FEBRUARY
28th
1923
25c

PUBLISHED
THREE TIMES A MONTH

# Adventure

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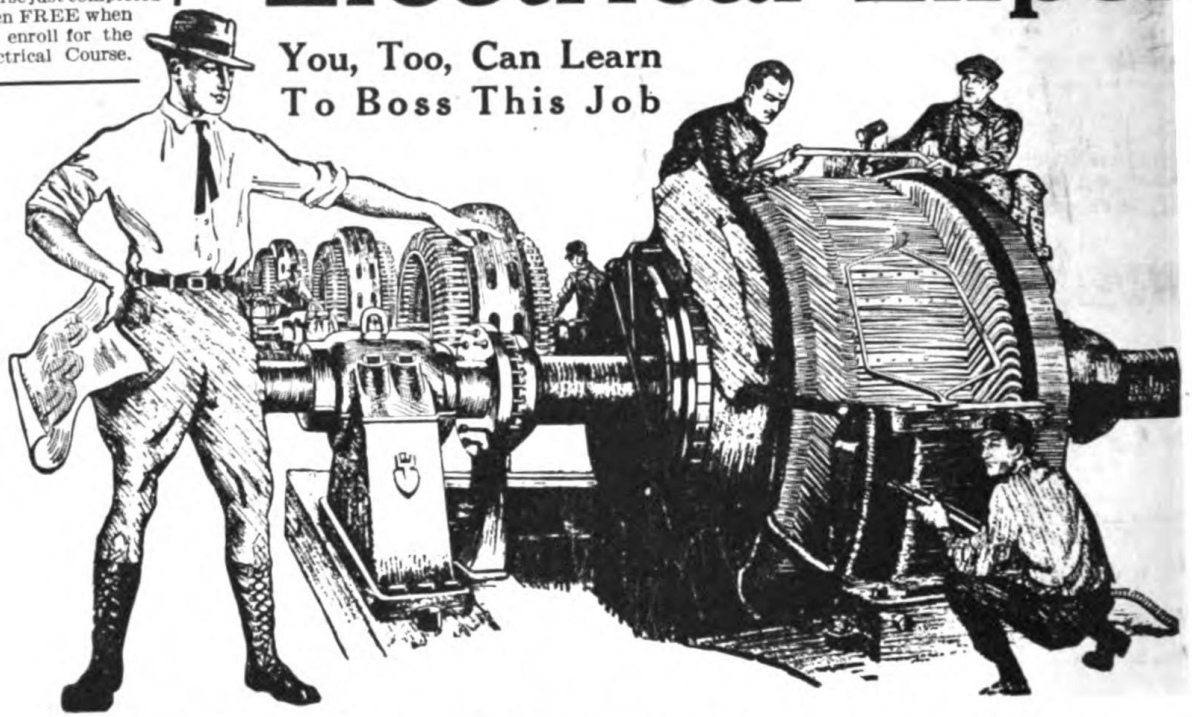

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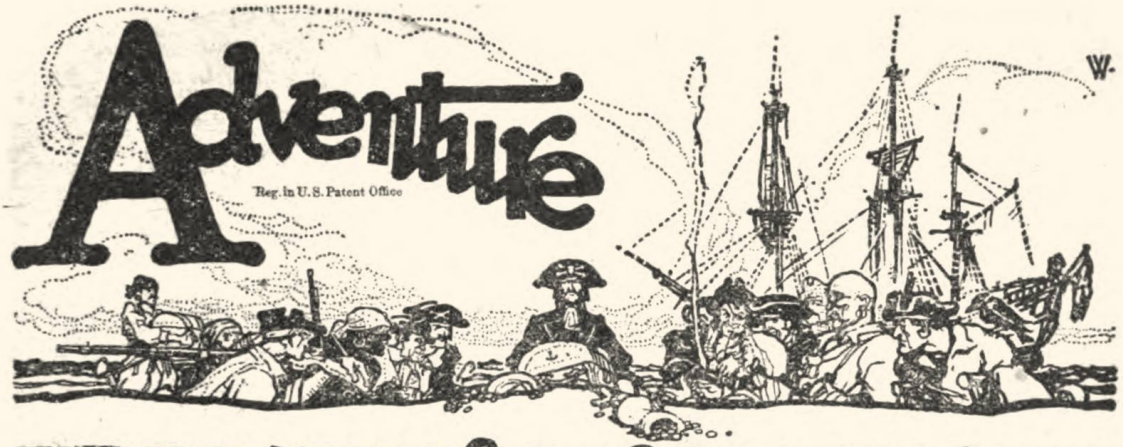


FEBRUARY·28th·1923 VOL·39·NO·3

**Published Three Times a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY**

J. H. GANNON, President — C. H. HOLMES, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring and Macdougal Streets - - New York, N. Y.
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

*Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879*

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

**Yearly Subscription, $6.00 in advance** — **Single Copy, Twenty-Five Cents**

Foreign postage, $3.00 additional. Canadian postage, 90 cents.



# Contents for February 28th, 1923, Issue



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(*Continued from preceding page*)



THE story had gone around that since *Seth Orville* had got rich he had become too soft to handle a bad crew. So just to nail that lie the little millionaire assumes command of a mutiny ship, and his adventures as captain form a topic of conversation for all the South Sea ports. "I'LL SHOW 'EM," a novel by Albert Richard Wetjen, complete in the next issue.

WHEN *Jean Triton* is captured by an African tribe, the art of the "squared ring" is pitted against the crude wrestling-tactics of savage warriors. "THREE PRONGS," by Georges Surdez, a complete novelette in the next issue.

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

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**Don't forget the dates of issue for *Adventure*—the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month**

February · 28th 1923 Adventure Vol·39 No·3

# TRAMPS OF THE RANGE

## A Complete Novelette by W. C. Tuttle

*Author of "Flames of the Storm," "The Ranch of the Tombstones," etc.*

THE first faint flush of dawn was creeping over the Mission River hills, as the Overland train drew to a stop at the little town of Moon Flats. It was only a moment's pause, but in that length of time a man had dropped off the rods of the baggage-car, crept between the trucks and walked slowly down the main street.

The town was deserted at this time in the morning, and the man seemed to study the dimly outlined, false-fronted buildings as if he had been there before.

Moon Flats was a cow town—nothing more nor less. It was a shipping-point for the Mission River ranges, which also made it an outfitting point. Like the majority of the old cow towns it had one street, narrow wooden sidewalks, the tops of which were never securely nailed down, long hitch-racks and a pavement of deep, yellow dust in the Summer and a quagmire of mud and slush in the Winter.

As the light grew stronger it illuminated the faded and battered signs of the Moon Flats Gambling House, Buck Franey's Place, Bill Eagle's General Merchandise, Jakie Dick's Élite Café and Restaurant, Trail End Gambling House, Mission River Stage-Office and General Post-Office.

The stronger light also illuminated the features of the man who studied them—a young face, although deeply lined and with a slight pallor, as if from sickness.

His eyes were dark, and his black hair showed slightly silvered at the temple, as if lightly brushed with a white powder. His nose was slightly hooked, and his lips seemed molded into a thin line above a strong chin.

He was slightly above the average in height, but just a trifle stooped. His garb was nondescript, dirty and greasy from travel. As he studied the signs a half-smile passed across his face and he sat down on the sidewalk in front of the Moon Flats Gambling House. By turning a pocket inside out, he managed to collect

enough tobacco to roll a thin cigaret, which burned with the unmistakable odor of lint, but the man did not seem to mind.

Across the street, in the two-story, ramshackle Cattlemen's Hotel, an alarm-clock started its tin-panny whirr, and in a moment a man's voice was raised in sleepy profanity. The man on the sidewalk smiled.

There was silence for a few minutes, and again the clock shattered the silence. A moment later the cheap curtains were flung aside, an arm described an outward arc and the faithful despoiler of slumber splintered on the sidewalk.

This time the man on the sidewalk laughed softly. It was all so human—and he was unused to human things. And as if the splintering of the clock was a signal, Moon Flats began to wake up. From behind the Élite Café came the sounds of some one splitting kindling, and over at the livery stable the sliding doors creaked as the stable man came out and looked around. Doors slammed in the hotel.

A sleepy-eyed, uncombed cowboy came around a corner from a corral, leading two horses which he watered at the livery-stable watering-trough. He paid no attention to the man on the sidewalk as he went past, but on his return trip he stared hard and rubbed his ear with a rope end, as if wondering or thinking. The man on the sidewalk spat dryly.

The door behind him opened and a man came out, carrying two wooden buckets, while another lounged in the doorway, holding a broom in both hands. They were swampers, getting ready to clean out the place. The man with the buckets crossed to the pump beside the stable, where he filled the buckets, accompanied by much creaking protest from the old pump.

In a few minutes the two cowboys came out of the hotel, yawned widely and started across the street, arguing.

"I never done no such a —— thing!" declared one of them. "All I done was wind it."

"Whatcha want to wind it fer?" queried the other. "It wasn't your clock, Newt. My gosh! What did you care 'f it run down? Wakin' us up at five o'clock! I s'pose you thought it was scientific, didn't yuh? Knowed that clocks would wind up; so yuh wanted to do the right thing by it, eh?"

"Tha's it, Monte," agreed the other. "Let her go at that, can't cha? You'd holler if yuh was goin' to be sent to the——"

He stopped abruptly as he looked at the man on the sidewalk and squinted sharply, as if not believing his own eyes.

The man on the sidewalk looked them over coldly—a half-amused expression about his thin lips.

"Shell Romaine!" blurted the one called Newt.

"Yeah," nodded the man on the sidewalk. "Shelby Romaine."

"Well, I'm ——!"

Newt Bowie rubbed his chin and looked at Monte Barnes, who was pursing his lips as if trying to whistle, though no sound came forth.

"Moon Flats ain't changed much in a year," observed Romaine dryly.

"No-o-o, she ain't—for sure," agreed Newt, looking around as if considering the unprogressiveness of Moon Flats. "She ain't growed much, Shell."

"When didja come back?" queried Monte.

"Just before yore alarm went off."

"Oh, that —— thing!"

Monte glanced back at the hotel.

"Newt, the danged fool, went and ——"

"Aw, let up on the poor old clock," interrupted Newt. "Anybody'd think you'd been abused, cowboy. You ain't seen a sunrise f'r so long that you don't know it ever comes up."

Newt and Monte sat down on the steps and relaxed. It was not difficult for either of them to relax, and their shoulder-blades were calloused from half-reclining against corral posts or tree-trunks.

"Goin' t' be here f'r a while, Shell?" asked Newt.

"Mebbe."

"Uh-huh."

Newt wanted information, but did not feel like asking pointblank for it.

SLIGHTLY over a year before, Shelby Romaine had been sent to the penitentiary for five years. Two men had held up the Mission County Bank at Sula, stolen thirty thousand dollars and shot the cashier. The cashier was crippled for life.

Jim Searles, a cowboy, who was an eyewitness of the robbers' getaway, swore that he recognized one of them as being Shell Romaine. The Romaines, father and son,

were of rather bad reputation, and it was not difficult to secure a conviction.

Old "Rim-Fire" Romaine, the father, battled mightily for his son. He was an old, lean-faced, white-mustached range man; quick-tempered, bitter of tongue, and reputed to be fast with a gun. The defense was weak, but there still remained—circumstantial evidence.

Shell Romaine refused to tell where the money was hidden, nor would he implicate any one else. The prosecution was also weak, but the jury brought in a verdict of guilty, and the judge sentenced Shelby Romaine to serve five years in Deer Park prison.

Old Rim-Fire Romaine cursed the judge and jury bitterly, and only through the intervention of the defense attorney was Rim-Fire prevented from filling the court-room with powder smoke. Old Rim-Fire had gone back to his little ranch-house, fairly sizzling with anger, while Shelby, linked to Undersheriff "Splinter" See, had gone to prison.

Many folk were of the opinion that Shell Romaine should have received a heavier sentence, but the State was satisfied. He was reputed to be a hard-riding, wild sort of a ——, who respected no one; and the Mission range-folks breathed easier after he was gone.

But now he was back, looking like a tramp; a little leaner, slightly more white about the temples, but still keen of eye. The prison pallor still showed in his face, but a few days of sun would wipe that away.

"Seen anythin' of my old dad?"

Shell's voice was low.

"Yeah, I seen him the other day," replied Newt. "Same old feller. Know yo're out, Shell?"

"No. Is he still runnin' the ranch?"

"Yeah."

Shell watched Newt roll and light a cigaret before he said—

"Anythin' new goin' on around here?"

Newt inhaled deeply and blew the ash off his cigaret.

"No-o-o, nothin' much, except the feller they calls the 'Black Rider.' "

"He's a-plenty," grunted Monte seriously.

"Black Rider?"

"Uh-huh."

Newt nodded and puffed slowly.

"Some jasper is liftin' treasure-boxes, robbin' banks, et cetery, and he dresses all in black. He's sure a dinger, that feller; and he's got the sheriff pawin' his head."

Shell stared at the toes of his worn shoes for a moment, and a bitter smile twisted his lips as he looked at Newt.

"It's a wonder they don't say it's the man who helped me do that Mission Bank job."

"That's what they're sayin'," nodded Newt.

Shell laughed shortly.

"He must be smarter than I am."

"He's smart as ——," agreed Monte quickly. "He's about ten thousand dollars ahead of the game now."

"Includin' his half of the thirty thousand we stole, makes him kinda rich," mused Shell.

"Yeah, that's a fact," grinned Newt. "'F he's real cute, he'll quit while the quittin' is good."

"Takes brains, I reckon," sighed Shell. "A —— fool never knows when to quit. Pat Haley's still sheriff, ain't he?"

"Yeah, Pat is still lookin' for suspects."

"Pat's all right—good sheriff," nodded Shell. "Just 'cause he shipped me to the pen, don't make me sore at him. He treated me right. No—" Shell shook his head— "I ain't sore at none of them judges, lawyers nor jury. They done their dangdest, I reckon."

"Jim Searles is still around here," volunteered Monte.

"Thasso?"

Shell was too indifferent to this.

"Yeah, he's still around here"

"Lemme have yore Durham," said Shell, holding out his hand to Newt. "I ain't had nothin' but pocket-scrapin's for quite a while."

"He'p yoreself, pardner, and then we'll have a little mornin' snifter."

"Much obliged for the smoke, but I ain't drinkin'—thank yuh kindly, Newt. I've been away from it a year, and I'm kinda sanitary and antiseptic, I reckon. I kinda get a kick outa settin' here and lookin' at the old town."

"She ain't much t' look upon," grinned Monte.

"It's home," said Shell softly as he lowered his head to lick the edge of his cigaret paper, "and I've been away for a good many lifetimes."

THAT same morning Cal Severn stood on the spacious veranda of the Diamond-S ranch-house, leaning against the railing as he moodily smoked a cigaret, his somber eyes taking in the wide vista of rolling hills and the sun-tinted Mission range beyond.

Just beyond the huddle of barns and shelter-sheds a long line of cottonwoods and willows marked the twisting course of Whispering Creek. To the south lay mile upon mile of broken, rolling hills, an ideal cattle-range.

The Diamond-S was the largest, and reputed to be the richest, cattle outfit in the Mission River range; owned for years by the Severn family, of which Cal Severn was the last of his line. Square-shooting, upstanding folks were the old Severns, proud, perhaps arrogant.

Cal Severn was barely thirty years of age, well-built, bronzed as an Indian. His face was lean but well proportioned, and his dusky-gray eyes remained indifferent, dreaming, even when his lips laughed. Like all of the Severns, he was quick of temper, slow to forgive; and Cal Severn was a fighter—a hard-riding fighter of the old rangeland.

Two men rode in at the big gate and halted at the corral, where they talked with two of the Diamond-S cowboys, who were saddling their horses. Cal Severn watched these two men turn their horses and ride toward him. They were strangers in the Mission River range; cowboys, by their garb.

One of them was tall, swarthy, with a heavy mustache and a hawk-like face; the other shorter, wiry of build, and with a face filled with grin-wrinkles. The tall one, in spite of his serious mien, appeared ready to laugh at any time.

They drew rein and nodded to Cal Severn.

"Lookin' for work," announced the tall one. "Me 'n' him," indicating his companion.

Severn shook his head.

"Not taking in any hands now."

He shifted his position and tossed away his cigaret.

"Fact of the matter is, I'm laying off all, but one, of my boys today."

"Thasso?"

The tall one seemed sympathetic. For a moment he considered Severn, and then his eyes swept around the confines of the Diamond-S as he reached to an inside pocket of his vest and took out a folded paper.

"Mind readin' this?" he asked, handing the paper out to Severn, who took it and unfolded it slowly.

His eyes grew even more sober, and his lips settled into a harsh line as he scanned the typewritten page.

His eyes came up from the letter, and he stared off across the hills, thinking deeply.

"Yuh *sabe* the idea, don't yuh?" queried the tall one.

Cal Severn seemed to jerk back to the present, and after a few moments he nodded slowly and handed the letter back to its owner.

"Yeah, I reckon I understand," he said. "You'll find bunks down there—" pointing toward the bunk-house—"and just make yourselves to home. Henry Horsecollar'll fix yuh up."

"I'm Hartley," said the tall one. "Folks calls me 'Hashknife.' This wide-awake pardner of mind was christened Geor-gh, but answers to 'Sleepy.' How far is it to town?"

"Six miles," shortly.

Cal Severn turned and walked back into the house, while Hashknife Hartley and Sleepy Stevens rode down to the bunk-house and dismounted. A tired-looking individual came around the corner and looked them over.

"Want t' see somebody?" he asked.

Hashknife shook his head.

"No-o-o, I reckon not. We've just hired out to the Diamond-S."

"Thasso? Huh!"

The man rubbed his ear violently.

"Kinda funny, seems like. Boss said he was cuttin' down the crew, and he let Newt Bowie and Monte Barnes go yesterday."

"He hired us," grinned Sleepy. "Mebbe he knows two danged good men when he sees 'em, pardner."

"Mebbe," dryly. "M'name's Dryden; first name's Henry and m' middle name's Harrison. H. H. Dryden."

"They sure branded yuh," grinned Hashknife. "I'm Hartley, and my pardner's name is Stevens. Hashknife Hartley and Sleepy Stevens."

"T' meetcha," bowed Dryden. "Howsa folks?"

"That," said Hashknife seriously, "would be pryin' into our private lives."

"Ex-cuse me plumb to ——!" exclaimed

Dryden, very apologetic and also very serious. "I'll kinda he'p yuh git settled in the bunk-house."

He led them inside the spacious bunk-house and allotted each of them a bunk. The room was large enough to accommodate twelve men, and as the Diamond-S force had been cut down they were able to select their own sleeping-places.

"Strangers around here?" queried Dryden.

"Uh-huh," admitted Hashknife. "Tee-to-tally."

"I sure know her from stem t' gudgeon."

Dryden smiled over his superior knowledge. It was not often that Dryden, known as "Henry Horsecollar," was able to get any one to listen.

"I know this here country jist like a book," he went on. "I know everything about her. There ain't a cañon nor a wash-out that I ain't fa-mil-yer with. By cripes, I sure know it well."

"That's sure fine," applauded Hashknife, looking up from his bed-roll. "Anythin' startling ever happen here?"

"Now yo're talkin'," said Henry. There sure is. Ain'tcha never heard of the Black Rider?"

"Go ahead," grinned Sleepy. "We'll bite, Henry."

"Aw-w-w-w, it ain't no joke. Nossir."

Henry shook his head violently.

"That there Black Rider sure ain't no joke. He's a lone rider, that feller is, and he's sure he'pin' himself t'things around this neck of the timber."

"Rustler?"

"No-o-o, I don't reckon he's rustlin' any; but he's sure makin' money off the stages and banks. Rides a black horse and dresses in black. Aw-w-w, yuh don't have t' believe me; yuh can ask anybody around here."

"Henry Horsecollar, we believe yuh," grinned Hashknife. "Who do yuh reckon it is?"

"'F I knowed I'd sure go after him—mebbe."

Henry was not committing himself.

"Outlawin' must be a good business around here," observed Sleepy.

"While she lasts," agreed Henry; "but she don't always last long. Look at Shell Romaine. He sure grabbed off a lot of money from the bank at Sula; but they put the deadwood on him, and he's bustin' rocks at Deer Park for five years. His old man owns a little outfit between here and Moon Flats—off to the right-hand side as yuh go from here. They calls him 'Rim-Fire' Romaine.

"Bitter? Beside him quinin would taste kinda sickish-sweet. Hates everybody. Got a few dogey cows and some horses."

"What's he sore about?" asked Hashknife.

"Eve'ything."

Henry spread his hands to indicate the entire universe.

"Hates eve'ything."

"Did they ever get the money back?" asked Sleepy.

"Git it? ——, no! Shell wouldn't tell 'em nothin'. It was thirty thousand dollars. There was three weeks that not a danged cowboy on this range would work. Nossir; they was all treasure-hunters; but nobody ever found it."

"Did you hunt for it?"

"Yuh danged well right I did! I was workin' for the X Bar X outfit at the time and when I got back I found out I didn't have no job; so I beat the Diamond-S outfit over here and got a job from Cal Severn. Cal was sore as —— at his own crew."

"Good feller to work for?" asked Hashknife.

"Fine and dandy. He don't pay much attention; but say—" Henry lowered his voice— "this ranch ain't no money-maker. They tell me that old man Severn was a humdinger, but Cal sure ain't. ——, he's a dreamin' son-of-a-gun, and yuh can't run a cow-ranch thataway. He's hot-headed sometimes, and he'd fight a circle-saw, but he ain't got no idea of business."

"He ought to make you the foreman," said Hashknife.

"Yeah."

Henry shifted his tobacco and spat accurately at a sawdust-filled box beside the stove.

"Yeah, that's what I been thinkin'. I could sure make this a reg'lar ranch, y'betcha. Mebbe Cal Severn don't think it takes brains t' run a ranch like this, but 'f I had a chance I'd sure show him what a li'l head-work would do."

"What's yore job around here now?" queried Hashknife.

"Aw, I kinda work around—keepin' things tidy-like."

Just at that moment, Cal Severn came to the door and looked inside.

"Henry fix yuh up?" he asked.

"Yeah," grinned Hashknife. "We're all set."

"Yuh spoke about goin' to town," remarked Severn. "I'm ridin' down right away."

"And we'll ride right along with yuh," nodded Hashknife.

Cal Severn saddled a horse and the three men rode away, while Henry Horsecollar stood in the doorway, chewing rapidly. He heartily approved of the new men. Since they were strangers, he would be able to talk about many things that the natives would not listen to nor believe.

"Quite a character," observed Hashknife, jerking his head in the direction of the bunkhouse.

"Henry Horsecollar?" grinned Severn, "Yeah, he sure is. Did he retail all the range gossip?"

"Well, he got a runnin' start," laughed Hashknife. "Told us about the Black Rider."

Severn laughed.

"That's a pet piece of gossip for Henry, and if he talks long enough about it he'll tell you who the Black Rider is and where to find him."

"Is it Henry's imagination, or is there a Black Rider?"

"There is," declared Severn, "and he's makin' things bad for the money interests. Somebody named him the Black Rider because he wore black clothes, I reckon."

"Got any idea who it might be?"

Severn shook his head.

"No, but I wish I did. There's an aggregate of ten thousand dollars reward for him—and I could sure use ten thousand dollars right now."

"You ain't got nothin' on me, pardner," assured Hashknife. "I never could count that much, but they could short-change me and never make me sore."

SHELL ROMAINE stirred the curiosity of Moon Flats, and many were the conjectures over his appearance; but he made no explanation of why he was out four years ahead of his sentence. Pat Haley got word of it and lost no time in meeting Romaine.

Pat was hard-faced, prone to hew to the line of duty, but with a soft heart inside his deep chest; and it was with a smile that he approached Shell Romaine.

"Shell, me lad, I heard ye was in town."

"Hyah, Pat," grinned Shell. "Howsa jail since I left?"

They shook hands earnestly, like two old friends meeting after a long separation.

"The jail is still intact," stated Pat, "and little used."

"She's a good strong jail," admitted Shell, "or I'd 'a' bored out, y'betcha. How's the good wife?"

"She's fine, Shell. Did they treat ye right at the big corral?"

Shell smiled grimly.

"Did any one ever go there expectin' good treatment, Pat?"

"'Tis not the primary object of the thing," agreed Pat slowly, "and I suppose that even Moon Flats looks good to ye now, Shell."

"Uh-huh," slowly.

"Will ye be stayin' hereabouts?"

Pat Haley wanted some information, but did not want to come right out and ask for it.

"I dunno."

Shell shook his head.

"It all depends, Pat."

"I suppose so."

Pat fidgeted with his belt-buckle.

"Have ye been out long, Shell?"

"Not very long."

"Uh-huh. Well, have ye seen the old man yet?"

"No."

"Uh-huh," thoughtfully.

Evidently Shell Romaine was not going to explain anything. They stood together on the edge of the board sidewalk in front of the Élite Café and considered the street while Cal Severn, Hashknife Hartley and Sleepy Stevens rode in and tied their horses at the hitch-rack in front of Buck Franey's place.

Haley noticed that there were two new punchers with Severn and also noted that their horses were branded with the Hashknife brand, which was a big outfit many miles to the South. Shell Romaine watched Severn until he disappeared inside Franey's Place, and then he turned to Haley.

"How's Cal Severn gettin' along these days, Pat?"

"Fine."

Some one called out from across the way, and they turned to see a man

riding swiftly down the street. He jerked his mount to a stop at the door of the Moon Flats saloon and sprang to the ground. Several men gathered around him as he talked excitedly, and one of them pointed across the street in the direction of the sheriff and Romaine.

"Somethin' must 'a' happened," observed Haley. "There's Mort Lee. C'm on."

They crossed the street, where the crowd was gathering, and the excited rider turned to the sheriff. The man was a stranger to Romaine.

"They got the Black Rider!" he exclaimed. "He tried to stop the Mission River stage at Medicine Creek, and Jim Searles got him cold."

"What do ye know about that?" grunted the sheriff. "Do ye know who he was, Mort?"

"Old man Romaine!"

The sheriff shot a quick glance at Shell Romaine, whose body had stiffened under the shock of his father's death. Some one in the crowd who knew Shell tried to interrupt the speaker, who continued:

"Doc Maldeen was with Searles when the old man tried to stick 'em up; but Searles was lookin' for somethin' like that, and he started shootin'. They'll be here in a little while."

The man laughed nervously as he added:

"I come dang near gettin' shot m'self. I was ridin' down the creek trail and busted right into it after it was all over. Thought I heard a shot just before that, but the creek makes so much noise and the twisted cañon kinda cuts off sounds. Searles lined up on me before he recognized who I was."

Nearly all the men in the crowd knew Shell Romaine, and they watched him curiously as he turned away and went into the Moon Flats saloon.

"You —— fool!"

One of the cowboys grasped the excited informer by the arm. "That feller is Shell Romaine, the old man's son!"

"Well, how'd I know?" he whined. "I never seen him before."

Cal Severn, Hashknife and Sleepy had joined the group in time to hear it all. There were no expressions of satisfaction over the passing of the Black Rider, although he had been a menace to the country. Both father and son bore bad reputations, but these grave-faced men around the sheriff did not comment upon the passing of one nor the appearance of the other.

One of the crowd moved over to the doorway of the saloon and peered inside, coming back in a moment to state softly that Shell Romaine was at the bar, drinking whisky.

"I don't blame him," stated the sheriff. "I dunno what I'd do in a case like that, so I don't."

A man came up the sidewalk, surveyed the group for a moment and called to the sheriff. The man was dressed in "store clothes," bareheaded and in his shirt sleeves. He handed a folded yellow paper to the sheriff and watched him as he read:

EXPRESS MESSENGER OF OVERLAND FOUND BOUND AND GAGGED WHEN TRAIN REACHED WHEELOCK THIS MORNING. SAFE BLOWN AND BIG AMOUNT REPORTED STOLEN. MESSENGER SAYS ROBBER LEFT TRAIN BETWEEN CLEVIS CREEK AND MOON FLATS.

(*Signed*) CLAVERING.

Sheriff Haley squinted closely at the message as some of the more inquisitive moved in close to see what it was about. Haley folded up the message and turned to the crowd.

"A lone bandit blew the Overland safe this mornin' and got off between here and Clevis Creek, accordin' to this telegram from Clavering, the marshal at Wheelock."

"By ——, this is gittin' to be a reg'lar country!" exclaimed an old grizzled cowman. "If it ain't one thing, it's two."

Haley nodded, and his eyes squinted thoughtfully as he remembered that Shell Romaine had just reached town. It was only three miles to Clevis Creek by the road, although it was much farther by rail and over a heavy grade, where a train barely crawled.

"If the Black Rider hadn't been killed they'd blame it on to him," declared another.

"The Overland hits there before daylight," said another, "and the stage don't hit Medicine Creek before eleven o'clock or later—and it's only seven miles from Medicine Creek crossin' to Clevis Creek railroad bridge."

Haley glanced around the crowd, and his eyes stopped at Hashknife, who was looking at him. Both Hashknife and Sleepy were strangers—and this was not exactly a nice day for strangers in Moon

Flats; not unless they could furnish a good alibi.

Several others took notice of Hashknife and Sleepy, but the coming of the stage precluded any questions. It drew up at the stage-office, and thither went the crowd.

Jim Searles, the driver, was a lanky, raw-boned, long-mustached person with pouchy eyes and red-veined cheeks. Doc Maldeen, the other occupant of the driver's seat, was a man of about forty years of age, black-haired, keen of features and with a long, flowing black mustache. He was slightly overdressed, and one might expect him momentarily to produce a stock of cure-alls, made by some famous Indian medicine-man, and which would cure any and all ills of mankind.

But Jim Searles was no less the showman in spite of his appearance. Without visible emotion but feeling that his prowess had been well advertised by Mort Lee, Searles looked the crowd over coldly, triumphantly. Then he handed the lines to Maldeen, got slowly down over the wheel and with a quick motion of his arm jerked the stage door open.

Lying on the floor of the stage, half-reclining against a seat, was the body of old Rim-Fire Romaine.

"There," said Searles dramatically, "is yore Black Rider!"

As Searles' eyes came back to the crowd he looked straight into the face of Shell Romaine, the man he had helped send to the penitentiary. Searles' eyes widened and he swayed back against the wheel as if trying to get farther away.

Shell's eyes were half-closed as he leaned forward and looked inside the stage. He had drunk considerable whisky, but was far from being drunk. The sheriff stepped in beside Searles and motioned for two of the men to help him remove the body, but Shell shoved one of them aside and took his place.

They carried the body into the stage-office and placed it on the floor. The old man was dressed in an old suit of rusty, badly fitting black clothes, nondescript shirt, black slouch hat and well-worn, high-heeled boots. The sheriff, after a cursory examination, stepped back. The old man had been killed with a buckshot load from a sawed-off shotgun—the upper part of his body being riddled.

Shell Romaine still stood beside the body, his shoulders hunched as he stared down at what had been his father, while the crowd watched him in silence. Then he lifted his eyes and looked straight at Jim Searles. It was not a look of anger; rather it appeared that Shell was trying to read Searles' innermost thoughts—and Searles turned away.

"Mind tellin' us about it, doc?" asked the sheriff of Maldeen. "Mort Lee told us some of it, but he was kinda excited."

"There's not much to tell," stated Maldeen. "We came to Medicine Creek, and Romaine stepped out of the brush just in front of us. He threw up his hand, trying to stop us, I think—and Searles shot him.

"He fell back into the brush. I held the team while Jim went over there and found out that he had killed old man Romaine. As he came back Mort Lee rode out of the brush and Jim almost shot him. Mort found out what had happened and then came on in ahead to tell about it."

"Had a gun, did he?" queried the sheriff.

Searles stepped forward and handed him a long-barreled .44 Colt pistol.

"This here's his gun, sheriff."

The sheriff looked at the gun and dropped it into his pocket as he said—

"It kinda looks like Searles was right; so there won't be no inquest."

"How about that reward, Pat?" asked Searles.

He had moved in closer to Shell Romaine as he spoke to the sheriff, and the words had barely left his lips when Shell whirled, stepped across the body of his father and smashed Searles flush in the mouth with a terrific right-hand swing.

Searles went backward almost out of the doorway, where he collapsed, half-knocked out and spitting broken teeth through his cut lips. Shell tried to follow up his blow, but Hashknife Hartley blocked him.

"Take her easy, pardner," begged Hashknife. "You can't hurt him any more until he gets partly over that punch."

Shell's face was white, and his eyes were a mere, dark-colored line, so tightly were they drawn, but he did not try to force his way past the tall cowpuncher. Searles crawled to his hands and knees and managed to get to his feet.

"I'd druther be kicked by a mule," observed one of the crowd seriously. "Jim Searles'll be eatin' his meals through Doc Hansen's stummick-pump, I'll betcha."

But Searles made no comment. He clapped one hand over his mouth and staggered outside, without asking further about the reward. That punch had driven all monetary considerations from his mind.

Shell Romaine turned to the sheriff.

"If there ain't goin' to be no inquest, can't I take him home, sheriff?"

His voice was pitched low, and his sudden flash of resentment had passed now.

"There ain't nothin' yuh want of him—now, is there?"

Pat Haley did not know just what to say. He looked at Shell and around at the crowd as if seeking guidance in this matter. Then he said:

"Well, I dunno, Shell. Why don't ye let us bury him all regular-like and ——"

"Knowin' that he was an outlaw, Pat? What does Moon Flats care about old man Romaine? My God, he was the only person on earth who cared for me! Me and him were a lot alike, sheriff; carin' for each other—kinda; and if it ain't against the law I'd like to take him—home."

Shell turned his head and looked down at the body, while Pat Haley bit his lower lip and had trouble adjusting his cartridge-belt. It was annoying him greatly; and several moments elapsed before he looked at Shell Romaine.

"Shell—ahem-m-m—it may be irregular as ——, but there ain't any of us too regular. You go right ahead, will ye?"

"Thanks, Pat. I suppose I can hire a team and a wagon."

"Yuh can borry mine," stated the man who had declared that Searles was due to take nourishment through a stomach-pump. "It's over in front of the store."

"Thanks," nodded Shell, and walked out past the crowd.

Severn, Hashknife and Sleepy walked outside to the edge of the sidewalk, where they were joined in a moment by the sheriff, who looked curiously at Hashknife and Sleepy.

"Do yuh think that Romaine was the Black Rider, Pat?" asked Severn.

The sheriff spat dryly and looked at Hashknife.

"We're strangers," explained Hashknife, "and I know how yuh feel, sheriff. I'm Hashknife Hartley and my pardner's name Sis tevens."

Names meant nothing to Pat Haley, and he merely nodded.

Hashknife produced the same paper he had shown to Cal Severn and handed it to the sheriff, who perused it slowly, pursing his lips over the words. Finally he folded it carefully and handed it back to Hashknife.

"Ah-ha-a-a!" he grunted. "So that's it, eh?"

"Kinda looks thataway," smiled Hashknife.

"Well, I wish ye luck."

Shell Romaine drove up and crowded the team close to the edge of the sidewalk, while four men brought out the body and placed it in the wagon-box. And without a word to any one Shell Romaine kicked off the brake and drove slowly down the street—going home.

"May the —— fly away wid me!" muttered Pat Haley. "I may be violatin' the law and me own duty in doin' this thing, but I've somethin' inside of me besides liver and lights, so I have."

"Do yuh think that Shell Romaine had anythin' to do with the Overland robbery?" asked Severn.

Pat Haley bit off a generous chew of tobacco and hitched up his cartridge-belt.

"Ye'll never find out by askin' me today, and if ye asked Shell—he'd likely lie about it."

Hashknife grinned in appreciation of the answer, but Cal Severn turned on his heel and walked away.

"The Spanish cavalee-e-e-er stood in his retreat and on his guit-ar-r-r-r played a tune, de-e-e-ear."

Henry Horsecollar's voice, if it might be called a voice, wailed dismally as he stood, razor in hand, and surveyed his half-shaven features in the dingy bunkhouse mirror.

Hashknife Hartley sat up in his blankets and blinked sleepily at Henry, after which he reached down and picked up one of his boots. Henry twisted his face sidewise so as to afford a medium smooth surface for the dull razor, and from that cramped facial angle continued—

"The mu-u-u-usic so-o-o-o swee-e-e-t——"

*Blam!* The boot crashed into the wall beside the mirror and drove all the music from Henry's soul. He turned and glared at Hashknife.

"Ex-cuse me," apologized Hashknife seriously.

"Why for did yuh throw the boot at me?" demanded Henry.

"Honest to gosh, I thought yuh was sufferin'," declared Hashknife, "and I can't bear to see sufferin'."

Sleepy kicked himself loose from his blankets and sat up.

"This is Sunday, don'tcha know it?" queried Henry.

"And you woke us up this early!" growled Sleepy. "What kind of a ranch is this anyway? Does everybody get up early and go to church?"

"I betcha Henry Horsecollar has got a sweetheart," grinned Hashknife, and Henry's ears got very red.

He turned and washed his face violently in cold water, while Hashknife and Sleepy winked at each other and began dressing.

"What does the boss do on Sunday?" queried Hashknife.

"Goes to see his girl," replied Henry.

"This must be a reg'lar *Romeo* ranch," laughed Sleepy. "We'll have to fall in love with somebody, Hashknife."

Henry wiped his face and sat down on the edge of his bunk. His face was badly cross-hatched from the dull razor, but shone from much scrubbing with soap—that is, the part which had been scrubbed. Henry was a lot like the average small boy, who never washes farther back than a line drawn from temple to angle of jawbone.

"Who is Cal Severn's girl?" asked Hashknife.

"Mary O'Hara."

"Swede?" queried Sleepy.

"I dunno. She's Pat Haley's niece, that's all I know."

"Visitin' here?"

Hashknife seemed anxious for information.

"No, I don't reckon you'd call it that. She's been with Pat and his wife for a couple of years!"

"Pretty girl?"

Henry Horsecollar scratched his chin and seemed to take the question under advisement.

"Well, she ain't my idea of beauty. I never did care for yallerish-red hair and blue eyes; and I betcha she powders, 'cause no danged human female has got skin as white as her skin is, and— Well, I ain't sayin' she ain't pretty, but to my way of thinkin', she ain't."

"Young?"

"Yuh can't tell—with all that powder; but mebbe she ain't more 'n twenty-one. I reckon she's a nice girl, but if she wasn't, Henry H. Dryden would be the last one to hold it ag'in' her."

"Yo're sure broad-minded, Henry," applauded Hashknife. "Did yuh know Shell Romaine?"

"Dang right!"

Henry grew thoughtful.

"I wonder why they turned him loose and what he's goin' to do. I had a hunch that Rim-Fire Romaine was the Black Rider. I kinda git hunches, don'tcha know it?"

"You look like yuh might," agreed Sleepy meaningly.

"It don't look right t' me for a man t' take his own father home and bury him."

Henry shook his head.

"Things like that ought t' be all fixed up by a preacher."

"Do yuh think that it makes any difference to God Almighty?" asked Hashknife.

"Well, if yo're goin' that deep into the matter, I'll pass. The old man was a tough old pelican; hated —— out of everybody, 'specially after Shell got sent to the pen."

"Shell is a hard man to whip, ain't he?" asked Sleepy.

"Yo're danged well right he is!"

Henry laughed and caressed his scratched chin.

"He licked Cal Severn, and when yuh lick Cal yo're some scrapper."

"What did they fight over?"

Hashknife grew serious.

"I dunno. That was over a year ago, and I don't reckon I ever knowed what started it. Anyway they curried each other right on the main street of Moon Flats, and Shell jist knocked —— out of Cal. They both had guns on 'em, but neither one offered to do any shootin'."

"Probably just a friendly fight," observed Hashknife. "Let's see if the cook's got anythin' to eat."

A middle-aged half-breed woman was doing the cooking. Henry Horsecollar called her "Mrs. Wicks," and then talked to her in the Nez Percé tongue, which they both spoke fluently. Henry scowled over some information and shot questions

at the woman, who only repeated her statement.

"I'm goin' to' git me a new job!" declared Henry heatedly. "By gosh, I'm tired of bein' bossed allatime. Sunday is supposed t' be a day of rest, and here the boss goes and passes me an order t' stay here at the ranch."

"Can't yuh rest here?" asked Sleepy.

"Rest, ——!" exploded Henry. "There ain't no reason for it, by gosh!"

He turned and spoke to Mrs. Wicks, who repeated her former statement. Henry sighed—

"I don't reckon she's mistaken, 'cause she's told me the same darned thing three times hand-runnin'."

After breakfast Hashknife and Sleepy saddled their horses, while Henry Horsecollar looked on disconsolate. He wanted to go and see his girl, but a job meant a lot to Henry and he did not want to displease Cal Severn.

Hashknife and Sleepy rode toward Moon Flats, twisting in and out of the low hills to a rickety old bridge which spanned the swift running Mission river. Beyond this the road skirted the hills. There were a few cattle in evidence, but the better feed was farther back in the range.

"What do yuh think of this layout?" queried Sleepy.

"I dunno," grunted Hashknife. "'Pears like we've run into somethin', Sleepy."

Hashknife drew rein near the mouth of a gulch, up which was an old road, showing little travel.

"I wonder if this is the road that leads to Romaine's ranch."

"Kinda looks like she might be," agreed Sleepy, and they turned and rode up the side of the hill, ignoring the road, which angled up the gentle slope of the dry cañon.

A mile farther on they cut back to the rim of the cañon and stopped in a clump of jack-pines. Below them in the bottom of the gulch was a tumble-down shanty and barn. Behind this was a rickety old corral. An old roan horse browsed around the corral, and a few chickens roamed around the dusty yard.

There did not seem to be any sign of life about the place. Suddenly their attention was arrested by a flash of color farther up the cañon, where a large clump of cottonwoods grew around a spring. A man and a woman were standing there close together, but at that distance it was impossible to identify them. There was a saddle-horse tied to a tree, but the shadows hid its color.

"I reckon this ain't the place we're lookin' for," observed Hashknife, "but we'll ride down and kinda find out whose place she is, Sleepy."

"Might as well," agreed Sleepy, and they rode straight down the side of the hill to the flat below.

Half a dozen mongrel dogs came out of the house at their approach, and each one tried to outdo the other in dog language.

As they rode up to the door a disheveled-looking character came on to the porch and stared at them. The man was a half-breed, blearly of eye and slovenly dressed. He was without boots, and his socks were half off his feet.

Several loose rocks were on the porch, and one of these he hurled at the barking dogs, sending them ki-yiing away. Then he drew himself up in mock dignity and said—

"What in —— you want here?"

"What yuh got?" asked Hashknife seriously.

"Ugh!"

The man leaned against a post and put one foot on top of the other, while he wiped his lips with a none too clean hand.

"This yore ranch?" asked Hashknife.

"Yeah—my ranch; yo' —— right!"

"What's yore name?"

"Me Joe Wicks, by ——!"

"Must be the lovin' husband of the cook," grinned Sleepy. "No wonder she hires out."

Joe Wicks bobbed his head drunkenly and reached for another rock; but the dogs knew what was coming and fled down toward the barn, where they proceeded to pull off a free-for-all fight.

"How far is it to the Romaine ranch?" asked Hashknife.

Joe Wicks considered this a while, slobbering just a trifle and keeping one eye on a spotted dog, which was coming toward the porch, but on an angle which would take it just beyond the corner.

A moment later came the slither of gravel, and Joe hurled his rock at the corner just in time to hit a girl who was turning toward the porch. Without a sound she crumpled up, while the dog, which had gone up to meet her, went yapping back toward the fighting crew at the barn.

"My Gawd!" gasped Hashknife, sliding out of his saddle and almost colliding with Sleepy.

They picked the girl up and placed her on the porch. The rock had hit her on the head, but too high up to do her any permanent injury.

Joe Wicks looked drunkenly on as Hashknife parted her hair and examined the bruise. She was dressed in a plain calico dress, badly made, and was undeniably part Indian, but her features were pretty. She was not over eighteen and had not began to acquire the shapeless figure which her kind are heir to after the bloom of youth has faded.

After a minute her eyes opened and she looked around.

"Got eyes like a young doe," grunted Sleepy, and blushed to think that he had spoken his thoughts.

"What was it?" she asked softly.

"You got hit with a rock," explained Hashknife. "Better lay still for a few minutes."

Her hand went up to her head, and she felt tenderly of the bruise. Hashknife pointed at Joe Wicks and said—

"He throwed a rock at the dog and you walked into it."

"—— dogs!" grunted Joe. "Too —— much dogs!"

She sat up, blinked her eyes dizzily for a moment and got to her feet with Hashknife's assistance.

"Thank you," she said with that peculiar, half-hiss of an Indian speaking a strange tongue, and went into the house without speaking to Joe Wicks.

"My girl," said Joe. "Marie Wicks, by ——!"

"Your daughter?" asked Sleepy.

"Yeah—my papoose; yo' —— right!"

Hashknife considered Joe, and his mind flashed back to the squat figure of Mrs. Wicks. Marie was pretty, graceful; but still she was the offspring of these two. Joe's socks bothered him considerably; so he yanked them off and threw them aside.

"Yo' have drink whisky?" he grunted.

"Where did you get whisky?" demanded Hashknife quickly.

Joe licked his lips and his eyes narrowed, but he did not say. Hashknife knew it was of no use to ask an Indian where he got liquor; so he did not repeat his question.

"Let's go," suggested Hashknife, getting back into his saddle. "We'll cut across the hills toward town, and we'll likely find the Romaine ranch."

Sleepy mounted, and they started toward the opposite side of the cañon. Joe Wicks watched them through narrowed eyes, and called after them—

"Yo' go to ——!"

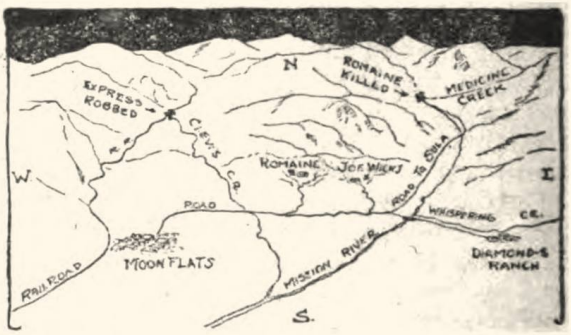
Hashknife nodded as if accepting good advice, while Joe Wicks spat dryly and went into the house.

"Can yuh 'magine that girl bein' a daughter of them two? Can yuh?"

Sleepy's questions were explosive.

"Well," laughed Hashknife, "she sure don't take after her folks, Sleepy."

They rode on across the sage-covered hills, angling back toward the road, riding silently; both men thinking deeply. Their course led down the sharp side of a hill and on to a flat, where they passed a heavy




growth of timber and drew up at an old rail fence which enclosed a ranch-house, little better kept than that belonging to Joe Wicks.

There was no human being in sight, and an air of lonesomeness seemed to pervade the old place. The roofs of the house and barn were sway-backed from age and neglect, and everything seemed neglected, forgotten.

Hashknife opened a broken-hinged gate, and they rode up to the house. The door was closed and locked with a heavy padlock. Just out in the yard was a fresh mound of dirt; mute evidence that Shell Romaine had buried his own father.

Hashknife shook his head sadly.

"Dang it all, yuh got to feel sorry for Romaine. Mebbe he ain't no good—I dunno."

"He's got guts anyway," declared Sleepy. "He didn't lay down and wail about it, Hashknife."

"No," agreed Hashknife; "he sure didn't; and I like the way he pasted the stage-driver. Man, he sure can hit. Well, I don't reckon there's any use foolin' around here."

They turned and rode out of the yard, heading down the road, which would connect with the main highway to Moon Flats. Just at the edge of the clearing, where the road twisted between a tall outcropping of granite and a big clump of brush, Hashknife suddenly jerked sidewise in his saddle, almost falling across his horse's neck; while from back somewhere near the house came the sharp snap of a high-power rifle.

With a sharp slash of his spurs Sleepy whirled his horse sidewise, throwing Hashknife's mount off the road and into the brush, where both horses raced ahead several jumps before Sleepy stopped them. Hashknife was humped in the saddle, apparently badly jarred. Sleepy slid to the ground and went to Hashknife's assistance, but the tall cowboy had already dismounted and was fumbling with his holster.

"Where did it git yuh?" asked Sleepy anxiously.

"Take a look," grunted Hashknife, turning his back to Sleepy.

The bullet had torn Hashknife's shirt from the center of his back to a point high up on the shoulder, cutting an ugly gash but not going deep enough for any permanent injury.

Sleepy started to examine it more closely; but another bullet struck a sapling just behind them, and they both dropped low in the brush.

"Kinda jagged me, didn't it?" asked Hashknife.

"Cultivated yore shoulder," grunted Sleepy. "If that danged fool don't quit he'll hit a horse."

"Yeah—if he don't quit he'll grab a harp," gritted Hashknife, flexing his right arm.

Another bullet flipped above them, sending a shower of leaves down upon their sombrero hats, but they were so low that the shooter could not see them now, and he was evidently shooting by guess.

"Wish we had a Winchester," grumbled Hashknife. "Can't do much with a six-shooter at this range, but I can sure make one awful stab at it."

"Aw-w-w, look at them —— horses!" wailed Sleepy.

The two horses had left the brush and were working out into the open. One of them had the reins looped around its foot and was moving along head down, when the rifle cracked again, and the horse pitched headlong, kicked wildly and lay still.

Sleepy sprang to his feet, but Hashknife yanked him down.

"Stay down, yuh danged fool! Don'tcha know he was tryin' to hoodle yuh into starting somethin'?"

The rifle cracked again, and the other horse floundered back into the brush, ran a few jumps and crashed down.

"Well," said Hashknife slowly, "we're due to walk now."

"I reckon we better be glad that we're able to walk," observed Sleepy. "That jasper is a good shot, and you just happened to turn far enough to miss bein' hit plumb center. Hurtin' yuh much?"

"Not half as much as my feet will before we get to town, Sleepy. My boots are kinda tight."

"Danged dude," sarcastically. "Tryin' to pinch a pair of number tens into nines. Next thing I know you'll be usin' cornstarch on yore nose to take off the shine."

"Well," mournfully, "I'll still be yore little friend. No matter what happens, I won't turn yuh down because yuh ain't got no sense, Sleepy."

Sleepy grunted explosively and peered through the brush. There was no sign of the shooter. A magpie, dipping and sailing across the clearing, twisted sharply and came to rest on the apex of the ranch-house roof. A minute later another of the same species came in from the opposite direction and perched near the first one, where they both chattered volubly, arguing in almost human voices.

"Either that bushwhacker is danged well hid or he's pulled out," declared Hashknife. "Them magpies ain't even cautious, and yuh can't hardly fool a magpie."

Cautiously they crawled toward the edge of the clearing, taking plenty of time and watching closely. An exposed sombrero failed to draw a shot. Hashknife snaked himself in behind a cottonwood bole and assumed an upright position. The sharp eyes of the magpies discovered him, and they flitted swiftly away, calling a warning to all of their kind.

Hashknife gripped his gun, flung himself away from the tree and ran to the dead horse, where he dropped flat on the ground.

Still there was no shot to break the stillness. He sat up, taking a long chance, but no shot came.

Sleepy walked over, and they examined the horses, both of which had been almost instantly killed. They stripped off the saddles and bridles and hung them up in a tree. Neither of the men complained nor swore dire revenge upon the man who had deprived them of their mounts.

"That there roan was a danged good horse," declared Sleepy.

"Such as he was," admitted Hashknife; "but he didn't noways compare with my gray hawse."

"Both of 'em bein' dead, it sure makes a fifty-fifty argument," grinned Sleepy. "That little roan bronc was all horse. Fifty miles a day——"

"Yuh mean, a week," interrupted Hashknife.

"Lemme finish, won't yuh? Jumpin' at conclusions thataway, Hashknife, makes me weary of yore company. I was goin' to say that fifty miles a day would kill that roan—dead. Want me to doctor that shoulder?"

"Naw. It kinda burns a little, and it's sore as ——; but yore kind of doctorin' wouldn't help it none. Let's go to Moon Flats. Can't be more than a couple of miles."

Sleepy nodded.

"All right, cowboy. I hope they don't cuss us nor shoot at us down there. I never did see such a —— uncivilized country in my life. Who do yuh reckon shot at us?"

Hashknife shook his head.

"I dunno. Likely mistook us for some one else and pulled out as soon as they found out their mistake."

Sleepy shook his head and squinted at Hashknife.

"Now, you don't even start to think thataway. They'd 'a' found that out before they shot our horses, wouldn't they? They never got a look at us after that."

"Mebbe they got scared and shot the horses to keep us from followin' 'em, Sleepy."

"All right, all right. Mebbe this and mebby that, and all the time——"

"We're delayin' the blisters on our heels," finished Hashknife. "C'mon, old pessimist."

And they started off down the road, walking with the stiff-legged gait of a cowboy whose boots are high-heeled and altogether too tight; walking with elbows bent and hardly swaying from the head to waist.

Just before they reached the forks of the road a rider swung on to Romaine's road and eyed them curiously. It was Mort Lee, the cowboy who had brought news of the Romaine killing to Moon Flats. Hashknife grinned at him, and after a moment Mort Lee grinned widely.

"Takin' our daily exercise," stated Hashknife seriously.

"Yeah?"

Mort Lee did not seem convinced.

"Keeps a feller in good shape," added Sleepy, shaking the perspiration off his nose.

"I betcha," agreed Mort, and added, "'Specially in ridin'-boots."

"That fit tight," added Hashknife painfully.

Mort Lee nodded, and his eyes invited explanations which did not come. Finally he said—

"Been up to Romaine's place?"

"Uh-huh."

"Shell at home?"

"I dunno," said Hashknife. "We didn't see him."

"Oh."

Mort Lee pursed his lips and squinted at the sun.

"We-e-ell, I reckon I'll be moseyin' on, gents. Yuh won't find the main road much better walkin' than this."

He spurred his horse and went away in a whirl of dust.

"If they don't cuss yuh or shoot at yuh, they hang crape," complained Sleepy. "—— such a country!"

"Country's all right," argued Hashknife. "It's the folks in it that make it bad. These people need purifyin'—that's all it needs, Sleepy."

"That's all —— needs," retorted Sleepy sadly.

ABOUT the time that Hashknife and Sleepy reached the main road, a crowd of men gathered around a poker-table in the Moon Flats gambling house. Cal Severn had challenged Doc Maldeen to a single-handed game of stud poker. Severn seldom played poker, but when he did it was for big money, and the men around the table grinned in anticipation of large stakes.

There was no money in sight, Severn merely requesting five thousand dollars worth of chips. The cowboys around the

table gasped audibly. Five thousand dollars! But Maldeen did not even blink as he slid five stacks of white chips across the table to Severn.

"Hundred dollar chips big enough?" he asked casually, and Severn nodded as he stacked them up in two piles of twenty-five chips each.

They cut for deal, and Maldeen won. Both men shoved in an ante of two hundred dollars after getting their hole-card. Then Severn drew an ace and Maldeen a seven-spot. Severn bet two hundred and Maldeen stayed. The third card around showed another ace for Severn and a king for Maldeen.

This time Severn bet two hundred, and, after calm consideration, Maldeen tossed in seven chips.

"Tiltin' it five hundred, eh?" Severn half-smiled, as he called the raise.

The fourth card showed a jack for Severn and another king for Maldeen. Severn studied Maldeen's cards. He had Maldeen beaten in sight, but the five hundred dollar raise made it appear that Maldeen had a king buried. Severn passed the bet and Maldeen shoved in five chips. Severn fingered his chips for quite a while, but finally tossed five into the pot.

Maldeen dealt slowly, placing the next card carefully beside Severn's hand. It was another jack. This gave Severn aces and jacks in sight. Maldeen flipped over his own card—another king. Three kings against two pair—in sight. It was Maldeen's first "say" in the pot, and he quickly estimated Severn's chips before shoving ten chips into the center.

Severn seemed to hesitate. He was beaten in sight, and Maldeen held a hard hand to bluff. Severn was already in eleven hundred dollars. Then he slowly picked up the rest of his chips and slid them to the center. Maldeen smiled and shook his head.

"Cal, that's cold-blooded poker, but I feel that yo're out on a limb."

He swiftly counted out his chips and slid them to the center, and his pile totaled one more chip than what Cal Severn had bet.

"Raisin' a hundred?" queried Severn softly.

"Thassall," smiled Maldeen.

Severn hesitated for a moment and cleared his throat.

"Give me five thousand more, doc."

Maldeen seemed about to refuse, but counted out the required amount. Severn was good for that amount, just on the strength of the Diamond-S ranch. He did not stack his chips this time, but shoved them all to the center.

"Boostin' it forty-nine hundred," he stated.

A gasp went up from dry throats around the table. It was the largest bet they had ever seen made. Maldeen studied Severn's cards as if seeking to discover whether Severn was bluffing or had filled his hand. He squinted at Severn's face, but the young cattleman was slowly puffing on his cigaret and looking at the fortune in the center of the table.

"I call," said Maldeen, tossing in his chips.

Severn flipped over his hole-card—an ace.

"Ace full!" gasped a cowboy, almost overcome from the suspense.

Maldeen smiled grimly and turned his card. It was another seven.

"King full!" exploded another cowboy. "Two full houses!"

For a few moments Cal Severn did not say anything. He shoved the chips across to Maldeen and leaned back in his chair.

"The god of luck was with me, doc; I'm through."

Maldeen got slowly to his feet and went back to his private room, where he kept a small safe. In a few moments he came back with ten thousand dollars in gold and currency. After he had counted it out he turned to the crowd and said—

"The house buys a drink, gents."

And the "gents" took their drink, gulping it down wolfishly, as if seeking solace from the reaction of that big bet.

"Never saw nothin' like it before," declared a cowboy earnestly. "That's goin' to spoil me for any of this four-bits-a-stack game. I used to git a thrill out of a five-dollar bet, but— Forty-nine hundred—whoo-o-ee!"

Severn laughed softly and leaned on the bar.

"That ten thousand will kinda help to pay up some of my debts, doc."

Maldeen grimaced.

"It won't help mine, Cal. That's a hard jolt for the old Moon Flats, if anybody asks yuh."

Severn shrugged his shoulders.

"You dealt 'em to me, doc."

"I'm a —— of a dealer," admitted Maldeen, and the crowd laughed boisterously.

They appreciated a good loser, and Maldeen was not kicking.

AND that same morning Mary O'Hara met Shell Romaine in the hills; but the meeting was not planned. Mary rode the hills nearly every day astride a wiry little sorrel horse, riding as recklessly as any cowboy; but today she was not in the mood for a wild gallop, and was poking slowly along a narrow trail when her horse suddenly stopped, and she looked up at Shell Romaine, whose horse blocked the trail.

For several moments they looked at each other, and then Shell swung his horse on to the down-hill side, giving her plenty of room to pass. He had removed his hat, but did not speak. He had changed from the dilapidated suit of the day before, and was now wearing a black sombrero, faded blue shirt and bat-winged, silver-trimmed chaps. Around his neck was a scarlet silk muffler, while around his waist was a wide, silver-trimmed cartridge-belt, and swinging low on his thigh was a holstered pistol.

"Why don't you speak to me?" asked Mary O'Hara.

Shell looked closely at her and dropped his eyes to the pommel of his saddle, where the palm of his right hand was tightly clenched.

"I didn't reckon you'd care to have me," he replied.

"Did you make that up out of your own head, Shell?"

"Well—" Shell lifted his head defiantly—"I don't know why yuh should want to speak to me."

Mary sighed and examined her well-worn gauntlets.

"Nobody wants to speak to a horse-thief, bank-robber, killer," he continued; but there was no bitterness in his voice. "I reckon everybody knows that my old man was the Black Rider."

"Shell, I'm sorry—for—you. It is hard luck, but——"

"I don't want sympathy," interrupted Shell, "and I'm not blamin' luck for what happened. I reckon I'll try to sell out the old place and leave the Mission country. It was hard to make a livin'—before; it'll be impossible now."

Mary nodded slowly. Shell twisted in his saddle and wiped his forehead with his sleeve.

"Mary, I want to tell yuh somethin' and ask yuh to forgive me for doin' it—if yuh can."

"If I can?"

"Yeah. Before that bank robbery—" Shell paused a moment—"mebbe it was a week or so before that, I got drunk in Moon Flats, and I got to braggin' to some of the boys. You was crossin' the street and I told them that me and you was engaged to marry."

Mary looked curiously at him and shook her head.

"No one ever told me that, Shell."

"Well, I said it, Mary. I dunno why I lied like that, but I did, and I'm glad it never came to you."

Suddenly Mary smiled.

"Shell, it did, too; but not that you had said it. Quite a while after you went away Cal Severn asked me if I was engaged to you. I told him I was not, and he laughed it off. I did not ask him where he got the idea."

"I reckon some of the boys told him," said Shell slowly; and then, "Are you goin' to marry Cal Severn, Mary O'Hara?"

Mary flushed and reached down to pat the shoulder of her horse, but did not reply.

"I wish yuh a lot of luck," said Shell. "A lot of luck."

Mary lifted her head, her eyes filled with tears.

"Shell, I must tell you something. You heard that the Overland was robbed yesterday morning between Moon Flats and Clevis Creek bridge, didn't you?"

Shell nodded his head.

"Uncle Pat was notified yesterday morning. It was done by a lone robber, who tied up the messenger and blew the safe. There was a lot of money taken. The messenger was discovered at Wheelock, and he was unable to give a good description of the robber, but said he was dressed in dark-colored clothes."

Shell turned his head and stared off across the purple sage, his mind working fast. He had been on that train.

"Did Pat find any clews, Mary?" he asked.

"No. But, Shell, they want to know where you were at that time, don't you see? Some say it was done by the Black Rider, but others point out the fact that you came into town early. Newt Bowie and Monte

Barnes say that you were in Moon Flats at daylight."

Shell smiled bitterly.

"Is there a warrant out for me?"

"Uncle Pat did not say, but I know he has worried a lot about it, Shell."

"Has he? I suppose I ought to go to town and prove that I had nothin' to do with it, or give myself up to the law; but one I can't do and the other—I've had a taste of, Mary. Oh, I know what the Mission range thinks of me, and I know how much chance I'd have in their courts. I'm already convicted, in their minds."

Mary nodded. She knew that Shell's past reputation was all against him, and she knew that many folks in Moon Flats had already declared that Shell Romaine had robbed the train. Hadn't he been convicted of robbery before? Hadn't his own father been the Black Rider and got killed in the act of holding up a stage?

"Couldn't you prove your innocence, Shell?" asked Mary.

"Prove nothin'!" bitterly. "What proof could a paroled convict bring to a court of law?"

"Paroled?"

"Yeah—paroled, Mary. I'm not free—not in the right way. I've got to report to the sheriff every so often, and any old time I even look cross-eyed—back I go to the pen."

"Will you report to Uncle Pat?"

"No!"

Shell gathered up his reins and settled himself in his saddle.

"I'm an outlaw. I haven't got a chance in the world to prove anythin', and I'm not goin' back to the penitentiary. If they got me for this robbery I'd go in for twenty years, don'tcha know it?

"They're all primed to get me, I reckon. I ain't got a friend left—if I ever did have any; and from now on I'm goin' to get the game as well as the fame. You tell Pat Haley, will yuh, Mary? Tell him he can declare open season on the last of the Romaines. I like Old Pat, and the Lord never made a better woman than 'Ma' Haley. I don't want to harm them, but you tell Pat that I'm not comin' in—not on my own feet."

Shell turned his horse down the hill, riding straight down the steep slope to the bottom, where he swung around on to a hog-backed ridge and disappeared in the timber.

For several minutes after Shell had disappeared, Mary continued to watch after him. He had wished her lots of luck in her marriage to Cal Severn. She had liked Shell Romaine, but had never thought seriously about him. He was a wild sort of person, willing to fight at the drop of a hat—and drop it himself—while Cal Severn was more settled, substantial.

She turned her horse and rode slowly back toward town, secretly glad that Shell Romaine was not going to give himself up to the law. She knew that it would be Pat Haley's duty either to arrest or kill him; knew that the men of the Mission River ranges would comb the hills for him. Turning outlaw would be proof conclusive that he was guilty, but for some reason Mary was glad that Shell Romaine was no quitter.

HASHKNIFE and Sleepy came into Moon Flats tired, dusty and limping from sore feet. They headed for the horse-trough beside the livery stable, where they took off their boots and immersed their aching feet in the water.

"—— hath no fury like a busted blister," declared Sleepy, wiggling his cramped toes." I wish I had the power to bring a curse upon the man who slew our chargers."

"Go ahead," groaned Hashknife, "and I'll do my dangdest to make it come true. The man that made my boots never knowed that a human bein' had more'n one toe."

"You *will* be a dude," observed Sleepy. "Bend yore feet all out of shape to make 'em look dainty."

Sleepy looked up and shoved his bare foot against Hashknife's ankle. Cal Severn was coming down toward them, leading his horse.

"What's the idea of the foot-bath?" he asked as he came up to them.

"Gettin' sanitary," grinned Hashknife, reaching for his cigaret-makings. "Washin' feet helps clear yore mind."

"Thasso?"

Cal Severn seemed amused.

"And what is the real reason?"

"Hot feet," grunted Hashknife, and then proceeded to tell Severn what had happened to them.

"You ain't kiddin' me, are yuh?" he asked when Hashknife finished.

"Go and look in Romaine's front yard and you'll find two perfectly good dead horses," declared Hashknife.

Severn shook his head.

"No, I'll take yore word for it and keep away from Romaine's place."

"Scared of him?" queried Hashknife, lighting his smoke.

Severn grinned.

"If yuh want to look at it that way. I don't care to be shot at, Hartley. But—" Severn grew more serious—"why should Shell Romaine shoot at you two?"

"Who in —— said he shot at us?" demanded Hashknife.

"Well, you—uh— Didn't you just tell me——"

"I said we was shot at," corrected Hashknife.

"I getcha. But who would shoot at you? You are strangers around here. Maybe it was a mistake."

"I dunno about that."

Hashknife proceeded to pull on his socks carefully.

"Anyway—" looking up with a grin—"we know —— well that we wasn't welcome around there."

"Kinda looks that way," admitted Severn seriously, and then, "Get a couple of horses from the stable to ride out to the ranch today."

Severn started to lead his horse into the stable, but turned.

"I reckon I can fix up some saddles for yuh out at the ranch."

"Ne' mind," said Hashknife. "We'll go out tomorrow and get our own rigs."

"Out to Romaine's?"

"Perzactly!" grunted Hashknife, kicking a boot-heel against the trough, trying to drive his swollen foot into close quarters.

Severn nodded and led his horse inside.

"I wonder what kinda whippoorwills he thought we are?" queried Sleepy. "Think we'd give up them there good saddles?"

"Didn't know he had hired two brave men," grinned Hashknife, but grimaced with pain as he took a step. "—— it! I thought my shoulder was sore, but these two feet of mine ain't feet a-tall; they're —— in a pinch."

Hobbling along, they headed for the Moon Flats saloon, where several cowboys, including Monte Barnes, were standing on the porch. The cowboys looked curiously at them, but said nothing.

"I'll buy a drink," announced Hashknife. "I bet my pardner the drinks that I could beat him to town from the Diamond-S, but I calculated wrong; so I'll buy a drink for everybody."

"Walk?" gasped Monte.

"Not all the way," said Hashknife, standing on one foot. "Part of the way we ran. C'm on in."

They all went inside and lined up at the bar. Maldeen was not there, and the conversation turned to the poker game, which had been played a short time before.

"Severn won ten thousand dollars in one hand," explained Barnes. "Game of stud. Both men filled. Never seen anythin' like it in my life."

"Prob'ly won't never ag'in," declared another.

Hashknife squinted at his drink and looked around the room. Finally he turned to Barnes.

"Ten thousand is a lot of money."

"More 'n I ever seen before," declared Barnes. "It's plumb easy to speak about it, but when yuh see it all on the table—whoo-o-o-ee!"

"And Maldeen done the dealin'," added another. "He sure deals a straight game."

"Severn must be a plunger," observed Sleepy.

"I never seen him play big before," stated Barnes." He plays poker once in a while, but I think that most of his gamblin' is done in the East."

"Goes East to gamble?"

Hashknife squinted at Barnes.

"Naw—the stock markets. Yuh know what I mean—gamblin' in wheat and oats and that kinda gamblin'. We took a train of beef back there two years ago and Cal studied market stuff. Ever since then he's gambled thataway, and I reckon he didn't get as square a deal as he got today."

"They kinda hook yuh, I reckon," observed Hashknife.

"Dang right! They sure hookum-cow. Man ain't got no chance to bluff; don't even get time to study his cards. I'll takem mine over the poker table, y'betcha."

"What happened to yore back and shoulder?" asked one of the cowboys, pointing at Hashknife's back, where the bullet had ripped the shirt.

The wound had bled considerably, discoloring his shirt.

"Oh, that?"

Hashknife tried to twist his head and look over his own shoulder.

"Well, sir, I was kinda hurryin' along and snagged m'self on a barb-wire fence."

The cowboys glanced at each other, but did not dispute the explanation. That it was not done by a barbed wire was very certain, but they knew better than to inquire too deeply into something that was really none of their business.

After the round of drinks Hashknife and Sleepy left the saloon, leaving a bunch of cowboys trying to figure out why two sore-footed cowboys had walked into town and why one of them had a bullet-scrape across his shoulder.

Jim Searles was standing in front of Bill Eagle's general merchandise store, and from him Hashknife found out where Pat Haley lived. Searles scowled at them and hitched up his belt. Searles was an evil-looking gentleman, short of body, but long of face.

"Whatcha want him fer?" he asked after directing them.

"Want him to say a prayer," said Hashknife seriously.

"Who fer?" quickly.

"I dunno—yet," grinned Hashknife and turned away.

Pat Haley lived in a home-like frame cottage just at the edge of town. Two great cottonwoods almost concealed the house, and the front yard was a mass of rose-bushes. A sorrel horse, saddled, was tied to the rear gate, and voices were audible through the open front door.

The two cowboys went up to the door and were about to knock, when Pat Haley came into the short hall. He glanced quickly at them and grinned with his pipe clenched between his big teeth.

"Come in and rest your feet," he greeted them. "Sure, it's cooler in the house, and me wife has just made a gallon of limminade wit' ice. Come on in."

They followed him into the living-room, where he introduced them to Ma Haley and Mary O'Hara.

"Me niece," explained Haley. "She's one-half of the Haley family, and me and Ma are the other half."

Hashknife and Sleepy sat down awkwardly on the sofa and fondled their hats. Hashknife winced from the jerk of his shirt as he sat down, and Ma Haley divined that something was wrong.

"Did ye get hurt?" she asked abruptly, getting out of her chair.

"Now, it ain't nothin'," declared Hashknife. "I just got scratched with a bullet, thassall."

"All?"

Ma Haley came straight to him and made him bend his back.

"Heavens above!" she exclaimed. "Why, the poor boy has been badly hurt! Mary, get some hot water and car-r-bolic-acid bottle—quick!"

"Aw-w-w-w!" begged Hashknife. "It ain't nothin'."

"You're in a —— of a fix," laughed Pat Haley. "When Ma finds a cut or a bruise she niver lets up until she doctors it. But who shot ye, Har-r-tley?"

"I dunno. You tell him, Sleepy—I'm in the hospital."

"You've got to take off that shirt," declared Mrs. Haley, "I never do things by halves, me boy."

"Come out on the porch and I'll tell yuh," laughed Sleepy. "I'd get to laughin' if I ever seen Hashknife Hartley in the rough."

They went outside, leaving Hashknife groaning mentally.

Mary came in with the water and bottle of acid, and Hashknife prayed that she would go out again; but Ma Haley spoiled his prayer by saying:

"I want you to help me, Mary. Every girl should know how to doctor a cut, bruise or a gun-shot wound, and this is a bad one to star-r-rt on," and then to Hashknife, "Shall I cut the shirt off, or can ye stand to have it pulled off?"

Hashknife hesitated.

"Bring me the shears, Mary."

"——!" breathed Hashknife. "I suppose there ain't no way out of it; so I might as well save the shirt," and he began to take it off.

He glanced at Mary O'Hara, who was trying to suppress a laugh, and at Ma Haley's serious face. It was too much for Hashknife. He bared his back and prayed that it might not take long.

From out on the porch came the droning of Sleepy's voice as he explained things to Pat Haley, while Ma Haley bathed the wound tenderly and explained the dangers of infection to Mary O'Hara.

For lack of adhesive Ma Haley was compelled to wind the bandages around Hashknife's chest and over his shoulder, which forced him to sit up and face them, bared to the waist. He was bronzed from the

sun, and the long muscles rippled like those of an athlete.

"Ye are no weakling," declared Ma Haley, and Hashknife blushed like a girl.

"Would ye tell me where ye were when ye got shot?"

"In Romaine's front yard," replied Hashknife.

*Crash!* Mary dropped the pan of water upside down on the carpet, and it flooded Ma Haley's shoes. She sprang aside and stared at Mary, who was staring at Hashknife.

"In Romaine's front yard?" breathed Mary. "At the Romaine ranch?"

Hashknife nodded and looked down at the wet carpet. Just at that moment Pat Haley and Sleepy came in from the porch and stared at the tableau.

"What went wrong?" asked Pat.

"Mary fumbled the pan," said Mrs. Haley gently. "Sure, the antiseptic water should be good for the carpet."

Sleepy laughed and leaned against the wall. "Hashknife, yo're all packed up and ready for shipment."

Hashknife merely glanced at Sleepy, but turned his eyes back to Mary O'Hara, wondering why she dropped the pan of water. Why was she startled when he mentioned the place where the horses were killed? Pat Haley was talking now, and so was Ma Haley; one about the shooting, the other about supplying Hashknife with a clean shirt while she washed the torn one.

Hashknife agreed with both sides and Ma Haley bustled away to get one of Pat's shirts, while Pat sat down on the sofa beside Hashknife. Mary picked up the pan and went to the kitchen just as some one knocked on the front door and Cal Severn's voice called a greeting from the porch.

Without waiting for any one to answer his hail, he came down the hall and into the doorway, where he stopped and stared at the three men.

"Excuse me," he grinned. "I didn't know yuh had company, Pat. Where's Mary?"

"Out in the kitchen."

Severn walked through the kitchen door, and a moment later he and Mary were in conversation.

"She goin' to marry Severn?" asked Hashknife.

"Uh-huh," grunted Pat. "That's the idea, I reckon."

"Severn just won ten thousand dollars from Maldeen."

Pat took his pipe from his mouth and looked closely at it for a moment. He squinted at Hashknife curiously.

"Would ye say that ag'in?"

Hashknife repeated the statement and added that it was won on a single hand in which both men held full houses.

"Well, well!"

Pat blinked rapidly.

"I've an idea that ten thousand is a lot of money. And ye say it was a single hand? Ten thousand dollars! I'm thinkin' that Doc Maldeen will face a lean year."

Mrs. Haley came in with one of Pat's shirts and gave it to Hashknife.

"I'll wash and mend the other one," she stated, "and I'll also go out while ye put this one on."

"Yo're a wonder, Mrs. Haley," declared Hashknife. "My shoulder feels better than it did before it was hurt."

"A little lyin' directly from the heart hurts no one," grinned Ma Haley.

Hashknife put on the shirt and rolled a cigaret, while Pat Haley puffed slowly, thoughtfully.

"Sleepy told yuh all about what happened, didn't he?" asked Hashknife, and Pat nodded.

"He did. I can't for the life of me de-duct why ye were shot at, though. If it was Shell Romaine, why would he wish to kill either of you?"

"If he knowed why we are here he might," said Hashknife softly.

"Aye, but he don't know. Cal Severn and meself are the only ones who know. I have not told him, and I'm sure that Cal has not."

Hashknife studied the tip of his cigaret for a moment, and then—

"What do yuh know about Joe Wicks?"

"The half-breed? He's just Injun—no good. Got a shack in a gulch over beyond the Romaine place. His woman cooks for Severn."

"Yeah, I know she does," nodded Hashknife. "We rode up to his place today. Joe was half-drunk—more than half, 'cause he asked us to have a drink with him. His girl was there."

"Marie," nodded Pat. "Pretty Injun girl. She's been to the Injun school, and they tell me that she's smart. Mary has taken a likin' to her."

Pat laughed and shook his head as he added—

"Henry Horsecollar Dryden is stuck on Marie and wants to marry her, so Mary says."

"Thasso?"

Hashknife grew interested; but just then Cal Severn came in from the kitchen, barely nodded to them and went out the front door.

"Well, that's leavin' in a hurry," observed Pat.

From the kitchen came the sounds of argument between Mrs. Haley and Mary, and Pat grinned widely.

"Sure, there's been a battle," he whispered. "Ma's out there tryin' to pour water on the powder."

A moment later Ma Haley came into the room, her eyes serious as she went to the front window and looked out. Then she turned to Pat.

"Mary's cryin' her heart out, and Cal's headin' back toward the ranch."

"Well, now, isn't that the usual thing to do, Ma?"

Pat seemed surprized at her distress.

"I mind the time that you bawled——"

"I never bawled, Pat Haley! If you'd 'a' hurt my feelin's before we were married —we wouldn't 'a' married."

"Ma, ye're startin' an argument with me," warned Pat. "I have never won an argument with ye yet, but I'm givin' ye fair warnin'. I'll win some day, so I will."

"Ye will, will ye? Well, if it wasn't for our guests I'd make ye wish ye'd never made the statement."

Pat Haley grinned delightedly and was about to continue when Mary came in. She had been crying, but her mind seemed to have been made up and she spoke directly to Pat Haley.

"I did not want to tell you this, but I think I must. I met Shell Romaine this morning—in the hills. It was an accidental meeting. We talked for a while about things, and he told me that everything and every one was against him and for me to tell you that he was not going to come in and report to you. He said that he was turning outlaw and that he was going to get the game along with the fame."

Pat took his pipe from between his teeth and polished the bowl on his palm while the others waited for him to speak. Finally he laid the pipe aside and smiled softly.

"I believe I'm not surprized. What time was it, Mary, and where did ye meet him?"

"It was about ten o'clock, and I met him on that narrow trail around the head of Broken Gulch."

Pat turned to Hashknife.

"About what time was it that you were shot at, Hartley?"

"It must have been later than that. Mebbe it was ten-thirty or a little later."

Pat nodded and rubbed his knees.

"From that spot it is about two miles to the Romaine ranch."

He frowned for a moment and looked at Mary.

"I'm sorry, but it looks like Shell Romaine had started real quickly to make good his threat."

Mary's eyes blinked back the tears, and she turned and went back into the kitchen. Pat squinted after her and turned to Ma Haley, speaking softly,

"And what was the row about—between her and Cal?"

"She would not say, Pat. Does a girl blab about the troubles between her and her sweetheart?"

Pat grinned at Ma Haley's serious expression and turned to Hashknife.

"It appears that Shell Romaine has challenged the law, does it not? I hate like the —— to accept, but me sworn duty says for me to bring him to task."

"If he's the one what shot at us, yo're welcome," said Sleepy. "That jasper sure can shoot."

"Aye, he can that, and it will be a grand battle."

Hashknife got to his feet and shook hands with Ma Haley, thanking her for dressing his wounds.

"Come and see us," she urged. "Ye have not been well entertained because things are kinda upset; but drop in any time."

Hashknife turned and walked to the kitchen door. Mary was standing at a rear window, looking out, but turned as Hashknife came up to her, holding out his hand.

"I—I am pleased to meet you," she faltered.

"Yes'm, I suppose yuh are, but yuh ain't had much pleasure since I've been here. I hope to see yuh again—smilin'."

He turned and walked on to the porch, where Pat and Sleepy were waiting for

him, and with a hearty handshake they left the warm-hearted sheriff of Moon Flats.

Severn had spoken to the livery-stable keeper, and two horses were saddled for them. The man volunteered the information that Severn had gone back to the ranch. He dilated on the fact that Severn had won ten thousand dollars from Maldeen, and was still marveling over it as they rode out of earshot.

Hashknife was very thoughtful, shaking his head as he debated things with himself. Finally he said—

"Mary O'Hara is a danged pretty girl."

"Yeah?"

Sleepy grinned.

"Think she is, do yuh? Henry Horsecollar didn't think so."

"He likes 'em dark."

Hashknife turned sidewise in his saddle and squinted at Sleepy.

"I've got a hunch that Mary likes Shell Romaine."

"Yo're dense as —— if it took yuh that long to find it out," grinned Sleepy. "Didja notice that her and Cal Severn had a quarrel?"

"Yeah, and I'd give a lot to know what it was about, Sleepy."

"What good would that do yuh?"

"I dunno—no good, mebbe."

They rode in at the ranch and stabled their horses. Henry Horsecollar squinted at their mounts and rubbed his chin.

"Didja trade with the livery stable?" he asked.

"Rented 'em," said Hashknife. "Somebody shot both of our horses."

"M' ——! Shot 'em? Where?"

Sleepy sketched out their experience, and Henry listened in open-mouthed amazement.

"Well, sir," he declared, "it's a caution what folks will do. Cal Severn came home a while ago, swore at me and almost jarred the winders out of the house when he slammed the door."

"He won ten thousand dollars from Maldeen today," stated Hashknife.

Henry half-opened his mouth and leaned weakly against the corral.

"Ten— Aw-w-w, yo're kiddin' me, ain'tcha?"

"In one hand of stud poker," said Sleepy.

Henry rubbed his chin slowly.

"Well, sir, I reckon he wasn't mad a-tall—he was crazy. The shock of winnin' that money kinda insaned him, don'tcha s'pose?"

"It would me," grinned Hashknife, and then sobered suddenly, as he said, "I seen yore girl today, Henry."

"My girl—Marie?"

Hashknife explained their mistake in thinking it was Romaine's place, and then he told of how Joe Wicks had hit Marie with a rock. Henry listened calmly enough, but his lips tightened over the recital.

"Drunk, was he?"

"Drunk enough to ask us to drink with him."

"That's pretty drunk," admitted Henry.

"I dunno where he gets his whisky—wish I did."

He sighed and leaned against the fence.

"I never had no girl before. Mebbe folks will look down on me for carin' for an Indian girl, but it's my own business. I'm shootin' square with her."

"Then we're with yuh, Henry," said Hashknife softly.

"We're with anybody that shoots square. Me and Sleepy ain't no plaster saints, but we sure do admire folks that shoot straight."

"I ain't no saint either."

Henry shook his head.

"I've mavericked cows and been two jumps ahead of the sheriff; I've done a lot of wrong things, but I'm square with Marie."

"Kinda wipes out the rest of the charges," nodded Sleepy, and added, "We met Mary O'Hara today."

"Yeah? She's goin' to marry Cal Severn, I reckon. Anyway folks say she is. Didja hear anythin' more about the train-robbery?"

"Not much," said Hashknife. "They're thinkin' that Shell Romaine pulled that job."

Henry grinned and shook his head.

"I don't believe that. I betcha Shell Romaine came back here to dig up his half of that thirty thousand dollars he stole a year ago, and he ain't takin' no chances till he gets it."

"There may be a hunk of truth in that," admitted Hashknife.

"Yo're danged well right there is truth in it. I've felt that all along. His old man has got a cache somewhere that's a dinger. Mebbe Shell will find that, too. Mort

Lee came past here today and asked me if I'd seen Shell. I wonder what Mort wants him for."

"Mort's the cowpuncher that brought in the news of old Romaine's killin'," said Hashknife thoughtfully.

"We met him, too. What kind of a feller is he, Henry?"

"Mort Lee? Well, I'll tell yuh about me: If I can't say somethin' good about a man, I won't say anythin'. Mort Lee is jist so-so, if yuh know what I mean."

"What about Jim Searles?"

"That or'nary pup? Sa-a-ay——"

Henry shook his head.

"Words fails me when I even think of Jim Searles."

"That's good," said Hashknife. "Let's see if Minnehaha has got any food for the stummick."

CAL SEVERN was not friendly the following morning, but the boys put that down to the fact that the quarrel between him and Mary O'Hara still ruffled him. He came down to the bunk-house after breakfast, leading a saddled horse.

"Goin' after your saddles today?" he asked.

"Pretty quick," said Hashknife. "We'll lead a couple of your horses so we can return the livery stock."

"All right. Henry'll show yuh the ridin' stock."

"Reckon I'll ride in, too," said Henry; but Severn shook his head.

"No; I want you to ride that upper fence today," he said.

Severn swung into his saddle and turned.

"I'm goin' up the east side of the river if anybody wants to know."

He rode away while Henry Horsecollar swore under his breath.

"I dunno who in —— cares!" he snorted. "Make me stay here all day Sunday and then send me out to fix a —— old fence!"

"When yo're foreman, yuh can do as yuh please," grinned Hashknife.

"Yeah, and when ——'s froze over I can skate, too!" retorted Henry heatedly.

Hashknife and Sleepy led two of the Diamond-S horses and rode the livery horses across the hills toward the Romaine ranch. They did not follow the road beyond Mission River, but swung back into the hills, circled Joe Wicks' place and swung around the heads of the gulches which led down to the Romaine place.

Just above the Romaine ranch-house the gulch forked like the letter Y, and Hashknife and Sleepy circled both forks, which brought them out on to the side-hill on the west side of the ranch. It gave them a clear view of the place. The ranch-house was about four hundred yards away and below them, as they rode into a thicket of jackpines and stopped.

There was no one in sight about the place, but both men studied it closely. They were going to be very sure that no one was there to ambush them again. Hashknife slowly rolled a cigaret, never taking his eyes off the clearing below them.

"She's plumb deserted," declared Sleepy.

Hashknife nodded in agreement, but his eyes continued to search the tangle of timber and brush north of the buildings.

"Look down the road!" grunted Sleepy, lifting himself in his stirrups.

Two riders were coming up the narrow, winding road, heading toward the ranch. They were plainly visible to Hashknife and Sleepy, who were far above them, but they were still concealed from the ranch-house.

"Who do yuh reckon it is?" queried Sleepy.

"I dunno," admitted Hashknife. "I ain't familiar enough with folks around here to tell who it is."

The riders came on, their horses kicking up a cloud of dust, swung into the clearing and headed for the house. Then one of the riders seemed to jerk sidewise and fell off his horse, which whirled and ran back toward the brush, while the clear air was shattered by the whip-like *pop!* of a rifle.

The other rider sprang from his horse and dropped flat on the ground, while the horse whirled and followed the other one back toward the brush. There was silence for several moments, and then the rifle cracked again. A splatter of gravel lifted in front of the man on the ground, who rolled rapidly aside as if trying to get the ranch-house between himself and the shooter.

Hashknife and Sleepy were watching closely, and now Hashknife drew his six-shooter.

"I think I see him, Sleepy. He's shootin' smokeless powder, but—watch that heavy clump of willers."

As Hashknife spoke he lifted his gun and fired—once—twice. It was long range for a .45 pistol, but Hashknife guessed the elevation perfectly, and a man got up from among the willows and began running up the gulch. He was partly screened by the brush, which made it impossible for either Hashknife or Sleepy to tell how he was dressed or even to estimate his physical proportions.

It was only about fifty yards from the heavy willow clump to the forks of the gulch, and both Hashknife and Sleepy emptied their guns at him, but at that range it was impossible to tell where the bullets were striking.

At the forks of the gulch the man stopped in a screen of cottonwoods, and a moment later a bullet splatted into the dirt under Hashknife's horse. Quickly they swung their horses back into the heavier thicket, but another bullet hummed past their heads, cutting the plume off the top of a jack-pine.

"Dang the luck!" swore Hashknife. "If we only had a rifle!"

He was shoving cartridges into his revolver as he spoke, and after filling the chambers he dropped it back into its holster and turned to Sleepy.

"You go down and help with that wounded man. I'm goin' to try and snag that smart jasper."

Sleepy nodded quickly, and Hashknife spurred out of the thicket and galloped off along the slope of the hill. His only chance was to circle the heads of both gulches and try to head off the man's escape; but if the other had a horse close at hand he would have a decided advantage. Hashknife could have ridden straight down the hill to the bottom of the gulch and followed the man, but it would mean that he would have to ride in the open in the face of rifle-fire; and this man had demonstrated his ability with a rifle.

Sleepy took the two lead-ropes and poked off down the hill, while Hashknife circled the west fork of the gulch, riding recklessly but watching the country. Between the two gulches was a wide stretch of open country, where a rider would be plainly visible; but on the east side of the main gulch were miles of broken hills, where a man might hide away for months.

Hashknife circled around the head of the west fork and galloped straight across this wide flat, heading swiftly for the rim of the main gulch, over a mile away. Instead of going toward the junction of the two forks he swung to the left, cutting across to the main fork, with the intention of striking it about half a mile from the forks. He felt sure that the shooter, realizing that he had more than one person to contend with, would retreat; and there was a bare possibility that he would follow the gulch.

Hashknife drew up at the rim and scanned the country beyond, but there was no one in sight. The gulch was heavily timbered and extended far beyond him. He hesitated only for a moment and then rode slowly down through the trees, watching closely. The timber was so thick that he knew the man's rifle would be of little advantage.

At the bottom was a deeply rutted cattle-trail, and a small trickle of water showed the presence of a spring farther up the gulch. He stopped in a thicket beside the trail and waited.

From the top of a dead cottonwood a mourning dove called softly, monotonously. Farther up the gulch a family of magpies started an argument, and Hashknife smiled at the great similarity to human voices. The old trail was deep with dust, which would muffle the sound of passing hoofs.

Suddenly a jack-rabbit flashed into sight, bounding along the trail like a gray shadow. It passed out of sight, leaving a faint cloud of dust in its wake.

Hashknife hunched lower in his saddle. Something had frightened the rabbit and that something was probably coming up the trail.

Then came the muffled *plop, plop* of a horse walking in deep dust, and out of the brush-lined trail came a horse and rider. Hashknife leaned forward and lowered his gun. It was Mary O'Hara!

Her sorrel horse was streaked with sweat and dust and appeared so weary that it did not even sense the presence of Hashknife's mount, passing within twenty feet and fading out in the brush beyond.

Hashknife made no move until a full minute after she had passed; then he rode out of the heavy thicket and went down the trail, wondering what it all meant. What was Mary O'Hara doing there? Had she met the man who had done the shooting?

He watched closely as he followed the trail, but there was no sign of any one in the

gulch. It was impossible to distinguish tracks in the deep dust; even the tracks of Mary's mount were but hillocks of dust. He rode out at the forks and swung wide of the brush to circle Romaine's fence.

He rode over to the ranch-house porch, where Sleepy was sitting. Four horses were tied to the porch-posts, and lying on the porch was a man, his head bolstered on a folded coat.

"See anythin' more of him?" asked Sleepy.

Hashknife shook his head and dismounted. The man was unconscious, mumbling incoherently.

"Splinter See," said Sleepy. "Got hit in the shoulder. Pat Haley's gone after a doctor and a rig to take him to town in."

"Was that Haley?" queried Hashknife.

"Yeah. He got his eyes full of sand from a 30-30 bullet and can't see very well, but it didn't stop him from doin' a complete job of cussin'."

Hashknife slowly rolled a cigaret as he considered Mary O'Hara. She had known that Pat Haley was coming after Shell Romaine, and apparently had cut across the hills to warn Shell.

"Hurt kinda bad, ain't he?" queried Hashknife.

"I betcha. Me and Pat looked him over, but it's a job for a doctor. Didn'tcha see nobody, Hashknife?"

"Seen Mary O'Hara."

Sleepy looked blankly at Hashknife.

"Mary O'Hara?"

Hashknife explained where he had seen her, and Sleepy swore softly.

"Goin' to tell Pat Haley?"

"Nope. I figure that she knew that Pat was comin' over here after Shell; so she packed a warnin' to him, and he stayed long enough to do some shootin'."

"And now the whole —— country'll be on his trail," declared Sleepy. "He didn't use no judgment."

"I don't *sabe* him," admitted Hashknife. "There's a lot of things around this range that I don't *sabe*."

"Well," observed Sleepy, "things must be in a —— of a muddle when you'll plead ignorance, cowboy."

IT WAS about an hour later when Pat Haley arrived. He was ably assisted by several of Moon Flats' leading citizens, among which were Maldeen and Jim Searles. The doctor was not available, so they did not wait for him.

The men were vociferous in the denunciation of Shell Romaine, and assured each other that his demise was but a question of a short time. They loaded the injured deputy into the wagon-box and trooped back toward town. Hashknife asked Haley to take back the livery horses, and after they were on their way Hashknife and Sleepy secured their saddles and bridles.

"I reckon that Shell Romaine is kinda up against it," said Sleepy as they mounted.

"Sure looks thataway," grinned Hashknife. "Everybody seems to be goin' after him."

"Kinda spikes our job," complained Sleepy. "About the only thing we can do is to set around and look on."

"Well, we sure can do that, can't we?" grinned Hashknife.

"Lotsa worse things than settin' around. Let's go back and see if Joe Wicks has thought up any new cuss words."

They went back across the hills and dropped down into Joe Wicks' road, where they ran into old Joe astride a moth-eaten gray horse. He was heading toward home, so they swung in beside him. Joe was just as dirty and unkempt as before, but he was painfully sober.

"What the —— yo' want?" Joe's inevitable question.

"How is the little girl, Joe?" asked Hashknife.

Joe squinted at Hashknife but did not answer.

"Rock didn't hurt her much, did it?"

Joe shook his head. He was evidently not in any mood for conversation.

"Is Henry Dryden goin' to marry her?" asked Sleepy.

"No, by ——!"

Joe woke up explosively.

"Henry's a good feller," said Hashknife.

"—— fool!" grunted Joe. "My girl too good for him, by ——!"

"He probably wants her to marry a king," grinned Sleepy.

They rode out of the willows and up the slope to the house. A tall roan horse was tied to the porch, and Joe Wicks swore fluently, hammering his old gray into a trot. He dropped off before reaching the porch and ran the rest of the way. Hashknife and Sleepy rode up, but did not get off their horses.

Inside the house, Joe Wicks was discoloring the air with profanity, and a moment later Henry Horsecollar came backing out of the door, followed by Joe. Henry did not see the two men beside the porch.

"Yo' go to —— out of here!" yelped Joe, waving his arms wildly. "You le' my Marie alone! *Hyak klatawa!*"

"*Klatawa* your own self, you —— breed!" snorted Henry. "Keep yore dirty paws off me or I'll knock yuh plumb into the Happy Huntin'-Ground!"

"Yo' go 'way, —— quick!" shrilled Joe. "Yo' not marry my girl, yo' —— right!"

Just then Marie came out of the door and Joe shoved her aside.

"Yo' keep to —— out of this!"

"You keep your paws off her!" howled Henry. "Leggo her, Joe!"

"Yeh?"

Joe leered at Henry.

"Yo' make me, eh? Huh!"

Joe whirled Marie toward him and slapped her across the cheek—probably to show Henry Horsecollar that Marie was his property to do with as he pleased.

Marie jerked back, throwing Joe off his balance, and in that fraction of a second Henry Horsecollar sprang in and smashed Joe flush in the face. It was a terrific punch, which started back about two feet behind Henry's right hip, described the arc of a circle and connected perfectly with the head of Joseph Wicks.

And the said Joe Wicks seemed to lift off the floor, straightened out to an angle of forty-five degrees and floated off the porch, where he fell limply among his colony of mongrel dogs.

Henry blew on his sore knuckles and stared at Marie, who was looking at Hashknife and Sleepy. He turned and looked foolishly at them.

"Henry, you sure can hit," applauded Sleepy.

"Uh-huh," admitted Henry. "Y'betcha I can."

They watched Joe Wicks get to his feet and look around. He was very dignified and very erect. Twice he turned around as if surveying the country, and then started out toward his corral, weaving like a drunken man with his whole pack of dogs barking at his heels. The running-gears of an old buggy barred his trail; but he walked into it, fell down and went to sleep while the dogs all sat down around him and barked at each other.

Marie turned and walked into the house, and after a moment's hesitation Henry followed her in.

"Yuh gotta hand it to Henry for bein' a *Romeo*," said Hashknife. "A father-in-law don't mean nothin' to him."

"He'll likely come out, draggin' her by the hair," grinned Sleepy, but he was wrong.

Henry came out alone, rather sad of face, and mounted his horse.

"Goin' back to the ranch?" queried Hashknife.

"Uh-huh."

They rode down past Joe Wicks, but he paid no attention to them.

"He'll likely beat that girl after he wakes up," said Hashknife.

Henry started to go back, but changed his mind and rode on with them.

"Prob'ly will," he agreed sadly. "Mebbe he'll beat some sense into her—I dunno."

"Ain't she got no sense?" queried Sleepy.

"She says she can't marry me."

"Mebbe she don't love yuh, Henry," offered Hashknife.

"My ——!" exclaimed Henry seriously. "Now I never thought of that!"

"Didn't yuh ever ask her if she loved yuh?"

"No-o-o, I never did. By gosh, mebbe that's why she can't marry me. Whatcha know about that?"

"And," declared Sleepy, "all that hammerin' on her pa's head ain't goin' to git yuh no votes from her."

"Huh!"

Henry squinted both eyes and rubbed his right ear thoughtfully.

"Love's a —— of a thing, ain't it?"

"Y'betcha," agreed Hashknife.

THE shooting of Splinter See and the open defiance of Shell Romaine furnished food for conversation in the Mission rangeland. Splinter was still alive, but badly injured. Ma Haley was a more than willing nurse, and old Dr. Goodsell was thankful for her assistance.

"When do ye look for a crisis?" inquired Pat.

"Crisis ——!" exploded the old doctor. "When you get hit with a 30-30, that's the crisis—right then. If you survive the shock you'll get well—maybe."

Contrary to expectations Pat Haley did

not swear in a big posse of men and go hunting for Shell Romaine. The county offered a thousand dollars for his arrest, and the express company offered two thousand dollars reward for information that would lead to the conviction of the bandit who robbed the express-car near Clevis Creek.

To many folk it was a foregone conclusion that Shell Romaine had robbed the train, and his early appearance in Moon Flats was but a part of his defiance of the law. Since Splinter was shot, cowboys rode the range with rifles handy—partly for protection, partly to try and collect the reward.

Mary O'Hara went softly about her work, taking little interest in things, paying little attention to those who came to see Ma Haley's patient. But Cal Severn did not come again, and Ma Haley shook her head sadly.

She knew that Mary was unhappy, but was unable to decide whether it was from the fact that Cal did not come any more, or— Ma Haley sighed deeply and reminded herself that the heart of a maid is a queer machine, so it is.

And Cal Severn seemed very unhappy, morose. He had little to say to Hashknife and Sleepy, but vented his spleen on Henry Horsecollar, whose hide was so thick that sarcasm and insult failed to penetrate.

"If I was you, I'd bulldog that *hombre*," declared Sleepy, disgusted at Henry's indifference to Severn's vitriolic tongue.

"He's hard to comb," replied Henry. "Fightin' whelp, that feller is, y'betcha."

"Then why not pistol-whip him?"

"And be out of a job, eh?"

"——!" breathed Sleepy. "You can't beat humanity."

Mort Lee came out to the Diamond-S and talked with Severn. It was a lengthy conversation, and when Mort Lee left the ranch he was so drunk that he lost his hat as he mounted his horse, and did not go back after it. Severn seemed to be cold sober. He studied the hat for a while, kicked it aside and went back in the house.

Hashknife was perched on the corral fence and observed all this. There was nothing strange that Mort Lee should come to see Cal Severn; nothing strange that Mort Lee should get drunk and lose his hat; but it caused Hashknife to think deeply. He wondered whether Mort Lee had seen Shell Romaine, and just why he had been looking for Romaine the day that they had been ambushed at the Romaine ranch.

Why had Cal Severn appeared friendly to Mort Lee, and then kicked so savagely at Mort's hat after Mort had ridden away? That trifling act whispered to Hashknife that Cal Severn was not friendly to Mort Lee.

Sleepy came from the bunk-house and climbed up on the fence.

"Whatcha worryin' about?" he demanded of Hashknife. "Yore nose is plumb tied in a knot."

Hashknife continued to squint thoughtfully.

"The Great Stone Face," observed Sleepy, "has puzzled scientists for a million years. What is it thinkin' about? Say, I reckon I talked Henry Horsecollar into stickin' up for himself, Hashknife."

Hashknife merely grunted and glanced toward the house, where Cal Severn was standing on the porch. He was looking down toward the bunk-house, and in a moment he left the house and walked down that way. He showed no effects of drink, except that he walked a trifle more erect than ever.

He went into the bunk-house and shut the door behind him.

"Henry's in for another bawlin'-out," grinned Sleepy. "I dunno how he stands it, Hashknife."

"Henry's a danged jelly-fish," grunted Hashknife. "He might fight like he did over at Joe Wicks' place—kinda like an animal protectin' its mate; but nobody can insult him and make him fight. He's just about fool-proof."

"He sure is. Did Mort Lee go back?"

"Uh-huh. Drunker than a whangdoodle. Lost his hat when he forked his bronc, and after he was gone, Severn kicked —— out of the poor old hat."

Sleepy grinned and began the manufacture of a cigaret. The bunk-house door banged open, and Cal Severn came out, kicked the door shut and went down to the barn, where he began saddling his horse.

"Look!" gasped Sleepy, pointing at the bunk-house.

Henry Horsecollar was standing in the doorway, dangling to the sides of the door with both hands, while he carefully felt for the one step with his foot. Then he came out, looked all around and weaved slowly toward the corral.

Cal Severn mounted and rode past him, but Henry Horsecollar did not look at him; neither did Severn even give Henry a

passing glance. Henry came up to the corral fence and looked up at Hashknife and Sleepy. Henry's two eyes were swollen almost shut, his upper lip stuck out like a duck's bill and the two front teeth in his lower jaw were missing.

"You—you—give me thom good advith, like ——!" lisped Henry painfully.

"My gosh, what happened to you?" gasped Hashknife.

"Well," mumbled Henry, caressing his swollen lip and trying to open his eyes wide enough to see his listeners, "well, I told you he wath a fightin' thon-of-a-gun, didn't I? He asked me to thaddle his horth and I thought it wath a good time to atthert my independenth."

Henry twisted his face and spat painfully.

"I told him to go to ——."

"And he didn't want to go?" queried Hashknife.

"He didn't thay."

Henry shook his head.

"Anyway he didn't go thoon enough. By ——, I'm all through taking advith, and that's a thinch. I'm got thom brains now, y'betcha."

"Then you ain't so much loser, after all," said Hashknife. "Swellin' will go down, but brains remain."

"Better go and ask the cook for some beefsteak," advised Sleepy. "That'll take out the swellin'."

"More advith?" queried Henry seriously.

"I'm advisin' yuh what to do to take out the swellin', thassall!"

"Thankth."

Henry squinted painfully toward the ranch-house, squared away and went seeking raw meat.

"He sure stuck up for himself," observed Hashknife.

"Yeah," sadly. "I sure feel sorry for Henry. Severn has got him buffaloed for fair. Somebody told Henry that Severn was a —— of a fighter, and Henry believed it."

"Lookin' at Henry," said Hashknife," I'd be kinda inclined to think that Henry heard a lot of truth. Let's go to Moon Flats and see if there is any late scandal."

MARY O'HARA was standing in the kitchen door, looking off across the hazy hills, when Hashknife and Sleepy rode up and tied their horses to the fence. She smiled wistfully as they came up to her.

"Yo're lookin' mighty pretty t'day," grinned Sleepy.

"Why emphasize 't'day?' " asked Hashknife reprovingly, and Sleepy blushed bashfully.

"Pat out huntin' bushwhackers?" asked Sleepy.

Mary's smile faded, and Hashknife scowled at Sleepy, who fingered his hat and tried to think of something to say that would mend matters. Ma Haley spied them and came bustling out.

"Why do ye come sneakin' in the back way?" she asked. "Ain't the front way wide enough, or—" she glanced at Mary and smiled knowingly—"was there an attraction?"

"There was," nodded Hashknife. "How is the sick man t'day?"

"Cranky as the ——, if ye please. I think he's gettin' well too fast. Won't ye come in? Pat's out in the hills today."

"Sleepy will go in," said Hashknife. "He likes to talk to you about nursin'; don't yuh, Sleepy?"

Sleepy squinted closely at Hashknife and was about to protest, but nodded understandingly and followed Ma Haley into the house. Mary watched them go inside and turned to Hashknife as if wondering why he sent them away.

"I wanted to talk to yuh," said Hashknife softly.

"Yes?"

"Uh-huh."

Hashknife examined the palm of his right hand for a space of time as if wondering just where to begin.

"Things ain't just right around this country," he observed. " 'Pears to be a lot of unhappiness. Mebbe it ain't nothin' I can mend, but I'd sure like to try."

"What do you mean, Mr. Hartley?"

"I like to see folks smile, Miss Mary. Me and Sleepy are just a pair of common old range tramps—not much good for anythin', never havin' anythin' except the smiles we've helped to bring to humanity."

"I don't think I understand," said Mary softly, wonderingly.

"Nobody does," admitted Hashknife, "until after the smile comes—then they know."

"But what do you want of me, Mr. Hartley?"

"Well—" Hashknife hesitated—"I'm goin' to ask yuh a personal question. I

don't reckon you'll care to answer it, but nobody ever gets real smart without askin' questions. What did you and Cal Severn quarrel about?"

Mary was staring at him; but her lips shut tight, and she turned away. Hashknife reshaped his sombrero while he waited for Mary to consider the question.

"Why do you ask me that question?"

"Just—kinda—wantin' to know, miss."

"Oh!" softly. "Why should you be interested?"

"Well, I can't just come out and tell yuh, but it ain't just curiosity. I reckon I know how yuh feel about things. I'm a lot older than you, Mary O'Hara; and I ain't makin' love to yuh."

Hashknife's homely grin brought a smile to Mary's serious face.

"But just the same," continued Hashknife, "I don't reckon that age ever stops a man from lovin' a sweet girl."

"Thank you," smiled Mary. "I shall remember that."

They were both silent for a few moments, and then Mary smiled sadly and said:

"I don't know why you want to know what happened between Cal Severn and me, but I feel that it is not just curiosity; so I will tell you. He accused me of meeting Shell Romaine in the hills."

She flushed hotly and shut her lips.

"Thank you, miss," nodded Hashknife. "Thassall. I reckon I'll go in and see the sick man."

As he started in through the door he met Sleepy.

"Patient's asleep," whispered Sleepy, "and Ma's in there fannin' the flies off him. By grab, it's a cinch to be sick around here."

"I reckon we'll drift up-town then," stated Hashknife. "And don't forget the smiles, Mary O'Hara."

"I'll try to remember them," she assured him.

"What's goin' on around here?" grinned Sleepy as they rode toward the street. "You tryin' to make a mash on the fair lady?"

"Mebbe," said Hashknife absently.

They tied their horses to the Moon Flats saloon hitch-rack and went inside. There were several horses at the rack, and among them was Cal Severn's horse and Mort Lee's brown mare.

Maldeen, Severn, Monte Barnes, Newt Bowie and another cowboy were playing poker. It was too early in the day for a heavy play, and the rest of the games were deserted. Jim Searles was sitting behind Severn, watching his play.

The bartender had moved all the glassware from the back-bar and was industriously painting a soap picture on the bar mirror, while in front of the bar a couple of the dance-hall girls offered frank criticism of his skill.

The men at the poker game looked up as Hashknife and Sleepy came in, but none of them spoke. The girls moved away from the bar and went to the rear of the room, while Hashknife and Sleepy made known their wants to the bartender.

Hashknife studied the soap picture. It was well drawn, and depicted a bucking horse almost unseating its rider. Hashknife frowned and bent his head over his glass, but in a moment he shot a searching glance at the bartender and said, with a grin—

"'Soapy' Evans, I had a hard time rememberin' you."

The bartender's eyes narrowed perceptibly as he stared at Hashknife and said coldly:

"You got the name wrong, pardner; my name's Hill."

"Thassall right," nodded Hashknife. "Hill's as good as Evans. You can't hardly help paintin' soap pictures, can yuh? Remember the one you painted on the lookin-glass in Bill Bird's place in Elkton?"

"I dunno what yo're talkin' about," growled the bartender. "I never was in Elkton."

"My mistake," said Hashknife quickly. "It was in Bearpaw."

The argument had been loud enough for those at the poker-table to hear it, and Hashknife turned to see Maldeen looking closely at him.

"What's the argument?" asked Maldeen.

"I called yore bartender Soapy Evans, and he kicked about it."

Maldeen laughed.

"His name is Hill. He's been working for me almost two years."

"All right," grinned Hashknife. "If two years' work will change a man's name from E to H—mine's Zachariah."

Maldeen snorted and turned back to his cards, and after a moment Hashknife and Sleepy rattled their spurs out of the front door.

"Where in —— did you ever know anybody by the name of Soapy Evans?" demanded Sleepy as they sat down on the edge of the sidewalk away from the Moon Flats saloon.

"Never did know him," grinned Hashknife. "About two years ago I dropped in at the Cross-in-a-Box outfit in Wyoming for a few days. One of the punchers was tellin' us about Soapy Evans. Seems that he knowed Soapy for a long time, but kinda lost track of him.

"One night a gamblin'-house in a town near there was robbed—safe blowed open. Whoever done the job knocked a watchman on the head and finished up the job by paintin' a picture in soap on the mirror.

"This puncher said he knowed danged well that Soapy done the job on account of the good drawin' on that mirror, but he never told on Soapy. I reckon it was partly because he was a friend of Soapy's and partly because he was afraid Soapy might find it out and come callin'."

"I betcha this is the same whippoorwill," declared Sleepy. "He sure acted guilty as ——; don'tcha know he did? And he's been with Maldeen for two years."

"Let's get some information," suggested Hashknife, and led the way over to Bill Eagles' merchandise store.

Mort Lee was in there, or rather was just coming out as they went in. Mort was still half-drunk and in a rather hilarious mood. He was wearing a new hat which did not fit him very well, and this fact seemed to amuse him greatly.

He went weaving toward the Moon Flats, taking up much more than his share of the street. Hashknife went up to the counter and replenished his stock of tobacco. Bill Eagles was a squat-figured, dark-faced man with keen brown eyes and a wide-mouthed smile.

"Mort lost his hat," he volunteered. "Mostly allus does lose his hat when he gets drunk.

"You fellers are working for Cal Severn, ain't yuh? Thought yuh was. How's Henry Horsecollar these days? Ain't seen him lately. Saw Pat Haley ride past a while ago, but he didn't have no prisoner.

"I jist got some fresh sardines and a barrel of crackers in if you fellers are hongry. Got a lot of nice canned peaches, too. Thirty-five cents a can. Ain't such big cans, but them peaches are dingers.

"Got two kinds of sardines this time. One kind is in big cans and all kinda gooied up with mustard. Fat Kahler ate two cans and they made him kinda sick. I been wonderin if they're all right."

Bill Eagles stopped for breath and handed some tobacco to Hashknife.

"How long has Maldeen owned the Moon Flats?" queried Hashknife.

"How long? Hm-m-m—lemme see. Why, I reckon about two years. He bought out——"

"How long has Hill been tendin' bar for him?"

"Hill? Lemme see. Why, he came here with Maldeen. I allus figured that Hill owned a interest in the Moon Flats."

"Didja ever see any of Hill's soap pictures on the saloon mirror?"

Bill Eagles looked blank and shook his head.

"I never seen none. Ain't sure I know what yuh mean."

"Pictures painted with soap on a lookin'-glass."

"No, I never see any."

"All right; give us some of them mustard-soaked sardines and some crackers."

"Yuh heard what I said about them peaches, didn't yuh?"

Bill Eagles did not want them to overlook their dessert.

"And some peaches," agreed Hashknife, sitting up on the counter.

Bill Eagles spread a piece of paper on the counter and laid out the lunch, keeping up a rapid-fire of comment on range happenings, asking questions and never waiting for an answer.

About fifteen minutes later Monte Barnes and Newt Bowie came into the store. Hashknife invited them to dine, and they lost no time complying. Bill Eagles opened another can of sardines and more peaches and invited himself into the feed without an invitation.

"Game busted up," Newt informed them with his mouth filled. "Me and Monte won six dollars and forty cents. Severn said it wasn't interesting to play four bits a stack; so we cashed in and busted up the game. Say, what was you kiddin' Hill about?"

"Mistook him for another feller," grinned Hashknife.

"Yeah?"

Monte squinted at Hashknife.

"He got mad and wiped out that soap horse after you left. Gosh, that feller sure can draw! Maldeen said it was a —— of a thing to put on a lookin'-glass, and Hill rubbed it out."

The conversation turned to Shell Romaine and the express-car robbery.

"Shell came to Moon Flats that mornin', that's a cinch," declared Newt. "Me and Monte run into him early in the mornin'."

"Wonder where he is now," said Hashknife.

"I betcha he's up in the Sulphur Cliff country," said Monte. "That's about the only place a feller could hide out around here unless he hived up in the breaks between this place and Mission River, which ain't noways likely."

"Where are the Sulphur Cliffs?" asked Hashknife.

"Back on Clevis Creek about ten or twelve miles from here."

"But why should he stay around here?" queried Hashknife. "Ain't nothin' to keep him from pullin' out of this country, is there?"

"I been wonderin' about that myself," declared Monte, "and she kinda looks to me like he was hangin' around until he finds the old man's cache. Yuh see, the old man must 'a' lifted a fortune."

"Yeah; but Shell must 'a' had some of that thirty thousand dollars he helped steal from the bank at Sula," argued Bill Eagles. "What more would he want? My ——, if I had thirty thousand dollars—uh-uh-h-h-h!"

Came the unmistakable thud of a pistol-shot. At the moment Monte was holding half-a-can of sardines, which fell from his hand, caromed from his toe and landed upside down on the none too clean floor.

"Somebody's shootin'!" exclaimed Bill Eagles.

"Nervous, like old wimmin!" complained Newt. "Actin' like a pistol-shot was somethin' unheard of."

Nevertheless they all moved toward the front of the store and looked out. Doc Maldeen and Jim Searles came out of the Moon Flats, and Searles started for the hitch-rack; but Maldeen called sharply to him, and he stopped. After a short conversation Searles turned and started down the street toward the sheriff's office.

Hashknife flung open the door and started across the street, with the others strung out behind him. Maldeen looked across at them and went hurriedly back into the saloon.

Inside the saloon they found Mort Lee lying half-under the poker-table, flat on his face with both arms flung wide. The elbow of his right arm was resting on a Colt revolver. Cal Severn was standing at the end of the bar, leaning on one elbow, while Maldeen stood near the card-table. The bartender was leaning on the bar with his chin cupped in his hands, looking down at Mort Lee. The air was still acrid from powder-smoke.

The men from the store stopped just inside the door and considered the tragedy.

"He tried to shoot Searles," volunteered Maldeen, "but Jim beat him on the draw."

"What was the row about?" queried Bill Eagles.

"Just a fool thing."

Maldeen shook his head.

"Mort wanted to play Jim a game of seven-up for the drinks. They both had six, don'tcha see, and Jim, who was dealing, turned a jack. Mort swore that Jim cheated. That's where it started."

"Jim went to give himself up." This from Severn.

"Is he dead?" asked Hashknife.

"Yeah," Maldeen nodded. "Drilled plumb center."

"How in —— do you know?" flashed Hashknife. "Did yuh turn him over after he was shot?"

Maldeen was flustered for a moment and groped for a reply; but at that instant footsteps sounded outside the door, and Pat Haley came in with Searles. Pat glanced around the room and went straight to Lee. He shoved the table away and knelt down.

"Help me turn him over, somebody."

Maldeen assisted him, and they placed Lee on his back. Lee's face was ashen, and the breast of his faded shirt was sloppy with blood. Pat grasped his limp wrist for a moment and looked up at the circle of faces.

"Somebody rustle around and find Dr. Goodsell while we take this feller down to my place. He sure ain't dead yet. Get a blanket for a stretcher."

Some one found a blanket; and Hashknife, Sleepy, Monte Barnes and Pat Haley carried Lee down to Haley's home, where Ma Haley welcomed them with open arms.

The doctor was ready for the job when they arrived, and his swift diagnosis showed that Mort Lee had a fighting chance.

Pat Haley singled out Cal Severn and asked him about the shooting. Severn's evidence was the same as that given by Maldeen—exonerating Searles. Mort Lee was drunk, quarrelsome, but not too drunk to draw a gun. It was a simple case of self-defense.

But Hashknife was dissatisfied, and did not conceal his feelings. Why didn't some one stop Mort Lee from starting the quarrel? He was drunk and irresponsible; probably fumbled considerably, trying to draw a gun. Why did three other men stand aside and let it end in powder-smoke?

It was in the Moon Flats that Hashknife sounded his queries, which only brought blank or black looks from the witnesses to the affair. Only Maldeen resented it openly, and his resentment took the form of sarcasm.

"Some of these tramp cowpunchers wear kinda long horns," he observed to Severn, who did not reply, but half-smiled in agreement.

"And some of 'em kinda hookum-cow," remarked Hashknife meaningly.

Maldeen leaned against the bar and studied Hashknife. There was no doubt in Maldeen's mind that this lanky cowboy was well able to take care of himself. The wide holster and heavy gun, hanging low on his hip, were too well worn for ornaments.

"Well, mebbe it was kinda foolish of us," admitted Maldeen, "but it all happened so quick, don'tcha see?"

Maldeen's inventory of Hashknife had caused him to assume a conciliatory tone, but Hashknife was not to be won over by soft words.

"Quick, ——! Didn't they argue over the turnin' of that jack? They must 'a' been standin' up when they was arguin', or Mort Lee wouldn't 'a' fell under the table in that position."

"Yo're quite a detective, ain'tcha?" sneered Maldeen.

"No, but I've got sense enough to smell a frame-up that's as raw as this one."

"What do yuh mean by that?"

Severn whirled on Hashknife, his face black with anger.

"You better take that back!"

"Thasso?"

Hashknife laughed in Severn's face and shook his head.

"Them are my sentiments, pardner, and I'll hang on to 'em until Mort Lee gets well enough to tell me I was wrong."

" 'Tend to yore own knittin', Hashknife," said Sleepy. "I'm estimatin' the rest of the crowd."

Sleepy had backed against the bar, where he could keep an eye on every one, and he did not want Hashknife to worry about outside interference.

Just then came the scrape of a boot on the threshold, and Pat Haley came bustling in. He stopped and looked at Hashknife and Cal Severn, facing each other in the middle of the room, and his eyes shifted around the place.

"The doctor," he said distinctly, "says that Mort Lee will pull through. And I want ye to distinctly understand that the next cripple will have to be shipped to a hospital, 'cause Ma Haley's extra beds are all full."

Severn turned and walked away. The tension of the room relaxed, and Maldeen offered to set up drinks; but Hashknife and Sleepy went outside, where they mounted and rode out of town.

"Do you think that was a smart thing to do?" queried Sleepy as they swung into the Diamond-S road.

"What do yuh mean—callin' 'em on that frame-up?"

"Are yuh sure it was a frame-up, Hashknife?"

"I think so, Sleepy. Anyway I sure got a rise out of Cal Severn. He'll fight, that's a cinch."

"That's a —— of a lot of satisfaction," dryly. "Didja ever stop to think that we came here for a purpose, Hashknife? We didn't come here to do battle with the natives."

"No-o-o, that's right," admitted Hashknife; "but in the course of human events it become necessary to horn in and show some folks their errors. Mort Lee don't mean anythin' to me or you, except that I'd sure like to know why Mort Lee was looking for Shell Romaine, and why Cal Severn kicked his hat."

"That don't mean nothin'," declared Sleepy. "Yo're allus makin' a mountain out of a mole-hill, cowboy."

"Sleepy—" Hashknife turned sidewise in his saddle and considered his companion

seriously— "tell me just how you figure things up to date? Lookin' at it from yore angle, what does all this shootin' amount to?"

"Well, I dunno," faltered Sleepy. "Kinda looks like Shell Romaine was makin' good, don't it? The Black Rider is under the sod; Shell Romaine is holed up. Mebbe he mistook me and you for the sheriff and deputy and took some shots at us. The next time he don't make no mistake, but we put the run on him.

"I figure that Mary O'Hara knowed that Haley was goin' after Romaine; so she packed a warnin' to him. It's a cinch that she likes Shall Romaine—or did like him. It's a mixed-up deal, Hashknife, but that's my opinion."

"Yeah?" thoughtfully. "Why did Jim Searles shoot Mort Lee?"

"Drunken row. Searles is a gun-man, that's a cinch. He got old man Romaine."

"Jim Searles was the one that identified Cal Severn as bein' the Sula bank bandit. Then he kills old Rim-Fire Romaine, the Black Rider, and this last time he smokes up Mort Lee, who was the one that packed the news of old Romaine's killin'. Mort said that he danged near got killed by Searles.

"That part of it was all right. I can imagine that Searles was kinda jumpy over it, and when Mort Lee came bustin' out of the brush Searles didn't know but what it was somebody workin' with the old man."

Hashknife grinned as he visualized the scene. Mort Lee had said that the twisted cañon and the running stream would effectually cut off the report of a gun from him, and it was a wonder that Searles did not take a shot at the man who appeared there at the moment.

"At that, it was kinda lucky for Searles that Maldeen was with him," said Sleepy. "There was a reward offered for the Black Rider, and Jim Searles wouldn't mind collectin' it—on any promising carcass."

They were at the forks of the road, where one road led across the river to the Diamond-S and the other to Sula, thirty-five miles away. Hashknife drew rein and considered both roads, while Sleepy looked curiously at him.

"Let's go this way," said Hashknife, pointing up the Sula road. "We ain't never been to Sula, and we ain't goin' to be none too welcome at the Diamond-S after what happened today."

"I dunno why we're goin'," declared Sleepy, "but yo're handlin' the rudder of this ship, cowboy."

"I dunno anythin' about Sula," confessed Hashknife, "but I might find somebody to answer a civil question."

They swung into an easy gallop, heading toward the purple haze of the Mission range; following a white ribbon of road, broken by the long, late-afternoon shadows; two tramp cowboys, going out of their way to help someone or to satisfy their own curiosity—or souls.

THE departure of Hashknife and Sleepy did not bring any sadness to the Moon Flats saloon. Cal Severn was sore over the accusation that there was anything crooked over the shooting of Mort Lee, but talked little. Searles was told of Hashknife's insinuations and grew indignant.

"Who in —— are these two shorthorns?" he demanded of Cal Severn. "If I was you, I'd fire 'em bodily off the Diamond-S."

"The long one," said Pat Haley slowly, "might not take kindly to it. The small one—ye can't tell about. Be the hang of his gun, I'd say they're a pair, them two."

"Well, they're headin' into trouble."

Thus Maldeen prophetically.

"A man is skatin' on thin ice," he added, "when he accuses folks of a frame-up shootin' scrape. Why should Jim Searles want to kill Mort Lee, I ask yuh?"

"I wish I could tell ye, Doc," said Pat Haley, "but it's beyond me, so it is. Mebbe Mort Lee can tell—if he lives and keeps his voice."

"The doctor thinks he'll live, does he?" queried Jim.

"That's what he says," replied Pat; "but ye never can tell. The doctor has no powers over life or death, except to do what other doctors has done."

Pat Haley finished his drink and went back home, leaving Maldeen, Severn and Searles alone beside the bar. Jim Searles was ill at ease and helped himself several times from the bar-bottle.

"If I was you Jim," said Maldeen. "I'd pull out, while the pullin'-out is real good."

"Yuh would, eh?"

Searles scowled and rested his elbows on

the bar; after which he reached for the bottle again.

"Don't be a fool," grunted the bartender. "You can't afford to get a skinful of hooch, Jim."

"The —— I can't!" indignantly. "Whose skin is this that I'm wrapped up in, I'd like to know?"

He turned and leered at Cal Severn.

"You jaspers are full of advice, ain'tcha? I notice that the long, grin-faced puncher run his li'l blazer on you, Severn. He didn't take back anythin' he said, did he? Hah!"

Severn's brows lifted a trifle.

"Do as yuh like, Jim; only I'd be away from the Mission range when Mort Lee got his voice back if I was you."

"To —— with him and his voice!"

Searles was working himself into a rage.

"You and Maldeen were here and seen it all. It's three ag'in' one, ain't it?"

"Don't get to yelpin'," advised Maldeen. "Yo're howlin' loud enough to be heard all over town. There ain't nobody goin' to give you the worst of it, Jim. If you want to stay here—stay."

"Yo're —— right I'll stay! I ain't never collected the reward for the Black Rider yet."

"And yuh likely never will," said Maldeen. "The county commissioners say that there is not sufficient evidence to prove that it was the Black Rider. They contend that old man Romaine might have tried to imitate the Black Rider, and that the real Black Rider is liable to show up any old time."

Maldeen laughed and ordered the bartender to serve more drinks.

"That's a —— of a way to look at it," grumbled Searles. "I reckon the only way I can grab off a reward is to go out and catch Shell Romaine."

"Why catch him?" queried Maldeen.

Searles shook his head and shot a side glance at Severn, who was moodily looking into his glass.

"If he'd 'a' stole my girl—" began Searles; but the next instant he received the contents of Severn's glass in his eyes, which was followed up by a terrific smash in the face.

The blow knocked Searles down, but did not knock him out. He spat out blood and profanity and tried to draw his gun, but Severn sprang into him, kicked the gun loose from his hand and flung it across the room. Searles' face was still swollen from Shell Romaine's fist, and Severn's blow did not tend to increase his beauty.

He got slowly to his feet, scowling at Severn, but did not speak; and without looking for his gun he went out of the door.

"That," said Maldeen slowly, "was a bad move, Cal."

"Yeah?"

Severn's face was white with passion.

"Because," continued Maldeen. "I wouldn't trust him as far as I could toss a steer by the tail."

Severn looked down at his skinned knuckles, flexing his fingers slowly.

"He'd be a fool to hang himself, doc."

"There's been a lot of fools hung," said Maldeen, "and they're still bein' born every day."

HASHKNIFE and Sleepy knew the country through which they were riding only from description; but a weather-beaten sign marked the trail up Medicine Creek. They drew rein and looked over the scene of the killing of the Black Rider.

The road sloped sharply to the crossing with fairly heavy foliage on either side and a box cañon on the right, through which Medicine Creek came brawling its way over rock and drift. Beyond this to the left the country was more open, although fairly well covered with brush.

"She was a good place for a holdup," said Hashknife as they rode on, "with everythin' in the favor of the bandit."

Fifty yards farther on he stopped his horse. There was a slight breeze from the northwest, and Hashknife wrinkled his long nose like a hunting-dog.

"Somethin' unclean in the world," stated Sleepy. "Prob'ly a dead cow."

"Prob'ly," admitted Hashknife, but swung his horse off into the brush and tried to follow the scent.

Sleepy growled a malediction upon any cowboy that would search for a deceased cow-critter, but followed. About a hundred yards from the road Hashknife dismounted at the side of a dead horse, which still bore a saddle and bridle. The animal had been dead for several days, and was already half-eaten by coyotes and magpies. They examined it closely, silently. The saddle was almost new, but already discolored and warped.

"Horse wears a Box-R brand, and has been shot square in the forehead," said Hashknife.

"Must 'a' been shot kinda close," observed Sleepy, " 'cause it's been powder-burned. Whatcha make of it?"

"Take a look," said Hashknife, pointing at the front leg of the animal. "Busted half-way between ankle and knee. Somebody had to shoot it."

"That part's all right, Hashknife; but why didn't they take their saddle and bridle?"

Hashknife rolled and lighted a cigaret before he replied.

"Cowboy, that's the horse that old man Romaine was ridin' the mornin' he was killed."

"Thassot?—There wasn't no horse mentioned in the story."

Hashknife squatted on his heels and chuckled to himself. It seemed to amuse him greatly.

"Where's the joke?" grumbled Sleepy. "Settin' there chucklin' at a dead horse!"

Hashknife sighed with evident satisfaction and got back on his horse.

"Cowboy, she's workin' out," he declared joyfully. "A dead horse ain't nothin', but when yuh find one that is saddled and bridled and left to the coyotes she sure means a lot to old man Hartley's fav'rite offspring."

"I'm just with yuh," complained Sleepy. "I reckon I'm supposed to chuckle with glee and applaud yuh for havin' a wonderful brain, ain't I? Yo're sure a wonder, Hashknife. My ——, I dunno how any human bein' can have a brain like you got!

"She's workin' out, is she? Y'betcha she is, and the sooner we get out of the wind from yore latest find, the better it'll suit yore silent pardner."

"Yuh still got faith in me, ain'tcha?" asked Hashknife seriously. "Yuh ain't doubtin' me, Sleepy Stevens?"

"Can yuh ask a question like that, Hashknife?"

"Uh-huh-h-h-h."

"Then guess the answer," retorted Sleepy. "Let's go to Sula."

WHILE Hashknife and Sleepy headed for Sula, Jim Searles mounted his horse and left Moon Flats, smarting from his injuries. Searles was usually cold-blooded, but now he was hot with rage against Cal Severn. He was not a man to take a knockdown without repaying it, and just now his mind was working overtime on plans for revenge.

But Searles was no fool. He knew the temper of both Severn and Maldeen. Curiously enough he held no grudge against Shell Romaine for the knock-down in the stage-office, in which he had lost both teeth and prestige.

He had no destination in view when he left Moon Flats, and suddenly realized that he was nearing the forks of the road, which led to Sula and the Diamond-S.

He checked his horse to a slow walk as he rode down through a wooded swale. Suddenly a man stepped out of the brush beside the road, causing Searles' horse to plunge sidewise with fright, almost unseating its rider. Searles whirled the horse back into the road and met Shell Romaine face to face.

Romaine was watching Searles closely, coldly, with his hand covering the butt of his heavy Colt revolver, and Searles instinctively lifted both hands even with his shoulders. He knew that Romaine was lightning fast with a gun, and was taking no chances on being misunderstood.

"Whatcha want, Shell?" he asked, and his voice was hardly more than a whisper.

The ghost of a smile crossed Romaine's face as he said casually—

"Yo're kinda gettin' in the habit of havin' yore face busted, ain't yuh, Jim?"

Searles' hand went to his bruised face, feeling tenderly of his swollen lips as he nodded.

"Some friend of yours, Jim?"

"No, by ——!" emphatically.

"I'm kinda lookin' for news," said Romaine; "but I expect yuh to lie to me, Searles."

Searles said nothing, and Romaine considered the remote possibility of a truthful answer. Then he said—

"Is the sheriff huntin' me?"

Searles shook his head.

"May or may not be the truth," reflected Romaine out loud. "Who are those two punchers who are workin' for the Diamond-S?"

"Couple of —— fools that don't mind their own business."

Romaine laughed. There was no possibility that Searles was not telling the truth this time, he was so earnest.

"The tall one ran a blazer on Cal Severn," volunteered Searles.

"What for?"

Searles refused to say. He caressed his face and wished he was far away from there. He did not care to answer some questions.

"Goin' out to the Diamond-S?" asked Romaine.

Searles considered the question. He had not intended going there, but he did not care to tell Romaine that he was just riding around; so he nodded.

"Will yuh pack a message to Cal Severn?"

Searles shut his lips tight. He was about to explode a curse at the mention of Severn's name, but thought better of it, and said—

"Yeah, I'll pack a message to him, Shell."

"Then tell him for me—" Romaine spoke very distinctly— "that if he don't keep away from Marie Wicks I'm goin' to send him to the undertaker. That's all."

Searles stared blankly at Romaine. So Cal Severn was hanging around the breed girl! Searles knew her; knew that she was pretty, and he also knew that she was Henry Horsecollar's girl. He had no idea of carrying that message to Cal Severn, but there was no harm in agreeing to do so.

"All right," he nodded. "I'll sure tell him, Shell."

"Much obliged, Jim. And yuh might also tell him that it's ag'in' the law to furnish liquor to Injuns."

Searles grinned.

"You *sabe* quite a lot about things, don'tcha? Yo're takin' a lot of chances hangin' around so close to civilization when there's rewards out for yuh."

"I'm not the one that's takin' the big chances."

Searles considered this statement. It might mean a whole lot, or little. Romaine stepped back against the fringe of brush.

"You can go now, Jim,"

Searles picked up his reins and settled himself in his saddle.

"All right, Shell; s'long."

Romaine did not reply. At a turn in the road Searles looked back, but there was no sign of Romaine. The size of the reward almost tempted Searles to go back and try to take Romaine, but he thought better of it, and rode on.

In fact he rode faster now. He was going to the Diamond-S ranch, and he did not want to be there when Cal Severn came home. He wondered why Shell Romaine did not shoot him on sight. He had sent Romaine to the penitentiary, had killed Romaine's father, and still Romaine did not seem to seek personal revenge. Searles could hardly understand Romaine.

He rode in through the Diamond-S gate and up to the bunk-house, where Henry Horsecollar was humped up on a box, busily greasing a set of buggy harness. There was a smear of grease across his upper lip, and his bare arms were greasy to the elbow. He spat dryly and looked up at Searles.

"How yuh comin', Henry?" greeted Searles.

Henry squinted closer and grinned a toothless grin that almost matched Searles'.

"Somebody give you some bum advice, too?" he asked.

Searles felt of his face. He and Henry were both alike in facial disfigurements.

"Nobody gave me any advice," grunted Searles.

"Mebbe they forgot to, and that's how yuh got yours."

Henry laughed as he poured some oil on his hand and applied it to the harness, but Searles did not see the humor of the thing. He squinted back down the road, being sure that Severn was not coming in behind him, and then watched Henry a few moments before he said—

"Man sent a message to Cal Severn."

"Thasso?"

Henry showed little interest.

"Cal's in town, I reckon."

"Well, I ain't goin' plumb back there to deliver it to him. I reckon you can tell him, Henry."

"Shoot."

Henry wiped his hands on his overalls and leaned back to receive the message.

"A man told me to tell him that he'd better keep away from Marie Wicks, or he'd fill him full of lead."

Henry did not say anything for several moments. He stared past Searles, looking blankly into space. Then he wiped a greasy hand across his lips and looked up.

"Tell me that ag'in', will yuh, Jim?"

Searles repeated the message, and Henry's greasy lips opened and shut as if repeating it after Searles.

"I—reckon—I—heard—yuh—right," said Henry slowly; and then quickly. "Who sent that message?"

"Shell Romaine."

"Shell——"

Henry gawped widely.

"Where'd you see him?" he asked.

"Ne' mind where I seen him."

Searles grinned knowingly.

"Well—" Henry bent over his harness and fingered at a buckle—"I'll tell him, Jim. Kinda hot t'day; ain't it?"

"Yeah, 'tis, Henry. Well, I gotta be movin'. S'long."

Henry watched him ride out through the gate, where he swung into the hills instead of going back on the road. He blended into the gray of the hills, and Henry turned back to his work.

"S'long," he muttered, never giving thought to the fact that Jim Searles was a mile away by this time. "I'll tell him what yuh said."

For a long time Henry bent over his work, polishing a buckle with the ball of his thumb, a queer tightness about his throat. Shell Romaine had sent that message to Cal Severn. Why did Shell Romaine send the message? Did Shell Romaine want her, too?

He knew now why Cal Severn had ordered him to stay at the ranch. It was to give him a chance to make love to Marie.

"Feller that'd do that won't play square with a girl," declared Henry softly. "I've gotta buck Romaine and Severn. I ain't scared of Romaine, but Severn's got money. Money! No!"

Henry shoved the harness aside and upset the oil-can, but did not pick it up.

"I ain't no —— gun-man, and I ain't got no money; but I'm playin' square with the girl."

He got to his feet and leaned against the bunk-house door; a pathetic, lanky figure in his ill-fitting range clothes, his lips set tight with determination. After a while he shook his head slowly, shoved his hands down deep in his overalls and said out loud:

"The only —— girl I ever had was Injun; and I couldn't keep her. I'm a —— of a lover all right."

Then he stumbled back into the bunk-house.

But Jim Searles was not through yet. He circled the hills, arriving at Moon Flats just before dark and going straight to Pat Haley's home. Pat was sitting on the porch smoking his pipe, and he looked curiously at Searles, who dismounted at the gate and strode briskly up the gravel walk.

Mary O'Hara came to the door to call Pat to supper, but hesitated as she saw Jim Searles coming up to the porch.

"Hyah, Pat," said Searles and tipped his sombrero to Mary.

Pat grunted and removed the pipe from his mouth, while his keen eyes studied Searles' battered face.

"I wanted to see yuh," said Searles slowly, "'cause I thought yuh might like to know that I seen Shell Romaine today."

"Ye did?"

Pat stared at him quizzically and shoved the pipe-stem between his teeth.

"Where did ye see him?"

"Back in the hills."

Searles glanced at Mary, who was leaning against the door, trying to appear at ease.

"Which covers a lot of territory," remarked Haley. "Would ye mind bein' more specific, Searles?"

"Well, along the road between here and the river. He stopped me, and we talked a while."

"Hm-m-m."

Pat Haley grew curious.

"And why didn't ye bring him back with ye?"

Searles grinned and shook his head.

"I'm no officer."

"So ye came to tell me where to find him, eh?"

"Well, I thought yuh might like to know he was still in the country."

"Which I would," nodded Pat. "What did he have to say?"

Searles grinned widely.

"He sent a message to Cal Severn, but I don't jist *sabe* the meanin' of it, Pat. He told me to tell Cal to quit makin' love to Marie Wicks or he'd fill him full of holes."

For a moment there was complete silence. Searles glanced at Mary's face, which had gone gray as ashes. Pat heaved himself to his feet, gripping his pipe so tightly that his teeth snapped through the amber stem. Came Ma Haley's voice just inside the door—

"Have ye no appetites, or do ye think I'm runnin' a short-order caffay?"

She came out of the door and looked at every one.

"Now, what the ——?" she began, but stopped as Pat stepped off the porch and grasped Searles by the shoulder.

"Who told ye to come here and say

that?" he demanded. "Did Shell Romaine tell ye to say that before Mary?"

"Wait a minute!" snapped Searles, yanking away from Haley. "What's all the fuss about? I was just tellin' yuh what Romaine told me to tell Cal Severn."

"And he knowed you'd tell everybody else, eh?"

"Don't say that," begged Mary. "Shell Romaine may be an outlaw, but he wouldn't hurt me. He knew I was engaged to Cal Severn, and he wished—us—luck."

Pat turned from Mary and glared at Searles.

"What do you know about Cal Severn and Marie Wicks?"

"Not a thing, Pat. I didn't know I was goin' to start an explosion, or I'd 'a' kept my mouth shut."

"What was it?" demanded Ma Haley. "What about Cal Severn and the Injun lass?"

"We'll not repeat it," declared Pat firmly as he turned toward the door. "Good evenin' to ye, Searles."

Searles turned and went back to the gate, while Mary O'Hara went softly back into the house. Pat shook his head slowly and stared down at the ground. Ma Haley had heard enough to know that it affected Mary O'Hara and coupled the names of Cal Severn and Marie Wicks. Then Pat said softly, bitterly—

"Sure, it's broke square in two, Ma."

"Mary O'Hara's heart, Pat?"

"No—me good old pipe," pointing down where it had fallen after the stem had snapped.

"Aw, to the —— wid yer old pipe!" exploded Ma Haley, and whirled back into the house.

"Aye," muttered Pat; "to the —— it is, sure enough. Now I'll have to buy me some cigy-reet papers and burn a hole in the middle of me mustache. And they're a poor counterbalance for the lower jaw of a man, so they are."

He shook his head sadly over the remains of his pipe and went slowly in through the open door.

THE following morning in the little town of Sula, Hashknife and Sleepy came out of the hotel dining-room and looked over the one long street. Sula was a mining community, although partly supported by the northern end of the Mission cattle range. In front of the stage-station a pack-train of burros were being loaded, and a number of men had congregated there to offer useless advice.

Hashknife and Sleepy drifted over there and watched operations until the departure of the pack-train, after which they loitered around the stage-station. The keeper of the station, a little, dried-up-looking person, wearing a badly warped pair of glasses, asked them what he could do for them.

"Not a thing, pardner," grinned Hashknife. "We're strangers here. Got in last night after dark, and we're just kinda lookin' around."

"Well—" the man adjusted his glasses and rubbed the palms of his hands on his overall-clad thighs—"you can almost see Sula at a glance."

"Yeah, I noticed that," grinned Hashknife. "The old-timers just built along the pack-trail. Anythin' excitin' ever happen around here?"

The man looked curiously at Hashknife and shook his head.

"No, I can't say there is. Things are about the same every day. On pay-day the boys come in and kinda razoo the old town, but most of the time she's like you see her right now."

"We came here from Moon Flats," explained Hashknife. "Do yuh know anybody down there?"

"No, not many. They don't usually come up this far."

"Know Doc Maldeen?"

"Runs the Moon Flats saloon, don't he? Yeah, I know him when I see him, but not pers'nally."

"Been here lately?"

The man squinted thoughtfully and shook his head.

"Not for a month or two. Used to come up here on pay-day. Town's pretty good for gamblers at that time."

"What do yuh think about the killin' of the Black Rider?"

"I dunno. It ain't been exactly proved that it was the Black Rider, has it? I ain't seen Searles since that day. Yuh see, he was only drivin' for about a month, and that was his last trip."

"Did the Black Rider hold him up any time?"

"Nope. He just tried it once. Wasn't no use anyway, 'cause we never sent any money on the stage. That mornin' I

was talkin' to Searles about the Black Rider. It's a long ways to ride alone, and I don't blame him for not liking the job."

"Where did Maldeen do most of his playin' up here?"

"Up at the Cinnibar saloon mostly. I expect he'll be up here ag'in about the twentieth of the month—pay-day."

Hashknife and Sleepy went back up the sidewalk and over to the Cinnibar saloon, where they leaned their elbows on the bar. The bartender, a smooth-haired, silk-shirted individual, greeted them warmly.

"Came in from Moon Flats," volunteered Hashknife. "Got in late last night, and we're still clogged with dust."

"Yeah? How's my old friend Doc Maldeen?"

"Doc's fine as frawg-hair. Probably be up here on pay-day."

"I betcha."

The bartender examined the part of his hair in the fly-specked mirror, and, finding it perfect, turned back.

"Doc swears that Sula is the best town in the State," the bartender remarked, "but he never comes to see us except on pay-day."

"Ain't he been here since last month?" casually.

"Naw. He waits for the money to come in. He's some card-player, y'betcha."

"Lost ten thousand in one hand to Cal Severn the other day—and dealt it himself."

The bartender grinned widely.

"Brother, don'tcha try to make me swaller that; I know this country too well."

"She's a fact," declared Hashknife. "There's a number of folks seen the play and seen Maldeen hand out the *dinero*."

"Well—" the bartender set out the bottle and motioned for them to help themselves—"I don't doubt but what you fellers are tellin' me the truth, but I'll bet the feller that told you lied like ——. Ten thousand! Say, have you got any idea of how much money that is? Ten thousand dollars, ——!"

"I'm sorry to upset yuh thataway," consoled Hashknife. "Bothered with asthma, aint'cha? Yuh kinda wheeze like yuh was. Keep away from wild flowers and don't rub a cat's back any more than yuh have to. C'mon, Sleepy."

They went out of the Cinnibar, leaving the bartender leaning across the bar and trying to figure out just what Hashknife meant. He finally swept the glasses into the wash-tub beneath the bar, swore softly to himself and examined his hair again.

Hashknife and Sleepy went down to the little hotel and paid their bill to a grouchy old individual, who seemed to be soured on the world and all therein.

"Goin' away, are yuh?" he asked. "Dag-gone it, seems like nobody stays here any longer than they have to. Which way yuh goin'?"

"North," said Hashknife, which was untrue. "I was just wonderin' if I could leave a note with you for Doc Maldeen. Know him, don't yuh?"

"Yeah, I know him."

He turned to an old calendar back of his desk and studied it closely.

"He won't be here for about ten days."

"Don't he never come here except on pay-day?"

"Well, I don't say he won't, but I will say that he never has. If yuh leave a note I'll——"

"Ne' mind—I'll likely see him before that. Much obliged, old-timer. S'long."

They went to the livery stable and got their horses. Sleepy had not spoken a dozen words since breakfast, but when they rode out of town, heading back toward Moon Flats, he said:

"Yuh came thirty-five miles to find an honest man and picked on a stage-station boss, a bartender and a grouchy old hotelkeeper. What did yuh find?"

"Three honest men, Sleepy. I never seen such an honest town in my life."

"Yuh kinda lied a little yourself, didn't yuh, Hashknife?" reprovingly.

"Uh-huh. Yuh see, when yo're lookin' for truth in yore feller men, Sleepy, yuh may have to lie to get 'em to tell the truth."

"Mebbe," admitted Sleepy; "but yuh still got me fightin' my head, cowboy."

"That's a good part of yuh to fight—it's so hard that yuh can't never do it no permanent injury, Sleepy."

CAL SEVERN did not go out to the ranch that night. He was in no mood to meet Hashknife Hartley, and he was under the impression that the two punchers had gone back to the ranch. He was troubled about Jim Searles too, and was sorry that he had knocked him down.

Searles had not showed up again at the

Moon Flats, and Severn wondered where he had gone. The next morning he ran face to face with Mary O'Hara, who was coming out of Bill Eagle's store. She tried to go past him, but he blocked her way.

"Wait a minute, Mary," he said. "I want to talk with you."

"I do not think it interests me at all," replied Mary coldly. "Will you please stand aside, Mr. Severn?"

"Aw, shucks!"

Severn stepped aside, but walked beside her down the sidewalk.

"Mary, I want to apologize for what I said the other day. Dog-gone it, won't yuh accept an apology? I was a darned fool, and I didn't have no right to say what I did."

"I am glad you realize that part of it," said Mary coldly," and I don't really think you had better go any further with me."

Severn laughed, but there was little mirth in it. "Now, listen, Mary. I've apologized and admitted that I was a darned fool, haven't I? What more can I do?"

"You can turn around and stop annoying me."

"Thasso? Aw, what's the matter with you, anyway? Lemme have a talk with yuh, Mary."

Severn's voice was low and pleading, but it had no effect on Mary O'Hara.

He followed her in through the gate and up to the porch, where they met Pat Haley, who was coming out of the house. Without a word Mary stepped around him and went in through the open door, while Pat Haley blocked the passage to Cal Severn.

"What's the big idea?" asked Severn wonderingly.

"Ye're not welcome here, Severn," replied Pat easily.

"Not welcome?"

Severn frowned thoughtfully.

"What do yuh mean, Pat? What's gone wrong?"

"Come away from the house and I'll talk to ye."

They walked down to the gate, which Pat opened and motioned Severn outside. Wonderingly he obeyed and turned, facing Pat.

"Now tell me what in —— is the matter with you, will yuh?"

Severn's voice was trembling slightly.

"I will," nodded Pat. "It has been told to us that ye have been makin' love to Marie Wicks, the Injun girl."

Severn's face flushed hotly, and then the color drained out, leaving it a gray tinge. He gripped the top of the gate and leaned closer to Pat Haley.

"Who packed you that —— lie?" he rasped. "Tell me who told yuh that and I'll shoot his —— heart out!"

"Which wouldn't disprove the statement," said Pat softly.

"——! Do yuh believe a lie like that, Pat Haley?"

"Can ye prove it's a lie, Severn?"

Pat's gray eyes bored into Severn's soul.

"Prove it? My ——, do I have to prove a thing like that?"

"Ye do—unless ye don't care to, Severn."

Severn relaxed a trifle and began the manufacture of a cigaret. His hands trembled slightly, and he spilled half a sack of tobacco on the ground.

"Did Hartley and his pardner pack that talk to yuh?"

"I'll name no names," declared Pat. "It was not told to me in confidence, but I'll not say who told it. In fact, the man was carryin' the same message to you—to keep away from Marie Wicks."

"I don't getcha."

Severn squinted away from the match as he lit his cigaret.

"Do yuh mean to say that this —— liar said he was bringin' me a message like that from somebody else?"

"Ye have a complete understandin'," said Pat.

"Well—" Severn hitched up his cartridge-belt and sighed deeply—"if you won't tell me who it was—how can I prove that it's a lie?"

"I'm not askin' ye to prove it."

"You'd rather go on believin' it, eh?" harshly. "You know why I hired Hartley and Stevens. It wasn't because I needed 'em, Haley. I seen that lanky Hartley lookin' at Mary O'Hara, like a —— coyote lookin' at a lamb. Well, if yuh want to believe him—go ahead."

"We'll leave her name out of it, if ye please."

Pat's voice cut like a knife.

"Oh, all right."

Severn turned and started away, but stopped after a few steps.

"I just wanted to tell yuh that the way yo're runnin' yore office don't make no hit

with folks around here, and they're wonderin' why you ain't makin' no effort to find Shell Romaine. Some of them say yo're afraid and others kinda suggest that it's kind of a family affair."

Severn turned on his heel and went back up the street, while Pat Haley lifted his right hand from near the butt of his gun and gripped the gate.

"Ye unspeakable pup!" he breathed. "Ye have unfurled yer flag to me, and the colors are yellow."

Pat turned wearily away from the gate and went slowly back to the house. He saw Mary saddling her horse near the rear gate and watched her ride away toward the hills. He went back to the porch steps and sat down heavily, his mind mixed with strange emotions. Then he took out a book of cigaret-papers and a sack of flake tobacco.

"Until Bill Eagles gets a shipment of pipes I've got to do this," he muttered, his lips set in a thin line of determination, "and 't's goin' to be the ——'s own job to make one unless there's some tougher papers in this package than there were in the last bunch I wore out."

CAL SEVERN went back to the Moon Flats saloon, where he drank straight whisky, filling the glass to the brim four times and drinking at a single gulp. Maldeen was at a card-table, studying a solitaire layout, but stopped his game to watch Severn.

Searles was sitting across from Maldeen, watching his play, but out of the corner of his eye he noted the feverish way in which Severn bolted his liquor. Something seemed to tell him that Severn had received a hard jolt, and he felt that Shell Romaine's message had been delivered.

It suddenly occurred to him that perhaps Severn knew who had delivered the message. Perhaps Severn was getting up courage enough to start trouble.

Searles reached down slowly and slid his holster over the top of his leg and loosened the Colt six-shooter a trifle. Being prepared had saved Searles several times, and he thoroughly believed in the law of self-preservation.

Severn turned and leaned back against the bar, looking calmly around. His half-shut eyes dwelt for a moment on Maldeen and Searles, but the set expression of his face did not change as he said—

"C'm and have a drink, you two."

It was an order, but neither man resented it. They walked to the bar, and Severn turned around with them.

"How yuh comin', Cal?" asked Maldeen.

Severn did not reply until he had imbibed another full glass of raw liquor. He turned his head and looked curiously at Maldeen. Severn was not a drinker, and the successive jolts of bad whisky had taken effect already.

After looking at Maldeen he turned back to the bar and called for more liquor.

"Take it easy, Cal," advised Maldeen. "You've had too much already."

"Yeah?" snarled Severn. "When did you get the right to preach to me? Have a drink, yuh tin-horn."

Maldeen knew that Severn was drunk in the head, but that his nerve and body was cold sober; so he accepted another drink and the rebuke in silence. Searles held his glass in his left hand, while his right hung close to the butt of his gun; but Severn paid no attention to him until after the drink was finished.

Several other men had come into the place, and Maldeen shifted around uneasily. Severn was just in the right mood to start trouble, but he merely looked drunkenly at the men and took Maldeen by the arm.

"I want to talk to yuh, Doc," seriously. "You and Jim Searles. C'mon."

Maldeen led the way back to his private room, and Searles, filled with misgivings, trod close to Severn. He was all set for anything that might happen. They went into the room, and Maldeen locked the door. There was a couch, a couple of chairs, a table, littered with papers, ore samples and an empty bottle. The rough walls were speckled with old photographs and pictures cut from sporting magazines and papers.

Severn sat down heavily on the couch, flung his hat across the room and leaned back wearily against the wall. Maldeen sat down beside the table, but Searles remained standing just inside the door. Maldeen waved him to a chair, but shook his head and leaned against the wall.

"Nobody's goin' t' hurt yuh, yuh —— fool!" snorted Severn drunkenly.

"I know it, Cal," grinned Searles, but did not sit down.

"Nobody can hear us talkin' in here, can

they?" asked Severn, and Maldeen shook his head.

"Either one of you seen them two strange cow-punchers today?" he asked.

"Not today," said Maldeen. "They left town right after you and the long one almost had trouble."

"I don't think they've been back since," added Searles.

"I hope to —— that they never come back!" exploded Severn. "But they will, —— 'em!"

Maldeen was interested now.

"What's the idea, Cal?"

"One of 'em went to Pat Haley and said that I was makin' love to Marie Wicks."

Searles jerked visibly and burned himself on his cigaret. This was interesting news to him.

Maldeen half-smiled.

"Tryin' to queer yuh with Mary O'Hara, eh?"

"Oh, go to ——!" blurted Severn. "He said that somebody sent the message to me to let her alone."

Searles inhaled deeply and studied Severn closely. It might be a scheme to allay his fears, but he was not going to be caught napping.

"Somebody, eh?"

Thus Maldeen.

"Tryin' to pass the buck to somebody else, eh?"

"Yeah," snarled Severn blackly, but leaned forward and lowered his voice. "I never told anybody who them two punchers are, doc. Me and Pat Haley are the only ones who know about 'em; so I kept my mouth shut. I didn't want to tell anybody, 'cause it might not look good, comin' from me; *sabe?*"

"Thasso?"

Maldeen hitched forward in his chair.

"Shell Romaine's out on parole, which yuh probably know," continued Severn. "He was sent up for five years and got out in one year. Didja ever wonder how he got paroled in one year? Yuh didn't? There was thirty thousand dollars lifted in that robbery, and not a cent of it ever recovered.

"The mornin' that Shell Romaine showed up here them two punchers rode in and asked for a job. I didn't want to hire anybody but Hartley handed me a letter which showed who they were—and I hired 'em.

"I reckon it was sort of a political pull that the bank directors had, but anyway they got Shell paroled in a year thinkin' that he'd come back here and lift his cache. Hartley and Stevens were workin' for the Cattlemen's Association and they were selected to come here and watch Shell Romaine. The bank wants that thirty thousand dollars."

"I see," said Maldeen softly, wonderingly, while Jim Searles whistled softly and sat down in the empty chair.

"Well they ain't been trailin' Shell Romaine, that's a cinch" declared Searles.

"How could they?" queried Maldeen. "Things broke against 'em. Anyway they don't look like they had the sense of a shepherd."

"Thasso?"

Severn seemed to wake up out of a trance.

"Don'tcha fool yoreselves. What about that shootin' scrape yesterday? Don't tell me that they ain't got no sense."

"Well, whatcha want to do?" asked Searles.

"I don't want to do a —— thing" declared Severn; "but I'd give a thousand dollars if somethin' would happen to wipe out the both of 'em. One thousand cold dollars."

"Apiece?" queried Searles softly.

"Yeah," said Maldeen meaningly.

Jim Searles burned himself again on his cigaret and flung it quickly aside as he got to his feet.

"Well, what's all the delay?" he grunted. "Ain't nothin' more to talk about, is there? Let's go."

"Nobody settin' on yore shirt tail is there?" queried Maldeen. "Go ahead."

"Cal's goin' with me," explained Searles.

"Where?" asked Severn vacantly.

"Out to the Diamond-S."

"What for?"

"To git the two thousand dollars f'r one thing."

"Whatcha mean?"

"Well," said Searles yawning widely. "I may be a fool, but I ain't no —— fool. On a job like this I git paid in advance."

"Oh, yuh do?"

Severn spat dryly.

"You must think I'm somewhat of a fool myself."

"Thinkin' ain't goin' to git us nowhere," declared Searles. "I ain't doin' no credit business with my gun, y'betcha."

Severn heaved himself off the couch and secured his sombrero. He was a trifle unsteady on his legs now. He motioned Searles

out of the door. Maldeen followed them out into the saloon, but Severn did not stop at the bar. He and Searles went straight to the stable, saddled their horses and rode out of town.

Pat Haley, from the porch of his home, saw them ride away and wondered what would have happened to Searles if Severn knew he was the tale-bearer. Then Pat Haley looked down at the steps littered with bits of torn cigaret-papers and at the folds in his shirt bosom, which were filled with loose tobacco, and shook his head.

"Smokin' cigy-reets is not a habit—it's a accomplishment," he declared wearily.

SEVERN and Searles rode slowly along the edge of the low hills, saying little. Severn's mind was deeply engaged in trying to puzzle out who would send that kind of a message to him, while Searles was also doing quite a lot of wondering himself. Somehow he could not shake the feeling that Severn knew who delivered that message, and that Severn was keeping still until he—Searles—had finished the job of getting rid of Hashknife and Sleepy.

Searles was a gunman whose ability in that direction was for sale, but he cared a lot for his own skin and meant to keep it intact. He had formed no plans for getting rid of the two offensive cowpunchers; but Jim Searles was not brainy enough to plan out any mode of procedure.

They were passing the mouth of the gulch which led up to Romaine's ranch when Severn whirled his horse aside and shoved Searles' horse into the brush beside the road, where they both stopped.

A horse and rider were coming in from the south, and they were able to identify the rider as Mary O'Hara. She crossed the road and stopped, while she looked over the country. It took her perhaps five minutes to satisfy herself that no one was in sight; then she went on up the road that led to Romaine's place.

Cal Severn laughed aloud and swung back into the road.

"Where's she goin'?" queried Searles.

"To meet Shell Romaine," grinned Severn, "and we're goin' to be there at the meetin'."

"And get a .30-30 bullet in our ribs," protested Searles, shaking his head. "Anyway she couldn't 'a' had no appointment with Shell Romaine. Why, he likely ain't in this country, Severn."

"Yo're crazy!" grunted Severn. "I betcha she meets him at the ranch-house."

"All right, let her meet him."

Searles evidently did not care to run into Shell Romaine. Neither did he want Severn to know that he had met Romaine the day before.

"How about the reward?" grinned Severn. "Can't yuh use half of it?"

"Yeah, I could use the money—if Romaine didn't see me first."

"Yellow, eh?" sneered Severn. "Well, come along, and I'll take chances on takin' him. I'll get some satisfaction out of it anyway."

They turned off the road and went slowly up the gulch, taking plenty of time, because the road wound through the brush and they were unable to see any distance ahead. Severn realized that they were taking big chances, but he had a desire to catch Mary O'Hara with Shell Romaine.

They came at last to the fringe of the timber and stopped to watch the ranch-house. There was no sign of Mary O'Hara's horse, but they knew she would not leave it in sight. There was no possible way to sneak up on the house; so Severn decided to go boldly up, taking a chance on being seen. Searles demurred. He did not want a soft-nose bullet mixed up in his carcass; but when Severn started for the house, Searles rode up behind him.

They dismounted at the rickety porch and stood still. There was a soft murmur of voices coming from the rear of the house, and Severn grinned widely as he heard Mary's voice. He knew that there was sort of a lean-to at the rear, and it was likely that this was where Mary had taken her horse.

He motioned to Searles for silence and led the way around the house, flattening themselves against the wall, with guns ready. Near the door of the lean-to they stopped. The voices were clearer now and Mary was saying—

"—said he met you; so I came."

"Yes," said Romaine. "I sent that message, Mary. I knew that you loved Cal Severn, and I was going to see that he played fair with you as far as I was able."

Severn's lips curled in a sneer now he knew who had sent the message.

"But it doesn't matter now," said Mary.

"I am not going to marry Cal Severn. I had made up my mind not to, and that message only strengthened my resolve. He accused me of meeting you in the hills that day, Shell."

"Did he? Where was he, Mary?"

"I don't know. Do you remember seeing those two strange cowboys with him? One of them asked me what Cal and I quarreled about, and he asked it in such a way that I just had to tell him."

"Who are they, Mary?"

"Hartley and Stevens. The tall one, who looks like he was just going to laugh, told me that they didn't do much except to make smiles come where smiles belong."

"Well, that's kinda funny," observed Shell Romaine. "It ain't such a bad business either if yuh stop to think it over."

"I can't stay long," said Mary. "It took me quite a while to get here, because I went around through the hills."

"It sure was mighty good of yuh," said Shell; "but I'm afraid somebody'll see yuh and look at it all wrong. Mebbe yuh better not come ag'in'."

They stepped out of the lean-to, and Shell Romaine looked square into the muzzle of Cal Severn's six-shooter. Searles stepped around and covered him with his gun while he took Romaine's gun from his holster.

"The pitcher went too often to the well," grinned Severn. "Much obliged to yuh, Mary. Yuh sure kept him interested."

Romaine turned and looked searchingly at Mary, who was staring at Severn.

"Never trust a woman," advised Severn. "They sure make a fool out of yuh, Romaine."

"Did you lead them to me, Mary?"

Romaine's lips were white at the very thought of being trapped through the girl.

"My God—no!" gasped Mary. "Lead Cal Severn?"

"You can stop yore lyin, Severn," said Romaine. "I'm takin' her word for it."

Severn laughed.

"All right, Shell. I didn't say that we framed on yuh, did I? No, we just followed her, thassall."

"Well, whatcha goin' to do?"

"Take yuh to Moon Flats and hand yuh to the sheriff. He ain't got guts enough to take yuh, but he may be able to keep yuh in jail."

"Bring the horses," ordered Severn, "and hog-tie this gentleman, Searles."

It took Searles only a short time to rope Romaine to the saddle of Severn's horse. Searles' horse was not broke to ride double. Mary stood aside and watched the operation. She was sick at heart over it all, and blamed herself for Romaine's capture.

"You ain't to blame, Mary," Romaine assured her, ignoring Severn and Searles. "You forget that part of it. I knew they'd get me some day, but I hoped it wouldn't be for a while."

"Why did yuh hope that?" queried Severn, testing the ropes with a vicious yank.

"That," said Romaine slowly, "is none of your business, you coyote!"

Severn laughed up at him mockingly.

"Sore because yuh thought I was cuttin' in on yore Injun girl, eh?"

Romaine's eyes flashed to Mary, seeking to find what she thought of Severn's accusation, but she had turned her back on them and was mounting her horse. Severn swung on behind Romaine, turned the horse around and rode away, with Searles bringing up the rear. At the fringe of the brush they looked back, but Mary O'Hara was not following them; she was taking the shorter cut across the hills toward the river.

"You've butted in on my game about all yo're goin' to, Romaine," stated Severn. "I reckon yo're goin' to make a long trip and stay quite a while."

"Does kinda look thataway," admitted Romaine, and turned his head toward Searles. "I reckon you delivered my message, Jim, Much obliged."

"Message?"

Severn looked at Searles wonderingly. He did not know just what Romaine was talking about at first, but it suddenly flashed through his mind that Jim Searles was the one who had told Mary and Pat Haley.

Searles' right hand had dropped to his thigh and was still concealed, although his right elbow was bent almost at right-angles. Severn noted all this, and that Searles was watching him closely.

"So you was the one that brought the message, eh?"

"Yeah, I brought it."

"Well," easily, "it don't make no difference, but yuh might 'a' told me instead of Pat Haley."

"Well, I didn't know you was still in town," defended Searles, "and I knowed that Pat would be glad to hear that Romaine was still around here."

"Let it drop," advised Severn, "and that other proposition still stands."

"Y'betcha," nodded Searles.

HENRY HORSECOLLAR DRYDEN had gone dumbly about his work after Searles had left the Diamond-S. Never before had he realized just how much he did think of Marie Wicks, and his soul was filled with sadness and self-pity. He was not mad at Severn for taking advantage of him, but he was mad at himself for being weak enough to let Severn keep him at home, while Severn himself courted Marie.

And Severn had one girl already. Wasn't one girl enough?

Later on Henry saddled his horse and rode down to the hill above Wick's ranch-house. It was dark in the hills, but there was a light in the ranch-house. For a long time Henry debated over going down, but finally turned around and went back to the ranch, where he talked with Mrs. Wicks.

"Is Cal Severn going to marry Marie?" he asked in the Nez Percé tongue.

"He has said it," replied the old squaw. "We will have many ponies and much to eat in the Winter."

"He is going to marry a girl in Moon Flats."

"That is a lie. A white man can have only one squaw."

"He may have many sweethearts."

For a long time the old squaw deliberated. This was a new angle, which she had never considered. Then—

"The girl in Moon Flats will be the sweetheart."

"Since when did a white man marry a squaw and leave a white sweetheart?"

"You lie in your heart!" grated the squaw, knowing that Henry spoke the truth.

"Cal Severn brings whisky to Joe Wicks to steal away his sight," declared Henry. "Since when could a drunken man tell right from wrong? Cal Severn hired you to cook for him because he knew that you would not drink whisky and forget to look. Ask your own heart if I lie."

The old squaw looked intently into Henry's face as if trying to read the reasons for this disclosure, but he did not turn away under her stare. She stared down at her gnarled hands for a full minute, like a bronze statue under the yellow light from the oil lamp. Then she got to her feet, flung a shawl around her shoulders and went out.

Henry went to the door and watched her going down the white ribbon of road in the misty light, a blurred figure that faded out and was gone. For a long time he stood in the doorway, gazing off across the shadowy hills, listening to the calling of a sleepy bird. From back in the trees an owl hooted softly.

"Funny thing," mused Henry aloud. "I never knowed I was so smart until I got to talkin' Nez Percé to the old squaw. I sure know a lot of things—and mebbe some of 'em is goin' to get me killed off. I reckon I'll go to bed."

But Henry did not sleep. For once in his life his mind was too active to woo slumber, and he marveled at the things he could think about, and by thinking he built up a great anger against Cal Severn. It was like starting a small snowball at the top of a hill; it grew until it was a force to reckoned with.

He unearthed a Winchester rifle from beneath his bunk and put in an hour cleaning and oiling it. His six-shooter received the same treatment. He filled his belt with ammunition for both guns.

Daylight came, and Henry cooked his own breakfast with a six-shooter hanging at his hip and the rifle lying across the kitchen table. He wondered what had become of Hashknife and Sleepy, but always his mind reverted back to Marie Wicks.

He waited until afternoon, but Cal Severn did not show up; so he saddled his horse, slung the rifle in a scabbard under his right leg, and rode toward Wicks' ranch. Something seemed to tell Henry that trouble was brewing, but he did not mind.

He rode up to the ranch-house and dismounted. Joe Wicks was sitting on the steps, dirty, disheveled, but apparently sober.

"Hyah, Joe," said Henry.

"Yo' go to ——!" grunted Joe without looking at him.

Joe's face still bore the marks of Henry's fist.

Mrs. Wicks came to the door and looked at Henry, who nodded to her.

"W'at yo' want?" asked Joe.

"Nothin' from you," said Henry, and then to the squaw. "Can I see Marie?"

"She is very sad," replied the squaw in her own tongue.

She could speak a little English, but it was much easier to talk in her own language.

"Yo' go 'way," growled Joe. "This place no good for yo'; yo' —— right."

"Be still!" hissed the old squaw. "Whisky has stolen away your brains, and you are like an old dog without teeth and without sense; a dog that can only bark at its own shadow or howl at the moon."

"I reckon that'll hold yuh," said Henry, but without a trace of humor in his voice.

"She is very sad and does not believe," continued Mrs. Wicks. "We have not slept."

"You ain't got nothin' on me," declared Henry. "Cal Severn did not come home. The other two are still away."

"They are good men," said Mrs. Wicks.

"I am only a squaw, but they are to me like to one of my own color."

"Yeah, they're all right," admitted Henry; "but they gave me some bad advice."

"W'at's the matter with yo'?" growled Joe. "Nobody ask yo' to come here."

Henry ignored him and looked appealingly at the squaw.

"Can't I see Marie?"

For a moment she hesitated and then pointed toward the rear of the house.

"Yo' —— right yo' can't see Marie!" grunted Joe; but Henry shoved him back on the steps.

"You horn into my business and I'll bend a gun over yore head," threatened Henry, and walked around the corner.

Joe relapsed back to his former position and said nothing, while the old squaw sat down beside him with her hands in her lap, staring into space.

Marie was sitting on the ground against an old cottonwood-tree when Henry came around the house, and started to get to her feet; but Henry motioned for her to sit down. He came up to her and leaned against the tree.

"Why did you come here?" she asked.

"I had to come," he replied.

"Why?"

"I wanted to ask yuh a question, Marie. Did Cal Severn ever ask yuh to marry him?"

Marie dropped her eyes and began fingering her faded apron.

"No," she said after several moments of silence.

"Didn't he make love to yuh?"

"I don't want to talk to you," she said defiantly.

"Don'tcha?" softly. "I'm kinda sorry, 'cause I sure want to talk to you, Marie."

"You lie," she said wearily. "You talk nice to me and then laugh about me to other people."

"What do yuh mean?" demanded Henry.

"You know what I mean. You laugh and say I am jus' an Injun girl to play with. You not care for me, you say."

Henry's lips tightened and he looked down at the top of her head.

"Marie, did Cal Severn say that?"

"Yes."

"Good God!" exploded Henry. "Looky here! Do yuh think I'd say that? Do yuh? Am I that kind of a coyote?"

"You are a white man; I am an Indian girl."

"That ain't no answer. Do yuh love Cal Severn?"

"I do' know what I love. Everybody lie to me."

Marie threw out both arms.

"I believe nobody now."

"Marie, will yuh marry me?"

Henry leaned closer and put his hand on her shoulder.

"I never lied to yuh."

"How do I know?" she asked, looking up at him.

"That's right."

Henry straightened up and shoved himself away from the tree.

"My word ain't no better than Cal Severn's now, but mebbe I can make it better. Yuh don't hate me, do yuh, Marie?"

"I don't hate nobody—jus' sorry."

"Somebody is goin' to be with yuh on that sorry idea," declared Henry, and walked back to his horse.

Joe Wicks glared at him, but said nothing. Mrs. Wicks nodded solemnly, and Henry tipped his wide hat to her as he turned his horse and galloped down the road.

Back at the cottonwood-tree Marie turned her head and watched him ride away. He had asked her to marry him, but had never given her a chance to accept or reject the proposal. White people were queer folks, she thought, and many of them were liars.

HASHKNIFE and Sleepy came straight back from Sula, but did not turn on to the Diamond-S road. For once in his life Hashknife rode for miles in silence, his forehead puckered in a heavy frown in the shade of his sombrero.

Sleepy was content with silence. He knew that there was no use in questioning Hashknife, and gentle sarcasm failed to bring a retort from the tall cowboy.

Where the road from Joe Wicks' place joined the main road they met Henry Horsecollar, who came at a swift gallop out of the brush-lined road. They noted the display of firearms and wondered what had struck Henry.

"Howdy, Henry," greeted Hashknife. "Goin' to town?"

Henry nodded and rode in beside them. Hashknife looked curiously at the rifle sticking out from beneath the right saddle fender and at Henry's low-swung Colt.

"Kinda loaded for bear, ain't yuh?" queried Sleepy.

"Coyote," corrected Henry shortly.

Hashknife whistled softly. This was a different Henry from him whom they had known at the Diamond-S, and he wondered what had happened: But neither of them questioned him further. If he was gunning for some one it was none of their business, and the less they knew about it the better for all concerned.

"How's things at the ranch?" asked Sleepy.

"Aw right," grunted Henry, never taking his eyes off the road.

"Hangin' on to his nerve," thought Hashknife. "Don't want to talk for fear of gettin' off the main idea."

By mutual consent they swept into a gallop riding knee to knee. Hashknife noted the set angle of Henry's lower jaw; it rather belied the rest of his bony angular body. Still there was force in that body. The smash he had delivered on Joe Wicks' jaw proved that. All Henry had lacked was nerve, and Hashknife wondered if something had happened to cause Henry to find himself.

About a mile out of town another rider came down off the hills and into the road going toward Moon Flats. It was Mary O'Hara. She glanced back anxiously as they rode up to her and they noticed that there were tear-streaks on her dusty cheeks.

"They caught Shell Romaine!" she blurted. "Cal Severn and Jim Searles are taking him to Moon Flats."

"Well, whatcha know about that?" grunted Hashknife. "Tell us about it, will yuh, Miss O'Hara?"

In a few words Mary described the capture; how she had unwittingly led them to him. She seemed to blame herself for everything.

"Yuh can't beat that, can yuh?" said Hashknife sadly. "I reckon we better mosey on to town and kinda find out all the latest news."

As they started on Hashknife drew in beside Mary.

"How's all the sick folks at yore house?"

"Splinter's fever is bad and Mort Lee has never been conscious except for a few minutes at a time. He talks all the time, but the doctor says he will get well."

"Talks all the time—kinda crazy-like?"

Mary nodded and brushed a lock of hair away from her eyes.

"Yes. He raves about old man Romaine's shirt sleeve. Isn't that queer?"

"Yeah, it is—kinda," admitted Hashknife. "Funny thing to talk about, y'betcha. And what else seems to bother him?"

Mary smiled and shook her head.

"It's mostly the shirt sleeve, but sometimes he rambles about a suit that he did not see. It bothers him a lot, it seems."

"Black suit?" queried Hashknife quickly.

"Yes—a black suit. Uncle Pat has tried to make head or tail out of his conversation, but is unable to get it connected enough to make sense."

Hashknife grinned widely and shifted himself in his saddle.

"Let's shake 'em up a little, folks. I've got a hunch that somebody is settin' on about a ton of dynamite and the fuse is gettin' short."

The four horses broke into a gallop down the dusty road with Hashknife slightly in the lead, frowning deeply as he contemplated just what to do.

Into Moon Flats they came at a stiff gallop. In front of Bill Eagles' store was a crowd of men, some mounted but most of them on foot. There seemed to be a heated argument in progress. Several small groups of men had seemingly drawn away from the main crowd, and were holding their own arguments.

The four riders drew up at the edge of the sidewalk, but no one gave them any heed. Looking over the heads of the crowd they could see Shell Romaine, still bound, leaning up against the wall, while near him were Cal Severn, Jim Searles and Bill Eagles. Bill was arguing with voice and arms.

Hashknife leaned down and tapped a cowboy on the shoulder.

"What's the trouble?" queried Hashknife.

The excited cowboy grasped a porch-post and jerked his head toward the center of the group.

"They captured Shell Romaine a while ago."

"Why don't they put him in jail?"

"Splinter See died an hour ago, and Pat Haley ain't in town. I reckon they're goin' to lynch Romaine."

Hashknife turned in his saddle and put his hand on Mary's arm.

"Get away from here, miss," he ordered. "You better go home, I think."

"But they can't lynch him!" hoarsely. "They wouldn't dare do that."

"Will yuh go away?" queried Hashknife sharply. "You can't help him, and yo're in the way if somethin' busts."

Something in Hashknife's homely face told her that her interests would be well protected, and with a half-sob she spurred her horse away from the crowd and went slowly down the street.

Bill Eagles was still arguing mightily, and it appeared that he was in favor of waiting for the law. But his arguments seemed only to bring a laugh of derision. A man came out of the store carrying a length of new rope and handed it to Severn.

"I don't *sabe* the right kind of a knot," said Severn, holding the rope out to the crowd.

Maldeen shoved his way in and took the rope.

"I know how to make it," he stated, and began making the loop.

Shell Romaine watched him coldly. There was no hint of fear in his eyes. Hashknife deliberately turned his horse around and rode it on to the board sidewalk, almost riding over those on the outskirts of the crowd, who broke away at the clattering hoofs, giving him an opening to the center.

All eyes shifted from the main point of interest and centered upon Hashknife, towering above them.

"Get that bronc to —— out of here!" snarled Severn.

Maldeen stopped looping his rope and stepped back as if afraid Hashknife was going to ride straight over him.

"Right sweet little party yuh got here," grinned Hashknife. "Keep right on makin' that knot, Maldeen; we'll likely need it."

"What you hornin' in fer?" queried a grizzled cowman who had moved aside. "This any funeral of yours?"

"Brother, yuh never can tell," grinned Hashknife. "Fate is a queer jasper; don'tcha know it?"

Henry Horsecollar had pulled the Winchester out of its scabbard and was holding it in the crook of his elbow.

"Henry Horsecollar's got a gun!" grunted a cowboy wonderingly.

Severn's eyes snapped to Henry and found his hired man's eyes looking directly at him. He started to say something, but there was something about Henry's expression that caused him to withhold his words.

"You aimin' to hang Shell Romaine, ain'tcha?" queried Hashknife softly.

"That ain't none of yore —— business!" snapped Jim Searles angrily, while the crowd shifted.

They knew the temper of Searles, and it had begun to appear that trouble was brewing.

"Yo're Jim Searles, ain'tcha?"

Hashknife did not seem to resent Searles' rebuke.

"Yo're the jasper that identified Shell Romaine in that Sula bank robbery. Now what I want to know is how much did they pay yuh for identifyin' Shell Romaine?"

"What in —— do you mean?" rasped Searles.

"Think it over, Searles," grinned Hashknife. "Talkin' real fast and tellin' the truth might help yuh out."

"I dunno what in —— yuh mean," faltered Searles; but a hunted look had come into his eyes.

He tried to keep his eyes upon Hashknife, but they grew watery, as if he had strained them badly, and he turned away.

"What's all this about, pardner?" queried Bill Eagles.

"A lot of things. Me and my pardner came here for the purpose of tryin' to find where Shell Romaine planted his share of that Sula robbery. They had him let out on parole and sent us in to trail him.

"Things kinda broke bad for our purpose, yuh know, and we just pesticated around, lookin' over things. I got to wonderin' if things were just like folks thought they was. Funny what a feller will find out if he keeps his eyes and ears open."

"Say, let's get this job over," snorted

Severn. "This ain't no time to listen to a long-winded lecture."

"This ain't goin' to be so awful long," said Hashknife, "and I'd kinda like to talk it over, if yuh don't mind."

"Pardner, yo're talkin'," said Bill Eagles. "They wouldn't listen to me."

"It's a scheme to delay things, by ——!" declared Maldeen. "He's tryin' to stall until Haley gets back."

"Go ahead and talk, feller," said the grizzled old cowman. "Get her down to brass tacks."

"Thank yuh kindly," said Hashknife. "I won't make it long, but I'm bettin' it'll be interestin'. Now about the stage hold-up. Maldeen, you was there, wasn't yuh?"

"You know —— well I was!" snapped Maldeen.

"You and Jim Searles drove down from Sula, didn't yuh?"

"Yes."

"What time did yuh leave there, Maldeen?"

"I dunno. I reckon it was the usual leavin' time; wasn't it, Jim?"

Jim Searles glanced at Maldeen and at Hashknife, but did not speak. His mind was beginning to run in circles.

"Then yuh got held up at Medicine Creek," continued Hashknife, and added, "by the Black Rider."

Maldeen nodded, but did not speak.

"He came out of the brush and tried to stop yuh, but Searles got the drop on him. Searles got down and went over to where the old man was lyin' in the brush with one hand and arm stickin' up, didn't he?"

Maldeen squinted blankly, but nodded.

"Yeah, I reckon that's right; but I don't see——"

"And then Mort Lee came down the creek trail and busted right in on yuh. Searles was on the ground with the shotgun in his hands. He had looked at the old man and was comin' back to the stage when Mort rode into yuh."

Maldeen half-smiled and cleared his throat.

"You sure got a good description of it, feller."

"Mort Lee didn't go over and look at the old man. You and Searles explained it all to him and told him to ride like —— to Moon Flats and tell the sheriff that they had killed the Black Rider. Ain't that right?"

Maldeen and Searles exchanged glances before Maldeen nodded.

"I wanted to get that all straight," grinned Hashknife. "And now I want to tell yuh that old man Romaine rode a horse down to within a couple of hundred yards of that spot, where the horse broke its leg in a gopher-hole and the old man had to shoot it."

This was something new, and it seemed to interest every one. Even Shell Romaine leaned forward and stared at Hashknife.

"How do yuh know it was his horse?" queried Eagles.

"Still got his saddle and bridle on, and the horse is branded on the right hip with a Box-R."

"I dunno where that means anythin'," sneered Severn. "Suppose he did have a horse—what about it?"

"The Black Rider was supposed to be right smart, wasn't he? Would a smart man shoot his horse and go right ahead and pull a holdup?"

"That's a —— of an argument!" laughed Maldeen. "Who knows what a man will do in a case like that?"

"Yeah, I'll admit that human bein's ain't built to run to form," agreed Hashknife. "But there's another little point to be covered; Mort Lee only seen the hand and arm of old Rim-Fire Romaine, but that arm was not clad in a black coat sleeve.

"Mort Lee told yuh that, didn't he, Severn?" queried Hashknife as the crowd fell silent. "Wasn't that why yuh kicked his hat?"

"By ——, I don't know what yuh mean," replied Severn, and his voice was almost a whine.

"Mort Lee wanted to find Shell Romaine and tell him about it," said Hashknife, guessing real fast. "He had to tell somebody, and when he couldn't find Shell he came out to the Diamond-S, sampled your whisky and talked to you about it, Severn."

Severn took a half-step ahead, and his right hand fell to his side.

"I don't know what yo're talkin' about, Hartley. You talk like a —— fool!"

"All right," grinned Hashknife. "Mebbe I am. Anyway I'm only telling what Lee told yuh, and he got shot over a seven-up game. Now we know that old man Romaine wasn't wearin' that black suit when he was shot."

"Wait a minute," interrupted Bill Eagles

wonderingly. "Lemme get that straight, will yuh? If old Romaine——"

"That's —— foolishness!" roared Searles.

"Y'betcha!" snapped Hashknife. "Keep on listenin'. Me and my pardner went down to Romaine's ranch-house and got bushwhacked. I got peeled on the shoulder, and both of our horses got shot. I'm goin' to ask Cal Severn where he was at that time. That was the day we hired out to yuh, Severn."

"Where was I?"

Severn tried to appear at ease.

"Why, I was there at my ranch."

"Then how did yuh know that Mary O'Hara met Shell Romaine on the narrow trail at the head of Broken Gulch?"

Severn's teeth shut with a click, and he leaned forward, his face filled with righteous wrath.

"You keep her name out of this!"

"That don't answer my question, does it? You never stopped to think that you put yoreself in bad when yuh accused her of meetin' Shell Romaine."

Hashknife grinned pityingly and shook his head as his eyes shifted from the crowd and saw the bartender standing in behind two other men.

"Soapy's lookin' on," observed Hashknife. "I thought that Maldeen was just a ordinary tin-horn gambler until I seen who his bartender was. Birds of a feather."

"Now is that all yuh got to say?" demanded Searles.

"Shucks, I'm just startin'; and I want to say right now that any nervous hands annoy me. When I see fingers itchin' to pull a gun—I scratch 'em."

"I've heard about all I care to from you!" snarled Maldeen. "I don't know where yuh got all these fool ideas, and I don't care. You've gone far enough."

"Thasso?"

Hashknife seemed hurt.

"Why, I ain't no more than scratched the surface, Maldeen; and you know it as well as I do."

"I don't know a —— thing about it!"

"Then listen."

Hashknife's smile faded, and he leaned forward in his saddle.

"It kinda looked like Shell Romaine was the one that killed our horses, didn't it? All right. We wasn't so far from the shooter that he couldn't have seen that we were strangers. He had no reason for shootin' us.

"Shell Romaine did not know that me and my pardner were over here to try and put the deadwood on him and get back that money. There were only two men beside me and my pardner who did know, and Pat Haley was here in Moon Flats. Cal Severn knew——"

"What in —— are yuh drivin' at!" yelled Severn. "Don'tcha try to hang anythin'——"

"Don't incriminate yoreself," interrupted Hashknife. "Who knew that we were goin' back there after our saddles? Pat Haley and Splinter See came huntin' for Shell Romaine, and See got shot. Shell Romaine did not fire those shots. Not by a —— sight! Splinter See is about my size——"

Severn's face was black with rage, but his eyes shifted from side to side, like a trapped animal looking for an exit.

"Keep goin', pardner!" panted Bill Eagles.

"That's a lie, —— yuh!" snarled Severn. "You're tryin' to stall until Pat Haley gets here, thassall."

"About thirteen months ago you needed money, Severn," continued Hashknife. "You wanted a certain girl, and you heard that she was engaged to a certain young man. You had a fight with him and he whipped yuh. Then you framed to send him to the penitentiary and to get a lot of money for yoreself.

"Don't get sore, Severn. You've got your misdeeds to face God with anyway, so yuh might as well face men."

Maldeen moved a step away from Severn as if giving him plenty of room, forgetting that he was included in the accusations. Searles swayed on his feet like a drunken man, fingering his belt with nervous hands.

"Now about that express robbery," said Hashknife thoughtfully. "That was kinda clever. The robber got off near Clevis Creek and went across to the main road. He kept his black suit. He packed a valise to hold his extra clothes and the money.

"The stage came along, and he got on. That part of it was all fixed, but the meetin' with old Romaine wasn't part of the scheme. The old man's horse broke its leg and had to be shot. The old man knowed that the stage was about due, so he waited for it, intendin' to ride home."

Maldeen stared at Hashknife, mouth

half-open. In fact, the whole crowd seemed bereft of motion or speech.

"That poker game was a clever scheme to give Cal Severn his share of the express robbery, and nobody would wonder where he got so much money. Maldeen was the Black Rider, and you and him robbed the Sula bank over a year ago, and——"

"That's a lie!" screamed Severn, and his hand snapped to his gun; but Shell Romaine, bound as he was, toppled into him, knocking him half-way to his knees, and his wide-flung gun went off almost against Jim Searles.

Maldeen flung himself backward into the crowd, drawing a gun from under his long coat, while men collided with each other in a mad rush to get out of danger.

From behind Hashknife came the roar of a revolver, and he saw the soap-painting bartender stumble into the street and fall flat on his face, his gun spinning out of his hand. Sleepy was not overlooking any details.

Maldeen's first shot knocked the hat off the grizzled old cowman, and the second one went into the top of the porch. Hashknife was unable to shoot for fear of hitting a bystander, and Maldeen was unable to shoot accurately on account of them.

Searles was down on his hands and knees, paying no attention to any one, a smudge of smoke coming from his shirt, where Severn's accidental shot had set it on fire.

Severn had recovered his balance, flung Shell Romaine aside, and without firing a shot whirled and darted into the open door of the store. Came the crash of boots on the sidewalk as Henry Horsecollar vaulted from his horse, and a moment later he darted through the cross-fire between Hashknife and Maldeen and dived into the open door after Cal Severn.

It was all happening in a few short seconds—a fraction of the time taken in the telling. Maldeen's backward rush had taken him to the wall beside a narrow alley, and Sleepy smashed a bullet into the wall beside his ear. As he whirled to return the fire, Hashknife fired his first shot.

Maldeen jerked back from the shock of the heavy bullet, spun around and stumbled into the alley, just as Sleepy darted across the sidewalk and dived into him, like a football player making a flying tackle. Together they crashed down out of sight.

Men were running away from the shooting, never realizing that the danger was all over. Searles was still on his hands and knees, and near him, sitting on the sidewalk, braced against his bound elbows, was Shell Romaine.

Sleepy backed out of the alley and stumbled toward Hashknife, panting triumphantly—

"He ain't goin' no place, Hashknife!"

Pat Haley was coming up the street, running in his queer, bow-legged way, a sawed-off shotgun in his hands, while behind him came Mary O'Hara.

"My Gawd, what happened!" he gasped. "Ah!"

He looked at the bartender, lying flat on his face in the street, and at Searles. He gave Romaine a quick glance and turned to Hashknife.

"Maldeen's in the alley," said Sleepy wearily, "and he's still wearin' his boots."

"Where's Severn?"

Searles dropped on one elbow and looked at them with lack-luster eyes.

"He shot me, didn't he? I knew he would some day. Where are you, Hartley?"

He tried to grin, but only his lips responded.

"I can't see yuh very plain, Hartley, but I want yuh to know that your story was all true, except that the killin' of old Romaine was a accident. It fit our plans fine though."

Searles licked his dry lips and took a deep breath.

"Mort Lee told Severn about not seeing — that — black — suit. Shell—Romaine—and — his — old — man — never — done — nothin'."

"He died clean," breathed Haley. "Clean."

Came the sound of some one stumbling down the alley, and Henry Horsecollar came into view. He waved out to them, almost falling over the body of Jim Searles. His hair was matted with blood, and his shirt was completely torn from his body, which was bruised and cut in many places.

He shoved the gory mop of hair out of his eyes, stared at them for a moment and then stumbled out into the street, where his horse was standing on the bridle-reins.

Men came out and stood around him as he tried to mount, but Henry did not mind having an audience. Hashknife went out and took him by the arm.

"Where's Severn?"

Henry blinked and shook his head drunkenly.

"I can't prove nothin' by him now," he muttered. "He lied to Marie about me, and now I can't prove—that—he—lied—not—by—him."

Henry drew a hand across his bloody face and began to cry bitterly. Hashknife flung one arm across his shoulders and patted him on the back.

"Cheer up, Henry. By golly, I'll tell her, and I'll bet she'll believe me."

"Will yuh?"

Henry lifted his head and peered into Hashknife's eyes. He stared at the crowd, but they meant nothing to him.

"If yuh will, Hartley, there's a chance that she will believe it, 'cause yuh sure can talk and make it sound true."

Hashknife grinned and turned to Haley.

"Yuh can turn Shell Romaine loose, Pat, and shift all this crime where it belonged. I dunno how much the bank will recover, but that don't interest me right now."

Pat Haley, with only part understanding, went over with Mary O'Hara and cut the bonds from Shell Romaine. He and Mary looked into each other's eyes for a moment, and both turned to Hashknife.

"I don't reckon there's anythin' I can say to yuh that would fit the case, Hartley," said Romaine slowly. "It ain't somethin' that a feller can put into words."

"Tell it to Mary," said Hashknife seriously. "And I'd like to see yuh both grin."

Mary turned away, her eyes filling with tears. Shell Romaine tried to speak; but his throat contracted, and he turned away. Then they started down the street hand in hand, going to Mary's home.

"Looky!" said Sleepy hoarsely.

Henry Horsecollar had mounted and was riding slowly up the street, going back to Marie Wicks.

They stood there, watching Mary and Romaine going one way and Henry going the other.

Pat Haley was standing near them, starting to roll a cigaret; his eyes blinking suspiciously fast. Perhaps some flakes of tobacco had blown into his eyes. Hashknife grinned softly, and Pat Haley lifted his head. He glanced down the street, where Mary and Romaine were turning in at the gate, and in the opposite direction, where Henry Horsecollar was fading out down the dusty road, and shook his head slowly.

Then he squinted at Hashknife and said:

"Hartley, ye're a wonder, so ye are. Ye have done a world of good for deservin' folks.

"Tramp cowboys, I've heard them call ye. If ye are, the title is an honor. Ye have done much for the Mission range, so ye have, and I'm wonderin' if ye'd do somethin' for me."

"Yo're danged right we will, Pat!" exclaimed Hashknife seriously. "What is it?"

"Will ye roll me a cigaret?"

# UNDERGROUND FORESTS

*by* **John L. Considine**

VIRGINIA CITY, Nevada, which now has about two thousand population, at one time housed nearly forty thousand. But the wooden structures that provided homes for its inhabitants at the time of its greatest prosperity never required a hundredth part of the lumber that went into the levels beneath the town.

Entire Sierran forests are entombed at depths ranging from one hundred to three thousand feet below the surface of that town. They were used to timber the lower levels of the mines. Some of those timbers, originally fourteen inches thick, have become from the pressure of the surrounding earth compressed to a thickness of two inches, and are as hard as iron.

The development of those mines marked a new era in the use of timber in mining. When the Ophir—first of the great mines uncovered in that camp—began to be worked, the big ore-body widened and grew softer as the miners followed it from the surface. In accordance with the only method of timbering then known to mining science, from the very collar of the shaft and so on to the bottom, round timbers of pine had been used to sheathe the sides of the incline and the branching drifts and crosscuts. Two up-right pillars on each side of a drift, with a third resting across from top to top, had been found sufficient to sustain the overhanging masses of rock in other mines.

But the Ophir ore-body was of too great a width and of density that varied too greatly for this primitive method to hold back its crushing force. Cave-ins recurred with ever increasing frequency, and miners' lives were sacrificed constantly. Finally, when the shaft had attained a depth of 215 feet and the ore-body was 65 feet wide, work in the Ophir had to be suspended altogether. To continue was impossible. Miners refused to go to the certain death that awaited under the menace of that ever sinking mass of unwieldly quartz and the heavy rock-wall that overlaid it.

A director of the Ophir company, then living in San Francisco, gave much thought to the problem, and finally laid it before Philip Deidesheimer, a graduate of Freiberg, who had come to the Coast from the silver mines of Saxony but a few years before. Deidesheimer had never heard of so big a deposit of ore before, and spent a month at Virginia City, making experiments. At the end of that time he had evolved what has since become famous among mining men the world over under the name of "the square set."

Briefly stated, the square set is made up of timbers from four to six feet long, interlocked at the ends by means of mortises and tenons so that they may be constructed into a series of cribs, added indefinitely side by side or built one on top of the other, so as to fill in any ore-chamber as fast as the ore is taken out. The unit in itself lies within the scope of a man's arms, but, built up in a series, it filled the vacant spaces left by the removal of the Consolidated Virginia bonanza, hundreds of feet in height, in width, and in length.

The square-set idea became famous throughout the mining universe, and miners from Europe, Asia, Africa, and Central and South America visited Virginia City for the purpose of making a personal inspection. But modest Deidesheimer did not even reap the reward of having his name attached to the invention. For all that, his name shines brightly among the many that helped to make the fame and fortune of that great mining camp. To him perhaps more than to any other individual belongs the credit of having made possible the extraction of that great deposit of ore, aggregating in value nearly a billion dollars in gold and silver.

It took an enormous amount of timber to supply the demand created by the introduction of square sets. The consumption of that one group of mines often exceeded 80,000,000 feet in a year. The mines became insatiable feeders on timber. One mine swallowed 6,000,000 feet in a year.

This tremendous tribute of timber soon stripped the lower and middle slopes of the eastern side of the Sierras above Washoe Valley. Roads were built to the very top of this ridge, a height of 9,000 feet above sea-level, but this was very expensive, seeing that each recurring Winter, bringing washouts, rendered necessary new construction in the Spring.

In places where the grade was very steep, chutes of trees were formed, and the big logs slid down them. But in all but a few places this plan was impracticable.

Then square flumes were used, waters being damned up in the high mountains and the trees washed down by the flume. Still this method was expensive and unsatisfactory.

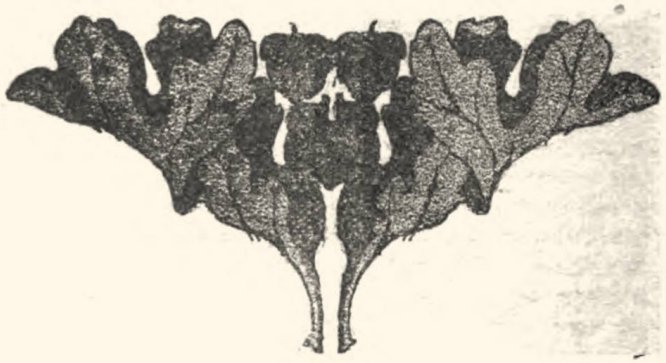
Finally James Haines, who had got his initial experience as a lumberman in Canada, invented the V-shaped flume, each section of which consisted of two boards, each two feet wide, one and one-half inches thick and sixteen feet long, joined at right angles. Each section underlaped the one above it. The entire structure was upheld by props resting on the ground. Crossing ravines, trestles were used.

One of these flumes was fifteen miles long and took 2,000,000 feet of lumber in the building. It had a capacity of half a million feet of lumber a day. In 1880 there were ten such flumes in Nevada, making an aggregate length of eighty miles. The cost of timbers and cordwood was greatly reduced by this innovation, and still every man that supplied timbers and wood to the Virginia City mines made a great fortune out of his business.

Like Deidesheimer's invention of square sets, the fame of the Haines flume spread abroad, and today an improved version of it is employed by California lumbermen on the western slope of the Sierras to flume their lumber from the higher slopes to the valleys below, where a commercial demand exists.

But even with the reduction in prices afforded by the Haines method, Virginia City mine operators in many instances fought shy of using timber as much as possible, and, owing to this thrifty trait, many accidents occurred. The Mexican, which in the early days of the camp was always noted as a recklessly managed mine, was a heavy sufferer from this cause. As early as 1863 one-half the surface of the mine fell with an attendant roar that alarmed the entire camp, and an acre of the surface was opened to a depth of 200 feet. The superintendent and twenty miners were underground at the time, but fortunately were not far from the bottom of the shaft, and so escaped being caught and crushed or smothered in a drift, or imprisoned to die of hunger and thirst.

Again, about eleven o'clock one night in October, 1861, the surface of the Chollar mine fell in with a great noise, engulfing a two-story building that stood on the main street. On that night the bookkeeper of the grocery, which occupied the lower floor, was asleep in his room in the second story, but was so annoyed by the continued scratching and whining of his little dog, which was wont to sleep in the hall outside, that he got up and went out for a walk, accompanied by his restless dog. It was during this walk that his lodging-place fell into the bowels of the earth. For the dog's behavior I can account only on the ground that he was forewarned by some such sense of impending disaster as is said to animate rats deserting a sinking ship.



# DIGGERS' LUCK

by
Merlin
Moore
Taylor

BRENNAN hated New Guinea from his very first sight of it. Cold fear clutched at every fiber of his being when the little vessel which had brought him from Australia along with a score of others weaved drunkenly through the shallow, reef-studded waters of the harbor and disgorged them at Port Moresby into the very midst of the hectic, delirious days of the early gold rushes.

Twenty years of intimate association with New Guinea, its swamps, its dismal jungles, its weird, mist-enshrouded mountains but increased Brennan's aversion for it. Yet circumstances and unrealized ambition held him to it as firmly as if they had been bands of steel—and he hated it.

In this Brennan was not unlike a great many others. Few can look with indifference upon this little lost continent in a far corner of the South Seas. Some see it through rose-colored spectacles and find it romantic, picturesque, alluring. Others, like Brennan, envisage it with the naked eye, and to them is revealed what Nature can do in her most cruel mood. There is no half-way emotion. Either you love it or you hate it, and you do either intensely.

Rumor, as rumor has a habit of doing, had exaggerated the finding of a few nuggets of gold into the discovery of a bonanza, where men went forth empty-handed at dawn and returned at dusk, staggering under a load of fabulous wealth. The will-o'-the-wisp of fortune lured Brennan, as it did hundreds of others from every corner of the earth, to battle against insurmountable odds in the mad endeavor to grow rich overnight.

Better equipped, physically and mentally, than most of them, Brennan survived where scores made timid, feeble stabs at fortune before they perished miserably from fever, insufficient nourishment or cannibalism. Brennan escaped all these and, flushed with the optimism of youth, joined each new stampede.

In the Lakekamu, before it played out, he washed out a few ounces of the glittering metal, but lost them when his claim on the Yodda proved a failure. By then, however, he was known to the storekeepers down on the coast and they staked him for a try at Sud Est and Woodlark. When their gold-bearing reefs pinched out he worked his way on a copra-schooner to Samarai, penniless and in debt to boot, but with courage unabated.

You will find no beach-combers, no human derelicts, in Port Moresby or Samarai. There is no refuge in either place for broken, discouraged men who have become mere shells in which hope and ambition no longer are housed. Other tiny tropical ports may let them stay, but New Guinea banishes them.

When a man has neither job nor money he very quickly finds himself aboard a steamer for the outside. If his condition has been brought about through no fault of his own, the more fortunate chip in a few shillings and buy him a ticket to Brisbane or Sydney and the hotel keeper overlooks his

unpaid bill. If, however, he has shown himself lazy or shiftless the helping hand is withheld and he is driven to the disgrace of applying for government rations and a government-bought ticket to Australia.

One way or the other, he must get out. Food is the reason. It is brought into New Guinea at tremendous expense and in the long run it is cheaper to help a man out of the country than it is to feed and shelter him.

Brennan, sickened by the hardships and misery he had undergone and hating New Guinea as he did, could have quit it by merely voicing the desire, as did so many others when the gold bubble burst. He was made of sterner stuff. He had seen other men come into the country with only a few pounds in their pockets and the clothes on their backs and later had seen them depart with pokes fairly bursting with gold and occupying deck cabins for which they had paid double or triple fare in order to have rooms to themselves. They had succeeded where so many had failed and Brennan felt that he, too, would succeed if he but stuck to it long enough. There was in him a touch of the characteristics of the bulldog.

So he went to his creditors at the stores and laid his cards on the table.

"I am broke," he informed them, unnecessarily because they had known it almost as soon as he. "I owe you now and if I live the debt will be squared, whether I stay here or get out. But there is gold back in the ranges, and I want to have a go at it.

"I've got my eye on a little farm down in Queensland and if I go back now I'll never get to own it. I'm only a laborer at best back there, and a laborer's wages will not buy a farm. Stake me to the tucker to see me through a year's trip into the mountains and I'll bring back enough gold to pay up and I can stake myself next time."

The storekeepers did it. They liked Brennan and the way he put it. Besides a man who is spurred by ambition usually gets what he goes after. A week later Brennan shepherded into a boat the natives he had recruited and set off for the mainland and the inland peaks.

IT WAS twelve months before Samarai saw him again. Like the other handful of "diggers" who alone remain of the hundreds who once invaded New Guinea, Brennan had spent those twelve months cut off from those of his own kind, with only his black boys for company. He had lived in flimsy tents of calico and poles, or native huts of brush, and eaten only the rice and canned food that he had brought with him. He had been baked under terrific sun-rays by day, soaked by the inevitable afternoon tropical down-pours and chilled to the marrow by the penetrating cold of night in the mountains.

He had battled leeches and scrub-itch in the jungle and stood off hostile savages and evaded their ambushes and conquered that most insidious of foes—the loneliness that breaks the white man more often that all the other things combined. And he brought back the gold he had gone after, enough to pay off his debts, keep him a few months in idleness in Samarai and leave him plenty with which to outfit himself anew.

Under the strain of such hardships the average man lets go when he gets back to safety and civilization. Wild drinking bouts and even wilder games of cards or dice are the rule. Brennan was the rare exception. He stood up at the bar and took his drink when he felt like it or took a hand at poker to pass away the long evenings. But he did both moderately.

His finances did not permit carousal if he ever was to realize his longings for that Queensland farm. Eventually, he cut his period of relaxation and recuperation to a few short weeks, recruited a new team of natives and went back to the mountains.

Old-timers shook their heads and said he had made a mistake. He would find it out quickly, they predicted. As prophets they made good, too, as Brennan demonstrated when he came back from his second trip. Only his unusual will-power had made him stick out the full twelve months after his too-short rest. His nerves were in tatters, his stomach upset by his speedy return to canned stuff, his reason threatened by the unceasing vigilance which is the price of safety in the jungle. He went on a spree that still is spoken of in Samarai as the wildest ever.

When a digger returns from a trip he deposits his gold in the bank, pending its shipment to buyers in Sydney. Meanwhile he is permitted to sign chits against its value and pays his bills at store, hotel or bar with them. The bank honors these chits as it does checks and deducts their

total from the proceeds of the sale of the dust and nuggets.

Brennan came shakily back to full consciousness after two weeks. He had a faint recollection of signing many chits, of tossing his money about with lavish hand, of huge bets at dice and poker. His first thought was for his balance at the bank. Haggard, hollow-eyed and shaking from his excesses of dissipation he made his way to the bank and asked how much he had left.

"—— little, I should say," was the reply. "You've fair plastered the place with chits. Wait a minute and I'll total them."

The clerk bent busily over a stack of papers.

"Here you are," he said finally, pushing a sheet of paper across the counter. "You brought in a hundred and fifty ounces. At four pounds, ten shillings an ounce, that is six hundred, seventy-five pounds. Your chits total six hundred, seventy-two pounds, fourteen shillings. You have left two pounds, six shillings. Want it?"

Brennan nervously stroked his unshaven chin for a moment before he replied.

"I'm a ruddy fool," he said at last. "Give it to me in silver."

He took the handful of coins and went out into the hot, sandy street. In front of the hotel he stopped, then with sudden decision whirled and flung the money far out into the shimmering green waters lapping at his feet. At the mad scramble with which the natives who had been watching him curiously plunged after the coins he laughed bitterly, and strode away down the street, past the straggling row of stores to the little path which circles the fifty-nine acres that are Samarai.

Under a clump of coconut palms Brennan threw himself upon the ground, pillowed his head upon his arms and took stock of himself.

"I'm a ruddy fool," he repeated to himself over and over. "Wiped out again." The fierce inward surge of remorse exhausted itself in the end and then he made the one great resolution of his life.

"I do not take another drink or touch another card or shake the dice again until I'm quit of this forsaken land," he vowed solemnly with bared head and hand held high.

He said it a good many times more before the day was over—to the storekeepers who readily granted him new credit for another trip, to the sympathizers who, man-like, advised him to drown his troubles and offered to "shout" the drinks.

"No," Brenan insisted firmly, pushing away the glass that the bar-man set before him. "I mean it. I'm through!"

Even then he realized that if he kept his word he was setting himself apart from his fellows, that so long as he remained in New Guinea and was abstemious he was going to be lonesome. In this respect the tropics are the same wherever white men gather. They are so few in number, these men, that they find it difficult to keep interested or amused and almost inevitably they turn to drink or gambling and, ultimately, take the final step of association with native women.

Brennan did none of these things. His was one of those rare wills which refuse to be undermined by the tropics, that once set upon a course can not be turned. During the years which followed he did not chafe at the isolation to which he had sentenced himself. Not that he was shunned or even ignored, for he was white and square, but other white men, and women, found little in common with him and so did not put themselves out when they met.

It was when night fell that Brennan found Samarai as lonely as the jungle itself. He would not permit himself to indulge in vicarious thrills by watching others play dice, poker or billiards and he kept away from the bars. Mostly he sat upon the hotel veranda or upon the sand of the beach or, when restlessness and discontent assailed him unendurably, walked round and round the island under the palms until fatigue drove him to bed.

He became silent and taciturn, upheld only by the knowledge that the figures in his bank-book grew steadily larger each year. Driven hard by visions of the little farm that was coming closer and closer to reality, he cut his vacations short and allowed himself only four weeks a year.

Brennan came back from his twelfth trip to find that he was one of the last diggers to quit the mountains that year. It is digger custom for the last man back to stand treat for those who have beat him in, and Brennan had no wish to avoid this obligation. The full sense of his standing was borne in upon him when, ordering the hotel-keeper to serve the boys at his

expense, he was told that another man, the last one in but him, already had "shouted."

But the offer attracted to him attention that heretofore he had been denied. It started speculation as to whether at last Brennan had struck it rich instead of being compelled to wash out, ounce by ounce and nugget by nugget, the gold he acquired.

It is not ethical for one digger to ask questions of another. Each one of them plays a lone hand, refrains from saying where he has been or where he is going next, keeps to himself the amount of gold he has brought back and lets the others speculate all they wish. But there are ways of putting two and two together that arrive at surprizingly correct results.

No one had seen or hefted the poke Brennan had taken to the bank, but almost immediately there were rumors that it had been unusually heavy, that at last luck had turned for him. The other diggers made mental notes to seek information from his natives, and even warmed up a bit to Brennan himself in the hope he would drop an incautious word or two. If they could discover where he had been and could get there first next time, he would be expected to hunt another location for himself. That was the way they played the game.

On the third day Brennan disappeared. Moreover, he had gone in the night with the ebbing tide and in a native canoe instead of one of the numerous ten-ton boats which ply between the islands. These things in themselves were suspicious and suspicion became certainty when a planter from D'Entrecasteaux group casually mentioned that he had seen Brennan on Goodenough Island.

THE news set the diggers on tenterhooks. A digger goes to Goodenough or Fergusson for only one thing—to recruit native boys for gold digging. He does not start recruiting, either, until he is about ready to go inland and has ordered his supplies at one of the stores. Then he brings his boys to Samarai, signs them on before the local magistrate, loads his supplies and is off as soon as he can.

"That cove knows something," the miners said to one another over the poker tables or around the bar. What they did not say aloud was that every one of them was making secret, but none the less strenuous, efforts to find out just what Brennan did know. Brennan's boys, with twelve pounds wages each in hand, had not completed their purchases of tobacco, knives, belts, beads and calico with which every laborer is laden when he goes home.

It was upon these boys that the diggers centered their efforts—and had their troubles for their pains. Brennan, the boys said, had taken them from place to place, had not worked them harder than usual and they had not washed out any great quantity of the shining stuff which the *dim-dim* (white man) prizes but a native finds worthless.

The baffled diggers set themselves to wait for Brennan to come back to Samarai. He would have to do that, they knew, if he was figuring on Goodenough boys for his labor. Only the Samarai magistrate may sign them on and, besides, Brennan would need supplies and could get them only in Samarai.

So the diggers retired early that they might get up betimes and resume their vigil for him. Once he got back his every waking hour would be spent under surveillance.

Brennan came back and, like his departure, his return was at night. He had not been there when the miners went to bed but he was on hand when they got up. After breakfast he sat on the veranda and smoked his pipe, dozing in his chair and quitting it only for his meals. At five o'clock in the afternoon all business in Samarai ends for the day, the magistrate closes his office and goes home, the great galvanized shutters go up at the stores, and the native roust-abouts seek their quarters.

All during the day Brennan had not stirred from the veranda, and the diggers relaxed their vigilance. For that day, at least, they felt sure they had made no false move. They were convinced when, around ten o'clock, they saw him going up the steps to his room on the second floor.

Consternation seized them, however, when at breakfast it was revealed that during the night Brennan had gone again. It was somewhat of a shock, too, to learn that the incoming tide at midnight had brought in a big canoe from Goodenough with fifteen laborers on board; that at twelve-thirty Brennan had aroused the magistrate and persuaded him to come down to his office and sign on the boys; and that the shipping clerk at B-P's had opened up and handed

over the supplies Brennan had ordered the very day he had returned from the mountains.

"That cove knows something," wailed the diggers, their plans to keep in touch with Brennan shattered. The two who had combined in the charter of a boat in which they had intended to follow him cursed heartily when the boat's owner insisted on holding them to their contract. The shipping clerk, in his cups that night, gave way to the volley of questions fired at him.

"Brennan's gone up Mambare way," he said.

"Mambare!"

"It's two hundred and fifty miles to Mambare."

"None of the power boats are gone."

"A man wouldn't head for Mambare in a native canoe."

Such were their various exclamations of surprize and disbelief.

But the shipping clerk was insistent.

"He said he was going to Mambare," he protested tearfully; and they decided he was drunk and didn't know what he was talking about or else Brennan had lied.

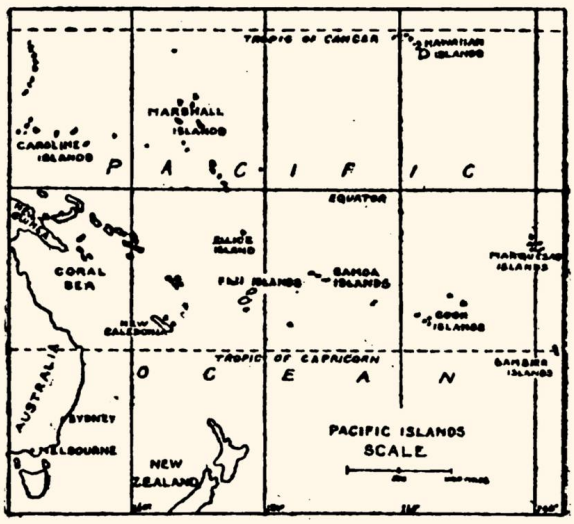
Brennan, transferring his supplies from the canoe in which he had left Samarai to a gasoline-propelled boat which he had secretly bought from a planter on the mainland, would have found all this immensely diverting. He had been shrewd enough to realize that the truth would serve him better than falsehood and he had told the shipping clerk the truth. He *was* bound for Mambare.

For Brennan did know something. He knew where, on the upper reaches of the Gira River at the point where it comes tumbling down the slopes of Mount Albert Edward, lay one of the richest beds of gravel that ever had been found in New Guinea.

He had stumbled upon it near the fag-end of his previous trip when he had crossed the Gira on his way out of the mountains. Although he knew the Gira had been pretty well panned over in the gold-rush heyday he had been unable to resist the temptation to run through a few shovelfuls of sand. He had found it full of gold; not dust alone, but nuggets as well.

His low food supply, and the weariness of his boys, had kept Brennan from stopping to work his find then. Besides, his twelve months were about up and the Government deals harshly with those who keep natives at work after the time for which they are signed has expired. So Brennan had made a note of landmarks so he could find the place again and set off post-haste for Samarai.

NOW, with fresh laborers, the best he could get, and inspired by his promise of a bonus if they worked hard, he was on his way back to the Gira. He patted himself on the back at his cleverness in fooling the other miners. His jubilation would have been short-lived, however, could he have known that at that very minute he was under the observation of the last man in New Guinea he would have wanted to know of his find.




Manuel Alvez was that man. His father, a Spanish adventurer, had drifted into New Guinea in the early days and Manuel was his son by a native woman. Whatever the secret by means of which he died possessed of more wealth than his little coconut plantation had seemed to warrant, apparently he had handed it down to Manuel.

Although Manuel gambled heavily and drank continuously and gave his plantation only the most casual of supervision he seemed nowhere near the bottom of the barrel. Perhaps, if he had been of a mind to confide in any one, Manuel might have been able to explain the presence in New Guinea of whisky and tobacco which certainly had not passed the customs officers and some of the numerous "accidents" which caused the passing out of pearl traders

and buyers on whom fortune had been smiling.

Brennan came under Manuel's ken by sheer accident. A balky motor in the half-caste's lugger had driven him to cover in a little cove which was so nearly landlocked that few suspected its existence. Manuel hoped the customs men at Samarai would be the last to discover it, as he had found it of utmost service on more than one occasion when hard-pressed.

So when one of his crew, posted as a lookout on a point overlooking the sea, came running to report a motor-craft approaching Manuel turned the motor over to his second in command and went to have a look for himself. Through the glasses he quickly satisfied himself that the boat was neither a police nor customs craft, but he kept on watching it through curiosity. It was hugging the shore as is customary during the hurricane season and, when it came opposite him, Manuel recognized one of its occupants with a start.

What was Brennan, the digger, going out again so soon for? Not a week before, Manuel himself had seen Brennan return to Samarai from the mountains. The boat was loaded with boxes and bags, too, and they mean supplies to the initiated. Instantly Manuel came to the same conclusion as had the diggers at Samarai. Brennan knew something. Manuel declared himself in on the deal, whatever it was.

THE half-caste did not hurry as he returned to the lugger. It was a deceptive craft, that lugger, and the motor in its bowels had unsuspected power. Had it been put to the test, the lugger probably could have shown a clean pair of heels to anything in New Guinea waters.

Manuel knew the old tub in which Brennan had passed. Under the most favorable conditions it couldn't do more than six knots an hour. The lugger could give it several hours start and catch it before nightfall. Only Manuel had no intention of catching it at all. He would stalk it from a distance and see where it went.

For four days he did stalk it, too, keeping behind it and almost below the horizon by day and creeping closer as dusk came until he had seen the other anchor. Only a man who knew every turn and twist of the rugged coast-line, every hidden reef, every bit of dangerous water could have done it. In this knowledge Manuel excelled.

When he neared Buna Bay, Brennan took a chance on a hurricane blowing up and put out to sea until a point of land that jutted out into the ocean would hide him when he drew inshore again. At Buna there is a magistrate and between Buna, on the north coast, and Port Moresby on the south there is a rough, but much-used trail over the mountains. Brennan took no chances that word of his whereabouts should trickle down over that trail to Port Moresby. He didn't want a mob of prospectors, veteran and amateur, following him up the Gira.

So, although Buna is the logical starting point for those who go into the Mambare country, Brennan gave it a wide berth and went on along the coast to where the Gira empties into Mambare Bay, just north of the boundary line between British New Guinea and former German New Guinea.

Between the bay and the foot-hills of the mountains the Gira twists and winds for miles through flat country, with sago swamps on each side, before it finally reaches the foot-hills where the water comes plunging down the cañons of the Main Range. Brennan sent his boat up-stream until its power no longer was able to cope with the current, then turned to the bank and unloaded.

When the boat had started back on the return journey to the plantation where Brennan had bought her, the boys picked up their loads and, with their master in the lead, set off into the jungle. It took them two weeks of arduous, heart-breaking travel to reach their destination—the bar where Brennan had discovered the gold.

There are no decent trails in the New Guinea mountains. Here and there is a path used by the natives that goes from point to point by the shortest route, over instead of around obstacles, and usually it ends on top of a precipice, impossible of ascent or descent.

This is because a New Guinea native seldom goes beyond the confines of the district in which he is born lest his enemies be waiting in ambush just over the line. His trails go no farther than he, so that the white man who wishes to cross into the next district must make his own trail.

This is what Brennan and his boys did, hour after hour, day after day. With great, sharp knives they cut and hacked a path

through the virginal jungle, wading up the river when it permitted and taking to its sharply sloping banks and the underbrush when the waters became too deep or the boulders too numerous.

Brennan did not once suspect that he had failed in his efforts to prevent any one from learning his destination. In this he reckoned without the astute Manuel. The half-caste had followed the digger's boat into Mambare Bay and seen him enter the Gira River. In a cockle-shell dingey Manuel was not far behind, but always out of sight.

When Brennan finally unloaded his supplies the half-caste watched from the top of a near-by hill and later marked the spot at which the digger's party had entered the jungle. Then he hurried back to the dingey and paddled down-stream to his lugger and was out of sight long before Brennan's boat emerged from Mambare Bay.

Not more than a week after Brennan had cut his trail up the river Manuel, accompanied by two of his fellows, was treading it. The half-caste had been compelled to return to the south coast to get rid of his contraband cargo and equip himself for the trip into the jungle. He did not delay about it, either. So rapidly does the vegetation grow that in the space of a few days a well-defined trail will have been obliterated and absorbed by the jungle again. Coming along a week later, however, Manuel found it easy to follow and in five days was ensconced upon the top of a bluff overlooking Brennan's camp on the hill-side above the gravel bed.

To the initiated it was plain that the digger planned a long stay there. He had cleared a good-sized space for a camp and erected a tight little shack of poles and brush for himself and two others for his boys. Also he had begun the work of diverting the waters of the Gira around his gravil-bed.

Stakes had been driven into the bank for a quarter of a mile and every native, except the cook-boy, was vigorously digging with pick and shovel at the deep trench which later would be connected with the river above the gravel-bed. Brennan himself was marking out the spot where his dam would be built by dropping big trees across the eighteen-foot stream. The waters, forced to back up by this obstruction, would find an outlet down the trench and leave the gravel-bed drained and easy to work.

No digger goes to all this trouble unless he knows that gold in paying quantities is to be found. Manuel, on his way back down-stream, already had his plan mapped out. His lips curled in a sneer as he pictured the digger driving his boys to the limit of their endurance to wash out the precious metal, hoarding it up in his buckskin pouch, adding to it by day and dreaming of it by night. And to what purpose? That he, Manuel, might seize it in the end.

Incidentally, the half-caste would be revenging himself upon the whole breed of diggers for his defeat at the hands of one of them. They are a hard lot, these men who brave the terrors of inland New Guinea in their hunt for fortune, and only once had Manuel tackled one of them. Conley, the digger on that occasion, had paid off his boys at the inland station where he had recruited them and gone to the coast alone, planning to make his way along it to some plantation where he could get a boat to take him to Samarai.

He had stumbled upon Manuel and his cut-throat crew caching an illicit cargo and they had killed him, partly to protect themselves against his informing the authorities, partly to get possession of the poke he was carrying. But the poke had proved a disappointment. It had not contained gold, but some kind of stuff that the half-caste had never seen before.

He had thrown the poke in a corner of the cave where his cargo was being stored after taking out a small nugget, which he later felt perfectly safe in displaying to the diggers at Samarai. And they had laughed at him and asked him where he had picked up the chunk of worthless pyrites.

Manuel scowled when he recalled that fiasco. The murder of Conley had never troubled him, for, to a man with native blood, human life is the cheapest thing in New Guinea. But he felt that somehow Conley had defrauded him.

Manuel often had wondered whether Conley had scented danger and hidden his gold, substituting the pyrites in his poke, in that interval between his arrival in the midst of the half-caste's party and the time they had turned upon him and shot him with his own rifle. Again, like many other white men, he might have been driven insane by the solitude of the jungle and not known that the pyrites were worthless.

Well, the half-caste decided, there must

be no slip-up this time, and Brennan's gold would square things for that which Conley had not had. Then a whimsical idea suggested itself to him.

If the opportunity presented itself to steal Brennan's gold without resorting to murder he would substitute the bag of pyrites for the digger's poke. The former still were in the cave where he had tossed them after killing Conley. What a joke on Brennan! Meanwhile, he had several months of waiting while the old man and his natives dug out the gold. He would keep a watch on Brennan's boat and when it went north again he would know it was time for him to strike.

In the eleven months which followed Brennan drove his black boys at top speed. His find was even richer than he had expected and the buckskin bag that never was far from his side grew heavier and heavier. Enthusiastically he promised the natives a knife and sheath each when he paid them off at Samarai. After that he had no occasion to chide them for loafing on the job.

Came at last the day when his dwindling food supply told Brennan that the time was drawing near when he must start back for civilization. He calculated to a nicety just how much food was necessary for the return journey, increased it by several days' rations to provide against unforeseen delays, and set it to one side. When the rest of the food had been used up, he told his boys they would start the next day.

Under similar conditions and with the knowledge that the gravel-bed still contained a fortune, many men would have stayed on until starvation threatened them, but not Brennan. He had more than the quantity of gold needed to make up the amount of money he had set as his goal and he was content that his departure from New Guinea forever was a matter now of weeks only.

In the early dawn Brennan and his boys made up the loads of those things they would take with them, pulled down the huts they had occupied so long, destroyed the dam and blocked the upper end of the channel so that the waters would return to their old channel. In this he was but playing the game according to digger ethics.

Although not once had he been menaced by the savages of the district, although they must have known of his presence, he knew they would resent it if he did not leave the river as he had found it and that the next white man who came along would find them hostile. As for the channel he had dug along the bank, in a few weeks its sides would crumble in, the luxurious vegetation would overgrow it and it would disappear.

Brennan had no intention of letting the gold in the river bed remain there until some one else stumbled upon it. He was no dog in the manger. The other diggers had not been intimate with him for years, but that was his own fault and he bore them no grudge. When he had teased them long enough he would give them a hint of the gravel bed's location and enjoy their frantic efforts in the stampede which would ensue.

At last Brennan gave the word to his boys to pick up their loads and start. As a general might contemplate the scene of a great battle where he had achieved victory, the old digger paused for a few moments for one last long look at the spot where the Gira again was rushing over the gravel-bed. Then he snatched the battered old hat from his head, swept it in front of him and indulged in a low, ironical bow.

IN THAT moment he felt a crushing blow upon the back of his head, everything went black before his eyes and he knew no more.

There his boys found him when, alarmed by his failure to catch up with them, they came back to search for him. Ordinarily they might not have troubled about him when they discovered him at the point of death, as they thought.

There is little of affection or gratitude in the make-up of a New Guinea black, so far as his white masters are concerned, but in Brennan's case there was a reason why his boys should want to save him. Not only did he owe each of them twelve pounds for their year's labors, but he had promised them a pound bonus each if they worked hard and also a knife and sheath when they reached Samarai.

If they did desert him it would be easy enough to explain to the "govamen' " man at Samarai that Brennan had died on the trip but in their own villages they would not get off so easily. They would not have with them the gifts for their relatives which it is incumbent upon a discharged laborer to buy. They would be disgraced indeed.

In the end they made a rude litter and undertook the difficult task of packing him out over the mountains to the coast where the boat had been told to meet them. Into the litter they tossed the buck-skin bag they found beside the unconscious man. To them gold meant nothing, except that the white man must have use for it or he would not be so foolish as to work so hard for it.

Of the hardships of that return journey through the jungle no one ever got the details from the boys themselves, for they were inclined to discount the achievement. But one can picture what was involved—the cutting of a trail, the doubling-up on loads because two of them must always be carrying the litter, the forcing down his throat of such food as they could compel him to swallow. For Brennan's skull was fractured, and when, three weeks later, the boat chugged into Samarai it was a wonder that he was alive at all.

Henderson, the resident magistrate, took charge of things then. He had Brennan removed to the hospital on top of the little hill in the center of the island, paid his boys and signed them off as provided by law and gave them the bonus and the knives they demanded. Even though he might have suspected that they lied when they so loudly asserted Brennan had promised them these things, Magistrate Henderson felt that they deserved them for bringing the injured man out.

One other thing the magistrate did, too. He took charge of the bag which had been brought in with Brennan and in the presence of witnesses sealed it with wax upon which was impressed the broad arrow of the Government and put it in the bank vault for safe-keeping. If Brennan lived he could regain it upon presenting an order from the magistrate. If the digger died the Government would sequestrate it unless it developed he had heirs.

But Brennan did not die. The medical missionary who operated upon him found only a small pressure upon the brain and as soon as that had been relieved the digger began to get well rapidly. But he could not tell them how he had been hurt. He thought that the heavy branch of a tree had dropped upon his head as he was taking his sentimental farewell of the gravel-bed.

It didn't matter in the least, he assured them. He was alive and well and in that poke which the magistrate had put in the bank for him was the biggest amount of gold any man had brought out in one year since the early boom days. When he got up again he was going to shout the drinks for every man in town and the first steamer going outside was going to have him on board. He was through with New Guinea!

ON THE day that Brennan left the hospital he was accompanied by a bodyguard composed of virtually every digger who was in Samarai. Each of them was secretly hoping that Brennan would let fall some hint of where he had found his gold and each of them was trying to make sure that none of the others would beat him to the information. So when Brennan reached the hotel where he usually put up he discovered that he was suddenly the most popular person among all the fifty-odd white residents of the island.

Into the circle which insisted upon shaking the digger's calloused hand Magistrate Henderson made his dignified way.

"If you'll come over to the bank, Brennan, I'll give you a release for your poke," he said and Brennan got up to follow him. The other diggers began to fidget. Reading their minds, Brennan laughed.

"Come along, boys," he invited. "Come along and feast your eyes on what I brought back."

So, flanked by the grizzled prospectors, Brennan and the magistrate crossed the street to the bank. There was a bit of a swagger about Brennan as the bank-clerk took the heavy poke out of the vault and dropped it upon the counter with a thud.

"There you are, Mr. Brennan," said the magistrate as he clipped off the seal he had put on it.

But Brennan was staring at the bag with unbelief in his eyes. "You must have made a mistake," he said, sharply. "That is not my poke."

"It must be," retorted the magistrate. "It certainly is the one you had with you when you got to Samarai."

"That is not my poke," repeated Brennan firmly. "Do you think for a moment that I wouldn't know mine when I saw it? Mine had a dark spot on one side where the blood from a cut finger stained it. One of the thongs was short because I cut off a piece to mend a broken boot-lace. This is not my poke!"

"But it must be," protested Magistrate

Henderson. "Here is the seal I have just cut off it, with the tag bearing your name and the date and the names of those who saw me seal it up."

"It's not my poke," insisted Brennan, then his face became flushed with anger. "What in —— are you trying to do, Henderson?" he demanded grimly. There was a dangerous glint in his eyes.

But the magistrate was not a man to be easily cowed.

"Be careful what you say, Brennan," he retorted. "We'll just open this up and see what's in it." He untied the leather thongs with fingers that were not altogether steady and peered inside. Then he started back in surprize.

"What's this," he cried. "This isn't gold!"

Brennan sneered.

"It don't go, Henderson," he said. "I told you that wasn't my poke. Whenever you get ready to hand over the right one, let me know. By ——, if it doesn't show up somebody around here is going to get into trouble."

He shoved aside roughly those who blocked his way and strode out into the street. But once outside his face went white under its tan, his limbs trembled and it was only by the greatest effort that he kept from staggering as he sought the path around the island and the solitude of the palms on the far side. He wanted to be alone, to think.

His brain was in a whirl. He was convinced that some one was trying to rob him. But who? Henderson?

The magistrate was getting along in years, his small pay scarcely enabled him to support his large family, as every one in Samarai knew.

But Henderson was not that kind. Stern, even to the point of harshness, in upholding the law, nevertheless he had a reputation for justice and fairness that extended even to the blacks who came before him. Some one at the bank, then? Possible, but not likely. Besides, Henderson was positive that was the poke he had found on the boat which had brought Brennan to Samarai.

Could his black boys have robbed him and made a crude attempt to fool him by substituting that other poke, filled with what he had identified at a glance as worthless pyrites such as he had thrown away for years? Brennan couldn't believe that of them. Gold was of no value to them, and they would not have brought him out of the jungle if they had robbed him.

There was but one conclusion he could reach in the end. That blow upon the head back there on the Gira had been no accident. Some one had felled him, then robbed him and left that other poke in place of the one he had set down at his feet just a moment before. But who? *Who?*

He was certain now that he never would know. His year's work was gone for nothing. He had not made his last trip as he so proudly had boasted. He must go back to the Gira again and wrest from it another hoard of the precious metal before he could be quit of New Guinea.

Sick at heart, and still weak from his recent illness, the great strength of which he had been so proud seemed to have left him of a sudden and he felt very, very old and very, very tired. Nature takes a hand when she sees that we have greater burdens than we seem able to bear. So Brennan, with his head pillowed upon his arms, fell asleep.

He was awakened by a hand roughly shaking his shoulder. He opened his heavy-lidded eyes and tried to make his numbed brain understand what was being said to him.

He recognized the man who still shook him vigorously as a constabulary officer, and behind him stood a handful of native police in their blue uniforms and red sashes and, behind them, a grim, unfriendly crowd of white men. In the very front row stood the diggers who so lately had fawned upon him. But there was no friendliness now in their gaze as he scrambled to his feet and faced them.

"What's wrong?" he faltered, looking from one to the other, his eyes at last coming to rest upon the face of the constabulary officer.

"In the King's name," said that officer, following the prescribed formula, "I arrest you, William Brennan, for the murder of Thomas Conley. And I warn you that anything you say may be used against you."

He laid a compelling hand upon Brennan's arm.

Brennan shook himself free.

"But I don't understand," he protested. "Murder, you say? Tom Conley's murder? I don't know anything about any murder?"

But the officer refused to debate the matter.

"You will come with me now and peaceably," he said, "or I shall order the police to bring you and I never yet have had to set a black man upon a white."

Brennan accompanied him, then, dazed and uncomprehending and stumbling a bit as his whirling brain tried to make out what had happened to him. At the magistrate's office they pushed him into the tiny court-room and up before the desk at which Magistrate Henderson, grave and dignified, sat. Behind him the spectators jammed and shoved and pushed until the magistrate took a hand.

"Gentlemen," he said, frowning, "you will please observe silence and decorum and remember that this is a British court of justice and conduct yourself accordingly."

Then he picked up a document and read it, a formal warrant charging Brennan with the murder of Thomas Conley.

"William Brennan," he continued, laying down the paper, "you are not now on trial for the crime of which you are accused. This merely is a preliminary hearing, following which the court will decide whether you shall be held for the session of the general court presided over by His Excellency, the governor. No," as Brennan opened his mouth, "do not interrupt me. You will have your chance to speak later."

He paused to let his eyes rove over the little court-room and to the windows, where those who could not get inside had taken their stand. Then he summoned the constabulary officer to him and whispered in his ear. The officer hurried out and the magistrate resumed:

"Mr. Brennan, you will remember that two years ago Thomas Conley, a digger, paid off his natives before the Government officer at Kokoda and started overland alone for Samarai. From that day to this Mr. Conley was not seen alive again and it has been generally supposed that he became lost in the jungle or perished at the hands of unfriendly natives. The authorities, however, have known otherwise.

"Mr. Conley's body, identified by the clothing and certain articles found in the pockets, was found floating offshore near Buna some time later. He had been shot to death. You understand what that means, Mr. Brennan. No native is permitted to have fire-arms except shotguns for which permits have been issued, and they are forbidden to touch rifles or revolvers at all unless they are in the constabulary. Mr. Conley was shot with a rifle. While that is not conclusive evidence, it points to a white man as the slayer.

"For two years, Mr. Brennan, every official in New Guinea has been quietly watching for something to turn up that would reveal the murderer. Until today that quest has been fruitless. Do you know what this bag contains?"

He pointed to the buckskin poke on the table before him. Without waiting for an answer he went on:

"This is the poke, Mr. Brennan, that at least three creditable witnesses are ready to swear belonged to Thomas Conley. They recognized it as you say you would recognize your own, by certain marks that they had noticed many times and which are indisputable. There are other witnesses who also will swear that this is the poke which you brought to Samarai, Mr. Brennan, although you declared it was not yours."

"And I swear to you that I never saw that poke until today," burst out Brennan. "And I'm not a fool to bring in a lot of pyrites to show for a year in the mountains. I was after gold, I tell you, and it was gold that I brought back. Three hundred ounces of it which my boys and I dug out on——"

He broke off, impelled to keep to himself the location of that rich bar. Then he went on.

"No, I won't tell you where it is, but I'll take you there, Mr. Henderson, you or any other official. You'll find the trench I dug, the huts we lived in and pulled down before we left. Get hold of the boys I had with me. They'll tell you what we did in the last twelve months. I don't know when my own poke disappeared and this one was substituted. That rap on the head——"

Magistrate Henderson held up a restraining hand.

"Calm yourself, Mr. Brennan," he begged. "I find it difficult not to believe you, but there is other evidence. You were in Kokoda on your way to the coast within a day after Mr. Conley left it."

"I knew he had passed through there, yes, but I did not ask or care which route to the coast he took in leaving," cried the harassed Brennan.

"There was bad blood between you and

Conley. You had quarrelled over the recruiting of boys on Goodenough."

"He had tried to take away laborers who were promised to me. But I held him no grudge afterward."

MAGISTRATE HENDERSON tapped on the desk with his forefinger.

"You have the frankness of an innocent man who has nothing to conceal, Mr. Brennan," he admitted, "but you have announced your intention of leaving New Guinea forever. A steamer will arrive this afternoon and depart tonight. I would be derelict in my duty if I did not hold you——"

He frowned and broke off. On the veranda outside the court-room there was a commotion, sounds of a struggle, of men breathing hard, of loud voices, of an "In the King's name" in the cool tones of the constabulary officer. Then the spectators by the door parted to form a lane down which two native constables propelled the unwilling Manuel Alvez.

"Ah," said Magistrate Henderson, gratification in his voice, as the smiling officer of constabulary followed his prisoner. "I thought when I saw Manuel so interested in the progress of this hearing that it was an opportune time to search his lugger. Evidently I was right. But stand him aside, Mr. Parsons, until I have disposed of this other affair."

Brennan had turned with the others at this unexpected interruption. Now his eyes were fixed upon the constabulary officer and the things which he carried in his hands.

"My poke!" he cried.

He pointed to the buckskin bag which Officer Parsons had dropped upon the magistrate's desk.

"See! The blood-stain upon the side. The short thong. It's my poke, Mr. Henderson!"

Then comprehension burst upon him and he whirled upon the half-caste.

"You robbed me," he accused with blazing eyes. "You hit me on the head up there on the Gira, took my poke and left me that worthless thing there, filled with pyrites. Why, it must have been you who killed poor old Tom Conley."

Magistrate Henderson had been examining the rifle which Parsons had laid with the other evidence. He held up a hand for silence.

"It begins to look as if you were right," he said, slowly, "for this is undoubtedly the rifle which Conley carried, a Government rifle with which I equipped him when he started on his last trip. Here is the number and the records will show it was issued to him."

He laid the weapon down and straightened up in his chair.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I shall now divulge certain things you do not know. Two years ago Mr. Conley came to me, knowing that I was a bit of a geologist, and showed me a piece of this stuff which long has been regarded as pyrites and worthless. I have no doubt that you who are diggers have thrown away much of it in your time. But Mr. Conley had been a miner in Tasmania and he had there seen a rare metal, osmiridium. He believed that it was osmiridium which he had found here in New Guinea. After an investigation I reached the same conclusion.

"Mr. Conley was without funds. I obtained from the Government at Port Moresby a subsidy of five hundred pounds to stake him for a prospecting trip in search of osmiridium. This was to be kept a secret unless he was successful, because the Governor had no wish to encourage false hopes in others which might result in a repetition of the misery and hardships of the gold boom. We know Mr. Conley found what he went after, for he showed his poke and its contents to the magistrate at Kokoda before whom he paid off his boys, just before he started for the coast alone.

"His body, as I have told you, was found floating off shore soon afterwards by a Government patrol officer. This week a police boat discovered that near that spot is a cave used as a cache for illicit cargoes by Manuel Alvez. The evidence as I have sketched it is not proof conclusive that Manuel Alvez killed Thomas Conley, but it is sufficient to warrant me in holding him for trial."

He waited until the three cheers and a tiger his words evoked had died away, then addressed Brennan.

"Mr. Brennan," he said, "you are discharged from custody."

Again he waited for the cheers to subside. "I regret what has happened, but it can be turned into profit for you, sir. Under the agreement between the Government and Mr. Conley, any osmiridium he found was to be equally divided. Unless Mr. Conley's heirs are found in time his share reverts

to the Government, too. But in any event, by our laws, any person who recovers lost Government property is entitled to ten per cent. of its value. I shall be very glad to file for you a claim to ten per cent. of the Government's share of the contents of this poke. It will come to a tidy sum, not bad at all for a man who brought in lost Government property without knowing it."

For a moment Brennan scratched his grizzled head, then:

"Aw, blow the osmiridium," he said. "I want my poke and a go at that farm in Queensland."

# INSCRIPTION ROCK

## *by* Edwin L. Sabin

THE National Monument of El Morro, or Inscription Rock, is located thirty-five miles east of Zuñi, in Valencia County, western New Mexico. The mesa has the remains of two ancient pueblos upon its top; but the main interest attaches to the scores of messages engraved upon its sides, in Spanish, Latin and English, and dating back to Juan de Oñate, conquistador of 1606. Like Independence Rock of the old Oregon Trail, what sights this rock has seen in the days when Spanish soldier, friar and traveler arrived, registered, and passed!

The rock was not discovered to general knowledge until 1849, when upon military reconnaisance the expedition of Lieutenant-Colonel John M. Washington, Governor of New Mexico, out to overawe the Navahos, arrived at Zuñi—itself discovered anew by the doughty Colonel A. W. Doniphan in a side trip upon his march from Leavenworth to Chihuahua, 1846.

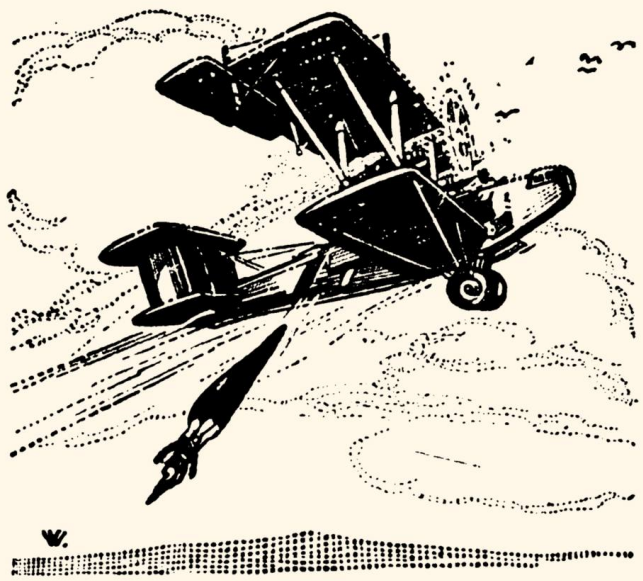
On September 17, 1849, on the march east from Zuñi there came to Lieutenant James H. Simpson, Topographical Engineers, in the Washington column, one Mr. Lewis, a trader among the Navahos, who offered to take the lieutenant to a great rock whose faces contained "half an acre of inscriptions, many of them very beautiful." The majority of the column scoffed at the Lewis story as "gammon," and the lieutenant himself was rather tolerant. But he went with Richard Kern, the zealous sketch artist, and Bird, a civilian employee.

After about eight miles they approached "a quadrangular mass of sandstone rock, of a pearly-whitish aspect, from two hundred to two hundred and fifty feet in height," with buttresses and domes. This they skirted for about a mile on its north side, when Lewis ran and climbed a mound at its northeast corner, scanned it, and cried out. They too ran and peered and saw. Then in wild excitement they set at work copying the inscriptions, being thus occupied from noon to sunset.

They laid off in order to climb the mesa. Upon the top they found pueblo ruins two hundred and six by three hundred and seven feet square. They descended in the dusk, camped at a cold spring amidst rocks and pine-trees in an angle of the south base; slept ill by reason of their excitement, the hard bed and the howling of coyotes; and at three in the morning got up to breakfast and be ready to finish the copying.

At eight o'clock they started on to rejoin the column. They left their own inscription, "Lt. J. H. Simpson, U. S. A., and R. H. Kern, artist, visited and copied these inscriptions, September 17, 1849." This, and an inscription, "O. R., March 19, 1836," were the only English words upon the rock; but many a name has been placed there since—not a few inconsequential.

Who was "O. R." of 1836—the first American, beaver-hunter or trader, to place his initials upon this Spanish signboard of the Southwest desert? Juan de Oñate, 1606, was the founder of Spanish Santa Fé itself, that same year. Don Diego de Vargas, 1692, was reconquering the Pueblos and regaining Sante Fé after the bloody revolution of 1680. But of the significance of these names and others Lieutenant Simpson was ignorant; and that which appeals in him was his fine enthusiasm of an adventurer whose mind is open to the romance of the long trail.



# HELP FROM HEAVEN

by

## Thomson Burtis

*Author of "The Education of Snapper McNeil," "Corrigan," etc.*

SEELEYVILLE and Windham are twelve miles apart, and from time immemorial there has been a continuous rivalry between them. Years ago Windham put one over on Seeleyville by being chosen as the county seat. Seeleyville countered by taking the largest cotton gin in the State away from Windham, when wealthy old George Townsend was wavering between the two towns as a location for his enterprise.

The court-house in Windham was stood off by a really beautiful town hall in Seeleyville. When Windham paved her streets Seeleyville was right at her heels, and finally took the lead when Mr. Townsend built and operated a large department store which, through the variety of its wares and fairness of its prices, simply compelled a large number of Windham people to do their trading in Seeleyville, unless they wanted to travel the hundred miles to San Antonio.

For years the youth of each place were steeped in the tradition that nothing good could come out of Nazareth, Nazareth being the other town. And that spirit was crystallized and condensed and found its only physical outlet in the annual series of three games between the baseball teams of the two municipalities.

Not so many years ago there were killings at those games. To this day the white-hot rivalry is responsible for many a fight before, during, and after the games. Probably the comparatively huge crowd which watches every game is the most peculiar and spectacular gathering which ever turned sport into something so important that it transcends healthy rivalry and becomes the camouflaged struggle for supremacy in all things. There is something deadly in the hushed, strained spectators who watch that series.

All of which helps to explain what took place in the office of Mr. James Corden the night before the final and deciding game. Corden was by way of being the leading citizen of Windham. He owned a large ranch a few miles from town, was a cotton-seed broker in season, dabbled in real estate and ran the town from town pump to town marshal. He was a tall, spare man, almost totally bald. His long, thin face and cold gray eyes told the story of his checkered career in Texas—he had the look of an old-timer who had fought with both gun and brain.

His office was in the Corden Building, the most imposing structure in town aside from the court-house. Val Simpson, captain of the Windham team, was the second to arrive.

"Good evening, Mr. Corden," he said respectfully, stealing a puzzled glance at the rather loudly dressed young man who was casually smoking a cigaret while his feet rested comfortably on Corden's desk.

"Evenin', Val. Meet Mr. Fish, who's figurin' on playin' short for us tomorrow, as you know. He's got a contract from me for six months' work on the ranch, which keeps us clear."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Fish," returned Simpson, shaking hands awkwardly.

Fish had been shortstop on the San Antonio team of the Texas League the year before. He did not get up to shake hands.

"Who else is coming?" inquired Simpson.

He did not quite dare to ask directly the reason for the sudden call from Corden.

"Lonny Baker and Babe Lord and Cal Faber," returned Corden in his measured, deliberate speech.

The big, clumsy-looking captain twisted his soft hat in his hands and appraised the nonchalant Mr. Fish with half-embarrassed, sidelong glances. He was a professional, and as such entitled to his due meed of respect from the Windham first baseman.

"Heard you been havin' some trouble with Pasquale Nervantes," he ventured at length.

"Yes—that —— spig has been layin' down for the last three months, I found out. Let a big bunch of cattle go to —— with the worms and never turned over a hand. I fired him today without lettin' him draw his time."

"They were sayin' down-town that he——"

"Said he'd get even with me," Corden remarked carelessly, secure in his power.

As he lighted a cigar the sound of tramping feet coming down the hall reached the men in the meagerly furnished office. Six straight-backed chairs, a big desk and another smaller one for a stenographer took up most of the room. A huge safe and a filing-cabinet supplied the rest of the equipment.

The door opened and three men entered, the two younger ones greeting Corden with marked respect. Faber, a middle-aged man with a tendency toward plumpness, treated the great man with more familiarity. He had been Corden's right-hand man for several years.

"Well, what's the lay, boss?" he inquired after Fish had been introduced all around. Corden drew his heavy eyebrows together and expelled a great cloud of smoke before replying.

"When I tell you, you boys'll throw a fit," he remarked. "To make a long story short, Seeleyville has got hold of Dick Alden to pitch for 'em tomorrow!"

"The —— you say!"

It was a chorus on the part of Faber and little Babe Lord. Lonny Baker said nothing, but drew on his cigaret with constantly accelerating rapidity.

"Who is this Alden—Christy Mathewson?" inquired Fish flippantly, his small eyes roving from one eloquent face to another.

"Just about, as far as we're concerned," admitted Simpson dully. "I thought he was in France yet, and wounded besides."

"He was in France and he was wounded," returned Corden. "The fact is I saw in the San Antone *Express* a year back that his leg was all shot, and one arm besides. When I heard today that he was to pitch tomorrow, though, I changed my ideas. Catch old George Townsend and Blair Kelly and that crowd pitchin' any cripple tomorrow!"

"I still don't get a ray o' light in my bean," stated Fish to Corden.

Baker and Lord were talking excitedly in undertones.

"Well, I can give it to you in short order," was the grim reply.

The others ceased talking abruptly.

"I suppose you took my tip and bet your wad on Windham tomorrow, didn't you?"

"I sure did," replied Fish airily. "You told me that what I bet would be all velvet, and that with this world-beatin' home-grown battery o' yours just back from France with A.E.F. wins on their belt to add to their record around here, Windham couldn't lose."

"And I meant it. Fatty Miller and Stew Maynard won two series off of Seeleyville before they went to France, and over there they pitched and caught on a regimental team that won the championship o' the A. E. F. They're good—so —— good that every livin' man in this town has bet all he owned and then some on that game tomorrow. I got five thousand with Townsend alone."

"Well, why the chills?"

Fish looked around at the others as he asked the question. Their eyes were resting unblinkingly on Corden. Plainly there had been something astounding in the simple statement that Alden was to pitch tomorrow.

"Merely that we'll be going up against a big leaguer who can beat us without an outfield behind him," was the grim reply.

The others nodded soberly.

"Big leaguer! Do you mean to say——"

"Exactly. Before he joined the Air Service in nineteen seventeen he was the youngest pitcher that ever stepped into a

big-time box. He beat us when he was fifteen years old."

"Alden. Who did he work with?" inquired Fish.

"Philadelphia Athletics. Connie Mack farmed him out to the New England League, and when he got back on the tag end of the season he won three straight games. I've traveled a couple of thousand miles a half-dozen times to watch the world's series, and I know a ball-player when I see one. Better men than I am agree with me that Dick Alden is as great a natural pitcher as ever threw a ball."

"You're —— right!" put in Faber excitedly. "Why, he——"

"Will just stand us on our heads," Simpson finished moodily. "Man, I'm just as scared o' him as I would be o' Walter Johnson. There just *ain't* any more speed than he's got!"

"Which means we lose our dough, eh?" inquired Fish.

"A lot of it—and what is more important, the series!"

Corden was sportsman enough, or hater of Seeleyville enough, really to put the winning of the series ahead of his five thousand dollars. George Townsend's crowing would be more unpalatable than the loss of the money.

"Well, it looks to me like I'm rooked," remarked Fish nastily.

"Not at all, not at all," Corden assured him hastily.

Fish was a real ball-player, and as such to be placated; at least until after the game.

"Right up to one hour ago Seeleyville was going to pitch old John Cohalan," Corden continued. "He once was a big-timer with the Giants, but now all he has left is the old headwork. Miller and Maynard getting back when they did, and Cohalan pitching for them, made it a cinch that we'd win this final game."

"Well, they've foxed us to a hard-oil finish!" exclaimed Lonny Baker.

He was a thin-chested, sallow youngster who smoked cigarets in a steady stream, hung around the pool-hall most of the time and played one of the best games of ball at second base that a man ever looked at.

"We ain't got a chance, —— 'em," mourned Simpson. "Why, down on the streets right now they're featurin' Fatty and Stew as though they'd already won, and every line between here and Seeleyville is busy tryin' to bet more money down."

There was a subtle disposition on the part of every one in the big, bare office to feel that Windham had been unfairly treated. As often happens, their disappointment and chagrin drove them into a frame of mind where they considered themselves the victims of a crooked deal.

"What I wanta know is, how does this here Alden pitch for 'em within the law?" queried Fish, his face sullen.

He had bet every dollar he owned on the game.

"You made me sign a contract and start to work yesterday so's this idea o' every player havin' to be a three-month resident of else a real home boy would hold."

"That agreement came about to prevent spending too much money for professional players," explained Corden. "It got so that both towns were broke after the series, payin' every ball-player from New York to Omaha to come down and play for us. Nowadays we got to prove that a player has either lived three consecutive months at some time or other in the town he's playin' for or else has got a honest-to —— job or something to prove he's going to live there. That's the reason for your contract. And Dick Alden was born in Seeleyville—lived there till he was three or four and his folks moved to San Antone. The whole thing just amounts to makin' a legal requirement for players, and Alden, because he once lived his three years in Seeleyville, is O. K. to play as far as the agreement goes."

"No way out of it then, I guess. From what you say we'll have about as much chance against him as a German would to be mayor o' Paris."

Corden smoked equably, his cold, heavy-lidded gaze roving from one dejected face to another. The emotions of his henchman were writ plainly for all to read. Something had been put over on them, and their resentment had in it that quality of injured innocence, of being victims of an unfair subterfuge, which so often makes the taking of a legitimate advantage seem illegal to the loser in any proposition.

After an interval of heavy silence Corden spoke.

"There is a way," he announced. "For the sake of winning the series and collecting our money, Alden must not pitch."

The four men looked at him eagerly.

"Draw in closer so I won't have to talk loud."

They lost no time in obeying him.

He talked slowly for a few minutes, and as he outlined his scheme his listeners gradually brightened until finally their faces literally beamed.

"Fish and Lonny and you, Babe, will pull it," he finished. "And mind you, no dirty work. This boy has been flying overseas, and he's all wool and a yard wide. I know his folks. He will be treated with the utmost consideration. The man that disobeys my orders will wish he'd never been born."

He spoke with the arrogance of years of power in his little circle, and the confidence of a man whose desires are law.

Faber lingered behind the others.

"Looks as though Seeleyville'd be tied up tighter'n a drum," he remarked.

Corden permitted himself a slow smile.

"I guess so, Cal."

"Seen anything more of Pasquale?"

Corden shook his head.

"That four-flushing, chicken-livered crook would run if he saw me a mile away," he replied contemptuously.

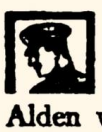
"I'd sort o' be on my guard, Jim. He's sore, and when a Mex is sore he's bad—from behind. How's the wife and family?"

The sudden softening of the hard, lean face was almost startling. Corden had married a girl much younger than himself two years before, and idolized her to an extent which was quite beyond the power of those who knew him best to appreciate. Two weeks before she had presented him with a baby boy. That was quite a night in the history of Windham.

"Fine, Cal—couldn't be better. And I got to mosey along to get back to 'em."

"Well, give the missus my best, and shake hands with the kid for me."

"He'll be able to do that little thing before long, too," laughed the suddenly genial Corden. "I wish he was old enough to be in that game tomorrow!"



FOUR hours after the brief conference which had taken place in Corden's office Lieutenant Richard Alden was strolling down the main street of Seeleyville, on his way back to the hotel. He had spent a most enjoyable evening at Mr. Townsend's home. Due to the fact that his unexpected return from overseas, followed by orders to Donovan Field, near San Antonio, had happened only a few days before, Townsend's house had been filled with guests for the series before Seeleyville had learned that their one-time pitching ace was available for the deciding game. Hence Alden had been put up at the hotel.

Life seemed very good to him as he walked slowly down the darkened street. It was good to be back in the States again, and best of all to be stationed almost at home. Being twenty-two and a very normal young man, it was gratifying to have men either greet him with affectionate admiration, or else look at him with awed respect, depending on the degree of their acquaintance. Seeleyville's hopes were pinned on his good right arm, and he looked forward with the keenest zest to that game on the morrow.

As always when he thought of baseball, there was a swift stab of pain as he remembered that his wounds would forever debar him from the big leagues. He had been shot down behind the German lines, and his wounds, plus several months as a prisoner, had been fatal to his chances to reach the top as a pitcher. One game a month was his limit now. That game he could pitch as well as he ever could, but his right leg and arm needed a full month's rest now before they could equal the strain of another nine-inning effort.

He was a sight for sore eyes, as Mr. Townsend privately expressed it to his wife. Six feet one, and weighing an even two hundred without a trace of fat, Dick seemed to be literally overflowing with joyous life. Sparkling eyes looked out from a freckled face that was topped with curly red hair, and farther down a forty-inch, barrel-like chest and powerful shoulders tapered to the small waist and slim hips of the natural athlete.

He was arrayed as the lilies of the field, likewise. A cocky overseas hat was on one side of his head, and below the beribboned blouse a pair of light-colored breeches, commonly denominated "pink," contrasted with glossy boots.

This ice-cream effect in haberdashery suited the vivid Alden perfectly somehow. He was the type of man so overflowing with life that he seemed to tingle with it, and those around him always felt its influence. There was nothing quiet or restrained about him or his appearance. He was a perfect young animal, living life to the full.

Ahead of him the single light in front of the hotel shed a pool of dim radiance on the sidewalk. The street was deserted—it was after midnight. Two hours before it had been thick with people, all discussing the game to come and eagerly speculating on the size of the score by which Seeleyville would win.

As in so many Texas towns, the main street paralleled the railroad track. A carefully nursed park partially screened the unsightly cattle corrals along the track, and all the stores were on one side of the street, fronting the park. Dick was within two hundred yards of the hotel entrance when a Ford car turned into the street and came to a stop alongside him.

A tall young man in a linen duster and a soft hat pulled well down over his face hopped out and approached the flyer.

"Is this Lieutenant Alden, sir?" he asked respectfully.

His voice was gruff and throaty.

"It sure is."

"I was passing Mr. Townsend's a minute ago, and he asked me to get you at the hotel and bring you back to his house. He said he had something quite important to see you about."

"That's funny. I just left there. Howsomever, it won't take but a minute to find out, I guess."

The driver opened the door of the tonneau and Dick stepped in. In a moment the car had turned around and was on its way back toward the Townsend home, which was on the outskirts of town.

As the little machine sped toward its destination Dick wondered idly what it was Mr. Townsend wanted. Perhaps he had heard something about the game. It was to be played in Windham, and it was not beyond the bounds of probability that news more or less distressing to Seeleyville might have reached Mr. Townsend's ears.

They had left the settled portion of town, and the big Townsend home was discernible ahead, set on a low-rolling hill well back from the road, when the silent driver jammed on the brakes opposite a clump of mesquite. Three men came out of the shadow. Dick had not seen them before.

"Want a ride?" inquired the driver.

"Why, hello, George," responded the smallest of the three. "We were hiking it back to the ranch—just stopped off for a rest and a smoke."

"Soon as I drop the lieutenant here at the Townsends' I'll run you out," offered the driver.

"Thanks."

Two of the men climbed in beside Dick, the third in front with the driver. He did not get a good look at them—there was no moon, and it was very dark.

"All O. K.?" asked the driver, looking around.

"Right!"

So suddenly that Alden did not have the slightest opportunity to resist, the men beside him pinioned his arms firmly. The man in front dived over the back of the seat, and in a trice had the flyer blindfolded. For a few seconds his powerful body struggled blindly to shake off his captors, but they succeeded in binding both his legs and arms without much trouble.

The car turned around again and set out in a new direction. In a moment Dick was completely lost.

Before long the hand which had been clamped over his mouth was taken away.

"Now get this straight, lieutenant," said a voice in tones so low that they barely reached his ears. "You won't be harmed in any way, so don't get restive. You'll have a good place to sleep, and tomorrow afternoon you'll be free."

"Tomorrow afternoon!" sputtered the enraged flyer, his wrath almost choking him. "If I ever find you thugs again——"

"But you won't," chuckled the same voice.

It was pitched so low that it would be impossible to recognize it again.

The uselessness of protesting was apparent. Nothing Alden could say would do any good, so he merely sat still and took out some of his wrath in assorted cursing of himself, for his lamblike entry into the hands of his captors, and of those gentlemen themselves. The big airman was a seething volcano of helpless anger. There was only one explanation possible—a plot to keep him out of that game on the morrow. And chances for escape were not promising.

In a few minutes every one save the driver got out of the car. Then for interminable hours the jitney jolted along, leaping from peak to peak on the road, which was an average Texas highway. Dick half-lay along the narrow rear seat, helpless in his bonds. He tried time after time to get into a position where he might possibly

be able to wear through the rope around his wrists by rubbing it against something, but to no avail. He could move neither hand nor foot.

There was more than the resentment against his predicament and the missing of the game to contribute to his unhappiness. He thought of the dismay of Seeleyville when he could not be found, and the ugly rumors of bribery and double-crossing which would circulate when he did not appear. Unless by some means or other he found ways to prove that he had been forcibly abducted there would always be some one to say that he had sold out to Windham. As between Seeleyville and Windham there was never any inclination to be charitable, and bitter disappointment was in store for Seeleyville.

Blindfolded and bound, his thoughts raced on in this strain until he felt a hatred for the men who had kidnaped him, that was murderous. It would have boded ill for the nonchalant driver had the airman found some way to get into action.

Finally he fell into troubled, uneasy slumber. He had no idea where he was, or how long he had been riding.

He was awakened finally by the driver's hand on his shoulder.

"Here we are—climb out," said that gentleman.

"What if I don't?" inquired the enraged flyer, his predicament sweeping back on him in a depressing wave.

"You'll just spend several hours on that seat instead of in a comfortable bed," chuckled the driver. "To say nothing of food!"

"My legs being tied tighter than ——."

"My mistake, lieutenant," was the chortling response.

The driver was in excellent humor. Dick tried his best to recognize the voice, and, failing that, to file it in his memory for future reference. It was so purposely husky, however, that it was evident that it would be a very difficult matter ever to place it again.

The man carefully loosened the leg straps just enough to let Dick proceed with mincing steps. With his captor's hand guiding him the airman tottered into what seemed to be a small cabin.

"Here's the bed," he announced, shoving Dick down on it. "In a minute we'll have some beans and coffee. Want your blouse off?"

"Kidnaping with modern improvements!" sneered Alden. "I don't need any manicuring or hair-curling tonight, papa."

"All right, if that's the way you feel about it," was the equable retort. "I'll get the chow, after making you safe again."

He tightened the bindings on Dick's legs once more and then went out. In a few moments he placed a tin plate before the flyer. He loosened the heavy twine around Dick's wrists a trifle until Dick could separate his hands slightly. The bandage was still on his eyes.

"The beans are right out of a can, and the coffee is hot from a thermos bottle," the man assured him, shoving a fork into his hand.

With the solicitous help of the other man Dick succeeded in eating without too much discomfort.

"How about a cigaret?" was the next inquiry.

The blindfolded flyer nodded, and in a trice felt a cigaret in his mouth, which his guard lighted.

"What time is it?" inquired Alden as the soothing effect of the smoke helped him decide that he might as well take things as philosophically as he could.

"Five A.M. By the time you wake up from your healthy sleep it'll be time for me to let you loose."

"Thanks for them kind words," returned Dick, smoking moodily.

Silence fell, and not a word was spoken until the flyer threw away his cigaret. Then he said—

"Well, papa, lean me back on the pillow, tuck me in and sing me to sleep."

"I'll do that little thing."

Under his guidance Dick's curly red head found the pillow; but for another hour there was no sleep for him. There was no chance for escape. In addition to being bound hand and foot his captor had passed another length of rope around his body and under the bed.

For interminable minutes the airman's mind dwelt on the coming game, only a few hours away. With maddening vividness there marched in never ending array a stream of mental pictures—the great crowd, the enthusiasm, the consternation of Seeleyville's adherents, the concealed glee of Windham. Over and over again his mind covered the sickening circle until he fell asleep from sheer exhaustion.

He had no idea how long he had slept when he woke up, but even through the blindfold over his eyes he could feel the light of day.

"Where are you, papa?" he inquired.

"Johnny on the spot," was the prompt reply.

"I'd give six months' pay to have my health, my sight, and one hand for just about a minute," remarked Dick.

His voice was smooth and silky, but in his mind there was the lust to punish the mocking, chuckling man who held him. That game——

"What time is it?"

"One o'clock Saturday. In one hour I leave you."

The game was called at two thirty. Undoubtedly he was at least fifty miles from Windham, and probably would be left by himself until after the game.

"I'm awful afraid you won't be able to pitch this afternoon, lieutenant," pursued his companion. "I'll fix things so you can work yourself free in a couple hours if you try hard. That'll occupy your time up to say four o'clock, and then you're quite a ways from anywhere——"

"Look out or you'll get talking too much, papa," snapped Dick viciously.

IT SEEMED as if that miserable hour would never end. Right then the roads into Windham were black with never ending lines of cars—the ballgrounds filling with people—and what bitterness in the hearts of Seeleyville! The tortured flyer strove to keep his mind off the subject, but he was helpless to shake off the seething thoughts that filled his brain.

Finally his host, who had been outside tinkering with the car, came in.

"I'm leavin', with my best regards," he announced.

For a moment he fooled with the lashing around Dick's wrists, loosening it.

"There you are. Try hard and she'll loosen little by little so you can work free. It'll be a long job, but you can do it. We got ways o' finding out whether you make it by nightfall or not. If you don't there'll be some o' your folks out to get you. Good-by, lieutenant."

In a moment Dick heard the flivver tearing off.

For a moment he gathered himself together. Then with every bit of strength he had in his big body he strained at his bonds. They gave perceptibly. Fighting off the frenzy that almost possessed him, he forced himself to be calm, gather his strength, and go at the thing in a way that would waste no effort.

The guard had not counted on the strength contained in that magnificent body. Ten minutes from the time of his departure Dick put all he had into a last effort to free himself. With the cords of his neck and temples swelling under the strain and the blood pounding in his ears he threw every ounce of strength into a mighty heave. He felt his bonds slipping slowly.

As long as he could he held to his task. Then he started working one hand free. In a moment, with the skin burning viciously, he had it loose.

It was the work of a moment to free his legs and tear the bandage from his eyes. Without a glance at the cabin he burst out the open door and ran down the lane that led away from the cabin.

A few hundred yards between thick mesquite, and he came out on a smooth macadam highway. He recognized it immediately as the Harlen Road. He was less than three miles from the outskirts of San Antonio and only four from Donovan Field, which could be reached through a short-cut over a dirt road.

The sun poured a flood of golden glory from a cloudless sky, and off to the westward a few airplanes over Donovon Field showed black against the dazzling light. The drone of an automobile motor from around the curve reached Alden's ears as a desperate plan leaped full-born into his mind.

A big roadster came in sight around the curve, its open cutout filling the air with a smooth hum, Dick leaped to the middle of the road, his hand upraised.

The roadster slowed down obediently, its one occupant appearing to be uncomfortable as well as surprized. In truth Dick was not a prepossessing object. His clothes were wrinkled and stained, his blazing hair in wild disorder above a face that was white beneath the freckles.

He leaped to the running-board before the car had stopped.

"Drive me to Donovan Field as fast as the Lord'll let you," he yelled, his burning eyes boring into those of the man driving.

"W-Why——"

"Don't talk. Don't you see I'm an officer in the Army? I've just escaped from a gang of thugs, and I've to get the chase started. And, by ——, if you don't start right now I'll throw you out of your own —— car and drive it myself!"

There was no room for doubt that he meant exactly what he said, or more. In a few seconds fifty miles an hour showed on the speedometer, and the needle was crawling up.

"Never mind the speed laws; and take the short-cut!"

The stocky, fat-faced young man who was driving nodded. As they roared along the smooth road Dick yelled his story into the driver's ear, and a widening grin was his reward. The man settled lower in his seat, and proceeded to prove that he could handle his car to the queen's taste.

Alden had no time to surmise very extensively about the whereabouts of his enforced guardian. Probably he was sending his jitney over the road home at high speed. There was no time to make an attempt to have him captured. He was probably a very small hireling in the scheme anyway.

In seven minutes they shot through the gates of Donovan Field like a black meteor, leaving astounded guards with their mouths open.

"To Field One!" yelled Dick, removing, his blouse as the big car ate up the distance, its horn sounding a continuous alarm that brought stenographers and enlisted men to windows and doors.

They skidded to a standstill before the hangar which housed the airplane department of the Mechanics' School. To his unutterable relief Dick glimpsed his old overseas friend, Mr. "Sleepy" Spears, through the open window. Spears was in charge of the airplane department of the School. For a wonder, he was on the job.

It took Dick about thirty seconds to tell his story and explain what he wanted. Stocky, lounging, slow Sleepy Spears became galvanized into life.

"Get Correll and Cox!" he roared to his orderly.

In a moment the two non-coms. came in on the run.

"Correll, get that parachute D.H. on the line warmed up, ready to go in five minutes. Cox, get one of those folded parachutes, inspect it and strap it on Lieutenant Alden. Orderly, find an extra pair of goggles and a helmet."

The three men were off in a rush to do his bidding. As they walked through the big hangar toward the line Dick elaborated on the story and explained more fully what he wanted Sleepy to do.

"It's only two-thirty right now, you see," he finished. "With luck we can make Windham by three. I can't take time to find a landing-field, but I can get there nearly on time with the 'chute. The game was scheduled for two-thirty, but they might be late getting started. You won't get in trouble, will you?"

"Sure," grinned Spears. "But I should become agitated about that."

As they walked the hundred yards down the edge of the field to the line-up of ships in front of the engineering hangers, a big white De Haviland burst into roaring life. It was one of a long line of airplanes of varying types. Out on the field other planes were landing and taking off frequently.

"Correll's got her going," remarked Sleepy. "Some ship, too—assigned to our department for parachute work only."

"Here you are, lieutenant," gasped a voice behind them, and Cox came tearing up to them carrying the big parachute pack.

"All inspected?" inquired Spears.

"Yes, sir."

The lanky non-com. had it packed on Alden's back in less than a minute, the harness fitting snugly over his shoulders and under his arms.

"Now all I have to do is pull the ripcord and jump, eh?" asked Alden with studied carelessness.

"Uh-huh. By the way, when did you jump before?"

"Quite a while ago," was the airy reply. "In France."

The roar of the warming ship grew louder as Correll hastened the process of preparing the motor for the air. The orderly was waiting with helmet and goggles.

Dick eased his big form into the back seat with much difficulty. He was big enough himself, and the unwieldly pack made matters much more intricate. He sat tensely forward, grudging every moment of delay. His stained white shirt and sinfully blotched breeches were in full harmony with the strained face and burning eyes. Curious pilots clustered around in front of

the ship, drawing from Spears a brief résumé of the story.

Correll pulled back the throttle, and the ship ceased its straining against the big wooden wheel-blocks. Spears was in the front seat almost before the sergeant was out. Mechanics jerked away the blocks, and with full motor Sleepy turned the ship around.

A second's glance was enough to show that all instruments were reading correctly. Sleepy was headed directly across the narrow way of the field. No ships happened to be landing, however, so he jammed on the throttle and set himself behind the stick. In a trice the tail was up—a hundred yards, and he rocked it off the ground.

For a second he held it scraping the grass and then lifted the big bomber in a steep climbing turn that reversed their direction. He headed eastward at a hundred feet, the motor droning wide open. He barely missed a water-tower, and turned for a brief grin at his passenger.

There was no circling the field for altitude or to test the motor thoroughly. When Lieutenant Sleepy Spears did get into action it was pretty to watch, as little Al Johnson, the engineer officer, once remarked.

He put the nose of the D. H. down until the ship was level and kept his hand on the throttle to make sure it would stay wide open. As straight as a crow flies the great ship sped on its way at an even hundred and twenty miles an hour, so low that telegraph wires seemed uncomfortably close.

Dick knew every foot of the way, and his guiding finger kept Spears on his course. Below them the ground flashed by with dizzying speed, even to the flyers. Altitude makes a great difference in the sensation of speed. At five thousand feet the ship would have seemed to be literally crawling over the ground.

Dick peered down with a grin at the open-mouthed people below. He could imagine the tremendous roar of the motor, and the appalling speed of the low-flying ship. Every detail was obvious, and in the fun of watching cattle scurry about, people pop out of their houses and autoists straining their necks he forgot for the moment the urgency of his mission.

Meanwhile Sleepy was thinking of nothing but his work. Every minute or so his bent head listened for a miss in the deafening roar of the laboring Liberty. His softly glowing eyes roved from instrument to instrument in the few intervals when he could cease his lookout ahead. He had the motor shutters wide open, and thanked Providence that the motor was heating up to only eighty-eight degrees Centigrade, even at the low altitude and the wicked speed.

He had his hands full handling the ship likewise. The bumps came in close succession, some of them so powerful that they almost wrenched the stick from his hands. A two-hundred-foot rise over a big plowed field would be followed by a sickening drop over a pool of water; once, over a three-mile strip of mesquite, he thought that perhaps the downward current of cool air would carry him into the trees.

There are no such things as air pockets—an air pocket is simply an upward or downward air current, the result of ground conditions. And at a hundred feet on a hot afternoon in Texas, these scrambled currents are at their worst.

Ten minutes out from Donovan Field, and they had picked up the railroad which connected at Seeleyville with the Windham line. Watching Alden's pointing finger, Sleepy gradually drew away on a northern oblique from the railroad, which would give him a short-cut through the angle the railroads made at Seeleyville.

Alden glanced at his watch. Ten minutes of three, and they were over half-way there. He inched himself up in his seat to have a look at the air speed meter in the front seat. As his head came above the level of the windshield the air-blast hit him a staggering blow. Dick fought it long enough to peer over the motionless, leather-covered head of his pilot and discover that a hundred and fifteen miles an hour was showing on the meter.

He sank back in his seat and permitted himself a smile and a long-drawn sigh. He refused to let the coming parachute jump bother him. That is, he tried to dismiss it from his mind.

His groping finger found the ripcord. For a second he shuddered a trifle as he glanced over the side of his cockpit to the step from which he would jump. Then in a rush that left no room for anything but bitter determination came the recollection of the preceding night's events. As Windham loomed ahead and Sleepy stuck the nose of the big white ship upward Dick was a man of one idea, of which a parachute jump was only a very minor part.

The excessive speed carried them up three hundred feet in one zoom, and then Spears kept the nose up as high as he dared to climb fast. A thousand feet would be a minimum at which the jump could be made. Donovan Field regulations said two thousand.

The straining eyes of the airmen picked up the ball-grounds in a few seconds. Alden's heart leaped as he saw the banked mass of black that rimmed the big lot on three sides. Roads leading from the field were clogged with parked automobiles. On the field itself small gray figures dotting its brown expanse showed that the game had started. Suddenly the crowd blossomed into white. A darting figure sped toward first base.

Sleepy made a thousand feet before they reached the field. It looked much smaller, now. The pilot turned and looked at Dick, who promptly drew himself to a standing position. With great difficulty, although the ship was now throttled and climbing, he threw a leg over the side of the cockpit and felt for the step. Finding it, he held on the cowling like grim death while he brought his other foot over to join its mate. He was standing outside the fuselage, facing inward.

They were near the edge of the field, to windward of it. Sleepy had picked up the wind direction from the drifting dust on the diamond. Spears was to be the judge of when to jump—as head of the airplane and parachute departments he had flown dozens of times for parachute work.

Waiting for the sudden stall that would mean to drop off, Dick dared a glance downward. His right elbow was hunched over the cowling, his finger in the ripcord ring. A seemingly never ending expanse of upturned white smudges met his eyes. On the field play had stopped. And the ground was very far away.

Suddenly the ship angled upward and lost speed as Spears stalled it. With an uncontrollable gasp of fear Dick simply fell off the ship backward.

His eyes were closed. He pulled the ripcord mechanically, sudden wonderment filling him as he did not feel any sudden rush of speed. His opened eyes saw nothing clearly for a moment, and then a wrenching snap doubled him up as the parachute whipped out. Then he was swinging calmly, a human pendulum a thousand feet in the air, above the Windham ball-grounds.

Ineffable exultation filled him as the vent in his 'chute closed gradually and constantly lowered his speed, and he could gaze downward at the awe-struck crowd. He had made the grade, outwitted his captors, and best of all could take partial revenge on them, perhaps, by means of propelling a baseball down there during the remaining innings.

"And talk about your grandstand entrances!" grinned the big flyer to himself as he dropped to five hundred feet.

He could almost make out the identity of some of the players.

SPEARS had gaged the jump almost to a hair. The light breeze had drifted him slightly inward over the field—unless something unusual happened he would land almost in the middle of the diamond, where there would be many hands to prevent him from being dragged.

The drone of the airplane motor diminished gradually as Spears flew along in search of a landing-field. It was peaceful and calm up there—a strange difference from the ear-splitting roar usually associated with being in the air. Below him the tree-rimmed field, with Windham itself adjoining it, stretched comfortably. There would be no danger of alighting in trees or wires.

As he dropped to two hundred feet and was readying himself for hitting the ground, one of those freakish things happened which often change the destiny of more important things than a baseball game.

Wise old John Cohalan, pitching for Seeleyville, had been as motionless as any one else on the field, watching the descent of his relief pitcher. Suddenly an idea permeated his brain—one which would pull him out of a bad hole. The bases were crowded with Windham runners. There were two men out, and two strikes on the man at bat. Fatty Miller, the receiving end of Windham's star battery, was the batsmen.

He was still in the batter's box. In fact, no one had moved from the time Dick's big silk umbrella had fluttered out a thousand feet above the field. And the umpire, as much surprized as any one, had not officially called off play.

Cohalan caught Carney's eye. The little

catcher set himself, careless of the rapidly descending Alden. Like a flash Cohalan threw the ball, as straight as a die for the heart of the plate.

But Fatty Miller caught the ruse in time. His swing was hurried but true. He met the speeding ball flush on the nose and lined it straight over Cohalan's head going higher all the while.

Dick dropping earthward a hundred feet high and almost directly over second base, felt his 'chute quiver. With a quick stab of fear he looked upward to see the ball disentangle itself from the shroud-lines and drop lazily downward.

Hart Gibson, the spry little shortstop of the Seeleyville team, was on the spot. Amid the surprized roar of crowds and player alike he caught the ball.

A mighty surge of shouting jostling men inundated the diamond in a resistless wave. Dick, loosening his muscles and grasping the shroudlines firmly to pull himself up, landed with a thud, almost unnoticed. There was a quick, darting pain in his injured ankle as he hit the hard-packed diamond, but it was gone before Gibson and Sacker, the second baseman, caught the flapping parachute and helped Dick to his feet.

"Don't ask me any questions now. Cut this —— thing off me and let me get into a uniform while everybody is arguing!" he said rapidly, his face one huge grin as he surveyed the coming crowd.

The last Windham runner was fighting his way through them to the home plate in the event that perhaps the scores would be allowed.

He followed Gibson at a run, escaping the swirling mob on the field. Over behind the grandstand, in Cohalan's car, he and the old ex-Giant changed clothes. Meanwhile a messenger was dispatched for Cohalan's own garments. It was the end of the second inning, he learned, and there had been no scoring.

Dick told Gibson the story of his abduction as he changed. The stocky, scarred shortstop, a cowpuncher, swore feelingly at the recital. Carney, the slender, frail-looking catcher, came running around the edge of the stand, his glove looking ludicrously large at the end of his thin arms.

"Wanta warm up while they're arguin'?" he demanded without preamble.

He was red-headed, like Dick, and now his boyish face was white with excitement. From the field the undertone of the crowd plainly reached the little knot of players.

Dick borrowed Cohalan's glove and started to pitch to Carney while Gibson and the other pitcher looked his stuff over. Fifteen or twenty easy pitches, and he began to put on steam.

Then a few sharp-breaking curves, and finally a pitch into which he put everything he had. There was a dart of white, shoulder high. Without any one, least of all Carney, knowing quite how it happened, no ball met the outstretched hands of the little catcher. Instead, it went cleanly through his bowed legs and bounced away over the grass.

"For the love of Mike, what in —— was that?" queried Cohalan, wondering whether his eyes had misled him.

Carney, after one amazed look, had gone after the ball.

"That, John, is a product of the recent war," grinned Dick. "See that?"

He held up a sizable thumb for inspection. On the inside edge was a hard, bone-like protuberance.

"A bullet did that," Dick explained. "Wait till the ball gets here and I'll show you something."

In a moment the white pellet thumped into his hands, and he gripped it so that the lump on his thumb dug into a seam on the bottom of the ball as he held it.

"A little snap, a lot of speed, and a little moistening on the upper side of the ball——"

Cohalan nodded slowly.

"Did anybody ever hit it?" queried Gibson.

"Well, it's the most unhittable ball I ever threw," returned Dick.

"And the most uncatchable son-of-a-gun I ever muffed," declared Carney, who had come up to join the conversation, carrying his glove under his arm. "For the sake o' keepin' every third striker off first, tip me off when that's comin'."

"I will," promised Dick. "Well, let's join the angry mob and see what's up."

On their way around the stand Carney learned the reason for Alden's absence at the start of the game, and as he heard his brown eyes began to flame.

"We got to beat 'em, lieutenant," he stormed, his voice cracking.

"One way or another," drawled Gibson with slow emphasis.

They came around the inside edge of the

east stand, close to the backstop. The crowd on the field had dwindled to a hundred, now. Old Mr. Townsend, his ruined hat in one gesticulating hand and his thatch of snow-white hair in wild disorder, was laying down the law to Corden.

Some of the players of each team were taking it easy, but most of them were arguing as loudly as the non-participants. There were fists being shaken in perspiring faces, and some of the faces wore far from agreeable expressions. Around the field on two sides there was a solid banking of men, adding their share to the din. Special deputies every few feet, holding ropes, held them back.

Like a carved statue of immutable law, Mr. George Screed stood on the home plate, a watch in his hand. Mr. George Screed, of San Antonio, was the only umpire who had ever lasted more than one Seeleyville-Windham game through. He had umpired the last five series at an honorarium of fifty dollars per game and the privilege of carrying two guns, which no one doubted he would use on the proper occasion. By mutual agreement, he ran the game from "Play ball!" to the last out.

"What's the argument, Mr. Townsend?" inquired the grinning Alden as he wormed his way through the crowd surrounding the two most prominent debaters.

The tousled old man looked up at Alden with a tiny twinkle dawning in his puckered eyes.

"Screed says the only way to settle it is to rule out that pitch and the hit absolutely, and start where we were before you dropped in on us. The minute anything is allowed, there's a mess. Gibson caught the ball. It might have been a home run—Corden here things it was. But Gibson caught it. If the pitch and hit are allowed, how are you going to get away from the catch? The fact of the matter is——"

"The fact of the matter is that your own pitcher tried to put something over, and Fatty Miller was too wise——"

"And that Screed is going to forfeit this game to Seeleyville in about two minutes unless you see the light, Jim," Townsend cut in on the blazing Corden.

The gaunt ruler of Windham and all who dwelt therein was disgust and rage personified. There was no getting away from Townsend's last statement—and that Alden was on the ground, ready to pitch.

On the outskirts of the group two voices were suddenly raised in anger. A stalwart figure of a man, who had been arguing heatedly with a slim young fellow in cowboy boots and flannel shirt, was now shaking his fist in the other man's face.

"And I say you're a —— liar!"

The high-pitched words cut the excited clamor of the group surrounding Corden and Townsend, and bedlam ended abruptly. Dick, the baseball with which he had been warming up still in his hand, turned quickly toward the voice. He was just in time to see the huge, rough-looking man draw a gun from his pack pocket, where it had been concealed by a long, loosely fitting coat.

Without conscious thought Alden let drive with the baseball. The man was less than fifteen feet away, standing between Dick and the tall, sombreroed young fellow who had given the lie.

The throw went true, and the gun dropped from a raw and bleeding hand as the gunman turned. He plunged for the flyer, bitter oaths ripping from his snarling mouth. Alden set himself to meet the rush, but a dozen men threw themselves between the two and held the wildly struggling Texan.

Once again the waves of spectators started from the side lines, but this time the deputies held them back. Out on the field every man was sobered by what had almost happened.

A bodyguard of a half-dozen Windham men escorted the gunman gently but firmly from the diamond. As they did so a sandy-bearded, crafty-eyed man slipped up to Corden and, under cover of the sudden burst of half-scared talking, whispered rapidly in the great man's ear.

Finally Corden nodded slowly, a grim smile fleeting over his face. There was a way out. The last ten minutes had been a nightmare, not only for him but for a large number of Windham men. Some way or other the rumor of Alden's arrival had spread over Windham the night before, bringing gloom in its wake. Then that morning a vague report which had traveled on the wings of the wind that in some manner Seeleyville had been outwitted brought hope; when the game started with Cohalan pitching there had been joy unconfined in the Windham camp.

No one but the insiders knew the true story, but many suspected somewhat the manner of the project. The airman's

untimely arrival had put Windham's backs against the wall, and of all the enraged and bitterly disappointed people there Corden was the chief.

He rolled and lit a cigaret with studied nonchalance as the bearded man made his way toward Alden, who was talking with Mr. Townsend.

The man touched Dick on the shoulder. As the big flyer turned he saw a back-flung coat, and on the gray flannel shirt beneath was a huge star.

"You are under arrest," stated the sheriff, his narrowed eyes meeting Alden's firmly.

"Under arrest! Why——"

"What do you mean, Sibley!"

Again sudden silence fell as Mr. Townsend, his naturally ruddy face almost purple, towered above the sheriff.

"For unprovoked assault."

Mr. Townsend made two efforts to speak without success. The knot of men, with the ball-players forming a ring around the outside, was silent as death.

When Seeleyville's leading citizen found his tongue, it was not to burst forth into the torrent of wrathful speech that the crowd expected. He turned toward Corden, whose gaunt face loomed above the heads of the men between.

"So you're trying to put this over, are you, Jim?" he inquired, so slowly that there was actually a stop between each word.

"It's open and shut, Mr. Townsend. In order to preserve the peace at a time like this we've got to be strict—can't let anything get by. We've got the other men now, but o' course there's no proof that Sanderson meant to shoot; and as far as this man goes here he had no right assaultin'——"


"LET me say something!"

Alden's pent-up wrath made his interruption of the sheriff's words both loud and impressive. He was literally ablaze, and as he looked around the tight circle and then down at the sheriff he was quivering in every fiber of his big body.

Finally his flaming eyes found Corden's face and stayed there. He had always known of Corden's power in Windham, and somehow or other the whispered conversation between the sheriff and his unofficial chief had caused him to believe that there was evidence enough in hand to put over a bluff.

"Last night I was kidnaped in Seeleyville, held a captive until two o'clock today, and then left bound and blindfolded. My guard overestimated the strength of my bonds, though, and I got loose a few minutes after he left. Well, I got here."

He stopped a moment, his eyes never leaving Corden. Sleepy Spears, his helmet still on and his goggles pushed up, joined the outside rim of the circle quietly. His amazed gaze was fastened on the white face of his brother officer.

"Now, Mr. Corden, how am I sure I was kidnaped to keep me out of this game? And *how do I know who was the big man behind this kidnaping?*"

On the outside of the circle Fish stole a glance at Corden, and then wiped his forehead with a shaking hand. Faber, next to his chief, was as motionless as if made of stone. Little Lonny Baker smoked nervously. So far as that gathering in the middle of the field were concerned, the six thousand people waiting restlessly on the side lines might have been in Peking.

Corden's face was a mask as he waited for Alden to go on.

"Next time, Mr. Corden, Windham had better find a guard that doesn't talk in his sleep!"

For a moment, dead silence; then—

"How do you like that advice, Windham?"

It was Mr. Townsend, and it broke the spell. The Seeleyville players, ready for trouble, burst through the circle, with Spears beside them, and took stations behind Dick. A sudden babble arose, which quieted when Alden shouted—

"Wait a minute!"

His scorching glance swept the Windham contingent with scathing contempt. When he spoke the hot words almost tumbled over each other as if blown from his mouth in the force of his anger.

"I don't know how many of you were in this kidnaping plot, but I do know it wasn't the so-called bums of the town. And right from the time you got me last night up to this minute when I've got your —— sheriff hanging on my arm trying to arrest me for stopping a murder, I want to say that Windham has been the biggest bunch of cheap skates, tin-horn sports and crooks I ever saw—so —— two-for-a-cent that I'd give a year of my life to pitch you to death today.

"And if I get the chance to try it I'll keep my mouth shut about what I know of

my abduction last night. It'll be worth it to beat you out of every nickel you've bet. If you arrest me, sheriff, within five minutes I'll shout to the world some stuff that'll make you empty your jail to make room for some of Windham's leading citizens. Do you get me?"

All that red hair and Irish blood stood for was rampant in the flyer as he dared the crowd, and no one could have told how much he was bluffing. In his state of mind it is probable that he believed all he was saying himself. So far his bluff had not been called—there was every reason to believe his instinct was correct.

The Seeleyville men were triumphant. Men stole puzzled looks at each other. Corden licked his thin lips.

"It strikes me that you're talking wildly, lieutenant," he said softly. "Sheriff, of course I have no power, in fact no one has, to prevent your arresting him. However, I should suggest, in view of the fact that Alden was due to pitch, that you at least postpone the arrest until after the game."

"Ain't you correct!"

It was the slow, amused drawl of Sleepy Spears, standing at Dick's elbow. And the lazy, humorously contemptuous words made Corden flush dully. He gave no other sign of the cold rage that possessed him.

The sheriff, mumbling something indistinguishable, moved away. By common consent the crowd disintegrated as Mr. Townsend yelled—

"Everybody to the side lines!"

The gathering scattered obediently, Seeleyville, players and partizans alike, were jubilant. They did not know the full story, but they knew that somehow Seeleyville had humbled Windham during the last few moments. And the Windham men, smarting under that knowledge as well as Alden's searing words, were in ugly mood.

With mystifying speed the crowd caught the spirit. Before the imperturbable Screed had made his announcements six thousand people were either savagely triumphant or bitter.

The players took their places. The three Windham base-runners found the bases they had occupied before the hit. Amid a silence that was pregnant with possibilities, Dick slowly took his allotted three pitches before Miller took his place as batsman, with his team standing three men on bases, two men out, and two balls and two strikes on him.

With the deadly spirit of the spectators as obvious as their faces Dick prepared to pitch. He had already told Carney what to expect. With his long, moistened fingers gripping the ball tightly he wound up slowly, and then let it fly with all he had. Miller's swing was a split second too late and at least six inches too high.

There was a short, savage bark from the Seeleyville partizans as Windham's chance to make the first score of the game was spoiled, but the usual whole-hearted riotous cheering of a baseball game was absent. That cheer was merely a primitive battle-cry in strange setting.

During Seeleyville's inning—the first of the third—Dick hastily fixed up signals with Carney. It was agreed that he should give the signals instead of the catcher. Nervous as a cat, Alden walked up and down behind the backstop, telling the story of the kidnaping to Mr. Townsend and awaiting the chance to pitch again. He was actually glad when Maynard turned Seeleyville back without a man reaching first.

"Go to it, son!" said Mr. Townsend as the last man flied out.

The old man's hand on his shoulder was like a vise.

Dick walked slowly toward the box. Deliberately he looked around, collecting himself and striving to stave off the quivering, nervous eagerness which had him in its grip. His eyes took in the crowded stands and the closely packed automobiles which stretched far down the foul lines of left and right fields. To the east was Windham, and on the north scattered residences could be seen through the border of trees.

Westward level cotton-fields stretched away to a big white house set on a low-rolling hill. It was all of five miles away, but looked less than half that distance in the clear, golden air.

Behind it towered a huge warehouse or barn of some description. The place probably belong to Corden, Dick reflected as he stood motionless just outside the box, waiting for the fielders to take their places.

His glance rested briefly on Corden, squatting motionless back of the third base line. The young flyer took a long breath and permitted himself a thin-lipped grin as Carney squatted behind the plate, and Maynard, the Windham pitcher, came to bat to start the last half of the third inning.

THEN really started the game that will go down in the melodramatic annals of the Seeleyville-Windham series as the most desperately contested struggle the two rivals ever staged. Maynard went back to his seat on the bench after three pitches. The first two cut the heart of the plate with such blinding speed that he stood helpless in his tracks. The third one was a drop that Carney picked out of the dust.

Lonny Baker, the Windham lead-off man, tried to bunt and popped out to Alden. Fish never touched the ball in three helpless swings.

Inning after inning, his body coiling and uncoiling with the smooth grace of a rawhide whiplash, Dick's long arm shot the ball with terrible force over and around and below the bats of helpless Windham batsmen. Every pitch was to him a blow that drove an enemy one notch further down toward defeat. He knew that he was giving all he had in every ball he threw, and gloried in the resistless power of his arm. He used very few curves, for his arm's sake and because he did not need to use that muscle twisting delivery.

Not a man got to base. On the few weak taps Windham made the Seeleyville team never faltered.

It was a game to make a connoisseur rave. There was Dick, pitching a game which, for sheer physical brilliancy, perhaps has never been surpassed. And stocky, deliberate Stew Maynard, taking his time and working the corners with uncanny control and never failing nerve in the pinches, turning the Seeleyville batsmen back to the bench without a successful assault on the home plate—he and Fatty Miller upheld their far-flung reputations that day.

And Carney. The seventeen-year-old catcher's hands were puffed into pillows before the sixth inning had passed, and it seemed as if every ball Dick threw would knock him off his feet. But Carney, with his under lip half-bitten through, stood up to every pitch. Many a one he dropped, but not a third strike ever escaped him.

Behind their batteries the two teams played with a deadly determination that was akin to the drawn tenseness of the silent crowd. Men talked, if at all, in undertones. Not a healthy cheer or an outburst of applause marked the progress of the game. The women were quick to feel the atmosphere, and their laughing chatter died away before half the struggle had been completed. It was not a game; it was a battle.

Ten, then eleven innings, and the scoreboard showed nothing but zeros. Every ball he pitched now was causing Dick pain in his ankle. Evidently that hard drop from the parachute had been more damaging than he had thought. He was weakening and knew it; but no one else did. He was making every pitch now an effort to make the batter hit, so drop after drop flashed across the plate, sometimes to be missed entirely and other times to be topped weakly to the infield.

Came the first half of the thirteenth. Not an exhortation nor an encouraging word for either side from the packed stands. Somehow ordinary rooting seemed light and puerile in that game—as out of place as applause at a funeral.

"Get on, Billy, get on!" almost prayed Hart Gibson as Carney went to bat.

Carney set himself with every muscle tense and his thin, freckled face as pale as his hair was red. Swinging a bat that seemed half as heavy as he was, he crouched and awaited the pitch. Maynard, winding up deliberately, served up a curve, close in.

Carney bunted. Almost before bat had met ball, it seemed, he was off for first. Head down, careless of where the ball rolled, the catcher tore for first with every ounce there was in him. He beat the throw by a hair.

"Bunt the first one!" whispered Gibson to Dick, and flashed a signal to Carney.

He went down with the pitch, and Dick sent the ball accurately down the first base line for a beautiful sacrifice.

It was then, with a suddenness so startling that it was like a thunder-clap, that Seeleyville came out of its trance to howl for Windham's blood. As Gibson strode to bat, his bowed legs ludicrously apparent in his uniform, a thousand men stood up and howled for that score. It was a psychological outburst—an irresistible breaking of the tautness which had held them in thrall so long.

Careless of the din which seemed like bedlam itself after the uncanny silence, Maynard put all he had on the ball. It was a curve that broke like lightning, and Gibson heard Screed call a strike on him—dimly, because the noise was terrific from the maddened Seeleyville fans.

One ball, two balls, two strikes—and still the stoical cowboy had not moved his bat. Carney balanced tensely, dangerously far off second.

Three balls, and then it came. With a smoothly effortless motion Gibson met the pitch for a single over the head of Fish, and Carney slid in as pandemonium was let loose from Seeleyville throats. Carson and Black went out quickly, and Seeleyville took the field.

Once again oppressive silence settled over the field. Men shifted restlessly, carefully, as if afraid to make a noise. Corden's mask-like face showed deeper lines, and the muscles of his jaw were set like granite.

Not a soul took his eyes from the diamond as Stew Maynard, no weak hitter although he was a pitcher, came to bat. And miles away, near the big, rambling white house set back on the hill, a slow column of smoke rose heavily, entirely unnoticed.

"I've got to get through this inning!" Dick repeated over and over to himself as he walked to the box.

He could walk on his ankle all right—it was only the strain of pitching that caused those agonies of pain to run up and down his injured leg.

He signaled an inshoot to Carney and wound up carefully, more slowly than was his wont, to ease the strain. With the pitch he put all he had on the ball, and through the pain he knew that it was good. With a gasp of relief he saw Maynard swing.

The ball flashed inward, and a weak roller up the third-base line bounced off the handle of the bat. Black swooped in, fielded the ball and shot it to first, but too high. Elongated Cohalan, who had shifted to first when he left the pitching up to Dick, lifted his six feet two high in the air and came down with the ball a split-second ahead of Maynard.

Ignorant of the fact that every ball he let go by would perceptibly weaken the grim-faced Alden, Lonny Baker fouled off two inshoots and then stood still while a drop that left Dick weak and sick split the plate. It was his nineteenth strikeout.

Fish, carrying with him the last hope of Windham, came to bat with his face ugly.

"Come on, pitch, you big stiff!" he barked.

It was a last desperate chance, taken in the hope of rattling Alden. It was the first personality that had been passed in the game. Personalities were not healthy in a Seeleyville-Windham series.

Dick, holding himself up by main strength, knew that he could not pitch another ball. But the flaming face and ugly sneer of the batsman gave him an idea—there might be a boomerang concealed in Fish's methods.

"Pitch? Why?" he inquired, making a bluff at tying his shoelace. "Let's see, how many hits has the famous San Antonio professional made? I don't need to pitch to you—I'll just throw it!"

This reference to Fish's record at bat—blank as was the sheet of all the other Windham players—was like a red rag to a bull. The professional choked with wrath, barely biting back a stream of profanity that would have been somewhat scorching to the ears of the women present. Tensely the crowd listened and watched.

"One run behind, two out, last half—here, you hitless wonder, make a home run for yourself!"

Winding up as he said it—awkwardly, because he could not bear his weight on his right foot—Alden finally threw the ball as the convulsed Fish, prepared for blinding speed, set himself. A great gasp went up from the crowd as they saw that apparently terrific pitch arch slowly upward in a long loop—such a throw as a twelve-year-old boy might make playing catch.

Slowly, tantalizingly it dropped across the plate. Fish, although he partially lost his balance, nevertheless swung mightily. He did not meet it firmly—he was too surprized and off balance for that—but meet it he did.

Imprinted for just an instant on Dick's retina was the shape of a speeding ball. He threw up his gloved hand automatically, and felt a numbing impact.

Still conscious of the racking pain in his ankle, he looked around quickly for the ball. It was a full second before he realized that it was in his hand. It had stuck there. He was still looking at it with a wry grin as the roaring crowd from Seeleyville engulfed him.

MR. TOWNSEND, so entirely dishevelled that he was almost unrecognizable, was one of the first to reach Alden.

"Let's get out of here, son!" he whispered tensely, his mouth close to the flyer's ear. "The crowd is ugly, and that sheriff is mooching around."

The Seeleyville team fought off those who

would congratulate them and under cover of the din sifted quietly toward the end of the grandstand. Depressed Windham people watched the maelstrom of the diamond quietly. Many groups of the men wore expressions which seemed somewhat disquieting.

Suddenly a piercing scream quieted the exultant roar of Seeleyville. It was an excited woman's voice, and what she screamed was—

"Fire!"

"By ——! Jim Corden's place!"

At Mr. Townsend's words Dick looked toward the big white house to the west. A tremendous column of smoke, which seemed to be rising from the large building back of the house, told its own story.

"And he's got a sick wife and a two-weeks-old kid there!"

There was a concerted rush for the automobiles. Automatically Dick and Mr. Townsend and Spears were swept along. In a few seconds they saw Corden, the center of a struggling group. Evidently the men were trying to hold him back. The gaunt Texan's face was terrible.

"He wants to start running over there," gasped one of the men. "It's seven miles by road, but——"

"I'll take him over!" yelled Alden. "Mr. Corden! I'll take you over in the plane—we'll be there in five minutes!"

Without a word the scrambling group parted.

"Lead the way, Sleepy!" yelled Dick.

He knew that the plane was close by, for Spears had come on the field within five minutes after he himself had dropped in the parachute.

Sleepy started at a run toward the tree-masked cotton-field to the west. Corden, breathing in great gasps, made the flyers stretch to keep up with him. As he ran he cursed in breathless, bitter phrases.

"That —— Nervantes! And not a man around the place, only a nurse," he mumbled time after time.

Both Cohalan and Gibson were in the speeding group. As they reached the De Haviland, drawn up in a corner of the field, Dick boosted Mr. Corden into the back seat. Sleepy leaned over the front cowling, turned on the gas petcock, used the air-pump briefly and then with Gibson's help swung the prop a few times. By the time Dick was in the seat Sleepy was yelling—

"Contact!"

Dick snapped on both switches and retarded the spark lever. As Sleepy and the hastily coached Gibson swung the eight-foot propeller Dick worked the throttle viciously. The motor caught on the first try.

"Never mind your belt—just hang on!" he yelled back to Corden.

The Texan nodded. His eyes were not so insane looking now, and he appeared to have hold of himself. From that building behind his house leaping flames now showed red. It was burning like tinder.

Alden did not stop to warm up the motor. He gave it the throttle, and in a trice had the tail in the air. The big wheels bumped over the low furrows, and cotton-plants dragged at the tail-skid. With maddening slowness, due to the heavy going, the D. H. picked up flying speed.

Half-way down the field Alden began rocking forward and back on the stick, trying to stall the plane into the air. Finally he succeeded. He held it level for a moment until he had speed enough to zoom, turning westward as he climbed.

He realized now that he had neither helmet nor goggles on. He hunched down behind the windshield and started for the house, less than a hundred feet high.

He took a hasty glance at the instruments. The cruelly mistreated Liberty lived up to its reputation among the flying clan. Although the thermometer was only fifty-five Centigrade, the air pressure was at three pounds, the oil was thirty, where it ought to be, and best of all the tachometer showed sixteen hundred revolutions per minute.

In a minute and a half they were half-way there. Dick glanced backward briefly. The road toward the house was like a long black serpent, and great dust clouds were rising from the speeding cars. They were barely a mile and a half from the ball-field.

He shielded his eyes with his hands and looked ahead, through the blinding tears which the terrific propeller blast brought to his eyes. Almost beside the house was a tremendous cotton-field where he could land. He caught his breath at thought of the inferno of heat that the big frame building must be. Through the dense smoke great red tongues of flame were licking greedily.

Three minutes, and they were practically over the house. It had not caught yet apparently.

Dick was starting to dive for the cotton-field when he saw what was about to happen. One of the big uprights in the warehouse, which must have been sixty feet high, was standling like some giant's candle, its upper end a mass of flame. The flyer's angle of vision was such that he could see it leaning perilously, about ready to fall. The walls had been burned away.

And it was leaning toward the house. Dick's quick estimate was that that burning end would hit the rear of the house. The two buildings were close together, with a long, narrow shed connecting them. This was partially burned.

Almost without thinking, Alden made his decision. The house and warehouse, or whatever it was, were between him and the field where he planned to land. He inched the nose down a trifle, and the speedmeter leaped to a hundred and forty miles an hour. He peered around the corner of the windshield, his left hand steady as a rock on the stick. He swooped straight over the burning débris.

In a trice he was blinded by the smoke. He could only hold the ship steady, hoping that he had lined up his objective correctly.

He had. His left wing hit the tottering wooden upright, knocking it out of the way like a toothpick. He cut the throttle, and as the De Haviland flashed out of the smoke his bleared eyes were barely useful enough to enable him to make a bouncing landing in the soft furrows. Why the ship did not crack up he never knew, but the De Haviland stayed right side up. The tip of the left wing was smoldering.

Dick leaped out of the cockpit with the fire-extinguisher in his hand. It took only a few seconds to wet down the leading edge of the wing and effectually dampen the ardor of aspiring sparks. As he turned for the house he saw that Corden had half-covered the three hundred yards.

Alden was not far behind him when the ranchman bolted in the door. The back of the house, which was toward the fire, was charring. Only the wind, blowing the sparks away from the house, had saved it that long.

Alden, following Corden, burst into a bedroom. White-faced but calm, Mrs. Corden was directing the nurse, who was pouring pails of water out of a window down the smoldering side of the house. Both women broke down as the two men rushed in. Grasping a tiny baby in her arms with convulsive strength, Mrs. Corden fainted.

It was only a moment's work for the two men to carry the couch down-stairs and out on the lawn. The sobbing nurse brought blankets. Then they turned to the business of fighting the fire.

They were reasonably successful, although the back of the house was ablaze by the time help arrived. In half an hour not a spark remained. In an hour a thousand men were scouring the surrounding country for Pasquale Nervantes, for, when she had been revived, Mrs. Corden told her husband that the Mexican had walked past the house shortly after all the men had left for the game. Whether he set the fire or not may be a question in some people's minds, but the posse which caught him left his bullet-ridden body hanging to a mesquite tree at all events.

Dick did not wait to see Corden after help arrived. He was utterly tired, and he did not want to hear the things Corden would say. He sympathized with the man, of course, but it was not in his nature to forget too easily what Windham had heaped upon him in the last twenty-four hours.

With Sleepy Spears and the Townsends he started for Seeleyville. A new lower wing would have to be shipped from Donovan Field before they could get the ship back. The suddenly humble sheriff, upon Alden's peremptory request, had promptly furnished a deputy to guard it.

The game, the fire, the kidnaping—all were subjects of conversation, and finally Mrs. Townsend brought up the matter of the parachute jump.

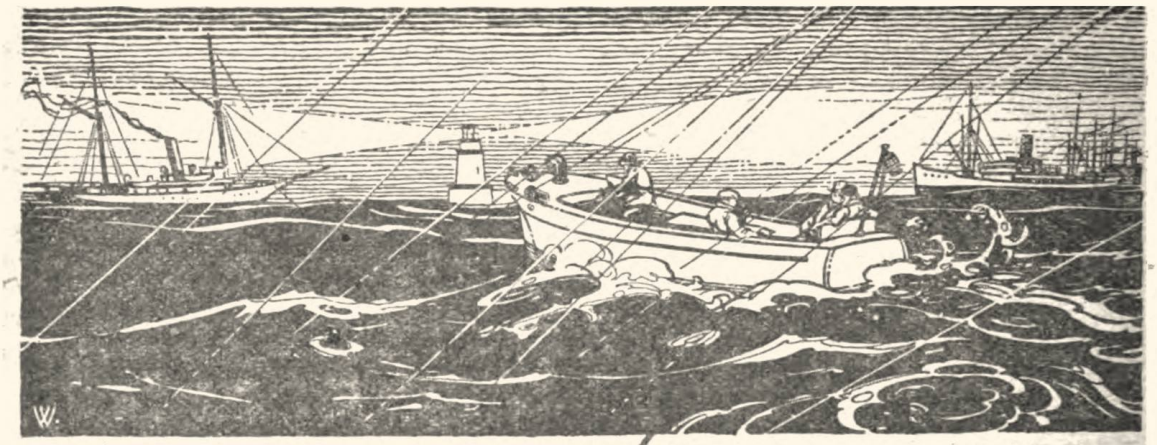
"I don't suppose it's so bloodcurdling when you're accustomed to it," she remarked with a shiver.

"By the way, how many times have you jumped, son?" inquired Mr. Townsend, expertly tooling his big car along the clogged road to Seeleyville.

Dick grinned shamefacedly.

"To tell the honest truth, that was my first one," he said.

"Well, I'll be ——!" breathed Sleepy Spears.



# ANGEL

by W. Townend

*Author of "The Codfish," "The Beachcomber," etc.*

MY FRIEND, Mr. Harrington, sat back in his swivel chair in his room on board the S. S. *Hyacinth* with his arms folded and his cap tilted, and talked.

"No," he said, "you can't lay down hard an' fast rules about anythin'. That what the mate said just now about a son havin' to do what his father tells him without arguin', for instance! Well an' good, so far as it goes, but where does it stop? When does a boy have mind enough of his own to know that his judgment's as good as the old man's?

"Now, listen, an' I'll try an' explain what I mean. It's a dangerous doctrine that about flat an' implicit obedience; —— dangerous. I'm afraid, castin' back a bit, it's a charge they never laid against me—not from the time I was old enough to talk, anyway. But once, not long ago, I got mixed up in as queer a case of a child obeyin' a parent's orders as you'd want to hear—not father an' son; father an' daughter. I've come across cases of what for want of a better word you might call devotion that almost scared you to watch—husband an' wife; sweethearts; mother an' child; but never in all my life have I seen devotion to equal this girl's devotion to her father!

"A queer story all through. But from my point of view it's not the risk I ran of bein' drowned in Cork Harbor or bein' shot at about three feet range that int'rests me now half so much as the motive at the back of everything—the girl an' the way she acted.

"Incomprehensible, eh! A good word. When you don't understand, you say that: Incomprehensible, an' nobody asks any questions."

Mr. Harrington paused and stared at me with his eyes puckered, and I knew that he was lost in thought, groping through the highways and byways of memory for what he wanted.

"It's funny," he continued, "how things get all mixed up once you start tryin' to straighten them out. I was goin' to tell you about somethin' that happened to me once, an' thinkin' of that put me in mind of somethin' else that's part of the yarn, an' that set me off on another course altogether.

"Have you ever thought how many times you meet people, men an' women, an' say good-by to 'em an' wonder if you'll ever meet 'em again, an' you do! In the least expected places! An' you call that meetin' a coincidence. Somethin' amazin'! But why? If folks never met after they've met once, life would be pretty near as dull as bilge-water! Or it would be with most men. Not with me, of course. Me, I'm diff'rent.

"By nature I'm quiet an' a lover of peace. As a consequence I'm in trouble always. I go for a stroll on a Summer ev'nin' down the East India Dock Road an' I stop an' look in a shop-window to see what they're chargin' for pipe terbacker

an' the next thing I know I'm chasin' full tilt down a side alley after a chink who's got a knife on him an' a dose of hop an' is burnin' to avenge the wrongs of his downtrodden country on me!"

I interrupted.

"When did that happen? You never told me!"

Mr. Harrington waved an apologetic hand to and fro.

"It never did happen. Not yet, anyway. But it may tomorrer. Things do.

"Do you know Rotterdam? No! It was there the story begins—on an afternoon in the early Summer of nineteen fourteen, when we were part loadin' before comin' across Channel to finish on this side. I was chief of the *Hibiscus* at the time, along of John Lorbury.

"Why I wasn't aboard workin' hard an' earnin' dividends for John Parbuckle an' his friends an' relations, Heaven knows! But I wasn't. I sat in a café, drinkin' iced lager. An' mark what follers! Out of a clear blue sky I get landed into adventures an' danger an' excitement; all through wantin' to do a kind deed.

"There were only a few fat an' respectable Dutchmen in the café, most of the tables were empty, an' the waiters were half-asleep; an' you could hear the flies buzzin' against the windows; an' I was sippin' my beer an' not payin' much attention to anyone, when all at once I knew, without turnin' my head to look, that there was a girl at the next table who wanted to speak to me.

"That brought me down to earth with a run. I'd finish my drink an' I'd clear, sharp. An' then, as I was tiltin' my glass, I looked at her sideways, so she wouldn't think I was curious, an' directly I got a glimpse of her face I found myself wonderin' what a girl like that was doin' in Rotterdam.

"She was English, for one thing, an' a lady. Seventeen, perhaps, not more. Pretty, in a quiet way; with red hair an' big, frightened gray eyes.

"It was this innocent lookin', scared little kid that was the beginnin' of as strange a combination of circumstances as I ever remember.

"As soon as she saw me watchin' her she turned very pink an' she leant forward across her table an' said to me in a low voice—

" 'You're English, aren't you?'

"I said that I was, an' from the way she spoke I knew there was something worryin' her.

" 'Is there anythin' I can do?' I says.

" 'There is,' she says, claspin' her hands together. 'I'm in terrible trouble.'

"I'll say this for myself, she trusted me. She told me her story. Her father was ill. He an' she had been livin' abroad for the sake of his health. On their road home he'd had a relapse, an' she decided to break their journey at Rotterdam.

"Just when she was wonderin' which hotel in the place to go to, she found some one had stolen her hand-bag in which was all the money her father had—cash, bank-notes, letters of credit, bonds—everything!

"She was wonderful, that kid; brave, yet scared.

" 'Please will you help me?' she says.

"She kept her eyes down, afraid to look at me, ashamed, I judged, of what she was doin'—beggin' for help. I liked her for that, I tell you.

"They'd been livin' for more than a week in one room, she said, in a lodgin'-house in a slum. Her father was worse; they'd neither money nor food.

"I told her she wasn't to worry, an' I paid for her cup of coffee which she hadn't touched, an' then I went with her, out of the café, to the house where she an' her father lodged—a tall, old-fashioned, tumble-down place, built maybe two hundred years before an' let out in single rooms ever since, by the look of it, to people with large families an' plenty of washin' an' cabbage for dinner.

"She climbed the stairs, one flight after another, up an' up, without any waitin' to see if I was with her or not, till we came to the top floor.

" 'This is it!' she says, an' she opened a door an' I follered her into an attic where her father was sittin' in a big chair, in his top-coat an' blankets.

"The girl went to him an' he opened his eyes an' looked at her.

" 'Angel,' he says, 'where have you been?'

" 'Father,' says she, 'I've brought some one who'll help us—an Englishman!'

" 'A friend of ours!' says he.

" 'No,' says the girl; 'a stranger!'

"An' then the father who was one of the most aristocratic an' distinguished lookin'

men I ever saw; very handsome, in spite of his illness, an' with a big mustache such as you don't often see these days when we're all of us clean shaven like boys at school; this father of hers, he shakes his head an' tells the girl she's no right to do things like that an' I must go away an' he wouldn't dream of acceptin' charity from any one who wasn't one of his personal friends. An' so on.

"I put him down as one of those —— fool Englishmen you don't know whether you'd rather fight at sight, because he is what he is, or be proud to have as a pal in a tight place.

"The girl gave him a look that might have been fear or anger or just despair.

" 'Shall I tell him to go?' she says in a kind of flat little voice.

"She turned to me, but her father stopped her.

" 'Angel,' he says; 'Angel, I'll do as you wish.'

"He was pretty shaky, I judged, an' he put his hand to his eyes.

" 'You've been good an' brave, an' it wouldn't be fair on you not to avail myself of the help you've brought!'

"I tell you, son, I felt about as big a fool as I've ever felt in my life, standin' there by the door, watchin' that brave little girl an' her sick father, pig-headed an' stupid an' proud, holdin' her hand an' consentin' to let a stranger save him from bein' thrown out into the street to die in the gutter.

" 'Sir,' he says, 'I thank you for your consideration!'

"I went to his side, then, an' the girl walked to one of the broken windows an' stood, lookin' out at the roofs of the houses round about, with her hands by her sides an' that same queer look in her face, despair, anxiety, fear, I didn't know which, that I'd seen before.

"An' then the father told me his story, an' I learnt that what the daughter had said had been made up because she was scared if she told me the truth, maybe, I wouldn't believe her, or else I'd report the whole affair to the authorities, an' her father would get into trouble.

"Rellable, his name was—Colonel Anthony Rellable, late Royal Artillery. Strictly speakin', he wasn't sick in the least; not through an illness or bad health, anyway. He'd a bullet-wound in the shoulder.

"An' then I saw that his arm was bound up, so he couldn't move it.

"How do you think he was wounded? In a duel! Yes, in a duel with a Frenchman! An' why? That I never knew. I don't know to this day. But it was somethin' serious from the way he spoke of it; —— serious. If it was known—well! I could imagine whatever I liked to.

"An' the Frenchman! Ah! that was the point. He wasn't expected to live when the colonel was hustled off in a motor, with instructions to clear out of the country, quick, before he was collared.

"At Rotterdam, just as the girl said, their money was stolen, all except for a few shillings; an' by this time the colonel was half-crazy with pain an' the girl was frightened he'd die in the street. She got her father into a cab, an' she managed to make the driver grasp what it was that she wanted. An' that's how they came to be livin' in the place they were.

"I can see the room now, with the slopin' ceilin', an' the plaster hangin' in bits, an' the walls all damp an' peelin', an' the windows broken an' mended with paper, an' no carpet an' a mis'rable little bed in a corner, an' the colonel, very white an' sick, huddled up in his chair, an' the girl starin' out of the window. It left an impression I'll never forget as long as I live.

"An' then a woman, with one of the most villainous faces I've ever seen, out of the movin' pictures, opened the door an' said in a kind of broken English that if they hadn't the money to pay the rent they'd have to go. She'd put them out into the street.

"Colonel Rellable let his head fall back an' he closed his eyes, an' the girl went to him an' put her arm around him, an' me—well, son, I was the hero of that film—I dug my hands down into my pockets an' brought out every penny I had.

" 'Miss Rellable,' I says, 'this is for you!'

" 'Thank God!' says the colonel. 'You've saved us, my dear, good friend!'

"The girl burst into tears; an' the father told her to take the money an' pay the landlady an' he told me that never, so long as he lived, would he forget what I'd done.

"Twenty pounds it was that I gave them—twenty hard-earned golden quid! The miracle was I'd any money at all. Usually I've about ten bob, no more. But

this time I'd drawn some money out when I was in London, an' I had it on me when I went ashore.

"Well, I'd stayed long enough. Colonel Rellable was in a pretty bad way, so I judged, an' I offered to go for a doctor. The girl wouldn't let me. The kindest thing I could do now, she said, was to leave them.

"They took my name an' address—the address of the firm in Fenchurch Street. They'd send me the money as soon as they reached England. An' they gave me the name of their place in Hampshire—Carraway Hall, or somethin' like that, let, furnished, the colonel said, to a rich brewer, an' mortgaged as well, but their ancestral home, none the less. Some day I must pay them a visit, an' nothin' would be too good for me.

"They never wrote, of course; neither the colonel nor his daughter. They never sent me my twenty thick 'uns!

"I WAITED for six months an' then I made inquiries. There was no Colonel Anthony Rellable. He didn't exist. No more did the ancestral home.

"I wrote over to Rotterdam, an' the police were good enough to inform me that there had been an English swindler an' his daughter, answerin' to the description I gave, livin' there an' makin' money out of their fellow countrymen before the war, until it was hinted they'd better clear out of the country, quick!

"An' so, as the sayin' goes, that was that. Lesson number two, Correspondence Course: Suckers, an' how to catch 'em!

"I wasn't angry, only kind of disappointed. I'd been taken in just about as completely as any one ever had been. At my age, an' by an innocent lookin' little girl!

"What was worse than bein' swindled was the thought that I'd let my feelin's be harrowed. I'd had a whackin' big lump in my throat when I stood in that attic an' watched that poor little girl an' her father, an' it was all wasted! I'd been cheated out of the glow I'd had in my chest through feelin' I'd done a good action.

"Now, had that girl, Angel Rellable, been a willin' partner in that graft of theirs or not? Or had she just been tied up by her father so she didn't dare say no to anything he told her to do? What was it? Were they really hard up when she spoke to me in that café? Or was she a barefaced little liar? Sometimes I thought one thing—sometimes another. After a while, though, I gave up worryin'. The problem was too much for me.

"Well, the years rolled by an' one bright an' sunny mornin' we found that the placid routine of the war had gone an' the horrors of peace had begun to tear a long-sufferin' world asunder once more.

"Believe me or believe me not; barrin' torpedoes, about the only peaceful years I'd ever known were those four years of bloody war! Directly the fightin' stopped, I get plunged into trouble of every description.

"Skippin' a lot, we reach the year nineteen hundred an' nineteen—November; an' Michael Shayne, a friend of mine.

"I was chief of the *Harebell* then, under old Gimlet Garney, an' after we'd discharged cargo from Galveston, Texas, in Liverpool, we found ourselves bein' bundled across to Passage West, Cork, for overhaul an' minor repairs in the engine-room.

"Why John Parbuckle sent us across to Passage, of all places, I never knew. Perhaps charges came cheaper; perhaps—I'm darned if I know. It's hard to say. You never knew what the old fox was drivin' at, anyway.

"Not that it made much diff'rence to me where we went, or to the mate, either, an' seein' we were the only two of the crowd that weren't laid off directly we reached Passage, why, it didn't matter to any one else, neither.

"I'd nothin' to do aboard ship an' the mate had his wife over from Liverpool, an' so I got into the habit of goin' off on walks by myself. I had all County Cork to admire, an' the Cork, Blackrock an' Passage Railway to help me do it. We were there six weeks, an' I've spent many a six weeks that I found less amusin'. They warned me, of course, the country was unsettled an' there was liable to be trouble, fightin' an' so on. I had to laugh. Jumpin' Joseph! I could have told them that!

"Ireland, Scotland, England or Wales. It 'ud make no diff'rence to me. Where I am, there there's trouble. If they dumped me down in the middle of the Sahara Desert at eight A.M., with no livin' bein' within a couple of hundred miles an'

nothin' but sand an' watercress in sight, by tea-time I'd find myself wonderin' how in the world I was goin' to get rid of the twins the old lady had given me to hold at the street corner without the policeman on point duty seein' me an' runnin' me in!

"Nothin' happens the way it should, does it? The world's not what it would have been, in fact, if you'd had the makin' of it, eh!

"Isn't that so? Precisely! Same here. That's what *I've* said, many a time an' oft, especially when beholdin' the ocean an' all its wonders; Cardiff tramps an' Greek bumboatmen, an' water-front bars, an' incompetent donkeymen, an' drunken firemen! However, that's not what I'm talkin' about now.

"One afternoon I was takin' a walk round the country, by way of exercise, an' I dropped in at a farm owned by a man I'd got acquainted with—name of O'Reagh; Dan O'Reagh—to have a look at some yearlin's he was fattenin' for market.

"I'm int'rested in cattle. Did I ever tell you? It's a hobby of mine. An' you needn't laugh. I bet I know more about the science of farmin', dairy-farmin' above all, how to get the best from your cows, an' so on, than almost any farmer you ever met!

"Well, as I was sayin', I dropped in to see O'Reagh's yearlin's. Just when it was time to go, if I wanted, that is, to reach the railway two miles away so as to catch a train to Passage, Dan asked me to wait, he'd somethin' to show me. An' that? Why, a pedigree bull that he'd bought only the week before. They were bringin' him up to the farm that very day. I was sorry, but I told him I couldn't wait. I'd come tomorrer.

"We were sayin' good-by at the corner of the lane that led from the main road to the farm when we heard some one yellin' blue murder!

" 'What's that?' says Dan. He walked a few paces up the road to look. An' then, 'Lord help us!' he says. 'It's the bull!'

"He was right about that. The bull sure enough.

"He came trottin' along, snuffin' from right to left, like an elderly old gentleman, suspicious of findin' himself in strange quarters. Soon as he saw Dan an' me he stopped, a big brute of an animal, an' pawed at the ground an' lowered his head an' snorted.

"An' then—well he was an Irish bull; I was an Englishman. It stood to reason I was the one he chose. Almost before I could think, he came at me full tilt, like a destroyer after a submarine.

"Dan gave a yell an' raced up the lane like a streak of lightnin'; a big man, he was, too; built on the same kind of lines as the bull; big an' fat an' powerful. An' how he ran! Me—I ran, too; down the road, intendin' to fling myself over the hedge.

"I didn't. I caught my foot in a root of a tree an' went sprawlin' on to my face. I'm not as a rule timid, but I tell you, an' it's the gospel truth, I thought at that moment my number was up!

"It's queer, isn't it? If you say you were —— near killed by a tiger in India or a lion in Central Africa, you're the next best thing to a hero. If you say you were chased by a bull an' —— near gored, every one smiles. Why? The risk's about equal, the way I look at it! A bull's no blinkin' guinea-pig, anyway! I felt —— little like smilin' myself, an' that's no lie.

"I've a kind of mem'ry, all mixed an' confused, of the fall, an' a pain in my knee, an' the bull gettin' nearer an' nearer, an' men shoutin', an' a man in gray draggin' me to my feet an' pushin' me off the road into the hedge, just in time, an' a sidecar ahead of me with the driver wheelin' the horse about an' gallopin' away. An' then things become clearer an' I remember leanin' against a tree, all shaken an' dazed, watchin' the man in the gray tweed suit. He'd a thick stick in his right hand, an' he snatched off his hat with his left an' waved it an' shouted, an' the bull, that had gone flyin' past, turned an' charged at him, but he dodged an' hit him over the nose, hard as he could.

"Next thing I knew, three or four farmhands came up at a run, an' the bull was caught.

"The man in the gray suit laughed.

" 'Feelin' all right?' he says. 'Good work, eh!' says he. 'If everything else fails, I'll turn torero or matador, or whatever they call it, an' make a fortune!' An' then he says, quick-like: 'No, by ——! I'll be —— if I do. Bull-fightin's off. It's too rottenly cruel!'

" 'I rather imagine you've saved my life,' says I.

" 'Nonsense!' says he.

"Dan O'Reagh wanted us to go up to the

house for a drink. The man in gray—a youngish man, thirty about, so I judged, with a grin like a boy's an' his face burnt brown, the color you don't often see in this frozen part of the world, an' a thatch of thick yeller hair—took out his watch.

" 'No,' he says, 'it's late, an' I'm drivin' to Monkstown. Where's that —— jarvey of mine?'

"An' then we saw the side-car comin' slowly toward us.

" 'Can I give you a lift?' says the man in gray.

"I said I'd be most grateful. I was goin' that way myself an' walkin' was off the bill for the time bein'. I said good-by to Dan O'Reagh an' off we went—me on one side, the man in gray on the other, an' the jarvey perched up on the driver's seat in the middle.

"Now, you'd have thought I'd had adventures enough for one afternoon, wouldn't you? You didn't know Michael Shayne! That was his name. Michael Shayne—Irish, of course; Irish an' rich as blazes, with an estate in Donegal, a house in Dublin, an' a mansion in Sussex, an' more money than he knew what to do with. Some he told me, some I learnt from just watchin' him.

"He was an entertainin' kind of a cuss, amusin' to talk to, simple in the way he looked at things, kind-hearted, friendly, not clever, but not afraid to act on his own judgment. When he was faced by a problem an' had to decide quick he didn't hang back. He did what was right, by instinct, without stoppin' to think what would happen to him, if he failed.

"We drove into a village, the name of which I forget, an' the first thing Shayne saw was a man in the road beatin' a pup. He told the jarvey to pull up.

" 'Here,' he says, 'what are you beatin' that dog for?'

"The man, who was fat an' dressed in an old pair of khaki trousers an' an old tunic, spat in the road an' looked like he wouldn't answer. He gave the pup another lick with his stick, but half-hearted, perhaps, an' Shayne dropped off the car an' went up to him.

" 'Stop it!' he says. 'D'you hear me?'

" 'He's afther chasin' my hins!' says the fat man.

" 'You've no right to thrash a young dog like that!' says Shayne.

" 'For the love of ——!' says the fat man. 'Mayn't a man do what he plaze with his own property?'

"Shayne put his hand into his pocket.

" 'How much will you sell him for?'

" 'A pound!' says the fat man.

"Shayne whistled. 'It's not worth it!'

" 'Not a pinny liss!' says he.

"The jarvey turned and gave me a wink.

" 'A pound!' says he. 'God hilp him!'

"Shayne passed the man over a pound note without sayin' another word an' took the pup under his arm an' hoisted himself up into his seat.

"We hadn't gone more than about fifty yards, when a tall, lanky feller with a long nose standin' outside a pub yelled to the jarvey to stop.

" 'What are you doin' with that pup?' says he.

" 'What pup?' says Shayne.

" 'The wan you've got in yer arms!' says the long-nosed man. 'Give it here at wance!'

"He came over to where we were an' grabbed at the dog's hind legs.

"This was too much for Shayne, of course.

" 'What the —— are you doin'!' says he, an' for the second time he climbs down from the car. An' angry! He was mad all through. "What right have you,' says he, 'to lay a finger on the dog?'

" 'Cripes!' ses the man. 'Isn't it mine? Mayn't I stop it from bein' stolen?'

"He grabbed hold of the dog once more.

" 'Let go at once!' says Shayne. 'D'you hear me! It's not your dog at all, it's mine!'

"An' by this time there was a crowd of about thirty strong, men an' boys an' women an' girls an' about five or six soldiers in khaki, all grinnin' an' highly delighted.

"When Shayne said that the dog was his, the long-nosed man turned his eyes up to heaven an' said that never was there anything he'd heard in his life to bate it! He was a poor, honest crayture who'd never tould what wasn't the truth, an' so on!

" 'There isn't a man nor a boy here,' he says, 'but what knows that the pup's mine!'

" 'I bought it from the man that owned it,' says Shayne, 'for a pound!'

"An' at that there was what you might call a thrill of excitement an' some one whistled an' then another asked Shayne what was the man like who'd sold it him!

"When he said it was a fat man with a straggly mustache an' an old khaki uniform, the crowd yelled, soldiers an' all, an' the long-nosed man doubled himself up just like a man who'd been told the joke of his life.

" 'Why,' says he, 'it's that ould ——, Paddy, ag'in!' An' every one said wasn't Paddy the grand boy!

"I knew, then, that this Paddy had sold Shayne a pup that he didn't own. An' Shayne smiled, rather sad an' subdued, an' he turned to the long-nosed man an' asked him how much would *he* sell the dog for.

"It's an honest fact, in the silence that followed you could hear yourself think!

"The long-nosed man opened his eyes very wide an' his jaw dropped an' he looked at his feet an' he looked at his friends an' he looked at Shayne.

" 'I'm fond of that little dog!' he says. 'I didn't intend to sell him to no one, yer honor, but,' says he, 'seein' it's you, you may have him for five pounds!'

" 'Five pounds!' says Shayne. 'Holy smoke!'

" 'Take it or leave it!' says the long-nosed man. 'The dog's mine!'

"Cuttin' things short Shayne paid him his price, five pounds in notes, an' the long-nosed man grinned just one little grin too much. I saw in a flash there was trouble brewin'.

" 'You say you were fond of the dog?' says Shayne. 'Then,' says he, 'what the —— do you mean by lettin' it get into this state, eh?'

"He showed us the sores that the pup had an' I gathered he'd reason enough to be mad.

"The long-nosed man's grin faded, quick.

" 'It's nothin' to do with you!' he says.

" 'Whose is the dog?' says Shayne. 'Yours or mine? Here!'

"Before I knew what he was doin' he gave me the pup to hold an' he turned to the man who'd sold it him.

" 'Maybe I'm not so soft as you think I am. I paid you your price,' he says; 'now you pay me mine!'

"An' at that Shayne hit the long-nosed man, hard on his nose, twice in succession.

"He let out a screech you could have heard in Patrick Street, Cork, an' fell in a heap, bleatin' like a sick calf.

" 'Get up, you big coward, an' fight!' says Shayne, breathin' hard. 'I'll teach you to be cruel to a poor dumb animal!'

"But there was no fight in the long-nosed man. He got to his feet an' bolted.

"An' then Shayne said that if he stopped on the side-car he'd never get home, he'd be havin' adventures from now till midnight; so seein' a station was handy an' a train was due, we'd pay off the jarvey an' we'd finish the journey to Monkstown by rail.

"The crowd gave him a cheer.

" 'They're good-hearted,' says I, 'but they're wild, of course!'

" 'I'd be wild myself,' says Shayne, 'if I lived in the same town as a couple of swindlers like those two! Fancy a man tryin' to sell me what wasn't his own to sell!'

"I told him, then, he needn't think he's the first man in the world to be stung that way.

"He said maybe he wasn't.

" 'I'm slow,' he says, 'I know, but I'm —— stubborn. I get what I want in the end.'

"Afterward when I knew him better I saw he was right.

" 'That pup,' he says, when we were in the train, 'is worth about two shillings! That man with the nose thought he was smart, didn't he?' He laughed. 'If I never get worse value for my money than I got from hittin' him on that beak of his, I'll die worth a couple of million!'

"He told me he was visitin' County Cork, partly for business reasons, but mostly by way of a change of air an' a rest after four years in the army. He hadn't been rich long, he said—an uncle who'd made money over in England had died an' left him a fortune, an' he was lookin' around for investments. He didn't believe in a young man, he said, just because he was rich bein' contented with doin' nothin'. An' so on.

"Just as we reached Monkstown I asked him where he was stayin'. 'Cork?' I says.

" 'Why, no!' says he. 'I've got my yacht here, in the harbor—the *Moon Ray*.'

"I looked at him, then, from a new angle. Here, for the first time in my life, I was meetin' a man who had money enough to do what he liked an' he actually chose to fly in the face of Providence by goin' to sea!

" 'Are you fond of the sea?' I says.

" 'Mr. Harrington,' he says, 'I love it!'

" 'An' me,' says I, 'I hate it!'

" 'Well, now,' he says, 'you've most likely had no opportunity of seein' an' knowin' it! What you ought to do, if you get the chance,' he says, 'is to go for a voyage. You'll revel in it, I know!'

" 'Mr. Shayne,' says I, 'what do you think I do for a livin', eh?'

"He'd got out of the train by this time an' was shuttin' the door.

" 'I've no idea,' he says, through the open window.

" 'Mr. Shayne,' I says, 'what's the motive power of your yacht?'

" 'Why, steam, of course.'

" 'That's me!' I says. 'I spend my time puttin' the steam in steamers. I'm a marine engineer. An',' says I, an' by now the train was movin' ahead fairly quick, 'thank you for savin' my life. I won't forget!'

" 'Rubbish!' he shouts. 'Come on board my yacht, Mr. Harrington, an' see me! Dinner, anything!'

"An' then we were too far apart to talk, so I waved my hand to him, an' sat down an' wondered if I'd ever meet him again, him an' his five-pound pup!

"NEXT day I didn't go over to Dan O'Reagh's, after all. I was up in Cork meetin' old MacCreel, John Parbuckle's engineer superintendent, who'd been sent over to have a look at the *Harebell's* engine-room.

"It was afternoon by the time we reached Passage West, an' threatenin' rain. MacCreel went straight to the office of the firm that was doin' the repairs, an' I went back to the ship.

"The mate—feller called Latwin, Joshua Latwin, a little man with a squint an' a religion of his own, manufactured in his watch on deck from the odds an' ends of about nine other religions he'd sampled in diff'rent parts of the word—was waitin' for me.

" 'Mr. Harrington,' he says, 'did Mac tell you the *Harebell* was goin' to be sold?'

" 'Why, no!' I says.

" 'Well,' says Josh, 'it's a fact. We've had a party aboard lookin' over the ship!'

"That was news, if you like. Old MacCreel had talked as if John Parbuckle's one ambition was to get the *Harebell* to sea again, quick as he could, as he had cargoes waitin' all over the globe! Freights were high at the time, not like they are now, of course.

"An' then Mrs. Latwin came on deck.

" 'Mr. Harrington,' she says, 'I'm a good hand at rememberin' faces, but when it comes to names I'm beaten. Who was the captain who got into trouble over obtainin' money by false pretences from an Australian sheep-farmer, two years before the war? Do you remember? Stoutish man with a hooked nose an' a little black beard an' mustache!'

" 'Why,' says I, 'Linnehan, of course! What about him?'

" 'He was on board with the people who were lookin' over the ship!' says she.

" 'I wonder what for!' I says. I knew Linnehan well an' I didn't trust him a yard. Crooked as blazes, always!

" 'He's skipper of a steam-yacht out in the harbor,' says Mrs. Latwin.

" 'How do you know that, Mrs. Latwin?' I says. 'Did he tell you?'

" 'No,' says she. 'He didn't see me. I watched them out of the port an' listened when they were on the bridge-deck here, talkin'.

" 'Mrs. Latwin,' says I, 'you don't happen to know the name of the yacht's owner, do you?'

" 'I do,' says she. 'Shayne. Michael Shayne.'

" 'Is it this Shayne who's goin' to buy the *Harebell?*' I says. But she didn't know. All she could say was they were formin' a company an' were plannin' to buy up four or five ships an' the first of the bunch was the *Harebell.*

"When MacCreel came aboard an' heard what Mrs. Latwin had said, he laughed.

" 'Listen,' he says, 'the *Harebell* is not for sale. You can tak' it frae me,' he says. 'I ken that, fer a fac'!'

"MacCreel was right, I was sure. Well, then, what did it mean? The *Harebell* was not for sale, yet Michael Shayne was buyin' her! Who from? An' why?

"I told MacCreel about Michael Shayne, an' Mac agreed with me it was —— queer. When I said Linnehan was mixed up with the crowd he thought for a while an' then suggested me goin' across to the yacht an' askin' Shayne what he was plannin' to do. I said I'd go, like a shot. Something was wrong, of course. I owed Shayne my life. The least I could do in return was tryin' to save him from losin' his money. I'd warn him, anyway.

"It was dark by now, but it wasn't late.

I took the train to Monkstown an' crossed the little foot-bridge to the pier. It was rainin', a soft drizzle, an' the lights of the ships in the harbor showed all blurred an' misty. There was a man in oilskins an' sou'wester waitin', an' I asked him what chance I had of hirin' a boat to take me out to the *Moon Ray*.

"An' then two other men whom I'd seen gettin' out of the train joined us an' the man in the oilskins says—

" 'Here's a gentleman wants to be taken off to the *Moon Ray*, sir!'

"By the light of the station lamps I saw they were studyin' me hard. They were gentlemen, of course, in every sense of the word; well-fed, well-dressed, polite.

" 'Are you a friend of Mr. Shayne's?' says the red-faced one, who looked like a bishop in plain clothes.

" 'I am,' says I. 'Mr. Shayne asked me to come an' see him.'

" 'A friend of Mr. Shayne's is a friend of ours,' says he; 'we'll be delighted to have you accompany us.'

"We went down the steps to a motor-boat.

"It was too wet an' we went too quick an' the motor was kickin' up too much noise for talkin' to be anyway easy, an' it wasn't till we were well out in the harbor that either of the two men sittin' beside me spoke.

" 'Goin' to see Mr. Shayne on business?' says the red-faced man.

" 'No,' I says. 'Social call.'

"The man in the specs touched my arm.

" 'Resident here?' he says.

" 'No,' says I. 'I'm chief engineer of a steamer at Passage West!'

"An' at that both of them straightened up like they'd been hit on the jaw. Ought I to have told? Why not? How did I know what they were! Maybe I ought to have had more senes—maybe not.

" 'Which steamer?' says the man in the specs.

"I spoke the truth; like a blitherin' idiot, I suppose, but I had to.

" 'The *Harebell*,' I says.

"The man in the specs said somethin' under his breath an' turned an' spoke to the man runnin' the motor.

" 'Stop her!' says he. An' then I knew.

"The red-faced man an' his friend began whisperin'. I'd more than a mind to take their heads in my hands an' crack their skulls for them. I didn't. I ought to have done it, of course.

"When the man with the red face spoke again, I caught a note in his voice that warned me I'd have to be careful, or else, perhaps, there'd be a corpse washed up on the shores of Spike Island next mornin', remarkably like me.

" 'On second thoughts,' says he, 'my friend an' I have decided it wouldn't be right for us to allow Mr. Shayne to see you.

" 'Why have you taken me out here into the middle of the harbor, half-way to Haulbowline, to tell me that?' I says.

" 'What's it to do with you?' snaps the man in the specs, but the other stopped him.

"What do you think the red-faced man said, then? He told me he was a doctor from London—Dr. Jones; an' his friend was a lawyer, Mr. Smith. They'd decided to tell me the truth. Mr. Shayne, he said, was sufferin' from mental trouble of a most distressin' nature—delusions an' so on. An' just at present, so Dr. Jones explained, he was under the impression that he was an engineer in the merchant service, out of a job.

" 'An' on that account,' says he, 'it wouldn't be right for me, as Mr. Shayne's medical adviser, to permit any marine engineer to come into contact with him. It's unfortunate, an' I'm sorry.'

"That was final, I knew. He was lyin', of course. But was he? The story was so —— flat-footed an' foolish it sounded almost as if it was true. But his voice didn't. An' then there was the man in the specs—Mr. Lawyer Smith—an' the way *he* spoke!

" 'It's a disappointment,' I says.

" 'I'll get the sailor to put you ashore again after he's taken Mr. Smith an' myself on board,' says the doctor.

"We reached the *Moon Ray* an' he an' the lawyer said good-by, very polite an' courteous an' full of regrets. Then we shoved off an' headed for Monkstown, against tide an' current.

"SOON as I thought it was safe, which wasn't far, I told the man runnin' the engine, to stop.

" 'What is it?' he says.

" 'You belong to the *Moon Ray*?' I asked.

"He told me he did.

" 'Right,' says I, 'take me back to the yacht, then. We'll go slow an' drift with the current.'

"He laughed. 'What d'you take me for?' says he. 'A —— fool!'

"He was goin' to start her again, but I wouldn't let him.

"What are you afraid of?' I says.

"He got sulky at that. 'I'm afraid of nothin',' he says. 'But I've got to obey orders. See! I was tould to put ye ashore. Captain Linnehan tould me to do whatever the gintlemen ordered!'

" 'Oh!' says I. 'Supposin' I shoot you!'

" 'You haven't a gun,' says he, 'or you'd have pulled it before.'

"He was only a boy, an' his nerve was goin'.

" 'Listen,' I say, 'there's no use in you an' me scrappin'. I'm goin' aboard the *Moon Ray*, an' you're not goin' to stop me. Do you know,' I says, 'what's happenin'?'

" 'I know,' says he, 'I'm an Irishman—a thrue Irishman, an' I obey orders!'

" 'You may be all what you say,' says I, 'but there's one of the finest Irishmen in the world in the hands of a gang of blackguards an' you're not goin' to move a hand to help him out of his trouble! I'm ashamed of you,' I says.

" 'Is it Misther Shayne that ye mane!' says the boy.

" 'It is,' I says.

" 'If Captain Linnehan knew that I'd disobeyed that big fella's ordhers, he'd kill me!'

" 'He'll never find out,' I says.

" 'But,' says the boy, 'you're a bigger an' sthronger man than myself! Supposin' now that ye tuk me an' crippled me so that I couldn't resist!'

"I laughed. Trust an Irishman to find a way out!

" 'Good for you!' I says. 'I'll overpower you an' gag you, so you can't shout, an' bind you, so you can't move, an' I'll run the boat back to the *Moon Ray* myself.'

" 'Can you manage the engine?' says the boy.

" 'I invented it,' says I. 'The Ark had one on Ararat!'

"Well, I tied the boy's arms with a piece of rope an' made him a kind of gag that looked like it'd uv stopped him yellin' for help, but wouldn't, if he'd really wanted to. We drifted up to the *Moon Ray* an' the tide was runnin' so strong I was nearly swept past the ladder but I grabbed it an' made fast the boat, without any one seein' me. An' then, not darin' to open my mouth or speak to the lad, I climbed aboard.

"There was no one on deck; not a sound to be heard; only the rain an' the water alongside, an' a train at Queenstown, whistlin'. I crept aft, slowly, a foot at a time. An' then voices came to me from a cabin—men's voices talkin'—an' I waited an' listened. I couldn't catch what was said, but Shayne wasn't with them. I didn't think so, anyway.

"A door opened an' there was a patch of light on the wet deck an' some one, a steward in a white jacket, walked for'ard. As soon as he passed me I opened the door an' stepped into the alleyway.

"An' now comes the part that's hard to believe; harder than me tyin' the lad in the motor boat an' gaggin' him, at his own request—harder than the pup that was bought for a fiver! It's the truth, all the same.

"I could hear voices in the room on the right of the alleyway. I drew the curtain a little an' found myself lookin' at Michael Shayne.

"He wasn't alone. No, that's the part that you wouldn't believe, if it wasn't the truth. By his side, on the leather covered settee at the after end of the little saloon was a girl; a tall, beautiful girl, dressed in black velvet that showed up her skin—black velvet with her arms bare an' wearin' a pearl necklace. An' she'd bronze-red hair an' gray eyes, gray as the sea on a Summer ev'nin', gray with a touch of gold, an' cheeks like wild roses—that kind of a girl.

"I stared at her an' she stared at me, an' then—then, son, the pink in her cheeks faded an' she put her hands to her bosom an' Shayne jumped to his feet an' came stridin' toward me, around the table, that was laid for dinner, with a white cloth an' silver an' flowers in vases. He held out his hand.

" 'It's Mr. Harrington!' he says. 'I'm delighted to see you!'

" 'How's the pup, Mr. Shayne?' I says. An' then I spoke to the girl: 'Well, Angel, a long time since you an' me met, isn't it? How's business?'

"She sat watchin' me with a look in her face that made me think she was goin' to faint. But not her!

"Shayne's eyes were gettin' rounder an' rounder. His smile had gone. He didn't know where to begin, I knew.

"Did I do wrong, then? Should I have given the girl the benefit of whatever doubt I could rake up? Maybe I should! But, then, son, think of all that I knew! Remember what Mrs. Latwin had told me! Cruel! Yes, I was cruel, I suppose. But I wanted to save Shayne.

" 'What is it now, Angel?' says I. 'What particular line of graft are you on these days? Has your father been fightin' any more duels, eh? How's the ancestral estate in Hampshire—Carraway Hall?' I says. 'Did they foreclose the mortgage? An' Rotterdam!' says I. 'Do you remember the time when your handbag was stolen an' you an' the poor colonel were down an' out an' I saved you from starvin'? Funny our meetin' like this, isn't it?'

"She didn't speak. An' I saw then, in a flash, the same kind of hopeless look she'd had in her eyes that afternoon more than five years before when her father was talkin' about his duel.

"Shayne put his hand on my arm.

" 'Mr. Harrington,' he says, 'what are you sayin' things like that for? What do you mean? It may int'rest you to hear,' says he, 'that this young lady is goin' to be my wife.'

"He was angry, of course, but holdin' himself in check.

" 'Mr. Shayne,' I says, 'yesterday you put me in your debt to an extent I'll never be able to repay. You saved my life.'

" 'Is that any reason why you should come here an' make a fool of yourself?' he says, pretty sharp.

"The girl was standin', still lookin' at me with the same old scorn an' bitterness an' he went to her an' told her she wasn't to worry.

"I tried again.

" 'Mr. Shayne,' I says, 'it's no pleasure to me to say what I've got to say, but there's some devilment afoot an' I'm talkin' for your own good. That lady you say you're goin' to marry I knew as Angel Rellable, the daughter of Colonel Anthony Rellable, late Royal Artillery; or that's what he passed himself off as, for,' says I, 'the name isn't known in the army! Miss Rellable an' her father,' I says, 'swindled me out of every penny I had the Summer the war started, in Rotterdam. I hadn't much, but,' says I, 'I gave it all, willingly, because I was tenderhearted an' a ravin' fool to listen to a story that was all lies on the face of it. Angel,' I says, turnin' to the girl, 'Angel, what's become of your father?'

"She spoke to Shayne.

" 'Why do you listen?' she says. 'Oh, why do you listen?'

"She didn't fight. She didn't argue. She didn't say I was tellin' lies. An' Shayne, who was almost as white as the girl, put his arm around her an' said:

" 'Dearest, tell me it's not true! Tell me you didn't! He's makin' a mistake, isn't he? Mixin' you up with some one else!'

"An' then, just when I was wonderin' how to convince Shayne that the girl he was goin' to marry was nothin' more nor less than a crook, the door opened an' there entered, as large as life, smilin' affably, in ev'nin' clothes, white shirt front an' all, the same as Shayne, an' with a leather case full of documents under his arm, the girl's father! As respectable an' as aristocratic an Englishman of good breedin' as you'd like to see! A soldier, every inch of him—though what work Satan could have found for *his* hands in the great war but robbin' his fellow countrymen, Lord knows!

" 'Ah, Michael!' he says. 'I've been detained.'

"He hadn't seen me, standin' by the wall, to the right of the entrance.

" 'Good ev'nin', Colonel Rellable,' I says; 'how are you?'

"I tell you, son, that honest, respectable old gentleman nearly dropped at my feet with a heart attack. I bet you he was prepared almost any minute, any place he was in, to hear some one ask him where was the money he'd stolen or what was the graft he was workin' on now, an' I bet he was ready to stare 'em square in the face an' say in his most aristocratic voice that he'd not the pleasure of knowin' 'em! But here, in the luxurious saloon of his future son-in-law's luxurious yacht, in the middle of Queenstown Harbor at seven o'clock on a November ev'nin', to find one of his suckers must have given him shootin' pains in his head!

" 'You remember me, don't you, general?' I says, givin' him a step in rank.

" 'No,' says he, with a kind of gulp. 'I'm —— if I do!'

"An' then on top of everything, before I

knew what had happened, almost, I saw my friends that I'd said good-by to earlier on.

" 'Ah!' I says. 'Come in, Dr. Jones; come in, Mr. Smith! I'm delighted to see you again. An' how's my dear old friend, Captain Linnehan? Isn't he comin', too?'

"NEXT moment I heard footsteps hurryin' along the deck an' some one came rushin' into the alleyway—Linnehan, I knew—an' gabbled:

" 'The boat's alongside, an' O'Brien tied with a rope an' gagged. Who's inside?'

"An' me—I says:

" 'Come in, too, Captain Linnehan; it was me tied him an' gagged him. Come on in an' let's see have you changed since I last saw you!'

"He hadn't. He was still the same old cutthroat!

"You'd think, maybe, from the way I'm talkin', that all this time there was no one sayin' a word. You'd be wrong. I tell you there wasn't one of that gang that wasn't peckin' at Shayne, tryin' to explain that I was a liar an' I'd murder a man for a shillin' an' the sooner they had me arrested the better. An' so on. It was the white-faced man with the glasses who talked of arrestin' me, an' I laughed out loud.

" 'Mr. Smith,' I says.

" 'My name's not Smith,' says he.

" 'I know that,' I says, 'but that's what you told me it was. Mr. Smith, the last thing in the world you're goin' to do is to have me arrested. You know it, too. Now, chew on that for a bit!'

"An' then Shayne, who'd been lookin' more or less dazed, tells me I'd better explain, quick. He was in a towerin' rage, quiverin', an' I knew if I didn't convince him he'd landed himself in the hands of a gang of crooks he'd show me no mercy.

" 'Tell me, Mr. Shayne,' says I, 'have you entered into any financial or business deal with this man here that I knew as Colonel Rellable? If so,' says I, 'you'll lose your money!'

" 'Michael,' says the colonel, 'this is outrageous. I've never to my knowledge set eyes on this man in my life!'

" 'Oh!' says I. 'Then look at Angel!'

"Even Michael Shayne who was head over ears in love could have seen for himself that the girl was afraid. I knew by her look that the game was up. She stood, starin' in a dull kind of way at her father. her hands by her sides, her face all drawn as though she was sufferin' agony an' it was all she could do to keep from shriekin'.

" 'Why don't you let me heave him over the side?' I heard old Linnehan say.

" 'Are you goin' to listen to a —— blackmailer?' says the colonel. 'A common man, not even a gentleman! I'm not goin' to stand by an' hear my reputation torn to shreds by a man of this stamp, I promise you!'

"An' somethin' seemed to whisper in my ear, then, that I was as near bein' dead as I'm likely to be this side of the big drop. The faces of those four crooks, the colonel, Smith, Dr. Jones an' Linnehan, would have been my death warrant, but for Shayne an' that jaw of his an' the chance, even now, the gambler's chance, of a lucky card in the draw.

" 'Mr. Shayne,' I says, 'what were you doin' on board the *Harebell* this afternoon over at Passage West?'

" 'We're formin' a syndicate to incorporate a shippin' company,' says he. 'We're buyin' up five or six steamers. The *Harebell's* the first. We're discussin' the final terms for the sale with the representatives of the ship's owners to-night!'

" 'With these two?' I says. He nodded. 'It may int'rest you to know,' says I, 'that one of them is your lawyer, the other your doctor, an' that you're sufferin' from delusions, so I was told, an' not quite right in the head.'

" 'A —— lie!' says the man in specs.

" 'Why didn't you let me aboard then?' I says. 'Mr. Shayne,' says I, 'I'm chief engineer of the *Harebell*. I've come here tonight to tell you the owners are not sellin'. They know nothin' of any offer to buy! Any documents this gang of swindlers may have shown you are forged!'

"I got no further than that. Rats in a trap have their teeth still. I saw the colonel, lookin' like he really did look, under the mask he wore in public, slide his right hand into his tail pocket. I stood by the sideboard, within reach of one of the best weapons a man may have. Before the colonel could get that gun of his into action I'd laid him out. How! Not with my fist, of course. Too far away! Champagne bottle, vintage unknown, square on the forehead. Might have killed him, I know, but it didn't. I grabbed hold of the next

bottle. Once, I remember, at Alexandria, clearin' a barroom of every livin' soul with a broken champagne bottle. I was ready to do it again.

" 'Any one else want a dose of the same-medicine?' I says.

"There was no scrappin'. The man in the specs an' his pal, the doctor, lost heart. The cards were against them. The red-faced man put out his hands, just like a man does when a policeman tells him to hold 'em out for the bracelets.

" 'I'm finished,' he says. 'You win!'

"An' the man in the specs says to him:

" 'It's your own —— fault,' he says. 'If I'd had my way I'd have heaved him into the harbor without any arguin'!'

"An' Linnehan?

" 'Captain,' I says, 'keep them dainty hands of yours away from your pockets! I don't trust you!'

"I took his revolver, an' then I loosened the colonel's fingers an' took his.

"Shayne's face was red, just like it was when he found that the pup he'd bought didn't belong to the man who'd sold it him. He turned, then, to the girl.

" 'Angel,' he says, 'is it true? Did you know they were tryin' to rob me?'

"There wasn't a thing in the world that mattered to Angel now, not even her father, groanin' there in the corner. She looked—well, I dunno, but if ever I saw tragedy an' despair in any human face it was there, in hers! She'd lost! She saw the world she'd built for herself crumblin' under her feet! Her life ruined! Poverty in front of her—poverty an' hardship an' maybe she saw prison, as well! That's what I thought. Once a crook always a crook, of course!

"That ended it. Angel said nothin'. The colonel was sittin' up, tryin' to stop the bleedin' with his handkerchief.

" 'Goin' to run us in?' he says.

" 'No,' says Shayne. An' at that the lot of them looked a little less like condemned poisoners, all but the girl. 'No, I'm not.' An' to me:

" 'Mr. Harrington, I'll ask for the loan of one of those revolvers. Now, then, on deck, the whole crowd! You'll be off this ship in less than five minutes!'

"He passed the four men out of the saloon.

" 'You, too, Angel,' he says. 'Make haste, please!'

"He went out without lookin' at her, an' the girl walked very slowly toward the door, her head bent.

"When she came near where I was standin', I saw she was cryin'.

" 'Mr. Harrington,' says she, 'there's one question I'd like to ask you: Do you think I knew what they were tryin' to do?'

" 'I don't think,' says I, 'I know.'

" 'Well, you're wrong,' says she. 'I swear before God that I never even suspected! I thought—I thought he was runnin' straight. An' now—now——'

"She gave a shrug of her shoulders.

" 'It doesn't matter, does it?'

"At the door she stopped again.

" 'Some day, perhaps,' she says, 'you'll understand what kind of a life I've had. I wasn't to blame. I was sorry about that money of yours.'

"We put them ashore in the motor-boat. It was pourin' with rain by now an' blowin' up from the sea—a dirty night an' cold. Neither the colonel, nor Linnehan, nor the other two, had much to say. They were all too sick an' sorry for themselves to argue, an' they were scared of Shayne. I was scared of him, myself.

"Directly the last of their luggage was dumped on the beach he says to them:

" 'This is the best stroke of work I ever did in my life. Colonel, you'd better consult a doctor about that head of yours. You'll need some stitches. Good-by, Angel. Take my advice an' chuck it! Bein' a crook doesn't suit you! That father of yours isn't worth it!'

"The girl didn't speak—just stood with her white cloak around her, like a ghost in the darkness, an' said nothin'. An' then we shoved off. Poor Michael!

"He was pretty mis'rable when I said good-by to him on Monkstown Pier.

" 'Mr. Harrington,' he says, 'you've saved me from makin' a fool of myself in more ways than one. But for you, I'd have been unhappy for the rest of my life!'

" 'But for you, Mr. Shayne,' says I, 'my life would have ended —— sudden yesterday afternoon.'

" 'I didn't know,' he says, 'there were liars like that in the world! When I think they nearly sold me a steamer that wasn't theirs I'm ashamed of myself! Good-by, Mr. Harrington; it's the pup over again, isn't it?'

" 'What are you goin' to do now, Mr. Shayne?' I says.

" 'I'm sailin' as soon as I can pick up a new captain,' says he. 'To the Mediterranean, or anywhere, so long as it's away from here!'

"He was takin' it hard, I could see. I'd saved him from makin' a fool of himself, yes, but he wasn't the kind to forget that girl in a hurry.

"THAT was November, nineteen hundred an' nineteen. February, nineteen hundred an' twenty-one, the *Harebell* was loadin' coffee at Santos, Brazil. One mornin' I found a letter askin' would I meet the writer that ev'nin' in a certain café. No signature. Shaky handwritin', but correct spellin'. For the sake of old times an' an old friend, would I be at the place named?

"An old friend, eh! Who would that be? I decided to go. There was nothin' to be afraid of. There wasn't a man alive who would touch me for money, if I wasn't willin'. An' may be it really was one of the old crowd, on the beach an' in want of a shillin' or so to buy him a meal.

"It wasn't, of course. I found the place named in the letter—a little café where you could get a meal or a drink; not much of a place, but quiet, an', so far as I saw, respectable. I pushed open the door an' went in.

" 'How are you, Mr. Harrington,' says a voice, 'how do you do! An' how's the *Harebell*!'

"I looked round an' there was the colonel. A reg'lar down an' out—just skin an' bone, an' his nerves all over the shop, to judge from the way he was shakin'.

"There was nothin' friendly in the way I looked at him, I suppose. His smile went. He shuffled in his chair an' pulled at his mustache which was gray by this time an' limp an' untidy.

" 'Mr. Harrington,' he says, 'you bear no malice, I trust!'

" 'No,' says I, 'I reckon I was paid when I last saw you.'

"He grinned.

" 'I've the scar yet,' he says. 'Won't you sit down, Mr. Harrington—it's a pleasure to talk to one of my old friends!'

"An' once he had called me a common man! A bit of a comedown, eh! The old colonel was on the rocks, at last!

"An' then I thought of the girl, an'—well, I felt worried an' anxious. If the father had sunk to this, what had become of Angel? It didn't bear thinkin' about.

" 'What about Angel?' I says.

" 'Angel,' says he. 'I've finished with her. She's no daughter of mine, Mr. Harrington. She's forgotten her poor old father!'

"He was so sorry for himself, an' he looked so mis'rable an' so diff'rent from the Rotterdam an' the *Moon Ray* days that I sat down at the same table an' bought him a drink.

" 'Mr. Harrington,' he says, after a time, 'if that girl of mine was to come to me now an' beg for forgiveness, I'd refuse to listen!'

"Nice cheerful old sinner, wasn't he!

"An' then he told me his story.

" 'She was always ungrateful,' says he, 'I did all I could to give her comforts an' luxuries. I didn't run straight, Mr. Harrington,' he says, 'but I had to have money somehow, to support her the way I wanted. No mother,' says he, 'could have taken more care of her than I did!'

"He swallowed his drink at a gulp.

" 'Society owed me a livin',' says he, 'an' I told her so, but she wouldn't listen. She didn't see things the way I did. You've no idea,' he says, 'the trouble I had to get her to do as I asked. She didn't refuse to obey me, that was her duty—her duty toward her father. She never left me. She couldn't.'

"An' then the old —— chuckled.

" 'Why didn't she?' I says.

" 'Because, Mr. Harrington, that little girl of mine loved her old father, whatever he did. D'you see?'

"I saw all right.

" 'But,' says he, 'she got more an' more difficult to manage, an' I was afraid some day just when I'd thought out some scheme to get us some money, she'd give me away by doin' somethin' that didn't fit in with the part she was playin'. An' so, Mr. Harrington,' he says, 'I did what I shouldn't have done. I told her a lie. For her own good. Hers an' mine. I said I was runnin' straight. I said I'd turned over a new leaf. I'd reformed an' was goin' into a legitimate business scheme with some friends of mine! An', says the colonel, 'she believed what I said.'

" 'An' what was the scheme?' says I.

"He looked sad. 'That shippin' company,' he says. 'I met Shayne in Dublin

an' he asked Angel an' me to be his guests on the yacht. My own idea, that of buyin' the *Harebell!* Good, wasn't it!'

" 'An' she thought you were straight, eh?' I says.

" 'She did,' says he.

" 'Where's Angel now?' says I. 'In Santos?'

" 'In Santos!' says he, raisin' his voice to a screech. 'In this —— of a hole! No,' says he, 'she's in London, livin' on the fat of the land, lookin' down on her poor old father who slaved year after year to give her a home an' happiness. An' now she hates me because I lied to her! An' I'm here, in Santos,' he says, 'an' I can't go home. She won't let me. If I leave South America,' says he, 'they'll stop my money an' then what would become of me? I must stay here, Harrington, piggin' it in a way no real gentleman should. For I am a gentleman, Harrington. If I told you my name,' he says, 'you'd be surprized. I was in the army, too. It's the truth.'

"He went on mumblin' an' mutterin', an' then I asked him the question I'd been tryin' to ask for some time.

" 'What's the girl doin', then?' I says.

"He swallowed the second drink that I'd bought him an' wiped his mustache.

" 'Didn't you know?' he says. 'After that unpleasant scene we had on the yacht, for which,' he says, 'I haven't the heart to blame you, she left me. She's a lady, that little daughter of mine. Blood told in the long run—not her mother's, of course—mine. I come of a good family, Harrington, did I tell you? Angel wanted respectability. She got married!'

"I could have shaken him.

" 'Who to?' I says.

" 'Didn't you hear?' he says. 'To Shayne!'

"An' then that disreputable old blackguard began to weep because his daughter had left him an' he was all alone.

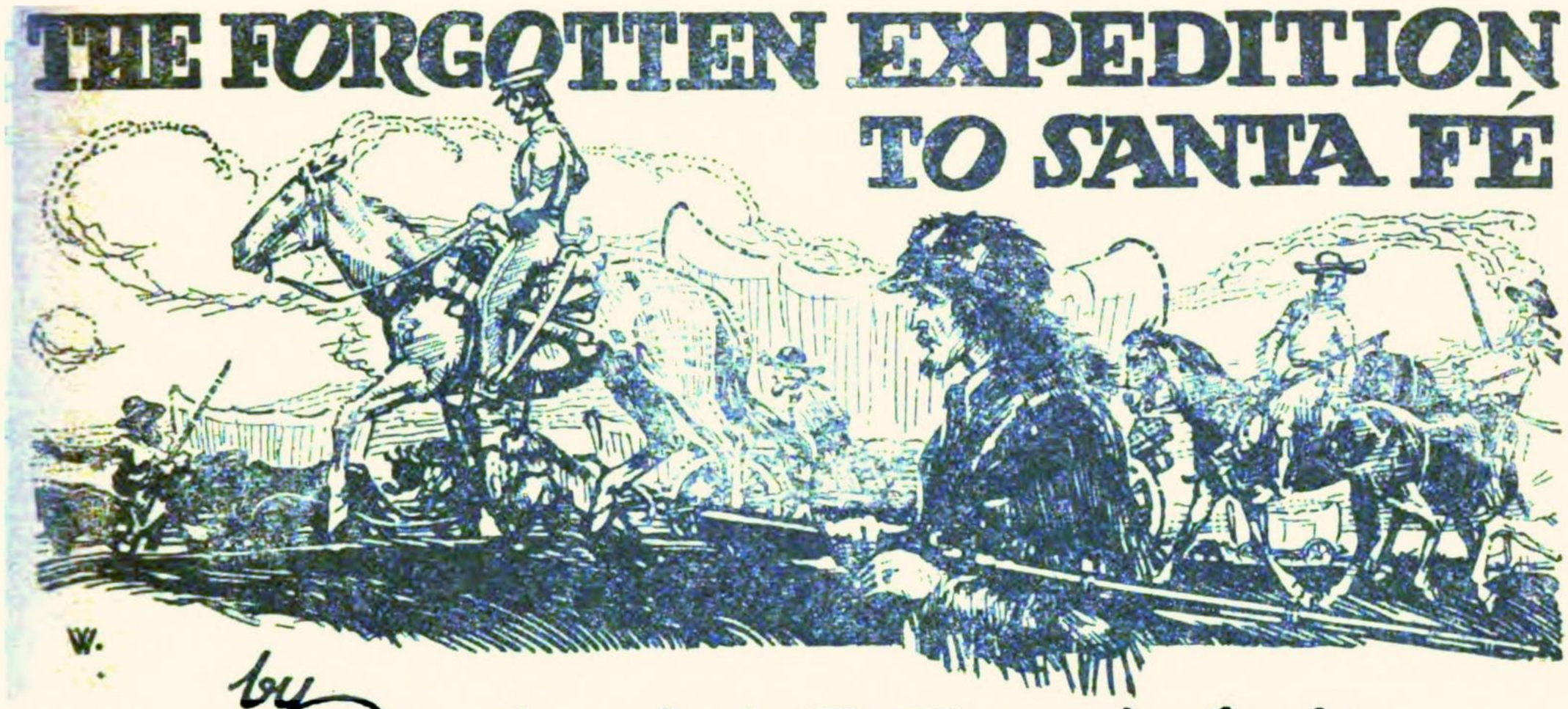
"I dunno; though I knew what kind of a life he'd led her, an' what might have become of her, for all he cared; yet, seein' him there in that little café at Santos, I pitied him.

"That's the yarn. The queer part of it is, I suppose, the endin'. Shayne an' his wife are happy. Funny, isn't it!

"He wrote me in the Summer, telling me about his marriage, an askin'—would I come an' see Angel an' him in London at their house in Grosvenor Square! Or would I stay with them down in Sussex! He'd give me the time of my life, he said. He would. But I didn't go.

"I'd like to see Michael again an' learn has he been buyin' any more pups. But what about Angel? Would she feel any great pleasure at seein' me? I doubt it. Michael wouldn't believe it, not for a minute. But it's the truth. That's why I stay away. For his wife's sake. I'm too much part of what she wants to forget!"

# THE FORGOTTEN EXPEDITION TO SANTA FÉ



by Frederick R. Bechdolt

*Author of "The Last of the Open Ranges," "The Texans," etc.*

THIS thing took place in the days when the West was young and the spirit of adventure was flaming in the hearts of men. It was not so very long ago if you reckon by years, for there are those still in their prime who have heard survivors tell the tale. But that same spirit of adventure has been sending men forth into the wilderness ever since, until the great, brown plains are criss-crossed by barbed-wire fences, the savage mountains are sheep-range, and there are no vacant places on the maps of the Southwest. Even the *Journado del Muerto* has ceased to mean the Journey of Death and has become merely a Spanish name, printed on picture post-cards, mispronounced by tourists in the Pullman.

Hard-headed men scoff at this flame—this urge from within which drives their neighbors on to hazardous projects. It is the one thing above all others which made it possible for them to raise their pigs and cut their eight crops of alfalfa in the valleys, to build their smelters on the arid heights, to sell automobile accessories and soap and real estate all along the Rio Grande, the Pecos and the Gila.

Some one had to be magnificent enough in his folly to disregard all possibilities of failure—and leave his bones to mark the trail for other enthusiasts—in order that the railroad might eventually come to carry these saner ones into the country.

To disregard all possibilities of failure—that was the thing that did it. They failed so many times, those old-timers! And, if they lived through it, they always tried again. They did heroic deeds; they made stories which stir our hearts—striving toward accomplishment which was too great for them. They dared to fail and because they did, a later generation has succeeded.

There were a hundred expeditions like this one along the border; business projects every one of them which ended in disaster. Some went forth to get lands, some to seek gold, others to traffic with strange people beyond the skyline; and there were those who looked to conquer new territory. Prospector, farmer, merchant and filibuster—theirs are the tales of lost hopes. But there was that in the manner of the losing which makes the stories splendid.

In this case a nation made the hazard. The Republic of Texas was in its fifth year and very poor when Mirabeau Lamar, its president, learned of a golden opportunity off to the west. He tried to seize it, and out of the attempt sprang a train of events which changed the history of this United States.

By all rights the story begins before Lamar's administration. To understand the situation which confronted him one must go back to an April evening in 1836 when the Mexican soldiers were fleeing from the stricken field of San Jacinto.

Second Sergeant George Sylvester of General Sam Houston's army, who was out

with a squad of troopers hunting for prisoners, happened to notice something stirring in the long grass beside Vince's Bayou. He dragged forth General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, dictator of Mexico, disguised as a common private.

Now the memory of the Alamo and of the massacre of Fannin's men at Goliad was fresh that evening and by the time he had been recognized and brought through the Texan army into the presence of General Sam Houston, the President of Mexico was so thankful to find himself with a whole skin that international boundaries appeared to him a small matter.

He continued in this frame of mind for several weeks, during which period he signed two treaties, one secret and one for publication. In the former of these he


expressed his tacit consent to the Rio Grande—Rio Bravo del Norte, they then called the stream's upper reaches—as the western limit of the new republic.

On the strength of this agreement, which Santa Anna afterward tried to repudiate, the world's larger powers, including the United States and England, recognized Texas as a nation. Naturally enough, when the people happened to think of their western boundary, they took it for granted that it was the Rio Grande.

But the question seldom occurred to men's minds in those days. For between the furthermost settlements and the river lay hundreds of miles of wilderness of which the terrible Llano Estacado was a portion.

Fourteen miles east of the Rio Grande, Santa Fé nestled under the flank of a mountain, row after row of flat-topped, adobe buildings clustered about the cloistered arches of the mission which the padres had built in days long gone. And Santa Fé was the gateway to the trade of all Chihuahua. Along in the latter eighteen-twenties the wagon trains began to crawl across the wide prairies and through the blazing sand-hills beside the Cimmaron, to ascend the mountains beyond and then to follow the road's windings downward to the city. They carried goods from St. Louis; they brought back Mexican gold in payment. It was a rich commerce.

Now merchants came from the states east of the Mississippi and settled here in the mountains of New Mexico. They built up a good business; they did well, as the saying has it, and this in spite of a series of extortions levied upon them by the Government officials. One of the traders was Samuel Howland of New Bedford, Massachusetts, who visited the near-by villages and came in contact with other Americans.

Like himself they were restive under the restrictions imposed upon them by the local authorities; they growled at the money which they were obliged to pay over in order to do their trading, and above all at the uncertainty which attended such transactions. Bad enough, they said, to be robbed, but far worse when they were never certain that the tribute which they paid would bring them any security.

Manuel Armijo was governor at Santa Fé. His record was picturesque because of its very badness. The people of New Mexico liked him as little as did the handful of Americans. He held his power because of the ragged regiments that loafed about the various *presidios*.

SAMUEL HOWLAND and his friends learned of the fact that Santa Fé lay within the borders of the Texan Republic. It occurred to them that it might be a good idea to get into communication with the people of the latter nation. For Texas seaports were only a few hundred miles away. Once make a road to the Gulf of Mexico—so they reasoned—and the trade would naturally take that shorter route.

Some time in 1840 Howland came to Austin by the roundabout St. Louis route and had a talk with President Lamar.

The merchant described conditions in New Mexico, the sentiment of the people, the richness of the trade, the unreliability of the authorities. And Lamar conceived the idea of an expedition to the city—an expedition made by a nation within its own boundaries—to promote trade and to give the people a chance to come under the Texan laws.

That was the idea—to organize a wagon-route commerce between Santa Fé and the Gulf seaboard. As to the extension of the Texan Government, why this was to rest with the New Mexican population. For the new republic was in no condition to start in on another war just now.

Lamar sent men to New Orleans and these emissaries interested a number of merchants in the proposition. By the Spring of 1841 the affair was organized—three commissioners who were to carry proclamations promising the people of Santa Fé the opportunity to come under Texan rule if they saw fit, but disclaiming any idea of forcing them to do so if they did not want to; some dozen or so of merchants who brought their goods with them; a half-dozen guests, men of prominence who were going along for the opportunity of seeing the country; and six companies of soldiers who were to guard the wagon-train against the Indians.

In all there were about three hundred and twenty members, fifty of whom were civilians and the rest volunteers. Don José Navarro, Colonel William G. Cooke and Dr. Richard E. Brenham were the commissioners. General Hugh McLeod of the Texan army was in command. Five of the companies were horsemen; one had a brass field-piece; and as for the soldiers themselves, they were for the most part young fellows without any experience in fighting.

In the first place it had been intended to take the old route by which the padres had traveled across the Llano Estacado when they founded the mission on the San Saba River, but that idea was discarded because of the long journey over the Staked Plains. There was no trail in those days; the great plateau was unmarked by a wagon track. It was finally decided to set out northward from Austin, following the Brazos River, to the Cross Timbers, then to swerve to the west and keep close to the Red River, crossing the Llano's northern reaches.

There were no guides. Some Lipan Indians who were to have served in this capacity failed to appear. Samuel Howland, who traveled with the expedition, was to contribute such knowledge as he had gained from hearsay. There were instruments for finding latitude and longitude in charge of Lieutenant Hull, a former British naval officer. All parties believed the journey would take six weeks or two months at the outside.

The idea was to start some time in May when the grass was young, that the horses and cattle might take advantage of as much green feed as possible. During that month the companies rendezvoused on Brushy Creek, fifteen miles north of Austin. But there was first one delay and then another—some of the merchants were slow in arriving with their goods; there was trouble in gathering wagons and equipment; and so May went by; June came and was well in its passing before the last of them appeared in camp.

On the nineteenth of the month President Lamar and a small party of the young republic's officials rode up from the capital. The expedition turned out to receive them. It was a brave sight, the rows of white tents; the Lone Star banner flapping in the breeze; the companies drawn up in double ranks; and all about the undulations of the prairie, deep green down in the troughs and on the crests just turning tawny from the sun's fervent caresses.

The wagons—forty-odd of them—were parked; the yoke-oxen stood tethered near the heavy vehicles; a herd of beef cattle, which were to furnish food, grazed just beyond. The presidential party rode slowly past, inspecting all these things. When they had done, they went to the parade ground.

A band struck up march music—two clarinets, four bugles and half a dozen fifes and drums. The companies of horsemen marched by the president in sets of fours; and in the rear came the riders with the brass field-pieces.

When the review was done Lamar made a speech, reminding these adventurers of the high hopes depending on their mission—they were to bring great things back to Texas from the lands beyond the wilderness, he said. They gave him three cheers and the brass six-pounder roared in salute. The president and his party rode home to Austin and two days later the expedition set forth across the rolling prairie.

For a few days they traveled on into the north through easy country. Every morning at dawn the band turned out, clarinets, bugles, fifes and drums, to sound the reveille. The tents were struck and loaded on the wagons; the men gathered about a half-hundred twinkling fires to cook their breakfasts. Then the oxen were yoked; the horsemen swung into the saddles and the whole train went lumbering over the bronze-green swells of the prairie.

TWO companies rode before, and one of these pressed far ahead. Matthew Caldwell was its captain—"Old Paint" men called him—a veteran of the Texan war for independence and an Indian fighter of note. He and his men were the pathfinders, scouting for a good route, for water at the day's end, keeping a lookout against hostile savages. Behind the second company, which acted as a vanguard, the wagons came in single file; the beef herd followed; then the brass field-piece. Another company of horsemen accompanied the main portion of the column, removing obstacles and doing such rude grading as was absolutely necessary. The rest of the soldiers acted as rear guard.

So through the long warm days, sometimes for twelve miles, occasionally as far as fifteen; until the late afternoon found them at the spot which old Matthew Caldwell and his men had chosen for their halting. Now the wagons were parked; and while some pitched tents and some attended to the animals, a beef was killed. The smoking meat was distributed. Captains and privates, merchants, commissioners and guests gathered about the camp-fires, each with his portion to roast it on a ramrod's end. Three pounds the man was the day's ration.

Evening came on. The fires flared ruddy in the growing darkness. Groups gathered round them. The old-timers—the men who had come into Texas away back in the days of Moses Austin—told tales of Indian fighting, of the enormous buffalo herds and of the unknown country to the westward where there was not a bush or a stone or any landmark, nothing but an expanse as level as a table—the Llano Estacado where the padres, who journeyed from Santa Fé, had to mark their course by stakes. And the young recruits listened open-mouthed. The hour grew late; the groups about the fires began to dwindle, until only the night herders remained and the sentries riding back and forth through the darkness.

So for ten days. They traveled up the Brazos Valley until they came to Little River. A number of the wagons were broken down. The beef was running low. They sent men back after a fresh herd and halted for five days to repair the vehicles.

Now they were in the country of the buffalo. Parties rode out on the prairie, slaughtering the huge animals. Others roved through the timbered bottoms hunting bear and deer. There was rich fishing in the streams.

They lived high during this time—great roasts of venison and bison humps spitted before the fires; honey from the bee trees, wild berries from the thickets. But the beef rations were issued just as usual. The men threw them aside and buzzards gathered about the rotting heaps.

Some of the old-timers shook their heads and muttered grim prophesies. These veterans, however, were in the minority and no one heeded them. Those in control had been chosen with a view to their fitness to deal with the people of New Mexico. They did not understand some things about the wilderness, and the few who did were in subordinate positions.

They struck a rough country when they resumed the march. On Cedral Creek they found a crossing where the banks were so steep that it was necessary to hitch twenty yoke of oxen to a single wagon. There was a pandemonium in the stream's bed; the cracking of the long bull-whips and the oaths of the teamsters resounded all day long. And the reckoning of the scout company failed to tally with the train's slow progress. Late in the evening when they reached their camp a thunderstorm swooped down upon them and some men talked of hardships before morning.

It was the twenty-first of July when they came to the Cross Timbers. That belt of woodlands which stretched from the north halfway across the state of Texas marked the uttermost limit of the territory which was known to the white man. It was a broken country, sharp ridges and deep gullies, with here and there a regular chasm of a ravine. In some of the level places great post-oaks grew; the steep slopes and the backbones were covered with

black-jack and small pines, with dense thickets between.

Matthew Caldwell took his company on ahead to find a route which wagons could traverse, and while they were making their reconnaissance the train halted for four days. The wagons were repaired. The officers held a council. A month had passed—that first reckoning of six weeks or so to Santa Fé looked over-sanguine in the light of their growing experiencing.

They decided it was time to lighten the burden which the oxen were dragging. So they threw away their tents together with a number of other luxuries—and a store of dried beef which they had carried from Austin to use in case provisions should run short. The day came when they wished that they had kept that meat.

Finally Caldwell returned with tidings of a feasible route to the northwest. Hard going, the old-timer told them, but it was the only way and once they started they must keep on, for there was no water until they reached the camping-place which his men had found out on the prairie on the other side. They set forth early in the morning and before they were gone two hours they found that his words were true. Hard going already and they had not struck the worst.

They traveled up and down, crossing a network of gullies whose steep sides were baked hard in the Summer sun. The pioneer companies were sweating with axes and shovels, cutting away the brush, leveling off the worst places. Now and again a laden wagon went over the bank and every vehicle behind was brought to a halt while the teamsters yoked a long string of oxen to the wreck and dragged it back from the depths into which it had fallen.

Afternoon came on; the sun grew hotter. Already they had used the last of their water; the tongues of the oxen were lolling from their mouths. And now they reached the rougher ground. The woods resounded with the crackling of the bull-whips; the oaths of the drivers rose in a never-ending chorus. There came at intervals the heavy crashing of a wagon rolling down into a gully. And so they sweated on and evening overtook them and the darkness followed. They lighted torches of pitch pine and kept up the struggle until midnight, when the brass field-piece stalled at the column's head.

There was nothing to do now but wait for daylight. So they bided there in the dark woods, enduring thirst's tortures until dawn. Then they set to work again and managed to drag the cannon free. Late that afternoon the train emerged from the last thickets to rumble on across the prairie to the spring which the advance guard had found for them.

So ended their first taste of real hardship; and when the last stragglers had come in and they had gathered around the campfires in the evening they talked of the difficulties of their journey as behind them.

The next day the riders who went on ahead reported a large stream just to the northward. The officers held another council. They had the observations which Lieutenant Hull had taken to aid their reckoning. They decided that the stream would be the Red River.

Those who have been lost in a new country know the feeling which comes over one when he realizes that he has gone wrong. They know the bitterness with which one remembers the exact moment when he strayed from the proper route. In days to come the members of the expedition were to look back with that bitterness on the morning when they saw the Wichita to the north of them and mistook it for the Red River, of which it was a tributary.

Here where they were, not far from the southeastern corner of the Panhandle, is a water-shed between the tributaries of the Red River and the upper reaches of the Brazos. Now, as day followed day, they believed that they were following the former stream, a course which should lead them a little north of west, skirting the upper reaches of the Llano Estacado. Really they were bearing off along the valley of its tributary, the Wichita, a little south of west. And although they noted the wrong direction they kept this up for something like two weeks before suspicion of the truth began to dawn upon them.

For this there was good reason. Soon after they emerged from the Cross Timbers they left the stony prairie and entered a broken country which men have called the Wichita Mountains. They were climbing toward the enormous mesa—the Llano Estacado. The land rose in a series of long steppes; and here, for a width of something like fifty miles, the terrane was all broken up into sharp ridges with deep valleys between.

Occasionally they came upon a plateau from whose surface truncated peaks and oddly shaped buttes stood forth, in a bewildering tangle.

In that day, when no white men really knew the country; they had no established landmarks on which to rely. So the scout company went on before, searching for good camping-places, feeling out the route; the wagon train followed with the pioneers sweating at road-making and the teamsters fighting to keep their vehicles right side up; and as they put the miles behind them, mounting higher every day, they came into more arid regions.

The Summer sun was growing hotter. Water became more scarce; and often when they found it, the pools were brackish with alkali, unfit for men. Day after day the feed grew shorter. Now and again a band of Indians appeared on the sky-line, to vanish as suddenly as they had shown themselves. The oxen were sore footed; some of them were already weak from leanness; the cattle in the beef herd were gaunted. Thirst was no longer a novelty to the members of the expedition.

In these hard days they had one solace. A Mexican named Carlos, who had lived for many years in old Taos and had at one time trapped along the northern portion of the Llano, was discovered in one of the companies and the officers asked him for his opinion concerning the stream whose valley lay just to the north of them. He said there was no doubt that it was the Red River. Every morning when they resumed their journey the officers would consult with him.

Perhaps it was in part because of a similarity in the landmarks and perhaps in part because of that eagerness to identify a thing which has so many times led better men than he into mistakes; at any rate Carlos began to discover peaks and ridges and valleys off there to the northward which he said he had seen before. Good news makes a man popular. The unlucky Mexican found himself extolled on all sides as a skilled guide and a wise fellow. Which in its turn, no doubt, helped him to find more evidence of the Red River as the days went by.

And so it was that for two weeks the expedition wandered in the broken country between the Brazos and the Wichita Rivers. And whenever any of the officers began to feel that they might be drawing off too far to the southward there was always a bit of cheering intelligence concerning some fancied landmark to quench the budding trepidations.

Then one day they came out of the rugged hills upon one of the plateaux which lie like a series of stairs leading upward toward the Llano. Here on the stony prairie, whose short grass was burned crisp and brown by the Summer sun, they had a good view on all sides. Carlos, the Mexican, looked ahead and saw three or four sharp peaks, which were, he said, just east of the New Mexican settlements. They had perhaps a hundred miles to go, probably less.

There was good water here. The column halted for the day to rest the sore-footed oxen. The officers, commissioners and merchants gathered in council; a ragged group, sunburnt and bearded and lank-haired; no one would have taken them for the same men who had set forth from Austin less than two months before.

They talked over the situation. Now that the hardships were behind them—so they said—and their goal in sight, it would be wise to send on an advance party to feel out the temper of the New Mexican people and to learn just what manner of reception they might expect. Also, the emissaries could send back breadstuffs and coffee, for they had eaten nothing but stringy beef for many days now.

So, on the next morning, Samuel Howland, the New Bedford merchant, set forth with two merchants by the names of Baker and Rosenberry. They had the best horses in the party and five days' provisions. The others watched them drawing on ahead until they became dots and vanished behind a rise of land. The column settled down to the day's march. Only a short time now, they told one another, and they would be at the journey's end.

There was one man who did not share the general feeling of optimism. That was old Matthew Caldwell. In the years of his Indian fighting down in southern Texas he had learned a good deal about landmarks and picking a course in an unknown country, and somehow the things that Carlos had said did not convince him. There was something in the look of the land off to the southward that kept him doubtful. So, two days after the departure of Samuel Howland and his companions, the

veteran took what the people of the border call a *pasear* off in that direction. He was gone all night and when he returned in the morning he gave it as his opinion that they were not anywhere near the Red River; they were just north of the upper Brazos.

THE officers gathered about him and heard him out. He told them his reasons, the dip of the valley to the southward, the direction of the ridges and such other things as go to show the identity of a main water-course. There was something convincing in his evidence, and a feeling of grave doubt began to spread among these men. If Matthew Caldwell were right they were more than one hundred miles off of their course.

That day began with the first uneasy suspicion that they were lost. It went on, hot and dry, under a blazing sun. Toward evening the advance company reached the brink of a deep gorge where a stream had cut its way to the northward, far beneath the level of the surrounding plain.

The water-course showed dry down there, but there was a little pool among the sands. The horsemen made their way down the side of the steep bluff with much difficulty and no little danger; and the wagons came on up to the brink. And as the train halted —just as the members of the vanguard were nearing the pool down in the depths below them—some one dropped a lighted match.

The grass was waist high here, as dry as tinder; along the sides of the bluffs dwarf cedars stood, killed by some fire in bygone days, acres and acres of gnarled dead branches. And now disaster mounted on the freshening evening breeze and swept over them in a red wave.

Three wagons were aflame within a few seconds. The one which held the expedition's powder was near by. While some whipped off the flames with their coats, others rushed to the threatened vehicle and put their shoulders to the wheels; the teamster lashed the bewildered oxen. Thus they saved most of their ammunition. And now they turned their efforts to fighting the fire away from the remainder of the train.

When the red line of flames raced away across the prairie they found that they had lost a portion of their provisions; some of the beef herd were stampeded; and the most valuable possessions of the merchants and the commissioners were burned.

Darkness came down. They had no water left in the barrels. There was no getting into the gorge now; and the members of the advance guard returned to tell them that the pool in the depths was so strong with alkali that it was doubtful if the animals would drink it.

The next day they traveled through a country which the fire had blackened for miles before them. Late in the afternoon, when the oxen were staggering in their yokes and the men were half-dead from thirst, they reached a few brackish pools too bitter for a human being. But the animals drank deeply and they pressed onward. The men chewed bits of rawhide to keep some moisture between their arid lips. That night the Mexican Carlos deserted them. His popularity was gone. He fled fearing the death with which many threatened him.

So for three days, with an occasional puddle of yellowish brown fluid as bitter as gall to give them a little surcease from the thirst's long torment; and at last they reached a clear spring. That was on the seventeenth of August. In the evening the officers held another council and the result of their discussion was an order reducing rations by one-half.

They had turned their course somewhat farther into the north and now they had passed beyond the source of the Wichita River. They had come up and out on the great Llano Estacado. Here on the bare plain, where there was not so much as a weed for a landmark, the Indians who had been dogging the column began to get more bold. One night they stole right into the camp and made off with a half-dozen tethered horses, cutting the rawhide ropes within a few feet of the sleeping owners.

A few days later Lieutenant Hull, the young British naval officer who had been taking observations to get their latitude and longitude, was riding out on reconnaisance duty with four companions, when fifty Kiowa warriors swooped down upon them. The five men made a stand and lay there in the short grass, holding off the savages with their rifles, while the horsemen raced toward them from the column's flank. But the distance which the companies had to cover was too great, and as they spurred their animals on they saw the

Kiowas closing in upon the little group. When they arrived they found the five bodies. Lieutenant Hull's bore more than thirty lance wounds.

On the last day of August, nearly three weeks after the departure of Howland, Rosenberry and Baker, the officers held council. At the slow rate they were going there was little hope of reaching the Mexican settlements in time to prevent starvation.

They decided to divide the party and to send Captain Sutton on ahead with ninety-nine others, mounted on the best horses, to procure provisions for the main body. So these departed to the northwest with five days' food and pressed on as hard as they were able.

In this manner the expedition came on across the northern portion of the Llano Estacado—three men riding in advance; far behind them one hundred other horsemen; and in the rear two hundred with the wagons. Their routes took them across the arid table-land around the head waters of the Red River, skirting the breaks of the South Fork of the Canadian. The small store of food which the two first parties carried gave out. For days they lived on prairie dogs.

So, one after another, each of the three divisions came down into the country near the upper Pecos, where they found the first people of the country whose good will they were seeking, whose promises of rich commerce had lured them hither to replenish the waning finances of their young republic.

It was late in August when Samuel Howland, the New Bedford merchant who had been the first to conceive the plan of uniting Santa Fé to the young nation within whose bounderies it lay, reached the little settlement of San Miguel in northeastern New Mexico, with his two companions. Sunburnt and bearded, gaunt from hunger, weary of hardships, the three men rode their half-starved horses into the village of flat-topped adobes. Their journey was as good as done; the capital lay but sixty miles away.

The people of San Miguel welcomed the strangers. They gave them food and shelter; they listened to the story of their wanderings with that outspoken pity which simple men and women always extend to the unfortunate. And when they had gained a little strength Howland, Baker and Rosenberry visited one or two of the larger Mexican landholders.

These and an American merchant by the name of Rowland, who had a store in the place, confirmed them in their belief that the people were only too willing to escape the tyrannies of Governor Armijo by coming under laws of Texas. And as to trade, all that was needed was the opening of a route.

So things looked bright, and the three men were feeling optimistic when they set forth after a night's rest to call on the *alcalde* and state the object of the expedition.

But news had flown fast while they were sleeping. Some of Governor Armijo's officers had got reports of what was going on, and while they were on their way to the *alcalde's* house the trio were surrounded by a company of barefooted soldiers who seized and bound them.

Rumors ran swiftly now through the settlements along the upper Pecos and the Canadian. The Texans were coming, a great army bent on conquest, hungry for loot. Messengers spurred their horses down the long trail to the Presidio del Norte—where El Paso stands today—for new troops. Regiments set forth for Santa Fé.

The people listened to the wild stories which the soldiers told them and were seized with fear. They looked to Governor Manuel Armijo to save them from the horrors of the armed invasion. And, as for the governor from whom the whole flock of falsehoods emanated, it is only just to note the fact that he himself probably believed them all—a man is pretty sure to reason out another's course of conduct along the lines of what he himself would do.

Meantime Howland, Baker and Rosenberry lay in jail under a heavy guard at Santa Fé. Three weeks went by. They had no idea what was going to become of themselves, but what bothered them more than their own fate was the fate of their companions. If they could but send back warning to the expedition! They talked about that day and night. At last they resolved they must take the word themselves.

How they escaped from the jail has not come down in any written chronicle; but it is known that they managed to overpower their guards somehow and to seize their weapons. So they set forth from Santa Fé and they fled eastward through the arid mountains.

For two days and two nights they pressed onward along the lofty ridges, while soldiers scoured the lowlands searching for them. They were without food or water. And on the morning of the third day, while they were traveling along the flank of a high peak near San Miguel, a company of fifty cavalrymen saw them and overtook them.

Three men against fifty. Had it been in the days of the repeating rifles which came three decades later, there is small doubt as to who would have won that fight. But the Texans were armed with old-fashioned smooth bore muskets and had but little ammunition. Even as it was, the swarthy troopers had to charge down upon them; and Rosenberry lay dead; Howland and Baker were bleeding from a dozen saber wounds apiece before the capture was accomplished.

The company of cavalry took their prisoners down to San Miguel. Governor Armijo was there and his *comandante*, Dimasio Salazar; the village was filled with troops. The plaza was like an armed camp when Howland and Baker crossed it to the blank wall where the firing squad was waiting for them.

During that last five minutes of their lives, while they were walking to the place of execution, they got a glimpse of four men, guarded by sentries, within a room beside the square. Those four were Texans.

And so they died there before the adobe wall, knowing that the trap which had closed upon them was already beginning to take their companions.

Thus ended the journey of the three who went on before.

The second party of one hundred men under Captain Sutton included Colonel William G. Cooke, one of the three commissioners. September was well along when they came down from the Llano Estacado into the valley of the upper Canadian. Five days' rations they had when they left the main body and they had been two weeks on the march.

The men were reeling in their saddles and the horses were staggering from weakness on the morning when a party of Comancheros, returning from a trading expedition down the river, met them and directed them to some sheep-pens ten miles or so from Anton Chico. Here the shepherds fed them well and sold them mutton, and the next morning, when they had somewhat recovered their strength, Colonel Cooke and Captain Sutton sent five men on ahead to seek out the authorities at San Miguel and consult with them.

These five were George Van Ness, secretary to the commissioners, W. P. Lewis, captain of the artillery company, who had lived for some years down in Chihuahua and knew Spanish well, Major Howard and James Fitzgerald, merchants, and George W. Kendall of the New Orleans *Picayune*, who was traveling as a guest of the expedition.

Before the emissaries reached Anton Chico they met several sheep-herders and country people and from these they got an inkling of conditions—just enough to let them know that wild rumors were going round of an invading Texan army. They sent back a native with word to this effect; but the man never reached the companies by the sheep-pens.

In the little village of Anton Chico the party learned more of the unrest which Armijo's soldeirs had stirred up. Yet the people were kind to them and gladly gave them shelter. And there was so little that was definite in the stories which they heard that their suspicions were still but half-awakened. They started on the next morning for San Miguel.

When they had gone a few miles one hundred soldiers met them on the El Camino Real. Dimasio Salazar was in command. He rode before his tattered companies and greeted the Texans with suave courtesy. What, he asked them, was their errand. They explained briefly and inquired concerning Samuel Howland's party.

Salazar lied blandly; the three Texans—he said—were with the governor, who had received them with distinguished consideration. And as for himself, why he was here by Armijo's orders to welcome them and their companions to the country.

One thing—he voiced his regret that he must tell them this but it was his duty—must be done by them before they went further. It was the law of New Mexico that foreigners entering the country for trade should give up their weapons. All expeditions from the United States had done this, and he had no choice but to ask the Texans to follow the custom.

To make a long story short, they did so. And as soon as they had parted with their arms, they were seized and bound. Thus

they were taken to San Miguel, where they got a glimpse of Howland and Baker going to their deaths, and where Governor Armijo had an interview with them.

This Manuel Armijo was a large man, well-built, and he made a striking figure in his gaudy uniform. When the five Texans were brought before him he asked them sternly who they were and what they wanted. And then Captain William P. Lewis for the first time showed his companions the treacherous material he was made of.

"We are," said he, "citizens of the United States; and we are here to trade."

The Texans cried out in one voice disclaiming the statement. Kendall, the American, joined his voice with theirs. And Armijo plucked the liar by the coat, pointing to the Lone Star button with a laugh.

But immediately Armijo ordered that this man be separated from the others. And thenceforth the four remained in chains while Lewis went away with the governor, who had good use to make of him.

Within a day or two Captain Sutton got tired of waiting for word from his advanced party and moved his companies on to Anton Chico. They made a camp on the brink of a ravine just outside the town. And Salazar came forth from the village, where more than three hundred of his troops were quartered, to have a talk with them.

Colonel Cooke and Captain Sutton asked the Mexican commander concerning their companions. Salazar told them that the five Texans were even now gone on to confer with Governor Armijo; that they had been kindly received; that the authorities looked upon the expedition with friendly eyes and the governor himself would be in Anton Chico to extend the hospitality of the province to the main body. And that statement quenched a good many smoldering suspicions. The Texans settled down to await the coming of the gubernatorial party.

On the next day the tattered adventurers heard march music and the beating of drums over in the streets of Anton Chico. More soldiers were arriving. Some of the old-timers did not like the appearance of things. They voiced their sentiments, and the officers were pretty well on the lookout when Salazar crossed the ravine in the morning to announce his intention of bringing over his regiments; they would make camp beside the Texans and receive the governor together.

Still the fair words of the previous day had their effect and the Mexican *comandante* was allowed to make a crossing. But the Texan companies were drawn up under arms and stood thus in formation, ready to go into battle at a moment's notice.

Then, just as things were getting tense, a new company of soldiers appeared and two men came out before it. One of these men was Captain Lewis.

Lewis brought his companion to Captain Sutton and Colonel Cooke and introduced him as a nephew of Governor Armijo, sent hither by his uncle to welcome the Texans. He went on to tell the news for which the officers were so eagerly waiting.

The emissaries, he said, had been well received. The other four were with Armijo at this moment. News of the Texans' coming had preceded them. There had been much alarm. That was now allayed. They were free to stay here for a limited period and open trade negotiations. But first they must turn over their arms and their horses according to the New Mexican custom, to recover them when they departed from the country.

Lewis lied better this time than he had in that interview with Governor Armijo. Or perhaps it was because his old companions had faith in him, which was natural enough after all these weeks of hardship together. At any rate the Texans turned over their weapons—and were promptly bound with ropes of rawhide.

And so the journey of the second party ended.

The main body came on slowly across the Llano Estacado. The Indians continued to dog them. By night they stole the horses. By day they harried the men on the flanks and the rear guard. One morning they rode right through the train, stampeding the remnants of the beef herd and most of the riding stock. The two hundred plodded on, most of them afoot, all of them done out with hunger and weariness. They ate prairie dogs and lizards and snakes and every living creature that crossed their path.

They ate even the half-starved dogs of the Indians that wandered into their camp. And at last they passed down the escarpments of the great mesa into the country near the Laguna Colorado, where they

camped on the seventeenth day of October.

Here the regiments of Salazar came forth to meet them. Of the two hundred Texans there were less than ninety able to hold their rifles. They listened to the same talk with which their predecessors had been deceived and they too gave up their weapons. During the last days of October Governor Manuel Armijo gathered his prisoners in Santa Fé to start them on the long journey to the City of Mexico.

The expedition had ended in failure. But from that failure great things were yet to come.

The people of New Mexico were kind to the captives. So, too, were the people of Mexico later on. They gave them food; they gave them comfort when they could. But Governor Armijo was afraid of them. He knew how narrow his escape had been, and he made up his mind to teach the Texans never to try this thing again. He placed his *comandante*, Salazar, at the head of the escort who conducted the prisoners to the Presidio del Norte, where his authority ended.

The route took them across the ninety miles of desert known as the *Journado del Muerto*—the Journey of Death. They went afoot. They had no food or water throughout the entire distance across those sands.

The winds of November came, biting-raw from the mountains. They had no blankets. The soldiers had stolen most of their clothing. For three days and three nights they traveled on, half-frozen, starving, tortured by thirst.

Now and again one who was too weak to walk dropped out, and a guard came up to urge the laggard on with the bayonet. Sometimes the man refused to rise; sometimes he was unable. Always the result was the same—a musket shot, and then the soldier cut off the dead man's ears to show that he had not escaped.

In El Paso a new commander took charge of the caravan and its members fared better from there on.

But when they arrived in the City of Mexico the Texans were thrown into various prisons and set to work on the public roads in chain gangs along with common felons.

Smallpox took heavy toll from their number; there was typhoid fever for a time. Many died from the cholera. Their sick were taken to the San Lazaro hospital and kept there—together with several hundred lepers who were in the last stages of the malady.

Yet they remained cheerful enough to celebrate the natal day of their republic in their prisons with patriotic songs and speeches. They sometimes varied the monotony of their captivity by playing practical jokes on their jailors. Two or three of them escaped and made their way to the seaboard at Vera Cruz, where they managed to get passage to America.

Meanwhile influential friends of some of them were busy. The American and British ambassadors were called upon for help. And within the year a portion of them were released. But the great majority remained in chains for another twelvemonth; they were joined by the survivors of the Mier expedition and were at last set free along with these.

ALSO THOSE who lived came back to Texas. And with them they brought their stories. The stories spread, and there grew up a fresh feeling against Mexico. Heretofore the memory of Goliad and the Alamo had rankled in men's hearts, but the bitterness had in the main been directed against Santa Ana and the other officials. Now there was added to it a grim intolerance of every Mexican.

And at the same time—through the fear which this expedition had engendered in him—Santa Ana was moved to action along new lines. He saw the danger of losing Santa Fé and his New Mexican possessions if Texas should remain a nation.

He set to work to do everything he could to weaken the young republic. He started in on a series of expeditions against San Antonio and the western settlements.

These expeditions in their turn brought counter expeditions and reprisals. There was war all along the border. And with the fighting the bitterness grew still more intense.

The deep rancor which the men of Texas cherished against their swarthy neighbors south of the Rio Grande never abated now, and from that feeling more than from any-

thing else came the train of events which led to the war between the United States and Mexico.

It was in 1841 that President Mirabeau Lamar sent forth the expedition to Santa Fé, looking for trade, hoping perhaps for the city to come under the republic's laws. In 1848, largely because of that expedition's failure, the whole Southwest and California came to us from Mexico.

# LONG RIFLES

## A Four-Part Story
## Part · II

by Hugh Pendexter

*Author of "Over the Rim of the Ridge," "Tameless Days," etc.*

***The first part of the story briefly retold in story form***

I HAD come from Fort Du Quesne in distant Ohio, where I had played the Frenchman, to my home town, Alexandria, in Virginia, bringing news to Governo Dinwiddie. For England and France were gambling again—the stakes, the land east of the Alleghanies and the friendship of that onlooker, the Red Man.

True, I was wanted at home for certain ancient debts; for my father, "Brond of the Open Hand," had left only debts for a legacy. Yet in the confusion incident to the impending campaign I passed unrecognized, save that near my old home I met Josephine, my boyhood sweetheart. With her was her fiancé, young Busby. He and I had played Indian-fighting in our boyhood, and he was now with Braddock's army, preparing for the campaign.

Although my message was to Governor Dinwiddie, it was General Braddock who should profit by my news, for he was in command of the English regulars sent to aid the colonies against the French. But General Braddock profited by no man's advice. Not altogether at fault, for recruits and supplies were lacking, he yet failed to grasp the essentials of warfare in this strange land, and clung to the military science as taught by war in Europe.

My reception by General Braddock did not change my first impressions of him. My dark skin—I was ever called "Black" Brond—and my knowledge of the red men have caused me to be taken for a half-Indian before now; and my forest runner's dress did not win me favor in the general' eyes. When I presented a letter from George Croghan and made my report on the weakness of the French at Fort Du Quesne, it made little impression upon him. He bade me go out ahead of the army to secure enlistments among the provincials. Governor Morris secretly gave me a message to Croghan.

Outside the town I found the camp of my friend Round Paw, the Onondaga. My way was ever his, and we struck northward for the Pennsylvania border.

Next morning we came upon Balsar Cromit, a young frontiersman at McDowell's settlement—a man of marvellous strength and great simplicity of mind. By promising him a long rifle we induced him to join us.

Hearing that a clearing-out of witches was taking place at Great Cove, we hastened thither, and succeeded in putting to rout certain settlers who were baiting a young girl and her uncle.

The old man, overcome by shock, died that night; and the girl disappeared, first promising to go to McDowell's mill. But when we came there we could find no trace of her.

The promise of land induced one Simon Flax to join us, leaving his wife to guard their home and children.

Cromit, with his insatiable desire for proving his finger strength, provoked Flax to a "wring."

Their hands met, and fingers grasped fingers.

"Go," snapped Flax, jumping all his strength into his big hands.

In a moment Flax was on his knees crying with pain, and defeated.

WE MADE Will's Creek early on the ninth of May and were surprized to find none of the army there except Rutherford's and Clark's Independent companies of foot, ordered to the creek from New York in the preceding Summer; and Demarie's Independent company from Maryland.

The three companies had wintered on the creek in huts and were mighty weary of the monotony of it all. We were quickly surrounded by an eager mob and plied with questions as to Braddock's whereabouts, when he would arrive, and how large an army would he bring. Had the French already abandoned Du Quesne, as had been reported by some of the Delaware scouts? And if so, why the — — were his Majesty's Independent companies being held in idleness at the creek and made to miss all the fun?

I met with the officers of the companies and told them what I knew and expressed my surprize that Sir Peter Halket and the Forty-fourth had not arrived. Three months would have elapsed between the anchoring of the transports at Hampton and the arrival on the creek of the first instalment of regulars, the distance covered being some two hundred miles. Could the army have been at Du Quesne two weeks earlier than mishaps and mistakes were to permit, it is to be doubted if the French would have fired a single musket in defense of the fort. But hindsight ever had an advantage over foresight.

Mr. Croghan came into camp a few hours after our arrival, and I delivered Governor Morris' letter. After reading it he told me:

"The belts were sent on the twenty-second of last month. I fear we'll get scant help from the lake tribes. Many of the Indians are waiting to see who's to win. They'll flock in to join the winner. It's lucky we have the French whipped already, for the slow work of getting the army here had made me uneasy.

"If a thousand men, or even less, could now march swiftly to Du Quesne the place would be ours without any fighting. The Twightwees have taken hold of the French ax, but they'll drop it if the French quit Du Quesne. The Indians at the fort have received laced coats and shirts covered with ribbon streamers. Shingis, who sent us three strings of black wampum to prove his loyalty to the king, has gone over to the French. Scarouady, who sent us two strings at the same time, is sticking to his bargain; but he says the English must end the war quickly, or he and his people will have to join the French or find axes sticking in their heads.

"The Assembly hurt us when it refused to feed my three hundred Iroquois. After keeping them all Winter they should have held on for a few weeks longer. Now the three hundred are back with the French. I have forty fighting men here, and sixty women and children. They've taken up the hatchet against the French. But if they ain't handled right they'll accept a bloody belt from Du Quesne.

"All the Indians are greatly excited. They don't know what to do. Johnson will hold the Long House neutral at least. But there are Iroquois warriors now at Du Quesne who will fight us if it comes to a fight. Some of the Delaware leaders have visited us and have promised to return. If they'd found the army here they'd have struck hands with us. Now the French will probably get them. Pennsylvania and Virginia are to blame for not sending them belts and presents. Every French Indian they meet has a gay coat and a new gun and new cloth for his women.

"General Braddock hasn't any notion of handling red men. Dinwiddie or Morris should have looked after that part of the business. But we'll lick the French easy enough. They're licked already. Worst is we'll have to smooth some of the Indians down after the French are back in Canada."

I believed the French were whipped, for had I not recently visited Du Quesne and obtained full knowledge of the fort's weakness and the red man's uneasiness? And yet there was something in Croghan's talk, or way of speaking, that left me depressed. When he declared the French were whipped it almost seemed as if he were dwelling upon it just to keep his courage up. When I returned to our camp back of the huts the Onondaga perceived my mood, and asked me if I had dreamed of an owl.

"I have dreamed of a voice in the forest calling me and my red brother to travel again to Du Quesne and see what we can see. This place is too shut in. The air is bad."

"Yo-hah!" he approved. "We will start after the next sleep."

But the morrow brought the van-guard

of the Forty-fourth, and the entire regiment was in camp by midday. Then came General Braddock and his escort of light-horse, and the drums began the "Grenadiers' March," and the scene was gay and very colorful. I forgot my gloomy mood and huzzaed with the best of them. Two hours later Colonel Dunbar and the Forty-eighth marched in, and there was more cheering and high spirits.

NOW it did seem as if we soon could be about the business of driving the French behind the Great Lakes. The artillery, however, did not come up—and would not for another ten days—but what odds? Braddock was with us with his two invincible regiments. Even though their uniforms made them conspicuous targets the French were too weak to oppose them. All that remained was to march swiftly to Du Quesne and fly our royal banner in place of the Lilies.

Then we would shift our strength to the north and capture Niagara and Crown Point, and teach the New Englanders how to fight. Only a hundred and fifty miles remained to be covered before France's grip on the Ohio would be forever removed. So entertaining was the camp with its various and picturesque phases of life that even the Onondaga forgot his haste to be gone, and I was well content to draw rations, sometimes supplementing them with my rifle, to smoke and play the part of spectator.

Our camp was now named Fort Cumberland in honor of the Duke of Cumberland, who had superseded as secretary of state for the southern province, the imbecile Duke of Newcastle. Ah, but now we were in fine spirits those first few days after Braddock reached the creek. His very austerity was a guarantee of complete success. The colonies were confident the fall of the enemy was but a matter of days.

Braddock had arranged to send back the latest news by means of mounted expresses. Once a week these fleet messengers were to leave camp, wherever it might be, and gallop through Pennsylvania and Maryland to Winchester, spreading the joyful news of our accomplishments. And every Thursday a western-bound mail-rider was to start from Philadelphia to overtake the army. I could vision the arrival of our express and the enthusiasm our bulletins would arouse when read aloud at every hostel.

And much good news was brought by Braddock and his staff. It quickly filtered until every wagoner knew it and could rejoice. A large delegation of Catawbas and Cherokees were to meet men from the Long House at Winchester and provide us with an overwhelming red force. The Catawbas alone were to send us a hundred and fifty warriors. I believed at the time the number was exaggerated, as the Catawbas did not number three hundred fighting men, according to the facts as I had learned them. As a result of the Winchester council our camp would be overrun with red allies.

But no Indians came to join us. Croghan's belts to the lake tribes brought us neither Shawnee, Twightwee, Wyandot or Piankashaw. But, while a trifle disappointed, it really did not matter. If they would not fight with us then surely they would not fight against us. They were simply waiting until it was definitely decided who was to be the winner. If they refused to participate in active warfare then so much the less would our efforts be to smooth them down. The French were whipped. We needed no Indians to aid us. To the inspiriting tune of the "Grenadiers' March" white men would oust white men from Du Quesne, and the heads of the Ohio would forever be sealed against the French.

Cromit had intended to enlist as a soldier, but had changed his mind after watching the provincials at their drill, and became a wagoner. Flax, too, did not carry out his original intentions once it was learned that he was wise in the ways of guns, and he became an assistant to the armorer. Round Paw and I wandered about the camp unattached, enjoying the lively scenes. A few wagons, drawn by four horses each, began to come in. Our ardor might have been dampened if not for the promise made by Mr. Franklin. We looked to him for the necessary supply of horses, wagon and pack, and stout vehicles.

One of his placards, addressed to the back-country farmers, was brought into camp and amused and cheered us. He had scattered them broadcast over three counties, and he was asking for fifteen hundred pack-animals and a hundred and fifty wagons. Added to his request was the threat that unless his requisitions were promptly honored the inhabitants would be visited by Sir John St. Clair and his soldiers, and that Sir John would prove himself to be a

Hussar in spirit as well as in uniform." This warning had a tremendous effect on the German farmers, who still remembered the deportment of the Hussars in the old country.

The ten days' delay in the arrival of the artillery was one cloud in our sky, for if it moved so slowly in making the creek what would be its rate of progress once it attempted the raw wilderness road now being constructed? To expedite the road we must lay down, St. Clair and Major Chapman, of the Forty-fourth, marched with six hundred men to smooth the way to the Little Meadows on the Youghiogeny, some thirty miles distant from Fort Cumberland. When we marched it would be in three divisions, under Halket, young Horatio Gates, and Dunbar.

What had surprized me was the number of white women in camp. I counted thirty wives of soldiers. In addition to these there were Croghan's sixty Iroquois women and children. Thus the non-combatants made a very respectable showing and used up much of our provisions; and we were not well-supplied with food. After our first high spirits had subsided a bit we began to notice something else that might become very serious. The regulars, upon whom Braddock depended—almost exclusively—were falling ill in large numbers. They had been herded on transports and had been deprived of fresh provisions. Meat was the principal item of food on the creek and it was oversalted. The result might have been foreseen.

Due entirely to Mr. Franklin's efforts the citizens of Philadelphia sent generous hampers to some twenty subalterns. Among other things the contents of each hamper consisted of sugar, tea, coffee, chocolate, white biscuit, Gloucester cheese, butter, old Madeira and Jamaica spirits. I can bear witness how hugely they appreciated these donations, for I messed with them and observed how heartily they ate and drank. But the French never would be whipped by subalterns, and the regulars continued in woful need of fresh beef and vegetables.

THE coming of the army brought many woodsmen flocking to the creek, and I began to meet old acquaintances who had never heard me called anything except "Black" Brond. After a day or so they would slip away while others would take their place to observe silently and form opinions. I frequently saw General Braddock walking about the camp with his officers, and was shocked to observe he looked worried and discouraged. There was much muttering and complaining among the provincials. The commander, being a rigid drill-master, insisted that the provincials be worked daily and made to go through the manual with fine precision. The provincials were slow and slovenly at maneuvers and aroused the general's disgust and contempt. This soon became generally known and was hotly resented. It resulted that there was no love lost between colonists and regulars.

I talked with some of the guards and endeavored to give them some inkling of the way war would be waged did the French have the temerity to give us battle. But they could not understand, having had no experience in our woods style of fighting. At first my talk amused them, then bored them. One sergeant listened to me with half-closed eyes, and when I had finished he proudly pointed to a stiff line of regulars going through their drill with the heavy infantry musket. The line of men moved as one man. The musket, with the bayonet, weighed eleven and a half pounds, and together measured sixty-three inches. The barrel was not accurate, but accuracy was not considered to be necessary, inasmuch as the regulars were taught to point toward, rather than to aim at, the enemy. The fire was delivered in volleys at a distance of not more than three hundred feet. Even did a soldier wish to individualize his work, and did actually endeavor to aim his piece, only by a lucky chance would the ball find the mark, so poorly did it fit the faulty barrel.

England had failed to find any merit in our rifles, although these typically American weapons resulted from long experience in forest-hunting and fighting, where the fear of Indians called for a minimum amount of noise and the maximum of accuracy, and where powder and lead were so precious that a small bore, long barrel piece was the only gun a man could carry any distance.

The sergeant was mildly curious about the little hinged box in the stock of the gun where I kept the greased patches of linen. I proudly explained the virtue of the patch, and he impatiently urged:

"You're a proper man. Put away that piece and enlist and learn how to fight."

"I am to serve as a scout."

"You're master dark of skin for an Englishman," he remarked, his dull gaze suddenly growing suspicious.

"My people were English. I was born in Virginia."

"You're black enough for a Frenchman."

"I was taken for a Frenchman at Du Quesne this Spring."

He grunted and walked away. I had forgotten him and was starting to visit the Iroquois camp when a babel of voices from the direction of the parade-ground attracted my attention. A score of soldiers, released from drill, were bearing down on me in a very business-like manner. My acquaintance, the sergeant, was leading them. I sat on a log and waited to see what was to come off the fire, and to my surprize found I was the object of their attention. They grouped around me and the sergeant said—

"We believe you're a spy from the French."

"Then report it to your superiors. But the man who calls me spy is a liar."

And I sprang to my feet.

"Tickle him with your bayonet and let some of the bile out of him. Then we'll drag him forward," one advised.

I dropped my long rifle in the hollow of my left arm and swung it about and enlarged the circle, and warned:

"It'll be easy for you men to murder me, but I'll take at least one of you with me. If you honestly believe me a spy, report me. But hands off."

The fellows lacked nothing in courage and I believe they would have risked closing in on me if not for the arrival of a horseman. He drove his mount through the circle and demanded:

"What does this mean? I am Major Washington, aide-de-camp to General Braddock."

I had recognized him before he spoke. The sergeant humbly explained:

"We believe, sir, he is a French spy. We came to take him before our captain."

"That is well. But I heard threats of violence. Be careful you do not take too much authority upon yourself."

He dismounted and took a sharp look at my dark face, and after a moment cried:

"Ha! Mr. Brond, of Alexandria. Webster Brond, whom I haven't seen these three years. What's this about you being a spy?"

"It's their imagination, major. I reported to the council in Alexandria, after playing spy for the English at Du Quesne. General Braddock himself will remember me."

"Then it was you who was before the council," he cried and thrust out his hand. "I arrived after you had left and in the confusion I did not hear your name."

Turning to the soldiers he said:

"This man is a loyal subject of his Majesty and he has done the king and the colonies excellent service. Be more cautious another time."

They were glad to withdraw. Major Washington sat down on the log and motioned me to sit beside him and asked:

"Can you tell me what you learned while at Du Quesne? I'm hungry for news of the country, and I've had no chance to talk with his Excellency, Governor Dinwiddie. I was indisposed and tardy in rejoining the army."

So I repeated in detail, and various things Braddock had not had the patience to listen to. When I ended he thoughtfully mused:

"There's but one thing to guard against—a surprize attack on the way. If we can avoid that we'll have Du Quesne just as surely as we're now camping on this creek. Where would they be likely to lay an ambuscade?"

"Anywhere along Salt Lick, or Thicketty Run. Turtle Creek, if we pass at its head."

"I would pick the second crossing of the Monongahela."

"But that would allow them to try but one ambuscade."

"There'll be but one. If it fails the Indians will refuse to try another."

"You believe they'll lay one?"

"Just as sure as you and I used to go to the bread-and-butter dancing parties, Web. The French are brave. They can't defend the fort, but they're well-trained in the Indian style of fighting. If they evacuate Du Quesne without making a fight they'll forever be discredited among the Indians. They risk but little in trying a surprize attack. If we are not caught off our guard they will fall back with trifling loss. Yes, they must try it."

"Their spies will be reporting every stage of the march."

"Naturally. But the size of the army will take the heart out of their Indians. They'll be too shrewd to march their Indians very far from the fort. They can get

one fight out of them if they can fight near Du Quesne. It will come on the Monongahela—and the guards are not used to it."

"From General Braddock's bearing at Alexandria I believe he underestimates the mischief a well-planned ambuscade can inflict on us." And I repeated Braddock's reply to Mr. Franklin when the latter expressed fears of an ambush.

"Indian warfare is difficult for a European strategist to understand. Fortunately we'll have our own woodsmen out as scouts and flankers. We should not be surprized."

"Our men do not take kindly to drill," I remarked.

He smiled humorously and turned his gaze on a group of long-haired backwoodsmen leaning disconsolately on their rifles while a sergeant lectured them on their uncouth appearance. Then his lips tightened and he tersely declared:

"They are the best men in the world for this sort of work. Five hundred of them could make Du Quesne before our artillery can cover a fourth of the distance, before the army can march a third of it. And once they were there they would shoot their way inside. This war may result in our being forced to shift more for ourselves in border wars. If we have to do that we will be better off."

He rose and genially said:

"Webster, I'm glad to meet you again. I wish I could have been with you at Du Quesne. I owe the place another visit when the odds aren't so heavy against me." His young face was grim and I knew he was remembering his last visit to the Ohio.

He mounted and said:

"I'm glad you're with us, Webster. But how do you serve? I don't see you drilling."

"I'll go as scout or guide, major, but I don't relish camp-rules."

"I'm afraid they'll insist on your being under military discipline."

"Then I'd be of small service as a scout."

"That is true. The more you keep out ahead of us the more valuable you will be."

"I am under orders from General Braddock to visit Du Quesne again, major, and play the part of a Canadian."

"Ah! That will be fine. I'll bring the matter before General Braddock so as to refresh his recollection. You wish to start soon?"

"Any time. I'm keen to be off. An Onondaga woods-mate of mine is here. He will go with me. He is Round Paw, of the Wolf Clan."

"He should be an excellent companion. I will take the matter up with General Braddock very soon. What our men want is a fight, not parade work. I'll see you again soon, Web. And don't forget the bread-and-butter parties at the Royal George, and the sweetened water they called tea. I hear Captain Busby is with us. I shall look him up, too."

He was riding away with a friendly wave of the hand.

I have never forgotten the parties at the Royal George, nor at Gadsby's. We had attended them as youngsters together, willing to forgive the insipid refreshments for the privilege of dancing with the Alexandria belles. I was devoted to Josephine in those days; he was catholic in choice. I watched him as he rode through the camp, a most gallant young figure.

I saw much of him in later years, after another war had tried his soul and had given much gravity to his handsome features. But this June day he was but little different from the youth from Mt. Vernon, who would ride across two counties for the sake of a contre-danse with some fair maid.

I IDLY watched the shifting scene of Indians, provincials and regulars, white women, red women and children, and speculated on how soon I would be on my dangerous errand to Du Quesne. Until the army arrived there was no point in visiting Du Quesne, for my stay there would be timed, and the later I went the fresher the news I would bring back.

Then Cromit's awkward figure, moving aimlessly, attracted my eye. He discovered me and quickened his step. What held my attention was the rifle he was carrying. It must have weighed all of fifteen pounds and have measured close to six feet. As he came up to me and with a broad grin rested the butt close to my moccasins I noted the stock was of curly maple and handsomely decorated with brass work and "lucky" silver stars. It must have cost a shrewd sum of money to the original owner, and could scarcely have been afforded by any one unless he be a colonial governor, or some such high official with a great love for hunting.

"Where did you get it?" I asked as he

sank down by my side and tenderly laid the long piece across his lap.

"I've been trading," he answered and with a grin that showed all his teeth. "It's a master rifle. See all them do-dads carved on the side-plate. Get it lined on a Frenchy or Injun and they're dead meat."

"But you had nothing to trade when you came here," I demurred.

"Had a whetstone. A master stone. Traded it for an officer's pistol with a busted spring. Flax helped me to tinker it up a bit. Traded the pistol for a broken-down horse a man fetched in to sell to the army. Spruced up the horse a bit and traded——"

"Good Lord! You mean you started with a whetstone and ended with this rifle?"

"I trade most mortally when I git started," he modestly explained. "Besides it was a good whetstone. When a man makes a bargain and trades, and then shows signs of kicking over the traces, I tell him, 'Don't do it.' Then I trade again."

I endeavored to learn the name of the owner of the rifle, and what he had traded it away for, but Cromit had detected suspicion in my words and saw fit to feel sensitive. Rising and shouldering his prize he stared down on me and said:

"I traded fair. If any man thinks I didn't all I can say is, 'Don't say it out loud.' "

It was plain I had not yet learned how to take the confounded fellow with his crazy laugh and menacing fingers; and yet, at first sight, one would swear he was as simple and good-natured as he was uncouth, and that it would be quite safe to make game of him. He left me and I walked in the opposite direction toward the Indian camp, thinking to find Round Paw, but paused where the wagoners were cooking their salt meat for supper. The kettles were abandoned quickly enough when a voice off one side began bawling:

"A wring! A wring!"

Nothing will collect men more quickly than the opportunity to see two men in a rough-and-tumble fight; and I joined the circle and beheld a man with a twisted face trying to come to grips with a slim youth, who was brandishing a heavy cart-pin.

"Drop that hunk of iron, you young murderer!" cried an enthusiastic spectator.

But the young man gripped the pin the tighter and made a motion as if to hurl it. His adversary, twice his bulk, dodged and shielded his head with his arms. The young man leaped nimbly backward and swept his gaze about the circle as if seeking a way to retreat. He had little liking for the combat, nor could one blame him after noting the superior physical development of his opponent. The spectators, as ever the optimistic way with neutrals, warmly urged him to carry the fight to the big man and give him his "needings."

But the young man had no heart for the encounter and was wishing himself well clear of it. At the best he would escape with a terrible beating, for there was no mercy in Twisted Face's angry eyes. The big fellow made a rush and the youth ducked and avoided it by a matter of inches. The crowd hooted and pushed in to narrow the circle and bring the two to grips. Now the slim chap was badly frightened. His shifting gaze caught mine and he flashed a signal for help as plainly as if his voice had called out to me.

It's a bad practise to interfere in camp fights, especially when one knows nothing as to the merits of the quarrel. I stepped back, intending to retire, and again the brown eyes met mine, and this time their pleading stirred me to impulsive action even while belittling my estimation of the young fellow's manhood.

I found myself pushing a path through the spectators and shoving the young man to one side while I informed the man with the twisted face:

"This has gone far enough. You should take some one nearer your size."

For half a minute the fellow glared at me, his crooked jaws working as if he were chewing a very tough morsel. Then he cried:

"Well, —— my eyes! A half-Injun telling Peter Symes what's gone far 'nough! Peter says it ain't gone far 'nough."

The crowd greeted this spirited retort with cheers. Some might have sympathized with the youngster because of his lack of beef, but there was no sympathy for me, a stranger. Also, the man's characterization of me as a mixed blood was accepted as a fact. I glanced about in hopes of locating some of my forest friends, but could discover none. Symes read a weakening in my roving glance, and taunted:

"Peter says it ain't gone far 'nough till your hoofs stand where your head is. Peter cal'lates, Mr. Half-Injun, you're 'bout his size. You're Peter's meat."

The situation was distasteful. I had had my share of fighting, but I could never find an animal joy in combat where all decency was laid aside and any cruel trick was permitted. Then again our mode of rough-and-tumble encounters made it a very serious matter for the loser unless by agreement the horrid practise of gouging were eliminated. Infinitely better was a clean death than the condition of blindness. To fight without weapons was to fight like wild animals. A duel with rifles was vastly to be preferred.

I have lived to see the code begin to decline in public favor. The day will come when it will be a dead custom; yet I lived through many years when it was the gentleman's only safe-guard against a bully. My wandering glances in search of old forest-running friends were misunderstood by the noisy crowd, and a wagoner jeered—

"His heart 'pears to be dropping down into his moccasins, Peter."

This bit of wit was loudly applauded. I was in for it. The young fellow I had championed was crouching on the ground behind me, a fact that surprized me, for I had expected him to bolt to safety once I took his place. I felt his hands touch my rifle and instinctively yanked the piece to one side as a man will do when one makes free with his weapons. But the hands were small, pathetically so for one who must bear the vicissitudes of camp life. My downward glance also beheld a thin, terrified face. I could not understand why the young fool had not slipped away.

I relinquished my rifle to his care and added my ax, knife, tobacco bag, and other belt fixings. Symes was already disarmed and impatiently waiting for me to make ready. I had barely faced about when he was flying through the air, his clawing fingers well extended. I had time to duck and seize him around the hips and heave him over my head, his own momentum reducing my efforts to the minimum. He struck on all fours and was instantly on his feet and at me again. His heavy body seemed to possess the springy muscles of a wild-cat.

"Just a —— trick!" he yelled as he moved around me.

He began a string of foul talk which I interrupted by driving my fist into his mouth.

Then we were clinched, with the dirty —— trying to scoop out my eyes. We swayed stiffly, our feet scarcely moving, testing each other's strength. He was an adept at beastly practises, but in vigor and quickness he was scarcely up to my two years of woods' training. I fought his hands from my face and drove my fist several times into his red neck. My blows were jabs and did not carry the necessary force to subdue him, although they kept him busy. Nor was the terrific pounding he gave the small of my back any laughing matter.

The dust and the cheers, the suffocating sweaty odor and, most of all, his repeated attempts to maim and disfigure me, aroused my passion without confusing my intelligence. He was willing to take my short-armed drives at his massive neck for the privilege of smashing his heavy fist into my kidneys. I shifted my tactics and began stepping back a bit, taking great care he should not trip me.

"No—half-Injun can—" he began, and I jerked to one side and drove my elbow into his throat just under the hinge of the jaw.

He went down, choking and gasping, and kicked about like a stranded fish. Some one threw water over him and exhorted him to rise and finish me. In his threshing about he rolled close to the young fellow still crouching on the ground and keeping guard over my weapons. Quick as a painter the little —— lifted the heavy piece and would have brained Symes if my moccasin had not kicked the long barrel aside.

Grabbing the youngster by the neck of his blouse I lifted him to his feet and flung him aside, and berated, saying:

"You young —— hound! What are you up to?"

Some of the men pressed forward to punish him, but I forced them back. One fellow tried to dodge under my arm and reeled back. Regaining his balance he stood with eyes bulging and mouth open. I was wondering how my shove could have done him any harm when he astounded me by bawling—

"——! It's a woman!"

Still not understanding I shifted my gaze to follow the direction of his pop-eyed staring and was in time to see the small hands clawing at the rough blouse to bring it together at the neck where my rough grasp had torn it open.

"A girl!" I stupidly muttered as I

glimpsed the rounded outlines of her breasts.

With a duck and a leap she escaped the circle and ran swiftly toward the Iroquois camp. The pack would have given chase, although they would have done her no harm, but I snatched up my rifle and called on them to halt.

"She's a French spy!" some one shouted.

"If she is then the Indians will hold her prisoner. She can't escape from the camp," I told them.

They quieted down and divided their energies between trying to get some raw rum down Symes's throat and in explaining to me the cause of the trouble. I gathered from their disjointed talk that the disguised girl was Symes' helper and had resented a buffet he inflicted for her failure to carry out some order. She had snatched up a knife and had attempted to stab him. She was promptly disarmed and turned over to him for punishment.

While I waited to see if Symes was able to continue the fight another picture came before my eyes—that of a young girl crouching before a mob of witch-hunters, her lips drawn back and exposing her small teeth, and with the same hunted wildness in the thin face. And I knew why we had found no trace of Elsie Dinwold, of the Witch's Head.

She had donned forest-leggings and blouse the night of her uncle's death on Der Hexenkopf; and that was the reason for her wearing a blanket when she came out of the cabin. We had sought a woman in our questing. Had we inquired for a young man we might have found some trace of her. And yet I think not, for her message to me must have been left at the Cox cabin under the cover of night.

Symes at last managed to swallow some rum and was able to sit up. His hunger for fighting, however, was satisfied. A subaltern bawled my name among the kettles. I joined him and with much curtness was told I was wanted at headquarters. I expected to be conducted before General Braddock. Instead, it was Major Washington who was waiting to give me an audience. I was conducted to his tent, set apart from the large marquee occupied by Braddcok.

"Mr. Brond, you are to take your Indian companion and scout out beyond the road-builders and look for signs. The enemy's Indians are keeping close watch on us. They are in small bands and will have Frenchmen with them to hold them to their work. If you can capture an Indian or a Frenchman and bring or send him to us you will be doing us good service. If you meet any Indians, bringing bloody belts to our Delawares, make every effort to stop them. The army will move slowly, I fear. You will have ample time to scout while making your way to Du Quesne. We want fresh news from the fort and it will be time enough for you to risk paying a second visit when the army is within a few days' march of it."

"I will start at once, sir."

He had been the officer; now he was the friend. Lowering his voice and smiling genially he said:

"I know how you dislike discipline, Webster. Forest-running makes a man that way. I have presented the matter to General Braddock and it's his wish you go at once. But as soon as he gets a grasp on all conditions here he will insist all scouts be under military discipline. So it's well you go now."

"Immediately. There is a young woman in camp, who has been masquerading as a man. Her sex has been discovered by the wagoners. They may say she is a French spy. She is Elsie Dinwold, of Great Cove. She was driven from the valley the day I left there on the charge she is a witch. I vouch for her as a poor, unfortunate young woman and thoroughly loyal to the colonies. She came here in desperation as there was no other place for her to go. By this time she has procured proper clothing from some of the soldiers' wives, I suppose."

"She shall not be molested. But there's too many women in camp already. I wish you good luck. I would like to go with you, only I'd never pass as a Frenchman."

I hastened to the Iroquois camp and found Round Paw smoking and talking with George Croghan. The Onondaga was quick to respond when I promised action. We secured a small bag of meal and some extra arrow-heads for flints, for I ever considered them better than the imported article. It was not until we were on the old Indian path leading around Will's Mountain that I remembered to ask Round Paw about the Dinwold woman. He had not seen her enter the Indian camp, and as her arrival would have been noticed, especially once she revealed her sex to the Indian women,

I knew she had slipped into the camp of the soldiers' wives and, with Major Washington's knowledge of the situation, was safe from annoyance.

As we traveled the ancient path the Onondaga informed me Major Chapman had taken his road-builders over Will's Mountain, a most foolish choice and one that would cause great waste of time and much hardship. Major Washington could have designated a much better road, as could any of Braddock's scouts had their advice been sought.

It was near sunset by the time we had covered five miles, and as my haste to depart had been to avoid being called back and hampered by any military instructions, we were free to camp and take it leisurely. I built a fire while Round Paw was perching a turkey. While we were broiling our supper a tall, lanky figure blundered into the light. It was Balsar Cromit.

"Been chasing you fellers," he informed us.

"How is this, Balsar?" I sternly demanded. "You're a wagoner, and your place is back in camp. We are out on a scout."

"If I ain't wanted I can scout alone," he replied, displaying his meaningless grin. "Wild timber enough for all of us to scout in. But I'll be mortally dinged if I'll stick on that creek and eat salt meat while the thief who stole my rifle is loose to hunt for fresh meat."

"Some one stole your rifle?"

"If we lick the French as sartain as that there rifle has been stole, then the French are everlastingly walloped this very minute. The thief lit out ahead of you fellers. Come round the mountain by this path. Soldier's wife saw him. She noticed the extry long rifle he was lugging. That would be my rifle."

The Onondaga caught only fragments of Cromit's talk and asked me to repeat it. After I did so, he advised:

"Let the bone-breaking man come with us. If we meet a bear he shall show how strong his hands are against claws."

"All right, Balsar; you're one of us, but I'll not be responsible for the consequences once you get back to the army. But 'tis a pity you haven't a gun."

"I'll have a mighty pert one when I overhaul that dinged thief. I knew bad luck was coming when I dreamed of that witch-girl. Consarn her!"

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CABIN AND THE MADMAN

THE Onondaga aroused us shortly after sunrise and whispered to me—

"Men come. Hide."

Cromit and I shook the sleep from our heads and heard what he had heard while we were asleep, a number of men approaching our camp. The careless ease with which they passed through the woods told us they were not soldiers.

We took to cover and after a few minutes one of them came into view and halted on beholding the ashes of our camp-fire. He leaned on his rifle and after a bit of glancing about sounded a low whistle. This was a signal that brought others to his side.

At first glance I thought them to be Indians, but as we observed their unkempt hair, the manner of their walk, their long rifles and fur hats, we knew them to be white men. There were ten of them and their leader was as dark as a negro. All were dressed like Indians. Their leggings reached only to the upper part of the thigh and they wore breech-clouts, just as did Round Paw. Their hunting-shirts differed from mine in that they were of dressed deerskin—a cold and clammy garment in rainy weather—and were lacking the broad, fringed cape that mine boasted. Besides a rifle each carried an ax as well as a knife at his belt. My second thought was that they must be Frenchmen, who always imitated their red companions in dress, and thus endeared themselves to the Indian. I was lining the leader with my rifle and was about to order him to drop his gun when the first man to break through the timber kneeled by the fire-stones, thrust his hands into the ashes, quickly withdrew them, and announced:

"Still hot. Burnin' not more'n two hours ago."

"Look about," harshly commanded the leader.

Before they could move I called out—

"Who are you men?"

None of them appeared to move a muscle until the leader slowly turned his head in our direction and tersely answered—

"White men."

But this was scarcely sufficient, for the times were ticklish. So I said:

"If you're the right kind of white men

we're glad to see you. If you are the wrong kind you will go to Will's Creek with us."

"Will's Creek is where we're bound for, to help Gineral Braddock whip the French and Injuns. So show yourselves." This from the man who had examined the fire.

There were along every border certain small bands of white men who had reverted to savagery, and who waged war on all decent people. Motioning for my companions to remain in hiding I stepped into the small opening, and said:

"We're scouts for Braddock's army. Now talk to me with belts."

The last speaker again spoke, saying, and civilly enough:

"Our cap'n here is 'Black' Jack of the Juniata. We go to help Gineral Braddock."

There was none on the frontiers who had not heard of Black Jack, the Indian killer. His family had been murdered by the red men while he was away on a hunting trip. On returning to the ruins of his little cabin he had vowed to devote the remainder of his life to exterminating the race.

There were many like him along the Pennsylvania and Virginia borders, but none so well-known as he. His followers were recruited carefully, and it was said that only those were accepted who felt an implacable hatred for a redskin. From Florida to New York province his name was known, and many the story was related about him and his never ending quest for revenge.

Like myself he was swarthy of complexion, only more so. Whether called Black Jack, Black Rifle, Black Hunter, or the Wild Hunter of the Juniata, his known presence near a cabin or settlement was a guarantee against an Indian attack. The Indians attributed much sorcery to him and no longer considered him a mere human being. Too many dead red men had been found on trail and mountainside, in lonely valley and on the banks of unnamed creeks, to permit of an ordinary human status.

This was my first view of him and I was greatly interested. He was not the giant in size I had expected, although he was fully as large as I, and much more powerful. He was a man of very few words and when possible allowed some of his followers to speak for him. Now he leaned on his rifle and eyed me gloomily.

As guides, scouts, and riflemen the ten of them were worth a thousand blundering regulars when it came to deep forest fighting. They would find their own food and be incapacitated neither by cold nor heat. I congratulated General Braddock for having such woodsmen serving him. I was worried over one problem their coming had created, however. For the Onondaga's benefit I called out—

"Keep back."

"That sounds like Injun," said one of the men.

"Who be you telling in Iroquois to 'keep back?' " rumbled Captain Jack, his dark eyes seeking to search out the thicket behind me.

"An Indian friend of mine who hates the French," I told him. "You stand no chance of harming him if you should be so minded. General Braddock needs your help sorely, but he has many Iroquois in his camp."

"His Injuns are safe. So's yours," was the slow response.

"Cromit, come forward," I called. The red-head crawled through the bushes, all his teeth showing. Standing behind me he drawled—

"The Onondaga is a quarter-mile away by this time."

"Your Injun is safe so long as he scouts against the French," growled Captain Jack.

Cromit eyed him with kindling interest and said:

"You look mighty husky, mister. Do you ever rassle?"

The swarthy killer turned a gloomy glance upon my friend, then said to me:

"Your Injun's safe when with you, or in Braddock's camp. We knew Croghan had some Iroquois there. But when we meet a redskin alone in the woods we never ask to see his road-belts. We shoot. How is this Braddock? He can't know anything about Injuns and their natur'."

"If you only hankered for a mild wring," sighed Cromit, his fingers beginning to work.

I gestured for him to be silent and replied:

"General Braddock is a drill-master. I came away from the camp so's not to be under military rule."

"He puts folks under orders, eh?" And Captain Jack shrugged his big shoulders in disgust. "We don't want any pay or rations. We're going to Will's Creek because Croghan's there. All we ask of Braddock is to be let alone. We live and

fight in our own way. We'll have our own way if we help him."

He jerked his head toward the valley path and his men fell in behind him and the ten of them passed from our sight. Invaluable as they would be to Braddock in guarding against surprize attacks I doubted if that martinet would accept them on their own terms. As they vanished through the green wall I turned back to the fire. Round Paw was there, his small mirror propped upon a convenient branch, his brush of pounded bark renewing the white paint on his chest.

He told me:

"The black-white man has a mighty *orenda*. His magic helps him to kill many warriors."

Cromit was in a sullen mood because of Captain Jack's disregard of his challenge. He growled:

"When I meet him again and he acts uppish him'n me will have a wring. He had you good and scared, Round Paw."

Without ceasing his painting the Indian grunted—

"His head would have been in two pieces if he walked into the bushes."

Cromit regained his good humor and chuckled:

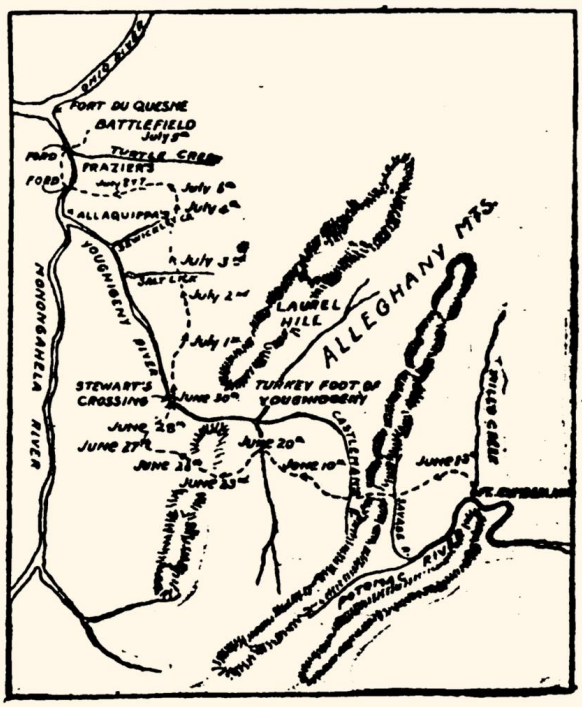
"The Injun never budged a inch. I lied like Tophet when I said he'd run away. But I would like to come to grips with that feller. Heard a heap about him. He'd give a most mortal fuss."

I have often wondered how an encounter between the two would have ended. I am inclined to think Captain Jack would have broken my friend's neck before the latter could secure one of his deadly grips.

WE MADE our breakfast of broiled squirrels and then pushed on. That day we passed through the Shades of Death, a forest of enormous white pines, and walked on cushioned ground that had not been warmed by the sun for centuries. Great Savage Mountain loomed high above us, but we could not see it through the impenetrable canopy. In all my woods roaming I have never passed through a section of timbered country where there was such an absence of animal life and such a nerve-racking stillness.

Cromit was subdued by the unearthly quiet. The Onondaga went at a trot to get clear of it. There was no sociable chattering of squirrels, no whirring of wings. It was a deathly calm that pressed down on one, and the accumulated effect filled me with a desire to shout, to fire my rifle, to do something that would shatter the ancient silence.

We breathed more freely when we left the gloomy arches and emerged into more open country. We crossed Savage Run, scarcely more than a rivulet, and camped on Little Meadows with the rugged slope of Meadow Mountain behind us.




It was a world of woods. Gaining a height of land, or climbing to the top of a lofty tree, simply enlarged the vista without changing it. Everywhere stretched the forest. Occasionally a bit of a watercourse could be seen where a blow-down, or a fire, had cleared the banks. A most damnable country through which to march an army of any but the forest-wise. So far we had found no fresh signs of Indians, but during the morning of the next day we came upon the scalped remains of a warrior. I pronounced him to be a Twightwee, but Round Paw insisted—

"*Jonontady Hagas!*" (meaning the dead man was a Huron).

There was but little left of his hair, but what there was bore out the Onondaga's claim, for it was roached. The body although only a day dead already had been found by the buzzards, and it was the sight of the foul birds taking to flight that had

attracted my red friend to the spot. The Onondaga said death had been caused by a small bullet, and he accepted my theory that the Black Hunter and his men had bagged the fellow.

Scouting farther on we came to the remains of a fresh camp-fire. It was not more than a night old and it was too large for an Indian to have lighted. Nor could I attribute it to the Black Hunter's band, for Captain Jack and his men would make a blaze after the Indian fashion.

The Onondaga was puzzled, for it placed a third party near the scene of the killing. My friend requested Cromit and me to stay by the charred sticks while he investigated more closely. Before setting forth he examined the spot most patiently and finally announced:

"One man. Long gun."

For proof of this assertion he pointed to a faint impression in the moss where something solid, like the butt of a rifle, had rested. Then he showed us a faint abrasion on a limb nearly level with the top of my head, and said it had been made by the barrel of the rifle. Cromit promptly cried:

"It's the critter who stole my rifle! No Cap'n Jack killed the Injun. It was the thief, and he's taking my rifle to Du Quesne to trade it to the French, ding him!"

It was with difficulty that I restrained him from making an immediate search for the fellow's trail and thereby hindering the Onondaga in his work. Incidentally I reminded him we were scouting for Braddock and not out to recover stolen property.

"I'll git that rifle even if I have to go to Du Quesne alone," he sullenly informed me.

The Onondaga's signal broke up our talk. We hastened to join him and were informed:

"Black Hunter scalped the Huron. Look! The Onondaga with the nose of the Wolf has found where ten men passed close to the Huron. One man stepped aside and scalped him. The Huron was dead when they came up, or they would not have found him. The man with the long gun by the fire killed the Huron and ran away. The black-white man came along and took the scalp. Look!"

The story was plain enough in the trail made by a number of men traveling in single file. No Indian, unless he were dead, would remain at the edge of the bushes while the wayfarers approached him. The trail approached the dead man through a thick cover, which precluded the possibility of one of the travelers dropping him at long range. But the range was short and unmasked by bush growth between the savage and the fresh camp-fire.

Having satisfied ourselves to this extent we proceeded to indulge Cromit by finding the trail of the man with the long rifle. The signs of his flight were very plain and suggested a panic. We followed it without difficulty toward the west side of the Little Crossing, or Castleman's River, a tributary of the Youghiogeny, but when within a short distance of the crossing Round Paw, who was ahead, halted and lifted his ax.

Cromit and I became more cautious and paused. Round Paw beckoned us to join him. The three of us listened. At first I thought it was thunder; then came the crack of a single rifle, only the woods were so thick and so muffled any sound it was hard to determine the direction with any degree of exactness. The Indian wet his finger and held it up to catch the trifling breeze, and then bounded away at a lope.

"One man in old trade-house. Hurons trying to get him," he called back to me.

Somewhere in the neighborhood was a deserted cabin, once used by Croghan as a trading-post. Round Paw and I had spent a night there two Winters before, but I did not believe we were taking the right direction to reach it. The Indian slowed his pace and began to be very circumspect. We came out on a slope and could look over the forest crown into a small clearing. And there in the middle of the opening stood the trading-post. Only instead of the shrill wind of that Winter's night, and the howling of the starved wolf-pack there were now ululating war-cries and the explosion of guns being fired into the log walls. There would come several puffs, then the detonation.

We kept under cover and counted the puffs of smoke and estimated the attacking force to number fifteen or twenty. The cabin stood in the center of the clearing and was completely encircled by the besiegers.

At last the cabin became alive. There came a puff of smoke from a loop-hole and a naked savage at the edge of the forest leaped grotesquely into view and would have fallen on his face had not a man leaped forward and caught him and dragged him to the shelter of the woods. The sun

glittered on something he wore around his neck, and I knew it to be a silver gorget, such as Captain Beaujeau and other French officers wore to indicate their rank. Otherwise one would have taken the fellow for a savage.

"It's a scouting party from Du Quesne in charge of one or more Frenchmen," I said. "That was the leader who pulled the Indian under cover."

A FIRE of musketry crackled around the clearing, two guns being discharged from the woods at the foot of the slope and directly in advance of our position. The Onondaga told us to remain quiet while he scouted nearer the besiegers. Cromit and I kept low behind some white hawthorne-bushes. After thirty minutes Round Paw returned and tersely reported—

"French Indians and two Frenchmen have cornered a Swannock."

I repeated this in English, and Cromit promptly declared—

"Then we must bust through and help the feller out."

While anxious to help the fellow, even though he were a thief, I had no notion to be cooped up in the cabin. I talked with the Onondaga, and he said that with three men in the cabin and with him outside to range back and forth behind the attacking force the Hurons would soon lose heart and retreat. Once the Frenchmen lost control of them our task of capturing one man alive would be greatly simplified.

His judgment had great weight with me; and there was no denying the confusion he would throw the enemy into once he stalked the savages from the rear. I agreed to make the cabin with Cromit if it could be done with any measure of safety. Had the situation been less serious it would have been amusing to witness his enthusiasm for helping the besieged and his failure to realize the fellow was the same who had stolen his rifle.

There remained the problem of conveying to the cabin the intelligence that three men had come to the rescue, and that two of them must find the door unbarred when they dashed across the opening.

The Onondaga took it on himself to provide us with a clear path to the cabin door. He briefly explained his plan, and we pronounced it good. When he set out to steal half-way around the unsuspecting circle until opposite our position, Cromit and I made down the slope and into the heavy growth where two or more of the savages were posted. We knew they were but a short distance ahead of us, for by lying on the ground we could glimpse the opening. We saw no signs of them, however, and only located them by the occasional firing of their guns.

Suddenly there rang out the fearful war-whoop of the Onondaga, accompanied by the crack of his rifle. There were a few seconds of silence and again Round Paw raised his voice, this time in triumph and sounding his scalp-cry. He had made his first kill and the enemy knew it, and the Huron howl rose from all sides of the clearing. The Onondaga shouted his defiance and dared the enemy to attempt his capture, and added a boast concerning a worthless, mangy scalp.

Yelping with rage those on the edge of the clearing began to search for him. The bushes rustled ahead of us, and we knew our path to the cabin would soon be open. Cromit was trembling violently and would have crawled forward had I not clung to his arm. One of the two warriors was well on his way, as the careless crashing through the undergrowth told us. The other was more slow to seek the Onondaga, perhaps reluctant to leave the cabin unwatched.

I was wondering how we could avoid him, or remove him, without giving the alarm to those who were in pursuit of Round Paw when he suddenly stepped into view not more than fifteen feet from our position. And he was facing us with suspicion in his little eyes and not giving heed toward the howls and yells across the opening.

How he got an inkling of our presence I do not know, nor did he live to tell, for before I could restrain him Cromit had raised himself to one knee and had whipped out his long butcher-knife. The savage discovered him and with a startled grunt threw up his musket to fire. The piece missed and as it snapped Cromit hurled the long knife. It streaked to the red throat and pierced it, and the man went down with a gurgling attempt to sound his death-cry.

"Good work and good luck," I softly cried. "Now race for it."

He halted and ripped off his gory trophy and waving it in one hand and his knife in

the other came pounding after me. The rest of the Indians were still hunting the Onondaga and we had an excellent chance to get the man out of the cabin. What surprized me was his failure to bolt when the way was open, but doubtless he feared some trick. A long-drawn-out cry, quavering and mournful told us when the savages came to the man Round Paw had slain. There followed a chorus of frenzied yells and yelps; then again the crack of Round Paw's rifle and more horrible screeching.

"He's bagged another!" I shouted.

Bending low we passed through the remaining growth and struck into the opening. Flame spurted from a loophole and the wind of the passing lead ruffled my hair. I yelled loudly that we were friends and English. We gained the door before a second shot could greet us only to find it barred. A gun was discharged in the woods and a heavy ball plumped into the lintel log over my head.

"In God's mercy open the door and let us in!" howled Cromit.

"We're friends, fool. Unbar the door," I added, and I faced about to shoot at any enemy showing at the edge of the woods.

It seemed a very long time that a hand fumbled at the bar, but at last the door gave and I tumbled in on my back and Cromit dragged me one side. A bullet whistled through the doorway and smashed into the wall. And a startled voice was crying:

"You're the kind man of Der Hexenkopf! The man who saved me in Braddock's camp!"

I leaped to the door and closed it, and dropped the bar in place and then took time to stare at the defender of the cabin. It was the witch-girl, and she was still wearing her leggings and blouse. The collar of the blouse had been repaired in some fashion. Cromit was glaring at her and the long rifle she was holding. I do not believe he would have moved had an Indian dropped down the chimney.

"Elsie Dinwold! What do you do out here ahead of the army?" I asked.

"Ding me etarnally if it ain't the brown-haired one. And she stole my fine rifle!" roared Cromit.

"I thought it was yours when I took it. It's heavy. It hurts my shoulder most awful. Take it," she sighed.

She collapsed on a fireplace log and threw off her hat. The brown hair tumbled down in great confusion.

"Master pretty hair," mumbled Cromit. "Can't you brush it back a bit?"

She did not seem to hear him. Her slight form began to shake, and tears rolled down the face. To Cromit I directed:

"Get to a loophole and guard one side of the cabin. Can't you see she's undone? We must get her away if the road is open."

"What a horrible world!" she panted, clutching at her straggling hair. "First Der Hexenkopf—now this. There was an Indian—back apiece—I shot him."

"Just let me see your forehead at the edge of your hair, missy," begged Cromit.

I leaped my length and pushed him violently backward just before a gun-barrel, thrust through the loophole, discharged. I caught hold of the barrel and the Indian outside exerted himself to withdraw it. It was slipping through my fingers when Cromit recovered his balance and some of his wits and sprang to help me. As his long fingers closed about the receding barrel he let out a screech of animal triumph and with a single wrench jerked the weapon through the hole as far as it could pass; and then, with a sudden concentrating of his wonderful strength, he threw his weight on the barrel and bent it down toward the floor and ruined it.

By this time I was at another loophole. The savage ran for cover, bounding and leaping from side to side. I tried to cover him, but this erratic movements foiled me until he was within a few feet of the woods, when he foolishly believed himself to be safe, and straightened out to cover the remaining distance in one swift plunge. My lead was quicker than his heels, and he remained where he fell, his head and shoulders concealed by the growth he had failed to reach.

Cromit's loud outcry brought me spinning about. He was kneeling beside the girl, his hands stretched forth to pick her up from the floor, and yet he did not touch her.

"Good God! What has happened?" I whispered, for the girl was as one dead.

He opened and closed his jaws and pointed a trembling finger at her forehead, where showed a red spot. I pushed him aside and lifted the girl in my arms and wondered that she should be so light. She moaned but made no effort to lift her head.

"Mistress Flax was right. It's the best way to tell," gasped Cromit.

"She's been hurt. Spread out her blanket," I angrily told him. Placing her slim

form on the blanket I further explained:

"When the Indian shot through the loophole the ball grazed her head. A little lower and it would have taken off her nose. Look here!"

And I stood where she had fallen and pointed to a log that was about the height of her head when she was standing erect. There was a fresh hole in the log, but Cromit would not be satisfied the red blotch on her forehead was not a witch-mark until he had taken his knife and dug out the ball. Then he joined me beside the girl and ventured to examine her hurt more closely. In a trembling voice he said:

"I hope you're right. It does look like the ball had barked her head. Yet it's most dingly just where Mistress Flax said it would be."

"She was about to collapse under what she's been through when the lead grazed her and gave the finishing touch. Get me some water."

I WAS rubbing her hands and wrists and awkwardly striving to bring her to her senses when I heard the cabin door open. I leaped to my feet to secure a weapon, and discovered Cromit was gone. Gaining the door I called after him to come back, and profanely demanded to know if he were a madman. But I had asked for water and I wanted it for the Dinwold girl; and he waved the bucket defiantly and ran around the corner.

Almost immediately he was back again with three men at his heels. Three jumps would take him to the door, but he was forced to half-turn and swing the bucket at the foremost of the men. The upraised ax struck the bucket and smashed it. I threw my ax before the savage could attempt another blow, and it struck edge first, handle down, just as the little Flax boy would have thrown it. Then Cromit was piling through the door, swearing insanely, with the remaining two men at his heels. I grappled with one and Cromit closed with the other!

"Pig! Surrender!" cried my opponent; and for the first time I realized he was no Indian but a Frenchman.

"I must have you alive!" I told him.

"*Diable*— You die for the insult, *monsieur!*" he grunted, forcing me back.

He was a very strong man and well-skilled in wrestling. In truth, he was so skilful with his feet that before I knew what he was attempting I was on my back and struggling desperately to keep his hands from his belt and my throat. Over his shoulder I caught a glimpse of Cromit's adversary, a most ferocious-looking fellow as nature turned him out, but doubly repelling because of the water-lizard tattooed in white on the upper half of his face.

Only a glimpse of him was afforded me as he and Cromit swirled across my field of vision. My own business was cut out for me, and I locked my long legs about the Frenchman's cunning limbs and exerted a pressure that made him groan with pain. From the other end of the cabin came a faint moaning which I could not credit to either Cromit or the savage.

My man began putting up a desperate resistance and I shut all thoughts out of my head except the task of finishing him. So shrewdly did he fight I no longer thought of making him a prisoner. Very slowly I began working on my side, carrying him before me and with what appeared an excellent chance of pinning him beneath. He was a good twenty pounds lighter than I, but he fought like a devil.

Before I could outguess him he was up to one of his tricks. Suddenly ceasing his resistance he flopped on his back and carried me with him but managed to escape the grip of my legs and draw up his knees. Then with a violent thrust of his arms and a surge of his legs he sent me flying over his head.

"Put a spell on him! Witch him!" screamed Cromit's voice.

I leaped erect and whirled and set myself to meet the next onset. The force of my fall blurred my vision for a moment, and the Frenchman might have had me had he not paused to jerk a pistol from his belt. He risked all on a bullet, and the weapon missed fire. I ducked the flying pistol and leaped upon him, incited to greater efforts by the stinging bump on the top of my head. We crashed together and hugged and tugged like two bears. I still feared his tricky feet and stamped heavily on his foot.

"*Nom de Dieu!* Foul ape!" he shrieked. And he filled my throat with choking with a jab of his stiff fingers under my ear.

I picked him up bodily and hurled him against the logs and he fell to the floor as limp as a sack of meal. But I would have no more tricks, and when he struck I was

upon him again. I remember hearing a shrill cry, but there was no time to calm the girl. I mauled the Frenchman about for some seconds before I discovered he was inert and offering no resistance.

As I drew back, thinking I had broken his neck I was conscious of Cromit puffing and lamenting—

"Plumb forgot you wanted the rogue alive."

My man had no more fight in him and I took time to glance at my friend. He was leaning against the wall and mopping back his bristling hair with hands that smeared his face a deep red. On the floor at his feet was the Indian, killed in a horrible fashion.

"Lor's me! But that was a wring worth the fuss," Cromit panted. "Mebbe it was the spell she put on him when I yelled out."

"——! With your bare hands!" I dully exclaimed. He proudly held them up for me to admire.

"He was mortal slippery even for a sarpent," faintly replied Cromit. "Mebbe if she hadn't witched him——"

"Where is she?" I wildly cried, brushing the sweat from my eyes and quite forgetting the Frenchman as I stared at her empty blanket and to the open door.

Cromit staggered to the door and at once emitted a terrible howl and grappled with another Indian who suddenly filled the doorway. I heard the dull thud of an ax and my friend went down on his knees.

"The bone-breaking man is mad from fighting," said Round Paw, the Onondaga.

Cromit, only slightly stunned by the flat of the ax, slowly gained his feet and stared stupidly at the Indian and rubbed his head ruefully. The Indian sighted my Frenchman and with a whoop would have jumped upon him had I not pushed him back.

"He is my prisoner. He goes to Braddock alive!" I warned.

He turned away and beheld the savage on the floor. With a yelp of amazement he bent over him and investigated the nature of the mortal wounds. Straightening he lifted his ax in salute to Cromit, then drove it into a log and cried:

"Yo-hah! This is a very brave man who walks through the land with us. They say he has killed a man with his hands. They say his name will be known to many nations, that he shall be called '*Royaner!*' "

"We waste time. There is work for the man of the Wolf. Find me the white girl whom we found in this cabin. It is the girl I fought for at Will's Creek, the one who left Der Hexenkopf with us. She was frightened by the fighting and ran away. She must be brought back. And your white brother's legs are weak."

He yanked his ax from the log and meditated my startling statement for a few moments; then told me:

"The white woman is *honnatkon.* Round Paw did not see her when he entered the opening. She changed into a bird and flew through the air. Who can follow where birds fly? She came here from the creek by flying."

"She is out there in the woods. She will be caught by those Huron devils. Get her and bring her back if you call me brother."

"She must run like a deer to overtake the Hurons. They have met Round Paw. They say they lost four men to him alone." And he proudly pulled a mass of hair from his belt. "And there are two dead at the beginning of the woods and one dead outside and one inside this cabin."

"The witch-girl has gone and has taken the light rifle dropped by the Frenchman," declared Cromit. "But she was honest enough to leave my good long rifle."

My prisoner groaned and kicked out his legs. Again I restrained the Onondaga and tied my man's arms behind him.

"Must your white brother ask again that you find the white girl's trail and save her from the Hurons?"

"She is *honnatkon.* My *orenda* tells me not to travel the same path," he sullenly demurred.

"Then I must go, and my eyes are not sharp like the Wolf man's, nor are my legs strong. And let it be remembered when you would pass me a pipe through the camp smoke."

With a grunt he ran from the cabin. Cromit and I endeavored to learn something from the Frenchman.

"*Monsieur,* I am a victim of war. But it is all for France," he told me.

"How many were with you?" I asked.

He smiled through his bloody lips and mocked:

"There was another Frenchman with me, who is worth a hundred red men. He will be here soon with some of his children."

I pointed to the dead warrior on the floor and asked—

"Shall I tell my friend to make you talk?"

He gave a look and was unable to restrain a shudder. Then with a shrug of his shoulders he said:

"A Beauvais can die even like that. I compliment *monsieur* on his French."

Cromit edged nearer, working his gory fingers and muttering for me to untie the prisoner. I waved him back and spoke in French for my captive's benefit, saying:

"We will leave it for Braddock to make him talk. He has many Iroquois with his army, and they have curious ways with wayward tongues."

"It will be interesting, *monsieur*—for your Iroquois. Let us go to them and learn if they can persuade me."

Confound the fellow! One can not hold a mean grudge against a brave man.

"We will start very soon. Cromit, reload the rifles."

The Frenchman glanced about the room and muttered:

"There was another here, a youth. My children trailed him here after he killed one of our Hurons. He made a very pretty fight, but we should have dug him out if you men had not come."

"What you took to be a youth was a woman. She took fright and ran into the forest while we fought. I fear your savages will find her."

"The good God forbid! Let us hope she traveled to the east. That path is clear." Then with frowning brows he added: "She must travel fast to catch up with my children even if she travels toward Du Quesne. Their hearts turned to water when your Indian began killing them from cover. But there was a man!" And he stared regretfully at the dead man on the floor.

"He and his brother were the only ones who would follow me in here. But if Dupuy can catch up with the others he will strengthen their hearts. You may find thorns and briers in the road to the English army, *monsieur*."

Cromit called from the door:

"Here comes Round Paw. Coming alone. And he ain't in any hurry."

The French looked earnestly at Cromit and politely said—

"Pardon, *monsieur* of the Hands, but in the name of a little red —— are there any more English like you?"

After I had interpreted it Cromit smiled broadly and drawled:

"He was a right proper man to meet in a fling. As to there being more like me, yes and no. The others are worser. I'm the youngest of the lot and ain't got all my growth yet."

"*Nom de Dieu!*"

ROUND PAW glided into the cabin and confirmed what my prisoner had said about his red allies being in a panic. The girl's trail led to the east. He had followed it but a short distance. Beauvais glared at the Onondaga's girdle and muttered:

"So that is why they do not stop their foolish running! What a pity! Poor Dupuy!" In answer to my questioning look he sadly explained. "The brown hair hanging over your —— friend's hip. Until very recently it was worn by my good friend Georges Dupuy."

"You found a dead Frenchman?" I asked Round Paw.

He touched the hank of brown hair.

"He received the Holy Eucharist before we set out. He told me he should never see the Beautiful River again. Poor Georges. I laughed at him and said it was a sick fancy. *Voila!* A red savage wears his hair in his belt."

I held a council of war with my friends and we decided to travel over the back trail for a few miles and look for signs of the Dinwold woman. I told Cromit he must take the prisoner back, also a verbal report from me. He strongly objected to leaving us, but a compromise was reached by his agreeing to conduct the prisoner as far as the road-builders' camp, where a guard could take him back to headquarters.

Had it not been for my anxiety about the Dinwold girl I should have started Cromit and his captive from the cabin while the Indian and I scouted after the retreating savages. Beauvais volunteered the information that his red force was composed of Potawatomi, and that he had had difficulty in inducing them to scout so far from the fort.

"I wanted to bring some of Pontiac's Ottawas and Ojibways, but they would not come without him, and he was away to Shenango. The fight would have been far different, *monsieur*, had Pontiac's children been with me. They would never shame their father by running away."

Round Paw did not like my plan, and insisted we should be picking off more of

the enemy while fear was gripping them and while they had no French leaders. But I was suspecting his sincerity in searching for the Dinwold girl. The idea was fixed in his pagan mind that she possessed the evil powers of all sorts of monstrous beings—*honnatkon*—and it was very possible he had not looked for her beyond the edge of the forest.

So we set forth and traveled until sundown. After the first mile the Frenchman gave his parole not to attempt to escape until I had turned him over to Cromit's care, and I released his arms and we fared pleasantly. That night I drilled Cromit on the few points I desired him to report, and made him repeat it until he had it straight enough. Especially did I warn against the proposed road over Will's Mountain, and urged that the valley-road be followed. In the morning we cooked squirrels and turkey and Beauvais ate heartily. When I came to tie his hands his spirits fell and he offered—

"I will renew my parole, *monsieur*, until *monsieur* of the Terrible Hands, has delivered me into the custody of somebody else."

I gladly accepted it, and explained to Cromit the man had passed his word not to attempt escape until turned over to the road-builders. Cromit was inclined to be incredulous and insisted he would tie the fellow up at night. I explained this condition to Beauvais who made a wry face but submitted with what good grace he could muster. We separated with a courteous exchange of compliments; then the Onondaga and I were more turned back toward Fort Du Quesne.

"The white woman is *honnatkon*," said Round Paw as we were swinging along. After a few minutes he added. "She turns into a bird and flies through the air.

"Her trail led to the east, the Wolf man said."

"The sound of war-whoop would sound farther than the trail ran."

His talk worried me. The trail was easy to follow when we left the cabin, and for a fourth of a mile he had called my attention to slight signs. Once she had entered the forest she had regained her woods-sense and had moved more cautiously.

What with the Frenchman to talk to and the approach of night, and my reliance on the Onondaga, I had ceased looking for the trail, always assuming she was ahead of us and traveling with her back to the sun.

"Does my brother mean her trail ended?"

"The signs of a bird are followed in the snow till the snow shows no marks. The white woman's trail was like that. She flew up into the air."

If the Dinwold girl could hide her trail from the Onondaga she was indeed well-taught in forest ways, and the Indian's declaration gave a new twist to my speculations concerning her movements. I had pictured her hurrying to the east, as losing her bearings and wandering about through the savage country. Now it would seem she had concealed her trail with consummate cunning, which meant some deep purpose I had not suspected. However, it was too late to look for her now, for Braddock's business could not wait.

We found three hoops hanging on a bush and I dared not look at them closely until the Onondaga pronounced the hair in each to be that of a white man. From what I learned later I believe these to be scalps taken from Chapman's road-builders. We skirted the opening where we had rescued the girl and crossed Castelman's River, which was not more than ankle-deep, and soon entered upon high and very wet glades. The country remained much broken, with the mountains split by narrow, deep valleys.

Our plan was to scout to the Great Crossing of the Youghiogeny that day, a distance of seventeen miles. This section of the country was excellent for surprize attacks and skirmishes. I feared that once the army had advanced this far it would be surrounded day and night by a cloud of invisible foes. In the late afternoon we came to a deserted Indian camp, and from the number of fires estimated that at least half a hundred warriors had recently feasted there.

In the middle of the camp and at the foot of a tree that had served as a torture-stake we found the charred remains of some unfortunate. I thought of the Dinwold girl and was too nauseated to investigate. But the Onondaga pronounced the victim to have been an Indian, presumably a Delaware who had kept hold of the chain of friendship with the English.

The trail from this camp led along the Youghiogeny, and was the southernmost of the three great Indian paths running

east and west through western Pennsylvania. The established path left the valley of the Youghiogeny for that of the Monongahela and ended at the forks of the Ohio. It was the road taken by Washington two years before and I had been over it twice. It was the road that General Braddock proposed to take; but by "road" I mean a trace, as the army would have to build its own thoroughfare before it could use its carts and bring up the artillery.

The central path, over the Carlisle and Shippensburg road and across the Laurel Mountains and Chestnut Ridge to Shannopin's town two miles from Du Quesne, was more direct. This was the trail taken by Christopher Gist as agent for the Ohio Company in 1750 and 1751. He was the first white man to explore so far west with the single purpose of observing the country and making a written report on the conditions he found. The northern, the oldest path, sometimes called the Kittanning road, was the one most used by our Indian traders.

We made the Great Crossing and camped on the west bank. We had eaten our evening meal and were smoking in silent companionship when a most unusual visitation startled us. The Onondaga attracted my attention by holding his pipe half-raised and staring intently over my head. I twisted my neck to look and like my red friend began to wonder if I were dreaming.

A TALL man with a bald head and long white beard, was standing directly behind me. His noiseless approach marked him to be a master woodsman, but his attire was absurdly out of place. He wore a long black robe relieved by a piece of white cloth over his neck and shoulders. This cloth was some four feet in length and was two feet wide and his head was thrust through a hole in the middle so as to give it equal length before and behind. He gazed at us solemnly, if not sternly, and the effect on the Onondaga was the same as if he were confronting an apparition.

"Are you lost, my children?" he asked in a deep voice.

He was no priest, yet I answered:

"We are not lost, father. We live much in the woods. You talk in the Iroquois."

"So the Indian may understand my words. I speak many languages."

With that he advanced and seated himself between us. And there remained the marvel of his stealing upon us undetected while hampered by his long gown and with the white cloth making him noticeable in the night.

"His *orenda* is very strong," humbly whispered Round Paw to me.

"My red son is very simple," he told the Indian. Then to me. "You are an Englishman."

In French I asked—

"Why do you think that?" I prided myself on my French.

"You can change your tongue just as I can cast off this evening robe and put on my morning robe with the wide bands about it. But you can not change the looks of your race."

"Who are you?"

"I am a man who lives alone so that I may help the whole world. The world used to call me Jacob Hardy. The star in my head led me into the wilderness. I have lived here many years."

He became silent and stared into the little fire. Finally he resumed:

"A man called Braddock is coming to bring death to the red children. The French at Du Quesne will oppose him; and that will bring more suffering and other deaths to the red children. My mission is to stop this bad business and allow nature to make us all one happy people."

He was still using the Onondaga dialect so that Round Paw might understand, but how he guessed my companion was of that nation I did not know. Surely not because he had been eavesdropping, for my friend and I had exchanged no words for more than an hour.

Believing I had to deal with one mentally unbalanced, and knowing how deeply the Onondaga was impressed, I bowed gravely and waited for him to continue.

"The evil in the world today results from our difference in dress. Should you, Englishmen, return to the sea-towns and put off your forest-leggings and fringed shirt, then you would become as those who know not the forest. A man is not a soldier until he is dressed like thousands of others. He is no longer a soldier when he returns to his former style of dressing.

"I, too, am an Englishman and was ordained a clergyman in the Church of England before the star in my head led me

out here. I know my history, just as I remember my Greek and Latin. So long as the Highlanders wear the kilt and plaid and bonnet, so long will their spirit remain unbroken. It is useless to attempt to change the hearts and thoughts of Oriental people so long as their faith directs their habits of attire. The Jesuits erred in believing they could convert pagans, like this red child here, while allowing them to wear what can only bring to mind memories of the warpath."

"You would have us all dress alike?" I respectfully asked.

"I would; but not as men now dress. There should be no buttons, nor buckles to remind us of vanity. No belts, nor trappings to remind us how once we carried swords and axes. No pockets to remind us that once we were avaricious and had more than our neighbors. Instead, I would have all mankind wear an evening gown like this, with the square of white to remind us that night was not made for deeds of stealth. I would have them wear the morning gown to remind us of the joy of the sunshine."

"His *orenda* is very big magic, they say," muttered the Onondaga.

"Your *orenda* shall burn you up, shall take all the land away from the Long House; shall leave you a broken people, if you carry that hate in your belt," fiercely warned the strange fellow; and he pointed an accusing finger at the scalps hanging in the Onondaga's belt.

"It is the hair of dogs, except this one," muttered the Indian, and he touched the brown locks of the Frenchman. "He was a very brave man, they say. The man of the Wolf gives them all to his *orenda*."

And he yanked them forth and cast them on the fire, and they made a most abominable stink.

Hardy neither approved nor condemned this species of sacrifice. His gaze grew more wild as he stared at the burning hair, and as if reciting something from memory he murmured in English:

"The difference in dress explains the difference in color of the races. The same sun burns us all, but habits of dress give us the black man, the red man, the white man, and all other shades. Yet the third membrane of the skin in all people is white. The outer skin is transparent. The *rete musosum* or middle membrane gives the color of a race; and this middle membrane responds to the sunlight in different degrees, according to the kind of dress worn. That is it. The star in my head told me that long ago."

"But in different regions the sun shines with differing degrees of intensity," I reminded.

He smiled upon me pityingly and from beneath his black robe produced a strip of thin bark, some two feet in length, and with two thorns for pins fastened it together after giving it two or three half-turns. He held it up before the Onondaga's wondering eyes and asked—

"What says my red child if I cut this lengthwise with my knife?"

"There will be two parts, or loops. Perhaps they will be linked together," timidly answered Round Paw.

"When you can explain why it remains all one piece, but is curiously knotted together, then perhaps you can explain the mystery of the sun on the human skin," said Hardy.

And he produced a small knife, keen of edge, and proceeded carefully to cut the twisted loop of bark lengthwise. When he had done he handed it over to the Onondaga, who fingered it gently and exclaimed in surprize as he found it all one piece, yet curiously knotted.

Since that night I have done the same trick many times, but never have I had brains enough to learn why a hoop, or loop, of bark or paper, even though twisted a bit, should not, when carefully bisected lengthwise, give two loops, although they be linked together. To me Hardy said—

"That is the answer to my white child's question."

Of course there is never any relevancy in a madman's talk, and yet his response astounded me. When he was turning out his well-rounded sentences his deep, rumbling voice made one forget the absurdities he was talking. I verily believe that had he merely recited the A, B, C's in English the Onondaga would have bowed low in his heart and pronounced him a great magician.

I had no talk to return in answer to the twisted double belt of bark. He rose to his feet and placidly smoothed out his flowing robes and quietly informed us:

"My children, you are in great danger. You are surrounded by death."

The Onondaga cast an apprehensive glance at the sky as if expecting to behold the Flying Heads. I glanced about the forest wall and demanded—

"What do you mean?"

I hoped it was nothing more than another of his quaint fancies and yet fearful there was some sane reason behind his warning speech.

"We passed a deserted camping-place, where fifty Indians had been. They had burned a man. But now they have gone toward the forks of the Ohio. No danger can come from the east except it be a very small scouting party. Already we have whipped one of those and have captured their leader."

"Never was death closer to you than now," he calmly assured us. "He sits by your side. He looks over your shoulder."

"Can you remember that once you were an Englishman, and tell me where lies this danger?"

Without turning his head, or making a gesture, to betray the nature of his warning he replied:

"These woods are filled with Ottawas, Ojibways, and French Mohawks. They have been gathering ever since the sun went down. Now they but wait for me to depart before killing you."

I repeated this under my breath to the Onondaga. His eyes glittered savagely at the prospects of a fight, but he did not make the mistake of lifting his head and glancing about the dark forest wall. He picked up a stick and snapped it into small pieces and fed them to the fire and quietly replied:

"It should be a good fight, but does not our father see an open path from this place?"

His words made me a woodsman again and caused me to remember that our guest must have a great influence over the savages, or else we would have been riddled before this. It naturally followed that I decided his presence was necessary for our immediate safety. I asked him—

"Surely you will not go and leave us to be killed?"

"The star in my head tells me to move on. The magic knot, which no man can explain, tells me to be gone. But there is no warning against your coming with me. You will not be troubled while I am with you; but with the first light of morning I must change to my morning robe; and then you must leave me."

EITHER the man was hopelessly mad and there were no savages hiding in the woods, or else he spoke true, and it remained for us to decide what course to take—to remain and pit our woodcraft against the hidden enemy, or to depend on the madman's influence to protect us. He did not seek to influence us except to ask casually—

"Do you stay, or go with me?"

I was inclined to trust to the darkness and risk an attempt to strike through any red lines. But after Round Paw had been told what Hardy had proposed he unhesitatingly declared we must go with him.

"His *orenda* will protect us," he earnestly declared. "The men of the Wolf clan would not even kill a Huron who was walking with the white magician."

I gathered up my blanket and weapons and said:

"We will go with you. But of course they will follow us and attack us when we part company."

"They will not press close while it is night. The star in my head tells me you should make for the town of Allaquippa, the Indian woman sachem. She holds her Indians back from joining the French, and the French have told their Indians to do no harm in her village, for they hope to win over Allaquippa's Delawares before the man Braddock reaches the Monongahela."

This was the first sane speech I had heard him utter. I knew of the Delaware woman who ruled as sachem over a village at the junction of the Youghiogeny and the Monongahela. She removed there from the Allegheny when the French came under Celeron in 1749. And there was no questioning her devotion to the English.

"We will go with you," I said.

He gathered up his black robe and strode into the black woods, and admonished:

"Speak not, but listen to my voice. My star tells me all men are one color after night comes. That is why the red men do not like to attack after the sun goes down. Keep close to me, but speak no word. You shall not be harmed."

Then commenced one of the strangest night marches I ever made. In a jargon of English, French, and various Indian dialects, decorated with phrases from the Latin and possibly the Greek—although I never studied that tongue and can not say for a surety—we began our journey. We traveled northwest so as to strike the river again where it passes through the Laurel Mountains. Our conductor moved with the tread of a woodsman, but his deep voice carried

far and betrayed our position to every living thing within a quarter of a mile.

After the first nervousness left me I pricked my ears to catch a hostile sound whenever Hardy paused to refill his lungs. But at first I heard nothing. I began to believe we were victims of his imagination; then off to the right I heard the soft swish of a bough too hastily released, and on the left came the soft scuffling sound of a careless foot hitting against a moss-covered rock. Ahead of us, too, there arose faint sounds at times, telling us the enemy was falling back so as to keep us inside the circle. We would be without road-belts after the east began to redden. Only once did I speak to our leader, and that was to ask—

"How many warriors are at Jacobs' Cabins?"

"It is deserted. Captain Jacobs and his men have gone to fight with the French," his heavy voice informed the forest.

This was too good news to keep, and I whispered it to Round Paw. For Captain Jacobs' town was close to the river-road we must follow in seeking sanctuary in Allaquippa's village. Jacobs, a chief of the Delawares, was bound to the French cause and a bitter enemy of the English. In a very short time his scalp was to be worth more than a hundred pounds to the colonies. Had he been in his town to bar our progress I would have been tempted to turn either south or north and attempt breaking through the circle.

As the night advanced and the occasional sounds warned us that the savages were ahead and behind as well as on both sides I endeavored to form some plan for breaking through the ring before daylight. Round Paw's wits were quicker than mine. With a hand on my shoulder he softly whispered:

"The Black Robe leaves us soon, my brother, and we must ask our own *orendas* to protect us. The Black Robe now talks like one who talks with ghosts. He does not stop to see if we are at his heels. His magic is strong, but he soon will hide it. When the first light comes he will turn into a big black bird and fly into the sky. While the light is beginning to drive the darkness from the openings, and while the woods are still black, let us take to cover and wait for the Ottawa dogs to pass on, trailing the Black Robe."

His scheme was as simple as it was expedient. There was no reason why, providing we were cautious and the victims of no accident, Hardy should not draw the enemy on after him until dawn revealed our disappearance. And Hardy was now furthering our plan, for his talk was taking on the fluency of a prepared harangue, and his voice was booming steadily. He paused only to gulp down a mouthful of air and then was rushing on to score his next point. As his words came faster his steps also quickened, until I believed he was approaching a climax, or a point of vocal exhaustion, when he would become silent and render our holding back a most dangerous procedure.

We came to a marshy place and knew we were near the river. We walked through this, leaving a broad trail, but once we had come to solid ground and felt a stony soil beneath our feet the Onondaga gave a soft hiss and touched my shoulder.

There was a suggestion of gray in the black wall ahead, as if the early morning light was showing through a hole in the forest. I halted and glided to one side after the Onondaga for several rods. He stopped and pressed down on my shoulder. I crouched to the ground and he took my hand and placed it on a huge prostrate tree trunk, now going to mold and covered with grape-vines. With no more noise than a snake rustling through green grass he crawled along the trunk and under the vines. I followed him until his heel pressed me gently as a signal to halt.

Hardy's rumbling voice was still addressing the darkness, shifting from French to the different Indian dialects, but always conveying the same message—a world of one race, therefore of love, based on a universal mode of dress and a like absorption of the sun's rays. His voice grew fainter as he drew ahead and our attention was next taken up with softer and more sinister sounds: the muffled step of a moccasin gently placed on the forest mold; a slight rustling as a foot caught on a grape-vine. The rear-guard of the savages was now passing our hiding-place.

Fainter grew the white man's voice until it was muffled and not to be separated into words. For twenty minutes no further sound of trailing red men was to be heard. The Onondaga pressed his heel against my face as a signal for me to back out of our hiding-place.

We planned to cross the river before daybreak and seek a hiding-place in the hills. My companion picked the way, and he moved so deliberately and slowly because of his fear of leaving a sign, that I began to think daylight would come and find us on the wrong side of the river. There was a streak of gray in the eastern sky when we reclined on the bank and took turns lapping the water, one listening while the other drank.

The river was several hundred feet wide but in no place more than three deet deep. We forded it, a step at a time, for to slip and flounder might bring arrows and bullets. On reaching the opposite shore we rested at full length until the water had ceased trickling from our leggings. Before the blackness had been entirely conquered by the coming sun we were snugly concealed among the rocks on the hillside.

"This has been a good night's work," grunted Round Paw.

## CHAPTER V

### WAMPUM!

THE rain was beating down on our hiding-place when we awoke in the morning. Once we were soaked to the skin we accepted the weather philosophically, even welcomed it; for it reduced the danger of being surprized by the enemy's Indians. By this time the hostile savages were hurrying back to the creature comforts of Du Quesne, or had taken to temporary shelter. Bows were poor weapons in rainy weather, and guns must have their locks wrapped in oilskin to keep them dry.

We traveled slowly and cautiously as our field of vision was limited and blurred by the storm, and there was danger of stumbling upon some Huron or Ottawa camp. With our rifles and the Onondaga's bow-string carefully protected from the dampness we spent a day in covering a few miles. The Onondaga was impatient to make a swift march of it, but my plans demanded that we should not only arrive at Du Quesne but arrive untouched by suspicion.

During our second night in hiding I perfected my scheme for entering the fort unquestioned, and curiously enough it was based on the advice given us by the Englishman Hardy. I proposed to enter Allaquippa's town in the rôle of a Frenchman. My presence would not be welcomed by the woman sachem, but her aversion would all the better establish my status among any fort Indians who might be there for the purpose of seducing her Delawares.

I did not believe there was any danger of any French Indians recognizing me as the white man Hardy had rescued. From Allaquippa's town I would make for Du Quesne. This line of procedure made it imperative that we should not be chased by any enemy scouting party into the Delaware village.

The morning broke fair and glorious and with the promise of a very hot day. As soon as we descended the rugged slope and entered the labyrinth of woods we found the ground wet and steaming and the air as oppressive as an oven. The sweat on the Onondaga's chest made inroads on his painted clan-mark, while I could feel the drops on my forehead seeping down into my eyes.

We were following the river and aiming to make Stewart's Crossing, eight miles from the hills. Half the distance had been covered when our advance was halted by the crash of a smooth-bore at one side. The heavy ball cut a small branch several feet overhead. I glimpsed a bronzed figure and fired. We advanced warily, and I was chagrined to find I had missed, for there was no trace of the Indian and no blood marks.

This sudden attack sent us half a mile back from the river. We made a wide circuit and I was still disgruntled at my poor shooting when the Onondaga picked up a poultice of chewed sassafras leaves, such as Indian and white man used for gunshot wounds in an emergency. My spirits rebounded, for we now knew my small ball had scored. We saw nothing of the fellow, however; nor did we believe he could be badly wounded.

We camped early that night above Stewart's Crossing, taking great care to hide our trail. The Onondaga killed a turkey with his ax and this we heated, rather than cooked, over a tiny fire and ate it half-raw.

Still keeping back from the river we crossed Great Swamp Creek the next day and suffered much from tiny black flies that were as voracious as wolves in February. Barely pausing to eat a handful of

parched corn and what was left of the turkey we left the disagreeable area and pushed on to Salt Lick, or Jacobs' Creek.

As Captain Jacobs' town was eight or nine miles back from the mouth of this creek we ventured to swing in close to the Youghiogeny so as to give the place plenty of clearance. Hardy had said the village was abandoned, but savages have a way of being where you least expect them, and Jacobs never had left his town because of fear. We covered thirty miles that day, and were very weary when we made camp and broiled some small game over a sheltered fire.

The journey to Sewickley Creek was uneventful. No Indians, so far as we could observe, had passed up our side of the river. This was not as we had wished, however, for if the scouting-party, which had dogged us while we were under Hardy's protection, should keep to the other side of the Youghiogeny it would necessitate its crossing the river at or near Allaquippa's town. Therefore, we were much relieved, although instantly put on our guard, when we discovered the remains of a recent camp a short distance below the mouth of the Sewickley.

The number of fires, built since the rainstorm, indicated the passing of at least fifty warriors. The trail led north toward Turtle Creek, and as there were no signs of scouts being thrown out on the flanks it was plain the band feared no danger and were avoiding Allaquippa's town, and were making a swift march to Du Quesne.

We followed the trail for two miles, to make sure no scouts were covering the back-track, then cut back to the Sewickley and traveled up-stream as far as Thicketty Run. Changing our course again we made due west so as to approach Allaquippa's town as if coming from Du Quesne. We used a day in these maneuvers, and before camping had the satisfaction of again crossing the war-party's trail, still holding toward Turtle Creek.

It was late afternoon and growing dark in the woods when Round Paw informed me—

"They can hear a gun now." After more walking he announced, "They can hear two whoops now."

But we did not make our camp until he said—

"They can hear one whoop now."

So we halted in hailing distance of the town, or the "Written Rock Village," as our traders called it from the names of English traders scrawled with charcoal on the rocks. Not caring to enter the village until positive none of the scouting-party had swung back to pay it a visit, we turned in for the night.

WE WERE awake in good season but took our time in breaking camp. Round Paw used his bow and arrows to good advantage and we dined excellently on small game. I buried the fire and waited while the Indian scouted to the edge of the woods and reconnoitered the village. After some time he stole back to me and said no French Indians were there, and but very few of the Delawares.

I told him to announce our arrival, and he threw back his head to give a loud halloo, demanded by Indian etiquette so that residents could come from the village and lead the stranger in. I clapped a hand over his mouth and he lowered his head and listened. It was very faint at first, then became more audible—the thudding of swift-flying feet coming down the Du Quesne path. The runner was making no attempt at secrecy. We moved closer to the trail and waited.

Soon the runner came into sight, a tall man with his hair roached like a Huron. He was naked except for his breech-clout and carried no arms. But he did carry that which was of poignant interest to me, a heavy festoon of wampum about his neck.

Round Paw whispered:

"A carrier of belts. He comes unarmed. They say he brings French belts to Allaquippa."

Major Washington's warning that I must intercept any bloody, or war-belts was fresh in my mind, and I loosened my ax. The job was as ticklish as it was distasteful, for we were within shouting distance of the village, and some of the woman sachem's warriors might appear on the scene at any time. To brain an unarmed man, even a Huron, was something I had never been compelled to do, and my stomach grew squeamish.

The Onondaga grunted a disapproval and grasped my arm to withstrain me, for the office of a belt-carrier was almost sacred, and whether his proffer of war-belts was accepted or rejected he was

supposed to have an open road in arriving and departing. I forced myself to think only one thought—the Frenchmen's desire to win over Allaquippa's warriors and turn their hatchets against the colonies.

"He must not take the belts to the village," I whispered.

"To kill a carrier of belts will make your *orenda* weak and sick," muttered Round Paw.

"If coming to us, yes. But he goes to the woman, Allaquippa."

The runner was now close to our position. He ran rapidly and showed no signs of fatigue although I suspected he had kept up the pace since leaving the French fort. It was akin to murder to drop the fellow, but there was much more than my personal feelings at stake. The delivery of bloody belts must be prevented at all costs. I could already make out, in addition to various strings of wampum, one belt of four or six strings, three or four inches wide and some three feet long. Round Paw understood my determination and whispered in my ear:

"Wait. He will pass this bush. Without his belts he will be laughed at. He shall not see us."

He gently pushed me back and moved to the side of the trail and pulled out his ax. I let him have his way, glad to avoid the gruesome duty, but kept my rifle ready to stop the fellow should my red companion make a mess of it. Along came the runner, and when opposite us and within two feet of us, he leaped high and opened his mouth to sound the guest-call. At the same moment the Onondaga slipped into the trail behind him and clipped him with the flat of his ax over the head before he could utter a sound.

The man went down like one dead and before I could offer to give a hand the Onondaga had yanked the wampum free and was pulling me deeper into the forest. The last glimpse I had of the belt-carrier revealed him sprawled out on his face, his head twisted sidewise and his mouth still open.

We retreated from the trail and ran north and crossed it and turned back toward the village. While we halted to learn if the scene had been witnessed by some early hunter, or if the man had regained his senses, we took time to examine the wampum.

The strings consisted of white beads, alternated with red. The belt was a more pretentious affair, being composed of black and red beads with a hatchet worked with white beads in the middle—a French war-belt and handsomely fashioned, and one a neutral tribe would feel honored in having presented even though it could not be accepted.

As no alarm was sounded we advanced to the clearing surrounding the cabins, and the Onondaga hid the wampum at the foot of a basswood-tree. Then lifting his voice he sounded the call and when he finished I shouted in French. After a few minutes two men of middle age slowly came to meet us, and one of them greeted:

"If you are tired from long walking your mats are waiting for you. There is meat in the kettle."

"Our legs were tired but now they feel strong after we have looked on the face of our brother," I answered in the Leni-lenape tongue.

They made no response to this but turned and led the way to the village. I counted twenty cabins made of small trees, low and roofed with bark. Had I been a Frenchman I would have felt discouraged over our reception. The absence of warriors was partly explained by those we saw through cabin doors sleeping off the effects of a debauch.

What was disturbing was the glimpse I caught of a white man, dressed as an Indian and wearing a tiny silver hatchet on a neck-chain. I had met him before, and his presence in the village made it impossible for me to claim a recent departure from Du Quesne. He was earnestly talking to an aged Delaware. The Indian clutched a bottle of brandy in his hand while he listened.

After passing this cabin our conductors halted before an empty hut and informed us it would be our quarters while in the village.

They seemed to be in haste to leave us, but when outside the door, one halted and said—

"Allaquippa, the woman sachem, will ask where you came from."

"Tell her a Frenchman and a Caughnawauga Iroquois have come from a scout to Castleman's River and would rest before going on to Du Quesne."

"The path between Allaquippa's village

and Du Quesne is beaten down very hard by French feet. The Leni-lenape's moccasins slip in traveling over it. Our sachem says the path is old and worn out," he replied.

"I see a French brother is here ahead of us," I said, ignoring his veiled hint that too many Frenchmen were coming to the village to suit Allaquippa.

He sullenly replied:

"He brings much brandy, which is bad. He brings a belt which is very bad."

So our coup on the red carrier of belts had not stopped the war talk of the enemy from reaching the village. However, the Delaware's open disapproval of us spoke well for the loyalty of the woman to the English. Requesting Round Paw to remain near the hut I departed to look up the owner of the silver ax, and by a bold course disarm suspicion.

WHEN I halted in the doorway of his cabin he glanced up with an ugly scowl, then was slightly perplexed for a moment. Before I could annouce myself he was coming forward to greet me, and exclaiming:

"Monsieur Beland, who was at our fort in the Spring! My heart sings to behold you again. I have been in this cursed place two days, trying to get an audience with that old demon Allaquippa. Welcome a thousand times. And let us drink if I can find a bottle these filthy ones have not mouthed."

"Name of joy! I am rejoiced to see Monsieur Falest once more," I genially cried.

We embraced, and he waved me to a keg and requested that I take my ease. His Indian companion rose, still clutching the half-emptied bottle, and staggered outdoors.

"Faugh!" exclaimed Falest. "But what would one have? The English feed them rum. We feed them brandy. They are impartial in their tastes. But for the news. Whence do you come? Whither do you travel?"

"I have been scouting far to the east, *monsieur*, in company with one of our Indians. I am on my way to Du Quesne, and stopped here to see if the Indian woman is holding her red children from picking up our ax."

"*Monsieur*, she is a daughter of the devil. I have waited two days to offer her a belt. She sulks in her cabin and will not see me. Her men are uneasy. Today they are drunk and would take our belts if not for her. She opposes France. She must die."

"Of a certainty, Monsieur Falest. Our minds run as one. But the French must not appear in it, eh? No witchcraft. Remember Half King's death."

"*Pardi!* No. But an accident? Yes. One of her drunken warriors fires a gun. Behold! The old red shrew is dead. We will see. We will have patience for a bit. It must not happen,—the accident—while any Frenchman is in the village. No, no. Now for the news. I am hungry to hear how it goes with Braddock and his army."

"The army is large and will bring much artillery. The road-building goes on but slowly. My red companion, who scouted ahead of me, reports many Virginia riflemen in the woods guarding the road-builders. How do our red children at Du Quesne feel about it?"

"Ah, *le bon Dieu!* How can they feel? They believe the forest from Du Quesne to the Potomac is filling up with red-coated English. We feed them brandy to make them strong of heart, and it strengthens them no more than so much sugar water of the maple. They will not fight, I fear."

"Not fight! Run away without striking a blow?"

"Oh, they may strike a blow near the fort; but they will not come very far to meet the English. Their veins are filled with milk. Since early Winter they have been hearing about the huge army Braddock will bring. Captain Beaujeu, who succeeded Monsieur de Crevecœur as commandant, has great influence over them. What man can do Captain Beaujeu will do. But they have not the great heart.

"Our only hope is to steal the Delawares away from the English and have them annoy the army all along the line of march. If this village and others would lay ambuscades and keep on the skirts of the army and pick off their scouts and sentinels, then the English spirit might weaken. Many of them, we trust, will be sick in body and that will make them sick in soul. If the army can be harrassed from the Little Crossing to the Monongahela by surprize attacks our fort Indians might do

something, at least enough to make the taking of the fort very costly and prevent Braddock from marching against Niagara, or sending aid to the army attacking Crown Point. Monsieur Beland, it grieves me to confide to you that Fort Du Quesne is lost."

"Such talk is madness, *monsieur*." I hotly protested. "It will be time to say that after the fort has been taken."

"Ah, you stout one! Stout of heart. You shame me. We need you at Du Quesne. You echo what Captain Beaujeu has been telling us."

"I shall hasten to Du Quesne to tell Captain Beaujeu what I have learned, *monsieur*."

"Good! I will try again to see the old red woman and offer her our belts. There is another man here, much younger than you, who wishes to get through to Du Quesne. He will travel with me. He is English but has a French heart. Allaquippa makes him welcome, but she will not send a body of her savages to escort him safe to the fort. She fears they might not return to her. Accompany me, if you care, *monsieur*, and witness how my last attempt turns out."

He procured from his blanket-roll a broad belt with eight diamonds—diamond-shaped figures worked in white beads, a decorative effect much used by the French in their belts and on their hatchets, and supposed to be much admired by the red men.

We left the cabin, and what few women and children and aged warriors we met eyed us with curiosity but with no enthusiasm. Falest nervously fingered the tiny silver ax pendant, and looped the belt over his left arm. As we slowly walked through the village I noted his gaze was ever wandering toward the forest on the north of the town.

"*Monsieur* expects some one," I murmured.

"Ah, Monsieur Sharp Eyes! *Sacrê!* But you speak true. The Huron should be here before this. Pardon, *monsieur*, if I appear distrait over the failure of one of our Hurons to arrive with war-belts from the lake tribes. The old red woman may refuse the belt of France—humiliation to confess it—but she will think twice before rejecting a belt sent by Pontiac in behalf of his northern Indians. Of a certainty, yes. If the Huron had arrived last night, as arranged, we would make the old woman much afraid. A big show of belts might shake her out of her cursed partiality to the English."

And after all the Onondaga's ax had done good work in dropping the carrier of belts. I felt much encouraged.

Some children came running toward us from between the huts. They were followed by a dozen sullen-faced Delawares and some women. They halted on beholding us and several of them glanced backward. We knew they must be the advance escort of "Queen" Allaquippa, as we named her after the European style of bestowing terms of royalty on savage leaders.

Then Allaquippa herself appeared, and walking by her side, still dressed as a man and carrying the short rifle of the Frenchman Beauvais, was the Dinwold girl. She gave a start of surprize on beholding me, but I made no sign of recognition, and she held her tongue.

QUEEN Allaquippa was withered of face and sharp of features, and very, very keen of eye. There was displeasure in her countenance as she gazed on us. She halted, and we did likewise, some ten feet apart. Falest produced a long-stemmed pipe and filled it with a mixture of willow bark and tobacco. Lighting this he took a few puffs and handed it to a warrior who gave it to Allaquippa.

The woman sachem hesitated, but her village was small and too close to Du Quesne for any needless flouting of the French. She smoked. The lack of ceremony in receiving him, prefaced by excuses for delaying to see him, angered Falest. He spoke more for the benefit of the spectators than in a hope of winning over the sachem and used, in my estimation, poor diplomacy. He harshly began:

"Brethren the Delawares: Six months ago Onontio sent you a message, asking you to return to your old home on the Allegheny, but while Onontio has waited long and has been heavy of heart you have not come. Now Onontio fears the road has grown rough and your feet have become soft and tender. He sends you these four strings of wampum to clear away the sharp stones and briers."

He advanced and extended four strings of white wampum which Allaquippa received with open reluctance. Her beady

eyes glittered malevolently as she met and held the Frenchman's gaze. Perhaps she was thinking of her old home on the Allegheny, about which Celeron said—

"The place is one of the most beautiful I ever seen on the Beautiful River."

Falest stepped back and continued:

"Brethren, I am here to tell you that your father and my master, the king of the French, is coming to visit you and take you under his care. You must not listen to any evil words that you hear, for he will not hurt you. He has something to say to the English, but you are to sit still on your mats and not mind what your father does to the English, for he will not let them live or tread on the River Ohio.

"But your father and my master can not protect you from the English unless you pick up the chain of friendship which he now holds strongly by one end. Your father and my master can not save you, nor keep the English from taking your lands, and make it safe for you to return to your old homes, unless you pick up the hatchet which he sends to you. Take this hatchet and hold it with a strong hand, edge against the English, and this shall remain your country."

He paused for a moment and stared intently into the set, angry face of the woman and then advanced, holding the war-belt in his two hands. She folded her arms and would not accept it. He hung it over her shoulder. With a twist of her body she dislodged it and it fell to the ground. Then snatching the short rifle from the Dinwold girl she flipped the belt to one side, taking great care not to touch it with her hands. In a deep masculine voice she replied:

"Brother Onontio: I have heard from the English. The Delawares will not accept your war-belt. Your hatchet lies in the dirt where you threw it. The road to the Allegheny was smooth and easy to travel. Then came the French to make it bloody and slippery. I will not take your belt. Give it to some of those warriors. They may take it and pick up your hatchet."

"The old red ——!" grated Falest.

And yet he would leave no chance untried although we both knew the woman sachem was making game of him. Falest recovered the belt and walked to a savage who was befuddled with brandy, but this fellow, although stupid with drink and seemingly deaf and blind to what was going on, jumped back and held his hands behind him once his bleared eyes had discovered the belt the Frenchman was extending.

"Red pigs!" gritted Falest; and he turned on his heel and stalked back to his cabin.

Now I had time to look at the Dinwold girl; she was frowning as if perplexed at my attitude. Allaquippa quickly demanded my attention by coming close and asking:

"What does the white man want here? Does he bring more red belts from the Ohio?

"I came here to eat and rest before going to Du Quesne," I told her.

"You talk our tongue like the French. You have a French heart."

It was necessary that all her warriors should believe this even though it meant that my hair would be in a hoop before I could make the fort. I declared my loyalty to France and was the target for many scowling glances. Allaquippa warned:

"Frenchmen do not sleep well in Allaquippa's town. They have bad dreams and dream they are ghosts, that a Delaware ax is sticking in their heads."

Without further speech she walked back to her cabin. The Dinwold girl lingered.

"What do you do here?" I asked. "Why are you not back at Will's Creek?"

"I am English, mister, but I have found the English cruel," she sullenly told me. "Now I will try the French."

"You are the Englishman with the French heart whom Falest spoke about," I said. "You would forget your race and desert to the French because some superstitious fools in Great Cove abused you. Do you think to find the French more kindly?"

"The English are cruel. I will try the French," she doggedly repeated. With a flare of anger she added, "What is it to you where I go, or how I fare, mister?"

"You are a woman and need help."

"God forgive me if He hasn't forgotten me! Yes, I have needed help. Three times you have helped me. If all the English were like you—" She turned from me while she conquered her weakness; then with a little toss of her head and a mirthless laugh she became the wild thing of Der Hexenkopf, and cried: "I am neither English, nor French. I am a daughter of a witch, of a family of witches. I make

ittle children sick. I send sickness to attle and dogs. They nail horseshoes over heir doors to break my wicked spells."

"That's all behind you. You're very young. You can be very happy."

"Mayhap I shall find happiness among he French. If not with them, then among he Indians. I can stay here. The Indian woman knows I am a woman and likes me, I think. She is kind to me. Nothing can harm me here. She speaks a little English and I know no Indian, yet she knows I am in trouble."

"And lead a red life and forget your white blood! It's unthinkable," I hotly protested.

Then I sought to reason with her and urged her to start back to meet the army. Allaquippa would give her an escort of Delawares. But the one wild notion of finding happiness away from the settlements filled her small head, and she replied:

"I will go on even if I die in the woods. I have talked with Mr. Falest. He speaks good English. He knows I am a woman and promised he would tell no one. I believe he's an honest man. He tells me I can go to Canada when the army falls back and find happiness there. I will go with him to Du Quesne."

"I too, know Falest. I believe him to be an honorable man. I will talk with him and tell him not to take you to Du Quesne; that you are young and do not know your own mind," I warned her.

Her thin face became convulsed with anger and her small teeth were exposed in a feline snarl.

"So? Then let us both talk to Mr. Falest. It's mortal strange that you, a scout for Braddock, should be friendly with the Frenchman. Have you told him about the fight at the cabin? Of that other Frenchman you threw on the floor? And what became of that man? Did you kill him? That's a vastly queer way to make a Frenchman like an Englishman."

Her mad words recalled me to my danger. "I will say nothing to Falest. You will hold your tongue about me. I am going to Du Quesne as a Frenchman. If you see me there you will not know me."

She stared at me in silence and the anger vanished from her face. "I shall not know you," she softly assured me. "But if they find out you are English your life——"

"Won't be worth a ninepence," I completed.

"Don't go!' she suddenly pleaded. "They'll find out. They'll hand you over to their Indians. Start back now and meet the army."

I shook my head.

"Will you take me back until we meet the army?" she pleaded.

That could not be, for my duty sent me to Du Quesne.

"I'll gladly send you back under safe escort. Round Paw the Onondaga is with me. He shall be one of the Indians to take you back," I offered.

"But you will not go? Good! I care nothing for the French nor the English. Say no more to me, or I'll tell Falest that you are an English scout."

"Don't take Beauvais' rifle with you. It will be recognized. Give it to Allaquippa," I advised, now convinced that further argument between us was useless.

Without answering she walked among the cabins in the direction Allaquippa had taken.

I STARTED to find Falest and to arrange traveling with him and the girl to the fort, but before I could reach his cabin the Onondaga glided by me, his blanket over his head, and in passing he murmured—

"Follow."

He was making for the woods. I shifted my course and carelessly strolled toward the mouth of the Du Quesne path. He entered the forest between the path and the river. I followed the path deep into the damp growth until I found him waiting for me.

"What shadow now falls upon us?" I impatiently demanded.

He continued leaning against a tree and staring up into the thick branches. Mentally cursing the Indian in him that ever demands a certain amount of deliberation I filled and lighted my pipe and gave it to him. He took only a whiff or two, for the red man prefers his tobacco liberally mixed with willow bark, or gum, or sumac, to the English article which he finds too strong to suit his taste. Returning the pipe he announced:

"They have found the Huron bearer of belts. The Wolf's paw was too heavy. It broke his head."

"The man is dead?"

He considered the question to be a

waste of so many words. After a tantalizing pause he went on:

"It is bad for a Wolf man's *orenda* to kill a bearer of belts. The Frenchman was waiting for him to come with wampum from the lake tribes. They found him while you were opening your bag of talk for the witch-woman. The Frenchman has gone out to look at him where they found him in the path."

"It is better so," I said. "Round Paw's *orenda* wished it so and gave great strength to the flat of the ax. It is better the Huron is a ghost."

If my words gave him any comfort he did not show it. After more staring at the branches over his head he said:

"Another Frenchman is near the village. My white brother has crossed his trail once."

It was maddening to search for truth under a veil of so much circumlocution. I bit my pipe savagely and waited. Finally he added:

"They say the man who breaks bones with his hands was asleep. They say his hands grew very weak."

"Cromit! ——! Beauvais is here?" I spoke in English, but he caught the name.

"Onontio's son has a strong *orenda* protecting him. He will be in the village very soon."

I seized the Onondaga's arm and muttered—

"He must not reach Du Quesne."

My impulsive gesture brought no change in his impassive face, but I fancied his eyes lighted when I pronounced sentence upon Beauvais. More composedly I said—

"I will stay out in the woods while my red brother scouts the village and learns from some of the Delawares what Beauvais plans to do."

"Beauvais will talk with the other Frenchman."

But this inevitable meeting did not worry me much. Falest had met me at Du Quesne as Beland. Cromit's escaped prisoner had never seen me until we fought in the cabin. He knew me only as a provincial. But should Beauvais see me at Du Quesne I would become a plaything for the Ottawas and other fierce children of the north. At all risks the man must be prevented from returning to the fort, or else I must cancel my promise to Major Washington and keep away from the forks of the Ohio.

Round Paw suggested that I follow the path for a mile or two and then hide and wait for him to bring fresh news from the village. He proposed boldly to enter the village and trust to his blanket to conceal his identity from Beauvais. This was a good plan and after exhorting him to be a fox instead of a wolf I started up the trail.

My course led across a bend of the Monongahela and I had not traveled more than a mile before I heard some Indians chanting on my left. They were on, or near, the river-bank and from the disorder of their singing I assumed they were drunk. It is never good to wander into an Indian camp during a drinking bout even if guards have been appointed to see that all weapons have been removed and concealed. I knew the men must be some of Allaquippa's warriors as there had been no signs of French Indians in or around the village, nor would the latter dare to drink themselves helpless in the nieghborhood of a village that held fast to English friendship.

I halted and turned from the path to wait for the Onondaga and found myself facing three Delawares, and a fourth man I took to be a Catawba or a Tuscarora because of his peculiar facial decorations. His face was painted red with a white circle around one eye and a black circle around the other, a characteristic of the Carolina Indians.

All four had been partaking of rum or brandy—I suspected the lattter—and were in an ugly mood.

"What does the Ingelishman do here? Only wolves come here. The Ingelishman must go back to Allaquippa's village. Our young men have had milk and smell blood," spoke up a Delaware.

As there was much going and coming between the village and Du Quesne, despite the woman's efforts to keep her people away from French influence, I did not intend risking a betrayal at the fort by some visiting Delaware. So I corrected the savage by saying:

"I am French. I am a friend of the man who brought the belt with eight wizard marks" (diamonds.)

The four stepped back a bit and exchanged a few words.

Then the hideously painted fellow said to me:

"It is good. There is French milk at the river. A Frenchman should drink some.

You shall go with us and help us sing." He spoke in the tongue of the Leni-lenape, but not as one of the blood.

"You are a Tuscarora," I told him, using the Onondaga dialect.

"Running Deer is one of the Tuscarora who did not go to live in the Long House," he replied. "He lived in Juniata Valley until driven out by white men. Now he lives with his grandfathers, the Leni-lenape. Our French brother shall help us sing at the river."

Whereat they separated so that a man walked on each side, one behind and the Tuscarora in front. I was helpless and realized it were better to pretend a willingness to visit the river-camp. Putting on a bold face I walked along with them, making lavish promises in behalf of the French and striving my best to convince them I served under the Lilies.

They made no reply to my running talk. Soon we came to a cleared place near the Monongahela where a dozen savages were crazily drunk although not physically incapacitated. I feared I had overplayed my part, so far as the good of the colonies was concerned, when I saw them dancing about a pipe tied to a tree; for the pipe was decorated with red feathers, which marked it as an Algonquin war-pipe. It was far from my purpose to influence them to become allies of France. I had assumed that the woman Allaquippa would hold them to the English cause.

Our arrival halted the dancing and the befuddled savages crowded around me with much mad howling and hooting. Mounted on a log near a fire was a small keg that originally had held seven gallons of brandy, probably a gift from, or stolen from, Falest. Running Deer hoarsely requested the frenzied creatures to stand back. After they reluctantly had retired a few paces he explained how I, a son of Onontio, had brought a bag of war-talk and had promised to give them a place to live on land they always had owned. Howls and screams greeted this piece of grim irony. The Tuscarora further said I was very anxious to witness how the Leni-lenape and the last of the Carolina Tuscaroras made ready for war.

His speech filled me with foreboding, for he said—

"The son of Onontio may dance for us."

Had he said I might dance "with" them I should have believed that a certain amount of ungainly capering around the war-post and pipe would satisfy them. However, a bold appearance is ever the best and I lazily told Running Deer:

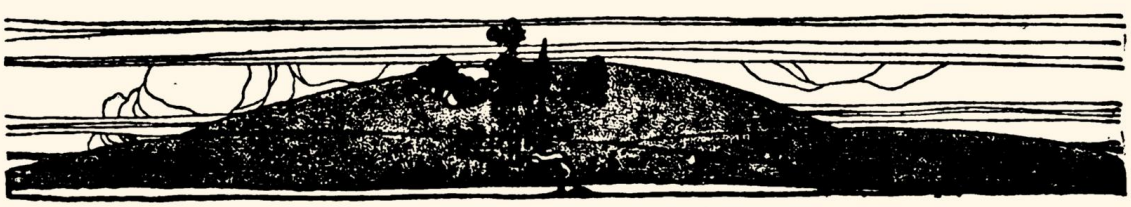
"The road from Du Quesne has made my legs two old men. I will rest and watch my red brothers make their war-medicine."

He grinned like a demon and mocked:

"The Frenchman's legs and feet are tired and cold. They shall rest and be warmed."

Howls of approval greeted this sinister utterance. With all the nonchalance I could muster I threw myself on the ground and pulled out my pipe and laid aside my rifle while I filled it. I was reaching to pluck a brand from the fire when the Tuscarora leaped on my shoulders and flattened me on my face. In a moment I was covered three deep by the whooping wretches, and before I could give more than a convulsive kick I was turned on my back with my two feet anchored to trees and with a cord around each wrist.

TO BE CONTINUED



# THE DOG WITHOUT A TAIL

by John Beames

*Author of "The Last Match."*

A CRUEL-LOOKING brute, Pridham; lean, silent, unsmiling, with wolfish eyes between puckered lids. I did not like the look of the man from the first, and old McAndrew, the factor, told me stories about him, none of them to his credit. Better for me had I never seen him, for he provided me with memories I would prefer to forget.

The dogs of the North have my profoundest sympathy: theirs is one of the hardest existences of all created things. In the Summer they starve, and in the Winter they are overloaded and overdriven. I do not know that Indians are intentionally cruel to their huskies, but they are callous and quite indifferent to their sufferings. White men are nearly as bad. Not that there are no humane drivers, who love their dogs and are loved by them, but they are few, though more numerous than they were.

So you will see that a man has to be pretty bad to get a name for ill-using his dogs, and Pridham had that name. I could hardly believe some of the stories McAndrew told me, as, for instance, that if a dog played out on Pridham he would deliberately whip the poor brute to death. McAndrew swore that the only thing that kept him from killing all his dogs by slow torture was the fact that he earned his living by them.

After that, naturally, I was not anxious to engage Pridham, but I was in a hurry to get to Lac Voleur, and he was the only man at the post willing to make the trip. So I hired him, determined that he should practice none of his deviltries on his train while he was with me.

He had a fine team, four black huskies, weighing well over a hundred pounds apiece. The biggest of them all was the leader, "the dog without a tail." They were incredibly savage, an unchained devil in each one of them. And how they hated Pridham! But the hatred of the tailless leader was greater than the hatred of the other three combined.

I will not say that I noticed this all at once, but what I did see was that the dog without a tail was the only one who never cringed to his master, and never relaxed his attitude of sullen, brooding defiance.

I saw also that all the dogs had ragged ears, freshly cut, as though they had been fighting. I did not connect it at the moment with McAndrew's significant statement that Pridman's trail could always be followed by the blood upon it.

But as soon as we pulled out, I understood. The man was a whip driver. His speech to the dogs was only an occasional muttered curse, but his whip was never still. He was an artist with it. Every few moments it would lick out like the tongue of a snake, and the tip would coil around the upstanding ears, already raw and bleeding, of one or other of the dogs. Little drops of blood soon began to mark our trail.

The thing sickened me, and I was almost on the point of turning back. I wish to God now that I had. But I really had to get to Lac Voleur. The dogs were heavily loaded

and not traveling very fast, so, to avoid the sight of their sufferings, I walked on ahead. But behind me I could hear the incessant cracking of the whip and the yelps of the dogs.

When we camped at noon I determined to have it out with Pridham.

"You seem to use your whip a good deal," I said.

He gave me his wolfish sidelong glance.

"Got to use a whip on 'em," he muttered in so low a voice I could hardly make him out. "Ain't no other way to drive them dogs. They hates me. If I was to take my eye off of 'em a minute they'd kill me. Look at Murphy there," he pointed at the dog without a tail. "He's just waiting for a chance to kill me—he's always waiting, ever since the time he scrapped me, and I cut his tail off to show him who was boss."

This seemed to be the one subject on which he was willing to talk, for he had not opened his mouth until now. He raised his voice and became almost animated.

"Them dogs is just the same as humans—always looking for a chance to put one over. You can't trust a dog no more'n you can trust a man. I don't trust nobody, I don't; I'm too wise, and I keep the whip handy for the dogs. Look at Murphy, will you? See the devil in his eyes? He's just a-waiting and a-waiting. He'll kill me one of these days likely, but I ain't a-scared of him. I could kill him, but I don't, I just keep him alive to get my fun out of him. He used to snap when I'd hold my hand out to him —so." He waved his hand just in front of the broad, black muzzle, but the dog neither snapped nor cringed.

"See," said Pridham, his thin lips curling back from his discolored teeth in a cruel grin. "He knows better now. But if I was to put my neck that close to him he'd have my throat tore out before you could raise a hand. That's Murphy. He'll kill me some day maybe, but he's going to suffer a lot before that time comes."

Mingled with my disgust at the man I could not help feeling a certain amount of pity. Pridham must have been a little crazy. It is an awful thing for a man to imagine that the whole world is looking for a chance to do him harm, and Pridham's life was passed in brooding over wrongs, real or imaginary.

But my talk seemed to have done some good, for he was not so busy with his whip that afternoon.

But when we camped for the night he gave another exhibition of wanton cruelty. The dogs were all tethered apart as usual, to keep them from fighting, and he was feeding them their daily ration of whitefish—dogs on the trail are fed only once a day.

DELIBERATELY he put the fish down in the snow just out of reach of the hungry brutes. Three of them immediately began to half-strangle themselves in an attempt to get at the food, but the dog without a tail, after seeing that he could not reach it, lay down quietly and as if disdainfully.

Pridham set up a shrill cackle, the first and only time I ever heard him laugh. I got up, feeling hot all over. Three of the dogs were foaming at the mouth, their eyes starting from their heads.

"That's no way for a white man to treat dogs," I said sternly, and kicked the fish within their reach.

The three snatched at theirs quickly enough, but Murphy had his like a flash. He had been lying with his head between his paws, but the instant the fish came within reach he was upon it as swiftly as a snake strikes. Then he favored me with a flash of his big teeth and a snarl of hatred.

Pridham went and sat down in a sulky silence, which he maintained from that time on.

The trail was good as far as Chin River Post, but from there to Lac Voleur there was no trail to speak of. However, the weather was fine, the temperature not much below zero, and the snow not deep, so that we continued to make good time for some days.

Nothing much happened until we reached Lac D'Oiseau in a driving snow-storm. With such a blizzard blowing it was impossible to venture out on the lake, and we made camp among some burned spruce on the shore.

Though Pridham and I had hardly exchanged a word, the tension between us had been steadily growing, and some sort of explosion was inevitable. Beyond beating the dogs savagely for the smallest fault —making me long to take the whip and flay him—he had not indulged his love of torture.

Some time during the night one of the dogs got loose, and of course made at once for the fish in the cariole. Pridham waked before he had time to do much harm, and beat him savagely and tethered him again.

In the morning the snow was as thick as ever, and the wind higher if anything. We had to stay where we were. After breakfast Pridham took up his whip and went over to where the dog lay cowering in the snow.

"I'll learn you," said Pridham, with the most devilish expression on his face. "I'll learn you to steal! I'll cut your heart out," and proceeded to flog the yelping beast.

The dog had been beaten for his fault once already, and this was more than I could stand. I jumped up.

"Cut that out now," I shouted at him.

He seemed not even to hear me. I went to him and caught him by the arm. He shook me off without looking round. His jaws were working and his eyes starting out of his head. The man was mad with the lust of cruelty.

I had to stop him; putting my hands on his shoulders, and my foot behind his heels, I jerked him backwards. He rolled over in the snow and came to his feet again screaming, foam on his lips. He closed with me, his fingers clutching at my throat. Fortunately for me, I was twice his size.

At that, I had extraordinary difficulty in fighting him off. As by this time I did not much care what I did to him, I gave him a vicious smash in the jaw that sent him spinning. He fell right in front of the dogs, and they were on him like tigers. By the time I was able to kick them off and drag him clear he had a dozen slashes in him. Luckily Murphy was unable to get at him, though he flung himself to the end of his tether and went raving-mad with fury until I got his master to his feet. Then he lay down sullenly, baffled.

Pridham hobbled over to the fire and fell down on his blankets.

"See what they done to me, see what they done to me," he kept repeating. He had apparently forgotten his fight with me.

"Well, if you'd treated them right," I could not help saying, "they'd have fought for you instead of against you."

We examined his bites. They were mostly on his legs, and his thick clothing saved him a good deal. I was afraid they might prove poisonous, but he made light of them. He hunched over the fire, muttering to himself at intervals, and giving me venomous glances out of the corner of his eye. And the dog without a tail watched him with unwinking eyes of hate that burned like coals. The snow fell steadily. It was a most miserable day.

ABOUT sundown Pridham rose with a muttered remark about getting the night's wood, though I had cut plenty already, and began to chop down a big dry spruce just behind me. I paid no attention to him until I heard the tree crack sharply, there was a whistling in the air, and the trunk struck the snow within six inches of me with a thud.

I sprang up. Pridham was staring at me with a most peculiar expression on his face.

"What the ——?" I shouted.

"Accident," he muttered. "Got away on me—half-rotten."

I am perhaps a little slow of understanding, and I do not willingly entertain suspicions of any one. It did not occur to me at the moment that he had intended to kill me, though, in the light of later events, I feel sure he did. I gave him a short lecture on carelessness to which he answered not a word, and the matter dropped.

By morning the wind had fallen and the clouds were breaking, so we pulled on. The snow had buried the last sign of a trail, and the sun was veiled most of the time, so that we had to depend principally on our sense of direction in the thirty-mile crossing.

It was falling dusk when we made out the land. The north shore of Lac D'Oiseau is rendered treacherous by springs. Ordinarily these show by the discoloration of the rotten ice above them, but the layer of fresh snow had made everything a uniform white.

"I ain't just sure whether we ought to pull in to this point, or to that one over east," said Pridham, breaking a silence that had endured all day. "Suppose you feel out the ice straight ahead, and I'll try over the other way."

It will never be proven now whether he deliberately sent me into that death trap, but I had not gone a hundred yards before I put my foot through the covering of snow into slush.

I turned at once and raced back the way I had come. And none too soon. When

turned to look, a dark stain was spreading swiftly across the white surface as the water soaked upward from below. Another step and I might have found myself over my head, and it would have been useless to look to Pridham for help.

We neither of us said anything, but my nerves had been shaken, and I began to have an uneasy suspicion of Pridham. We pulled on to the next point and landed without difficulty. There we camped.

I think now that the only thing that prevented Pridham from killing me that night was the fear of his own neck. He would have to explain what had happened to me when he returned to the post. But he evilently made up his mind that night, and his scheme was characteristic of him in its cold-blooded fiendishness.

I was putting on my snow-shoes, intending to go ahead and break trail for the dogs. Pridham was harnessing the dogs. This was something that nobody could do but himself, for the team would tear any stranger to pieces. Pridham himself exercised the greatest care, never taking his eyes off the brutes.

My rifle was lying on the snow beside me. Suddenly Pridham leaped at me, snatched it up, and sprang backward. The snow-shoes kept me from getting quickly to my feet, and when I stood up I found Pridham grinning at me evilly, with the weapon levelled at my heart.

"I'll learn you to hit me!" he snarled. "I'll learn you to bully-rag me! I ain't going to have you around here no more. You just hike out now, wherever you want to go and leave me be. Go on now."

"Aw, cut that stuff out, Pridham," I answered, with what must have been a sickly grin, "I don't care for that kind of joke."

He gave me another of his cruel grins.

"The joke's on you, that's why you can't see it," he answered.

"But see here," I warned him, "this is murder. You'll get a stretched neck out of this."

He shook his head.

"No, I figured that all out. There ain't going to be any bullet holes in you when I bring your body in to the post. You got separated from me in the blizzard, that's what happened, and wandered around until you froze to death."

"Do you suppose anybody'll believe that yarn?" I asked.

"They might, or they mightn't, but they'd have a hard time to prove any different," he replied.

It was perfectly true. We were at least two hundred miles from any human habitation that I knew of, and an unarmed man, without food, or blankets, could not hope to live many days in that temperature. I looked at Pridham's face for any sign of softening, but all I could see was hatred and diabolical enjoyment. The more fully my misery was reflected in my face the greater his pleasure.

I measured the distance between us with my eye. I knew he would not fire at me if he could help it. Perhaps I could spring upon him and wrench the rifle out of his hand.

He read my thought.

"Don't you try it," he said. "I'll shoot quick enough if I have to."

We stood staring at each other. It came into my mind that if I held my ground, he would have great difficulty in handling the dogs and keeping his eye on me at the same time.

"Better cut this foolishness out, and let's get ahead," I said peremptorily.

"No, by ——," he yelled at me, putting aside his sneer. "You won't do what I tell you, won't you? Well, I'll make you. I'll set the dogs on you. You can stand there and let 'em tear you to pieces if you want." He laid the rifle in the cariole within easy reach, and bent to unharness the dogs.

There was no doubt what the brutes would do to me once they were loose, and I was absolutely unarmed. On the other hand, my snow-shoes gave me a certain advantage over them in the soft, deep snow, and perhaps they would not follow me far. While there was life there was hope, and anything was better than standing there to be torn limb from limb. I ran.

Behind me there rose a sudden, mad chorus of yelps, snarls, howls, and then a ghastly, high-pitched screaming. Then silence. I looked over my shoulder as I ran. The dogs were not following me.

I stopped, uncertain what to do. It seemed probable that the huskies had fallen upon their master as soon as they were loosed. But if I ventured back there would they not fall upon me too?

Yet, as things were, I could not look for anything but a lingering death from cold and hunger. There was nothing for it but to

turn back and chance it. But first I made a wide detour that brought me upwind to the camp, so that the dogs should not scent me.

Well, there is little more to tell. Pridham made his last fight for life with an ax. Two of the dogs lay dead, and another, unhurt, was gorging himself with fish from the cariole.

But Murphy, the dog without a tail, crouched in the snow, the blood welling from a mortal wound in his back and worried and worried at something between his paws.

# HANK MONK'S LITTLE JEST

## *by* John L. Considine

OF ALL the men who drove over the famous Placerville route to Virginia City, Hank Monk is best remembered. He first broke into the limelight when he took Horace Greeley over the Sierra. Greeley, due for a speech at Placerville at an early hour in the evning, once or twice expressed a fear that he should be behind time. Monk, then on a long up-grade, said nothing. But as soon as he crossed the summit he "threw the silk" into his team.

Greeley, bouncing around in the coach like a bean in a gourd, was greatly alarmed. Out he popped his head to remonstrate, but Monk only cried:

"Keep your seat, Horace. I'll get you there on time."

But the fearful speed was maintained; and Greeley, nearly distracted, put his head out again, only to be greeted by—

"Keep your seat, Horace."

After a half a dozen repetitions of this, Greeley gave up in despair, and it is chronicled that the editorial dome of thought was profusely beaded with perspiration when Hank landed his distinguished passenger in Placerville—on time.

By and by Hank met with a serious accident, and the manager of the stage route invited him to resign. Brokenhearted, he applied for a job on Doc Benton's line, running from Carson to Glenbrook, Lake Tahoe, a distance of fourteen miles. But, no matter how depressed, he never forgot to joke whenever the opportunity offered.

In those days travelers often carried their belongings in what was sarcastically called by the stage-drivers a Saratoga bandbox—a huge trunk about the size of a small bungalow. Monk, like all the other stage-drivers, hated the sight of them.

A woman tourist, stopping at the Glenbrook House, had a Saratoga which she had managed to get to Carson by rail and was there forced to leave it. Monk had repeatedly promised to bring it up "next trip"; but it failed to appear. As he drove up in front of the hotel one evening the woman appeared on the veranda as usual to ask if he had brought her trunk.

"No, ma'am," was the answer; "but I think some of it will be up on the next stage."

"Some of it!" exclaimed the woman.

"Maybe half of it, or such a matter."

"Half of it?" she shrieked.

"Yes, ma'am, half tomorrow and the rest of it next day or the day after."

"Why, how in the name of common sense can they bring half of it?"

"Why, when I left they were sawing it in two, and——"

"Sawing it in two? Sawing *my* trunk in two?"

"That was what I said. Two men had a crosscut saw and were working down through it—had got down about to the middle, I think."

"Sawing my trunk in two in the middle!" groaned the woman. "Sawing it in two with all my best clothes in it! Heaven help the man that saws *my* trunk! Heaven help him, I say!"

And in a flood of tears and a towering passion, she rushed indoors, threatening the hotel-keeper, the stage-line, and the State of Nevada with suits for damages. It was in vain that she was assured that there was no truth in the story—that Monk was a great joker; she would not believe that her trunk had not been cut in two until it arrived intact. And even then, so deeply had the story of the sawing impressed itself on her mind, she insisted on examining its contents most thoroughly.

# THE LOST BLUE BUCKET

## A Complete Novelette

by

## George Bruce Marquis

MAUTONIC, Oregon, had all the drab characteristics of the ordinary frontier town; more saloons than dance-halls, more dance-halls than stores, more stores than places of worship. It lay cuddled in the bent elbow of the Pannikan River just before that impetuous stream straightened out for its last wild plunge to join the Durland River.

From its back-door, pine-covered foothills sloped away in long sweeping undulations, to merge at length with the Calico Mountains. Nearer at hand, and across the Pannikan, lay a million acres of pasture land for whose possession cattlemen and sheepmen waged constant warfare.

Mautonic's solitary street was but a chopped-off section of the old emigrant road along which in the early days had swept the thousands of prairie schooners on their way to Oregon and California. Just now the lone street was deserted, for the denizens of Mautonic displayed their activities chiefly in the evenings.

Presently around a bend in the road appeared two diminutive burros, and in their wake shambled their master, old Bud Wiley, a character known for many a mile around.

He was old, and tall and thin, his face covered with kinkly gray whiskers which grew sheer up to a pair of steel blue eyes, set so close together that they seemed literally to perch astride the bridge of his great hawk-like nose.

Mining was his passion, and in his gaunt frame it raged like an unquenchable fever. No strike was too distant, no vague rumor too filmy but that Wiley would be on the way as soon as the first faint whisperings reached his credulous ears.

Now he trudged unnoticed the length of the dusty street, and finding with satisfaction that his old camping place on the banks of the Pannikan was untenanted, unloaded the burros and took possession.

"Now Judy, you and Punch roam around a spell," he admonished the burros, "while old Bud rustles a drink."

Mautonic's one hotel, The Grizzly House, maintained a barroom as an indispensable adjunct, and toward this Wiley now bent his hurried steps. He made commendable speed for an old man, and drew up in record time before the open street door. No one chanced to be inside save the bartender, a big cheery-voiced man, one Donald Mitchell, generally known as "Mitch." He glanced up just as Wiley's elongated body was framed in the doorway.

"Hello Bud!" he greeted the prodigal in tones calculated to shake the glass from the window frames. "Ain't seen you in a coon's age. Where've you been?"

"I refuse to elucidate that p'int till I gits a drink," Wiley replied firmly. "Alkali dust allus did cut my throat up fierce. Trot out the snake medicine."

"Yeh, alkali dust's sure fierce back in the Calicos," Mitchell chuckled good-naturedly at the old man's feeble attempt to account for his perennial thirst. "Still any

alibi's good after a drought. Here she is Bud. Drink hearty and give the house a good name."

"I ain't a-drinkin' much this trip," the old man declared earnestly at the end of his third bout with the bottle.

Now he leaned nearer, two hectic spots beginning to glow on his hollow cheeks, mute witness to the potency of the whisky straight.

"Mitch," said he tremulously, "believe it or not, but I finds——"

To his amazement, the barkeeper interrupted his tale.

"You says," Mitchell cut in reprovingly, "that you finds that a Winchester beats a Henry rifle? I'm sure scandalized at you Bud. When a man, who's packed a Henry rifle for a hundred years more or less, same as you've done, goes back in his dotage on that said weapon, he sure oughta have a gardeen appointed."

Wiley caught the note of warning and promptly adjusted himself to it.

"A Henry carries straighter," he admitted. "But a Winchester totes more ca'tridges in its magazine."

Then, with elaborate carelessness, he glanced about to discover if he might the reason for Mitchell's interruption, and as speedily found it in the person of a man who, unnoticed by Wiley, had followed him into the barroom and now sat at a table in the corner. He was an utter stranger to Wiley, a tall thin man with lean jaw and cold gray eyes. To all appearances he was giving no attention to the two men at the bar.

Wiley observed him narrowly for a moment, then returned nonchalantly to their recent subject of conversation.

"I'm located at my old stampin' ground down by the river," he informed Mitchell. "When you're off shift suppose you trot down with your Henry rifle and we'll argue the relative merits of them said guns."

"Be lookin' for me in about an hour," the barkeeper grinned amiably. "Only don't drink too much of that coffin varnish, Bud. I sure want this contest to be unhampered."

When Wiley shuffled out, the stranger got up and sauntered over to the bar.

"Who's the old settler?" he inquired.

"A harmless old lunitic whose been around here since Heck was a pup," Mitchell answered carelessly.

"What was the argument about?" the other persisted.

"About the relative merits of Winchester and Henry rifles," the barkeeper answered promptly. "You see for years he toted a Henry, but lately the old nimny has took up with the Winchester."

"Seemed to me," the stranger insisted, "that he said something about what he'd *found*."

"Jest what I was goin' to inform you," Mitchell fabricated with voluble ease. "You see *he* thinks he's found out the superior merits of the aforesaid Winchester——"

The other fixed the barkeeper with a frosty glance.

"His name's Wiley, I hears," he remarked sententiously.

"You hears correct," Mitchell nodded with equal brevity.

"Old Bud Wiley?"

"True for yours."

"I've heard of him," the other mused, "and if my hearin' ain't gone clean to the bad I'm informed his self-appinted job is the findin' of the Blue Bucket Mine."

"It ain't a penance inflicted onto Old Bud alone should that be the fact," Mitchell replied. "Every feller from here to Pocatello has tried it at one time or another."

"Anybody ever found it?"

"Well she sure ain't registered at the land office."

The eyes of the questioner narrowed.

"Suppose Wiley *has?*" he asked incisively.

"If he has," Old Mitch retorted coldly, "my bet is that he won't announce it from the house-tops."

The other pondered this reply for a moment, then set the ball of conversation rolling in another alley.

"My name's Suggett," he announced calmly.

"I've heard of you, Mr. Suggett," Mitchell admitted. "You hangs around the U & I dance-hall I understand."

"Pete Cogan's my friend," Suggett continued gently, "the same bein' sufficient guarantee for me. Now you say you've heard of me. Here's something else to refresh your memory then. I'm the man who had the little shootin' match with Hank Green."

"I'll admit you're a good man with a gun, Mr. Suggett. You sure had to be to git the best of Hank Green."

"Which brings us back the original p'int in our conversation," Suggett asserted

calmly. "I'll also suggest," he added evenly, "that you consider your answer careful before you make it. I'm a quiet man, except when I runs into a stubborn man when I'm out after information."

"I'm waiting'," Mitchell informed him icily.

"*Do you think Old Wiley has found the Blue Bucket Mine?*" Every word was rapped out separately like the sting of hail on a frosted glass.

"Say, what's that dog up to?" Mitch growled suddenly.

The distraction was for a moment only, but it was enough, for when Suggett turned again to the barkeeper he found him, flaming-eyed, gripping in his hands a double-barreled, sawed-off shot gun, both hammers cocked suggestively.

"If you perpose to push that question to an answer," Mitch snarled venomously, "hop to it."

Suggett eyed with the sweet calm of babyhood the terrible weapon which held its unvarying direction toward his abdomen.

"Put away the stove-pipe," he advised the other dryly.

"When your back shows up at that front door on your way out," Mitchell retorted. "And now I'm goin' to give *you* a plain word of advice. You downs Green, the same bein' a praiseworthy deed, him bein' a bad man and a killer himself. But this camp ain't so wild as she usta be, and if you kills some peaceable citizen, the boys calkalate to string you up. They've got your number, so to speak, and if I was you, I'd let the other feller do the drawin' before I added any more notches to the handle of my old six-gun."

"That's plain speakin'," Suggett smiled, "and I sees the p'int to it. Also to that misbegotten howitzer which you're caressin'. I'll ponder them words."

He turned his back on Mitch and without once glancing around, walked carelessly out into the street.

SUGGETT'S allusion to the Blue Bucket mine requires a word of explanation. Twenty years before, a band of emigrants through the treachery of an Indian guide became lost in the Calico mountains and for a dozen days floundered about in its maze of defiles and cañons. On one of the days they rested, and while the men busied themselves repairing the wagons and ox-yokes and the women did some sadly needed washing, the children scattered out to play.

Among them were two little girls named Hufby who, taking a small blue lard pail, set out to gather service-berries. However, they returned that night with the little bucket filled to the brim with pebbles, which they hoisted into their father's wagon and promptly forgot.

The train moved on, some days later striking the emigrant trail near the present sight of Mautonic. Next day they were attacked by the Indians who harried them for miles but were in the end beaten off. The emigrants were nearing the California line when one day Hufby by chance picked up the little bucket of pebbles and found it surprisingly heavy. A brief examination afforded ample explanation, for the pail had been filled with water-washed gold nuggets of staggering richness.

From that day on men had searched the Calicos for the fabulous mine, but always without results, so that in time it had been consigned to the category of the irretrievably lost. And Suggett had asked Mitchell with superb directness if Wiley had not rediscovered the long-sought Blue Bucket!

AN HOUR or so following his strenuous interview with Suggett, Mitchell appeared at Wiley's camp. That worthy was stretched out comfortably in the shade of a low, spreading juniper, and he waved the genial barkeeper to a seat on a roll of blankets.

"What's your idee, Bud," his visitor demanded severely, "of blabbin' in a public place?"

"It was a trick short even of mule intelligence," Wiley admitted frankly, "but you chopped off my little speech at the first joint. Sure clever of you Mitch! That Winchester and Henry rifle argument was quick thinkin'."

"But it didn't do no good," Mitchell said ominously, and he detailed the conversation just concluded with the decidedly inquisitive Bill Suggett.

Wiley's face fell at the vivid recital.

"What do you know about him Mitch?" he asked anxiously. "Where'd he come from?"

"Information as to his past career is minus," Mitchell replied. "He landed here about four weeks ago in company with a

half-breed Injun named Felix La Motte. He hangs around the U & I dance halls mostly, and Pete Cogan and all that gang jest tody to him ever since he made a sieve outen Hank Green. Fink Jackson and Jim Hake air his particular cronies, which oughta enlighten you as to his general tastes."

"That statement *is* some enlightener," old Bud said bitterly, "because the last time I was here I mooched round with that Hake some and bein' comfortably drunk——"

"You informed Hake you was out gunnin' for the Blue Bucket, eh?"

"I expect I did," Wiley admitted grudgingly.

"That explains Suggett's interest when you comes gallopin' in to tell the world what you finds out in the Calicos," Mitchell snorted.

"It was a bad break," Wiley nodded, "but I had somethin' to tell."

"Meanin'?" the other asked quickly.

Old Bud Wiley glanced about warily before he answered the pointed interrogatory.

"Mitch," he declared solemnly, "I'd 'a' found that mine in two shakes of a dead lamb's tail if I hadn't run out of grub. I'll tell you why I say that."

"Go to it. I'll admit I'm interested."

"If you ain't now, you will be before I'm done. Now, Mitch," he continued, "the whole secret depends on the fact that up to this time everybody's been follerin' a dead scent."

"How's that?" Mitchell inquired.

"Simply this. The idee's allus been, as you know, that the emigrants follered the Durland River, when as a matter of fact they was on the *Pannikan*. Wait a minute and I'll show you how I figger that out. Now if you'll remember, them emigrants all said they *crossed* the river that they afterwards follered, away back in the Calicos."

Mitchell agreed to this.

Wiley looked at his companion quizzically a moment before he asked:

"Mitch, did you ever scout along the Durland River to see where they coulda crossed it?"

The barkeeper indicated that he had not.

"Well I have," Wiley continued, "and it can't be did. Now I've had a nudge for a good while that it was the Pannikan, and this about convinced me for if they *did* cross a river, and they couldn't a crossed the Durland, they jest naturally was on the Pannikan."

"That looks sense," Mitchell agreed thoughtfully.

"It is sense," Wiley corrected him. "Now, when I reached that p'int I begun investigatin' the Pannikan and about a couple of weeks ago I found where they did actually cross that said river."

"Find any wagon tracks?" Mitchell grinned.

"You needn't get ribald," the other answered. "I say they crossed *there* because it's the only place in fifty miles that it could be did. More than that Mitch, I hadn't gone along many miles from there till I finds positive proof that I am right."

"What did you find?"

"An old wagon wheel, or what's left of it, bein' mostly rotten splinters now except the steel tire."

"Bud," Mitchell exclaimed, "you're sure on the right trail, because there's never been any wagons but their's back there in the Calicos."

"Of course I'm right," Wiley nodded triumphantly, "and if I hadn't run out of grub I'll bet I'd a been playin' with nuggets bigger than your fist by this time. Still," he added, "I'm glad I run out."

"Why?"

"Because, Mitch, I want you to be in on it with me. You've grub-staked me for years, and stood by me when everybody said I was crazy and so forth. You're jest naturally goin' back with me, and when we finds that said mine we'll stake it out in the name of Mitch and Bud."

"That wouldn't be fair to you Bud," Mitchell protested. "You've stood all the hardships for years——"

"Smother it, Mitch," the other chuckled. "You're due to hit the trail with me. Let's plan when and how."

"Still it ain't fair to you, Bud," the other argued.

"Forget it," Wiley again advised him. "Why shucks, Mitch, if it's half as rich as the nuggets them kids picked up, you and me will be on velvet the rest of our days. The main p'int is, when can you git away?"

"Any time," Mitchell replied. "Andy Griggs will be glad to step into my shoes the minute I say so."

"Well then, let's make it tomorrow."

"Tomorrow night, you mean," Mitchell

corrected him. "I misdoubt if we have any snap gittin' off unobserved."

"Think that Suggett will be watchin' for us?"

"My guess is he will, so we'll simply hafta make it a fadaway. Now," Mitchell continued, "I know that Soapy Smith's got two good saddle hosses, likewise two pack mares which we can git cheap. And Soapy knows how to keep his mouth shut. We'll leak out of here in the night, outfit at Pannikan City and be on our way."

"It listens good to me."

"Alrighty," said Mitchell as he made premonitory signals of rising. Then something else occurred to him.

"Bud," he said earnestly, "there's only one thing that could spoil our plan."

"What's that?" the other inquired quickly.

"For you to tank up and talk," Mitchell told him bluntly. "You know your failin'. Somebody like as not, will try to git you drunk tonight and pump you dry."

"I'll drink only with friends," Wiley qualified his promise, "and limit my drinks. I know my capacity to a thimblefull."

"But when you gits lit up," Mitchell said dryly, "that said thimbleful says jugful. Anyway you've gotta stick around the Grizzly House. I kin keep a watchful eye on you then."

"Sort of wet nurse, eh?" Wiley chuckled "Well, I'll do it, Mitch."

Wiley spent the remainder of the day securing a needed rest, and laying in a supply of provisions, but evening found him early one of the crowd which pretty well filled the Grizzly House barroom.

Mitch, from his position behind the bar was able to keep an eye on the old man, and he noticed with satisfaction that Wiley was sparing with his drinks. Barring a mishap all would go well.

"Hello, Bud!" a voice greeted the old prospector. "Hear you're going to give up minin' and raise skunks for their fur. How comes it?"

Old Bud surveyed the questioner a moment before he answered.

"If I do, Jim Hake, you'll be the first one I'll chase into the kennel."

"Why you old reprobate!" Hake chuckled. "Your tongue's sure sharpened up since I seen you last. That's a good joke. Let's have a drink on the strength of it."

"I'm off the liquids," Wiley informed him regretfully.

"Must 'a' been in the last ten minutes," Hake replied. "I saw you hoist in a couple of drinks no longer ago than that."

"I made a bet with a friend," Wiley lied easily, "that I'd only take ten drinks in ten days. Them two that you just saw me absorb finished the quota."

"Seems to me," Hake opined, "that I'd a spread 'em out over a little more time. Sluicin' your system with too frequent drinks is calculated to upset the general run of innards. Besides, it grieves me to have you refuse to drink with me."

"I'd lose a fifty-dollar slug if I did," Wiley affirmed. "When I wins that bet I'll sure take a drink with you."

"Well if you won't drink," Hake persisted, "let's take a stroll up to the U & I hall. There's a draw-poker game on with the sky the limit."

"I'm afraid the blankets 'll be my limit tonight," Wiley told him. "I've trudged about considerable in the last few days, and I hear my old bed a callin'. Sorry to disoblige you, Jim. See you later."

As Wiley reached the bar Mitch came out from behind it.

"What was the palaver about?" he asked in guarded tones.

"Come outside and I'll tell you," Wiley answered.

When beyond the range of curious ears, Wiley gave a succinct recital of the encounter with Hake.

"A plain frame-up," Mitchell growled.

"Sure," Wiley agreed. "I seed it from the first, but anyhow she didn't work."

"Not this time," the other said thoughtfully. "But they're sure on your trail, Bud. Question is, what's their next move?"

"I don't know what it'll be," Wiley replied. "But if they make another right away it's goin' to be at my camp."

"And that's a good idee," his companion said approvingly. "If they want trouble, let 'em hunt it."

"That's my tumtum," the other nodded. "Want to come down with me?"

"Guess not, Bud," Mitchell answered. "Think I'll hit the flax myself. Howsomever, I'll drop around in the morning and take breakfast with you."

Wiley plodded on down to his camp and after raking up the fire sat down to think, but finding it unprofitable presently went to bed.

It was well toward morning, when he was

aroused by the sound of voices. He was lying on his side facing the east, and the first thing that caught his eye was the sight of four men, one with a lantern, grouped just beyond the burned-out embers of his campfire.

They were discussing something in low tones, and in the uncertain light Wiley could discover nothing which identified them. Besides he soon discovered that they were masked. Before going to sleep Wiley had laid his belt and guns within easy reach and now, keeping a wary eye on the quartet, he cautiously felt for his weapons to find to his dismay, that they had been removed beyond the reach of his inquisitive fingers.

The intruders quickly came to a decision.

"Rip," one ordered, "you squat down by the old-timer and keep a watchful eye on him. Monkey shines from him don't go, remember."

The one addressed as "Rip" promptly obeyed, and through his half-closed eyelids, Wiley saw that he held a very business-like looking gun in a big fist.

The old man decided to lie still.

The other three began to overhaul his dunnage in a thorough and painstaking manner, and for a while Wiley was puzzled as to the reason for the search.

A chance word soon explained it.

"Map's not here," one of the men growled.

"You bet he's got one," a second declared emphatically. "Like as not it's on him 'stead of in his baggage."

"We'll see," the first said briefly.

With this remark the three joined the guard, and the one with the lantern flashed it fair in old Bud's face.

"Drunk!" sniffed one. "Bein' off liquor as long as he was don't give his innards any chance against Mautonic whiskey. Well, look him over."

Without wasting more words they proceeded to ransack his clothes and blankets, even drawing off his socks, which Wiley rarely parted with save on the notable occasion of putting on a new pair. Insult was added to injury by leaving his denuded feet exposed to the chill morning air.

"I told you he wouldn't have no map," the searcher said disgustedly. "What would he want one for? Think he can't remember where he's been? Guess again. The way to do is to wake the old codger up and make him talk at the business end of a gun."

"He won't do it," a companion declared with conviction.

"I know a way to make him mellow," a third spoke up brutally. "Stir up that fire and let's hold his feet to the blaze. In about a minute he'll be leakin' information."

"It won't do," another, and apparently the leader of the gang objected. "If we try that, we'll be obliged afterward to knock him on the head and chuck him into the Pannikan."

"What of it?" a man standing at his right cut in.

"Nothin', only suppose the information didn't track with the facts in the case? Now I've got a better scheme than that."

And drawing the three a little aside and lowering his voice a few sentences he made his meaning clear.

"Guess that's right," the one who had proposed the fire test agreed regretfully. "Still I'da liked to a tried the effigy of heat applied to the old fossil's toes."

When the four had gone, Wiley quickly repossessed himself of his two revolvers, but he did not close his eyes in sleep again.

Soon after the sunup Mitchell appeared, nor did he seem greatly surprized at Wiley's epigrammatic recital of his experience with the four.

"I figger that callin' each other Rip and so forth was a bluff for my benefit," Wiley added, "in case I was awake."

"Sure," Mitchell agreed.

"I ain't forgettin' either," Wiley averred, "that the leader said he had another plan that beat warmin' up my soles."

"I'll bet he has too," Mitchell nodded.

"Well I ain't goin' to ford the river till I git to it," Wiley declared philosophically, "which naturally leads up to the question of breakfast."

"I'm sure in on that," the other said with enthusiasm. "I've gotta git used to your cookin' anyway and here's a good chance to start."

Most of that day Wiley spent quietly about his camp getting things in shape for a quick exit that night. When he went uptown after supper he found nothing out of the ordinary, and even Suggett passed with him the time of day.

The two met at Mitchell's cabin about twelve o'clock that night.

"It's too easy, Bud," Mitchell said thoughtfully.

"Sure enough," the other agreed. "Still

we've gotta chance it. Where's the horses?"

"Tied jest back of the cabin."

"Smith likely to chatter?" Wiley asked anxiously.

"Tain't likely he will, tonight at any rate," Mitchell responded. "Fact is old Soapy's drunk as a b'iled owl right now and besides he's stowed away in the cabin here for safe keepin'. Let's be goin."

He directed their steps to a clump of pines back of the cabin where four horses were concealed, and taking two himself, he placed the lead ropes of the other two in Wiley's hands.

In silence they made their way to Wiley's camp, where they quickly loaded his camp equipment on the pack horses, and by the last rays of a moon a little past the quarter, which was just then swinging out of sight in the West, set out.

THE route taken at first was circuitous, designed to deceive a possible spy, but at the end of an hour they struck the road running from Mautonic to Pannikan City, and with each leading a pack horse, they at once quickened their pace.

Sunup found them at the little frontier town. They stopped only long enough to get breakfast and finish outfitting, and after casually letting fall the information that they were bound for a trip through the Rattlesnake Mountains, left in that direction.

However, as soon as they were well out of town they swung sharply to the left and traveling on the arc of a great circle, passed twenty miles to the south of Mautonic. Not long after this they camped for the night.

The next day was but a replica of the first, but the end found them far back in the Calico Mountains, and only a few miles from the famous Churning Water Springs. Purposely they had avoided the traveled routes and had seen no one save a couple of squaws on their annual hunt for huckleberries.

The third day they plunged headlong into a perfect maze of ravines, forded unnamed creeks, and scrambled up the sides of rocky cañons, all familiar ground however to Old Bud, who had traveled this part of the Calicos for a dozen years and knew their secrets better than even the Indians.

Toward evening they reached a heavily wooded plateau, broken off to the north, by a great cleft running east and west. Wiley pointed it out, as they clambered wearily out of their saddles.

"That's the Pannikan," he informed his travel-stained companion.

"I'm sure glad to meet it," Mitchell averred thankfully. "Providin' you're correct."

"You bet she's the Pannikan!"

"How much further do we go then?" Mitchell queried.

"Another day'll bring us to the jumpin'-off place."

"That is, providin' we ain't been followered," Mitchell interposed.

"Shucks, Mitch," the other laughed. "You're as nervous as an old woman. Them fellers would 'a' had to been mind readers to trail us these last three days. Anyway we ain't see hide nor hair of that gang, which reminds me of the fact that I'm hungry as a starved wolf-pup. Let's have supper."

"Them suggestions sure get a second from me," Mitchell declared with alacrity. "My belt wouldn't make a respectable hatband right now."

When they had feasted to repletion, they sought the added solace contained in a pair of ancient but trustworthy pipes.

They were in the saddle early the next morning, and by eight o'clock had reached the river.

Mitchell sat his horse and looked at it with kindling interest.

"Been here before Bud?" he asked presently.

"Only once and that about a year ago," Wiley answered, "so I don't savvy this particular stretch much. But I do know them emigrants never kept to the river this far, the reason bein' that they couldn't 'a' done it on account of some ravines that cut square down to the river above here. That says that the mine's up the river. Consequently we moves up."

The Pannikan here was a good fifty yards of tumbling green water, its surface flecked with spume thrown up from the tips of boulders that blocked its turbulent progress. Its course lay at the bottom of a V-shaped ravine, with sides towering up at unbelievable angles.

Skirting their side of the river ran a narrow benchlike platform, never more than twenty yards wide, often narrowing to a

scant half-dozen, and along this bridge-like causeway the two men elected to travel.

Gradually the pathway drew away from the river, till by noon they found themselves skirting that treacherous stream a good hundred yards from its edge, on the very lip of a sheer rock wall. Above them rose a basalt cliff, so steep that it seemed literally to lean toward the river. Then the pathway widened out suddenly into a level grassy platform, nearly circular as to shape, with a diameter of perhaps a hundred yards. Trees grew here, and a little spring bubbled up invitingly.

Mitchell heaved a huge sigh of relief.

"I never trained for a tight-rope walker," he declared, "and I don't like it."

"The last mile would 'a' sure made a circus performer hold his breath," Wiley agreed with emphasis. "But anyway its brought us to a nice place for dinner."

"Yeh, and a nice place to turn around and beat it back over the same way we come in," Mitchell said grimly. "Look yonder, Bud," and he pointed at the further side of the oval plateau.

Wiley obeyed the injunction and his jaw sagged at the sight.

A wall of rock and tangled débris lay straight across their pathway, a mighty gate, effectually barring further progress up the river.

"That slide's come down since I was here," Wiley said mechanically. "Looks like we was stuck for fair."

"I'd tell a man we was," his companion nodded. "Nothin' but a bird can git over that wall."

"Anyway," Wiley said philosophically after a pause, "we've got a nice place to feed our faces in. Also the horses. Let's git busy."

"A nice place maybe," Mitchell grunted. "She looks more like a trap to yours truly. I suggests we don't lose many minutes floatin' back out of here."

"There's two or three prongs to that said remark," the other opined. "The first bein' I'm hungry, consequently I nominates grub as my first candidate. Others to be considered later."

Mitchell agreed to this, and while he staked out the horses Wiley gathered a quantity of dry thorn for fuel, and started a fire. Thorn burns with an intense heat, without smoke, but at the same time gives out a rather pungent odor.

"Smells like you was brandin' calves," Mitchell chuckled as he gingerly tested the tainted air. "Anybody who gits a sniffer full of that won't be long guessin' what it is."

"She don't smoke," Wiley returned, "nor for that matter smell up the grub none."

He turned to inspect the coffee pot just then threatening to boil over, when a sound of some sort coming from down the river caught his acute ear.

"Watch the coffee," he bade his companion briefly.

Picking up his Winchester he ran back a dozen yards to where the trail bent sharply around a shoulder of rock to widen out into the tiny plateau. Here he crouched down and waited.

Presently there came to his straining ears a medley of sounds, jostled suddenly into articulate speech, borne down in its turn by Suggett's commanding voice.

"I tell you I smell smoke."

"Yeh," some one taunted him. "You said it before. Why don't you sing it for a change?"

"If you open that mug of yours again, Fink Jackson," the other snarled, "I'll twist your turkey neck till you can spit into your hip pocket without botherin' to turn your head."

Jackson seemed indisposed to cast further aspersions on Suggett's olfactory equipment and after a moment the latter repeated.

"I smell smoke." Then, lowering his voice, he added a few words in tones which try as he would, Wiley was unable to quite catch.

A sound at his side attracted him, and turning he found that it was Mitchell, rifle in hand.

"What have you treed?" he asked in a half whisper.

"Suggett and his gang," Wiley grunted.

"Who do you mean by gang?" Mitchell asked, for no one was in sight at that particular minute.

"Why it's Suggett, and LaMotte, with Jim Hake and Fink Jackson. I figger we're due to mix it with 'em in about a minute."

"Not if we can help it," Mitchell objected. "Even if we stood 'em off, Bud, we're in the bottom of a demijohn which them gents hold the cork to at this present writin'. If they start a shindy, we'll go the limit of

course, but I'd a lot rather have a rumpus sommers else. My judgment is we'd better see their ante before we raise it."

"Their intentions ain't honorable," Wiley argued. "On the contrary. But I conceeds the p'int to you, Mitch. Let's eat dinner!"

Dinner on inspection proved to be a wreck, and while they were getting out a second supply, Suggett and his companions arrived.

As they rounded the bend, Wiley laid down the bacon he was slicing and picked up his Winchester, an action which Mitchell promptly seconded.

And yet the entry on the scene of the other four men was peaceful enough. With a cheerful "Hello" from Suggett and a friendly wave of the hand on the part of La Motte, they filed out on to the little plateau and going into camp forty yards or so away set about getting dinner.

While the two parties were eating Wiley and Mitchell scrutinized the outfit of the others with care. One thing puzzled them considerably, for while they had but three pack animals, still there were eight horses in their outfit. The extra horse was plainly for the saddle, though all his equipment consisted of a rope hackamore.

"I know that horse," Mitchell finally confided to Wiley in guarded tones. "Belongs to Pete Cogan, and he's the best long-distance runner in the country."

"That means that Cogan's in on this," Wiley growled. "Which don't sweeten it none to the taste. But what's the idee of the extra horse I'd likta know?"

Mitchell couldn't enlighten him, but Suggett presently proved more apt in that particular regard. However as a prelude he did a most remarkable thing.

Quite at the edge of the camping ground and a good thirty yards away stood a lone pine tree, dead from the kiss of the lightning, as its torn and shredded bark attested. From its shattered peak stretched out at right angles a gaunt and naked limb not much larger than a man's thumb, and on its splinted end was perched a jaybird, who surveyed the mixed company with grave and thoughtful eye. Suggett noted him, and getting leisurely to his feet, remarked that he would give him a little surprize.

"Don't shoot him Bill," Jackson protested. "It'd give us bad luck."

"Shoot him?" Suggett chucked. "Who said I was? I'm goin' to move his perch. He's too cocky."

"Betcha a ten spot you can't do it," Hake spoke up. "Anyway at the first shot."

"Consider that ten spot mine," Suggett responded promptly.

"Shootin' from a rest don't go, of course," Hake added hastily. "Anybody could do *that*."

"I'd be ashamed to shoot from a rest at as big a mark as that," Suggett snorted in disgust. "Besides I'll do it from a whirl to give you an even chance. Also I'll make it twenty instead of ten if you're game to cover."

"Sure I'm game," Hake agreed as he fished out a double eagle.

Suggett reached into his breeches pocket, tossed over a twenty-dollar gold piece to Jackson, who was acting as stake holder, and then walking out a couple of paces, measured the distance to the limb carefully a moment before he acted.

Came a quick advance of his right shoulder as his hand flashed by his hip, and his long barreled Colt's lay in his hand.

"Some draw that!" Mitchell whispered excitedly. But Wiley breathlessly was watching Suggett as he whirled the gun about his finger till it resembled a ring of burnished steel. And then, without seeming to pause, even much less aim, he leveled it at the mark.

The crash of the gun followed instantly, and the bluejay resting in sophisticated ease suddenly discovered that he was literally sitting on nothing at all. The bullet had torn the limb bodily from the tree and sent it whirling toward the river.

Suggett coolly jacked out the empty shell, replaced it with another, returned the gun to its holster, and nonchalantly reached for the money.

"For gun work that's in a class by itself," Wiley declared in hushed tones, "and all for our benefit too. Wonder what their next move'll be?"

As it happened they were not left long in doubt on this point, for the four men presently strolled over to the other camp and seated themselves comfortably as if they were old-time friends.

Suggett opened the conversation.

"Lucky we run into you men," he said cheerfully.

"Why lucky?" Wiley asked coldly.

"So we can travel on together," Suggett responded promptly. "In union there is strength, you know."

"I don't quite see it," Wiley said flatly. "We was gettin' along fine as it was. I ain't much on that sociability stuff, nor Mitch neither, so far as that's concerned. I predicts we travels on our own several trails."

"And I'm game to disagree with you," Suggett answered just as promptly. "We're sure goin' to mooch right along with you two gents, from this time on and forever. Leastwise till we land at the Blue Bucket Mine."

"So that's what's eatin' on you," Wiley retorted heatedly. "Where do you git that noise anyway? Blue Bucket Mine! I don't seem to remember that we invited you to jine us. Kinda like hornin' in, seems to me."

"It don't make a lot of diffrunce what you calls it," the other said coolly, "but we're sure in on this little expedition with both feet in the trough. Also I'll tabulate for you a bit of advice. Don't kid yourself none about what you can do with that old smooth-bore you're caressin'. I could draw my six-gun and shoot you as full of holes as a cheese before you could even elevate it to your ancient shoulder."

"I shoots from the hip," Wiley informed him belligerently. "And right now there's a catridge in this Winchester, which is also cocked. My finger is wrapped around the trigger and I serves notice on you now that if you tries to pull that gun of yourn, that your rambles through these mountains is sure goin' to be brief."

"That's talkin' old man," Suggett laughed. "That's talkin'. But I suggests that before we argue this thing in smoke you takes your finger offen that trigger and listens to reason."

"I can listen with my finger crooked," Wiley assured him. "Let's hear your say."

"Briefly and thusly then," said Suggett, "she stacks up about like this. You've either found the mine or know where it is. I ain't quite clear there. But anyway, we're hankerin' to settle down on that same ledge. Our proposition is that we split the thing between us, even. Of course, there bein' four of us, and only *two* of you makes it a little unfair our way, but we're willin' to split it with you anyway. Nobody can say we're hogs. What's your answer to that?"

"My answer is," Wiley snarled, "that I'd admire to know where you git in on it at all? What are you throwin' into this jack-pot you're perposin' to divide so airy-like?"

"A partnership with four good men," Suggett answered promptly.

"Trot 'em out so as we kin see 'em," Mitchell cut in.

"Observations of that character," Suggett shot back, " is what gums up the wheels of friendship. But if you fellers take that view of it, I rise to remark that we've got another string to our bow yet. For a while, anyway, we're simply goin' to trail you gents, bein' amply able to do so."

He broke off with a laugh.

"You fellers thought you were playin' it pretty cute pullin' out of Mautonic at night," he chuckled. "Why bless your innocent souls, we were within hollerin' distance of you all the time. La Motte here trailed Injuns all over Arizona for Crook. You couldn't noways git away from him."

He turned once more to the subject of the mine.

"As I was sayin'," he continued placidly, "we're goin' to travel along with you and when you lands at that said mine, and sets up your discovery stakes, we'll set ours up too, coverin' the same ground."

"Arguments is like to arise about that time," Mitchell asserted bluntly.

"Now even you'll agree," Suggett continued evenly, as if oblivious to Mitchell's challenge, "that there's about three things necessary to holdin' a claim. Discovery, work, and recordin'. And I guess now you get the purport of that extry horse. For if we stake the *same* claim, the gents that gits their discovery notice recorded first at Mautonic sure walks off with the bacon."

He turned about to Mitchell.

"I allow," he grinned, "that you won't pretend that your crow-bait nor Wiley's either can beat that horse to Mautonic, specially since he's travelin' light and rarin' to go. You'd better reconsider them hard words recently uttered."

"They're said," Mitchell remarked sententiously.

"Let 'em ride then," Suggett retorted airily. "And that bein' your attitude, it becomes my unpleasant duty to inform you that we're out to win, barrin' nothing."

"Hop to it," Wiley said invitingly.

"Presently," Suggett answered coolly. "Hear this then and see if it listens good to you. We're reasonable if you ain't, so we're goin' to give you a brief spell to change your mind. If you don't, we propose to git the information we crave at the point of a gun, or otherwise."

"You'll find that about as easy as skinnin' a live porcupine with bare hands," Wiley snarled venomously.

"Don't you worry none about that porcupine," Suggett said evenly. "We sure won't need to borry nobody's gloves when we git ready to take offen its hide."

As if this remark exhausted the subject, he got up and walked away, followed by his three companions.

Soon after Wiley and Mitchell took the back trail, and not long after the other men followed.

FOR the next few days there ensued a slow chase, for while Suggett's outfit never came within hailing distance of Wiley and Mitchell, yet they were rarely out of sight day or night.

Often they discussed problematical ways of throwing their pursuers off the trail and even were of half a mind to return to Mautonic and try it all over again.

"I know a quick-sand that maybe we could git them to ride into," Wiley suggested hopefully one evening as they went into camp on a little creek a good many miles back from the Pannikan.

"I misdoubt if you can work a vermifuge like that on this gang," Mitchell replied, with fine disregard for correct speech in his earnestness.

"I'll make a try at it pretty soon," Wiley declared, "outen sheer desperation."

"Mebby somethin' 'ill favor us," Mitchell said hopefully.

"The weather might," and Wiley jerked a long gnarly finger toward a mass of black clouds banked in the southwest.

"That means business," Mitchell said apprehensively after a brief inspection.

"Summer storms back here in the Calicos ain't what you'd call gentle," old Bud nodded. "Still, this one may come in handy."

"I'm pickin' up my cards one at a time, but don't seem to be gettin' much," Mitchell confided. "What'id you draw?"

"My hand says that we make a sudden move tonight," Wiley informed him. "Wherefore I welcomes this storm."

"You figger it'll cover up any noise we make in departin'?"

"If that gentle zephyr runs true to form, Mitch, she certainly will."

"Findin' a trail on a night like this won't be any snap," Mitchell remarked thoughtfully. "I misdoubt if you can do it, Bud."

"Don't lose any fat worryin' about it," Wiley said confidently. "I can do it blindfolded."

"Yeh, and you might as well be," and Mitchell shook his head ominously, as he studied the fire-veined mass rolling up toward the zenith.

"The lightnin' will help some," Wiley said philosophically.

"It's sure able-bodied," the other agreed. "I only hope it don't git too playful."

THEN with the roar of an avalanche the storm was upon them. The rain came down as if shot from a thousand faucets, falling in slanting fury, with thunder like the roar of sustained drum-fire and lightning to match.

Tailing their four horses, with Wiley in front and Mitchell close behind with a firm grip on the bridle reins of the lead horse, the two men set out. Men and horses were almost instantly drenched, and only the fact that the storm was squarely at their backs made progress possible.

"That'll wash out our tracks," Wiley wheezed. "Pine needles won't show a sign of a trail after a sudsin' like this."

The first fury of the storm quickly passed, and the little cavalcade moved on at an increased pace.

Presently Wiley began to veer off toward the north, and in a little while they were advancing at right angles to their original course.

An hour more, and the storm had spent itself, and a full moon peeped through the ragged fringe of clouds, flooding the mountains with glory.

Wiley stopped, removed his neck handkerchief and wrung the water from it.

"Duds washed while you wait," he chuckled. "Not that they needed it either."

"How much further do you reckon we'd better go tonight?" Mitchell asked.

"I calculate we'd be smart to hump along till we hit the Pannikan," Wiley answered. "That'ill put some more scenery between us and that Suggett gang, which I favor strong. I'm bettin' we've throwed them off

about a million miles by this move, but still you can't sometimes allus tell."

"You sure can't," Mitchell agreed feelingly. "That bunch certainly clung to us like a cuckle-burr to a colt's tail."

"Yeh," Wiley nodded, "I figger it's strictly up to us to make a few more tracks while the moon lasts, and then tomorrow to make some more. Likewise, the next day. I'm positive against goin' even in the direction of that said mine till we're sure we're rid of them. Howsomever let's ride for a change."

"Which same gits my unanimous vote," his companion assented.

Just as the sun swung up over the edge of the Pannikan cañon, they drew rein at the river's edge.

Wiley sat his horse for a time looking out over the tumbling water before he crawled wearily out of the saddle.

"Mitch," said he, "if you'll look after the horses, I'll flax 'round and fix some grub. I'm hungry."

"Same here," Mitchell agreed heartily. "What I couldn't eat would sure make poor feed for an Injun even."

As they ate the two men discussed the situation, which unquestionably presented some very serious factors.

"If we only was certain that we'd throwed that bunch off the scent," so Wiley summed it up, "we'd make a bee line for the mine."

Mitchell agreed to this.

"The whole trouble is," Wiley continued, "that we ain't sure of that said fact. I'm hopin', but I don't gò no further than that. My view accordin' is, that we'd better travel fast, keeping our weather eye peeled for any hostile signs. If we don't see none, we'll leak out for the diggin's."

"You bet we want to be sure," Mitchell nodded emphatically. "Any gang that can put it over on us like they done ain't no amateurs. We don't want them to find us ladlin' out no nuggets and gold dust. Out here in these mountains two dead men won't attract much attention. We want to be sure Suggett ain't behind a tree with that gun of his handy when we start to tack up our claim notice. You and me ain't got no business to transact with him per a six-gun. A Winchester might be diffrunt, though I misdoubt it."

"Jim Hake and Fink Jackson ain't what you'd call slow," Wiley said meditatively. "We sure don't want to have a percipitate run-in with that bunch if we can help it."

Breaking camp presently Wiley and Mitchell turned their horses straight toward the Pannikan, forded it, and bore off at right angles to that turbulent stream. Winding up through the cañons by ten o'clock they had emerged on a high tableland, lying between the Durland and the Pannikan rivers.

The plateau was intersected at intervals by shallow ravines, and was covered sparsely with trees mostly in little groves. The two men climbed a bare hill that gave them an unobstructed view for miles back over their trail. No one was in sight, but they waited for a couple of hours to make certain.

"I believe we've give them the slip this time," Wiley declared after a final inspection of the surrounding country.

"It looks like it," his companion agreed.

"Anyway, we'd jest as well travel as set still," Wiley declared. "Occasionally we'll hit for some high point or ridge that'll give us a look back over the trail. This kind of open country don't give 'em the advantage they had on the other side of the Pannikan."

They made a late camp that night and were off the next morning as soon as it was light enough to travel. Confident that they had at last shaken off their pursuers their spirits rose as mile after mile flowed away beneath the feet of their hard-pressed horses. All that forenoon they were gradually drawing away from the Durland and nearer to the Pannikan.

Toward noon, Wiley halted, and pointed ahead to where a flat-bottomed cañon tilted down toward the river.

"The emigrants was on the high land between the two rivers, same as we are," he explained. "With this diffrunce; that they was headed in jest the opposite direction. That cañon yander is the one they follered down to where they crossed the Pannikan. Come on and I'll prove it to you."

The cañon down which Wiley so confidently asserted the wagon train had gone, sloped quite gently toward the river and as Mitchell cast a practical eye over its course he had a feeling that Wiley was right. Wagons could have certainly negotiated its grade without any great difficulty.

But when he reached the Pannikan at the mouth of the cañon, his belief became certainty itself. That tempestuous stream

at this point ran an almost level course for a good hundred yards, and its gravelly bed furnished a perfect ford.

"Bud," Mitchell exclaimed, "I'll bet you're right. If them emigrants didn't cross here, they sure oughta."

"You know I'm right," the other nodded. "I've follered this river from head to tail and its the only place they coulda forded it. Also, I've been up and down the Durland which they couldn'ta forded at all. Right here, Mitch, them wagons crossed."

"And all we've gotta do," Mitchell added enthusiastically, "is to trail 'em."

"Which ain't a hard job," his companion assured him, "for once across, they was in a groove which they had to travel in. You'll see what I mean as soon as we're across."

Negotiating the river at the ford they had so confidently assigned to the emigrant train, they stopped only long enough for the briefest of dinners, then swung once more into the saddle.

Almost immediately, the cañon walls closed in upon them, leaving room only for a shelf-like bench of rock running along the river, a sort of level-topped terrace, probably a former river level. While its surface was rough in places, it was passable, and the whole situation tended to prove Wiley's contention, that if the emigrants crossed the river at all, they must afterward have proceeded along this natural road.

In about two hours they crossed a good-sized creek that had bored its way down to the Pannikan, and about sunset reached a second. Here they camped for the night.

At daybreak the two men were once more in the saddle, and before the sun had warmed the bottom of the cañon they reached a land-mark which Wiley aptly called The Broken Thumb.

It towered above them, a cylindrical pillar of reddish rock, its top weathered and bent from the perpendicular.

"I calls that The Broken Thumb," Wiley explained, as he pointed to the battered pinnacle.

"She looks the part," Mitchell nodded. "I wonder if any of the emigrants noticed it?"

"I never heard of it if they did," Wiley answered. "Consequently I doubts it. Besides, they was so busy gittin' through that I reckon they didn't waste no time on the scenery."

Mitchell's eye rested on the ragged shelf of rock hugging the river, and in imagination he glimpsed the ox-teams as they picked their way wearily along, dragging behind them the heavy wagons.

"What a road!" he said finally. "Bud, them old-timers, includin' the women and kids, had nerve. We're a poor degenerate lot compared with them."

"That's right, Mitch," Wiley agreed thoughtfully. "They musta had their troubles too. Why, even Injuns don't come back in here. Howsomever *they* did as the wagon wheel I found proves."

"Close here?" Mitchell asked quickly.

"A quarter of a mile on, mebby a little further."

The road temporarily descended almost to the edge of the river, and here Wiley had found the broken wheel. A good-sized thorn tree now grew between two of the spokes, and the tire was bitten deep with rust. Both men stood looking at the strange relic for a time without speaking.

Finally Mitchell turned to his companion.

"Bud," he declared solemnly, "this sure proves it."

"Yes," Wiley nodded, "we're undoubtedly on the right trail and our work starts right from here," he added. "I run out of grub at this p'int, and had to hit back to Mautonic to stock up. I climbed straight out of the cañon up that ravine yander."

"You didn't foller down the Pannikan then?"

"No further than here. Fact is I'd been livin' on mountain scenery for two days already. Besides, Mitch, I wanted you in at the finish."

"And you're tellin' something there," Mitchell chuckled. "You old humbug, I'll bet you'd a stayed here till you'd a located the mine but for that."

"Well maybe," Wiley admitted. "Anyway we're here now, and the emigrants have been here before us, which proves that the mine's here too. I've gone over all the back trail careful, and if we do the front trail likewise, we simply can't miss it."

The next few days were filled with the hardest kind of work, for the two men made use of every available minute of daylight to push their eager search. At night around their campfire they built airy castles with the wealth they felt was fairly within their grasp.

One thing only detracted from their joy. Where was Suggett and his gang?

"I'm wonderin'," Mitchell remarked one night, "jest how much you told Jim Hake the time you got tanked up and talkative."

"Honest, I don't know," Wiley answered, "but I guess I spilled a lot too much information."

"Likely enough," his companion grunted, "but did you tell him you were out to find The Blue Bucket?"

"I musta," Wiley admitted grudgingly.

"Did you tell him, that you thought it was on the Pannikan instead of the Durland?"

"Let me think," Wiley replied, "for everything's purty hazy about it."

He pondered the question awhile but in the end felt certain that he had not.

"Well then," so Mitchell proceeded to analyze the probable facts in the case, "all they've got to go on is that we're out here sommers, and they know where we hit the Pannikan. That can't be very far away can it?"

"I can't say prezactly," his companion replied, "but it's likely a matter of forty mile or so from here."

"She ain't far enough," Mitchell declared with emphasis.

"I know it," Wiley agreed, "but thinkin' so don't make it no further. Anyway, I moves we go to bed."

The next morning, while they were eating breakfast Mitchell remarked that it was the seventh day since they had lost Suggett and his men.

"Seven was allus my lucky number," Wiley observed, "at cards and everything. I predicts we strike it today."

"Here's hopin'," the other said fervently. "I'm sure worn to a frazzle by this strenuous life. I've actually took my belt up three notches in the last two weeks."

"Seein' as your belt will still go round me twice," Wiley chuckled, "you oughtn't to mourn none after them three lost notches. Besides, didn't I jest tell you this was goin' to be our lucky day? By tonight, who knows but what you may be wadin' chin deep in nuggets?"

"Here' hopin'," Mitchell again repeated, as he clambered to his feet and began gathering up their camp dunnage.

However, despite Wiley's optimism this day progressed about as the preceding one, and it was well along in the afternoon before anything happened to vary the monotony of their search.

They had descended again to the edge of the river, whose shore-line at this point was bordered by a level meadow a good many acres in extent. On the side opposite the stream the meadow ran flush up against a perpendicular rock wall two score or so feet in height, roughly paralleling the course of the river. A little creek cut straight down across the face of this barrier and its plunging waters had gouged out a pot hole, round as a table, at the base of the ledge. Out of this, the green water ran frothing away to join the Pannikan a short hundred yards away.

"She's a bang-up place to camp," Wiley declared after a brief inspection. "I guess our horses'll be hard to stake out in that grass."

"Livin' as they have for the past few days on pine cones mostly," Mitchell grinned, "I doubt if they'll know what to do with such provender."

TURNING toward the river, they pitched camp in a grove of quaking asp, first staking their eager horses out in the lush grass, which reached almost to their bellies.

"What had we better do now?" Mitchell asked as the two men turned away from their camp.

"Suppose we go up and look at that waterfall," and Wiley pointed to where the little stream took its leap from the breast of the cliff.

"She's a purty sight," Mitchell declared as they drew near the leaping water. "Looks just like a silk scarf wavin' in a breeze."

Ten yards it dropped into the bowl-like pool, whose churning surface hid the bottom in its deeper parts. The incessant pounding of the falling water had built a dam of boulders on the side toward the Pannikan, through which the stream had burst its tempestuous way. A dozen feet away the elements had undercut the cliff at its base, forming a snug little cave carpeted with white sand.

As they stood watching the thin sheet of water tumbling into its stone basin, and noted how the sunlight played on its ever changing surface, Wiley said, reverently:

"Purty's no name for it, Mitch. She's

st gorgousness itself. Think of it way ck here in the mountains, and us probably e first people to ever see it. She's sure rth comin' a long ways to look at."

Mitchell skirted the bowl of water and tered the tiny cave, leaving Wiley still anding thoughtfully by the swirling pool.

Suddenly, above the roar of the falling ater, Mitchell heard a shout, which ought him outside pell-mell.

Wiley, both arms dripping wet, was ancing about like a madman, waving out his head something clutched in his an hairy fist.

As Mitchell lumbered up, the other without a word extended it toward him for his spection.

It was a water-worn lump, about the ize of a goose egg and of a dull yellow olor.

Mitchell gave one look then straightened up speechless, grown instantly gray beneath is coating of tan. For it was gold, the nost amazing nugget that his eyes had ver rested upon.

"We've found it Mitch!" Wiley chuckled oarsely. "The Lost Blue Bucket!"

"Found it!" his companion stuttered in the excess of his excitement. "Why, Bud, I never seed anything to compare with that nugget before and I thought I knew somethin' about placers too."

"It's The Lost Blue Bucket," Wiley repeated with absolute certainty. "You remember that the emigrants had stopped to feed their stock that day and that meadow yander fills the bill. Mitch, we're rich as Cresox. Whoop!"

And those two worn men proceeded to do a war dance calculated to make a Tillayuma brave commit suicide from sheer envy.

Then a sudden fear chilled Mitchell's heart.

"Bud," he panted, "let's look and see if that one nugget exhausts the diggins'."

That remark instantly sobered his wild-eyed companion.

"Tain't likely," he replied fearfully. "Still, let's make sure."

Wiley had found the wonderful nugget at the point where the creek boiled out of the pool, and now both men knelt soberly down and peered into the frothing water. Doubt, however, was brief, for they had found a placer, if that term was not inept, of fabulous richness.

Nuggets there were of varying size, from a good-sized pea up, though none appeared of so great size as the first. Besides the ground-up débris was heavy with gold.

"She's no fake, Mitch," Wiley declared after a brief inspection.

"And there ain't no manner of use in our tryin' to exhaust it tonight," Mitchell added practically.

"No," the other agreed. "Besides we've got some other things to do. First one is to put up our discovery stakes and notice. Also we've gotta make a copy of the notice for record at Mautonic."

Mitchell after a little search produced a stubby pencil which he had treasured against this day and a sheet of paper, once white, but now of doubtful color. With these he painstakingly wrote out two notices, the one for posting on the premises, the other for record at Mautonic. With the notice properly posted they put up their corner stakes without delay.

The most important thing so they felt was to get their notice of discovery on record in the branch land office at Mautonic and they were not long in deciding that Wiley was the one to make the ride. Mitchell on his part would stay at the mine and defend it against any possible interlopers.

"We've gotta look out for that Suggett gang," Wiley declared thoughtfully. "They may not be far away right now."

"You'll wanta keep your peepers open, too," Mitchell nodded.

"Yes, and you'll wanta do likewise. If they run onta you while I'm gone, you'll have a lively time."

"There'll sure be blood on the moon," Mitchell agreed, "for I figger they won't be in no angelic mood."

"That's a fact, Mitch, which means we've gotta fix you up to stand 'em off, in case they do find you while I'm gone."

"There's jest one place that fits the bill," Mitchell said suddenly as he indicated the tiny cave by the waterfall. "Let's look at it."

"It's all to the candy," Wiley declared enthusiastically after a brief inspection. "All we've gotta do is to barricade the front some, and you'll be as snug as three bugs in a basket."

Following a brief parley as to ways and means, they procured an ax from their camp, cut a section from a fallen tree,

wedged it down firmly across the entrance, placed a second on the first, and topped the two with a smaller log, taking care to leave jest space enough for a gun-barrel.

Wiley surveyed it with satisfaction.

"She's the tricket," he said approvingly. "All you've gotta do is to move your dunnage in and hold the fort so to speak. I wouldn't wander far away neither. So far as the horses is concerned, we'll stake 'em out where they can git to water. They can live a week on the grass they can grub up at the end of a fifty-foot rope."

That night the two men slept but little, and daylight found them busy putting the finishing touches to Mitchell's fort, getting his equipment stored safely away, and staking out the three remaining horses where pasture would be ample without a second moving for several days.

Just as the sun peeped up over the rim of the cañon, Wiley swung himself into the saddle.

"Keep your weather eye out, Mitch," was his final caution as he pointed his reluctant horse toward Mautonic.

Riding down the Pannikan for a half-mile, he found a break in the dyke of rock through which he was able to scramble up out of the river bottom.

There followed a hard climb for the next two hours, but at the end of that time he had topped the Pannikan cañon. Here he gave his horse a brief rest, then pushed out rapidly toward Mautonic.

At the end of ten miles he came to a little creek cutting the deer trail he was following at right angles. It ran a rather level course, and Wiley decided that it would be a good place to break his trail on the bare chance that some one might later stumble onto it. With this in mind, he turned up the bed of the stream and followed it for several hundred feet, finally riding out where a thick carpet of pine needles made trailing practically impossible.

HIS move was certainly a wise one, for his trail to the edge of the little creek had scarcely been cold an hour, when four men coming from the opposite direction arrived at the same point. As they rode into the creek to water their horses, the sharp eye of Felix LaMotte caught sight of the fresh tracks. To push his horse across to the other side, to slip from the saddle and examine the tell-tale marks was but the work of seconds. Straightening up, he announced with the utmost certitude—

"That's Bud Wiley's horse!"

"How old's the tracks?" Suggett shot back.

"An hour, mebbe two," LaMotte answered.

"What does it mean him comin' out alone?" Hake asked in puzzled fashion. "What's happened to Mitch, I wonder?"

"It means I take it," Suggett growled, "that they've located the mine. Wiley's likely hittin' out to register the claim, while Mitchell guardin' it. We've got a move on two comin' ourselves."

"Name it, Bill, name it," Jackson exclaimed.

"Here it is," Suggett said with decision. "One of us must trail Wiley—see if you can find which way he went, Felix—and take that claim record away from him. No," he said in answer to a pointed question from Hake, "it don't make much diffrunce how it's done, though I suggests shootin' him first. It'll avoid complications later. The other three'll take Wiley's back trail and attend to old Mitch."

He turned to LaMotte to ask—

"Which way'd he go?"

"Up the creek, I figger," LaMotte replied with uncanny accuracy.

"Tryin' to throw us off the scent, the old skunk," Suggett grumbled. "Spread out boys and see if anybody can find where he rode out, and remember, it's speed that counts now. Though," he added as an after-thought, "mebbe two of you had better go down the creek. And look sharp! The old boy's pretty slick, remember."

Accordingly they separated, Hake and Jackson, taking the down trail, while Suggett and LaMotte followed up-stream. Twice the leader and his prize trailer crossed the place which Wiley had artfully chosen to leave the stream, but at the third time, the cunning LaMotte detected the faint hoof marks.

"Here 'tis," he announced. "Call the other boys."

At Suggett's bellow, Hake and Jackson hurried up.

"LaMotte, you'll trail him," Suggett said with decision following a brief consultation. "He may try some more monkey shines like this again, and there ain't any of the rest of us your equal at that game."

It's erysipelas to me," LaMotte replied ly. "I'll stick to his trail, don't you ry none about that."

Remember it's the notice of discovery want," Suggett added. "Git it, and it. With a slight change of names of rse. Also don't forgit," he suggested lly, "that a man with a bullet planted place above the chin don't tell no s."

'I've heard myself," LaMotte grinned, at a man fixed that way ceases to take ive interest in things. I'll remember it."

But here an idea full of wisdom occurred LaMotte.

'The scheme's all right," he remarked liciously, "providin' I runs onto Wiley. t suppose, for the sake of argument, at the old-timer outguesses me, then at? Seems to me it'd be safer to have a scovery notice of our own should that the case."

"By hokey, that's right," Jackson dded.

"Course it is," LaMotte continued. Why can't we put up the tale, if we have , that we located the mine and they eaked in on us at night say and jumped ? That would be a good bluff in case I n't succeed in relievin' old Wiley of that id notice."

"Your idee's correct."

Suggett nodded with decision, and drawg out a small day-book and using his ddle-horn for a table he wrote a few nes, signed the page, and passing it over Hake, bade him to likewise.

Jackson and LaMotte in turn with much bor succeeded in adding their names in oubtful chirography. LaMotte folded it p carefully and stowed it away in an inside ocket.

He found trailing Wiley no sinecure, for he old man twice repeated his former actics of concealing his trail. He was urged o this by a double motive, for besides ishing to make discovery of Mitchell nore difficult, he was anxious to make railing himself a hard matter as well. or it chanced that soon after crossing the ittle creek, he had swung sharply back to he north with the fortunate result that e had come across the trail made by the our men.

A lifetime spent in the mountains had iven him ability to read with unerring ccuracy things of this sort, and he quickly hit upon the facts. He also guessed that they would presently run across his trail. That they would divide forces in that event and follow him, he took as a matter of course.

Still he had one distinct advantage. He was between them and Mautonic, and he did not doubt for a moment his ability to maintain that advantage, barring accidents. Besides he could travel when it was so dark that trailing was a physical impossibility.

It was nearing sundown when he reached the neighborhood of the famous Churning Water Springs, a rough distance of forty miles from Mautonic, and usually reckoned a good day's ride from that town. However, he had no intention of stopping at that famous camping-place that night, but instead pushed on till darkness and the evident distress of his horse forced him to halt.

He did not permit himself the luxury of a fire, although the night air was chilly, but wrapping himself to the chin in his blankets lay down with his gun at hand and in easy reach of the sapling to which he had tied his horse.

Before daybreak he arose, stiff with the cold and the hard ride of the preceding day, and with the prospect of a still harder ride before him. Within the hour he swung into the old emigrant road leading from Mautonic through the Calicos, and noting with satisfaction that no one was ahead of him, pushed on at an increased rate of speed.

At three o'clock that day he rode into Mautonic. It was Saturday afternoon, and the town was full of men, but without waiting to greet any one Wiley rode up to the log cabin which did service as a branch land-office, dismounted, and entered.

No one was in the building, and hurrying outside he inquired if any one had seen Solomon Chacum, the government officer in charge.

"Sol Chacum went into the U & I gambling hall," a miner presently informed him, "not more than five minutes ago."

Wiley crossed the narrow street, and seeing the proprietor, Pete Cogan, at the farther side of the room, made his way through the crowd to that worthy and inquired if he knew where Chacum could be found. Cogan turned about at the question, and eyed the dust-covered man with exasperating deliberation.

"Chacum's off huntin'," he said coolly.

Just at that moment the door leading into a rear room swung open momentarily, and Wiley caught a glimpse of the interior.

Sol Chacum sat at a table playing cards with three of Cogan's choicest limbs of iniquity.

That fleeting picture told a plain story to Bud Wiley. Cogan proposed to prevent Wiley's registering the claim, Chacum, in all probability, being a paid party to the scheme. And Wiley had no manner of doubt that back along the trail, and in all likelihood not very far off either, some member of the Suggett gang was literally burning up the road to reach Mautonic.

One glance at Cogan, bearing well in mind too the dive-keeper's justly earned reputation as a hard citizen, and Wiley realized the folly of attempting alone anything resembling force. Yet in that brief moment he formulated a plan.

"You say Chacum's out of town on a hunt?" he repeated. "When'll he be back?"

"In a couple of days, mebbe," Cogan answered.

"That's soon enough for me," Wiley said carelessly, and turning about, he walked out of the room with studied deliberation. Cogan meanwhile watched him closely until he disappeared.

The moment Wiley was out of the other's range of vision, he evinced an increased interest in life. He hurried down the street to the Grizzly House, and entering the barroom walked quickly over to where Andy Griggs, the successor of Mitch, stood chatting with a group of men.

"Hello, Bud!" Griggs greeted him cordially. "Thought you was out on a hunt for the Blue Bucket."

"I was, and I found it," Wiley answered succinctly, and in confirmation of the statement he lugged out the big nugget which had marked that discovery and laid it down on the rough board counter.

"By the triple-tailed polecat!" Griggs exclaimed. "Look here, fellers. See what old Bud's totin'."

The miners crowded round in wild excitement to inspect the giant nugget, the equal of which none of them had ever seen before.

"I found it boys," Wiley announced, taking advantage of a temporary lull in the torrent of questions, "and I proposes to lead a rush, free to all comers, out that way, jest as quick as I can git my c... registered.'"

And then, in a few brief words he ... plained to them the situation, cente... around Cogan's perfidy.

Griggs was a man of action, and ... reaching beneath the bar and dragging ... light Mitchell's fearful weapon, the saw... off shot gun, he said in his soft drawl wh... to the initiated, spelled danger in cap... letters:

"Boys, I moves that Sol Chacum rec... that said claim of discovery *now*. ... them in favor will get their gats ready ... come a-runnin'."

The boys, a good two-dozen, were ... cidedly "in favor" and with Griggs ... Wiley at their head moved promptly ... the U & I hall.

"Three or four of you fellers had be... lope round to the rear door," Griggs s... gested as they neared the street entra... "so as to head off that Chacum in cas... tries to vamoose."

Then the human avalanche burst in ... the front door and poured down up... Cogan before he had time to make a mov... Griggs, his shotgun pointed directly ... Cogan's ample stomach, issued a poi... ultimatum.

"Cogan," he said silkily, "we've co... for that Chacum. What's your idee ... detainin' of him?"

"Chacum ain't here," Cogan sneere... "Your mind must be sufferin', Griggs, fr... the bad booze you ladle out up at th... Grizzly House."

"Cogan," Griggs said warningly, "thes... personal observations don't git you n... wheres. We'll give you about a quar... of a minute to dig him up. If you don... your insides will be scattered arou... purty promiscuous-like."

Pete Cogan was a brave man, but he h... unpleasant memories of what a sawed-... shot-gun could do at close quarters. A... he knew Andy Griggs.

"Mebbe," he suggested after a pau... "Chacum's in the back room, yander."

"Shouldn't surprize me if that's s... Griggs nodded. "Suppose you step to t... door and call him."

With Griggs at his back Cogan obeye... with the result that a badly shaken ... registrar was soon in the hands of a ba... of determined men who escorted him ... his office with speed. Here Wiley produc...

his claim notice, which Chacum recorded as promptly as his trembling fingers would allow.

The last line had scarcely been transcribed, when in a swirl of dust LaMotte rode up to the building, and leaping from his lathering horse rushed into the room. Pushing his way up to the counter, he roared—

"Don't record that notice!"

"Why not?" came in startled chorus from a dozen men.

"Because we located it first!"

"That bein' the case," Griggs asked pointedly, "how comes it that Wiley gits here first? Especially since you had Pete Cogan's horse, the same bein' far and away the fastest animal in this neck of the woods."

"I maintain as a fact," LaMotte replied sturdily, "that we locates her first. Also I'd admire to know your warrant for buttin' in on this anyway."

The answer to this was immediate and direct, for Griggs shoved his inseparable shot-gun up against LaMotte's lean flank.

"Here 'tis," he said in his softest tones. "And now kindly explain to these gents what you mean when you say you discovered it first and they jumped it."

"It's jest as I said," LaMotte answered sullenly. "We discovered it jest before sundown and Wiley and Mitch relocated it that same night. Sneaked in on us when we didn't know they was within miles of us, too. Wiley must 'a' started for Mautonic right off the jump. I run across his tracks not far from Churning Water Springs."

"Where's Mitchell then?" one of the miners cut in.

"He was tryin' to argue the boys outen our rights," LaMotte lied smoothly, "the last I saw of him."

"A likely tale," Griggs remarked skeptically. "Wiley brought samples along to prove his story. Where's yourn?"

LaMotte was of necessity forced to admit that he had none, his explanation being that he had never thought of it in his hurry to overtake Wiley, whom they had surmised was on his way to Mautonic.

"Start to lie and you only git in deeper, LaMotte," Griggs said pointedly. "Still we've got another way to test you. Wiley here has promised to lead a rush back to the mine, but seein' as you claim you diskivered it, he retires from that leadership."

LaMotte was game whatever his other shortcomings, yet for fear of contingencies that might arise later he thought it wise to qualify his brave words somewhat.

"I can do it of course," he replied confidently, "but bein' there only once and comin' out in a hurry the last part won't be easy."

"And that's about the only thing you've said yet that ain't a lie," Griggs said coldly. "Howsomever you air sure goin' along, but if you git mixed up, Wiley here promises to take the job offen your hands. We'll be movin' in an hour or thereabouts."

He turned away with this declaration, when he noticed Pete Cogan standing on the edge of the crowd.

"Pete, when I says *we're* goin'," he addressed him with admirable directness, "it don't include *you* nor any of your personal friends. I misdoubt but that the boys have elected you fellers to warm the benches right here in Mautonic. What say you, boys?"

The thundering acclamation left nothing to the imagination. Then with a wild surge the crowd cleared the building, every man hurrying toward his cabin to make ready for the grand rush for the new strike.

"LaMotte, be sure you're here," Griggs shouted back, as he joined the stampede. "You're the official guide remember."

WITHIN an hour, with LaMotte riding between Wiley and Griggs at their head, the motley procession moved out of the well-nigh deserted town. Darkness overtook them about fifteen miles out on the road and here perforce they went into camp. All that night stragglers kept coming in, for the news had spread far and wide, that the famous Blue Bucket mine had at last been found.

They traveled a good part of the following day in a light rain, and late that afternoon passed Churning Water Springs. Night overtook them miles beyond Churning Water Springs and near the point where LaMotte had picked up Wiley's trail.

"We'll be there before noon tomorrow," Wiley told the eager group of men around the campfire that night, "or my name ain't Bud Wiley."

Crossing the little creek next morning early, at the point where he had parted

with his three companions, LaMotte pushed confidently ahead for a time, but soon missed the trail at a point where Wiley had cut in over a denuded shoulder of rock. Wiley noted it but said nothing.

LaMotte on his part was not long in discovering it too, and after some time spent in a vain endeavor to pick up the lost trail he turned to Griggs who was keeping strict watch on his every move.

"I'm gittin' kinda confused," he admitted.

"Shouldn't wonder!" Griggs said dryly.

"I believe I'm turned round," LaMotte continued. "Rain makes a heap of diffrunce with everything."

"Tracks mostly," Griggs suggested, "which is about all you've had to go on I figger. We'll see if Wiley is afflicted the same way."

He turned and addressed him.

"Think you can pilot us any farther Bud?"

"I shore can," Wiley responded promptly. "I've been here before remember."

"LaMotte resigns, boys," Griggs informed the others with a cheerful grin, "and Wiley takes the job."

WHEN Wiley had ridden away that morning, Mitchell busied himself about their claim, but all the while keeping a sharp lookout for Suggett and his men. However, that day passed without incident, but the next morning his vigilance received its adequate reward.

He finished breakfast and had just panned out a shovel full of gold-bearing sand, when glancing down the river in the direction his partner had the day before ridden he saw three horsemen approaching. One look was enough. The leader was Suggett. Mitchell promptly dropped his miner's pan, and picking up his Winchester, which leaned conveniently near, fired a warning shot close about their heads.

The three men halted, and after a brief conversation Suggett dismounted, and handing his rifle to one of his companions approached on foot.

Mitchell permitted him to advance until only a scant dozen yards separated them, when he ordered Suggett to halt.

"What's the idee of the war-like display?" Suggett inquired.

"It means that I don't purpose to have you' fellers foolin' round here," Mitchell answered.

"How far do you reckon your dominion extends?" the other sneered.

"As far as my old Winchester'll carry," Mitchell retorted promptly.

"Three guns'll carry jest about as much lead as one," Suggett shot back. "And while we're on the subject, let me tell you that we're either goin' to set in on this mine as pardners or as owners. Which do you pick as a first choice?"

"You won't git bow-legged standin' round waitin' for my answer," Mitchell said coldly. "Me and Bud air in on this said mine alone. That's my tum tum! You'll take it that way, or you'll take it smoked!"

"All right, old-timer," Suggett nodded. "You've nominated war, and war she is."

With this remark he turned on his heel, and with deliberation returned to his companions.

Here he mounted his horse, and followed by the other two men rode back a couple of hundred yards to a small grove of pines. Passing around behind this screen they dismounted, unsaddled their horses and staked them out, then Winchesters in hand, returned to continue the argument.

Mitchell watched them emerge from the grove before he sought the shelter of the cave. He cherished no illusions about the limit they would go in their efforts to possess the mine, and consequently he intended to take no chances. His motto would be, "shoot to kill."

The distance from the grove to the cave was a good four hundred yards, a pretty long shot for a Winchester with a man as a mark, but even at that the three men gave him no opportunity to try his skill, at least at a stationary target. Their advance consisted in short jerky runs from one shelter to another. Mitchell on his part intended to waste no shells, so he simply squatted on the floor of the cave, eye glued to the crevice between the logs and waited.

A hundred yards in front of the fort a gravel bar stretched obliquely, its surface dotted with boulders of every size, from a teakettle up to a wagon bed. It furnished a natural point of attack, and the three men were not slow in appropriating it.

Presently, from the side of one of the boulders was blown, plume-like, a jet of smoke, accompanied by the purr of a bullet as it hummed a few inches above the protecting top-log. The ball had opened.

Almost immediately the two other rifles took up the refrain, and the sharp tattoo of bullets as they bedded themselves in the logs, or ripped on into the back of the cave, was a stern reminder to Mitchell that the men outside meant business.

For the time, he did not choose to reply, but lay snug and allowed them to waste their ammunition. His chief danger lay in ricocheting bullets, and occasionally one did dance about the little chamber in disconcerting fashion, till presently he felt a sharp nip in his cheek where a flying shread of lead bit deep enough to draw blood.

"Durn you," he growled as he wiped the blood away with his bandanna handkerchief. "I'll jest give you a taste of your own medicine."

Warily, he applied his eye to the crack between the logs, and waited, rifle slightly out-thrust and ready for instant service. It chanced that this was the particular moment that Fink Jackson had chosen to do a little investigating as to the damage done by their bombardment. But as he peered cautiously out from the tilted-up side of a boulder, the crack of a Winchester informed him that Mitchell was very much alive. The dust kicked up in his face by the bullet induced him to draw back with a speed which tickled hugely the risibilities of Jim Hake, who lay near by.

"Say, Fink," he chuckled, as Jackson turned his dust-clouded face in his direction, "you sure need a wash. You look like a hog after he's been busy all day rootin' up taters. We'll hafta ring your nose same as they do a pig's."

"Spose you stick your own snout out," Jackson retorted loftily, "and see how close the old buzzard can come to it."

"I ain't curious like some fellers," Hake answered. "I know he kin shoot without havin' it proved to me."

"Shut up!" Suggett cut in with an oath. "You two jaspers ain't out here for a visit. You can do that later. Keep under cover and see if you can't slip old Mitch a lead ace."

All that day the battle went on, with the three firing ten shots to the other's one, for Mitchell did not shoot unless one of them offered a possible target. They tried flanking his position, and made threatening moves as if they contemplated a rush, all with the purpose of enticing him into a rash exposure.

But Mitchell had not lived thirty years in the West for nothing, and at nightfall they were forced to confess that all their strategy had been for naught.

"The old-timer's wise," Suggett admitted to the others as they ate supper that night.

"And lucky," Jackson added bitterly. "Some of them chunks of lead we heaved into his little fort today woulda snagged anybody else but him. Why I'll bet them logs weigh a hundred pounds more right now than they did this mornin'."

"I'll tell you something we can do anyway," Suggett said finally. "We'll keep him awake tonight. That won't help his nerves none tomorrow."

"How'll we do it?" Jackson queried.

"Take turns layin' out there in front of his shebang, and pitch lead into it at regular intervals."

The other two agreed that the plan was a good one, and with Suggett on the first lap of the all-night relay, Hake and Jackson rolled into their blankets.

As night drew on Mitchell ate his frugal supper and unrolled his blankets, but before lying down he placed his two revolvers in easy reach in case the besiegers should try rushing tactics under the cover of darkness.

However, he had scarcely stretched his weary body out on the smooth sand when the black night was riven by a streak of flame, and a bullet plunged into the back wall.

Mitchell sat up and peered out, but as no second shot followed immediately he lay down again. But hardly had he settled himself before it was repeated; and so on through the night.

Sleeping under such conditions was a sheer impossibility, and morning found him with jangling nerves, almost ready for any desperate venture.

The next day dragged out its seemingly interminable length, its happenings much like the first.

"We'll keep his peepers open again tonight," Suggett announced grimly, "and tomorrow mornin' we'll give him somethin' else to sharpen his teeth on. Listen here, boys, and I'll elucidate."

"She'll work, Bill," Jackson said with an oath, when Suggett had explained his plans for the morrow's campaign. "Wonder why we didn't think of it before?"

"It's gotta work and work quick," said

Suggett nodding grimly. "I figger we've gotta move him tomorrow or not at all."

"Meanin'?" Hake queried.

"That old Bud Wiley will git back here by that time."

"Mebbe La Motte headed him off," Hake suggested hopefully.

"I misdoubt it," Suggett answered. "Anyway we can't sit round twiddlin' our thumbs waitin' to see. We've gotta act, and act right prompt."

The second night, so far as Mitchell was concerned, was a repetition of the first. Yet he slept at intervals in spite of the patter of bullets against the logs and their sharper bark as they ripped into the back and sides of the cave.

Morning came at last, but for a time he saw nothing of the besiegers. Then as he peered out warily with red-rimmed eyes in an effort to discover the reason for the strange silence, suddenly he saw on the surface of the pool which lay almost at his feet the shadows of two men above his cave.

The stream at flood-time scoured out the pool, piling up the débris around the base of the cliff much like the built-up lip of a huge geyser. Through this it had cut a deep channel like the letter V, and now as Mitchell watched the shadows of the two men, one of them tossed down an object which flashed through the falling spray and landed squarely in the throat of this natural spillway.

It was a boulder half as big as a suitcase, and was quickly, followed by other rocks, some so large that only the united efforts of both men were able to land them in the mouth of the channel.

In an instant Mitchell divined their purpose, for if they succeeded in even partially blocking the channel, his cave would be flooded, for it lay well within the radius of the débris-constructed wall, its floor being but a scant six inches above the surface of the pool even now.

And the men meant business, for in addition to a perfect avalanche of rocks in the course of a quarter of an hour they managed to land in the channel a considerable quantity of brush and pieces of logs and limbs, and in addition three sand bags, in the construction of which they had sacrificed that many saddle blankets.

Mitchell, drawn off guard for a fleeting second, craned his head above the log rampart to see what effect had been produced in the pool, and as quickly located the third man. From behind an up-rooted tree out in front of the cave came a puff of blue smoke, and he felt the hot kiss of the bullet as it whistled by. And then the water began to seep into the cave.

At the end of two hours it was a good foot deep with water cold as if it flowed from beneath a glacier. For Mitchell, numbed with cold, teeth clacking like a pair of castanets, there came a time when the limit of physical endurance was reached. If he waited longer, resistance would be impossible. Nothing remained but to stagger out, gun in hand, and go down fighting.

IT WAS ten o'clock when Wiley halted the band of men at the break in the cliff leading down to the river bottom.

"The mine's jest around where the cliff bellies out yander," he exclaimed as he indicated a decided bulge in its generally even front.

"Far?" Griggs asked quickly.

"Not over a half-mile I reckon," Wiley answered. "We kin swing down to the river——"

The sentence was cut straight across by the sound of a rifle shot coming from some point up the river, followed by another.

Old Wiley's jaw set tight.

"That's them now," he snarled. "Let's hurry!"

But Griggs, always cool in an emergency, detained the old man.

"Tell us the lay of the land, Bud," he demanded. "We want to git that gang remember. They're busy and we can slip up on 'em."

Wiley smothered his impatience in the face of the plain wisdom of the other's course, and in a few sentences gave them a pretty clear idea of the general situation around the waterfall.

Griggs turned it over in his mind briefly.

"Tain't likely they've got their horses right with 'em," he said practically, "which makes it an easy enough job to round 'em up. Also they may be above and below. Consequently we'll divide and round them mavericks up.

"Maxon," he said to a little leathery-faced man, "you take half the boys and circle around above the cliff there, keepin' in the trees. When you cross the crick, spread out and meet us where she cuts

down to the waterfall. The rest of us will ditch our horses and sneak up on the same p'int from the river."

The plan was quickly put in execution. With Wiley and Griggs perforce went La Motte. As soon as they reached the edge of the meadow at the foot of the cliff, Suggett's camp was sighted in the grove of pine trees. They circled it, and reached the river's edge, and under cover of its bank cautiously worked up to the point where the little creek emptied into the Pannikan. The waterfall was a short hundred yards away. Griggs wormed up to the top of the bank, made a brief investigation, and slid back to report.

"Suggett's layin' behind a big tree right in front of the cave," he explained. "I'll crawl up on him while you boys watch."

"Let me go 'long," Wiley pleaded. But Griggs shook his head.

"You're too anxious, Bud," he grinned, "and might let your gun go off accidental. I'll git him, don't you fret."

Suggett was so engrossed watching the cave, that Griggs was fairly upon him before he realized that any one was near. At the slight sound made by a slipping pebble he turned his head quickly to find to his amazement Andy Griggs, Winchester at shoulder, smiling at him over the top of a boulder.

"Stick 'em up Suggett," he purred. "The jig's up."

For one fleeting second Suggett considered the possibility of resistance, but dismissed it as quickly.

"They're up," he growled. "What else?"

"Keep 'em up," Griggs said briefly.

Now in answer to his signal the rest of the miners flocked up from the river and almost in the same instant the other men appeared at the top of the cliff with Hake and Jackson in tow. Griggs waved to them to bring their prisoners down to where the other miners were gathered.

As Wiley hurried by on his way to the cave he snarled:

"Don't let the —— skunk git away. I've got somethin' to settle with him if——"

But he could not finish the sentence. He splashed his way through the pool before the cave and entered the little fort.

Mitchell sat leaning against the side of the cave.

"You, Bud?" he questioned feebly as his partner bent above him in an agony of fear. "I'm glad—to see—you."

A half-dozen other men had by this time scrambled over the log barrier and they carried him quickly out into the sunshine. Here a fire was built, and with food and a change of dry clothes Mitchell in the course of a half-hour announced that he felt fit as a fiddle.

By mutual consent the men had refrained from staking out any claims, and now they proceeded to constitute themselves into a court, with Suggett and his three companions in the middle. Andy Griggs assumed the direction of the trial.

"Suggett," he announced crisply, "we'll hear what you've got to say."

The double circle of stern-faced miners could hardly be recommended as a nerve sedative to any one caught in a flagrant act, and no one knew the temper of men of this sort better than did Suggett. Yet with all of his demerits, he was a brave man, and he faced the situation with a courage worthy of a better cause.

"Do you propose to hang a man for tryin' to oust a claim jumper?" he inquired.

"Tell your story Suggett," Griggs answered. "We'll take that up when we git to it. Only remember," he added warningly, "that we've already heard Wiley's side of the case, also La Motte's. Stick to facts, and be brief!"

"I'm jake to that," Suggett answered coolly, "and I'll cut out all the frills, too. Five days ago then, along in the afternoon me and my pardners here found this mine. We put out our notice and stakes, set up camp, and next mornin' early La Motte started for Mautonic to file our claim discovery."

He paused and looked about him, but no one said a word. He proceeded:

"Wiley and his pardner musta been trailin' us, though we'd seen nothin' of 'em at all, for when the three of us come up here from our camp after La Motte got started we found that fort and Mitch inside."

"You think they built it that night?" Griggs inquired.

"They musta," Suggett nodded. "Howsomever we didn't see nothin' of Wiley at all. The three of us here naturally tried to move Mitchell offen our property and we'd 'a' done it too," he added belligerently, "if you men hadn't blowed in when you did.

That's the plain tale, with no varnish applied."

"But Wiley tells us," Griggs interposed mildly, "that they discovered this mine first."

"Their word ain't no better than ours," Suggett argued stubbornly. "Besides they ain't got no stakes up and no discovery notice posted nowhere. The law says that's gotta be done to make your title good."

In answer to this, Bud Wiley stepped over to the side of a drift log, and kicking away a pile of débris disclosed a stake driven into the shingle, holding in its split end, a duplicate of the notice he had carried to Mautonic.

"Thar she is boys," he chuckled. "We kivered it up for good and sufficient reasons. I think you kin guess what they was. You'll find our four corner stakes fixed the same way, as I can show you."

Griggs stood drumming with agile fingers on the handle of his Colt's for a time without speaking. Finally he looked up.

"Suggett," said he in his softest tones, "my private opinion, publicly expressed, is that you're a liar."

A murmur of assent ran through the group of men at his words.

"Not that you ain't a good one," Griggs hastened to qualify. "And now here's how it stacks up in my noggin as to the relative merits of your claims to this said mine. They've got their stakes up, their notice is posted, it's filed at Mautonic, and they're in possession. It follers, naturally, that the mine is theirn. Am I right boys?"

"You sure are!" came the chorus of voices.

"So far so good," Griggs continued. "Now my judgment is that you four men be——"

"Hanged!" a bearded miner cut in enthusiastically.

"Wait a minute, Dell," Griggs interposed. "They need hangin' mebbe, but I hateta christen this camp that way. I suggests, therefore, that they be disarmed, put on their horses, and started on their way. That said way, not endin' at Mautonic, neither. What say you, boys?"

The boys after some grumbling eventually agreed to this plan, and it was executed with commendable promptness.

When the four crest-fallen men had disappeared down the river, Griggs turned once more to the group of men.

"Boys," he grinned, "the field's yourn, sail in!"

Wiley and his comrade watched the men as they hurried here and there staking out claims, and panning dust for signs of color.

At last Mitchell turned to Wiley.

"Bud," he chuckled, "you said one thin' back at Mautonic anyway.''

"What was it, Mitch?"

"Why you said we'd be on *velvet* when we found this mine. Though I dunno," he added after a pause, "whether that's the right name or not. Seems to me it's *plush*, with nap long enough to smother in. Ain't I correct, Bud?"

And Wiley admitted that his partner was "correct."

# THE CAMP FIRE

## A Meeting Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

**Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.**

**We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.**

**But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.**

**Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.**

**If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.**

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, George Bruce Marquis rises to introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine. Also he gives us something about the facts back of said story. At this same Camp-Fire we have something from one who should know something about the Lost Blue Bucket Mine almost at first hand.

Whitman College, Wall Walla, Wash.

I suppose that no tradition is more general in the Northwest than that of the Blue Bucket Mine, but it is equally true that none has a more controverted existence as to locality.

SOME place it in the John Day country in Oregon, that is, east of center of the State, while others insist that the correct location is in the eastern Cascade Mountains. Others insist that its existence is and was fabulous. However, the old-timers generally accept it as genuine, and personally I have known at least three old prospectors who were forever seeking to relocate it. Because of this I have chosen an imaginary setting as to rivers, towns, etc. The enclosed sketch-map will perhaps help the reader to an understanding of the general relation of the points mentioned in the story. As to the story of the first finding by the two emigrant children, I am giving the version as related to me by a man who had gleaned it from early settlers in the John Day country.

THE Personal Word: Born in Kansas, July, 1879. Crossed the plains with a wagon team —riding not driving—before I was two. Settled in eastern Oregon near Pendleton, of Round-Up fame, on the edge of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Here I learned something of Indians, and saw with

my goggled eyes a number of the famous though passing characters of that time. As an aside may I interject the query, how did Mr. Bechdolt fail to hear of one of them at least, Hank Vaughn, in his chronicles of gunmen?

My schooling came per the country route, small town normal, and later at Whitman College, Walla Walia, Washington, where I am at present Bursar. Am also a regularly admitted member of the Washington bar. I am married—3 children; weight, 175; and most of my sporting experience was acquired through the medium of baseball, a southpaw pitcher, without any doubt my greatest talent. Refusal to play Sunday ball kept me out of professional ball.

This ought to blow my own bugle sufficiently so I will simply add that I count it a great joy to join the Camp-Fire. Also, I've no doubt, that my story will arouse some slumbering lions in the Oregon country, who will probably roar.—G. B. MARQUIS.

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THE following, sent in by a comrade, from the son of the man who discovered the lost Blue Bucket mine, should be of interest:

Harrisburg General Hospital,
Harrisburg, Oregon.

Am enclosing a clipping, relative to discussion appearing in *Adventure*. Thought it might interest Camp-Fire.—W. W. PURDY.

The clipping is from the *Morning Oregonian* of March 7, 1922, written at Heppner, Oregon, a few days earlier:

Both my father, W. J. Herren, and my mother were members of the company that Steve Meek undertook to pilot from the crossing of Snake River to the Dalles in 1845.

MEEK had trapped on the upper Deschutes, at what was known as the Beaver Meadows, two seasons, and claimed that he had been over the route from there to The Dalles and also from there to Boise and that he could take them over a much better route than the one over the Blue Mountains by way of the Grand Ronde valley. He induced some thirty or forty families and their outfits to let him guide them over the route that he described, which was by the way of the Malheur and Harney lakes and then across the mountains to the Deschutes and down on the west side of it to The Dalles.

But traveling over a mountainous country with a saddle horse proved to be quite different from traveling with heavily loaded wagons and ox teams. They got along all right until they reached the foot of the mountains, where they found the country so rough and the hills so steep that they could not negotiate them. Meek tried to make it up several tributaries of the south Malheur, but each time had to turn back, which caused them to lose much valuable time, and as their provisions were getting quite low they became very much exasperated at Meek and finally served him notice that unless he got them out of there within a certain length of time his life would not be worth very much. He became alarmed and skipped out and left them to their fate.

SEVERAL of the young men that had saddle horses scouted the country over and finally found a ridge that led to the summit of the mountain. They concluded that if they could once get their outfits up on to this ridge they could make it over the mountains. By hitching ten and sometimes twelve yoke of oxen at a time to a wagon they finally succeeded in getting them up on to the divide.

There was no water on the divide so they had to make a dry camp. The captain of the company took all of the young people who had saddle horses to take buckets and go hunt for water. My father, who was then twenty-three years old, and his sister, who afterward became the wife of William Wallace, took their old blue wooden buckets and started out to find water.

THEY finally found a dry creek bed which they followed until they found a place where a little water was seeping through the gravel, and while my father was digging for water his sister saw something bright and picked it up.

The account given me states that they found two good-sized lumps or nuggets, and that there were many fine particles in the gravel. He was quite sure that it was gold at the time, and when he arrived at camp he showed it to some of the older men, who told him that if it was gold it would be malleable. So one of them took a hammer and hammered both pieces out flat into a saucer-shaped disk.

He had a tool-chest with a secret drawer in it. He hid the gold in the chest, therefore no one but the members of the family ever knew what became of it. I well remember the old tool-chest and its secret drawer.

WHEN they reached the summit of the mountains they camped on a meadow, and while there some Warm Spring Indians came to their camp. One of the Indians could speak a little English. He told them that if some of them would go with him to a high ridge near by they could see down into the Deschutes and Crooked River valleys. He showed them some buttes that lay south of Prineville and said that they would find water there, but no water between there and the Deschutes. He also showed them what is now called Pilot Butte, and told them if they would steer straight for that butte they would find a place in the bend of the river where a man could cross it on a horse, and for them to cross the Deschutes there and keep down on the west side, through by way of the Metolius and Tygh Valley, and that they would eventually reach The Dalles.

They strung cables across the river and ferried their outfits across, but in doing so they lost a lot of their provisions, but the gold was not lost.

The Indian evidently reached The Dalles soon after they saw him, for the missionaries at The Dalles sent men with provisions and teams to help them through.

MY PEOPLE have always hoped that some members of the family would eventually find the place where the gold was discovered, and many years ago my father gave me an old leather-bound memorandum book, with maps and diagrams showing the water courses and giving a general description of the country. It also contained quite a lengthy account of the trip and related many of the incidents that occurred.

My father was among the first to mine on Feather River in California. He kept the gold found in the Blue Mountains and took it to California with him and bought provisions with it at Sacramento in 1849.

I ONCE did some prospecting in the immediate vicinity of where the gold was found. I found some fine gold, but it was late in the Fall and the ground froze so that I had to give it up. I intended to go back some time and try it over, but have never done so. Many parties have hunted for the place. In either 1855 or 1856 one of my uncles in company with four others started for the place, but at that time the Indians were bad, and they got away with the horses and two of the party were killed by the Indians.

The account given me stated that the place where the gold was found was nearly two miles from camp in a northerly direction, and that when they got back to camp they found that others had found water in plenty much nearer than where they obtained theirs, so none of them went back to the place and my father and his sister were undoubtedly the only members of the party that ever saw where it came from.

We have had many inquiries regarding the place, but have always avoided giving any definite information regarding its exact location.—W. H. HERREN.

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AT THE last minute a story by John T. Rowland, whose name appears among the authors on the cover, had to be taken out of this issue. There had been a mistake in estimating the length of the material for the issue and when it came down in type something had to give. As this story happened to give just the amount of space needed, it had to be the victim. At that stage of the game no change could be made on the cover, covers being printed ahead of the body of the book. Naturally we're sorry for the mistake and of course Mr. Rowland's story will appear in a future number.

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WHO can tell us more about close-ups of the northern lights?

Spillan River Post Office,
Porchu Island, B. C.

Here comes an old stiff who wants to be introduced. I was born in Canada East and have been in this country about twenty-five years off and on and I like this north country with its great sunsets and its northern lights. I want to ask the comrades at the Camp-Fire if they were ever directly under the northern lights and saw them at work as I have. I will try to tell you how they look.

ABOUT three years ago I was hand-logging and had to get a log off the beach at high tide and in calm weather. It was very calm when I pushed my boat out into the channel and found myself directly under the northern lights. To see them at best I lay on my back in my skiff; the lights were very low, less than one hundred feet above me. They (the lights) were in streaks of blue and white; the blue was clear blue. I could see far up into the blue, but not to the top, as I will explain later. A blue streak, say seven, nine, twelve or fifteen feet wide and stretching clean across the channel from land to land in straight lines seven feet at both ends or nine feet at both ends, and those blue streaks were the same width a long ways up into the sky.

The white streaks on both sides made the walls of the blue and were as clearly defined. The white streaks were steamy or fleecy cloud but *full of light*. Both streaks were going south slowly. (Now get this: Imagine that you are looking up through a clear blue cake of ice, a cloudy cake on both sides).

FROM the white steamy streak south of the blue "a light" shaped like a piece of corrugated roof iron would go up through the blue into the white streak north of the blue and so on up north as far as I could see, and the farther up into the sky that the lights would go through the blue, the bigger they were, and that, I think, is the reason why I could not see to the tip. The "light" that worked up through the blue from one white streak to the other was a soft light moved, not like lightning, but like a northern light, slowly.

I worked on the night-shift at Nome, Alaska, but never noticed the northern light as I did here three years ago. Those northern lights that I am telling you about were in streaks as far north as I could see and were over the steamboat channel between Louis Island and Kennedy Island. So I expect to hear of those lights from steamboat men, as they may have seen them often.—A. D. STEWART.

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ONE of you took exception to the brand of Anglo-Chinese dialect used in fiction magazines, including our own. In replying, I asked him whether all Chinese handle English in the same way. Here is his answer:

Dundalk, Maryland.

Now Chinese is like the people who speak it, very peculiar. Most philologists believe that all primitive languages started out in life in about the same manner, but the group of dialects comprehended under the name of Chinese have followed a course of development peculiarly their own and one that has rendered them altogether different and distinct from all other tongues, even those belonging to the same linguistic stock. While the dialects are all different, yet, in some respects, they are all alike. The language is based on simple monosyllables, each one a complete word. The number varies from about nine hundred in Cantonese to about four hundred in the Pekin dialect, the so-called Mandarin Chinese. These two dialects mark the two extremes of Chinese speech, Cantonese being considered the most representative of native development, while the dialect of Pekin has been modified by the Manchu conquerors who were originally of Ural-Altaic or Finnish stock. Yet with all the modification that it has undergone it still preserved its distinctive Chinese character.

Since the language contains thousands of words with but a few hundred sounds to express them, it long ago became necessary to invent some expedient in order to distinguish one from another. The principal three are as follows: (a) Doubling the

word, thus, *ko*-elder brother. When used in that sense and under circumstances where there is danger of ambiguity, it is doubled, *ko ko*. (b) Interposing an aspirate, thus, *tsoy* becomes *t'soy*, *chun* is *c'hun* or *ch'un*. (c) And last and most distinctive of all is the introduction of inflections or tones, rising, falling, upper even, lower even, etc.

Now the point that we're trying to make is this, the structure of the language together with the necessary inflections, insures that no dialect will differ from another except along certain lines. Furthermore they are all bound together by the written language, which is the same for all dialects. It is only fair, then, to assume that one Chinaman will handle a foreign language like another, regardless of what part of the empire he hails from. And that has been my experience, having came in contact with thousands of Chinamen. Differences there undoubtedly are, but they are not apparent to the ear of an Occidental.

ON TOP of that, all these dialects resemble one another in that they possess no grammar in our sense of the word—no gender, moods, tenses or number. Sentences are put together with the least amount of words possible to make the meaning clear. And this accounts for the queer way in which all Chinamen handle our grammar, avoiding the use of prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions and auxiliary verbs wherever possible to do so. Now that *r* again: while it is true that an *r* appears in the north of China it is a modified sound, more like *ah*.

I will defy any one to show a native Chinese name, geographical or otherwise, in which this sound occurs. In addition the very way in which the spoken sounds are produced, *i. e.*, with the lips, teeth and tip of the tongue, with the tongue always in contact with the teeth, renders it almost impossible to pronounce the sound in question with any clearness.—W. J. SHERWOOD.

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SOMETHING from Thompson Burtis in connection with his story in this issue:

Godman Field, Camp Knox,
Stithton, Kentucky.

If you people up there think that maybe some of the situations are a little unusual for a baseball game between two Texas towns I'll be glad to dig up a paragraph or two for Camp-Fire to show that the story sticks closely to fact.

The tremendous rivalry in some annual series is almost funny. The spirit of the crowd and the lengths to which the teams will go to win is not overdrawn in the story.

Regarding the principal character, *Alden*. The original of *Alden* is my ex-roommate and good friend Dick Aldsworth. As mentioned in the story, he did pitch for the Philadelphia Athletics on the tag end of 1915 or 16, and is prevented from following a big league career through injuries to his arm and leg. The story is a fairly truthful composite of some of his experiences pitching around Texas on week-ends. He has read and approved it, incidentally, so that the closeness of the story to life need not worry any one.

I have just emerged from some hectic weeks during which the bombing of the *Alabama*, the war in West Virginia, changing station and a flock of cross-country trips through Ohio, Tennessee and Illinois have kept me busy.—BURTIS.

CLEAR back to 1920. Two letters put together as one, one of them in answer to a query of mine:

Phœnix, Arizona.

Roy Bean was the greatest joke (and one of the greatest tragedies at times) that western Texas has ever known. He was a saloon man. (I have heard the name of his saloon mentioned, but can't recall it just now.) And he "held court" in his saloon and, believe me or not, "court" sessions were opened and adjourned at least twenty times each day.

IT WAS not considered "good form" to pull a gun in "Roy Bean's place." (I have all this from the very best authority.) For instance: A tourist from the East stepped off the train one day, went in to "Bean's Place" and ordered a bottle of beer (ordinarily costing 50c.) and laid a twenty-dollar gold-piece on the bar to pay for it. Bean politely pocketed said $20 and when the stranger asked for his "change" and, on being denied, started an argument, oh boy! Roy Bean declared, "court's in session" and *fined* the man $19.50 for *disturbing* the peace.

Bean held sway over the entire region surrounding Langtry (named for Lillie Langtry, the "Jersey Lily"). The phrase: "The Law West of the Pecos" has been associated with Roy Bean, I can safely say, for at least thirty-two years. My people came to Texas in 1882 and I am writing this under the advisement and coaching of one for whose good memory I have all the respect in the world—my mother. I could sit here and ask her leading questions about a good many "makers of history" and have Hugh Pendexter backed off the board (fat chance). But I just rise to remark that my family have always been in the van of American civilization. The old family Bible has two such names any way. Gen. Geo. R. Clark and David William.

But Roy Bean *was* the Law West of the Pecos and don't forget it lest his ghost come to "hant yuh" with his famous .45 in one hand and his derringer in the other. (He packed two of each.).

BY THE way! "How come" I never see anything about John Wesley Hardin? He *was* a killer—twenty-seven notches on his gun—(beg pardon, twenty-six, for with the killing of Hardin, old Uncle John Selman made *his* twenty-seventh known to have fallen under his gun—not counting Mexicans and "Injuns.").

Edgar Young asks: "What is the spirit of Adventure?" My idea is, that it is that which makes a small boy break a window or a —— fool wear a yellow ribbon on St. Patrick's Day.—ALBERT L. FITZGERALD.

There seems to be a lot of argument in Camp-Fire about the death of "Billy the Kid." At the time of the demise of Billy I was a mere child, but my grandad was a peace officer in El Paso, Texas, and he was justice of the peace at the time Selman, then constable of El Paso, killed John Wesley Hardin. The old gentleman was quite a friend of "Pat" Garrett and said that the description of the killing of Billy the Kid as given by Chas. Siringo (author of "A Texas Cowboy," "Fifteen Years On the Hurricane Deck of a Spanish Pony" and "A Cowboy Detective") tallies in every respect with

Garrett's version of the happening. In fact, the old gentleman thought very likely that Siringo got his version from Garrett. Furthermore, my next-door neighbor, Mr. B. H. Lee, was at that time stock inspector for Lincoln County, and he says that Siringo should be taken as an authority.

Now some of you birds beat it for a bookstore and look for a little paper-backed book, either "A Texas Cowboy" or "Fifteen Years On the Hurricane Deck of a Spanish Pony." (Price about 25 cents).

My grandfather's name was David S. Farrell, better known as "Judge," and any real old-timer from El Paso to Pecos will remember him.

The old Judge was also quite a friend of Roy Bean and told me a story of the finding of the dead body of a Chinaman in Bean's jurisdiction. On the corpse was found $150 in cash and a .45 Colt six-shooter. Bean as justice of the peace fined the corpse $150 for carrying concealed weapons.

Well, I've had my say and as the smoke is getting in my eyes, I'll move around to the other side of the Camp-Fire and listen for a while.—ALBERT L. FITZGERALD.

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A FEW words concerning his story in this issue from Merlin Moore Taylor:

Chicago.

The story was roughly jotted down between desperate sieges of jungle-fever in New Guinea last year, following my return from a trip into previously unexplored regions of cannibal land. Most of it came from *Brennan* himself, for the farm down in Queensland palled after a couple of years and he came back to Papua, hating it as much as ever but unable to resist its lure. I can see him now, with his long piratical mustaches, sitting beside my exceedingly lumpy bed, telling his yarns of the early days and breaking into them every hour to get up and feed me the lone spoonful of champagne which the doctor ordered because my quinine-loaded stomach refused anything else.

Incidentally, did you know that *Adventure* has quite a hold in Australia and New Zealand? In Sydney I was browsing in a second-hand book and magazine store and I saw a stack of well-thumbed *Adventures*. "Do you write for that?" asked the salesman, who knew I wrote stories. "No," I said regretfully, "I never broke in yet. But I hope to some day." "Quite so," said he. "I think everybody reads the —— thing."—MERLIN MOORE TAYLOR.

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ONCE in a while I let a bit of praise for our magazine and writers stay in a Camp-Fire letter, but I think you'll bear witness that it's seldom and that knocks get several times more hearing in our columns than do boosts.

Comrade Nason of our writers' brigade is asked to identify the scene of "A Can of Jam."

Philadelphia.

Old comrades of the Camp-Fire—yes, old comrades; for these many years I have sat just within the shadows, watching your comings and goings, hearing your voices amid the crackling of the flames, scanning your faces and the expressions found there by the searching gleams of fire-light, and finally watching you drift away into the shadows again, some never to return.

But as the spirit moves me to step forward now and become known to you as I have known you these ten years, I will enter the fire-glow with a few remarks and also a few questions.

I AM with you heart and soul in your efforts to produce a publication free from the usual vapid, sex-problem "stuff" dished up to us in place of fiction. More power to you! And Camp-Fire is surely a little bit of all right. I have followed Talbot Mundy's stories and find him "there"; also his little argument with the Canadian. I have heard the same sentiments that he has his character express voiced by both Diggers and Kanucks.

"Howdy!" I just saw a new comrade at the Fire. Listen, L. H. Nason, could that little story called "A Can of Jam" have had its setting near Montzeville, France, during the latter week of September, 1918? That "handle" sounds familiar, Nason, but which regiment were you starving in, the 18th, 10th or 76th? I claim the latter as my meal-ticket at that time. I surely remember that ere battle and she was some battle. Go to it, Nason; if they call your stuff fiction, there never was a war.

By the way, I have somewhere in my possession notes and a skeleton story based upon the yarn of an old sailor I met in Frisco some years ago. He told a very lurid tale of the life of an old salt by the name of James or Joseph Young who was shipwrecked on one of the Hawaiian Islands about 1800, married a Hawaiian princess and later became the ruler of one of the smaller islands. Now this sounds very much like something I have read except the name and I do not care to steal some one else's thunder. Perhaps some student comrade can help me out.

I must fade out into the shadows again, but remember that I am always present though my voice is seldom lifted in council. May your trails be smooth and your portages easy.—WARREN A. MCCARNS.

While I'm at it, here's another with praise. A very interesting one which would be made rather meaningless if reference to particular author and story were cut out.

I'll hang on to myself and not get started talking on one point he makes—that the little criminals get punished while the big ones go untouched. But it's hard work to keep quiet. I'm so tired hearing the roar about burglars, hold-ups and such while politicians, big interests and such continue cheerfully robbing and betraying the country for the benefit of their personal pockets. Yes, burglars and such are "enemies of society" and must be punished but when, oh when, will Americans learn that betrayal of a public office, grafting off public moneys, making the many victims of the few are crimes against democracy itself, against the whole people and their whole future, a hundred times more serious than crimes against

individuals and a hundred times more in need of severe punishment?

Surely, put burglars, etc., in the "pen," but down in the sub-cellar, serving longer terms, put the public official who lets his office, even once, serve personal ends instead of only the people's ends; the man or groups of men who sells local or general government inferior material or at inflated prices; the officials who help or let them do it; the groups or men, labor or capital, who force high rates on necessities, robbing the people as a whole for their own benefit, the — but why go on? And I promised not to.

State Prison at Folsom,
Represa, Calif.

I am thirty-nine years of age and have spent just thirty-nine of those years in the so-called underworld. This is not to boast, neither is it written in hope that I may create a little sympathy for what some may term my unfortunate lot in life. I'm merely stating a fact.

I HAVE just finished reading the novel "Men of the Night," by Gordon Young. To simply say that Mr. Young has written a powerful "close-up" of the Underworld would be too tame in the way of appreciation. I do not expect the supercilious simps of the so-called select social or society set to agree with me. Those who look no farther than a cabaret or a house of ill-fame or a penitentiary to find the world *beneath* them, or those who can only see adventure in mob violence, or a posse running to earth and capturing a lone man will never be able to tolerate or understand anything that savors of decency or sincerity or a good worthy purpose in the world of less fortunate beings.

A great many people figure that every crime committed gives the offender a passport into Crookdom. Not so, there is a class of persons who fall from the higher or upper world to crime of a lewd nature, but those who violate women and children, etc., are either insane or void of any energy aside from lust and in either case their character is so weak that they would be as much, if not more, a menace to the Underworld as they have proved themselves to be to the world at large.

I'm not trying to uphold crime or crooks; we know that we are in the wrong, and there's not a man among us bright enough to read his own name who is not desirous of some day doing that "comeback" stunt and who does not build plans against the arrival of that time. One great reason that we don't get back sooner is because we, too, are capable of seeing some of the rottenness on the other side of the fence, and feel at times that the great hubbub raised is to cover up some of the larger acts of "two-faced" society by enlarging on the smaller offences of little crooks.

TAKE it from me, Gordon Young "knows his stuff" and has the moral courage to "tell the world" about it. When I read the opening chapters wherein he shows the foppishness, the vices, etc., of that class of monied idiots who consider their wealth an excuse for everything else, I said, "Great God, how I hope it soaks in!"

I write to thank Mr. Young through you for writing this story, and your magazine for publishing it. I'm tired of crime, and I'm trying to get a start along the road to a useful life, but I do not intend to use the shortcomings of others as a stepping-stone. (I think you get me.) Therefore it gives a man courage in the fight, and hope for better things to know that there are honest men in the world who understand the situation so well and can write and print stories and articles to show that manhood (undeveloped though it may be) is in the underworld awaiting a square chance to grow. The loyalty of Young's characters pictures that fact to a "T."

"I've read all of Gordon Young's work in *Adventure* and like "Men of the Night" best. *Adventure* always affords me pleasure; it has made many a dull hour in a prison cell lighter. It is a great dispeller of gloom, but Gordon Young makes your magazine a necessity to me. — —— ——.

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THIS letter goes back into the West of the '70's and '80's:

Lovington, New Mexico.

I have thought for a long time that I would write, but for some reason I had not done so till now. Seeing something about steer-riding a while back in your magazine, I thought I would tell my experiences when a boy.

I RAN away from home in West Texas when I was fifteen years old. I was raised on horseback and no Indian could beat me riding. I left one night on my pony, headed for the far West. I had no place in view but to get far away out into the world. I had always been a puny boy, did not weigh over 90 pounds and was four feet eight inches tall. I headed for the Yellow House Cañon, Brigman Brothers Ranch. There I found a big outfit ready to drive to Arizona.

I threw in with them and we drove all the way by the way of Fort Sumner, N. M., Pinos Wells, the Manzanos, Ysletto, Winslow, Halbrook, Flagstaff, Williams, Ashfork, then on northwest through Skull Valley on to Big Chino Valley. There we came to our journey's end, a big ranch. We will call it the American Ranch.

THAT Fall there was a great cowboy gathering where there was the greatest riding it has ever been my good luck to see. Some of the wildest stunts were pulled off of any place on earth; and one of the wildest was riding wild bulls three years old that never had a rope on. They were driven down from the head of the Hasayampa River and the Verde, and one of the parts I played was to ride one of those wild bulls.

I was entered with three other men as the best riders in Arizona. Now they met at we will say, Vulture, Arizona. There at the grounds where the stunts were pulled off, they had a long chute at the end that was divided into two parts, six or seven feet high with a big plank across so you could sit down, and they would drive the wild bull through them. You had to fall down on the bull astride with nothing to hold on to but your spur.

Believe me, they were hard to ride. They were so big around and my legs so short that it was hard to get a grip on his sides. We had laid off our guns so

we could fly when we got what was coming to us, and that was not long. I rode my bull five minutes, when he fell to his knees and I fell over his head. There were two men on horseback that rode on each side so they could kill the bull before he could get to the riders. He almost got me before they killed him. Now those were the real wild times in the Wild West, 1882.

While it is part of another story to say how I looked in three years, but I was a big stout man, six feet tall and weighed in my shirt sleeves 170 pounds. I have my picture yet taken at Tucson, Arizona, in 1885, with my hair down on my shoulders. My own folks did not know me, for they thought I was dead. Later I may write of a real adventure in the West.—S. LOVE.

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HERE'S a tightly packed little bunch of adventure from Mexico to Alaska:

Palatka, Florida.

Your correspondence in this issue is certainly refreshing—the hiking projects, I mean. Say, is it possible to get Dawson? I should smile. How do I know? I done it, sir, or somepin just as good.

Sit around and keep my name out of it, that's all I ask. I crossed the Canadian Rockies in mid-Winter nearly a score years back, when they bet us in Peg we would never get through. Jumped off at Quebec and finished t'other end in little over six months, traveling without a nickel and going on all four cylinders where the going was good. But some tough in the out places—north shore Lake Superior, frinstance.

First man to hike new steel of Grand Trunk Pacific to Rupe—twenty foot of snow piled up either side track when they linked up steel at Fort Fraser and oh boy! how the champagne flew for three days! Out of Spokane that trip and made it as far as Ketchikan. Hardest stunt up Cariboo Road 320 miles through snow slush. Jumped a liner 500 miles on return trip and sat me down at saloon table and helped 'em out with their grub. Six hundred miles through Mexico—minus language or *dinero*. Tell some of those chechakos to write in for info if they want to make a trip and get put wise. Was in Villa's camp three days and got away with my hair. Lowest temp. through Rockies sixty-three below zero and stayed at that three days.—A. B. C.

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ANOTHER example of meeting old friends in strange places:

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

I happened to notice one small item about meeting old friends in strange places and I thought the following incident might prove of interest to some of the comrades of our old Camp-Fire company.

I SAILED before the mast for some years and had occasion to meet up with all sorts of experiences, made many friends all over the world and hope some of them will see this and maybe write me a line or two. Here's hoping so anyway!

I joined an old English tramp in New York some years ago and found myself shipmate with a pretty good bunch of fellows, mostly English, a few Norwegians and a Greek or two. Among the crew were one big strapping ex-guardsman, a Cockney by the name of Moody whom everybody called "Soldier Moody," and "Old Cap Fisher" a Newcastle-on-Tyne man. Moody wasn't much of a sailor but he sure was good company in the forecastle. He knew all the latest music-hall ditties and had a very good tenor voice. Old Man Fisher was about the best sailor aboard and carried a Board of Trade master's certificate but couldn't find any job as mate or captain and had to sail as a plain A. B. I was a young fellow at the time and sailed as ordinary seaman. We were bound for Fremantle in Western Australia and had therefore lots of time to get acquainted.

A WEEK or so out of New York the galley-boy took sick and I was put in charge of the pots and pans and had to help the cook with his cooking. During my stay in the galley I naturally fell heir to all the stray bits of plum-duff and other good things from the officers' mess and I would slip them to Moody and old Cap, thereby cementing our friendship wonderfully. No one who has never sailed the seas in the old days can appreciate what a bit of cabin food means to a sailor.

Now everybody could see that Moody would never make a sailor. Moody would tell you so himself and he was scheming all through the trip how he could possibly manage to get paid off when we got to Australia. He managed it though. He took awful "sick" and even fooled the doctor of the port and, just to get rid of him, the Captain paid off "Soldier Moody." It wasn't long before Moody had a job singing in a free-and-easy music hall and there we left him.

IN DUE time we all got paid off in London and scattered to all corners of the globe. I got myself a job on a R. R. boat running between Harwich, England, and Antwerp. Then I went up to Sweden for a Summer season in the lumber trade and finally drifted back to Antwerp to spend some loose change I had accumulated and ran right plumb into "old man Fisher."

Now Fisher had a good-sized roll himself and we decided to go back to London and have a good time there, which we promptly did. Now London is a pretty good-sized town itself and full of surprises, but the biggest surprise of all we got while walking down Commercial Road. Suddenly "old man Fisher" started to shout and point excitedly to a big strapping fellow sitting on top of a bus. The big fellow turned in his seat and recognized us and took up the hollering and, believe me, we made some noise. Yes sir, it was our old friend Soldier Moody. After holding a little reunion in the middle of Commercial Road we hiked to a little pub called the "Three Nuns." But what happened there is another story and has nothing to do with this one.—FRED ROYAL.

P. S.—I forgot to mention the name of the old English tramp was S. S. *Nomston*, Grange Halder Line, East India Docks, London, England.

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MOST of the original paintings made for *Adventure* covers that have appeared during the past year or so are for sale to the highest bidders. No bid of less than ten dollars per cover considered. Covers will be sent express collect to the highest bidders about July first.—A. S. H.


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I write to thank Mr. Young through you for writing this story, and your magazine for publishing it. I'm tired of crime, and I'm trying to get start along the road to a useful life, but I do not to use the shortcomings of others as a step.

**These services of *Adventure*, mo... get me.) Therefore it gives one.** They involve much time, work and expense on our part, ... turn only that you **read and observe the simple rules**, thus saving need delay and trouble for us. The whole spirit of the magazine is one of friendli... No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help we're re... and willing to try. **Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of ti... Allow for two or three months between sending and publica...**

## Identification Cards

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:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

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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A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying*.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

## Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

## Back Issues of *Adventure*

*The Boston Magazine Exchange, 24 T Wharf, Boston, Mass., can supply* Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL SELL: Jan., June, Oct., Dec., 1915; Apl., May, July, Oct., Dec., 1916; all 1917 except July and August; all 1918, except 1st Feb.; all 1919 except 1st Jan., 2nd March and 2nd June. Twenty-five cents each, post-paid.—Address C. E. Douglas, Vienna, W. Va.

WILL SELL: Volumes 1 to 34, complete except volumes 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, and 26, each of which have one issue missing. All in good condition. Prefer to dispose all to one person, rather than odd volumes. What offer?—Address W. R. Tilton, Prairie Depot, Ohio.

WILL SELL: All issues from July 18th, 1920 up to, and including Dec. 30th, 1922, excepting Jan., Feb. 30th, April 10th, 20th, 30th, July and Oct. 30th, 1922. What offers?—Address R. H. Briggs, 4058 Park Ave., Chicago, Ill.

WILL SELL: Twenty issues of 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922. All in good condition. Two dollars takes the lot.—Address Christopher G. Ennis, 344 Willow St., Waterbury, Conn.

WILL SELL: All issues from June 18th, 1920, to date. Best offer.—Address A. C. Harvey, 38 Chase Ave., Springfield, Mass.

WILL BUY: Mid-May, 1919. I will pay any old price.—Address L. H. Wilson, Luning, Nevada.

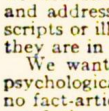
## Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "... staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is 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 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 also no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. use fiction of almost any length; under 3,000 welcomed.

## Camp-Fire Stations



Our Camp-Fire is extending its Stations over the world. Any one belongs who wishes to. Any member desiring to meet those who are still hitting the trails may maintain a Station in his home or shop 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 and maintain his Station in good repute. 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. Address letters regarding stations to J. Cox.

## 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 13, 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.

## Missing Friends or Relatives

(*See Lost Trails*)

## Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to use as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail to be 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.

## Addresses

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, ... Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

could fly when we got what was coming to us, d that was not long. I rode my bull five minutes, en he fell to his knees and I fell over his head. ere were two men on horseback that rode on each le so they could kill the bull before he could get e riders. He almost got

name of Moody wh Moody," and Tyne

## Service Bureau of Information and Activities Everywhere and 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, bject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any sponsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been osen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. e have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any ay by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

**Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) 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.**

**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.**

**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.**

**Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**

**Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

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ERIAH BROWN, 1624 Bigelow Ave., Olympia, Wash. hips, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanhip, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography f U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific anks. (*See next section.*)

**The Sea Part 2 British Waters**
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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), Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture.

**★ Australia and Tasmania**
ALBERT GOLDIE, Sydney Press Club, 51 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

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**Asia, Southern**
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, Morgan City, La. Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, western China, Borneo. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

★ *(Enclose addressed envelop with 5 cents—in Mr. Beadle's case 12 cents—in stamps NOT attached)*

**14. Africa Part 1 Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria**
ROBERT SIMPSON, care *Adventure*. Labor trade, expenses, outfitting, living conditions, tribal customs, transportation.

**15. ★ Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and the Upper Congo**
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J. L. BINDA, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York. Greece, Jugo-Slavia, Bulgaria, Roumania. Travel, history, topography, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

**23. Albania**
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St. N. W., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

**24. Scandinavia**
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St. N. W., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

**25. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland**
FRED F. FLEISCHER, 426 15th St., West New York, N. J. History, politics, customs, languages, trade opportunities, travel, sports, outdoor life.

**26. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile**
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

**27. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina**
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

**28. Central America**
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras. British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

**29. Mexico Part 1 Northern**
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

**30. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California**
C. R. MAHAFFEY, Box 182, Salinas, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

**31. ✠ Canada Part 1 Height of Land and Northern Quebec**
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Also Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); southeastern Ungava 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.*)

**32. ✠ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario**
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping, aviation. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

**33. ✠ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario**
GEORGE L. CATTON, 94 Metcalfe St., Woodstock, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

**34. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District**
T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing climate, topography, travel.

**35. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta**
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THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1436 Hawthorne Terrace, Berkeley, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

**39. Baffinland and Greenland**
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**41. Western U. S. Part 2 Colo. and Wyo.**
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**42. Western U. S. Part 3 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains**
CHESTER C. DAVIS, Helena, Mont. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

**43. Western U. S. Part 4 Idaho and Surrounding Country**
OTTO M. JONES, Warden, Bureau of Fish and Game, Boise, Idaho. Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, outdoor photography, history and inhabitants.

**44. Western U. S. Part 5 Tex. and Okla.**
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**45. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.**
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**47. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan**
J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

**48. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River**
GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (*See next section.*)

**49. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Miss., O., Tenn., Michigan and Hudson Valleys, Great Lakes, Adirondacks**
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Automobile, motor-cycle, bicycle and pedestrian touring; shanty-boating, river-tripping; outfit suggestions, including those for the transcontinental trails; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs.

✠ *(Enclose addressed envelop with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached)*

**50. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers**

HOWARD A. SHANNON, care Howard-Leach Co., Inc., 308 Law Bldg., Norfolk, Va. Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

**51. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.**

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**52. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Maine**

DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

## RADIO

DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

## MINING and PROSPECTING

VICTOR SHAW, Shaw Mines Corp., Silverton, Colo. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

## OLD SONGS THAT MEN HAVE SUNG

ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 745 Riverside Drive, New York City. A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads —songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.

## FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

**Salt and Fresh Water Fishing**

J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

## WEAPONS, PAST and PRESENT

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

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. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

C.—**Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800.** Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

## MOUNTAINS and MOUNTAINEERING

Especially of New England. ARTHUR BENT, Appalachian Mountain Club, 1050 Tremont Bldg., Boston, Mass.

## STANDING INFORMATION

For information on trade in any part of the world, address J. L. BINDA, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York.

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 receiverships 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 Com., Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

United States Revolver Ass'n. W. A. MORRALL, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

All inquiries for information regarding the national parks, how to get there and what to do when you get there, should be addressed to the National Park Service, Washington, D. C.

### Travel in the Near East

WHERE a passport still talks and your best friend's motto is "In God We Trust:"

*Question:*—"I wish to obtain information relating to present conditions in the Balkan countries, covering trade conditions, transportation, etc. It is possible that I will cover these countries in the near future, and therefore this letter.

I would like to know especially whether an American (U. S.) passport is of any great advantage; that is, is it a real protection to person and property?

What are the present transportation conditions to and from manufacturing points?

I have been informed that it is better to purchase the money of these countries in New York than to carry a letter of credit or banker's checks. Is this true?

Is it hard, when equipped with a U. S. passport, to go from one country to another, or to travel within any of the countries after being admitted therein?

As to trade conditions: Have these countries manufactured products for exporting? If so, what is the basis of exchange—the dollar, pound or the money of the country? If the money of the country is used is the accepted value that of the dollar or the pound?

If purchases of merchandise or other products are made are the conditions covering its exporting to this country hard or unusual? Are the exporting custom duties excessive?

Using this country as a standard, are transportation costs, both passenger and freight, high or excessive?

In your opinion are conditions in the Balkans such that profit could be obtained by purchasing there with the dollar, the product to be exported to this country?

Are American commercial travelers welcomed in these countries and afforded opportunities to buy and sell?

Should note of this inquiry be made in the 'Ask Adventure' I would appreciate it if my name be not used."— —— ——, New York.

*Answer*, by Mr. Binda:—I will answer your questions in the order in which you ask them.

It is practically impossible to travel in the Near East without a passport, and an American passport is of especially great value at the present time. If you are American born or your parentage is not that of any of the nations of the Balkans, you will certainly obtain real protection in person and property, as far as this Government or its representatives abroad are concerned. My advice is—get an American passport and hold on to it, because every effort will certainly be made to steal it from you.

The present transportation conditions are generally very poor; however, for the towns that you will probably visit you need not have any real worry.

You will understand with regard to this that each country controls the railways within its borders.

Let us suppose that you are traveling through Bulgaria and through Roumania. When you reach the Roumanian frontier the complete control of your train will pass into the hands of the Roumanians, and unless you are traveling on one of the "wagon-lit trains" (or Pullman trains) you will find that you will be obliged to change trains at every frontier, for most Governments will not allow any of the rolling stock to leave its own borders.

Most of the leading cities are connected up with adequate lines, but you certainly will not find the transportation facilities anything like those obtained in this country. I would advise against the purchase of foreign money of these countries in New York, and certainly advise you to carry a letter of credit, rather than any other form of money. There are laws still in vogue in a number of the countries which prevent any one from taking out of that country more than a stated amount of gold, and the fluctuations of the paper currency are so uncertain that it would be foolish for you to take any chances.

If your passport is properly viséd and presented to the right officials, there should be no trouble in traveling from one country to the other, or within the borders of any of the countries.

None of the Balkan countries have much manufactured products for exporting with the exception perhaps of a few articles of local manufacture and the products of the handiwork of the native population. These countries are principally agricultural, and their exports consist of raw material such as hides, skins, tobacco, grain, salt, fruits and nuts, etc. The basis of exchange is usually the English pound, but in a number of Balkan States you will have no difficulty in using the dollar as a basis. The accepted value is arranged by personal agreement.

As these countries are endeavoring to recover and can recover only by exporting any of their products that they can sell at a profit abroad, every facility will be accorded to any one endeavoring to trade with the merchants of the country and no custom duties will be placed on goods exported, except in a few rare cases.

I would not say that transportation costs are, under present conditions and in comparison with those of this country, high or excessive.

Any man able to make purchases with the dollar in the Balkan countries, especially one who is on the ground, should have no trouble in making a considerable profit on the transactions, providing he uses good judgment and has a special knowledge of the products which he purchases.

American travelers are especially welcome in these countries, and where they might not be accorded any special opportunities to sell, they are certainly received with open arms if they wish to buy or provide means by which the natives may turn an honest penny.

You will realize above all that the people of these countries wish to work. They are hungry and know that through work they can find their only salvation. In Bulgaria especially Americans are welcomed, for the average Bulgarian probably knows just as much about America's history and institutions as our own people. You will also be accorded a kind reception in the other countries.

***The full statement of the sections, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.***

### Notes from "A. A." Men

WRITING under date of October 5, 1922, Mr. Mahaffey gives a gloomy picture of conditions in his territory. Maybe things will have changed—for the better, let's hope—before the subjoined letter meets your eye:

Salinas, Calif.

I expect to stay in California during the Winter as late reports from Mexico indicate a first-class knock-down and drag-out fuss there in the near future. Near Topolobampo there was a big scare over the Yaqui and Maya Indians rebelling against the Government, and a party of bandits raided a place called El Fuerte a few days ago, eighteen being killed, one captured and six escaping. You can see that things are not as rosy as they seem.

You might put in a little notice in "A. A." advising all concerned to go easy on investing in Mexico or going there until present conditions simmer down. According to good authority the present Administration will not last six months unless recognized by the United States, and betting is open in the City of Mexico whether Obregon will last that long.—C. R. MAHAFFEY.

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A COUPLE of comments herewith, made by Brother "Big Jim" Harriman relative to Q's and A's which have appeared in recent issues. Too bad that mechanical difficulties prevent reproduction of the photograph to which he refers:

Los Angeles, Calif.

In November 10th, 1922, issue Captain Hanson has transposed his Latin names for elk and moose. I have my encyclopedia-dictionary before me—Century—and it says *cervus canadensis* is the wapiti or elk. Not *alces palmatus*. Anyhow, *palmatus* indicates palmation such as a moose carries. A wapiti has pronged antlers and no palmation.

The only elk the United States has produced, in the American acceptation of the name, with palmation, is the elk of Arizona and New Mexico, which migrated to old Mexico in the late seventies. I enclose a photograph of a pair of horns of this elk.

They hang on the walls of the Becker Mercantile Company's office in Springerville, Arizona. Mr. Becker says these elk were plentiful there in '74 to '78.

Regarding the Sphinx, described by Mr. Binda, would like to say that the British Museum contains a beard, carved in stone, that fell off the face of the Sphinx and was dug up just below. Dr. J. W. Phillips of Mobile, Alabama, a man I am proud to call my friend, has earned the admiration of Egyptologists by his solution of the Sphinx riddle.

A figure with a man's face, a woman's breasts, a lion's body, it was carved to represent LIFE. This view is now accepted by students of Egyptology as correct. If Mr. Binda will excuse my addenda.—E. E. HARRIMAN.

***"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.***

### The "Laughing Plant"

CANDIDLY, Brother Giddings is stumped. Anybody coming to the rescue?

*Question:*—"I am enclosing an article which I found in a book.

I would like to know the name of the plant.

It must have a scientific name beside the one mentioned in said article.

Do you know of any firms in the United States or Arabia that could get the seeds for me?"—EDWARD BOURE, Lowell, Mass.

The article which Mr. Boure encloses is as follows:

*The Laughing Plant.*—In Palgrave's "Central and Eastern Arabia" we are told some interesting facts concerning this singular plant. The active principle appears to reside principally in the seeds. These seeds, when powdered and administered in full judicious quantities, produce effects similar to those produced by laughing gas. The person to whom the drug is administered laughs, sings, dances, and conducts himself in the most extravagant and ludicrous style. After an hour of this intense excitement he falls asleep; and upon awaking, he is totally unconscious of anything that he said or did while under the influence of the drug. It is a common joke to put a small quantity into the coffee of some unsuspecting individual, in order to enjoy a laugh at his antics; and it is said that, when judiciously given, it has never produced any evil consequences. An overdose would be dangerous.

The plant which bears these berries grows only in Arabia. In Kascem it hardly attains the height of six inches above the ground, while in Oman it has reached the height of three or four feet, with widespreading limbs. The stems are woody, and when stripped of the bark have a yellowish tinge; the leaf is of a dark-green color and pinnated with about twenty leaflets on either side; the stalks are smooth and shining; the flowers are yellow, and grow in tufts, and the anthers numerous. The fruit is a capsule, stuffed with a greenish padding, in which lie embedded two or three black seeds, in size and shape much like French beans. Their taste is sweetish, but with a peculiar opiate flavor. The smell is overpowering and almost sickly.

*Answer*, by Capt. Giddings:—I am sorry I can't supplement your information on the laughing plant, and I am going to pass your question on through *Adventure's* columns in the hope that some one scientifically inclined will come forward and help us out.

Write to the British vice-consul, Muscat, Arabia, and ask him if he can supply you with seeds. Stay —I don't know—might not this be classed as a pernicious drug?

### U. S. Army Equipment

MR. BARKER hies him back to the time when the Federal military establishment consisted of some 1,200 men all told:

*Question:*—"I picked up an old flint-lock pistol the other day marked 'U. S., Midltn Conn.' on the lock. It also has a sliding safety in back of hammer but no date; swivel ramrod and one band over barrel. Please tell me the date of this pistol, also if it is a rare one. Enclosed you will find postage for return mail."—RAE UNDERHOFLER, Lansdale, Pa.

Brookline, Mass.

*Answer*, by Mr. Barker:—It was not until recently that uniformity of equipment, except in the regular or standing army, was compulsory. Besides the regular army there has always been a militia, equipped by each State and intended primarily for State service, being liable to service for the United States in time of extreme danger upon call of the President.

The arms of the militia of the several States have differed greatly. When you consider that in 1790 the regular army consisted of one regiment of infantry and some artillery, the total number of officers and men being 1,216, and that at the outbreak of the War of 1812, the regular army, called the military peace establishment, contained only 5,728 men and officers in all, it may be seen that it was not necessary for the Government to maintain factories for the making of arms.

The Government was undoubtedly able from 1795 to 1813 to equip its regular army from the two factories at Springfield and Harper's Ferry. Other arms were purchased from individuals by contract, but were sold to the States for the militia. At the outbreak of the War of 1812 the regular army was raised by act of Congress to 35,579 enlisted men, and at its close in 1815 there were 32,160. Hence in 1812 the two Government armories being incapable of supplying so many, the rule was abandoned for the time, and contract arms and those of other purchase were issued to the regular army as well as to the militia.

About ten or a dozen contractors furnished most of these pistols. The one that you ask about is, I assume from your description, the Model 1819 Army, which was made in three sizes by S. North, Henry Evans, and Harper's Ferry. It is of caliber .54, smooth-bore, with a length of 17¾ inches, the barrel being 10⅛ inches. Two smaller sizes were 15½ and 13½ inches respectively. They were provided with an exterior sliding safety bolt to hold at safety.

These were used in the Black Hawk, Seminole and Mexican Wars. They were usually marked with the name of the maker and date when made. I have a Model 1819 Navy, which was precisely the same, save that it had not the safety bolt, and was usually marked, "U. S. N.," and the only mark on it is an "M" on the lock-plate. One can not depend upon the marks for identification, but must be familiar with the pistol.

As you may judge, the army of that period was large enough to call for quite a quantity of these pistols, and as they continued in use in the service long after the revolver was invented and manufactured in 1836, I should not call them rare from the standpoint of a collector.

***Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.***

### Railroading in China

WHO is this Mongolian Jim Hill who builds his own railroad in emulation of the empire-builder he used to work for?

*Question:*—"I am a railroad man; I have heard the rumor around that the Chinese have sent to this country for men to go over there and run the roads for them. Now then is that true? If so, could you give me the address of the office through which that is handled? Also the kind of work that they have to do? Also a general idea of the country and its resources?"—ALLAN CLARKE, Medicine Hat, Alta., Can.

*Answer*, by Mr. Halton:—Regret that I can not offer any encouragement, as natives are employed almost exclusively on the railroads of China.

One of the best roads in South China was built and is operated entirely by a man who was formerly a section hand on the Great Northern Railroad of this country in the early days when Chinese labor was used on the roads here.

There is not a foreigner connected with the road in any capacity. Some of the northern roads have European officials, but unless you were a highly specialized civil or mechanical engineer the opportunity would be practically nil.

Regret that I can not give you any encouragement.

### Down the Mississippi by Towboat

NO OTHER through passenger service from St. Louis to New Orleans. And it's a great life if you're not in a hurry:

*Question:*—"As my sidekick and I are leaving on a coast-to-coast trip, would like to get a little dope on Mississippi River travel. Our route is indefinite, time unlimited and eventual stop is Los Angeles.

Is there anything which we have to take precautions against?

Have done some outdoor trekking, but am far from an old-timer. Any help you can give will be appreciated."—HENRY A. CLAUSEN, Roslyn, L. I., N. Y.

*Answer*, by Mr. Zerr:—My section is limited to the Mississippi River and its tributaries, especially east. Why not come to Pittsburgh, pick up a canoe and go down the Ohio to Cairo, 968 miles? There is good water, and you could make better time than by land.

Or you could take one of the packets out of Pittsburgh for Cincinnati, at $16 per, meals and berth included, which will land you at the later terminal within three days. Then you could take a boat for Louisville, a night's ride, and you could continue your journey from there.

Would not advise a river trip west of the Mississippi. Or, how about shipping on any towboat down the Mississippi to New Orleans and then by way of the canal on one of the liners, coastwise? You could make money and still get to your destination. There is no regularly constituted through passenger service from St. Louis to New Orleans, but towboats go all the way.

### The *Haka*

IT'S the Pacific islander's native form of Dutch courage:

*Question:*—"Have been wanting for quite a while to find out more about Samoa, especially the natives and their customs. So will ask you to let me have this information. The thing I especially want to know is this:

I have traveled quite a lot myself, and during one trip I saw a native of Samoa going through the native dance. Have never been to the Samoan Isles, so never got to see the dance further than what the native went through in Honolulu.

He went through all sorts of arm movements as though going through some sort of exercise, and I noted he had a fine development of arms. How did this dance originate? It seems to come natural to me, that it has been introduced there by some one who knew the value of physical culture, and was taught to these natives for a health benefit. I would like to learn all I can about them."—CHAS. C. MCCLEARY, San Diego, Calif.

*Answer*, by Mr. Mills:—"Come natural" is right. Why should not the first essentials in physical-culture exercises come as natural to a native in the Pacific Islands as to a dweller in San Diego? All the natives of the Pacific, including the Maoris of New Zealand, have dances in which the outstanding features are familiar p. c. motions and notions.

The origin of the dance which you saw *solus* on the part of a Samoan was in the days when war-parties roamed not only over the islands, but voyaged about in their great war-canoes. The motions you saw the Samoan going through were those of the *haka* preceding a fight. You can imagine a war-party of one, two, five or six hundred natives, stark narked, bodies well oiled, spear or club in hand, stamping in unison and with more or less graceful throwing-about of arms and legs and swaying of bodies, with deep-breathing stunts working themselves up to fighting pitch.

No native tribe of the South Seas would dream of going into battle without his war-dance, which wrought the men into an ecstasy or frenzy. It took them hours and hours to get worked up to fighting pitch, and often they did this sort of thing within a few paces of the opposing enemy, neither side dreaming of striking a blow until the psychological moment had been reached. So that's that—and I hope that is just the dope you were after.

# 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.

FARMER, FRANK D. Write your mother at once. Aunt Margie dead. All will be O.K.—Address MRS. MAE LAVIS, 2441 John R St., Detroit, Mich.

RICHARDS, FRANK. Last heard of in Detroit 1921, supposed to have gone to California. Served with the 44th Canadian Infantry in France. My letters have been returned from Detroit, Michigan. Please write.—Address T. J. PROUT, Wyco, Wyoming County, West Virginia.

BLAIN, HAROLD F. (Pat) Last heard of in Kansas City, Mo. Son of Frank and Bertha Blain of Minnesota. Please write your old pal.—Address WM. P. WINSLADE, Band Section, Edgwood Arsenal, Maryland.

SKINNER, JAMES H. Last heard of in Henryville, Tenn. May be in Gadsden, or Birmingham, Alabama. Any information will be appreciated.—Address J. E. SKINNER, Route, 1, Burwell, Ga.

WAGONER, HARRY R. Last seen in Charleston, S. C. Any information will be appreciated by his pals Frank, Mack, and Smith.

"SAKE," EVAN J. About five feet nine inches tall. Explorer and surveyor. Last seen at the docks at Honolulu. The old gang would like to communicate with him as they have very important news. Any information will be appreciated.—Address VERN L. BLAND, Headquarters Co., 3rd U. S. Engrs., Schofield Barracks, H. T.

DEVER, CHARLEY. Last heard of in Leadville, Colorado. Any information as to his whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by his sister.—Address MRS. MARGARET DEVER, 1483 Amsterdam Ave., N. Y. C.

LINDSEY, PERY. Last seen in Vancouver, B. C. Write GUS.

BROWN, CARL A. Please write to mother. She is in poor health and wants you to return. Ethel is married. We all miss you.—Address EMMETT BROWN, 312 S. Griffith St., Hannibal, Mo.

BAILEY, EDGAR T. Resident of Newark, N. J. Age about forty-eight years. Last heard of at Gatun Locks, Panama Canal Zone, summer of 1918 under name of Elmer Brown. Any information will be appreciated by an old friend.—Address FRED L. MACCARROLL, 1607 Wallace St., Philadelphia, Pa.

MCCURLEY, T. J. (Bud) Last seen at Cordova, Alabama, July 1919. About sixty years of age, six feet tall, weighs about 180 lbs. Any information will be greatly appreciated by his son.—Address J. W. MCCURLEY, Route 1, Cordova, Alabama.

SENEY, A. Lumberman, black hair, blue eyes. Left Puget Sound country for Portland, fall of 1921. Any information will be appreciated by his friend.—Address JAMES HAYES, 216 4th St., Lewiston, Idaho.

VANDERBECK, ANDREW W. Last heard of while on board of the U. S. S. *General Alava* at Cavite, P. I., in 1914. Brown hair, brown eyes, five feet ten inches tall, weighs about 192 pounds. Any information will be appreciated by his sister.—Address MRS. LENA REIHL, 2253 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif.

ELS. If you see this let me hear from you through this column or write in care of Jack, same address. SIS.

SWIATKOWSKI, WILLIAM J. Resident of Chicago, Ill. Please write to your old side-kick.—Address DON ENRIQUE, Marine Barracks, San Diego, Calif.

MCCARTHY, R. N. Left for France June, 1915, with an ambulance unit, was transferred to 26th ammunition train, then to 27th Motor Lorry Unit, then to "Princess Pats." Was wounded at Vimy Ridge, sent back to Canada and discharged. Was known to have enlisted in the U. S. Army sometime in Nov. 1918 as R. N. Seeley (his mother's maiden name). Last heard of at this time. Any information will be appreciated.—Address L. T. 450, care of *Adventure.*

**THE following have been inquired for in either the December 30th or January 20th issues of Adventure. They can get the name of the inquirer from this magazine:**

ACRES, Bert; Baker, Halard; Barnard, Ella; Bowlly, Charles and John; Berry, C. R.; Bush, Henry; Dempsey, Ray; Dow, Edmund F.; Estes, Bill Adams; Fausler, J. P.; Foster, Donald A.; Frazer, John George; Garcia, Julian; (Joe) James Wing, Guy Hunter; Gilday, John E.; Grant, L. S.; Greene, Cecil; Hennessy, J. M.; Harding, Samuel Merton; Heaton, Maurice; Herrington, Ernest Chester, Joseph Forest, Roy Ray, and Philip Maitland; Keim, Albert; Kerkling, Herbert, E.; Krone, Joseph; Layton, Clyde; Leuzkee, Gottlieb Fritz; Levine, Dave; Lewis, Oscar; MacDonald, James F.; MacDonald, Malcom; Madsen, Louis; Magee, Alfred H or "Red;" McManus, Roderick P.; Meadows, Madge; Muller, E.; Nekring, Frederick; Newman, Albert E.; O'Brien, John; Powell, Jesse; Rodgers, Clifford, Grant; Rodgers, (Rogotzky) Theodore; Rost, John S.; Sammet, Jacob; Scotts, Cecil; Shepard, Harold; Sjoberg, Alex; Smigoski, John M.; Smith, Bertha, Christina; Spaulding, Joseph C.; Taylor, Milton James; Walsh, Matthew J.; Walton, Kenneth; Williams, Miss (Red Cross Nurse): Wood, Theodore; Woodruff, Mary L.; Wynne, Herbert; Zitman, Eddie and Joe Foley.

MISCELLANEOUS—Adair; Daddy we want to hear from you. Diana and Jackie boy; "Leary," "Dutch" Rhyne, Kirck, "Tug" Wilson, Haines and all the rest of the gang who graduated from U. S. Navy Yeoman School, Newport, Rhode Island, Dec. 23, 1916; My old chums of the Clover Leaf Club please let me hear from you; Sgt. Pat Vaughn, Captain Baker, or any member of Convalscent Camp No. 2, or any member of Base Hospitals 16-66-17-18 between Sept. and Nov. 1918.

**THE following names have been inquired for within the past two years. The name of the inquirer can be obtained from this magazine.**

ABEL, FRED; Abbots, Albert; Abranno, Westly; Ackern, Horace; Adams, Harry C.; Adams, Jesse; Addison; Agnew, Thos.; Ahearn, Arthur; Albert, Vivian; Alderman, John; Alford, Jimmie Lee; Allen, Charles K.; Allen, George Foy; Allen, Jerome; Allen, Joseph C.; Allen, Luther B.; Anderson, Charles W.; Anderson, Oscar; Anna, M. W.; Ansell, Edward Clarence Trelawney (Rex); Ansell, Rex; Anzini, Henry V.; Arbuckle, Louis McLane; Armstrong, Scott H.; Arthour, B. S.; Ayton, Tom; Beglin, Jack; Bailey, Jack W.; Bailey, Robert; Baird, Charles Oliver; Baker, Wm.; Baldwin, Harry; Ballard, Dave; Barker, Robert (Alias Slim); Barnett, Mrs. James; Barret, Albert; Barrow, Edward C.; Barrow, James S.; Barrow, Otis W.; Barton, Jas. E.; Basket, Robert; Bass, Edgar Lee; Bassett, Frank A.; Bastian, Walter (Blondy); Bateman, Leonard; Bauer, C. J.; Beck, Louis M.; Behrens,

E. A.; Bell, Tom (Red); Benedict, Otis; Bennett, Joseph; Bentley, Milton Reynolds; Bergin, Bill; Berger, Ole Eleassen; Bergman, Fred; Berner, Cart (Jake); Berry, Marle E.; Bevans, Charles; Bittel, George; Black, John Jackson; Blackburn, George W.; Blaine, Peggie; Blanchard, Fred Joseph; Blomstergren, O. V.; Bluewell, James G. (Chicken Blue); Blum, Albert; (Shorty); Bobonie, George; Boniface, W. J.; Bonie, Luis Terea; Bonnie, L. F.; Boroman, Lt. Clarence L.; Bosse, Henry; Bossman, Arthur; Botting, Leonard; Bound, John F.; Bowman, Daniel; Bowman, Wesley; Boyd, Asa; Boyton, Joseph A.; Bracken, Alva L.; Bradley, George Shifler or Joseph Lake; Brady, Frank J.; Bragg, William H.; Brandon, W. E.; Brassel, John H.; Brautigan, Jack; Bredwell, Clifford; Breeden, Richard O.; Brent, C. G.; Brett, Patrick; Brice, Norman; Brick; Brieger, Arthur; Brockmeir, Otto H.; Bronk, Henry; Bronson, D. D. Brooks, Edward Dr.; Broons, Oscar; Brown, Carl; Brown, Chester L; Brown, B.; Brown; Eddie Alford; Brown, Fred A. and Mary; Brown, Geo. C.; Bensinger, Alf; Lewis, Gus; Brown, Miss Josephine; Brown, Mrs. Lottie Atkins; Brown, Sanford; Brown, Walter R.; Brown, Wm.; Brune, Frank; Buck, Sadie; Buckley, Thomas; Bunch, William S.; Burgess; Burks, John Sterlint; Burks, Thomas Shafter; Burke, Max; Burke, James; Burns, Harry; Burns, Jim; Burns, J. M.; Burns, William; Burg, Louis A.; Burton, Bob; Burton, Thomas E.; Bushard, Wilfred; Bushnell, Lowman Chester; Bushnell, Lucius Hamilton; Cabaniss, Harvey; Calamia, James A.; Callahan, Morris; Cannon, Lewis Marion; Cantero, Marcelo A., Vincente, and Renulfo E.; Carruthers, Jack; Carley, M. R.; Carlew, George Stephenson; Carr, Isaac Scott; Carroll, Arden A.; Carter, J. P.; Case, Don; Cashore, Lawrence H.; Cassidy, John Thomas; Catchings, Jewel; Cawley, Charles; Chamberos, Onesime; Chandler, Ethel M.; Chapline, Clyde; Chapin, E. W.; Cheney, E. H.; Cheney, S. H.; Childers, Theodore R.; Christian, Elam; Clapp, Family; Clapp, Mrs. Nellie; Clark, Edwin E.; Clark, Joe; Clark, William H.; Clarke, Jim; Clarke, Gilbert VanAntwerpt; Claiborne, Harry E.; Clegg, Arthur; Clems, Thornton; Cleveland, Edward or Harry; Cleveland, George C.; Cline, Charles; Clyde, Lewis; Coffin, Harry or Edward; Cohen, Alf E.; Cohen, Jacob; Colam, Frank Howe; Coles, Harry A.; Collins, Carter; Colston, Amos Hillier; Coffman, Ralph B.; Conenen, George; Conklin, Buhl Mr. and Mrs.; Coulton, Mrs. Conner; Justin, Chas.; Conoly, Pat; Conrad, Ira L.; Conway, Charles LeRoy; Cook, Frank; Cook, "Mano" or R. M. Cook; Coombs, Peggie; Copley, Clarence L.; Coutant, Fred I.; Cox, Sherman W. and Austin; Craft, Felix Werner; Craft, Mrs. Harriett; Crane, E.; Croad, James; Crow, Katherine; Cullinan, Michael; Cummins, Mozart; Cunningham, Juliet; Curran, Patrick; Current, Mary; Curtis, Jas. R.; Curts, Frank E.; Curry, Jas. F.; Daly, A. T.; Daneker, John Lee; Darlington, James B.; Darlington, Michael T.; D'Arcy, Mike; Dates, Alfred Thomas; D'Aubert, Vincent; Davis, Aron and Family; Davis, Frank; Davis, F.; Davis, Harry Bean; Davis, Mrs. Nora Brazille; Davoren, Jack; Day, George E.; Dayve. Edward C.; Dawson, William J.; Deady, John; De Bruyeker, Valentino; Decker, Chas.; De Con, John H.; DeHart, Buckley; DeHaven, Wm. Stringer; Delamater, Frank C.; DeLisle, Frank A.; DeMoss, Bob; Dempsey, Howard; Denham, Walter E.; Dennehy, Timothy; Dennis, John A.; D'Errico, Louis; Desparios, Roy B.; deYattos, Harry Burton; Dickard, Vernon; Dickman, Sgt.; Diven, David Ward; Dixon, Lt. Harry Allen; Donley, George D.; Donohue, Bill; Donohew, Mrs. Gertrude; Doppman, Frank C.; Dorais, A. R.; Dorpema, Jack, Doyle, Mrs. Eddie; Driver, Lily May; Dubey, Louis April Cole; Dubois, Joe; Dunkleu, Gunner Leslie Hill; Dural, Mrs. A.; Durst; Paul; Dutch, Mack; Duva, Sven; Earl, Allen Eastman, Edward J.; Echols, Ray; Eckert, Warren; E. Cononui, August A.; Edmunds, Jack; Edwards, Thomas Herbert; Ehrlich, Oscar; Entwissle, Martha; Ericsson, James; Erickson, Carl J.; Estvan, Joseph; Evans, Welconie Lafayette; Everding, Alfred; Eyels, Emil F.; Fairbanks, John Custus; Fallon, Frank; Farmer, Frank D.; Farrell, Bartholomew; Farrell, Howard "Duke;" Farrell, Joseph P.; Farrington, I. R.; Fares, Ellis G.; Farwell, Frank J. or Mack; Feeney, Frank, Catharine, Mary, Ellen and Margaret; Thomas and William; Ferris, Curtis P.; Fiedler, Joe; Field, Wm. H.; File, James; Finnegan, Joseph Patrick; Fisherman, Allen Gonlda; Fitch, Leslie H.; Fitzgerald, Garrat; Fitzpatrick, John F.; Fleming, Cyrus; Flye, Vernon F.; Flynn, Peter Paul; Foley, C. W.; Ford, Harry; Ford, Robert; Forsyth, Thomas; Foster, H. B.; Foster, Lenora Miss; Fowle, Dr. Fairfax T.; Fowler, M. R.; Fox , Albert and four children, Florence, Albertine, Thomas and Alice; Franklin, B. G.; Franzen, Fritzoff F.; Fraser, Alexander; Fraser, James Oglivie; Frantz, Charles E.; Fredet, Peter; Fredericks, Erick; Fredericksen, Frank R.; Fromme, Harry K.; Gabelle, James; Gallagher, Chas. J.; Gardiner, Ex. Pte.; Gardner, James E.; Gardner, John; Gardner, H. Belden; Gatlyn; Gaugh, Charles; Gelston, Rodney S.; George; Gholston, Jabez Gideon; Gibbs; Gibson, Capt. Percy B.; Gilbert, Robt. E.; Gilberto, Ruacho; Giseler, Barney; Gladden, William R.; Gleason, John J.; Glenn, Bowdin; Goldie, Joe or John; Goodman, T. V.; Goodson, Clarence Eugene; Gordon, J. C.; Gore, Lena; Gorton, Roma S.; Gould, Jay K.; Gould, Terry P.; Gowder, Clarence Milton; Grady, George S.; Graham, Mrs. Mary; Graham, Edna May and Willie Leon; Grasme, Erwin; Graves, Dr. George C.; Gray, Gene; Gregoire, Frank; Grezense, Lawrence; Griffin, Earl or mother; Gunn, Corp. George; Haberly, Francis K. and Dr. S. S.; Haertel, Art; Hall, C. J.; Hall, Charles and Heprietta; Hall, Florence; Hall, John Pvt. or Sgt.; Hall, Lamar, Dr.; Hall, Dr. W. W.; Halsell, "Tuss;" Hamilton, Charles; Hammer, or Hanner, Lulu V.; Hammon, W. P.; Haigh, Mason, C.; Hank, I. J. B. F.; Hannigan, Pat; Hansl, Procter Jr.; Hanson, Mrs. Annie; Happy Jack; Harmon, Nancy Mabel; Harold, J. S.; Harper, Walter A.; Harriman, Robert Clayton; Harries, (or Harris) Hugh M.; Harrison, Lee. Harrison, Wm. G.; Harry G.; Hersell, B. L.; Hartman, G.; Harty, William; Hassous, Earl Stewart; Hauck, George; Haydon, William Jackson; Hayes, John M.; Hays (or Hayer), Conrad; Hazelton, V. J.; Hazzard, Herbert, Heald, Wesley or Henry; Herbert, N. A.; Heigelmann, Edward H.; Henderson, A. F.; Henderson, Jack; Herbert, N. A.; Herbert, Sidney; Hestvan, Casterea; Hetzel, Claude LeRoy; Hickey, James, Hickey, Frank; Hicks, Marien; Hicks, Sydney; Hill, Ernie C.; Hilliard, Houghton; Hindes, George; Hines, Jack C.; Hintz, Harry; Hitter, "Flip;" Hodges, George Otis; Hodges, Sebastian; Hoffman, John; Hoffman, Paul; Hoffman, William; Hogue, Clyde; Hood, Herbert James; Hoover, Will and Carson; Hooper, Cal. B.; Horton, Fred; Hough, T. J.; Howard, Charlie; Howard, George; Howard, Jack S.; Hubbs, James; Hucht, August Thomas; Huff, Ray and Vera; Huffman, Carl; Hugh, Edward; Hughes, Geo. H.; Hughes, Johnnie; Hukill, Eugene, S.; Hull, Harry H.; Humiston; Hundley, R. L.; Hunt, Arthur; Hunt, Robert; Hupp, Charles E.; Hurley, James; Hurley, Warner L.; Irvine, Thomas M.; Irving, James D.; Jacks, Milton; Jackson, Howard; Jacques, Frank L.; Jakubovsky, Joseph and Vidikovsky, Kasimir; James, Frank; Jenkins, Chas. Westley; Jenness, Dale; Jensen, Victor; Johnason, John R.; Johnson, Ernest Lawrence; Johnson, Jefferson Randolph; Johnson, Lawrence R.; Johnson, Nellie; Johnson, Norman LeRoy; Jones, A.; Jones, Frank; Jones, Harry; Jones, Homer; Jones, Melvin, Mur; Jones, Merlin; Jones, Oscar; Jolley, Major Wade; Jordan, Tommy; Jorkinson L.; Jury, W. E.; Kaczyanake, Gus; Kahl, Harry; Kanes, Miller Richard; Kaferle, Victor; Kannengiesser, Olga; Karnatz, "Chick;" Kasimir, Haji; Kavanagh, John; Kavanagh, Ned and E. E. Egan; Kearns, Gertrude; Keenan, Wm.; Keene, Tom; Keith, Joyce; Kelly, Francis A.; Kelly, Joe; Kench, Frank; Kennedy, James A.; Kennedy, Norman; Kenner, A. W.; Kenney, Joe; Kenney, D. W.; Kepner, Mrs. Edith; Kerr, Jack; Keyes, Fayette E.; Klein, Blackie; Knight, W. V., Kierstead, James Amos; Kimmis, Bruce; Kindling, Louis; King, Capt. Billie; King, David Fillmore; King, Clarence; King, Jim; King, Phillips; Kister, Norval L.; Korolden, Charles J.; Kotelman, Harry T.; Krauss, Frank; Kubid, Charles; Kuhn, Herman; Kuss, Corp. George A.; Kutchinski, Gustave Adolph; Laird, Lawrence Russell; Lake, Arthur Lewis; Lanahan, Bob "Digger;" Landers, Morris; Lane, Edward; Lane, Roy M; La Parr, Jean; La Pine, Andrew J.; La Porte, Harry; Larson, Franklin S.; Laurie, R. C.; Latimer, Rev.; Law, Merton Edward; Lawson, Harry; Lee; Lee, John; Lee, Preston; Leef, Harry; LeEffe, Jack; Leider, Dolores; Lenz, Charley; Levine; Lewey, Harry F.; Lewis, Arthur C.; Lewis, Evelyn A.; Lewis, William J.; Lebber, Mrs. Eva.; Lockwood, Charles A.; Lockwood, Robt. L.; Loonie; Lovers, Jimmy and Cooper H. Leslie; Lieder, Joseph; Lilly, W. A. Linc; Lindgren, Mathias; Lindsay, Willard C.; Linds, Ralph; Lipesey, Alex; Livingston, Sam. L.; Lucas, Dimaggio; LuValle, Alvin; Lyon, C. W. Jr.; McBain, C. Hutson; McCabe, Joe R.; McCafferty, Frank; McCaul, Peter; McCauley, George W.; McCawley, Walter A.; McCloud, John Henry; McConnell, John and May; McCoy, George; McCulloch, Milan E.; McCune, Thomas; McDermott, Mrs. Chrystal; McDevitt, Andrew John; McDevitt, Hugh; McDonald, Duncan; McDonald, James; McDonough, Roderick; McFarland, Earl; McFarland, Edward; McFarland, Harry; McFeat, Edward George; McGovern, John; McGuire, Charles; McGraw, J. K.; McIver, Lawrence; McKee, A L.; McKeefery, Frank J.; McKnight, Robert; McLaughlin, Stewart H.; McLaure, E. J.; McLauren, Joe; McNamee, Joseph T.; McMullen, Mrs. Grace; McNabb, Fred. Leo and Ethan; McNally, Patrick and Joe; McNamara, William; McPherseon, Kenneth; McWilliams, Walter; Dudley, McCauley; MacDonald, John; MacDonald, Jim; Mack or Martin, Robert; MacKenzie, William J.; MacMahon, Harold; MacSweeney, Sgt.; Magnus, Alf; Mahoney, Arthur; Malsom, Peter; Malley, Ted G.; Malone, Clifford; Mannion, Michael Patrick; Mansfield, Robert Allen; Marshall, Delia Arnold; Marlin, Michal Jefferson; Martin, Eugene L.; Martin, Harold; Mason, Albert L.; Mason, Henry

Arthur; Masters, Mark B.; Mathias, P.; Maynard, Cecil D.; Meager, Thomas F.; Melius, Fred; Mellard, W. Donald; Menard, Patrick; Merz, Alfred; Mesecar, Joseph Alfred; Meyer, Paul F.; Meyers, P. H.; Mickle, Frank; Middaugh, Robert Lee; Miller, Edward; Miller, George E. and Alberth; Miller, George M.; Miller, Harry; Miller, Julius; Miller, Walter Farcourt; Mills, Charles Foster; Mills, Lynden; Milnthrop, John or Henry; Mitchell, Geo.; Mittler, Edward J.; Moffet, Chauncey; Molewitz, William; Monk, Fred; Montgomery, A. J. H.; Moore, Bill; Moore, Harry A.; Morris, Cecil Edward; Morris, Walter; Morris, William E.; Morton, William H.; Moses, Reuben; Mothes, Paul M.; Muller, Robert F.; Mullins, Roy; Munkins, Haven; Munro, James; Murphy, Jesse T.; Murphy, Thomas Joseph; Murrell, Butler E.; Myers, Mrs.; Myers, James; Myers, William X.; Napier, Harry; Nelson, Adolt: Nelson, D. W., Nelson, John; Nelson, Milton; Nelson, Olla; Newberry, Floyd J.; Nichols, Frank; Niman, Samuel; Nigrel, Cooper; Noden, William M.; Noll, Adam Mrs.; Norton, Major Sam and Lt. Harold; O'Connor, Daniel; O'Connor, Jeremiah; O'Donnell, Joseph; O'Dyer, Pat; Olie, Pasquale; Olive, Private Dave W.; Olson, Lawrence T.; Olmstead, Lela Jean; O'Neill, Jack; O'Rourke, Larry; Outland, Merrit, E.; O'Toole, John William; Owne, Jack; Pafford, William; Page, W. A. Palen, Charles E.; Palmer, Arthur; Parent, Joe; Parker, Carl N.; Parker, Donald W.; Parker, Willie Larater; Parmeter, John; Patterson, Frank; Patterson, Tom; Patton, Francis E.; Payne, Alfred; Paynter, E. Ware; Pechin, Miss Camille; Pedersen, Carl; Peebles, Jack; Pelley, Wm. G. A.; Peminan, Jane; Penavin, George; Pendland, A. C.; Pendleton, Eugene; Peppard, Gerald A.; Perry, Earnest F.; Perry, Ernest Leslie; Perry, Samuel G.; Pfwiffer, H. A.; Pharis, Alfred; Phillip, Frank; Phillips, Bryan; Pierce; Pierce, Austin R. and Stanley J.; Pilsbury, Mary; Pinians, Robert C.; Plouitz, Lewis; Ponish, Henry; Pollitt, Percy W.; Porter, Mell.; Pouers, Gertrude, Mrs.; Pratt, Herbert Sidney; Prunty, Peter, Private; Prusak, Johnnie; Punch, Mary; Pugh, Sidney Richard; Purdom, Charles Edward; Puthee, Leopold; Quick, Jack S.; Quinn, Joseph; Racine, John; Raley, Thomas Keys; Raney, B. O.; Rasmussen, Holger; Rattray, John; Ravens, Arthur; Ravenswood, Edward; Redding, Earl P.; Reed, Forrest B.; Reed, Harry; Reed, Lucede; Reed, Mrs. M. A.; Reeves, John R.; Reid, Jack E.; Reiner, Harold; Reith, James; Rehmann, Mathias; Rethwisch, Pvt. Herman K.; Reynolds, John; Reynolds, Miss Kattie Agnes; Rice, Herbert G.; Richards, Jack C.; Richardson, Howard; Richter, George Alfred; Riddle, Harry; Riddell, Edward; Ridenour, O.; Riffle, C. H.; Rinckhoff, J. Allen; Rippley, L. Eroll; Ritter, Ralph Herbert; Ritey, Richard P.; Robbins, Ellsworth H.; Robel, James P.; Robinson, Dan; Robinson Percy; Rodigan, Tobius; Rolingthis, Anthony P.; Rood, Carl S.; Rosner, Dom E.; Ross, Sturdy G.; Roy, John or Pruit, Wm.; Rucker, Lulu Williams; Rumpf, George A.; Ruiz, Jose "Pap;" Russell, Juel C.; Russell, William Thomas; Rupert, Joseph; Russell, Wm.; Ryan, Robert; St. Amond, Marcel; Saaf, Erik Algot; Sadusky, Joseph; Sage, F. L.; Sahlman, Tovio; Sandberg, William; Sanford, Fay; Sargent, John W.; Sargent, Mabel; Sattur, Peter A.; Savage, Frederic; Schafer, Thelma and Mary; Schlegel, Phil; Schmidt, A.; Schreiber, Carl; Schrock, Frank J.; Schulky, Fred; Schultz, William; Schwartz, Barney; Scott, David; Scott, Miss Elvia Belle; Scott, Henry E.; Seabourn, (or Sheabourne—Seabourne) Seagraves, John; See, John; Seelye, Lawrence Copeland; Seril, Frank; Shaffer Edward; Shaffer, Edw. W.; Shahane, T. O.; Shaklee, George H.; Shamblin; "Shanghai" Pressey; Sharman, George; Sharpe, Cecil; Shatto, Powers; Shaw, Robt. E.; Sheets, Robert; Sheldon, Mrs. Ella, Fred and Albert; Shepard, Harold North; Sherp, Wilhelm; Shirley, Alfred; Shirley, Wissiam S.; Sholes, Sgt. J. J.; Shortiss, James; Shultz, Mrs. Frank; Shultz, Mrs. Julia A.; Siebert, Jack; Sigabeem J. A.; Simonsen, Stanley L.; Sims, Wayne J.; Skowronsky, John; Slaven, Joe; Slavin, Joe Patrick; Smart, William R.; Smeltzer, Bonnie F.; Smigoski, John M.; Smith, Albert; Smith, Albert Ernest; Smith, Sgt. Albert R.; Smith, Arthur James; Smith, Ben.; Smith, Benjamin P.; Smith, Charley; Smith, Curtis William; Smith, Stewart Carenem; Smith (or Miller) Eddie E.; Smith, Gordon; Smith, Harold; Smith, James (alias Nicholas Finley); Smith, William J.; Smyth, Pete; Smoky, Pete; Snook, Mrs. Anna E.; Snyder, "Dutch;" Soeding, Harry; Sohn, Sollie; Solsh, Joe; Sond, Viola; Scontupe, Sam; Southwick, Alfred Whales; Specter, Mary and Louise; Spence, Edmond Shackleford; Spencer, Earl; Speilman, Al.; Sprout, Robert R.; Sperry, Frank E.; Spowage, John; Sramek, J. B.; Staedtler, Emil; Stalker, James; Stanfield, Ross; Stanley, Francis; Starke, James Elbert; Starr, Ted: Steen, William P.; Streetzel, Fred; Steinke, Le Roy; Stengel, Michael R.; Stevenson, Pvt. Fred; Stewart, C. J.; Stewart, Ernest J.; Sterling, William; Stiegler, Bernhardt; Stocker, Ethel C.; Stoodley, Virginia; Stone, Nallie Russell; Stone, Ted; Storey, Albert; Story, Capt. Sydney S.; Stotts, Cecil, Clarence and Charley; Storks, Francis Havens; Stringer, Jesse L.; Stuart, Arthur P.; Stuart, A. G.; Stubbs, Ralphy; Styles, Virgil; Sullivan, Dave D.; Sullivan, Thomas; Summerell, W. E.; Swann, F. W.; Sweeney, E. J.; Swenson, N. A.; Swenson, Neil; Taylor, Charles W. Sr.; Taylor, William W.; Tag, Howard J. H.; Taggart, Helen Alice; Tainton, Blair A.; Talbott, Lizzie; Tarply, Thomas E.; Taylor, Jimps; Teague, Oscar R.; Teeter, John Pedro; Teets, Earl J.; Thayer, Otis Elmer; Thomas, David L.; Thomas, Henry; Thomas, Geo. Washington; Thomas, R. S.; Thomas, Luther; Thompson, Irvin L.; Thompson, Clarence Lee; Thornton, Walter; Thrope, Frank; Tidbald, Carl Erhard; Timmel, Ed; Tisdale, Clark; Todd, R. Hubert; Tokas, Basil; Tolly, Frank; Toulsness, Ole; Traynor, W. J. H.; Tribble, Ralph; Trowbridge, Frederick Cooke; Truffer, Frank; Turbeville, Clem; Turner, John; Tucker, James Walter; Turbush, Richard; Underwood, Ray; Updegraff, Pvt. Frank; Vincent, Donald; Van Save, Mamie; Vallen, Arthur; Vosburgh, Edward; Van Zile, Ralph; Van Wyck, Thomas McLoughlin; Valimont, William; Vance, John Raymond; Vaughm, Ernestine; Vaughan, Jas.; Valdez, Alex; Vivian, Howard; Wade, Robert; Wagner, Henry A.; Walker, Sailor Fred; Walker, Geo. Francis; Walker, Rupert; Walker, Oscar Newland; Wall, Frank; Walsh, Michael and Mathew; Walton, Theodore or Thad; Watkins, Morril; Warner, George; Watkins, Robert; Washburn, Hugh E.; Ward, Walter G.; Washbroad, Tommy; Weekes, George Leslie; Webster, E. M.; Weldon, Frank; Webb, Joseph Ralph; Wells, Burtis E.; Webber, William; Weimer, Jacob; Weathers, Christena; Wells, Fred S.; Wesner, Charles; West, J. P.; Westman, Andrew August; Wendler, William D.; Wendell, Warren; Westhaver, P.; West, Max; Whittemore, Arthur R.; Wheeler, Bill; White, Emory; Whitney, Adolph; White, Theodore; Wheeler, Andrew J.; Wheeler, Charles; White, Charles; Whitlatch, James Monroe; Williams, Earl; Williams, Rufus; Wilson, Earl D.; Wilson, G. Harry; Will, Collis; Wilson, Robert E.; Wilkinson, Charles; Williams, "Kid"; Wilkins, Francis B; Wickroy, Allen Sigal; Wilson, Robt. C.; Wilde, Ted; Wild, Harry; Wigley, August: Williams, George C.; Williams, Fitz; Wilson, Frank G.; Wilmington, Rev. A. W.; Williams, Harry H.; Wilson, Anna, Margaret and Edward; Wilburth, Harry; Williams, Patrick; Williams, Claude; Williams, George Bert; Williams Reginald Bobbitt; Wilson, Samuel William; Willet, Jas. S.; Winnie, George; Willis, Sam; Wilson, John P.; Wislin, Joseph and Harry; Wood, Elmer; Worher, Henry; Wood, Marion; Wolff, Albert; Wooding, W. A.; Woodus, T. M.; Wood, Theodore; Wurtha, Charles; Wright, Cecil; Wray, Albert L.; Young, Franklin, Leroy; Young, Ione; Yagner, Sam; Young, Derony; Zeit, Louis.

MISCELLANEOUS—Members of Promethean Pub. Co.; Anyone of the old 15th Sep. Bat. of the 5th U. S. Marines; Members of two I. O. G. T. Lodges; Anyone who served with D. 2 F. A. in Phillippines in 1911; Parents of baby girl (name may be Flaven); Relatives of Mary McAulay; U. S. S. *Truxtun's* Crew 1911. James Kirby, W. T. Eugene Frye, Pete Crawford, or anyone who knew "Daddy" Lantz in 1911-12; Former members of 269th Aero Squadron; Descendants of Izekiel Hopkins; Friends and relatives of Fred J. Noonan; Tibbets, Martelle A., Hodgson, Joseph (Cook) or anyone who remembers Pvt. Percy Laidlaw (Night Cook) 1st Royal Quebec Regt.; Montague, Lena Dennison, Mabel Stiles, Elizabeth and other friends; A. E. S.; Sievert, Ottow Charles, "Diffie"; Tours, 2nd A. I. C. France—Members of the Photo Section and Members of 5th Casuals at St. Louis de Montferrand; DeCisare, Florence: Annuciata, Rosie Mrs.; C. L. W.; Leonard, Mrs. Louise; Van Camp, Mrs. Gertrude; G. H.; Men and Officers of 2nd Canadian Construction Batt.; Men who served in late war at Halifax during time of explosion; Goldstein Samuel: Sumsky, Herman; "Baldy" Jack Tettle, Frank Burns, Dave Searbourgh, Burns Harney and Dick Horton, or any of the boys of Pack Train 308-9-10 or M. T. C.; Members of Co. B 52nd Inf., Co. L. 321st Inf. 81st Div., "Wild Cat" Stonewall, Co. G. and 7th Co., 1st Prov. D. Bn. 156th D. B.; Members of U. S. Monitor *Tallahasse*, or other U. S. vessel that called at Bermuda 1915-1919; Fellows in Mexico with Troop D. 13th Cav. 1916-17.; Astor, Miss Mattie: Wheat, Mrs. Lula; Mrs. G. S. or relatives; Sons and daughters of Joe Hancock; Relatives of John Burger; Nieces and nephews of Fred and Sallie Gibson; Maher, Danny; Mischaud; Heavy, Frank; Harvey, Geo. or any of the boys of Batt. D. 31st F. A. A. E. F.; Former members of 657th Aero Squadron; A. E. P. or Pat; Relatives of Mrs. Meffond Wintermute; Goodlett, Elmer F.; Speicht, Guy; Friends in 37th Co. U. S. Marines, Camaguey, Cuba, 110th Irish Inf. Overseas Batt. Canadian Ex. Forces (Fort Wadsworth, N. Y.) Batt. D. 20th Field Artillery U. S. Army; Canadians, Old pals of the 1st Depot Batt. Manitoba Regiment, Coates, Landrigan, Bumby, Keller, Richards, Kirkpatrick, McGrew and any others who survived the Big Show; Boys of Base Hospital at Mesves, Nievre, France; A. E. F. men from 310th Machine Gun Batt. Co. B 79th Div.; Chamblee, Pat;

Barlow, Frank and friends of Buoy 13, Pensacola, Fla.; Battery "B" Bt. French Art. Members; Boys who served in H. C. 15th Inf. D. Co. 31st Inf. O. C. Co. 8th Inf., Daddy Foster, Pop Faust, Steve, Bug Moore, Hot Cakes, Jame; L. J. K.; 140th Inf. members; Any of the gang in A. C. No. 5 U. S. A. up to 1916; Curley; Boys of Co. M. 167th Rainbow division; J. B. L.; Members of 2nd F. A. D. Batt. in Philippines and Q. M. C. Vancouver, Wash.; Clarence; Caulfield, Michael; Paascnl, Wm.; Brett, James; Marine Guard who served on U. S. S. *North Carolina* 1908-1911; Evesharn, Tommy; Hart, Mat; Warren, A. J.; Moffet; Bounafon or any dynamiters who were shipmates with Tramp Rogers, West Coast 1910-14; Boys who worked on Caro Ranches in Wyoming in the eighties; Men who served on Sub Chaser No. 37 from Christmas 1918 to May 1st 1919; Soldiers of former 324th Aux. Remount Sta. Waco, Texas; W. M. C.; Boys that served in France Co. B. and C. 9th Field Signal Battalion; Murriel; Potter, A., and anyone who served in the 7th U. S. Cavalry from 1872 until 1881; "Number One." R 724,942; Relatives of Charles Merinar; Former member of Batt. B. 149th F. A. Rainbow Div.; Armed Guard crew on S. S. *Sobral* 1918; Friends of Broadway Whitney; Shipmates of S.S. *Carlton* and *Farragut*; Shipmates on U. S. S. *Lakeside;* Capt. Mooney, Lt. Hoffman, Ensigns Osburn, Green and Rarrabee; Shipmates on U. S. S. *Balch* in 1918 who knew Elza Newman; Tynn, G. M., Blais, Douglas; Patten, S. S.; Osborne, C. E.; Card, San; O'Rielly, E. M. and others who knew me in Bermuda; Ex-soldiers who served under Sgt. Edwin Swain, 354th Bakery Co., St. Aignan, A. E. F. France; Lenergan, Sgt. Patrick, Meehan, Jack or any boys of Co. C. 29th Inf.; Anyone who was in Militia Division. M. C. Base Hospital, Camp Jackson, S. C.; Co. 1 3rd Batt., Engineers; F. W. D.; Men who served under Casomi in Central America and Lower Mexico and boys who were with me in Cape Town, South Africa; Parents of George Caldwell; Hefley, Linnerman, Friday, Hardy, Rainbolt, McClellan, Creighton or any of the gang that rode the No. 7 and No. 11 cars in 1918 and 1919; Any of the old gang who were in Co. A. 40th Inf. from July 1917 to January 18th, 1919; Co. K. 11th Inf. U. S. A.; Descendants of Michael E. McCaffrey; Descendants of John Walsh; Gang who served in the Ambulance Co. No. 8 Corzal, Canal Zone 1915 to 1921; Members of Coast Guard *Cotter, Apache* or *Yamacran* who served during 1919. Also members of crew of the Shipping Board Steamer *Collingsworth* who were abroad at time of salvaging of the S. S. *West Waoneke;* Relatives of Mr. and Mrs. R. J. Wilkey; Boys of U. S. S. *Rondo:* Cal.; Ex-members of Battery A. 3rd Batt.; Hannigan, Joe; Mang, Freddy; Parlen, Pinky; McCarthy or any of the boys who worked for the S. P. U. at Camp Merritt, N. J., in summer of 1919; Relatives of Eslick's or Pierces's who settled in Webster and Polk Counties, Iowa, about 1850; R. E. H.; Anyone who saw the accident of the Harry Wright Amusement Co. boat *Marion* a few miles below Helena, Ark., on the Mississippi River, April 26, 1908; Dubs; Would like to hear from any member of the 14th Battalion R. M. R. Canadian Army who was acquainted with Raymond Kearns, who died in action Easter Monday 1917 at Vimy Ridge; Sailors who occupied Barracks 948 E. Camp Farragut, Great Lakes, Illinois, between the dates of January 10, 1919 to January 30, 1919 can help a gob by writing to Laurence K. Hyde 3324 Alderick Ave., South Minneapolis, Minn.; Belgian; Woods, Mrs. and Mr. W. M. and daughter Fannie May and son Lee; Descendants of Desire Bourgeois. Born in the village Les Petites Chiettes now village De Bon Dieu, Franche Comte, Jura, France, who emigrated to California, U. S. A. in 1848; Would like to hear from Col. Muerlin of the 2nd C. M. M. G. Bde. regarding some photos taken in France. Also would like to hear from "Hump" Parks, Auty Sergt. "Mulligan" and other D. R's please; 9628; Members of the family of Montgomery whose ancestors lived in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, between 1750 and 1800, are requested to communicate with W. V. Montgomery, 2 Madison Ave., N. Y.; Cunningham heirs of Boston, Mass. can be located by writing to J. C. Harriss, 911 Fournier St., Ft. Worth, Texas; "Happy"; Would like to hear from Martin Purcell and Thomas Quigley, last heard of at Tampico, Mexico in January, 1921; Would like to hear from any of the old bunch who served with me in either Co. E or Headquarters Co. 166 Infantry 42nd Division during the war; Would like to hear from Albert Diar somewhere in North Carolina, or any other fellow who served in the Sec. Holding, Ho., under command of Major Brocas at La Suze, France; Would like to hear from shipmates aboard the S. S. *Kimta* after we left Antwerp, Belgium in Dec., 1919; "Rondo Seadogo Ahoy," "Pop" Polinkas, "Tex" Russell, "Dad" Hodge and any other of the *Rondo* crew, also shipmates of the tugboats *Penobscot, Nahant* or *Conestago,* and mates of Co. F. 2nd Ala. Inf.; Want to hear from any of the boys who served with signal Corps in Mexico or at Columbus, New Mexico, during the Punitive Expedition during 1916 and 1917, who knew me and recall the accident that happened to me at Columbus when my skull was fractured. Also want to hear from any of the boys that served at March Field, Riverside, California, during the war, that were familiar with me and were at the field at the time I resigned as Disbursing Clerk; N. S. L.; Would like to hear from the Sergeant of Co. K. of the Infantry who was in France with me after the Armistice was signed; Please write to your old pal Dutch; Bob and Ruby write to your friends.


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