glanced suspiciously at the cave mouth and then at the stack of ivory. He looked at Dorsay slowly.

"Gor!" he said, pawed his eyes with the back of his hand and fell to staring at the tusks.

DORSAY watched his pose and the tense strain of the eyes:

"He's had an awful fright and he's trying to bluff," he observed to himself without interest. "Got lost in the cave, I guess."

Slowly Dorkin tore his eyes away from the half a million dollars, gazed at Dorsay as if unable to believe that he were really there, and sat down suddenly with the rifle across his knees. He opened his lips to speak and then, glancing nervously at the cave mouth, snapped—

"W'ere's 'e gawn?"

"Don't know."

"Carnt 'e git aht?"

"I've told you."

A broken snicker was followed by a shriek and muffled echoes.

"Oh, gor!" exclaimed Dorkin, starting. "Wot's 'e do that fer?"

"He's mad, I told you."

"Lumme."

A scared expression came into Dorkin's eyes.

"'Re yew mad, too?"

"Not yet."

"Crikey, can't stand this."

Dorkin scrambled to his feet hurriedly, looked toward the cave mouth, hesitated, and then, bending over Dorsay, whispered—

"D'yer fink 'e saw somefing?"

"What did you see?" queried Dorsay with some interest.

"Me? I—I— Is it true wot yer tole me abaht not gittin' aw'y?"

"Unfortunately, yes."

"Gawd's truf?"

"Unfortunately, yes."

"But they tole me the stuff wus in 'ere."

"Well, it is, isn't it?"

"They tole me I could 'ave it."

There was a resentful whimper in the voice like a deceived child's.

"Well, there it is."

"I got bloomin' eyes, ain't I?" retorted Dorkin savagely.

"H'm. Who brought you here, anyway?"

"Some of me own men."

Dorkin scowled at the recollection and burst out:

"Darned scuts, never can trust a ruddy nigger. That Yamakala—me head man—'e told me 'e got the tip stright from Mangu, the witch-doctor bloke, that the stuff was 'ere. Brought me las' night afore the moon rose. Then when I wus 'arf wy 'e turned and bolted, the mangy swine. Afore I cud let 'im 'ave one, too. In wiv that there streak o' guts ter get me *safari*."

"Why didn't you go back after him?"

"Arter 'im?"

Dorkin seemed about to choke with indignation.

"'Ow cud I w'en there wasn't no more light than in the backyard o' ——?"

He paused to shoot a glance at the cave mouth.

"Never see a plice like that afore. Ruddy hawful. But I come on. Tikes somefin' ter stop me."

"So you've been in there since last night?"

"Yus, the ruddy 'ole. But I'll git 'im, mark me."

"Why don't you?"

"Heh?"

He bent lower over Dorsay, as if he had suddenly recollected something he had forgotten.

"But yew s'y as we carn't git aht?"

"That's right," answered Dorsay, noticing the "we."

"Garn," exploded Dorkin with sudden

energy. "It ain't true. Oh, haw, there 'e is agine!"

The lunatic had come out of the cave silently and was watching them. Dorsay beckoned to him. He came trotting across with the cringing eyes of a cur fixed on the stranger, and, sidling beside Dorsay, cuddled to him.

This time Dorkin watched him with the awe of the ignorant for the insane. He straightened up, glanced at Dorsay, and bellowed, as if wild with rage:

"Yew're a bloomin' pair of balmies, that's wot yew are. I'm orf."

He strode toward the cave mouth. On the threshold he stopped to stare at the ivory, walked across and around it, evidently measuring the quantity. Then he turned and shouted:

"Comin' back for this lot, I am, and don't yer ferget it, yer pair of balmies! So long!"

And, turning, he plunged resolutely into the fangs of the ghostly cave.

"I wonder what he's angry with us for?" commented Dorsay aloud, and looked at his pal, who began to snicker softly.

The curve of sunlight shrank up the gorge, blazed upon the eastern rim and disappeared. In the cool the madman awoke and began his nightly game with the shadows and the people of his disordered mind.

Dorsay, who had dozed too, resumed his usual promenade. Although he wondered what had happened to Dorkin the incident seemed very unreal. If there was any definite emotion it was a hope that he wouldn't come back, would escape, anything rather than insist upon dragging him back to terrible reality.

He looked up at the disk of perforated sky. There was no moon now, and the stars were frostily brilliant. The giggles and yells of the madman had become normal to him. When he was fairly warm he would crouch in the hut of ivory and doze for a while until the chill awoke him and then recommence the perpetual promenade. Sometimes the lunatic would fall in beside him and follow like a dog, until, tiring, he would scamper off upon his own mysterious errands.

During one of these moments Dorkin reappeared, Dorsay heard a groaning curse as he stumbled out of the cave. He didn't see his two fellow prisoners, and cried out—

"Oh, my ——, they've gawn!"

"No they haven't," answered Dorsay, and wanted to laugh; yet he dared not because the madman giggled; but he heard Dorkin's words—

"Oh, thank Gawd!"

Dorkin came toward him eagerly. The lunatic turned a giggle into a shriek, and, darting past him, disappeared into the cave. Dorkin made a gulping noise and collided with Dorsay, who noticed that he was trembling as with an ague. He clutched him by the arm.

"Is it truf?" he whispered hoarsely. "We carn't git aht?"

"I told you so."

"Yus, but—but——"

He seized Dorsay's arm again.

"I fort I'd never git aht o' that ruddy cave. Never git aht. Oh, ——, it's hawful."

"Yes; it's worse than this, isn't it?"

"Oh, ——, I —I Look 'ere, I ain't been right wiv yew. I know it. But yew won't leave me, will yer? Swear yer won't? I carn't stand it."

"I'm not likely to—unfortunately. Say, you'll have to pull yourself together, Dorkin else you'll——"

"Wot's the good? Wot's the ——'s the good?"

He flung himself away and subsided into a corner growling—

"If I git 'old of 'im, ——!"

DORSAY continued pacing, trying not to give way to the thoughts which Dorkin's entry excited in teeming clouds. Dorkin remained crouched against the rock, alternately swearing and groaning. The lunatic, for some reason, kept quiet, gibbering occasionally just within the cave mouth. At last the stars paled. Dorsay noticed that Dorkin had not got his rifle.

"Probably lost it in the cave. So much the better," he thought, "for he'll get ugly sooner or later."

When the madman came scampering past him to reach the ivory hut, Dorkin scowled.

"Better have a sleep, Dorkin," advised Dorsay on his way to the hut. "We're fed about eight."

Dorkin mumbled unintelligently. Later Dorsay was awakened by revolver-shots. He started up with his mind in a blaze of hope. He saw Dorkin standing in the middle of the pit bottom, jumping with rage and firing wildly above the gourd of food as it was being lowered.

"It's no use doing that," he called out as the lunatic in a frenzy of fear dashed past him into the cave.

Dorkin wheeled about, and with an oath threatened to "put one" in him if he didn't "hold his jaw." At that moment the madman shrieked. Dorkin fired into the cave mouth.

The act infuriated Dorsay. He shouted and rushed at Dorkin. The small eyes were gleaming with mad rage. As Dorkin fired, Dorsay leaped.

The bullet clipped his ear.

This excuse for action seemed to release something in him that had long been tugging for freedom—something which was already loosed in the other man. He grabbed at Dorkin's wrist with one hand and smashed into his face with the other. Dorkin jabbed him in the ribs and brought up his knee at the same time. Dorsay, hurt, gripped the other's neck and, savagely winding a leg around Dorkin's, threw him. The revolver clattered on the rocky floor.

Maddened by pain and disgust and the tearing of the man's teeth, Dorsay exerted every ounce of strength and skill, knowing, more than he had in the previous fight, that the man had become a more dangerous killer through sheer terror.

Once as Dorkin in a heave managed to get atop of him and had his hand upon his windpipe, Dorsay saw, as through a cloud, the form of the lunatic, dancing and giggling about them.

Vainly Dorsay tried to twist the wrist of the hand whose fingers were around his throat. Abandoning the attempt, he managed to seize Dorkin's other wrist, and, twining his leg between his adversary's, contrived to half-throw him on to his side. Then, swiftly grasping one ankle, by a desperate effort of his spine and body he secured the right leg in a lock. At the first jerk the knee-cap cracked with the strain. Dorkin released his strangling grip.

For several moments, to get his breath, Dorsay held him. Then, changing to an arm-lock, he climbed on top of him.

"See here, Dorkin," he said thickly, "you've got to do what you're told. Understand that?"

"I wasn't doin' nuffin," pretended Dorkin sulkily, "till that there ruddy idjit larfed at me, and then you——"

"That'll do!"

Dorsay slid off his opponent's body and seized the revolver.

"Now get up!"

Dorkin obeyed, glancing malevolently at the lunatic, who was standing by the cave mouth, ready to seek refuge. Dorsay, ashamed and half-frightened by the animal fury that had possessed him, and partially conscious that he should have killed the killer, stalked over to the food-basket and curtly handed a share to Dorkin. Then, taking the rest, he walked to the cave mouth and called softly to the lunatic. Sitting together, with the revolvers in Dorsay's pockets, Dorsay and the witless one ate their food, while Dorkin sulkily chewed by the edge of the stack of ivory tusks.

THROUGHOUT the day Dorkin refused to speak and remained squatting sullenly by himself, growling and scowling at the lunatic. Realizing that Dorkin would probably try to recover his revolver and that he could not keep awake, always, Dorsay, when going into the cave to drink, hid both Dorkin's weapon and his own.

In the warmth of the middle day and afternoon he slept as usual with the lunatic huddled beside him. When he awakened he knew that Dorkin had tried his pockets for the guns. Dorkin grinned spitefully, said he would "do for" the "gigglin' idjit" and began a systematic search, first among the tusks. When he failed to find the guns he grew vicious, swore continually, and threatened. Once he bawled out with a hysterical note—

"If it wasn't fer yew, yer ——, I wouldn't be in this 'ole; —— yew and yer dotty doctor."

But watching Dorkin and protecting the lunatic began to tell on Dorsay. He became more nervous, and the continual strain wore down his morale. He grew to hope that some end would come. Then Dorkin developed other symptoms. He would awake screaming and make sudden savage rushes after the witless one. When Dorsay interfered he would retreat, muttering and gibbering unintelligibly.

Every day he would persist in sitting and dozing in the short sun-rays without a hat or covering. Dorsay warned him, but received snarling curses.

"He won't last long," Dorsay commented that night, "and then he'll try to kill us

both. I ought to shoot him," he added, as a statement of cold fact.

A few days afterward Dorsay—sticking to his first resolution had not counted—was awakened by a scream, felt a heavy body fall upon him and savage hands about his throttle. He knew what was happening and fought desperately. He had scarcely any chance; for Dorkin, taking him when he was asleep had secured a strangle-hold. He writhed and kicked, but Dorkin had pinioned one arm with a thigh and rendered his legs useless by straddling his stomach. Dorkin's thumbs and fingers sank deeper. Dorsay felt his tongue swelling, his lungs bursting, and the pain was like scorching iron pincers in his throat.

Then suddenly came a feeling of concussion. The fingers relaxed, and his aggressor rolled over helplessly. Dorsay sat up, choking and pawing up at his lacerated throat. Through bloodshot eyes he saw mistily that Dorkin was lying still with blood flowing from his skull, and beside him was the lunatic, staring bewilderedly at him. He grew vaguely aware that the dreadful light had gone out of those eyes, as the man placed his hand to his white hair and whispered slowly—

"Who—are—you?"

K

"WHO am I?"

Dorsay repeated the words mechanically.

"Why—"

"And who did that?"

The man pointed to the corpse of Dorkin, the head of which was almost split in two from a blow from a small tusk lying weltering in blood.

"Who did——"

Dorsay stared, still holding his throat. Then he realized the fact that a blow, or the excitement, had restored the man's reason.

"Why you must— But don't you recollect anything? Don't you remember me?"

"You?"

The man passed his hand across his eyes bewilderedly.

"Never saw you before, my dear chap. Er—who are you, and how did you come here—and this?"

"Well, my name is Dorsay Beffert. I'm an American. Those savages brought me here where I found you. This fellow came some days ago. He was a trader after this ivory. I knew him. He tried to shoot you——"

"Shoot *me?*"

"Yes; but that's days ago. A while ago he tried to strangle me, and you must have felled him with that small tusk there. But don't you recollect anything at all?"

"Nothing," responded the man incredulously. "The last I remember was— Oh, my God, I got lost in the cave, I think, and —and—I can't remember."

He held his head with both hands as if trying to recall the past."

"Who are you?" interposed Dorsay.

"I? I'm Geoffrey Constable. These natives tricked me in here— Oh, I don't know. Last year, I suppose. I don't know. What month is it?"

"Probably July—as far as I know. When did you come here?

"March, nineteen three."

"Nineteen three! Good Lord, this is nineteen six!"

Geoffrey Constable stared at Dorsay.

"Three years!" he repeated dully. "Three years! My ——!"

His eyes wandered around the circular wall of their prison and rested at length on the corpse of Dorkin.

"Did I kill this man? Why?"

"Because he tried to kill me in my sleep. You saved my life."

"I did? Why did he want to kill you? I mean," he added, "what's the use of killing—anything—here?"

"Quite so," assented Dorsay soothingly. "But he did. He was going a little crazy. Couldn't stand it, I guess. He was a rough-neck anyway."

"Rough-neck?"

"Yes; bad-man."

"Oh."

Constable gazed at Dorsay musingly.

"Of course you haven't been long here yet, have you? H'm. I suppose I must have become—er—unbalanced. Was I?"

"Yes—slightly. I mean you didn't—didn't seem to recognize me—I mean as a white man," added Dorsay embarrassedly.

"Oh, really?"

Constable pointed suddenly to the curve of sunlight about seven feet up the wall.

"I remember that. See that ridge? Well, it's twenty-four minutes past three o'clock. I had a watch—at first. By Jove!"

He turned with interest, clutched his wrist, and then began feeling the remnants of his pants where his pockets had been.

"I wonder what I've done with it?"

He twiddled meditatively with his long white beard.

"By gad," he remarked, "rather nice of you to turn up."

He laughed—sanely.

"Although rough luck, I must say. Haven't any scissors, have you? My hair seems rather long, what? And my beard——"

Pulling the ragged ends, he glanced down, and started violently.

"My ——, it's white!"

Dorsay did not reply.

"Is that true?" he demanded. "Or am I——?"

"No. It's true—and your hair."

"And it used to be black!"

His eyes filled with tears. Dorsay looked away. Constable rose to his feet, and began examining his clothes.

"Good ——! Good ——! I remember," he muttered. "I tore up bits of my shirt and threw them over the crater in a piece of calabash. Oh my ——, how long was that ago!"

"Yes, I know," responded Dorsay. "I found one. That's what brought me here."

"Brought you here? What, to rescue me? That was sporting!"

He smiled and held out his hand.

"Thanks, Mr. — er ——?"

"Beffert."

"Mr. Beffert. But where? How?"

"I found it on a native as a charm, and then I came along with a doctor friend of mine, Macnamara——"

"Mac! What! Mac?"

"Yes; do you know him?"

"Where is he?"

"I wish I knew."

Oblivious, in this excitement, of the weltering corpse of him who had been the unconscious cause of restoring Constable's reason, they talked on for some half an hour or more. Constable, it appeared, had come down from the Sudan, and among the Turkana had been trapped as Dorsay and Dorkin had been.

When he had arrived there had been another white, a Scotchman, McCullough, a dour soul, said Constable, who would never talk and had one day disappeared. Constable had never known whether he had died or had escaped. Dorsay thought of the skeleton he had stumbled upon in the cave.

THEY buried the remains of Dorkin, or rather carried them as far into the cave as they could. They could do no more.

In the society of this man who had endured so much until his brain had given way, Dorsay's desire to live, and courage to think, revived. He would watch Constable sometimes with a kind of awe, recollecting the giggling "thing" which had cringed and cowered for protection. The more he saw of Constable the better he realized how the man had withstood two or three years of solitary confinement in such environment; for as an experienced hunter and exploror he had a fund of mental life and a courage that nothing appeared to be able to daunt.

Days melted into each other Constable so drew Dorsay's attention from the concrete present by stories of exploration and a philosophic presentation of life, founded on his experiences in many lands, that he almost forgot their sorry plight and began to draw, as many a prisoner has done before, a queer pleasure from the effortless life of a caged animal, relieved of the daily struggle for existence.

At length, while pacing in the dark of a moonless night, there came to them a sound that quickened the action of their hearts, yet which was stoppered by a clutching fear of illusion.

"Did you hear that?" whispered Constable as the two stood stockstill in the well of their prison, staring incredulously at the perforated disk of the sky.

"Beff-ert! Are you there?" came a familiar voice from above before Dorsay could reply.

"Yes, yes! Oh, my ——!" shouted Dorsay, hoarsely, almost stifled with emotion and clutching at Constable's arm. "Is that you, doctor?"

"Sssh!" came back warningly, and the faint outline of an arm waved broke the rim of the crater against the frosty stars. "Are you all right?"

"Yes, thank God. But ——"

"Alone?"

"No, no. There's a friend of yours here. Geoffrey Constable——"

"What!"

"Hullo, Mac!" chimed in Constable quietly. "How are you? Jolly glad to see you—or rather—" he laughed softly—"jolly glad to hear you!"

"Well, I'm ——!" floated gently the voice of the little doctor. "Where the deuce did you pop up from? But, ssh! No time now. Listen. I'll throw you a rope and you'll have to swarm up."

"Right-o! But half a moment. Anybody with you?"

"A couple of my men and a donkey," returned Macnamara. "We'll have to break round the mountain for Uganda. Look out!"

Again an arm broke the rim line and a fiber rope wriggled against the stars, the end of which hit the perpendicular sides of the shaft with a smack.

"You go first," said Dorsay.

"No. But wait," returned Constable. "I say, Mac, better cover our tracks, hadn't we? We'll rig up a body here to look like one of us asleep so that they won't smell a rat tomorrow morning, what?"

"Good idea, old man," assented the doctor. "Give us a longer start. But all the same they won't follow farther than the lower slopes for fear of the mountain devil."

"Right-o! Come on, young-feller-me-lad," added Constable to Dorsay. "We'll have to lug your dead friend out. It's a nasty job, but he'll sleep just as well here as inside the cave, poor soul."

XI

BY DAWN the little expedition had gained the northern elbow of the mountain and was hidden by the mist which often dwells around the summit of Mount Elgon.

The going was rough and cold in their slight tropical clothes, particularly for Constable, but they plugged on steadily, warming up in the heat of the rising sun, until about noon, when, reasonably safe from any pursuit, if the natives had discovered their flight, they halted in sight of the plain of Busoga, covered in swamp and forest, beneath them.

"No," replied the doctor as they sat around the camp-fire, in answer to a long-deferred question regarding the upshot of the Somali's attack. "They wiped out about half my men and got away with three of them and two donkeys."

"And one perfectly good American," interrupted Dorsay, smiling. "Don't forget that."

"I didn't," asserted the little doctor, grinning like a Scotch terrier. "At first I thought the darned American had kicked the bucket. Anyway I followed up your trail and found your dead friend and the horse. Horse spoor easy enough; but your trail was difficult.

"However, we eventually found the spot where you had met several natives and my donkey. I arrived at Yamba's only a few hours after you and Dorkin had left. Of course, I hadn't the remotest notion who he was. The old man swore you had left together, but I knew he was lying.

"They tried to put me off for some time, and then suddenly came round and offered to lead me straight to you. I smelt a rat. I came to a village not far from the sacred one where they led you out into the trap, and then refused to budge. I suspected something was in the wind, but couldn't make out exactly what.

"Through my men and overhearing one of their *shauris* I knew that you were near, and that some witch-doctor business was on. I tried to buy the local man, but he tried to double-cross me. By the way, did you see anything of a compass?"

"Surely I did," assented Dorsay, and related the circumstances.

"Well, I managed to get Mangu," continued the doctor, "the old fellow and chief of the witch-doctors, to come to see me, and kidded him that this was an extra special piece of magic which would reveal the man whom the gods had appointed and all that sort of thing. Sheer bluff, of course, because I had only a ghost of a notion what I was talking about—guesswork; but I wasn't far wrong.

"You had rotten luck. About four to one against the needle hitting right on you. If it hadn't, it might not have saved you altogether, but at any rate it would have delayed matters.

"Well, that night I heard the caterwauling and guessed that something had gone wrong. I darn't barge in, but had to sit quiet and watch."

"Then things began to get uncomfortable. A lot of monkey work was going on around. Mangu came later and wanted to lead me straight to my white friend, you or Dorkin. I refused. They would have simply trapped me as well.

"I tried to find out where you were from the local man. Not a bad sort. Wanted like the deuce to have the cattle I offered, but the spirits of his ancestors, and you people in the hole there, scared him stiff.

"However, I learned by piecing together scraps and what not, something of the system, and guessed pretty accurately what had happened. As you probably know, Connie, they mess up the concrete with the abstract; kings same thing as gods in their eyes, you know. But from the little they had seen and heard in those days and since, they knew that the whites were more powerful with their guns and what not than the blacks.

"Then some enterprising witch-doctor must have said, 'Let's have white gods, and so we'll be stronger than any other tribe.' Logical enough; but premises somewhat rocky, what?"

"Yes, I had heard of the system up north and came along to find out all about it. I did," said Constable dryly.

The two ex-gods laughed, feeling that now they could afford to do so.

"Well, to get along with the yarn," continued the little doctor, "I started working on that basis. While I was thinking things out Mangu and company began to get ugly. Evidently they wanted to get me safely planted.

"Well, matters got to such a pitch that I saw I couldn't get out to make up a relief expedition as I had half thought of, and that it was up to me to save my own skin to get yours out, young man."

"Very nice of you, doctor."

"H'M," GRINNED the doctor. "I tell you frankly there was a time when I thought that it was about time to check up accounts for Gabriel and cussed myself for a fool for ever allowing you to kid me into such a mess at my age. Well, they got so jolly nasty generally that I had to think up something or chuck up the sponge.

"Then my local pal began to get scared of Mangu, and I saw that I couldn't trust him any longer. I saw too that I had to do something to settle matters, and above all to get Mangu and the head witch-doctors out of the light before I would stand a sporting chance of getting near you or of saving myself. Then one night I heard the drums going and thought that it was for my funeral—it must have been about the time of Dorkin's introduction to the cave from what you say.

"Suddenly I recalled the message written on the charm that had lured us into the untidy mess. I knew very well that any part of a god is sacred. That's why they had made a charm out of your shirt, Connie. I hadn't got a striped shirt, but I tore up a piece of *bafta* (trade cloth) and faked the blood writing.

"It worked like magic. They were scared to death of me. Let me do pretty well what I liked. I cussed myself for a prince of fools for not having thought of it before."

"Good Lordy!" exclaimed Dorsay. "Dorkin must have known something of that. That's why he tried to steal my charm and tried to murder me for it! If I had only known!"

"I don't know so much," demurred Constable. "Had he known, why didn't he fake it as you did, Mac?"

"Too darned stupid, I guess," put in Dorsay.

"Probably, from what I know of him," agreed the doctor.

"Say, doc," continued Dorsay, "what does '*hakkim*' mean?"

"In Kiswahili Arabic it means doctor. Why?"

"Oh, that's what I thought and kept on asking Gillette—the guy with my safety razor in his ear—for you by that name. That's how they got me into the cave. He pointed and kept saying, '*hakkim*, *hakkim*,' and I fell for it, thinking he meant you."

"Oh, but that's not Turkana lingo. Probably he didn't understand a word. But you must always remember that a native is particularly sensitive to suggestion. He regards a white—usually—as a superior being; is scared; and therefore anxious to please.

"You'll remark the same thing in a peasant. If you say, 'This is so,' he'll possibly reply, 'Oh, yes, sir!' On the other hand if you say, 'This isn't so,' he'll as well say, 'Oh, no, sir!'

"But in your case Gillette, as you call him, was probably kidding you—anything to get you into the cave and the trap."

"That's what I thought—afterward."

"Evidently that's their game with each one," commented Constable. "They promised to show me this god—and I bit! Naturally I never suspected that I was intended for part of the menagerie."

"Yes, they are not such bad psychologists. Roughly speaking, these witch-doctors know human weaknesses and play them for all they're worth. That's their trade after all."

"Plenty of white witch-doctors, too, who make a good living!" added Constable with a laugh.

"You bet," assented the doctor, grinning, "otherwise most politicians would be out of a job, what? Well, after I got that magic going they left me alone, gave me permission to go where I liked through the country and all that sort of thing, you know. But I daren't begin any real attempt to rescue you until Mangu *et al.* had gone home.

"They might be nice to me with what they thought was your shirt-tail in my hands, Connie, but I didn't think they'd stand for monkeying with their gods, what? Well, after that all I could do was to sit tight and wait my chance.

"I think Mangu got jolly wild over the charm business, for it deprived him of an extra god; but he couldn't get over the authenticity, as it were, of the sacred relic. Finally he got peeved and went home cussing. Then my local friend became more friendly and I found out where you were.

"A few days ago most of the village went on a hunting-raiding expedition and I seized my chance. That's all."

THE three white men sat for a while in silence, staring at the glowing end of a log, occasionally throwing a handful of twigs upon the coals to keep them alight. The air was sharp and cold, and the vastness of the African night seemed to press them closer to the blaze.

The orange glow, lighting up their faces, betrayed three curiously different expressions.

Dorsay, though smug and content with having passed through an experience that would keep the home folks thrilled for years to come, looked like a happy tramp, with his stubby growth of beard, and an old, weather-beaten pipe stuck between his sun-cracked lips.

Constable, with gray patriarchal beard spread over his broad, bony chest, was dreaming terrible dreams. His sunken eyes seemed to look back with increasing horror on the years he had spent in the frightful pit.

Only the little doctor was alert. His small eyes twinkled restlessly, darting frequently at the haggard countenance of his old friend.

"Constable," he said abruptly, "why didn't you try to get out?"

"Get out?" broke in Dorsay. "It was impossible!"

"Impossible," Constable echoed dully, not having quite grasped the significance of the doctor's words.

"That's rot," insisted the doctor impatiently. "There were lots of ways—ladder of ivory—make a bit of string to guide you through the tunnel——"

"Oh, oh, I see!" exclaimed Constable sharply as his reawakened brain grasped the query.

Then in a puzzled tone:

"But I did. You must have seen. I was always planning something."

His face became animated, and his eyes sparkled.

"As soon as I fully realized they had me imprisoned—for life—I set to work to get out. I made tools with my belt-buckle and the nails from my shoes—and I built a ladder of ivory, with the longest, heaviest tusks at the base. It took me over a year; but I did it, and half the time my hands were so raw I could suck the blood from them.

"I spent a full week shifting my ladder into position. When I reached the top—it was shaky and flimsy as straw—my hand came about four feet from the rim of the pit. Of course, I should have gone down again and worked some more. But I'd used up my last scrap of metal. I was desperate. So near the top— I must have gone a bit crazy to be free. I jumped for it.

"The added pressure of that spring snapped the ivory under me. I went crashing all the way down to the bottom. I broke some bones and lost a lot of blood—and must have lain there for two or three days——"

"Didn't the niggers ever know?" exclaimed Dorsay.

"No. They never looked down. Afraid of accidents, I suppose. Afterward I made a shelter of the ivory."

The Englishman paused, and drew a shaking hand slowly across his forehead.

"Next thing I did," he continued with a rush, "was to try to explore the cave systematically. I saved the fat from the goats' meat and made a candle with a wick

from the threads of my shirt. Then a cloudburst came and my last few matches were dissolved in mud, leaving only some useless phosphorus."

"Good Lordy!" exclaimed Dorsay. "I should think you *would* have gone crazy!"

The Englishman looked fixedly at Dorsay for a moment.

"A couple of times, young fellow, I thought I was——"

"Yes, yes," said the little doctor impatiently; "get on."

"Well," continued Constable, "I preserved the mud and phosphorus in a bit of hollow ivory. Then I raveled my shirt and what remained of my socks and underwear, and spun a long cord with the thread.

"With this I began to trace my way out through the labyrinth. Whenever I came to a doubtful point I'd pick out a bit of stone and smear it with phosphorus; so I left glowing points behind me.

"There's something ruddy awful in groping through a slimy tunnel, black as ——. Not a sound but the infernal drip-drip-drip of the water from the tips of the stalactites. Once in a while I'd barge into a stalactite, and it would collapse with a splash and a sound like the soft wheeze of a river animal.

"There was a little comfort in looking back at the glowing spots of phosphorus; so as I went on I smeared the rocks more and more thickly.

"I had just smudged some on a small round stone like a large volcanic pebble, and had continued on for a few steps, when suddenly I felt absolutely sick. The cord in my hand had parted!

"Water must have soaked through the flimsy thread, and it broke at the first strain. My only hope then was to follow the points of phosphorus immediately, and get back before the glow faded away. By this time I was jumpy and scared—nothing but a bundle of nerves anyway, you know.

"I turned quickly, and began blundering my way back, my heart beating a hundred to the minute.

"And the first thing I saw in the dead blackness in front of me was a skull in a ball of pale flame, with black, empty eyes and gaping mouth grinning at me.

"Of course, it was only the round stone I had smeared with phosphorus. But the shock was too sudden for me to grasp that then. I must have yelled and—and gone a bit—eh—balmy—because I haven't the foggiest notion what happened next until young Beffert here caught me smashing the Australian—the next day—I think it was."

His voice trailed off, and his eyes remained fixed dully on the coals. His hands stole almost furtively up to the matted beard. Then he scrambled widely to his feet.

"Good ——!" he cried. "It's true, then! It's true!"

His companions looked up, startled and silent. For a moment they could think of nothing to say. Then the tenseness passed from Geoffrey Constable's face.

He faced the darkness with a reckless light blazing in his eyes, and shook his fist in the direction of the Turkana village.

"All right," he cried. "Six years I've given you! But you'll pay—you'll pay—fifty thousand blinking quid!—a fortune in ivory! Gentlemen, it's ready for us whenever we want to collect. Are you with me?"

And the young American and the grizzled little doctor jumped to their feet with yells of enthusiasm that rang through the night, and stilled—for a moment—the wild, threatening voices of Africa.

THE PASSING OF BARBARY TIM

by **Joseph Blethen**

THE range boss grinned as he slipped me a pass
To his midnight necktie show;
"Come on," said he, "we wants a scribe
So all them papers will know."

A wandering scribbler far from home,
I trembled in my boots;
But no one slacks in Coulee Flat,
Where a man is known as he shoots.

I went along as a critic cold
To watch a rope go tight,
There in that plan of man to man,
Where a life for a life is right.

This Tim had seen some better days
And some nights that will never grow cold—
But finally landed behind the bars
For beaning a guy for his gold.

So along about twelve on the night of the show
The range boss tipped me a wink
That plainly said: "You interview him,
While I go fish for a drink."

And while he rustl'd a bottle or two
Of the essence of barleycorn
With which we all might irrigate
Our nerve for that dismal morn—

Poor Tim and I had a midnight chat
As cheerful as ever could be,
For Tim had something on his chest
And he lifted the lid for me—

* * *

"Them vigilantes sure do go
When once they start to move;
They got the goods on me all right,
An' it's wastin' time to prove.

"I've lived a bit; I got no kick;
'Don't steal—don't squeal'—is the way;
But who the —— is the hangin' sharp
That fixes the time of day?

"Some things jest nacherly strike a man wrong,
An' he wonders who lets 'em go free,
Such as drinkin' with poker or weddin's at noon
Or this business of hangin' at three.

"From the quarter-deck of a spotted hoss
I'll navigate to my God,
An' you'll plant me under a sage-brush plant
Instead of my native sod—

"But why let a guy get a slant at the dawn
Of a day that can never be his?
Say! Hang 'im at night when the sun is low
An' he's ready to sleep as it is!

"Just string 'im up when the stars come out
An' the ranchers has hit the hay,
An' he won't know a dawgone thing
When the roosters go yellin' for day

"Go on, send a note to your Editor sharp
Back East there to call 'em all in,
An' tell 'em to fix a nice little law
To make hangin' at daybreak a sin.

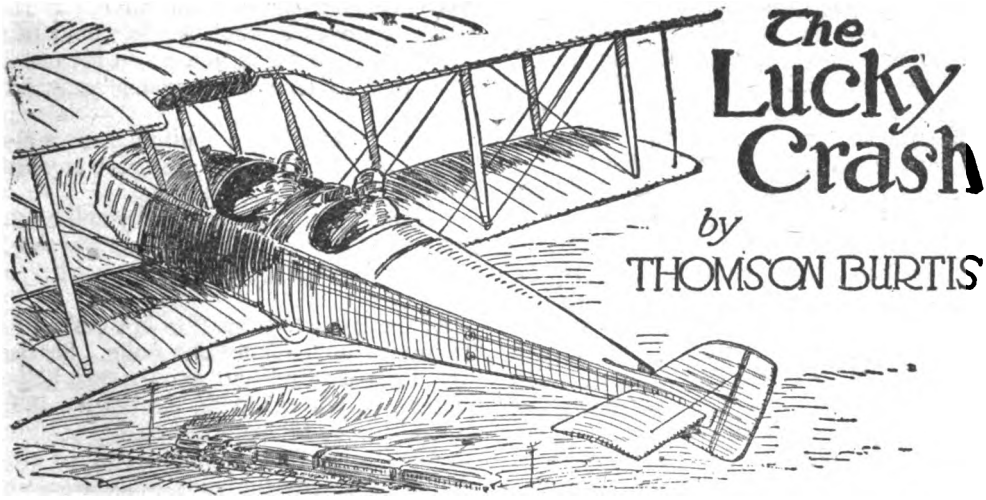
"I've played my hand an' cheated—say!
I'm tagged. I know I'm It;
But I hope they hang the next son of a gun
At a time of the day that is fit."

* * *

And that was the way that Barbary Tim
Orated there to me
As we waited around till the range boss came
With a rope and drinks for three.

And they sat poor Tim on a spotted horse
And led him under a tree,
Where a rope went tight to make things right
At the ugly hour of three.

'Twas "Curtain" for Tim, the range boss said
When we reached the end of the play,
And all that was left was the critic's job—
And here she is—as she lay.



The Lucky Crash

by THOMSON BURTIS

Author of "The Winning Chance," "When Good Fellows Get Together," etc.

TIA NITA, Mexico, is a little settlement of unpainted buildings dominated by one big two-story structure which bears the following sign in faded lettering, written in both Spanish and English:

FITZPATRICK'S STORE

General Merchandise. Money Loaned on Crops.

The store itself was dark at nine o'clock on the evening of October 14, 1920, but in the rear several lighted windows glowed dimly. Dave Fitzpatrick was at home.

The best-known—by reputation—and most feared man on the border was seated in a big crude armchair on the small veranda in the rear of his living-quarters. The soft light shining through the open door illumined his face and left the most of his body in shadow. He was a rather short, powerfully built man with grizzled hair and an unusually wide, thin mouth which remained almost as motionless as a ventriloquist's when he spoke.

"I haven't had a chance before to talk to you about this MacDowell, Searles, and you were the only man there that night who could out-figure a baby on your own hook. How did it happen that you let him get away?"

His even voice was without shading or expression and his face remained absolutely immobile as he talked. There was a curious impression of stony coldness despite the bulk of his body. His square face was almost entirely minus the tan of the country, and the finely lined skin seemed to be stretched tight over the framework beneath.

His companion whom he had addressed was a small sandy-haired man of middle age. His hands, brown as mahogany, were so large and gnarled that they seemed ludicrously out of proportion with the rest of his body. His tanned face was seamed and lined and his eyes were in a perpetual squint. He was totally unimpressive in appearance.

"It's a queer deal, Dave, and the size of it is that we just let a wild young kid hand us the little end of the stick," said Searles, rolling a cigaret absently as he gazed at the fringe of mesquite skirting the course of the Rio Grande a hundred yards away.

"Well?"

Searles inhaled a huge draft of smoke and settled back against the wall. He was squatting cowboy fashion on his heels.

"Beers got hold o' me on the phone and said you wanted to trim this young flyer, MacDowell, and that he wanted me and Aldez to help. Beers got next to this young loot some way and got him into a poker game at the Del Norte with Aldez, Beers and I. Beers and Aldez was to switch decks, give MacDowell four aces and Beers a four-card straight flush, and Beers was to

draw a card to fill after diggin' into MacDowell for I.O.U.s as high as possible.

"It was just the same frame-up as we used on Carsley up to Nogales. The only difference was that this here MacDowell had been tipped off—how I ain't the least idea—and had guts enough to buck the ante. He caught the switch in decks, but bet his four aces up to a couple o' thousand dollars worth o' I.O.U.s before the draw.

"I guess, bein' a keen kid if there ever was one, he knowed it would be too raw for Beers to have a pat straight flush against four aces, and he figured the lay right—that the first two cards on top o' the deck would fill either end o' Beers' flush. The boy throws away one ace and draws two cards, so Beers don't fill.

"Then he pulls a gun before anybody could recover, has his partner, Ransom, that was sittin' there lookin' on, scoop in all the money in sight, and fades—a couple o' thousand winner. Of course I wasn't workin' the deal myself—just sittin' in to follow your orders, but you can't blame Beers. No man in the world could know that the kid had been tipped off and that he'd deliberately get into the game, figure the deal right and then throw away four aces for the sake o' drawin' two cards."

"He's a chip off the old block," remarked Fitzpatrick. "And he's got two thousand dollars of mine that I figure to make the most expensive *dinero* he ever got hold of."

He apparently had not moved a muscle during the conversation and his voice had neither raised nor lowered in the slightest degree, but his last words conveyed in some subtle way a depth of cold resolution that caused Searles to glance at his chief in sudden curiosity.

"There's a couple o' things I'm wonderin' about, Dave," he said. "Number one—who tipped off MacDowell that you was out to get him? Number two—why are you out to get him?"

Of all the men—outlaws, Mexicans, Chinamen, bribed officials and bandit chiefs—with whom Fitzpatrick carried on his widespread traffic back and forth across the border Searles was probably the only one who would have dared to ask that last question. Fitzpatrick gave no sign that he had heard, for a moment. So the imperturbable Searles went on:

"So far as I know this flyer has never run afoul o' you except that time he was flyin' low along the San Elizabeth road and made you back your car into the ditch. Unless you've changed a whole lot it would take more'n that to make you go so far out o' your way to trim off a young sprig like him."

Fitzpatrick's silence continued for a moment. Neither face nor eyes gave any hint of what his thoughts might be.

"Well, I'll tell you, Jim, and you'll be the first man I ever did tell. I guess you won't be under any temptation to spread it," he said.

At the last words his thin lips curved for an instant in an unpleasant smile. Searles, who for ten years had known that half a lifetime in jail would be his portion if he failed to serve Fitzpatrick well, did not give any indication that he understood the allusion but smoked calmly and waited.

"Twenty years ago," continued Fitzpatrick coldly, "I was a stockman in North Texas. I fought with every weapon I figured I could get away with using. I was no more particular then than I am now. Some people thought a lot but not a —— one o' them could prove anything. I was getting rich when Bill MacDowell—young MacDowell's father—threw his cards in my face at a stud game in Palestine and accused me of crooked dealing.

"The other fellows—all big stockmen—gave me a week to leave the country and published the story all over Texas. I came down here. And I'm tellin' you, Searles, if I'd thought I could have cheated in that game I would have, because it was big, but I was playin' square.

" 'Roarin' ' Bill MacDowell is one of the big men in Texas today—I might have been where he is. For twenty years I've waited to pay him off. When I see his son kicked out of the Army and out of the border country like I was there'll be a lot of men like you that won't be under the necessity of dancing when I crack the whip."

As unemotionally as Fitzpatrick had spoken, Searles replied.

"The spigs will find it harder to get guns, the Americans will find it harder to get liquor and the Customs men can sleep of nights," he remarked.

It was the first time he had ever heard Fitzpatrick say a word about himself, his past career or his reasons for any action. He was closer to his chief than any one else. Yet he had never pierced the armor of icy

inscrutability that had always kept Fitzpatrick an unknown quantity even to his underlings; his rule over them more absolute for that very reason.

"I thought it would be a simple matter of getting him deeply in debt or something of that kind," mused Fitzpatrick, his light eyes gazing unwinkingly into the soft blackness of the night. "It will be simple—but meanwhile I'm going to kill two birds with one shot. I'm going to make myself a fortune—and that fortune is coming directly from the pockets of young MacDowell. Until then, he can probably hold his rank in the Army Air Service."

The notes of a guitar came through the softly whispering night as one of Fitzpatrick's Mexicans felt the call to indulge his soul in music. Searles rocked gently on his heels, giving no sign of his surprize at the manner in which his boss was confiding his plans. He wondered how Dave planned to make a fortune at the young flyer's expense, but wisely held his peace for fear of breaking the mood of his chief.

"I sent 'Curly' Barnes to McMullen—MacDowell is stationed with the border patrol flight there—to look over the land, find out what he could and report. He came back today. He got into a liquor-made friendship with a Sergeant Cary from MacDowell's outfit and the sergeant told Curly all about a new carburetor that MacDowell and Cary himself have just about perfected.

"I know little about mechanics, but Curly says the idea is that all aviation carburetors now have what he calls jets for the gas to go through. These jets are about as big as the head of a pin, and fifty per cent. of the forced landings they have in flying are because these —— jet things get plugged with dirt or something in the gas. This carburetor has no jets. They built one and it worked fine. But there were a lot of new improvements so they're building another now. MacDowell got the idea and Cary, being a good mechanic, worked it out.

"They haven't got any blueprints or anything—they're just making one and plan to get the patents and stuff after they've got everything fixed right. Curley talked around various places and brought me a lot of engine books and things—and I can see that it's bound to throw any jet carburetor out of the running. All I've got to do is steal the model when they get it built—which will be next week sometime—rush the papers through and let Sallman up in Washington put it through the patent office."

Searles, imperturbable as he was, could hardly repress a start as Fitzpatrick mentioned Sallman's name so lightly. Sallman was a power in the Administration—truly the lines that Fitzpatrick held led to high places. He wondered whether Fitzpatrick realized how much he was revealing after all the years of silence under the spur of his long-deferred desire for revenge. He rolled another cigaret and waited for the massive, seemingly lifeless figure in the chair to continue.

"The question is," came the passionless voice of his chief: "Who is the best man to trust it to? What he will get when he succeeds will be very satisfactory. What he will get if he falls down like Beers will be—plenty."

Searles got up and walked to the edge of the tiny porch, the high heels of his boots accentuating the awkwardness of his bow-legged rider's walk. He spat deliberately and leaned against the wall.

"There's only one man for the job, I'd say," he stated finally. "'Weasel' Williams."

"That's what I thought you'd say, and you're right. There's a bunk ready for you in the room at the end of the mess-shack. Good night."

"Night, Dave."

"And Searles!"

Searles, who had started toward the near-by shack, turned. Fitzpatrick, still seated in exactly the attitude he had assumed at the start of the conversation let his pale eyes rest for a moment on the face of his chief henchman. Searles, standing in the light shining through the open door, returned the coldly steady gaze without wavering.

"You're the only man I've met in twenty years that never talked too much. Don't start now, Searles."

"A habit as old as that one doesn't break easily, Dave. So long."

Searles had many notches in his long-barreled old-fashioned six-shooters and he was as inscrutably calm as ever as he walked toward his bunk, but he was glad that he had been compelled to face his chief no longer than he had.

ONE week later Captain Kennard, in command of the McMullen Flight of the Air Service border patrol, was calling on Colonel Brewster who was in command of the cavalry garrison at McMullen. With them was Colonel Brewster's brother, a portly gentleman with a stiff white mustache who looked like a banker and was really a well-known Chicago architect. The conversation turned to Tex MacDowell.

"Just what sort of a fellow is this flyer of yours?" inquired Mr. Brewster through the fragrant smoke of his cigar. "After visiting Natalie and that husband of hers and hearing them talk I judge he is the best flyer, most wonderful character and general all-round champion hero that ever breathed."

Stocky homely Captain Kennard grinned at Mr. Brewster's dry summary. He could imagine how Ransom, a young observer who had recently married Colonel Brewster's daughter, had tooted MacDowell's horn for him.

"There is no doubt that Tex is an unusual chap, Mr. Brewster," he replied, settling back in his chair comfortably. "He was brought up on a big ranch here in Texas. I've gathered from the sheriff down here, who knew him when he was just a young sprout, that Tex ran with the cowboys almost from his infant days. He was a wild young *hombre* when he was about fourteen and knew more about life than a lot of men twice his age.

"He was sent East to school and college and when the war broke out in 1914 went with the Royal Air Force, then called the Royal Flying Corps. He got three boches before he was captured. He entered the American Air Service some months ago and came down here.

"His dad is a big man in Texas and has been for years. According to Sheriff Trowbridge the old gentleman—they used to call him 'Roaring Bill' MacDowell—was some boy in his prime, himself, and he passed down to Tex a wonderful physique, a lot of common sense, a brain as keen as a razor and an ineradicable love for a good fight of any kind whatever.

"Since Tex came to McMullen circumstances have arranged matters so that he has been continuously in the limelight for one thing and another. There is no question that he is a wonderful flyer—the best, I think, I ever saw—but there are lots of flyers, like Jimmy Jennings in my flight, who are just about as good, yet never got a line in a newspaper or their pictures in the movies. Tex just has a faculty for getting into the midst of whatever is going on, and coming out on top.

"On the other side he is too much of a gambler. He'd pile all he owned in the middle of the floor and roll the dice for the whole business any time. And he is —— on liquor at times. Besides he is incurably boyish—inclined to let big things slip, sometimes, for the joy he gets out of fighting against odds—a contest of any kind."

"Ransom was telling me about the stunt he put over in El Paso—skinning those card sharps out of two thousand dollars at their own game," chuckled Mr. Brewster.

"A perfect illustration of what I mean," declared the captain. "He took an awful chance for the pure joy of pitting himself against them—with the odds in favor of Dave Fitzpatrick's being behind them. And instead of realizing what Fitzpatrick's enmity may mean to any one on the border Tex is really tickled to death at the prospect of bucking him."

"I'd like to meet him," said Mr. Brewster. "A man that can handle himself in any company always appeals to me."

"That's MacDowell—he's knocked around in so many different kinds of society that he can wear a dress suit as well as he can figure a crooked game. If the colonel and yourself would like to stroll over to the airdrome I'm sure we'll find Tex. He and Sergeant Cary are working on a new carburetor that bids fair to be a world-beater. Another instance, by the way, of the MacDowell luck, genius, or whatever one may call it."

As the three men strolled down the moonlit road which led from the cavalry post to the airdrome, Captain Kennard told his companions something of what the new carburetor would mean to flying.

Aviation motors all have carburetors which feed the gas through small low and high-speed jets and thus far no one had been able to devise a carburetor without jets that would give the correct mixture for all speeds. The diminutive jets clog easily and fifty per cent. of the forced landings that are so expensive an item—expensive in both material and personnel—are due to clogging of jets.

Tex, knowing little of practical mechanics,

yet had struck the basic idea of the new carburetor.

Sergeant Cary, a lanky middle-aged mechanical genius had once been a cowpuncher and had worked for a brief time on the Circle Eight ranch owned by MacDowell senior.

A queer friendship had sprung up between them, and so it was natural that the two should work out the new carburetor together; Cary doing practically all the designing and mechanical work but with MacDowell's idea as the indispensable foundation.

"It's a wonder, too, gentlemen—I saw a model run on the blocks, with the old model, on gas that had been diluted twenty per cent. with water," said the captain. "There are practically no moving parts, and there is almost no chance of it ceasing to function. I believe the model they have about completed will be O. K. in every respect and they can go ahead on definite plans for patenting and promoting it."

The three men walked down the edge of the airdrome past the hangars on the eastern side. From a window in one end of the hangar farthest from the headquarters building and barracks a light shone. This was the machine-shop where MacDowell and Cary had been working every evening for two weeks. It was a warm, starry Southern night and the Chicagoan inhaled luxuriously.

"—— if I don't envy you, Ed," he said to his brother, the colonel. "I—Good ——!"

He had fallen in a heap over the body of a man lying in the deep gloom of the hangar corner. Captain Kennard and the colonel stooped with one accord and the captain struck a match.

"Tex MacDowell!" he said blankly.

With swiftly capable hands he tore open shirt and underwear and pressed his ear to the flyer's chest.

"Heart's going all right," he said crisply. "Colonel, will you mind giving me a hand so we can carry him over to that water faucet?"

THE three men carried the tall form to the water faucet at the side of the end hangar. The moonlight was sufficient to show a swelling lump on MacDowell's head. A few dashes of water and some rapid wrist-chafing by the colonel and his brother had speedy effect. Tex opened his eyes languidly.

He stared wonderingly at the three anxious faces bending over him. Then his characteristic smile tugged at the corners of his mouth.

"Good evening, colonel," he drawled. "I seem to have run into something."

He touched the bruise gingerly, and sat up.

"What happened?" demanded Colonel Brewster bruskly.

"Sergeant Cary and I were working in the machine-shop when some soldier—I didn't notice who it was—came in and said there was a man outside who wanted to see me. I came out and the soldier led me over here. A sort of small man was standing in the shade of the hangar here and when I came up he just soaked me and that's all there is—there isn't any more."

"You don't suppose—" began the captain slowly.

Tex suddenly sprang to his feet.

"The carburetor!" he exclaimed. Without another word to the others, who followed in his footsteps, the tall flyer ran for the lighted window on the end of the last hangar.

Forgetful of rank and dignity the puffing colonel and his portly, excited brother charged into the machine-shop at the heels of the airmen. Sergeant Cary, tall and gaunt, was swaying dizzily, supporting himself by leaning against a lathe.

"What happened to you, Cary?" demanded Tex.

The leathery face of Cary essayed a crooked grin as the sergeant looked at the lump decorating the side of MacDowell's head.

"About what happened to you, I guess, lieutenant," he replied. "The last I remember I was workin' on the bench there when something hit me."

Tex and Captain Kennard looked around the small shop, littered with tools and machines, and then their eyes met.

"Both models of the carburetor are gone, captain, and what few written estimates we had," said Tex softly. His clean-cut face was curiously older than it had been a few moments before, as he questioned Cary.

"I didn't see anybody—he must have sneaked up behind me," was the sergeant's reply to MacDowell's question. "The electric motor was running and would have covered the noise."

"Well, let's get busy," snapped the captain.

"Tex, call up Sheriff Trowbridge and give him a description of the man in soldier's uniform who called you out. He must have been a confederate. I'll go out and question the guard on the main road gate as to whether anybody passed."

Tex and Sergeant Cary started for headquarters. The colonel and his brother accompanied Captain Kennard as he half-ran toward the main gate. A public road ran through the upper section of the reservation and the guard had no orders to stop anybody.

"It was absurdly simple for the robbers," remarked the captain jerkily to his two puffing companions. "It's Saturday night and most of the officers and men are in town. Of course the quarters there are five hundred yards from the machine-shop. I am wondering who did it—whether it could be possible that Fitzpatrick's machinations would go this far?"

"There was a matter of a new gun years ago where the same suspicion of Fitzpatrick was held," replied the colonel as the three men approached the guard, who held his gun at present arms in their honor.

"Have any cars passed through here within the last half-hour?"

"Yes, sir. One touring-car with two men in it passed west and in about ten minutes went back to town—driving fast."

"Who was in it? What did they look like, I mean?"

"One was in uniform, sir."

"Do you have any idea what kind of a car it was?"

"No, sir. It was black—a five-passenger touring-car, fairly big and heavy."

The captain knit his brows in thought as he stared out the gate down the road to town leading through the Mexican quarter of McMullen.

"I think we'd better catch Tex before he rings off on the sheriff, colonel, and give him the dope. Trowbridge knows what he's doing and I believe can catch that car before we're much older."

Headquarters held a dozen excited officers and enlisted men—so excited, in fact, that the entrance of a red-faced, dusty-booted colonel did not even create a ripple. Sergeant Cary was leaning back weakly in Captain Kennard's desk chair while Tex was talking in terse phrases over the phone to the sheriff of Hidalgo County.

"Let me give him some more dope when you get through, Tex," whispered the C.O

Tex nodded.

"Just a minute, sheriff. Captain Kennard has some more news," said Tex and handed the phone to the captain.

"Captain Kennard, sheriff. We have just found out that a touring-car, five-passenger, black, passed out of the field at high speed a half-hour ago, carrying two men, one in uniform."

"Good," came the rumbling voice of the sheriff. "I'll get plumb busy over the wire and have every road blocked twenty miles out in —— short order. A car was their worst bet in Hidalgo County. They must be green. I'll be out soon's I get things fixed."

"Fine. That carburetor might turn out to be the biggest robbery of the year, sheriff, and we'll sure be your debtors for life if you land it."

"Haw, haw! Don't worry, son!" boomed the sheriff.

His confidence was infectious and Captain Kennard passed it on to the cluster of men in the office. The trail was hot and with the sheriff already busy every one felt as if chances for recovery of the model were excellent. Colonel Brewster was expounding his views to Sergeant Cary of what should be done to the culprits and the gaunt lathe-like sergeant was answering with blasphemously emphatic remarks that would have stricken him dumb with awe at his own temerity if he had happened to think of the silver eagles on the shoulders of the man he was addressing.

The colonel's architect brother, despite the knowledge that the events of the evening were far from pleasant for Tex and the sergeant, could not help but enjoy the novel experience. His keen eyes appraised the flying officers and the handful of enlisted men, and he marveled at the youth of the men who daily performed the hazardous duties of the border patrol.

His gaze rested longest on Tex MacDowell, taking in the great height, wide shoulders and lean face of the man who was acknowledged to be the outstanding star of the border patrol. There was a hint of the recklessness that Captain Kennard had spoken of apparent in the young flyer, but now there was no trace of boyishness.

The wide mouth, ordinarily with a slight whimsical quirk at the corners, was tight and thin, and the large wide-set gray eyes

were hard. He took little part in the endless discussion of just what had happened, but sat quietly awaiting the advent of the sheriff.

IT WAS nearly midnight when the sheriff arrived. He was tall, gray-headed, and his seamed and rough-hewn countenance was garnished with a flowing gray mustache. He was in the habit of coming out to the airdrome periodically and shooting clay pigeons on the trap range with his big single-action revolvers, to the great edification of the flyers.

"Cal Rogers stopped a car driven by a man in uniform on the Brownsville Road," boomed Trowbridge as he clumped into the office. "They're fannin' it for here right now so you can have a chance to identify him, Tex. If it proves to be our *hombre*, where is his pal?"

This opened up a new series of conjectures which were interrupted by a sudden explosion on the part of the old sheriff.

"Just what hour of the night was it when you got smote on the head, Tex?" he demanded.

"Couldn't say exactly, sheriff, but about nine or nine thirty."

"Must've been about then," agreed Cary.

"In case this bird coming is the man that called you out there's a good chance his pardner might've taken the ten o'clock train for San Antonio," stated Trowbridge, his bushy white eyebrows meeting in a portentous frown. "It was a slick deal I'm thinkin' because from what Cal Rogers says he's got one o' the men and nobody on God's earth has any idee who his partner is. This here unknown is the man that's got the carburetor."

The sound of a motor outside brought them all to their feet. In a moment two men, one in the uniform of an enlisted man, although without insignia, entered. Rogers had tied his prisoner's hands securely and a hobble of clothes-line was an efficient curb for any attempt at escape.

Tex looked briefly at the prisoner.

"Sheriff, I'm sure ashamed to say it, but I don't know whether this is our man or not. I didn't notice him much, as I said, and he turned his back the minute he'd given me the message. It might be him, all right. What do you think of my putting up a bluff that I'm sure he is the man and see whether it works?"

He had spoken in low tones, and the sheriff nodded. The rest of the little company were gathered in a half-circle waiting expectantly.

"That's the man, sheriff," stated Tex aloud.

"All right, my man, come clean and you may save your hide," said the sheriff bruskly walking toward the sullen hard-faced prisoner. When he was so close that they almost touched he tapped him on the chest with a huge forefinger as he said—

"Where is the man that drove out of this airdrome with you—and who was he?"

"I never was here before, and there has been nobody with me," was the reply given with a defiant glare at the imposingly wrathful representative of the law.

"What are you doing in uniform?" asked Colonel Brewster.

"I am not in uniform. I have on no insignia and there's no law against wearing khaki that I know of," answered the prisoner with a sneer.

The colonel's face grew red and he stepped forward threatening, but thought better of it as Captain Kennard said suddenly—

"Fitzpatrick certainly trains his men to keep their mouths shut!"

A scarcely perceptible start was the captain's reward. He was the only man aside from the sheriff who had heard MacDowell's admission that he was not sure of the identification and his shot in the dark was a deliberate effort—apparently successful—to surprize the prisoner.

Trowbridge nodded admiringly at the captain's strategy, and Tex, who had previously had no idea that his powerful enemy might be behind the theft, was as much surprized as the prisoner.

A half-hour of grilling was unsuccessful, however. The prisoner would say nothing. He refused to give his name, his business, his destination or any other items of information.

"You've got nothing on me, and you know it as well as I do," he remarked as Rogers bundled him off for a sojourn in the McMullen jail as a suspicious character.

"There's no doubt in the world that he's the man but it's all circumstancial evidence," mused the sheriff. "Did you notice the way he talked? He's no Westerner and he learned that good English far away from the border country."

It had been apparent to them all that the

man had talked like an educated, even cultured citizen.

"Well, if he didn't have the carburetor it doesn't make a —— of a lot of difference who he is," was the colonel's summing up. "What are we going to do about the other man?"

"He may be right here in McMullen but if he was how in blue blazes would we know him? From the twitch I saw when the cap'n here mentioned Fitzpatrick it looks like that old skunk might be backin' the play, but none o' his men that's known at all around here is in town or I'd known it. Howsomever, if he is backin' this deal it's a cinch that the other bird is on his way from here—and in view o' the fact that the robbery was pulled around nine-thirty and the San Antonio train leaves at ten——"

"I believe that's good reasoning, sheriff," Mr. Brewster cut in tersely.

"This pal got out o' the car, walks calm-like to the depot, gets on the train and nobody knows what his face looks like. That's the slick part o' the deal. If I wire ahead they got to search everybody on the train on a wild chance in San Antonio. It'd be a —— of a job for me to tell San Antonio everything and without the benefit of any kind of a description. And this bird would probably get off some place this side o' the city—no, I don't believe he would at that.

"Givin' the brains behind this deal full credit, I think Fitzpatrick—if it's him—would figure that *we'd* figure they was makin' a break for the Rio Grande and double-cross us by goin' North."

The weather-bitten old sheriff was thinking aloud and there was scarcely a rustle on the part of his audience while he was speaking. Then Tex MacDowell, who had been lost in thought raised his eyes as an idea struck him.

"Sheriff, if that man is on the train there's a thousand ways we could slip up, wiring ahead. If the captain says the word and you're willing you and I can take off at dawn, catch that —— train, land somewhere and do the searching ourselves. It takes it twenty hours to make the two hundred and fifty miles to San Antonio, and it lays over at the Junction for four hours. It won't be half-way to San Antonio by seven in the morning. We'll travel at ninety miles an hour and overhaul her in an hour and a half. It may not be strictly legal procedure to search her, but if you don't think it's the right thing I'll hold her up, do it myself, and let you arrest me for it afterward!"

THE pilot's eyes were glowing—a different sort of a glow than the usual joyous dancing light with which he met a sudden test. Apparently Tex for once was taking Fitzpatrick's enmity seriously and realized the full import of what was happening.

The sheriff smote his thigh enthusiastically.

"Suits me fine!" he declared. Tex glanced questioningly at the captain who nodded shortly.

"Better take that extra-tank 'Jenny,' " he said. "It'll be easier to land it."

Jimmy Jennings, one of the McMullen pilots, glanced at his wrist-watch.

"Two thirty now—you can take off in a couple of hours," he said.

Sergeant Cary started for the door.

"I'll wake up some of the boys and we'll start getting the ship ready right now, sir," he said. He had forgotten his former intimacy with a full colonel and was a soldier again as he saluted Tex, who was engineer officer of the flight, and went out the door into the night.

"Just what are you planning to do, MacDowell?" inquired Colonel Brewster.

"Catch the train, fly ahead of it until we come to a field close to the track, land and flag the train, sir."

"Well, the best of luck, my boy. I'm going to bed—this excitement is too much for an old man. Good night, gentlemen."

"Not me," said his brother. "I'm going to stick around."

"Won't Clara and the Chicago clubmen hear some wild tales of the border when you get back!" gibed the colonel as he started for the door. "The adventures of our leading architect will be good copy for the *Tribune*, Charley."

"I'll admit all this is a new experience for me. I had no idea that this country had any characters like Fitzpatrick left," Mr. Brewster told the sheriff. "My nephew by marriage, Dave Ransom, was telling me something about him and I'd like to hear more."

"Yes, I know Ransom," said the sheriff. "Fine boy, sir, and he married a fine girl."

"Natalie is all right," admitted her uncle.

"Dave was there when Tex trimmed some of Fitzpatrick's men at crooked poker."

"Thereby gainin' emoluments from Dave to the extent of a couple o' thousand iron men," chuckled the grizzled old officer. "This fellow Fitzpatrick has been smuggling firearms into Mexico and opium and hootch into this country for twenty years. By every underhanded means a smart and black-hearted man could figure out he's gathered a bunch of spigs, half-breeds, chinks and bad-men around the Big Bend that jump when he cracks the whip. He's bribed government men or anybody else he could use and if anybody made too much trouble for him he's framed that man or else had him shot.

"His influence carries as far as Washington on this side and there isn't a bandit chief in Mexico today that don't eat out of his hand. He owns a lot of land in Mexico and the spigs that work it on shares are dependent on him and his general store to keep them alive. There's many a good man that has been sent from government service in disgrace because o' him and a good many more who've left the border for their health.

"You understand that in actual proof we couldn't show enough against him to stand in court. We've caught a hundred of his men and never a one talked yet. But any man that knows the border knows Fitzpatrick—and what he is."

"You don't mean it! What sort of a man is he—old time bad-man stuff—quick on the draw and that sort of thing?"

"No. He's big and cold and smart and most o' his men are the kind he's got something on and don't dare break with him. The spigs are afraid of him, the bandits depend on him and the crooks at heart that he's bribed make up the rest. The actual smuggling, killin' or crooked work he never does but he's got specialists in every line. *Sabe?*"

"Belongs to the old political boss type adapted to the circumstances, eh?"

The sheriff nodded. Outside the voices of hurriedly aroused mechanics reached the men indoors as Sergeant Cary urged his crew to make haste.

Mr. Brewster looked at MacDowell.

"Apparently you are bucking a hard proposition, son," he said.

Tex grinned.

"I'm beginning to realize it," he admitted. "But I took the first trick, and by —— you watch me try for the second one!"

LONG spurts of flame stabbed the gloom as Sergeant Cary pushed the throttle full on for the final warm-up. The sheriff, huge as a grizzly in his bulky flying coveralls, carefully placed one of his famous pearl-handled, long-barreled, single-action guns in each side pocket. He had been a passenger in McMullen ships before by special dispensation of Captain Kennard, but the hardy veteran of the border was pleasantly excited at the thought of a real trip cross-country.

Tex, helmeted and goggled, a Colt .45 in its holster around his waist, climbed in the front cockpit as the sergeant got out. While Cary was seeing to it that the sheriff was securely strapped in the rear seat Tex surveyed the instruments. The ship was one of the sturdy training types, made more powerful by the installation of a famous French-American motor.

Extra gas-tanks on the side of the fuselage and a large reserve tank on the upper center section gave it a four-hundred-mile cruising radius. He was taking this Jenny because it was smaller and lighter than a De Haviland and much easier to land safely. It landed at fifty miles an hour where the huge poorly balanced De Haviland required seventy as a minimum. The Jenny was fully twenty miles an hour slower, though plenty fast enough for its mission.

Tex frowned when he saw the oil pressure, which was sixty, then relaxed and grinned. Liberty oil pressure should be only thirty and he had forgotten for the moment what motor he was sitting behind. He throttled down and turned to the sheriff.

"Ready, sir?"

An indistinguishable bellow came from Trowbridge and he waved a long, puffy-looking arm gaily. Tex glanced toward the east—the sky was lightening.

He nodded to Cary, and two mechanics crawled underneath the ship and pulled the blocks. With a man on each wing to help guide him around Tex turned his ship, pointed the nose up the field, and the ship disappeared from sight as he fed it the throttle.

Only the spurts of fire apprized the onlookers of the ship's course until it left the ground and appeared shadow-like against the graying sky.

Tex circled the field a few times to get altitude and then headed north following the course of the little single-track railroad, hardly discernible through the blackness below.

The two-hundred horse power motors seemed to him to be barely purring, its roar was so low compared to the mighty chorus of the twelve-cylinder, four hundred horse-power Liberty he had grown accustomed to. To Sheriff Trowbridge it seemed as if his ears would split from the noise.

As the world below grew more distinct, although shrouded in fleecy morning mist Tex swerved slightly and drew closer to the railroad. To east and west in never ending billows of mist-covered green rolled dreary miles of mesquite-covered desert. To the border patrol flyer, accustomed to fly daily over country which was almost sure death to flyers compelled to make forced landings in mighty De Havilands, it seemed like a joy ride to be flying a light little Jenny up the railroad, where small scattered clearings presented many possible landing-places.

Tex figured they would catch the train in about an hour and a half. It had a three hour stop-over at the junction point, Chaparville, which they were passing now four thousand feet below. Three-quarters of an hour more and they should be in sight of the ramshackle laboring little locomotive and its dusty coaches.

The tall pilot, constantly checking the r. p. m., air pressure and oil pressure of his smooth-running motor, waited patiently for the fast-approaching time when perhaps he would have an opportunity to pit himself against his enemy again.

The joy of the struggle flamed in his eyes, but the deepened lines around his mouth and the set of the lean jaw told not of reckless anticipation but of entirely businesslike determination.

A half-hour later the two airmen sighted the train, crawling like a snake along its green-bordered lane. Tex throttled to a thousand revolutions a minute and nosed down. They were traveling more than a hundred miles an hour as they flashed past the train. The engineer and fireman were leaning out their respective windows in the engine and on the platforms the conductor and brakemen could be plainly seen. The curtains on the Pullman windows were all drawn—it was too early for passengers to be up.

The train seemed to be standing still as the plane shot past it. Less than a thousand feet high Tex flew on up the railroad, throttle wide open and motor singing the crackling song which told of perfectly functioning mechanism. Five miles on Tex sighted his field. It was two hundred yards long, and the railroad track ran along one edge of it.

Tex dived for it and skimmed along five feet above the ground as he looked it over for ditches, puddles or humps. It looked good.

He zoomed the mesquite at the northern end and then banked steeply around, gradually cutting the throttle as he did so. The little ship dropped over the trees, leveled out above the ground and stalled down on smooth grass-covered terrane that presented no difficulties.

Due to the smallness of the field it stopped rolling only fifty feet from the mesquite barrier at the southern end—so Tex gave it the throttle for a moment and ruddered around until the ship was pointed down the field in position for the take-off. It would be a with-the-wind take-off, for the prevailing breeze was southeast from the Gulf of Mexico though the air was almost motionless in the early dawn.

Sheriff Trowbridge lost no time. The train would be rambling along in a few minutes. Tex helped him doff his coveralls and handed him his guns. The pilot himself had on a short leather coat and his Colt was ready to his hand.

"I'll go down the track a few hundred yards and flag that there conveyance," said the sheriff. "You stay back o' me about two hundred yards in case they should happen to run by me. That'll give us two chances. If I stop 'em fan it down *pronto*. Are you figurin' on turnin' off your plane?"

"No, I'll let her idle," responded Tex throwing helmet and goggles into the front cockpit.

"It's a lot of trouble for one man to crank a ship, and we've got plenty of gas."

"Yore the doctor. I'll mosey now."

THE stalwart old man trudged off down the deserted track, his iron-gray shock of hair in a terrifying state of disarray. When the train hove in sight, a mile down the track Tex saw him stop, remove the vest he was wearing and start to wave it.

As the train came closer Tex saw that it was slowing down, so he felt safe in starting to join the sheriff. He snapped the clip out of his Colt, examined it again to see that it was well-loaded and made sure it was loose in the holster.

When he arrived the sheriff was deep in conversation with the conductor, engineer and brakemen.

"That's the lay, Pete," Trowbridge was saying when Tex came within earshot. "What we're aimin' to do is search the —— rattle trap you run and see whether that carburetor is on it."

"Don't you know you're out o' Hidalgo County?" queried the conductor quizzically.

"To —— with Hidalgo County! Get sassy with me and I'll throw you in jail when I get back to McMullen for servin' a minion o' the law with bootleg licker three nights ago!"

"O. K., Bill," rejoined the grinning railroad man who came through from McMullen with the Pullman—the rest of the crew carried the train from Chaparville on.

"Now, what's the layout o' passengers you got from our town, Pete?"

The other railroad men crowded closer and Tex listened eagerly.

"Only one chance that your man is on," returned Wright. "There's a bunch o' womenfolks, five McMullen citizens that you've knowed since they wore dresses and one smallish red-headed little feller that has a ratty lookin' face and the brightest pair of eyes I ever see. He's your *hombre*, if any."

A young brakeman, eyes wide with excitement, broke into the conversation jerkily.

"When I was runnin' out o' El Paso last year that same fellow—I seen him when he poked his head out at Chaparville and asked me where we was—was pointed out to me as Weasel Williams that was up for killin' old man Corby down to Marfa. You must o' heard of him, sheriff."

"Tex, old boy, we're in luck!" roared the delighted old war-horse. "I never see this Williams, but he's one o' the toughest little eggs in the Big Bend and it's a mortal cinch he's workin' in cahoots with Fitzpatrick."

"O. K. Let's go," grinned Tex, a great load lifting from his mind.

"I'll lead you to his berth and you can haul him out and search him quiet," said the conductor. "He's only got a small bag as I remember."

The half-dozen men walked swiftly down the track alongside the train and one by one swung aboard the dusty, superannuated Pullman. Wright leading, they tiptoed down the aisle between the faded curtains on either side.

They formed in a half-circle around the berth from which no sound came. The railroad men were excited, the sheriff grimly happy and Tex himself filled with eager expectations.

Two or three inquisitive heads popped out from different curtains as the conductor parted the folds of Williams' berth. A surprized curse broke from his lips as he flung the curtains wide. The disarranged berth was empty, and the open window showed the way.

MacDowell's glance darted out to the mesquite beyond the window.

"There he goes!" he shouted and plunged through the circle and down the aisle, careless of the passengers who had been aroused from their slumbers and were demanding the reason.

All six men tumbled off the platform in a heap, the sheriff cursing in prodigious tones. MacDowell's brain was working like lightning.

"Wait a minute!" he yelled. "Listen, sheriff. If we go into the mesquite after him we're liable to lose him, or else get a couple of these boys shot. The train's got to go on, anyway. I'll take off, spot this bird, and keep flying over him. You go on to Elmton—it's only seven miles up—collect a mounted posse, and my airplane will show you where Williams is. Those extra gas tanks give me three hours in the air yet—You can be back by that time."

The railroad men nodded as they remembered their official duties. The sheriff hesitated briefly and then agreed.

"He heard our plane and figured the deal," he snorted disgustedly. "But he's caught as sure as the Lord made a hop-toad. And if he hasn't got that carburetor may all my children be sheepherders!"

"He's our man," agreed Tex.

"Gus, can you ram this heap o' junk into Elmton inside of a hour?" demanded the sheriff as the engineer swung up in the cab.

"Your airplane ride'll seem slow!" yelled the excited engineer.

Tex was seated in the cockpit by the

time the train pulled out, and he quickly shoved on the throttle of the still idling ship. He gave silent thanks for the lucky chance that had made him leave the motor running—not that he did not have plenty of time, but it would be easier to spot the fugitive before he struck the thicker mesquite farther away from the railroad.

He hurdled the trees fifty feet high and banked around eastward. In less than half a minute he saw the man below crossing a small clearing. Williams stopped and as the ship roared toward him Tex could see him firing at it. The pilot grinned. Ninety miles an hour makes a target hard to hit.

He circled the clearing leisurely—a hundred feet high now—and glanced over at the train. It was a half-mile away, belching smoke in a mighty gray-blue cloud. He looked below and picked up Williams, who was walking steadily eastward.

"It's a long walk to the Gulf, old sport," thought Tex.

He glanced at his instruments and a bitter curse snapped out as he saw the air-pressure standing at nothing. It might have been a lucky shot in the gas-tank, or the tank might have sprung a leak from other causes. As his hand automatically dropped to one side of the cockpit to turn on the reserve tank, which fed by gravity and not air pressure, the motor started sputtering for lack of gas and the pilot nosed down to keep flying speed.

His groping hand found no petcock. He had made a serious mistake, and realized it too late. He was so accustomed to De Havilands, in which the reserve tank petcock is located at the side of the cockpit, that he had not remembered quickly enough that the little lever which controls the gravity tank on a Jenny is above the windshield right before the pilot's eyes.

The little fraction of time was too much—the motor quit dead and the ship was scraping the trees. Like a flash Tex pulled back on the stick, stalled—and dropped. The right wing caught in a tree, throwing the ship's weight on the left wing, which crumpled against the ground. The fuselage slid forward and the right wing broke against a limb.

A SWIFT wrench that sent stabbing pain through his leg made Tex cry out. Then he found himself lying with a wing-strut not two inches in front of his eyes, his right foot still in the cockpit and his left doubled up under him. His wonderful little ship, a combination of lightness and strength, had saved him, plus the fact that they had hit in such a manner that the motor was not forced back on him. In a De Haviland if the wreck itself had not killed him the whole mass would probably have been in flames by this time.

Tex forgot that his leg might be seriously injured in the bitter thought that Weasel Williams could now make his escape, possibly. In an instant, however, he felt a wild thrill of hope as his swift-working mind hit on a ruse that might work. Careless of the agony his wrenched ankle gave him he crawled out and surveyed the tangled mass that had been his ship. It was one of those wrecks where a landsman could never have understood how the pilot could come out alive.

Beads of icy sweat stood out on his face and his face was drawn with pain as Tex crawled under what had been fuselage and left wings. He allowed one arm and one leg to remain exposed, and quickly arranged a linen screening that would hide his face and still be no barrier when he got into action. A tear in the linen allowed him to see without being seen. This accomplished, he leaned back, stretched prone beneath the wreck and waited. Lying motionless as he was, his ankle ceased to be so painful.

He knew that he must be less than half a mile from Williams and he felt sure that he had been flying so low that Williams had seen that there was but one man in the ship. The noise of the crash must have been tremendous and in addition he had wrecked directly on Williams' course eastward. It was almost inconceivable that the outlaw would not scout around the wreck. With his ignorance of flying he would be sure to believe that the pilot was dead or at least unconscious.

He soon saw that his reasoning had been correct. A wary head topped by a spike-like thatch of red hair protruded from behind a tree. Tex held his exposed arm and leg motionless. For a full five minutes Williams looked and then started for the wreck, keeping behind trees as he covered the intervening fifty yards. He held his six-shooter ready for action and in his left hand was a grip, which he placed on the ground behind a tree ten yards away.

He was a small man—not over twenty-five, either, Tex thought. His face, with its short, curving nose, and slightly receding brow and chin, announced to the world the reason for his nickname, "Weasel." There was a certain combination of recklessness and impudent hardness discernible that was good reason for believing that his reputation was deserved.

Williams stooped, gun ready for action with its business end forward. As he pulled away the torn linen barrier that shielded MacDowell the flyer took his chance. Like a flash of light his hand shot forward and flung the revolver outward as it went off. Williams, already stooped over, lost his balance completely. Tex flung himself on the momentarily helpless outlaw, who was no match for the six-feet-two pilot. Tex flung Williams' gun away with his left hand—his right held the thin neck with sinewy fingers that were cruel in their strength.

In a few seconds he was sitting astride his prisoner who was stretched face-down beneath him. Although his ankle was giving him pain so great that he almost collapsed Tex leisurely plucked the second gun from its holster and sent it spinning into the mesquite. He pulled his own Colt, cocked it, and held it trained on Williams while he got to his feet.

"You may arise, Weasel, my boy," drawled the flyer, pale lips smiling crookedly. "And now that you've given away the fact that you've got the carburetor by leaving the palatial Pullman in favor of the 'squite, I sure wouldn't hesitate to kill you if you got gay."

The little outlaw got up, dusted himself off, and nonchalantly inquired,

"Mind if I smoke?"

Tex grinned appreciatively.

"Roll me one too, will you? I can roll 'em with one hand but I'll be —— if I can pour out the tobacco without two."

Tex received his cigaret at arm's length, Colt cocked and ready, but Williams made no move.

The whistle of an engine stabbed the silence of the brush with a sudden screech. Tex gave joyful thanks to whatever keen eyes had seen him fall—he suddenly felt as if that —— ankle would make him keel over yet. The agony was almost unbearable.

"Carburetor's in the bag, I suppose?" he asked his prisoner.

Williams nodded.

"Well, are you aimin' to walk me to the track, loot?" he inquired, his freckled, sinister face showing no trace of rancor or sullenness.

"No, we'll wait. Sit down."

Weasel Williams obeyed and smoked silently. He blew contemplative smoke rings, watching them with his bright little eyes half-shielded from the sun by lowered lids. Apparently he had neither comment nor inquiry to make about his capture.

Tex eased himself to the ground slowly and for a moment the pain let up. Then it increased again until the set face was white beneath the tan and his long fingers gripped the Colt with almost maniacal strength. He wondered how long it would take the sheriff to track Williams—or should he risk taking the outlaw through the mesquite toward the railroad?

For ages, it seemed, he sat there, head reeling but gun-hand steady and eyes alert. If Williams knew what the Army man was going through, he gave no sign.

Sheriff Trowbridge finally burst into view at the head of all the male passengers on the train and likewise the train crew.

"Seen you fall and backed up, Tex. Great ——! He's got Williams, too!"

"Uh huh. It was a lucky crash all around, sheriff. The carburetor is in that bag, I think."

Mr. George Smithers, manager of McMullen's leading store, investigated the bag and announced that it was there, holding it up in proof.

"How did you do it?" demanded the sheriff, while two men were efficiently re-searching Williams.

"Why he just—" and Tex quietly crumpled to the ground.

The sheriff found the wrenched ankle in a trice. While he was binding it with a huge khaki handkerchief soaked in water from a tiny puddle he looked up at Mr. Sam Edwards, rugged old-timer and present mayor of McMullen.

"You knew his daddy, didn't you, Sam?" he queried.

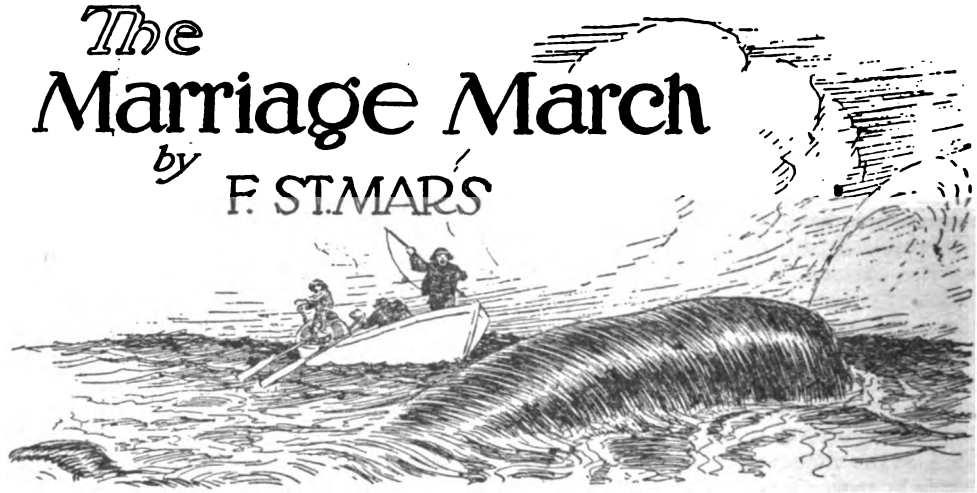
"Uh-huh. Tex is a chip off the old block, Bill."

Weasel Williams, surrounded by his captors, took a last puff of his cigaret and broke into the conversation.

"So Dav—a feller was tellin' me," he admitted.

The Marriage March

by F. ST. MARS



Author of "Chivalry of the Wild," "Union Is Strength," etc.

THE deep boiled.

A back-fin, sharp and straight and ominous as a shark's, cut the all-streaky glare of the water like a knife, hissing as it came. Then veered and "put about." The deep boiled again.

Another back-fin, same shape as the first, a back-fin black and six feet high, appeared and disappeared with violence.

The deep boiled like a devil's caldron once more. Foam appeared, all creaming, and spread, and in the middle of the foam a shape, dark gray, almost black, immense, enormous, and growing. Up and up it came, yard upon yard, oblong, blunt, like some stupendous tank turned upside down—a tank of the gods.

Nevertheless, it was simply a head. A gigantic, weird, square-ended head. Then it blew a blast of oily vapor from an S-shaped cavity a little to the left of the top of the front of itself—and three miles away that diagonal upward and forward blast could be seen like a jet of steam.

Had there been a whaler present, even among the passengers upon a liner, he must have given one yell—"A blow!" Then have added aloud: "Sperm!"

And he would have been right. Only the sperm whale, the leviathan cachalot of the limitless tropic seas, makes a diagonal forward blast like that. All the others "blow" straight up or backward.

Up and up that head came still, till it seemed it would never end—till it became clear it was all head, all upper jaw—till at last the under-jaw was exposed, long, narrow, flat, and hinged, like the lid of a box, which alone had teeth. Enormous teeth they were, too, and glistening, the largest ten inches long, over nine and a half inches in girth, weighing three and a half pounds. There were on either side of that lower jaw twenty-five such teeth.

But there was more than that. The wet and glistening skin like silk; the little, kind eyes—something like the little eyes of an elephant but more gentle—the flippers, which looked like fins, but were really flesh-mittened hands, just like human hands, with four fingers; the immense body joining the gigantic head without a neck; the hump behind the head; the startling length and breadth of the back without a back-fin, the enormous flukes of the tail, set on horizontally—not vertically as with all fish—over fifteen feet in diameter; the reserve power, the mountainous reservoirs of strength, the calm immensity—seventy-five to eighty-five feet long. Certainly no less. A giant "bull" sperm, a record monster of a monster race, such as whaling captains dream of, and none have slain for many a voyage.

For a space the tremendous beast moved forward at a speed of about three knots, then turned suddenly, with a plunge of rage that sent a great wave foaming off sidewise in his wake. The long, upright, knife-blade back-fins accompanying him had appeared again as suddenly silent as they had gone, racing along with a little curl of foam at their base, like destroyers.

They were the back-fins of killers, *alias* grampuses, *alias* orcas, the scourge of the seas, more terrible even than sharks; whales, they were, too, but carnivorous whales, not much over twenty feet long, and heavily armed with sharp teeth.

There was a whirl of flying spray as the enormous head of the sperm charged. The deep seemed to open, but it was his mouth really. One back-fin darted one way, another shot aloft, revealing a twenty-foot glistening, gleaming body, black above water-line, purest white below, round-headed, whale-tailed, gleaming-fanged—in fact, the killer.

The whale's lower jaw crashed to with a clash like iron gates hurled shut, barely missing the leaping killer's tail; and in a second the brute's companions were forty yards away with a hissing rush, even as the sperm's tremendous "flukes" beat down with a smash like the report of a six-inch gun upon the place where they had been but were no longer.

The killers were attacking, wolf fashion, skirmishing, circling, dash in, chop, dash out again, and at each chop a chunk of whale blubber as white as marble went with them. But the whale whirled upon himself in mountains of spray with amazing agility for such an—an island of flesh, and—his under jaw closed again—crash! He had touched—only touched—one of the killers, but that beast was floating away, broadside on, out of control, still and helpless, broken from end to end utterly. Somehow it resembled a ship that had struck a mine.

Then at last those menacing, vertical back-fins drew off, swift, keen, and coldly business-like as they had come, hissing away to starboard, gathering into a flotilla, even more oddly like torpedo-boat destroyers than ever as they went.

They had attacked and even slain and eaten whales before, but never one with a temper, with a spice of the devil in him, like this whale. The other species of whales—among the million-ton Antarctic floes they had been—had owned a back-fin, and no teeth, and no temper. This whale was a surprize in respect of both.

Not that they sailed quite away, these killers. That is not their habit. They had drawn off a little, nonplussed possibly by the temper of this strange giant whale; but, like wolves, they would not go quite, and their ravening hunger—verily there can surely be few appetites in the wide world to equal the awful craving of the killer—would drive them presently, like wolves again, to return.

Perhaps the stupendous sperm knew this. But he did not show it.

HE DID not go—at least, not at once. He continued to "blow" vastly for some twelve seconds, then dipped and momentarily disappeared, but only to break surface again and blow for some twelve seconds more. This he continued to do, with remarkably ordered regularity, forging ahead all the time with slow majesty, and vanishing between each blast, till he had "blown" exactly seventy-four times in all, taking over twelve minutes to complete the process.

Then he was ready—ready for anything, very truly a giant refreshed. To be exact, he had completely emptied and completely refilled his lungs again, and the killers could come on now, and follow where he led, if they liked.

His little eyes, so near the water-line, probably could see, as he topped the crest of a half-mile-long swell, those dread, straight, sharp back-fins alter course at last, and steer straight toward him again in "line ahead" formation.

He plunged, his head vanished in a vortex of white, his body followed. His whole vast length pointed downward at nearly a vertical angle, his awe-inspiring tail flung high in air, and, with one last boiling, seething flourish, he was gone, down, down, down, almost vertically down, into the abyss of the deep.

In that dive the big old "bull" sperm whale performed one of the most sensational, and at the same time one of the most mysterious, actions in all Nature.

The killers at first followed him, some of them, and some waited, prowling and cruising about on the surface, but the former presently returned, and all together went away. Even they, wonderful deep-sea divers as they were, could not follow where the "bull" sperm led.

The sperm, a stupendous, glaucous, green-and-blue, semi-luminous, pear-shaped, bubble-like form, undulated down almost perpendicularly at great speed, reeling off, fathom after fathom, long, smooth curves,

wonderful sweeping waves, precise, effortless, and grand, with a continuous up-and-down motion of his tail, of his whole body in a fashion that is peculiar to all the whales, and utterly different from the swimming of fish.

The still, warm, blue-and-green world of silent foggy water around him changed rapidly as he descended.

At the ten-fathom depth the wide, silver-gold circle of light, which had represented the surface, had nearly faded out, and all was a dim, greenish twilight, and the pressure had increased from fifteen to thirty pounds per square inch.

After he had passed the four-hundred-fathom depth and approached the five hundred, there was no light at all that human eyes might see, only the ultra-violet rays—which ants can, and perhaps the whale could, see—and after that at, and beyond, nine hundred fathoms, even the ultra-violet light had vanished, and all was plunged in a darkness so utterly complete that nothing could describe it.

Beyond the four-hundred-fathom depth the whale had passed the point at which the temperature of the sea never changes with the seasons, and after that the cold increased in the abysmal stillness till it had fallen to a point but little above freezing.

The bull sperm had now reached the womb of the mother of all the seas, the birthplace of the ages, but he still continued to go down in spite of the terrific and increasing pressure of a ton and a half upon every square inch of his vast surface.

But if there were no light in this terrible, cold, dread underworld of the sea, there were *lights*.

The great sperm whale was not alone by any means.

All about him as he dived the pall-like blackness was filled with ghostly, shifting gleams. Rows of tiny twinkles, like portholes on a ship, went floating by; great eyes of light, like lamps, came and glared at him, and went away; gleams, as it were, of electric bulbs, were switched off at his near approach, and switched on again after he had gone by.

Showers of sparks fled, coruscating from his course; "ghostly, silver-blue shapes" glimmered like arc lamps "through a dense fog on a dark night," and everywhere comets and rockets, pale stars, golden rain, shooting meteorites, constellations of pale-violet planets, and faint lilac sheens, and streamers glowed and gleamed and shot and rose, and sank and hurtled and floated.

From time to time weird fish of many shapes, but always black or deep red, and always with huge heads and enormous teeth and jaws, and always quite invisible in that "darkness that could be felt" till they switched on their lamps, came and looked at him and went away; and more than once he butted his vast, blunt head into what looked like a dead wall painted in ink, only to burst, as though he had touched a button and set off a Brock's benefit, a perfect explosion of silver-blue sparks.

All these fireworks, however, were quite in the order of things, according to science.

They were only just the fish and the molluscs, and red crustaceæ, the sponges, the alcyonarians, the echinoderms, the tunicates, the isopods, and crinoids, the starfishes, and the sea-urchins, and the sea-pens, and little slaters after their kind—all lit up, all with power to turn on phosphorescent lamps, like eyes, or to produce a phosphorescent slime at will. But it was very wonderful, all the same, and despite science, it was a fairyland under the sea.

BY THIS time the whale had reached the bottom, and stopped his dive to turn and wave himself along, or undulate horizontally.

By what means he knew when to turn in order that he should avoid charging down head first into the abysmal ooze, the terrible, yielding, brown mud of the deepest deeps, the insoluble remains of marine plants and animals and meteoric dust settled down through the ages from suspension in the sea, none can tell.

It was certainly too utterly, overwhelmingly dark to see. Not even the whale could see there. But the wonderful, almost uncanny sense of touch which lives in the wings of bats, and which enables them to avoid colliding with objects that they can not see may be possessed in some degree by cachalots. The swallow has, in part, at least, the same extraordinary power, and something of the kind is certainly possessed by whales, so that they wonderfully avoid collision with vessels and ice which it is doubtful if they can often see.

In the case of whales, however, this sense is chiefly needed for deep-sea diving; and, indeed, without some such magic power it is

difficult to understand how they could "carry on" as they do at great depths in the utter dark.

However, the giant bull sperm swerved, and for a space swam along over the bed of the ocean, above the strange crawling and motionless stalked creatures, crustaceans and others, whose long legs enabled them to move in that sucking, soft, sickening, elemental ooze, in and out among the fairy lights, till suddenly, just as he had begun to explore down a long, gentle slope, like the side of a hill, he came to a place where all the lights had gone out, or were very much lowered and only turned on, as it were, at half power. And that, in the grim black underworld of the sea, spells only one word —F-e-a-r.

The bull sperm seemed, in some strange, uncanny fashion of his own, to become aware of the fact almost at once, and hurried and bustled along with quicker up and down strokes of his tail, looking the less, not the more, graceful; for nothing can make the swimming of the whale people graceful. It is too much like a man in a sack, giving the impression of hind limbs imprisoned under the skin and struggling for freedom.

Soon it was possible to feel a commotion in that still place where everything is always motionless unless torn by some great upheaval. That all the inhabitants of the place could feel it was evident by the fact that all had put their lights out, or lowered them to extreme dimness. That the whale felt it was evident by the way he hurried toward it.

Then suddenly he swerved. He had to. Else he would have banged, nose first, into a thirty-foot female sperm whale struggling and thrashing like a wild locomotive, apparently in the meshes of a wire cable.

As it was, he missed the whale by inches, but not the cable. It did not stop him though. Seventy tons of living bone and flesh, reeling off a good fourteen knots an hour, is not so easily stopped, but it checked his impetus momentarily, and he slid on at reduced, though still considerable, speed into—oh, horror!—a waving forest of giant cables—no, by the gods, tentacles!—tentacles, waving house-high.

The bull sperm had charged full tilt into a herd of the unimaginably horrible, the indescribably abominable, giant cuttlefish of the floor of the ocean. Such cuttles never see the day. Their true dimensions even are not known. They can only be guessed from specimens hurled ashore by typhoon or submarine earthquake, rarely beheld by white man, and quickly decomposing; but from preserved pieces of tentacles, it is estimated that they reach at least a length of sixty feet, and probably a good deal more. And into a herd of such things had the bull sperm charged headlong. Nevertheless, it was with the express purpose of finding a herd of such loathly beings he had come there!

Yet nothing could be seen—absolutely nothing. Only was there the darkness—the pitch blackness of the pit.

But a great deal could be felt.

The cuttlefish were pumping the water into a maelstrom with their syphons, and lashing it continuously with their extraordinary arrow-head tails, and in case the complete dark should not be dark enough, were filling all about them with clouds of sepia ink.

Nevertheless, if it had been light enough, there would have been revealed, a very forest of gigantic, waving, tree-like tentacles twining and untwining, beneath which, half covered in the brown slime, the enormous sack-like bodies lay pulsating with waves of color, brown, purple, red, lilac, white, and brown again.

As anger shows colors to the blind, their rage played over them visibly and devilishly like a thunder-storm; and everywhere huge saucer-like, staring eyes, of unspeakable malignity and hate, stared upward glassily. Lucky it was, perhaps, that such a sight was mercifully eclipsed by the pall of the deep. It was too horrible, too unshamedly demoniacal, for exposure in any light.

In a flash, too, three tentacles had thrown themselves about the bull sperm like hawsers pulled taut, and began to strain down terrifically. Others leaped, anaconda-like, to help them. More followed those. And there were feelings, the unspeakably ghastly eddyings of things moving and closing in all about.

In three seconds the scene was a vortex of leviathan, fiendish strife, and the underworld rocked and swayed and eddied as in a tornado to it. It was as if the spirits of the deep had risen in strife against each other and had chosen the battle-ground—here.

But it seemed to have been written that few could withstand the sperm whale's jaws. He let his under-jaw down at right angles,

so that the enormous cavity of the roof of his mouth was disclosed, as it were the hold of a ship, but as white and shining as a marble cave.

For some reason that cavity seemed to have an extraordinary fascination for those writhing, snake-like tentacles, so that they crept, feeling deliberately, inside—so that they wrapped themselves about the upper jaw—so that——

THE bull sperm's lower jaw shut with a snap and the scene that followed beggars description. All the ocean seemed to go mad, and rise and lash itself in fury, but nothing, not even this inferno, troubled the bull sperm. Again and again he was lashed by tentacles, as by hawsers, from bow to stern. Again and again, backed by his huge weight, he burst himself free. Again and again he was bound by the mighty nose of him and hauled head down, and again and again that steam-saw underjaw of his shut, shearing through everything and set him free.

Twice he charged down into that seething caldron of animated, hate-possessed sacks, and each time rose with an enormous cuttlefish in his jaws—writhing like a tree in a storm—shaking it dog-fashion. And once he charged, at tremendous speed, beneath the female sperm, cutting her adrift from tentacles that sought to restrain her, as a battle-ship cuts through a chain-boom. And each time, and every time, and all the time, he fed—upon cuttlefish.

That was what he was there for. And all the while the tormented chameleon devils beneath him wrapped and writhed and wrenched, and tore and tugged and hugged, seeking to enmesh and pull him down to their ten-times-terrifying, parrot-like beaks, or yammering horribly to draw themselves up to him, which twice they did, and he shot away, spinning, with a huge-eyed form stuck to him like a leech, only to cut it adrift in the end and dart after it, with wonderful agility for so colossal a beast, as it shot backward, expelling great jets of water and ink as it went.

Nevertheless, save that his head was marked all over with round lines where the suckers upon the tentacles had stuck, and with scrawly lines, like Oriental writing, on his sides, left by the horrible beaks, the sperm whale showed no scars for all his battling.

It seemed, however, nothing in all earth or sea or sky could survive long against these monster devil shapes of the ocean's floor—nothing, that is, except perhaps the whales. But they might live after all! Their enormous bulk, their specially constructed jaws, the thick coating of blubber beneath their soft, yielding skin—a pneumatic diving suit, as it were, at once against the tremendous pressure of the water and the sucking devils' tentacles—all these things suggested a gleam of hope. And so it was.

At last, when for the third time the bull sperm cut her free from those awful living cables—it is doubtful if she could ever have escaped the united embrace of the herd of cuttlefish herself alone—the cow sperm began to rise. The bull himself, with one last fearful rending, chopping, swirling, reeling, rocking charge, cleared his body, and followed her. For this there were two reasons.

She had gone, and somehow he had no further interest in food without her. Secondly, even his wonderful lungs could not keep him under water forever without breathing. And in that lay the cuttles' chance. If, combining, they could have held him down for just so much too long, they could have drowned him—he being not a fish—and had their revenge; but his weight and his peculiar jaws beat them, and he removed as he had come, undulating. Up and up and up in the track of her, his new guiding star; up to the clean, sane world of air and sky and the glorious light at last, the two swam.

The bull sperm had no idea where she had come from. As a matter of fact, she had separated from a herd or "school" of whales that had been swimming not many miles from where he had dived. But apparently he had fallen in love with her, and that was enough.

Back upward he hurried, while the lit sea, peopled and teeming, boiled all about him. Back to the regions of ultra-violet rays; back to the dim, violet light, where sharks began to appear, and the lights of the underworld people to become scarce and fade out. Back to green and blue light, and ordinary fish; back to red and orange and yellow gleams, where bonito and other fish shot like shooting stars; and back at last to the great green and golden light shining down from the surface.

He saw her, the young cow sperm, break

surface, letting down a stream of silver and gold; saw her duck under again, a great luminous globule, and thinking nothing wrong, or reckless because she was looking on, he broke surface, too, after a dive lasting one hour and eighteen minutes.

He had not time to see much, or to realize much more. His little, kind eyes back of his mouth—not so kind as the eyes of most whales, perhaps—may just have seen the huge bodies of other whales—sperms, too—all about, and to have known that this was the "school" of his kind from which the "cow" must have dived and now returned to. Just time, perhaps, to realize the boat that was almost atop of him.

Then the harpoon struck.

HE FELT the bite of it like a needle of fire in his back; and swerved, swept aside with a flourish of his fifteen-foot tail that all but abolished the boat, and ran almost headlong into the "cow" sperm hemmed in and attacked by three boats.

Now, ninety-nine times out of a hundred he would, upon being struck, have "sounded" some thousands of fathoms to the uttermost depths. It was the one method he used to get away from his very few enemies, the tactics he had employed against the killers.

But this was the hundredth time.

That cow whale must be saved. 'Twas the traditional chivalry of the sperms to help a companion. And never hesitating, apparently, the bull sperm acted.

Those who saw, caught sight of him suddenly begin really to move, slipping along beneath the surface, faster and faster and faster, the rope on the end of the harpoon fast in his back, fairly hissing out astern of him.

Straight at the three boats round the cow whale he headed, his seventy-ton bulk gaining momentum every moment as he drove with all the force of his great flukes, with the many hundreds of horse-power, possibly, he was capable of.

Then he leaped.

Right from under one boat he leaped, capsizing her in his own wave as he shot from the swell, cleaving the azure deep asunder, and at an angle of forty-five degrees, going up ten, fifteen, twenty feet—clear into the air.

There was one momentary chaos of amazed confusion, snarling of falling waters, hiss of foam, beating of oars, shouting of men, and curses.

Then he turned partly over, rolled ponderously upon his side—the way he always fell—and came down again—smash! All in a heap he fell, not diving, not curving, or anything of the kind, but flat—falling as a seventy-ton gun might fall, and with a thunder that a seventy-ton gun, exploding prematurely, even, might not be ashamed of.

One boat, having no time to get out of the way, was under him as he fell, not after. Nothing at all was to be seen of it after but the bobbing heads of two men out of the six that had manned her, and a few floating jagged bits of wreckage broken into matchwood.

But that was not all. Occasionally a sperm, one here and there, when his blood is up, sees red and goes "all out."

One of the three boats attacking the cow whale, was capsized by the bull as he leaped, one was smashed by him on falling, and one was fleeing fast across the silky waves back to her parent ship, the whaler. One there was, however, that had followed involuntarily, the boat whose harpoon was fast in the bull whale's back.

He had towed her at terrific speed, and now, sliding forward, backing water, but unable to check momentum fast enough, she was the only boat he could see with his little, angry eye as he surged about, in mighty waves of his own making, to do battle for his life.

There was no pause. His enormous flukes beat the water into a boiling maelstrom of white. His head shook clear of the streaming waters, open-jawed.

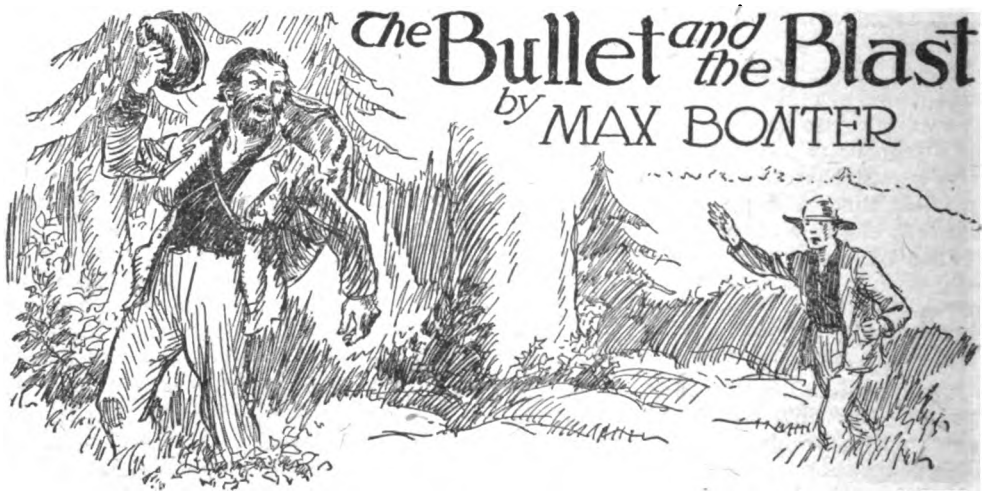
He was upon the boat before any one could do more than yell.

Then his cavern of a mouth shut, and—that boat which caught the "bull" sperm caught him no longer. There was no boat. Men, boat, ropes, harpoons, fourteen-foot lances, oars—everything vanished in one engulfing, whirling smother of spray and spume and water. The fight was over, finished, cut short, wiped out in a—in a scrunch!

Half an hour later, hull down, the sails of the whaling ship and a thin wisp of smoke could be seen vanishing over the horizon. She had a leak and a bad list to port, for the bull had charged *her*, too, or collided with

her as he dived, after demolishing the boat.

And in the middle distance, shoulder to shoulder, side by side, three huge shapes showed in spouts and gouts of spray, heading against a rising sea in the opposite direction—two "cow" sperm whales, shouldering away and bolstering up on his course, as it were, our ponderous leviathan wounded "bull" sperm—victor of all he surveyed, including love.



Author of "Ev'rybody Likes a Gunman."

"FIRE! F-i-r-e!"

Dalton heard and heeded the peremptory, repeated cry that shrilled warningly upon him out of the quiet night. He stepped quickly from the cleared right of way to convenient shelter behind a huge hemlock.

"Fire! F-i-r-e!"

It was nine o'clock on a September evening and the clear northern sky was filled with the shimmering aurora borealis, which fell in profusion upon the dark canopy of spruces overhead and trickled in fitful glimmerings down through the black forest spaces beneath. Early evening had brought along its usual mosquito accompaniment; but advancing night's keen breath had at last benumbed the sanguinary ardor of these tiny pests and caused them to flee for shelter to their secret haunts under the grasses, leaving the air in peace save for that shrill, repeated warning:

"Fire! F-i-r-e!"

The lone traveler waited in silence behind his hemlock barricade. Suddenly the stillness was engulfed by the deep *boom* of an explosion, and its echoes were promptly caught and multiplied, reverberating in sullen diminuendo among the encircling granite hills. Simultaneously there came a rushing *crish-crish* and *thwack-thwack* as of hard bodies hurtling through the foliage and making strong impact against the tree-trunks beneath. This succession of *crishes* and *thwacks*, lasting several seconds, was followed by quiet throughout the forest save for the deep, drum-like *whirr* of a ruffed grouse startled sleepily from its covert, or the frightened chatter of some of the smaller birds whose nests had been rudely shaken by the blows.

"A *kiute*," explained Dalton to himself. "I must be near McLeod's camp."

Leaving his shelter behind the friendly hemlock, he stepped back into the right of way and plowed steadily onward through the muskeg. A couple of hundred yards farther he emerged into a clearing. At his left, by the side of a winding stream and bathed in the splendor of the subarctic night, a cluster of log shacks showed clearly. As he stood watching the peaceful camp two forms stepped into the starlight from the wide jaws of a rock cut ahead and made their way across toward the buildings.

"These must be the men who fired the blast," reasoned Dalton.

He walked over and intercepted them.

"Is this McLeod's camp?" he inquired in that tone, at once gruff and direct, that passes muster as courtesy among the men of the open places.

"It is that," responded one of the men, halting and scrutinizing the stranger's face. "And how far might ye be travelin'?"

"No farther tonight if you've a spare bunk for me."

"Come along wid us, me bye," was the Irishman's prompt and genial invitation.

Dalton followed the men into the long, low bunk-house, through the interior of which a big oil-lamp cast a feeble glow. A central passageway extended the entire length of the building between rows of double-decked bunks built like stalls, from which emanated a weird dissonance that presently could be identified as the combined snoring and heavy breathing of half a hundred weary men.

"Here's an impty bunk, lad, wid enough o' blankets. Sure, ye'll nade thim all. It'll be chilly the night, I'm thinkin'."

With appropriate thanks to his host, Dalton forthwith began divesting himself of his apparel; and in a few minutes, utterly fatigued by arduous travel and fortified against the coming cold by six Hudson Bay blankets, he was unconsciously adding his individual notes to the sleepers' chorus.

Five o'clock in the morning brought the inevitable *ding-a-ling-a-ling* of the cook's triangle with the resultant stretching of arms, reluctant yawnings and gathering together of working habiliments. From the stall-like bunks there crawled presently into the lamp-light a couple of score of weird figures; some full-bearded, some scraggly bearded, others with long, unkempt locks and ragged mustaches; a bizarre aggregation of the males of many races representing numerous countries and a couple of continents.

The malodorous air of the bunk-house began to vibrate at once with the rumblings of deep-chested men girding themselves for the toil of another day. Frowsy, unshaven faces were plunged into basins of cold water and attempts were made to straighten out some of the most obdurate of the kinks in hair and beard: until, the compelling notes of the triangle breaking rudely in upon their toilets or ablutions, in they trooped to the mess shack for breakfast.

The meal, in conformity to that strict rule that governs table etiquette in the camps of the North, was eaten in silence save for the frequent guttural demands necessary for the passing back and forth of the steaks, the coffee and the flapjacks. Dalton scanned with keen interest the double row of countenances that paralleled the long board. The polyglot assemblage included large, calm-eyed, heavily bearded Slavs; dark Magyars with their fierce, long black mustaches; volatile, mobile-faced half-breed French, gaudy in habiliment: and here and there, like landmarks in a strange domain, the clean-cut, dominating features of the Anglo-Saxons.

After breakfast when paying the French cook for his meal, Dalton casually inquired:

"Any men going West stop here night before last?"

"*Oui, M'sieu'*, one—a *français* pedlaire wit' pack."

"Did he do any business?" pursued Dalton with a smile.

"*Oui, oui.* Some Russe men, she buy watch—one, two, t'ree," smilingly admitted the French-Canadian with a flash of white teeth.

Dalton grinned an understanding "*Bon jour*" to the cook and went his way. It was seven o'clock and the workmen were straggling into the cut preparatory to beginning the day's labor. The sun, now risen over the bleak granite hills to the eastward, was diffusing his welcome warmth through the chill air. Dalton entered the gaping mouth of the deep rock cut and proceeded westward. Ten minutes' walk sufficed to bring him to the westerly limit of McLeod's operation. The cut suddenly ended before a formidable wall of gray granite. From its face, deep-scarred and blast-marked, great slabs and polyhedrous masses of rock had been torn and lay in scattered profusion on the floor of the cut, ready to be loaded upon cars and drawn away to be dumped into the nearest "fill."

"Last night's blast," mused Dalton, his gaze sweeping comprehensively over the rock-littered gorge. Climbing carefully over the débris, he reached the crest of the rock hill and there halted, surveying the scene. Away to the northward spread the sparkling expanse of Lake Shabogama, set between spruce-bordered shores. On every side his vision met the primal wilderness, scarcely traversed and hardly penetrable except by half-breeds and Indians

and the intrepid *coureurs de bois*. Nothing but outcropping ledges of granite, gloomy spruce forests and a labyrinth of lakes and rivers in this wild land, that stretched a hundred leagues northeastward to Labrador and approximately the same distance northwestward to Hudson Bay.

Through this immense area of rock and tree and muskeg and water the railroad pioneers were busily cutting and digging and blasting their way westward—with almost superhuman ingenuity and labor carving a smooth bed for the rails of the great Canadian Transcontinental that, though still a hundred miles away, would soon come twisting and turning like a big serpent out of the southeast.

DALTON walked steadily northwestward, patiently gaining mile after mile over granite ledges and fighting his way through stretches of tangled brush and roots and muskeg. Often he passed by little mounds beside the right of way with pieces of dynamite boxes serving as head-boards, whereon pencil-scrawled names told the pathetic story of the passing of poor souls martyred by a blast or come to dissolution by the grim forces of the wilderness.

By noon Dalton had traveled ten miles and at length he arrived at the easterly limit of Carmichael's operation. First there was a sand cut wherein a composite gang of Swedes and Cockneys shoveled and sweated under the eye of a Swedish foreman. Next came a "fill" across a deep ravine and then a rock cut manned by Finns and Russians. The rock walls of the cut echoed the ceaseless clink of hand drills. The hammer men, broad-backed and lusty, were sweating profusely as they swung their hammers and drove the big drills persistently into the hard rock.

Cans of blasting-powder and a box of dynamite lay on the floor of the cut in readiness for the charge. The drillers cursed the circling swarms of black flies as they pounded steadily away at their drills. The midday sun was hot. They were getting a dollar a foot for the drill-holes and they earned it.

"Got to fire a *kiute* this afternoon. Can't wait till dark. Got to get some rock out. Hot as blazes, eh?"

The foreman of the rock cut had lit his pipe and come over to talk to Dalton, who, likewise smoking, had paused and was looking interestedly over the scene.

"Lookin' for a job?" pursued the foreman, glancing appraisingly over the stranger's soiled khakis and blue working-shirt.

"Got business farther up," returned Dalton noncommittally. "Anybody ahead of me on the right of way going west?"

"Pedler stopped here last night—that's all. Bamboozled three o' my Russkys here out of forty dollars apiece for brass watches—not worth a dollar. They're innocent as the Babes in the Woods—just over from Europe. You know what Shakespeare says—'anything that glitters'—that's them."

"It's a shame," agreed Dalton. "These fellows are brought over here by the Government to blast some civilization into this wilderness and help develop the country. Incidentally, they often develop a bank-roll for the unscrupulous."

"Some o' these hot-headed Frenchies wouldn't stand for it—they'd go gunnin'," continued the foreman reflectively. "Now in the last camp where I was—Hervey's, last June—there was a Armenian pedler sold some of this junk to the half-breeds, before they was wise to it. One o' the breeds goes down to Montreal and finds that the watch is bum. When he comes back to the camp he tells the rest o' them. One day along comes Johnny Pedler on his way back from the West. Somebody must have potted him from the brush while he was walkin' along the right o' way, because we found him about fifty feet back in the spruce, where the killer had dragged him. There was a couple o' holes in him and his pack and bank-roll was missin'."

"Didn't they ever get the murderer?" asked Dalton curiously.

"Get nothin'! There's no law in this here wilderness, young feller. Now out in the Northwest the police 'ud clean things up in a jiffy; but there ain't no police over here in Quebec at all, 'ceptin' the few plain-clothes men the company's got out, and they don't seem to be able to do anythin'."

The foreman, shaking his head, went back to superintend the labor of his gang, while Dalton proceeded thoughtfully to Carmichael's camp for dinner.

II

GASPARD BEAUCHAMPS—hot, thirsty, tired and reviling with French-Canadian proficiency the swarm of black flies that tormented him—made his way along the little blazed trail through the spruce forest to the blind pig kept by Papa Dupré on Lake Shabogama.

"I have thirst the most great, *mon papa!*" bellowed Gaspard in the French-Canadian patois, throwing his pack disgustedly upon the floor of Dupré's shack.

He seated himself expectantly in a huge chair constructed of spruce saplings and sprawled his legs in an attitude of indolence under a rough table. Papa Dupré's grizzled old face brightened with prompt understanding. He fetched a bottle from its cache and poured therefrom a glassful of that strong, colorless liquor that is known to the Canadians as "white wheat." Gaspard drank, smacking his lips. He drew a fat wallet from his pocket and tossed a ten-dollar bill carelessly upon the table.

"It is that busines is good—*hein?*" queried Dupré, noting the size of the visitor's wallet and catching a glimpse of the denominations of some of the bank-notes therein contained.

"The Russians are of the buyers the most silly," vouchsafed Beauchamps with good-humored reminiscence. "Like the sheep," he added with an air of conscious superintelligence.

The pedler helped himself to another glassful of the white wheat that Papa Dupré, with keen business acumen, had left temptingly within reach on the table.

"I perform not longer the hard labor, me," boasted Gaspard with a mellow and superior air.

Papa Dupré stood looking through the open doorway, which afforded an unobstructed view of the placid surface of Lake Shabogama, stretching mysteriously into the northern solitudes between its pretty, spruce-girt shores. Miles distant a tiny black speck marred the water's otherwise unsullied brightness.

"That will be the canoe of Pierre Lalange," mused Papa Dupré.

"I take not interest, mé, in M'sieu' Pierre Lalange—whoever he may be," rumbled Gaspard petulantly.

"Pierre Lalange is a *coureur de bois*. He is of the country of the Lac Saint Jean. The best shot in the Quebecs is Pierre Lalange."

"I also shoot, me," declared Gaspard with contentious arrogance, significantly tapping his pocket.

Nothing was to be gained by pursuing this sort of argument, thought Papa Dupré, who thereupon tactfully dropped the subject and proceeded to refill the pedler's glass.

Gaspard dawdled away another half-hour at the blind pig, bestowing somewhat more attention upon the potent white wheat than was good for him.

"A little companion of the pocket, Papa Dupré," said he at length, winking grotesquely. "It needs that I return to the business."

DUPRÉ obligingly filled a pocket-flask for his customer, who thereupon paid the bill and rose unsteadily to his feet. Shouldering his pack again, with a perfunctory "*Adieu!*" Gaspard sallied forth into the sunlight. Breaking exuberantly into song, down the path toward the right of way he ambled, past a little log cabin on the shore of the lake. Jacqueline Dupré, the old man's daughter, was hanging out wash on a clothes-line at the back of the cabin.

The sunlight sparkled on the long, dark hair that fell in attractive coils over her graceful shoulders; and, impatient at the restraint imposed by a gaudy little waist, a pretty sun-burned neck and a pair of shapely brown arms escaped therefrom and boldly paraded their attractiveness.

Jacqueline's little person was pulsing just then with the eternal song of health and youth—for was not M'sieu' Pierre due today from the North? Pierre Lalange of the black hair and the keen eyes and the broad shoulders and the tireless limbs of the hunter? Jacqueline hummed blithesomely some notes from the epic of happiness that bubbled out of her heart and draped her newly washed clothes with true Gallic neatness from the clothes-line.

Into the liquory eyes of Gaspard the pedler came then this dainty vision. He stopped, coughed significantly and approached the young girl, doffing his cap with exaggerated gallantry. Women—young and comely women—were almost as rare in the Quebec wilderness as birds of paradise.

"Is it not that I shall show you the pretty rings, *ma petite?*"

Gaspard screwed his ugly visage into what was meant to be an ingratiating smile. He opened his pack forthwith and began to exhibit some of his spurious wares. Jacqueline's instinct toward personal adornment had been bequeathed to her, through direct maternal lineage, by Mother Eve.

"*Comme elles sont jolies!*" she breathed ecstatically.

Gaspard selected one of the gilt baubles and slipped it on her finger, standing back a pace and gazing upon the girl with the fond expression of a gargoyle.

"How much, m'sieu'?" asked Jacqueline.

"Only a kiss, *ma petite*," croaked Gaspard, his voice thick with alcohol and passion, stepping suddenly close to her and seizing her hand.

The girl's face blanched under its tan. Violently she tried to wrench herself from the pedler's bear-like clasp. Gaspard laughed exultantly and caught her more firmly about the waist, thrusting his black-bearded physiognomy, redolent with the fumes of alcohol, into the pretty, terrified little face. Jacqueline screamed and fought, infuriated, using her nails and teeth.

"*Pardieu!* Is this that thou art as a young she-bear?" grumbled Gaspard, quickly loosing his hold.

With a smothered oath he took up his pack again, glanced apprehensively over his shoulder at Papa Dupré coming through the doorway of the blind pig and ignoring the pathway, plunged into the tangled area of spruce and underbrush and faded from view. After proceeding a couple of hundred yards he took the flask from his pocket, treated himself to a long pull, and then, breaking recklessly into an amorous ditty, he continued plowing his way through the brush and muskeg, slapping hilariously at the black-flies with his cap.

Jacqueline pulled the worthless trinket from her finger, hurled it with vehemence after the pedler's retreating form and then, sobbing in fright and humiliation she turned and rushed into her father's arms.

"*Ma pauvre! ma pauvre!*" Papa Dupré kept repeating comfortingly. "Name of a name of a name of a dog! What did he then, *petite?*"

Meanwhile a bark canoe had glided to the shore. A young man, black-haired, black-mustached and as straight and lithe as one of the encircling spruce trees, stepped out. His rifle and a pack he transferred to dry land and then, bending over the big canoe, with a single deft movement he swung it on high over his head, carried it a few paces and then set it carefully down, bottom up, in the shade.

"Pierre!"

Pierre Lalange knew only one voice in the world that held a note like that—and he came, running. In vain Papa Dupré begged his daughter to keep silence. Jacqueline transferred her head to Pierre's shoulder for additional consolation and the story of the pedler's insult was presently sobbed into his ear.

Pierre Lalange said little. He kissed Jacqueline, unwound her arms from his shoulders, carried his pack up to Dupré's blind pig and then came back and picked up his rifle.

"Pierre!" called Papa Dupré appealingly.

The young *coureur de bois*, unheeding the call, turned and strode into the forest.

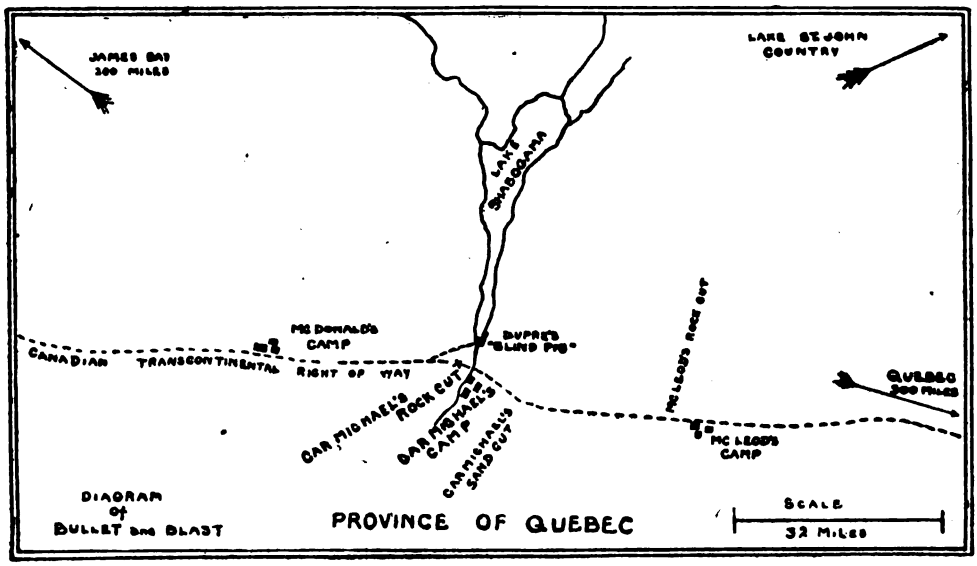
"*Parbleu!*" cried Dupré, throwing up his hands.

III

BY TWO o'clock in the afternoon Dalton had gained three miles to the westward of Carmichael's camp. He sat down upon a boulder and flicked viciously with his handkerchief at a swarm of black-flies that kept circling about his perspiring face with exasperating persistence. Out of the wealth of sunlight that streamed upon the western horizon came a sharply silhouetted figure traveling toward him.

Dalton stepped quickly within the protectiveness of the spruce-trees that fringed the right of way and waited. Mechanically he loosened his automatic from its holster under his left arm-pit and made sure that it was in readiness for a sudden draw. The man seemed to be proceeding rapidly notwithstanding the treacherous nature of the pathway, obstacled as it was with rock and root and muskeg. Dalton discerned something that looked like a pack on his back and watched the approacher intently.

The shortening distance at last revealed the secret of the traveler's rapid gait; it was that peculiar jog-trot affected by the postmen of the wilderness. Disappointedly



Dalton stepped back into the right of way and reseated himself upon the boulder. The mail-carrier was coming along swiftly and his features soon became distinguishable. His swarthy countenance and black hair told the story of composite ancestry—probably Indian mother and French father. The pack of mail was carried across his shoulders and held to its place by a broad strap passing, Indian fashion, over his forehead.

"*B' jour.* Seen anybody on the right of way going west?" was Dalton's greeting.

"No, *m'sieu'*; no man she go west, two, t'ree day."

The mail-runner came obligingly to a stop. Dalton pondered.

"What camp comes next after Carmichael's?" he interrogated.

"McDonal' camp—he feefteen mil' furder on."

"There's no stop between Carmichael's and McDonald's?"

The mail man reflected carefully a moment. Then his lips and teeth parted in a broad grin.

"*Oui, oui.* Papa Dupré—she keep blin' peeg on Shabogama."

"So there's a blind pig on Lake Shabogama?" repeated Dalton musingly, a light of understanding coming into his eyes.

"*Oui*—one mil' furder back, tor' Carmeeshel."

"*Merci,*" came in satisfied thanks from Dalton; and the runner, with an acknowledging "*Salut!*" again took up his jog-trot and resumed his interrupted journey eastward toward civilization.

Dalton could not hope to equal the half-breed's rapid pace and accordingly he proceeded in the direction of Carmichael's with more leisurely stride. The postman's figure had melted into the eastern horizon when Dalton finally arrived at a tiny foot-path, scarcely discernable except to the astute eyes of the dwellers in the wilderness, that left the right of way and meandered off through the spruces toward Lake Shabogama.

Then ensued a few moments of perplexity that were spent in a critical examination of the footmarks on the little pathway; but Dalton was presently forced to conclude that his inspection gave but scanty enlightenment in the way of Indian sign of recent passage. He was still hesitant regarding the proper course to be adopted when, happening to glance along the right of way in the direction of Carmichael's, he perceived in the middle distance a figure that, but a minute or two previous, had been absent from view.

He rubbed his eyes and gazed with greater intentness; but the distance was such that the figure's outlines were not defined enough to permit any sort of identification. Dalton therefore took up a swift pace and began to overhaul the wayfarer ahead of him. He saw at length that the man carried a pack and that he was moving

in the direction of Carmichael's rock cut; and then, when Dalton had materially lessened the distance between them, certain peculiarities in the man's gait began to evidence themselves.

"Aha! Papa Dupré's blind pig on Lake Shabogama," was Dalton's smiling interpretation of the mystery of the pedal eccentricities of the man in front of him. "Papa Dupré's outlaw whisky thus facilitates the law. Outlawry comes to the unconscious rescue of law and order. Strange contradictions characterize a lawless land."

His smile subsided quickly into a grim-lipped look of triumph. With no pretense of caution, which was unnecessary under the circumstances, Dalton stepped still more briskly after the pack man, who labored wabbily along through the muskeg less than a quarter of a mile in advance of him. A short distance beyond the point already reached by the object of his pursuit rose the crest of the granite hill through which Carmichael's men were cutting. Dalton now consulted his watch. It was just three o'clock. He spurred his weary legs dutifully into a sort of jog-trot, somewhat emulative of that affected by the half-breed mail-runner.

"Must be about time for Carmichael's blast," he said to himself.

Hardly had he reasoned in such wise when, out of the distance, startling the still afternoon air with its shrill portent, came the shouted warning:

"Fire! F-i-r-e!"

The pack man did not appear to have heard; or, having heard, to give heed. Dalton was much closer to him now. The man was very evidently intoxicated. He staggered indifferently over or around the many impediments that littered the right of way and his progress was obviously slow. At the top of his lungs he was bellowing some maudlin French-Canadian ditty. Once he pulled off his cap and waved it about his head—evidently an attempt at reprisal upon the relentlessly swarming black-flies.

"Fire! F-i-r-e!"

The warning had become fainter. Dalton knew that by this time the men of the gang would have sought and found security from the coming blast behind stumps or trees or ledges of rock at a safe distance from the point of danger. The man in charge of the big blast had in all probability carried his firing-battery the full length of its long wires and was now waiting, finger on key, until any chance pedestrians within the zone of exposure should have had plenty of time to heed the amply shouted warning and ensconce themselves in places of safety.

Dalton shouted sharply to the inebriate, who had now arrived within fifty yards of the cut and, apparently oblivious of the grave danger confronting him, was walking directly and nonchalantly toward it. At the sound of Dalton's voice the pack man turned, steadied himself, peered back along the right of way and then, beholding Dalton running rapidly toward him, took off his cap and waved it hilariously.

"Fire! F-i-r-e!"

The third and last warning pealed quaveringly through the serene stillness. Nature was in repose. Only a slight breeze lazily stirred the stately spruces. The drunken pedler, unmindful of his impending doom, turned and proceeded again toward the mouth of the cut. He could not possibly have been seen by the men of Carmichael's gang, who had long since secreted themselves in the deep excavation well removed from the scene of the blast and whose westward view along the right of way was effectually shut off by the intervening hilltop with its thick covering of brush.

Dalton stopped running, but shouted again—loudly and commandingly. Then, mindful of his own safety, he leaped from the open into the ample shelter of the spruces. Peering from behind one of these he saw the pedler stop a second time and look bewilderedly about him, passing his hand over his bearded features as if striving to brush the alcoholic mist from his brain and to retrieve his normal faculties. Still again Dalton called—with all the force of his lungs.

THEN the fascinated watcher from his spruce covert saw the entire hilltop tremble violently and sliver into fragments; and at the same moment a sharp sound like the crack of a whip split the air, which sound was immediately swallowed up by a deep roar that burst thunderously forth and then sank, grumbling and muttering, into a volley of echoes that coursed their way among the surrounding valleys and finally became smothered by distance.

Stones and pieces of rock hurtled through the air and *crished* and *thwacked* their way among the trees; and among the trunks of the latter, on the farther side of the right of way, Dalton fancied that he saw a human shadow pass. He hurried at once toward the rock cut. Through a dun pall of vapor and rock-dust he saw the form of the pedler lying prone on the ground.

The man was dead. Even a cursory glance was sufficient to establish that fact. One red gash that extended from the bridge of the nose to the top of the skull was sufficient to have caused death. But Dalton was far from satisfied. He turned the body over and examined it closely. What he saw appeared to furnish the information he desired; especially when, from the rotten wood of a tree-stump close by, he picked a half-imbedded object that he put carefully away in his pocket. A blood-stained wallet containing several hundred dollars in Canadian bank-notes was his next find. These also he pocketed. Strong alcoholic fumes emanated from the corpse and Dalton found fragments of a broken flask in one of the pockets.

"Hands up, you ——!"

Dalton's hands went obediently into the air. He understood instinctively that to have ignored this command would have meant death. Intent upon his examination of the pedler's body he had not noted the quiet approach of the foreman of the rock cut who now, revolver in hand, had come up from the excavation and was facing him. The pall of vapor and rock-dust that had at first enveloped the scene had now been dissipated by the breeze; and, the obstructing hill crest having been obliterated by the blast, Dalton and his movements had been clearly observable from the cut below.

"So that's the 'business you got farther up', eh?" said the foreman with a sneer.

The members of his gang came running along behind him. Some looked stolidly upon the body of the pedler and stood indifferent. Others, reflecting the attitude of their foreman, glowered at Dalton. The superstitious Russians turned immediately toward the East and crossed themselves devoutly, mumbling prayers. Some of the bolder and more materialistic spirits, scenting plunder, ghoulishly proceeded to open the dead man's pack.

"What did you git off'n that feller, and how's it come he got hit by the blast?" demanded the foreman suspiciously, shoving his gun into Dalton's ribs.

Dalton merely smiled, but it was a smile that was somehow vaguely disconcerting to the foreman. This stranger in the dirty khaki overalls, who had been surprized in the very act of rifling the dead pedler's pockets and who now, with his hands held high in the air, was in front of the muzzle of the foreman's gun—this nervy stranger was actually looking at the foreman with a calm smile of contempt.

The foreman, considerably nettled, put a wary hand into Dalton's side pocket and withdrew the late pedler's wallet. Cupidity shone in his eyes as, from its size and weight, he estimated its value. The foreman transferred the wallet to his own pocket.

"Open my coat. I've a gun there. You'd better get that," advised Dalton with a quiet laugh. "You're a real artist at this game. The poor pedler was only an understudy."

The mystified foreman, to hide his misgivings, resorted to bluster. Roughly he pulled open Dalton's coat and the butt of the automatic came to view. The foreman did not offer to take it. There was something about the manner of Dalton that suggested a strong, well-disciplined mechanism that might do sudden and astonishing things.

"You dare not take my gun," said Dalton, very evenly and quietly.

The foreman tried to meet Dalton's gaze, but his own eyes dropped miserably. Dalton deliberately dropped his hands to his sides. He opened his coat.

"Look at my holster," he commanded.

The foreman looked as directed and beheld a certain well-known emblem that bore the Royal Canadian coat-of-arms. His bellicose jaw dropped and a frightened look sprang into his eyes. Sheepishly he put away his revolver and returned to Dalton the wallet of money.

"Why didn't you tell me before?" he mumbled shame-facedly.

"I don't make it a point to take all comers into my confidence," replied Dalton drily. "Moreover, when ignoramuses like you carry pistols they are liable to go off through accident or nervousness, so I thought it better to put my hands up at the start to humor you," he added.

The foreman winced.

"Stop that!" called Dalton with a sternly

authoritative air to those who, having opened the dead pedler's pack, actuated by morbid curiosity or the thought of gain, were pawing over the trinkets they found therein.

The men looked enquiringly from Dalton to their foreman, who had now lapsed into speechless discomfiture. They were puzzled over the sudden exchange of authority.

"Have your men dig a grave for this body," continued Dalton shortly to the foreman. "His name was Gaspard Beauchamps. He apparently met death by accident through no negligence on your part. I myself heard the proper warning given, which was perfectly audible for a sufficient distance. I shall make a report of the circumstances of the case. I shall also take charge of his effects."

Dalton thereupon removed the pack from the body, shooing the morbid congregation of laborers away like a flock of hens.

"Now get together the men of your gang who bought worthless goods of this pedler," was his order.

"Ivan!—that's the only one I can pronounce," said the foreman disgustedly. "Anyway, I call 'em all 'John'. Hey, John! You, and you, come here!"

One of the Russians whose smattering of English was sufficient for the simple transaction was called into service as interpreter; and to him Dalton having communicated his idea, three hulking, bearded innocents presently produced newly purchased brass watches, with that air of ingenuousness that children bestow upon toys. Dalton replaced these articles in the pack and promptly reimbursed the Russians the full amounts that they had paid therefor, which sums Dalton took from the roll of money found on the pedler's person.

"Now I want these men's receipts," continued Dalton. "I'm accountable for these funds. If the Russians can't write English, let them make their marks."

This having been accomplished, the foreman detailed two of his men to dig a grave for the reception of the body and ordered the remainder of the gang to resume their interrupted work of loading rock on the dump cars.

Dalton picked up a slat from a dynamite box and wrote thereon:

GASPARD BEAUCHAMPS
Died Sept. 2, 1911.

"This Beauchamps," said Dalton to the foreman in conclusion, "had evidently been at the blind pig that I understand is in the neighborhood, because he was very drunk on the right of way. I did all I could to warn him, but I was too far behind to save his life. In any event, he probably escaped hanging, because I have been after Beauchamps for some time. He was wanted for the murder of Ismil Masourian, the Armenian pedler who was found near the right of way at Hervey's last June. This pack and pocketbook are identical with the ones taken from Masourian.

"So you see that justice works after all—though often in strange ways—even in the wilderness. Law travels wherever man travels, my friend—even if it is only the law of Fate."

The sun was dropping swiftly beyond the western wilderness; and it being impracticable to continue in the darkness certain investigations that Dalton had in mind, he went to Carmichael's camp for supper and a night's lodging.

IV

ALONG the line of the Transcontimental were establishments known as "blind pigs" where liquor was sold without compliance with the regulations of the Excise Department. The Government, though cognizant of these things, did not openly interfere with them so long as their operations were kept within reasonable bounds. The majority of the workers had been accustomed on their native heaths to alcoholic beverage in some form. The French-Canadians were restless without their vin and their whisky blanc—as they called the "white wheat"; The Russians were lonesome without vodka; The Hungarians were a long way removed from their beloved slivovitz; and the Irish and the Britons were morose without something in lieu of Scotch or a drap o' the poteen or a mug o' 'arf an' arf.

The laborer undoubtedly felt more resigned to the primitive life in the wilderness if he could spend an occasional hour over his tipple. The blind pigs kept many a good worker from drawing his time and going periodically to Montreal—a journey by foot and rail that consumed more than a week coming and going—merely for the purpose of enjoying himself after his own

peculiar fashion. Accordingly the Government did not actively object to the presence of the blind pigs. They wanted the railroad built. That was the prime consideration to which all other matters were made subservient.

Therefore Dalton was not particularly concerned with the existence of the establishment run by Papa Dupré on Lake Shabogama. The ethics of his profession, however, demanded a deeper probe into the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of the pedler, Gaspard Beauchamps. While this man had been a murderer and while Dalton could as easily have written the end of his chapter as he had scribbled the head-board for his grave—nevertheless Dalton's professional procedure was a dealing in principles rather than in facts.

He might pare the rough surface of a fact to fit a principle, but he would never subordinate a principle to a fact. Therefore, while it would have been easier to give official dismissal to the matter by reporting that Gaspard Beauchamps had met death by accident due to blasting operations on the right of way, than to pursue a strange and inexplicable circumstance that might lead him through a maze of fruitless investigation, Dalton adopted the more difficult and dangerous of the two courses and resolved that the obscure features of the case must, in the interest of justice, be illuminated.

On the following morning Dalton repaired at an early hour to Papa Dupré's log resort on the shores of Lake Shabogama. Two cockney laborers lounged therein, indulging in Whitechapel gossip, with a bottle of white wheat on the table between them. Dalton was not particularly interested in these men. One glance told him that they were not men of the woods. They were shovelmen, brought by their calling into an environment quite strange to them. The type of man Dalton sought was far different.

" 'Ave a little drop, matey?" was the generous invitation of one of the Londoners, to whose short-sighted eyes Dalton's khaki overalls immediately indicated membership in the universal lodge of labor.

"Don't mind if I do, old top," returned Dalton in amiable acquiescence, helping himself to a small tot of the liquor.

Papa Dupré, with his eyes alternately measuring the gradual decline of the liquor in the bottle and the growing architecture of a pair of snow-shoes that he was laboriously fabricating for use during the coming Winter, was less communicative than usual.

"Hear about the fellow who got killed at Carmichael's yesterday?" asked Dalton with studied casualness.

Dupré lifted his eyes from the intricacies of his task and looked interested.

"Bli' me! That's nothink new—eh, wot? 'Ow did 'e get it, mate?"

"Hit by a *kiute*," said Dalton, "at the big rock cut."

"We're from McDonald's. Mac ain't doing any blawsting, 'e ain't. Nothink but sand. Jolly good thing for us blokes."

"This man was a pedler," continued Dalton, leaning comfortably back against the log wall of the shack and glancing at Dupré through half-closed eyes. "A Frenchman," he added.

Dupré at once joined in the conversation.

"*Sacré!*" he interrupted suddenly, "Beeg mans wit' beard?"

"The same," agreed Dalton. "Name was Beauchamps."

"*Canaille!*" exclaimed the French-Canadian hotly. "She insult' ma leetle Jacqueline—she geet keel'?"

"Dead," said Dalton. "Hit by a blast."

Dupré piously crossed himself, shrugged his shoulders and seemed to dismiss the subject from his mind; but Dalton fancied that he detected a look of relief in the deep-set, faded old eyes.

"Bli' me! but those pedlah chawps are nothink but a lot of blooming robbahs. Now in Lunnon——"

The Londoners drank steadily and continued contrasting their home institutions with those of the savage country of their adoption, through which unscrupulous vendors were permitted to roam at will and mulct honest working-people out of their hard-earned savings.

Dalton glanced through the open doorway and admired the still, mysterious waters of Lake Shabogama stretching upward through the granite-hilled and forested solitudes of the "Height of Land." As he looked, in quiet contemplation of the scene's primitive beauties, an Indian-made bark canoe hove into sight from beyond a tiny headland and approached the shore at a point near the blind pig.

The paddler became of immediate interest to Dalton, who noted at once the long, free stroke of the paddle and the consummate deftness with which the occupant made his landing. There was plenty of strength in the frame of the man who could thus swing the big craft into the air and set it so gently in a patch of shade where the resin-covered seams would not be affected by the rays of the sun.

A pretty, dark-haired girl was gathering in some newly washed and sun-dried clothes that hung from a line back of a log cabin standing farther down the shore. She called to the canoeist, who responded with a prompt and familiar wave of the arm.

"That young lady will be Dupré's Jacqueline," thought Dalton.

He laid a bill upon the table and bought drinks.

"That's a nice-looking canoe yonder, eh? I'd like to buy a good Indian-made birch-bark."

The cockneys glanced curiously at Dalton. They were wondering why a railroad bloke should wish to invest money in a canoe when there was plenty of white wheat to be obtained.

Dupré looked enquiringly, first out of the doorway and then at Dalton.

"He Pierre Lalange canoe. Pierre, she not sell."

"Pierre work on the railroad?" asked Dalton in a tone of mild curiosity.

"*Coureur de bois*," answered Dupré. "Pierre, she come from countree of Lac Saint Jean. Bes' shot in the Quebecs, Pierre Lalange."

Proud admission of the accomplishments of his prospective son-in-law glowed in the eyes of Papa Dupré.

"I'll go and ask him if he wants to sell his canoe."

"Pierre, she no spik the Eengleesh," remonstrated the old man, giving Dalton the change for his bill.

"I do not imagine she does," mused Dalton in grim satisfaction as he made his way down to the shore of the lake: "particularly when 'she' does not seem to be cognizant of the significance of the word 'Fire!'"

Dalton well knew Lalange's type; black hair, black eyes, probably a strain of Indian blood; lithe in his movements as a lynx as he stepped noiselessly about in his boot-topped shoe-packs. Pierre critically reviewed a string of newly caught lake trout and sat down upon a log preparatory to making them ready for the frying-pan—a treat for Jacqueline, probably. His rifle stood against a tree-trunk near by. Dalton walked quietly over and stationed himself at a point between Pierre and his Winchester.

"Do you want to sell your canoe?" he asked courteously.

The young *coureur de bois* glanced at the speaker and then, spreading out his hands in an attitude of perplexity, he replied in the French-Canadian patois—

"I not speak not the English."

Dalton's mental processes were not tardy. He recalled that Papa Dupré had said that the pedler had insulted his daughter. Happenings of this sort touch a more serious cord among the men of the North than among their more conventional fellows of civilization. Dalton knew and understood these things well.

The closing act of the little drama now clearly enacted itself on the capable screen of his imagination. He beheld in fancy the clumsy Beauchamps stumbling through the brush and emerging upon the right of way so befuddled that, instead of proceeding westward, in which direction he was bound, he had turned again eastward, toward Carmichael's, whence he had just come.

Along his easy trail this young, hot-headed tiger of the North had followed swiftly, aroused to fury by his betrothed's sobbing recital of the pedler's wanton insult. Beauchamps, had he been sober, would have heeded the official warning of a coming blast on the right of way; but on this occasion he had staggered into the zone of danger. The tracker, unfamiliar with railroad operations and not understanding the warning cry, which informed him simply that there were men ahead and that his quarry was about to escape him unless he acted quickly, was spurred into immediate action when the pedler neared the crest of the granite hill beyond which he would presently pass from view.

Then Dalton's voice, uplifted to warn the pedler and coming from the rear, had forced matters to the grim climax. Thus out of the dim shadows of the spruces on the farther side of the right of way had come the report of the hunter's rifle, that had been drowned a second later by the deep thunder of the blast.

The young woodsman, startled by the

heavy detonation and by the hail of stones and rocks that swept simultaneously through the trees, had slipped away like a shadow and was probably unfamiliar, even yet, with the exact nature of Gaspard Beauchamps's death.

Dalton, looking calmly into the black eyes of Pierre Lalange, then said slowly and significantly in excellent French—far better than Pierre himself could command—

"I have heard that you are a good shot, Monsieur Pierre Lalange."

The *coureur de bois* dropped the fish he was holding and stood erect, swiftly searching Dalton's eyes. Dalton observed a lightning-like play of emotions skim over his mobile countenance—suspicion, fright, dismay, desperation. The way to his rifle was barred by Dalton's stalwart form. Ah! There was the little hunting-knife that he held in his hand—the knife that he had already opened preparatory to cleaning his fish.

Pierre glanced instictively and longingly at the Dupré cabin and then his face assumed a transfigured light, as of a martyr about to perish in a noble cause. The little, dark-haired Jacqueline was just tripping out of the doorway and was coming toward them. Pierre's total fund of muscular energy seemed suddenly to marshal itself under the supreme command of his brain and to poise itself, tiger-like, ready for the ultimate, death-defying effort of the untamed spirit at bay. Then—

"I have heard that you are a good shot, Monsieur Pierre Lalange."

Dalton, having quietly repeated his remark, was now serenely smiling into the young woodsman's desperate eyes. Pierre Lalange trembled in his indecision. His suddenly marshaled energy was ebbing. His swarthy face paled. His perceptions, unerring in their measurement of a foe, began to discern a hint of the power that lay behind the unwavering blue eyes of the Briton who opposed him.

No excitement whatever was manifest on the calm features—no anticipation of, or feverish preparation for, a coming shock of contest. Yet this man was undoubtedly prepared. His superb confidence unnerved the emotional spirit of the Frenchman, whose strength lay only in action, swift and immediate. The moment for such action was now past. Pierre moistened his hot lips.

Dalton was speaking again.

"This country needs strong men, Pierre Lalange—strong, good men, who can shoot. Men like that are necessary to subdue a wilderness like this. Some men say there is no law in this wilderness. There is law wherever there are men, Pierre Lalange. Even the murderer, Gaspard Beauchamps, came to his end through the workings of the law—the law of Fate. Granted that he misconducted himself in a vile manner, still you had no right to attempt the taking of his life. That office is reserved for a higher power than you. Therefore, you are very lucky, Monsieur Pierre Lalange. I have heard that you are a good shot—but, fortunately for you, in this case your aim was poor. You missed, Monsieur Pierre Lalange. Beauchamps met his death by the blast that followed your shot."

Relief and wonder swam into the eyes of the young *coureur de bois;* but there was also a glint that looked suspiciously like wounded pride in the glance that he threw mechanically at his trusty rifle. Jacqueline Dupré was coming, close by. Her dark eyes brightened with pleasure when she beheld the fine mess of trout that Pierre had caught for her. She glanced inquiringly and half-timidly at Dalton.

"Allow me to wish you a long and happy life, Monsieur Lalange," said the Briton, extending his hand. "And you also, Mademoiselle," continued he, courteously lifting his hat.

From Dupré's "blind pig" floated the raucous, argumentative tones of the two shovelmen. Above the verbal mêlée Dupré's voice could be heard, expostulating with them in his broken English.

"Bli' me! you cawn't frighten us, pop!" cried one of the laborers belligerently. "There ain't any bobbies out in these 'ere woods, we jolly well know!"

Dalton smiled and started back toward the right of way. His professional procedure was a dealing rather in principles than in facts. He was ready at times to juggle with a fact in the service of a principle.

"It is much more desirable to make a good citizen than to lose one," he assured himself in extenuation of his recent conduct.

Pausing in his walk along the silent, spruce-bordered lake, he pulled a flattened bullet from his vest pocket and tossed it into the oblivious waters of Shabogama.

"Miss!" he ejaculated in grim derision. "Those fellows never miss!"

The People of the Fourth Dimension

by S.B.H. HURST

Author of "The Padre of Paradise Street," "The Mending," etc.

"BUT does my lord really love me?" Sesson, striving for eloquence, became feverishly inarticulate, after the manner of men more accustomed to the silences of vast spaces than the babble of crowds.

The girl, who was fifteen in age but ancient in wisdom and with a subtle understanding of life which few Western women can hope to attain, laid a bangled arm about the man's neck and drew his face down gently. The greatest of sculptors, banished again to earth, might have carved her out of old ivory, giving form and existence to the memory of his spirit love, lest he forget and the wonder of her be lost forever.

"And the old one," she whispered, simulating an easy indifference to disguise a burning curiosity, "what does he say?"

"Er, well—" Sesson fought his limited bump of language. "You see, light of the world, men of my race do not talk to one another about their love affairs."

"So. But of course I know you forget all about me when you leave my house."

With the lack of originality of men of all races, Sesson tried to tell her that he could not forget, that she was never out of his mind. Listening, she suddenly realized that her smile was betraying her feelings and she began to laugh playfully.

"But is my lord—who is so big and strong—afraid to tell the old Sinclair sahib about his home with me?"

"No, not afraid—but what good would it do? Besides, I don't want—I mean I—that is——"

"It is, my lord, and I am proud you hold me so sacred," coming into the wind easily, she shot off on another tack, without Sesson, who had been a sailor, being at all aware of her evolution.

They sat in the cool of the evening on the top of the house Sesson had rented for the girl with all the care and secrecy at his command. He knew only too well how news travels among the natives of India, and he had no desire to have his love affair become a joke in the bazaars.

Rising and falling, the roar of Calcutta flowed beneath them like a river; and in the still air the smoke of cooking fires lazily waved. The early bats were beginning their evening's gambol. Hanging like the sign of the girl's faith, the faintest crescent of a moon seemed more like an ornament than a satellite, and there were no stars.

"Looks as if the monsoon were about to break," Sesson remarked irrelevantly.

"Thinkest thou of the weather when with me?" she chided.

"It was but my tongue speaking," he apologized. "My soul is dumb in thy presence—like a devout in the temple of a goddess."

"Very good, my Sesson," she applauded. "Give me more. I like it, for it is good talk."

He did his best and while she listened she wondered; coming to the conclusion that

she loved him as well as she could allow herself to love any man—but, after all, what was love? Besides, when one is young and lovely love is an easy thing to get. When one grows old, money is very useful. When she was old she might be fat. She shuddered slightly and Sesson, thinking she was cold, drew a shawl about her.

"Yes," she thought, "and he will marry some *mem sahib*, anyway, so what matters it? Still, if I could only be sure. Bah, one is sure only of old age and death."

"My Sesson," she roused herself with sudden decision, "didst thou ever look into the ink-pool?"

"Of course not."

"Why not?"

"Oh, because it's silly, I suppose."

"So is all play, if you will. But I like to stare into the ink. Sometimes I see all sorts of things. Besides, I always look to see if thou art true to me." And she laughed lightly.

"Why?" Sesson was lovingly indignant. "How can you doubt me?"

"Did I say I doubted thee?"

"No. But you said you looked into the ink to see if I were faithful."

"Does that not prove I love thee? If I didn't care, would I trouble to be jealous? How little dost thou understand a woman, my lord!" And there was just enough of plaintiveness in her voice to make Sesson ashamed of himself. "Let us play, then," she suggested.

Sesson hesitated. While not exactly a clever man, he had had certain experiences which had taught him much. Also, he had one of the best teachers in the world, for his employer, Sinclair, knew the native as few men had ever done, without consideration of race or creed. Therefore, he hesitated, although he cursed himself—knowing his hesitation implied a doubt of the girl. Queer things have happened to those who have stared into the saucer of ink. But the girl loved him—she would rather die than do him an injury.

"All right—perhaps I will—some time," he parried weakly.

The women of India have a certain bird-like quality which is only faintly approximated by women of other lands. They can also rise gracefully from cushions laid on a flat roof. Doing this, the girl reminded Sesson for all the world of a small and very indignant canary.

"I go to look into the ink—perchance I may discover in what way I have caused my lord to doubt my faith."

"Did I say that I doubted?"

Sesson also rose from the cushions, but no one would have accused him of doing it gracefully.

"There is no need to *say*."

"But— But—" Sesson attempted to put his arms round her.

"Let not my lord touch one so unworthy —he may contaminate himself." She avoided him disdainfully.

"Oh, well, I'll look into the —— ink."

"There is no —— ink. But such as it is thou shalt *not* look into it."

"Eh?"

She had gone too far—intentionally. Now she played her winning card—throwing herself into his arms, sobbing so violently that she scared him, as well as making him thoroughly ashamed of himself.

"It is always thus," she panted. "A woman gives herself to a man and worships him as a god, while he but regards her as a toy. This is bad, but when a woman loves a man with her whole soul and then finds he does not trust her—that is too bad to be borne. I will die!"

"Come, come," Sesson did his best to soothe her.

"Why—why didst thou fear the ink? Did my lord think that I, his slave, would play him some trick?" This was exactly the suspicion that had been in Sesson's mind, although it had not quite risen to the surface where words would have given it form. Thus, being an intangible thing, the girl's distress had blown it away, leaving in its place a feeling that he had treated her brutally. Besides, he knew that while he looked upon ink and crystal-gazing as merely aids to auto-hypnosis, methods of reflecting pictures in the subconscious and thus bringing them into conscious view, the girl considered everything so revealed as objective truths—believed them to be glimpses into the future, warnings, divine messages, and what not.

That is, the average girl of her sort did so believe, and he had no reason to think that Laulee was different from her species. All this being so, Sesson was in the unhappy situation of one who sneers at or doubts the religious belief of his sweetheart; while he had betrayed a doubt of her fidelity to himself.

"LIGHT of my life," he whispered fondly to the trembling bundle of white linen, bangles and emotion, "I did but jest with thee."

A long-forgotten story came to his aid.

"Thou knowest that whither thou goest I will go, and whatsoever thou takest pleasure in will surely be my delight. Let us together look for pictures in the ink. I promise thee that thou wilt see nothing but thine own sweet face in my dreams."

She disengaged herself, clapping her hands like a delighted child.

"Oh, my Sesson, thou art a poet," she chirped. This he doubted, annoyingly conscious of being a fool. At the same time the shadow of a fear, a premonition of danger obtruded itself into his emotions. Manlike, however, he felt committed to his promise—in addition to disappointing Laulee, it would be dishonorable if he did not stare into the ink.

"But," he joked tenderly as they descended from the house-top, "what, if when we look into the ink, I should see all the men who have loved thee?"

"*Ai*, and if thou didst! Such a mob! You would think it an army—of fools. Would it not be more interesting to thee to see a picture of every man I have loved—which is very different?"

"Would that be an army, too?" he retorted with ready jealousy.

"Ay, my lord. Indeed, a host in himself. And that—" she lighted the lamp—"you may see without ink. Behold!" She laughed saucily and pointed to his photograph. "You may say the ink can lie, but I have heard that the camera can not."

Sesson grinned, contented and comfortable. Here, in this house, he was as absolute as some feudal baron. The outer door was barred and no one could enter without fighting the old soldier, his gatekeeper. For privacy in India is sacred. What a crank he had been to make a fuss about the ink. As if any harm could come to him in such a sanctuary, even if the girl did not love him; and he felt sure she did. Why shouldn't she?

Lighting a pipe, he sank lazily into a soft couch and watched Laulee making ready for the experiment. To the dimming of the light he made no objection, nor yet to the preparations which told him he would be compelled to sit more upright; but he did complain when the girl decided it was necessary to stop the electric fan—a modern usurpation of the age-old *punkah* which made for greater privacy, and relished even by those who considered a *punkah* coolie as being merely furniture—because its spinning would irritate the placid surface of the ink saucer. But the girl soothed his objections with a pretty authority, finally surveying her arrangements with complacent satisfaction.

"Now, my lord, all things being in readiness, wilt thou condescend to allow the gods to open the veil?"

"So the gods have charge of this business, eh?" asked Sesson as he took up the position assigned to him.

"Who knows, *sahib*?"

"Don't call me *sahib*," he protested.

"Don't make fun of what I do, then," she retorted.

"I am all obedience," he avoided the argument.

"You must not," she protested as he slipped an arm about her waist. "This matter must be approached without any idea of levity."

"Wherein is the levity?" He imitated a reproved schoolboy, and sat very straight.

"Nay," she begged, "please, my Sesson, do thou fall into my mood. Who knows what will happen?"

"If I don't fall asleep, I will keep on staring at a pool of ink until you grow tired of watching me do it—that's what will happen. Now!" And Sesson, to please Laulee, imitated her every move—or, rather, lack of movement.

For some minutes they stared, and Sesson was conscious of nothing more than an overwhelming desire to blink his eyes. Presently, this passed and he became sleepy. Then, suddenly, he stared intently—very wide awake! For, deep in the ink apparently—so deep that it seemed impossible that the saucer held less than an inch of the liquid, he saw!

What he saw at first were certain things he did not like to look at. Events in his life about which he could never think without a shudder of disgust, of shame—the skeletons which every man keeps hidden from the world and as far as is possible from himself. He rubbed his eyes, hoping that what he saw had no objective existence and would disappear. But it persisted. He saw himself, deep in the ink, doing again what he wished he had never done.

It was exactly as if some unseen moving-picture camera had recorded his every move —years before; and with a rare feeling of horror Sesson lifted his eyes from the damning record of his past to look at Laulee. Was she, too, witnessing the same scene?

She was not. In that small saucer of ink, she was seeing very different pictures, and the incidents of Sesson's life which he had seen were hidden from her. This he knew in a glance. For the girl's face was flushed with delight. She hardly breathed. Whatever she saw, it was entrancing. Relieved and lured by a horrible fascination, Sesson stared again at the ink.

But the unpleasant picture of his past was no longer there to trouble him. There was nothing there, but the placid pool of ink; and warned by his previous experience Sesson felt that it would be the wiser part to stare no more with intentness. Laulee would be none the wiser if he pretended to look deep.

As a matter of fact, she was so absorbed in her visions that she had apparently forgotten he existed. If she asked him afterward what he had seen, he could invent something. To tell her the truth, as far as his experience had gone, would be impossible.

It was curious, very curious—this seeing the record of one's past. Of course he had heard of such experiences, but he had never experimented. In a vague way he understood why he could not see what the girl saw, and *vica versa*. He began to theorize on the how and why of the visions—his eyes still fixed on the saucer, so that if Laulee happened to look at him she would be deceived into believing he was seeing things.

CURIOUS stuff—ink! In some way it caught all the light in the room. Of course, the light was dim —Laulee had seen to that—just enough to see the ink properly. That, no doubt, was the reason the ink had changed both in color and appearance. That cloudy, steamy, vapory stuff, now rising like a fog over a marsh—that must be due to some chemical peculiarity of ink.

Sesson's knowledge of chemistry was trifling, but he gravely tried to explain to himself why he no longer saw a saucer of ink. As a matter of fact, he hadn't the remotest idea what he saw; but what he did see reminded him of the interior of a tunnel, just after a train has gone through it.

That was it. He remembered now. Funny why he had had any difficulty. Simple, when you knew how to figure it out! But, now he came to think of it, it was —— strange his being able to stand in the way of an express train without getting hurt. He must have been standing in its way, because the train had just gone through the tunnel, and there was only one set of rails.

No, it wasn't so strange, after all. Very dimly, but nevertheless positively, he remembered that, for many, many years, nothing had been able to hurt him—that is, hurt him physically. He could, also, fly. That, as a matter of fact, was his natural gait. He moved his legs something like walking, swinging his arms ever so little—much less than when swimming. And, by Jove, the air held him up much better than water did. How perfectly delightful this easy motion through space. He felt like a bird. No, not a bird, exactly. What did he feel like? Oh, well, it didn't matter. He could decide some other time.

It was lonely, though. And where was he? With a great effort, Sesson took hold of himself, as one can sometimes do in a dream, and realized that something exceedingly curious had happened to him.

He was not dreaming—in some way he was sure about that—but he certainly was not where he ought to be. But, where was that? Where should he be?

For what seemed like several centuries, Sesson struggled desperately to remember where he should be—where he had been before he found himself floating like a feather in a silent void. It was no use—he knew he was himself, but what that self was he did not know; and where he had come from was equally inexplicable.

The fear and horror peculiar to nightmare began to assail him and the only answer to all his questioning was that he was lost, utterly lost, in limitless space.

He struggled to awake, illogically because he still felt he was not dreaming, but it was the only course of action he could think of. He believed himself to be screaming, praying, begging. Then something deep in his consciousness told him to open his eyes. This he did, easily and naturally, finding, to his utter astonishment, that he was sitting where he had been before his

awful experience, before the saucer of ink, while Laulee was still staring into the pool, with the same ecstatic smile. She, evidently, had had no such unpleasant experience.

"No more for me," he exclaimed involuntarily.

As if pulled by some invisible hand, the girl's head jerked back from its attitude of staring. She frowned at him.

"Why did'st thou waken me? See, there is nothing—all is gone. Oh, why didst thou do it?"

"Don't blame me," he said contritely. "What I saw caused me to yell out loud. It was not my fault."

"Oh, yes it was," she answered with some asperity. "For if there is no evil in our memories, no evil thing can happen to us in the ink. In all the universe there is nothing that can harm the good."

With one of her rapid changes of mood she began to pet and soothe him.

"Poor boy, did all the bad devils of thy past rise up to haunt thee? It had to be, but next time maybe the good spirits will take thy hand and lead thee to Paradise instead of Jehannum."

Whether the girl's explanation was correct or otherwise, Sesson was deeply moved by his experience. It was altogether different from anything he had ever known. Of course, one may dream of time and space, and feel that years are passing; but when one wakes one realizes that it was but a dream and probably lasted only a few seconds. The experience can then be dismissed, as not being real.

But, to his surprize, Sesson found that he could not so casually dismiss the effects of his ink-gazing. On one hand, he felt certain that he had never moved from the place where he had been sitting; on the other, to believe that he had not moved seemed absurd. The experience, the sense of motion—all this had been too real, too tangible. Indeed, compared with the events of everyday, Sesson was compelled to admit that one was as real as the other.

If what had happened to him while he apparently sat by Laulee's side had not been real, then he had not eaten his dinner that evening. Yet, logically, this conclusion was absurd. Thinking, the puzzled sailor remembered the words of an old fakir: "There is a realm where logic is transcended, where things are real."

Naturally, then, Sesson wanted advice. The experience had scared him. Could a man leave his body and go wandering, without regard to what we call time, and careless of what we call space? But who was there to advise him? Laulee? Hardly! And yet, why not? Was it the egoism of the male, hesitating to seek advice from the female?

No. Truthfully, Sesson could answer "no" to that. Then did he not feel confident; did he doubt her knowledge? That was better, but, still, not the whole truth. He felt that he might as well own up to it—that he wished thoroughly to understand the girl, but could not. Men in love feel this bafflement.

And the need of consulting some one was pressing. Calling himself a baby that could not keep its mouth shut failed to ease the urge. To talk, to confess, if you will, to some one, he must. And who was there but Sinclair?

Yet, he balked. To tell Sinclair about his adventure in the ink meant at least hinting about Laulee; and while he knew that the elder man would not ask questions and would never even dream of trying to supervise his morals, he hated to mention that his extraordinary experience had taken place while apparently in the presence of a woman. Troubled this way he put off speaking to Sinclair; but the weight on his mind was so pressing that he went about his duties like a man in a dream and every one he met knew he was bothered.

This of course he knew and because his confounded experience came between his work and himself, he worried the more. That he should worry at all was another problem and a weighty one. But how should Sesson know that he had dipped into the immeasurable sea?

In the end he developed a fixed idea—he wanted to tell Sinclair, but he would not. He would fight the wish. But "the suppressed wish' is the fulcrum of psychology and its effects are known to men of far less wisdom than Sinclair, the unofficial guardian of India. Being what he was, he disliked to question Sesson. Thus he compromised, one morning, with:

"You are not looking yourself—better take a few weeks' leave. Go up to Darjeeling, or some place where its cooler."

And Sesson, who was forty years the younger, blurted out the whole tale and felt better when he had blurted.

AS HE told it, he did not look at Sinclair and when he did look up he was startled by the expression of gravity on the face of the elder man, who said:

"It's too late to ask you why you stared, and I won't. You are living in a country where queer things happen. I mean, things which would be called queer in England, but which are every-day events in India."

He paused for a few minutes, then continued:

"In my many years here, to quote Newton, I have felt myself, as it were, walking by the shore of a boundless sea, picking up small pebbles. Each pebble means so much more knowledge—but what is a ton of such to all the knowledge hidden by the sea? It appears that you, unwittingly, have taken a plunge into the sea itself. Once, and only once, I myself wet my hand in it. Well, whatever their reason, *they* did not allow it for mere amusement." And Sinclair finished speaking almost as if he were talking to himself.

"Who," Sesson stammered, "who do you mean by *they?*"

"I do not know," said Sinclair very simply.

"Eh?" Sesson might well be surprized.

"No. I have discovered society after society. I found the gang which wishes to hypnotize the world, and may, because the silly world does not believe it possible! As if the western world knew anything about hypnotism! Yes, I have unearthed clique after clique—knowing all the time that behind all these manifestations lurked a power, a power which seemed as far beyond my reach as the fourth dimension, a power beyond me, which I was almost content to admit as my master. I believe that power is interested in you."

Sesson was dumb. Not because he had heard about a mysterious power, which appeared to be interested in himself, but because Sinclair had admitted there was something in India which he was content to let alone, if not consider his superior. This was more than extraordinary; it was hardly believable.

"My explanation may be miles from being correct," Sinclair continued, as if soliloquizing, "but it's the best I have been able to build up in all these years. To make my idea easier of understanding, suppose we call this *they* who appear to be interested in you 'The People of the Fourth Dimension.' Then, remember how almost everything pertaining to the so-called "Occult" has its origin in India.

"Sect after sect has arisen, book after book has been written, mahatma after mahatma—so called—has said his little say and passed on. But all of these were perhaps but the echo of the *they* I speak of: the sects, the wise men, the books were maybe but gropings for the truth of this mysterious people, although, being human, these gropers pretended to have the truth, and lived by peddling it.

"Few of them knew more than you do today—every one was trying to explain, and is trying to explain an experience similar to your own. That is why India is the home of occultism—because it seems to be the home of this unseen people of fourth dimensional space.

"I am a materialist, but not in the narrow sense in which the term is generally understood. I am so because the material is constantly showing us new wonders and until we are certain that the marvels of the material are exhausted—which will never be—I see no reason to speak of the spiritual. For what we call spiritual is only matter refined. Therefore, this unseen people are as physical as you and me. They are invisible to us because they occupy four dimensions of space instead of three.

"Even if we admit a common evolutionary basis—I speak, of course, of some basis of which undifferentiated protoplasm is a product—why should not one branch of life have evolved in a space of four dimensions, while our branch evolved in three? If we admit the possibility of this—and I see no reason and no consistency in denying it—then the evolution of man in fourth-dimensional space must have resulted in a super-being, a being who grew beyond us for millions of years, in the ratio of as four is to three, with all the added possibilities of that added space.

"That we can not see them is to be expected, since we can not even imagine fourth space, verbally intelligible though it may be. But the theory is big. That these people exist you will, I think, soon have greater proof than I have. I suggest that you go on with your ink experiments, and if you tell the lady what I have told you, she will be apt to confirm it. If she doesn't,

you will have an inexhaustable source of argument. But perhaps you had better not tell her that you confided in me.

"Every native is suspicious of me, and will close up like an oyster if my name is mentioned.

"But, remember—for this is serious—that you are playing with something far too powerful for you to control. Nevertheless, I should like you to go through with the thing. We may learn something tangible—that is, if you are not afraid of the consequences to yourself?"

Naturally, this suggestion made Sesson all the more anxious to continue his ink experiments; if only to show Sinclair that he was not afraid of even the inhabitants of fourth-dimensional space. Yet no doubt he would have gone on without the dare—the lure of the thing being easily understood by any one.

And so, that twilight, going to the house, he was conscious of two pulls. There was, of course, the charm of the girl; but Sesson paused in the narrow street, to wonder if, after all, the bugle-call, crying "fight," were not the more alluring. The something to be done was beginning to thrill.

His devotion to Sinclair was stronger than that of son to father, more overpowering than the subject's loyalty to his queen or king. It was a subtle fealty, born of kindness and nurtured in friendship and understanding. And to risk himself, body and soul, to aid, in his weak way, Sinclair's researches, to assist the great man to solve what appeared to be his one unsolved problem! Why! "To crush the Moslem in his pride" could not have more greatly stirred a crusader to action.

But the task would need all of his not too-remarkable intelligence. For Sesson was under no delusions concerning his mental status. His was the average mind of the average ship's officer, and he had the bull-dog courage of the breed. And that type is neither introspective nor fond of dallying with abstraction; neither is cold logic a hobby. To dare and do his best was a conviction more soul-binding than a religion. And to do this for Sinclair carried the additional force of an emotional stimulus.

The mind of the sailor set itself, as he stood between the high, old walls of the street. Just as years before it would have set itself to the task of squaring the yards had the wind drawn aft.

Automatically he again walked slowly. Haste is agitating and this thing must be approached calmly and with unwinded lungs—no hurting pantings when the clash came, be that clash weird beyond a mortal's imagining. It was a fight to be fought. He must be at his best. To think about the end would be folly, weakness. To fight, and do his best—this must be his one continual mental picture. The man in his fine determination was doing himself an injustice. He needed no such mental reminder.

LAULEE was fascinatingly melting. Her loving was of the custard-apple sort, which she knew to be Sesson's favorite fruit. So overwhelmingly subtle is mind of woman when it wishes to be. To have played the mango, with its wonderful taste but hard center, would have been a mistake. That girl could become things, and she instinctively knew the correct thing to imitate.

All the core, the jarring center of their last meeting, had been changed into lusciousness. In that sweetness he could feel that her love was real, was abandonment. And surely, if there were any doubt of her, wise old Sinclair would have warned him?

She was a mere child, playing, through the ink, with the underlying occultism of India. And she did not know the danger of her toy. So, they were only lovers again and the world was a wealth of sweet-briar in late Spring.

They went up to the roof and, like two children, tried to count the flying foxes crossing the low moon. Like children, they pretended to quarrel about their counting. And both were very happy. So it was Sesson, feeling the call to self-abnegation, the urge to do what seemed his duty, who suggested, playfully, that they again seek pictures in the ink. Laulee was surprized, puzzled, but her answering laugh was light and lilting.

"Why, my Sesson, would'st thou become a holy man and live in rags and with his beggar's bowl!"

He laughed back:

"No, my sweet one, I crave no fakir's austerity. To be strictly truthful, I hope, in the ink, to see thee—when thou dost not know me to be watching!"

He looked at her long and silently, put in doubt by her words and the hidden sparkle in her eyes.

Her answer was the answer of the woman of India. Men, reputed wise men, have wrangled over the possibility of telepathy; yet only an ignorant fool denies the power of suggestion. The two are one and the same, made slightly variant by the distance bridged. Whosoever does not believe this—from the lips of an agnostic—let him stain his face and body, learn language, and live as a native of India with the natives—if he has the wit not to be discovered—for twelve months. Chances are he will become as superstitious as a devotee of juju. Again the preparations, the lowering of the light—protracted tonight, however, almost as if the actors were late and the stage and curtain must be kept back for them, by loving interruptions, which Sesson found very soothing. He even asked for more, but the lady became suddenly firm, smiled, pointed to the ink, pouting delightfully.

"Seek me there as thou didst tell me."

And Sesson—feeling like a boy caught in a lie—stared, pretending his best, after a long kiss.

Hardly had he concentrated upon the saucer, when his eyes closed and he believed himself elsewhere, and he found it very pleasant. His sensations were those of lying upon a bank of flowers, by a small stream in that delightfully lazy condition only possible to healthy tiredness, perfect nerves. Besides, he was content to let the voice talk to him. It was a fascinating voice, which rose and fell with the strangely soul-stirring sounds of an aeolian harp. As a chorus, there was the faint sob of the wind among the trees, with the whispered comments of the birds.

But, presently, Sesson knew that the voice was telling him something important—was not merely entertaining him with its beauty. So he listened carefully until, among the music of the many sounds, he came to distinguish what was meant for him. It thrilled him with memories and echoes of religion. And the theme was obedience.

But no man had ever preached or written upon obedience in the wonderfully alluring manner in which the subject was now imparted to Sesson. His soul seemed to become in tune with the voice and to answer back with emotional fervor that obedience was the whole duty of a man. In his ecstasy, it never occurred to Sesson to ask whom he should so utterly obey. It was enough for him, then, to absorb with intense enjoyment the lesson—obey, and all things thou delightest in and seekest shall be given unto thee.

Surely, he thought, the voice must be that of some old prophet of the Bible. He became embued with religious enthusiasm to which he had ever before been a stranger. To obey! What a wonderful, soul-entrancing Creed! To obey, obey, obey, obey. He sat up on the flowers, anxious to begin the path of obedience. He tried to hear more, but the voice was failing. Into the scenery about him he stared, seeking the owner of the voice. He used his eyes as he would have done picking up a buoy on a dark night at sea, and—saw Laulee staring at him, her lips parted.

His experience he told to Sinclair in detail, not forgetting to mention his standing in the narrow street with the call to fight coming over him and his decision to go through with the thing, "like having trouble with the crowd forrard."

But at this Sinclair frowned and shook his head.

"That's like you, of course, and I admire it. But you cannot approach this affair in that frame of mind. Think! How can you? Imagine wrestling with a being who occupied four dimensional space. Try to picture your efforts to get a toe-hold on him! Won't do! Impossible. No, there is only one way for you to go into this thing, and if that way dismays or annoys you, why, we will drop the whole affair.

"The way is—as in your last experience—absolute and entire obedience. You must subjugate your will to *their* intentions, or nothing worth while will happen. You must become a mere automaton in *their* hands, or there will be no result. I know it sounds unattractive, if not worse; but I can promise you that you will suffer no injury. You may be somewhat inconvenienced, but only for a few days, or so. Permanent effect there will not be. You know me and can trust me. I am banking on a natural law. Will you go through with it on these terms?"

For the first time since he had known the man, Sesson was aware of what was nothing else but a pleading note in his voice. This was remarkable. Why was Sinclair so tremendously interested in this vague people? Sesson gave it up. It was beyond him. But Sinclair pleading! That was unnecessary. Of course he would go through

with the thing. To oblige Sinclair he would go to hell.

He did not say this. That, also, was not necessary. The men parted in full understanding. But Sinclair spent most of the night making plans. The matter involved great consequences and not a single inch of the track must be allowed to be out of line.

NEXT evening, Laulee's greeting savored of irony.

"My high priest of the ink must thou to thy duties at once—*ek dum*—or hast thou a tiny moment to waste on such utter uselessness as I?"

Veiling his eyes with a smile, Sesson studied her as keenly as he could; in reality, for the first time. From some hitherto nebulous intuitive faculty a truth came to him, cold and solid as a steel bar. Or, again, it may have been the sudden re-pulsing of an atavism. Leaving the argument, he knew with a stinging clarity that an ironical woman is worse than dangerous, passes understanding and is false. Love cannot stoop to irony—that is, and mean it. But, did she mean it?

"Lady of my life," his voice had never been more lover-like, "if it pleases thee, thy slave will never again stare into ink but will spend every moment of his hours away from his work—and he needs must work, for thee—in proving to thee his utter and changeless devotion."

This, of course, in Hindustani, which he spoke well, while Laulee caught her breath. Then, before she meant to answer—emotion-driven—

"But I would not ask thee to give up thy amusements, my lord."

"Thou art more to me than any play, any reward—more indeed, than my honor! What a small thing is it for me to cease to stare into ink which seems to displease thee."

"Nay, my Sesson——"

He interrupted, with a careless gesture—

"Hush, sweet one, let us forget such little things, for what is a dish of black fluid?"

He was surprized at himself. Could that be Sesson, talking so incisively to Laulee? A doubt dragged him from the heights. He loved her, too greatly. Reaction came, and he felt almost as if he had struck her. With one of her lightning-like flashes—she was cobra-like in her rapidity and singleness of purpose—she struck back, one small, bare foot indicating indignation with a single stamp.

"So, that is it!" Her eyes met his, flashing venom. "In the first play thou didst doubt me, fearing I would do thee some small meanness. Then thou didst pretend to play. Now thou tirest of this pretense. It is all of a part. Thou hast all along believed me faithless. Maybe the old one told thee and like a calf thou didst bleat belief! And now, careless, thou hast as good as called me traitor!"

Her voice trailed off into heartrending plaintiveness.

"When, my lord, all I wanted in my little game was thy strengthening presence by my side."

She was in his arms, sobbing like a child wakening from nightmare.

A very cold-blooded, logical, perhaps inhuman, man might have resisted Laulee in that moment, provided he had not the slightest interest in her, did not love her. But, what chance had Sesson, pulsing passion, with five million reds, the normal blood-count of a healthy man—and the girl's willing slave? He forgot everything; the doubt so recently roused vanished like a jet of steam. Besides, Sinclair had asked him to go through with this thing. Sesson became slightly bewildered. So the affair progressed.

But the molding was slow, and Sesson became irritated at the lack of tangibility in his ink-experiences. Nothing now but voices in a void reiterating lessons he felt he knew. This for a month. What was it all about? Why didn't something happen? The man began to doubt, but kept it to himself, that there was anything behind these weak manifestations—that it was all self-induced hypnosis. Yet Sinclair, who could not make mistakes, had asked him to go through with it? Laulee was a dear girl, who did not know what she was playing with.

The tangibility came with an overwhelming suddenness.

During the usual preparations, he found himself thinking that Laulee must have penetrated his reason for this nightly performance. Then he dismissed this thought —she, with the patient, eternal curiosity of her sex and India, was willing to continue seeking ink-truths all her life. And she did but ask his nearness as a sort of support. She had never asked him a question

regarding his experiences. Remembering this last, he felt sure of her and comforted. Why comforted he did not seek to know.

OF COURSE by this time Sesson had merely to look at the ink with a momentary intentness to drift off into dreams or whatever his condition was. This night was no exception, but hardly had he reached his usual void, when the voice said loudly and with certainty—spoke in such a way that Sesson never even thought of doubting what it told him—

"Sinclair has been murdered!"

In that state, with every faculty and emotion suspended and waiting to be influenced, the words—to Sesson as truthful as if from the lips of God—swung every fiber of the man into frantic, clamoring, revengefulness. Sinclair murdered! Then there was only one thing in life for Sesson to do, and that was to get the murderer. Further, the law should throw no protecting mantle over him. Neither would he have the easy death of hanging.

But at this the voice protested. The murderer was too clever. He had even impersonated Sinclair, deceiving, for that day, even Sesson himself, the stout *babu*, Sinclair's personal servant, the Sikh gatekeeper. If Sesson tried long-drawn-out killing, he would fail. Thinking he had gone mad, Sinclair's men would grapple with him. Revenged he should be, but caution must be the mother of success.

His consuming anger was natural and admirable, as for a murdered father, but a clever villain must be beaten by cleverness. No other way could win. The voice was as greatly angered as Sesson, but knew better than to act rashly.

But Sesson was in the throes of a man bound, who sees all he loves violated. He struggled to free himself, to reach, in some way, that murderer.

But a month of suggestion—the work of a master—had made Sesson pliable, obedient. The murder must be at once avenged but there must be no chance of failure. A revolver, a shot at close quarters—the only sure way. Sesson was only vaguely conscious of his surroundings. He was steady enough on his legs, but his brain—swayed and guided by the voice, by the man he felt was his friend, who held his arm—groped, as if under the influence of some powerful drug.

He knew he was leaving the house with this friend, but it never occurred to him that no man but himself had any right in the privacy of that room. And this was not only due to the utter confidence he placed in the vague figure by his side—white or black, native or European, was something Sesson never considered—but to his having lost all interest in life, except to avenge Sinclair.

He neither saw nor thought of Laulee who, wrapped in a whirl of conflicting emotions, crouched in a corner, watching. Neither was he conscious of guiding his friend to that carefully hidden house. Yet here, he felt that his friend knew the house, but needed Sesson's presence to gain admission. (The student of this subject will note conflicting theories, impossible of discussion here). If his volition, if his "free-thought" had been dammed and diverted, as is a stream, there was still the ever-living effort to burst through and again flow free. And Sesson felt his right hand on the automatic in the pocket of his coat. The Sikh gatekeeper admitted them, acting as if he neither saw nor sensed anything unusual, and as Sesson and his companion walked slowly across the small compound, the keeper of the gate closed his charge and turned to watch the two men, clearly visible in a streak of moonlight. Out of the forest of hair covering his face his teeth showed whitely for an instant, in what might have been a grin or a snarl. Then a scratching, a feeble knocking on the gate drew his attention.

He switched on the powerful light which showed what was outside and opened the lookout. What he saw brought again the show of teeth, but this time there was no mistaking the snarl.

"So, it is thee, hell-cat!" And he turned aside, to spit loudly.

"Water-buffalo!" Laulee's intense emotion had lifted her above any sort of fear or thought of self. "No doubt thou thinkest thyself a brave and clever man, and at times that may be true. But I am all that can save my *sahib* and thy *sahib* this night! Let me in, big man. Surely thou art not afraid of a woman, and such a little one?"

With her usual cleverness, the girl had made no appeal based on Sesson's love for her. But the Sikh knew of that fact, and he thought the world of Sesson. Also, he had his country's idea of women. Their

place in the scheme of things was the place of toys. They belonged to the lower side of life. Yet a Sikh or a high-caste Hindu often adores his mother! They were neither to be trusted nor treated as responsible beings. But to hurt the woman a man loves is like taking cubs from a tigress. And Sesson sahib was a man.

"Come in, spawn of Satan," he announced blandly, opening the gate a trifle.

As the girl slipped through, he gripped her, hurtfully. Then he closed and barred the gate.

"About thee? Is it a knife, a gun, or maybe a trained sister of thine—another snake?" he asked. For a moment she twisted in his grip, then she gave up, and bore it.

"A knife!" She produced a curved, deadly blade.

"Hum! Keep it! Because of the honor I bear my Sesson sahib, neither will I search thee. Think not that this is due to any honor of thee! But, try to be the traitor thou art, and thy head falls—very swiftly!"

He drew his sword significantly.

"And while thou swellest thy chest, mouthing the brave things thou wilt do to a child, thou art preventing me from saving my *sahib*."

The Sikh laughed softly.

"Thinkest thou this is a hive of fools?"

Nevertheless, with his hand on her arm, he went with her towards the door of the house—sufficiently believing to leave his gate without authority.

They entered quietly. All seemed quiet. The small elevator was not running. A tiny light in a red globe showed the stairs. Against his wish, the urging of the girl caused the Sikh to hasten.

Making no more sound than two drifting feathers, they began swiftly to climb the wide staircase. They reached the first landing. Into the quiet—startling even the Sikh—the noise of a shot broke. Although he grabbed at her with the rapidity of a wrestler, and even cut at her flying legs with his sword, the girl squirmed out of his grip and fled like a streak of white up the last stairs soundless, for Laulee had left all her many bangles at home. So swiftly had she moved that it seemed to the Sikh that the noise of breaking glass came to him after she had gone!

Flashes of half-light, shadows, trick of circumstance, the unexpected, the unguessable tide of human emotion, the touch of self-denial, the craving for the thing loved, the carefully planning mind of a great man—and chance.

WHAT Laulee glimpsed through her haze of feeling, at the open door of that curiously light-dark room, was, first, Sesson standing alone, staring vacantly at what seemed to be the shattered remainder of a large mirror, his empty hands hanging at his side—an attitude that was half terror, half not understanding. In the unbreakable grasp of the two ex-dacoits, whom Sinclair employed for rough work, stood the "voice," the "friend."

But Laulee, also, saw something else and to her distraught soul the hideous danger to Sesson was magnified a thousandfold. If she made any sound at all, it was a hiss. Then she sprang, as the panther springs, at the back of the "friend," plunging the knife deeply into vital parts.

The unexpected shock of her spring loosened the dacoits' grip. Clinging, even with her teeth, to the writhing body of the "voice," her added weight dragged him from the astonished Burmans, and as she fell to the floor with her enemy she did her utmost to make the stab of the knife more deeply piercing and mortally wounding.

All this in moments. Then, as the astonished and maddened dacoits plunged again to hold the struggling but dying "friend," that person managed to scratch lightly the girl's throat with a large ring on his first finger. In a dialect understood by Sinclair alone he shrieked out some words. When the Burmans gripped him, there was no longer need of their gripping.

Sesson—feeling like a man emerging from a partial anesthetic, during which he has been helpless but always on the verge of complete consciousness—sank weakly on a couch. Laulee, gropingly but surely, crawled to his knees—upward, until he grasped her in his arms, and careless of onlookers held her head to his breast. She sighed like a tired child, content.

In the doorway stood the Sikh, observing all things with complete understanding.

Sinclair's voice spoke from the gloom. The Burmans removed the dead "friend." The Sikh and others of Sinclair's men left the room, shutting the door. Laulee and Sesson were alone with Sinclair. She was afraid of only one thing—that she might

not be able to speak what she wished so wildly to say. And she was very tired, growing weak, and the humility of India's women was upon her.

"My boy," Sinclair's voice was very gentle. "I was sorry to put you to all this, but I saw no other course. I spoke truly when I told you that this matter was my only problem and that I did not know with whom you were dealing. Now I do know—the words my enemy spoke as he died having told me—told me what I never guessed at, would not have credited.

"For some years I have felt an obstacle in my work and gradually it came to me, partly by intuition, that this unknown obstacle was a very clever man, or men, with but one object in life—my death. Far too cunning to chance a shot at me in the street or to employ any of the usual methods of the assassin, this obstacle was always near and I knew that some day he, or they, would find what appeared a sure way of killing me.

"It was not so much the danger of death that annoyed me—it was the eternal nuisance of having to take this obstacle into account whenever I planned anything at all. Before undertaking any task I had carefully to guard against the sudden cessation of all my work.

"If I could have obtained a tangible sign, the evidence of a single overt act, I felt capable of grappling with the man. But there was nothing I could come to grips with. The entire danger was as vague as the fourth dimension.

"I admit it began to get on my nerves, for I am not a young man. With all the power—no slight power, as you know—I command I began to institute counter-measures against this unseen, unknown enemy, but as I said, it was like trying to put handcuffs on a mathematical X. Then, to my intense surprize—for, as you also know, I never allow any reports to be brought to me concerning the private affairs of my friends—you told me of your weird experience. Then, relieved, I knew that at last the battle was opening. I felt easily capable of winning.

"Much as I disliked doing so, I had to trick you with my 'people of the fourth dimension.' Since the enemy was keeping your mind from the truth I was compelled to take the same stand. You can see why.

"To use you against me was the best card he could have played. And it was all so subtly clever. He knew of my deafness to all reports of your acts when not actually on duty. When on duty it is necessary to know what you are doing, in the event of your needing sudden support. He banked on my knowing nothing of, er, the lady. I didn't know until you told me.

"Then he knew our racial horror of discussing such a private matter. He had reasons for feeling quite safe. It was hardly to be expected that you would say anything to me. But a certain distrust of—never mind the name—nullified the early suggestion given you. You have forgotten, but you were ordered, when 'in the ink,' not to mention either the ink or the lady to me. You broke through this inhibition—an unusual feat—and told me.

"You were no doubt asked seemingly light questions in the beginning. Had you spoken to Sinclair?

"Slowly he became sure of you and of his revenge. The thing had to be gone through with to the bitter end An old arrangement of mirrors—don't you remember the living woman, showed in little theaters when you were a boy, whose existence apparently ended at her waist? All mirrors, cleverly arranged, made it appear that I lay facing you when he whom you believed to be your friend ordered you to shoot—to avenge me, likely as not?"

Sesson groaned an affirmative.

"Don't let it trouble you. It's all over and I am in your debt. You sacrificed yourself and your pride to help me. It was a big brave thing to do. And, oh yes, as he died he told me— Back to the Mutiny this thing goes. Years ago, as you know, I found where the British women and children had been incarcerated—underground Calcutta.

"We smashed that den, and as I believed caught every person affiliated with its rulers, in every city in India. But one man escaped us and I did not know it. He hated everything British with a hatred we can not understand. Eh, well—was he responsible? I doubt it. I think this tells you all. Boy, we touched history tonight, and the breed will trouble us no more.

"That dead man, as well as hating me for what I was and what I have done and am doing, had further cause for vindictiveness. He was the only living son of Nana Sahib!"

At this Sesson stiffened suddenly, and Laulee gave a little cry.

"If there is something you wish to tell her," Sinclair spoke even more gently than before, "I will leave the room, while there is time."

"Eh?" Sesson voiced his lack of understanding.

THEN the girl spoke, her voice faltering:

"Do not go, *burra sahib*, for how can my lord mind kissing me good-by in thy presence? Art thou not his father and his mother? And I want to tell you all. For in thy great wisdom it may seem well to thee, during the years that are yet to come, to tell my lord and my love that I was not all a traitor."

"Traitor?" Sesson held her more closely, not troubling to wonder why he knew so clearly that her one desire in life had always been for his love, for him.

"Little one, if it tasks thee, do not strain to tell. I think I know, and—I will tell."

"Nay, wise *sahib*, it were better for me to tell. Remember this lies heavy on my soul and it has such a little while to clean itself."

She sighed and nestled, still graceful.

"It began—my lord remembers—such a wonderful love. I was never bought! We saw, we loved—there was nothing else required. If sometimes I found myself fearing age, his tiring of me, his finding a woman of the white-log and making her his wife—all this I would forget in his arms!

"Like a girl I had played with the ink and the ink began to whisper to me— 'He will grow tired; thou wilt grow old, maybe fat; he will leave thee, forget thee and marry one of his own kind.' This, I swear by Allah, I did not believe at first. But, as thou knowest, *burra sahib*, such fancies grow like weeds after rain. Money, much money, was offered to me—rupees for my age, when there would be no longer any love, no longer my Sesson. But I loved, and money was not enough.

"*Ai*, I was tempted, but I would not. I fell, but dared to deny my promise. But the ink—the —— ink, *sahib*—it makes one worse than drunk! Then was offered me love—for all my life—love and my Sesson, for all mine own, forever! What woman, loving, would have refused a small deceit—coaxing to the ink—for such as that? For it was told me that there was a *sahib* whom all *sahibs* knew for an evil man, whom every *sahib* wished to see dead, but who was protected by the *sahibs'* law, which protects evil and good alike.

"It was told that the *sahib* who killed this evil one would be a hero and benefiter of all *sahibs*. But because of the law he would have to hide. 'He will be brave, sacrificing himself for his own kind; but he will have to flee from his own and become one of us—a native. His face stained, he will live safely among us, with money secretly given by the *sahibs*. Never able to leave us. Never to speak to the *mem-log*! Dost thou not see, little sparrow, that he will be thine all thy life? Is such love, for all thy life, not worth so small a matter with great deeds in hand?'

"That was why I—foolish, love-dazed, thoughtless—became what seems like a traitor, *burra sahib*—and oh, my lord, my love, my life!" She sobbed weakly.

"I would not call thee traitor," Sinclair's voice was husky, "neither will thy Sesson. I would say that thou hadst loved too greatly for thy soul's peace."

"To love my lord too greatly were not possible!" An echo of the old, audacious lilt crept into her voice. "But, I must end. This night, being a woman who loved, I suspected treachery and, thank Allah, followed. Before the gate was reached I knew and felt the knife in my bosom speak to me. *Burra sahib*, didst thou not see that that dead spawn of Shitan was wearing boots?"

"I saw, and guessed the poison needle at his toes. But, loyal little lady, had he lifted a foot to scratch he would not have reached thy *Sahib*. Nevertheless, in what thou didst do, thou didst show thyself a princess, a woman worthy of all love."

She tried to laugh.

"A little fool even in my dying," she gasped and choked slightly.

"Nay, but a great lady who gave her life to save her love. We honor such an one above all others!"

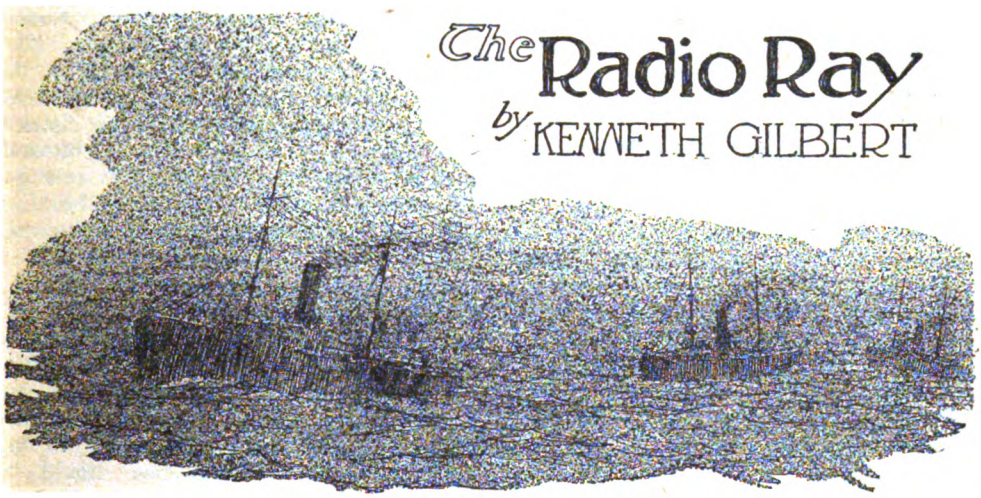
"Then—" she could scarcely whisper—"I die content."

There had been no suggestion of a doctor, of an antidote. Both Sinclair and Sesson knew the futility of such, knew that any attempt to save life would only make life's last moments more unhappy. Had there been pain, Sinclair had an anodyne at hand. But the poison was as painless as it was

deadly—a poison unknown to Western toxicology.

There was silence in the room. Sesson could not speak; Sinclair did not wish to. The younger man could only hold Laulee as tightly yet as gently as he could as if feeling that all he loved were slipping away from him, he would try to prevent the going.

"My lord, I was and am unworthy. Forget me and find a woman of thine own race to be the mother of thy children. Yet," her voice trailed off until Sesson had to bend his ear to her lips, "yet—yet—my love—and my lord—for this last moment—love *me* and forget the *mem-log*—and kiss me—a long kiss—farewell."



Author of "Heart of the Crew," "Lights of Peace," etc.

INSPECTOR JERRY LYNCH, Immigration Service, entered the administration building with an unusual nervous springiness to his customary brisk step; a serious, thoughtful expression on his keen, rather dark face indicating that something of importance was on his mind. This last-named was usual enough, for, while bearing the title of immigration inspector, Jerry was really the head of the service's sleuths in this district.

Despite the fact that he was but twenty-seven, his training as a police detective had been so thorough and his work had met with such success that he had been induced to accept Government pay, for the flood of contraband Chinese slipping into the United States through the Government's fingers in this district had reached such proportions as to draw a frosty query from the head of the department to the local immigration officials.

And so Jerry, because he was familiar with the crooked streets and lanes of the quarter where the illicit immigrants invariably turned up, to say nothing of knowing every habitué of the city's Chinese quarter to a disconcerting degree, had been successfully importuned to act as a stop-gap. For three months he had been at work, and as yet there had been apparently no diminution of the stream of chattering Celestials. So far all he had gained out of his new job was a lowered respect for his ability as a sleuth, a contempt for politics and a heightened admiration for the men who had evolved the smooth system which baffled him.

He went directly to the office of the acting chief, Dobson, heralding his approach with no more than a tap on the door which separated the official's space from the outer area.

Dobson was quite in the extreme of what is known in the military curriculum as "at ease." His feet were on a corner of his desk, and he leaned back in his chair comfortably, so profoundly wrapped in his morning paper that he was oblivious to Jerry's arrival.

Haight, the secretary, a dapper,

middle-aged man who to Jerry's mind always dressed with a show of affluence unwarranted in a Government clerk, merely looked up from the papers on which he was working and then resumed his task.

Jerry stood close to the acting chief's desk, his sleeve all but brushing the official's bald head with its rim of white hair—for Dobson was of that age when in the matter of appointment to office recognition of ability leaves off and political patronage begins.

"Chief," said Jerry, unconsciously dramatic, "the Chinese quarter is full of Chinks!"

"Eh?"

Dobson, startled by the other's proximity, sat up so quickly that his gold-rimmed spectacles all but slipped off.

The interruption nettled him. Besides, it was such a silly statement. As well say the sea is full of fish!

"I dare say, Lynch," he remarked sarcastically. "If it were full of Italians it wouldn't be the Chinese quarter, would it?"

Then the published words of a senator regarding the outlook for the party caught his eye, and his attention focused entirely on the dispatch.

Haight, the secretary, apparently saw something humorous in the reports he was checking, for he smiled.

Jerry felt his cheeks burn and a wave of the disgust that had been growing in him for weeks sweep over him. This was politics. A doddering old incompetent in a position of authority in such an important branch of the Government, and the yellow school swimming through the net as if its meshes were of gossamer. He was sick of the whole thing. —— it; he'd go back to the force!

He opened his mouth to tell the acting chief his personal opinion of the situation in its entirety when his eye caught some one standing at the door at the far side of the room. It was Clarke, the assistant chief; the real chief, said his friends.

Clarke laid a finger on his lips, and beckoned to Jerry. And the latter, with his ultimatum to Dobson undelivered, crossed the room and entered Clarke's office. Clarke closed the door.

"Sit down, Lynch," he said with a genial smile, "and give me the facts. I know what you mean by saying the Chinese quarter is full of Chinks; what I want to know is, how?"

Jerry had respect for Clarke. The assistant chief was but slightly older than himself, and that he was efficient and wrapped up in his work there could be no gainsaying. He it was who had been instrumental in bringing Jerry into the service, for inability to block the Asiatic horde had piqued his professional pride.

"How, I can't tell you, Mr. Clarke," replied Jerry Lynch, enthusiasm gaining the upper hand once more. "But that's what I propose to find out," he continued. "All I know is that every rabbit-warren in the quarter is alive with coolies today. We can throw a dragnet through the district, and make every one account for himself. But even then it is doubtful if we'd get half of them, with nearly every building there undermined by dugouts and secret passages."

Clarke nodded agreement.

"We can't raid them for another reason," he supplemented. "Our reputation is at stake. Already the wealthy and influential Chinese are kicking about what they term unnecessary raids and the newspapers are agreeing with them to the extent of saying that the contraband coolies should be caught before they ever reach the Chinese quarter. If we raid them again, we court a grilling by the press. And *that* is what will make the department heads at Washington sit up and take notice."

"But what is your theory about how this last bunch got in?"

Jerry turned to the window, from which one could gaze on the sweep of the harbor as if it were a mill-pond. It was a peaceful view; the small shipping clustered along the wharves or dotting the placid surface here and there; a ferry plowing her way laboriously while steamers of varying sizes headed inward or outward; a peaceful view that did not suggest from a distance the bustling activity it really represented.

"There!" said Jerry, pointing.

CLARKE'S eyes followed the direction of the other's forefinger. Far out in the bay, on the fringe of the anchorage, was a large steam yacht. Her lines were of the clipper order, the overhang of her proboscis-like prow being accentuated by a long bowsprit. Smoke curled from a thick funnel placed midway between her two masts.

From waterline to truck she was painted

a slate gray, resembling that which is applied to Government vessels, and which, known as "war color," is least distinguishable at distances on water.

"Why, that's the *Sylph*, Burke's yacht!" exclaimed Clarke.

Jerry nodded.

"Exactly," he said. "And I'll be frank in saying that I can do no more than suspect her. And yet every time that Chinatown gets a-crawl with coolies I look out there and see the *Sylph*, and discover that she has come in during the night. And almost invariably it is from a cruise in waters beyond the border, ostensibly an aimless pleasure jaunt.

"Another thing; why should he have her painted that slate gray, which easily camouflages in these hazy waters, when he could just as well give her some livelier color?"

"But Burke is a millionaire; and anyway how could he escape examination after arriving here from a port beyond the border?" asked Clarke.

"Easy enough, I think," replied Jerry. "In these thick fogs he could slip by our boarding-officers in the night, land his cargo, slip out again and then return to stand inspection.

"As for his money, how do we know he has any; and where did he get it? Who is he, and where did he come from? No one around here seems to know much about him, but I intend to find out just to satisfy my curiosity.

"And I tell you his boat *smells* Chinese. You can't coop up coolies in one spot for hours without the taint remaining. I hadn't been here two weeks before I paid him a visit.

" 'Come right aboard, inspector,' he told me, shaking hands at the gangway. 'Glad to have you pay us a call.'

"And then he took me all over the boat. Showed me fixings that I never expect to see again outside of a museum. But there was nothing Oriental about them. Just luxurious trimmings that any man of his apparent means would be likely to have.

"As we started down the main deck I saw three of his crew putting on the hatch-cover to the hold. It seemed to me they were working too fast; as if they were too anxious. So I just went up and had them lift off a corner. And while the smell that came up to me was mostly of formaldehyde and other disinfectants, I tell you it made me think of one of those holes down in Chinatown.

"I observed Burke looking at me rather closely, but the instant he saw I noticed his gaze he slipped into his old character again.

" 'Bilges certainly do get smelly; don't they, inspector?' he said. 'I just had ours cleaned out and disinfected. Had to do it, or the whole ship would get scented up.' Which struck me as being decidedly far-fetched.

"Next we came to a shack on the main deck.

" 'Your wireless room, I see,' I remarked, for—I don't think I've ever told you about it—but I've always been something of a nut on the subject of wireless. Got a set and a little laboratory at home, and when I'm off duty I'm always experimenting. Taught myself the code.

"So when we came to the wireless room my amateur interest was naturally aroused. Burke appeared bored, but he was polite enough about it. He took hold of the door-knob. The door was locked.

" 'Stupid of me to forget,' he remarked. 'Our wireless operator is ashore. Married man, you know, and I always give him all the leave possible when we're in port.'

"Which again struck me as being somewhat odd, though I didn't say anything about it.

"The blinds to the windows were slid shut. Aside from noticing that the *Sylph* seemed to have an unusually wide sweep to her aerial for an ordinary pleasure vessel, I didn't get anything there.

"Anyway I was not as fully convinced then as I am now that Burke is mixed up in this matter."

"The wireless end of it," remarked Clarke "seems to be eliminated by the fact that none of our operators on patrol boats has ever been able to intercept messages remotely relating to Chinese. And yet a ship brings those Chinese here, and they are run in when our patrol boats are elsewhere. Which convinces me, and I don't mind telling *you*—" and his voice lowered—"that I suspect some one connected with this office of being in league with the smugglers.

"Word of the disposition of our patrol cutters is flashed to the smuggling vessel—the *Sylph*, if you will—and the Chinese are brought in and landed. But how is word sent to that vessel, if not by wireless?

Surely, she must stand by at sea, waiting until the coast is clear. And she'd stay far enough out so as not to be seen by every packet going in and out of the harbor."

Jerry jumped up suddenly, slammed his hat on the floor and jumped on it.

"—— muttonhead!" he claimed to himself. "Why couldn't I have thought of it before!"

Then, rather shamefacedly, he picked up his hat.

"Excuse me, Mr. Clarke," he apologized, "but I couldn't help bawling myself out. I think I've got the answer. They *do* get the word by wireless!"

"But how?" asked Clarke.

Jerry smiled and shook his head.

"Let me do this in my own way. If it's a flivver we can try something else. I'm going up to my laboratory now and do a bit of work. And I need some help. Send me a good electrician, a first-class armature-winder—one we can trust. Tomorrow night I'll have the answer.

"See, they're getting under way now," and he pointed to the *Sylph*, which was beginning to belch smoke from her funnel. "Maybe they'll have a cargo of Chinks ready to be run in by tomorrow night, figuring it to be soft. Give me a man to help, and we'll surprize 'em.

"One thing more. Find out if our friend Haight belongs to a tong. I've been trying to place him ever since I came here, and now I think I have. When I was a cop the Hip Leongs and Bow Sings got to shooting up each other and we pinched a raft of 'em. If I remember correctly, our friend out there was trying to arrange bail for one of them. Used to be a lawyer, didn't he?"

Clarked nodded.

"That's the bird then," Jerry went on. "He and another lawyer in this town are the only white men I've ever heard of that belong to a Chinese secret society. Did it so they could get Chinese law business, I understand.

"But let's be sure. Have Reynolds watch him tonight and tell me where he goes. See you tomorrow!"

LIGHTS were beginning to glow at street corners and in shop-windows through a muggy drizzle when Jerry showed up at immigration headquarters for the first time in thirty-six hours. All the offices save Clarke's were deserted. Jerry found the assistant chief at his desk, and with him Reynolds, one of the inspectors detailed to Jerry's force.

"Got her," announced Jerry as he closed the door. "Tested and adjusted and rigged aboard the cutters. The testing is what delayed me, but she works like a charm now."

Clarke turned to Reynolds.

"Tell Lynch what you told me," he directed.

"It's this," said Reynolds. "Last night I trailed Haight when the office here closed. He went to the Carlton Hotel grill, where he met a man I've never seen before. A big fellow, two hundred pounds or more; grayed about the temples, smooth-shaven, probably fifty years old; a well-dressed, prosperous-looking business man, I figured."

"Burke!" exclaimed Jerry.

Clarke motioned him to silence, and Reynolds went on:

"After dinner they had a long talk. I couldn't catch the drift of what they were saying, as the nearest I could get to them was two tables away, and anyway I didn't want Haight to spot me. But pretty soon Burke, as you call him, looks at his watch and gets up. Then I heard him saying something about a long boat trip.

"They both went out and down to the water-front. There the big fellow climbs aboard one of these speed-boats—'sea-sleds,' they call them—and beats it at sixty miles an hour. Haight goes back uptown.

"He goes to his room at the Carlton, but comes out again in five minutes and starts toward the lower end of town. He zigzags back and forth kind of aimlessly, but by and by I discover that we're in the heart of the Chinese quarter. Once there, he steers a straight enough course for the Bow Sing Tong headquarters.

"Of course, I made no attempt to follow him inside, but waited. In about three hours he comes out and goes direct to his room at the Carlton. As it was then pretty late I figured he had gone to bed; so I quit."

Jerry looked at Clarke.

"I remember now," he said. "It was a Bow Sing gunman that Haight was trying to spring, the time he was fixing up bail. That's the tong to which he belongs. And it's the same outfit that is back of this smuggling scheme, for word is all over

Chinatown that they're getting to be the strongest tong down there. Picking some choice coolies for members, to develop them into gunmen and hatchet-men.

"I know their joint well, because we searched it regularly every time there was a killing in the district. They've got rooms on the third floor of a brick building. In one end of the lodge-rooms is the biggest joss I've ever seen. Ten feet high if it's an inch, and four or five feet thick at the waist. But I wonder why Burke didn't go with the *Sylph* when she sailed yesterday?"

"Probably lingered to complete his plans, while the *Sylph* went on ahead to get her cargo of Chinks," was the logical deduction of Clarke. "He's aboard her now, for he could easily overtake her with his speedboat. But how about this fog? How the —— do you expect we can find the *Sylph* out there on a night like this?"

"If we can't then my theory is no good," responded Jerry confidently. "Fog or no fog, it's all the same if my guess is right. But, Lord, what a night for a murder—or a wholesale smuggling operation!"

Together the three went down to the Government wharf, where three patrol cutters, *Namaycush*, *Sturgeon* and *Grayling*, lay moored side by side. Jerry, leading the others, went from boat to boat, inspecting the wireless equipment of each.

Even to Clarke, who knew nothing of the mysteries of wireless, it appeared that a change had been wrought in the apparatus housed in the tiny cabins of each craft. Ordinarily the myriad of coils, shining instruments and switches was enough to baffle his comprehension, but tonight it seemed that each wireless set had enhanced its complexity.

There were additional coils, and, suspended over the receiving set, was something that looked like a gyroscope. That is, it consisted of two hoops of hard rubber, each wound with a single layer of copper wire. One hoop was smaller than the other, so that it could be revolved inside the larger hoop on a single shaft which bisected them. Jerry smiled wisely at the puzzled expression on Clarke's face.

"We'd better go aboard the *Namaycush*, Mr. Clarke," he said. "I've explained to the skippers how we are to work. We steam in single file straight ahead until we are outside the headlands. Then we swing in a circle five miles in diameter, play 'follow my leader,' and the *Namaycush* will lead. We keep doing that until we pick up what we're after."

Outside they found the fog almost impenetrable to vision, but by occasionally blowing their whistles they kept track of each other in the murk.

And so on the big loop they started, the *Namaycush* followed by the *Sturgeon* and *Grayling* in the order named. They had been steaming for half an hour, with Jerry hanging over the shoulder of the operator of the *Namaycush*, when the *Sturgeon's* operator broke in—

"Just heard them!"

Immediately Jerry ordered the *Namaycush* put about, and the other ships followed her. For five minutes the *Namaycush* forged ahead while her wireless operator kept the telephone receivers glued to his ears. Suddenly he started, listened a moment, then handed the receivers to Jerry.

As Jerry slipped on the receivers there came trickling through them the musical tinkle of a spark, the song of a high-frequency set—

—coolies and——

Then silence. So bold had the smugglers become and so cocksure of the infallibility of their system, that they were not even coding their messages! Jerry jumped for the wheelhouse.

"Back up fifty yards!" he yelled at the captain. "And signal the other ships we're going astern!"

Then he hurried back to the receivers again.

Silence still brooded in the ether void, while he felt the throb of the propellers as the *Namaycush* gained sternway. A minute, two minutes, passed. Then spoke the strange spark again.

"Tell the skipper to stop her right here!" Jerry directed his operator, "and give me the compass directions at right angles to our beam."

Apparently the operator of the strange wireless set was having difficulty in making himself understood, for he was repeating the message; spelling out the words with painful precision and exactness:

Boss says to —— with the cutters; we're going in. The fog is too thick for us to be spotted. Have vans at south turning-basin at twelve sharp.

"O.K." came back the response this time.

The wireless operator of the *Namaycush* was back, and with him was Clarke.

"Skipper says the directions at right angles to our beam are south-southwest and north-northeast," he reported.

"We've got them if our luck holds!" exclaimed Jerry.

"Have the cutters keep abreast, fifty yards apart, and run on a slow bell, Mr. Clarke. And be sure to steam exactly north-northeast!"

"But—" began Clarke.

Jerry shook his head.

"Not now," he stated firmly. "I want to do this in my own way."

And Clarke saw he would have to be content with that.

FOR an hour they steamed—*Namaycush* to starboard—maintaining their formation by keeping close enough to mark each other's lights in the blanket of fog. And yet the oily heave of the ground-swell was broken by nothing save their own wakes.

Suddenly a star gleamed through the murk, dead ahead of the *Namaycush*. The cutter slowed to a stop, while the star rapidly grew from third to first magnitude. The *Namaycush* veered more to starboard, the other two following suit.

The wall of fog ahead grew more opaque as a great form took shape. They could hear the ripple of a cutwater. And out of the pall a long jib-boom was suddenly poked. The *Sylph!* Without lights save at her foretruck, she was feeling her way stealthily through the night, relying on the sheltering mist to cloak her movements.

As if a command had been spoken, the cutters in unison backed clear of her path, then steamed ahead—*Grayling* and *Sturgeon* to port and *Namaycush* still to starboard—closing in on her.

"Heave to!" shouted Clarke at the darkened bridge of the yacht.

The command was echoed by the skippers of the cutters on the other side. A bell clanged inside of her, and she slowed to a stop.

Jerry, Clarke and Reynolds boarded her at her starboard quarter, while the others were clambering up the opposite side.

"Where's Burke?" demanded Clarke of a sailor who met them.

"Not aboard," replied the man uneasily looking forward. "Who are you? What d'ye want?"

Without replying Clarke started forward. From that direction a pulley suddenly creaked; then there was a snapping sound, a yell and a splash. Clarke quickened his pace to a run. Reynolds and Jerry followed.

Suspended from a davit by a single piece of tackle swung a short, flat-bottomed craft of wide beam with an oversized gas engine. A frayed end of rope which dangled from the other davit explained what had happened.

"He's gone!" explained an ashen-faced deck-hand who stood at the davit falls, peering over the side.

"Who's gone?" demanded Clarke.

"Burke," was the reply. "Must have struck his head on the engine when the line broke. Served him right anyway, —— him, for tryin' to run out and leave us to face it alone!"

The water below the dangling speedboat showed no sign of life.

"—'s bells!" exclaimed Jerry to Clarke. "I'd forgotten. You two take a look at the Chinks; I've got to stop their operator from tipping off the gang on shore."

And he dashed for the wireless room.

But before he reached there he heard the hum of the motor-generator and the muffled voice of the singing spark. The *Sylph's* operator, a sallow little man, snapped off the power and leaned back in his chair as Jerry burst in the door. The little man grinned without fear.

"Too late," he remarked evenly. "Got a cigaret?"

THEY were reporting to Commissioner Dobson, and doing it painstakingly, so that he would understand.

"We have the *Sylph* with forty-six coolies and two hundred five-tael tins of opium which we have turned over to the customs men," summed up Clarke. "Burke is dead, and he'll probably always remain a mystery, as none of the prisoners seemed to know much about him. Probably the smuggling syndicate owned the yacht and merely financed him so that he could pose as wealthy and give them an excuse for running it back and forth between here and the border.

"But we rather fell down on the tong end of it," and he looked at Jerry with mock seriousness. "The *Sylph's* operator got word to them, and when we reached there the place was deserted. Probably we should have sent back one of the cutters to nab them first, but if Jerry Lynch hadn't made an error somewhere in his calculations he wouldn't be human.

"However, he found their wireless set. The blamed thing was inside of that big joss of theirs, and the aerial leads ran up through the walls to the roof. We don't know who operated it; probably Haight. At any rate he got away. He was their inside man here, we found.

"But I'll let Jerry tell you about the wireless end of it, and how they managed to get their signals through without having them intercepted."

"They were using what may be called a 'radio ray,'" explained Jerry. "The very latest thing in wireless communication. Ordinary wireless apparatus sends out waves in all directions, and any one can pick them up; this device concentrates them. Shoots them out just like a searchlight beam, and unless you get in the beam's path you can't hear a thing.

"Both the operator on the *Sylph* and the one at tong headquarters knew the direction in which to send their radio beams, and that is why we never heard them until we started swinging in the big circle that I felt would at some point cross the path of the ray. When we finally struck it I waited till it was at its strongest, meaning that it must be abeam, and then I had the skipper give me the directions at right angles to our ship's beam, figuring we had cut squarely across their line of communication. If we had taken the south-southwest, we would have brought up here in town; instead we steamed north-northeast, in which direction we knew the *Sylph* must be.

"The apparatus I rigged up for catching them was merely a loose-coupled receiving tuner, which permits unusually close tuning on wireless waves. That is, you can tune out all other ether waves except the one you want to hear. It had some extra coils which permitted us to cut in on extra long wave-lengths, which I figured they would be using.

"We have the *Sylph's* set and the one from tong headquarters. You'll have to excuse me from explaining them, because I'm not that far along in wireless. Marconi has been testing out the same kind of apparatus for months; and until he finishes he won't give out the details of it. How the smugglers got hold of the apparatus we don't know. Probably they stole the idea."

He paused.

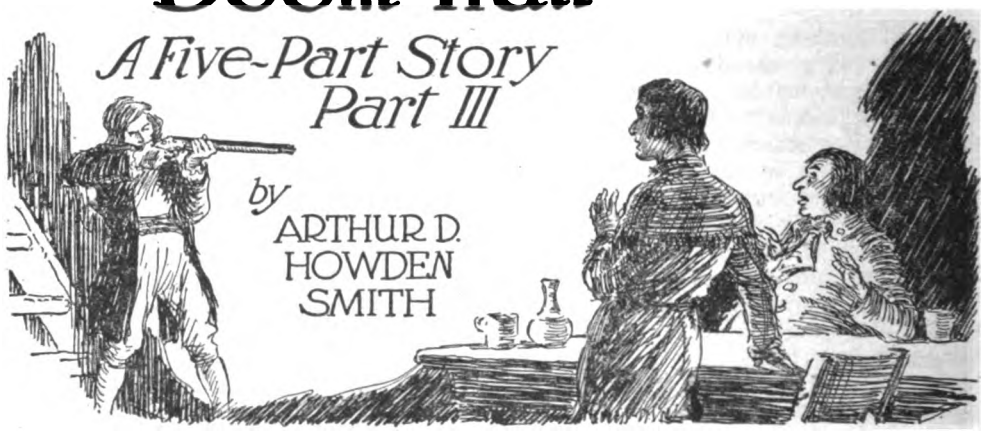
"I—see!" said the acting chief after a minute, nodding his head wisely, although he saw but hazily. "Truly wonderful!"

And he held out his hand, beaming as he did so.

"And now I'll be frank with you," he went on confidentially. "I had begun to fear that you were a mere trifler when the other day you made that silly remark, 'The Chinese quarter is full of Chinks!' Now I am convinced that such inanity is no indicator of your capabilities!"

The Doom Trail

A Five-Part Story
Part III



by ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH

Author of "Man to Man," "Claymore," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

IT WAS on the night of my return, incognito, from France as a refugee to London, that I inadvertently ran to the aid of a man who was beset by cutthroats. He turned out to be Master Juggins, an old friend of my family's, and in gratitude he gave me succor in his home. But I was outlawed everywhere, for I had first trafficked with the Jacobite constituents of Charles, the Pretender, and then quit them, having wearied of popish intrigues.

Master Juggins resolved to use me for my own good, and incidentally advance his fortunes also. He proposed sending me to the new continent of America in the interest of his trade and to assist in counteracting a plot by a certain Andrew Murray, influential in Government and trade circles. I accepted gladly; and so in disguise accompanied Juggins to a meeting of the Lords Commissioners.

It was here that I learned how the opposition stood. Accordingly Juggins secured passage for me on the first boat bound for the New World. I sailed the following Saturday, and discovered to my disgust that Murray, his daughter and his friend de Veulle, a traitor whom I had once humiliated at Paris, were fellow-passengers. Murray was guarded by an ape-like negro, and I was on the lookout for trouble.

De Veulle saw through the disguise I was wearing, and a quarrel started. Shortly afterward some one crept up behind and overpowered me. I struggled, but it was no use. I could not resist the snakelike arms which mastered me. One shifted swiftly to a grip on my legs. I was whirled into the air and dropped clear of the railing—falling—falling, until the cold waters engulfed me.

When I found myself in the water I thought death to be but a brace of minutes away, for I was rapidly growing numb from the cold. By some miracle I chanced upon a rope hanging over the side of the ship, and by it I was able to climb back on board. Once on deck, I seized an iron-tipped hand bar, and sought for the negro. I soon ran afoul of him and laid him low before he had time to recover from his surprize.

Murray and de Veulle witnessed the attack, and our quarrel commenced afresh. At this point Murray's daughter appeared, and though learning the cause of the disturbance set her heart against me. Thereupon we all declared a truce till we should reach New York.

Upon my arrival in the New World I went to a tavern, pending the time for an interview with the governor. As I passed through a side street I saw an Indian chief who was being harried by ragamuffins. These I drove off, and immediately the Seneca, whose name was Ta-wan-ne-ars, and I became fast friends.

Eventually I met Governor Burnet, who welcomed me and read all my documents which I had from Master Juggins. He put me in touch with the trade situation, and I heard also all about the Red Death and the Doom Trail for the first time. The governor explained that this Trail was a secret route established by Murray for smuggling goods into Canada. No one knew just where it ran. Any one who attempted to find it was certain to meet his doom.

This trail was aiding the French in their schemes to gain predominance of trade and ultimately to overthrow the British power in America. In return for his services Murray would receive a dukedom, wealth and great trade concessions.

It developed that my help was needed in securing information regarding a new fort under construction by the French at Niagara; and then the discovery of the Trail itself. I was introduced to Corlaer, an old woodsman and friend to our cause.

On the way back to my lodgings I was set upon by the Red Death—one of Murray's minions. He had very nearly done for me but for the timely rescue of the Seneca.

A few days later I started for Albany with

Ta-wan-ne-ars and Corlaer. From there we pushed westward. About nightfall of the first day's tramp along the trail of the Long House, the Indian noticed that we were being followed. We hurriedly prepared an ambuscade and hid in the undergrowth near by.

THE three dummies were then disposed to the satisfaction of Ta-wan-ne-ars and, striking flint and steel to some rotted wood, a bright blaze sent the shadows chasing each other around the confines of the glade.

"Peter," he said, "you had best take post by that boulder on the other side of the fire. Ormerod and Ta-wan-ne-ars will lie together upon this side."

"You need not think it necessary to keep me by your side," I said indignantly. "'Tis not the first time I shall have heard musketry."

A gleam of humorous intelligence chased the gloomy ferocity from the Seneca's face.

"Ta-wan-ne-ars does not doubt the valor of his brother," he said, "but Ormerod has never fought with Cahnuagas. They are dogs, but they are skilled in forest war."

He did not give me a chance to answer, but, putting his fingers to his lips to enjoin silence, sank down behind a boulder next to the one by which I stood. Corlaer had been swallowed by the dancing shadows beyond the fire.

I dropped beside Ta-wan-ne-ars, and like him dusted fresh powder into the pan of my musket, drew tomahawk and knife from their sheaths and laid them on the ground within reach.

How long we waited I can not say, but the suspense which had racked me in the swaying branches of the pine that afternoon was nothing compared to the agony of the hours that followed. For it must have been at least two hours after we had taken cover that Ta-wan-ne-ars touched my arm, and the light from the glowing bed of coals revealed a feathered head crouching forward where the trail entered the glade.

It hovered around the edge of the firelight like a monstrous reptilian fiend, body bent nearly double, a glint of steel showing whenever the hands moved. Presently he withdrew into the trail, and it seemed that two more hours dragged by on leaden feet, although it was probably less than half that time.

The fire was lower, but Ta-wan-ne-ars did not need to warn me when the Keepers reappeared. It was as if a mist of evil preceded them. My senses were all alert, and I saw the first feathered head emerge from the trail and each one of the six who followed their leader. I counted every step of their approach until the yellow paint which streaked the ribs of the one nearest to me glimmered in the light of the embers.

"*Hah-yah-yah-eeee-eee-ee-e!*"

Ta-wan-ne-ars sounded the war-whoop as he fired, and instinctively I aimed my piece at those ocher-tinted ribs and pressed the trigger. The report of my musket carried on the echoes which had been roused by the Seneca's. Corlaer's discharged as I bounded to my feet.

The Cahnuagas yelled in surprize; three of them were thrashing out their lives on the rocks. But the four survivors did not hesitate. The French called them "Praying Indians," and perhaps they did pray occasionally for Black Robe, to placate him sufficiently in order that they might practise their own horrid rites in secret. They fought now like the devils they really were.

One of them was on me immediately, bounding over the boulders with screeches that split the night. His knife and hatchet cut circles around my head—then chopped at my bowels. His activity was extraordinary, and he fought better than I, for he knew his weapons and they were strange to me.

It was the realization of this which saved me. Fending awkwardly with knife or hatchet against a foe whose handling of them was the result of lifelong training, I was at a disadvantage. I could not hope to beat him by his own methods.

So I changed the tomahawk to my left hand, and grasped the knife by the hilt as if it were a sword, thrusting with it point first instead of slashing as the Indian did. And now my skill at fence was in my favor.

The Cahnuaga's knife was no longer than mine. We were on equal terms—or rather the advantage inclined toward me. Bewilderment showed in the Indian's face. He did not understand this fighting with passes and parries and swift, stabbing assaults. I touched him in the thigh, and he struck at my knife-arm with his hatchet; but my tomahawk was ready to meet him.

He side-stepped to attack me from a new quarter, but I pivoted on my heel as I had often done in the *salle des armes*, and he retreated, circling warily in search of an

opportunity to return to the style of fighting he preferred. My chance came the next time he charged me, goaded into desperation by these strange tactics. I aimed a smashing blow at his head with the tomahawk, and, as he lifted his own hatchet to guard, I thrust for his belly, parried his knife and ripped him open.

His death-yell was in my ears as I leaped over his body and looked to see how my comrades were doing. Ta-wan-ne-ars had just knifed his man and was running to the help of Peter, who had two assailants on his hands. As Ta-wan-ne-ars came up, the Dutchman closed with one, dashed the defending weapons aside and grasped the struggling savage in his powerful arms. The last Cahnuaga turned to flee, but Ta-wan-ne-ars did not even attempt to pursue him. Without any appearance of haste the Seneca balanced his tomahawk, drew back his arm and hurled it after the fugitive. The keen blade crushed the man's skull before he had passed from the circle of firelight, and Ta-wan-ne-ars sauntered across and scalped him.

"That time Ta-wan-ne-ars did not miss, brother," he observed to me as I watched with fascinated horror the bloody neatness with which he dispatched his task.

"But why do you scalp your enemies, Ta-wan-ne-ars?" I answered. "Surely——"

"I am an Indian, not a white man."

"Yet you——"

"I have forgotten what the missionaries taught me," he replied impatiently. "All except what I think may be useful to my people."

Peter brought up his captive and tossed the man down in front of us.

"Oof, that was a goodt fight!" he commented placidly.

"Why a prisoner, Peter?" asked Ta-wan-ne-ars.

"We will ask him of der Doom Trail," returned Corlaer.

He jerked the man to his feet.

"Where is der Doom Trail?" he demanded.

The Cahnuaga, badly shaken though he was, drew himself erect and folded his arms across his painted chest.

"The Rat can go to the torture-stake and not answer that question, Corlaer," he said quite simply.

"We will take you to the nearest village and let you make good your boast," threatened Ta-wan-ne-ars.

The Cahnuaga smiled.

"If I told you, none the less should I suffer at the stake," he said, "for the Ga-go-sa Ho-nun-as-tase-ta(*a*) knows all. Do your worst, Chief of the Long House."

A tinge of mockery colored his voice.

"Be sure that whatever you do you can not equal the ingenuity of the Ga-go-sa. Yes, I think you will come to know more about them some day, Iroquois. I seem to see pictures in the firelight of a stake, and a building with a tower and a bell that rings, and many of the Ga-go-sa dance around you, and your pain is very great. Aye, you are shrieking like a woman; you——"

He sprang, not at the Seneca but at me. His hands were around my throat before I could move. His eyes blazed into mine. His teeth gnashed at my face. A gout of blood, thick and warm, deluged me. The next thing I remembered was seeing Ta-wan-ne-ars bending over me.

"My brother is whole?" he asked anxiously.

The ferocity was gone from his face, and his fingers prodded me tenderly in search of hurts.

"Yes," I said, sitting up and rubbing a very sore throat, "except that I shall not be able to swallow for a time."

"You were choked, brother."

"And the Cahnuaga?"

"That dog is dead. Do you sleep now, for the dawn grows near and we must be upon our way."

CHAPTER XIV

ALONG THE GREAT TRAIL

I STIRRED to wakefulness when the first pink light of morning was in the eastern skies. A pungent whiff of wood-smoke filled my nostrils, and I turned over to watch Corlaer frying bacon and maize cakes—only to lose my appetite at the spectacle of Ta-wan-ne-ars stretching scalps on little hoops of withes to dry by the fire.

He went about it in a very business-like way, yet he indulged in an amiable grin over my look of interested aversion.

"What does my brother find that is so horrible in a scalp?" he inquired, extending a particularly gory one for my inspection. "'Tis no more than the crown of a man's head—and that man an enemy."

"I like not the idea of mutilating a

(*a*) Mistress of the False Faces.

body," I retorted. "If you have slain a man, 'tis sufficient. Why, you might as well cut off his arm or his head!"

He considered my point while he made another hoop and adjusted a scalp to it.

"Yes," he agreed; "that is what the English do, I am told."

"What?" I protested indignantly. " 'Tis absurd!"

"To be sure, Ta-wan-ne-ars knows no more than what the missionaries and his other white friends have told him," he answered. "But they say that when a man in England is condemned to die, if he is an enemy of the King, his head is chopped off and put on a high place, and sometimes his arms and his legs are hacked off, too, and shown elsewhere."

For an instant I was nonplused.

"That may be so," I said finally, "but in battle we do not cut off the heads or limbs of our foes."

"It is not your custom to do so," rejoined the Seneca equably. "It is the custom of my people to scalp their foes. Then when a warrior returns to his village and recounts his exploits nobody can deny his proof."

I was at a loss to reply, and Corlaer averted further argument by announcing that the bacon and maize were cooked. But I was somewhat amused to notice that Ta-wan-ne-ars was careful to wash his hands before eating. So much, at least, the missionaries had dented the armor of his innate barbarism.

"And what of these?" I asked, pointing to the distorted bodies of Murray's emissaries, as we adjusted our packs for the day's march.

Corlaer raised his cupped hand to his ear.

"Do you hear?" he said.

I followed his example, and through the clashing of the branches overhead there sounded a prolonged, exultant howling.

"Der wolfs," he explained.

There was no disputing his stolid acceptance of the situation, and I fell into my place between the Dutchman and Ta-wan-ne-ars. In five minutes the forest had closed around us. The glade of last night's adventure was shut off as completely as if it existed in another world. There remained no more than the bare groove of the trail and the encompassing walls of underbrush and overhead the roof of tree-boughs. But at intervals a faint echo of yelps and snarls was borne to our ears by the forest breeze.

That afternoon we forded the Mohawk to the southern side some distance above Ga-ne-ga-ha-ga,(*a*) the Upper Mohawk Castle. And now for the first time we began to meet other travelers. Several Mohawk families shifting their abodes on account of poor crop conditions in their old villages; a party of Oneidas of the Turtle Clan journeying on a visit of condolence to the Mohawk Turtles, one of whose *roy-an-ehs* had just died; a band of Mohawk hunters returning from the Spring hunt. By these latter Ta-wan-ne-ars sent word to So-a-wa-ah, the senior *roy-an-eh* of the Mohawk Wolf Clan, charged with the warding of the Eastern Door, of our encounter with the Cahnuagas and its result.

We continued up the valley of the Mohawk all of that day and the next. As we advanced westward the country became less settled. Game was more plentiful. Once a deer trotted into the trail and stared at us before plunging on its way. The second day, as we made camp and I set out to gather firewood, a pile of sticks which I approached moved with a dry, whirring rattle, and a mottled flat head rose menacingly from restless coils.

"Be careful, brother," shouted Ta-wan-ne-ars.

I jumped back in bewilderment.

"What is it?" I gasped.

"Deat," he said grimly. " 'Tis the Snake Which Rattles, and its bite is fatal. Yet it is an honorable foe, for it always gives warning before it strikes. So let us permit it to depart in peace."

The evening of the third day we camped in the Oneida country at the base of a hill, which the trail encircled and which for that reason was called Nun-da-da-sis.(*b*) Here we had a stroke of what turned out afterward to be rare good luck. Whilst we were making camp a group of five canoes of the birch-bark which is used by other nations than the Iroquois(*c*) approached from upstream and their occupants camped beside us.

These Indians were Messesagues, whose country lay between the two great inland seas, the Erie and Huron Lakes. They were on their way to Fort Orange or Albany to trade their Winter catch of furs, which

(*a*) Near Danube, N. Y.

(*b*) "Around the Hill;" present site of Utica, N. Y.

(*c*) There were very few birches in Iroquois territory. They employed instead red elm and hickory bark which were much heavier.

lay baled in the canoes. Ta-wan-ne-ars, as Warden of the Western Door, had held intercourse with these people before and understood their language.

They told him that they had had trouble with the Sieur de Tonty, commander of the French trading-post of Le De Troit,(*a*) which had been established in their country; and that in consequence de Tonty had been obliged to flee and they had decided to shift their trade to the English.(*b*) Ta-wan-ne-ars encouraged them in this design and described to them the high quality and quantity of the goods they might expect to get in exchange for their furs at Albany.

ON THE fourth day the trail abandoned the head-waters of the Mohawk, fast shallowing in depth, and headed westward across the mile-wide divide of land, which separates the waters flowing into the Mohawk and Hudson's River from those flowing into Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River of Canada. This passage or carrying-place between the waters was called Da-ya-hoo-wa-quat,(*c*) and we met several parties of Indians carrying their canoes and packs from one stream to the other.

I had my first view of the long houses of the Iroquois at the Oneida Castle, Ga-no-a-lo-hale,(*d*) which was situated on the Oneida Lake. They were impressive buildings, sixty, eighty, one hundred and sometimes one hundred and twenty feet in length and from twelve to fifteen or twenty feet wide. We went as a matter of course to the lodgings of the Oneida Wolves, of whom Ta-wan-ne-ars, according to the Iroquois code, was a blood-brother; and they placed at our disposition a guest-chamber, the first next to the entrance of the Ga-no-sote,(*e*) together with all the firewood and food which we required and an aged squaw to cook and wait upon us.

Our chamber was perhaps twelve or fourteen feet in length and twelve feet across. On each side there was a shelf or bunk of bark placed on wooden sticks, raised about two feet from the beaten-clay floor and covered with skins, more or less infested with vermin.(*f*) Above these bunks again were other shelves for holding clothing, weapons or provisions. The passageway between the bunks was the common entry to the house.

In the middle was a fire-hole where our squaw cooked. In the remainder of the length of the house there was a fire for every four families, and when all were cooking at once—as was frequently the case—the smoke that escaped through the vents in the roof was negligible.

On the other hand the houses were stanchly constructed and weather-proof, and they demonstrated strikingly the clannishness and community spirit which were the outstanding characteristics of the Iroquois. They thought, not as families or individuals, as most savage or barbarous people do, but as a people, as a clan, a tribe or a confederacy.

In this, as Ta-wan-ne-ars remarked in our many talks on this and kindred subjects, lay the secret of their political and military success. It enabled them to concentrate, when they wished, an overwhelming force against any other tribes, and a force which could be directed in the joint interests of the League. Only the French or English could withstand them, and their aid must tip the balance in favor of the branch of the white nation whose cause they espoused.

From the Oneida Castle the Great Trail bore westward past De-o-sa-da-ya-ah,(*g*) which lay on the boundaries of the Onondagas, whose beautiful valley, with its mirror lake, was the fairest country I have ever seen unless it be the matchless home of the Senecas. The trail led us through the three villages of the tribe, which were scattered along the banks of the Onondaga River northward of the lake.

At Ka-na-ta-go-wa burned the sacred Council-Fire of the Long House which their traditions claimed had been lighted by the godlike Founders of the League, the two *roy-an-ehs*, Da-ga-no-weda and Ha-yo-wonth-ha, whose places in the Ho-yar-na-go-war(*h*) have never been filled because the Great Spirit can not create again men worthy to hold their titles.

Ordinarily, Ta-wan-ne-ars would have halted on his way to pay due reverence to the shrine and to To-do-da-ho, the senior of

(*a*) Detroit, Mich.

(*b*) De Tonty was obliged to abandon his post temporarily about that time.

(*c*) "Place for Carrying Boats;" present site of Rome, N. Y.

(*d*) A "head on a pole."

(*e*) Bark house.

(*f*) I am obliged to confess I had lice throughout my stay amongst the Indians. 'Twas impossible to be clean.—H. O.

(*g*) Deep Spring.

(*h*) Literally, Counselors of the People—the ruling body of the League.

all the fifty *roy-an-ehs* of the League, whose wisdom and prestige are inherited from the first of the name, him who made practical by his deeds the conceptions of the Founders. But we were in haste; Ta-wan-ne-ars was anxious that no news of our journey should escape; and he pressed on, sending word by a brother Wolf to To-do-da-ho of the circumstances which governed his action.

It was a rich country which we traversed, a country fit to be the home of a race of warriors. The forest always was king, but the ingenuity of the inhabitants forced it back whenever they had need.

In clearings by the streams were vast gardens of corn, pumpkins, melons, squashes and beans. In open spaces were luxuriant orchards of fruit-trees. The people we met, in the villages where we sometimes slept and ate or along the shaded slot of the trail, were pleasant and courteous. They eyed me curiously, but there was never any unseemly disregard of manners. Even the children were polite and hospitable.

"*Qua*," would be our greeting. "You have traveled far, brother of the Wolf Clan, you and your white friends. Sit by our fire and partake of our food and tobacco, and perhaps when you are rested you will tell us what you have seen on your way."

"What do you think of my people, Ormerod?" asked Ta-wan-ne-ars one day as we sat on a hillside above the north end of the Cayuga Lake and looked down on the village of Ga-ya-ga-an-ha.(*a*)

"I think they are a people of warriors and what we call nobles," I answered.

"That means gentlemen," he said.

"Yes, if you choose," I agreed.

"But they take scalps and have vermin in their clothes," he suggested.

"And they are kind to the stranger and fearless and generous," I returned.

Corlaer, who usually said nothing, took his pipe from his mouth and blinked at me.

"*Ja*," he said. "Andt there is der same kind of fermin in Fort Orange or New York."

WE SLEPT that night in the Cayuga village, and in the morning forded the foot of the lake and pursued the trail westward again until it emerged upon the north bank of the Seneca River, which we followed to the village of Ga-nun-da-gwa(*b*) on the lake of that name.

"Now we are in the country of the Senecas, brother," said Ta-wan-ne-ars when we started the next morning. "You have seen the homes of all the other tribes, save only the Tuscaroras who live to the south of the Oneidas; but none of them is so fair as the valley of Gen-nis-he-yo,(*c*) where my brethren dwell."

And I endorsed his words without reserve on the evening of our tenth day on the Great Trail, when we stood on the brink of the sweetest vale in all the world—aye, more beautiful even than the sacred valley of Onondaga—and looked across the treetops at the river that wound along its center like a looping flood of silver, with the myriad colors of the sunset tinting the hills beyond and a soft wind wafting upward to our level the odors of the woodlands and orchards.

From a little village that was huddled on the near bank of the river Ta-wan-ne-ars sent off that night a messenger to carry on word of our coming. So two days later, when we had passed the Gen-nis-he-yo and the belt of forest beyond to the Senecas' chief town, De-o-nun-da-ga-a, it was to find ourselves expected guests. Warriors and hunters, women and children, along the trail, hailed Ta-wan-ne-ars and his friends; and at the gates of the palisade which fortified the village—for it was the principal stronghold of the Western Door—stood Do-ne-ho-ga-weh himself, the Guardian of the Door, with his *roy-an-ehs* and *ha-seh-no-wa-weh*,(*d*) or chiefs, around him.

He was a splendid-looking old man, tall as Ta-wan-ne-ars, his massive shoulders unbent by age, his naked chest, with the vivid device of the wolf's head, rounded like a barrel; his pendant scalp-lock shot with gray. He and those with him were in gala dress, and the sun sparkled on elaborate beadwork and silver and gold ornaments and inlay of weapons.

He took one step forward as we halted, and his right arm went up in the graceful Iroquois salute.

"*Qua*, Ta-wan-ne-ars!" his voice boomed out. "You are welcome home, O my nephew. I can see that you have been brave against our enemies, for you carry a string of scalps at your belt, I can see that

(*a*) Near present site of Auburn, N. Y.

(*b*) Site of Canandaigua, N. Y.

(*c*) Literally, "The Beautiful Valley."

(*d*) Literally, "An Elevated Name." The office of chief was elective and in no sense hereditary or noble as was that of *roy-an-eh*, which has been misnamed sachem.

you have been honored, for Corlaer walks with you. I can see that you have been fortunate, for a strange white man walks beside you who has friendship in his face.

"Enter, O my nephew, with your white friends. The Council-House is made ready for them, and you will dwell with them a while until their feet have become accustomed to the new paths and their eyes see straight the unfamiliar things about them. We are eager to hear of your experiences and the deeds you have done. Enter!"

He turned on his heel and walked before us, and those who had accompanied him fell into single file behind us. So we paraded through the village—or rather I should say town, for it contained many thousand people—until we reached a house in the center where burned the tribal Council-Fire and where ambassadors and distinguished guests were lodged.

This house was oblong, almost square. The *roy-an-ehs*, chiefs and elders filed into it at our heels and arranged themselves around the fire in the center. Then squaws fetched in clay dishes of meats and vegetables of several kinds, as well as fruit, which they set down at intervals around the circle, and at a signal from Do-ne-ho-ga-weh everybody began to eat, each one dipping his fingers into whichever dish was nearest or most to his liking, but all governed by the utmost deference toward the wishes of their neighbors.

At the conclusion of the meal Do-ne-ho-ga-weh lighted a ceremonial pipe, carved of soapstone, with a long wooden mouthpiece decorated with beads and small, bright-colored feathers. He blew one puff toward the ground, one puff toward the sky and one toward each of the four quarters. Then he passed it to Ta-wan-ne-ars on his right hand, and Ta-wan-ne-ars gravely puffed it for a moment, and handed it to me. I did likewise, and gave it to Corlaer, who handed it on to the next man, and so it went the rounds of the fire.

There was a moment's silence, and then Ta-wan-ne-ars began the account of his travels, speaking slowly and without oratorical effect. Afterward he told me what he and the others had said. He made no references to our mission, but he described his journey to New York, his interview with Ga-en-gwa-ra-go—this impressed his audience mightily, and they applauded by a succession of guttural grunts—his meeting with me; the arrival of Murray and de Veulle and its meaning; our journey homeward and the fight with the Cahnuagas.

"*No-ho!*" he concluded.

Again there was a pasue. Then Do-ne-ho-ga-weh rose.

"We thank you, O my nephew," he said. "You have indeed honored us and yourself, and your white friends have shown themselves to be brave men. Now we will retire so that you may rest."

He walked out, and the others followed.

"What next?" I asked as Ta-wan-ne-ars filled his pipe.

The Seneca smiled.

"Soon we shall have a real talk," he said, and reached for a live coal.

"A real talk?" I repeated.

"Do-ne-ho-ga-weh knows that we could not tell him all of our tale when so many ears were listening. He knows, too, that we are pressed for time."

"*Ja*," squeaked Corlaer, "der *roy-an-eh* will come back."

AN HOUR passed, and I began to doubt my friends' wisdom. I was sleepy and tired. I had had overmuch of the coarse native-grown tobacco. But in the event I was rewarded, for a shadow darkened the entrance and the Guardian of the Western Door stood before us.

He sat between Ta-wan-ne-ars and me, and crammed tobacco into his pipe-bowl.

"You are not sleeping, O my nephew," he commented.

"We have that upon our minds which will not let us sleep," answered Ta-wan-ne-ars.(*a*)

"Would it ease the weight on your minds to confide your troubles in me?"

"That is my thought, O my uncle."

Do-ne-ho-ga-weh bowed gravely to all of us.

"My ears are open," he said.

There was a pause, and Ta-wan-ne-ars put down his pipe upon the floor.

"As you know, O my uncle," he began, "I went with Corlaer to Ga-en-gwa-ra-go to tell him of Joncaire's plans to build a stone fort at Jagara. On the same day came this white warrior, Ormerod, whom I call my brother, with word that Murray had defeated Ga-en-gwa-ra-go before Go-weh-go-wa. On the same day came the Frenchman

(*a*) This conversation was translated for me later by Ta-wan-ne-ars—H. O.

de Veulle, who once lived for a while amongst us. Him you will remember."

The bronze mask of the *roy-an-eh's* face was contorted for one brief instant by a flare of passion.

"I remember him," he said simply.

"De Veulle comes from Onontio's King with a message for the Canadian tribes, O my uncle. He and Murray and Joncaire work together to defeat our friend Ga-en-gwa-ra-go and drive the English from the land. Ga-en-gwa-ra-go has sent my brother Ormerod, who has lived amongst the French and speaks their tongue, to spy out the ground at Jagara. I go with him. After that, if we may, we shall seek the Doom Trail and clean out the Cahnuaga dogs."

For five minutes Do-ne-ho-ga-weh smoked in silence. Then he emptied his pipe.

"I am glad that Ga-en-gwa-ra-go keeps his eyes open, O my nephew," he said. "But I can not understand why the English disagree amongst themselves, so that one faction work for Onontio. However, they are white people, and I am a red man. Perhaps that is the reason. Do you wish my counsel?"

Ta-wan-ne-ars inclined his head.

"The Messesagues you met on the Mohawk told you that de Tonty was in trouble. I do not think word of this can yet have reached Joncaire. My advice is that you dress yourself as a Messesague warrior, O my nephew, and that your white brother—whose name I can not coil my tongue around—call himself by a French name. Then the two of you may go to Joncaire and say that you have just come from Le de Troit and give him the news and he will make you welcome. So you may spy out his plans at Jagara."

"*Ja*," assented Corlaer in English; "that is a goodt plan. You needt a goodt plan for a fox like Joncaire. By ——, I hope you fool him andt bring home his scalp."

"The news which Ga-en-gwa-ra-go asks for will be sufficient," replied Ta-wan-ne-ars. "O my uncle, we thank you. Now we may sleep with ease."

"That is well," said the *roy-an-eh*, rising.

He lifted his arm in salute.

"May Ha-wen-ne-yu, the Great Spirit, and the Ho-no-che-no-keh, his Invisible Aids, have you in their keeping."

CHAPTER XV

JONCAIRE IS HOSPITABLE

IT WAS a week before we left De-o-nun-da-ga-a, and although the delay irked me it could not be avoided, for the prolonged absence of Ta-wan-ne-ars from his post as Warden of the Western Door of the Long House had permitted an accumulation of questions of political and military importance which required his attention. He spent the days either in consultations with the *roy-an-ehs* and chiefs and delegations from neighboring tribes or in inspecting the marches. Corlaer departed with a small band of braves upon a hunting-trip, but I availed myself of the opportunity to gain an insight into the workings of the remarkable military confederacy which held the balance of power in America.

Do-ne-ho-ga-weh, as Guardian of the Western Door, was the political custodian of the most important frontier of the League. As such he was supreme.

But Ta-wan-ne-ars with his assistant chief, So-no-so-wa,(*a*) of the Turtle Clan, were the military captains of the Western Door. They were the only permanent war-chiefs in the confederacy, all others being elected to temporary command in times of emergency. They were also assistants to Do-ne-ho-ga-weh and attended him in this capacity at meetings of the Ho-yar-na-go-war, the great council of the *roy-an-ehs*. Their duty was to keep in proper subjection the numerous tributary nations, beyond the actual boundaries of the Long House, and equally to safeguard the Western Door from attack by any enemy.

So-no-so-wa at the time of my visit was absent on a trip to the south to chastise a band of Shawanese who had presumed to invade the hunting-grounds of the League. So jealous was the watch kept over the supremacy of the Long House that the slightest aggression or impertinence, even against a tributary nation, was punished at the earliest opportunity.

One of Ta-wan-ne-ars' first acts was to organize a war-party to harry the Miamis in retaliation for an attack upon a village of the Andastes in the Susquehanna Valley who were subject to the jurisdiction of the League.

(*a*) "Great Oyster Shell." The names of two permanent war-chiefs were really titles of honor, and were hereditary in an indirect line like the rank of *roy-an-eh*, the idea being to select the ablest man of his generation in a particular family.

"It was the intent of the Founders to prevent quarrels amongst the five nations who formed the Ho-de-no-sau-nee," explained Ta-wan-ne-ars as we sat in the Council-House after the departure of an embassy from the Je-go-sa-sa(*a*) or so-called Neuter Nation, who had petitioned for relief from the military aid which had been demanded of them for the expedition against the Miamis. "Before we built the Long House we fought constantly amongst ourselves. Afterwards we fought only against others, and because we were united we always won, although sometimes our wars lasted for many years.

"And now that we are strong, and only the white man can venture to oppose our war-parties, we fight for nothing more than the right to impose peace upon others. If a nation makes trouble for us too frequently we subjugate it, as we did the Delawares. If a nation is troublesome upon occasion like the Je-go-sa-sa we make it a tributary, and in return we protect it. If a nation is in difficulties, as were the Tuscaroras in the South, and they appeal to us for aid we give it. We took the Tuscaroras into the League because that was the best way we could protect them."

"Against whom?" I asked innocently.

"Against the white men," he answered. "Aye, brother, down in the Southern colonies the white men hunger for land just as they do here in New York. When an Indian tribe is weak, as were the Tuscaroras, the white men drive it before them. When a tribe is strong, like the O-ya-da-ga-o-no(*b*) or ourselves, it can resist—for a time."

He fell silent and his eyes gazed moodily into the smoke of the Council-Fire.

"Why do you say 'for a time'?" I asked.

"Because I mean it," he retorted fiercely. "Think you Ta-wan-ne-ars is ignorant because he is an Indian? But I do my brother an injustice there, for he does not look down upon the Indian as do so many white men.

"No, Ormerod, I tell you it is so. Today the Indian is still strong. He has the protection of the forest. The white man foolishly has given him guns to fight with, and steel axes and knives. But the Indian grows weaker; the white man grows stronger. In the end the Indian must go."

"The People of the Long House?" I cried. "'Tis impossible after the friendship you have shown us."

He eyed me gloomily.

"Friendship counts at the moment; strength counts in the future," he said. "That is the white man's way. Have I not lived amongst them?"

He leaned forward until his face was close to mine.

"When all else fails the white man will use fire-water, what you call rum and the French call brandy. The red man can not resist it—and it ruins him. He becomes a red animal."

"But——"

He would not let me speak.

"And your missionaries told me I must believe in their God!" he went on scornfully. "A God who permits white men to do things the God of the Indians forbids! I said to them:

" 'No. I am an Indian. A good Indian is better than a good white man; he is a better Christian, as you call it. And between bad Indians and bad white men there is only a difference in kinds of evil.' "

A warrior entered to report on a mission to a near-by village, and our conversation lapsed. I was to remember it many times in the future and especially during the adventures which were immediately before me.

THE next day we started up on the march to Jagara. We had not gone very far on the morning of the second day of our journey when I began to hear what sounded like a muffled roar, not thunder, but the bellowings of some gigantic monster, whose breath could ruffle the trees of the forest. Ta-wan-ne-ars, who had regained his customary good spirits with the prospect of danger and hardship, smiled at my obvious bewilderment.

" 'Tis the voice of the Great Falls, brother," he said. "The Thunder Waters."

"Does water make that noise?" I exclaimed.

"Nothing but water."

" 'Tis impossible."

"So many have said; and indeed, the missionaries told me 'twas one of the greatest wonders of the world."

In the early afternoon a mist appeared, overhanging the treetops on the horizon and shot with gorgeous rainbows. The volume of noise increased. It was not deafening. You could speak and converse with ease as

(*a*) Wildcats.

(*b*) Cherokees.

you approached it; but it dominated you, made you conscious of a power beyond human effort to subdue.

Yet even so, when we stepped from the trees and the panorama of the cataract lay spread before us, a vast, seething wall of water that swirled and smoked and tossed and fumed in an endless fight for freedom, I was amazed, staggered by the magnitude of the spectacle. Here in the heart of the wilderness, far from civilization, the effect of it was belittling, overwhelming. That mighty flow of water, so resistless, so inevitable in its progress, so unthinkably gigantic, seemed almost as if it might sweep away the fabric of a continent.

I stumbled behind Ta-wan-ne-ars into the trail of the portage which led around the falls. Canoes and goods were transported by this route from the Cadarakui Lake to the Lake of the Eries whence poured this endless stream; it was a main-traveled road between the French posts in Canada and their outflung establishments in the farther wilderness.

We followed it northeastward until twilight, the roar of the falls gradually diminishing behind us, and came at length into an open space upon the banks of the swift-running river which carried the shattered waters into the Cadarakui Lake. Close to the bank stood a flagstaff, and from its summit floated the white ensign of France.

At the foot of the staff, as if resting secure under the folds of the flag, rose the walls of a substantial log house. Behind it were a collection of smaller huts and lodges of bark.

A large, stout man, with very greasy, lanky black hair, hailed us from the log house as we approached.

"*Hola!*" he shouted in French. "Who comes so free from the westward without canoe or fur-packs?"

"A poor, miserable rascal of a forest-runner," I called back gaily.

He discarded an Indian pipe he had been nursing in his hand, and came across to me at a surprizingly rapid gait for one of his build.

"And who might this 'poor, miserable rascal of a forest-runner' be?" he demanded. "These are the King's grounds, and we must know who comes and goes."

"*Mon dieu!*" I appealed in mock consternation to the stars. "But it is a hard man to deal with! Will you have an objection, *monsieur*, to the name of Jean Courbevoir?"

"None in the world, Jean," he returned promptly, "if you have your trading-permit with you. But who is the good savage with you?"

Nobody had told me anything of a trading-permit, and I fought for time.

"You call him good with justice, *monsieur*— By the way, what is your name?"

"They call me Joncaire," he said with a trace of grimness.

"Joncaire! *Mort de ma vie!*"

And I appealed with all the precision my memory would permit to the calendar of the saints.

"The very man I have been searching for!"

"What? How is that?" he asked.

"Ah, but that is a tale! I can not believe it now! Am I in very truth on French soil once more?"

"This is the Magazin Royal," he returned. "As for French soil, *mon brave*, I do not see how you could have been off it."

"Off it?" I repeated.

"Off it," he replied impatiently. "Since his Most Catholic Majesty hath a just claim to all lands in these parts—on this side of Hudson's River, at any rate."

"To be sure, to be sure," I assented quickly. "But, Monsieur de Joncaire, you will be interested to know there is an accursed tribe of savages who do not believe as you do."

"Is that so, Jean? And who may they be?"

"The Messesagues."

His face lighted up.

"They are in de Tonty's country. And how is the dear Alphonse?"

"Fleeing for his life, no less."

"Fleeing? How is it he has not come here?"

"Those same accursed Messesagues, *monsieur*. They rose up against us, and Monsieur de Tonty must flee to the northward and make the journey through the country of the Hurons."

"But you escaped?" he pressed.

"Verily, *monsieur;* and 'tis this good savage who walks beside me who did it. He has a kindness for me, and when we were out hunting informed me of the rising against Monsieur de Tonty and escorted me here."

A look of grave concern overspread Joncaire's face.

"Are you certain of this, Jean?"

"Beyond doubt, *monsieur;* for my friend, the Ottar here, smuggled a message from me to Monsieur de Tonty, who bade me come at once to you that you might hold up all west-bound canoes."

"Aye, Alphonse would have done so," approved Joncaire. "Well, I always told him he would have trouble with the Messesagues. He was too easy with them. They are used to the heavy rule of the Iroquois, and they misunderstand kindness. *Ma foi!* This is bad news you bring, Jean. Was there much loss in furs?"

"Sad! 'Tis very sad!" I said ambiguously. "All gone!"

"And that reminds me," he went on, "you have not shown me your trading-permit."

"Trading-permit, monsieur?" I said. "Why—why—*monsieur* forgets that I am not a free-trader. I was in Monsieur de Tonty's employ. I had no permit. Nor, indeed, *monsieur*, have I any furs. Therefore what need would Jean Courbevoir have for a trading-permit?"

"Humph!" he growled. "Have you been long in Canada, Jean?"

"But this year, *monsieur.*"

"And you already speak the tongue of the savages?"

I nearly fell into this trap, but bethought myself of the danger in time.

"Oh, no, *monsieur;* only a word here and there."

"But this savage of yours?"

"Oh, he is like a dog. So faithful, so devoted! And he learns French readily, too."

"Humph!" growled Joncaire again. "And where do you come from, Jean?"

Something in his speech warned me—the liquid slurr of the South.

"I, *monsieur?*" I replied innocently. "Oh, I am of Picardy. But *monsieur* is of the South—no? of Provence?"

ALL the suspicion fled from Joncaire's face, and in its stead blossomed a broad smile.

"*Peste!*" he ejaculated. "'Tis a clever lad! And how knew you that, Jean?"

I was overjoyed—and in no need to simulate my sentiments. This was good fortune.

"Was I not camping beside the Regiment de Provence when we were on the Italian frontier? 'Tis a pleasant way those lads have of talking. And such good companions with the bottle!"

"You know, Jean, you know!"

Joncaire was delighted with me.

"Ah, yes, *monsieur,*" I asserted modestly. "Ah, for some of that warm Southern wine at this moment instead of the accursed rum. Rum is good only for savages."

"You say truth," applauded Joncaire. "Come your ways within, Jean, and you shall taste of the blood of La Belle France—although it be not our Provence vintage. By the way, do you know Provence?"

"I can not say so with honesty, *monsieur,*" I fenced, "although I have been in Arles."

"In Arles!"

He flung his arms around my neck.

"Jean, I love you, my lad! I was born in St. Remi, which is but a short distance out in the diocese. Does that *sacré* Henri Ponteuse yet have the tavern at the corner of the Grande Place?"

I decided to take a long leap in the dark, and answered:

"But no, *monsieur;* he is dead these ten years. 'Tis his——"

I was about to say "son," but luckily Joncaire interrupted in time.

"'Twill be that fine lass, Rosette, his niece!" he exclaimed. "Ah, I knew it."

"And she has taken a husband," I encouraged him, now so far committed that I might not draw back.

"Not young Voisin, the miller's son?"

"No, *monsieur;* a stranger from a far corner of the diocese. One Michel."

We were now in the entrance of the log house, and Joncaire opened with the door.

"Jean, you are a lad in a million!" he pronounced. "You shall drink deep. I have some wine which Bigon the *intendant* fetched out for a few of us—you will understand you must say naught of it hereafter; it never paid duty. Aye, we shall make a fine night of it, and you shall tell me of all that has passed in Arles these many years.

"*Mon dieu!* I could weep at the thought of the time I have spent in this place of devils; and my children will never know the country that their father came from!"

Ta-wan-ne-ars would have followed us indoors, but Joncaire turned and pushed him down on the doorstep.

"Sit, sit," he said kindly in a tongue which Ta-wan-ne-ars afterward told me was the Messesague dialect. "You shall have your food here."

And to me—

"Our own Indians I will tolerate when I must, but I want no strange savages stealing my stores."

"*Monsieur* has a family here?" I asked as we took our seats at a rough table in the front room.

"Here! Never! Although I have one son who will soon be able to carry on his father's work."

"One son? That is too bad. Now in Picardy——"

"*Mort de ma vie!* Would you talk to me of your Picards? Young man, each Autumn that I return to Montreal—and it has been many Autumns, let me tell you—Madame de Joncaire has a new little one to introduce to me."

His face softened.

"Bless me if I know how that old lady does it!" he sighed. "We have ten now—or maybe 'tis twelve. But I am not sure. I must count up when I return this year."

He clapped his hands, and a soldier in the undress uniform of the French marine troops, who formed the major part of the garrison of Canada, entered.

"François," announced Joncaire," this is Jean Courbevoir, who will be my guest until he departs. He has been in Arles, François. Remember that. It should be a part of each young man's training to visit Arles.

"What he orders you will render to him. Now bring us the flagon of wine which Monsieur Bigon sent out this Spring."

The soldier saluted me as if I were a marshal of France, and brought in the flagon of the *intendant's* wine with the exquisite reverence which only a son of France could bestow upon the choicest product of the soil of France.

"Pour it out, François," commanded Joncaire.

The soldier hesitated.

"And Monsieur de Lery?" he said.

"A thousand million curses!" exploded Joncaire. "Am I to wait for him? Am I to sacrifice my choicest wine in his gullet?"

"Who is Monsieur de Lery?" I asked as François filled a thick mug with the ruby juice.

"What? You do not know him? That is a good one, that! I should like to have had him hear you say it. But do you mean you do not know of him?"

"*Monsieur* will remember I am of the wilderness," I protested.

"True, true. And this pompous whippersnapper, who sets out to teach Louis Thomas de Joncaire, Sieur de Chabert, his duty, after thirty-five years on the frontier —pah!"

He drained his mug, and pushed it toward François for more.

"But you have not told me who he is, *monsieur*," I said.

"He is——"

"Monsieur de Lery enters," interposed François with a glance at the doorway.

CHAPTER XVI

TRAPPED

A SLENDER, wiry little man in a wig several sizes too big for him strode in to the room. He had a thin face, near-sighted eyes and a bulging forehead. He favored me with a curious glance, nodded to Joncaire and took a seat across the table from me.

My host made a wry smile and motioned to François to bring a third mug.

"*Hola*, Monsieur de Lery," he said. "This is a gallant young forest-runner, one Jean Courbevoir, who has come to tell me that charming idiot Alphonse de Tonty has been chased out of Le de Troit by the Messesagues. Jean, Monsieur de Lery is the King's engineer officer in Canada."

"Another case of a log fortification, I suppose," remarked de Lery sarcastically in a dry, crackling voice.

He paid no attention to the introduction to me.

"You gentlemen will never learn," he added.

"You must think we grow louis d'or instead of furs in Canada," growled Joncaire. "Be sure, we of the wilderness posts are the most anxious to have stone walls around us. Well, what headway have you made?"

"I have traced out the lines of the central mass," replied de Lery, taking a gulp of the wine. "Tomorrow I shall mark out a surrounding work of four bastions to encompass it."

"And you insist it shall be at the confluence of the river and the lake?"

"There can be no doubt 'tis the proper spot," declared de Lery didactically, "both from the engineering and the strategical points of view."

"But I am telling you—I, Louis Thomas de Joncaire, Sieur de Chabert, who have

been thirty-five years in this accursed country—that if you do so you will have no sheltered anchorage for shipping. Moreover you will sacrifice the buildings we have erected here."

De Lery pushed back his mug.

"All very well," he answered; "but your position here does not command the lake. If the English chose they could blockade you in the river, and your anchorage would go for naught. Furthermore there is great difficulty in navigating craft this far up the river against a current of nearly three leagues an hour."

"Bah!" exclaimed Joncaire. "You know everything."

"I am an engineer," returned de Lery pompously. "You are a soldier. I should not attempt to dictate to you."

Joncaire appealed to me. He was on his third mug of wine, and the mellow stuff had rekindled his odd friendship for me.

"Come, *mon Jean*," he cried, "what do you say to it? You are a man of experience. You have been to Arles. I think you implied that you had seen service in the Army in France?"

"As a sergeant only, *monsieur*," I answered modestly. "In the Regiment de la Reine."

"A famous corps," he proclaimed. "Your opinion has weight with me, Jean. You are a man of sense and judgment. What is your opinion on this subject we debate?"

"*Ma foi, monsieur*," I said cautiously, "I am scarcely fitted to discuss it with two gentlemen of your wisdom and experience. I am frank to say I do not understand the issue."

"De Lery, we will leave the matter to this youth's honest candor," suggested Joncaire.

"With your favor, *monsieur*, we will not," replied the engineer decisively.

He rose from his seat.

"Speaking for myself, I have had sufficient wine, and I shall retire. If the masons bring in the loads of stone we expect in the morning, we shall be able to lay the first course by noon."

Joncaire twisted his face into a grimace as de Lery ascended a steep flight of ladder-stairs to an upper story.

"What a man to live with!" he apostrophized. "*Mon dieu*, nobody knows the agonies I suffer! Me, I am a man of compassion, of friendliness, of respect for another's opinion. But that man—*tonnerrr-rrr-rr-re de dieu!* For him there are no opinions but his own."

"What is the difficulty, *monsieur?*" I inquired sympathetically.

"Why, at last I have persuaded this stupid, timorous government of ours to build me a proper fort. 'Tis the only way we shall hold the *sacré* English in check.

"You have intelligence, Jean. You know the country to the West. 'Tis manifest that with a fort here we can control in some measure the intercourse betwixt the western tribes and the English. Also, we shall have a constant threat here to keep the Iroquois at peace."

"That is readily understood, *monsieur*."

"Of course. Well, I worked up Vaudreuil to approve it, obtained the grants from Paris, secured the necessary mechanics—and then they sent this popinjay to supervise the work. I had pitched on this site here. He would have none of it. No, he must overturn all my plans and put the new works several miles down the river where it runs into the lake.

And he will not listen to reason. He is so conceited with himself because he has been charged with all the works of fortification in Canada."

"Are there others then, *monsieur?*" I asked casually, burying my nose in the wine-mug.

"Aye, to be sure. He is to build a wall around Montreal, and to strengthen the *enceinte* of Quebec."

"But we are at peace with these *sacré* English," I objected.

JONCAIRE, now thoroughly convivial, winked at me over the rim of his mug.

"For the present, yes. But how long, Jean? Ah, my lad, you are young, and I can see you have the brains to carry you far. Here in Canada family counts for less than in Paris. But after all you are not of those who know the high politics of the day—not yet."

"I am a poor, ignorant youth whom *monsieur* is pleased to honor," I said humbly.

"And *monsieur* is pleased to instruct you," he answered. "Yes, we can not go on as we have been, Jean. Every year that passes the English grow in strength, and we become weaker, I speak now in matters of trade, for after all, lad, the country which obtains the mastery in trade must be the

military master of any contending nation. I may be only a simple soldier, but so much I have learned."

"Ah, but *monsieur* is pleased to be downhearted!" I cried. "'Tis plain we are stronger than the English. Are not our posts stretched thousands of miles beyond theirs?"

"Pouf! What of that? We are a colony of soldiers and traders, well armed and disciplined. They are an infinitely larger group of colonies with only a few soldiers and traders, but many husbandmen. Give them time, and they will obtain such a grip on the soil of the wilderness that they can not be pried loose. But if we use our temporary advantage, and keep them from winning supremacy in the trade with the savages, then, my Jean, we may force a war upon them at an early day, and we shall win."

He sat back, and eyed me triumphantly.

"Surely we have that supremacy now!"

He winked at me again, and drew from a drawer in the table a heavy book such as accounts are kept in.

"Jean," he said, "I am about to disclose to you a secret—which is not a secret, because every trader who works for himself is acquainted with it."

He flipped through the pages.

"Here is the account for this post for the year just ended. We handled a total of 204 'green' deerskins and 23 packets of various kinds of furs. On these we cleared a profit of 2,382 livres, 3 sols, 9 deniers,(*a*) which would not come anywhere near covering the operating-expenses of the post. You will find the same story at every post from here to the Mississippi."

"Why, *monsieur?*"

"These *sacré* English! First they turn the Iroquois against us—and in that success, I am bound to say, they have been ably assisted by ourselves;(*b*) then they build the post of Fort Oswego, at the foot of the Onondaga's River on Irondequoit Bay;(*c*) then they send out a swarm of young men to trap and shoot in the Indian country; then they pass this accursed law that forbids us obtaining Indian goods from the New York merchants! *Peste*, what a people! They have us in a noose."

(*a*) About $476.

(*b*) Joncaire was one of the few Frenchmen who had the confidence of the Iroquois. He had been captured as a young man by the Senecas and adopted into that tribe.

(*c*) Now Oswego, N. Y.

I shook my head dolefully.

"Ah, *monsieur*, you make me very sorrowful," I said. "I came out to Canada thinking to make my fortune, but if what you say be true, I am more likely to be killed by the English."

"No, no, it's not so bad as that," he answered quickly. "The governor-general has waked up. It seems that in France they are not quite ready for another war, but we are charged to make preparations as rapidly as possible. There is an emissary coming soon from Paris, who will have instructions for the frontier posts and the friendly Indians. It may be we can persuade the English to be stupid enough to revoke this law of theirs. In any case, my Jean, you will have heard of the Doom Trail?"

I crossed myself devoutly.

"I have heard nothing good of it, *monsieur*," I said fearfully.

"Humph; I don't doubt it. And mind you, Jean, for myself, I do not like that kind of business. But after all 'tis the trade over the Doom Trail which keeps you and me in our jobs. Without it—well, this post would shut down. And they do say at Quebec that if we can start a revolution in England for this Pretender of theirs and war at the same time, we shall be able to take the whole continent from them."

"And who is this emissary you spoke of?" I asked, thinking to extract more information from the bibulous Joncaire.

"Not of your——"

There was a commotion at the door.

"Bind the Indian," shouted a voice in French. "Hah, I thought so! We meet again, Ormerod!"

De Veulle stood on the threshold, his rifle leveled at my breast.

"Bring the Indian inside here," he called behind him. "We'll have a look at him in the light."

A group of Cahnuagas, frightfully painted, with their grotesque bristling feather headdresses, hustled Ta-wan-ne-ars into the room.

But now Joncaire asserted himself.

"What do you mean by this, Monsieur de Veulle?" he demanded with a cold displeasure which showed no signs of his recent indulgences. "This man is a forest-runner, Jean Courbevoir, a messenger from de Tonty. The Indian is a Messesague—as you should see by his paint and beadwork."

"Bah!" sneered de Veulle. "They fooled

you. The Indian is Ta-wan-ne-ars, of the Seneca Wolves, War Chief of the Iroquois. The white man is Harry Ormerod, an English spy and a deserter from the Jacobites. He was stationed in Paris for some years, and recently was sent to New York. Burnet, the Governor of New York, dispatched him here to spy out what you were doing. 'Twas fortunate I had an errand to Jagara, for he seems to have deluded you completely."

"That may be so," assented Joncaire; "but it happens that I command here. These men are my prisoners. You will order your Indians from the room. François, get your musket and stand guard."

DE VEULLE drew a paper from a pocket inside his leather shirt and presented it to Joncaire with irritating deliberation.

"Here," he said, "you will find my warrant from the King himself to exercise what powers I deem necessary along the frontier. Only the governor-general may overrule me."

Joncaire studied the paper.

"That is so," he admitted. "But I tell you this, de Veulle, you have a bad record on the frontier for a trouble-maker. But for you I should have had the Senecas and Onondagas in our interest before this. I write to Quebec by the first post, demanding a check upon your activities. We have too much at stake to permit you to jeopardize it."

"At De-o-nun-de-ga-a it is known that Ta-wan-ne-ars and his brother Ormerod journeyed to Jagara," interposed the Seneca in his own language. "Does Joncaire think the Senecas will be quiet when one of their chiefs is given up to the Keepers of the Doom Trail for torment?"

"The Senecas will be told that you never reached Jagara," replied de Veulle before Joncaire could speak.

"I will have nothing to do with it," declared the commandant of the post. "Spies they may be, and as such they may be imprisoned; but I will have nothing to do with turning them over to the Keepers. De Veulle, this is on your own head."

"I am content," said de Veulle with a mocking smile.

Joncaire turned to me.

"Well, my Jean," he said soberly, "whatever your name may be, you have gotten yourself into a nasty mess. You will be lucky if you die quickly. This is what comes of trying to fool old Papa Joncaire."

"You will admit that I fooled you," I replied as lightly as I could.

"You did," he conceded, "and you are nearly the first."

"Will you do me a favor in memory of Arles—I have really visited that renowned city—*monsieur?*"

"Gladly."

"Get word sometime to Peter Corlaer that I fooled you, and 'twas no fault of mine I was taken."

He clapped me on the back.

"That's the spirit, *mon brave!* I'll do it without fail. And my advice to you is to pick the first chance to die, no matter how it may be. These Keepers—*peste!* They are a bad lot. They are artists in torment. 'Tis part of their religion, which I will say they still practise, even though Père Hyacinthe were to excommunicate me."

"Better not let the worthy priest hear you," admonished de Veulle with his mocking smile. "Have you finished your homily and last word to the condemned?"

"I have finished my last word to you," snarled Joncaire.

"Perhaps, *monsieur*," I said, "you have never chanced to hear of a certain duel with small-swords in the ——"

De Veulle struck me with all his strength across the mouth.

"Here," he called to the waiting Cahnuagas, "bind him—and make a sure job of it. Be not careful of his comfort."

Joncaire looked him up and down with indescribable contempt.

"There is a bad air in here, Monsieur Englishman," he said. "Even the company of that ass de Lery is preferable to this miserable person. I bid you adieu."

But as he was about to climb the stairs de Lery had ascended, de Veulle called him back.

"One moment! Speaking officially, Monsieur de Joncaire, I desire you to send out belts to all friendly tribes, summoning them to a council-fire which will be held here by the King's command in August."

Joncaire bowed.

"It shall be done," he said.

"Now then—" de Veulle addressed me—"we will consider your case. Are the bonds sufficiently tight?"

I had been bound with strips of rawhide

which cut into every muscle. The question was superfluous.

"Pick them up," he said to the Cahnuagas. "We will get back to the canoes."

One of the Keepers objected, seeming to suggest that they rest the night at least; but de Veulle silenced him with a frown.

"We start at once," he said. "There will be time to rest after we are out in the lake."

Ta-wan-ne-ars and I were slung like sacks of grain each upon the shoulders of a pair of warriors and so carried past several phlegmatically interested French soldiers to the bank of the river. Here we were laid carefully in the bottoms of separate canoes, which were shoved out into the swirling current and borne swiftly down-stream into the spreading waters of the Cadarakui Lake.

Despite the tightness of my bonds and the numbness they induced, I fell asleep, rocked by the easy motion of the canoe as it was driven along by the powerful arms of the Cahnuagas, who crouched in line, one behind the other, their paddles dipping in and out of the water like tireless machines.

CHAPTER XVII

LA VIERGE DU BOIS

A DASH of water awakened me. One of the Cahnuagas was leaning down, his hideous face close to mine, his fingers wrestling with the knots in the rawhide bonds.

"You can not lie idle, my distinguished guest," called de Veulle from his place at the stern. "You must keep us dry."

As the rawhide strips were unwound I was able to sit up and look over the frail bark side. We were out of sight of land, and a moderate breeze was raising a slight swell, the crest of which occasionally broke over our bow. In the other canoe Ta-wan-ne-ars already was at work with a bark scoop.

The Cahnuagas were uneasy, and at times they muttered amongst themselves; but de Veulle kept them at the paddles, working in relays of four. It said much for his hold on the Indians that he was able to persuade them to navigate the treacherous waters of the open lake, a feat the savages will never attempt except under compulsion.

All of that day we were isolated on the restless surface of the huge inland sea. Just before dusk of the second day we sighted a rocky coast, and sheered away from it. Two nights later we passed a group of lights to the north, and the Cahnuagas murmured "Cadaraqui." Indeed 'twas the French fort of that name, the key to the westerly defenses of Canada and the St. Lawrence outlet from the lake.(*a*) On the sixth day we passed out of the lake into the narrow channel of the great river, and landed in the evening at a palisaded post on the southern bank.

So far I had been treated fairly well. My captors had shared with me their meager fare of parched corn and jerked meat; and if I had been compelled to bale out the canoe incessantly, it was equally true that they had labored at the paddles night and day. It was also true that de Veulle had made me the constant subject of his gibes and kicks and had encouraged the Cahnuagas—and God knows they required no encouragement—to maul me at pleasure. Yet the frailty of the canoe had forbidden indulgence in as much roughness as they desired.

But now everything was changed. My legs were left unbound, but with uncanny skill the savages lashed back my arms until well-nigh every bit of circulation was stopped in them and each movement I was forced to make became an act of torture. The one recompense for my sufferings was that for the first time since our capture I had the company of Ta-wan-ne-ars, and I was able to profit by his stoical demeanor in resisting the impulse to vent my anger against de Veulle.

"Say nothing, brother," he counseled me when I panted my hate, "for every word you say will afford him satisfaction."

"I wish I had staved in the canoe in the middle of the lake," I exclaimed bitterly.

"Ta-wan-ne-ars, too, thought of that," he admitted. "Yet must we have died with our tormenters, and perhaps if we wait we may escape and live to slay them at less cost to ourselves."

"It is not likely," I answered, for my spirits were very low. "What is this place? Where are we?"

Ta-wan-ne-ars looked around the landscape, rapidly dimming in the twilight. We had been left in custody of the Indians on the river-bank whilst de Veulle conversed

(*a*) Later Fort Frontenac.

with three white men who had emerged from the palisades as we scrambled ashore.

"This place Ta-wan-ne-ars does not know," he replied. "Yet it is on the river St. Lawrence, for there is no other stream of this size. I think, brother, that de Veulle is taking us to La Vierge du Bois."

"It matters little where he takes us," I returned ill-naturedly. "Our end is like to be the same in any case."

"At the least," said Ta-wan-ne-ars with a smile, "we shall have solved the riddle of the Doom Trail."

"And what will that avail us?" I countered. "Joncaire told me all I sought to know of Jagara—but he told it to a dead man."

"Not yet dead, brother," Ta-wan-ne-ars corrected me gently. "We have still a long way to go—and we have our search."

"Which is like to lead us into the halls of ——," I said rudely.

But de Veulle and the three strange Frenchmen walked up at that moment, and Ta-wan-ne-ars was spared the necessity of an answer.

"'Tis well," de Veulle was saying. "We will rest the night, then. I'll lodge my prisoners in the stockade."

"And there is naught else?" asked one of the others.

"The letter to Père Hyacinthe—don't forget that."

Whereat they all four laughed with a kind of sinister mystery and cast glances of amusement at us.

"I would I might see the Moon Feast," said another.

"Some day, if you are accepted amongst the Ga-go-sa, you may," returned de Veulle. "Be ready with the letter, I beg you. I must start early with the daylight if I am to be in time for the feast."

The Cahnuagas drove us from the bank with kicks and blows of their paddle-blades, and the white men followed leisurely, laughing now and then as we dodged some particularly vicious attack upon our heads and faces. As it was, when we were flung into a bare log-walled room within the palisade we were covered with bruises. 'Twas the real beginning of our torment.

IN THE morning our arms were untied and we were given a mess of half-cooked Indian meal. Then the rawhides were rebound, and we set forth upon a trail that led from the river southeastward into the forest. A Cahnuaga walked behind each of us, tomahawk in hand. De Veulle himself brought up the rear, his musket always ready.

I prefer not to think of that day. The heat of early Summer was in the air, and although it was cooler in the forest than in the open a host of insects attacked us; and with our hands bound, we could not fight them off. Ta-wan-ne-ars had the thick hide of his race, and they bothered him less than they did me; but we were both in agony by the time we made camp and the smoke-smudge kindled by our guards in self-protection gave us temporary relief.

The next day was much the same. If we hesitated in our pace or staggered, the savage nearest to us used the flat of his tomahawk or his musket-butt. Ta-wan-ne-ars walked before me in the column, and the sight of his indifference, his disdainful air toward all the slights put upon him, maintained my courage when otherwise it must have yielded.

On the third day shortly after noon I was astonished to hear faintly, but very distinctly, a bell ringing in the forest. And I remembered the words of the Cahnuaga who had been last of his brethren to die in that fight in the glade on the Great Trail—

"A building with a tower and a bell that rings."

"La Vierge du Bois welcomes you," hailed de Veulle from behind us. "The bell rings you in. Ah, there will be bright eyes and flushed cheeks at sight of you!"

He laughed in a pleasant, melodious way.

"White cheeks to flush for you, Ormerod, and red cheeks to grow duskier for our friend the chief here! What a fluttering of hearts there will be!"

Could I have wrenched my hands free I would have snatched a tomahawk from the Cahnuaga before me. But I did what Ta-wan-ne-ars did—held my head straight and walked as if I had not heard. Something told me the Seneca suffered as much as I.

We did not hear the bell again; but in mid-afternoon the forest ended upon the banks of a little river, and in the distance a wooden tower showed through the trees. As we drew nearer other buildings appeared, arranged in irregular fashion about a clearing. One of pretentious size stood by itself inside a palisade.

Cahnuagas, including women and children, swarmed along the trail with guttural

cries. A big, red-headed man stepped from a building which was evidently a storehouse. 'Twas Bolling, and with a yell of delight he snatched a block of wood from the ground and hurled it at my head.

"Curse me, 'tis the renegade and his red shadow!" he shouted. "We are in great luck! Do but wait until Tom knows you are here, my friend. The stake awaits you!"

He walked beside us, rubbing his hands together in high glee, and discoursing with seemingly expert knowledge on the precise character of the various kinds of torment we should undergo. From time to time he would break off to call upon the Cahnuagas for confirmation or new ideas, and they never failed to support him. Once in a while he kicked us or beat us with the nearest stick he could reach.

His attentions drew a considerable crowd; and so when we entered the single rude street of the settlement 'twas to find the whole population awaiting us. The gate in the stockade around the big house was open, and with a thrill I realized that a swirl of color there meant Marjory. Murray's stately figure I identified at a distance.

I think she did not know me at first. There was no reason why she should. My leather garments were rent and torn, my hair was tangled and matted with briers and thorns from the underbrush, my face was scratched and bleeding. I was thin and gaunt, and I might not walk upright, although I tried, for the rawhide thongs bowed my shoulders.

But Murray knew me instantly, and a flare of exultation lighted his face. Behind him, too, stood the animal-shape of Tom, long arms almost trailing on the ground; and the negro's yellow eyes seemed to expand with tigerish satisfaction.

De Veulle halted us directly in front of the gate.

"An old acquaintance has consented to visit us," he said.

And with a shock of grief I saw comprehension dawn in Marjory's face. But she did not flush crimson, as de Veulle had prophesied. She blenched white. I knew by that she had been long enough at La Vierge du Bois to appreciate the temper of its inhabitants.

"I seem to recollect the tall Indian beside our friend, likewise," observed Murray.

" 'Tis his companion of the interview at Cawston's in New York," rejoined de Veulle. "What, Mistress Marjory, you have not forgotten the rash youth who was always threatening or badgering us?"

Her lips moved mechanically, but 'twas a minute before she could force her voice to obey.

"I remember," she said.

Murray took snuff precisely and addressed himself to me.

"Master Juggins, Master Juggins—oh, I beg your pardon! I keep confusing your names. Master Ormerod, then—did I not warn you to leave the Doom Trail alone?"

I laughed.

"I have not been near the Doom Trail," I answered.

"No," answered de Veulle. "I found him cozening that old fool Joncaire at Jagara."

"So!"

Murray pursed his lips.

" 'Tis a serious offense."

"For which, it seems, Joncaire is not to be permitted to take revenge," I added.

"You are a dangerous youth, Master Ormerod," admonished Murray gravely. "You had opportunity to win free of your past misdemeanors, you will allow, yet you would hear none of my advice. No, you must mix in affairs which did not concern you. And as I warned you, it hath been to your sore prejudice. Much as I——"

Marjory flung out her arms in a gesture of appeal.

"Why do you talk so much, sir?" she cried. "What have you in mind? This man is an Englishman! Is he to be given up to the savages?"

MURRAY surveyed her gravely. "Tut, tut, my dear! Is this the way to conduct in public? 'Given up to the savages,' forsooth! The young man is a traitor, a renegade—and a sorry fool into the bargain. He is in an uncomfortable situation, thanks to his own mistakes and heedlessness. He hath meddled in matters beyond his comprehension or ability. We must reckon up the harm he hath done, and assess his punishment in proportion."

"Just what do you mean by that, sir?" she demanded coldly.

He brushed a speck of snuff from his sleeve.

"Frankly, my dear lass, I can not tell you as yet."

"I think you mock me," she asserted.

"And I tell you, sir, I will be party to no such crime against humanity. You talk of traitors. I am wondering if there is more than one meaning to the word."

She turned with a flutter of garments and sped into the house. De Veulle eyed Murray rather quizzically, but the arch-conspirator gave no evidence of uneasiness.

"You shall tell me about it," he said as if nothing had happened. "Meantime I suppose they may be lodged with the Keepers."

"Yes," agreed de Veulle; "but I desire to give some particular instructions for their entertainment."

"Do so; do so, by all means," answered Murray equably. "But wait; here comes Père Hyacinthe."

The Indians surrounding us huddled back, cringing against the stockade, their eyes glued upon a tall, thin figure in a threadbare black cassock of the Jesuit order. He walked with a peculiar halting gait. His face was emaciated, the skin stretched taut over prominent bones. His eyes blazed out of twin caverns.

Parts of his ears were gone, and as he drew nearer I saw that his face was criss-crossed by innumerable tiny scars. When he raised his hand in blessing the Indians I realized that two fingers were missing, and those which were left were twisted and gnarled as by fire.

"Whom have we here?" he called in a loud, harsh voice.

"Two prisoners, reverend sir," replied Murray. "English spies caught at Jagara by the vigilance of Monsieur de Veulle."

"Are they heretics?" demanded the priest.

"I fear I have never conversed with Master Ormerod concerning his religious beliefs," said Murray whimsically. "I should add, by the way, father, that the young man is the spy of whom I told you, who crossed upon our ship with us."

The priest peered closely at me.

"Well, sir," he asked bruskly, "are you a son of the true faith?"

"Not the one you refer to, sir," I said.

"And this savage here?"

"He believes, quite devoutly, I should say, in the gods of his race."

The Jesuit locked and unlocked his fingers nervously.

"I fear, *monsieur*, that you will suffer torment at the hands of my poor children here," he said. "Will you not repent before it is too late?"

"But will you stand by and see your children torture an Englishman in time of peace?" I asked.

His eyes fairly sparked from the shelter of their cavernous retreats.

"Peace?" he rasped. "There is no peace—there can be no peace—between England, the harlot nation, and holy France. France follows her destiny, and her destiny is to rule America on behalf of the Church."

"Yet peace there is," I insisted.

"I refuse to admit it. We know no peace here. We are at war, endless war, physically, spiritually, mentally, with England. If you come amongst us, you do so at your bodily peril. But—" and the challenge left his voice and was replaced by a note of pleading, soft and compelling—"it may be, *monsieur*, that in your bodily peril you have achieved the salvation of your soul. Repent, I urge you, and though your body perish your soul shall live."

Murray and de Veulle stirred restlessly during this harangue, but the savages were so silent you could hear the birds in the trees. I was interested in this man, in his fanatic sincerity, his queer conception of life.

"But if I repented, as you say," I suggested, "would not you save my body?"

His eyes burned with contempt.

"Would you drive a bargain with God?" he cried. "For shame! Some may tolerate that, but I never will! What matters your miserable body! It has transgressed the rights of France. Let it die! But your soul is immortal; save that, I conjure you!"

"Aye; but do you think it Christian to permit a fellow-man, whether he be of your faith or not, to be tortured by savages?"

The contempt died in his eyes, and was replaced by a dreamy ecstasy.

"Death? What is death?" he replied. "And what matters the manner of death? Look at me, *monsieur*."

He fixed my gaze on each of his infirmities.

"I am but the wreck of a man. These poor, ignorant children of the wilderness have worked their will with me, and because it was best for me God permitted it. Torture never hurt any man. It is excellent for the spirit. It will benefit you. If you must die——"

His voice trailed into nothingness.

De Veulle interposed.

"Reverend father," he said, "I have a letter for you from Jacques Pourier. The

rivermen would like you to give them a mass Sunday. 'Tis a long——"

"Give me the letter," he cried eagerly. "Ah, that is good reading! Sometimes I despair for my sons—aye, more than for the miserable children of the wilderness. But now I know that a seed grows in the hearts of some that I have doubted. I shall go gladly."

He turned to depart, retraced his steps and fixed me with his gaze that seemed almost to scorch the skin.

"Remember what I have said, *monsieur*. Repent, and in the joy which will come to your soul you will rejoice in your agony. You will triumph in it. Your heart will be uplifted by it. Do I not know! I have suffered myself, a whole day at the stake once, and again for half a day."

DE VEULLE winked at Murray as the priest limped away.

"I must send Jacques a barrel of brandy for this," he remarked; "but our Cahnuagas would be in the sulks if they could not celebrate the Moon Feast, and they stand in such fear of the worthy Hyacinthe that they would never risk his wrath."

"The Moon Feast!" exclaimed Murray. "True, I had forgotten. Well, 'twill be an excellent introduction to the customs of the savages for our friend the intruder."

"'Twill make a great impression upon him," laughed de Veulle. "In fact, upon both of them. I have a surprize for our Iroquois captive as well. The Mistress of the False Faces awaits them."

"Then haste the dancing. Will you dine with us?"

De Vuelle hesitated, looked longingly toward the end of the clearing and more longingly toward the house within the stockade which housed Marjory.

"Aye," he said at last.

He murmured some orders to our guards, kicked me out of his path and sauntered through the gateway beside Murray.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MISTRESS OF THE FALSE FACES

WITH Bolling in active supervision and Tom hanging greedily on the flanks of the crowd we were hustled through the clearing, past the chapel and an intervening belt of woodland, into a second and much larger open space, crammed with bark lodges and huts.

"A big village," I gasped to Ta-wan-ne-ars as I dodged a blow at my head.

"'Tis the haunt of the Keepers," he replied. "See, there are Adirondacks and Shawendadies, as well as Cahnuagas. And those yonder are Hurons from north of the Lakes."

Bolling slashed him across the face with a strip of rawhide.

"Keep your breath for the torture-stake, you Iroquois cur!"

Ta-wan-ne-ars laughed at him.

"Red Jack can only fight with a whip," he said. "But when Ta-wan-ne-ars holds a tomahawk he runs."

Bolling struck at him again, but the restless horde of our tormenters pried the ruffian away as some new group pushed to the front to have a look at the prisoners and deal a blow or two. The throng became so dense that individual castigation was impossible, and we were tossed along like chips in a whirlpool.

In the end we were hurled, head over heels, into a natural amphitheater on the far side of the village, where a background of dark pines walled in a wide surface of hard-beaten, grassless ground. Two stakes stood ready, side by side, in the center, and our captors tore off our tattered clothes and lashed us to these with whoops of joy.

So we stood, naked and bound, ankle, knee, thigh, chest and armpit, whilst the sun, setting behind the village, flooded the inferno with mellow light and an army of fiends, men, women and children, pranced around us. For myself, I was dazed and fearful, but Ta-wan-ne-ars again showed me the better road.

"The Keepers scream like women," he shouted, in order to make himself heard. "Have you never taken captives before?"

They shrieked a medley of abuse at him, but once more he compelled their attention by force of will.

"Are you afraid to let Ta-wan-ne-ars and his brother run the gantlet?" he demanded.

A squat Cahnuaga chief grinned and shook his head.

"We do not want you to tire yourself," he answered. "You would not be able to last so long under torture."

"You are afraid of us," jeered Ta-wan-ne-ars. "You know that if we were free we

could escape from your whole tribe. You are women. We scorn you. Do you know what has become of the seven warriors Murray sent to pursue us on the Great Trail?"

Silence prevailed.

"Yes, there were seven of them," gibed Ta-wan-ne-ars. "And there were three of us. And where are they? I will tell you, Cahnuaga dogs, Adirondack dogs, Shawendadie dogs, Huron dogs. Crawl closer on your bellies while I tell you.

"Their scalps hang in the lodge of Ta-wan-ne-ars—seven scalps of the Keepers who could not fight against real men. The scalps of seven who called themselves warriors and who were so rash that they tried to fight three."

A howl of anger answered him.

"Begin the torment," yelled Bolling.

Tom drew a wicked knife and ran toward us, his yellow eyes aflame. But the squat Cahnuaga chief pushed him back.

"They are to be held for the Moon Feast," he proclaimed. "See, the Mistress comes. Stand back, brothers."

The sound of a monotonous wailing filled the air, joining itself with the evening breeze that sighed in the branches of the pines behind us. The crowd of savages drew away from us in sudden awe.

"Ga-go-sa Ho-nun-as-tase-ta," they muttered to each other.

"What do they say?" I asked Ta-wan-ne-ars.

His eyes did not leave a long bark building on the edge of the amphitheater.

"The Mistress of the False Faces is coming," he replied curtly.

"And who is she?"

"The priestess of their devilish brotherhood."

Out from the long bark building wound a curious sepentine procession of men in fantastic head-masks, who danced along with a halting step. As they danced they sang in the weird monotone we had first heard. And behind them all walked slowly one without a mask, a young girl of upright, supple figure, her long black hair cascading about her bare shoulders. Her arms were folded across her breast. She wore only the short ga-ka-ah, or kilt, with moccasins on her feet.

The breath whistled in Ta-wan-ne-ars' nostrils as his chest heaved against its bonds, and I turned my head in amazement. The expression on his face was compounded of such demoniac ferocity as I had seen there once before—that, and incredulous affection.

"What is it?" I cried.

He did not heed me. He did not even hear me. His whole being was focussed upon the girl whose ruddy bronze skin gleamed through the masses of her hair, whose shapely limbs ignored the beat of the music which governed the motions of her attendants.

The procession threaded its way at leisurely pace through the throngs of Indians, the girl walking as unconcernedly as if she were alone, her head held high, her eyes staring unseeingly before her.

"Ga-go-sa Ho-nun-as-tase-ta," murmured the savages, bowing low.

THE False Faces drew clear of the crowd, and danced solemnly around us. They paid us no attention, but when they had strung a complete circle around the stakes they faced inward and stopped, each one where he stood. For the first time the priestess, or Mistress as they called her, showed appreciation of her surroundings. She walked into the ring of masks and took up her position in front of us and between our stakes. She had not looked at us.

"Bow down, O my people," she chanted in a soft voice that was hauntingly sweet. "The False Faces are come amongst you, for it is again the period of our rule, and I, their Mistress, am to give you the word.

"Behold, the old moon is dying, and a new moon will be born again to us. The Powers of Evil, the Powers of Good and the Powers of Life are come together for the creation.

"Thrice fortunate are you that you recognize the rule of So-a-ka-ga-gwa,(*a*) for it brings you well-being, now and hereafter in the Land of Souls. Moreover it brings you captives, and your feast will be graced by their sufferings."

She turned to face us, arms flung wide in a graceful gesture. I thought that Ta-wan-ne-ars would burst the thongs that bound him. His powerful chest expanded until they stretched.

"Ga-ha-no!" he sobbed.

She faltered, and her hands locked together involuntarily between her breasts. A light of apprehension dawned in her eyes,

(*a*) The Moon—"the Light of the Night."

and for a moment I thought there was a trace of something more.

"Ga-ha-no!" pleaded Ta-wan-ne-ars.

But she regained the mastery of herself, and a mocking smile was his answer.

"They are no ordinary captives who will consecrate our feast," she continued her recitative.

"For one is a chief of the Iroquois and a warrior whose valor will resist the torment with pride. And the other is a white chief whose tender flesh will yield great delight and whose screams will give pleasure in our ears.

"Great is the triumph of the French chief de Veulle who is himself of our order. Great is the triumph of the brave Keepers who aided him. Great will be the future triumphs which So-a-ka-ga-gwa will give us in return for these sacrifices.

"O my people, this is the Night of Preparation. When An-da-ka-ga-gwa,(*a*) the husband of So-a-ka-ga-gwa, retires to rest to mourn his dead wife and make ready for the new one he will take tomorrow, you must retire to your lodges, and put out your fires, and let down your hair.

"For in the night the spirits of Ha-nis-ka-o-no-geh(*b*) will come to hold communion with their servants, the False Faces, and they will be hungry for your souls.

"And this is my warning to you, O my people. Heed the warning of the Ga-go-sa Ho-nun-as-tase-ta.

"And on the next night we will celebrate the Moon Feast, and I will dance for you the Moon Dance, and you shall dance the Torture Dance. And we will tear the hearts out of our enemies' breasts and grow strong from their sufferings."

She tossed her arms above her head, and the ring of False Faces burst into their high-pitched, nasal chant, and resumed the hesitant dancing step, their horrible masks wobbling from side to side, their painted bodies, naked save for the breech-clout, posturing in rhythm.

Their Mistress summoned the squat Cahnuaga chief, who seemed to be especially charged with our safe-keeping.

"You will unbind the captives from the stakes and place them in the Council-House," she said coldly. "If they are left out in the night, my brothers and sisters, the aids of Ha-ne-go-ate-geh will devour them. Feed them well, so that they will be strong to resist their torment, and tie them securely, and place a guard of crafty warriors over them. If they escape, you shall be the sacrifice at the Moon Feast."

The chief groveled before her.

"The commands of the Ga-go-sa Ho-nun-as-tase-ta shall be obeyed," he promised. "And I pray you will hold off the Spirits of Evil tonight, for sometimes they have been overbold and have snatched our people from their lodges."

"You are safe this time if you heed my words," she answered, "for you have secured a sacrifice which will be very pleasing to So-a-ka-ga-gwa and her friends."(*c*)

Then she came up quite close to us. She looked at me with frank curiosity, and particularly at my hair, which was brown. But most of her attention was bestowed upon Ta-wan-ne-ars.

"So you remember me?" she said in a hard voice and speaking in the Seneca dialect.

"I remember you, Ga-ha-no," he answered. "But I see you do not remember me."

"Oh, well enough," she returned. "But I am no longer an ordinary woman. I am the Mistress of the False Faces——"

"And of a French snake," he added bitterly.

Her eyes flashed.

"I am not a squaw, which is what I should have been had you and my stupid father had your way with me!"

Ta-wan-ne-ars shook his head sadly.

"Ta-wan-ne-ars has only one regret that he is to die," he said. "That is because he can not live to find your lost soul and return it to you."

"My lost soul?" she repeated.

"Yes."

She laughed harshly.

"Ta-wan-ne-ars is a child," she said. "His heart is turned to water. He talks of things which are not. My soul is here." She tapped her left breast.

"It does not matter, however, for the Ga-go-sa Ho-nun-as-tase-ta does not need a soul as other mortals do."

She turned on her heel abruptly, and followed the priests into the long bark house from which they had emerged.

(*a*) The Sun—"the Light of the Day."
(*b*) Hell—"the Dwelling-Place of Evil."

(*c*) For this and other conversations am indebted to Ta wan-ne-ars, who translated them for me afterward. H. O.

THE great mob of Indians melted away as soon as she left us. They all but fled in order to reach their lodges before sundown, and so hurried were our guards that in removing us from the stakes to the Council-House in the center of the village they forebore to beat or maltreat us.

In the Council-House they supplied us with a liberal meal of meat and vegetables. Then our bonds were replaced and we were covered with robes, whilst our guards cowered close to the fire in abject fear. They started at the slightest movement. Had we been able to stir hand or foot I think we might have won our freedom. But they had used care in binding us, and we lay inert as corpses.

"What do they fear?" I whispered to Ta-wan-ne-ars at length, desirous of hearing a friendly voice.

He roused himself from the gloom which enwrapped him.

"I do not know exactly, brother," he said. "These Cahnuagas are renegades from the Great League. This demon faith of theirs, with its False Faces and their Mistress, is a corruption of some of our ancient beliefs."

"But the Moon Feast they talk about," I persisted. "What is that?"

"It is some invention of their own," he replied. "Perhaps Murray or de Veulle helped them with it. My people know nothing of such things."

Through the bark walls of the house came the weird, minor melody which had attended the appearance of the Mistress of the False Faces, mingled with shrieks, groans, screams and yells. Our guards huddled closer together. They abandoned their weapons and covered their heads with blankets. A drum throbbed near by, and at intervals sounded the wailing chant of the masked priests and the thudding of dancing feet.

Once a woman's voice soared, shrill and sweet, above the bedlam of noises, and Ta-wan-ne-ars' face was contorted as if rats were gnawing at his vitals.

"Your grief is very great, brother," I said.

"It is," he answered.

"Be at ease," I begged him, "for sure 'tis no fault of yours."

"Of that Ta-wan-ne-ars can not be sure," he replied somberly.

He struggled into a sitting position, resting his back against one of the supports of the roof.

"Cahnuaga dogs," he said—and his voice was not the voice of a captive, but of a chief—"what is it that you fear?"

The squat chief allowed his nose to protrude from the blanket which completely covered him.

"The False Faces dance with the Evil Ones in preparation for the birth of So-a-ka-ga-gwa," he mumbled. "They are hungry for human meat."

"Who told you that this was so?"

"The False Faces."

"But how do you know that it is not a lie?"

The chief shook his head vigorously.

"Even the white chief Murray stays within doors when the False Faces dance," he said.

"And the other white dog—de Veulle?"

"He is one of them. . He was raised up by the Old Mistress when he lived amongst us before. It was he discovered the New Mistress."

Ta-wan-ne-ars sank down upon his back again.

"You fear shadows," he said contemptuously.

But the Cahnuagas were too demoralized to resent his taunts. The uproar outside increased in violence. Women's voices, some in dreadful protestation, some in eager ecstacy, joined in it. It was near, then at a distance, then returning. And occasionally that one shrill, sweet voice quelled the saturnalia and was lifted on a note of pagan exultation—only to be drowned in the thrumming of the drums.

Our fire dwindled and was rekindled. The night crept on toward the dawn. The monotony of the noises, the endless repetition, deadened the senses, and we slept. When I awakened, 'twas to see the daylight trickling through the smoke-hole in the roof. Ta-wan-ne-ars still slept beside me, the lines of his anguish hewn deep in his face. Our guards lay under their blankets, snoring lustily. The fire was dead. My bones and muscles ached from their confinement.

I regarded myself, naked, bruised, scarred, sprawled in this den of savages. A few months ago I had thought myself at the low ebb of my fortunes. The dungeons of the Tower and the headsman had awaited me. Now I faced death by torment in such horrid rites as my imagination could not

depict. I had fled to the New World to improve my lot—and the improvement was like to consist of an early exit to another world which optimists proclaimed a better one.

Somewhere in the sunshine a bird began to sing, and my captors yawned and sat up. The squat chief, his fears of the night gone, kicked Ta-wan-ne-ars awake.

"This is the day of the Moon Feast," he said. "You will soon clamor to die."

CHAPTER XIX

THE MOON FEAST

WE WERE kicked and harried through the village to the Dancing-Place; but a messenger stayed us at the last minute, and our guards flogged us back into the Council-House. We were fed perfunctorily and given water to drink, then left to our own devices whilst the guards played a gambling game with peach-stones. So the morning dragged by until the sun was beginning to decline toward the west and a second messenger disturbed the wrangling players.

We were yanked to our feet and pushed outside. Thousands of Indians lined the narrow, dirty streets between the bark houses and lodges. They greeted us with a silence so intent that it was as arresting as a shout. Not a finger was laid upon us, not a voice was raised. Yet the fierce anticipation which gleamed in every face was more threatening than definite gestures.

The guards hustled us along; and as we passed, the hordes of savages closed in behind us and flowed in a mighty, barbaric stream at our heels. Ahead of us opened the flat expanse of the Dancing-Place, with the two lonely stakes, flanked by piles of freshly gathered firewood, standing like portents of evil against the dark-green background of the pines which walled the rear of the amphitheater.

Ta-wan-ne-ars looked eagerly in every direction, but she whom he sought was not present nor were there visible any of her carrion crew of priests. Only the sinister faces of the negro, Tom, and Bolling, with his tangle of red hair, stirred recollections in that alien, hostile mass. They, too, were under the spell of the gathering, a spell which seemed to have for its object the compression of the combined malevolence of the ferocious throng.

Our guards bound us to the stakes as they had the day before, and Ta-wan-ne-ars, with a significant glance at me, rallied them with the searching wit of his race.

"The Cahnuaga dogs are not used to taking captives," he commented. "They do not know what to do unless their white masters tell them. They are women. They should be tilling the field. They do not know how to torment real warriors."

When they were passing the thongs under his arm-pits, the Seneca bent forward and fastened his teeth in the forearm of an incautious guard. The blood spurted and the man yelped with pain. Ta-wan-ne-ars laughed.

"Unarmed and bound, yet I can hurt you," he cried. "Truly, you are women. The warriors of the Great League scorn you."

Strangely enough, they made no retaliation upon him; but, having securely fastened us to the stakes, withdrew and stood somewhat apart from the encompassing crowds.

The silence continued for more than an hour, when a lane was opened opposite to us and Murray and de Veulle sauntered forward.

"I trust you have fared well, Master Juggins—I beg pardon, Master Ormerod?" remarked Murray urbanely. "No discomforts? Enough to eat and sufficient attention?"

I profited by Ta-wan-ne-ars' example, ant thrust for the one weak spot in the man's armor of egotism.

"You do proclaim yourself for what you are," I answered him steadily. "Sure, no man of breeding would descend to the depths you reach. I do assure you, fellow, if you ever return to civilization and attempt to mix with the gently bred, your plow-boy origin will out."

His face was suffused to a purple hue.

" 'Sdeath!" he rasped. "Sir, know you not I am of the Murrays of Cobbielaw? I quarter my arms with the Kieths! I have a right to carry the Bleeding Heart on my shield! I ——"

"No, no," I interrupted. " 'Tis easy for you to claim here in the wilderness, but the humblest cadet of the house of Douglas would disprove you. 'Tis the bleeding hearts of your enemies you bear. You

tear them out like the savages and devour them to make medicine. You are a foul, cowardly half-breed, more red than white."

"I have the blood of kings in my veins!" he shouted in the words he had used on board ship.

I laughed in his face, and Ta-wan-ne-ars joined in. Murray stormed in vain. I heaped ridicule upon his claims until cynical amusement appeared in de Veulle's eyes, for the man's conceit was fantastic.

"My mother was a Home of—" he asserted finally.

"I dislike to speak ill of any woman," I cut him off; "and certes I could weep for the grief of her who conceived you, whatever she was. But I make no doubt she was some Huron squaw."

His face went dead white.

"I was pleaded with overlong to spare you," he said in accents so cold that the words fell like icicles breaking from the rocks. "I am glad I resisted."

"You were never tempted to yield," I assured him.

"I shall give orders now that your torments be the most ingenious our savages can devise," he returned.

"I doubt it not," I said.

"You will die in much agony," he continued placidly. "Nobody will ever know of your taunts. And I—" his vanity flared up again—— "I shall die a marquis and a duke."

"And a convicted criminal," I added.

He murmured something to de Veulle and walked away, the savages moving from his path as if he were death in person, for indeed they feared him, more even than they feared Black Robe and their own accursed priests. He was the master of all.

"SO YOU are to be chief torturer, *monsieur le chevalier?*" I remarked to de Veulle.

"Even so," he agreed.

"There could not be a fitter," I said sympathetically.

"I thank you for your appreciation," he replied.

"Yes," I reflected aloud, "unless it be at small-swords or in fair fight with any weapon, you should make a fair executioner. 'Twas an excellent butcher was spoiled in the modeling of you."

But de Veulle refused to be annoyed.

"Keep up your spirits by all means," he said—and in sober truth, I talked as much for that as to plague my enemies. "You will need them anon. I have instructed the savages to give you the long torment. You will be still alive this time tomorrow. Think of it! Your Iroquois friend knows what that means—an eyeless, bloody wreck of a man, begging to be slain! Ah, well, you would blunder in my way."

"I thought it was Murray's way," I answered.

"'Tis all one. And after all, as you must know, Murray is no more than a pawn in our plans."

"He would enjoy hearing you say so."

"He never will—and you will not be able to tell him when next you see, or rather, hear him."

He beckoned to the Cahnuaga chief.

"Let loose your people," he ordered, and stepped back.

The Cahnuaga put his hand to his mouth, and the high-pitched, soaring notes of the war-whoop resounded through the air. And as if one directing center animated them all the thousands of savages closed in on us, yelling and shrieking, weapons menacing, feet pounding the measures of some clumsy dance.

They swirled round and round us, those who could get nearest dashing up to the stakes to mock at us or threaten us with words and weapons. Nobody touched us, but the strain of constantly expecting physical assault was nerve-racking. Ta-wan-ne-ars smiled serenely at them all, and when he could make himself heard, returned their threats.

This continued for a long time. Twilight was at hand before they dropped back, and a select band of young warriors began to exhibit their skill with bow and arrow, knife and tomahawk. Arrows were shot between our arms and bodies; tomahawks hurtled into the posts beside our ears; knives were hurled from the far side of the open space, so closely aimed that their points shaved our naked ribs. Once in a while we were scratched; the handle of a tomahawk, poorly thrown, raised a bump on my forehead. And de Veulle, squatting on the ground with a knot of chiefs, applauded the show.

It went on and on. New forms of mental torture were constantly devised. Darkness closed down, and the fires beside the stakes were lighted. I was in a daze. I

had ceased to feel fear or misgiving. I was conscious only of a great weariness and thirst. The clamor that dinned in my ears, the weapons that jarred the post at intervals, the wild figures that leaped in the firelight—all combined in a weird blur that gradually became a coherent picture as my mind recalled for the second time the dying words of the Cahnuaga in the glade by the Great Trail.

" 'Be sure that whatever you do you cannot equal the ingenuity of the Ga-go-sa.' "

Hark! What was that eery sound that stole through the shadows, a sliding, minor chant that wailed and died away?

But the picture went on shaping itself in my mind.

" 'I seem to see pictures in the firelight of a stake, and a building with a tower and a bell that rings, and many of the Ga-go-sa dance around you, and your pain is very great.' "

Yes, there was the picture: our stakes, side by side, two instead of one; the fires that roared and flamed, the figures that danced and yelled; and beyond, across the village, the tower with the "bell that rings," looming above the trees. And as I looked, the sickle moon, silvery-bright and sharp as a sword, protruded its upper horn over the wooden tower.

Of a sudden I realized that the shouting had died down. The prancing figures were at rest. But into the circle of firelight swayed the hideous column of False Faces, their masks of monstrous birds and beasts and reptiles seeming alive with horrid purpose in the shifting gloom, their feet moving harmoniously in the hesitant step of the dance, their voices united in the monotonous music of their chant.

They strung a circle, as they had done the day before, and halted, heads wabbling this way and that. There was a brief pause, and I noticed de Veulle, risen to his feet and staring intently behind me, where the wall of pines made a perfect background for the spectacle. A sigh burst from the half-seen throngs of savages.

"Ga-go-sa Ho-nun-as-tase-ta!"

I craned my neck, and as well as the thongs permitted me peered around the stake to which I was lashed. A white figure flitted from the protection of the trees and glided toward us. The False Faces started a queer, rhythmic air, accompanied by gently throbbing drums. The figure commenced to dance, arms wide, hair floating free. Beside me Ta-wan-nears choked back a groan of hate and love and fought fruitlessly against the rawhide thongs.

'TWAS Ga-ha-no. She danced forward, passing between our stakes and into the open arena which was delimited by the vague, crouching forms of the False Faces. She wore again her ceremonial uniform, the kilt and moccasins; but this time they were white, fashioned of skins taken from the bellies of young does. Her limbs and body, too, were coated with some white substance that made her gleam like a delicate marble statue when she postured in the flickering radiance of the fires. Her hair floated about her like a black mist, first concealing, then revealing, the perfect, swelling lines of her figure.

She tossed up her arms in a curving gesture toward the moon, riding low above the treetops. The music of the attendant priests swung into a faster measure, the pulsing of the drums became subtly disturbing, commanding.

"O So-a-ka-ga-gwa," she cried, "I, your servant, the Mistress of the False Faces, begin now the Moon Feast we make in your honor!"

She resumed her dance, but 'twas very different from the graceful, pleasing steps she had first used. I know not how to describe it, save perhaps that 'twas like the music, provocative, appealing to the basest instincts in man, indecent with a peculiarly attractive indecency. It was, I think, the dance of creation, of the impulse of life, one of the oldest and in its perverted way one of the truest dances which man ever devised. It could only be danced by a savage people, primitive and unashamed.

You could feel its influence upon the bystanders, the thousands who stood or crouched or sat around the curve of the amphitheater beyond the lines of False Faces. You could feel their rising emotion; the instincts, normally half-tamed, that awakened in them; the cravings that slowly began to dominate them. You could hear the catching breaths, the yelps of satisfaction, the growing spirit of license, of utter savagery.

Faster went the measure of the dance. Faster whirled the glistening white figure.

Her hair streamed behind her; her moccasins barely touched the ground; her body was contorted with supple precision.

Now she danced before us, her eyes burning with mockery—I know not what—of Ta-wan-ne-ars: Now she spun around the open space in a series of intricate steps and posturings.

The music worked up to a crescendo, the drums thudding with furious speed. Ga-ha-no leaped high in air and raised her arms toward the moon, whose sickle shape was no whiter or fairer than she.

The chant stopped in the middle of a note, and as her feet touched the ground again she ran lightly across the amphitheater and threw herself into de Veulle's arms. He tossed her upon his shoulder.

"The Moon Feast is open. O my people," she called back as he disappeared with her into the shadows.

All those thousands of people went mad. The Dancing-Place became a wild tumult of naked savages, men and women, leaping in groups and couples to the renewed music of the False Faces. Decency and restraint were cast aside.

Tom and Bolling rolled in barrels of rum, which were upended and consumed as rapidly as the heads were knocked off; and the raw spirits combined with the hellish chant and the suggestive throbbing of the drums to stimulate afresh the passions which Ga-ha-no's dancing had aroused.(*a*)

At first they paid no attention to us. They were preoccupied with the extraordinary hysteria which had gripped them. They apostrophized the moon. The women flung themselves upon the False Faces, for it was deemed an honor to receive the attentions of these priests of evil. The men worked themselves into an excess of debauchery. Groups formed and dissolved with amazing rapidity. Individuals, wearying of each other, ran hither and thither, seeking partners who were more pleasing or attractive to them.

But at last a portion of the drunken mob turned upon us. An old woman with wispy gray hair and shrunken breasts beat Ta-wan-ne-ars on the flank with a smoldering brand. Bolling, whatever of man there was in him smothered under the brutishness the rum had excited, carefully inserted a pine-splinter in the quick of my fingernail. I gritted my teeth to force back the scream of agony, and managed to laugh—how, I do not know—when he set it alight.

"The brother of Ta-wan-ne-ars is a great warrior," proclaimed my comrade, swift to come to my help. "Red Jack and his friends can not hurt Ormerod. We laugh at you."

Bolling ripped out his knife and staggered toward the Seneca's stake.

"I'll make you laugh," he spat wickedly. "I'll carve your mouth wider so you can laugh plenty when we begin on you in earnest. Think this has been anything? We——"

A yell of mingled fear and laughter interrupted him. False Faces and warriors, women as well as men, were pointing toward the background of the pines.

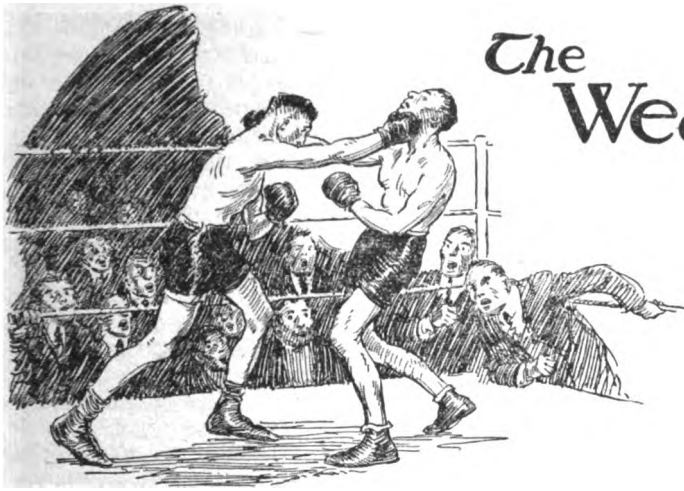
"Ne-e-ar-go-ye, the Bear, is come to play with us," they cried.

And others prostrated themselves and called—

"*Qua*, Ga-go-sa Ho-nun-as-tase-ta!"

TO BE CONTINUED

(*a*) Decency forbids a detailed description of these horrible rites.—H. O.



The Weak Spot

by G. A. WELLS

Author of "Clothes and the Man," "The Devil a Man Would Be," etc.

FAT Ike Trimble chewed savagely at an unlighted cigar and glared out a window of his office. "Chick" Ward, his lieutenant and man of affairs, sat on the desk reading a telegram dated that morning.

"Challenge declined," he read. "Your man not in line for match with Nixon. Match Lynn with McCrady and will take on winner. Dunn."

"Well, that's settled," said Ward, lighting a cigaret.

"It ain't settled!" growled Trimble, turning from the window. "I'm gonna get that match with McCrady for Tommy."

"You say you are?"

"I'll say I am."

"Nix, Ike."

Trimble swore and flung his frayed cigar into a handy cuspidor, but immediately put another between his teeth.

"Why won't I?" he snapped.

"Because McCrady's retired and——"

"Yeah! I know all about them retired birds. They retire till somebody hangs up a fat purse for 'em to snap at."

"I'll eat a hatful of mud if you get that match with McCrady," Ward volunteered.

"Money does it," returned Trimble confidently.

"But McCrady promised his wife that——"

"Never mind about McCrady's promises," broke in Trimble impatiently. "I know a few things about Mister Kid McCrady. When he got married he plastered himself all over with debts. Bought a house over there in Mercer and furnished it complete on nothin' but nerve. He needs the money, that bird. He'll slip back in ring harness quick enough when we show him the color of our coin."

"I wouldn't swear to it," said Ward.

"He's got to," declared Trimble. "Tommy's gotta have that match with McCrady or he marks time. You see what Dunn says in that telegram."

"Ike, what's Dunn's idea wanting Tommy to beat McCrady before he'll give him a match with Nixon?" asked Ward.

"That's plain enough," answered the other. "You see, Chick, Nixon's doin' a few weeks in vaudeville just now an' him an' Dunn's pullin' down some tall money. Dunn knows mighty well nobody'd give a plugged jit to see Jack Nixon if he wasn't lightweight champ, so to stall for time he's switchin' us off on McCrady."

"Nixon's a big four-flusher in my opinion," observed Ward. "He beat Rooney out of the championship by the skin of his teeth; fouled him out of it, so it's been said."

"No matter, Chick, Nixon's the champ, an' the champ does the dictatin'. If Marty Dunn says Tommy's gotta beat McCrady before he can go on with Nixon, why Tommy's gotta beat McCrady, that's all."

"You take it from me, Ike, we got to go some to get a match from Kid McCrady."

"I ain't takin' nothin' from you," rejoined Trimble. "I'll say I ain't. McCrady's gotta fight whether he wants to or not."

"Oh, I guess the Kid's willing enough, Ike, only his wife——"

"There you go luggin' in his wife again," cut in Trimble. "I've been settin' in this fight game too long not to know how it's played. Say, ain't McCrady workin' over there somewhere in Mercer, Chick?"

"At the Union Panel Company."

"All right, you chase yourself over there an' tell him we want six rounds at a hundred an' thirty-five or less at the North Side Athletic Club's plant thirty days after date of contract. Tommy can put him out inside of six rounds. Tell the Kid we'll post a guarantee of three thousand beans the minute he signs. Winner takes sixty per cent. of the net gate. If he sticks offer him eighty per cent."

"Thirty days ain't very much training time, Ike; he'll buck on that."

"Son, do I look feeble minded? This McCrady ain't no bum preliminary fighter; he's one of the niftiest little lightweights ever stuck a fist in a glove. Between you an' me, Chick, the Kid could put both Nixon an' Lynn out if he was top-notch. I'll give him credit. If his wife hadn't pulled him outta the ring he'd of got Nixon sure."

"I believe it," agreed Ward.

"I bet Dunn was tickled sick when McCrady retired. You see, Chick, I gotta hunch Dunn figgers McCrady's wife won't let him fight, thereby he puts Tommy in a hole. In case we do get a match with McCrady, though, Dunn still figgers McCrady'll beat Tommy. He thinks he's got us goin' an' comin', see? An' that's good dope, Chick, an' it's cause why I don't want McCrady top-notch when him an' Tommy gets together. The Kid's been outta regular trainin' about a year now an' I calculate he's gone kinda stale."

"Then your calculator's on the blink, Ike," Ward said. "I went over to Mercer to see a basket-ball game at the Calumet Club a few nights ago. McCrady plays with the Calumet team and I had a good look at him, and he didn't look stale to me. He boxes around the club with some of the boys, I understand. Give him two months and he'll be as good as ever."

"Two months, ——!" snorted Trimble. "I said thirty days. If you have to give ground anywhere make it money. Money ain't no object to us right now; what we want's a match between McCrady and Tommy, an' we'll give our shirts to get it. Thirty days trainin' time, Chick, an' not a day longer. I'm playin' this safe."

"You sure are," commented Ward with a wide grin. "You're playing it so safe you're not going to play at all. Better let me make that guarantee five thousand instead of three, Ike."

"All right, shoot the five," assented Trimble. "I'm willin' to pay for what I get. An' play up the purse strong, Chick. The North Side plant seats four thousand an' we oughta take in at least twenty thousand beans. Promoter takes twenty per cent. of the gross for overhead an' the rest goes to the purse. Now toddle along over there to Mercer an' see what you can do with McCrady. Here, better take a little change in case you need it."

He handed Ward five one-hundred-dollar bills. Ward shoved them in his pocket and went out and caught an interurban car across the river to Mercer, lying in another state.

IT WAS the noon hour when Chick Ward arrived at the plant of the Union Panel Company, and he found Kid McCrady standing at the main gate with a toothpick between his teeth.

McCrady was a trim-built young man of twenty-four with an open countenance and steel-blue eyes that looked at one as straight as a needle. Sad to relate, but none the less is it true that the prize ring has laid malign hands upon many fighters. It would seem that there is about the squared circle an atmosphere that tends to breed in its votaries a moral carelessness.

But Kid McCrady had not been contaminated by this atmosphere; he had remained clean in the things that count most—morally, mentally and physically. Never in his life had he fought a crooked fight or loaned himself to questionable tactics. His scutcheon was unblotted.

He and Chick Ward had met on frequent occasions, and while they were more than acquaintances they were yet a little less than friends. McCrady greeted the other man cordially.

"What brings you to this side of the river, Chick?" he inquired, shaking Ward's hand. "Looking for a job here?"

"No job today, Kid," laughed Ward. "I came over expressly to see you. Have a cigaret?"

McCrady declined the proffered cigaret case and looked at Ward with not a little suspicion.

"What might you want to see me about, Chick?" he asked.

"Trimble sent me over," answered Ward.

"And Trimble is Tommy Lynn's manager. The plot thickens. Trimble knows I've retired, doesn't he?"

"Certainly, but he figures there's always a chance that a man will come back if——"

"Not me, Chick," interrupted McCrady. "I'm out of the fight game for keeps. It's a promise to the wife when we got married and she wouldn't stand for me fighting again. But if it's only a benefit for one of the boys possibly——"

He stopped and looked at Ward for further information.

"It's not a benefit, Kid," said Ward. "We want you for a principal in an elimination. The winner takes on Nixon. We'll make it worth your while, Kid."

"I'm out of the game," repeated McCrady, but the wistful note in his voice was not lost upon Ward. "But let's hear what you've got to say, Chick. I like to talk fight, anyway."

"It's like this," Ward said. "Ike wired Dunn, Nixon's manager, asking for a match for Lynn. Dunn wires back Lynn'll have to beat you before he'll consider our challenge. You see where that puts Lynn; if you won't meet him he ain't got the ghost of a show to get on with Nixon."

A cold glint flashed into Kid McCrady's eyes.

"Chick, do you fellows figure that I'd lay down to Lynn so he could get his match with Nixon?" he asked.

"No, no, Kid," Ward hastened to say. "Don't get me wrong. You know me well enough to know that I don't play that kind of game. If you give Lynn a match he takes his chances of beating you. It's a straight deal. Tommy thinks he can beat you, Kid."

"And what if I beat him?"

Ward made an expressive gesture with his shoulders and said nothing.

McCrady fixed his gaze upon a slowly drifting cloud in the sky. Ward had touched his tenderest spot. Banned though he was by wifely edict from active participation in the affairs of the ring, Kid McCrady had never for a moment lost interest in the fight game. He followed its course through the newspapers—poor enough sop—and was as much interested as at any time during his active career.

Yet he was constantly obsessed with a heartfelt longing for the ring—for the old life of padded fists, of canvas covered floor pungent with the odor of resin, the swirl of tobacco smoke, the glare of the lights, the faces of the fight-mad fans, the frenzied yelling and hooting, the smell of hot sweat in the nostrils, the antics of the nimble referee, the thud of hard fists against hard body, the agile ducking and dodging, the feinting and clinching.

That vision haunted him incessantly. It was indeed a seductive lure and often enough Kid McCrady was forced to fight the good fight in order to remain true to his promise to his wife.

And now with Chick Ward's generous offer the vision came before McCrady's mental eyes more vividly than ever before.

Ward was watching the little fighter's face narrowly. He saw that hunger and yearning there, and he also saw the indecision. The big moment had arrived and he decided to land his fish with a single cast.

"Kid, the minute you put your John Henry to a contract to meet Lynn we'll post a guarantee of five thousand dollars," he said. "Furthermore, the winner takes eighty per cent. of the net gate. That means ten thousand dollars or more. That's a whopping lot of money, Kid."

McCrady gulped. Ten thousand dollars was indeed a whopping lot of money to a man who was up to his neck in debt. And he had the opportunity to earn that amount of money in not more than half an hour's actual work. To boot, he could earn it at work he loved better than any other form of work he knew about. It was beyond him to calculate in his mind how many dreary years he would have to work at the panel factory before he could earn and save ten thousand dollars. He gulped again.

He visualized that sum of money in his possession, his debts paid, a little luxury here and there and Kitty and himself really well-started in life.

"What are the conditions, Chick?" he asked in a thick voice.

"Six rounds at one-thirty-five or less at the North Side Plant, fight thirty days after contract."

It was an odd glance that the little fighter gave his tempter.

"Why the rush?" he asked.

"The sooner the quicker, Kid," replied Ward helplessly. "You're pretty fit as you stand; thirty days is just about enough to put an edge on you."

"Thirty days training time don't look good to me," said McCrady.

Ward mentally cursed Trimble for holding him down to thirty days training time. He felt certain that had he been authorized to extend the time to, say, sixty days he could have landed the contract without further effort. But Trimble's word was law.

"Well, you get five thousand no matter how it goes, Kid," he said wheedlingly. "If you're afraid you'll lose to Lynn we'll split the purse sixty-forty; that gives the loser a bigger divvy."

ONCE more McCrady fixed his eyes upon the drifting cloud. He was offered five thousand dollars simply for getting into the ring with Tommy Lynn. That sum would no doubt be included in his end of the purse, but even if he drew the loser's end of forty per cent. of the purse the amount would be more than five thousand dollars; it would be nearer six thousand, provided the North Side arena got its full seating capacity and the admissions were graded right. He owed more than five thousand dollars. No matter, then, how the fight turned out he would draw down enough money to wipe out his debts at a swoop.

"I might be able to get ready in thirty days," he said tentatively.

Ward's heart gave a hopeful bound. He fairly snatched from his pocket the five bills Trimble had given him and held them out to McCrady. He knew that the sight of actual cash then would have more effect upon McCrady than the mere promise of a check later.

"To bind a gentleman's agreement, Kid," he coaxed. "We'll sign articles at the Calumet Club tonight at eight o'clock and post a check for the balance of the guarantee. Coming in, Kid?"

McCrady looked at the money with eager eyes and his hand itched to take it. But at that precise moment occurred one of those incidents that are ever present in the affairs of men to change the courses of lives and fortunes. A deep-throated whistle growled its warning to return to work for the afternoon shift. And with the growling of that whistle the expression on Kid McCrady's face suddenly changed.

"I'll have to pass it up, Chick," he sighed. "I'd like mighty well to go on with Lynn. I need the money and I need it bad. But—well, I can't that's all. The wife wouldn't stand for it."

"Take a little time to think it over, Kid; a week, say," pleaded Ward.

McCrady shook his head and without another word turned and strode away through the gate. Ward watched him with disappointed eyes until he disappeared in one of the long buildings not far away, then he replaced the five bills in his pocket and walked away.

BOTH Trimble and Tommy Lynn were waiting for him when Ward got back to Trimble's office to report.

"Well?" said Trimble, tipping his chair out from the wall.

"Nothing doing, Ike," said Ward.

Trimble bit off an oath and Lynn scowled at Ward.

"Didja see him?"

"Sure."

"An' he turned you down?" asked Trimble incredulously.

"Yep."

"——!" exploded Trimble.

He sprang to his feet, kicked the chair against the wall and began to stride the floor, muttering curses.

"Now don't jump on me, Ike," warned Ward truculently. "I did the best I could."

"I'll say you done the best you could, an' that's about as good as a baby could of done," sneered Trimble wrathfully.

"It was your fault I didn't land him," Ward defended himself.

Trimble shot Tommy Lynn a meaning glance.

"Didn't I say he'd try to lay it on me if he fell down, Tommy?" said Trimble. "I'll say I did. How you figger it was my fault, eh?"

"He bucked on only thirty days training time, just as I said he would," explained Ward. "If you had given me more elbow room there I could have——"

"Yeah! I bet you could," snapped Trimble sarcastically. "I oughta give you lief to guarantee him we'd tie Tommy's hands behind him an' blindfold him an' shoot some dope in him before he went in

the ring. You're a fine li'l go-getter, you are. Well, I guess you see where you stand, Tommy. You'll tarry right where you are with the would-be's."

"I ain't tarryin' nowhere, Ike," rejoined Lynn warmly. "I gotta have that match with McCrady an' it's up to you to get it for me."

"How'll I get it for you, that's what I'm askin' you?"

"That's your business; you're my manager, ain't you? McCrady's got a weak spot somewhere an' it's up to you to locate it. Go on an' get busy with your bean, Mister Trimble."

Trimble said nothing more, but shifted his unlighted cigar to a new angle in his mouth and again took up his striding the floor, his head applied to the task of finding ways and means of forcing Kid McCrady to fight.

Some time later he brought the fist of one hand smashing down into the palm of the other.

"McCrady fights, boys!" he cried triumphantly. "I'll say he fights, else he ain't the kinda man I thinks he is. Listen to uncle."

He talked rapidly and enthusiastically for ten or fifteen minutes, and as he unfolded his plan for forcing McCrady to fight Tommy Lynn's face brightened hopefully. On the other hand Chick Ward's face showed a deep disgust.

"Now whadda you think of that, lads?" concluded Trimble.

"You got that bird sized up just about right, Ike," approved Lynn without hesitation. "He'll fall for that like a ton of brick."

"How about you, young fella?" Trimble addressed Ward.

"That's about the rottenest trick I ever heard of in the fight game," replied Ward acidly.

"Whadda you mean, rotten trick?" bristled Lynn.

"You know what I mean," answered Ward.

"We gotta get that match, ain't we?" demanded Trimble.

"That ain't no way to get it."

"Aw, you make me sick! If Kid McCrady turns down a straight, honest offer we gotta get him any way we can. We ain't gonna let him stand in our way gettin' on with Nixon. I'll say we ain't, eh. Tommy?"

"All right, go ahead; but I'm not traveling that road myself," Ward said.

"Don't be a baby, Chick," put in Lynn palliatingly. "You'll get yours, won't you?"

"I won't get it that way!" cried Ward hotly. "I've got a wife of my own and I know how I'd feel about it. You're both dirty curs!"

Lynn was across the room at a bound and thrust his tensely drawn face within an inch of Ward's.

"Lemme tell you somethin', you!" he jerked out. "If you wanna play a kid's game go play with kids, an' if you wanna play with men you gotta play men's games. See?"

"Men!"

Ward slurred the word; flung it at them from between clenched teeth and made it the equivalent of an oath. Lynn swung for his jaw. He ducked the blow, then they went at it hammer and tongs all over the office. Trimble swore and plunged between them.

"None of that in my shop!" he bellowed. "Break, you pups!"

At the cost of several stiff jolts on his own person he got them parted and they stood panting and glowering fiercely at each other.

"Whadda you say, sonny?" said Trimble, confronting Ward. "You for or against us?"

"I'm against you heart and soul when you try to pull a stunt like that you propose, Trimble," Ward promptly replied.

The fat promoter's lip curled and he jerked a thumb toward the door.

"But lemme have my five hundred before you go," he said.

Ward took the five bills from his pocket and hurled them at Trimble.

"Now mooch!" snapped Lynn.

Ward made no reply, but the glance he gave them was eloquent enough. He went out and banged the door behind him.

CHICK WARD'S first impulse was to return to Mercer and warn Kid McCrady of the plot Trimble and Lynn were hatching against him, and which was due to come to a head that evening at a basket-ball game at the Calumet Club. As McCrady played on the Calumet team he was certain to be there. On second thought, however, Ward decided to keep hands off; it was none of his affair.

None the less, a keen curiosity impelled him to be on hand at the Calumet Club that evening to see how the forthcoming business passed off. The big hall on the second floor of the club-house was pretty well filled when he arrived about seven-thirty. He found a seat near the door and divided his attention between the game and the door, watching for the entrance of Trimble and Lynn. That they were not in the hall Ward had previously ascertained by a careful inspection of the audience.

But the game was over and the spectators had filed out and down the stairs, leaving two or three members of the Calumet team and several others standing at the far end of the hall, McCrady being one of them, before Lynn and Trimble put in their appearance. After a malevolent look at Ward, who had not yet removed from his seat near the door, the newcomers ignored him.

"Hey, McCrady!" Trimble hailed when he and Lynn had whispered together a few moments.

McCrady turned from his companions at the other end of the hall, saw Trimble beckoning him, and came forward.

"Welcome to our city," Ward heard him greet the two men genially when he came up to them.

Trimble gave him a curt nod, then stepped aside to make way for Lynn, who looked McCrady up and down insolently a moment or so before he spoke.

"McCrady, your hands are dirty," Lynn then said in a low voice.

Instinctively McCrady's eyes hardened and his body stiffened. He divined something of a sinister nature in Lynn's words but could not fathom it.

"What might you mean by that?" he asked.

"Don't get me, eh?" the other laughed. "They do say a certain party was pretty free with herself before a certain other party picked her up off the streets, Kid McCrady."

The dullest man could have understood. McCrady's body jerked as if under the impact of a violent electric shock and his teeth came together with an audible click.

He shot his right fist straight for Lynn's face, but Lynn was on his guard and avoided it. He countered with a hard left jab to McCrady's ribs. McCrady went down like a lump of lead and lay gasping.

"Beat it, Tommy," whispered Trimble.

It was not the fat promoter's intention to have the two men fight it out then and there. He gave Lynn a push toward the door and followed him, and by the time the others had come running from the far end of the hall to see what the trouble was they were gone.

McCrady's companions helped him to his feet and down the stairs to a dressing room, getting no answers to their queries regarding the affair. Ward followed and noted into which room McCrady was taken. When the others came out and went away five minutes later he approached the door, which stood open.

McCrady was sitting on a chair with his head between his hands, but when Ward's shadow darkened the doorway he looked up. The next instant he was on his feet and lunged viciously at Ward. He lashed out at Ward with his fist, but Ward caught him and held him helpless. McCrady had not yet fully recovered from the effects of Lynn's blow and was comparatively easy to handle. No one was near to interfere.

"Now you hold on a minute, Kid McCrady," Ward said, holding McCrady firmly. "I want to talk to you about this business. Aw, listen, Kid; it's to your advantage to listen."

At that McCrady subsided and Ward released him.

"Spit it out and beat it before I show you what I'm going to do to Tommy Lynn!" McCrady snarled. "I guess you're a party to that contemptible trick."

"Not on your life, Kid, and that's what I want to talk to you about," replied Ward. "Anybody could see that it was all planned. I guess you know what it was done for, Kid. Trimble's trying to make you go on with Tommy."

"He made good!" said McCrady savagely. "I'll go on with Lynn, all right, and when I do—Say, you see Trimble right away and tell him I'll sign articles with Lynn here tomorrow night at seven o'clock."

"Now don't hurry yourself, Kid. You can do Trimble and Lynn a lot more harm by passing 'em up. That spoils Lynn's chance getting a match with Nixon. Pass 'em up, Kid, that's my advice to you."

"I'll fight him," returned McCrady doggedly. "They can't put over anything like that and get off clean. You were there; you heard what Lynn said. What would you do if he'd said that to you?"

"Well, I guess I'd feel like you do about

it, Kid," confessed Ward. "But all the same you——"

"You go tell your boss to bring Lynn over here at seven tomorrow night if he wants a fight out of me," broke in McCrady.

"Whose boss? Not mine, Kid. I'm off Trimble and that other dirty little snipe. That business was too raw for me. I told 'em so and Trimble cursed me and Lynn tried to beat me up. I'm done with 'em."

McCrady studied Ward's face narrowly. He saw nothing there that would indicate that Ward was telling other than the truth.

"Sure enough, Ward?" he said.

"I'll take my oath on it," Ward answered.

"All right, you see Trimble for me, anyhow, Chick. Tell him I'll accept the terms he offered through you this afternoon."

"Remember, Kid, he's only giving you thirty days training time," cautioned the other. "He's trying to flim-flam you there."

"That's all right; we'll see who gets flim-flammed," replied McCrady stubbornly. "The sooner I get at Lynn the better it suits me. You tell Ike Trimble to bring his dog here at seven tomorrow night. And if you don't mind, Chick, you come over and witness for me. Will you?"

"Sure, Kid, if you want it," consented Ward.

WEDNESDAY evening at seven o'clock at the Calumet Club Kid McCrady and Tommy Lynn signed articles to fight six rounds at one hundred and thirty-five pounds or less thirty days after date of contract, the winner to take eight per cent. of the net gate receipts. Trimble knew that he had McCrady cinched and saw no need of mentioning a guarantee. Nor did McCrady insist upon a guarantee.

Ward witnessed for McCrady and Trimble for Lynn, and while the four men were together it was as much as McCrady could do to restrain himself jumping Lynn then and there. The contract signed he hurried away, while Trimble licked his fat lips and gave Tommy Lynn a sly wink.

The following morning while Kitty McCrady waited for the coffee to boil she sat down in the kitchen to glance over the morning paper. An announcement flung clear across the top of the sporting page in big, black type caught her eye:

BEST CARD IN YEARS SLATED FOR THE NORTH SIDE ATHLETIC CLUB

In smaller sub-headings below, she read:

Kid McCrady Comes from Retirement. Signs Articles to Meet Tommy Lynn. Winner Likely Challenge Nixon, Lightweight Champion. Said to be Grudge Fight.

A little gasp escaped Kitty McCrady's lips. In bewilderment she read on.

In a brief statement given out last evening Ike Trimble, the well-known fight promoter and sporting man, announced that he had signed Kid McCrady and Tommy Lynn, both local boys, to meet in a six-round bout May 12 at the North Side Athletic Club's plant at Midway at weights of one hundred and thirty-five pounds or less ringside.

It will be remembered that some time ago McCrady, who is at present living in Mercer, our sister city across the river, married Miss Kathleen Galliver of that place, and announced his permanent retirement——

Kitty McCrady read no further. The paper slipped from her hands and fell open on the floor at her feet. When Kid McCrady came into the kitchen several minutes later he found his wife sitting motionless in a chair staring blankly at the wall. The bold headlines of the paper leaped up at him.

Kid McCrady had not yet informed his wife of the agreement to fight Lynn; he had put it off to the last moment, fully intending to tell her that very morning. And now that she knew his heart sank. He had faced hundreds of fighters in the ring; men whose sole ambition at the moment had been to batter him into unconsciousness. Of these he had not been afraid. Now before his wife, a weak woman, his knees wabbled.

Several long moments passed before he could muster sufficient courage to wrest his gaze from the tell-tale paper and look at his wife. She was looking at him and her eyes were hot with accusation and condemnation.

"Is that true, Charlie?" she asked in a voice that quavered.

He nodded and saw her body shiver as if from a sudden cold blast. Without another word, however, she rose and placed his breakfast on the table, then left the kitchen. In a few moments the sound

of subdued sobbing struck Kid McCrady's ears.

But he made no attempt to soothe or comfort his wife. He knew well enough that the only thing that would soothe and comfort her was for him to assure her that he would repudiate his contract to fight Lynn, and he felt that conditions were such that he could not conscientiously repudiate that contract. Nor did he wish to repudiate it. The words Lynn had spoken against Kitty McCrady burned in McCrady's brain like living fire.

Nor did he feel that he could take his wife into his confidence. He shrank from repeating to her the dastardly lie that had been uttered against her character.

He finished his breakfast silently and went away to work without seeing Kitty, whom he left still sobbing in the bedroom. He excused his conduct toward her then with the reflection that he must have time to consider before he tried to square himself with her. It would be a hard enough task, he well knew, to reconcile her, and perhaps sometime during the day some logical plan of defense for his position would occur to him.

When he returned home that evening he found the house locked. That was ominous and evoked within him a keen sense of dread. He let himself in with his latch-key. Kitty was not there, but on the dining-room table he found a note. He picked it up with trembling hands and read it.

"It isn't your consenting to fight again, Charlie, so much as it is that you would deliberately break your promise without first consulting me," was one of the sentences he read in that note. "And so I have gone back to my people," was another.

A sharp pain racked Kid McCrady's heart. He had counted too much upon his wife's love to hold her and condone his transgression. Yet he had somehow all along felt that she would do just what she had done—leave him. She was exactly that sort of woman. Had he put it up to her in the right way as he should have done, explain to her that his fighting would bring them enough money to clear them of all debt, possibly she would have assented to his meeting Lynn. But she would never forgive him for breaking his promise without first consulting her. He saw his mistake when it was too late.

But he had not yet in fact broken his promise. It was not yet too late to repudiate the contract. What if he did? In that event Kitty would return. But would his conscience permit him to let the slander against her good name go unavenged?

And what if he repudiated his contract to fight and punished Lynn wherever he found him? In that case doubtless Ike Trimble, out of pure, malicious revenge, would bruit it about that McCrady was too cowardly to protect his wife. Trimble would not hesitate to expose the secret that McCrady wished above all things to remain a secret. Trimble was like that.

After many restless hours of consideration McCrady decided that he would fight. He felt that he must fight. He would lose his wife, perhaps, but better that than never again to be able to look her in the face. He could at least call himself a man and not a slinking creature too yellow to protect his own from vicious slander and lies.

Even a savage would fight under such circumstances.

THE night of May 12 the North Side arena was packed to the doors. Trimble had graded seat prices from ten dollars ringside to three dollars under the eaves. Five hundred seats in one section alone had been reserved for members of the Calumet Club and their friends, who came up to Midway, three miles distant from Mercer, in four chartered electric cars. If Kid McCrady lost the fight it would not be the fault of his fellow club members, who were there to root for him.

The program started promptly at eight o'clock with a go between two welterweights. Followed four fast rounds by a pair of bantamweights. These two bouts served to whet the appetites of the fans, and scarcely had the bantamweights dropped down from the ring than the audience set up a clamorous cry for the headliners.

"That sounds like they're about ready for us out there, Kid," said Chick Ward, who, with two sparring partners and handlers was with McCrady in the dressing room allotted to them. "Better let the boys run over you again, Kid. Here, Johnny, Fred; touch him up a little. Feeling all right, Kid?"

"Fine as silk," answered McCrady

shortly, rising for a final rub-down from his handlers.

Ward said nothing more. During the past couple of weeks he had learned to respect McCrady's mood. From the first day of training McCrady had little to say, and as the days wore on he grew more and more reticent. And also as the days passed that miserable, depressed look on his face deepened.

Ward had a pretty fair idea of what had been going on inside his principal's head during the thirty days of training, and at first he despaired of getting McCrady in shape for his fight. In desperation he one day telephoned Kitty McCrady at her father's home to see if he could not affect a reconciliation, but when she learned who he was and what he wanted she quickly cut him off. He and his two assistants therefore worked like Trojans to neutralize the effects of McCrady's incessant brooding.

But it was not so much what Ward and his assistants had done for McCrady as what McCrady had done for himself that finally put him in condition for his fight. During every minute of training a powerful stimulator had been at work. It was the recollection of that evening at the Calumet Club.

A hundred times during training McCrady had visualized himself ripping and tearing and cutting Tommy Lynn to pieces. His every thought and act had been directed to the one end of making himself fit to exact vengeance.

His first move had been to get a month's leave of absence from his work. His next to engage Chick Ward as his manager and principal sparring partner and move into training quarters at the Calumet Club, the directors obligingly turning over to him the second floor of the club-house for that purpose.

Perhaps it might seem that to engage Chick Ward as his manager and trainer McCrady was playing into the hands of the enemy. But recently Ward had been a member of the other camp, and it was possible that Trimble's plot embraced more than had occurred at the Calumet Club that evening.

Opposed to this idea, however, it must be remembered that Ward would be a valuable acquisition to the McCrady camp because of the fact that Ward knew more about the fighting tactics of Tommy Lynn than any other man, having had not a little to do with training Lynn. It was vastly to McCrady's advantage to have for his principal sparring partner the man who had trained his opponent. Moreover, at the time Ward was the only competent trainer available.

During the first week or so of training, therefore, McCrady kept a watchful eye upon Ward. But Chick Ward showed in many ways that he was sincere in his efforts to put his principal in shape to beat Lynn. He taught McCrady several cunning little tricks of Lynn's that he would have to guard against, tricks that outraged the rules of decent fighting.

McCrady was soon satisfied of Ward's loyalty and the training went on harmoniously. Two hours every forenoon were given to general muscle building exercises and two hours in the afternoon to sparring and shadow boxing. Early mornings and late afternoons were devoted to road work, and generally McCrady had a contingent from the Calumet Club to accompany him on the eight-mile run to Bald Knob and return.

His excess weight dissolved quickly and the day of the fight he tipped the scales at one hundred and thirty-one pounds. He had taken off a little more than eleven pounds without in the least weakening himself. Ward marvelled at the way he rounded into form in such a brief time.

Lynn had trained at a farm some miles back of Riverton and the rival camp knew nothing about him except what came to them as rumors. But these rumors indicated that McCrady had his work cut out for him.

THE final rubbing-down finished, McCrady slipped into his green silk trunks and put on his socks and shoes. He was a splendid physical specimen. Strength and energy fairly radiated from him, and when he moved the spring-steel muscles came into play under the skin like so many squirming snakes. In repose the muscles disappeared and left his limbs smooth, round columns that were deceptive to the eye. He was indeed as "fine as silk."

A bell on the wall rang and the two handlers caught up various paraphernalia and hurried out. While Ward and McCrady

waited a few moments longer McCrady flexed his muscles and tested the spring of his shoes. He was impatient, eager.

"Let's go, Kid," said Ward presently. "Remember now, old man; keep away from that left jab. That's about all he's got that'll do you any damage, but it's a haymaker. And watch for his funny tricks. Doc Slater's the referee, you know, and he's partial to Trimble. Better stand him off the first round and size him up. Remember, over the heart is his weak spot. Come on."

He threw a bath-robe across McCrady's shoulders and they went out and McCrady weighed in. They noted by the clerk's book that Lynn had weighed in at one hundred and thirty-three pounds. Trimble was not there to check up McCrady's weight; the weighing clerk was Trimble's man. They went on down the aisle toward the raised platform that stood under a bank of glaring lights.

Four thousand throats were roaring and Ward sought the cause. He saw Lynn and Trimble, with two others, climbing through the ropes into the ring. When the fans caught sight of McCrady and Ward the roaring grew in volume, and amid an ear-splitting welcome they joined their helpers and McCrady seated himself on the stool in his corner.

"Atta boy, Kid!"—"Oh, you McCrady!"—"Eat 'em up, Mac!"—"Whassa matter with McCrady!"—"Hezaaall right!"——

Thus from his friends in the Calumet Club section and elsewhere. But after a sweeping glance at the tier upon tier of faces that banked solidly about the ring and a wave or so of his hand McCrady turned his gaze upon the man sitting upon the stool in the opposite corner, and from that moment it remained there scarcely without a break. The fire that had been smoldering in his eyes for the past month burst into flame.

The bath-robes were cast off and the gloves examined and put on, then Slater, the referee, held up a hand for silence.

"Gentlemen! On the right, Kid McCrady; the left, Tommy Lynn. As advertised, the bout is for six rounds with a knockout and full decision allowed by State law. Ten counts out. Each round goes two minutes with a minute rest between. I am requested by the management to state that the winner of this bout is in line to challenge Jack Nixon, lightweight champion of the world. Shake hands, gents."

Ward, Trimble and the four handlers tumbled down from the ring, taking their gear with them. McCrady and Lynn advanced to the center of the ring, glared at each other, then returned to their respective corners without the slightest pretense of touching gloves after the prescribed form. This incident did not escape the notice of the fans, and to them it was a token of war without mercy.

The gong clanged, McCrady stepped out cautiously. Lynn rushed, feinted with his right, then came in hard with his left jab. He had orders from Trimble to make it snappy. McCrady let the blow go past and landed a right swing squarely on Lynn's ribs. The first blow was McCrady's and the fans howled. The next instant Lynn found McCrady's nose with a glancing right and red appeared. The first blood was Lynn's and the fans howled again.

McCrady drew off and blocked Lynn's best efforts to fight his way in to short-arm work. The fans jeered McCrady for his aloofness, but he ignored their jeering and centered his attention upon Lynn. Lynn saw an opening and leaped in. McCrady was forced to clinch to save himself.

"Fight, you four-flusher!" Lynn snarled in his ear.

McCrady did not retort, but the flame in his eyes leaped higher. The referee tore them apart and held to McCrady's arm a fraction of a second to give Lynn the chance to leap in again with a vicious right hook for McCrady's head. McCrady jerked his head back out of the way and paid Lynn with another smash on the ribs. The gong sent them to their corners with the round awarded by the fans to Lynn. Ward, Trimble and the handlers were in the ring almost before their principals got seated.

"Good work, Kid," complimented Ward, sponging McCrady's mouth and nose. "Keep your eye on Slater; he played you dirt that time; you're fighting two men out there. Think you got his number, old man?"

"Yes."

"All right; chaw him up, boy!"

BOTH men were on their feet before the clapper of the gong fell. McCrady went in madly, like a cylcone, yet with caution. He stabbed and chopped with short-arm blows, then for variety

stepped back and swung rights and lefts so fast it was difficult for the eye to follow them. At least half his blows registered.

He cut Lynn's lip with a left hook and bruised his eye with a straight right. Lynn revenged himself with a short-arm right jab on the jaw that rocked McCrady. Time and time again Lynn tried to land his famous left jab and failed every time. McCrady was particularly alert for Lynn's left. When the gong separated them both were breathing freely.

"Take it easy next time," Ward advised during the intermission. "Save your wind; that's your weak spot."

McCrady took the advice. Lynn's orders were no doubt similar, for the third round was a round of feinting and bluffing, with few telling blows landed. The fourth round was considerably faster, due to Lynn, who waded in as if bent on a knockout. The fourth round was plainly Lynn's.

"Muzzle his wind, Tommy," whispered Trimble to his man while they were waiting for the gong to call the fifth round. "I notice he's breathin' kinda hard. An' don't forget the li'l old throat racket. Needn't be afraid of Slater; he's spendin' my money. There's the bell."

The fifth round was rampant with fouls; fouls so palpably evident that even the fans howled against them. Three times Lynn forced a clinch purposedly in order to choke off McCrady's wind with the heel of his glove pressed against McCrady's mouth and nose.

Each time this occurred Ward screamed to the referee to take notice, but no notice was taken. McCrady broke from the third clinch without any interference from the referee and sent a left swing against the side of his opponent's head. The blow whirled Lynn clean around and he fell back into clinch again.

He threw his left arm about McCrady's shoulders, a foul that with an honest referee would have forfeited the fight to McCrady instantly, and brought his right forearm against McCrady's throat and began to saw back and forth.

McCrady's wind was immediately shut off and the pain of the sawing was intense. By sheer force of will alone he beat Lynn off with several terrific short-arm jolts with his right to Lynn's stomach. But the damage was done.

"Now I'll get you, you false alarm!" snarled Lynn as they broke.

McCrady was gasping for breath. The choking had dazed him. Hazily he saw Lynn's left fist shooting straight for his stomach. But coordination between brain and muscle had not been broken down. McCrady stooped a little to save his stomach and take the blow on a less vulnerable spot.

Lynn's fist landed with the force of a pile driver against McCrady's chest. The breath left McCrady's lungs in a wheezing belch. He sank to his knees and sprawled face down on the canvas.

"One——two——three——"

As if from an immeasurable distance he heard the voice of the referee counting him out, and Chick Ward's hoarse voice cursing Slater for counting too fast. But he felt that he would never be able to rise unassisted. The pain in his chest was excruciating, unbearable. Time was when the hardest blow on the chest would not have feazed him. He had not been sufficiently hardened in the thirty days Trimble had allowed him for training. He made a heroic effort to get up and fell back again.

"Four——five——six——"

That devilish counting never stopped. The words beat against his ears like the thump of a trip hammer. He heard the audience yelling and screaming and groaning.

"Up, Kid! For the love of heaven get up!" Ward bawled at him through the din.

He struggled to his knees and got one foot flat on the canvas, and there he paused to suck a big breath of air into his panting lungs. The air was foul with tobacco smoke, stifling, but it was precious air, something to inflate his lungs.

Objects appeared but dimly before his eyes. He saw the referee's pumping arm; he saw Tommy Lynn standing before him ready to smash him down again the instant he rose erect; he saw thousands of white, anxious faces, chief of which was the pleading face of Chick Ward.

And floating far up there under the roof in a fog of tobacco smoke he saw a vision of Kitty McCrady, her soft lips twisted into a jeering smile and her eyes taunting him.

"Seven——eight——nine——"

An effort that was nothing short of superhuman brought him to his feet. Lynn leaped at him tigerishly. By a lucky cast of his arms he got hold of Lynn and hugged him desperately. Lynn cursed him

and fought like a fiend to break his hold, but he held on grimly, fighting for time to clear his head and get the air back into his lungs.

The gong mercifully saved him and he fairly tottered to his corner and fell upon the stool. A whiff of ammonia and a spill of cold water on his head and face revived him a little, but he was dazed and weak and trembling like a leaf. His handlers chafed at him madly.

"It's all right, old man," Ward cheered him. "Just a little bad luck, that's all. You'll come back all right next round."

But Ward knew that he was merely trying to kid both McCrady and himself. There was little hope that McCrady would come back the next round; he was responding too slowly to the treatment of his handlers. He had stopped one of Tommy Lynn's left jabs, and Ward knew from personal experience what that meant. Lynn's left jab was about the wickedest thing in that line he knew of.

He sent a glance toward Lynn's corner and saw Lynn and Trimble smiling confidently. They knew that it was all over but the shouting. Even if Lynn didn't knock McCrady out next round it was inevitable that he would get the decision on points. Slater would see to that, because Slater was there for that very purpose. It was almost certain, however, that McCrady would be knocked out. Only a most amazing miracle could prevent it. McCrady was already whipped.

SUDDENLY Ward's face set grimly. There was one chance left. There was one faint hope of bringing about that miracle. It was cruel, a terribly cruel thing to do, but the situation was desperate. He saw the time-keeper's hand reach out for the bell rope. He leaned and put his lips to McCrady's ear.

"Kid, see that man over there in that corner?" he whispered. "Have you forgotten what he said about somebody you think a great deal of? Ain't you going to collect what he owes you? Go get him, Kid."

He felt McCrady's body stiffen under his hand. The gong sounded and Lynn was in the ring at a bound. And so was Kid McCrady. He went after Lynn furiously, an avalanche of fury, fairly overwhelming him with the very ferocity of his attack. A vast astonishment overspread Lynn's face, and Ike Trimble, who stood down at a corner of the platform waiting for his man to finish McCrady, stared open-mouthed. Perhaps never in prize ring history had an audience seen a more miraculous recuperation of a fighter all but down and out and licked. Those few whispered words had accomplished more than even the most powerful stimulants could have accomplished.

Like flashes of lightning McCrady's rights and lefts shot out, his blows falling like hail against Lynn's body, beating a veritable tattoo. He pounded Lynn unmercifully and gave him no chance to recover. He felt within him vast, inexhaustible reserves of strength and will power; he felt that he could go on forever pounding this man whom he hated with a bitter and insatiable hate. His face was screwed into a savage, ferocious mask; it was the face of a raging gorilla.

"Remember, over the heart is his weak spot," Ward had said.

Kid McCrady remembered. And principally toward his opponent's heart he directed his attack. Lynn covered up as well as he could and tried to escape from the storm of blows that beat against his body long enough to regain his poise. But it was far from the intention of Kid McCrady to let him escape. He followed Lynn about the ring like an avenging angel and battered and hammered away.

At length he drove Lynn into a corner against the ropes where escape was next to impossible, then while Ike Trimble shrieked curses at him he proceeded to cut Tommy Lynn to pieces. It was terrific. As a man the big audience came to its feet and gasped.

"Stop the murder!" "Kill him, Kid!" were the mingled shrieks that were hurled at the ring. It was bedlam, chaos, brute man without the restraining veneer of civilization.

McCrady caught a momentary glimpse of a policeman shouldering his way down the aisle through the frenzied mass toward the platform. Was he to be cheated of the last and sweetest morsel of his revenge? Had he let his wife go now to be balked in the act of taking recompensation for that sacrifice? He swore that he would have the uttermost mite of his revenge.

He suddenly stepped back from Lynn. Lynn seized the opportunity to stagger out

from the ropes. McCrady made an incredibly swift motion with his right arm and his fist cut through an opening in Lynn's guard and smashed resoundingly against Lynn's chest directly over the heart. Lynn uttered a choking gasp, pawed wildly at the air a moment, then tumbled headlong. McCrady himself wilted and staggered against the ropes for support.

A roar that shook the building to its foundations drowned out the spoken decision of the referee as Lynn's handlers jumped into the ring and bore his unconscious form away. But the result was too plainly evident to make a spoken decision necessary.

The Calumet Club boys stormed the ring and carried McCrady away to his dressing-room on their shoulders. Half an hour later he was more himself and had dressed to go home. Aside from one or two slight cuts on the face, bruised knuckles and a throbbing pain in his chest he was little damaged.

"Come on, Kid; I'll take you down home in my flivver," said Ward when they were ready to go. "We'll find Trimble out here somewhere and get what's coming to us."

They went out to the main entrance where a crowd of two or three hundred fans had tarried to see the victor come out. Trimble saw them and hurried up with a huge stack of bills in one hand. With a rather hang-dog air he handed the money to McCrady.

"Over twelve thousand there," he said sourly. "You're a lucky stiff, McCrady. I'll say you're a lucky stiff."

McCrady took the bills, then smashed Trimble on the point of the chin.

Trimble flopped over and struck the hard floor with the back of his head.

McCrady and Ward fought their way through the press and leaped into Ward's waiting automobile.

NOT a word passed between the two men on the way back to Mercer. In fifteen minutes or so the machine drew up to the curb before McCrady's home in Shelby Place and McCrady got out. He counted off two thousand dollars from his pile of bills and handed the two thousand to Ward. In silence they shook hands and Ward drove on.

McCrady stood for a few moments on the sidewalk looking at the darkened house he called home. Home! The word was a travesty. An acute sense of loneliness swept through him, and surged up within him a longing for Kitty McCrady. That longing had obsessed him constantly during the past month, but it had been somewhat neutralized by an attention to training. Now that it was all over he seemed to realize in full for the first time exactly what he had lost.

Too, now that he had avenged Kitty he felt no satisfaction. It had left a bitter taste, an empty sort of feeling. What a fool he had been! If he had only told Kitty everything! Surely she would have sympathized with him, understood him, given him good counsel. But now it was too late for all that. He had burned his bridge when he fought without Kitty's consent.

With drooping shoulders and lifeless steps he climbed to the front veranda and unlocked the front door and went in. He groped his way to the sitting room and stood there in the darkness a few moments before he gave a despairing sigh and switched on the electric light.

And there stood Kitty McCrady with her wraps on. He stared at her unbelievingly. He tried to speak but could not.

"I have come home again, Charlie—to stay," she said with a smile. "Mrs. Ward came to me at father's a little while ago and told me all. She told me against her husband's wishes. Charlie, I didn't understand. Why didn't you tell me?"

McCrady could not meet her eyes.

"Kitty, there are some things that a man thinks he can't say even to his wife," he answered. "That was one of them. I whipped Lynn, and I suppose this money is clean enough; it's part of our revenge. It will start us even with the world again, with something over."

He tossed the money on the table and she nodded.

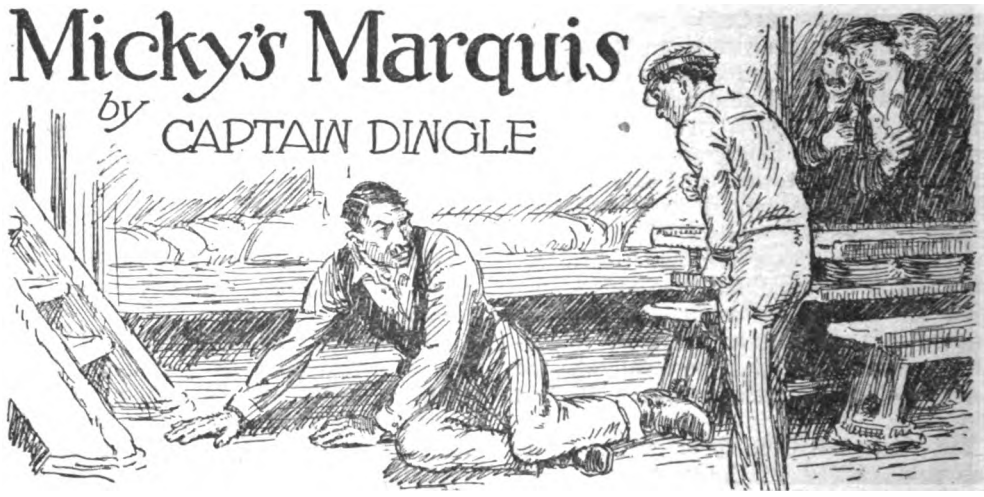
"I would have let you fight, Charlie, if you had told me why you wanted to fight that man," she said.

Then she noted his raw knuckles and added:

"Those poor hands! Come back to the kitchen and let me fix you a poultice, boy."

Micky's Marquis

by CAPTAIN DINGLE



Author of "Red Saunders' Protégé," "The Burden Paternal," etc.

THE last of the grand old fleet of square-riggers belonging to the Glasgow Line of Australian clippers was the full-rigged ship *Hesperides;* and she carried to sea a queer crowd. All the sailormen had graduated into quartermasters or had taken the exams and secured tickets while the getting was good during the four-year feverish demand for ships and officers.

About the only real blue-water boy among the lot was Micky Donlin, but he was the real thing without reservations.

Another signed A. B. worthy of mention was "the Marquis," and he was noteworthy because he knew as little of the sailing branch of the sea as Micky knew much. There was the boy, Skimps, and for the rest they were twelve of the heartbreaking sort of misfits that turn good captains and mates into rotten farmers and truck-growers in self-defense.

"Th' lad looks loike he could dance, and he's clane, anyway," Mickey had decided about the dapper little Frenchman, whom everybody, even in the Shipping Office, at once dubbed the Marquis.

It was not a very complete endorsement of a square-rig sailor, perhaps, but Micky Donlin was an exuberant young man of more than ordinary self-complacency, and he knew he could carry on two men's work of sailoring if one of the two could come up to the scratch on the shore end. That any shore dance in Sydney was a possible ninety days distant mattered not a bit.

"An' sure, he's clane, anyway," was a bit of tribute which the Marquis earned from all hands, too. As a sailor he was about as useful as a whittled candle would be as a marlinespike, but as an ornament to any ship he was——

Well, ask yourself what any hard-bitten old time wind-jammer man would think of a pretty fellow about five-feet-six high, not more than a hundred-and-twenty pounds weight, possessing glossy black curly hair, a face as smooth as a girl's arm, teeth that really twinkled with whiteness, feet so small that no sea boot was ever made to fit them; who trod the deck with an air so lightsome as to seem never to touch the planks, who sang cheerful little French songs from morning to night, and who carried himself with the air of a Russian duke making a duty visit to his humble peasantry.

"Bedad, he's jist loike th' ould squire's daughter!" grinned Micky happily.

But Big Bill Chivers, the self-elected forecastle ruler—whom there had been no time yet either to depose or establish—had no soul for sheer ornamentation. He stopped kicking Skimps, the ship's boy, whose duty it now was to fetch along the supper for all hands, pending the picking of watches immediately after, and swung the Marquis around with a vicious grip on the shoulder.

"Hey, Cissy, trot along f'r the hash, or I'll put a head on yuh as big as a forty-gallon pot!" he growled.

"Cissy? I know not ziz Cissy!" the Marquis answered, twisting free from Big Bill's grip with suspicious ease. "I am not ze boy, messieu. Skimps shall bring ze 'ash, yes. I am ze able seaman. Tra-la-la!" And he spun away singing and snapping his fingers nonchalantly, while a titter went up from the curious crowd that provoked Chivers to fury.

With an oath he lurched forward, aimed a savage punch at the Marquis, and missed. Recovering himself, as the Frenchman turned upon him in bland surprise, the big fellow swung his sea-booted foot and kicked the small man viciously on the thigh.

The next second the forecastle crowd scattered back in amazement; for, instead of running away, or even crying for help, the Marquis turned pale, his lips drew into a thin red line, and he faced Bill, poised on one foot, hands held loosely at his sides, the other leg swinging from the knee downwards like a stocking on a clothesline in a gale of wind.

Before Big Bill could wholly recover his balance after his vicious kick, the Marquis shot out his own free foot like a serpent's stroke, and his heel took the bully under the chin and sent him headlong over the scuttlebutt.

"Zere! Peeg-dog!" panted the Marquis, and as suddenly as his anger had risen he cooled, trotted nimbly up the ladder and lighted a cigaret while waiting for the delayed supper hash. But Big Bill was not content. He picked himself up, whipped his belt around, bringing his sheath-knife to hand, and blundered up the ladder after the Marquis, cursing horribly.

Men stood aside and let him go, and until his knife flashed clear as he leaped through the scuttle the Marquis seemed to be threatened with cold murder at his back. But sight of steel aroused Micky Donlin. Like a sleek cat he sprang up the ladder, caught Big Bill's knife-wrist in a wrenching grip, and flung the big man bodily over against the fife-rail, where he fell heavily, his knife clattering into the lee scuppers.

"Ye dirthy heathen!" Micky said without heat. "It's wan o' thim knife butchers ye are, is ut?"

"He kicked me! The pink-faced shrimp kicked me!" roared Bill, rising slowly and peering doubtfully at Micky. It was too early in the voyage for men to have found their separate levels. Nobody had yet told Bill that he was not to be cock of the forecastle; and Micky didn't look so very big in the evening dusk.

"Kicked ye, did he?" soothed Micky in silken tones. "Arrah! Whin did ye 'arn a right to use the boots widout paymint? Didn't ye kick him foorst? Say, big felly, I can't fight; I niver licked a poshtage stamp widout payin' fer ut; I'd shtand fer tales ov h'athen, Gawd bless um! takin' sunsthroke fer want o' woolen shirts as I knowed our dacint captain has in his slop chist; but Oi'm hungry as th' divil, and ye're sthoppin' me food. Let's ate, f'r——"

Big Bill cut short the argument by a sudden stumbling rush and a wild punch that caught Micky unawares and hurled him back through the forecastle hatch into the midst of the gaping crew. Following fast, and bent upon wickedness, Big Bill reached the forecastle floor two jumps behind Micky, and that was as far as he got, consciously.

HE REACHED bottom to come face to face with a smiling, blood-smeared devil, who seemed possessed of as many arms as an octopus, and each arm terminated in a hard, willing, utterly capable Irish fist, driven by the force animating a heart that had never missed a beat through fear.

Micky made a clean job of that first encounter: or rather a complete job; for when at last a subdued but secretly exultant Skimps set the hash kid on the table Big Bill was swabbing his battered face in a bucket of salt water under the hatch, while his mates unostentatiously turned blankets and other personal gear bloody side down, pleased that the cock of the forecastle had been found and established thus early on in the voyage, but quietly cursing him for spilling so much of Bill's gore down below instead of taking it on deck.

Big Bill allowed Micky's supremacy to go unchallenged for a long time after that first sea day, but that didn't prevent his own sly bullying of weaker members of his own watch.

As a seaman he was perhaps the best of a bad lot, outside of Micky Donlin, and that and his great brute strength, and a measure of courage too, made him leader

of his watch as Micky was of his. And it was the misfortune of the Marquis to be picked in Chivers' watch.

Only at the change of the watch, or in the dog-watches, did Micky get a chance to improve the acquaintance of the little Frenchman. At such times as they met with leisure Micky took pride in showing the dapper sea-novice many things of which he was wofully ignorant.

Perhaps there never was a signed able seaman so utterly lacking in the simplest rudiments of his profession.

His hands, at the end of three days, were raw pieces of shapeless meat, instead of the girlish, pink-tipped appendages they had been; and it was Micky who slushed them and dressed them day after day until they recovered shape and took on toughness.

"Ha! Now am I wat zey call ze tough guy, no?" chirruped the Marquis, smiling ruefully at his calloused palms when his friend announced them cured. "I pool ze lee-fo'-brace, I stan'by — royal-halliard, I——"

"Ye're all thim things, Marquis," grinned Micky approvingly. "Now we got to thry to tache yez not to kick loike a mule, but to use yer hands loike a man. Th' lads is thryin' to git ye mad, jist fer sport, an' 't is Big Bill as is eggin' 'em on to do it."

The Marquis's eyes sparkled, but his lips were pursed in doubt.

"An' eef zey mak me mad, angree, an' smack me by ze face, shall I not——"

"Sure!" Micky put in heartily. "Sure, laddie, yez'll have to give wallop fer wallop or they'll all pile onto yez. But 't is the way o' sailormen, mostly, to hit wid the hands. If ye kick a man whin he's down, everybody knows ye sarved yer toime in German ships."

The Marquis's sparkling black eyes glittered angrily at the mention of German ships, as Micky intended.

"Bot I know not ze scrap-box!" he cried. "In my countree ze *gentilhomme* he do *la savate*, see, like zis—" And he illustrated his method by brushing Micky's face with his foot as swiftly and gently as the darting of a humming-bird. Micky laughed.

"Sure, Oi know ut, Marquis. Didn't all hands see ut whin ye floored Big Bill? But it ain't white, sonny, it ain't white."

"Bot ze Beeg Beel he do ze same to me in ze beginning!" There was puzzlement in the protest.

"Well now," Micky retorted with a grin, "an' wud yez want to folly a feller loike him now? Did yez see me put the boots to anny mon yit? An' can't Oi handle meself and take care o' some o' the rest o' ye too?

"Come, Marquis, Oi loike yez a lot, or Oi wudn't take throuble wid a mon as kicked another in the mug, be ——! Oi'll tache yez to use yer hands, an' yez'll tache me to use me feet, in dancin', not scrappin'. Is thot a go?"

Marquis showed that the stuff in him was right, even if his methods, through usage, were wrong. Pirouetting gracefully on bare toes, like a Ballet Fairy, he "tra-la-la'ed" merrily, and concluded with a flourish in front of Micky, while all hands standing by guffawed in derision.

"Zere!" smiled the little Frenchman, ignoring the others. "Like zat you shall dance, Mickee. Bot mooch time is zere for ze dance to learn. First I shall ze scrap-box try, yes?"

"Up on de hatch wid ye!" laughed Micky gleefully. "Sure, we'll show these fellies a bit o' the rale thing. Oi'll bet a spud yez'll be rooster-weight champeen o' this foine ship *Hesperides* long afore she bumps Circular Quay. Don't moind them laffin' at yez, me boy. Thim laffs last as laffs afterwards, sure. Come thin, put yer hands up loike this."

THE Marquis obeyed every instruction with nimble grace, he assumed every posture indicated as to the manner born. Micky beamed encouragement and gratification. Many a time he had seen a slender, light-footed man like the Frenchman turn out a thumping good boxer, if only the courage was there; and he had no fear in this case. He dropped his hands, and stepped back.

"Now thin, ye have all the motions. Oi'll tache yez to hit, stop, and git away now. Whin Oi lead wid me left, ye'll slither back sideways loike Oi showed yez, thin, before Oi git clear, yez'll thry to wallop me on the beak, see? Don't be feared o' hurrtin' me. 'Tis only a friendly spar, an' Oi won't hould ut agin yez av I git a painted peeper. Ready!"

Somebody about the hatch called—

"Time."

The rest guffawed, and the Marquis obeyed his teacher so smartly and accurately that Micky's left lead missed him by

six inches, and his own swift return smacked sharply against Micky's neck.

"Begob! Thot's a beauty!" grinned Micky, happily. He danced out of range, fiddling for an opening, and instructed the Marquis to lead now. Before the words were well uttered, the little Frenchman slipped inside his tutor's guard, and whacked with both hands at the broad Irish chest before him.

Micky's eyes were dancing; the thing looked like the beginning of a fight, for the Marquis had been suddenly seized by the lust of battle, and his dark eyes glittered keenly out of a face gone white.

"Come, Meecky!" he cried sharply, flashing a swift smile. "Zis is ze stuff, no? I like well me ze scrap-box. Ha!"

Micky backed away, laughing at his pupil's excitement, and tried to hold him off long enough to get in a word of advice. He found his hands full.

"Whist!" he panted at last, guarding a flurry of wild punches, "go aisy, Marquis, till Oi tell yez. Yer guarrd's all wide open, me boy. Oi c'd wallop yez roight on the chin anny minute, an' sure Oi'll have to av ye don't back up a bit. 'Tis too excited yez are. Whist, Oi say!"

Micky found himself in a fix. Unless he punched hard and straight he'd either be backed clear off the hatch, or be floored by one of those flying wallops, for the Frenchman was carried wholly away by the excitement of battle. Micky decided to use the opportunity of finding out whether the Marquis would stand up under punishment.

One shrewd punch would serve, if placed where it would sting yet not numb. As he circled around, with double guard covering stomach and jaw, his keen eyes peeped through his hands watching for the opening.

"*Hola!*" cried the Marquis, and attacked furiously.

"Murdher!" growled Micky, catching a swing on the top of his towseled head, and countering like a streak of light with a hard right to the cheekbone which sent the Marquis sprawling to the hatch in an amazed, shocked heap.

Micky stepped forward to help him up, grinning cheerfully, and as swift as his own cross-counter had been came the Marquis' right foot, clear from the hatch, where the Frenchman had turned face downward in a flash, hands supporting his weight. The heel took Micky under the chin, and he spun lengthwise through the air and landed in a tangle of ropes at the fore-rigging.

As soon as he could shake the cobwebs from his blurred brain, Micky picked himself up, spat out a tooth, and lurched towards the hatch, bent upon the annihilation of his enemy.

At the edge of the hatch the Marquis met him, hand outstretched, all the lust of fight gone out of his face, and only shy apology remaining.

"My fr'en' Meecky!" he cried. "I am desolate! Eet is a peety. I am so soree!" He looked so utterly wobegone, that even Micky's fighting fury could not withstand him. Micky took the proffered hand, gripped it fast, and shook his aching head.

"Begob, 'tis loike foightin' a ruddy horrse!" he said. "Annyway, ye did well f'r a forrst lesson, me boy. Next toime Oi shall anchor thim hoofs to ringbolts, and yez'll l'arn yet, Marquis, yez'll l'arn, f'r yez have the guts, begob, even av yez don't quite savvee all at wance. Now giv's wan av thim scenty little cigaroots ye smoke. Me jaw's too sore to hould me poipe."

THAT was but the beginning of the Marquis's education. Micky persevered, and found his reward in the rapid advance his pupil made.

True, half the passage had been covered before the Marquis could be taught finally to keep his feet out of an opponent's face, and Micky still carried on the job of benevolent tyrant of the forecastle, seeing that the weaker men got their fair whacks, and the stronger shouldered their share of the meaner jobs of the watch; but there was no longer any thought in the crew of humiliating or beating up the Marquis, unless, perhaps, Big Bill still nursed such a desire at times.

Even Skimps had grown fat and saucy by the time the *Hesperides* reached the roaring forties and squared yards and set up preventer backstays for the long run before strong gales and heavy seas to Cape Otway.

The boy was a true son of the Whitechapel gutter: shrewd, bright as a new dollar, fearless, and impudent, yet having no real vice, beyond that of inherent ignorance and all that goes with it.

"Yez'll be gittin' yer block knocked off

av ye don't shtop raggin' the min, Skimps," Micky told him one wild afternoon when the watch came below after a hard bout with a split mainsail and found no hot tea.

Skimps had answered their protests with cheerful profanity, and only Micky's entering the forecastle for a muffler prevented Big Bill thrashing the boy.

"Go hon wiv yer!" Skimps retorted, dodging under Micky's warning slap. "I ain't scared. You ain't crool enough to beat a boy like me, Micky, an' none ov the rest dares to, see? You go hon teachin' yer frog-eater to darnce wiv 'is 'ands and fight wiv 'is feetses, see, and leave me——"

Micky stopped the argument by catching and cuffing the imp of mischief before he said something which must bring results more grievous from others; but others besides Big Bill promised the boy sure and certain retribution before the voyage was up, as soon as Micky went on deck.

Even the Marquis began to fret under the continual chaffing Skimps gave him over his boxing methods.

"Ha, eet is ze know-nossing of ze *petit garçon!*" he cried, gesturing hopelessly with his hands. "Some day Skeepms shall have ze bloody noz' and ze peeper *noir*, yes! He is too mooch vat zey call *piquant*, *parbleu!*"

Whatever was in store, Skimps was still intact when the ship reached the vertex of her Great Circle track, and sailed foul of the bitterness of a week-long fifty-mile blizzard. That was a time to try the toughest.

The fat little skipper seemed to be impervious to cold, so blubbered in fat was he, so well fed, and so snugly clothed; but even so he proved his right to command, and stood more hours of the piercing gale than his two mates combined, tough and able though they were.

In the forecastle misery was predominant. The *Hesperides* belonged to a splendid class of ship, her weatherliness and ability to carry on under evil circumstances was a proverb among seamen, but she was built in a day when sailors' comfort was left out of the building plans; and the tiny iron bogie stove, which was either cold or red-hot, did no more than fill the chilly iron cavern of the men's living quarters with noisome steam which presently condensed and fell upon the just and the just-dry alike in creepy drops of cold water.

Through it all the men cursed, growled, cuffed Skimps, and worked like the uncouth heroes they were, sleeping in sodden clothing, eating damp hardtack and half-cooked mahogany salt-horse, never, during the worst of it, getting so much as a pannikin of hot tea or coffee simply because the Doctor could keep no fire in his galley stove regularly enough to bother with anythig except the barest of necessaries for the cabin and the shortest of short whacks for the crowd.

The greatest sufferer was the Marquis.

His frail, unseasoned frame was ill-adapted to the life of a sailor in the best of circumstances. In the cold and wet, hunger and thirst of that passage, though it was nothing unusual, he wilted and collapsed like a frost-bitten lettuce plant, and only his indomitable spirit sustained him. That was what satisfied Micky.

Watching him every minute when both watches were on deck, the capable Irishman saw a body all but beaten, fired and kept going by a soul too great to accept defeat. Micky stole below when he came from the wheel at midnight, after a freezing spell in which the perspiration induced by the strenuous fight with the wheel of the running ship froze on him.

He went to draw solace from a dhudeenful of stout plug tobacco, and as he passed to his bunk, stealthily as all good seamen used to pass when their opposite watchmates slept, he struck a match and peered down at the uneasily sleeping Marquis.

"Begob, there ain't a wisp av the poor little feller!" he muttered.

The Marquis's face was white as death, his eyes were ringed with dark blue, his lips were no longer vividly red, and the slim, blue-veined hands on his breast barely moved to his faint breathing.

Micky stripped the blanket from his own bed, laid it with the gentleness of a mother over the shivering form, and went back on deck munching a cold chew because the rummaging for his pipe, and the lighting of it, might awaken the lightly sleeping man.

THE weather hardened.

It was the worst experience the skipper had had in thirty years of running the Easting down, and real hardship began to be felt. Even the water tanks were impregnated with brine; it was

only perhaps for a minute or two in days that the second mate dared pump water from the forepeak tank for fear of salt water getting in much more than had been, and ruining that part of the supply utterly.

Then it was that the combination of adverse circumstances proved almost more than the Marquis could endure.

He shivered even while furling a split topsail, which kept every other man sweating. For the first time since Micky had cured his sore hands, the little Frenchman hung back from hauling his share on a rope. For the first time in the entire voyage he failed to respond with a smile, faint though it was at times, to Micky's boisterous greeting.

Straight to the Old Man went Micky.

"Well?" snapped the sleep-hungry, harassed skipper.

"Plase sor, 'tis the Marquis Oi'm onaisy about. Th' lad's dyin' on his feet, sir. He ought to lay up, sor."

"Lay up!" gasped the Old Man. "In this?" He swept a heavy arm around the gray sea wastes. His own fat, red face now sagged in gray folds of fleshless skin, his own bright eyes were red and heavy for lack of sleep.

"Oi'll do his worrk, sor," Micky persisted, and the skipper's haggard face lighted up with the tenderness that lurks within the hard case of most real sailor-men.

"Go for'ard, Donlin," he said, gently turning Micky about. "You're already doing more than any two men in the ship. I'm watching, my lad. The ship can spare nobody until a man drops. The weather'll change in a little while, by the glass. Your Marquis will soon find his feet again."

Micky grinned at the unconscious humor, and saluted. He stopped in at the galley and found the Doctor out. He had wanted to bully the old cook into making some hot coffee; in his absence he rummaged for dry sticks, started a bit of fire, and hurriedly made it himself out of cabin stores. Taking it forward, he ran right in to old Doc himself, yarning in the forecastle.

He put the steaming pot behind him, catching the cook's eye; but there was something on Doc's mind, too, for though he undoubtedly caught sight of the coffee-pot, he slipped his pipe in his pocket and made a hasty exit.

"Now what the divil!" Micky grunted, looking around at the palpably uneasy watch. He saw the black eyes of the Marquis glittering at him out of a face of ghastly hue. "Here, me boy," he grinned, "giv's yer pannikin. Hot coffee, me little man!"

Like a phantom the Marquis confronted him, spitting with anger. Micky stood like an effigy, dumb with amazement, for the excitement of the Marquis was certainly not that of a tottering mind.

"Ha!" screamed the Frenchman, snapping his fingers under Micky's nose. "Ha! Eet is ze false friend, ha? I am ze seeck man, yes, bot I do ze work, no? An' ze man vat ees my friend mos' go to ze skippaire an' say zat I, I, I am not fit for ze work ze sheep! *Parbleu!* Come on ze deck!"

Before Micky could well fathom the mystery, understand that the cook must have been aft on some business with the steward and overheard his appeal to the captain, thereafter carrying the tale to the Marquis, the little Frenchman was dancing frantically in front of him, two small, pitiful fists balled up and jerking under his nose.

The coffee-pot fell with a sizzling splash, and Micky glared down at his excited friend. Then, while he was yet debating whether to spank the little man and put him in his bunk, or go out and pound the cook, to say nothing of his feelings at the loss of the precious coffee, from on deck came a thunderous crash and roar, a sharper, more metallic crash, and a shout from the poop that penetrated even the hubbub of the elements.

"On deck! All hands! Aft with you, the for'ard tank's adrift!"

The forward tank was one of a pair, secured by a stout band of iron which was bolted through the bulwarks fore and aft of the tank, just abaft the break of the forecastle. It, and its mate opposite, was a cubical iron tank full of water, and weighed around two tons. It was the emergency supply in case the big forepeak tanks gave out before the voyage was up. And it was adrift; a careering, murderous lump of inanimate menace in the hands of such terrific seas as were combing the ship from either quarter.

Merely to get out of the forecastle was a problem for the boldest and nimblest. As the men swarmed up the narrow ladder, the tank could be heard thundering across the deck to the roll of the ship and the

surge of the sea. A terrific clang resounded somewhere more distant, and Micky darted out, yelling to the rest—

"Come an wid yez, boys, the dom tank's foul o' the fo'mast!"

VAGUELY he knew that at his heels trooped the watch below. He was the only man of the watch on deck not up when the tank went adrift. His watchmates could be heard, scarcely seen, in many places, all yelling advice, none daring to slip down and muzzle the murderous iron monster.

Somewhere close at hand, as he crouched to get the true situation, he heard the wheezing breath of a comrade, but he was too intent upon his job to turn to identify faces. He saw the bulk of the tank, tangled in a maze of involved coils of sea-swept ropes, and he noticed that it had broken deeply into the fore-fife-rail and much of the fore-rigging hung in jeopardy.

The ship plunged with a long, slow sweep into a rolling sea that had passed under her and was leaving her, and her head hung low too long. The tank took charge again, left the mast, and bounded like a live thing straight at Mick. He dodged, yelling defiance, and trod heavily upon the Marquis at his heels.

"Git t'—— outa here!" he yelled. "'Tis no place fer th' loikes av yez, Marquis!" Then the tank crashed against the break of the t'gallant forecastle, bounced like a rubber ball, and shot aft to the mast again as the ship rose from her plunge.

A shrill, defiant yell rose above the uproar of wind and sea and thundering tank. At the instant that Micky seized a rope-end, meaning to fling a turn around the runaway and hold it against the fife-rail long enough to enable his mates to muzzle it thoroughly, the Marquis darted forward, his puny hands out-flung, and tried to do without a rope what Micky purposed doing with one.

His sudden rush thwarted Micky's plan, and did no good of itself.

"Howly Moses!" roared Micky furiously. "F'r th' love av Hiven somebody put the little man under cover till we git thot tank lashed. Sure he'll murther us all!"

In darting across the deck the Marquis crossed the rope in Micky's hands, and now, while the tank was teetering in preparation for another terrific charge, the rope tripped him and he fell fair in the course of the iron demon. Far from doing as they were told, the men did as most men would do in the circumstances: they darted in all directions out of the way when the tank came clanging down upon them again.

And right in its path the Marquis was scrambling for a foothold on the slippery deck, one foot entangled in Micky's rope.

"Save us!" breathed Micky, and sprang surefooted as a cat across the Marquis and hurled himself shoulder first at the tank. Man and iron rolled down to the bulwarks in a heap, and the tank halted there for a moment, stopped by a human wedge in the shape of the right arm and breast of the Irishman.

"Catch a turrn wid it now!" screamed Micky. "Jump, ye wooden men! D'yez t'ink Oi'm made o' wood too?"

He lost consciousness and relaxed, but not before the tank was secured. They carried him aft and laid him in the half-deck where the Old Man could attend to him, then trooped forward to take out their anger for his mishap on the Marquis.

The tail end of the big blow lashed sufficiently hard to keep all hands busy until their initial rage against the Marquis had died down. Micky was snug and well cared for; the ship came out of the hurly-burly as a sound, well-found, well-handled ship should do, intact in all except a few paltry rope-ends that made no difference to her as a ship.

But with the coming of fine days, though still booming with dry wind, the galley fire was kept going, the water tanks could be opened, the forecastle crowd were fed and dry-sleeping. As ordered by Providence when sailors were first created, men full fed and warmly slept sought for any outlet for rising spirits, and as in nature bound to do they picked on the Marquis joyfully, for his protector, Micky Donlin, was no longer working as a protector.

They forgot even to skin Skimps, the boy, though Big Bill had said often enough that the first chance he got he'd cut the provoking youngster's throat and heave him into the Doctor's soup pot.

And, to the silent amazement of both watches, the Marquis took all the ragging coming his way without once kicking a man in the face. He didn't attempt to use his hands.

He smiled, bowed, apologized, slipped away from a kick or punch like an eel in a bucket of oil, never once hitting back, losing his smile, or saying one of those fearfully weird French sentences that all hands detested through sheer inability to understand them.

Big Bill decided Micky might recover sooner than expected. He sought out the Marquis at the change of the afternoon watch.

"Little frog, I'm goin' to knock yer laugh into a grin, an' then hammer the grin into a crimson loud yowl fer mercy," he said, and promptly landed a broad-handed slap on the Marquis's smiling face.

On his visits to Micky in the half-deck, the Marquis had faithfully lied concerning matters in the forecastle, for he saw that the damaged Irishman was anxious, and anxiety was bad for his crushed shoulder and bruised chest.

"Everysing ees fine, Micky," the Marquis insisted. "Ze men say Skimps an' me are fr'en's of you, and zey geeve us ze gran' kindness.

"Then that's foine, sure," Micky had smiled cheerfully. "Oi wis scared they'd hop onto th' lad, or start in raggin' yez again soon's Oi wis scuppered. Kape yerself goin' aisy, thin Marquis dear. Don't let thim git yer goat now. Sure, Oi'll be wid yez again in a day or two, an' it's yer jooty to see as Big Bill don't pick on that young villain Skimps afore Oi kin look after him again.

"Kape smilin', don't kick back, onless ye have to in self-defence, and, av ye can, pershuade Skimps he's safer wid his tongue betune his teeth 'til Oi git back wid yez."

ALL these sage counsels were in the Marquis's mind now, when his cheeks stung and flamed under the vicious slap of Big Bill. Just for an instant that cunning right leg of the foot-fighter quivered and flexed, but Micky's plea prevailed, the Marquis bowed, and ran up on deck without reprisal.

As will happen at times, the men whose own brutal proclivities were only held in leash by fear of Big Bill and respect for Micky now found a vent in a wholesale baiting of the Marquis. It was a chance too good to miss, for by mobbing the runaway Frenchman, whose feet they no longer feared, they would earn the approval of Chivers—and Micky could not stop them.

On deck they clambered with gleeful oaths. It was Sunday, and except for necessary work and helm tricks the men were holding holiday. The Marquis had taken up a perch on the forecastle rail, calming his smoldering anger with a cigaret without a thought that he would be molested. He flattered himself, in fact, upon having respected Micky's wishes.

"Some day eet shall be zat I keeck ze stoffin' of Beeg Beel from hees estomach out!" he blissfully resolved. Then the sound of the men approaching startled him. Hands seized him from behind, hauled him off the rail to the deck, and fists and feet pounded him without mercy.

The blows and kicks hurt, as they were meant to do; and the Marquis's good resolutions vanished when his cigaret was jammed into his mouth, and a heavy boot landed on his ear. With a shrill cry of pain and fury he sprang clear of the roaring mob, poised himself for a second, then shot out his feet with the speed and accuracy of piston strokes, and two of his assailants crashed to the deck insensible at the moment when the steward led Micky Donlin out on deck for a little exercise in the fresh air.

Big Bill emerged from the scuttle at the same moment, dragging Skimps by the ear; but the Marquis saw nothing of that at the time. He heard Micky's despairing shout, weak as it was from suffering, and shame came upon him in a hot wave.

"Howly Moses! There goes his fut again! Th' little mon'll niver larn!"

And well the Marquis knew that he had displeased his one friend—the man who had saved him getting crippled if not actually killed. To avoid further shame he ran like a hare to the fore-rigging, hoping to escape by flight as shameful. But Skimps entered into the game, anguished howls wrung from him by the cruel ear-twisting of Chivers who was thoroughly enjoying himself in full sight of the helpless Micky.

It was the boy's shrill cry for mercy that wrought still another change of front in the Frenchman.

"Leggo! Ye're tearin' orf me bleedin' ear!" squealed Skimps. "Ow! Micky!——

"Dhrop th' lad, Chivers, or Oi'll take a chance wid yez crippled as Oi am!" yelled Micky, shambling forward, shaking off the

anxious steward who ran aft to bring the officer of the watch.

Skimps screamed again, and his face had gone white as bleached bone with pain and terror. Chivers laughed contemptuously and seized the other ear.

"Stop where y' are, Irish," he warned. "Y' had yer turn all the voyage. It's my turn now. I'll teach boys an' frogs to keep civil tongues towards men."

AS HE twisted the boy's ears, the bully dragged him over to the rigging, where he took up a coil of small line and cast a turn about the quivering lad. His brutal face was red, and his eyes glittered with sheer cruelty; even his comrades had stopped their chasing of the Marquis, their roaring merriment had dropped to a murmur.

"I'll get th' Marquis next—" blustered Big Bill, turning the rope about a pin. Then, from ten feet up the ratlines dropped the Marquis himself, not waiting to be got, and Micky yelled delightedly as the Frenchman crumpled Bill under him.

"Thot's th' bhoy! Oi'll forgive yez this toime av yez kick th' everlashtin' stuffin' outa the big swine, Marquis. Go to him wid both feet, me brave lad. Sure, 'tis excusable wid a big stiff loike him!"

But the Marquis leaped clear as Bill stumbled to his feet cursing bitterly, and though his small face was pale, and his lips tight and colorless, it was in the fashion taught by Micky that he faced the big fellow, with balled fists, a half crouch, and feet sliding swiftly on the deck carrying him forward to lead with a snappy left that caught Bill under the chin with a crack like a shot and sent him back to the boards.

"Thot's the stuff!" howled Micky, delirious with joy. "Git in wid another wan loike thot before he gits sot fer a wallop!"

The Marquis got in with another punishing lead, but his weight was against him.

Big Bill brushed another punch aside, floundered forward, and planted a wallop into the Marquis's middle that hurled him like a half-filled sack clear across the deck. And Bill followed up, willing to finish the job with the boots. Then the Marquis's ability made up for his lack of poundage, and before Bill recovered from missing a terrific kick the Frenchman slipped out sideways, crouched, and leaped in with both small fists balled tightly together to land simultaneously under the big fellow's right ear.

Bill crashed to the deck in a heap at the moment when the mate started forward to stop the fight, and the steward caught Micky's arm and started to drag him back to the half-deck. And above the shouted orders of the officer was the shrill yell of Micky as his conductor hauled him away:

"Be ——! Th' little felly beat him wid his hands! Niver kicked him wanst! Hoorooo-oo!"

Then he halted, and the steward could not force him to move. Even the mate stopped on the edge of the crowd to grin behind his hands before proceeding to carry out his intention; for the Marquis, cocky as a bantam rooster, was gracefully dancing up to the subdued seamen in turn, and paying off the scores that had accrued while they were chasing him.

"Ha!" he cried, snapping his fingers before a startled seaman. "Ha! Eet is you zat keecked me, yes? Zen I keeck, too, see?" And his foot shot out like lightning, taking the fellow in the rear with a spank like the slam of a board. Unerringly he seemed to pick out men who had kicked him. To each he returned the debt in kind. Then he went to the others, who had pummelled him with fists or rope-ends.

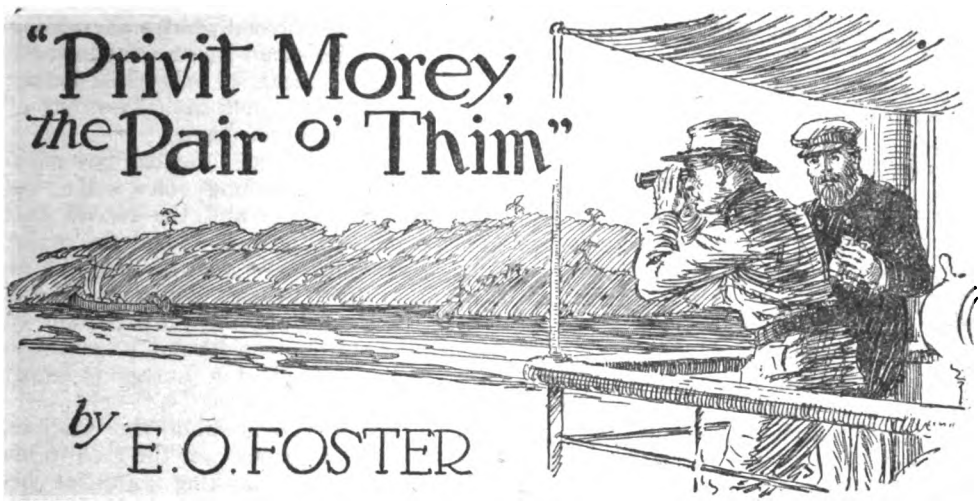
"See," he smiled, "eef you keeck, I keeck. You poonsh me by ze face, I smack ze noz', *comme cal* Weel you scrap ze box, or shall you 'ave sufficient? Spik, for ze officer he waits."

One by one the men slunk away, and the decks resounded with the roaring mirth of Micky. To the mate went the Marquis last of all.

"Sar, ze fracas ees fineesh!" he said with a smile and a bow. "'Ave no uneasiness, messieu'. Zere shall be no more of ze bloominrow, vat you call heem, for I, ze Marquis, am now ze cock of ze forecastle. Big Beel, eet is you zat shall bring ze hash for ze watch ontil ze poor Skimps recover, yes?"

The mate hurried aft shaking with glee, Micky followed his attendant like a lamb, and Skimps forgot the pain of his torn and bruised ears; for Big Bill Chivers, the terrible Bill, turned without a word and fetched forward the supper.

"Privit Morey, the Pair o' Thim"



by E. O. FOSTER

"Oh, I can't get 'em up,
Oh, I can't get 'em up,
Oh, I can't get 'em up in the morning,
Oh, I can't get 'em up,
Oh, I can't get 'em up,
No I can't get 'em up at all——"

LITTLE Tommy Rice was "jamming the wind" at Pateros in his daily endeavor to blow sleeping Company E out of its pup-tents.

"The corporal's worse than the private;
The sergeant's worse than the corporal;
The lieutenant's worse than the sergeant;
And the C-A-P-T-A-I-N-'S—

(Tommy always held her a moment here)

"worse than 'em all!"

Tommy switched to "Assembly," the echoes of his infantry bugle rising shriller and shriller on the morning air. Sergeant Luttge, the "top," came slowly from the orderly tent, timing himself to arrive at the company street exactly as the last note died in the distant hills. His bellowing "Fall In!" carried across the river to Pasig where Colonel Wooley's Second Washingtons already were shouting "here" as the rolls were called.

Lieutenant Miles, his new bars glittering on his shoulders, came snappily to "attention," facing the company just in time to answer Luttge's salute as he reported—

"One private absent, sir."

"Who is it, sergeant?"

"Morey, Second, sir."

The lieutenant's "Dismiss the company, sergeant," was just audible above Tommy's bugle which in a happier note sounded:

"Soupy, soupy, soupy,
Without a single bean,
Porky, porky, porky,
Without a streak of lean,
Coffee, coffee, coffee,
Weakest ever seen."

"Where was Pete Morey?" was the question that added zest to breakfast that morning. It was discussed by rank and file. Morey was gone and so was the little banca the brothers had purchased from an old fisherman a few weeks before, but the Pasig, flowing silently by, bore no trail and told no stories.

"Has he gone up the lake again, Ray?" The cook waved his hand in invitation to Morey, First, to pass his mess-tin for "seconds" and let an extra spoonful of black native molasses drip on the flapjacks in hopes that the brother would rise to the treacly bait. Ray waited until the last drop had trickled from the spoon.

"Don't know, cookee, old top; maybe he's visiting the Washingtons again."

Every one in hearing knew the story of the twins' escapade across the river a week before, and the roar which followed was audible two blocks away, at the padre's house, where "Old Spud" Morphy, Brevet Major, and Captain of Company E, was discussing the absent offender with Lieutenant Miles.

"Listen to the divils shoutin', Mr. Miles. An' have ye no disciplin' in the company at

all? Niver mind answerin'; ye have none at all."

The major threw his lather brush on the tiny camp-table and began to pace the floor. It was time for his morning storm and soon he was holding forth on the army in general and on "Privit Morey, the pair o' thim," in particular. The roar from the company street was all that was necessary to set his hair-trigger temper flashing in the pan.

"—— their sowls, I'll give thim somethin' to howl about before the sun sits, and Morey'll git the jackin' up of his young life when he comes a-trailin' into camp like the —— young jackass he is, the pair o' thim. An' which of the divils is absint, this marning? Yis, yis, Mr. Miles, I know it's Morey, Sicond, but which wan? Ye know I can niver rimimber if 'tis Pete thot's first, and Ray, sicond, or Ray sicond, and——

"—— yer eyes, cut thot silly grin from yer ugly face and till me immejutly is it Pete thot's disgracin' his good Oirish name, or is it—Niver mind, now, niver mind, I know 'twas that—niver mind, I told ye, I know 'twas Pete. He askid me for a pass yisterday an' me not givin' him it, he goes off on his own. I'll show him, the pair o' thim."

The major picked up the discarded brush, made a sweeping white splash of lather down one side of his stubbly old face and began coaxing his recalcitrant razor to open action against the enemy. All of a sudden a new idea percolated through his gray thatched head, and he started for the window before his hand had finished guiding the razor to its first deploying position.

The razor turned traitor. The result was disastrous. There was a clatter of steel on the floor and the major stood balancing the heel of a regulation shoe on the offending blade, his head stuck inquiringly out of the window. There was no one in sight, but the "one, two, three, four, hep—hep—, left, right, left, right," of a drill sergeant counting the cadence for an awkward squad, presaged the arrival of some detachment of newly joined recruits.

"Column left, March!"

The squad turned the corner under the major's window.

"Squad, halt!"

The sergeant had spied the major even before the major had begun his Bashan bull bellow of "Sargint!" He saluted and his "Did the major call?" was all that could be desired in military courtesy. If he saw the tiny stream of blood which was trickling down the major's lean jaws he was too wise to let even the flicker of an eyelash betray it. A smothered giggle came from one of the recruits not so well posted.

"Did the major call" the old boy mimicked in a languishing voice. He was getting warmed up and the recruit had flicked him on the raw. "Did the major call? Ye know —— well he did, but he wasn't calling to ye, Sergeant Weeks. Take thot bunch of scum yer pretendin' to be drillin' out o' my sight and, on yer way, till thot squarehid of a Luttge to report to me at wance!"

The major turned from the window, stuck a piece of paper over the gash in his cheek and began hacking away at his beard with the safety Lieutenant Miles had quietly laid close to his hand, the force of his muttered objurgations blowing a spray of lather from his pursed-up lips. Another idea—and another rush to the window.

"Sargint, Sargint. SARGINT!" His last crescendo call caught the ear of Sergeant Weeks just as his squad was swinging into the company street. It brought him double-timing back.

"Sargint, ye didn't salute whin ye lift. Mind yer eye now. I want no more o' yer foolishness. Ye double-timed to git here, now just double-time back again and till Sargint Luttge to bring Privit Morey, First or Sicond, whichever it is of him, to me. Niver mind thot —— salutin'! Git a hump on ye!"

WHEN Sergeant Luttge and Private Morey, First, reported a few minutes later, the major had passed from his roaring mood to the quieter, seemingly injured, one, which generally heralded a rift in the storms that sometimes hid the real sunshine in the old veteran's character.

The Morey twins, despite their continual disregard of Army regulations, had been the delight and despair of the major's heart ever since they had joined the company at San Francisco before its voyage to the Philippines at the outbreak of the Spanish War. He had forgiven them many a slip, but at last he felt that he must turn the screws a bit after this apparent defiance.

"Morey, where's yer brither?"

Quiet, but with a menace that stabbed,

his voice cut through the hide of the enlisted man like a knife. It was never sharper except when he filed it up a bit to "shave the tail" of some young graduate just out from the Point.

"I do not know, sir."

"Yis, yis, I know ye don't know. Ye don't know beans in yer own spune whin ye don't want to, the pair o' ye, but —— if ye don't till me where he sid he was goin', or the guard-house for yours."

"The guard-house is as the major wishes," came the quiet response. "I have never peached——"

"Shut up now, shut up I say! Take him away sargint, take him away, before I say something thot will land him in Bilibid, —— his eyes!"

The sergeant departed, Morey falling close on his heels. The major's muttering interfering with his shaving, he gave his stubble one last long sweep, and as he dipped his gory face in the basin he spouted words in angry profusion. It was getting a little too warm for the lieutenant, who slid for the door just in time to catch the last tirading effort.

"Sure and he will land in Bilibid, the pair o' thim. The impidence of him! He had niver 'peached!' And he knew thot was jist the answer I might have ixpected whin I let me old fool tongue run away wid me! I'll keep him under arrist for a day or two, just to tell old Wooley thot I have punished him for his brither's helpin' the Chink—bad cess to th' yeller divil—lift his own money out from under the eyes of the Washingtons' guard last week."

The storm was over and the old boy began to chuckle.

"And after stirrin' up all their —— camp, he had the gall to tell me about it, the cheek o' him! He'll be the dith of me yit, the pair o' thim!"

A beautiful calm descended upon the camp, as it always did after one of the major's stormy outbreaks. The men drilled "jist right," the dinner was "foine," and the peace of the tropics had settled down upon the little village of Pateros long before Tommy's bugle sounded the melancholy "Taps," sweetest and saddest of army calls, that night.

Ray Morey, after the guard—its reliefs all posted for the second time—had settled down for a catnap, worked quietly under the edge of the guard tent, rolled carefully in its shadow to a nearby gully, and stole stealthily down the river to intercept his brother, due from Manila that night.

His departure was unnoticed, and the Washington guards overlooked a chance for revenge when they failed to halt the canoe carrying "the pair o' thim" toward the mouth of the Laguna de Bay in the early morning hours.

Juan de Taal, *amigo* when it suited his convenience, *insurrecto* at other times, spied the pair as they pushed steadily toward the lake. He began studying how he could turn this knowledge to his own advantage and long before the brothers had passed the first bend in the Pasig just below the Laguna, he had decided to call on the major before the day was much older.

Again Tommy blew the men of Company E to reveille, and again Sergeant Luttge reported, but "prisoner," not "private" was the appellation he gave Morey, First, who had committed that most unpardonable military offense of breaking guard and quitting camp while under arrest. Lieutenant Miles dismissed the company and walked slowly toward the padre's. He wanted the major to finish shaving before he broke the news that Private Raymond Morey had followed his brother, Peter, "over the hill."

"Mr. Miles, Mr. Miles, why don't ye report the company?". The major's head stuck out of the window, his red flannel undershirt and lathered face standing out in vivid contrast to the cool green of the sash with its tiny squares of opalescent shell which framed him on each side.

"One prisoner missing, is it? Don't till me who 'tis before I finish foolin' me beard with this —— safety contraption o' yours. Was it by any chance the ither Morey? Don't till me now I say, list I fly in a rage and cut mesilf again. I know who it is, bad cess to him! I'll tighten the screws on him till he wishes he was a blasted marine, —— his eyes, the pair o' thim!"

Juan de Taal followed the lieutenant quietly into the room. He had some information for the major. It might mean an order on the commissary for a few cans of salmon, so dear to his fish-loving heart.

"What the —— are ye doing here, ye imp o' the divil?"

It did not take Juan long to tell his little story. He added to it that the Moreys

were known to have purchased a big war banca which they had hidden somewhere in the heavy tules surrounding the island of Malihi in the middle of the Laguna, and that they had been dickering with Old Pappa Isuan, the *insurrecto* chief, secretly, for the last two weeks.

Isuan's name was like a red rag in the major's face. The wily old scoundrel had fled Samar after the massacre of Balanguiga where he had wiped out the better part of an infantry company, and staking his victims out on convenient ant-heaps to be devoured by the vicious insects at leisure, had departed for the Laguna de Bay on the island of Luzon with forty-seven picked men of his forces, all armed with the Krags that had once belonged to his enemies.

Soon after his arrival on the Laguna he had established his headquarters at Los Banos waiting for a chance to sweep down on some other isolated company and repeat his coup. Twice he had made an attempt to steal through the outpost lines of E, only to be discovered and driven back. This latest news was enough to stir the anger of a more even-tempered man than the major, but Lieutenant Miles was not to hear the torrent of curses that he expected Juan's recital would bring forth.

"Mr. Miles, give my compliments to Captain Franklin and say that Major Morphy would be pleased to take a trip to the head of the lake this morning, if the *Napindan* is running, and it is convenient to the captain, ye understand, Mr. Miles, if it is convenient—to the captain."

The even, dead cold accents came quietly from the major's lips, their menace so deep that again Juan de Taal followed in the lieutenant's footsteps without even waiting to ask for the expected reward.

AN HOUR later the major, followed by his orderly, Tommy Rice, stepped aboard the *Napindan*. A short run of five miles and the old converted ferry-boat swung into the Laguna and began to plow her steady, six-knot way toward the head of the lake. The major, sweeping the coves with his field-glasses, kept a close lookout for his "deserters," as he called the Moreys in his running conversation with Captain Franklin.

He had intended to attack Pappa Isuan that very day, and only the Moreys knew the trail through the pampas-grass covering the ridge between Pateros and Los Banos. His plans were all awry and he held forth at length on the defection of the twins.

"Trouble-makers, the pair o' thim! I'll git thim! Ill fix thim, too. I'll lairn thim to break up any party of mine! Had it all planned out to round up Old Isuan today. Thim Moreys, —— thim, knew a nice little trail, but ividently it was only for their own traitorous uses. —— the pair o' rapscillions thot upset an old man before the day is fair begun!"

Meanwhile in the shade of Malihi Island the Moreys were just putting the finishing touches on the gas engine they had bought in Manila and installed secretly in their big war banca. They were ready for their revenge. They would have the laugh on Old Spud, the major, this time.

Leon de Jesus, ostensibly postmaster at Pasig, in reality one of Aguinaldo's most trusted agents, had left them a few minutes before, paddling hurriedly to Pappa Isuan, at Los Banos, with the word that the two Americans were ready to deliver a dozen cases of much needed Krag ammunition to the insurgents, at Paquil, in return for commissions in the Insurgent army and a small honorarium in Philippine pesos. They did not dare make the transfer at Los Banos owing to the proximity of the American troops.

About the time the *Napindan* struck her nose into the Laguna the twins were already paddling slowly toward Paquil. A small square sail forward hid the deadwood bracing in the bow and made the rather heavy task of propelling the big banca somewhat easier. Aft of the mast were piled ammunition boxes, along the sides on the oval bottom of the craft, hiding the engine amidships. It was slow work and Pappa Isuan's big banca had been rolling idly in the swell off Paquil for an hour before the twins arrived within hailing distance.

The *Napindan* had completed a circle around Malihi before the major picked up the two canoes at the head of the lake. The tropical sun was pouring down on the old vessel, its iron-sheeted sides reflecting the rays which bored like molten lead at the pitch seams in the decking.

The major had sought refuge beneath the awning over the bridge and both he and Captain Franklin were following every move of the distant bancas with their glasses. As the *Napindan* drew nearer they saw

the Moreys pass an ammunition-box over the side of their banca to the waiting members of Isuan's crew.

"Look at 'em now, will ye," burst from the major's lips, "handin' over thot box of ammunition to old Isuan as if ivery bullit did not carry a dith ticket for some poor comrade. And see the other two boats loaded to the gunnels with dirty *amigos* pullin' quietly from the tules to flank the young divils if they are not inclined to accipt old Isuan's idea of a proper sittlement. Jist look at 'em. I've worked over thim two byes like a fathir, tryin' to make soldiers out o' thim, and now, just bekase this divilish old tongue of mine ran loose and ripped the hide off thim a bit, the pair o' thim turn traitor.

"Wot's thot? They're backin' away? Will, can't I see it? Probably holding out for the rank of Jigadier Brindle and a few thousand pesos before they deliver thimselves neck and crop to the inimy. In the meantime old Isuan has enough ammunition to load all his Krags and blow the young divils into Kingdom Come, and thot's jist whot he's doin' this minit, passin' out the good thirty-thirties to his blackamoor guard, bad cess to thim. Thim byes will be rounded up immejut or I'm an old fule of an infantry major.

"Howly Moses, Franklin, look at thot!" The *Napindan* was now within an easy half mile of the Moreys. "What's thot the young divils are throwing overboard? More ammunition, did ye say? Bet ye a dollar old Wooley'll be coming to me tonight with the story of how the young divils robbed his ammunition train! And what for are they throwin' it overboard? Ye don't know? Well I do! They're showin' old Isuan they can play poker. Look at the ither two canoes close in! They'll be the jokers old Isuan has up his sleeve."

The Moreys kept pitching the ammunition-boxes overboard, paying no attention to the approaching canoes. Soon they were flanked, and old Isuan called to the men in the other canoes to get ready to fire if the Americans did not stop dropping the boxes of cartridges he needed so badly into the lake.

Suddenly the pair ceased their labors. Ray stepped quickly to the bow of the banca, pulled down the flapping sail, and a second later Old Glory was swinging to the gentle breeze from the masthead.

"Phwat in ——" The more the major was excited the more he reverted to his Irish accent and the language of his earlier days, when he, too, was a private. "Phwat in ——," he repeated, "is that thing in the bottom of the canoe! A motor ye say, Franklin? And where did the divils git that contraption? She's turnin' over, too. ——, see the speed of her! They can run around anything on the lake, not ixcipting this old tub, bigging yer pardon, Captain Franklin. Headin' straight for us, too, like a comet, with the Stars and Stripes at the hid and old Isuan's flotilly dropping astern in their tail."

The strain was getting too much for O!d Spud. There was going to be a scrap and he never let a scrap go by without getting in it. He dropped from the bridge and rushed wildly for the Hotchkiss rifle in the bow, shoving the crew to one side. He was just drawing a fine bead on old Isuan's banca when the Moreys' craft, making a good twenty miles an hour, cut his front sight.

"—— the fules! They're going back to dicker with old Isuan! I wash my hands o' thim. Lit thim sink to —— through the bottom of the lake and git cooled off on the way down! They'll need it, the traitorous sassenach, whin the divil of all begins poking their ribs."

The major had exhausted his vocabulary and his anger. No matter what the Moreys were planning to do now, they had been true blue in the fight at Malabon, and at Pateros, when he took the little town, and at Zapote bridge they had been part of the detachment that had swum the river and turned the insurgent flank. They had followed Lieutenant Miles into block-house fourteen, both being wounded in the hand-to-hand fight for its possession.

It had been the only real bayonet scrap thus far in the Insurrection and the major had a kindly corner for the few men that had helped Lieutenant Miles win his "honorable mention" that day.

THE *Napindan* was plowing steadily ahead in the wake of the onrushing canoe. The major could see the barrels of Isuan's men glisten in the sun as the little brown brothers took careful aim at the onrushing banca. He saw the flash of Isuan's bolo as he signaled "Fire!"

The ragged spurt of flame which followed seared the heart-strings of the gallant old soldier. A tear dimmed his eye, and with a "God be merciful to him, the pair o' thim!" the aged veteran turned to the Hotchkiss ready to sweep the Laguna clean of Isuan's crew.

He had not seen the two Moreys drop to cover behind the remaining ammunition-boxes at the flash of Isuan's guns, but he did see the commotion the volley raised in the canoes, and he did see the Moreys rise quickly to their feet and drive their banca for all it was worth straight through the sides of Pappa Isuan's pet war-vessel, leaving a stream of bobbing heads in their wake.

"Look at 'em now, Franklin, look at 'em now!" The old boy was fairly dancing in his excitement. "They want all the fun to thimsilves! Divil a chance can I git with your old scatter-gun! Look at 'em circle! And who is thot trailin' astern? Good boy, thot's right, bring the old divil into court!" Morey, Second, had picked old Isuan neatly from the water, and was now heading for the second banca.

"Why in the —— don't thim fool gu-gus fire on the pair of young divils. Are they all tongue-tied in their arms and eyes? There goes the sicond banca! See the heads bobbing like coconuts."

The major was shouting advice to the Moreys now a good quarter of a mile away in pursuit of the third of Isuan's flotilla.

"Rip 'em up ye divils. I don't know how ye did it, but ye're an honor to Company E."

The Moreys could not hear him, but his "Make a big circle now and cut off the ither wan" was carried out to the letter, for they completed the big sweep which put them between the fleeing *insurrectos* and the shore and herded them toward the *Napindan*—within reach of the major's tongue.

"Phwat the —— are yez doin' out here carryin' on a privit war of yer own, whin you knew I wanted yez to show me the way to that old divil's stronghold, so I could carry out a proper military evolution for his capture?"

"Pappa Isuan was in a hurry for those cartridges, sir, and it took time to load them."

Peter was standing at attention, the motor dead and the banca rocking slightly in the gentle swell, as snappy a looking soldier as one could wish to see as he answered the major's question. Ray was keeping close guard of the huddled prisoners.

"And phwat did yez want to load 'em for? Isn't Uncle Sam able to furnish ammunition good enough for your gu-gu frinds to slay your comrades with, bad cess to yez?"

"Too good, major, so we loaded one case with guncotton that Pete got yesterday from our uncle, the captain of the *Charleston*, and the rest were dummy boxes filled with sand. Shall we put the prisoners aboard, sir? Most of them have wounds which need dressing."

THAT night as Pappa Isuan and his motley crew were nursing their wounds in the old church—temporarily converted into a guard-house—the major was deep in his recital of the day's epic for the delectation of the colonel of the Second Washingtons, who had offered his aid in rounding up the "deserters."

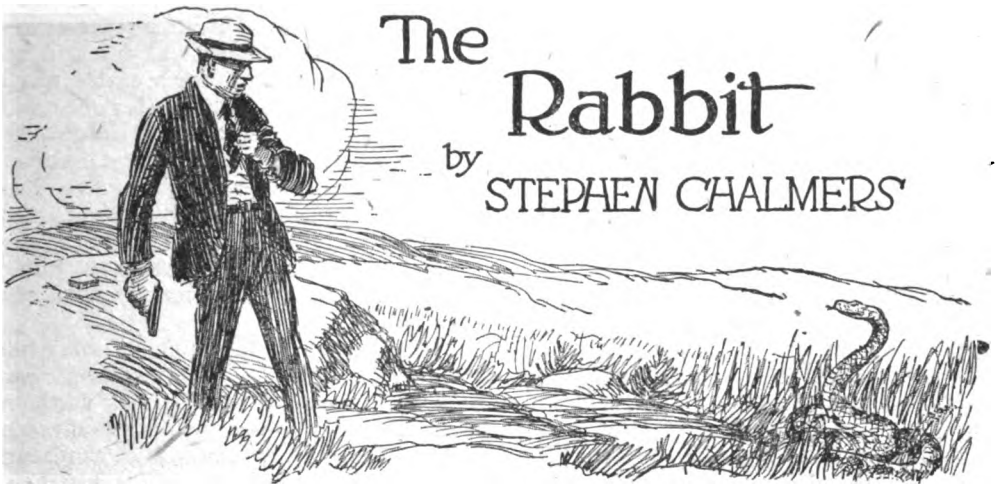
"Aid be ——, beggin' yer pardon sir. I niver had a diserter in me company. Of coorse a few of the byes has lift at odd times whin they received word thot their old mithers were sick—and forgot to come back, but there niver was a real diserter in old John Morphy's outfit.

"And ye think they took some ammunition with them, do ye?" The major's voice took on a truculent tone. "Ye have heard of the 'Forty Thieves,' have ye? Will, any time my byes steal it is not thim, it is the min of old Matile's outfit wearin' the cross-guns they stole from E while on guard-duty at Manila. My byes don't steal.

"Yes, Privit Morey, the pair o' thim, did lift a box of your ammunition, and if ye would be interested to know, they gave it to old Pappa Isuan today with the compliments of E company, —teenth U. S. Infantry. Old Isuan could not fire it fast enough, and after the first volley, forty-sivin shots and forty-sivin casualties, the rest wint into the lake along with twinty boxes loaded with sand."

"Yis, forty-sivin I said, and only forty-sivin shots fired. And that was not the only 'wilful waste and destruction of government property,' for there's forty-sivin Krags to be added to the list of damages. How's thot, ye say? Will if ye must know, they loaded that case of cartridges with guncotton they begged of Captain Morey

of the *Charleston*, and then flaunted the Stars and Stripes before old Isuan until they teased him into letting a volley go after thim. Result, forty-sivin bursted breechblocks on forty-sivin Krags, forty-sivin wounded gu-gus, and forty-sivin days in the guard-house for the pair o' thim, And why the guardhouse? Man alive jist to teach thim to invite Old Spud to their next party! Here's to Privit Morey, colonel! —— him, he'll be the dith o' me nixt, the pair o' thim."



Author of "The Supreme Court Goes Fishin'," "Lure of the Lode," etc.

LEDERS sat on the face of the sunlit rock, a shiny, new-blue automatic pistol idly clasped in the hand that drooped between his knees. His eyes were fixed, rather unseeingly, upon a rabbit which had come out of the low brush and, seeing the man, or doubtful if this still object was indeed a living thing, sat perfectly still, ears up, and soft round eyes timidly alert.

The thoughts of the man were far from the subject of rabbits. If they momentarily lingered on the little bunch of brown-and-white fur it was with the attention to trivial detail which is a peculiarity of mental tension.

Yet the mind of Curzon Leders was curiously calm just then—calm, remote, isolated in the vastness which surrounded him and this top-o'-the-world spot where he had chosen to think it over finally.

Had he been a religious man—which he was not—he might have considered himself alone with his God. Had he been irreligious—which he was not, either—he might have added, "and a rabbit."

He was so near and yet so far from the scene of that matter which had cost him nights sleepless to the point of madness brought oddly disfiguring lines to his eyes and mouth-corners and faded the coloring of the hair at his temples.

So near and yet so remote from Los Angeles, the existence of which was marked beyond distant, low hills by an oval smudge of industrial vapor against the blue skies. Yet Leders had only to turn his head and see, far to the southeast, the dim bluff of Punta Loma by San Diego; for there was nothing to obstruct his view from this hilltop for from twenty to a hundred miles in any direction.

"It's like the jumping-off place," he had said to himself when he came to the rock where this great, circular vista suddenly opened out. "It's what I would have wished—the kind of place I hoped to find."

To his left, running parallel with the coast hills, was the great, blue blister of the Pacific. It was broken by the rough silhouette of Santa Catalina Island which looked like a drifting bit of crushed brown paper down on the western horizon.

At his immediate right the hills fell away into the vast, green valley of the Mission Viejo, where here and there were spattered

spots of white—ranch-houses, villages, towns. Beyond these rose, graying as they neared but never quite touched the snow-line, the hills of Temescal; and beyond that again to the north the Bear Mountains, snow-covered and glistening blue-white in the sunlight.

Over the whole scene of green, brown, silver-white and gold a turquoise sky stretched in a wide, perfect dome. That "inverted bowl" reminded Leders just then of a verse from the *credo* of a philosopher who perhaps had had none too salutary an influence on this man's look-out and look-forward.

'Tis but a Tent where takes his one day's rest
A Sultán to the realm of Death addrest;
The Sultán rises, and the dark Ferrásh
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.

And then, the cloud of retrospection, the haze of introspection, clearing from his mind and eyes, he saw the rabbit.

Possibly it had been there five minutes or five seconds: Leders did not know—or care, anyway. It was just a plain Molly Cottontail; but the sleek smoothness of its unsullied coat, the limpid clearness of the half-startled half-curious eyes and the rigid grace of the alert pose stirred in the man a kind of envy.

"Hullo, little *conejo!*" he said with a half-wistful softness. "You're lucky—if you only knew it. You do not exercise yourself in great matters, as I used to hear 'em sing in church back home. You're just born, and you grow up, take a *pasear* in the cool of mornings and evenings, sleep when it's too hot or too cold, or the wind blows too hard. When there's trouble abroad you just take to a hole and pull the hole in after you.

"You don't have to worry about——"

The rabbit suddenly stirred, perhaps at the voice—started as if a gun had exploded near by. But it did not run. It dropped from its pretty sitting-erect posture and cowered close to the ground as if paralyzed with fear. It flattened its long ears upon the reddish nape of its neck. Its limpid eyes became deep round wells mirroring some dark dread.

THEN, as Leders wondered, completely forgetting himself and his affairs for the moment, the rabbit uttered a queer, shrill squeal and sprang in the air.

Turning a complete somersault it struck the ground on its side, regained its feet after a slight struggle and began to hobble around in a curious, aimless way as if stricken with blindness.

Presently it rolled over on its side. For a moment it seemed to suffer a slight convulsion; then the quivering limbs straightened out and became still. It was dead!

Leders, not understanding, rose to his feet and took a few steps forward to investigate. But suddenly he stopped and his grip became tight on the automatic pistol which had been dangling loosely in his right hand.

From the low brush near the dead rabbit a danger flag was hoisted—a thing that fluttered so rapidly that to the eye it was but a small, half-transparent, grayish blur. And from this warning flag issued a high-pitched sound like the whirr of a cricket, yet with a suggestion of the metallic note of some tiny telephone bell.

Then Leders saw the thing and his heart gave a painful throb. Not because he was a coward—which he may or may not have been; not even because the thing he saw was larger than he had conceived such a creature ever grew; but merely that it was a snake—a rattlesnake; and all his life he had had a violent idiosyncrasy of horror in the matter of reptiles.

Involuntarily he started back a step. At the suddenness of the movement the rattlesnake instantly drew itself into the position of attack and defense; coiled, with its head and tail up, the latter sounding warning or challenge (who shall say which?), the former spitting hatred from two beady eyes and a flickering, needle-like tongue.

Leders was not afraid in that moment. Strange to say, he was not even conscious of his old horror. It was just as if his back was to the wall and every other emotion was covered by or embodied in the great instinct of self-preservation—to kill rather than be killed.

He knew little about the automatic pistol in his right hand. It was new. He had bought it on the previous evening; and the dealer had filled the clip in demonstrating how that and other things about the weapon should be managed. He had declined to purchase an extra clip. The remainder of the single box of cartridges which he had bought lay on the rock that he had temporarily abandoned. He had used the shell-box as a weight for a paper on which he had written a message.

Quickly he aimed at the lifted head of the rattlesnake and pulled the trigger. The trigger did not yield. Then he remembered. The weapon was "on safe."

He noticed that his fingers trembled as he unlocked the pistol action.

"Keep cool!" his subconsciousness whispered to him. "That's death in front of you!"

He pulled himself together, aimed again at the slightly wavering head of the serpent, and fired. He missed, the bullet sending up a spurt of white dust from a bit of limestone broken off from the honeycombed rock among the brush.

Ere Leders could try again, the rattlesnake not moving from its posture of defense, from close at his right came another nerve-scraping whirr!

Instantly Leders glanced in that direction, but without moving his head or lowering his arm, he had again leveled at the enemy in front.

There was another rattlesnake there, about twelve feet away. It was emerging from the honeycombing of the rock, or possibly, alarmed by the shot, seeking cover of it.

The leveled arm swung quickly around and Leders fired a snapshot at the second reptile. Luck was with him—pure luck. The bullet caught the snake about the thickest part of its body and crippled it, without however, killing.

Leders felt the thrill of "first blood." He knew that, even if this second rattlesnake did not die presently, it could not come nearer him—in a hurry, at least. All he had to do was to keep half-an-eye on it while he devoted the other eye-and-a-half to the big, ugly thing in front of him.

It was still there, about seven feet away. It was still coiled, the head, like that of a spear, swaying slightly on the gracefully upcurved neck, the tail intermittently lifting and sounding its scalp-chilling note.

"Keep cool!" whispered the *alter ego* of subconsciousness. "Take a little more care with the next shot. Suppose you aim low!"

But Leders himself, with that attention to detail which is a peculiarity of taut nerves, found himself wondering why the big snake was colored differently from that one which was squirming in crippled agony at his right.

He was thinking of this trivial thing while he steadied the weapon over his left forearm and took aim again at the loathesome monster in front of him. They both had the same shape, although in different sizes and the back of each was patterned faintly with diamond figures in grayish outlines. But the hue of the body-color of the smaller snake was darker than that of the big rattlesnake in front of him. *That* was of a fierce brick-red darkening toward the head and setting off the diamond pattern more vividly.

They were not of the same variety, he found himself concluding. Then they were hardly likely to be mates. He thought not, and the thought added to the unpleasantness of the situation. If there were two—not mates—there might possibly be more than two.

He had drawn the bead he wanted on the big fellow—just where the foreground and its body met. Somewhere he had heard or read something about—trajectory? Was that the word?

But as he was about to pull the trigger, the rattlesnake, as if sensing its peril, stirred, lowered its head, uncoiled itself and began slithering off in retreat. As it went Leders was surprized to note that it was a larger snake even than he had thought. Its body was as thick as his forearm. Its full length he could not determine on account of the brush.

A kind of rage seized upon Leders. After all this— He felt that it ought to pay with its life.

"Don't let it escape!" whispered the *alter ego*. "Kill it!"

Leders took a step after the retreating reptile, the pistol raised ready to shoot at opportunity. At the first movement in pursuit the rattlesnake again coiled itself into the posture of defense.

Up went Leders' pistol to his forearm again. He fired, but not this time at the head. Taking no further chance of missing he shot into the densely coiled body.

With the bark of the automatic the reptile gave a mighty squirm and shot two-thirds of its body-length blindly upward—like a flung stick. Then it fell to the ground and became convulsed with mighty writhings.

The slug, although Leders did not know it then, had grazed one coil and broken through another at a point about twelve inches from the tail. The reptile was by no means out of the fight.

But Leders thought it was, like that other

to the right; and, anyway, his attention was diverted almost at the instant he shot by a sudden chorus of whirrings, one sounding close at his left, the others for the most part behind him!

AS IF built on springs he flung himself around. He could see nothing but the low, green brush gently vibrating in a breath of air from the distant sea. Yet the whirrings continued and he could place their source almost to a foot—hearing serving for vision.

Yet he *could not see* them, and that fact tortured him more than if he had beheld the big reptile he had just wounded slithering straight toward him with malice of revenge gleaming in its beady eyes and its needlelike tongue flickering venomously.

He knew now that he had stumbled on not one rattlesnake, nor two, but a nest of them. This whole area of brush and honeycombed limestone rock was alive with them! The Eden he had chosen for his final consideration of a great question had numerous serpents in it.

He was as one surrounded—trapped—unexpectedly. It seemed inconceivable in a place of such natural, peaceful beauty. Down to the west the sea spread a placid blue-and-silver cloth under the sparkling sunlight. From far down the valley of the Mission Viejo to the east he could hear the lowing of cattle. To his nostrils came the odor of sun-warmed earth and the coolness of clean, high air touched with the aroma of brush that he had bruised in passing or underfoot. Yet, every other second, beauty of scene and balm to sense were jarred by a whirr that passed over his nerves like a new file over satin.

His gaze had been temporarily turned back of him and to the left, searching for the rattlesnakes which sounded close but did not appear. Then upon the quick, jumpy springs of nervousness he spun around to his former position, startled by the noise of a faint rustling in the low brush, as of something slowly, stealthily stealing upon him unawares.

It was the larger of the two visible rattlers. The other was hardly moving; perhaps dead and merely quivering. But the big reptile had straightened itself out and seemed to be coming toward him, dragging its broken tail after it.

Whether it just happened to come his way in a blindness of pain, in a blind attempt to escape, he had no means of knowing. Only the sight of the thing, its full length now apparent, its black, unshifting eyes catching gleams from the sunlight and its thin lips moving curiously as it rapidly projected the needlelike tongue—the whole aspect of the thing filled him with a momentary paroxysm of horror.

At pointblank he fired. Twice—thrice he pulled the trigger, and each time the pistol flashed. Again—and the weapon made no response. The clip was exhausted.

But he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had hit the big snake again. Its powers of locomotion were clearly diminished some more, although it was again squirming violently and seemed far from dead.

The pistol was empty and the rest of his shells were on that rock, the containing box weighting down that paper, the edges of which fluttered in the fitful breeze from the sea. That little box was but a few yards away, yet between him and it sounded at intervals the warning note of invisible rattlesnakes.

He dared not move in any direction.

Presently the voice of that subconscious *alter ego* drifted in from a long distance.

"Keep cool and think!" it whispered. "Make a false move and you are a dead man. If you're going to be bitten, friend Leders, you're just going to be bitten; and getting the shells after you are struck won't help you much.

"You stand a better chance if you keep still. Don't move a hand or foot—particularly a foot. These low shoes you're wearing without leggings are pretty poor for brushwork. You haven't any rattlesnake cure with you and probably wouldn't know how to use it if you had. You don't know any of the old native cures—herbs and that sort of thing.

"See what you get for not being interested in finding out things that were outside of your business," continued the subconscious voice in a curious, insistent monotone. "Every time the subject was snakes you put down the story, or whatever it was. Didn't like to read about snakes—eh? Gave you the horrors.

"How do you know they did? (Watch the big fellow—he's moving again.) Oh, yes. You read about rattlers once in 'Two

Years Before the Mast.' Why, man, it happened right about here, too. That's Dana's Head sticking out there before your eyes—this side of Capistrano Bay—place where Dana tossed the hides down to the drogher's boats.

"Don't you remember how Dana went cutting firewood—right about here, Curzon—right about here—and bumped into a nest of rattlers? Don't you remember *now* what he wrote about 'em? Think, man, *think!* What the natives told him? 'So long as they're rattling they're moving—probably away from you. They don't *want* trouble if they can avoid it. It's when they're somewhere about, and *still*, that they're dangerous.' That was it! Of course, you remember. Funny you should remember that so clearly *now*. You haven't thought of it since you read the book when you were a boy, back home.

"Well? . . . *Keep still!*"

FOR an hour he stood there, almost motionless, the empty pistol in his hand, the sweat rolling from his face, his damp clothing sticking to his skin, his lips and tongue hot and dry, for the breeze had petered out and the sun beat mercilessly upon him. The glare, struck up from the limestone rocks, had drawn salt tears that blinded his eyes. The soles of his shoes burned his feet like hot metal plates.

Long since the two rattlesnakes—the only two he had actually seen to shoot at—had ceased to move. They lay there sprawled in ungainly lines, red- and gray-scaled, diamond-marked horrors with bellies banded with a smooth-worn, bony "corduroy" of a sickly yellow.

For about twenty minutes he had not heard a warning whirr. But before he took a step from the stance he had held so long, he cautiously stooped, and picking up a few loose pieces of rock pitched them here and there into the low brush between him and the rock where the cartridge-box weighted down the paper.

No high-pitched note of a warning rattlesnake responded. They had gone to cover.

Still carefully he picked a path back to the rock, beyond which lay clearer ground and the trail by which he had come from the coast highway below. Only when he reached that comparatively clear spot by the rock did tension relax. He sat down, wiped his damp face and neck with a kerchief, and breathed deeply.

But presently he stood up again. From the higher elevation of the rock he looked down upon the spot, not five yards beyond the edge of the low brush where adventure had held him through one long hour of inferno.

Among the little green bushes he could see the dead rabbit—the rabbit which had been the first actor on the stage; the rabbit which he had quite forgotten in the meantime. Beyond it, and also on this side of it, two irregular grayish-red streaks among the brush told him he had not been the victim of a hideous day-dream.

A thrill of victory's satisfaction ran through him. He was still utterly forgetful of what had brought him to this hilltop in the first place. Now that the all-absorbing thought of self-preservation had left him, pride of prowess succeeded.

He would have a great tale to tell these fellows at the club whose horizon was bounded by the city's limits and business interests. He would take back the dead rattlesnakes to prove his veracity.

Chuckling to himself he cast around until he found a fair length of brush-stick. Armed with this he returned to the scene of his adventure. In a gingerly manner he fished out the reptiles' carcasses.

His delight and pride were great when he calculated that the larger serpent was five feet long, more or less, as thick around the middle of its body as his forearm, and carried fourteen rattles! The smaller was at least four feet long, as thick around as his wrist and carried nine rattles.

"Good work!" chuckled the subconscious voice. "You're no rabbit! You don't take things lying down!"

Then, as Leders arranged his matters for departure from that hellish spot, his gaze fell on the paper weighted down by the box of shells.

For a moment he stared at the thing unbelievingly. Which was real? The adventure with the rattlesnakes—or *that?* As the memory of the purpose that had brought him here rushed back upon his temporarily diverted mind, a sickness of shame descended upon him.

Slowly he detached the paper and read again what he had written. It was grave matter couched in cynical terms. It was to the effect that should any ever find "the

remains" it would be unnecessary to raise a cry about possible foul play, and it would be charitable not to attempt positive identification.

"The original tenant chose to leave this house for reasons amply sufficient—which, however, concern nobody else."

"Amply sufficient—" echoed Leders, while the new-blue of the automatic blinked in the sunlight. "Were they?—Are they ever? I wonder——"

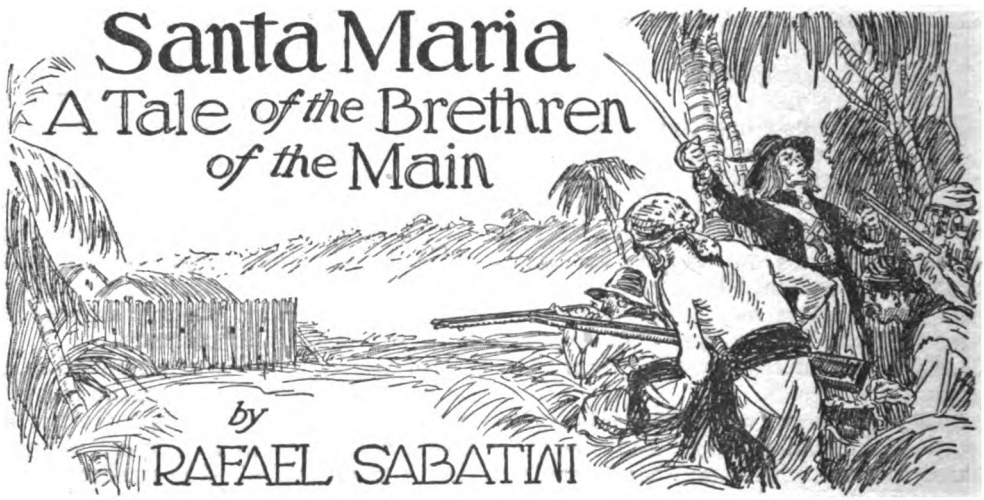
"Why don't you be consistent?" whispered the *alter ego* in that dull, insistent monotone. "Do what you came to do. You're a queer stick. You don't understand yourself. Why didn't you let a rattlesnake bite you? What was the idea of standing blistering there for an hour, fighting for the life you came up here to take? Is life so darn sweet at that?"

"No—not that. It isn't," muttered Leders, as if replying to some actual opponent in argument. "It's just that——"

His eyes fell upon the dead rabbit; the poor, timid thing that had cowered, paralyzed by fear into submission.

"It's just that I forgot—the difference—between men and rabbits—facing the music or lying down. I've proved to myself that I can face the music—and I will."

Deliberately Leders tore the cynical message into small pieces, slung the snakes over his stick and over his shoulder, pocketed the pistol which had served a man and no coward, and went down the open trail with a firm step and a clear eye.



Author of "The Prize," "Don Diego Valdez," etc.

THE buccaneer fleet of five tall ships rode snugly at anchor in a sequestered creek on the western coast of the Gulf of Darien. A cable's length way, beyond gently heaving pellucid waters, shot with opalescence by the morning sun, stretched a broad crescent of silver-gray sand; behind this rose the forest, vividly green from the rains now overpast, abrupt and massive as a cliff.

At its foot, among the flaming rhododendrons thrusting forward like outposts of the jungle, stood the tents and rude log-huts, palmetto-thatched—the buccaneer encampment during that season of careening, refitting, and victualling with the fat turtles abounding thereabouts.

The buccaneer host, some eight hundred strong, surged there like a swarming hive, a heterogeneous mob, English and French in the main, but including odd Dutchmen and even a few West-Indian half-castes. There were boucan-hunters from Hispaniola, lumbermen from Campeachy, vagrant seamen, runagate convicts from the plantations and proscribed outlaws from the old world and the new.

Out of the jungle into their midst stepped on that glowing April morning three Darien Indians, the foremost of whom was of a tall, commanding presence, broad in the shoulder and long in the arm. He was clad in drawers of hairy, untanned hide, and a red blanket served him for a cloak. His naked

breast was streaked in black and red, in his nose he wore a crescent-shaped plate of beaten gold that hung down to his lip, and there were massive gold rings in his ears. A tuft of eagle's feathers sprouted from his sleek black hair, and he was armed with a javelin which he used as a staff.

He advanced calmly and without diffidence into their staring midst and in primitive Spanish announced himself for the *cacique* Guanahani, called by the Spaniards Brazo Largo. He begged to be taken before their captain, to whom he referred also by his Hispanicized name of Don Pedro Sangre.

They conducted him aboard the flagship the *Colleen*, and there in the captain's cabin the Indian *cacique* was courteously made welcome by a spare gentleman of a good height, very elegant in the Spanish fashion, whose resolute face, in cast of features and deep coppery tan, might, but for the eyes of a vivid blue, have been that of a Darien Indian. Brazo Largo came to the point with a directness and economy of words to which his limited knowledge of Spanish constrained him.

"*Usted venir con migo. Yo llevar usted mucho oro Español. Caramba,*" said he in deep guttural tones. Literally this may be rendered: "You to come with me. I take you much Spanish gold," with the added vague expletive, "*Caramba!*"

The blue eyes flashed interest. And, in the fluent Spanish acquired in less unregenerate days, Captain Blood answered him with a laugh:

"You are very opportune. *Caramba!* Where is this Spanish gold?"

"Yonder." The *cacique* pointed vaguely westward. "Over land march ten days."

Blood's face grew overcast. Remembering Morgan's exploit across the isthmus, he leaped at a conclusion.

"Panama?" quoth he.

But the Indian shook his head, a certain impatience in his sternly wistful features.

"No. Santa Maria." And he proceeded to explain that there, on the river of that name, was collected all the gold mined in the mountains of the district for ultimate transmission to Panama. Now was the time when the accumulations were heaviest. Soon the gold would be removed. If Captain Blood desired it—and Brazo Largo knew that there was a prodigious store—he must come at once.

Of the Indian's sincerity and good-will toward himself Captain Blood entertained no single doubt. The bitter hatred toward Spain smoldering in the breast of all Indians under Spanish rule, made them the instinctive allies of any enemy of Spain.

Captain Blood sat on the locker under the stern windows, and looked out over the sun-kissed waters of the lagoon.

"How many men would be required?" he asked at last.

"Forty ten, fifty ten, perhaps," said Brazo Largo, from which the captain adduced that he meant four or five hundred.

He questioned him closely as to the nature of the country they would have to cross, and the fortifications defending Santa Maria. Brazo Largo put everything in the most favorable light, smoothed away all difficulties, and promised not only himself to guide them but to provide bearers to convey their gear. And all the time, with gleaming anxious eyes, he kept repeating to Captain Blood:

"Much gold. Much Spanish gold. *Caramba!*"

"You are very eager that we should go, my friend," said Blood, pondering him. "You seem to hate the Spaniard very bitterly."

"Hate!" said Brazo Largo. His lips writhed, and he made guttural noises of emphatic affirmation. "Huh! Huh!"

"Well, well. I must consider." He called the boatswain and delivered the *cacique* into his care for entertainment.

A council, summoned by bugle-call from the quarter-deck of the *Colleen*, was held as soon thereafter as those concerned were come aboard.

ASSEMBLED about the oak table in the admiral's cabin they formed a motley group, truly representative of the motley host encamped ashore; Blood, at the table's head, looking like a *grandee* of Spain in the somber richness of his black and silver, the long ringlets of his sable hair reaching to his collar of fine point; young Jerry Pitt, ingenuous of face and in plain gray homespun, like the West of England Puritan that he had been; Hagthorpe, stiffly built, stern-faced, wearing showy clothes without grace, looked the simple, downright captain of fortune. Wolverstone, herculean of build, bronzed of skin, and picturesquely untidy of person, with a

single eye of a fierceness far beyond his nature, was perhaps the only one whose appearance really sorted with his trade. Mackett and James had the general appearance of mariners. Lastly, Yberville, vying in elegance with Blood, had more the air and manner of a Versailles exquisite than of a leader of desperate and bloody pirates.

The admiral—for such was the title by now bestowed by his following upon Captain Blood—laid before them the proposal brought by Brazo Largo. He merely added that it came opportunely inasmuch as they were without immediate plans.

Opposition sprang naturally enough from those who were first and foremost seamen—from Pitt, Mackett and James. Each in turn dwelt upon the hardships and dangers attending long overland expeditions. Hagthorpe and Wolverstone, intent upon striking the Spaniard where he most would feel it, favored the proposal, and reminded the council of Morgan's successful raid upon Panama. Yberville, a French Huguenot, proscribed and banished for his faith, and chiefly intent upon slitting the throats of Spanish bigots, wherever and whenever it might be done, proclaimed himself also for the venture in accents as mild and gentle as his words were hot and bloodthirsty.

Thus stood the council equally divided, and it remained for Blood to cast the vote that should determine the matter. But the admiral hesitated and in the end resolved to leave the decision to the men themselves. He would call for volunteers, and if their numbers reached the necessary quota, he would lead them across the isthmus, leaving the others with the ships.

The captains, approving this, they went ashore at once, taking the Indians with them. There Blood harangued the buccaneers, fairly expounding what was to be said for and what against the venture.

"I myself," he announced, "have resolved to go if so be that I am sufficiently supported." And then after the manner of Pizarro on a similar occasion, he whipped out his rapier and with the point of it drew a line in the sand. "Let those who choose to follow me across the isthmus, step now to windward of this line."

A full half of them responded noisily to his invitation. They included to a man the boucan-hunters from Hispaniola—who were by now amphibious fighters and the hardiest of all that hardy host—and most of the lumbermen from Campeachy, for whom swamp and jungle had no terrors.

When counted they proved to number four hundred and twenty men. The others, who held aloof, were chiefly fellows who by rearing or from late habit were followers of the sea, and who mistrusted themselves away from their ships.

Brazo Largo, his coppery face aglow with satisfaction, departed to collect his bearers, and he marched them, fifty stalwart savages, into the camp next morning. The adventurers were ready. They were divided into three companies, each commanded respectively by Wolverstone, Yberville—who had shed his fripperies and dressed himself in the leather garb of the hunter—and a hard-bitten fighter named Christian.

Thus they set out, preceded by the Indian bearers, carrying their heavier gear, their tents, six small brass cannon of the kind known as sakers, cans for fire-balls, good store of victuals—doughboys and strips of dried turtle—and the medicine-chest. From the decks of the fleet the bugles called farewell and in pure ostentation Hagthorpe fired a salute from his guns as the jungle swallowed the adventurers.

Ten days later, having covered a distance of some one hundred and sixty miles, they encamped within striking distance of their destination. The first part of the journey had been the worst, when their way lay over precipitous mountains, laboriously scaled on the one side and almost as laboriously descended on the other. On the seventh, they rested in a great Indian village, where dwelt the king or chief *cacique* of the Indians of Darien, who informed by Brazo Largo of their object, received and entreated them with all honor and consideration.

Gifts were exchanged, knives, scissors and beads on the one side, against plantains and sugar-cane on the other, and reinforced here by a score of Indians, the buccaneers pushed on. They came on the morrow to the river of Santa Maria, on which they embarked in a fleet of some seventy canoes of Indian providing.

But it was a method of traveling that afforded at first little of the ease it had seemed to promise. All that day and the next they were constrained at the distance of every stone's cast to turn out, to haul the boats over shallows or rocks or over trees that had fallen across the channel.

At last, however, the navigation grew clearer, and presently, the river becoming broad and deep, the Indians discarded the poles with which hitherto they had guided the canoes and took to paddles and oars.

And so they came at length by night within saker-shot of Santa Maria. The town stood on the river bank a half-mile beyond the next bend.

THE buccaneers proceeded to unload their arms which were fast lashed to the insides of the canoes, the locks, as well as their cartridge-boxes and powder-horns, well cased and waxed down. Then, not daring to make a fire, lest they should betray their presence, they posted sentries and lay down to rest until daybreak.

It was Blood's hope to take the Spaniards so completely by surprize as to seize their town before they could put themselves in posture of defense, and so snatch a bloodless victory. This hope, however, was dispelled at dawn, when a distant discharge of musketry, followed by a drum beating frenziedly *à travailler* within the town, warned the buccaneers that they had not stolen upon the Spaniards as unboserved as they imagined.

To Wolverstone fell the honor of leading the vanguard and twoscore of his men equipped with fire-pots—shallow cylindrical cans filled with resin and gunpowder—while others bore forward the sakers, which were under the special command of Ogle, the gunner from the *Colleen*. Next came Christian's company, whilst Yberville's brought up the rear.

They marched briskly through the woods to the very edge of the savannah, where at a distance of perhaps two furlongs they beheld their El Dorado.

Its appearance was disappointing. Here was no handsome city of New Spain, such as they had been expecting, but a mere huddle of one-storied wooden buildings, thatched with wild cane and palmetto royal, clustering about a church and defended by a fort. The place existed solely as a receiving-station for the gold produced by the neighboring mountains, and it numbered few inhabitants apart from the garrison and the slaves who worked in the gold fields.

Fully half the area occupied by the town was taken up by the mud fort, which, while built to front the river, presented its flank to the savannah. For further defense against the very hostile Indians of Darien, Santa Maria was encircled by a stout palisade, some twelve feet high, pierced by loop-holes for musketry at frequent intervals.

Within the town the drums had ceased, but a hum of human movement reached the buccaneers as they reconnoitered from the wood's edge before adventuring upon the open ground. On the parapet of the fort stood a little knot of men in morion and corselet. Above the palisade wavered a thin line of smoke to announce that Spanish musketeers were at their posts with matches ready lighted.

Blood ordered the sakers forward, having decided to breach the palisade toward the northeast angle, where a storming-party would be least attainable by the gunners of the fort. Accordingly, Ogle mounted his battery at a point where a projecting spur of the forest on his left gave him cover. But now a faint easterly breeze beginning to stir, carried forward the smoke of their fuses, to betray their whereabouts and invite the speculative fire of the Spanish musketeers. Bullets were already flicking and spattering through the branches about them, when Ogle opened with his guns. At that short range it was an easy matter to smash a breach through wooden pales that had never been constructed to resist such weapons. Into that breach, to hold it, rushed the badly captained Spanish troops. A withering volley from the buccaneers scattered them, whereupon Blood ordered Wolverstone to charge.

"Fire-balls to the van! Scatter as you advance, and keep low. God speed you, Ned! Forward!"

Forth they leaped at the double, and they were half-way across the open before the Spaniards brought any considerable body of fire to bear upon them. Then they dropped and lay supine in the short gamma grass, until that frenzied musketry had slackened, when they leaped up again and on at speed before the Spaniards could reload. And meanwhile Ogle had swung his sakers round to the right, and he was hurling his five-pound shots into the town on the flank of the advancing buccaneers.

Seven of Wolverstone's men lay on the ground where they had paused, ten more were picked off during that second forward rush, and now Wolverstone was at the breach. Over went a score of fire-balls to

scatter death and terror, and before the Spaniards could recover from the confusion caused by these the dread enemy was upon them, yelling as they burst through the cloud of smoke and dust about the breach.

Nevertheless, the Spanish commander, a courageous if unimaginative officer named Don Domingo Fuentes, rallied his men so effectively that for a quarter of an hour the battle swayed furiously backward and forward in the breach. But in a battle of cold steel there were no troops in the world that, in anything approaching equality of numbers, could have stood long against these hardy, powerful, utterly reckless fellows.

Gradually but relentlessly and inevitably the cursing, screaming Spaniards were borne back by Wolverstone, supported now by the main host with Blood himself in command. Back and back they were thrust, fighting with the wild fury of despair, until the beaten out line of their resistance suddenly snapped. They broke and scattered, to reform again, and by a rearguard action gain the shelter of the fort, leaving the buccaneers in possession of the town.

WITHIN the fort with the two hundred demoralized survivors of his garrison of three hundred men Don Domingo Fuentes took counsel and presently sent a flag of truce to Captain Blood, offering to surrender with the honors of war. But this was more than Blood could prudently concede. He knew that his men would probably be drunk before night and he could not take the risk of having two hundred armed Spaniards in the neighborhood at such a time.

Being however adverse to unnecessary bloodshed and eager to make an end without further fighting, he returned a message to Don Domingo, pledging his word that if he would surrender at discretion no violence should be done to the life or ultimate liberty of the garrison or the inhabitants of Santa Maria.

The Spaniards piled arms in the great square within the fort and the buccaneers marched in with banners flying and trumpets blaring. The commander stood forward to make formal surrender of his sword. Behind him were ranged his two hundred disarmed men, and behind these again the scanty inhabitants of the town, who had sought refuge there. They numbered not more than sixty, among whom were perhaps a dozen women, a few negroes and three friars in the black and white habit of Saint Dominic. The black slave population, it was presently ascertained, were at the mines in the mountains, whither they had just returned.

Don Domingo, a tall personable man of thirty, in corselet and headpiece of black steel, with a little peaked beard that added length to his long narrow face, addressed Captain Blood almost contemptuously.

"I have accepted your word," he said, "because although you are a pirate scoundrel and a heretic, in every other way dishonorable, you have at least the reputation of honorably observing your pledges."

Captain Blood bowed. He was not looking his best. Half the coat had been torn from his back, and he had taken a scalp wound in the battle. But, however begrimed with blood and sweat, dust and gunpowder, his grace of deportment remained unimpaired.

"You disarm me by your courtesy," said he.

"I have no courtesies for pirate rogues," answered the uncompromising Castilian, whereupon Yberville, that fierce hater of all Spaniards, thrust himself forward, breathing hard, but was restrained by Captain Blood.

"I am waiting," Don Domingo intrepidly continued, "to learn your detestable purpose here, to learn why you, the subject of a nation at peace with Spain, dare to levy war upon Spaniards."

Blood laughed.

"Faith now, it's just the lure of gold, which is as potent with pirates as with more respectable scoundrels all the world over—the very lure that has brought you Spaniards to plant this town conveniently near the gold fields. To be plain, Captain, we've come to relieve you of the season's yield, and as soon as ye've handed it over, we'll relieve you also of our detestable presence."

The Spaniard laughed.

"To be sure you conceive me a fool," he said.

"Far from it. I'm hoping for your own sake that ye're not."

"Do you think that, forewarned as I was of your coming, I kept the gold at Santa Maria?" He was derisive. "You are too late, Captain Blood. It is already on its way to Panama. We embarked it in canoes during the night and sent a hundred men to

guard it. That is how my garrison comes to be depleted, and that is why I have not hesitated to surrender."

He laughed again, observing Blood's rueful face.

A gust of rage swept through the ranks of the buccaneers pressing behind their leader. The news had run through the ranks as swiftly as flame over gunpowder and with similar effect in the explosion it produced. With yells of execration and sinister baring of weapons, they would have flung themselves upon the Spanish commander, who—in their view—had cheated them, and torn him there and then to pieces, had not Blood swung round and made of his own body a shield for Don Domingo.

"Hold!" he commanded in a voice that blared like a trumpet. "Don Domingo is my prisoner, and I have pledged my word that he shall suffer no violence."

Yberville it was who fiercely voiced the common thought.

"Will you keep faith with a Spanish dog who has cheated us? Let him be hanged."

"It was his duty, and I'll have no man hanged for doing no more than that."

For a moment his voice was drowned in uproar. But he stood his ground impassively, his light eyes stern, his hand upheld, imposing some measure of restraint upon them.

"Silence, there, and listen!" he shouted. "You are wasting time. The harm is far from being beyond repair. The gold has but a few hours start. You, Yberville, and you, Christian, reembark your companies at once, and follow. You should come up with them before they reach the gulf, but even if you don't it is still a far cry to Panama and you'll overtake them long before they're in sight of it. Away with you. Wolverstone's company will await your return here with me."

It was the only thing that could have stayed their fury and prevented a massacre of the unarmed Spaniards. They did not wait to be told a second time, but poured out of the fort and out of the town faster than they had poured into it. The only grumblers were the sixscore men of Wolverstone's company who were bidden to remain behind. They locked up the Spaniards, all together, in one of the long pent-houses that made up the interior of the fort. Then they scattered about the litle town in quest of victuals and such loot as there might be.

BLOOD turned his attention to the wounded. These, both his own men and the Spaniards, had been carried into another of the pent-houses, where beds of hay and dried leaves had been improvised for them. There were between forty and fifty of them in all, of which number one quarter were buccaneers. In killed and wounded the Spanish loss had been upward of a hundred men, that of the buccaneers between thirty and forty.

With half a dozen assistants, of whom one was a Spaniard who had some knowledge of medicine, Blood went briskly to work, to set limbs and patch up wounds. Absorbed in his task, he paid no heed to the sounds from outside, where the Indians, who had gone to earth during the fighting, were now encamped, until suddenly a piercing scream disturbed him.

Before he could move or speak, the door of the hut was wrenched open, and a woman, hugging an infant to her breast, reeled in, calling him wildly by his Hispanicized name:

"Don Pedro! Don Pedro Sangre!"

Then as he stepped forward, frowning, she gasped for breath, clutched her throat, and fell on her knees before him, crying agonizedly in Spanish:

"Save him! They are murdering him—murdering him!"

She was a lithe young thing that had scarcely yet crossed the threshold of womanhood, whom at a casual glance one might, from her apparel and general appearance, have supposed a Spaniard of the peasant class. Her blue-black hair and liquid black eyes were such as you might see on many an Andalusian, nor was her skin much swarthier. Only the high cheek-bones and peculiar dusky lips proclaimed upon a closer inspection her real race.

"What is it?" said Blood. "Whom are they murdering?"

A shadow darkened the sunlit doorway before she could answer, and Brazo Largo entered, dignified and grimly purposeful. Overmastering terror of the advancing Indian froze the crouching woman's tongue. Now he was standing over her. He stooped and set his hand upon her shrinking shoulder. He spoke to her swiftly in the guttural tongue of Darien, and though Blood understood no word of it, yet he could not mistake the note of stern command.

Wildly, a mad thing, she looked up at Captain Blood.

"He bids me go see them roasting him alive. Mercy, Don Pedro! Save him!"

"Save whom?" barked the captain, almost in exasperation.

Brazo Largo answered him, explaining:

"She to be my daughter—this. Captain Domingo, he come village, one year now, and carry her away with him. *Caramba!* Now I roast him and take her home."

He turned to the girl.

"*Vamos,*" he commanded, continuing to use his primitive Spanish. "You are to come with me. You see him roast, then you come back village."

Captain Blood found the explanation ample. It revealed to him the fact that in urging this raid of Santa Maria, Brazo Largo had used him and his buccaneers to exploit a private vengeance and to recover an abducted daughter from Domingo Fuentes. But, however deserving of punishment that abduction might appear, it was also revealed that whether the girl had gone off willingly or not with the Spanish captain, his subsequent treatment of her had been such that she now desired to stay with him and was concerned to the point of madness for his safety.

"It is true what he says—that Don Domingo is your lover?" the captain asked her.

"He is my husband, my married husband and my love," she answered, a passion of entreaty in her liquid eyes. "This is our little baby. Do not let them kill him, Don Pedro! Oh, if they do," she moaned, "I shall kill myself."

Captain Blood looked across at the grim-faced Indian.

"You hear. The Spaniard has been good to her. She desires his life. And his offence being as you say, it is her will that decides his fate. What have you done with him?"

Both clamored at once, the father in angry, almost incoherent, remonstrance, the girl in passionate gratitude. She sprang up and caught his arm to drag him thence.

But Brazo Largo, still protesting, barred the way. He conveyed that Captain Blood was violating the alliance between them.

"Alliance!" snorted Blood. "You have been using me as the monkey used the cat. You should have been frank with me, and told me of your quarrel with Don Domingo before I pledged myself that he should suffer no violence. As it is——"

He shrugged, and went out quickly with the young mother. Brazo Largo followed, glowering and thoughtful.

Outside, Blood ran into Wolverstone and a score of men who were returning from the town. He ordered them to follow him, telling them that the Indians were murdering the Spanish captain.

"Good luck to them!" answered Wolverstone, who had been drinking.

Nevertheless, he followed, and the men with him, being in reality less bloody in deed than in speech.

Beyond the breach in the palisade, they came upon the Indians—some forty of them—kindling a fire. Near at hand lay the helpless Don Domingo, bound with leathern thongs. The girl sped to him, crooning soft Spanish endearments. He smiled in answer out of a white face that yet retained something of a scornful calm. Captain Blood, more practical, followed with a knife and slashed away the prisoner's bands.

There was a movement of anger among the Indians, instantly quelled by Brazo Largo. He spoke to them rapidly, and they stood disappointed but impassive. Wolverstone's men were there, musket in hand, blowing on their fuses.

They escorted Don Domingo back to the fort, his little wife tripping between him and the buccaneer captain, whom she enlightened on the score of the Indians' ready obedience to her father.

"He told them that you must have your way since you had pledged your word that Domingo's life should be safe. But that presently you would depart. Then they would return and deal with him and the other few Spaniards left here."

"We must provide against it," said Captain Blood, to reassure her.

When they got back to the fort, they found that in their absence the remainder of the Indians, numbering rather more than a score, had broken into the shed where the Spaniards were confined. Fortunately, the business had only just begun, and the Spaniards, although unarmed, were sufficiently numerous to offer a resistance which so far had been effective. Nevertheless, Captain Blood came no more than in time to prevent a general massacre.

When he had driven off his savage allies, the Spanish commander desired a word with him.

"Don Pedro," he said. "I owe you my life. It is difficult to thank you."

"Pray don't give yourself the trouble," said Captain Blood. "I did what I did not for your sake, but for the sake of my pledged word, though concern for your little Indian wife may have had some part in it."

The Spaniard smiled almost wistfully as his glance rested on her standing near him, her fond eyes devouring him.

"I was discourteous to you this morning. I beg your pardon."

"That is an ample amend." The captain was very dignified.

"You are generous. May I ask, sir, what is your intention regarding us—myself and the others?"

"Nothing against your liberty, as I promised. So soon as my men return, we shall march away and leave you."

The Spaniard sighed.

"It is what I feared. You will leave us, weakened in strength, our defences wrecked, at the mercy of Brazo Largo and his Indians, who will butcher us the moment your backs are turned. For don't imagine that they will leave Santa Maria until that is done."

Captain Blood considered, frowning.

"You have certainly stirred up a personal vengeance, which Brazo Largo will prosecute without pity. But what can I do?"

"You could suffer us to depart for Panama at once, while you are here to cover our retreat from your Indian allies. Ah, wait, Don Pedro! I would not propose it did I not deem you from what I have seen, to be a man of heart, a gallant gentleman, pirate though you may be. Also you will observe that since you have disavowed any intention of retaining us as prisoners, I am really not asking for anything at all."

IT WAS quite true, and upon turning it over in his mind, Captain Blood came to the conclusion that they would be much better off at Santa Maria without these Spaniards who had to be guarded on the one hand and protected on the other. Therefore, he consented.

Wolverstone demurred. But when Blood asked him what possible purpose could be served by keeping the Spaniards at Santa Maria, Wolverstone confessed that he did not know. All that he could say was that he trusted no living Spaniard, which did not seem to have any bearing on the question.

So Captain Blood went off to find Brazo Largo, who was sulking on the wooden jetty below the fort.

The Indian rose at his approach, an exaggerated impassivity on his countenance.

"Brazo Largo," said the captain, "your men have set my word at naught and put my honor in danger."

"I not understand," the Indian answered him. "You make friend with the Spanish thieves?"

"Make friends, no. But when they surrendered to me, I promised as the condition of their surrender that no harm should come to them. Your men would have murdered them, in violation of that promise, had I not prevented it."

The Indian was contemptuous.

"Huh! Huh! You are not my friend. I bring you to Spanish gold, and you turn against me."

"There is no gold," said Blood. "But I am not quarrelling on that. You should have told me, my friend, before we came this journey that you were using me for purposes of your own, so that we might deliver up to you your Spanish enemy and your daughter. Then I should not have passed my word to Don Domingo that he would be safe, and you could have drunk the blood of every Spaniard in the place. But you deceived me, Brazo Largo."

"Huh! Huh!" said Brazo Largo. "I not say anything more."

"But I do. There are your men. After what has happened, I can not trust them. And my pledged word compels me to defend the Spaniards so long as I am here."

The Indian bowed.

"*Perfectamente!* So long as you are here. What then?"

"If there is trouble again, there may be shooting, and some of your braves may be hurt. I should regret that more than the loss of the Spanish gold. It must not happen, Brazo Largo. You must summon your men, and let me consign them to one of the huts in the fort for the present—for their own sake."

Brazo Largo considered. Then he nodded. He was a very reasonable savage. And so the Indians were assembled, and Brazo Largo, smiling the smile of the man who knows how to wait, submitted to confinement with them in one of the penthouses.

The assembled buccaneers murmured a little among themselves and Wolverstone ventured to express the general disapproval.

"Ye're pushing matters rather far, captain, to risk trouble with the Indians for the sake of those Spanish dogs!"

"Oh, not for their sake. For the sake of my pledged word and that bit of an Indian girl with her baby. The Spanish commander has been good to her, and he's a gallant fellow."

"Lord help us!" said Wolverstone, and swung away in disgust.

An hour later the Spaniards were embarking from the jetty, under the eyes of the buccaneers, who from the mud wall of the fort watched their departure with some misgivings. The only weapons Blood allowed the voyagers were a half-dozen fowling-pieces. They took with them, however, a plentiful supply of victuals, and Don Domingo, like a prudent captain, was very particular in the matter of water. Himself he saw the casks stowed aboard the canoes. Then he took his leave of Captain Blood.

"Don Pedro," he said, "I have no words in which to praise your generosity. I am proud to have had you for my enemy."

"Let us say that you are fortunate."

"Fortunate, too. I shall tell it wherever there are Spaniards to hear me that Don Pedro Sangre is a very gallant gentleman."

"I shouldn't," said Captain Blood. "For no one will believe you."

Protesting still, Don Domingo stepped aboard the *piragua* that carried his Indian wife and their half-caste baby. His men pushed the vessel off into the current, and he started on his journey to Panama, armed with a note in Captain Blood's hand ordering Yberville and Christian to pass him unscathed in the event of his coming up with them.

IN THE cool of the evening the buccaneers sat down to a feast in the open square of the fort. They had found great store of fowls in the town and some goats, besides several hogsheads of excellent wine in the house of the Dominican fathers. Blood, with Wolverstone and Ogle supped in the departed commander's well-equipped quarters, and through the open windows watched with satisfaction the gaiety of his feasting followers. But his satisfaction was not shared by Wolverstone, whose humor was pessimistic.

"Stick to the sea in future, captain, says I," he grumbled between mouthfuls. "There's no packing off a treasure there when we come within saker-shot. Here we are after ten days' marching, with another ten days marching in front of us! And I'll thank God if we get back as light as we came, for as likely as not we shall have differences to settle with old Brazo Largo, and we'll be lucky if we get back at all, ever. Ye've bungled it this time, captain."

"Ye're just a foolish heap of brawn, Ned," said the captain. "I've bungled nothing at all. And as for Brazo Largo, he's an understanding savage, so he is, who'll keep friends with us if only because he hates the Spaniards."

"And ye behave as if ye loved 'em," said Wolverstone. "Ye're all smirks and bows for this plaguey commander who cheated us of the gold, and ye——"

"Sure now, he was a gallant fellow, Spaniard or no Spaniard," said Blood. "In packing off the gold when he heard of our approach, he did his duty. Had he been less gallant, he would have gone off with it himself, instead of remaining here at his post. Gallantry calls to gallantry; and that's all I have to say about it."

And then before Wolverstone could make answer, sharp and clear above the noise the buccaneers were making, rang the note of a bugle from the side of the river. Blood leapt to his feet.

"It will be Christian and Yberville returning!" he cried.

"Pray God they've got the gold at least," said Wolverstone.

They dashed out into the open, and made for the parapet to which the men were already swarming. As Blood reached it, the first of the returning canoes swung alongside of the jetty, and Christian sprang out of it.

"Ye're soon returned," cried Blood, leaping down to meet him. "What luck?"

Christian, tall and square, his head swathed in a yellow kerchief, faced him in the dusk.

"Certainly not the luck that you deserve, captain." His tone was curious.

"Do you mean that you didn't overtake them?"

Yberville, stepping aboard at that moment, answered for his fellow leader.

"There was nobody to overtake, captain. He fooled you, that treacherous Spaniard; he lied when he told you that he had sent off the gold; and you—you believed him—you believed a Spaniard! You have made your name what it is among the Brothers of the

Main, and yet you believe a Spaniard!"

"If ye'd come to the point now!" said Captain Blood, his voice more than usually metallic. "Did I hear ye say he had not sent off the gold? D'ye mean that it is still here?"

"No," said Christian. "What we mean is that after he had so fooled you with his lies that ye didn't even trouble to make search, you allowed them to go off Scot free, taking the gold with them."

"What?" barked the captain. And there was a confused clamor among the buccaneers behind him. "How do you know this?"

"A dozen miles or so from here, we came upon an Indian village; and we had the wit to stop and inquire how long it might be since a Spanish fleet of canoes had gone that way. They answered us that no such fleet had passed today or yesterday, or any day since the last rains. That's how we knew that your gallant Spaniard had lied. We put about at once to return, and midway back we ran into Don Domingo's party. The meeting took him by surprize. He had not reckoned upon us seeking information so soon. But he was as smooth and specious as ever, and a deal more courteous. He confessed quite frankly that he had lied to you, adding that subsequently, after our departure, he had purchased his liberty and that of all who accompanied him by surrendering the gold to you. He was instructed by you, he said, to order us to return at once, and share in the plunder which was being divided, and he showed us your note of hand, which made him safe."

And then Yberville took up the tale.

"But we being not quite so trustful of Spaniards, and arguing that he who lies once will lie again, took them ashore and subjected them to a search."

"And d'ye tell me that you found the gold?" cried Blood, aghast.

Yberville paused a moment and smiled. "You had permitted them to victual themselves generously against that journey. Did you observe at what spring Don Domingo filled his water-casks?"

"His water-casks?" quoth Blood.

"Were casks of gold—there's six or seven hundredweight of it at the least. We've brought it with us."

By the time the joyous uproar excited by that announcement had settled down, Captain Blood had recovered from his momentary chagrin. He laughed.

"I give you best," he said to Christian and Yberville. "And the least I can do by way of amends for having suffered myself to be so utterly fooled, is to forego my share of the booty." And then, on a graver note: "What did you do with Don Domingo?" he asked.

"I would have shot him for his perfidy," said Christian, fiercely. "But Yberville here—Yberville, of all men, this drinker of Spanish blood—turned mawkish, and besought me to let him go."

Shamefacedly the young Frenchman hung his head, avoiding the Captain's glance of questioning surprize.

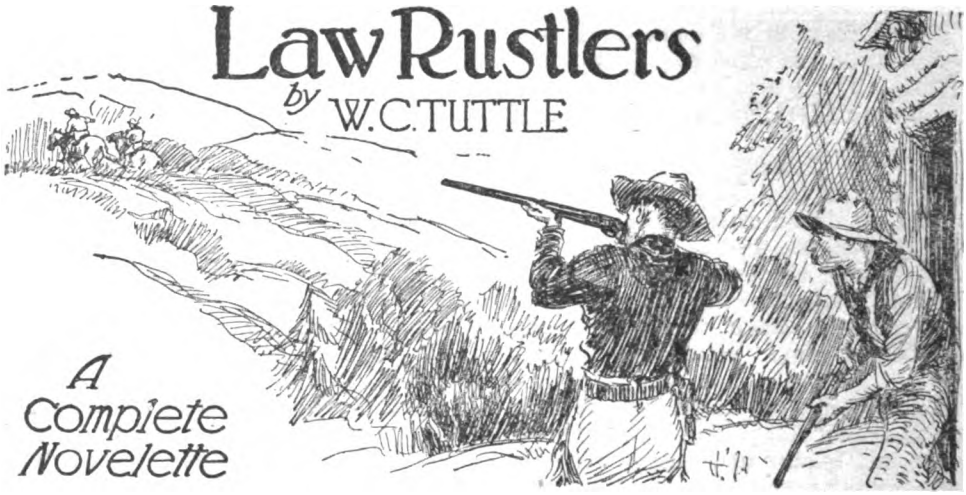
"Oh, but after all," he flung out, defiant almost in his self-defense, "what would you? There was a lady in the case—his little Indian wife."

"Faith now, it was of her that I was thinking," said Blood. "And for her sake and his—oh, and also for our own—it will be best to tell Brazo Largo that Don Domingo and his wife were slain in the fight for the gold. The sight of the recovered water-casks will amply confirm the story. Thus there should be peace for all concerned, himself included."

And so, although they brought back that rich booty from Santa Maria, Blood's part in the transaction was rated as one of his few failures. Not so, however, did he himself account it.

Law Rustlers

by W. C. TUTTLE



A Complete Novelette

Author of "The Devil's Dooryard," "Sun-Dog Trails," etc.

ME AND "Hashknife" Hartley. sets there on our broncs and spells out the old sign, just like it was the first time we ever seen it. The good Lord only knows why we're back at the old sign. Willer Crick don't mean nothing to us. Glory Sillman lives, or did live, on Willer Crick, but her name ain't never figured in any of our conversations since the day we fogged away from Willer Crick.

We kinda left that part of the range in a hurry that day; left a surprized bunch of folks watching our dust, while a couple of enterprising bad-men went home to get patched up and another bunch throwing lead at the wrong parties, just because said parties had a gray and a roan horse.

No, Willer Crick has been a closed incident to us. Not that we're silent folks, 'cause we ain't. I can talk the bark off a greasewood, and Hashknife Hartley—man, he's a conversationalist. It's kinda funny that we never talked about the Willer Crick folks, 'cause they sure are worth talking about. Sol Vane, who does the lawin' for the Crick, Jim Sillman, one of the Council of Three, old Ebenezer Godfrey—they're one goshawful layout.

Of course Ebenezer Godfrey is dead. Jim Albright and Pete Godfrey, his illegal heirs, are dead, we think, but there's a plenty of that misguided tribe left. Ebenezer was killed by Pete and Jim, 'cause the old man wouldn't die soon enough for one of them to get visible means of support, in order to marry Glory. The old man was hard-boiled enough to hang on to life until he could will everything he owned to me and Hashknife. Willer Crick, being a closed corporation, didn't accept me and Hashknife to any great extent.

They stole old Godfrey's body in order to establish what Sol Vane called "corpus delectable," but we got it back, or rather hid it again. We buried some dynamite in the front yard and Sol, Pete and Jim dug into it, thinking we had planted the old man there. Sol lost all his hair and all we could find of Jim and Pete was a hat with the crown gone.

Me and Hashknife weathered considerable storm, but there wasn't no use in defying the lightning too much, so we got out by the skin of our teeth, with a Winchester rifle and a vest-pocket derringer.

Me and Hashknife cut cards to see which of us would marry Glory Sillman, accept five hundred dollars in place of a wife and then leave the country. This was to save Jim Sillman from the law of the Crick, and would also allow Glory to go outside and get educated like a human being. Willer Crick had a peculiar law. It seems that they rules that a girl has to stay on the crick until she gets married. After she's hooked up she can leave. Of course, they means to make her marry one of their own bunch, but their law don't specify that. It also seems that the sins of one of the family is visited upon all the rest of that family.

Jim Sillman explains that everything he

owns is on the crick, and that if Glory breaks the law they're liable to take away his property as punishment. Kind of a weak way of looking at things, but we can't all think alike thataway. He offers us five hundred dollars cash if one of us will marry her. This gives her the right to pull her freight out of there and also saves him from their locoed law.

Glory don't want a regular husband, and it's a cinch that me and Hashknife ain't noways hankering for a wife, but it's a sporting chance and we takes it. We never collected that five hundred for the simple reason that the "uncle," who was financing the law-breaking scheme, turned out to be the sheriff of Yolo, who had been trailing me and Hashknife for six months.

Sometimes I'm kinda sorry we didn't smoke up that bunch and take Glory along with us. I spoke to Hashknife about it the day we left there.

"Easy enough," says he. "I could 'a' downed her uncle and her pa—easy. Any girl would whoop with joy to see her uncle and paw full of lead. Maybe she'd 'a' married you, Sleepy, dang your homely face. Maybe she'd 'a' married me—me bein' handsome; but any old way yuh take it, we'd 'a' busted up—me and you. Yuh can't keep a wife and a bunkie."

"Hashknife," says I, "would yuh rather have me than a wife?"

"You danged porkypine, I don't have to support you."

It's been quite a while since me and Hashknife hit for the open trails. We stayed at the Circle Dot a lot longer than we ever stayed any one place before, but when the snow fades off the hills and the grass shows green on the slopes and you can smell the sunshine—we're traveling.

"Where?" I asks.

"Anywhere," says Hashknife, jingling three months' pay. "We're follerin' our noses, cowboy. Maybe we'll get to Alaska this time."

I reckon that mostly all human beings have some outlook in life. Some of 'em looks forward to the day when they can set down by the fire and let a hired man herd the sheep, while some looks forward to the day when they can hunt a warm climate in the Winter and know that somebody is at home to do the chores.

Me and Hashknife looks forward to Alaska. What in —— we are going to do up there has nothing to do with it. It's something to look forward to, as the horse-thief said to the posse when they comes in sight of a limbless tree.

THREE days after we leaves the Circle Dot, we cuts a wagon-road and there is that same old sign, sagging a little more and maybe a little more faded, but still showing:

THERE IS A CLICK ON WILLER CRICK
THE WORST IN ALL THIS NASHUN.
THE HITE OF THEIR AMBISHUN IS TO BEAT THEIR OWN RELASHUN.

"Still advertisin', I see," grins Hashknife. "Them folks sure are a caution to ——, Sleepy. I wonder if Sol Vane's hair ever growed on his head again. Wonder if Glory—say, Sleepy, there was a reg'lar girl. 'Member how she used to fill the magazine of her rifle after shootin' once or twice? Reg'lar little hewoman. If I wanted to git married——"

"Which you don't."

"No-o-o, but if I did I'd——"

Hashknife squints down the road.

"By the antlers on a desert toad!" he gasps. "Here comes the joker."

Remember the old playing-cards that had a joker which was a picture of a long-legged old pelican riding a little mule? The feller's legs are so long he has to spread himself to keep from dragging his feet on the ground, and he's got kind of a funny old face.

He rides up, insists on shaking hands with us and then reads the old sign.

"I have found it," says he proud-like.

"You've found somethin'," agrees Hashknife. "You goin' to visit Willer Crick?"

"Name's Cobb, Reverend Cobb, and I am God's pardner. Yes, I am going to visit the place, brother."

"I'm Hashknife Hartley, and I ain't got no brother. I'll say to you that Willer Crick ain't the healthiest place on this earth, no matter who your pardner is."

"I've come a long ways," says he, "a long ways on a mule. I've heard that it's kinda ungodly."

"Ungodly!" snorts Hashknife, "lemme tell yuh somethin' about that—uh—no, I won't either. You've come a long ways on a mule."

"Are they as bad as folks has told me?"

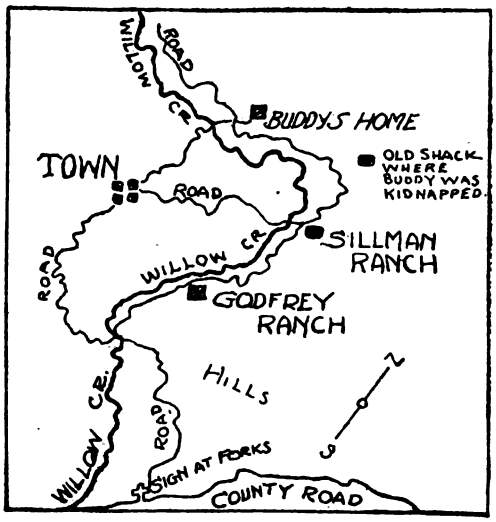
"Man," says Hashknife, "man, there

ain't never been a liar foaled yet that could do that place justice. That there sign is a compliment to that community."

"Well, I'm glad to hear the worst. *Adios*, brothers."

We watches him jog out of sight and then we pilgrims on. Some time in the dim and distant past a colony of men and women and dogs and mules and kids pilgrimed from the South and settled in the Willer Crick hills. Seems that they was kinda anti-everything, and wanted to form a little empire of their own.

They picks out this spot, took up their farms and drew sort of a dead-line against the rest of creation. They didn't want schools—not believing in education, and they made their own queer laws. They intermarried until it took 'em a month to figure out a legal heir in case one of the land owners shuffled off. A few of 'em, called the Council of Three, assisted by Sol Vane, who does the lawin' for the Crick, had enough education to see that the rest of the colony didn't get anything that the council



Map for "Law Rustlers"

and one didn't want 'em to get. Glory explained the system to us.

"My ——!" snorts Hashknife. "I could shoot once and kill your uncle, a cousin, a half-brother, a brother-in-law and a nephew."

Which wasn't true in Glory's case, being as her dad had busted the law by marrying outside the colony.

This close relationship has bred a fine bunch of chinless horse-thieves, gun-men and hard drinkers. Seems like the men with the least chins always carries the most guns. There had never been a Willer Cricker arrested for anything else. Willer Crick dealt with 'em in their own way, and kept its mouth shut, except when it came to lying about their own innocence.

Me and Hashknife rides along for a while and then Hashknife pulls up his horse and looks back. I looks back too, but there ain't nothing to see except the hills.

"Sleepy," says Hashknife, kinda like he was thinking, "what do yuh reckon they'll do to the Reverend Cobb up there?"

"Well, if Gospel was something they could steal, I'd say they'd entertain him over night."

"That's what I was thinkin', Sleepy. In the words of the immortal George Washington: turn, boys, turn, we're goin' back."

"George never said that," says I. "It was Bryan."

"All right, all right; have it your own way. What I don't know about geography would make a set of hymn books, but I know somebody said it."

"Why go back, Hashknife? Willer Crick wouldn't hurt a preacher."

"Not while he's preachin'; but he can't sermonize all the time. Willer Crick needs reformin', Sleepy, but it's got to be done in a language they understand."

"It's a fool idea," I argues, "Willer Crick ain't forgot us. They may be ignorant, but their memory ain't weak. They may be shy on literature and art, Hashknife, but they sure as —— can shoot, and they'll just about put the kibosh on us ever getting to Alaska."

"You sure do get morbid, Sleepy. If Willer Crick had brains I'd pass 'em by. They can't think beyond next drink-time. If they recognize us they'll think like this: there's them two crazy cowpunchers who depleted our community. Wonder who they'll smoke up this time? That's the way they'll think."

"And then start to shoot in self-defense. A preacher don't mean nothin' to me, Hashknife. What do you want to foller him in there for?"

"I dunno, Sleepy. I ain't been to church since Sittin' Bull first sat down, but there's somethin' kinda helpless about a preacher—and Willer Crick is so —— ornery."

"Was your folks religious?"

"I don't reckon they was. Paw and maw split up when I was knee-high to a tall Injun, and paw took me with him. Paw thought he was a two-gun man and I becomes a orphing at a tender age."

"You helpin' out folks thataway is goin' to stop me and you from ever seeing Alaska, Hashknife."

He turns in his saddle and smiles at me. Hashknife ain't no beautiful critter. He's one of them hard-eyed, thin nosed and thin-lipped *hombres*. His cheek-bones are kinda high and his ears kinda bat out and his hair is roan. He'll fight at the drop of the hat; fight with a foolish grin on his face, and he ain't afraid.

That's why I like Hashknife. I'm kinda scary, myself, and I need moral support as I trail through life. When Hashknife smiles, every dog within half a mile begins to wag its tail. Hashknife calls me and him, "cowpunchers of disaster."

He turns and smiles at me.

"Sleepy, I see by the almanac that she's goin' to be awful cold in Alaska this Winter. Mebbe we better pick out one of their warm Winters."

"I think," says I, kinda mean-like, "I think you're going into Willer Crick to see somebody—and she ain't no preacher."

"No-o-o, Sleepy. 'Course I'd like to see her and apologize for not marryin' her that time. Girl kinda expects a apology in a case like that. Mebbe her uncle told her why, but he'd sure paint us black so that she'd be glad I left her at the altar."

THEM Willer Crick hills sure do look natural. We rides past the old Godfrey ranch, which me and Hashknife owned for a few days. The old ranch-house is still squeegeed from the force of the dynamite, when the "heirs apparently," as Sol Vane called 'em, dug into the alleged grave of poor old Godfrey. It looks like nobody had ever lived in it since we left.

We rides on past the Sillman ranch, where Hashknife came danged near being a bridegroom and a cash-widower. We don't see anybody around there, but Willer Crick is a great place for folks to not be in evidence. About a mile farther on we comes to the town.

It sure is some town. There's a saloon, a store and a blacksmith shop on one side of the street and on the other side is an old shed, a long tie-rack and a pile of old lumber. The saloon is two-stories high, and the upper half has a sign which proclaims it to be the Town Hall.

There's several saddle-horses tied to the rack. The town hall has an outside stairway and around the bottom of this is grouped four men. When we get off our broncs one of the men strolls over to us. It's Al Bassett. Al was one of those who was very active in seeking our demise when we were in Willer Crick before, but me and Hashknife never figured him much of anything but a talker. He squints at us.

"Howdy, Bassett," grins Hashknife. "Remember us?"

"Well," says Bassett, drawing a deep breath, "well, ye-e-s, I do."

He stares at us like he was kinda wondering why we came back there again. His mouth kinda gaps as he stares.

"Better look out or you'll get your tonsils sunburned," says Hashknife.

Them other three fellers moves over closer to us. We never seen them before. Bassett turns and starts to speak to 'em, but just then we hears loud voices, and out of the the door of the store backs a man.

In one hand he's got a six-gun and in the other is a package. He turns his head away from the open door and just then comes the thump of a pistol-shot. The feller kinda jerks around, drops his gun and package and falls against the side of the building, where he slides to the sidewalk.

He ain't no more than went flat when out of the store come a man, bareheaded and in his shirt sleeves, with a gun in his hand. He stoops over, picks up the package and then looks down at the man. Bassett steps in past us and says:

"What was the matter, Cale?"

"Well—" the man licks his lips and then wipes the back of his hand across his mouth—"well, I tol' him I wasn't 'lowed to sell him nothin'. He gits kinda uppity and drags his gun. Then he he'ps himself to a bottle of medicine, flings the money on the counter and backs out. Yuh notice he didn't git away with it, don't yuh?"

Bassett nods and turns the man over. He's been drilled dead-center. The storekeeper is staring at me and Hashknife.

"Mind tellin' why yuh killed him?" asks Hashknife soft-like.

"Where I came from, buyin' medicine is a necessity—not a killin' matter."

"None o' yore—" begins the feller, but Bassett stops him.

"Hol' on, Cale. Lemme tell him."

"I can run my own——"

"You shut up!" snaps Bassett. "This feller askin' questions is the feller who inherited the Godfrey ranch that time. This other feller is his pardner."

The storekeeper stares at us, and kinda grumbles to himself, but goes back inside. Them other three hombres gawps at us considerable but don't say nothing.

Bassett leads us to the end of the little board sidewalk, and we all sets down.

"What are you fellers doin' here?" asks Bassett.

"Waitin' for you to think up a lie to tell us about that killin'," says Hashknife. "Yuh might as well tell us the truth. Who was the feller what got hit?"

"Eph Sillman."

"Jim Sillman's son?"

"Uh-huh—Glory's brother. He done busted all our laws. Yuh see, he married an outlander about seven year ago."

"You're doin' most of the talkin," reminds Hashknife.

"Eph brought that woman here, but nobody's ever had anything' to do with her. They got a kid about seven year old. On 'count of Jim Sillman we had suffered 'em to live here and trade the same as the rest of us, but not havin' much truck with him and his. He gets drunk the other day and he talks too much. The council takes action on him and decides to outlaw him. They says he can't buy nor sell here. He knowed he couldn't buy that medicine, but he was hard-headed."

"His woman couldn't associate with other women?" asks Hashknife.

"Nope. Yuh see, she's a ——"

"His little kid can't play with other kids?"

"No. The other—— "

"Kinda tough, don't yuh think, Bassett?"

"When a feller makes his bed he's got to lay on it."

Hashknife nods and looks at his toes.

"Bassett, did yuh ever read the Bible?"

"Nope."

"Yuh ought to, Bassett. It tells yuh how to pray."

"Pray?" says Bassett, kinda queer-like. "Whatcha mean?"

"You could learn some prayers," says Hashknife soft-like, "and then yuh could teach 'em to the rest of the Crick, 'cause they're goin' to need 'em—bad. Who will tell his widder about this?"

"The council, I reckon. Jim Sillman, Sim Sellers and Black Albright."

"Goin' to be a nice chore for Jim Sillman—tell her that his own son is dead. Didn't Glory have nothing' to do with Eph's wife?"

"Glory—I dunno," says Bassett, scratching his head. "Some says she has. There's been several quarrels about it in the last year. She has been watched close, but nothin' comes of it, except that 'Tug' Williams got a rifle bullet into his shoulder one night."

"Where does Eph Sillman live?"

Bassett points down the road.

"About two mile down there. Second ranch to the left. House sets back in the cottonwoods. You ain't goin' down there."

"You've been misinformed," says Hashknife. "We're goin' down there, I reckon."

"Better keep away, Hartley. Willer Crick ain't askin' yore help. My advice to you would be——"

"Ignored," finishes Hashknife. "Absolutely, Bassett. You ought to know us better than to give us advice. You ain't forgot how we acts, has yuh?"

"Willer Crick remember you two."

"If anybody cares," grins Hashknife. "Come on, Sleepy."

We swung back on to our broncs and points off down the road. Bassett joins them other three fellers and they watches us ride away. Outside of the body on the sidewalk, Willer Crick is just the same as when we rode in.

"I hope to see buzzards circlin' that place," says Hashknife. "I'd like to be called upon to say a prayer over the whole works."

"What would you say?" I asks.

"I'd say, 'The rest of you ordinary sinners stand back, 'cause there's goin' to be one awful fire in ——.' "

We found the place, and tied to the front gate is the Reverend Cobb's mule.

"Whatcha know about that?" grunts Hashknife. "Leave it to a preacher to smell out things like this."

WE WALKS around to the back door. Standing in the doorway is Glory Sillman. She's kinda leaning against the side of the door, looking away from us. Then she turns.

"Howdy," says Hashknife, taking off his hat. "Nice day." Glory kinda jerks back when she first sees us, but after the first look she kinda takes a deep breath and stares at us. I reckon she thought we was Willer Crickers at first.

Then she says kinda soft—

"You two!"

"Yes'm," says I. "Same old two of us ma'am."

Just then a little kid comes out beside Glory. He's a little, round-eyed shaver, and he's been crying dirty tears or has been crying tears on a dirty face, 'cause he sure is streaked.

"That's his kid," says Hashknife, kinda whispering.

"Whose kid?" asks Glory, but before Hashknife can answer her the old man comes out.

He brushes his hand across his eyes and stares at us.

"Yuh beat us up here, grampaw," smiles Hashknife.

"Yes," says he. "I—I reckon I did."

Then he puts his hand on Glory's arm and says to her:

"Girl, I want to thank yuh for your kindness to her. She tol' me some of it. Yuh see, she never wrote to me and I never knew how things was. I decided to come, yuh see."

"You're welcome," says Glory thoughtful-like.

"Seven year and a few months," says the old man, like he was talking to himself. "Me wonderin' why she don't write, and—and it's a long ways to Arizony—on a mule."

"Woman sick?" asks Hashknife.

"Not now," says Glory sad-like. "Maybe she's better off, I don't know. Anything is better than livin' here like she had to live."

"Where's her husband?" asks Hashknife, like he didn't know.

"Gone to town," says Glory. "He—he was going to try and get some medicine."

"Ain't yuh got no doctor?" I asks.

"Yes, but——"

"He wouldn't come?" asks Hashknife, and Glory shakes her head.

"She was my daughter," says the old man, and then he says to Glory, "Will yuh come in with me and he'p me a little?"

The little kid looks at us and then follers them inside. Me and Hashknife looks at each other. We're kinda hard-boiled, but it's getting under our hides a little.

Then we hears voices out by the gate, and here comes a lot of men. We figures it's the council coming to notify Eph's wife. It ain't right to feel thataway, but I'm kinda glad she wasn't able to hear what they has to say. Hashknife touches me and I steps around the corner with him.

This gang trails around to the back door and we hears one of 'em speak to Glory. The old man must 'a' come to the door, 'cause we hears somebody ask Glory who the old man is. The old man starts to talk, but one of the gang says:

"We jist wants to say that Eph got killed today."

We hears Glory say:

"Eph Sillman?" kinda strained-like.

"Uh-huh."

"Dad, is this true?" asks Glory, but we don't hear Jim Sillman answer.

"What or who killed him?" asks Glory.

"Nobody seems to know," says a voice. "He's layin' up there in front of the store. Bassett heard the shot and so did several more folks. Bassett says that two fellers rode through town today, and he's dead certain that they're them same two cowboys what tried to steal the Godfrey place. Them two is likely the ones what done it."

"They better not show up around this country," states a voice. "I'm lookin' fer them two, y'betcha."

Hashknife pinches me on the arm.

"That's one of the fellers what tried to hold me up for the five hundred dollars I never got. I reckon I shot high."

"Eph went to see if he could get a little medicine," says Glory, and her voice is high pitched. Then she adds, "But it wouldn't 'a' done any good."

"Did—did she die?" asks Jim Sillman.

"She was my daughter," says the old man. "My daughter."

"This here e-state will need considerin'," says a voice.

"My gosh, there's Sol Vanel" gasps Hashknife.

"How about the kid?" asks some one.

"He don't count," declares another. "He's the brat of a outlander. Mebbe we better look around fer them two gunfighters."

"I'm lookin' fer 'em, y'betcha," states the feller who has promised to dance our hair. "All I needs is one look."

Hashknife steps away from the side of the

building and around the corner, with me on his heels. The folks are grouped in kind of a half-circle around the doorway. Glory and the old man are on the steps, with the kid between 'em. On the left side of the doorway is Jim Sillman. Standing at the rear of the half-circle, looking like a turkey gobbler in a flock of turkeys, stands Sol Vane, craning his long, dirty neck and chewing a mouthful of tobacco that stretches his face all out of shape. They turns and looks at us.

"Yuh might use up that one look right now," says Hashknife.

The bunch kinda sway away from each other. One cinch, there's never any chance for pot-shooting on Willer Crick. I sees Sol Vane swaller real hard and the bulge is gone from his skinny cheeks. The rest of the bunch just seem to stare at us.

Hashknife has got his eyes on that big-talker, who is just about in the center of the crowd. He's sort of round-shouldered, fish-eyed and looks like he ain't been curried for a year. His eyes are flat, if you know what I mean. They're like the eyes they put in mounted animals. He's got a big gun hanging on his hip, but he ain't made a move toward it yet.

"You, I'm talkin' to," says Hashknife. "You dirty centipede. Set your eyes on me feller. I'm the *hombre* you spoke about. Reach for your gun, you cross between a polecat and buzzard. Make good, can't yuh?"

I never seen Hashknife like that before. This is once that he ain't laughing. Maybe he knows that one shot will spill the whole works, and the odds are all against us.

THE feller licks his lips but don't speak. His face looks kinda funny—like he was scared to breathe. Hashknife walks up to him, slow, but this feller don't move. The rest of the crowd seems hypnotized, but I wasn't taking no chances. I sets the butt of my .45 against my hip and waits for the break to come.

Hashknife takes this feller's gun out of its holster and tries to make him take it in his hand, but all this feller does is look like a dog that has been caught doing wrong. Hashknife takes the feller's belt off, takes him by the shoulder and turns him around.

"Go home," says Hashknife kinda hoarse-like. "Go home and be glad you're alive."

I never seen anything like it. That feller walked away, kinda slouching, and Hashknife turned back to face the bunch.

It was Hashknife's face and eyes that froze that bad *hombre*. He was hypnotized, but the minute Hashknife turned his back this feller came to. He swung sideways, grabbed his vest and flashed another gun.

I was looking for just that. He was about fifty feet from me, but I took a chance and shot twice.

Man, I was just in time. His bullet cut the dirt at Hashknife's feet. He looks down at his pistol and then kinda tosses it away from him, like he was all through with it, and then turned as though he was going away—but he didn't. I glances at the bunch and then at Hashknife, who was facing them with a gun in his hand.

"Hashknife," says I, "you do take the worst chances. These Willer Crick rattlers has more than one set of fangs. Little more and that Alaska trip would 'a' been all off."

"You're the little snake-hunter, Sleepy," he grins. "Much obliged."

Then he faces the bunch and they're sure one uneasy crowd. Me downin' that feller don't mean nothin' to them—much. Hashknife glances from face to face, and finally looks straight at Sillman.

"Eph Sillman was your son, wasn't he?"

Sillman don't speak: just shifts his feet.

"That dead woman in there was your daughter-in-law, Sillman. You folks denied her a doctor and then yuh killed her husband when he was man enough to try and get medicine for her. We seen that killin'. Bassett and three other men saw it; now yuh tried to throw the deadwood on me and Stevens."

"You fellers try your dangest to stir up trouble, don't yuh?" wails Sol Vane. "I didn't think you'd ever come back here, I didn't."

"I came back to see if your hair growed out, Sol," says Hashknife. "If yuh want another hair cut, I'll bury the dynamite."

Nobody had a word to say, but finally Sol Vane spoke—"The feller you gunned up over there is Lem Sellers. He's a brother to Sim Sellers."

"I don't care if he's his own uncle and brother-in-law," says Hashknife. "Who is Sim Sellers?"

"Head of the council," says Sol, like he'd sprung something on us. "Sim's the head man of Willer Crick."

"I hope he's got more guts than Lem," says Hashknife. "I like to do my own killin'."

Just then that little kid kinda sneaks up beside Hashknife, and Hashknife looks down at him. The little feller looks up at Hashknife with them big eyes, and then he just slips in closer, like a pup does when he likes yuh.

"Come here, Buddy," says Glory, but Buddy's hanging on to a rosette on Hashknife's chaps and don't even look at her.

"Buddy kinda inherits this ranch, don't he?" I asks.

"That's a question," says Sol Vane. "A question for the council to decide."

"And they've already decided," says Glory.

Hashknife looks down at Buddy and then at the bunch of men.

"The kid's goin' to get a square deal, ain't he, Sillman? He's your grandson."

The men all looked at Sillman, but Sillman don't speak.

"Your grandpaw's goin' to see that you gets a square deal, Buddy," says Hashknife, patting the kid on the head.

One of the men kinda snickers and then turns sway.

"Who's goin' to keep the kid now?" I asks. "His family ain't in no shape to take care of him."

Sol Vane clears his throat. The son of a gun looks like a gobbler with something stuck in his neck.

"Well that's a question. He ain't a Sillman and he ain't nothin' else—much. It's a question, I reckon. Nobody on the Crick is beholdin' to his folks that I knows on."

Sol Vane swallers hard and begins to chaw again.

"He's your kid, Sillman," says Hashknife soft-like.

"I'd like to—" begins Glory, but Sillman stops her.

Then he says to Hashknife:

"Hartley, you ain't got no business hornin' in like this. Willer Crick can handle its own affairs, and Willer Crick will decide what is to become of the kid."

"And you're his gran'paw," says Hashknife, "gran'-paw to a nice little harmless kid like this. And you say that Willer Crick will tend to him. Why—" Hashknife teeters on his toes and hooks his thumb over the belt above his gun—"why, you herd of mangy curs! You pack of gutter pups! Go ahead, you chinless maverick—reach for your gun! No? Then listen to me, you lousy cowards! You, Sillman! I thought you was an inch or two above this carrion, but you ain't. You're all alike. You've married your own relations until your brains are warped and shrunk so badly that you ain't above eatin' your own kind. The cannibal will protect it's own blood, but you coyotes won't."

Them Willer Crickers never made a false move. Maybe they'd 'a' nailed us, bein' about five to one and all armed, but we'd 'a' sure give the buzzards a feed, and them men knowed we would.

"I wish," says Hashknife, "I wish I had education enough to tell folks what I think of yuh. There's a lot of words I don't know, dang the luck."

The old man steps down from the doorway and moves in beside Hashknife.

"Brother," says he, "you've done well. If I can help yuh out in any way, I'd be plumb willin'. I'm a preacher of the gospel, but there is times when a good cuss word does come in handy."

"Are yuh through?" asks Sillman meek-like.

"No, I ain't!" snaps Hashknife. "I've got to think of somethin' new to call yuh. Ain't there nothin' I can say that will make yuh mad? Ain't yuh got enough decency left to accept a insult?"

"Mebbe," says Sol Vane, "mebbe you'll find out—later."

"Thanks," says Hashknife dry-like. "I'm glad to have somethin' to look forward to. I had a open, runnin' shot at you once, Sol, and I was fool enough to shoot low. Next time I'm goin' to cut you off above the collar."

"You cain't threaten me, Hartley!"

"I ain't threatenin' yuh. No, you buzzard, I'm statin' a fact."

"There's fifty men on Willer Crick," states another one of the bunch.

"Pass the word," says Hashknife. "There's just that much difference between us and you. Me and Sleepy are square shooters and we'd love to have yuh come and bring all your friends. Only twenty-five apiece. Sleepy, there don't seem to be much chance for us to get action here."

"Who's goin' to take the kid?" I asks.

"I am," says Hashknife. "He's too good to live with Willer Crickers."

"He, he, he," cackles Sol Vane. "He, he, he."

"Sol Vane, you're goin' to choke to death some day," states Hashknife. "Right in the middle of one of them laughs you're goin' to quit seein' the funny side of serious things. Now, you snake-hunters, pick up that would-be assassin and drift. I don't want him clutterin' up the scenery. Tell your friends that we're receivin' company at any time."

They files past us and picks up Lem Seller. I don't reckon Lem's plumb dead, but he ain't in no shape to help himself much. They loads him up and drifts, while me and Hashknife and the little kid stands there and watches 'em go.

GLORY is inside the house. After they drifts out of sight I steps up to the door and peers inside. I see Glory standing by the front window. Then she turns and leans a Winchester rifle against the wall. Hashknife looks over my shoulder and sees her place the gun, and then he looks at me kinda queer-like.

Glory wasn't takin' no chances on Willer Crick smoking us up. The little kid hangs on to Hashknife.

"I like you," says the little jigger, looking up at Hashknife.

"Well, for gosh sakes!" gasps Hashknife. "Whatcha know about that. Buddy, me and you are goin' to bunk together for quite a spell."

"You play wit' me?" he asks.

"Well, my gosh!" says Hashknife foolish-like. "Well, whatcha know about that?"

"Brother," says the old man, "was you serious about takin' Buddy?"

"You're a preacher," says Hashknife, "and I admire preachers a heap, but just you try takin' him away from me. Ain't nobody sayin' I can't take him, is there?"

Glory looks at Hashknife and then down at the kid.

"I'm glad for Buddy," says she.

"Buddy glad," says the kid.

"Well, my gosh!" gasps Hashknife. "Don't this beat —— and high water?"

Willer Crick never made no foolish breaks when we went up with Eph Sillman's old wagon and team and brought Eph's body back with us. Me and Hashknife went up there and took it—that's all. They'd moved him off behind the sidewalk and put a old blanket over him. The store was closed and there wasn't man, woman nor child in sight.

Glory said they wouldn't bury him, and I reckon she was right. Me and Hashknife dug two graves and Hashknife built two boxes. It's awful to have to plant folks thataway, but we done our dangdest to make it look right.

The old man kind a broke down over the sermon, which was natural, and Hashknife finished it up. Glory was there. It was her brother, and I reckon she thought a lot of him. Buddy didn't know what it meant, but he bawled anyway, which made a real pleasant party all the way around. I reckon the old man was kinda loco over it all, 'cause he went out, got on his mule and pulled his freight.

Glory didn't have much to say after it was over. She kissed the kid, and then got on her horse.

"I ain't had much chance to talk to you two," says she, "but I want you both to know I'm obliged to you. Maybe they won't let me see you again, but I hope you'll take Buddy and get away—which I know you won't do."

"Glory Sillman," says Hashknife, "you're welcome—and we won't."

She smiled at us and rode away, and we stood there with our hats in our hands, like a pair of fools until she's out of sight.

"Well," says I, "we've met Willer Crick."

"Not all, Sleepy; there's forty more, so they say. Glory left her rifle. It's standin' in there, and hangin' to it is a belt plumb full of shells. She likely didn't know we had a pair of rifles."

"She did," says I, "but she wanted to have an extra one here when she showed up."

We cooks supper, but neither of us has any appetite. Buddy wants to get on Hashknife's knee all the time, and Hashknife ain't got no conversation in his system, except, "My gosh!" They've got the house fixed up kinda nice inside. There ain't much furniture, but it's clean, which is something in Willer Crick.

"Don't yuh never have no little boys to play with?" I asks.

"Li'l boys?" says Buddy, "I'm li'l boy."

"This country ain't human, Sleepy," says Hashknife. "This here family must 'a' been ignored complete, the same of which would drive anybody loco. Honest, I thought Jim Sillman was half-human, but he ain't. Glory's a humdinger, but she's

sure handicapped. Think of these *hambres* spyin' on her to see if she ever comes to see her sister-in-law. Ain't they the meanest, sneakinest bunch of pariah dogs yuh ever seen? It ain't hard to see who slammed that bullet into Tug Wilson. Too bad she shot high."

I'm leaning against one of the front windows, looking down the road, and I sees a man coming. It's almost dark, but I *sabe* that pelican.

"Here comes Sol Vane," says I.

He rides up to the front gate, gets off his horse, takes out a white rag. I opens the front door.

"Can yuh see me?" he asks, waving the rag.

"Come ahead," I yells back at him, and he shuffles up to the door.

"I packed a flag," says he, masticating real fast and looking at Hashknife with the kid on his lap, "I ain't got no gun on me."

"Yuh didn't need to deprive yourself of a gun," says Hashknife.

"I ain't comin' to talk mean," explains Sol. "We held a council uptown, and I just comes down here to let yuh know some of the things we argued out.

"Some was in favor of bustin' down here and puttin' yuh on the run, but I'm plumb in favor of goin' kinda soft."

Sol grins and takes a fresh chew.

"They wasn't hard to convince that your way was the best, was they?" I asks.

"I does the lawin' fer Willer Crick, and they accepts my judgment—mostly. I comes to talk to yuh about th' brat."

"Boy, yuh mean," says Hashknife. "In speakin' of this offspring, Sol, use the boy's name or just speak of him as 'the boy.' "

The little jigger knows that Hashknife is sticking up for him, I can see that, and he kinda leans back against Hashknife.

"This here ranch," says Sol, "belongs to—well, I reckon it's a question. Jim Sillman owns part of it and the rest of it's to be settled by the council."

"Meanin' that Buddy gets gipped out of his ranch, eh?" asks Hashknife.

"Under the circumstances, the br—Buddy don't own nothin'. His folks was just suffered to kinda live here."

"Suffered," nods Hashknife. "Go ahead."

"I reckon that's all."

"All for you," amends Hashknife, "but I ain't started yet. For one thing, Sol Vane, I'm goin' to do this: I'm goin' to the county seat, find a regular lawyer and make Willer Crick jump over the moon. I'm goin' to see that this here baby gets a square deal and I'm goin' to——"

"Now, now," grunts Sol Vane. "Don't git excited. Willer Crick ain't goin' to beat nobody out of nothin'—not if they owns anythin', y'understand."

"This here Buddy is exhibit A," says Hashknife. "Willer Crick took away his folks but they don't take away nothin' more. This ranch ain't much, but it'll be somethin' for him to live on."

Hashknife gets up and steps over beside Sol Vane.

"You tell your —— council that Buddy owns this ranch, will yuh?"

"'Pears to me," says Sol, "that you're kinda anxious to—the kid bein' a minor and you grabbin' him thataway, it kinda looks like you was sort of——"

Sol Vane made one awful mistake when he hinted that Hashknife was trying to feather his own nest. I seen Hashknife swing his body sideways, and Sol Vane landed flat on his face on the little dirt walk. It was a beautiful smash. We stands there and watches him twitch back to life, like one of them animated toy things. He managed to get to his feet and start for the gate, but ran into a tree and fell down again.

Then he got up and found his horse, but he didn't take time to mount; just went staggering down the road, leading the horse.

"Good!" says Buddy, and his eyes were like saucers. "Sol Vane bad mans, my daddy says."

"My gosh!" gasps Hashknife. "Did yuh hear that? He said it was good. This feller ain't no Willer Cricker, y'betcha."

NOT bein' wishful to take any chances of a night attack, the three of us slept in the open. We took bedding from the house and rolled up under the trees. Buddy thought it was a picnic. The next morning we finds a notice on the front door, which reads:

GIT OUT THIS IS THE LAST WARNIN

"Well," observes Hashknife, "we'll just about take that advice. Not that Willer Crick is runnin' any whizzer on us, Sleepy, but we've got to kinda look out for this little Buddy, eh, Bud?"

"Betcha," nods Buddy. "But we ain't scared, are we?"

"It's a wonder to me that this here kid ain't cleaned up on that bunch before this, Sleepy. He's got plenty of nerve. Did yuh ever shoot a gun, Buddy?"

"No, but I betcha I could."

"He's got it, Sleepy," grins Hashknife. "Natcheral born terrier. Let's pack up."

We saddled our broncs and packed up all the clothes we can for the kid, which ain't much. We took a little grub and then pulled out, with the kid riding in front of Hashknife. We took Glory's rifle and belt with us, figuring on going past Sillman's place and leaving it there.

There's another road angling off the one to town, and the kid tells us that it goes past Glory's place. We ain't got nothin' to take us through town; so we swings off onto this road. About a mile farther on Hashknife pulls up his horse and squints off down into a brushy coulee.

"Sleepy, there's the old man's mule there, ain't it?"

"It's the mule all right; feeding around in the brush."

We swings our horses around and rides along the edge of the coulee, which leads down a deeper ravine.

"Anybody live around here—close, Buddy?" asks Hashknife.

"Mitch Ames lives down there," says Buddy, pointing down the ravine.

"Fine!" grins Hashknife. "I dunno Mitch, but we'll go down and see him."

"You seen him yesterday," says Buddy. "He was to my house with them men."

"Oh, is that a fact? Well, he called on us, Buddy, and it ain't no more than fair that we calls on him. Sleepy, did yuh notice that the mule was wearin' a piece of pocket-rope. Likely broke loose."

Mitch Ames' cabin was cached away in that ravine, like he was scared somebody would find it, but Buddy knowed right where it was. We swung down the hill above it. Setting beside the cabin, tilted back in a chair, is two men. One of the horses steps on a round rock and sends it bumping down the hill and it hops into the bushes right near 'em.

Jump? Man I'd say they jumped! One of 'em had a rifle across his knee, and when he seen us he started to throw it to his shoulder, but the other feller grabbed him and yanked him around the corner.

Me and Hashknife drops out of our saddles and slips our rifles loose. We didn't come there hunting for trouble, but if it showed up we'd be ready.

"Buddy, you get down in the brush," orders Hashknife, pointing to a thick clump. "You get down low and wait for us."

"Betcha," says Buddy. "Me wait."

The little jigger dives down into the brush like a rabbit and then me and Hashknife separates a few feet apart and slips down to the cabin—or rather toward the cabin, 'cause just about the time we hit the flat ground a hunk of lead whispers so close to my head that I heard what it said. We flops down and waits awhile.

The brush is kinda thick and we can only see one side of the cabin. We lay there quite a while, but there ain't no more shots. We kinda snakes along until we works up beside the cabin, where we listens for a while, but can't hear a thing. Hashknife gets to his feet, takes out his six-shooter for close work and walks to the door end of the cabin, with me on his heels. The door is shut. Hashknife gives it a kick and it swings open. Inside it is dark, being as there's only one window, and that dirty.

We steps inside, and looks around, and as soon as our eyes gets used to the dusk we sees that there's a man laying on the bed.

It's the old preacher that rode the mule, and he's sure hog-tied to a fare-thee-well, and has a rag shoved between his teeth.

Hashknife takes out his knife and starts to cut the ropes, but stops and listens. Then he jumps for the door, with me behind him.

"The horses!" gasps Hashknife. "I heard them rollin' rocks. There they go!"

Up over the peak of a hogback goes our two horses, with a man in each saddle, and one of 'em is packing Buddy. Hashknife throws up his .45-70 Winchester.

"Buddy's on that bay!" I yelps. "Look out, Hashknife!"

THE rifle cracked and the gray horse swung sideways as the bullet fanned past its ear and the rider throws himself kinda sideways. It's only a jump more to get out of sight and the range is about two hundred yards. I glances at Hashknife just as he shoots again.

I seen the rider of the gray horse slump sideways and go down on the left side of

the gray. I reckon he must 'a' tangled in the reins, 'cause it swung the gray plumb around on the hogback and it stops with its head down.

We went up there as fast as we could, but the bay horse and its two riders were out in the breaks. That bay horse could outrun anything in the cow-country, even packing weight; so we know it ain't going to do us any good to try and run him down with that hammer-headed gray.

This feller has got one foot twisted in the stirrup and has the reins twisted around his hand and elbow. That big bullet had lifted part of his scalp and the top of his right ear, but he wasn't dead.

"Worst shootin' I've done in a age," complains Hashknife. "Kinda had buck-fever, I reckon. Shame to waste two shots thataway."

We hung the feller over the saddle and went back down to the cabin, where we cut the old man loose. It took him quite a while to recognize us and also to get his vocal cords to working again.

"How did yuh happen to be in this shape, old-timer?" asks Hashknife.

He shakes his head.

"I don't know, brother. I went to the town, after I left you, and I—I asked a man where I could find the sheriff. He wanted to know what I wanted him for and I said I wanted to talk to him on business. I left there, and in a few minutes some men overtook me and brought me here. They tied me up and left two men to guard me. One of the men told me that if I ever seen the sheriff it would be after the sheriff had died and joined me."

We led the old man outside and showed him the wounded man.

"He's the one what told me that," says he. "What happened to him?"

"He stayed too long," grins Hashknife. "We'll tie him up in your place."

This *hombre* has commenced to talk to himself, so we ties him to the bunk, where he won't get loose for a while.

"You take the horse and round up the mule, Sleepy," says Hashknife.

That wasn't no job, being as the mule had sore feet. I took it back to the cabin and turned it over to the old man. Me and Hashknife doubles up on the bay horse and the three of us cut back to the main road again.

About a mile or so farther on we comes to the Sillman ranch. Hashknife points down the road and says to the old man:

"Keep on this road, pardner, until yuh come to the sign where we first met yuh, then yuh turn to the left. Silverton is about twenty miles."

"I wants to thank yuh, son," says he. "Wants to thank both of yuh for what yuh done fer me. I'm gettin' kinda old and so forth—but——"

"A man ain't no older than he feels," says I.

"Then I'm a million. Got rheumatics and them ropes didn't he'p it none. *Adios.*"

"Now," says Hashknife, "I hope he gets out free of charge, 'cause I ain't got no more time to monkey with him."

We swung into Sillman's gate and rode up to the house. I reckon Glory seen us ride into the place, 'cause she comes out the front door to meet us and the first thing she says is—

"Where's Buddy?"

It don't take Hashknife long to tell her what happened to Buddy and how we found the old preacher.

"Where's your pa?" I asks.

"In town, I reckon. Council meeting called, I think. They met here last night, but I didn't get any chance to hear what was said. They're all suspicious of me. Sim Sellers wants me to be punished for assisting Eph's wife, and him and dad had a run-in over it. Sim growled at me when they came and I told him that Lem was a growler and look what he got.

"Sim ain't no better than a savage, and he said he'd eat your heart out if he got a chance. I told him he better get some extra teeth 'cause he might lose what he's got. I thought that dad would give me —— for sayin' it, but he didn't. He asked me where I left my rifle, and I told him I left it in a good cause."

"Glory," says Hashknife, "do yuh know why I didn't marry yuh that time?"

"No, I—I don't," says Glory, turning red, "but it wouldn't 'a' worked any way, 'cause Willer Crick showed up in force. Me and Dad and uncle Luke thought you seen 'em coming."

"Your Uncle Luke was the sheriff of Yolo, wasn't he, Glory?"

"He was once—yes."

"When he was here?"

"No-o-o—not hardly. He got in bad with the Vigilantes down there."

Hashknife looked at me and I looks at him, but neither of us says a word. Then Glory says:

"What do you reckon they'll do with poor Buddy? What did they steal him for? Nobody wanted the little feller."

"They want to get him away from me so there won't be no heir to that ranch," says Hashknife. "They're goin' to hoodle that poor little kid out of the way, Glory."

Hashknife eases himself in his saddle and looks off across the hills. "I never had nothin' like him—nothin' in my life. The little jigger liked me, and kinda depended on me, I reckon. I said I was goin' to keep him, didn't I?"

Hashknife turns and looks at us.

"I said that, didn't I? Well, that goes as she lays. Somebody on Willer Crick has got Buddy, and I'm goin' to start in at the foot and work my way up, and I'm goin' to git that kid if I have to fill —— with Willer Crickers."

Glory nods like she knowed Hashknife meant it.

"Loan me a horse and saddle?" I asks.

"No," says Glory, "I won't loan you a horse, but there's several out in the corral and there's a couple of saddles hanging in the shed. I can't stop you from taking what you want, can I?"

Me and Hashknife starts for the corral.

"That roan out there can run all day," yells Glory. "He don't look it, but he's the best bronc in this country."

"I hate to take things like this by force," says Hashknife serious-like. "It ain't right to intimidate a lady thataway."

"You're a pair of brutes," says Glory. "Pick on somebody your own size."

I DON'T know whether Glory was kidding about that bronc or not. It bucked over the corral fence with me, bucked for half a mile faster than Hashknife's animal could run. After that it was a pretty good animal. We headed straight for town.

"Willer Crick will be looking for us, Hashknife," says I.

"I hope so, Sleepy. I hopes they forms a holler square and hauls out their cannon.

"Mebbe," says I, "mebbe we ought to let Willer Crick dispose of their own business. They ain't got no sense, but maybe they'll give the kid a square deal, if we give 'em a chance."

"Maybe the devil could skate—if he had ice—but we know he ain't."

There's at least twenty-five saddled horses in town, but not a person in sight as we swung down the street, but as we swung past the store a man came out. He gave us one look and then started for the outside stairs of the town hall. He showed speed, but not enough. Hashknife jumped his bronc across the sidewalk and into that feller, just short of the bottom step.

The bronc's shoulder hit that feller, and he went spinning away like a tumble-weed in a wind; then Hashknife's bronc hit the flimsy railing of the stairs and went down. Out of the tangle comes Hashknife and he's got his Winchester. The bronc gets to its feet and limps away, while Hashknife runs along the side of the building and around to the front.

"Get off and under cover, you danged fool!" he yelps at me. "Willer Crick is all upstairs!"

I jumps my horse out of line with the windows and gets off. I hears somebody yelp a question, and then I follers Hashknife across the street, where we ducks in behind that old shed. I reckon that Willer Crick was too excited to take a shot at us when we went across the street.

Extending out from the side of the shed is a pile of old lumber, which we proceeds to get behind. It's about three feet high and ten feet long. Between us and the other side of the street is the tie-rack, full of saddle-horses.

The feller who got knocked down is crawling out of sight behind the saloon, and Hashknife's bronc is just wandering around between the saloon and the store.

"There's our bay horse," says I, pointing at the tie-rack.

Then a bullet dusted the top of the lumber-pile and sent some splinters into my face.

"Keep low," advises Hashknife. "They're a-shooting from the windows. We've got to be careful that we don't hit Buddy."

THEN Willer Crick starts in to make a lead mine out of our lumber-pile, but them old boards sure do stop bullets. One feller gets cocky and looks out of the door. I lifts his hat and I think a part of his scalp, cause he yelps like a bee had stung him.

"Don't shoot until you're sure," grins

Hashknife. "We can't take any chances of hittin' our little jigger."

"Think a lot of that kid, don't yuh," says I.

" 'Thout a doubt in the world, Sleepy."

"It ain't noways reasonable for you to adopt him," says I.

Hashknife recovers his hat, with a hole in the crown, and nudges in closer to the lumber-pile, while Willer Crick sifted lead across the street.

"Nobody wants him but me, Sleepy, and I ain't goin' to let the little jigger go to no orphing home, y'betcha. Maybe I ain't no fittin' person to bring up a kid, but—oh, oh-h-h!"

Hashknife slips his rifle-barrel into a slot between two boards and then twists over almost on his shoulder, in order to look down the sights. A feller has slipped out of the doorway, thinking that we didn't dare to expose ourselves enough to shoot.

Hashknife's rifle cracked, and the feller's feet slipped and he sat down hard. I don't know where it hit him, but it made him either brave or sick, 'cause he just sets there, until a arm sticks out of the door and hauls him back inside. Then the shooting seemed to ease up.

"What do you fellers want?" yells a voice.

"This is a —— of a time to ask questions!" yells Hashknife. "Don't stop shootin' on our account."

Just then a bullet nicked a piece of meat off the point of my jaw, and splatted into the wood beside my head. Before we can move, another bullet hit Hashknife's hat.

"Behind us!" I yelps. "Look out!"

Hashknife flips off his hat and yanks his gun out of the slot.

"Look out yourself! That son-of-a-gun I knocked down has circled us."

Willer Crick woke up to the fact that something is wrong, and they sure hammered our fort.

Zowie! A bullet spinged off my rifle-barrel and almost knocked it out of my hands.

"Watch the hall," says I. "I'll tend to our neighbor before he spoils our Alaska trip for good."

I crawls in behind the old shed. Behind us is nothing but mesquite brush, which don't make very good cover, especially for the first fifty yards.

Willer Crick is still trying to annihilate that pile of lumber, so I takes a chance and crawls like a snake. None of 'em seen me and I reached the heavy brush in safety. I hears this feller shoot again, and all to once I see him. He ain't over fifty feet from me. There's kind of a high piece of ground, with some rocks on it and a lot of mesquite clumps.

He's having quite a nice time all by his lonesome and ain't expecting visitors. He has to lift up real high to send his lead anywhere near Hashknife. He's shooting one of them old 1876 models of Winchester, the kind we calls "grasshopper" action.

He rises up on his toes, squints down the sights, but seems to kinda get dissatisfied and relaxes. I could almost throw my gun and hit him, and shooting him thataway would be murder; so I waits until he lines up his sights again and then I slams a bullet into the loading-gate of his rifle.

I reckon a .45-70 hits kinda hard, cause it knocked him loose from that gun and he sat down hard. Some of the busted mechanism must 'a' dented the primer of one of the shells in the magazine, 'cause that rifle sure raised —— for a few seconds. The owner of the gun wagged his head and looks down at the barrel of my rifle, which was poking into his belt.

"Get up!" says I.

He got up kinda slow-like, shaking his head and then he grabbed for his six-gun. I'm too close to him to shoot with the rifle, so I uppercuts him under the chin with the barrel, and he lost interest in everything.

I took his belt and six-gun back with me. Willer Crick seen me as I came back, but they must 'a' hurried their aim. I got back to the shed, with my eyes, ears and nose full of dirt and a hole in my sleeve. Hashknife is doubled up, covering the doorway from that slot in the lumber-pile.

"You're a fine friend," says I. "You let 'em all come to the window and shoot at me."

"They had Buddy with 'em, Sleepy. Dang it, I was afraid to shoot."

Somebody yells at Hashknife, but I don't hear what he said.

"No yuh don't," answers Hashknife. "You let us have Buddy and we'll call it square."

Hashknife motions for me to stay behind the shed. I seen him settle down and line up his rifle again. He lifts his head and says:

"Sleepy, for ——'s sake, look! He's usin' Buddy for a shield. The rotten coward!"

I jumps to the corner of the building and looks. There's a big feller coming down the stairs, with Buddy held in front of him. He's got his arms wrapped around the kid, and there ain't a chance in the world for us to shoot him.

"Take that bay hoss, Sim," yells a voice from the hall. "He can outrun anythin' around here."

"He, he, he!" cackles Sol Vane. "He, he, he!"

Hashknife empties his rifle through the windows of the hall and Sol quit laughing.

"Yuh can't git the best of Sim Sellers," whoops a voice.

Sim comes on to the horses, which are plumb nervous. One of 'em ripped its bridle loose and went down the street and another threw itself, trying to get loose. Sellers is kinda between us and the windows, which stops their shooting.

"Don't get scared, Buddy," says Hashknife.

"I ain't," shrills Buddy. "Betcha I ain't."

"Sim," says Hashknife, "you better think up a prayer, 'cause you're goin' to need one —— bad."

SELLERS cursed us and carried Buddy in close to that bay horse, which has anchored itself with its left side against the tie-rack and refuses to budge. It's easy enough to use a kid for a shield against bullets, but it's another thing to get on to a scared bronc with the kid in your arms and still keep covered.

Willer Crick are liable to hit Sellers if they shoot at us, so we takes things easy.

"You're in a hole, Sim," says Hashknife. "One bad move and you're a goner."

"You'll have to get on Injun side," says I, "and that bronc will sure love you for that."

Sim Sellers sure is up against it. I reckon he seen what he was up against—seen that he had to take a chance; so he threw Buddy into the saddle, intending, I reckon, to throw himself sideways on that bronc and make a getaway like an Injun, but Hashknife was looking for that move.

As Buddy went into the saddle it left Sim's legs exposed under the bronc's belly. Hashknife shot twice with his six-shooter and Sim went down, like something had cut his legs out from under him. The horse plunged against the rack, throwing Buddy between us and the hitch-rack, but he lit on his hands and knees.

"Come a-runnin', Buddy!" yells Hashknife, and if you ever seen a rabbit, that kid sure imitated one.

He dived around the corner of that lumber pile and landed between us, where he sets and puffs the wind back into his lungs.

"Hurt yuh any?" asks Hashknife.

"Na-a-a-w! Sim Sellers like to busted my ribs, though. Did yuh kill him?"

"Cut him loose from the ground," says Hashknife, watching the windows.

"Set still, Sim. Don't forget that both ends of yuh are exposed now."

Sim Sellers is setting there in the dust, with a pair of legs that don't seem to work.

"They stole me," says Buddy. "After you left me with the horses, Mitch Ames and 'Poky' Vane swiped me. I kicked Mitch in the knee and he swore he'd kill me. He brought me here. Say, they're goin' to kill you—honest. They ain't goin' to let you tell the sheriff on Cale Ames. They sent men to get the old man."

"Where were they goin' to take you, Buddy?" asks Hashknife.

"Me dunno," Buddy shakes his head. "Sim Sellers says he's takin' me where you fellers never will find me."

"Hey!" yells a voice from the hall, which we recognizes as belonging to Sol Vane. "Can yuh hear me?"

"If yuh don't yell too loud," answers Hashknife.

"Now listen; that shed beside you is containin' about five hundred pounds of dinnamite, caps and fuses. Come out and hold up your hands or we'll shoot into it until we blows yuh up. Do yuh hear that?"

Me and Hashknife looks at each other. It's a good bluff. I don't care a whoop who says nay, I'm here to state that dynamite might go off under them conditions. Some of them hombres are shooting .50-110 rifles, which carries a explosive bullet, and that might make things plumb audible around us.

"Talk to 'em, Sleepy," grunts Hashknife. "Keep talking, for ——'s sake!"

"You mean, you'd blow us up, Sol?" I asks, as Hashknife slides past me and gets against the building.

"He, he, he! Think we'd let ye off after what you've done? Naw, sir, your goin' to git all that's comin' to yuh. When I give the word we start shootin'."

Of course they never thought that we had a chance to sneak away into the mesquite, and if they did they knew we'd never leave on foot as long as there's a chance to get horses.

"We're willin' to go now," says I.

Hashknife rips one of the boards loose and crawls inside.

"Ready to go, are yuh?" chuckles Sol Vane. "Jist try startin', will yuh. There's twenty rifles ready to give yuh a sendoff."

"Think I ought to put Sim Sellers out of his misery?" I asks.

Sim Sellers quits crawling and looks back at me. He thought we had forgot him.

"Throw away your gun!" I yells at him, and he threw it away.

"Well, what have yuh got to say?" yells Sol Vane.

"Give me a chance to think it over."

"Two minutes," says Sol. "Two minutes will be all."

"That's enough," grunts Hashknife, forcing his way out past the loose board.

He's got a fifty-pound box of dynamite in his arms, a box of blasting caps and a coil of fuse.

"Whatcha goin' to do?" I asks.

"Give 'em a taste of their own medicine, Sleepy. When I get around the corner here start shooting. Empty your rifle and then empty mine. *Sabe?* Fan them windows to a fare-thee-well, and I'll do the rest. Buddy, keep down low. Ready?"

I TAKES both rifles, nods to him and starts throwing lead. I sure did send hot hunks of sudden death into that place. I emptied both rifles and then sent six shots from the .45 I borrowed out in the mesquite.

Two or three shots was all that answered, but they never came towards me.

"Good work, Sleepy," yells Hashknife.

I slammed shells into the loading-gates of them two rifles and then took a look. Hashknife is flat up against the front of that building, and is fussing with a fuse.

I hears a bunch of argument in the hall, and I takes a snap-shot at somebody who got too close at the window.

"Keep 'em back, Sleepy," yells Hashknife, cheerful-like, reeling out fuse from the box of dynamite.

"Sol Vane!" he yells.

"That's me," squeaks Sol.

"I've got fifty pounds of dynamite against the front of your building, Sol. There's a two-minute fuse on a loaded stick, and the box of powder is settin' on a box of primers. I can either fire the fuse or shoot the primers. If you fire a shot toward that shed I'll upset Willer Crick. Do you *sabe?*"

There ain't a word said for a while, and then Sol says—

"You—what do yuh want us to do?"

"I want you to bring down every gun up there, Sol. Load up and bring 'em all down here and lay 'em in the street."

"Like —— he will!" roars a voice. "You'll never get my guns!"

"Nor mine!" howls another.

"Better do it," advises Sellers. "He's got just what he says he has."

"I'm countin' to ten," states Hashknife. "Countin' in my own rapid way, Sol."

"I'm comin'," says Sol. "For gosh sakes give me a little time."

Sol Vane looked like a hardware store when he made that first trip. I never seen so many guns outside the army. He lays 'em in the street and then goes back for more. It took him four trips to bring 'em.

"Now what?" he whines.

"Have 'em all come down, one at a time," says Hashknife, and then he yells over at me: "Watch 'em, Sleepy. If they look like they're holdin' out on us, don't give 'em a chance."

"I'm particular," I yells back. "Send 'em down, Mr. Lawyer."

Then they begins to file out and down the stairs. Sol lines 'em up in the street, and they sure are a sore crowd. Finally they quit coming.

"Is that all?" asks Hashknife.

"That's all of 'em," says Sol.

I starts to get up, but Buddy grabs me by the belt and yanks so hard that we both went over backwards. With his heels in the air, Buddy yelps—

"Mitch Ames and Cale Ames ain't out yet!"

That's all that saved us, I reckon. I rolled over, shoved my rifle across the lumber pile and took a snap-shot at Cale Ames, as he threw down on Hashknife from one of the windows. I seen Cale's gun fall outside and he fell down past the window-sill. Hashknife jumps back around the corner and covers the crowd with his six-shooter.

I reckon that Mitch Ames figured that Hashknife would explode that dynamite,

and he also figured that we wouldn't let him surrender; so he ran out of the door, and vaulted over the top of the railing. I ain't no wing shot with a rifle, but Mitch Ames didn't get up after he hit the ground.

"Got him!" I yells at Hashknife.

Buddy follers me out into the street and we meets Hashknife near the crowd.

"Sol," says Hashknife, "I ought to kill you for lyin'. If it hadn't been for Buddy your scheme would 'a' worked. I reckon them Ameses are your best shots, eh?"

Sol masticates real fast for a while, and then says—

"What do yuh want now?"

"Watch 'em, Sleepy," grins Hashknife.

Hashknife takes a sheet of paper and a pencil from his pocket and holds the paper against the side of the building, while he writes. He finally finishes and goes over to Sol Vane and hands him the paper.

"Have your council sign that, Sol; and then you put your name at the bottom."

"What is it?" asks Sillman.

"To whom it may concern," reads Sol Vane kinda slow-like. "The undersigned hereby declares that Buddy Sillman is sole owner of the ranch where his folks lived and he owns everything on that ranch. His dad's name was Eph Sillman and he was killed by Cale Ames on June 3, when Eph was trying to get medicine for his sick wife.

"We also admits that the folks of Willer Crick wouldn't let Eph Sillman have a doctor for his wife and that they ain't no better than murderers, 'cause she died. We hereby agree to see that the ranch is run right and the money turned over to Buddy. We hereby agree to abolish all our old laws and live like the rest of the world. We hereby sign our names."

"You're crazy!" wails Sim Sellers from where he sets in the street. "We'll never sign that."

The rest of 'em shake their heads.

"Yuh can't get away with nothin' like that," says Sol. "We aims to live as we please. Yuh can't set there and keep us rounded up forever."

"Sleepy," says Hashknife, "go up into the hall and see if yuh can't find some Willer Crick records.

WE THEY has that room fixed up like a court-room, with kind of a place for the judges and all that kind of thing. Cale Ames is setting on the floor near a window, holding onto the side of his head. I looked him over for weapons, but he's harmless.

On the judge's desk is a pile of books and papers. I takes a look at the biggest book, and it's labeled—

THE LAW.

I takes all the books and papers, and then I makes Cale get to his feet and go down ahead of me. Our bullets sure have carved our trade-marks in their furniture and walls. Willer Crick wails when they see me with their books.

"Good stuff!" grunts Hashknife. "Now, maybe they'll sign my little paper."

I never seen folks so anxious to sign anything. Hashknife held the paper on the brim of his hat so that Sim Sellers can sign. I unloads all them guns and then throws the whole works under the sidewalk, where nobody can get one quick.

"Rope the books together so we can carry 'em, Sleepy," says Hashknife.

"Them is our records!" wails Sol.

"That's why we need 'em," grins Hashknife. "You and your council are the only ones what can read and write, and I'm thinkin' that your law and records will make hy-iu readin' for the county attorney."

Willer Crick is stuck. They shuffles their feet and swallers hard.

"Your home-made law is a thing of the past," observes Hashknife. "I'll send the sheriff in here after Cale Ames, and mebbe Cale won't be the only one he rounds up."

I got the horses, while Hashknife holds the crowd. Hashknife takes Buddy with him, while I take the law of Willer Crick. We starts away, with the crowd watching us, but all to once they makes a dive across the street toward the hitch-rack. I thinks they're going to try to foller us, but it comes to me in a flash that I seen two or three rifles hanging to those saddles.

I seen a feller drop flat and slide under the sidewalk, and I know it won't take 'em long to get their guns loaded.

We ain't over a hundred yards from the crowd, and I can see that we can't scatter 'em much with two guns. I yells at Hashknife to look out. He turned in his saddle, keeping himself between Buddy and the crowd. I saw him throw up his rifle and take deliberate aim. I was trying to shift them books on to the horn of my saddle, so

I could shoot. A bullet splatted into the books, but before I could lift my gun, Hashknife's shot was echoed by a crash that shook up the whole country.

I seen the front of that building jump off the ground and dissolve into smoke.

"Come on, you law rustler!" yelps Hashknife.

I ducked a piece of two-by-four and set my spurs into that hammer-headed gray. Hashknife had been lucky enough to send a bullet into that box of giant caps under the fifty pounds of dynamite.

I looks back as we hammers down the road, but there ain't a soul on our trail. We swings across a high bridge over Willer Crick, and Hashknife stops.

"Get a couple of heavy rocks, Sleepy," says he. "Rope one on each side of that bunch of books, and drop the whole works over the side."

"Ain't yuh going to turn these over to the law?" I asks.

"No-o-o, I reckon not. I don't believe in rubbin' anybody raw. They'll never know but what we did, and we've sure amended the constitution of Sol Vane and his bunch."

We sunk their law in six feet of swift water and then rode on. About half a mile from the forks of the road we swings around a curve and almost runs over Al Bassett and another man. Bassett's right arm is out of commission and the other feller is kinda sick from too much lead.

"They were sent after that old man," says Buddy.

"It's been a hard day for Willer Crick," observes Hashknife.

Bassett can't hang onto himself any longer. Hashknife takes off his hat and holds it in his hand until Bassett stops.

"Sleepy," says Hashknife, "did yuh ever hear the like. I wish I could cuss like that. Bassett, you're one of the fellers who was sent down here to stop the old man, ain't yuh? Did the mule kick yuh or did the old man bite yuh?"

Bassett refuses to talk, and the other feller is too sick to remember.

"A feller by the name of Poky Vane is tied up in Mitch Ames' cabin," says Hashknife. "I reckon you'll see that he gets loose."

"Willer Crick will git you yet!" snarls Bassett.

"I refuse to argue," grins Hashknife. "Home won't never seem the same to you fellers. *Adios*."

We left 'em there in the road.

"Why didn't we take Cale Ames out with us, Hashknife?" I asks. "Mebbe the sheriff won't be able to find him."

"It would be our word against a hundred, Sleepy. Me and you ain't so danged lily-white that a jury'd take our word against a hundred; and besides, hangin' ain't half as bad as thinkin' about it."

At the forks of the road, where the old sign-board hangs, we found the old preacher and Glory Sillman with a rifle.

"I had a escort," says the old man, nodding at Glory. "She—she saw that I got out safe."

"She did," nods Hashknife. "I seen that a mile or so ago."

Glory starts to swing her horse around.

"I—I reckon I better be going back," says she.

"You come wit' us," says Buddy. "We licked 'em." Glory looks at Buddy and then at Hashknife.

"I'm goin' to adopt him," says Hashknife. "Yuh might come with us, Glory. There ain't no more Willer Crick law to stop yuh now. The trail's wide open."

Glory and Hashknife sets there and looks at each other. I looks at the old man and he looks at me. I turns and points down the valley and says to the old man:

"Do yuh see that peak 'way down there, old-timer?"

"I do. What about it, son?"

"I never climbed it in my life."

"Well, well!" says he. "Ain't that queer?"

We sets there like a pair of danged fools and admires that peak, which don't mean a thing to either of us.

"You comin'?" shrills Buddy, and we turns to see Hashknife and Glory riding down the road side by side, while Buddy leans out past Hashknife and yells at us.

The old man looks at me and says—

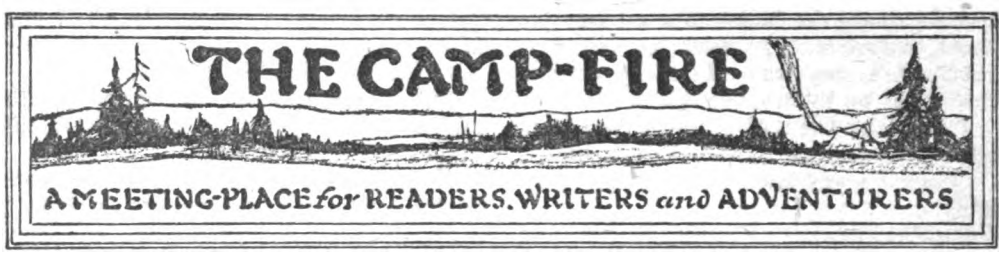
"Son, if you'll ride slow, mebbe I can make my mule keep up."

I turns in my saddle, grabs that old sign and tears it off the tree, after which I throws it into the brush. Then I turns back to the old man.

"I ain't in no hurry, 'cause I know I'll never get there anyway," says I.

"Where?" he asks.

"Alaska."



IN REPLY to a query from us in the office F. St. Mars straightens us out on a point in his story in this issue:

Southsea, Hants, England.

"A blow," and "There she blows" are both right. "There she blows," among English-speaking whalers, I grant you; especially if "blow" is expected. But among Scots and Scandinavians, such as I knew, when first "blow" has been long looked for, just "A blow," was most frequent.—F. ST. MARS.

Adventure Three Times a Month

DON'T forget to be on the lookout for our magazine on its new dates. The October issues will be the first on the three-times-a-month basis and will be out September 10, September 20 and September 30.

Our magazine is nearly eleven years old now, for it was born early in October, 1910. with its November issue. In August, 1917, it went to twice a month with its September issues—four years now at twice a month. We've advanced conservatively, keeping our foundations solid beneath us, and taking no step not warranted by natural growth and the approval of our readers. As you'll remember, the actual vote by our readers was even stronger for four issues a month than for three.

ELEVEN years. Those eleven years mean a lot to me personally. When I look back across them and sum up the friendships they have brought me I feel sort of like trying to burst into oratory. I won't, but—well, I'd sure hate to face life without the real friends I've found through our magazine. And when I say "friends" I mean that word.

You see, I was on it when it started, though not in charge until something over half a year later. Those happened to be bad days for me and I welcomed this new job as a new interest. Sort of lived in it. Had worked on five other magazines and a newspaper before that—they're only dim shadows now—but from the first *Adventure* seemed to offer a chance for human, friendly relations that the others hadn't afforded. Some of our writers interested me very much personally and it seemed as if you readers would be interested in them too, so we got them to write something about themselves or to give me the facts for you.

WE BEGAN by printing only a page or so following the contents page. I remember that poor Harry Couzens was the very first of our writers who was thus personally introduced to you. That was in the November, 1911, issue. He's dead now, these years past, died of tuberculosis after as plucky a fight as any man could put up. Many of you will remember. In the next issue it was C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne, one of whose *Captain Kettle* stories we were running at that time. And on the same page a few words about Talbot Mundy. He was just a raw beginner then, not long in this country from British East Africa and other lands before that. His story in that issue was "The Blooding of the Ninth Queen's Own." Previously we had printed two articles of his and one story, "The Phantom Battery."

LOOKING back through our files to verify the above facts, I chanced to read a few words in the middle of "The Blooding of the Ninth Queen's Own." I couldn't stop until the end and then I went back and read the first part. I had forgotten what a tremendous punch those early stories had. And he was just a beginner then, a raw beginner! Ten years ago. To-night he meets me at the train to spend the week-end with me at the farm, one of the best friends I have in all this world. He's told me that when he first met me he took a violent dislike to me and I confess I eyed him with doubt for a year or two. Finally we camped together in Maine, the

two of us, and that settled it. I remember Hugh Pendexter came over from Norway some sixty miles distant just out of the kindness of his heart to give us more dope on this Maine Mundy and I were both so crazy about, sat on his heels at our fire one night and was gone early in the morning. Now—but I'm gassing terribly.

In the next issue, January, 1912, the single page briefly introduced Adolph Bannauer and John A. Heffernan, of whom I've had no word for years; George Holmes Cushing, Arthur D. Howden Smith and Thomas Samson Miller. As there are 3,000 miles between us, I still know Miller only by correspondence, but Smith, like Mundy—no more gassing. It was not until our June, 1912, issue that "Camp-Fire" was opened as a regular department in addition to the page in the front of the book, that page being dropped later. It's more than nine years now that we've gathered around the Camp-Fire. Here's to many more such years.

Well, I'll shut up now. Remember to be on the watch September 10, September 20 and September 30. We're embarked on the new voyage of three times a month.

HIS story in this issue was written very much from first-hand material, as the following letter from Stephen Chalmers shows:

Laguna Beach, Calif.

There is a great deal of fact behind this story. Most of the details of *Leders'* adventure with the rattlesnakes happened to me at the exact spot and amid the scenery described, on Feb. 12, 1921, and four days later (yesterday) I wrote the adventure and its application in *Leders'* case—at one sitting.

THERE was a great deal of interest—I will not say excitement—around Laguna when people saw the dead snakes, noted their unusual size for this region in these latter days and considered the earliness of the rattlers' coming from the rocks, which they don't as a rule (around here) do until about April. But we had had two blistering days preceding, the second so hot that I struck my camp in El Toro cañon, it being too blazing hot for hunting, and was on my way home when I bumped into the rattlesnake circus.

I had the great advantage over *Leders* of a shotgun and a fair skill in using it; but he had one advantage over me in that I had a pack on my back, heavy with duffel and brush rabbits, also a roll of army blankets sweltering about my neck. As the face of the hill where I struck the nest was of loose rocks and almost perpendicularly precipitous I was unable to set the packs down (they would have rolled to the bottom) and it was a case of shooting from the hip on account of the shoulder encumbrances.

And I wore that pack and roll all through that tedious hour under a sweltering sun and without water, for an empty canteen had conspired with the heat to end the hunt. But it should be clearly understood that I was up there to hunt bobcats and rabbits and had no idea of committing suicide.—STEPHEN CHALMERS.

P. S. By the way, my *alter ego*, like *Leders'*, was talking to beat the band all the time. I have since concluded that the smaller snake is of the common variety, *Crotalus confluensis*, and the larger of the rarer red variety, *Crotalus pyrrhus*. They are as described in the story, and no doubt some reader can confirm or correct.—S. C.

IT IS proposed and seconded that the adventurer whose picture appears below be made, both for himself and as a representative of all his tribe, an honored member of our Camp-Fire. Maybe those just behind him would feel happier if he weren't given a front seat, but surely he deserves a place among us.

Mount Morris, Illinois.

Dear Mr. Hoffman—and the rest of the crowd: Here is a question—and I'm sure that there will be but one answer thereto: Even if an old trailer doesn't talk about his adventures he is, as a rule, glad to join the circle about the Camp-Fire. In view of such a desire, and rules of your own circle, isn't he entitled to a seat in the crowd?

I speak in behalf of the old trail-worn philosopher a sketch of whom is enclosed herewith. You will sure find him a good listener, as I have oftentimes, and his modesty, or backwardness (that last is double-barreled!) is surprising, considering the stirring times he has seen, and perhaps participated in. This particular mouse-colored beast of burden has covered many weary miles of desert, inhaling alkali dust and scorching language; has seen some gun-fighting, not a little of death, and has surely undergone the discomforts of hunger and thirst. It is with deep feeling that I mention that last, I'm here to tell you. And still he keeps his peace, à la Sphinx.

All of you who have at one time or another tackled the desert have met up with Lodestone or one of his brothers—and all of you, while reminiscently cursing his obstinacy, nevertheless there is a place in your heart held by this patient plodding little animal. So let's consider him for a place in the sun—his kind is passing, along with George Catlin's

"old, hip-shootin' hombres"—for hasn't the Government declared war on the wild burro?

This may sound like a lot of silly sentimentalism to some of you—but not all, I hope. I have tried to depict him in his characteristic attitude of unconcern, or indifference, while on the march. And we became great pals before we parted.—R. T. TILDEN.

REMEMBER when Michael J. Phillips talked to us about being under fire for the first time in the Spanish war and how sore he got, when he was getting it pretty hot, at a sailor on a gunboat who seemed to take things as a joke? Here's a possible clue as to who that sailor was. Ole Olsen, if you're among us, own up if you're the guilty party. All is forgiven. If you're not the man, then maybe you can tell us who he was, since you were aboard with him.

Geneva, New York.

I am out here for a while in the Finger Lake district, which is rich in the lore of the Six Nations. Pendexter could do a good Indian tale right out of the local legends. Near here is a little village called Seneca Castle, which was one of the old council grounds of the Senecas.

I spent a whole day in the State Library at Albany verifying Pierre Benoit's references, in "L'Atlantide" and it certainly is an historically perfect possibility.

I hate to think of the work Lamb has to do just to get some of his tales started. He's got me deeply interested in medieval Asiatic history, just as Pendexter has in our old Indian history.

In the issue I got to-day Michael Phillips mentions a tar on a gunboat that riled him. Ole Olsen, a diver, who later helped raise the *Maine* and a friend of our family, told me of the incident some time ago, and mentioned the fact that he was on the gunboat credited with knocking off the flag. He always was an irresponsible sort of chap, and maybe it was he who sat on the rail and laughed.—G. C. LYON.

CONSIDER the Iroquois, especially those of you who look down upon all Indians as inferior beings. I wonder whether the government of New York City, for example, largest city in the world, would compare at all favorably with that of the Long House of the Six Nations, in efficiency, honesty or democracy. Before you have finished "The Doom Trail" you're likely to accord them a much higher place than formerly.

A word from Arthur D. Howden Smith concerning them and other characters in his story:

Brooklyn, N. Y.

Most of the characters in this story really lived. *Ormerod* and *Marjory*, of course, are fictitious. So is *Robert Juggins*. Murray was the one powerful trader refered to anonymously in the official records as the proponent of the commerce with Canada, but I have expanded considerably a figure which has become vague at best after the lapse of 200 years. Cadwalader Colden was just as I have drawn him. Gov. Burnet, too, is quite faithfully represented. One of the least-known characters in Colonial history, he was, I think, also one of the greatest men who molded the future of this country. He seems to have been by far the best of the Royal governors of New York, and I should hesitate even to attempt to estimate the extent of the debt that State owes to him. A native-born Englishman, he was still pugnaciously Colonial in his sympathies, his policies and all his deeds.

CORLAER was one of the most picturesque figures of the New York frontier, and in the absence of a more detailed delineation of him, I think I may claim that I have fairly transcribed his personality. Ta-wan-ne-ars and his uncle were leaders in the ranks of the Iroquois, but no record of what they did or said or how they looked has come down to us, so I have given free rein to my imagination.

Joncaire was exactly as I have shown him, one of the wiliest soldiers and rough diplomats who labored so conscientiously against tremendous odds to build up New France. *De Veulle* had no counterpart that I known of, although his type was a frequent development of the time.

The influence of Jacobite intrigues on Colonial history all through the opening half of the 18th century, until the failure of the Young Pretender in the '45 has not often been given adequate consideration.

IF I have seemed to idealize the Iroquois character, I trust that readers will be lenient with me. The Iroquois unquestionably were the highest type of Indian on this continent. Whether they were superior in intellect, intelligence and morality to the white settlers, as some one recently suggested in Camp-Fire, is a point open to question. Certainly, in some ways, before they had been debauched by the liquor traffic and the disintegration which has beset every Indian nation after establishment of contact with the white race, they were more advanced than their white neighbors. Their structure of government remains to-day a marvel of philosophical detail, as extraordinary a concept of democracy as any race has evolved. In oratory they were unmatched. In diplomacy they were at least the equals of English or French. In their own kind of warfare they were irresistible. The one factor which handicapped them was their numerical inferiority. So nearly as can be determined, they never exceeded a total of 20,000 souls. Yet with this meager population they dominated the continent between the St. Lawrence and the Susquehanna and their war parties clashed with the Cherokee Confederacy in Tennessee and the Carolinas and punished the depredations of the Sioux on the edge of the Great Plains. Their aid was a vital point to either French or English. It was so recognized from the beginning by both governments.

THERE was nothing similar between the Iroquois and the plains tribes. They were different breeds. The Iroquois, for instance, were moral and did not mistreat women captives. They possessed a dignity of demeanor and an elevation of thought beyond the attainment of other

tribes. But, with it all, we must not lose sight of the fact that the Iroquois had been unable in the course of centuries to advance themselves beyond a stage of culture roughly similar to that of our own race in the Stone Age. There was a quality lacking in the Indian's intellect which made it impossible for him to advance, unaided, beyond a certain mile-stone. In time perhaps, if the white man had not come, the Iroquois might have beaten out a civilization distinctive and comparable with others in Europe. It would surely have been a civilization based on democracy, on morality, on clean living, on decent regard for the fighting virtues. But that is only speculation. What I do hope is that any one who reads this story will feel, as I have felt, the tremendous claim upon American appreciation and gratitude of the Indian race, who were the first people in recorded time to establish and maintain a league of nations for mutual aid and protection and to reduce the dangers of intertribal warfare. The machinery of the present League of Nations is in spirit a duplication of the Council of the Roy-an-ehs.

ALSO, remember this: when the Revolutionary War came, the Iroquois, notwithstanding their favored position with the British Crown, were split on the question of participation. Part sided with the Colonies, part with the British. It was the final, the crushing blow, to the League. When it came, I think, *Harry Ormerod* and Ta-wan-ne-ars were old, old men, but they were believers in liberty and they died in buckskin in the forests beyond the Mohawk, defending, with handfuls of riflemen and Oneidas and Onondagas, the settlements which were to know the scourge of the tomahawk until General Sullivan carried fire and sword through the length and breadth of the Long House in 1779. It must have been a bitter death for Ta-wan-ne-ars, but he died that the Council of the Thirteen Fires might take over and maintain the principles that the Six Fires of his people had struggled for since long before Columbus landed on Turks Island without realizing that he had not reached his goal. Some day I am going to tell the story of how Ta-wan-ne-ars and Corlaer searched for the Land of Ata-ent-sic and of what they found instead. Also, another story of Andrew Murray and Louisburg and the frontier. But the best story of all is how Ta-wan-ne-ars and *Harry Ormerod* died for a liberty they thought was lost.—A. D. H. S.

THE right Camp-Fire spirit shows in the following letter:

San Antonio, Texas.

So far as I have been a silent member of Camp-Fire, but have decided to introduce myself as I feel that every one who reads and enjoys it should contribute something, even though it be just a little, to show that he is alive and don't make any excuses for it. I am sure that every one has been through something in his life worth telling about.

TO BEGIN with, at fifteen I ran away from home and have been going through things ever since and it is just that going, changing and seeing something different that gives me a thrill and it has led me from State to State working at everything. Soda dispensing, cotton picking, mucking in the mines, hoboing, and to sea, where I have sailed for some time in nearly every capacity aboard a ship, and across, and to west of all the wonderful tropics, which has fascinated me more than anything. So much that more than once I requested a discharge from "El Capitan" and hit the trail for short hikes. Once from Ponce to San Juan *via* Mayaguez and again from Port Limon up the mountain to San José, and many other shorter ones and am planning a real long one in the near future. and in all my little journeys I have never been hung, burned at stake or fallen off a cliff.

But nevertheless I can recall many thrills and when I think over these it is then that I long to be moving again.

I will conclude with a word in regards to Camp-Fire.

The fact that Camp-Fire exists is evidence enough that readers enjoy it and that there is a feeling of comradeship among us. Let's hear from more of you.—WM. E. HEWITT.

CURIOUSLY enough, these two letters came in almost at the same time. They introduce an interesting subject for discussion:

Wichita Falls, Texas.

I'm writing for a Camp-Fire button. I have never written to Camp-Fire but am an interested reader. There is one question that Camp-Fire has not discussed so far as I know, and that is the origin of the American Indian. The reason I am asking is that I am a descendant of the Cherokee and Chickasaw Indians and in all of the histories that I have read it does not tell where the Indians came from.—WAL HACKNEY.

Newark, New Jersey.

Having read a brief criticism of "L'Atlantide" by Heywood Broun in the New York *Tribune*, a dormant interest in what was, during a rather imaginative childhood, a really great question, was reawakened. Needless to say, I was deeply gratified to find the story in a copy of *Adventure*. The story read (and very much enjoyed), I have since been more or less subconsciously rehashing the subject.

TO-NIGHT, after returning from a week-end in the country, I find, in the New York *Times*, a review of the first volume of a work by Professor Leo Wiener, written to prove that African culture touched America prior to the voyage of Columbus. I have not read the book—I haven't time—but certain of the arguments, as outlined by the reviewer, struck me as being hardly original. And then I knew. Out of an upstairs bookshelf I unearthed a rather dusty volume—"Atlantis, the Antediluvian World," by Ignatius Donnelly (Harper & Bros., 1882). Donnelly places the Lost Continent in the Atlantic Ocean, between South America and Africa—and uses a good many of Professor Wiener's arguments (and some of his own) to prove that the flora and fauna of the latter were at one time known to the former. It would seem, offhand, that Professor Wiener, approaching the subject from an entirely different angle, has materially, though unconsciously, helped out the cause of Plato and Donnelly, for the Negroes have never been a seafaring race—and airplanes, to the best of our knowledge, were not known to the ancients.

In connection with the foregoing, and suggested,

possibly, by Mr. Young's theory that the first of the Incas were Persians, it may interest some of your readers to know that a serious attempt has been made to establish the identity of the pre-Columbian culture of Guatemala with that of Etrusca. At any rate, it is, at the close of a busy day, rather stimulating to think that possibly, in spite of Dante and the Great Victorian, the last voyage of Odysseus did not go out in utter oblivion. It would have been an ending worthy of the "wily Ulysses"—and of the pen of Pierre Benoit.—WM. RANKIN.

THE following poem by the late Harry Irving Greene was dedicated by him in 1913 to the Adventurers' Club of Chicago and holds firm place in the memories and associations of that organization's old-timers. It has been published in the Rangoon (Burma) *Times*, whose editor is Major W. Robert Foran, charter member of the club's New York chapter and later the first president of the Chicago chapter, also an old-time member of our own writers' brigade:

A Toast to Men

HERE'S a toast—a toast to men,
I care not who, nor why, nor when,
But Men—
Who've felt their red blood running free,
And rode its tide.
To Mountain side,
To Prairie wide,
To Tropic sea,
To north coulee,
Barbarie coast,
My friends—a toast!

And here's to those of the misty past,
Whose bones are dust, whose deeds still last,
To Spanish Don on Spanish Main;
To English crew; to viking too,
To Holland's host,
My friends— a toast!
To those of now who do and dare,
Who plough the seas, who ride the air,
Who prowl the peaks—the jungle shore,
Who mock the gale—the lion's roar,
Or, from the trenches shoot and laugh,
Their health I drink; their health I quaff!

So here's to those who have come and gone,
And here's to those who still remain,
And here's to those who are yet to be,
To all that red blood, roving host,
My friends—a toast!

A WORD from E. O. Foster concerning the facts back of his story in this issue:

Pablo Beach, Florida.

In reality this tale is built around Major ——. ——, U. S. Infantry, of my unregenerate days in the Philippines. He was the dearest old boy in the world, a real gentleman at heart, but a hell-raising, cursing old devil when things went wrong. He'd take the hide off you, but let any one else ever flutter an eyebrow in the direction of his command and there was the devil to pay. Ordinarily his English was of the best, but you could generally tell the exact state of his temper by the accent and fluency of his speech. I have tried in this story to use this peculiarity in accenting some of the stronger passages.

The *Moreys* are imaginary. There was a Morey in my old company, but it was the Johnson brothers from the Tenth Tennessee regiment who pulled the particular stunt that forms the climax of this tale and who really caused as much worry to the Insurgents, and incidentally to their officers, as any two swashbucklers of ancient ages.

They set the whole works sneezing in a scrap one time when they beat the Germans twenty years in the use of "sneeze gas," which by the way, they learned how to manufacture from an old Chinese camp-follower. They also had a power-canoe, which they bought and maintained with the aid of a pair of ivory gallopers which they had trained to the minute.—E. O. FOSTER.

THE Station idea is booming. Letters come in steadily from members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to—who want to offer hospitality to the wanderers coming their way. Many of the Keepers have organized permanent clubs in connection with their Stations, where the local adventurers get together round their own camp-fire and talk over old days on the trail.

Stations now cover the country pretty well but there is no limit to the number that can be organized in one State, county or town. We are glad to add new names to the list and also to get suggestions from the old Keepers. Address correspondence about Stations to J. E. Cox.

Following is an outline of the Station idea and a list of the Stations so far organized:

A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and provide and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if

they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazine is that stated above and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

No. 50—ALABAMA—Birmingham. Percy E. Coleman, 2804 Tennessee Ave.

No. 39—AUSTRALIA—Melbourne. Wm. H. Turner, 52 Emmaline St., Northcote.

No. 44—CALIFORNIA—Oakland. Lewis F. Wilson, 2963 Linden St.
No. 28— Lost Hills. Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Monson, care of Gen. Pet. No. 2.
No. 38— Los Angeles. Colonel Wm. Strover, Westlake Military School, Mount Washington.
No. 60— San Bernardino. Charles A. Rouse, Hotel St. Augustine.

No. 31—CANADA—Vancouver, B. C. C. Plowden, B. C. Drafting & Blue Print Co.
No. 22— Burlington, Ontario. Thos. Jocelyn.
No. 4— Dunedin, P. E. Island. J. N. Berrigan.
No. 29— *The Post Weekly*, Deseronto, Harry M. Moore.
No. 45— Norwood, Manitoba. Albert Whyte, 172½ De Meurons St.
No. 10— Montreal, P. Q. Nelson J. Cook, 2037 St. Catharine St.
No. 30— Winnipeg, Man. Walter Peterson, 143 Kennedy St.
No. 62— Tweed, Ontario. George L. Catton.
No. 53— Toronto. W. A. Bach, 206-208 Victoria St.

No. 37—CANAL ZONE—Cristobal. F. E. Stevens.

No. 9—COLORADO—Denver, Elwood Claughton, 1234 Elati Street.
No. 61— Boone. Charles E. Luckenbill.

No. 15—CUBA—Havana. B. N. Faries, Dominquer 7 Cerro.

No. 14—DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA—Washington. Fagan's Cigar Store, 1404 New York Ave., N. W.

No. 32—HONDURAS, C. A. Dr. Wm. C. Robertson, Galeras, Olancho.

No. 18—INDIANA—Connersville. Norba Wm. Guerin. 112 East Eighteenth St.

No. 47—ILLINOIS—Peoria. B. H. Coffeen.

No. 33—LOUISIANA—Lake Charles. J. M. Shamblin, Southern Amusement Company's Louisiana Theater, and 716 Common St.

No. 19—MAINE—Bangor. Dr. G. E. Hathorne, 70 Main St.
No. 56— Cape Cottage. E. Worth Benson, P. O. Box 135.
No. 59— Augusta. Robie M. Liscomb, 73½ Bridge St.

No. 55—MARYLAND—Baltimore. Henry W. L. Fricke, 1200 E. Madison St. at Asquith.

No. 26—MASSACHUSETTS—Malden, Arthur R. Lloyd, 16 Cross St.
No. 49— Fitchburg, G. R. Wyatt, 66 Lunenburg St.

No. 27—MICHIGAN—Marquette. T. Mitchell, Box 864. G. P. O.

No. 51—MISSOURI—St. Louis. W. R. Hoyt, 7206 Minnesota Ave.

No. 17—NEW JERSEY—Caldwell. Chas. A. Gerlard, P. O. Box 13.
No. 16— Bayonne. J. D. Gray, 92 West Sixth St.

No 23—NEW YORK. Jamestown. W. E. Jones, 506 Jefferson St.
No. 42— Yonkers. A. F. Whegan, 173 Elm St.
No. 34— New York City. St. Mary's Men's Club, 142 Alexander Ave., Bronx.

No. 13—OHIO—Cleveland. Wayne Eberly, 602 National City Bldg.
No. 52— Ulrichsville. Anthony Sciarra, E. Third St.
No. 58— Cleveland. J. F. Thompson, Community Pharmacy, 9505 Denison Ave.
No. 63— Ulrichsville. Chas. F. Burroway, 312 Water St.

No. 57—OKLAHOMA—Haskell. D. E. Jonson.

No. 43—OREGON—Salem. D. Wiggins.

No. 20—PENNSYLVANIA—Philadelphia. Wm. A. Fulmer, 252 S. Ninth St.
No. 24— Philadelphia. Alfred A. Krombach, 4159 N. Eighth Street.
No. 21— Braddock. Clarence Jenkins, Union News Co.

No. 46—PORTO RICO—San Juan. M. B. Couch, P. O. Box 944.

No. 8—SOUTH CAROLINA—Allendale. Ed. N. Clark, Editor-Owner *The Tri-County Record* and Allendale *Advance*.

No. 54—TEXAS—Houston. M. B. Couch, Route 2, Box 189.

No. 3—WASHINGTON—Republic. A. E. Beaumont, Box 283.
No. 1— Ione. A. S. Albert, Albert's Billiard Hall.
No. 12— Seattle. H. C. Copeland, *The Western Sportsman*, 83 Columbia St.
No. 61— Burlington. Judge B. N. Alberson, Fairhaven Ave.
No. 7— La Connor. Ed. L. Carson.

No. 48—WEST VIRGINIA—Huntington. John Geiske, 1682 Sixth St.

No. 41—WISCONSIN—Madison, Frank Weston, Room 9, Tenny Bldg.
No. 5— Milwaukee. Paul A. Buerger, Apt. 2, 150 Biddle Street.

HOW do you like our new plan of giving maps with certain stories where a map seems to fit in? Sometimes a map makes clear at a glance the lay of the land in a story and sometimes a map helps refresh the memory as to just where a certain island, city or district is situated in relation to other places. Also I think most of us sort of like maps just as maps—there's a certain fascination about them for any one with the adventure spirit in him.

Of course a topographer would find some of our maps crudely drawn, but I think you'll find them true to fact—or to the imaginary facts of a fiction story—and that's all we ask of them. We aren't trying to make them pretty.

I might remark in a low tone of voice that as these maps come in, we in the office are getting quite a few surprizes as to how much we don't know about geography. It's amazing how vague a fellow's ideas of some parts of the globe are when he's called on to get down to brass tacks as to directions, comparative sizes and exact locations of places he thought he knew about.—A. S. H.

VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

These services of *Adventure* are free to any one. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you **read and observe the simple rules,** thus saving needless delay and trouble for us. The whole spirit of the magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help we're ready and willing to try. **Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.**

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Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

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In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

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If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of the last issue of each month.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 109 *Mountfort St., Boston, Mass., can supply* Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL SELL: Mid-June to First Jan., 1920, and Mid-March, 1921. Thirteen copies $2.75 for lot including postage or twenty cents each without postage.—Address H. VON DEILEN, 268 South St., Morristown, N. J.

WILL EXCHANGE: Many volumes of *Adventure* for collections of postage stamps.—J. C. JOHNSTON, Box 21, Vanceboro, Maine.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Camp-Fire Stations

In their homes or shops some members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to—maintain Stations where wanderers may call and receive such hospitality as the Keeper wishes to offer. The only requirements are that the Station display the regular sign, provide a box for mail to be called for and keep the regular register book. Otherwise Keepers run their Stations to suit themselves and are not responsible to this magazine or representative of it. List of Stations and further details are published in the Camp-Fire in the first issue of each month.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 519 Citizens Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

1. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

2. The Sea Part 1
BERIAH BROWN, 1508 Columbia St., Olympia, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next department.*)

3. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs, and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Orlando, Fla. Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Me. Maine. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. The Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. Early history of Missouri Valley.

8. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

9. Middle Western U. S. Part 3
LARRY ST. JOHN, Saugatuck, Mich. Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Lake Michigan. Fishing, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, clamming, early history, legends.

10. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

11. Western U. S. Part 2; and Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 West 10th St., Austin, Tex. Texas, Oklahoma, and the border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, natives, hunting, history, industries.

12. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California
C. R. MAHAFFEY, Apartado 168, Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico. Lower California: Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, natives, business and general conditions.

13. ✠ North American Snow Countries Part 1
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Height of Land and northern Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry); southeastern Ungava

★ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached*)
✠ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

and Keewatin. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

14. ✠ North American Snow Countries Part 2
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Ottawa Valley and southeastern Ontario. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping, aviation. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

15. ✠ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Tweed, Ont., Canada. Georgian Bay and southern Ontario. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

16. North American Snow Countries Part 4
T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Hunters Island and English River district. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

17. North American Snow Countries Part 5
ED. L. CARSON, La Connor, Wash. Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

18. North American Snow Countries Part 6
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, backpacking, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

19. ✠ North American Snow Countries. Part 7
REECE H. HAGUE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

20. ✠ North American Snow Countries Part 8
JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada. New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and southeastern Quebec. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

21. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 632 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

22. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, language, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

23. South America. Part 1
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

24. South America. Part 2
P. H. GOLDSMITH, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Venezuela, the Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentine Republic. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, natives, languages, hunting and fishing.

25. Asia, Southern
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, 1315 Josephine Street, New Orleans, La. Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, western China, Borneo. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

26. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, 5444 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, Calif. History, natives, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

27. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

28. Russia and Eastern Siberia
MAJOR A. M. LOCHWITZKY (formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), care *Adventure*. Petrograd and its province, Finland, northern Caucasus, Primorsk district, island of Sakhalien. Travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

29. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Carmel, Monterey Co., Calif. Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, Niger River to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora, tribal histories, witchcraft.

30. Africa Part 2 Morocco
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

31. Africa Part 3 Tripoli
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, 1315 Josephine Street, New Orleans, La. Including the Hoggar Tuaregs. Hunting exploring, traveling, customs.

32. ✠ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East Africa
R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

33. ★ Africa Part 5 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, Ile de Lerne, par Vannes, Morbihan, Brittany, France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport. (*Postage 12 cents.*)

34. Africa Part 6 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand
CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, 40 South Clark Street, Chicago, Ill. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

35. ★ New Zealand; and South Sea Islands Part 1
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa. Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (*Postage 8 cents.*)

36. South Sea Islands Part 2
CHARLES BROWN, JR., 213 E St., San Rafael, Calif. French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumoto, Marquesas); islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn). Natives, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture.

37. ★ Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, Sydney Press Club, 51 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

WEAPONS, PAST AND PRESENT

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a par particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A.—All Shotguns, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including foreign and American makes. D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

C.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheellock and snaphaunce varieties. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; bait and fly casting and advice; live bait; camping outfits; fishing trips.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines, Porto Rico, and customs receivership in Santo Domingo and Haiti, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union may be called upon for general information relating to Latin-American matters or for specific data. Address L. S. Rowe, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For R. C. M. P., Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Comm., Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents—in Mr. Mills' case 8 cents and in Mr. Beadle's 12 cents—in stamps NOT attached*)
✠ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

More about Flying in Mexico

IN THE first June issue Mr. Mahaffey answered an inquirer who wanted to know about flying opportunities in Mexico, by saying in effect that they aren't so good for foreigners. This took care of the inquiry in a perfectly satisfactory manner; but it remained for the editor of *Aviation* to deal with the general subject, which he does in the following letter to "Ask Adventure:"

225 Fourth Ave., New York.

Permit me to supplement the information your Mr. Mahaffey gave on aviation in Mexico.

Since the instauration of President Obregon Colonel Salinas is no longer chief of the Dpto. de Aviación: in his stead Rafael O'Neill has been appointed to head the air force of the Mexican Army, now called Fuerza-Aerea. Señor O'Neill is not an American, being a native-born Mexican, though his father was a North American. His mother is Mexican.

Señor O'Neill served during the latter part of the Great War with the American Army Air Service as a volunteer. At the termination of hostilities, having obtained his discharge, he returned to his country and now is commissioned to put the Fuerza-Aerea on a modern basis.

The Fuerza-Aerea has a number of up-to-date French and Italian aeroplanes beside their Mexican-built machines, which are satisfactory for training purposes. The Government works (Talleres Nacionales de Aviación) at Valbuena not only construct airscrews, but also aeroplanes—as above mentioned—and aero engines. Three models of the latter are built, *viz.*: 35 h.p., 80 h.p., 130 h.p. They are all radial air-cooled engines of very sturdy, though somewhat heavy, construction and stand up well in service. Owing to the high elevation of Mexico, D. F., the engines have a high compression to work well in the rarefied air.

The propellers built at Valbuena are quite exeellent, in particular with regard to their ability to resist great changes of temperature and moisture without cracking.

Civil (commercial and private) aviation is not yet authorized in Mexico, probably because quite a few foreigners might take unfair advantage of such a permission and utilize aircraft for smuggling or stirring up rebellion.

The small State air force which Esteban Cantú organized in Lower California has been incorporated in the Fuerza-Aerea since Señor Cantú's curious rebellion was suppressed by the Government. It had a few Curtiss J.N.-4 planes—which are probably the American planes your expert referred to. They are without military value.—LADISLAS D'ORCY.

We sent Mr. d'Orcy's letter on to Mr. Mahaffey, who wrote him the following appreciative reply, which also embodies some more right-on-the-spot facts:

Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico.

Adventure has sent me your splendid supplementary letter covering aviation in Mexico, for which please accept my personal note of appreciation. Unfortunately at the time Mr. Goodstein's letter was answered—from San Francisco I believe—I had just completed several long trips touching coast points all the way down to Panama and had not been able to keep track of the many political changes in Mexico.

It so happens that Mr. Ralph O'Neill is an old acquaintance of mine, and while I knew he had leagued himself with Obregon and had been actually offered an appointment as chief of the aviation department and he was the party referred to in my reply on page 189, I did not feel at liberty to mention his name. As showing the difficulty in securing information of undoubted accuracy, allow me to state that we always considered Ralph O'Neill as an American citizen although his mother is of Mexican extraction, and the family one of the most prominent for years past at Nogales, Arizona. His father has repeatedly held office, and was candidate for Senator during the late elections. In any case Ralph is a splendid type of the best that our Government had in its service during the Great War.

My understanding was that he had sworn allegiance to the Mexican Government on taking his new position, as has also been required of the various French and Italian aviators and mechanics who have at different times joined the Mexican air forces. I likewise have the impression that he left for England and the continent this year to secure new planes and has been replaced as the actual head of aviation.

Changes continue rather kaleidoscopic in official circles at Mexico City and I have not had the pleasure of seeing their official organ *Tochtli* for some months past, referring to the monthly publication of the Mexican aviation service. Naturally it is quite impossible also, when the inquiry is general, for *Adventure's* foreign correspondents to go into a mass of detail when answering our voluminous correspondence from the States although absolute accuracy is always attempted.

Since the matter of commercial aviation has been touched I would state that a decision is pending on the 20th of May and another on the 24th of this month, covering mail, express and passenger service to such points as Vera Cruz, Tampico and Ciudad Juarez (El Paso) from the capital. It is very probable that a company headed by an Italian named Jorge Puflea will be given the latter route to the border and the intermediate points.

In this connection I would state that since the armistice this matter of commercial aviation in Mexico has been taken up to my certain knowledge by at least three English groups, two each from Germany and France, one from Italy and various others from the U. S. A. It is generally conceded that of the American groups it is most probable that a concession will be granted the Mercury Aviation Co., which is already operating in Cuba, Colombia and other foreign parts. During the past two years these matters have been thoroughly threshed over by those seeking concessions and the Secretaria de Communicaciones of the Mexican Government. It appears that the Post-Office Department in all cases demands mail service.

Many other routes have been proposed at different times; such as Mexico City to Salina Cruz and way points, the capital to Mazatlan *via* Guadalajara and Tepic, Chihuahua to Hermosillo, etc.

It may also be of general interest that a French world-war veteran named François de Boige heads a powerful group seeking a concession in Mexico that would give service similar to that between Paris and London, Paris and Brussels and on the purely French routes, using planes of the Goliath F-60 type, each equipped with two Salms motors and Nieuport biplanes with Le Rhon and Clerget motors. It seems certain that something definite is at last to result along the lines of commercial aviation.

It should also be stated that various mining companies have during the past two years taken up the matter of private airplane service between mines and shipping points; but the Government has so far refused permits to any of them, as also occurred in the case of the oil companies. As you doubtless know, private aviation has also been prohibited to date from the standpoint of general safety, although Mexico has at least one amateur aviator of standing in the person of Mr. Alberto Braniff, one of the leaders in general sportsmanship along all lines, who very generously gave his plane to the Government to replace losses incurred by the air forces.

Since the inauguration of General Alvaro Obregon there have been some very successful flights made by American aviators in our Governemnt service overland from the border to Mexico City, and I notice that Captain Luis Colsa of the Mexican air forces was at San Antonio, Texas, early this May, hobnobbing with American flyers and getting in touch with our flying-camp methods and machines. I take it that the unsatisfactory results of Mexico's purchase of German planes and the fatalities among French and Italian aviators and mechanics, as well as of Mexican flyers, has reacted favorably toward American planes and fliers; and it is doubtless true that under the progressive administration of the actual régime there will be many future opportunities offered American fliers here in Mexico. Personally I believe they will be along the lines of commercial aviation, especially since General Obregon has very greatly reduced all military activities and has brought appropriations and army strength down to very low figures and has insisted upon spending funds along other lines that will lead to the quick rehabilitation of Mexico.

Thank you again for your valued help.—C. R. MAHAFFEY.

Mr. d'Orcy sent us Mr. Mahaffey's reply, together with the subjoined note. So there you have the aeronautics situation in Mexico as it existed in the late Spring of 1921. We're trying to get the news to you at the earliest possible minute; but the magazine goes to press a long time ahead of the publication date which it bears, so that we can't guarantee that the information is strictly up-to-date at the time it reaches you:

New York.

I have only this to add, that Mr. Mahaffey's information as to Señor O'Neill having been replaced as the actual head of the Fuerza-Aerea is correct, and my latest information shows that General Gustavo Salinas has been appointed to succeed him. General Salinas is the brother of Colonel Alberto Salinas, former head of the Mexican Flying Corps, who may be considered the real founder of Mexican aviation.

Mr. Mahaffey is right: changes *do* continue rather kaleidoscopic and if you don't get this lengthy cross-correspondence into print soon, we will have to write it all over.

Incidentally an Ansaldo 6-seater cabin airplane has recently been shipped to Señor Jorge Puflea at Chihuahua. This is a thoroughly modern machine and is to be flown from Chihu. to Mexico, D. F.—LADISLAS D'ORCY.

Put at least five cents postage on all letters addressed to "Ask Adventure" editors who live outside the U. S. Always enclose at least five cents in International Reply Coupons for answer.

Glass Buffalo Eyes

THEY'RE easier to get than the buffalo, I'll say:

Question:—"Can you tell me where I can get artificial eyes to mount a buffalo head?"—ROLAND MATTHEWS, Fort Musselshell, Mont.

Answer, by Mr. Thompson:—You can get the eyes for buffalo head at Art Taxidermy Studios, 1041 West Madison Street, Chicago, Ill.

Arguing with a Hold-up

MR. WIGGINS describes a very cogent bit of eloquence:

Question:—"Here are a few questions that are probably a little out of line; but I think you can answer them, and will surely be thankful to you if you will.

First I would like to tell you that I am cashier at the railroad freight-house here and handle quite a bit of money. I always have a good amount on hand on account of our location from town. The depot furnishes no safe nor weapon. I always take the money home.

Would the circumstances warrant me in owning a pistol or revolver?

Is there a permit to purchase a pistol and also one to carry one?

How would I go about it to get a permit?

If you can not answer these questions could you tell me where I could get information regarding permits?"— —— ——.

In response to your letter of the 28th ult., I would not advise you to carry a gun with the intention of arguing out the matter with a hold-up man, unless you are already expert with one, and very fast on the draw.

For the following reasons:

The thug will shoot to kill if he thinks there is the least chance of resistance; very few highwaymen ever pay the extra penalty for murder, any officer will tell you. And they always have the drop on their man, too.

Leave the money hidden securely in the freight-house, is my advice. I don't suppose you are held

accountable for it, beyond taking ordinary precautions, as no safe is furnished you by the company. Let them take the risk, is my advice. Hold-up men sometimes kill before telling a man to bail up, you know.

But my advice in case you still desire to carry the money is as follows: Get a shotgun, a double barrel, and have the barrels cut off to sixteen or eighteen inches. Carry it loaded in both barrels and cocked. And if any one takes a whirl at you, give him a one-way ticket to ——.

I don't think any permit will be necessary, but if one is, the local chief of police will be glad to fix you up, I am sure, when he sees this letter and knows the circumstances.

Breaking into Alaska

LISTEN to an old sourdough and do as he says, and you won't stick yourselves with an "outfit:"

Question:—"Myself and buddy have planned a trip to Alaska to prospect for gold. We have a little money; thought we could work some to make our way. We are single, ages twenty-one and twenty, both willing to work and endure hardships if such prevail.

Here are some questions I would be very pleased to have you answer:

What part of Alaska would we find prospecting best?

Are the Winters severe there?

Would we be able to find plenty of work?

How are wages there?

What means of travel do they use mostly?

Also what species of fur-bearing animals can be caught there?"—HOWARD MOODS, Clayton, N. M.

Answer, by Mr. Solomons:—I answer hundreds of letters like yours. Go to Seattle. Talk to people. Decide on what part of Alaska you want to hit first. Take passage on a boat with NO outfit.

When in Alaska go to work. Look and listen. When you are wise to things, then prospect or hunt or trap or do any condemned thing you want to. Grow up with the country.

Don't plan in advance and buy an outfit. Suckers do that.

The weather is bad sometimes, but the climate is good and not hard on any one. It's a great country for a he-man, and lots of chances if you are in no hurry. Work is usually plentiful enough for the right kind of fellow—who is not afraid of it in any form. Wages are a little better than in the States, and living good.

They use all kinds of means of travel, depending on where you are. Same as United States. 'Most all northern fur-bearers are found there—by those who know how.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

MILLS, CHARLES FOSTER. Brother. Age about twenty-four, blue eyes and light hair. Discharged from Med. Dept. U. S. Army at Vancouver Barracks, Wash., January, 1919. Any information will be appreciated.—Address HARRY E. MILLS, 618 E. 11th St., Cheyenne, Wyo.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

SCHERP, WILHELM. About sixty-eight years of age. Came to New York in 1888 from Poland. Worked in Long Island in a cemetery and for a man named Fritz Werner. Any information will be appreciated.—Address JULIUS SCHERP, 10 Durham Ave., Middletown, Conn.

HANSON, MRS. ANNIE. Sister. Last heard of in Tacoma, Washington, about twelve or fifteen years ago. Has son by name of Paul Clark—twenty-eight or thirty years of age. Any information will be appreciated—Address MRS. JULIA CROOKS WEBB, 49 Grove St., St. Paul, Minn.

STOODLEY, VIRGINIA. Twenty-six years old. Last heard of in Southbridge, Mass., 1900. Black hair and eyes. At that time five years of age. Living with a French family. Any one knowing her whereabouts please notify father. R. V. STOODLEY, Ashfield, Mass.

HURLEY, WARNER L. WARNER LAWRENCE. Any one knowing his whereabouts kindly write—Sister. MRS. JOHN J. DIXON, L. B. 336 Charles Town, W. Va.

LEEF, HARRY. Brother. Born in Smyrna, Del., Feb. 5, 1866. Went West, and not heard from for thirty years. Was then in Denver, Colo. Heard he was with the 101 Ranch Show, later with the H. R. I. Ranch. Any information will be appreciated.—Address S. EVELYN LEEF, 116 N. Connell St., Wilmington, Del.

JOHNSON, ERNEST LAWRENCE. Last heard of in Hartford, Conn., living on Capitol Ave. Light complexion, about five feet eight inches tall, Swedish by birth. Scar in center of forehead. Thirty-six years of age. Mechanic by trade. Any information will be appreciated. —Address sister.] MRS. ROBERT THOMPSON, 166 Potter Ave., Providence, R. I.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

ONE HUNDRED AND FORTIETH INFANTRY. Comrades at Argonne or in Vosges. Good news! Write CHAPLAIN EDWARDS, Lawrence, Kansas.

WILKINS, FRANCIS B. Age twenty-four, slender built, five feet nine and one-half inches tall, black hair, gray-blue eyes. Called "Smoky." Last heard from in November, 1920. Was then in Reno, Nevada. From there was supposed to have gone to Douglas, Arizona, and from there going to Mexico with an expedition. Any information will be appreciated.—Address MRS. T. B. WILKINS, 218 Blaine St., Caldwell, Iowa.

VALIMONT, WILLIAM. Your old friend who was on the S. S. *Hollywood* wants to get in touch with you Write PERCY RUSSELL, 4102 So. Thompson Ave., Tacoma, Wash.

RUIZ, JOSE. "PAP." Last seen in Balboa, C. Z. Lives in Liverpool, England. Please write to LARRY, care of *Adventure*.

JONES, MELVIN MURLE. Will be eighteen years old August 16th; blue eyes, dark hair. Last heard of at Delta, Colo., June, 1919. Any information will be appreciated by his mother.—Address MRS. A. B. JONES, Coffeyville, Kansas.

LITTLE SON. Please send address where I can write you. Interesting news. Everything all right. Heard from Miss Ford.—MOTHER.

BROWNE, SANFORD. Reported killed in mines in Colorado; but was supposed to be a false report. Any information will be appreciated by his granddaughter.—Address MRS. A. M. McCOY, 416 Sixth St., Taft, Cal.

EDMONDS, JACK. (PERCY G. JENNISON). Age about twenty-seven, dark hair, five feet six inches tall. Last heard from in Buffalo, N. Y. Was my partner on bicycle ride from Atlantic City to Los Angeles in 1914. Married Miss Clara Bause of Ponca, Nebr., at Denver, Colo., July 22, 1914. Home was in Greenfield, Mass. Any information will be appreciated.—Address VERNON P. COX, 23 South Virginia Ave., Atlantic City, N. J.

ANY of the old gang that were in A. C. 5, U. S. A., up to 1918 are requested to write to "PARY," care of *Adventure*.

RUSSELL, WM. Last heard of in Knowlton, Wis. Was known there as Mike Bender. Also known as Zhny. Please write to your pal. Am going to the Great Lakes and would like to get your address.—Address BERNHART B. BLOCK, The Anchorage, Baltimore, Md.

STEWART, ERNEST J. Of Milwaukee and Red River. Please write P. O. Box 735, 25 South St., New York.

SATTUR, PETER A. Formerly of Passaic, N. J. Last heard from in October, 1920, in Newark, N. J. Was then leaving for California. Any informatln will be appreciated by his mother.—Address MRS. A. SATTUR, 18 William St., Wallington, N. J.

RYAN, ROBERT. Last heard of nine years ago in Dillon, Mont. At that time was a sheep-herder. Any information will be appreciated.—Address sister.—MRS. L. O. MAHAR, Box 155, Milltown, Maine.

WALTON, THEODORE or THAD. Last heard from in Navy, 1917. Your old shipmate would like to hear from you.—Address FRED E. DYNES, 265 Twenty-third St., Brooklyn. N. Y.

RINCKHOFF, J. ALLEN. JACK. Last seen in Cedar City, Utah, September, 1919. Going to Los Angeles soon after. Lived in Huntington Park, Cal. Was cowpuncher in Universal L-Ko and Pathé pictures. Any information will be appreciated.—Address R. T. T., care of *Adventure*.

McGOVERN, JOHN. Left Schaghticoke, New York, April 10, 1876. Last heard of at Fort Eddy, New Mexico, 1890. Any information will be appreciated.—Address L. T. 425, care of *Adventure*.

THE following have been inquired for in either the First August or Mid-August issues of Adventure. They can get the name of the inquirer from this magazine:

BAIRD, CHARLES OLIVER; Barker, Robert; Bevans, Charles; Brick; Brown, Chester I.; Brown, D. B.; Brown, Mrs. Lottie Atkins; Burns, Jim; Cashore, Lawrence H.; Catchings, Jewel; Current, Mary; De Hart, Buckey; Drew, William; Dixon, Lt. Harry Allen; Durst, Paul; Ferris, Curtis P.; Goodman, T. V.; Heald, Wesley or Henry; Jordan, Tommy; Lindsay, Willard C.; MacDonald, John; MacSweeney, Sgt.; McGraw, J. K.; Perry, C. G.; Pfeffer, H. A.; Phillips, Frank; Pierce, Austin R. and Stanley J.; Pratt, Herbert, Sidney; Reed, Harry; Robinson, Percy; Roy; Scott, Miss Elvia Belle; Shirley, Alfred; Smith, Stewart Carenem; Sperry, Frank E.; Stuart, A. G.; Tucker, James Walter; Wilkinson, Mrs. Alice Gladson Brown.

MISCELLANEOUS: L. J. K.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

MID-SEPTEMBER ISSUE

In addition to the complete book-length novel mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will contain the following stories:

THE KING OF SPADES — *Frank H. Shaw*
Fate takes a hand in a poker game.

RRA BOLOI An Off-the-Trail Story — *Crosbie Garstin*
Trooper against witch-doctor.

"FIND THE MAN" — *R. T. M. Scott*
A search in the city's crime-belt.

LORD JULIAN'S MISSION A Tale of the Brethren of the Main — *Rafael Sabatini*
Again the Spanish admiral is "bubbled."

THE FLIGHT OF THE YELLOW OWL — *Kenneth Gilbert*
On the trail of border plotters.

THE TYRANT SAURIAN — *Paul L. Anderson*
Battles in a younger world.

THE COCONUT GRENADIERS — *E. O. Foster*
"*Privit Morey*, the pair o' them," spring a surprize on the Filipinos.

THE CLUE ON QUEEN'S HILL — *Robert J. Horton*
Boyer, man-hunter, and a stage hold-up mystery.

THE DOOM TRAIL A Five-Part Story Part IV — *Arthur D. Howden Smith*
The people of the Long House take up arms.

THE TURTLE AND THE JACKRABBIT An Adventure of *Tackline Brady* — *Stanley S. Schnetzler*
High strategy in a gob boat-race.

"We Pay Him $100 a Week!"

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- ☐ Machine Shop Practice
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- ☐ Gas Engine Operating
- ☐ CIVIL ENGINEER
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping
- ☐ MINE FOREMAN OR ENG.
- ☐ STATIONARY ENGINEER
- ☐ Marine Engineer
- ☐ Ship Draftsman
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