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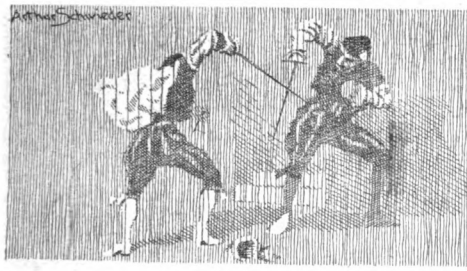

Adventure

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Contents for May 10th, 1923, Issue

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(*Continued from preceding page*)

Three Novelettes

WHEN a white man slips he slips fast—in the South Seas he slides! *Tubu* had picked *Ford* for his game—even had his mark on him. Then *Smith* left his copra plantation just long enough to prove to the *Water Wizard* that the white man's magic can be quite as effective as a native's. "THE WATER WIZARD," a complete novelette, by J. Allan Dunn, begins in the next issue.

HARD fighting, hard drinking, the crew of the *Trebizond* at last recognized that the meek little trimmer was a real man. But it was not their friendship that he wanted. "THE TRIMMER," a complete novelette, by W. Townend, in the next issue.

FROM Sidney to Thursday Island, thence to New Guinea, a down-and-out is sent on a strange mission, seeking for rare pearls lost in a native village—pearls whose power is unknown even to their owner. "THE QUEST OF THE BLOOD-RED PEARLS," by Merlin Moore Taylor, is a novelette, complete in the next issue.

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

***Adventure* is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month**

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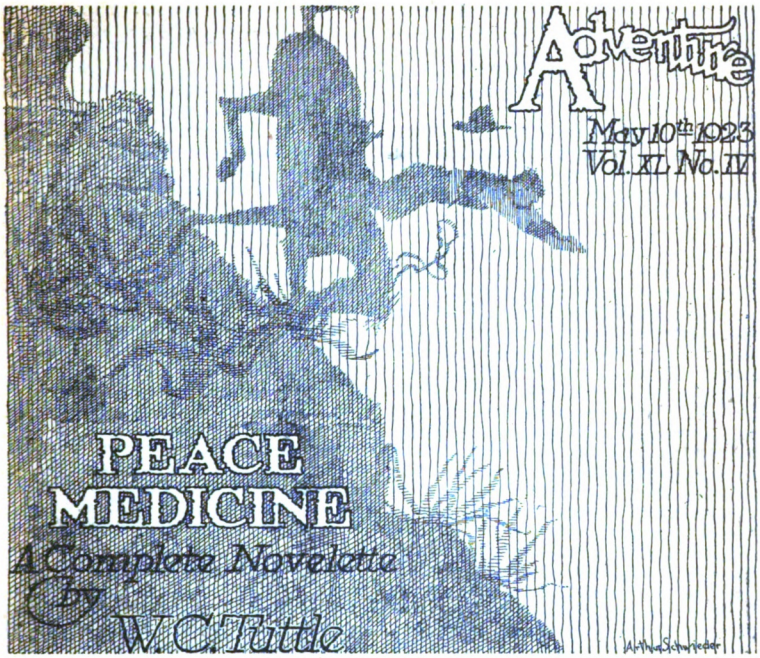

Author of "Tramps of the Range," "Sticky Ropes," etc.

IT WAS late Spring in the valley of the Chinook. The hills were already covered with luxuriant bunch-grass, and the clumps of cottonwood along the Chinook River had leafed to a sparkling green against the dark blue and green of the balsam, fir and pine.

Winding through a V-notched gash in the mountains was the road which led from the town of Pasiooks, through Poncho Pass to Tarp City. This road was barely wide enough for one wagon, and its builders had followed the lines of least resistance in its making.

Chinook Valley was a cattleman's paradise. Thirty miles in length and averaging seven miles in width, its grazing-land was unexcelled. It had plenty of feed, streams of cold water and an encircling range of mountains which held the herds within its boundaries. Poncho Pass was the only outlet, and this was guarded by a fence and a gate at its narrowest point.

At the lower end of the valley the Chinook River—which was not really a river, but a large stream—gurgled its way through a box-cañon, and twisted and turned in its narrow bed, giving it the title of Crazy Snake Cañon. It was impassable for man or beast.

Pasiooks was the only town in the valley, consisting of a general store, a saloon and a post-office on one side of the street; a blacksmith shop and barber shop on the other side. At one time it had been the location of a French trading-post, and the Indians had called it Pasiooks, which in the Chinook jargon, or trade-language, means French or Frenchmen.

Thirty miles to the north, across Poncho Pass was the town of Tarp City, the terminus of the branch of the C. N. & W. Railroad. South and east of Tarp City stretched the Fossilshell Range along the Fossilshell River. North of Tarp City was Sun Prairie, the sheep country, despised of cow-men.

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Cowboys patrolled the Fossilshell Range lines to see that no sheep invaded their domain from Sun Prairie; but the cow-men of Chinook worked secure in the fact that no woolie would or could ever come through Poncho Pass.

Here the ranch-owners ruled with as great a power as any of the feudal barons of old; and wo unto the man or men who broke their word or tried underhanded work on that range.

Nestling down in this snug little valley was the rambling ranch-house of the Cross L—the castle of "Cross L" Marshall, whose word was considered law in Chinook.

Down a long, grassy slope above the ranch-house rode a man and a girl, coming slowly toward the ranch-house. The girl was Jess Marshall, a tall, willowy girl, easy of movement and sitting her horse like a cowboy. Her brown eyes were troubled as she tucked a vagrant strand of brown hair under the brim of her sombrero and looked up at the man beside her.

Clell Danert was handsome—by certain standards. He was tall and well proportioned, regular of feature, with a certain ease and grace seldom found in cow-land. His gray eyes were a trifle small and set a little too close together, and a smile showed a tilt to one side of his mouth—a sign not cared for by those who love an open smile.

His clothes were perhaps a trifle too well tailored and inclined to gaudiness. Just now he leaned closer to the girl and watched the curve of her cheek as he propounded a question.

Jess Marshall's eyes scanned the country for a moment, and a tiny crease appeared between her eyes as she turned to him.

"I—I think so, Clell."

Danert imprisoned the hand on the saddle-horn—

"Then you will marry me, Jess?"

"I said, 'I think so,' Clell," she repeated wearily. "I really don't know what dad will have to say about it."

Danert laughed softly:

"I'll fix that all up, Jess. When will we be married?"

"Some time," enigmatically, "I——"

She stopped and listened. From the ranch-house floated the musical dinner-call, as the cook beat a tattoo on a suspended triangle of steel.

"Some time is hardly definite," reminded Danert sourly.

"Nothing is definite in this world." Jess smiled sadly at him as she released her hand and gathered up her reins. "Let us go to the ranch or we'll be late for dinner, Clell."

"My heart is bothering me more than my stomach," replied Danert, "but I bow to your wishes—forever."

"Well," replied Jess, "I suppose you are not the first man who has said that before marriage, and very likely it is not the first time you have said that to a girl, Clell."

She laughed at him and spurred down the slope.

Bart Farley, the foreman of the ranch, met them as they rode in past the corrals, and walked beside Jess' horse to the house. Farley was a grizzled cowboy, who lived only for the interests of the Cross L and Jess Marshall. He did not speak to Danert, who gave Farley only a glance. When they dismounted Farley led Jess' horse away, leaving Danert's horse to its owner.

Danert looked after Farley, but said nothing as he tied his animal to a ring at the corner of the porch. Cross L. Marshall had come on to the porch as they came up the steps, and he put his arm around Jess' shoulders.

Marshall was of the old type of cow-men. He was between fifty and sixty years of age, tough and wiry as a steel cable, his features as harsh as if chipped from flint. He had fought his way through the early gold rushes, battled the Indians and outlaws and was now enjoying the fruits of his labors in peace.

He nodded to Danert and kissed Jess. Danert had been a frequent visitor to the Cross L, and frequent visitors always made themselves at home.

"Better get yoreself ready for chuck, Jess," smiled Marshall, and as she turned into the house Danert spoke—

"Marshall, I want to talk to you for a minute or two."

"Yeah?" Marshall looked at him curiously. "Well, I reckon I'll listen—at least."

Danert twisted his gloves for a moment and slapped himself on the knee.

"Marshall, I want to marry Jess."

Marshall's mouth twisted to say "Oh!" but no sound came. He squinted at Danert for a moment, and then—

"Well, that ain't nothin' against yuh, is it?"

Danert looked up quickly.

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"And she wants to marry me."

Marshall glanced back at the door and seemed to let this statement percolate through his mind for a while.

"Say she does? When?"

"She would not say."

"Oh!" shortly; Marshall rubbed his chin. "Well, yuh likely ain't got nothin' to worry about then, Danert. Plenty of time to worry about it when she sets a date."

"Then you do not object?"

"Yeah," drawled Marshall seriously. "But Jess is twenty-five years old, and I don't reckon it's any of my —— business. Yuh must remember—I ain't marryin' yuh, Danert."

Danert laughed.

"I never know when you are joking, Marshall."

"No-o-o?" Marshall squinted his eyes and looked across the hills thoughtfully. "That's what a hoss-thief said once—and he was fool enough to take a chance."

Danert looked quickly at Marshall, but the old man was still gazing at the rolling hills. Finally he turned as if having dismissed the subject and said—

"Reckon we better eat before the grub gets cold."

There was little conversation at the table. Marshall was silently thoughtful. Farley and the two cowboys, Jim Horne and Bert Hart, ate with the family, but were strangely silent. Farley glanced often toward Danert, but Danert confined himself to Jess and her wants.

After the meal Farley and Marshall drifted out to the porch, where they lighted their pipes and settled down against the porch posts. It was an after-supper ceremonial with them.

"Jess goin' to marry him?" asked Farley, jerking his head back toward the living-room.

Marshall drew slowly on his pipe for a while and glanced sidewise at Farley.

"He says she is, Bart."

"What does she say?"

"I dunno." Marshall shook his head slowly. "Wommen is queer cattle. Her mother married me."

"I don't like him," declared Farley savagely.

"You ain't marryin' him, are yuh? I don't like him; but—that ain't none of my business."

"I always thought," mused Farley slowly, "that she was kinda waitin' and——"

"Now I reckon that ain't none of our business either, Bart. Jess wouldn't never marry a—a——"

"'Mebbe not," interrupted Farley, "but 'Peace' Parker, even if he was a cow-thief, is a —— sight better than Cleh Danert."

Marshall nodded slowly:

"Lord knows yo're right, at that. But he's a-wearin' stripes, Bart; and no woman would marry——"

Marshall spat angrily and resumed his smoking.

Peace River Parker had been Farley's bunkie and a favorite with Cross L. Marshall. He was engaged to marry Jess Marshall. Then came rumors of the misbranding of cattle. The men of Chinook Valley investigated, and guilt pointed toward Peace Parker.

The bulk of the evidence was furnished by Jefferson Crane, who owned the Five Dot brand; although other outfits suffered from the misbranding. Chinook Valley did not take it to law—not then. They brought their proofs to Peace Parker, and he could not disprove them. Chinook Valley did not cry to high Heaven for punishment; but rode away, back to their homes.

Peace knew that they were giving him a chance to prove his innocence—which he could not prove. The work had been cleverly done. In a cold rage Peace rode to the Five Dot ranch-house, where he met Jefferson Crane and two of his cowboys. There was no arbitration, no argument. When Peace rode away, Crane and his two cowboys were temporary cripples, and Peace was drilled with bullets in several places. He rode straight to Tarp City and gave himself up.

JIM HORNE sauntered out on the porch and sat down with them. Horne was a long, lean cowboy, with a melancholy cast of countenance.

"Heard tell that Jeff Crane done sold out down on Sandy," he volunteered. "Heard it in Tarp City yestiday."

"Likely had to sell," grunted Farley. "Wonder where he'll head for now."

"Not for Chinook," stated Marshall.

Farley grinned and shook his head.

"No, I reckon Crane's had enough of Chinook. He likely got too crooked for the

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Fossilshell and they made him sell out. Wonder somebody don't kill him."

"Shippin' a lot of sheep from Sun Prairie now," drawled Horne. "Train-load went out yestiday, and there's about twenty thousand held at the loadin' corrals. They tells me that cars are scarce. The feed's all gone in Sun Prairie and they've got to move."

"—— good thing," grunted Farley. "I can smell 'em for fifty miles."

Jess and Danert came out on the porch, and Danert untied his horse.

"I'll be back in a day or two," he stated as he swung into the saddle. "I've got to make a trip into the Fossilshell to buy a few car-loads of feeders. Good night."

He turned his horse, smiled up at Jess and rode down toward the main road. Jess watched him for a moment and went back into the house.

"He used to work fer Crane, didn't he?" asked Horne.

Farley nodded.

Horne got to his feet and stretched.

"I wonder why he quit workin' fer Crane."

"Took a job buyin' cattle," grunted Marshall.

"He ain't bought none in Chinook, has he?" asked Farley. "Why don't he buy them few cars of feeders from us instead of goin' 'way down on the Fossilshell?"

"He's a purty son-of-a-gun, anyway," grinned Horne. "I feel like takin' off m' hat every time I meet him."

"Sh-h-h!" cautioned Marshall. "Jess is goin' to marry him."

Horne opened his mouth, held it open for a moment and closed it slowly.

"Oh, m' ——! M' ——! That's the first teetotal e-clipse I ever seen."

Marshall got slowly to his feet and went into the house. He wanted to argue in favor of his daughter's choice, but he felt as did Farley and Horne. He had nothing personal against Danert, except that he did not like him.

Danert had come into that country three years previously and had worked as a cowboy for several of the outfits in Chinook and Fossilshell. He worked for Jefferson Crane on Sandy Fork, after Crane and his outfit had been run out of Chinook Valley. Now Danert was buying cattle, so he said, for a Chicago packing-house. He was a good spender, a plunging gambler; and the cowboys of the Fossilshell said he was almost too fast with a six-shooter.

Jess was sitting in the living-room, half-curled up in a big rocking-chair as her father came in, and did not look up at him. He studied her for a moment.

"Jess," he said softly, "yo're old enough to know what yuh want to do; but yore old dad would kinda like to know if yuh really wants to marry Clell Danert."

"I don't know, Dad." Jess did not look at him as she shook her head. "When I am with him, I do."

"And when yuh ain't, yuh don't, eh? Kinda like seein' a purty flower on the ground, I reckon. When it's there yuh want it; but if it ain't there yuh never give it a thought."

"Something like that, Dad."

Marshall nodded and crossed the room, where he parted the curtains and peered off across the hills. Suddenly he turned.

"Jess, I been thinkin' a lot lately about Peace Parker."

Jess did not reply and he continued:

"His time's about up. Wonder where he'll go. ——, I'd give a lot to see his homely old face again. Didn't he have the dangdest biggest mouth yuh ever seen? And when he smiled——"

Jess Marshall got to her feet without a word and looked at him. He squirmed under her gaze and started to speak, but she stopped him with a weary gesture.

"Dad, don't talk about him—please. He—he wasn't—homely."

She turned away and left the room. Cross L Marshall grinned softly and slapped himself on the thigh.

"Branded a thief, a gun-fighter, and homely as ——," he muttered to himself. "Five years in the penitentiary and we helped send him there. Jess ain't mentioned his name in all these years; but she ain't forgot him. He ain't like a —— purty flower—Peace Parker ain't."

Cross L Marshall eased himself into a soft chair and took out his old pipe, chuckling to himself—

"Clell Danert, yore cake is goin' to be a lot of gobby dough, or I don't know women—our kind of women."

TARP CITY was a metropolis of at least a thousand population, huddled away in a nook of the foot-hills; a metropolis of false-fronted buildings,

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unpainted and weather-beaten. It was a supply center for Fossilshell, Chinook Valley and Sun Prairie, which made it of vast importance to the world.

To Tarp City came the cow-men, the sheep-men, the prospector. Freighters' wagons creaked up and down the dusty street. From the big loading corrals at the edge of town came the bawling of cattle, the rattle of stock-trains. At times there came dust-gray, bleating bands of sheep from Sun Prairie to fill the stock trains.

At night Tarp City celebrated. Of saloons there were many, and gambling was wide open, with the sky for a limit. The Poncho saloon and gambling house was the main attraction. It was a place where wine; women and coarse song might be found, seen and heard; where high-heeled boots and spurs were not barred from the dance floor.

At the outskirts of the town, facing the rear of a huddle of small saloons and restaurants, stood a warped-appearing shanty. This was the temporary home of Jefferson Crane. The interior was as unattractive as the exterior; but Jefferson Crane had little taste in home decoration.

Just now he sat at a rough table, figuring on a torn piece of paper with the stub of a lead pencil. Three bunks were built into the rear of the shanty, and on one of them a man was sleeping, snoring deeply. This was Pete Perez, a half-breed Mexican and Indian.

Tilted against the wall on a backless chair sat Gus Sinks, a hard-faced type of cowboy, half asleep, an unlighted cigaret glued to his underlip.

Crane was a peculiar type of cow-man. He was below medium height, thin of feature and hawk-eyed. A scraggly blond mustache, frayed at the ends from much chewing, draped over a crooked mouth, and surmounting his narrow head was a faded, nondescript hat, which at one time had been a derby. Seasons of heat and cold had obliterated its color until it was neutral in shade as well as shape.

Crane was narrow of soul and very close with his money. He asked much and told little, but demanded detailed obedience from all who worked for him. He was deadly with a gun and had the reputation of always shooting at an unlooked-for moment.

Came a knock at the door. Crane dropped the pencil and his right hand reached inside his unbuttoned vest, where a Colt automatic pistol reposed in a shoulder-holster.

Sinks tilted forward in his chair, wide awake, one hand hanging loosely beside the holstered gun on his hip. At Crane's call the door opened and Clell Danert stepped inside, followed by Rance Wylie, a tall, rangy cowboy, who tossed his hat into a corner and sat down on the floor with his back against the wall.

"Well?" said Danert, eying Crane closely.

"Got 'em," stated Crane. "Twenty thousand head."

"Wool and bones, eh?"

"Well, they ain't fit for market," admitted Crane, "but yuh got to figure we got 'em cheap. They'll stand another drive."

Danert drew a box up to the table and sat down. Crane shoved the sheet of paper across to him, and he studied the mass of figures for a while.

"That's what you paid for them, Crane?"

"I paid half of it down—cash. They was —— willin' to take it. Sun Prairie is sheeped out, and them twenty thousand head of sheep wouldn't pay for shipping. Where would they go? No, they was glad to sell at my price, Danert. We'll make money."

"Looks like it, Crane," Danert nodded, and then he leaned across the table. "We'll make money if we can put the sheep into that valley. There is always an 'if.'"

Crane removed his hat and rubbed his head slowly.

"I'll put 'em in there, Danert. Here's the scheme."

Crane talked rapidly and softly, while Danert watched him closely. When Crane finished, Danert half-smiled and nodded.

"Sounds good; but who will take the first bunch through the pass?"

"Not me," interrupted Sinks. "I wouldn't go into Chinook with a woolen shirt on my back."

Crane grinned and shook his head.

"Don't worry, Gus—" and then to Danert—"I told Jim Holman to pick up a sheep-herder for me. Lot of drifters pass through Fossilshell, and he can pick one for me. I told him to promise a hundred a month, and that much money will bring one a-whoopin'."

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"He won't live to collect anythin'—" This from Wylie, with a short laugh.

"I told Jim to pay him a month in advance," explained Crane. "I reckon we can afford to bet a hundred dollars on this deal."

Danert smiled slowly:

"I guess we can, Crane. But there's one thing we must do, and that is to see that this shepherd don't talk. Close-herd him all the time. One word in the wrong place and the scheme is busted."

"By ——, I'll see to that!" snapped Crane. "I've got every cent I own tied up in this deal, Danert. Chinook Valley run me out, —— em! They shook a rope in front of me!" Crane got to his feet and struck the table-top a resounding whack.

"I'm goin' to make Chinook pay —— big for that deal! I'm goin' to sheep out their tight little hole in the hills, do yuh hear me? That's goin' to be Crane's Valley after I get through with it. Crane's goin' to be the big man in there."

Perez sat up on the bunk and glared around.

"W'y you yell? I'm ride all de way from Fossilshell and I'm sleep."

"Perez packed my note to Holman," said Crane.

"Why not let Perez drive the first bunch in?" suggested Danert.

Perez stared at Danert. As his meaning grew clear, his hand slid to the pistol on the blanket beside him. Perez knew what would happen to the first man over that pass with sheep, and he was going to defend his position.

Danert laughed easily and shook his head.

"No, we can't use any of our own men, Perez. I was joking."

Perez's white teeth flashed in a grin.

"*Bueno.* It ees no job for friends, eh? We send de stranger. Ha, ha, ha."

"That's right," agreed Danert, and then to Crane—

"When do the sheep arrive here?"

"In the morning. We'll have to let people think we can't get any cars. Maybe we'll have to hold 'em a few days. We'll pass the word that the sheep belong to Jim Holman. Jud Evers will be in charge of them. Whatever happens, don't let anyone know I'm in on this deal, Danert. Holman will send this herder to you; *sabe?* I don't want any one to suspect me."

Danert squinted at the table-top. This move did not exactly fit into his plans; but he could not buck Crane and his men. Danert intended to marry Jess Marshall; but he knew that this sheep move would kill all chances, unless he was able to cover up his end of the deal.

"You watch for our man," ordered Crane. "I dunno when Holman will find the right one, but I hope it will be soon. Them sheep won't stand much delay."

"One outfeet try to go into Fossilshell range," volunteered Perez. "One herder die, two t'ousand sheep go to feed de buzzard. Cowboy act fas'."

"Likely lookin' for 'em to cross the line," observed Sinks.

Crane nodded quickly.

"Sure they was lookin' for 'em. Chinook won't be lookin' for us. We'll fill the place with wool, fight 'em to a finish and make the law decide. Sheep have the same right as cattle, according to law; but you've got to have part possession. All we want is an even break in court and the sheep will get it all, because the cattle can't live on the same range."

"You was over in Chinook yesterday, wasn't you, Danert?" asked Wylie.

Danert nodded.

"Yes, I was in there. Had supper at the Cross L."

"Yuh was in there two days before that, too," said Crane slowly.

"Suppose I was—what about it?" queried Danert.

"Buyin' cattle?" laughed Wylie.

Danert smiled and shook his head.

"No. I was just looking around."

"Didja find her?" Sinks asked.

Danert turned and his eyes narrowed as he looked at Sinks, but Sinks only smiled. Danert looked quickly at Crane.

"More of your spying, eh?"

"If yuh want to put it thataway, Danert."

"By ——, I'll have no man following me!" Danert's face was white with rage, but Crane's face was an impassive mask as he replied softly—

"Then you keep away from the Cross L ranch."

Danert stared at Crane for a moment in wonder—then remembered. Crane had tried to make love to Jess Marshall. It was ridiculous even to think of Jess Marshall and Crane in the same breath; but Crane was a human being, in spite of his

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crooked nature; and human beings are all capable of love or hate.

Jess had ignored his love, and Crane, like the dog in the manger, was going to see that no one else won her love. Danert was angry at Crane for spying on him, but was wise enough to conceal it now.

"I don't want anybody dogging my tracks, Crane. I'm as deep in this as you are and I don't see why you can't trust me."

Crane was looking down at the floor as Danert finished. He glanced at Danert, but did not reply. Finally he got to his feet.

"You know what I want yuh to do, Danert. Keep an eye out for the man Holman will send in. Thassall, I reckon."

Danert got up and went out of the door. He resented the domineering voice of Jefferson Crane, and cursed softly to himself as he went back to the street. So he had been followed and spied upon, had he? Jeff Crane did not trust him. The lack of trust did not hurt Danert's feelings. As far as that was concerned, he did not trust anybody; so why should he be trusted?

Danert looked up and down the street, wondering if Crane would trust him, now that he—Danert—knew he was shadowed. Finally he turned and went into a restaurant and sat down at a table. A waitress, a pretty little thing, came from the kitchen and went straight to him.

"Clell, is it true that you are going to marry that Marshall girl?"

Danert frowned. It was rather embarrassing, as he was engaged to marry this pretty waitress, Dora Frazer. He shook his head and smiled up at her.

"Not a thing to it, Dora."

She bit her lip and looked away.

"Why do they say it, Clell—if there is nothing to it?"

Danert squirmed in his chair. He liked Dora, and he knew that she could cause him a lot of trouble if she wanted to. A woman of her type likes to be confided in, and Danert rapidly sketched his plans regarding Chinook Valley and the Marshall family.

"I'm the inside man," he explained. "This love affair is only a blind, don't you see. It gives me a fine chance to know just what is going on."

"Is it fair to the Marshall girl?" she asked after a moment's thought.

Danert looked away. There was no accounting for a woman's mind. Here he had gone to the trouble of explaining his reasons for his seeming unfaithfulness, thinking that Dora would be satisfied; but now she sympathized with the other girl.

"Well, perhaps not," he agreed, "but I am not going in to see her again; so it doesn't matter."

Dora took his order and went to the kitchen, while Danert smiled to himself. He had no intention of marrying Dora. He did intend to marry Jess Marshall; but it was a long trip to the Cross L ranch, and Danert craved amusement.

"WILLING to do anything, eh?"

Peace River Parker nodded slowly, his blue eyes looking past the man who had questioned him—looking out across the sage-covered hills. The questioner was a middle-aged, businesslike man, whom Peace had accosted in hopes that the man might know of some outfit in need of a man.

"I ain't particular," said Peace softly. "I'm plumb broke."

"Mind herding sheep?"

Peace smiled and pursed his lips.

"No, I don't reckon so—if the sheep don't."

"I've got a job," the man half smiled. "Friend of mine asked me to get him a man who—who could take care of himself."

"I reckon I can, but I ain't been carin' for myself much durin' the past five years." Peace smiled grimly and held out his open hands, palms up. "Eight-pound sledge-hammer and no limit to the rocks. I've worried a heap of rocks in the last five years. Warden said I was the king-pin rock-buster of the zebra university."

The man studied him closely, and did not wonder that Peace had come unbroken from the prison grind. Peace was six feet three inches tall, with long sloping shoulders, long arms and a massive head. Peace was homely. His nose was thin and sensitive, his chin jutted belligerently, and the lines of his face appeared as if carved deeply in bronze. His mouth was abnormally wide and full of large white teeth. His eyes were set in a mass of tiny wrinkles, which cross-hatched each other and faded out over his high cheek-bones.

"I think you are the man for the job," stated the man. "Hundred a month and grub."

"Hundred a month?" Peace rubbed his

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chin and squinted wonderingly at the man. "Things has kinda changed in five years, ain't they? When I left——"

"I know," quickly. "Punchers got forty a month and sheepherders thirty. Will you take the job and how soon can you go to work?"

"I'll take the job, and go to work right now. I want—" Peace turned and stared out across the hills—"I want to get out there, pardner—into—them—hills."

Peace turned again slowly and looked at the man.

"You don't know what I mean. Mebbe yuh think yuh do, pardner; but yuh don't. You ain't never been penned up for five years, where you can't see no hills, no birds —nothin' but plain men all around yuh—men who ain't got nothin' on their minds but a certain date. Yuh can't talk to them.

"Get herded out in the mornin' like animals, bust rock, march back and hear the lock click shut. Every time it clicks yuh say, 'That's one click off.' Then yuh set there and figure out how many more times it's goin' to click behind yuh. The first time I was locked in I says to myself:

"'That's got to click for eighteen hundred and twenty-five night-locks before you see them hills again.' Pardner, can yuh imagine what that means? No, yuh can't. They said I was a good prisoner—if that's any satisfaction. When do I start work?"

"Come over to my office and I'll give you the details."

They crossed the street and went into an office, on the window of which was the firm name, "Holman & Keller, Investments and Insurance."

An oldish man was writing in a ledger and merely glanced at them as they came in.

"I'll give you a month's salary in advance," said Peace's companion, as he sat down at his desk.

He wrote rapidly for a minute, sealed the note in an envelop and handed it to Peace, together with several bills.

"You take the stage right away to Tarp City, where you will find a man by the name of Clell Danert. Give him this note and he will arrange the rest of it for you. He will furnish you with a Winchester and six-gun. If you lose the note, tell him that Holman sent you."

Peace nodded.

"Much obliged, pardner. Mebbe I'll make a good shepherd." He nodded to the oldish man, who was staring at him, and held out his hand to Holman.

"So-long. If yuh ever want to ask about me—my name's Parker."

Peace walked out of the office and hurried down the street, where the stage was loading in front of the post-office.

The oldish man stared out of the window for a moment and then crossed over to Holman, who was writing in a note-book.

"Know who that is, Holman?"

"Said his name was Parker," looking up at his partner's curious tone.

"Parker—yes. That's Peace River Parker."

"Peace River—oh, the gunman, who——"

"And you sent him to Tarp City. My ——, that's his home country, Holman!"

Holman started to his feet, but from down the street came the rattle of wheels as the stage started on its journey to Tarp City. Holman sank in his chair and picked up his pipe.

"Well, what if it is, Keller? Has he any love for Chinook Valley?"

"Perhaps not, but it is a very sure thing that he has no love for Crane."

"No, that's all true, but Crane isn't going to show in this. Crane wanted me to find a man who was willing to take a chance—a cat's-paw, Keller. The man who takes the job will never enjoy his hundred a month."

Keller stared out of the open doorway and turned back to his desk.

"I never did like Crane; but we're handling his business and I suppose we've got to help him out at times. Perhaps Parker will take the job and see it through. He's got the nerve of the ——, but—Holman, wasn't there something about him being engaged to marry a girl in Chinook Valley?"

"Marshall's daughter," grunted Holman. "She's going to marry Danert."

Keller ran a hand through his thin hair and turned back to his work.

"Going to marry a girl is like putting off until tomorrow what you can do today. I'll believe it when the knot is tied."

"It is all settled, I believe."

"If it isn't, it will be," smiled Keller.

FIVE years had made little difference in the Fossilshell country, as far as Peace Parker was able to see. Progress had not touched the cattle country in the 90's to any great extent. Peace had

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known few people in Fossilshell, and he saw no familiar faces as he wended his way to the stage office, where he paid his passage to Tarp City, forty miles away.

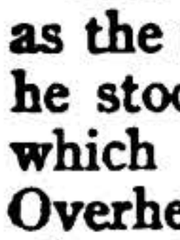
Peace smiled grimly to himself as he perched up on the stage seat. He had never intended going back to Tarp City. In fact, he had decided, before leaving prison, to go North. He had dreamed of Alaska, Northern British Columbia, but at times he pondered deeply over the purple sage-covered hills of the Fossilshell; of the hazy, lazy range of the Chinook, where the moon silvered the impassable ranges on either side.

In his dreams he had seen the shadowy figures of riders, heard the muffled footfalls of horses, the creak of saddle-leather, as they faded out over the silvered road through Poncho Pass. He could see Tarp City, where hard-bitted men brought great herds to the terminus of the branch railroad; where they shook off the dust of the range and made merry in their own way.

But there was a harsh note in these dreams, a note which caused Peace to scowl in his sleep. A man's face—grinning. This man had the eyes of a hawk, a scraggly blond mustache, which draped a crooked mouth, and surmounting this grinning face was a faded, green derby hat.

The memory of this face came to Peace, as the prison gate clanged behind him, and he stood in the middle of the dusty road which led to town. It was late Spring. Overhead a belated flock of wild brant, a glittering V in the sky, gabbled as they headed for the northern lakes. Peace watched them, fascinated. They were going his way. Were they? He turned and looked south. It was Spring, and he was free. He shook his head slowly and headed for the town. Plenty of time to go North. The Fossilshell and the valley of the Chinook were calling.

Now he was going blindly into the country which knew him for a thief and a gunman, going back to face honest men, after they had banished him for the good of society.



THE driver was a surly individual, crabbed from much jolting over rough roads. Beside him he carried a small box full of rocks, one of which he ever and anon threw at his lead team, punctuating each throw with profanity.

"Yo're liable to make a bad throw and hurt one of them broncs," remonstrated Peace, after they had traveled into the hills.

The driver gave Peace a malevolent look, but did not reply. Peace filled his lungs with sage-laden air and bared his head to the breeze. The stage split through a herd of beef cattle, and the cowboys yelped and waved their hats at the driver of the stage.

Peace itched for a chance to swing into a saddle again, wanted to talk about it, but the driver's sour visage precluded all chances for a pleasant conversation. Finally Peace asked—

"What do they pay punchers around here?"

"Forty a month!" grunted the driver without turning his head.

"Oh, yeah. Same old price all over the West, I reckon. What do they pay sheepherders?"

"Sheepherders?" The driver spat disgustedly. "I dunno. Ain't none. Over in the Sun Prairie country they pay 'em thirty a month. That's the nearest sheep-country. Lookin' for that kind of a job?"

Peace did not answer. He wondered why Holman was paying him a hundred dollars a month—sixty more than the cowboys were paid and seventy more than the sheepherders were getting. What was the idea? Peace knew the Sun Prairie country and had no desire to go into that sheep-ridden land.

He remembered the time he had ridden the length of the prairie—sixty miles of sheep odors, where frowsy sheepherders bleated like sheep. The buttes were as bare of foliage as a dirt road. In fact the whole country was a barren waste, for sheep leave nothing in their wake.

What their teeth do not devour their sharp hoofs destroy. There were deadlines to this land of dust and sheep, and Peace smiled as he remembered the cowboy patrol, which watched that no woolie might pass into the cow-land. Suddenly he remembered that he had hired out to herd sheep. He had accepted a month's pay in advance. Well, he could stand it for a month.

His musings were broken when the stage gave a violent lurch. One of the lead team floundered into its mate, shaking its head madly. The driver cursed wickedly and threw another rock. He struck one of the leaders just behind the ear with a sharp chunk of granite as the animal was striving desperately to keep its feet.

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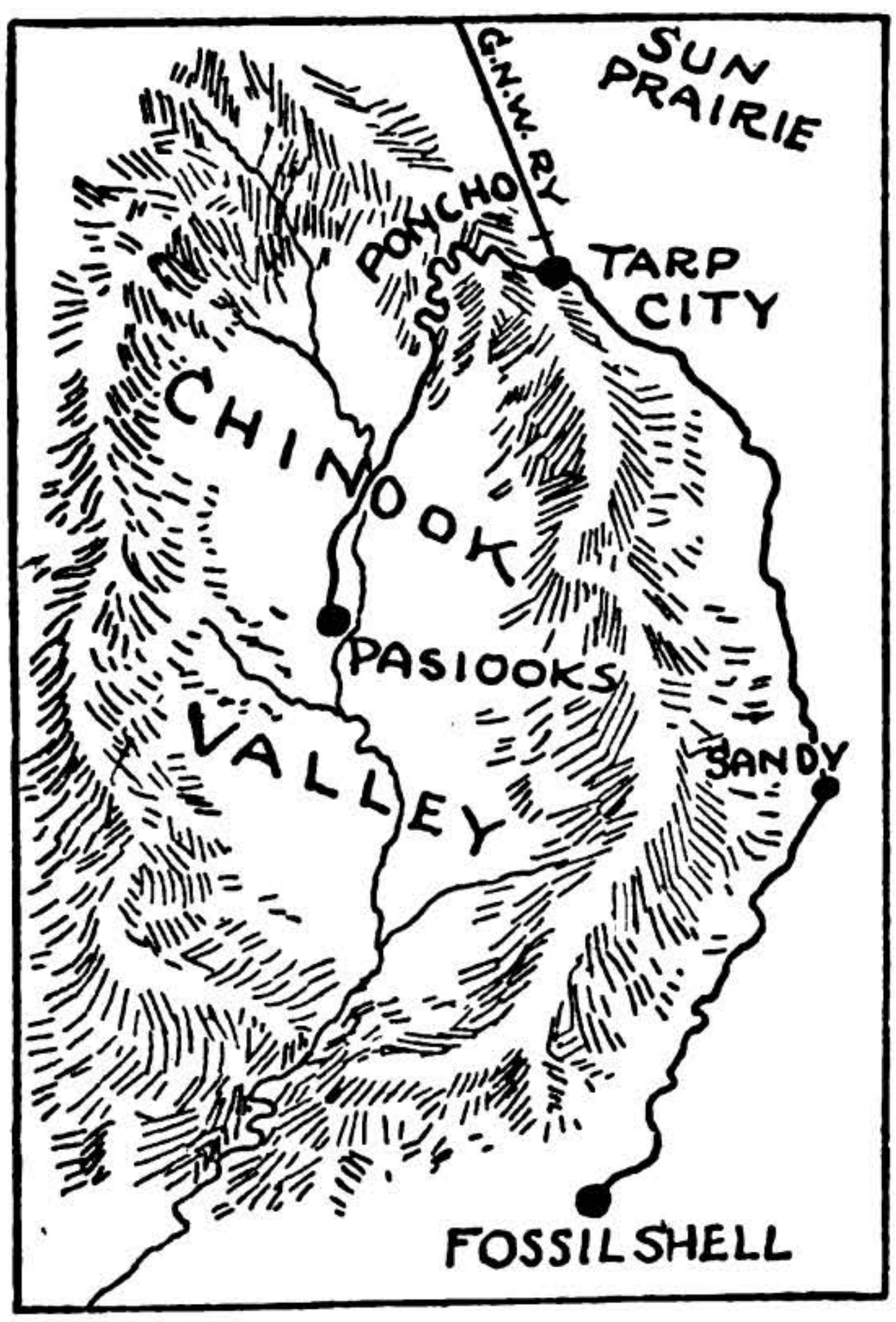
The driver wrapped the slack lines around his hands, braced his heels, and threw the four horses rearing backward. Before he could slacken his grip he felt the lines torn from his grasp. An instant later he was jerked to his feet and thrown bodily off the stage seat and down the embankment of the grade, where he lodged in the embrace of a wild rose-bush.



He wiped the dust out of his eyes and looked back up the grade, where Peace River was leaning over the side of the stage seat, looking down at him.

The driver tore his way loose from the briers and drew his gun, mouthing curses. Peace's right hand flipped downward and a hunk of granite crashed into the driver's elbow, paralyzing his gun hand temporarily.

Then Peace kicked off the brake, chirped to the nervous team and rattled around a curve, while the driver clawed his way to the road, spouting curses and raving.

Peace River knew the stage route—knew every inch of the road. It was good to be alive and free and to hold a set of lines again. A coyote crossed the road ahead of the team, and Peace yelled a greeting at it. Jack-rabbits flashed away into the sage, followed by a mighty whoop of joy. He was like a kid out of school. Ordinarily a quiet man, he whooped and sang with joy of it all, and the four horses needed no stinging lash to make them cover the road.

The fact that he had knocked the driver off the seat and taken charge of the stage did not worry Peace. The driver would have a twelve-mile walk back to Fossilshell; but Peace considered this small punishment for hitting a horse in the head with a rock.

He scanned the sage-covered hills, where drifting herds picked at the new covering of bunch-grass; the deep-rutted hill trails, where for years the cattle had come down to drink from the Fossilshell.

The past five years were wiped out in a day. Nothing had changed. Barbed-wire had not yet arrived in the country, and the homes of the nester were few and far between. The white alkali dust eddied up from the horses' hoofs, a blinding, choking mist; but Peace drank deep of it all. Even alkali dust tasted good to his tongue.

It was late that evening when he drove into Tarp City. It was the same old town. He drove the team up to the stage office and looked down at the crowd who congregated to wait for their mail; but there were no familiar faces.

No one questioned him, and he decided that the Fossilshell stage-line was in the habit of changing drivers often. Two men began unloading. Peace lifted the mail-sack from between his feet and tossed it to a man near the doorway.

"Where's the stable?" asked Peace, and one of the bystanders pointed out the stage-stable. Peace climbed back to the seat, swung the four horses in a wide arc, drove into the open stable doors and helped the hostler unhitch.

"First time this team ever came in on the jump," observed the hostler, slapping one of the horses on the rump. "Not a hair laid on 'em and fifteen minutes ahead of time."

"I never hurried a-tall," grinned Peace.

"There's drivers and drivers," stated the hostler. "Some fellers has to heave the rawhide all the way, which plumb ruins good hawses; other fellers are drivers. Lots of difference between a driver and a herder. Goin' to be with us for a while?"

Peace shook his head.

"No, I don't reckon so. Where can I find a feller named Clell Danert?"

The hostler squinted at Peace.

"Danert? Oh, yeah. Well, sir, I dunno

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where you'll find him, but most likely in a poker game. Friend of yours?"

"No-o-o, I can't say he is, 'cause I don't know him."

"Then he ain't," replied the hostler enigmatically. "You ain't his kind, I'm bettin'. Know Tarp City very well?"

"Mebbe not."

The hostler walked to the door with Peace and pointed out the possible places where Danert might be found.

"If yuh find him," stated the hostler, "you'll likely see that he's in a poker game, settin' in a chair which is against the wall."

Peace smiled.

"Scared?"

"Per-tick-ler," corrected the hostler. "Ever' once in a while yuh find one like that. Hope yuh find him. I've heard folks say that Clell Danert's handsome. If yore eyes treat yuh thataway, pardner, look for beauty."

Peace thanked him and wended his way to the nearest saloon. Oil lamps were already shedding their yellow glow through the windows, and Tarp City's night life was ready to crawl out and start where it left off the night before.

Peace looked at the games in the first saloon, but did not see any one answering Danert's description. Remembering that he had not eaten any supper he crossed the street to a restaurant. The place was partly filled with diners, and Peace took a seat near the rear of the room.

"Five years makes a lot of changes in faces," mused Peace. "None of the old gang around here. Mebbe they're changed so much I don't know 'em."

Dora Frazer came to take his order and Peace caught her looking intently at him. When she came back with his order he looked up and smiled at her. For a moment she stared at him, and then, with a slight intake of breath—

"I—I thought you was homely!"

The frank innocence of the remark both amused and pleased Peace and he laughed boyishly.

"Ma'am, I don't reckon yuh made a mistake the first time."

"I was just thinking of the difference when you smiled."

"That's my mouth," said Peace seriously. "Ain't it awful for a human bein' to have his face gashed up thataway?"

They were both laughing, when the door opened and Clell Danert came in. He looked at Peace and Dora and then came toward them. Dora turned and looked at Danert, and Peace knew she was afraid.

Peace had never seen Danert in his life, but he instinctively disliked him. The white silk shirt, tailored broadcloth suit, fancy boots and the large Southwest type of Stetson did not please Peace Parker, who mentally classed him as a tin-horn gambler.

Danert's cold glance swept from the girl to Peace, accusingly. Peace got slowly to his feet, feeling that trouble was imminent. The girl stepped back and looked appealingly at Danert, who was watching Peace closely. Peace's eyes never wavered from Danert's face.

Part of a stamped-leather belt and ornate buckle showed at Danert's waistline, and a slight bulge low on his hip told Peace that this man was wearing a holstered gun.

Peace was unarmed and he knew that his only chance was at close quarters. Their glances clashed as Peace got to his feet. The man was evidently not sure whether Peace was anticipating trouble or whether he had finished his meal.

A noise at the door caused them both to look that way. A man had come in and was looking over the diners. Peace knew at a glance that it was the stage-driver whom he had thrown off the Fossilshell stage that morning.

The man's glance swept the diners; then he saw Peace. There was nothing cautious nor delicate in the man's actions when he sighted the man who had set him afoot. With a bellow of rage he whipped out a gun and strode down among the tables, heading for Peace Parker.

Peace flung himself into Danert, tripping him and tearing his coat away from his hip, and as the astonished Danert plunged to the floor, Peace sprang away from the frightened waitress, with a pearl-handled Colt pistol in his hand. Diners upset their chairs getting out of the danger zone, and there was a general stampede to the sides of the restaurant.

A bullet ripped through Peace's shirt, burning its way between his upper arm and side, but he did not flinch nor waver the muzzle of the fire-belching gun which was held tense at his right hip.

Another bullet burned its way across his thigh, but the cursing stage-driver was

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falling as he fired and his last shot powder-burned the floor.

Peace leaned forward and watched him, but the man did not move. The crowd merely stared at Peace. The handsome stranger got slowly to his feet and Peace handed him the gun.

"I owe yuh for six cartridges," said Peace calmly.

Danert took the gun, looked from Peace to the driver and shook his head.

"You're welcome, stranger."

Then he turned and faced the crowd, which was moving in closer to the fallen man.

"You saw how this was done, didn't you? Can't make nothing out of it except self-defense."

A grizzled man stepped out of the crowd and Peace saw the flash of a star on the lapel of his vest. He nodded and said:

"I seen it. I dunno why it was done, but the big stranger only done what he had to do. I seen him take yore gun, Clell; which cinches the fact that he wasn't lookin' for trouble." Then he turned to Peace—

"There won't be no investigation, stranger."

"Much obliged," nodded Peace and turned.

"Yore name Clell Danert?"

"Yes."

Peace handed him the letter from Holman, and Danert read it slowly. He squinted at Peace for a moment and put the letter inside his coat.

Men were removing the wounded driver, and a man in a white apron was busily cleaning up the stains of conflict. The place buzzed with conversation and nervous laughter. Tarp City was used to scenes of violence.

"No use trying to eat in here," said Danert. "Let's go down the street where nobody will bother us."

As they started down the sidewalk Peace said—

"You was kinda on the prod yoreself, wasn't yuh, Danert?"

"When I came in?" Danert laughed coldly. "Well, I thought you was getting fresh with the little lady."

"Shucks!" Peace's tone was sorrowful. "I never got fresh with no lady, Danert. You goin' to marry her?"

Danert laughed and shook his head.

"No, I haven't any use for a wife—not yet."

"Pshaw!" breathed Peace. "I never thought about a man havin' use for a wife. Kinda sounds like a man packin' an ax to cut wood with. Say, Danert, I don't want to criticize any man's notions, but—do you like them pearl-handled six-guns, or do yuh pack one 'cause it's pretty?"

Danert hesitated for a moment and slowed his walk.

"I do not care to have any one tell me what I should wear. My business is my business and concerns no one except myself. I hope you understand what I mean."

"Sure," grinned Peace. "Go ahead and pack one of those pretty guns if yuh want to; but some day she'll slip in yore hand——"

Danert turned and went into a small restaurant, and Peace followed him to a booth in the rear. They sat down and gave their order to a Chinaman. Danert took out the letter and read it again.

"Holman does not give your name," he remarked meaningly.

"That's all right," said Peace slowly. "Just call me Peace."

"What's your first name?"

"First name?" Peace pondered solemnly over it for a while and smiled at Danert. "Ma told me once that they used to call me Little Sunshine, on account of me havin' red hair at that time. I reckon that was my first name. After that they——"

"Oh ——!" Danert exploded his disgust, but Peace's face broke into a wide smile.

"You know anything about Chinook Valley?" growled Danert.

Peace's eyes narrowed and he studied Danert.

Was the man trying to probe into his past?

"Chinook Valley? What about it, Danert?"

"That's where you're going to herd sheep."

Peace was thankful that the Chinaman came in at that moment with their orders, which gave him a chance to prepare for anything Danert might say. When he went out Danert continued—

"I'll tell you something about Chinook Valley, if you care to hear it."

Peace cut slowly into a juicy steak and nodded without raising his eyes.

"Go ahead, Danert."

"Chinook Valley is East of here, across

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the range," said Danert. "The only way to get in and out is by Poncho Pass, which is a pretty stiff climb out of here. There are about ten cattle outfits in this valley. These ten outfits have controlled the valley for years, although they do not own more than a few hundred acres apiece.

"The biggest cattle owner in the valley is a man named Marshall, who owns the Cross L brand. They call him 'Cross L Marshall.' The rest of the brands own about the same amount of stock.

"A little northeast of here is Sun Prairie. Sheep have used that locality for years, but it is worn out now. It is a case of a new range or sell out. Some of the sheep men have sold out—sold out cheap. Those are the sheep you are going to herd—into—Chinook—Valley."

Peace ate slowly while Danert talked, and did not look up when Danert stopped.

"We told Holman to get a man with plenty of nerve and to pay him well," continued Danert. "You've got the nerve. Holman says he paid you a month's salary in advance."

Peace nodded and cleared his throat.

"You goin' to only send in what one man can drive?"

"No," hastily. "It's like this: You will take a thousand through the pass at night and have them well down into the valley by daytime. Get them as far as possible, you understand. Scatter them as much as possible. If no one stops you at daylight, keep them drifting. Our idea is to follow up the next day with twenty thousand head. We'll flood the valley with sheep.

"We'll have at least twenty men in there the day after you get in. What we want to do is to get the first bunch so far down into the valley that it will take all their time to round 'em up.

"Your small bunch will travel faster at night, whereas a large bunch would move slowly, and we're using you to drive a wedge into the place. The big herd is held just outside of here now. Everybody thinks we are waiting for cars to ship 'em out. Several train-loads have already been shipped East."

"When do yuh aim to send in the first bunch?" asked Peace.

"Tomorrow night. Don't mention it to a soul, because if a hint of it was heard by the men from Chinook Valley you couldn't drive a sheep through that pass in a covered wagon. We've got every cent we own invested in those sheep and we're going to graze them in that valley in spite of ——. Sun Prairie is a land of dust, the Fossilshell is an impossibility, because they patrol a dead-line, which means a battle before we can get started. Chinook has both feed and water, and they're never looking for any one to attempt to herd sheep into their tight little place.

"You put that herd through the pass and into the valley, and we'll do the rest." Danert got to his feet. "That hundred a month won't look very big to you, if you obey orders, and if you don't—you won't need it."

Peace got to his feet, smiling. Danert stepped to one side and removed a chair to let Peace outside. Like a flash Peace grabbed him by both arms and crashed him against the wall of the booth, where he held Danert helpless.

"What do you mean?" snarled Danert, glaring at Peace.

"This much." Peace spoke slowly and without effort.

"I've accepted a month's pay and I'm willin' to obey orders, but no —— man can threaten me, Danert."

Loosening one hand, Peace lifted Danert's gun from its holster and then proceeded to take a handful of cartridges from Danert's belt-loops.

"I'm doin' this, 'cause I don't trust yuh—not because I want this pretty gun. Holman said you'd give me a Winchester and a six-gun, which listens good; but I'm goin' to be heeled until yuh do. *Sabe?*"

Peace released Danert and stepped back, loading the gun. Danert rubbed his cramped arm and arranged his rumpled clothes. He was boiling, inwardly, but outwardly cool.

Danert was a large man, but Peace had handled him easily, and it hurt Danert's vanity. He knew he was a fighter, knew he was stronger than the average man, but Peace had made him feel that he was in the grip of a machine rather than the grip of human muscles.

"Did I hurt yuh?" asked Peace quietly, a bit humorously. "I done it as easy as I could. Hope you don't begrudge me the use of the pretty gun."

"That's all right," said Danert, forcing a smile. "You caught me when I wasn't looking."

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"Are yuh lookin' now?" queried Peace meaningly.

"You and I can get along without any trouble," said Danert hastily. "We'll let things go as they lay. Maybe we better not be seen together after this. We can't do anything before tomorrow evening. Suppose you meet me in front of the Palace saloon at seven o'clock tomorrow evening, and we'll leave from there. I'll have the guns for you at the herd, and we'll give you all your instructions at that time."

"I'll take orders," nodded Peace. "*Adios.*"

Peace walked to the door and watched Danert disappear up the street. Across the street in front of the stage-station was a watering-trough, a huge log hollowed and set up on log foundation. Peace crossed the street and sat down on one end of this, while he tried to think.

From down the street came the tinpanny tinkle of a piano, blended with the uncertain notes of a worn-out music-box. Wagons creaked into the light of the oil lamps, men called greetings to each other as they passed. Riders swung past, melting into the shadows at the saloon hitch-racks.

Peace gave no heed to the passing night life of Tarp City. It was what his soul had longed for, dreamed over for five years; but the one sentence, "Sheep in Chinook," drove all other thoughts from his mind. He could see the gray bands sweeping the valley from Poncho Pass to the Crazy Snake, to the utter ruination of the most wonderful cattle range in the world.

Peace shook his head slowly. He would not be a party to this.

"Sheep!" he muttered to himself. "I've hated the —— things all my life, and here I am throwin' in with 'em."

He mused over it for a while, and it suddenly came to him: Why should he protect Chinook Valley? What had Chinook Valley done for him? Nine of the twelve jurors had been from Chinook Valley. The witnesses for the prosecution were from Chinook. He was innocent; but they convicted him. Why not let the sheep clean out the place? Sheep were going to supplant cattle. It was only a question of time; so why not make it now?

Peace rubbed the palm of his hand over the butt of Danert's pistol and stared down at the ground. He had left there, branded as a dangerous gunman; his homecoming had unfortunately sustained this reputation.

JEFFERSON CRANE was humped on the bunk, spelling out the words of an old newspaper when Clell Danert rapped at the door. With a flip of the paper Crane extinguished the lamp, and picked up a Colt pistol, which was beside him on the worn blanket.

"Come in!" he grunted.

Danert opened the door and peered into the dark interior.

"Danert?" snapped Crane.

"Yes."

"Come in!"

Danert shut the door behind him and Crane lighted the lamp, cursing at the hot chimney. He turned and peered at Danert, who sat down on a rough stool.

"Holman sent us a man," volunteered Danert, handing the letter to Crane, who made no move to take it.

"Talk about him," ordered Crane.

Danert started to describe Peace River Parker, but Crane stopped him.

"Tell me that again, Danert. Yuh say he's over six feet tall, and kinda stooped? Homely son of a gun?"

"Holman didn't say what his name was," said Danert, ignoring Crane's anxious questions. "I asked him what his name was an' he said it was Peace."

"The —— he did!" Crane's teeth fairly snapped. "Peace, eh? Danert, you —— fool; that's Peace River Parker!"

"The guy who shot up you and your outfit?"

Crane trembled with anger, and he nodded violently. "I forgot that his five years were up. What in —— did he come back here for?"

"Why ask me?" growled Danert. "Not for his health, that's a cinch. He filled the Fossilshell stage-driver full of lead in Davey's restaurant tonight—with my gun. I took him down to Louie's place where we could talk business, and he took my gun away from me again and held me against the wall while he loaded it from my own belt. Said he would keep it until I gave him a better one."

Crane stared at Danert for a moment and broke into a cackling laugh, which grated on Danert's nerves.

"Took your gun, eh? He, he, he! Held yuh against the wall. He, he, he!"

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"Stop your —— cackling!" snapped Danert.

Crane stopped his unholy glee and wiped his eyes. It was not often that Jefferson Crane laughed and the effort was almost too much for his vocal cords.

"I'm not working for you and I don't have to take your —— orders; so—" Danert was angry.

"Don't let that itch yuh any," advised Crane. "I got along before your handsome carcass hove into view, Danert; and I can do it again."

For several moments there was silence. Danert realized that the argument was getting too warm for him, especially as he had no gun, and Crane's gun was on his lap. He knew that Crane would not hesitate to kill him if it came to a show-down, and Clell Danert had no desire to die. Finally he said slowly—

"Shall we let him take the herd in?"

"I dunno." Crane fondled his gun. "Peace Parker is a wolf when he hates; but the —— fool comin' back here kinda makes me wonder. Did the penitentiary make him scared of trouble?"

"You can bury that kind of talk," said Danert. "He is not afraid of trouble, Crane; and five years in the pen hasn't spoiled his six-gun ability. He never lifted that gun from his hip, and I'll bet that every shot hit the target."

Crane stared blankly at the wall, and his lips twitched for a moment. Down deep in his narrow soul was a great fear—not exactly a fear of death; and his soul cried out a "Why" for the coming of Peace Parker. Then a crafty grin came to his lips, and he turned to Danert, who was watching him closely.

"Clell, I reckon we'll let him take the sheep in—if he'll do it; and if he won't——"

Danert nodded. He knew what Crane meant.

"He knows what he's goin' up against," said Crane. "It's almost a cinch that the first sheepherder into Chinook Valley will get filled so full of lead that they'll take him to the smelter instead of to the undertakers."

Danert nodded, and Crane continued:

"We've got to see that he goes in with them sheep. Post the boys to trail him and watch every move. If he gets an idea that I'm behind this deal he will yell it from the street. Tell the boys to stick to him, Danert; and if he makes a break—kill him. Don't let him talk to anybody. *Sabe* what I mean?"

Danert nodded quickly. "Leave that to me, Crane. I don't think that Holman knew who he was hiring. He paid Parker the hundred dollars."

"I told him to pick a man who looked like he didn't care what happened to him," said Crane, "and —— bad luck sent Parker to him. Don't let on that you suspect him, Clell, and for ——'s sake don't mention my name to him. If he knowed I was behind this——"

"He'd give Holman back his money and kill you," finished Danert.

"That's none of your —— business!" exploded Crane. "What's between me and Peace Parker is no affair of yours, Danert!"

"For which I give thanks," grinned Danert. He turned back toward the door, where he stopped. "I'll be at Pasiooks when the sheep start into the pass."

"What for, Clell?"

"Well, I may be able to hinder some action."

"Yeah?" drawled Crane sarcastically. "You ain't afraid of Jess Marshall hinderin' us, are yuh?"

Clell Danert's eyes narrowed, and he took a half-step back towards Crane.

"My personal business is nothing to you, Crane. What I do in Pasiooks is none of your —— business, do you understand? You found that you couldn't get that girl; so yuh might as well get used to it."

Crane's evil face contorted with anger, and his skinny hands gripped the heavy gun.

"What about that restaurant girl, Danert? You goin' to turn her down?"

"None of your —— business, Crane! I haven't done her any harm. You take care of your own morals."

Crane glared at Danert, but made no reply.

"Marshall ran you out of Chinook Valley," continued Danert tauntingly. "I've heard it all. You was willing to sell your outfit for about half what it was worth; so you must have valued your hide pretty highly. Maybe that's what Peace River Parker came back for."

"Danert—" Crane slipped off the bunk and walked half way to him before he continued— "Danert, we're into this sheep deal together—pardners, if yuh feel thataway—but—but your —— tongue wags too much.

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You're nothin' but a crook in dude clothes. Yes, I know you've got a rep as a gunman, but that don't scare me none a-tall. We'll put our sheep in Chinook Valley and then we'll talk business. *Sabe?*"

"Any time," nodded Danert, but added, "in the mean time I'm goin' to Pasiooks, Crane. *Adios.*"

Crane did not reply, but he stared at the closed door for several minutes after Clell Danert had gone into the night. Then he dropped the heavy gun into his holster, snapping it out—back—in—out—in—out until the draw was too swift to follow with the eye, and each time the gun came level with the hammer at full cock. Then he tossed the belt and gun on the bunk and sat down to think of Peace Parker.

Crane did not fear Clell Danert. He knew that he could shade Clell with a gun, and that with an even break he would win. He would see that it was an even break, if he had to start it himself.

Peace Parker was a different proposition. Peace had beat him on the draw—beat him in a fair fight, and not only that but had whirled and downed two of Crane's cowboys, who were not rated as slow gunmen.

Peace had not gone unscratched, but was able to mount his horse and ride to the sheriff at Trap City and surrender himself to the law. Crane had been the chief witness against Peace Parker—lying while under oath to tell the truth.

Danert's taunts had bitten deep into Crane's narrow soul. He had planned to win Jess Marshall for a wife, after Peace Parker's exit, but the wooing had been a dismal failure. He knew that the people of Chinook Valley were laughing at him, and it had steeped his soul in bitterness.

He had set his plans to control the valley. Some one had likened him to Napoleon. Discreet questioning had brought him the information that Napoleon had aspired to rule the world. Considering Napoleon's ultimate failure, Crane decided to cover less territory and play safe, but a delegation of hard-eyed, sober cattlemen persuaded him that Chinook Valley was a very poor place to attempt to start an absolute monarchy.

Exhibit A was a half-inch, hard-twist rope. The jury requested that Mr. Crane sign his name on a dotted line, accept a fair price for his holdings in Chinook Valley and go some place where the people hankered for a monarch. Mr. Crane signed, and he and his four cowboys—Gus Sinks, Pete Perez, Jud Evers and Rance Wylie—were escorted to Poncho Pass and ordered to stay away.

Crane's brand had been a Five Dot. Barr Severn owned the Three Dot outfit, whose brand is three dots in triangle form. The added two dots changed it to Crane's ownership. Such things, while not easy to prove, are a violation of range etiquette.

Chris Sorensen owned the Bar X Bar. Chris was absolutely honest, and when he found a Three Dot animal, which had been made over into Bar X Bar, with four strokes of a running-iron, he took up the matter with Barr Severn. Some one was trying to start trouble between neighbors. At any rate Jefferson Crane left Chinook Valley and bought a brand far out on the Fossil-shell range, but he still remained Napoleonic in his desires.

PEACE PARKER did not know that Crane was no longer a cattleman in Chinook Valley, as news of this kind does not penetrate the walls of a prison. He realized what sheep would mean to the valley, and he knew how the cattlemen would greet the first man who drove in a band of sheep.

The men who were going to invade Chinook Valley were determined, and he knew that they would see that he either obey their orders or never live to tell what their plans were.

His head was in a noose, especially as soon as they found out who he was. He slept late and went to Davey's restaurant for breakfast. The same girl waited on his table, but she seemed nervous and glanced often towards the door, as if expecting someone. Finally two men came in and sat down near the door.

One was a swarthy man, whose features bespoke Mexican parentage. The other was thin almost to the point of emaciation, with a weak, blond mustache. Peace studied them for a moment and a half-smile moved his thin lips.

It was Pete Perez and Gus Sinks, two cowboys who worked for Crane, when Peace was with the Cross L outfit. Peace did not know either of them personally, as they had joined Crane's outfit shortly before Peace's conviction. Crane hired them to replace the cripples caused by Peace's gun.

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Peace remembered seeing them in the court-room.

Neither of the men gave Peace more than a passing glance, but he felt that both of them recognized him. He looked up at the girl as she placed a cup of coffee on the table, and he noticed that her hands shook, spilling the coffee.

"What's the matter, miss?"

Peace's question was very abrupt, but scarcely above a whisper. The girl's hand went to her forehead and she flinched slightly, a look of pain in her eyes; but she quickly recovered and tried to smile.

"Why—why, it is nothing," and hurried back to the kitchen.

Peace wondered why the waitress was nervous; but decided that the events of the night before had made her afraid that his presence meant more trouble. He busied himself with his food, but studied the two men at the other end of the room.

He knew the type. Perez, with his scarlet muffler and beaded vest, was dangerous in his own way—a type which always strikes from behind. Sinks was the opposite—an unemotional, cold-blooded killer, who does not fear death, because his imagination pictures nothing beyond the bare word. Neither of the men was paying any attention to Peace; but he felt that they were there because of him. He switched his eyes to the door, where more people were coming in.

It was Jess Marshall and Bart Farley. They were laughing as they went to a table, on an angle between the table occupied by Perez and Sinks, and Peace's table. They had just sat down when the door swung open again and Cross L Marshall came in. He was talking with some one just outside the door, but turned and went straight to Jess and Farley, and sat down beside Jess, facing Peace.

Peace watched them closely, hungrily. He watched the play of emotions across Jess Marshall's face as she listened to something her father was telling Farley. Peace's mind flashed back to a night in Spring, five years before, when he and Jess had halted at the top of the pass and watched the moon come up above the jagged skyline. That was the night when he had talked haltingly, groping for words; while Jess had looked up at him and supplied both the question and answer.

He had told Cross L Marshall of it all later on, and the old cattleman had wrung his hand and said—

"Peace, I was afraid yuh wasn't never goin' to get up the nerve to ask her."

Peace watched them now as they talked. He wanted to get up and go outside; but it seemed miles to the door, and he must pass them as he went out. For the first time in his life, Peace Parker knew fear. He glanced back and saw the waitress near the door to the kitchen, one hand against the wall. She was looking past him at Perez and Sinks.

Marshall's voice boomed out in a laugh as he leaned across the table, talking earnestly with Farley, but suddenly he looked straight at Peace Parker. Neither man showed surprize in his face. It was more the sharp scrutiny that strangers often direct at each other.

Marshall turned back to Farley and continued their conversation. Peace continued to eat slowly, at the same time watching Perez and Sinks, who were paying no attention to the Marshall party.

Suddenly Peace glanced at Jess Marshall and found her looking straight at him, a look of wonderment in her face. Her eyes shifted to her father, but he was engaged with his food. Peace flashed a glance at Perez and Sinks and caught them both watching the girl. Their eyes shot a glance at him and both men began eating again.

Peace glanced up as the waitress came between himself and the Marshall party and began removing the dishes. Without seeming to move her lips the waitress said softly:

"Be careful. They are waiting for you to meet that girl and her father and if they are kind to you, you'll never leave here alive."

Peace had begun eating as the girl spoke and did not look up until after she had taken the dishes and gone away. He could see it now. If Jess Marshall or her father shook hands with him, either Perez or Sinks would try to kill him.

The powers that be were taking no chances on having their sheep venture blocked. Danert had likely told the girl, and she feared gun-play.

Peace smiled at their caution. There was not the remotest chance in the world that any of the Marshalls would recognize him—an ex-convict. Hadn't the jury declared him guilty? The judge had censured

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him severely for the shooting at Crane's ranch, believing that Peace had done it out of revenge.

Peace wondered who was really behind the sheep deal. Some one who knew him, that was certain. He felt that Clell Danert was merely one of the pawns of the game. Jess and her father were not looking at him now, and Perez and Sinks seemed interested solely in their food.

Peace got to his feet and walked slowly to the counter, where he settled for his meal, paying no attention to any one.

Farley looked up at him as he passed and started to get to his feet, but Marshall spoke quickly, and he sat down again. Farley had been a stanch defender of Peace Parker, and a prison record would not interfere in any way with his friendship for a man.

A grin passed between Perez and Sinks. Jess Marshall stared down at her plate until she heard the door shut behind Peace Parker. She looked at her father as if about to speak, but her glance took in Perez and Sinks beyond and she shut her lips tightly.

"Five years—" muttered Marshall, staring down at his plate— "five years is a short time."

Farley glanced at Jess. He knew it had been a long five years to her, although she had never mentioned Peace Parker's name since the day of his conviction. Other men had paid court to her; but she would have none of them until Clell Danert came. She was not the kind to mope in memories; but Farley knew that she had not forgotten Peace Parker.

Perez and Sinks got up, paid for their meal and went outside. Farley scowled at them as they went out. Jess and her father were both intent on their own thoughts as Farley turned and said:

"I heard that Crane sold out his outfit on Sandy Fork, and I'm wonderin' what his cow-rustlin' punchers are goin' to do for a livin'. It's a cinch that nobody will hire 'em."

Marshall shook his head.

"I dunno, Bart. Crane is a bad *hombre*, I reckon. Danert told me a lot of things about him."

"Danert did, eh?" Farley slowly stirred his coffee. "Clell Danert worked for him long enough to know a few things, I guess. If Clell is so —— upright, why did he work for Crane all this time? If yuh asks me I'd say that Crane can likely tell a few things about Danert."

"Don't say that, Bart," begged Jess. "You are prejudiced."

"Yeah, by ——, I am!" Farley snapped his reply. "Clell is educated and he's slick enough to make yuh think the moon is a hunk of cheese. Yeah, sure he can talk the handle off a pump and make it believe it's a windmill. He's got a pretty face and nice hair and don't wait for Saturday night to take a bath; but there's only one difference between him and a rattlesnake—the snake is honest enough to rattle."

"Quit it!" snapped Marshall. "If Jess says he's all right, he's all right. If Bart says he's a bad *hombre*, he's a bad *hombre*."

"What is your opinion, Dad?" asked Jess.

"Mine?" Marshall put on his hat and pulled the brim low over his eyes. "My opinion is that I'd be a —— fool to throw in with either one of yuh."

"Dad plays safe," said Jess seriously.

"Y'betcha he does," returned Marshall. "But that don't mean I'm goin' to give three cheers for Clell Danert. Bart is right when he says——"

"Dad, are you going to be a —— fool?"

"Excuse me." Marshall got to his feet. "It's kinda hard to keep neutral. Mebbe Jess is right, Bart—I dunno. But there's one thing I do know—" Marshall placed one hand on Jess' shoulder and looked down at the table, speaking softly—"I know it hurt like —— to have Peace Parker walk past us thataway."

Jess looked at her father. He had sworn by Peace Parker. His hard old face was curiously twisted now. Jess looked at Bart Farley, who had been Peace Parker's bunkie. Farley did not look at her as he rubbed his hand across his stubbled chin and said softly—

"As if he thought that bein' in the pen made any difference."

Jess put her hand on his arm, and he looked straight into her eyes.

"Jess, I don't reckon that Gawd A'mighty himself could convince me that Peace Parker was a thief."

Jess did not speak, but turned away as her father went over to the counter to pay for their meals.

Peace Parker did not ignore the Marshalls and Farley because he did not want to speak to them, but he felt that they might speak

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to him out of sympathy and old friendship, masking their true feelings against him.

After the warning from the waitress he knew that if he talked with them it would mean a bullet in the back. He sauntered up the street to the front of the Diamond Flush saloon. Looking back he could see Perez and Sinks leave the restaurant, but they went in the opposite direction. Their work was done.

Peace concluded that they knew Marshall was leaving Tarp City immediately and would have no further chance to meet him again that day. As he started into the saloon a familiar figure, wearing a faded green derby hat, met him at the door. For a moment they stared at each other, and Jefferson Crane tried to smile, but only succeeded in twisting his face into a painful contortion.

"Huh—howdy, Peace River," he stammered, holding out his hand.

Peace looked him over carefully. Jefferson Crane had ruined his life—branded him a thief, caused him to be placed behind prison walls for five years, cheated him out of the happiness with the girl he loved—and now he wanted to shake hands. Jefferson Crane swallowed hard and wished himself many miles away from that spot. Finally Peace spoke:

"Crane, I ain't goin' to curse and swear at yuh and I ain't goin' to shake hands. Yo're a pizen little sidewinder, Crane." Peace pointed at the gun in Crane's holster. "You've got a gun right handy, and you've got a rep for bein' sudden with it."

Peace smiled softly and hooked his thumbs over his belt.

"Crane, I reckon I'm goin' to kill you right away."

"No!" breathed Crane. "No! Peace River, you can't——"

"I ain't got nothin' to lose," interrupted Peace. "You put a brand on me, Crane—the brand of a convict. —— knows it's a hard brand to change. You lied before a judge; but yuh won't lie before the one I'm goin' to send yuh to. No, yuh won't lie to Him."

Crane's hands opened and shut spasmodically and his eyes flashed sidewise, like the eyes of a trapped animal. He was cold-blooded, hard as flint, but he knew Peace River was going to kill him.

His gun-hand was nerveless and his stomach was nauseated, as his mind flashed back to the day when Peace River had dared him to draw and then downed him before his gun left its holster. Crane wet his lips.

"Peace, they'll hang yuh," he whispered thickly. "Think of it, Peace."

"You dirty little coward," said Peace coldly. "It won't hurt yuh—much. I'll try not to cripple yuh, Crane. Put up a fight and it won't hurt yuh as much as though you stood and took it."

"——!" Crane's face contorted with agony as he looked at Peace. "Gimme a chance, Peace—gimme a chance. Yuh can't shoot a man down like that. It—ain't—human."

Crane's nerve was broken, and he whimpered like a child. Peace laughed aloud, and Crane shrank back; but instead of drawing his gun, Peace's arm flashed out and he caught Crane by the collar. Crane's knees buckled under him, but Peace yanked him up. For a moment he glared into Crane's frightened eyes; then he removed the faded green derby and proceeded to smash it to shreds over Crane's head.

The job was very thorough. Crane staggered into the wall, covering his head with his arms, but Peace jerked them down and only quit when his hand held nothing but a wisp of the old hat-brim. Peace threw this aside and stepped to the saloon door, where men were crowding out to see what was causing the noise. Crane, white-faced, stared at Peace, his lips moving as though talking to himself.

"That was the only way to ever make yuh get a new hat," explained Peace.

The crowd laughed nervously, wondering why Crane did not resist Peace's act. Crane stared at Peace, amazed. His gaze shifted to the crowd, and he swallowed painfully. Then without a backward glance, he half-ran, half-staggered down the street.

"Thank ——!" said a man piously. "I've hated the sight of that old hat."

Peace smiled and walked on up the street. He had fully intended to kill Crane—the smashing of the hat was an afterthought. Crane's whining cowardice had saved him, but from now on he would be a marked man.

He had shielded his face with his hands, while a man beat him over the head with his own hat—had made no move toward the gun at his hip, and went away like a whipped puppy.

Clell Danert had seen everything that

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happened from where he stood just inside a store across the street, and he grinned joyfully, as he went outside and followed Peace to the upper end of town. Danert felt that he had a good argument to put up to Peace regarding the sheep—an argument which would help, in case Peace suspected Crane.

He crossed the street and caught up with Peace. Danert was in a jovial mood and did not seem to harbor any ill feelings for what had happened the night before.

"I saw you having a run-in with Jefferson Crane," smiled Danert.

"Yeah?" Peace River seemed indifferent.

"Peculiar character, that man Crane. You didn't mention anything about sheep, did you?"

Peace shook his head.

"No, we didn't talk about sheep—" and then as an afterthought— "Crane still have a ranch in Chinook Valley?"

Danert smiled, but evaded the question by saying:

"I'm glad you did not mention sheep to him. You know how the cattlemen feel about sheep?"

"Yeah, I know. I understand that Perez and Gus Sinks are still working for Crane."

"Yes," replied Danert, and immediately wondered why Peace grinned so widely. He had a sudden suspicion that Peace had a deep reason for that question; so he said quickly:

"I'm not sure of that either. Come to think of it, I remember hearing that they left Crane sometime ago."

"This here country," said Peace softly, "ain't rid of all its liars yet, Danert."

"What do you mean?" demanded Danert nettled.

"I mean that you're a liar, Danert."

Peace did not raise his voice above a low conversational tone, and he smiled as he spoke.

"Why should I lie?" Danert's voice carried no resentment.

"Mebbe Crane told yuh to."

"Crane! For Heaven's sake, why would Crane ask me to lie?"

"I dunno." Peace shook his head slowly. "I dunno, but I think I'm goin' to find out pretty soon."

Danert reflected. He knew what the trouble was between Crane and Peace, and he was afraid that Peace already knew too much about the sheep. A word of warning in Tarp City and they would never be able to invade Chinook Valley with their bands of sheep.

Danert knew there was no use antagonizing Peace, and he also knew that diplomacy was apt to fail. Peace must be appeased at any cost; so Danert grew confidential.

"I want you to understand that Crane is no friend of mine. He'd love to block that sheep deal, and he will do it if he suspicions us for a moment."

"Yeah?" Peace was skeptical. He studied Danert for a moment and then—

"Who owns the sheep?"

Danert smiled and shook his head.

"I can't tell you; if I could you'd be surprized."

"Yeah?"

Danert knitted his brows as if deep in thought.

"Peace, I think perhaps I had better tell you, after all. I know that you are Peace River Parker."

If Danert expected Peace to be surprized over the statement he was disappointed, because Peace merely nodded seriously.

"And you know Chinook Valley," added Danert after a pause. "The price of hides and beef has dropped since you lived here, and there is little profit in the business. In fact the cattle business is no longer a paying proposition. Now, suppose a big cattleman had foresight enough to see that wool is going to be a money maker."

"Somebody in Chinook Valley?" queried Peace.

Danert nodded slowly, and said—

"The biggest cattle raiser."

"Cross L Marshall?"

Danert started to speak, but a man walked in behind them and they both turned. It was the sheriff, who had been in the restaurant when Peace and the stage-driver had battled with their guns. Danert spoke to him and turned to face Peace.

"See you later, old man."

Peace nodded and turned back to the sheriff.

"Sent the driver to Fossilshell today," volunteered the sheriff. "He was kinda bad off, and we ain't got much of a surgeon around here."

"Shucks! I'm sorry he acted thataway, sheriff."

"I ain't blamin' you for the shootin'. He got what was comin' to him. What I

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want to talk to you about is the reasons for it. He tells me that you stole his stage and kicked him off half-way between Fossilshell and Sandy Fork. He got a horse from a ranch and came on."

"He ain't no liar," smiled Peace. "I just about done that. He was drivin' his team with rocks and almost knocked an ear off one of his leaders. He ain't fit to drive a nail, sheriff."

The sheriff nodded.

"I reckoned there was a good excuse. Too danged bad we shipped him out. Yo're a stranger, ain't yuh?"

"Name's Peace River Parker."

"Peace River? You the feller that—" the sheriff hesitated.

"And that's whatever," agreed Peace.

The sheriff studied Peace. His term of office began long after Peace had left the country, and he only knew Peace from hearsay.

"Goin' to work around here, Parker?"

"Mebbe," softly.

"Well, I reckon yuh can take care of yoreself," drawled the sheriff appraisingly. "I ain't preachin', yuh understand; but—I'm tryin' to stop folks from throwin' lead around here."

Peace glanced behind him and saw Jud Evers standing looking in a window. He was only a few feet away, apparently interested in what was going on inside the building; but Peace knew that his ears were tuned to catch every word that was said between himself and the sheriff. Peace turned to the sheriff and said—

"You know Jeff Crane?"

"Y-e-s, I know him. Owns the Double Circle ranch down on Sandy Fork—did own it, rather. Just sold it."

"Ain't he runnin' cows in Chinook Valley no more?"

"No-o-o, not for a long time. Heard that he had a run-in with Cross L Marshall and sold out."

"That so?" Peace was interested. "Ain't no money in cows nowdays, anyway, is there?"

"There ain't? Buyers in here most every day, Parker. Meat and hides are worth more right on the range now than they used to be laid down in the eastern markets. No money! Man, them Chinook cattlemen are gettin' rich as——"

"Cross L Marshall sellin' a lot of stock nowdays?"

"I dunno, Parker. I know he drove two thousand head of feeders through the pass a week ago and added 'em to his range. Bought 'em from the TF outfit. That Chinook is one hy-iu range, y'betcha. I seen Marshall a while ago—him and his daughter. Hear she's goin' to marry Clell Danert pretty soon."

"Is that so?" asked Peace softly. "What is Danert's business?"

"He punched cows for Crane for a while and then for Marshall, but I hear he's buyin' stock for some Chicago outfit now."

"Any sheep botherin' around here?"

"No-o-o, not much. The Sun Prairie country is sheeped out. Lots of woolies have been shipped out of here lately, and a big bunch are waitin' for trains. I'm —— glad to see 'em go."

"I've just been wonderin'," said Peace, "is there any law that keeps sheep off the range which ain't actually owned by cattlemen?"

"That is somethin' for the undertaker to handle—not the law. Pers'nally, that ain't in my jurisdiction, and if it was I'd be there too late to arrest any one."

Peace grinned and nodded.

"Yeah, I reckon yo're right, sheriff. I just wondered, that's all. Too bad about that stage-driver."

"Like —— it was!" snorted the sheriff. He nodded and went on down the street.

Peace watched him for a moment. He knew the sheriff had not lied to him, and he knew that Jefferson Crane was the man behind the sheep deal. Danert was a party to the deal, and Danert was going to marry Jess Marshall. He was the cat's-paw. Holman had innocently hired him, and Crane was more than willing to let him go ahead and drive the sheep-wedge into Chinook.

Peace knew there were just three things left for him to do—obey orders, escape from town or fight. He thought of going straight to Pasiooks and warning the cattlemen, but it was almost a certainty that some of Crane's men would be on the watch for just such a move and ambush him. No, it would be suicide to try to move. He knew that there were at least four of Crane's men in town, not including Danert.

He turned slowly and saw Rance Wylie cross the street near him and join Evers in earnest conversation. Evers and Wylie

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were the two cowboys he had crippled in the fight at Crane's ranch five years ago, and he knew that they were dangerous. With Perez and Sinks, both gunmen, it made the odds badly against him.

The fact that Jess Marshall intended to marry Danert did not seem to annoy him, for the simple reason that he couldn't believe it. He did not hate Danert for this, but he did detest him for what he was doing against her father. The old saying that all is fair in love or war did not connect with Peace Parker's philosophy of life.

He would neither love nor fight unfair, because he did not believe in anything except a square deal. If Jess Marshall wanted to marry Danert—all well and good; but he was going to see that Danert won her fair—if they didn't kill him off before he got the chance. It was plain to see that the Chinook Valley cattlemen were going to have trouble.

Sheep travel slowly at night, especially in large bands. The small band could get well into the valley by morning. This would be discovered and cause much excitement. While they were rounding up this bunch the valley entrance to the pass would be spewing its wooly horde uninterrupted. Once inside and scattered it would be more than the cattlemen could handle, especially as there would be well-armed men with them.

This would end in the courts, which, according to law, would give the sheepman an equal right with the cattlemen. The only hope for Chinook Valley would be to stop them in the pass.

Peace's impulse was to seek out Crane and Danert. He went up the street in the direction taken by Danert, but he was nowhere in evidence.

Gus Sinks and Jud Evers were drinking at the bar, Perez was in a poker game and Rance Wylie was apparently half-asleep, tilted back against the wall in a chair.

"Four to one," mused Peace. "They'll kill me and the sheep game goes merrily on. I reckon I'm the poor guesser. They've kinda got a tail-holt on yuh, Peace Parker."

He turned and walked slowly down the street, watching behind him. Wylie and Evers came out of the saloon and sauntered down the sidewalk behind him. Sinks came out a moment later, but crossed the street and walked slowly down the other side.

"Kinda taggin' me around," mused Peace to himself. "Goin' to see that I don't open my heart to anybody. Mebbe them jaspers think that five years of rock-bustin' has ruined my gun-hand."

Peace had approached the corner of a general store, and as he turned, the door opened and Jess Marshall and Clell Danert stepped out. Peace dropped his head and quickened his pace, as if to walk past them; but Jess caught him by the sleeve and he looked straight into her face.

"Peace Parker, won't you speak to me?" she asked wistfully.

Peace blinked his eyes and swallowed hard.

"Yeah, I—uh—Jess, I didn't reckon yuh—uh——"

"I didn't think you would turn down an old friend, Peace."

Peace had not expected this and it shackled his tongue for a moment. Danert seemed uncomfortable.

"I didn't want to turn yuh down," said Peace softly. "I thought that mebbe —after what happened——"

"That is only the past, Peace," softly, "and the past is all forgotten as far as I am concerned. I feel that it was all a terrible mistake, and—won't you come to see us? Come out to the old ranch, Peace. I know dad and Bart would be mighty glad to see you again."

Peace turned away and glanced across the street. Evers was standing on the sidewalk, looking across at them. Just beyond them, Perez and Wylie had stopped and were looking in a window.

Peace turned back to Jess:

"That's a'mighty nice of yuh, Jess—that is. I'd sure like to talk with 'em again. I hear that yore dad is goin' in for sheep."

"Sheep?" Jess' brown eyes snapped wide in amazement. "Where on earth did you ever hear such a thing, Peace?"

Peace shifted his eyes to Danert, whose face had flamed scarlet and then turned gray with anger. He knew that Parker was ruining their scheme, and he had no way to stop him.

"I heard he was," said Peace slowly. "Seems a shame to sheep out old Chinook."

Jess glanced at Danert and back to Peace.

"Why, Peace—such a thing is ridiculous. I don't understand why——"

"It is foolish to talk of such a thing,"

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said Danert. There was a world of meaning in his words and Peace understood.

"Is yore dad in town, Jess?" asked Peace.

"No. Dad and Bart went home a little while ago."

"I think we had better be going, Jess," stated Danert impatiently.

Peace smiled at Danert's eagerness to get away from him, and said to Jess—

"Where's yore horse?"

She pointed down the street, where two horses were tied to a hitch-rack.

"Down there. Mr. Danert is going to ride home with me."

"Yeah?" Peace smiled widely. He knew that this was his one chance to spoil the sheep deal—the only one. It was a long shot—four-to-one, to be exact; but Peace Parker liked odds, and he was banking on Jess Marshall's ability to grasp the situation.

Danert started to walk on, but Peace stepped in front of him.

"Danert, you ain't goin' for no ride—" and then to Jess, without turning his head—"Get yore horse and circle west to hit the road, Jess, and ride like ——. I'll foller yuh if I can. Tell yore dad that a herd of sheep is comin' into Chinook tonight, and——"

Danert lunged forward like a bull, crashing into Peace and they both floundered off the sidewalk, locked in each other's arms.

Danert twisted himself on top and tried to get loose, but Peace hugged him tight and yelled to Jess—

"For ——'s sake, get goin', can'tcha?"

Then with superhuman effort, Peace twisted from under Danert, and came up with him in his arms. Jess ran down the street towards the horses, while Peace, with the cursing Danert in his arms, staggered to the middle of the street, keeping Danert between himself and Wylie and Evers, who had come running at the first signs of trouble.

"Stop her!" yelled Danert. "She——"

Peace tightened his elbow and Danert's vocal cords were too cramped to function properly.

Jess had got on her horse by this time, and was just swinging around the corner when Wylie seemed to grasp the purport of Danert's words.

He whirled and raced for the hitch-rack, calling to Perez, who was running down the other side of the street. Perez ran out to him and they both ran for the rack, where their saddle-horses were tied.

Evers seemed undecided what to do as he did not understand what had happened, but when he saw Wylie and Perez mounting hurriedly, he started for the other horse at the rack, where Jess Marshall's horse had been.

Danert had been kicking and cursing and trying to get his gun, but now Peace, when the danger from the others had passed, whirled and crashed Danert against the side of the building, releasing him at the same time. Danert dropped, stunned, to his hands and knees. Peace tore the gun loose from Danert's holster and ran down the sidewalk toward Evers, who was having trouble mounting.

He managed to swing into the saddle, but the half-broke bronc whirled against the hitch-rack. Evers saw Peace coming and whipped out his gun, but Peace's gun spat once and Evers' right arm crumpled at the elbow; his gun discharging from the jerk of tearing muscles.

The horse reared wildly, but Peace caught it by the head-stall and eased Evers out of the saddle, letting him fall to his knees beside the rack-post. The horse tried to tear away from Peace, but he grasped the saddle-horn, cramped the animal's head against its shoulder and swung into the saddle.

Danert had got to his feet and was trying to run after him, but his feet did not seem to track well. Men were running to see what was going on, and Peace heard the sheriff yell at him from across the street, demanding that he stop.

Peace swung the horse toward the narrow board sidewalk, and the animal jumped it like a born hunter. Straight down a narrow alley dashed the horse, swinging in behind a blacksmith-shop, where a blacksmith was setting a tire on a wagon-wheel.

Peace caught a flash of the blacksmith dodging sidewise, waving a heavy pair of tongs, as they vaulted the tire-rack, and then swinging clear of buildings he circled away from town to strike the road which led to Poncho Pass.

Peace stood straight in his stirrups and thrilled at the feel of a good horse under him. It had been over five years since he rode a horse, and this was a real horse. It was Danert's, and Danert was as proud of a good horse as he was of his personal appearance. The animal was only half-broke,

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anxious to run, and Peace did not check it.

He thundered around curves, where brush blocked his vision, riding with Danert's gun swinging in his hand, and Danert's other gun in his holster. Suddenly he noticed that there was a Winchester swinging in a scabbard under his right leg, and he laughed with joy. It was likely filled with cartridges—six, to be exact—but six would be enough.

Peace knew that Perez and Wylie were going to capture Jess if possible, and there was a strong possibility that they would strike the pass ahead of her, as she had to make a wide circle to get to the road.

His only hope was to overtake her before she reached them, because he knew they would hesitate at nothing to stop her from reaching home. If she reached the pass ahead of them they would lose, because Jess was a good rider and the Cross L horses were no common stock.

Now the road twisted and turned, climbing higher and higher. To the right the mountain broke sheer for a hundred feet, boulder and brush at the bottom of the gorge. The upper side was dense with mesquite and sage.

The horse began to show signs of slowing up, Peace spurred it to further efforts. The grade was only wide enough for one wagon, with turn-outs at irregular intervals. Peace swung himself sidewise on the turns, watching ahead.

Suddenly he whirled around a curve, and saw three horses about a hundred yards ahead of him. Perez and Wylie had got to the pass ahead of Jess and had captured her.

Peace threw his horse back on its haunches, but before he could make any other move Perez fired with a rifle. Peace felt the impact of the bullet as it struck the horse, but before he could swing out of the saddle, the horse pitched sidewise and went over the grade with him.

Luckily the horse struck flat on the steep side of the bank, throwing Peace free of the saddle; otherwise he would have been crushed, as the horse rolled over and over to the bottom of the ravine. Peace struck on his side in the brush, out of sight of Perez and Wylie and slid to the bottom, where he lay in a doubled heap.

It would seem impossible for a man to fall off that grade with a horse and not be killed, as the first sixty feet was almost sheer drop. Whether from the bullet or not, the horse was stone dead when it reached the bottom.

Peace did not move for some little time, and then it was only to open his eyes and look up at the sky. He did not know how badly he was hurt, but he was leaving that to be determined when there was no longer danger from the men up on the grade.

Suddenly he heard several shots fired. The reports echoed in the hills, making it difficult to tell just where they came from, but Peace felt sure they were fired from above him on the grade. He did not hear the bullets, which seemed to imply that some one else had mixed into the game. He knew that there was nothing he could do for Jess Marshall—at least not right away.

They would probably hold her a prisoner until tomorrow—but would they? Chinook Valley would rise *en masse* and treat the kidnapers to a sample of swift justice. Jess would know the men who stopped her, and that knowledge would be fatal to Perez and Wylie.

Peace knew that Crane and Danert would stop at nothing to accomplish their ends. They were determined to put their sheep into Chinook Valley, and they would not let Jess Marshall stand in their way.

It was very likely that Jess knew and recognized Perez and Wylie; but they were merely hired gunmen, who would take their pay for the deed and escape from the country. Crane and Danert would not show in this—at least Crane would not. If Peace were killed, and Perez and Wylie out of reach, it would be hard to prove anything.

Peace knew that Crane was foxy, and that he would have some plan formed to throw the blame on others. Their one aim was to get the sheep into the valley. Twenty thousand sheep represented a big sum of money. If Jess Marshall had escaped them, they might as well let the coyotes and buzzards have their herds. They were taking a desperate chance in kidnaping Jess; but it was their only alternative.

Peace drew himself together and began to analyze his different bruises and strains. He was cut in several places and his whole body seemed one mass of bruises, but there were no bones broken. His revolvers had been lost in the fall and were nowhere in evidence. He dragged himself to where

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the horse was lying, intending to get the rifle, but found it minus a stock and with the barrel bent. The saddle was broken and torn—a useless hull. The rope was still intact, and might be of assistance in getting back to the road.

He sat down and rolled a cigaret, while he tried to plan some action. He might try to go on into Pasiooks but it was almost a certainty that some one was guarding against just such a thing. No, his move would be to get back to Tarp City as fast as possible. He worked his way into the open, taking a chance to expose himself; but no one shot at him.

He worked on up the cañon for a distance, and then began his climb. A narrow hog-back afforded him a precarious footing; but he was able to climb up to within about forty feet of the level of the grade.

He rested a while. Above him, at the edge of the grade, was the stub of a jack-pine. It was a long cast, almost straight up. Peace managed to brace his feet sufficiently to make a cast with his rope. He had been a good roper five years before; but his arm and eye had lost their cunning. Cast after cast he made, swinging the loop almost straight up, only to have it fall back. Finally it caught and held.

Even with the aid of the rope it was a hard climb. He sprawled beside the road for a while, his bruised body protesting against such efforts. His hands were cut—his clothes torn; but he grinned as he rolled a smoke.

He was near a curve in the road. The sun was still about an hour high and Peace estimated that it must be about four o'clock. Finally he got to his feet and began limping down the road toward Tarp City.

As he made the first turn in the road he almost stumbled over the body of a man, lying face down in the middle of the road. Near the man stood a saddled horse, its feet tangled in the bridle-reins. Peace stopped and glanced quickly around. No one else was in sight. He knelt down beside the man and turned him over.

It was the sheriff—stone dead. Peace examined him quickly. He had been shot twice. Peace straightened up and looked around. He knew instinctively what had happened. The sheriff had followed him, had run into Perez and Wylie with Jess, and one of the men had killed him. Those were the shots he had heard.

Beyond the body, almost buried in the dust, was the sheriff's pistol. Two shots had been fired and the gun was cocked; showing that the sheriff had been killed before he could pull the trigger for the third time.

Peace wiped the gun on his sleeve. At least he had a gun and a horse.

"I sure do change weapons and broncs real often," he grunted aloud.

As he stepped toward the horse, several mounted men swept around the curve just beyond him, with Clell Danert leading them. They were not over a hundred feet away and riding fast. The sharpness of the curve and the heavy dust of the road had muffled the sounds of their approach.

Peace threw up the gun and pulled the trigger. The hammer barely moved forward, and Peace realized in a flash that the cocked hammer had let the action clog with fine dust, leaving the gun useless for the moment.

The riders were almost into him. Peace ducked to one side, as he hurled the gun straight at Danert; and a moment later a horse struck him, spinning him against the upper side of the grade and knocking him unconscious.

THE Eastern range and the high foot-hills of the Valley of the Chinook glowed with the colors of sunset; but the western half of the valley lay like a vast blue shadowland. The sky-line of the western cliffs was high-lighted with sweeping splotches of gold and orange, where the mighty rocks still showed their facets to the dying sun.

Down in the blue shadows, Cross L Marshall and Bart Farley sat on the ranch-house porch, performing their evening ceremonial smoke. Both men were very silent. Farley's pipe was not drawing well and he dug savagely at it with his pocket-knife.

Marshall slowly knocked the dottle from his pipe and got to his feet, where he leaned against a porch-post and gazed at the fading sunset.

"I dunno," muttered Farley looking up at him. "They was to start soon after we left. It ain't like Jess to stay like this."

Marshall shook his head.

"I don't like it, Bart. Jess knows danged well we'd worry about it. She said she was goin' to the store and get some cloth of some kind and then they was goin' to come right on."

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Jim Horne came out of the front door, rolling a cigaret. Jim was usually the last one to quit the supper table. He sat down on the porch and braced his back against the wall.

"Ain't Jess come home yet?" he asked in his peculiar drawl. Neither of the men answered him in words, but he knew that she had not.

"I dunno," complained Farley nervously. "Peace Parker is in town, and Crane's there and——"

"Peace Parker, the cow-thief?" asked Horne.

Farley turned like a flash. "Take that back, Horne! Don'tcha say that!"

Horne's mouth gawped open and his cigaret fell to a fold of his shirt-front. It was not like Farley to explode like this.

"I—I takes it back," stammered Horne, digging into his bosom for the smoldering cigaret; "I didn't know——"

"You ain't never heard him spoken of as such around here," reminded Marshall softly.

"I never knowed him," said Horne, "and I don't reckon I ever heard any of yuh mention him. I've only heard him spoke about at other places. He's been in the pen, ain't he?"

Farley nodded.

"You don't know him, Jim—or yuh wouldn't speak against him."

"I sure begs yore pardon, Bart. I reckon he's been done wrong. Lot of fellers serve time. Did he come back to find out who done him dirt?"

Farley glanced up at Marshall.

"I wonder, Cross L?"

Marshall rubbed his chin slowly and nodded—

"Mebbe."

Bert Hart rode in past the corrals and galloped up to the porch, where he swung down.

"I saw Barr Severn a while ago, Marshall. He just came in from Tarp City. There was a shootin' scrape on the street. That feller Peace Parker is back from the pen. He plugged Evers, the cowboy who works for Crane.

"They tells me that Parker tried to grab Jess, and him and Danert had a —— of a time. Jess got away on her horse and Parker took out after her on Danert's horse. The sheriff tried to stop him; but he got plumb away. Barr didn't see it himself, but he says everybody got excited, except the sheriff, who got a bronc and follered 'em. Danert said they hit toward Fossilshell. Barr says that Danert got —— licked out of him."

"Where's Barr?" snapped Marshall.

"Gone home to get his punchers. Said he'd be here in a few minutes. He got into town about a half-hour after it happened, and came straight here."

"Yuh says that Peace Parker tried to grab Jess?" asked Farley.

"That's what Barr said. I dunno what it means, Farley. Some of the boys have headed down the Fossilshell country. I reckon everybody got excited and didn't know just what did happen. They said that Parker wrasseled Danert all over the street and then slammed him into a building. He sure is a proper heller, I reckon."

"Saddle up!" snapped Marshall.

Farley, Hart and Horne raced for the stable. Hart yelled over his shoulder to Marshall—

"I'll saddle yore bronc for yuh."

Four other riders, including Barr Severn, of the Three Dot, galloped into the Cross L and swung in beside the stable. Marshall came running from the house, buckling on his belt as he ran, and stopped beside Severn, a rangy, solemn-faced cow-man, with a stringy black mustache.

"Got any idea a-tall, Barr?" asked Marshall eagerly.

"Nothin' 'cept what I told Hart. I grabbed what info'mation I could and came on in as fas' as possible."

"All set!" yelled Farley.

The four men swung into their saddles, settled themselves for a long ride, and a few moments later eight silent riders faded out up the yellow ribbon of road, which led to Poncho Pass—eight men whose fingers itched for the feel of a trigger in defense of their women.

IT SEEMED to Peace that he had been asleep only for a moment. He had felt the numbing crash of the running horse striking him, and it seemed as if he were slightly stunned. He could hear voices, but caution told him to keep his eyes closed. He barely moved his fingers and could feel the nap of a blanket.

He lay perfectly still,. trying to understand what was being said. At first it was a meaningless jumble of words, but as his

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brain cleared he heard an earnest conversation, seemingly between three men.

"—pretty hard shock," said a voice, which Peace decided belonged to a doctor. "No bones broken. I do not understand where he received all those bruises, though. Impossible to have received them by merely being knocked down by a horse. Must have the constitution of a mule."

Peace realized that he was in a house, but had no idea of whose house, nor where. He must have been unconscious for some time.

"He likely fought with the sheriff," Peace recognized Danert's purring voice. "We were unable to find the sheriff's gun anywhere. This man threw his gun——"

"Threw kinda straight, too," grunted a voice. "Few inches lower and yore beauty would 'a' fled forever, Clell."

Peace opened his eyes a fraction of an inch, giving him a blurred image of Clell Danert, with his head bandaged.

"Doc, do yuh reckon he's got his spine hurt?" asked the third party. "Takes him a long time to wake up, don't yuh think?"

"Hm-m-m—possibly. It is hard to determine right now. How did you happen to bring him here?"

"Peculiar situation," purred Danert. "The sheriff is dead and the deputy is gone away. No keys for the jail. We thought he was dead; but wanted to be sure. We'll have to hold him."

"Certainly, it will require an investigation." This from the doctor.

"He killed the sheriff, that's a cinch," declared Danert. "He shot Evers and stole my horse. The sheriff must have caught him on Poncho Pass. This man's gun had been fired twice and the sheriff was hit twice. My horse is at the bottom of the cañon, dead."

"Sheriff Langley was well liked," observed the doctor.

"That's the worst of it," said Danert. "I'm strong for a square deal, doc; and I know what Tarp City will do to this man when they find out what he done."

"Might save the county the expense of a trial," growled the third man. "This feller's got a —— bad rep, and the sooner he decorates a tree the better. Shall we keep him here?"

"Perhaps it would be better to say nothing until he is safe in jail," suggested the doctor. "He is physically unable to do anything. I do not like to see a man executed without a fair trial, and this man is in no condition to give a coherent defense of his own acts."

Peace grinned to himself and wondered if he really was in as bad shape as they thought. He could see that Danert was framing everything against him. The sheriff, not knowing the real cause of the trouble, had followed him to Poncho Pass, where he had been killed. Many witnesses would testify that the sheriff had followed Peace Parker.

"You stay here," Danert ordered the third man as he and the doctor went out of the room.

Peace could hear the guard rolling a cigaret. As he scratched a match Peace peered through almost closed lids and saw that the guard was Gus Sinks. He was tilted back against the wall in a chair, with a Winchester across his lap. Clell Danert stepped softly into the room, came close to Sinks and whispered.

"Gus, we can't let this man go to jail. I'm going to town and let 'em in on it. I think they'll act fast; but if they don't——"

"Whatcha want me to do, Clell?"

"I dunno—" admitted Danert, and after a long pause— "Make it look right, whatever you do, Gus."

"If he tries to make a break—" said Sinks.

"You *sabe* things," agreed Danert and slipped softly out of the room.

Peace shut his eyes and tried to think out a plan. He had no way of knowing just how badly he was injured. Danert would incite Tarp City to lynch him, and Sinks was ready to kill him if he made a move. They did not want him alive. They could not afford to let him tell what he knew.

The doctor came back into the room with a lamp, which he placed on a table near the bed. He felt of Peace's pulse.

"Reckon he'll pull through?" asked Sinks.

"I can not say; but I have hopes," smiled the doctor and left the room.

"—— you and yore hopes!" growled Sinks.

Peace realized that it was growing late and that no time must be lost if he blocked the sheep game. But what could he do? He could see Sinks watching him, with the Winchester pointing toward the bed. Peace studied Sinks, who was puffing slowly on

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his cigaret, a scowl on his homely face. Sinks had been cut across the face at one time, and the scar showed yellowish-white against his brown skin.

Peace did not dare to test his muscles for fear of what Sinks might do. As far as Peace was concerned, he might be paralyzed. He seemed to have no sense of pain. Finally he saw a way out—a desperate way. Without moving a muscle he began moving his lips, muttering to himself. Over and over he repeated aloud—

"Danert—double-crossin'—own—men."

Sinks listened indifferently at first, but after Peace had repeated it several times he tilted forward in his chair and watched him closely.

"Danert—double—crossin'—own—men," droned Peace.

Sinks got up from his chair and backed to the door, keeping an eye on the bed. He glanced quickly into the hall and came slowly back to his former position.

"Danert—crooked—" muttered Peace. "Crooked."

"Yo're crazy," muttered Sinks. "Whatcha talkin' about?"

Peace kept muttering broken sentences, a jumble of "Danert double-crossin'—own—men—all—for—himself——"

Sinks glanced back at the door and came to the bed, where he put his hand on Peace's shoulder and shook him.

"Whatcha talkin' about? Who is Danert double-crossin'?"

Peace began murmuring a jumble of stuff, barely whispering. Sinks leaned closer to hear it. He wanted to know all about Danert, and Peace Parker's mumblings might be true.

"—— yuh, why can't yuh talk sense?" he growled, leaning closer and glancing back toward the door.

As he turned back a brawny hand shot from under the blanket and closed around his throat, while another arm hooked around his waist, jerking him off his feet.

Peace lunged forward from the bed, every muscle on his body protesting against the strain, and crumpled Sinks under him to the floor. The attack had been so sudden, so unlooked-for that Sinks was half-throttled before he could attempt a defense.

He managed to jerk his head sidewise, and half-tear away; but his body was in a human vise, which crushed out his breath and seemed to drive the life from his muscles. He tried desperately to cry for help, but his voice was gone and he crashed to the floor, striking the back of his head.

Peace staggered to his feet and looked down at Sinks. His body seemed racked and torn and the blood pounded in his temples like trip-hammers. He managed to remove Sinks' belt and gun, which he buckled around his own waist, and picked up the Winchester.

He heard the doctor come into the house and go into another room, shutting the door behind him. Peace staggered to the door, where he leaned against the wall, trying to overcome his dizziness. Behind him came a sobbing curse, and he whirled to meet Sinks, who had recovered sufficiently to put up a fight.

He rushed at Peace, apparently unconscious of the fact that Peace had both of his guns. He crashed into Peace, striking and grasping, mouthing curses which were mere whispers. Peace shook him off and drove in a crashing uppercut to Sinks' chin as he rushed again, and Sinks collapsed like a wet rag, sprawling on his face almost under the bed.

Peace glanced at him, turned and went into a short hall. Behind him he could hear the doctor in another room, hammering on wood and whistling unmusically. Peace grinned. The doctor had been too much engrossed in his own noises to hear the fight.

He opened the door and stepped outside. He was just at the outskirts of Tarp City, at what was evidently the doctor's home. At the gate he could see the outlines of a horse and buggy and further up the fence was a saddled horse. A big moon was coming up over the Sunset range behind Gunsight peak, which masked a triangle portion at the bottom; making it look like a huge yellow pie, with one piece removed.

Peace untied the horse and swung into the saddle.

He shut his lips against the pain of wrenched muscles and bruised flesh, and rode toward the lights of the town, with the Winchester in the crook of his arm. He rode slowly down the middle of the street. On either side of him shone the yellow lights from the windows. Men were moving in small groups, and there did not seem to be the usual hilarity connected with Tarp City's night life.

Peace knew what it meant. Sheriff Langley had been well liked, and Tarp City

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was preparing to avenge his death. They were going to lynch some one, and he was the marked victim.

Peace knew that Tarp City was like gunpowder; knew that Danert's tale would cause them to explode with indignation over the killing of their sheriff; but still he rode down the main street.

A number of men were standing in front of a saloon, and as Peace rode closer he could hear Danert's voice. He drew up on his reins. Should he kill Danert? Would Danert be any good to him dead?

Danert was telling those men of the killing of the sheriff; branding Peace with the mark of a murderer. Peace looked up and down the lighted street—lighted from the yellow glow of oil lamps. Some men crossed the street near him, talking excitedly. One of them carried a coil of new rope. Peace smiled grimly.

Suddenly there came the rattle of wheels, the pounding of a horse's hoofs, and into the street came a horse and buggy, coming furiously and dangerously. The driver was standing up in the buggy as it flashed into view, and he swung it between Peace and the saloon. The horse fell at the edge of the sidewalk and one of the front wheels smashed to kindling against a post.

For a few moments there was a surge of men, as they got the horse to its feet and off the sidewalk. Peace moved in close enough to know that the driver of the rig was Gus Sinks, and that he was reporting the escape of Peace Parker. Men poured out of the saloon and joined the group.

Peace turned his horse and moved slowly away. He did not feel alarmed, because no one would ever expect him to come to town following his escape. He swung into a short side street and stopped. He felt sure that Danert knew where Jess Marshall was held; but there would be no chance for him to force a talk with Danert. There was just one chance left.

He spurred his horse and rode swiftly toward the loading corrals, where he knew the bands of sheep were being held. There was just a chance that he would find some one there—some one who would talk.

Peace knew that he would have to work fast to do any searching for Jess Marshall and to keep out of the hands of the mob. He wondered if Marshall had been doing any searching for Jess. He knew that the sheep would not be moved tonight, because the owners would never chance a move of that kind, while things were upset. Chinook Valley would be on the search for Jess, and men would be riding the pass.

Peace could hear the uneasy bleating of sheep, as before him loomed the shadowy outlines of the corrals—huge enclosures, with narrow chutes which led to loading platforms the height of a stock-car door. The tall timbers of the chutes cast long shadows across his path, as he rode through and scattered the bedded bands of sheep.

Beyond the corrals were a huddle of tent-houses, the home of the sheepherders. In one of them glowed the light of a lamp, and Peace rode slowly to this one, gun in hand. He dismounted in the shadow of the corral, and was walking almost to the doorway of the lighted tent, when a man rode in from a different direction. He dismounted and peered into the lighted tent. Peace accidentally trod on a brittle stick, which snapped sharply. The man turned his head and called—

"Pete!"

It was Jefferson Crane. Peace walked toward him, saying nothing.

"Whatcha doin' out there?" demanded Crane, as Peace came closer to him. "Sinks fell down on the job, —— him! There's —— to pay and no——"

"Uh-huh," grunted Peace, stepping in close and shoving the muzzle of his rifle into Crane's ribs.

"There's —— to pay and no pitch hot, Crane."

Crane said nothing. Peace backed him into the tent-house, with Crane cringing away from the gun, hands held even with his shoulders.

"You?" he breathed sharply. "You?"

"Me," admitted Peace coldly. "I let yuh go once, Crane. Let yuh go 'cause yuh begged like a yaller pup; but beggin' ain't savin' yore soul tonight."

"Why—I ain't done nothin' to you," faltered Crane. "Why kill me, Parker?"

Crane's face was green with fright and his lifted hands opened and shut spasmodically.

"Arguments are all closed," said Peace slowly. "Sinks sure fell down on the job, Crane; but yore hired coyotes have lied to honest folks and they're all yellin' for blood—my blood. Mebbe they get me and mebbe they don't.

"If they do—you've gone to —— ahead

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of me; and if they don't—" Peace shook his head—"the mem'ries of your demise won't haunt me, Crane."

Crane licked his lips and glanced around. He tried to swallow, but his throat refused to function. Then:

"Parker, for ——'s sake, you—you—I'll help you get away. They'll hang yuh sure. They're after you now. Honest, I know a place where they'll never find yuh. I'll take yuh to it and I'll give yuh money and I'll——"

Peace shook his head.

"No! I want to ask you one question before I kill yuh, and I'm askin' yuh to answer with the truth. Did you misbrand them cows—the job I served five years for doin'?"

Crane clenched his teeth to keep them from chattering and nodded.

"Talk!" snapped Peace.

"Yes," whispered Crane. "I done that job, Parker. I wanted to marry Jess Marshall, and I had to get you out of the way."

"And now Danert is goin' to marry her, eh?"

"He thinks he is," Crane's face distorted wolfishly. "I'll kill him first. Lemme go long enough to kill him, Parker."

"You were goin' to sheep out Chinook Valley?"

"By ——, they kicked me out of there!" Crane shook like a man with the palsy. "I'm goin' to git even!"

Peace studied Crane for a full minute, and Crane squirmed under the scrutiny and the menace of the cocked Winchester.

"Got a pencil and a piece of paper?" asked Peace.

Crane's hand went cautiously to his vest pocket and took out the stub of a pencil. In one corner of the tent was a large packing-case, upside down, and on the top of it were a number of old newspapers and some blank wrapping paper.

Peace motioned Crane over to this box and shoved a piece of the wrapping paper over to him with the muzzle of his gun.

"Write out what yuh know about misbrandin' them cows," ordered Peace.

"Where do I git off?" Crane whined the question.

"Write fast!" snapped Peace. "Then sign it."

"Do I git off?"

Peace squinted at Crane. "Get off? Crane, yo're a dirty, lousy, pariah-dog; but I'll give you a shootin' chance—after I've got that confession."

Crane licked his lips and began writing. He wanted to stall for time. Perez should be around there close. Crane was afraid to have even a shooting chance with Peace. If he could stall long enough, help would come. He wrote slowly. The lamp was nearly dry. Peace turned it higher and it smoked a spiral of acrid smoke which eddied in the draft from the doorway. Crane affixed his signature and shoved the paper across to Peace. It read:

> I branded them cows in Chinook Valley five years ago and Peace Parker got sent to the pen for it. He was not to blaim and I say so here.
>
> (Signed) JEFFERSON CRANE.

Crane watched Peace read it, and wondered how quickly he could draw the gun from the shoulder-holster under his vest. He was afraid even to move a hand toward it for fear Peace might take it from him.

"That's let you off," said Crane as Peace finished.

"Yeah?" Peace shoved the paper back to Crane. "You ain't hardly started writin' yet, Crane. Now make out a bill of sale for every sheep yuh own. Make it out to me and mark it paid in full."

Crane nearly made a foolish motion toward his shoulder, but checked it in time.

"To you?" he shrilled. "Why?"

Peace slid his thumb off the cocked hammer of the rifle, and his voice was cold as ice.

"Yore lies made me work for five years, Crane. It was —— hard work, too. You made a convict out of me, and the least yuh can do is to pay me for my hard work. Write fast, 'cause this gun is easy on the trigger."

Crane's thin face was white with anger, but he laughed harshly:

"I'll do it, Parker; but —— little good will they be to you. You can kill me if yuh want to, but yuh won't live 'till mornin'. Tarp City's got a rope, and they're trailin' yuh, Parker. You better be on the run."

"Go ahead and write," said Peace coldly. "I'll take a chance on my own hide."

Crane wrote the bill of sale and signed it. Peace glanced at it and put it in his pocket, with the rifle still covering Crane's chest.

"Anythin' else yuh want?" asked Crane hoarsely.

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"Uh-huh," nodded Peace. "The most important of all."

Crane squinted at him wonderingly and for a minute they looked at each other. Crane licked his lips and tried to edge one hand toward his concealed gun.

"Well, what in —— do yuh want?" Crane fairly squealed.

"Where is Jess Marshall?"

Crane jerked back at the question. "Jess Marshall?"

"Where is she, Crane? Talk fast."

Peace depressed the muzzle of his rifle to cover Crane's stomach.

"Start talkin'."

"I dunno," croaked Crane, "I dunno."

"When did yuh see Perez last?"

"Three or four hours ago."

"You knew that Sinks failed to hold me," said Peace softly. "You lie when you say you don't know that your men kidnaped Jess Marshall. I'm——"

Came a rustle at the door and Peace whirled and saw Perez half inside the doorway. As Perez saw him his hand flashed for his gun. Peace fired from the hip, almost across the smoking lamp, and the concussion blew out the light.

Perez's gun sent a stab of orange flame into the tent-top, which showed that he was falling as he fired. Crane's pistol flashed almost in Peace's face and the bullet burned across the top of his ear, while the powder burned into his chin and cheek.

Peace ducked and flung the rifle in Crane's direction and heard the cry of pain as it struck. Peace could hear some one moving inside the tent, but could not exactly locate the sound.

He dropped behind the big packing case, and seemed to locate the sound just behind him. He slipped his fingers under the edge of the case and upset it in the direction of the sound. He heard Crane swear as the box rolled into him, and then he seemed to feel the shaking of the tent as Crane crawled underneath one of the walls instead of going out the door.

Peace started forward on his hands and knees and his hands came in contact with a body. He slowly drew his hands back, muscles tensed for battle, but his fingers came in contact with a dishevelled mass of hair, which never grew on a man.

Swiftly he explored the body and found it trussed with ropes. His fingers found the face, half masked with a cloth gag. It was Jess Marshall, gagged and bound and she had been hidden away under the big packing case, the last place any one would expect to find her.

Peace picked her up in his arms and staggered out of the tent, stepping over the body of Perez. As he came out into the moonlight a pistol flashed beside one of the tents, and a bullet buzzed past his head; but Peace staggered straight on with his burden.

The pistol flashed again from the shadow of the tent as he reached his horse, and Peace heard the thud of a bullet striking his saddle. He eased his burden to the ground and sent shot after shot at the dark spot.

Then he dropped to the ground, loaded his gun, untied the ropes and removed the gag.

"—— buzzards!" he grunted softly. "Doin' this to a girl!"

Jess Marshall mumbled through her bruised lips, slowly, painfully—

"Peace—Parker—"

"Uh-huh—it's me," whispered Peace. "How do yuh feel, Jess?"

"F-fine," she whispered, bravely. "I—I—thought—you—were—killed."

"No-o-o, I'm kinda livin'—yet. Can yuh stand up?"

He helped her to her feet, but the cramped muscles refused to work and she crumpled. Peace swung her up to the saddle and she clung to the horn dizzily.

"Can yuh ride, Jess?" anxiously. "Can yuh, girl?"

"I think so, Peace. I'm so numb all over and my mouth feels as big as—as——"

"Mine," added Peace. "Now yuh can see how I suffer all the time."

"Don't say that, Peace. Your mouth is ju-just the right size. Where do you want me to go?"

"Ride north and swing into the dry cañon at the foot of Poncho Pass. Wait for me there. Don't try to go through the pass, 'cause it's guarded. If I don't show up, stay there 'till mornin' and go in with some of yore own folks."

"You'll come, won't you, Peace?"

"I'm figurin' a heap on it," softly. "I kinda want to know, and—" Peace took Crane's confession and bill of sale from his vest pocket and handed it to Jess.

"Hang onto that, will yuh, Jess? If I don't never come across the Pass, yuh can show it to yore folks."

"What is it, Peace?"

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"Didn't yuh hear what me and Crane talked about, when you was under that box?"

Jess shook her head.

"No, I couldn't hear what was said, Peace. That cloth was over my ears, and all I could hear was a jumble of voices, and after a while those shots were fired."

"That's my pay for five years of hard work, Jess. I wasn't hired to work that long; but the man who got me the job is payin' me for doin' it well."

"I—I don't understand what you mean, Peace?"

"I ain't got time to tell yuh now. You ride out where I told yuh to, Jess. I've got some more work to do around here before I can join yuh."

As Peace finished talking he seemed to melt into the shadows of the high corral fence. Jess Marshall listened, but not even a footfall told where the big man had gone. She lifted her sore hands and guided the horse around the corner of the fence.

She wanted to go back and help Peace Parker. He was in trouble, but she did not know what the trouble was. No doubt it concerned the men who had tied her up and brought her to the tent-house unconscious. She seemed to remember the shooting of the sheriff, but it was only a hazy remembrance.

She felt tired, sore. Her throat and mouth were raw from the gag, and every muscle in her body ached from the tightly-drawn ropes. She rode slowly out into the night, swinging to the northern flats on a big circle toward the foot of Poncho Pass.

PEACE had proof of Crane's guilt in his pocket, but there was grave danger that he might not last long enough to present his proofs. The main street seemed deserted, except for the great number of horses tied to the racks.

He walked down the opposite side of the street from the Poncho saloon, and saw that the place was packed with men. A dull hum of conversation, like the hum of a big machine came to him, and he grinned in realization that his actions had caused all this conversation. No one had heard the shots at the corrals, which were some distance from the center of town.

Peace crossed the street and went in behind the saloon. A high board-fence was built against a shed and Peace managed to get to the top of this shed. Above him was an open window, which lighted the main hall of the balcony above the Poncho, and by making a short jump he could grasp the sill.

It was a hard pull for sore muscles, but he managed to draw himself in through the window, where he sat and rested for a while. Down the hall he could see the tops of the shaded oil chandeliers, around which eddied the smoke from the men below.

There seemed to be no rattle of chips, no clink of glasses; nothing but the dull hum of serious conversation. Peace walked slowly down the hall and out to the edge of the balcony, keeping concealed from those below. Over a hundred men were in the room. He could see Cross L Marshall near the end of the bar, listening to Clell Danert.

Through the crowded room came Jefferson Crane, and his voice sounded shrill above the rest as he stopped near the center of the room. The hum of conversation ceased as he shouted—

"Is Cross L Marshall here?"

Peace saw Marshall shove away from the bar and elbow his way to Crane. Danert followed him.

"Peace Parker's got yore daughter," shrilled Crane. "Me and Perez ran into them down by the corrals. He was tryin' to put her on his horse. He killed Perez."

Crane stopped for breath.

"Don't try to take him alive! He's travelin' by this time!"

A roar of anger went up from the packed mob, as they surged in closer to Crane. They were like a pack of wolves at the scent of blood. Some one tossed a rope high in the air and it hung to a hanging lamp.

Peace realized why Crane was lying about the kidnaping. Crane knew that he was all through in that country and he wanted time to make his getaway. He wanted to get his men together and pull into the hills. By tomorrow, after the mob had talked with Jess or with him—Peace—there would be no place strong enough to hold Crane and his gang. It was a desperate move for Crane. He would have to give up his sheep, and race against time to get out of the country; but his life was worth more than money, and he was taking a long chance that the mob would kill Peace Parker on sight, and that perhaps Jess would not know who was responsible for her kidnaping.

Peace could see Wylie sitting on the bar,

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and further back in the room was Gus Sinks, sitting on a card-table. Cross L Marshall climbed to the top of a table and held up his hand for silence.

"Men, I ask yuh to use reason in this. Find Peace Parker first; but give him a chance to defend himself against these charges. If he is guilty—hang him; but first, be sure. Come on."

The crowd surged toward the door. Crane and Danert made no move. Sinks slid off the card table, but did not mix into the mob. Wylie remained on the bar. There was no confusion.

Peace came slowly down the stairs and almost to the center of the room. Marshall had stopped near the door, giving instructions to the men as they filed past. Many of them were from Chinook Valley; and Crane knew that Peace Parker would get a chance to tell his story in case he was captured.

Peace stopped in the center of the room, within twenty feet of Crane and Danert, who were watching the door. Peace saw the look which passed between them, and knew that they were going to make their getaway as soon as the mob was gone.

Marshall turned as the last man filed out and looked back into the room. He looked at Crane and Danert—then past them.

He stared at Peace, blinking his eyes as though mistrusting his own vision, while Crane, Danert, Sinks and Wylie looked at Marshall curiously.

PEACE stood in the middle of that big room, hatless, almost shirtless, his face and hair plastered with gore. One leg of his pants had been torn nearly all the way from bottom to thigh, and flapped widely, as he stood, legs planted far apart, his body tensed forward and his gun swinging in his right hand.

To the left of him, not over twenty feet away, half-turned away from him, were Danert and Crane; while to his right, about the same distance away was Wylie sitting on the bar, looking toward the door. Between Crane and Marshall, leaning against a table, and looking toward the door, was Gus Sinks. Outside everything was confusion, as the men were mounting their horses; but inside the Poncho saloon all was silence.

Marshall stared at Peace so intently that Wylie turned his head and looked straight at Peace. Wylie did not move. His eyes opened a trifle wider. Then Peace spoke.

"Jess—is—safe." Peace spoke every word distinctly and spaced them widely, that there might be no mistake.

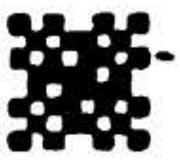
Crane, Danert and Sinks whirled at the sound of his voice, and stared open-mouthed at him. Sinks' hand went to the table-top for support.

"Crane's—men—kidnaped—her," said Peace slowly and ominously. "They—were—going—to—take—sheep—into—Chinook—tonight—and—she—knew—it."

Crane licked his lips and shot a glance at Danert, who was tense as a fiddle-string. Wylie looked straight at the opposite wall, as though afraid to move even his eyes.

"Wylie—and—Perez—killed—the—sheriff," Peace intoned the statement without a single inflexion of his voice. "I—killed—Perez—and—now—I'm goin' to get the rest of the crooked layout."

Men seemed to move back to the doorway and windows, looking curiously inside—looking for Cross L Marshall, who was to lead the hunt. Marshall did not speak, but a look of understanding flashed across his face and his right hand dropped to the butt of his six-shooter.



THE room grew very still, and every man seemed a graven image, except Peace, who swayed easily on the balls of his feet, head thrust forward, his right hand tensed at his side.

Suddenly Gus Sinks dove for the door, like a frightened rabbit; but Marshall flung him reeling back into the room. This seemed to break the spell. Danert streaked for his gun.

Peace swung forward, as if to brace himself against the shock, and fired from his hip—once—twice.

Danert's gun spouted wildly, a fraction of a second too late; his muscles jerking from the shock of heavy bullets as he went to his knees.

Peace felt a bullet tear through his arm, as Wylie fired down from the bar; but he only felt the shock in a dim way, as he shot through the smoke at Crane—pulling the trigger slowly and deliberately—once—twice—three times.

He seemed to see Crane falling sidewise, his revolver twisted in his hand. He knew that Wylie was falling from the bar and

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rolling across the floor, shocked from bullets fired from over by the door.

As in a dream he saw a man dash through the smoke, and he tackled him as he rushed past. They crashed into a roulette table and went down in the wreckage. Men were crowding around him, shouting, swearing. He realized that the man beneath him was Gus Sinks, and he laughed to think that none had escaped.

Men lifted him to his feet and a babel of voices beat upon his ears, questioning, wondering. He looked around and saw that Cross L Marshall and Bart Farley were holding him up, and he laughed drunkenly.

Other men had pulled Sinks to his feet and were handling him roughly.

"Keep still!" yelled Marshall, and the noise died down.

He turned to Peace.

"Are you tellin' the truth, Peace?"

Peace smiled and looked at Sinks.

"It won't cost yuh nothin' to tell the truth, Sinks."

Sinks jerked his head to release his throat from a hand, which was twisted in his muffler.

"Crane was to blame," he babbled. "Him and Danert framed it all. Perez killed the sheriff. I didn't do any shootin'. I didn't shoot any in here. They—they was goin' to put sheep into Chinook; but Parker busted up their game. They was goin' to kill him and then make me herd the first bunch in.

"Honest, I never killed nobody. They caught that girl on the Pass and they thought Parker was dead. The sheriff was after Parker and he ran into them with the girl. Perez shot the sheriff. They thought Parker was dead; so they brought him and the sheriff to the doctor's place—but Parker wasn't dead—not by a —— sight!"

Sinks turned appealingly to Peace.

"I tell yuh somethin' else, Parker; Crane branded them cows five years ago himself and sent yuh to the pen for it."

Sinks turned back to the crowd.

"I've told all I know. Go ahead and do what yuh want to."

"You've been trailin' with a bad bunch, Sinks," said Peace slowly, "but I reckon you'll be good now."

"He sure will," growled one of the men. "Good for a long time."

The crowd assented eagerly. They had been worked up to a certain pitch, and Sinks' life was not worth a plugged cent. Sinks knew this, but was game. He had not mixed in the battle, but he knew the crowd would not stop to weigh evidence; so he gamely shut his lips tight over defeat. Peace looked at him and back at the faces of the men.

"Folks," he said slowly, "I got the man who killed yore sheriff." His eyes came back to Marshall beside him. "I saved yore daughter, Marshall, and I blocked the sheep from Chinook."

He lifted a hand and rubbed it across his eyes.

"Twelve of yore citizens found me guilty of somethin' I never done and sent me up for five years. Don't yuh think that Chinook Valley and Tarp City owe me somethin'?"

"Yore —— well right they do!" exploded Marshall, and the crowd growled an assent. "What do yuh want, Peace River Parker?"

Peace smiled at Sinks' white face and turned to the crowd.

"Crane gave me a bill of sale for all his sheep. He kinda wanted to pay me for what he done. Gus Sinks needs to be punished; so I—I kinda thought I'd like to hire him to herd the —— things for me, if yuh don't mind."

It took this several moments to soak into the minds of the overwrought crowd. Then some one laughed. A grin overspread the nearer faces. Another man laughed aloud. The spell was broken—a man's life saved.

Sinks gasped foolishly as the import of it came to him. He staggered ahead, grasped Peace by the arm, muttering incoherently; trying to thank the man who had given him back his life.

He knew that he was free and that men had slapped him on the back, laughing as they did it. He was looking up at Peace, holding to his sleeve, trying to say something.

"Quit pawin' me, you —— sheepherder!" croaked Peace. "Go back and take care of my animated bunch of itch-producin' underwear."

Marshall put his arm around Peace's shoulders and turned him toward the door.

"Peace, I don't know what to say to yuh—honest."

Peace grinned.

"Tha's all right, Cross L—don't say anythin'. Get me a horse and head me toward

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Poncho Pass, will yuh? I know where somebody is planted out there—waitin' for me."

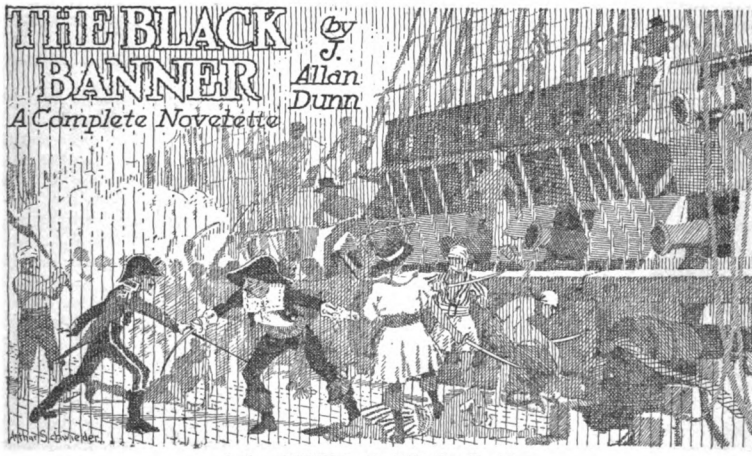
"If yuh mean Evers—he ain't there, boss," stated Sinks, touching Peace on the arm. "They sent him to guard the Pass against yuh; but he seen the killin' of the sheriff and he pulled out. The Pass is as safe as a church."

"Yo're goin' to a doctor—that's where yo're goin'!" declared Marshall. "Goin' right now, Peace Parker."

"Ain't there a doctor in Pasiooks?" asked Peace.

"Yeah; but he ain't much good," replied Farley. "Yo're goin' to have the best medicine we can get, old-timer."

"Tha's all right," smiled Peace widely, "I'm goin' to pick up my medicine at the foot of Poncho Pass. C'm on."



Author of "Wild Justice," "Yellow Head," etc.

NOW, whether one has been patriot or pirate, it is hard, in the prime of life, to view power only in retrospect, or to pursue it vicariously. Yet the man who sat upon the dune, fingering an open telescope and gazing moodily across the blue waters of the Gulf of Mexico knew all these conditions.

Pirate he had been, gathering much booty that he had flung far and wide. Patriot, seeking new reputation at the cannon's mouth and finding it but a prismatic fantom, gleaning a pardon for reward of virtue. Now, bearing the empty title of Governor of Galvezton under a commission from General James Long; insufficient head of a project to conquer Texas for the United States, predestined to failure; Jean Lafitte, master of an island, of some sixty square miles of barren, sandy acres and an excellent harbor, gloomed at the horizon where he had glimpsed the topsails of an American cruiser, giving notice of blockade; and chewed the bitter cud of impotence.

He was alone. The straggling town, his capital, faced the bay and the mainland, a mile from where he sat. It was the close of the year eighteen hundred and nineteen, thirty-eight years since he had been born in faraway France, at St. Maloes; twenty-five since he first shipped as cabin-boy to follow the sea.

He was in black satin, laced with silver, ruffles at neck and wrists, his own black hair clubbed in a queue, silver buckles on his shoes, silk stockings on his shapely legs, very much the governor. A cocked hat with silver bullion braid lay on the sand beside him. The hot sun disturbed him no more than it would a lizard; his olive skin absorbed the rays; his warm blood was adjusted to the temperature.

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His dark eyes glinted under their black brows. His firm chin was cupped in his palm. Above it showed the line of resolute lips, over them a nose shaped like a quarter crescent. The gaze in the narrowed eyes was that of a hawk, that seems to be ever focused beyond the immediate. Dismissing the cloudy future, Lafitte looked back to a past that was at least shot with vivid flashes of action, of success, even of gallantry and heroism.

Of stalwart physique, resolute nature and quiet wit, equipped to conquer, Lafitte, gentleman of fortune, brooking no master, owning allegiance to no flag save his own black banner, had played a losing game in time of magnificent opportunity. He had defied the British, warred against Spain, served America and then, in face of the pardon that condoned his offenses as chief of the *Corsairs of Barrataria*, had flung in his lot with an insufficient adventurer and set up his latest piratical establishment at Galvezton Bay.

Against Long and his ragged companies was arrayed the rapidly stabilizing Republic of Mexico, successful in their independence against Spain. Texas was not yet ripe for American conquest, though settlers were already commencing to stream across her border. Texas, long the shuttlecock for the battledores of Great Britain, France and Spain, was still a No Man's Land, a place of magnificent occasion for a leader with clean ambitions. And Lafitte, for all his daring, for all his joy of hazard, had played his own hand, chosen his own game, gathered his gains and discounted them. If the game had been worth the candle, he had burned it at both ends. There was not much of it left now. The wick was smoldering.

But it had blazed well at times. Luck had been with him often since he was first made captain of a privateer at Mauritius for a successful cruise, where he broke the regulations of his commission, attacking ships of all nations besides those of England, as specified in the *lettres de marque*, and so turned pirate.

A load of slaves at the Seychelles and flight before an English frigate up to the Equator, a stern chase that he won at the cost of rations reduced to a minimum and evened by fighting, with but two guns and a crew of twenty-six, an armed British schooner of thrice his force. Then on to Bengal, taking the *Pagoda* of the East India Company with her twenty-six twelve-pounders and one hundred and fifty men.

Next command of *La Confiance* with twelvescore bullies under him and off to British India.

Off Sands Head it was, twelve years ago this very month—and Lafitte's eyes brightened and his clutch upon the glass tightened as if it had been a sword hilt—off Sands Head, the great East Indiaman *Queen*, a stately pyramid of canvas, towering high above *La Confiance*, her decks swarming, four hundred men aboard of her to defend her valuable cargo, a gun for every ten men.

That was a fight to be proud of. Against a national enemy, against all odds, his men catching flame from his own fiery spirit, his seamanship out-maneuvering the Indiaman, surging on like a floating fortress in a sea of blue water and golden sunshine, her gun-ports open, the matches glowing, fife and drum sounding "quarters" and the battle-flag of Britain flying red in the wind.

Under the flash and thunder of her broadside, with its hail of iron, he had laid his own vessel aboard, his men flat on the decks while the solid shot tore through sail and rope and spar.

Then up, with hand-grenade and bomb, into the yards and tops, flinging explosion and death, clearing the Indiaman's deck about the mizzenmast.

Himself, observant of every incident, seizing the moment, ordering the beat to arms, leading the forty men, with pistols in their hands and daggers in their teeth, who swarmed the lofty bulwarks and the boarding nest and dropped into the open space, driving those aft to the steerage while the second instalment of boarders came rushing from *La Confiance*.

Death and destruction. The scuppers running blood. The sanded decks slippery with it. The acrid fumes of powder, shots, the clink of steel against steel, shouts mingling with moans and desperate gasps. The *Queen's* captain killed, the imminent second of victory or defeat, with the odds still against them in a mob of men grimset to hold their vessel.

He had ordered a gun—one of the Indiaman's own battery—loaded with grape, turning it on the survivors, gathering for a retrieving rally; standing by it with

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drawn sword and ordering surrender or extermination.

Then mercy, as the crimson flag was hauled down to the black banner of Seychelles. A stop to idle slaughter and the name of Lafitte resounding through India as the terror of English commerce.

Round the Cape of Storms, to the Gulf of Guinea and the Bight of Benin, home to St. Maloes with gold dust, ivory and palm oil in his hold, two prizes, following, the cabin-boy returned a hero.

The *Brigantine*, that he had chosen as his favorite rig, long and low in the water, black of hull and tall of mast, twenty guns and a hundred and fifty picked bravos and Ho, for Guadaloupe and the Spanish Main!

Cruise after cruise without a setback. Carousals ashore. Wine, women and song, until the British, in his absence, took Guadaloupe, and he sailed for Barrataria and his little kingdom, lording it at the isle of Grande Terre, living *en grand seigneur*, chief of a pirate colony in the very teeth of a civilized nation, selling by public auction the prize cargoes of merchandize and slaves, ruffling it with the best even in New Orleans, gaming, dueling, breaking women's pride if not their hearts, laughing at the efforts of the United States gunboats under Commodore Patterson's command, leading them the ——'s own chase amid the shoals, the cypress swamps and bayous, leaving them grounded, outpiloted and impotent.

Back to his plantation mansion with his secret hoard of spoils.

Roaring days! Uproarious nights!

He lightly hummed a snatch of song as he swept the horizon with his glass. A slight haze had gathered. The topsails had vanished.

There's naught upon the stern and there's naught upon the lee,
Blow high, blow low, and so sailed we.
But there's a lofty ship to wind'ard and she's sailing fast and free,
Sailing down the coast of the High Barbaree.

. . . . . .

Oh, I am not a man o' war or privateer, quoth he,
Blow high, blow low, and so sailed we.
But I'm an honest pirate a looking for my fee;
Sailing down the coast of the High Barbaree.

THERE was the day—September second—eighteen hundred and fourteen, when a British armed brig had appeared off the pass at Cat Island and anchored there, sending off a pinnace bearing British colors and a flag of truce under the command of two naval officers.

He went off to meet them—so clear was the recollection that Lafitte lived again in it.

"Are you Lafitte?" asked Captain Lockyer, commander of the brig.

"Is it likely?" he parried.

He gulled them ashore, commissioned by them to deliver a packet into Lafitte's own hands, if that were possible. He assured them with a smile that it was and landed where two hundred privateers surrounded them, angered by the attack made a few weeks before, which they had repulsed with loss to the British.

Lafitte thoughtfully handled the packet, addressed to Mr. Lafitte, Commandant of Barrataria, considering that here might be papers of importance to the safety of the country, seeing the British sought to seize Louisiana.

There was a proclamation from one Col. Edward Nickalls, in the service of His Britannic Majesty, Commander of the land forces on the coast of Florida, addressed to the inhabitants of Louisiana. A letter from the same to Lafitte, an official document addressed to him from the Hon. W. H. Percy, captain of the sloop-of-war *Hermes*, backing the statements of Captain Lockyer.

"You are a Frenchman and a gallant fighter," said Lockyer, "proscribed by the American Government. If you will enter the service of His Majesty, there is the rank of post captain for you and the command of a forty-four gun frigate. All those who are under you are offered suitable employ.

"In addition, thirty thousand dollars to be paid on call at Pensacola, for which I will give you an order. In all, an unprecedented opportunity for acquiring fortune, fame and honorable consideration."

It took quick thinking. His men were clamoring for the arrest of the officers and their dispatch to New Orleans as spies.

Here was rank and money but not honor. Lafitte might be a pirate, lacking in that commodity, but his country's honor was not as his own and it was in his keeping.

A Frenchman to accept the employ of his country's bitterest foe, to turn renegade? The thought was intolerable.

But he dissembled. He harangued his men, taking them apart.

"Corsairs we may be," he told them,

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"yet it would be black infamy for us to treat as prisoners those who come under a flag of truce. Moreover, it is in my mind that most of you are Frenchmen and not therefore overslow to discover the projects of the British against Louisiana. Let me play these fish a while.

"I can see us catching two kinds with one cast. Look you, if we should disclose to M. Blanque, representative for Louisiana and to Governor Claiborne all that I may learn within the next two weeks, during which time I will delay my answer, which I will allow these officers to surmise as favorable; if we should offer to defend this port, or to lend our services to General Jackson as he should dispose of them—why, it seems to me that we should stand in high favor with the very Government that has now proscribed us.

"The Americans are free citizens, they enjoy liberty, fraternity, equality—words that should sound well in the ears of every Frenchman. Has France not helped them, under the glorious Lafayette, to win this republic of theirs, their great demcracy? Now France lies beleagured by the Allies, among whom roars the British lion? Shall we cast in with Britain?

"I have here," he showed the papers, "promises of position and of gold. Shall we barter our honor for these? Or shall we send these documents to the governor?"

He held up a hand for silence. His arguments were not yet driven home.

"The United States grow daily more powerful. Not for ever may we hold Barrataria against them. True, we are freemen, but it is the liberty of a cage. A good cage and a large one but I, for one, though I may not wish to leave it, prefer that the door be open.

"For these papers we may win a pardon, become free indeed. And with a good fight forward. Which shall it be, to fight *with* the British or to drive them back, to prove false or true to the instincts of a Frenchman?"

The huzzas that followed answered him. He could hear them ringing yet. How much of his own resolve had been for honor, how much for the pardon that would open the way for him out of that cage of Barrataria that, in his shrewdness, he saw every day growing more confined, how much for France, how little for Lafitte; he had never analyzed. There was enough that was clean and chivalrous about it to bring a thrill to him yet for a deed well done.

On the eighth of January, eighteen hundred and fifteen, a storm of rockets preceded the cheers of British soldiers, the roar of cannon, the advance of the redcoats in close column of sixty men in front, shouldering their muskets and carrying fascines and ladders. From the earthworks of the Americans, answering, a ceaseless, rolling fire of artillery with no gun better served than the twenty-four pounder in the third embrasure from the river, manned by Lafitte and Dominique, his lieutenant with his bully boys, the corsairs of Barrataria. That and two other batteries, at once the admiration of the Americans and the dread of the storming British.

Right in the beginning victory had hesitated upon whose banners to perch. A column of the British pushed forward between the river and the levée with so fierce a charge that the outposts were forced to retire, closely pressed by the enemy. The redcoats cleared the ditch before the batteries could break the charge; they gained the redoubt through the embrasures, leaping the parapet in overwhelming force. The breach was started. Through this gap in the entrenchments an army would soon sweep in conquering torrent.

"Dominique! Comrades! They must not pass!"

Cutlas in hand, his bullies back of him with drawn steel, Lafitte, as he had led many a boarding-party, sprang to the threatened point, leaping the breastworks, a score of his best behind slashing into the apex of the threatening phalanx. Cut, slash and thrust! Parry and thrust again! A British officer falling under his own hand, cleft through the shoulder. Another pierced through the heart. The bloodied blade waving high.

They checked them, held them, till a band of frontiersmen with their deadly rifles backed them. Astounded at the courage that made men leave their entrenchments and meet them hand to hand, pressed back in confusion, the redcoats gave way, the gap was closed, the thunder of the artillery, the belching gases, the plunging shot, stayed the advance, mowed down the ranks with frightful havoc, decimating the invaders of New Orleans until they made precipitate retreat, leaving the ground covered with dead and wounded,

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dyed the color of their uniforms, a red field of defeat.

That had been worth living for. That alone. Now——?

Lafitte's eyes saw the pearly gleam of canvas showing through the haze. The glass revealed more to his practised eyes. There sailed the blockader, off and on, watching his movements, despatched by the government for whom he had so gloriously fought and then, freed from the cage at Barrataria, defied once again. This time there would be no pardon.

He tucked an end of his mustache into the corner of his mouth and gnawed at it. Fortune had deserted him. Closing the telescope, leaving it beside his hat, he paced up and down the sand where the ebbing tide had packed it hard.

After all, he had only exchanged one cage for another, a little larger but just as confining, once the door was closed. The isle of Galvez was little more than a great sand-bar formed by the Trinity River, whose waters poured into the head of Galvezton Bay. Thirty miles long, from a mile and a half to three miles wide, a barrier against the storms that ravaged the Gulf at times, flinging water far and high, changing the contour of his petty principality. San Luis Passage to the west, Galvezton Passage to the east, opening into the West bay and the greater haven that was, in the words of the visionary General Long, to become one of the great ports of commerce and the world.

That was the trouble with Long. Too many fluent words and too little sluggish action. Too many promises and scant fulfilment.

Lafitte, glancing at the cruiser from time to time, suddenly felt middle-aged and infinitely lonely. He had known many lights o' love and mistresses. There was a woman now in Galvezton, but women had meant little in his life but distraction, an outlet for swift tides of passion. He had never known the great love that a truly great man may hold—and inspire. Jean Lafitte had no heir, no daughter, no home. His had been the curse of Ishmael, the rover dreeing his own weird, one foot on sea and one on shore, believing always in his own star, as an adventurer must—or perish.

How devilishly the dice had rolled of late! He had come to Galvezton with five fast-sailing ships and three hundred men.

The United States warschooner *Lynx* had captured one of his schooners, and her prize, while smuggling in the Carmento.

The United States cutter, *Alabama*, had captured a second schooner and still another prize. This schooner had been fitted out at New Orleans, carrying two guns and twenty-five men, commanded by Le Fage, one of his best lieutenants. Six men had been killed outright, Le Fage wounded, the two vessels taken to Bayou St. John.

Mitchell, another of his aides, who had set himself up on an island near Barrataria, with a hundred and fifty corsairs and several pieces of cannon, vowing death rather than surrender, had been chased into the cypress swamps after his earthworks had been taken by bayonet in the face of a hail of grape-shot. Many had been killed, great store of merchandise and specie taken and twenty of Mitchell's men tried before Judge Hall of the United States Circuit Court at New Orleans and hanged for pirates.

Lafitte could see the writing on the wall. They were out to sweep his ships from the sea, to exterminate all piracy,

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to hang him by the neck if they could catch him.

Involuntarily he stretched his neck in its lace setting and smiled wryly. With his reckless expenditure he was getting short of cash. The brigantine *Jupiter*, chased, perhaps by this same cruiser whose topsails were once more fading into the haze, had indeed come in safe with a valuable cargo, largely in specie. She had been the first vessel to sail under the so-called authority of Texas, but Lafitte was well aware the United States regarded that authority as spurious and that, when the *Jupiter* set out to sea again, she was more than likely to be overhauled and taken prize, being none too fast a craft.

For the moment he was personally safe, but he was like a king checked in the corner of the board, a move to the right and then to the left, while the opposing pieces slowly marshaled to checkmate.

Long was a will-o'-the-wisp, with a Falstaffian company, without money, without backing, without force to establish a capital and a government or to collect revenue in the vast territory of Texas, rich but largely unpeopled.

The Republic of Mexico was more firmly based. Its dictators looked with an unfriendly eye upon the Americans coming across the border. Ultimately that might mean war, the issue of which would be uncertain for a while—all too far off to enter the present situation.

Long and his irregulars were a different matter. Any day might see them rounded up, placed against a wall, annihilated. And Lafitte held his office—his empty office—under Long. He would be swept off the island by the triumphant Mexicans, fight as he might. At sea the cruiser waited. He might resolve to die fighting, like Mitchell, but Mitchell had the cypress swamps for a last resort where he now wandered, mosquito bitten, starving, ragged. With his remaining men Lafitte could not defend Galvez Island and its thirty miles of water-front.

Piracy, he felt, was almost a lost trade. The shores were becoming too well settled. The settlers demanded protection for their trading. The New World was becoming too civilized.

There was the blackbirding trade. Slaves were in demand for the plantations. But how was he going to get out of the cage? How deliver his living freight—at least in America, where the big profits lay—when they were out to capture him?

Was that a certainty? Or had he been a prey to his own fears? Was he losing his nerve and his decision, softening with the life ashore, while his lieutenants did all the work?

He picked up his glass, put on the cocked hat with the oldtime tilt and walked back to town and his gubernatorial palace at a fast rate.

IN THE room he called his library his quartermaster, an enormous black, brought him a toddy of rum, tamarinds and limes. Lafitte gave him an order to fetch Dominique, master of the *Jupiter*, before noon. Then he settled himself at a mahogany table with writing-materials.

The first line was not written when a woman entered the room, supple as a cat, with hair and eyes dark as midnight, graceful and feline in her suggestion of equal aptitude for lazy ease or leaping action and swift fury.

In her eyes, as she looked at Lafitte, unmindful of her silent entrance, was the gaze of the tigress that at once fears, loves and hates its master and trainer.

Her silks brushed against a chair, and Lafitte looked up at her.

"I am busy, Lucille. Pray leave me."

"I never see you these days. Are you tired of me?"

It was a challenge rather than coquetry. Lafitte set down his pen impatiently.

"What makes you think so? I have important matters in hand."

"Am I never to share your affairs? You treat me like a toy."

"It is my mode."

"You might at least treat me with courtesy. Am I not the wife of the governor?"

"You are so known. Madame, there are greater things forward than courtesies. Nor am I to be handled with the leading-chains and bearing-reins of convention. Go, feed comfits to a leopard."

Her eyes flashed dangerously, and her high bosom heaved. Lafitte was frowning, his eyes bent on the paper. Irritation fretted him to the verge of endurance. A pest on a woman who did not know the time and place for endearments.

"It is so, then. You have tired of me. I can not go back to New Orleans. You brought me here with promises, you——"

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Lafitte got to his feet, trying to stem the torrent that was about to break.

"I am aware of no promises that I have broken, Lucille. I have no wish for your return. I am not tired of you. Yet there are times," he broke out, despite himself, "when I am not sure that I wronged your estimable husband in taking you from him."

There was a jeweled dagger on the table, used by Lafitte as paper-weight and paper-cutter. Swift as any leopard, the woman shot out an arm and grasped it. Swifter yet, Lafitte captured her wrist and pinned it to the table-top, until her fingers slowly opened under his tightening grip, while he smiled at her. Such affairs he could better understand and handle than the steady dalliance demanded by a woman who feared that, because she had dishonored one man, the other would not honor her.

"I hate you," she panted.

Lafitte shook his head, taking her other arm, bringing her with slow force into his embrace.

"Not so. You have but proved you love me. If you did not you would not care if I lived or not. Are you abandoned? Are you denied anything?"

"Everything, that I crave."

"Tut! While you stay in the house and adorn yourself——"

"For you."

"Making yourself most beautiful."

He saw the fury die out of her eyes and smiled at her. She struggled slightly, pouted and resigned herself, trembling as Lafitte kissed her passionately.

"Let that seal our armistice," he said. "While you were within I have discovered a ship outside that looks to me like an American cruiser. If it is here to watch me, as I fear, to prevent my carrying on my commerce or to leave this port, I desire to know it. Mexico grows stouter daily, Long is a broken reed, if the United States are after Jean Lafitte, then Jean Lafitte is between the devil and the deep and stormy sea. He prefers the sea, if it is not too cluttered with gun-boats. Therefore, before it becomes so, I write this letter to find where I stand. I shall despatch it by Dominique to the commander of the ship.

"There are those dogs who have been trading in stolen slaves and whom I examined yesterday. I shall send their declarations to show my good will towards America. If I can placate the captain, persuade him to withdraw, or if the ship turns out to be no cruiser, nor commissioned against me, I shall breathe easier and wait until other ventures come home. We have only what store came on the *Jupiter*, my dear. There is much more at stake at sea. Let us gather that, let us find the sea open, and you and I, my sweet, will sail for France.

"Look you, the Allied armies have been withdrawn. The Bourbons reign, but not in the hearts of the people. Napoleon is not dead. He languishes in St. Helena. A chained eagle—with unclipped wings. If he returned again France would rise to welcome him and Europe shake in terror. A few bold hearts to lead, such men as I might gather, men who chased the British out of the entrenchments at New Orleans; a swift and simultaneous landing on all sides of the island, a wild charge in the dead of night and then—Napoleon sailing aboard the ship of Lafitte to where the faithful will be waiting to greet him and start the grand march to Paris with thousands flocking to his standard.

"Paris, my life! Queen of cities, where you will queen it with the best. Napoleon is not ungrateful. You may yet see Lafitte an admiral!"

Her eyes glowed with pride and passion and ambition.

"But, if the ship is a cruiser?"

Lafitte laughed at her. He could see his star again. His mood was one of ascendancy.

"There is but the one, so far. We will trick her. The *Jupiter* is not so fast as I might wish, but she will serve. There are other means besides speed if we are overhauled. I'll warrant we will sting. This *Jupiter* can hurl thunderbolts."

"I shall sail with you?"

"I swear it. Would I leave the best part of my fortune behind? Now I must write this letter. Dominique will be here soon."

"Let me stay while you write it. Read it to me. Let me be more than plaything to you, Jean."

He was in the mind to be cajoled. Inspiration had come for the letter that had failed him when he first sat down. He wrote quickly.

"Listen:

"To the commandant of the American cruiser, off the port of Galvezton:

SIR—I am convinced that you are a cruiser of

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the Navy, ordered by your Government. I have therefore deemed it proper to inquire into the cause of your lying before this port without communicating your intention.

I shall by this message inform you, that the port of Galvezton belongs to and is in the possession of the Republic of Texas, and was made a port of entry the 9th October last. And, whereas the supreme Congress of said Republic have thought proper to appoint me as governor of this place, in consequence of which, if you have any demands on said government, or persons belonging to or residing in the same, you will please to send an officer with such demands, whom you may be assured will be treated with the greatest politeness and receive every satisfaction required. But if you are ordered, or should attempt to enter this port in a hostile manner, my oath and duty to the government compels me to rebut your intentions at the expense of my life.

To prove to you my intentions towards the welfare and harmony of your government, I send enclosed the declaration of several prisoners, who were taken in custody yesterday, and by a court of inquiry appointed for that purpose, were found guilty of robbing the inhabitants of the United States of a number of slaves and specie.

The gentleman bearing this message will give you any reasonable information relating this place, that may be required.

Accept, sir, the assurance of my honorable consideration, J. LAFITTE."

Dominique, short, swarthy, sturdy, scarred across cheek and both lips with a boarding-pike, was announced and read the contents of the despatch, given an outline of Lafitte's plans. His eyes sparkled as his leader spoke of a raid on St. Helena and the restoration of Napoleon.

"It is a good chance," he declared. "Far easier than the capture of the big Indiaman, my captain. And it will be for France. This Louis is but a puppet of his ministers. There have been too many Louis. Down with the Bourbons. I am not alone in that cry, my captain.

"Look you, Napoleon escaped from Elba and this Louis scuttled from Paris like a rat out of a cellar. He returned—but shall not the Little Corporal return?

"And it is time for us to leave Texas. Holy blue, we also will be like rats before long! This General Iturbide of Mexico is a man. He will make himself emperor unless this other, Santa Anna, a tiger of a man, displaces him. Besides either of them, General Long is a blatting sheep. It is he who should serve under you, Jean Lafitte. I drink to you and to your lady. The pinnace is ready. Before nightfall I will bring you word from the cruiser."

When he had gone Lucille picked up the jeweled dagger once more and slid it down between her firm white breasts.

"Not for you, Jean," she said. "But for me, if I should ever lose you."

"My faith, let it not lie between us," he answered as she came into his arms.

THE silver candelabra had been lighted, half the dinner served, before Dominique arrived. Lafitte and Lucille were eating alone.

The Breton's face was black with wrath. He was sea-booted, wet with spray, for the wind had risen and the pinnace had run into a rising sea.

"A norther," he said. "We came in the teeth of it and it has not yet started to blow. It will drive that accursed cruiser far to sea tonight."

Lafitte raised his eyebrows and glanced at Lucille at this hint of his lieutenant's reception.

"You delivered the letter and the declarations?"

"To the commander. A Yankee with no more bowels than a dried fish. Which he resembles. He gave me no courtesy. He said that he let me return only because he was certain he would shortly see me again.

"He told me that the United States recognized no Republic of Texas, nor even the Republic of Mexico. That, until the latter might be established, Texas was still under the control of Governor Martmez and belonged to Spain."

" 'Long,' he said, 'is a cheap adventurer, out-at-elbows, and, saving the pardon of madame, out of his breeches as well as his shoes.

" 'Tell him who signs himself Jean Lafitte,' said he, 'that he has once received pardon from this Government for the crimes he is again committing and that next time we will hang him to the yardarm.' "

"Said he that?"

"Exactly that, my captain. Would I else use such words? As for his present orders, he said to state to you that he was set to watch a rat that was stealing too much cheese."

Lafitte pushed aside his plate, upsetting a glass of wine, and sprang to his feet, his eyes flashing.

"A rat! If 't were not for this norther I would feed him to the rats in his own bilge

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before morning. I may yet. What more?"

"Nothing that he said. Some that I gathered, knowing English better than they thought, for I professed to speak French only and, after they had read your letter, they debated among themselves. This I learned, that they have no authority to land at Galvezton, lest the landing be misconstrued by Spain or France. But they purpose to overhaul all ships leaving this port and, unless they sail under the flag of an allied nation, they will take them as prizes to New Orleans.

"Now this, my eyes told me. There are eighteen guns aboard, sixteen of which are twelve-pounders and the others Long Toms, bow and stern. At the least two hundred men."

"What said you, Dominique?"

"Not what I wished to say, my captain. I bowed, to show them that a man might have courtesy in any situation, and I said that, if I saw any rats, I would deliver their message, but that the rats in these parts were both strong and courageous. It was not a phrase of great spirit, that; but my brain was burning at their jibes.

"With that I went overboard into the pinnace. I could see the quick gloom of the norther gathering over the land. Pouf! It commenced to blow, and the Yankees swarmed aloft to take in sail. They were hull down when the haze shut them out. They are leagues from land by now."

"And will be more leagues by morning. Listen."

A mighty crash of thunder broke above the roof. The tall windows were suddenly illumined, and they saw the trees bowing in a lavender glare. The rain lashed, and the wind flung great gouts of sand. The wild fury of the norther was sweeping out to sea.

"Dominique, the *Jupiter* is ready for sea?"

"Of a truth. But—in this weather?"

"Are you afraid of the weather, Dominique?"

"I am afraid of the bar. The tide will turn to ebb within two hours."

"We will be ready in one."

"Jean?"

"You go with me, Lucille. Gather your trinkets and some few clothes. Collect your men, Dominique. We sail on the turn. Long is done for, but Lafitte is not. Do you come, Lucille?"

"Jean, why do you ask me?"

But she shuddered as the wind roared and the thunder pealed while the house shook on its foundations of sand.

The lightening lit the course of the *Jupiter* over the spouting bar at Galvezton Passage. The bay was a sheet of white, with spume flung like driven snow. The brigantine, under a thrice-reefed mizzen and a rag of head sail, fled before the howling wind, fast to the south, Lafitte himself at the wheel, chanting his favorite song though the gale shredded the syllables to silence before they left his lips, wet with the salty spray.

So Lafitte bade farewell to Texas, without commission, once more a pirate, determined to rob all nations and neither to give nor receive quarter until he reached the coats of France and enlisted others in his desperate enterprize to help retrieve the fallen fortunes of Napoleon.

There were sixteen guns in the *Jupiter* and all his corsairs, that were in Galvezton, a hundred and sixty bullies, tanned and scarred. Long had lost his navy and his governor.

THE sun was barely above the horizon, gilding the dark crests of the sea, still stained with the purple of night. The sky was alive with flying clouds and a fresh wind was blowing.

In the maintop of a British frigate the lookout curved a horny palm against the sun and strained his keen sight toward the land north, gazing into the heart of the Gulf. The *Viper* had come in from the Caribbean through the Straits of Yucatan and was now close to the line of the Tropic of Cancer.

The word was out that Lafitte was at sea, and Captain Lockyer, late of H. M. brig *Thespis*, was keen to meet the man who had cajoled him at Barrataria five years ago, leaving him open to sharp reprimand and ridicule.

The officer of the deck saw the lookout lean forward in his perch and leveled his telescope in the same direction.

He saw a long, dark hull, with the rig of a barkentine, coming out of the dazzle of the sun on the water, far down the wind, bound for the open sea. The deck officer was a grizzled lieutenant who had long ago attained the highest grade of which he was possible, bound by certain limitations of

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his own, but eminently a sea-dog of the bull fighting breed. The reek of gunpowder was in his nostrils what snuff is to the Scotchman or the sweet savor of a rose to a romantic maid.

He had fought with Admiral Duncan when the Dutch fleet was destroyed at Camperdown, he had been with Nelson at the Battle of the Nile, at the bombardment of Copenhagen and at Trafalgar, where the fruits of victory were spoiled by the death of his hero. Transferred to American waters when war was declared between Great Britain and the United States, he still cruised the Caribbean, lamenting the Treaty of Peace between the nations, fighting his only trade, with no business in prospect.

To learn from the survivors of a burning vessel, looted and fired by Lafitte, that the notorious pirate was afloat and within possible reaching distance, cleared the dulness from the veteran's eyes. Now that he believed the barkentine to be the corsair's ship, though it displayed no bunting, the lieutenant smacked one gnarled fist into the hollow of his other hand with a chuckle of delight.

"Wake the captain," he ordered the attendant midshipman, whose dawn sleepiness had vanished as the lookout called down his news and all the morning watch turned eager eyes toward the stranger. "Report to him with my compliments that there is a suspicious sail in sight. A barkentine."

"That'll bring him," he muttered as he again focused on the distant craft. He knew his commander's special grudge against Lafitte.

Captain Lockyer was on deck within three minutes, his face flushed, buckling his sword-belt as he came. He took the officer's glass and handed it back with sparkling eyes.

" 'Tis he. Those poor devils on the raft said he had his foretopmast fished. Egad, we've got him. We've got the weather-gage of him and we've all day to catch him. He made a fool of me once, Grady. I'll make a ghost of him before sunset if, as they say, he seeks no quarter."

"Rather die on his feet than off 'em, in midair."

"We'll hold our fire until we're near enough to shoot the spars out of him. Then we'll board him fore and aft. I'll lead the stern party, Grady. If he beats me this time it'll be because he's the better man at sword-play."

"Aye, sir."

"If a bullet doesn't get you first," the lieutenant added to himself as the commander walked to the break of the poop.

Not that he doubted Lockyer's skill or valor but feared his rash exposure in making the fight a personal affair. The plan to take the barkentine by boarding pleased him, and he grinned as he heard Lockyer's orders, and stood by himself to carry them out.

The tompions of the guns were removed, haul-tackles inspected, tested, greased. Vents pricked. Crows, rammers, handpikes, sponges, powder-horns, fuse and match ranged ready. Cutlases were ground and pistols cleaned and primed. The men stripped to the waist and tightened their belts far ahead of time, standing by their stations, disdainful of watch below, the powder-monkeys listening wide-eyed to the talk of the old tars, the gun-pointers slapping the butts of their pieces, boasting of former victory and coming conquest. Round-shot was piled ready, chain-shot prepared. Surgeon, armorer and carpenter set out their tools, ready for emergencies.

Speech, while constant, was subdued and eager; above and below decks the atmosphere was charged with the excitement of the chase, the prospect of coming battle. The discovery of a miserable raft where four men, two of them sorely wounded, had launched themselves from the deck of a trading-vessel after Lafitte had destroyed the boats and left them the only survivors to their fate, made jaws set a trifle harder and grimmer and brought a sterner gleam into the eyes that watched the chase slowly —slowly grow larger as the frigate began to overhaul her.

There was a good breeze for a bowline, but it was a little light for running. The swell was long and the rolls shook the wind out of the canvas in the troughs, testing the strength of the buckling booms.

The brigantine had none the better of it. She too had hoisted studding sails, but they did slight good with the breeze spilled from them at every lurch. The wind favored neither, but the *Viper* was the faster.

Lockyer walked up and down his poop, trying to control his impatience. Gunshot was out of the question. So far the barkentine had showed no colors. She had kept

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on her original course, and there was no absolute certainty beyond the fished topsail that she was the *Jupiter*.

He knew that there were other cruisers in the Gulf, looking sharp for Lafitte. And now he believed he had him, all to himself, if only the breeze would freshen.

"Curse the swell," he said to Grady. "It too often means a calm in these latitudes."

Grady squinted to the southeast out of which the swell was running. It was hazy there, and the haze might cover weather and a shift of wind. In the west there was a steady mackerel sky.

"It'll blow southest before noon," he stated authoritatively.

"That means he'll not dare try the Florida Passage. Too risky anyway. We'll get him. We'll try the royals, if you please, Mr. Grady. I fancy it's strengthening a little now."

But the best either ship could make was short of six knots and, with crowded cloths, snow-white in the sun, they moved over the sparkling sea like two clouds, with the *Viper* creeping slowly, steadily, up and holding the weather-gage. The breeze was northeast. The *Viper's* entry was smoother, she made less leeway while the *Jupiter* edged ever closer to the coast of Yucatan that lay like a blue stain above the horizon to the southwest.

FROM Galvezton, with the norther speeding him, there was a thousand miles of blue deep water ahead of Lafitte, tangenting across the Gulf and through the Yucatan Channel to the Caribbean. He meant to avoid Cuba, to pass well south of Jamaica, to sail on, if he had luck in the way of replenishment of supplies from wandering ships of any flag, until he reached Guadaloupe or Martinique. Then, after a short run ashore—perhaps they would get late news from France—to sail home after he had taken a prize or so. He did not mean to land at Saint Maloes without more than just his pockets full of money.

The norther served him, but took toll in the shape of a broken topmast and some bolted canvas. Of the American cruiser he saw nothing and hoped her sunk for a rat-catching Yankee. Unless she had been one of those shapes he had sometimes seen on the horizon, like pencils of blue or needles of ice, determined only as to size or rig by their apparent height, fading and melting away on separate tacks.

They had captured the trader much as the up-stream salmon devours a fly, bait to a fighting temper. All hands had sworn to fight until the ship sank under them before they would surrender. It was lose all or gain all with them, and they were ready to run amuck on the high seas.

There had been brandy on the little trader. It was only after the ship had been fired and the flames began to change to a thick column of smoke that Lafitte saw the folly of this beacon. He had no desire to overadvertise his being at sea until he got out of the Gulf. Dominique pointed out the gleam of rising canvas, mounting fast. Course by course they pyramided, while the *Jupiter* hung in the wind and the drunken, carousing pirates lay on their oars and watched the fire take hold, with ribald toasts to the poor wretches whose boats they had smashed.

Course after course showed. What might have been topsails resolved themselves into royals—into skysails! Here came a frigate at the least, with speed far greater than the barkentine. She would carry eighteen-pounders on one deck and her carronades would be thirty. If the Yankee cruiser had thought to play rat-catcher, here was a ship to be cat to the *Jupiter's* mouse.

The weather saved him, a sudden rising of the wind and then a cloudy night. Lafitte had ordered the trader scuttled. Firing her had been only the idea of men hot with the lust of killing. The job was badly done, and he had no time to mend it. He was discovered red-handed.

Back to the barkentine they rowed, the men sobered by the boatswain's deep hail announcing their peril. The breeze began to freshen to a gale, and first the frigate took in her upper cloths, then Lafitte reluctantly ordered his topsail and topgallant halyards let go. Reefs were smartly tied in topsails and forecourse, and still the *Jupiter* lay down with a smother of foam on her weather bow, merged to her cathead at every plunge while the crests of the roaring surges blew away in gray smoke.

The black squall came up with her and enveloped her, and she fought through, the frigate lost to sight, pitching and tossing far after nightfall. She had won free, but

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at the expense of sailing back into the Gulf again.

Lafitte and his men were ready enough to fight, to spend their blood freely, if might be, but only in the pursuit of booty or if they were cornered. They had no stomachs for the folly of deliberately engaging a ship-of-war with thrice their number, thrice their metal, capable of blowing them out of the water with a broadside. And they dodged back, doubling to avoid suspicious sail, working south again until the channel to the Caribbean was once more ahead.

As the shadow of night slid off the ocean Lafitte and Dominique sat in the cabin in exultant mood. By the day's end they would be clear of the Gulf, and there must surely be some pickings in the Spanish Main. A sailor, seated on the fore top-gallant yard, a glass slung on his back, his clothes trembling in the wind, slowly searched the brightening sea-line with a slow continuous movement of his head.

"We've won free and clear," said Lafitte. "We're out of that trap at last."

Dominique nodded, busy with his breakfast. The late governor's lady slept late and was served in her cabin.

"'Tis not the first time we've fooled them, Dominique. Lafitte's luck."

"Long may it hold."

A voice in the wind sung out—

"Sail ho!"

The boatswain thrust his head through the open skylight to carry on the news, but Lafitte was half-way up the companion, his lieutenant hard on his heels.

"Where away?" he shouted.

"Right astern, sir," came from the yard.

Seamen sprang into the shrouds. Lafitte leveled his fine glass. But as yet the frigate was invisible from the deck of the barkentine. Then he saw her, a star of sail, white as the snow on a distant peak, slowly enlarging, mounting before his troubled gaze.

"It's the frigate," he cried. "She's after us!"

He shouted orders. The watch below tumbled up, and all hands set studdingsails to the height of her royal yard-arms. Under the press of canvas the brigantine increased her speed. The sea broke in rainbow crystals at her bows, but the pursuer steadily climbed the horizon. By half-past eight, one bell in the forenoon watch, a pyramid of swelling canvas showed above a hull that every now and then sparkled like a black diamond.

Lafitte ordered whips for buckets, and the men lay aloft flinging the water sent up to them until the white canvas turned gray. Still the frigate came on, gaining little by little, inexorably destroying the distance that must be covered before she might let loose her batteries.

As had Lieutenant Grady, so Dominique gazed into the southeast when the following wind began to falter, to scant, to muster sudden puffs, signs of calm or change. He watched the sky in that quarter grow darker and darker gray with loose vapors peeling off from the main mass, while Lafitte, with the end of his mustache tucked into his lips, gazed from the taffrail at the man-of-war.

A southeaster would do the *Jupiter* no good. The frigate was well to windward. She would continue to outfoot the barkentine. The sun shone on her towering gleaming courses. With her studdingsail booms and their cloths she seemed as round as the moon. The white froth at her bows parted cleanly.

At two in the afternoon, with the frigate so close that Lafitte, through his glass, could see her decks crowded with men waiting eagerly for the moment when they could attack, the wind abruptly shifted, changing to the direction of the swell.

He shouted for the helm a-starboard. The port studdingsails were taken aback, but rounded out, and they made the new tack, the frigate abeam.

A spit of pale flame showed in the latter's bows, the smoke blown aside in a long wisp, the sound smothered by the wind, the plump of the shot unseen. It was not meant to hit—the range was still too far—but as a warning, a hint to the brigantine that if she was true ship here was the time to show her colors.

Lafitte flung off his mood of despondency. The brigantine was doing all she could, the men were willing enough, but they worked in a silence that was slowly eating up their courage.

Fight they must, and that before long. Dominique was looking at his commander inquiringly.

"Serve out rum and brandy," ordered Lafitte. "Broach kegs and set pannikins handy. Dominique, they've got us this time. We'll show our teeth. Small arms

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to every man. We'll open fire the moment we get range. If we can cripple her, bring down some of that tophamper—she'll have to take in some of her kites in this breeze before long—why, there's good hope yet. We must keep away from a broadside. We'll outshoot her, if we can't outsail her."

He went to the lower deck from the poop, encouraging the men, drinking with them, working up a fit of fury and charging the crew with his own desperate spirit. For all his talk, he feared exchange of cannon shot. But he prevented the crew from getting in their minds' eyes what he saw in his, the barkentine riddled, helpless, sinking without a blow exchanged. With the handling of pikes and axes, the grinding of cutlases and priming of pistols; as the liquor fevered their blood, the corsairs swaggered and exchanged jests. Dominique matched them.

"We'll take her as we did the *Queen*, my lads. Remember that? The old trick. Flat on the deck and then up and fling your grenades at 'em. We'll show them the kind of wasps we are."

IN THE cabin where Lafitte examined his pistols and made an elaborate battle toilet, Lucille aided him, handing him scarf and lace, adjusting his ruffles, pinning on a jewel.

"They are too strong and fast for us, Jean?" she asked, and her voice was steady.

He took her face between his hands and looked deep into her eyes.

"We may never see France," he answered. "I have sworn an oath not to surrender, though I might for your sake."

"For my sake? To live and see you—hanged." She shuddered. "I have taken that oath with you, Jean." She showed him the jeweled dagger.

"Have you no fear, Lucille? You are a woman in a thousand. If we win through this—" He paused, his black mood was on him again. Full as he was of desperate courage he could not shake off the presentiment, the almost certainty against such odds, that he had seen his last sunrise. His gaze traveled through a port where the frigate, matching their tack, came roaring after them, skysails and royals furled, a reef in her lower courses, but surging fast under more canvas than the strengthening wind warranted. He could see the flash of gun muzzles in her ports as she lifted.

Then he turned again to the woman with a flush of tenderness as she spoke.

"Fear, Jean? I am horribly afraid. I do not want to die, but I will not be left to live alone. Let me come on deck, Jean. I will dress as a man. Let me be with you—at the last."

He shook his head, kissed her lingeringly and set her from him.

"It would never do. If they board us they would cut you down."

"You expect that?"

"It is what I would do. Unless they sink us. But we may have a lucky shot or two. It's not over yet. So, a glass of wine with you, my dear. A pledge of love. I had not known women were so brave. It is a pity——"

Another flash came from the frigate, and this time the hollow boom of the gun sounded down the wind.

"They have seen our flag," said Lafitte, filling two glasses. "The black banner against their red."

He bowed to her, with the ceremonious courtesy learned in the salons of New Orleans and St. Louis.

"I would that I had met you sooner, that I may know you much longer," he said.

She caught her lips in her teeth to steady them and drained her glass, though some few drops were spilled. Her face was white as a flower, but she smiled at him. In that moment, cheats though they had been in the game of life and love, they played the last hand as partners, fairly, one might almost say not without some meed of honor.

Dominique rapped on the door, thrust in his head.

"They are beating to quarters on the frigate," he said. "That last shot was barely short."

Lafitte hurried out, leaving the woman still smiling. Her face twisted suddenly as he closed the door, and again she bit her lip, with one hand on her heart. Blood trickled to her chin and she let it drip, standing by the table, balanced to the pitch and roll of the ship. She placed a hand between her breasts to touch the dagger, then stationed herself by the port to watch the issue of events, forcing her features to a mask though her eyes were dull with the fear she could not entirely banish, a fear conjured, not so much by dread of the future as in a review of the past, a growing belief

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that, as she had sowed, so was she about to reap.

DOMINIQUE, fired with liquor, was in optimistic mood. The men had been served with grenades. He pointed to a heap of them with a grin.

"The same trick, eh, my captain?"

"We'll see," said Lafitte tersely.

The frigate was coming fast, thrashing through the seas, gaining at every lift. Momentarily he expected to see her yaw and to bring her forward guns to bear. There was a fatal gap in the difference of range in guns and, while it closed, he must be exposed to her fire without ability to return it. To be raked by a broadside might be fatal.

He watched her ready to dodge, like a hare that sees the hound close on it, to shout orders to his seamen and the helmsman that would shift them out of the direct line of fire. But, dodge as he might, there was no burrow, no covert, no friendly river or port where he might hide at the last. Nothing but blue water and daylight and the frigate coming on relentlessly, lunging through the choppy waves.

The rising sea offered him the best chance. Gunnery was uncertain. He had some good pointers aboard. He spoke to these hairy, half-naked men, bidding them wait till the crest, before they fired, to aim high. If they could bring down a mast——

The frigate's heavier battery was in range now. But no shots came. The ship-of-war did not veer from her headlong rush. She was sailing ten knots to the brigantine's nine.

Still she withheld the hail of death. Lafitte grimly gaged the distance. At last he trumpeted from the poop.

"Starboard your helm. Port battery, stand by."

The men leaped to their stations.

A sheet of flame belched from the side of the *Jupiter*. Shot went hurtling high, plumping through the rigging of the frigate. Rents showed in the canvas, ropes slackened. A shout went up from the corsairs as the Britisher's foretopmast wavered and fell. There was confusion on her decks. Scattering grape had found marks in the crew.

Lafitte veered. The frigate paid off, in tireless pursuit, breaking through the smoke of the pirate's guns that hung low in the hollows of the waves. She gained. The pirates worked their guns in savage frenzy as the other closed up.

A cable's length apart! Then flame leaped again from the frigate. Round and grape sang above the heads of the corsairs while the bullets of a volley of small arms ravaged them. There was a crash aloft. The frigate had evened matters. The *Jupiter's* foretopmast toppled.

The fight was on.

Another battery thundered and the jaws of the main gaff were severed. Down came a torrent of rigging while Lafitte cursed the luck. Ten men sprawled on the deck.

The bows of the frigate glided past the *Jupiter's* stern. Leaden pellets from musketry carried death and wounds. Her sides towered above the *Jupiter's* disordered deck. There was the roll of drums, the shrill blare of a trumpet.

A voice bellowed through a speaking trumpet from the high poop.

"Surrender. Haul down your flag."

Lafitte recognized Lockyer and fired a pistol at him, without avail, hurling the empty weapon after the ill-aimed bullet, shaking his fist.

"We'll fight you, you curs," he shouted, then whirled to his own men: "Fire! Then 'ware boarders!"

The tactics of the British commander were clear now. He had purposely withstood their fire for the chance to board, knowing his larger vessel could take the buffeting. The barkentine was fast losing way.

The pirates fired their last broadside plumb into the sides and through the gunports of the frigate, now alongside. The narrow space between was filled with dense smoke as the frigate replied once in kind and the heavy shot tore through bulwarks and deck-houses from the lower battery while both ships rocked to the discharge.

Chained grapnel whirled through the air. The hull of the frigate ground against that of the barkentine, bearing the smaller vessel over. Leaping sailors, shrilling an hurrah, descended in a cataract from the starboard bow and rushed against the horde of desperate men in impetuous, bloody onset.

Lafitte and Dominique sprang to the head of the defense. The pirates hacked and stabbed with the fury of rascals fighting for their lives. Men fell with gaping wounds that spouted blood, clutching at the legs of their opponents, bringing them down to the

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deck for rolling duels. Runlets of blood found their way to the scuppers.

Dominique fired his pistol pointblank in the face of Grady, and it flashed in the pan. In a trice both were at it, sword against sword. Dominique, leaping in and out, cursing and taunting, the Britisher silently guarding, thrusting, giving no ground.

Lafitte sought in vain for Lockyer till a second cheer rang out above the hubbub and his men turned to face another entry, landed on the *Jupiter's* poop, clearing it, pressing forward.

The pirates were between two boarding-parties and now Lafitte saw the tall figure of the frigate's commander waving a bright sword, striving to get at him, as he encouraged his men.

The odds were heavy. While perhaps a hundred men remained aboard the frigate, to work her, and to fire muskets wherever they saw an open shot; all the pirates were engaged in the mad and bloody rout. It was more than two to one. The fight centered about the mainmast with its tangle of spar and rigging, swaying back and forth in individual battles. The flash of pistols ceased and steel ground against steel, sword and cutlas and boarding-pike and broadax, knife and dagger.

Grady went down, pierced through the lungs, staggering back on the slippery deck while Dominique leaped after him to make an end. A British seaman, his naked torso smeared with blood, snatched an ax from a prostrate pirate and brought it down on Dominique's head, through bone and brains, springing on for another victim.

Lafitte's men fought like fiends from the pit. It was sword or rope for them, and their desperate courage was goaded by the thought. The combatants were cumbered by the dead and dying. Slowly the ruck broke up into little swirls of gasping men, fencing, smiting, reeling about the slimy planks in a deathlock, grasping sweaty, slippery arms, gasping as they sought to drive home a blade, entangled in the fallen rigging, rolling into the scuppers.

The savage yells that marked the commencement of the fight had died down. Men saved their breath, fighting on in a frenzy, their muscles steeled with barbaric fury. Lafitte fought like a demon. Thrice he had almost reached Lockyer when the shifting onslaughts bore them apart. His men were falling all about him, and they had not evened the odds. He knew that he was doomed, but by some miracle of chance he was still unhurt while he had let out two lives with his sword, after pistoling three. Panting, but untired, he swept a space clear about him and flung a taunt at Lockyer, striving to free himself from a fallen pirate who had gripped him about the knees in a last burst of energy.

Two men leaped at Lafitte simultaneously, one a burly boatswain with a cutlas broken off a little below the point, a bloody, jagged, formidable weapon, roaring out an oath as he sprang in. The other, whirling his ax, was the sailor who had killed Dominique.

Lafitte stepped back and ran the boatswain through his belly, coolly clearing his sword from the collapsing body and sweeping the blade upward with a twist of his supple, steely wrist as the ax hung poised for a split second while the seaman sought to direct his blow. The ax fell harmless, the sailor stared unbelievingly at the severed cords of his wrist and the next moment Lafitte spitted him.

Lockyer smashed with his sword-hilt at the face of the man who held him, and the fellow dropped senseless. The commander kicked himself free and strode across the body, his face exultant. The way was clear to Lafitte at last.

Lafitte's sword had run clear between the ribs. The weight of the dead seaman, falling heavily sidewise held the bending steel with a tug that brought Lafitte forward, trying to clear his blade for the crucial encounter. He had little fear of the outcome. He had noted the Britisher's strong but crude swordplay. With him down——

A blade flickered out from the side, a slicing blow, half-swing, half-thrust, as the second lieutenant of the cruiser, fearful for his commander's challenge of the pirate's skill, slipped on a clot of blood and fell to one knee. The cut entered Lafitte's body above the belt, slashing deep into his abdomen, bringing a gush of blood, emptying Lafitte of strength as water gushes from a broken bottle. At the same instant a bullet from the frigate broke the bone of his right leg and fetched him prone to the deck.

Lockyer stood over him, his stroke arrested in midair, for the instant off-guard as he gazed at Lafitte, striving to raise himself on his hands, his eyes glaring defiant hate, his

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lips forming soundless curses at his impotence.

The luck of Lafitte had broken. Life was pumping out of him in a scarlet flood, his finery sodden with it, his very entrails protruding. He could not rise, and fell at full length while one hand groped for his dagger the other clutching at his gaping wound.

A blow descended on Lockyer's head. A pirate had flung away his broken cutlass and clubbed a musket, bringing it down with tremendous force on Lockyer's unprotected skull, stretching him senseless beside Lafitte.

The dulling eyes of the pirate gleamed venomously. With a last rally he raised his dagger to stab his enemy to the heart. But his spirit could not drive the dizziness from his brain, his aim faltered and the knife came down into Lockyer's thigh.

Lafitte dragged away the blade in a convulsive effort, lacerating the wound. With dissolution crumbling his energies, with death gripping him, he slowly stretched out a hand, groping with glazing eyes to find the captain's heart, to make sure of his last stroke. Once more he raised the reeking dirk and, before he could be prevented, the blow fell, thwarted again by an awful giddiness as he himself hung over the abyss of hell. His arm jerked as life departed. The dagger pierced Lockyer's other thigh in a flesh wound and Lafitte rolled over, drenched in blood, his eyes upturned so that only the whites showed, his teeth bared in a snarl, a corpse.

Slowly the din died down. The upper deck was already cleared. The disheartened pirates were hemmed in about the mainmast. A carronade loaded with grape was trained down upon them. Not a man but was dripping blood, suffering from wounds and exhaustion.

A stricken man cried—

"Quarter."

"Do you surrender?" demanded the frigate's second lieutenant, now in command, with Grady and Lockyer *hors de combat*, though neither was dead. "Throw down your arms."

They obeyed sullenly, too spent to resist further. What of life remained between them and the gallows now looked dear to them. Herded together, they watched the black banner hauled down, while the victorious seamen leaned heavily on their stained cutlases and waited orders.

The two vessels glided on side by side, locked with the grappling-chains. The lieutenant ordered them cast off. Lockyer was picked up, breathing heavily but not dangerously wounded. The bugle blew for return.

"We'll scuttle her," said the officer. "Send me the carpenter." The man started below with an assistant to carry out the command. As he reached the companion hatch he stepped back hastily at the sight of a woman, magnificently dressed but with her hair in disarray, her face swollen with tears that had ceased to flow. The men shrank aside as she rushed through them to the body of Lafitte. She gathered the limp and bloody body in her arms, her gown saturated in an instant.

The lieutenant stooped and caught her arm.

"Come, madam," he said, "we do not war on women. This is no place for you."

She looked up at him, her gaze seeming to be withdrawn from faraway, fired with a certain madness.

"This is my place," she said.

Before he could prevent her she had run her hand into her bosom, tearing apart her gown as she withdrew a dagger, instantly plunging it between her firm, white breasts and falling back upon the body of Lafitte.

The gems of the haft gleamed in the rays of the afternoon sun, slanting across the crimson-spotted decks where men lay sprawled, singly, in heaps, with clutching hands that seemed to grasp at life departing.

The officer stood with bowed head, the British seamen gathered around in silence, staring stupidly, as a thread of scarlet welled up from where the steel knit the fair flesh.

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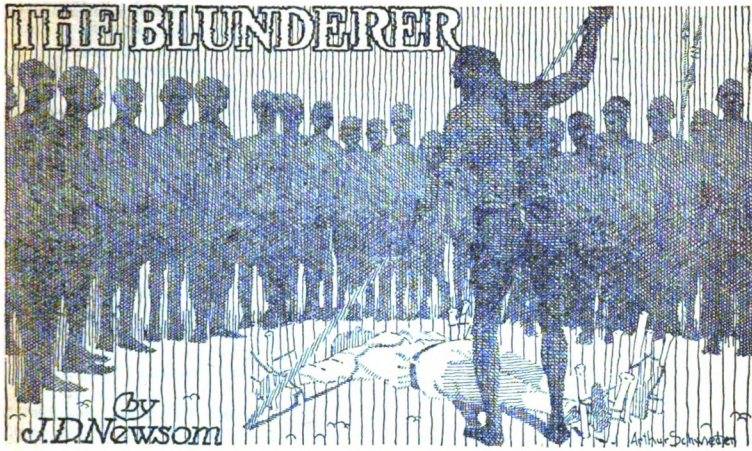

Author of "The Magician of Ombakura," "Fading Light," etc.

THERE are men who can take themselves seriously even in the privacy of their bathrooms. They go through life miserably conscious of their uprightness and integrity, and fully aware of the sins of their neighbors. Of course, they have no sense of humor. They would look upon humor as a mortal sin if they understood the meaning of the term and were not fully convinced that they possessed an abundant fund thereof. They have unbounded faith in their judgment, these righteous men, and they cling to their convictions with a stubborn tenacity which in many cases, without overstressing the point, might well be called mulish.

Brigadier Verron was such a man. His bath-tub was a large and remote section of northern New Caledonia, a land of barren hills and narrow gorges, bounded on the west by the Pacific and on other sides by an undefined wilderness of crags and swamps and forests.

Verron administered his district with the pomp of a Governor General although his headquarters consisted of two rooms on the second story of a little house at the mouth of the Douara river. The ground floor of the dwelling was given over to the stables and the jail, but Verron claimed that from his perch he could always keep an eye upon his domain and his pride was soothed.

Too broad for his inches he nevertheless conveyed a sense of restless energy accentuated by his wide-open eyes and enormous mustachios which extended half-way across his cheeks. Never had he been known to appear in public otherwise than fully uniformed, with medals and spurs and pipe-clayed helmet, even though his district contained but three white men and a villageful of partially civilized Kanakas who were far too overawed ever to notice his appearance.

He was much annoyed, therefore, when McLaird surprized him early one morning as he sat at his desk in his shirt sleeves, his large stockinged feet resting conspicuously on a stool. McLaird was his nearest white neighbor and a man who needed repressing. He was a mild-mannered little Australian, quite bald, with a soft voice and a round, melancholy face where two very cold, very blue eyes counteracted the effect of the gentle voice. He was a thorn in the brigadier's side for although he spoke and understood French he could overlook such knowledge whenever it suited his purpose.

"It is not a time to call, this!" mumbled Verron, gripping his penholder between his teeth as he shook hands. "Excuse my attire, but at this hour of the day——"

"It *is* a fine day," admitted McLaird, his

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eyes roving over the Douara valley where a light fog still eddied among the trees. "Going to be hot. That's why I came over so early."

"This report—" Verron waved an imposing-looking document beneath the Australian's snub nose— "it is most important. We are harassed, we officials!"

McLaird refused to take the hint. He lighted a cigaret and seated himself on the edge of the desk.

"There's going to be trouble in the district," he remarked placidly. "Somebody's been having lots of fun at my expense. Somebody's been killing my cows, somebody's been smashing my wind-mills, somebody——"

"Stupefying!" exclaimed Verron, twirling his mustachios and opening his eyes very wide. "Stupefying!"

"Somebody's been tampering with my waterholes and burning my fences." McLaird sighed and drummed his heels against the painted woodwork. "It's been going on for two months—since January. Eight bullocks and twenty-three cows——"

"Thirty-one. Incredible! I must have full particulars."

"Yes, and whoever it is skins the beasts and leaves the carcasses where I'm sure to see 'em—draped over gates or in the middle of the track."

"Stupefying! And why—" even in his shirt sleeves Verron became the embodiment of constituted authority— "and why have I not heard of this sooner? To think that such things could happen in my zone."

"Well, I've been trying to investigate. Went out with a dozen stockmen night after night; scattered them up and down from Nakitalo to the head of Mbaninga pass. And what do you think happened to those stockmen?"

"I have no idea," Verron said dryly.

If McLaird had taken the law into his own hands, let him suffer, thought the *gendarme*.

"I found every one of them drunk—helpless. And sometimes, within ten feet of a man there would be a nicely skinned bullock."

"But it is forbidden to supply alcohol to the natives!" thundered Verron, shaking an accusing finger. "Where did they obtain it?"

"Search me," McLaird commented in English.

"Stupefying! Where did you say?"

"No savvy. Some found it, others say they got it from friends. In other words, they won't talk."

"And I am only informed of all this after a delay of two months! Am I a nobody, Monsieur McLaird? Am I not in charge of the Douara district? Your conduct—it is reprehensible, if you must know. Thirty-one head of cattle killed—all your stockmen drunk! It is formidable! I must act."

"That's why I came over here. What are you going to do?"

"First, I shall report to Nouméa."

"Ten days each way. Go on."

"Then I shall pursue a thorough investigation among the tribes beginning with the people of Douara village."

"Waste of time."

"You wasted two months," hotly retorted Verron.

"But most of the trouble happens inland, in the hills, Mbaninga way. You won't find much evidence on the coast."

"To be quite frank—" the brigadier suddenly became confidential and lowered his voice to a rumbling whisper— "I believe Jansen is at the root of the trouble."

"Jansen—that old fellow?"

"Precisely. A dangerous customer that one! You say the hides were all taken away. Would he not be just the man to make a few dishonest francs? Hides are worth money these days."

"He hasn't enough energy to think of such a scheme," declared McLaird, "and besides, why do so much other damage?"

"A criminal of his caliber would stop at nothing. I have observed him. His store—a disgrace, he drinks all day, he is nearly a native himself. I shall catch him yet."

"But I tell you," yawned McLaird, "the cows are killed up-country. Jansen couldn't cover that much ground. If you'll begin with the hill tribes—"

"No, Monsieur McLaird. This is an important case to be handled carefully."

"So you are going to wait for three weeks until you hear from Nouméa before you begin. Very well." He slid off the desk and looked up into the *gendarme's* face. "Then, I'm going ahead with the affair in my own way."

"Do not dare!"

"Can't wait. I might lose a cow every night. You know the situation now, let's work together. You look around on the coast, I'll go inland."

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"It is dangerous. Those tribes beyond Mbaninga pass are unsettled."

"I'll unsettle 'em," agreed McLaird.

The brigadier stamped up and down the balcony in his stockinged feet. Here was a case which upset the majestic dullness of his daily routine! Jansen, of course, was the culprit. Jansen was a small trader whose tumble-down store at the mouth of the river should be closed forever. He was a grimy old man, with matted hair and tangled beard, who smoked and drank all day long, who openly scoffed at the *gendarme* and went about most of the time in a native loin-cloth and a battered straw hat. Yet McLaird refused to believe him guilty and must needs go wandering among the uncivilized hill-folk who did not know a cow from a dog. Stupefying! Verron did not want to go chasing through the hills; it meant discomfort and more work on his return.

"It is an *impasse*," he said at last. "Let us call on M. Blondel and talk things over with him. He, at least, is a man of reason. He will give an opinion."

"He won't be out of bed yet, and I want to start."

"M. Blondel," the *gendarme* commented sententiously, "is to be trusted. We are three respectable white men isolated in this district. Let us band together to combat this outrage."

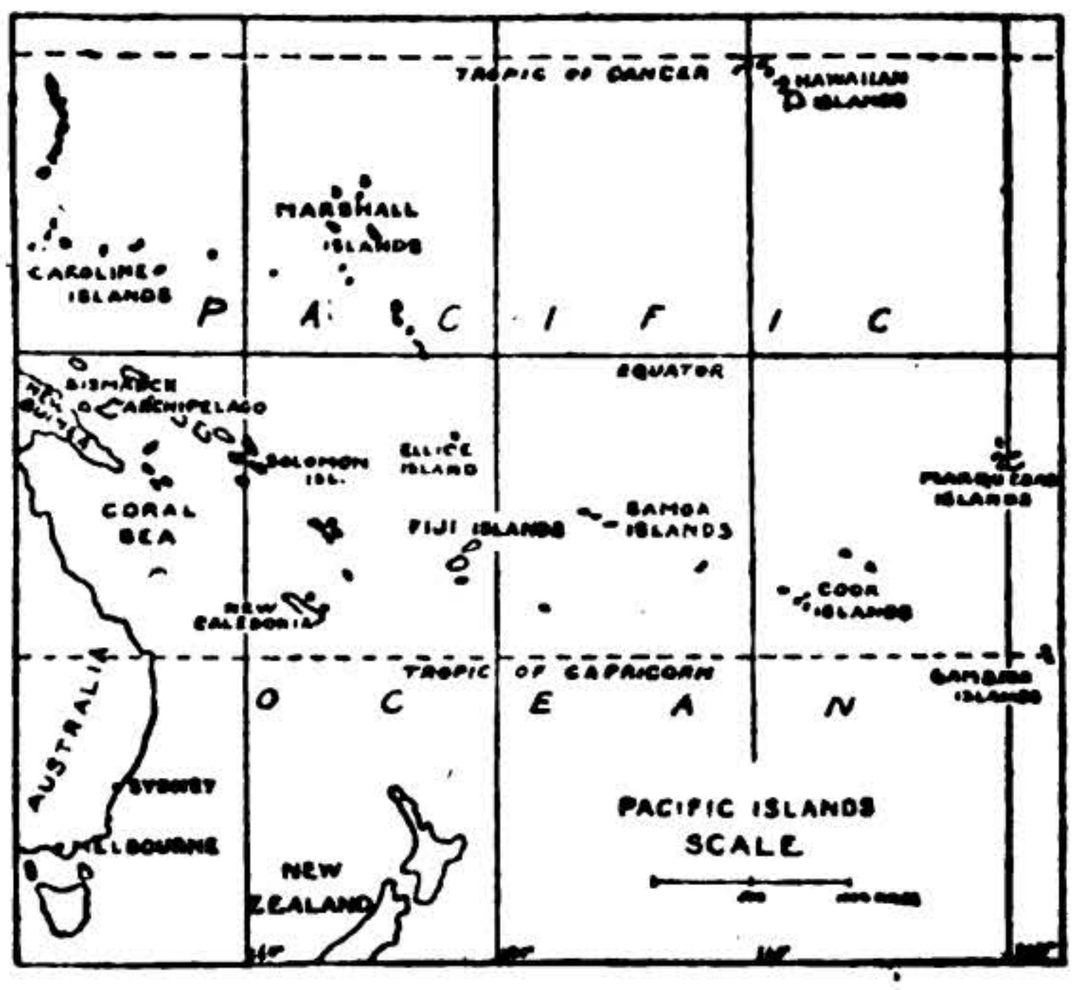
"All right," agreed McLaird, "but it is understood: When we've obtained Blondel's blessing I am going ahead with my plans."

"Do," snorted Verron. "I shall have the guilty one in prison awaiting your return. Then we shall laugh!"

That McLaird! Always the pig-headed one, but an important settler who gave the district a good name. A man to be tolerated in consequence.

The brigadier hustled into his tight-fitting khaki tunic where medals and brass buttons shone brightly, pulled on his boots and buckled his spurs. At last he was presentable! He cast a disapproving glance at McLaird in his sleeveless shirt and stained felt hat. What a contrast!

They rode along a track skirting the coast, clambered up a steep ridge and, leaving the fertile Douara valley behind them, descended into a broad, parched plain where a thin trickle of water snaked seaward between dusty banks. In the distance the high hills already danced and shimmered in the growing heat of the day and the shadows in the gorges were deep blue. At last they reached the shade of a dense grove of coconut trees surrounding Blondel's house, a neat, trim bungalow, painted white, fronted by a well-kept little



garden where bright flowers grew plentifully. Between the slender bowls of the trees the Pacific stretched away immense and still toward the horizon.

Blondel greeted them as they dismounted. He was a well-built man of about thirty-five, clad in immaculate white riding breeches and shiny black top-boots. His hair was brushed back sleekly accentuating the height of his forehead; his oval face was smooth and plump, rather sallow, with twinkling eyes and a little black mustache above full, red lips, which were too full and too red perhaps, but his general appearance was that of a good-natured, even-tempered man.

He supplied them with white wine and listened while Verron explained their mission.

"Too bad," he murmured when the last "Stupefying!" had died away. "You have struck what you call a 'bad streak,' eh?"

He spoke some English and occasionally resorted to its use in the Australian's presence.

"You're right," the latter admitted. "I——"

"And M. McLaird goes up to the mountains to seek the offender," boomed Verron. "It is formidable! The guilty one need not be sought so far away."

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"I think I agree with you, brigadier. You will settle this affair in a short time. It is not serious."

"Not serious?" murmured McLaird. "No, of course not."

"I mean," smiled Blondel, "you have not gone about it in the right way. Brigadier Verron—there is your man. In a few days, pouff!—he will have this bad fellow under lock and key."

"Naturally," agreed the *gendarme*. "I am not to be fooled. Already I have strong suspicions."

"Of that I am sure," declared Blondel. "Now I have my own worries. May I burden you with them, they fall within your province?"

"At your service. I am *paid* to help."

"I knew it. Imagine! Two Javanese coolies have run away!" His mouth became a thin red scar. "A man and a woman. Lijken, the woman, gave birth to a child some time ago. What yells! What commotion!" He struggled to smile. "They said they were married—but you know these coolies! Of course, I put up with the inconvenience until Lijken went about her housework and served my meals with the child on her hip."

"Formidable!" commented Verron.

"I assure you, I remonstrated gently. 'The baby must be kept in the kitchen and allowed to sleep,' I told her. No! It was thrust upon me at all times, and Wanasi, that's the man, became positively insulting. Again I protested, but two nights ago, after a most amazing scene of cries and threats and I know not what, they vanished. Gone!"

He paused dramatically, both hands outstretched, palms upward.

"I will find them," asserted the brigadier. "They never go far, these deserters. And especially these people if they have a child. Their names and numbers?"

"What about my cows?" suggested McLaird.

"Oh, cows—that matter is *very* important! I have it under consideration. Now, let me see, you said Lijken——"

"Lijken and—" began Blondel.

"I'm going," said McLaird, still in the same dispassionate voice. "It's getting too hot for comfort. I'll travel."

"What a shame," exclaimed Blondel. "Do wait! I want to talk to you. That last offer I made for Nakitalo——"

"Good-by," answered McLaird.

Then he rode off at a jog-trot, a puff of smoke curling away behind him as he lighted a cigaret.

"Stupefying!" grunted Verron. "Let me see, let me see—Lijken is the woman's name, is it not?"

THE Mbaninga pass is the gateway to the heart of the high hills. There, between great cliffs, springs the Douara river, a thread of water hurrying noisily away from this desolate place toward the broad valley and the sea. Abrupt, boulder-strewn, shadeless, the head of the pass is an inferno of heat by day, and by night when the cool wind blows off the mountains it fills with a steamy mist which deadens all sound beneath its woolly folds. Half-way down the gorge, where it is no more than a third of a mile wide, stands the white man's last outpost—a five-barred fence stretching from wall to wall. This is the extreme tip of the Douara district, here the wide lane worn smooth by the hoofs of driven cattle gives way to a native track which goes zigzagging upward and vanishes into the mystery of the broken land beyond the sky-line.

Here for three days and three nights, scorched by the sun and chilled by the dew, McLaird waited crouching behind a mound of rocks. From his nook he could see the remains of his burned and uptorn fence and the bleaching skeletons of four of his beasts startlingly white against the dun colored soil.

On the first night of his vigil while the pass was thick with fog he had heard the raiders call to each other as they hurried back to the hills, but he had made no move.

"When I get 'em," he told himself, "I want to see what I'm hitting."

At early dawn on the fourth day just as the sun threw its iridescent mantle over the hill-tops and the mist became gossamer-thin, a file of natives came hurrying up the track. McLaird counted eleven of them as he hitched up his cartridge belt and slid stealthily from his perch. Three of them carried hides slung across their shoulders, all were armed with clubs and short stabbing spears while their leader, a great hulking fellow with a strip of blue cloth around his waist, carried a rifle in the crook of his arm.

McLaird's onslaught was swift and terrible. Before they were aware of his presence,

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before they could think of acting as a unit, he was in among them, an automatic in each hand. One minute they were a compact group, the next they were scattered, frantically clawing their way up to safety among the boulders. Eight escaped; of the others two lay dead, sprawling on the hides they had been carrying, and their leader, pinned against a wall of rock, swung his clubbed rifle above his head as McLaird closed in.

For a fraction of time they stared at each other, then the Australian whistled softly.

"Mbwaga!" he drawled. "So you're the man. Put down that gun—put it down!"

The native obeyed, an uneasy smile on his shiny black face. *Wah!* He knew how straight this one could shoot—he was cornered.

"To begin with," McLaird went on gently, "I'm going to beat you up for all the trouble you've given me. Now!"

Something happened to that chieftain, something so swift and so sudden that he found himself hammered and pounded by two iron-hard fists until he grew faint and dazed. He stretched out long arms to grasp at his antagonist—blow upon blow crashed full in his face. He tried to stagger away, tried to call out, only to find himself dropping into an awful void.

When he recovered consciousness a few minutes later McLaird was sitting a few paces away rolling a cigaret.

"We had an agreement, you and I," the latter went on quietly, as if summary punishment of six-foot Kanakas were an everyday occurrence. "It was understood that you were to keep my fences in order and round up stray cattle. That is right, isn't it?"

Mbwaga nodded his head but said nothing.

"And I find you burning the fences and killing my cows. Why?"

The last word shot out sharp and compelling; Mbwaga cringed as he wiped the blood from his eyes.

"O *Topwo*, I am at your mercy," he answered, "but hear me! The people of Vanikoro are to blame. *They* are godless men. But I—I am Christian. My people too. When I heard of this outrage I said 'We must stop this killing else *Topwo* will surely accuse us.' So last night we went into the valley to seek out the men of Vanikoro. In a great battle they fled leaving behind those skins. These I should have sent to you later together with the heads of the culprits." He paused and a cunning look came into his eyes. "But now, two of my own people are dead. It is evil to take life—the missionary has said so. If I were to tell——"

"You lie," McLaird commented placidly. "I heard you three nights gone by shouting through the fog. I have waited for you Mbwaga, and now you are coming with me to the *gendarme's* house. One more question before we go: Who has paid you to break our engagement, who takes the hides?"

"But have I not told you——"

"*No more lies!*" McLaird's voice suddenly cut like a knife. "Speak!"

Mbwaga fawned at his feet.

"O *Topwo!* Nothing is then hidden? But my tongue is tied by great oaths."

"It is, is it?" McLaird lapsed into English. "I'll untie it for you, believe me!"

The tone made the native wince though the words were meaningless.

"I speak," he whined. "It is the one whom they call Jansen, the bearded one, whose store stands by the sea. *Topwo*—he came to me offering great sums for the hides of bullocks. Where could I get them if not from your valley? The desire made me mad for I wanted many things. And he said 'burn the fences,' and he gave me rum to offer to your servants, who are also my servants and my kinsmen. I asked no questions. And now, *Topwo*, may I be pardoned, for I was tempted. I am a sinner, but your gods say that the sinner is to be forgiven."

"Pick up those hides. You're coming with me. Now march!"

They made their way down the valley toward a narrow gully carved by the rains in the wall of rock. Here they found McLaird's pony.

"You're too darned quiet," muttered the Australian, glancing at Mbwaga as he adjusted the bit. "I wonder what your game is?"

All at once he understood, for whistling through the air came eight spears followed by a ringing shout as Mbwaga's men leaped down from rock to rock. One spear stuck quivering through the saddle which still lay on the ground and McLaird vaulted on to his pony's bare back. Three men blocked his exit from the gully, the others were above him showering down stones.

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He caught sight of Mbwaga rolling to safety behind a great boulder.

"Gosh!" he grunted. "No use hanging around—too good a target. Ought to have guessed—but they don't often come back like this. Now for Jansen. I'll get Mbwaga later on."

And he rode out of the gully at a gallop, striking down those who leaped out at him with the butt-end of his gun.

All that day and far into the night he pushed on toward the coast. The hills became covered with scrub, the scrub gave way to silver-barked *niaouli*-trees, here and there at the water's edge clumps of bamboo appeared, pines dotted the way, until far ahead through the darkness he saw the twinkling lamps of Douara. To the left across the river lay the *gendarme's* house and his own homestead, Nakitalo, where a bed and decent food awaited him, but he turned to the left, trotted through the silent village, and drew up at last before Jansen's store.

The door was open, and McLaird peered into the one disordered room before entering. There sat the trader smoking a long china pipe, a bottle and a mug beside him on the floor. He wore a pair of patched blue denim trousers and an old white coat. Steel-rimmed spectacles were perched on the end of his fleshy nose and his hair hung down in his eyes as he bent over an old newspaper which he read aloud. He was dirty, worse than dirty, and his store was a den of cockroaches and rats.

He looked up over the rims of his glasses at his visitor.

"So late!" he rumbled. "You vant somet'ings?"

He tried to grin, disclosing toothless gums.

"Yes," answered McLaird, "I want you."

"So!" Jansen chuckled drunkenly. "The invitation gomes late in the evening, but I am alvays game."

"Listen, old bird, what's this stuff about Mbwaga?"

"The chief beyont the pass?" exclaimed Jansen. "He vos von rascal, you belief me. He gome to me mit his schmooth talk! Vill I gif gredit, he ask. Too much civilization, he haf got. I kick him oud—so!"

"Jansen—" McLaird sat down on a heap of jute sacks and nursed his knees—"is that straight?"

"I am von drunken old fool, but ven it gomes to Mbwaga——"

"He tells me he's been selling you hides—my hides off my bullocks, and he says you gave him rum."

"*Sapristi!*" Jansen was surprized into cursing in French. "He vos von bad egg that Mbwaga. Say, Mac, you belief that?"

"I've got an open mind, but things seem to point your way."

The trader lurched out of his chair and stood swaying in front of McLaird, one dirty finger describing circles in the air.

"Thirty years I lif in the islands—twenty right here. Nefer haf I done a bad job to a white man—nefer—onderstand? Most are rotten—but I don' care. Take no interest, like. Days, twenty years ago, the natives vos fine fellows. Straight, you know, honest, good, hard men—unshpoiled. Now—blah! As the Kanakas go bad, so I go bad too, I guess. I lif perhaps too long with them. But do von dirty trick like that to you, mit Mbwaga as pardner—blimey, Mac, I haf too much self-respecd."

"Are you half-way sober, old bird?"

"As a judge."

"Then let's have a look around for hides. There's been no boat in for five weeks. If you've got any skins they should be somewhere about. Are you willing?"

Jansen complied without hesitation. Still talking volubly he turned out his store from top to bottom, under the floor and over the rafters, stirring up clouds of dust. He even offered to dig up the ground surrounding the house.

"*Voilà*," he declared finally. "Notings. I do this for you, Mac—you vos von white man. For another I say go to ——! Vat do you tink?"

He stuffed tobacco into the bowl of his enormous pipe and seemed to lose all interest in the affair.

"I'm wavering," admitted McLaird. "Guess I'll have to fetch down Mbwaga."

"Dat's the idea—fetch the *chenapan*. Ve vill soon see. But me—I take notings. Haf a drink—thirsty vork."

McLaird refused, and they went out into the warm night.

"No saddle," chuckled Jansen. "You vos in von hurry, eh? But you— Look!" he cried out. "*Madré mia*, it is fire!"

Flames and a column of sparks shot up into the air from across the river, glowing redly behind the black trunks of trees. The flames grew, towering, licking upward, casting an angry glare over the village.

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"My place," yelled McLaird. In a flash he was mounted and away while behind him lumbered Jansen, calling out:

"I gome, I gome to help. Vat a fire!"

BEFORE either of them reached the homestead its flimsy walls and roof had given way and it lay a smouldering, glowing heap, surrounded by a ring of excited stockmen and house-servants. The stables and the native lines had been spared only because the night wind had blown the flames seaward.

"Kitchen stove no go," the head boy chattered. "Master, me no savvy how fire she start. Two lamps in house; one light me, one expect you—no more."

"Well," grunted McLaird, who trusted the old coolie. "Where did it start?"

"Office—*hoo!* She go up all one piece. No lamp there."

"Right. Let the stockmen double up. Take one hut for yourself and the servants. Fix up another for me. We'll start re-building tomorrow."

Then Brigadier Verron appeared on the scene, demanding instant explanations.

"Terrible," he exclaimed. "Fantastic! Some negligence! Unfortunate Monsieur McLaird! Sleep at my place!"

"There's been no negligence," McLaird retorted. "Here's what I know, think it over for yourself—" and he related briefly the incidents of the past few days while the *gendarme* opened and closed his mouth waiting for a chance to speak.

"Criminal conspiracy!" he bellowed at last. "I knew Jansen——"

"He has had nothing to do with it," put in McLaird. "I've been all through his place and was with him when the fire started."

"Stupefying! You believe that? I will put him under arrest and investigate."

"Leave the old man alone and get Mbwaga."

"Mbwaga is the tool, Monsieur McLaird. You made him confess. He blamed Jansen—and yet you have doubts. Astounding! I am even ready to consider what Mbwaga said in the first place—that he was pursuing the culprits. His people are——"

"Well," murmured McLaird. "I'm going back for that nigger. You can make him talk and see for yourself."

"Very fine! I am so busy—those coolies of Mr. Blondel have escaped capture. I am harassed with work! You shall act as my deputy. In the mean time I shall detain Jansen—I always knew that he was dangerous. Now he has gone too far—burnt your house!"

"He couldn't do that, he wasn't here, I tell you."

"A bottle of rum would make any native an accomplice; I have had much experience."

"In a way," sighed McLaird, "I'm not sorry. Darn pay sheets and things all burnt up. Hate books. Still it's a nuisance. I had a fine suit, *gendarme*, not two years old. Fitted like a glove. You should have seen me walk down Pitt Street with it on. *Distinguél* Now, why would old Jansen burn up my suit, tell me that?"

"Ha!" Verron put a broad hand on the Australian's shoulder. "Always you joke. It is formidable! But I have thought—" he leaned forward and whispered—"the house is burnt, all your supplies too. You will have to go to Jansen for goods. You must take what he has at his price until you can get fresh supplies from your Sydney or Nouméa, that is plain. First he took the hides, then his bad character makes him think of this new scheme."

"So he burnt down my house to make me buy soap! *Gendarme*, it's a wild idea, isn't it?"

Verron shrugged his shoulders disgustedly and forgetting all idea of secrecy, he thundered:

"All criminals are alike. I know my man. It is terrible! He was probably aware that you had caught Mbwaga—quicker than the telegraph are the native signals—Jansen is a criminal, an assassin, a what-do-I-know; he has taken revenge. He has paid some one to commit this crime. Let us catch him!"

The trader, very much out of breath, came lumbering into the circle of light. He had, obviously, lost his footing while fording the river, for he was wet from head to foot; his hair and beard dripped water, and he shook himself like a dog.

"I have him!" shouted the brigadier as though he had achieved a sensational capture. "You are under arrest!"

"So!" chuckled Jansen, speaking in his mangled French. "What crime have I committed?"

"You know! You know! Here is the

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evidence before your eyes. I have been watching you—do not deny it!"

Jansen laughed outright, holding his sides, head thrown back.

"It is droll," he cackled. "What you tink, Mac?"

"Let him go until we have Mbwaga on the spot," McLaird suggested to Verron. "He can't run away and, after all, I couldn't find any skins around his place."

"Impossible," exclaimed the *gendarme*. "I must detain him. Why, he might attack *me* next!"

"Where's your evidence?"

"I have all that I need and more. Mbwaga's confession, your own testimony, my intelligence."

"But you can't lock him up——"

"I am in charge of this district. I shall do what I think best to keep the peace. That is settled. Jansen, consider yourself my prisoner."

"Very well," said the trader, solemnly waggling his head. "When I am released I shall claim damages. Business is not so good. It will help, and Brigadier Verron will be stup—stupefyingly astonished."

"Formidable! How can you stand there laughing? You see—" Verron turned to McLaird—"what a criminal he is. He dares deny——"

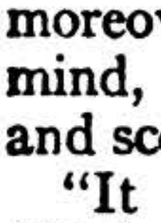
"Perhaps he's right. There's only Mbwaga's word to go by."

"It is ample."

All McLaird's pleadings proved useless; moreover, Jansen having once made up his mind, drunkenly insisted that he be jailed and scorned all idea of help.

"It will be an experience," he declared. "Nefer haf I been in prison. You get Mbwaga, Mac. Do not hurry too much. The *gendarme* vill haf to serve my meals; it vill be gread fun."

With the coming of another day McLaird mapped out the work for the gangs which were to rebuild his house, sent them about their tasks, wrote a laconic report to his firm in Melbourne, and at two in the morning, after a few hours sleep, started up country again in pursuit of Mbwaga.



LIKE a deer, as swift and as tireless, over the ridge fled Lijken. Her baby, strapped to her back, was a light burden indeed and she sped down Mbaninga pass her small feet barely touching the ground. Her blue-black hair was loose on her shoulders, her tight-fitting bodice was ripped to tatters, there was a gash on her jaw-bone from ear to chin. Hard and set was her face, her black eyes were live coals and in one hand she gripped a *kris*, stained to the hilt. The sun beat down upon her out of a sky of brass, her throat was dry and aching, but she dared not stop by the side of the stream, dared not pause for an instant, for somewhere behind her, just over the crest of the pass, came a score or more of pursuers ready to avenge Mbwaga who lay in his village with a great wound in his thigh.

Back there, too, lay Wanasa, her husband, a crumpled, dead thing, flung headless in the clearing before the huts. Days before they had escaped from Blondel's service and crept inland rejoicing even at the hardships they encountered, for the white man had been bitterly cruel and merciless. Always a hard taskmaster, after the baby's birth he had worked Lijken harder than ever, abusing her when she flagged, laughing at her weakness. Once he struck her, and Wanasa, chattering with rage, had gone to his hut for his knife.

"No," Lijken had said, "let him live, for we should surely be found, and then you would die. Let us run away instead, and for a while be free."

They had crawled away from the house and, traveling by night, they had reached a village high up on the flank of a hill where Mbwaga had greeted them. For a time they had lived in peace until one morning the chief had come in from a raid limping and bruised. He had been so sullen that Wanasa had taken alarm, but they stayed on, for the child was sick.

Mbwaga had called a great council attended by all the men of the tribe. There had been much talking, hour after hour it had gone on, all one night and into the next day, then they had been summoned from their hut.

"You have brought great evils upon us," Mbwaga had shouted at Wanasa. "We befriended you—yet your magic injures us. You are a spy—else why was I captured? You shall die, and the woman shall go into *my* hut."

Shouts had greeted the words and a score of hands laid hold of the coolie. *Aiel* How he had fought; it was good to see such a man, but at last he had fallen and the *kris*, flying out of his dying hand, had dropped

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at Lijken's feet. More terrible than a tiger, more deadly than a snake she had slashed Mbwaga as he came toward her and dodged, and raced away, up over the brow of the hill, down into a valley of thorns and creepers, up once more until Fate guided her steps into the pass.

Ahead she suddenly saw a horseman coming through a break in the blackened fence. She recognized McLaird, Blondel's neighbor, and her grip on the knife tightened. He had come to bar her way, either to give her back to the white man or send her to her death among the Kanakas. Blind fury seized her and she tore at him with upraised blade.

He wheeled out of her way, jumped to the ground as she went by and before she could turn around, called out:

"Stand still or I shoot! I shoot the child. Stop!"

She drew up, trembling.

"Drop the knife and come to me."

The harshness had left his voice, it was gentle and unhurried.

"Now," he ordered, speaking in French, "what is the trouble?"

All resistance had gone out of her and between sobs she told him of Wanasa's death and her escape. Even as she talked, far off cries reached them and black figures began to swarm down the slope.

"You know my head-boy," he told her. "Go to him, go without hurry, taking good care of that baby, and tell him to keep you until I come."

"They will kill you——"

"Here's a bite of food." He pulled a package wrapped in newspaper from a saddle bag. "Now go on. When I get back I'll have a talk with M. Blondel. Avoid the *gendarme*."

"But I see them——"

"Go!"

He remounted and headed up the pass without once turning his head.

She saw him light a cigaret as he drew close to the group of Kanakas, then she hurried up the hill-side and lay flat on the ground unable to take her eyes off the scene. She saw him, a minute figure far below, drop the reins on his horse's neck and draw his pistols from their holsters.

Crash! Crash! Crash! The sound of the shots echoed and re-echoed in the narrow gorge. The natives were scattering before McLaird. Lijken suddenly wanted to cry out, to yell a warning, for she saw small groups of men slinking past him, hidden behind the rocks. He had wheeled and was trotting back—then from all sides they poured in upon him—a black avalanche. She saw the tiny stabs of light as the guns belched fire, saw the horse rear at the throng. Faint cries reached her. They had pulled him out of the saddle, the horse lay on its side kicking a little, and surrounded by a maddened crowd McLaird was being dragged away.

His words hammered at Lijken's brain.

"You know my head-boy: go to him. Avoid the *gendarme*."

But she knew that now she must come face to face with Brigadier Verron. She knew that she must seek him out at whatever cost to herself, for of all the people she had met McLaird alone had offered refuge and asked for no return.

After eating and drinking she went on, staggering now beneath her load. Wearily she faced the road before her, mourning as she trudged along.

A day and a night dragged by, the dusk of another day faded before she reached the sea all silvery in the light of an enormous moon. At Nakitalo, as in a dream, she found McLaird's servant to whom she entrusted her child.

"Keep him," she begged, "for though I am worthless, you knew Wanasa. I must go to the *gendarme* who alone can deal with those black men."

She crept shaking and trembling toward the brigadier's house, but when she lay in its shadow her will-power deserted her—she found that she could not force herself up that flight of steps, could not move another inch. Overwhelmed by the nearness of her surrender, she sank to her knees and moaned, her head resting against an iron-barred door.

"Who cries?" whispered a cautious voice.

She started back, flinging up an arm before her face as if expecting a blow.

"So!" the voice went on. "But I am not tangerous, here behint bars. Who is it veeps at my feet?"

She recognized Jansen's low rumble.

"He is in prison," she thought, "he has done some wrong, therefore he will have mercy and understand."

Breathlessly she told him of McLaird's plight while she clutched at the grating for support.

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"It is a bad noise," he murmured. "Alvays the goot ones go—just so!"

"Make talk that I can understand," Lijken implored.

"So! *oui!* Go up to the *gendarme*. Have no fear. Speak plainly and quickly. See that he acts. Hear me carefully. When you have done up there go to my store. Hung on the wall beneath a strip of red cloth you vill find a pistol. Take it back to McLaird—get one of his horses. If he is not dead see that he gets it. If he is already killed shoot—shoot anybody, it does not matter who, for we are both lost without him. Now *en route*."

Reluctantly, hesitatingly she went to the foot of the steps, then steeling her mind she darted up soundlessly. By the light of a kerosene lamp she saw Verron sitting at his desk in the middle of the room. His head was bent forward on his chest, his hands were folded over his stomach—and he snored. He was collarless, his shirt sleeves were rolled up to his elbows and his feet were bare. Brigadier Verron had spent a hard day looking for Blondel's coolies and had fallen asleep over his capitation tax reports.

He awoke to find her staring at him from across the table.

"This is fantastic!" he shouted, his mustachios bristling. "Am I dreaming?"

"No, I am Lijken. Mr. McLaird——"

"Ha! Blondel's coolie. At last I have you. You are under arrest." He heaved himself out of his chair. "Stand still, Lijken, I will not hurt you, but I must——"

She moved around the desk to escape his outstretched hand.

"Mr. McLaird," she cried, "he has been caught——"

"Stand still. It is formidable! Stand still, I say!"

They danced swiftly around the desk while his bellow grew louder and louder.

"You dare run away!" he panted all out of breath. "I will not harm you, no, but I will have to punish you for this—this——"

He lost all dignity as he tried to corner the nimble figure. He grew very red and very hot, and his sleeves unrolled and flapped down over his wrists.

"For the last time," he commanded. "You must submit to the Law!"

"Mbwaga has caught him. He is at Dovari, Dovari, Dovari!" she screamed. "Go there quickly!"

"This is too much!" Verron was beside himself with wrath. "You would tell me what to do? It is stupefying! Terrible! Such insolence!"

He lunged across the top of the desk and the sweep of his arm sent the lamp rolling into the floor where its glass tank burst into a hundred fragments. As he recovered his balance he caught sight of Lijken's figure faintly outlined in the doorway against the starry sky.

"Dovari!" She cried out. "Dovari! McLaird is there. Make haste!"

She vanished, and Jansen's hoarse laugh came up to the brigadier:

"My Romeo! The feet are too heavy. Soon the ceiling give way. Would you kill your Jansen?"

•

MBWAGA was sick, very sick indeed. The wound in his leg had festered, the limb was swollen, useless, and from it a creeping pain had invaded his whole body. He felt numb and not a little frightened for all the skill of old Tuvingo had not brought him relief. What pleasure could it give him to know that McLaird lay face upward, staked out on the ground for all to behold, if he, the chief of Dovari, must die? His glance traveled slowly over the empty village where only the sick, the aged and the very young dozed in the afternoon sunlight. Above the huts towered the barren rocks, below were the gardens going down into the valley in gigantic steps all green and luxuriant, watered by a stream cunningly channeled from terrace to terrace.

Beyond the sudden dip and rise of the valley lay the mountains, their front ranks gilded by the dying sun, the more remote peaks shading off to purple, melting into the darkening sky.

With a grunt of pain Mbwaga hauled his aching body across the open and let himself subside near McLaird. Malevolently, grinning savagely, he dug his nails beneath the cracked and peeling skin on the Australian's face.

"It hurts like that—my wound," he snarled. "Do you feel, you——?"

McLaird looked unflinchingly into the native's eyes.

"Yes," he said between swollen lips. "I feel."

"Good. That is good, and tomorrow by the real *Topwo*, by the greatest of all spirits,

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you shall die as a slave and a prisoner! Your soul shall serve my soul—for I am no longer of your faith. *My* gods are real. *Wah!* But I am pleased I did not kill you at once. Just enough water, just enough food to keep you alive and in pain—that was your due. Tomorrow comes the master——"

"What master?" croaked McLaird.

"Wait, wait, this is no time for names," Mbwaga retorted. Then his face contracted as a spasm of pain shook him. "Four days ago I was strong—but now! Never was there such torture. Tomorrow I shall see you shake, I shall hear you scream—it will make me whole again."

Night came. The villagers straggled up from the black valley, the waning moon shed a wan light through the branches of the palm trees.

Soon the fires kindled for the evening meal died away as the people in anticipation of the morrow's orgy went early to their huts. Mbwaga groaned in the darkness and his household chanted softly in a minor key to ward off prowling ghosts.

The moon dipped behind the mountain range, the embers crackled as the last sparks went out. McLaird dozed uneasily until all at once he became conscious of a form crawling toward him across the clearing. It slid along the ground, a vague shadow in the shadowy darkness. He sensed its nearness, its imminent contact with his body even though it was still shapeless and indistinguishable.

A voice startlingly close breathed in his ear—

"I have come back, I, Lijken."

Swiftly she cut the thongs binding his wrists and ankles and holding up his head she poured water, drop by drop, down his throat.

He tried to sit up, but his body was stiff and cramped. He swore softly.

"I can not move. I must stay here until my strength returns—and it is nearly dawn. I am grateful. Now go back and warn them on the coast. Before you go—more water."

She offered him a flask full of rum which he would not touch.

"Put it there beneath me," he ordered. "I shall need it in the morning. What's this," as she held out Jansen's revolver. "Oh, I see. Fine. Slip it into my coat pocket. There's a fighting chance. You rode back, or you could not have made it so quickly. If you want to wait—you don't have to—hang around the head of the pass until an hour after daybreak. If I am not there by that time, hurry away. Now I must rest, for I am very tired. Before you go fix those thongs so that I can slip my hands through them again as if I were still tied."

She drew back and was gone blending with the gloom.

A grayness came into the sky, a rustle crept through the tree tops, a pigeon cooed, and a great Kanaka crawling from the men's sleeping-house yawned and spat and stretched mighty arms above his head. The day had begun.

Mbwaga, evil and shriveled, was carried from his hut and the warriors, not yet armed or dressed for the coming ceremony, waited expectantly while the women prepared food.

A cry came from the hilltops. It was taken up by another watcher near at hand—

"He comes!"

"It is time," mumbled Mbwaga, leering at the captive. "I want to see you die."

Then through the circle of tribesmen came Blondel, neat and clean, his white clothes and black top-boots in startling contrast with the naked Kanakas who closed in behind him.

He greeted Mbwaga sympathetically as one greets a trusted servant and turned to McLaird smiling a little. He spoke in English, slowly, carefully:

"This is some surprize, Mac, eh? I never expected this. I hope you are not too uncomfortable."

"I kind of expected you," sighed McLaird, closing his eyes.

"You did—how strange it is! You have been a confounded nuisance, don't you know. My property—it is lamentable, so poor! You would not sell, though I made many tempting offers, so we eliminate you now by most elementary process. Mbwaga was so useful! He is dying, eh? Blood poisoning, I think. Not nice. I arranged everything so well, except this finale—it went like clockwork. Mbwaga when he was caught blamed Jansen. He was an apt pupil, don't you know. I could always have had him released. Now," he laughed complacently, "I am spared all complications."

"It's interesting," admitted McLaird. "You're forceful aren't you?"

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"One has to be. But I really had no intention of having you captured. It was a mistake, don't you know. I thought that by constant nibbling I could drive you out of the country. Burning your house got your goat, as you say. But I do not want to kill. You must have been hunting trouble. Of course, it simplifies matters. If you will agree to sign certain papers *here* I will have you released."

"You better talk it over with Mbwaga," McLaird suggested. "He seems to have made other arrangements."

Blondel, raising his eyebrows slightly to express his disbelief, addressed the chief.

The latter's shout of disapproval was repeated by the whole crowd. Release the captive—never! The man had killed five, ten, a score of their kinsmen—let him precede the chief to the home of the dead.

"You were right," murmured Blondel. "Mbwaga has other plans. It is not my fault. I am very sorry." He extended both hands. "I shall write to your firm in Melbourne——"

"Don't bother!"

McLaird was on his feet, taunt, dynamic, sudden master of the situation.

Mbwaga opened his mouth, a bullet silenced him forever.

The amazed warriors were still unarmed. Panic seized them at the sight of their chief whose head was blown to pieces. Blondel gave one shrill cry, his arms fell to his sides, he gaped and a twitching muscle in his right cheek drew his mouth all out of shape.

"Back!" ordered McLaird, firing above the warriors' heads, and the circle gave way.

"Go ahead," he told Blondel. "Step out!"

One attempt was made to seize them—the last bullets in the revolver broke the rush.

As they left the row of huts shouts came to them from the rocks above and Brigadier Verron came hurtling toward them, trying to jam a clip of cartridges into his carbine as he ran.

"Where is that devil Mbwaga?" he bellowed. "I shall arrest him. A fine pair him and Jansen!"

"Mbwaga's dead," answered McLaird. "Here's your man, Blondel. I'll explain later. Just fire a few rounds over the village to keep them quiet. They're still dazed."

The *gendarme* complied willingly, and they scrambled up the slope, out of the hills, into the pass where Lijken awaited them.

"It is formidable!" declared Verron. "I am mystified!"

He ceased to be mystified, however, when in Blondel's house they discovered forty-odd hides all bearing McLaird's brand.

A little later he sobbed on Jansen's shoulder and apologized at great length, like the man he was, while McLaird sitting on the steps of the *gendarmerie* rolled a cigaret and talked through the barred door to Blondel.

"You'll go to Nouméa," he drawled. "You'll get five years in the Hebrides. You'll see the world, Blondel. And, oh, by the way, I'm taking over Lijken—that's a fine kid she's got, all right."

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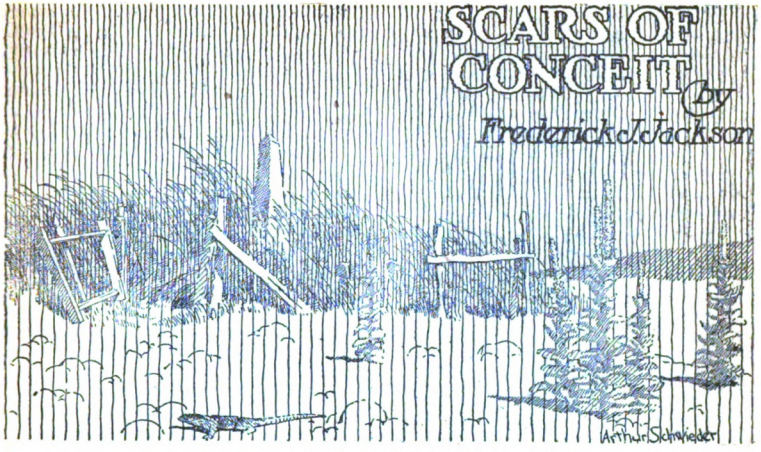

Author of "Bad Men Make Good Pickings," "Stepsons of Law," etc.

FOR a snappy description of conditions in San Pasqual County in 1885 it will be easiest to quote the words of old "Judge" Peters, one of the historians of this tale. He said the county "was as wide open as —— and twice as tough." But that was before Hank Barrows became sheriff.

It was in 1885 that Hank, late of Nevada and its hectic mining camps, set out to see the world. Hank was a lean, wiry, sun-parched, middle-aged gunman—"a shootin' fool." The most noticeable points about him were an enormous, tobacco-stained mustache and a serious expression.

On his attempted "world tour" his baggage for the greater part consisted of a Colt in a shoulder-holster, a large bank-roll in a hip-pocket and unlimited confidence in himself. But his most valued possession was a heavy, old-fashioned silver watch, formerly the property of his grandfather. As a keeper of time its value was doubtful, but as a keepsake and sort of mascot it was beyond price. Hank cherished it more than a negro who had survived being struck by lightning would thereafter cherish the graveyard rabbit's foot he had carried.

Thus in the rôle of a peaceful traveler Hank came into the town of San Pasqual on a stage, which stopped overnight. Two hours in the town sufficed to make several radical changes in Hank's viewpoint on life. Up to a certain point he had been at peace with the world—then came a shower of stars, followed by sudden clouds and a blank period.

The next act consisted of awakening in an alley, a goose-egg bump on his throbbing head, to find that among the things missing from his person were the watch, his money, his gun and much of his confidence.

Upon discovering this state of affairs, Mr. Barrows was flooded with righteous, flaming anger. As calmly as was possible under the circumstances he thought it over and decided that at last he had a real mission in life. He would camp right there in San Pasqual and use his talents to make the town and county safer for its citizens and for innocent wayfarers. But what was really the biggest thing in life to Hank was to recover his watch.

After bathing his aching head in a watering-trough, he crawled into a hayloft for a night's sleep. The next morning he set out to find a job to his liking, one that would at least assure him of three square meals a day, another Colt and chances to use it. His first and last place of call in search of employment was at the office

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of the sheriff, this harrassed official almost falling with joy upon Hank's lean sinewy neck upon learning that the possessor of the above described neck wanted a deputy's job.

Five minutes sufficed to swear in Hank, equip him with a silver star, a rifle, revolver and plenty of ammunition, tobacco, a horse and some other things, including renewed and full confidence. The sheriff then gave Hank a pocketful of unserved warrants and sent him forth to clean up the town and part of the county.

With Hank on his joyful way, the sheriff limped back into his office, to nurse his leg in which a bullet wound was not yet quite healed. Incidentally, the official wondered how long Hank would last on the job.

Hank lasted beyond all expectations. In about three months he had filled the small jail, four graves and six make-shift hospital beds with law-breakers. He had also managed to fill most of the remaining loose bad-men with an idea that times had changed. But all this in the way of results left Hank comparatively cold, for despite the large number of prisoners and suspects he had searched, his pet watch had not yet come to light.

By this time the sheriff had fully recovered. Spurred by the pace his new chief-deputy had set, he grew ambitious. With a posse of five, including himself and Hank, he set out to capture the notorious Reynolds gang. This was being a little too ambitious with an insufficient force, for "Bud" Reynolds had seven men under him. And every one of the eight outlaws knew that drawing down fine on the rear sight would cause fewer bullets to be wasted on thin air.

Hank had heard much of this straight-shooting tendency on the part of each member of the gang. He advised much caution and considerable strategy in approaching the outlaw stronghold, but the sheriff was bull-headed. It may be that he was jealous of Hank. This refusal to take advice makes the sheriff an unimportant character; with this raid he passed out of the story—also out of the world.

The end of a foolish direct attack found the sheriff and one deputy dead, and Hank Barrows with two bad wounds. The two remaining deputies were wise; they waited for the cover of darkness before bringing up the horses and loading what they supposed to be three dead men on to them. Hank protested feebly but profanely against being treated as a corpse, so the deputies did all they could in the way of second aid before transporting him to San Pasqual. The one doctor in the town agreed with the deputies that Hank could not live.

But Hank fooled them all by refusing to die.

It is told that the death of the sheriff, who was popular, impelled fifteen citizens of the town, good shots and bad, to set forth immediately in another ill-advised attempt to smoke out the Reynolds gang. The result was three new mounds in the cemetery just over the hill from San Pasqual, and five patients treated for gun-shot wounds.

Following this, the Reynolds gang was re-voted to be bad medicine and to be let severely alone.

TWO months later found Hank Barrows again climbing into a saddle. But his gameness was greater than his strength. After riding less than the width of the street he fainted and fell to the ground with a shock that re-opened both wounds.

Six more weeks passed before he was really fit and ready to re-open the war against lawlessness. And in the mean time he had been *elected* sheriff, to take the place of the officer lately deceased.

This time he started out alone, with the intention of gaining a thorough knowledge of the country in the vicinity where the gang made its headquarters. Some miles from what he considered to be dangerous territory he left his horse and continued on foot—cautiously. But of what avail was caution to a man who was a perfect genius when it came to finding trouble?

The lookout of the gang had spotted his approach, and Hank proceeded to raise expectation in the hearts of three outlaws by sneaking directly toward them. But one of the gang split open the bean bag by his anxiety to get in the first shot at Hank. In his haste he failed to draw down fine enough on his rear sight, with the result that his bullet missed Hank's neck by a scant inch.

Hank promptly dropped to the ground, sized up the situation and failed to like it at all. He was practically cornered, for

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behind him arose a perpendicular wall of rock, which not very far away made an abrupt turn to his left and hemmed him in in that direction. In front, less than one hundred yards distant began a thirty per cent. slope plentifully strewn with tumbled rocks, many of which were several feet in height. Near the top of the slope, less than three hundred yards away, a thinning away cloud of black powder smoke indicated the position of the unseen marksman.

To his right, the way he had come, the nearest cover was too far away to attempt to reach. At his left lay a mass of large boulders, and toward these Hank sprang up and made a dash. Three hidden outlaws promptly cut loose at him; one bullet struck between his feet and the others spattered against the rock wall to his left. Untouched by lead, Hank dropped among the boulders, shoved forward the barrel of his Winchester and prepared to do some shooting on his own account.

Thut! Off flew his hat the moment it appeared above the top of a boulder. Hank took a good look at things before ducking his head, then uttered phrases which contained the name of his Maker. But he was not praying. The sun shone directly into his eyes as he peered out to locate a target. The sun handicap was bad enough, but what made it worse was that he was unable to catch the slightest glimpse of the snipers. They were careful to stay well hidden and sheltered.

Then, over the summit came running five men, the rest of the gang, summoned by the gun-fire. Hank took two free shots at them and registered two misses, thanks to the blinding glare and his own haste.

After that all he could do was to lie low and await developments, for the slightest exposure of his person was the signal for several soft heavy slugs to spatter searchingly among the boulders. Two of the gang started working their way down the slope to Hank's right, to cut off his only way of retreat.

Hank wiped the sweat out of his eyes and glanced longingly at his hat, which had sailed into some cacti fifteen feet behind him. He wanted his headgear, but the price might be too high.

"Shucks! I never did like that hat, anyway—till now," he muttered.

He did some more soft cursing and a lot of hard thinking. His only hope of escape, he decided, was to stick it out until darkness would cover his movements and then, carrying his boots in his hand, steal away to his *left*, a direction the gang would not be likely to look for him to take, for it would bring him up against the rock wall. But Hank intended to "Injun" his way up the front slope into open country.

The prospect of wandering at night in stocking feet over ground infested heavily with cacti, cat-claw and the fiendishly sharp-Spanish bayonet was not alluring, but it was either that or risk taking a few bullets where they would do no good to the taker. In the eery mountain silence the slightest click of his boots against a rock would betray him. It would have to be stocking feet, or not try it at all. Hank swore some more, for he was growing angrier every minute—angry at himself for getting into the trap.

And then the unreckoned element entered the game.

Hank stole another hasty survey of the slope and was surprized to see on the summit a man outlined against the sky. Hank shifted his position a few feet to one side, scaled his rear sight up another notch and on general principles took a shot at the newcomer. It was another miss, and the gang, taking it for granted that Hank had shot at one of them, promptly smothered his position with a promiscuous spattering of lead which forced him to hug the ground.

Ten minutes passed. Again a hail of slugs enveloped Hank's position. Wondering at the deliberate, methodical waste of ammunition, he crawled a dozen feet to the left and ventured to bob up his head, just in time to see a man leap behind a tall rock not more than one hundred yards distant. The continued shooting had been to cover his advance.

Things were growing serious, indeed, for Hank. The outlaws were closing in on him.

Unexpectedly, from farther up the slope, came the roar of a heavy gun, unmistakably different in its timbre from the reports of the Winchester used by the gang. Hank stole another glance and saw the outlaw who had sneaked down the slope suddenly "flop" from behind his sheltering rock into the open. The man made a few convulsive movements, then lay inertly—in plain sight.

Hank couldn't figure it at all. He knew the man was dead or at least badly wounded, but what had happened? Hank was no

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super-optimist. To expect a friend, or assistance from a stranger right in the outlaws' territory would be asking too much.

At that moment several cubic feet of black powder smoke suddenly belched forth far up on the ridge. Hank did not see where the bullet found a mark, but he did see four members of the gang spring into crouching positions as they hastily sought shelter from this unexpected and deadly fire from their rear.

Hank was not given to passing up an opportunity. With him at the moment it was action first; later, there would be plenty of time to puzzle things out. Promptly he opened up with his Winchester and put two of the four men out of the fight. The boom of the newcomer's weapon heralded the passing of a third, but Hank's bead on the fourth outlaw was spoiled by a bullet from down the cañon smashing into the stock of his rifle about half an inch below his chin. The shock was sufficient to knock him temporarily clear into another land, for he confessed afterward that he had heard meadow-larks warbling all around.

HE RECOVERED consciousness to find himself beneath the grinning scrutiny of a bearded but obviously young chap who, seated on a boulder, suspended rolling a cigaret to watch him. Satisfied that Hank had regained his senses, the stranger leisurely finished the operation, brought out half a block of sulfur matches and attempted to strike one.

On his part, beyond a first bewildered stare, Hank ignored his rescuer. He had troubles of his own. Putting one hand to his chin he cautiously waggled it from side to side and up and down. Blood dripped down his fingers as he took them away. He sat up.

"Seems to work all right," he announced in a tone of relief, again tentatively testing his chin. "But she's sure sore. What happened?"

The stranger grinned and pointed to the splintered gun stock, which told its story.

"Got a match?" he inquired. "Mine got soaked with sweat and won't light."

Hank obliged, and studied the stranger as he lighted the cigaret and took two deep inhalations.

"I sure like a smoke after the action is over."

The youth sighed in complete satisfaction.

"You sure were there—while it lasted," admitted Hank. "What's your name?"

"That depends," was the cautious answer. "It seems to me that I'm entitled to the first question. What do they call you at home?"

"Me? I'm Hank Barrows."

The other suddenly slapped his knee and rocked with laughter.

"What's so danged funny about it?" queried Hank rather stiffly.

"Why, you're the sheriff of San Pasqual County, and this is the first time I ever helped a sheriff."

Hank grinned uncertainly. Somewhere seemed to be concealed a life-sized joke.

"You've got a large chance to keep on helping one—if you want a job. I need a deputy like you."

"If you need help very often like you needed it today, it won't be a job—it'll be a pleasure. I'll take the job. My name's Bob McCann."

They shook hands, continuing to size up each other.

McCann possessed exceptionally brilliant laughing eyes, an excess of exuberant youth, six feet of rangy body, dark brown hair, a high forehead and long slender fingers. The laugh in his eyes did not fool Hank. He knew McCann as a type. Those eyes could in less time than the jerk of a head grow cold, hard and fairly spit hate if their owner were aroused.

"How'd you happen to sit into the game?" inquired Hank.

"Oh, I was on my way to San Pasqual when I heard the shots. So I left my bronc and came up the other side of the ridge. You threw a slug at me, so I sat down to watch your little war, wondering if your taking a shot at me could be construed as an invitation to horn in. I finally sized the thing up—eight men against one. I didn't know who was who, but the odds weren't quite fair. I stood off the trigger-finger itch as long as I could, then invited myself in on your side, despite your shooting at me. The eight men might have been a posse, for all I knew. "And—" with a reckless laugh—"I'll confess that I didn't give a ——!"

"Huh!" grunted Hank, smiling reminiscently. "Lucky for me that you're young and careless—like I was once. I got myself cornered by the whole danged Reynolds gang. Did you see how many of them got away?"

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"Two," regretfully. "That pair down the cañon finally hit the breeze. It was one of them who almost got you. When I came down here to take a look at who I'd been helping, at first I thought your chin was smashed to pieces. Then I saw that it was only full of splinters. They didn't do much more than break the skin. I examined your jaw and was pretty certain that you'd come out of it—sooner or later. So I waited. Sorry I had no water and nothing clean enough for a bandage. But I knew you wouldn't bleed to death."

"It sure was a jolt, anyway," swore Hank. "The scratches don't matter."

McCann flipped away his cigaret stub and grinned.

"Old-timer," he drawled, "you're plumb full of grit and you're sure overlooking—for a sheriff—the way you took it when I said I didn't give a —— whether or not the eight men were a posse."

"Well, I ain't been a sheriff *all* my life," explained Hank. "We seem to speak the same language."

"Here's the funny part of it," continued the other: "I was on my way to San Pasqual *to bump off Bud Reynolds*—if I could find him. Some months ago we had a little run-in and I came off second best. I got gunned up good and plenty. I've been practising a fast draw—I *had* got kind of rusty on it—and now I'm back in form. I can beat Reynolds—or at least I think I can—so I was traveling straight across country to find him. That's how I happened to be coming down the cañon across the ridge.

"I'll sure be disappointed if Reynolds is among those we bumped off, but I think he's one of the two who got away down the cañon. Those two would have been my meat if I'd had a repeater, but I like this gun best."

McCann lifted his rifle, and Hank saw that it was an old Sharps, a long-barreled weapon, taking the .50-120 cartridge.

"My dad was a buffalo hunter," continued McCann. "This was his pet gun. I stole it from him, after he quit using it. I don't blame him for liking it. It shoots where it's laid and gets what it hits."

"They sure are a good gun," agreed Hank. "This Winchester ain't so bad, though. She won't shoot like a Sharps, but I can throw more lead in less time with it. I'm for a repeater every time."

"If you are, you're sure a little missing above the shoulders," grinned McCann. "That 'grasshopper action' thing is a joke. I'll have to convert you to a *real* gun."

"You've got your work cut out for you," scoffed Hank.

"Is that so? Look! See that white rock."

McCann pointed to a white spot on the hill about five hundred yards away, then raised his Sharps, elevated the rear sight, took quick aim and fired.

Hank, standing clear of the smoke, saw the spurt of white granite dust when the bullet struck near the center of the target, which was about two feet wide by four in height. Distance, however, made the rock look not much bigger than a postcard.

"Good shooting," he admitted, grudgingly.

"Fair," grinned the other. "Now you try it."

Hank squirmed. He had been touched in a raw spot. His only weakness, his one conceit, was his skill as a marksman. He did not doubt his ability to shoot straight enough to hit the target, but he did doubt his rifle, knowing its limitations. To hit anything beyond three hundred yards with it was a matter of luck, not of skill. McCann's invitation caused Hank's sun-reddened countenance to turn even a deeper hue.

"Aw, heck," he growled. "I might as well admit that your gun is better at long range. Let it go at that. But I'll get me a Sharps and then show you up."

"Go to it, old-timer," laughed McCann. "Let me know when you're ready."

HANK was still weighted down with gloom as they started out to examine the fallen outlaws. But the thought that on the body of one of them he might find his watch served to cheer him up. McCann was contented with merely looking at the face of each dead or wounded man, but Hank stopped to search or feel the pockets of each one.

"Why the thoroughness?" asked McCann. "I just want to see if Bud Reynolds is one of those who got away."

"Well, this is a personal matter with me," explained Hank. "I got robbed of my watch last Spring in San Pasqual and I'm gonna get that watch back if I have to shoot and search every bad-man in the county to do it."

"Oh, I was wondering why you searched

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so thoroughly. I hope you find it. Excuse my starting to laugh; I didn't realize how seriously you took it."

"The *hombre* who took that watch won't laugh," vowed Hank. "Not after I find it on him," he added.

"I'm your deputy now," replied McCann seriously. "I suppose it's up to me to help you find it."

"That's sure a gratifying spirit," commended Hank. "Guess I better swear you in, all regular. Put up your right hand."

The oath was taken. Next, McCann inquired—

"What do we do now?"

"We'll have to locate the Reynolds corral and get some horses to carry these men to town. I think two of them will live, and they're the ones that'll give us the most trouble. Get a horse apiece for them. Get a couple of pack horses—we'll load two dead men cn each. These men are worth danged near a thousand dollars apiece in reward money. We'll make an even split between us of whatever it amounts to."

"I knew I was going to like this deputy's job," grinned McCann."

IT WAS late in the afternoon of the following day when the two officers rode into San Pasqual, each leading a double-laden packhorse and each supporting before him in his saddle an outlaw suffering from acute lead poisoning. Between Hank and his new deputy on the journey there had been much argument, not only as to the merits of various firearms, but also because Bud Reynolds had escaped. The latter fact caused considerable dissatisfaction to Hank, but it really made McCann glad, for he hoped some day to meet the outlaw face to face on equal terms. Only this would enable McCann to smooth out the dent in his vanity.

Weeks passed, and months. San Pasqual County, with the Reynolds gang broken up, was almost safe for travelers. Reynolds himself had disappeared. Bandits, rustlers and professional bad-men who were wise shifted their operations to other counties, for Barrows and McCann made a team which discouraged crime. Those who stayed were out of luck, for the two law enforcers of San Pasqual stuck like bloodhounds to a trail, bobbed up unexpectedly and relentlessly finished each job. Resistance meant a gun fight and both of them appeared to live only to shoot or for a chance to shoot. Often their lives depended upon their uncanny ability to shoot as straight and swiftly as the glance of an eye.

But as crime in San Pasqual County became reduced to a minimum, time began to hang heavily on both of them. The days they spent peacefully in San Pasqual irked their restless souls. They longed for action. With this similarity of inclination as a basis, between them had grown a great friendship.

They slept together in the same wide bunk; they ate together; their tobacco and other things were treated as community property. One thing they did not do together was to drink. Bob would never touch liquor, and Hank gradually gave it up because of Bob's example. When apart, each would extol the virtues of the other to any one willing to listen; they were a sort of mutual admiration society. In Hank grew a love for the younger man that was half-paternal. The other half was great admiration, all the greater perhaps because the deputy possessed innumerable gifts and qualities lacked by Hank.

Temperamentally, the sheriff and his deputy were opposites. Hank was somber, quiet, inclined to downright moodiness, a grave look ever in his eyes, slowness in his speech. McCann, the habitual bearer of a laugh, smile or grin, took nothing seriously but his marksmanship. He possessed the sensitive, nervous, flashy ability to be equally quick in a verbal retort or in drawing a Colt. Behind his laughter and constant joking was a streak of cold nerve that coupled well with his quick hand and brain. But the more volatile the spirits of a man the greater his conceit.

With women, Bob, with his ability to play almost any musical instrument, with his laughing and winning ways, was more than a success. He could have married any eligible woman in the county. But Hank in the presence of the other sex invariably was tongue-tied and painfully embarrassed. At the town dances Bob flung a light foot. Hank as a rule accompanied him to the festivities, but would take no part. He never danced, had always lacked the courage to try to learn. Back in a corner he would sit, his gaze never leaving Bob as the latter wove back and forth among the throng. From merely watching the younger man he seemed to derive much pleasure, perhaps

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reveling vicariously in the obvious good time enjoyed by the other.

"As close as Hank and Bob," was a simile frequently used by the citizens of San Pasqual. And these same citizens were highly amused at times by the absurd cause of quarrels between the two officers. One inordinate vanity was possessed in common between them and was their one point of argument, of discord. Each prided himself on his marksmanship with both revolver and rifle, and neither would admit that the other was quite his equal. They practised incessantly, each fearful that lack of practise on his part would some day let the other man out shoot him in some competitive test.

Hank had made good his threat or promise to get a Sharps rifle for himself. He had adjusted the sights to a thin whisper and from then on had been able to hold his own at long-range shooting.

One morning happened an incident which almost led to an open break. Judge Peters, the local Justice of the Peace—when there was any "justicing" to be done—owned a livery stable. On the shady side of the building were placed as more or less permanent fixtures a number of chairs, which made it a favorite hang-out for the town oracles.

Peters, sitting alone, after a poker session lasting all night, had fallen asleep. From the stable eaves a large tarantula had dropped onto his head. At that moment Hank and Bob turned the corner, ten feet from the sleeping man. Both saw the tarantula, which had started to crawl down Peters' forehead. Peters, half-awakened, slowly raised his hand to brush away the cause of the tickling thing that had disturbed his slumber. The tarantula evidently saw the threatening hand, for it "froze" combatively. Normally it would have scurried to the nearest hiding-place, perhaps down inside Peters' collar, but this time its instincts probably had been jarred loose for the moment by the twenty-foot drop it had taken.

For a scant fraction of a moment Hank and Bob likewise were frozen, spell-bound. Then a Colt barked; a bullet flicked the poisonous insect from beneath the approaching fingers.

Peters jerked erect and gazed bewildered into the powder smoke. He saw Hank with a Colt in his hand, while the usually cool Bob, now pale and sickened, leaned back against the wall.

"My God, Hank! What a chance—what a fool chance!" gasped Bob. "Less than an inch from his eye?"

"What—happened?" demanded Peters.

"Just a choice of judgment," drawled Hank. "Your hand was about to touch a tarantula. It might have bitten your eyelid. So I shot the —— thing away. Look! There's a couple of its legs on the next chair."

"But what a chance he took," repeated Bob. "He might have put out your eye."

"I'm glad he took it," retorted Peters. "Hank knows what he does. Never touched me," he added, after wiping his hand over his face. "Le's all go and have a drink. Bob looks like he needs it."

"Maybe I need it," answered Bob, "but I won't take it."

This should have ended the matter, but didn't. Either Bob's nerve or his vanity—Hank couldn't decide which—had been shaken by the tarantula episode, for during the following week he referred to it in various ways, invariably, however, stressing the risk Hank had taken in daring to make a quick shot so close to Peters' eyes.

Hank finally got fed up on it.

"Suppose we try it over again," he proposed. "I'll give you the first shot, then you'll have nothing to holler about. We'll catch a tarantula and plant it on the judge's head when we find him asleep. That'll give you another chance."

"That's just what worried me—the risk to the judge," protested Bob.

"In that case we'll try it off the top of the hitching-rail. But you'll have to supply the tarantula."

"You go to blazes!" swore Bob, forced to grin at Hank's whimsical stipulation.

This ended the episode as far as talk was concerned. Bob contented himself with sulking. His conceit had been shattered. When it had come to a pinch—and a shot which required both quick thinking and cold nerve—Hank had calmly beaten him to it. In his very heart Bob doubted that he could have made the shot under the circumstances that Hank had made it. The thought rankled.

A few days later when they sat at breakfast in the restaurant two doors distant from the sheriff's office, a ranch-hand entered on the run.

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"Bud Reynolds has come back," he blurted out breathlessly. "He stuck up Henderson's place alone, killed Henderson and grabbed the cash. Mrs. Henderson came out with a rifle and shot Reynolds' horse. He jumped clear and plugged Mrs. Henderson three times. Then he got Henderson's old gray out of the barn and started away bare-back. He had to leave his rifle; it's still in the saddle-boot, under his dead horse.

"I didn't have a gun, so I ran up and grabbed Mrs. Henderson's rifle. The shell had jammed in it—the gun hadn't been shot in the last year, and the shell had been in it all the time. Mrs. Henderson's dead, all right."

"Which way did he go?" queried Hank, gulping the last of his coffee.

"Pacheco Pass. He——"

But Hank was already following Bob out of the restaurant.

Henderson's store and saloon was half a mile south of San Pasqual, and Pacheco Pass was eight miles distant on the valley road that Reynolds had taken. But another road out of town was far more direct; it cut off three miles.

Bob was the first into the sheriff's office. From the gun-rack he took his Sharps and smiled quizzically as Hank reached for his favorite Winchester. Hank promptly changed his idea and took down his Sharps. Not more than three minutes later they were leading a large and growing dust cloud out of town.

In the foot-hills near Pacheco Pass they caught first sight of the outlaw mounted on the faltering, wheezy old gray mare. He had left the road and was topping a ridge perhaps six hundred yards away. The old gray had been forced too hard and it was apparent, even at that distance, she could not go much farther. She was barely moving as she struggled up the last of the grade.

"We gotta get him, Bob!" yelled Hank. "He'll take to the brush, and we might lose him."

They both reined in. McCann leaped first to the ground.

"How far?" he asked.

"About seven, but pull down fine."

Hank raised the sights on his gun and dismounted.

The gray was crossing a rocky stretch and stirred up no dust, although a twenty-mile breeze was bending the tree tops on the ridge. Bob hastened to fire, and the bullet spurted dust several feet to the left of the fugitive. Bob in his haste had failed to allow for windage.

Hank methodically thumbed the windage screw and raised his gun.

"Too late!" said Bob in disappointment, as he closed his gun breech on another cartridge. "He's over the ridge. Come on!"

He sprang into the saddle and urged his horse up the hill.

Hank mounted and endeavored to overtake his deputy. But McCann was recklessly spurring his mount, consumed with eagerness to come to close quarters and face through powder smoke the man who once had bested him in a gun fight. There would be no attempt to take alive the murderer of little Mrs. Henderson. Bob wanted to finish the job with his Colt before Hank arrived on the scene. The fact that he had already missed a shot at Reynolds served further to drive him on; he wanted to wipe that blot from his record and give Hank no chance to make insulting remarks about poor shooting.

On the summit, however, Bob reined in and waited for Hank. Below on a flat stood a deserted homesteader's cabin, outside of which, head hanging low in an attitude of weariness, was the blown gray mare. Unvoiced by the officers was the thought that Reynolds must have been wounded or be would not have chosen to make a stand in the cabin. As a matter of fact, the outlaw's ankle had been severely sprained when his horse had been shot out from under him by Mrs. Henderson.

"He's cornered himself." Hank voiced the obvious fact. "Thank the Lord he hasn't got a rifle. He'll fight like a rat, but I'm going after him. I'll bet that here's where I get my watch back; I've always suspected him of having it."

"*You're* going after him?" blurted out McCann heatedly. "You want to hog all the fun, don't you? Let me get at him; he's *my* meat. I've got a grudge fight with him. I'll sneak around a blind side of the shack and yell for him to come and shoot it out for the second time. If he won't come I'll set the place afire to drive him out. It'll burn like a straw stack."

"No," compromised Hank. "We'll edge down till he shows himself to shoot. Then we'll pop him through the wall with our rifles. That'll simplify the job."

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"Have it your own way," consented Bob sulkily.

They rode down within two hundred yards of the cabin, dismounted and with rifles in readiness started slowly forward on foot. They were still one hundred and fifty yards away when a Colt was shoved into sight at one corner of the unglazed window opening. Twice it barked, with two resulting misses. The range was still too far for accurate revolver shooting. Part of Reynolds' head was exposed as he carefully aimed again.

The officers had stopped; the rifles had leaped to their shoulders. The two heavy guns roared almost simultaneously. Such was the faith that each had in his own shooting eye that there was no hesitation in running directly to the shack and through the doorway. Each was certain that Reynolds was dead. As they entered the shack, Bob, as usual, was in the lead.

Reynolds lay face up on the dirt floor, the left breast of his shirt saturated with blood.

"I sure got him," said Bob. "That's the spot I aimed at."

Hank tore away the shirt, exposing a gaping wound. The heavy soft bullet had flattened to some extent in tearing through the cabin wall and had been far from neat in its effect on the outlaw. Incidentally, it had knocked him twelve feet from where he had been crouching at the window.

"It looks like my trademark," claimed Hank. "I aimed plumb center—about a foot below and a little to one side of Reynolds' eye that I saw in the window corner. I sure made a bull's-eye. I was thinking of Mrs. Henderson. If I'd let this man live I'd of been in trouble up to my neck fighting off half the county. They'd uh wanted to lynch him."

"That's what I was thinking of, too!" snapped Bob. "I pulled for right where I thought his heart would be. That hole in him is right where I aimed."

"Well," said Hank, diplomatically, "maybe we both hit him in the same place."

He knelt in a hasty search for his missing watch—and failed to find it.

"Hit him in the same place—nothing! Look!" Bob pointed to Reynolds' left ear. "*Your* slug nicked him there. I *know* where *I* aimed."

"So do I," contended Hank. "But let's let it go at that."

"The —— we will!" snorted Bob, in anger. "You think you're such a wonder of a sure shot, but I'm just as good—and maybe a little better. Your slug went through the window opening. It touched his ear and went through the back wall. There's the hole it made. Look at the angle of it. It just barely missed the window ledge."

"It sure looks like one of us shot high," admitted Hank, scratching his head. "But don't get het up about it. I'll give you all the credit you got coming—but you sure missed that wide-open shot back on the ridge."

This was rubbing salt in the open wound of Bob's vanity.

"You bull-headed, conceited old fool!" he snarled. "You think you can claim credit for ringing the bell on this *hombre?* You can't! That's flat—and do what you like about it."

Bob's eyes were blazing as he deliberately stepped back a few feet.

"Conceited!" grinned Hank. "That's a danged good word—the one I've been trying to think of. One of us got him, that's sure—so let it go at that. It ain't worth quarreling about."

"I *will* quarrel about it!" snapped Bob.

"Aw, shut up!" retorted Hank. "You're acting like a schoolboy. Conceited is sure one great little word."

With that, he stepped out of the cabin and walked away to get the horses, feeling slightly amused at Bob's unreasonable display of anger.

He returned, and there was no word between them as they carried out the body and placed it behind Hank's saddle. Hank lashed it in place, stuck his rifle in the saddle-boot, mounted and rode back toward San Pasqual. After a few minutes he was followed by Bob, who took the gray horse in lead.

Hank rode slowly, but was not overtaken. McCann, young, hot-headed, sulky, wanted to be alone, to nurse his fancied grievance. Hank was willing to let him alone; he would come out of it in time.

Hank took his grim burden directly to the coroner's office. After telling his story he made his way back to the sheriff's office. After ascertaining that there had been no calls for him, he leaned his rifle against the wall and went out to take care of his horse.

In the mean time, Bob, after arriving in

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town, had disappeared through the swinging doors of the nearest saloon. He downed several drinks of whisky, neat, and these, after his long period of abstinence, took quick effect.

Less than half an hour later Hank returned to his office. He took his rifle and had just started to push a cleaning rod through the barrel when from outside in the street came a drunken whoop and summons. Hank dropped the rifle and stepped to the door.

Bob stood, swaying uncertainly, about thirty feet distant.

"Hey, you!" he hiccuped. "You think you're such a —— of a good shot, don't you?"

Hank felt nothing but pity at Bob's weakness in making a public spectacle of himself. He walked on to the porch.

"Come in, Bob," he coaxed. "Go to bed and sleep it off."

"*Yah!* Sleep *this* off!"

Out flashed Bob's Colt.

Three times he fired in less than that many seconds, and each bullet thudded into Hank's body.

Hank staggered back against the building; the wall momentarily served to keep him upright.

His right hand had dropped to a gun-butt. Out came the Colt. It was nothing but instinct, reflex action, perhaps—the result of years of constant practise—that caused his muscles to coordinate in a swift draw. His knees were bending, he was falling as blindly he fired one shot. Even after he had collapsed in a limp heap his fingers continued to flex spasmodically as the gunman's instinct drove him to try to shoot again.

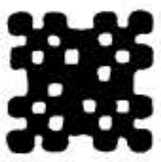
Bob had dropped like a pole-axed steer, dead before he struck the ground. He had been shot through the center of his forehead.

The next day he was buried in the town cemetery—buried as he fell, with his boots on. Public sentiment had urged the coroner to do this. And even as Bob McCann was being laid away, word went out that Hank Barrows was dying.

But Hank, tough old veteran of gun fights, had a habit of living. For the second time he fooled the town doctor after the latter had announced that there was no hope.

A coroner's jury had been assembled—as a matter of form. Half a score of men had witnessed the shooting. The first-ballot verdict was—to quote the *exact* words of the foreman—

"*Self-defense in the first degree.*"



NOT until two weeks later, in reply to Hank's querulous and persistent inquiries did the physician dare inform him that he had killed his deputy. Hank was shocked, dazed, could scarcely believe. He had not the slightest recollection of even drawing his Colt.

When he had gained sufficient strength to leave the doctor's home, he made his way to the sheriff's office. During his weeks in bed his duties had been taken over by the town marshal who was not in the office when Hank entered.

The two Sharps rifles had been cleaned and placed in the rack. Hank walked over to them, his gaze centered on one. His mouth opened in shock as he inspected his own gun.

On it the rear sight stood raised to the seven-hundred yard notch and the wind-gauge was screwed far to the left.

"Why," gasped Hank, as the significance of this struck home, "that's the way I had it fixed when I wanted to get Reynolds before he crossed the ridge. I took after him in a hurry and plumb *forgot* about the sights being left that way. *My* bullet nicked his ear."

At that moment the marshal entered, to see tears trickling down the deeply graven lines in Hank's face. The marshal was surprized, to say the least, also curious, but tactfully said nothing.

Hank took down the gun.

"I'm no better than a murderer," he announced chokingly. "Look at the sights on my gun. Imagine shooting at a hundred and fifty yards with the sights raised like that. Of *course* I missed. That's what Bob got riled about. He was so proud of his shooting. High spirited and proud—that was Bob. And I loved the boy, even though I thought he was a little conceited. But I was the bull-headed one, too conceited about my own shooting.

"I wouldn't own up that I *might* have missed; I honestly didn't think that I had. He got so boiling mad that he got drunk. He'd never touched the stuff before—or at least since I've known him. I feel that I'm the one to blame for what happened. Poor Bob!"

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The marshal consoled Hank the best he could. A few minutes later he left Hank alone and hastened to the coroner's office.

"Hank considers Bob as a friend to be mourned," he told the other official. "He'll take it hard if he learns that Bob was buried with his boots on. We'd better spare his feelings; spread the word that he mustn't be told. We were all feeling mighty mad at Bob and we took it out by deliberately busting the gunman's pet superstition. Hank is essentially a gunman. He might mourn around and want us to dig up Bob and take his boots off. You can't tell how some of these old-timers will react."

"You're right. We'd better take no chances," agreed the other.

Returning to the sheriff's office, the marshal found Hank tearing a piece of paper to shreds.

"That was my resignation as sheriff," explained Hank. "I wrote it out, but changed my mind. I'll stick on the job until I get back my watch."

A few days later, when he had grown stronger, Hank mysteriously disappeared from San Pasqual. In a fortnight he returned, in a huge wagon drawn by twelve mules. On the wagon was a large marble shaft, which Hank had gone to Los Angeles to purchase. During his absence his hair had noticeably whitened.

"Boys," said Hank, "I've picked out the best tombstone in the market. I'm doing this to satisfy myself, and it's little enough. I want Bob McCann to be remembered and respected."

In response to Hank's wishes, nearly every inhabitant of the town journeyed to the cemetery to witness the erection of the stone. The carved words on it had been chosen by Hank. They read:

HERE RESTS
ROBERT McCANN
1859-1885
A LOVED COMRADE
HE WAS MURDERED BY HIS CLOSEST FRIEND, ON WHOM MAY THE LORD HAVE MERCY.

AND here ends the story of Robert McCann—as it was known to the inhabitants of San Pasqual. Hank Barrows himself told it often in the years that followed, and with each telling idealized his friend more and more.

But the real story had not yet been told.

The year 1923 found San Pasqual as a side-tracked town afflicted with sleeping-sickness. It is no longer the county seat; Jamesville, seven miles distant, and on the railroad, long since took away this honor. Over the hill from the somnolent community lies the old cemetery, fallen into disuse, neglected, forgotten.

All burials in the last two decades have been made at Jamesville, for no one now wants his loved ones to be buried in old Boot Hill. Cacti and yucca now flower there. Sage and greasewood have crept in among the scattered head-boards. From these the whitewash has long ago been blown or washed away, but here and there a carved or painted epitaph is more or less legible on a warped piece of wood. Lizards dart from place to place in the shade of sun-cracked rocks. Snakes, squirrels, horned-toads and owls have taken up their abodes around the spots where once men were laid away with their boots on.

In one corner of this acre of memories and legends of death from flame and lead still towers a shaft of marble. It is the only piece of quarried stone in old Boot Hill, and stands out like a lighthouse on a sandspit.

It was another sight of this, seen again for the first time in years, that served at last to unlock the lips of old Judge Peters. Peters had known the real story all through the years. He was the only man who knew it. At first he kept his silence to avoid bruising Hank's feelings. Disillusionment would have been cruel. Hank passed away in 1900, but the judge, perhaps from force of habit, continued to keep the secret.

The judge's livery-stable is now a garage, in charge of his grandson. On the shady side of the building there are still placed a number of chairs and it is here that the white-haired, feeble old man spends the greater part of each day, together with those of his old-time cronies who have still been spared.

A stranger stayed overnight in San Pasqual, something that had not happened in years. To the stranger the judge told the story of Robert McCann, as he has told it perhaps a hundred times. Then he sighed and turned his kindly, but watery and faded, blue eyes on three of his cronies, who had just finished listening to the story for perhaps the hundredth time. He seemed to come to a decision.

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"Boys," he said, his voice trembling, "yesterday I drove by Boot Hill. And today I came across this letter. I thought I had lost it thirty years ago. It seems to be meant that I should tell."

From a wallet he brought forth three folded, yellowed sheets of paper, covered with almost illegible writing. He read aloud:

"DEAR JUDGE:

"Here is Hank's watch or what is left of it. It saved my life when Bud Reynolds was the fastest on the draw and threw two slugs into me. The watch was in my vest pocket and made Bud's first slug glance off into my right arm as I was going for my gun. The second slug was in my right shoulder and put me down. But I rode out of town that night. I hate to think of that ride.

"How I got the watch is not a nice story, in fact, nothing about me is nice. I'm bad all the way through. I expect to get bumped off some day and I'll confess the whole story. It'll make me feel better. I'll make a package of the watch and this letter, address the package to you and put the package in the bottom of the canvas bag I carry my junk in when I travel. It won't be found till I'm dead, and then you'll get it.

"I feel that my getting bumped off suddenly is bound to come sooner or later. There is something in the Bible to the effect that those who live by the sword must die by the sword. I reckon that applies to guns as well. If they'd had guns as well as swords in those days, the word guns would sure have been put in the text. I have lived by the gun. It has been a curse with me, part of me, apparently meant to be. I am ready to die as I have lived.

"I haven't the courage to tell Hank about his watch. He seems to think so much of it, that I'd rather let him live in hope than plant this wreck somewhere and let him find it. Bud's slug sure messed it up.

"I'm from Texas, judge—from a good family and all that. Dad owns a ranch half as big as this county, but that's nothing to me. I'm *out*—with no chance of going back. There is a taint in me. I've smiled as my Colt exploded and cold lead tore into the man in front of me.

"You may have noticed that I let whisky alone. I don't dare touch it. A few drinks under my belt—and something snaps. I become a *killer*. I killed my only brother after I had been to a Christmas celebration, killed him for no reason at all except that the drinks in me urged me to do it.

"After that, I was out. I dodged around Texas with the Rangers always on my trail. I finally got tired of that and came West. I had been in San Pasqual a couple of days and had just spent my last cent for a meal when Hank Barrows flashed a lot of money. I wanted that money. I needed it. So when I got a chance I busted Hank with my Colt. Then I dragged him into an alley where it was darker and went through his clothes. I made a clean sweep—gun, watch and everything. I was safe. He didn't know who hit him.

"After that I went into a saloon to get some tobacco. In there I had the run-in with Reynolds and the watch saved my life. That enabled me to happen along some months later in time to save Hank's life when the gang was closing in on him. I laughed when he told me his name. And it was even funnier when he told me about the watch and all the time the busted piece of junk was in my saddle bag. I kept it as a souvenir because it had saved my life.

"I liked Hank. I was sorry I had robbed him. So I teamed up with him when he said that he needed me.

"That's all, Judge. If you ever read this, break the news easy to Hank about me and his watch.

"I won't sign this because my right name is not Bob McCann."

JUDGE PETERS finished reading and slowly refolded the sheets of paper. From his listeners there was nothing but silence. Finally one of them sighed and inquired—

"And you never told Hank?"

"I never dared to. He sort of worshiped Bob McCann. The truth would have hurt him."

"What became of the watch?" pursued the questioner.

"Oh, it was smashed beyond repair—worthless. So I slipped it into McCann's coffin when nobody was looking. It's still under that marble tombstone over the hill."

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WERE GEN. CUSTER'S REMAINS EVER POSITIVELY IDENTIFIED?

by **E. A. Brininstool**

ARE the remains of what were popularly supposed to be those of Gen. George Armstrong Custer, which were taken from the battle-field of the Little Big Horn in June, 1877, a year after the fight with the Sioux, and which were buried at West Point, really those of the illustrious cavalry leader of the Seventh Regiment?

It is a question which probably never was satisfactorily determined. All published reports that ever have been given out state that, after Gen. Gibbon's troops, accompanied by detachments from Reno's command, went over to the Custer battle-field on Tuesday, June 27th, two days after the Custer fight, they "buried the dead." All told, there were two hundred and sixty officers and men killed in Custer's and Reno's commands. The survivors and the relief column had very few picks or shovels, and there had not been any such tools taken by Custer's troopers.

Sergt. M. C. Caddle of Troop I, under the command of Capt. Myles Keogh, was one of the men detailed from this troop to remain at Powder River when the expedition started, in charge of the Seventh Cavalry's property which had been left there. Every other trooper of Keogh's command was killed in the Custer fight.

In June, 1877, Caddle, owing to his acquaintance with the officers and men of his regiment, and especially those of Keogh's troop, was detailed to accompany the burial party, under Col. Michael V. Sheridan, a brother of Gen. Phil. Sheridan. Sergt. Caddle states that when they arrived on the field they found all the skeletons *lying on top of the ground!* It would appear, therefore, that no serious attempt was made to inter the bodies of the dead on June 27, 1876—in fact, the accomplishment of the task would have been well-nigh impossible.

Properly to inter two hundred and sixty bodies in the hard prairie soil with the limited time and means at hand was almost out of the question. The graves—if any were dug—must have been very shallow; and doubtless the rains, together with the wolves or coyotes which undoubtedly were attracted to the spot, had uncovered and exposed to the elements the bodies of the troopers.

Be that as it may, Col. Sheridan and his party remained on the field for ten days, during which time the bones strewn about were placed in coffins. Each body when "buried" the year before had been marked with a stake at its head with a number to correspond with the name in the list which had been prepared immediately after the fight. Among these was one supposed to be that of Gen. Custer. It was placed in a coffin.

Immediately thereafter the remnants of a blouse were found under the remains, and in the pocket was a name, but it was not the name of Gen. Custer. It was a most disconcerting discovery to find that even the remains of Custer could not be satisfactorily identified, but Sergt. Caddle states that "they found another body and placed it in the coffin intended for the remains of Gen. Custer." He further adds—

"I think we got the right body the second time."

Gen. E. S. Godfrey, who is unquestionably the best living authority of the Custer fight, was told by the officer in charge of the collection of the remains, that "in some cases the bones were somewhat removed from the places of burial, but that great care was taken in their collection."

It has been reported that when the officers killed with Custer were "buried," the grave was marked with a stake driven below the surface of the ground. The name of the officer was written on a slip of paper, and this paper was put into an empty cartridge-shell and driven on top of the stake. This probably is true, but it is also probably equally true that these bodies were dragged from their shallow graves in some manner, probably by wild animals, and scattered about promiscuously so that proper identification a year later was impossible.

It is also popularly supposed that the distribution of the headstones about the fenced monument on Custer Hill at the present time, represents the exact spot where certain of the officers fell in the fight, but there is nothing to substantiate this theory.

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Author of "Tameless Days," "Long Rifles," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

WHEN the United States declared war against Great Britain in June, 1812, I was despatched on a keelboat expedition to carry the news to Manuel Lisa—"Mr. Manuel"—founder of the Missouri Fur Company, who was trading with the Indians along the upper Missouri River. Speed was imperative, for if word should come to the hostile Sioux from Canada first, Mr. Manuel would be trapped. For a year past, British agents had been urging the nations of the upper region to join Tecumseh's great confederacy; and with the exception of one or two tribes, they were in an ugly mood.

The same special knowledge of Indian conditions, especially among the Mandan tribe, that had earned me the nickname of "Mandan" Ramsay resulted in my appointment as *bourgeois*, or head, of the expedition sent to warn Mr. Manuel.

Our start was made from St. Louis in June, and by the latter part of September I had got the news to him. Briefly I summarized our long trip—how we had unwittingly shipped two British agents named Le Fou and Balise, who had tried to murder us and then had made off to the hostile Indians, Le Fou carrying with him a package of arsenic. They were now working, I believed, in cooperation with a one-eyed medicine man named Medicine Crow and with Le Borgne (the Blind) a one-eyed chief of Hidatsa, chief village of the Minnetaree tribe.

"The sooner you get to the Minnetarees the better," Mr. Manuel told me. "You will find the British flag flying in their villages. You must demand that it be lowered and the United States flag raised. While you are gone I shall be kicking the Canadian traders out of the Sioux villages."

Next day I started, accompanied by one of our hunters, a giant American named Richardson. On our journey we encountered a hostile Sioux band, and before we could get away we had to kill a Minnetaree who was riding with them.

The Sioux gave chase, and we entered the Mandan village of my friend Shahaka for protection. At this time of year the truce of the corn-trading season was effective in the villages of all tribes hereabout, though warfare was actively waged on the plains outside.

Here I met my enemy Balise. The latter had already raised the British flag and was busy making trouble.

"Being Shahaka's friends," I said, "the Americans will not shed blood and break the law of the village during the corn-trading season. Yet the flag of my people's enemies should not be seen in the village. Balise will go outside with me. He will pull down his flag, or I will beat him like a squaw."

"I have killed men with my bare hands," snarled Balise, "and I will kill you."

I flung out my hands for room in which to fight.

THE Indians promptly fell back and formed a wide circle, their small eyes glittering at the prospect of rare sport. The Sioux now glided up and became spectators. As they squatted on their haunches several slyly opened their medicine-bags toward me to make me an easy victim for the furious Frenchman. I taunted him:

"You are not even fighting for your own flag. You have no flag to fight for."

His rage seemed maniacal as he tore

"*Red Autumn*," *copyright, 1923, by Hugh Pendexter*

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off his velvet coat and shirt. Then his cunning began to return, and he regained control of himself and whispered:

"You shall not secure any advantage by arousing the black beast in me. The beast is there and will feed on your throat, American. But he shall be held back till you are helpless."

I stripped to the buff, and Richardson squatted by my weapons and held his long rifle across his knees. He had taken his position on the right of the Canadian trader. The latter was dressed as an Indian, and his complexion was darker than that of the average Mandan. He eyed Richardson askance, and I knew there would be no foul play from that quarter.

Balise stripped big. His skin was very white where it had been protected by clothing. I was as strongly built as he but not so agile. From what I had observed of him on the up-river trip I decided that I must beat him to the ground with my fists and be most cautious when coming to grips. He grinned wolfishly as I stepped forward, and, with hands on his hips and balancing on the balls of his feet, inquired—

"The conditions?"

"Pull down the flag. There are no other conditions."

He spat in my face, and like a streak had darted in and had stabbed two fingers at my eyes, and was out of reach before I could get my wits to working. Only my height and a backward jerk of the head saved my sight. A spot of fire burned on each side of my nose where his nails had punctured the flesh.

The savages grunted approval at the fellow's agility and cunning. The red man ever loves a winner when he has nothing of his own at stake. The Frenchman had counted the first coup and was unharmed. The Sioux were openly partizan. The Canadian trader laughed derisively.

Balise skipped in and out, seeking another opening for his terrible fingers. I slowly followed him about, carrying the fight to him yet making no efforts to rush to close quarters. I feared his hands.

I backed him around the circle until he was opposite the Sioux, when with bewildering quickness he feinted to dodge by me on my left, and the next second was under my right arm, his left hand jabbing at my eyes again. I jerked my head far to one side before I had time to realize my danger, and the two sharp-nailed fingers dug furrows across my left temple.

He was leaping back the moment he made the stab, but not so quickly that my right fist did not overtake him and land with a smash on his grinning lips. He shot through the air to the ground, landing on his shoulders, and was on his feet with the resilience of timber-cat. His lips were split and the blood was flowing, and yet I knew I had hurt him but little as he was jumping away when the blow overtook him.

The effect on the savages, however, was unmistakable. They saw the trickling blood and conceded that I had counted a coup; and they believed he was more injured than was the fact.

"He can't use his fists! Smash —— out of him!" roared Richardson.

Already I had discovered my foe knew nothing about fisticuffs. He fought like a wolf. He would gouge and maim and blind an adversary, but he had no idea of using his clenched hands as battering-rams.

My confidence was strengthened. Twice he had almost reached my eyes. I would be on my guard against the third attempt.

So I followed him, always ready to meet a rush with a blow. He spat out blood and grimaced hideously. He kept his hands half-raised, the first two fingers rigidly extended, and he moved his hands in short circles much as a Spanish knife-fighter keeps his blade in motion.

There came a new glint in his eyes, and I knew he was about to try another trick. I was instantly on guard against it, and yet when he worked it I was taken entirely by surprize. He had been giving ground very slowly. Suddenly he leaped back several feet and had barely touched the earth before he was coming at me.

I straightened out to catch his chin on my fist—and he was not there. His hands were resting on the ground and his moccasined foot caught me under the chin and set me back with a nerve-jabbing pain running along both sides of my jaw and to the top of my head. Had he been wearing boots he would have smashed the bone.

I regained my balance and started to rush him, but he was erect and laughing and dancing just out of reach. The Indians grunted in admiration.

Richardson howled:

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"For —— sake! Keep your head and hands up, Mandan! Watch his eyes! Just one good smash will settle him! He's about out of tricks."

I wondered. We maneuvered around the ring, Balise giving ground grudgingly, sometimes skipping to one side, sometimes feinting to rush me. I kept my head up and guarded against heels and fingers. He scuffed heavily in passing the line of Sioux, then retreated rapidly and was back before the Sioux within a very short time.

Then he was up to another game. His scuffing had stirred up the sun-baked soil; and, crouching as if to spring, he swept up a double handful of loose dirt and tossed it into my face. He had hardly done this before he was leaping first to one side, then to the other and back again, until my blurred eyes could scarcely keep track of him.

Richardson gave a staccato shout of warning—and the snake was under my right arm and had an arm around my neck. But I caught his right wrist as he started his fingers on a search for my eyes, and I hated him for the brutish endeavor more than if he had stuck a knife into my throat.

Exerting all my strength, I squeezed his imprisoned wrist until his eyes bulged with pain. Then I borrowed his tactics; I dropped his wrist and shoved my fingers into his face.

With a wild yell of fear he wrenched loose from my right arm; but now I had him. And before he could make good his clearance I was on him and driving my right fist against the side of his head. He went down as if hit with an ax.

"Jump on him! Tromple —— out of him!" howled Richardson.

The man was unconscious. I did not even know that he lived. I turned to Big White's circular, clay-covered log lodge and glimpsed the chief's startled visage in the opening. I called out to him:

"Shahaka, my flag has won the fight. Let that flag come down and the flag your Great White Father sent to his Mandan children go up in its place."

The Mandans accepted the exchange of flags as the prize the white men had fought for. They knew that the Sioux had used their medicine to help Balise win. For several seasons I had had the good will of the Mandans. Now that their hereditary enemies were disgruntled they were highly pleased with me. Several crossed the ring and patted my shoulders and curiously examined my bleeding knuckles.

Richardson leaped to his feet. The Canadian trader also jumped up. Richardson wheeled on him joyously, but the fellow wanted none of our brand of fighting; and he plunged into the crowd and effaced himself.

Big White came out with the American flag. Richardson gave up pursuit of the Canadian to pull down the hostile colors. When Balise opened his eyes and crawled to his feet and turned a swollen face toward the lodge he beheld the Stars and Stripes.

"How do you like the pattern of that flag?" I asked him.

He pretended not to see me nor hear me. Without a word he gathered up his shabby velvet coat and rag of a shirt and passed from sight among the lodges.

I returned to Big White's lodge, where his squaw had a kettle of hot water waiting for me. She bathed my puffed face and rubbed on some kind of salve. She accepted me as a warrior who had fought conclusively, yet in a peculiar manner. She could not respect a prowess that smacked of a squaw's style of giving battle, and yet I was a victor. I believe she was divided between admiration and contempt.

However, she was glad I had won, for she was partial to Americans because of having accompanied her husband to the States. After I had finished repairs and had dressed, Richardson lounged in and reported:

"The Frenchman and four traders have moved on to the Minnetaree village. They've lost their grip here. The squaws hooted them."

I had seen but one trader. Richardson explained that the others were hiding in the village to await the outcome of the fight.

"They've all skipped out," he added. "'Low the Sioux will soon go there to make their corn trade. They think something is wrong with their medicine. They're thinking it's our flag. They'll go where the British flag's flying. You done well, Mandan; but you're slower'n —— on your big feet."

"We must follow them to the Minnetarees," I said. "They must be kept moving."

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"We'll find it harder next time," he muttered. "And, by ——! I'm going to git into the next fuss or know the reason why. You can't have all the fun, Mandan Ramsay."

I wandered from the lodge to where the Sioux had pitched camp. To my surprize I discovered nothing to suggest an early departure. They greeted me respectfully and like the Mandans examined my raw knuckles. Apparently the hunter was mistaken about their going to the Minnetarees to trade. I asked the leader why he was not following the Frenchman.

I did not believe he would answer me, for his pause was very long. At last he said—

"He was whipped like a squaw."

My heart was light; for I believed that the brutal brawl had alienated a score and a half of Indians from the British influence; and at that Indians who a few hours before had hungered for my American scalp. Direct results are what weigh with the red man. I had won my fight; *ergo*, my flag was a stronger medicine than the one it had supplanted.

CHAPTER VII

WE MEET THE HALF-BLIND

SHAHAKA advised us to wait and avoid the appearance of haste in going to the Minnetaree villages. Now that the Sioux were less hostile to us because of Balise's defeat I agreed to remain in the Mandan village until the next day. The chief urged:

"Stay here longer. Birds are carrying word to the Minnetarees that my white brother struck the white man down. The Minnetarees like a man who counts coup."

The Indians of one village were always jealous if another village, even of the same tribe, were visited by a trader. Shahaka would not like it if I took my packs of goods to the Mandan village across the river. The first Minnetaree village I entered would endeavor to keep me from visiting either of the two remaining Minnetaree villages. In short, Shahaka wanted me to stay in Metutahanke until I had finished my trading. I repeated my decision to depart on the morrow.

"Then let my brother go to Amahami, the Mandan village near the mouth of the Knife."

This was a small village, mustering not more than fifty warriors.

"The enemy's flag will be flying in Hidatsa, the biggest village. We must go there," I replied.

The chief was disappointed, yet he was a friend; and after a short silence he warned me:

"Le Borgne, the Blind, is in Hidatsa. He is a very bad medicine for men he does not like."

"He likes the English traders," I conceded. "But there are many Minnetarees who do not like Le Borgne. They will be my friends."

Now his eyes sparkled as he entertained some pleasing thought. With trade jealousies out of his mind he could be a wise counselor.

"Let my brother, the White Mandan, first go to Amatiha, the middle village, and make a present to Red Shield, the war-chief, and tell him the present comes from the Great White Father."

"Red Shield does not think as Le Borgne thinks?"

This was to draw him out, as we Americans well knew the rivalry between the two.

"Let the Shield have a gift from the Great White Father. Give nothing to Le Borgne. It is good that the children of the Great White Father should receive gifts."

And his eyes wandered toward his own lodge.

I took my cue and casually remarked—

"Now that I see my flag over Shahaka's lodge I can take time to get his gift sent by his White Father."

This pleased him immensely and I lost no time in opening my packs and presenting him with a pound of balls and fifty loads of powder, some vermilion, a hunting-knife, a mirror and some silver bracelets; not forgetting some blue and red cloths for his squaw and some trinkets for his children.

There was no need for him to advise no gifts for Le Borgne. On their outward trip Lewis and Clark had presented a swivel gun to the one-eyed rascal, and he had boasted to the Hudson's Bay Company's traders that the Americans were afraid of him.

However, I did not believe it wise to enter the middle village. The people would resent a hurried visit. My plan was to make direct for Hidatsa, as it was there that the crucial fight must be made. The Minnetarees could count nearly six hundred warriors, and the most of these lived on the

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north side of the Knife. The other two villages, so far as fighting-men were to be counted, did not loom very important. They were friendly to the United States, but stood in fear of the big village. So I told Shahaka:

"If Shahaka will send a man with my white hunter to Red Shield's village my hunter will give the Great White Father's present to Red Shield and will ask him to ride out in the morning and meet me and travel with me to the north village. My hunter can start at once. I shall start with the sun. I must see what flag Le Borgne is flying."

"Death is sitting under the flag he flies. He is a very bad man," muttered Shahaka. "One of my warriors will ride with the warrior."

I found Richardson exchanging hunting stories with the Sioux and seemingly on most friendly terms with them. Taking him to Shahaka's lodge, we made up a present to Red Shield that included a United States flag.

Richardson was keen for action and swore he would see the flag flying over Red Shield's lodge before the sun went down. His eagerness for the trip and the battle light in his eyes told me he was hoping to find Balise or some of the traders there. I did not discourage this hope, although I was confident that the Frenchman and the traders had made a bee-line for Le Borgne's village. Securing the gift-bundle behind his saddle and accompanied by a Mandan man, Richardson started on his four-mile ride, very optimistic over the prospects for a bloody fight.

I strolled down to the Sioux camp and endeavored to learn something about Medicine Crow. While they were respectful they would not talk. Despite their impassive bearing I could see that my queries caused them uneasiness. At last I said:

"You warriors are very brave men. You come from a very brave nation. But you look afraid when I speak of the mystery man."

Then one of them replied:

"He is very *wakan*. He has a very strong medicine. He talks with ghosts. In his sleep he goes to the Land of Many Lodges and gets new medicine from dead men. He can not be killed. He knows what men say about him, even when a man is many sleeps away. He knows what men are thinking. He can kill a man without seeing him."

"He can not kill me," I retorted. "If he knows what I am thinking he must know that I believe his medicine is growing very weak, like a sick man. Let him kill me!"

This defiance frightened them. They drew their robes over their heads as if fearing to witness a tragedy caused by some supernormal agency. They were anxious for me to be gone before my fate engulfed them.

As I walked back to Shahaka's lodge I pondered over the statement—

"He can kill a man without seeing him."

If the Sioux believed that, then Medicine Crow must have given proof of his terrible power, and the only way he could bring about death at a distance was to have a confederate within reach of the victim. And Le Fou had smuggled arsenic up the river. When I retired that night I was firmly determined to be careful of what I ate.

The early morning was glorious, clear and cold and with a touch of white frost. There was a taste of Autumn in the air, although an hour after sunrise it was mellow and warm. Carrying a flag and with the led horse following, I set forth with Shahaka riding beside me. He announced that he would go with me until we sighted the middle village.

A silent company witnessed our departure, and among them were the Sioux. Among the latter there were several who held the right hand flat and with the palm downward before the body and then threw it over in a fifteen-inch curve to the right. By those who had never left the settlements this gesture would have been accepted as an adieu. But among the Dakota, the Hidatsa and the Arikara it was the sign-language for "Death." Shahaka pretended not to observe it, but I noticed that his pleasant face grew worried before we had quit the village.

Outside Metutahanke and extending along the rough road to the Knife stretched fields of corn, the different patches fenced in by growths of small willows. This and all other crops grown by the Mandans and Minnetarees were tended and harvested by the women.

When there was no truce with the Sioux armed guards were stationed around the fields. Now that it was the trading-season and peace was declared the guards were absent; but despite the early hour our way was lined with activity.

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Young girls, wearing around their necks the rodent teeth of the beaver to make them industrious, helped the women gather the corn and convey it to the village. Boys ran wild and gave but little assistance, for they were training to be men and warriors, and their games mirrored the victories of the hunt and ambush. Some were discharging tiny arrows from behind piles of corn and with shrill war-whoops were waylaying the girls.

Older youths were breaking colts and interfering with the work by dashing madly through the fields. These had remembered to tie a deer or antelope horn to the neck of their frisky mounts to make them swift in the chase and in flight. A good buffalo-horse must be able to outrun a grown buffalo in the Fall.

The Arikaras were among the first growers of corn and taught husbandry to the Mandans, who in turn taught it to the Minnetarees. I know some old river men will hold that the Mandans were farmers before the Arikaras, but the latter have a much more complicated ceremony connected with the planting than have the Mandans, while their rites to insure an abundant harvest are more intricate than any practised by the Knife River villages. In all Arikara lodges I ever visited I saw an ear of corn showing through the mouth of a medicine-bag which the Arikara address as "Mother."

The Minnetarees frankly admit they got their first corn from the Mandans, and have no ceremonies attending the planting and harvesting. Yet all these three tribes raised corn long before the first whites visited them, and for aught I know their ancestors were raising it when Joseph's brothers went down into Egypt in famine times.

Besides the corn considerable pumpkin, squash and beans were raised, including crops from seeds introduced among them by Mr. Manuel. The harvesting of sunflower-seeds was another important piece of farming, for out of these seeds cakes are made which have a great food value.

WHEN we came in sight of the middle village Shahaka wheeled his horse about and without a word took the back trail. I saw Richardson and a tall Indian coming to meet me. I think Shahaka feared to meet Red Shield lest it be told against him in Hidatsa by those who were enemies to the Shield.

The hunter waved his hand in greeting, and Red Shield waved the new flag I had sent him. The chief was freshly painted and wore a huge necklace of shells, traded to the Knife through various tribes all the way from the Pacific coast. For an amulet he wore the head of a wolf on his head, the lower jaw having been removed so it could set down on the thick hair like a cap.

He was a well-built man and, like all Minnetarees, took great pride in his long braids of hair, which at regular intervals were banded with white and red earth. The wolf's head in some way was symbolic of his personal medicine; the scars on his shoulders told of his passing through the ordeal of the Dahpike.

Besides his knife he carried his bow and arrows and a stout war-club. I looked on him with great interest as he represented the growing opposition to Le Borgne's tyrannical rule.

We halted, facing each other. I lighted my pipe and passed it to him, and after the ceremonial puffs I said—

"The strong leader of the Minnetaree has looked on the gift from the Great White Father."

He lifted the flag high above his head and answered:

"The gift is good. I carry this flag to make my enemies afraid. My brother has no gifts for the Blind?"

I shook my head, and he grunted—

"That is good."

"I will trade with him for horses," I said. "I must send horses down the river to my chief. Some bad Minnetarees stole his horses."

"The Mandans stole three," he quietly informed me.

I did not believe it, but later I learned that he had spoken the truth and that the animals had been in the lower Mandan village even while I was the guest of Shahaka.

"Do not trade goods with the Blind for horses," the Shield went on. "He will tell the village the Great White Father is afraid of him and sent the goods as gifts. When we come back to my village there will be horses for your chief. We have been giving one horse for straight lodge-poles for our skin lodges, but we have some horses left."

And he held up twelve fingers to show the number of spruce poles, cut in the Black Hills in the land of the hostile Teton Sioux that a good buffalo-horse would bring.

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With Red Shield leading the way we started to find a crossing, the two flags making a brave showing. Richardson called out from the rear—

"If that one-eyed cuss can be given his needings we'll have the three villages showing our colors and kicking the Canadian traders out."

"Le Borgne will be a hard man to outwit," I warned. "We can not scare him."

"Either the Shield kills him or gits killed before this is finished,"* prophesied the hunter.

We soon traversed the neck of land where the Knife bows, and splashed and swam through a ford and gained the road along the north bank below the most important of the Minnetaree towns. Even at a distance we could see that the rounded roofs of the big lodges were covered with people, and I did not believe that they had had time thus to assemble to watch our approach. Red Shield halted his horse and stared for a few moments, then announced:

"Some one speaks evil words in Hidatsa. The Minnetarees are listening to him. He must be a very strong man. They say a new medicine-man has come to work new magic in the village."

"His magic will burn him and make him blind if he makes medicine against this flag."

I spoke this with a great show of confidence, yet felt uneasy at the thought that Medicine Crow was ahead of us.

That some orator or spectacle was engrossing the villagers' attention was quickly proven. We got within arrow-flight of the nearest lodges before the people discovered our approach.

Two horsemen came sweeping out, and we halted and waited. The Indians separated to pass on both sides, then to wheel and dart alongside of Red Shield. The chief affected not to see them. The man on his right said:

"You come with the white man and his medicine flag. You carry a medicine flag."

"It is very strong medicine. It is *itakatetas*," grunted Red Shield.

"There is a new medicine-man who is *itakatetas*,"† spoke up the second warrior.

"They say the mystery man's medicine has put out one of his eyes and soon will put out the other," was Red Shield's scornful reply. "A mystery man and a war-chief who have only two eyes between them!"

Our escort did not relish such talk, and the man on the Shield's right replied:

"With his one eye he sees like a war-eagle. A medicine crow sits on his shoulder. The crow was given him by Mahopamiis.†† It flies with ghosts at night and learns new medicine to bring back to its master. They say he can hear men when they talk about him."

"How many white men are in the village?" I asked.

Without turning his head the Indian held up his fingers until he had counted six. I knew that Balise and the four traders must be there, and I believed I could account for the sixth man.

"Is one painted like an Indian, and did he come with Medicine Crow?"

The Indian held his hands out from his sides so I might see the index fingers were curved, and he huskily muttered—

"Bent legs."

"I'll bend his —— neck!" growled Richardson in English.

The second Minnetaree informed us:

"Mahopa has touched his head. They say Medicine Crow can send him among the dead to hear talk and bring it back to him."

So we were all to be brought together again in the village—Balise, Le Fou, Richardson, and I, not counting the traders and the one-eyed man with the tame crow. Further inquiry revealed that the witless one and Medicine Crow had arrived in Hidatsa the day before we made the Mandan village. Richardson pressed alongside of me and nudged my arm and asked—

"Has any warrior gone to the Village of the Dead since they came?"

"Elk's Tooth died this morning. He called the Americans his brothers. His body should be covered."

By this speech I knew the two men were of Red Shield's party, and I promised:

"It shall be covered. Was he killed while hunting?"

"He heard a ghost," muttered one of the men. "He was not hurt hunting or fighting. The ghost whispered to him that his lodge in the Village of the Dead was ready. Before he died he laughed. He could be heard in many lodges."

I was sorry to learn that Elk's Tooth had been murdered. He brought Mr. Manuel a

*Red Shield is supposed to have killed Le Borgne. P. 73, "Luttig's Journal," ed. by Stella M. Drumm. Also p. 162, "Bradbury's Travels," ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites.

†Anything that is mysterious. In Sioux, *wakon*.

††Fabulous old woman who works evil.

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good trade the season we built Fort Lisa on the Missouri, some twelve miles from Hidatsa. I warned Red Shield:

"Let him who calls the Americans brothers be very careful what and where he eats. They say there is a new medicine that kills, but that it is harmless unless some is put in a soup or on the meat."

This warning had a strong effect on the three men ahead, and for a moment each was jolted out of his show of composure. I knew that they would treasure my words and interpret them correctly. Poison as a weapon was practically unused by the red men, except as some bands of the Chippewas were supposed to have employed it until Flat-Mouth, chief of the Pillager band, stopped the horrible business.

Blackbird, who was buried on his horse far down the river, had gained supremacy over his people, the Omahas, by killing with arsenic all those who stood in his path. But his was the act of an individual, a white man having supplied the poison in return for trade advantages.*

I could not deal directly with my red friends as I would with white men, but must reach their minds in a roundabout way and by inference. Let them absorb the belief that a man was murdered by poison and not by sorcery, and the fear of the supernormal would be washed from their minds.

The Minnetaree sorcerer who injured at a distance, used an effigy of his victim, or a lock of his hair. Having seen to it that his victim was informed of the enchantments being made against him the poor creature's imagination did the rest, inducing illness and sometimes death.

Richardson gritted his teeth and whispered to me—

"If them cusses go to murdering all the men friendly to us, mighty soon we won't have a friend up here."

"We must kill Le Fou and get hold the arsenic," I murmured.

WE NOW were at the village. The lodges were arranged in a hit-or-miss fashion, the entrances facing in every direction. Some of the structures were so close together as to permit of only a foot-wide path between them. Others were far enough apart to afford room for horsemen. Wherever there was plenty of elbow room it resulted from accident rather than design.

The people on the roofs began to descend, and Red Shield called back to me—

"The mystery man has closed his bag of talk."

He spoke to his companions, and one of them answered:

"The lodge next to Elk's Tooth's lodge. It is mine."

We dismounted, and the two Minnetarees who had come to meet us appeared to be in a hurry to get us under cover before the roofs were cleared and the narrow lanes were congested with the curious and the hostile. As we passed by an entrance the rawhide door would be opened so that the inmates might stare at us sharply.

We proceeded only a short distance into the village before our escort halted before a lodge and motioned for us to enter. Red Shield told me to take the packs inside, and added—

"Your friends will see that your horses are not stolen."

"That —— Le Borgne will add these nags to them he stole from Mr. Manuel," growled Richardson.

I did not believe this. While the Minnetarees would not mind if Le Borgne robbed any white man of horses, such a theft being considered a civic accomplishment, it was a far different matter when the white man voluntarily entered the village. As for any property placed in a lodge, there was not the slightest danger that a penny's worth would be stolen.

It was considered entirely proper, however, for impish boys to steal from our pockets when we were in the open. I could bring a string of horses into the village any time and find them waiting for me when I got ready to depart; but I would not be surprized if an attempt to steal them all was made at my first camp away from the village. This was no immorality from the red point of view, but legitimate business.

Red Shield, Richardson the hunter and I entered the lodge and deposited the packs before the medicine log. This held a buffalo skull painted, a scalp, several weapons supposed to be *itakatetas*, and a small bunch of feathers.

We laid aside our rifles and repaired to the covered porch extending some ten feet from the door, after the Arikara scheme of architecture. We were at once surrounded

*This trader was poisoned with some of the arsenic he had taken to Blackbird.

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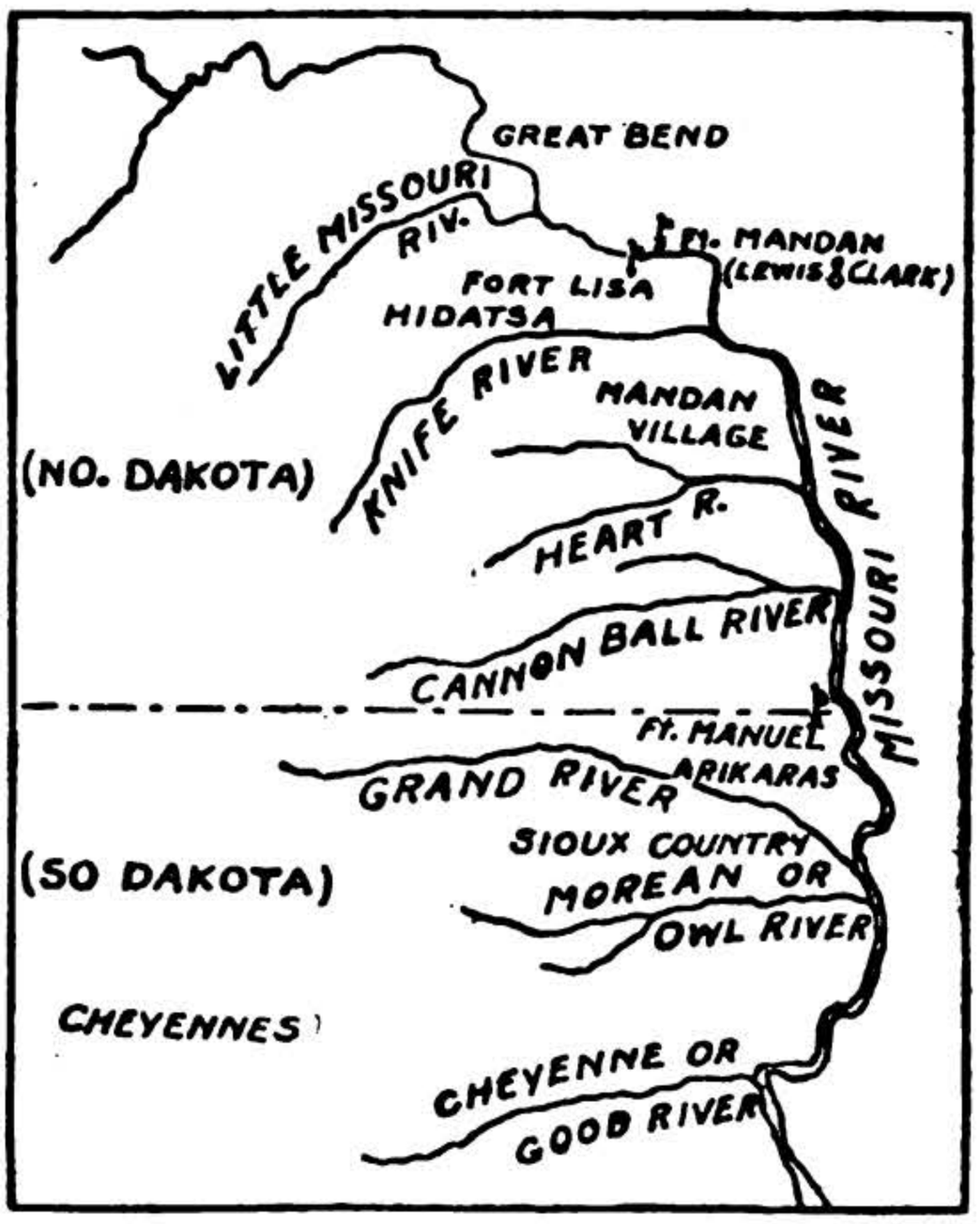
by a dozen impertinent youths, who would have made game of us and stolen anything they could put their hands to if it had not been for the presence of Red Shield.

The absence of warriors and women told us that there was a rival attraction in the village. From a distance came the sound of a man's voice raised in a loud harangue. I could not make out what he was saying, and he spoke but briefly. Red Shield told me:

"It is the Blind. He tells the people the mystery man will make another talk tonight. They are coming this way."



And he stepped to the edge of the porch and drew himself up and folded his arms, his right hand hanging close to the hatchet worn on his left hip. The clumping of horses at a slow walk and the scurrying of the people between the lodges to reach points where the procession could be viewed, substantiated the Shield's words. I darted back inside the lodge and brought out the American flag. Richardson shifted the rifles closer to the door.

Then around a lodge came Le Borgne and Medicine Crow, each blind in the right eye. Le Borgne wore a white patch over his dead optic, but the Crow had no covering.

Le Borgne was a very large man, ferocious of countenance and a brute at heart. Until within a very few years he had been absolute monarch of the three villages, or until Red Shield and several subordinate chiefs had joined factions and pressed him hard. The day was gone when Le Borgne would dare to enter a lodge and brain a warrior with his huge war-club and appropriate the widow; yet he remained the most feared individual on the upper Missouri.

That he was astute far beyond the average of his people was proven by his being alive this mellow day in late September. Whereas he had previously depended on brute strength to gain his ends he now resorted to cunning; and had his subordinates not made their partiality for Americans the issue he might have lived out his years with none successfully to dispute him.

It was logical enough that he had elected to champion the cause of the Canadian traders, which now meant Great Britain. Until Mr. Manuel got a foot-hold on the upper river there were none of my countrymen to set up a serious opposition to the men from the Red River country.

Lewis and Clark had visited the village and had gone away. But year in and out men from the Hudson's Bay Company and from the North West Company were bringing in their packs and carrying away beaver and other fine furs. They would have stripped the country of robes as well, only the problem of transportation was too great.

Over his massive shoulders Le Borgne wore a robe of Cheyenne make elaborately decorated with porcupine quills and feathers. The Minnetaree robes were embellished only by black, blue and red paint. His horse had a Spanish bridle, heavy with silver ornaments, originally traded for, or stolen, in Mexico. His only weapon was his big war-club, from the handle of which hung several scalps.

Beside Le Borgne when the narrow passageway widened out enough to accommodate the two horses, rode Medicine Crow. His undecorated robe was gathered about his loins. A large copper half-disk hung from his neck. On his head he wore a turban, crowned with the tail feathers of a war-eagle and ribboned with the small feathers of the owl.

But if he lacked in ornaments the tame crow, perched on his shoulder and incessantly tilting his head to fix a beady eye on the spectators, was sufficient to hold every onlooker's attention. For this bird consorted with the ghosts of the dead and in itself was very *itakatetas*.

Behind the two leaders came a double

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line of warriors on foot. They were armed with clubs, axes, guns, spears and bows and arrows. The two horsemen discovered us at the same moment, and there was something very disagreeable in the way their sound optics turned to sweep us with a hostile stare.

Le Borgne reined in, and, leaning forward, glared at me and the flag I was displaying. Next he darted a savage glance at the imperturbable Red Shield.

"What do you strange white men want?" he demanded.

"We come from Manuel Lisa to trade for horses," I replied. "You have seen us and talked with us before."

"We have no horses for the white men who come up the river."

"Red Shield will sell them horses," spoke up my red companion, his small eyes expanding with hate as he met the gaze of Le Borgne. Le Borgne replied—

"That is a trade to be made at the middle village."

"I come to cover the body of your dead friend, Elk's Tooth," I added.

"His body should be covered," said Le Borgne, his gaze flickering sidewise to rest on Medicine Crow. "He was a very brave man. It will take many gifts to cover him."

"The Great White Father has many gifts to give. He does not forget his red children in life or death. Elk's Tooth shall be well covered. He was a friend of the Americans."*

Le Borgne would have passed on, but Medicine Crow detained him by loudly crying—

"There is a Great White Chief across the big water who gives with both hands where the Americans give with one."

The crow flew from his shoulder to perch on a lodge. The mystery man stared at it earnestly as if presaging something from its flight. Then he continued:

"The blankets of the Americans do not keep out the cold. Their guns fall to pieces. If the Minnetarees look for warm blankets and good guns let them look to the north. The Americans cover the dead with a handful of beads and with cloth that soon rots."

There was no gainsaying the magnetic quality of the fellow's voice. The vibrant tones were those of the born orator, and I knew that in a set address he would be most persuasive. However, I did not propose affording him an opportunity for airing his eloquence. Speaking to Le Borgne, I said:

"I hear the voice of a stranger. He does not belong in Hidatsa or in any other village of the Minnetarees. I have no talk for this man. When the Minnetarees adopt him as a son my ears will open to him. But he comes from nowhere. He met me down the river and spoke with the tongue of a Sioux. Evil ghosts whisper to him and he tells their talk to you.

"Today Elk's Tooth will be covered. Some words are like foolish birds that do not know where to light but hop and fly around and make a noise. Today the Minnetarees will see how the Great White Father remembers the man who was a friend to the Americans.

"They say the white man across the water has forgotten to fill his hands with gifts for the dead warrior. They say he gives presents only to a war-chief and does not see the warriors and their women. The Great White Father down the river covers all, even little children."

Medicine Crow threw up his head, and I believed that he was about to burst into an eloquent harangue. The tame crow fluttered back to his shoulder. He changed his mind about speaking, perhaps concluding that even an orator can talk too much.

He spoke in an undertone to Le Borgne. The chief bent down and gave an order to a young warrior. The latter worked his way through the throng and disappeared among the lodges.

"What's the cuss up to now?" muttered Richardson from the corner of his mouth, and he stepped back so he could reach inside the door and seize a rifle.

Red Shield never shifted his boring gaze from Le Borgne. The crooked lane and the openings between the lodges became very quiet.

Then I saw the colors of Great Britain approaching, bobbing and flapping above the heads of the people as the young warrior worked his way back to join his chief. He handed the flag up to Le Borgne, who raised it high above his head as an answer to the Stars and Stripes.

The harsh voice of Red Shield broke the tension by loudly proclaiming—

"They say the Mandans and the two lower villages of the Minnetarees do not like that flag."*

* *Maetsiictia:* lit., Big Knives: inhabitants of U. S. Probably translated from the language of some tribe farther east. Matthews' "Philology of Hidatsa Indians."

* *Madakapihi*, fr. *dakapihi:* to float in air or water; to flap.

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"They are like foolish men who believe evil tongues," sharply retorted Medicine Crow.

"They say the Blind listens to a strange man who has no tribe and who comes to make us trouble," continued Red Shield. "They say the Blind is no longer a Minnetaree but has turned into a Sac or some other upper-Mississippi man."

I expected Le Borgne to leap from his horse and strike the speaker down with his club. I believe Red Shield was hoping he would attempt violence. I saw his right hand rest on the head of his hatchet; I saw the muscles quiver and tighten as he braced himself to meet the attack.

A few years before, and this affront to Le Borgne would have meant death for one of the two. Now there were many Minnetaree warriors who would have rallied behind the Shield did the opposing factions come to blows.

Nor did Medicine Crow wish for an open clash. He spoke rapidly to Le Borgne. The latter straightened and allowed his right hand holding the big club to hang limp at his side. Looking ahead, he cried out—

"They say the Big Father of the Americans will soon be covering the body of Red Shield."

With that threat, and without pausing for an answer, he kicked his horse, and a bloody climax was avoided, and the procession was once more in motion.

THE fighting men glided by, each dressed in his best war-toggery. Half a minute after the rearmost men had passed from view the four traders who had fled from the Mandan village came along. They had been drinking, and were laughing and talking loudly. They swaggered nearly abreast of us before seeming to discover us and the flag. They came to a halt, and the man who had urged Balise to conquer me gave a howl and yelled:

"Here's work for us! That —— rag mustn't be seen here!"

And, emboldened by rum or the presence of his comrades, he advanced a few steps toward the porch. Before I could speak or take the offensive Richardson glided by me, padding as softly as a wolf. The trader attempted to retreat among his friends; but the hunter's long arm shot forward and the big hand closed about the bronzed throat. Then came a terrific *smack!* as the huge fist caught the fellow beside the head, knocking him insensible. The man dropped in his tracks like a dead man. Then the hunter commanded:

"You skunks lug that poor fool away. If he lives, tell him not to look at us again or I'll knock his head from his shoulders."

The three of them gathered up the limp form, not pausing to learn whether he lived or was dead, and disappeared between the opposite lodges. The spectators grunted in amazement and softly clapped their hands to their lips and eyed the hunter with much respect.

Red Shield trembled with the battle lust. His aquiline nose dented at the nostrils as he drew a deep breath and struggled to maintain his appearance of indifference. He remained with arms folded, staring at the tops of the lodges; but had one of the traders paused to give us further argument there would have been no restraining the Shield, and the crisis would have been precipitated.

When Red Shield spoke it was to say—

"The White War-Club is *mahopa*."*

Richardson knew he had received a red name which would stick to him so long as he was remembered among the Minnetaree. He had made a most favorable impression on the spectators, who ever admired boldness and courage.

I was for withdrawing before anything could happen to minimize the effect; but the sound of a shrill voice singing in French help us spell-bound. The singer was following the route taken by Le Borgne and the mystery man; and as he drew nearer we recognized the old boating song:

"Le fils du roi s'en va chassant—
Ye, ye ment!
Avec son grand fusil d'argent,
Tous du long de la rivière;
Légèrement, ma bergère,
Légèrement, ye ment!"

The childish sentiment of the prince and the silver gun and the shepherdess was tragically out of place in our savage environment. A war-whoop would not have jangled my nerves more severely.

The identity of the singer quickened the drama of the situation. He bounded into sight from between two lodges and held the rapt attention of all the onlookers. A more grotesque figure I never saw. He was painted after a whim of his own, one calculated to appeal to the red fancy. In the middle of his forehead was a huge eye, the pupil being blood-red.

*Having mysterious power. Strong medicine.

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He tore off his robe and swung it about his head and danced from side to side of the lane in most outlandish fashion. His scrawny chest was covered with eyes, painted in red, black and blue; and there was no denying that Le Fou possessed a certain weird technique in drawing. Perhaps the fantastic pattern was suggested by the half-sight of Le Borgne and Medicine Crow. It was even possible to believe that the witless one had perpetrated a burlesque on their facial defects.

Le Fou took much time in approaching us because of his weaving back and forth from lodge to lodge. The effect on Red Shield was pronounced. He could outstare Le Borgne and defy Medicine Crow, but this uncanny figure shook his red nerves. He was inside the lodge in hiding before I missed him from my side. The spectators fell back into doorways or retreated between lodges and kept their hands to their lips as the half-demented creature advanced.

And Le Fou knew his power and was rejoicing in it. He had sense enough to realize that he was immune from all danger regardless of anything he should do. He was reveling in his power. Whereas he had cringed and crawled and had been the butt of many a rude bit of horse-play among the river-men he was now beholding fear in every countenance.

He leered cunningly at the different doorways and would pretend to pass one, only to wheel about and thrust his grinning face close to that of some thoroughly frightened veteran of many battles. Each time he did this the warrior would vanish from the opening with a suddenness that suggested a tumbling over backward. The very dogs—a nuisance in all the Minnetaree villages—appeared to be afraid of him and slunk from his path. With crazy dancing steps, in the performance of which his bandy legs cut up strange antics, he came on, swinging his robe around his head and cackling shrilly.

The flag caught his gaze when he was two lodges away, and he halted and stared at it sharply for a moment. He ceased his leering and sardonic grinning, and, screaming with rage and trailing his robe, ran to within a dozen feet of us. Then he halted again and fumbled uncertainly at his receding chin.

"*M'sieur* the *bourgeois!*" he muttered.

"I'll crack his witless head!" boomed Richardson.

Le Fou gave back a few steps, his lips twisting in a snarl. I caught the hunter by the shoulder and whispered for him to restrain himself.

"The fellow is sacred in the Minnetarees' eyes," I warned. "Even Red Shield would desert us if we laid a hand on him."

"You said he must be wiped out!" hoarsely muttered the hunter.

"But not now, with all these Indians looking on. Do him any violence, and this village goes over to the British."

With a groan Richardson promised:

"I'll keep my hands off'n him. But, Lord! When I think of poor James and other things, it's mighty hard work!"

Le Fou was cunning enough to know I had restrained the hunter from doing him mischief. His instinct of self-preservation was acute enough for that. From an abject coward when threatened with harm he had become a terrible bully once he believed people were afraid of him. His sojourn among the Indians had convinced him that he could do anything he pleased.

He was watching us closely, remembering that on the boat he had been made to carry and fetch. He knew we were no longer his masters. His thin face suddenly became convulsed with rage, and he shrilly called.

"*M'sieur* the *bourgeois* and the big pig! Bah! I despise you. I am *mahopa* now."

He had caught the meaning of the word and had learned that it was his shield and buckler against all red men.

"I can do anything I want," he went on.

He paused for us to grasp this assertion; then as an object lesson he darted through a doorway and quickly emerged, holding a big warrior by the ear. The man wore a wooden knife, painted red, thrust through his hair to show that he had killed a Cheyenne chief. Now there was the fear of something worse than death in his face. Le Fou swung his free hand and slapped the warrior in the face twice, then released him and turned triumphantly.

"You try that on me, my lad, and I'll bash your skull," warned Richardson.

Le Fou attempted to scowl, but his weak eyes fell before the ferocious stare of the hunter.

"A better white man than you, big pig, keeps out of my way," he boasted.

"That's because he's afraid you'll poison him," I explained. "I've arranged to have your throat cut if either Richardson or I happen to eat any poisoned meat."

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He grimaced and hugged his thin arms across his chest, partly in fear of my threat and partly, I believe, in secret exultation over his deadly power.

"A red man will kill both of you," he said. "I am *mahopa*. No one will touch me. When you die they will say it was another man's medicine."

"Where is Balise?" I shot at him.

He bent double in silent laughter. Big tears streamed down his thin face. Finally he managed to gasp:

"He is busy, *m'sieur*, keeping out of my way. Ho! Ho! To think of the bold man from Balise, my master so long, being afraid of poor Le Fou! He grows very thin. For each time he has called me pig he must call me master. Ho! Ho! Is it not exquisite, *m'sieur* the *bourgeois?*"

"You stole the dead Indian's pipe from the burial lodge to make the Sioux believe we took it," I accused him.

"Balise told me to do it. He said the Indians would stop the boat from going up the river," he explained with a touch of his old servile manner.

Then with a burlesque of fierceness:

"Now no one tells me what I shall do. I shall always live here."

"You killed James and pushed another hunter into the river," I continued.

He chuckled gleefully and told me—

"And it was poor Le Fou who shot at *m'sieur* the *bourgeois* with an arrow and killed Le Clair, the boatman, at St. Charles."

"Where and when did you get the arsenic?" I demanded.

His gaze grew very crafty, and he answered:

"There is a man from Balise who wanted to know that. Now he does not ask me any more questions. I shall be greater than any red man after you Americans are driven down the river."

"The British will come in if we leave. You will find them hard masters."

"If they come they shall go back, or go to sleep on the platforms," he retorted, referring to the scaffolds of the dead dotting the plain around the village.

"But your arsenic will give out. There will come a time when you can't poison a man's meat and soup."

I knew I had hit close to the truth and that he was nearly out of the poison. I hastened to add:

"You wasted too much when you spoiled the meat in the Sleeper's camp. You must have used it foolishly, for the dogs died very quickly. After all, you're only Le Fou."

He fought against the fear that was so plainly showing in his eyes and face.

"I am *mahopa*," he at last protested. "I shall never lose my power. You two men go away. Le Fou has learned not to waste. He is very wise now. You two men go away now!"

And much like an angry child he flapped his robe at us as if expecting to shoo us from the village. The hidden watchers may have expected us to drop dead on the porch. Richardson took his cue from me, and we laughed at him. Then I sternly told him:

"Enough of that, Le Fou. Keep out of my path. Let me find no spoiled meat, or I'll have Richardson show the Indians just what you are."

He had sense enough to realize that he was gaining no great credit by the talk, and with a shrill string of lower-river abuse he resumed his dancing and singing and robe-waving and passed from our view. Not until he had gone did heads again show at the doorways. The Indians stared at us curiously, perhaps surprized to find us alive. Richardson and I entered the lodge and found Red Shield seated before the medicine log.

"We have scared the man away," I told the chief.

He stared at me uneasily and muttered:

"He is *mahopa*. It is bad medicine to stand before him with all his eyes looking at you."

"Among white men he is a slave," I answered. "We laugh at him."

But it was useless for me or any other white man to attempt to change the red point of view concerning a witless person. I began to fear that Le Fou would be a greater obstacle than Le Borgne and Medicine Crow combined. Richardson spoke my thoughts when he whispered:

"That cuss must drop out of sight mighty soon and very quiet-like. Let's look at the village and do some thinking. If we can git him alone for one minute——"

"The Minnetarees will turn against us if they believe we killed him," I reminded him, speaking rapidly and in English so that Red Shield would not understand.

I then asked the chief to walk through the village with us, but he shook his head and

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crouched lower before the medicine log. So the hunter and I set forth without him.

WE TOOK a direction opposite to that followed by the procession and Le Fou. We stopped before a lodge and boldly entered. A middle-aged warrior was seated on a mat, eating meat and dried berries. He motioned for us to be seated, and his squaw brought two bowls and more of the meat.

As the meat happened to be quite fresh instead of in the spoiled state that many of the Minnetarees seem to prefer, and knowing it could not have been poisoned, we were glad to accept the invitation. After we had eaten and smoked, I inquired the reason of the chief's exit from the village with so many fighting men.

Our host was not hostile to us, yet he was loath to answer. After a bit of silence he countered with the query:

"There is a brave warrior, Red Shield. Where is he?"

"We left him in the lodge where we are to sleep. He is our friend. He came here with us."

He pondered over this for a minute, then informed us:

"They say many Sioux are coming from the lower Mandan village. They say the Blind and the man with the medicine crow go to meet them. They say the Sioux will help the Blind drive all Americans down the river."

"They say a lie," I told him. "The Sioux are my friends. They are the friends of Lisa. They stay to trade corn with the Mandans. I whipped a white man who brought a strange flag to Shahaka's lodge. The flag of the Great White Father hangs in its place. The Sioux will not follow a man who has been whipped like a squaw."

He smoked for a while and then remarked:

"A white man is here who keeps away from the men. The squaws laugh about him."

This would be Balise, as we had seen the traders and Le Fou. I asked about the Frenchman, but the Indian would make no answer. If Balise was in retirement there was some reason besides his fight with me. I gave our host a piece of tobacco, which should have refreshed him greatly after smoking the abomination the Minnetarees and Mandans use for tobacco.

Richardson and I continued our stroll toward the up-river end of the village. There were some hundred and thirty huts, whereas before the smallpox swept over the village there had been some nine hundred.

Faces appeared at the doors as we passed. Many of the huts were empty, the owners having followed Le Borgne and the medicine man. It came to me that those not in attendance on Le Borgne were likely to be friends of Red Shield.

We passed from the village and walked among the holes used for storing vegetables during the Winter. Down on the river-bank we discovered Balise. He was so deeply preoccupied with his thoughts that he did not sense our presence until we were close upon him, and while he was off his guard we had an excellent opportunity to study him. The mask was off, and he showed much of his age. His face was thin and haggard, and there were lines about the eyes that must have resulted from much worrying.

"*M'sieur* is not with his friends," I greeted.

He was erect and had his hand at his belt before I had finished the sentence. After the first startled glance his features took on the old expression of cynical humor, but the gleam in his half-closed eyes remained most baleful.

"What do you want, *m'sieur?*" he curtly demanded, yet dropping his hand from his knife.

"Nothing of you but a clear trail. We have met your friend, Le Borgne; also Medicine Crow and Le Fou. We met them as we meet you, by accident."

"Ah, that Le Fou!" he muttered, speaking to himself.

"He says you shall call him master for every time you ever called him pig."

Instead of a scornful laugh or a flash of anger he eyed me sullenly and exclaimed—

"And I risked my life to pull him from the river!"

"Balise, you look like a hungry man; like one who is half-starved," commented Richardson.

He showed his teeth and retorted:

"I do not relish their food up here, *m'sieur* the big hunter. They eat spoiled meat."

"Meat that has not spoiled may be very bad," I added.

"Death of my life! I have lived on corn since arriving here from the Mandan village, and I am used to much meat," he groaned.

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"Surely Le Fou would not poison you, his old patron," I said.

He seated himself and resumed staring at the river, and muttered—

"I have no talk for *m'sieur* the *bourgeois*."

"Mebbe you have a fight for me," hungrily suggested Richardson. "We're alone. Mandan Ramsay will keep at a distance if you hanker for a fuss."

"Not after confining myself to corn. Thanks, *m'sieur* the big hunter; but none for me just now. I am contemplating this stream. To think some of this water I behold will find its way to wash the low shore of Balise below New Orleans!"

"Homesick as a *mangeur de lard*," I taunted. "Your trip up here was hardly worth what you've been through; let alone what you must face before you leave."

He made no reply; and, knowing that he would not talk, we turned away. Richardson was cruelly disappointed at Balise's refusal to fight him. Strangely enough, I found something pathetic in the fellow's isolation and serious predicament. It was better to be the object of Le Fou's open hatred than to hold the relation Balise held.

The hunter called back to him—

"Took one of your friends by the throat less'n a hour ago and nearly knocked his head off."

Balise eagerly jerked his head about and cried—

"Le Fou?"

"One of your trader friends. Le Fou did not come in reach."

Balise settled down to the study of the river, or perhaps his thoughts did not permit him to see the river. We turned back toward the village, walking slowly. We came to a man whose hands were crippled for life. I stopped and gave him a small piece of tobacco and asked how he had received his savage hurts.

He was grateful for the tobacco, and as his misfortune precluded his following the chase or winning honors in war he had no companionship among his people. He was eager to talk. A man who is physically incapacitated in the red country must live on the outside of things. There was no place for him by a camp-fire; no Indian would bring out a mat did he venture into a lodge. He was worse off than as if he were dead. Instead of receiving sympathy he would at the best be ignored. With none of the red man's usual reticence he explained:

"When I was a young man I did not do as I should before going to catch eagles. An eagle got his claws loose and tore my hands."

I knew that the Minnetarees were very punctilious in observing the rites preliminary to hiding in deep holes to catch eagles. I had seen men maimed in one hand from an eagle's talons, but never one before who was hopelessly crippled in both hands.

We talked with him until he was thoroughly at his ease. He told me the same as had the man who gave us meat—that Le Borgne was expecting the Sioux to come from the lower Mandan village, and had done them the honor of going forth to meet them.

"What do they do tonight?" I carelessly asked.

He glanced at the tobacco clutched in his twisted hand; and then about him to make sure none of the Indians was witnessing the interview.

"The *mahopa* man, they say, will tell tonight whom he has dreamed about."

"What do you mean?"

The fellow shuddered and rolled his eyes in terror.

"The man who walks into the *mahopa* man's dream will be very sick before the sun comes again."

"That is child's talk. Why do you say that?"

"Elk's Tooth walked into his dream. The *mahopa* man told it yesterday. Where is the Elk? They say that after four days he will go to the Village of the Dead. The Deer helped the women dress the Tooth for death. He saw medicine in the Tooth's lodge. He will soon catch an eagle."

For four days the ghost of a Minnetaree lingers about his lodge and then takes up his abode in the "Village of the Dead;" for it requires that length of time for the four souls of the deceased to unite outside the earthly body. The cripple's irrelevant talk about catching an eagle suggested great fear, and prompted me to comfort him by saying:

"He does not know you. He will not name you."

"He will not name me. I have no hands. White man, I can not hurt. I must raise corn like a woman. Those who do not hunt must go hungry unless they have corn to trade.

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"When my corn was new the horses broke through the willows and spoiled it. Black Deer will have no corn to trade. For days he has been hungry. When he goes without food he has medicine dreams. Last night in a dream he heard the *mahopa* man name the man he will name tonight."

He paused like a natural-born story-teller to increase the effect, and then with an occult air added—

"In the Deer's dream the mystery man named a white man."

He ceased speaking and weighed the trade tobacco in his hand and sniffed it lovingly.

"I will give you a pipe," I said.

"Black Deer has his pipe. It has been cold a long time. He will not smoke for two sleeps. If the white friend of the Mandans is not a ghost after two sleeps he will give the Deer more tobacco. If he is a ghost the Deer will make this tobacco last a long time. He will make it last until he catches an eagle."

"—— and ——!" growled Richardson. "Why can't he spit it right out? He means that half-witted cuss named you."

"He dreamed I was named," I corrected. "According to his tell Le Fou has named only Elk's Tooth thus far. It's a trick to get me to promise him more tobacco."

But Richardson was shaken. He might resent being called superstitious, and yet his mind was red in spots. He knew that oracular dreams among the Minnetarees come only to those who have fasted. Ordinary dreaming has no significance. Black Deer had been light-headed from hunger; therefore his dream about Le Fou naming a man about to die must forecast the fact. Le Fou had named Elk's Tooth, and the man was dead.

I tried to show him the fallacy of his reasoning. I reminded that even Balise did not know the possibility of my coming to the village until he had had his fight with me in the Mandan village.

The hunter lost none of his gloomy bearing as we finished our walk and threaded our way to our lodge.

"We'll be at that powwow tonight and hear who he names," he muttered, shaking his shaggy head.

And while I could not share his absurd fears I did remember the sign for "death" which the Sioux had made while watching me ride away with Shahaka.

CHAPTER VIII

LE FOU LOSES A CLIMAX

RICHARDSON was not inclined to talk; and I supposed he was wrestling with his superstitious fears concerning Black Deer's dream. To my surprize he halted when we reached the porch of the lodge and abruptly announced—

"I'm going back to learn how a cripple can catch an eagle."

"If you carry a fight to any one our work is spoiled before it's commenced," I warned him.

"My business is something bigger then gitting into a fuss."

And there was a new dignity about him.

"That broken-handed cuss opines that he'll catch eagles. I'm cur'ous. By his own tell he's been half-starved since he was a young man. He's no good at hunting or fighting. He's had to help the women with their squaw work. Now he figgers on catching an eagle. Mandan Ramsay, I'm plumb cur'ous. Don't fret about me."

I watched him out of sight, wondering what he was up to. He believed his errand to be important, for his bearing was grave and deliberate. To me he had always been the happy-go-lucky hunter, loving the bottle and a fight. This new phase of him was puzzling—the more so because I could discover no sane purpose in wasting time on Black Deer.

I heard the murmur of voices from the down-stream side of the village and guessed that Le Borgne and his followers were returning. I stepped inside the door and all but closed it. Le Borgne and Medicine Crow did not pass by the lodge, however, but took a course that circled it and led them out of their way. I glimpsed the two of them and the warriors afoot as they rode by the mouth of a narrow lane. None of the Sioux was with them.

Red Shield remained seated before the medicine log, staring intently at the painted buffalo skulls. He gave no heed to my entrance and appeared to be lost in meditation. Being one of the principal leaders opposed to Le Borgne and his faction, I depended on him much. I aroused him by announcing:

"We must cover the body of the dead. Come with me to cover your friend. Elk's Tooth is waiting in his lodge."

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He lifted his head and watched me as I opened the packs. As I continued to lay aside trade-goods, silver ornaments and other things highly prized by the red man the chief's eyes opened widely, and he remarked—

"You cover the dead with more gifts than you give to a live war-chief."

"The Great White Father wishes his red children to know that he remembers them when they have gone to the Village of the Dead," I told him.

"The Blind will be angry in his heart," he muttered.

"He is not a friend to Americans. We do not think about him."

"Elk's Tooth's ghost is still in the lodge. It will be happy when it sees what the White Mandan brings."

I placed the gifts in two richly embroidered blankets and gave one of them to the chief to carry. Never had a trader on the upper Missouri covered the body of the dead so lavishly. I knew that the effect on the Minnetarees would be pronounced. When we emerged from the lodge Red Shield importantly announced to a dozen loiterers:

"We go to cover the bones of Elk's Tooth. The Great White Father sends gifts to the dead."

The onlookers clapped their hands to their mouths as Red Shield haughtily led the way to the next lodge. The word was passed rapidly, and as we took our time in covering the short distance we had many spectators before we reached the doorway. When we entered the lodge and left the door standing open the lane outside was filled with men and women.

On a bed raised two feet from the ground and hung around with dressed skins reposed the dead man. He was wrapped in his best robe, and beside him were a bow and arrows, a lance, a scalping-knife and a hatchet. Above his head hung his new hair-brush of porcupine quills, a medicine whistle fashioned from the bone of an eagle and a fife made of wood. The last two were to permit him to imitate the whistle of the elk and the bleat of the antelope in the land of shades. I also noted some flint and horn arrow-heads.

Elk's Tooth had lost his wife some years before, and so genuine had been his attachment that he had not taken another woman into his lodge. Therefore the big hut was lacking those things which reflect a woman's presence. He had removed the doeskin dresses and moccasins worn by his wife and all else that might serve to remind him daily of his loss. So the lodge was a shell instead of a home.

As Red Shield and I pulled back the skins and gazed down on the dead man the warriors began entering, stealing in by twos and threes and taking positions around the sides of the hut. We turned back to our bundles and opened them, and the spectators made soft sounds of amazement as they beheld the gifts.

First we took from the blankets several strings of varied-colored beads which were vastly superior to the one string worn by the deceased. We placed the beads around the dead man's neck and then slipped silver bands on the upper arms and wrists, and these shone dully in the darkened lodge. A tobacco-pouch of gay design, filled with tobacco, was hung at the girdle. We spread out the two blankets and placed upon them the blue and red cloth and a Spanish coat of blue trimmed with gilt braid.

For weapons we gave a new trade musket, brightly polished and a goodly weapon in red eyes even if, like all trade guns, the barrel was inaccurate. We added thirty shots of powder and a big bag of bullets. Red Shield drew the new hunting-knife from its decorated leather scabbard as if to make sure it was a fit weapon for Elk's Tooth, and thus afforded the onlookers an opportunity to admire the bright blade. A miscellany of smaller articles finished our offerings to a man who had stood America's friend.

Then we stepped back so that all might approach and more closely inspect the gifts. As each warrior paused to view what to him represented the value of many buffalo-horses, the hand went to the mouth and patted the lips.

Half of the men had filed by when the doorway was filled by the huge figure of Le Borgne. He had learned what was taking place, and his curiosity and greed would not permit him to remain away.

He was wearing his fixed smile, by which the initiated gaged his anger. When the smile widened it was a sign that his rage was mounting. White men on first meeting him had been deceived by this facial trick; but I knew it of old.

He strode forward, the warriors getting out of his way. Halting beside me, he folded his arms and stared at the Elk's Tooth.

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He bowed his head and swept his eye over the offerings piled on the blankets, and in a rumbling voice asked—

"Was this man a mighty chief, that he is covered so thick?"

"He was a friend of the Americans," I told him simply. "We remember our friends."

"Americans gave him no gifts like these while he was alive," he ironically remarked.

"We brought gifts for him, but he had died before we could reach him."

He was silent for a minute, then with a sidelong glance at Red Shield said—

"They say there were many gifts left at the middle village for a Minnetaree."

"They speak with straight tongues," I promptly replied. "We remember the living and the dead."

With his one eye fixed in implacable hatred on the stern face of Red Shield he dropped his hands to his sides, the fingers of his right hand opening and closing; and I knew he was regretting the absence of his war-club. Only the solemnity of the occasion prevented an open rupture between the two men, for Red Shield was in the mood to kill or be killed. Le Borgne folded his arms again, his fingers digging into his biceps, and in a low voice he reminded me—

"No gifts have been left at the lodge of the Blind, the leader of all the Minnetarees."

"The leader of some Minnetarees," I corrected. "If the Blind stops trying to lead them into the arms of the Canadian traders there will be gifts for him."

His smile became a ghastly grin as he swung his sound eye to stare at my face. He warned me—

"The Blind can take what is not given."

"Even the Blind dare not take from the dead," I replied.

He had not meant that; for, as ruthless as he was, he would not dare violate the gifts bestowed on the dead. He was telling me he had the power to despoil me of all my trade goods. But he would not bother to set me right, and without a word he stalked from the hut, his head filled with jealousy and hate and greed.

I HAD accomplished my purpose. I believed I had taught Le Borgne and the onlookers that from a material point of view it paid the tribes to remain friendly to the United States. Could Mr. Manuel have known my liberality in covering a dead warrior who was not a chief his brows would have crawled up in amazement. But when he should learn the significance of the situation I was convinced that there would be no frown on his face.

Mr. Manuel was a shrewd trader and took his profits, but he was never one to hold his hand closed when policy demanded that it should be open. Nor was he ever inclined to take his utmost profit. His blacksmiths were continually doing work for the Indians, for which he charged nothing.

His genuine interest in the welfare of the upper tribes was often proven by other kindly acts. His gifts of seeds alone were a great addition to their subsistence. His posts were always the refuge of those too weak or too old to follow the lodges. He loaned starving hunters traps and charged them nothing. By these humane acts he acquired the confidence and friendship of the Indians.

His rivals have said many harsh things about him, but I never heard an Indian complain of him. Surely he never could have gained and held his power over the Missouri tribes unless the red man's sense of justice had declared him to be a trader who kept his word and dealt fairly with the natives. So I knew I would have the hearty approval of my employer.

Red Shield had pretended not to have seen Le Borgne, except for the moment when their eyes blazed forth challenges. When we left the lodge he could not entirely conceal his great satisfaction at the outcome of the ceremony. Not only had his dead friend been done high honor, but the Minnetarees had learned the distinction made between him and Le Borgne by the United States.

As we walked back to our lodge several men, one at a time, stepped up to him and spoke a word or two. When we were alone in the lodge he told me:

"There will be a talk made tonight in the lodge of the Blind. The White Mandan will go with me to hear it. There will be medicine in the talk. They say the *mahopa* man has dreamed again."

"The *mahopa* man will name the man who walked into his last dream. The last man he named was Elk's Tooth. The men the *mahopa* man meets in dreams will die very soon after they are named, they say," I told him.

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His impassive face went out of control for a few seconds.

"My white brother has had a *mahopa* dream to know that," he muttered.

"He knew the *mahopa* man far down the river where the white men have their stone lodges. Down there the white men push the *mahopa* man out of their path. He can not hurt them. They laugh at him."

Now his face hardened, and he sternly reminded me:

"He is *mahopa*. No one can hurt him. They say the white man will be wise to ride from the village after the talk in the lodge of the Blind is finished. They say the horses will be ready outside the village."

Indirectly he was informing me that his friends feared for Richardson's safety and mine and had arranged to have our horses ready for flight.

"We leave this village only after our medicine flag stands on top of a lodge and the enemy's flag can not be seen," I answered.

He brooded over my defiance for a while, and then went for a walk about the village. He was not afraid of Le Borgne, but he was greatly afraid of Le Fou. Knowing that I was not wanted, I wandered alone. I glimpsed Red Shield several times and observed that he was visiting quite a few lodges. I passed Le Borgne's big hut but saw nothing of him or Medicine Crow.

I did come near to encountering Le Fou and Balise, but they saw me and turned in between two lodges..

After passing the point where they disappeared I glanced back. They had returned to the lane. Balise had his back to me, but Le Fou was watching me, his weak visage reflecting keen anticipation.

Unlike the Arikara and most of the other upper tribes the Minnetarees had no large council house or medicine lodge. When matters of importance were to be discussed the men gathered in some favorable spot outside the village, or in a large lodge. As it was near the time for the entire village to move back to the hills or to the timber along Snake Creek, where there would be plenty of fuel during the Winter, and where they would split up in small bands to hunt foxes, kitts, buffaloes and wolves, the question of American or of British supremacy must be settled quickly.

As the afternoon wore away I found myself wondering whether it would not be far better for Mr. Manuel to have handled the situation. Such thoughts suggested weakness and lack of self-dependence, and I fought to force them from my mind. Mr. Manuel demanded results. He exacted them of himself more thoroughly than he did of any *engagé*.

Even now his was the more difficult and hazardous task. To arrange a peace between the Arikara and the Sioux, also between the Arikara and the Minnetarees, would have been utterly impossible for me to accomplish. Mr. Manuel was going about it singlehanded. More than to redouble his danger was the active work of the Canadian traders in stirring up trouble among the tribes.

Near the outskirts of the village I came face to face with Richardson. He was huskily humming the refrain of a river song. He grinned broadly on seeing me, and I turned and walked with him to our lodge. On my asking where he had been, he chuckled much like a boy who is suspected of mischief and feels that he is in no danger of being convicted.

"Just back in the timber," he told me. "Took a squint at a new medicine lodge the eagle hunters use in making their medicine. Then I went up in the hills a bit where they've dug holes for traps.

"They're pretty cute, them hunters. Hide in the hole and cover themselves up with sticks and grass and wait only as an Injun can. The eagle sees the dead rabbit or bird on the trap and drops down to git it. Up shoots the hunter's two hands through a little hole and he grabs the eagle by the legs and yanks him down into the hole and ties him up. Then he fetches him to the village and pulls out his tail-feathers and lets him scoot off again"——

"I know all that," I broke in. "You found Black Deer. He went with you."

"How'd you know that, Mandan Ramsay?"

"You left me to find him. What did you do? What did you learn?"

Chuckling much, Richardson confided:

"I l'arned how the poor —— was planning to catch eagles without using his broken hands. —— if he ain't clever!"

And question him as I would I could learn nothing more. There was no mistaking his air of elation, his suppressed merriment; and I was curious to the point of impatience. All he would say was:

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"Just keep your moccasins on, Mandan Ramsay. We'll go to that meeting tonight and see what tricks they're up to. If things begin to happen I'm loaded for b'ar. Now where can we git something to eat that won't kill us in our tracks?"

While we were debating this important matter Red Shield entered and briefly informed us that we were to accompany him to the lodge of a friend, where a kettle of meat was awaiting our attention. He took us to the man who already had given Richardson and me our dinners. He took my hand and pressed it warmly and repeated his show of approval with the hunter. He used up his one word of English in saying—

"Whisky?"

I began to explain that we had brought no whisky with us when Le Fou's cracked voice, singing a river song, caused him and Red Shield to jump convulsively. The singing approached the lodge, and as it drew nearer the Minnetarees retreated to the side opposite the door.

"He's stopped outside the door," said Richardson.

"He's coming in," I added.

Sly steps sounded at the entrance, and then Le Fou's leering face showed around the corner of the door. With the roar of a bull Richardson leaped toward the intruder, who with a squeak of terror jumped back. We ran to the porch, where I checked the hunter from giving chase. The bandy legs of the half-wit covered the ground with amazing swiftness.

Then he remembered that he was lowering himself in the estimation of the red men and came to a halt. Facing us, he poured out a torrent of filthy abuse. Richardson started as if to run after him, whereat Le Fou darted between the lodges and disappeared. Richardson laughed loudly and came back to me. We went inside, and the Shield and our host stared at us in awe.

"You ran after the *mahopa* man!" cried our host.

"He has the heart of a rabbit," I said. "White men laugh at him and make him run."

"He is *mahopa*," insisted Red Shield.

When the Missouri River flows back to its source and leaves the broad, deep channel to the Mississippi so much corn-land, then, and not before, will the Indian view the mentally unbalanced without fear.

As we tarried in the lodge to smoke, a continuous string of visitors dropped in ostensibly to pay their respects to the Shield and his red friend, but in fact to satisfy their desire of looking on the man who had chased Le Fou. Red Shield made us known to those whom we had not met before, and I knew that every man of them could be counted upon to carry a fight to Le Borgne's faction. But not one of them would dare to affront Le Fou.

One aged warrior who spoke more boldly perhaps because he realized that he was nearing the end of his earthly trail stared thoughtfully at the hunter and asked—

"The white man is not afraid of walking into a *mahopa* dream and of having his name spoken?"

"The *mahopa* man's medicine can not hurt white men, grandfather," replied the hunter.

After the last of the visitors had departed Richardson became thoughtful and said:

"Mandan, that cuss feels powerful mad because we made him run while the Injuns was looking on. He'll do his derndest tonight to git even with you."

"He would have done that anyway," I answered.

His mood quickly shifted, for he was never one to borrow trouble, and soon he was laughing heartily as he recalled the fellow's ludicrous flight. He asked:

"What about the flag? We oughter take that along even if 'tis Le Borgne's lodge."

"By all means. His lodge is a public place while the powpow is being held."

EARLY hours were the rule in Hidatsa, and by sundown there was a general movement toward the big hut. When we arrived we found the lanes around the hut and the small square in front of it well filled with silent warriors. The tops of the adjacent lodges were sprinkled with women. In the groups around the hut were those who favored the United States and those who preferred Great Britain. Only representative men passed behind the heavy hide door.

Red Shield haughtily led the way, his long braids of hair touching the ground and decorated with the silver geegaws I had given him. I came next, carrying the flag. The hunter brought up the rear.

When we entered the big circular room the only illumination came from the firehole

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in the center. The fire was low, and through the opening over it we could see the pale stars. An aged man threw on some dry grass, and the leaping flames revealed to us the double circle of men seated around the sides of the hut, and revealed us to them. We were objects of much interest, especially Richardson; for by this time the whole village knew that he had pursued the *mahopa* man.

Le Borgne was seated by his medicine log, smiling in his ghastly fashion. On his right sat Medicine Crow, and on his left sprawled Le Fou. Behind the three crouched Balise, much like a servant waiting on his masters. There was no question as to the adventurer's frame of mind. He was wishing himself away. If haggard features and roving eyes indicated anything he was disliking, even fearing, the night's work.

We seated ourselves on buffalo robes across from Le Borgne; and as we took our places the tame crow fluttered down from the top of the lodge and lighted on the mystery man's shoulder. The Indians eyed the bird with stealthy glances and were accepting it as being *mahopa*.

No objections were made to the flag we carried; and as for that the enemy's colors stood against the wall back of Le Borgne. I whispered to Red Shield to learn how many of his followers were present. He replied—

"The Blind has more than the Shield, but the Shield has many outside."

After a suitable period of silence Medicine Crow sprang to his feet, his pet leaving his shoulder to light on the ground and search for scraps of food. The gathering, silent from the first, now scarcely seemed to breathe. The mystery man stood with his one eye closed for a minute and then commenced to speak. His voice was low at first and scarcely audible across the lodge; then grew in volume until it must have been heard plainly by all outside the lodge.

He said that the Master of Life was putting the words in his mouth, and that only the night before he had been taken up into the spirit world and had been permitted to peer into the future. Those who did not heed his warning would be judged as workers of evil and would be punished when they entered the Village of the Dead.

As the red men believe in neither future rewards nor punishments there was an uneasy stirring among his hearers. Red Shield grunted in contempt at such talk. Continuing, the speaker declared that the red man must conform to the ancient laws of his people and cease wearing the white man's dress and using his weapons.

"We must return to the life the Master of Life taught to our fathers when the world was very young. This land belongs to the red man. Let the white men be driven out, or die. The Master of Life has said it.

"There is a white man, a great chief, who lives over the big water, who does not want our land. He does not want the Big Knives* to cheat the Minnetarees and Mandans. This white chief will trade for your furs and robes and give you more for them than the Big Knives will.

"Save your trade for the traders from the Red River and the Assiniboin River. The great Sioux nation is taking the war-path against all the Big Knives, who come to cheat you with their thin blankets and their poor cloth. Through my voice the Master of Life has spoken to you."

He seated himself and extended his arm for the crow to perch on, but the bird, with tilted head and inquisitive eyes, was busy searching the ground and began hopping around the circle. That the Indians believed there was some uncanny power invested in the crow was shown by their sly edging back and withdrawing their legs as the bird approached. After a minute Red Shield slowly stood up and discarded his robe and began:

"The Minnetarees were told by their fathers that there was nothing to fear when they became ghosts. There are evil spirits that can hurt us before we die, but nothing can hurt us after we have entered the Village of the Dead. That was told our old men's grandfathers many, many snows ago. We believe it.

"Now a stranger comes to us, speaking strange words. He tells us we will be hurt after death. We do not understand him. The ghost of Elk's Tooth will leave his lodge after three more sleeps. Elk's Tooth was a brave man in war and in hunting. He will be a brave man in the Village of the Dead. We have been told we will begin where we left off.

"This strange red man tells us we must have nothing to do with the white men from down the river; but that we must be helped

*Americans.

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by a white man over the big water. What harm has the white man Lisa done any of us? Did he hurt us when he brought us seeds so we could grow such big pumpkins as to make you pat your fingers against your mouths? Or was it when he gave us big beans to plant and had his white men make you lance-heads of iron? Or did he hurt us when he sent the White Mandan to cover Elk's Tooth with warm, thick blankets and much good cloth and other gifts?

"He tells you the Sioux have taken the war-path against the Americans. Why are they not here? There were many Sioux at the lower Mandan village. This strange red man and the Blind went out to meet them this morning. The Sioux did not come. They say they will not make war on the Americans and their good friend Lisa.

"The Mandans and the Arikaras will not fight the Americans. The middle and lower villages of the Minnetarees will not follow that flag."

And he pointed to the colors behind Le Borgne.

"Will the village of Hidatsa take the path alone?" he went on. "What will the other tribes do when they hear we are fighting Americans? Take the presents the Great White Father sends them and then stay in their lodges, like Chippewas hiding from the Sioux? Or will they come here and cut us to pieces?

"How will that white man over the water help us drive the Americans out? They say that there are men in this village who were young men when the Americans drove the soldiers of the man over the water out of this country. There are more Americans now. Has the man over the water sent any of his fighting-men here to fire guns for you? Red Shield must be losing his eyes; he sees only some traders. Now that the fire lights this lodge he sees a man who speaks for the man over the big water, but that man is not an English man. They say the man I now see was whipped like a woman in the lower Mandan village."

He paused and stared at Balise, who leaned forward as if to spring to his feet and give him the lie. But the Frenchman took second thought and settled back and forced an expression of indifference. Le Fou tugged at Balise's arm, and from the latter's whispering I gathered he was interpreting the Shield's speech to the half-wit.

Red Shield finished his speech by saying:

"Let the Minnetarees listen and believe the words of the strange mystery man and many gifts may come to the Blind; but there will be no gifts for those who do the fighting. Their dead bodies will not be covered. You have seen how the body of Elk's Tooth, a friend of the Americans, has been covered. In my lodge in the middle village are many gifts from the Great White Father down the river. Shahaka, the Mandan chief, has many gifts sent him by the Great White Father.

"Where are the gifts from over the water? Where does this strange red man come from? Who is he? How do we know that the Master of Life has whispered in his ear?"

Having made a deep impression on his hearers, he sat down. Even those who were ready to follow Le Borgne turned anxiously to their chief, eager to hear the Shield's bold words refuted.

During the pause, which etiquet demanded should separate the different speeches, there was a slight confusion at the door. It was caused by a newcomer insisting on crowding through the group of warriors. It was the Minnetaree who twice had given the hunter and me food that day. He cast his gaze around the circle, oblivious to the scowling glances of those he had jostled against, and then began working along toward us.

Le Borgne sprang to his feet, clutching his war-club, and commenced a violent harangue against all Americans. He accused us of bringing smallpox to the Indians and of killing them off with rum. Thanks to information supplied him by Le Fou, he was able to recount how we had killed the Omaha who had stolen a blanket from a smallpox victim near Fort Osage. He cited the man's death as an excellent example of the Big Knives' bloody treatment of Indians who long had been friendly to the United States.

"A few men come here and see our lodges and our robes, and we let them go," he shouted. "Then more men come and bring the sickness and kill us off. On the way up the river they shoot friendly Omahas just as they would shoot the buffalo. We do not want them. We get guns and cloth from the Red River country. The Shield says the Sioux will not help us. A big medicine says the Sioux will help us. The Sioux

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fired on that white man's boat when he came up the river."

And he pointed at me.

"The Sioux chased him and the big white man into the Mandan village, where the corn-peace saved their lives. The Master of Life took Elk's Tooth's life away when he refused to fight the Big Knives. The Master of Life told a *mahopa* man he would send Elk's Tooth to live in the Village of the Dead, where he could learn truth; and it was so. The Master of Life has again talked to the *mahopa* man in a dream, and tonight the *mahopa* man will speak a name, just as he spoke the name of Elk's Tooth. And the man he names will be taken away to the Village of the Dead because he is the enemy of the real white men*.

"Your chief has one eye and can see. You who have two eyes and are blind remember what I say. How many men must be sent to the Village of the Dead before you can see?"

Le Borgne sat down. Richardson whispered to me:

"He hit them hard. They're well scared. That —— Le Fou told him about the Maha man. We'd better not try to explain it. If another man dies as the Tooth died we'll find the traveling mighty hard. We're in for a fracas unless I can git some medicine to working."

There was no denying the uneasiness of the warriors. Even Red Shield had difficulty in masking his fear as he stared at Le Fou and waited for him to speak.

The Minnetaree man who had reached our position by crowding along the wall behind the second circle of warriors worked forward a few steps and dropped a piece of paper over my shoulder. I opened it and held it up to catch the light from the firehole, but had ascertained only that it was written in Spanish when Richardson drove his elbow into my ribs and warned:

"It's coming! The next ten minutes will tell whether we count a coup or git wiped out."

I STUFFED the paper into my shirt and looked across the lodge. Le Fou was on his feet. Balise was standing behind him to interpret his speech. The witless one was conscious of his power and was vastly different from the cringing creature I had foolishly permitted to make the up-river trip with us. He took his time in leering malevolently at the averted faces. It had been some such scene as this that had prefaced the passing of Elk's Tooth.

Le Fou marked those who were to die, and whose deaths would be so many inscrutable mysteries to the red men. He had named a man in prime of life, and inside of very few hours that man had died horribly without being hurt by blade or bullet. Small wonder that every Minnetaree in the lodge stiffened to hear the sentence.

Le Fou threw off his robe so that his fantastically painted person might be viewed by all. In the uncertain light the varied-colored eyes seem to wink and blink most evilly. Hands were pressed to lips, and a great fear gripped many a red heart.

Le Fou began by shrilly singing a verse of a river song, worn threadbare by many creole throats. Balise did not interpret the childish phrases. To the Indians it was an incantation, a medicine ritual that was most potent. Even the tame crow, now hopping along our segment of the circle, ceased its search for meat scraps and tilted its sly head to look cunningly at the grotesque figure.

Three verses did Le Fou sing, and as he paused the crow resumed his approach toward our position. Red Shield gave a little shiver as if cold, and drew his feet under his robe as the bird stopped to peck at a bead on a moccasin a few yards above us. Le Fou began speaking, pausing whenever Balise touched his shoulder so that the Frenchman could interpret his words to the red audience.

"I am *mahopa*. No one can hurt me," he said in French; and he darted a malignant glance at us, then shifted his gaze as it encountered the cold stare of the hunter. "I dreamed of a man and called his name. He was a red man, and he is dead. The Master of Life sends me these dreams because I am *mahopa*. It is not for me to say what I shall dream, or when I shall dream. That is for the Master of Life to say. I am his child.

"Last night I dreamed of another man. He will die very soon."

He paused and swept his cunning gaze around the double circle, evidently finding keen enjoyment in beholding the signs of fear displayed by his hearers.

He began again, repeating himself, always declaring he was *mahopa* and could not be harmed. His was the egotistic mouthing

*The English.

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of a man who is mentally unbalanced, but who is able to perceive himself to be an object of fear to his fellows.

It was the poor ——'s great hour. To enjoy this triumph and stand at the peak of affairs he had been kicked and cuffed about the lower river from Balise to St. Louis. The wheel had turned and for the moment had allowed the fool to play the monarch.

He had sense enough to appreciate and enjoy the contrast. He was wearing the purple, even if only in an Indian village. Nay, he was a more important figure than his barbarous environment could ever again provide; for from this little-known red village it might be possible that his influence would spread and seriously hamper the development of the new republic.

Where Le Fou repeated himself over and over Balise interpreted the boastings most impressively. Speaking over Le Fou's shoulder, he wove into the ranting words a dignity of language that could not fail of appealing to the red man and that certainly aroused my admiration.

Medicine Crow leaned forward and watched Balise closely as the scamp polished and gave edge to the half-wit's threats. I suspected that the mystery man understood English and was appreciating to the full the interpreter's work.

After talking the same things for ten minutes Le Fou turned half around, thrust his hand into Balise's face and pushed him back. For a moment I believed and hoped that Balise was about to brain him. But the hand that dropped to the belt remained there as the Frenchman observed the burning gaze of Le Borgne and Medicine Crow. Le Fou entirely missed the peril behind him and with superb confidence commenced a slow dance around the circle. The bandy legs capered and maneuvered in a ridiculous fashion, but it was all medicine to the spectators. And as he danced the fool shouted—

"I will give the name very soon and will point to the man!"

Balise, his face drawn and distorted with helpless rage, dutifully shouted this sentence in the Minnetaree tongue.

Red Shield drew up his robe until it rested on his shoulders and under his chin. His gaze never left the bandy-legged dancer, who was going about his task slowly so as to extract a full measure of enjoyment. He paused before every other warrior to stare into the frightened face. When a man concealed his face Le Fou would tear the robe away. Sometimes he would dig his hand under a man's chin so that he might look into the frightened eyes. He showed no partiality to Le Borgne's followers. Le Fou had tasted power, and never would he get his fill of beholding strong men shrink from him because of a deadly fear.

Of course I and my friends understood—as did Le Borgne and his intimates—that these maneuvers were only preliminary to my being pointed out and named as the man who had walked into the *mahopa* dream. Every now and then Le Fou would dart me a sly glance and leer most unwholesomely.

The tame crow, disturbed in his hunting, fluttered ahead of the dancer, leaving the ground each time Le Fou advanced. Perhaps the bird expected to be fed, for he kept a dozen feet ahead and watched the swinging arms closely. The combination of the *mahopa* man and the crow—also medicine—quite overwhelmed the Indians. Red Shield was under the spell.

Closer Le Fou worked, with the crow preceding him. Great was the fear of those he approached; and great was the joy of those he left unnamed. As fast as a man realized that he was not to be named he became an eager-eyed spectator, overawed and yet anxious to witness the climax of the weird performance.

Le Fou discovered that he was leaving a wake of relief, and corrected this fault by suddenly turning back and passing a group for the second time, and pretending that his man was at hand if he could but locate him. This gave the Indians a fresh paroxysm of fear.

But at last the crow was in front of me, and Le Fou was but eight or ten feet away. Richardson hoarsely whispered:

"Be ready to bolt, Mandan Ramsay. For I shall brain the fool in his tracks if my medicine doesn't work."

And he rolled something on the ground before him.

I was studying Le Fou and did not seek to inquire into Richardson's purpose; nor did I oppose his using his ax. The half-wit must be removed even though he took us with him.

The crow hopped hurriedly by me, no longer watching the dancer. The latter

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had two men to pass before reaching me. Then he repeated his tactics of cat-and-mouse and danced away from us as if intending to skip our part of the circle. I swung my gaze to follow him and casually noticed that the crow had lost his interest in Le Fou and was busy pecking at something on the ground.

Red Shield exhaled a mighty breath of relief as Le Fou continued to ignore us. Richardson's deep-throated chuckle attracted my attention, although I did not look at him. I heard him mutter—

"What could catch an eagle oughter catch a crow."

Then Le Fou uncovered his climax. He whirled about, stared at me and began edging back toward us. Red Shield drew a deep breath and presented a stony face to the *mahopa* man. From the white point of view Le Fou was what he was called, and yet I had to concede he possessed a dramatic talent for pantomime. His manner of stalking Red Shield was patterned after his burlesque of stalking game in the Sleeper's camp, only now there was no suggestion of comedy in his acting, but something that smacked of the dreadful.

He brushed the long hair back from his forehead so that the painted eye might be seen, and his appearance was that of a fury as he crouched low, his eyes staring wildly, his feet inching forward, his hands extended before him and the tips of his fingers all but touching the trodden earth floor. He had his insane gaze focused on the strained visage of Red Shield; yet there were several of us who knew that he would not name the Shield this time. His purpose seemed to be to strike terror into the chief's heart and compel him to display weakness.

But the Shield was a brave man. Expecting the worst, he had summoned his courage to meet it. He feared no mortal danger, but this encounter with the supernatural was near to unnerving him. He forced himself to hold up his head.

The crow, oblivious of the impending tragedy, continued to worry what I took to be a dead mouse. A crow feeding on a mouse while an ancient kingdom and a young republic seek supremacy among the trans-Mississippi tribes! The thought would obtrude, and I found it grotesquely ironical. The red gods on the bluffs of the Missouri must have enjoyed a hearty laugh that night.

Richardson glared at Le Fou. I was giving my attention to Red Shield, praying that the chief would not break. With a wild flurry of his thin arms Le Fou skipped into position in front of the hunter. The Shield drew his robe over his head and seemed to collapse. Richardson growled—

"Keep out of my reach, or I'll bash your skull!"

The crow hopped away a few feet and energetically continued its pecking. Suddenly it seemed to have had enough and stood with head lifted high, as domestic fowls stretch their necks when drinking. Richardson gathered his heels under him.

With a piercing scream Le Fou shifted his gaze to my face and extended an arm, a long finger slowly falling to point me out. Trembling visibly, he gave way to yelping laughter. Then he straightened his figure and lifted his hand high above his head, as if to fix every man's attention, then slowly brought it down until the finger again designated me.

Still pointing, he twisted his head from side to side and opened his lips to name me; but before he could speak Richardson was on his feet, his heavy, booming voice crying:

"The *mahopa* man's medicine speaks before the *mahopa* man can speak! What walked into his dream walked on two legs. But the *mahopa* man could not see well in his dream. He thought it was a man. His ears did not hear well. It was the medicine crow he dreamed about. Look!"

And he swung his heavy arm down and pointed at the tame crow. Le Fou, startled by the unexpected interruption, stared stupidly at the hunter, wetting his dry lips and trying to find something to say. But he had lost the climax. Every eye was now centered on the crow. The bird took two or three staggering steps and endeavored to lift its head higher. Then it fell over, a small bundle of black feathers with death busily filming the beady eyes.

Medicine Crow was the first to rise. He strode across the lodge and gazed at his dead pet as if not yet understanding. Then he saw the small piece of meat. He spurned it aside with his toe and darted a malevolent glance at the nonplused half-wit. Le Borgne stood up, the hand holding the war-club shaking with fear or anger.

"The *mahopa* man's medicine has run away from him and killed the medicine crow!" bawled Richardson.

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There was a general uprising of the spectators and a common desire to escape from the lodge. Le Fou ran to the medicine log and snatched up his robe as if he, too, were afraid of the place. Balise came forward and in passing us paused to say:

"Clever, *m'sieur!* I make you my compliments. Death of my life, but it was clever!"

Then he was gone in the swirl of Indians.

Le Borgne called out to me, his voice unsteady, and asked:

"What is it, white man? What killed the medicine crow?"

"The Master of Life," I promptly told him scornfully. "He killed the crow because it was the medicine of a man who talks with a crooked tongue. Medicine Crow will die soon. The *mahopa* man has lost his medicine. Put him to work, lugging wood with the women."

WE FOUND Red Shield waiting for us outside the lodge, his head held high. He had heard the hunter's words; and he exulted:

"The medicine turned against the medicine bird of the strange mystery man. It is good!"

Other voices caught this up and repeated it; and I believed we had won a great victory. Yet when we had gained the privacy of our lodge Red Shield was sober and preoccupied. Once more were old fears roosting in his mind.

To bring him out of his moodiness I reminded him—

"The medicine bird is dead."

"Dead," he mechanically repeated and without lifting his head. "But the *mahopa* man lives. He was strong enough to kill the medicine bird. He will dream of men and name them."

Such was his inconsistency resulting from his fears of the supernormal. He had fairly quivered with joy when the bird had died in the big lodge. Then followed reaction. Le Fou was *mahopa*. Then it must be Le Fou who had killed the tame crow. I gave him up and turned to Richardson and requested a full explanation of the extraordinary scene.

"I used pizen on that little black cuss," he told me. "Lawd, but wouldn't the boys think I was mighty *wakan* if they knowed about it! After Black Deer said as how he was going to catch an eagle I begin to smell the truth. How could he catch 'em? Not with his hands.

"I know how they go eagle-hunting. I've been in their little eagle-medicine lodge and set with visitors on the right. I've watched the hunters sitting on the left and going without eating till midnight. I've watched them leave the village before sunrise to sit all day without food or water in the deep holes they dig for traps. I've watched them come back at night with all the village keeping indoors so's not to bust their medicine spell by seeing them.

"Black Deer, with them broken hands of his, couldn't catch an eagle any more'n I could catch one with my teeth! I sent my wits to scouting round over his talk with us. He'd helped the woman dress Elk's Tooth for burying on a platform. The Deer was sure he would git an eagle. Elk's Tooth died from eating meat that was pizened with arsenic.

"The notion got into my head that Black Deer found a hunk of that meat and was going to try it on an eagle. He'd have to take his bird dead, and he'd be mighty keen not to let the village know he had killed instead of catching 'em alive. He would be called a medicine man. I hated to spoil such a pretty game.

"I hunted him up and told him I knew all about it. At first he tried to lie out of it, but he'd been bossed around so much he didn't have the spunk to hold out. After awhile he told me all about it. He'd found a piece of meat left in the Tooth's kettle and had taken it. Showed he was pretty cute in his head; he knew Elk's Tooth had been pizened.

"His game would have worked, too. He'd 'a' killed an eagle and would 'a' pulled out the wing and tail feathers and told the village his medicine brought the feathers to him in a dream. The Injuns would 'a' swallowed it and paid a extry fine price for one feather. Mandan, you oughter give him some trade goods to make up for what he's lost by me taking away that hunk of meat.

"Well, with that meat in my pocket I made up my mind either to bag Mr. Crow or to use my ax on the Fool.

"And, Mandan, what do you s'pose that poor cuss of a Black Deer done that spoiled his medicine and let an eagle spoil his hands?"

I shook my head.

"He forgot and spit on the floor in front

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of him instead of in the hay behind him. Just derned fool carelessness! And it crippled him for life. When a man hitches up with a medicine he's got to be mighty smart in treating it right.

"Well, the powwow is over, and you ain't been named yet. Those two half-blind skunks are doing some tall figgering just about this time. The night ends bad for them. What was that Minnetaree handing you so sly-like?"

"It's in Spanish. Must be a message from Mr. Manuel," I mumbled. "Light was so poor and things were happening so fast I didn't try to make it out."

I fished the writing from my pocket and stirred up the fire, and as the flames gave me light I read aloud:

"SENOR RAMSAY:

Medicine Crow is Tenskwatawa, the Shawnee Prophet. He dares not identify himself because of the fight he lost last November at Tippecanoe. Raven's Nose learned the truth and has just told me. He could have told me while you were here at the fort. Had he done so I would have hesitated in sending you to the Mandan country.

I can't advise you what to do should you meet this man. Perhaps it would be better to expose him as the Prophet who failed at Tippecanoe, then to kill him. Tecumseh must need the Missouri Indians to have sent him here.

I am having a hard time with some of the Sioux chiefs, but have hopes of winning them all over to our side. If Tenskwatawa comes to the Knife send me word by Richardson, or by one of the friendly Indians. It will be very hard for me to leave the Arikaras and Sioux, what with their sneaking about to kill each other, but I will come if you believe my presence is necessary. May God be good to you!—MANUEL LISA."

TO BE CONTINUED

Author of "Freedom's Last Stand," "Oh, Isabel!" etc.

MR. JOEL T. MAUM, the impresario, was favoring the smoking-room of the steamship *Centaur* with frank and not altogether flattering comments upon the mentalities and habits of the petted darlings of the opera and the record shops. It was seldom that Mr. Maum could afford to be frank upon this subject. His business too frequently demanded the soft answer that turneth away wrath. But tonight, in mid-ocean, he felt that he could say what he pleased. His *virtuosi* were several days beyond earshot.

"When nature puts something into their throats, she takes something out of their heads," Mr. Maum concluded his discourse. "They don't think, they feel, and they feel differently from the rest of us. In fact they are nuts, and the greater the voice the greater the nuttiness."

"DuGano," observed Captain Baker.

Mr. Maum made a wry face.

"I am always reminded of my one big

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failure when I sail in your ship, captain," he complained. "But—yes, DuGano. I couldn't choose a better voice to prove my point. The Great DuGano—great voice, great nut."

"DuGano?" queried the Cleveland toy-buyer, who was a record connoisseur. "I thought I knew them all, by name at least, but I never heard of DuGano."

"You might have, you would have, only he was the craziest nut I ever— Oh, there I go! I can't think of DuGano, even after all these years, without losing my temper. Such a voice—and such a blithering, unreasonable fool——"

Mr. Maum turned to the sailor.

"Captain, you tell them about DuGano," he urged.

Captain Baker tugged his gray beard and smiled deprecatingly.

"A sailor's yarn against the stories of Joel Maum!" said he. "Oh, well—if I must——"

TO BEGIN with (the captain went on) I'll have to shift you gentlemen out of your own world and into my world, the sea world. And I'll have to take you back to a time beyond the memories of some. More than thirty years.

Now in those days my world was a different world from what it is today. There was sail still upon the seas, and I was a young man in sail. San Francisco was still a grain port where hundreds of sailing-vessels rendezvoused in Autumn and Winter, and loaded for Europe.

My ship was a Boston bark, the *Homer Wilberforce*. I was second mate in her. She was a brute of a ship, a big-bellied, oversparred freight-wagon, no more. She couldn't sail, she wouldn't handle, and she was as homely as her name. But I was very proud of her, for this was my first voyage aft as a "mister."

The ship was lying at anchor ready for sea, and waiting for the crew to come on board. Queenstown for orders was where we were cleared for. That meant the Horn in mid-Winter, and from the feel of the gloomy February day a mean sou'easter soon after we poked our nose through the Golden Gate. Mr. Flett, the mate, was very pessimistic over the outlook as he and I leaned on the rail and watched the tug approach.

"They'll be a scrub lot," says he.

"The Old Man is paying through the nose for a decent lot," I reminded him.

"And who is he paying?" Mr. Flett demanded with a snort. "The Knitting Swede, the worst boarding-master in San Francisco, and that means the worst in the world. Once the Swede gets his blood-money, do you suppose he'll worry bout the quality of his wares? Not if I know crimps. The Swede contracts to supply beef, and a stiff is as good beef as an A. B. so far as he is concerned. No, sir, mister, I'll bet they are a —— scrub lot. I never took a decent lot out of this port yet."

It was just at that moment we heard the voice. Aye, rightly enough, we heard the man before we clapped eyes upon him. It was the voice, not the man, that mattered.

It came over the water to us from the tug. It was a singing voice, and the song was an ancient chantey, "The Maid of Amsterdam." Aye, that voice! Maum will describe its perfection. At the moment Mr. Flett and I were interested in the life that was in it. It was a clear, bell-like baritone, and, to judge from the distance it carried, of great volume.

"Here comes a chanteyman. Now, say, this isn't so bad after all," said Mr. Flett.

In truth it wasn't so bad. It was much more than we expected. We had hoped for a few good seamen in the mob the crimp was delivering, but we had not hoped to get a prime chanteyman. That was too much to expect of the Knitting Swede, and San Francisco. A chanteyman like this one we heard across the water—why, he was a watch in himself!

That was the day of the chanteyman. Never was the singing man so welcome and needed on board ship as during those last years of the sailing-vessel, when the tall ships went lumbering over the oceans criminally undermanned. The Knitting Swede was to deliver us eighteen more or less, mostly less, able seamen. Eighteen men to work the ship—and a generation before this time ships of half our size went to sea with eighty men before the mast!

They had chanteymen in the old well-manned days, too. They had chanteymen in the days of Queen Bess, for that matter, and they sang the same chanteys. But in the old days they were a luxury, an entertainment. In my day they were needed.

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Aye, lucky the ship with a good chanteyman beforemast.

It was the chanteyman who moved the ship, weighed anchor, lifted the yards, caused the heavy work to proceed with swinging despatch. He was the foresinger, the lad who fisted the line ahead of the watch and chanted the song, while his mates hauled or heaved and roared the chorus in unison. It was the voice of the chanteyman that put strength into weak and tired backs. It was his song that often made the difference between a happy ship and a hell ship.

The tug made fast, and our eighteen bullies tumbled or were hoisted over the rail. Aye, a scrub lot; the sweepings of the waterfront. But the voice was among them. Ah, that put a new value on the crowd. Mr. Flett and I did not have to dress them down, as we had expected; we did not have to thump life into the drunks with the business ends of belaying-pins so the ship could get under weigh. The voice attended to that.

It was a strange thing to observe. Men too drunk to stand, suddenly found life in their legs and in their arms. Men so stupid and dazed with the Swede's poison that they could not hear an order shouted in their ears, responded to the call of the chanteyman. They could hear, or perhaps feel, his song. They lifted the anchor to the swinging measure of "Rio Grande," and never had I seen a smarter bit of work.

Oh, but Mr. Flett was tickled!

"We're in luck this passage, mister," says he to me. "That lad can sing."

Of course the mate took him for his watch at the choosing. But that was to be expected, and I bore no grudge. After all a chanteyman is for a ship, not for a watch. It is when all hands are called that his voice is needed most.

His name, we discovered at muster, was Salvatore Dugan. Aye, the extra "o" was an invention of Maum's, years later. Dugan, he was to us.

During the course of the passage I learned this about his personal history. He was a product of Telegraph Hill, in San Francisco. The old Telegraph Hill, when the Irish were still ensconced on the summit and waging a losing battle against the Italians who were creeping up the slopes to displace them. Salvatore Dugan was a child of this war, his father an Irish stevedore, his mother an Italian lass. It was his father who gave him his blue eyes and stout body, and his mother who gave him his love of song. But his voice, his golden voice—the gift of the good God, no doubt.

We speedily discovered that Salvatore Dugan was a very poor seaman, and apparently he was too stupid ever to become a good seaman. Now he was not stupid in the ordinary sense of the word. He was not dull of mind. But he had room for nothing in his mind that was not connected with music. He was not interested in sailorizing unless the job needed a chantey. Mr. Flett and I cared not a hoot for his lubberliness. We let him loaf — and sing.

Sing he did, at work and at play. It was a very curious thing the way that lad's personality—or his voice, rather, for the man was nothing apart from his voice—so quickly pervaded and dominated the ship. It was not only in the fo'csle that his influence was felt. We felt him aft as well.

In the dog watches, when the day's work was done and no chantey was needed, Dugan would break out his accordion and sing songs to the men, to the ship; aye, it seemed to the ocean itself. Irish songs and Italian songs, and the lugubrious ballads of the day; even at times operatic arias that he had somewhere picked up. Dugan never tired singing, and we never tired listening to him.

We needed a singer like that in the *Homer Wilberforce*, for it was a long, hard passage. We were months to the line, and more months to the Horn. It was Dugan who sang us through the horse latitudes. It was Dugan who sang us around the Horn in that bitter, bitter Winter month of June. Dugan's songs, Dugan's chanteys—aye, they kept that undermanned, underfed ship wholesome. In the seemingly endless stretch between the Horn and Europe I verily believe that only Dugan's voice stood between us and bloody mutiny.

Not that the crew grew ugly. That is the surprizing thing about it. They didn't, and by all experience they should have. We were more than eight months on that passage from San Francisco to Queenstown —two hundred and forty-seven days, to be exact. We experienced all the kinds of weather that can delay and dishearten a ship at sea—head gales and endless calms, and winds that would have been fair to any

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other ship, but not to that crab-sailing craft. Every day a work-day, and eighteen overworked, sty-fed men beforemast. And yet they did n't grow ugly.

For Dugan kept their tempers sweet. When he lifted his voice in a chantey he poured out the wos of the men, and they straightway felt better. When he improvised the words he gave tongue to the "grinds" the men had against me or Mr. Flett or the skipper and the owners, or against life itself. He was in effect the medium through which those eighteen dumb ones expressed themselves.

And how proud Dugan was of his calling, of his title as chanteyman! Aye, despite what Maum may tell you, I'll say he was an artist all the way through. No night too bitter, no noon too scorching for his song when his song was needed. Many the time he left his bunk without being called and came on deck during my watch, just to give my lads a voice when a voice was needed at a heavy job like lifting a topsail yard.

Aye, that voice! It had *life* in it. There was something in it, some quality in the clear, ringing sounds, that made one tingle and laugh—and work.

And when the job was done—the yard maybe was up and I called, "Belay"—Dugan would thump his chest proudly and smile his slow smile.

"I sent it up, mister," he would say. "It's me, my chantey, that boosts this hooker along."

I'd agree with him. It was so.

We ran short of provisions the last month of the passage, and it was half-rations and scurvy in the fo'csle. But even the outright starvation and the sickness could not break the spell Dugan's voice had woven about us. The *Homer Wilberforce* limped into Queenstown as we had lumbered out of San Francisco, a happy ship.

Why, even our getting the fresh provisions we so needed, and the orders for a continental port that sailors love, did not make a break in the routine of the ship. That night as usual Dugan held his singsong on the forehatch, and made his shipmates laugh or blink back the tears as he desired. Dugan could play upon sailors' hearts with his voice like other men played upon harps with their fingers. It was his gift, the source of his power. His song was his work, and he took proper pride in it.

THEN was when I first heard the voice (said Joel T. Maum). I was making my yearly trip abroad, journeying in the *City of Pekin*, one of the fliers of that day. We had dropped mails and passengers and were steaming out of Queenstown harbor.

I remember that I was in my cabin, shaving for dinner, when Toratoni, the coloratura, burst in upon me without even the formality of a precautionary knock. You may think it odd that I allowed myself to be dragged on deck coatless and collarless and with half my face coated with lather. You never knew Toratoni.

"The greatest voice in the world is singing out there," she said. "Come at once."

And it would have taken a larger man than I to resist her urging.

Our steamer was passing abreast a sailing-vessel which was anchored a full quarter of a mile distant. The voice came from this other ship. It came ringing in clear, rounded tones across the quiet dusk of the harbor. The man was singing a folk-song of southern Italy, and even at that distance, so pure and powerful was the voice, my ear could detect the idiomatic phrasing. A born Nap, I thought.

"The greatest voice," said Toratoni, and I almost believed her.

We were rapidly passing beyond earshot, though the carrying-quality of the voice was marvelous. Toratoni turned to me with all her chins and stomachs quivering with excitement, and demanded that I cause the ship to turn about; and when I tried to explain that great liners did not turn about because of a song heard in passing, she called me a pig and would not talk to me for hours. Ah, Toratoni—she too was a nut!

When I reached London I immediately set about identifying the sailing-ship and locating the singer—so much had I been impressed by a few notes heard in passing.

Two weeks later I was in the city of Antwerp. I went there for several reasons—to find my singer, for his ship had gone there; to hear a new diva in Brussels, and because Tuffo was in Belgium.

Perhaps you never heard of Tuffo; he has been dead many years. At that time he was the greatest of the Italian singing-teachers—the greatest teacher in the world, I think. He would not take a voice he did not believe in. When students won the

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right to call him *mio maestro* they considered their fortunes as good as made. I knew I could back Tuffo's judgment when I doubted my own.

My sailor had left his ship by the time I arrived, but nevertheless I found him. One evening I was walking by the riverside, past the quays, and I heard his voice for a second time. There was no mistaking it. I never heard another voice just like it. It was unique—in timbre, in range, a true freak of nature. Ah, wonderful!

This time I did not have to pass it by. I traced it down to a quayside tavern, a sailor's groggery. Inside I found DuGano (No, it was not I, it was Tuffo who supplied the extra letter to his name. Tuffo could not mouth the barbarous English.) drunk as a lord, and singing like an angel for the edification of sailortown.

I made friends with him easily. He was proud as Punch that his voice had fetched a silk hat in from the street, and he readily agreed to accompany me. I took him to Tuffo at once, that very night. And he sang, and Tuffo laughed and wept by turns, and gave me Toratoni's very words—

"The greatest voice in the world is singing there!"

That settled it, of course. I made the arrangements, and Tuffo took the sailor back to Italy with him, back to his beloved Naples. DuGano gave no trouble. He was eager; it was a new experience. And I went about my business nursing in my heart the knowledge that I had discovered and would control the singing sensation of the age.

Three years DuGano studied with Tuffo. But "study" is perhaps not quite the right word. Tuffo wrote me enthusiastic and despairing letters concerning his marvel. Yes, the old man grew to worship DuGano for his genius, and to love him as a son. He said that DuGano did not learn his art; he absorbed it, drank it in, so to speak. But he would not shine in the Old World society that was so eager to welcome the *maestro's* protégé; he preferred, Tuffo complained, the free-and-easy ways of the *lazzaroni*, and the companionship of common fishermen and other waterside characters. For them he sang; in the salons he sulked.

He made his début in Naples. A great success. Then came Rome, and the acid test of La Scala in Milan. Oh, yes, he was the sensation of the year—of the generation. If you are interested enough to dig into the files for that year you may follow his triumphal progress over Europe. The Great DuGano, the barytone of the century! Italy, Paris, Brussels, London—everywhere the world of the opera was at his feet.

And then I brought him home. He was to do for me what I had helped do for him. Opera in New York and Boston, and then a concert tour. Yes, the Great DuGano was to establish Mr. Joel T. Maum at the very head of his tribe in America.

He would have done it. Undoubtedly he would have done it. What greater honor than to have discovered and to manage the greatest voice in the world!

"The Great DuGano, under the exclusive management of Joel T. Maum!"

That would be my reward.

But—oh, the crazy fool, the unreasoning idiot, the—the—the nut! Dear me, I lose my temper even after all these years. Captain, you tell them.

YES (said Captain Baker) I know what happened. Better than Maum perhaps. Chance put me in at the end; in a way I was a participant.

Like other ambitious young men, I had deserted sail. I was mate of a small coastwise steamer plying between New York and Norfolk, and at the time we were at the northern end of our run.

But my old friend and confrère, Mr. Flett, had remained true to his first and only love. Moreover he had his own ship at last. He was Captain Flett, of the full-rigged ship *Margaret Doan*.

One afternoon I left the old tin kettle I called home amd walked over to the *Margaret Doan's* berth to say good-by. For Flett was leaving the dock that afternoon, and next morning was putting to sea for Manila.

It was a bleak, blustery day, I recall, with a biting wind, herald of Winter gales, sweeping the docks and whistling in the riggings of the ships. Flett and I stood among the stores piled on his deck and talked about the weather. I openly envied him his coming weeks in the Summery trades and lamented the fate that kept me on the coast during the bitter months. Aye, I had half a mind that afternoon to chuck it all myself and go swinging off shore again on white wings.

The crimps had not yet delivered Flett his full crew. A scant half-dozen men

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were bending sail under the direction of a sarcastic and disgusted mate, and they were making poor work of it. They were trying to lift the course to the main yard. The job was heavy for their numbers, and it was plain their hearts were not in the labor.

"A song would help that job," I remember I remarked.

"So it would, but where will it come from?" says Captain Flett. "The chanteys get rarer each voyage. The old men are dying off and the young men don't know them. Now if I only had that chanteyman of the *Wilberforce* on board here that sail would go aloft with a run."

Now there was a crowd of loungers on the dock—the usual crowd that gathers to see a ship cast off. Among them was a man we had both noticed because he was so unusually well-dressed for a waterfront loafer. Top hat, fur-collared coat, gloves, stick—oh, he was a howling swell. He was standing well along for'ard, looking down at the work, and he seemed intensely interested in the spectacle.

Suddenly he stepped on the rail and down on deck, pushed his hat back on his forehead and grabbed the gantline forehand the block. As he did so, he commenced to sing one of the old, rousing hauling songs—

"Oh, first 'twas a fist and then 'twas a fall,
To me way, yay, hay, ho,
When I sailed to the east'ard aboard a Black Ball,
A long time ago,
A long, long time ago."

It was the voice, the well-remembered voice we had just been wishing to hear. Magic; aye, that it was.

"By ——, it's the lad himself!" says Captain Flett, and then he stood gaping like myself, too astounded and delighted to say more.

It was as if new life were being poured into the veins of the men at the work. They bent to it and matched the pace-setter. The golden voice filled the ship and echoed and reechoed among the dockside buildings. The rude voices of the men roared a hoarse chorus. The weighty bunt went aloft with great jumps, as if it were no more than a roll of feathers.

When the dumfounded mate found his tongue and stammered, "Belay," the singer's huge laugh boomed out. Aye, the old laugh I remembered so well, and the old words, too. He slapped his chest.

"It was I lifted that sail, mister," he said to the mate.

"Yes, it was," the mate replied. "And who in —— are you, any way?"

He laughed again.

"I'm the chanteyman," says he.

"Lay aft here, Dugan!" sang out Captain Flett.

It was then he noticed us for the first time, standing by the cabin, and recognized us as old shipmates. Such a delighted look in his face! He remembered our names and hailed us by them and held up for our inspection the soiled, split gloves. He stripped them from his hands and tossed them over the rail.

"The first line I've handed in a long time," says he.

He looked it. The old voice was there, but the old Dugan had changed. Not only the clothes and the jewels on his white hands and in his tie; there was a sleekness about his jowls and middle that told of soft living and a little too much to eat. Now that he was not laughing one could see discontent and unhappiness in his face, about the mouth, and in the frank blue eyes. Aye, the voice was there, but Dugan himself had changed. He looked little like the lean, bronzed, carefree lad who four years before had clambered over the rail and adventured into Antwerp.

"And where have you come from, Dugan, and what are you doing?" asked Captain Flett.

"You know about me," says he. "The Great DuGano. I am DuGano."

We had heard of DuGano, of course. The papers were filled with him just then. But neither of us had ever connected Dugan with DuGano. I'll admit the news quite took my breath.

But it didn't seem to impress old Flett. He regarded Dugan with his wise old eyes.

"So you're not going to sea any more?" says he.

"Not any more," said Dugan.

He said it sadly. Then he slapped his chest with the old gesture and broke out boastfully:

"You would like me to be a sailor still. A good chanteyman. But now I am DuGano, the Great DuGano. I am in the opera. I have money, servants, carriages. I don't eat salt junk now; I eat what I wish. I sang for nothing; now people pay to hear me."

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Suddenly he stopped his speech, and I saw that his eyes had filled with tears.

"No, captain," he added; "I don't go to sea any more."

"You eat what you wish, but you are still hungry; eh, lad?" says Flett. "Hungry for ships. And the sea."

That brought another laugh out of Dugan. But it was a strange laugh, not at all the hearty bellow we had listened to a moment since. It was a polite, stage laugh.

"Me hungry?" says he. "I've never been hungry except in hungry ships. Like the *Homer Wilberforce*, captain, or this old windbag of yours. Tea and hardtack, and a chantey on an empty belly to make the old wreck move. That's when I was hungry, captain."

"And happy," says Flett.

Dugan made no reply.

"I'm leaving the dock in a few minutes," Flett continued. "But I lay off Tompkinsville tonight and go to sea in the morning. I could use a good chanteyman this voyage, Dugan."

"I hope the boarding-master gives you one, sir," says Dugan. "Tonight I sing *Tonio* at the Metropolitan."

And he began to hum the "Prologo" to us.

"I'm glad you are getting on so well," says Flett. "It's a long passage to Manila, and sore need of a voice at capstan and halyards. Yes, I could use a chanteyman."

"You could. You could use me, DuGano. The Great DuGano."

Dugan seemed genuinely amused.

"You go to sea and live hard for months; I stay ashore and live easy and sing, and people will pay and cry, 'The Great DuGano!' And I will make so much money that next year I can buy your ship if I like."

"Yes, I suppose so," says Captain Flett. "I lay at Tompkinsville all night, and weigh at dawn."

WHEN the tug came and took the *Margaret Doan* down-bay Dugan accompanied me up-town (continued Captain Baker). He seemed eager for my companionship, and I was eager enough for his. To tell the truth "the Great DuGano" part of it rather dazzled me. I found it fascinating to compare this well-spoken gentleman with the rough-spoken fo'csle hand of my memory.

At first we talked of ships and shipmates. He wanted to know about this man and that. Had I ever sailed with Scotty MacPherson again; and that belly-robbing steward of the *Wilberforce*—"now what did the blankety-blank call himself?"—had he opened the eating-house in Butte Road as he planned?

And the old bark herself. He had read of her being lost with all hands on the China coast the very year after we were in her. Poor old Captain Minter! He'd bet they hadn't a proper chanteyman on board that last voyage.

As he chattered on in this vein the fo'csle lingo returned to his tongue. Aye, the Great DuGano with his careful English disappeared, and by my side was Salvatore Dugan of Telegraph Hill. It was very odd to hear the phrases of a fo'csle Jack come out of the mouth of such an expensive-looking toff. I think I realized even then how thin was the DuGano veneer over the Dugan interior.

He went to a chop-house with me and sipped a glass of milk while I ate my supper. He must not eat before a performance, he informed me. After the meal we boarded a cab and drove about the park until it was time for him to go to the theater.

As we rode, the talk of ships exhausted itself; or, more correctly, I directed the conversation to his career, for I was more interested in that than in the other. I got him to talking about DuGano. He lost his sea lingo, and became pompous. Oh, it was delicious to hear him; he was just like a healthy twelve-year-old boy boasting of his toys. He bragged of his servants, one for the theater and one for the hotel, of the fine horses behind which he took the air of a morning, of the villa he would buy in Calabria. He grew excited about himself and shouted his triumphs and laughed his great laugh.

And yet this boisterous gaiety just barely lacked something. I didn't know what; I couldn't put my finger on the missing element. Perhaps it was his laugh. I thought I sensed determination behind it; it did not bubble spontaneously, as of old, as indeed it had bubbled that very afternoon when he sang the chantey.

He insisted I go to the theater with him. I was gleeful over the opportunity; I had never been behind the scenes in any theater, and to peek at the secrets of a great opera-house—that was indeed a treat. I was impressed by the exaggerated respect shown

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Dugan by the crew of the place, and I thought his dressing-room more commodious and luxurious than any skipper's berth I ever clapped eyes upon.

People kept coming to see Dugan after he had donned the clown's costume, and while he was being made up by the wizened, one-eyed dago who was his "theater man." These people were of the great of the city; their very names abashed me. Thin, nervous, gray men in evening clothes—and their women.

Aye, it was the women chiefly who wanted to meet the Great DuGano. Fat, moist women, plastered over with diamonds. Gushers, the lot of them.

I remember one in particular. She came with Maum there, and she reeked of high scent and riches. She was the wife of a great financier—one of the principal angels of Maum's venture, I suspect.

Me she favored with a frigid half-nod; but she wrapped herself about Dugan, so to speak, and fairly smothered him with praise and welcome. The Great DuGano might consider her the mouthpiece of Society. He must sing his best tonight; Society was on the *qui vive*. Society was there to hear and confirm Europe's judgment as to the greatest voice in the world. Her prayers were with him on this occasion of his first appearance in the New World. She just knew he would be superb. And so on and so forth.

When she had gone, Dugan turned his painted face to me, and I was astonished at the anger in his eyes and disgust in his voice.

"The Great DuGano—*bah!*" says he. "A pet cat for old women!"

I said nothing, and after a moment he went on with what he was telling me before the woman had appeared.

He had been telling me about the triumphal tour of the cities that was to come. He had been bragging mightily about it; but now of a sudden the vainglory left his voice. He said—

"And she'll be stewing in the doldrums, and the men in her will be sweating blood at the braces—while I am going about the country, making big money."

"Good Lord, you're not sorry at the prospect, I hope!" I exclaimed.

"And then they'll be running down the trades in the fine, soft weather," he went on, "and in the dog watches the men will be yarning on the forehatch, and wishing Sally Dugan was there to give them a sing-song. And he'll be in Cincinnati or New Orleans singing to people who want to hear the Great DuGano."

He lifted his head, and I saw tears slipping down the layers of grease-paint on his face. His manner had completely changed, too; he was the sailor again.

"By ——, mister, I want to ship!" says he.

"Dugan, you are crazy," I told him.

I looked about that dressing-room of his, a far finer room than any I had ever occupied on board ship. I looked at him—the Great DuGano. It was preposterous.

"Man, do you remember what a ship's fo'csle is like?" I asked him. "The cold, the stink, the rotten grub? And you—here! You ship! Before the mast? Don't be silly!"

"I am not silly," he flashed.

He stood up and gestured, embracing the whole theater, the whole city.

"This is silly, this whole business!" he cried. "And DuGano—what is he? A fine figure, eh? Yes—a fine figurehead. The finest voice in the world, and he must sing while the rich women pet him and give him money!—like a tame cat; like a tame dog. They don't care about his voice; they don't need his song. They get on just as well without him, playing with some other DuGano. *Faugh!*

And the men are just as bad—worse. What does DuGano's song do for them? Does it help them do their work?

"You say, 'Don't be silly,' and I say, 'Mister, was the chanteyman silly out there?" Here! Yes, silly; —— silly. The Great DuGano—the great voice! What does it do? What good is it—here? Does it help them do their work? Does it make them happy?

"How about the *Homer Wilberforce*, mister? Silly, eh? But it was Salvatore's song that brought you into port—Sally's voice. He made sail and brought the yards around; he kept the men happy and on the job with empty bellies. He was of some use—out there.

"But here—now—the Great DuGano! *Faugh!* A pet cat, a lap-dog, a plaything. A songbird—me! A —— singing louse!"

He dropped into his chair and buried his face in his hands. There was a struggle going on within him and that Celtic-Latin

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temperament of his made his soul a battle-ground open to the view of any chance on-looker. There was no concealment about Dugan. Says he:

"On board ship I could see with my own eyes what my song did. And here—they don't need it; they don't work to song ashore. And he says to me—

" 'I could use a good chanteyman this voyage, Dugan.' "

I sat there looking at him, speechless. What could I say? After all it was his affair. But I wondered how old Flett knew.

Somewhere near by a tenor commenced to try out his voice. Then a soprano started to trill. There came a knock upon the door, and the knocker called out a sentence in Italian. A summons to get ready, I suppose, for the little one-eyed dresser approached Dugan with a throat spray and spoke to him.

Dugan lifted his head with a start as if awakening from a sleep. He stared an instant, then leaped to his feet, seized the container from the man's hand and hurled it against the wall.

The servant squeaked a startled protest. Dugan thrust his clenched fist beneath the frightened man's nose and poured out a flood of hot, sibilous Italian. The little fellow backed hurriedly away from the fist. Dugan jerked open the door, thrust the man outside and closed and locked the door in his astonished face.

He stood with his back against the door, looking at me. Suddenly he laughed. Aye, and it was Dugan's laugh, not DuGano's. The old, bubbling, infectious laugh.

"Did you see the look in his eye?" says he. "Sure, the poor man thinks I've gone crazy."

"You have," I answered.

"I have not; and you, who was shipmates with me, know it," he replied. "But this—" he swung his arms in a wide gesture—"I was crazy ever to come to this. I don't belong here. Never did; never will. I'm a sailor. And I'm going back—where they need good chanteymen."

He lifted the window, which opened upon a fire-escape and the side street. With his leg across the sill he turned again to me.

"She looked like a smart vessel," he says, "and with a proper skipper aft and Salvatore for'ard it will be a fine passage, I'm thinking. Good-by, mister—and if you ever go back into sail, maybe we'll be shipmates again some time."

He disappeared. I was sitting there alone in the room. Soon there came a thumping on the door, and voices called urgently for admittance. When I opened the door Maum and the one-eyed man and others rushed into the room.

"Where is he?" cried Maum, staring about.

I pointed to the open window—and I reached it myself as soon as he. As we leaned out, we both caught a farewell glimpse of the man—a clown, standing on the brightly lighted street corner, while passers-by paused to stare at him. Just a glimpse—and he plunged into the crowd and was gone.

THE NAMING OF VIRGINIA CITY

by John L. Considine

THE settlement that gathered with the discovery of the famous Comstock Lode was variously named before it finally received the designation of Virginia City—the one that stuck. It was first spoken of as "Pleasant Hill," then as "Mount Pleasant Point." In August, 1859, it was known as "Ophir" and in October as "Ophir Diggings." Then it was called "Virginia Town" and finally "Virginia City," after one of the original discoverers, James Fennimore, *alias* Finney, better known as "Old Virginia." He dropped the name of Fennimore when he got into trouble in California and fled over the Sierrra into what is now Nevada.

Comstock, who was erroneously given the credit of having discovered the lode, says how the place came to be named was this:

"Old Virginia was out one night with a lot of the boys on a drunk, when he fell down and broke his whisky bottle. On rising he said—

" 'I baptize this ground Virginia.' "

Whisky played an important part in the life of Old Virginia. More than a year

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before the discovery of the Comstock—on February 22, 1858, to be exact—he made a location on a large vein lying to the westward of that lode. This vein is known as the Virginia lead or Virginia croppings. It has never yielded much ore but contains vast quantities of base metal of various kinds.

A company bought Old Virginia's claim and began suit against the Ophir company, asserting that the lead on which the Ophir company were at work was the same as located in 1858 by Old Virginia. It was a sort of speculation on the part of those who brought the suit, and it is understood that they succeeded in obtaining $60,000 from Ophir company.

At the beginning of this suit it was necessary, if possible, to produce the original notice placed upon the croppings of the lead by Old Virginia, but the men to whom he had sold his claim could never get him sufficiently sobered up to show where it could be found. Growing desperate finally, they seized the old fellow one evening, and, thrusting him into the mouth of a big tunnel, closed and locked upon him a heavy iron gate. When they went to the tunnel next morning they found Old Virginia sober but very savage.

He would neither say nor do anything until they had taken him down-town and given him half a tumbler of whisky. The hinges of his tongue thus lubricated, he was ready for business. He marched directly up the side of the mountain, and, going straight to a large tower of croppings, drew out a small block of rock; and behind it was seen the much desired notice.

As a matter of fact, what he actually sold was an interest in the sluices and diggings in Six-mile Cañon, just east of the Comstock, for twenty-five dollars. James Hart, who also had an interest in the sluices and diggings, sold his right to be "considered in" on the big discovery to John D. Winters for a horse and twenty dollars in coin. In this way Winters got into the Ophir as one of the locators, and from this came the "old-horse story" that was saddled on to Old Virginia. To fix it still more firmly upon the old fellow, the bottle of whisky was added.

He was killed in the town of Dayton in July, 1861, by being thrown from a bucking mustang that he was trying to ride while a good deal under the influence of liquor. He was pitched head first upon the ground, suffered a fracture of the skull, and died in a few hours. At the time of his death he had about three thousand dollars in coin and was preparing to return to his native State—the dream of nearly all the argonauts of those days, seldom, alas, realized.

Many years afterward a Piute buck, returning to the scenes of his youth at Virginia City, described the incident to a reporter on the *Territorial Enterprise.*

"When me pirst come here, no house here—all sagebrush. Me work here pirst time me come for Old Birginey. Yes; me work for Old Birginey down in Six-Mile Cañon."

"At mining?" suggested the reporter.

"Yes, minin'. Me heap pullem rocker. Me that time know Comstock—Old Comstock. You *sabe* him?"

"Yes. I have seen him. He is dead now. Got broke, up in Montana; bad luck all the time; got crazy and shot himself through the head with a pistol."

"Hum! Old Comstock dead," mused the old warrior. "Dead! Well, Old Comstock owe me pipty-pibe dollar. That money gone now. Well, same way Old Birginey. He owe me porty-pibe dollar when he die."

"How did he die?"

"Well, you see he die down to Dayton long time ago. Old Birginey he all the time drink too much whisky. One day he bully drunk, he get on pony. Pony he run, he buck one bully buck and Old Birginey go ober pony head. One foot stick in stirrup and pony drag ole man on ground and kill um. Me help dig one grabe, bury Old Birginey, down Dayton, by Carson River."

Many have supposed that Virginia City, Montana, was named after the Nevada community. This is not so, but its christening was sufficiently odd to merit chronicling. The Southern sympathizers residing in and about Alder Gulch, where a rich gold find was made in 1863, gave the name of Varina to the settlement which sprang up in consequence of the discovery, that being the baptismal name of the wife of the Confederate President, Jefferson Davis. Dr. Bissell, one of the miners' judges of the gulch, was called upon to draw up some papers, and having done so to date them at "Varina City."

Dr. Bissell, an ardent Unionist, replied—

"I'll be —— if I do!"

He then dated the papers "Virginia City," and by that name the community was ever afterward known.

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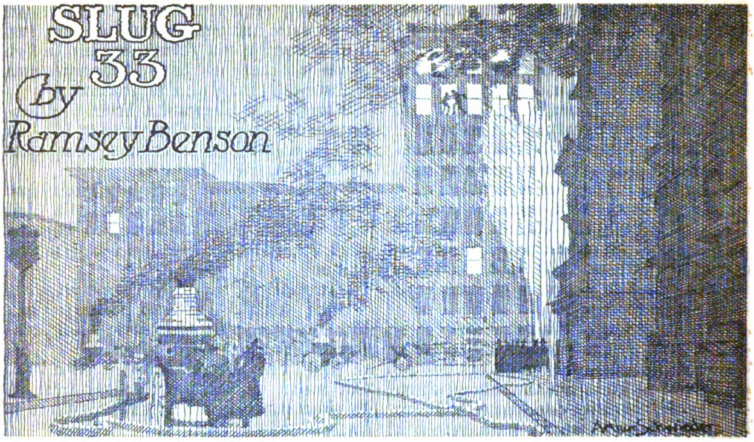
SLUG 33

by Ramsey Benson



Author of "Jastrow."

SLUGS take you back some—to the days when type was set by hand and printers were paid by the piece. Every man had a slug number, his slug showed up in the galley proofs along with whatever type he set and the type was measured to form his string. The longer the string the more money he found in his pay envelop at the end of the week.

P. Sarsfield McGurk was Slug 33 in our shop and he ran up a longer string than any other man. McGurk had his peculiarities and they got on our nerves, too, but we had to admit that he could sling type. He certainly had the knack.

Curiously enough the thing he could do so well was the only thing he never bragged about. I don't doubt he could have gone into a match with the fastest printers in the country and made a showing to be proud of, but he never claimed to have done so. He didn't overlook any other field of endeavor, though, and that was what got on our nerves. He made us mighty tired with his blow and bluster about the wonderful deeds he had done. We didn't believe a word of it. We had to admit that he could sling type, but beyond that there was just one distinction we conceded to him—we regarded him as the most colossal liar that ever drew the long bow. He had *Baron Munchausen* faded to a very faint shadow, if you asked us.

Or maybe I should say two distinctions. His exploits, as he recounted them, always made him out to be tremendously courageous, but he didn't have much luck convincing us. Somehow we couldn't shake off the feeling that a truly brave man would never boast so brazenly of his bravery and it wasn't long till we'd have taken our oath that a coward to beat McGurk was never born. No doubt there are great cowards in the world, but he had them backed off the boards. Anyway that was our notion of him and the more he talked the less we doubted.

HE WAS of the tribe of tramps. A real tramp printer is hardly ever seen any more, but in those days he was a numerous species. McGurk drifted into the shop one Sunday night, his elbows sticking out of his sleeves and his bare toes out of his shoes, and asked for a job. He showed a perfectly good card from "Big Six" in New York and when old Bill Herkimer, our foreman, asked him why he quit there he had a perfectly good excuse, though I don't remember what it was. His credentials, in short, were satisfactory. Old Bill never had much use for tramps as a class and he didn't need any more hands at

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the moment, but he couldn't very well refuse to give McGurk a tryout.

"Just let me set a couple or three takes—you don't have to pay me a cent if I don't make good," says he and old Bill told him to go to it.

It happened that he got his first take off the hook just ahead of me and when I went back for my next he was coming for his third. I could hold up my end with the most of them, too. Old Bill Herkimer was watching and it didn't take him long to make up his mind after that. He liked to have fast men about him. They cost no more and they meant quicker action in a pinch. Then, too, he enjoyed sending long strings down-stairs and causing the cashier's eyes to stick out when he made up the pay-roll.

It's a fact that when the cashier saw McGurk's first string he thought there was something crooked about it and I reckon old Bill took no small satisfaction in showing him there wasn't.

Jealous? Well, I don't deny we might have been a little jealous. Still it was the way he bragged about his heroic exploits that did most to make us dislike him.

He kept pretty quiet the first few nights—he had so little to say, in fact, that we began to think of him as a sort of dummy. I don't know why he did that unless he was canny enough to want to get settled in his job before he proceeded to make himself unpopular, though it wouldn't be like a tramp to care a whoop about his job. But whether or no, when once he got started talking he made up for lost time and then some. He had us dizzy in just a little while—dizzy and gnashing our teeth, as you might say.

The first yarn he sprung on us had to do, if I remember right, with his part in the war with Spain. Believe me, it was some part.

He claimed he was in the Navy—first-class mechanic or something like that. He enlisted as a fighting man, but they needed mechanics of his kind more and though he liked to fight better he deemed it his duty to give up his personal preferences and put in his licks where they would do the most good. He was on board the *Oregon* when she made her sensational voyage around the Horn to be in at the death when the Spaniards got theirs in Santiago Bay.

He had something to do with the electric installations and his terms in that connection were away too technical for us—we never understood just what he did but the amount of it was that the *Oregon* would have gone to the bottom if it hadn't been for him. He had the captain's word for it—Captain Clark, he called him.

"McGurk," says the captain, with tears in his eyes, "we'd sure be in Davy Jones's locker by now only for you!"

If you let McGurk tell it.

He helped Hobson with the *Merrimac*. Or rather Hobson helped him.

"Hobson," says he to us, "was a good, clean boy, but he hadn't much notion of what he was going up against and when it came to the show-down he got cold feet. He was about ready to back out, but I wouldn't let him do that. I told him we'd simply got to see it through and he took a brace and the rest is history."

According to his account he was shifted, just before the battle, from the *Oregon* to the *Brooklyn*, Commodore Schley's flagship. He gave us to understand that the transfer was made at the commodore's personal instance. Captain Clark didn't much like to give up his marvellous first-class mechanic but Schley, being in command, he had his way and McGurk went over to the *Brooklyn*.

I believe it's a fact of record that the only American killed in the battle of Santiago Bay was the chief yeoman of the *Brooklyn* and McGurk was right there when it happened. There wouldn't have been anybody killed if he could have squeezed out through the port-hole of a turret half a minute sooner. He squeezed out but a bonehead in the gun crew got in his way and he was just that shade too late to save the chief yeoman's life.

"The commodore," says McGurk to us, "was on the bridge and he saw what I did and after the battle he sent for me and shook hands with me and told me it was a brave deed, but a man as important as I was in the navigation of the ship ought not to be taking such a risk."

There were tears in the commodore's eyes, too. But he didn't say the battle would have been lost only for McGurk. We wondered why. There was some controversy, if you remember, about that battle, just who deserved the credit for winning the victory, but somehow McGurk didn't claim that it belonged to him.

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HE HAD some tall yarns about the wild and woolly West, as it used to be. He made it look like that was his particular element. He'd been right in the thick of the adventure and romance—if you let him tell it. He and Roosevelt were the chummiest kind of chums, out in Montana. Roosevelt saw him rope a steer and he did it so much better than anybody else that they called each other by their first names ever after.

"Nothing pleased 'Teddy' so much as a show of downright nerve," says McGurk to us.

When Roosevelt was president McGurk called on him at the White House and got a royal reception. He had to stay to dinner and meet the family.

"I like to have my boys know real men—there's not so many of 'em here in Washington," says Teddy. Sort of sad, wasn't it?

After dinner the president dismissed the cares of his exalted office and took McGurk to his den and they sat up till away after midnight talking about old times on the frontier.

"Do you know," says Teddy to McGurk, if you let McGurk tell it,"I looked for you high and low when I was recruiting my Rough Riders. I wanted the worst way to put you in command of a company."

Perhaps it was just as well. If McGurk had gone with the Rough Riders he couldn't have brought the *Oregon* around the Horn and the whole course of history might have been different.

He was making us pretty tired, as I say, and our comments were sarcastic. But always behind his back. We didn't venture to be sarcastic to his face. Not that we were anxious to spare his feelings, though—don't think it. The reason was that we'd framed up a job on him and part of it was to lead him on till we got him where we wanted him. So we listened to him with sober faces and made on like we swallowed his yarns whole.

WHAT started us to thinking we might take the wind out of his sails was his record, the way he told it, as a fighter with his fists. It was simply weird and the weirdest part was his encounter with "Philadelphia Jack" O'Brien. I don't know much about pugilists, but I'm told O'Brien took high rank in his day. Maybe he wasn't champion in his class, but if not that anyway the next thing to it and when McGurk claimed to have knocked him out it struck us as about the biggest lie of the lot. It was sure a whopper and it set us to thinking.

We pretended to be deeply interested. Or rather we were interested and no pretense about it only not in the way we made it appear. We pressed him for the details and stood around listening with our mouths open.

He wouldn't tell us the name of the town where it happened because a fight of that kind was against the law and he didn't wish to embarrass the people who had pulled it off.

"They treated me right," says he to us, "and they're safe so far as I'm concerned. I'll not betray their confidence."

They were members of a swell club—he didn't mind telling us so much. Not a man among them worth less than a million. The battle took place in the rathskeller behind locked doors. McGurk thought there might have been a hundred onlookers present. A select gallery, as you might say—the best in the town.

It seems the club was very much on the look-out for new talent, their matchmaker somehow got wind of McGurk and hunted him up, to see what he could do, and McGurk, without letting himself out especially, showed him. The matchmaker was profoundly impressed. Jolted to the very depths of his being, in fact.

"Would you fight Philadelphia Jack O'Brien if we got him here?" says he.

"I'll fight anybody—bar none," says McGurk. Just like that. Wildcats or anybody.

"Some of our folks," says the matchmaker, "have got it into their heads that O'Brien is the great unbeatable fighter of all time. They're good sports, too, and ready to back up their belief and if you'll take O'Brien on it may put some of the rest of us in the way to win a little easy kale."

"Anything to oblige," says McGurk.

Of course the club didn't care what it cost. They paid McGurk one thousand dollars and though he never knew what O'Brien got he didn't doubt it was a right pretty penny.

When the fight came off McGurk stalled for a round or two and then he tried a trick Joe Choynski had taught him. Choynski

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was another top-notcher and he wasn't teaching his tricks to everybody, but he recognized McGurk's great worth and passed the secret along to him. He wouldn't tell us what it was.

"It wouldn't be treating Joe right to give it away," says he.

But he tried it with Philadelphia Jack O'Brien and it worked beautifully. Less than half a minute after the bell rang for the third round O'Brien went to the mat and stayed there until long after the ten seconds had been counted off.

In point of fact he was dazed for a day or so, but when he was thoroughly recovered he sought McGurk out.

"I'll never rest easy," says O'Brien, if you let McGurk tell it, "till I see you matched up with Fitzsimmons. I can see you taking that freckled kangaroo into camp."

Fitz held the heavyweight belt at the time, but he soon lost it to Jeffries and Jeffries lost it to Johnson and McGurk wouldn't fight a black man. It was against his principles.

Well, we cooked it up right. The pit we digged under friend McGurk's feet was sure a dandy pit. We gloated over it in anticipation. In our mind's eye we saw him already at the bottom of it and he looked good to us there.

Our town boasted a bruiser known as "Diamond Dutch." He fought booze mostly and that meant he wasn't much, but we figured he was enough to serve our purpose. Anyway he looked like a pug.

He was willing to work cheap, too. He asked only twenty-five dollars to do what we wanted done.

Tim Gorman's was the joint where we mostly went after thirty was called in the early hours of the morning, to get a bite of something to eat and a drop of something that wasn't water to wash it down, and it was there we had our pit digged. Tim was in the plot to the extent that we might make any use we liked of his big back room and he'd see to it that we weren't interrupted.

Our plan was simple enough. We proposed to bring McGurk down there and get him started blowing off about what he'd done with his dukes. We'd egg him on and when he was well warmed up we'd have Diamond Dutch step forward and offer to fight a few rounds for a modest purse.

We thought we knew how it would turn out. McGurk would either fight or refuse to fight. If he refused to fight he'd write himself down a coward and if he fought he'd be licked. Either way he'd be shown up for the four-flusher he was.

Some of the boys laid bets back and forth and towards the last the odds were two to one that McGurk would turn tail and run. I didn't bet myself, but I was convinced that he wouldn't fight.

WE HAD everything set for the night of November thirty and November thirty is a date in history. For another reason, though. There was a fire that night that a whole lot of people won't forget in a hurry.

In our building. Nobody knows how it started. Circumstances pointed to an incendiary origin, but there was a mystery about it and the mystery has never been cleared up. A copy boy was the first to discover it. He was sent out with some proofs and for reasons of his own he went down by the stairs instead of taking the elevator. He glimpsed a suspicious light in a vacant office on the third floor as he passed by and when he investigated he found a pile of old papers burning.

There was a hand-grenade hanging up and the boy grabbed it and threw it but his aim was poor. The grenade was intended to break and scatter chemicals over the blaze but instead of that it glanced off and smashed out through the window.

The broken window let in a rush of air and the next the boy knew the flames had been caught up by the draft and swept out through the door over his head. He was scared and ran for his life, down the stairs, and by the time he reached the ground, though he couldn't have been more than a few seconds on the way, the fire had shot up the elevator-shaft like it was a big chimney and he could see it spreading through the top story of the building.

The top story was the eighth. A paper-box factory had it rented, and it was packed full of material that burned like tinder.

Our print-shop was in the seventh story. We had the west half of the floor and the editorial rooms of the newspaper were in the east half, with the elevator and stairs between.

The shaft of the elevator, from the third floor up, was blazing like a blast furnace

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before the alarm reached the printers. It was too late for anybody to go down that way—either by the elevator or the stairs that wound around the shaft. There was a very good fire-escape at the east end of the building and the people in the editorial rooms went down safely by it, but the printers were cut off from that outlet by the blazing shaft. It was so hot they couldn't pass. I can testify to that, for I made the attempt. I wrapped a heavy woolen coat about my face and head and made a quick dash to get by, but the heat took my breath away so that I stumbled and fell and if the others hadn't dragged me back I'd have perished right there.

The shop employed more than thirty printers regularly, but part of the force was phalanxed for the night. I judge there were about twenty of us caught in the trap.

WE CROWDED to the windows, for our only hope lay there, and we looked down on a sight such as not many men have ever seen. The police were already drawing their lines and the firemen were laying down their hose, but the marvel of it was the crowd back of the ropes. Where had the people come from so quickly and in such numbers? I don't know, but anyhow they were there, thousands and thousands of them, pressed together till they formed an unbroken sea of upturned faces. Though they were so far below us we caught the look of sick dismay in those faces and more than anything else it brought us to a sense of our tragic situation. The people were still, too, as death, as if they had been stricken dumb. The police shouted and the firemen clattered about, but not so much as a whisper came up to us from the crowd.

Of course the firemen considered life before property and their very first concern was to run up their great ladder to take us down. You will believe that we watched the process intently. The ladder lay folded across the bolsters of a gigantic truck and we saw it swing up and lengthen out joint by joint until it reached the sixth floor under us. There it stopped, and we didn't know why till a kind of shudder ran over the crowd—a shudder and a sound like a great sigh. The people down there understood—the ladder had been extended to its full length and would reach no further. It was a story short.

But right away two firemen scrambled up with a pompier ladder in their hands. You know what a pompier is like—a short ladder with a hook at the end to reach up and fasten over a window sill. It looked to be just the thing to piece out with and when the crowd saw the firemen going up with it they broke into cheers.

Meanwhile the fire was eating downward from the top of the building. We could hear it hissing and crackling as it devoured the dry material in the box factory over our heads and we could feel the heat of it through the metal ceiling. Here and there, too, the plates that formed the ceiling had begun to let go and buckle and curl and lop down for a sign that the wooden joists of the floor were burning. We had plenty to make us nervous and wishful that the firemen would hurry along with their ladders. If you've ever looked death right in the face, close up, you know how we felt, otherwise you don't, and can't.

We crowded around the window that was directly over the firemen and two or three of us leaned out and grabbed the hook of the pompier when they poked it up to us. Right there was where we got our shock—a shock that made everything so far seem like a lark by comparison, and the long and short of it was that the pompier failed to work. It was built wrong or the sill was built wrong—anyhow the hook wouldn't clutch. It had to be held by somebody up there or it would slip and let go.

See where that left us? If you don't we did. I guess the same thought was in every mind. There were hands in plenty to hold the hook until it came the last man's turn to go down but there would be nobody to hold the hook for him.

For a little a kind of spell came over us, but right away old Bill Herkimer knocked on the composing-stone with the mallet he used to lock the forms.

"Chapel come to order!" he sings out, in his big, gruff way.

That was only a form of words, of course. We couldn't have been in better order, when it came to that, standing as if we'd been whittled out of wood, staring at the boss.

"Boys," says he, "be sensible! I've never made any talk about it, but the doctor tells me I can't live six months anyhow, my heart's that bad. I'm speaking of it now because it may make you feel better about doing what I tell you to do. Holding that

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hook is my job. Now, then, let's go! Slug 1—out!"

With that he grabbed the pompier in his two hands and jammed the hook down over the sill.

"Slug 1!" he calls out again, sharp like.

Jerry Maney was Slug 1. It was an awful choice to put to any man, but I thought, and still think, he chose right.

"God bless you, Bill!" says he and without another word he went out and down the pompier.

"Slug 2—step lively!" barks Herkimer and Con Jenkinson went down.

I was Slug 14 and it came my turn almost before I could think. I was ashamed, but somehow I couldn't get the vision of the wife and babies out of my eyes and I did as the others had done before me.

IT WAS a dreadful experience even though we had got away with our lives and when we were down we huddled together at the foot of the big ladder so dazed that we didn't more than half-know what we were about. There was nobody else coming down and then in a minute we discovered that McGurk wasn't with us. He was Slug 33 and by that the last man, but he hadn't come down.

We could see old Bill Herkimer up there in the window. He had the fire behind him and his bushy head showed against it plain as day. We cried like a lot of babies and when in just a minute or so he sank back out of sight I thought my heart would break. I've known grief in my time, but never a grief like that. It didn't last long, though. My eyes were glued to that window in the seventh story and it wasn't a jiffy, as you might say, until I saw McGurk up there and he had old Bill in his arms.

The crowd didn't understand. They didn't know about the pompier having to be held at the top and they wanted the firemen to go up and lend a hand. They could see that McGurk needed help the worst way and they yelled at the firemen like a lot of crazy people. Cursed them, in fact, they were that frantic. Of course there was nothing the firemen could do.

McGurk laid old Bill down across the sill and he hung perfectly limp, with his head dangling. Right away the touch of the cool fresh air revived him some so that he lifted his head and even sat up, but we could see that he was still mighty weak. McGurk climbed out on the coping and he tried to get Bill on his feet but the old man hadn't the strength to stand alone.

To us down below, knowing about the pompier, there didn't look to be a chance. Old Bill struggled up and got on his feet after a bit, but he reeled and wavered so that McGurk couldn't let go of him for an instant. As I say there didn't seem to be a chance. But with both their faces to the wall and his arm about the old man's shoulders McGurk got the boss up beside him and in that order they started edging along the coping inch by inch toward the east end of the building where the fire escape was.

The coping was a ledge of dressed stone let into the brick wall all the way around at the level of the seventh story. I don't know how wide it was but from the ground it looked like they were walking a ribbon. I say walked—they barely crawled. They hadn't gone ten feet from the window of the print-shop when the glass in it was shivered by the heat and a tongue of flame shot out. They had other windows to pass and it would be a miracle if their retreat wasn't cut off.

But before our eyes the miracle came to pass. The firemen got their tower up and so adjusted that McGurk and old Bill flattened against the hot wall were kept drenched with a spray of water. As luck would have it, too, the fire spread toward the west. It was the west end of the roof that fell in first, with a tremendous crash and a spurt of flame that seemed to touch the sky, almost. But McGurk and the boss had turned the corner by that time and sooner than the telling they were being lifted down the ladders of the fire escape.

Bill Herkimer was pretty far gone, but we heard from his lips what had happened in the print-shop after we climbed out. Bill couldn't remember what printers were phalanxed and so he called all the numbers in order till he came to the end of the list.

"Slug 33!" he winds up and gave McGurk the sign to go—jerked his head toward the window or something like that.

But McGurk didn't budge.

"I don't think I'll go down—not that way," says he.

Bill eyed him, without a word.

"I'll hold the hook for you to go down," says McGurk. "Then I'll climb out on the coping and work my way around outside of the building to the fire-escape."

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Bill took a look at the coping out of the window.

"You'll never!" says he. "No man living could do that."

"Anyway I'm going to try," says McGurk. "Here—I'll hold the hook while you go down."

"Man, you're crazy!" says the boss.

That was the situation up there when Bill was taken with a sudden fainting spell. He felt himself crumpling down, then everything went black and the next he knew he was hanging out of the window.

WHAT became of P. Sarsfield McGurk, otherwise Slug 33? You can search me. Our first thought was of good old Bill Herkimer snatched from the jaws of death, but it wasn't many minutes till we thought of McGurk, too, and the heroic deed he had done. But when we went looking for him we found him not. He was gone. As soon as he was down the fire-escape he slid out of sight in the crowd and the places that had known him knew him no more. We never saw or heard of him afterward.

I guess it was the tramp in him. Once a tramp always a tramp. Most likely he'd begun to get uneasy and when he felt the impulse to move on he simply moved, without ado.

We paid Diamond Dutch his promised twenty-five dollars and ten dollars more to forget what we'd meant to do. We didn't like to think of it and we wouldn't have it known for the world.

Author of "Uncle Henry Would Enjoy This," "Self-Defense," etc.

TO THE dramatic history of Madrigal Place in the San Andres, another chapter was in the making when Louis Bern, bronzed cosmopolite from the far reaches of cattle country in both Americas and half-owner in the Madrigal range, piloted Redman, his thousand pound, blood-bay gelding, up the sun-drenched pinnacle south of Bottle-neck Cañon.

Veteran stockmen of the southwest remembered when, in the old lawless days, Henry Madrigal "squatted" on the pine-and-rock-clad location that still bears his name; how he fought his valorous but losing battle against five gunmen, hired by Sam Barnhill whose thousands of Flying Y cattle even then dotted the plains at the base of the mountains; they had seen Barnhill, greedy and dominant, hold the place as "protection" to his prairie range for almost thirty years, and had rejoiced when Bern, a

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newcomer in the country and self-educated in his years of vagabondage, combined his seasoned judgment with the youthful enthusiasm of his partner, "Thad" Wyman, to wrest Madrigal Place by legal process from the Flying Y owner.

There had been hectic days when the minds, muscles, and even the lives of Bern and Wyman were pitted against the cunning devices of Barnhill, but the law finally rendered to them a service it had been powerless to confer on Henry Madrigal—justice.

Hence, the partners, known as "Tiger" and "Cub" to their friends—for the bond of affection between Bern, compact, matured of mind and muscle, and Wyman, ebullient, leather-skinned, hard-riding son of the frontier, was epic—came into possession of the historic range. They stocked the mountains with Herefords, purchased with money realized from the sale, to Barnhill, of their former ranch, far to the southwest in Hackberry Hills. And Barnhill, smarting under the adversities of Fate—which he had controlled with an iron hand for many years—declared a vendetta; but, for almost a year, now, the partners had been unmolested.

Autumn had come again with its silver frost on the evergreens by night and they concluded, finally, that Barnhill's threats were merely the ravings of a defeated man who saves his face by roaring intimidation.

Perhaps the death of Mrs. Barnhill, whose childless life with the dominant cattleman was notoriously unhappy, had tempered his wrath and stilled a desire for vengeance.

BERN, looking down in Bottleneck Cañon, knew that Barnhill had struck! For, huddled at the "bottle's" southern extremity were forty or fifty head of full-grown, rangy, wild-eyed, Old Mexico cows bearing—he could see even at that distance—the partnership brand and earmarks of himself and Wyman. They were cattle neither he nor Thad had bought; cattle to which they could show no bill of sale; cattle that had been branded by some one else. They were cattle, moreover, that the "T. L. Cattle Company"—the corporate name of the partners—could not claim to have raised, for there were hundreds of witnesses to the arrival at Tedler, the nearest and only shipping point, of a trainload of Hereford cows and bulls.

A Hereford cow may rear a "throwback" type of black and white Mexican calf—a not unusual bovine freak of nature; but Bern felt that he would be imposing greatly on the credulity of any court to ask it to believe that the red, bald-faced herd had produced *full grown* Old Mexico stock within a year's time.

Bern's side vision, alert as his brain and tense sinews, caught an object on the opposing hillside; but a keen survey of the rocks, crevices and trees failed to re-locate it. He thought at first that Wyman might have ridden his part of the range in record time and have something to report.

"Nerves," Bern decided, putting steel to Redman.

His mind swiftly developed a plan of action as he balanced to the horse's leaps down the mountain.

"Who would have a big idea in planting this stuff on our range?" he inquired of himself. "Mr. Sam Barnhill; none other. Why? He's the one dyed-in-the-wool enemy we have who owns the money to spend on such an elaborate frame. He also sees his way clear to control of this range if Thad and I spend some several years in the pen for buying smuggled cattle. Any court would convict us on the evidence he has so thoughtfully provided—if some arm of the law should happen to see it. Happen to see it?

"Listen," he chided himself. "Would the erudite Sam waste much time in getting word to the proper official that Louis Bern and Thad Wyman have just received a fresh consignment of smuggled livestock? He would not! Would the official respond eagerly? He would! United States marshals; their deputies; Texas Rangers; New Mexican sheriffs and their aides have been running themselves ragged, trying to break up the border running of contraband cattle. If they could make an 'example' of some one it would discourage malefactors of great stealth who buy cattle in Old Mexico for nothing and sell them at inviting prices to purchasers on this side of the Rio Grande.

"Would it constitute a defense for Thad and me to point out that we would hardly be so insane as to buy at the border—sixty miles from here; drive the stock across country with all the risks of capture, and turn them loose with our brands on them? A court would yawn and deplore the senility of the alibi. It would inquire for our bill of sale or the vented brand of a former owner

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—well, that's one thing I must find out about right now. *Is* there a vented brand? Is there any mark on those black hides that will give us a leg to stand on or a clue to work out?"

Bern's forty-one years of experience had taught him that a tranquil—even facetious—mind is best adapted to think quickly in an emergency. He reined Redman through the mouth of Bottle-neck and approached the herd, lariat in hand, whistling softly to reassure the milling cattle. His loop snaked out and settled around the horns of the most convenient cow, which crashed to earth when Redman turned off abruptly and held a taut rope until his master had tied the animal down with a hogging-string.

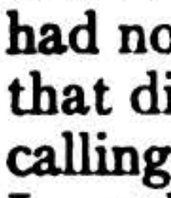
Bern's practised eye took in the freshly blazoned "L. T." on the ribs; the sharpened left ear. The brand had been applied and the ear-mark cut within the past twenty-four hours.

He glanced at the morning sun before setting to work with fingers and pocket knife to "feel out," through the long hair, any brand that might be dimmed by age and overgrown by the heavy winter coat.

"Kind of Sam to make us a present of this stock," he murmured with a certain grimness. "Somehow, I think I've learned about it earlier than he expected. It's about nine o'clock now. He had 'em driven here last night, under cover of dark. He would get in touch with Sheriff Balrondorf at Marona as soon as possible this morning but probably not before eight. Bal would gather a Government man to bring with him—in view of the international nature of the case. If they left Marona about now they'd reach Flying Y headquarters ranch about one o'clock. They'd borrow horses there. Taking a half-hour out for dinner and figuring their speed from that point at seven miles an hour, they'd get out here somewhere between five and six this evening. That leaves me considerable time to work in. Sam evidently doesn't think we ride our range very systematically. He would feel complimented to know that we have been on the outlook for his fine Spencerian hand."

No results attending his efforts to ferret out an obscure brand, Bern released the cow and leaped to the saddle.

"Slickears straight from Old Mexico," he communed with himself. "What a beautiful picture we make in this frame—for Sam!"



HE WAS still coiling his rope as Redman loped through the cañon exit when a horseman charged from behind an ambuscade of rocks and fallen timber with a crisp mandate—

"Reach high!"

Bern checked Redman instanter; elevated his hands, dropping reins and rope—when he noted the stranger's easy command of a leveled six-shooter.

"Greetings 'Little Stranger,'" he hailed jovially to cover his surprize and gain time to think. "Never saw you so well. You were a trifle distant a while back—" there was a satisfaction in knowing that nerves had not betrayed him into seeing something that did not exist—"but I thought you'd be calling around to pay your respects. Shall I get down?"

"Just a minute," grinned the man. He was young; marked hard by weather and dissipation, but his face was within one day of being clean shaved and showed strength, intelligence and a pleasant reaction to Bern's jocularity. "Never saw you to better disadvantage myself," he remarked, riding to a point of discretion and relieving Bern of the gun in his cartridge-belt. He investigated the pockets of Bern's chaps.

"Leggin's pocket has a gun-clip, too, but it's empty," he observed. "Reckon you can get down now. Act human, but don't make any false passes with your hands."

Bern dismounted and admired the lithe swiftness with which his captor flipped from the saddle without changing the direction of his gun barrel.

"My name's Bern," he offered. "B-e-r-n. I generally spell it; otherwise people call me 'Burns.'"

"Y'ur name an' manner are both familiar," rejoined the stranger grinning.

"Then you have two advantages—three in fact. You know my name; my business—and you wave a wicked shooting-iron in my face."

Bern smiled.

"Does it wave?" the man inquired in mock chagrin. "I gen'rally aim t' hold it steady. It mayn't be much advantage, but I'll keep it. I'll swap even on th' other two, though. 'Light's' my name—I mostly don't spell it, assumin' folks can tell it from dark; an' I'm a deputy U. S. Marshall. I'm loose

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herdin' those cattle yonder. There's some suspicion regardin' their pedigree. An' I reckon I'd better hobble y'u if I'm t' continue with my duties till relief comes."

"No objection to showing me your badge?" Bern asked gently.

Light significantly tapped his gun with a disengaged forefinger.

"While I'm foolin' 'round showin' y'u my decorations, you'd be figurin' out some practical joke on me. No, I'll have t' disoblige this time an' let th' 'Colonel'—" he again indicated the .44—"be my authority."

Bern accepted the ultimatum without argument and sighed. He sat on the ground and started unbuckling his chaps.

"You don't mind if I take off my leggings, do you?" he begged permission confidently, and Light, squatting sociably on his boot-heels, offered no objection. "They're uncomfortable to sit around in."

Bern unhooked the snaps on his left legging—the side toward Light—and began on the other. Light discoursed amiably about non-essentials and twirled his gun on the trigger-guard.

"Drop it!"

Bern's command came sharply and Light's six-shooter spun off his finger.

Light expressed indignation and commiseration for himself as he gazed into the shiny muzzle of the weapon that peeped from under the crook of Bern's right leg.

"I never did put confidence in a man but what I got gypped," Mr. Light declared. "I'd 'a' swore you wasn't heeled after I frisked y'u," he lamented.

Bern chuckled and retrieved the gun. He slipped it into the pocket where Light had discovered an empty holster.

"There is also a gun-clip in my right boot-leg," he commented. "Silly to carry two sidearms—or even one; but since a couple of trying experiences with Mr. Sam Barnhill—who once owned this range, you know—I've formed a habit of preparedness."

He transferred his own gun from Light's hip-pocket to its customary holster.

"Now Light," said Bern, "you've acted like a regular person; and I'm going to try to prove to you that I'm one. I'm not going to search you for another gun—which you may or may not have; but I'm going to ask you to sit tight till I've finished with what's on my mind. You've formed opinions about those cattle. Now listen to my side of it."

"I promise t' be good. Speak, mister. I've heard a lot o' sad stories an' can stand yours. Starvin' mother? Sick kids?"

Light spoke frivolously, reaching inside his jumper to a vest pocket. Bern eyed him keenly but made no move for his gun.

"Now didn't I give y'u my word?" Light demanded aggrievedly. "I ain't reachin' for a gat; just after cigaret makin's."

The muscles in Bern's smooth, copper-colored face relaxed.

"Smoke up," he invited. "Roll me one when you have time." Bern smoked cigars at the ranch but never carried them with him. "I couldn't roll one on a bet. Did you ever hear about this Madrigal range?"

"Never," Light averred.

"It belonged to my uncle, Henry Madrigal, who was raising my sister Louise and me. We were orphans—both named after our mother. I'll skip a lot," Bern promised, "but you wouldn't understand a few things that I want you to know before you—" he slanted his eyes humorously at Light—"throw me in jail.

"Louise and I were out berrying one day in the hills behind the cabin when we heard shooting. When we got to a point where we could see into the cañon—there were four dead men lying on the ground near the house. One was Uncle Henry; the rest were strangers. Two other men were kicking at Uncle Henry's body. We kids were paralyzed with fright—Louise was nine and I eleven—and didn't go back. We took to the hills; got to Roswell after a hideous trip. Since then I've been all over the world—wherever there was cow-work to do—and Louise died some years ago——"

"Stop a second an' get y'ur breath," Light broke in and offered Bern a cigaret. "Was this Henry Madrigal th' 'fightin' nestor of th' San Andres' that so many yarns are spun about?"

"He's the man." Bern's reply was tinged with pride. "The tenderest man possible with us kids——"

"I don't recollect about that part." Light inhaled copiously from his cigaret, and smoke oozed from his nostrils as he spoke. "But I've heard tell o' this gent that went to th' mat with five gunmen over a squatter's right which controlled cattle-range. He killed two of 'em; flattened two more with th' butt o' his gun when he run out o' shells—an' then th' fifth ruined him. Yep—" Light paid tribute with a solemn nod of the head—"that boy built quite a rep for New

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Mexico with us Arizonians, but I didn't know this was his home range. An' you're his kin," he added. "Then what?"

"So far as I'm concerned there's nothing for twenty-nine years. I'd drunk of the Rio Grande, and you know the tradition about that. One always comes back. Recollection of Uncle Henry's death faded to a memory, and New Mexico seemed like home after I'd carried a wandering foot to the ends of the earth. So *I* came back. Nobody knew me, of course, and I didn't tell who I was. Barnhill owned Madrigal—this —place. Title had passed to him, according to report, from the survivors of that famous gun battle; and rumor had it that Barnhill engineered the whole thing. But I didn't believe it—until later. My experience has been with men who did their own dirty work instead of hiring some else to do it; and I've met some tolerably tough nuts——"

"Maybe that explains why y'u didn't act none too self-conscious an' embarrassed when I throwed down on y'u a while back," Light observed dryly.

Bern laughed:

"You're no 'tough nut,' Light. You're simply acting under orders without knowing the facts—which I'm trying to give you. I have an idea that you wouldn't care to railroad an innocent man to prison any more than he'd care to be railroaded.' "

"Shoot," Light urged, snapping his spent cigaret into a clump of greasewood. "But remember that what y'u say may be used against y'u. What fin'ly convinced y'u about Barnhill?"

"Well—" Bern chewed thoughtfully on a sprig of mesquite—"Thad Wyman and I formed a partnership and located in the Hackberry Hills. This didn't suit Barnhill; our range bordered his and he hired a detective named Goren to catch us stealing cattle. This Goren, when he couldn't show results in any other way, knocked Wyman into an abandoned prospect hole and left him for dead. I trailed Goren; forced him into a written confession—which I still have—and listened in on his report to Barnhill later the same night. Barnhill dug up three hundred dollars which he'd promised Goren to kill either Thad or me. Goren hit the trail and hasn't been heard from since."

Bern grinned reminiscently and continued:

"I drove a bargain with Barnhill that I'd keep quiet about the affair if he'd buy me out at a big price—so that's how he came into possession of our ranch in Hackberry Hills. And I learned, at that time, his connection with uncle Henry's death. Of course Wyman wasn't dead. As a matter of fact he was leading a crew of engineers to this range while——"

"What for?" Light was becoming vastly interested.

"Because," Bern resumed, "Barnhill's title to the forty acres that control all this territory—on account of water—was defective. Thad and his transit men ran out the correct lines and we bought the land from the Government. We also leased several hundred additional acres to make ourselves secure. We'd known for a long time that Madrigal Place was open territory, but I wouldn't agree to jumping it until I was convinced that Barnhill had a hand in that old tragedy. Things being as they were, I saw no reason why we shouldn't have it. It was my rightful inheritance, and Barnhill had used it nearly thirty years. Barnhill had hired killers to get rid of my uncle; he'd hired another to kill my partner."

"Why didn't y'u send him up for conspiracy or somethin'?" Light inquired. "Y'u had him dead t' rights with that confession y'u mention—if y'u're dealin' out facts to me."

Bern nodded.

"We could have sent him over the road—easy. Thad wasn't bound by any promise of secrecy—as I was; so, when he 'came alive' he spilled the beans. Barnhill was arrested, but later released when we refused to prosecute. We thought he'd been punished enough.

"In view of everything," Bern said earnestly, "Barnhill's conduct since that time has worked out to a logical conclusion—in this." He pointed to the bawling cattle in Bottle-neck. "He couldn't depend on local cowboys to help him frame any meanness on Thad or me. They're our friends. So he let out all the old hands and worked his range with a few strangers that drifted in. Then he built a commissary and laid in a supply of booze—importing his stuff from Marona instead of trading at Tedler as he'd always done before. Folks thought he was doing it to spite Tedler merchants and saloonmen who were out of sympathy with his rough work on Wyman

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and me; but I think his motive was to keep his new hands from going to town and getting filled up with local gossip.

"If Barnhill was planning a raid on this outfit, he'd want to be surrounded by men who were also hostile to us. He'd control their minds in such a way that when it came time to use them, they'd feel that they were working on a private grudge. These strangers never went to town—nor did the other Flying Y riders that Barnhill took on from time to time—so they didn't have a chance to feel public sentiment.

"Well," Bern concluded, "you can see why Barnhill wants us off this range. You can also see why he doesn't dare show his hand in a conspiracy against us; we could hamstring him with those old charges; we could also show prejudice. But he's worked it smoothly. He got hold of some smuggled cattle; used his men to handle 'em; brand 'em and drive 'em here. Then he notified officials in Marona—and here we are."

Light yawned.

"Bern," he remarked casually, "y'u listen reasonable. But y'u've left out some important details at th' finish. How could Barnhill get a Gov'ment man up here so quick after th' stock arrove without exposin' his game?"

"He couldn't," Bern grinned wisely.

"Then how do y'u explain me?" Light demanded.

"Easy," Bern laughed again. "You're one of Barnhill's riders. He planted you here as a witness and to do just what you've done—guard against Wyman or me finding the stock and driving it to cover. You exposed yourself when you didn't show your badge."

"Right as rain in dry weather!" Light beamed appreciation. "Only, I give y'u my word I didn't know I was workin' on a frame. Hilliard, th' wagon-boss, put me on th' trail o' these slick-ears early this mornin', tellin' me what he suspected. He give me orders to stay with th' herd, in case they proved t' be Mexicoes, an' make myself out t' be a deputy-marshal if any one showed up. If I didn't get back in a certain time, he was t' send some regular officers to look over th' lay an' take you an' Wyman into camp. These officers was also t' make me a deputy so that I could testify as a Gov'ment man an' not drag th' Flyin' Y into th' mess. Hilliard said he could manage it that way 'cause Federal agents'd be so glad t' get a line on this particular kind o' case that they'd protect any informer.

"I got here," Light divulged further, "about daylight while th' brands was still smokin'. I tried t' trail th' horse tracks leadin' out of th' cañon but they lost themselves in th' rocks—an' that set me to wonderin': Why should men build a trail that looms up like a lighthouse when drivin' th' stuff here; be at such pains t' get 'em branded immediate—which wouldn't leave 'em any possible alibi if th' stock was discovered; an' then be so darn particular about hidin' their sign afterward?

"I was millin' this over in my mind when you showed—an' what you've just mentioned seems t' tally out right vigorous. You've explained why Barnhill didn't dast t' show his hand which sounds a heap more convincin' than Hilliard's remark that th' boss didn't *want* t' get mixed up in th' mess. Moreover you don't look like a man that's spent a night in th' saddle; an' y'u don't talk or act like a man that'd jackpot hisself on account o' not usin' brains. I—I've been some misguided by statments that you an' y'ur pardner *stole* this range from Barnhill—which ain't considered ethical where I come from; that you an' Wyman was robbin' Flyin' Y blind—beefin' stock an' brandin' calves; an' that y'u was makin' a reg'lar business o' takin' profits on smuggled cattle.

"Not that it's any o' my business," Light apologized, "but I got a right to my opinions."

"And what's your opinion now?" Bern carefully subdued an impulse to shake hands with himself and kiss the hard-faced but discerning cowboy.

"Right now it's my opinion that Joe Light is goin' t' help Louis Bern figure his way out from one —— of a squally lay," the pseudo-deputy declared himself. "What's th' program?"

"Seems to me," Bern said, "that the best 'out' is for Thad and me to claim the cattle and show a bill of sale to them."

"Now I know for sure that you're a smart man," Light admired. "But where's th' bill o' sale comin' from?"

"From Mariano Valdez—over in the Rio Grande *bosque*. He's the one man in the entire country who is qualified to pass title on this bunch of longhorns—unbranded. He runs a couple thousand head of 'em, and he's my friend."

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"Is he th' 'friend in deed' to th' 'friend in need?' "

"Sudden death would be the only thing to keep Mariano from going down the line for me."

"Let's hope he keeps his health for a while. An' wouldn't it be a good plan t' run those cows t' cover till some one fixes 'em up with nice, ancient-lookin' brands an' Valdez' vent?" Light's gray eyes twinkled. "Just so's t' play safe."

Bern smiled appreciation—

"Acid brands?"

"Sure," Light expounded. "A well-placed acid brand has kept many a innocent man out of th' pen, just as a poor one'll send a crook over th' road. An' this is a good time o' year t' do th' business—when cattle are growin' their winter hair."

"Good, old scout!" Bern warmed to Light's friendliness. Here was a man so anxious for fair play that he was willing to adopt devious methods to obtain it! "It won't be necessary. Mariano's bill of sale will stand up under fire. You just sit tight with the cattle. Don't tell any one that I've been here—you can ride over my tracks or run the stock over 'em. Let the marshal, when he comes, deputize you, if that's in the program. I'll hunt Thad; send him after the bill of sale and wait at the cabin for a posse to arrest me."

"Check." Light concurred. "All I do is be useless—an' get deputized for my pains."

Bern rearranged his chaps and his hand came in contact with the bulge of Light's gun. He tossed the .44 to his companion and started for Redman—but paused when Light soberly drew a pistol from under his jumper and remarked:

"I could 'a' got it when I was goin' after my smokin'. I reckon you an' me are goin' t' get along, Bern." His face wrinkled amiably. "Fly away birdie. Maybe we'll meet in jail."

LATE afternoon—the New Mexico evening when the sun drops slowly behind western mountains in a haze of flaming gold and purple clouds—Bern, standing on the ancient Madrigal cabin gallery, smoked his cigar tranquilly as he listened to Sheriff Zeb Balrondorf introduce his business; a United States Marshal, and one Joe Light, a deputy, at the same time.

"This here," Balrondorf explained, "is Herb Dalrose—" He hesitated while Bern's untroubled eyes took in the Federal badge. "An's this's Joe Light, one o' Dalrose's deputies. We thought maybe y'u could tell us somethin' about those Mexico cattle down yonder in a cañon."

Bern varied his greeting to the newcomers by a slight wink, unnoticed by the others, when he nodded to Light.

"Well now!" exclaimed Bern looking at the sweat-stained Flying Y ponies—borrowed for the occasion. "Too bad you had all this ride for nothing. Wyman and I bought those cattle from Mariano Valdez over in the Rio Grande *bosque* yesterday."

"Does Valdez make a practise of selling unbranded stock?" Dalrose inquired, smoothing his reddish mustache.

"Not generally, I think," Bern replied easily. "But he'd picked up these mavericks in his round-up and offered 'em to us cheap. Nothing unusual in that, is there? *Bosque* cattle will sometimes miss several round-ups in a row. I've seen twelve and fourteen year old cows and bulls down there without a mark on 'em. Those longhorns get wild and hard to find in the brush."

Dalrose's broad face registered disappointment. He regarded Balrondorf with irritation for having brought him on a false scent; but he weakened not at all in his examination.

"What was the idea of bringing them across country at night?"

"Why, marshal," Bern retorted in high good humor. "You should know that cattle can be driven twice as far in the cool of the night as they can travel in the hot daytime. If we'd started from Valdez' this morning, we'd have been forced into a dry camp, ten or twelve miles from home, tonight. As it was, they strung out like racehorses and we covered the forty miles before daylight."

Dalrose changed the subject, exasperated that he had asked a question with so obvious an answer.

"I suppose you have a bill of sale handy?"

"Not right now," Bern apologized. "You see, we made the trade unexpectedly and didn't have any money. So we could hardly ask for a bill of sale when he offered to let us take the cattle and pay for them later. Thad left here before noon with a check for Valdez; he ought to be back in the morning with the bill of sale. Will you wait?"

"We will," Dalrose announced firmly.

Balrondorf had led him to a clean-cut

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case; it had threatened to break down under Bern's smooth explanations; but now it assumed a more promising aspect.

"Light," he ordered his new deputy—who stood appalled and delighted with the magnificence of Bern's mendacity, "take our horses to the corral; feed 'em. And be ready to relieve Harrod at daylight."

"And who might Harrod be?" Bern inquired, reaching inside the door for his hat.

"Another deputy that I brought along to guard the evidence," Dalrose replied bruskly. "We left him on duty."

"I see. Then you left Marona with full information as to what you might expect here in the nature of evidence. Who was your informant?"

"Deputy Light. He's been on y'ur trail for some time, young man," the marshal told him severely—thus demonstrating a lie-ability equal to Bern's, and a fidelity to his promise not to divulge his source of information. "Light has been suspectin' y'u of handlin' smuggled stock for some time, but he never got it on y'u till last night."

"Sorry to trouble the deputy with my misdemeanors," Bern murmured. "I'll be more careful next time."

"There'll be no 'next time,'" Dalrose opined, "if that bill o' sale fails to appear. S'pose you show Light where the grain is kept while the sheriff an' I start supper. And remember you're under arrest."

"Oh, you hadn't mentioned it before. All right," Bern submitted gracefully, following Light down the rocky trail.

"BE CRAFTY, old-timer," Light warned. "Don't get chesty with th' marshal. Y'u're not out of th' woods yet by considerable. S'pose Wyman can't get a bill o' sale from Valdez—then what?"

He led his horses inside the corral and stood by to close the gate after Bern.

Bern held up a hand for silence.

"Didn't you hear something?"

"Sure I did. I ain't deaf," Light was indignant. "Shod hoof against rock. Likely a horse comin' in for water."

"Not from down cañon," Bern objected. "Horse pasture's up the hill. Some one's coming up the trail from outside."

They listened and, after an interim, the metallic sound was replaced by a crunching of gravel.

"Man afoot," Light whispered. "He's stashed his mount somewheres. Any friends on th' dodge y'u'd rather I wouldn't see?"

Bern grinned.

Out of the dusk came Thad Wyman's guarded voice—

"Louis?"

"Don't be so far away," Bern invited. "Step lively. I wasn't looking for you till morning."

Thad slipped into the corral which was concealed from the house by a galvanized iron water storage tank. His shirt was soggy with sweat. He carried his spurs.

"You smell like a Turkish bath, young feller," Light observed when Bern had introduced them. "If you've been to Valdez ranch you've set a saddle continuous since early noon."

"Sixty miles—taking the short-cut," Thad removed his hat and mopped his brow, talking swiftly. "Didn't know who I'd find here, so I left Gruya down th' line a ways an' come in quiet, packin' my spurs. One o' us, Louis, needs t' be free an' arrangin' for bondsmen, else th' two of us'll be greetin' friends through jail bars."

Thad's saddle-brown complexion showed a trifle pale in the twilight. His normal exuberance was subdued and his voice carried a timbre of excitement.

"We'll get no bill of sale from Mariano Valdez. He's dead!"

Bern had been prepared for disappointment. Thad's cautious approach had warned him. But the announcement of Valdez' death came like a blow. It was more than a blow—it was disaster. He clapped hands, wordlessly, to his partner's shoulder—the reassuring gesture with which he always backed his friend in times of stress; the attitude that had won him the "tiger" sobriquet.

"Men," Light cupped a hand behind an ear. "I'm a trifle hard o' hearin', so if there's somethin' t' be said which a deputy-marshal had ought t' hear—speak clear an' indistinct."

"You don't think *I* killed him, do y'u?" Thad smothered the exclamation.

"I don't think none whatever," Light retorted. "Can't I mention my infirmities——"

"Joe has a bad official memory, too," Bern supplied.

"Yes, sir, that's right! I herd Gov'ment evidence for th' marshal—an' for special reasons; outside o' that I'm mostly human."

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An important matter being thus settled, Thad proceeded:

"Mariano was shot right between the eyes. An' he wasn't heeled! They'd brought his body in from th' *bosque* only a half-hour or so 'fore I got there. He'd been out all night, havin' left on some slight business after supper. When he didn't show up for breakfast his wife got nervous an' sent Juan Romero an' some other Mexican t' look him up. They found him by accident a couple miles from th' ranch, lyin' face down, close t' where his horse was grazin' in a clearin'. Tracks show that th' gent which did th' killin' overtook his mount at some distance. He made boot-tracks up to th' time he struck a windfall; when he emerged he was in his sock feet. Maybe he thought his bare feet'd leave less sign—but they didn't, 'cause in half a dozen diff'rent places his right footprint looms up clear with only four toes apparent. That's all there is t' go on. They lost him complete 'fore ever he reached his horse."

Bern's jaw muscles stood out rigid.

"Any one been arrested?"

"Not yet. Hal Currie phoned from Tedler to Balrondorf's office in Marona where th' deputy in charge told Hal t' take charge of th' case till he could notify Bal who was somewheres in th' San Andres—" Thad smiled—"workin' on a cattle-stealin' case. He's here?"

Bern nodded absently, his mind grappling with the problem.

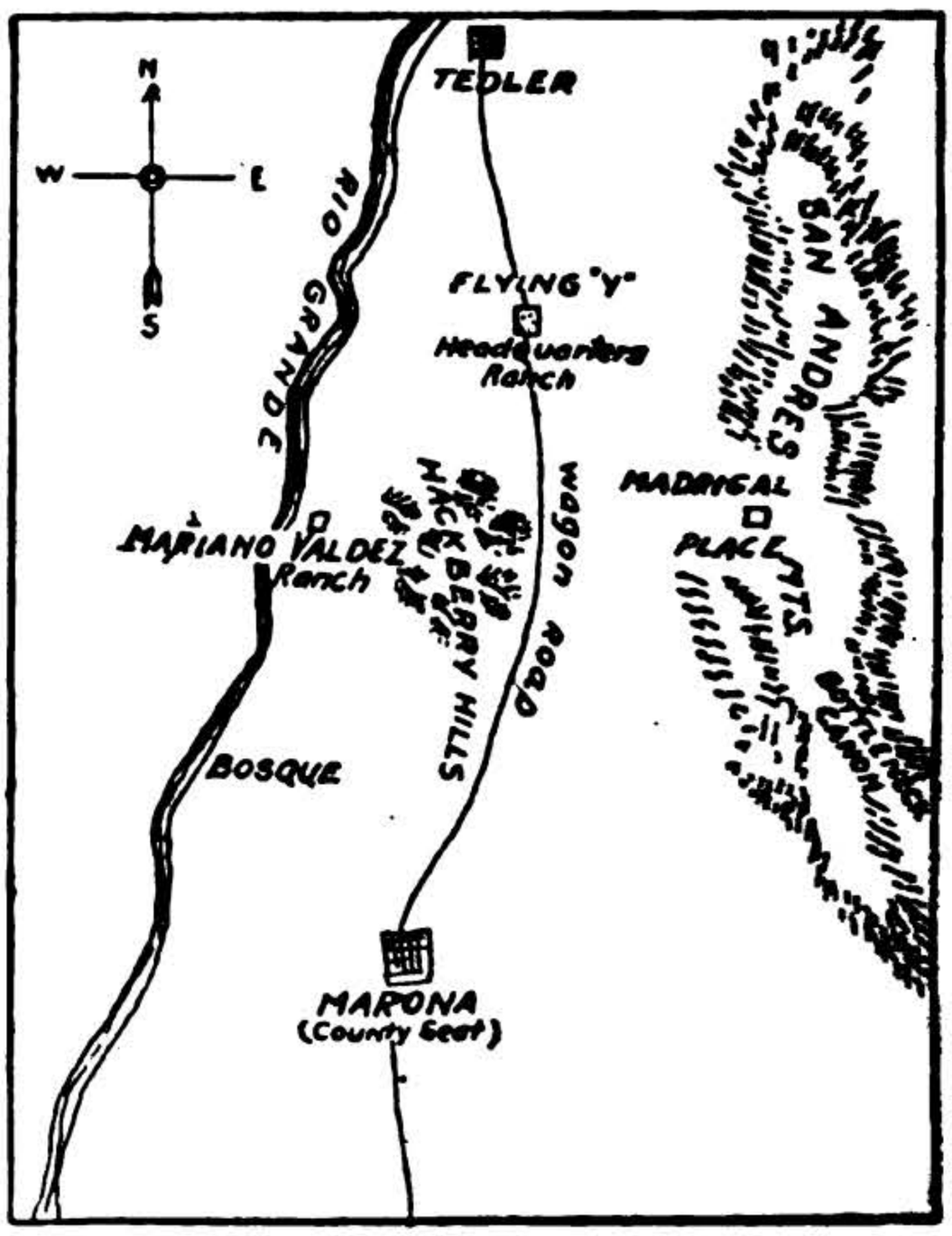
"See here, gents," Light urged. "A couple important cooks at th' house will wonder why'n' —— don't some o' us come back t' chuck. Let's put nosebags on th' ponies; go up an' eat; an' then, when we come back to take off th' morrals, bring Wyman some fodder. Bern, what was that y'u said this mornin' about Valdez helpin' y'u out?"

Bern recalled:

" 'Sudden death would be the only thing that would keep him from going down the line for me.' Death changes a lot of plans——"

"This one doesn't change Barnhill's none," Light suggested. "An' don't let it change y'urs. Y'u've claimed th' cattle; now stay with it. I b'lieve in stayin' with a good lie till I c'n think of a better one. It wouldn't look well t' go into court with a diff'rent story than th' one y'u've told Dalrose."

INHABITANTS of the range bounded on the north by Tedler, the shipping and merchandising center of Flying Y territory, and on the south by Marona, the county seat, drank their fill of sensation. Wherever two or more were gathered together on this seventy mile sweep of prairie, discussion of the arrests of Thad Wyman and Louis Bern



vied in interest with the killing of Mariano Valdez. Every one knew the principals either intimately, by sight or reputation. Some, more subtle-minded than their fellows tried to figure out a connection of one affair with the other.

The informal juries in saloons, pool halls; on street corners and on the open range, convicted and acquitted the partners a dozen times a day for a period of two weeks. Various angles of the case provided ample food for thought and argument. The tolerant attitude that "Mebbe Bern an' Wyman have been slippin' t' his sort o' thing over regular an' just happened t' get caught this once," was hooted at derisively.

The "T. L." partners were smart men, it was urged. 'Specially Bern who had "book learnin' " and was rated one of the keenest business men in the country. They'd have chosen a less exposed range if they were working smuggled stock. Besides, where'd they sell the contraband without *some one* finding out about it? For it is seldom, in

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cow-country, that a man is completely in ignorance of his neighbor's affairs.

"Now this Mariano Valdez," it was argued, "had a proper lay for handlin' 'over th' border' stuff—*bosque* range where no one can see what's goin' on an' a couple thousand head o' black an' white longhorns that just nach'ly absorbs Old Mexico cattle without leavin' a trace."

This phase of the matter was taken up in detail by "Balmy" Summers and "Slat" Akers of Tedler.

"I reckon this four-toed party that killed Mariano," Balmy surmised, "will prove t' be some one that he's had dealin's with in th' border-runnin' o' cattle. That sort o' thing can't go on indefinite without gents havin' a fallin' out. Y'u know how Mariano worked it, don't y'u?"

"Sorter, kinder," Slat polished his instep on the brass rail under his right foot and hailed the bartender for "more of the same." "He made arrangments with a couple *vaqueros* t' buy all th' stock they could steal from one certain man in Chihuahua——"

"Vigil Armendares," Balmy supplemented.

"Th' motive bein'," Slat continued, toying with his glass, "that this Armendares person killed Mariano's son. I've knowed about it so long that I've mostly forgot th' details. Mariano always insisted that th' animals be delivered to him without a mark on 'em—which has been easy, since revolutionary times, on account o' Armendares bein' on th' dodge continuous, hidin' out from p'litical enemies an' not gettin' a chance t' brand his stuff."

"Y'u ain't forgot that Mariano endowed a church in Rosario with th' proceeds, have y'u? Or that his wife an' daughter are th' only parties hereabouts—outside o' sheriffs an' such—that don't know about his 'underground' business?"

"Y'u don't reckon Thad or Louis bumped him off over some disagreement about them cattle, do y'u?"

"Not a chance," Slat declared. "First place, neither of 'em do business that way. Louis might spank Mariano if he got irritated but that's all th' further it'd go. Anyhow they couldn't 'a' been drivin' that herd across th' Flats an' killed Mariano in th' *bosque* at th' same time. If they'd claimed some other defense—such as not knowing' nothing about th' cattle an' sayin' they'd been planted to get 'em into trouble—they might have some difficulty in accountin' for their time. Yes, sir!" The idea grew on Slat. "Thad an' Louis are in for a rough session with th' court, but it ain't half so bad as if they'd just claimed to 'a' been sittin' at home while some one was framin' 'em. They'd be havin' murder charges filed against 'em long before this."

"But Louis ain't four-toed, is he?" Balmy objected.

"Well, no. Not that I know of," Slat conceded. "But," he insisted defiantly, "it wouldn't be much trouble for th' officers to take off his boots an' find out; an', if he *should* have only four toes, he'd be in a turrible pickle."

"There's somethin' right misunderstandable concernin' th' entire lay," Balmy decided. "I was inclined at first t' think that Barnhill might have somethin' t' do with it——"

"Huh! Barnhill acts now like Thad an' Louis was his sons or brothers or somethin'," Slat pointed out. "He made a special trip to Marona an' offered hisself as one o' their bondsmen; but he was too late. Thad already had it fixed up. An' he's fightin' his head 'cause this waddie Joe Light from th' marshal's office, used Flyin' Y ranch as his headquarters while spyin' out th' lay. Sam says he wouldn't 'a' hired Light if he'd knowed Light was a stool-pigeon."

"Made th' trip to Marona when his shoulder was all crippled up from his flivver backfirin' while he was crankin' it," Balmy shook his head in bewilderment. "But," he brightened, "Sam got new heels put on his boots while he was in Marona. It's about time. Them old ones was wore over till he couldn't walk straight. His legs is so crooked that th' right heel wears down on th' left side—an' vice versy. Y'u'd think that, with all his money, he wouldn't run down at th' heel that way."

"Well, y'u know he won't patronize local talent since th' time when Tedler rose up an' booted him out for hirin' Goren t' kill Thad—an' Vince Manly is th' only cobbler this side o' Marona," Balmy reminded him.

Thus, quickly and naturally, the interest of Balmy and Slat veered from the outstanding sensations of the day to the detail of Barnhill's boot-heels. Men of the open spaces have minds so constituted that they will dismiss with a gesture, the moral aspect of a killing; but they will argue into the still night watches over the exact position

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of the slain man's hand with reference to his gun when the fatal shot reached him. And, as a result of this attention to minutiæ, the moral aspect has often been proven.

To Balmy and Slat, there was nothing much worthy of comment in the fact that Mariano Valdez was a known cattle smuggler unapprehended by law. Mariano's business was his own so long as it didn't interfere with theirs. Their interest in this phase was merely incidental. It might, or might not have some bearing on the Mexican's death. At any rate it held for them the same approximate interest as the boot-heels of Barnhill. Both were subjects for speculation.

FIVE arrests were made in connection with the death of Valdez—all of them known enemies of the deceased. Four quickly proved a proprietary interest in five toes on each foot. The other showed only three toes on the foot under suspicion. He also established an alibi that was bullet proof. He had been attending services at the Rosario chapel, founded and maintained by Valdez. He didn't know at the time that Mariano had endowed the place or he would not, he admitted, have honored it with his presence. He stated freely, however, that he had no regrets over the circumstance as it copper-riveted his protest of innocence.

Bern made headquarters, while his case was pending in court, alternately at the Valdez ranch and in Marona. Thad rode the Madrigal range and attended to the partnership business. He complained bitterly to Bern, who reported frequently on progress made and disappointments met, that he wasn't in on any of the excitement.

"I bet you're buildin' loops at Teresa Valdez, 'stead o' doin' detective work," Thad accused him on one of the occasions when he and Bern shared their "sow bosom" in the mountain cabin.

Teresa, nineteen, a velvety bloom of Latin beauty, had once told Thad her admiration for Bern. She reveled in the coppery fairness of his skin. She thrilled when his shoulder muscles rippled as he mounted or dismounted his magnificent horse, Redman. She was astonished when Thad told her that the youthful appearing Bern was more of an age with her father than herself. But it made no difference to Teresa. She adored Bern and made no secret of it. And Thad, reciting the conversation to Bern made it as sweetly sentimental as possible—to Bern's vast embarrassment.

"She craves for y'u to teach her English," Thad related at the time. "Y'u talk it so much prettier'n th' rest of us."

Since then Bern had carefully avoided the Valdez domicile until the present.

"She's mighty valuable to us, Thad," Bern defended himself. "A lot of remarks her dad made, piece out with what I know. And it's going to help us a lot to be on friendly terms with her and her mother. Suppose we make it stick, in court, that the cattle actually were Mariano's. That'll take the case out of the Government's hands, won't it?"

"Well?"

"If it develops into a State prosecution there'll have to be a complaining witness—and do you think Señora Valdez or Teresa would appear against us? Not much!"

"You'll do t' take along," Thad said accepting, as usual, his partner's logic.

WHEN the case of the U. S. Government versus Thad Wyman and Louis Bern was only three days distant, Bern consulted with Sheriff Balrondorf in the latter's dingy office.

"I can't talk with y'u about y'ur case, Louis," protested the sheriff.

"I know it, Bal. What I want to tell you is that I know who killed Mariano Valdez!" Bern spoke in a casual manner, but it electrified Balrondorf.

"Louis, y'u ain't in th' habit o' makin' brags y'u can't make good on. Spit it out."

"I'll tell you what proof I have—" Bern sailed his hat to the top of a near-by table—"The man who killed Mariano had dealings with him in smuggled cattle——"

Balrondorf's hair rose:

"Do y'u mean that religious ol' Mexican was a—a—the man we've been huntin' since before Diaz left Mexico?"

"He's the loo-loo, Bal," Bern hesitated, uncertain with his words. "I'd forgotten that you didn't know what every one else—outside of official circles and his family—knows. His work can't go now. He's dead. I'd—we'd all be sorry to have a court record made of Mariano's crookedness because it would spoil his memory for his wife and daughter. It may be necessary to

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tell this at the trial of Mariano's murderer; but I think it can be avoided when Thad's and my case is disposed of. At any rate, I'll depend on you to keep this officially under your hat till—or if—the time comes.

"I was going to tell you what I have on Mariano's killer. He shot Mariano; his horse scared and he had to pursue it for over a mile through the *bosque* thickets and trees. He went into a windfall of trees, you remember, with his boots on. When he came out he was in his stocking feet. Well, did you figure out why he took off the boots?"

"Heel-marks make a easier trail t' read. He made th' shift to leave less sign."

"Not this time," Bern smiled. "He tore the heel from his right boot. I found it stuck in the crotch of a fallen limb, wedged flush with the wood. He fell in wrenching himself free. He hurt himself and, either on that account, or because he couldn't find it in the darkness, or because he was in too desperate a hurry—he was a coward, of course, or he wouldn't have shot Mariano unarmed—he didn't wait to recover the heel. It was then he pulled off his boots. Maybe he knew his tracks would be too easy to follow. Any how that's what he did—forgetting about the minus toe."

Balrondorf rose to his full, lanky height and raised his bull-like voice in official command—

"Louis, name th' man an' produce th' evidence—in th' name of th' law."

Then he wheedled:

"Aw, now—what's th' use o' bein' mysterious. Y'ur man might get away."

"Keep your hair on, Bal," Bern urged, grinning. "He won't get away. The one reason I'm holding out on you is that if you make an arrest now, it'll get mixed up in Thad's and my case—and upset it. I'm looking for a letter, in any mail now, from Rodermund, the bootmaker in San Antonio, which will, I think, make the case about ripe; but this man needs to be broken down on one or two points and I want to attend to the breaking down process myself. I can do it, with what I know, and you couldn't."

"You want t' make th' arrest, Louis?" Balrondorf demanded. "Why—why——"

"I know you can't deputize me unless I come clean at my trial. But if I do, you stand by to clap a deputy's badge on me right away. Our man will be at court. And then follow me, without being too conspicuous, while I make the arrest."

"Tickled pink," the sheriff agreed. "But what if y'u get convicted?"

"Then I'll turn everything over to you and you can worry it out by yourself—" Bern picked up his hat— "I want to save Señora Valdez and Teresa the knowledge that Mariano was a cattle-smuggler; and I also wanted to prepare you to act quick, either way my case goes, so that we can gather our man before he leaves the court-house."

Bern slipped out of the door with an amiable wave of his hand.

"Now—my aunt's cook's cat's cock-eyed kitten!" the sheriff swore to himself. "Louis tells me he ain't goin' t' talk about his case an' here he's got me all stirred to a point where I'm hopin' harder'n ever he gets a clean bill o' sale. Daw-gone his copper hide—if he ain't got me all mystified an' full o' questions. Why didn't I hunt that windfall for tracks 'stead o' cuttin' sign at its edges? I mout 'a' found that boot-heel myself."

THE new Marona court-house seethed with humanity. Cattlemen from distant points beyond the San Andres and from across the Rio Grande, drove their families across country in buckboards to be present at the trial of Bern and Wyman. Thad had grown up in the country and Bern had become distinctly a part of it during recent years. Cowboys in chaps and ornamented with six-shooters crowded to the Federal division where deputies relieved them of their hardware and beckoned them vaguely to seats already filled.

Tedler and environs were represented *en masse*. Merchants abandoned their businesses. Owners and herders of livestock left them to their own devices. Barnhill alone left men at the home ranch. He had reasons for doing so. Though he had got rid of three men who were instrumental in the planting of the contraband stock on "T. L." range, there was yet danger that those remaining might learn too much for *his* good by coming in contact with the public. He arrived at court early and took a front-row seat.

Judge Hawthorne Stadler mounted the dais at the north end of the room and ordered curtains drawn where too-bright

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sunlight streamed through the long row of east windows. He observed the defendants, seated below and in front of him at a long table, while the bailif chanted his usual monologue.

Business of impaneling a jury proceeded briskly. In the annals of Marona's courts no speedier selection is recorded. If any prospective juror had already formed an opinion in the case he failed to mention it. The United States District Attorney, one Wilberforce Witherspoon of portly mien and waist-line, was a wise and experienced person; so was "Al" Heathcote, the stocky, middle-aged lawyer for the defense. They both knew that a cow-country jury would condemn a prisoner at the bar for poor headwork—and free him if his methods met with their approval—if the evidence in the case was not submitted to their complete understanding and without legal verbiage; otherwise the accused would be freed or convicted as a result of a personal "sizing up."

Heathcote and Witherspoon were satisfied with the panel. All the jurors were either directly or indirectly interested in live-stock of one kind or another. The lawyers' foreheads wrinkled slightly at sight of two wool-growers sandwiched in among hostile-apapearing cattlemen, but they decided not to disturb the venire. Since the trial did not involve a range feud to decide the prior rights of sheep or cattle and there was every hope that the talesmen could serve in peace.

The prosecutor in his preliminary address to the jury, thundered his charges:

"We will prove that these defendants were in possession of cattle, unbranded except for their own marks; cattle to which they can show no bill of sale. They will claim that they entered into a verbal agreement with one Mariano Valdez, now dead, to pay him nine hundred and sixty dollars for the forty-eight head of stock. A specious argument, my friends," he sneered. "What one of you, under similar circumstances, would not undertake the same defense. But we will prove, I think to your entire satisfaction, that these cows never belonged to Mariano Valdez; that they were stolen in Old Mexico; smuggled to this side and driven to the range of the defendants. Whether they are the actual thieves is not your concern, nor is it mine. The fact remains that they were found to be in illegal possession of them. And the case comes under Federal jurisdiction because we feel there is ample proof that the crime is international in its scope.

"Would this Mariano Valdez fail to brand his cattle year after year, until they are full grown? He has the reputation of having been excessively careful in the branding of his stock—we will produce witnesses to that effect. A half-dozen yearlings might be overlooked in the Spring drive, but they would be picked up in the Fall and the branding iron applied. I ask you, as stockmen and men of intelligence if it is reasonable to believe that Mariano Valdez would gather, in one drive, forty-eight head of full grown, unbranded cows on his *bosque* range?

"It is possible that the defense will make the cowardly assertion that Valdez himself bought these cows from smugglers; but that will help them not one iota. They would know, just as you and I would know, where they came from and by what means. The best that could be said for them, in such case, is that they had a guilty knowledge of the cattle's history and therein they are as amenable to the law as if they, themselves, did the actual stealing.

"But they did not buy the stock from Valdez," Witherspoon roared. "If they had, there would be the Valdez brand on at least some of them—which would show his qualification to transfer title to them. Show me a brand on those cows," he challenged, shaking arms, shoulders and torso, "that proves Mariano Valdez, or any other American citizen ever owned them and—and—I'll accept their story that these longhorns came to them through the regular channels of barter and trade."

Heathcote followed this tirade with an appeal for justice:

"The prosecution is taking advantage of the death of the one man who could have verified the statements my clients will make. We will undertake to prove that the defendants are not the type of men to associate themselves with so illegitimate an enterprise as the knowing purchase of smuggled cattle. If the cattle were contraband, it was beyond their knowledge."

He weakened under the audible snickers from the jury-box but carried on after a hasty reconstruction of his speech:

"I don't mean to imply that Valdez conducted himself otherwise than uprightly. I believe—" Heathcote considered that he might as well go the entire route as adopt

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half-way measures—"that Valdez raised these cows on his own range. They are similar in all respects to the main herd and might easily have been overlooked year after year, despite the prosecution's statement to the contrary. Our witnesses will tell you that stock has been known to die of old age in the *bosque* with never a brand or ear-mark on them. You have been instructed to give defendants the benefit of any doubt. We purpose to convince you beyond any possible doubt, that Louis Bern and Thad Wyman have been grievously wronged by the charges brought against them."

Heathcote, despite the strength of his final appeal, took his seat in front of Bern with a feeling that he was fighting for a lost cause. The jurors' amusement while he was protesting his clients' innocence was an evil omen; and Witherspoon had, in his closing sentences, put the jurymen on the alert for evidence that the defense was not in a position to furnish—that Mariano Valdez was qualified to give title to the cattle; or that he had ever owned them.

Joe Light, the heralded star witness for the prosecution, was called to the stand. He answered the perfunctory questions as to his official status with lazy good nature. He related following the trail of two horsemen who were driving a herd of cattle; of finding the animals in a bottle-necked cañon on the range controled by Bern and Wyman—"with th' brands smokin' hot."

"Describe the brand," Witherspoon prompted.

" 'T. L.' on th' ribs; left ear sharped."

"Did you, at that time, notice any other mark or brand on the cattle?"

"No, sir, but——"

"Just answer my question, please," the prosecutor interrupted testily. "I will now ask you if you saw any mark on the cattle that would indicate who their former owner had been? Was there any vented brand?"

"Which question shall I answer first?" Joe inquired demurely—so demurely that Witherspoon sensed danger and, being a lawyer of action as well as words, framed his next utterance with caution.

"I will withdraw the questions," he remarked suavely.

Then, after some moments of pacing up and down in deep meditation, he said—

"That's all."

Light, grinning, started to leave the chair, but Heathcote, like a dog freed from leash, sprang to intercept him:

"Keep your seat. I want to ask you some questions."

Spectators felt the tensity of the situation. Joe Light had something to say about brands on the cattle and Witherspoon wouldn't let him tell what he knew!

"Did you inspect the cattle for brands at any time subsequent to the occasion you have told about?" Heathcote barked at the deputy.

"Yes, sir——"

Witherspoon, who had remained on his feet, shouted an objection.

"Not proper cross-examination, your honor," he argued.

Judge Stadler tensed. A battle of wits, centering on the admissibility of testimony, was imminent and he prepared to referee the fray.

"The prosecution opened up this line of questioning and it seems to me the defense should be allowed to follow it up," he decided. "Objection overruled."

Heathcote shot his next interrogation—

"When?"

"Yest'day evenin'."

"Where?"

"At th' Gov'ment pasture a few miles north o' Marona, where Deputy Harrod an' me have been guardin' th' evidence in this case."

"What, if anything, did you find in that examination, different from your first report on the brands or ear-marks on the cattle?"

Frenzied objection from Witherspoon availed him nothing. The judge opined that:

"We are here to ferret out the truth. I see nothing wrong, anyhow, with the cross-examination. Tell the court in your own words, Deputy Light, what transpired in the Government pasture when you inspected the stock yesterday."

Light settled himself in the chair and narrated:

"Harrod an' me knowed we'd be called on shortly t' make statements concernin' th' brands, so, at four o'clock when I come on duty t' relieve him for th' night, we decided t' take down a couple o' them cows an' make sure that we hadn't overlooked nothin'. We couldn't tell much by lookin' at th' heavy coat o' Winter hair but Harrod, probin' with his fingers around where th' new brand is located, thought he felt a

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scratch or mark on th' hide. So we plucked th' hair an' found a 'M. V.', connected, on th' ribs—so faint an' dim that we had trouble tracin' it out. It was partly covered up by the L an' T."

Above the crescendo buzz of excited, whispering spectators and jurors who understood the vital importance of the testimony, Heathcote hurled another question—

"Do you know who runs an 'M. V.', connected, brand?"

"I've heard tell that Mariano Valdez used it."

Light peered anxiously about the courtroom till his eyes found Teresa Valdez sitting beside her mother.

"*Oh, sil*" Teresa cried. "*Es de mi papa!*"

The bailiff rapped for order. His Honor frowned and consulted in whispers with Witherspoon who stood on tip-toe in order to see over the judicial desk.

"Shall I proceed with my interrogations, your honor?" Heathcote inquired when the consultation had extended itself over several minutes.

"I don't think we will hear any more testimony now," said the judge, leaning back in his chair. "It will be necessary for the jurors to see this evidence before the case can proceed."

He turned to the animated talesmen:

"Court will adjourn for the present, gentlemen, while you inspect the cattle in question with reference to the brands indicated by Deputy Light. Conveyances will be supplied to take the jurors to the Government pasture. This is slightly unconventional court procedure, gentleman," he felt called upon to explain, "but it seems more convenient that you go to the habitat of the cattle than have some forty-eight head of livestock driven into this courtroom."

Jurors, in charge of the overworked bailiff, and spectators who had followed, to a man, lined up outside the Government corral wherein nearly a half-hundred bawling, long-horned cows voiced their displeasure. Each of the veniremen was instructed by the bailiff to pick an animal for inspection.

Joe Light dragged the first protesting bovine through the corral gate. Deputy Harrod officiated in "heeling" it and the redoutable Joe then manipulated the hogging-string.

The public crowded to one side of the prostrate cow; jurymen on the other. Clippers were pressed into service and the hide exposed. Faintly discernible under the expert tracings of Light's forefinger, appeared the two diagonal strokes of an ancient looking "M" with a "V" following and connected. The left-upright of the "M" was assumed to have disappeared under the "T" lately applied.

Each successive juryman scrutinized his bit of "evidence" with all diligence and, in every case, the Valdez brand showed—old, dim, faded—almost obscured. Sometimes it appeared between the "T" and "L" of the Bern-Wyman partnership brand; sometimes above; sometimes running through it.

The baliff inquired—after the twelfth cow had been clipped, inspected and turned back in the corral—if the jurors were ready to report back to the court on their findings. They expressed their entire willingness in the matter.

There was some exchange of knowing smiles and happy grins; a subdued, excited murmur of excited whispers in the audience when court was resumed in the Federal division.

An individual poll of the jury revealed what every one knew—that the testimony of Deputy Light had been fully and carefully verified.

Judge Stadler deferred to the district-attorney—

"Shall I proceed with my instructions to the jury, Mr. Witherspoon?"

"If your honor please, I would like to recall Mr. Light to the stand for a few minutes," the prosecutor requested.

Joe complied.

"Deputy, I want to ask you if any one, outside of yourself and Deputy Harrod have had access to the Government pasture?" Witherspoon asked—in a more genial tone than formerly.

"No, sir. One of us was on duty day an' night ever since th' stock was first located."

"And it would have been impossible for any one to approach the herd without the knowledge of one or the other of you?"

"Not a chance," Joe assured him. "Those cows are snaky an' they'd 'a' give their own alarm if any one'd tried t' slip th' pasture."

Heathcote restrained himself with a distinct physical effort when he saw in the trend of Witherspoon's interrogations an inference that the evidence had been tampered with. Another such query and the defense lawyer would have been on his feet

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with an objection; but the prosecutor changed his mode of attack.

"Was there any evidence, so far as you could see, of former ear-marks on the cattle?"

"No, sir."

"How do you explain that?"

Heathcote poised to leap from his chair, but a warning flash from the witness' eyes subdued him.

"Valdez under-sloped th' left ear; Bern án' Wyman sharp it. A 'sharp' would take out an under-slope."

"Wouldn't Bern or Wyman have noticed the old ear-mark, while rebranding?"

"Likely not. If th' under-slope was as much over-growed by hair as th' old brand, they wouldn't."

Witherspoon flopped his hands limply, in a gesture of depair, and took to his seat. Heathcote, after another visual consultation with the witness, announced—

"The defense rests."

Judge Stadler proceeded with his instructions to the jury:

"Gentlemen, I will say that the Government was interested in this case because these cattle were assumed to have been driven, contrary to law, across the international boundary. But the brands mentioned by Deputy Light and verified by you, tend to prove that the transaction was local and that Mariano Valdez, now deceased, believed himself to be selling unbranded stock which, as a matter of fact, had been carelessly or lightly branded at some remotely prior date; that the brands faded, as is often the case, until even an expert can not see them except by a process of plucking the hair.

"You are therefore instructed by the court to find for the defendants and return a verdict of 'Not Guilty.' "

THE bailiff's chant, formally dissolving court, released an avalanche of jubilant humanity which descended on the partners with shouts of gladness. Leading the congratulatory onslaught, Balmy Summers and Slat Akers alternately throttled, gripped hands with, and swore joyously at, their unconvicted friends.

Bern leaped to a chair where he could view the crowd flooding out of the courtroom doors. He maintained a virile poise above the rapturous hubbub that swirled gainst him; his weather-burnished features reflected a gamut of emotions—from grim vigilance as he observed the progress of one member in the throng to warm affection as he bandied amiable epithets with delighted comrades. Thad's ebullient youth invited to hardy demonstrations of joy that were rapidly degenerating into a good-natured roughhouse.

A hand stole inside Bern's coat and attached something to the lining. Sheriff Balrondorf was adding his congratulations to those of the populace at the moment. He also slipped a .38 caliber pistol inside the waist-band of Bern's trousers.

"Y'u're deputized an' heeled now, Louis," Balrondorf whispered. "I ain't forgot y'ur promise an' I expect y'u t' make good. Do I gather from y'ur expression that y'u've located y'ure man?"

"You do," Bern jumped from his elevation. "Clear a path for me. He's leaving right now!"

The sheriff rudely plowed a passageway through the mob for his new deputy. In the corridor, the pair made better progress, though still hemmed in and followed by the cordial and the curious.

At the outer door of the county building, they saw a solitary figure whose long, lean, crooked legs were carrying him with stumbling rapidity toward an automobile parked at the road-side.

"Keep the crowd back, Bal," Bern enjoined. "And you stay here. He may reach for his gun—and if a shot should go wild, some one might get hurt."

"Barnhill!" the sheriff gasped. "Are y'u sure y'ure right?"

"Positive!" Bern nodded. And then—

"Hey, Barnhill," he called, starting at a brisk walk in pursuit.

The cattleman turned. There was a marked hesitancy in his manner—which was not lost on the spectators who were prepared for some sort of a bombshell since the low-voiced conversation between Bern and Balrondorf during the hurried exit.

"I didn't notice you congratulating me a few minutes ago," Bern saluted the Flying Y owner, closing the distance between them.

"No, an' I ain't goin' to," Barnhill growled. "You got an acquittal through trickery. Them cattle was slick-ears when —when—y'u got 'em."

"They were intended to be." Bern smiled much too pleasantly. "It's true that Mariano Valdez always insisted that smuggled

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cattle be delivered to him unbranded—so I don't doubt that they *were* slick-ears when they were delivered to Madrigal range *by the man who planted them!*"

"I ain't got any interest in th' case," Barnhill turned to leave.

"But," Bern insisted, "you'll be interested to know that the man who planted those Mexicoes on Thad and me, is the same man who killed Mariano:"

Barnhill faced about reluctantly to glare at his heckler.

"Well, then, why ain't he arrested?"

"He is," Bern's eyes flamed purple when he noted the surge of relief that played on Barnhill's rugged features, "but he doesn't know it—yet."

Barnhill stiffened and remained at attention while Bern proceeded:

"I've had access to a secret book wherein Mariano kept a record of his transactions in Armendares cattle and the cash disbursements to his church. It shows that he sold forty-eight head on the twenty-sixth of September—the day before they showed on Madrigal range."

"Y'u doctored th' book if it shows that way," Barnhill bit nervously at his bushy mustache.

"No, I didn't. But I see you're finding something of interest in it. And even if the book is lost—" Bern tapped a vest pocket—"I can put my hands on the two men who drove the cattle to Bottleneck Cañon. They left the country shortly after they finished their work—and their employer thought they were lost and gone forever. But they're not; they're in Juarez *now*."

Barnhill's jaw sagged and his arms hung limp. He listened in trance-like stupidity while Bern rambled on conversationally, mindful of the watchers and controlling his voice so that his words would not carry to them.

"It occurred to the man who framed Thad and me that we'd run to Mariano for a bill of sale to the stock—since he was the only man in this territory who could give us one that would be bullet-proof, and was our friend—so he planned to copper our bet by threatening Mariano with exposure if he didn't throw us down. Mariano didn't know, when he sold the cows, that they were to be used for a purpose—but when he found out, he was willing to go down the line for us, even though it was to his own destruction; for the man shot him down when Mariano didn't even have a gun on him."

Bern observed that the "breaking down" process was working. The effect on Barnhill was ghastly—almost nauseating—for Bern liked to pit himself against strength; and here was a man in whose eyes showed the wild light of a trapped poltroon; who chewed at his mustache and almost lost control of his vocal organs; who croacked, almost inaudibly—

"You lie!"

"Maybe I do," Bern agreed cheerfully. "But I believe that Mariano died because of his friendship for Thad—and me. Steady there, Sam. Just slip me your right hand so every one yonder will think we're on the friendliest possible terms—and keep you away from your gun.

"I thought of all this, but the idea didn't take root till *you* showed up in Marona with a crippled shoulder and a desire for new boot-heels. Then I got to work. Here—" Bern reached into his left-hand coat-pocket and produced a semi-triangular object—"is the heel of your right boot, worn off in your customary manner. Suppose, Sam, you march right along with me while I turn you over to Sheriff Balrondorf."

Barnhill's mind was that of a coward; and a coward's mind functions in an emergency in a panicky and illogical manner. It seeks only a means of immediate, physical escape and loses its natural ability to plan with intelligence. It is a diseased condition. From Barnhill it reflected in a steely glitter of hatred and fear. He did not stop to reason the futility of his act. His car, ten yards away, offered a means of escape; Bern was an obstacle in the way of his reaching it.

A hundred pair of eyes saw Barnhill wrench his hand free from Bern's; twice that number saw the flash of steel as he drew his six-shooter from the hip-holster. The multitude heard the report of a gun; but it was not until Barnhill staggered and fell that they realized that the shot had come from Bern's weapon.

IF YOU are a stranger in either Marona or Tedler, perhaps you will not hear of the gun duel between Louis Bern and Sam Barnhill—in which the victor allowed his adversary a clean

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draw and then beat him to the first, and only, shot. If you do, it will be to illustrate the fact that a man has no business packing a gun if he doesn't know how to use it.

But if you happen to be a "stray" man following the Flying Y round-up, perhaps Balmy Summers, who is now one of the mainstays of the outfit, will relate, with close attention to detail, how a five-toed man can make a four-toed track. He will pass lightly over tragic features of Sam Barnhill's death and dwell greedily on the incident of Sheriff Balrondorf's removal of Barnhill's right boot.

"Yes, sir," Balmy will state. "Sam had five toes, all right; but th' littlest one was a hammer-toe. D'y'u know what a hammer-toe is? No? It's a toe that's too high an' mighty t' associate with other toes on th' same level. It rises up till it's, maybe, a half-inch higher'n all th' rest—so, consequently it wouldn't track none whatever. A hammer-toe is caused by wearin' too tight shoes when y'u're little, thereby not givin' th' foot room to expand proper. Th' sock trail that Sam left behind him in th' *bosque* showed th' ball o' his right foot plum' normal in all respects; but th' sign made it look as if only four toes was attached.

"When Louis Bern got his sights on ol' Sam as Mariano's murderer, he wrote to Rodermund, th' bootmaker, inquirin' how did he manage to make Barnhill's right boot look so normal when it was a well-known fact that th' foot inside was *ab*normal. Rodermund wrote back that he always made an allowance for Sam's hammer-toe—an' enclosed a measurement blank so that Louis could order a new pair o' boots. Louis did so."

Or, if you happen to be a wiseacre in the matter of brands and the reading thereof (as well as a "stray" man) you will be sure to stir up a discussion if the chuck-wagon is at Madrigal Place where the punchers are always stimulated by memories of the various struggles for its possession. Slat Akers, likely, will draw you away from the circle of cowboys gathered 'round the fire at night and, if you have claimed, for instance, that an acid brand can always be detected, he will refute you with damning testimony:

"Y'u take th' case of them smuggled Mexicoes that was planted on Thad an' Louis down yonder in th' Bottle-neck." Slat will point out the general direction through the sighing firs and dark hills. "There wasn't a scratch on 'em except th' 'T. L.' on th' ribs an' a 'sharped' left ear. Not none! Louis looked 'em over—him an' Joe Light—an' they don't make mistakes. Yet when a able-minded jury that knowed stock from tail-tuft to wet-nose inspected 'em, every last cow that they examined had a 'M.V.', connected—Mariano Valdez' brand. Now how did they get there, I ask y'u?"

If you are discreet and want to hear the story, you will pretend to be mystified; and Slat will enlighten you in his own way:

"Plum' simple—but it required a master hand t' do th' work. Joe Light an' Harrod, seein' how badly Thad an' Louis was framed—an' knowin' they get stuck for a prison term if somethin' wasn't done t' prove them cattle wasn't Old Mexico slick-ears—acid-branded th' whole herd. Positively! They parted th' hair an' used a brush t' paint a weak acid solution on th' hide. It takes acid a couple weeks t' blister an' peel an' heal up; but, after a month it looks for all th' world like a old iron-brand that's just wore itself out by age an' hard work. Ev'ry one o' them 'M.V.'s' looked like it might be from five t' twenty years old! Louis didn't know that it'd been done till after Joe did his testifyin' in court an' disrupted th' prosecution; but *I* know that Joe was sweatin' blood when Witherspoon commenced askin' him if any one else'd been in th' Gov'ment pasture outside o' him an' Harrod.

"Mr. Deputy J. Light sat beside me while th' jury was out an' spilled a educatin' earful. Says he, 'What would I 'a' done in case Witherspoon got snuffy an' inquired if Harrod or me had put them unexpected brands on?' "

If Slat is philosophically inclined, he will discourse on the rare discretion of Bern in the choice of friends and enemies:

"Imagine a man pickin' for his sole an' solitary enemy a person who is so slow on th' draw that he can be spotted a gun in hand an' then be exterminated 'fore he can pull th' trigger. Y'understand I ain't castin' no aspersions on th' way Louis handles his hardware; but they's some folks on this range that he couldn't give so much advantage as he did Sam, without courtin' disaster."

Here Slat will lower his eyelids modestly and then continue:

"But, in th' matter o' Louis' friendships He gathers Thad Wyman, th' smartest,

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hardest-workin' waddie on th' Flats, for a pardner. An' didn't he pick a dandy when he chose Joe Light? But he chose hisself another *amigo* up in Canada, long before he ever come to this country, that proved t' be th' most important of 'em all. Louis wrote to this gent shortly after th' slight onpleasantness from which Sam emerged in a wooden overcoat, askin' would he stake th' 'T. L. Cattle Comp'ny' to money with which t' buy th' 'Flyin' Y.' Louis didn't get no answer to his letter—by mail. But, dang me if this Canuk didn't show up one bright, sunshiny mornin' with his pockets full o' bank drafts an' letters o' credit. Said he'd come t' look over th' lay. 'Fore he left, he'd fixed Thad an' Louis up for a mere matter o' half a million dollars so's they could do business with Barnhill's heir—a nephew that lives in California.

"So now, Thad an' Louis, who didn't aspire to nothin' more'n a small range in th' Hackberry Hills a few years ago, own th' whole darn country, simply an' solely on account o' bein' choicy in th' selection o' friends an' enemies. But d'y'u think they'll make headquarters camp out on th' Flats where Barnhill had it? Not much! They give Joe Light th' title o' range boss an' plant him on th' plains where he can fry in Summer an' freeze in Winter while they sit pretty up here in th' mountains—on th' ol' homestead that Louis' Uncle Henry loved so well that he died for it.

"Things ain't what they was in th' old days—with Barnhill hirin' gunmen to shoot some one; or railroadin' folks to prison; or hazin' nesters to their graves. But we worry along without gettin' too much agitated."

PERHAPS—said the officer of the Legion—you are one of those who believe this War, with its great guns, its masses of men, its trench warfare, squeezed all the romance out of fighting, as a hand squeezes water from a sponge—*drip-drip-drip*. Perhaps you say to yourself that in the old days the individual of lofty idealism, of indomitable courage, performed deeds of signal bravery and valor, but that now men fight only in mass like two hordes of rats, and the individual is submerged. No?

Well, you are right. Such is not the case. I am thinking of Jules Lenart, "Jules of the Point," some called him, and others "The Pigsticker."

This Jules was a Belgian boxer who came to Paris years before the War and fought

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all comers. He weighed, perhaps, seventy kilos—one hundred and fifty pounds. Yet often he would fight men twenty, thirty pounds heavier than he. He was beaten often, but he was respected, because you see he was clever and very brave. He would fight and never give in.

At length he accumulated a little fund of savings, and on the edge of Montmartre he opened a little atelier for instructions in his art. Stout men who wanted to pull in their waists so that they could stroll on the boulevards like dandies also came to him. He became a little better known, made a little money, it began to look as if the hardships of life were behind him.

And then—the War.

"*Monsieur*," said he to me, when I told him in his gymnasium that I would no more have the time or inclination to come and box with him, "*monsieur*, the gymnasium will not be here to receive you, if you come."

"Henri joins his regiment, yes," I said, naming his assistant, "and you return to Belgium, *n'est ce pas?*"

"But, no, *monsieur*," rejoined Jules. "In Belgium there is no Jules Lenart upon the regimental rolls. And the man Jules used to be could not show up, even to defend his country, without those stupid *gendarmerie* remembering a certain little affair."

"What then?" said I.

"I would join the Foreign Legion," said he. "Will *monsieur* be good enough to arrange it?"

"It shall be arranged," said I.

It was.

I did not ask, of course, the nature of that "certain little affair" which the *gendarmerie* of Belgium would remember. I did not seek to learn what name Jules had borne in the past. It is not customary to seek such information in the Legion. A Legionnaire is gaged by the present, alone.

Need I dwell upon the training period? It was very brief. When Von Kluck and the Crown Prince attempted to press their pincers shut upon Paris, the Legion was among the hard nuts which refused to be cracked and which bent the pincers back. Alas, however, so many of my children were not alive to answer roll call afterward that the new men in training were called up to fill the gaps. Among them was Jules.

I was his captain, and could follow his career. I was also bayonet instructor. Thus I saw early that Jules would excel at the use of that weapon, which in those days before the development of lines locked in trenches was much employed. His cleverness as a boxer helped him. Those were terrible days, filled with fighting. Jules could never seem to get enough of it. When we met the enemy, he fought like a demon, and each time he would slay more Germans than the last.

He took a simple pride in his exploits. Our men call the bayonet "Rosalie." "This day," Jules would say, on returning from a charge in which he had been invincible and had slain I know not how many; "this day, Rosalie drank a stomachful. Now she must rest." Then he would polish that long and incredibly thin bayonet which the Legionnaires carry.

It was a little grotesque, *n'est ce pas*, to see that sturdy little fellow, five feet four, with his thin face over which the skin was drawn tight like an onion, sit there polishing his Rosalie and talking to her in a low voice? I would think, sometimes, as I watched him, of a little girl with a doll. She croons to it, rocks it in her arms, or speaks of it in the third person, saying "Rosalie must go to sleep now." Just so it was with Jules and Rosalie.

At length he would put it away, scratch a battered ear, memento of his ring days, or lay a thick finger alongside his broken nose and his shrewd little eyes would stare down its length and he would say, "There, Rosalie, sleep now, for soon we shall have another pig or two to stick."

Because of this expression of his, his comrades termed him the Pigsticker. More rarely he was called Jules with the Point. His reputation grew, not only among us but among the Germans, too.

He won the War Cross, more rarely given in those days than later. It was for an exploit in which he saved me when I was wounded, and bore me back, over his shoulder, like a sack of meal, and herding twelve prisoners before him. So you may observe he was a good soldier to have in one's command. Yet he was not a model soldier. Ah, but who looks for models in the Legion? The men of the Legion want fighting and forgetfulness. That is when they are best. That is when they are devils. Give them a quiet sector, with nothing to do except keep clean, and they grumble. It was so when we got into a quiet sector in Champagne. And Jules grumbled worst of all

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He got into trouble; he committed petty misdemeanors. I had to overlook much.

Often he would go by himself and sit and brood with his bayonet in his hands. Then he would talk to it in low tones, like a child to its doll, saying:

"Rosalie, this loafing can not last. Take heart, Rosalie. Soon we shall have a nice fat pig to stick."

Sometimes, when I would come upon him quietly, and overhear him saying such things, I would shudder.

"To what end," I would ask myself, "does this war bring men? Here was a nice fellow, getting along well in his gymnasium back in Paris, a very human, genial man. Now he is a little mad and thinks only of killings and of blood."

Then I would speak to Jules and attempt to reason with him, but he would only stare at me vacantly and salute, and I would go on with a little more sadness at my heart.

ONE night there was a little raid, and my men brought in a prisoner. He was a Saxon, and thus we learned that for three days now there were Saxons in line opposite us. Does that not mean anything to you? It did to us. We knew the Saxons for the best of the Germans. They keep their word when given. With the Saxons opposing on a quiet sector, one could enter into agreement to let things rest for a day or two and feel assured the Saxons would not attempt to play tricks.

This prisoner made a statement while the men who had brought him in were still present, which led to what followed. He informed us proudly there were three famous bayonet-wielders among the Saxons and added:

"We have heard the Pigsticker is here. He will meet his match when he goes out again."

One of the guards, Ledoux, a gossip, hurried at once to Jules with this word.

"Ha, what is that you say?" cried Jules, busy at his endless task of polishing Rosalie.

He put her up hastily and came to find the prisoner. They met outside the door of my dugout, as the Saxon was being led away.

Jules thrust his broken nose into the other's face.

"Pig," he cried, thumping his chest, "behold. I am the Pigsticker. I would fight your three great men at once. Yes; I would chew them up and spit them out. So." And he spat.

This Saxon was a sturdy fellow, a man of intelligence, and he spoke French. He did not tremble before Jules. Instead, in a tone of contempt, he said:

"Perhaps they would not condescend to fight you. You fellows are jail-birds."

It is true, my children of the Legion have not a savory reputation, and this is known to the Germans. Yet, what would you? A Legionnaire is touchy of his honor. Jules knocked the prisoner down.

It was not nice, but judge for yourself.

Then Jules retired and thought. Presently he obtained a piece of board and a little black paint, and was observed busying himself about something. At length he brought it to his comrades in his dugout and displayed it proudly.

"Excellent," they cried when they had read, "we shall put it up at dawn."

And, when daylight came, above the lip of our trench stood this board. It was a challenge. It was the Pigsticker's challenge to the three Saxon champions. He would engage to fight them all, he had written. If the conditions were accepted, he would advance with no arms except his unloaded rifle and bayonet to a point midway between the trenches. Then one German champion was to advance to meet him. When they engaged, a second was to leave the German trenches, and when he should reach the Pigsticker, the third was to advance.

Absurd bravado, you say to yourself, perhaps. Have it as you will. The Pigsticker trembled for hours after that challenge was issued. Yet when one comrade, more daring than the rest, undertook to chaff him for this trembling the Pigsticker gave him, first, a terrible glance, and then a terrible buffet. No, he did not tremble because of fear at having committed himself to a course that quite possibly spelt death. Instead, he shook lest the Saxons should not accept.

And this became apparent when three hours later, having read his challenge through their glasses, the Saxons answered it in kind, accepting and setting the duel for the following day. Then Jules ceased his trembling and became magnificent.

"Ah," he cried gaily, and he drew his bayonet and kissed it, "now Rosalie shall drink her fill."

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Yet Jules was not content. He must have the terms of the duel explicit. Once more rose his bulletin board, to be scanned through German glasses, and answered in kind. There must be truce between the two sectors, no interference, and the victor to leave the field undisturbed by the enemy; it must be a duel to the death. So it was agreed.

Here, then, was about to occur that at which I hinted in the beginning—a duel between warrior heroes like the combats of olden time while opposing armies looked on.

Need I speak in detail of the ensuing hours? What the Saxons did I know not. But Jules was untroubled at thought of the morrow and slept extra long.

NEXT day, at the appointed hour, he mounted the fire-step, kissed a hand to his comrades, leaped across the parapet and, clutching his rifle and Rosalie, set forth into No Man's Land. All along our lines we watched him, and I doubt not the Germans did the same. Yet, at the first, heads stayed discreetly low, and none showed.

When he reached the middle of that space between the lines, Jules halted and stood at ease, resting on his rifle, looking toward the farther lines. Then a German with his gun and bayonet clambered over the parapet, there, and started forward to meet Jules. Remember, these were Saxons, and we trusted them to come with unloaded rifles. With Prussians it would have been different.

The German approached Jules warily, and they crossed bayonets. At that moment, a second German leaped his parapet and started forward. It was in the agreement that this should be so, but now our hearts misgave us. To engage three champions in this fashion? It was too much. Not even the Pigsticker could battle so. The trenches were only one hundred meters apart; it was only fifty meters to the center. What chance would be the Pigsticker's to polish off the first opponent ere the second arrived, and the third?

And now in our anxiety, all prudence was cast aside. Our heads uprose above the parapet, so that we could observe all that took place. Nor were the Germans more careful. Above the two opposing lines of trenches were these rows of heads, like heaped-up cannon-balls, like targets in a gallery. However, the truce was respected, and not a shot was fired.

We could see more clearly, and also it became apparent our anxiety for Jules was somewhat premature. For, ere the second champion arrived to cross bayonets with him, he had given the first a terrible thrust in the chest, near the heart, and he had fallen to the ground.

The Saxons had sent their least expert champion first; that was apparent. This second was a man of shrewder technique. He gave Jules many smart thrusts, and there they thrust and parried, balanced on the balls of their feet, with the first German quiet and still on the ground between them.

Yet was Jules the better, and presently he gave the other a terrible thrust in the throat, so that his Rosalie passed clear through and took the air at the back. The Saxon slumped down, dragging Rosalie with him, but Jules by a quick movement freed her and drew her dripping out.

It was time. For as Jules jumped clear and put himself on guard, the third champion was upon him.

He was a bad man to meet, this third. From our prisoner I learned a little about him. He was the Saxon instructor in bayonet practise. He came accoutered, on his feet rubber-soled shoes with which to grip the ground well; on his body only short running-pants ending at the knee, and a sleeveless jersey, thus giving arms and legs full play. Here when the Pigsticker was spent from his previous encounters, and bleeding, too, from many wounds, came the best of the German champions, and he was fresh. My heart misgave me. So, too, did those of our men, for they did not answer the hoarse cheer which went up from the Saxon lines as the Saxon and the Pigsticker crossed bayonets.

That one yell, however, was all that arose. Silence followed, such silence that we could plainly hear the rasping of steel on steel and the labored breathing of the fighters.

The Germans, you may know, have one main thrust. It is started, as is ours, with the left hand upon the barrel, the right upon the stock of the rifle. And it is started shoulder high. But while we retain our left hand upon the barrel, the German releases his. Thus he can shoot his bayonet farther forward than can we. It is as if two men boxed, one with a longer reach. And of this thrust, the Saxon was a master. Yet,

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just as when boxers are matched the one with the longer reach not always can land his blow, so it was with the German. For we have many thrusts and parries, we have developed the science of bayonet-play from the older science of fencing. And of all our thrusts and parries, Jules Lenart—the Pig-sticker—was master.

Around and around they circled, each crouching, gun and bayonet advanced. Cut, slash; thrust, parry. Jules was touched several times. How badly, we could not know. That Saxon was truly a terrible fighter. Both men were drawing in great sobbing breaths. In that awful stillness, the sound of it came quite distinctly to our ears.

Suddenly, pinning all his hopes upon it, the Saxon executed his main thrust. With lightning-like quickness, he lunged far forward. Yet Jules was able to parry the blow. His upflung rifle, just in time, turned the other's weapon aside, so that the bayonet merely grazed his head. Quicker to recover, Jules brought his rifle whirling down, and before the other could regain his balance he was spitted upon Rosalie.

The Saxon sagged to the ground. Slowly, fumblingly, seeming to our overwrought nerves to be forever about it, Jules Lenart freed his bayonet from the body. He stood erect with an effort, leaning upon his rifle, looking at the three foemen, like heaps of clothing, upon the ground before him. Then his hand came up in a salute to the worthy dead, he turned, and started back.

Not even then was the spell upon my Legionnaires broken. Not even then did the Saxon lines give tongue. None even moved in either line. We stood there, on our respective parapets, like so many graven figures of stone. There was neither cheer, nor imprecation, nor movement. It was as if some force vast and beyond the puny comprehension of man had laid its influence upon us all, to keep us from speech or action. For my part, the blood drummed in my ears, and it seemed as if my temples would burst. In all the world there was only Jules Lenart, plodding back on wavering legs to our lines, leaning upon his rifle, groping with it as a blind man with a cane.

Presently he sank slowly to one knee. One hand still grasped the rifle, the other was pressed upon the ground. Then at last we came back to conscious life, and two or three of Jules' comrades could stand that no more, and leaped over the parapet. But Jules' glazing eyes saw them, and it was as if the sight put into him new life.

He stood upright, a terrible figure, dripping blood, stood as if on parade.

"No, no," he cried violently; "go back."

They hesitated, respected his wish, and fell back to the trench. Jules came on. He was a terrible figure, indeed. But he faltered no more.

He reached the parapet. He clambered over. Strong hands reached to support him, but he put them aside. He gained the fire-step. He leaped down into the trench.

Then that inhuman accession of strength deserted him. He collapsed, as the Legionnaires gathered around. He lay still, one hand upon his Rosalie. And we saw how his uniform was cut to ribbons, how his body gaped with countless wounds inflicted by the Saxon bayonets, with his life-blood pumping from them.

Even yet, however, Jules Lenart was not dead. Quite suddenly he sat up, blood spurting anew from him and staining the legs of those nearest; and, pulling his cap from his head, he cried in a loud voice:

"Vive la Belgique. Vive le Légionnaire."

He fell back, and that is how Jules Lenart died. We counted twenty-seven wounds upon him.

That night, upon patrol, we found a green wreath where Jules had fought, and on it a card which read:

TO JULES LENART, THE PIGSTICKER. A GREAT FIGHTER.

A Saxon had left it there. It was Jules Lenart's epitaph.

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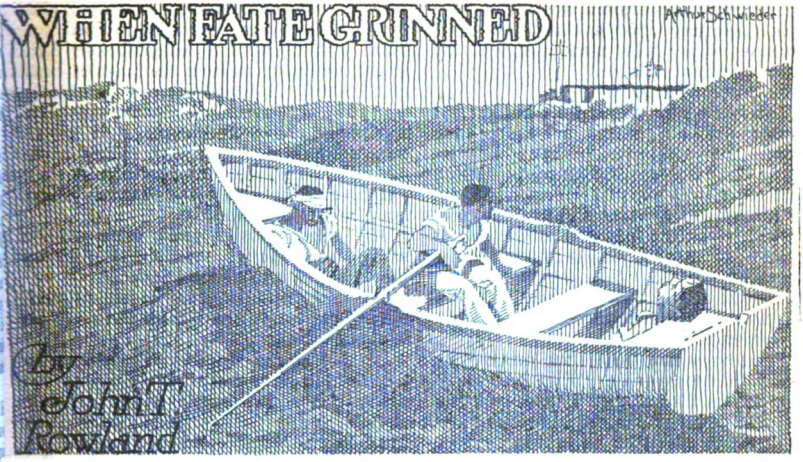
WHEN FATE GRINNED



by John T. Rowland

FROM the dingy whitewashed café Captain Williams looked out across a plaza where shimmering heat waves danced a dance of ten thousand devils fresh from the sizzling furnaces of hell. An idea came into the captain's somewhat clouded mental processes that if one's olfactory sense had not been blunted by two months' association with the waterfronts of West Indies ports he could probably detect the odor of brimstone in the air.

It looked like it! The white heat from the retort-like street; the black stevedores in their rags, sweating under huge coffee-sacks; the pathetic, starved and fly-bitten ponies hitched to waiting buses outside the café door, and the immobile black gendarme who stood with rifle at rest on the far corner where his shadow fell like a splash of ink upon the gleaming sidewalk—all suggested to Captain Williams' groping mind the scene of a real inferno.

"It couldn't be any worse!" he muttered.

The words were spoken aloud but to nobody in particular. In fact, to his way of thinking there was nobody present—in particular. A few blacks and a French mulatto bartender; these did not come as near the human plane as the ship's cat!

So he went on talking to himself with insolent unconcern.

'Six ports in the West Indies—mid-Summer at that—owners take me for a blasted parcel carrier!

"Here, boy!" as one might break into a soliloquy to cast a word at a stray dog. "*Encore du rhum, comprends?* An' put more ice and lime juice into it this time, you greasy ——!" The last sentence was directed at the bartender, as was indicated by a slight raising of the voice—for Captain Williams did not deign to turn his head.

Two men at the table behind the seaman's back exchanged a glance, and one of them, a slight youth burnt to the color of mahogany and wearing a suit of non-reg. khaki, leaned over and tapped the captain lightly on the shoulder.

"Say, stranger," he warned soothingly, "I wouldn't talk that way if I were you. This is their country, you know, after all!"

With surprizing agility the big man swung around and half-arose from his chair. His eyes had an unpleasant trick of blurring periodically from the toxic effect of raw Haitian rum, but in an uncloudy interval he perceived that he was looking into others of a peculiar pale gray which could never have been a product of the tropics.

"Why, bless my soul!" he said with a ridiculous pleased gravity. "Have a drink, Yank!"

The other inmates of the place grinned. The mounting wave of tension collapsed.

"Sure," said the youth in khaki.

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And while the captain was settling his weight gingerly upon a chair, the other occupant of the table made a sign to the barkeep with signified—

"Cut out the rum!"

Two hours later, as the short twilight fled from over Gonaives Bay and the blazing street lights—preventers of nocturnal violence—flashed out, two men might be seen conducting a third, who overtopped them by a head and wabbled slightly as he progressed, down the long pier at the end of which lay a big four-masted Yankee schooner.

Arrived at his own gangway, Captain Williams turned and pressed solemnly the hand of each in turn.

"You boys sure treated me proper," he said with slow gravity. "Hope you won't hold it again' me that I took you for natives—and you can send your man out any time you like: I'll be getting away on the first of the morning breeze."

He thrust aside the proffered support and made his way gingerly but safely over the rail.

From the shadow of the main deck a figure advanced to meet him.

"Where's the crew?" he asked in an altered voice. "Ashore drunk, I suppose!"

"Yes, sir," the other replied, "but the commander of gendarmes promised me he'd round 'em up and put 'em aboard by midnight. They won't be able to move by then," he added reflectively.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS awoke early and was surprized to discover how singularly well he felt. He was ignorant of the fact that his last ten drinks had consisted of a cooling concoction of limes and ice water with a dash of grenadine to lend a deceptive color to the whole. Instead he laid it to his remarkable constitution and an inherited capacity to carry strong liquor.

He was, in his own phrase, as taut as a backstay, and even the ordeal of shaving with a straight razor passed without mishap.

"Ah, well! I reckon I can hit 'em on the beezer now!" he told himself with satisfaction, and a few minutes later his deep voice echoed like a roll of thunder along the deck in words unintelligible to any but a sailorman.

It was still dark, but in the negro capital a thousand and one cocks heralded with uncanny prescience the advent of a new day. A fresh little breeze, surprizingly cool and laden with all sorts of indescribable land smells, wafted down from the heights back of the city. It would increase gradually while the day dawned and by the time the sun leaped above the mountains it would be a real breeze o' wind, only to die away again, however, with the heat of the day. Before that happened the Haitian shore must be put well astern.

Mr. Olson, the slim young mate with a schoolgirl complexion, stumbled sleepily up the poop ladder to the quarterdeck.

"Engineer's awake, sir," he announced, forcing back a yawn. "He'll have steam in about ten minutes."

On ships of the *Katherine Randall's* type a hoisting engine, similar to those used by contractors ashore, is employed for the heavy work of hoisting sail, something which the small crews could never manage unaided.

The master grunted.

"How about the crew? Did they all show up?"

Olson nodded, then realized that in the darkness some more positive reply was needed.

"I've yust counted them. Yohnson's the only man fit for duty; him an' me stood the anchor watches all night."

"Well—I reckon the three of us c'n get some rags on her. Lead the fore and main halyards along and then you and Johnson jump up and hoist the jib. Let the drunks sleep; we'll rouse them at eight bells." A certain coolness with which the last words were uttered made Mr. Olson smile grimly to himself.

The maneuver was a simple one despite the great size of the vessel. With lines gone, she sagged gently away from the pier under the insistent pressure of the shore breeze. Then her jibs and half-hoisted foresail filled and her head swung off slowly for the open sea. When day dawned she was making way down the harbor. Captain Williams slipped the wheel in a becket and the three of them, assisted ably by the black cook, gave their attention to hoisting the remaining great sails.

At last they had everything on her, including topsails.

"Fine and dandy!" said the master, glancing shrewdly overside to estimate the vessel's progress. "We figured that just right; there's a rule of the port against

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sailing before daylight, but we aren't rightly out of the harbor yet."

"Look, captain," cried Mr. Olson suddenly, "they're wavin' at us from the pier!"

Williams shaded his eyes against the first rays of the sun.

"Well," he muttered, "what the Sam Hill do they expect me to do—*walk* back!"

The excited group on shore doubled their vociferations, but these were rendered faint and unintelligible by distance.

The captain made mental inventory of all the vexatious things that were needful to be done in order to clear a vessel from a foreign port and assured himself they had been attended to before his visit to the grimy café the previous afternoon; the papers were in his wallet now.

"Some —— foolishness," he muttered and went below for his morning coffee.

Off the Naval Station, however, a patrol boat was waiting for the *Randall*. The captain of the port himself was on board. He, like all the other really important local officials, was a white man supplied by the Occupation.

"Say, there, Captain Williams," he hailed, "you haven't got a stowaway on board?"

"Certainly not!"

Williams turned sharply to Johnson and Mr. Olson who were busy about some work on the quarterdeck.

"You didn't see any one but the crew come board, did you?" he asked.

Both replied positively in the negative.

"The gendarmies brought dem," Mr. Olson added. "I'm sure t'ing nobody else wus alongside."

"Well, I won't spoil a fair wind for you, captain," said the port officer, who knew quite well that no unauthorized person could have gotten past the marine sentry on the pier. "There's a prisoner escaped from the civil jail and I had to make sure, that's all. A good passage north to you—and no hurricanes!"

The little boat spun about and headed back for shore.

"Now, mister," said Captain Williams to his mate, in a tone of deep relief, "break out that gang of sots forward an' let's see if any of them can stand up!"

QUITE naturally the discovery of a total stranger, cold sober at that, who had somehow taken the place of B. Wurst, able seaman, in the schooner's crew, set the processes of recollection to work in Captain Williams' mind. With the mate and some of the sailors standing by he was obliged, however, to maintain his air of injured, if not wrathful, mystification.

"As Wurst you came and Wurst you stay," he averred in no uncertain terms, "and God help you if you can't do an A. B.'s work!"

The stranger who, except for the fact that his eyes were brown, bore a striking resemblance to Captain Williams' friend of the afternoon before, evinced no dismay at this verdict. Indeed a glow of pleasure showed momentarily in his face. Then he saluted respectfully, proving thereby that he was no sailor, and went quickly to assist the mate coiling down lines on the fore hatch.

The latter after a bit began to eye the man furtively and at last his curiosity could be restrained no longer.

"How'd you come here?" he asked gruffly when sure the master was out of hearing, "in Wurst's clothes, too!"

"I was having a drink in the same place, and I suppose somehow we must have swapped."

"Huh, *you* wasn't drunk; you only played off. Well," sourly, "if you don't want to tell me, I suppose you can mind your business."

"That's just what I intend doing," said the other calmly.

Olson frowned and studied the youth appraisingly, while his fists instinctively doubled up. Then he caught sight of the "old man" strolling forward with critical eye, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Coil that line with the sun, not agin it, you dummy!" he said loudly. "By cripes, what sort of a —— A. B. do you call yerself, anyhow!"

Captain Williams heard, as it was intended he should, and indulged in his favorite pleasantry.

"My boy, it looks like you were in for a rough passage!" said he.

"I can stand it, sir," the pseudo Wurst replied with a smile.

IN THE month of August the Windward Passage, between Cuba and the island of Haiti, is not the healthiest place in the world for a sailing ship to try to work through, bound north. In the first place there are eight to ten days, on the average, of flat calm. Then there is

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the contrary current which runs at times as strong as four knots; and the trades, when they blow, are ahead or nearly so. Finally and worst, there is the ever present threat of a hurricane, which too often makes good.

Decidedly it is a place to keep a vessel away from; Captain Williams had that much justification for the mood which led to his continued indulgence in the raw product of Haitian cane. It was not his fault that he was there! And the owners were far away, where the nearest thing to a tropical hurricane was an occasional afternoon thunder-storm. Certainly he was an honest man abused!

Upon reaching this point in his circular reasoning the captain invariably remarked to his mate that he felt a touch of sunstroke coming on and fled to the oven-like shade of his cabin, where Mr. Olson or the cook, who was also steward, would find him later in the day stretched full length on the bed, shirtless and trouserless, with a carafe of water and a dirty glass within reach. The bottles went overboard as soon as empty, and Mr. Olson fell into the morose habit of judging the degree of his superior's intoxication by the number of splashes which occurred during a watch.

The mate was a taciturn young man who made no show of his emotions. He was also a good navigator; so he shrugged his shoulders and kept the vessel going—beating interminably back and forth between the distant high shores.

He could not, however, remain on duty twenty-four hours a day; that was obvious. Therefore it came about with the inevitableness of Fate that the one other responsible-minded person on the vessel, aside from the engineer and cook, who had troubles of their own, was exalted to the position of acting second mate. This was the young stranger.

He had, it developed, sailed small boats when a boy, and there was little difference in principle between that and handling a big schooner. The intricacies of the gear his alert mind soon mastered. His manner with the men was incisive but pleasant; they said "sir" to him more naturally than they did to Olson, and since he had scarcely opened his mouth while an inmate of the forecastle there were no awkward readjustments to be made.

His one deficiency was a lack of that indefinable quality which sailors term "judgment" and which is to be gained only by experience at sea. However, he had sense enough to realize this at the start and nerve enough to call the mate at any hour of day or night if a situation arose wherein he felt unsure.

Being a Scandinavian, Olson did not resent this situation, once his choice was made, but accepted it with calm fatalism, even admitting candidly to himself the other's mental superiority; and since the newcomer took care not to overstep, the two got along well enough in a spirit of taciturn forbearance.

In time the captain came to be wholly ignored, or referred to merely as the real rulers of a constitutional monarchy refer to the crown. Nevertheless, it was his fault that the second week after leaving Port au Prince saw the *Katherine Randall* still struggling to round Cape Maysi. Taking advantage of a more easterly draft of wind close in to the Cuban shore Olson had almost succeeded in working clear of the Passage when Williams, in one of his ever rarer lucid intervals, showed up on deck and with no apparent motive but a drunken caprice ordered the ship put about on the other tack, to lose in a single watch all the distance that had been so hardly won. Of such force is the habit of discipline that not a word was spoken in opposition.

The following day, however, brought a sudden shift of wind. It actually came in fair for a few hours, and nightfall saw the northwest corner of Haiti abeam. After dark the vessel went ahead more slowly and Olson, fearful of drifting back with the current, attempted to skirt the north shore of the island eastward in order to be to windward when the trade wind set in again.

When he relinquished the deck at midnight Mole St. Nicholas was barely discernible on the bow.

"Keep her this way as long as you can," he said to the new second. "If there's any change call me."

And he went down wearily past the snoring skipper's closed door to try to catch a few hours' rest.

The breeze now grew very light—just a little air that filled the topsails and barely moved the ship through the water. Nevertheless Wurst, as he still was called, had a sense of tension, as of great forces soon to be unleashed. For half an hour he paced the deck uneasily, telling himself that the feeling would wear off when he became fully awake,

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but at the end of an hour he was more acutely uncomfortable than at its beginning.

The stars shone, but not with their accustomed brilliancy, and from some remote part of the heavens a deep rumble of thunder came occasionally to his ears. Fish flashed now and then past the vessel's side, leaving long streaks of meteoric fire behind them.

The ship rose and fell on a long swell, so gradual that it was virtually imperceptible if one did not notice a star which seemed for the better part of a minute to be climbing the rigging like a sailor going aloft, to pause at the crosstrees and then, as slowly and gently as it had ascended, start to come down again and continue descending until it nearly reached the deck.

The men were very silent—cowed, it seemed, by some uncomprehended dread. Johnson, at the wheel, muttered something under his breath.

"What's that?" the second asked sharply.

"Big ground swell started comin' in," the sailor replied.

The words were uttered in a significant tone. Wurst cast about in his mind for the meaning. Waves he knew were caused by wind, and a ground swell is a wave motion that has outrun the disturbance which gave it birth. Ideas now rushed impetuously to build up the edifice of his thought; the murkiness and distant thunder, the sharp shift of wind in the afternoon and the hushed intensity of the night that strained men's nerves without their knowing why—these fell into their ordered place and brought a sudden comprehension.

As though timed purposely to give it confirmation, a lingering flare of lightning disclosed the heavens. Above the horizon from north to east was piled a mass so dense that Wurst for an instant took it to be land. Ten seconds later he threw open the door of the mate's stateroom.

"Wake up, Olson," he shouted, "there's a hurricane coming!"

PERHAPS it was the sudden draft of cool, north wind that acted as a tonic, or possibly the occasion merely happened to coincide with the lucid period which would naturally follow a long day and night of heavy sleep. At any rate when Captain Williams became conscious of tramping and shouting going on over his head he experienced a sensation of rocket-like projection back into his normal self.

For a few moments he lay quite still, staring up at the tell-tale compass fastened to the deck beam over his bed. The ship was heading east. The rush of water alongside told him that she was moving swiftly and the motion bespoke a huge swell from nearly ahead. Then his eyes sought the face of the barometer on the opposite wall, faintly illuminated by the light which fell into the room from a cabin lamp, and in a single bound he landed in the entrance to the companionway.

Henry Williams was not a man whom it was easy to frighten, but for once in his life Fear had gained an uncontested point. He was still shaking when he reached the quarterdeck and, as a sudden wave of shame swept over him, plunged into the blackest darkness under the boom. Then came anger—for the owners, the ship, but most of all for himself—and Williams knew that in a few moments he would be able to trust his voice again.

He took rapid inventory of the situation. A fresh breeze was blowing from the north, driving before it shreds of low scud. Along on the right hand—the lee side of the ship—stretched a level shadow that he took to be land.

On deck men labored frantically, judging by the sound, to shorten sail. The great spanker had already been lowered and furled and the mizzen was rapidly following suit.

"Hold on there—hold those halyards!" the old man's voice boomed out. "Mr. Olson, come back here!"

The shouting ceased and a figure raced aft and bounded up the poop ladder.

"Where are we?" Williams asked.

A fine question for the master to ask! It was a moment before Olson found his tongue. Then:

"Right off the entrance to Mole St. Nicholas," he said. "I was runnin' in to anchor."

Captain Williams shook his head.

"No need for that. We've got three hours anyhow to work her off shore. Hoist that mizzen again and we'll tack ship and stand up to the nor'west. We'll carry sail as long as she'll stand it; and when the wind hauls she'll drift over back of Great Inagua—plenty of sea-room there." The voice had the positive ring of earlier days.

Olson, however, was not satisfied. He had seen the wind freshen from a light air to a

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reefing breeze within the space of twenty minutes and he had well-founded suspicions of what the next half-hour would bring. Providence itself had furnished the harbor so gravely needed. But he knew better than to argue; instead he struck straight from the shoulder.

"You ain't fit to decide, Captain," he said. "Let me take her in here or you'll lose the ship and all hands. If you try running to sea it will be over my protest—and I'll put it in the log myself."

Williams grasped the threat in those last words and winced under cover of the darkness; but next instant the old despotic humor flushed him with rage. Still he realized his disadvantage.

"You will, eh?" he retorted, cold as ice. "What will that get you, mister, if the ship is lost?"

He expelled a lungful of air in what passed for a laugh. Yet something warned him that he was playing a losing game and could not afford to dissemble.

"The fact is, mister," he said, "we daren't go in; we've got an escaped murderer on board!"

The mate stood a long moment silent. Then with an oath of bitter sacrilege he turned his back on the master.

"Lead along those halyards to the winch! Hoist the mizzen up again!" he sang out.

So it happened that the *Katherine Randall* staggered desperately to sea.

RALPH PAGE had never imagined the wind could blow so hard. And he had never realized how much strength there was in cloth and rope and steel. Under three of her four huge sails the schooner plunged wildly on through what seemed a shrieking inferno of sheeted spray. Yet the tremendous fabric aloft held together! As an engineer, he marvelled.

More than two hours had passed since the ship had tacked and it began to look as though Captain Williams might get his intended offing after all. Unquestionably, Ralph thought, she could not hold on much longer.

But he was, after all, a novice. The captain, grimly interested in the study of a chart in his cabin below, had already dismissed thought of the sails from his mind; they would hang on till they blew away—that was all! The canvas was far from new and he had half a spare suit in the lazarette; all he asked was that the ship might gain every mile possible of offing before being bereft.

Two men stood at the wheel—lashed there. Unable to be of further service young Page crept to the companionway and gained the cabin and his own bunk, gasping for a breath of air that was not two-thirds water.

"Great God," he said aloud. "Was there ever anything like it!"

It seemed as if he had been rescued from one death only to be exposed to another equally violent. The curious chain of circumstances that had landed him in a native jail under sentence of death and beyond the pale of white man's intervention was no more fantastic than the succession of events which had occurred since his escape.

What would be the end of it? Would the crazy ship ever reach a port of safety?

It had seemed very simple on the morning he got away—and so it would have been but for the curse of rum and that maudlin skipper! —— the muddled fool—next thing he would break the ship in two! How she labored and groaned and what a fearful row the storm made outside! It was enough to drive a man mad!

Yet somehow as he lay there the thunder of seas and shrieking of wind seemed gradually to recede—to change into a distant murmur that finally faded entirely away and left him with a curious sense of drifting peacefully through a great void. It was inexorable nature claiming her reward.

Only a series of tremendous reports penetrated dully the veil of his sleep. They occurred about daybreak. They marked the departing, or perhaps—for all one could tell—the dissolving into amorphous mist, of the *Katherine Randall's* sails.

When the last one went Captain Williams struck the nearest helmsman, who happened to be the mate, upon the shoulder.

"Lash the wheel and go below!" he roared.

Olson heard faintly and glared in reply.

When he stumbled down into the cabin he found the captain already there, sitting on the leather divan. Williams looked tired, but not so wan as the mate; and there was a gleam of triumph in his eye.

"Who said we couldn't work off shore, eh?" the heavy voice exulted. "She's come thirty mile if she's come an inch!"

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The other halted with a hand on the door
his room.

"Thank the sailmaker for that," he said eliberately. "It's no credit to you—runkard!"

By the pale light of a dawning day, a ght that seemed to lose all its vigor in ozing through the spray-swept skylight, wo men looked into each other's eyes.)ne saw there brute anger; but the other he steel-cold fury of the viking.

The brute was first to recover.

"Come, Olson," he said, "lay off that! t's time enough to fight when we've got hrough this," and his arm swept the circle of the horizon.

The mate made no reply, but turned with a gesture of contempt and went into his room.

BY ONE of those lucky flukes which are supposed to be the special property of drunkards and fools Williams had happened to encounter a recurving storm which progressed in such a path as to place his ship in the left hand semicircle. So far as the layman need be concerned, this meant simply that the direction of the wind shifted steadily to the left—"against the sun," a sailor would say—instead of to the right.

When the storm was at its worst, about ten o'clock in the morning, the wind blew from the northwest. This was driving the schooner directly back toward the land; but by noon it had shifted into the west and by four o'clock to southwest. As evening approached it gave the first indication of a break. A small, irregular patch of blue appeared for a few moments overhead.

Although it still blew so hard a man could not stand on deck Captain Williams considered his care and troubles as good as done. Moreover, he was grateful to the hurricane for having dragged him out of the slough of rum-ridden besottedness into which he had fallen. On the whole it seemed as if things had broken for him pretty well.

That night they set some of the headsails and got the vessel off on a north heading before wind and sea. She made good progress under bare poles.

"By morning it'll be moderate enough so's you can bend on that new foresail," Williams remarked cheerfully as he retired.

He slept well and awoke half an hour before it was time to go on watch. Ordinarily a master's first thought under such circumstances would be to hurry on deck and have a look around; but Williams found himself extraordinarily hungry. Suddenly it came over him that he had not eaten a regular meal for upward of a week and at the same instant the aroma of coffee was borne to his nostrils. He bounded up quickly and crossed the reeling cabin to the messroom.

The table was set and food was upon it; but the chairs were deserted. Evidently two people had been eating but departed suddenly, leaving their coffee untouched. Without waiting to sit down Williams poured himself a draft and drained it. Then he seized a chunk of salt beef and a slab of bread and began devouring them simultaneously.

Of a sudden he became aware of another presence and, turning rather guiltily, beheld young Page, alias Wurst, in the doorway.

He gulped down the food and waved his hand.

"Sit down!" he said. "I hear you did some fine work while I was laid up. What do you say to staying second mate the rest of the voyage?" For all his past beastliness there was something magnetic about the man.

Page almost pitied him, for he saw he did not know.

"I'm afraid that won't be for long, Captain," he replied.

The other opened his eyes very wide.

"Meaning?" he asked.

"She's strained badly and leaking like a sieve; the mate says she won't be afloat by noon."

It was brutal, he knew, but he had to get it out all at once. Moreover, was not Williams the master? Had he not a right to know?

The captain's smile died out but he heard the news without the flicker of an eyelid.

"Thank you, son," he said simply. "Now eat your grub—it may be the last you'll have a chance to take sittin'."

IT WAS two days and some hours before the *Katherine Randall* finally sank. This extension of life she gained at the price of human slavery, for if ever men labored to exhaustion under the iron will of a slave driver, the crew

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of the *Randall* did that thing. As if to atone for his former slothfulness Williams seemed all at once to be animated by a desperate fury which spared not even himself. When the time finally came to leave her the men had scarcely strength to climb over the rail.

And all this availed nothing. In fact it would have been better had she gone sooner. Following the storm the wind blew fitfully from the south and the *Randall* drifted helplessly past Mariguana Island and out of the steamship track.

They got away in two boats. Captain Williams had intended that the mate and Page should take the smaller and that he should go with the crew in the other, but the men cut adrift without waiting for him and set up the sail. When he came on deck with his chronometer and papers she was half a mile away.

"Come along," said Olson wearily, "there's nothing we can do about it."

Williams raged and shook his fist at the deserters. Then he became clumsily apologetic.

"I intended towing you," he said. "This is too bad."

"Get into the boat," Olson retorted roughly, "or sink with your ship if you like it better."

He prepared to shove off from the schooner's low side.

Williams' great shoulders sagged. He looked at the mate dully; then sighed and climbed awkwardly down into the wherry.

"Too bad—too bad," he kept repeating as he sat hunched up and inert upon a thwart.

"Never mind, captain; you're in it as badly as we are," Page reminded him. He got out an oar and Olson did the same. Mechanically they began to row.

"What's the course?" Page asked.

"Eh? Oh, west-by-no'th'll fetch San Salvador—with the current."

About half an hour after leaving the schooner Page and the mate saw her rear her stern and slide majestically to her grave. The captain would not look.

At nightfall they drank a little water and ate a few biscuits. Then Ralph suggested that the captain take an oar. He offered to match coins with the mate to see which should have the first "spell," but the latter hung on to his oar and shook his head. He had not spoken a word since they began to row.

For some reason Page shuddered. The mate saw and smiled.

A gruesome premonition entered Ralph's mind.

"Come on," said the captain. "Shift!"

He sat down on the after-thwart and took up the oar, and as he turned his back to Olson the look of mortal fear came for an instant into his eyes.

Suddenly Ralph understood. He glanced quickly at the mate. The eyes of the latter were rivetted on the captain's broad back and a smile again twisted the corners of his mouth.

Ralph Page sat bolt upright so suddenly that the two rowers glanced up, one quizzically, the other with a look of startled appeal.

It was impossible, fiendish! He longed to shout, to act—to do something to show these men that there was decency and law in the world. Then he remembered what he was and how he too came to be there.

The gentle motion of the boat riding the long swell, the measured splash and gurgle of the oars cast a spell upon Ralph's weary mind. His body ached for sleep. Twice he caught himself nodding and came to with a start; the third time nature won.

WHEN Page awoke, the sun had been for some minutes shining full in his face. His eyes blurred when he painfully opened them. The stiffness of his limbs told him that he had slept heavily and in a cramped position. Yet how heavily, he was not prepared to say.

At first he thought the other two were sleeping. But the roll of the little boat undeceived him. Suddenly broad awake, he bent forward to see.

Henry Williams lay on his face. The back of his cotton shirt was stained crimson. In one clenched fist he gripped the butt of a broken oar. Beneath him a sluggish red tide followed the motion of the boat, flowing from side to side under the floorboards. On the grating itself lay the mate's knife, crimson to the handle.

Ralph looked farther. Olson's knees were hooked over the thwart on which he had been sitting, but his body had fallen backwards. He had dropped his oar across the boat, and it still lay there. A terrible bruise disclored his right temple and part of the forehead.

Page raised the man's shoulders and

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ıred water over his face. The eyelids :tered, the lips framed a word.
:t was not a whisper; rather a sort of ssionate gesture.
'Drunkard—fool!" Ralph read.
He dragged the mate forward and propped . body in the angle of the bows. Then he :ned his attention to the other.
The captain's case was more desperate, t he too was alive. If it had not been for e mental funk that seized the man with e loss of his ship, Ralph felt certain that would have laughed at a wound such as e mate had inflicted. The knife had rned against a rib, making a cut that was ng and ragged but superficial. But the ıock and pain, followed as it was by unanched bleeding, had nearly done its ork.

In the small boat's cuddy was a crude ›ol kit. From it Page selected a sailor's alm and needle and a ball of hard twine. earching further he came upon a tobacco an stuffed full of oakum. With these nplements he went quickly to work. After ll, it was not far different from sewing .p a wire-cut steer.

When he had done everything that was ›ossible, he turned his attention to breakast. Then he picked up the remaining ›ar and attempted to paddle, but without nuch success.

Two days passed without any decided :hange. The patients, separated by the length of the boat, stirred uneasily at times or uttered inarticulate sounds. Williams was so weak that he could scarcely breathe and the other, while stronger, was plainly suffering from a concussion.

The trade wind struck in at last and the boat drifted before it in a favorable direction. At least she was bound to cross the steamer track through Crooked Island Passage.

Finally Page spied a smoke. Then within an hour Watling's Island came in sight ahead. He breathed a deep sigh of relief. The steamer was approaching from the south. She must pass within a dozen miles of the island and he by that time could be nearly in her path.

But Fate, as it happened, held a bitter disappointment in store. When the vessel's stack and superstructure reared above the horizon Ralph knew her for the Government mail packet from the Canal Zone and Port au Prince. For him her deck would be equivalent to a death cell! Was it chance that brought that ship, of all which sail the tropic seas, to that point at that time?

He sat with hands on knees, and as he looked a savage rebellion welled up within. Why should *he* pay? A twisted fate had mocked him from the start!

First the forced quarrel with its tragic ending, the surrender, the cold refusal by the Occupation to interfere with workings of the native courts. Had he not been a civilian, now—a mere planter—how different the story would have been!

Then a brother's wit and nerve, the escape on a Yankee ship—freedom! And finally, the gradually closing net: a drunkard's folly, a Norseman's hate and its result—this ship of doom steaming down upon him, inevitable as death!

After all, why attract her notice? There would be other ships—for that matter, other days! He could hold the wherry with a drag and pass for an island fishing boat. By Jove, that was the game!

Just then Olson groaned. Ralph looked at the two. For all their sins, they had given him *his* chance. Could he filch theirs while they lay helpless at death's door?

"YOUR pals will pull through," said the doctor, "but they sure got here just in time! That big fellow—the skipper you say he was?—is about on his last legs. By the way," he continued in a casual tone, "what ship did you say you came from?"

Page, though suffering from réaction, was not to be caught so easily.

"British schooner *Arethusa*, seven days out of Nipe Bay, for Halifax."

"H'm," the surgeon mused, "she doesn't seem to be in the register. There's a British *bark* by that name——"

He fell silent.

The ship's engines, pounding steadily along, beat a weary refrain into Ralph Page's brain. "Take—him back!" they seemed to say. "Take—him back! Take—him *back!* Take—him *back!*"

He turned on the pillow and stifled an involuntary sigh. The doctor was talking again—would that man never shut up and leave him in peace, such brief peace as he yet might enjoy?

"—very curious case; it's the talk of Port au Prince, and nobody knows where to find the poor ——. It seems he was kidnaped

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out of the calaboose by unknown friends, *officially* unknown that is, and dressed up in the clothes of a drunken sailor and put aboard a vessel that was sailing. The old man probably never discovered that he had a jailbird on board until he got to sea—if he did then.

"Well, the funny thing about it all is——"

The doctor interrupted himself to light a cigaret.

"The funny part is that the black never was killed at all. They found him in the bush next day, and he's not only pulled around but has even exonerated the chap by confessing that it was just a case of which one of them landed first—the cane-knife or the bullet. But of course, in Haiti——"

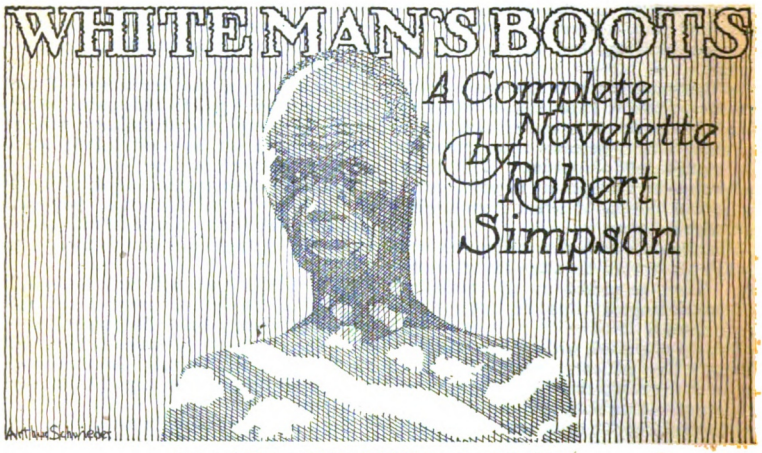
He finished the sentence with a shrug.

'How are your patients now, doc?"

It was the chief officer—always in a hurry—who had thrust in his head for a moment at the sick-bay door.

The medico chuckled.

"This one's just fainted—but the ship won't hold him when he comes to!"



Author of "Red and Yellow," "With Hands and Teeth," etc.

FROM Balloch's point of view, Samuel Brown was a "pink wart;" whatever that might mean. But Harth, as a good senior assistant should, rebuked Balloch for this and reminded him that Sammy, as he persisted in calling the new assistant, was somebody's son, and therefore deserving of the respect to which this remarkable achievement entitled him.

Samuel Brown, in Oil River's parlance, was just one month old. He was Marsden & Co.'s junior assistant at Warri, and, among other things, he had never been Sammy to any one and never would be if he could help it.

However, Harth and Balloch, who were his seniors in West African trade by several years, gave Samuel's viewpoint no consideration whatever. A junior assistant on a Niger Delta trading-factory was not permitted to have feelings of the sort Samuel Brown seemed determined to indulge himself in.

Unfortunately they did not know Samuel. He had concluded definitely that the place and the people, both white and black, were utterly impossible. There was nothing fine about them, and he could not understand how he had ever deluded himself into accepting a post of that sort. Samuel always called his job a post, just as if he were a fledgling A. D. C. (assistant district

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commissioner) in the employ of the Government.

Therefore, refraining from making reply to anything either Mr. Harth or Mr. Balloch chose to say, and refusing to consider Mr. Kingdon, the company's agent, as a fitting arbiter of his affairs for even a fractional part of the two years his contract called for, Samuel had decided to resign. This, he thought, would be answer enough.

Kingdon, of course, had kept his opinion of Samuel to himself. But it was not a good opinion, and it did not improve when, just before dinner one evening, Samuel entered the little agent's office to tender his official resignation.

PHYSICALLY Kingdon was at a disadvantage. He gave to the uninitiated an impression of fragile inconsequence that suggested he be labeled "Handle with care." And as far as the label was concerned, those who knew him best would have endorsed the suggestion with emphasis; most particularly Lionel Danby Fosdyck, C. M. G., the provincial commissioner, who had discovered, as set forth in a tale already told, just what manner of man Kingdon of Massachusetts really was.

Both Balloch and Harth spoke of him almost in whispers.

Balloch, who was prone to easy antagonism and gifted with an impulsive driving force behind the shoulders, was as clay in Kingdon's lean white hands. And Harth, red of hair, with prominent blue eyes and a button mouth from which there emanated, when the mood was upon him, startlingly life-like imitations of beast and bird calls—this man, who looked like an overfed farmer and was in reality a man of many and surprizing attainments, regarded Kingdon with a curiously gentle reverence that would have been ludicrous if he had ever tried to put it into words.

From the native standpoint, ever since the incipient John Ogu rebellion on the Segwanga road—an affair which Kingdon had settled after his own fashion—Kingdon had become a kind of benevolent ju-ju; an unbelievable anomaly among a people who spoke of him awesomely in a jargon in which there was no word for gratitude.

Thus, in a land where the passions of men were as inflammable as they were likely to be sullen and strange, Kingdon ruled his small but tumultuous world with a steady and a steadying hand, and without raising his voice above a mild, conversational level.

Though he had come to several conclusions with respect to Samuel Brown, that Samuel was a child of Destiny—a kind of instrument of Fate—was not among the number. Samuel, himself, probably suspected it, and had he been informed of the fact it would not have surprized him in the least.

But at the moment when he stood upon the unofficial side of Kingdon's desk his principal concern was the grave duty of resigning his post as Marsden & Co.'s kernel clerk, and of demanding an immediate passage home.

In stature Samuel was not so tall as Balloch nor so stout as Harth. His countenance was of a pink, cherubic cast, faintly decorated by a pale mustache that became evident after one had studied him for a minute or so. His eyes were an indignant blue. Whether in more temperate latitudes they would assume a quieter, more satisfied shade, it was impossible to say. Sufficient that he was obviously determined nothing of the sort would happen in Warri, or anywhere else between Sierra Leone and Old Calabar.

"I regret very much, Mr. Kingdon, the necessity which compels me to——"

"I don't think you do," Kingdon interrupted quietly. "In fact I am sure you are glad of it, whatever it is."

Samuel floundered. This was not according to Hoyle. He had decided what he would say, and what Kingdon would say, and just how the whole business would end up, and right at the beginning——

"I—that is—I am afraid, Mr. Kingdon, I do not understand. I have an unpleasant duty to perform—a duty to myself which I am sorry——"

"No," simply. "We can't agree on that point if we argue about it all night."

"But, Mr. Kingdon, this is a matter of grave importance to me. I am doing my best to perform an unpleasant duty as pleasantly as possible, and can see no grounds for levity. Much as I regret——"

"You don't regret anything you are saying or are going to say to me," Kingdon persisted mildly and rose. "What's on your mind?"

"I find myself compelled to tender my resignation."

"Can't be done."

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"But I insist that——"

"You can't insist. The contract you signed at Liverpool takes the matter out of your hands and mine."

"You mean that I am compelled to remain here against my will!"

"That unfortunately is what contracts are for."

Samuel paused and swelled as if he were making ready to burst.

"You mean that it is impossible, under any circumstances, for that contract to be set aside!"

"Not exactly. But when a man wants to throw up his hands simply because he thinks his job is beneath his dignity, we like to prove to that kind of man that it isn't."

"I—I will take the matter up with the home office!"

"I can't prevent you doing that, but I am afraid you will find it only a waste of time. Meantime—" as the dinner gong furnished a welcomed interruption—"we'll eat."

SAMUEL did not enjoy his dinner that evening. Aside from the circumstance that his resignation had been so summarily rejected, his position as junior assistant relegated him to the foot of the table where he was compelled to sit in silence and listen to the absurd observations of his superiors, who were astonishingly misinformed on almost everything they presumed to discuss.

At least such was Samuel's opinion. Mr. Balloch particularly indulged in so much hyperbole that it was impossible to take seriously anything he said, and Samuel detested exaggeration in any form. Precision was his watchword, and when precision and euphony were joined, the result was more holy than matrimony.

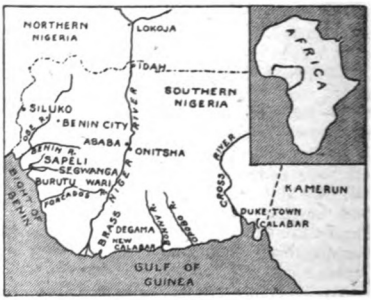
Kingdon, from his eminence at the head of the table, eyed Samuel that evening, wondering if he were worth the trouble. He was willing to go a long way to give any man the benefit of every reasonable doubt, but, on the surface at least, there did not seem to be any doubt about Samuel Brown.

On several more or less poignant occasions Kingdom had found himself in opposition to an interesting variety of men, but for sheer strength of conviction in a given direction no one had quite equaled Samuel. Nothing could possibly have been more self-satisfied than he. He was just right and could not be improved upon.

In short Kingdon thought Samuel was a pity, and it was always extremely difficult to do anything with that kind of man.

However, Samuel was determined to do something for himself, and when dinner was over he walked alone, leaving the others to their own crude devices.

From Marsden & Co.'s Warri beach there was only one way to walk—toward the consulate. In a few minutes Samuel was passing the consulate annex and was heading



toward the cricket-field and the old mud-and-thatch court-house, which was now used principally for revels of the smoker sort, at which a man might forget the morrow and a considerable fraction of today if he mixed his drinks properly.

Just then the place was in darkness, and Samuel had no interest in it in any case. He was just walking and thinking and trying to plan a way out. And though he did observe the light in Dr. Drummond's little laboratory and office, which fronted the concrete strip he was then following, he did not attach any importance to the circumstance.

He had had as yet no occasion to meet Dr. Drummond, who was the provincial medical officer and like himself a comparatively recent arrival in Warri. And he had no desire to meet him. Vaguely he had heard Mr. Balloch and Mr. Harth speak of the new doctor as odd, but he attached so little importance to anything they said that his information on the subject was practically *nil*.

As he strode past the little building the front door opened, and Samuel had a vision

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of the doctor's lean, stoop-shouldered figure framed in the doorway. The light of a kerosene lamp in its stand behind Drummond threw him into bold relief, and Samuel, who was not ordinarily imaginative, thought instantly of a vulture.

The doctor did not speak, and Samuel passed on with his chin tilted at a slightly more superior angle than usual, but with an uncomfortable sense of being watched until he had passed the huge mango-tree, the shade of which served as a kind of grandstand in the upper left-hand corner of the cricket-field.

Samuel was in no humor to have his thoughts disturbed. Perhaps this was why the intrusion of the doctor's odd personality impressed itself upon his attention so forcibly. So that when he had gone as far as the court-house he paused there and instead of continuing his walk in the circular direction he had intended, he turned and went back the way he had come.

He would not have admitted that he wanted to spy upon the doctor; and on the face of things there did not seem to be any necessity for anything of the sort. He was simply going past the doctor's office and laboratory again, to prove to himself that there was no reason why he should not walk that way as often as he pleased.

However, when he reached the black shadows of the giant mango he stopped there. Some one, who looked like a native, was leaving Drummond's office, and was coming toward him, Samuel, in what appeared to be a state of intoxication or extreme nausea. In any case the man swayed from side to side along the concrete strip and one or twice looked as if he would topple in a heap.

The light in Drummond's office went out, but this did not prevent Samuel, half a minute later, from distinguishing the angular figure of the doctor disappearing in the opposite direction toward the consulate.

Samuel waited. There would have been nothing particularly remarkable in the sight of a wabbly sick man emerging from the Government doctor's office if the man had been white or the time several hours earlier.

But that the patient should be a native and that the doctor should scurry off in such apparent haste the moment he got rid of him, made Samuel at least inquisitive, if not altogether suspicious.

Plainly the native did not suspect Samuel's presence behind the mango-tree, and obviously his only thought was to reach his destination as quickly and as unobtrusively as his condition and his wabbly legs would permit. Occasionally he moaned, and because the sound seemed to be drawn from the vitals of him, whether he would or not, it held a deep and terrible note and made Samuel only too uncomfortably aware of the fact that he had a spine.

Arrived abreast of the mango-tree, the native halted. His legs weaved and bent, and he tottered toward the tree as if to enlist its support.

Samuel immediately tried to put the tree-trunk between himself and discovery, but at the first slight scuff of his feet the native pulled up with a jerk, his whole body stiffening into a posture of alert suspicion and fear.

Then with an exclamation of terror he spun about and bolted at breakneck speed in the general direction of the old court-house and the bush behind it.

Samuel watched him until he had disappeared, and there was a look of puzzlement and unbelief on Samuel's face as he did this. He knew who the man was, or he thought he did. His name, if Samuel were not mistaken, was Orafo-Ekta, and he was the husband of Yonima, who, as all men were destined to learn within twenty-four hours after their arrival in Warri, was one of the shrewdest traders in the Warri district, and the only woman in the business.

But if the man really was Orafo-Ekta, there was something wrong with him, something that was not just a sickness, something queer and uncanny—something *spotted*.

Samuel stroked his chin and turned his steps slowly in the direction of Marsden & Co.'s beach, thinking absurdly of leopards and checkerboard counterpanes.

IT WAS no secret that Orafo-Ekta's fondest ambition was to wear trousers and white men's boots. And while his wife, Yonima, attended to the menial matters of trade, Orafo spent his time around the consulate studying the sartorial effects arrived at by the Government's Sierra Leonese clerks, who were the last word in colorful dressing.

Usually, on the days when Yonima brought kernels or oil to Marsden's beach, Orafo strolled along from the consulate in

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the late afternoon to cast his eye with an air of superiority over the result of the day's business, and as a rule Yonima and he left the beach together in Orafo's canoe, with Yonima's strident voice sounding a note of wifely contempt for whatever criticism her indolent, fashion-hunting husband had to offer.

Yonima had been on Marsden's beach that day, but Orafo had not put in an appearance. Samuel had not given the circumstance a thought at the time, but he remembered it now because Orafo's absence had suddenly assumed a significance that was as concrete as it was ridiculous—that is, if Samuel's eyes had not deceived him.

The nearer he drew to Marsden's beach, the surer he became that the whole business had been an optical illusion; an effect of light and shadow through the leaves of the mango-tree perhaps. In any case since the affair was manifestly absurd, it was not worthy of a moment's consideration, particularly at a time when he had other vastly more important matters to think about.

Therefore he said nothing to Kingdon or Harth or Balloch about it, partly because he was afraid they would laugh at him. But he did await with a keener anticipation than he would have admitted, Orafo-Ekta's next visit to the beach.

The first of the following week brought Yonima with several puncheons of oil, and it fell to Kingdon's lot to discover that in the life of this masterful woman there had come a marked change.

Though it was whispered among the women who squatted under the kernel-store awning that Yonima's pride trailed in the dust because she was without children, Yonima had never been known to speak of it. Tall and just a little heavy, she was of Amazonian mold, capable of employing a machete on the skull of an enemy with as much effect as and probably less compunction than the average Delta thug.

That she had taken over the active management of Orafo's rapidly decaying business, and was building it up again in no uncertain fashion, made her unique among the women of the swamps; all the more so since Orafo was possessed of younger and comelier wives who had borne him sons.

But Yonima, who was a daughter of kings, was a law unto herself in all things—except in the matter of the price she could demand for the oil she sold.

Kingdon decided that.

However, unlike the majority of native middlemen who brought him palm-oil and palm-nut kernels from the far-scattered native markets, Yonima was not afraid of him or in the least awed by his supposedly supernatural attributes. Instead she gave the decided impression that she resented a condition that allowed any one of lesser height and girth than she to dictate what her produce was worth.

On the Monday morning in question, as Kingdon leaned over his veranda rail to view the accumulation of trade canoes alongside his breakwater, he saw Yonima crossing the beach toward the stairs that would lead her up to his office where the inevitable discussion about prices would begin.

As far as Kingdon was concerned, the debate always ended there. But Yonima as a rule carried it loudly and vituperatively all over the beach so that all men might know how villainously she had been cheated.

This morning, however, she climbed the stairs slowly and quietly and shuffled along to Kingdon's office as if her interest in the price of oil were as remote as her conception of the Ten Commandments.

"*Doh*," she mumbled unenthusiastically by way of greeting.

"Good morning, Yonima," Kingdon said simply. "What's matter?"

Yonima sat down in a deck-chair as if she were prepared to remain indefinitely.

"I bring oil. Sevum puncheon. How much you pay?"

Kingdon, on the official side of his desk, gravely quoted her the market price.

And Yonima's customary "*Cha!*" of indignation was wanting. She had slumped in the deck chair, her chin in the cup of her hands, and presently she said indifferently:

"A'ri'. But dis oil business no good."

"No? What's matter?"

"Juju palaver make trouble for market too much," Yonima declared sourly, referring to the native markets where she bought the oil she sold to the white traders.

"Juju play palaver, you mean?" Kingdon asked, knowing that the oil and kernel gatherers frequently deserted their labors to attend juju plays that sometimes lasted for weeks.

Yonima shook her head.

"Be different juju pass dat. I no savez which juju he be, but Orafo—I no look

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Orafo long time, and all man say be juju lone catch him, and I no fit to trade for narket till them juju done go."

Kingdon understood this perfectly. As ong as there was any doubt as to the par-icular kind of juju or witchcraft that had seized upon Orafo, Yonima's presence in the native markets would not be welcome.

"You no savez which place Orafo go?" he asked.

"I no savez."

"Some man talk all same he look Orafo?"

"Plenty man talk, sof'ly, sof'ly. But they no talk for my ear. Them time they look me they go 'way li'l bit, so I no fit to hear. Orafo be fool long time, but all same he be fool for hisself, dat no be my palaver. I no care for dat. But all same he go make *me* fool, so I no fit to trade, and all men make small mouth them time they look me—me, I no like dat. Yonima be big woman for dis place!"

Plainly Yonima's pride was sorely wounded, and it was evident that unless her own people stopped whispering as she passed by, some of the whisperers, and Orafo, who had caused it all, were likely to get hurt. Kingdon nodded sagely to satisfy her perfectly normal expectation of sympathy, then asked quietly—

"You think some man savez which place Orafo live?"

"Mebbe so, some man savez," guardedly.

"Which man say juju done catch Orafo?"

"I no savez which man talk so first time."

"What you go do?"

"Me?"

Yonima sneered at the fate that had made her a woman.

"I be so-so woman. I no get nothing."

This was a lie. Yonima was a wealthy woman, as the wealth of women went in the Delta, but Kingdon did not dispute the point or inquire any further into her immediate intentions in the matter. Apparently Yonima did not expect him to.

"I go heave up them oil," she announced suddenly and sullenly, and scuffed her way out and down the stairs to the oil-wharf.

And there was no subsequent demonstrations of her vocal powers when Balloch, the beach-clerk, discovered that one of the puncheons of oil she had brought contained a percentage of water, which meant that it had to undergo the tedious and delaying process of boiling out. Nor was there any shrieking indignation when she arrived at the shop-door just as Harth was closing it to go up to eleven-o'clock breakfast.

The voice of Yonima was reduced to little more than a whisper, and as she squatted under the kernel-store awning throughout the crawling hours of the noon-day heat, waiting for the shop to open again, it was noticeable that she squatted alone.

Orafo did not appear on the beach that day. And after Yonima had taken pay for the seven puncheons of oil she departed much earlier than usual amid a silence that was like a jangling discord.

Samuel Brown, standing in the kernel-store doorway, noted her departure. The alteration in her demeanor was almost as startling as the absurd change that seemed to have come over Orafo's complexion, and he had no difficulty in deducing that the one had direct connection with the other.

But he refused to discuss the matter at table that evening, even when Balloch brought up the subject by mentioning Yonima's astonishingly quiescent acceptance of the necessity for "boiling out" a whole puncheon of oil. In this reticence, however, Samuel was not alone.

Kingdon said nothing about the "juju palaver" Yonima had told him of, even though throughout the day he had taken the trouble to learn from several more or less influential and well-informed traders that Yonima's plaint had not been in the least exaggerated.

In fact, Yonima had not said enough. Orafo-Ekta was not the only native who was suffering under the malicious spell of the same juju. Several others, whose names were known to Kingdon, had fallen under its malevolent jurisdiction, and the result in every case, as far as any one knew about it, was the almost immediate disappearance of the victim from the normal haunts of men.

A few of them had been seen skulking in the bush afterward, but always at night, and the juju had vaguely become known as "the leopard juju."

No one had been able to tell Kingdon just why the name "leopard" had been attached to it, and apparently it was not the usual transmigration kind of superstition. The souls of the victims had not entered into the body of a leopard; neither had the soul of the leopard entered into them. Though they evidently preferred the dark, there was nothing of the ferocity of the leopard in their manner or habits.

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As nearly as Kingdon could arrive at an explanation, they looked something like leopards and walked like men, and were thus neither one nor the other.

There was nothing very definite about this. It was just talk, and though Kingdon could readily see that it would be likely to hurt trade in no small measure if any more traders like Yonima were affected by it, it was still too hazy a matter for him to do anything more than quietly investigate it through the medium of friendly natives who, under the circumstances, would not be inclined to tell him very much.

And of course Kingdon did not attach any significance to the fact that after dinner Samuel Brown strolled off by himself in the direction of the consulate.

Samuel had almost forgotten that he wanted to resign. Not that he would have admitted this even to himself. Normally, so he assured himself, he would not have given the absurd Orafo-Ekta affair a moment's thought, but everything and every one in Warri were so stickily and inconsequentially dull that he concluded an after-dinner stroll would help to relieve the monotony.

When he reached the consulate his eyes turned at once in the direction of the cricket-field, and as he anticipated, in the midst of darkness and isolation he saw a solitary light. The light drew him toward it as a candle-flame draws the moth.

However on this occasion he did not go directly toward his objective. He followed the concrete strip that led him around the consulate grounds on the far side; past the entrance to the Segwanga-Sapeli road, past the barracks and on toward the old mud-and-thatch court-house. Arrived there, with the width of the cricket-field between him and Drummond's laboratory and office, he stopped.

The court-house was in darkness, and its gaping windows gave forth no sound. Thus there was no reason why he should stop there, particularly since the living-quarters for the Government's colored clerks were no great distance to his rear. But Samuel was not thinking of the Sierra Leonese gentlemen who were Orafo-Ekta's models of tailored excellence.

He was wondering if he could so far forget himself as to crawl across the cricket-field toward the doctor's back window.

He decided that this, if he were caught at it, would be extremely difficult to explain, but the fact that he thought about it at all indicated that he was in the throes of a considerable mental upheaval, the climax to which defied all prescience. He began to cross the cricket-field with a quick sidewise motion, pausing every now and then to assure himself that he was not observed, then going on again more cautiously and suspiciously than before.

All about him was a black dark that gave him the appearance of a vagrant shadow, sometimes fairly distinct, most of the time altogether invisible. But Samuel did not feel at all invisible. He felt as big as a house, and the nearer he drew to Dr. Drummond's back door the more he wished he had kept to the path as any normal white man would have done.

Of course he *could* cross the cricket-field after dark. There was no law against it. But he knew perfectly well he would not have done anything of the sort if he had not had Dr. Drummond's back window distinctly in mind; and he covered the final hundred feet of the distance, one moment trying to make himself less conspicuous by stooping, the next assuming an erect attitude of casual indifference. The result, from any one's point of view, would have been most suspicious.

SOME time later Samuel was forced to conclude it must have been. He was lying in his own bed at Marsden's when he came to this conclusion, and Dr. Drummond was bending over him, holding something that smelled vilely close to his nose. Kingdon was behind the doctor, a little to his right. Harth's flaming red head showed in the doorway.

Samuel jerked his nose away from the doctor's hand, then groaned and blinked the pain out of his eyes where in his hazy condition it seemed to be located.

"Confound you!" he muttered thickly and disagreeably, and spoke directly at the doctor. "You didn't have to pounce on me like that!"

Drummond ignored the remark completely, and presently turned to Kingdon and treated him to one of his rare and really remarkable smiles.

"Just keep him quiet. There's no fracture, but I wouldn't bother him with questions until the morning. He won't be at all coherent until then in any case."

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Kingdon nodded and, paying no heed to ıe mumblings that came from the bed, ft the patient in Harth's keeping for the me being and followed the doctor to his, Kingdon's, own end of the house.

Something less than half an hour before, vith the assistance of a hospital stretcher nd two colored policemen, Dr. Drummond ad brought Samuel Brown back to Mars-len's beach. He had said he had found him n an unconscious state not far from his office, where he, Drummond, had been working after hours.

Since there seemed to be no great harm done, he applauded Mr. Brown's choice of a spot in which to get hurt, and he hoped Mr. Brown would be able to explain the whole business in the morning.

Now, in Kingdon's office, the doctor accepted the drink Kingdon offered him just as the D. C. (district commissioner) or Captain Marlin of the transport department or any of the other Government officials would have done. He reassured Kingdon that Samuel's condition was not in the least alarming, and then proceeded to forget about it and to talk of sundry matters that would be likely to interest his host.

Kingdon encouraged him. It was the first opportunity he had had to get a good look at Drummond, and the longer he looked the more interesting the doctor became.

Although his stooped shoulders and gangling gait robbed him of any claim to majesty, Dr. Drummond was undoubtedly a big man. He had a long head, long legs and unusually long hands. His face was lean, and his iron gray mustache had the same melancholy droop that seemed to mark the man's whole personality.

When he walked he appeared to watch each step with utmost care; when he looked directly at Kingdon, which was seldom, Kingdon discovered that his bushy gray eyebrows concealed an eye that was gray-yellow; when he spoke, his voice had a soft, mellow note in it that was almost kindly and not at all suspicious; but when he laughed he did so almost soundlessly, and reminded Kingdon of nothing so much as a grinning wolf-hound.

"Do you know a native woman named Yonima?" the doctor asked presently. "I understand she trades quite a lot?"

"She's the only woman trader in the business who handles anything above a bushel or two," Kingdon admitted. "Why?"

"She came into my office late this afternoon," Drummond replied and finished his drink. "She seemed to be terribly upset about a juju of some sort—a leopard juju, I think she called it—and she wanted some white-man medicine, or said she did, that would cure it. I'm not yet sure just what she did want or why she came to me. As a rule they don't think much of white-man medicine in juju cases."

Kingdon nodded slowly. That Yonima had taken her troubles to a white doctor indicated that she was very badly rattled, or that she had an ulterior motive for doing so. He could not imagine what the motive might be, and he thought it would be just as well to say as little as possible until he had had an opportunity to look into it. Therefore he said to Drummond simply:

"She told me about the juju today. Her husband, Orafo-Ekta, seems to be one of the afflicted, and it is affecting her business. What did you do?"

"Nothing. I told her I'd have to see the patient before I could prescribe. Her description of whoever was sick was not very clear, but it suggested the possibility of some sort of skin disease that may be contagious, and, as far as I could gather, was becoming more or less epidemic. I just wondered if you had heard anything more definite about it."

"No, I haven't."

"I understand you would be likely to get first-hand information before any one else in this district."

Kingdon smiled.

"Who told you that?"

"Oh, I keep my ears open, and Crawford of the P.W.D. says they tell you all their secrets. The provincial commissioner was inclined to agree with him. Will you let me know if you hear of anything really interesting? Chasing bugs, you know, is a speciality of mine, and Yonima's story suggests a new one."

Kingdon agreed that it possibly did, but cautiously evaded the responsibility of making any definite promise to let Drummond know if any more coherent information on the subject came his way.

There was nothing politic in his reason for this evasion. Just at the moment Kingdon could not have explained it very lucidly. He did not exactly dislike Drummond; and when the doctor finally departed, saying he would be along again in the morning,

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Kingdon watched the gaunt, gangling figure disappear around the corner of the house, wondering what possible reason he could have for distrusting him so much.

Of course, in appearance Drummond was not an appealing personality, but Kingdon knew men too well to allow externals to influence him to any great extent. And he had an odd sensation of being on the defensive, without knowing what it was he was to defend.

He walked slowly toward Samuel Brown's room, and found that Samuel was asleep. Harth rose from the bedside and moved softly toward the door when Kingdon beckoned him with a jerk of his head. Balloch apparently had gone back to his own room, having lost all interest in Samuel when Drummond announced that the patient was not to be interrogated until the morning.

A Kroo-boy attendant remained on duty in Samuel's room as Kingdon and Harth passed quietly out on to the veranda.

"Did he have anything else to say?" Kingdon asked in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Nothing much. Kept talking about Drummond and a light for a minute or two, then went off to sleep. Wonder what hit him?"

Kingdon made no effort to answer the question.

"What did he say about Drummond?"

"Just what he said before you and Drummond left the room. He seems to be pretty well convinced it was Drummond who did it."

"And what about the light?"

"He says he didn't feel any pain when he was hit. The light was there and then it wasn't, and that seems to be all he knows about it."

"He didn't say what light?"

"No, but I imagine he means the light in Drummond's office. It was somewhere near there it happened."

Kingdon nodded slowly.

"I don't think he'll be able to tell us much more than that in the morning. And it won't be necessary to sit up with him. Have his boy call you if you're needed. Good night."

"Good night."

AS KINGDON suspected, Samuel had nothing to add as evidence against his unknown assailant the following morning. And since he was in a more rational frame of mind, he thought it advisable to withdraw what he had had to say about Drummond, and to keep his own counsel with respect to his reason for being in the vicinity of the doctor's laboratory when the mysterious assault took place.

Thus, when Drummond came along again to see how his patient was progressing, Samuel's story was reduced to the simple statement that he had been walking in the consulate grounds, had decided to cut across the cricket-pitch to save the trouble of following the concrete path all the way round, and, near the laboratory, some one or something or both, had pounced upon him, struck him behind the ear and knocked him out.

He knew of no one who had any reason for doing so, and there the matter was compelled to rest until, by some happy chance, more evidence was forthcoming. His injury was hardly severe enough to keep him to his room, even for that day, and the doctor dismissed him as a "case" forthwith. Evidently Drummond considered the affair serious enough from an ethical standpoint, but it was equally obvious that he had no intention of worrying about it.

Samuel was glad of this. He prided himself that he had, verbally at least, wriggled out of a somewhat tight corner with not a little diplomacy and finesse. If the doctor were at all suspicious, his suspicions had undoubtedly been allayed by his, Samuel's, decision to free him from all blame; and Kingdon, of course, who knew nothing of Drummond, or Orafo-Ekta or anything of that sort, was out of it entirely.

As Samuel remained in his room, thinking the whole business most carefully over from every angle he could think of, he did not give Kingdon a thought. He would not have considered Kingdon competent to solve his problem in any case.

Therefore in mid-afternoon he was somewhat startled when Kingdon, having knocked upon his door, strolled in to ask him how he felt, and, being answered, did not go out again, but perched himself on one corner of Samuel's table and asked mildly—

"What made you think it was Drummond who hit you?"

Samuel sat up a little. He did not know how guilty he looked, and his conception of Kingdon's intelligence did not allow him to think that the little agent had discernment enough to see quite plainly that he was most obviously rattled.

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"Oh, association, I suppose. The thing happened near Drummond's office, you know."

"How near?"

"Well, really, I can't say. Perhaps fifty feet, perhaps fifty yards. You know how it is in the dark. Things seem nearer than they really are—lights particularly."

"Do they? I didn't know. Did you expect Drummond to hit you?"

"Expect! What on earth for?"

"That's what I'm trying to find out. You didn't blame Drummond or think of him for nothing."

"Er—no—I suppose not. But I really don't know what I said last night. In my hazy condition I may have thought that Drummond mistook me for a native or something of that sort, and——"

"Why should he wallop a native any more than you? White men, particularly doctors, don't go about clubbing every native they meet in the dark."

"No—no, of course not. I'll admit it was odd that I should have blamed Drummond. Can't account for it at all. I—er—I have nothing against the man."

"Haven't you?"

"Why—what—what could I possibly have against Drummond?"

"Almost anything. Our antipathies aren't labeled, as a rule. Ever meet Drummond before you came to the coast?"

"No—never. And it seems to me, Mr. Kingdon, that this cross-examination is wholly unnecessary and uncalled for. I do not know why I mentioned Dr. Drummond's name, and——"

"I think you're lying, Brown," Kingdon interrupted conversationally, then turned sharply toward the chief steward who had just entered the room. "Want me?"

"Yessah. Yonima say she want talk trade palaver one time."

"All right. I come for my office."

He got down from Samuel's table, and when the steward departed, he said simply:

"Perhaps not exactly lying, Brown. Evading is a better word."

Samuel was already on his feet. His assumption of indignation was fairly convincing, too.

"I must protest, Mr. Kingdon, against the unwarranted aspersion upon my veracity. It is your privilege to preserve discipline here, and I am sensible of the fact that I am subject to your orders, but I can not concede to you the right to be insulting. You owe me an apology, sir."

Kingdon did not smile. He looked Samuel carefully over.

"Plus a goatee and an appropriate accent, you would sound like a Kentucky colonel," he said quietly. "But I still think you are not quite as frank as you might be. If you feel like changing your mind, let me know."

Then, without giving Samuel's indignation a further opportunity to express itself, he left the room and went leisurely along to his office where Yonima huddled sullenly in his best Madeira chair awaiting the doubtful pleasure of an interview.

"HELLO, Yonima. What's the matter?"

Yonima looked up, nodded several times in a slow, mechanical kind of way, grunted a few words in Jakri that meant nothing to Kingdon, then asked warily with a glance in the direction of the veranda and Kingdon's bedroom—

"Any man live?"

"No. No man hear. Talk."

Yonima paused, looked Kingdon over dubiously as if, for some reason or other, she did not think he were big enough, then mumbled indifferently—

"You 'membah I talk juju palaver?"

Kingdon remembered.

"What about it?"

"I savez which place Orafo live."

"Yes?"

Kingdon showed not the slightest trace of excitement. He strolled to his desk, found a cigaret and lighted it, and allowed Yonima to finish her story in her own good time.

"I savez which place Orafo live," she repeated definitely.

"Be so you talk," Kingdon conceded mildly. "But what's matter you come talk for me?"

Yonima looked cautiously about her once more.

"Me an' you—we go dere."

"We do?" Kingdon smiled. "Why me?"

The whites of Yonima's eyes showed for an illuminating instant.

"I—fear," she admitted unnecessarily.

"Yonima fear?" Kingdon queried with mock incredulity. "And she come talk for me!"

Yonima nodded, swallowed once or twice, and nodded again.

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"Be white man juju palaver. I no savez dat palaver. All men say you be white man juju for youse'f, and you no fear white-man gun or white-man medicine. Be so I come talk for you."

Kingdon accepted the native conception of his prowess without any comment. Nothing was going to keep him from accompanying Yonima to the place where Orafo was hiding out—not even Yonima's suspiciously exaggerated talk about his immunity from bullets. But he thought he would like to be a little exclusive just for effect.

"Which time you want to go?"

"Pass chop time."

"Tonight?"

"Eh—heh."

"Which place Orafo live?"

Yonima hesitated, and again and more surely this time, Kingdon glimpsed the whites of her eyes.

"Ekaba."

It was scarcely a whisper, but Kingdon heard it and thought the whisper warranted.

Ekaba was, in the native mind, a place accursed by reason of the fact that, with the exception of a single family, it had been literally wiped out by an "epidemic" of blackwater fever the previous harmattan season.

The surviving family no longer lived there. Some people said they had migrated to the Ibo country; some up to Benin. In any case, they had been compelled to get out of the Jakri country because, like the place of doom they had fled from, they were looked upon as being more or less damned, and, what was worse, being in some way responsible for the disaster that had descended upon the place.

Therefore Orafo-Ekta, and such other "leopard-juju" victims as might be with him, in all likelihood had the place entirely to themselves, altogether free from any intrusion. Which of course made Yonima's need for white assistance convincingly plausible.

"How you savez he live for Ekaba?" Kingdon asked in a low voice, but not low enough for Yonima.

"Sof'ly, sof'ly," she pleaded after the pitiful manner of one who is not accustomed to pleading for anything. "I beg you! If any man savez I go dere—*e-yaw! Yella, yella, yella!* Dis juju palaver make trouble for me too much. All same I go die one time, be besser."

"How you savez he live for dat place?" Kingdon repeated more guardedly.

"Some man tell me."

"Which man?"

"He say I no fit to speak him name."

"How you savez he no lie?"

"Dis man no lie."

"All men lie," Kingdon said simply.

"Dis man no lie," Yonima repeated stubbornly. "I swear. We go them time chop done finis'?"

"I go think li'l bit," Kingdon said cautiously, though he had no intention of doing anything of the sort. "You ask me to go to them place—dem juju place—because you fear to go for yourse'f, but you no fit to say them man name. I t'ink so Yonima fear dat man too much?"

"I no fear. I go cut dem man head ten-twenty time so they no fit to talk small mouf no mo'!"

"Be so you talk. But talk be all same kernel-dust. No man buy him, no man fear him. Be all same nothing. What's matter you no fit to speak dat man name?"

"I no fit," whimperingly.

"You fear?"

"I—I fear."

"He be Jakri man?"

"No, sah."

"Sobo?"

"N-no, sah."

"Black man?"

"I no fit!"

Yonima leaped from the chair in a sudden frenzy that was startling, wringing her hands and clapping them nervously above her head, pacing up and down the floor past Kingdon almost as if he did not exist.

Kingdon allowed her to go as far as she liked, leaning indolently against his desk; and after a while, picking up a letter from the home office that had nothing to do with the case, he began to read it just as if it were of vital importance to the issue.

Yonima did not like this. That anything so astonishing as Yonima afraid should be so carelessly ignored was not flattering, and the insertion of anything so mysterious as "book" into the situation confused it utterly.

"Wha's matter?" she demanded, suddenly stopping before him. "You t'ink so I be fool! Me? Yonima! You look them book all same juju palaver be so-so nothing? All same I go die you go read book!"

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Kingdon put the letter aside.

"What them man name?" he asked as if he were inquiring the time of day.

"*Cha!* Wha's matter?"

Yonima looked down at him, wondering perhaps why he was not afraid of her. Doubtless, with a reputation such as hers, she felt that he ought to be.

"We do dem place dem time chop done finis'?"

"If you tell me them man name."

"I no fit!"

"All right. Palaver set."

"We go?"

Kingdon shook his head.

"Palaver set."

Yonima drooped. She seemed to lose several inches in a moment, and when she turned hopelessly toward the door her knees gave an appearance of being ready to fold up at every step. In the doorway she stopped, leaned against the jamb and looked back. Kingdon had not moved. He met that look of something like bovine appeal with an air of finality that to Yonima was appalling.

"I no fit," she whimpered. "Be besser I go die."

Kingdon nodded gravely, then turned his back upon her and walked leisurely into his bedroom.

Yonima watched him as if she were hypnotized, and when he had disappeared she stood staring at the bedroom door in gaping unbelief. When she had done this for several minutes and Kingdon did not reappear, she took a hesitant step into his office again, then another and another until she stood just outside the open bedroom door.

"Mas' Kingdon."

"What's matter?"

"I speak for you ear, sof'ly, sof'ly?"

Kingdon came slowly into view, and when he was near enough Yonima looked furtively about her, then breathed, rather than whispered, a name in his ear. She drew her head back sharply as if to watch the effect on Kingdon's face, and saw him nod once or twice and heard him say, as if he were not in the least surprized—

"Be yesterday he talk so?"

"Eh-heh!" in much astonishment. "How you savez dat?"

"He told me," simply.

"He done tol' you! *Cha!*"

"He tell me you come look him to beg him give you white-man medicine. He no tell me what place Orafo live. Be so you beg him give you white-man medicine?"

Yonima nodded fearfully.

"I no savez dat man. He no be all same 'nother white man. He savez white-man medicine too much. We—we go them time chop finish'?"

"Them time chop finish we go," Kingdon repeated formally. "You bring canoe?"

"I bring him."

"All right. Them time beach-bell ring one bell, we go. Palaver set."

Yonima looked vastly relieved as she nodded agreement and shuffled out; and Kingdon returned to his desk to ask himself why Drummond had lied to him, and why Samuel Brown found it necessary or advisable to shield the doctor from suspicion.

Kingdon, however, did not trouble to interrogate Samuel further. He thought he would get most of the rest of the story at Ekaba.

SAMUEL did not appear at dinner that evening. Under the pretext that he was still suffering from the results of the blow he had received he permitted Kingdon, Harth and Balloch to enjoy an evening without him, and, when he knew they were all busily employed at table, he took the opportunity to dig down to the bottom of a cabin trunk and unearth a revolver and a goodly number of charges to fit it.

That Samuel should be in possession of such a weapon was not surprizing. First-timers are likely to arrive on the West Coast of Africa visualizing the daily necessity of defending their lives. Then, having arrived and eaten their first dinner in a trading-factory dining-room, most of them discover things about table etiquette they had never heard of before; and thereafter their guns and ammunition remain at the bottom of their steamer trunks like hidden things of which they are ashamed.

This did not include Samuel. He was not ashamed of his revolver. In fact he was rather proud of it, partly because it belonged to him and partly because he had been at some pains so learn how to use it.

Had Kingdon seen him load it the businesslike manner in which the thing was done would probably have startled the little agent considerably.

What Samuel had in mind was not quite

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clear just then, but when he had disposed of the preliminaries he concealed the revolver inside his shirt and then allowed his boy to serve him his dinner. Obviously he was in no hurry. Neither was he at all nervous. He ate his dinner, course by course, as deliberately as he always did, and whatever his purpose was it in no way interfered with his appetite.

It was after eight o'clock when he put on a coat, transferred the revolver from his shirt to his coat pocket, picked up his Panama and strolled through the corridor toward the stairs.

Harth and Balloch were in their rooms by this time. Kingdon was leaning over the veranda rail at his end of the house, watching the breakwater and waiting for the beach-boy to strike "one bell." He saw his junior assistant when the latter reached the top of the stairs leading down to the beach, and Samuel at the same time saw him.

"I think I'll take a short walk," Samuel said, as if he had forgotten all about the necessity for an apology from Kingdon.

"All right. See that you don't come home on a stretcher this time."

Samuel did not laugh. Kingdon was afraid that Samuel's principal trouble was lack of a sense of humor, and nothing could very well be less vulnerable than this. He watched his junior assistant go down the stairs, saw him round the water-tank at the corner of the house and turn in the direction of the consulate.

Then Kingdon went along the veranda, past Balloch's room and stopped in Harth's doorway.

"Brown's just gone for a walk," he announced simply. "And I'd like you to see that he doesn't get into trouble again. Think you can keep him in sight without being too conspicuous?"

This was not a question. It was an order, and Harth understood it as such. He got out of the canvas deck-chair in which he was luxuriously reclining, reached for a battered-looking Panama and looked toward Kingdon for further information without a word on his own account.

"I think Brown knows who hit him," Kingdon said in a low monotone that somehow or other did not seem in the least secretive. "And I have a notion he's gone looking for him. See that he doesn't get killed, will you? And let me know?"

"All right. Am I to bring him back with me if he looks too long or wanders too far?"

"No. Just stick. He has something on his mind, and I'd like to get it off once and for all."

Harth nodded, slipped past Kingdon with an uncanny lack of sound, headed for the stairs and vanished in pursuit of Samuel like a cumbersome Newfoundland that had suddenly turned greyhound.

Kingdon went back to his own quarters, and presently just as the dark shape of a canoe with a grass awning sidled alongside the breakwater the beach-bell struck once. Kingdon strolled down to the breakwater.

"Mas' Kingdon?"

The whisper came from under the grass awning.

"Yonima?"

"Yessah. All be all ri'?"

Kingdon crouched and vanished beneath the awning.

Evidently this was answer enough. The silent paddle-boys pushed off, turned the canoe's nose down-river, and like a gently swaying wraith it headed for mid-stream and the forbidden village of Ekaba.

WHEN Samuel reached the consulate beach he was at once made aware of a keen disappointment. Dr. Drummond's office was in darkness.

Samuel had hoped to have a straight talk with the doctor there, and he was not at all desirous of transferring the interview to the doctor's private room at the consulate. Patients did not as a rule visit the doctor privately, and as Samuel had intended to call upon Drummond in the guise of a patient this part of his plan seemed instantly doomed to failure.

Of course, his real intention was to discuss with Drummond the matter of the assault upon himself and perhaps the mystery of Orafo-Ekta, and try to learn from the doctor's manner just what he really did think about these things.

If the doctor were inclined to talk violently Samuel felt that the revolver would be a fitting inducement for him to calm down. In any event Samuel was determined to learn just who had hit him over the head and why, and he was in no mood to be trifled with in the process.

It did not occur to him to look behind. And the probability is he would not have discovered Harth in any case. Harth had been ordered to see without being seen, and

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Harth was doing this, with the assistance of some lime-bushes, so astonishingly well that even Dr. Drummond, who was facing in his direction, did not see him.

Drummond had just come down from his room and was standing in the shadow of the consulate front steps watching Samuel with some intentness and quite naturally wondering what he was going to do next.

Then, since Samuel, who hesitated at the junction of two concrete paths, did not seem to be able to make up his mind, Drummond walked toward him and tried to make it up for him.

"Hello, Brown," he said as Samuel suddenly came toward him, while a bare-footed, blue-uniformed colored policeman shuffled off toward the waterfront. "What's the trouble now?"

Aside from the circumstance that Samuel resented being addressed as "Brown," he was just a little flustered by the doctor's somewhat providential appearance.

"I—that is—I was just going up to your office. Are you on your way there now?"

"Head still bothering you?"

"Quite a bit," Samuel lied, and felt his self-possession rushing back to him. "I thought perhaps you could give me a sleeping-powder of some sort, or something to quiet my nerves. My eyes don't seem to be able to stop seeing things. In fact——"

But Samuel halted there. He had been on the verge of adding that his eyes were constantly troubled with black-and-white spots jumping before them, but on second thoughts he reasoned he had been subtle enough. For answer Drummond laughed with scarcely a sound, and Samuel's right hand, which persisted in remaining in his coat pocket, jumped a little.

"That's nothing," the doctor assured him. "Stomach probably."

He turned about in the direction of the consulate steps.

"I'll give you something to remove the spots."

Again Samuel's right hand jumped.

"Spots?" he repeated rather mechanically.

"That's what you're seeing, isn't it? Spots that come and go in front of your eyes?"

Samuel admitted that it was, and wondered whether the doctor was trying to be subtle, too. But without any further remark he followed Drummond up to his room on the second floor of the consulate, all the while carefully keeping his right hand in his coat pocket.

Harth followed as far as the front steps. It was too early in the evening to go any farther than that.

"Have you found out who knocked you out yet?" the doctor asked as with the speed of a practised pharmacist he measured out a muddy-looking dose from several bottles ranged on shelves on one side of his room.

"No. I haven't. You didn't see any one—er—running away when you came out and found me?"

"Not a soul. Here, drink this."

Then as Samuel was about to hold out his right hand for the glass, but thought better of it and used his left—

"I shouldn't have thought you were left-handed."

"Oh, I can use either if I have to," Samuel confessed, and promptly spilled some of the medicine on the doctor's floor to prove it. "Oh, I'm sorry. What is this mixture, might I ask?"

Drummond was speculatively eying Samuel's right-hand coat pocket.

"Nothing much of anything," he replied. "But you'll feel better after it. Drink it up."

In the interests of investigation Samuel drank and detected a peppermint flavor. But that was all. He handed the glass back to Drummond and remarked—

"Funny how I should have thought it was you who pounced on me, wasn't it?"

"Nothing remarkable about it," Drummond declared, putting the glass back on a small table beside the wash-basin. Then as he heard some one in rubber-soled shoes going through the hall outside and passing down-stairs he lifted his head slightly to listen.

And Samuel had an impression that Drummond was always listening; that every sound and every movement of every resident of the consulate was noted and put on record by this strange, vulture-like man.

"Many people who have been knocked out as you were, blame the first man they see when they open their eyes again."

"Yes. Yes, of course," Samuel conceded. "But isn't it odd that I should have believed you would do a thing like that? That I should—er—still think so?"

"Do you?"

Drummond showed no surprize or antagonism.

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"Why?"

"I don't know. But perhaps it's because I had an idea—utterly absurd, of course—that you did not want any one to know about that fellow Orafo?"

"Orafo?"

Drummond's head came forward slightly, so that he looked more like a vulture than ever.

"You mean that woman Yonima's husband?"

"Exactly."

Samuel smiled. It was a restless, nervous effort that kept his right hand company.

"You—er—know, of course, about him?"

"I know he's run away from his wife," Drummond admitted, turning to pick up his hat. "She told me that much. Let's get out of here. I have to go down to Paller's beach."

"One moment."

Samuel suddenly stood between the doctor and the door. His manner was as commanding as he could make it, and this was considerable; and his attitude had obviously cast aside all pretense.

"I want you to be fair with me, Dr. Drummond. Just as I have every intention of being fair with you. I am quite capable of defending myself, and of compelling you to come to a proper understanding with me. So please be good enough to appreciate these facts, and let us dispense with subterfuge. What is your interest in Orafo-Ekta?"

Drummond's hat dangled in his left hand as listlessly as his eyes looked Samuel over. Evidently he was not quite sure what he ought to make of him, if anything.

"Then there was nothing the matter with your eyes?"

"Nothing," Samuel said suggestively. "Particularly on the evening when Orafo-Ekta left your office apparently in a very sick condition."

"I'm speaking of this evening," Drummond said thoughtfully. "I'm sorry now I didn't make that dose a little stiffer."

"What do you mean, sir?"

Drummond did not think it necessary to explain.

"Let's go down-stairs and talk it over on my way to the wharf. I really must get down to Paller's tonight."

"Evasion won't serve you any purpose, Dr. Drummond. This matter of Orafo-Ekta is unquestionably bound up in the assault upon me, and I warn you——"

"You're talking rot," Drummond said patiently, and moved toward the door. "But if you'll bring that revolver of yours into plain sight I'd feel more comfortable. Do you know how to handle one of those things?"

Samuel did not like this.

"Perfectly," he said stiffly, and his right hand remained where it was.

"Oh, that's all right then. It's only fools who let them go off too soon. As far as I can judge you've got the muzzle of the thing pointed at my abdomen, and I've always disliked the thought of a knife or a bullet prying into my vitals. I've seen too much of it, and it's nasty work. Walk down to the gig-wharf and we'll talk it over."

Samuel demurred, but he knew he could not, even if his suspicions had been better founded, interfere with the doctor in the exercise of his duty. This, for the nonce at least, was a legitimate excuse for avoiding the issue. But Samuel was satisfied that it would not serve forever, and that Drummond now knew that he was dealing with a man who would not rest until he had probed to the roots of the matter.

Therefore Samuel consented to walk down to the gig-wharf with the doctor. They passed the D. C. (district commissioner) on the way; also a steward and a colored policeman. But there was no sign of Harth.

Evidently the doctor's plans for visiting Paller's beach had been made in advance, and the consulate gig was in readiness at the wharf and awaiting his pleasure.

"Trouble with you, Brown, is that you are too imaginative," Drummond said pleasantly enough as he hesitated on the wharf-steps. "I'd say you were harboring a grudge against something or some one and were taking it out on me. Get your facts straightened out and come and talk to me tomorrow night at my office. Your evident sincerity interests me, even if it is running on the wrong track."

Samuel frowned. He knew or felt sure he was being cleverly trifled with, and that the doctor would be no more informative the following evening than he was now. But as open hostility would be both useless and unconvincing in that place, there was nothing for it but to make a pretense of being successfully put off.

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"Very well," stiffly. "I shall call at your office tomorrow evening at eight-thirty."

"Good. But leave the gun at home. You may know how to use it, but it keeps me wondering whether you do or not, and that isn't conducive to clear thinking. Good night, Brown."

He went down the steps into the gig, and left Samuel flat-footed; or thought he did. But, like Harth and Balloch, he did not know Samuel Brown.

With a snort of impatience Samuel turned on his heel and, walking rapidly up the wharf, reached the concrete path fronting the consulate and turned in the direction of Marsden's.

Harth followed. The spreading fronds of a wine-palm had afforded him ample cover, and now he strolled leisurely after the junior assistant, satisfied that the evening's excitement was over.

Samuel, on the other hand, knew that it had only begun. He did not believe Drummond was going to Paller's beach. He did not believe a word Drummond had said to him, and he was determined to prove it. So he headed directly for Marsden & Co.'s waterfront, where he found the usual string of trade canoes, small and large, huddling up to the breakwater, awaiting the resumption of business in the morning.

Harth watched the succeeding performance from the shadow of a water-tank. He saw Samuel make his selection of a canoe very carefully, heard him bargain with the owner in a low monotone, and saw him glancing out toward mid-stream every few seconds in such a manner as to suggest quite plainly to Harth that he had not finished with Drummond.

Then, a satisfactory bargain concluded, Samuel stepped into what proved to be a four-paddle kernel-canoe; and, making himself as comfortable as possible on a grass mat laid across a heap of rather damp and sweating kernels, Samuel was paddled out of the little side creek in close and wholly unsuspected pursuit of an eight-oar gig that was swinging rhythmically in the general direction of Paller's beach.

Whereupon Harth immediately shot upstairs to Kingdon's office, discovered in something less than a minute that Kingdon was not at home, and bolted downstairs again.

Balloch came out of his room at this juncture to lean over the veranda rail and inquire of the heavy figure below who was calling softly for a watch-boy—

"What's the matter?"

Harth did not answer. He waited for the watch-boy to join him, then held whispered conversation with him, which concluded when the watch-boy scurried off in the direction of the Kroo-house at the back of the beach.

Balloch resented being ignored, just as Harth suspected he would, and, in pajamas and mosquito boots—the beach-clerk's favorite undress uniform—he came downstairs in an inquiring mood that was somewhat militant.

"Why the mystery? Where are you bound for?"

"Don't know yet. But you can come round to the wharf and see me off."

"Where's the boss?"

Harth, having learned from the watch-boy that Kingdon had, like Samuel, also gone off in a canoe, would have liked to be able to answer this question. So he said more truthfully than Balloch believed, as the Kroo-boy gig crew made its appearance carrying paddles instead of oars:

"I think that's what I'm going to find out. Right this minute I feel like the knot at the end of the string."

KINGDON sat tailor-wise on the deck of Yonima's canoe and watched the dull face of the bush go by. Ekaba was rather more than an hour's canoe journey from Warri, and in that hour Kingdon said practically nothing to Yonima, and Yonima, with her overcloth covering her head and muttering almost incessantly to herself, said nothing to Kingdon.

It was not a cheerful journey. Secret and mysterious in its very nature, the swish of the paddles and the whispering voice of the bush—with here and there a squeak or a yelp or a cry to relieve the monotony—served only to make it still more ominous.

Occasionally Kingdon flicked a cloud of mosquitoes away from his ears, and once or twice he leaned forward a little to peer out at a passing canoe; but aside from such trivial interest in his surroundings he remained as motionless and unconcerned as a temple god.

Yonima's mutterings increased as the journey progressed; became more nervous and hurried, with an occasional staccato exclamation that died out in a low whine

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that tested the nerves to the uttermost.

The twisting maze of the bush-lined creeks seemed to grow darker with every stroke of the paddles, and at every turn the bush on either side seemed to come a little nearer. Then there were no more canoes that passed them by. All suggestion of things that were human had somehow been left behind, and a heavy, crushing sense of desolation and loneliness closed slowly down upon them.

Then just as the paddle-boys were beginning to whimper a little, Yonima spoke to them gruffly in Jakri, and the canoe, with a sound that was like a sigh of relief, scraped its way into a little side creek and trailed to a halt before a bush path that was little better than a tangle of creepers and weeds.

Here Yonima paused. She was a big woman and a strong one, and her fears were few; but when she stirred on this occasion it was to crawl across the matted deck of the canoe to Kingdon's feet.

"We go walk li'l bit," she announced in a whisper, jerking her head fearfully in the direction of the almost invisible bush path and trying to prevent her teeth from chattering. "Dis way be besser. Paddle-boy no savez nothing."

Kingdon appreciated this, nodded and gripped Yonima's arm to steady her.

"Fear be small-boy fash'," he reminded her quietly. "Yonima be big woman for this country. Yonima no fear. Come. We go."

He crawled out from under the awning, still gripping Yonima's arm, and induced her to follow him; and when she stood at his side, crouching near to him and peering fearfully into the dark ahead, he knew that his real troubles had begun.

Of necessity Yonima would have to lead the way, and just then this did not look like a favorable possibility. Yonima's imagination was more busily employed than it had probably ever been, and her vaunted strength and fearlessness were sadly minus at that moment. But apparently as far as the paddle-boys were concerned this was nothing to be ashamed of. It was perfectly natural for Yonima or any one else to be afraid in the vicinity of Ekaba.

"Come. We go," Kingdom repeated patiently. "Suppose we go stand for dis place long time, we grow all same tree."

But whatever sense of humor Yonima might possess, there was no laughter possible then. Instead she muttered rapidly in Jakri something that sounded as if it might be an incantation, and as if she knew she was leaping in the face of fate and against decrees of all the gods that were hers, she suddenly emitted a most unccanny whine and sprang forward—just a step or two. Then she stopped again, crouching away from the black mysteries ahead as if they had taken shape before her eyes.

But she was in front now, and that at least was something. Kingdon saw to it that she stayed there. And with persuasion and threats and ridicule and promises he encouraged her to go deeper and deeper into the dark until they were about half-way between nothing and nowhere—the canoe out of sight behind them, and nothing that was in the least tangible ahead.

"I no fit," Yonima whimpered, backing up so suddenly that Kingdon had no chance to avoid collision. "Dis place be dead man place!"

Kingdon straightened his Panama.

"Yonima be fool! Yonima be all same nothing. Them time Yonima come trade for my beach again, I laugh too much. I tell all man laugh. I make Yonima fool for all man."

Then with a sudden change of tone:

"Juju palaver no live. Them time white man come for dis place juju go 'way. I sing, I laugh, I no' care for juju palaver. I be big man pass Yonima!"

Yonima did not seem to care whether he was bigger than she was or not. Her principal concern seemed to be to get back to the canoe as fast as possible.

But Kingdon had no intention of going that far and not finishing the job. So as he barred the frenzied, fear-stricken woman's retreat and patiently quieted her down to a state of something approximating reason he asked in a low voice while the bush hummed and whistled and whispered all about them—

"What's matter you want look Orafo?"

At once, Yonima stopped trying to squeeze her way past him, just as Kingdon had hoped she would. That she had a most urgent reason for wanting to hold conversation with Orafo was plain on the face of things, else she would never even have thought of braving the dangers of a visit to Ekaba. So he had believed it might be a good thing to remind her of it; particularly

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since, as far as he could judge, none of Orafo's other wives seemed to be bothered with the same inclination.

Yonima did not answer Kingdon's question in words. But with a stiffening of the body that was clearly perceptible even in the dark she faced front again and in sudden resolution went on.

After that Kingdon's task of keeping her on the move and straight ahead was comparatively easy. True, she stopped every now and then; most of the time she whined and made more fearsome and more unintelligible noises than the bush itself, but always she went on again when Kingdon reminded her that she had a purpose in wanting to speak to Orafo.

And presently, when they had scraped and dodged and in spots literally crawled their way along the bush path for about half an hour, the chattering of Yonima's teeth suddenly became plainly audible, and the first outlying hut of the accursed village of Ekaba loomed vaguely into view.

"Be him!" Yonima whispered fearfully, referring to the hut and the village generally and almost grabbed Kingdon around the neck.

Kingdon pulled his head back and caught Yonima's wrist.

"Sof'ly," he cautioned. "Maybe so 'nother man live."

Yonima had not stopped to consider this possibility. As far as the place and circumstances would allow, she was trying desperately to concentrate upon the interview with Orafo. And as this interview, as might have been expected where Yonima was concerned, was a "trade palaver," involving no fewer than fifty puncheons of oil and Yonima's whole future in trade, it was imperative that she speak with Orafo alone.

Kingdon would have appreciated this. Fifty puncheons could not be spoken of except in whispers! A fabulous, golden yellow fortune from the point of view of almost any native, the assurance of which would have been well worth the risk of a visit to Ekaba.

It was also—or would be if Yonima succeeded in carrying it through—a final and lasting testimonial to her greatness as a trader.

Just then, however, while Kingdon gripped her wrist and whispered words of caution in her ear, Yonima was making no claim to greatness of any sort. When Kingdon tugged at her arm, she followed. When he stopped, she stopped. And as they moved step by step into that silent, weed-grown place of men that were dead, Kingdon moved very carefully because of the cobras and puff-adders that were possibly very much alive.

Therefore he did not invade any of the empty huts indiscriminately. He looked first for the hint of a light, and then at the doors to try to see just how thick and undisturbed the cobwebs were.

Suddenly as they were gropingly crossing a space between two huts, they heard a voice speaking in Jakri—a thin, quavering voice that seemed to come gaspingly out of the tomb. And almost immediately they saw a light that swayed and moved on.

Kingdon did not know all that the voice said; just a word or two here and there. But he did know that the light was nothing more spectral than a hurricane lantern in the hand of some one who was doing patrol duty or was simply passing from one hut to another and was talking audibly to himself in a laudable effort to conquer fear.

Yonima was trembling violently, and her constant muttering was stilled. She did not run, largely because her limbs refused to move, but she leaned away from the voice and the light so sharply that she disturbed Kingdon more than the sepulchral utterance of Jakri had done.

Steadying himself and taking the precaution to release Yonima's wrist, he moved cautiously forward a few steps, stopped, crouched and went forward again. Yonima followed. She was as much afraid of retreating as she was of advancing, and she trailed after Kingdon like an obedient puppy because she was not at all anxious to be left alone.

Presently, somewhere not far away, they heard the muttering of several voices; a kind of low growl that lifted and fell and sometimes died away altogether. Kingdon again paused to listen, crouching at the corner of a hut which he felt marked the dead-line between himself and discovery. He turned his head and whispered to Yonima, who was immediately behind him—

"You savez which thing they talk?"

"I no savez. They speak small mouf, too much. Li'l bit, we go look him."

Kingdon knew this, and when he looked around the corner of the hut he did so very carefully, took a good long look, then drew

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his head in slowly and was motionless and silent so long that Yonima could not refrain from whispering impatiently:

"Wha's matter? What thing he be?"

Kingdon was not sure, and he was afraid to ask Yonima to take a look on her own account. Woman-like, Jakri or not, she would be almost sure to scream, and he wanted to be more certain of the exact situation before he took chances of that sort.

"Come, we go 'nother way," he whispered. "Dis place too far 'way. We go look him proper li'l bit."

Yonima did not protest. She allowed herself to be led back the way they had come for a short distance, after which she obediently followed Kingdon by a slightly circuitous route to a point which he considered, when he started going forward again, would bring him much closer to the queer group of human beings who had made Ekaba their refuge, and who were growlingly discussing something of vital importance to them by the light of two or three hurricane lanterns.

Evidently they lived in no fear of intrusion or interruption; and, having had one fairly satisfying glimpse of them, Kingdon had no wish to startle them or in any way give them cause to resent being spied upon. So, even more carefully than before, he moved toward the location of the weird conference, and this time his view was both nearer and safer.

Creeping out of the shadow of a hut, the roof of which had fallen in, Kingdon slipped into the still blacker shadow of a stunted palm; and, kneeling behind it with Yonima quaking at his side, he looked again upon the little group that were squatting upon mats around a community chop-pot in a small, cleared space in what Kingdon supposed was the center of the village.

Yonima looked, too. She did not scream. The best she could do was whisper to herself, over and over again, a kind of litany in her own tongue. It made no sense to Kingdon, and shortly even so much as a whisper was beyond her. She gripped Kingdon's shirt sleeve just as a child might have done, and silently prayed to her several gods that he was all of the juju destroyer he was credited with being.

Truly in the village of Ekaba that night a beneficent power was a first necessity.

Kingdon's expression was curious; sharply inquisitive in fact. He saw a group of eight or nine men in loin-cloths, whose bodies were neither white nor black nor in between. Perhaps their faces might give an impression of leopard spots to the hurried observer; but their bodies, which he could see more plainly, suggested the piebald.

One of them, upon whom the light of the lantern fell most generously, seemed to be quite white of shoulder and arm and side, but his neck and thigh were patched with black, and, as far as Kingdon could see, there was no trace of white in his calf. The others—and no two of them apparently were alike—were "patched" in the same fashion. Some were more white than black; others more black than white, and one had streaks across his chest and around under his arm that somewhat resembled the zebra.

It was this man—and it was impossible for Kingdon to be sure of the identity of any of them—who suggested to him that the markings were those of a warrior caste; but he decided at once that no self-respecting Delta fighting-man would paint himself as colorlessly as that. So he sat observing them for a while, trying to decide just how it would be best to approach them.

Obviously they were in an excitable mood. They chattered and gesticulated and whined, and sometimes one of them would leap suddenly to his feet, clapping his hands wildly above his head, and, emitting a long, drawn-out wail, would throw himself violently upon his face and beat his head savagely upon the ground.

Every so often they would all stop talking and would peer steadily in the direction opposite to that in which Kingdon and Yonima had come, as if they were half-afraid of something or some one who was due to appear from that quarter. Then with various expressions of disgust or impatience or fear they would start chattering again.

Kingdon turned to Yonima.

"You look Orafo?" he whispered.

Yonima's color was a dirty ash-gray. Her lips moved; but as no sound resulted she shook her head. She did not recognize Orafo in the group and apparently, she did not care whether she did or not. Even a hundred puncheons of oil would not have tempted her to talk to a man who was damned as these were. She tugged feebly at Kingdon's shirt sleeve.

"We go," she breathed thickly. "I no fit to look him."

"Wait. What you want talk Orafo for?"

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"Be fifty puncheon," Yonima whimpered freely enough, trying to keep her eyes away from the weird, lantern-lighted circle. "But I no fit. Trade palaver be fool palver for dis place."

Kingdon thought so too; but fifty puncheons was a lot of business to come in one piece, and particularly from a woman. So, very carefully, when the chattering of the accursed was at its loudest, Kingdon drew from Yonima the information that to consummate the fifty-puncheon deal, what she needed principally was canoes. Before she could buy or borrow these Orafo's consent was necessary, whether he was damned or not.

"All right. Wait li'l bit. I go talk for Orafo."

Yonima shook her head.

"I fear! I no want look him!"

"Sh!"

Kingdon faced front sharply. But Yonima's rather loud protest had not been heard by the group with the lanterns. They were suddenly too much interested in something in the opposite direction.

All were on their feet now, and two of them broke from the group, ran a few yards toward what Kingdon supposed was the creekside, came back a little, then went forward again, as if they did not know whether they should or should not, but could not possibly, stand still and wait.

Then they finally came all the way back slowly, a hesitant, dragging step at a time until they had joined the others. There in a rough semicircle they stood waiting and staring.

And presently, without haste or fear or any demonstration that was in the least abnormal, the lean, gangling figure of a white man came leisurely into the lamplight.

YONIMA'S grip on Kingdon's shirt sleeve tugged sharply.

"Be him!" she whispered hoarsely. "Now I go die!"

"Sh-h-h!" Kingdon cautioned again without turning his head.

He was too intent upon watching how simply and calmly Dr. Drummond made himself at home.

IN THE flickering, uncertain light, while the shadows crawled and swayed into grotesque shapes as the lanterns swung crazily in their excitable bearers' hands; with the heavy, musty smell of age and desolation and rank, tropical vegetation hanging over the place, and the lifeless outline of the surrounding huts forming a sinister background that had all the gloomy suggestion of a voiceless message from the dead, the effect of the patched bodies of the men who crowded about Drummond in that first outburst of frenzied eagerness and hope, was as fascinating as it seemed unreal.

And in the midst of it Drummond's gaunt, stooped figure, his head thrust forward a little, his long arms and great hands dangling carelessly at his sides, was undoubtedly the embodiment of a mysterious force that seemed capable of any kind of magic.

He waved the first clamoring excitement aside with a sweep of his arm that was no less indifferent than if he had been standing on the front steps of the consulate at Warri.

And Kingdon in the succeeding few minutes was reminded of nothing so much as of watching an animal-trainer handling a cageful of striped or spotted jungle cats who were not in the mood to perform.

They fawned upon him, pleaded with him and flung themselves literally and figuratively at his feet; and in a moment, without any apparent reason or warning, cursed him and clawed at him as if, words being of no avail, they could not express themselves in any other way.

Several weeks—or even days—of residence in Ekaba had had its own effect upon the nerves of the little company that was so queerly accursed. Evidently too their only hope of relief was Drummond. And since this hope appeared to be slim, and to grow still more so as the doctor held them at arm's length and answered their excited demands with a shake of his head or a monosyllable, their attitude toward him rapidly became distinctly more hostile; not so excitable and much more dangerous.

It was the hostility of an animal that was trapped. Kingdon could see this plainly; a snarling, biting rage that was impotent as long as Drummond kept his eye on it. And Kingdon observed that it was centered principally in the leadership of one man whose right hand lingered nervously, now and then, in the vicinity of his loincloth.

This man looked like Orafo-Ekta, but Kingdon could not be sure of this; and Yonima, whispering a constant string of

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gibberish behind him, did not seem to be any better informed. But Kingdon did know that if any serious trouble were to start, this man would surely set it in action.

What Drummond was expected to do, or wherein he was responsible for releasing them from their present position, Kingdon could not clearly determine. When they talked loudly enough to be heard they all talked at once—a jabbering crescendo of pidgin-English, every one saying something different, so that the whole was just a jumble out of which Kingdon derived a few scattered words and phrases that meant little or nothing.

He did make out that they were afraid they would die in Ekaba; that Drummond had lied many times and as a consequence would be most appropriately damned; that he had made fools of them; that they would like to know what they were going to do; and there was mention made of their wives and families and fortunes, from all of which they were forever separated unless something radical could be done to improve their condition.

Obviously, if the power in their voices were any criterion, they were not sick. Yet apparently nothing could be done that would satisfy them; at least, nothing that seemed likely to satisfy the man who resembled Orafo-Ekta.

When Drummond had several times silenced them and driven them off to a respectful distance and compelled them to listen to what he had to say—which he said in a voice that was much too low for Kingdon to hear any of it; whenever he seemed to have the majority of them fairly well in hand and they appeared to be taking his word for whatever it was he promised and were nodding to each other in growling but encouraging approval, there was always one who refused to believe, and who had plainly lost all faith in the juju gifts of the white medicine man.

And after Drummond, having given this man warning to be silent for the third or fourth time, suddenly stepped forward, seized him by the shoulder and held a lantern close to the disturber's face and body as if he were making a perfunctory examination to pacify him or to prove something to him, Yonima again tugged Kingdon's sleeve in excited awe.

"Be Orafo! *E-yaw!* What I go do!"

Instantly Drummond's head lifted sharply, and he peered into the dark in their direction. Orafo's glance followed immediately with a gesture of impatience, and the sullen muttering of the near-naked men beyond him ceased at once.

Kingdon waited; and Yonima, realizing that her whispering amaze had carried farther than she intended, crouched behind him as if she were actually trying to hide her Amazonian body in the ridiculously small, frail shadow of his.

Then Drummond, releasing Orafo without compunction or ceremony, began to walk deliberately in Kingdon's direction, just as if he were counting his steps, while doing it. That his ears were quicker than any of the others' was as obvious as the fact that none of them seemed to appreciate the necessity for interruption; particularly Orafo, who had been so summarily dismissed.

And whatever they supposed Drummond's intentions were—whether they thought he was deserting them or not—there was no mistaking their attitude toward him when his back was turned, and no misinterpreting the sudden, wild and unreasoning fury of the erstwhile dandy Orafo-Ekta, who, like a spoiled child whose pride has been hurt, suddenly wants to destroy.

But by the fractional part of a second Kingdon moved first. Wrenching himself free from Yonima's detaining grip, he sprang into the open with a shout, hoping to warn Drummond and by attracting attention to himself to effect a pause.

Perhaps the roaring madness that was in Orafo's ears drowned out the sound of Kingdon's voice. Perhaps he heard it and did not care.

As Kingdon raced toward Drummond at top speed he saw Orafo's lean, strong body, that seemed to be streaked and spotted with light, skim along the ground more like that of an animal than a man.

He saw Drummond half-turn about, the lantern still swinging in his hand; and then in a twinkling Orafo leaped for the doctor's shoulders and appeared to wind himself around his neck. An arm that was black circled Drummond's throat; the other, that was blotched with white, curved swiftly upward, then down, driving a glint of steel before it.

Then a curious thing happened. Drummond did not sag and crumple. His head

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rose, his shoulders stiffened, and a second later he had flung Orafo from him with a sweeping gesture of disgust as if the Jakri were of no more consequence than a wet rag.

When Kingdon reached him he was still standing stiffly erect—a giant of a man with his feet planted firmly under him, though only a faintly flickering light showed in the eyes.

Kingdon, who was dwarfed beside him, made no effort to hold him upright. He placed himself a few feet in front of the doctor while Orafo picked himself up and groped frenziedly for the knife that had evidently been jolted out of his hand.

The others, forming a scattered group, hung back undecidedly, staring at Kingdon and mounting words in Jakri that indicated just how much of a juju they thought he was.

That he looked almost pitifully small and frail standing there in front of Drummond did not appear to occur to most of them; and that there was no weapon in his hand did not matter. He was the "cap'n for Marsden's beach," and it was said that bullets or the edge of the sharpest knife had no effect upon him.

However much they were inclined to believe this at that time and in the unholy village of Ekaba, they saw without a doubt that he was not afraid and that, when he had looked at them without speaking for a few seconds, he quietly turned his head to Orafo, who had found his knife, and was venomously curving around Kingdon to take Drummond again in the rear.

Apparently Kingdon's presence did not effect Orafo as it did his companions in damnation. Orafo's ambition to wear trousers and white men's boots indicated an advance in culture that was always dangerous; just as dangerous in Kingdon's case as it had been in Drummond's.

And, having struck once, he meant to finish the job because he had to; and this, since Kingdon had interfered to the extent of being a witness to the affair, included him too.

Orafo, accursed though he might be, had no intention of allowing the white man's Government to hang him.

Drummond's head had sunk a little, but he lifted it again with a jerk. He made no sound; said no word to any one, and made not the slightest effort to move, even to defend himself. When Kingdon walked deliberately toward Orafo, Drummond did not follow. He simply stood perfectly still, gripping the lantern and staring dully ahead, with the gray of death upon his face, just as if he were listening for a signal of some sort.

Orafo hurled a Jakri curse at Kingdon—a waspish scream of rage that told only too plainly what Ekaba had done to him. But the little agent went into the teeth of that momentary madness as quietly and as unhurriedly as if he were walking toward the door of his own shop.

He seemed to have no nerves at all, or any understanding of danger. If Orafo's passion and knife-hand were Death, Kingdon walked straight into them. His step did not even hesitate, much less falter; his eyes showed not the faintest sign of fear or even a trace of doubt.

This may have irritated Orafo. Possibly it frightened him into a snarling leap at something he did not in the least understand. But, steady as Kingdon's eyes were, his impressions in the succeeding second were utterly confused.

Again Kingdon had a vision of a body that was streaked and spotted with light hurtling through space—this time in his direction.

But beyond that body, from somewhere out of the dark, there came a shot—a thunderous, deafening, incredible thing—and simultaneously a vague hint of something white and large coming tearing toward him as if propelled from the same gun.

Kingdon was stepping swiftly out of the way of Orafo's twisting lunge when he saw and heard all this, and he did not see how queerly Orafo's body buckled and spun in mid-air and finally came to rest, doubled up almost at Drummond's feet.

But he did see Drummond turn slowly, and just a little, in the direction from which the shot had come—saw him incline his head solemnly as if he were bowing in thanks for the assistance the shot promised, and then Kingdon saw him glide gently into a heap sidewise, as if the doctor were trying to avoid all contact with Orafo.

Instantly there was a sudden rush of naked feet retreating; of blotched bodies and wildly bobbing lanterns that leaped scatteringly out of the picture and disappeared like the fantoms they seemed to be, leaving an ominous dark behind them.

Then Kingdon was being dwarfed again.

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Harth, a little out of breath, loomed over him possessively.

"Are you hurt?" he demanded without any ceremony.

Kingdon glanced past Harth's bulk toward another shadow-like figure that came stiffly and precisely toward them from the same direction as Harth and the shot had done.

And there was no need to ask who it was. Samuel Brown apparently was just as much Samuel in Ekaba as anywhere else.

"Did he do that?" Kingdon asked Harth quietly, indicating Orafo and nodding in the direction of the unmistakable Samuel.

"He did," tersely. "Just as if he were out at target practise. Sammy's no fool when his mind's made up."

Kingdon got the remainder of Harth's report later. Just then he turned immediately to Drummond and Orafo, and when he relighted the lantern Drummond had hung on to so tenaciously, and which had gone out-when he had collapsed, he knew that Drummond was dead and that Orafo, who was moaning slightly, very probably would follow.

Yonima, who had come timorously out of hiding, was kneeling beside the latter, superstitiously careful not to touch him, groaning and muttering and demonstrating her grief and horror after the manner of her kind.

And it was while Harth brought his gig-crew from the creek side, and they carried Drummond's body to the gig, that Orafo feebly opened his eyes and apparently recognized Kingdon and Yonima bending over him.

As best he could, Kingdon was trying to stanch the thick flow of blood from a wound under Orafo's left shoulder, and at the same time was examining the patches that were scattered with crazy indiscrimination over Orafo's body.

They were not quite white; more like the color of the negro palm, which is inclined toward yellow. The face was spotted with them, most particularly where there were no tribal face markings, and because Kingdon had to turn Orafo on his side to reach the wound, he observed at once that the back was not so decidedly marked as the chest or abdomen, the blotches ranging from light to dark tan.

Then, when Orafo had stared dully at Kingdon for a minute or so, he said in a hoarse whisper as if he understood that some sort of comment was expected of him—

"Drummon' say he go make me all same white man."

"*Cha!*"

Yonima pulled away sharply. But Kingdon, though he hardly believed his ears, tried not to waste any precious minutes in surprize.

"How he do so?" he asked, and leaned near to Orafo's mouth to catch the smaller whisper.

"Be—all same—needle. I no savez this needle. Dat man—lie—too much. Now he say—li'l bit we go be—black man 'gain. Mebbe so. I no savez. White man just—palaver—no good."

Then all at once he dropped into Jaluit and began whispering things to Yonima: things that had to do with death and burial and the necessity for not allowing him to die within the accursed confines of Ekaba. And, probably aware that he had no time to lose in useless comments upon Drummond's failure to do what he had promised, he ignored Kingdon altogether.

As it happened, he lived just long enough to be transferred to Yonima's canoe, and if Kingdon guessed aright—because Yonima never spoke of it—there was no ceremony at his burial. His grave was undoubtedly a shallow thing without treasure or symbol to keep him company; and certainly, unlike the majority of his contemporaries, he would be buried only once.

All this time, and until the somber journey back to the consulate at Warri had been completed in all its gloomy details, Kingdon said nothing to Samuel Brown; and Samuel for his part made no attempt to say anything to him. But each was thinking of the other, and both were somewhat puzzled and amazed.

Arrived at the consulate, and their funereal duty done, Harth and Samuel walked back to Marsden's beach, leaving Kingdon in close conference with the D. C., who sent for Fosdyck, the provincial commissioner. And Fosdyck in his turn listened to what Kingdon had to say with justifiable incredulity and suspicion.

"As far as I can judge," Kingdon summed up gravely, "the thing was done by means of hypodermic injection. Orafo spoke of a needle, and a hypodermic is the only one that seems to fit. Perhaps injections were

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ude covering certain areas; and in some eas the injections plainly enough worked tter than in others. I could see that. course, none of us, white or black, is of even color all over, and the negro is alays blacker in the back than in front."

"Is he?" the D. C. queried. "I hadn't oticed."

Kingdon nodded.

"Naturally I know nothing about the nd of experiments Drummond was trying make, or what chemical solution he could ossibly have used. But what I saw leads e to think he had some notions of his own pigmentation, and found Orafo's desire ape the white man good experimental aterial."

"What about the other fellows?" Fosdyck emanded. "I should imagine we could ound them up?"

"That's a possibility," Kingdon conceded. "But I doubt it. They saw the doctor killed, you know, and as he seems to have promised them that their natural color would return, they'll probably be very careful to hide themselves away until it does. I can give you the names of some of them, though, in case you do catch up with them some day."

The D. C. took the names Kingdon gave him; then the little trading-agent suggested that Drummond's private papers might shed some light on the subject.

But, though a search discovered, among other scientific treatises, numerous notations on pigment, indicating that Drummond had several very decided theories on the subject, particularly with respect to the reduction of the heavy pigmentation which is responsible for the color of the negro's skin, there was nothing found then or later that could be accepted as a formula.

So Kingdon walked back to his own beach, thinking vaguely of the folly of men who sought to improve on creation, and of the vanities of others who longed to step from mountain-top to mountain-top while they yet crawled on their hands and knees.

He also wondered where Samuel Brown had learned to shoot.

This bothered Kingdon. While he realized that it was impossible for any man to travel through life without being under some sort of obligation to the great majority of his fellow men, it troubled him to think that this included Samuel Brown. Samuel was—well, Samuel. All except his shooting.

Thus when Kingdon reached his office he sent for Harth.

"What happened?" he asked when Harth, who had been waiting for the summons, showed in his doorway.

"Sammy tried to follow Drummond in a kernel-canoe," Harth explained. "But the owner of the canoe would go only so far and no farther when he discovered the journey was taking him toward Ekaba. So I helped Sammy out of his dilemma with the gig. He didn't like it—my interference, I mean—but he was on Drummond's trail and meant to stay on it till he found him out. So he put up with me and took charge of the rest of the proceedings while I sat back and watched. It was worth watching, too."

Kingdon did not smile.

"When he pulled the gun," Harth added, "I tried to stop him, afraid he would hit something or somebody he wasn't aiming at, but he just told me to mind my own business and do something. So I took a chance on his shooting and ran. And you saw what happened."

A pause.

"What was wrong with Orafo and those other fellows?"

"I'll tell you about that later," Kingdon promised absently. "Ask Brown to come in and see me if he hasn't gone to bed."

Samuel was not in bed. He was sitting before his table, drumming upon it with his finger-tips when Harth entered his room to deliver Kingdon's message.

"Oh. All right. At once. Certainly."

This kind of diction meant that Samuel was just a little nervous; much more so than he had been at Ekaba when he had so calmly shot Orafo. He got to his feet with something of a jerk, tried to look as superior as usual and, for some reason or other that was not clear to Harth, succeeded in looking like a human being instead. Then he paused.

"Kingdon—er—that is— He had nothing in his hands, had he?"

Harth looked puzzled.

"Now, you mean?"

"No—no, at Ekaba. When that fellow with the knife was so er—lively?"

Harth shook his head.

"Not a thing. Why?"

Apparently Samuel did not know, but his nervousness increased as he went along to Kingdon's office and entered it, looking more human than ever.

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"Sit down," Kingdon invited mildly.

"Er—yes, yes, of course," Samuel agreed and chose the edge of the couch.

"How did you know anything about Drummond?"

Samuel tried to rest his elbows nonchalantly on his knees, but they did not seem to be able to rest very well. So he straightened up again, made one or two false starts, then managed to tell his part of the story, including the circumstance that he had been certain it had been Drummond who had struck him.

"Why did you not tell me of this when I gave you the chance?" Kingdon queried without any antagonism.

Samuel's normally indignant blue eyes at once found the native mat at his feet unusually interesting. But he was not really seeing it. He was back in Ekaba watching Kingdon, with nothing in his hands, facing Orafo in his madness. And whatever else might be said of Samuel, he knew courage when he saw it.

Suddenly he rose to his feet. He looked as if he were choking, or would do so if he did not get something off his mind. Yet when he spoke he was none the less Samuel.

"I think I owe you an apology, Mr. Kingdon."

"Not at all."

Kingdon rose too and came slowly around his desk.

"A man is entitled to his own opinions of anything—even me."

He smiled.

"Where did you learn to shoot like that?"

"Oh—that?"

Samuel seemed surprized that his shooting should cause any comment.

"My people have always shot things. I used to do quite a lot of it at the trap."

"I see," Kingdon said dryly, marveling not a little at the average human being's tendency to belittle the things he really can do well, while he frequently puffs out like a pouter pigeon over virtues that are purely imaginary. Then he announced after a moment's thought:

"I'm going to arrange with the home office about your resignation. But you'll have to stick till another man comes out. About two months."

And Samuel actually looked frightened.

"You—you mean I am dismissed!"

"No. You wanted to resign, didn't you?"

"Oh yes, of course, I—er—I did, didn't I?"

Samuel's smile was somewhat sickly.

"But would you—that is—would you mind very much if I stayed?"

SAMUEL stayed.

And Yonima, being no longer troubled with a husband who interfered with her course in the ways of trade, brought fifty puncheons of oil to Marsden's beach one week, ten puncheons per day for five days.

She argued with Kingdon about the price as usual, so that her voice was heard from one end of the beach to the other.

But Kingdon knew this was only a bluff; that he had but to mention the village of Ekaba and Yonima's loud-voiced vituperation would descend instantly to a whisper of supplication, so that the price of the oil she brought would have been most pitifully at his mercy.

Kingdon, however, was a gentleman. And it was no part of a gentleman's creed to take advantage of a lady.

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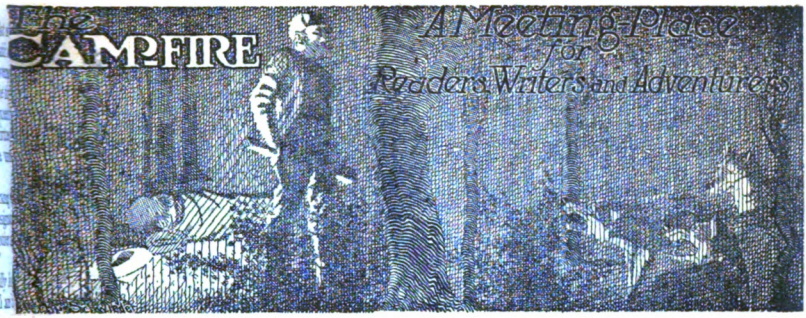

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know 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.

SOMETHING from J. Allan Dunn in connection with his complete novelette in this issue:

Carmel, N. Y.

There have been many speculations as to the final end of Lafitte. My main authority comes from a book published in Boston within seventeen years that gives his life and death as I have made it into a tale—with embellishments.

AS THIS publication gives dates, publishes the text of many letters besides that of the one given in "The Black Banner" as written to the commander of the U. S. cruiser off Galvezton, I have ventured to regard it as authoritative though I have delved in several other sources and omitted all that was contradictory. The duel with the British captain is described in detail in this printed account.

That Lafitte, with his undoubted talents, knowledge of his profession, courage and physical strength, might well have made more of the opportunities of the times, is certain. That he did not, shows the caliber of his reckless, perverse but ambitious spirit.

I think that, in "The Black Banner," he may be fittingly added to the *Adventure* gallery of Piracy. The conditions in Texas, with mention of Long's filibustering attempt at conquest (the second of such endeavors by Americans) which failed dismally in 1821, are historically correct.—J. A. D.

HERE are a number of questions that will stir things up. The letter went into our cache in December, 1921. Just the other day I read a newspaper magazine-section article saying that the mystery of Ambrose Bierce's disappearance had never been cleared up. He went to Mexico and—vanished.

Reno, Nevada.

I just wanted to say that I have wandered over the West for more years than I care to tell. I have

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worked in mines, trapped, ridden, worked on surveys and followed other lines too numerous to mention, and although I have known several professional killers, I have never met one that filed a notch on his gun as a sign of a victim slain. Nor have I ever known a man to develop hydrophobia from the bite of a skunk. I have never known at first-hand of a chaparral bird or road-runner corraling a rattlesnake and leaving it to perish in a prison of cactus. I wonder is the bad-man of the notched gun a creature of the imagination like the ogres of our childhood days? And are the habits of the skunk and road-runner but myths? Has anybody sitting here at the fire to-night ever seen a creature called a vinegarone? If so, I hope they will describe it. Figuratively I am from Missouri. Two more questions, I would ask in all earnestness. Does any one know what became of Ambrose Bierce, and is Butch Cassidy still alive? If so, where?—H. CHALLENGER.

THIS comrade's letter was so full of good words for our magazine that there isn't much left of it after I've finished cutting out that part of it. But there's enough left for us all to get acquainted with him. He starts a train of thought that probably others of you as well as I have often followed in fancy. How many times, without knowing it, does one of us come into contact with one of the rest of us in the ordinary doings of our lives? Comrade Hall speaks of having doubtless sent telegraph messages for some of us and of course we're all dealing with one another in countless ways. Wish there were some magic way of knowing each other at the time as comrades at the Fire.

Our friend is right about "73" *vs* "71." I think another letter has been heard at "Camp-Fire" on this point.

San Francisco, California.

Will you please let an old-time railroad telegrapher in on the circuit long enough to say a few words? Contrary to the belief of many railroad officials, we brass-pounders can originate an idea now and then.

This is the first time I have cut in on the line, although I have never missed one single number. In our parlance I have been over on the receiving side all the time.

I HAVE been slinging lightning for twenty-four years all over the West, but I have had very few of the adventures that others tell about. However, I wish to say that there are adventures to be had in a train-dispatcher's office that will shake the nerves of the strongest of men and leave them as helpless and weak as babies. Just sit there once and wait for word that two trains have come together—just sit there and play checkers with trains and human lives as pawns and see. Go up to the General Office, sit in on the S. F.-N.Y. wire and listen to Ogden, Cheyenne, Omaha and Chicago in there fighting the stormy weather and trying to pass us through. The same on the New Orleans wire with Houston, San Antonio, Del Rio, El Paso, Tucson, Los Angeles and Bakersfield in there on a bad day. While some of the Camp-Fire members are sitting around their Camp-Fire smoking, I have worked many wires that pass over their heads—perhaps handling a Pullman reservation to Los Angeles for one of them, or one naming rates on a carload shipment of fruit to England.

Our wires cross the great Northwest about which so many stories appear in the magazine. The wires hum night and day fixing tariff rates and regulating the movement of, and providing equipment for, millions of tons of freight and thousands of passengers.

When Wilson, Roosevelt, Taft, Pershing, Diaz, Foch and others came West we kept our fingers on them from the time they left Portland, Oregon, until they arrived in El Paso, Texas. During the war we handled hundreds of troop-trains the same way.

There are three things I can judge accurately on first sight—a good ball-player, a good telegrapher and a good story. If they are mediocre, no amount of ballyhooing will ever convince me to the contrary. Some people say that a good story is all a matter of taste—that what I would like some one else might not. That doesn't enter into the question. A good story is a good story, no matter whether it is the type we prefer or not.

Now that I have gotten all this out of my system, I feel better. Been packing it around with me a long time and I guess you think I burned all my fuses and grounded Ckt when I did start. NM-RJ-73-GN.*—JAS. T. HALL.

(*No more—Relief—Best regards—Good-night.)

It has just occurred to me to add a word about the figures "73" meaning "best regards."

Seems like some one has said something about "71" being used for this. I have been telegraphing a good many years and worked the heavy fast wires where the men know telegraphing to the *n*th degree and I've never heard anything but "73" being used to express "best regards."

I will appreciate a little light on the subject.—J. T. H.

ON THE occasion of his first story in our magazine, John T. Rowland follows Camp-Fire custom and rises to introduce himself:

Pitts Bay, Bermuda.

In freshman year at New Haven I had the good fortune to meet Dr. Wilfred T. Grenfell, the great medical missionary of the North. The following Summer four of us, classmates, took to Labrador a little 35-foot schooner which had been built in the States for his work on that bleak coast. After delivering the boat I remained and spent a wonderful Summer with the Doctor, poking into all the little nooks and corners as far north as the White Bear Islands.

SIMILIAR Summers followed, but 1911 was the best. That year another white man and myself, with two half-breeds, went to Baffin Land in a 30-foot launch. So far as I know, *Daryl* is the only craft of her size ever to have made such a voyage. We traversed the whole length of the Labrador,

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crossed Hudson Strait to Baffin Land, and coasted west up the Strait to the mouth of Fox Channel, exploring waters which in detail at least are utterly uncharted. It is a fascinating coast!

A cruise in Alaskan waters followed, but to my way of thinking that did not touch the Labrador for remoteness and the feeling of being in virgin territory.

My sea-hunger has not abated. Only last Summer I made a short voyage on a four-master as mate, and I've had various cruises along our own coast and to the West Indies. During the War I served as watch officer on a destroyer.

It is the North, however, that interests me most. If the readers will bear with me I'll try to give you some yarns of that part of the world from the viewpoint of the man who sails a small boat.—JOHN T. ROWLAND.

ANOTHER chapter in our San Blas discussion. The enclosed newspaper article mentioned is one in the *Star and Herald* of Panama telling of Mr. Mitchell-Hedges' big catches of big fish off Taboga Island.

Since he asked that his letter be not published in full detail, only a portion of it follows:

Ancon, Canal Zone.

I really feel I must write this letter if only to straighten your correspondents out a little. It is a curious fact in this world that it is human nature to underestimate most things and people. Hence—when Mr. Wilcox (an admitted authority upon the San Blas Indians) states that a British scientist, with much advertising recently attempted to cross and penetrate the hinterland, etc., and was gone three weeks and turned back by the Indians (this appeared in *Adventure* in a September or October issue)—here once again one has an example of underestimation and lack of knowledge of facts and pure surmise. The British scientist in question, namely myself, quite right was gone three weeks and returned. *But* he returned for and with a definite object. He suddenly left again as the press described, refusing all information and loaded tight with supplies.

He was gone upon this second trip over three months and returned with the boat loaded, not with the supplies, but with the greatest collection of Indian dogs, picture-writing on cloth, primitive weapons, etc., that has ever been brought out of the country; also the history of the Indians as handed down to generation after generation. Further, the photographs, of which many series have been taken, will, when published, I think settle much controversy and rather astonish a good many.

There is—and on this I join issue with many of your subscribers—too much surmise and not enough actual definite data given to-day with many of the so called articles gotten up and written purely sensationally for the edification of the public without even a pretense of truth. A well known Sunday paper recently published a shark story. Well, really it is an insult to one's intelligence. All fish stories are looked upon with suspicion previous to my San Blas exploration.

I was engaged in six months deep sea research work in the Caribbean Sea, and now I am engaged in six to twelve months deep sea research in the Pacific.

I enclose you a paper with a little record. Every fish is photographed, bones removed, measured, weighed and witnessed. I thought it might perhaps interest you.

If any portions of this letter are of interest, you may publish, but please not in full detail, as I have only scribbled this while arriving here for a day to get supplies.—F. A. MITCHELL-HEDGES.

IN ACCORDANCE with Camp-Fire custom Gerald B. Breitigam arises and introduces himself on the occasion of his first story in the magazine:

New York City.

Have you ever been on the program of some big radio broadcasting station? I have. And I feel now as I did then—talking to an audience I can neither see nor hear. It's eery. Anyway, I can sit down to do it, which is welcome news to my knees.

I'M BY way of being a newspaperman—although no longer working at my trade—and I reckon I always will be a newspaperman. It gets in a fellow's blood. But—I didn't start out that way. I'm still a Candidate for Holy Orders in the Episcopal Church. St. Stephen's and I decided, however, to get along without each other. St. Stephen's decided first—after I had spanked the mathematics professor at dinner and questioned certain dogma in the class-room.

I hit for the West, first stop, Kansas City. To an Easterner—I'm a native of Lancaster, Pa.—it seemed like a good place to roll off the reds, being in all likelihood the end of the world, and I liable to fall over the rim if I went farther. Was in turn pool-hall attendant, park spieler, singer of illustrated songs in a movie house, book salesman, collector, reporter. The last one took.

(Let me have a fresh paragraph for this:) I had no more money than any reporter and more debts than most when on a borrowed five-spot I knelt into a crap game on Minnesota Avenue, Kansas City, Kan., one day and—broke the game. Two poker games in the next two weeks were almost equally generous. Then, free of debt, and with pockets still filled, I said to Bill let's get married, and Bill said let's. We did it.

Henry Zimmer came to the wedding. Henry was chief of police, and a good friend. He pulled out a revolver as long as your arm, and slapped it on the table, and laughed like a horse. "This sees that the Kid don't back out." He meant me, but we were both kids, twenty-one apiece. It's a great world at twenty-one. But, Lord love you, it's a great world now at thirty-three, and I reckon it's a great world at any age. If you're built that way.

WE WANTED to see the world. Next stop, San Francisco. Then the Middle West again, then New York. Back to Denver and the Rockies, south to Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. Into the movies for a while. Running a Santa Barbara paper's telegraph news for a time. Then, with New York again as headquarters, a year's swing through the rural districts of America on a flock of special

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articles for the farm magazines. New York again, and city editor of *The Globe*.

Now I'm publicity man for a producer with seven or eight stage properties all going at once, here, there and everywhere. Also, I'm working over a play he may produce sometime—but that's nothing to gamble on in the show world. It may be put on tomorrow, and flop. It may be produced fifteen or twenty years hence and provide an annuity for pappydom. Oh, well.

I'VE written five books of adventure for boys under the pen name of Gerald Breckenridge—my middle name—a bale of newspaper verse, another bale of short stories for newspapers, but that's all in the day's work, in this business of providing cakes three times a day.

Do the thing you want to do—no matter what it brings you. That's been as close to a motto as I have steered.

Any man that tells about himself without mentioning his wife is not telling the whole story. Bill's the Lady Who Married Me, five-feet-three, ninety-five pounds, New Orleans born, full of fire. I owe her a lot. Jerry, Jr., and Pat—real name Russell, but all the Irish blood behind him jumped the generations and hit him in the upper lip—are nine and eleven, and I'm prouder of them than if I had written the finest poem in the world.

Adventure. My hat's off to it. And I'm proud to meet you around its camp-fire. With which, hoping nothing he has said will be held against him, deponent endeth.—GERALD B. BREITIGAM.

REMEMBER some time ago we had an anonymous letter calling us in the office degenerates because we didn't give women and the love element sufficient place in our magazine? I passed it on to you, with another cussing us for spoiling a story by letting woman interest into it, just to show what hard lives your editors live. But that letter was taken up by quite a few of you, particularly our women readers. Wish there were space for all these letters, but here are some samples. So far as I remember, only one, a woman, objected to our masculine type of story.

Here's one from a man:

Chicago.

The lady who criticized *Adventure* as not having enough of the feminine in its fiction is very unreasonable and not at all generous or considerate of the masculine reader.

THE news-stands and bookstalls are glutted with the type of fiction she mentions and are thrust at the reader in all the current fiction magazines and cloth bound fiction. *Adventure* is making an attempt to cater to the masculine reader exclusively, the boy of sixteen and the man of ninety, and it should not be diverted from that field and it should eliminate the feminine entirely from its pages. Why? Because that field is fully occupied, in fact, it is crowded with much competition and they all cater to the feminine readers with the result that there is always a bountiful supply of this type of fiction which the lady critic craves—so why the complaint? Why begrudge the masculine reader one fiction magazine he may call his own?

We have fiction magazines for the girls. We have the boys juvenile fiction magazines. We have fiction and general magazines for the ladies. We have the general fiction magazine for the general reader—the term "general reader" is a composite made up of masculine and feminine readers, but catering 90 per cent. to the feminine reader. The masculine reader must be content with the general fiction magazine, 90 per cent. feminine or go hang. A survey of the magazine and fiction field will bear out these statements. All men and boys sure do love a "thriller"; Western adventure and sea stories are the type that appeal to the boy in each one of us—but writers, ably seconded by the editors, try to combine a love and adventure story with the feminine bobbing up at critical times, thereby ruining a good adventure story in order to cater to the feminine reader.

This type of story gluts the market. The writers and readers of this type of fiction have my best wishes. They are bountifully served and have no ground to complain. They have all fiction magazines serving them and should not begrudge the masculine reader one magazine out of the great multitude published.

Just one—is that not a most humble request?—JOHN H. JOHNSTON.

This is from a girl, and if she has not in her the true spirit of adventure as much as any man among us I do not know it when I meet it. Did I slam women? I didn't mean to.

Oakland, California.

Needless to say that I read *Adventure*. Not every month. Why? Because it hurts. You see, I want adventure. But I did read the December number, in which you (in the "Camp-Fire" portion) in a way slammed women. Please read this letter, and then see if I am an exception or "just a woman."

I WANT adventure. I love to read travel books, telling of the East, West, North and South. Yet I sit down and read such books as "Main Street." I would love to cross (to me) unknown waters, yet the only water I have crossed is the Bay between Oakland and San Francisco, where I see big liners coming in, loaded with the fruits of foreign lands, see big steamers coming in, bringing home people who have seen, some who have felt, the ever changing world. I want adventure. I want to climb the Alps, go down the Nile, tell the Sphinx my secret, see the grave of Michael Collins, the tomb of Napoleon, see the Bay of Bombay, the Highlands of Scotland, the picture galleries of Italy, to see the works of Bellini, Romney, Turner. I want to see the crooked streets of old London, to see the characters of Dickens's books; I want to see the King and Queen of Belgium, who are, to me, ranked with the noblest people of the world, along with Lloyd George, Michael Collins, Madame Bernhardt. I would like to be in Japan with the blooming of the cherry blossoms and to see Mount Fujiyama.

I want to feel, to live, to see other worlds. So far in my life, my greatest adventure was going through Yellowstone National Park. It was wonderful. I would like to go through in the Winter

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time when everything is covered with that silent white blanket. The Park has a wonderful, strange hold over me. I dream of all this as, day in and day out, I do my duty at the office, hoping and feeling that some day my dreams will come true. I have no friends, because I am too quiet. I do not "jazz" around, smoke, and be a general flapper. It isn't in me. I like music; violins take me back to the days of Pompeii; waltzes to the Colonial days. Jazz makes me have a headache and makes me think of a bunch of jabbering monkeys, parrots, etc. I would like to explore the few unknown parts of the world that are left, as well as go over what is known. Who knows but perhaps some day my shorthand and typewriting experience will enable me to have at least part of my dreams come true. I am free, twenty-one and white, a girl (unfortunately). Money—the Bread of Adventure. Dreams—the Curse of Life.— —— ——

And here's another girl with the same spirit. Surely we always have welcome at Camp-Fire for women like these:

Chicago.

I, like the lady who wrote protesting your neglect of the feminine, am of that gender, *but* that isn't my fault, I'll assure you. Wanderlust, the burning longing to strap on snowshoes or buy a machete and a gun and go either way for adventure, almost consumes me at times; and your magazine is the only exhaust I have found that, if not conquering at least satiates the desire for the time being. So I'm one more on your side.

I've been a silent member of your Camp-Fire for ages and my only regret is that my sex keeps me from doing things that come under the heading of adventure. More power to you. Don't love-story us.

I read everything in the magazine and pass it on in many places and I love it 'cause it knows the difference between "adventure" and "romance."— —— ——

And still another of the same sturdy breed:

From a Town In New Jersey.

Well, *I* am a woman too. BUT—I would not for the world have you introduce the so-called "love-interest" into the stories you publish. It may seem queer, but I would much more prefer to read of *James Grim* and *Corrigan* and a score of others than the love-stories which, by the way, get dreadfully tiresome with their inevitable "happy ending." Of course, some of them are also very good, and entertaining, but I am for adventure, furst an' las'.— —— ——

This time it is a mother speaking, and I print her good words about our magazine without apology for praise of it in its own pages.

Montclair, N. J.

DEAR SIR:

I am not a Camp-Fire member, though I might be, as I have lived in many places, from a quiet town in the South to many countries abroad, miners' towns, logging camps and comfortable apartments in New York. But I am an "*Adventure* mother" and have read the magazine for some years. Three of my sons get it, sometimes all three at once. So I have had frequently duplicate and sometimes triplicate copies in the house. Naturally I want to know what my boys read, and I read it too, and I like it.

But nothing would have made you the victim of this letter but my wrath at reading the letter of an anonymous person, be it a woman, a silly man or a so-called "lady," saying that the stories in *Adventure* are "sex-morbid." Nothing could be more untrue or foolish. I know that there have been few women compared with men to invade the waste places of the world, but there have always been some, and there are but few stories that can be told of men in which women have had no part, good or bad. And the writers of *Adventure* are exceedingly chivalrous to women, mentioning the evil influence very little and good very often. Everything I have so far read in *Adventure* is wholesome and makes for righteousness. I would advise your cavilling correspondent to read some of the higher-priced magazines in many of which she, he or it will find all the morbid stuff that needs chastisement. Yours very truly.—THE MOTHER OF A WHOLESOME FAMILY.

Guess we'll just jog along as we've been doing. Can't see any reason for barring women entirely from our pages, but I can't see any reason for letting the love element occupy any greater place than it has heretofore. Unless I hear from you to the contrary, we'll call it settled.

A LETTER from one who can tell the anti-weapon law fanatics a few facts as to where criminals get their guns. Then, if these same fanatics would reason out how impossible it would be to prevent criminals from getting guns no matter what laws were passed—but they won't reason. If they did, the very wet wetness of the country under Prohibition would convince them:

Detroit, Michigan.

May another drifter step into the warm circle of the Camp-Fire?

HAVING lived for several years in New York State, and being a gun crank if there ever was one, I am fairly familiar with the law, and its weakness. And I can tell you a bit more about the way it works out.

The pistols and revolvers which have been confiscated from those who have no authority to carry them are destroyed or dumped into a near-by body of water. Very few ever find their way into the hands of those who would put them to any illegitimate use. But there is a large number of importers and cheap mail-order houses who supply the criminal class with the wherewithal to get results.

Had a perfectly good permit to carry a pistol, during my residence in N. Y. State, but was never called on to show it. Only needed the old pistol twice in the years I carried it, but she sure did come in handy then.

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FROM personal acquaintance with a number of fellow-sojourners in a nice big prison, I can with authority tell you where the most of the weapons they used came from. In the larger cities there are always pawn-shops which do an illicit business in pistols and revolvers, and the rest of the country has access to the mail order house, of which there are a number, handling German and Spanish weapons.

While I wish you wouldn't use my name, if this is published in full or in part, I am glad to say that President Wilson pardoned me, after new evidence in my behalf was submitted. The thirteen months I put in for Uncle Sam, without pay, were about the most interesting of my life, and I learned more about men whom I met there than I could have discovered in thirteen years on the outside.

Oh, yes, I did five days in solitary on bread and water, the "Hole," the boys call it, and that just three days before my pardon arrived.

SOMETIME some writer is going to make the crack that the boys are wild with joy when they hit the street after doing a stretch in stir. There's nothing to it. I helped dress out over 700 men in the time I was there in the clothing room, some lifers among them, and not a one ever went out without a good many backward looks for the boys he left behind, and I have seen a lot of big huskies with tears on their cheeks, too. I know one fellow who deliberately lost 30 days "Good time" so he could go out with his buddy.

Saw one third-term man who broke open a mail-box in front of the prison, to get sent back. He had no home and had been in the same place over 15 years altogether, and there was a hard Winter coming on. So he played safe for a bed and chow for the cold weather.

I WISH I could write a story about the old deputy warden who used to come around to the boys in solitary, after his Sunday dinner, rubbing his belly and telling them what he had for dinner and how good it tasted. Also about the time I was riding on a street car in an Eastern city and busted a man in the jaw, thinking it was the old deputy. He looked like the old ——, and I automatically swung on him. But we got to be pretty good friends after I explained why I hit him.

The man who replaced the old Deputy was a *man*, and was well liked by the boys. He was not soft with them, either, but he always gave them a fair break.

I could go on for reams and quires about the fights, escapes, petty politics, and other things which occur even in the best regulated of prisons, but enough is enough.— —— ——

ONLY a little over fifty-five per cent. of the population of the United States is of white American parentage. Think it over. Various business interests, for their own selfish profit, are trying to let down the bars to more immigration. Various foreign elements, for their own interests, are trying to do the same. Various red elements, for the ultimate overthrow of our government by force, are trying to do the same. No one of these elements gives a —— for the interests of America herself. Are you going to stay asleep while they get what they want for themselves at the expense of America? Stop immigration.

Let your Senators and your Representative in the House know very definitely where you stand. Use every legitimate pressure you can bring to bear. Stop immigration.—A. S. H.

OUR Camp-Fire stations are spreading over the map. Help make them grow.

A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazine is that stated above, and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

Keepers answer letters only if they wish. For local information write "Ask Adventure."

Alabama—50—Fairfield. Percy E. Coleman, 405 Forty-fifth St.

Arkansas—161—Hot Springs. Tom Manning, Jr., 322 Morrison Ave.

California—44—Oakland. Lewis P. Wilson, 836 Seventh Ave.
28—Lost Hills. Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Monson, care of Gen. Del. No. 2.
38—Los Angeles. Colonel Wm. Strover, Westlake Military School, Mount Washington.
60—San Bernardino. Charles A. Rouse, Hotel St. Augustine.
73—Galt. E. M. Cook, Box 256.
74—Eagle Rock. John R. Finney, 109 Eddy Ave.
89—Chico. K. W. Mason, 1428 Park Ave.
108—Helendale. G. R. Wells, P. O. Box 17.
113—Vallejo. Edith G. Engesser, Golden Triangle Rabbitry, Highway Homes.
114—Mill Valley, Louis F. Guedet, Restawhyle Knoll.
115—Los Gatos. G. H. Johnson.
116—Sabastopol. Mrs. Lucy E. Hicks, 420 S. Main St.
126—Covelo. Whit H. Ham. Box 388.
141—Santa Cruz. A. W. Wyatt, Capitola Road and Jose Ave.
149—San Francisco. A. H. Hutchinson, Veteran Press, 1264 Valencia St.

Colorado—105—Grand Junction. Bart Lynch, 236 Main St.

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Connecticut—103—New Haven. Ralph Pierson, 3 Yale Station.
142—Hartford. Homer H. Brown, 47 Sisson Ave.
D. C.—167—Washington. Walter A. Sheil, 503 Sixth St. N. E.

Florida—87—Miami. A. C. Smith, 1243 N. E. Miami Court.
117—Miami. Miami Canoe Club, 115 S. W. South River Drive.
128—Titusville. Max von Koppelow, Box 1014.
129—Clearwater. E. E. Preston, 504 Vine St.
139—St. Petersburg. Capt. Lee Whetstone, Hotel Poinsettia.
143—St. Petersburg. J. G. Barnhill, 10 Third St. N.
158—Crescent City. E. N. Clark, care *Courier*.
Georgia—98—Hinesville. R. N. Martin, *The Liberty County Herald*.
Idaho—110—Pocatello. C. W. Craig, 223 S. Second Ave.
Indiana—18—Connersville. Norba Wm. Guerin, 112 East Eighteenth St.
90—Linton. Herschell Isom, 73 Tenth St., N. E.
Illinois—47—Peoria. B. H. Coffeen.
66—Mt. Carmel. W. C. Carter, 1122 Chestnut St.
67—Plainfield. J. P. Glass, The Linshield Co.
Kentucky—144—Corbin. Keith Mauney.

Maine—19—Bangor. Dr. G. E. Hathorne, 70 Main St.
59—Augusta. Robie M. Liscomb, 73½ Bridge St.
111—Lewiston. Howard N. Lary, 714 Main Street.
Maryland—55—Baltimore. Henry W. L. Fricke. 1200 E. Madison St. at Asquith.
82—Baltimore. Joseph Patti, Jr., 4014 E. Lombard St.
151—Hagerstown. L. J. Schaefer.
Massachusetts—26 Malden. Arthur R. Lloyd, 16 Cross St.

Michigan—27—Marquette. T. Mitchell, Box 864, G. P. O.
69—Grand Rapids. Dr. A. B. Muir, 1133 Lincoln Ave., N. W.
79—Lansing. Geo. H. Allen, *Lansing Industrial News*, 109½ N. Washington Ave.
80—Detroit. R. A. Taylor, 5129 Maybury Grand.
106—Gaylord. Sidney M. Cook.
131—North Muskegon. J. F. Forsyth, *The Peninsular Clarion*. The Forsyth Publishers.
137—Flint. O'Leary & Livingston, 309 So. Saginaw St.
Minnesota—112—St. Paul. St. Paul *Daily News*, 92 E. Fourth St.
145—Brainerd. P. T. Tracey, care Brainerd Gas & Electric Co.
Mississippi—88—Tunica. C. S. Swann, Box 244.
Missouri—51—St. Louis. W. R. Hovt. 7921 Van Buren St., phone Riverside 250.
94—St. Louis. C. Carter Lee, M. D., 3819 Olive St.
127—Salem. Emmet C. Higgins, 100 N. Tenth St.
Montana—119—Butte. B. A. Tower, 1127 Waukesha St.
Nebraska—95—Omaha. L. W. Stewart, 119 No. 16th St.
New Mexico—96—Silver City. Edward S. Jackson, Box 435.
New Jersey—17—Caldwell. Chas. A. Gerlard. Box 13.
164—Chatham. Roy S. Tinney.
16—Bayonne. J. D. Gray, 92 West Sixth St.
91—Tenafly. Ed Stiles, P. O. Box 254.
146—Paterson. Charles S. Gall, 378 Dakota St.
New York—23—Jamestown. W. E. Jones, 906 Jefferson St.
34—New York City. St. Mary's Men's Club, 142 Alexander Ave., Bronx, N. Y. C.
42—Yonkers. A. F. Whegan, 173 Elm St.
93—Rochester. Thomas C. Murphy, 62 Swan St.
107—New York City. Bronx Division, U. S. Junior Naval Reserves, 3132 Webster Ave.
140—New York City. L. D. Montgomery, U.S.S. *Utah*.
147—Youngsville. Harry Malowitz, Youngsville House.
165—Saratoga. Mrs. Wilma D. Chapman, Office No. 3, Chamber of Commerce Arcade.
171—Albany. 224 Greene St.
North Carolina—92—Asheville. B. Taylor and C. M. Gravatt. The Southern Spar and Mica Co., 322 Haywood Bldg.
133—Pine Bluff. N. Steve Hutchings.
159—Waynesville. Harry M. Hall, 720 Walnut St.
North Dakota—109—Stanley. Dr. W. W. Coe, Box 301.
160—Fargo. James E. Cowan, Central Garage, rear Grand Theatre.
Ohio—58—Cleveland. J. F. Thompson Community Pharmacy, 9505 Denison Ave.
52—Ulrichsville. Anthony Sciarra, 329 W. Fourth St.
63—Ulrichsville. Chas. F. Burroway, 312 Water St.
75—Columbus. Chas. W. Jenkins, 54 S. Burgess Ave.
113—Columbus. Geo. T. Watters, 679 N. Nelson Road.
166—Toledo. Frank P. Carey, 3267 Maplewood Ave., or wherever his Ford happens to be.
168—Greenville. K. S. Enos, Camp Eldorado, R. F. D. 44.
Oklahoma—57—Haskell. Roy Holt.
Oregon—4—Salem. D. Wiggins.

Pennsylvania—20—Philadelphia. Wm. A. Fulmer, 252 S. Ninth St.
21—Braddock. Clarence Jenkins, Union News Co.
24—Philadelphia. Alfred A. Krombach. 4159 N. Eighth Street, and Spring Mills Station, P. & R. Ry. Co., Montgomery County.
78—Pittsburgh. Peter C. Szarmach, 3201 Brereton St.
100—Philadelphia. Veterans of Foreign Wars, 926 N. 41st St.
121—Philadelphia. Don L. Brown, 3444 D St.
152—Harrisburg. Mrs. L. H. Wistrand, Box 1027.
Texas—99—Beaumont. D. E. Jonson, 738 Pearl St.
33—Houston. J. M. Shamblin, 2003 Gray St.
123—San Juan. D. L. Carter, Box 436.
134—Breckenridge. Joe Randel, 226 Baylor Avenue.
135—Mexia. Charles O. Hurley, M. D.
148—Port Arthur. Ralph C. Cornwell, 215 Eighth St.
174—San Angelo. E. M. Weeks, 24 West Eighth St.
Utah—157—Salt Lake City. Ned Howard, 127 N. St.
Vermont—56—Fort Ethan Allen. E. Worth Benson, Box 10.
Virginia—108—Cape Charles. Lynn Stevenson, Custom House Building.
Washington—1—Ione. A. S. Albert, Albert's Billiard Hall.
61—Burlington. Judge B. N. Albertsen, Fairhaven Ave.
71—Charleton. Elmer E. McLean, Box 561.
83—Seattle. Chas. D. Raymer, Raymer's Old Book-Store, 1330 First Ave.
153—Monroe. Ed. L. Carson, *The Monitor*.
154—Mt. Vernon. Miss Beatrice Bell, Western Washington Auto Club.
155—Olympia. B. F. Hume, Commercial Club Rooms.
172—Sunnyside. Mark Austin.
West Virginia—48—Huntington. John Geiske, 1682 Sixth St.
Wisconsin—41—Madison. Frank Weston, 401-406 Gay Bldg.
5—Milwaukee. Paul A. Buerger, Apt. 2, 150 Biddle St.
138—Tomahawk Lake. Mrs. J. S. Hughson, Hughson's Resort.
Africa—173—Sinkat, Red Sea Province, Sudan. W. T. Moffat.
Australia—39—Melbourne. William H. Turner, 52 Emmaline St., Northcote; and Carters' and Drivers' Union, 46 William St.
76—Victoria. Chas. M. Healy, 30, The Avenue.
130—Brisbane. H. V. Shead, Sutton St., Kangaroo Point.
Belgium—131—Antwerp. Reuben S. James, Rue Chapelle de Grace 4,—Grage Kapel-straat, 4.
Canada—31—Howe Sound. C. Plowden, Plowden Bay.
84—White Rock, B. C. Charles L. Thompson.
22—Burlington, Ontario. Thos. Jocelyn.
4—Dunedin, P. E. Island. J. N. Berrigan.
29—Deseronto. Harry M. Moore, *The Post Weekly*.
45—Norwood, Manitoba. Albert Whyte, 1725½ De Meurons St.
30—Winnipeg, Man. Walter Peterson, 143 Kennedy St.
62—Tweed, Ontario. George L. Catton.
85—Ontario. J. Wonal, Simcoe St. S., Oshawa.
102—Amherst. Lloyd E. Mac Pherson, 5 Belmont St.
124—Hartshorn, Alberta. Leonard Brown, 33-34-17 W4M.
Newfoundland—132—St. John's. P. C. Mars. Smallwood Bldg.
Canal Zone—37—Cristobal. F. E. Stevens.
156—Ancon. Arthur Haughton, Box 418.
Cuba—15—Havana. Ricardo N. Farres, Dominques, 7 Cerro.
Great Britain—65—North Wales. William J. Cooper, "Kia-Ora," Plastirion Ave., Prestatyn.
Hawaiian Islands—170—Leilehua, Oahu. Chateau Shanty.
Honduras, C. A.—32—Galeras, Olancho. Dr. Wm. C. Robertson.
70—La Ceiba. Jos. Buckly Taylor.
Mexico—68—Guadalajara, Jal. W. C. Money, Hotel Fenix, Calle Lopez, Cotilla Nos. 269 a 281.
136—Tampico, Tamps. Jack Hester, care of T. D. El Humo, Apartado 238.
Porto Rico—46—Ensenada. M. B. Couch, P. O. Box 5.

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In the last issue of each month are printed in full the friendly services of *Adventure* to readers: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons; Camp-Fire Stations, etc.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or informarion is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1, 2. The Sea. In Two Parts
3, 4. Islands and Coasts. In Two Parts
5, 6. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
7. Australia and Tasmania
8. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
9. New Guinea
10. Philippine Islands
11. Hawaiian Islands and China
12. Japan
13—15. Asia. In Three Parts
16—23. Africa. In Eight Parts
24. Turkey and Asia Minor
25, 26. Balkans. In Two Parts
27. Scandinavia
28. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
29, 30. South America. In Two Parts
31. Central America
32, 33. Mexico. In Two Parts
34—40. Canada. In Seven Parts
41. Alaska
42. Baffinland and Greenland
43—47. Western U. S. In Five Parts
48—51. Middle Western U. S. In Four Parts
52—55. Eastern U. S. In Four Parts
Aviation
Tropical Forestry
Radio
Mining and Prospecting
Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
Fishing in North America
Standing Information
Lost Trails

Sport in the Dearborn and Sun River Countries

INCIDENTALLY, has any old-timer got anything to say about Fort Rice and the Indian fight mentioned by this inquirer?

Question:—"My brother and I intend to spend our vacation hunting and fishing near the headwaters of the Dearborn River and may also prospect a little. We have hunted and fished in Colorado but have never been in Montana. Any information you may think necessary will be gladly received.

Is the fishing good in the Dearborn River? What kind of fish are in that stream?

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What kind of game may be found west of Sterns, Lewis and Clark County?

What minerals are found near Sterns?

Are there any Indians near Sterns?

Where could I get a good map of Lewis and Clark County?

Was Fort Rice on the Sun River near where Augusta now stands?

Does the history of Montana tell of a fight between emigrants and Indians about thirty miles south of Fort Rice in 1864? If so, near what town or stream did it take place?"—CHARLES S. MERCHANT, New Castle, Pa.

Answer, by Mr. Davis:—There is excellent fishing in the Dearborn River. The fish are principally trout and grayling. There is a game preserve on the Dearborn River, but there is some hunting outside of it, principally deer but some bear and some elk. There may be some mineral in the district, but up to the present time it has never been discovered in commercial quantities. There may be a few half-breed Indians in that district, but they will disturb no one.

You might be able to obtain a map of Lewis and Clark County by writing the County Clerk and Recorder, Helena, Montana. I suggest you write the Forest Supervisor, headquarters of district Number 1 at Missoula, Mont., and ask if they have a map of this district. I believe that they have. You might also write the Topographic Branch of the United States Geological Survey at Washington, D. C., for a topographic chart. They have made some maps in Montana, and I believe they have included this district. These maps are exceedingly good.

So far as I am aware no Fort Rice was ever built in Montana. There was a Fort Rice built in 1864 six miles from the Missouri River on Cannon Ball Creek in what is now North Dakota. The histories of Montana do not tell of the fight between the emigrants and Indians about 30 miles south of Fort Rice in 1864.

In conclusion I would say the Dearborn is a very good country. It is not far from the Dearborn to the Sun River country, which is a still better region for hunting and fishing. You will need a non-resident game license to hunt in this State. Application for it should be made to the State Game Warden, Helena, Montana.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in alternate issues of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

Agriculture in Hawaii

LITTLE or nothing doing for the newcomer, so don't try to stop on the islands otherwise than as a tourist:

Question:—"I would like to know what the working conditions are in the Hawaiian Islands in Agriculture.

I understand that there is land to be taken up.

I am a single man and would like to go there if there is work."—ED. COOK, McLeod, Mont.

Answer, by Mr. Halton:—I regret that I can not give you any encouragement regarding employment in Hawaii as the only agricultural activities are the cultivation of sugar and pineapples and the labor used is largely Asiatic. It would not be possible for a white man to compete with Japanese owing to their different methods of living.

There is some land owned by the Territorial Government which is leased to the large sugar plantations and which is thrown open to homesteading as the leases expire. As these occur at rare intervals and one has to be on the ground to attend the drawings you will see that it is not at all likely that you would be one of the few selected.

Mexican Beliefs, Natural and Supernatural

AGAIN Mr. Mahaffey has been accommodating. He didn't have to answer any such scatter-gun questions as the one given below; but he did, and his reply is so informative that it's "got to" be printed. Remember, though, that in order to be sure of an answer, you must not only enclose self-addressed envelop, with full reply postage not attached, but you must also *make your questions specific*, precise—to the point, and not to all the points of the compass:

Question:—"Will appreciate such information you can give on native customs, witchcraft, superstitions and religious beliefs in territory covered by your section.

What has it to offer for one wishing to travel for sport, business and exploring generally?"—LYNN STEVENSON, Cape Charles, Va.

Answer, by Mr. Mahaffey:—It is rather a large order for me to give you an idea as to the different religious practises of the different tribes of Indians which form the mass of the Mexican people; but I will try to give you an idea. In the first place the Spanish priests after the Conquest did not try to eradicate all the superstitions of the Indians; and so we see the Indians celebrating the *Fiesta de las Flores* or Feast of the Poppies, celebrated in April in the Valley of Mexico, which was originally devoted to the worship of the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl, the god of nature with them. On that day the bloody sacrificial rites were suspended and all joined in this festival of flowers.

Mexico, like each good Catholic inhabitant of the country, has a patron saint, who presides over her destinies. This saint has not only been adopted by the Government in times past, but has been proclaimed as the guardian of Mexico by the Holy See, and only a few years ago was duly crowned as the Virgin of Guadalupe in ceremonies made memorable by the large number of church dignitaries present. Her miraculous appearance at the time greatly assisted in attracting the Indians to the new form of worship.

The Aztecs had long worshiped a deity called Tonantzin, the "Mother of Gods," who was supposed to reside on the hill of Tepeyacac, now called Guadalupe. According to tradition a devout Indina

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called Juan Diego, who resided in the village of Tolpetlac, and who had been recently converted to Christianity, was passing by this way on the morning of the 9th day of December, 1531, on his way to early mass.

When at the base of this hill there suddenly burst upon his ears a melody of sweet music, as of a chorus of birds. Surprized by this unusual happening, he looked up, and lo, just above him rested a cloud, more brilliant than a rainbow, and in the center of this cloud stood a lady.

Thoroughly frightened, he fell to his knees, but was aroused by a voice which proceeded from the cloud and called him "Juan." He looked up, and the lady told him to go to the Bishop of Mexico and tell him that she wanted a church built upon this hill in her honor. He did so, but the bishop did not believe this tale of an ignorant Indian.

A second and third time did the vision appear to the faithful Juan and make the same request. On this last time Juan had passed on the other side of the hill to avoid this vision, but to no avail.

Upon the report of the third vision to the bishop the latter asked Juan to ask the lady for some unmistakable sign. The lady appeared again on the following morning, and Juan told her of the bishop's request. She told him to go up the hill and gather flowers from the barren hillside, where they had never been known to grow. As soon as he did many beautiful flowers appeared in a miraculous manner, which Juan gathered up in his *tilma* or blanket and took to the bishop. When he had emptied his *tilma* the image of the virgin was found on the blanket in most brilliant colors.

The bishop reverently took the *tilma* and accepted it as an unmistakable token. He at once began the construction of a chapel where the lady had requested it to be built. As soon as the chapel was done he hung the *tilma* on the high altar, where it has always remained, except for a few short periods. It can now be seen under glass upon the payment of a small fee.

From the time of its origin this story has had a wonderful and deep effect upon the Indians, even to this day. Our Lady of Guadalupe is looked on as their patron saint and protector. Coming so soon after the Conquest and appearing upon a hill already sacred to them, it led thousands to the new religion.

The main church is very large and imposing, with a nave 200 feet long and 120 feet wide, and cost over two million dollars in gold, which was a large amount in the days it was built. The altar is magnificent, and has a solid silver railing. This railing weighs several tons. Back of the chapel is the miraculous spring which burst forth from the very spot where the virgin stood at her last appearance.

The Indians sing the following song on the 12th of December, the day appointed for the great *fiesta* in honor to the virgin who appeared to Juan Diego:

"From Heaven she descended,
Triumphant and glorious,
To favor us—
La Guadalupana."

This *fiesta* lasts for days and is one of the great sights of Mexico City.

Perhaps in no way is the general ignorance of the Indians shown to better advantage than in their ideas of disease and medicine. The *curandera*, usually a woman, admits having great knowledge of anatomy and chemistry and has a pharmacopeia all her own. The accounts given here are taken from a book called "Modern Mexico," written by a Mexican, and show the superstitions.

Aire (air) when introduced into the system through blows or unusually forcible sneezing, causes swellings, sore eyes and nervous tremblings. It is treated with plasters, bandages, and lotions.

When the alimentary canal is obstructed it is *empacho*, which means that the undigested food has adhered to the stomach or that the food has formed into balls which rattle around in the stomach or intestines. This disease demands immediate and heroic treatment, and a drop of quicksilver is prescribed. This usually kills or cures.

Tiricia is indicated by homesickness, melancholia or insomnia, and is caused by a subtle vapor produced by the action of the moon on the dew and is absorbed through the pores. Change of climate, good company and tonics are usually prescribed.

Mal de ojo, or the evil eye, causes the sufferer to fade away or die of inanition, and is a common disease of children. Bright, attractive objects are hung up to attract the attention of the "evil eye."

If a child is slow in talking a diet of boiled swallows is prescribed.

One writer definitely asserts that red and blue beads ground fine and mixed in equal proportions have been given to persons suffering from paralysis, and the sufferers survived the treatment.

The *curandera* is often called on to mix love potions and poisons which will cause delirium or often insanity and death.

Another instance is told in the same work of a woman who was very sick from a disease which rendered her practically helpless. The *curandera* had told the husband to get a white turkey and tie it in the house and the sufferer would get well. When the turkey had failed to cure her *curandero* (man healer) was called in, who promised to cure the woman if provided with plenty of *aguardiente* (brandy). Four dollars' worth was supplied him; and four dollars will buy a lot of cheap brandy in Mexico.

The old man laid himself down on the ground, after filling himself up with the brandy, pounded his head and repeated many incantations which could be heard for a long way. This was continued for days until the supply of brandy gave out.

In the mean time the patient had improved somewhat and could use her arms and body as far as the waist. The shrewd old man shrugged his shoulders and said that he had cured her as far as he could and that they would have to get somebody else to finish the job. The poor woman died soon afterward, and her husband always swore she had been bewitched.

Another legend of the Valley of Mexico concerns the two great volcanoes, Popocatapetl and Ixtaccihuatl.

The legend says that these two mountains, Popocatepetl, the "Smoking Mountain," and Ixtaccihuatl, the "Woman in White," were once living giants, but that, having displeased the Almighty, they were changed to mountains. The woman died; and the contours of her body, covered with snow, can be traced on the summit of the smaller peak.

The man was doomed to live forever and gaze on the sleeping form of his beloved. At times when

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rief becomes uncontrollable he shakes with his great obs and pours forth tears of fire. This is when opo blows off steam, of course.

These are only a few of the legends and beliefs mong the Mexicans. I would advise you to send or some of the books mentioned in the enclosed heet, which will be well worth your time.

As far as business conditions are concerned times re rather hard in Mexico now, and there are many roubles connected with going into business or in- esting money there. As for exploring, there are many places well worth your while, such as the ruined cities of Yucatan, and many other historical places; and there are many charming out-of-the-way nooks worth visiting.

Hunting is good in almost any part of Mexico, as the natives are not so addicted to hunting as the residents of the U. S. The game to be found includes deer, wild cats, alligators, ducks and geese of all kinds, wild pigs, wolves, bear, mountain lions, monkeys and many other game. I have seen deer six miles from Mazatlan, a city of 28,000 inhabitants, so you can judge from that that game is plentiful.

I hope this slight information may be of interest to you, but to give you all or any considerable part of the traditions and beliefs of the Mexicans would be a large contract.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Holidaying in the Maritime Provinces

IT WAS at Gaspé, by the by, that Jacques Cartier took formal possession of Canada in the name of the King of France. But that was in 1534:

Question:—"Could you give me any information as to board and lodgings, also trips that one could take in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia? My wife and myself and a friend of ours and his wife will probably spend from two to six weeks there this Summer and would like to be prepared in advance and make reservations.

We desire good, substantial meals and clean, comfortable lodgings, *not* in larger cities or towns and preferably on shores of salt water where we could get some boating.

We have gone to Southwest Harbor and Vinalhaven, also Deer Isle and Blue Hill in Maine in past Summers and would like to go further for a change. Of course we would like to look through Halifax, St. John and other interesting points where we might see something unusual or quaint.

Just what are conditions for tourists in Prince Edward Island? I am not at all familiar with conditions in Maritime Provinces and would be grateful for any suggestions you could give and information or directions as to where I may get details of best means of travel from Boston—both train and steamer or either—boarding-places or hotels, short trips, etc., at reasonable rates."—W. Al. Crozier, Philadelphia, Pa.

Answer, by Maj. Belford:—Two very interesting places are on the Gaspé coast—Percé and Gaspé village. At the latter Mr. Baker runs a splendid hotel, home-like, comfortable and reasonable in price. There is also a good hotel at Percé, but I have forgotten its name. Good fishing, sea and river, and good boating.

The north shore of New Brunswick is very fine, and Dalhousie is well situated for a quiet holiday.

In Nova Scotia Pictou, Lunenburg, Liverpool, Guysboro, and in P. E. I. Georgetown, Souris, Princetown, would furnish what you wish. I regret that I can not put you in personal touch with any one who could take you in, but if you write the postmaster at any of these places he will cheerfully do so.

Steamers run between Boston and St. John and Boston and Halifax. By train Boston, Portland and through to St. John.

P. E. I. is very interesting and should give you a good trip. Steamers run from Pictou to the Magdalen Islands and the North Shore. There are plenty of coasting-vessels so that you can arrange side trips as you wish.

Another line of steamers operates between Boston and Yarmouth. The Can. Pac. R. R. operates a line of vessels between Digby and St. John.

If you would write the Chief Clerk, Dept. of Lands, he could put you in touch with Nova Scotians who could furnish the accommodation you want.

I regret that I can not be more definite. I have always stopped in hotels in Nova Scotia. I have spent some very pleasant holidays on the North Shore, and in Gaspé. These places can be reached by water or rail from Halifax.

Palm-Nut Kernels and Palm Oil

AN EXPLANATION by a man who spent years of his life trading for these commodities:

Question:—"I note your name in 'Ask Adventure' as an authority on the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa. As I am greatly puzzled with regard to a question on trade I would like very much to place my questions before you and hope that your knowledge of that part of Africa will permit you to answer them.

I am interested in the palm-oil trade, particularly the matter of losses through leakage while the commodity is undergoing shipment. It has been my impression that the oil itself is not shipped direct from the trading-beaches but is received there and shipped from there in the form of kernels, the pressing of the kernels being carried on at some other central point.

Unfortunately I do not know whether this is done in Africa or not, so I may be inquiring of you on a matter that would not come within your province. Even if this is true it may be that your knowledge of the West African coast and the palm-oil trade will permit you to give me information which will set me on the right track as to the most logical point to obtain the information sought.

The specific questions are:

1. Where are the palm-oil kernels pressed and rendered into palm-oil and first shipped in wooden casks or barrels?

2. Have you any idea of the losses sustained through leakage of contents from wooden casks or barrels between the original point of shipment and point of first destination?

3. Do you know whether the wooden casks or barrels are treated in any manner before being filled in an attempt to prevent or reduce leakage?

4. Can you give me the names of any firms either in New York or other cities that receive palm-oil

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and who might be in a position to give me accurate data with regard to current practise in shipping the palm-oil? By current practise I mean as to the methods of packing and shipping?

I am sorry to bother you with questions more commercial in nature than sporting but have not been able to obtain the desired information through other channels and know of no other way of getting on the right trail.

Should this appear in *Adventure* I would esteem it a favor if my name were omitted."— —— ——, East Orange, N. J.

Answer, by Mr. Simpson:—I shall try to answer your queries in the order in which you have asked them.

1. Strictly speaking there is no such thing as a "palm-oil kernel." What you probably mean is a "palm-nut kernel," which is something else again. Palm-oil is derived from boiling the oily substance out of the fibrous covering of the palm-nut, and this is done by several crude methods by the bush natives who gather the nuts, and thereafter carry the oil in calabashes down to the native markets, where they are met by the native middleman. This latter individual for the most part has brought containers in the shape of puncheons, which he has acquired from the white trader. The oil he buys—by barter from the producer or bushman—is transferred at the native markets into these puncheons and then carried by canoe down to the white trading-stations.

There the beach clerk or some such white man in the employ of the trading-company "tries" the oil to discover if there is any water in it. This is done by means of a "try rod" which, something like a butter sampler, is inserted into the puncheon and comes forth bearing a sample of the oil "from bilge to bilge." This sample is placed in a flat, copper pan like a frying-pan, and when heated the blobs of water, if there are any, immediately show.

Assuming that there is no water, the oil is bought, and a new puncheon is given in exchange for the one the native brought. These puncheons contain 180 to 195 gallons.

2. I have no figures to cover this. But, taking the white trading-station as the original point of shipment, the losses, I should say, are very slight. My answer to question three will explain this.

3. The puncheons referred to in my answer to question one are hardened in the usual way by a cooper, usually an Accra man, whose job it is to see that each puncheon is in proper shape for shipment in every way, and that the exact number of gallons it contains is cut into one of the staves in the vicinity of the bung-hole. Then the puncheons are shipped to Liverpool or London or New York according to the particular affiliations of the firm that does the business.

4. My answers to your first three questions answer this one. But you might write to the Standard Oil Company which, I understand, is interested, through one of its subsidiaries, in the palm-oil trade.

In case you are confusing palm-oil with kernel-oil, I'll just add that the kernel of the palm-nut is a considerable element in West African trade. It is removed from the nut by the bushman who gathers it; bought as a kernel from the native trader and shipped as a kernel by the white trader and crushed for the extraction of its oil in England and in this country.

In the case of the kernel the tonnage is frequently greater at the first point of destination than at the point of shipment. It largely depends on how good a kernel clerk the white trader has. If he's cheated often the tonnage will be smaller. If he sees to it that he always gets good measure, the "error" will be the other way. There is no material waste of this product during shipment.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

"Throwing Down" a Revolver

HERE'S a method developed by years of experience and practise:

Question:—"Thank you for your advice in reply to my letter asking for some points on pistol-shooting. You have covered most of the points I was in doubt on, and I am pleased to find that in most respects my own opinions—which were not, however, founded on enough experience to be of much value—were correct.

One point I am not sure whether I understand in your letter. You advise me to practise "throwing down" on the mark. Do you mean to raise the pistol higher than the mark and then lower it on to it with a circular swing like swinging a club? Or is the pistol simply brought from the holster and swung up on to the mark? It seems that the former would require a waste of some time without any corresponding increase in accuracy. I had formed the opinion that the gun should be drawn from the holster and brought directly up and to the front till it pointed at the mark.

I have sent for the book you recommend, and intend to get the Reising automatic pistol, cal. .22, as soon as I can find $25 to spare. I prefer the Reising to the Colt, not only on account of the exposed hammer, but because the angle at which the stock is attached is the same as that of the service pistol, while the Colt has its stock at a greater angle. I have also a Smith & Wesson .45 revolver, and had come to the same conclusion as yourself—that for field service the old six-shooter beats the automatic.

It may interest you to know in that connection that the commanding officer of this regiment has had a long investigation of the respective merits of the revolver and the automatic pistol, as now issued to the service, made. The report has not been officially made out, but every officer who made an investigation, including myself, reported in favor of the revolver.

The new cal. .22 service automatic pistol is not yet ready for issue to the service, and I was informed by the Ordnance Department, when I wrote to them about a month ago, that there was no prospect of their being ready for issue till 1923."—DONALD C. HAWLEY, Captain, 4th Cavalry, Fort McIntosh, Tex.

Answer, by Mr. Wiggins:—Your contention that the "throwing down" should be done with a direct snapping motion from the holster, instead of raising the gun and lowering it to the mark, is absolutely correct. The ideal method is a direct jerk from the holster, the movement of the wrist flipping the revolver to the front as the muzzle clears the holster, thus alining the arm on the target with sufficient accuracy for self-defense at close range. For you

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know that the side arm is merely for such quarters as make the use of the rifle inconvenient or even impossible in the case of the enlisted man. And the officer, with no rifle, must of course depend entirely on his revolver.

I advise a lot of practise in this stunt; it's a life-saver in time of trouble. I have practised for years on this stunt, and can perform fairly well now.

I was interested in the matter of the report to be made by the commanding officer of your regiment anent the merits of automatic *versus* revolver. I know the automatic made a very bad record during the Punitive Expedition in '16, due to dust causing the action to tie up when worst wanted. A very small grain of grit under the slide and over the barrel at the muzzle will cause the slide to remain just enough to the rear to prevent a shot, as the action can not completely close. But it does not seem to matter what you do to a Colt or Smith & Wesson revolver, they continue to keep shooting as long as the ammunition holds out.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

State o' Washington

A REGION that sounds like a real-estate agent's dream of heaven:

Question:—"I am thinking of coming to Washington, and I would like to ask you a few questions about Bellingham and Burlington. Now is this a farming country, and can a man buy a small tract on time, say five acres or more, and what is the land worth per acre? My wife and I both have heard about the big rattlesnakes of Washington, and I would like to know if there is any in your part of the country.

How do chickens thrive there? I have heard they won't hatch at all.

I may go into the fishing business. I hear August is the time they fish in the sound. I may have asked you some foolish questions but I would like to hear from you."—E. L. LEMON, Grandview, Wisc.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—Bellingham, twenty-six miles north of here, is a pretty little city of 30,000 inhabitants situated on Bellingham Bay. It has large sawmills, fish canneries and many other industries, and is one of the friendliest, or should I say most neighborly, populations of any town I know of.

Burlington is small, not more than 2,000 inhabitants, but coming ahead in very gratifying style. Here again you will find the glad hand very much in evidence; and the surrounding country is one of the richest farming districts in the West.

Certainly you can buy land here in five-acre lots and have reasonable terms of payment. First-class land runs as high as five hundred dollars per acre; but its wonderful fertility makes it a good investment even at that price.

As to those big rattlesnakes, I have been here six years and have never seen even a small one yet and have traveled rather extensively at that. I hear that one is seen occasionally over in the alkali belt east of the Cascade Mountains, but I believe I am safe in saying that there are absolutely none here on the coast. Whoever gave you the information may have been merely romancing.

This is as fine a berry country as one could wish for. Fruit canneries are being built all over the district, and the future for the berry business is rosy indeed. We have whole tracts of wild blackberries, over which visitors from the East just rave; and one can pick wild berries from the strawberries in May till the last of the blackberries in November.

Chickens do remarkably well here. I have twelve brown Leghorns that have been giving me an even dozen eggs a day for the last 22 days. I am keeping cases on them to see how long it will be before they miss one day. All rot about their not hatching. Get a report from Pullman College, Pullman, Wash., and see how silly that non-hatching story looks beside it.

Between salmon, smelt and crab fishing a man can keep busy the year round. We never have any ice that interferes with boating. At best there is only a coating over the shallow ponds for a day or so on which some of us get out and go through the motions of skating. No fun for a northern man.

Care of the Burro

HOW to turn a pack-animal into a pal:

Question:—"I am an outdoor man and have drifted around some. Come from Maine. I take long hikes—one thousand or one thousand two hundred miles or more. Have always "toted" my pack on my back, but am getting so I don't like the feel of it as much as I used to. So I am going to get me a burro for my next trip and let him do a little of the work. I shall be able to take a more elaborate outfit than when I carried my own.

I am not inquiring as to the outfit, because I know what I want. But I would like to know what load an average burro can pack and be able to go indefinitely; that is, to keep up with me walking; and for two or three months at a time. I would have the minimum rather than the greatest load. I want to be considerate of the animal and not tax his strength.

Would sixty pounds be too much to expect of him to carry and keep going day after day? Is grain necessary every day for a burro; and if so, how much? Also is sawbuck saddle the right kind of pack-saddle? Of course, I would get some one who knows how, to teach me to pack. You see I admit my ignorance as regards burros, 'cause I've never had any experience with them. Yours for the Great Outside."—FRANK J. FLANNAGAN, St. Louis, Mo.

Answer, by Mr. Middleton:—Yes, a burro will pack a load of from fifty to seventy-five pounds day after day for an indefinite time, providing you give him the ordinary care he is entitled to. Do not let his back get sore under the saddle, and go over him with a curry-comb as you would a horse. He will likely object at first, but will soon get to like it.

Get a good-sized animal; they are more intelligent. Then if you get a fair-sized animal I would advise two panniers, one for each side of the saddle, in which to put the camp equipment, leaving the top between the forks for the bed-roll. Don't try leading him, but haze him along in front of you. Give him a lump of sugar or something like that occasionally, and you will soon have a pal. Don't deny him a chance to roll after removing the pack, for that is worth as much to him as a feed of oats.

If you are in a good grass country you'll not

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need to grain him often, but by giving him a quart of oats night and morning you will help to keep him in condition, and he will stay around camp without being hobbled.

I am sure you are going to be satisfied with your experiment. Two of us made a camping and hunting trip with the aid of four burros a few years ago, and had no cause to regret the choice of pack-animals. We fed them the refuse of camp cooking and a feed of grain occasionally, and it got to be a regular chore for us to have to hang things up, to keep the burros out of 'em. After you have tried your idea out, I would like to hear from you as to how you have made out. If I can be of any more assistance, don't hesitate to come again.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose full return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

Diamond-Panning

ONE free-lance found a whopper last Fall:

Question:—"As your territory seems to cover the Vaal River I am coming to you for some information *re* the diamond game.

Can you give me some general information in regard to methods used in panning for diamonds?

Can a rocker be used? How worked? Are they satisfactory? Where could I get a book or a sketch showing how to construct one?

Can you recommend any books on diamonds, in regard to the strata they are found in, geological formation, etc?

Is there any panning being done in the Vaal River district at the present time? Is there a possibility of at least making expenses?

Please do not use my name or address if this is published.

Answer, by Capt. Franklin:—The methods used in panning for diamonds in South Africa are still extremely crude. The old rocker system is still used. Natives seem to do most of the work.

There is plenty of panning being done in the Vaal River District at the present time, and several very unusually large diamonds have recently been found, including one in September of over one hundred carats. Unless you know Africa well and have plenty of money to risk I do not suggest your proceeding to "buck" the game of Vaal River diamond-digging, as the watchers now on are nearly all old-timers, and the good standings are handed down to the son. I enclose pamphlets.

Spring Fishing in the Adirondacks

WHEN to practise bottom fishing, and when to switch to flies:

Question:—"We note that you will give information regarding fishing in the vicinity of the Adirondacks.

We intend taking a fishing-trip the last week in April or the first week in May.

Kindly inform us what kind of fishing there is around Wilmington, N. Y., and what kind of flies should be used.

Any other information which you think of importance would be greatly appreciated."—J. N. SINSABAUGH, Shelton, Conn.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—Late April and early May are a little early, normal years, for fly-fishing. The water is cold; snow is melting in the woods, and the weather is apt to be chilly, and the fish to be feeding on the bottom—worms, minnows, young mice (big fish). This is fine lake trout season and deep-pool fishing, as the trout are then coming up into the foot of the rifts. By 10th to 15th of May the best fly-fishing is had, and lasts for from two to four weeks.

First flies, yellow spinners (pale-yellow body, blue-heron wings). Then grizzly king, yellow sallie, black gnat, queen of the waters, royal coachman, and, on much fished water, tied on No. 8 to 10 hooks. In rough water, perhaps No. 6 hooks. There are a number of useful hackles (I suggest carrying gray, brown, black). Cowdung is a good fly. This is my own list, but I haven't done much in the AuSable region—just two days near Saranac.

My suggestion would be to lay in these flies; perhaps take a few "for luck," as in medium hue and shade; and then apply at the local stores for local ideas on the subject. No two fishermen ever agree exactly. But my list was made up from the casts of the best rift and stream fishermen in southwestern Adirondacks, and it is good in all parts of the mountains.

Two or three warm days, and you'll have the cream of the trout-fishing with flies, probably in early May (10th to 15th). And you might hit them in first week for fly-fishing. Last of April and first of May, usually, as I say, bottom fishing, as the fish come out of the Winter schools.

More about Two-Bladed Knives

MR. BARKER has discovered some further facts:

Brookline, Mas

MR. ALLEN V. GARRATT:—"Ask Adventure" of September 10, 1922, contained correspondence relative to a double-bladed dagger of yours, the blades of which pointed in opposite directions. At that time I was obliged to tell you that although I had seen them before, and was able to give you a relative value, and was of the impression that it was of East Indian, Persian or African origin, I was unable to inform you as to its exact use.

I am now very glad to inform you that they were used by African natives in the marshes of the Zambesi and other localities, in killing crocodiles. The native approaches the animal, and when the latter opens his jaws to seize him, he springs forward, thrusts his arm and the knife far into the yawning mouth, holding it there a moment, one end pointing up to the brain, the other to the tongue beneath. As the jaws close he is able to pull back his arm, the mouth being pried open, and throw himself to one side. At each effort to close its jaws it drives the sharp point of the upper knife further into the brain, until it dies in its struggles.

I think it would greatly interest you to obtain a copy of "The People of the Mist," by H. Rider Haggard (Longmans, Green, and Co., New York, 1910,) and turn to page 271, where you will find both an illustration and description of one in action. —LEWIS APPLETON BARKER.

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Old Songs That Men Have Sung

The Night That Murphy Died

The night that Paddy Murphy died is one I'll ne'er forget.
The whole damn crowd got rollin' drunk, an' some ain't sober yet.
As long as a bottle was passed around of course th' boys would stay,
And Casey came in with his pipes just for th' wake to play.

Chorus:—That's how they showed their respects for Paddy Murphy;
That's how they showed their honor and their pride.
They said it was a shame for Pat and they winked at one another—
Everything in the wake-house went the night that Murphy died!

Mrs. Murphy sat in the corner, blowin' out her grief;
Along came Darby Kelly an' his son, th' dirty thief!
They went out in th' anteroom, an' a quart of rum they stole,
An' put th' bottle on th' corpse to keep the liquor cold!—*Cho.*

Well, everything was goin' fine, there was no fight at all,
Till Casey he told Callahan he had an awful gall.
He thought that that would start a scrap, an' sure enough it did,
For Callahan was carvin' his name right on th' coffin lid!—*Cho.*

Th' fun grew fast an' furious, an' every one jumped in;
Somebody tore the whiskers off av poor ould Darby Flynn!
An' there was good old Barney Burke, an' what do ye thing he done?
He stood th' corpse upon its head in th' corner just for fun!—*Cho.*

The boys got feelin' jolly, they didn't care a red
If Mrs. Murphy an' th' fam'ly ivery one were dead.
They stopped th' clock so Mrs. Murphy couldn't tell the time;
And at a quarter after two they told her it was nine.—*Cho.*

At four o'clock in the morning some dirty, drunken scamp
Wrote upon th' coffin lid, "Here lies an Irish tramp;"
An' some of the things those rascals did—it made me shake wid fear—
They took the ice right off th' corpse an' slapped it in their beer!—*Cho.*

I am indebted to Compadre E. S. Clavel, of Wauchula, Fla., for the words of "Casey Jones" for which Comrade Whitmore of the U.S.S. *Bittern* asked some time ago. Here they are:

Casey Jones

(*Sing slow and easy*)

Come, all you rounders, if you want to hear
The story about a brave engineer.
Casey Jones was the rounder's name;
On a six-eight wheeler, boys, he won his fame.

Caller called Casey at a half-past four;
Kissed his wife at the station door;
Mounted to the cabin with his orders in his hand
And took his farewell trip to that promised land.

Chorus:—Casey Jones, mounted to the cabin—
Casey Jones, with his orders in his hand;
Casey Jones, mounted to the cabin
And took his farewell trip to that promised land.

"Put in your water and shovel in your coal;
Stick your head out the window, watch them drivers roll.
I'll run her till she leaves the rail,
For I'm eight hours late with that Western mail."
He looked at his water and the water was low;
Looked at his watch and his watch was slow;
Turned to the fireman and he said,
"We are goin' to reach 'Frisco, but we'll all be dead."

Cho.:—Casey Jones, goin' to reach 'Frisco, *etc.*

Casey Jones passed by Reno Hill;
Tooted for the crossing, with an awful shrill;
Agent knew by the engine's moans
That the man at the throttle was Casey Jones.
Casey pulled up within two miles of the place;
Number 4 stared him right in the face;
Turned to the fireman, said, "Boy, you'd better jump,
For there's two locomotives that's a-goin' to bump."

Cho.:—Casey Jones, two locomotives, *etc.*

Casey said just before he died,
"There is two more roads I would like to ride."
Fireman said, "What can they be?"
"The Southern Pacific and the Santy Fee."
Mrs. Casey Jones, gettin' out of bed,
Got a message that Casey was dead;
Said to the children, "Stop your cryin'—
Got another papa on the Salt Lake Line."

Cho.:—Mrs. Casey Jones, got another papa, *etc.*

Compadre C. F. McCarty, of 609 Lindsay Street, Chattanooga, Tenn., tells me an interesting story of hearing a young plainsman out in Idaho sing the following inspiring anti-Volstead ditty in a gilded saloon many years ago and would like to know if any of you songsters ever heard it:

You'll be sorry you refused me
That good old drink of rum,
For I'll be wearing diamonds
When you're a barroom bum.

Ah! Thim were th' good ol' days, McCarty! This sounds suspiciously like propaganda, however, Mac. Never mind—we'll try to dig up the balance for you.

Accompany your inquiry with stamped, addressed envelop.

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I regret to say that the version of "The Wabash Cannon-Ball" which appeared in the issue of Dec. 20, 1922, was wrong. These errors are bound to occur, and I'd rather take a chance on mistakes than to have our bully bunch of sitters-in at the Camp-Fire take any less interest in this department. Here's the correct rendering. Following it will be found another somewhat similar bit of verse which came with the Great War and will probably go into obscurity ere long—"The Bob-Tail Cannon-Ball."

The Wabash Cannon-Ball

We hear the merry jingle,
The rumble and the roar,
As she dashes through the woodland
And comes creeping on the shore.

We hear the engine's whistle
And merry hoboes' call
As we ride the rods and brake-beams,
On that Wabash Cannon-Ball.

Now here's to long Slim Perkins,
May his name forever stand;
He'll be honored and respected
By the 'boes throughout the land;
And when his days are over
And the curtains round him fall
We'll slip him off to Satan
On that Wabash Cannon-Ball.

The Bobtail Cannon-Ball*

From the wild and rugged 'Lantic
To the mild Pacific shore;
From the rock-bound coast of Maryland
To ice-locked Labrador,
Out in the State of Kansas
Is a place called Leavenworth;
That's where they send the soldiers
To do their hard day's work.

There are men of every nation
For crimes both great and small
"Doing time" at Leavenworth,
Behind the prison wall.
And then there is a captain,
He's a man without a soul;
He takes away your good time
And throws you in "the hole."

The slum is full of moth-balls,
The hardtack full of worms;
The coffee swam the ocean
Before it found the urns.
The oatmeal's full of sawdust
And isn't fit to eat;
The gravy's like the oozy mud
You find on any street.

The way they dress the "bobtails"
I never will forget;
No matter if they fit or not,
They'll always holler "Check."
The shoes are size eleven,
And you never get a pair;
And Washington wore the uniform
When he crossed the Delaware.

The service in the barber-shop
We know it can't excel;
The razors are like sickles,
And the clippers pull like ——.
We have a dippy doctor
Who sees if you are "nuts;"
He smokes Fatima cigarets
Then offers you the butts.

And if by chance you take them,
A "red star" he will call
And rush you to the "nut ward"
Behind the prison wall.
When your little "bit" is ended
And you regret it all,
They'll give you transportation
On the "Bobtail Cannon-Ball."

—From *Captain Billy's Whiz-Bang.*

* "Bobtail" is the slang name given to soldiers who are serving a prison sentence.

Send your old songs or requests for 'em to ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 745 Riverside Drive, New York. Do not send requests to this magazine.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

MAY 20TH ISSUE

Besides the **three complete novelettes** mentioned on the second page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE ANGEL-MAKER — *Georges Surdez*
A deadly pistol in the hands of a gold-seeking fanatic.

COLD TURKEY An Off-the-Trail Story — *Charles Victor Fischer*
The spark that was within him.

FLOR DE GARFIELD — *F. R. Buckley*
A young Texas Ranger demonstrates the uses of bad cigars.

RED AUTUMN A Five-Part Story Part IV — *Hugh Pendexter*
How "*Mandan*" *Ramsay* hid out in the *mahopa* Indian "House of the Infants."

THE CLUE — *George Brydges Rodney*
"Bring me his clothes and I'll tell you who killed him."

CHESTNUTS An Incident in the Affairs of Mohamed Ali — *George E. Holt*
Proving that the cat's-paw will work—even in Algiers.

TAMING THE FOUR BAD-MEN — *William Wells*
Still waters are sometimes deep.

THE FAULTLESS ALIBI — *Charles Lee Bryson*
The murder was perfectly planned.

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Keep a Kodak story of the children

Autographic Kodaks $6.50 up

Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, N.Y., *The Kodak City*

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You write down your own history – and you can't get it back

EVERY rash act will always stand and the results cannot be evaded. Claribel realized this fully and yet she decided to risk everything for a few stolen hours with the man she loved — the man who had already caused her many an anxious moment. What happens when her wealthy, commonplace husband discovers her? Not what you expect, at all! This very unusual story will interest everyone. Whether you are rash or not, read it. The name of the story is "The Moving Finger" and it is but one of the many interesting stories in the April issue.

She remembered her rash visit to his bungalow and the overwhelming unhappiness that followed. What will happen if this new indiscretion is discovered?

Read the "Moving Finger" in

Everybody's Magazine

FIRST IN FICTION .·. ON EVERY NEWS-STAND

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